

Vernon Settlement Strategy

Phase 1 - Community Mapping

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Citoyenneté et
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urban
matters

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1.0 Introduction

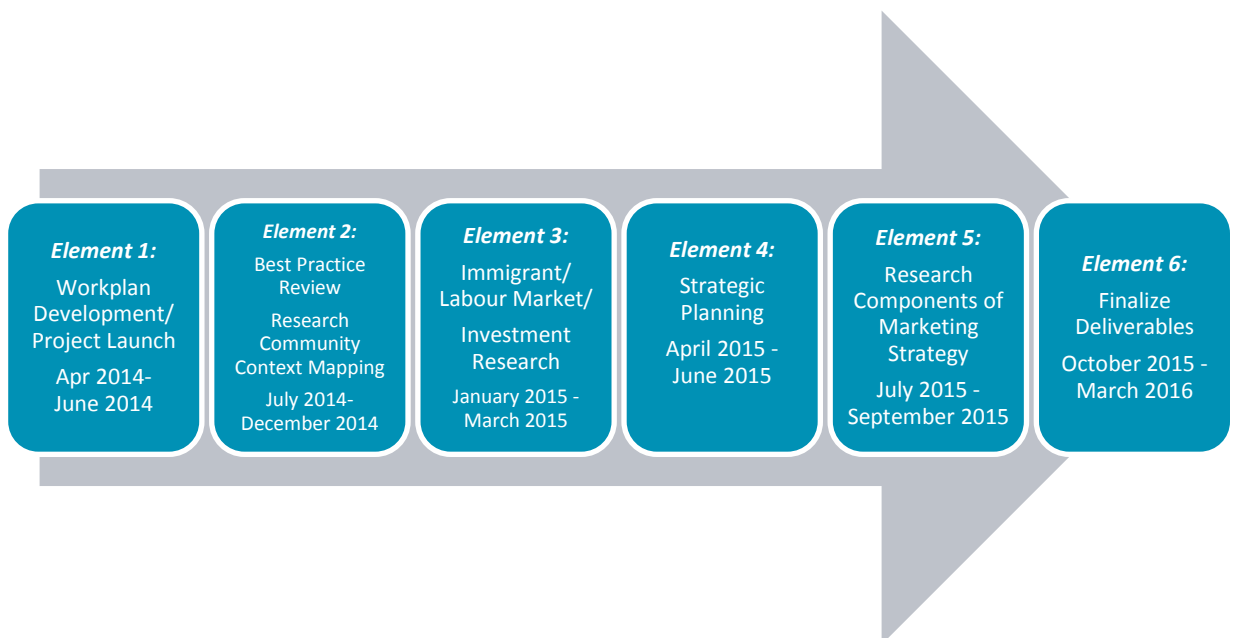
“Canadians need immigration just as much as immigrants need a destination such as Canada. Immigration, as it turns out, is most likely the key to Canada’s prosperity.”

***For Canada, immigration is a key to prosperity
Clément Gignac. The Globe and Mail
Monday, Oct. 07 2013***

The City of Vernon has been welcoming people from around the globe for over a century. Residents of the City understand very well that immigrants have helped make the City a vibrant, dynamic society in which everyone can prosper and build their dreams. With that said, is the City all it can be? Is the City a place of tolerance and diversity where everyone is encouraged and supported in their efforts to build a good life for themselves and become a part of the community?

The effort that follows is a first step in better understanding the City of Vernon’s relative strengths and weaknesses as it comes to being a truly welcoming community.

Thoroughly understanding the current context is especially important as an input into future programs and directions.



1.1 Local Immigration Partnerships

As constituted, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) are community based initiatives sponsored by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). These LIP's exist for the purpose of:

1. Fostering local engagement of service providers and other institutions in the newcomers' integration process;
2. Supporting community-based knowledge-sharing and local strategic planning; and,
3. Improving coordination of services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration.

LIPs do not deliver services directly to newcomers. Instead they provide a collaborative framework that serves to facilitate the development and implementation of sustainable solutions for the successful integration of newcomers that are local [or regional] in scope. This collaborative framework seeks to enhance cooperation, coordination and strategic planning at the community level. Success is a more welcoming and inclusive community that improves settlement and integration. LIPs gather the expertise of numerous actors and conduct research on the needs of newcomers, as well as on local service gaps in order to inform their settlement strategy. LIPs serve as a catalyst for cross-sector collaboration and the sharing of immigration related resources, ideas and research.

In 2013/2014 the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan (SPCNO) facilitated the Welcoming Communities Vernon Program. This Program engaged over 30 participants in creating a Welcoming Communities Action Plan. The Action Plan identified seven key projects deemed necessary to the creation of a more welcoming environment for newcomers to Vernon.

The LIPs program sponsored by CIC is intended to carry the momentum of this previous work forward into 2014-2016 through the creation of an Immigration and Settlement Strategy for Vernon.

1.2 Vernon Immigration and Settlement Strategy

The objectives of the Vernon Immigration and Settlement Strategy are to:

1. Provide an overview of the City of Vernon's relative position and capacity to substantively affect and positively manage settlement initiatives;
2. Identify critical strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges related to being a welcoming community;
3. Map out an inventory of existing immigrant services/programs and identify any gaps;
4. Analyze local labour market trends to identify entrepreneurial and business investment opportunities and challenges;
5. Identify strategic and operational objectives related to immigration and economic development within City of Vernon; and,
6. Research and articulate the key components of a marketing strategy for attracting entrepreneurs/skilled immigrants.

1.3 Scope and Objectives

The following narrative seeks to satisfy the first three components or objectives of the settlement strategy exercise. In short, this report is about “community context”.

One cannot develop an effective and efficient immigration and settlement strategy without understanding the challenge of effectively addressing immigration and settlement issues exist. Defining context is the first and most important step in effectively and efficiently planning, developing, delivering, operating or maintaining a successful immigration and settlement program.

The term context tends to be misunderstood because defining context is not easily disaggregated into neat packages of data and information that can be easily summed up. Context is similar to synergy, in that the result is greater than the sum of its individual parts/components. Context and meaning are multifaceted and can be viewed in many different ways. Further to this, all communities have a unique context. Defining context involves not only collecting tangible data about an area, but also gathering the intangible experiences of community members to help understand the values and perspectives of citizens. Therefore, the exercise of defining context must combine desktop exercises with field work and, most importantly, public engagement strategies to understand issues, interests, needs and priorities.

The methodology we have undertaken to complete this phase of the exercise focuses on context as an amalgam of components that broadly includes those factors we typically refer to as “welcoming”. To this end through focused research we have identified 17 key welcoming characteristics; with the help of the Project Steering Committee we have identified key players and a number of key qualitative/quantitative indicators; we have researched the indicators and provided a series of insights/thoughts; and finally we have prepared a mind map of indicators and players.

2.0 Vernon in Profile

Vernon has three lakes within fifteen minutes, Kalamalka Lake, known as the lake of many colors, Okanagan Lake, which one can boat all the way through Kelowna to Penticton, and Swan Lake. We have Silver Star Mountain Ski Resort, a true ski in/out hill with runs for all abilities and only twenty minutes from town. On the way to the hill you can stop by Sovereign Lake Cross Country for Nordic events. We have a variety of first class golf courses, Predator Ridge, The Rise, Vernon Golf and Country Club, and Hillview, again all within twenty minutes of each other. We have hiking and biking through Kal Lake Park, Silver Star Mountain Biking, Grey Canal Trail, and BX Falls. Our VantageOne Center is the Okanagan home to the Vancouver Whitecaps Soccer Academy, and we host the biggest slow pitch tournament in Western Canada, Funtastic.

