

March 28, 2024

Themes from Recent Engagement on Community Safety

As part of engagement for the City's Comprehensive Plan, staff have also spoken with more than 2500 community members about their hopes for the future. The themes below reflect common sentiments shared during visioning conversations and in-person engagement during 2022 and 2023. Feedback is organized under the strategic plan focus area of a Safe and Prepared Community.

Safe and Prepared Community

- Across a wide range of projects and engagements, community members have consistently identified safety as one of their top priorities and hopes for the future
 - Residents report specific concerns with vehicle thefts, burglaries, break-ins and property crime; many community members said that they don't want to worry about their car getting stolen from their driveway or their catalytic converter stolen every time they go shopping
 - Violent crime was mentioned by a significant number of people, as well, including a belief that violent crimes, such as shootings, could "spill over from Portland"
 - Some community members report feeling unsafe walking at night, particularly downtown; others have said that they no longer feel safe walking on certain trails, including the Burnt Bridge Creek Trail
 - These community members have most commonly cited negative encounters with unhoused residents, as well as people who appear to be experiencing mental health crises or openly using drugs
 - Among the business community, retail theft and property crime are major concerns
 - Larger retailers report thousands of dollars of theft each month
 - Some businesses have experienced multiple break ins or robberies
 - Retail workers have reported feeling unsafe at work or being directly affected by robberies, assaults or thefts
- Community members who are black, Latino, Pacific Islander and LGBTQ+ also reported specific concerns about safety
 - Some community members mentioned negative interactions with police and concerns about police use of force, particularly shootings that have taken place during the past several years
 - These community members said that they want to feel safe calling police and interacting with officers; topics such as de-escalation training, body cameras and efforts to hire diverse staff were often cited as examples of positive developments on the part of the police department
 - Others have said that they don't feel safe or welcomed in certain parts of Vancouver or Clark County; demonstrations by groups, such as Patriot Prayer or the Proud Boys, and visible displays of the Confederate flag were cited by some residents as specific incidents that have made them feel unsafe
 - LGBTQ+ community members have also shared varied experiences and perceptions of safety in the community; while some longtime residents and those who have grown up in Vancouver have shared their belief that the community has become more accepting and inclusive over time, others report feeling unsafe.

- On the other hand, people who have moved to Vancouver recently (in the past five years), have shared stories of feeling a greater sense of safety and belonging in Vancouver; perhaps unsurprisingly, this sentiment seems to be most common among people who have moved from less LGBTQ+-friendly communities; additional engagement is needed to better understand how to strengthen feelings of belonging and safety for all community members
- Some community members have also pointed out that safety is directly related to other issues, such as mental health, poverty and a lack of economic opportunity
 - These community members have said that they see investments in economic growth, job creation, housing and social services as ways to make our community safer
 - Some would also like to see additional investments in co-responder services to better respond to community members experiencing a mental health crisis
- Among community members concerned about climate change, resiliency, preparedness and adaptation were frequently mentioned as priorities
- Disaster preparedness was mentioned by a very small number of residents
 - They would like to see greater investment in earthquake-resilient infrastructure and community preparedness, especially at the neighborhood and household-level

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Outcomes, Impacts and Expectations



During meeting #5, we'll revisit the topics of outcomes in greater detail. For tonight, please take some time to share your expectations related to community safety.

What does a safe community look and feel like?

When it comes to public safety, how should we measure success?

What should community members expect of Vancouver's police services?