COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS

REPORT TO THE
BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
AUGUST 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

What do you care about? Libraries can help.

Bellingham Public Library leaders embarked on an ambitious project during Spring 2019, using a new-to-us community engagement model for our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. Our Community Conversations project aimed to gather feedback by talking to people – in person – about their hopes for our community and their ideas for working together to strengthen it.

This report describes these conversations and what we learned from them. With this information, library leaders will determine where the library can make the greatest impact and form its strategic directions accordingly.

National engagement model

Our Community Conversations project is based on tools developed by the American Library Association and the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. It is one of several step-by-step processes these organizations designed to help libraries strengthen their roles and bring about positive change in communities.

These processes are being used by libraries around the country to better understand their communities, be more proactive to community needs and issues, and put community aspirations first. Using the Community Conversations model, libraries authentically engage members of the community and generate "public knowledge" to inform decision-making of all kinds.

PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE	EXPERT KNOWLEDGE
Comes from authentically engaging with people about their aspirations, their concerns, how they see their community.	Comes from professional analysis and reporting of statistics, trend data, poll data, audience and market studies.
In plain language that everyone can understand.	Often in language only professionals understand.

From American Library Association *Libraries Transforming Communities*

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Other local, state and national organizations publish reports and data that also will inform our strategic plan. This "expert knowledge" comes alive when considered alongside the voices of the people who participated in our Community Conversations.
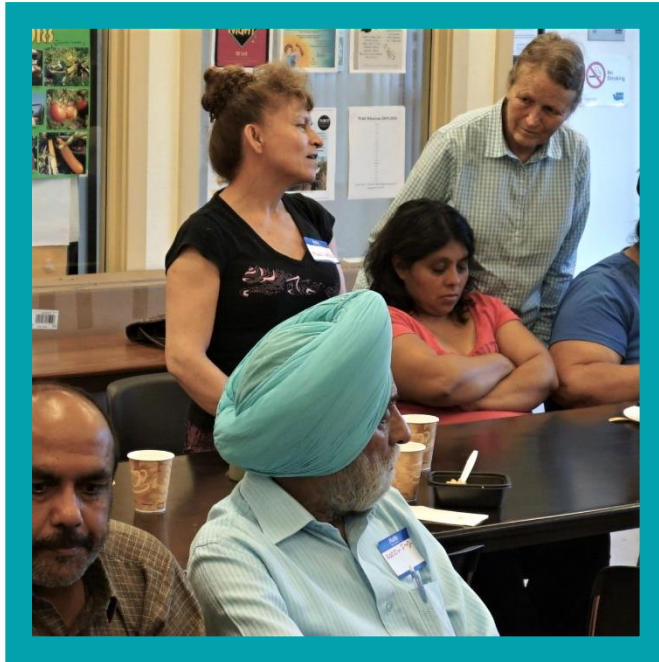
Our experience

Our goal was to gather public knowledge on a range of topics of interest to people who live and work in Bellingham to inform our strategic plan. We promised to listen carefully and develop our plans for the future based on what we heard.

Over the course of three months (April through June, 2019), our staff team of 12 spoke with 343 people. The conversations took many forms: some were held as drop-in public meetings, some were scheduled around specific themes or with specific groups in different locations. Many were held with individuals, people who were willing to be interviewed during events and gatherings, or scheduled in their offices, at coffee shops, and elsewhere. Several group sessions and individual interviews were hosted in languages other than English.

We believed we would get the most impactful and useful information by talking to people. What we didn't expect was just how much people would open up to us and how meaningful these conversations would be. People were eager to share their hopes, their fears, their challenges, and their hurts. The conversations were rich and rewarding, and sometimes hard to hear.

We are humbled and honored that people entrusted this information to us. We are inspired to use it to envision public library services that are transformative and tailored to our community's needs. Thank you to everyone who participated. We look forward to using your voices to shape our strategic directions for the years ahead.

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OUR COMMUNITY STORY

People want to be connected, safe, valued, respected, and accepted by others, with opportunities to be engaged and ever-learning together.

But they are concerned that our community could be more inclusive, safe, and sustainable, with resources and opportunities more equitable and prevalent for all.

As people talk more about those concerns, they talk about the need for authentic connections that strengthen our understanding of each other's diverse experiences, that bridge inequities in access to community resources and economic opportunity, and that reduce divisions and feelings of exclusion.

They say we need to focus on building a welcoming and safe community with well-funded public spaces, where relationships and connections can flourish, where reliable information is accessible to everyone, and where barriers to opportunity are acknowledged and reduced.

And if non-profits, faith-based organizations, people in leadership positions, our government, and our good and creative neighbors played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

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WHAT WE HEARD

Aspirations

"People want to be connected, safe, valued, respected, and accepted by others, with access and opportunities to be engaged and ever-learning together. …

Connected. Accepted. Engaged. Valued. Respected. Using these words and other similar phrases, participants described the community they wish for as collaborative and safe, where people belong and are valued and accepted for who they are.

Connection was a central theme throughout our Community Conversations, with people describing their wishes for connections of all kinds, including connection to each other, connection to resources, and connection to information and learning.

They said they want access to better, more reliable information, as well as opportunities to learn from and about each other. Despite our world being more electronically connected than ever, people said they wish for greater in-person connections, places to gather, and social opportunities.

Participants said they want a compassionate and caring community, where basic needs are met for all, where helpful resources are abundant and easy to find. They said they want a community that is accessible for everyone, with accessible transportation, accessible learning opportunities, accessible greenspaces, and accessible buildings.

They said they want a diverse and culturally rich community, where everyone is valued, respected and accepted, and where everyone has access to opportunities, resources and amenities.

People also highlighted the beauty and amenities in Bellingham that make our city among the most desirable places in the country to live, work and play. Many people aspired to be in a community just like Bellingham and love it just like it is today.

Aspirations quotes

"I want a community that is affordable and economically strong, educated and engaged, with diverse voices. One that is welcoming, connected, and interdependent. I want a proactive 'yes' community, not a reactive 'no' community, one that has a 'sense of the commons' and people's basic needs (shelter, food, water, information) are met. Where there are spaces for public uses, or 'third spaces,' both indoor and outdoor. A community that is economically strong, environmentally sound, safe, and has a sense of home, where you live, give, and make investments."

"Where all people can find places they fit, where they can create interdependence with others, where there are people one can rely upon and where one can be supportive of and relied upon by others. A community with a cultural focus, where there are things to do, places to connect and artsy kinds of things."

"A safe and peaceful community that is inclusive, hospitable and accommodating, active and connected … where we can truly see people and their strengths."

"A community where everyone is cared for, and their needs are being met. Where there is kindness and compassion, and a healthy web of support. A community in which people feel welcomed and honored. A community that is well-resourced, and not just financially. Where there is connection, collaboration, and community knowledge. A community that can handle and manage conflict in healthy ways. A community where kids can thrive. A community that is not siloed, but is worldly and interacts and invites multiple perspectives and people."

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WORDS MATTER: SAFE, SAFETY

The words "safe" and "safety" can mean many things. We heard these words often, usually used in a broad sense accompanied by comments about feeling welcomed and trusting, and having emotional and cultural safety, as well as physical safety. Comments about physical safety often highlighted safe places for children to play and learn, safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and safe access to community resources and amenities for people with differing abilities.

WHAT WE HEARD

"Safety for children, such as walkability within the community."

"Safe to be who you are, to speak up."

"A more diverse community can make everyone feel safer. Those who are 'othered' can relax and not feel excluded."

"Being intolerant breeds a feeling of being unsafe or a fear of the unknown."

"Quality of life and personal safety (in my home, in my neighborhood) are important."

"If people feel safe and welcomed, community building is easier, and we're more engaged and productive. Crime rate is not that high, but there is a perception of elevated crime."

"Safe, accessible community that embraces lifelong learning."

"Safety is a concern, homes are broken into, there is a feeling that the neighborhood is less safe, but also more interesting."

"A friendly and inclusive community with active and informed members. Safe, affordable, and well-funded."

"A place that is tolerant and people want to help those in need. Where people are safe to be expressive in different ways."

"I want my community to reflect my core values, as an individual and a parent. People can be at their best when their core needs are met. Safety, clean air, these are baseline human rights."

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WHAT WE HEARD

Concerns

… But they are concerned that our community could be more inclusive, safe, and sustainable, with resources and opportunities more equitable and prevalent for all.

As people talk more about those concerns, they talk about the need for authentic connections that strengthen our understanding of each other's diverse experiences, that bridge inequities in access to community resources and economic opportunity, and that reduce divisions and feelings of exclusion. …

Throughout our Community Conversations people said they love Bellingham and referenced the many great things about our city: natural beauty, parks and trails, our focus on sustainability and local businesses, strong neighborhoods and sense of place, respected educational institutions, and businesses and non-profit organizations that offer services that our community needs and values.

Participants noted there is another side of Bellingham. Those who are economically stable, advantaged, and able, may not see or acknowledge how challenging it can be to live here. We heard directly from people about their struggles with wages and employment, affordable housing, childcare, food insecurity, language barriers, health concerns, visible and invisible disabilities, racism, discrimination, and lack of access to information, resources, and opportunities. People who provide community services, and caring people throughout the community, took the opportunity in our Community Conversations to advocate for their neighbors on these topics as well.

People we spoke with expressed concerns about divisions in our community, about feeling excluded or seeing others be excluded, and about their discomfort with what they describe as "us vs. them," "othering," and "NIMBYism" (Not In My Back Yard).

Despite more digital connections than ever before, people said they don't have access to trusted, comprehensive information. They said information feels biased, scattered, or non-existent. They wish for better ways to connect with each other, learn from and about each other, and find out community news, issues, resources, and events.

Participants listed other issues as well, including concerns about traffic, parking and transportation, technology infrastructure, growth and change, sustainability, climate change, and safety.
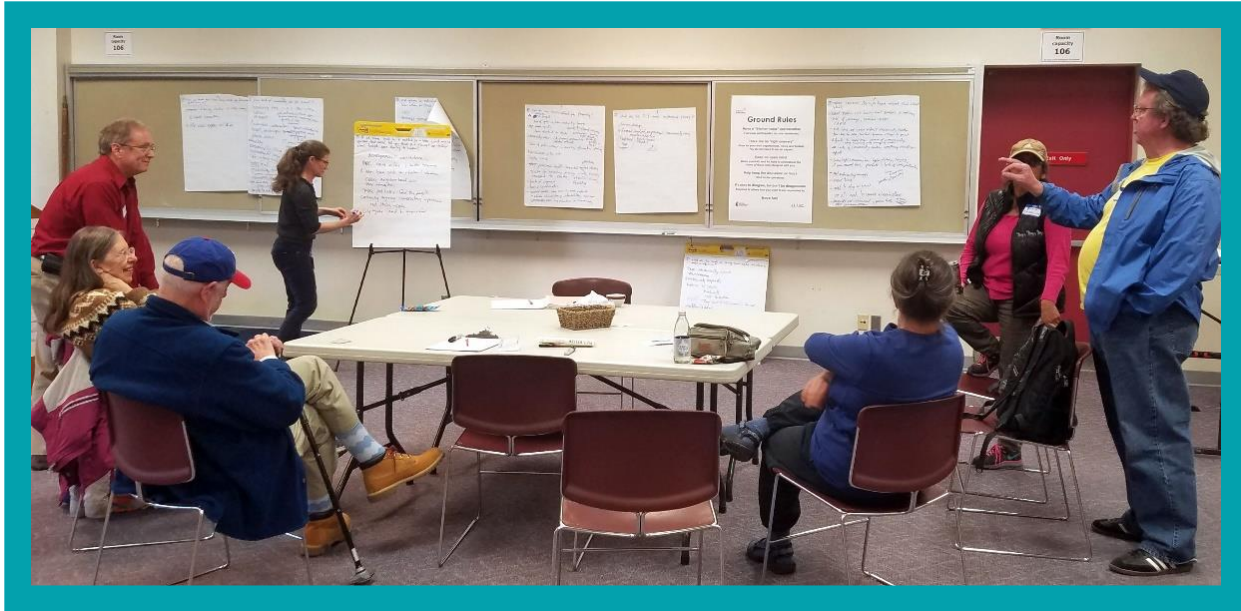
Concerns quotes:

"It feels like Bellingham is two Bellinghams: the beautiful 'brochure Bellingham' that everyone wants to come to, then the "reality Bellingham": lack of jobs, housing unaffordability, whole communities that are invisible. The shadow side of us being a hot commodity is the cost of living is high, it is impossible to buy a house. Bellingham is going to continue to grow due to the Seattle/Vancouver corridor. It is important to have aspirations established so that as the city continues to grow, Bellingham stays or becomes what we want in a sustainable way."

"Removing barriers to access services and resources. The impacts of stress, social isolation, racial inequities, and increased anxiety on families. Building relationships and different levels of connections."

"Many 'us vs. them' situations that harm our sense of community. People and systems not integrated, not sharing information, understanding, and resources. Separate tracks of people living in Bellingham, with very different needs and experiences. People's basic needs not being met."

"We want to leave a healthy legacy for our children with opportunities to stay in this community. We value critical thinking and believe that with more education and knowledge, people are more likely to be inclusive and engage in productive dialogue. Difference is not a negative; we all bring something to contribute."

"Talent and business retention in Bellingham, it is hard to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs when there isn't the infrastructure nor workforce."

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"There are significant gaps in the web of support for many in the community. We become habituated to ongoing systemic challenges like homelessness and domestic violence…."

"People want to help each other, but NIMBY-ism (Not In My Back Yard). Resources are split among organizations and people are pursuing their own goals. How can we work together to make a bigger difference? The people who work with different communities in need are mostly social workers who get burned out or volunteers who are not getting paid. We need more resources and funding to provide help for people who need it."

"People want to feel connection. Without an understanding of each other there is tribalism, neighborhood bubbles, marginalization. There is an awareness of inequality and a lack of resources for those who need help but a lack of or unclear community priorities. Bellingham is changing and experiencing growing pains. How we will adapt?"

"Managing and planning for growth in terms of development, zoning, and business. Not just saying 'it's bad for me' – having a conversation and seeing all sides. A community that isn't overly dependent on single employers, has a lot of community participation, types of economics, multi-faceted. Cost of living is too high compared to current wages and shallow job market. Reactive, and focused on short-term, basic needs. Not able to have long-term view."

"Our community believes in and wants to be welcoming, but we're not always. We are fairly isolated and experiencing growing pains. It's important to ask hard questions about our values and commitments."

"The issue of school boundary changes highlighted divisions and 'us vs. them' concerns. How many see our community is different than reality. We are not as inclusive and forward thinking as we like to think."

"Without an interconnected community, things start to unravel at the bottom and first impact the most vulnerable populations. That instability then starts moving up. As a community we need to know what resources and support are available. People move here because they hold certain values, one of which is social involvement."

"Everyone is in different camps, silos. We have focused on how we are different, rather than how we are similar. Our community places more value on some voices over others. Affordable housing and access to childcare are significant challenges."

"Equity is critical in a community. We are so partisan now, less neighborly. Gaps in income (have and have nots) are growing. We need things that will bring us together for the common good."

WORDS MATTER: POVERTY, INEQUITY, ACCESS

For some people in our community, economic barriers are insurmountable hurdles to accessing opportunities and reaching their aspirations. We heard time and time again: too many individuals and families lack the basic necessities of life and have difficulty accessing helpful resources. Economic inequities, sometimes coupled with discrimination, disabilities, lack of childcare, language barriers, and other challenges, make life a daily struggle. People said that our community can and should do more to help.

WHAT WE HEARD

"There is a lot of inequity in Bellingham. If you have the means or good luck in life, you're okay. But many are struggling with unsafe situations, economic instability, racism, domestic violence, mental health, and gender disparity."

"People of color and immigrants have had too many negative interactions with the court and so do not access needed legal resources. People become involved with the court system during the most important decisions of their lives, such as custody of children and losing housing, but at the same time have the least resources to deal with these issues. People who have the power to make change are not connected to our most vulnerable members of the community."

"People who don't speak English or don't have strong literacy skills often don't have a voice or access to information and basic services. We need to give people the tools to be on the same playing field (equity). It's easy to spend time with people like ourselves. In-person connections increase understanding and empathy."

"Families are isolated due to language and transportation barriers, limited resources, lack of support for health needs, stresses and trauma due to family situations and needs."

"I want a community that is equitable. Where people have similar, rather than dis-similar, experiences when accessing resources. Equal access to all services: food, health care, education, housing, transportation, and recreation. Equity for people of color and all incomes. A community where we are not segregated by type of housing, quality of schools, or generational poverty."

"We are a segregated community, especially north Bellingham, which bears the brunt of housing density. Other neighborhoods don't have this density and can afford and retain owner housing. People of color and low income show clear disparities in health. There is a population suffering from food instability in Bellingham, which also means they suffer barriers to affordable health care, equal education, living wage jobs, and housing.

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WORDS MATTER: RACISM, INTOLERANCE, DISCRIMINATION

Barriers to success, opportunity, and esteem come in many forms. Perhaps the hardest comments to hear during our Community Conversations were those from people who experience racism, intolerance, and discrimination in our community. We heard from people who experience it firsthand, parents whose children are faced with it at school and elsewhere, and those who witness it: hateful actions and attitudes are present in Bellingham. We must recognize our community is not immune from these problems and act against them.

WHAT WE HEARD

"People feel isolated because 1/5th of the population experience some type of disability (visible or invisible) and most are unaware of how difficult some disability challenges can be."

"Those who are excluded feel they have to explain their existence daily, struggle to retain their dignity, always be conscious of their 'otherness'. The Pacific Northwest has a reputation of cool or cold racism. We self-identify as progressive, but don't ask the 'othered' why they are not comfortable here. Environmentalism here is white privileged, but not environmental justice, which looks at the disparate impacts of toxic environments on low-income neighborhoods."

"Our students suffer with racism and name-calling."

"The treatment of some people as 'other' or less than. For instance, those who say 'we're becoming a magnet for the homeless.' This type of intolerance leads to terrible situations and outcomes, locally and nationally. There's a patina of progressiveness, but we are often only welcoming to people who are 'our' people."

