

**The lived experience of North Park neighbourhood residents as it relates to community
planning, social inclusion, and well-being**

By

Kate McAllister
B.Sc., University of Victoria, 2017

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

This research aims to gather input into the health, wellness, social inclusion and dynamics within Victoria's North Park, a mixed-used mixed income neighbourhood. Employing a community-based participatory approach in collaboration with the North Park Neighbourhood Association, 19 participants were interviewed. Analysis revealed diverse perceptions of the neighbourhood emphasising the community in a period of transition, competing interpersonal relationships and the impact of policy and bylaws on daily life. Residents expressed frustration with political decision-making processes and tensions between housed and unhoused neighbours and territorial stigma was pervasive. Despite advocacy for inclusivity, exclusionary attitudes persisted. Placemaking was identified as both a barrier and facilitator to community connection and well-being, alongside concerns about ongoing development and gentrification. This research underscores the importance of accessible public spaces and community programming as vital resources for fostering well-being and inclusion through centering community voices in neighbourhood planning. While territorial stigma persists, opportunities for meaningful community engagement offer hope for resilience and connection. Achieving this outcome requires buy-in from both community and local government, and equitable decision-making processes to promote community well-being in dynamic urban environments.

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Dedication

This research was made possible with the support and guidance of my professors, friends, and family. I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisory committee Dr. Nathan Lachowsky and Dr. Kiffer Card who have supported and mentored me throughout this process and pushed me to the finish line. To the NPNA and Sarah Murray who continually helped to shape this process through their invaluable collaboration. Their unwavering dedication to the betterment of the North Park community has been a driving force behind this project's success.

I would like to further express my eternal gratefulness to the gracious members of the North Park community who generously opened-up and shared their stories and insights with me. Your willingness to entrust me with your narratives has enriched this work beyond measures.

Finally, I would like to thank my support network, to my family and friends thank you for being patient, supportive and encouraging through every step of this process.

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Introduction

My thesis is rooted in community-based participatory research to provide insight into and understand the various factors at play in the evolving and dynamic ecosystem of communities in transition through conducting a local community needs assessment focusing on experiences of community members in the North Park neighbourhood of Victoria, British Columbia (BC). In partnership with the local neighbourhood association (North Park Neighbourhood Association) at their request, we co-developed and evaluated data collected through interviews from local community members. My thesis also draws on the disconnect between local planning processes on lived experience of community members, and the various intersections of understanding and accessing public space from diverse actors in community. In particular, I examine how these processes are related to and have an impact on community well-being and inclusion.

I worked alongside the neighbourhood association between 2021 and 2023 during this project. In this role, I built relationships with the NPNA and was invited into community spaces to discuss and learn from members in the North Park which was developed with and for these community members. Despite being a local resident of Victoria and having grown up in the City, it is important to acknowledge that I am not a resident of the neighbourhood, nor does my neighbourhood face the same challenges as the North Park. While I did spend time in the neighbourhood growing up and accessed some of the facilities in the community – it was an intentional process to gain trust and build relationships with the NPNA and to be welcomed into conversation with community members.

Background and Significance

The North Park neighbourhood is located to the northeast edge of the downtown core in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. It is a diverse, mixed-income, mixed-use community and is approximately 1 km² (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2019). According to the 2016 census, 3,565 residents and over 2,000 households reside in North Park (City of Victoria, 2022). However, North Park is also home to a congregation of people who lack stable housing. Therefore, the population is likely noticeably larger considering the point-in-time count for 2020 identified 1523 individuals who lack stable housing, which is an undercount considering hidden homeless and those who cycle in and out of homelessness (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2021). North Park is one of the few remaining areas of affordability in Victoria with average property value in December 2020 being \$673,727 (City of Victoria, 2020). Data from the 2020 Canadian census found that North Park has the greatest population density (33% higher than Victoria) (AreaVibes, 2023) and highest population growth in Victoria (15.5% growth) from 2011-2016 (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2019). Despite the community being considered affordable, median household income (\$41,425) is 52% lower than British Columbia (AreaVibes, 2023). Furthermore, 52% of North Park residents live in core housing need and 31% live in subsidized housing (City of Victoria, 2019). Core housing need is defined as a private household housing falling below threshold for either housing adequacy, affordability or suitability and the household spends more than 30% of before tax total income on rent (Statistics Canada., 2021). This is disproportionately higher than other areas of the city whereby fewer than 15% of resident households live in non-market housing (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2019). The Financial Health Index indicated that North Park ranked 78/78 in the capital region for financial vulnerability in terms of household income, real-estate

assets and neighbourhood poverty. Furthermore, North Park houses a high percentage of renters (79%), one in five people being visible minorities (20%), and one third (31.4%) of the population is between 25-34 years old (AreaVibes, 2023; City of Victoria, 2019). The proportion of children aged 0-5 and aged 6-17 living in poverty is 34% and 52% respectively, additionally 51% of seniors are living below the poverty line (City of Victoria, 2019). Understanding this demographic breakdown is especially relevant to bolstering community well-being and connection considering that renters report lower quality of life across multiple dimensions of well-being and are more financially vulnerable than those who own property. Renters also report having a lower sense of belonging in their community and increased levels of loneliness (Statistics Canada., 2024).

Furthermore, there are infrastructure and economic realities in the the North Park neighbourhood that must be considered. The continued ageing infrastructure, rising housing costs, and cost of living have left fewer opportunities for individuals and families to settle and participate meaningfully in their community. The above-mentioned numbers are taken in tandem with consideration that chronic stress is associated with poor neighbourhood conditions and inadequate housing conditions can have implications that contribute to negative physical and mental health outcomes (Hernández et al., 2016). As the community continues to rapidly expand, there is more strain on sharing the current resources in the neighbourhood. Gentrification of the area and resulting increases in both rental and housing prices should be considered as a concern as the current population in North Park is already in a financially fragile position.

Northern City of Victoria neighbourhoods, including North Park, house among the greatest number and proportion of urban Indigenous people, newcomers, and people of colour. It is also one of the only densely populated neighbourhoods in Victoria without a community

centre and has been identified by the City of Victoria Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan as park deficient (City of Victoria, 2023; North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2019). Despite this, the largest park in the community remains fenced off with little access outside of organized and pay entry events. There is a disproportionate concentration of calls to service in this neighbourhood including assaults and drug-related quality of life calls (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2019). The lack of community amenities including no community centre, and few other safe public places to gather such as parks, taken in conjunction with the lasting impacts of COVID-19 pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities and areas of need in the community. Since the abovementioned statistics are from census data, it is unreasonable to assume this is a perfect representation of the make-up of the community. Many marginalized people including those living in non-legal suites and many of the people who currently lack stable housing who spend time in this neighbourhood are not included.

While this neighbourhood shoulders a burden in terms of core housing needs, financial vulnerability, calls to service, and lack of community amenities, it also boasts a vibrant community. The neighbourhood is architecturally diverse with both landmark and heritage buildings, historic and culturally diverse places of worship, and some of the City's major sports facilities including Save-On Foods Memorial Arena and Royal Athletic Park. It is close to the downtown core, has light industrial, apartment, single family dwelling, and North Park Village, a commercial zone with food, services, artisans, and other commerce opportunities. Due to the high concentration of social services (shelters, drop-in centres, harm reduction services, supervised consumption sites, etc.) and many people who currently lack stable housing are spending time and sheltering on the 900 block of Pandora, the "community" described in this project is much larger than the 3,565 residents included in census data.

Please see a map of the North Park neighbourhood in relation to the greater Victoria area.

The North Park neighbourhood has been highlighted in green.

Figure 1

Identifying North Park Neighbourhood (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2024)



Research Objectives

The North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA) expressed interest in conducting a needs assessment in their urban community to gather information about the health, wellness, and social inclusion of those living, working, and spending time in North Park. North Park is currently in a pivotal moment of transition. Housing development, public facility construction, parks, and green spaces have all remained stagnant for some time in conjunction with the growing need to share current resources among a rapidly expanding community. These issues are not unique to the North Park. Canada remains the fastest growing G7 country, with a projected population expected to exceed 55 million by 2068 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Needs of residents

will continue to change with continued urbanization and pressure on surrounding neighbourhoods to absorb much of the growth. Higher density neighbourhoods within similar footprints will result in more reliance on public spaces. To meet this demand, access to and planning of public spaces to better suit its residents is required.

The City of Victoria released a local area plan for North Park neighbourhood in conjunction with the city's Official Community Plan to guide the evolution of communities for 2040 (City of Victoria, 2022). However, residents have previously cited inaction and non-fruitful community engagement in community planning processes as insufficient to meet demands of their changing community and, in some instances, Councils closed session decisions in neighbourhood planning are further exacerbating pressure points in the neighbourhood (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2023). This is exemplified by the City designating 16,500 sq ft. space as a "Community Centre" in an area that is currently "volatile and unmanaged", ironically with use of the "community" space being decided on by the city with no input from the community for who it is intended (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2023).

Participatory Research Framework

A community needs assessment can help to support the NPNA to highlight and emphasize the unique qualities of their neighbourhood and learn more about the residents and what their needs are relating to key determinants of health and well-being. Previous findings indicate that community needs assessments are well suited to identify service gaps and unmet needs in a community (Finifter et al., 2005). Incorporation of community-based participatory research (CBPR) was highlighted as important by the NPNA to maximize partnerships in the community needs assessment (Kirk et al., 2017). CBPR was chosen as this approach is based on identifying and highlighting local knowledge and experience to leverage change (Jason &

Glenwick, 2016). Participatory research can counter effects of oppression and social injustices, therefore undertaking a needs assessment grounded in CBPR is well suited to the North Park neighbourhood where diverse ethnicities, religions, backgrounds, economic realities, and a high concentration of social services converge (Padgett, 2012). CBPR engages community members directly to help with research design and creating action plans to help address the research findings. This is relevant as the North Park Neighbourhood Association and community has expressed interest in undertaking this project. Shared ownership through meaningful collaboration throughout the community needs assessment results in planning a project that is appropriately and culturally situated than can have long lasting impacts (Kirk et al., 2017). Furthermore, it can help to bolster community relationships, community ownership, and capacity essential to sustainability and creating effective lasting community change that improves health and quality of life (Woodyard et al., 2015). Community partnership has been found to be one of the most effective strategies for eliminating health disparities in communities (Kirk et al., 2017; Woodyard et al., 2015). Understanding circumstances of people's lives is an essential component of the development and implementation of policies and programs to reduce inequities, foster healthier living, and provide more opportunities within and between neighbourhoods.

This study is significant as current City proposed plans are inadequately addressing the needs of residents as they relate to community spaces and community needs, which reproduces inequities in the community. The proposed City of Victoria draft plan opens an opportunity for the research collected in this project to empower community-led decision making in local planning processes. The needs assessment will help identify gaps between current conditions and desired conditions in North Park and determine who is being underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized in order to inform policy, guide investment decisions (capital investments,

operating budgets, procurement, and grants), and distribute social services appropriately to create a more equitable neighbourhood.

