



Madrona Community Connections Pilot

Final Report & Recommendations

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Introduction

Origin and Goals

In anticipation of tenants moving into Madrona, Catalyst's first fully owned and operated rental development in Vic West, staff asked themselves what it really meant to build vibrant, affordable and inspiring places for people to live. Was it enough to offer security of tenure and rents affordable to working people? Or could they be more ambitious, and take active steps to intentionally foster a friendly, socially connected, resilient community at Madrona?

Catalyst decided it wanted to be more ambitious. Throughout the fall of 2017 I set out as a consultant to learn from other housing organizations, resulting in a set of recommendations and a report called *Homes That Connect Us: Building social connections and community engagement among residents of multi-family rental housing.* From there I worked with Maura Chestnutt, Catalyst's VP of Operations and Strategic Initiatives, to put together a 12-month 'Community Connections' pilot concept. In May 2018 we began to roll it out, about five months after tenants began moving in.

The 12-month goal was to undertake landlord-led and tenant-led events and initiatives that would:

- Increase social connectedness amongst Madrona residents and foster tenant engagement
- Increase positive connections between Madrona and other Dockside Green residents
- Strengthen Madrona tenants' feelings of belonging, inclusion and engagement within the Vic West community
- Achieve the above goals with a clear sustainability ethic guiding Catalyst and tenant decisions
- Foster a program that is financially sustainable without grant inputs in future Catalyst developments
- Maximize the positive social potential of Madrona's physical design

The longer-term aspiration was that lessons learned from the Madrona pilot would strengthen Catalyst's ability to develop and manage vibrant, affordable rental homes that would:

- Be embraced by those who live there
- Be embraced by the neighbourhood and larger community (integrated with existing ownership housing, not segregated)
- Have a strong feeling of community and home, not just a transitional set of walls

- Feel comfy and welcoming
- Be very well cared-for, non-sterile buildings (both Catalyst building managers and tenants would feel pride of place and contribute to care of the space)
- Show obviously positive relationships between tenants (people look out for and take care of each other)
- Have low turn-over rates
- Get frequent referrals from existing tenants and have healthy waitlists
- Have an identifiable, positive, friendly vibe (Catalyst becomes known for building, managing and cultivating friendly, inclusive, engaged communities)



Photo Credit: Martin Knowles Photography.

Consultant Role

My role in the Community Connections pilot was to:

1. **Learn about community building efforts by other housing providers and communities.**
Literature review and in-depth interviews resulted in late 2017 pilot recommendations and a spring 2018 report called Homes That Connect Us, which outlined 10 key learnings and related case studies.
2. **Develop a plan for a 12-month pilot at Madrona, including both implementation and evaluation aspects.** Between late fall 2017 and mid-winter 2018, I worked closely with Maura on implementation and evaluation plans.
3. **Attend and help at social events, getting to know tenants and reporting back on how things went.** Events included: May 2018 launch & dialogue, June 2018 BBQ, October 2018 pumpkin carving, and October 2018 discussion with a tenant about building a recycling shed.
4. **Check in periodically with key staff** (Maura Chestnutt/Catalyst & Shelley Xu/Randall North) to document their observations and learnings.
5. **Conduct four anonymous online surveys, distributed by property managers at Randall North, and report on findings.**
 - May 2018: full survey including feedback questions on Ollie & Quinn pilot launch and dialogue event
 - June 2018: June BBQ event feedback and ideas for tenant-led events and initiatives
 - November/December 2018: full survey including feedback questions about pumpkin carving event
 - May/June 2019: full survey including feedback questions about May block watch event and final questions about Community Connections pilot
6. **Wrap up the first pilot year with this report and set of recommendations for continuing the Community Connections pilot at Madrona and expanding it to new sites.**

Staff Role

Maura Chestnutt's role was to:

- Coordinate town halls and events
- Engage tenants to help with events
- Encourage tenants to come up with own initiatives
- Work with property manager to educate and inform them about how Catalyst is a different landlord, with different client expectations
- Work with property manager on building issues
- Set the intention for Community Connections and make sure it stays on track; help to make internal argument for time and resources; document and tell the story of how pilot is going, how it is impacting tenants
- Advocate internally and externally for Community Connections approach
- Keep the focus on people, while others at Catalyst are focused on building
- Receive tenant feedback and integrate it into design guidelines for new projects
- Be a tenant advocate; bring tenants' lived experiences into organizational discussions and decisions
- Cultivate online community with tenants; inform about events, new policies, discuss tenant ideas and concerns etc.
- Be responsive, stay curious and open to creating something that fits for a particular group of tenants. Listen, adjust expectations, co-create community.

Pilot Activities

Pilot Activities

Date	Event	Attendance	Survey Info		
			<i>I enjoyed the event, and look forward to the next one</i>	<i>The event felt inclusive of all Madrona tenants.</i>	<i>I met neighbours I've never talked to before</i>
May 4 2018	Pilot launch & social at Ollie & Quinn, ending with facilitated dialogue	Approx. 30. 15 stayed for discussion	100% agreed (sample of 12)	83% agreed 7% neutral (sample of 12)	100% agreed (sample of 12)
May 2018	Town hall	Not recorded	N/A	N/A	N/A
June 10 2018	Outdoor BBQ at Madrona, timed with VicWest Streetfest	50+; good blend of ages	100% agreed (sample of 12)	83% agreed 7% neutral (sample of 12)	83% agreed 7% neutral (sample of 12)
Sept 20 2018	Town hall	Not recorded	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oct 28 2018	Pumpkin carving	Approx. 12	75% agreed (sample of 4)	75% agreed (sample of 4)	25% agreed (sample of 4)
Mar 23 2019	Block watch launch & town hall	Approx. 16-18	90% agreed (sample of 10)	70% agreed (sample of 10)	80% agreed (sample of 10)

Reasons for social event non-attendance

Across all four events, the reasons given by survey respondents for not attending events were:

- 'conflicting plans,' (35 responses),
- 'work' (8 responses),
- 'event didn't interest me' (7 responses),
- 'challenges with childcare' (3 responses),
- 'couldn't get there / mobility / affordability' (3 responses),
- 'didn't know about it' (3 responses), 'was sick' (3 responses); and,
- a few random 'other' responses.

What were tenants saying before pilot activities started? Who responded to the surveys? What were some of the baseline findings?

By the time Catalyst hosted its first event – the May 4, 2018 pilot launch and dialogue at Ollie & Quinn – tenants had been living at Madrona for five months. There had been a number of building deficiencies for Catalyst to contend with. People weren't clear about the distinctions between Dockside Green, Randall North, and Catalyst. However, around 30 people of all ages showed up to meet Catalyst team members, Randall North staff and learn about the Community Connections pilot.

After a casual dinner, drinks, a brief presentation by Catalyst and some social time, 15 tenants stayed to take part in a facilitated conversation about the pilot, and to talk about what made neighbourhoods friendly. During that discussion 7 of the 15 participants said Madrona was the friendliest place they'd ever lived. This was remarkable to hear after only five months, and before the pilot had begun. Digging into that sentiment, some of the contributing factors included:

Security & commonalities:

- A general feeling of thankfulness for home & security (of tenure)
- Everyone coming in at the same time; lots to talk about with moving challenges, deficiencies, people sharing extra furniture, etc.
- Neighbours that have things in common with you (temporal or other)
- Similar financial position is comforting (they all knew their neighbours had similar incomes)
- Friends your age; similar hobbies and values; shared interests in green building, recycling, etc

Housing model / design:

- Ability to have pets; pets create conversation
- No hallways! Meeting people outside (at pond, watching herons & kingfishers)
- Paths that go by everyone's living room window; mostly Madrona residents use the top path; people in the condos very friendly so far, chatting occurs on pathways
- Madrona's design forces you to be social; privacy is a bit of a challenge; you either hide, or fully engage;
- People are respectful of the boundary between private and public



Madrona Event. Photo Credit: Maura Chestnutt.



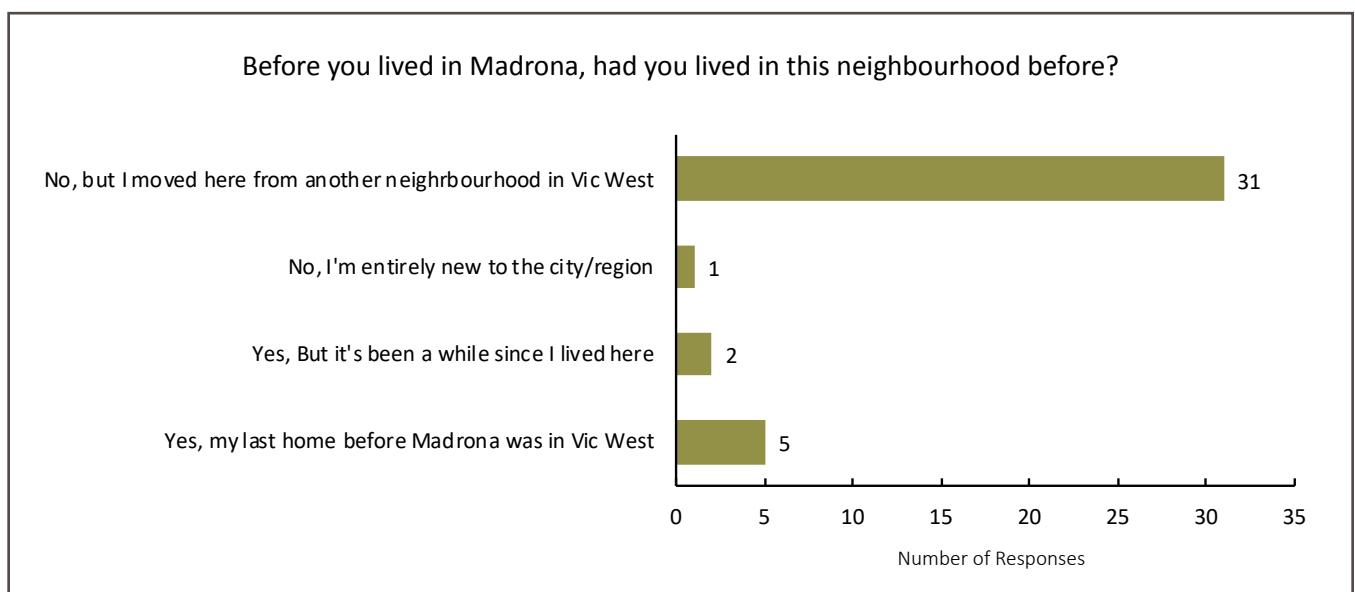
Photo Credit: Upper Left Photography.

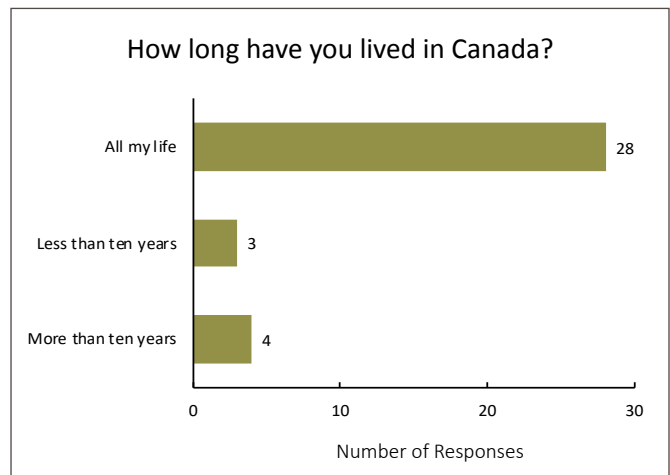
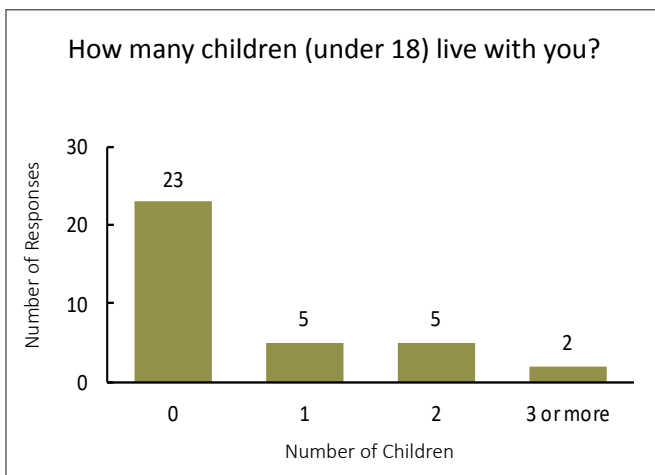
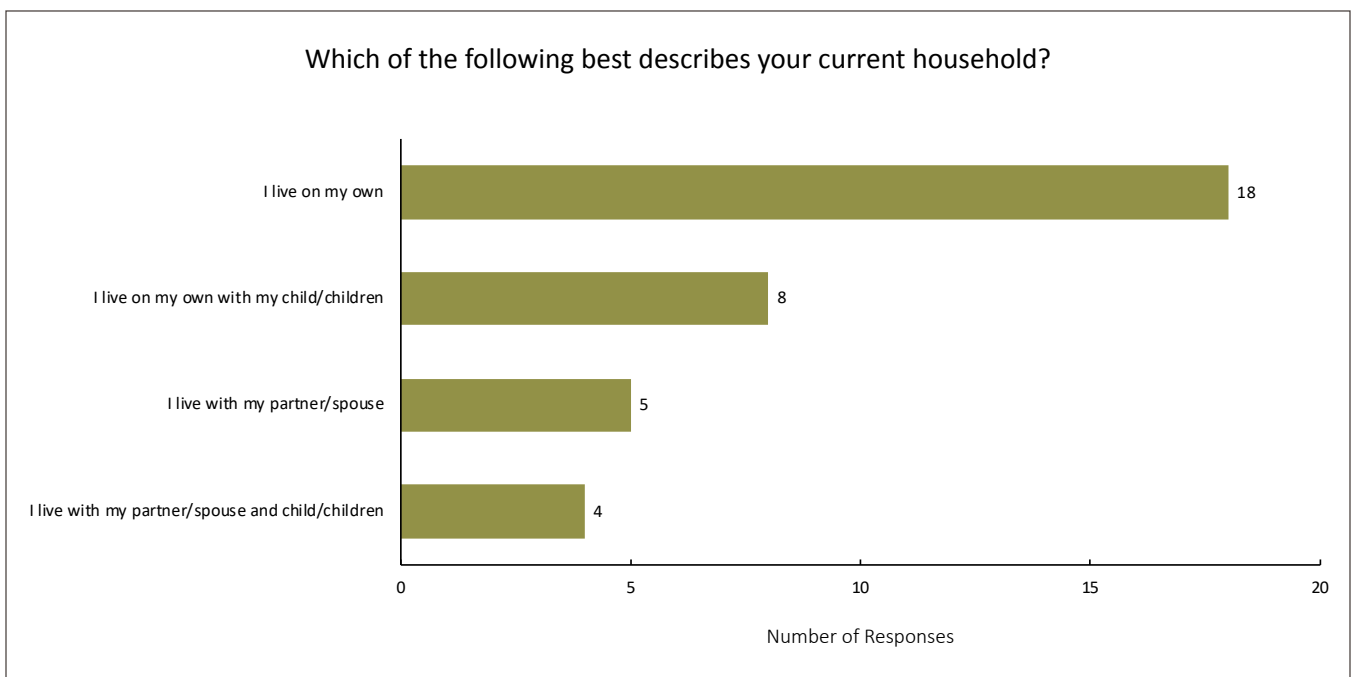
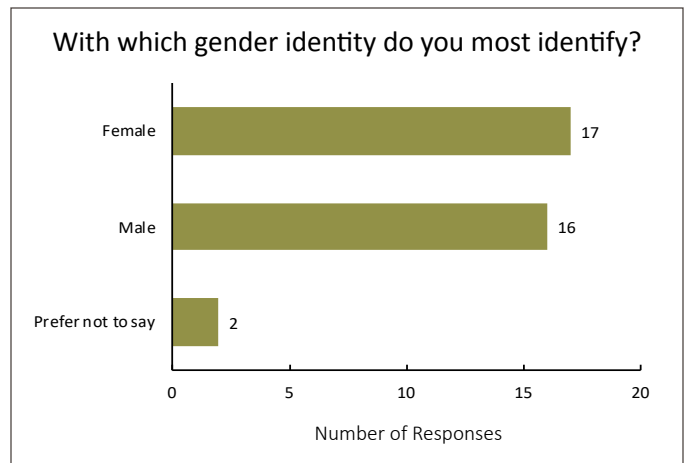
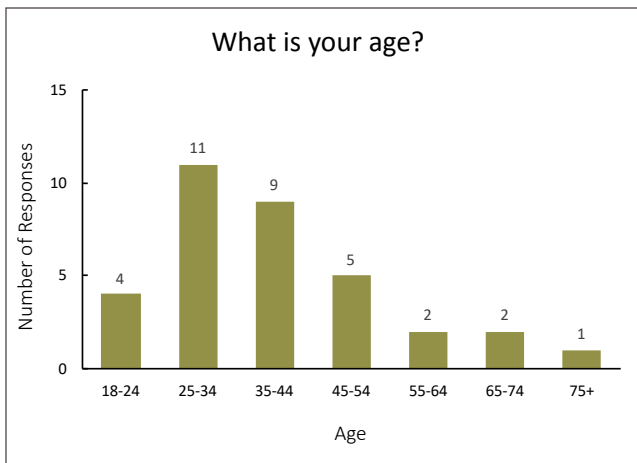
Engagement: In-Person & Online Surveys

Rather than ask questions about Madrona's built form within online surveys, we opted to learn about it at the May 4th event by posting a large handwritten matrix on a wall. The stars represent the number of votes with sticky dots. We also committed to observe how people interacted with various spaces at other events.

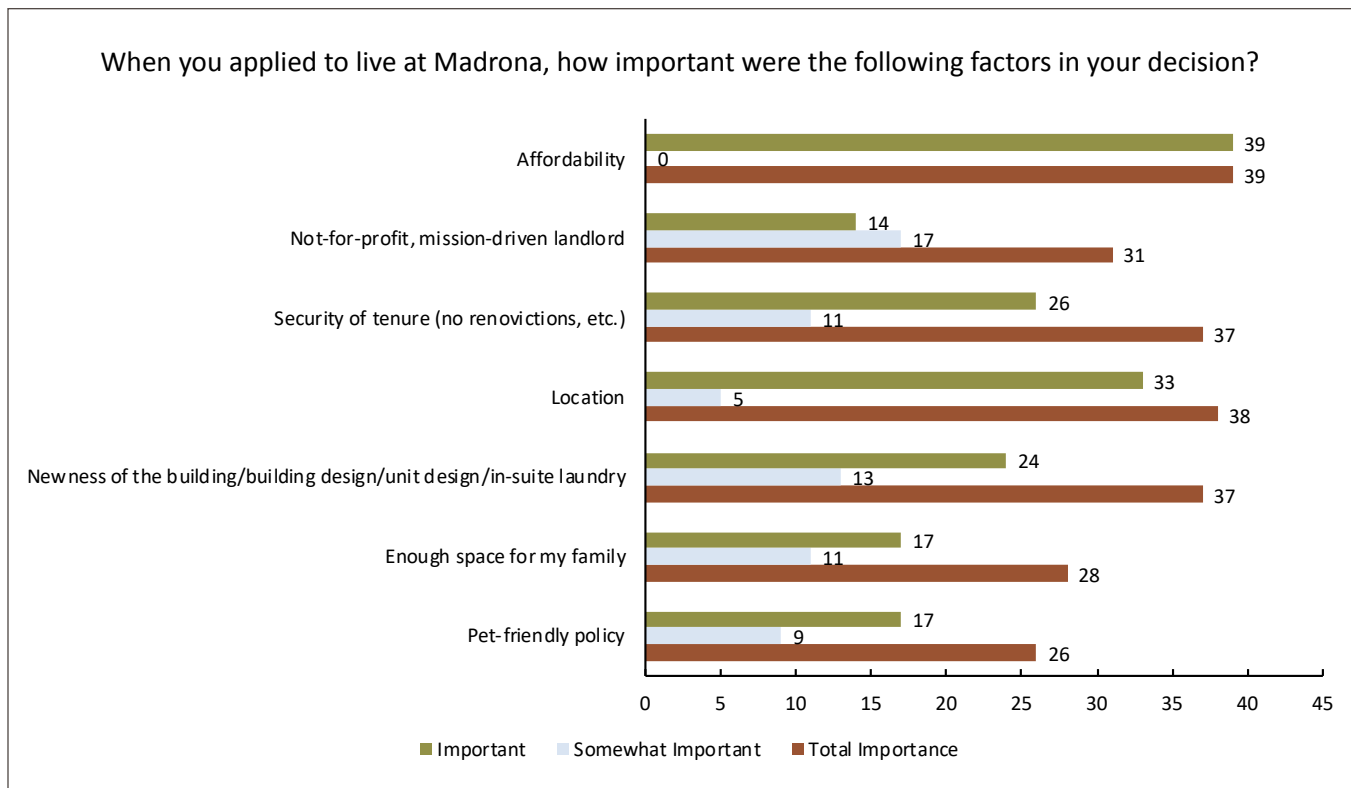
Where do conversations happen most often for Madrona residents?			
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Near Bike Storage		***	*
Near Mailboxes		*****	*
In / around café & bakery		****	****
On sidewalks / near front doors	***** One person wrote 'lots!'	*	
Out in the community	*	***	
Other	***** (someone wrote 'dog park' & 2 people put stickers near that; likely they were also voting for dog park)		

Altogether, 39 Madrona tenants responded to our online surveys. The first survey (May 2018) had the highest response (33), the third (Nov/Dec 2018) and fourth (May/June 2019) each had 23, and the second (June 2018) – which was just about the June 2018 BBQ and tenant ideas for events & initiatives – had 18 responses. The following charts are drawn from responses to one-time questions, which were asked only to 1st time respondents during each survey period.





Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?	Number of Responses	Percent (%)
No	30	76.92%
Yes, one person	6	15.38%
Yes, between 2-4 people	3	7.69%
Yes, with 5 or more people	0	0.00%
Total Responses	39	



Other selected May 2018 baseline survey responses:

- 76% of survey respondents agreed with the statement *'I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here.'* This may largely have to do with the fact that most survey respondents were born in Canada or had lived there over 10 years and had lived in Victoria or Vic West previously.
- 70% said 'definitely' to the question *'Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?'* 27% said 'maybe' and only 3% (1 respondent) said 'no.'

High-Level Results

(from online surveys
& staff interviews)

High-Level Results

Online Surveys & Staff Interviews

It is important to note that while we had fairly strong response to online surveys – 18-33 responses per survey for a 49-unit development – each survey was stand-alone, and it was challenging to track individuals' responses over time. And though I guaranteed anonymity (only aggregate responses and unattributed comments would be shared), some tenants may have felt wary about sharing their information and insights.

Even though it's a bit risky to make firm pronouncements from limited survey responses, the surveys are generally consistent with what Maura and I heard and observed at events and town halls, as well as Shelley Xu's observations as property manager of Madrona for Randall North.

This report does not go into the results of every survey question, only the ones that seemed most relevant, or where there was the biggest shift over time. However, you can find full results of each individual survey – quantitative and qualitative, positive and critical-as well as some compiled results, in the appendix.

The Community Connections pilot project – events, town halls, and support for tenant initiatives – appears to be having the following results.

1. Relationships between neighbours are broadening and deepening
2. Satisfaction with life at Madrona, and with Catalyst as a landlord, is growing
3. Town halls, surveys, and more open communication between landlord and tenants are creating opportunities for building deficiencies to be quickly surfaced, complaints to be addressed, solutions to be co-created, and social events to benefit from resident volunteer energy.
4. People are taking some leadership with events and initiatives. They are engaging with neighbours, Catalyst, and caring for their homes.
5. It's not all sunshine and roses



Photo Credit: Martin Knowles Photography.

1. Relationships between neighbours are broadening and deepening

- In the May 2018 survey, 77% of respondents said they knew no future neighbours by first name when they moved in.
 - By late May 2018 – just after the pilot launch and dialogue – 78% knew one or more neighbours by first name. 42% knew 1-3 people by first name, 18% knew 4-9, and 18% knew 10-20.
 - By May 2019, 91% knew one or more neighbours by first name. 35% knew between 1 and 3 people; 26% knew 4-9; 26% knew 10-20; and 4% knew over 20.
 - By May 2018, 72% of respondents knew 1-3 people well enough to ask for help.
 - By May 2019 92% knew at least 1-3 neighbours well enough to ask for help. 57% knew 1-3 people well enough to ask for help, 26% knew 4-9, and 9% knew 10 or more.
- In May 2019, 61% of survey respondents said that events and town halls helped them get to know more of their neighbours.
 - Of those, 65% said that events resulted in them socializing and sharing with neighbours on their own initiative. Examples included sharing plants, soil, gardening tips, food, and conversation around the building. Most of those who said events didn't help, shared that it was because they weren't able to attend them.

“I thought Community Connections was a good idea, a nice thing for a landlord to try to connect people, build community, engage tenants. A very brave idea! [...] People know their neighbours’ names much more than in other buildings, that’s quite clear. They share things, help each other, etc. There’s a lot of positive feedback from the tenants: appreciation for events, opportunities to do things together, etc.” [...] I suspect the people who come to events will likely stay a good long time; hard to say what the turn-over rate will be for others.”

(Shelley Xu of Randall North, paraphrased from interview with Michelle Hoar spring 2019)



Photo Credit: Martin Knowles Photography



Photo Credit: Martin Knowles Photography

2. Satisfaction with life at Madrona, and with Catalyst as a landlord, is growing

- By May 2018, 67% of respondents already agreed that Catalyst was “living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate vibrant, affordable, and inspiring rental homes and places for people to live in.” But 9% said ‘no’ and 24% said either ‘I don’t have a strong opinion on this’ or ‘not sure / prefer not to say.’
- By May 2019, 78% said ‘yes’, only 4% (1 respondent) said ‘no,’ and only 17% said ‘not sure / prefer not to say.’

But the numbers don’t do justice to the difference affordable, stable housing – and a landlord that cares – can have in a person’s life. The following are verbatim comments from online tenant surveys:

Tenant Quotes from May 2018

“For once I feel like I am not at the mercy of my landlord. Madrona is open, and non confrontational to deal with. Supportive and empathetic. I have had some quite unsavoury experiences renting in the past. This has been quite a breath of fresh air.”

“The tenants are lovely that I’ve met, I really appreciate the grounds work (requiring pets to be on leashes would be a bonus) but the atmosphere is happy and cheerful and its just a great place to live.”

Tenant Quotes from Fall 2018

“I’m at the happiest point in my life partially because of my new job 1 block away, but mostly because of this cool suite. The affordability of my rent gives me a sense of security I’ve never felt before, it’s a good feeling!”

“Landlord has a true desire to make the Madrona project a successful experience.”

Tenant Quotes from May 2019

“Everyone I talk to about this place is interested but when it comes to Catalyst’s goals and how they’ve followed up with us, jaws simply drop. Nobody’s heard of this kind of thing before. I absolutely love the sense of integrity behind this place. I’ve never felt so respected as a tenant, and had such a mutually helpful working relationship with owners.”

“Staff are friendly and helpful. Grounds are well cared for and the sense of permanency is refreshing for my family and several neighbours I have spoken with. As a rental community, several of us have faced rental insecurity and experienced the devastating toll this can have on one’s sense of security for an assured future. Thank you for eliminating this threat. One mum told me she too has faced homelessness with children in tow and we both agreed what a blessing Madrona has become!”

Catalyst in the News

In the spring of 2019 Minister Selina Robinson lauded Catalyst as a landlord to be emulated in a video announcement about changes to the Residential Tenancy Act. She illustrated what’s possible in people’s lives when they have affordable, stable housing and a landlord that bothers to work with tenants towards improvements.



Photo: Catalyst board member, Karyn French, chats with Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Selina Robinson.

3. Town halls, surveys, and more open communication between landlord and tenants are creating opportunities

Town halls, surveys, and more open communication between landlord and tenants are creating opportunities for building deficiencies to be quickly surfaced, complaints to be addressed, solutions to be co-created, and social events to benefit from resident volunteer energy.

Town halls were not part of the original plan but were a response from Maura Chestnutt to tenant complaints about building deficiencies and confusion about roles. With Catalyst as a Vancouver-based developer and landlord, Randall North being the contracted property manager, and Dockside Green in the mix to boot, tenants were understandably confused. Maura used town halls to air complaints and find solutions, to co-plan upcoming social events, and stimulate conversation about events and initiatives that tenants might want to lead with Catalyst's support.

- In the May 2019 survey, 60% of respondents said they would like to keep doing three town halls per year.
- One of the main complaints from tenants was inadequate storage for bikes and problems with theft. It was a topic at each town hall, and Catalyst has been working with tenants to improve storage and security.
- There is no indoor common space at Madrona, and no specific space for gathering outdoors other than pathways and the area near the adjacent coffee shop (pond etc). Catalyst benefitted from the use of Ollie & Quinn's community space, an optical business where a few tenants work in nearby downtown Victoria. With a large arbutus tree falling on the property, Catalyst and tenants are looking at how to adapt that space for other uses.
- One of the requests from some tenants is for a community garden space. Though there are complications with usage restrictions at Dockside Green, Catalyst is looking into where this might happen.
- One important conversation that happened through town halls was around rent increase policy and income testing policy. Though not everyone was happy about the reality of future rent increases, it was an opportunity to be transparent about why policies had been set a certain way, to hear peoples' concerns, and to make adjustments where possible.

"The town halls seem to be helping build trust. It's unusual for a landlord to be this approachable, I think. Doing them helps to break down the 'why' of Catalyst. They give us an opportunity to be transparent about our model, our limits, etc."

(Maura Chestnutt, paraphrased from interview with Michelle Hoar in fall 2018)

"There are both benefits and drawbacks to doing something like this. [...] It's easier to discover issues about the building, landscaping etc. Information comes in more quickly, sometimes through Bazinga, sometimes direct email. It's a bit more time consuming than other buildings because there's more communication of issues, because people have been encouraged to communicate and they don't fear negative repercussions."

(Shelley Xu, Randall North Property Manager with Randall North, in interview with Michelle Hoar spring 2019)

4. People are taking some leadership with events and initiatives. They are engaging with neighbours, Catalyst, and caring for their homes.

- In May 2018, 48.5% of survey respondents agreed with the statement *“Madrona tenants take good care of their homes and the surrounding common spaces.”* By May 2019 74% agreed with that statement.
- A small group of tenants – about 6-12 – have organically emerged as champions, organizers, and consistent volunteers at events.
- A small group of tenants came forward with the idea of turning a shed that wasn’t working for bike storage into a zero-waste recycling shed. With support and encouragement from Catalyst, tenants have completed it, and are managing it.
- One particularly engaged tenant initiated a Block Watch group, which in addition to being good for neighbourhood security, created an opportunity for tenants to get discounts on their content insurance.
- Numerous other ideas for events and initiatives have come from tenants via town halls and surveys. It remains to be seen how many will get implemented. You can find information on them in the appendix.
- In the May 2019 survey, we asked: *‘Have you felt comfortable bringing forward your own ideas for social events, sharing initiatives etc?’* 52% said yes, 39% said they ‘hadn’t really thought about it’ and only 9% (2 respondents) said ‘no.’

“Everyone felt needed and helped out as they wished. This is in my experience the root of community. I loved that my faith in this process was proved out [...] Three strong interest groups seem to be emerging – gardeners, dog owners, and recyclers [...] People were forthcoming about their ideas and I find the tenant suggestions very doable and realistic – which is nice.”

(Maura Chestnutt, debriefing June 2018 BBQ with Michelle Hoar.)

“People seem to be caring for their spaces well and caring for one another. I see it in comments from parents talking about their kids being comfortable visiting other adults. I see it in people helping with each others’ dogs, and other kind interactions. I see it at town halls as well.”

(Maura Chestnutt, in interview with Michelle Hoar in May 2019)

5. It's not all sunshine and roses

Positive qualitative responses (37) to the question *'In your opinion, is Catalyst living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate vibrant, affordable, and inspiring rental homes and places for people to live in?'* outweighed negative comments (10) throughout the surveys, with more neutral or constructive critiques (14) also more prominent than negative ones.

However, it's not realistic to think that you'll be able to make all tenants happy all the time. In order to paint an honest picture of what we've heard this year – and not just the positive highlights – here is a summary of main themes of less than positive feedback (24 total). A full list of comments – excluding ones where a tenant's anonymity might be compromised – is included in the appendix.

- Design complaints & critiques:
 - Inadequate soundproofing / noise
 - Not enough in-suite storage space
 - Inadequate bike storage
- Comments being surprised about rent increases and worries about future rent increases
- Construction noise from neighbouring building
- Property manager response to complaints
 - Too slow
 - Poor communication
 - Listening to some tenants more than others
- Minor requests for things like more garbage cans, quicker clean-up of garbage or debris outdoors, etc.



Madrona Bike Room. Photo Credit: Maura Chestnutt.



Photo Credit: Upper Left Photography.

Reflections: an exchange between Michelle and Maura

Reflections:

an exchange between Michelle and Maura

Michelle: I think you're well on your way towards a number of your short-term and long-term goals.

If you can keep up this level of open communication and responsiveness to tenants needs and interests, I think you'll see continued increases in engagement, volunteerism, initiative, and self-reported feelings of connectedness and belonging.

Maura: I've stopped thinking about this in terms of achieving goals. It's just become a way of being with tenants. I've learned a lot in working with you and documenting the experience, but now it's just a way of doing our work. The way we did it in the first year really forced me to reflect on what we were doing, why some things were working and others weren't, and helped me think about how I would adapt the first year program for new buildings.

Michelle: I think the town halls are the most unique, innovative and powerful part of the pilot experiment.

By showing that Catalyst wants to hear from its tenants directly, face to face, and problem solve with them, you are encouraging tenants to be active agents in the health and wellbeing of their housing community. By proving there are no negative repercussions to sharing ideas and critiques, you are building trust and a feeling of safety and belonging. I have no doubt that this foundation of increasing trust, safety, and belonging paired with explicit encouragement for and support of tenant initiatives will yield great things over time.

It's not entirely rare for landlords to organize social events for their tenants. It is rare for them to engage with tenants so directly, transparently, and collaboratively.

Maura: The town halls were the first adaptation we made based on tenant feedback after our first event. They have had the biggest impact on building trust, and authentic relationship. The key takeaway for me is that as a landlord, being willing to be vulnerable and honest that you are learning

as you go helps you be more human with your tenants. Being ok with being imperfect and inviting tenants into that space with you is key. Being transparent about the intention behind certain policies and being willing to incorporate tenant suggestions for making policies stronger. For example, income testing policy. I was trepidatious about talking with tenants about income testing. I made it clear that Catalyst really didn't want to evict people. It turned out that tenants welcomed the income testing (to keep the building for low and moderate-income people), as long as it was a policy that was fair and made sense for everyone.

Anytime you decide to be honest with someone, you're taking a risk. Asking for feedback can be scary but it can yield good things.

Michelle: Some of the goals were – knowingly - very ambitious. It will take time, resources, and creative partnerships to move the dial significantly on them.

GOAL: *Increase positive connections between Madrona and other Dockside Green residents*

Though there were survey comments from a few people that the shared path between Madrona and the condos were a place for friendly conversation, there were no specific activities during the pilot year to bring Madrona residents and condo residents together.

Recommendation: One potential opportunity to work on this could be to partner with SHIFT's Connect & Prepare program through the Hey Neighbour Collective and open it up to Dockside Green residents more broadly so that Madrona and condo residents can get to know each other better, and support each other in a collaborative resilience-building effort.

Maura: I might not have this as a goal in new buildings, as it's a big project. But that said, we have seen connections between buildings as a natural outgrowth of Community Connections

at Madrona. In 2020 we're doing a Connect & Prepare pilot with Synergy (the strata behind us) and the block watch program (which was started by Madrona tenants) has brought tenants in different buildings together.

At new buildings we're inviting external neighbours to the open house to meet new residents. At the Rise in Penticton we invited the nearby lawn bowling club, fire department, etc. At Hannelore in Vancouver we invited the construction crew, the bank downstairs, etc. At Shepard in Port Moody, one year out from completion of construction, we're already planning to invite all their neighbours to the open house. It's become a new policy to invite everyone from construction crew to neighbours at the opening party.

GOAL: Strengthen Madrona tenants' feelings of belonging, inclusion and engagement within Vic West community

Survey respondents noted a feeling of belonging in the Vic West neighbourhood even before pilot activities began. In May 2018 76% agreed with the statement 'I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here.' In May 2019 that had jumped to 83%.



Photo Credit: Martin Knowles Photography

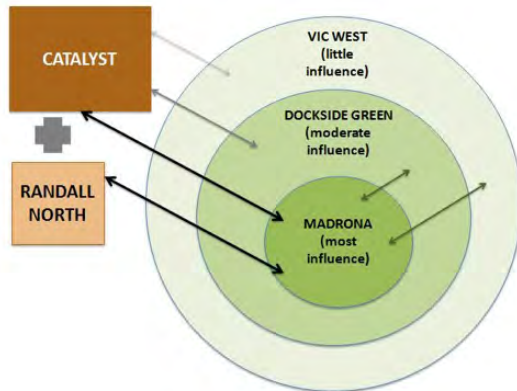
This may largely have to do with the fact that most survey respondents were born in Canada and had lived in Victoria or Vic West previously.

Respondents reported engaging in a number of different activities in the neighbourhood, and though there was a marked decrease in the number of people who said they 'hadn't done any of these things yet' from May 2018 to May 2019 (from 10 to 0), we can't safely infer any causal connection between that decrease and the pilot.

4. Thinking about the past 5 months, please tell us if you have done any of the following in Vic West or Victoria? Choose all that apply.

	Survey 1 (May 2018; 33 respondents)	Survey 4 (May 2019; 23 respondents)
Visited local library, community centre or recreation centre	18	13
Attended a neighbourhood event or celebration	14	9
Attended a cultural or ethnic event put on by a cultural or ethnic group different from your own	6	3
Attended a religious service	5	2
Signed a petition	4	9
Attended a political rally or political meeting	3	1
Participated in a neighbourhood community project (eg....)	7	9
Attended a city council or school board meeting	3	1
I haven't done any of these things yet	10	0

Maura: It would be so hard to have an impact on these goals. You'd need a lot of resources and a targeted strategy around certain activities that you wanted to encourage. The welcome party – inviting in other neighbours and community groups – helps to signal to new tenants that they do belong and helps to address the stigma around affordable housing. We knew this goal would be a stretch when we designed the pilot, illustrated by the graphic below.



Recommendation: If Catalyst wants to keep this as a goal for the Community Connections program at Madrona and/or other sites, it would be wise to think hard about what sorts of civic engagement activities you want to try to increase.

Once you know which activities you want to prioritize (something you could involve tenants in deciding), you could then build a strategy for increasing tenant participation in them. This might include reaching out proactively to certain organizations, or seeking out tenant champions who have a passion for certain types of civic engagement and asking them to share events and opportunities on notice board, Bazinga, eNewsletters, etc.

Michelle: It's hard to pin down progress on some goals with survey data

GOAL: *Achieve the above goals with a clear sustainability ethic guiding Catalyst and tenant decisions*

Did we accomplish this? Is the goal itself clear enough to measure against? Subjectively, I would say that there was a sustainability ethic

underpinning much of what happened in the first year of Community Connections. Events aimed for zero waste, much of the town hall conversations were about how to better store and protect bikes (a major mode of transport for tenants living in a complex with only six parking spots), and the biggest tenant-led initiative that got off the ground was a zero-waste recycling shed. If you throw in tenant-driven ideas like establishing a community garden, or doing a Gorge shoreline clean up, you start to get a picture of a sustainability-focused community mostly pointing in a common direction.

Maura: For Madrona, the tenant population has a strong sustainability ethic. I'm not sure it will be so easy to transfer this to other projects. So many things about Madrona helped this. Dockside is well known as a sustainable community. It was marketed that way and so it has attracted a certain type of renter and buyer. For example, we have almost no parking at Madrona, something we were able to argue for as we are close to transit, walkable amenities, and bike routes. One of our tenants told us the lack of parking was one of the main reasons he chose Madrona.

GOAL: *Foster a program that is financially sustainable without grant inputs in future Catalyst developments*

Only Catalyst can answer whether the Community Connections program – as it currently stands – is financially sustainable without grant inputs. Did it stay within its budget? Did it require a reasonable, sustainable amount of staff time? Did running it negatively impact any other core areas of work? And perhaps most importantly, will this intensity of community building with tenants be sustainable as Catalyst grows and manages more buildings? Will a new staff role be required imminently? And if so, how might it be funded?

Maura: Yes, we see the program as sustainable. Direct costs are extremely low, but staff time is more significant. Going forward, the Community Connections work is going to be a bigger part of my emerging role. It didn't make sense financially to have a person fully dedicated to this work when we had just one building, but it does with multiple buildings.

Michelle: Intentional social programming is important and effective, but don't discount the power of the fundamentals: affordability, security, and good design.

Again and again, in surveys and in conversations at events, tenants talked about how important the affordability and security of Madrona was to them. For me, this is beautifully summed up in the paraphrased quote below. It's from a tenant in her 30s expecting her first child with her partner who told Maura that they felt safe and secure enough to contemplate starting a family.

"This is the first place where we have bothered to get to know our neighbours."

If people don't feel a sense of security and belonging, they are less likely to spend energy putting down roots, connecting with others, and engaging on neighbourhood issues. If they are struggling to afford the basics of life, they have less energy and emotional bandwidth to engage, never mind to lead.

By just acting on its basic mission to provide secure affordable rental housing, Catalyst is removing many of the structural and psychological barriers that people experience when it comes to being neighbourly, engaged residents.

But then Catalyst goes two major steps further:

- It aims to build in a way that encourages social interaction. When building design falls short in certain areas, Catalyst involves its tenants in efforts to either remediate those spaces (like the bike storage and recycling shed issues), or work around their absence (using community space like Ollie & Quinn in place of an onsite common room, or clearing parking spaces to set up covered pumpkin carving tables.) It is paying close attention to how Madrona's design is being experienced and is taking those learnings into new projects.

True to the final pilot project goal, Catalyst works intentionally to '*maximize the positive social potential of Madrona's physical design.*'

- It commits to intentional social programming and honest dialogue: as detailed above, this helps to build trust and encourage tenant initiatives, and brings to life Catalyst's mission to create vibrant communities.

Maura: I agree. Those fundamentals are incredibly important and the design piece is key. By engaging with tenants, we're learning a lot about what sorts of design details encourage and discourage social interaction. We're making adjustments where we can, and Madrona tenants have been instrumental in helping us co-create design guidelines for new buildings. We'll have these discussions with tenants at all of our buildings, and strengthen our design guidelines over time with their feedback.



Consultant Recommendations

For Madrona Going Forward

Review Community Connections goals and learning objectives

Do the goals outlined in early 2018 still resonate? Do they still feel achievable and realistic? Or do they need to be refined? When you look at the learning agenda, have some questions been conclusively answered? Which ones feel most important heading into the second year?

Social events

Continue to lead the planning and execution of regular social events but drop from the originally proposed four to two per year. Encourage engaged tenants to lead other events of their choosing, and make sure they are aware of available budget or other supports that they can request. Encourage experimentation with different timing for events to align with different work schedules. Explore whether there is a closer community space than Ollie & Quinn for gatherings.

Tenant-led initiatives

Continue to support the most feasible and broadly supported ideas that emerge, particularly if they are consistent with the sustainability ethic that Catalyst wants to promote. If any promising ideas are beyond the available budget, share information on sources of funding like the City of Victoria's My Great Neighbourhood Grant Program. Could the effort to re-think the arbutus tree area be a contender for a place-making grant? Or the creation of a community garden?

Town halls

Commit to three town halls per year – 60% of survey respondents support this.

Online surveys

I would consider dropping down to an annual survey that includes demographic questions, tenant satisfaction questions, and Community Connections questions around belonging, engagement, social connectedness etc. Add a question about how long tenants have lived at Madrona, in order to capture differences between longer-term tenants and newer arrivals. Consider adding prizes to incentivize

response. Look at other ways of gathering information at events, through Bazinga, eNewsletters, etc. The Hey Neighbour Collective should be a good place to think through – with professional research help – how you want to continue to document and analyze your efforts.

Building emergency preparedness and social connections with other Dockside Green residents

As mentioned above, it might be worth considering partnering with SHIFT Collaborative through Hey Neighbour to bring the Connect & Prepare program to Madrona and extend the invitation to participate to other Dockside Green residents.

Consider design interventions for studio 'floor/block' to increase social connections amongst that sub-group of tenants

Could the Hey Neighbour Collective project provide expertise and resources to co-create some interesting low-cost solutions to make the ground-floor studio units feel more socially connected? Would tenants be interested in being part of that? Can we direct an invitation to them to engage on this question? Or will we discover that people in these units are happy with things as they are, and have little desire for increased social interactions?

- *"Upper floor seems friendlier than lower floor... lower has construction, more single people; upper more families, pets, mostly neighbourhood traffic so it feels intimate."* (From Fall 2018 conversation with tenant & Maura re recycling shed)
- *"Community clusters are starting to form around the core groups - very poor representation from the studios - trying to figure out ways to include them as their unit set ups do not encourage spontaneous meetings as the upper patios do [...] May do some sort of activity for the bbq by block e.g. 370 studios, 370 uppers, 384 studios, 384 uppers...."* (Maura Chestnutt in email to Robert Brown, debriefing May 2019 block watch launch and town hall)

Communications

One of the one-time questions we asked everyone in their first survey was how they preferred Catalyst communicate with them. It is my understanding that Catalyst has decided to create an eNewsletter, and that some tenants may help with occasional content. It's probably best for capacity reasons if a Facebook group or email listserv is started by tenants, rather than by Catalyst.

In the May 2019 survey we asked about Bazinga.

How well is Bazinga working for you?		
I love Bazinga for learning about important Madrona issues and sharing information online with neighbours.	1	4.35%
It's nice to have, but I don't use it much.	18	78.26%
What's Bazinga?!!	4	17.39%
Total responses	23	

It sounds like Bazinga will be useful for other purposes, such as tracking tenant's issues with their suites and such. I would keep engaging there, and make sure new tenants get connected, but don't expect much more uptake. It will never compete

for peoples' time and attention with social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. Time and energy are much better spent planning face to face interactions.

Tell Madrona tenants how other Catalyst projects are going. Through all available platforms (eNews, Bazinga, events, town halls), look for opportunities to communicate to tenants that they're part of an expanding success story. If your experience with them at Madrona has influenced some aspect of design or programming at a new development, tell that story. Show them how their engagement with you is positively impacting new places and people.

Review onboarding materials (tenant welcome package) to make sure Catalyst's mission is clear, the distinctions between Catalyst, Randall North, and Dockside Green are clear, and that there is a compelling and explicit invitation to take part in events and town halls.

- *"How do we educate new tenants about the Community Connections program, when units turn over?"* (Shelley Xu, spring 2019 interview with Michelle Hoar)

How would you prefer to hear about events that Catalyst is putting on for tenants, or other community events we think you might be interested in? Please select all the options that suit you.

Preset Responses	Number of Responses
Facebook Group	9
Monthly eNewsletter	15
Paper notice in my mailbox	6
Group email listserv (for communication among tenants)	21
Other Responses	
Carrier Pigeons & slack	1
Notice board? Along the pathway maybe?	1
Community message board	1
Personal email	1

For New Buildings

Review Community Connections goals and learning objectives

Do the goals for a new project differ in any significant way from the goals for the Madrona project? If so, be sure to outline them. If the learning agenda has new components (for example, because the resident population is going to be very different, or you have an operating partner in the mix), articulate what new questions you want to probe.

Town halls

Commit to at least three in the first year. As at Madrona, use them to inform and involve tenants on important issues, to problem-solve with them, and to plan events and initiatives together.

Tenant-led initiatives

Allow for ideas to organically emerge from each unique community of tenants, but consider inspiring them with what's happened at Madrona, or in other communities. Hey Neighbour Collective should be a good source, once it's up and running more fully, for external inspiration.

Surveys

Work with Hey Neighbour Collective researchers to review the Madrona surveys and see what you want to keep, let go of, or add. Do a baseline survey as soon as you can after tenants move in and do at least one more at the 12-month mark.



Photo Credit: Martin Knowles Photography

Social events

Plan for three or four Catalyst-led events in the first year, and aim for one before move-in. Like at the Madrona launch event, make space for a purposeful conversation amongst soon-to-be neighbours about what makes a neighbourhood friendly, what makes them feel like they want to get involved in something. Consider some kind of physical take-away that they can look at as they prepare to move in that reminds them they're moving into a different kind of community, but that participation is entirely optional. This could just be the tenant welcome package, but it could also be an invitation/reminder to participate in a baseline survey, or a fun and provocative question card that they filled out at the event and can take home.

- *"We should have done our first event before people moved in. It would have helped with the confusion around who Catalyst is, given that tenants' early interactions were mostly with Randall North. Having Bazinga right away would have been great too, as a way for people to communicate building deficiency issues immediately, and to connect with each other."* (Maura Chestnutt, June 2018 debrief)
- *"My only complaint would be that it took 5 months or so before we (I) heard from Catalyst. Those first months it was a bit confusing, we didn't know who was in charge, what the relationship was between us and Randall North, us and Dockside Green. I for one felt a bit lost in the Dockside/Madrona entities and it was a big relief when Catalyst got in touch and came to meet us. It's a bit complicated: I have a building manager who answers to RN; RN answers to Catalyst, Catalyst is part of DSG... and then there's Bosa in there somewhere... You can see that there's a lot to sort out and none of it made sense (to me) in those first months. Having the connection with Catalyst, and a rapport with individuals from there, makes me feel more anchored here."* (Fall 2018 survey)

Conclusion

It has been joyful and intellectually rewarding to support Catalyst in the development and execution of the Community Connections pilot. I hope this report gives you some confidence that your efforts are yielding positive results and progress towards stated goals.

In my new role as Project Director for *Hey Neighbour Collective*, I look forward to continuing on this journey with you as you expand to new sites and communities. I hope you'll look to the Collective to help you grow your capacity to innovate and lead in this space. It should be a space to uncover all sorts of new resources – peer support, professional expertise, funding, in-kind support – to help you do this work and help others learn from it.

Appendix 1.