"We are concerned that community members don't view each other as equal and we and our children experience racism. We experience isolation because we don't have adequate access to transportation, and we don't know about resources. We are concerned about safety and security for our children and ourselves…"

"Racism, discrimination, or indifference based on race, sexuality or socio-economic factors."

"Services are inaccessible to people with disabilities."

"Sense of exclusion here if you are not a white, heterosexual, coupled, house owner. Tends to be a monoculture. …"

"Our community could benefit from anti-racism training, especially in businesses in which people of color encounter the most racism: where they bank, shop, and go to school."

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WHAT WE HEARD

Actions

… They say we need to focus on building a welcoming and safe community with well-funded public spaces, where relationships and connections can flourish, where reliable information is accessible to everyone, and where barriers to opportunity are acknowledged and reduced. …

The theme of connection was a consistent thread throughout our Community Conversations, and many of the actions people recommended had to do with connecting people to information, to resources, and to each other.

Many people who participated said solutions to even our most challenging problems – such as poverty and discrimination – start with acknowledging these problems exist and listening to each other.

Many of the recommended actions we heard followed a theme of welcoming people – helping people feel safe, included, and embraced as valued contributors to our city. As Bellingham grows and changes, more people are moving here from other places. Many people expressed interest in better ways to welcome new people to our city, such as by "welcome wagon" services.

The need for effective, inclusive ways to collect, fact-check, and disseminate objective, reliable information also was a consistent theme throughout this project and in actions participants recommended. Many people noted a need for central community hubs for information and resources.

Many participants said access to additional safe, convivial, and convenient places – indoors and outside – to gather and share our stories, is important to a healthy, connected community.

Participants noted that all actions require resources, and they recommend our community commit financial and other resources to the concerns and actions identified.

Actions quotes

"Need places to meet, gather, and participate in civic life on both a local level and a national level. Need places to connect socially that promote inclusiveness, not divisiveness."

"Bold and visionary leadership, at all levels, understanding that some will not approve but willing to take risks. Actively search for new perspectives and ask new people to participate. Infrastructure needs to be supported in our growth: water, roads, sewers, police, fire, hospital – must get in front of it, plan for it. Growth and change are -ing words, community is always changing and growing."
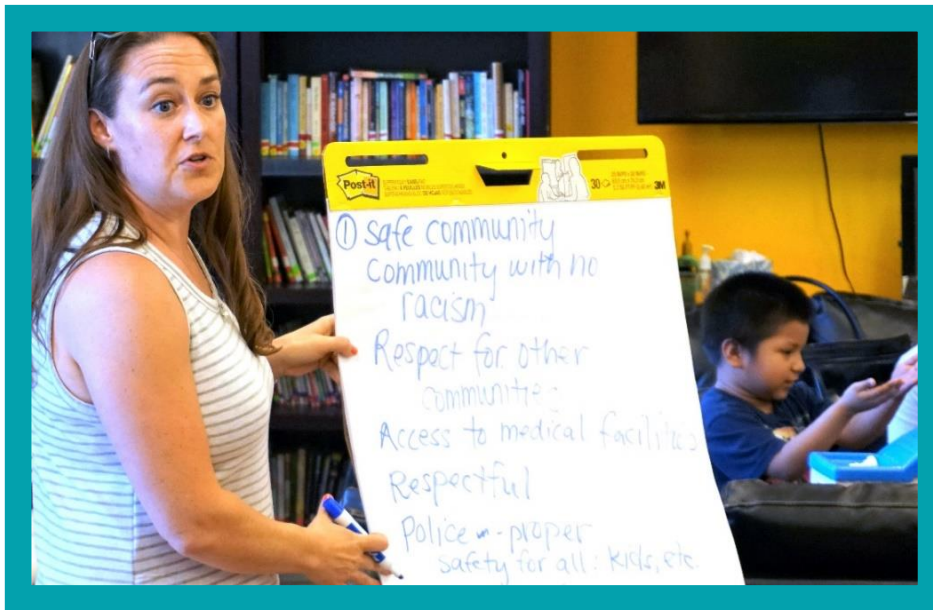
"Recognize that people who aren't like us exist. People say there is no diversity in Bellingham but there is, and it needs to be recognized. Who are the audiences we don't know? There are a whole bunch of ways that we don't see each other."

"Funding that is stable. More supportive, permanent, subsidized housing that's easy to access. Increase access to legal assistance, such as Street Law program. Easier access to social services. Continued and increased legislative efforts."

"Ask the people who are experiencing racism and low incomes to tell their stories to help change the situation. If we create deeper and more authentic relationships, we can ask them what would work."

"Political support for additional neighborhood spaces, better communication within the community, more resident involvement and engagement."

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"More conversations, more education, more opportunities for interaction to foster understanding, civil dialog, respectful communications, conflict resolution. Find ways to bring people together, not separate further. Provide access to services/facilities for everyone. Like public libraries and parks: everyone welcome, no barriers based on who you are, language, money, etc. Consider meeting people's basic needs an urgent priority and get better at doing it. Foster community involvement, community activism, community solutions, and don't reinvent the wheel. Find groups who have experience/systems in place and collaborate."

"Build community! We need to get to know our neighbors even if it is outside of your comfort zone. Get businesses involved in helping out the community. Find out and evaluate the basic needs to thrive - water, phone charging stations, etc. Take steps to make connections and understand each other's experiences. Education! Listen and talk to each other without assuming the worst."

"Emphasize personal connection rather than digital connection. Equitable opportunity: helping each other learn more about ways to welcome other people, other cultures, other backgrounds, other life circumstances. Try not to simply replicate our own bubbles. Ask 'who isn't here?' Value differences, different points of view, diversity. It's hard work; we're all drawn to people like us."

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WHAT WE HEARD

Who people trust to act

… And if non-profits, faith-based organizations, people in leadership positions, our government, and our good and creative neighbors played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward."

Participants in our conversations have faith in many organizations and individuals to work together to meet their aspirations. Many local and regional non-profit organizations were mentioned repeatedly as trusted and well-regarded and are expected to play important roles in our community's future.

Our community looks to our schools as places for connection, innovation, and leadership, with Bellingham Public Schools noted often. Some people shared concerns about behaviors that occur within our schools, a reminder that our community's work to foster respect and inclusion is not complete.

People highlighted our local higher education institutions as trusted organizations and valued community contributors.

City and county governments received cautious praise. City departments, other area public agencies, and individual leaders were noted often as being trusted. Yet some participants also cautioned that governments need watchdogs, and there are important roles for advocates and activists.

Many people we spoke with have confidence in themselves, in each other, in their neighborhoods, and in local businesses. As one person said, "It's not all on one person or group, we are all part of this community and need to work to make changes."

Quotes from "Who do you trust to take action?"

"Younger people need to be at the table who aren't jaded by fear, who are willing to take risks and have tenacity to get things done. But we don't want to discredit the established voices. Younger and established voices together, mentoring each other."

"I trust those who are collaborative, collegial, and inclusive."

"Lots of people are doing really good work. Whatcom County has a vibrant non-profit network. We need to believe and trust in our community as a whole, instead of pointing to individual groups."

"(I trust) the faith community, city and county government, Opportunity Council, Catholic Community Services, Lydia Place, Lighthouse Mission, schools, Habitat for Humanity, Community Land Trust, WWU, Food Bank, and United Way."

"The juvenile court system, where the focus is helping youth not simply punishment. Senior centers. Privately run voluntary programs, not government requirements or restrictions. Churches, which are good at social well-being."

"Anyone who starts making change. Faithlife employees, Kulshan Land Trust, Lighthouse Mission, Food Bank, private employers."

"(I trust) neighborhood associations, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, League of Women Voters, Sustainable Connections, RESources, Unitarians, City Club, Unity Care, Riveters, WWU, libraries, YMCA, and the Senior Center."

"I trust shared processes. People who have investment in topics and wide experiences. People who represent different backgrounds and identities. People from the community are more trusted than outsiders."

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

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PROJECT GOALS

✓ Incorporate diverse voices

- We strived to talk with people who may not often be asked their opinions, particularly seeking people from traditionally under-represented groups and people on the front lines of providing services in our community.

- We reached out to a diverse cross-section of our community. We spoke with people who work downtown, people of color, teachers, business people, people with disabilities, moms, dads and grandparents, people experiencing homelessness, technology entrepreneurs, people who speak a primary language other than English, adult students, social services providers, and many others.

- As with any time-limited outreach project of this nature, there is more to be done. We identified gaps that we will fill in subsequent efforts. Our future outreach will benefit from even greater age, socio-economic, and cultural diversity.
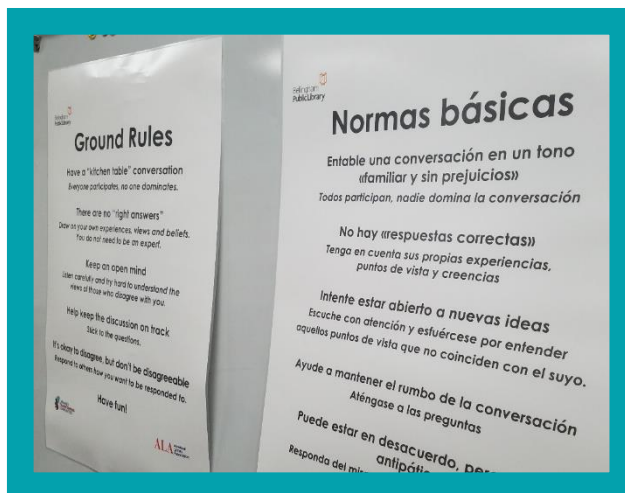
✓ Offer many opportunities to participate

- We hosted 35 group Community Conversations, including nine widely advertised drop-in sessions open to the public. Spanish language interpretation was provided at five Community Conversations, and one session was conducted in Punjabi.

- We conducted 79 Ask Interviews, including several in Spanish, Chinese and Farsi.

✓ Gather quality feedback

- We gathered specific public knowledge to contribute quality information about community needs for the library strategic plan and to share with other departments and organizations.

✓ Inspire new partnerships

- We fostered several new collaborations, strengthened existing partnerships, and motivated community building among group participants.

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✓ Create a positive vibe

- The project supported team building and camaraderie among all staff and people involved.

- Many people who participated said they enjoyed thinking and talking about the questions we asked. The group conversations were generally warm and friendly, with light-hearted moments of laughter and shared experiences.

- We created safe, welcoming environments for authentic conversations. Even when the content was hard to share and hear, people engaged in rich, meaningful ways.

- Participant feedback was very positive, with many requests to receive results. Non-participants who heard about the effort often were eager to learn more, impressed that the library took on this effort.

- Some people asked how they could help or contribute further. After experiencing the Community Conversation format, many people offered to help get word out about future sessions. One group, after the Community Conversation ended, started brainstorming community volunteer projects they could tackle together based on the aspirations they had discussed. Others simply wished to further support the library.
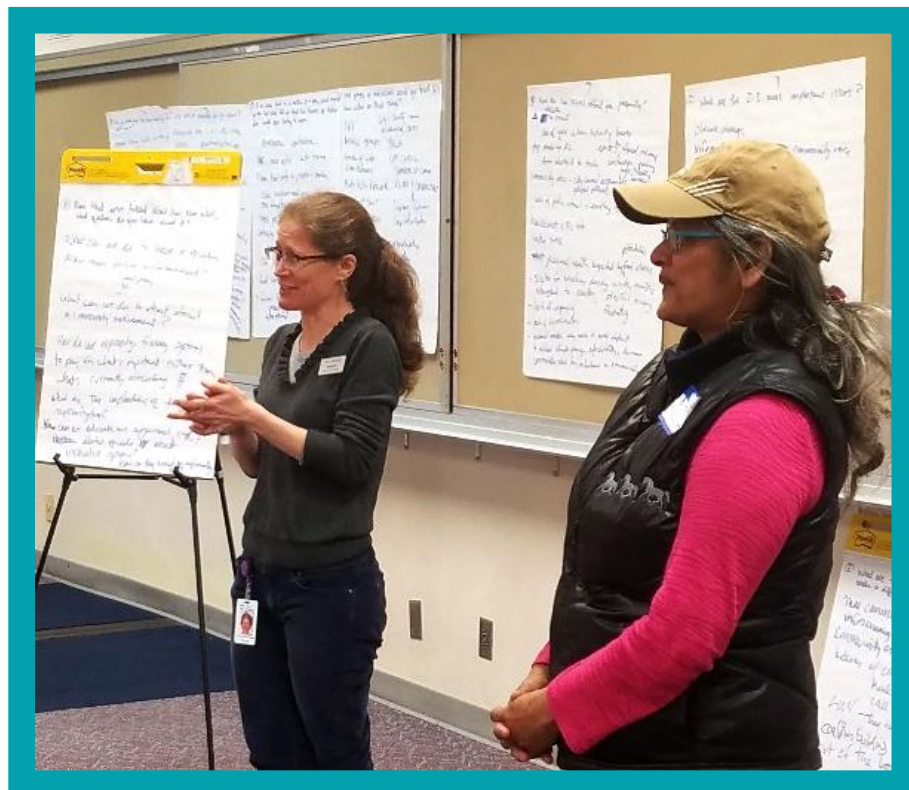
PROJECT TOOLS

Ask Interviews

- Simple questions you ask one or two people to learn what kind of community they want.

- A starting point for learning about your community's aspirations.

- Takes as little as 5-10 minutes, though many people wish to share more.

- Our team conducted 79 Ask Interviews during our three-month project.

Community Conversations

- 60- to 90-minute conversations with groups of three or more people about their community: their aspirations, the challenges they face in realizing these aspirations, and what changes are needed to overcome challenges.

- Engage groups in collaborating on community aspirations and challenges.

- Help develop partners and strategies to strengthen the library's significance in the community.

- Our team hosted 35 Community Conversations during the three-month project.

Facilitation Team

- A team of 10 Bellingham Public Library staff members and two graduate student volunteers. All received training and participated in Ask Interviews and Community Conversations.

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WHAT WE ASKED

Group conversations

- What kind of community do you want to live in?

- Given what we just said, what are the two or three most important issues in our community?

- What concerns do you have about these issues, and why?

- How do the issues we're talking about affect you personally?

- When you think about these things, how do you feel about what's going on?

- What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?

- When you think about what we've talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done to make a difference?

- What groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?

- If we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would tell you that the things we talked about are starting to happen?

- What questions do you have, about these issues, these conversations, or the library?

Individual interviews/group short format

- What kind of community do you want to live in?

- Why is that important to you?

- How is that different from how you see things now?

- What are some of the things that need to happen to create those changes?

- What groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?

PROCESSING CONVERSATIONS

Theming Categories

Facilitation team members organized their notes into the six Theming Categories listed in the box at right. All information collected organized into these categories can be found in the Appendix, beginning on page 33.

THEMING CATEGORIES

- **Aspirations**
- **Main concerns**
- **Specific issues**
- **Actions that would make a difference**
- **Who people trust to act**
- **Questions people have**

Community Narrative Stories

For each group Community Conversations, the teams reviewed their categorized notes and filled in the blanks of the template below to tell a story about the conversation. Summarizing the group's conversation using clear language that people use every day is a powerful way to stay focused on the essence of the conversation and make sense of what we are learning.

Community narrative stories were written for group Community Conversations, not individual interviews. All Community Narrative Stories developed through this project are listed in the Appendix, beginning on page 33.

Identifying Our Community Story

With all the above information collected over the three-month project, we set out to analyze and summarize what we heard. While this task may sound daunting, clear over-arching main themes emerged. We developed Our Community Story (on page 7) using the template below, built from the Main Themes we heard throughout the project.

COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORY TEMPLATE

People want *(aspirations)* , but they are concerned that *(main concerns)* . As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about *(specific issues)* . They believe we need to focus on *(actions)* and if *(groups/individuals)* played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

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PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE STEWARDS

Trusted conveners and contributors

Various definitions of stewardship include descriptions like "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care."

People who participated in Community Conversations shared with our teams in good faith, counting on us to gather, share, and use the public knowledge we gained, doing so carefully and in ways that contribute to the common good.

In this spirit, this report includes the text of all the categorized comments we gathered during this project. It is the same data we used to develop Our Community Story and the overarching themes that contributed to it. Our process of notetaking and theming captures the essence of what people said without singling out specific individuals.

Using and sharing public knowledge

Here are the ways we will use the information gathered in Community Conversations:

Incorporate into Library Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Our goal when initiating this project was to gather public knowledge about our community to shape our strategic plan. Our planning process is underway, with a final strategic plan anticipated to be approved in early 2020. The knowledge from these Community Conversations provides an invaluable contribution to planning for future library services.

Share with participants and others

We committed to everyone who participated in our Community Conversations that the information would be shared with them, which is part of the purpose of this report. The final report will be distributed directly to those participants who provided contact information, as well as posted on the library website. Presentations with highlights of this report are expected to be provided to the Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees, Bellingham City Council, and other library and city stakeholders.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The Bellingham Public Library Community Conversations project format, process, training materials, interview questions, and other tools were adapted from the Libraries Transforming Communities initiative, developed by the American Library Association and Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.

About Libraries Transforming Communities

Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) is an American Library Association initiative that seeks to strengthen libraries' roles as core community leaders and change-agents. LTC addresses a critical need within the library field by developing and distributing new tools, resources, and support for librarians to engage with the communities in new ways. As a result, we believe libraries will become more reflective of and connected to their communities and build stronger partnerships with local civic agencies, non-profits, funders, and corporations. The initiative is made possible through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

About the American Library Association

The American Library Association (ALA) is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with approximately 58,000 members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries. The mission of the American Library Association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.

About Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a national non-profit organization based in Bethesda, Md., that teaches and coaches people and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together. The Institute is guided by Richard C. Harwood, whose transformational work during almost 30 years has spread to thousands of communities nationally and worldwide, from small towns to large cities.

