

North Shore Young Citizens' Forum

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PROGRAM REPORT

2020

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The North Shore Young Citizens' Forum would like to acknowledge that this program took place on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the x*mə\thetak**əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Executive Summary

The North Shore Young Citizens' Forum (or 'the Forum') is a civic education cohort program for young residents ages 18-39 on Vancouver's North Shore. The program was designed to address the challenge of a lack of equitable participation of young people in policy and decision making, especially at the local government level. The Forum is delivered in collaboration between North Shore Community Resources and CityHive.

This was the second time that the Forum was hosted; unlike the first Forum, which was held in person, this Forum was held entirely virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Forum consisted of 10 sessions between October and December 2020 which included presentations from the three North Shore municipalities as well as the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səlilwəta?ł (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. The program also included skill- and knowledge-building workshops and a supported group project development process.

The Forum's membership ranged from 18-39 years of age and from across the three North Shore municipalities with a strong diversity of identities, positionalities, and lived experiences.

In municipality-based groups they developed projects that explored young adult perspectives on pressing local issues. The three topics that were explored in these projects were:

- Belonging
- Sustainable transportation & mobility
- Housing affordability & access

The projects featured in this report were presented by Forum members at a public virtual event on December 3rd, 2020, and at municipal council meetings throughout Dec 2020 - Feb 2021.

This report documents the program design, projects that emerged, and lessons learned. We look forward to future iterations of this program, and are excited to have had the opportunity to learn with all of the wonderful participants and guests who joined us.

Overview

The North Shore Young Citizens' Forum has one overarching objective: to increase young adult participation in civic life at the local government level so that their voices and perspectives can be shared with decision makers and thus influence their decisions. There are three goals that work towards achieving this primary objective:

- 1. Increase Forum participants' understanding and knowledge of local government.
- 2. Create connections and relationships within the Forum cohort and between the Forum and local government staff, municipal Councillors and local First Nations.
- 3. Facilitate the creation of project(s) and/or recommendations that can be shared with local governments and provide a platform for the perspectives of the Forum participants.

The 2020 iteration of the Forum was centered on these three interconnected central themes:

Civics: BC's K-12 education provides limited information for our students about how municipalities operate or local decisions are made. The Forum offers participants a basic civic education, while also connecting them directly to their local elected officials and municipal staff.

Connection: The Forum works to build connection and community between younger adults on the North Shore by providing them with a platform to meet likeminded peers while also connecting to local government Councillors and staff.

Capacity: By connecting participants directly with municipal staff and elected officials on important local issues, participants learn how to engage meaningfully and effectively with our local governments. The Forum builds the capacity of the participants to engage in the future on issues they care about through specific project work.

"Through this program I was able to achieve a much better understanding of young people living in the North Shore. I learned about the power of young voices, and more importantly I learned about the existence of young voices within the North Shore. I was able to collaborate with like minded individuals in developing a project and practice my public speaking skills!"

- 2020 Forum Participant

The Forum focuses on an age demographic that is often left out of local decision making. The Forum is an effort to engage individuals aged 18-39 who live, work or study on the North Shore so that they can play an integral role in shaping their future neighbourhoods, local culture and economy.

The first cohort of the North Shore Young Citizens' Forum was held in 2019 and focused exclusively on improving local processes to encourage greater participation by younger adults in local decision making. The 29 members of the first Forum cohort developed a series of sixteen recommendations to address five barriers to participation faced by young people on the North Shore. They presented their recommendations to all three municipal councils in spring 2019.

You can find the 2019 Forum report here:

http://www.nscr.bc.ca/pdf/Final_Report_May_2019.pdf



The Forum is a collaboration between North Shore Community Resources's Democracy Cafe program and CityHive.



The idea of the Forum germinated from an affordable housing workshop NSCR convened on the North Shore several years ago. We made sure lots of younger adults were part of that conversation given the challenge of housing for this demographic. What we learned was that younger adults have a need and desire to learn more about local government and how best to work together with their peers to influence local decision makers to shape their communities. At its core, the Forum is about making

democracy work better for younger adults. Working with CityHive and tapping into their expertise on youth engagement has been a great way to launch the Forum.

