Building Neighbourhood Social Resilience

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August 29, 2014
2014 Greenest City Scholars Program

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Executive Summary

The **Building Neighbourhood Social Resilience** project is about strengthening neighbourhood-level relationships and increasing community resilience, specifically in regards to emergency preparedness as well as disaster response and recovery. Past disastrous events, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami in Southeast Asia and Hurricane Sandy in New York, have highlighted that neighbours are a significant source of help during recovery. This project is responding to research about social isolation by the Vancouver Foundation as well as policy directions from the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan, the Mayor's Engaged City Task Force, and the Healthy City Strategy.

Research has shown that apartment dwellers experience higher levels of social isolation from their neighbours compared to those living in townhomes or single detached homes. Amongst apartment dwellers, renters are revealed to have weaker connections with their neighbours. This research has influenced this project's focus on rental apartments.

Project components include a literature review of urban neighbourhood resilience, a review of best practices engaged by local governments in supporting social resilience, a summary inventory of Vancouver's initiatives around connecting neighbours, and a pilot study involving hosting a neighbourhood social gathering for two rental apartment buildings.

In Vancouver, there are multiple mechanisms to create projects for neighbourhood connections, such as the Neighbourhood Small Grants and the Neighbourhood Matching Fund. Residents, non-profit groups, as well as the City are involved in projects developing neighbourhood relationships based on sharing resources, sharing food, placemaking, emergency preparedness, and the use of online tools. There are also examples of multi-unit residential buildings in Vancouver who have been successful in establishing neighbourly connections through the hosting of regular social events.

For the pilot study, we hosted two "vertical block parties" during August 2014 for a rental apartment in Kitsilano and another in the West End. We held beach barbecues, which were chosen by residents as their desired activity through our distributed survey. At each event, around 17 to 20 residents participated. During both events, we utilized tools in order to encourage residents to connect with each other as well as consider future opportunities for social gatherings.

The process of organizing the two pilot events was an important learning experience around community engagement and participatory event planning. Although we had originally intended to co-design the event with building residents, we found that residents were reluctant to take the lead in this new initiative and were happier allowing the City to facilitate planning a simple social event for them. In addition, we found that it was challenging to raise the issue of emergency preparedness at our event beyond simple awareness of the connection between increased neighbour connections and increased resilience. This may be the case in an initial neighbourhood social gathering where residents are primarily focused on just getting to know each other. We

concluded that the stage of incorporating emergency preparedness is best suited to happen after neighbours have hosted several low-pressure social events.

Based on key learnings from each project stage, the following recommendations have been compiled for the City of Vancouver.

	Action	Lead Department
Quick Starts (by summer 2015)	Follow-up with Pilot buildings	Sustainability
	Create a Resource Guide for "Vertical Block Parties"	Sustainability, Public Engagement
	Create a Toolkit for Building Managers	Sustainability, Public Engagement
	Provide Access to City insurance for "Vertical Block Parties"	Special Events
	Provide reduced or waived fees for "Vertical Block Party" Picnic Permits	Vancouver Parks Board
	Share ideas for Neighbourhood Connections on Social Media	Corporate Communications
	Hold a contest for registered Block Parties	Public Engagement, Vancouver Parks Board
	Action	**Lead Department**
Longer-Term Actions (by summer 2016)	Expand the Utility of Community Disaster Support Hubs	Emergency Management, Public Engagement
	Build on the Neighbourhood Emergency Assistance Team program	Emergency Management
	Create a City Webpage template for Neighbourhood Communications	Corporate Communications, IT, Public Engagement
	Create a Community Event Trailer	Public Engagement, Vancouver Parks Board

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 A need for social resilience

Communities today face a complex range of social, environmental, and economic challenges. In order to adapt to these challenges, communities need to build up their resiliency. “Resilience” in this case means our ability to respond and adapt to change or threats in ways that are pro-active, that build local capacity, and that enhance well-being.

This project focuses on **building neighbourhood social resilience**, specifically in regards to emergency preparedness as well as disaster response and recovery, which can be climate-related or otherwise. When referring to social resilience, influencing factors include kinship networks, strong local connections, and meaningful personal relationships. At the basic level, social resilience starts with knowing and socializing with your neighbours so that you have someone close by to call upon in an emergency or crisis. Communities with higher levels of neighbourliness and strong social networks are more resilient – that is, they are better at withstanding, adapting to, and recovering from change, stresses, or disturbances.

In the case of emergency preparedness, knowing your neighbours is incredibly important. Past disastrous events have shown that the most significant sources of help before, during, and after the emergency were reported to be friends, family, and neighbours. In an extreme event, municipal resources will be stretched and communities will need to draw upon the resources of their personal networks to “weather the storm”.

Vancouver needs to be prepared for more frequent instances of extreme weather events, which have been forecasted to occur due to climate change. One simple step that Vancouverites need to take is to get to know their neighbours. Research from the Vancouver Foundation has shown that our neighbourhood connections are cordial, but weak. Most of us know the names of at least two of our neighbours, but the relationship stops there. Most of us do not do simple favours for our neighbours, and even fewer have visited a neighbour’s home or

invited a neighbour over.

How well neighbours know each other also depends on the type of housing and ownership. Twice as many apartment dwellers never chat with their neighbour, compared to those living in townhomes or in single detached homes. 26% of renters say they never chat with a neighbour or do so once a year, compared to 12% of homeowners.

1.2 Policy context

This Neighbourhood Social Resilience Project responds to the loneliness and isolation research done by the Vancouver Foundation, exploring through an academic literature review, best practice models, and a pilot study how Vancouver can strengthen its neighbourhood relationships. The pilot study was set in rental apartments because research has shown that renters and apartment dwellers exhibit higher levels of social disconnection between neighbours.

The project fits into the wider policy context of the City of Vancouver's Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. It supports the Greenest City goal of Climate Leadership in the area of climate change adaptation, as building neighbourhood social resilience is a strategy for preparing for intense weather events. The project also supports the Greenest City goal of a Lighter Footprint with the key action of engaging and supporting residents, businesses, non-profits, and other community members to work together to reduce their ecological footprint. There is significant overlap between projects that aim to bring neighbours together and projects that aim to reduce environmental impact through sharing resources and tools within a local community.

The Neighbourhood Social Resilience Project also fits into the goals and recommendations from the 2014 Vancouver Mayor's Engaged City Task Force Final Report. One of the first quick start objectives recommended by the Engaged City Task Force was "Engagement at a Neighbourhood Level". The Task Force also included "Rethink condos for social inclusion" as a recommended idea for community action and suggested the creation of condo committees that can help residents share their interests and hobbies as well as arrange social events. This project is following through on the Engaged City Task Force's priority of focusing on multi-unit residential buildings such as apartments and condos for building social connections.

Additionally, the emerging Healthy City Strategy, which as of this writing is going to City Council in late September 2014, aims to create a healthy city for all. The strategy includes the related goals of "being and feeling safe and included," with a target of increasing Vancouverite's sense of belonging and safety by 10% by 2025, as well as "cultivating connections," with a target that all Vancouverites report that they have at least four people in their network that they can rely on for support in times of need.

In terms of this project's long term impact, the research undertaken will contribute to a larger City program to develop a neighbourhood resiliency toolkit. This research will also be used to inform the development of enhanced public education strategies for the Emergency Management Office and may also support the implementation of the Mayor's Engaged City Task Force's recommendations. The approach of building neighbourhood social resilience connects the objectives and strategies of multiple City departments.

2.0 Project Outline

2.1 Research Objectives

- To document the rationale for building neighbourhood social resilience for the purpose of emergency preparedness as well as disaster response and recovery.
- To test the effectiveness of select method(s) and tool(s) at the multi-unit building scale to encourage neighbours to build social connections with each other.
- To identify opportunities to improve resident-led responses to disasters and reduce the demand on City resources during emergency events.
- To compile best practices that focus on cultivating neighbourhood connections at the block or building scale.
- To compile an inventory of existing projects in Vancouver that are cultivating neighbourhood connections.
- To provide a list of recommendations on how the City can support residents to strengthen social connections within multi-unit residential buildings.

2.2 Project Components

Literature Review

Reviewed existing academic literature on building urban neighbourhood connections, specifically at the block or building scale. Also reviewed academic literature regarding the significance of community social resilience in disaster response and recovery.

Best Practices Review

Reviewed existing and past models of strengthening neighbourhood relationships in other municipal jurisdictions. The focus of the review was on the role of local governments in supporting social resilience.

Vancouver Project Inventory

Put together a summary inventory of existing key initiatives that contribute to building neighbourhood social resilience in Vancouver, from the City, non-profit groups, as well as residents.

Pilot Study

Selected two rental apartment buildings in Vancouver neighbourhoods to host a pilot event. The event was framed as a social gathering for neighbours from the building. At the event, opportunities for sustaining social interactions and engaging with community emergency preparedness were presented. (For additional details on the methods utilized in the pilot study, please refer to section 8.)

3.0 Learning from Disaster Response and Recovery

In a succinct explanation on the importance of community social resilience, Mark Pelling commented that "...for urban risk management, then, local agency lies with individuals but also with formal and informal groups of residents and neighbours who, based on regular social contact and the trust that this has engendered, have built up social support networks". Pelling adeptly points out that neighbourhood social networks are crucial for effectively responding to emergency events. Using the following case examples, this report explores the role of community social resilience in disaster response and recovery.

