



# VOICES *of* BOWNNESS

Creating a Vibrant Neighbourhood

2009

BOWNNESS

**Vital**Signs

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# MESSAGE FROM THE BOWNESS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The Bowness Community Association was pleased to lead the Bowness Vital Signs project. From our beginning conversations about what we can celebrate and what might be missing, to hearing the ideas that you have for our community, this exciting initiative has been a unique opportunity for involvement.

Bowness Vital Signs is an invaluable tool for all of us who care about Bowness. It highlights the areas that people have identified as important and points to possibilities for action. Together, working with agencies, businesses and individuals in the community, we can build the Bowness we all dream of.

# MESSAGE FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

We are proud to present Bowness Vital Signs, a community engagement initiative that examines issues important to the neighbourhood of Bowness. Our report aims to raise awareness, encourage dialogue and promote action, while celebrating what is unique and special about Bowness. Through shared knowledge, we can make better decisions and build stronger neighbourhoods.

Inspired by Calgary's Vital Signs, this initiative was led by the Bowness Community Association. Its key supporters include: United Way of Calgary and Area, Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary, The Calgary Foundation, City of Calgary Community & Neighbourhood Services, and Bowwest Community Resource Centre.

Bowness Vital Signs was made possible through the support of many organizations and volunteers who care about Bowness. We would like to send a special thank you to the Bowness Historical Society and to the 542 voices who participated in the survey. We also want to acknowledge the organizations who donated their locations for our survey collection: Calgary Public Library, the Bownesian Grocer, Cadence Coffee, and the Bowness Sportsplex. Please refer to the Acknowledgements section for an extensive list of our contributors.

# THE HISTORY OF BOWNESS

The Community of Bowness is located in Calgary's northwest, along the banks of the Bow River. Rich in history and culture, the area was once used as a ranch back in the late 1800s. It was owned by an English entrepreneur named John Hextall, whose vision became the framework for Bowness.

In 1911, Hextall donated a park to the City of Calgary in exchange for street car services to Bowness. The 'Hextall Agreement' opened Bowness to development, but it wasn't until March 10, 1952 that it was established as a town. Bowness remained a separate community until 1964 when it officially became part of Calgary.

As of 2008, the total population of Bowness was 11,308, but it still retains its small-town feel and strong sense of community.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- Some of the earliest aviation activity in Calgary happened in and around the Bowness Flying Field, which was located near the present-day high school.
- Located across the river from Bowness Park, the Baker Memorial Sanatorium was a well-known health care institution for World War I soldiers suffering from tuberculosis.
- There are six Hextall-built heritage homes still standing in Bowness.

Sources:

Bowness: Our Village in the Valley

# BOWNESS TODAY

## **QUESTION: WHAT'S A BOWNESIAN?**

**Answer: Someone who lives in Bowness.**

## **QUESTION: WHO'S A BOWNESIAN?**

**Answer: This one is a little tougher, but this booklet will provide some insight. Ultimately, who a Bownesian is depends on which one you're asking.**

- There are currently 11,308 people living in Bowness. The population of Bowness only grew 0.2 per cent between 2007 and 2008, compared to Calgary's population, which grew by 12 per cent during the same time.
- About 60 per cent of Bownesians are between the ages of 25 and 64.
- More than a quarter of Bownesians are under the age of 25.
- Bowness has a fairly diverse population with 6 per cent Aboriginal population, 14 per cent immigrant population and 5 per cent visible minority population.
- Bownesians are diversely educated—of those over 15 years of age, 29 per cent have a high school diploma, 14 per cent have an apprenticeship or trade, 15 per cent have a college degree and 12 per cent have a university degree.
- About half of Bownesians own their homes and about half rent. This is significantly different than most other neighbourhoods in Calgary, where almost three quarters of people own the homes they live in.
- More than a quarter of Bownesians live in low-income households.
- Of the 1,605 families with children living in Bowness, 37 per cent are headed by a single parent.
- The median household income in Bowness is \$45,790, which is 47 per cent lower than the median household income for Calgary of \$67,238.

Sources:  
Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

# HIGHLIGHTS

Bowness Vital Signs tells a number of stories. One is that Bowness is a neighbourhood with a deep and enduring sense of being, shaped by the physical surroundings of the river, woods and valley, and nurtured by a rich local history and a culture of involved neighbourliness. Another story is that Bowness, like many of Calgary's neighbourhoods, faces a number of challenges as it charts its pathway to the future. Many residents live in poverty and isolation; young Bownesians do not feel as connected to the neighbourhood as their adult neighbours. Each issue area and each indicator in this report has a story to tell. Our collective task is to weave these narratives towards a shared understanding of where we are and where we can go as a community.

From the very start, the Community Association was committed to hearing from many diverse voices. This commitment helped shape the project and the format of this report. Rather than one uniform approach, we embarked on a number of research activities – door-knocking, an online survey, drop boxes and group sessions. We are also presenting a table of results on the check-in survey rather than just the average of the overall responses. A page of direct quotes from respondents is also included.

## **FROM A BROAD VANTAGE POINT, WHAT CAN WE SAY FROM THE RESULTS?**

The following areas are where more than 65 per cent of respondents feel Bowness is outstanding or doing well:

- sense of community
- natural environment
- transportation

On the other hand, while many respondents felt Bowness is doing well or fair, more than 20 per cent felt additional effort is needed in these areas:

- education and learning
- diversity
- sports and recreation
- local economy

At least 24 per cent of respondents identified the following areas as areas of concern or needing immediate action:

- arts
- built environment
- health and wellness
- housing
- safety

# RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT METHODS

## VITAL CONVERSATIONS – CREATING THE ISSUE AREAS

In May and June, people who live, learn, work or worship in Bowness gave their thoughts about the quality of life in Bowness by taking an online survey, joining one of the community sessions or filling out a paper survey at one of several drop places. Local researchers went door-knocking along select streets to give more people the opportunity to participate. Bowness residents and the Implementation Team used the survey results to identify the report's 12 issue areas.