This research is a novel assessment of the North Park community aimed to study the lived experience of people who work, live, or spend time in the community as it relates to community planning, social inclusion, and well-being. Prior to implementation of this project, previous research included a quantitative “Community Values Survey” (Gibson, 2020) to understand how people in the neighbourhood wanted to see their neighbourhood develop, the City of Victoria’s North Park neighbourhood Plan (City of Victoria, 2022) for guiding evolution of plans and policies over the next 10 to 20 years, an equity toolkit for Community Benefits Agreements and Community Land Trusts in North Park by Queen’s University (Ford et al., 2020), an equity slide-deck on preferred location for the City’s Recreation and Wellness Center (North Park Neighbourhood Association, 2019), and a Land Uses Map project that provides ongoing asset-map of neighbourhood use (Josephson et al., 2021). None of these projects assessed lived experience using qualitative data to understand social inclusion and well-being in North Park. This gap in knowledge is filled in part by this research project.

Theoretical Frameworks

Territorial stigma and placemaking are the theoretical frameworks that will be used to inform analysis of this work. In particular, understanding the intersection of territorial stigma, placemaking, and the abutting and often competing needs of housed and unhoused neighbours will help to inform the interplay of social, spatial and health outcomes within the North Park neighbourhood. Simply put, territorial stigma can be defined as the intersection of place and space (Butler et al., 2018; Marelli, 2021). The term was first coined by Wacquant, pulling together Goffman and Bourdieu’s work on spoiled identity and symbolic power (Butler et al.,

2018). It extends notions of stigma on an individual level to an entire geographic area whereby persons are stigmatized based on their association with a place that is considered undesirable or devalued. This has implications for the psychosocial well-being of affected communities, negative sociopolitical impacts, and spatial isolation of the community (McCurry et al., 2023). This in turn has implications for shaping people's identities, opportunities, and access to resources. It should be noted that stigma can be internalized or externalized, both at the individual or geographic scale (McCurry et al., 2023).

Territorial stigma has been associated with neighbourhoods of low socio-economic standing, and in areas where people without stable housing or who engage in illicit substance use may spend time (Marelli, 2021). This can lead to reproducing inequalities and vulnerabilities within and across neighbourhoods, often exacerbated by media portrayals.

Placemaking is both a theory and a process-oriented approach whereby there is "participation in both the production of meaning and in the means of production of a locale" often in relation to public space (Loh et al., 2022). Places are constantly evolving and being reproduced through physical, institutional and human interactions (Platt & Medway, 2022). Arefi (2014) describes three different forms of place-making, each of which play a critical role in understanding how meaning is attributed to place and how it impacts the way people engage in their locale. First is physical placemaking, which embodies design-based strategies to prescribe or change meaning through consumption, second is social placemaking described as the intersection of physical and social attributes of a neighbourhood, and finally is political placemaking which describes the way institutions mediate physical space which impact daily activities and experiences of residents (Arefi, 2014).

Placemaking is process-oriented as a community attributes meaning to place, often by engaging in a process that capitalizes on assets and potential in a community and creating spaces that contribute to feelings of inclusion and well-being thereby building social capital (Loh et al., 2022). An example may be a community initiative for greening a neighbourhood. It is a theory as it creates a framework to understand how people shape the built environment or attribute meaning to it (Arefi, 2014). Public places are public goods whereby their benefits should be accrued to all. A challenge of engaging in advocacy place-making is understanding who placemaking works for and who may benefit from placemaking activities, acknowledging that assets mean different things to different people and issues of gentrification and privatization of public place may reproduce inequities to those excluded from placemaking ultimately weakening place as a public good (Arefi, 2014; Loh et al., 2022). This can be exacerbated by territorializing public space and creating physical spaces with relational belonging (Platt & Medway, 2022).

In 2016, the province of British Columbia declared a public health emergency for the opioid overdose crisis (Mathew et al., 2021). The opioid crisis is fueled by toxic drugs poisonings through fentanyl, carfentanil and other synthetic analogues (Belzak & Halverson). In 2016, fentanyl was involved in 68% of illicit drug deaths, this number rose to 83% in 2017 (Belzak & Halverson). The 900 block of Pandora, which is located on the western border of North Park as shown in Figure 1, is a place where many people who use substances and lack stable housing spend time and open substance use is prevalent. It is also a block that houses many social supports including overdose prevention services, safe consumption sites and community and social services. Considering the temperate climate of Victoria, increasing financial pressures, and rising mental health challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, the homeless population grew substantially (Lake Berz, 2022). This is further exacerbated by worsening of housing insecurity

and homelessness, increasing income and food insecurity, worsening mental health and substance, and increasing economic pressures over the previous three years (British Columbia Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2023). The rising population coupled with increasingly toxic drug supply has made apparent the level of community need being unmet and the repeated trauma of the toxic drug crisis (Lake Berz, 2022). Despite these challenges, data from interviews conducted in this project suggest there is also a strong sense of community and support on the block.

Developing a needs assessment in North Park through the lens of placemaking and territorial stigma will provide a more complete understanding of the interplay of varying levels of need in the neighbourhood to inform future planning. Further, it will provide a framework to enable results to reflect the reality of the neighbourhood through the various facets and voices of community members.

Methods

Study Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to generate knowledge into the dynamics that impact community health and well-being in the North Park neighbourhood. Specifically, this study analyzed perspectives from a broad range of community members who live, work, or spend time in the neighbourhood to elucidate a nuanced narrative regarding the perceived facilitators and barriers to community well-being and inclusion. This generated knowledge can contribute to informing local policy, guide investment decisions, and distribute social services appropriately to create a more equitable neighbourhood with community-led decisions. It provides further insight into other local neighbourhoods in Victoria who may be facing similar challenges. By learning from the lived experiences and opinions of residents, the voices from the community will help guide the research process and ensure it reflects current needs.

Methodology and Procedure

This project is a novel community-based needs assessment (CNA) entered into in partnership with the North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA). This CNA aimed to encompass North Parks' community concerns, and this research was conducted at their request. The project is collaborative, with local buy-in and investment through the NPNA, who have provided a guiding criterion for the project, established in the purpose-statement. The means to achieve this was done through collaboration, co-creation, and establishing the level of involvement preferred by the community by entering into early dialogue to share understandings of the issue, establishing governance, focusing on the agenda of the participants, using self-reflective cycles, developing shared quality criteria, and generating knowledge, understanding and an action plan. Integral to this approach was enabling participants and partners to feel

supported, valued, and respected, valuing their social identities, affirming autonomy, accountability and building capacity (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007).

Identified as priorities by the NPNA when entering into this partnership, the purpose of this CNA was to gather information and gain input about the health, wellness, and social inclusion of those working, living, or spending time in North Park. Specific objectives include identifying individual, interpersonal, and systemic barriers and facilitators to community well-being and inclusion based on perspectives and lived experience of people who live work or spend time in the neighbourhood, to identify gaps between current conditions and desired conditions in the neighbourhood, and to understand what populations are being underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized in North Park. The study utilized a demographic screening survey, qualitative key informant interviews, and a community mapping activity to achieve the stated objectives.

This project used a qualitative research paradigm to explore the lived experience of people in North Park. This involved conducting semi-structured interviews with people who live, work, or spend time in the neighbourhood. The Access Alliance Community Health Assessment Report questionnaire, which aimed to identify assets, needs and service priorities, was used to inform the development of interview guides with input from the community partner to ensure local and situational relevancy (Access Alliance, 2013). A copy of the semi-structured interview guide can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Qualitative research is well suited for this project as it provides in-depth understanding of the phenomena in context-specific settings in a complex and dynamic social world (Hoepfl, 1997). Social constructionism is the ontological basis of this study. Social constructionism believes reality is constructed by social actors and that reality does not exist outside of

participants' understandings, rather individuals' varied backgrounds and experiences contribute to their on-going construction of reality existing through social interactions (Wahyuni, 2012). Therefore, interpretivism, which studies the social reality from the perspectives of the participants themselves, is the epistemological approach (Wahyuni, 2012). This CNA attempted to understand lived experience through an emic perspective, where social reality will be studied from the perspective of the people in North Park. Through democratic dialogue and sustained effort to identify individual knowledge, sharing of individual experiences can result in new knowledge production. Democratic knowledge production increases reliability of information, and the likelihood of results being put to practice, both essential to community-based participatory research (Greenwood et al., 1993).

The study will use a CBPR methodology. This approach to inquiry is deeply rooted in helping people in a specific time and place to increase awareness of constraints to full participation in community. Essential to this process is enabling these people to take action to minimize these barriers and lead to meaningful social change (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007). To engage in CBPR, co-production and partnership is required. Partnering with the NPNA shifts power from legitimizing privileged experts to collaborating with local knowledge brokers as experts. Here, knowledge results in action, reflection, collective investigation, and shared experiences. As in CBPR, this CNA has embraced North Parks' community concerns, and this research is being conducted at their request.

Governance

Community-based participatory research requires researchers and community stakeholders to engage as equal partners in all steps of the research and evaluation process (Jull

et al., 2017; Tremblay et al., 2018). Each step of this project was done in an iterative and collaborative approach in partnership with the NPNA with each step informing the next.

Governance was established by creating a community steering committee (CSC) to carry out part of the research process. A CSC can ensure that the project addresses community identified priorities and equity issues while simultaneously fostering long-term partnership development (Ziegler et al., 2019). Furthermore, community members have more local knowledge and more access to events than outsider researchers, which increases community trust and valued insider status (Becker, 2017). While neighbourhood associations are vital in advocating for public interest in government, a strength of the NPNA is its established strong community network evidenced by a variety of current and past collective community initiatives. Historically there are some insufficiencies at these associations being able to represent many different interests in their neighbourhood, particularly among neighbourhoods with divergent socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Holvandus & Leetmaa, 2016). Establishing a connection with other key agency staff and community members outside the NPNA and working in partnership to ensure information and process undertaken during the project is appropriately representing the community was important. Because participation is a process that is generated, project involvement was based on limits set by the participants (Greenwood et al., 1993).

Regular meetings were organized for the CSC composed of members of the NPNA, the University of Victoria researcher, and UVic supervisors. These meetings were responsible for establishing research goals, informing the study design, engagement, and recruitment strategies. These meetings prioritized community experiences and built capacity among the community to undertake the project. At each meeting, preparation work was be done by the researcher, content

was presented, discussed, decisions were made based on consensus, and action items following the meetings were set. The CSC held final decision-making power.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (21-0258). A copy of the ethics certificate can be found in [Appendix 2](#). Participants had the option to participate by scheduled Zoom Video Conferencing or in-person at one of three locations: 932 Balmoral Road room 114 First Metropolitan Church, the community room at 1008 Pandora Street, or SOLID Outreach Society located at 1056 N Park Street. A written consent form was provided prior to the interview with clear lay-person language to explain the project aim, eligibility, study procedure, data collection methods, potential inconveniences, benefits, compensation, how their data would be protected, stored, and disseminated, and to provide contact information if the participants had questions or would like to withdraw consent at any point. The consent form was explicit in describing how participant anonymity would be protected; the participant identity was only to be known by the researcher and all identifying information was to be removed. A copy of the consent form can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

All Zoom calls were conducted using University of Victoria VPN and hosted by an institutionally-provided Zoom account. All participants were informed they were able to turn off their camera and change their name on Zoom to maintain confidentiality before commencing recording. Immediately after interviews had finished, audio files and mapping images were transferred to the UVIC secure servers whereby access was restricted to members of the research team only. Audio files from the in-person interviews were immediately uploaded the secure server and deleted off the TASCAM recording device. Paper consent forms, honoraria forms,

and mapping exercises were scanned and uploaded to secure server electronically and physical copies were stored in a locked file cabinet.