Evaluation Matrix (goals,
learning agenda, evaluation plan)

MADRONA'S 'COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS' PILOT:

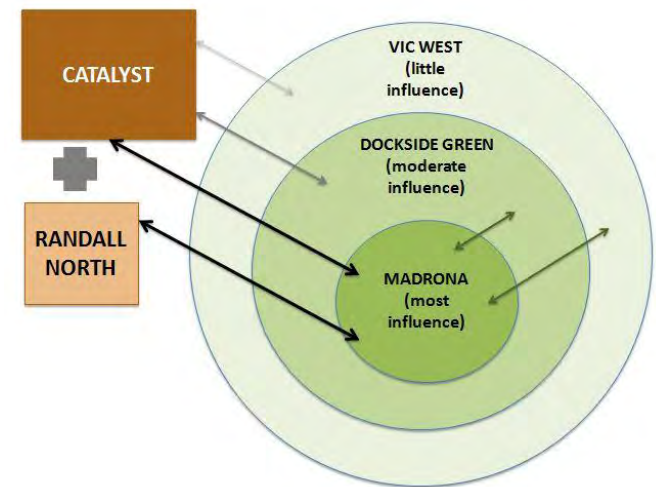
LONG-TERM ASPIRATIONS, PILOT GOALS, KEY QUESTIONS, AND DRAFT EVALUATION PLAN

LONG-TERM PROGRAM ASPIRATIONS - Lessons learned from the Madrona pilot will strengthen Catalyst's ability to develop and manage vibrant, affordable rental homes that will:

- Be embraced by those who live there
- Be embraced by the neighbourhood and larger community (integrated with existing ownership housing, not segregated)
- Have a strong feeling of community and home, not just a transitional set of walls
- Feel comfy and welcoming
- Be very well cared-for, non-sterile buildings (both Catalyst building managers *and* tenants will feel pride of place and contribute to care of the space)
- Show obviously positive relationships between tenants (people look out for and take care of each other)
- Have low turn-over rates
- Get frequent referrals from existing tenants and have healthy waitlists
- Have an identifiable, positive, friendly vibe (Catalyst becomes known for building, managing and cultivating friendly, inclusive, engaged communities)

PILOT GOALS - The 12 month 'Community Connections' pilot will include a blend of Catalyst-led and tenant-led events and initiatives that work towards the following goals:

- Increase social connectedness *amongst* Madrona residents and foster tenant engagement
- Increase positive connections *between* Madrona and other Dockside Green residents
- Strengthen Madrona tenants' feelings of belonging, inclusion and engagement *within* Vic West community
- Achieve the above goals with a *clear sustainability ethic* guiding Catalyst and tenant decisions (social, economic and environmental)
- Foster a program that is *financially sustainable* without grant inputs in future Catalyst developments
- Maximize the positive social potential of Madrona's physical design.



Key Questions (learning agenda) – Some of the questions we want to answer during the course of the pilot include:

HARDWARE - BUILDING DESIGN / COMMON SPACES:

- **How is the built environment at Madrona affecting social connections?** What physical design aspects create barriers or conflict? What space offer opportunities for connection and social gathering?
- **How is the built environment at the larger Dockside Green development affecting social connections?** *Same questions as above.*

SOFTWARE - PILOT PROGRAM / ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP / BEHAVIOUR CHANGE:

- **How are Catalyst's efforts to bring tenants together working?** Are social events and workshops well-received and attended? What kind of feedback are we hearing? What kind of conversations are the events stimulating amongst tenants, property managers and Catalyst?
- **How are Catalyst's efforts to cultivate and support a team of tenant champions working?** Are people stepping forward? Are their ideas embraced by other tenants? Are their ideas easily supportable by Catalyst? How much guidance do tenants require in their efforts? How much time is it taking for Catalyst to engage and support champions? Is the process for approving ideas and moving money effective? Are tenant champions creating a culture of people being heard and acknowledged (or is a clique-ness emerging?)
- **Are connections between Catalyst staff, Madrona tenants and other neighbours and staff at Dockside Green growing?** Have there been opportunities for condo and rental residents to socialize or collaborate? Is there any effective partnering between Catalyst and Dockside Green?
- **Are the pilot activities making a noticeable difference in tenants' feelings of connectedness, inclusion, belonging, or security?**
- **Are tenants working out conflicts and other problems together?** If so, is it reducing strain on Randall North's services?
- **Do tenants have an awareness of Catalyst's mission?** Does it matter to them? Does it change how they perceive their role as tenants?
- **Are overall pilot activities staying true to the goal of maintaining a sustainability ethic (economic, social and environmental)?** What level of engagement around the environmental sustainability ethos of Dockside Green are we observing? Is there a sense of being part of something greater being built?
- **How are the pilot activities impacting Catalyst staff?** Is the pilot requiring the time and money originally estimated, or did we underestimate? Is the work of supporting the pilot enjoyable and positive, or is it challenging?

Draft Evaluation Plan – A number of methods will be used to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data on the pilot, from tenants, Catalyst staff, Randall North staff, and possibly Dockside Green staff. The plan is roughly to:

- A. Create a set of clear pilot goals, key questions, and performance indicators agreed upon by consultant and Catalyst staff by early January 2018.
- B. Select a small set of comparative data points to measure Madrona residents against (Victoria Foundation Vital Signs, for example.)
- C. Conduct four online surveys of all tenants 13 years and older during 2018: February, June, October and December (or January 2019). Each survey asks a small set of standard questions about tenants' feelings of inclusion, connection, belonging, and engagement, plus a set of specific questions about Catalyst-led events or workshops. Tenants will each be assigned a number so that their specific responses are tracked over the year. *Some survey questions will match those being asked by the City of Vancouver Hey Neighbour Pilot and SHIFT's Vertical Streets pilot.*
- D. Observation at Catalyst-led events, and informal chats with tenants and tenant champions. Collect info about # of participants, note depth/quality of engagement etc. Consultant to assemble notes immediately after each observed event.
- E. Connect with Catalyst and Randall North staff on a quarterly basis (via email or phone) to record their observations of pilot activities.
- F. Dig deeper with tenant champions and Catalyst staff at the three-quarters point of the pilot (September) through a group discussion and possibly individual interviews. Investigate what's working, what's not, look at how to improve in second half of pilot.
- G. Collect ad hoc emails and notes on phone conversations with tenants, Randall North, and Dockside Green with regards to the pilot. What unsolicited feedback are we getting on how things are (or aren't) working?

DRAFT EVALUATION GROUPS AND METHODS

All tenants	Tenant champions	Catalyst staff	Randall North staff	Dockside Green staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online surveys (4) • Casual discussions at events • Ad hoc emails and phone calls with Catalyst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online surveys (4) • Casual discussions at events • Mid-point check-in & interviews • Ad hoc emails and phone calls with Catalyst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly interview before surveys • Mid-point check-in and interview (possibly with tenant champions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly interview by email or phone • Ad hoc emails and phone calls with Catalyst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad hoc emails and phone calls with Catalyst

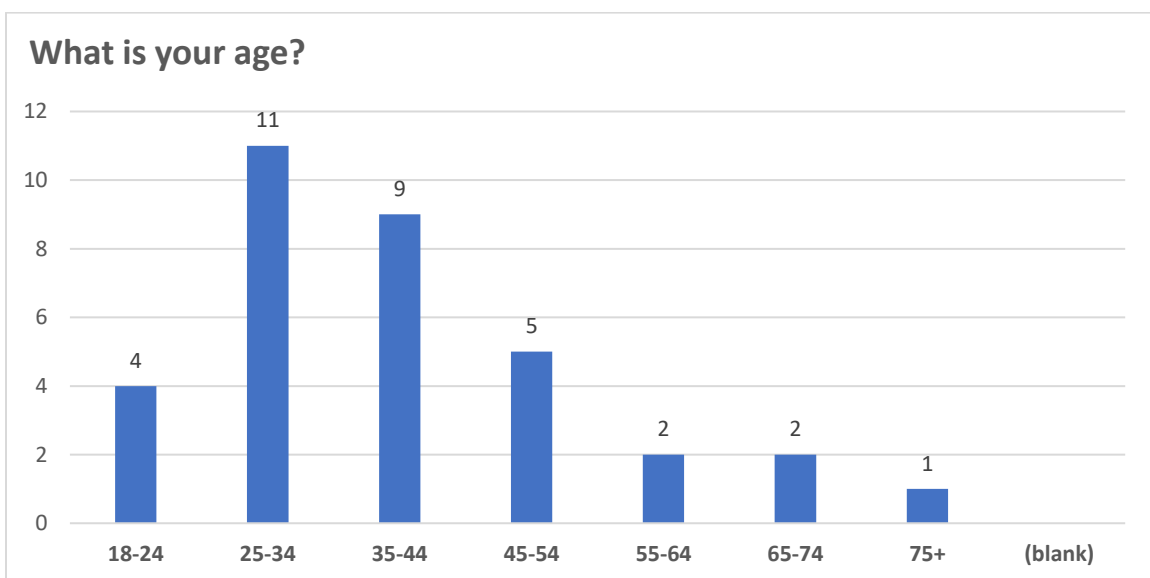
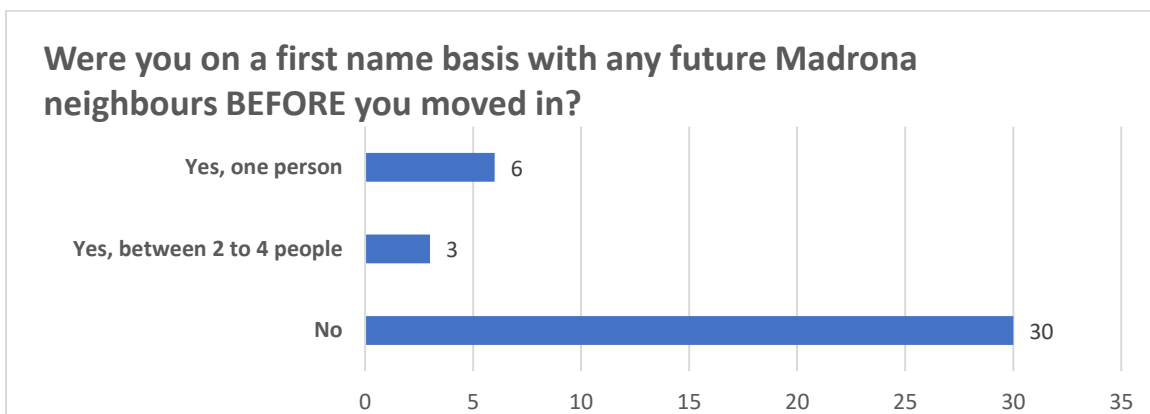
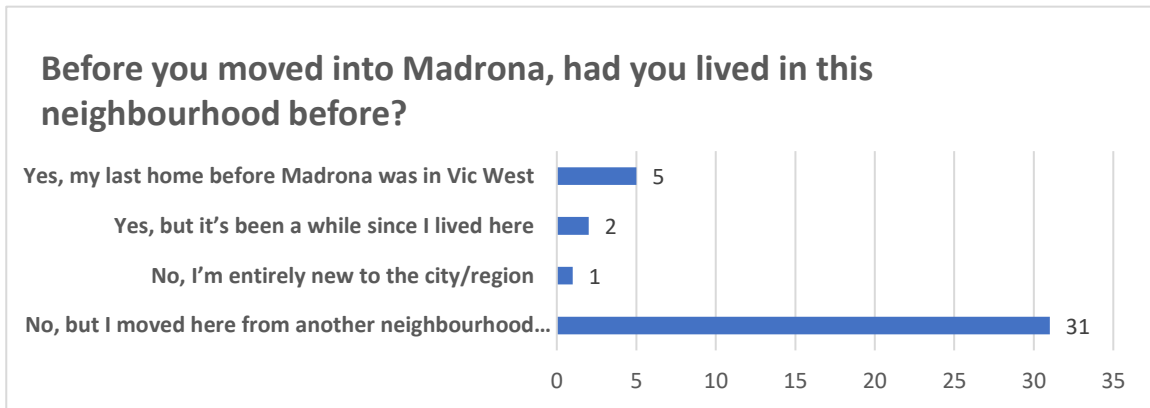
Long-term outcomes (2+ years)	Catalyst communities are known for being friendly, inclusive, warm places where tenants feel secure and at home. Catalyst residents are more actively engaged in their neighbourhoods than the average citizen, and are seen as great neighbours. Residents feel a pride of place and contribute to the care of their homes. Residents look out for each other, and recommend Catalyst to their friends and families. The built environments at Catalyst buildings are conducive to community building, and Catalyst has a reputation for being at the forefront of social design, but the real magic happens through an ongoing commitment to intentional 'community connections' programming.					
Short-term outcomes (12 months)	Madrona tenants are more socially connected with each other. They are participating in and helping to organize events and initiatives. They are sharing and looking out for each other.	Madrona tenants are connecting positively with other Dockside Green tenants.	Madrona tenants feel a strong sense of belonging and inclusion in the Vic West neighbourhood, and are finding ways to engage in the community.	Goals around tenant inclusion and engagement are being achieved through a consistent and clear sustainability ethic.	The Community Connections pilot project hits its goals within a budget that is replicable at future developments without grant inputs.	The pilot project has found ways to maximize the positive social aspects of Madrona's physical design.
Possible Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalyst-led & tenant-led events, workshops & other initiatives • Social media, email, and notice board comms & story-telling (Catalyst-led and tenant-led) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination between Catalyst, Dockside Green & Bosa re events • Vic West Streetfest • Earthquake prep & bike workshops? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthquake prep & bike workshops • Coordination with Vic West neighbourhood society & others • Neighbourhood Small Grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for approving tenant ideas • Final analysis of events and initiatives through sustainability lens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget tracking (hard costs, consultant costs, staff time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalyst and tenant-led events & workshops • Ongoing observation and problem-solving by Catalyst and Randall North, with input from tenants
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # participants at events & workshops • # and type of events & initiatives started by tenants • Tenant feedback on events & workshops (surveys & interviews) • Tenant statements on feelings of inclusion, connection, friendliness and engagement (surveys & interviews) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant statements about connections to other Dockside Green residents (surveys & interviews) • Reaction to Madrona tenants from other Dockside Green residents (complaints or lack of) • Reaction of Dockside Green Soc. to Madrona tenants and activities (ad hoc comms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements from tenants about feelings of belonging & engagement • Capturing of different sorts of ways tenants are engaging in community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All events & initiatives, both Catalyst-led and tenant-led, fit within a broad sustainability ethos (economic, social and environmental) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First year pilot budget not exceeded • Analysis of pilot spending, and estimates of ongoing annual costs, find program to be sustainable within Catalyst operating budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with space effectively and creatively resolved • Positive and negative observations of physical design noted for future Catalyst developments

Appendix 2.

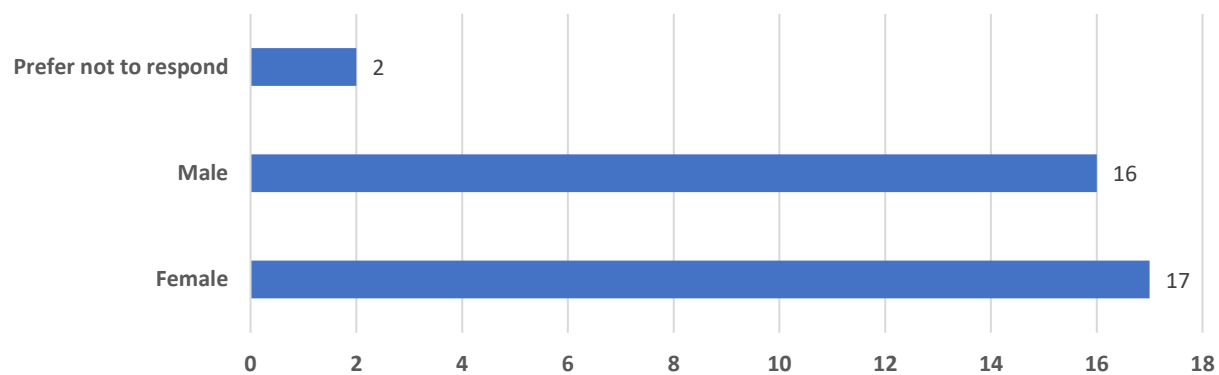
Compilation of one-time
questions from all surveys

Community Connections 2018-2019 online tenant surveys: one-time question summary

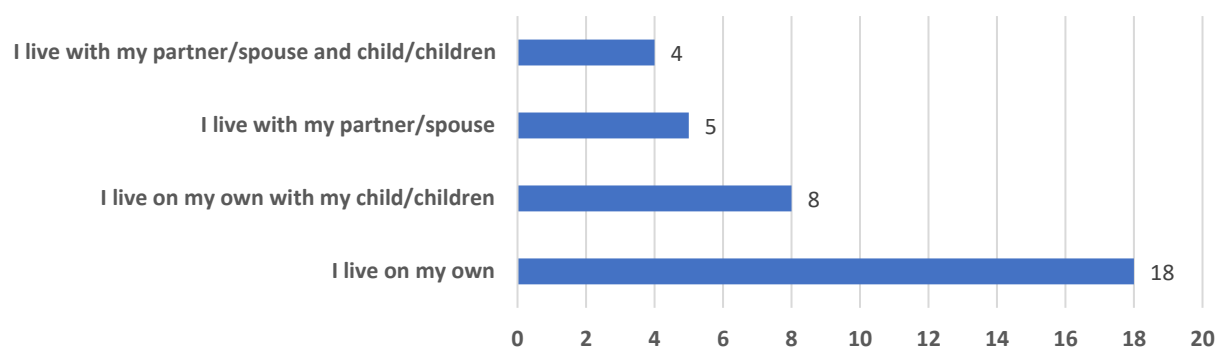
These charts were compiled using data from all three major online surveys conducted with Madrona tenants between May 2018 and May 2019. These questions were only asked of a tenant once, as we didn't need to see changes in their responses over time.



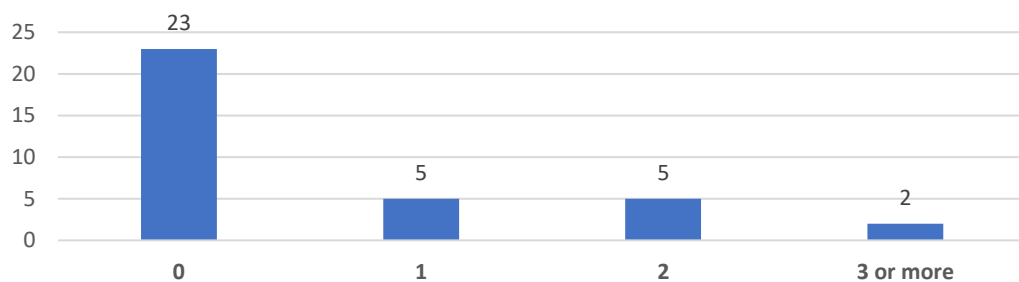
With which gender identity do you most identify?



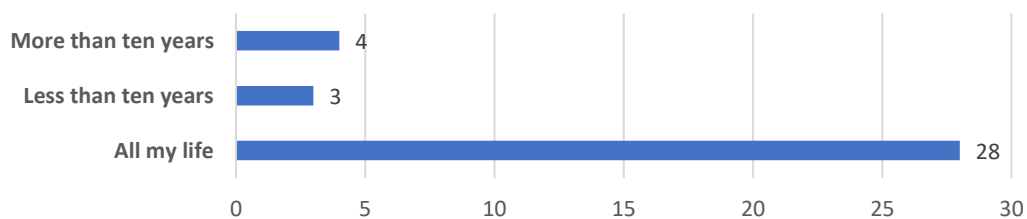
Which of the following best describe your current household?



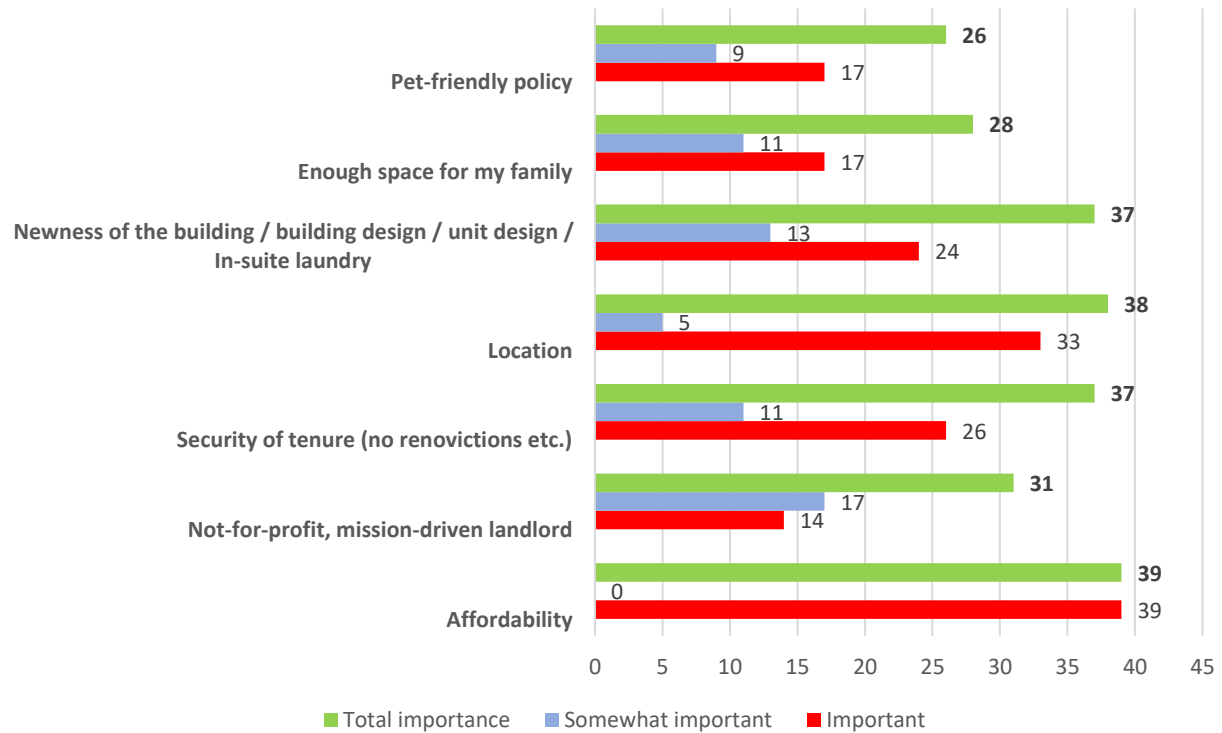
How many children (under 18) live with you?



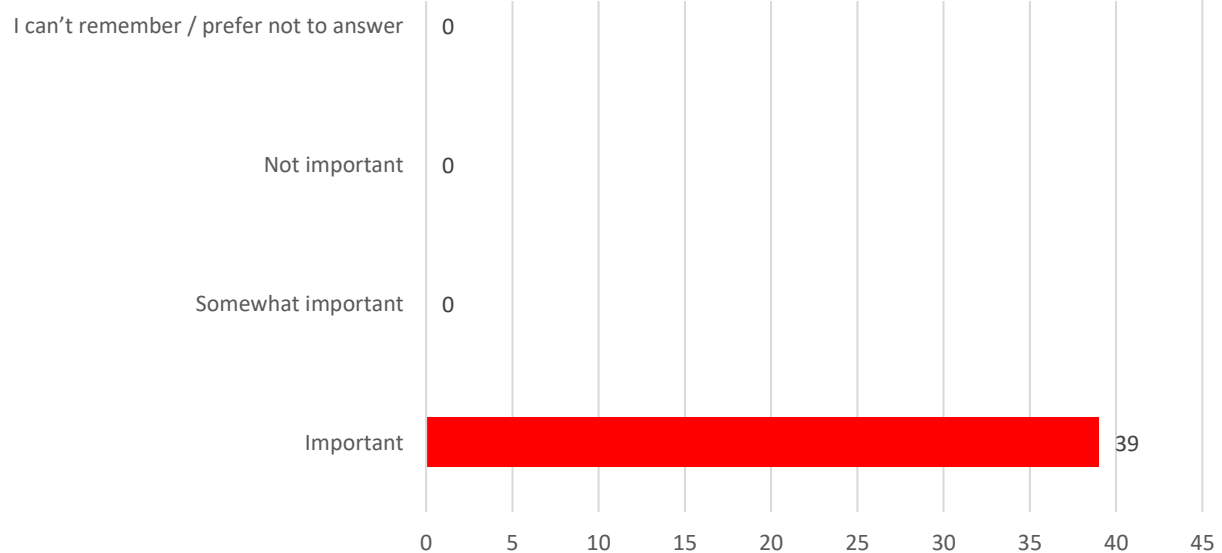
How long have you lived in Canada?



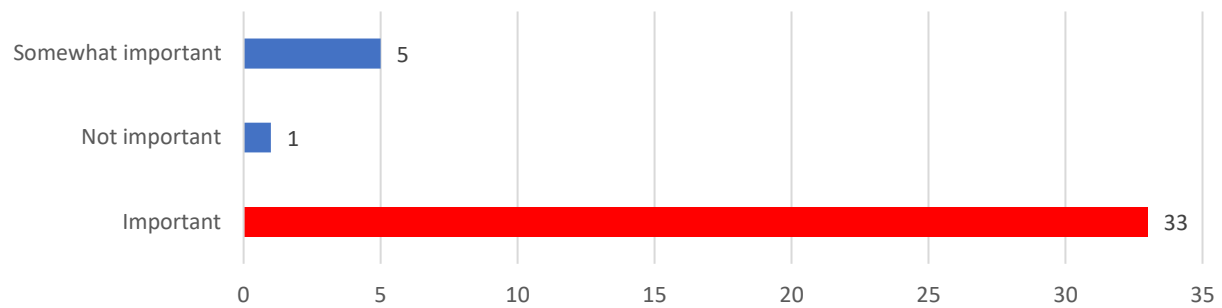
When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision?



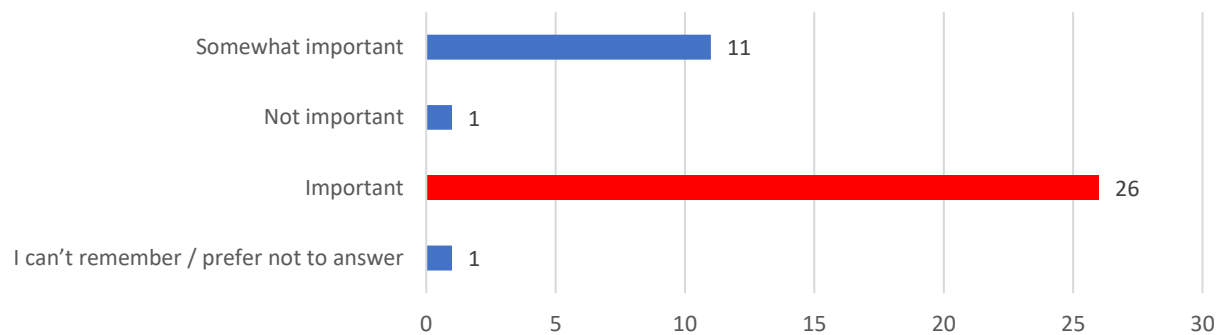
When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision? [Affordability]



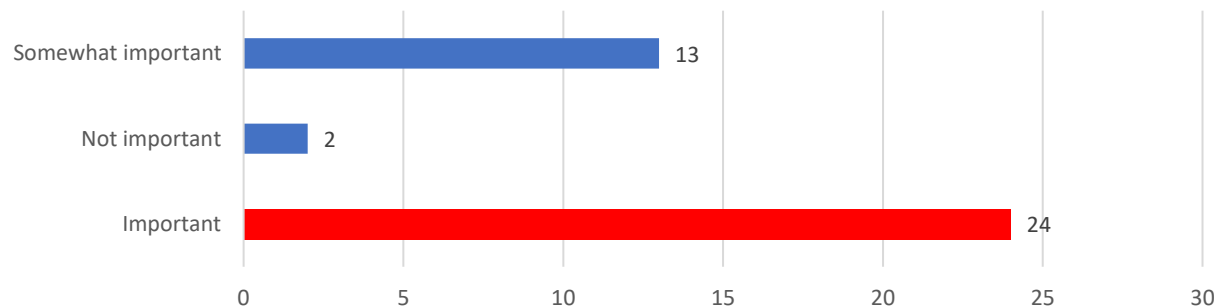
When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision? [**Location**]



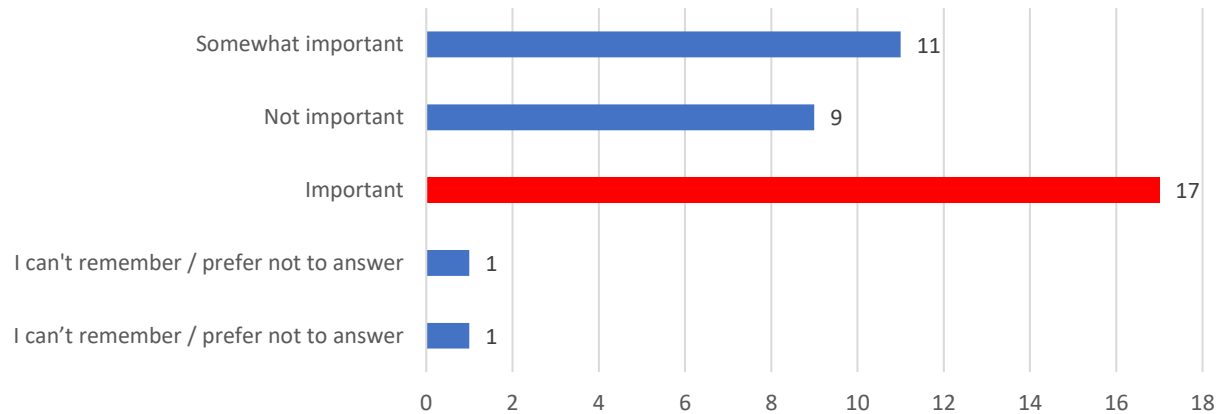
When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision? [**Security of tenure (no renovations etc.)**]



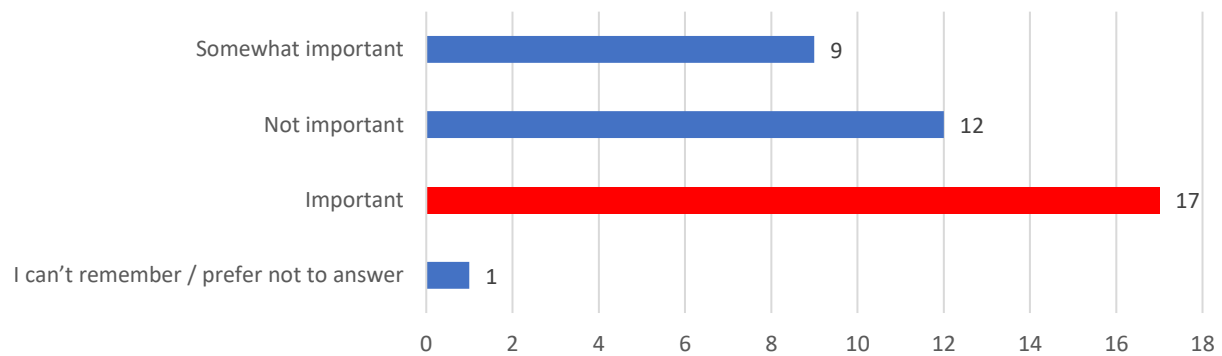
When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision? [**Newness of the building / building design / unit design / In-suite laundry**]



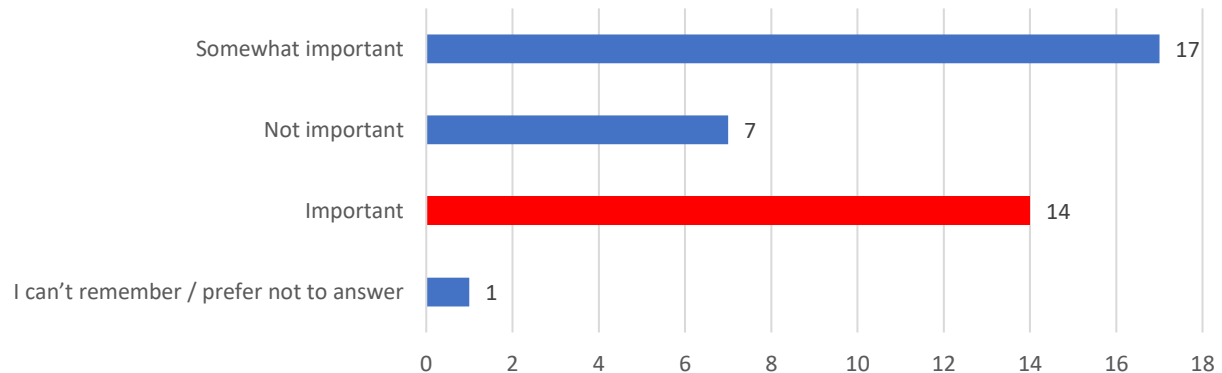
When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision? [**Enough space for my family**]



When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision? [**Pet-friendly policy**]



When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision? [**Not-for-profit, mission-driven landlord**]



All surveys compiled		
Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?	#	%
No	30	76.92%
Yes, one person	6	15.38%
Yes, between 2 to 4 people	3	7.69%
Yes, with 5 or more people	0	0.00%
Total respondents	39	

How would you prefer to hear about events that Catalyst is putting on for tenants, or other community events we think you might be interested in? Please select all the options that suit you.	
Preset responses	#
Facebook group	9
Monthly eNewsletter	15
Paper notice in my mailbox	6
Group email listserv (for communication among tenants)	21
Other responses	
Carrier pigeons & slack	1
notice board? along the pathway maybe?	1
Community message board	1
Personal email	1

Where do conversations happen most often for Madrona residents? (from May 2018 Ollie & Quinn event, on paper)

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely / Never
Near bike storage		***	*
Near mailboxes		*****	*
In / around café & bakery		****	****
On sidewalks / near front doors	***** (11) One person wrote 'lots!'	*	
Out in the community	*	***	
Other?	***** (someone wrote 'dog park' and 2 people put 2 stickers near that; could be that others were also voting for dog park		

Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?		How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?					
All surveys	%	Survey 1 (May 2018)	%	Survey 3 (Nov/Dec '18)	%	Survey 4 (May 2019)	%
No	76.92%	None yet	21.21%	None yet	13.04%	None yet	8.70%
Yes, one person	15.38%	1 to 3	42.42%	1 to 3	43.48%	1 to 3	34.78%
Yes, between 2 to 4 people	7.69%	4 to 9	18.18%	4 to 9	34.78%	4 to 9	26.09%
Yes, with 5 or more people	0	10 to 20	18.18%	10 to 20	8.70%	10 to 20	26.09%
Total respondents	39	Over 20	0	Over 20	0	Over 20	4.35%
		Total respondents	33	Total respondents	23	Total respondents	23

Approximately how many people at Madrona do you know well enough to ask for help if you needed it?					
Survey 1 (May 2018)	%	Survey 3 (Nov/Dec '18)	%	Survey 4 (May 2019)	%
None yet	21.21%	None yet	17.39%	None yet	8.70%
1 to 3	72.72%	1 to 3	60.87%	1 to 3	56.52%
4 to 9	6.06%	4 to 9	21.74%	4 to 9	26.09%
10 or more	0	10 or more	0	10 or more	8.7%
Total respondents	33	Total respondents	23	Total respondents	23

Did Catalyst's events and Town Halls help you get to know more of your neighbours?	#	%
Yes	14	60.87%
No	6	26.09%
Not applicable	1	4.35%
Have not attended	1	4.35%
Did not go. I work nights. All these events took place while I was at work.	1	4.35%
Total responses	23	

Great to hear! Did that result in any instances where you socialized with neighbours on your own initiative? Shared things, gave or received assistance from with neighbours?		
Yes	11	64.71%
No	6	35.29%
Total responses	17	

Great to hear! Did that result in any instances where you socialized with neighbours on your own initiative? Shared things, gave or received assistance from with neighbours? Would you like to share any of those experiences with us?
<p>1. Chatting with neighbours after the meeting as we all walked home across the bridge. Neighbours I'd seen and greeted many times but now I know them better. 2. Another neighbour I hadn't seen in a long while; catching up, asked if he would adopt some of my houseplants; now whenever I see him we talk about the plants. 3. After the last meeting, a cluster of us stood outside in the chilly dark for 40 minutes chatting. One of the neighbours from Balance (the condos next door) happened by and joined in the conversation. So now we know him, too. Yay!</p> <p>We shared garden and Internet connection tips</p> <p>my neighbours have been friendly and have shared with each other soil, plants, food, conversation.</p> <p>Thanks to Bazinga I can ask other tenants questions. I do wish Bazinga was linked with Facebook or we used Facebook since I log into Facebook daily to connect with family and friends already.</p>

Have you brought forward any ideas? Were you able to bring them to fruition?
<p>yes; I initiated the blockwatch program here; it gave me a chance to meet my neighbours and now we have a loose structure for on-going contact.</p> <p>I missed the town hall meetings! I wanted to suggest a group garage sale/bake sale, and trying to get grant \$ for community projects (City of Victoria has a series of grants)</p> <p>Windows washing greatly appreciated</p> <p>Yes, looking forward to the new bike structure and recycling space.</p> <p>talked about a vegetable garden plot to share with tenants near the bldg with management but have not seen or heard back about if that can be accommodated. I imagine it needs some forethought and planning re watering etc.</p> <p>I'm interested in communal gardens...</p>
What might help you feel more comfortable bringing forward your ideas?
<p>I have no ideas. As far as I am concerned everything is going great. Good rent, nice suites, pro active landlord and decent neighbors. I can save money now where before I was living from pay cheque to pay cheque.</p> <p>Constantly wishing we had a community board</p> <p>Feeling like your thoughts are valid too, not just the opinions of louder tenants</p> <p>At the Blockwatch meeting it was asked how people felt about the cidery and using Bazinga. Some people answered one way. I personally disagreed but did not feel comfortable being the voice of dissent. Surveys like this are comfortable.</p> <p>I have ideas, but I don't have much interest in being part of the group that organizes it.</p>

Should we keep going with Town Halls?		
Yes, keep doing three per year.	12	54.55%
Yes, but less frequent would be okay.	6	27.27%
No. They were important in the first year, but don't need to continue.	1	
Haven't attended	1	4.55%
I like them. As I said above, I think maintaining face-to-face connection with people from Catalyst is very important.	1	4.55%
I miss many of these. Maybe a pdf summary of key points that were discussed at these meeting for those that cannot make them so we are still in the loop.	1	4.55%
Total responses	22	

How well is Bazinga working for you?		
I love Bazinga for learning about important Madrona issues and sharing information online with neighbours.	1	4.35%
It's nice to have, but I don't use it much.	18	78.26%
What's Bazinga?!!	4	17.39%
Total responses	23	

Anything else you'd like to say about the first pilot year of the Community Connections program?

Thanks

Re Bazinga -obviously it would be more effective if: 1. more people signed up. 2. we had the option to receive a notification when something new is posted (a new topic etc). I'm just not likely to make a habit of checking regularly no matter how hard I try, and I often miss things. communication is very challenging these days!! (and we can push and push but It may be that the people already signed up are the only ones who are really interested.)

Keep up the good work

Appreciate the efforts of community building :D

Thanks for your efforts to create community.

Keeping as minimal as possible noisy power tools used by ground keepers (landscapers)

If we could have the meeting in one of the buildings on harbour road, it would be closer and easier to access.

Appendix 3.

Compilation of selected repeat questions to show change over time

Community Connections 2018-2019 online tenant surveys: repeat question summary

These charts were compiled using data from all three major online surveys conducted with Madrona tenants between May 2018 and May 2019. These questions were only asked of a tenant once, as we didn't need to see changes in their responses over time.

#3 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here.						
	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agree	25	75.76%	14	60.87%	19	82.61%
Neutral	3	9.09%	5	21.74%	3	13.04%
Disagree	1	3.03%	1	4.35%	0	0.00%
It's too early to say	4	12.12%	3	13.04%	1	4.35%
Total responses	33		23		23	

#5 - Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?		#6 - How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?					
All surveys	%	Survey 1 (May 2018)	%	Survey 3 (Nov/Dec '18)	%	Survey 4 (May 2019)	%
No	76.92%	None yet	21.21%	None yet	13.04%	None yet	8.70%
Yes, one person	15.38%	1 to 3	42.42%	1 to 3	43.48%	1 to 3	34.78%
Yes, between 2 to 4 people	7.69%	4 to 9	18.18%	4 to 9	34.78%	4 to 9	26.09%
Yes, with 5 or more people	0	10 to 20	18.18%	10 to 20	8.70%	10 to 20	26.09%
Total respondents	39	Over 20	0	Over 20	0	Over 20	4.35%
		Total respondents	33	Total respondents	23	Total respondents	23

#7 - Approximately how many people at Madrona do you know well enough to ask for help if you needed it?					
Survey 1 (May 2018)	%	Survey 3 (Nov/Dec '18)	%	Survey 4 (May 2019)	%
None yet	21.21%	None yet	17.39%	None yet	8.70%
1 to 3	72.72%	1 to 3	60.87%	1 to 3	56.52%
4 to 9	6.06%	4 to 9	21.74%	4 to 9	26.09%
10 or more	0	10 or more	0	10 or more	8.7%
Total respondents	33	Total respondents	23	Total respondents	23

#8 - Approximately how often do you have conversations with your neighbours? This can be anything from a brief "hello, how are you?" to more significant chats.						
	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Every day!	12	36.36%	5	21.74%	8	34.78%
A few times per week	8	24.24%	7	30.43%	8	34.78%
Two or three times a month	8	24.24%	7	30.43%	4	17.39%
Once a month	2	6.06%	4	17.39%	1	4.35%
Never	3	9.09%	0	0.00%	2	8.70%
Total responses	33		23		23	

#9 - Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?						
	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Definitely!	23	69.70%	14	60.87%	12	52.17%
Maybe	9	27.27%	8	34.78%	11	47.83%
No	1	3.03%	1	4.35%	0	0.00%
Total responses	33		23		23	

#14 - To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

I / We feel safe living at Madrona / Dockside Green

	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agree	24	72.73%	16	69.57%	19	82.61%
Neutral	5	15.15%	5	21.74%	3	13.04%
Disagree	3	9.09%	2	8.70%	1	4.35%
Rather not say	1	3.03%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total responses	33		23		23	

I feel like my belongings are safe at Madrona

	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agree	15	45.45%	9	39.13%	12	52.17%
Neutral	8	24.24%	5	21.74%	8	34.78%
Disagree	8	24.24%	8	34.78%	3	13.04%
Rather not say	2	6.06%	1	4.35%	0	0.00%
Total responses	33		23		23	

Madrona tenants work together to solve conflicts

	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agree	2	6.06%	2	8.70%	7	30.43%
Neutral	25	75.76%	19	82.61%	13	56.52%
Disagree	6	18.18%	2	8.70%	2	8.70%
Rather not say	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	4.35%
Total responses	33		23		23	

Madrona tenants take good care of their homes and the surrounding common spaces						
	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agree	16	48.48%	15	65.22%	17	73.91%
Neutral	16	48.48%	7	30.43%	4	17.39%
Disagree	1	3.03%	1	4.35%	1	4.35%
Rather not say	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	4.35%
Total responses	33		23		23	
Madrona tenants take care of one another						
	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agree	10	30.30%	10	43.48%	9	39.13%
Neutral	22	66.67%	12	52.17%	13	56.52%
Disagree	1	3.03%	1	4.35%	0	0.00%
Rather not say	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	4.35%
Total responses	33		23		23	

#21 - From your perspective as a tenant at Madrona, is Catalyst living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate vibrant, affordable, and inspiring rental homes and places for people to live in?						
	Survey 1		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	22	66.67%	18	78.26%	18	78.26%
No	3	9.09%	2	8.70%	1	4.35%
I don't have a strong opinion on this	6	18.18%	2	8.70%	3	13.04%
Not sure / prefer not to say	2	6.06%	1	4.35%	1	4.35%
Total responses	33		23		23	

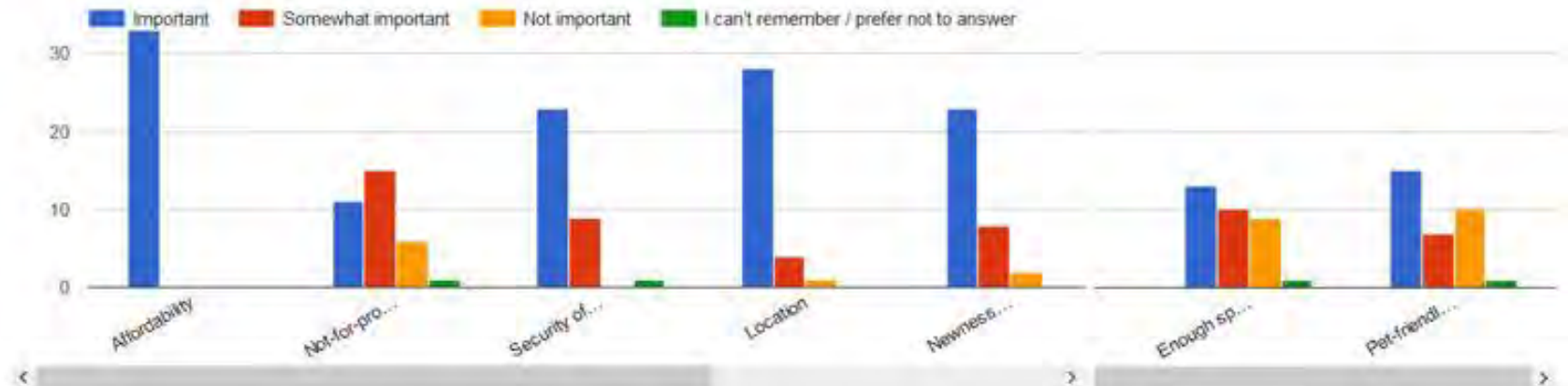
Appendix 4.

Full survey reports: May 2018 (all), June 2018, November/December 2018 (1st timers and return respondents), and May 2019 (1st timers and return respondents). Where necessary to protect tenant privacy, individual comments have been redacted.



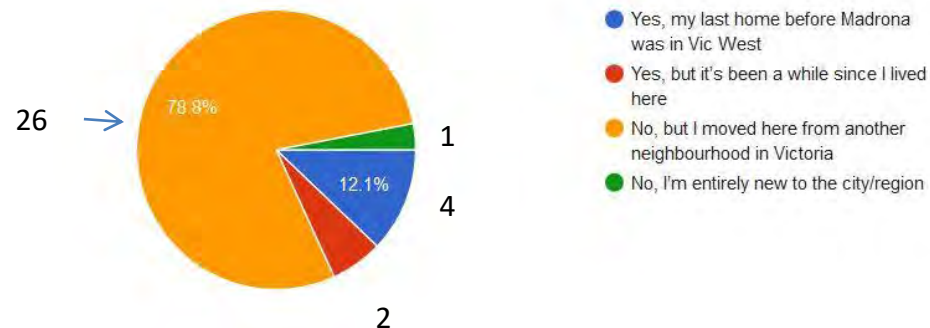
Madrona Tenant survey #1

1. When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision?



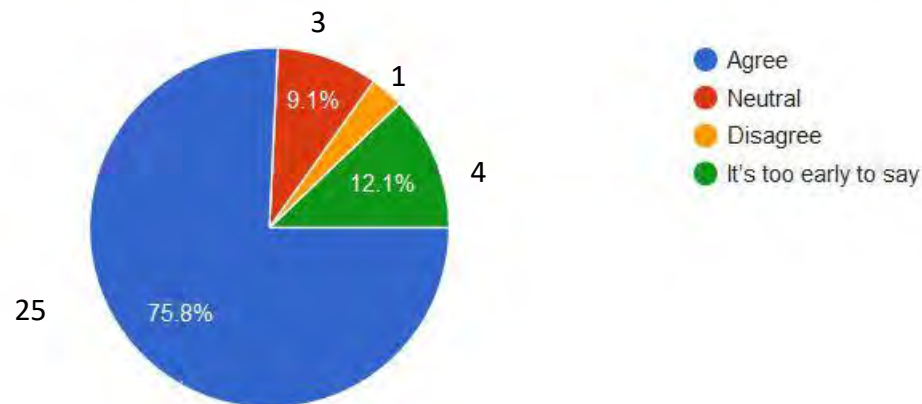
2. Before you moved into Madrona, had you lived in this neighbourhood before?

33 responses



3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here.

33 responses

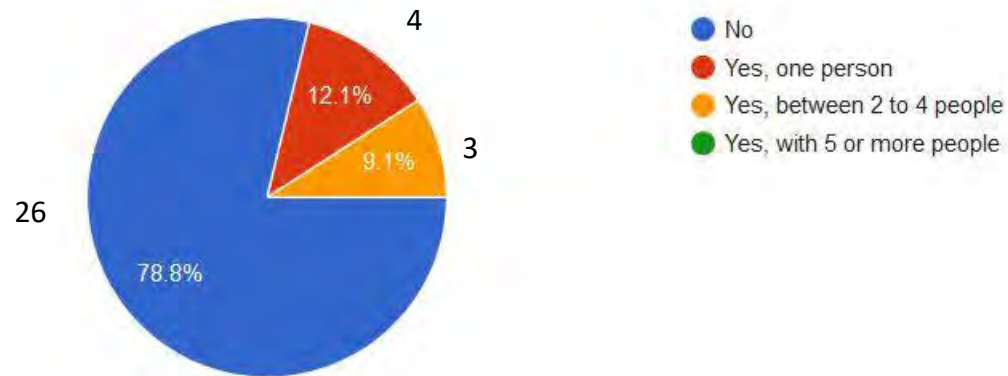


4. Thinking about the past 5 months, please tell us if you have done any of the following in Vic West or Victoria? Choose all that apply.

Preset responses	#
Visited local library, community centre or recreation centre	18
Attended a <u>neighbourhood</u> event or celebration	14
Attended a cultural or ethnic event put on by a cultural or ethnic group different from your own	6
Attended a religious service	5
Signed a petition	4
Attended a political rally or political meeting	3
Participated in a <u>neighbourhood</u> community project (eg....)	7
Attended a city council or school board meeting	3
I haven't done any of these things yet	10

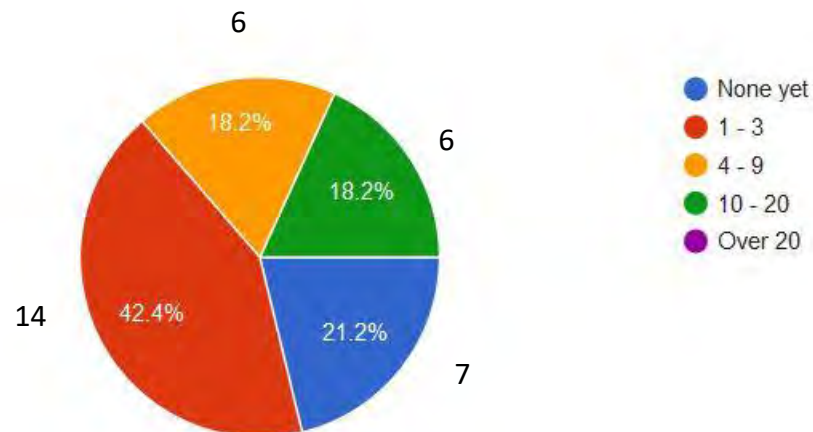
5. Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?