## VITAL RESEARCH – SEARCHING FOR INDICATORS

The Research Team searched for indicators from several primary sources, including the 2006 Census, City of Calgary reports, local neighbourhood studies and the Community Social Data Strategy. Some indicators can only be presented in certain geographic scales, including:

- Social District – Bowness is grouped with Montgomery and Point McKay in Social District 8a. The larger Social District 8 includes several more neighbourhoods.
- Census Tracts – Bowness is comprised of several census tracts, some of which include other neighbourhoods.

Whenever possible, a combination of indicators was used to reveal both strengths and challenges.

## VITAL CHECK-IN – FINDING OUT HOW BOWNESS IS FARING AND IDENTIFYING ACTIONS

In August and September, community members were once again invited to share their thoughts about how Bowness is doing in the 12 issue areas and what actions could be undertaken. In addition to the survey methods mentioned, Vital Check-In picnics were organized in Bowness Park. The following index was used:

<b>Outstanding:</b>	<b>One of the things I love about Bowness</b>
<b>Doing Well:</b>	<b>Heading in the right direction</b>
<b>Fair:</b>	<b>Needs additional effort</b>
<b>Of Concern:</b>	<b>Below average</b>
<b>Needs Action:</b>	<b>In dire need of immediate corrective action</b>

## VITAL SIGNS REPORT – PRESENTING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY


This report summarizes the results of the community engagement and research processes. To be true to its purpose of giving voice, the results of the Vital Check-In are presented in table form rather than an average of the overall responses. A page of direct quotes from the surveys is also included.

## RESPONDENTS' PROFILES

The Research Team received a total of 542 responses to the Vital Conversations and Vital Check-In surveys. More than 200 gave their views in the Vital Check-In. Of these:

- 74 per cent resided, 41 per cent worked, 11 per cent worshipped, and 8 per cent were learning in Bowness
- 71 per cent were female
- 11 per cent were adults aged 18 to 30; 46 per cent were aged 31 to 50; 33 per cent aged 50 and over

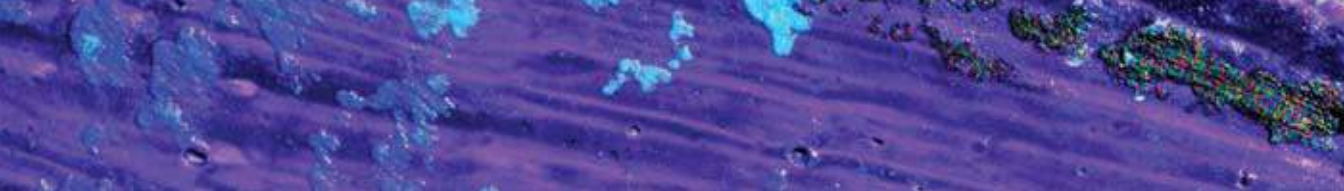
# SENSE OF COMMUNITY



OUTSTANDING	10%
<b>DOING WELL</b>	<b>56%</b>
FAIR	28%
OF CONCERN	3%
NEEDS ACTION	3%

**A strong sense of community involves being connected with your neighbours and having a sense of belonging. It also involves having your needs met, and having an influence on community issues. In Bowness, many people have a strong sense of pride and belonging in the community. Others believe that greater engagement is needed, especially among youth and newcomers to the neighbourhood.**





## ATTACHMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

In 2004, 81 per cent of Bowness residents surveyed said that Bowness was “my community.” The survey also showed that neighbourhood attachment is high in Bowness (10.8 score out of a possible 12). However, a survey of youth in a local junior high school in 2007 showed a much lower attachment (less than 8.7) among those living in Bowness. This score is measured by residents’ interest in what is going on in the neighbourhood, whether they would miss Bowness if they were to leave, and whether they feel at home in the neighbourhood.

## LIVING ALONE

About 1,700 individuals, or 15.6 per cent of the population, are living alone in Bowness. This is significantly higher in comparison to the whole of Calgary. It is important that individuals living by themselves have the support and the opportunities to participate in their community.

## PARTICIPATING AND VOLUNTEERING

A 2006 City of Calgary survey related to social issues and needs indicated that 67.3 per cent of respondents from District 8a (Bowness, Montgomery, Point McKay) participated in community activities and events. In the same survey, 52.9 per cent volunteered at organizations throughout Calgary.

## WAYS OF CONNECTING TO THE COMMUNITY

Bownesians who are 18 and over connect to their community through various means, including the local schools (76 per cent), community association and Sportsplex (76 per cent), churches (43 per cent) and local agencies such as Boys and Girls Clubs (25 per cent).

*The BowMont Ministerial Group brings together the local churches to undertake activities that benefit the community. The group runs a weekly drop-in supper at the local Shepherd of the Hills church.*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**COMING TOGETHER** - Increase community events and other activities that bring neighbours together to celebrate success and welcome newcomers.

**INCREASE AWARENESS** - Increase awareness about community events, the new community association, volunteer opportunities and resources and services available in the neighbourhood.