Bellingham **Public Library**

APPENDIX

COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

INTRODUCTION TO "COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES"

After each conversation, facilitation teams reviewed their categorized notes and filled in the blanks of the template below to tell a story about the conversation. Summarizing the group's conversation using clear language that people use every day is a powerful way to stay focused on the essence of the conversation and make sense of what we are learning.

Community narrative story template

People want *(aspirations)* , but they are concerned that *(main concerns)* . As people talk more about those   concerns, they talk specifically about *(specific issues)* . They believe we need to focus on *(actions)* and if *(groups)* played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

Community narrative stories were written for group Community Conversations, not individual interviews. This section contains all COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES. Information presented below in random order.

People want a community that is affordable, safe, environmentally sustainable and economically strong, and that is welcoming, diverse, and proactive in fostering community; but they are concerned that rapid growth and economic shifts have led to imbalances in resources that leave some people behind. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about lack of affordable housing, food and other basic needs, climate change, increased polarization, and lack of information and connection between groups in the community. They believe that lack of community-building makes weathering change difficult, and that we need to focus on investing time and resources to strengthen our connections with each other; and if various civic groups, government, non-profit agencies, and elected officials played a leadership role in informing and connecting people folks would more likely trust the effort and step forward.

People want a safe, accessible, connected community that embraces lifelong learning, but they are concerned that people without strong literacy or English language skills face many difficult barriers to information and services. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about lack of resources to address needs, the changing landscape of education, the many barriers to access for some people, and reduced opportunities for people to build community in our modern world. They believe we need to focus on funding for lifelong learning, creating tools and experience in civil dialogue, raising awareness, and creating connections, and if people with expertise in education, libraries, churches, and other organizations played a part in those actions folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want to live in a connected, safe, respectful and welcoming community with opportunities for all. Bellingham is changing with more apparent socio-economic divisions, and the visibility of homeless and those with mental health issues impact peoples' perceptions of those who need help. An antidote to responses of fear and anger is credible, current, local information.

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COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want an open-minded and caring community with support for homeless and mentally ill that includes affordable housing for all members of community. They are concerned that these issues are not being adequately addressed. As people talk more about these concerns, they talk specifically about access to housing and mental health service, and the need for evaluating city housing laws and creating of community gathering spaces. They believe we need to focus on putting money and individual effort towards these issues in addition to looking at property and mental health laws. If the city, local non-profits, and individuals played a part in these actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want all groups to be heard and for people to show compassion for each other, but they're concerned that growth is too rapid with environmental issues and homelessness becoming more prevalent. As people talk about those concerns, they talk specifically about the lack of knowledge and access to information on resources for people in need of help and for those that want to help. They believe we need to focus on creating safe spaces for people that are homeless and have more free community spaces for people to meet and understand others' experiences and if the Opportunity Council, Food Bank, Michael Lilliquist, and Sustainable Connections played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want proactivity around issues, authentic inclusivity without assumptions, and opportunities to build relationships with others, but they're concerned that we have a "no" culture with short-sighted solutions and a lack of perspectives at the decision-making table. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about governing for the future not just today, climate change, silos of communities, and lack of creativity in solutions. They believe we need to focus on building relationships across ages, ethnic groups and stances, providing spaces and opportunities to connect in person, and having a solutions-based mindset and if all groups and community members played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a welcoming community to all with places to meet and learn about others and their experiences, but they're concerned that there are not enough opportunities to bring people together from different communities. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the fear of change in our community and not understanding the problems outside of their own groups. They believe we need to focus on creating spaces for people to get to know each other and if the public library and neighborhood associations played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want to connect with people in the community, but they're concerned that there are not enough free opportunities for people to build these connections. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about a lack of knowledge in how to access resources and get connected with those resources. They believe we need to focus on offering more community spaces and opportunities for people to learn from each other and build relationships, and if the library and City of Bellingham played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

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COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want to live in a safe, accessible, connected, and invested community, but they're concerned that there are limited resources and funding to help people connect, thrive and live enriched lives. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about a lack of education and empathy for other people's situations and experiences. They believe we need to focus on more opportunities to make connections with people to share and learn from each other to foster respect, and if we all work together along with people who are knowledgeable about who they are serving played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a vibrant community that is well educated with equity and access for everyone, but they're concerned that there are not enough jobs that pay well enough to cover the cost of living and equitable resources for people in need. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about our community facing homelessness and mental illness while feeling helpless in finding the right resources for people. They believe we need to focus on providing greater education for the resources readily available and if Faithlife and other private employers, the Lighthouse Mission, and the Food Bank played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a friendly, welcoming, connected, accessible, and informed place with opportunities for all, but they're concerned that we are becoming two Bellinghams, "brochure" and reality. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about losing our roots of connection and friendliness amidst growth and change. They believe we need to focus on personal over digital connection, and creating places for people to interact outside of their usual circles, and if neighborhood associations, the library, and individuals did their part, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a community that is diverse, safe, connected, and engaged but they're concerned that people are not participating in our neighborhoods and civic life. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the perception that the northside only has senior citizens, and that developers and city officials are not planning for quality of life amenities. They believe we need to focus on integrated planning, and secure funding, and if the Mayor, WWU, citizens, law enforcement, city & county council, and BTC played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want to live in a place that feels like community (vibrant, supportive, inclusive, and creative), but they're concerned that the northside lacks a strong sense of community. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the difficulty of engaging residents in activities, and the lack of places to gather. They believe we need to focus on strengthening neighborhood associations, engaging educational institutions in neighborhood life, and proactive advocacy with developers and the city, and if individuals, neighborhood associations, elected officials, HOAs, and social media platforms played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

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COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want to feel safe in their community and that their kids are safe in their schools, but they're concerned that violence, crime and racism prevent that. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk about teachers not believing their kids in school, the fear of their children losing trust in educators and getting involved with drugs and weapons, and that families don't have health care options or basic information about nutrition. They believe we need to focus more on police visibility in the community for security and for there to be a rehabilitative rather than punitive focus at school and that if pastors, the Mayor, and parent groups within schools played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want support for adults to provide support for youth, but they're concerned that there are barriers to access to support services. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about access to basic human needs to thrive, and support for social and emotional needs for children after elementary school. They believe we need to focus on providing education and community training and meet people where they're at with services for people to be successful and if Joe Fuller from the Whatcom Health Department, Dr. Baker with the Bellingham School District, Northwest Youth Services, Whatcom Family Network, NAMI, and we all as individuals played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

Participant wants intelligent, generous and open-minded communities but they're concerned that segments of Bellingham are misinformed, which negates forward movement to this goal. As this person talks more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the dangers of social media and the misinformation and hateful rhetoric present. They believe we need to focus on bringing truthful, unbiased information to the community in a discoverable way and if the Western Front played part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a welcoming community that prioritizes strengthening families and equity of accessibility, education, economics, race, and abilities, but they're concerned that barriers such as access to transportation, home language and services, and family trauma negatively impact the development of children and lead families to social isolation. As people talk more about those concerns they talk specifically about the effects of toxic family stress and anxiety due to drug use, our current governmental climate, the barriers of oppressive, paperwork-driven systems that reinforce intergenerational historical trauma, economic inequities, and the need to build relationships to forge connections and community. They believe we need to focus on acknowledging that systems are oppressive, writing policies that explicitly prioritize families, bringing resources directly to families and holding more free, family-centered events and if parents, faith communities, higher education, the library, tribal communities, medical practitioners, Dr. Baker, non-profits and schools played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want a community where people can come together, share languages, and learn from each other, but they're concerned that there are not enough opportunities to bring people together from different communities. As people talk more about those concerns they talk specifically about the lack of communication with families in schools and the need to improve and provide more free educational opportunities for children and families. They believe we need to focus on bringing people together to make connections to create a more understanding of each other and if April Barker played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a community that is inclusive, engaged, connected, safe (both psychologically and physically), informed and "ever-learning" but they're concerned that people lack knowledge and education about community issues and impacts, and view differences as a negative. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about managing and planning for growth with a long-term view rather than reactive short-term solutions, the cost of living and long-term economic opportunities. They believe we need to focus on establishing infrastructure that supports growth, actively seeking out new perspectives, and being creative in the solutions process, and if younger and established voices work together and played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a friendly, safe, and inclusive community with active and informed citizens, but they are concerned that a big portion of the community is unhoused, or low income, and not connected to services. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the negative perception of those experiencing homelessness, fear, and not knowing how best to interact. They believe we need to focus on both education on what it means to experience homelessness as well as collaborative community efforts, and if government agencies, the faith community and non-profits played a part in those actions folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a collaborative, compassionate community that supports ideas and actions that benefit all, but they are concerned that they do not know all of Bellingham. As people talk more about those concerns they talk specifically about reaching out beyond their base demographic to make themselves relevant to those we don't know. They believe we need to focus on being open to opportunity, saying yes, and finding ways to partner with disconnected segments of the community, and if the people and organizations of Bellingham played an active part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and move forward.

COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want a strong technology infrastructure to support growth, equity in business, education and policy, a safe community with a good educational system, and a vibrant economic climate that retains local talent and provides living wages. But they're concerned that there is no county-wide technology infrastructure master plan, that the business community is not connected with the technology community, and that the local economy is not able to support new entrepreneurs and the necessary workforce. As people talk more about those concerns they talk specifically about how the technology community could connect with IT students through mentorships and internships to gain real world skills, that there is a general technology knowledge gap in the community, and that there are many missed opportunities for the technology community and business community to unite. They believe we need to focus on connecting the technology and business communities, partner the technology community with new industries, coordinate data sharing for practical applications city-/county-wide, collaborate with partners to create information symposiums and learning opportunities, and support the work of the Port's Economic Development team, and identify ways and places for the community and business owners to learn new technology. And if business owners, TAG, the Port of Bellingham and the technology community of Bellingham played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want to live in a safe, accessible, connected, and invested community, but they're concerned that there are limited resources and funding to help people connect, thrive and live enriched lives. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about a lack of education and empathy for other people's situations and experiences. They believe we need to focus on more opportunities to make connections with people to share and learn from each other to foster respect and if we all work together along with people who are knowledgeable about who they are serving played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a durable, robust, and sustainable community, but they're concerned that the process for change is slow and short-sighted. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the need for civic education to spur community engagement and shifting from "I" to "we" for long-range planning. They believe we need to focus on creating avenues for sharing local information, and building relationships in the community and if neighborhood associations, non-profits involved in sustainable activities, and educational and social organizations played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want a community that is inclusive, compassionate, environmentally responsible, and forward-thinking, but they are concerned that community conflicts, economic disparity and lack of understanding across diverse groups of people harm our sense of community. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the need to manage growth, and need for access to housing, jobs and basic services for many people. They believe we need to focus on bringing people together, providing access to services, fostering community solutions, and providing education in respectful communication and conflict resolution. If K-12 and higher education leaders, local elected officials, non-profit organizations and churches played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want to live in a thriving community (systems, people, environment) that is inclusive of all and provides equitable access for all, but they're concerned that system approaches are deficit-based, people in need are described by their deficits rather than by authentic connections, and teachers and families are not thriving. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the isolation of teaching, families and systems/services that function in silos, and how more continues to be expected but all lack the collaborations and resources to truly respond to increased needs. They believe we need to focus on authentic relationship building, utilizing schools as community centers, increasing collaborations, and leveraging more resources and if grassroots efforts utilizing teachers, librarians, parents and children played a part in those actions that folks would more likely trust the effort and step forward.

People want stable housing with access to any health and support services needed, but they're concerned that there is not enough permanent, supportive housing or health care for those on Medicaid. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about the challenges in accessing services and that the services are not enough to meet the need. In addition, there are few places for unhoused clients to meet, and many people in the community don't recognize the significance of the issue. They believe we need to focus on increased funding of housing options that include supportive housing, better compensation to care providers, and increased social service supports. If Mercy Housing, Unity Care, Street Law, and the legislature played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want to feel safe and respected in their community and at home, with access to health services, convenient transportation options, and affordable living, but they're concerned that community members don't view each other as equals, adults and children experience racism and isolation, they lack access to health care services and a sense of safety and security. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about rent increases and a lack of knowledge about how the system works, how students are suffering from racist behaviors, how accessing public transportation is difficult, how others seem unaware of their needs, and that they know there are groups that can help but don't know who they are. They believe we need to focus on people being willing to help each other, with increased access to information and resources where people live, improving access to transportation, creating programs for students and citizens to unlearn racist behavior, and improving police presence and relations, and if Lindsey Karas played a part in those actions folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

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COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want to live in a safe, peaceful community that is inclusive, hospitable, accommodating, and has a variety of opportunities for enjoying enriching interactions, but they are concerned that this community is not very welcoming to new people or people and families with special needs, and many activities are similar. As people talk more about these concerns, they talked specifically about the stereotypes and prejudice that prevent people from seeing the whole child, or person, and engaging with them as a real person, and instead assume limitations that might not be the individual's perspective or experience, and makes it hard to attract people to this area to call home. They believe we need to focus on opportunities for talking and connecting - sharing honest realities about our lives, increasing better understanding of (ABA) Applied Behavior Analysis and celebrating ALL children and people, and if Monica Burke and Julia Chen from the ARC, along with a collaboration of organizations and people with heart and passion, played a part in those actions then folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want an inclusive, open-minded, diverse, and engaged community that is environmentally progressive, while at the same time is thriving economically. But they are concerned that we won't be able to manage livability in our growing community in an environmentally responsible way. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about families breaking apart, technology deserts, lack of stable, green jobs, and young professionals working 2-3 jobs to get by. They believe we need to focus on job training, policy making, bold leadership, citizen engagement, and effective governance. And if the library, young voices, community social services, marginalized groups, and the colleges played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a sustainable, affordable, accepting community, but they're concerned that there is a lack of communication between specific populations. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about affordability and lack of community. They believe we need to focus on training, communication, and cooperation, and if local nonprofits (with sustainable funding), the library, schools/educators, and churches played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a community that supports persons with disabilities by providing greater accessibility within the community. But they are concerned that there isn't enough awareness about the difficulties people with disabilities face. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about a lack leadership by the city, Whatcom Transportation Authority, and local businesses to provide facilities and resources that meet the needs of our disabled citizens. They believe we need to focus disability awareness, education support, and more financial resources. And if the library, statewide disability advocacy groups, City Council Member Terry Bornemann, the Center for Independence, and the Arc of Whatcom County played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

COMMUNITY NARRATIVE STORIES

People want a connected community that celebrates creativity and good citizenship, but they are concerned that we live in a time when we are increasingly disconnected from each other and we can't truly understand and respect one another until we know each other. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about how people have many opportunities to self-segregate and tend to dismiss or even demonize those that think differently, which forces the community to disconnect even more. They believe we need to focus on recognizing that people who aren't us exist, start recognizing our local diversity, figuring out how to see one another, and to find out who are the audiences we don't know, and if good, creative citizens played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

People want a safe, supportive, inclusive, diverse, accessible, well-managed community, but they're concerned that there is not a place for centralized information and the city isn't managing safe and diverse growth. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about safety in the library, and city planning seeming to be about immediate, not future, needs. They believe that we need to focus on social workers in the library, dedicated town hall gathering spaces, proactive economic development, and an organized community that stands up to hate. If key non-profits, neighborhoods, community influencers, and others played a part in those actions that folks would more likely trust the effort and step forward.

People want a community that is prepared, sharing, collaborative, resilient, connected, fun, eclectic, weird, aware, inclusive, welcoming, diverse, and well informed, but they're concerned that people have unrealistic expectations, are in denial, aren't prepared for disaster, and are expecting to be rescued. As people talk more about those concerns they talk specifically about apathy, a lack of resources, time, money, knowledge, and education, that there is no good way currently to spread information to all people, that people lack time management skills, lack of participation, information overload, a lack of trust, and a cultural, language and socio economic divide. They believe we need to focus on building social capital, and distributed solutions that provide depth of planning and redundancy. If government, city, social organizations and educational institutions with similar missions and available resources played a part in those actions, folks would more likely trust the effort and step forward.

People want convenient amenities, green spaces, and to feel connected and informed about their neighborhood, but they're concerned that northside neighborhoods lack places to meet and gather. As people talk more about those concerns, they talk specifically about neighbors living in silos, communication challenges, and a lack of shared history. They believe we need to focus on political support for additional neighborhood spaces and better communication within the community, and if neighborhood associations, elected officials, PTAs and the Parks Department played a part in those actions that folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

ASPIRATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO "ASPIRATIONS"

After each individual interview or group conversation, the staff teams organized their notes into the six categories below:

>   Aspirations

>   Main concerns

>   Specific issues

>   Actions that would make a difference,

>   Who people trust to act

>   Questions people have

This section contains ASPIRATIONS described by Community Conversation participants in group conversations and individual interviews. Information presented below in random order.

Well-educated, friendly, affordable, welcoming community.

Educated, friendly, affordable community that works together to solve problems. Safe & scenic places to walk and recreate.

Likes our community now, with people having varied social, economic, education, political status.

Safe, friendly, clean, with well-maintained amenities, and a good library.

Affordable and economically strong. Educated and engaged, with diverse voices. Welcoming and connected. Interdependent. Proactive "yes" community, not reactive "no" community. Has a "sense of the commons" and people's basic needs (shelter, food, water, information) are met. Spaces for public uses, "third spaces", both indoor and outdoor. Economically strong, environmentally sound, safe. Sense of home, where you live, give and make investments.

Friendly, welcoming community, where people are pleasant and not critical or stand-offish. Community where traffic moves more freely at major intersections.

Active, engaged community that cares about taking care of each other and the world around us. Having fun together, being productive together. These are quality of life indicators for me. Having and deepening connections is important to me.

Where all people can find places they fit, where they can create interdependence with others, where there are people one can rely upon and where one can be supportive of and relied upon by others. A community with a cultural focus, where there are things to do, places to connect and artsy kinds of things.

ASPIRATIONS

Safe, accessible community that embraces lifelong learning. Community that is curious, where everyone has a voice. People are respectful and caring, and enriched by each others' stories. Access to credible, non-biased information. Beauty and art.