Looking at the cultural side we have The Performing Arts Center, hosts of various events, Powerhouse Theater, Vernon Art Gallery, a museum, recreation center and our own Okanagan College. Downtown comes alive all year round, from the Downtown Christmas light up to the summer Sunshine Festival. Winter Carnival in February is the third largest in Canada, a week full of activities and pageantry. We are a vibrant and attractive city for many businesses who want their employees to enjoy their lifestyle after hours.

***Akbal Mund, Mayor City of Vernon
2014***

The City of Vernon is situated in the south-central interior of British Columbia in the North Okanagan Valley. The North Okanagan contains a variety of landscapes, rich agricultural land, forested hillsides and mountain peaks. The North Okanagan region is dominated by Okanagan Lake and Kalamalka Lake, which run along the valley floor North-South beneath steep hills. The Greater Vernon and the North Okanagan region cover a territory, which extends from the northern end of Okanagan Lake, and Kalamalka Lake/Lake Country, North to Shuswap Lake. The Okanagan Valley is known for its temperate climate making Vernon a popular choice among visitors, immigrants and other Canadians who are relocating or retiring.

The City of Vernon was officially incorporated on December 31st, 1892. The first City hall was built in 1903. By 1904, Vernon was the largest town in the valley and the first in the Okanagan to have a bank. Today the City of Vernon is the economic hub and the largest population centre in the North Okanagan. Vernon's rich and diversified historical evolution is captured in the built environment and conveyed in a rich collection of downtown murals. Unlike many growing urban centers, downtown Vernon remains the centre of commerce and culture for the community.

In 2010, Vernon was ranked the third best city in BC by MoneySense Magazine based on prosperity, affordable housing, lifestyle and weather, and was ranked number one in entrepreneurial spirit by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. 2012 was Vernon's 120th anniversary.

2.1 Population and Demographics:

In 2011 the population of the Greater Vernon area was approximately 58,584 people and growing. Between 2006 and 2011 the region experienced 5.7% growth (1.14% annually), which was more substantive population growth when compared with some neighboring regions and the province (0.7%). Population within Vernon and the North Okanagan Region is expected to continue to increase over the next 10 to 12 year period and the Greater Vernon area is expected to surpass 70,000 people by 2025.

The regional population is predominantly urban. In fact 72% of residents of the North Okanagan Region currently reside in the Greater Vernon area.

Greater Vernon has an older than average population when compared to the Province. In the 2011 Census, over 53% of the Vernon's population was aged 45 years and over versus

48.8% for BC, and this is expected to increase over the next several decades. Further, a portion of the population in the front wave of the 'baby boomer' cohort (b.1948-1964) has already entered retirement and 21.5% of all people in the North Okanagan are aged over 65.

Near 87% of working age residents have a high school diploma or higher educational training. This includes almost 14% that hold an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, and a further 15% with a university certificate or higher.

Vernon maintains a diverse population attracting new residents from around the world to live and work in the Okanagan. In 2011, there were 6,705 immigrants living in Vernon; the majority of which were from the United States and Europe.¹ Of the total immigrant population approximately 11.8 per cent or 790 people arrived between 2006 and 2011.² The primary countries of origin **were** the United Kingdom, Germany, United States, the Netherlands, India, Poland, South Africa, and the Ukraine.

In recent years new waves of immigrants have added significantly to the diversity of the City with more arrivals coming from Asia and the Americas. Today, common first languages spoken in Vernon include English, German, French, Dutch, and Panjabi (Punjabi).³

¹ Statistics Canada (2011 National Household Survey)

² Statistics Canada (2011 National Household Survey)

³ Statistics Canada (2011 National Household Survey)

2.2 Economy

The Greater Vernon and the North Okanagan has a diverse regional economy that is well integrated with other economic regions of British Columbia and Alberta, the United States and the global economy.

- **Employment:** In 2013 the average unemployment for the North Okanagan region was 6.6%
- **Business:** Vernon is home to 3,176 businesses
- **Labour Force:** The total labour force for Vernon is estimated at 17,965 people representing a participation rate of 58.8%
- **Services:** There are a number of government and business support offices including a Service BC location, a the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, a Vernon Downtown Association and a tourism office
- **Income:** Median family incomes in the region (\$35,575) tend to be less than the BC average (\$37,440)

The proportion of the population that is of working age (ages 15 to 64) within the Greater Vernon area is proportionally smaller than that of the rest of BC (63.9% compared to 68.5%). Furthermore, according to a recent labour market survey prepared for the region, the proportion of the population that is of working age is expected to decrease over the next five years.

In terms of employment by sector, the services producing sector represents more than three-quarters of all employment in the Greater Vernon area, led by healthcare and social assistance (12.0%), accommodation and food services (7.1%), educational services (5.9%), and professional, scientific and technical services (5.3%). The region's largest industry is trade (wholesale and retail sales), which accounts for nearly 18.4% of total employment.

Looking forward, in terms of labour force, the Greater Vernon has some challenges to consider. On the demand side the Okanagan Region as a whole has the third highest number of projected job openings (110,300) in BC. As with other regions in the Province a substantial number of these openings are expected to arise due to replacement of retiring workers or deaths (75.2%). However, on the supply side the regional labour force is only expected to grow by 3.8% to 2020. This implies that there may be many opportunities for new arrivals to find employment if they choose to settle in Vernon.

2.3 Quality of Life

The Greater Vernon Area offers an appealing quality of life with a pleasant climate, safe and vibrant neighbourhoods, a diversity of cultural and recreational opportunities, quality health services and access to spectacular natural environment.

Residents of Vernon have access to a variety of healthcare services, with Vernon Jubilee Hospital offering acute and emergency care, ambulatory care, medicine, and surgery, psychiatry, maternity and pediatrics. Three public and community health centres provide mental health, addictions services, and public health nursing.

Vernon is a relatively safe community with property crime rates close to the provincial average, while rates for violent crime are well below the provincial average.

The Greater Vernon area has a full complement of schools from elementary to university level courses. There are several colleges and specialized post-secondary training institutions in the Vernon area.

Like most communities in BC, Vernon and the North Okanagan are challenged by a lack of affordable housing. Low to moderate income earners are increasingly further away from being able to afford current market values for housing. The gap between housing affordability/sustainability and median income/wages continues to grow.

3.0 Principles and Importance of Welcoming Communities

In understanding this concept of “welcoming” and applying this perspective to the design and development of an effective Vernon settlement strategy it should first be understood what is “welcoming”; why is it important; and how might one go about the task of determining whether a community is or is not welcoming.

In a March 2010 report, commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Integration Branch entitled *Characteristics of a Welcoming Community*, effort was expended in identifying and providing insight into characteristics of a community that impact on a community’s receptivity to and long-term integration of immigrants. The characteristics presented in this report are broken down into seventeen associated subcategories, which relate directly to the attraction and retention of immigrants. This strategy subscribes to these characteristics, and they were used to direct the community analysis and develop the recommendations presented herein.

From the literature the term ‘welcoming’ has both a spatial context as well as a qualitative context. Thus in the first instance the context of welcoming implies some physical assets and attributes; and in the second instance the concept encompasses certain social, economic, political and cultural considerations.

The importance in understanding welcoming is first and foremost the realization that a community’s comparative and competitive advantage depends not solely on its economic attractiveness but on its social, political and cultural qualities. Therefore efforts to enhance community prosperity and sustainability must necessarily focus on all of those characteristics, which can improve the community’s capacity to be welcoming.