Indian Ocean Tsunami
2004

The undersea earthquakes that triggered the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 created extensive damage in coastal and inland villages throughout Southeast Asia. During the aftermath of the disaster, emergency management officials noted that coastal hamlets in the region bounced back from the incident at very different rates. Research from Daniel Aldrich highlights that in some fishing villages in Tamil Nadu, India, government surveyors arrived on the scene to find town representatives with organized lists of the dead and wounded as well as specific requests for rebuilding materials, food, and supplies. In these well-organized villages, hamlet councils, known as the *uur panchayat*, played an important institutionalized form of bonding and linking social capital. During disaster recovery, the hamlet councils connected residents to each other, provided information to non-profit and government authorities, and coordinated requests from the local population. Aldrich's research shows how Tamil Nadu villages with high levels of bonding and linking social capital demonstrated better recoveries from the tsunami.

Hurricane Katrina
2005

Hurricane Katrina was a tropical cyclone that caused severe destruction along the Gulf coast from central Florida to Texas, much of it due to the storm surge. The most significant number of fatalities occurred in New Orleans, Louisiana because of the collapse of the city's levee system. In the following years after the disaster, neighbourhoods in New Orleans experienced different rates of recovery. While the Lower Ninth Ward still retained many flood-damaged, unoccupied houses and recovered only one-fourth of its pre-Katrina population, the Vietnamese-American community in Village de L'est experienced a 90 percent population recovery. Although Village de L'Est also suffered extensive damage after Hurricane Katrina, neighbourhood activists worked to maintain strong bonding social capital among residents during the evacuation and afterwards. Faith leaders played a role in reaching out to evacuation shelters in other states to meet with church members, neighbours, and community members. One particular religious leader set up Vietnamese-language radio broadcasts to announce community plans for rebuilding. When New Orleans allowed residents

to return in October 2005, Village de L'est residents did so in mass numbers and the community organized a petition to prompt the local utility to restore electrical power in the neighbourhood.

Hurricane Sandy

2012

During the 2012 Atlantic hurricane season, Hurricane Sandy hit the entire eastern seaboard from Florida to Maine. Its storm surge hit New York City in October, which caused extensive flooding in streets, tunnels, and subway lines. The floods also created major power outages across the city. During the aftermath of the disaster, social networks and news blogs began reporting instances of neighbours reaching out to each other to share resources. One resident assisted in rescue efforts using his personal jet ski, a restaurant owner created a pop-up restaurant to offer free coffee and bagels to neighbours, a youth resident started a pop-up Internet café and charging station in front of her home, and a local doctor offered free medical care for injured local residents. The recovery process after Hurricane Sandy was marked by numerous neighbourhood based efforts to collaboratively meet community needs.

4.0 Background on Apartment Neighbourliness

Across the globe, there has been a great deal of research as well as community activism around strengthening neighbourhood connections. This is also visible in Vancouver, as many residents and community groups are engaged in projects that support building neighbourhood relationships. However, a major portion of these community initiatives are set in neighbourhoods that consist mostly of single family homes. This leads to our research questions of:

1. How are neighbourhood relationships different in dense housing environments?
2. How can we increase neighbour-to-neighbour social interactions in multi-unit residential buildings?

Research from the Vancouver Foundation about connections and engagement in the city has shown that apartment dwellers are more isolated from their neighbours compared to those living in townhomes or single detached homes. *Figure 1* highlights how 15% of apartment dwellers have never spoken to a neighbour, which is around twice as many as those living in townhomes or single detached homes at 7%. The Vancouver Foundation also notes that 43% of people living in high-rises do not know at least two of their neighbours' names. When it comes to doing favours for neighbours, 57% of all people surveyed have not done a favour and this spikes to 77% for apartment dwellers.

Figure 1: Residents who have never spoken to a neighbour (Vancouver Foundation, 2012)

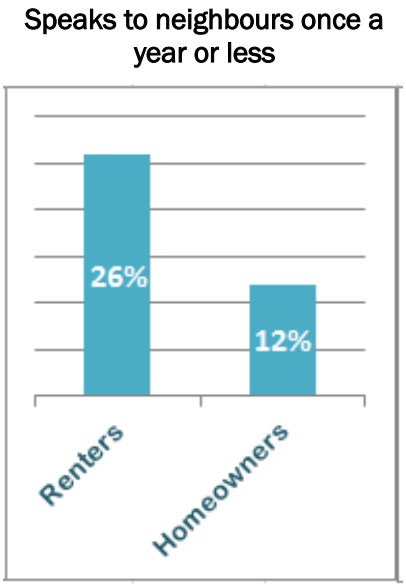

Figure 2: Speaks to neighbours once a year or less (Vancouver Foundation, 2012)

Within the demographic of apartment residents, there is also a notable difference between those who own and those who rent. In Vancouver, renters have been revealed to have weaker connections with their neighbours. When measuring interactions, the Vancouver Foundation found that 26% of renters say that they never chat with a neighbour or do so once a year compared to 12% of homeowners (*Figure 2*).

In many large cities, forms of urban alienation create barriers for interaction amongst residents in an apartment. Residents

who are socially well-connected otherwise can live in an apartment for years without knowing who their neighbours are. Evidently, physical proximity does not ensure neighbourliness.

Marcus Foth and Paul Sanders have explored the various ways that neighbours in apartments get to know each other, and they have categorized these encounters into three groupings. The first is *serendipitous encounters*, which takes place in the elevator, at the pool, in the car park, while taking out the garbage, and other routine activities. Repeated encounters in these settings can encourage lengthier chats between residents. The design of public space in residential apartments is vital in influencing the likelihood, frequency, and intensity of serendipitous encounters. The second type is *sociocultural animation*, which has various forms such as community barbecues, donation appeals, landscape rejuvenation programs, and resident associations. The facilitation of these activities requires public space and also heavily relies on residents to take the initiative to organize collective events. Lastly, there is *digital augmentation*, which is defined as a community network system that acts as a virtual space for social interaction that complements existing public spaces. Examples include resident directories with member profiles, private social networks, and interactive community displays. These 3 categories of social interactions are useful to reflect upon because in order to strengthen neighbour-to-neighbour relationships in apartments, interventions need to happen at each level.

Neighbourhood friendliness has important implications. A study from Peter Howley found that perceptions of the friendliness of neighbours have a significant impact on an individual's overall satisfaction with their neighbourhood, and that the level of interaction between neighbours is an important determinant of neighbourhood stability. Howley conducted a case study of high-density residential neighbourhoods in Dublin, Ireland. He analyzed how age, gender, and income impact the level of neighbourliness amongst apartment residents and he found some notable differences.

> "[W]hen you're in a house you would, say if someone moved in, pop to your neighbours, give them sugar or whatever but when it's an apartment it's just, even when you're just going into your door and they're going into their door next to each other, it's like the unsaid code that you just don't really speak…and they only live 3 feet away." – Study participant from Peter Howley (2009)

Figure 3 shows the probability of an individual speaking with their neighbours once a month or more depending on separate factors. The figure demonstrates that the likelihood of speaking with one's neighbour increases for the demographics of being over 30 years old, female, and having an income of less than €50,000.

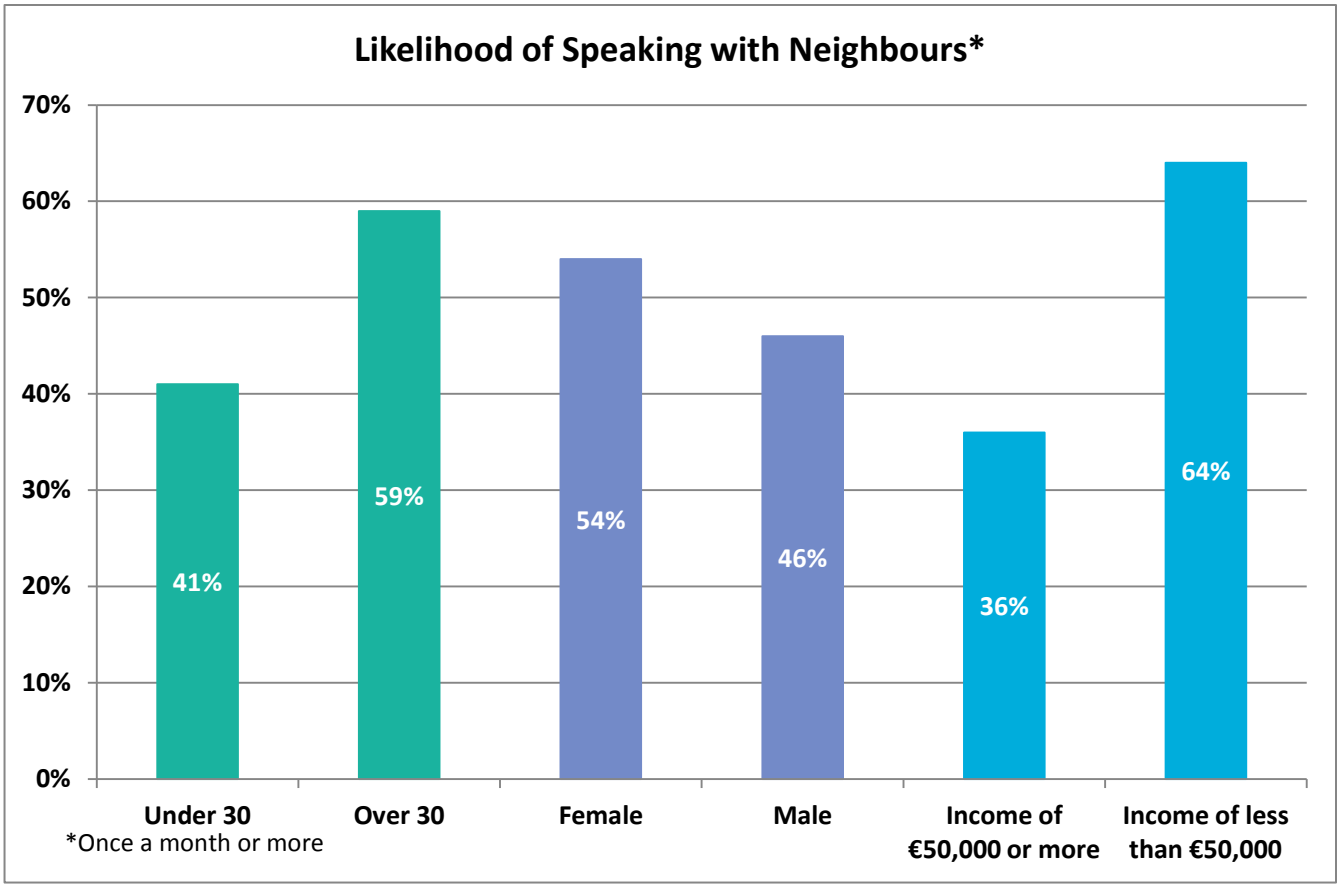

Figure 3: Likelihood of speaking with neighbours (Peter Howley, 2009)

