

Fort Langley Community Association Survey & Focus Groups

Analysis and recommendations



Summary

Survey and focus groups

The 2021 Fort Langley Community Association survey began on November 1, 2021 and ran until December 6, 2021.

The intention of this research project was to help the Fort Langley Community Association (FLCA) decide what role the organization could take to represent both businesses and residents and is there support from residents, businesses and community groups to do so.

In that time, we had:

- 703 visitors
- 319 surveys started
- 100% completion rate
- An average survey time of 5m 42s

Additionally, between February 12 and 28, the Fort Langley Community Association conducted a series of focus groups. 20 attendees participated in a total of 3 sessions, with participants representing three primary groups to explore input received via the survey.

Residents - 8

Business Owners - 5

Community Groups - 7

Survey Results

Are you a resident, business owner, or both?

The majority of respondents were residents

Approximately 91% of respondents were residents.

4% were business owners

And 6% were both residents AND business owners.



Resident of Fort Langley Owner of a Business in Fort Lang... Both a Resident of and a Busines...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Resident of Fort Langley	289	90.60%
Owner of a Business in Fort Langley	12	3.76%
Both a Resident of and a Business Owner in Fort Langley	18	5.64%

What issues would you like more say on?

Respondents had similar concerns as in previous surveys

Development, parking, and traffic were the primary issues that respondents would like more say on.

In our 2019 survey, respondents concerns were truck traffic, heritage character and speeding.



If a business operator had an issue relating to their business operations in the Village, where would they like to go to address it?

Top 5 Responses:

Township of Langley - 12

It Depends - 4

Community Group of Representatives - 4

Something like the BIA - 3

FLCA - 2

Other suggestions included “Fort Langley”, “my landlord”, “anyone but my landlord”, and “nowhere. I don't believe business owners have a voice.”

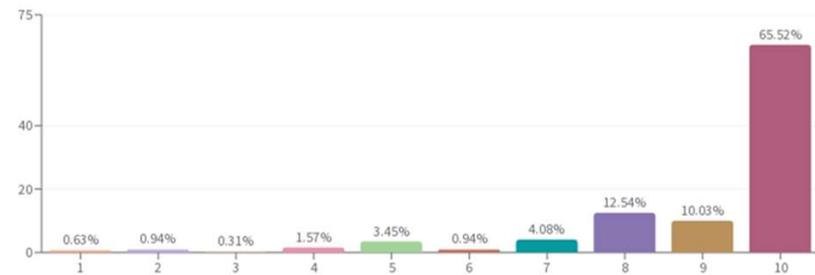
Business operators had different ideas about where to go to address key issues.

Many mentioned the BIA being gone, and several said they don't know.

Is it important for there to be an organization representing the interests and voice of Fort Langley residents and business to the municipality?

Respondents believe an organization representing their interests is very important

90% of respondents rated the importance at 7 or higher.



Who would they prefer as a voice for Fort Langley?

Respondents believe a local non-profit of elected residents and business owners would be best

65% of respondents selected “Local non-profit made up of elected residents and business operators.”

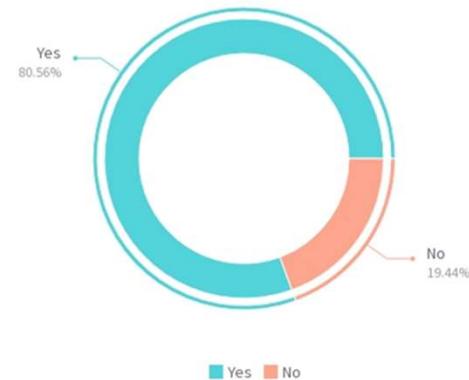


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Local non-profit made up of elected residents and business operators	208	65.20%
Yourself as an Individual	78	24.45%
Other	22	6.90%
Yourself as a Local Business Operator	11	3.45%

Are they aware of the Fort Langley Community Association?

Most respondents are aware of the FLCA

Over 80% of respondents are aware of the FLCA, with less than 20% saying they are not aware.