**REACHING OUT** - Reach out to residents in isolation, building circles of support for those who are living alone.

# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



OUTSTANDING	24%
<b>DOING WELL</b>	<b>51%</b>
FAIR	16%
OF CONCERN	7%
NEEDS ACTION	2%

As one of Calgary's oldest communities, Bowness is full of mature trees, lush greens, and old growth. Its location along the Bow River provides an ideal opportunity for many parks and pathways in which residents can enjoy the outdoors in a variety of ways.



## WE LOVE OUR PARK!

Bowness Park is a major source of pride for the community. Open year-round, it covers about 30 hectares of land and is always full of activity. From skating on the lagoon in the winter to picnicking in the summer, it's a popular hangout for Bownesians and Calgarians alike. 99 per cent of residents surveyed in 2004 said that they have visited the park, while 87 per cent said they go to green spaces in the neighbourhood to walk, cycle or rollerblade. Skating in the lagoon (40 per cent), river raft races (40 per cent), picnics and family events (51 per cent) and paddle boats (26 per cent) are the most popular activities. The park also includes "Playland" with rides for young children.

## MORE MAINTENANCE AND MORE GREEN SPACES

Bownesians love their green spaces but feel that more maintenance and upkeep is necessary to keep these spaces accessible and enjoyable for all. Some spaces do not see regular gardening and play structures are outdated. Bownesians express the desire to see more community initiative being taken in the upkeep of these vital areas within their community. In addition, 37 per cent of Bowness residents reported not having enough parks and green spaces available.

## AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Just over half of the respondents from Social District 8a had concerns regarding air quality, and approximately 40 per cent were concerned about the availability of clean drinking water and green spaces.

*Some Bownesians take advantage of a local community garden where they grow their own fresh fruits and vegetables, and get a little exercise to boot.*

*<http://calhort.org/gardening/community.aspx?id=643>*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**MORE GARDENS AND PATHWAYS** - Many of those surveyed suggested that developing more gardens and pathways would increase fellowship and community pride in Bowness.

**SAFER PATHWAYS** - Several Bownesians said that more safety is needed on their pathways. These respondents reported that some of the younger community members were loitering and littering in the green spaces near the river.

**OPEN A FARMERS' MARKET** - Several respondents suggested opening a farmers' market in the main village. They believed this would add to the quaintness and sense of community in Bowness.

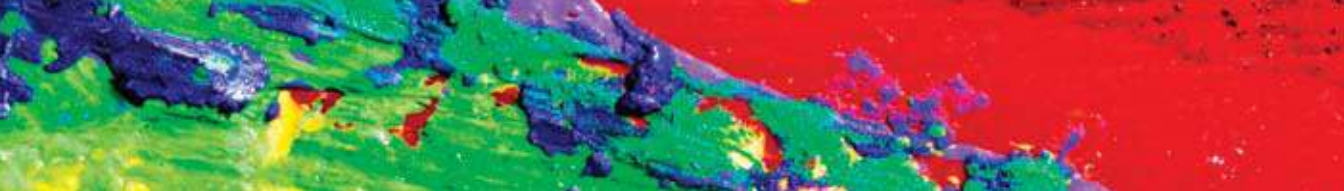
# LOCAL ECONOMY

OUTSTANDING	5%
DOING WELL	35%
<b>FAIR</b>	<b>42%</b>
OF CONCERN	13%
NEEDS ACTION	5%

A vibrant local economy contributes to a strong neighbourhood, allowing community members to live, work and shop in close proximity. Life is less stressful when jobs are safe, enjoyable, close to home, and pay reasonably well.

In 2006, the economy was booming and the unemployment rate for Bowness was 4.6 per cent – slightly higher than the 3.2 per cent rate for Calgary.

Sources:  
Statistics Canada, 2006 Census  
Canadian Business Patterns, December 2008  
Community Social Statistics  
City of Calgary Signposts 2006



## TYPES OF BUSINESSES

Bowness has 501 registered businesses. Residents would like to see more variety in the businesses that operate in the community - especially ones that are beneficial to the community such as coffee shops, restaurants, local grocery stores and book stores.

## PEOPLE EARN LESS

The median household income is \$45,790, which is 47 per cent lower than the median income of \$67,238 earned by the average Calgarian. About 25 per cent of Bownesians report living in low-income households compared to citywide average of 14.2 per cent. But in spite of this, 90 per cent of Bownesians say they are able to afford the things they need.

## WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

Residents identified the potential for local businesses to provide employment opportunities for residents of Bowness. Entrepreneurship and working at home were also identified as ways for residents to work in their community. Currently, 10 per cent of working Bownesians are self-employed, and 50 per cent of those employ other people. Five per cent of residents work from home.

*"I think the Bowness core needs more work - there are shops and amenities but these don't have much diversity in products."*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**ENCOURAGING LOCAL INVESTMENT** - Re-establish a business development group or business association group of entrepreneurs and investors that could encourage investment in the community and encourage residents to support local businesses.

**LOCAL BUSINESS COOPERATION** - Extend the Business Revitalization zone to include all commercial areas so all business owners could work cooperatively for the benefit of Bowness.

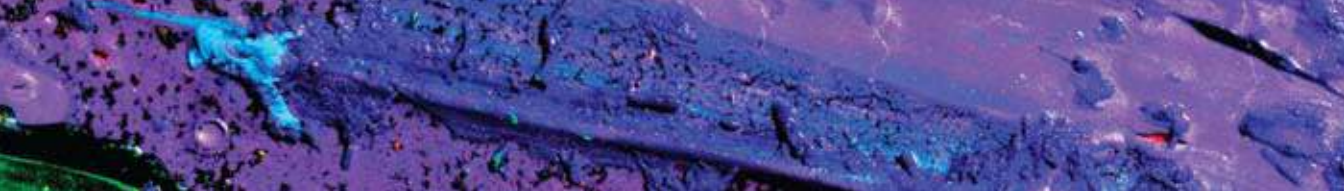
**COFFEE SHOPS** - The community loves their coffee shops but would like to see one along Main Street open in the evenings.

