



We Have A Plan

A community strategic plan, that is. Here’s where the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership sees itself going, and how it’s going to get there.

How does one go about charting the future of a community consortia tasked with just about everything to do with immigrant integration in one of Canada’s fastest growing communities? Well, with a great deal of research, forethought and community consultation, say Surrey Local Immigration Partnership leaders Tina Balachandran, Manager, and Manvir Aujla, Manager, Research and Knowledge Sharing.

There’s no disputing that Immigrants are flocking into Surrey in unprecedented numbers—some two dozen a day in recent years, a flow that’s likely to increase. Together they account for more than three-quarters of population growth - so rapid that in about 2040 Surrey will leap past Vancouver as the province’s largest city.

Even before then, immigrants are projected to account for more than 50% of Surrey’s population (the proportion is 45% already), making immigration central to just about every aspect of civic life—but such a rapid transformation also brings with it innumerable needs and challenges. The Surrey Local Immigration



Partnership was established for the express purpose of helping the community deal with those. (See What a Local Immigration Partnership Is and Does).

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Partnership Table Members

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|--|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Alexandra Neighbourhood House | 11. MOSAIC | 22. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. |
| 2. Association of Neighbourhood Houses | 12. Muslim Food Bank | 23. Surrey Board of Trade |
| 3. City of Surrey | 13. Oak Avenue Neighbourhood House | 24. Surrey Interfaith Council |
| 4. Douglas College | 14. Options | 25. Surrey Libraries |
| 5. Fraser Health Authority | 15. Pacific Community Resources Society | 26. Surrey Now-Leader newspaper |
| 6. Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association (FRAFCA) | 16. Pacific Intercultural Community Services | 27. Surrey Schools |
| 7. IECBC (Immigrant Employment Council of BC) | 17. Pacific Immigrant Resources Society | 28. Umoja |
| 8. ISSofBC | 18. RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) | 29. UNITI |
| 9. Kwantlen Polytechnic University | 19. SHER Vancouver | 30. Vancity |
| 10. Ministry of Municipal Affairs B.C. Government | 20. Simon Fraser University | 31. YMCA |
| | 21. Sources | 32. YWCA Metro Vancouver |
| | | 33. Surrey Schools |
| | | 34. BC Housing |
| | | 35. Surrey Police Service |

What a Local Immigration Partnership Is and Does

The Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is a collective of community partners, bringing diverse voices together to build a fair and inclusive city where all immigrants, refugees, and citizens thrive. Through dialogue and research, Surrey LIP's three dozen member organizations collaborate on innovative and community-driven strategies to meet the changing needs of one of the fastest-growing cities in B.C.

LIPs are funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to develop and implement plans to improve immigrant and refugee settlement and integration. Currently there are about 90 across Canada, 18 of them in B.C. They take the form of multi-sectoral partnerships that integrate newcomer needs into the community-planning process, identify community-specific strategic priorities, and implement a settlement strategy and action plans to improve newcomer outcomes. Their aims and benefits include:

- Recognize and Celebrate Diversity
- Facilitate Integration
- Enhance Social Cohesion
- Leverage Skills and Experience
- Enable Policy Development

For the first five years of its existence, Surrey LIP was led by the City of Surrey, but in 2019 leadership passed into the hands of DIVERSEcity, a Surrey-based organization that has been serving newcomers and others since 1978. At first the new structure and its aims and approaches closely resembled the original version, but change is a constant, whether within organizations or in the fields and communities they serve. Thus, the need for a new community plan.

"When DIVERSEcity began this contract five years ago, the landscape of immigration and settlement within the city looked a lot different," says Aujla. "So this allows us to take in all the lessons and best practices that we've learned, and apply them to our vision, our mission, our strategic priorities, and the actions that we are going to be undertaking."

