

# Deepening Community

RE-IMAGINING CITIES | RE-ENGAGING CITIZENS



## Hosting Community Conversations in Baltimore, MD

### A Conversation Guide

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[www.tamarackcommunity.ca](http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca)

## Community Is Good For Us

More and more people believe that community is important because it helps...

- Shape our identity more broadly
- Create a sense of belonging
- Provide opportunities to care and be cared for (mutual aid)
- Enhance our economic prospects
- Strengthen our individual and collective well-being
- Improve our level of happiness



The first step to building a community is to have a conversation. When we talk with each other, we build connections and form relationships. Having conversations is how we learn, create understanding and stay connected with each other.

## Imagine...

People of all ages, from every sector in our community, working together to actively create the kind of welcoming and thriving future for our community...a place where all who live here know that they belong...a place where everyone's gifts and talents are honoured and shared...and a place where we all play a role in creating the future we want to live into.

## It all begins with a conversation...

How does this hope become a reality? It all begins with a conversation and an experience of community between neighbours. This is the starting point...and the guiding force...that will help us harness the collective wisdom and creativity needed to realize our shared hopes for the future.

A shared vision for the future can help us to galvanize our collective energy and resources and focus them on achieving shared priorities that benefit our entire community.

The most inspiring and compelling shared visions are grounded in the individual ideas, experiences and aspirations of as diversity of people. These visions are positive and inspiring because each of us can see our own vision reflected in the broader shared vision.

## How Can You Contribute?

Here are four simple things you can do to help us to build a shared vision for the future of our community:

1. **Participate in a conversation** and share your ideas and hopes for our community's future;
2. **Recommend others to participate** so that we can engage as many – and as diverse – a mix of our community in this project as possible.

3. **Complete the project and asset mapping survey** This survey will provide data for our project and enable us to complete an inventory of resident skills, talents and interest
4. Attend our community celebration at the end of this process to **have fun together**; discover what we **have learned**, **confirm** an emerging community vision; and, **identify priorities** for shared action.

## Hosting a Conversation: How to Get Started...

### *Choose a Space that Invites Conversation*

- Somewhere relatively quiet and free from distractions and interruptions
- Somewhere familiar and accessible to all who want to participate
- Somewhere comfortable with enough room for everyone to sit in one big circle

### *Make it Welcoming*

- Be sure to greet and welcome people
- Introduce people to each other
- Thank them for coming
- Make it celebratory – flowers, snacks, music all help create a sense of joy and fun

### *Logistics and Supplies*

- Plan that the conversation will last approximately 1.5 hours depending on the number of questions you want to explore
- Bring along markers, paper and pens in case people want to take notes or draw pictures to represent their vision for the future
- Ask people to sign a list with their name, email list and phone number so that we can keep them informed of how this work is unfolding
- Consider using an audio recorder if that makes it easier to capture the conversation

## Opening the Conversation...

### *Set the Context*

Take a few moments at the start to:

- Outline the purpose for the conversation: **“Today’s conversation will help us build a shared vision for the kind of community that we want to create together in our neighbourhood in Baltimore.**
- Explain why and how you personally decided to get involved;
- Let people know that the ideas they share today will be combined with those generated by many other conversations like this one that are happening throughout the community in the next month or so in order to build a consensus of the kind of community we want to be part of in the future
- Tell people that they are welcome to continue to be part of this process as it unfolds

### **Create a Safe Container “to Hold” the Conversation**

The goal of a great conversation is to help people to think together. To achieve this, it is often helpful to outline – and get agreement on -- guidelines for the conversation. These can include:

- Turn off cell phones
- Listen with attention
- Be comfortable with silence
- Speak with intention
- Ask questions
- Be open to new ideas and possibilities
- Be tolerant and willing to shift your opinion
- Attend to the well-being of the group
- Have fun!



## **The Conversation Guide...**

### **Getting Warmed-Up (10 minutes)**

Ask people to re-form into their groups of three and share their answers the following question (5 minutes):

- **Share a story of a powerful experience of community that you’ve had. What made it powerful?**

Then, when all have shared their story, invite them to capture their insights to the following questions (15 minutes)

- **Given the stories we’ve shared, what do we see as the benefits of community?**
- **What do we see as the challenges of community?**
- **What do we see as the job /purpose of community?**

### **Exploring the Desired Future for Our Community (25 minutes)**

Ask people to close their eyes and imagine that, it is 5 years into the future and Peterborough has succeeded in creating a welcoming, dynamic and thriving community (10 minutes):

- **What does our community look like?**
- **What has made the community successful?**
- **How do we know that it is welcoming and inclusive?**
- **What are you personally most pleased about?**
- **What unique contributions is the community recognized for?**
- **What businesses, programs and services are offered?**
- **Who are the organizations, groups & individuals that have contributed to the community’s success?**
- **What has been important about how the community’s success was achieved?**

Invite people to share their drawings and ideas in groups of three and then capture the common elements and unique ideas that emerge across all their pictures (10 minutes.)

***Debrief the Entire Large Group: (5 minutes)***

Invite each person to share one thing that they are taking away from this conversation today... Thank everyone for coming.

## Identifying and Mapping Our Assets

When the conversations are completed, encourage participants to spend a few moments to complete our ABCD Asset Map and Project Survey. The data collected from these surveys will be used to:

- Evaluate your experience and the impact of this conversation;
- Compile a profile of the perspectives engaged by this project;
- Identify potential projects for shared action; and,
- Map the assets (gifts, talents and knowledge) that residents of our community are willing to share

This survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete

## Next Steps...

Thank you so much for your leadership in this process. Remind participants that the conversation they have been part of today is part of a community-wide project that will build consensus around a shared community vision and identify opportunities for shared action. Let them know they can contribute to the project by:

1. **Sign the registration list** (and give us your email) so that we can send you periodic updates and information about what we are learning from this process
2. **Recommend other groups** in the community who you think would be interested in contributing to this project (We are hoping to engage at least 200 people)
3. **Attend the community celebration** we are planning to host to share what we are learning and create an opportunity to identify possible projects
4. **Stay Involved!** If you would like to help with this project (organizing our celebration event, hosting conversation or anything else) please contact NAME at [email@email.com](mailto:email@email.com) and let us know.



## Thank You!