# BUILT ENVIRONMENT

OUTSTANDING	4%
DOING WELL	26%
<b>FAIR</b>	<b>40%</b>
OF CONCERN	23%
NEEDS ACTION	7%

**Built environment includes man-made structures like houses, buildings, streets and public facilities that are added to the natural environment. The connection between people and the built environment is important because it shapes and influences our relationships with neighbours, our sense of place, our lifestyle, and how we care for others.**

**Bowness occupies about 565 hectares of land, including roads, or a net area of 390 hectares.**



## LAND DESIGNATIONS AND LAND USE

About two-thirds of Bowness is designated for residential use, and more than half of that is for single family dwellings. In 2006, there were close to 5,000 occupied private residences in the neighbourhood.

## COMMERCIAL AREAS

About 7 per cent of the land area of Bowness is used for commercial purposes and concentrated in four areas: Main Street, the Bowness Mall, Trans Canada Highway and Sunnyside Nurseries.

## HERITAGE BUILDINGS

Two sites in Bowness are currently designated under the Alberta Historical Resources Act: Wood's Douglas Fir Tree Sanctuary and the Shouldice/Hextall Bridge. The community also has six sites listed in the City's Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources: Bowness Park, Bowness Town Hall, Hamblin House, Hextall House, Hoare Residence, and Phillips Residence. The Bowness Area Redevelopment Plan identifies three additional potential heritage sites.

*"There are areas in Bowness that need revitalization - something that is happening slowly."*


## VITAL ACTIONS

**A CLEANER COMMUNITY** - Many respondents suggested that the Bowness Community Clean-Ups be held more often, while others recommended raising awareness about garbage disposal and engaging the community in keeping the neighbourhood clean.

**KEEPING IT SMALL** - Keep the small town appeal of Bowness while injecting more vibrancy on Main Street by upgrading the façades and buildings.

**DEALING WITH GRAFFITI** - Develop effective ways of dealing with graffiti and vandalism in the neighbourhood, including having more murals and art projects that engage local residents.

# HEALTH & WELLNESS



OUTSTANDING	3%
DOING WELL	26%
<b>FAIR</b>	<b>40%</b>
OF CONCERN	24%
NEEDS ACTION	7%

Health is not just the absence of disease, but a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” (World Health Organization). In order to be healthy, we need local health services and facilities, options for recreation, and accessible, healthy food choices.



## LIFE EXPECTANCIES

According to a Calgary Health Region report, men and women in Social District 8 have lower-than-average life expectancies compared to the citywide average:

	<b>Social District 8</b>	<b>Calgary</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>76.3 years</b>	<b>79.1 years</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>80.1 years</b>	<b>83.3 years</b>

## EATING & FITNESS

The number of respondents who consume less than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day is 69 per cent, but this is still lower than the Calgary average of 73 per cent. The community also gets more exercise than the rest of the city: only 38 per cent of those surveyed said they do not meet the recommended level of physical activity compared to 45 per cent of Calgarians.

## HEART HEALTH

Men and women in Social District 8 have higher death rates per 100,000 from heart disease compared to the rest of Calgary:

	<b>Social District 8</b>	<b>Calgary</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>73</b>

## TOP HEALTH CONCERNS

Respondents to the Signposts Survey in 2006 from District 8a identified the following top concerns regarding physical well-being: lacking sleep (54.7 per cent); gaining weight (46.3 per cent); being physically inactive (43.4 per cent), not eating healthy (31.5 per cent) or not having opportunities for recreation and leisure (31.5 per cent).

*"We need more affordable, healthy choices at local eateries."*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**MORE HEALTH FACILITIES AND STAFF** - Many of those surveyed feel that there aren't enough local places for them to get the kind of health and wellness services they need.

**GET DRUGS OFF OUR STREETS** - Visible signs of drug abuse and too many drugs on the streets were of high concern to many in the community—Bownesians want more drug-use deterrents and treatment facilities in their neighbourhood.

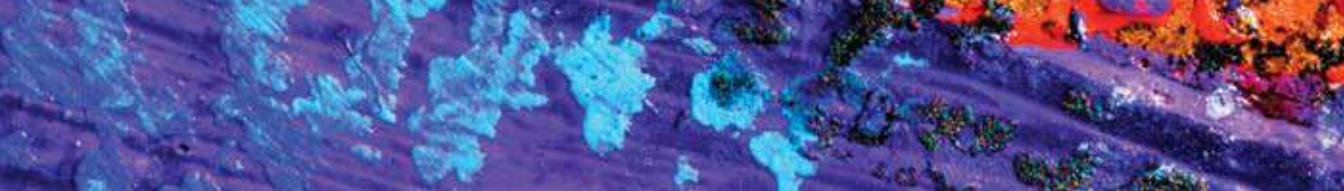
**MORE GROCERY STORES** - Although the survey respondents have indicated that they love the Bownesian Grocer, many feel that there aren't enough places in the community to get healthy and affordable foods.

# SPORTS & RECREATION

OUTSTANDING	8%
<b>DOING WELL</b>	<b>42%</b>
FAIR	37%
OF CONCERN	11%
NEEDS ACTION	2%

**The availability of sports and recreation opportunities is vital to creating an active and vibrant community. By promoting health and well-being, and by providing opportunities for neighbours to interact with each other, sports and recreation lead to healthy individuals and communities.**





## GREEN SPACE USE

Close to a vast network of bike and walking trails in Canada Olympic Park and the Bow River park system, Bownesians take full advantage of their green spaces. A full 99 per cent say they have been to Bowness Park and 87 per cent had used the park's green space for walking, cycling or rollerblading. About 90 per cent say they walk (either a lot or a little) in the local area.