“ A sustainable city is a city that is fully inclusive... Inclusion means that each person’s participation and contributions are welcomed, recognized, and valued.”

Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program

September 2008

On a number of levels there are significant challenges in terms of assessing a community's unique position of being "welcoming" and subsequent efforts to enhance that position. Notable challenges include the following:

1. There are a myriad of individual and collective characteristics one might broadly refer to as being determinants of "welcoming". To distill or group these characteristics to a rough list of seventeen characteristics that is representative of "welcoming" across various jurisdictions and circumstance implies some level of categorization of those many variations on a theme that may and
2. probably does inadvertently exclude or misrepresent notable factors, i.e. community/location specific factors;
3. While we may be able to broadly accept a list of seventeen welcoming characteristics, because they encompass such broad themes these characteristics are difficult to define exactly, and because they are difficult to define they are difficult to measure and they are especially difficult to compare across jurisdictions. Even with acceptable proxies it is difficult to obtain sufficient, distinct and timely information to properly assess each characteristic;
4. The importance of each characteristic to any given community will vary depending upon a number of factors not the least of which is how the community envisions itself 10 and 20 years down the road. Further, and most importantly, how these characteristics are valued by immigrants versus how they are prioritized by the players that provide the services represents a serious disconnect.

In our efforts here to define community context as a foundation for the strategic planning effort, we have chosen to take this list of seventeen welcoming characteristics as a starting point. Within each characteristic we have endeavored to introduce via a series of specific proxies a local flavor and relevance. Subsequent to this we would propose contrasting this information with the needs and interests of targeted populations. This approach will provide us a better understanding of Vernon's unique position and greater insight into programming options that might best serve to make the community more welcoming to all immigrants generally and to those targeted immigrants especially.

In going forward, it has been agreed to consider this list of welcoming characteristics as a starting point. Within each characteristic we have endeavoured to introduce (via a series of specific proxies) and identify key descriptors and the organizations (players) that make-up the local context. Subsequent to this we will be contrasting this information with the needs and interests of local immigrants to determine the ranking of these seventeen in terms of their importance for immigrant attraction and settlement in the City of Vernon and further understanding as to 'how' the City of Vernon is perceived in meeting the expectations of immigrants and where there are gaps and areas for improvement. This approach will provide us a better understanding of Vernon's unique position and greater insight into programming options that might best serve to make the community more welcoming to all immigrants generally and to those targeted immigrants especially.

The list of 17 characteristics of a welcoming community include:

1. Employment Opportunities
2. Fostering of Social Capital
3. Affordable and Suitable Housing
4. Positive Attitudes toward Immigrants, Cultural Diversity, and the Presence of Newcomers in the Community
5. Presence of Newcomer-Serving Agencies that Can Successfully Meet the Needs of Newcomers
6. Links between Main Actors Working Toward Welcoming Communities
7. Municipal Features and Services Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers
8. Educational Opportunities
9. Accessible and Suitable Health Care
10. Available and Accessible Public Transit
11. Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations

12. Social Engagement Opportunities
13. Political Participation Opportunities
14. Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System
15. Safety
16. Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreation Facilities
17. Favourable Media Coverage and Representation

For each of these characteristics the consulting team and the Local Immigration Partnership Council developed attributes that best reflect the City of Vernon which examine the players and characteristics of key newcomer services. This evaluation of key characteristics of a welcoming community considers both the physical and social infrastructure needed to support new immigrants in their transition into Canadian society. Summaries of this work are outlined in the ensuing storyboards, with individual characteristics summarized in the Vernon context in ***Appendix A***.

What Makes the City of Vernon...



... A Welcoming Community?



Vernon Settlement Strategy Mind Map: Characteristics



EMPLOYMENT

- Occupations -service occupations 19.0%, trades, transport 17.1%, business, finance and admin 14.9%
- Participation rate 45.5%
- Unemployment rate 5.1%



SOCIAL CAPITAL

- 16 cultural associations
- 42 sports organizations
- Local Immigration Partnerships Council (LIPC) – 25 members



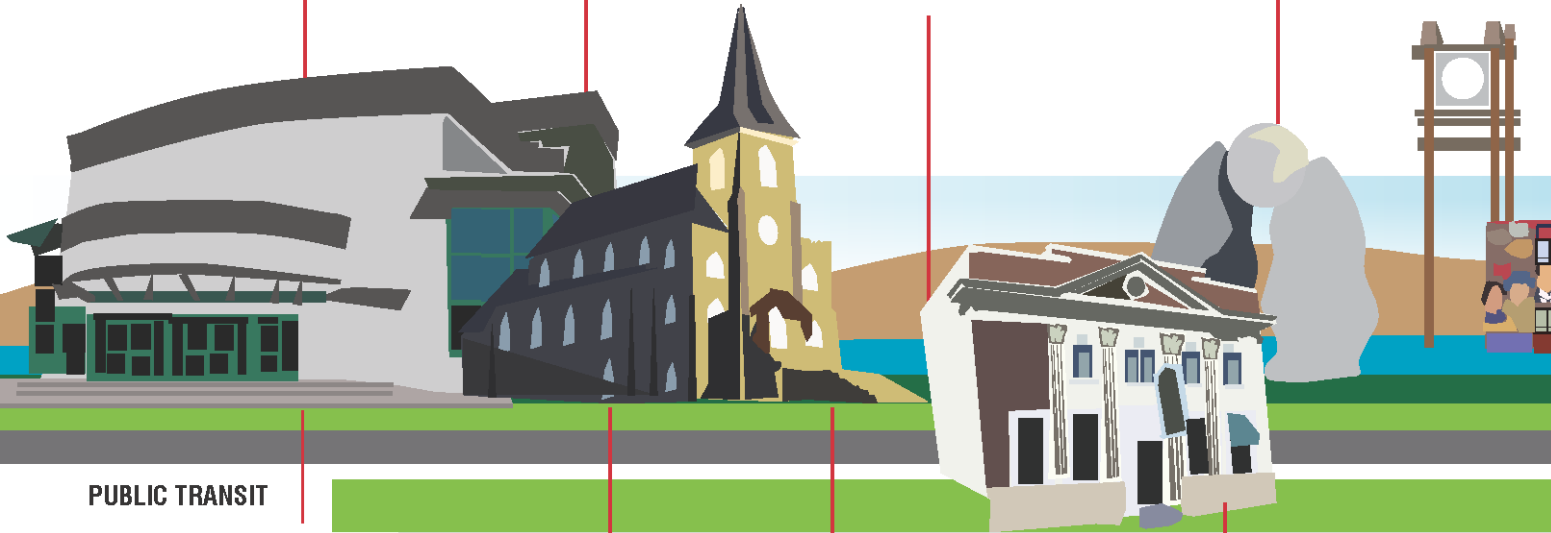
HOUSING

- Housing (median price): \$343,000
- Vacancy rate: 4.0%
- Total households in core need: 2,880
- Dwellings requiring major repair: 6.3%
- Housing diversity: single-detached (53%), apartments (22%), row homes (9%), semi-detached (8%), and duplexes (7%)



POSITIVE ATTITUDES

- 30 cultural events and festivals
- Non-Official languages speakers in Vernon 3,700
- Mother-tongue retention: 57.5%
- Bilingualism non-official languages: 4.7%



PUBLIC TRANSIT

- Alternative transportation use: 7% walk, 1% cycle and 0.7% take transit.
- 15% of employed persons walk or cycle to work
- A new bus exchange in Vernon - seven bus bays, six bus shelters, and an additional 2,800 hours of service.
- 2013- 445,000 trips were taken on the Vernon Regional Transit System
- Kelowna International Airport (YLW) – BC's 3rd and Canada's 10th busiest airport (1.44 million passengers annually)
- 2 types of accessible transit service