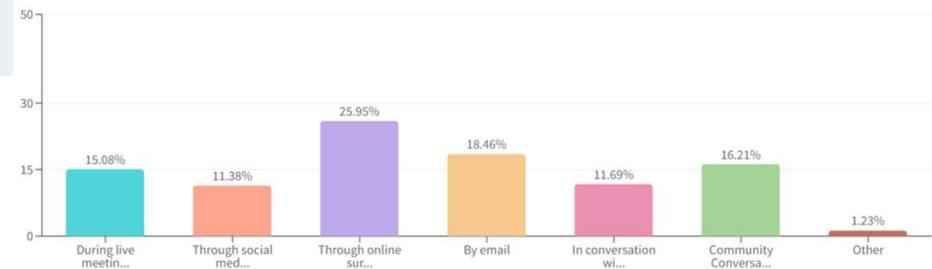
ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
■ Yes	257	80.56%
■ No	62	19.44%

How would you like to voice your opinion on community issues and provide feedback?

Responses were mixed

Responses did not identify a single or even a primary means of communication. There was a preference for online surveys in the responses, but this could be easily attributed to bias (this was an online survey) and not to actual preferences among residents.

A “Community Conversation” is an online meeting similar to an open forum for questions and answers with the community.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Through online surveys	253	25.95%
By email	180	18.46%
Community Conversation	158	16.21%
During live meetings	147	15.08%
In conversation with FLCA members	114	11.69%
Through social media polls	111	11.38%
Other	12	1.23%

Would you support a non-profit community group that represents the needs and interests of residents and businesses in Fort Langley?

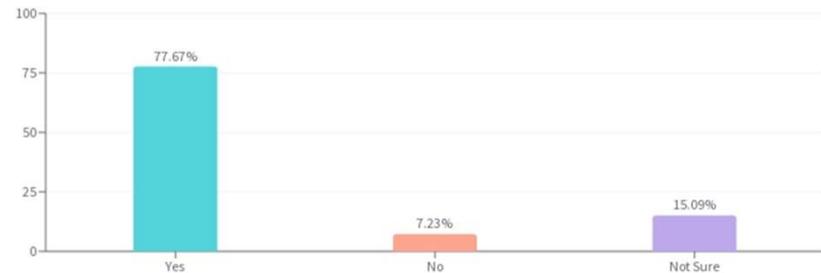
Respondents were overall supportive

Over 77% of respondents would support a non-profit community group that represents the needs and interests of residents and businesses in Fort Langley, while 15% remain unsure.

Only 7% would not support such an organization.

Concerns include:

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



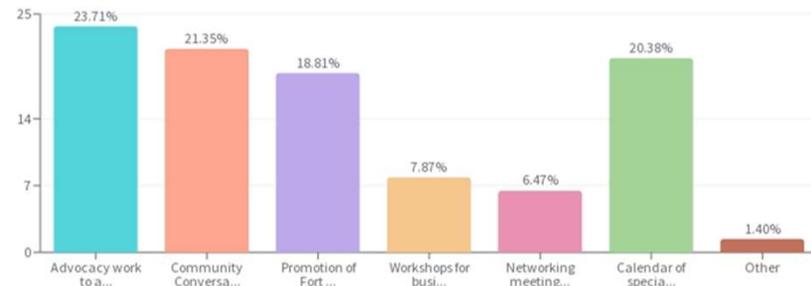
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Yes	247	77.67%
No	23	7.23%
Not Sure	48	15.09%

If there were a community group that represented the needs of residents and businesses in Fort Langley, what services do you think they should provide?

Business services were a lower priority

Respondents prioritized services such as advocacy work, community conversations, calendar of and promotion of events, activities, and businesses.

Less than 15% of respondents think that workshops and networking meetings should be provided.



Services, continued

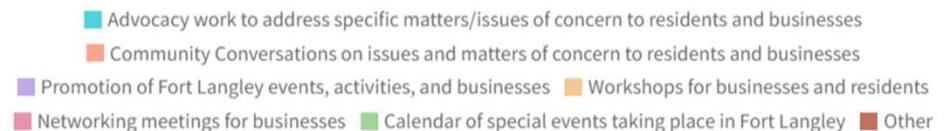
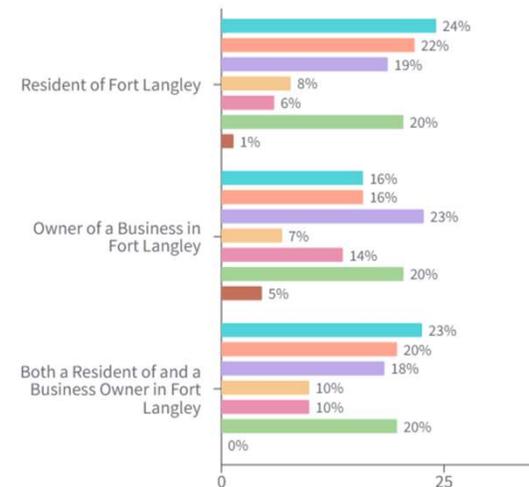
Business services were a lower priority