## USE OF RECREATION FACILITIES

In addition to the parks in the area, Bownesians have some great recreational facilities, including the Bowness Sportsplex. A study conducted by the University of Calgary found that 76 per cent of those surveyed had visited the Bowness Community Association and Sportsplex. Among households with kids aged 18 and under, the degree of involvement was even higher at 83 per cent. Similarly, the City of Calgary Signposts survey in 2006 showed 72.2 per cent of respondents in Social District 8a have used recreation and leisure facilities, programs and services.

## NEED FOR MORE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

Of those responding to the Signposts survey in 2006 in Social District 8a, 7.1 per cent identified that they need recreation and leisure programs for themselves or for their family members.

*Bownesians seem to do everything with a bit more community spirit and flare than most neighbourhoods—they have a neighbourhood running club, and the annual "Le Tour de Bowness"—a three-day cycling event which has become a premier stop on the provincial cycle tour. - [www.tourdebowness.com](http://www.tourdebowness.com)*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**FIX OUR FACILITIES** - Bowness is one of the older neighbourhoods in Calgary, and its facilities may be showing it. Many respondents reported that they would like to see the existing facilities fixed up and new ones developed.

**MORE COMMUNICATION** - Many of those surveyed are unaware of the recreational opportunities in the community. Developing more effective ways of communicating what's available will get more people involved.

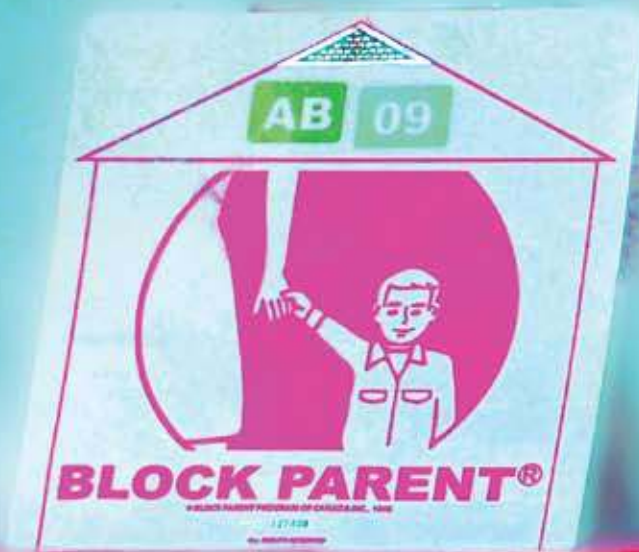
**AFFORDABLE OPTIONS** - Many respondents feel that the recreational opportunities that do exist are too expensive. Offering more affordable options will allow more Bownesians the opportunity to be active and engaged.

# SAFETY

OUTSTANDING	3%
DOING WELL	26%
<b>FAIR</b>	<b>46%</b>
OF CONCERN	14%
NEEDS ACTION	11%



Everyone wants to feel safe in their neighbourhood. Safety is not just about crime – it's seen as freedom from risk of harm or injury. Bownesians report that they're concerned about safety and feel that Bowness is only doing a fair job of ensuring a sense of security in their neighbourhood.





## HIGHER THAN AVERAGE CRIME RATE

In 2008, there were 11.4 reports of assault per 1,000 people - much higher than the citywide rate of 5.6 per 1,000 people. In the same year, Bowness recorded a higher than average number of domestic violence calls to city police. There were 22.5 calls per 1,000 people, compared to Calgary's rate of 12.9.

## FEELINGS OF SAFETY

An overwhelming number of residents in Social District 8a say they feel safe in their schools, workplaces and homes. In spite of this, many Bownesians are worried about their property being stolen or damaged. It's important to note that the property crime rate in Bowness is no higher than the reported citywide rate: in 2008 there were 47 reported violations per 1,000 people in Calgary.

## KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Several respondents recognized that neighbour interaction is an effective way of increasing their feelings of safety. Communities with active participation in a Block Watch program tend to have a lower crime rate, yet there are only 20 households in Bowness signed up.

*"It feels unsafe, but I wonder if it actually is unsafe. Maybe people need to know more about how Bowness compares to other areas in terms of crime."*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**SUPPORT LOCAL INITIATIVES** - Support or join the Bowness Block Watch. Get to know your neighbours and other community members.

**INCREASED POLICE PRESENCE** - Many respondents said they would like to see a greater police presence in the community. Some suggested engaging the police in youth programs, schools, and the community association.

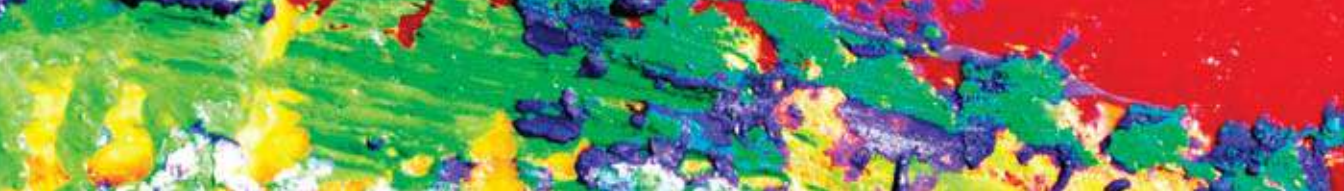
**AWARENESS AND INFORMATION** - Ensure community members are aware of the resources available to help them if they are worried about family violence.