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- 74 places of worship
- 3 religious schools
- Religious community of 19,870 people
- Religious diversity - 93% Christian, 1.7% Buddhist, 0.9% Sikh, 0.7 Muslim, 0.3% Hindu, 0.2% Jewish, 0.2% Traditional, 2.1% Other



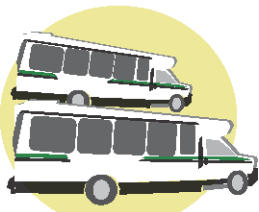
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- 14 types of cuisine found in restaurants
- 30 cultural events and festivals
- 16 cultural associations
- 42 sports and recreation organizations



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- Federal Elections – To vote or be a candidate must be a Canadian citizen, and 18 years of age
- Provincial Elections – To vote or be a candidate must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age, and a resident of BC for 6 months
- Municipal Election - To vote or be a candidate must be a Canadian citizen, a resident of BC for 6 months, a resident of their jurisdiction for at least 30 days, and 18 years of age





SUPPORT SERVICES

- Vernon Immigrant Services Society available in English, French, Spanish, Russian and German
- Skilled professionals assisting newcomers (i.e. Local Immigration Partnerships Council (LIPC) – 25 members)
- English as a second language training for adult newcomers to Canada
- The provincial language service (Translation)
- Import/ export brokers: 1
- International courier services: 5



COOPERATION AMONGST AGENCIES

- Local Immigration Partnerships Council (LIPC) – 25 members
- Need for greater information gathering and sharing
- Welcome Vernon Website



MUNICIPAL FEATURES

- Welcome Vernon Website – 2 languages and newcomer guide
- 42 sports and recreation organizations
- World-class golf, mountain and wellness resorts, beaches, hiking and mountain biking
- Sister cities - Anandpur Sahib, India; Frankenburg am Hausruck, Austria; Modesto, United States; Saint-Lambert, Canada; Tavullia, Italy; Tome, Japan



EDUCATION

- Number of schools: 14 elementary, 5 high schools
- Private schools: 3
- Number of students: 8,762
- Number of teachers: 53.9(FTE)
- Student to teacher ratio 19.3: 1
- 50,000 people with a certificate, or degree from Okanagan College



HEALTHCARE

- 1 hospitals, 1 community health centre, 2 public health centers
- 332 hospital beds
- 102 physicians (ratio of 1.84 per 1000 population)
- 31 dentists (ratio of 0.56 per 1000 population).



POLICE AND JUSTICE

- 30 volunteers Vernon Community Policing Office (CPO)
- 50 crime reduction/prevention programs and initiatives
- Language translation services available
- Basic cultural training for police officers



SAFETY

- Crime:
 - Average property crime rates (10.0 per 1,000 people)
 - Low violent crime rates (2.7 vs 3.7/1,000 population).
- Emergency Services:
 - 3 ambulances, 14 full-time employees
 - 3 fire halls and 63 firefighters



PARKS AND RECREATION

- .5 ha of park space per 1000 people
- 100 lakes in a one-hour drive from Vernon
- 42 sports and recreation organizations
- World-class golf, mountain and wellness resorts, beaches, hiking and mountain biking
- 2014 budget Parks and Recreation = \$4,519,715



MEDIA

- CBC TV and radio stations - multiple languages
- 3 local FM radio stations
- Global Okanagan - local news and weather
- Fair media representation enforced by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) and Equitable Portrayal Code



Vernon Settlement Strategy Mind Map: Players



EMPLOYMENT

- **Private** - Major Private Industry Employers: Kal Tire, Tolko, Silver Star, Tekmar, Rogers Foods, Pacific Regeneration, Harbercraft, and more
- **Public** - City of Vernon Economic Development, WorkBC, Service Canada, Interior Health Authority, School District 22
- **NGO's** - Community Futures North Okanagan, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, NEXUS BC, Chamber of Commerce, Social Planning Council



SOCIAL CAPITAL

- **Private** - Major employers provide training and benefits to employees
- **Public** - Service Canada, Interior Health Authority, School District 22, Okanagan College
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services, cultural associations, cultural events and festivals, Social Planning Council



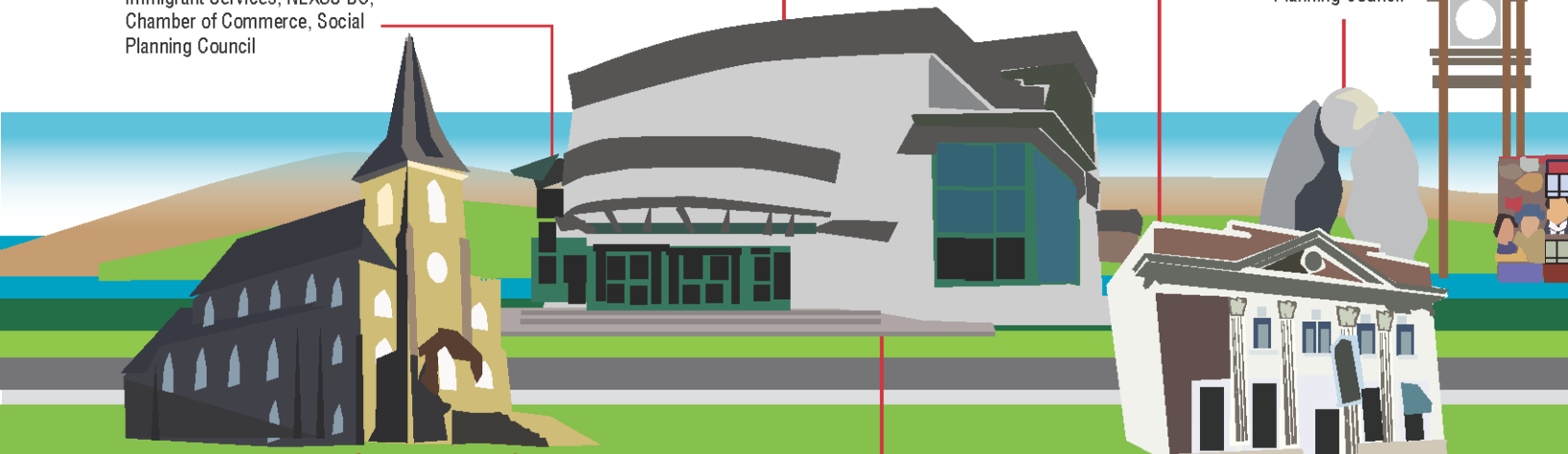
HOUSING

- **Public** - Canadian Home Builders Association -Okanagan
- **Public** - City of Vernon, Affordable Housing Committee, BC Housing, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- **NGO's** - Women's Transition House Society, First Nation's Friendship Centre, John Howard Society, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Native Housing Association, Social Planning Council



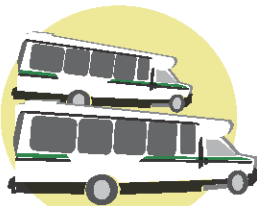
POSITIVE ATTITUDES

- **Private** - Major Private Industry Employers with equal opportunity policies
- **Public** - Canada's Action Plan Against Racism (Canada), Anti-Racism Programs Initiatives (BC), Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Social Planning Council



PUBLIC TRANSIT

- **Private** - Personal vehicles for hire, such as taxis.
- **Public** - City of Vernon, Vernon Regional Transit System, OK College and UBCO
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Chamber of Commerce



RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- **Public** - Canada's Office of Religious Freedom
- **NGO's** - Interfaith Bridging Program, cultural associations, places of worship, Vernon and District Immigrant Services



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- **Public** - Canadian Heritage, Public Art Gallery, City of Vernon, Downtown Vernon Association (DVA), OK College and UBCO
- **NGO's** -Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Nexus BC, cultural associations, events and festivals, Social Planning Council



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- **Private** - Private media organizations
- **Public** - Immigration & Citizenship Canada, Elections Canada, Elections BC, City of Vernon
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Vernon Chamber of Commerce





SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Private** - Major employers in Vernon have joined the Local Immigration Partnership Council
- **Public** - Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Interior Health, WorkBC, Service Canada
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Women's Transition House Society, North Okanagan Youth and Family Services, Independent Living Vernon, Family Resource Centre, Kindale Developmental Association, John Howard Society, NEXUS BC



COOPERATION AMONGST AGENCIES

- **Private** - Major private industry employers work with local agencies on recruitment.
- **Public** - City of Vernon, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- **NGO's** - Community Futures North Okanagan, Social Planning Council, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Chamber of Commerce, cultural associations, Local Immigration Partnerships Council



MUNICIPAL FEATURES

- **Public** - City of Vernon, OK College, Interior Health
- **NGO's** - Social Planning Council, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, cultural associations, Local Immigration Partnerships Council



EDUCATION

- **Private** - Many local employers provide skills training
- **Public** - OK College, Okanagan Regional Library, School District 22 Inclusionary Teams, UBCO, Interior Health
- **NGO's** - Local Immigration Partnerships Council Vernon, Social Planning Council, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, North Okanagan Youth and Family Services



HEALTHCARE

- **Private** - Many private industry employers provide health benefits
- **Public** - Vernon Jubilee Hospital, Public community health centres, Interior Health, Public Health Agency of Canada
- **NGO's** - Family Resource Centre, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA), English Language Services for Adults (ELSA Net), Vernon North Okanagan Health Unit, Downtown Primary Care Centre, Vernon Mental Health Centre



POLICE AND JUSTICE

- **Public** - Community Policing Office and the Vernon Safety Ambassadors
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Women's Transition House Society, North Okanagan Youth and Family Services, North Okanagan Restorative Justice Program, Social Planning Council

SAFETY

- **Private** - Health and Safety Awareness Training for Workers - legal obligation to provide a safe work environment
- **Public** - Public Health Agency of Canada, Community Policing Office and the Vernon Safety Ambassadors, WorksafeBC, WorkBC, Vernon Fire Department, North Okanagan Emergency Management
- **NGO's** - North Okanagan Youth and Family Services, Women's Transition House Society

PARKS AND RECREATION

- **Private** - Local private recreation businesses (i.e. golf courses (Predator Ridge), mountain and wellness resorts (Silver Star), etc.
- **Public** - BC Parks, City of Vernon, Regional District North Okanagan, Okanagan Regional Library, Vernon Public Art Gallery, Greater Vernon Museum and Archives
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Chamber of Commerce, Social Planning Council

MEDIA

- **Private** - Private media organizations
- **Public** - CBC, Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Media in BC, Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, Public Art Gallery
- **NGO's** - Vernon and District Immigrant Services



4.0 Recommendations for Consideration in Strategy Development

Defining community context is but a first step, albeit an exceedingly important one, in the broader effort to formulate a settlement strategy for the City of Vernon that is reasonable and realistic. What is presented herein is detailed and comprehensive. For the most part critical issues are identified and useful insights provided. However, in moving forward there are a number of critical next steps:

1. Because people can view the same set of facts and see totally different things it is necessary that there be consensus on the information collected and the interpretation of its relative import;
2. To ensure this exercise is fairly balanced. It is critical to gather objective input from the range of diverse immigrants and newcomers reflecting their experiences with the process of immigration and inclusion and their specific thoughts on Vernon's individual welcoming characteristics;
3. To better appreciate the City's relative position in the broader "immigrant attraction" milieu there is a need to establish a series of benchmarks or a comparative framework of sorts from which each characteristic can be properly assessed in terms of whether Vernon is "all it can be" and if so/if not is the characteristic a strength, weakness, opportunity or threat in the broader effort to promote and support immigration to Vernon;
4. Some effort needs to be expended in ascertaining which characteristics are "changeable", who the change agents might be, and the scope of effort required to make changes;
5. A greater understanding needs to be gained on the structure of immigration to date and a determination needs to be made as to how this level and scope of diversity in skills, interests and engagement reflects where the community sees itself in the future, i.e. what needs to change or be improved; and,

6. There is a need to recognize that community context as presented herein is a snapshot of a single point in time, that context changes and as such future programming needs to be formulated with a consideration of change.

As outlined on page 1, this document represents a milestone, the conclusion of Element 2. Next steps will include labour market research, strategic planning and marketing plan development, concluding toward the end of the fiscal 2016 (March 2016).

Appendix A – Summary of Characteristics



Employment Opportunities



Definition

Employment opportunities are one of the most important characteristics of a welcoming community. Employment for newcomers represents an opportunity to start a new life by providing a primary source of income to meet their basic needs for housing and food. Many skilled workers come to Canada with the expectation that they will be able to obtain employment, and this helps Canada to meet growing demands for skilled workers in our knowledge-based economy.



Private

Major Private Industry Employers: Kal Tire, Tolko, Silver Star, Tekmar, Rogers Foods, Pacific Regeneration, Harbercraft, and more



Players

Public

City of Vernon Economic Development, WorkBC, Service Canada, Interior Health Authority, School District 22



Non-Government Organizations

Community Futures North Okanagan, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, NEXUS BC, Chamber of Commerce, Social Planning Council

Descriptors



- Occupations service occupations 19.0%, trades, transport 17.1%, business, finance and admin 14.9%
- Participation rate 45.5%
- Unemployment rate 5.1%

Considerations



With a high level of projected demographic job openings, largely coming due to attrition, partnered with the existing in trends in the valley and in particular the City of Vernon creative solutions need to be developed in order to attract appropriately skilled employees and citizens to the City.

Fostering of Social Capital



Definition

Social capital can be described as the collective value of all social networks and connections between individuals. Social capital provides value to society and the economy, and can affect the productivity of individuals and groups. Fostering social capital within newcomer groups can help narrow the economic and psychological differences that limit the ability of new immigrants to integrate into Canadian society.



Private

Major employers provide training and benefits to employees



Players

Public

Service Canada, Interior Health Authority, School District 22, Okanagan College



Non-Government Organizations

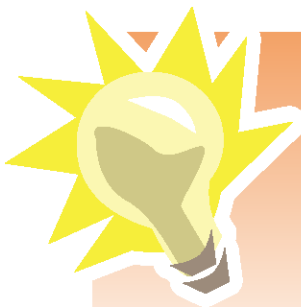
Vernon and District Immigrant Services, cultural associations, cultural events and festivals, Social Planning Council



Descriptors

- 16 cultural associations
- 42 sports organizations
- Local Immigration Partnerships Council (LIPC) – 25 members

Considerations



Within the context of the City of Vernon it is evident that there are significant social capital foundations and an extensive network from which social connections can be enhanced/solidified. That said there is some uncertainty as to the depth and breadth of the connections available and the accessibility of these connections, i.e. are they as relevant to the needs of immigrants and readily accessible to new immigrants? The implication in terms of fostering a more positive immigrant experience is how might these circumstances be properly and objectively measured and, if found wanting, enhanced.