33 responses



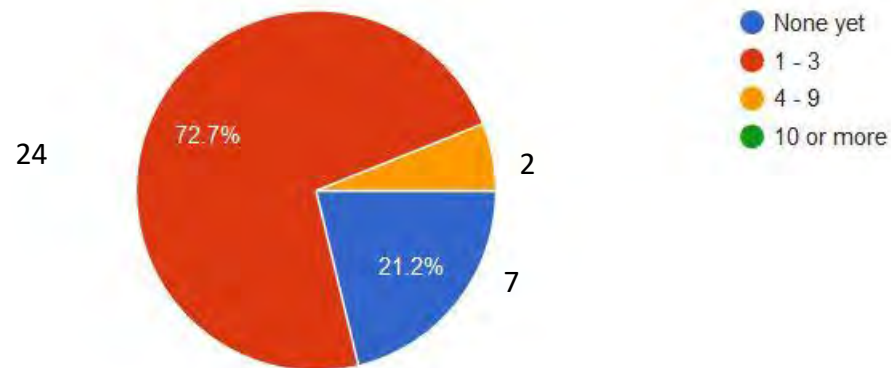
6. How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?

33 responses



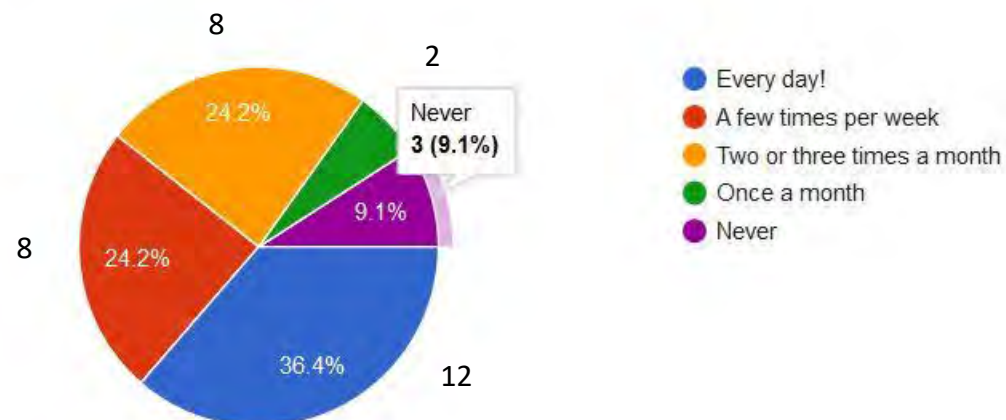
7. Approximately how many people at Madrona do you know well enough to ask for help if you needed it?

33 responses



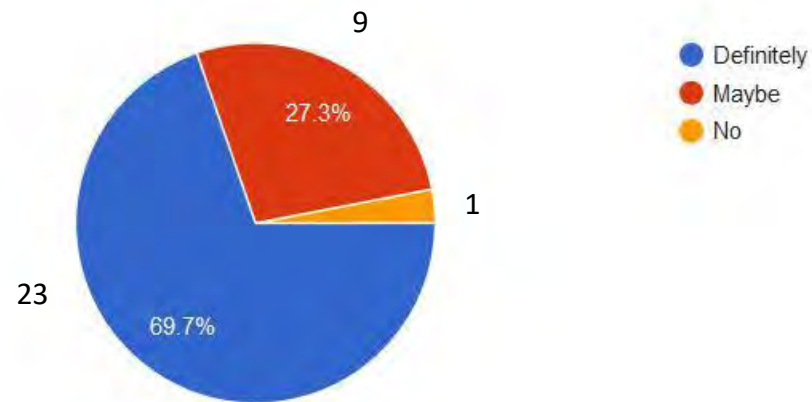
8. Approximately how often do you have conversations with your neighbours? This can be anything from a brief 'hello, how are you?' to more significant chats.

33 responses



9. Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?

33 responses

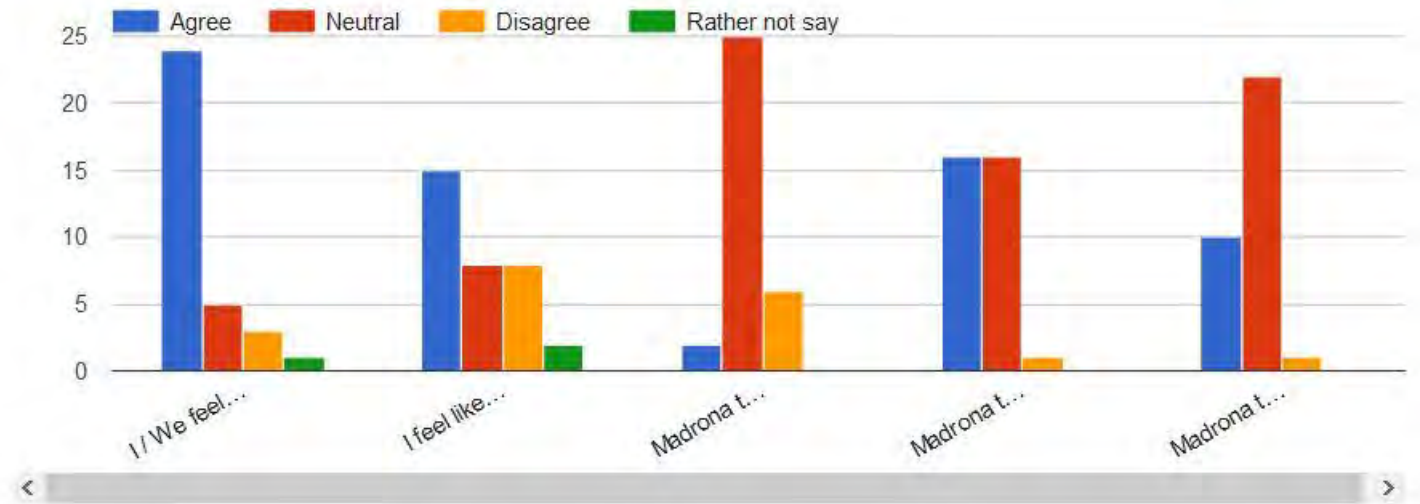


What makes you NOT want to get to know your neighbours better?

1 response



14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:



I / We feel safe living at Madrona / Dockside Green

I feel like my belongings are safe at Madrona

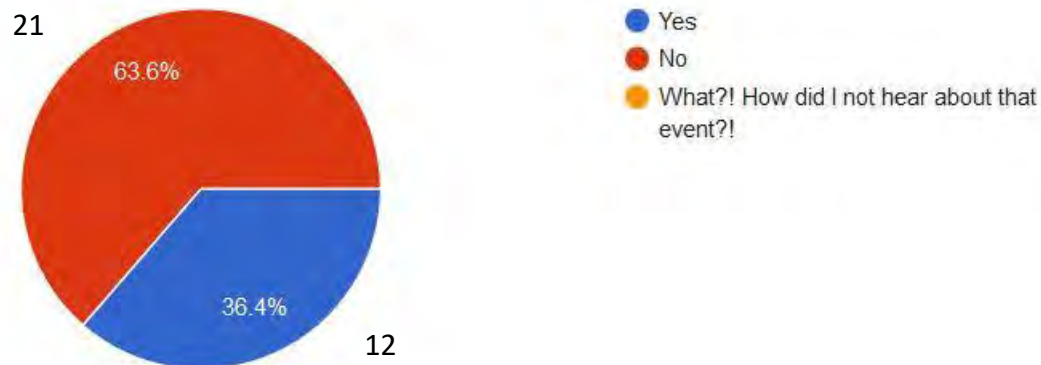
Madrona tenants work together to solve conflicts

Madrona tenants take good care of their homes and the surrounding common spaces

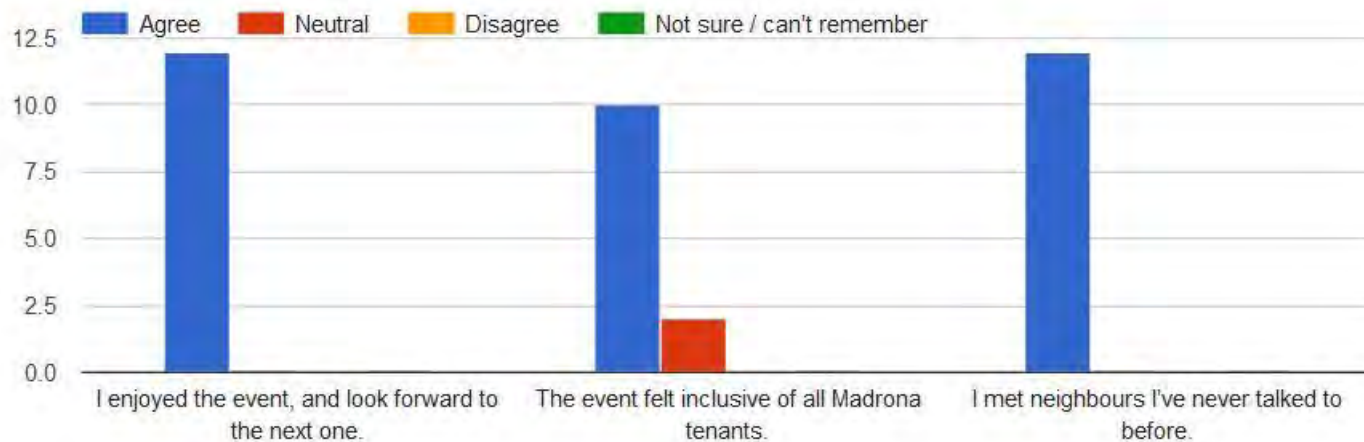
Madrona tenants take care of one another

19. Did you attend the first Madrona social on May 4th?

33 responses



We'd love a little feedback on the social event at Ollie & Quinn. To what extent would you agree with the following statements?



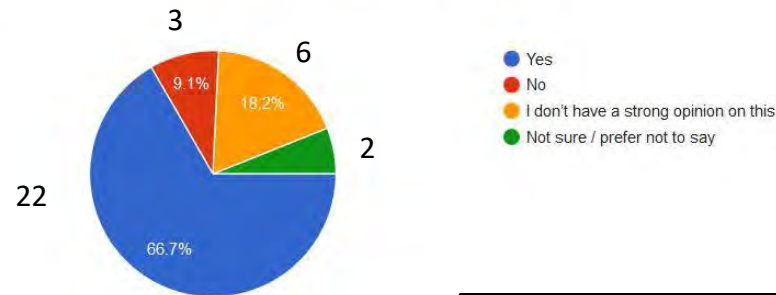
May 4 social event: Would you mind sharing with us why you didn't attend? Select all that apply.	
Preset responses	#
I had conflicting plans	14
The event didn't interest me	3
I didn't know about it	1
I couldn't get there (mobility or affordability challenges)	2
I had challenges with child care / kids schedules	1
Other responses	
Would have been more interested if management actually cared about instead of pawning off liability onto the construction company they hired.	1
My basic tenancy issues have not been met and I have almost moved twice	1
Foot issues	1
Would prefer onsite events	1
Was sick	1
Was at work from 2:30-10:30pm	1
I work on weekends, and extra hours when I can	1
I suffer from crippling anxiety	1

How would you prefer to hear about events that Catalyst is putting on for tenants, or other community events we think you might be interested in?
Please select all the options that suit you.

Preset responses	#
Facebook group	9
Monthly eNewsletter	15
Paper notice in my mailbox	6
Group email listserv (for communication among tenants)	21
Other responses	
Carrier pigeons & slack	1
notice board? along the pathway maybe?	1
Community message board	1
Personal email	1

21. From your perspective as a tenant at Madrona, is Catalyst living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate vibrant, affordable, and inspiring rental homes and places for people to live in?

33 responses



Responded 'YES' to Q21

Would you care to elaborate?

7 responses

From conversations since I've moved in, I'd say that management cares!

Yes though I wish rents could truly be 1/3 of tenant's monthly income

I like it here.

I looked long and hard for something affordable and secure and am SO happy to be here. We use the Goose for cycling and the Gorge for paddling, and are close to work and school. That it's new and eco-friendly are great bonuses.

Iv lived in this city almost my whole life and have never lived in a place where it seems that the landlord cared about and for the living environment. It is a notion with many landlords that they don't care how it works as long as it works... But I suppose that depends on what you mean by 'works', but so far it's been great.

The tenants are lovely that I've met, I really appreciate the grounds work (requiring pets to be on leashes would be a bonus) but the atmosphere is happy and cheerful and its just a great place to live.

Nice layout that allows for people to talk. There is a divide between the upstairs people and the downstairs people though. Two different worlds.

Responded YES to 'Is Catalyst living up': <i>Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?</i>
Liking it.
Not at this time
security cameras would be appreciated I have had items stolen from my patio not necessarily by another tenant at Madrona as we have public traffic on the walkway.
Staff are professional and always friendly. Safe, clean living environment with a commitment to sustainability. Cutting edge but should be global practice. We love Madrona@DocksideGreen and everything this urban oasis stands for!
Would like to see a garbage can installed by the south end stairs.
Bike situation is still terrible. We've had three bikes stolen and don't understand why unused bikes are still getting space in the locker when we use our bikes daily and have lost half of the bikes we came with. SO upsetting. Have asked repeatedly to get our front door fixed to keep out the incredible draft in the winter and now insects and dust in summer. Also, would appreciate clarity around the maximum income, as I've seen a couple different numbers - and I really don't want to be moving any time soon!
None now :) Thanks!
<p>I'm very happy living at Madrona as the affordable rent is helping me a lot, and neighbors are lovely, but when I have some issues in my unit, it takes so long to get help from Randall North Real Estate. I had no heat for a month at some point and I really had to keep telling them it's not something I or they could fix, but they didn't get back to me for so long. Finally, my coworker called them what's wrong with that, and they took it seriously that it was fixed in a couple of days. I feel a little bit shy to tell this kind of things as it's affordable, but I'd just like to tell this because when I chatted with neighbors, they were having the same problem, and I'm not sure if it's something Catalyst's known of.</p> <p>But again! I'm so thankful for Madrona and luckily I'm in a part of this community. Thank you for creating this.</p>
Bike room access
All is good
Deficiency repairs took awhile but that's expected in a building this big. Very happy with how fast Michelle responds to my emails, Ruth is very friendly. Soooooo blessed to be apart of the madrona community.
Love everything about it. The only issue I have with living here is the noise level (thin walls)
I am renting a one bedroom and a den, when I was shown another rental unit I was told that it would be the same. When I moved into my unit I discovered the other bedroom did not have a closet, therefore it is technically a one bedroom and a den not a bedroom. I Would suggest not charging the same price as the two bedrooms for the one bedrooms and den units. I would suggest a community garden Area. Future building should have a screening of dogs permitted/ Make sure they are properly registered with the city (not sure if you already check this requirement. (No Pitbulls/dobberman pinchers/Rotweilers,(Aggressive breeds?) .
Quicker to respond to problems. No screens on windows yet and it took a long time to fix initial problems. (Bathroom door fell off and was not fixed for 1 week. Very dangerous with little kids having a precarious door hanging on to hinges)

Responded 'Not sure / prefer not to say' OR
'I don't have a strong opinion on this to Q21

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

4 responses

I'm really happy at Madrona so far. The neighbours I know are people I feel comfortable and safe with, can turn to for help, can offer them help. The thing that makes me uneasy is question of ongoing affordability. I.e., if rents go up according to Gov limits, it will become difficult for me to stay.

Putting up a signage at both ends of the concrete pathway saying: tenants or visitors walkway only

Randall North has been unprofessional and uninformative regarding repairs and communications. Tenants should have been informed during the application process that Madrona is in a high-activity zone for noise and given information on the noise levels that we should expect and what to do if the noise is excessive for the zone. The noise level has been the most stressful part and the "below-market" price seems almost market-level when the utilities, etc and noise-zoning is accounted for. I would feel more respected if I had been fully informed of the noise impacts and would have still chosen to rent there. I was prepared for some noise but was not aware of the level and intensity.

Okay, we have work to do.

Responded 'NO' to Q21

Would you give us some constructive feedback on how we could improve?

3 responses

Learn how to manage a building or buildings

I talked with a neighbour once but forgot their name. Who is Catalyst? Is all this for a future building? I'd like to live in that building if they made it more soundproof. The people running Madrona must be all new as they have poor organizational skills and they seem to lack a willingness to provide information or consistency in getting back to me.

Create communal garden spaces on the roof.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

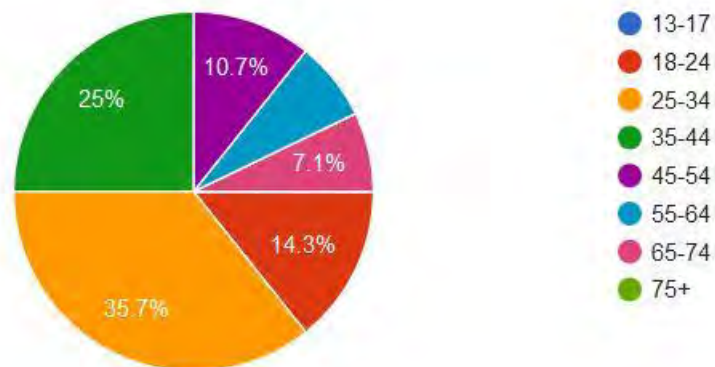
2 responses

Not impressed in the least you make so many rookie mistakes from even before this place was built. I am lucky to hit Step 2 with BC Hydro. Did this even get a LEED certification

I thought Randall north was our landlord. I have fears of them raising the rent in December when our first year is up.

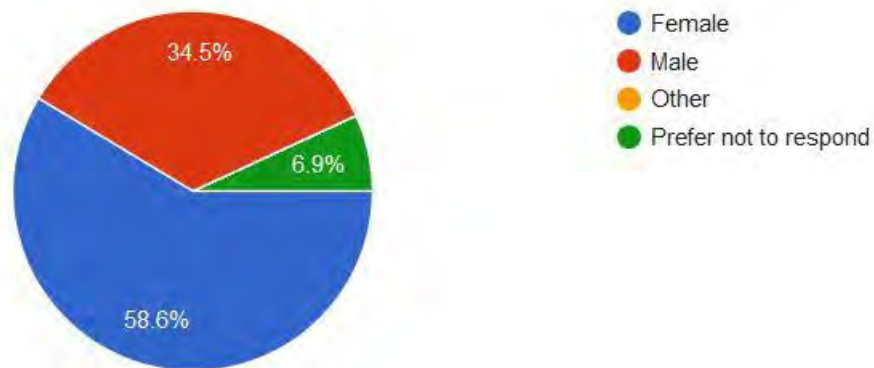
22. What is your age?

28 responses



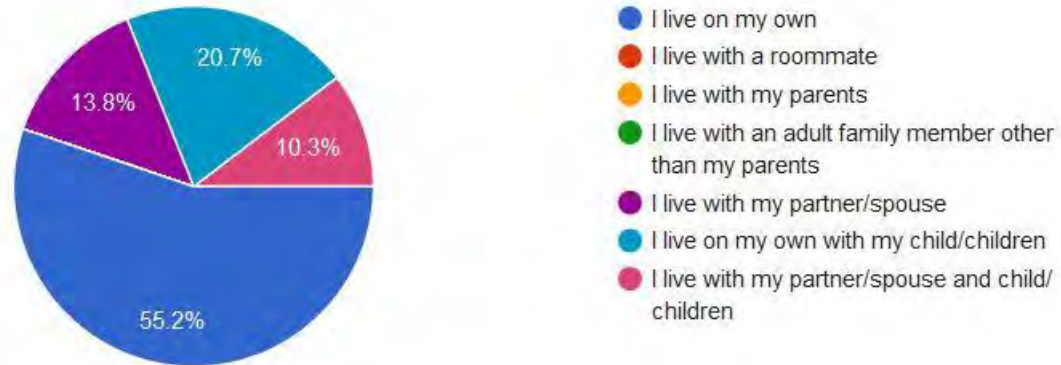
23. With which gender identity do you most identify?

29 responses



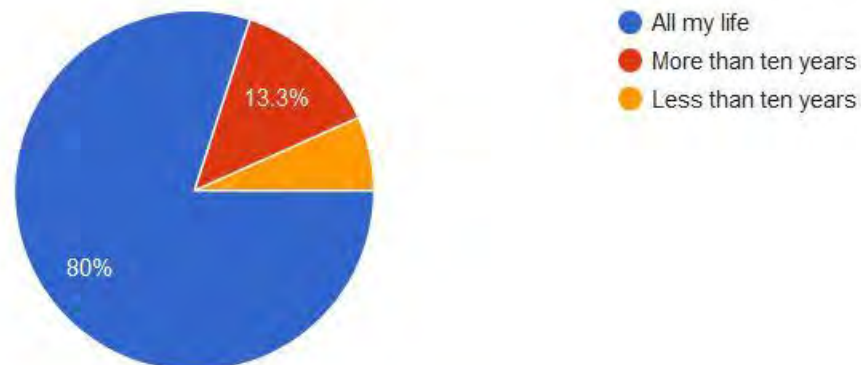
24. Which of the following best describe your current household?

29 responses



25. How long have you lived in Canada?

30 responses



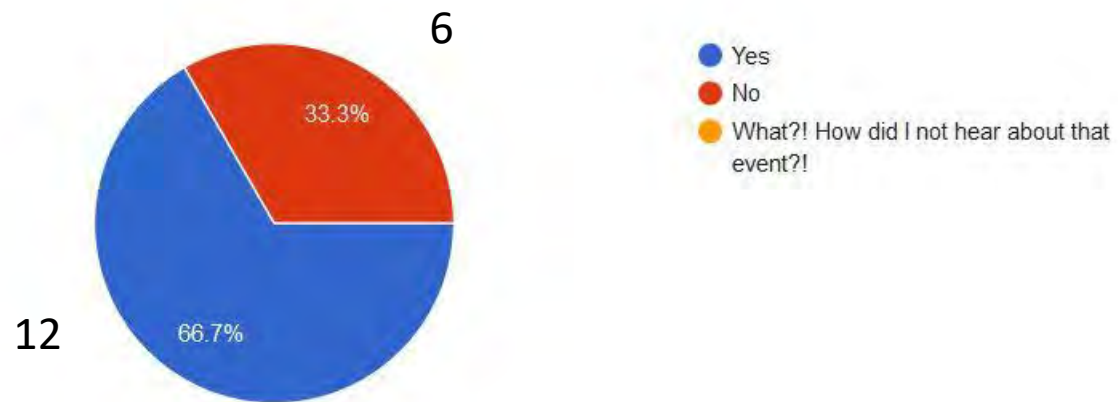


Madrona Tenant survey#2: June 10 2018 BBQ & Tenant ideas

(18 responses on BBQ, 11 on tenant ideas)

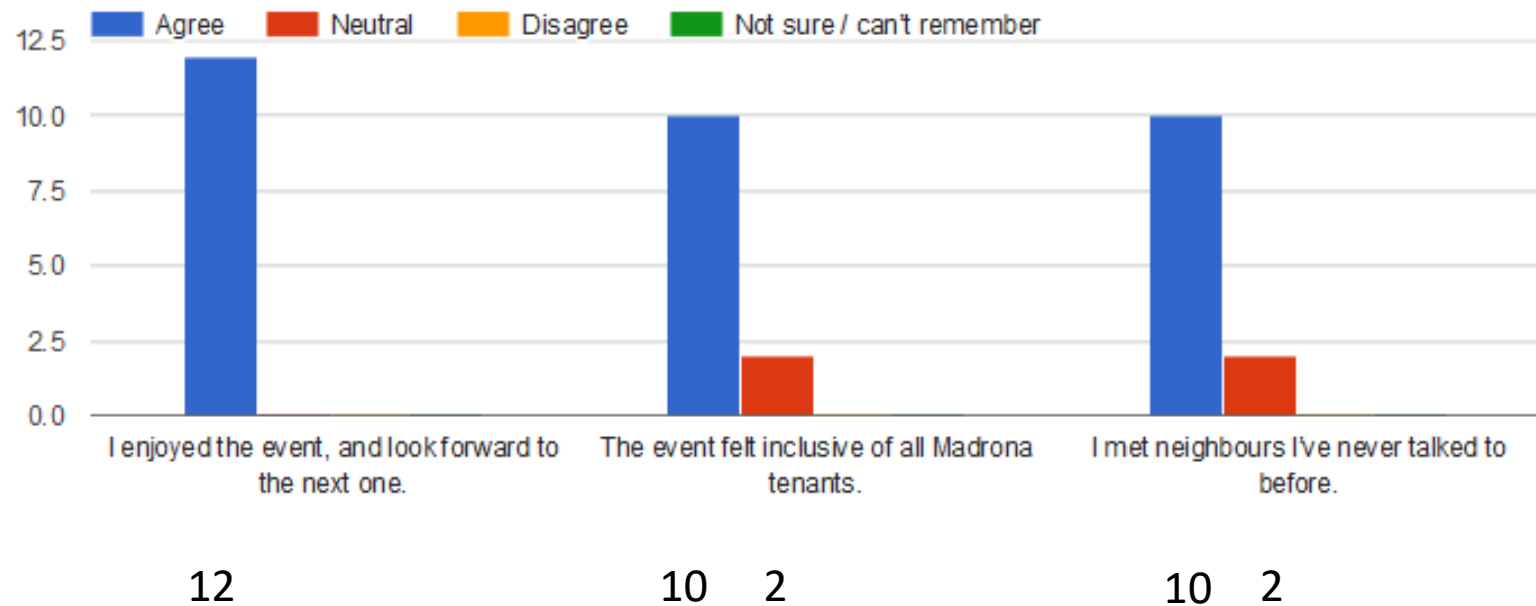
19. Did you attend the June 10th Madrona BBQ?

18 responses



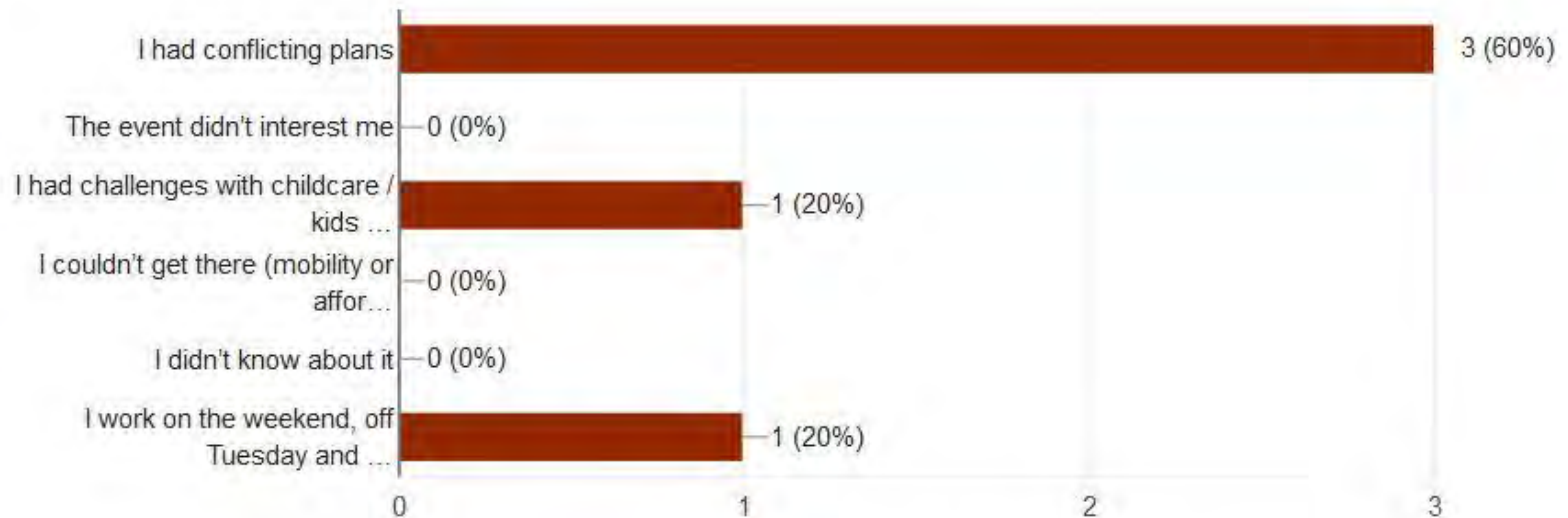
Event feedback

We'd love a little feedback. To what extent would you agree with the following statements?

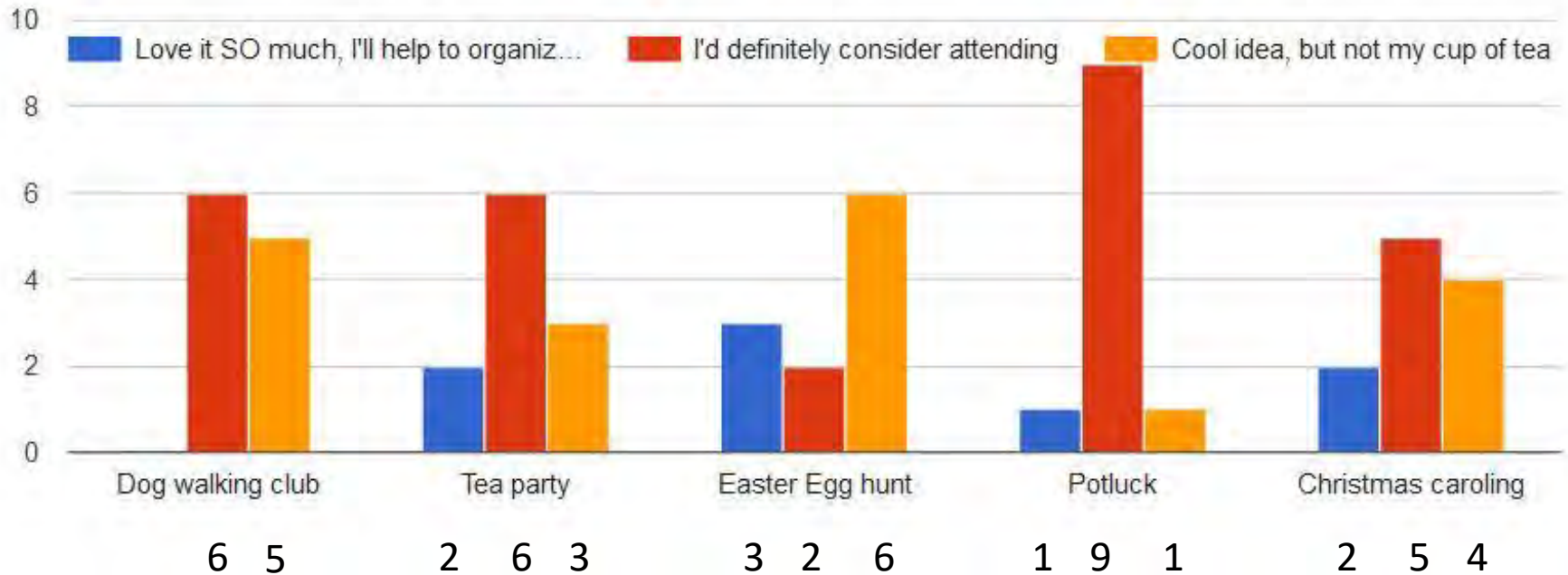


Would you mind sharing with us why you didn't attend? Select all that apply.

5 responses



Madrona resident SOCIAL ideas



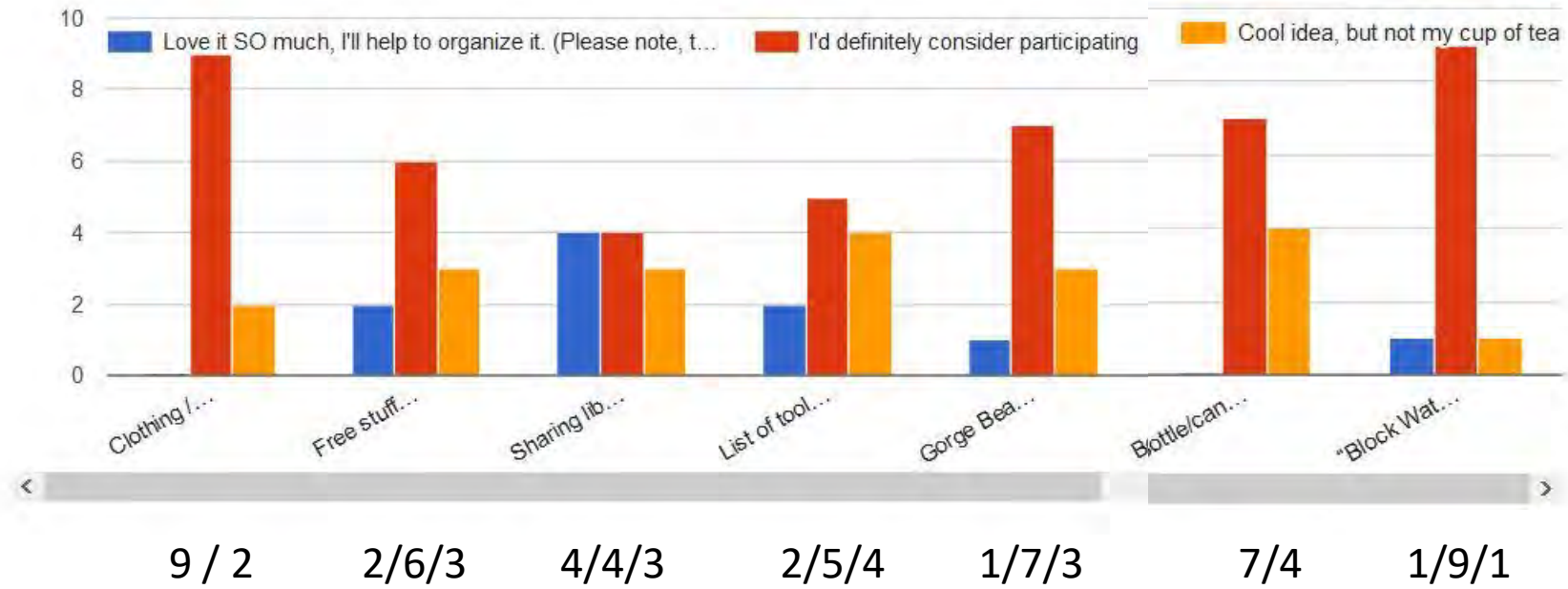
Tea party volunteers: [REDACTED]

Easter egg hunt volunteers: [REDACTED]

Potluck volunteer: [REDACTED]

XMAS caroling volunteers: Alfredo & Jollean

Madrona resident SHARING & COLLABORATING ideas



Clothing / home goods
swap

Free stuff spot

Sharing library (books)

List of tools/appliances
willing to share

Gorge Beach clean up

Bottle/can drive for fun
events or stuff

Block watch (discounts
on tenant insurance)

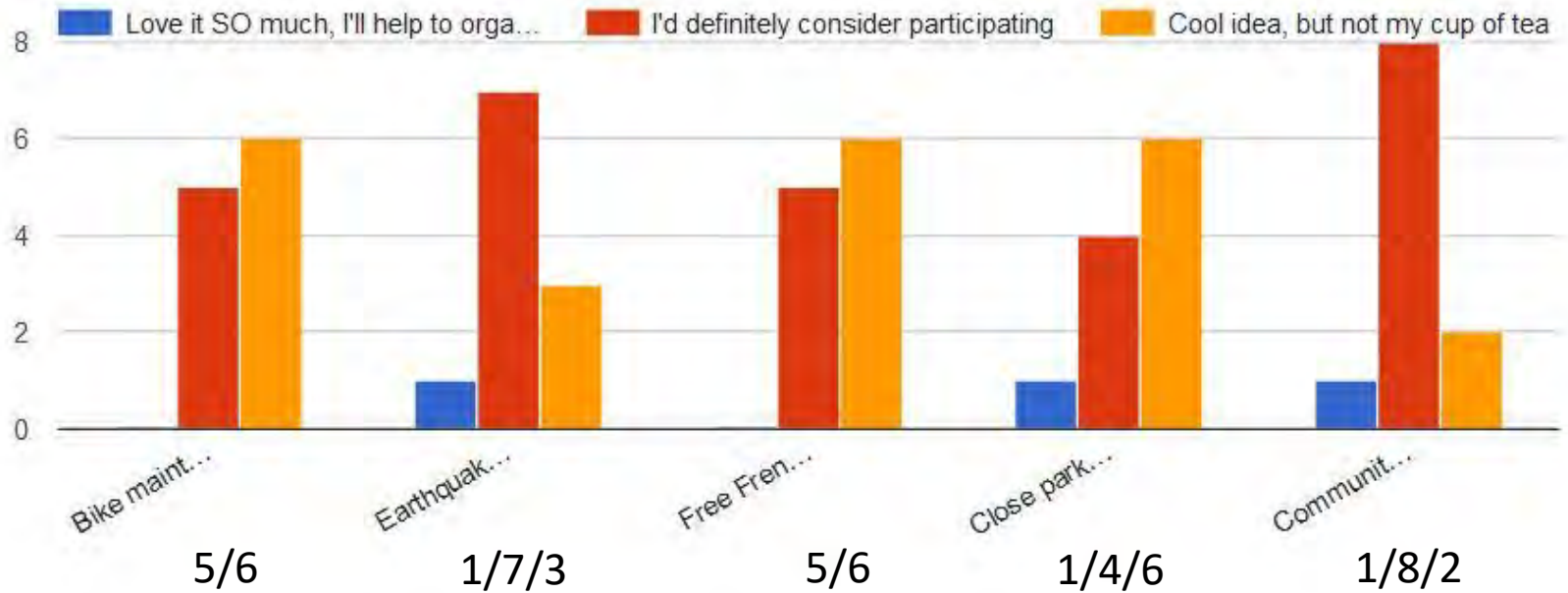
Free stuff volunteers: [REDACTED]

Sharing library volunteers: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Tool list volunteers: [REDACTED]

Block watch volunteer: [REDACTED]

Madrona resident ideas for LEARNING TOGETHER



Bike maintenance workshop

Earthquake preparedness workshop

Earthquake preparedness workshop

Close parking lot for safe cycling

Community help / skills roster. Connecting those with skills to people needing help tackle projects. Example: bike maintenance, gardening etc.

Earthquake preparedness volunteer: 

Safe biking volunteer: 

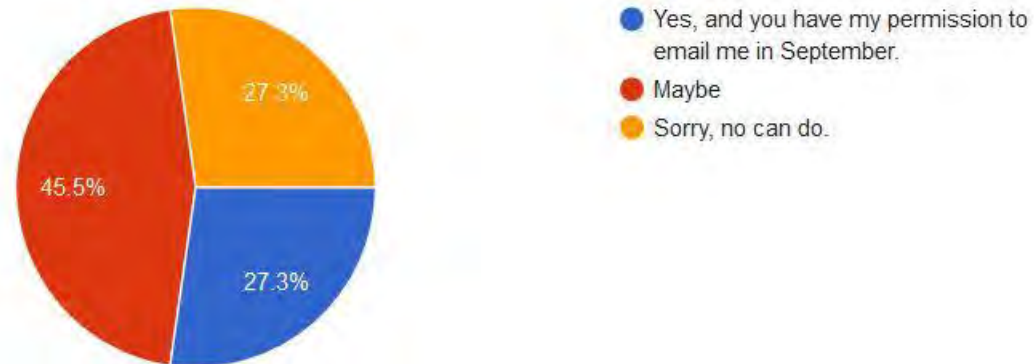
Community skills roster volunteer: 

Gorge Beach clean up volunteer: 

Next Catalyst social: Hallowe'en

Would you be willing to help organize Hallowe'en festivities?

11 responses



Halloween volunteers:





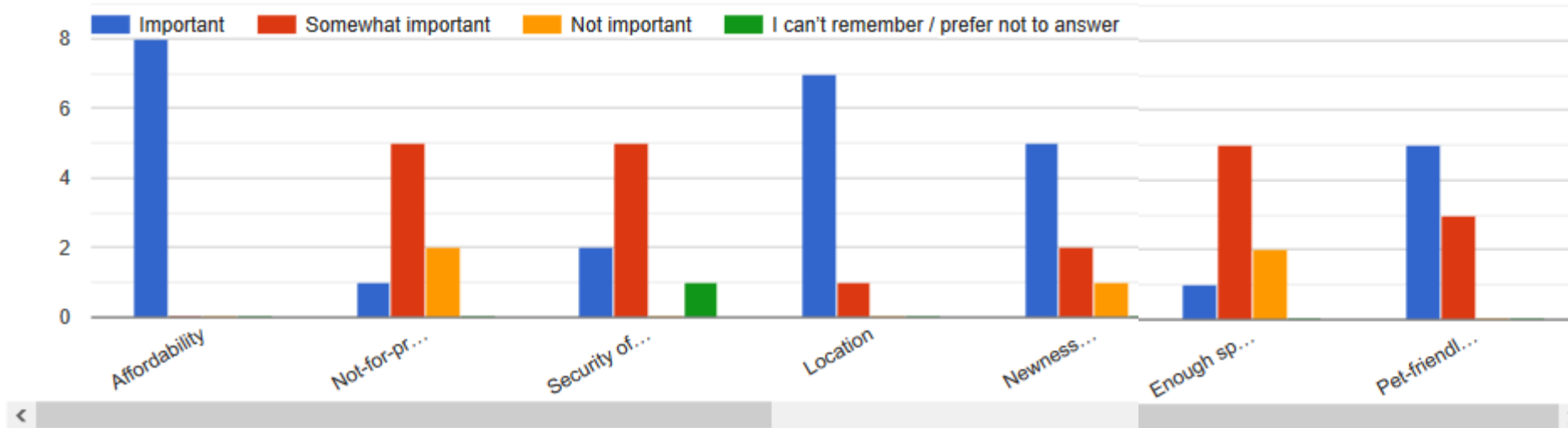
Madrona Tenant survey #3: Nov/Dec 2018

(8 1st time respondents)

1st time respondents

These are tenants who DID NOT take the first survey in June 2018. They received all the original questions.

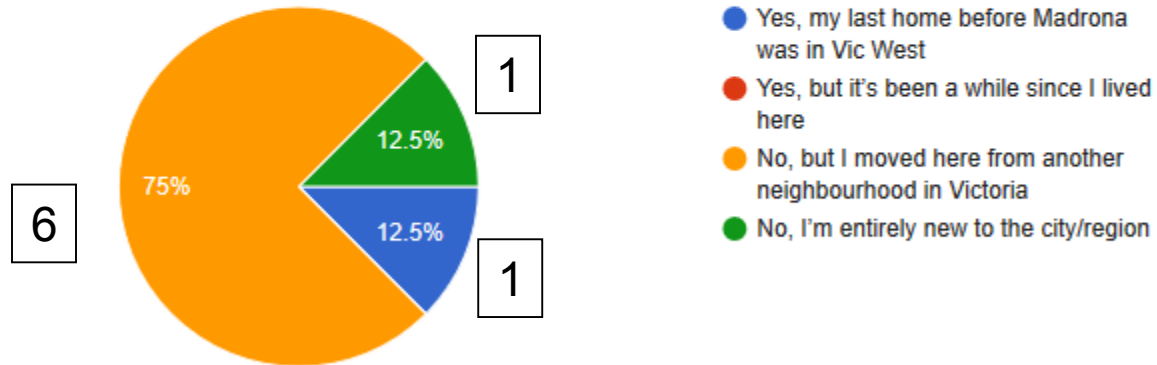
1. When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision?



1st time respondents

2. Before you moved into Madrona, had you lived in this neighbourhood before?

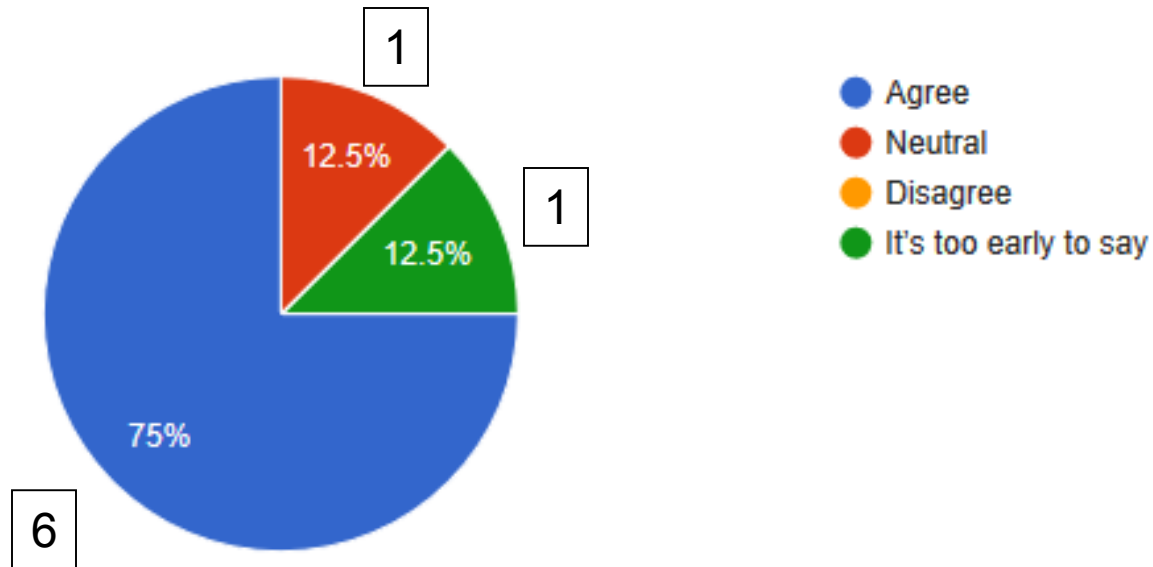
8 responses



1st time respondents

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here."

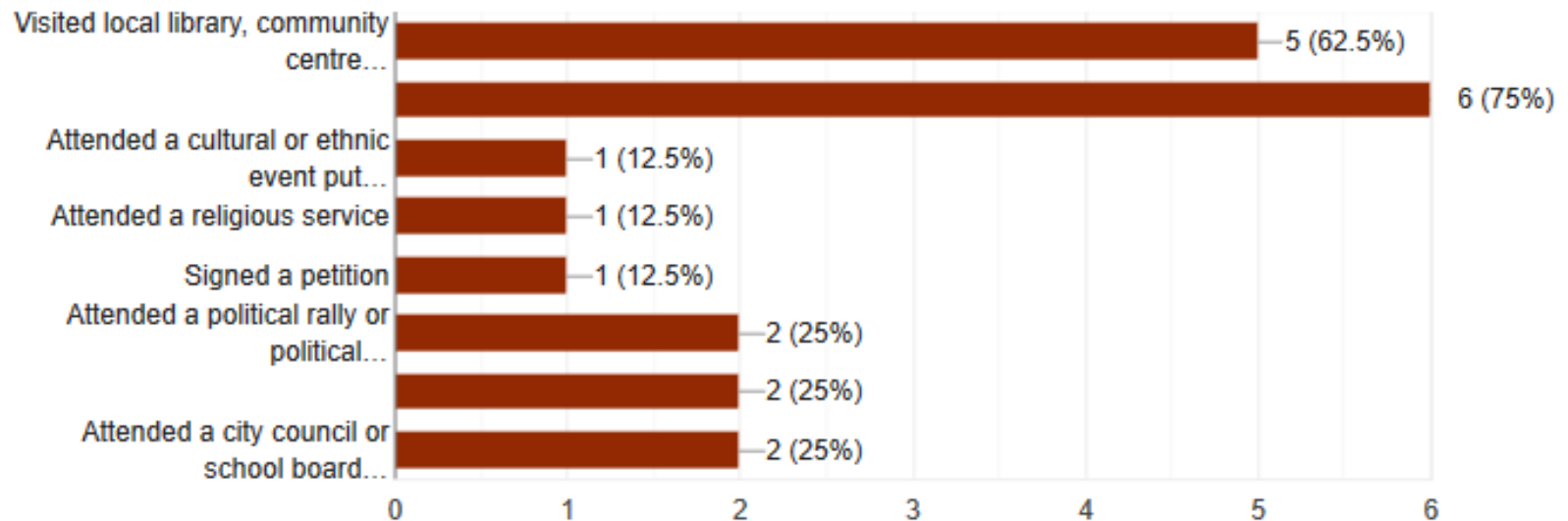
8 responses



1st time respondents

4. Thinking about the past 5 months, please tell us if you have done any of the following in Vic West or Victoria? Choose all that apply.

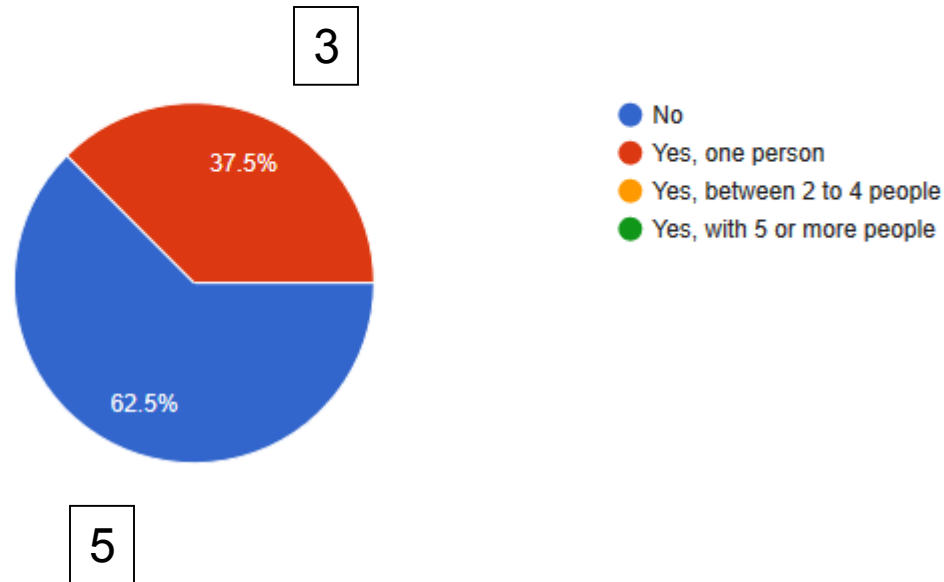
8 responses



1st time respondents

5. Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?