All identifying information collected from the participants was stored on the secure and restricted UVIC servers. Participants were assigned individual codes and tracked in protected and secure documents. Audio files were manually transcribed, which were then cleaned to remove any potentially identifying information before any analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts.

Population, Recruitment and Sampling

This project focused solely on perspectives of those with lived experience within the City-defined geographic boundaries of North Park, including those who lived, worked, recreated or spent time in the neighbourhood. Equitable public engagement requires the researcher and NPNA to acknowledge inherent power imbalances in institution-led engagement. Decentering engagement from top-down decision making to community-led decisions and incorporating the Government of Canada Gender-Based Analysis Plus framework was applied (Government of Canada, 2024). With local buy-in and ownership as established through the NPNA as local knowledge brokers, community members were more likely to participate in the needs assessment (Becker, 2017). Furthermore, local knowledge of events in the area or specific barriers to participation inclusive of time helped alleviate scheduling meetings that are not timely.

Recruitment for this project was conducted using targeted email invitations, posting in the neighbourhood, the local community Lending Hub, and community Seedling Giveaway, using the NPNA social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, flyer for the weekly grocery hamper program, and canvassing local businesses and residential buildings. Individual targeted email invitations were sent by the NPNA Executive Director to members of the

community as identified in CSC meetings including known service providers, and well-connected community members. The NPNA as local knowledge brokers were best equipped to recruit participants for the CNA. For participants who were underrepresented in the 2020 community survey (Gibson, 2020), including Indigenous people, renters, and newcomers, we entered into dialogue with community organizations including Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre, SOLID and Tiny Town to understand if engagement with this project was of interest and the ways in which this CNA could best and meaningfully engage with their priorities for a more inclusive community. This included open and honest conversations about degree of influence participants will have in decision-making processes, minimizing consultation fatigue, keeping an open dialogue in the process, outlining the process, summarizing the next steps and explaining how input contributes to decision making (Simon Fraser University's Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 2020). Not all these organizations were willing to participate in this project.

For ethical considerations, the minimum age for participation in this study was 18 years of age to provide free and informed consent and to minimize risk to participants (Government of Canada., 2022). Inclusion criteria included those who work, live, or spend time in the geographic boundaries of North Park, were 18 years of age or older, and had English proficiency.

Furthermore, an equity-based lens allowed for purposeful selection of participants who met criteria for a diverse sample of the community.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through multiple modalities for the needs assessment. The first step was a short demographic and screening survey done online using UVIC Survey Monkey. A copy of the demographic screening survey can be found in [Appendix 4](#). The second modality was through semi-structured interviews. Interviews took place either in-person at 932 Balmoral Road

room 114 First Metropolitan Church, the community room at 1008 Pandora Street, SOLID Outreach Society located at 1056 N Park Street, or online via Zoom Video Conferencing. These interviews were all organized and conducted by myself. All interviews were prefaced with an explanation of the purpose of the study, expectations of the participant, and expected data usage. Interviews lasted around 60-90 minutes. Informed consent was obtained through a form sent to participants prior to the interview; for those who completed the interview in-person were sent the form in advance but signed it upon arrival. Prior to beginning any interview, participants were offered an opportunity to clarify any questions or concerns about the project, the consent form, and the data usage; verbal consent was again obtained by the interviewer before commencement. Participants were given an honorarium of \$20.00 (CAD) for each hour of participation. This was aligned with previous compensation provided by the NPNA. For interviews conducted in-person, a cash honorarium was provided; for interviews conducted online over Zoom, participants provided an email address for Interact e-transfer.

The semi-structured interview guide was based on previous literature on community assessments by Access Alliance and tailored to novel community specific questions (Access Alliance, 2013). Involving the NPNA in developing interview guides enabled questions that were most appropriate for the community and current context (Association for Community Health Improvement, 2017). Seminal methodology on finding and mobilizing community assets was introduced (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993). A mapping activity was done in concurrence with the interview to help participants think through some of the questions pertaining to their neighbourhood as well as provide a visual representation of how people were using their community. Once the interview guide was finalized, it was pre-tested with a community member to increase accurate, direct, and sufficient information was being collected.

Interviews conducted with participants included questions to understand how residents are currently using their community, how they would like to be using their community, and what are barriers or facilitators to realizing this potential. The interview was a data collection tool and a process for the interviewee and myself to construct the phenomenon of the lived-experience to further assess meanings participants attribute to their social worlds through experiences (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004). Semi-structured interviews allow freedom for participants to narrate their lived experience and open-ended questions allow the researcher to probe into these questions to further develop the participants' answers and narratives (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Interviews were recorded either through Zoom Video Conferencing or using the TASCAM-DR-05 device at the consent of participants, and promptly uploaded onto password-protected encrypted UVIC servers.

Regarding the issue of positionality of researcher (myself) and the considerations for ways that it might affect the research process and outcome, I constantly used awareness and monitoring as part of the technique to interviewing. Despite being a community-based researcher, I am aware of my position as a community outsider, my upbringing as a middle-class female whose gender identity, ethnicity, geographic location, language, social class, education, and political leanings might differ from the participants. I engaged in constant monitoring of self-performance as an interviewer during data gathering to reduce instances of entering dialogue that may leave the participants feeling uncomfortable. Critically, reflexivity and rapport-building were constantly re-evaluated, addressed and incorporated into interview techniques including: expressing interest and attention, considering tone of voice and body language, pauses to allow time for participant reply, empathetic neutrality and avoiding self-disclosure, being considerate

of participants emotions, avoiding academic jargon and long questions, considering leading questions, and managing challenging participants.

Once recorded, interviews were then transcribed by two research team members. During this process they were cleaned and removed of any personal or identifying information by the other team members with assistance from myself. Following this, a coding framework was developed with help from the NPNA for data analysis whereby transcripts were subsequently imported into NVivo 13 for coding (Lumeviro, 2018). The coding framework is referenced in [Appendix 5](#). All coding was conducted by myself using thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clark (2006). The focus of analysis was to identify themes pertaining to barriers and facilitators to community well-being and inclusion and identifying gaps between current and desired conditions in the neighbourhood.

In total, 42 community members expressed interest in participating in the project and were sent a link to the demographic survey. Of those expressing interest, 19 completed a semi-structured interview. For the rest, 10 were invited for an interview and lost to attrition, 8 did not fill out the survey, and 5 were not invited to an interview as these demographics i.e. white female homeowner had been overrepresented in previous findings and were already included in the participants being interviewed with the aim to not oversaturate the data with a certain demographic characteristics. Interviews took place until thematic saturation was reached.

Of the participants that were interviewed, 47% (n=9) identified as being a man, 37% (n=7) identified as being a woman, 11% (n=2) identified as non-binary and 5% (n=1) identified as agender. Participants ranged from 24-76 years of age with the mean age of participants being 48.5 years. Participants had lived in the neighbourhood between 1-30 years, while the average years lived or spend in the neighbourhood was 11.3 years; however, seven participants had spent

less than three years in North Park. Over 80% (n=16) of participants were born in Canada, 84% (n=16) identified as white, 5% (n=1) identified as Arab, West Asian, or North African descent, 11% (n=2) identified as East Asian, 5% (n=1) identified as Indigenous, and 5% (n=1) identified as being of South Asian descent. Participants were asked their sexual identity, and 13 responded they identified as straight, one was questioning, four identified as queer and one identified as bisexual. Current housing situation found that 53% (n=10) of respondents owned their own house, and 42% were renters. Of participants who rented their housing, 50% (n=4) rented their house in market housing, and 50% (n=4) rented their house in affordable/non-market housing. One participant was currently lacking stable housing and living outside. Most participants (n=10) lived in a condominium or apartment, four lived in a duplex or suite, and three lived in detached house of single-family dwelling. One participant did not live in any of the above-mentioned structures.

Participants were asked their relationship to North Park, 89% of respondents mentioned they shop and or eat in North Park, 68% lived in and or near North Park, 53% worked in or near North Park, 16% owned a business in North Park, and 63% recreated in North Park. Respondents also answered they get high in North Park, walk in North Park, have children in daycare, commute through the neighbourhood, volunteer and raise kids in the neighbourhood.

Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible approach to analyze, identify and report patterns and themes guided from Braun and Clarke (2006). I employed each of the six-stages in the analyses of data. First, familiarization with the data, transcripts were cleaned of any identifying information and I immersed myself in data by re-reading transcripts until there was familiarity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Second was to generate codes, which was accomplished by collaborating with the NPNA to inductively generate codes based on initial

understanding of the data. These initial concepts were then used to construct a code book and framework to begin coding the data. These codes were identified, tagged, and named through NVivo 13 to organize data into meaningful groups. Additional codes were generated as the transcripts were analyzed. Once initial coding was complete these codes were then used to start constructing themes, relating to broad concepts of territorial stigma, access, well-being, and social inclusion.

Throughout this process, I used an inductive approach using a ground-up analysis for emergent, relevant and recurring events in the data to generate themes that were strongly linked back to the data (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis was done at the latent level, to search for underlying ideas or assumptions theorized as shaping the descriptive data. During this stage themes were constantly reviewed, renamed, and regrouped individually and then within the broader context of the data and subsequently named and defined. This stage ensured coherence and heterogeneity, through reviewing codes within a theme and then reviewing themes within the larger dataset to ensure they are accurately represented (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were examined to determine community members concepts and perceptions of community well-being and understanding differences between current and desired conditions in the neighbourhood. Finally, this study is the report of this process.

Benefits and inconveniences

Considerations were taken when conducting the interviews for possible emotional and psychological discomfort to participants. Some minor inconvenience included time commitment to participate and the potential for a small risk of emotional discomfort as some topics related to personal experience of social inclusiveness and safety in the community. To prevent or to

mitigate these risks, the option to take a break and or to skip the question was presented to participants prior to interview and before the specific question was asked. The participants were given a copy of the questions in advance, so they are aware of the types of questions being asked.

Participants were informed of their ability to pause or stop the interview at any time without any consequences and that if they did decide to stop, they would be offered the option to delete their interview, and all collected data. Compensation for participation was established at \$20.00 CAD per hour of participation. This was established with feedback from the NPNA, and in-line with their current rate of compensation. Participants were either given cash if the interview was conducted in-person or sent an electronic bank transfer if the interview was conducted over Zoom Video Conferencing.

Results

First, I will start by describing how community members define their neighbourhood and North Park. Next, I will explore concepts of territorial stigma through tensions between residents, between residents and space, and between residents and policy. Finally, results will be analyzed through the lens of placemaking, to provide both a current understanding of place and desire for placemaking through increasing social connection and developing community identity.