– Murray Mollard, Executive Director, North Shore Community Resources



Important decisions - whether regarding housing, planning, climate, or anything in between - are often missing the critical voice of young people. The North Shore Young Citizens' Forum provides a meaningful opportunity for younger folks who work, live, or study on the North Shore to learn about how decisions are being made in their communities, connect with local elected officials, city staff, and peers. Through building connections, learning and directly applying that knowledge, our hope is the Forum

builds a culture of young people's engagement that helps move our municipalities to a vision that's more fully representative of their residents.

- Veronika Bylicki, Executive Director, CityHive

The 2020 Forum was made possible thanks to the generous support of the West Vancouver Foundation, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, Darwin, Vancity, and the City of North Vancouver.











Forum 2020

Preparation & Pre-Program Planning

Working with municipalities

As one of the goals of the Forum is to build relationships with local municipal governments, the Forum prioritizes consultation with staff and elected officials at all three North Shore municipalities. We worked closely with municipal staff to develop workshops for the program, and sought the advice of both staff and councillors for the program deliverable (project) component. We extend deep gratitude to all the staff and councillors who supported us in the development of this iteration of the Forum – we look forward to working with you again soon!

Application and promotion

The Forum comprises 18-39 year olds who live, work or study on the North Shore. In order to reach as many young people as possible, the Forum team disseminated the opportunity through a variety of local and community partners. We were also featured in the <u>North Shore News</u>. Ultimately, we received 45 applications from which 25 participants were chosen.

Developing facilitation team and program design

Once the initial scoping of the program was complete, the planning team brought together the young adults who would be tasked with leading and facilitating the program directly. The program was co-led by Andrea Oakunsheyld (NSCR) and Rowan Gentleman-Sylvester (CityHive), with three Forum 2019 alumni acting as support facilitators: Anna Boltenko, Hassan Merali, and Imrahn Mitha. Together this team designed the program, facilitated the Forum sessions and supported the participants from October into early 2021.











Anna

Hassan Imrahn

We'd like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work and leadership provided by this team that contributed to a very successful Forum.



Learning Arc

Knowledge to Action

The Forum is based firmly in a knowledge-to-action framework, allowing participants to use the information they are learning in hands-on and tangible ways. This iteration of the program had four distinct phases:

- Learning Phase: Presentations from and dialogue with subject matter experts and knowledge-keepers on issues related to municipalities, civics, and Indigenous communities.
- 2. **Project Phase:** Participants, divided by municipality, develop projects that are locally and demographically relevant to them.
- 3. **Presentation Phase:** Project groups present their work at an open, virtual community event and at municipal council meetings to their local Mayor and councillors.
- 4. **Activism Phase:** Participants are supported beyond the end of the program to advocate for the changes they want to see locally.

Focus Areas of Learning

There were three key areas of learning that were shared by guest speakers and the facilitation team:

- <u>City planning & municipal governance:</u> Throughout the program, Forum participants heard from five municipal staff working in planning positions about the processes of municipal and community planning. They also worked closely with elected mayors and councillors to learn about how they make decisions.
- Indigenous history & relationships: Participants had the great honour of meeting and learning from knowledge-keepers Carleen Thomas of the səlˈilwətaʔł (Tsleil-Waututh) Nation and Marissa Nahanee of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) Nation. The cohort also spoke at length about how we can better work and live in right relations with local First Nations and Indigenous communities.

 Advocacy & working with municipalities: The facilitation team shared their combined experience and expertise in navigating advocacy work and how best to build good relationships with municipal staff and elected officials. This included workshops on presentation skills and power dynamics.

"The NSYCF was an extraordinary experience to guide young adults toward being more informed and engaged citizens, while also encouraging reflection on issues that matter to the individual and the community."