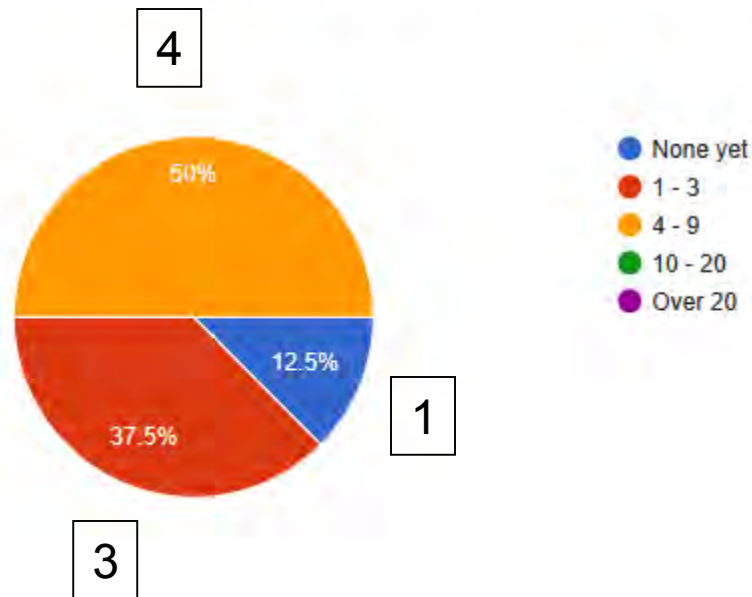
8 responses



1st time respondents

6. How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?

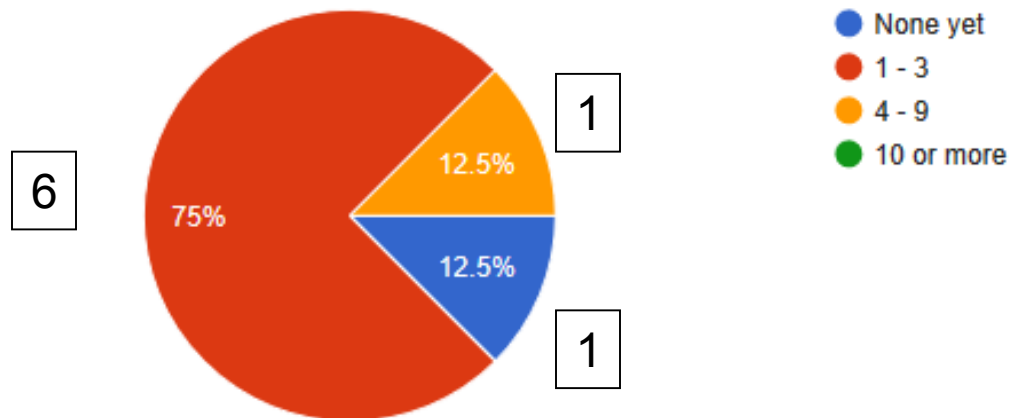
8 responses



1st time respondents

7. Approximately how many people at Madrona do you know well enough to ask for help if you needed it?

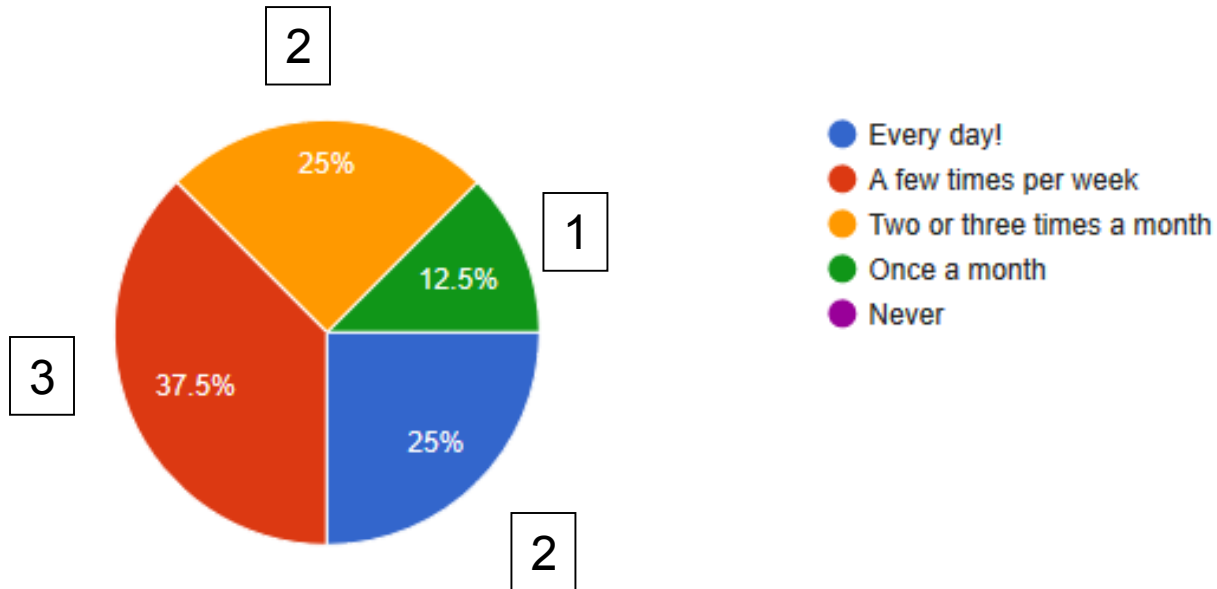
8 responses



1st time respondents

8. Approximately how often do you have conversations with your neighbours? This can be anything from a brief 'hello, how are you?' to more significant chats.

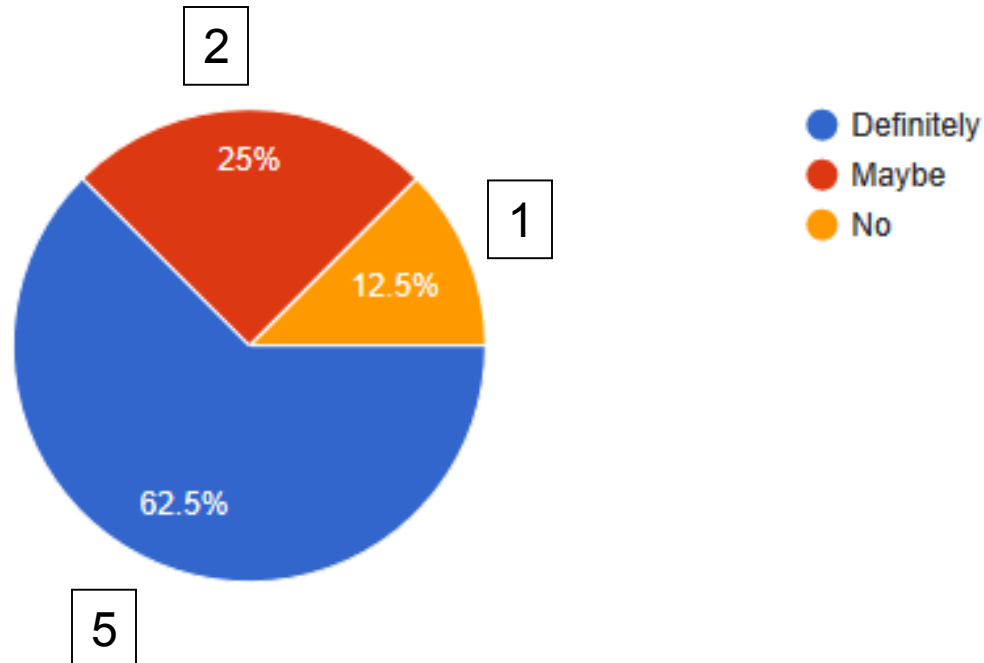
8 responses



1st time respondents

9. Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?

8 responses



1st time respondents

What makes you NOT want to get to know your neighbours better?

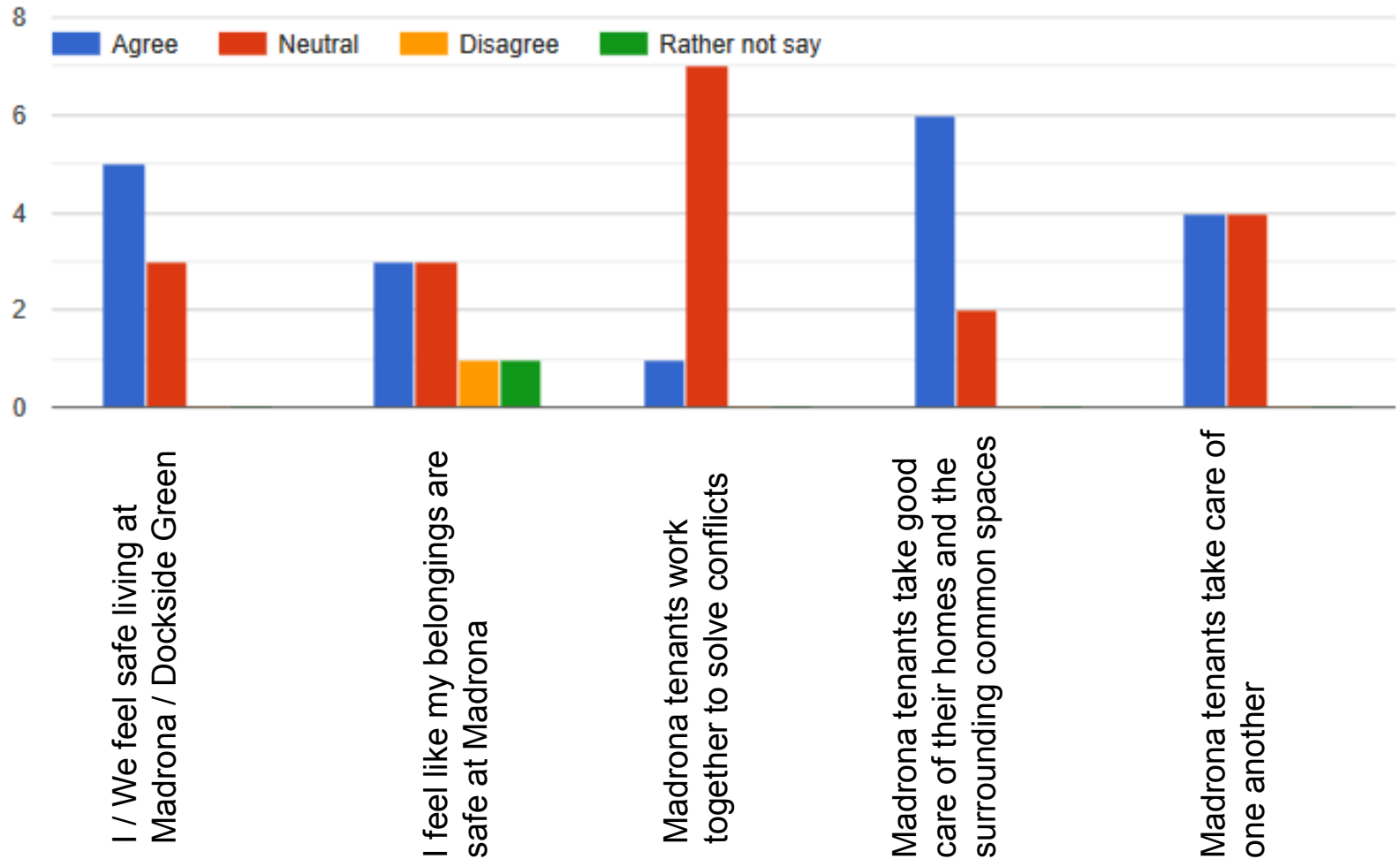
1 response



- I prefer to maintain my privacy
- I already spend a lot of time with neighbours!
- I already have enough friends
- I don't feel like I have enough time

1st time respondents

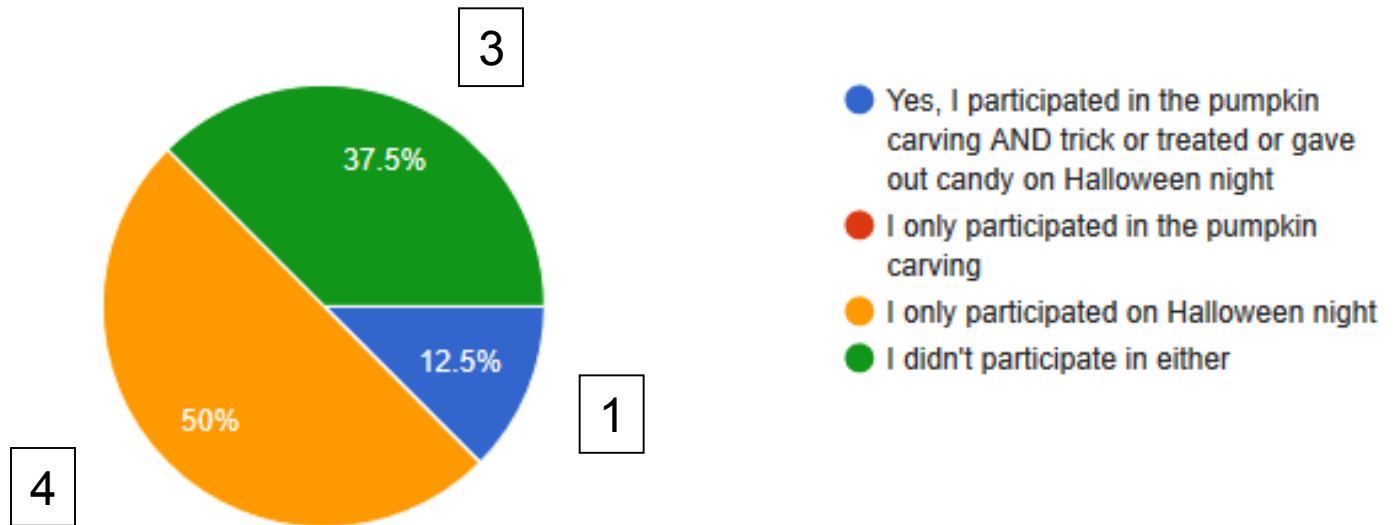
14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:



1st time respondents

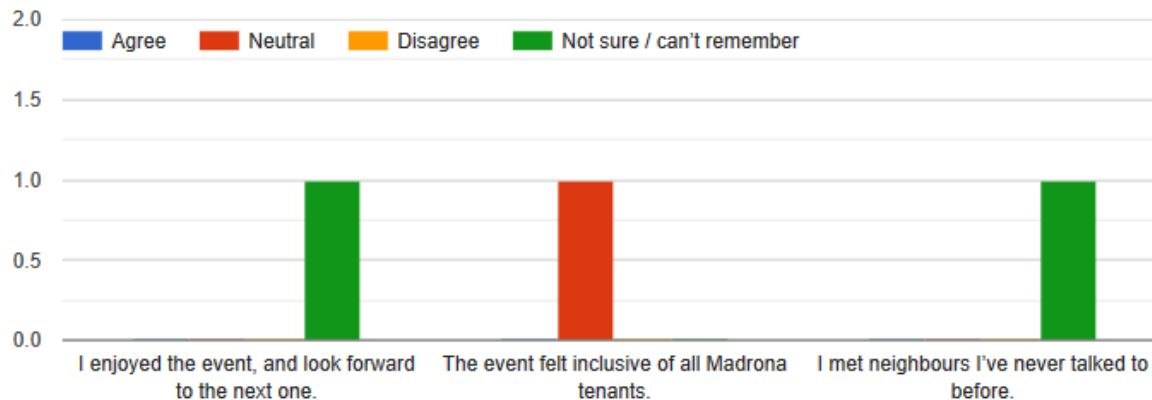
Did you participate in Halloween events at Madrona?

8 responses



1st time respondents

We'd love a little feedback on the pumpkin carving event. To what extent would you agree with the following statements?



Any other feedback on Halloween activities?

2 responses

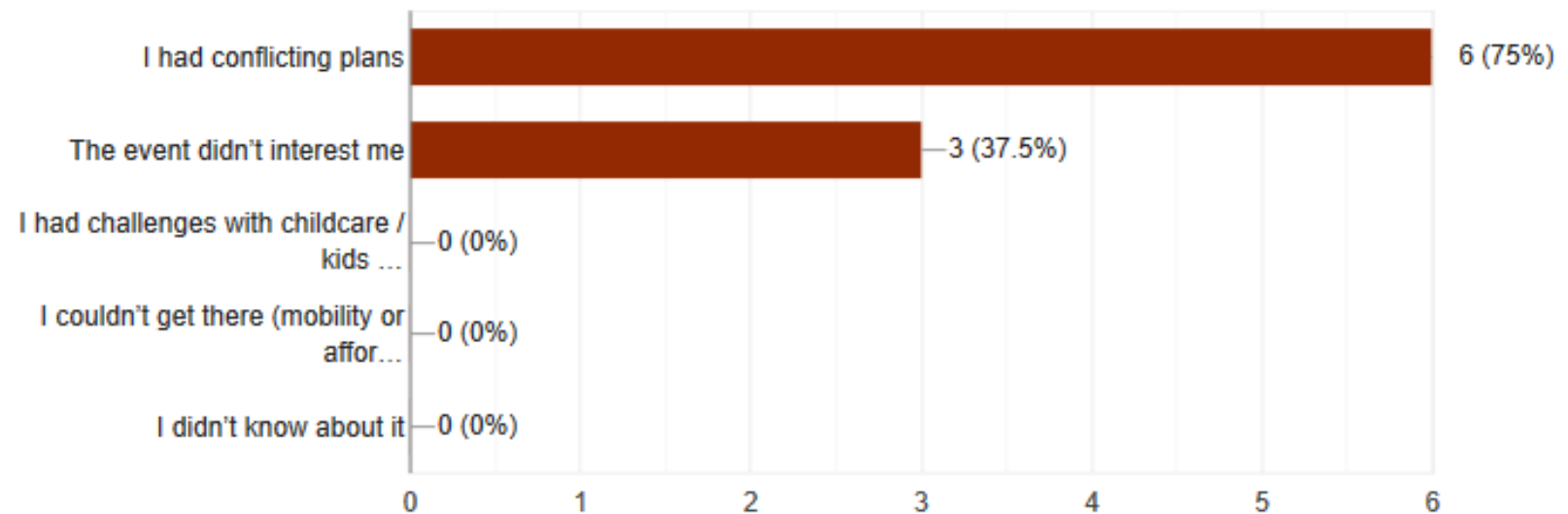
It was more-so focused on kids, which is fine.

I wanted to go but was busy

1st time respondents

Would you mind sharing with us why you didn't attend? Select all that apply.

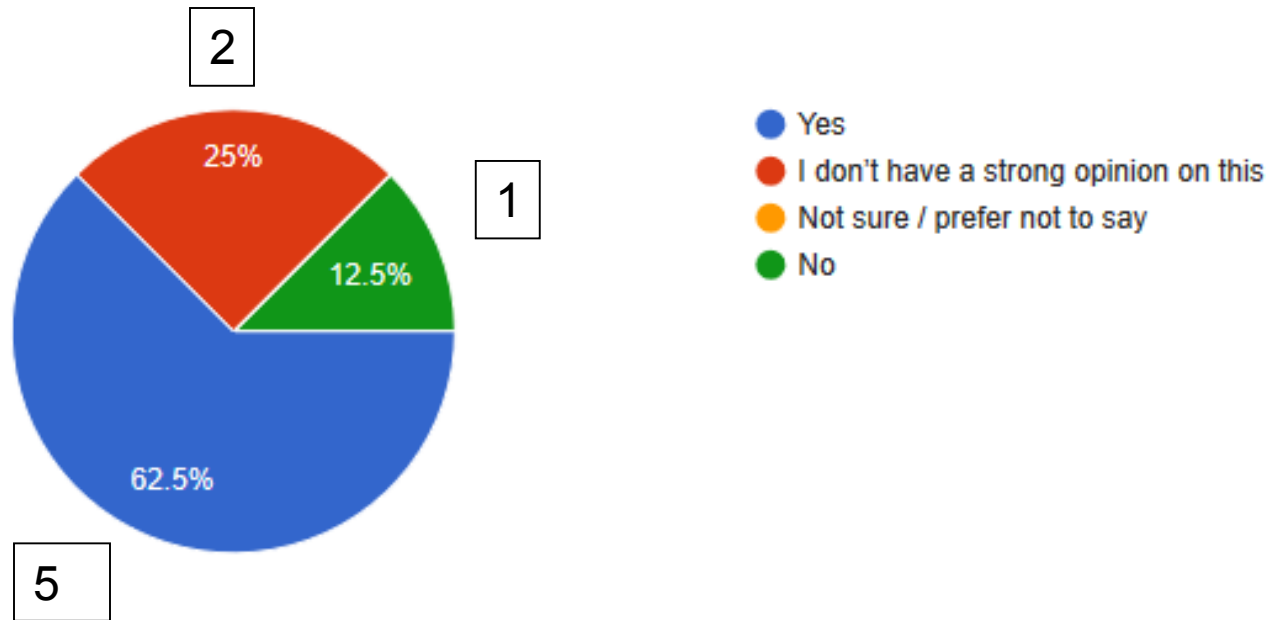
8 responses



1st time respondents

21. From your perspective as a tenant at Madrona, is Catalyst living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate vibrant, affordable, and inspiring rental homes and places for people to live in?

8 responses



1st time respondents

We're happy to hear that.

Would you care to elaborate?

3 responses

Madrona staff always willing to help and listen to concerns!

For once I feel like I am not at the mercy of my landlord. Madrona is open, and non confrontational to deal with. Supportive and empathetic. I have had some quite unsavoury experiences renting in the past. This has been quite a breath of fresh air

A great community for people on the cusp.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

4 responses

Took awhile to get used to the construction going on right on front of my building

Keep on keeping on. Maybe more regular town hall meetings/engagement in apps or message boards could help any concerns or suggestions to be voiced. As well as updates in progress

Living on ground floor is not very good when you have a child running around all day the building was not thinking about that problem the walls are soundproof but the ceiling is not you should come and check it out

Mostly positive. Hard to keep up with correspondence and maintenance issues when busy with life. Still need some things in the house but never have time to get a hold of people.

1st time respondents

Okay, we have work to do.

Would you give us some constructive feedback on how we could improve?

1 response

The rent increase was not welcome.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

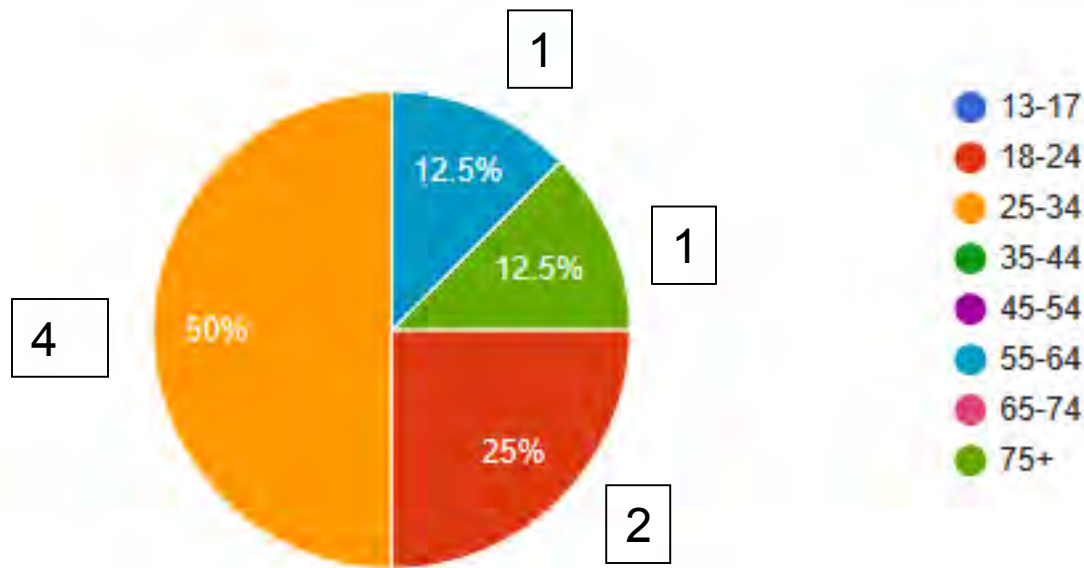
1 response

I like our community meetings

1st time respondents

22. What is your age?

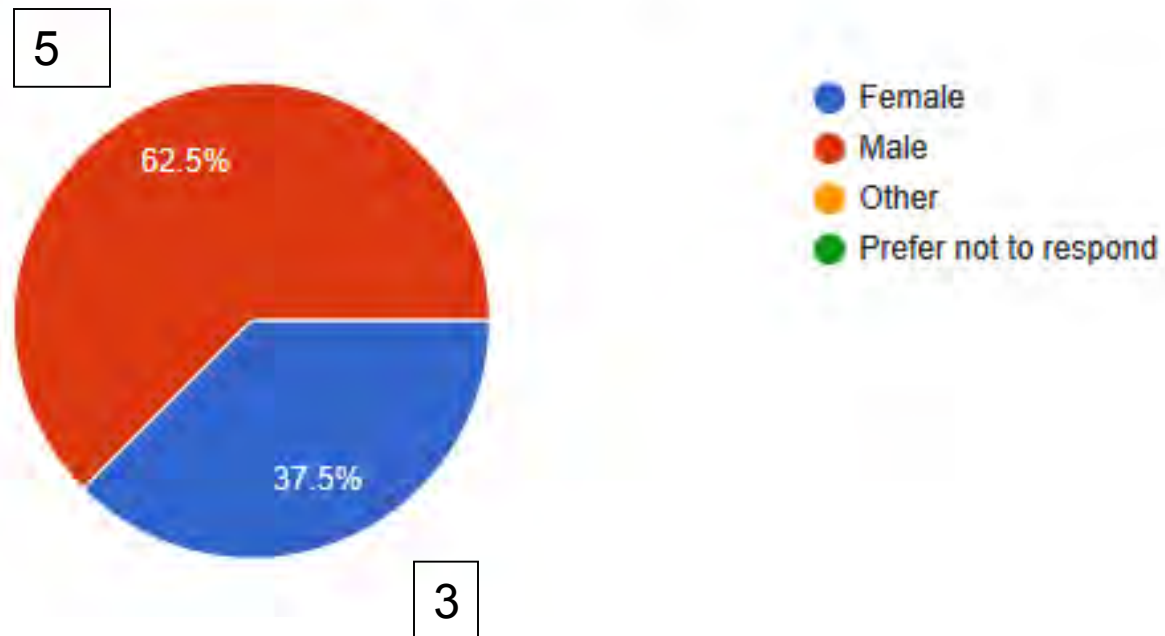
8 responses



1st time respondents

23. With which gender identity do you most identify?

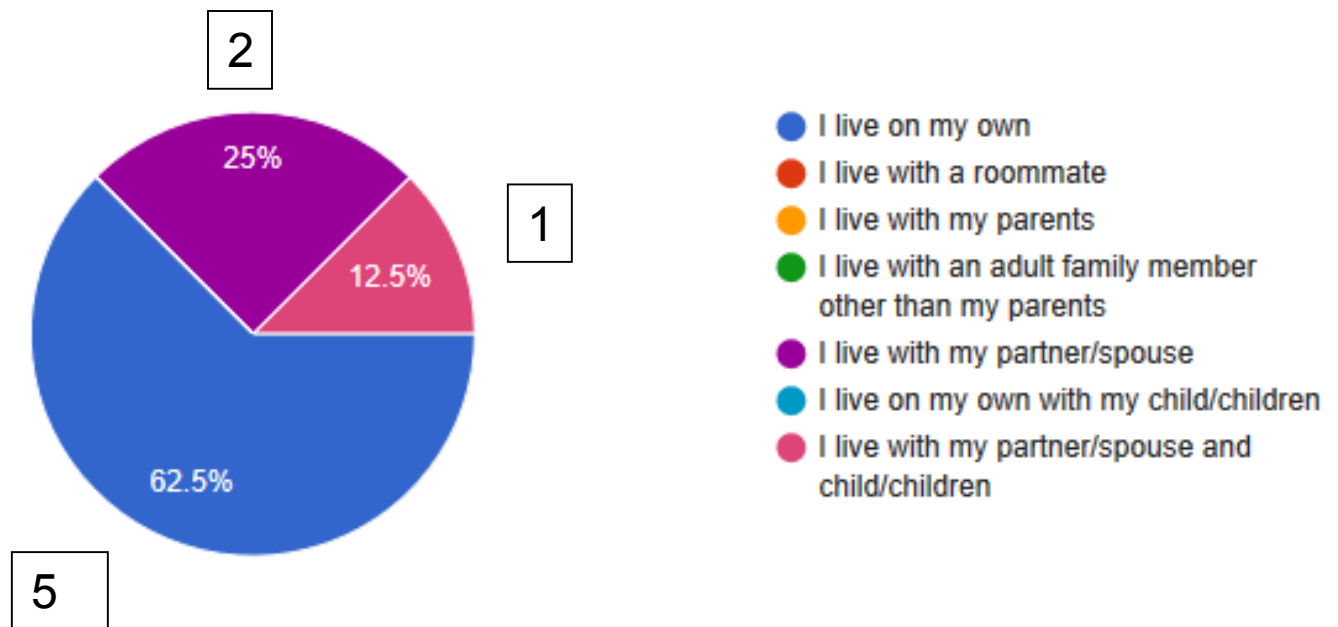
8 responses



1st time respondents

24. Which of the following best describe your current household?

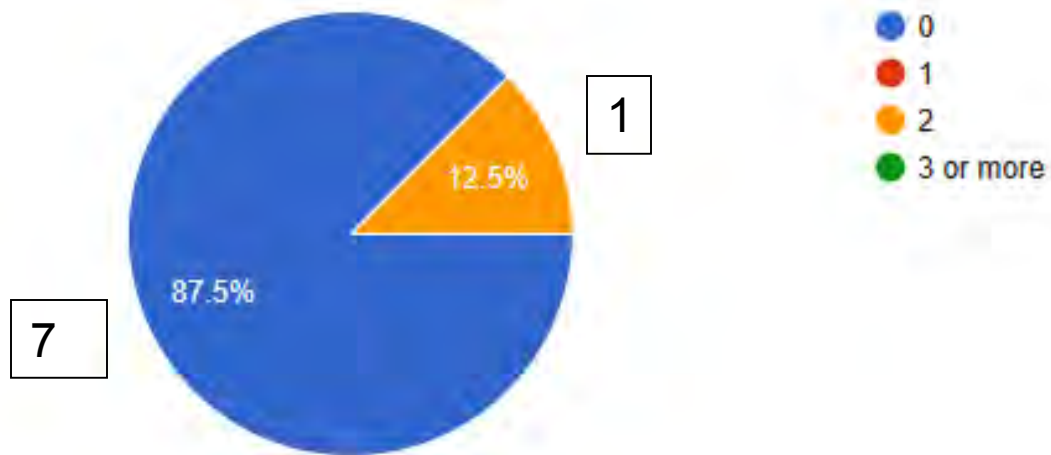
8 responses



1st time respondents

How many children (under 18) live with you?

8 responses



1st time respondents

25. How long have you lived in Canada?

8 responses



- All my life
- More than ten years
- Less than ten years



Madrona Tenant survey #3: Nov/Dec 2018

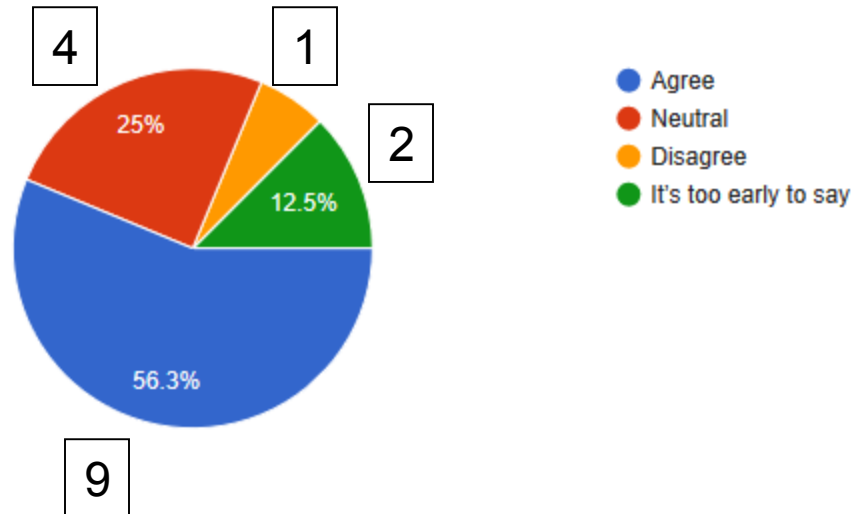
(16 responses 2nd time respondents; xx 1st time respondents)

2nd time respondents

- These are tenants who took the first survey in June 2018. We didn't repeat certain questions for them.

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here."

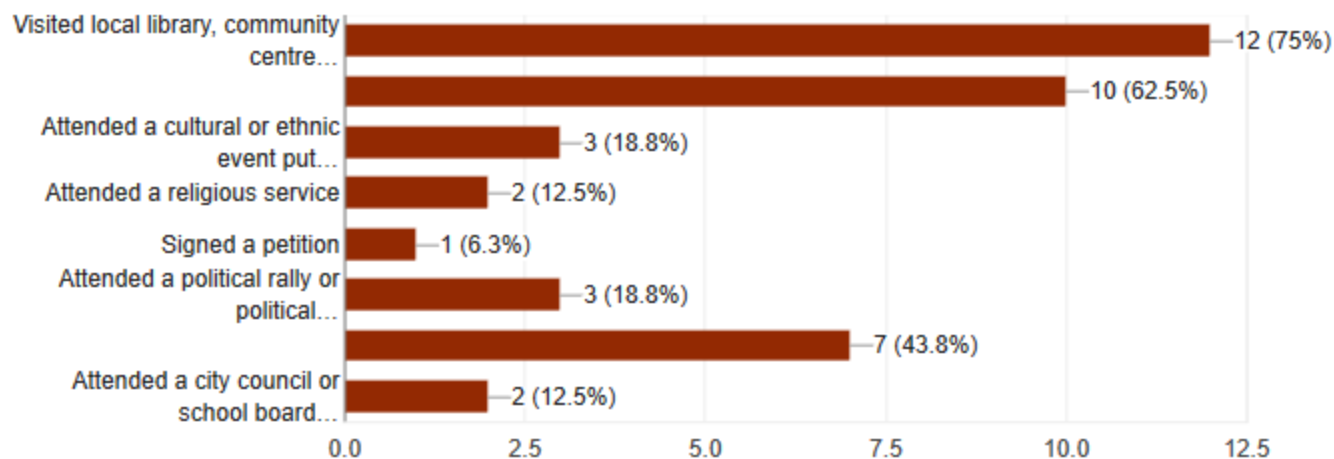
16 responses



2nd time respondents

4. Thinking about the past 5 months, please tell us if you have done any of the following in Vic West or Victoria? Choose all that apply.

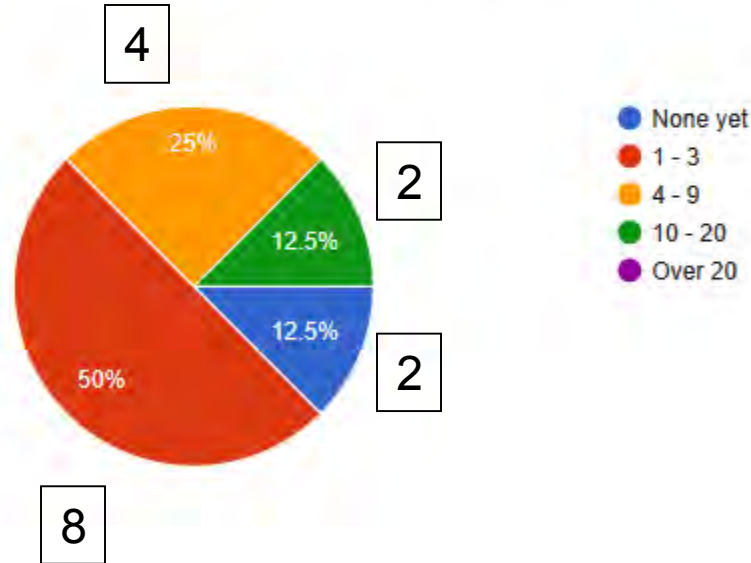
16 responses



2nd time respondents

6. How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?

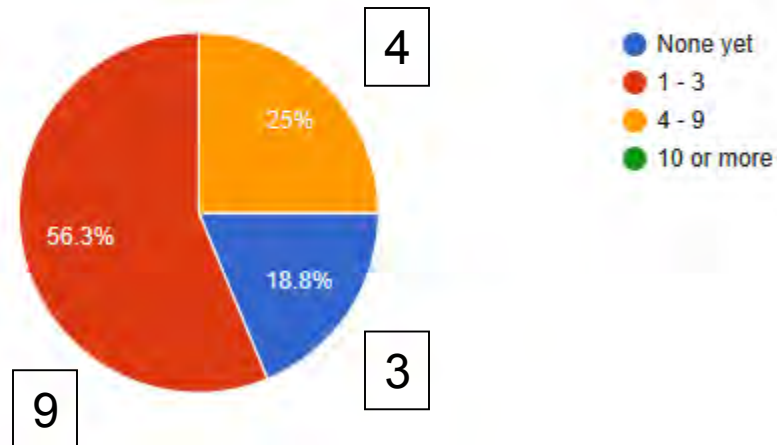
16 responses



2nd time respondents

7. Approximately how many people at Madrona do you know well enough to ask for help if you needed it?

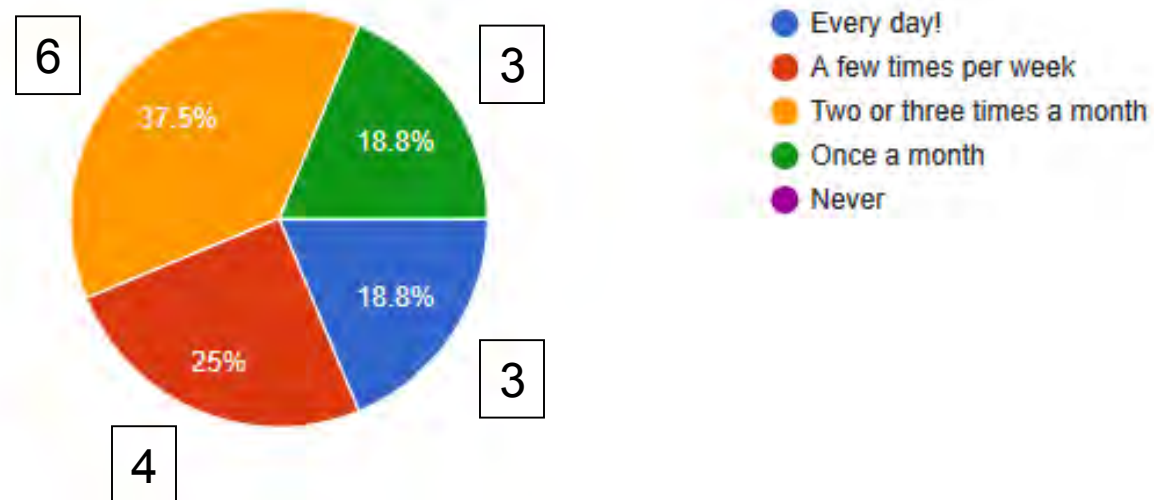
16 responses



2nd time respondents

8. Approximately how often do you have conversations with your neighbours? This can be anything from a brief 'hello, how are you?' to more significant chats.

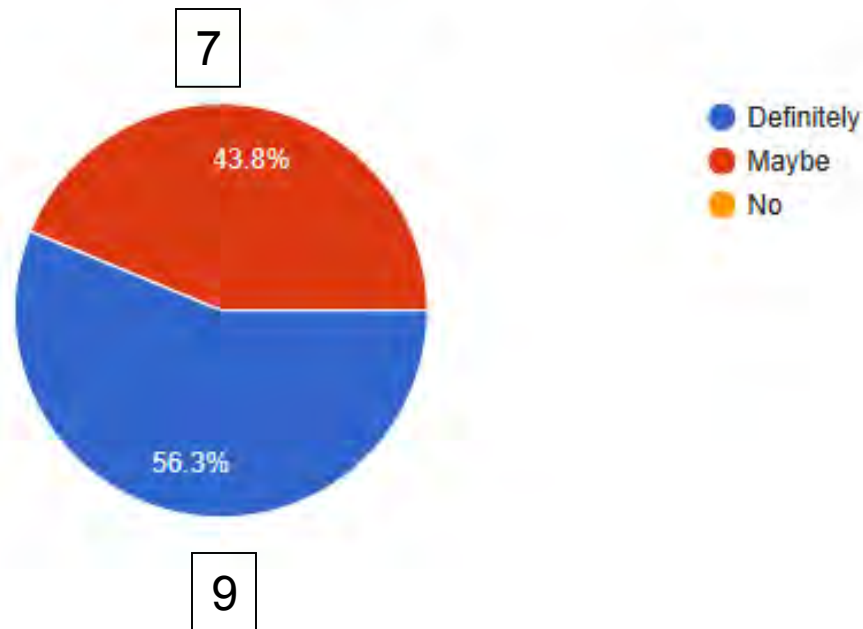
16 responses



2nd time respondents

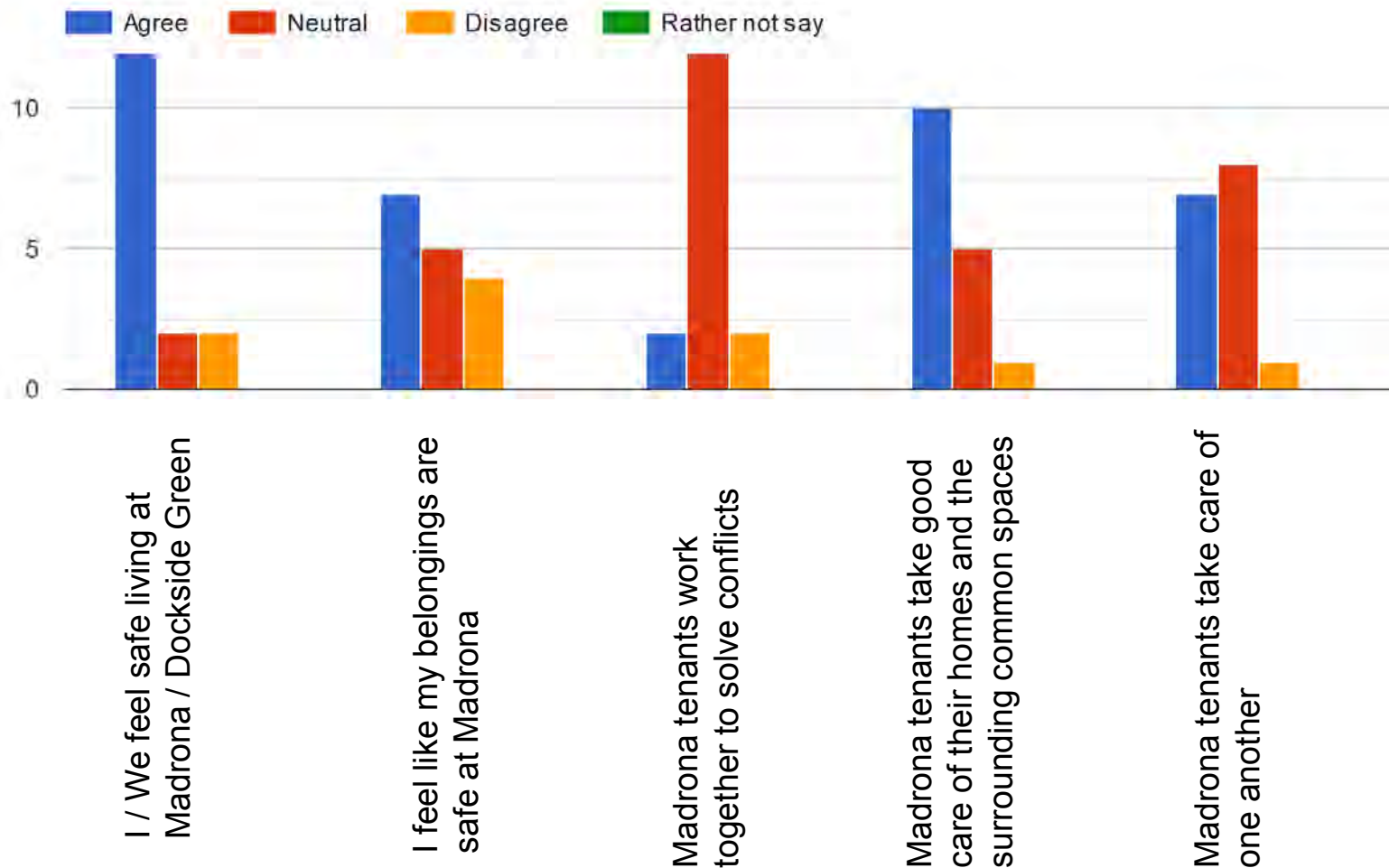
9. Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?

16 responses



2nd time respondents

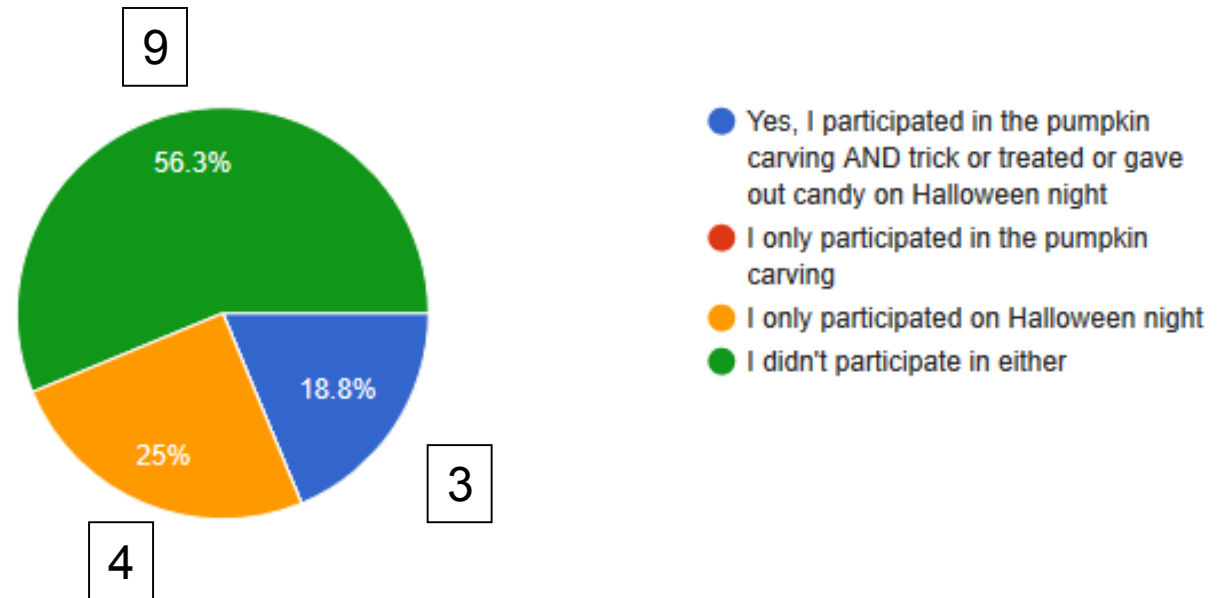
14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:



2nd time respondents

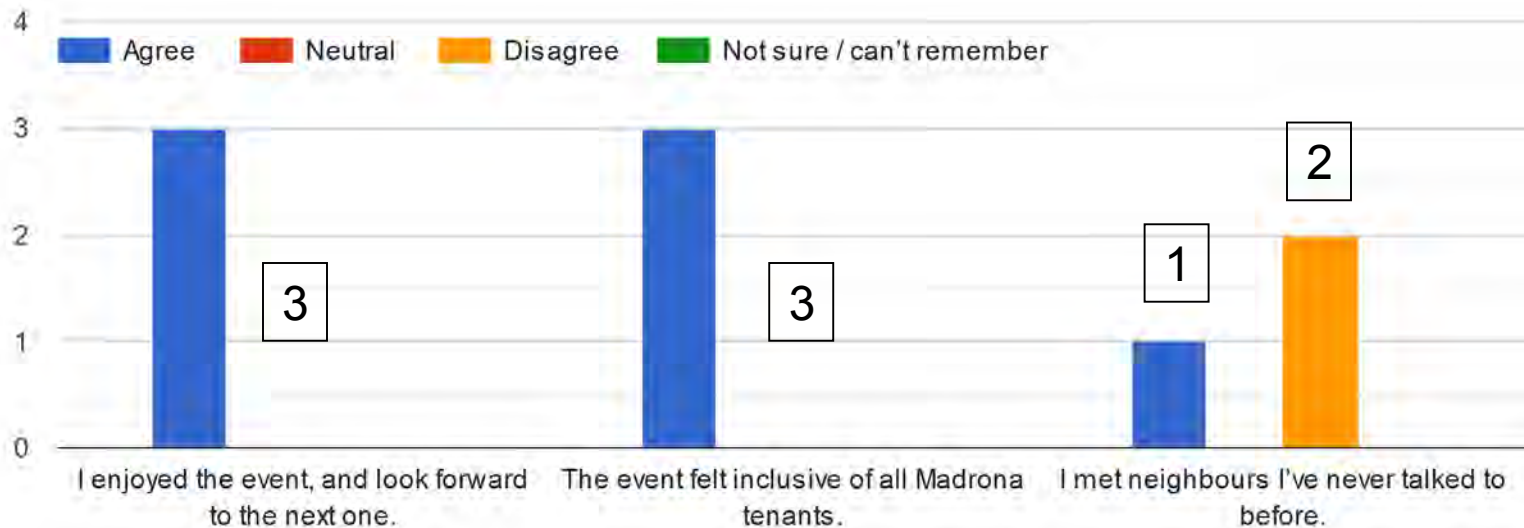
19. Did you participate in Halloween events at Madrona?

16 responses



2nd time respondents

We'd love a little feedback on the pumpkin carving event. To what extent would you agree with the following statements?



2nd time respondents

Any other feedback on the pumpkin carving or Halloween night?