A safe, open, civil, connected, and respectful society with citizens that acknowledge and support those who are disadvantaged or challenged because of economic or educational disparity, mental illness, or other factors that may limit an individual's full potential. People want to feel safe.

Open-minded and caring community with support for people who are homeless or have mental illnesses. Affordable housing for all community members. Sustainable transportation and more free public spaces, indoors and out.

Transparent, inclusive and representative community. Accessible resources for health. Additional "greenspace". Governments that are more mindful of space use. Access to outside resources.

Improved access around town. Improved safety (sidewalks). Greenspaces (parks). Increased employment opportunities. Improved societal necessities (sewer systems). Access to factual information regarding community improvements.

An inclusive community. Safe and developed. Clear information provided for everyone in multiple formats.

Safety for children, such as walkability within community. Convenient business service hours. Language accessibility within organizations. Accessible food, childcare, transportation. Affordable family-oriented locations, community spaces, parks, etc.

Community collaboration, inclusion, and improvement

Reasonably priced resources (food, books, etc.). Greenspaces (parks, multifunctional community spaces, playgrounds, etc.) Sidewalks. Community collaborations (block parties, multicultural festivals, etc.) Skills sharing opportunities, resource swaps.

Equal access to resources (food). Safety.

Access to resources (greenspace, food, bus lines). Community "pride", "neighborhood feel."

Engaged, inclusive, curious, and compassionate community. Supportive of "civic activism." Collaborative efforts between organizations with similar goals. Develop one "gateway" for all community resources and make that info known. Compassion among citizens.

Bellingham**Public**Library

ASPIRATIONS

Relationship-building community to establish collaboration and trust. Authentic inclusion without assumptions and with actions. Proactivity, not reactivity, to issues. Seeing selves reflected in the community. Climate change is a priority.

A welcome place for people from diverse populations. Provide resources to all people who need them. Activities for all: families, college students, and seniors, to keep people engaged.

A connected community where people are welcoming, happy and helping each other out.

Safety, accessibility, connection and relationships with a variety of different community members, and respect for each other.

Equity, access, education, faith communities, well-rounded and diverse population of people. Clean, safe.

More opportunities for youth: jobs, activities to keep them busy. Bring social services to people by meeting people where they are at, more affordable housing, and more diversity. There also needs to be more mentorship from adults for youth, and support for adults to provide support for youth.

Connected, welcoming, accessible, equity, free opportunities to connect with others, culturally rich, inclusive, courageous conversations, de-isolation, strengthening families through preventative measures.

A place where people can come together and share languages and learn from each other.

Intelligent, open-minded, generous population.

Environment-focused, local in terms of events and businesses, importance placed on parks and green spaces.

Inclusive, progressive, engaged (e.g. volunteering, where people give back), connected, safe (physical, and psychological - safe to be who you are, speak up), resilient and informed. Not overly dependent on single employers, business, has a lot of community participation, types of economics, multi-faceted. Growing. Happy; people who enjoy life in general. Kind. Educated, "ever-learning." Literate. Strategic; intentional, acting on ideas. Empathetic. Creative. Industrious. There is judgement on development and growth here in Bellingham. We have to take on what the growth looks like, not just saying "it's bad for me" but also looking at if it's good for others. Having a conversation, seeing both sides. Informed, access to good sources of information and transparency from suppliers of information.

Calm (not a big metro, hectic area), safe for children and everyone, welcoming, strong infrastructure to support growth, equity in business, education and policy, good educational system, living wages and the ability to grow income and encourage individualism.

ASPIRATIONS

An inclusive, informed community, with affordable housing and services.

A friendly and inclusive community with active and informed members. Safe, affordable and well-funded.

A diverse, accepting community, that gives citizens the chance to connect with each other.

A small-town feel, with connected, caring people.

Smaller, safe, and one that does not attract the homeless and mentally ill by providing too many resources, which is draining the community. Where you can easily make a living wage. A community in which citizens face the consequences of their actions, that a government is not afraid to enforce.

Safety, accessibility, connection and relationships with a variety of community members, and respect for each other.

Healthy community, "durable, robust and sustainable" in regard to housing, urban planning and environmental stewardship; embrace the "local", intergenerational exchange, civically educated

A community that supports entrepreneurship. In Whatcom County, the backbone of the economy is small business. A community that is willing to try new things, like employee ownership. A community that has equity. Create uplift for people our community structures do not support. A community that has programs and is aware. A community that has living wages. A community with a healthy work/life balance, with Whatcom County being the outdoor playground. A community that cares about hardship and has compassion.

Want a community rooted in the place they occupy, in touch with the natural environment and the history of the place. When rooted it is easier to make connections with each other, which results in more social interactions, and more resilience to face challenges and address them.

A community in which people know what resources are available and have the help and support they need to navigate the legal system. A truly progressive community, instead of thinking themselves progressive. A community without the barriers of racism, classism, nationalism, and gender discrimination. A safe and healthy community, that is safe and healthy for all classes.

A community that is equitable. Where people have similar, rather than dis-similar, experience when accessing resources. Equal access to all services: food, health care, education, housing, transportation, and recreation. Equity for people of color and all incomes. A community where we are not segregated by type of housing, quality of schools, or generational poverty.

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ASPIRATIONS

Richly diverse in multiple ways: races, gender, culture. Wants people to feel a part of the community, wants community to overcome barriers together. Wants facilitated communication within the community to be proactive about problems. Wants all generations involved.

A community seen through the lens of identity: cultural, sexual, and gender. A community that is 50% white, 50% people of color. Would like neighborhoods to be more representative with different groups. A more diverse community can make everyone feel safer. Those who are 'othered' can relax and not feel excluded. Conversations would be different and more alive. People would explore other cultures. An environment where people are curious and willing to learn.

Where everyone is cared for, and their needs are being met. Where there is kindness and compassion, and a healthy web of support. Community in which people feel welcomed and honored. A community that is well-resourced and not just financially. That there is connection and collaboration, and community knowledge. Community that can handle and manage conflict in healthy ways. Community where kids can thrive. Community that is not siloed, but is worldly and interacts and invites multiple perspectives and people.

Compassionate and caring. Diverse: ethnic, ideology, socio-economic, education. Inclusive and welcoming, where people belong. Environmentally responsible and forward-thinking. Integrated and innovative. Thoughtful of kids and of our legacy.

Where people can access what they need. Where support networks are integrated. Informed, where it is clear where to look for fun things and for information about issues.

Supportive and welcoming to all, with a culture of interest in new people with different backgrounds.

Collaborative, problem-solving, understanding. People are heard, feel safe.

Safe (physically and emotionally). Diverse (all nationalities, backgrounds). With locally-owned businesses. With recreation and leisure opportunities, a strong downtown. Job opportunities.

We want to live in a thriving community (systems, people, environment) that is inclusive of all and equitable for all. Community-minded, connected, open to authentic engagement, with reciprocity of welcoming.

That all people who need it, have access to permanent, supportive housing with the range of health care services that are needed to support their individual needs.

We want to live in a safe, respectful community with no racism, access to health and police services, adequate transportation, and affordable living.

ASPIRATIONS

A safe and peaceful community that is inclusive, hospitable, and accommodating. Active and connected beyond beer or Ski to Sea. This is important to me because it would enable us to truly see people and their strengths.

Inclusive, open-minded, and engaged community that is diverse both ethnically and culturally. A community that is environmentally progressive while, at the same time, is thriving economically. "Think locally, act globally."

More inclusive and accessible for all people, but especially those with disabilities. This includes more accessible bathrooms, parking, transportation, more medical specialists, and free educational resources.

A connected community that celebrates creativity and good citizenship.

A collaborative, compassionate community that supports ideas and actions that benefit the community to make it an intentional community.

Kid-friendly community. Less of a bubble

Community that provides basic safety net. Diversity of thought valued. More equitable distribution of resources.

Sense of belonging and purpose for everyone. Sustainability, like mandated composting. Community gardens, bike access and trails. Affordable living. Job availability.

Affordable basic needs. Lower housing costs. Good healthcare options.

Respect, safety, healthy environment, education, truth, free family events.

Inclusion, advocacy, resources.

Safe, supportive, inclusive, diverse, accessible, well-managed community.

Prepared, sharing, collaborative, resilient, connected, fun, eclectic, weird, aware, inclusive, welcoming, diverse, well-informed.

Informed, educated, and connected with access to good parks and amenities that are within walking distance (and sidewalks!) or conveniently located. Health, safety, and diversity also important.

Friendly, welcoming, equitable, connected, healthy, vibrant, accessible, informed, place where there are opportunities, (like: education, jobs, economic, recreation), housed, inclusive.

Bellingham Public Library

ASPIRATIONS

Civil, where people are engaged with each other, greet each other. A place where people look each other in the eye vs. living in a bubble. Happy, safe, inclusive. Easy to get around and interact. Equal access to education and jobs. Has spaces that allow us to show our authentic selves.

Small town feel with diversity in age, income, and background. A community that values the social fabric of our lives and speaks up about causes that will make us better. A community with healthy food availability, healthy living, and fun.

Connected, balanced, healthy, and diverse (all broadly defined). A community that respects those who came before while seeking knowledge from the generation that comes next. A community where collaboration, compromise, and a sense of shared responsibility to each other is valued.

Safe, with many interesting activities and places that are easy to get to (no traffic gridlock). With great jobs and a growing technology sector (start-ups, etc.).

Safe and diverse (cultures, religions, ethnicities, age) with amenities such as trails, parks, and swimming pools. Where people can communicate easily with each other (in-person meeting places or through local newspaper). An engaged community, one where people are listened to and supported, and where they participate. Where people help others. Opportunity for community involvement. Close access to good medical care, good public transportation that is available for everyone, and good roads. Access to books, magazines, and newspapers. A rich cultural life that is inexpensive to access.

A community that is progressive, that cares about people and the environment as much as it does about money and growth.

Diverse (racial, culture, income, political), energetic, creative and with people from all walks of life. It's good to hear varied stories. Good mass transit and health care.

Free, in terms of the basic American definition: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from coercive government control.

Tolerant, accepting, welcoming, inclusive of multiple ideas and opposing points of view.

Engaged and culturally stimulating community that is safe, full of interesting people and has a good library.

Safe, healthy (especially environmentally), active, fun.

Active, involved, empathetic, collaborative (for greater collective impact).

Equity, diversity, inclusion.

ASPIRATIONS

Community that supports education, diversity, invests in children. Community that is safe, easy access to places and outdoor recreation, no traffic. Community with an equity lens, one that values social justice, progressive policies.

Supportive, tolerant, effective, empowered: "Tell me how we can." A community that problem-solves together.

Vibrant, inclusive, accessible, diverse, supportive (someone there to help, reach out to…), caring, safe, affordable, and artistic. One with educational facilities, meeting places, trails, and good public transportation. "Feels like community."

A place where there is reverence for the natural beauty around us. Where people make a conscious decision to live here, despite obstacles, and appreciate being part of this community. Authentic (not just for tourists); residents are able to live and shop here. Where people are supportive of each other and collaborative, and where businesses support each other, rather than compete. Focused on abundance, rather than scarcity. A place that is tolerant and people want to help those in need. Where people are safe to be expressive in different ways.

A community built around the principles of universal design. For instance, instead of stairs, a ramp. Airport style bathrooms (with no doors), everywhere. Where every door has a button at hand and foot level. Accessible to everyone.

Centered around community, fairness, and the environment. That has easy access to green spaces, clean air, and housing, where all income types can live in close proximity to one another. Accessible and fair to those with disabilities.

I want to live in this community. A community that is open, progressive, robust, and diverse. A community that cares and walks the walk. We spend a lot of time thinking about what kind of community we want to be. The key: can we manage our changing character and demographic and still preserve what keeps us authentic? Many communities go through a life cycle.

In our community, we have diverse opportunities for learning and engagement with diverse landscapes: City center, neighborhoods, waterfront, mountains, water, and islands. Not a suburban monoculture. You don't need a car to live in Bellingham, transportation is inexpensive and convenient, our children have freedom to move around. Diverse learning opportunities give our children a way to develop their interests and trajectories: garden camp, public library storytime, Whatcom museum. Accessible to everyone (transportation and free or low cost)

Inclusive, colorful, safe.

Inclusive, diverse, different opinions and ideas, safe in their neighborhoods.

Bellingham Public Library

ASPIRATIONS

Welcoming and safe, where basic needs are met (housing/food). A community with a high quality of life, with access to education, employment, and entertainment.

This one! I appreciate the values that I see in this community: open, participatory, welcoming. Also college influence and opportunities.

Friendly, where people have the opportunity to live their best life.

Where people look out for each other, build each other up. Where seeking common ground is more important than consumerism. Where people aspire to higher values.

This community. Likes having a grocery store close by.

A community without homelessness.

Agrarian. Farming communities that are family, god centered, and low tech. Focus on needs of people.

A Christian community. Focused on family and staff. Respect for people with disabilities. We should all be treated equally. Just because someone has a disability, doesn't mean they're not normal. Respect for those with differences.

All people are respected, regardless of their lot in life. Treated with compassion. The purpose of life is to survive. Survival depends upon cooperative solutions. Getting into the roots of conflict, fear, social ills.

Freedom of speech, no stereotyping, everyone helps each other, build better future for next generations

I like the community we have, very familiar with it, peaceful one, people let people live own lifestyle. Bellingham aligns well with my morality, other communities have hatred, violence.

Community that integrates all ages, places that can be used for multi-purposes – i.e. library, youth center, senior center, nice to have people interested in contributing funds. All can learn from each other, helps to know/share, have a lot to give youth.

Safe, safety most important. Clean. Where you can trust your elected officials and government, local and state. Common sense. Freedom, follow the constitution, appreciates the old values.

Safe community where kids are believed. Accessible, timely healthcare options. Local amenities like the library within walking distance. Free or affordable activities that kids like available. Information about nutrition is readily available. Family learning and opportunities for kids and parents exist to learn.

Where there's something for everyone. Safe, progressive ideals, inclusive, accessible for a variety of people, affordable, local emphasis.

MAIN CONCERNS

INTRODUCTION TO "MAIN CONCERNS"

After each individual interview or group conversation, the staff teams organized their notes into the six categories below:

Aspirations

Main concerns

Specific issues

Actions that would make a difference,

Who people trust to act

Questions people have

This section contains MAIN CONCERNS described by Community Conversation participants in group conversations and individual interviews. Information presented below in random order.

Affordability, unresponsive local medical system/services, lack of access to community information, laws not consistently enforced.

Need for growth in good wage jobs/industries.

Some areas of town have public facilities that need maintenance. Homelessness and people with related/underlying problems, especially addictions, are a main concern.

Basic human needs not being met in our community. Not enough funding for existing structures, which is an aspect of needs not being met. Climate change, especially climate refugees and lack of readiness for all effects of climate change (housing, employment, healthcare, etc.). Rate of change undermines sense of community and community voice. Community not informed, not connected and lacks cohesion and voice. Communities are in pockets, lack of cross-pollination across silos. Concerns about information and source accuracy/reliability, especially about government. Lack of community makes weathering change and challenges difficult.

Traffic at major freeway interchanges. No other concerns, very content with our community and has great hope for the future.

Need wide recognition that everything and everyone is connected. Feels this is a wonderful community with lots of opportunities, some not available or accessible or used by all.

Finding ways to give and receive from the community. Finding social connections and events. Being welcomed and welcoming. Finding social settings and organizations where one fits in, as someone new to Bellingham.

Bellingham **Public Library**

MAIN CONCERNS

People who don't speak English or don't have strong literacy skills often don't have a voice or access to information and basic services. We need to give people the tools to be on the same playing field (equity). It's easy to spend time with people like ourselves. In-person connections increase understanding and empathy.

Need credible and informed local news sources that combat misinformation on social media, which fosters a general climate of distrust and intolerance. How to bridge gaps to build community? Loss of safety net for many isn't understood. Being intolerant breeds a feeling of being unsafe or a fear of the unknown.

Affordable housing. Sustainable transportation.

Safety.

Safety, city support, equal treatment.

Individuals are removed from community due to personal barriers. Safety. Community meetings exclude voices, are not representative.

Safety. Child services are not at available times of day (library programs, health services, etc.). Inclusiveness is limited (business hours, language barriers, affordable resources).

Community bias towards education, youth, age, race, etc.

Limited safety, language barriers, limited physical resources.

Unequal distributions of resources, limited access to necessary resources.

Safety, lack of community hubs.

Loss of community environment. Bellingham community members aren't the concern of the city.

Our community has: short-sighted solutions and a lack of: creativity, youth voices, urgency in finding solutions for climate change, and relationship-building across communities.

A free place for people to meet other people in the community.

Developing relationships with others in the community.

Knowledge of how to access resources that are available, the feeling of helplessness: wanting to help but not know how to help people in need. Equitable resources for people in the community. NIMBY (Not In My Backyard)

MAIN CONCERNS

There is a HUGE lack of support for youth and families.

Children are negatively affected by trauma in the home, location and transportation, meeting people where they're at. Language and transportation barriers for families. Economic influence and the cost of services. Access and equity.

There needs to be support from the community and to know what the needs are in the community

Social media spreads harmful, biased information.

Short-sighted solutions, lack of creativity in solutions. A "no" culture. Lack of youth voices. Lack of urgency regarding climate change. Lack of relationship-building across communities.

We want to leave a healthy legacy for our children with opportunities to stay in this community. We value critical thinking and believe that with more education and knowledge, people are more likely to be inclusive and engage in productive dialogue. Difference is not a negative; we all bring something to contribute.

Education, retaining workforce, general understanding of technology for all, ability to grow the economy, ability to use technology for economic and business/industry growth. Few resources to figure out how to learn about new technology and keep up to date, information gathering and sharing in relation to I.T.

Government officials are not listening or acting on what citizens want. Cost of living is too high, community has become exclusive.

Helping the unhoused and supporting low-income families by connecting them to services.

Not enough diversity in Bellingham on many levels: culture, religion, ages, sexual orientation.

