

3.10 Cultural Diversity

City residents from all backgrounds share the same human characteristics and goals. They form families, raise children, grow and age, and are not discriminated against in the incidence of ability or disability. Any resident from any culture requires appropriate housing and possesses the basic need for safety and security. They are artists, athletes, parents, professionals, seniors, students; in short, individuals striving to create balanced lives in which opportunities for work, family development and community participation determine well-being and quality of life. The Social Plan vision and the value statements guiding its goals, objectives and actions apply equally to all City residents.

It is apparent that the City of North Vancouver is becoming increasingly diverse. The ethnic composition of the City is not only increasing as a proportion of the population but also changing in terms of newcomers' country of origin. This change presents both evident and subtle challenges for individuals and the community. At the same time, it has served to bring into focus universal questions of access, inclusion, community involvement, awareness, and the fundamental role of the City to serve all its resident-clients.

Acknowledging and reasonably accommodating diversity in its own business practices is one way the City can improve access and foster inclusion. It is also important that the City support community-based agencies with experience and expertise working with diverse clients in a changing environment. Expressing recognition of and valuing the diversity of the community signals commitment to the following goal and objectives.

GOAL

To support the pursuit of individual well being and shared community needs, values and aspirations by residents from all ethno-cultural backgrounds, through equal access to City services and resources and by fostering inclusion -- the equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to community life.

Objective 1: To promote and reflect a positive and proactive attitude towards community diversity among City employees and representatives.

Actions

The City will:

1. Undertake a program of cross-cultural training, designed for all levels of the City organization, to raise awareness about the nature of the City's diversity, and of

principles for serving clients from diverse backgrounds.

2. Encourage employees to develop and display cross cultural sensitivity and skills by:
 - Soliciting input regarding training needs and tools.
 - Providing job-specific training where required.
 - Demonstrating an understanding of the need to apply skills of patience, creativity and spending extra time to serve the needs of the public, particularly where communication barriers exist.
 - Communicating that senior management, department heads and supervisors value these abilities, both informally and through performance evaluation processes.

Objective 2: To build and maintain knowledge about the current and changing nature of the City's diversity, and about cultural diversity initiatives and activities throughout the community.

Actions

The City will:

1. Foster relationships and support opportunities for ongoing information-exchange by:
 - Sharing ethno-cultural information among City departments, agencies, associations and other interested parties.
 - Maintaining a commitment to participate in committees such as: the North Shore Health Ethno-Cultural Advisory Group and Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee of the Interagency Network, and to support the North Shore Multicultural Society and other agencies.
2. Remain committed to the effective liaison established by Social Planning staff with community based agencies and groups, and seek ways for their knowledge of community needs and trends to inform other City staff and processes.
3. Regularly update the ethno-cultural profile of the City from available quantitative data, combined with the qualitative knowledge of community level service providers.
4. Explore with the North Shore Multicultural Society and other partners in the community, the development of further roles and means for receiving and coordinating input on diversity issues.

Objective 3: To enhance and maintain the quality and effectiveness of City services while reasonably accommodating client needs.

Actions

The City will:

1. Consider developing simple, practical tools to facilitate transactions with City clients, where challenges have been identified by employees or other means.
2. Undertake ongoing reviews of procedures, policies, programs, and plans to develop an awareness of barriers to accessibility, and to identify reasonable responses that promote general accessibility to all residents.

Objective 4: To improve communication with resident-clients of all ethno-cultural backgrounds in order to enable and enhance access to information, services, resources and City processes.

Actions

The City will:

1. Use existing devices and practices such as “City Views” or the City home page to outline common issues or processes, and include summaries of this information in the most significant non-English languages in the City. Examples include dealing with a parking ticket, paying taxes and completing the homeowner grant, obtaining a business license or the role and process of a public hearing.
2. Consider less formal dissemination of City information through the community network, in addition to current methods.
3. Seek opportunities to convey information about the City, its functions and processes at events involving the multicultural community such as meetings, lectures or classes where formal or informal interpretation would be available.
4. Develop a pamphlet(s) in English summarizing general information about the City and the main functions of the City organization including information on participating in local government such as ways to access Council, distribute broadly, and work in collaboration with multicultural groups to produce it in other languages as a pilot project.

Objective 5: To promote inclusion and welcome the participation of residents from various backgrounds in community and civic life.

Actions

The City will:

1. Encourage applications for advisory board appointments from members of the multicultural community.
2. Support community agencies and organizations in their efforts to provide education, facilitation, language and other services to the multicultural community, which are geared towards promoting their participation in civic and community life.
3. Continue the practice of Council members' acknowledged and visible participation in events involving the multicultural community, and seek opportunities to enhance involvement of both Council and staff.
4. Prepare for the next municipal election with an objective of facilitating the participation of the ethno-cultural community through:
 - Seeking to involve volunteers from the multicultural community in the election process, e.g., through the North Shore Multicultural Society, North Shore Community Services or other community contacts.
 - Using existing means of communication to outline the election process and encourage participation in English and in the City's most significant non-English languages.
 - Seeking opportunities to address members of the multicultural community through North Shore Multicultural Society classes or other events.
5. Review public participation practices and prepare for public events by identifying ways to facilitate involvement of residents from diverse backgrounds.
6. In collaboration with community groups and agencies, explore ways to facilitate the role of community leaders in conveying information and involving members of ethno-cultural groups in community life.

Objective 6: To maintain the City's role in effectively supporting the work of agencies and organizations serving residents from diverse backgrounds, and to enhance this role by seeking new opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

Actions

The City will:

1. Maintain the City's fundamental role of facilitation and support.
2. Ensure that agencies and organizations serving the multicultural community are consulted in the assessment of community amenities and facilities priorities.
3. Consult with agencies serving the multicultural community to consider ways to become involved in improving employment opportunities for residents of diverse backgrounds, including youth.