5 responses

Only involved larger units with kids tended to avoid single units not inclusive

I was not available for the carving this year but enjoyed seeing the kids that came to the door

The families who participated in trick or treating all seemed to really enjoy it and it seemed perfect for the little ones - and a great start for us. (:

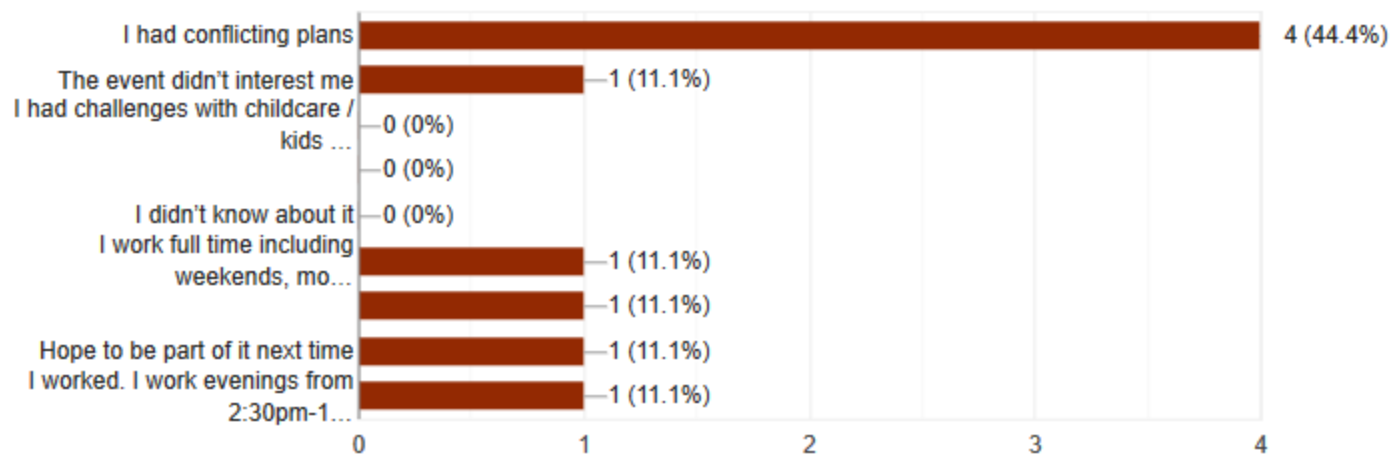
Expected more kids :) Had 5. Wish I had told one of them to return at 8PM so they could have the rest if they wanted :D

It gave me a quiet, relaxed opportunity to get to know one of the families. I liked that. Even a small turnout can be effective. Holding it in a neutral space was nice. A few people I talked to (before/after the event) mentioned it's too bad there isn't an indoors common space for things like this.

2nd time respondents

Would you mind sharing with us why you didn't participate? Please select all that apply.

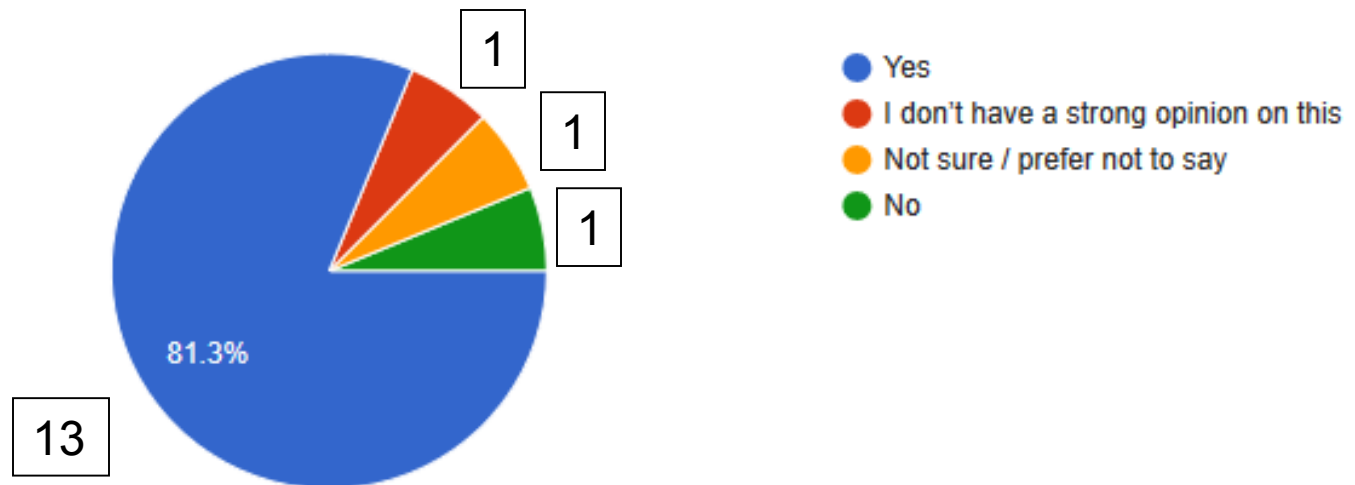
9 responses



2nd time respondents

21. From your perspective as a tenant at Madrona, is Catalyst living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate vibrant, affordable, and inspiring rental homes and places for people to live in?

16 responses



2nd time respondents

We're happy to hear that.

Would you care to elaborate?

7 responses

I think Catalyst is doing it's bit to create community. I think the residents at the last meeting spent the time complaining and not working to build community.

I'm very concerned about having a safe, quiet, clean and engaging community in which to live; Madrona provides that environment. Since I work full time including weekends it is extremely difficult to participate in community events, it is a little frustrating not to be part of it. On Friday, one of days off I spend the day volunteering at a local shelter. On Tuesday, my other day off I buy groceries, run errands, clean my place and enjoy coffee at Fantastico. I'm usually not home from work until 6:30, after having dinner, I relax. A small community centre where I could go to to meet other tenants would be good.

I think the bus tickets are a wonderful perk and the caretakers/property managers (Ruth) are great at providing help when needed. Very friendly employees all around.

Affordable rent increase. If there was a problem with the suite, or another tenant I feel confident it could be resolved by contacting the manager.

My only complaint would be that it took 6 months or so before we (I) heard from Catalyst. Those first months it was a bit confusing, we didn't know who was in charge, what the relationship was between us and Randall North, us and DSG. I for one felt a bit lost in the Dockside/Madrona entities and it was a big relief when Catalyst got in touch and came to meet us. It's a bit complicated: I have a building manager who answers to RN; RN answers to Catalyst, Catalyst is part of DSG... and then there's Bosa in there somewhere... You can see that there's a lot to sort out and none of it made sense (to me) in those first months. Having the connection with Catalyst, and a rapport with individuals from there, makes me feel more anchored here.

Low rent increase makes affordability a reality. Randall North staff answer back rapidly to any tenant's concern.

Lots of communication via email. Problems dealt with quickly.

2nd time respondents

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

6 responses

I love living here. Only problem is people finding the building (esp. at night in the dark).

I'm at the happiest point in my life partially because of my new job 1 block away, but mostly because of this cool suite. The affordability of my rent gives me a sense of security I've never felt before ,it's a good feeling!

I am pleased to be here, and proud that I'm in what seems to be a unique arrangement with a lot of integrity in its bones. That matters to me, a lot. There are downsides to the unit and the location, but lots and lots of positives. I wrestle a bit with the balance between needing privacy (not a ton of it unless I close my shades) and connection to others (easy to see who's going by, can pop out and say hi; and bump into each other a lot along the path.) Community is tricky - we want connection but everyone has busy lives etc. I'm involved in a couple of community -building programs in different parts of town and it seems to be a common theme these days: people acknowledging the need for us to meet and connect in real time; still looking for effective ways to make that happen. My impression at Madrona is that a lot of people are content to be here and not looking for much contact, which is also fine. I think things like pumpkin carving, even with small numbers, do a lot in the big picture.

Landlord has a true desire to make the Madrona project a successful experience. Merci et à la prochaine,

Keep up the good work. Your housing has allowed me to not live from pay cheque to pay cheque again and to be able to save money once more.

We could use a garbage can on or near South stairs.

2nd time respondents

How is Catalyst doing?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

1 response

[Redacted response]

Okay, we have work to do.

Would you give us some constructive feedback on how we could improve?

1 response

I do not know how to get single units to engage most avoid each other definitely not a community it feels like a prison.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

1 response

Inexperienced staff have been involved from the start and continue to make mistakes quality staff would not make. Poor design from the start. Poor quality building that will cost more in the long run. Would never recommend except for the price.



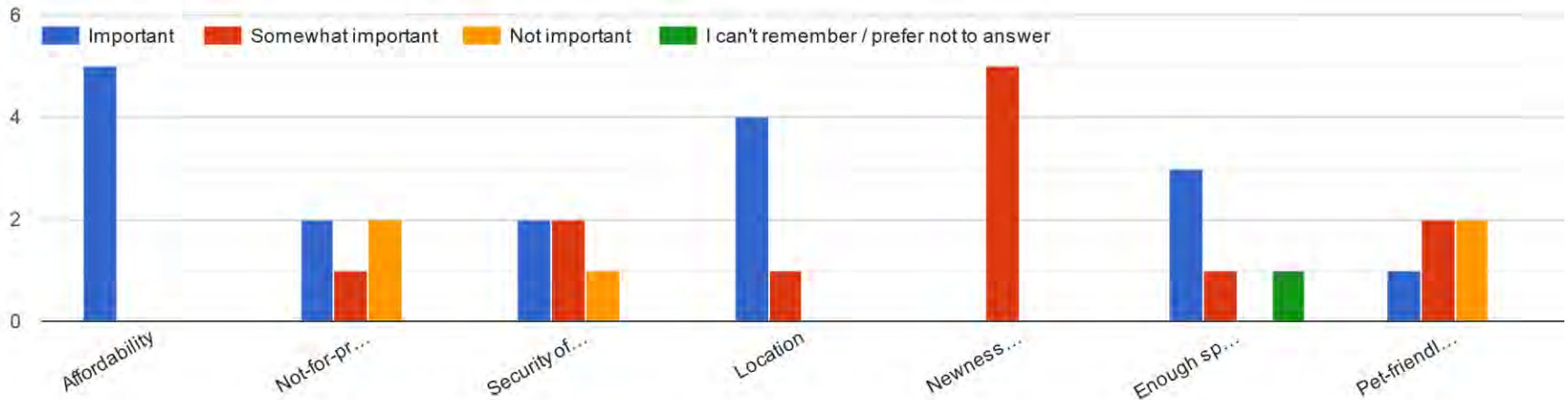
Madrona Tenant survey #4: April/May 2019

(5 1st time respondents)

1st time respondents

*These are tenants who have NOT YET taken a Madrona tenant survey (to their knowledge).
They received all the original questions.*

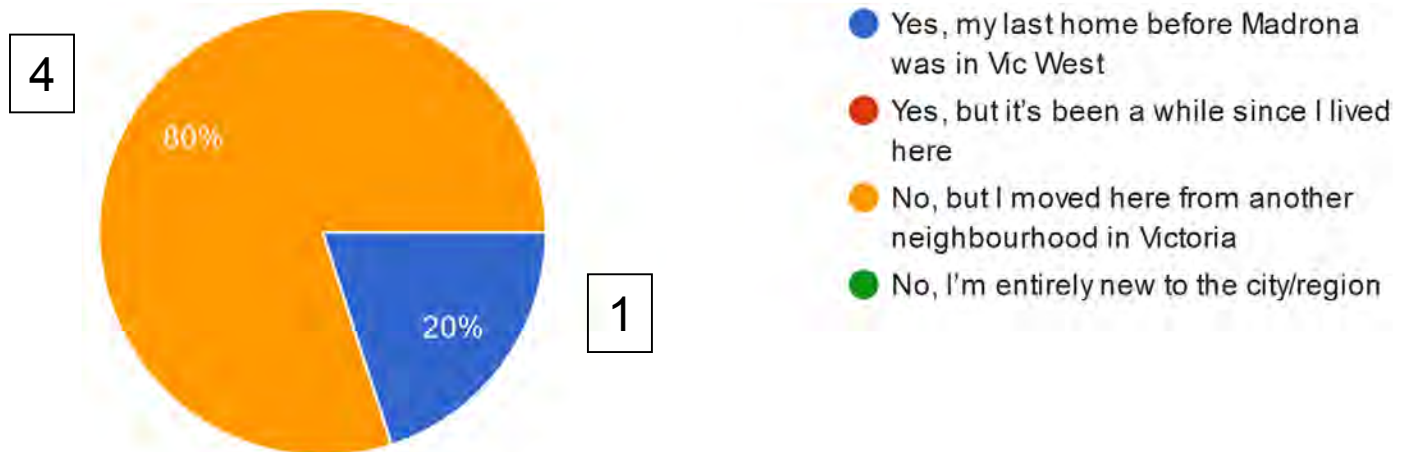
1. When you applied to live at Madrona, how important were the following factors in your decision?



1st time respondents

2. Before you moved into Madrona, had you lived in this neighbourhood before?

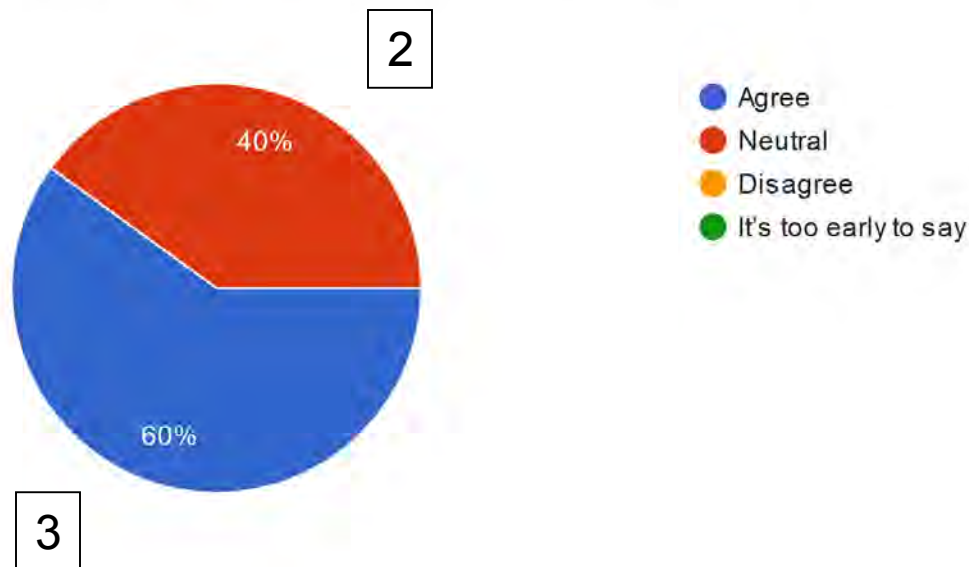
5 responses



1st time respondents

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here."

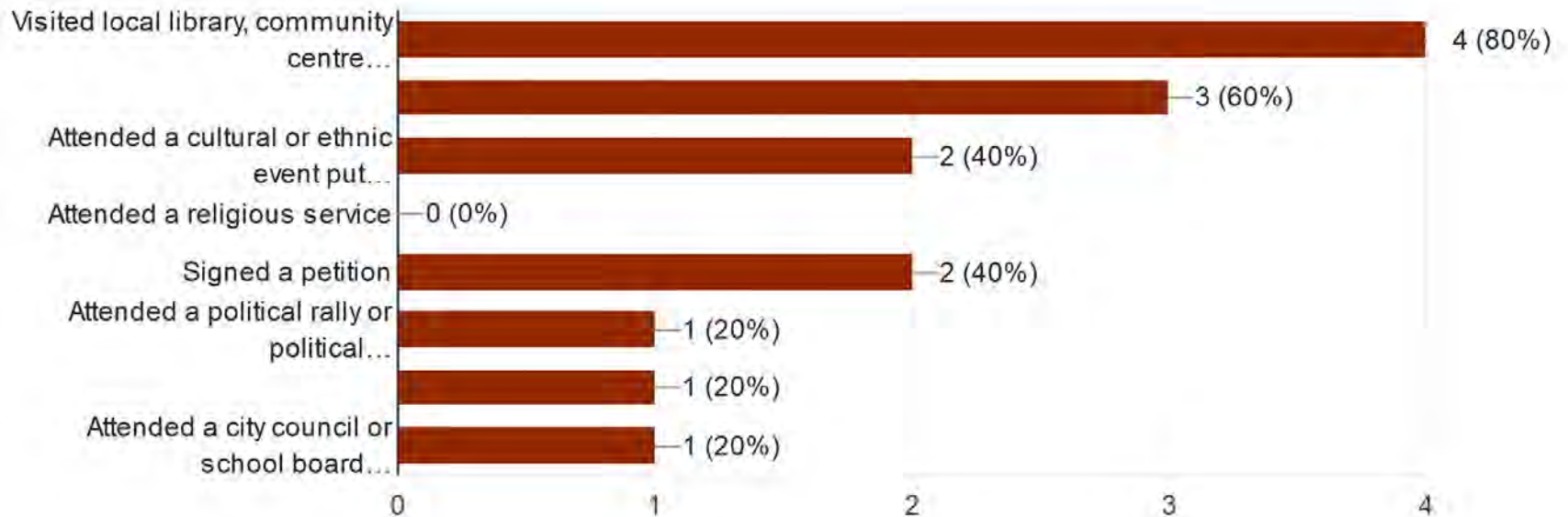
5 responses



1st time respondents

4. Thinking about the past 5 months, please tell us if you have done any of the following in Vic West or Victoria? Choose all that apply.

5 responses



1st time respondents

5. Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?

5 responses

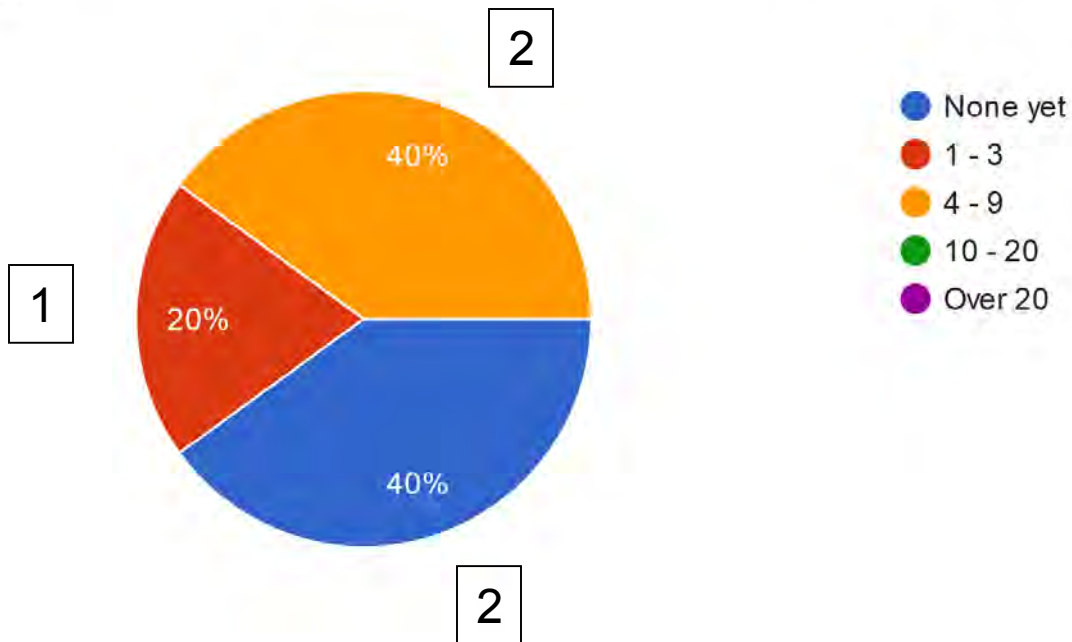


- No
- Yes, one person
- Yes, between 2 to 4 people
- Yes, with 5 or more people

1st time respondents

6. How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?

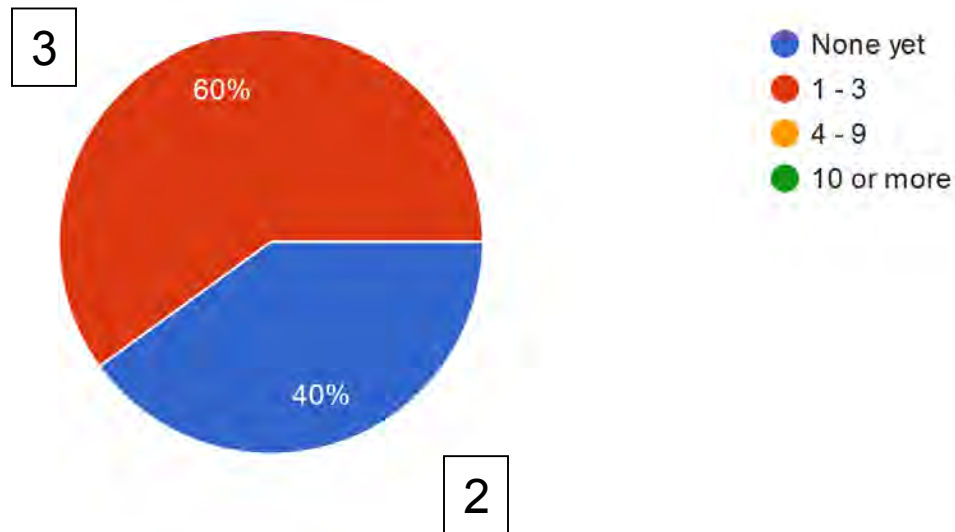
5 responses



1st time respondents

7. Approximately how many people at Madrona do you know well enough to ask for help if you needed it?

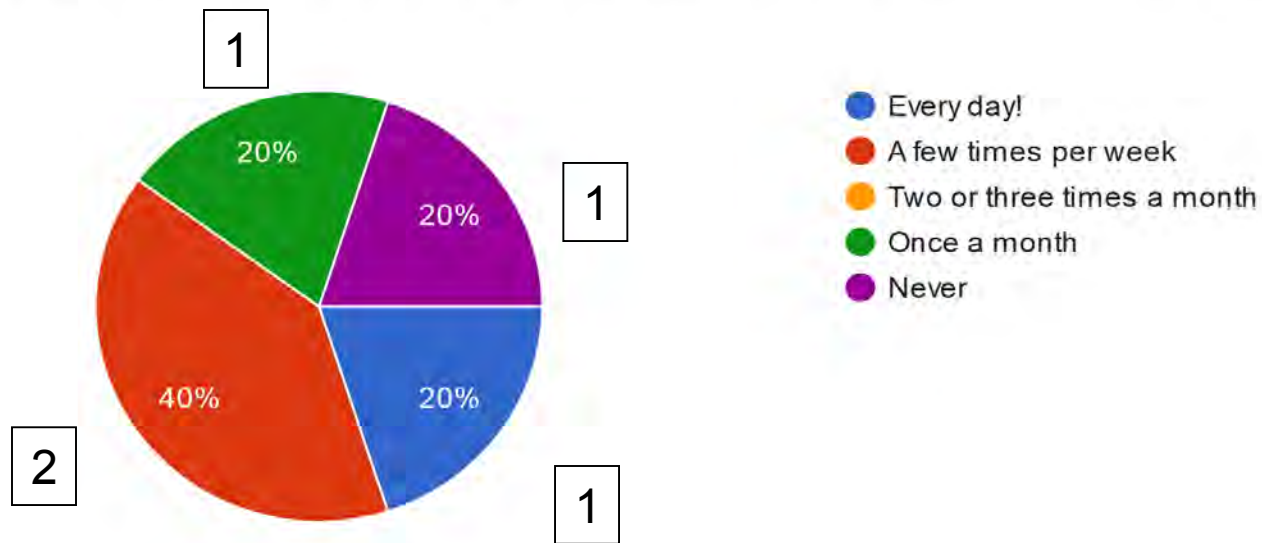
5 responses



1st time respondents

8. Approximately how often do you have conversations with your neighbours? This can be anything from a... are you?' to more significant chats.

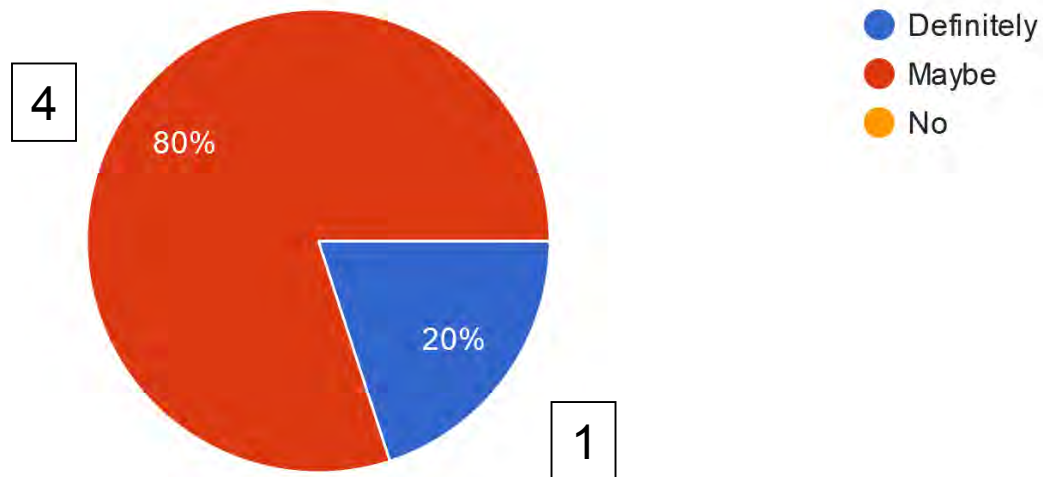
5 responses



1st time respondents

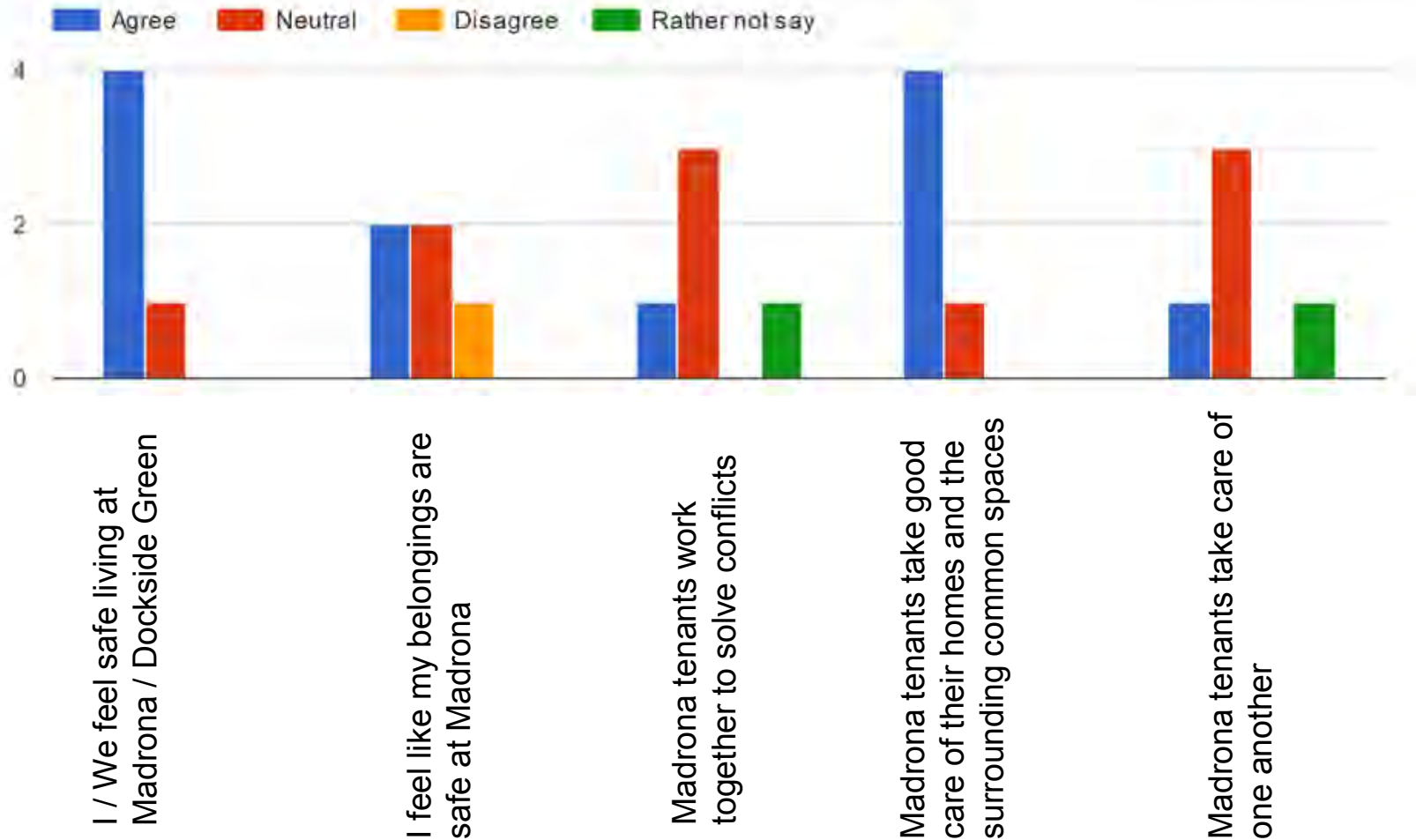
9. Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?

5 responses



1st time respondents

14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:



1st time respondents

19. Did you participate in the late March Town Hall and Blockwatch launch at Madrona?

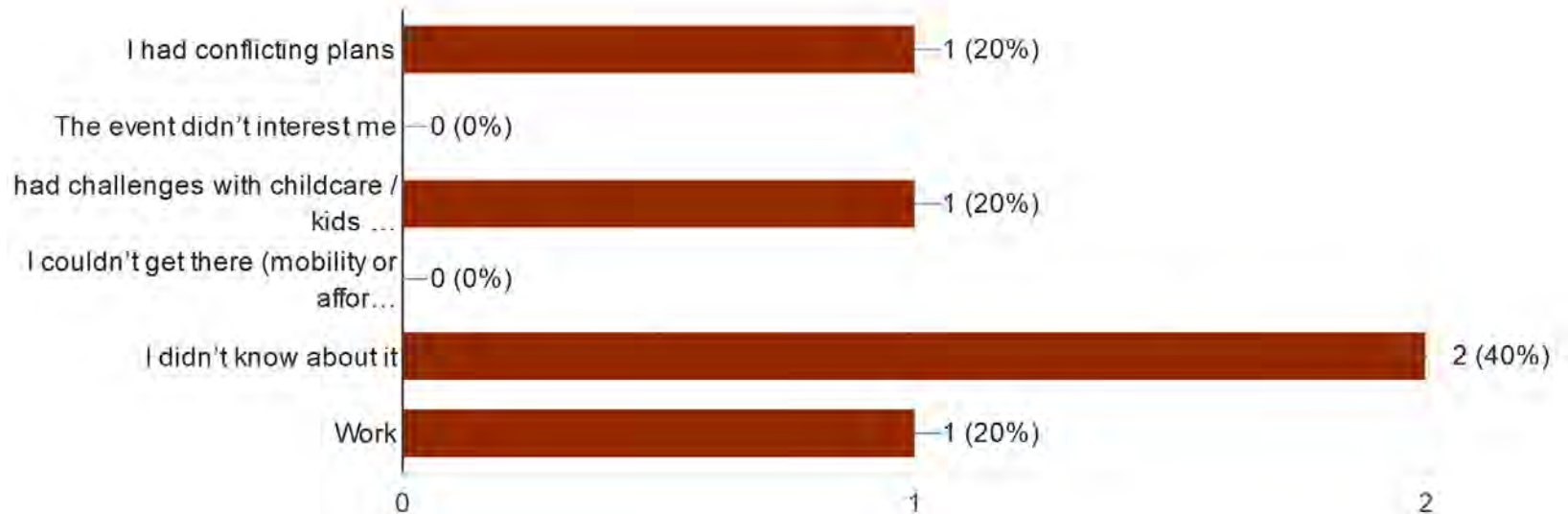
5 responses



1st time respondents

Would you mind sharing with us why you didn't participate? Please select all that apply.

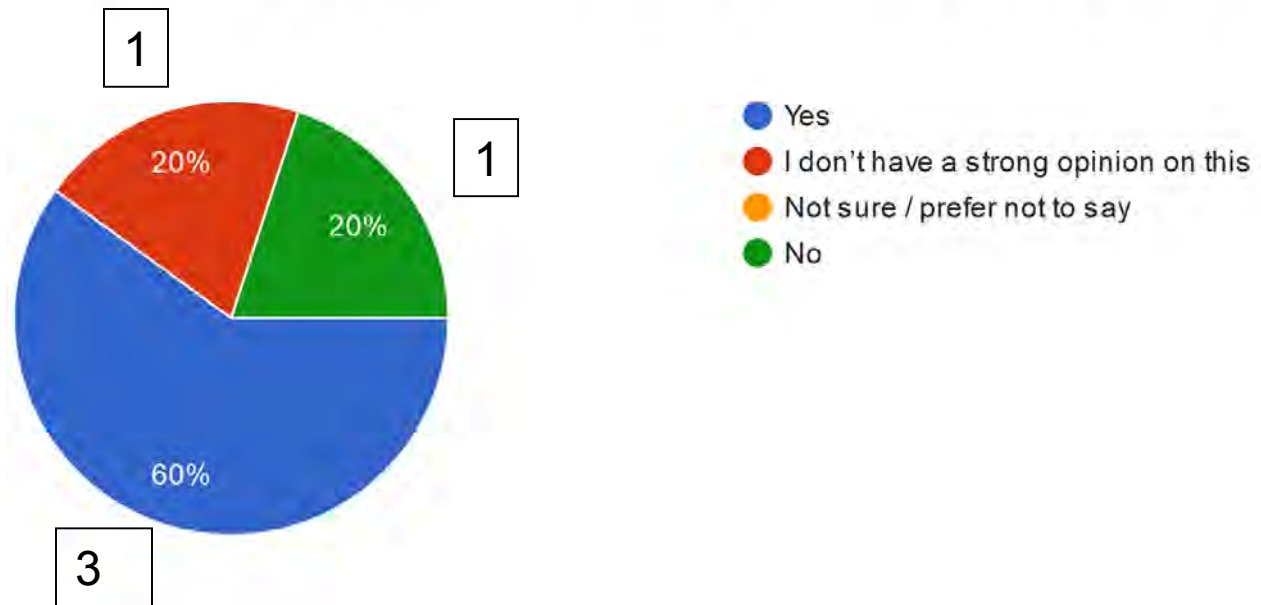
5 responses



1st time respondents

21. From your perspective as a tenant at Madrona, is Catalyst living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate...mes and places for people to live in?

5 responses



1st time respondents

We're happy to hear that.

Would you care to elaborate?

1 response

Affordability, well maintained.

1st time respondents

Okay, we have work to do.

Would you give us some constructive feedback on how we could improve?

1 response

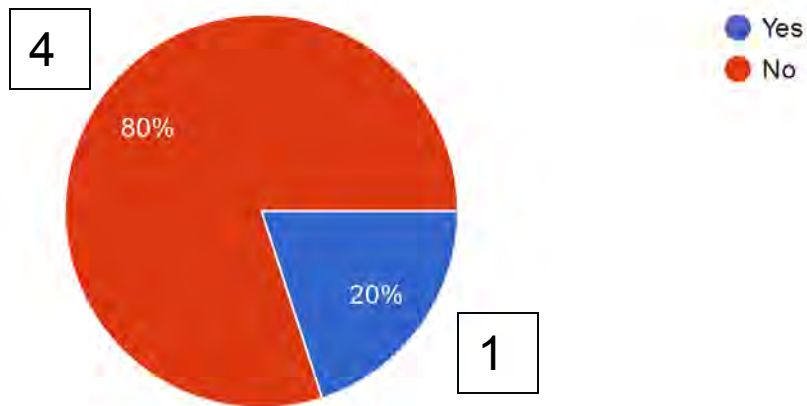
I haven't been impressed with the property management company

1st time respondents

Community Connections pilot

Did Catalyst's events and Town Halls help you get to know more of your neighbours?

5 responses

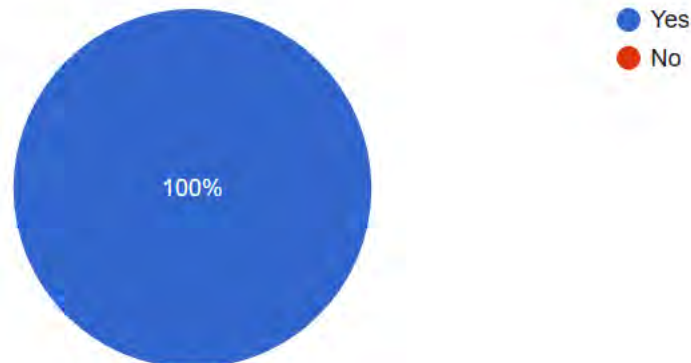


1st time respondents

Community Connections pilot

Great to hear! Did that result in any instances where you socialized with neighbours on your own initiative? Shared things, gave or received assistance from with neighbours?

1 response

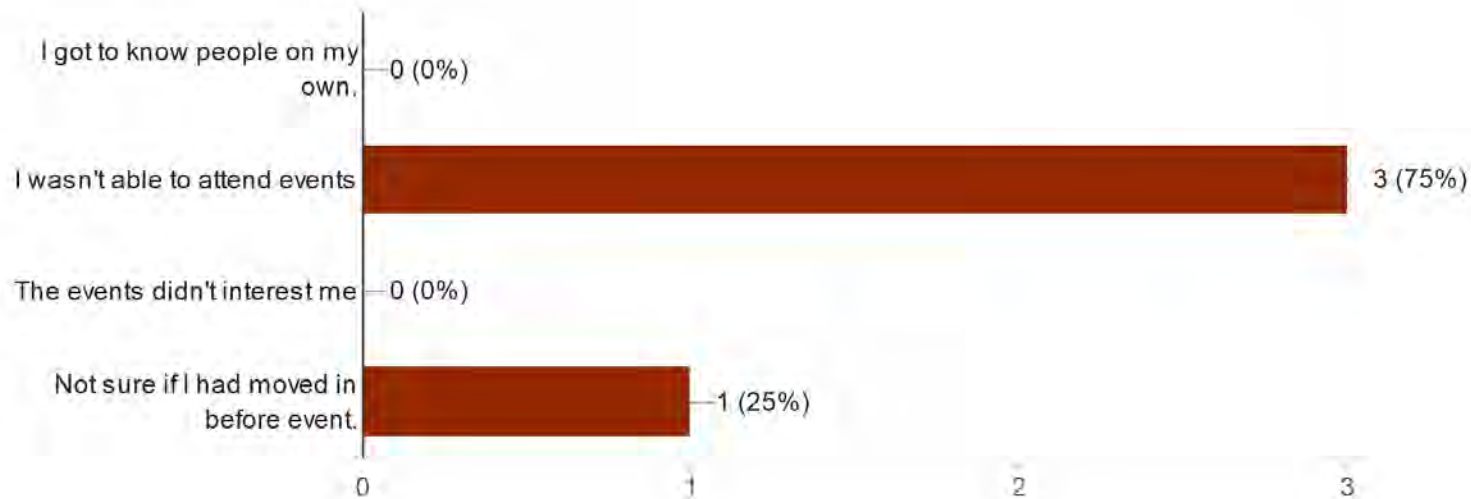


1st time respondents

Community Connections pilot

Why do you think that didn't happen?

4 responses

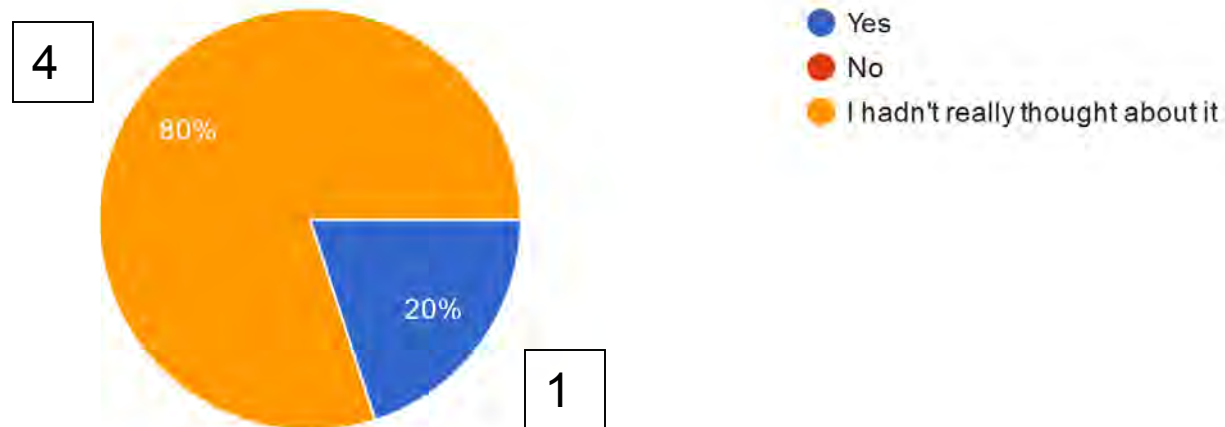


1st time respondents

Getting engaged

Have you felt comfortable bringing forward your own ideas for social events, sharing initiatives, etc?

5 responses



1st time respondents

Getting engaged

Have you brought forward any ideas? Were you able to bring them to fruition?

1 response

I missed the town hall meetings! I wanted to suggest a group garage sale/bake sale, and trying to get grant \$ for community projects (City of Victoria has a series of grants)

What might help you feel more comfortable bringing forward your ideas?

1 response

I have ideas, but I don't have much interest in being part of the group that organizes it.

1st time respondents

Building on the pilot year

Should we keep going with Town Halls?

4 responses



- Yes, keep doing three per year.
- Yes, but less frequent would be okay.
- No. They were important in the first year, but don't need to continue.

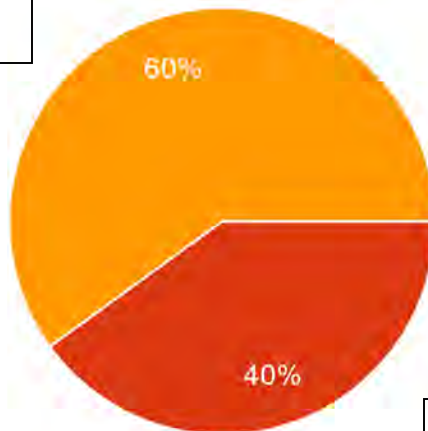
1st time respondents

Building on the pilot year

How well is Bazinga working for you?

5 responses

3



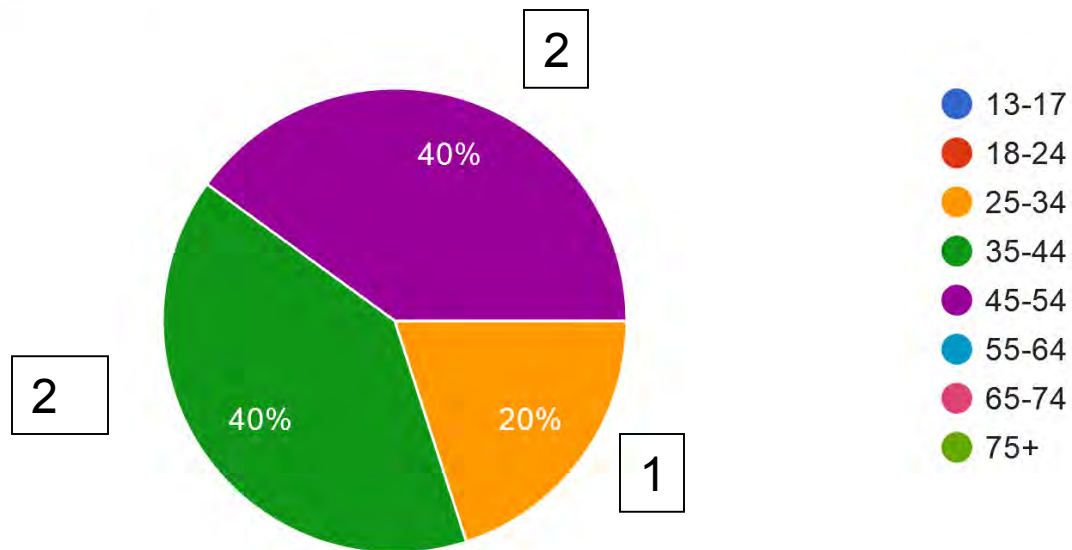
2

- I love Bazinga for learning about important Madrona issues and sharing information online with neighbours.
- It's nice to have, but I don't use it much.
- What's Bazinga?!!

1st time respondents

What is your age?

5 responses



1st time respondents

With which gender do you most identify?

5 responses

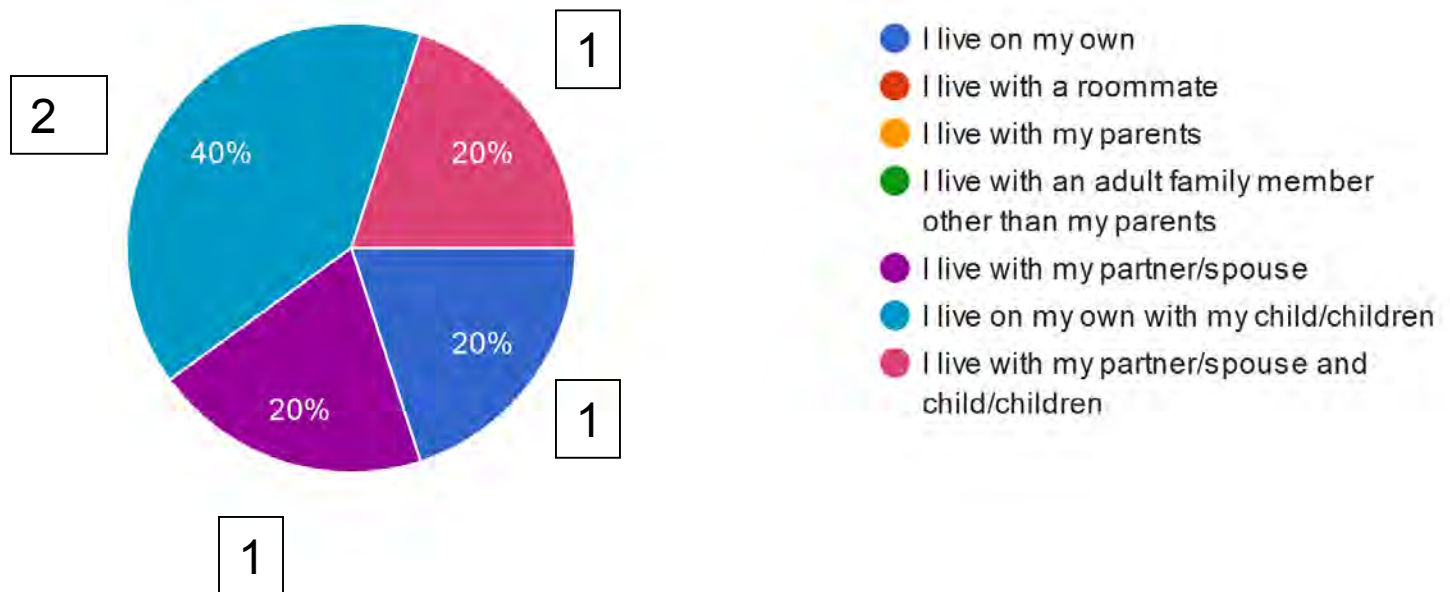


- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to respond

1st time respondents

Which of the following best describe your current household?

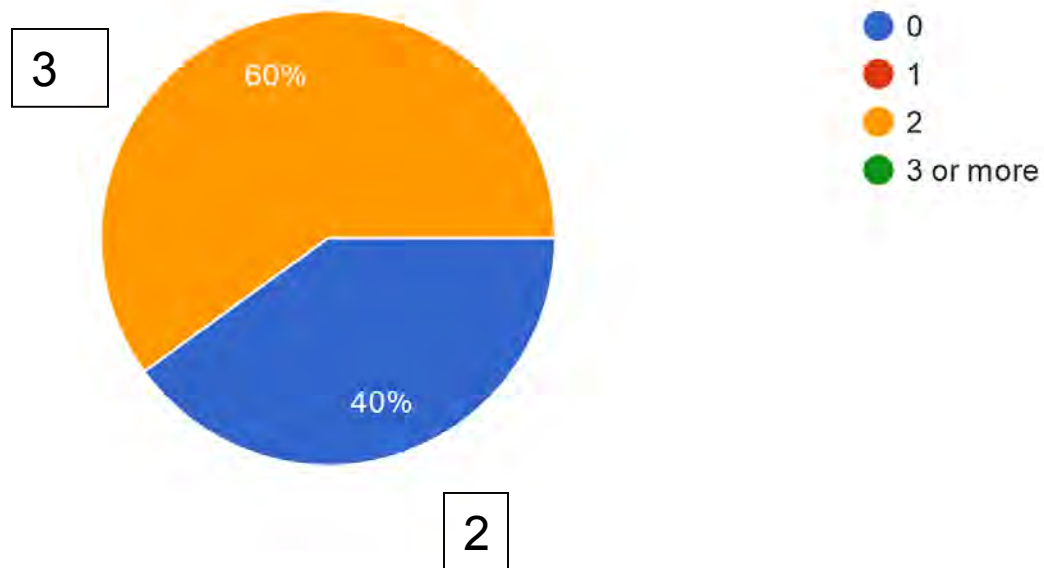
5 responses



1st time respondents

How many children (under 18) live with you?

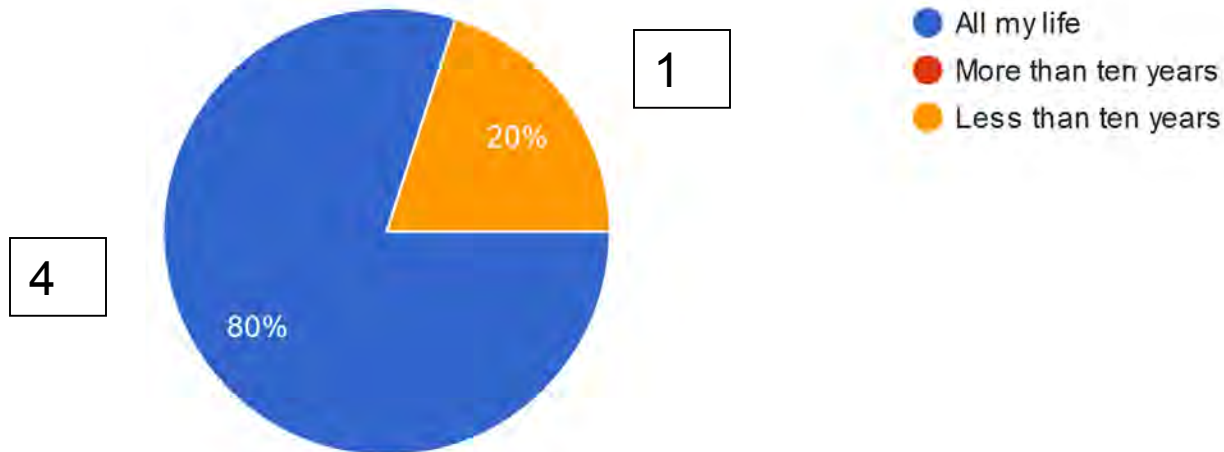
5 responses



1st time respondents

How long have you lived in Canada?