Defining the Neighbourhood

Community members described their neighbourhood in a myriad of ways, including interpersonally, through community essence or ‘vibes’ and in physical boundaries. There are three main sub-types that can be drawn from the how people ascribe meaning to their neighbourhood. Each have strong implications for how community members talk about, engage with, and make meaning in their community. It is imperative to consider place as a social construct, embedded with social, cultural, political beliefs and practices.

North Park is described through its essence in relation to time

Communities are not stagnant, nor are they homogenous, based on the essence of the community there is division in how people view and describe their community. Participants were describing their community in a period of transition; however, this was done with participants offering split opinions. Some participants were expressing concerns with how the community was entering into this transition using the following words:

“changing”, “transitional”, “threatened”, “deteriorating”, “divided”, “liminal”,
“challenged”, “vulnerable” “problematic” “scary”

Others did not view their community as being unable to support the changes in the community, and instead described their community changing more positively through the following words:

“growing”, “lively”, “dynamic”, “supportive”, “trendy”, and “busy”

This imbalance in perception demonstrates the heterogeneity of community members and provides insight into the various relationships’ community members hold with their neighbourhood.

People described their neighbourhood in relation to its physical characteristics.

Physical characteristics were described both in relation to proximity to services including the downtown core, as well as features of the built environment. Participants described their neighbourhood as:

“compact, convenient, mixed-use, green, small”, “under resourced”, “mixed”, “lower-income”, “foodie”, “noisy at night”, “access to resources”, and “small”.

Again, there is a dichotomy of positive and negative attributes to describing the physical characteristics of the North Park community.

North Park is described in relation to the human identity and human quality of the community

Participants described their community as “active”, “young”, “diverse”, “friendly”, “supportive”, “multicultural”, “integrated”, “welcoming”, “connection”, “community-oriented”, “good people”, “funky”, “cozy”, “very together”, and “community-oriented”. The description of human-centered approaches to community tended to be seen much more positively and cohesively than both the essence or vibe of the community and characteristics of the built environment.

Within this concept, some community members defined their neighbourhood boundaries in relation to interpersonal relationship and described community as composed of people and identity rather than geographical area. One participant said, “further extending out like this way a

little bit because I have like friends in these areas, I consider it like my neighborhood”. – participant age 20s, 1 year resident.

The following quotes highlight imperfections in zoning and bylaw to meet the needs of communities as they do not fit into neat boxes, but the fluidity of identity and community is innate despite the rigidity of invisible City defined boundaries that have implications for planning.

“I think everyone in Victoria has a different community identity and we do our best with our local area plans to reflect that, but there is the intersection between planning and identity.” – participant age 50s, 9 year resident.

“I don’t know these folks. But I understand that we may be impacted by the same like, you know, zoning policies and things” – participant age 20s, 1 year resident.

The mapping activity was a way for participants to think through how they use, move through, describe, and interact with their community. Providing an example of two community members maps can provide insight into how different social positioning impacts neighbourhood interaction and use. Major attributes and features of the neighbourhood were highlighted, for example North Park Village, Royal Athletic Park, and participants used different coloured pens and stickers to answer questions about community use.

The first map is from a community member who currently has no fixed address, the map displays the time they spend in the neighbourhood are either public, or at an organization that provides social aid, for example, the green circle is SOLID, and the pink circle on Pandora Avenue is a harm reduction site. A lack of access to private space and engagement in the community is apparent.

Figure 2.

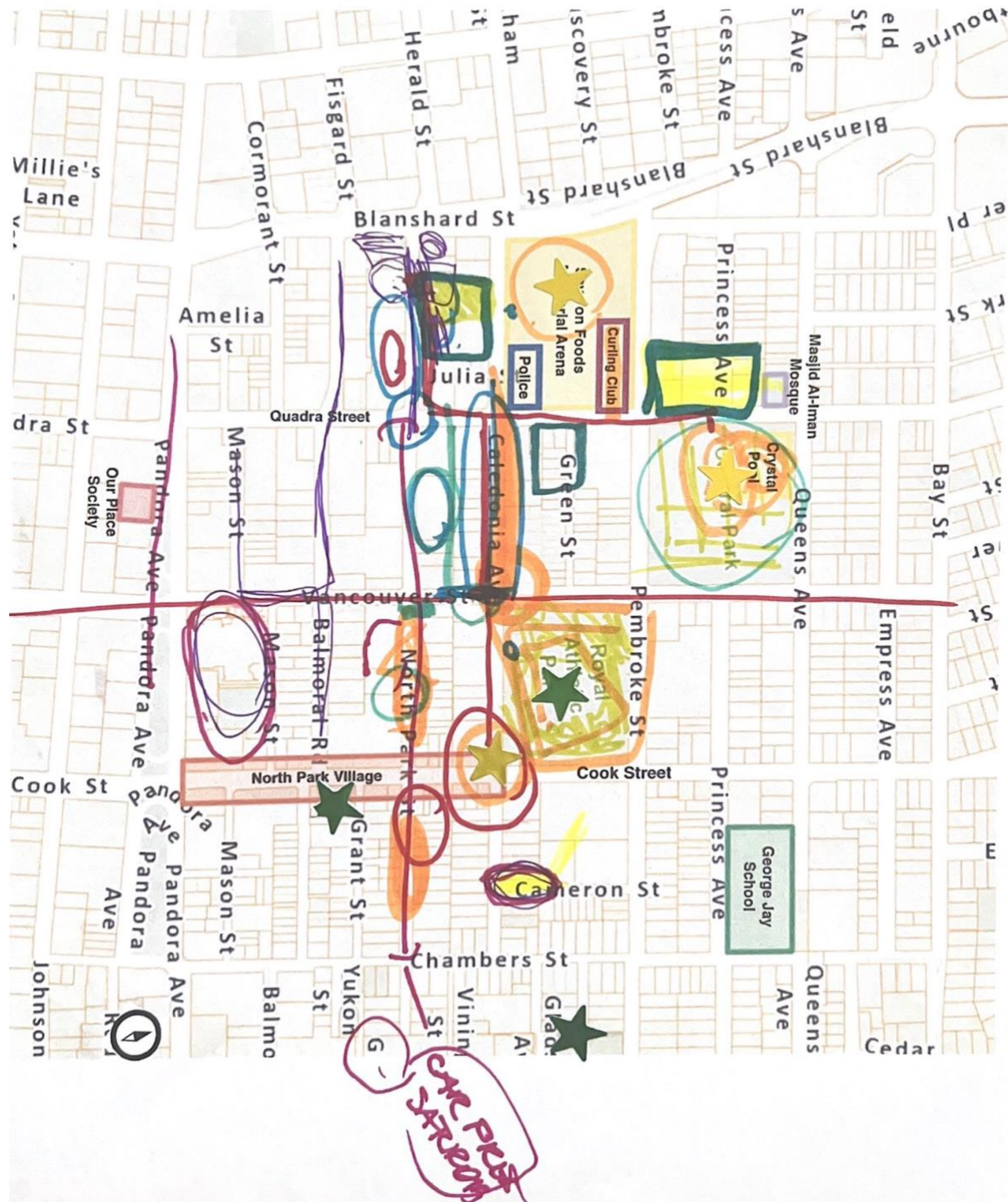
Community mapping exercise from participant age 40s, unhoused 2 years in community.



In contrast, Figure 3 is an example of a map from a community member who is much more engaged in their neighbourhood, and who has access to and uses more private spaces. It is also evidenced that Pandora Avenue is an area they avoid and do not interact with. The differences are apparent, yet both have strong reliance and activation on public space emphasizing its importance.

Figure 3.

Community mapping exercise from participant age 40s, 12 year resident.



Theme 1: Territorial Stigma

Territorial stigma was identified in a multitude of ways. This included territorial stigma through the politic, enactment of bylaws and around community access to and perceived ownership of public space evidenced through conversations with participations.

Territorial Stigma through political engagement, bylaw, and policy

This arose in multiple different concepts; however, the overarching theme was the lack of inclusion and engagement in decision making, lack of decision making, and decisions that were not in benefit of the community or for long-lasting change, particularly surrounding housing.

While the City does provide opportunity for engagement into civic issues and planning processes, residents were feeling frustrated that these meetings tend to be a box-ticking endeavor rather than meaningful engagement, whereby their opinions and concerns are taken into consideration and actioned. This is despite community members taking time out of their day, or at the expense of their business to contribute to these conversations and provide feedback. This might be described as tokenism or opportunistic engagement.

“you could just tell that it just wasn’t going to make any difference cause they have a very preconceived notion of what they want to do. They’re going through the pretense of feedback from effected members and they still only ever do what the original plan was community engagement. Like a box, they have to tick, but they’re not actually interested in” – woman, business owner.

Furthermore, community members believe that not only are engagement efforts non-fruitful, the decisions that are being made are coming from individuals who are not only unfamiliar with issues in the neighbourhood but are unwilling to immerse themselves to understand the situation. This is exemplified in the following two quotes.

“it just really felt like they were very out of touch with our issues. Kind of wanted to whitewash things [...] It’s not proper engagement, they just they want like blanket comments general. They’re not really looking for anyone specific feedback at all” – woman, business owner.

“Go to the City Hall, bullshit, and then because nobody lives in this neighborhood and like- I’m really concerned” – age 50s, 23 year resident.

And at times, members of the community do not feel like there is any engagement at all.

“we haven’t really had that much cooperation or consultation with them in the past. We have always things thrown at us or voicing on us” – participant age 50s, 30 year resident.

Community members expressed that their community is becoming a place where the City is placing most of the city-wide supports, particularly for people who were currently using substances or who currently lack stable housing. Some community members were frustrated that the overconcentration of services was changing the feeling in their community, despite recognizing a need for the services.

“our neighborhoods been redzoned. [...] that’s the problem. So just throw, everything there, all the everything. [...] well, that’s where the problem is. Like, no, no, people go where the resources are. [...] it’s never, it’s never been shared, you know, us and Burnside Gorge man probably have 99% of all those resources. And so I feel [...] there has been a tone shift a bit in the neighborhood, and I’d like to see that balance” – participant age 50s, 23 year resident.

The overconcentration of supports was recognized as necessary but further seen as a barrier for some families with young children.

“we’re the opposite of not in my backyard. It’s like, all in my backyard. So, that sort of getting a little bit, like overwhelming to deal with as a parent”. – participant age 40s, 12

year resident.

This is exacerbated by a lack of engagement into these decisions and the way they may have an impact on other community members. Particularly other vulnerable members in the community. Despite there being recognition that these supports do need to exist, the frustration lies with the lack of awareness, engagement or impact community members feel the City of Victoria is making into these decisions. One community member expressed frustration at a safe injection site that was opened near George Jay Elementary School, it had initially been zoned to go near a local private school – however, after much public outcry it was moved to be near the local public school.

“Without any consult, they put it [safe injection site] in near George Jay. OK. And it was just like it just. Whatever the optics. It’s just like fucking poor kids. Yeah. Don’t worry about it. They we don’t really give a shit about that. The optics of it was horrible” – participant age 50s, 23 year resident.

Not only was there frustration at the overconcentration of services, but participants expressed frustration that the City was also neglecting other aspects of neighbourhood, including cleanliness.