# DIVERSITY



OUTSTANDING	3%
<b>DOING WELL</b>	<b>49%</b>
FAIR	38%
OF CONCERN	7%
NEEDS ACTION	3%

**Rich in social diversity, Bowness boasts a wide range of cultural, linguistic, religious and economic variety. The richness of its people makes Bowness a vibrant and inclusive community with character and potential. By celebrating its differences, Bownesians aim to promote and enhance the diversity within their community, making it a defining feature of the Bownesian identity.**



## RECOGNIZING ETHNO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In 2006, of the total population of Bowness, 6.4 per cent were Aboriginal, 14.1 per cent were immigrant, and 5.1 per cent were visible minorities. Additionally, in a 2007 survey of youth attending grades six, seven, and eight in Bowness, 90 per cent reported they were born in Canada, and the majority (73 per cent) self-identified as white. However, as diversity continues to grow in our communities it is important to acknowledge the many benefits this brings to the community.

## BRIDGING THE AGE GAP

39.3 per cent of Bownesians are over the age of 44, compared to 23.8 per cent of the Calgary population. Many respondents see this as a rich and rare opportunity to engage the 19.9 per cent of those under the age of 20 in more community initiatives, which could help bridge the age gap.

## THE “HAVES” AND THE “HAVE NOTS”

While many respondents list diversity as a major strength in Bowness, some feel that there is a distinct division between those who are more financially secure and those who are not. Many respondents believe this gap is increasing and is a major barrier to a deeper sense of community. In 2005, the median household income in Bowness decreased 0.9 per cent between 2000 and 2005 while that of Calgary grew by 1.8 per cent.

*“The problem I see is the gap between the rich and the poor.”*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**INCREASING CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES** - Bownesians reported a desire to see more opportunities for sharing and showcasing cultural and linguistic diversity. They also felt this would heighten a sense of belonging to those in the community.

**EQUAL REPRESENTATION** - Bownesians felt there needs to be a greater representation of social class, age, and cultural groups at the Bowness Community Association.

**ACCESS FOR ALL** - There remains a perception among Bownesians that not all activities are accessible to everyone in the community. The main concern is regarding income.

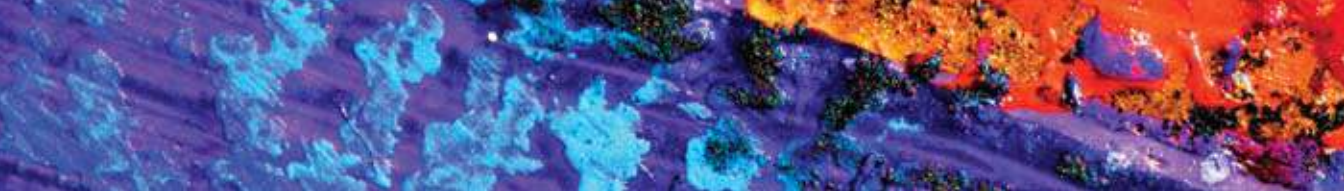
# HOUSING

OUTSTANDING	3%
DOING WELL	33%
<b>FAIR</b>	<b>40%</b>
OF CONCERN	15%
NEEDS ACTION	9%

**Variety in housing choices and affordability contributes to community diversity. Bowness offers a distinctive mix of housing options, which attracts residents of different backgrounds and income levels.**

**Single home residential sales values in Bowness have one of the widest ranges for any neighbourhood in Calgary. The minimum is \$240,207, the maximum \$1,888,306, and the median is \$363,848.**





## **SPLIT BETWEEN RENTAL AND OWNED PROPERTIES**

Bowness has an almost even split between rental (47.3 per cent) and owned (52.6 per cent) properties. This figure differs dramatically from the move in Calgary towards suburban single family home development where 73 per cent of dwellings are owned and only 23 per cent are rented.

## **SENIORS LIVING ALONE**

Bowness has a high number of seniors who live alone. In fact, 40 per cent of all people who live alone in Bowness are seniors. In addition, 52.8 per cent of respondents in another survey noted concern about their ability to care for themselves as they aged.

## **LOWER RENTS NOT ENOUGH**

At \$776, the average monthly rental rate in Bowness is substantially more affordable than the Calgary average of \$871. But 42 per cent of respondents said they continue to spend more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter.

## **DWELLINGS REQUIRING MAJOR REPAIR**

In Bowness, 10.3 per cent of homes require major repairs. This is more than twice the Calgary average of 4.9 per cent.

*"If I were to buy a home, this is where I'd buy it. We need more affordable housing for all ages."*

## **VITAL ACTIONS**

**BOWNESS DEVELOPMENT PLAN** - Many respondents appreciated the housing mix in Bowness, but would like to see all housing types and affordability levels considered in future development options. Several respondents want to move from congregated affordable housing complexes to a mix of affordable housing options dispersed throughout the community.

**HOUSE PROUD** - In the survey, many said they want to ensure Bowness properties are maintained. Some suggested by-law enforcement or neighbourhood follow-up with landlords to ensure that rental properties are maintained. Others suggested offering assistance for seniors who need help maintaining their properties and opportunities for renters to engage in the community and take pride in their homes.

**PROMOTING BOWNESS** - The respondents said they want to promote their community and draw attention to the affordable rental or homeownership options, great natural spaces, proximity to downtown and "small town within the big city" feel. The objective is to engage Calgarians who are interested in contributing to the richness and diversity of community life in Bowness.