5 responses





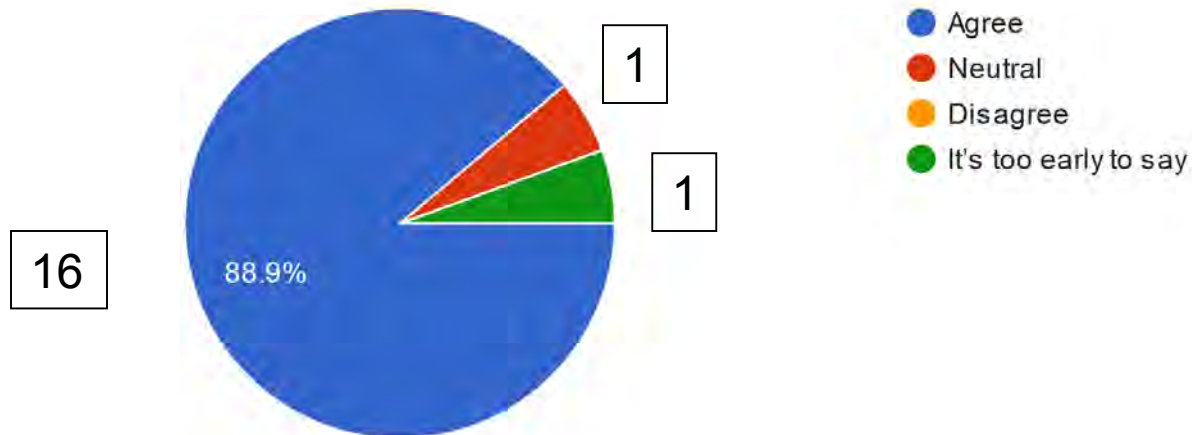
Madrona Tenant survey #4: April/May 2019

(18 Return respondents)

Return respondents

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "I feel welcome in Vic West and feel like I belong here."

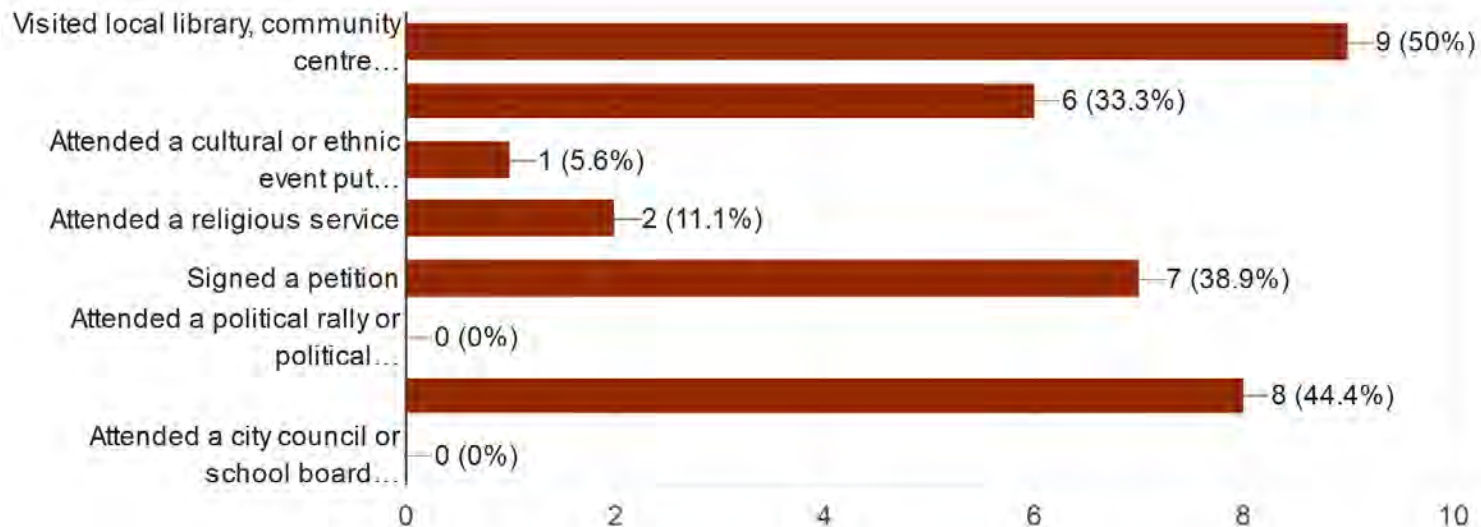
18 responses



Return respondents

4. Thinking about the past 5 months, please tell us if you have done any of the following in Vic West or Victoria? Choose all that apply.

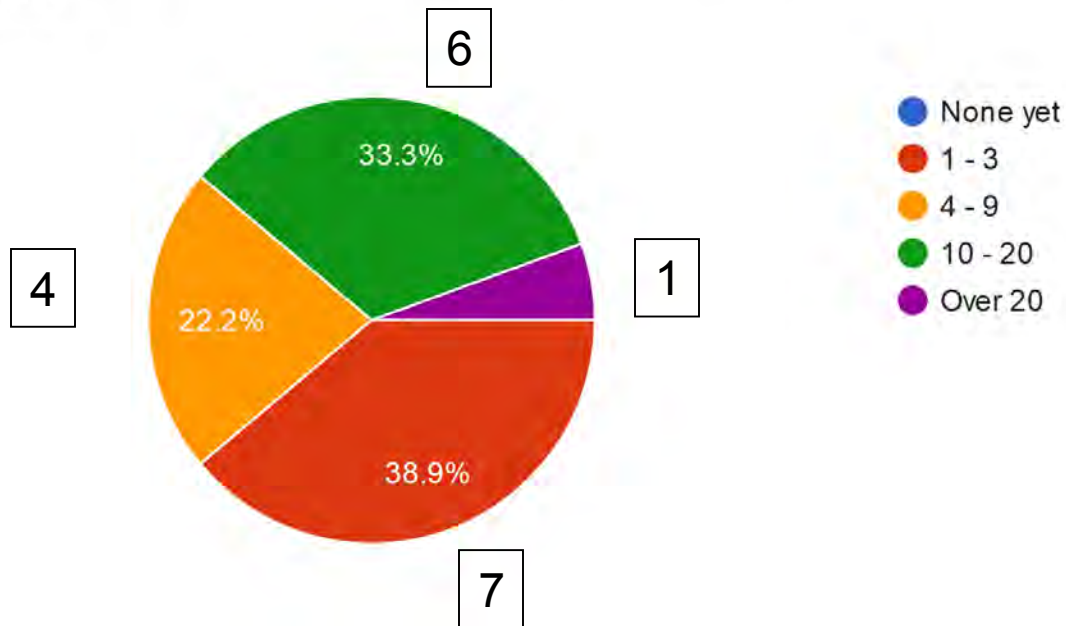
18 responses



Return respondents

6. How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?

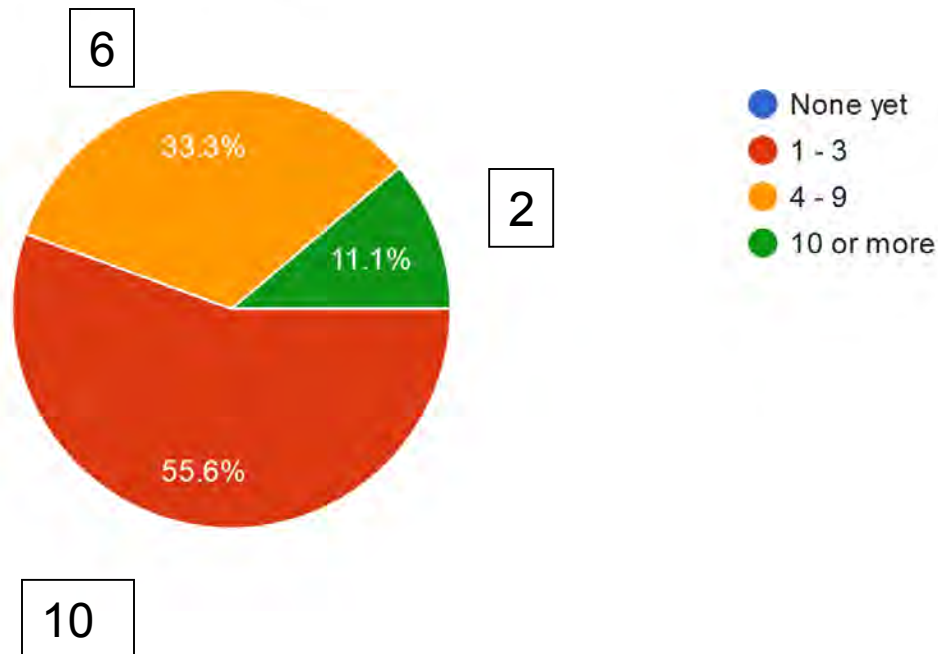
18 responses



Return respondents

7. Approximately how many people at Madrona do you know well enough to ask for help if you needed it?

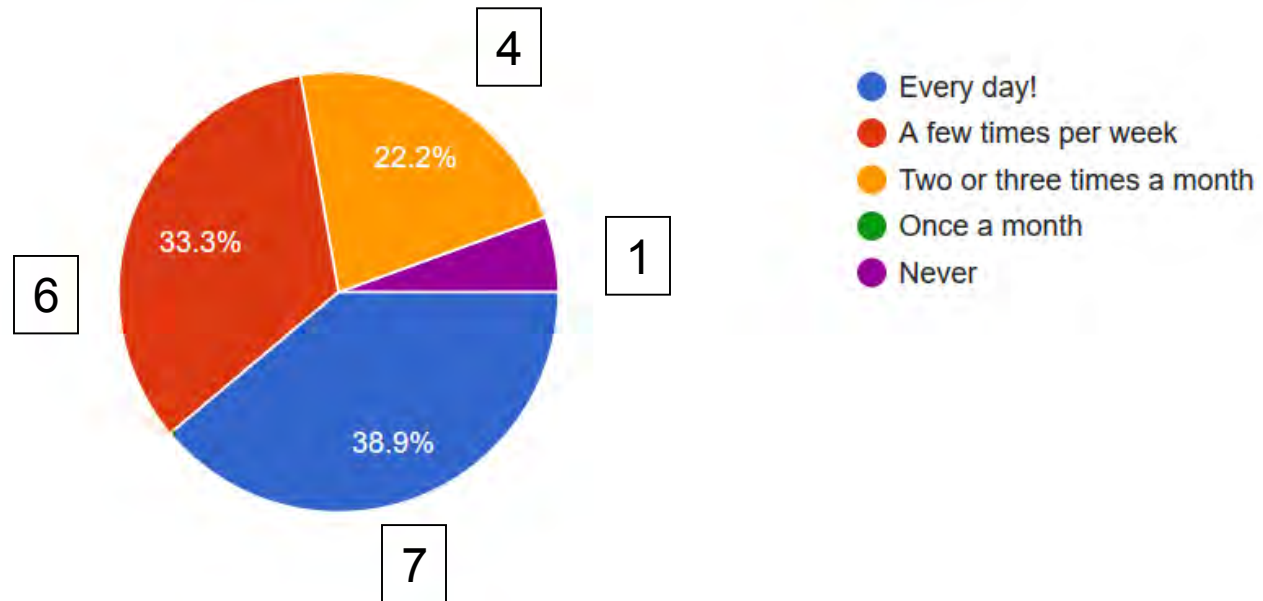
18 responses



Return respondents

8. Approximately how often do you have conversations with your neighbours? This can be anything from a brief 'hello, how are you?' to more significant chats.

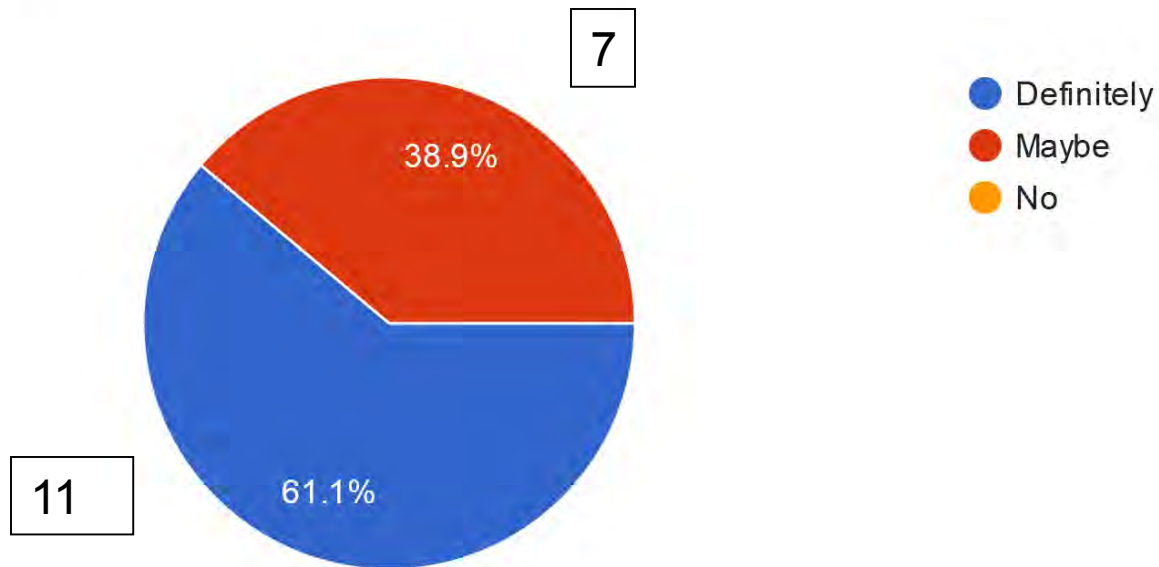
18 responses



Return respondents

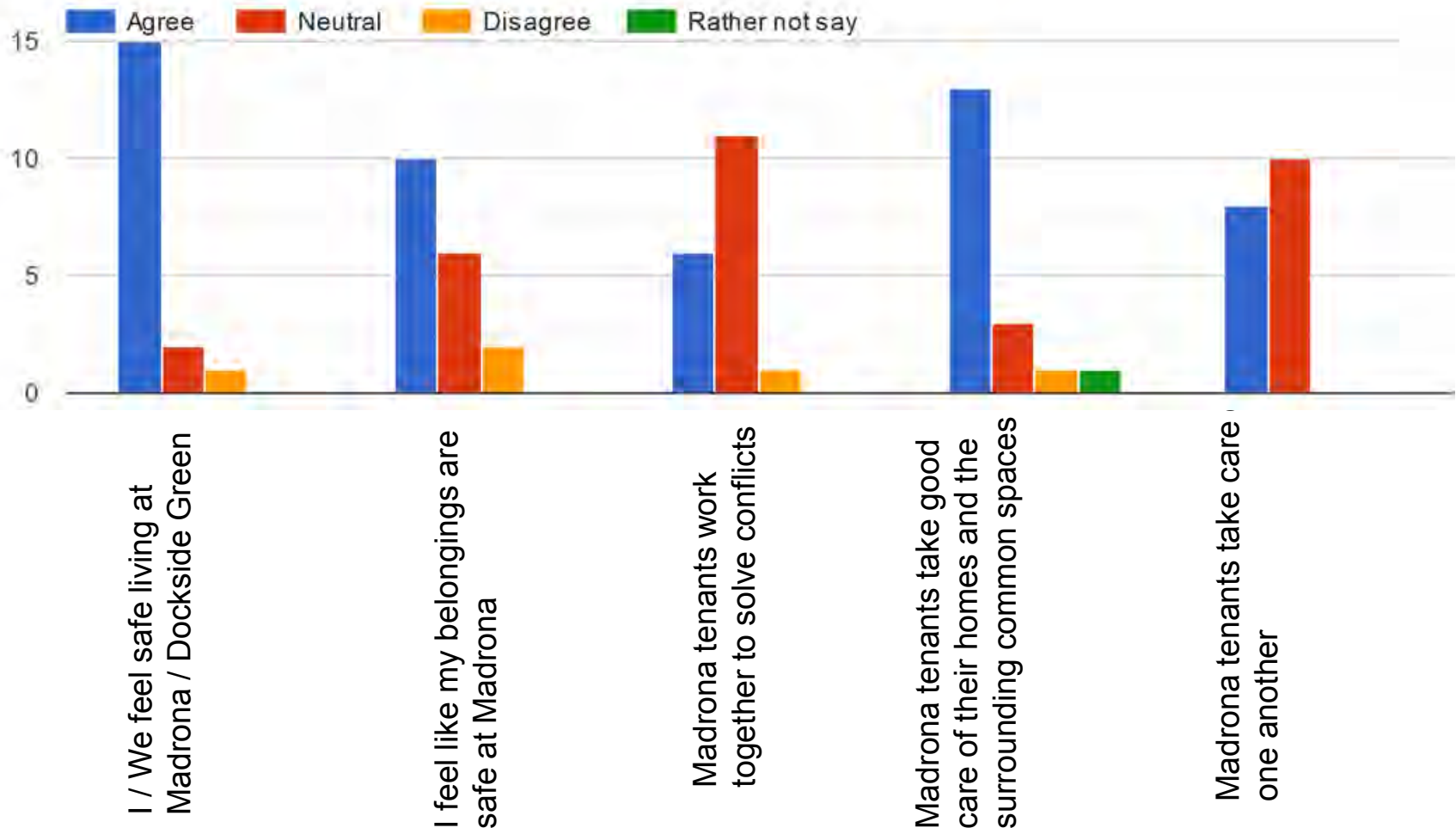
9. Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?

18 responses



Return respondents

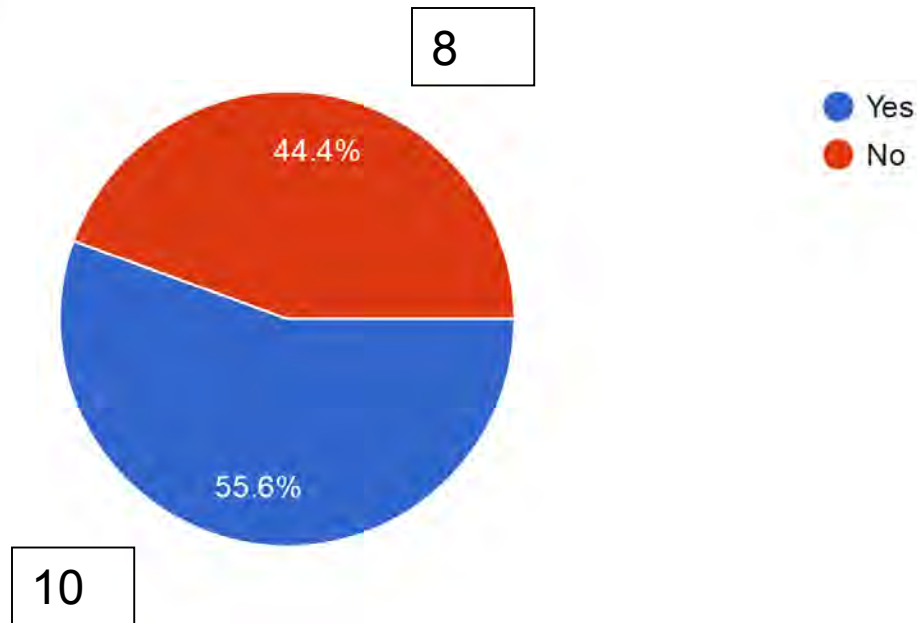
14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:



Return respondents

19. Did you participate in the late March Town Hall and Blockwatch launch at Madrona?

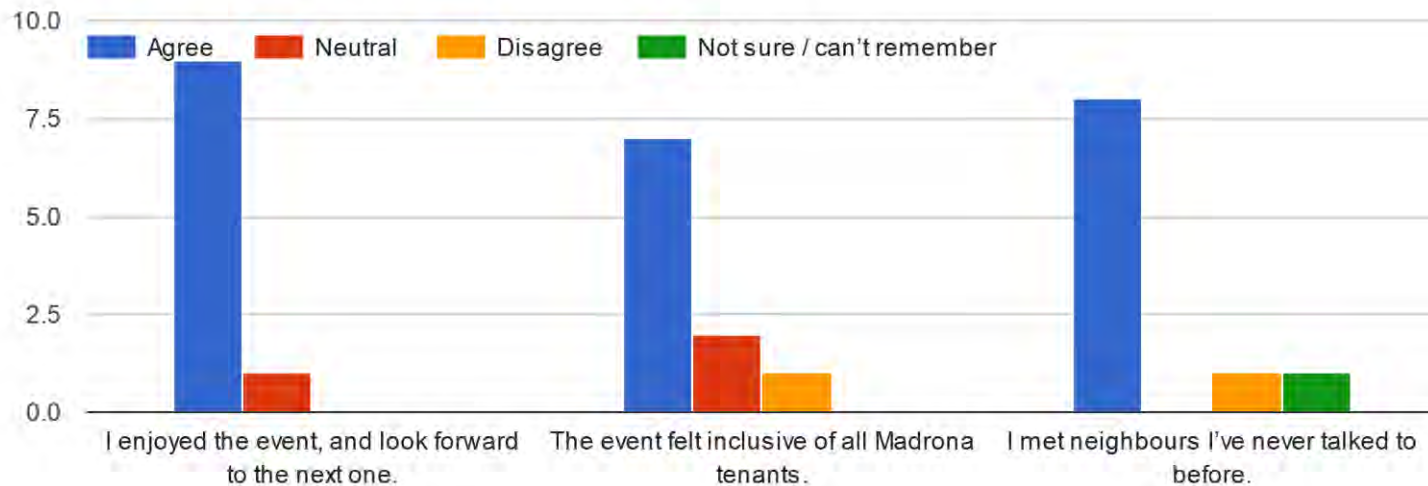
18 responses



Return respondents

Feedback on March Town Hall and Blockwatch launch

We'd love a little feedback on the March Town Hall and Blockwatch launch. To what extent would you agree with the following statements?



Return respondents

Feedback on March Town Hall and Blockwatch launch

Any other feedback on the event?

5 responses

I liked combining the two events. I also like it when Maura (or someone) comes over from the office. It means a lot to have that connection "live."

There certainly wasn't enough room for all the tenants to attend and I am unsure if it is accessible to all, but since the Madrona building is inaccessible to all guess it is a good fit. Received an email that suggested anyone could benefit from the insurance deduction which is fine but I was told by an insurance agent that one only need attend a single Blockwatch meeting. The location was fine for the number of people who probably said they would attend and did attend :)

Good location, meeting close to home

Possibly ordered food or potluck? I rushed to get there after work without any dinner. I was under the impression more significant snacks would be served to fill our bellies rather than just cheese and crackers ;). I get hungry!

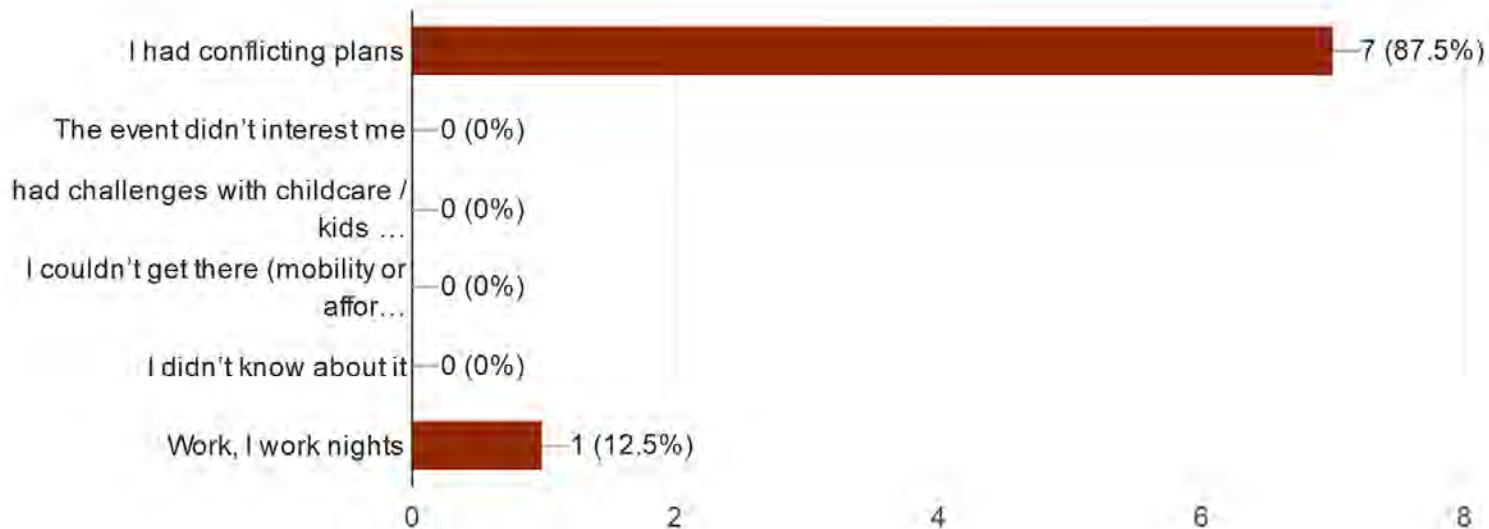
More food & drink please!

Return respondents

Feedback on March Town Hall and Blockwatch launch

Would you mind sharing with us why you didn't participate? Please select all that apply.

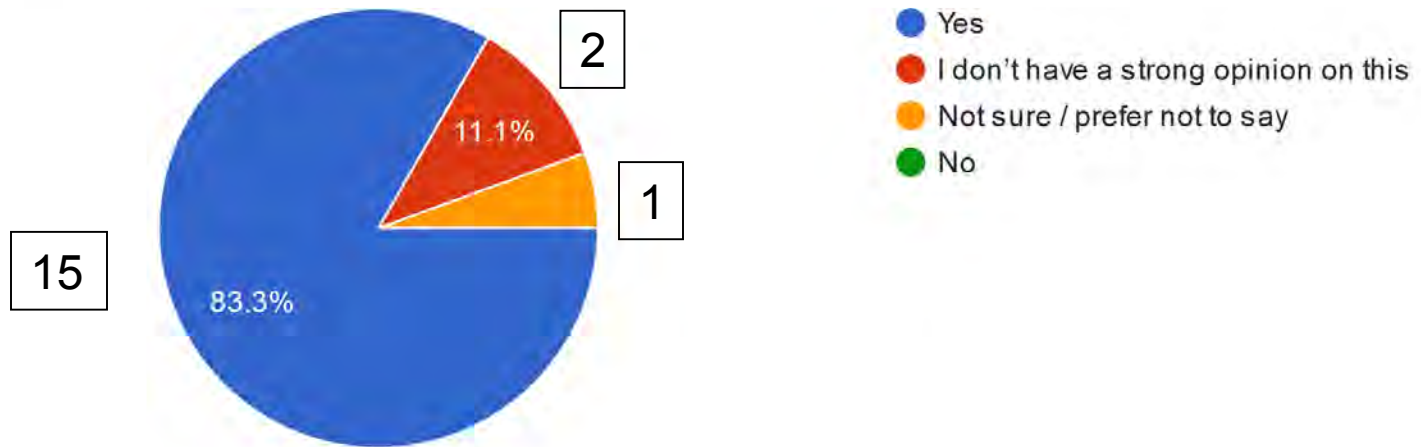
8 responses



Return respondents

21. From your perspective as a tenant at Madrona, is Catalyst living up to its non-profit mission to build and operate...mes and places for people to live in?

18 responses



Return respondents

We're happy to hear that.

Would you care to elaborate?

8 responses

I truly appreciate this co. having reasonable rent! Need more places like this!!

Our living space is really nice and safe, good community, affordable rent for the city of Victoria

Everyone I talk to about this place is interested but when it comes to Catalyst's goals and how they've followed up with us, jaw simply drop. Nobody's heard of this kind of thing before. I absolutely love the sense of integrity behind this place. I've never felt so respected as a tenant, and had such a mutually helpful working relationship with owners.

Rent is good, suites are nice, pro active maintenance like windows cleaning appreciated

Tenants are aloud to landscape their frontage

The way the building is designed really encourages socializing along the pathway. Not only among our building but others in dockside green as well.

Staff are friendly and helpful. Grounds are well cared for and the sense of permanency is refreshing for my family and several neighbours I have spoken with. As a rental community, several of us have faced rental insecurity and experienced the devastating toll this can have on one's sense of security for an assured future. Thank you for eliminating this threat. One mum told me she too has faced homelessness with children in tow and we both agreed what a blessing Madrona has become!

Thank you for listening to our input about the bike room. Excited to see the new bike structure built near the recycling!

Return respondents

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

9 responses

I find that there is prompt service when an issue comes up; very appreciated.

The lack of storage is something who has to be address please. We live in the 3 bedrooms unit with no storage space. It's a problem when you have more than one children.

I think there are still folks out there who don't understand the nature of the project, Catalyst, non-profit etc. Traditional tenant-landlord relationships are so fraught that we sort of need to shout the differences to get past some assumptions and the automatic antagonistic positioning. (Shout in a nice way, of course.) More education, newsletter? etc...

None I can think of

Too many strangers using our sidewalk

Sound proofing is terrible between suites but otherwise everything else has been great.

I really appreciate the landlords allowing and encouraging us to truly make the space our own. Most notable are the individualized gardens of Madrona patio space. Oft times people strolling by will stop to say hello and comment on the pretty gardens!

I have spoken to Shelley about the behaviour of Aaron and Krista and their policing around the neighbourhood. She is very receptive and feels the same way, that they complain about just about everything and act very inappropriately. It would be nice if Catalyst could understand other tenants issues rathe than just theirs and not cater to them so much.

Unimpressed with the \$10 rent increase, but looking forward to the rent DECREASING.

Return respondents

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience living at Madrona, or about our services as a landlord?

9 responses

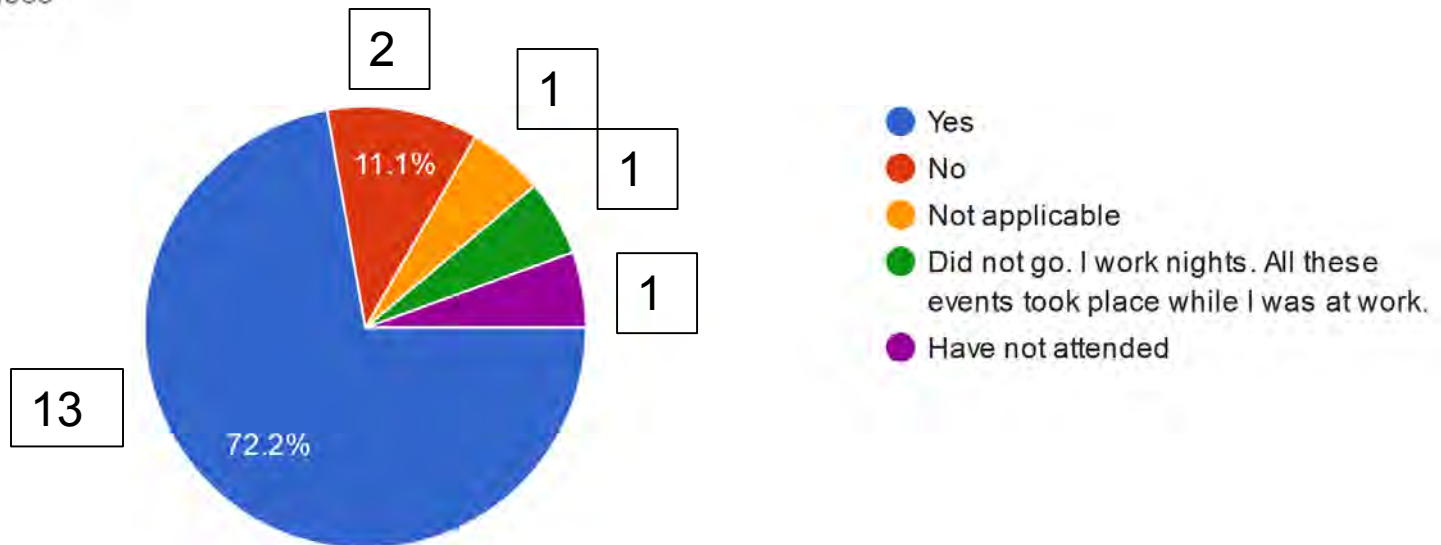
Originally I mentioned the storage. I now believe that there is adequate storage (I just have to get rid of a lot more stuff which is unneeded) though the upper cupboards are virtually useless unless you have a step ladder or are quite tall. After living here for some time I would wish that the kitchen area had more room. Feel concern for the amount of water that accidentally gets spilled onto the cupboard from using the single sink. Primarily due to the stovetop. Given the poor or questionable installation/construction of everything I wonder if the stovetop will stop working. I do hear cracks while a burner is heating and wonder if this is due to water seepage. No doubt you are using this information for a better building. The doors have a window in them. That is a security flag. I guess thanks to the lack of soundproofing if someone did break the door window to break in neighbours would hear and respond? As a single woman even if I hear noises outside, I stay inside to be safe; do not want to look out. And given the lack of soundproofing would even feel reluctant to call 911 unless absolutely sure of a crime knowing the criminal system and fearing retribution ie the criminal if caught and prosecuted would soon be released and could return to seek revenge. It would be great if someone were responsible for more regular maintenance outside in particular the garbage/recycling area which could use salt in winter conditions and where broken glass appears. I also feel concern regarding fire given the lack of instructions regarding the dryer as well as feeling a lack of confidence to the electrical construction. Would like to clean the vents but believe them to be behind the dryer. Would feel better if every unit came equipped with a fire extinguisher. Given there are annual fire inspections, they could also check that the extinguishers are in working order.

Return respondents

Community Connections pilot

Did Catalyst's events and Town Halls help you get to know more of your neighbours?

18 responses

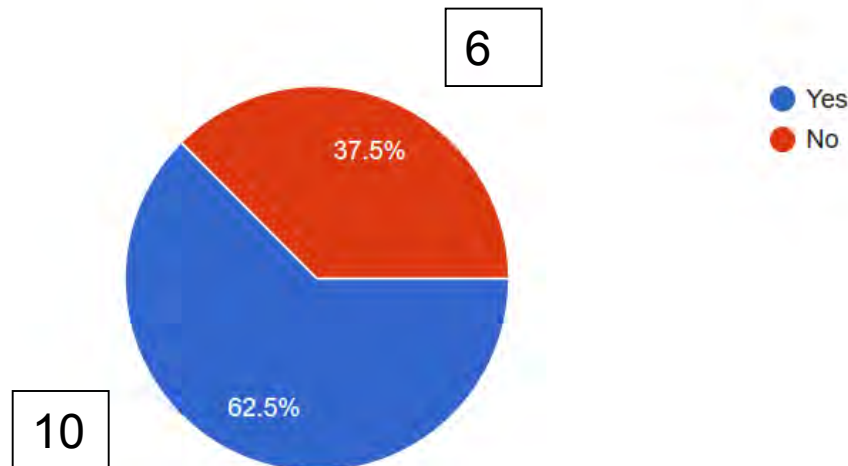


Return respondents

Community Connections pilot

Great to hear! Did that result in any instances where you socialized with neighbours on your own initiative? Shared things, gave or received assistance from with neighbours?

16 responses



Return respondents

Community Connections pilot

Would you like to share any of those experiences with us?

4 responses

1. Chatting with neighbours after the meeting as we all walked home across the bridge. Neighbours I'd seen and greeted many times but now I know them better. 2. Another neighbour I hadn't seen in a long while; catching up, asked if he would adopt some of my houseplants; now whenever I see him we talk about the plants. 3. After the last meeting, a cluster of us stood outside in the chilly dark for 40 minutes chatting. One of the neighbours from Balance (the condos next door) happened by and joined in the conversation. So now we know him, too. Yay!

my neighbours have been friendly and have shared with each other soil, plants, food, conversation.

Thanks to Bazinga I can ask other tenants questions. I do wish Bazinga was linked with Facebook or we used Facebook since I log into Facebook daily to connect with family and friends already.

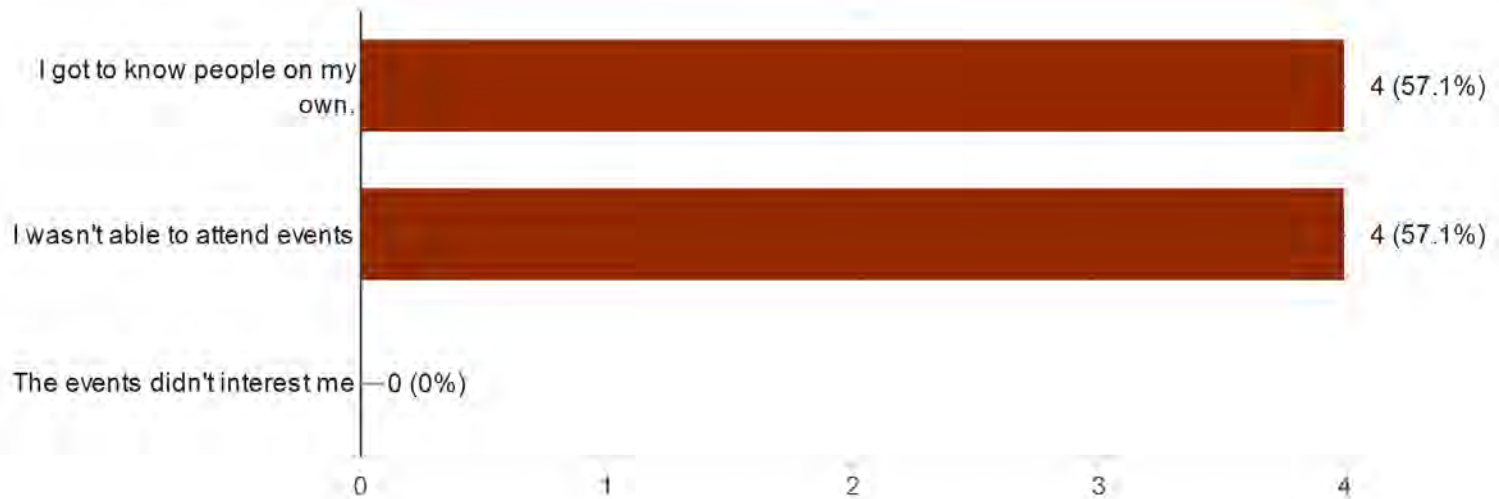
We shared garden and Internet connection tips

Return respondents

Community Connections pilot

Why do you think that didn't happen?

7 responses

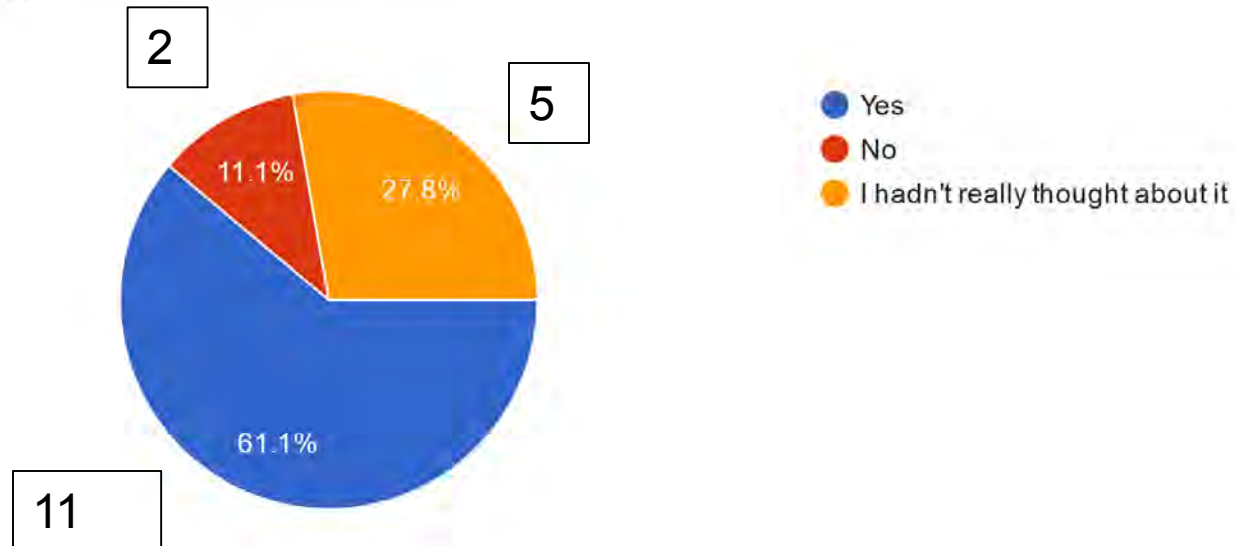


Return respondents

Getting engaged

Have you felt comfortable bringing forward your own ideas for social events, sharing initiatives, etc?

18 responses



Return respondents

Getting engaged

Have you brought forward any ideas? Were you able to bring them to fruition?

5 responses

I'm interested in communal gardens...

yes; I initiated the blockwatch program here; it gave me a chance to meet my neighbours and now we have a loose structure for on-going contact.

talked about a vegetable garden plot to share with tenants near the bldg with management but have not seen or heard back about if that can be accommodated. I imagine it needs some forethought and planning re watering etc.

Windows washing greatly appreciated

Yes, looking forward to the new bike structure and recycling space.

Return respondents

Getting engaged

What might help you feel more comfortable bringing forward your ideas?

4 responses

At the Blockwatch meeting it was asked how people felt about the cidery and using Bazinga. Some people answered one way. I personally disagreed but did not feel comfortable being the voice of dissent. Surveys like this are comfortable.

I have no ideas. As far as I am concerned everything is going great. Good rent, nice suites, pro active landlord and decent neighbors. I can save money now where before I was living from pay cheque to pay cheque.

Constantly wishing we had a community board

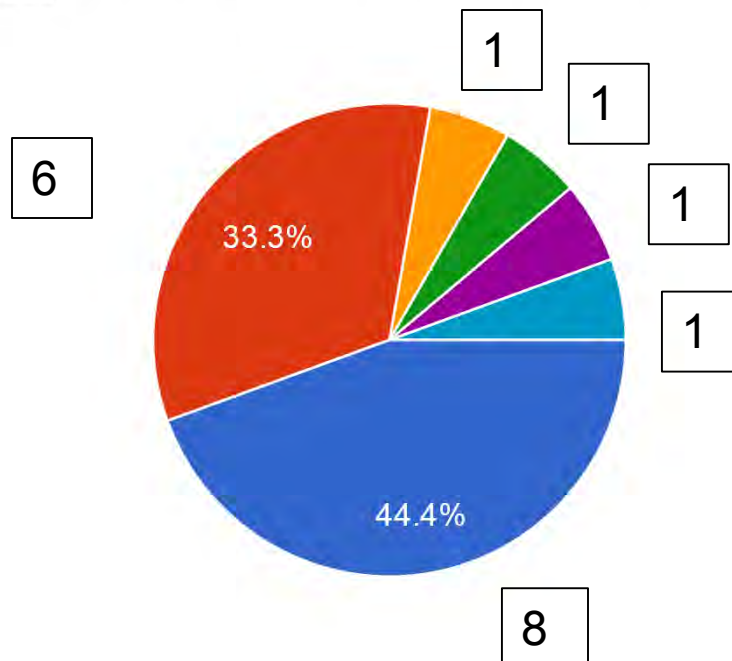
Feeling like your thoughts are valid too, not just the opinions of louder tenants

Return respondents

Building on the pilot year

Should we keep going with Town Halls?

18 responses



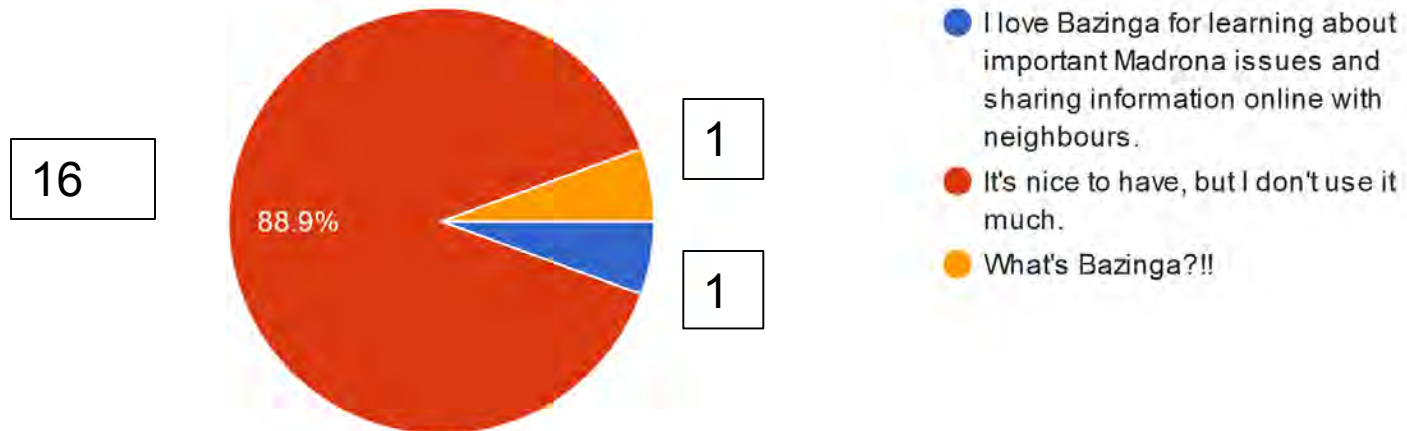
- Yes, keep doing three per year.
- Yes, but less frequent would be okay.
- No. They were important in the first year, but don't need to continue.
- I like them. As I said above, I think maintaining face-to-face connection with people from Catalyst is very im...
- I miss many of these. Maybe a pdf summary of key points that were dis...
- Haven't attended

Return respondents

Building on the pilot year

How well is Bazinga working for you?

18 responses



Return respondents

Building on the pilot year

Anything else you'd like to say about the first pilot year of the Community Connections program?

9 responses

Keep up the good work!!!

Thank you for your time and care!

Re Bazinga -obviously it would be more effective if: 1. more people signed up. 2. we had the option to receive a notification when something new is posted (a new topic etc). I'm just not likely to make a habit of checking regularly no matter how hard I try, and I often miss things. communication is very challenging these days!! (and we can push and push but It may be that the people already signed up are the only ones who are really interested.)

Thanks for your efforts to create community.

Appreciate the efforts of community building :D

Keep up the good work

Keeping as minimal as possible noisy power tools used by ground keepers (landscapers)

Thanks

If we could have the meeting in one of the buildings on harbour road, it would be closer and easier to access.

Appendix 5.

2017 Pilot Recommendations

Madrona Pilot recommendations

Prepared for: Robert Brown and Maura Chestnutt

Prepared by: Michelle Hoar

Date: November 8, 2017

This memo is intended to serve as a high-level set of recommendations and guiding questions from which we'll work together to design the Madrona 'community connections' pilot project.

It is laid out through the eight thematic learnings that came out of literature review and interviews conducted September through November 2017.

As most of my phase one work was focused on research and writing of a 'best practices' report, I have not outlined a specific implementation plan, timeline or budget here. That will be the second phase of the project, and we'll need to work together to determine what is feasible, and how we'll go about rolling it out. With tenants moving into Madrona as we speak, I'm happy to launch into this next phase as soon as you are available to start discussing these ideas.

Pilot objectives:

- To increase social connectedness between Madrona residents, leading to a friendlier, happier, more resilient community than might have otherwise organically emerged in the first year of occupancy;
- To increase connections between Madrona and other Dockside Green residents;
- To strengthen feelings of belonging, inclusion, and engagement for Madrona residents within Dockside and the wider Vic West and Victoria communities.

Lessons learned from the Madrona pilot will strengthen Catalyst's ability to develop and manage vibrant, affordable rental homes that will:

- Be embraced by those who live there
- Be embraced by the neighbourhood and larger community (integrated with existing ownership housing, not segregated)
- Have a strong feeling of community and home, not just a transitional set of walls
- Feel comfy and welcoming
- Be very well cared-for, non-sterile buildings (both Catalyst building managers *and* tenants will feel pride of place and contribute to care of the space)
- Show obviously positive relationships between tenants (people look out for and take care of each other)
- Have low turn-over rates
- Get frequent referrals from existing tenants and have healthy waitlists
- Have an identifiable, positive, friendly vibe (Catalyst becomes known for building, managing and cultivating friendly, inclusive, engaged communities)

Assumptions to explore as we design the Madrona pilot

My instructions from Maura were to 'deliver the Cadillac version' of a pilot project, with the understanding that it would likely need to be whittled down to conform to available staff time, financial resources or other considerations and constraints.

As we explore what the 'Cadillac' version could look like, it would be helpful to test some assumptions about how and where Madrona learnings will be applied:

- I have assumed so far that Madrona's typology (townhomes with no significant shared amenity spaces) may be an outlier with respect to future projects. My assumption is that most future Catalyst projects will be larger and denser multi-story developments, perhaps mixed use with some commercial elements. I have also assumed that these sorts of developments will integrate some amount of common space design for social connections and tenant engagement.
- I have also assumed that all Catalyst developments will be income-tested below-market rental, where tenants are required to leave once they exceed a maximum household income threshold.
- I have assumed that for the next five years, Catalyst will be contracting out property management, but retaining connection with tenants through managing projects like this pilot, and ongoing communications that help to set expectations and norms, and build a certain 'Catalyst' culture of friendliness and collaboration. During that time, Catalyst will be working to develop its own property management capacity in order to take that work in-house within five years. That could include the possibility of a live-in building manager in some developments. What we begin to learn through Madrona may eventually inform what Catalyst's property management strategy and ethos looks like.
- After a brief chat with Maura, I have also assumed that some portion of her time will be available to guide this pilot for a 9-12 month period, with help from myself at whatever level, and for whatever duration, you deem necessary and helpful. Also that a modest budget will be available directly from Catalyst, with an intention to fundraise for more if necessary.

Pilot recommendations

These broad recommendations, ideas for consideration, and questions to mull over come out of the literature and interviews conducted this fall. I look forward to a brainstorming session soon where we sift through it all together, and figure out what fits and how to proceed.

#1 - Invest In Hardware *And* Software.

Thoughtfully-designed common spaces and well-situated shared amenities are the physical foundation for facilitating connections between residents. But not all common spaces are created equal, and good hardware alone won't build strong community.

Madrona doesn't include any significant intentional spaces for tenants to gather together, but it does benefit from the following 'hardware' assets:

- Front doors, small stoops, and mini-patios, not physically or visually separate from immediate neighbours
- Generous sidewalks and a semi-private road on the water side; attractive greenway on the opposite side, connecting Madrona to condos and to commercial spaces.

These two features make Madrona a bit more like a single family home neighbourhood in terms of its orientation to outdoor walkways and lack of communal space.