Getting to know one's neighbours in an apartment setting is often a balancing act between wanting to feel part of a community and also needing to maintain personal privacy. A research experiment, conducted by Peter Conradie, Stephanie Neumann, and Jonas Breme, explored to what extent neighbours are willing to share personal information in a case study of a Berlin apartment. Residents were asked to select categories of information that they would be willing to reveal about themselves as well as categories of information that they would like to know about their neighbours.

An interesting discovery was that participants were willing to give more personal information than they were requesting to see about their neighbours. Results also showed that newer residents, having lacked the time to establish social connections, had a much higher interest in sharing and gathering information. More settled residents, who had stronger social ties to their direct neighbours, were more reserved about establishing additional connections. The study participants identified that information communications technology could play a possible mediating role for making initial contact, but they also wanted a stronger focus on face-to-face interactions.

This brief literature review shows that although strengthening neighbourhood relationships is discussed as a general theme, connections between neighbours in an apartment is developed in a different context than connections between neighbours in single family homes. This project recognizes this difference and explores the role that a municipal government can take to support interactions between neighbours living in an apartment complex. With the trend of urbanization and the increasing density in cities around North America, it is increasingly important to look into how the social fabric of multi-unit residential neighbourhoods can be protected and strengthened.

5.0 An Inventory: How are neighbours in Vancouver connecting?

Communities and organizations in Vancouver are well aware of the issue of social isolation in the city. There has been a significant response from residents, non-profit groups, as well as the City in creating opportunities for neighbours to connect with one another. The following inventory details the different projects focusing on neighbourhood relationship building that are happening around Vancouver in addition to the existing mechanisms that are helping fund these projects.

Both the City of Vancouver and community organizations are also involved in programs that help connect community members at a broader scale. Examples include the Car Free Festival and Viva Vancouver's public space projects. However, we have not included these types of examples in our inventory because we are specifically looking at projects that are connecting neighbours at a block, building, or a smaller neighbourhood scale.

This section's neighbourhood projects and funding mechanisms are run by grassroots residents, community organizations, and the City of Vancouver. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list. Due to the wide range of community building activities that are happening around Vancouver, all projects could not be captured in this inventory.

5.1 Mechanisms to create projects

Block Parties

vancouver.ca/doing-business/block-parties.aspx

The City of Vancouver is implementing a Summer of Block Parties program, which supports residents in organizing block parties for their neighbourhood and raises awareness of the City's block party resources. Block parties are community-organized and focus on encouraging people to meet their neighbours. The block party program covers liability insurance of $2 million. For block parties that require the closing of streets, 65% of neighbours need to sign for approval. The City provides 2 barricades for each block party, which are picked up by residents at one of four

community centres. Block parties are intended to be for the residents of that block only. During spot checks, it has been found that some blocks do not actually have their block party after being approved for one. Post-event surveys are being considered to collect information on challenges and ideas from blocks that have applied for the program.

Neighbourhood Small Grant

www.neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca

The Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) program was created by the Vancouver Foundation in 1999. The NSG program operates in sixteen neighbourhoods, in partnership with other community organizations. It is based on the idea that when people feel a sense of belonging and connection to their neighbourhood, they are more likely to be engaged in activities that make it a better place.

Small grants are provided of up to $500 (and up to two grants of $1,000 in each neighbourhood) for projects initiated and undertaken by local residents. Resident Advisory Committees, which are made up of people living in the community, review the ideas submitted by residents and decide which projects to fund.

In addition, there are the Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants, which are jointly funded by the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Foundation. These grants fund resident-led, neighbourhood projects that support the Greenest City Action Plan goal areas.

MOV Neighbourmaker Program

neighbourmaker.tumblr.com

The Neighbourmaker Program is run by the Museum of Vancouver and is co-funded by bazinga!, a company that provides online social networks for buildings. It is a public program and design challenge, which encourages university students to design an intervention or experiment in a public or semi-public space in the city to help build social connections. The program recognizes the importance of place-making in strengthening communities as well as the role of design in sparking conversations amongst strangers.

Smart & Caring Community Fund

www.vancouverfoundation.ca/initiatives/smart-and-caring

Established by the Vancouver Foundation, this fund is designed to support the Vancouver Foundation's priority programs. These priorities include connecting and engaging residents at the neighbourhood level, addressing youth homelessness, and helping Vancouver become the greenest city by 2020. This fund was inspired by Governor General David Johnston's challenge to build a smarter, more caring nation in the lead-up to Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. This initiative provides the funding for the Neighbourhood Small Grants program, the Youth Homelessness Initiative, as well as the Greenest City Fund granting program.

Neighbourhood Matching Fund

http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/neighbourhood-matching-fund.aspx

The Neighbourhood Matching Fund (NMF) is a program that supports neighbourhood-based groups that want to make creative improvements to local public lands. It is managed by the City of Vancouver in partnership with the Vancouver Foundation. Eligible projects must actively involve the community and build neighbourhood connections. The NMF is not a grant, as community groups are reimbursed for project expenses and there needs to be equivalent contributions from volunteer labour and alternate funding sources. Funding requests are needs-based and can receive up to $10,000.

100 in 1 Day

http://100in1day.ca/vancouver/#top

100 in 1 Day is a festival that celebrates citizen-driven action with participation from individuals, neighbourhoods, and community organizations. Residents are encouraged to develop interventions that inspire inclusive actions that respond to community needs and that build community networks. 100 in 1 Day is a platform for action, where intervention leaders are responsible for their costs, logistics, clean-up, and acquiring necessary permits. One of the festival's projects in June 2014 was a mobile "sniffing station" where dogs, along with their owners, can get to know each other. The sniffing station included a fire hydrant, a water bowl, pet treats, and pet toys. The project's intent was to introduce pet owners from different socio-economic classes in the mixed-income community of Woodwards.

5.2 Shared Resources

Vancouver Tool Library

www.vancouvertoollibrary.com

The Vancouver Tool Library is a cooperative tool lending library in East Vancouver. The library is based on a vision of a community empowered by having the tools and skills needed to transform their homes and communities into vibrant and sustainable spaces. The tool library aims to reduce the costs of improving and greening places by sharing a variety of tools. Members can borrow tools for home repair, gardening, bicycle maintenance and more. The tool library also acts as a community space, as it offers affordable workshops, hosts community events, and provides volunteer opportunities.

Pop-up Street Libraries

http://www.straight.com/blogra/570356/mapping-vancouvers-neighborhood-book-exchanges

All over Vancouver, there are many neighbourhood book exchanges or pop-up libraries that are emerging. The concept behind pop-up libraries is simple: local residents build a dry storage space in their neighbourhood, usually visible from the street, which can hold a small collection of books. Everyone is encouraged to take or leave a book, and this exchange occurs without any records or regulations. The pop-up libraries encourage people to read and also provide a meeting space and conversation piece for neighbours to connect over. Some pop-up libraries, such as the St George Street Library, also have notice boards that neighbours can use for communications.

The Green Bin Share Project

www.globalmechanic.com/the-green-bin-share-project-a-waste-reducing-initiative-by-our-very-own-yumiko-sasakawa

The Green Bin Share Project is a sharing initiative that encourages neighbours in single family dwellings to share their green bins with neighbours in multi-unit residential buildings. The project is funded by the Vancouver Foundation's Neighbourhood Small Grants program. Residents of single family dwellings can let others know that they are willing to share their compost bin with a green ribbon tied to the lid of their green bins. This project addresses the fact that not all multi-unit buildings in Vancouver receive green bin services to recycle food scraps. It also helps neighbours get to know one another by providing a connection point.

5.3 Sharing Meals

Lunch Meet
www.vancouverpublicspace.ca/tag/lunch-meet/

The Lunch Meet was organized by the Vancouver Public Space Network (VPSN) in the summer of 2012 at the Crosstown area. Hundreds of people gathered on Abbott Street as the VPSN transformed one block of the street into a pedestrian space, with a long table and music to bring people together to share a communal outdoor meal. The Lunch Meet occurred each Thursday in July 2012 and invited people to eat lunch together and start a conversation with strangers.

East Van Grub Crawl
www.grubcrawl.ca

The East Van Grub Crawl is a roving potluck organized in East Vancouver. The Grub Crawl is set up so that everyone eats one course at each person's house and travels between households together until they have a complete meal. An interesting twist is that each participant will not know who their dinner companions will be until they all arrive at the first home. The purpose of the Grub Crawl is to get to know your immediate neighbours. The roving potluck is held on the first Sunday of each month, and it is open to residents living between the boundaries of Hastings, 12th Avenue, Rupert and Clark. The website acts as a conduit to help people sign up. If 3 to 5 homes sign up in a specific area for any given Sunday, then the Grub Crawl is confirmed.