Bellingham keeps growing, but can retain some small town feeling in neighborhoods like Fairhaven.

Bellingham is getting worse, and political decisions are made for the sake of tax money (marijuana) instead of educating citizens of the dangers of drug abuse. Laws protecting the innocent are not being enforced because of the need to be politically correct.

People want to help each other, but NIMBY (Not In My Backyard). Resources are split among organizations and people are pursuing their own goals. How can we work together to make a bigger difference? The people that work with different communities in need are mostly volunteers or social workers that get burnt out or are not getting paid. We need more resources and funding to provide help for people that need it.

BellinghamPublicLibrary

MAIN CONCERNS

Need for civic education. Housing and smart growth (infill/changing neighborhoods). Energy efficiency. Need to embrace diversity. Need community and relationships.

Hard to keep families and graduates here because the cost of living is too high. Next generation will not be able to afford housing here. What situation are we leaving for the next generation? Wants people to think about the community as a whole and place an emphasis on equity. Homelessness is a complicated problem and that we are not doing enough to overcome it. Not enough resources to deal with drug addiction and mental illness in the community. Safety of children using public facilities, like bathrooms. The 'silver tsunami': baby boomer business owners are retiring and selling their businesses without taking the time to ensure that the business continues to exist, transition effort to new or employee owners, to keep jobs in the economy.

Without an interconnected community, things start to unravel at the bottom and first impact the most vulnerable populations. That instability then starts moving up. As a community we need to know what resources and support are available. People move here because they hold certain values, one of which is social involvement.

Need equitable access to the legal system, which favors the income secure and educated population. The legal system is intimidating and confusing, and is set up to disadvantage those of lower income. People who allocate funding do not have hands-on experience with the legal system that low-income people experience, so do not understand their needs.

Inequity of all kinds. High rent, high cost of living.

Food insecurity is just a symptom of other unmet needs. Initial advantages or disadvantages predict how successful people are in life; they are less healthy, feel undervalued, anxious, and live in fear. Equity gaps are a result of our local, state, national, global socio-economic systems. Need to spread out our resources more equitably among the community. We do not lack the resources to create more equity, and people need to acknowledge that. When people make bad decisions, the impact is very different depending on where we are in life.

Humans have a need to communicate with each other. Our nation tends to separate people. Technology is a tool and needs to be treated as such, but people will use it if they are not getting connection and fulfillment with each other. We need connection with each other and all beings in our environment. Genuine relationships need to be modeled to children. It is an American value to always want more, which gets us into trouble on multiple levels. Look at how we have interacted with the native population and the environment.

Sense of exclusion here if you are not white, heterosexual, coupled, house owner. Tends to be a monoculture. Claustrophobic for any who are not in that monoculture. People in that community don't need to question their condition or cross cultural lines. Comfortable in their ignorance. PNW is outdoors sporty, which is able body-ism. People of color not depicted in posters that show people enjoying the outdoors in Whatcom County.

Bellingham**Public**Library

MAIN CONCERNS

There is intersection between the self and the whole, between the family and the community. One affects the other. How do we want to spend our time? Need to be connected to the roots of our place, the history, the environment. Family units need to be healthy and get support for challenges. There is a ripple effect of violence in the home on the rest of the community. We have to start with health so we can all contribute and benefit.

Many "us vs. them" situations that harm our sense of community. People and systems not integrated, not sharing information, understanding and resources. Separate tracks of people living in Bellingham, with very different needs and experiences. People's basic needs not being met.

Communications and connections not clear. Helpers not connected to people with needs. Hard to find the "local scene."

Unsupportive communities are corrosive. Don't know all of Bellingham.

Not everyone is recognized or represented. Need for shared goals, hard to attain. Community building is important, takes time.

Not very diverse, especially racially. Expensive to live here. Not enough services, especially mental health services. Homelessness. Visible class/socio-economic divides.

Approaches are deficit-based rather than strength-based. We describe people "in need" by their deficits. We do "for" rather than "with" people. Isolation, systems, teaching, families, plus the impact of trauma, is increasing unmet needs for everyone. Limited resources, funding and time for collaborations (too many silos). A lot of people have a notion of how to make them [resources] accessible, but our notions are different than someone who doesn't speak the language, we have different mindsets. We've laid out this beautiful space, provided food, but what are we going to do that matters?

There is not enough housing. There are not enough providers willing to provide services to Medicaid clients. Because providers are limited, preventative care cannot be accessed, and need escalates to emergency, thus over-burdening health care system, and can be permanently altering to someone's health. Accessing services is difficult. Community "segregation" keeps us from knowing each other, and we create an "othering" status.

We are concerned that community members don't view each other as equal and we and our children experience racism. We experience isolation because we don't have adequate access to transportation, and we don't know about resources. We are concerned about safety and security for our children and ourselves. We are concerned about an affordable cost of living.

Bellingham **Public** Library

MAIN CONCERNS

I am concerned that our community is not very welcoming to new people or to people with special needs. People already have their friends and are not that open to making new ones. I am concerned that there are not enough services for children with special needs.

Affordable housing. Sustainable transportation.

How to manage growth and environment to improve livability for everyone. Economy: jobs and affordable rent. Inclusivity: race, religion. Empathetic, caring, planet.

People want to feel less isolated and more welcomed into the community to make in-person connections (as opposed to online connections). Better education to improve economic conditions, provide job opportunities, create more volunteer opportunities and create a more aware community that is respectful and knowledgeable about disabilities.

We live in a time where we are increasingly disconnected from each other and we can't truly understand and respect one another until we know each other.

Homelessness.

We live in a bubble. We try to force a diversity that doesn't exist and are too inclusive.

Better communication between specific populations - city, county, college - to better understand each other, rather than "existing in silos." Lack of affordable housing. Lack of diversity.

Housing costs too high and waiting lists too long for affordable housing. Stress levels too high and quality of life diminished because primary focus and concern is around meeting basic needs with no extra left over.

Lack of respect. Lack of safety. Lack of healthy environment.

Lack of resources for marginalized communities. Lack of inclusion and intersectionality.

Pro-actively managing growth. Encourage diversity (actively building bridges). Safe, supportive (anti-hate). Encourage industry and business. Centralized information. Promotion of higher education resources.

How do we build social capital? People have unrealistic expectations, are in denial, aren't prepared for disaster, and are expecting to be rescued.

Need places to meet, gather, and participate in civic life on both a local level and a national level. Need places to connect socially that promote inclusiveness, not divisiveness.

MAIN CONCERNS

Bellingham downtown one of the ugliest, don't like the vibe, homeless people intimidating.

Feels like Bellingham is two Bellinghams: the beautiful "brochure Bellingham" that everyone wants to come to, then the "reality Bellingham": lack of jobs, housing unaffordability, whole communities that are invisible. The shadow side of the hot commodity is the cost of living is high, impossible to buy a house. Bellingham is going to continue to grow due to Seattle/Vancouver corridor. Important to have aspirations established so that as the city continues to grow, Bellingham stays or becomes what we want in a sustainable way. Small town feel is almost gone.

Homelessness is a problem for all of us, and multi-faceted. Housing affordability, especially for young families. Character of neighborhoods is changing, gentrifying. Lack of education about civics and civic process.

Communities need to be intergenerational – whether that's the broader community, or the smaller communities that we form in our lives. We learn from each other.

Working to improve my community is important to me. It's how we leave the world a better place. It's a way of life and never something that is finished.

Quality of life and personal safety (home, neighborhood) are important. We do not have enough high-paying jobs in Bellingham and need to grow our employment base generally. Currently the city is the largest technology employer. Growth in this area would benefit the community.

We have avenues to participate in our neighborhoods and civic life and to learn from each other through shared stories.

People who don't have a voice, and the planet also has no voice. Stronger community values.

Diversity makes a community interesting.

Freedom is the fundamental core that lets everything else happen; everything stems from there.

Sense of belonging. Sense of place, whether it is physical or community place.

Quality of life. I want to enjoy my life, not just exist! Building community in my northside neighborhood is important.

I want my community to reflect my core values, as an individual and a parent. People can be at their best when their core needs are met. Safety, clean air, these are baseline human rights.

Bellingham Public Library

MAIN CONCERNS

In the US, generally, we are more focused on the individual; other cultures have a more collective lens. To me, community means no one is left behind. That's what community is.

Equity is critical in a community. We are so partisan now, less neighborly. Gaps in income (have and have nots) growing. We need things that will bring us together for the common good.

I am raising my own kids, and responsible for kids as an educator. I have lived in many places, and Bellingham is special. I am passionate about the school's role in our community.

A sustainable community where everyone is welcome.

So many places are focusing on maintaining status quo out of financial incentive.

A strong sense of community is connecting, not isolating. We learn by sharing life experiences with each other, as well as academic learning. Our stories are rich treasures.

Supporting and creating safe spaces as part of urban design/placemaking. If a safe space is created, people will go outside their comfort zone. For instance hula hoops at Boulevard Park. If it feels okay, someone will try it and not feel judged. I don't want to be in a place where people are constantly feeling judged.

Accessibility for myself and everyone in the community.

I care about improved quality of life. I care about having a place to live – the threat of climate change is upon us. Lasting solutions only come with fairness and community in mind.

Everything gets planned, the question is how well. The success of a community is defined by how well it responds to change. Do we follow our values and vision? We can't stop change but we can embrace and preserve what we value.

The currency of a society is its ability to learn, ability to be welcoming to new people and ideas. I want to live in a place that is good for my children and other children. These are the societies that survive.

If people feel safe and welcomed, community building is easier, and we're more engaged and productive. Crime rate not that high, but there is a perception of elevated crime. Part of national anxiety, and visibility of the homeless.

I grew up valuing different opinions and ideas, diversity.

We have a responsibility to build a framework for the future. I am most concerned for my kids and the next generation.

MAIN CONCERNS

A community that is open to change and where critical thinking is valued. Not rigid or closed off.

If people are doing things that sustain them and make them happy, our community will be a better place to live. Access to amenities, jobs, and parks important.

Life is about relationships and community. These embody the bigger realities of meaning and purpose. Community success is not defined by value of homes but by the way people lift each other up, the quality of relationships and ability to build relationships.

Drugs, violence, loss of morality, people are fearful, uncertain about future.

It is important for everyone to help each other and not feel stuck here.

We are showing ourselves to be burned out. Man becomes a tool (now). He is disposable. In an agrarian community, everyone has their function and every soul is necessary.

Don't want to put up with a ghetto.

This is a conquest and war-based society. Respect is the key concern.

I guess because I don't judge, unless they're hurting other people, so I shouldn't be judged, this is important to me as a father.

It's not always safe here, kids in schools are not safe from drugs and weapons, teachers don't believe our kids when they say they're not involved in incidents, we don't have a common goal.

Too many cars, too many smokers, this decreases health and safety for all, expensive

No big concerns. Most of her aspirations are being met.

Bellingham **Public Library**

SPECIFIC ISSUES

INTRODUCTION TO "SPECIFIC ISSUES"

After each individual interview or group conversation, the staff teams organized their notes into the six categories below:

Aspirations

Main concerns

Specific issues

Actions that would make a difference,

Who people trust to act

Questions people have

This section contains SPECIFIC ISSUES described by Community Conversation participants in group conversations and individual interviews. Information presented below in random order.

Cost of living and affordability. Unresponsive local medical system.

Streets need repairs. Cost of living and affordability.

Lack of state-of-the-art industries. Entrenched leaders. Too much government bureaucracy.

Rundown buildings and park facilities. Homeless people downtown, near the library. Bullying, especially in schools. Isolation, especially for elderly people who don't speak English.

Climate change and resource imbalance: some can buy their way out of it, and those who cannot. Housing affordability: not enough now, more people coming, lack of affordability (especially rentals). Population and economy shift: now more a cultural and tech hub, instead of industry. These shifts leave some people behind. Traffic, parking issues, construction, affordability, access to healthy affordable food all impact quality of life. Lack of information, urgency, coordination, leadership, etc. coupled with lack of public interest, engagement and accurate info all combine to impede solutions. Polarization, scarcity mentality, lack of agreement of what the issues even are, also get in the way. "Divested decisions" it comes back to us as individuals.

Ridiculous blockages that impede traffic flow at Bakerview, Sunset, Meridian, Lakeway.

Opportunities for people to connect, especially lower-income families.

Affordable housing, especially in desirable locations. Finding the LGBTQ community and other less visible communities. Infrastructure for a rapidly growing community, especially in Fairhaven area and at the library in particular.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Adult education often not a resource priority. Changing landscape of education, how we teach, what we teach, who we teach. Accessibility defined broadly: lack of transportation, cultural bias, language and skills barriers, lack of connections and relationships, and many other barriers and stigmas, get in the way of access to information and services. People participating less and less in things that would help them develop the tools to build community.

People want to feel connection. Without an understanding of each other there is tribalism, neighborhood bubbles, marginalization. There is an awareness of inequality and a lack of resources for those who need help but a lack of or unclear community priorities. Bellingham is changing and experiencing growing pains. How we will adapt?

Happy, healthy and participatory community. Open-minded and diverse population. Affordable housing and access to mental health services. Evaluation of city housing laws. Community gathering spaces. Sustainable transportation away from fossil fuels.

Limited street lights, limited sidewalks, unattended roads, limited gathering points, community hubs.

Increased taxes, rent, and job loss. Development of community (job benefits vs. taxes increase). Unfair treatment by city (lack of services and support). Limited responses from police, fire department & EMTs. Forced removal from community. Inclusiveness (minority groups/voices - responses by government officials). Information and connection to all community members (especially those with limited tech). Timely updates on services and improvements (with clear facts and estimates). Representation within government (many do not vote and do not feel represented within government).

Safety. Voices are not represented evenly within community.

Costs of basic services within Bellingham are too high (children's programs, living expenses).

The government and community exclude some members of the community due to age, race, education, etc.

Community members fear getting involved when they don't know what will come of new things.

No accessible food.

Unstructured greenspace. Secluded feeling without resources.

Increase of low-income housing, homelessness, and mental health issues. Actions taken by the city do not represent the needs of the community. Litter. Too many causes of homelessness to tackle everything, better to help them support themselves. Community groups are not being heard for

Bellingham **Public Library**

SPECIFIC ISSUES

their needs. Well off community members get what they want or are interested in, while low-income members are provided with remnants.

Climate change and climate refugees. Housing. Inclusivity. Economics. Youth engagement. Diversity. Places to meet and connect with community members. NIMBY-ism. Issues get roadblocked with conversation disagreements with no action. Governing for today and not the future.

More programs and places to bring people together from different communities. We are trying to help the homeless community, but we can do a lot better.

There isn't a way to find out how the community is connected. Not everyone is in tune with what resources are out there for them to be utilizing.

Poverty, homelessness, high cost of living.

Access to basic human needs, social and emotional support for tweens/teens, mental health access, cultural diversity and understanding.

Removing barriers to access services and resources. The impacts of stress, social isolation, racial inequities, and increased anxiety on families. Building relationships and different levels of connections.

Need more opportunities to bring people together. People should be able to feel like they can contribute their talents and be a resource to other people. Schools need to be more inviting to parents and provide more outreach to keep parents informed so they can be supported.

Downtown Bellingham neighborhoods seem more tolerant and cohesive than neighborhoods on the fringes. Social media appears to further polarize neighborhoods and people within neighborhoods.

Managing and planning for growth in terms of development, zoning, and business. Not just saying "it's bad for me" – having a conversation and seeing all sides. A community that isn't overly dependent on single employers, has a lot of community participation, types of economics, multi-faceted. Cost of living too high compared to current wages and shallow job market. Reactive, and focused on short-term, basic needs. Not able to have long-term view.

Talent and business retention in Bellingham, it is hard to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs when there isn't the infrastructure or workforce. Lack of innovation and competition between schools in terms of technology education, comprehensive infrastructure planning is not county-wide, sometimes the focus is more on technology than on the underlying problem that needs to be addressed and solved. Knowledge regarding IT does not benefit

SPECIFIC ISSUES

business community (technology silos). Community suffers from those gathering information and not targeting it to those who really need it

The Port is not listening to what citizens want. The Mayor is not listening or paying attention.

Perception of people experiencing homelessness is uninformed, which leads to fear and not knowing the most effective and empathetic way to interact.

We need to encourage more diversity and get people to connect and interact.

Need to have opportunities for people to get together to get to know each other, so they can feel connected.

Police need more power to enforce laws and protect us the way they know how. Politics are too liberal and personal safety is being affected.

Lack of respect for others from all over the community. There is an us vs. them mentality. Children are being raised differently - where are the consequences for actions?

Shift from "I" to "We"; not a focus on sustainable planning, change is slow, how can it be sped up? Housing: prices, availability, infill, density, vacation properties. How to spur citizens to engage and act locally. Analysis-paralysis locally regarding governmental studies.

Need to have people be more aware of business resources, which exist and are well-funded. Community organizations and agencies are willing to invest in this county and its economic growth. Concern that people think government has a magic pot of money, they do not, and the people are the government. They are the ones that need to provide tax money for services they want to see happen.

Need living wages, especially for people providing social services. Continuity is important for the quality of care they give. Concern that social needs have been increasing. Lack of living wages combines with housing crisis. Our mental health infrastructure is under-served and under-budgeted. Volunteers help but cannot take the place of professionals. Volunteers are pulled from the young and the retired, difficult to recruit other ages as they are just trying to make ends meet. Need reconciliation work with the tribes and include them in making local decisions, especially ecological decisions.

People of color and immigrants have had too many negative interactions with the court and so do not access needed legal resources. People become involved with the court system during the most important decisions of their lives, such as custody of children and losing housing, but at the same time have the least resources to deal with these issues. People who have the power to make change are not connected to our most vulnerable members of the community.

Bellingham **Public Library**

SPECIFIC ISSUES

We are a segregated community, especially north Bellingham, which bears the brunt of housing density. Other neighborhoods don't have this density and can afford and retain owner housing. People of color and low income show clear disparities in health. There is a population suffering from food instability in Bellingham, which also means they suffer barriers to affordable health care, equal education, living wage jobs, and housing. No one is taking the lead in making change, there is fear in making the change needed for equity in our community. Change is difficult particularly for people who are doing well, or OK.

