

# 2021 FLCA Survey Overview

This past year, the Directors of the Fort Langley Community Association began to review our mandate in the community. With the BIA dissolving, are there gaps and opportunities to look into? The Fort Langley Banner Program gave some context to where we could start. Historically, going back to the 1990's the Community Association at that time was made up of a wide variety of community interests including residents, the business community and community groups. There even was a representative from Township Planning attending.

With this in mind a survey was undertaken from Nov 1<sup>st</sup> to December 6, 2021. 319 online surveys were completed. This was followed up with 3 Focus Groups between February 12 and 28<sup>th</sup>.

While the majority of questions were directed towards the FLCA's role in the community, we did ask one question addressing respondents concerns. As in our 2019 Survey, respondents had voiced similar concerns around traffic and development.

We found that respondents are supportive (90%) of a nonprofit society representing both residents and businesses however there were some concerns. These were identified

- The Community Association could be made up of Directors who could be biased
- Residents and Businesses are not aligned and have separate interests
- Some respondents have issues with Governance Structure

We need to keep these concerns in mind.

**With this support, the question arises. What are the expectations of respondents from their community association?**

- Advocacy work, community conversations, and promotion of events, activities and businesses were the highest.

There were several themes that emerged repeatedly in the additional comments. Some were expected, such as concerns about development, traffic, and parking. One interesting trend emerged regarding events. Business owners and residents alike who mentioned events in their comments did not want to know about events so they could participate, but

rather to mitigate or reduce the negative impact of the events on their businesses or activities. This included filming in the community.

### **Looking a bit deeper, it was asked what is important to the respondents when representing the interests of Fort Langley**

- A repeating theme was the diversity of interests in the community, and the number of community groups. A need for a centralized voice or organization to bring all of those interests and groups together. Helping communications in the community with a need to balance interests between residents, businesses, tourism and development.

### **Considering a larger mandate exceeding just residents should the FLCA expand its umbrella**

- The general sentiment was that the FLCA should represent all areas of the Fort Langley community, including businesses and community groups. “If you're going to represent a community you need to represent all parts of the community.” Especially since the BIA disbanded and having a forum to come together could amplify voices and be constructive.

### **What are the positive aspects and or pitfalls of expanding the FLCA “umbrella?”**

- Positive aspects include advocacy at township, representation of the people rather than personal interests of the board, communication from the FLCA, transparency from the FLCA, welcoming of residents and community members, opportunities for networking and connection, fundraising initiatives drawing the community together
- Pitfalls included ensuring that the organization had sufficient time, volunteer contribution and commitment. The financial resources to fulfill a larger mandate is a potential obstacle. Ensuring that those participating were a diverse group with adequate support could prove challenging. The idea of diluting the effectiveness of the organization by trying to be all things to all people,

**Only 7% were not in favour of the FLCA moving into a larger organization. Their concerns were listened to. The word bias was brought up.**

- Participants responded that an unbiased community likely doesn't exist. It was pointed out that people who participate tend to have a bias, and that acknowledging that bias is a first step. The organization can be structured to minimize the impact of

that bias. Inclusion of a lot of different voices, making them accessible, etc. would support this objective.

- There was some discussion about clear avenues of feedback and communication - giving the community easy ways to ask for and share information would help with transparency and reduce the perception of bias. Term limits would reduce a single viewpoint monopolizing the organization
- It was important to create a safe space where members could freely voice their opinion without fear.

### **Do you think the FLCA should take on that role in our community? Why or why not?**

- Most participants agreed that the FLCA could take on the role of the former BIA, with some very supportive and others simply accepting that it would be a logical solution. It would help to have a forum where residents and businesses can voice their shared concerns
- There is some concern of businesses dominating over resident voices, but if representation is fair, it would help “fill a void”. As one participant said, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”
- For the FLCA to take on representation of both businesses and residents the following should be met.
  1. **Provides balanced representation to both businesses and residents**
  2. **Accurately reflects the viewpoints of residents and businesses in a non-partisan way**
  3. **Provides services that reflect the needs of the community, including advocacy work, community conversations, and event notifications**

In closing the overall feedback on the FLCA itself remains positive. Most participants are supportive of the FLCA representing residents, business owners, and community groups.

Many see the need for an overarching umbrella organization to bring together communications and concerns across the community, giving one common place for everyone to collaborate and seek advocacy and representation.

Many see the FLCA as uniquely positioned to do this work in the community, due to their longstanding and respected role in the community and their access to township council.

It is seen as beneficial to have sub-groups or sub-committees within the FLCA for areas lacking representation and organization, such as residents and businesses.