- 2020 Forum Participant



Projects & presentations

The 2020 Cohort











Andrea Davidson

Becca Birkner

Christina Cassidy

Christina Radvak



Darren Wong



Emily Kelsall



Emma Cunningham



Ethan Walker



Gem Johnson



Ismail Askin



Louis Wong



Mariah Dutnall



Mark McLaren



Meghan Mathieson



Michael Corey



Raashi Ahluwalia



Rivesha (Akshi) **Parahag**



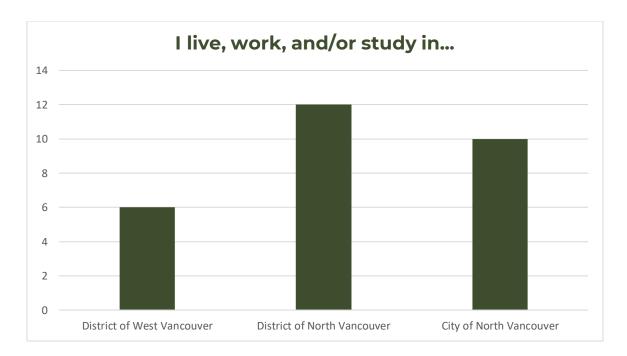
Savin Narwal



Teodora Zlatanova-Geroeva



Tyler Norman



Above: The number of participants who associated with each of the North Shore municipalities

While participants shared various **reasons and motivations** for applying to the Forum, a few key themes emerged:

- Solutions-oriented: many participants articulated a desire to go beyond conversations about social issues or challenges, and to explore and enact solutions
- **Community-connection:** many participants indicated a desire for solutions and conversations to be connected to their experiences of community, and tied to this land and place
- **Knowledge & skill-building:** many participants noted that their past experiences haven't equipped them to navigate civic issues and they hoped to learn more about working with cities to solve local issues
- **Diverse perspectives:** several participants expressed a hope and desire to hear from different and new points of view
- Social connection: several participants expressed a desire to meet and connect with like-minded young people through the program

"I felt really welcomed and heard and that I could come to this group being my genuine self - I've rarely been in a group like that, especially of strangers and being online."

- 2020 Forum Participant



Project portfolio

While the 2019 Forum cohort's project component was process-oriented and resulted in <u>recommendations</u> for improving North Shore young adult civic engagement, this second cohort focused on municipality-specific and issues-based projects. Staff and councillors from the three municipalities were canvassed for priority topics to focus projects. From the midpoint of the program, project groups gathered to apply their knowledge of municipal issues and suggestions of municipalities towards the creation of meaningful projects.

The project teams were each composed of five to eight Forum participants that live, work, or study (or all three) in their assigned municipality. These project groups were characterized by young adults who are interested in community well-being and municipal engagement, with a desire to enact positive change locally.

City of North Vancouver (CNV)

TEAM

Akshi, Alicia, Becca, Darren, Ethan, Meghan, Raashi

TOPIC

- Discussed a number of relevant topics to young adults, including: affordable housing, green cities, inclusion and diversity, sustainability, climate change and future-proofing, and community building
- Created a focused project on the topic of sustainable transportation
- All members of the group have experienced challenges in getting around in a sustainable way

PROJECT

The CNV Forum Team created a video to succinctly present:

- The group's unique perspectives (and the many perspectives they don't represent)
- The challenges they each experience in moving around the North Shore with potential solutions
- Areas of focus for walking, cycling, and transit:
 - o Cultivating a culture of sustainability
 - o Encouraging families to make the better decision
 - Devising incentives for people to make more sustainable choices
 - Overcoming barriers to sustainable transportation, such as rain, hills, time constraints, frequency and reliability of buses, traffic congestion, safety on foot and on buses, and costs associated with gear (e-bikes, reflective clothing)
- A process to support ongoing engagement of young adults

Possible solutions to transportation issues included:

- Create an App to allow people to report unsafe conditions to the City of North Vancouver
- Financial incentives to invest in sustainable transport (e.g. e-bikes, reflectors)
- Educating all users of the road about safety
- Assess bus routing, frequency, reliability for increased efficiency and ridership
- Map and build bike paths with gradual slopes for easier riding
- Install more pedestrian activated lights at crosswalks



Click here to check out the CNV team's video.

NEXT STEPS / RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

• Form a North Vancouver Youth Advisory Committee with diverse perspectives to consult with municipal government on relevant issues, including transportation, housing, green cities, well-being and inclusivity.

As a continuation of the recommendations proposed by the North Shore Young Citizens Forum in 2019, this recommendation aligns with the need for younger adult voices in City Council, public hearings, and formal processes. It also aligns with our proposal to use existing funds to invest in sustainable transportation including using the Enhancing the Accessibility to the Young Citizens Fund.

The Forum's City of North Vancouver team presented to the City of North Vancouver Mayor and Council on December 14th, 2020 which can be viewed here: <u>Council Videos (cnv.org)</u>. As a follow up to their presentation, the Forum team was invited to continue conversations with Council and staff about their recommendations. We wish to recognize and applaud the City's warm reception to the Forum participants and their willingness to listen to and deliberate on their recommendations.