The current political climate has resulted in larger levels of divisiveness, which can block communication. We need to slow down and allow time for reflection, at work and at home. We do not understand our history. We have not preserved our past, as Europe does. People who need services often won't call on them because they previously have not received fair treatment, especially people of color. Pockets of people come together to address issues, but there is still a target, an 'othering' in the process. We need to bring people back into the community but also recognize that some people will not change.

Those who are excluded feel they have to explain their existence daily, struggle to retain their dignity, always be conscious of their 'otherness'. Bias in job hiring against people of color. Cost and availability of housing is a huge problem. Geography of the PNW is a disadvantage for attracting greater diversity. PNW has reputation of cool or cold racism. We self-identify as progressive, but don't ask the 'othered' why they are not comfortable here. Environmentalism here is white privileged, but not environmental justice, which looks at the disparate impacts of toxic environments on low-income neighborhoods.

There are significant gaps in the web of support for many in the community. We become habituated to ongoing systemic challenges like homelessness and domestic violence. People struggle with difficult conversations. We can identify and name problems of equity, such as in the school district. We have food, housing, health care insecurity. Inequity is a barrier to effective communication and support. Need to be better prepared for good and effective communication. Have more comfort talking with our neighbors, feel more socially connected to each other. Fear is keeping us from making progress and making changes in allocating resources.

Issue of school boundary changes highlighted divisions and "us vs. them" concerns. How many see our community is different than reality. We are not as inclusive and forward thinking as we like to think. Our "liberal arrogance" is not reality, needs work. How we manage growth is a barrier to our aspirations. We are building mansions when we need affordable housing. Economic disparity. Lack of jobs and affordable housing. Lack of understanding of each other, many barriers to connection and conflict resolution.

Housing, cost of living. Staying in Bellingham, attracting workers to Bellingham, is hard due to costs, especially housing.

Racism, discrimination or indifference based on race/sexuality/socio-economic factors.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

For teachers, isolation is increasing because more is being expected, services are isolated, and there isn't enough time to know about or grow collaborations. Families are isolated due to language and transportation barriers, limited resources, lack of support for health needs, and stresses and trauma due to family situations and needs. Sometimes special equipment is needed to support children's needs. We don't want to create "othering" conditions.

There is not enough housing, that is supportive through the transition. Some of the waits are so long that clients give up, and cycle of chronic unhoused situations is perpetuated. It's too difficult to access the care that is there, so people opt out until there's an emergency.

Our students suffer with racism and name-calling. We experience rent increases and other financial stresses and we don't know how the system works. We don't have access to all the health care services we need.

It's hard to find quality employees who want to make their home in this community.

Local conservation – good at talking the talk, but not great at the follow though. Jobs and homes are not being created. Lack of technology jobs, i.e. "tech desert." WWU grads or other young professionals who are working 2-3 jobs to get by not in their fields. Lack of stable, green jobs. Growth always a personal cost. Human nature to act tribally rather than collective good. Bellingham is paradoxically isolated from rest of state, impacts economy.

People feel isolated because 1/5th of the population experiences some type of disability (visible or invisible) and most of the community is unaware of how difficult some disability challenges can be. Need better accessibility for bathrooms, no florescent lighting, more and safer parking, better public transportation, and more laws about requiring these things when new buildings are erected.

People have more opportunities to self-segregate. People tend to stick with people that have the same outlook, viewpoints, ideas. We don't expose ourselves to those who think differently. We demonize others who think differently. And all those reasons force us to stay disconnected.

We need to reach out beyond our base demographic by making ourselves relevant to those we don't know.

Kids are forced to participate in things like the school walk out, which is too political. Homeless are being given too many resources. Things are too expensive because they are local and organic.

Lack of safety net for most vulnerable populations (mental health, addiction, elderly, children).

Not understanding the point of view of different groups/demographics.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Too high a percentage of social security and/or income going to housing costs. Better housing options needed for both seniors and families.

People being mugged/not feeling safe to take kids downtown. Understanding problem of homelessness, drugs, mental health, but don't know how to solve. Hate crimes. No free parking. No access to quality, stress-free childcare. No library Kaleidoscope program that includes ages birth to two.

Emergency shelter, potholes, speedbumps, toddler parks, lower rent, non-smoking campus.

County has a history of racism, and it is still a problem. No branch on northside. Concern about safety in the library. City planning is about immediate needs and not future needs.

Apathy, lack of resources and time and money. Lack of knowledge and education, no good way currently to spread information to ALL people. Can't manage their time, information overload. Lack of trust. Cultural, language and socio economic divide. Lack of public participation

Housing is unaffordable, especially for people on set incomes. Smoking affects people negatively, have to leave the library when other people on the computers come in smelling strongly of smoke. Pedestrians aren't always safe with cyclists and skateboarders or cars. Lights aren't timed with pedestrians in mind. Hard to get a medical appointment in a timely manner.

Cordata has limited spaces to gather. People are living in silos, not connecting, even when activities are planned. Communication is not reaching everyone. A lack of shared history as a neighborhood makes it harder to connect.

I want to see a community that is not isolated and is in control of itself. We have to sort out how to do that amongst all these outside influences. How do we, as individuals, fit in to the big picture and know we are not alone with our problems. If we are conscious about issues, we can surmount some of them with awareness and intention. There is a sense that we are losing the connection and friendliness and neighborliness that a small community nurtures. How do we nurture those things in a growing, changing community? People want to keep those connections. We are a small enough community that we can make a difference for each other, and that's exciting. We can know our leaders personally. Growth does threaten some of the small community feel. As new people arrive, you see their "fear of other" on sites like nextdoor.com, which has the potential to overcome the friendly and connected aspects. It will take conscious effort to accentuate connectedness, particularly online, without killing the friendly and welcoming. Social media has pluses and minuses as a method for connecting. But if you are new, that may be all you are seeing. For example, amongst a particular demographic group, strong social media presence but people desperate for face-to-face connection. Changed strategy to host small events, and people have shown up.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Lack of alternative housing models, new developments are higher end, growth into county making it less affordable as well. Community has good intentions but people often look outside themselves for answers and struggle to connect effectively with others to take action. We are stretched too thin in daily life and no emotional space left to engage in controversial topics; easier to stay in a bubble. Many in our community are sad, worried, and stressed out about housing, need to find new place to live, better job, or must leave community altogether. Duplication of effort across organizations. Those who are homeless are seen as outsiders.

Seniors are being priced out of homes because of taxes, younger families cannot afford to move into Birchwood area. Gentrification is an issue and tone. People are asking for gyms instead of affordable housing. Grocery stores are not available.

Everyone is in different camps, silos. We have focused on how we are different, rather than how we are similar. Our community places more value on some voices over others. Affordable housing and access to childcare are significant challenges.

Our technology community is currently too small. Our community lacks diversity but values diversity.

Developers not necessarily concerned with amenities, parks, meeting places. Need for activists to draw attention to needs. No planning for quality of life on northside. Perception that in Cordata, "only senior citizens live there." Schools may become overcrowded, planning needed. Nature of jobs is different now, need to attract high tech workforce and other diverse businesses that are well paying.

There is a veil of progressiveness in Bellingham that isn't really true. By their actions, people appear to be motivated by upward mobility and greater power, rather than public service.

There's a certain segment that feels left out politically, others economically. The economic divide is worse.

As a society and a community, we are accumulating more government involvement in daily life. We only add, never take away. Very hard to remove even if world changes dramatically.

The treatment of some people as "other" or less than. For instance, "we're becoming a magnet for the homeless." This type of intolerance leads to terrible situations and outcomes, locally and nationally. There's a patina of progressiveness, but we are often only welcoming to people who are "our" people. Anger, finger-pointing at city council meetings during public remarks.

Northside/Cordata expected to double in population. Increasing numbers of homeless. Safety is a concern, homes are broken into, there is a feeling that the neighborhood is less safe, but also more interesting.

Bellingham **Public Library**

SPECIFIC ISSUES

There is a lot of inequity in Bellingham. If you have the means or good luck in life, you're okay. But many are struggling with unsafe situations, economic instability, racism, domestic violence, mental health, gender disparity. For instance, the summer is a really stressful time for a lot of children. Cannot rely on school meals or structure, or home is not a safe place.

So many people/groups are doing similar things; organizations can become territorial "I don't want to share." Societal safety net is too thin. We don't have open and equal access to opportunity and information for women and minority residents. Education is power.

Silos. We don't connect with people who are different from us. Bellingham is becoming a retirement community. Retirees less likely to support education: "not my kids…"

Equity work is ongoing. Overall, we live in a supportive community.

We only hear from a small subset of people. Majority of people are happy, but they are not involved in the democratic process, except to vote. Busy with families and enjoying life. Elections have gotten manipulated. Is this person telling me what I want to hear? Need and want to hear are not always the same thing.

Fortunate to have access to educational facilities and good transportation on the north side, but residents lack places (like libraries, galleries) for people to come together. Still a car culture, although more sidewalks and bike lanes coming. Neighborhood associations find it difficult to engage/involve residents and need new ways to get people out of houses and apartments.

Paid wages are not keeping up with rising housing costs. Although we do well mostly, there is political intolerance – we say we're this, but we're really this. For instance, we say we want more density in the city, but then in my neighborhood – No. We can all be better.

Barriers for people with disabilities. When I was at WWU, Miller Hall used to have a ramp and an automatic door. When remodeled, they added stairs. Now, must go downstairs to enter. Recently, County Council adopted ADA transitioning plan, no one with disabilities asked to be involved.

Demographic shifts impact housing, green spaces, transportation, etc. Climate concerns must be front and center.

Safety and credibility of kids in school system. Racism. Better nutrition in the schools. Kids who do use drugs are penalized, but not supported through therapy or rehab. Kids are criminalized.

We are in denial about societal and environmental change. There is a comfort in preserving the status quo, but the fall is much greater. For example, "family" definition of single-family neighborhood is not true for most people now. Two incomes are needed, expectations are diminished for this generation.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Because of capitalism, class differences are stark in our county. There is a legacy of ethnic cleansing here (Lummi/Nooksack) and racial segregation that has an impact on our community health and well-being. Japanese internment, KKK presence in Whatcom County, every person of color has an awareness, it's in the water here. All of our anchor institutions reflect that history even if our leaders now don't share that philosophy. We are very isolated, hierarchical, social/economically segregated, and resistant to change.

We're a "beige" city; color creates a feeling and environment. It would be nice to brighten up our City; slightly oppressive.

Need for city services has intensified. There is more pressure on city departments to meet with people, more demand.

Our community believes in and wants to be welcoming, but we're not always. We are fairly isolated and experiencing growing pains. It's important to ask hard questions about our values and commitments.

We are not open to change, or consistent. For instance, housing levy overwhelming yes vote -- but people resistant to new types of housing/development in their neighborhood. We can be territorial.

Homelessness and rising costs of housing. Seniors can't afford to stay in their own homes. We need our community to be reasonable, safe, and livable. It's okay to be a little scruffy. Bellingham is oriented around neighborhoods, but they're not always open to mixing. Experience of living here very different based on neighborhood. Many are oblivious to the needs of others. People are very nice in Bellingham, but welcoming to newcomers? People have same friends from high school.

Encouraged by Bellingham in a lot of ways. Neighborhood associations work together for common goals in exciting ways. Similarly, the faith communities in Bellingham work together. But it's a challenge to reach the next generation. Service clubs, churches struggle to get next generation involved.

More homeless here than anywhere she has seen. Has lived in China, Chicago, Seattle. Even so, she says there are fewer issues here. Hopes for less construction noise. Wants homelessness addressed.

Mismanagement of funds, no accountability or transparency, hate the politics, not logical, not common sense, see so many things, something's going on. Homeless situation, public information hard to access, jail is awful, downtown parking garage is scary. Bellingham has a bad, scary vibe, that it was getting worse, and any responses from elected officials were unhelpful.

Bellingham **Public** Library

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Some organizations are doing their part, but most people are not helping each other.
World War III. Plague. Major war that eliminates technology. An event that is culturally and psychologically devastating. All of the issues talked about circled back to respecting an individual place for everyone in the community. Ideal community would eliminate the placement of elderly residents in "homes" that removed their usefulness to society.
We are constantly harassed. Services inaccessible to people with disabilities.
This person feels comfortable in his community and likes it the way it is.
Takes money to make changes, hard to make changes.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

INTRODUCTION TO "ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

After each individual interview or group conversation, the staff teams organized their notes into the six categories below:

> Aspirations
>
> Main concerns
>
> Specific issues
>
> Actions that would make a difference,
>
> Who people trust to act
>
> Questions people have

This section contains ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE described by Community Conversation participants in group conversations and individual interviews. Information presented below in random order.

Welcome wagon services. Senior shopping days. Stronger, consistent law enforcement.

Obtain federal funding to fix streets.

New, younger, progressive leaders, especially elected officials. Reduce government bureaucracy.

Need maintenance. Need programs to welcome newcomers. Need programs to assist with literacy and basic skills, removing barriers to literacy. Need rules/instructions in other languages, such as driver's license test manual. Need friendliness. Friendliness is an attitude; most people here are friendly. It starts with us. We should be helpful, we should be friendly, and teach our kids to be friendly.

Social opportunities and events, where people engage and talk. Forums, lectures, community conversations, calls to action, breakout groups. Potlucks and sharing of food. Individuals with energy taking grassroots action. Coalition-building on shared interests. Cycles of engagement. Invest resources and processes to gain community buy-in. Not enough to interact, needs deep investment: time and resources. Other ideas: neighborhood liaison with authority, especially regarding growth and development issues. Training for neighborhoods, more opportunity for actions. Ban plastics and Styrofoam.

Let the freeway bypass the main areas of town to eliminate the problem.

Meaningful experiences and ways to connect, offered to all.

Volunteer group focused on historic preservation of Fairhaven library. More computer terminals at Fairhaven library, and other branches. Library should focus on core traditional services.

Bellingham **Public**Library

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Adequate funding. Marketing and awareness. Make sure people of all background have a voice in shaping programs/services. Listen, empower, use the information you gather. Bring communities together to experience each other, to build trust and reduce barriers. Create places/processes for in-person connections. Develop tools and experience in civil dialogue, ways to incorporate different ideas and respectfully discuss and disagree. Reduce assumptions of people's personal needs and what is relevant to them, create services that are relevant.

There needs to be monetary investment in the community with partners who understand prioritized community goals. Needs need to be identified, problems acknowledged and issues need to be addressed on a systemic level. Accurate and truthful information needs to be disseminated in community to break down barriers not build them.

City needs to put money toward housing and mental health in community. Re-evaluation of property tax and other taxes to increase city revenue. Change in state law for in-patient services for people dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues. Individuals need to get involved by volunteering, voting, speaking up. Create more community spaces.

Intentional development of community hubs (parks, libraries, etc.).

"No change, it's just easier". Increased changes and support towards community demands without the requirement of community involvement.

Development of neighborhood associations. Localized places for meeting.

Encouragement and collection of community voices is necessary. Advocacy is necessary for many members. Welcoming settings within organizations (language support). Providing time and space for the community to support one another and share skills.

Community collaboration helps to improve individuals.

Utilize resources in the area to provide welcoming gathering points (schools).

Utilize current changes to the community (i.e. Alderwood Elementary is updating, volunteer support and develop collaborative efforts through transition).

Incorporate events catered to the community. Collaborative efforts for the community. Access to libraries. Enhance safety, such as police presence, lights, sidewalks.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Additional resource implementation into society, especially at the library. Increase outreach attempts. Connect organizations that already have same goals. Find a common goal among all community members. Centralized location for all homeless. Invite the homeless to support the community in productive ways. Skill shares among different groups in the community. Increase public transportation access. Create opportunities for homeless to help out/volunteer their skills bridging them to the community. Someone needs to be assigned the task of reaching out to the community to hear the voices of those not heard. Educate the public on what community resources are available, or how they can find out this information. Take advantage of available space within community. Provide information to the public about where their taxes go. Anytime steps are taken for something new, make sure the people know about it.

Build relationships outside what is comfortable and create more spaces for people to get to know each other and connect in person. Be open to communicating with local leaders to build relationships and trust to create solutions-oriented mindset.

The Community Conversations are great. We need more places for people to meet so people can get to know each other and understand other people's experiences.

More community spaces and opportunities for involvement to offer resources and talents.

Build community! We need to get to know our neighbors even if it is outside of your comfort zone. Get businesses involved in helping out the community. Find out and evaluate what the basic needs to thrive - water, phone charging stations, etc. Take steps to make connections and understand each others' experiences. EDUCATION! Listen and talk to each other without assuming the worst.

More active in helping people out by churches in the downtown and Fairhaven areas. Greater education resources for everyone. Free community centers for people to have spaces to meet and get to know other people. Have more of these Community Conversations so we can know what people want and need in their community, as this is continually changing.

Education and awareness, more adults in schools to provide trust, more trainings for educators to provide social/emotional support in curriculum, more partnerships with increased capacity and the capability to hear more "yes" to ideas, redefine schools/libraries and how spaces are used (social services needs).

Have courageous conversations, communities in schools by using spaces to provide resources directly to families. Policies that explicitly prioritize families, partnerships with businesses, free community events to connect people providing food, childcare and translators. Individuals openly loving other people, acknowledging systems are oppressive, more services at the library for organizations like Street Law.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Have community events to bring people together by sharing food. Food is a great way to bring people together to talk and learn about each other. It would be great to have book clubs with people to talk about the different perspectives in reading.

Have a symposium for restaurateurs and then bring in the technology to teach them how to improve their bottom line.

Building relationships outside friend/family/culture. More spaces to connect, build relationships in person. Local level influence – build relationships and trust with local officials. Awareness of what other are doing in the community. Being open to collaboration, break down silos. Solutions-oriented mindset.