The process of developing a new plan began in earnest in the summer of 2023 with strategic planning meetings of the Council and a working group comprised of Surrey LIP members. Community consultations were a mainstay, and numerous focus groups were conducted. "Through the consultations, focus groups and surveys, I feel we were able to capture the unique perspectives of our community members, particularly those of under-represented and marginalized groups," says Aujla. "It's very important that the goal of this work has been ensuring that the plans reflect the needs, aspirations and concerns of all the stakeholders in the community," adds Balachandran.



Tina Balachandran
Manager, Surrey Local
Immigration Partnership

"Cross-sectoral representation from partners providing direct and indirect support to the community allows us to hear eclectic narratives about specific barriers newcomers face."



Manvir Aujla
Manager, Surrey Local Immigration
Partnership – Research and Knowledge
Sharing

"When DIVERSEcity began this contract five years ago, the landscape of immigration and settlement within the city looked a lot different."

Perhaps as a consequence of the broad and inclusive participation, the plan that emerged includes some aspects that weren't previously flagged. Balachandran is pleased to see the inclusion of learning and embedding indigenous perspectives as a priority. Council member Doug Tennant, CEO of UNITI, which supports people with disabilities, says "I find it fascinating that it's newcomers to Canada who actually understand indigenous perspectives, rather than colonists who have been here for many years."

Aujla has another example. "There were definitely elements that were not part of our previous mandate, and one that we heard loud and clear through our consultations and focus groups was inspiring humanitarianism."

Even if not previously articulated, humanitarianism as a value could be assumed to be implicit within such an organization, but Balachandran and Aujla have the sense that it rose to the foreground during the larger community's experience welcoming refugees and arrivals from, first, Afghanistan and then Ukraine. "We felt collectively that this was an objective we wanted to move forward with, and we asked ourselves, how can we build a more strategic response?" says Aujla.



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Presenting the 2024 - 2029 Surrey Local Immigration Partnership Community Strategic Plan

Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

We are pleased to present this strategic foundation for the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership. The following statements will guide our work ensuring that we stay focused and achieve our goals to shape a community that embodies inclusivity, opportunity, and collaboration.

Vision Statement

Surrey is a community where diversity is valued; social, economic, and cultural opportunities are accessible to all; and new and longer-term residents work together to build a more welcoming and inclusive city.

Mission Statement

We increase the capacity of Surrey to integrate and support immigrants and refugees by assessing and addressing evolving community needs and sharing information and leading change.

Guiding Principles

The work of the Surrey LIP is guided by the following principles:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion We are accountable for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all our work and we have practices and structures in place that uphold these principles within our ever-evolving community.

Expertise and Collective Commitment We acknowledge, respect, and leverage the expertise and lived experience held by our members and believe that meaningful change results from their active participation and full commitment to our work.

Engaging the Community By listening, learning, and collaborating with a diverse range of community representatives, we deepen our understanding of our communities and build strong and enduring relationships.

People Centred Our work reflects and serves the unique and diverse needs of both our newest and more established residents.

Evidence-based Decision-making Our decision-making and our work are guided by data and evidence ensuring purposeful and effective action and demonstrated outcomes.

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Council members reinforce the idea that a concept such as humanitarianism, while important in its own right, can also have very practical implications. David Lee, Director of Employment, Language and Social Enterprise at MOSAIC, an immigrant service organization, suggests it's certainly appropriate for an organization like the LIP to focus on an important area like employment, but that it must also address systemic barriers to equity.

"I think that because we have representation from groups like the Surrey Board of Trade, but also from so many groups that provide direct support to newcomers, we hear the stories about specific barriers that newcomers face," he says. "We see the patterns." Meanwhile, UNITI's Tennant cites the critical need for "affordable and inclusive housing."

Balachandran and Aujla are pleased to have a plan in place that more accurately reflects the current LIP organizations and membership, the local community, and the work that needs to be done. "It's very important that the goal of this work has been ensuring that the plans reflect the needs, aspirations and concerns of all the stakeholders in the community," says Balachandran.