District of North Vancouver (DNV)

TEAM

Andrea, Christina C, Christina R, Gem, Louis, Mariah, Mark, Tyler

TOPIC

- Explored the "missing middle" housing options (townhouses, low-rises, etc.) as well as the "missing middle" generation, referring to young adults approximately 20-40 years of age in need of affordable housing
- Connected missing middle housing in the District of North Vancouver to the goals of the Official Community Plan (OCP)

PROJECT

The DNV Forum team completed a survey-based project aiming to understand housing challenges that young people are facing. Through the survey, they collected stories from respondents to shape their recommendations

The Forum team has an interest in housing because housing is a basic need but highly inequitable. The project's focus on housing recognizes the influence of local government on housing development.

In the project, the Forum team examined: housing types for the missing middle and how this generation is defined. Topics covered included:

- What is an Official Community Plan (OCP)
- What are the District of North Vancouver's Official Community Plan's goals which include housing accessibility, affordability, rental housing, market housing, non-market housing, and homelessness
- Housing supply vs housing demand in the District of North Vancouver
- Young people's experience of housing in the District of North Vancouver
- Opportunities for solutions



NEXT STEPS / RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

The Forum team's project included recommendations to pursue:

- Broader consultation with young adults during OCP review(s)
- Implementation of a pilot housing survey of young adults developed by the Forum team by the District of North Vancouver
- District sponsored Intergenerational dialogue that would bring younger adults together with older generations to discuss affordable housing challenges and solutions

The DNV Forum Team presented to District of North Vancouver Council on January 11, 2021 which can be viewed here: <u>Council Meetings Video (dnv.org)</u>. As a result of the Forum team's presentation, District Council identified three points of contact for follow up: the District's Rental & Housing Task Force; the OCP Engagement Planning Team; and the Committee for Oversight regarding creating a young adults' advisory council. The DNV Forum Team looks forward to continuing conversations with the District to advance their recommendations. We wish to thank the District of North Vancouver, Mayor Little, Councillors and staff for the opportunity to work with the Forum.



District of West Vancouver (DWV)

TEAM

Emily, Emma, Ismail, Michael, Savin, Teodora

TOPIC

 Exploring the idea of 'belonging' and how young adults feel they do or don't belong in West Vancouver

PROJECT

In order to understand the feelings of belonging, the DWV project group conducted a series of informal interviews with their peers to learn about young adults' feelings of belonging to West Vancouver. Interviewees were both current residents of West Vancouver, as well as those who have since moved away from the municipality.

Through the compilation of these interviews and conversations, as well as wider research, they developed a video (found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoeC9yX0Mds&ab_channel=DoughbirdO) as well as a formal presentation delivered to Council.

Their presentation and conclusions explore:

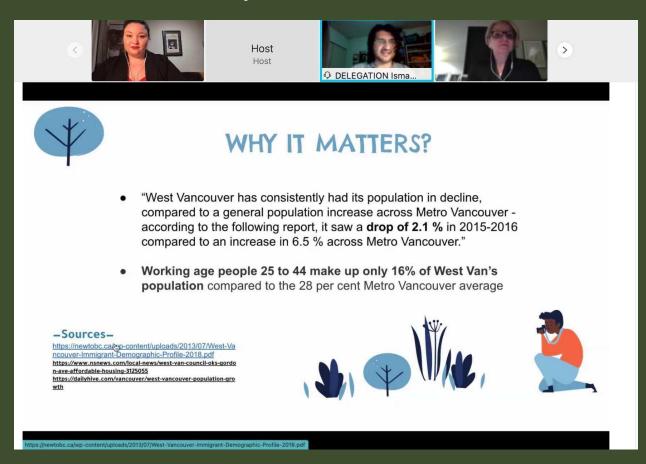
- Population decline in the DWV
- What the young adults interviewed love about West Vancouver (support programs, rec centres, community events, parks and green spaces)
- What issues and challenges young adults from West Vancouver have faced (housing, values, transit, stagnation, activities for young people, reputation)



NEXT STEPS / RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

- 1. Rebuild the Youth Centre
- 2. Action on Affordable Housing
- 3. Youth Committees

The DVW Forum team presented to the District of West Vancouver Council on February 8, 2021. To view the video of the DVW Forum team's presentation to the District of West Vancouver Council, <u>click here</u> and use the calendar function to search for the video on February 8, 2021.