Shared spaces amenities include the bike storage room, the mailbox, and the garbage and recycling areas, and to a small extent, the sheltered outdoor parking spaces. It will be hard for people *not* to at least recognize their neighbours because of Madrona's compact yet open design. But if Catalyst wants to maximize the potential of existing assets, it will need to invest in some 'software' or programming to animate those spaces, and proactively give tenants a sense of what is permissible and encouraged.

One of the most potent catalysts for building community is shared gardens. It doesn't seem at first glance that Madrona would have space for a community or communal garden, but a few ideas worth considering might be:

- Allowing people to transform landscaped areas on patios into their own gardens
- On water side with no significant landscaped space, allow people to put containers out; consider bulk soil purchase or even pot purchases; have a planting party in the spring to encourage people to personalize their patios and stoops, and to get their hands dirty with neighbours; consider whether bulk plant buys would be manageable, given lack of access to vehicles.
- If tenants show a particularly strong interest in gardening, see if the nearby garden that seems to be connected to Fantastico Caffe is open to the community. Or investigate whether there's any potential to have a temporary community garden on the site where the commercial building will be going up.

Happy City also points out that people feel a stronger sense of 'home' and belonging if they're able to express their interests, values and cultural backgrounds through personalization of space. Other than gardening (which not everybody will be interested in), how might you encourage people to personalize front doors, stoops and patios?

#2 – It is possible to build social connections and community without optimal social 'hardware.'

You can overcome a lack of social 'hardware' through a portfolio strategy, a focus on community connections, or a rethinking of existing spaces.

With only one building in Victoria, a 'portfolio strategy' isn't really possible, but a focus on community connections and a rethinking of existing spaces certainly is.

Community connections:

Map out what resources are available nearby that might help tenants feel more connected to the immediate community. Consider how you might utilize those resources in your top-down & bottom-up efforts to engage tenants and support their sense of inclusion, belonging, and well-being.

- What free or inexpensive spaces are nearby where tenants could gather to celebrate or organize? (Libraries, community centres, inexpensive halls or other meeting spaces)
- What organizations are nearby that could become potential partners in sociability, well-being, or sustainability programming? (health organizations, neighbourhood associations, environmental groups, volunteering associations, farmers markets etc.)
- What opportunities might exist to partner with nearby businesses throughout the pilot project?
- Are there any Dockside Green amenities, resources, or activities that Madrona residents can tap into? If we wanted to create larger social opportunities for Madrona and other Dockside residents, who might we need to build relationships with at Dockside?

Rethinking existing spaces:

Analyze all the spaces that have potential for animation, or that risk becoming a zone of conflict. Watch for barriers to use (or proper use) of shared spaces. Remove barriers where possible, and engineer towards animation, sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and a feeling of ownership. For example:

- **Bike storage room:** What tensions will arise in this space? Can tenants be part of how problems get solved in this space? Will tenants need more space for bikes, or will some bikes not be needed? If so, what solutions are available?

- **Covered parking area:** Could this be transformed once or twice a year into a covered area for parties, making it a space not just for the six lucky car owners? A staging area for potlucks, BBQ'ing etc? Could wall space be used for storing shared goods like outdoor chairs or even rolling grocery baskets?
- **Exterior wall near bike storage and mailbox:** Could we erect a notice board near the mailbox where tenants can post notices of local events & initiatives, and Catalyst can post information or invitations? Could we be playful with the larger exterior concrete wall, and encourage people to use chalk to draw on it? Small grants for local artists to do chalk murals? Chalk available for that wall and sidewalks at all outdoor gatherings?
- **Shared greenway/walkway:** Could tenants be encouraged to work together during certain seasons to animate this space? Halloween pumpkin carving and decoration? Christmas lights? Easter egg hunts?
- **Sidewalk and semi-private road:** Might this be a good site for a summer block party? Could it be inclusive of other Dockside Green residents too? Would the Dockside Green Society and the future commercial landlord/tenant partner with us to make it a bigger thing?
- **Recycling & garbage:** Would there be any place/need for a recycling committee? Could a group go beyond what is currently handled through city recycling programs and coordinate things like e-waste, battery disposal etc?

3 – Stability of Tenure and Governance Structures Matter.

Look for ways to cultivate a sense of 'home' rather than 'house' in rental developments. Consider what level of tenant engagement you're willing to welcome in order to achieve greater social connections and community involvement.

People are obviously very excited to move into Madrona. It probably feels like a slice of paradise compared to what's out there in the current rental market. Because it's a fresh cohort of tenants, it won't be hard to set some norms and expectations right off the bat, and welcome tenants to think differently about their roles in the overall health and happiness of the community.

However, it would be good to have a clear story to tell about what happens when you have to ask a tenant to leave because their income has exceeded the maximum threshold. Currently, this reality runs counter to a message that this is 'a stable home for as long as you like,' a story that co-ops and some other non-profit housing models are able to tell (assuming continual payment of rent, and adherence to rules and regulations, of course.) Many people will move on of their own accord, seeking more space or a different neighbourhood when their income situation improves. However, there may be some who feel scared of that eventuality, which could negatively impact their perception of belonging and security, and therefore their likeliness to engage in activities and 'owner-like' behaviours seen in ownership and secure tenancy models. I don't expect this is a huge problem, but it's worth thinking about, as I know you are.

During the Madrona pilot, I would recommend encouraging and supporting one or more small and focused committees rather than an individual. This will ensure a greater diversity of perspectives, useful overlap and redundancy, and draw from a wider set of competencies, leading to greater overall resiliency in the tenant community. It should be clear what sorts of decision-making power these committees have, and how they will communicate with Catalyst and Randall North around problems or opportunities.

#4 – Community Building Efforts Will Be Affected By Tenant Mix.

Tenants who share a values alignment, occupation, or stage of life often connect more easily. But diversity may be lacking in these models. Different tenant mixes call for different engagement strategies.

Though it's my understanding that incoming Madrona residents aren't hugely diverse in terms of culture or ethnicity, neither are they all of one age, or one professional affiliation (seniors, artists etc.)

So, you will have some diversity of life stages and personal interests to navigate, which is both a challenge and an opportunity. Getting to know your tenant mix and trying to encourage good representation on any committees that emerge will help tailor experiences that are attractive to as many tenants as possible, though not each opportunity will meet everyone's needs.

Unless you already have strong information about your tenants, it might be a good idea to send out a quick, fun, friendly online survey by email in advance of the first social gathering. Resulting information could be used in fun ways at that first event, and perhaps later (more on that in next section.) This first survey could also include some questions to check back in on at the end of the pilot (for example, 'how many people do you know at Madrona?' 'How well do you feel you know the Dockside/VicWest neighbourhood?' etc.)

#5 – Engage early, engage often, engage strategically.

Natural champions may emerge organically given the right conditions, but sustained community-building requires intentionality and resourcing. The earlier and more thoughtfully you engage residents, the deeper and wider your efforts will go.

Think about all possible touch-points as opportunities to create culture, reinforce norms, and invite a feeling of community and openness. If residents feel part of something bigger, they'll engage more enthusiastically.

Building an empowered and social community through top-down *and* bottom-up methods yields more diverse activity and builds resiliency and leadership.

There's a lot contained in the above sentences. Here's what I think it means for the Madrona pilot.

Though you'll want to make lots of space for collaboration with tenants, and encourage their ideas for connecting, sharing, and building community, you'll also want to set some clear norms and lead by example. In addition to the first social gathering and a brainstorming event soon after to capture tenants ideas and solidify early commitments, I would recommend organizing 2-3 other Catalyst-led events.

Some are a few ideas to consider:

- Holiday party/parties (if lots of kids in mix, easter or hallowe'en, if not, summer block party/bbq or fall harvest); incorporate decorating and eating together
- Container & patio gardening party (bulk soil & plant purchase, BBQ afterwards)
- Bike tour (on their fancy new bikes) of neighbouring services and businesses with meal at beginning, middle or end
- Guided tour of Dockside Green sustainability features & story of how development will evolve
- 'Party with a purpose': earthquake preparedness at Madrona. Could be open to other Docksiders.
- Outdoor movie night in empty lot (with permission of course, and open to other Dockside residents)

Setting the tone at the first Madrona gathering. Though this shouldn't feel like a work party or a dry information session, you'll want to think hard about what story you tell at this first gathering, and what kind of norms you want to set. What invitation are you making to tenants to become involved in something bigger? Is that 'something bigger' just a friendly, embracing community where landlord and tenant collaborate to create something greater? Is it also about their involvement in a model green community that's trying to change norms around built environment and individual and collective behavior?

If you've done a survey and have some interesting granular information about tenants, use it to animate the first event somehow, or jumpstart conversations.

A bingo card ice-breaker (with prizes) where people have to talk to their neighbours to find out who's the plumber, who can crochet a plant pot, who does improv theatre, who speaks four languages?

Some sort of visual, or a story to tell in an intro speech, that reflects the group back to themselves? ("Forty percent of you have lived in the Victoria area for more than 10 years. Thirty percent of you spoke a language other than English in your home growing up. Seventy percent of you say they don't know this neighborhood well...." Etc.)

If you agree on the idea of having a follow-up brainstorming session for any interested tenants, make sure they hear about it at the first event. Who knows what ideas and conversations might start brewing right away? Also use this first event as an opportunity to collect information from people about how they like to communicate, if that hasn't been done already. Are they on social media, and if so, which platforms? Do we have the best email address for them?

'Part of something bigger': Both Artscape and CCOC have highly intentional programs for engaging tenants in their broader organizational missions. For Artscape it's the Values Exchange program that makes a five hour per month pledge of volunteer time in the arts and culture community mandatory for tenants and purchasers of Artscape homes. For CCOC it's the voluntary – but strongly encouraged – Green Commitments program, where tenants make personal green pledges that are then reinforced by more active outreach, education and engagement by CCOC staff.

Though it feels overly ambitious to try to create a highly structured program like either of these in year one at Madrona, it might be interesting to think forward to whether it might be a goal for future Catalyst communities to integrate some intentional, values-oriented program along these lines. This could tap into the goal of not just connecting tenants with each other at individual buildings, but also amongst Catalyst buildings and with the wider community. How could Catalyst communities become great not just for their tenants, but for their immediate neighbours and wider communities too?

One way to start small along that path might be by tapping into the Dockside Green sustainability features and goals. Are there stated master-plan goals for behavioral change amongst residents? Are there any interesting activities or initiatives already in place at Dockside that Madrona residents can join in? What possibilities does the EnerPro program present? What can Catalyst or other partners do to educate new tenants about opportunities to be part of the 'green' ethos at Dockside? If there was interest, what might a sustainability committee work on? Learning from CCOC's use of community-based social marketing theory, how might Catalyst incent and celebrate adoption of new norms and habits?

Make it easy for tenants to get small events and projects off the ground:

Make small amounts of money easily available to committees for any event or initiative that is open to all Madrona tenants. (CCOC actively encourages ideas to blossom and makes \$20 available for seasonal decorations and \$50 for food at social gatherings.)

Once an idea is approved, help them get word out and ensure that Randall North is aware in case there is any support needed from them. Ask for a brief report on how it went (# of attendees, feedback, anecdotes etc), but don't make the process onerous. Work from a place of trust, but also accountability.

Provide tenants with lots of resources for bringing people together, creating successful invitations, etc. (I will be providing a set of resources and tools in the appendix to my report.) Once there is a small committee or committees struck, you could do an orientation and inspiration meeting to get juices flowing. Lead with examples and ideas, but don't predetermine outcomes too much. Let tenants figure out together what they need and want, and support them as long as it meets goals of social inclusion, community connection, and building resiliency and capacity.

#6 – Big parties can be expensive, but everyday community-building and tenant engagement doesn't need to be.

A clear and consistent strategy, strategic partnerships, and staff or resident committees specifically tasked with social connections and engagement can make modest budgets go a long way.

The three largest expense categories for this pilot will be Catalyst staff time, my time as a consultant, and events or initiatives led by Catalyst (particularly any events requiring renting of space, equipment, and including catering.) Each will depend on the scope decided upon.

There may be a virtue to keeping budgets for tenant-led projects quite modest. For example, for a tenant population of 1600 units and about 2200 people, CCOC has three staff in their membership and communications team, one of whom is a sustainability coordinator. Their budget for tenant-led activities is \$1400/yr and \$3500/yr for staff-led activities. This does not include any hard costs around invitations, communications, committee meetings and compensation etc.

A budget of as little as \$500 - \$1000 for the year would force tenants to get creative, and choose only the things that really excite them. If they wanted to work on bigger projects, they would know about sources of funding like the City of Victoria's [My Great Neighbourhood](#) grants through our early orientation and inspiration efforts.

#7 – Effective communication is frequent, consistent, varied in terms of platform, but as much as possible, in person.

Try to establish a tone and style in your communications with tenants. Remind them often, and in different ways, of your support for them coming up with ideas to make the community better. Ideas may not just bubble up through committees, it could be an individual dropping you an email one day with a great idea, or a complaint that has potential to be transformed into an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving.

Given that staff time and resources are modest, don't try to be a social media whiz on all platforms. Find out where the majority of your tenants already are. Are they all on facebook, or are they instagram people? Keep things simple to start: email, one social media platform, and physical notices when needed. In the process of socializing, communicating and organizing with tenants, new modes of communication will emerge: listservs, topic-specific private facebook groups, instant messaging, Slack channels etc.

Since Randall North staff won't often be onsite to help reinforce rules and shared norms, and Catalyst staff are many miles away, think about how you might cultivate ambassadors to deliver invitations in person. That might happen door to door with friendly physical invites or serendipitously when running into neighbours at the mailbox, on the bike path, in the grocery store or coffee shop.

Make sure to bring Randall North fully into the loop on whatever the pilot plan is going to look like. What help can they offer? What insights might they have to share? Can they be persuaded to sing from the same songbook? Can we make sure that tenants aren't receiving radically different messages from Catalyst and Randall North staff?

#8 – Measure what matters, but do it because it serves your mission and makes life better for staff, tenants, and eventually, the broader community.

There is a clear and deep mission behind Catalyst's work, so I don't feel like there needs to be a strong business case made for investing in this pilot, or any broader programs that might arise from it for future developments.

However, it would be useful to set out some clear goals and metrics that will help us analyze the success of different strategies, so that future efforts can be made stronger. There is some interest from both SHIFT Collaborative and the City of Vancouver's Hey Neighbour pilot in finding a small set of shared metrics to track, possibly building on some of the things that the Vancouver Foundation tracks for its Neighbourhood Small Grants program.

Also, if one of your goals is to shift the industry towards better social design and programming to reduce social isolation and build community resiliency, it will help to be able to tell a clear story around the impact of your efforts, both on the business side, and for tenants.

Some of the things we discussed early on that could be measured:

- Reaction of Dockside Green Society to Madrona tenants and activities
- Reaction of other Dockside Green residents? (ex no complaints would be positive)
- Survey of tenants (feelings of safety, connection, belonging; use of amenities; happiness with property management services; reaction to Catalyst communications etc.)
- Events generated by tenants, and attendance at them
- Any sharing initiatives that evolved

Some of this information can be captured through surveys, but most of it will come from the tenants that step forward to help organize. Catalyst will need to communicate an expectation that some things will be measured and recorded, but make it easy and fun for tenants to do so. This could be accomplished through quick email exchanges collected by Catalyst, check in phone calls etc.

Longer-term questions to consider as we build the Madrona pilot

Though it's not necessary to have answers to any of these questions in order to proceed, some discussion of them may influence how we structure, measure and analyze the Madrona pilot project.

- Would Catalyst consider an explicit program like CCOC's or Artscape's in future developments? Would you put time pre-occupancy into engaging tenants of a new development? Would you give them any say in amenity or program design?
- Would Madrona consider formal committees composed of tenants, staff and community members that direct Catalyst staff, like CCOC's model? Would Catalyst want to cultivate tenants as board members?
- Does Catalyst want to involve tenants in advocating for affordable housing policy or other community issues?
- What is currently required in terms of common space in municipalities where you're building? Is policy likely to change in the near future? Will certification standards like WELL become important to follow? Could implementing standards like WELL, or aggressively leading the industry in your own way give you any useful leverage in negotiating with cities or funders?
- Is there any program funding that you know of that could help you experiment with and commit to deep community engagement and tenant well-being work?

Appendix 6.

2018 Homes That Connect Us report

HOMES THAT CONNECT US

Building social connections and
community engagement among
residents of multi-family rental
housing

Prepared by Michelle Hoar
Spring 2018

PART ONE

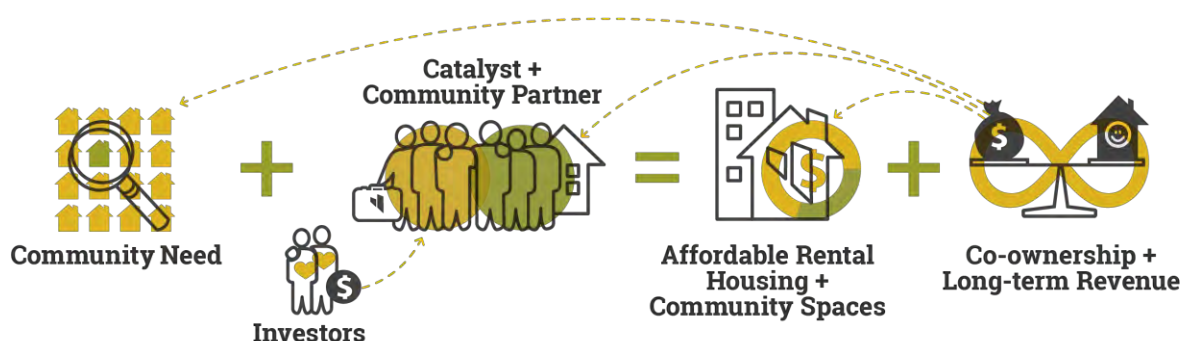
INTRODUCTION TO CATALYST
THE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PILOT
ABOUT THIS REPORT
CONTEXT
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS
CONCLUSION
REFERENCES

Introduction

[Catalyst Community Developments Society](#) is a non-profit affordable rental developer that launched in Vancouver in 2013. Partnering with non-profits and municipalities to secure affordable land and keep it under community ownership, Catalyst has eight sites currently under development in Vancouver, Penticton, Langley, Port Moody, and North Vancouver.

• The Catalyst Business Model •

Catalyst partners with non-profit organizations and municipalities to create new affordable rental homes and community spaces, and achieve long-term financial sustainability.



Its first completed site is Madrona, a 49-unit below-market rental townhouse complex in Victoria West's Dockside Green development.

In anticipation of tenants moving in, Catalyst staff asked themselves what it really meant to build vibrant, affordable and inspiring places for people to live. Was it enough to create the buildings and the landscaping, and to offer security of tenure and rents affordable to working people? Or could they be more ambitious, and take active steps to intentionally foster a friendly, socially connected, resilient community there?

Catalyst decided it wanted to be more ambitious, and set out to learn from other housing and community organizations. In fall 2017, it commissioned research and interviews with over a dozen groups to help them put together a 12-month 'Community Connections' pilot project for Madrona. Rather than keep what it learned to itself, Catalyst tasked consultant Michelle Hoar with writing a shareable report highlighting key findings and recommendations.

We hope this report will be particularly relevant to those in the purpose-built rental sector (for-profit and non-profit): developers and property managers, but also funders, investors, and the planners and politicians who oversee the policy environment within which they operate.

But the key findings should also be of interest to architects, market housing developers, strata councils, housing funders and financiers, and policy makers in various levels and departments of government, particularly those interested in social determinants of health.

Intention

The intent of this report is to highlight inspiring examples of community building in multi-family housing developments of different types. The hope is that insights gleaned from studying these examples stimulate a broader dialogue about opportunities to foster social connectedness in dense typology housing, and influence the sector toward a greater focus on affordability, security of tenure and sociability.

Ultimately, Catalyst looked to others for inspiration around successful techniques for community building and tenant engagement. As it grows, Catalyst aims to inspire others in the field to put effort and resources into smart social design and programming that fosters diverse and truly livable, thriving communities.

Catalyst will continue to share what it is learning throughout the 12-month Community Connections pilot at Madrona and will release a report about what worked and what didn't in spring 2019.

• Catalyst Housing — Benefits for Communities and People •

Non-profit organizations, together with Catalyst, contribute to communities by creating affordable mixed-income rental housing and new community spaces.



About Madrona



- 49 stacked townhouse units; mix of studio, 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms
- Max household incomes from \$26,500/yr for studios to \$67,000 for 4 bedrooms
- Rents range from \$695/m to \$1650/m (units affordable to people making between 36% - 76% of local median income)
- Only six parking spots
- All units received a bike, given Dockside Green's proximity to bike paths, transit, and their overall sustainability plan
- Tenants receive 10 transit tickets per month
- Only covenanted affordable rental development currently planned for the large site
- Tenants moved in December 2017

About the 'Community Connections' pilot project

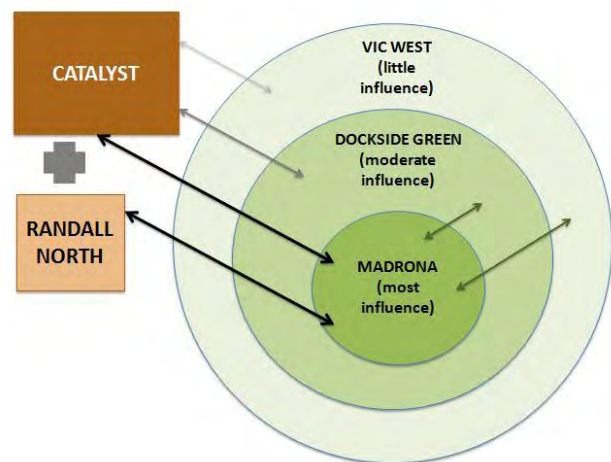
Building on findings and recommendations from this report, Catalyst has designed a 12-month pilot with the following objectives:

1. Increase social connectedness *among* Madrona residents.
2. Increase positive connections *between* Madrona and other Dockside Green residents.
3. Strengthen Madrona tenants' feelings of belonging, inclusion, and engagement within the Victoria West community.
4. Achieve the above goals with a clear sustainability ethic guiding Catalyst and tenant decisions (social, economic, and environmental).
5. Foster a program that is financially sustainable without grant inputs.
6. Maximize the positive social potential of Madrona's physical design.

Catalyst is contracting with Randall North to manage leasing, rent payments and general building upkeep. Catalyst will work with Randall North to establish a welcoming culture, host events, and support tenants to organize social events and sharing initiatives.

The diagram to the right reflects our acknowledgement that collective efforts will likely have the greatest impact at the immediate Madrona scale, and less at the Dockside Green and Victoria West scales.

It is also important to note that Catalyst's efforts are focused on making Madrona a friendlier, more inclusive and engaged community, but we realize that ameliorating deeply entrenched social isolation may be beyond the scope of impact such a pilot can have, as the pilot will not actively help to improve tenants' financial security (other than through affordable rent and secure-tenure, beautiful, dignified housing), or connect them with support services that they might need (mental health, mobility, food security etc.)



Pilot activities will begin early spring 2018:

- Catalyst will organize and host four social events through the year as well as two workshops (e.g. bike maintenance and earthquake preparedness)
- Catalyst will convene tenants to brainstorm what sort of additional events or initiatives they might want to spearhead
- There will be a modest budget to support ideas that tenants bring forward, and assistance to connect them with further grant funding for larger projects that benefit all neighbours

- Four online surveys throughout the year will collect information from tenants on what’s working and what’s not, and whether the pilot is leading to increased feelings of social connection, belonging, and community engagement
- Results from the Madrona pilot will inform both the physical design and programming of future Catalyst homes, many of which will take denser multi-family forms than townhomes. Catalyst currently has eight projects in various phases of development in Vancouver, Penticton, Langley, Port Moody, and North Vancouver

About This Report

Throughout fall 2017, a literature review and a series of in-person and phone interviews were conducted in an effort to better understand successful models of sociable design and programming in different types of multi-family housing communities. In addition, a tour of “friendly” buildings conducted by the City of Vancouver’s ‘Hey Neighbour’ project was attended. Interviews were conducted with:

- [Vancouver Cohousing](#) (multiple resident owners)
- [First Avenue Athletes Village Housing Co-operative](#) (resident member Jeremy Murphy)
- [Concert Properties](#) (Beverly Greene, Senior VP Property Management)
- [Artscape Toronto](#) (LoriAnn Girvan, COO and Liam Hanebury, Manager Community Services)
- [Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation](#) (Meg McCallum, Director Membership and Communications, and Natalia Snajdr, Sustainability Facilitator)
- [Options For Homes](#) (Heather Tremain, CEO)
- Matthew Carter (owner, [MGC Projects](#) and past-president of Great Northern Way Trust)
- [SFU Residence and Housing](#) (Tracey Mason-Innes, Director)
- Doris Koo (Catalyst [advisor](#) and ex-CEO of [Enterprise Community Partners](#))
- Gord Tulloch ([PosAbilities](#), Director of Innovation, and contributor to *Living Up, or Living Apart?*)
- [SHIFT Collaborative](#) (Stacy Barter, Lead Facilitator, *Building Resilient Neighbourhoods* Initiative)
- [Happy City](#) (Paty Rios, Project Lead) and
- [Brightside Community Homes Foundation](#) (Carolina Ibarra, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects and Sara Thiessen, Community Development Coordinator)
- An anonymous property manager for a large real estate firm

In addition, the ‘Hey Neighbour’ tour included [The James](#) (condo), The Social (condo), Bluesky Chinatown (purpose built rental), and [District Main](#) (purpose-built rental.) Tours were conducted in some cases by tenants, and in others by building staff.

This work is not intended to be considered comprehensive or statistically relevant, but is rather a targeted snapshot of how a small hand-selected group of different housing and community organizations – largely in Canada – go about connecting and engaging residents.

Similar Projects

Catalyst's pilot project takes place parallel to four other projects worth mentioning.

1. City of Vancouver's *Hey Neighbour* project

Led in partnership by Social Policy and Housing Policy, [Hey Neighbour](#) is a 12-month 'social retrofit' pilot testing ways of creating social connections between residents in two existing market rental buildings in Vancouver.

A part-time coordinator at the City will identify and support resident champions willing to step forward and help organize social and sharing activities at each building. This pilot builds on summer 2017 research by Healthy City Scholar Aylin Tavakoli that resulted in a report titled [Supporting Friendlier, More Neighbourly Multi-Unit Buildings in Vancouver](#) and the tour described above. This report draws on many of the findings by Tavakoli in her scan of 17 Vancouver buildings deemed to be friendly by their residents.

2. Building Resilient Neighbourhoods

The second related project is the [Building Resilient Neighbourhoods](#) initiative hosted by [SHIFT Collaborative](#), a Victoria/Vancouver-based co-operative consultancy. Building off prior work studying and deepening sociability and resiliency in Victoria-area single family home neighbourhoods, it is currently scaling its [Resilient Streets program](#) to four additional B.C. municipalities: Whistler, Richmond, Powell River and Sunshine Coast Regional District. Its project will include a mix of denser multi-tenant buildings and single-family home neighbourhoods, and it will be working closely with municipal staff in each community. Additionally, it is currently piloting *Resilient Streets* activities in several multi-unit buildings in Greater Victoria, working closely with resident champions.

3. Brightside Homes' *Community Development Initiative*

The third is a project that [Brightside Homes](#), a Vancouver-based non-profit affordable housing developer and operator, has been working on since spring 2016. Brightside owns and operates 27 buildings with over 1,000 tenants, largely lower-income families and seniors. It works towards a vision of a future where people of all incomes have a secure home in a vibrant, healthy community. In summer 2017 it worked with two university students to conduct an in-depth Community Enhancement Survey, aiming to get information about their tenants' needs, and ideas for creatively fostering healthier Brightside communities.

By better understanding residents and tapping into their ideas and willingness to volunteer, Brightside is discovering new ways to support residents experiencing social isolation, challenges with aging in place, and barriers to accessing affordable food and support services.

4. Happy City's *Happy Homes Toolkit*

The [Happy Homes Toolkit](#) identifies 47 specific design actions that could be taken to make multi-family housing more sociable. Through fall 2017 and winter/spring 2018 Happy City will engage with planners, developers and architects in Metro Vancouver to explore where the strongest areas of priority and interest lie with regards to the proposed actions; identify technical, regulatory and financial blockages and opportunities to recommended actions with highest buy-in; co-design new policies, incentives, etc. This will enable the housing industry to think about and design multi-family housing linking affordability and social connectedness.

Ten Key Findings and Recommendations

How can you go about building community and fostering more engagement from residents? Here are 10 high-level insights gleaned while preparing this report. *Each is unpacked in detail in **Part Two** of the report.*

1. Good building design pays off.

Thoughtfully designed common spaces and well-situated shared amenities are the physical foundation for facilitating connections between residents. But good building design alone won't build strong community.

2. Convert underutilized spaces for social purposes, with resident involvement.

What is a common space? Can a laundry room be retrofitted into a place for positive social connections? What ideas might residents have for transforming spaces for social purposes?

3. Overcome site limitations with a portfolio strategy and/or community partnerships.

Faced with managing older properties, or newer properties with site or budget limitations? You can overcome a lack of common space ('hardware') by adopting a 'software' mindset.

4. Stability of tenure and governance structures matter.

Cohousing, co-ops, and mature, entrepreneurial housing non-profits employ the most robust and creative strategies for building community and unlocking residents' enthusiasm for engagement.

5. For rental developers and property managers, mission and branding are the biggest motivators for investing in community building.

More work could be done to disseminate business case examples and reward best practices, particularly in the for-profit rental sector. For the non-profit affordable rental sector, some financial assistance may be warranted.

6. When crafting community-building strategies, be mindful of your tenant mix.

Tenants who share a values alignment, occupation, or stage of life often connect more easily. But diversity may be lacking in these models.

7. Engage early, engage often, engage strategically.

Natural champions may emerge organically given the right conditions, but sustained community building among residents requires intentionality and resourcing. Think about all possible touch-points as opportunities to create culture, reinforce norms, and invite a feeling of community and openness.

8. Everyday community-building and tenant engagement is more effective than the BIG event.

A clear and consistent strategy, strategic partnerships, and staff or resident committees specifically tasked with social connections and engagement can make modest budgets go a long way.

9. Effective communication is frequent, varied, and as much as possible, in person.

Don't try to cover every communications medium. Find out what your tenants already use, and commit to a small set of platforms that you can manage well.

10. Measure what matters to your mission.

Take a good look at your organizational mission and think about how you might advance it further by engaging residents more creatively. What could you achieve with a dedicated staff person/people or committee? Which meaningful, measurable indicators might you track?

Context: Trends in rental housing, social isolation, and community engagement

Numerous trends affecting the health and well-being of residents of multi-family housing in British Columbia invite new building design, tenure types, and operational practices.

More renters, Higher rent

Costs for all types of housing have been rising rapidly throughout B.C. in recent years. As homeownership costs have risen, the percentage of renters in larger municipalities has increased.

- Vancouver's [renter population grew](#) from 51% in 2011 (26% of whom were families) to 53% in 2016. Forty-four percent of renters spend more than 30% of before-tax income on rent. Vacancy rates in Vancouver hover around the 0.9% level.¹ The City of Vancouver projects a need for [47,900 rental homes](#) of various types in the next 10 years.²
- [2016 census data](#) showed median monthly rent rising much faster than incomes.³ Renters are more financially strained than owners in all 14 municipalities.⁴
- [2016 census data](#) shows that 32% of British Columbians were renters. Forty-three percent of renter households were paying more than 30% of before-tax income on rent, and 21% were spending more than 50%.⁵
- The percentage of renters in 2016 in Victoria was [61%](#). Nearly half of those renters spent more than 30% of their income on shelter.⁶ Vacancy rates in Victoria are just [0.5%](#).⁷
- The [March 2017 Metro homeless count](#) found 3,605 people living on the street, a 30% increase over 2014 and the highest number ever recorded by the count.⁸ [Fraser Valley homelessness](#) increased from 346 in 2014 to 603 in 2017.⁹

With tightening federal lending rules, rising interest rates, flat or declining wages, a rise in precarious freelance work, and growing economic inequality, the number of renters is bound to continue growing. For an increasing number of British Columbians, renting may be permanent. "This isn't some temporary phase of being on the route to home ownership," notes Director of SFU's City Program [Andy Yan](#).¹⁰

Social isolation grows as community engagement declines

In 2012, Vancouver Foundation polled 3,841 people – including 275 charitable organizations – across Metro Vancouver to learn what issue they cared about most. In its often referenced [2012 Connect & Engage report](#), it was surprised to learn that the issue it expected to top the list – affordable housing and homelessness – was eclipsed by a growing sense of isolation and disconnection.¹¹

How can we begin to tackle the complex issues like poverty and homelessness if people are disconnected, isolated and indifferent? How can we make people care about community issues if their concern stops at their front yard?"

**Vancouver Foundation
Connect & Engage report 2012**

In 2017 the foundation [updated its survey](#) (3,785 respondents and special focus groups.)¹² Though the studies didn't report on the same exact data year for year, there are some clear trends:

- People making less than \$40,000 a year and high-rise residents are most likely to say they spend time alone more often than they would like, or are often lonely;
- Renters, young people and low-income people are significantly less likely than homeowners and older people to say they “feel welcome” in their neighbourhoods and to know neighbours well enough to ask for help.
- Many of the measures of community engagement that were tracked have declined in the last five years.

2017 data

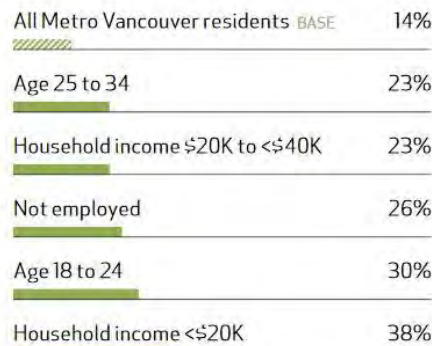
Who spends time alone more often than they would like?



QA9. Do you find yourself spending time alone more often than you would like?

Total respondents = 3,785

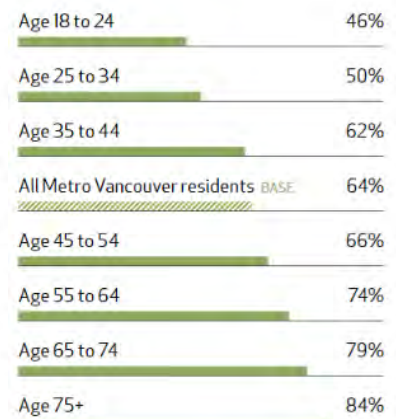
Who experiences loneliness often?



QA10. How often do you feel lonely? (Answer - 'Almost Always' or 'Often')

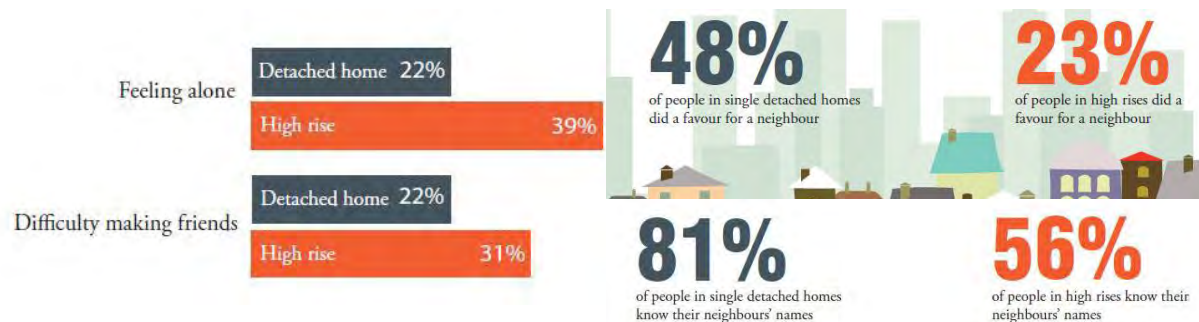
Total respondents = 3,785

How do different age groups experience a feeling of welcome and belonging?



QB3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these statements: 33 A) I feel welcome in my neighbourhood and feel like

2012 data



**** All graphics used in accordance with Creative Commons license, from Vancouver Foundation's 2012 & 2017 reports, and [2012 sub-report](#) on the effect of apartment living on neighbourliness.¹³**

Percentage who responded positively to the question “In the last 12 months, have you done the following?”



Health consequences and policy responses

Strong social connections are a well-researched and significant determinant of health. One frequently cited [2015 study](#) from Brigham Young University showed that social isolation and loneliness are as harmful as obesity, smoking and lack of physical activity, increasing risk for heart disease, depression, dementia and other conditions.¹⁴

Policy makers around the world are taking note of these problematic trends.

- In January 2018 the United Kingdom appointed a [Minister for Loneliness](#) with a mandate to work across multiple ministries to reduce social isolation. The announcement spurred numerous articles and radio shows questioning [whether Canada should do something similar](#).¹⁵¹⁶
- PlanH, a partnership between Ministry of Health and BC Healthy Communities Society, has prioritized [Social Connectedness](#) for its 2017-18 grant stream and is currently supporting 11 municipalities working in partnership with their regional health authority to implement initiatives focused on increasing social connectedness.
- The City of Vancouver has a number of formal strategies that identify goals for alleviating social isolation and increasing community engagement: the [Healthy City Strategy](#), the [Greenest City Action Plan](#), and the [Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force](#). It has identified homelessness and the lack of affordable housing, the increase in social isolation, and growing economic inequality as some of the [chronic underlying stressors affecting the city’s resilience](#).¹⁷

Local reports on the prevalence and risks of social isolation, with ideas for increasing social connectedness and resiliency:

- [Connections & Engagement Reports](#) (Vancouver Foundation, [2012](#) and [2017](#))
- [Building Neighbourhood Social Resilience](#) (Eliana Chia, Greenest City Scholars program, 2014)
- [Living Up, or Living Apart: Addressing the Social Consequences of High-Rise Living](#) (Sabrina Dominguez, for City of Vancouver, 2015)
- [Resilient Streets Toolkit: The How-To Guide For Building Community](#) (SHIFT Collaborative, Building Resilient Neighbourhoods Initiative, 2015)
- [Happy Homes Toolkit](#) (Happy City, 2017)
- [Supporting Friendlier, More Neighbourly Multi-Unit Buildings in Vancouver](#). (Aylin Tavakoli, City of Vancouver, 2017)

Research shows that communities with strong social cohesion and social capacity are better able to manage and bounce back from acute shocks (earthquakes, major storms, or floods, or events like dramatic economic downturns) and mitigate chronic stressors.

Clearly, there are many reasons to get serious about addressing the triple threat of worsening housing affordability, growing social isolation, and declining community engagement.

Conclusion

The new realities of housing in British Columbia's larger urban centres – a higher percentage of renters facing rising costs – presents challenges and opportunities for those who regulate, finance, design, build and operate rental housing. Beyond the pressure to keep rents affordable and tenancies secure is the need to create living environments for renters that are inclusive and connected.

The health and well-being benefit to tenants in building socially connected housing communities is well-documented, but there is also increasing evidence to show that these efforts yield economic benefits to developers, landlords and property managers, in the form of reduced turnover and maintenance costs, positive referrals, and even improved staff morale. At every stage of development and operations, there are low-cost opportunities to engage tenants in the creation of a more connected and resilient community. Each building will have its own particular context and constraints, opportunities and challenges. We hope this report serves as food for thought for those who are ready to experiment with going beyond the provision of housing and into the cultivation of vibrant communities.

For Catalyst, this report and our soon-to-launch pilot, mark the beginning of a journey. We're eager to share our successes, and our failures, along the way, and hope that others do the same.

Takeaway Questions:

Any positive business benefits from investments in social design and programming in rental developments will accrue mostly to developers who hold their assets, not to turn-key developers who quickly sell the development.

How might all types of developers – for-profit and non-profit – be incentivized to design and build for sociability in an expensive, low-vacancy market like Vancouver?

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- ⁶ *ibid*
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PART TWO

KEY FINDINGS
CASE STUDIES

Key Findings

1. Good building design pays off

Thoughtfully designed common spaces and well-situated shared amenities are the physical foundation for facilitating connections between residents. But good building design alone won't build strong community.

Of all housing types surveyed, cohousing and co-op housing had the most generous square footage dedicated to shared space, and the largest variety of intentional shared spaces. The next category of housing types with generous, thoughtfully designed common spaces and shared amenities were newer condos and higher-end market rental. Affordable rentals and older buildings of all types tend to feature less shared spaces, or none at all other than a small entrance lobby.

Without exception, all indoor shared spaces were used more frequently and creatively if they had low barriers to use (physical and financial accessibility), and had a staff person or resident committee animating them.

For example: a party room that's on a random floor, kept locked up when not booked, and only accessible for an hourly fee plus cleaning charges is less likely to be used than a party room that is prominently located off an entrance lobby or other highly used area, free for tenant use, and proactively programmed by a building manager or tenant committee.

Spaces for gardening, eating, celebrating and playing together are the most effective community builders

A common observation from all interviewees was that gathering spaces where people could experience nature, socialize, eat and play were the most effective spaces for building community.

Gardening has strong therapeutic benefits not just for those participating, but those observing. It gives people a safe and simple thing to talk about, it can cross cultural and language barriers, and is an activity that young and old can participate in together.

The communities that decided to manage garden spaces collaboratively, rather than assigning individual plots, reported a higher degree of social connection, and a deeper growth in their capacity to work together, which spilled over into other social activities.

However, not everyone likes to garden, so outdoor spaces that also accommodate shared seating areas, space for kids to play, and even communal BBQs, support a wider range of resident activity.

“

Our survey reveals that 33% of residents in Metro Vancouver do not have a yard or common area where they can easily socialize with neighbours. This figure rises to 44% for people living in a suite-in-house, and 50% for those living in an apartment or condo.

The kind of common areas residents would like to enjoy include community garden (28%), green space or pocket park (22%), BBQ area (18%) and games room (14%).”

**Vancouver Foundation
Connect & Engage 2017**

“

Belief in the significance of architecture is premised on the notion that we are, for better or worse, different people in different places – and on the conviction that it is architecture’s task to render vivid to us who we might ideally be.”

Alain de Botton
The Architecture of Happiness

Gyms and Fitness Rooms

Gyms have become standard in newer high-end condo and market rental buildings. Interviewees observed that though residents like having gyms available, they aren’t conducive to deepening resident connections.

Smaller and more flexible fitness rooms are more common and are featured in a wider variety of housing types. For example, Vancouver Cohousing’s yoga room is also used for meditation, toddler time, dance practice, and other fitness classes. Options For Homes, a non-profit developer of affordable condo projects in the Greater Toronto area, also prefers low-key fitness spaces to gyms, as they’re less expensive to build and maintain, and allow for more diverse and socially inclusive uses.

Case study: 1st Avenue Athletes Village Co-op (Vancouver)



A large open front lobby is used for activities such as kids’ story-time, seasonal decorating, and ping-pong. The lobby flows seamlessly into two well-situated and well-used spaces: a large, welcoming, and airy multi-purpose room with a full kitchen and shared book, toy, and DVD libraries, and the outdoor

courtyard. The office of the part-time onsite building manager is connected to the shared kitchen.

Two communally cared-for rooftop gardens include seating areas, and look out over a shared courtyard and playground. Kitchen windows look out over the courtyard.



The multi-purpose party room and kitchen is always open, and is often used for building-wide gatherings such as movie nights, book clubs, and volunteer committee meetings. A group of resident librarians voluntarily keeps the well-stocked sharing libraries organized and alphabetized.

Case Study: The James (Vancouver)



This 155-unit townhouse and condo complex, built in 2012, is mostly owner-occupied with a few suites rented out.

Rather than situating a party room behind a closed and locked door, The James' common area begins right as you step out of the elevator and into the 13th floor dining room, kitchen, and lounge area. Most walls are floor-to-ceiling glass with incredible city views. The interior is surrounded on three sides with an accessible patio, featuring a large and covered communal BBQ, tables and chairs, and numerous raised beds.

With the exception of closure due to special events and private bookings, the top floor space is open to all residents from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. every day. Every resident – renters included – gets two private bookings of the space per year, at no cost.

When owners first moved in the raised beds were filled with landscaping plants. Over time, residents formed a garden committee. With a series of \$200 - \$500 Vancouver Foundation [Neighborhood Small Grants](#), they began to transform the beds into communal gardens. The communal structure of the gardens forced residents to work together, accelerating social connections, strengthening capacity, and leading to more spontaneous socializing. Eventually a separate social committee emerged, and more grant funding was secured to outfit the shared kitchen with plates, cutlery and other materials to make social gatherings easier.

“ The next thing you knew we were making plans outside of gardening. We were planning social gatherings together, going for drinks, hanging out at the beach.”

James resident, in [Vancouver Foundation](#)

Residents continue to expand the gardens through small grant funding, adding composters, irrigation, etc. This [video](#) is a lovely window into how gardening pulled people together at The James, and also allows you to see how the smart design of their rooftop common space facilitates their efforts.

Other successful shared spaces and amenities

Artscape Toronto: This non-profit urban development organization, whose mission is to make space for creativity and transform communities, owns and manages a number of live/work spaces for artists. Some of the well-used amenities in these spaces include kilns, workshops, small rehearsal rooms and galleries.

Simon Fraser University Housing: Newer buildings feature wellness rooms, interfaith rooms, game rooms, and learning commons (semi-social study areas.) Most of these newer spaces are being designed with floor to ceiling windows to maximize visibility and a sense of openness, safety and inclusivity. In newer buildings, laundry rooms are now being placed next to lounges, with glass walls to encourage connectivity and flow. (To learn more about SFU’s well-being design guidelines check out their [Housing Master Plan](#) and [Healthy Campus Community](#) plan.)

Takeaway Questions: In a market where it’s already very challenging to develop affordable housing, how can we make sure that thoughtful social design isn’t only for the well-off?

What can different levels of government do to support developers who want to integrate good social design while preserving affordability, or property managers who want to invest in social programming?

Bluesky Chinatown: This 191-unit market rental high rise in Vancouver’s Chinatown neighbourhood features a large lobby, an outdoor lounge and individual garden plots, a woodworking room, an internal bike rental program, and a novel co-location feature: side-by-side dog and bike washing stations.

Commercial and other public spaces: Doris Koo, Catalyst advisor and ex-CEO of U.S.-based Enterprise Community Partners says that if you really want to get serious about building community, think of your whole building as a shared amenity for residents *and* non-residents. Enterprise now strongly encourages co-location of commercial businesses and publicly accessible amenities like early childhood education facilities, meeting rooms or community centres in the affordable housing developments that it funds.

2. Convert underutilized spaces for social purposes, with resident involvement.

What is a common space? Can a laundry room be retrofitted into a place for positive social connections? Can a recycling room become more than a dumping area? What could be done to animate hallways or stairwells?

What ideas might tenants and/or owners have for transforming spaces for social purposes? Are there ways you could allow residents to showcase their personalities or cultural traditions in otherwise sterile spaces (front doors, hallways, lobbies)?

Many interviewees had examples of common rooms being transformed over time from little-used spaces to widely embraced spaces, usually based on feedback from residents.

For example, developer and property manager **Kevington Building Corp.** changed up the small gyms on each floor of District Main, a market rental building, after an online survey to tenants about what sorts of equipment they wanted. The results led them to sell all the existing equipment and install what tenants wanted instead, increasing use of the spaces and deepening their engagement with tenants.

After consultation with tenants, 60% of whom are seniors, **Brightside Homes** unearthed huge appetite for community gardens, and for volunteering to help build and maintain them. Along with 50 volunteers, they set about building gardens at nine of their buildings, and plan to continue to expand this successful project.

Takeaway Questions: Are there underutilized or problematic spaces that could be transformed with input and assistance from residents? Are there parts of the building that could be animated or taken care of collaboratively with tenants?

Self-expression holds an important place in defining a collective identity.

“

People are more likely to improve their communication and be empathic among each other when they find a place to be creative and share their ideas and values.”

Happy Homes Toolkit
Happy City, 2017

3. Overcome site limitations with a portfolio strategy and/or community partnerships.

Faced with managing older properties, or newer properties with site or budget limitations? You can overcome a lack of common space (‘hardware’) by adopting a ‘software’ mindset.

Portfolio strategy:

For developers and property managers with multiple properties, think of these properties as interconnected communities, rather than as isolated buildings. This works best for properties with a reasonable degree of geographic proximity.

Examples:

Doris Koo points to New York City-based nonprofit housing and economic development group [Asian Americans for Equality](#) as a good example of how to knit together a portfolio of buildings. Some of its buildings had little to no common space, so it decided to hold major events like Christmas parties or food bank events in the larger spaces, inviting tenants from all buildings. This encouraged mingling between tenants from different neighbourhoods and income levels, and made better use of existing spaces.

A property manager for a 400+ unit property in Victoria explained how three rental properties in Victoria would share amenities. For example, two of their new buildings would share amenities that include a gym and social lounge. None of their buildings in the area have a large enough party room, so a multi-building tenant appreciation event was held in a new downtown public market. Management is considering blocking off a carriage way (a private, treed, pedestrian-oriented street) connecting buildings for a summer party to connect and engage residents.

Many of [Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation](#)'s affordable rental homes and buildings have little shared amenity space, but what is available is open to all 1,600 households and the public. There are three meeting rooms, ranging from a basement meeting room that can accommodate up to 20 people, to a newer space with a full kitchen that can handle 70 people. The spaces are available for free for any event open to CCOC tenants, and carry a very modest fee for private use.

A focus on community partnerships:

Artscape Toronto: Well before it added affordable work/live artist housing to its mix, Artscape Toronto was securing, developing and managing affordable commercial spaces for artists throughout Toronto. Over the years, these spaces have evolved from simpler artist co-locations to transformative master-planned districts with sophisticated arts and culture amenities available to artists and the general public.

As a result of this broader mission, Artscape focuses as much on connecting residential tenants and condo owners to the larger arts and culture community as it does to fellow residents, with a distinct focus on supporting artists' professional livelihoods. It runs a [wide range of programs](#) out of various different Artscape spaces for artists and community members, ranging from artist residencies to business workshops and mentorship services to neighbourhood-based arts initiatives pairing artists with kids and families.

Artscape's community focus is so embedded that it recently renamed its '*property management*' team to '*facilities and community services*,' with a full-time manager of community services. It is the manager's job to understand the totality of the Artscape community and organizational mission, and find opportunities for linkages, initiatives, tenant engagement (commercial and residential) and strategic partnerships.

It also employs a portfolio strategy in that it uses larger available Artscape spaces to host events open to all tenants and residents, over time cultivating a more expansive community than it could at any one site.

“ It's not 'build it and they will come, in terms of common spaces: you need intention and coordination... [] We also think hard about where it makes sense for us to create our own programs, and where facilitating a partnership makes more sense.”