“there’s so many cigarettes everywhere all the time [...] weeds growing [...], So giving us a little bit of respect that way. Keeping our streets as clean as they do in other municipalities and like tidy and maintained. I don’t even think we have any (garbage cans)” – participant age 40s, 12 year resident.

Territorial stigma through bylaws

While there was an overconcentration of services, which comes with where service users will congregate, there was also frustration with the lack of humanity and the way bylaws were

negatively impacting these people who are oftentimes in the community to access services. These are often extremely marginalized people who are left in these cyclical patterns of accessing help, being removed, being stripped of belongings, and therefore being pushed into further reliance on these services.

“I understand the challenge with bylaw is our perception or concern that if the sweeps aren’t done that we’re going to end up with a, you know, a lack of a better way to phrase that intensity occupation. But I think that there’s got to be a more kind way to do that. Those sweeps result in folks losing everything [...] one of the other really unfortunate things of the sweeps is often folks lose ID, which then becomes a big barrier to them accessing other services in the future and it ends up being really cyclical [...] donate tents and tarps and stuff [...] it’s raining in the winter tarp drives and then bylaw comes and takes all the tarps. And City of Victoria passes a no grocery bag bylaw. And I think if we’re looking at restricting grocery bags and take out cups and straws, what is even the ecological impact, forget the human impact” – participant age 40s, 1 year resident.

Residents further expressed concern around the current housing situation. Considering North Park neighbourhood remains one of the few remaining areas of affordability in Victoria, it also houses residents with lower financial means. There was concern among residents around current proposed housing zoning bylaws and availability of upward mobility for those who currently reside in the neighbourhood. There was a struggle between both growth for opportunity and preserving the current feeling of the neighbourhood.

“makes me wanna leave, unfortunately, is the high cost of living and the lack of regulation around housing.” – participant age 20s, 1 year resident.

The following quote is provided by a participant who had expressed how much her family enjoyed the neighbourhood but were feeling like there were fewer options for their family to stay. This was compounded by current lack of opportunities for her children to participate meaningfully in the community in the way they would like for perceived safety concerns, a lack of physical space to gather in the neighbourhood that was family friendly, and the lack of child-centric opportunities.

“Moving out of neighbourhood: We never really thought about it before, but now we are. And there’s no opportunities. [...] they’re building are like, one-bedrooms, bachelors, maybe two-bedroom. But then they’re like a million bucks. So there’s not really a lot places for us to go. Like, there’s no upward mobility options here at all” – participant age 40s, 12 year resident.

Residents expressed concerns about being priced out of their neighbourhood. Without the flexibility of choosing where to live, they were feeling grateful for the rent they currently pay but frustrated with the surrounding experiences in the neighbourhood. Many feel they are tethered to place by necessity.

“pretty much anybody who’s been in this neighborhood for 20 years is staying here because they can’t afford to move. And if they did move everywhere they look at, they go yeah, but I’m not close to anything” – participant age 70s, 10 year resident.

“I have been blessed with subsidized housing. So with the rent situation no I am anchored” – participant age 20s, 4 year resident.

Furthermore, there was concern over the rising number of developments and high rises coming to the community. There remains concern over newer buildings being unaffordable to current residents, and there was concern that increasing high rises and condo building comes at

the expense of community well-being and identity as there was little opportunity to interact and build relationships with people in condos.

“developers are destroying the city. And I mean they’ve got their line, which is we need more spaces. So let’s build more condos. The changes in my community in the last five years, it’s almost unrecognizable [...] There’s no more affordable housing. There’s none, right. There’s none. And so yeah, I mean, I do think lower income people are sidelined” – participant age 50s, 23 year resident.

Territorial stigma through perceived ownership of place:

Access can be a catalyst or a prohibitor to opportunity, connection, and well-being in a community. The North Park neighbourhood was divisive in its access to public space and community participation, often this is self-regulated by socio-demographic factors and competing tensions between who gets to access public spaces, who these spaces are designed for, and who can meaningfully participate in the “community”.

There remains competing access of public space. This was exposed through dialogue around community policing. There was a division in how participants defined who were community members. Some participants did not acknowledge some people in the neighbourhood, particularly those who use substances or who may currently lack stable housing as North Park community members. This was exemplified through territorial stigma, whereby concepts of ownership and community policing over public spaces exist.

“we also want to reclaim our public spaces again. when it came to Vancouver Street Plaza, we were excited about establishing that. I mean, we wanted be a community space. [...] when the marginalized come and try to claim that space as their own, I mean, that really defeats the purpose of establishing that space because it doesn’t become welcoming space

anymore” [...] “they’re right next to our neighbourhood plaza, which is supposed to be a people-place, and now that a group of homeless encampments is trying to entrench itself there. There’s a lot of people in the neighbourhood that are saying: “No way! We’re not going to let this happen to us” – participant age 50s, 30 year resident.

In contrast, some members of the community recognized this undercurrent of community policing and wanted to make their voice heard that this exclusionary concept was not pervasive throughout housed community members. So, while there is recognition there are tensions in the neighbourhood, and some people are not having their needs met, it is not at the expense of certain people.

“I, in general, have a lot of compassion towards folks who use substances and are unhoused, [...] I don’t want there to be like an over shadowing voice of oh we gotta change the neighborhood, we gotta clean it up, and cut crime and stuff like that like I just want voices like mine to also be heard because like compassionate caring people who don’t mind our unhoused neighbors exist” – participant age 30s, 1 year resident.

Furthermore, other community members recognized that there were certain public spaces that were not for them as it was a community space for people who were street-entrenched, and it is important for them to have space to feel comfortable in.

“Pandora green space, I don’t use it, I feel like it’s very much a community space for a community that I’m not a part of, so I feel like I would be stepping into somebody else’s space” – participant age 40s, 11 year resident.

“I don’t want like blame homeless people they might feel comfortable in the area too. This is how they enjoy their time. So yeah, I want to respect that part too.” – participant age 30s, 2 years working in North Park.

This division between people in the neighbourhood does not go unnoticed. People who work in harm reduction, people who use substances, or people who are unhoused have recognized the divisiveness of existing in the neighbourhood and the negative impact these views have on this community.

“they just see them for what they are, unwashed people who are homeless, right. And it’s kind of sad, right?” – participant age 60s, 20 year resident.

“ it’s like a horrible version of cat-calling, [...] And it’s like, people turning their nose up [...] people are audible. Not recognizing these are human beings with feelings and emotions and like they hear exactly what you’re saying, you know? So, I think that would be how they would not feel safe.” – participant age 40s, 4 years working in North Park.

While people who use substances in the neighbourhood felt stigmatized by other community members, and at times are forcibly removed from certain public spaces by bylaw, it was also apparent that there were few places for these people to gather. This is despite some of these people not having access to stable housing and very few other opportunities or safe places to gather.

“They don’t want people on the block like up and down Pandora, whatever. Give them somewhere else to go. They literally have nowhere else to go. [...] If we have services where people live that way can access and have somewhere safe to be in a community-based sense, [...] it would solve a lot of [...] the violence of the demographic, like crime and just the mood of the people in general, you know, give them something to look forward to and somewhere to probably feel safe and warm.” – participant age 40s, 4 years working in North Park.

This dual concept of encroachment on public space identifies the ongoing territorializing of public space. Understanding the systemic barriers faced by people who may lack stable housing, their lack of private space, and the continued stigmatization speak to the ongoing tensions in the neighbourhood. Despite being educated and understanding of people's situations, many housed residents did not feel that their perceived safety should be compromised at the expense of others. This further exacerbated the lack of safety being experienced by all.

Theme 2: Placemaking

Attributing meaning to space was prevalent throughout the project. In particular, participants discussed catalysts and barriers to connecting and engaging with their community through the use of space. This was commonly discussed through dialogue centering on public space. Further, as placemaking is an ongoing process, it provides an opportunity to understand how people attribute meaning to their community and how they would like to be engaged in the meaning and planning of space. Placemaking was prevalent through conversation around neighbourhood densification, and public space as both a catalyst and barrier for connection. Further, opportunity to build connection and breakdown stigmatization across the community was discussed through the desire of creating neighbourhood identity through community engagement.

There was concern that priority was being given to development and densification of the neighbourhood at the expense of members of the community. Gentrification remained an ongoing pressure felt by the community members, particularly as density was pushing from the downtown core into the North Park neighbourhood.

“redevelopment will inevitably happen, I want amenities to be considered at the same time. [...] the city sometimes isn't doing the best job of is putting a lot of people into a

neighborhood without considering the amenities that they'll also need? More people means more services needed. So yeah, considering the needs of the of the people in the neighborhood at the same time as considering the fact that there will be more people and still supports the people that are in there and the people that will be coming there... ensure that any sort of developments that do come into North Park don't come in at the expense of pushing out affordable spaces for people that already live there.” – participant age 40s, 11 year resident.

This speaks to recognition that despite the need for capital development and increased housing options in the neighbourhood, there is an opportunity to do so in a way that can include those who currently live there as well as supporting social infrastructure for the inevitable increase in population. Acknowledging the importance of community and connection in built environment, in particular the importance of developing places inclusively and providing opportunity across the income range and access to amenities outside of just net new housing.

Placemaking and resilience through public space

North Park has three city-owned parks. First, is Royal Athletic Park, this park is predominantly gated off to everyday non-organized use and instead opened for pay-entry events such as the local baseball team Harbour Cats, organized events such as beer fest, and local music festivals and occasionally opened for free community planned-use as advocated for by the NPNA but requiring permitting from the City. The other two parks are Central Park which is on the same property as Crystal Pool fitness center and holds green space, two baseball diamonds and basketball courts, and a small park Franklin Green that houses a small playground. Other public spaces in the community include the new Vancouver Plaza a federally grant-funded community gathering space, North Park Village on Cook Street that is home to many of the

commercial food and other services in the neighbourhood, and the large local Save on Foods Memorial Arena – which despite being owned by the City and containing a large block of real-estate is for pay entry region-serving events and has no green space.

Participants identified that their current housing situation did not offer private green space, so accessing public green space was an important consideration to promote health and well-being in the community and was seen as essential to those who live there. Particularly, accessing low-barrier and free public spaces was seen as critical to well-being and connection. Participants noticed strong activation on the basketball courts as a place where youth and teens gather to play. Considering few other local free options for younger people in the neighbourhood this activation was seen as very positively.

“It’s free and it’s acceptable, and I think that’s really cool and there’s not a ton of stuff that like accessible and free for people to do in in this downtown area, at least, right?” – participant age 40s, 11 year resident.

Central Park was viewed as a multicultural gathering place for all ages in the community. Participants viewed this park as family friendly, a place for activities including basketball, picnicking, and a gathering place for local groups. Pitfalls to the park were a lack of gender-neutral washrooms, washrooms in general, and too much of the park being taken up by a second underutilized baseball diamond. Participants further expressed interest in converting part of the field into an off-leash dog park and creating covered areas to gather such as a gazebo as these were both identified as missing assets in the community. This speaks in part to the desire for connecting with members of community, and lack of private space for gathering.