The HELLO Project
villagevancouvernews.blogspot.ca

Organized by Village Vancouver, the HELLO project helps neighbours connect with each other. The project promotes a simple logo as a recognized ice-breaker among strangers when displayed in coffee shops and other suitable locations. The HELLO project also organizes community potlucks to share information and to gather neighbours together.

5.4 Placemaking

Gather Round
www.gatherround.ca

Gather Round is a project initiated by a resident, who created a mini-park (3 square metres) in a traffic circle at the intersection of 10th Avenue and St George Street. The mini-park has a table, artwork, and well-tended plants. Neighbours collaborate to store the table and chairs and to supply water and a kettle. Matchstick, a local coffee shop, supplies the coffee. Every Sunday during the summer, residents serve free coffee to passer-bys. Local neighbours know about the mini-park through notices delivered every few weeks. Within the neighbourhood, the mini-park has an additional benefit because it acts as a traffic calming measure.

The Campfire Project
www.facebook.com/TheCampfireProject

As part of the Neighbourmaker Program, the Campfire Project attempts to recreate campfire experiences in public spaces in order to help build social connectedness. The project team has organized outdoor events where local residents can gather around an imitation fire, eat s'mores, as well as listen to storytelling, slam poetry, and songwriter performances. The project recognizes that people who are living in high-rise buildings no longer have their own backyard. Public parks and beaches are becoming the modern backyard, and there needs to be spaces in them where neighbours can get to know each other.

Street Art Team
www.citystudiovancouver.com/projects/streetart

The Street Art Team is a pilot project from CityStudio that was engaging Mount Pleasant neighbours to collaboratively design a vibrant on-street mural around the intersection of 18th Avenue and Quebec Place. The mural, which was painted in the summer, serves as a symbol of neighbourhood identity and connectedness. The pilot project hosted four community meet-ups for residents to brainstorm design ideas and to form new relationships.

5.5 Emergency Preparedness

Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program
http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/free-emergency-workshops.aspx

The City of Vancouver offers free emergency planning workshops to residents through the Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program. The workshop topics include learning how to prepare, respond, and recover from earthquakes, tsunamis, heat waves, and other disasters. Community groups and neighbours can request a free workshop as long as they have at least fifteen participants. One of the available workshops focuses on earthquake preparedness in the context of apartment living.

Dunbar Emergency and Earthquake Preparedness
http://dunbar-vancouver.org/archives/category/dunbar-earthquake-and-emergency-preparedness-deep

The Dunbar Emergency and Earthquake Preparedness (DEEP) program is a neighbourhood-oriented, community resilience approach to emergency preparedness. The program is run by a team of local residents who work closely with the City's emergency and police department. DEEP has engaged Dunbar neighbourhood residents in a "Map Your Neighbourhood" activity to identify emergency needs and has collaborated with local residents to create a Community Disaster Response Plan. In addition, DEEP hosts monthly workshops with talks by emergency preparedness experts, which offers an opportunity for neighbours to meet. The DEEP model is significant as it brings disaster preparedness from the individual scale to the community scale.

5.6 Online Tools

Neighbourhood email listservs

http://www.dickenscommunity.org/
http://dunbar-vancouver.org/neighbours-mailing-list
http://www.mountain-view.ca/

Many neighbourhoods host email listservs as a communication tool to facilitate the exchange of information, ideas and items amongst local residents. E-mail listservs are used to communicate neighbourhood news, events, and crime alerts, and they also allow residents to borrow, buy and sell goods as well as organize local projects.

bazinga!

www.mybazinga.com

bazinga! is a centralized online communication tool that helps share resources and create social collaboration within multi-unit residential buildings. The online portal allows for neighbours to be kept in the loop about the latest building news and alerts, to share updates and look out for each other, to recommend a service or skill, or to find an activity partner. The aim of the tool is to create better communication and communities in high-rise residential buildings. All residents are connected to a newsfeed called "The Loop". Currently, 40 buildings are now using bazinga! across Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto. The program "bazinga! Home" is the free-base version and has the main purpose of facilitating resident communication.

5.7 Demographically-Targeted Projects

Neighbourhood Connections

jfsa.ca/neighbourhood-connections/

Neighbourhood Connections is a program run by the Jewish Family Service Agency, which is about linking seniors with volunteers in their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood-based volunteer teams respond to seniors' requests for assistance with one-off tasks, such as picking up dry cleaning, shopping for groceries, or taking a vacuum to be repaired. Volunteers are trained by the JFSA and dedicate 1 to 2 hours per month. The program allows people to volunteer in a way that is

convenient to them, as it is based in their own neighbourhood. The program also provides the opportunity for neighbours to get to know each other through a giving relationship.

In With Forward

http://inwithforward.com/

The team at consulting firm “In With Forward” uses a “grounded change” approach to explore the unmet needs and gaps in the current social services and welfare systems. The team spent 10 weeks living in a social housing complex in Burnaby to learn about how to redefine labels, reduce isolation, and increase belonging. During the 10 weeks, they collected stories from neighbours and co-developed ideas for new services, policies, and neighbourhood networks. One of the proposed ideas is called “Nok Nok”, which is a new role and introductions service in apartment complexes and high-rises that connects neighbours who share specific social interests and practical needs.

6.0 Bright Lights: Existing examples of well-connected multi-unit buildings

During the beginning of this project, there was an exploration of multi-unit residential buildings in Vancouver that have been successful in establishing social connections. We spoke to building managers, residents, community organizations, and developers to find "bright lights" or exemplary models of well-connected apartments. The following cases demonstrate how particular residential buildings in the city were able to strengthen neighbourhood relationships.

Performing Arts Lodge

Coal Harbour

The Performing Arts Lodge (PAL) is a housing complex for performing artists, which consists of 99 rental units. The complex contains a studio theatre as well as a common garden. PAL's residents recognized that Coal Harbour faces a lack of street life and issues of social isolation. In response, a small resident group became involved in organizing a Canada Day celebration in their apartment and invited their neighbours from nearby buildings. The Canada Day celebration was a large scale event, which involved a live band, an animation booth, line dancing, a car show, and an evening cabaret in the building's theatre.

District Main

Riley Park

District Main is a rental apartment with 79 units and provides a community garden and patio as a communal space for residents. The building manager uses the common spaces to organize three neighbourhood events per year for District Main's residents. Neighbourhood events have included a pumpkin carving contest, outdoor movie night, as well as different themed parties. The building manager sends out a monthly e-newsletter to update residents about the building's news as well as social events. Recently, a District Main Facebook group was created to help residents communicate with each other more frequently. The building also has a communal wine rack and a closet designated for sharing equipment in order to facilitate informal exchanges between neighbours.

Hollyburn Properties

West End

Hollyburn is a property management firm that manages rental apartments in the West End neighbourhood. The firm has led various programs to engage and connect residents in their buildings. Every year, each building hosts a Resident Appreciation BBQ, which provides the opportunity for neighbours to get to know each other. In addition, property managers at Hollyburn organize garage sales, clothing swaps, and lobby decorations for holidays. There are also community gardens at many of the Hollyburn properties, which supports food security as well as provides a space for neighbours to connect with one another.

Project Change
South Cambie

Project Change is a personal pursuit of a Vancouver resident that aimed to strengthen community connections. The resident lived in a two-storey apartment building in South Cambie and initiated actions to bring his neighbours together. These actions included donating a Waves coffee card for neighbours, organizing residents in writing a thank you card for their postman, and starting a book exchange in the lobby. His actions as a resident champion led his building's residents to leave more sticky notes and letters for each other as well as to create an apartment Facebook page. In addition, another resident was inspired to host an apartment party in their unit to develop neighbourly relationships.

Salsbury Drive
Grandview Woodlands

In a multi-unit apartment complex on Salsbury Drive, tenants have taken over the lawn areas to collectively build an organic food garden. They have planted a variety of vegetables and flowers in a garden that already had a clump of rhubarb plus a fig tree and plum tree. Tenants each have their individual garden plots, but there is also a community plot shared by the entire group. The garden has brought residents in the apartment complex together in a practice of cooperation, sharing, and respect. The owner of the complex has encouraged her tenants to garden and has allowed additional lawn areas to be converted into vegetable plots. Every year, the owner supports her tenants' garden by trucking in new soil and mulch, and she has also contributed an old wheelbarrow. The apartment residents work in the garden as time permits, taking turns to water and weed, and they often end up hanging out together in the garden in the evening. The garden has also become a conversation point for neighbours passing by, which is bridging connections between households in the community.

From the case examples discussed above, a key lesson is that it often takes a champion to drive actions or projects to bring neighbours together. The building champion can be a resident, building manager, or property manager, and they can take the role of creating social spaces for neighbourly interactions or introducing neighbours directly. Without a building champion to drive these initiatives, apartment residents often become complacent and accept living in isolated environments.

7.0 International best practices in building neighbourhood connections

Although relationships between neighbours primarily develop organically, local governments can still play a role in growing neighbour-to-neighbour interactions. Around the world, city and regional governments are stepping up to create initiatives and programs to support neighbourhood social resilience. Some government projects focus mainly on increasing social interactions between neighbours while other projects incorporate a sustainability or emergency preparedness component.