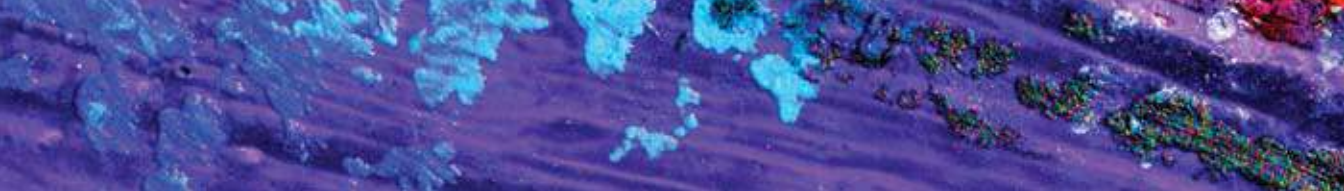
# TRANSPORTATION

OUTSTANDING	26%
DOING WELL	52%
FAIR	18%
OF CONCERN	3%
NEEDS ACTION	1%

Good transportation options are vital to neighbourhoods in order to meet the mobility needs of all residents. Transportation is about our ability to get around so we can get to work, participate in community activities and ultimately meet our basic needs. Many people felt Bowness is a walkable and accessible community, while others wondered if we could expand on our existing infrastructure.



Sources:  
City of Calgary, Transportation Data  
City of Calgary, Transportation Planning  
Statistics Canada 2006 Census  
City of Calgary



## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Bowness is served by five bus routes (Routes Number 1, 40, 305, 408, 407). Two are low-floor buses for accessibility and one is designated as rapid transit for those commuting to work downtown.

## **ROADS AND TRAFFIC VOLUME**

Bowness Road is the major roadway through the centre of community. It is linked to collector streets and other major roads that have transit service. In 2007, an average of 15,000 vehicles used Bowness Road on a typical weekday.

Bowness residents commute to other parts of the city through the Trans Canada Highway, Sarcee Trail, 85th Street and Bowness Road.

## **COMMUTING TO WORK**

In Bowness, 72.6 per cent of residents get to work by driving or riding in a private vehicle, while 19.1 per cent take public transit, and seven per cent walk or cycle.

## **PATHWAYS AND BIKE PATHS**

Bowness has approximately 15 kilometres of pathways and bikeways. These include routes through public parks and regular streets.

*Bus No. 1, which travels from Bowness to Forest Lawn, is one of Calgary's oldest bus routes.*

## **VITAL ACTIONS**

**IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSIT** - Improve public transit routes and increase connections to other areas of the community.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKABILITY** - Make it easier to get around by improving pedestrian pathways, sidewalks, and bridges, and introducing traffic-calming features.

# EDUCATION & LEARNING

OUTSTANDING	12%
<b>DOING WELL</b>	<b>53%</b>
FAIR	22%
OF CONCERN	9%
NEEDS ACTION	4%

Education and learning affect our health, our capacity to earn and our ability to be creative and adapt to change in our lives. Strong neighbourhoods nurture lifelong learners and support a variety of learning opportunities in both formal and informal settings.

## POST SECONDARY

In 2006, 45.4 per cent of Bowness residents (aged 15 and over) had completed post-secondary education (degree, certificate or diploma). This was below the city rate of 56.3 per cent, the provincial rate of 48 per cent, and the national rate of 49 per cent for the same period.

## HIGH SCHOOL

In 2006, 25.8 per cent of individuals (aged 15 years and over) living in Bowness held no certificate, diploma or degree, while the citywide rate was 18.1 per cent.

## PUBLIC LIBRARY USAGE

In 2008, over 311,000 customer transactions took place at the Bowness Public Library; this total reflects an overall decrease of 5 per cent from 2007. However, in-library computer sessions increased by 14 per cent and the number of items circulated also increased by 3 per cent during this period. More than 4,862 people attended an event at the Bowness Public Library in 2008, reflecting a downward trend of 21 per cent from 2007.

## READING AND WRITING

A Calgary survey completed in 2006 reported that in Social District 8a (Bowness, Montgomery and Point Mackay), 13.2 per cent of respondents indicated that not being able to read or write kept them from fulfilling what they wanted to achieve, compared with 14 per cent as the Calgary average.

*Bowness is fortunate to have a community-based GED program called Never Too Late. Since 2006, 78 adult learners have completed their high school equivalency in this program.*

## VITAL ACTIONS

**MORE ADULT LEARNING OPTIONS** - Informal adult learning is lacking in the community. Offering evening classes for adults and seniors would be beneficial for Bowness residents.

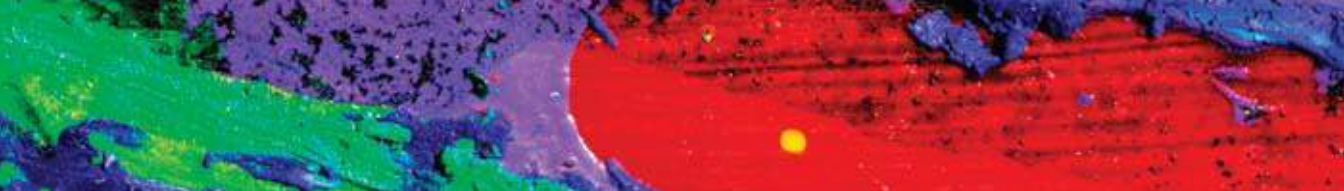
**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE** - Many of those surveyed said that there should be more ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction in the community.

**ARTS AND CRAFTS** - Many different needs could be addressed by having special interest classes such as art, cooking, music and drama.