There were only minor differences in preferences between residents and businesses, including:

- A higher preference for advocacy work among residents
- A lower interest in community conversations and workshops from businesses
- A higher interest in networking meetings from businesses

Though it should be noted that workshops and networking were consistently the least preferred services across all groups.

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



Additional comments

Key themes from the additional comments

There were several themes that emerged repeatedly in the additional comments. Some were expected, such as concerns about development, traffic, and parking. Some offered concerns about bias and a balanced viewpoint in the representation for Fort Langley. Other comments offered support for the FLCA or the village itself.

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.

One suggestion was made to include Kwantlen First Nation in the organizational leadership, and address the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

There were several individual questions about things such as sidewalks, room rentals, what happened with the BIA, and more. There are a number of survey respondents who are interested in volunteering their time.

Focus group results

Focus Groups Summary

Focus groups

Between February 12 and 28, the Fort Langley Community Association conducted a series of focus groups. 20 attendees participated in a total of 3 sessions, with participants representing three primary groups to explore input received via the survey.

There were a total of 3 sessions. It was decided that Community Groups should be included as they are part of the Village makeup. We wanted to explore the survey results and dig deeper. The Focus Groups were conducted by a third party, Tactile Design Co., who also conducted the survey.

Focus Group participants were as follows:

Residents - 8

Business Owners - 5

Community Groups - 7

1. What is important to you in an organization like the FLCA when representing the interests of Fort Langley?

- **A repeating theme was the diversity of interests in the community, and the number of community groups, and a need for a centralized voice or organization to bring all of those interests and groups together.**
- Many participants mentioned that communication and transparency are important to them in an organization like the FLCA.
- Participants would like to see diversity - a range of ages, opinions, lifestyles, working and retired people, etc.
- There is a desire for preservation of the community heritage and community feeling, while also being progressive - looking for opportunities to build community and improve things while keeping the community feeling and heritage intact.
- One participant stated that they want to keep what makes Fort Langley feel special and sustain that special feeling while also making it sustainable.
- Participants also mentioned a need to balance interests between residents, businesses, tourism, and development.

2. Who do you think should be represented by the FLCA - residents? Businesses? Community Groups? Someone else?

- **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.”**
- Some participants specifically discussed the relationship between issues impacting residents and issues impacting businesses, and how having a forum to come together could amplify voices and be constructive.
- There were some minor concerns about duplication of services or mandates between the FLCA and other groups.
- Participants shared that the businesses need support since the BIA disbanded.
- Participants talked about how the residents and businesses need each other. Without residents, businesses couldn't survive - but without businesses, residents wouldn't have the walkable community of services they have now. The group agreed, and it was discussed that having a place to balance the needs of both and collaborate would be beneficial.
- A participant mentioned also including First Nations groups, art and culture events, and all sides so they could collaborate.

3. If an organization representing all groups were to exist, what purpose do you think such a larger organization should fulfill?

- **Participants suggested that the FLCA could act as a larger “umbrella” organization, representing residents, business owners, and other community groups, and centralizing information and advocacy at township.**
- There was some discussion regarding groups that want to work together, and overlapping needs and services that exist, and having a long-standing community group such as the FLCA to bring everyone together and form connections would be beneficial.
- Participants discussed that there are three primary areas of focus - immediate issues, ongoing issues such as trucks etc., and long-term planning to shape the future of the community.
- Also discussed was the need to pull information in from the larger community so that the FLCA represents the interests of the community at large.
- Respondents generally agree that a larger organization would become the hub of the community to bring ideas and concerns, get support and advocacy, and connect and collaborate with other groups.

4. When you think about the existing community organizations, past and present, what have been the impacts of those organizations - both positive and negative?