The following case studies are best practice examples of local governments in different cities around the globe who have engaged their citizens in becoming more "neighbourly". These examples have been selected because they have been initiated by municipal governments and thus could become a model for the City of Vancouver to adapt. However, it is important to remember with best practice case studies that each model is successful in a specific context. In reviewing the following cases, it would be beneficial to consider which examples occur in a similar governance environment to Vancouver.

Note that the majority of the examples provided in this section are not programs that are specific to neighbours living in multi-unit residential buildings. Most of the government initiatives listed below are intended for neighbourhoods in the general sense. However, the concepts behind these initiatives can still be applicable in an apartment or condominium context.

7.1 Emergency Preparedness

An important reason to bring neighbours together is for the purpose of emergency preparedness. Local governments can encourage residents to organize disaster preparedness at the neighbourhood level through offering trained facilitators or small financial incentives. These models also require a resident champion who is willing to conduct outreach to their neighbours and to lead meetings.

"Get Ready" Meetings

San Mateo County, California
http://www.ca-ilg.org/public-engagement-case-story/san-mateo-county-gives-residents-options-and-opportunities-get-prepared

San Mateo County has developed a "preparedness pyramid" that supports residents in different levels of involvement with emergency preparedness. Included in the preparedness pyramid is the opportunity to form neighbourhood block groups, where residents with Community Emergency

Response Team (CERT) training are encouraged to share their knowledge with neighbours by hosting an introductory level "Get Ready" presentation. The neighbourhood "Get Ready" meetings, led by CERT volunteers, provide an opportunity for neighbours to get to know each other better and to identify those who may have special needs, such as persons with disabilities, elderly residents, or pets. This model aims to keep City volunteers with an interest in emergency preparedness engaged and providing leadership for their community.

Neighbourhood Liaisons Program

Redwood City, California
www.redwoodcity.org/manager/initiatives/neighborhood_liaison.html

In Redwood City, residents can sign up to be Neighbourhood Liaisons, which is a volunteer position that involves meeting and talking to a few of their neighbours, having them fill out contact sheets, and then helping them to collectively come up with and work on a neighbourhood project. Once a year, a short basic disaster preparation class is taught to Neighbourhood Liaisons, who then take the information back to others in their neighbourhood. The City offers up to $300 for expense reimbursement to groups that hold neighbourhood events, on the condition that they invite the Fire Department to attend and inform residents about emergency preparedness opportunities.

7.2 Neighbourhood-led Initiatives

Neighbourhood activism and community building often begins with small projects. These are projects that involve neighbours and are directed towards improving the livability, vibrancy, and health of local neighbourhoods.

Resilient Streets

Victoria, British Columbia
resilientneighbourhoods.ca/activities/resilient-streets

The Resilient Streets initiative is part of the Building Resilient Neighbourhoods Project, which is led by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria and Transition Victoria. The program offers the Resilient Streets Toolkit for residents, which is a guide about how neighbours can begin hands-on projects with limited funding. The toolkit provides examples of projects in the areas of: gatherings and celebrations, placemaking, the sharing economy, as well as peer learning and action. Residents can also apply for micro-grants for a one-time pre-planning neighbourhood gathering ($40) and they are also eligible for a Resilient Streets Project grant ($200). The funding is given to help neighbours get to know each other and work together on a project to improve their block and to strengthen connections.

Better Neighbourhoods Program

Ottawa, Ontario
http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/get-know-your-city/improving-your-neighbourhood/neighbourhood-connection-office

The City of Ottawa has formed the Neighbourhood Connection Office (NCO), which helps residents and community groups work together on small-scale projects that make their neighbourhoods more liveable, healthy and vibrant. The NCO helps connect resident groups to potential resources that they can access and also offers a "Do-it-yourself" neighbourhood toolkit. In addition, the NCO runs the Better Neighbourhoods program that supports small-scale community-driven projects at the neighbourhood-level. Resident groups apply to the Better Neighbourhoods program with a project idea, and the three winning entries can receive a maximum of $30,000 in funding. Selected neighbourhoods work with City staff who help to assess the feasibility of their project and assist with implementation.

A part of encouraging neighbour-to-neighbour interactions is raising public awareness about the importance of neighbourhood relationships. One way to do this is through dedicating a day or even a year to celebrating neighbourliness. It can be a low-cost option for municipal governments or it can become a program that funds neighbourhood events and initiatives. Most importantly, it provides residents an excuse to reach out to their neighbours to arrange a social gathering.

Local governments can also create incentives for residents to reach out to their neighbours by organizing a contest. These contests can involve registering a neighbourhood-oriented event, posting a community photo, or writing about a neighbourhood initiative on social media. The City can offer use of its facilities and resources as prizes, such as entry to a swimming pool, skating rink, gym, or recreational class.

Festival of Neighbourhoods

Kitchener, Ontario
www.kitchener.ca/en/livinginkitchener/FestivalOfNeighbourhoods.asp

Festival of Neighbourhoods is a supportive incentive program in Kitchener that celebrates neighbourhoods by encouraging community members to organize inclusive activities that bring neighbours together. It is a year-long festival and culminates in a Festival Finale that is held by the City in October. Every neighbourhood that registers their event in the festival is qualified for a draw during the Festival Finale for a $10,000 capital improvement grant for their neighbourhood. Early bird draws offer other prizes such as one-hour of free ice time at the City of Kitchener arena, a free inflatable rental, and a swimming party at a City of Kitchener indoor pool. The City also offers festival coordinators to help with the process of event organizing. A monthly newsletter called "Festival E-Neighbour" is distributed that shares successful stories and fun ideas for gatherings.

The City provides the Festival of Neighbourhoods Information and Planning Package, which includes a list of community resources. In order to ease event organizing, the City rents out the Neighbourhood Activity Trunk, which includes games, crafts materials, instruments, and sports equipment.

Neighbour Day

Calgary, Alberta
www.calgary.ca/General/flood-commemoration/Pages/Section1/1-Neighbour-Day.aspx

The City of Calgary designated June 21 as "Neighbour Day" in commemoration of the flooding that occurred during June 21, 2013. "Neighbour Day" intends to celebrate the spirit of Calgary and remember the outpouring of kindness, help and citizenship exhibited by Calgarians during the flood. "Neighbour Day" was celebrated across the city in the forms of block parties, barbecues, community events, corporate functions, and more.

SHINE Movement

Singapore
www.hdb.gov.sg/fi10/fi10333p.nsf/w/GNSHINE2013?OpenDocument

In 2012, the Share In Neighbourliness or SHINE Movement was formed to engage residents in the promotion of small acts of kindness. The SHINE Movement focuses on encouraging residents to take the initiative to forge neighbourly ties on a personal level with the people staying nearest to them. Residents are encouraged to join the SHINE Movement by saying "Hello" or "Thank You" to a neighbour by giving them a SHINE card with personalized messages. These cards are available through government service centres and community centres. Every card entry is put into a lucky draw with 30 winners. A photo contest is also held for the most creative or touching photo entries of good neighbourliness. Since the launch of the SHINE Movement, over 23,800 neighbourly acts have been registered.

7.3 Resident Recognition

A simple and direct way of encouraging neighbourliness is by awarding residents who have gone out of their way to help a neighbour. This approach is low-cost because the award does not need to be financial but can just be a formal recognition by the City. Awarding citizens who engage in positive neighbourly acts is a way of showing appreciation to individuals for their good will as well as a way of promoting similar behaviour to other residents.

Good Neighbour Award

Singapore
www.hdb.gov.sg/fi10/fi10333p.nsf/w/GNGoodNeighbourAward2013?OpenDocument

The Good Neighbour Award is an annual award given to Singaporean residents based on acts of neighbourliness and graciousness that they have done that require a significant sacrifice of their time and efforts. The award started in 2009 and was organized by the Housing Development Board and the People's Association. Residents are nominated for the award by their neighbours. In 2013, more than 1,800 nominations were received from appreciative residents who wanted to recognize their neighbours for showing their care and concern. Award recipients have volunteered to do handyman tasks for their neighbours, taken care of more vulnerable elderly residents, and organized street parties and exercise groups for their block. There are separate categories for adults and for students, so youth are also encouraged to be actively supporting their neighbours.

7.4 Block Parties

Block parties are the traditional form that neighbours have gotten to know each other through. The City of Vancouver currently leads a block party program that supports residents through subsidizing fees as well as providing other resources for event organizing. The examples below show how other municipal governments have run block party programs and the different resources for residents that they have chosen to direct public funding towards.

Meet the Neighbour Program

Launceston, Australia
www.launceston.tas.gov.au/lcc/index.php?c=625

The Meet the Neighbour Program encourages anyone living in Launceston to initiate relationships with neighbours through hosting a small event. Residents can apply to the local government for funding, which is in the form of a $60 supermarket voucher to cover the costs of food. In order to receive the voucher, the small event must abide by a list of rules. The rules include: 1) They must invite 5 neighbours, 2) At least half of them should be people that they do not know well, 3) The event must be free to attend, 4) A "Neighbourhood Contact Sheet" and "Neighbourhood Skills and Interests Form" must be filled out at the event and given to guests to help keep in touch.

Community Event Trailer

Victoria, British Columbia
http://www.fairfieldcommunity.ca/events/Block%20party%20trailer.pdf

The City of Victoria's equipment inventory includes the Community Event Trailer, which is an all-in-one event kit created specifically to support residential neighbourhood block parties, community centres, and neighbourhood associations. The purpose of the event kit is to gather supplies and equipment in one accessible location as well as to make supplies available for an affordable rental fee. The trailer includes: 6 tables, 30 chairs, 4 EZ Up tents, 1 set of tent walls, 16 tent weights, 4

sandwich boards, 4 extension cords, 1 large Webber BBQ, 1 generator, 1 wireless PA system with a stand, 1 microphone with a stand, as well as 1 portable volleyball net with a volleyball. The cost of renting the Community Event Trailer is $150 and the trailer is stored at a local park.