# ARTS & CULTURE

OUTSTANDING	3%
DOING WELL	23%
<b>FAIR</b>	<b>34%</b>
OF CONCERN	23%
NEEDS ACTION	17%

Arts and culture in a community are not just “nice to have”—increasingly studies are showing that they are “must haves.” As the celebrated urban theorist Richard Florida recently said, “The idea is that arts and culture are part of a vibrant neighbourhood” (The Tyee, August 2008). A vibrant arts and culture scene gives us the opportunity to interact with one another and helps us remember our past, live in our present and imagine our future.



## THE FUNCTION OF FAITH

There are nine places of worship in Bowness, offering residents a wide range of places to practice their faith locally. Of those surveyed in a University of Calgary report, 43 per cent said that they had been to one of the places of worship.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Bowness has a lot of community events. One of the most popular local events is the Annual Stampede Parade and Breakfast. According to one study, 72 per cent of those polled said that they had been to the event.

## CULTURAL PRESENCE

There are at least five cultural institutions operating in Bowness, including the Bowness Historical Society, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Irish Canadian Club, the Dutch Canadian Club and the German Canadian Club. Additionally, Bowness has various cultural events including the Tour de Bowness, the Bridges of Hope Refugee Festival, the Annual Friendship Round Dance, Picnic in the Park and Bowness Community Clean-Up Day.

*Bowness may be the only community in Calgary to have its very own musicians-in-residence. The Bownesians have been said to be "the quintessential surf-pop band, flavoured with a little rockabilly, while sneaking in some 50's B-movie influence."*  
[www.thebownesians.com](http://www.thebownesians.com)

## VITAL ACTIONS

**MORE ARTS & CULTURE** - Bownesians love their art and culture, but feel that there aren't enough public places to profile their work. Many suggested opening more local art shops, cultural venues and art studios as a way to bring more vibrancy to the neighbourhood.

**GETTING INVOLVED** - Many people in the community feel that there aren't enough opportunities to get involved in arts and cultural programming. Creating more programs would give Bownesians more ways to celebrate their own local arts and culture scene.

**SHARING INFORMATION** - Many feel that they don't know about local arts and cultural events and programming, and that they don't know where to find the information. This could be preventing many Bownesians from getting involved in their community.

# COMMUNITY VOICES

"A strong community willing to work together and help each other is more valuable to our future than anything else."

"There is a certain sense of pride in the community. No other community has a bumper sticker and I would be proud to put one on my truck!"

"It feels like we are in our own little town sometimes, I love how it's very family oriented."

"Resources are great here - there are some great things, teams and clubs in Bowness that other communities don't seem to have."

"I think improving the content and delivery of the Bowwestn'er, in both physical and electronic formats, is a priority for getting out news and info to the community."

"The youth in this community are very special: most of them are a blessing and an asset to the community."

"I especially like the fact that we do not live in a "cookie-cutter" type of neighbourhood where all the houses have "architectural controls" and they are all the same colour, same exteriors and same basic design ... BORING!!"

"I feel like Bowness is on the edge of some big changes, but I'm not sure what direction it's headed in. There are a lot of older places now that are starting to be torn down that are now sitting empty. The old RB Bennett School is sitting vacant. Downtown Bowness is a mix of new and some old, run down or vacant buildings. Depending on what happens to those places will shape Bowness for decades to come."

"I think the Bowness core needs more work - there are shops and amenities but these don't have much diversity in products."

"Everyone should get aboard the Bowness embellishment train!"

"A strong community willing to work together and help each other is more valuable to our future than anything else."

"We're lucky to have Bowness Park in our community, but there are other green spaces in Bowness that need work."

"I'd like to see the Sportsplex offer more services - like dance classes and a gym!"

"I would like to see more art galleries or coffee shops where local Calgary artists' work is displayed."



# WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

*By Christina L. Hammond*

More than just  
The place you live  
More than just  
A name to give  
Being significant  
Belonging to  
Taking part  
Making anew  
Bringing differences  
And strengths in stride  
Using talents  
Hands by side  
A strong sense  
Of community  
Evokes confidence  
And harmony  
It means dancing together  
In rhythm and poise  
Intertwining lives  
Giving them a voice  
Backs straight  
Heads held high  
Arms linked  
Ready to fly

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## COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Belvedere- Parkway Elementary School  
Bowcroft Elementary School  
Bowness Historical Society  
Bowness Lions Club  
Bowness Montgomery Neighbourhood Collaborative  
Bowness Ministerial Group  
Bowness Seniors Centre  
Bowness Senior High School  
Bowwest Community Resource Centre  
Our Lady of the Assumption School  
Calgary Family Services  
Calgary Foundation  
Calgary Public Library  
Catholic Family Service of Calgary  
The City of Calgary, Community & Neighbourhood Services  
Family Pride ParentLink Center  
Society of Bowness Residents  
TB Riley Junior High  
Volunteer Calgary

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Dell Café  
The Bownesian Grocer

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# NEXT STEPS

Bowness is a great place to live, learn, work and worship. Bownesians are a diverse group of people with diverse ideas on how to keep Bowness great and make it even better.

This report, the first neighbourhood Vital Signs in Calgary and in Canada, clearly says that there are many things to celebrate in our community. It also says that there are things that we need to watch out for – neighbours who need support in overcoming difficult situations, local resources and facilities that need improvement, youth and newcomers who must feel welcomed, and social issues that need to be confronted.

We have work to do as a community. How can we take advantage of our strengths to take action on our challenges? For this, we need everyone, including ourselves and our neighbours, youth and seniors, and local businesses, governments, agencies and faith groups.

Let us use this report to move forward. Let us come together to see what we can do, as individuals, as organizations and as a community.

# CONTACT US

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[www.bownessvitalsigns.com](http://www.bownessvitalsigns.com)

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