- **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**
- Negative aspects included lack of communication from some organizations, lack of apparent services or purpose, and representation of a select group of interests.
- Participants discussed again here that it would be an advantage to have a centralized voice for everyone to come together and bring concerns, collaborate and connect over them, and have advocacy for resolution at township. The envisioned the FLCA as an umbrella organization with various organizations or committees within it.
- Many expressed throughout the focus groups that there are many, many community groups within Fort Langley and it is challenging to keep track of them all, let alone know what they're up to and who to contact.

5. What potential issues could the FLCA face, should we choose to represent the interests of residents, businesses, and community groups?

- One participant introduced the idea of diluting the effectiveness of the organization by trying to be all things to all people, to which other participants agreed.
- In general, many participants used this as an opportunity to reiterate the lack of services available to businesses and their support for the FLCA involvement in filling that gap.
- Structure, organization, and adequate time and resources were also mentioned. Ensuring that the organization had sufficient time, volunteer contribution and commitment, and 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.
- Many participants were also concerned about bias in participants. The division between those who want to bring more development and progress to Fort Langley vs. those who want the community to maintain character and stay the same has grown, and balancing those needs is challenging.
- There is some concern about conflict of interest from developers, organizers, business owners, and other groups who may push to embrace development, tourism, and other things that could impact businesses and residents for their own benefit.

6. Do you have concerns about bias or equal representation in Fort Langley's current community organizations?

- One participant mentioned that other organizations have had entire “slates” of leadership attempting to take over the organization to utilize it for their own intentions or fulfill a mandate, or special interest groups wanting more authority.
- Residents and business owners, however, were very concerned about bias and equal representation based on past experiences with other organizations in the community.
- There is concern about underlying manipulation, conflict of interest, business or residents overriding the other group to their own benefit, and the effort that would be required to maintain balance.
- Cultural diversity was mentioned as a concern by one participant and agreed with by another.
- One participant expressed a concern about getting “stuck in the past” (referring to past conflicts and issues) and a desire to bring all voices to the table and move forward in collaboration.

7. What does an unbiased community organization look like to you?

- Participants responded that an unbiased community likely doesn't exist, but that the organization can be structured to minimize the impact of that bias. Things like expressing a conflict of interest, 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.
- One participant pointed out that people who participate tend to have a bias, and that acknowledging that bias is a first step.
- Some participants also discussed the idea of term limits and forced turnover to encourage more diversity of opinion on the board and reduce the possibility of a single viewpoint taking leadership of the organization.
- One participant used the term "create a safe space for communication" and other participants agreed. They discussed the importance of creating a space where it was safe to disagree and remain friends. "Separating the issue and thoughts from the person."
- Adding to the discussion on a safe space, one participant shared that the leadership has to be responsible for creating a safe space for communication and that bringing diverse voices to the table is not enough.

8. The Fort Langley BIA is now gone. 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.
- Participants voiced that it would be nice to have a place for residents and businesses to voice their shared concerns and have advocacy at township level.
- One participant mentioned the number of home-based or cottage-industry businesses that are an opportunity to bring both viewpoints together, as they have opinions on both areas.
- 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.”
- Many participants reiterated that the businesses currently do not have a support system in place except for other individual businesses, or self-advocacy at township.
- Some participants discussed past BIA experiences with higher membership, higher turnout, and more participation. They expressed this may have been related to the leadership at the time who proactively reached out and tried to get everyone involved.

Further comments

At the end of each focus group, participants were given the opportunity to share additional comments. This is what they shared:

- Some participants mentioned leadership concerns at this stage, hoping that more residents and business owners would volunteer to participate in the FLCA.
- There was some support for bringing sub-committees or different voices to the table for conversations in the future.
- Many compliments to the FLCA on these groups and the surveys. They were well done, well received, and participants appreciated the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings.

Overall sentiments

There appears to be support for the FLCA to take on representation of both businesses and residents, provided that the organization:

- **Provides balanced representation to both businesses and residents**
- **Accurately reflects the viewpoints of residents and businesses in a non-partisan way**
- **Provides services that reflect the needs of the community, including advocacy work, community conversations, and event notifications**
- **Elects directors and representatives from the community to allow possible representation of multiple viewpoints**

Overall feedback on the FLCA itself remains positive, as was overall survey feedback.

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.

It is also seen as beneficial for community groups such as the FLCEA to remain separate from the FLCA but have representation with the organization to ensure their voice is heard.

Questions?

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