“I want access to a space where I can exercise my dog. This also offers an opportunity to connect with others in the neighbourhood.” – participant age 40s, 1 year resident.

However, pushback for additional seating and gathering areas has been identified regardless of its potential benefits to community. This speaks to the juxtaposition of who these spaces are perceived to be created for.

“if there were like picnic tables and places like that to go and sit down and in these areas, then probably people would go and enjoy those spaces more, but they probably don’t put picnic tables there because they don’t want people to sleep on the picnic tables and use the picnic tables and stuff” – participant age 30s, 1 year resident.

Gathering in public spaces such as the parks was also seen as promoting and facilitating social gathering – whether this is intentional or more passive it was still viewed as important for community members. Particularly with COVID-19 recovery, outdoor spaces were seen as promoting socialization in a safe and more comfortable member.

“enjoy some areas that are social areas in our neighbourhood or, I mean obviously we are coming out of COVID now but I do enjoy areas that can facilitate more of that social gathering or social hang out kind of thing. Without it being dangerous again” – participant age 20s, 4 year resident.

For those people who use substances or lack current stable housing, the public parks in particular Franklin Green was seen as important gathering space to remember other community members who have passed. This space was seen as a safe space to gather and connect for these people.

“we utilized that area [Franklin green] as well for wakes and celebrations of life for people that have passed in the community. But it’s necessary and it’s part of the community and it does pull the community together” – participant age 40s, 4 years working in North Park.

Franklin Green was also an important park for meeting, building up resilience and engaging with businesses and other community members in North Park for the unhoused community. SOLID runs programs called Rig Dig and Street Ambassador; these programs aim to make the gap less painful between residents, business owners and people who accessed SOLID programming by engaging in activities include cleaning up needles and other drug paraphernalia and washing windows in local businesses. Participants are also paid a stipend for this work which could eventually lead to employment.

“We actually will employ some guys there who are from the homeless community that will go up and down and clean like, brooms. You know, like mop buckets, [...] while businesses are closed, washing windows for them and things like that. Just it’s our way of saying like, look we’re not bad. We want to be part of this too, we don’t want to be just a thing that’s separate in your community. You’re valued. It’s what’s key. And I think people are just, there isn’t... too many individuals are being undervalued because of how they look or where they have to sleep.” – participant age 40s, 4 years working in North Park.

Despite the reliance on public space being identified as important to the community, many community members identified there was still a lack of available space to gather. Particularly for children and families.

“we are playing in the parking lot, Robin’s parking lot by our house, and the kids are like why can’t we use this like football-size field. I don’t know son. I don’t think there’s a real reason” – participant age 40s, 12 year resident.

Public spaces as catalysts for connection

Participants viewed public spaces and community programming as a way to meet their

neighbours and engage more meaningfully with other members of the community. These opportunities were valued and encouraging more bids for connection and opportunity to gather were identified as important priorities in the neighbourhood. Particularly with residents becoming more neighbourhood centric since COVID-19, reliance on public spaces and organized events was more evident. Community members emphasized appreciation that Royal Athletic Park had been opened more frequently for community-planned events and would like to be using this space more both as an accessible green space and for free organized events.

“art programming and stuff that they did over the summer. That was really cool. Like, the kids are really excited to see their, like, birds up on the wall” – participant age 40s, 12 year resident.

“I go to it when they allow me. I would like to use it a lot more. It would be a cool place to go use for community events if possible” – participant age 40s, 11 year resident.

The following quote exemplifies how community events can foster civic pride in the neighbourhood and a way to meet different people with different experiences and through sharing of culture.

“food, block party type events. I feel like that really does bring like everyone together on the same page, like we are North Park, and like we all do like a really beautiful thing, and like everyone’s invited, like come check us out, like maybe like more of like immersion because sometimes it can feel like, it can be like little separate islands” – participant age 20s, 1 year resident.

“Multicultural like festivals [...] that has been really awesome and, like, seeing more things like that I think would really bring a lot to the neighborhood and specifically

working with these various communities who have been living here for a while, who maybe aren't talking to you" – participant age 20s, 1 year resident.

Community events were also seen as a way to build social capital and find a community identity, particularly in a community that is divisive and in a period of flux.

"I feel like when the fabric of the community is already kind of weak, it's easier for those other issues to be become more apparent, right? So it's like, yeah, if I knew all my neighbors and the people up the street, and all these other people, then we could gather and be like, hey what are you guys seeing? What's going on with this? Are you feeling concerned or like, you know? But there isn't really a lot of that. So, some strengthening of just like overall community." – participant age 40s, 12 year resident.

While there was recognition that pay access events are necessary, residents noticed that they are dealing with the by-product of these events, which often result in a lack of parking in their neighbourhood. Some residents mention being unable to leave their neighbourhood as they were unable to park upon return. It was suggested that having local community discounts to these events would be useful.

"offering like discounted stuff at some of these events for people that actually live in the community, because we have to be deal with all the parking issues an side effects of it all and whatever." – participant 40s, 12 year resident.

There was consensus that facilities such as Save-On-Foods Memorial Area are region-serving and that this takes precedent over the community in which it is located. While it is privately operated, the arena is publicly-owned and was built with public participation. Therefore, residents highlighted that there should be some public and community benefit coming from it. The pervasive undercurrent is both the desire to engage in community, and the lack of

opportunity to do so. This was particularly relevant for young family and children, and the desire to have opportunities to meet with and learn from people.

Discussion

As evidenced through the results, this needs assessment offers a comprehensive understanding of the complicated and competing dynamics in the North Park neighbourhood through the interplay of placemaking, territorial stigma and this underlying yet pervasive human desire for connection and belonging. These results provide insight for community development and planning in the North Park 2040 community plan and provide a roadmap to highlight the need for social and community inclusion in greater detail for this neighbourhood.

Describing the neighbourhood.

In boundaries: This was based on the question of how you define your neighbourhood. The idea of *place vs site* plays into this concept. “Zoning codes and other planning mechanisms exemplify the criteria experts use to standardize the design quality of a place. But the meaning people assign to a place does not necessarily derive from or reflect those criteria. The debate on standards versus criteria also highlights the tension between the expert knowledge versus the local knowledge previously discussed” (Arefi, 2014, p. 20). **Places** are culturally and contextually rich because they are imbued with multiple narratives. **Sites** are “professionalized” and essentially reflect single narratives often conceived, developed, and touted by the expert knowledge, whereas places reflect multiple narratives of collective identity (Arefi, 2014). This begs consideration of who is creating these meanings of place, how does that relate to site or city boundaries defined by professionals and how are those implicated by zoning. It also offers opportunity to explore countering the concept of what is expert knowledge, by including those who live, spend time, or are embedded into the neighbourhood as experts in decisions that

impact their daily lives. It is evident through the results that community members want an opportunity to engage with planning and understand well the nuances of how place and space is used in their neighbourhood.

Territorial Stigma and Community Identity

The concept of territorial stigma was pervasive throughout conversations with participants within North Park, however manifested in a multitude of ways. This encapsulates the understanding that neighbourhoods are both heterogenous and homogenous in identity, particularly when in a period of flux, as is being experienced currently in North Park. The complicated interplay of perceptions and social divisions within and across the neighbourhood was particularly prevalent with the construction and perpetuation of neighbourhood identity. Descriptions of the community ranged from optimistic and embracing diversity to one of fear and apprehension. With some residents perceiving their community as “vibrant” and “evolving” and others expressing concerns about its future trajectory, citing feelings of vulnerability uncertainty and a perceived lack of identity. This juxtaposition of interpretation speak to the multifaceted nature of territorial stigma including social, cultural and political dynamics as discussed by Arefi (2014). Previous literature in Amsterdam has similarly found that as neighbourhoods change due to economic, political and social processes, residents develop increasing experiences of loss of belonging (Pinkster, 2016). The way participants described their neighbourhood as vulnerable and uncertain and lacking identity is describing this process of change and its associated feelings of discontent with governing bodies and lack of meaningful engagement with the City.

Territorial stigma was referenced through spatial practices and discourses in the neighbourhood. Exemplified through some community members’ understanding and belief of

which public spaces belong to who and the expectation of perceived ownership over these spaces reveal how these divisions contribute to the construction of social hierarchy, exclusionary practices, and the normalization of othering. This discourse facilitates a community versus non-community boundary whereby unhoused neighbours are seen as a threat to safety and therefore justify community policing of public space (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). It also highlights opportunity to dismantle these processes and include a more equitable lens when designing public spaces for community.

The concept of well-being is complex and varies across interpersonal, individual, and collective domains. However, commonly well-being can be identified with social and emotional aspects of positive feelings (Coburn & Gormally, 2020). Community well-being can be enhanced by building individual capacities through community involvement (Coburn & Gormally, 2020). It can create feelings of caring, belonging and community identity all of which are found to improve quality of life (Coburn & Gormally, 2020). Considering that cultivating a sense of community belonging through shared spaces, and that well-being of a community is impacted and reliant on equal opportunities for engagement and participation, fostering an environment to facilitate these connections was described as important by participants in this study. Doing so will have long-lasting positive impacts both individually and collectively in the North Park (Michalski et al., 2023). It has been found that community well-being is associated with a combination of accessible amenities and ability to engage without marginalization; however, territorial stigma and stigmatization of place in the North Park remains a strong barrier to actualizing this goal (Michalski et al., 2023). The results show that there is work to be done in bridging gaps between residents' needs, between residents in the neighbourhood and in local area planning to foster increased well-being. Engaging in equitable placemaking activities and

reimagining public spaces, for example Royal Athletic Park, can be a way to enhance community-well-being across North Park.

Placemaking and Community Engagement

Placemaking was prevalent throughout discussions involving the built environment and its physical characteristics. Attributing meaning to place was seen both as a catalyst and barrier to community cohesion, underscoring the importance and value placed on placemaking to fostering well-being. However, tensions with local authorities reveal a significant challenge in community engagement or providing opportunity for engaging in decision-making process. This lack of opportunity for engagement, despite desire and effort is particularly important as evidence has demonstrated that a lack of control over decisions that impact daily living is an important determinant of poor health (Baxter et al., 2023).

Access to Public Space and Community Participation

Access to public space emerged as a vital determinant of community well-being and social cohesion within North Park. Participants highlighted the significance of public parks and gathering spaces as hubs for social interaction, recreation, and community building. Furthermore, they highlighted the desire for more opportunities to engage with community through public space. However, there was an underlying tension of understanding who public space is for. Competing access and community policing remain divisive barriers to inclusivity for all residents, particularly for marginalized groups including those who lack stable housing or use illicit substances. Organizations who support equity-deserving groups, and some community members are continually attempting to bridge this divide, however this othering continues and is internalized through people's experiences.

