



2019 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS FINDINGS REPORT

PREPARED BY

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**Loveland
Public Library**

Where you can!

PEOPLE WANT TO CREATE A SAFE, THRIVING, AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY.

BY DIANE LAPIERRE, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

The Loveland Public Library's mission is to inform, enrich, and inspire a strong, engaged community. Service to the community is at the heart of what we do, but understanding what our community members want and need is the key to providing programs, collections, spaces and services that make a meaningful difference in people's lives. The public library, by its nature, provides a forum for people from all walks of life to come together to explore their world, learn new skills and build connections with each other. One of our key strategic focus areas is to build community through connecting individuals through shared experiences. Over the course of the past year, we have invited groups of people to sit down together and share their aspirations for Loveland, delve into what is preventing us from reaching our aspirations now, and discovering ways to join together to make Loveland a thriving community where everyone feels safe and welcome. In addition to the four Community Conversations we facilitated, we have also shown up at local events including the Farmer's Market, Summer Concerts, Cherry Pie Festival and more to gather comments from people about the kind of community they want to live in.

This Report of our 2019 Community Conversations includes quotes and themes we heard from the 100s of people who shared their thoughts with us including two conversations with young people who serve on the Youth Advisory Board and Library's Teen Advisory Board, along with seniors, parents of young children, millennials and empty nesters. It includes the voices of people who have lived in Loveland for many years, and newcomers who choose to move to Loveland to be close to family and enjoy our beautiful outdoor opportunities. We also realize we did not hear from segments of the population including Spanish language speakers, people with disabilities and people experiencing homelessness. The Library strives to reach out to underrepresented user groups and we look forward to convening additional conversations in 2020 to fill in the gaps in our understanding of different perspectives.

In creating this Report, we hope to share what we've heard with other community stakeholders including City leaders, public safety partners, educators and business leaders who share our vision of developing partnerships to foster community connections. As we continue to do this work, we will provide updates that include specific actions that the Library and our community partners have taken based on what we've heard.

Loveland is my hometown and I am proud of the respectful, thoughtful and inspirational words that are reflected in this document and I share the aspiration to live in a safe, thriving, and welcoming community for myself, my family and all who call Loveland home.

SAFETY WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

People are concerned that so many within our community feel unwelcome and unsafe. People want all people regardless of age or background to be physically and emotionally safe. People are concerned about safety in public spaces including downtown Loveland. There are fewer public spaces overall, and the public spaces that do exist are becoming less safe. They also are concerned about not feeling connected with their neighbors. The community is effected by the rise in substance abuse as well.

“If people feel connected to their community, they won’t want to steal or commit a crime against their neighbors.”

ACTIONS

- Offer more support to families by addressing homelessness, substance abuse and isolation in our community.
- Increase infrastructure that helps people with mental health issues.
- Ensure more cross-agency collaboration, to better distribute volunteers and resources.
- Create more community support for our schools.
- Create a welcoming town by finding ways to celebrate diversity, develop opportunities for teens and emerging adults and create a strong family orientation.

LOVELAND

GROWTH CHALLENGES

People recognize that our community is struggling to keep up with our increasing population. Our local economy doesn't have a wide variety of employers and it doesn't have infrastructure to support the amount of people who go to school, work and live here. Because of this, Loveland lacks a clear identity. There is a perceived disconnect between long-time residents who want to keep things the way they are, and newcomers who are looking for amenities and facilities they had in communities where they lived previously.

ACTIONS

- Work towards ensuring that Loveland is an affordable community.
- Economic development needs to be balanced between local and larger businesses. Provide incentives for sustainable choices, and support development of clean energy.
- Develop long-range growth plans and ensure good infrastructure such as bike paths, clean transportation, solutions for seniors, and vibrant downtown.
- Build stronger schools that support all students by investing more in education.
- More money available to support quality of life.
- Offer more support for diverse groups in the community including for young people and families so they feel welcomed and engaged.
- City Council needs to be more engaged with the community.

“Our community is in the process of expanding and growing. It just needs time, money, and effort from the community.”

“...we need to restore what we have. Businesses are leaving and there are outlet buildings that don't have any tenants.”

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

There are a limited number of ways to connect with one another, especially with people from different backgrounds. Because of this isolation and lack of opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, people don't share a common sense of community. Participants said that our community is fearful of people who are different, which leads to deep division, mistrust and great challenges in moving Loveland forward. People said that when we feel a sense of community we have a higher quality of life.

“The voices at ‘the table’ are not diverse and representative of the whole community - we can do better.”

ACTIONS

- Increase collaboration & coordination between groups: this includes businesses, government, non-profits, and faith-based groups.
- Have better communication channels in the city to let people know what is happening.
- Increase opportunities for teens and emerging adults (19-25) in our community.
- Develop and provide opportunities for people to connect and engage through neighborhood events, especially offering more community events in Northwest Loveland.
- Increase opportunities for people to engage in the political process and city planning.
- City Council needs to be more engaged with the community.
- Provide space to have healthy conversations on difficult issues.

LOVELAND

UNDERLYING CHALLENGES

People see that our community is divided and it has a pattern of not being inclusive

People shared that there are multiple forms of division within our community including political, generational, native Lovelanders versus new Lovelanders, and between the “growth is good” group vs “no growth” group. These divisions, the lack of willingness to collaborate with the other side and the limited representation within city politics is keeping the city from meeting the needs of its community members.

People want to see a more comprehensive approach to safety.

There are concerns with safety that go beyond increasing law enforcement personnel. People said that we need more support for schools, mental health services and addiction recovery services. People also said that if we had more opportunities to connect with our neighbors there would be less crime.

"If people feel connected to their community, they won't want to steal or commit a crime against their neighbors."

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Shared Responsibility

- City government agencies
- Nonprofits
- Civic groups, such as Rotary
- Churches and faith-based organizations
- Boys and Girls Clubs

- Smaller groups at schools, neighborhoods, churches etc.

- Business leaders like Downtown Development Authority, Loveland Business Partners , Chamber of Commerce

Shared Aspirations

Our community aspires to have a safe, thriving and connected community. We want safe public spaces and schools and we want more mental health and substance abuse support. We want a robust economy, strong infrastructure and public transit, and a long range growth plan. And at the root of it all, we want our community to be more connected and collaborative. Our community is made up of diverse people that all care about making Loveland the best it can be.

"A supportive community with a multitude of opportunities for all."