At the same time, they recognize that a plan is only that. It's how the plan becomes action that's important. "I think with a lot of strategic plans they're just documents, and when you look back on them in 10 years, only so much was done," says Aujla. "We want to make sure that this is our commitment to the work we're doing. We want to make sure that we are evaluating it. We want to make sure it's having an impact."

"It should be an evolving piece," says Balachandran. "We need to ensure that there is an action stemming from every goal and objective. This is our north star. It is going to define and design the work going forward."

Governance and Membership

The Surrey LIP is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and is contract managed by DIVERSECity Community Resources Society. The Surrey LIP is governed by a 35+ member council chaired by Neelam Sahota, CEO of DIVERSECity.

The partnership table is supported by a project team and its work is guided by its Immigrant Advisory Council and a number of subject specific working groups and roundtables.

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The Surrey LIP will Focus on Five Priority Areas

To address these five priority areas and support the achievement of these goals, annual action plans will be developed by working groups with the support of the project team. Progress will be monitored and regularly reported on to the council, funders and community at large.

1. **Accessible Services** Increasing awareness and improving coordination of services is a persistent pursuit. The Surrey LIP will work towards a future where access to services is equitable, responsive, and empowering for all residents.

GOAL Surrey has a robust and fully resourced settlement and community services infrastructure where immigrants and refugees and those assisting them have ready access to the services, supports and information they need.

2. **Engaged Community** Raising awareness, eliminating discrimination, and elevating the voices of our newest residents is an ongoing endeavour. The Surrey LIP will work towards a future where diversity is celebrated, inclusion is the norm, and all residents have the opportunity to participate fully.

GOAL Surrey is a welcoming and inclusive city that supports immigrants and refugees to make community connections, and actively participate in all that Surrey has to offer.

3. **Meaningful Employment** Recognizing the critical role that meaningful employment plays in the lives of immigrants and refugees, this priority embodies our collective commitment to ensuring equitable access to economic opportunities and pathways to success. The Surrey LIP will work to build a Surrey where every individual has the opportunity to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our vibrant community.

GOAL The community has the knowledge and tools needed to support immigrants and refugees to meaningfully contribute to the labour market.

4. **Learning and Embedding Indigenous Perspectives** In recognition of the rich cultural heritage and profound contributions of our Indigenous communities, the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership has committed itself to fostering a meaningful and collaborative relationship with local Indigenous groups. Grounded in principles of respect, inclusion, and mutual learning, this priority is a cornerstone.

Land Acknowledgement

On the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the SEMYOME (Semiahmoo), q̓ícəy̓ (Katzie), kw̓ikw̓əłəm (Kwkwetlem), q̓w̓a:ńłəń (Kwantlen), q̓iq̓éyt (Qayqayt), x̓w̓məθk̓w̓əy̓əm (Musqueam) and s̓c̓əw̓aθəń məsteyəx̓w̓ (Tsawwassen) First Nations. The knowledge and traditions of these communities are significant in providing context to the work we do, and the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership recognizes the importance that reconciliation has in building truly inclusive and strong communities.

GOAL The Surrey Local Immigration Partnership has a meaningful relationship with local Indigenous communities and through listening and collaboration we have integrated Indigenous knowledge, culture, and perspectives into our work.

5. **Inspiring Humanitarianism** This priority stands as a beacon of compassion and solidarity within the City of Surrey. With a steadfast commitment to fostering empathy and support for immigrant and refugee resettlement, this priority area encapsulates the essence of Canadians' humanitarian values and the spirit of inclusivity that defines our nation.

GOAL Surrey residents understand and value Canadian humanitarian efforts in immigrant and refugee resettlement and are motivated to support and engage in these efforts.



How can I get involved?

There are many ways to get involved with the Surrey Local Immigration Project, whether as an organization or as an individual, at community consultations, or as a working group or roundtable member— your expertise, perspectives and insights are welcome!

For more information about LIP and how to get involved, contact:

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To learn more about the Surrey LIP, visit www.surreylip.ca and follow us on [Facebook](#), [X](#) and [Instagram](#).

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