7.5 Youth Engagement

In crafting a culture of neighbourliness, it is vital to engage and include youth in the community process. Cities can have a role in youth engagement through establishing a partnership with local secondary schools and colleges. Through this partnership, Cities can support youth in hosting workshops and activities around building better neighbourhood relationships in their own communities.

Youth SHINE Projects

Singapore
http://www.hdb.gov.sg/fi10/fi10333p.nsf/w/GNSHINE2013YouthNJC?OpenDocument

One of the projects that was part of the Youth SHINE campaign was run by the National Junior College with support from the Punggol Meridian Residents' Committee. Students designed customized games to help residents understand the importance of neighbourliness. Residents received tips on body language, learned about the inconvenience of dripping laundry, helped each other through obstacle games, and learned about different communication methods. Students organized the Neighbour Activity Day and attracted around 140 residents from the area. Students went from door to door to invite residents to the Neighbour Activity Day and collected messages for their Pool of Thoughts board.

8.0 The Pilot Study

8.1 Methodology

After learning from global best practice examples and an overview of the existing neighbourhood projects in Vancouver, this project began to explore potential apartment buildings in the city to conduct a "Vertical Block Party" pilot initiative. For this pilot, we planned to host an event with the focus of supporting neighbour-to-neighbour interactions while connecting to emergency preparedness and resilience building. We also wanted the event to be a starting point for residents to do future organizing around social gatherings for their building.

In the search for a pilot building, we included the criteria of:

- Rental units, because research has shown that renters face higher levels of social isolation than home owners.
- A diverse neighbourhood, so that we can see the effects of our pilot on a range of demographics.
- A mid-rise (rather than high-rise) residential building, because our project did not have the capacity to host an event with a larger resident population.
- A residential building that has not already had many social events or opportunities to connect, as we did not want our pilot to be redundant.
- A building with an existing resident champion, who we can communicate with during our organizing process and who can help us with promotions.
- A building where we are able to receive approval from the Property Manager to implement the project.

We followed through on a variety of leads, and in the end, confirmed two apartment buildings for our pilot study – one in the Kitsilano neighbourhood, and one in the West End neighbourhood.

Beach Ave Pilot Building

West Broadway Pilot Building

Apartment building	Beach Ave	West Broadway
Neighbourhood	West End	Kitsilano
Number of units	36	29
Type of units	1 & 2 bedrooms, residential-only. No common amenity space.	1 & 2 bedrooms, mixed-use with commercial units on the ground floor. No common amenity space.
Resident demographics	Retired seniors, young working professionals, and very few children, Many of the renters are long-term residents.	Young working professionals (18-40 years), singles and couples, very few children, and near-retired seniors. The building is new so all the renters have been there for less than 2 years.

8.2 Resident Engagement

After selecting our pilot buildings, we began our resident engagement process. Our first step was creating an online survey to distribute to residents, through the Talk Vancouver platform. In the survey, we evaluated the current levels of neighbourly interactions, interest in developing neighbourhood relationships, and we also asked for input regarding our pilot event's activities (see *Appendix A* for survey questions). One component of our survey was to ask residents whether they would be willing to be involved in designing the pilot event.

For the West Broadway building, we distributed the survey through an e-mail contact list provided by the Property Manager. For the Beach Avenue building, we requested the assistance of the Building Manager to distribute paper copies of our survey link due to the concerns that the Building Manager had regarding sharing e-mail contact information.

We received 10 survey responses from the West Broadway building and 1 survey response from the Beach Avenue building. The most common event activity suggested by survey participants in both buildings was a beach barbecue. Due to the fact that none of the residents signed up to be involved in the event design process, we decided to move forward with organizing a beach barbecue. Although residents did not express interest in helping design our pilot event, we received e-mails from building residents indicating their interest in the overall project as well as their desire to see the organizing of future social gatherings.

8.3 Survey Findings

In terms of levels of neighbourly interactions and interest in developing neighbourhood relationships, we found that at the West Broadway building, neighbours were friendly in their openness to greet one another, but they do not currently socialize with one another. However, building residents are generally interested in getting to know their neighbours. The survey found that the average number of neighbours that the building residents were friendly with was 3 to 4 individuals. *Figure 4* below shows the level and forms of interactions that neighbours at West Broadway engage in and *Figure 5* demonstrates the level of interest in strengthening neighbourhood relationships.

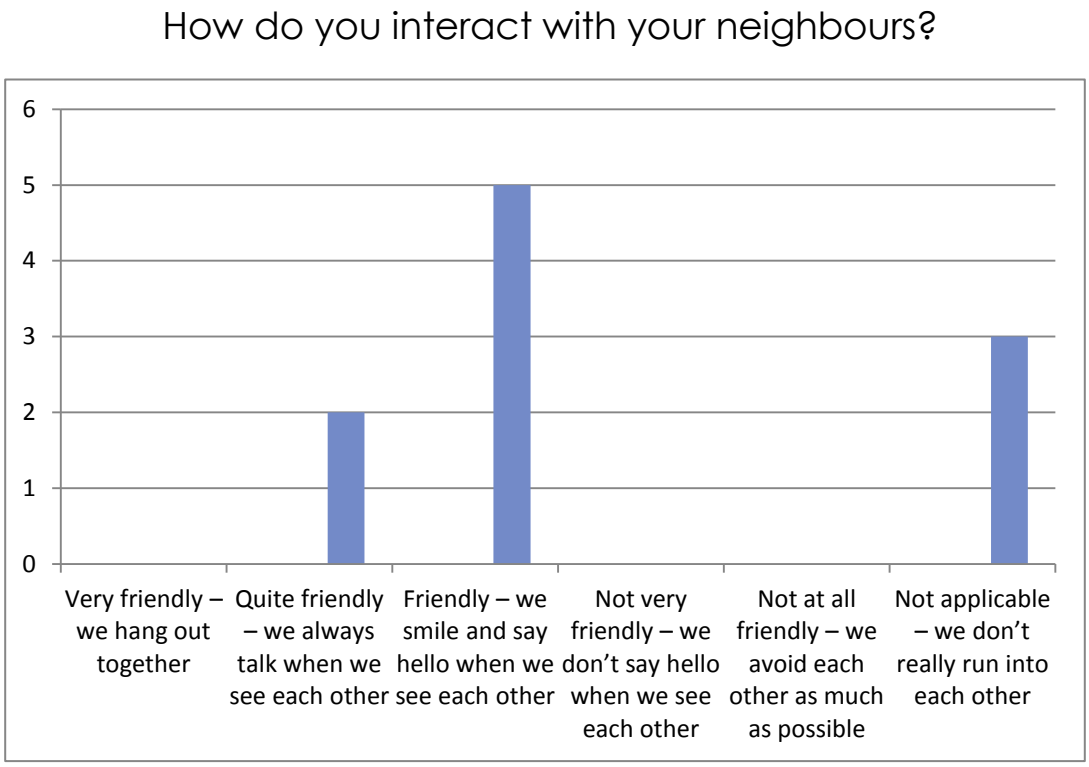

Figure 4: How do you interact with your neighbours?

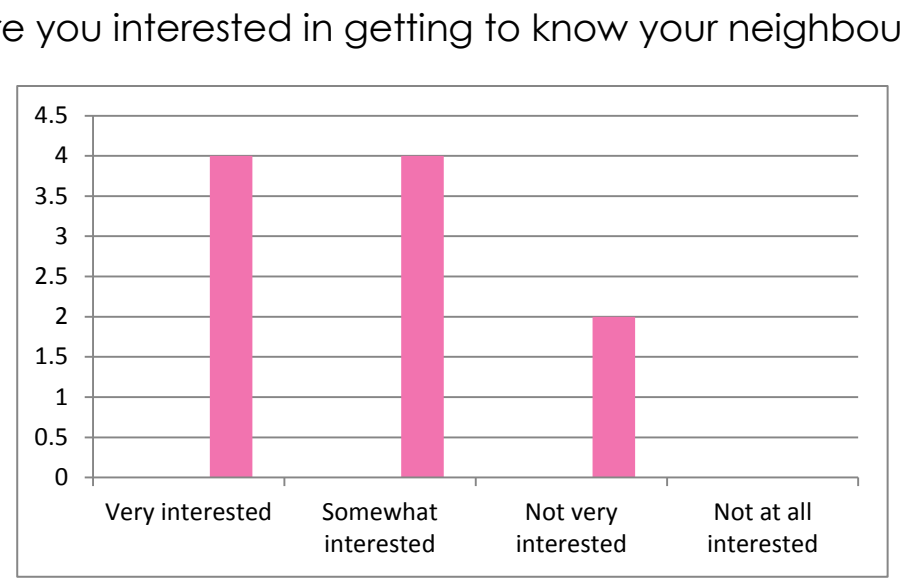

Figure 5: Are you interested in getting to know your neighbours?

Due to a low response rate, survey findings for the Beach Avenue building are not included in this analysis.

8.4 Event description

We hosted our two pilot events during August 2014, and we held beach barbecues in reflection of the desired activity identified in our survey. At each event, there was the participation of around 17 to 20 residents. During both events, we utilized three tools in order to encourage residents to connect with each other as well as consider future opportunities for social gatherings.