Affordable and Suitable Housing



Definition

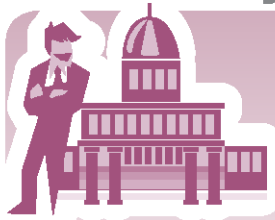
Affordable housing is generally seen as housing that costs less than 30% of before-tax household income. Finding affordable housing that is suitable to meet one's need for shelter is a primary consideration of newcomers' decision to immigrate to Canada. In addition to being an essential need, housing is important because it influences one's ability to access schools, jobs, and key services such as health care.



Private

Canadian Home Builders Association
Urban Development Institute
Private Developers

Players



Public

City of Vernon, Affordable Housing
Committee, BC Housing, Canadian
Mortgage and Housing Corporation



Non-Government Organizations

Women's Transition House Society,
First Nation's Friendship Centre,
John Howard Society, Vernon and
District Immigrant Services, Native
Housing Association, Social Planning
Council

Descriptors



- Housing (median price): \$343,000
- Vacancy rate: 4.0%
- Total households in core need: 2,880
- Dwellings requiring major repair: 6.3%
- Housing diversity: single-detached (53%), apartments (22%), row homes (9%), semi-detached (8%), and duplexes (7%)

Considerations



Despite recent evidence to the contrary affordable housing remains a concerning issue within the City of Vernon amongst a significant portion of the population. But is either affordability or availability a critical issue for immigrants today or those targeted in the future? The answer depends upon expected incomes, housing prices, rental vacancy rates and the like for immigrants today and for arrivals in the future. In terms of action however it is important to understand how this compares with the experience in other jurisdictions and whether it is a limitation to focused immigrant attraction? If required are there ways in which specific programming might be used to assist immigrants or ameliorate problems.



Positive Attitudes toward Immigrants, Cultural Diversity, and the Presence of Newcomers in the Community



Definition

In this context, positive attitudes refer to the feelings, opinions, and behaviours people in Canadian society have towards newcomers. The attitude of society towards newcomers is an important consideration because this can determine the public's reaction to the presence of newcomers, and affect their opinions on Canada's immigration policy.

Players



Private

Major Private Industry Employers with equal opportunity policies



Public

Canada's Action Plan Against Racism (Canada), Anti-Racism Programs/Initiatives (BC), Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination



Non-Government Organizations

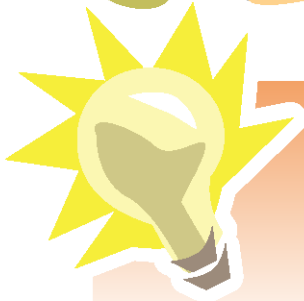
Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Social Planning Council

Descriptors



- 30 cultural events and festivals
- Non-official languages speakers in Vernon 3,700
- Mother-tongue retention: 57.5%
- Bilingualism non-official languages: 4.7%

Considerations



Community attitude is best defined by the adage “what you think about you bring about”. In this context it is important to evaluate local attitudes toward immigrants and the perceptions of immigrants to feeling welcome. How do attitudes manifest themselves and how are they conveyed and enhanced? Is it only about about providing or accommodating needs or should the effort be more visible and proactive?



Presence of Newcomer-Serving Agencies that Can Successfully Meet the Needs of Newcomers



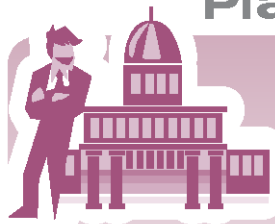
Definition

Immigrant-serving agencies are the primary point of contact for many newcomers upon their arrival to Canada. They provide services that support new arrivals, by identifying and assessing newcomer needs and providing information on relevant services and resources within the community.



Private

Major employers in Vernon have joined the Local Immigration Partnership Council



Players

Public

Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Interior Health, WorkBC, Service Canada



Non-Government Organizations

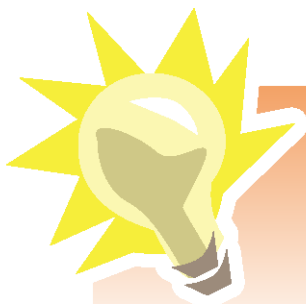
Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Women's Transition House Society, North Okanagan Youth and Family Services, Independent Living Vernon, Family Resource Centre, Kindale Developmental Association, John Howard Society, NEXUS BC

Descriptors



- Vernon District Immigrant Services Society available in English, French, Spanish, Russian and German
- Skilled professionals assisting newcomers (i.e. Local Immigration Partnerships Council (LIPC – 25 members)
- English as a second language training for adult newcomers to Canada
- The provincial language service (Translation)
- Import/ export brokers: 1
- International courier services: 5

Considerations



The array of agencies, services and programs within the City of Vernon for immigrants is extensive. But are existing services/programs sufficient/relevant to immigrant needs; and is there a sufficient level of awareness by immigrants of key supporting agencies and the services/programs they deliver. How might deficiencies where they exist be corrected and how might particular strengths be improved?



Links Between Main Actors Working Toward Welcoming Communities



Definition

Links between main actors working toward welcoming communities, refers to connections that involve cooperation, information, and resource sharing between main actors who can shape a welcoming community. This can include community members, service providing organizations, regional governments, and provincial and federal governments.

Players



Private

Major private industry employers work with local agencies on recruitment.



Public

City of Vernon, Citizenship and Immigration Canada



Non-Government Organizations

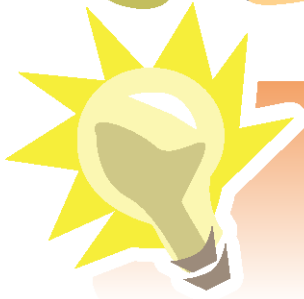
Community Futures North Okanagan, Social Planning Council, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Chamber of Commerce, cultural associations, Local Immigration Partnerships Council

Descriptors



- Local Immigration Partnerships Council (LIPC) – 25 members
- Need for greater information gathering and sharing
- Welcome Vernon Website (www.WelcomeVernon.ca)

Considerations



How do you measure the synergies of cooperation and how do you ensure cooperation/collaboration are maximized to the benefit of the client given different funders and mandates? Consideration should be given to building synergy within some basic areas such as information collection and beyond this on joint cooperative initiatives targeting immigrant attraction and inclusion.

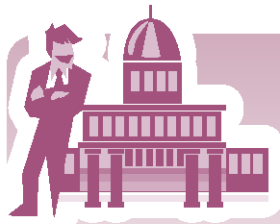


Municipal Features and Services Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers



Definition

The characteristic of welcoming communities relative to municipal features and services *sensitive* to the presence and needs of newcomers considers the role of municipalities in creating welcoming communities. This takes into account city planning, the provision of services and the provision of information.



Public

City of Vernon, Okanagan College, Interior Health



Players

Non-Government Organizations

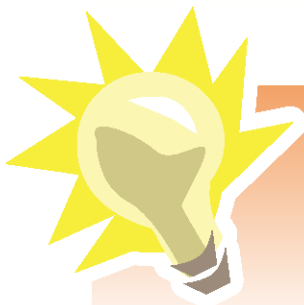
Social Planning Council, Vernon and District Immigrant Services, cultural associations, Local Immigration Partnerships Council

Descriptors



- Welcome Vernon Website – 2 languages and newcomer guide
- 42 sports and recreation organizations
- World-class golf, mountain and wellness resorts, beaches, hiking and mountain biking
- Sister cities - Anandpur Sahib, India; Frankenburg am Hausruck, Austria; Modesto, United States; Saint-Lambert, Canada; Tavullia, Italy; Tome, Japan

Considerations



Every municipality is unique though there are certain essential services expected regardless of location. For the most part municipalities throughout Canada offer a similar array of core services. But it is the differentiation beyond these core services that is the essence of community competitiveness in terms of immigrant attraction. How do these competitive advantages serve the City of Vernon's efforts and how can this be enhanced?