LoriAnn Girvan, COO Artscape Toronto

Centretown Citizens Ottawa: As part of their robust sustainability programming, staff help organize an annual fall tour of CCOC buildings highlighting sustainability features for the board, staff, tenants and the public. In fall 2016 they did the tour by bike, in partnership with Green Energy Doors Open. They have also been a partner for a number of years of [Centretown Movies](#), a weekly pay-what-you-can outdoor family film festival held in a public park in the Centretown neighbourhood. The impetus for the festival came from a tenant, and it was such a good fit with Centretown's mission to revitalize neighbourhood public spaces and engage community that they agreed to house the project within their non-profit and even assist with fundraising. In addition, CCOC has supported tenant-initiated projects like a Good Food Box, and a parent-led daycare group.

Brightside Community Homes Foundation: Brightside partners with dozens of different community organizations as a way to connect tenants to services and supports that can make life more affordable and healthy for them. Examples include neighbourhood houses, food banks, community pharmacies, United Way's Better At Home program (non-medical day to day support for seniors), PosAbilities (assistance for people with developmental disabilities), YWCA and more. More on their strategies for supporting tenants later in this report.

Takeaway Questions: *Are there ways to connect multiple buildings in your portfolio?
What might happen if you thought of all your residents as one big community?*

What ideas might residents have for ways of creating, deepening or supporting community partnerships?

Are there aspects of your corporate or non-profit mission that could be focused on for more strategic, creative resident engagement?

The Centre for Digital Media is an innovative graduate-level educational partnership program jointly owned by Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia and the BC Institute of Technology. The four institutions co-own the Great Northern Way Trust (GNWT), which manages the 10.5-acre campus in one of Vancouver's last major brown-field development sites.

Centre for Digital Media (CDM) students live in the same building where they take their classes. Student housing is well designed and programmed for social connections. A large communal kitchen and student lounges allow students to socialize and collaborate. Resident advisors work with staff to support students and organize social events.

The CDM campus also includes a number of older buildings that have been converted into office space for 15 local tech start-ups.

In an effort to foster social and business connections among commercial tenants *and* CDM students in their related fields (~200 workers and 100 students), it allocated a budget and staff to organize connectivity initiatives open and free for all: a speaker series, a variety of exercise initiatives (yoga classes, running clinics, etc.), business open houses with pizza and drinks, and a food truck program. Some experiments were more successful than others, but over time students and commercial tenants did start to take ownership, gave feedback, and suggest new ideas for activities.

4. Stability of Tenure and Governance Structures Matter.

Cohousing, co-ops, and mature, entrepreneurial housing non-profits employ some of the most robust and creative strategies for building community and unlocking residents' enthusiasm for engagement.

Two things became clear from interviews:

- The ownership, governance structures, and formal missions of housing organizations had a strong effect on how deeply they committed to building community, and how actively they engaged residents in the process.
- The more stable people perceive their tenure to be, the more likely they are to participate in or help organize social activities, or engage in other activities that manage or improve shared spaces.

“

In multi-family housing, legal frameworks that allow tenants to stay in their home for many years can help to nurture a diverse and inclusive community.”

Happy Homes Toolkit
Happy City, 2017

Vancouver Cohousing (Strata Cohousing)

Prospective owners came together years before occupancy to manage all facets of the development through challenging but fruitful consensus decision-making. By the time they move into their homes they have been through the trenches together and have each signed formal agreements detailing the philosophical principles, rules and regulations of what is effectively a strata organization. With help from a property manager who keeps track of legal and financial issues and sources bids for work that is outside the capability of owners to undertake, the cohousing community manages all aspects of the building and community through formal committees and a highly-structured communications and workflow process.



Vancouver Cohousing members socialize in front of the 6,000sf common house.

Vancouver Cohousing was completed in 2015, on three assembled lots. Its 31 units includes two covenanted rental suites. A few suites are also rented out by their owners (secondary market.) Renters are fully included in committees and other activities, but do not have a formal vote on the strata. The one renter interviewed reported feeling completely involved and engaged in the community.

The diversity and depth of sharing and collaboration at Vancouver Cohousing are impressive. In addition to the shared use of spaces such as outdoor garden beds, a kids play room, a craft room, two guest suites, and more, sharing activities include regular shared meals in a large kitchen/dining room, film screenings, informal trading of child care; bulk food purchases, sharing school drop-off and pick-up; sharing of camping gear, kitchen equipment, vehicles; clothing trades, and shared hiring of professionals for on-site music and yoga classes, haircuts, etc.



Though each home has its own kitchen, the common house also includes a large communal kitchen and dining room, where group dinners are held three times a week.

Athletes Village Co-operative Housing (Co-op Structure)

All residents of non-profit co-operative housing are members who vote on building issues and the election of a board of directors to manage co-op business. Members work together to keep their collectively managed home in good order, but there is also a full time Co-op Coordinator, a part-time repair technician/handyperson, and a full-time janitor to help maintain the building and collect housing charges. There is full security of tenure in a co-op: as long as residents abide by the co-op's rules and regulations and pay their rent, they can stay as long as they like.

There is resident turnover of course, but at Athletes Village the main reasons tend to be geographic moves for work or school, or transition to full home-ownership. Often family members and close friends move in, strengthening the ties and support systems within the co-op.

Beyond the attractiveness of affordability and stability, a values-alignment around intentional community living draws people to the co-op housing model. This feeling of security and home leads to ownership-type behaviour: personal investments in remodeling suites, mutual care of common space, and more active bubbling up of ideas for connecting, collaborating and sharing.

Brightside Community Homes Foundation (Non-profit Landlord)

Brightside is a 65-year-old non-profit housing organization that builds "resilient communities for those who struggle to meet the demands of market housing." To ensure that homes are reserved for low-income residents, there is a maximum income cap and rents are geared to income. A resident needs to exceed the maximum income for three years in a row before Brightside begins to work with them to transition to suitable market housing. Enormous effort is expended by staff to keep tenants housed, sometimes even extending temporary in-

house subsidies during times of financial duress, other times by connecting them with external supports such as affordable food programs to reduce costs elsewhere.

In order to balance the need to maintain its housing stock in good condition, and its mission to keep tenants securely and affordably housed, Brightside underwent a rent policy review in summer 2017. Throughout the process it held information sessions to keep tenants informed and receive input. It also undertook an extensive community engagement survey, making in-person visits to tenants to assess their individual needs and gather their ideas for building community and supporting tenants' mental and physical health. Those parallel processes helped to build trust between Brightside staff and residents, unearthed many individuals willing to volunteer their time, proactively identified residents in need of critical support services, and unleashed residents' creative ideas for building community.

Brightside has now committed to organizing and hosting annual health fairs, is building community gardens and supporting tenant-led social gatherings, and is forging an ever larger number of community partnerships that make tenants' lives healthier and more affordable. It is also saving money by reducing tenant turnover and reducing suite damage due to physical and mental health crises.

Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC) (Non-Profit Housing Operator & Neighbourhood Association)

CCOC blends a strong non-profit mission with a formal tenant-driven committee model. The organization grew out of a neighbourhood association that banded together in the 1970s to fight a proposed freeway development. It wanted to preserve existing affordable housing and help preserve the community feel of Ottawa's downtown core, and espoused what now would be considered 'smartgrowth' principles: mixed-income housing, dense walkable neighborhoods with strong public transit, accessible parks and other public spaces etc.

Since then CCOC has grown to include over 50 sites of various sizes, from single family homes and townhouses to larger multi-tenant buildings. About 1,600 households call CCOC rental suites home. Though there is an intentional mix of incomes in CCOC developments, including some subsidized and program-supported units, there is no maximum income beyond which a tenant would be asked to leave. Average tenancy is six to eight years, as opposed to two to three years in the regular rental market.

Takeaway Questions: *For smaller non-profit housing providers with constrained staffing and budgets, would external funding to engage tenants in community building and resilience initiatives be helpful?*

What can your housing organization do to strengthen residents' security of tenure? How can you better execute on your mission by involving tenants more intentionally?

CCOC staff support and are formally directed by volunteer committees and a board of directors. Committees are composed of tenants and community members, and the bylaws for the board require at least one-third tenants and at least one-third non-tenants. Committee membership is open to anyone who attends three meetings as a guest and has a CCOC membership. CCOC encourages tenant participation by providing opportunities to participate in social and sustainability activities and cultivating increased engagement over time. Barriers to participation for their low and middle income tenants are removed by offering to compensate for travel and family care costs. The blend of tenants and community members ensures a diversity and balance of perspectives.

There aren't hard lines between staff and volunteers: several staff are tenants, and staff may participate on committees as tenants or community members. Participation on CCOC committees is now viewed as a valuable professional development

and leadership opportunity for younger professionals and community activists. CCOC has a modest membership fee of \$3 per year. Anyone who pays the fee and agrees to uphold the mission and values is eligible to stand for election to the board, participate as a committee member and vote at the AGM.

Artscape Toronto (Affordable Ownership & Rental)

Artscape's housing portfolio – built starting in the mid-1990s and expanding still - is all live/work units, with a combination of affordable ownership condos, and affordable rental, often in the same development. The ownership units are made affordable through an [innovative program](#) where Artscape offers buyers a second interest-free, payment-free mortgage for 25% of the market price (effectively maintaining 25% equity in each unit.) Sale agreements stipulate that when owners sell, it must be to Artscape-approved buyers (lower income working professional artists), which passes affordability on to creative workers who might otherwise be priced out of central neighbourhoods.

Because Artscape is a non-profit with an ambitious mission to support Toronto's arts and culture community, revenues from all properties flow directly back into the mission, helping launch more sophisticated and ambitious projects over time. Artscape tenants and homeowners are part of an expansive, supportive and increasingly well-resourced community.

5. For rental developers and property managers, mission and branding are the biggest motivators for investing in community building.

More work could be done to disseminate business case examples and reward best practices, particularly in the for-profit rental sector. For the non-profit affordable rental sector, some financial assistance may be warranted.

Mission-oriented non-profit rental housing providers may be the most philosophically aligned, on the whole, towards engaging tenants, providing security of tenure, and building resilient communities. Interviewees in this sector reported some clear business benefits (lower turn-over, less suite damage, greater care of shared spaces), but for the most part they cited their missions as the rationale for staff and financial investments. However, many smaller organizations with below-market or shelter rate rental revenues may struggle with constrained staff and financial resources, and therefore prioritize basic building maintenance and management over community-building initiatives.

With record-low vacancy rates, along with annual rent increase restrictions in B.C.'s Rental Tenancy Act – particularly with new restrictions on the use of fixed term leases – there is little financial incentive for for-profit rental developers and property managers to encourage stable long-term tenancy or invest heavily in programming that connects and engages tenants.

Though there are reduced costs with low turnover and high referral rates, in an extreme low-vacancy situation those reduced costs may be easily outweighed by the ability to raise rents when turnover occurs.

That said, all three for-profit companies interviewed in this study – two of which develop *and* manage their properties – were quite committed to building sociability and community in their buildings. They cited it as part of their inherent mission and corporate culture as opposed to a clear-cut business goal.

Kevington Building Corporation’s District Main (Vancouver)

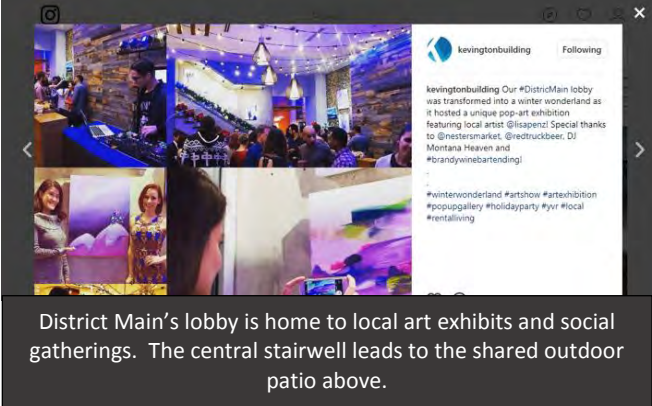
Kevington’s tagline **‘buildings inspiring people, people inspiring buildings’** is a crisp, clear articulation of the importance it places on thoughtful design, consistent and creative community animation, and storytelling that reinforces its ethos (through social media in particular.) District Main (two side-by-side buildings comprising almost 80 rental units) is a testament to what happens when you thoughtfully align effective social design with a small but well-resourced team with the right skills and community-building outlook.

In other [local studies](#) on fostering sociability in multi-family buildings, Kevington staff have confirmed that they experience low turnover and very high tenant referrals. But they have also pointed out a paradox: though their socially-oriented management style results in tenants staying longer and treating the space with respect, the strong feeling of ‘home’ and belonging created for tenants also results in some residents feeling more entitled and making more demands than less engaged tenants might.

The fact that this family-owned company continues to be clearly devoted to a high level of tenant service shows that a strong and strategically implemented corporate mission can override temptations to value maximized profitability over positive tenant experience.

“ A Kevington property is about more than just a great building. It’s a place where thriving communities are embraced and welcomed, and the individual is celebrated. We believe that creating positive living and workspaces fosters vibrant and healthy communities. When you lease a Kevington property, you get a sense of belonging.

Kevington Website



Concert Properties was established in 1989 with a mandate to develop assured rental housing, and is fully owned by union and management pension funds. Since then, it has become a diversified real estate enterprise with assets in excess of \$3.6 billion. Concert has a strong market rental portfolio (approximately 4200 units), with developments in Greater Vancouver, Greater Victoria and Toronto.

Concert prides itself on its role as a community builder, carving out an internal project called '[CommunityWorks](#)' through which it "contributes to not-for-profit causes, parks and recreation, education and training programs." The focus of these efforts, however, doesn't appear to be tenant or building-centric but outward-facing, philanthropic types of activity that staff, tenants and partners are encouraged to participate in.

An interview with Beverly Greene, Senior VP Property Management, focused more on Concert's efforts to increase social connections among tenants.

The biggest events that Concert organizes focused on social connection, are annual tenant appreciation events for each building, which include free food and entertainment. Greene reports varied but generally strong success with these, noting that they work best in buildings with lots of children. Other successful events have been movie nights with free popcorn and pop, kids' afternoon movies in the summer, wine and cheese parties during winter holidays, ice cream days, and sponsored fitness classes like yoga or zumba (Concert pays half, tenants pay around \$4 for a class.) One of the least successful experiments she mentioned was coffee mornings in lounges (people are too busy to really stop and engage).

She said that her team has also investigated various options to get tenants more involved in social connection

“

We want people picking rental as a lifestyle choice. We're trying just as hard to connect with tenants in this low vacancy era as we did when vacancy rates were much higher.

We don't want to just provide four walls for people. We want our tenants to feel valued, connected to others in the building and the community.”

Beverly Greene
Senior VP, Property Management
Concert Properties

Takeaway Questions: *Are there lessons from cohousing, co-op housing and mission-oriented non-profit rental housing that could be applied to your rental properties to decrease social isolation and engage tenants more thoughtfully?*

What level of increased tenant engagement would your staff, owners and/or directors be comfortable with?

What benefits might you see if you explicitly articulated a mission to focus on the social well-being and engagement of your tenants? How might your efforts to date in this realm accelerate if you had staff dedicated to implementing that mission?

efforts. So far it has not been that successful and no new programs have been tried. Partly this has been due to challenges working in older buildings with very few common amenity spaces, and partly because staff do not have dedicated time or expertise to manage comprehensive social programs. Newer Concert buildings are incorporating green roofs, terraced decks with BBQs, tables and lounge chairs, and other amenities such as fitness rooms, games rooms, party rooms, specialized meeting rooms, theatres, and libraries.

Greene has volunteered one of the company's high-rise rental buildings in Vancouver as a site for the City of Vancouver's 'Hey Neighbour' pilot

project, as she found the offer of people power and creative assistance to boost their efforts attractive. It will be interesting to see what 12 months of dedicated and coordinated effort will yield there, and whether it will have a lasting impact on Concert's property management practices. Greene conceded that tenant-led initiatives hadn't been strongly encouraged to date, largely because it has felt challenging enough to just get people to pay attention to event invites. But Concert is interested in strengthening the relationship between tenant and landlord, and if people got excited about connecting through the pilot, then it would look at how it could support this approach going forward.

6. When crafting community building strategies, be mindful of your tenant mix.

Tenants who share a values alignment, occupation, or stage of life often connect more easily. But diversity may be lacking in these models.

A number of truisms were observed through literature review and interviews.

- Pets, kids, and gardens create natural and safe opportunities for people to engage in casual conversation with each other. Those safe and casual connections can then deepen over time through repetition as familiarity and trust build.
- It can be challenging for busy working parents to get involved on committees or volunteer activities unless it's within an intentional community like cohousing or a co-op, where they knowingly chose that sort of involvement and barriers are actively reduced to their participation.
- Seniors with more time on their hands – and often greater levels of social isolation – can be easier to bring together, and are more likely to self-organize, especially if given encouragement and support.
- People at similar life stages or with similar interests connect more easily and perhaps more meaningfully if clustered together (students, parents, artists etc.)

Because most rental buildings contain a mix of people at various ages, from various cultural backgrounds, and engaged in different professional activities, it can be challenging to know what types of activities will be successful, and where to focus time and resources.

Interviewee observations:

Anonymous property manager: In one of their larger Vancouver rental properties there is a very active and largely self-organized seniors' social group that meets at least once a month for movie nights and game nights. Property management staff support seniors' activities through free bookings of meeting spaces, and ensuring that invitations are extended to all tenants at that life stage.

Doris Koo pointed to one of the largest and most well-regarded non-profit housing organizations in the US: [Mercy Housing](#). Working in 41 states, and managing over 48,000 rental and affordable homeownership units, Mercy Housing's mission is underpinned by a [resident-focused approach to poverty alleviation](#) that offers services that help people with various challenges at over 70% of its properties.

Acknowledging the value of connecting people in diverse life stages, but also accommodating the often very different needs of different groups, Mercy is increasingly working on developments that pair family-focused housing with seniors housing, often with common greenspace in between specially-designed buildings where kids can play and seniors can relax and engage with neighbours. It supports programs where seniors help families – and connect with youth – by providing volunteer after school care, informal tutoring and more. It also trains and compensates residents to be community health workers.

“

Although people often seek to create ties with others who are in similar life circumstances, international research has highlighted that keeping the housing for different population groups separate can have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of all groups. [...] When planning policy emphasizes diversity, based on age, gender or cultural group, the result can be more vital, economically strong and socially resilient communities that are also healthier places to live, work, play and study.”

**Happy Homes report
Happy City**

Student Housing

Matthew Carter and Tracey Mason-Innes both discussed how student housing can harness the commonality of interests and life-stages of its tenants to deepen social connections, improve academic performance, and particularly at the graduate level, facilitate professional development and employment opportunities.

Matthew Carter cited the example of UBC's MBA House, where a large meeting room is used for alumni presentations, seminars and special events programmed by the business school. However, he saw it as a model that may not have truly met its potential, partly because non-MBA students were allowed to become tenants a

few years in, diluting the commonality of academic interests, and because there isn't a dedicated staff person animating the facility and engaging the residents. He points to Stanford's vibrant and highly sought-after [Schwab Residential Centre](#), which intentionally clusters graduate business students together and supports the community with intensive social, academic and professional programming.

Tracey Mason-Innes outlined the range of the universities' efforts to positively impact residents during the academic phase of their life. At SFU, there is a ratio of one trained and paid RA (resident advisor) per 40 upper-year undergraduate students, or 50 graduate students. RAs are further supported by RLCs (residence life coordinators), full-time SFU staff who also live in residence

Takeaway Questions: *What does your tenant mix look like? How might you bring people of similar interests or life stages together? What opportunities exist to connect people of different life stages, cultural backgrounds or interests?*

How might you encourage tenants to self-organize or support each other? How might you support and amplify their efforts (space, funds, communications etc.)?

buildings. RAs and RLCs act as peer mentors, conflict mediators, connectors to health and academic resources, and social organizers.

SFU students also have the opportunity to become part of special '[Living-Learning Communities](#)' that allow them to live on the same floor as students with similar interests, and benefit from mentorship and programming to help them thrive. Communities include Engaged Global Citizenship, Beedie School of Business Undergraduates, Leadership Empowerment and Development, and the Indigenous Student Cultural House.

7. Engage early, engage often, engage strategically.

Natural champions may emerge organically given the right conditions, but sustained community-building amongst residents requires intentionality and resourcing. The earlier and more thoughtfully you engage residents, the deeper and wider your efforts will go.

Think about all possible touch-points as opportunities to create culture, reinforce norms, and invite a feeling of community and openness. If residents feel part of something bigger they'll engage more enthusiastically.

Examples:

Options For Homes:

Formed in the 1990s and structured as a non-profit, Options For Homes develops affordable condominiums for people in the Greater Toronto area. Its mission is *"To contribute to a more equitable distribution of wealth in society by making the benefits of homeownership accessible to more people."* To date, it has helped over 3,100 households become homeowners.

It [achieves affordability](#) for middle-income buyers by spreading the word at events in libraries and other community spaces (instead of pricey condo advertising), by eschewing typical for-profit developer profits, and by offering a payment-free shared appreciation loan to each buyer for up to 15% of the unit sale price. When owners sell, they share any increase in value with Options For Homes, which reinvests the proceeds in future similar developments.

During the two to three-year development phase, Options updates buyers on development progress via bi-monthly meetings and building-specific email newsletters. This is an opportunity to answer people's questions, keep them informed of key milestones, communicate Options' unique culture and mission, and build community among future neighbours.



This [video](#) shows how the long journey of community building within one Options condo in Toronto's Distillery District spilled over into residents becoming invested in the development of their wider neighbourhood.

CEO Heather Tremain notes that because of these facilitated pre-occupancy gatherings, tenants begin to self-organize and socialize well in advance of moving in together. Options also hosts parties and tours at holidays and key development milestones: Christmas, ground-breaking, site tours to meet builders, openings, etc.

When a building is ready, there is a months-long transition process where the condominium legally changes hands from Options ownership to strata ownership. In some projects, the new owners have identified improvements they would like to make to their building and these have been paid for from residual development contingencies. Later, owners have access to strata budgets, and tend to be more collaborative around improving or repurposing shared spaces.

Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation: sustainability programming

Though it has always had an inherent focus on economic and social sustainability, CCOC began to focus on the environmental aspect of sustainability about 12 years ago. This was prompted by a realization that “environmental chickens were going to come home to roost” with escalating energy costs, changes in local climate etc. However, instead of just working out mitigation strategies, it decided to include tenants in its theory of change, which was as much about setting new norms of behaviour as it was about changes in building systems and structures. This focus creates an opportunity for interested residents to engage.

Fast forward 10 years and all CCOC buildings have undergone sustainability improvements. New buildings are being built to very high standards, like the five-building [Beaver Barracks](#) development, and an upcoming Passive House building.

Under the green commitments program, a team of three full-time [Membership & Communications staff](#), including one Sustainability Facilitator, is responsible for “membership and volunteer engagement, corporate communications, and community partnerships. They work to involve tenants in energy conservation, recycling, gardening and neighbourhood issues and to promote CCOC through events and activities that build a sense of community.”

Beyond the Green Commitments pledges, three specific outreach campaigns have been created and more are planned: eating greener/urban agriculture, using less water, and reducing phantom power use.

“We create engagement opportunities around sustainability initiatives, but the outcomes are increased sociability and sense of belonging, and resiliency.”

Meg McCallum
Director, Membership and Communications, CCOC



Beaver Barracks, over 200 units of affordable rental apartments and townhomes.

Artscape’s Value Exchange Program:

Coming out of an evaluation of a particular building that wasn’t as engaged or socially connected as it would have liked, Artscape decided it needed more intentionality in its housing programming. It piloted a [Value Exchange Program](#) in two new live/work buildings, where each resident was asked to make a pledge of five hours per

month of volunteer service in the arts & culture community. The pilot project showed so much promise that Artscape will be including it in three upcoming live/work rental and condo developments, taking the number of participants from about 50 to over 200.

Here's how it works. When a prospective tenant or buyer looks into an Artscape development, they are made aware of the mandatory involvement in the Value Exchange Program. If they want to be part of the new development, they have to put together a proposal for what they'll do with their five hours per month. A selection committee vets proposals. The prospective tenants or buyers are not required to know exactly how or where they will act on their pledge; Artscape's full-time manager of community services is there to help connect people with partners who might be interested in their skills, and connect residents with similar commitments for possible collaboration. Because tenants and buyers are often signing leases and purchase agreements a year or more in advance of occupancy, Artscape fosters this community right away, organizing opportunities for residents to meet their future neighbours and getting some going on their volunteering pledges if they're keen.

Though Artscape acknowledged that the program has been a lot of work to get going, it expects that it will become more and more streamlined and self-managed over time. Artscape has found that the program is helping to create very engaged, empowered, and cohesive groups of residents who are actively feeding into and enriching the organization's broader mission. Though it does require some dedicated staff time, the program requires very little additional funding, and doesn't require large amounts of space. This creative program addresses both social isolation and a prominent barrier to people participating in volunteer and community activities: the feeling that they don't have anything to offer, or don't know where to start.

8. Everyday community-building and tenant engagement is more effective than the BIG event.

A clear and consistent strategy, strategic partnerships, and staff or resident committees specifically tasked with social connections and engagement can make modest budgets go a long way.

All of the housing organizations interviewed for this report put time and money into larger seasonal celebrations or tenant appreciation events. The most expensive single events reported were annual tenant appreciation event. Two of three for-profit rental buildings said they spent over \$10,000 a year on tenant social activities, not including upkeep of common spaces and amenities. But most organizations reported spending very little annually on gatherings.

Many examples in sections above show how low-cost activities like gardening, eating together, sharing skills, tools and time, all build community. With a small amount of smart organizing, amazing things bubble up.

Examples:

CCOC: Through an academic partnership with Carleton University PhD students, CCOC put together a sophisticated sustainability outreach and engagement program and green commitments impact-tracking system at very modest cost. It also makes \$1,400/year available for tenant-led activities, and \$3,500/year for staff-led

activities with tenants. Its three-person membership and communications team is guided by a very clear mission and calendar of activities, and is complemented by a volunteer committee composed of tenant and community members. Its work feeds into multiple strategic goals around sustainability, resilience, governance, and engagement, so all costs are easily justified.

Anonymous property manager: Centralized property management staff and resident building managers are all involved in getting word out to tenants about opportunities to connect and socialize, and work to encourage tenants to come forward with ideas, offering small amounts of financial support to help with good ideas for tenant appreciation events or purchase of games. Depending on the size of a development, social activity budgets can range from \$2,000/year to \$10,000/year.

Tap into grant funding: A number of small grant programs exist in B.C. to support community-building efforts between neighbours. This type of small-scale fundraising not only allows for additional funds, but builds community and capacity in the teams working on applications, implementation and reporting.

Vancouver Foundation: Both Vancouver Cohousing and The James mentioned great experiences accessing funding through Neighbourhood Small Grants and Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants. The [Vancouver Foundation website](#) offers ideas and encouragement from past recipients. The small grants model has been so successful that other community foundations around B.C. are implementing the model. Vancouver Foundation's goal is to make the grants accessible to people in all corners of B.C. eventually. It has shared their learnings from the project [here](#).

City of Victoria: For neighbourhood projects that “animate public space, develop and enhance a sense of community and leave a positive legacy,” the City offers [‘My Great Neighbourhood’](#) grants of up to \$5,000.

Building Resilient Neighbourhoods: This Victoria-based project managed by SHIFT Collaborative offers [micro-grants](#), which in the last year supported 20 tenant-led projects or gatherings in multi-unit buildings.

9. Effective communication is frequent, varied, and as much as possible, in person.

Don't try to cover every communications medium. Find out what your tenants already use, and commit to a small set of platforms that you can manage well.

Communication techniques and tools varied greatly between interview subjects, with email being the one tool used consistently by all groups. Two of the for-profit rental groups mentioned only being able to do one-way emailing due to privacy restrictions, but other groups got permission from residents to share emails for topical listservs and personal communications.

Social media was common in many models, sometimes formally managed by a landlord or property manager, and sometimes arising organically among residents as a self-organizing tool.

None of the interviewees reported using other available tools like [Bazinga](#), [TheVillage.io](#), or [GoNeighbour.org](#). (For an inventory of relevant online tools for connecting residents or fostering neighbourhood community sharing, see Aylin Tavakoli's [Supporting Friendlier, More Neighbourly Multi-Unit Buildings in Vancouver](#).)

All interviewees reported that getting good turnout at events required getting the word out in every format possible, repeatedly, with face-to-face invitations yielding the greatest buy-in.

Examples:

Vancouver Cohousing: Because of the intensive committee structure and consensus decision-making model, this group displayed the most in-depth resident-led systems for communicating and problem solving. Emails, google groups, social media and [kanban boards](#) (a lean system concept for work-sharing) are used on a regular basis. A special process committee keeps the overall systems working sanely, and they've invested in capacity building such as a workshop on conflict transformation.

Athletes Village Housing Co-operative: Email, Facebook groups for specific topics (clothing swaps, kids activities etc), and even [Slack](#) are used by members of Athletes Village to organize themselves. Notice boards and elevators are also areas where people can learn about activities and issues. One tenant has even decided to take on kids' birthday announcements, posting a monthly notice in elevators including all known birthdays that month.

Options For Homes: During the development process, regular building-specific eNewsletters are circulated to members/purchasers, answering questions posed during in-person meetings and updating on progress, and email listservs are set up so that neighbours can communicate. They are also working on a new CRM tool (customer relationship management) that will include a purchasers' portal and systematize a series of customizable emails at various touch-points in the lifecycle of a development. Once a new condo is transferred over to its strata, direct communications are no longer managed by Options.

Artscape has a vibrant social media presence, and some buildings have their own Facebook groups and pages. Staff put together an eNewsletter for each individual commercial and live/work building. Currently the main Artscape Facebook page focuses on its own events, initiatives and news, but the organization plans to more proactively share resources and opportunities of broader interest with its growing community. It is also in the process of expanding its CRM into being a rich tenant/member portal for communicating with Artscape and sharing with the broader Artscape network.

CCOC is intentional about every communications touch-point, always making sure to keep the tone positive, celebrate victories and continually remind tenants of gatherings and neighbourhood events, daily sustainability actions they can take, and other opportunities available to become more engaged in CCOC decision-making.

Its communications and engagement strategy goes well beyond getting people out to events, onto committees, and suggesting ideas for events and initiatives: it's about behaviour change and a conscious evolution of shared norms.

While CCOC uses email, monthly newsletters, social media, posters, and other physical materials like detailed tenant handbooks and calendars to communicate, it still says that face to face is the most potent way to inform, engage, and build relationships.

Its membership and communications strategy is deeply informed by the community-based social marketing theory developed by Doug McKenzie-Mohr. [McKenzie-Mohr's techniques](#) emphasize “direct contact among community members and the removal of structural barriers, since research suggests that such approaches are often most likely to bring about behaviour change.” Barriers to socializing and engaging can be physical ones imposed by building structure, or they can be language or culture-oriented, or economic. CCOC staff work diligently to remove barriers or work creatively around constraints.

“

If you want to create new norms of behavior, you have to embody the norms you want to see, in all forms of communication and in all actions. There are many opportunities to set, embody, and celebrate those norms: look for all possible touch-points. All players need to be singing from the same songbook: cleaners, property managers, tenant custodians, staff etc. Never use a condescending or critical tone, always praise success. [...]

“Most people are drawn to the ‘magnetic middle’: not to exceed a goal, but not to be at the bottom on the pack. The goal over time is to move the middle upwards, in terms of performance & norms. People innately want to be part of something successful, something measured and tangible, not abstract. Giving regular positive feedback makes people tend towards trying harder.”

Meg McCallum

Director of Membership & Communications, CCOC

10. Measure what matters to your vision.

Consider your organizational mission and think about how you might advance it further by engaging residents more creatively. What could you achieve with strategically deployed resources? Which meaningful, measurable indicators might you track?

Few interviewees spent significant time or energy identifying metrics or tracking efforts at increasing social connections or encouraging sharing and collaboration. Most reported that they put energy and resources into the activities because it was the right thing to do, it supported the larger vision, or it just made developments obviously happier and healthier places to be. Some also described how focusing on sociability, sustainability or tenant engagement increased staff morale and retention. Measuring results wasn't essential to them, because no one was demanding that information. However, most interviewees commented that having stronger impact metrics would support the business case for making investments in community building, and that if they could find time to do it, they would.

The most typical examples of tracking metrics were output-focused: number of people showing up at events, shared meals, or meetings for example. Some did event evaluations or comment boxes in lobbies.

Tracey Mason-Innes at [SFU Student Housing](#) outlined their tracking of outcomes. Because it is to a certain degree responsible for student well-being and performance, SFU's Residence Life program conducts detailed tenant surveys every two years, and has robust information on how peer and staff supports and shared amenities impact student well-being and academic performance. The program also benchmarks those studies against other

educational institutions. Resident advisors do a needs assessment with each student resident at the beginning of the year to identify what types of supports they might require.

CCOC has initiated a regular tenant satisfaction survey. Meg McCallum said *“Up until 2 years ago, I would have said our work was justified based on values alone, with no tracking of numbers etc. Now we’re tracking participation, budgets, satisfaction, etc, to try and quantify our impact and maximize the social impact.”*

Artscape is undertaking a project called the Thriving Artists Initiative, which will attempt to measure the impact of clustering workspace and other supports for artists.

Doris Koo mentioned that many funders would love to see outcome-focused reporting on programs that address social isolation and other issues faced by low- and moderate-income tenants, but that this information can be difficult to compile, other than anecdotally. However, groups like Mercy Housing are attempting this type of reporting by doing longitudinal studies that track the health status of seniors before and after interventions by community health workers at their housing developments.

Takeaway Comment

If forward-thinking players in the affordable housing, social inclusion and resiliency fields can get better at measuring what works, it will be easier for policy makers and funders to get behind supporting the work. Clear examples and compelling stories will help to shift the industry and scale working concepts.

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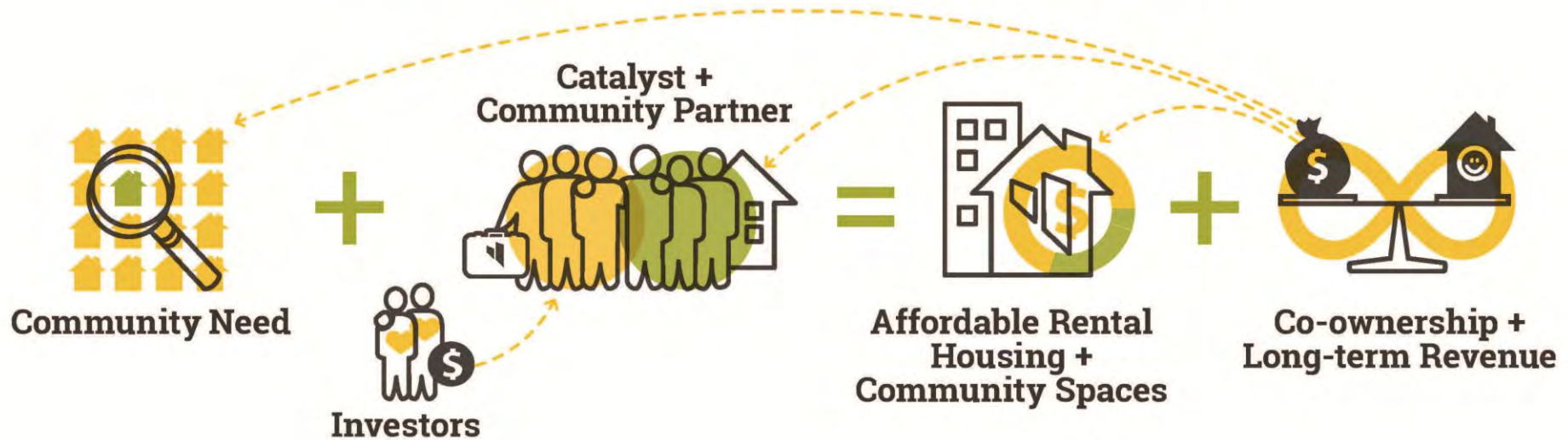
Appendix 7.

December 2018 presentation to
City of New Westminster

Community Connections Pilot

• The Catalyst Business Model •

Catalyst partners with non-profit organizations and municipalities to create new affordable rental homes and community spaces, and achieve long-term financial sustainability.



What does it really mean to build vibrant, affordable and inspiring places for people to live?

Is enough to create the buildings and the landscaping, and to offer security of tenure and rents affordable to working people?

Could we be more ambitious, and take active steps to intentionally foster a friendly, socially connected, resilient community in our developments?

% Renters



- 53% of Vancouverites are renters; 59% of Victoria residents
- Renters in all 14 GV municipalities more financially strained than homeowners

Affordability



- 44% of Vancouver renters spend more than 30% of before-tax income on rent
- Across BC, 29% are renters; nearly 50% spend more than 30%; nearly 25% spend more than 50%

CoV estimates 62% of lived-in dwellings are apartments

Social isolation



- 39% of Metro Vancouverites in high-rises say they're alone more often than they'd like (VF, 2012)
- 26% of renters say they never chat with a neighbour, or once/yr

Civic engagement



- Over 50% of VF Connect & Engage respondents had not participated in neighbourhood or community activities in previous year
- Most oft-cited reason was feeling they had little to offer;

HOMES THAT CONNECT US

Building social connections and
community engagement among
residents of multi-family rental
housing

Prepared by Michelle Hoa
Spring 2018

catalyst
Community Development

Best practices research:

- Co-housing
- Co-op
- Non-profit below-market rental
- For-profit market rental
- Graduate student housing
- Strata condos
- Non-profit affordable ownership

10 Key Findings &
Recommendations



Detailed Case
Studies



Catalyst's
'Community
Connections Pilot'

Madrona: affordable
housing component of
larger Dockside Green
development



Rents range from \$695 for studios to \$1650 for 4 brms. 49 units total.

Maximum household income ranges from \$29,500/yr to \$67,000/yr.



Catalyst's pilot?



Maura Chestnutt
(VP Operations &
Strategic Initiatives)

- Staff lead (pilot activities) & consultant (research, documentation, analysis)
- 4 Catalyst-led social events
- Facilitated 'town hall' sessions with tenants
 - 3/yr
 - Develop landlord / tenant rapport; landlord vs property mgr
 - Manage issues & concerns; communicate re progress on building deficiencies
 - Plan 4 Catalyst-led social events together
 - Brainstorm tenant-led ideas

Catalyst's pilot?



Catalyst-led:

- BBQ @ Vic West Streetfest
- Halloween
- Jan & April 2019 TBD, with tenant input

Tenant-led:

Happening: Recycling shed

Yet to come: Community garden, Gorge clean-up, earthquake prep, skills roster, shared library, easter egg hunt, bike skills, etc.

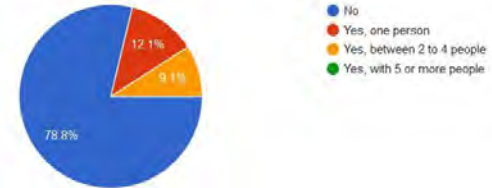
Catalyst's pilot?

- Tracking key metrics

- Four online surveys (connection & tenant experience)
- Participate in, and document Catalyst-led events
- Diarize experience of staff

5. Were you on a first name basis with any future Madrona neighbours BEFORE you moved in?

33 responses



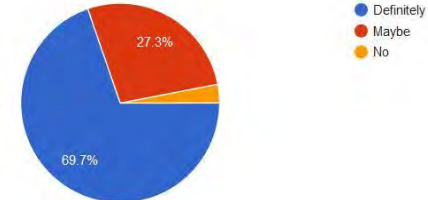
6. How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?

33 responses



9. Would you like to get to know your Madrona neighbours better?

33 responses



Key findings & recommendations

(and how they relate to our Madrona experience so far)

Good building design pays off. (But it's not everything)

- Front stoops, small patios, kids & pets (“forced to know your neighbours!”)
- Building deficiencies bring people together!!!

Convert underutilized spaces for social purposes, with resident involvement.

- Additional bike storage becomes recycling shed
- Covered parking & closed street as event space

Ten key findings & recommendations

(and how they relate to our Madrona experience so far)

Overcome site limitations with a portfolio strategy and/or community partnerships.

- No common amenity space; Ollie & Quinn lucky break; all future buildings will have

Stability of tenure and governance structures matter.

- Relief and appreciation for the non-profit Catalyst model

Ten key findings & recommendations

(and how they relate to our Madrona experience so far)

Engage early, engage often, engage strategically.

- Do-over? Get tenants together before move-in; introduce tool like Bazinga immediately; communicate mission and Catalyst / Randall North roles off the bat. Organizing from Vancouver a challenge.

Everyday community-building and tenant engagement is more effective than the BIG event.

- Town halls; Bazinga; inexpensive efforts; hope that tenant-led efforts take off

Ten key findings & recommendations

Effective communication is frequent, varied, and as much as possible, in person.

- Trust is built in-person; tenants have limited interest in communication, but many value relationship

Measure what matters to your mission.

- Seeing good feedback, and change from move-in to present. How to measure business impacts? Capacity a challenge.

HEY NEIGHBOUR COLLECTIVE



MORRIS J. WOSK
CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE



VancouverCoastalHealth

metrovancover



NEW WESTMINSTER



BCNPHA
BC Non-Profit Housing Association

LANDLORDBC



Hey Neighbour Collective

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graph TD; HNC[Hey Neighbour Collective] --> COP[Community of Practice: Pilot site partners]; HNC --> R[Research: SFU Urban Studies, VCH]; HNC --> KM[Knowledge mobilization]; COP --> EX[EXISTING: Catalyst & Brightside; 3 CRD C&P]; COP --> NEW[NEW]; EX --> OEP[Other existing projects]; NEW --> TBD[TBD sites: BRN & Connect and Prepare]; NEW --> HNM[Hey Neighbour model: new landlords & property managers]; KM --> BCPH[BC Non-Profit Housing]; KM --> LBC[LandlordBC]; KM --> HC[Happy City]; KM --> YO[YOUR ORG?];
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Community of Practice:
Pilot site partners

EXISTING: Catalyst & Brightside; 3 CRD C&P

Other existing projects

NEW

TBD sites: BRN & Connect and Prepare

Hey Neighbour model: new landlords & property managers

Research:
SFU Urban Studies, VCH

Knowledge mobilization

BC Non-Profit Housing

LandlordBC

Happy City

YOUR ORG?

Short-term goals

- Residents in pilot buildings have increased their sense of “neighbourliness” and community through connecting with their neighbours in diverse ways.
- Partners, housing industry, property managers and policy makers have:
 - increased their understanding of their potential role as champions and change agents within this system.
 - increased their knowledge of diverse approaches to potential programming, design, management and policy solutions that can contribute to more socially connected buildings.

Long term outcomes

- **Measurable increase in social connection and neighbourliness amongst residents of multi-unit buildings.**
- **The way that multi-unit buildings are built, managed and engaged with is positively transformed.**

What now?

- **Funding!!!**
- **New pilot site partners**
- **New municipal partners**
- **New knowledge mobilization / industry partners**

Let's talk!



**Francis
Heng**

New Pilot
Projects
Director



Michelle Hoar

Project Director

Michelle.hoar@gmail.com



**Stacy
Barter**

Director of
Learning &
Evaluation

Appendix 8.

Spring 2019 presentation to
Catalyst board of directors

Community Connections Pilot

What does it really mean to build vibrant, affordable and inspiring places for people to live?

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To offer security of tenure and rents affordable to working people?**

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development



Rents range from \$695 for studios to \$1650 for 4 brms. 49 units total.

Maximum household income ranges from \$29,500/yr to \$67,000/yr.





Maura Chestnutt
(VP Operations &
Strategic Initiatives)

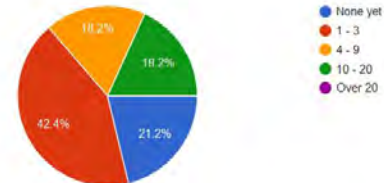
Catalyst's pilot?

- Staff lead & consultant; small budget
- 4 Catalyst-led social events & town halls
- 4 online surveys, documentation after events, staff interviews throughout, public report at end



6. How many Madrona neighbours are you on a first name basis with NOW?

33 responses



Goals?

- **Increase social connectedness *amongst* Madrona residents and foster tenant engagement**
- Increase positive connections *between* Madrona and other Dockside Green residents
- Strengthen Madrona tenants' feelings of belonging, inclusion and engagement *within* Vic West community
- Achieve the above goals with a *clear sustainability ethic* guiding Catalyst and tenant decisions (social, economic and environmental)
- **Foster a program that is *financially sustainable* without grant inputs in future Catalyst developments**
- **Maximize the positive social potential of Madrona's physical design.**

“I’m at the happiest point in my life partially because of my new job 1 block away, but mostly because of this cool suite.

The affordability of my rent gives me a sense of security I’ve never felt before ,it’s a good feeling!”

“Everyone I talk to about this place is interested but when it comes to Catalyst's goals and how they've followed up with us, jaws simply drop.

Nobody's heard of this kind of thing before. I absolutely love the sense of integrity behind this place. I've never felt so respected as a tenant, and had such a mutually helpful working relationship with owners.”

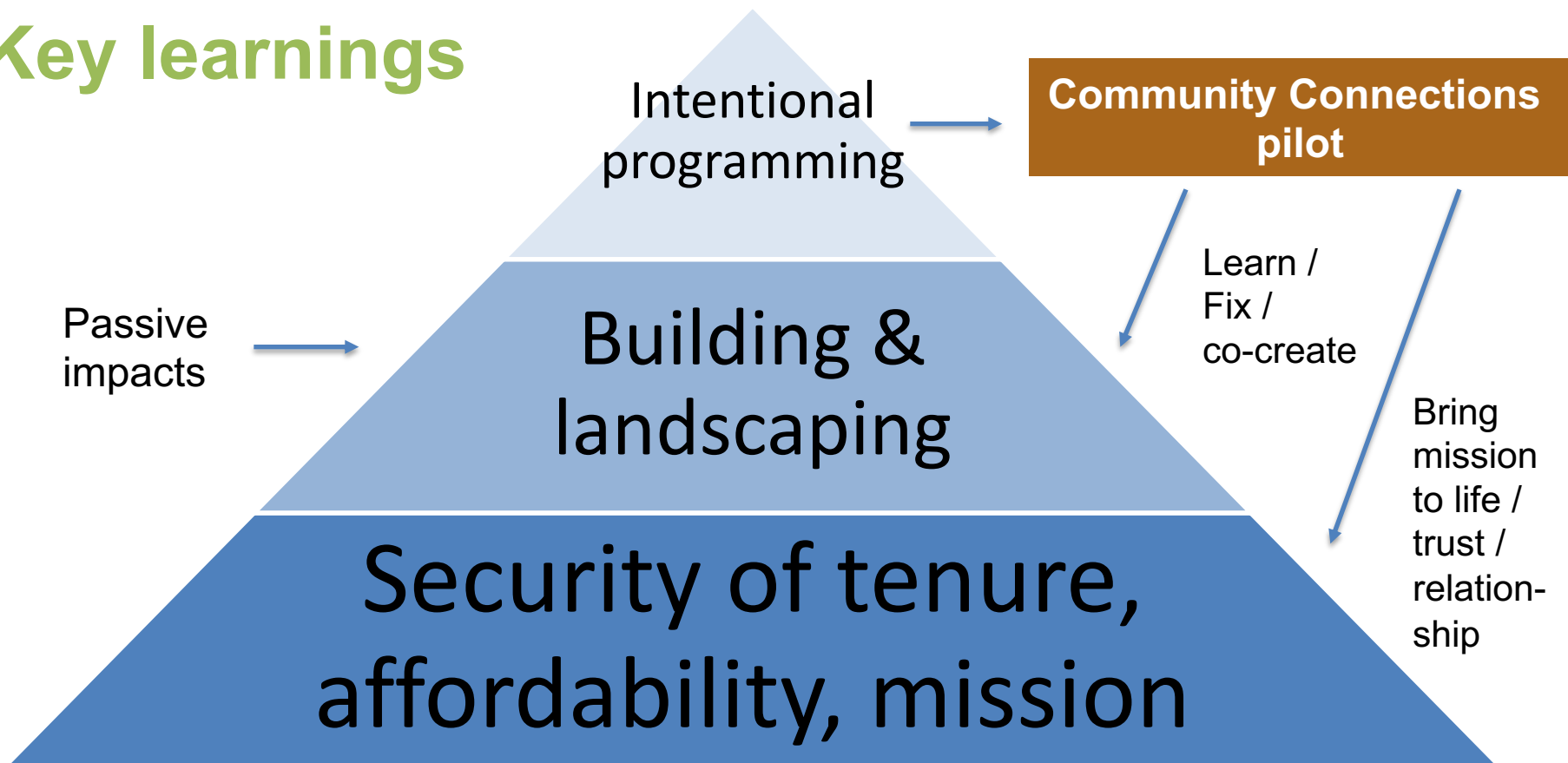
Couple starting a family in their early 30s:

“This is the first place where we have bothered to get to know our neighbours.”

Randall North's experience of CC

- Overall positive: “A nice idea for tenants” and “a very brave idea.” A lot of appreciative feedback by email and at events.
- Tenants seem to know each other better than at other RN buildings. They share things, help each other, etc.
- More feedback and information sharing; time consuming but good for discovering problems; people feel safe bringing issues forward.
- Would recommend to landlords with new buildings; fresh community as opposed to social retrofit. Easier in townhome typology as opposed to apartment.
- How do we educate new tenants (turn-over) about CC?

Key learnings



ACTION

+

RESEARCH

+

DIALOGUE

=

- Wellbeing, resiliency, engagement outcomes
- Industry change
- Better designed MU housing
- Policy change



What will we study?

- Impacts of different types of intentional social programming on **residents'** self-reported sense of well-being and social connectedness
- Impacts of above on partners' **business fundamentals** & practices
- **Role of built design** in different programs' success / challenges
- **Policy environment** that positively / negatively impacts this work; what opportunities exist to improve policy & funding environment to get better uptake for this work?

Long term outcomes

- **Measurable increase in social connection and neighbourliness amongst residents of multi-unit buildings.**
- **The way that multi-unit buildings are built, managed and engaged with is positively transformed.**

What now?

- **Funding!!! (hoping for July 2019 start, scaled back)**
- **New pilot site partners**
- **New municipal partners**
- **New knowledge mobilization / industry partners**

Fit with regional planning priorities?

- Connect & Prepare; resiliency, emergency prep
- Belonging / engagement; health outcomes
- Better building design for denser cities, happier, more engaged people
- Make vertical, urban, transit-oriented living desirable
- Strengthen case for affordable, secure, purpose-built rental and other non-ownership models

Let's talk!



**Francis
Heng**

New Pilot
Projects
Director



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Project Director

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**Stacy
Barter**

Director of
Learning &
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