Moreover, the importance of connection was exemplified through the desire to participate in and planning of public community events. This was seen as an opportunity to foster civic pride and develop social capital within the neighbourhood. This highlights the opportunity to build community capacity through cultural events as an opportunity for neighbours to connect, engage and celebrate local identity and promote belonging. Social connection has long ranging impacts and is a catalyst for increased longevity independent of other risk factors including increasing immune functioning, coping with stress and influencing healthy behaviours (Holt-Lunstad, 2022). Increasing trust and connection among neighbours has been found to increase levels of happiness, in particular for older residents, those who live in low-income neighbourhoods, and those who have low mobility as there is increased reliance on local connection (Hoogerbrugge & Burger, 2018). Curbing social loneliness can be done through increasing neighbourhood identity. Street parties or community events can be an opportunity to do so and should be explored, considering that members of community have also highlighted this desire and the evidence substantiates these activities as mechanisms to build social capital.

Implications for Community Development and Urban Planning

The findings from this needs assessment demonstrate the unquestionable need for community involvement in planning and decision making. The results have the opportunity to contribute to community development and urban planning initiatives within the North Park. First is the need for inclusive community engagement, particularly from the municipal government. The residents of North Park have a strong voice, strong knowledge base and a desire to participate in conversations for decisions that impact their community. Second is the desire for access to more public space and the need to enhance access to currently available space. This will continue to be a pressure point in the community as the City plans to continue densification

of the neighbourhood. Considering North Park remains park deficient, investment into the current infrastructure and amenities to public spaces should be prioritized. Particularly in an inclusive and accessible manner considering diverse needs of community members. This may involve retrofitting existing spaces, removing pay barriers, adding covered spaces, and prioritizing families.

Conclusion

This research underscores the importance of centering community voices in neighbourhood planning and decision-making processes. It highlights the ongoing pressures faced by small, urban, low-income neighbourhoods such as North Park, in particular as densification continues, economic pressures mount, and pressure to share ongoing resources intensifies. In the North Park neighbourhood, as these pressures grow, evidence of territorial stigma and reproducing of inequities was evident and frustrations in the community were increasing. However, despite these pressures, there exists desire among all community members, despite their perceived differences to engage with and build community connection and capacity. This presents a promising opportunity to building social capacity and community identity and to dismantle some of the processes perpetuated through territorial stigma. Engagement and facilitating connection can provides opportunity to challenge and overcome some of the current barriers to inclusion and equity.

The community needs assessment research project findings highlight community programming and public events as essential avenues for building social capital and breaking down barriers. These initiatives offer spaces and opportunity for community members to come together and forge meaningful connections and break down differences. However, increasing community and local government buy-in are all essential to actualizing this vision.

Communities are neither a homogenous nor a stagnant entity, but dynamic and diverse. Understanding the various stakeholders needs and how processes impact groups differently is critical to developing equitable decision-making processes. Through community-driven solutions, the community can work together to help to increase well-being resilience and connection across North Park.

Strengths and Limitations

This project was created in partnership with the North Park Neighbourhood Association and they informed all stages of development and were continually involved through the engagement and analysis phase of the research. Their involvement was a catalyst for community buy-in and engagement with this project, and their local knowledge and experience was essential to root the work in a culturally relevant and safe way for the community. For my thesis using a CBPR methodology and developing a strong partnership with the NPNA provided a more intentional and holistic understanding of the North Park community. However, despite this strong relationship, the project did have some barriers and limitations.

First, there was difficulty engaging with equity-deserving groups. Despite reaching out to organizations, such as Tiny Town run by Our Place, there was an unwillingness to partner or engage in the needs assessment, and as contact was made through employees of Our Place a lack of choice or opportunity for participation was provided to their residents, despite residents' agency. I understand the power dynamics and lack of trust with institutions may have been a factor for unwillingness to participate. Second, ethical considerations relating to reaching youth was another barrier to community engagement as we required participants to be at least 18 years of age. Considering some equity-deserving and youth groups were both left out, additional work to engage these groups would be beneficial. This restricted the reach of the project for diversity

of representation in understanding of the community. Third, change in leadership at the NPNA during this project has led to barriers in reconnecting with the community. This will likely impact knowledge mobilization and dissemination of results, and there will need to be diligent effort to mitigate these risks so community members can benefit from the results as intended. Finally, there has been a change in municipal government since onset of this project, and understanding how that will impact the policy window is yet to be determined.

Future Research

Future studies could further analyze the North Park Needs assessment data for other facets of community belonging, well-being and planning to understand and make recommendations for the community. This should be done alongside the community with North Park members as final decision makers. This project and its accompanying materials can also help to inform future needs assessments in the neighbourhood to understand impact of policy and planning in North Park and across other lower-income urban neighbourhoods. This is especially relevant as the increased pressures faced in this neighbourhood are not unique to North Park. Another study could further explore how to combat territorial stigma and build connection in the community to foster well-being.

Knowledge Mobilization

Knowledge mobilization for this project prioritizes putting the results back into the community in a way that is most appropriate for them. Dissemination of results will take place through a final report shared back to the NPNA that is accessible to community members. Considering community voices guided this project at all stages, this will be the first and most critical stage of dissemination. Dissemination of results may further take place through presentations at various conferences and events.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key Informant Interview questionnaire guide

Semi-Structured Key Informant Interview Guide – North Park Neighbourhood Community Needs Assessment

Hello, thank you for taking the time to be here today.

INTRODUCE SELF:

My name is Kate, I use she/her pronouns and I will be conducting this interview with you today.

INTRODUCE PROJECT AIM:

Today we want to get a better understanding of what is happening in the North Park neighbourhood as it relates to the way people are interacting with the community, the way people would like to be using the community and understanding what is working well. You are best equipped to address your specific needs and we are looking at community members to help provide some more details into their lived experience. The answers will be based on your opinions and experiences, there are no right or wrong answers.

If at any time you want to take a break, please let me know and we can do that. If there are any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering we can skip those as well.

OVERVIEW OF CONSENT AGAIN:

Our session today will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be recorded so that nothing important we talk about today is missed later. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study at any time. All the information collected during today's interview will be kept confidential, and any identifying information will be removed. This information is also found in the consent form you read so hopefully this is not new, I just wanted to go over it one more time before getting started.

OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTION:

If you have any questions prior to starting the interview, please ask them now before we commence.

I will start the recording now.

Rapport Building:

I will start by asking a few questions about your relationship to the North Park Neighbourhood. Some questions will involve a mapping exercise, this will help to get a visual representation of how you use your community.

1. If you had to describe the North Park neighbourhood in three words, what would they be?
2. In front of you, you will see a map. Can you use the draw function to draw what you believe are the boundaries of your neighbourhood on the map?
 - a. Why do you describe this as your neighbourhood?
3. In what ways do you spend time in the Neighbourhood?
 - a. Work? Live? Socializing? Activities?
 - b. In what ways would you like to spend time in the neighbourhood?
4. Can you use the “stamp” feature to put a “star stamp” on the map in areas that you frequent in your neighbourhood?
 - a. What is there?
 - b. What do you do at these places?
 - c. How often do you spend time at these places?
 - d. If you can think back to a time before COVID have your patterns of where you spend time change? In what way?
5. Can you describe something that makes North Park a good place to live?
 - a. What do you find attractive about the neighbourhood?
6. Do you ever think of moving out of the neighbourhood?
 - a. What makes you want to stay, or what makes you want to leave?
7. Can you tell me a bit about your interest in participating in this project?

The next section will ask some questions about transportation and mobility. This will help us understand the way you move about your community.

1. Can you show me on the map how you get around your neighbourhood? This can be done using the draw feature in colour red on zoom.
 - a. What streets do you walk/bike/drive on? Please outline them on your map
2. How accessible are transportation options in the neighbourhood?

- a. Are there any streets or areas of the community you do not feel as accommodating to mobility needs? Please mark these on the map using the draw function in blue.
 - i. In what way are these not as accommodating? Can you provide an example of you or someone you know being unable to easily use an area of the community?
 - ii. What would you suggest to make these areas more accommodating?
 - b. In your opinion, is the community more friendly to walking, biking, driving, or bussing?
 - i. Does this suit your preferred mode of transportation? How could the neighbourhood be more friendly to other modes?
3. How often do you leave your community to access goods or services (healthcare, banking, groceries, recreation, education, employment)
- a. How far do you travel to access these services?
 - b. Would you prefer any of these be in your neighbourhood? If so, which?

Commerce/Organizations/Institutions

1. Do you belong to any organizations or associations in your community?
 - a. If yes, which?
 - b. What do these offer you?
 - c. What do they offer the community?
 - d. How often do you participate or spend time at these organizations?
 - e. Are there any other organizations you are a part of that you must leave the community to access?
2. Who do you think the businesses, services and community in North Park are geared towards?
 - a. Do you think anyone is being left out or sidelined in the neighbourhood? Who?
 - b. In what capacity? Can you provide an example?

- c. If you can think back to a time before the COVID-19 pandemic to now, has this changed? In what way?
 - d. In what ways could the community be more inclusive?
 3. Are there any resources in the community that are currently being underutilized that could be an asset in the community?
 - a. If so, where are they located? Please use the “arrow stamp” to label them
 - b. What can they do to help more in the community?

I will now move to asking questions about parks, recreation, and physical space in the neighbourhood.

1. What do people do for fun in the community?
 - a. Do you think these are accessible to all people?
 - a) In what ways could they be more inclusive?
 - b. Do you think these sorts of activities have changed since Covid? If so how?
2. Where are places people gather?
 - a. Can you mark these on your map using the draw feature in brown?
 - b. What spaces are available for community initiatives?
 - c. Are there places people do not gather? Can you mark these on your map? Please use the draw function in green.
 - a) In your opinion, why do people not gather here? What would make it more enticing for people to gather?
 - d. In your opinion, have the places people gather changed since the pandemic and its associated restrictions? In what way?
3. Can you indicate green spaces by circling them on the map using the draw function in black in the community?
 - a. Do you use these spaces? Why or why not?
 - a) How do you use these spaces?
 - b. Do you feel safe in accessing these green spaces?
 - a) Can you provide an example of why or why not?
 - c. What could make these spaces more inclusive and attractive for you?

4. What recreation facilities/services do you use in the neighbourhood? Can you indicate them on the map using the “heart stamp”?
 - a. What services do they provide that you use?
 - b. What services would you like them to provide?
 - c. What would make these facilities easier to access or more enticing for more people?
 - d. Are there any financial, spatial, accessibility barriers to accessing these services?
 - e. What recreation services do you leave the community to access? Do you think these could be provided in the community?

8. One of the City’s strategic plan goals is to build a community centre in North Park.
 - a. Can you indicate on the map using the “X stamp” where you would choose for it to be located?
 - b. What sorts of services would you aspire for this community centre to offer?

Stories/Belonging

1. From your experience, what do you see as the three most positive things currently promoting health, well-being and belonging in the neighbourhood?
 - a. Do you think some people are unable to access, utilize or benefit from these things?
 - i. In what way? How could they be more beneficial to all people in the community?
 - ii. Can you provide an example of you or someone you know benefitting from these?
2. What positive activities are already happening in your community you would like to see more of?
3. What would you like to see in your community that doesn’t currently exist now?
4. How often do you participate in community events?