Bold and visionary leadership - understanding that some will not approve but willing to take risks. Actively search for new perspectives and ask new people to participate. Infrastructure needs to be supported in our growth: water, roads, sewers, police, fire, hospital – must get in front of it, plan for it. Growth and change are -ing words, community is always changing and growing. We need to be adaptable, okay to change course, not reactionary to all change.

Connect the technology and business communities, partnering with new industries, support the work of the Port's Economic Development team that is focusing on technology and recreation and creating incubators and hubs. Who can provide learning opportunities for people to learn about new technology and/or keep up to date?

City needs to have a real master plan that they will then follow.

Need education on what it means to experience homelessness. Collaborative community leadership to coordinate and strengthen services and efforts to help. More people housed.

More low-cost opportunities for people to interact and experience diversity, like festivals, concerts, plays, gallery walks, etc.

Increase volunteering and activism.

Police need more power. Politics should be less liberal, and safety should be the primary goal.

Have a local community news outlet (education and community building). Encourage ALL neighborhood associations to be active. Use relevant information sharing avenues for all generations (i.e. print, online, etc.). Planning for longer-term change. Create opportunities and spaces for community education.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Need specialized services for underserved communities, make it possible for others to help. Leverage more local funds and local investment to raise capital for local businesses. Need synergy between existing community resources, and a more coordinated community plan.

Focus on current trends and community initiatives for mental health support. Peer counselors, and a model of community club house for mental health and substance abuse recovery. Make it easier for people in need to access social services, many are discouraged from applying because of all the barriers. People need to slow down and become aware of the place in which they live. Need for public low-cost retreats, to maintain good mental hygiene.

Need more spaces that are welcoming to everyone, where everyone feels safe. Need government to fund resources that will help people through the legal system. Free up attorneys for professional work, and not for helping people through basic navigation of the legal system. Examples are Minnesota's self-represented litigant system, or NW Justice Project, which has an online interactive tool that results in a filled out legal form. Need more diverse representation in our local and state governments.

Actions need to be accountable to those marginalized. More listening. Help people fit in.

We cannot fix this on the local level. We will not end hunger in Bellingham, only slightly ameliorate food insecurity. There are bigger and more complex issues underlying food insecurity that have not been addressed. 40% of the United States population makes less than $15 an hour. We can create change, such as having a living wage ordnance, a more progressive housing policy which incentivizes and promotes equitable housing density. We need to diversify the housing stock. Community could benefit from anti-racism training, especially in businesses in which people of color encounter the most racism: where they bank, shop, and go to school. Ask the people who are experiencing racism and low incomes to tell their stories that can help to collectively change the situation. If we created deeper and more authentic relationships, we can ask them what would work.

History needs to be presented from multiple voices, especially important in the place where you live. For example, there is a decolonization tour presented by a local professor. Walking in the same paths, with knowledge of the past, creates connection. We need to listen to young people, to older people; to grasp the truths they offer, but not accepting everything they say. We need to have a diverse variety of community leaders. This community likes to reflect on things, but it is then not communicated out to the whole community. We need to make space for where we are and where we are going as a community. We need to honor the different kinds of leaders that help our community to be healthy, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Bellingham **Public** Library

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We can't just make little tweaks in all the ways we have done things in the past, it has to be bold change. The majority will need to question things and engage with other cultures. White heterosexual majority doesn't need to be so defensive and ignorant. We need to address structural inequality in schools, health, housing. Housing needs more models, more low-income housing. Need to diversify the economy, be intentional in hiring, nonprofits can model that. Need a community conversation about health care, and who is delivering it. We need to hear from the underserved populations how we can improve. Libraries need to be conscious of barriers to their service, provide opportunities for young white families to experience other cultures. Adult programming should have a lot more community conversations, different topics and experts.

Keep the vision of what is possible for our community in front of us, be mindful of what we are striving for so we can connect in meaningful ways. Stay rooted in a common shared purpose. Many elements present in our community that are working for an ideal community. There is no quick fix. Community conversations are taking place to address issue of justice, we need to follow through on our conversations, to create and act on our visions. Have to able to talk and acknowledge each other's perspectives, acknowledge our past and allocate sufficient resources. Trust is an essential building block in communication. We need to work on that as a community, to make people feel heard and supported.

Political changes. More conversations, more education, more opportunities for interaction to foster understanding, civil dialog, respectful communications, conflict resolution. Find ways to bring people together, not separate further. Provide access to services/facilities for everyone. Like public libraries and parks: everyone welcome, no barriers based on who you are, language, money, etc. Consider meeting people's basic needs an urgent priority and get better at doing it. Foster community involvement, community activism, community solutions, and don't reinvent the wheel. Find groups who have experience/systems in place and collaborate.

A hub, a one-stop information resource. Rent control to address housing?

Community-building efforts. Taking time to agree on shared set of values.

More funding for helping services. More funding for library services. Consider raising minimum wage, like Seattle. Create jobs for low-income/homeless people as a start toward stability and success. Less negative attitude toward people with less money.

Utilizing schools as community centers, hubs for services and happenings. (The buildings are not used to their full potential.) More collaborations are needed. Money/funding. Having critical conversations. Identify goals, and minimize competing interests. Focus on what is wanted. Setting up opportunities for more exchanges of resources and skills which will build relationships.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Funding that is stable. More supportive, permanent, subsidized housing that's easy to access. Increase access to legal assistance, such as Street Law program. Easier access to social services. Continued and increased legislative efforts.

More engagement, accessible information and resources where people are. More people willing to help each other. Improved access to transportation: better bus routes and more frequent. Improved police presence and relations.

People need to be open and honest with themselves; acknowledge that they have bias around people who are different than them with special needs or different race and skin color. They need to avoid developing expectations or limitations before they know the person and all their strengths. We need opportunities for more interactions across differences.

City needs to put money toward housing and mental health in community. Re-evaluation of property tax and other taxes to increase city revenue. Change in state law for in-patient services for people dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues. Individuals need to get involved by volunteering, voting, speaking up. Create more community spaces.

Need transition programs to help us shift to green, sustainable economy. Need zoning/planning laws that make it easier to expand economically. Universal basic income. Focused economic development (solar/wind/tidal), development zones, sustainable industry. Policy-making, bold leadership, citizen engagement, effective governance. School curriculum reform in high school. Senior volunteerism. Library meeting rooms across systems full of folks mobilizing for action. Open data portal for city and county. Calendar of city-wide neighborhood association meetings available through the city. More interfacing with leaders and community groups. More community conversations at the library. More access to government leaders, such as through "office hours."

Leaders act to create more and better legislation. Update city's vision statement to be more inclusive. Community members need to get invested and speak up to create awareness about the needs of the disabled. Our political leaders should experience a disability for at least 24 hours. More awareness of invisible disabilities. A community resource page on the city website. More community financial support for people with disabilities and overall access needs.

Recognize that people that aren't like us exist. People say there is no diversity in Bellingham but there is, and it needs to be recognized. Who are the audiences we don't know? There are a whole bunch of ways that we don't see each other.

Be open to opportunity and say yes. Find ways to partner with disconnected segments of the community.

There should be limits on the resources provided to the homeless who choose to be homeless.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Guaranteed basic income. State-run mental health facilities. Place for free exchange of ideas, "community watering hole."

Improving communication and awareness. Building more affordable housing. Increasing minimum wage. Knowing how to help.

Rent control. More Section 8 housing. Better treatment by landlords of Section 8 tenants.

Talking to people face-to-face with respect. More reliable police, safety force. Show Ruby's Studio movie about safety. Continue free events for kids, families. Free parenting classes. Educate public on sustainable living.

Add VA and more than one hospital. Designate library (or other building downtown) as emergency shelter.

Social workers in the library. Economic development (more companies here bringing in jobs, number of jobs created, with increase in taxes, if the sales tax goes up, if the B&O tax goes up). Dedicated town hall gathering space could also serve as a community information center. Recognition of northwest Washington as education corner of our state (people talking about it, active promotion, branding). Feel more comfortable bringing grandkids into space (this library). Branch library in the north end. Organized community resistance to hate to show it's not welcome in our community. Need for information dissemination, not only online. Better informed. If we were able to see lots of people talking about community development. A new fully funded library.

Political support for additional neighborhood spaces, better communication within the community, more resident involvement and engagement.

Elected officials with progressive mindset. Impossible to move forward without this.

Building social capital. Leadership training offered on a wide scale. Build relationships & trust, talk to your neighbors, help educate the public. Get the younger generation involved. Offer social activities to start conversations that are new and innovative; examples: a disaster book club or disaster movie night and then talk about at the end what was realistic or not. More social capital in the neighborhoods. Initiative for neighborhood capital. Use little local hubs. Disaster preparedness books in all little free libraries. Information kiosk or display case in library with disaster preparedness books. Find a way to fund initiatives to build social capital. "Each one, teach one." Welcome the stranger, make it personal. Reach out. Free lunch. Places to go to meet to talk about emergency management. Use print publications and social media to get word out.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Actions that would make a difference: self-conscious outreach. You have to make a conscious effort to connect. Keep strong neighborhoods. Our strong neighborhoods foster some connectedness with block parties, neighborhood meetings, "Map Your Neighborhood." Emphasize personal connection rather than digital connection. Equitable opportunity: helping each other learn more about ways to welcome other people, other cultures, other backgrounds, other life circumstances. Try not to simply replicate our own bubbles. Ask "who isn't here?" Value differences, different points of view, diversity. It's hard work; we're all drawn to people like us. Major structural things might need to change: access to health care, access to housing, affordable healthcare/housing. More physical spaces for community. i.e. there's no Bellingham community center. More "groups" like newcomer groups, walking groups. And capitalize on the skills, talents, interests of groups. Creating spaces and opportunities that mix people up outside their bubbles. People coming together from different backgrounds, neighborhoods, generations. Cross generational, cross cultural, encourage people to get to know people outside their usual circles. Integrate tribal voices into the conversations.

Variety of learning spaces such as the Library's SkillShare. More jobs that are stable and living wage. Curriculum changes that bring more youth awareness to issues of homelessness. Capacity building grants, etc. Community meetings that have action plans and are well run. Government incentives to build more low-income housing. More diverse housing types. Collaborative approach to solving problems and talking directly with those impacted.

More avenues for accessible food, such as school meal programs. More affordable housing. Coordinated services around homelessness, with a recognition that the church community can only do so much. Continued city leadership around the issues of food security, housing, etc.

Actions that would make a difference: regarding housing, we need to have a conversation about what kind of community we want to be. We need to find more housing, plus the city infrastructure to support that housing (roads, fire, etc.), or we are going to be a luxury community. This might be a transition of historic neighborhoods to multi-family/higher density housing with niche retail. We have to build UP.

New technology businesses in Bellingham to fuel economic development. Diversity in recruitment and hiring practices.

Integrated planning, higher paying jobs, less regulation that would attract business, WWU more involved in community development and economic development. "Business Czar" in city planning department who specializes in outreach. Bonds for parks and library. Multi-use of schools. Cordata real estate excise taxes invested back into Cordata.

We need to create housing. I'd also like to see buildings with Green architecture, solar panels, water, etc. as our climate changes.

Bellingham **Public**Library

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Build sunset clauses into all legislation. There are still provisions in the Bellingham Municipal Code from the 1950s.

More conversations and more education, community-wide. Shining a light on tough issues. Engagement of elected officials. Undo discriminatory zoning laws and policies that concentrate poverty and people of color. We also need to celebrate victories (i.e. accessory dwelling units).

A Cordata branch library would make a difference. I'm envious of the Barkley reading room! Tech tutoring appointments and Chair Tai Chi would be popular at Cordata. Multi-use trails.

At the macro level, continued and more robust policies on local and regional level. Intentional focus of services on birth to age 18. Building security and equity for youth is our most important investment. To do that, we must also support parents of small children. Wrap-around approach.

Economy of effort, working together. To mitigate inequality, begin teaching technical skills to girls in elementary school. They don't need to be scared of STEM. Train teachers in coding. At the same time, provide community tech opportunities that are free: e.g. Western GEMS (girls engineering), etc.

Whatcom Community Foundation "Project Neighborly" grants, supporting events that bring people together who might never be together. For example, quarterly potlucks in South Fork area. Also, coordinated Days of Service for Rotary clubs, Kiwanis, and Lions. Maybe a Service Week that is prioritized around a theme such as habitat.

As a community, we need to focus on poverty. There is work to be done to make sure all kids have food, housing, transportation, athletic opportunities, etc.

Focusing on priorities would help re-establish trust in government. We can't just tell people we are "working on it." Simplifying government process is also important, easy access and better response to issues. Better customer service. Clarifying roles and decision-making authority. We need to let go of single issues and make clear pathways for who does what and how. Civics: people need more education about government and how it works.

Strong, engaged neighborhood associations that provide a way for residents to learn about happenings, events, news, and resources (for instance emergency preparedness). Proactive advocacy to city about neighborhood needs. WCC and high schools in dialog with residents to create meaningful, intentional sense of community. Regular forums with developers and city to talk about plans, perhaps town hall style.

Continue to educate in a way that seeks to understand. Sometimes it may mean reminding someone of different point of view, sometimes speaking up instead of letting something go.

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

People with disabilities need to be involved in planning processes.

We must be creative about making learning opportunities available to people where they are.

We believe in a peculiarly American way of doing things – the technological "fix." But there are no technological fixes for some issues. We need a common set of facts and common agreement. Education, awareness, ability to put people together. We can change perception by showing facts.

System conveners: those who create spaces that allow people to learn from each other across institutional, disciplinary, cultural, and geographic boundaries, in order to enhance the capacities and responsiveness of our social systems. Cross boundary learning spaces, bringing people together across differences.

Hiring with diversity in mind. Creating strong teams within the city and addressing workload. Cleaning up alleys, supporting art so that spaces are open, cared-for, colorful.

Full-time city council might be needed in the future. Important to respond to every email/phone call. People want to know you are listening.

Outreach. It is the responsibility of the city to go to those who have needs/interests. We can't wait for people to come forward. Often those groups are isolated and don't have access or the skills to navigate our systems. People don't have luxury of time or money. We need spaces anyone can use that promote intergenerational connection.

We usually do a solid job of being welcoming as a community (e.g. Youth pride, Women's March). At the city, we need to be disciplined about providing services, and expand when we are able and according to clear vision. Downturn will come.

Library can provide ways for people to mix and mingle and can help bring people together. Ferndale offers good examples of community gatherings.

Faith communities equip people to go out and share the values of caring for their community. But not everyone wants to be part of a faith community, the Pacific Northwest can be suspicious. "Be involved in something." Nonprofit leaders could meet quarterly for roundtable. Sharing/relationship building, not really goal oriented.

Government and businesses need to step up and address homelessness. China provides food and shelter for all. Homeless should get jobs.

Bellingham **Public** Library

ACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Organizations like Brigid Collins, Habitat for Humanity, and Opportunity Council are doing a good job, but need to do more. People need bus tickets out of here. Government and nonprofits have a responsibility to step up and help people who cannot help themselves.

No one on their own. Maybe city councils and local groups. We need a melting pot.

Staff (at the drop-in center) should be retrained. There should be a program of training for all staff that can then be shared with volunteers and attendees.

Moving society toward a less violent/capitalist ideology. Focused repeatedly on paradigm shifts. Re-orient away from economic growth as the highest priority. It would set a human/earth/ecology paradigm.

Education, know the constitution of the United States.

Education that supports acceptance.

Make it easier to make changes, people be willing to break down barriers to change, people get discouraged, don't enjoy conflict, so don't participate. Hard to get things done in community because people are too confrontational and there are too many layers of bureaucracy.

Clean out the government, term limits, people running unopposed is a problem, lack of choice. Invest in a new jail. Put cameras in commercial areas to help with shoplifting.

We can start with ourselves, look out for each other, i.e. neighbors can watch each other's houses if their neighbor is away, report things that are odd.

Improve public transportation, increase bus availability at nights and Sundays. Build sense of neighborhoods, emphasize local connections.

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

INTRODUCTION TO "WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT"

After each individual interview or group conversation, the staff teams organized their notes into the six categories below:

Aspirations

Main concerns

Specific issues

Actions that would make a difference,

Who people trust to act

Questions people have

This section contains WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT described by Community Conversation participants in group conversations and individual interviews. Information presented below in random order.

Fire Department. Whatcom Transportation Authority.

Opportunity Council. Medical providers. Community volunteers. Department of Social and Health Services.

Juvenile court system, focus is helping youth not simply punishment. Senior centers. Privately run voluntary programs, not government requirements/restrictions. Churches, which are good at social well-being.

Typically trust local and state government. Fixing traffic problems would take a regional effort.

People with specific knowledge and experiences to share. City, especially the Parks and Recreation Department. School district. Various non-profits. Community members, who should be engaged in dialogue about what they want and would use.

Government (but needs watchdogs). Libraries and bookstores, especially Village Books. Pickford Theatre.

Libraries: safe spot "safe harbor." Dispute Resolution Center. "Community Champions." Churches. People in education systems, especially teachers. Philanthropic organizations. People who are doing engagement activities in our community right now. City Club and other organizations.

Many but not all governmental entities, nonprofits and businesses. Varying opinions of who could be trusted. The "trusted people" were not necessarily those who can act on the concerns raised.

Bellingham **Public Library**

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

City Council member April Barker and other elected officials who care more about people than money. Non-profits/human services like Catholic Community Services. General suspicion towards all organizations in positions of power or who could effect change. City of Bellingham moving in the right direction. Kulshan Community Land Trust.

People/organizations with focus on the greater community (schools, libraries, etc.)

Birchwood Neighborhood Association. Birchwood "Food Fighters." Not voted-in officials.

Birchwood Neighborhood Association is trusted, they are known and part of the community (true representatives). Birchwood "Food Fighters" (seen as supporters of vital resources within community).

Mayor Kelli Linville. Fire Department, especially Whatcom Medic One.

Opportunity Council.

"Anyone not looking for ID." Library. Opportunity Council. YMCA. Schools/students.

Parent/teacher organizations. Schools.

Schools and associated organizations. Wild Whatcom. Opportunity Council. YMCA. Other non-profit organizations.