The first tool was a bingo icebreaker activity (see *Appendix B*), which is a common game used in group settings to encourage participants to speak with strangers. Each participant needed to find others within the group that fit into the descriptions provided in each bingo category. We created a bingo icebreaker template that included potentially useful information to know about neighbours in the event of an emergency. Examples of descriptions include: “has taken a first aid class”, “owns a battery-powered radio”, “owns a pet”, and “English is a second language”. This tool is a means for neighbours to begin conversations and also benefits emergency preparedness by getting residents to think about the resources and vulnerabilities in their building.

The second tool was a poster of best practice examples of how neighbours are connecting around North America (see *Appendix C*). We displayed this poster throughout our event in order to raise awareness about the many different ways that neighbours are creating relationships with one another. This tool is meant to expand ideas beyond the traditional “block party” to think about how neighbourhood gatherings can work towards sustainability, home improvement, or community safety.

The third tool that was utilized was an interactive poster to receive input from participating residents about how they would like to continue with neighbourhood social events (see *Appendix D*). The poster asked residents for feedback on what type of event they would like to attend next, how they would like to keep in touch, as well as their contact information. The intention with this tool is to forward it to a resident champion who can use the information to organize future gatherings for the building.

All three tools can be useful for Vancouver residents who are interested in organizing initial social gatherings for their building or block. The tools have been included in the appendices of this report for public use.

8.5 Reflections on the pilot

The process of organizing the two pilot events was an important learning experience around community engagement and participatory event planning. Our vision for the pilot event evolved as we received feedback from our building’s residents. Initially, we had planned to host a co-design session with residents so that they would be able to contribute ideas around the activities and community resources they wanted at the event. In our attempts to organize this session, we found that residents were unwilling, intimidated, or simply did not have the time to help plan the pilot. Through consultations with a resident champion, we were given the advice of organizing a simple event with one clear goal of getting to know your neighbours.

Before the event, we had asked residents to bring food, supplies, and equipment to share. We had anticipated that we could borrow and share items in order to reduce our number of necessary

purchases. At the event, we found that residents are willing to bring dishes to share with their neighbours, but they chose not to bring supplies such as cooking and set-up items. For future vertical block parties, it would be important to consider that hosts may be responsible for all supplies and equipment.

There were notable differences in our processes of organizing the two pilot events. At the West Broadway building, we had the active participation of a resident champion and we also had access to residents' contact information. Because of these factors, we were able to raise awareness about the event through e-mail updates and posters in the elevator. As a result, we had a higher rate of 19 RSVPs at the West Broadway building and a similar number in attendance. In contrast, at the Beach Avenue building, our resident connection was out of town during the weeks before the event and we did not have access to residents' contact information due to the building manager's privacy concerns. Due to these factors, we decided to mail invitations to residents. We only received 4 RSVPs from the Beach Avenue building but around 18 residents attended the event. Because our Beach Avenue event was held in front of the pilot building, it was easier for residents to drop by.

Another difference between the two buildings is that West Broadway had already started to build connections through resident socials, whereas Beach Avenue had not. A resident from Beach Avenue had commented during our event that she has been residing in the building for 10 years and has never seen an apartment social. This absence of connections at Beach Avenue may have influenced the building's low response rate for the surveys and RSVP requests.

8.6 From friendly hellos to emergency preparedness

We found that at our pilot event, it was challenging to put a lot of focus on emergency preparedness. Because it was an initial neighbourhood social gathering, residents were focused on spending time on getting to know each other. We realized that the stage of incorporating emergency preparedness needs to happen after neighbours have hosted several social events.

The City can have a role in conducting outreach to neighbourhoods who have already hosted a number of block parties to propose a small-scale disaster preparedness session with neighbours in

the area. Alternatively, residents can engage in a community preparedness model such as the Dunbar Emergency and Earthquake Preparedness program. *Figure 6* below demonstrates some suggested steps to building community social resilience.

Figure 6: Steps to building community resilience

9.0 Key Recommendations

Based on the key learnings from each stage, the following recommendations have been compiled for the City of Vancouver. The recommendations identify potential roles for implementation and have been categorized into two sections: quick starts and longer-term actions.

9.1 Quick Starts (by early summer 2015)

Follow-up with Pilot buildings

Lead Department: Sustainability

From our pilot event, we have received information from residents about what type of event they would like to attend next, how they would like to keep in touch, as well as their contact information. The City should conduct additional outreach via a post-event follow up meeting in the pilot buildings to identify resident champions who are willing to lead in organizing future social events. These resident champions should be given the information that we collected through our event tools as well as a copy of this research report as resources. In addition, the follow-up can provide an opportunity for the City to share neighbourhood-oriented emergency preparedness resources and to encourage resident champions to engage their building in disaster preparedness education.

Create a Resource Guide for "Vertical Block Parties"

Lead Department: Sustainability, Public Engagement

During our pilot study, we came to learn that many mid-rise apartment buildings do not have common amenity spaces. This can be a deterrent for residents when organizing a social event for their building. On the City of Vancouver's block party website, there is a Locations tab that suggests general ideas for alternative spaces for apartment residents. However, this tab requires additional navigation to find specific facilities and not all the facilities listed include pricing.

In order to encourage more multi-unit residential buildings to participate in "vertical block parties", the City can create a resource guide that clearly lists all City facilities that are available for rental along with their pricing. The resource guide can also be created in the form of an interactive map, so that residents can look at which facilities or resources they can access in their neighbourhood. This resource guide can be promoted to resident associations to raise awareness about potential block party spaces for apartment residents.

Create a Toolkit for Building Managers

Lead Department: Sustainability, Public Engagement

From this project's survey of best practices in Vancouver, we found that building managers play a pivotal role in supporting neighbourly interactions. Connected and engaged buildings usually have a building manager who leads in organizing social events for the apartment residents. Building managers also have a role in introducing residents to one another when they perceive a common area of interest or practical need. The City should create a toolkit for building managers that explains why and how they can socially connect their tenants. The toolkit can draw on successful models in Vancouver, such as District Main. As a starting point, the City can reach out to the Building Owners and Managers Association of British Columbia as a partner in this toolkit.

Provide access to City insurance for "Vertical Block Parties"

Lead Department: Special Events

The City of Vancouver purchases a $2 million insurance package for their Block Party program. This insurance package covers residents who are organizing block parties and helps reduce barriers for hosting these neighbourhood gatherings. Multi-unit residential buildings who want to host block parties using public parks or facilities will also need to purchase liability insurance for their event. The City should explore the feasibility and costs of including "vertical block parties" under the Block Party insurance program.

Provide reduced or waived Fees for "Vertical Block Party" Picnic Permits

Lead Department: Vancouver Parks Board

The City should partner with the Vancouver Parks Board to explore the feasibility of subsidizing picnic permits for "vertical block party" events. The rationale behind this subsidy is that mid-rise apartments are providing density in the city, but residents are not gaining common amenity spaces. Residents in mid-rise apartments should receive affordable access to public spaces to have social events for their building. In addition, a precedent has been set by the Block Party program, which subsidizes the cost of street closing permits for residents organizing block

parties. The City can work with the Vancouver Parks Board to analyze the costs of subsidizing or eliminating the picnic permit fees for events that are block parties for apartment residents. It would be important to clearly define block parties so that apartment residents understand that they cannot waive picnic permit fees for private parties.

Share ideas for Neighbourhood Connections on Social Media

Lead Department: Corporate Communications

The City of Vancouver can inspire residents to try innovative projects around strengthening neighbourhood relationships by promoting best practice examples through their social media networks. These best practice examples can be drawn by the models provided in this research report. Currently, the City is focusing its promotions around neighbourhood connections on the block party model. However, there are a variety of ways that neighbours can come together, which also work towards sustainability, emergency preparedness, and community building. By sharing these other models, residents can think beyond block parties for ways of getting to know their neighbours.

Hold a contest for registered Block Parties

Lead Department: Public Engagement, Vancouver Parks Board

In this project's survey of best practices, it was discovered that contests are an effective method of providing incentives for residents to host block parties. These contests can involve asking residents to register their block party, post a photo of a neighbourhood connections event, or write about a neighbourhood initiative on social media. This approach can be a low-cost option, as the City can offer use of its facilities and resources as prizes, such as entry to a swimming pool, skating rink, gym, or recreational class. The City can pilot a neighbourhood block party-related contest and analyze its impact on increasing the number of hosted block parties. This would be of particular merit in association with launching any new Vertical Block Party resources, to encourage neighbourhood socials within multi-unit buildings.

9.1 Longer-Term Actions (by summer 2016)

Expand the Utility of Community Disaster Support Hubs

Lead Department: Emergency Management, Public Engagement

The City is currently in the planning stages of implementing Community Disaster Support Hubs in neighbourhoods across Vancouver. The Community Disaster Support Hub is meant to be a simple post that acts as a gathering place for neighbours in the event of an emergency. There is the potential to develop this hub so that the space is consistently used during non-emergency periods. One recommendation is to utilize the hub as a neighbourhood billboard, so that nearby residents can communicate to each other about local events, news, goods exchange, and alerts. This

approach will familiarize the hub to local residents and will also turn the hub into a tool for connecting neighbours.

Build on the Neighbourhood Emergency Assistance Team program

Lead Department: Emergency Management

The City of Vancouver manages the Neighbourhood Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT), a team of volunteers who are trained to support professional emergency responders in the event of a disaster. Volunteers receive standardized training on how to self-organize their neighbourhoods and work as a team in disaster staging areas in the event of an emergency. Currently, NEAT volunteers do not work with their neighbours on how to organize for a disaster until the actual emergency event. The City should explore building on the NEAT program so that volunteers are able to connect with other volunteers in their neighbourhood after their training. This approach would be proactive through encouraging NEAT volunteers in each neighbourhood to prepare a preliminary emergency response plan with their neighbours.