Educational Opportunities



Definition

Educational opportunities, defined as access to education, are a key characteristic of a welcoming community. When thinking about the presence of education and training opportunities, it is important to consider the needs of both adults and youth.

Players



Private

Many local employers provide skills training



Public

Okanagan College, Okanagan Regional Library, School District 22 Inclusionary Teams, UBCO, Interior Health



Non-Government Organizations

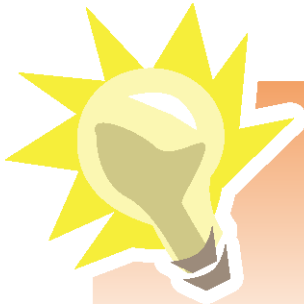
Local Immigration Partnerships Council Vernon, Vernon and District Immigrant Services

Descriptors



- Number of schools: 14 elementary, 5 high schools
- Private schools: 3
- Number of students: 8,762
- Number of teachers: 453.9(FTE)
- Student to teacher ratio 19.3: 1
- 50,000 people with a certificate, or degree from Okanagan College

Considerations



If the target for future immigration within the City of Vernon is on skilled employees, the City must boast a necessary level of excellence in educational programs, facilities and opportunities. While the City has much to offer, how does this meet the needs of targeted immigrants and what needs to be done, if anything, to better position the City's educational offerings? Further, in terms of educational students from abroad what can or should be done to retain new grads as part of a broader immigration strategy?

Accessible and Suitable Health Care



Definition

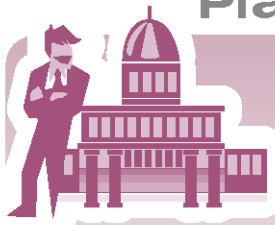
Health Care, defined as access to healthcare, is a key characteristic of welcoming communities. Access to healthcare relates to inequities in health status and access to services. Often newcomers experience considerable diversity in health status and access to health care. Immigrants and refugees are considered an under served population, mainly because they experience barriers to presentation of need.

Players



Private

Many private industry employers provide health benefits



Public

Vernon Jubilee Hospital, public community health centres , Interior Health, Public Health Agency of Canada



Non-Government Organizations

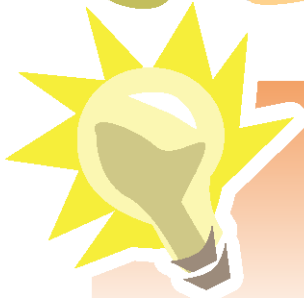
Vernon North Okanagan Health Unit, Downtown Primary Care Centre, Vernon Mental Health Centre

Descriptors



- 1 hospital, 1 community health centre, 2 public health centers
- 332 hospital beds
- 102 physicians (ratio of 1.84 per 1000 population)
- 31 dentists (ratio of 0.56 per 1000 population).

Considerations



The City of Vernon offers a comprehensive array of health care facilities' and services within the City and Region. Too often these services are regarded as incidental to development. However given the broader economic size and diversity of the Valley there may be value in looking to premise a broader and more sustainable community development effort by building on this important foundation and using its development as a platform for immigrant attraction.

Available and Accessible Public Transit



Definition

The *Available and Accessible Public Transit* indicator is best described as the ability of public transit to meet peoples' needs and improve their ability to get to work, access services (e.g., healthcare) and meet daily needs (e.g., shopping for food). A lack of public transit poses significant barriers to immigrants' successful labour market integration. In addition to limiting actual work opportunities (e.g., due to inaccessibility), it may limit access to employment-based services (such as professional training).

Players



Private

Personal vehicles for hire, such as taxis.



Public

City of Vernon, BC Transit System, Okanagan College and UBCO



Non-Government Organizations

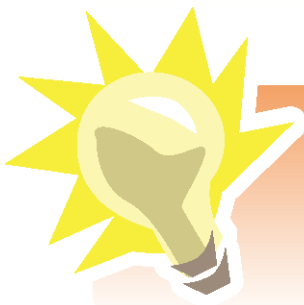
Vernon and District Immigrant Services, United Way

Descriptors



- Alternative transportation use: 7% walk, 1% cycle and 0.7% take transit.
- 15% of employed persons walk or cycle to work
- A new bus exchange in Vernon - seven bus bays, six bus shelters, and an additional 2,800 hours of service.
- 2013- 445,000 trips were taken on the BC Transit System
- Kelowna International Airport (YLW) – BC's 3rd and Canada's 10th busiest airport (1.44 million passengers annually)
- 2 types of accessible transit service
- United Way offers bus tickets
- Vernon & District Immigrant Services offers orientation to public transit

Considerations



Despite Vernon's relatively small size there is a reasonable and multi-faceted, public transit system in place. But does this system adequately suit the needs of new immigrants in terms of residence, employment, services and general accessibility? How are public transit services geared to support the needs of new immigrants?



Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations



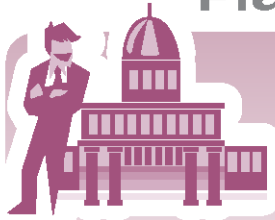
Definition

The *Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations* indicator is broadly expressed as the increased variety of religious followers and organizations present in Canada over the last several decades. Freedom of religion and religious diversity is an important predictor of whether newcomers will make the decision to immigrate to Canada.



Non-Government Organizations

Interfaith Bridging Program, cultural associations, places of worship, Vernon and District Immigrant Services



Players

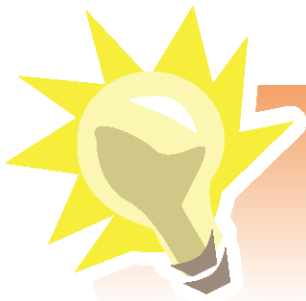
Public

Canada's Office of Religious Freedom

Descriptors



- 74 places of worship
- 3 religious schools
- Religious community of 19,870 people
- Religious diversity - 93% Christian, 1.7% Buddhist, 0.9% Sikh, 0.7 Muslim, 0.3% Hindu, 0.2% Jewish, 0.2% Traditional, 2.1% Other



Considerations

An essential component of any immigrant attraction effort or any multicultural initiative is a diversity of religious choice. The City of Vernon has a history of religious diversity yet this history is just beginning to be celebrated and promoted as part of a broader development effort. Vernon's unique offering should be a foundation for supporting/fostering immigrant attraction.



Social Engagement Opportunities



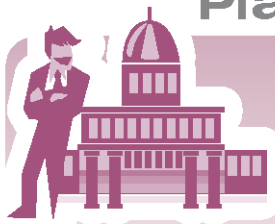
Definition

Social engagement opportunities refer to events and gatherings that allow individuals and groups to have shared interactions. Social engagement opportunities are closely linked to social networking because they represent connections with community members. Social engagement and networking serve as primary sources of assistance to newcomers in the absence of family or friends.

Players



Private



Public

Canadian Heritage, Public Art Gallery, City of Vernon, Downtown Vernon Association (DVA), Okanagan College and UBCO



Non-Government Organizations

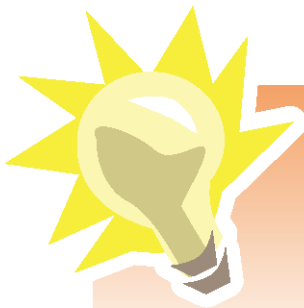
Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Nexus BC, cultural associations, events and festivals, Social Planning Council

Descriptors



- 14 types of cuisine found in restaurants
- 30 cultural events and festivals
- 16 cultural associations
- 42 sports and recreation organizations

Considerations



The City of Vernon is home to a number of cultural groups and offers a diversity of cultural events and festivals. Together these activities and groups can enhance the City's overall sense of welcoming. In looking down the road at a new immigrant attraction strategy what is the apparent fit between what is already present and what might be the needs and interests of new immigrants? What additional efforts need be considered and how might they be realized?

Political Participation Opportunities



Definition

Political participation refers to civic participation and engagement. In Canada this is manifested in the rights of citizens to vote and run in elections. An important part of participation is knowledge about one's rights and responsibilities. This is particularly important for newcomers who may be arriving from countries with different civic participation expectations. Through providing opportunities for political participation, communities can help newcomers become politically-empowered citizens.

Players



Private

Private media organizations



Public

Immigration & Citizenship Canada, Elections Canada, Elections BC, City of Vernon



Non-Government Organizations

Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Vernon Chamber of Commerce

Descriptors



- Federal Elections – To vote or be a candidate must be a Canadian citizen, and 18 years of age
- Provincial Elections – To vote or be a candidate must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age, and a resident of BC for 6 months
- Municipal Election - To vote or be a candidate must be a Canadian citizen, a resident of BC for 6 months, a resident of their jurisdiction for at least 30 days, and 18 years of age

Considerations



Any immigrant attraction effort without a conscientious and visible political engagement strategy is doomed for failure. Nowhere is inclusion and measurable engagement more evident than in the domestic political process. How does Vernon rank in being inclusive/participative; are efforts in place to enhance, promote and ensure inclusion, i.e. in advisory committees, in elected office? What can be done and what should be done to promote the political participation of immigrants as a doomed platform for fostering/supporting additional immigrant attraction?

Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System



Definition

For many immigrants, especially immigrants from countries where the policing and justice systems are corrupt, a Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System is vital indicator of a welcoming community. An Immigrants' perception of safety and their overall wellbeing will largely stem from whether they feel they have a positive relationships with those that promote safety within the community.



Public

Community Policing Office and the Vernon Safety Ambassadors



Players

Non-Government Organizations

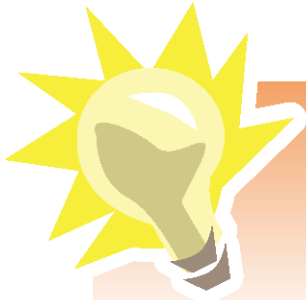
Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Women's Transition House Society, North Okanagan Youth and Family Services, North Okanagan Restorative Justice Program, Social Planning Council

Descriptors



- 30 volunteers Vernon Community Policing Office (CPO)
- 50 crime reduction/prevention programs and initiatives
- Language translation services available
- Basic cultural training for police officers

Considerations



Depending upon country of origin, relationships with the local police and justice system are especially concerning. Transparency, good governance and anticorruption are essential characteristics of any highly regarded democracy. In Canada many people have come to expect this behavior as a norm and thus it is seldom celebrated or highlighted. But it needs to be promoted as a core tenet in any effort to attract new residents to the City.



Safety



Definition

The safety of a community is evaluated on its crimes rates and the ability of the justice system to promote and maintain the security of its citizens. Feeling safe at homes and within the community has an enormous impact on one's quality of life, and it is a vital part of Canadian society.

Players



Private

Health and Safety Awareness Training for Workers - legal obligation to provide a safe work environment



Public

Public Health Agency of Canada, Community Policing Office and the Vernon Safety Ambassadors, WorksafeBC, WorkBC, Vernon Fire Department, North Okanagan Emergency Management



Non-Government Organizations

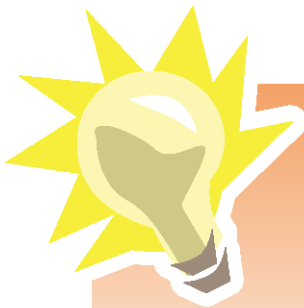
Women's Transition House Society

Descriptors



- Crime:
 - Average property crime rates (10.0 per 1,000 people)
 - Low violent crime rates (2.7 vs 3.7/1,000 population).
- Emergency Services:
 - 3 ambulances, 14 full-time employees
 - 3 fire halls and 63 firefighters

Considerations



Safety is an essential pre-requisite to any location decision; though arguably on an individual basis the concept is relative. The City of Vernon is by all statistical evidence a relatively safe and secure choice for any newcomer. Compared to other parts of Canada or the United States however it is a City of similar ilk. In terms of immigrant attraction if this is a notable strength how is it communicated and how is it properly highlighted within the immigrant attraction effort? There are also a number of opportunities for immigrant engagement in a variety of initiatives focused on local safety. How is inclusion/participation promoted/facilitated and how is this engagement utilized within the framework of immigrant attraction?



Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreation Facilities



Definition

This refers to public spaces and facilities, such as parks, town squares, public libraries, and public community/recreation facilities that are open and accessible to all community members. Use of public space and participation in community/recreation centres are important because they provide opportunities for newcomers to become integrated into the community.



Private

Local private recreation businesses (i.e. golf courses (Predator Ridge), mountain and wellness resorts (Silver Star), etc.



Players

Public

BC Parks, City of Vernon, Regional District North Okanagan, Okanagan Regional Library, Vernon Public Art Gallery, Greater Vernon Museum and Archives



Non-Government Organizations

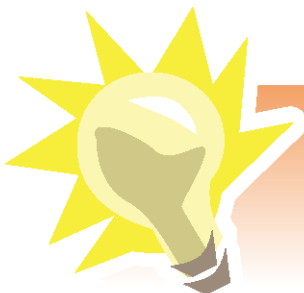
Vernon and District Immigrant Services, Chamber of Commerce, Social Planning Council

Descriptors



- 5.5 ha of park space per 1000 people
- 100 lakes in a one-hour drive from Vernon
- 42 sports and recreation organizations
- World-class golf, mountain and wellness resorts, beaches, hiking and mountain biking
- 2014 budget Parks and Recreation = \$4,519,715
- Recreation discount Park at Recreation Centre for certain low income groups

Considerations



The City of Vernon benefits from an array of natural and man made recreational and cultural attractions. How do these features position the City relative to immigrant attraction. Are these attractions readily accessible?

Favourable Media Coverage and Representation



Definition

Media can be described as a medium through which information is shared and communicated, and includes radio, television, newspapers, and internet sources. The media is also used for the purpose of disseminating information. The extent to which immigration issues are politicized and depicted in the media impacts attitudes toward immigrants and immigration intake.

Players



Private

Private media organizations



Public

CBC, Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Media in BC, Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, Public Art Gallery



Non-Government Organizations

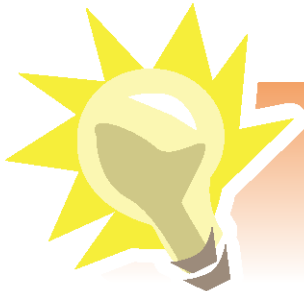
Vernon and District Immigrant Services

Descriptors



- CBC TV and radio stations - multiple languages
- 3 local FM radio stations, one local newspaper
- Global Okanagan - local news and weather
- Fair media representation enforced by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) and *Equitable Portrayal Code*

Considerations



People go to where they feel welcome and stay where they feel wanted. The media plays a huge part in telling the story and efforts need to be expended in engaging the media in supporting immigrant inclusion and immigrant attraction.