

Shape Your Future Victoria

Community Well-being



Definition and Description

Community well-being is dependent on the well-being of each and every member of a community. It is only possible when the basic needs of all citizens are met in a way that maintains human dignity and each person has the opportunity to develop in their own capacity. Indicators of community well-being include equity, social inclusion, public safety and personal security, adaptation to gradual change and resiliency in challenging times.

Why Is This Topic Important?

In a sustainable community, **basic needs** are met through equal access to adequate food, housing, income, health services, learning, arts and culture, sports, recreation and mobility. There is respect for social diversity and services are provided to assist vulnerable groups including people with a physical disability, mental illness or addictions. Sustainable communities also build on local resources, adapt to gradual change and are resilient to sudden threats, such as disasters or shortages in energy supply.

There are two types of community resources: **individual capacity** and **community capacity**. Developing the skills and potential of individuals leads to personal well-being. Opportunities for meaningful and stable work, education, creativity, physical activity and citizen engagement can help with the development of personal well-being. Stronger individuals can help to build a stronger community with the capacity to ensure all citizens feel safe, basic needs are met, and there are secure local sources of food, energy and materials.

Did You Know?

22 per cent of the population of Victoria lived below the **poverty line** in 2005. More than one quarter of residents (26 per cent) under age 18 lived in poverty.¹

Affordable housing costs less than 30 per cent of total household income.² 38 per cent of Victoria households did not have affordable housing in 2005.

Formed in 2008, the **Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness** has housed more than 400 people with support services for mental illnesses and addictions.

Many people in Victoria grow a portion of **local food** supplies. However, Vancouver Island imports about 90 per cent of its food.³

In 2008, 15.4 per cent of residents on South Vancouver Island over the age of 18 years were reported as being **obese**, significantly up from 11.5 per cent in 2007 and 12.8 per cent in 2005.⁴

People classified as **visible minorities** comprised 12.1 per cent of Victoria's population in 2006. Aboriginal and First Nations people represented 3.8 per cent of total residents. 4.4 per cent of Victoria residents were recent immigrants.⁵

Volunteer Victoria recruited 16,500 **volunteers** for community organizations in 2009.⁶

Issues and Trends

Well-being is dependent on the presence of "soft" infrastructure such as organizations to provide support services and social bonds between citizens, and public and/or private sector provision of "hard" infrastructure like affordable housing and access to transportation options. Some of the factors that contribute to community well-being include the following:

CONTINUED ➤

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cameron Scott, Senior Planner, Community Planning Division | 1 Centennial Square, Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

T 250.361.0534

E ocp@victoria.ca

www.ShapeYourFutureVictoria.ca

Meeting basic needs

- Every person has the right to affordable, safe and secure housing that is suitable for each specific household and any special needs of its members. People of working age should have opportunities for paid work allowing them to meet their own basic needs with dignity.
- Everyone needs affordable, nutritious food for personal health and well-being. People also need access to low-cost physical and creative activities, facilities, parks and open spaces. Lifelong learning is also needed from early childhood development to later life. Victoria has many green spaces and parks and arts, culture and recreation programs, while other institutions provide educational opportunities.
- Every resident needs to be able to get around, including people with disabilities, young children and seniors. Affordable public transit and safe pedestrian routes help support personal mobility. Safe cycling routes provide another accessible travel option, as does the roadway network. The City addresses mobility needs in policy documents such as the *Pedestrian Master Plan* and the *Bicycle Master Plan* and transportation infrastructure.

Developing individual capacity

- Personal well-being depends on the capacity of individuals and households to secure financial independence through skills development, fairly paid, stable jobs and local business creation. Income support programs are needed in times of economic downturn.
- Vulnerable citizens need to be helped to gain independence, self-confidence, skills and abilities through training, education, financial support, health services and other means. Target groups include people coping with personal or family change and anyone with a physical disability, mental illness or drug addictions.

- The talents, skills and capacities of individuals are invaluable resources to leverage for the future of Victoria's neighbourhoods and the community as a whole.

Strengthening community networks and resources

- Community assets—such as social bonds, natural and built resources—need to be identified and strengthened. These range from local food, energy and materials, to the treasured character, diversity, history and environment of Victoria's neighbourhoods, to low-cost opportunities for learning, recreation, sport, art and culture, to affordable public transit.
- Community well-being requires that people feel safe. First responders (police, fire and ambulance) provide emergency services. At the same time, urban design can address safety in public spaces, such as neighbourhood parks, playgrounds, streets, open spaces, transit stops, community facilities and pedestrian and bicycle routes.
- Resilient communities have the adaptive capacity to respond to gradual change under normal conditions and sudden threats such as emergencies. Adaptive housing anticipates the changing needs of owners throughout the lifecycle, and community facilities can be designed as adaptable to potential future uses, i.e. multi-purpose. The Victoria Emergency Planning Agency (VEMA) is the City's resource for helping our community to be prepared for emergencies.

The City in Action: What We Do Now

The City of Victoria fosters and enhances community well-being through land use, transportation, parks, culture and emergency planning, urban design, housing policy and incentives and financial and other support to partners in the region and community that assist vulnerable citizens. Major plans and initiatives include but are not limited to: Victoria's *Comprehensive Housing Strategy*, The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and Neighbourhood Development Grants.

Share your thoughts and ideas

Existing plans and policies shape Victoria as a place that meets basic needs and strengthens the capacity of individuals and the community as a whole but policy directions and priorities could be changed in the future.

- How would you ensure that the basic needs of residents are being met?
- Are some personal needs more important than others? Why or why not?
- What changes do you expect in the community for the future? How would you respond?

1. Statistics Canada measures the low-income before tax cut-off and low-income after tax cut-off. Both are commonly known as the poverty line. The percentages used above are before tax.
2. Shelter is housing and related costs, such as utilities and strata fees.
3. Please see: Food Systems Topic Sheet.
4. Statistics Canada 2008. Obesity is defined as "a body mass index of greater than 30".
5. Please see: Demographics Today Topic Sheet.
6. Volunteer Victoria, 2006.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Additional topic sheets are available online at www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca/research-facts