Create a City Webpage template for Neighbourhood Communications

Lead Department: Corporate Communications, IT, Public Engagement

In some Vancouver neighbourhoods, there are e-mail listservs that act as a communication tool to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among local residents. The issue is that not all Vancouver neighbourhoods have an e-mail listserv and the labour of setting up and maintaining a listserv is dependent upon a few dedicated residents. The City can ensure that all neighbourhoods have access to a simple communication tool by setting up a webpage template that acts as a platform for neighbourhood communications. A recommendation for the City is to research the costs as well as logistics of setting up and maintaining such a webpage. The City can also explore the feasibility of training community residents to learn the basics of maintaining the webpage.

Create a Community Event Trailer

Department: Public Engagement, Vancouver Parks Board

The pilot study revealed that in organizing a vertical block party, there is significant time spent towards gathering equipment and supplies. We found that although residents are willing to provide food for an event, it is difficult to recruit neighbours to assist in providing equipment. The City can ease this process by providing a “Community Event Trailer”, which is an event toolkit that can include a pop-up tent, barbecue, tables, chairs, recreational equipment, and more. There can be a few Community Event Trailers available for rental through community centres. This recommendation is based off an existing model from the City of Victoria, which rents a wide range of event equipment for a total of $150. The affordability of this rental is important, as private party rental companies charge high prices for renting equipment, particularly barbecues and pop-up tents. The City currently has an event toolkit, but it is geared towards providing items such as street barricades and does not include a pop-up tent or a barbecue.

10.0 Concluding remarks

Vancouver communities face a complex range of social, environmental, and economic challenges due to the effects of climate change as well as other global processes. In order to adapt to these challenges, communities need to build up their resiliency and one way to do so is through strengthening the social connections between neighbours. There are multiple benefits that accrue from connecting neighbours, including decreased social isolation, better health, increased safety, reduced material consumption and improved preparedness for emergency events.

Building up relationships between neighbours and addressing the issue of social isolation is a strategy that is important to a range of departments at the City of Vancouver. Creating neighbourhood social connections fits into existing goals established by Public Engagement, Emergency Management, Sustainability, and Social Development. Through interdepartmental collaboration and simple, cost-efficient actions, the City can play an effective role in improving neighbourhood social resilience.

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Appendix A

"GETTING TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS" SURVEY

How friendly are you with your neighbours?

- ☐ Very friendly – we hang out together
- ☐ Quite friendly – we always talk when we see each other
- ☐ Friendly – we smile and say hello when we see each other
- ☐ Not very friendly – we don't say hello when we see each other
- ☐ Not at all friendly – we avoid each other as much as possible
- ☐ Not applicable – we don't really run into each other

How many neighbours are you friendly (very friendly/quite friendly/friendly) with?

_____

Are you interested in spending more time with your neighbours and getting to know your neighbours better?

☐ Very interested ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ Not interested

Would you be interested in participating in a social event at your apartment that can help you connect to your neighbours?

- ☐ Very interested – I would like to help organize the event / I would want to provide input about the event
- ☐ Interested – I would attend the event
- ☐ Somewhat interested – I may attend the event / I would want to know more details
- ☐ Not interested – I would not attend the event

What type of neighbourhood social event would you like to come out to (eg. BBQ, Board Games Night, Movie Night, etc)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Age:

☐ 18 to 29

☐ 29 to 40

☐ 41 to 55

☐ 56 to 70

☐ 71 and older

Do you have children in your household?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What age group do they belong to? (Check more than one box if appropriate)

☐ 0 to 6

☐ 7 to 12

☐ 13 to 18

If you are interested in this potential event, please provide us with your contact information below:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

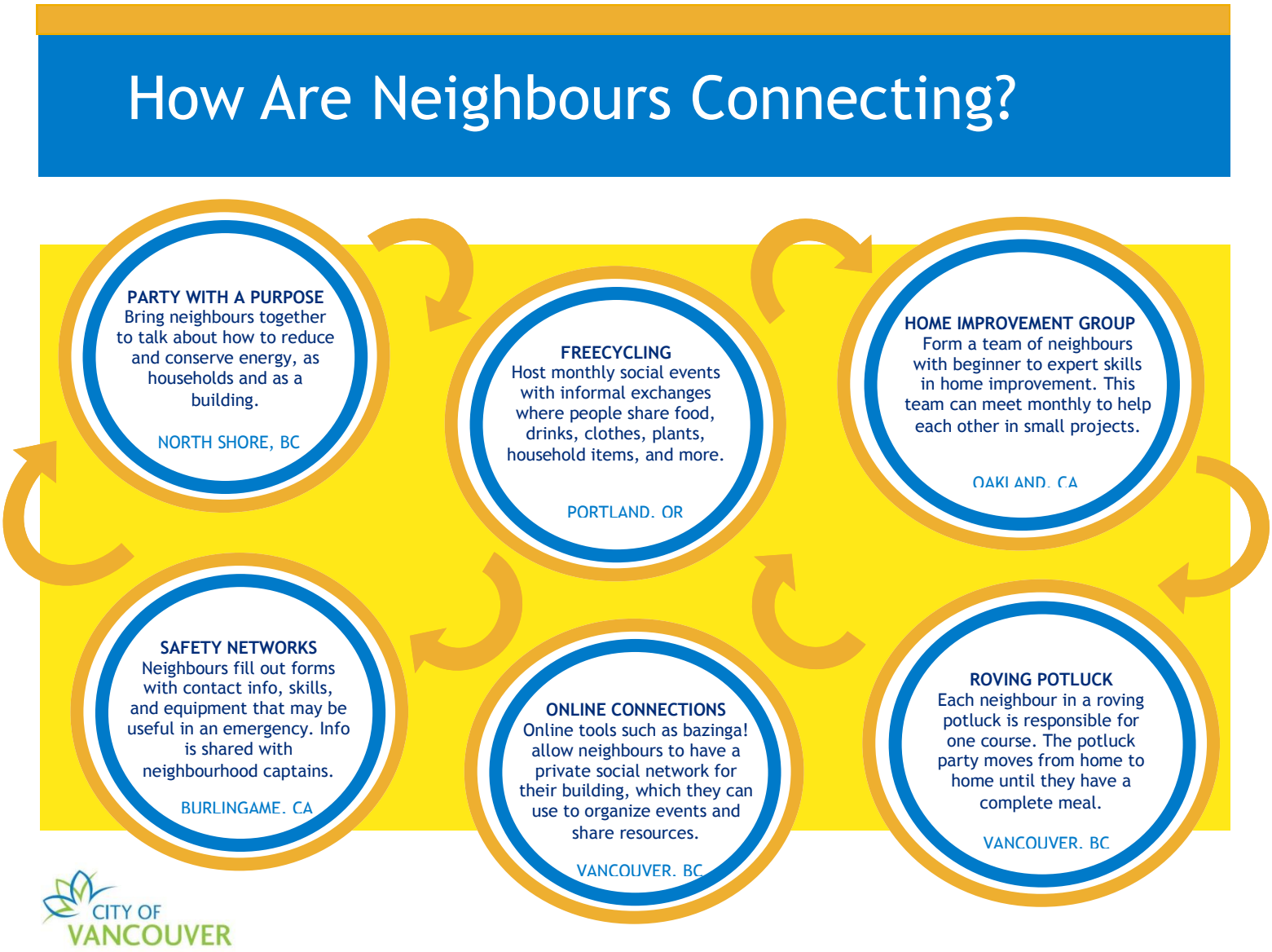
E-mail: _____

Preferred method of contact: _____

Appendix B

B	I	N	G	O
Has a food allergy	Owns (or has owned) a pet	Has taken a first aid class	English is a second language	Plays soccer
Was in Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts	Plays a musical instrument	Is a vegan or vegetarian	Enjoys carpentry or wood	Wears a watch
Enjoys water sports	Likes D-I-Y home projects	FREE SPACE	Goes camping every	Likes to cook
Is afraid of heights	Is an only child	Knows how to fix a bike	Goes to the gym every week	Owns a battery-powered
Drives a van	Family lives outside of B.C	Goes to the gym every week	Likes to buy candles	Participated in a marathon

Appendix C


How Are Neighbours Connecting?
PARTY WITH A PURPOSE
Bring neighbours together to talk about how to reduce and conserve energy, as households and as a building.
NORTH SHORE, BC
FREECYCLING
Host monthly social events with informal exchanges where people share food, drinks, clothes, plants, household items, and more.
PORTLAND, OR
HOME IMPROVEMENT GROUP
Form a team of neighbours with beginner to expert skills in home improvement. This team can meet monthly to help each other in small projects.
OAKLAND, CA
SAFETY NETWORKS
Neighbours fill out forms with contact info, skills, and equipment that may be useful in an emergency. Info is shared with neighbourhood captains.
BURLINGAME, CA
ONLINE CONNECTIONS
Online tools such as bazinga! allow neighbours to have a private social network for their building, which they can use to organize events and share resources.
VANCOUVER, BC
ROVING POTLUCK
Each neighbour in a roving potluck is responsible for one course. The potluck party moves from home to home until they have a complete meal.
VANCOUVER, BC
CITY OF VANCOUVER

Appendix D

Having Fun?

What do you want to do next?

Movie Night	Potluck	Sports Game	Board Games

Other ideas:

Can your neighbours contact you?

CONTACT INFO:
(Want to help organize the next event? Put a star beside your name!)

HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH?

- Facebook Group
- E-mail listserv
- Bazinga! (Private social network)

Other ideas: