

Mayor's Youth Forum - Fall 2009

Preliminary Report *November 2009*

Overview and summary

The Mayor's Youth Forum is an opportunity for local youth (grades 10 through 12) in the City of Kelowna to share their thoughts, criticisms and ideas about local social planning issues. The focus of this eighth forum, held November 5th, 2009, was on civic sustainability from a youth perspective.



Methodology in brief

1. Steering committee met between June and October 2009
2. Each of the seven high schools created a leadership team. Each team was responsible for presenting a visual status report on sustainability within their community using the City sustainability framework of: Economic, Environmental, Cultural and Social
3. Over 500 on-line surveys were completed representing all seven high schools and about 20% of all grades 10-12 students. This survey provides feedback from the larger youth population and is a reliable measure of current sustainability from a youth's perspective.
4. About 40 youth completed personal record logs of their sustainable habits.
5. Over 50 youth took part in the full day forum November 5th at UBC-O campus.
6. Preliminary report to Council.
7. Presentation to Council Nov. 30
8. Final report to council.

Findings

Youth have a broad interpretation of "sustainability" that goes beyond recycling and reducing automobile usage. For example, they are aware that arts and culture, effective transportation and education all support social well being. They are also critical of certain elements relating to the social health of their community.

Overall, they rated the current status of local sustainability in the 'average' to 'good' range. In all but three metrics: Arts Scene, Going Green and Safety) the youth ratings were closely in line with the recent VitalSigns survey completed by the Central Okanagan Foundation¹ (which used an "A", "B" etc. rating).

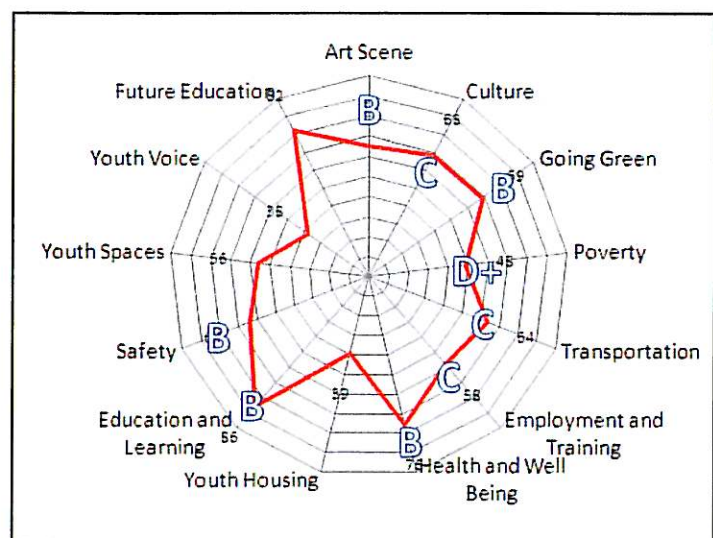


Figure 1: Youth ratings versus VitalSigns (letter ratings)

¹ The VitalSigns study is part of a larger series of studies coordinated by the Communities Foundation of Canada. The Central Okanagan study was completed in the Summer of 2009 and respondents were from: 69% Kelowna, 17% West Kelowna, 3.5% Lake Country, 3% Peachland and 1% West Bank First Nations.

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The youth rating of community sustainability (using the model of: Economic, Environmental, Cultural and Social) were (see Figure 1) in order from highest to lowest:

Top ranking	Lowest ranking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education and Learning: quality, availability and options for youth• Future Education• Health and Well Being supported for youth• Going Green: awareness and action• Culture: identity, belonging and celebrating diversity• Art Scene and youth participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety: crime, relationship with police, bullying etc.• Transportation for youth• Employment and Training options for local youth• Youth Spaces: availability, safety and matching needs• Poverty and the gap between socioeconomic groups,• Youth Housing and availability of affordable housing• Youth Voice for social issues to civic leaders.

"... a sustainable community consists of people working together as a team to contribute to helping are world a better place." youth survey respondent

Working with UBC-O graduate students, the forum delegates generated preliminary ideas for improving local sustainability that included:

- creating a youth radio station,
- mandatory xeroscaping for new developments,
- banning plastic bags at retail outlets,
- youth election committee,
- youth social spaces, non-recreational, safe and non-commercial,
- youth criminal deterrent program,
- youth housing, safer and more extensive bicycle lanes,
- more sidewalks (e.g. in front of school where youth congregate or wait for buses),
- improved public bus schedule (readability, display at stations, routes)
- bicycle-only streets (or partial closing),
- more bicycle lock ups (encourage cycling, improve safety),
- web site to register job openings for youth.

Next steps

1. The most popular sustainability ideas (as ranked by the youth) from the forum will be expanded with youth input to present to Council.
2. Some 40 youth completed personal "Sustainability Logs" that need to be analyzed and results collated. These logs provide insights into personal lifestyle patterns of consumer consumption.
3. A final report will be submitted to Mayor and Council by December 11, 2009.
4. Ideas and design concepts for the next Youth Forum will be explored with the Forum Committee.



"Sustainable Community means that we as a city are committed to considering the needs of today's community as well as the communities of the future." youth survey respondent