League of Women Voters. Students/schools. Opportunity Council. Bellingham/Whatcom Housing Authority. Sustainable Connections. RE Store. Unity Care. City Council member Michael Lilliquist. Bellingham Food Bank.

Anyone, until proven otherwise (rehabilitative perspective).

The public library and neighborhood associations.

The library and the City of Bellingham

It's not all on one person or group, we are all part of this community and need to work to make changes. People and groups that are knowledgeable about who they are serving, like members of the Homeless Outreach Team.

Anyone who starts making change. Faithlife employees, Kulshan Land Trust, Lighthouse Mission, Food Bank, private employers.

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

Joe Fuller at Whatcom Health Department, Dr. Greg Baker (superintendent of Bellingham schools), Northwest Youth Services, Whatcom Family Community Network, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Whatcom, and individuals.

Library, parents/caregivers, faith communities, colleges, non-profits, tribal communities, medical practitioners, Dr. Greg Baker's Bellingham Promise.

April Barker (City Council member).

Whatcom Front for reliable and unbiased news and information.

Fountain Parrish Church, Lighthouse Mission, Bellingham Co-Op.

Me! (makes decisions quickly, reaches out to community members). Younger people need to be at the table who aren't jaded by fear, willing to take risks and have tenacity to get things done. But we don't want to discredit the established voices. Younger and established voices together, mentoring each other. How can we engage and empower more young people to have a voice in civic process? Everyone gets equal vote in our democracy. Also, Kulshan Community Land Trust, Whatcom Dream (especially Trudy Shuravaloff), HomesNOW.

Business owners, Technology Alliance Group, Port of Bellingham, technology community of Bellingham, as they are mindful and thoughtful.

Faith community, city and county government, Opportunity Council, Catholic Community Services, Lydia Place, Lighthouse Mission, schools, Habitat for Humanity, Community Land Trust, WWU, Food Bank, United Way.

Police Department, Fire Department.

Neighborhood Associations. Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association. League of Women Voters. Sustainable Connections. RESources. Unitarians. City Club. Unity Care. Riveters. WWU. Library. YMCA. Senior Center.

Small Business Development Center. Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College. City of Bellingham. Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. Lydia Place. Downtown Bellingham Partnership. Whatcom Community Foundation. Sustainable Connections, Opportunity Council, Chambers of Commerce.

Everyone is functioning with such limited resources. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services, Northwest Youth Services, Whatcom Dispute Resolution Services, Opportunity Council, Bellingham Food Bank. Trust the dedicated staff of the City and County government (more than elected officials).

Bellingham**Public**Library

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

Community facilitators that come from the communities they serve.

A circle of people are working on an individual basis, but they only have so much impact, and they can burn out. Others: City Council member April Barker, Food Bank, Opportunity Council, Community to Community farmworkers, Lummi Nation.

A lot of people are doing really good work. Whatcom County has vibrant nonprofit network. Need to believe and trust in our community as a whole, instead of pointing to individual groups. Trusts the network of people at Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center, that they are agents of positive change.

Lot of people are doing really good work. Whatcom County has vibrant nonprofit network. We need to believe and trust in our community as a whole, instead of pointing to individual groups. Trusts the network of people at Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center, that they are agents of positive change.

Dr. Greg Baker (Bellingham schools superintendent). People with lived experience. For example, do we ask criminal justice "consumers" what reform would work? What would work better for them? Education infrastructure, not just WWU and Bellingham schools. WCC and BTC have a lot to offer. Churches. Local politicians: mayor, city council, county council. They have their ear to the community. Whatcom Community Foundation. The library. ReSources for Sustainable Communities. Opportunity Council. Native American communities. Lummi, Lummi Indian Business Council, Nooksack tribe.

WWU, WCC, Opportunity Council. Anywhere that is a public service point: libraries, non-profits. Neutral, safe places.

Librarians, student activists, WWU students, co-workers. WWU president.

Trusts shared processes. People who have investment in topics and wide experiences. People who represent different backgrounds and identities. People from the community more trusted than "outsiders."

Non-profit organizations providing services. Worker-owned companies. Libraries.

Teachers, librarians, parents, children - those who are living it. Grassroots efforts.

Mercy Housing. Unity Care. Legislators. Managed-care providers. LAW Advocates, particularly access of Street Law. Library for meeting space.

Lindsey Karas (resident services coordinator at Sterling Meadows housing). Community organizations we know are out there, but we don't know they exist and they don't know we exist.

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

Monica Burke and Julia Chen from the Arc of Whatcom County, and a collaboration of organizations and people who have the passion and heart for working with children.

The library. Educated, informed, and youthful voices. Church/faith community social services. WWU: intellect and innovation. Community Colleges. Leaders of marginalized groups and those who work with them.

All libraries, particularly Bellingham Public Library, because of their services and access to Lynda.com. Several disability advocacy groups local and state-wide. Shawn and the Center for Independence. The Arc of Whatcom County. Self-advocates. People First. Disability Rights of Washington. Allies in Advocacy. City Council member Terry Bornemann.

Good citizens and creative people.

The people and organizations of Bellingham.

Opportunity Council, Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), Bellingham Food Bank, the library, educators, health organizations, such as Unity Care, Sea Mar, Compass Health, Planned Parenthood.

Nobody.

People who are passionate about making change. The library as a space to come together and talk. Any organization that can actually listen and hear different sides. WWU Office of Sustainability. Bellingham Police. The Mayor.

Programs like Lydia Place has a very high success rate. Opportunity Council. Bellingham Public Library. Whatcom Literacy Council. League of Women Voters. MNAC (Mayors Neighborhood Advisory Commission). Neighborhood Associations. Influencers, community activists and "Bellebrities." Chamber of Commerce. Interfaith Coalition. City Council. PeaceHealth. Barkley Company.

City departments whose missions align with community priorities and have the resources to devote to them. Public Works. "Our" government. The hospital. Red Cross. Non-profit organizations. Our emergency services (law enforcement/fire fighters). Library. Best if a diverse group. Neighborhood associations. Sustainable Communities Office at WWU. Ourselves. Opportunity Council. Community Resource Officers (certain people) in the Police Department (more of a certain personality than a department).

Council member April Barker, neighborhood associations, parent/teacher organizations, homeowners associations, Parks and Recreation, community gardens, Cordata Presbyterian.

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

Published research, comparative studies in other US cities on incentives for tech employment.

Neighborhood associations, Julie Guy (could see a need and spent time making it happen). Bellingham Public Library. Whatcom Community Foundation. Everyone needs to do their part, lots of affinity groups and citizen groups, like the Whatcom Young Professionals. Non-profits. City of Bellingham leadership (elected officials and staff). Bellingham schools, especially the leadership, especially during redistricting project. Whatcom Human Rights Task Force. Tribal leaders (tribal communities, institutional structure not in the city, but many live outside the reservation area, need to be in the conversation). Youth and their voices.

Library. Whatcom Human Rights Task Force. Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. Non-profits, HomesNow, Educational systems. High schools. Youth.

Tina McKim (food security), Opportunity Council, St. Francis, neighborhood associations (although sometimes focused on property values).

Me! I must be part of the solution. Hand off to the next generation. WWU: bigger dorms to house more students, less strain on rental market. Kulshan Community Land Trust: public private partnership. Housing through partnership could be available to those with W2 in Whatcom County.

Mayor. WWU. Citizen voices. Cordata neighborhood voices/activists. Law enforcement. Whatcom County Council. Bellingham Technical College. Bellingham City Council.

I trust people who have already done things that make a difference. Activists in the community.

Elected officials who can set policy.

Citizen pressure groups.

The next generation! I'd like to see young women of color running the country.

Cordata Neighborhood Association. Library. City of Bellingham.

School district. City of Bellingham. Non-profits. Churches. Library. County -- but would like to see more from the county.

Small business owners and teachers. They get stuff done, find solutions, cut through red tape. Atul Deshmane (Public Utilities District Commissioner)

Whatcom Community Foundation. Chuckanut Health Foundation. United Way. Youth.

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

Bellingham School District. Opportunity Council. YMCA. Boys and Girls Club. Whatcom Community Foundation. City of Bellingham. Chuckanut Health Foundation. Dollars for Scholars. Businesses and foundations. Bellingham Schools Foundation

Leadership comes from the top: values and principles must be shared. We need to hire into our principles/philosophy to move forward.

My company! We work to make spaces and websites more accessible. I also trust people with disabilities.

Elected officials. The library.

"We the people" (individuals and neighbors). Working families. Neighborhood associations. HOAs. Social media for getting the word out. Government, City Council

Mayor, leading by example. Mayor can set the tone and expectations for staff. Educators and teachers.

Our public process. Schools, libraries, public organizations that help walk the walk; we need to model behavior. There is a deeply held distrust of government.

Jessica B (Opportunity Council). April Barker (City Council). Shirley W (Lummi). Christine P (WCLS). Amy R (County Health).

Darby (city permitting), Flo (Bellingham Police), Rick Sepler (Bellingham Planning) Monea (City Council administrative).

City council and administration.

Community participation. We need everyone for effective change. Safe Spaces.

Kulshan Land Trust. WDRC. Opportunity Council. Bellingham Housing Authority. Rick Osen (library board chair). I trust those who are collaborative, collegial, and inclusive.

City council member April Barker. City administrator Brian Heinrich.

Faith communities. Non-profits. Grassroots neighborhood efforts. I trust efforts that help get everyone on the same page.

Brigid Collins. Habitat for Humanity. Opportunity Council.

Governments. Mayor. Catholic Community Services.

WHO PEOPLE TRUST TO ACT

No specific category of people. People in all walks of life could be well positioned to make these changes. Trust should be placed in independent thinkers, non-conformists, and those with intelligence.

Leaders in the community like the Mayor. Community members. The church. Organizations within the school, but not the school itself. Parents. Pastors.

Opportunity Council, Sustainable Connections, Library.

League of Women Voters. Library lectures. Forums on government; not just a lecture but engagement. Business clubs. Garden of Life movement (and other advocacy groups). Garden groups. Grow Veterans. A lot of groups doing fantastic things. FAN: Faith Action Network. Interfaith Coalition Promise Keepers. Faith-based organizations of all kinds. Book recommendation: Braiding Sweetgrass. Neighborhood associations. Any group I will initially trust until they prove otherwise. I trust everyone until they prove they will not be worth the time and effort. Proactive, inclusive. City and county. Ecumenical council. Opportunity Council. Chamber of commerce. Visitor and convention bureau. Library/libraries. LAW Advocates. BTC. WCC. WWU. Northwest Indian College. School districts. Every high school student in this county should be trusted, as they are absorbing massive impacts for the decades ahead. Lighthouse Mission. Huxley College.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE HAVE

INTRODUCTION TO "QUESTIONS PEOPLE HAVE"

After each individual interview or group conversation, the staff teams organized their notes into the six categories below:

Aspirations

Main concerns

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Actions that would make a difference,

Who people trust to act

Questions people have

This section contains QUESTIONS PEOPLE HAVE from Community Conversation participants in group conversations and individual interviews. Whenever possible we answered questions raised. Some people used this as a chance to provide comments about library services. Information presented below in random order.

Can the library help create access to driver's license testing in other languages so people learn to drive and can get their licenses?

What else are you doing to reach out to the community? Are you doing surveys? Why is the library taking this conversation on, why isn't City Hall? How can we gain people's attention/interest - instead of passive entertainment - in learning about community? How do we reprioritize our funding systems to pay for what needs to be done? What are the implications of making those changes? How can we educate our elected officials and appointed city officials/staff about innovative options/cutting edge solutions? How can they succeed in implementing?

Is the bulk of city funding going toward northside services, and will that reduce funding to Fairhaven branch? Is there/could there be a volunteer/helper group focused on Fairhaven branch and historic preservation?

How can we make this our community space where people can be heard? Library, churches, post office are the places I knew as a teen homeless person. How can we create a space for access to services? How do we design the space better to accommodate the service needs to assist homeless people? More spaces for people to spend time. There is a need for those sorts of spaces, with or without the library. What does the library think is high priority?

Please provide more private rooms for tutoring and small group meetings. Wifi access. Hot spots to check out, like in King County. Story times in different languages. Book clubs in different languages.

Bellingham**Public**Library

QUESTIONS PEOPLE HAVE

Can libraries provide more intentional collaborative efforts with schools?

Can communication to the public be increased (multiple languages, multiple modalities)?

Can there be more bookmobile visits to schools and apartments? Can there be language apps through the library with practical reading/subjects? Can there be a new location with high number access points?

Where will findings be distributed? How can we get the word out?

Will there be more of these conversations and when will you be putting together the information from these conversations? How can we help?

How does the library define community? Has anyone asked the homeless what they want or need? Who can fund support for homeless people? Which community would welcome a centralized location for homeless? How do we know if our efforts are promoting homelessness? What aspects of homelessness don't we see that talking with them can make visible? Can "zoning" help to consolidate community groups? Would this help to use space within the community for resources or share skills? Is there someone/an organization qualified to lead focus groups to understand the community's needs? Is there any centralized place for homeless to access the basics-showers, toilets, etc.? And who knows about these things? Will further promotion of homeless engagement at the library prevent other users from feeling safe? What time can meetings be held to gather information from community groups in need?

Do we value connection as a community? How do we get more resources, time, support? Do we have a community that supports and strengthens families? Do we have a culture of interaction?

Where will findings be distributed? How can we help get the word out?

Regarding safety: is safety tangible or is it a perception? Is our community really less safe or is the perception that it is less safe?

How do we keep talent in Bellingham? Where do people go to learn about technology? Can we tier technology training for the community? Can Bellingham make a statement that they want XYZ (types of companies) and then fast track that? Like Everett wants to be an aerospace community, and they fast track those projects. Could Bellingham prioritize housing? Employees need housing.

Questions about existing and potential library services, and how the library could help this community partner in their efforts.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE HAVE

When can specific feedback be provided for the strategic plan (i.e. library-based feedback not community-based)? Has BPL considered joining with WCLS? Can input on the plan be provided before the plan is finalized?

I picture a beautiful new building with gorgeous hangout spaces! Seattle Public Library has five floors, generous hangout spaces, glorifies reading, lots of digital services. It is a place where everyone is welcome and it is beautiful. So many ugly buildings downtown: the jail, the courthouse. Buildings are reflective of our values. Nobody hates the library, not polarizing. Neutral space.

We were supposed to build a new library 10 years ago. Is it not proceeding a blessing in disguise, due to changes in the library world? What are today's library needs? "Amazon-ification" of the library with personal deliveries? Access to internet and available wifi after hours? Access to charging stations? Expanding internet time? Lending mobile hot spots? Notes to the fire department with strategic plan.

Are the Post-It pads expensive? How do you access Lynda.com? Can we get a community liaison in the library who knows about community programs? Can we get rides to the library provided by the library?

Can the Peace Health building be turned into a Library? Can we help spread the word about future meetings?

Need for youth life skills: how to save for a house, etc.

When will our strategic plan be done?

Are we going to get a new library or not? Are we looking at a satellite library model for the north side? Are they talking about ways to distribute funds to make it possible? How is the balance changing from physical checkouts to electronic checkouts? How can/do volunteers help the library? What's the story with the community spaces down here? I was really scared when they went offline. Is it public knowledge that the rooms will reopen? Will after hours meetings be open? Can a program host come back? What does it mean to coordinate readers' advisory? What else could we the public do to support the library's efforts?

Is this a library event? How do we get people out of an apathy mindset? How do we get people to understand the importance of being prepared? How can I best help others and what is best help to address the true need? How can we build social capital? Where is social capital flourishing? What are examples of success? Where are the meeting points and distribution points in the city?

QUESTIONS PEOPLE HAVE

Girls Who Code is an important program and pathway to the middle class. Could the library sponsor a club?

Sunday summer hours are my biggest wish for the library.

Employees do not have a practical education. We now do skills-based testing and no longer base hiring decisions on university credentials. Our education system has not adjusted to new opportunities and changing needs. Young people do not have basic life skills: how to negotiate a mortgage or car loan, how computers work, etc. I see the library as a storage place for artifacts, books as museum artifacts. Everything can be accessed digitally.

It's hard to be tolerant of those who are intolerant.

The magazine alcove at the central library is important to me, especially newspapers such as The New York Times, The Seattle Times, and The Bellingham Herald. Great resource for the community. I also like the DVD selection. The co-op meeting room has a nominal fee of $5/year if you're a member. The senior activity center is good, but far away. I only bumped into one neighbor there. They have regular board games and card games.

Unity Care has new strategic plan. Increased access to mental health a priority for Unity Care, also Governor's budget. We must have meaningful intervention for drug and alcohol abuse, as well as low barrier/no barrier shelter. Right now, people sleeping in doorways.

Co-locate a library facility at a school.

Library has an important role to play in more meeting space, places for children, technology access, and providing a welcoming, creative neighborhood hub. There are barriers to access with downtown library. Could there be a public/private partnership (such as at the Mall). It would say "we care about creating a community here."

Library staying downtown is good. Park, can it be put to better use? Safe space created that supports an element of play. Maybe a stage? Play is so important, for all ages.

How can people with disabilities be involved in library remodel project?

Libraries are about accessing information, not selling someone else's narrative.

Libraries need to market better. How to help citizens navigate too much information?

Community Engagement Fellows are a natural intersection with public libraries. Both are about social learning.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE HAVE

Library: Northside satellite important but need staffing to support. Downtown facility needs facelift.

Long-term plan for facility? Joining boards and commissions is a good way for people to get involved.

I like the Big Read at the school. Middle and high school libraries have welcoming, age-appropriate spaces. Would like to see more spaces for kids and families to participate in community.

Library is forefront of how people access information. Leader. Civil dialogue important. How can library support civic education? People rarely happy with compromise.

Library may be able to fund seismic upgrades for Fairhaven in 2021-22 state budget. Waterfront location for downtown library ideal.

How do kids who use drugs get help beyond getting suspended? How do decisions about them in school get made? How can working parents still be actively involved?

Bellingham **Public Library**

COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS

Bellingham **Public** Library

Bellingham Public Library

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