- a. What would make community events more enticing to more community members?
5. In what ways have you been involved in the community?
 - a. In what ways would you like to be involved?
 6. How are different forms of spirituality and culture presented or expressed in your community?
 - a. How are members' beliefs or practices connected to the community?
 7. Do you socialize with other members in your community?
 - a. How often? In what ways?
 - b. Is it easy to meet people? In what way could the community facilitate socialization or connection?
 8. Can you provide an example of a time you felt connected in the community?
 - a. Are there places you feel you belong to more than others in the community?
 - i. Can you indicate these places on the map by circling them using the draw function in pink?
 1. Why do you feel you belong here more? Can you provide an example?
 - ii. Are there any places you might not feel connected or included?
 1. If you are comfortable, can you provide an example as to why?
 9. How do people learn about what is going on in the community?
 - a. Do you think that there are better ways to communicate what is happening in the community or ways to engage in the community?
 10. What is the level of sense of safety and security in North Park?
 - a. Is there anything that could enhance safety in the North Park?
 - b. What areas do you feel the most safe and secure in? Can you indicate this on a map using the draw function in yellow?
 - i. What makes you feel safest in these parts of the neighbourhood?
 - c. Are there any areas in the neighbourhood that you might not feel safe? Can you indicate this on the map using the draw function in purple?
 - i. Can you provide an example of when the community did not feel safe for you or someone you know?

Moving Forward:

1. What is a wish you have for your community moving forward?
2. In your opinion what are specific actions, policies, programs, or funding priorities you would support as they would contribute to a healthier more inclusive society?

Is there anything else you would like to add before we finish?

That concludes the interview today. Again, thank you very much for being here today and sharing your insight, perspectives, and experiences. This is one of a few interviews I will be conducting to get a more complete understanding of the needs in the community.

You have my contact information if you have any questions or need information relating to this project.

I will stop the recording now and then we can go over compensation.

As compensation for your time, we have an honorarium of \$20.00 per hour of participation it looks like our conversation today was approximately [x time] so you will be entitled to [\$ amount]. I can send it to you by e-transfer. Do you prefer over email or using your phone number? If by email is it the same one we have been corresponding over? I will send it to you shortly because I am holding the finances in my personal bank account – it will be sent from my Gmail account – I think this is the same one you received the zoom invitation through?

Thank you again for volunteering your time and expertise.

Appendix 2: Certificate of ethics approval



**University
of Victoria**

Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board
Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval - Amendments

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Nathan Lachowsky (Supervisor)	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER 21-0258 Expedited review - delegated
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: Kate McAllister Master's student	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 17-May-2022
UVIC DEPARTMENT: Public Health and Social Policy PHSP	APPROVED ON: 07-Nov-2022
	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 16-May-2023
<p>PROJECT TITLE: North Park Neighbourhood Association Needs Assessment</p> <p>RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: Anya Slater - Research Admin Assistant, UVic Andres Montiel - Research Assistant, Uvic</p> <p>DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: Mitacs Accelerate Proposal, University of Victoria Island Health (Community Wellness Grant Program), North Park Neighbourhood Association</p> <p>DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL: tcps2_mcallister_kate.pdf - 04-Feb-2022 L.1 - Key Informant Interview Guide.docx - 16-Feb-2022 L.2 - North Park Map labeled.pdf - 16-Feb-2022 L.3 - Map for Identifying North Park Neighbourhood.pdf - 16-Feb-2022 M.1 - Community Support List.pdf - 25-Apr-2022 O.1.3 - KII consent form.pdf - 16-May-2022 K.3 - NPNA recruiting template.pdf - 23-Jun-2022 L.4 - NPNA screening survey.pdf - 23-Jun-2022 O.2 Screening Survey Assent Form.pdf - 23-Jun-2022 K.2.b Study recruitment.png - 06-Oct-2022 K.2.c Study recruitment.png - 06-Oct-2022</p>	
Conditions of approval	
<p>This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.</p> <p>Amendments To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol.</p> <p>Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.</p> <p>Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.</p>	
Certification	
<p>This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria's policies for research involving human participants.</p>	



Dr. Sandra Gibbons
Chair, Human Research Ethics Board



Dr. Matthew Murphy
Vice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Certificate Issued On: 07-Nov-2022

Appendix 3: Consent Form for Key Informant Interview**University
of Victoria*****Participant Consent Form*****North Park Neighbourhood Needs Assessment**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled North Park Neighbourhood Needs Assessment that is being conducted by:

Principal Investigators: **Nathan Lachowsky**, PhD, Research Director - Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) & Associate Professor - University of Victoria (nlachowsky@uvic.ca)
Kate McAllister, BSc, Master of Public Health Student – University of Victoria (katem@uvic.ca)
Anya Slater, MA, Research Administrative Assistant - University of Victoria (anyaslater@uvic.ca)

This study is being conducted in partnership with the North Park Neighbourhood Association.

This research is being funded by Island Health (Community Wellness Grant Program), and Mitacs Accelerate Grant.

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in this project. You are invited to take part in this study because you are a member of the North Park community. The purpose of these interviews is to better understand what is happening in the North Park neighbourhood as it relates to community needs, health, and well-being of its residents. Before you decide to take part, please read the following information.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to gather information and gain input about the health, wellness, and social inclusion of those living, working, and spending time in North Park. The needs assessment will collect data through key informant interviews and community mapping activities. This data will be used to inform policy, guide investment decisions, and distribute social services appropriately to create a more equitable neighbourhood. The research objectives are a) to assess the health and wellbeing of the community members in the North Park neighbourhood, b) to identify gaps between current conditions and desired conditions and c) to understand what populations are being underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized in the North Park. By learning from the lived experiences and opinions of residents, the voices from the community will help to guide the research process and ensure it reflects current needs.

Study Procedure:

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include partaking in a one-time, individual interview with a short community mapping exercise. The session will take place either in person at the community room at *1008 Pandora Street* (provincial COVID-19 restrictions permitting), Room 114 First Met Church (932 Balmoral) or online over Zoom Video Communications and will take approximately **one hour**. The session will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken. Documentation of the mapping exercise will be captured. A transcript of the interview will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some minor inconvenience to you, including time commitment to participate. There may be a small risk of emotional discomfort as we will be discussing topics related to personal experience of social inclusiveness and safety in the community. To prevent or to mitigate these risks, the option to take a break and or to skip the question will be incorporated. Participation will not impact your involvement with the community organization through which you were recruited.

Benefits

The immediate potential benefits of your participation in this research are minimal. By participating you are helping us to better understand the current needs in the neighbourhood. There is potential for long term benefits as the information collected during this project will be used inform policy, guide investment decisions, and distribute social services appropriately in future.

Compensation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. To compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given a \$20.00(CAD) honorarium for each hour of your participation. This will be paid through cash or e-transfer (with the email you provided). If paid through cash, whomever receives the honoraria needs to sign a receipt indicating they have received the cash. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study for any reason and at any time before, during, or after the session without any consequences or any explanation. If you withdraw before the session, you will not receive the honorarium. If you withdraw during or after the session, you will still receive the honorarium and your data will be destroyed. Your decision to stop participating will not affect your relationship with the researchers or any other group associated with this project.

Confidentiality

All discussions will be treated confidentially. If using Zoom Video Communications, you will be given the choice to change your name and turn off your video during the interview if it is preferred. Recordings will be kept confidential and only accessed by members of the project team. After the discussions, your name will be replaced with a code to ensure anonymity during analysis. Your email and other identifying information will be kept separate from this code. The

file identifying information with participant code will be stored on a secure University of Victoria (UVIC) server.

Data Collection and Storage

Recording and visual data collected during the interview held on the UVIC-hosted version of Zoom Video Communications will be saved directly to a secure UVIC server. Recording and visual data collected during the interview held in person will be uploaded to a secure UVIC server and once uploaded copies will be shredded and destroyed.

Participants will be advised if they have or may have come into contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. Contact information for participants will be stored in a separate file from research data in the event that follow up is needed.

Dissemination of Results and Data Availability

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways. The study data may be published or shared with others in a public report and through academic journals or conferences. The study data will also be used in Kate's thesis and be publicly available on the UVIC Library website "UVic Space" and a separate report will be provided to North Park Neighbourhood Association. Your name and any identifying information will not be included in these communications. Your recordings will be stored on secure servers at the University of Victoria for seven years after study publications per University of Victoria's Policy. After this time, the data will be deleted.

Contacts for further information:

Thank you for taking the time to read the information about this study. If you have any questions or concerns now or at any time about the key informant interviews, you may contact Kate McAllister at katem@uvic.ca

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

A copy of this form will be emailed to you and a copy will be kept by the research team.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Appendix 4: Screening and demographic questionnaire**Screening Survey**

Thank you for your interest in the North Park Neighbourhood Needs Assessment. The information collected during these interviews will help to inform policy, guide investment decisions, and distribute services appropriately in the North Park neighbourhood. All those involved will receive a \$20.00 honorarium for each hour of participation. To make sure you are eligible, please respond to the questions below.

There may be some questions where multiple answers apply, if that is the case, please circle all that apply.

1. What is your relationship to the community
 - a. I live in/near the North Park Neighbourhood
 - b. I work in the North Park Neighbourhood
 - c. I own a business or property in the North Park
 - d. I live in another neighbourhood in Victoria

2. How long have you been in the neighbourhood (either through work, or residing)?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. 6-10 years
 - e. 11-20 years
 - f. Over 20 years

3. How old are you right now? (In years)
 - a. <15 years
 - b. 15-19
 - c. 20-29
 - d. 30-39
 - e. 40-49
 - f. 50-64
 - g. 65+

4. What is your gender identity? Please select the option(s) that fit best at this time. The options are listed in alphabetical order.
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Non-Binary/Two-Spirit
 - d. Other

- e. Prefer not to answer
5. Which of these do you identify with? Please select all that apply. These responses are provided in alphabetical order.
- a. Immigrant
 - b. Indigenous
 - c. LGBTQ2IA+
 - d. Racialized
 - e. Refugee
 - f. None of the above
6. Which of the following best describe your current housing situation?
- a. I own my own house
 - b. I rent my house in market housing
 - c. I rent my house in affordable/non-market housing
 - d. I live in a housing cooperative
 - e. I currently lack stable housing
 - f. I do not live in North Park
7. Which of the following best describe the current building type you reside in?
- a. Detached home/single family house
 - b. Suite in a house or converted house
 - c. A duplex or townhouse
 - d. I currently lack stable housing
 - e. Other

Appendix 5: Coding Framework

Deductive Code Book was created with NPNA as Community Partner – codes in **bold** and examples (in parentheses):

- **Green space** (parks, dog park, garden, playground, tree canopy, landscaping)
- **Recreation** (free, paid)
- **Community spaces** (crystal pool, arena, comm. centre)
- **Community desires**
- **Visibility of issues** (mental and physical ill-health, inc. substance use, homelessness)
- **Housing** (affordability/difficulty finding appropriate housing, displacement, residents living in low income)
- **Neighbourhood identity**
- **Wellbeing** (for children, families, seniors, single adults)
- **Reconciliation**
- **Active transportation** (walking, cycling, scooting)
- **Vehicle transportation** (parking)
- **Safety**
- **Territorial Stigma**
- **Public Space**
 - Crystal pool
 - RAP
 - Pandora
 - Arena
 - Central Park
 - Franklin Green
 - NP Village
 - Solid