Ongoing Engagement

In addition to formal presentations to municipal councils, Forum participants from each team are continuing to communicate with and advocate for their various recommendations with support from North Shore Community Resources, CityHive and prior Forum cohort participants.

Learnings & Looking Ahead

Evaluation

As noted in the Overview of this report, the North Shore Young Citizens' Forum seeks to increase younger adults' participation in civic life, particularly at the local government level. To assess whether in fact the Forum is achieving its objectives and goals, the Forum requests participants to respond to a comprehensive survey designed to measure the Forum's impact. As with the 2019 Forum cohort, the 2020 cohort generally reported positive experiences that meet the Forum's purpose.

In addition, this year's Forum was convened in a particularly challenging context -- a worldwide pandemic that prevented Forum participants from working together in person. This unique context required a different approach to facilitating the work of the Forum which, along with other innovations in facilitation, provided important learnings for our work.

A summary of some of the impact, feedback and learnings follows:

- Participants expressed strongly that they felt that the Forum increased their understanding of why civic engagement matters
- Participants expressed that the Forum was an effective space to:
 - Explore formal and informal ways of getting involved in our cities and communities
 - o Gain new skills related to civic engagement and the project theme(s)
 - Build confidence in interacting with people involved in local decision making
- Participants expressed that the Forum helped them to put their learning and knowledge to action in civic engagement
- Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to deepen their understanding of Indigenous and connection to local First Nations

"Learned a lot about the North Shore and the differences and commonalities between the municipalities" - Forum Participant

- Participants loved the municipality-centred, place-based projects (most survey respondents recommend that format for the next cohort)
- Projects offered participants an opportunity for deeper, practical learning
- Participants expressed a stronger level of confidence in providing leadership to improve young citizens' participation in local government
- Many participants expressed that they felt the Forum helped them to influence policy and decision making in municipal politics.

North Shore Young Citizens' Forum

BY THE NUMBERS

93%

of participants believe that "most elected officials care what people like me think"

80%

believe that their participation in the Forum has increased their knowledge, capacity, and willingness to contact an appropriate official about a concern in their community

73%

believe that as a result of their participation in the Forum, they feel more connected to other young residents of the North Shore

73%

believe that their participation in the Forum has increased their sense of belonging to their local municipality

67%

believe that their participation in the Forum has increased their trust in municipal governments to take care of their communities

5.1 / 6

was the average rating participants gave the Forum overall

100%

of respondents said that they would recommend the Forum program to their friends or colleagues When asked to share what their personal program highlights were, participants had lots to say. These are some selected highlights:

- "Coming up with our own project ideas/topics" Forum Participant
- "The learning sessions with the municipalities, the project, and the feedback from the elected officials." Forum Participant
- "Session 7 where we got feedback from the elected officials on our projects ahead of the community and council events was really helpful and helped my team identify gaps that we had in our project and changes that we could make to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our presentation and our project" - Forum Participant
- "Interacting with North Shore residents in my age group and developing a project at the conclusion of the forum" Forum Participant
- "the community presentations- especially seeing all 3 of the groups presentations" Forum Participant

Accessibility

As noted, convening of the Forum via an online platform can provide a real opportunity to make the Forum more accessible to those who may otherwise be unable to participate. While virtual programs have unique opportunities to create access for diverse participants, accessibility is key to equitable work whether done virtually or in-person. The Forum will continue to explore opportunities to enhance accessibility.

Equity and Diversity

Because the Forum is designed specifically to educate, build capacity, and integrate new learning of young adults in civic engagement at the municipal level, it is important that the Forum provide a platform open to full participation by a wide diversity of participants. To further this approach, the 2020 Forum broke new ground in both the structure and content such as the use of a diversity welcome, participant agreement, incorporation of Indigenous speakers and more. The Forum's facilitation team were particularly attuned to ensure an inclusive and equitable environment for all participants. These were important innovations that future Forums can build on.

Virtual Delivery

While the first Forum was held in-person, the second Forum was held entirely virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Holding the Forum virtually came with both pros and cons, which will inform future design of the Forum.

