

Kitchen Table Conversation Report

Name of Group/Organization: Volunteer Lethbridge

Conversation Topic: Impact on the Social Profit Sector

Number of people in Conversation: 19

Date: February 23, 2017

Describe your Conversation: Volunteer Lethbridge is a non-profit organization with a vision to strengthen and sustain a healthy, vibrant community through the support and advancement of volunteer excellence. Their mission is to build connections and empower individuals and organizations to enhance volunteerism and grow volunteer capacity.

Nineteen individuals representing Volunteer Lethbridge and their member organizations gathered in the boardroom at the Penny Building in Downtown Lethbridge in a conversation on the impacts of future growth in Lethbridge on the social profit sector.



The organizations represented in the discussion included Family Centre Society, Lethbridge Youth Foundation, Girl Guides, Galt Museum and Archives, Southern Alberta Individualized Planning Association, Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization & Meals on Wheels, United Way of Lethbridge, Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre, Interfaith Food Bank Society, YWCA, Lethbridge College LGBTQ Club, Downtown BRZ, and Volunteer Lethbridge. The conversations were based on individual's perceptions/opinions and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the organizations they represent.

Conversations although directed, were not limited to the social profit sector. Conversations provided meaningful dialogue on the future of the city and the social profit sector, and provided a forum for individuals and the organizations they represent to stretch from thinking about ourselves as individuals to thinking of our broader community. The conversations were rich and vibrant with everyone in the room being provided opportunity to provide their input, and to discuss freely with others in the room. Conversations primarily highlighted many of the positive aspects of the social sector, however, there were many areas of improvement that were also noted. Due to the nature of some of the topics, such as Provincial and Federal funding, there are limitations on a municipalities influence. Nonetheless they are important to capture and efforts will be made to incorporate and provide future municipal direction related to the conversations.

Conversation 1: *What do we currently do well in Lethbridge?*

- Maintain the feel of a community – we’re still that small town group, everyone knows everyone, smaller community feeling.
- Park Space; how easy it is to access greenspace from anywhere in the city. It’s also well maintained
- How well the West side has been developed and how it has grown to become its own community. It’s growing to include business opportunities. Like the idea of the ATB Centre/multipurpose facility and the way that the development of the little communities has happened. You can drive in any area and it feels like a nice flow when you’re driving around.
- Speed of access; from a transportation point of view (particularly for drivers). Good walking hub from Southside and downtown. Size of population helps a lot with that too; less congestion. Feeling of the conversation was that speed of access is a strong overarching community value.
- Rebuilding of neighbourhood connections/associations has been very positive; community gardens, little free libraries. Another example; at Probe, there has been some progress on neighbours leaning on each other to take turns walking groups of kids to school. This has been very purposeful (investment from the City into providing some resources and tools).
- Newer developments have purposeful connectivity between neighbourhoods
- Foresight of early councils and educational institutions have become a central part of the fabric of our community. Particularly our University has started to bloom and grow.
- Industrial hub; a lot of new industries coming in, and attracting tourism as well
- Better access to specialized health & medicine supports (not as much need to drive to Calgary)
- Focus on building the community (not just the business community, but a neighbourhood) downtown
- Keeping our roots; celebrating our history and the cultures that created our community
- Welcoming; refugee resettlement community

Conversation 2: *What could we do better in Lethbridge in the future?*

- Food deserts – we have some and need to keep a close eye on that; need to make sure there is access to affordable, appropriate, healthy foods
- Transit needs to be improved; schedule needs to be more consistent
- Traffic flow at certain major on/off access points; traffic light timing
- Cycling; being able to go from home to work (e.g.downtown). This can be achieved by combination of cycling infrastructure investment and education.
- Bigger developments all along University Drive; traffic being diverted into residential areas/playground and school zones (appropriate size infrastructure at the right time)
- Future planning; not boxing ourselves into maximum capacity for “right now”
- Keeping all areas feel part of the community (i.e. need development in North Lethbridge to be as good of quality as what we see happening on the West side). Currently feeling of segregation by sector.
- We haven’t repurposed vacated areas very well (i.e. closing the Safeway on the north side)
- Facilities in neighbourhoods; i.e. we as agencies have opportunities to offer services across the city – see the whole city as our key clientele. Needs for our services are going to grow
- Collaboration between agencies, city can partner with organizations
- Mixed development neighbourhoods; potential for more co-locating spaces so that organizations can cover broader geographical areas
- Meeting spaces! Community Centres! There’s just no spaces left to get together
- University and College are their own worlds – they build their own infrastructure. How can we work with them/collaborate to avoid duplicating all of the services
- Still a lot of exclusion that happens on the ground level. There’s good work being done, but lots of work that still needs to be done.

- Schools; Chinook/CCH & Public library all in a hub. What has happened is that people cannot be kicked off school campus because there is a public library. Violence happening as a result of that public space. Need to take into consideration some of the other issues.

Conversation 3: *What are some trends that you are currently seeing or that we may expect to see as our community continues to grow?*

- Issues/unwanted behavior and crime
- New kinds of developments - do we want new developments that all look like Mountain Heights? New zoning coming; potential for small commercial and residential to be together
- Increased demand for affordable housing, food deserts
- Look at zoning for tiny houses; make it affordable for people to own their own homes
- Park space; Kinsmen Park size with mixed use is nice. Not so much the micro/one-lot parks
- We do a good job (as a social services sector) right now knowing who does a good job of what. Anticipate seeing more duplication of services as we get bigger
- More need for meaningful daily activity for folks; possible to have services together in a space
- More pressure and expectations for convention type facilities
- More need for arts/performing arts venues to try and attract
- Continued need for advocacy provincially and federally (politically) to maintain financial support compared with the bigger centres who get greater access
- Trend of growth of neighbourhood associations, culture of the city, people knowing the history

Conversation 4: *Are there any other outstanding ideas or thoughts that you have related to social profit sector or the big picture of Lethbridge at 100K+ that have not been captured yet?*

- Colocation of social services; how can city help? (i.e. Bill Kergan) Could be led by city, social profit sector, or corporate sector.
- Addiction really needs to be addressed; rise in crime is largely related to it
- More events bringing similar groups and services together
- How the social services sector is funded; in Lethbridge there's a number of additional services that are provided by the City
- Rethinking the way we do accessible transit (Access-a-Ride); vulnerable populations are a target with public transportation – they are able to take the public bus, but they don't feel safe. Volume of use would make a big difference
- Neighbour to two large Reserves; trend over the last few years is more relocation of individuals to the City. How can we provide appropriate, safe spaces for them to connect and feel a part of things? How can we make it easier for people who are new to the City, particularly our Aboriginal neighbours. Almost 10% of our population is Urban Aboriginal. CMARD is important. How can we avoid compartmentalizing and having "Aboriginal Agencies" serving that population; we all need to take responsibility for learning how best to serve diverse populations. Same for other newcomers to Lethbridge.