Pros

- Accessible to different audiences (including parents of young children, those with mobility challenges, etc.)
- Multiple avenues for participation (speaking, chat, interactive whiteboards, etc.)
- Opportunity for further accessibility supports to be offered (closed captioning, etc.)

"I found that the virtual platform provided a very egalitarian platform where people could voice their opinions through chat, or by speaking without the pressure or judgemental eyes of others that are commonly felt by women, POC, disabled, etc, even from the most well intentioned." - 2020 Forum Participant

Cons

- More challenging to develop a sense of community and human connections
- Long periods on Zoom are very challenging in terms of energy, and ability to focus

"Three hours on Zoom during kids' dinner and bedtime is really, really hard." – 2020 Forum Participant

"Learning for me anyway, is best when it's multi-faceted: when it includes hands-on, in person activities; when it's varied and not unidirectional focus (e.g. the student sits and watches the teacher deliver a lecture). And that multi-faceted approach is difficult to recreate in a purely virtual environment." - 2020 Forum Participant



Looking Ahead

In its short life after two cohorts, the North Shore Young Citizens' Forum has demonstrated its value by increasing the participation of younger adults in local government. Since 2019, over 50 participants have deepened their understanding of municipal government, made important connections with municipal staff and Councillors and created new relationships with their peers. They are equipped and willing to contribute to shaping their communities in new ways that were limited prior to their participation in the Forum.

Moving forward, the Forum's success very much depends on a willingness of local partners at the municipal level to work with the Forum. In particular, our partnership with municipalities, staff and Council, will continue to be instrumental in creating positive experiences for Forum participants. We look forward to deepening these collaborations while developing more partnerships with local First Nations and other community partners.

We also wish to recognize our funding partners and sponsors whose support enables us to do this work. As we have seen recently south of our border, supporting greater engagement and participation in the project of self-government is a critical investment for a successful, robust democracy.

We look forward to further strengthening these various relationships to continue offering the Forum to new cohorts of young adults on the North Shore.



Special Thanks

We want to express our deepest gratitude for the following people and organizations who supported the 2020 North Shore Young Citizens Forum as guest speakers, project mentors, advisors, and more:

Andrew Devlin

Carleen Thomas

City of North Vancouver

Councillor Don Bell

Councillor Jessica McIlroy

Councillor Jordan Back

Councillor Marcus Wong

Councillor Mathew Bond

Councillor Peter Lambur

Councillor Tina Hu

Councillor Tony Valente

Darwin Construction Ltd.

David Hawkins

District of North Vancouver

District of West Vancouver

Heather Evans

Jim Bailey

Leah Herman

Maeve Bermingham

Marissa Nahanee

Mayor Linda Buchanan

Mayor Mary-Ann Booth

Natalie Chiang

Real Estate Foundation of BC

Robert Skene

Tina Atva

Vancity

West Vancouver Foundation

Again, a special thanks to our program funders, without whose generous support this program wouldn't be possible:











One final thank you goes to our 2020 North Shore Young Citizens' Forum participants. Participation in the Forum takes considerable time, effort and goodwill. We sincerely thank all our Forum participants, and those that applied to participate, for making this iteration of the Forum a success in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to continuing working with you and future Forum participants for the benefit of the community.



About North Shore Community Resources (NSCR)

Founded in 1976, NSCR is a registered not-for-profit charitable organization serving the community on the North Shore, Bowen Island and Lions Bay. Our mandate is to design and deliver programs and services that enhance well-being, social connections, empowerment and community participation. We provide a wide range of services to a diverse mix of clients and the public.

The North Shore Young Citizens' Forum is a project of NSCR's Democracy Café program which is a platform for local residents and citizens to learn about and engage more fully in the democratic life of our communities.

For more information on NSCR programs and services, visit us at http://www.nscr.ca



About CityHive

<u>CityHive</u> is on a mission to transform the way that young people are engaged in shaping their cities, including planning, decision making, urban sustainability issues and other civic processes. We are a Metro Vancouver-based non-profit that works with city-shaping institutions and municipalities to create meaningful youth engagement practices, and simultaneously work with young people to build capacity and provide opportunities to address urban challenges. We act as a bridge builder between institutions and young people to harness the immense untapped energy, talent and brilliance of young people.

https://cityhive.ca | @CityHiveVan | info@cityhive.ca