



Mission: Community Profile

Written by ML Hardy & Associates with the District of Mission and Measuring Up at 2010 Legacies Now

Mission is located in the Coastal Mountains beside the Fraser River, 70 km from downtown Vancouver. With a growing community of over 35,000 residents, Mission citizens enjoy a rich history and a strong sense of community infused with small-town friendliness. Many consider Mission to be “the Jewel in the Valley.”

Demographically, Mission has a younger than average (under the age of 45) population relative to British Columbia as a whole; however, with the aging of the baby-boomers this sector is expected to represent 11% of the population by 2011. Mission has had a steady annual growth rate averaging over 3.0% over the past 35 years and, upon full grow-out, Mission is expected to reach a peak population of over 100,000.

Historically, Mission’s economy relied heavily on agriculture and forestry-related business. In recent years, emerging sectors such as manufacturing, transportation and construction have diversified the economy.



Go Mission

In 2006, the District of Mission made it a priority to create a livable community that is sensitive to the needs of all people, and identified inclusion as a common objective throughout all social and economic plans for community growth.

In 2007/8, the District of Mission was pleased to partner with 2010 Legacies Now to conduct a Measuring Up assessment to determine current community accessibility and ensure that all residents can enjoy all the work, volunteer, recreation and social opportunities available in Mission.

This project complemented Mission’s inherent desire to create a community that revolves around people and embraces the talents, experiences and knowledge of those who live, work and play within our neighbourhoods.



Margaret Hardy of ML Hardy & Associates (formerly Demal Services, Inc.) was hired to facilitate the Go Mission project. During the community engagement process, it was determined that access to information was a vital component that affects the degree to which all people, including youth, seniors and those with hidden or visible disabilities, are able to contribute to community life.

Subsequently, Measuring Up funds were used to develop a virtual information portal (infomission.ca) to offer user-friendly access to community resources and information. The main purpose of the Go Mission project was to foster greater opportunities for inclusion for everyone in Mission.

Go Mission is an important project as it values, utilizes and builds on current assets and resources; promotes active community involvement and social interaction; increases accessibility awareness; and develops community capacity for inclusion.

Most importantly, this online communication tool builds Mission's small-town reputation for open dialogue and affirms our community commitment to leave a lasting legacy of inclusion for future generations.

Why Mission Became Involved in Measuring Up

The District of Mission has been proactive in realizing that our community is so much richer when it is diverse and inclusive. The stated purpose of the District of Mission is to be a "safe, healthy and inclusive community abundant in economic, recreational and cultural opportunities."

In November 2006, Council appointed the Social Development Commission with the express purpose of "developing and implementing an action-oriented Social Development Plan that realizes the vision of the District of Mission's purpose statement." This commitment is further evidenced by the appointment of a Social Development Director to aid the Social Development Commission to engage individual involvement and promote community vibrancy and health.

Because inclusion does not take place in a vacuum, it is identified as a common objective throughout all social and economic development plans for Mission.

In 2007/8, the District of Mission was pleased to partner with 2010 Legacies Now with \$20,000 in funding in order to undertake a Measuring Up project to determine current community accessibility and ensure that all residents can enjoy work, volunteer, recreation and social opportunities.



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Mission's Measuring Up Process

The District's primary concern is to create a livable community that is sensitive to the needs of all people. Using the Measuring Up Guide, we embarked on a community engagement process to determine (and improve) how Mission "measures up" as an accessible and inclusive community that welcomes, recognizes and values the contributions of all residents.

To begin this process a comprehensive and diverse committee (Mission Measuring Up Advisory Committee) was created. It is comprised of twenty-two persons from local service providers for seniors, adults and children, business representatives, council members, district staff, local government, Spirit of BC Mission and people with disabilities representing diverse disability sectors (sensory, physical, developmental and mental health). Terms of Reference were distributed to all members outlining the purpose, responsibilities and commitment required.

The District then conducted two public forums with the objective of "dreaming, discovering, and designing the future" together with concerned citizens, including both people with and without disabilities.



How a Specific Project Was Chosen

This community consultation provided a renewed understanding of what makes a successful inclusion or accessibility experience. Housing, transportation and employment were mentioned as important areas; however, it was also determined that access to information was a vital component that affects the degree to which residents are engaged in community life.

This community input was carefully reviewed by the Mission Measuring Up Advisory Committee. A report documenting this information was also presented to the Council and discussed with



specific municipal departments to determine improvements that are underway or planned developments in any of the identified areas.

The collective feedback was analyzed and enabled us to prioritize a project that was attainable, measurable and would leave a lasting legacy for inclusion and social change.

It was decided that the need for an effective communication tool that bridged the gap between the community and the resources available was a fundamental need that met this criteria. The committee then set bite-sized targets and developed realistic strategies for reaching them.

As a result, ML Hardy & Associates submitted a report to 2010 Legacies Now entitled “Go Mission.” This outlined a twelve month plan to improve communication by creating a virtual Central Resource Bureau, in an accessible format, to provide access to information ranging from programs, services, schools, arts and culture and volunteer opportunities to professional clubs, spiritual groups, recreation and local events to enhance the quality of life of all Mission residents.

Project Outline:

Vision

- To foster greater opportunities within Mission for inclusion for everyone.

Goals

- To establish an inventory of community resources and assets;
- To create a website for easier access to resources;
- To bridge the gap between the community and the resources available;
- To enable users of assistive technology to source information; and
- Promote community volunteerism.

Objectives

- To engage the community in identifying our successes and challenges; and
- To create strategies to address areas of concern.

This project is based upon the fundamental belief that communication is a vital component of community life that enables full participation. It also strengthens community partnerships, builds the capacity for greater inclusion and creates healthy community growth.

In January 2009, we embarked on the planning stages to build this clearing house of community information. We worked with the District of Mission’s Social Development Commission Central Resource Bureau (CRB) sub-committee to determine scope, boundaries and web format. This sub- committee had been appointed by the Social Development Commission to create a mechanism for sharing information.

We also developed the following values and guiding principles:



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Our Values

- **Connect:** Mutually respectful relationships between people and organizations.
- **Communicate:** Create multiple approaches to sharing information between people and organizations. People's ability to make new or different choices is affected by their access to communication.
- **Celebrate:** Recognize diversity while highlighting our strengths, appreciating and acknowledging positive contributions of everyone.

Guiding Principles

- Promote inclusion and accessibility for everyone.
 - Break down barriers to services (business and social).
- Communicate in plain language
 - Be user-friendly.
 - Adopt alternate formats.
- Include community stakeholders
 - Partnerships - alliances - collaboration.
 - Encourage community collaborations between business and non-profit groups.
- Value, utilize and build on current assets and resources
 - Promote active community involvement and social interaction to encourage healthy growth as people invest in their community.

Our first task in developing this project was to survey selected members of the community, including those with disabilities, to determine how and where people find information and identify assistive technology requirements (e.g. large font, voice tools, speech recognition, colour contrast, etc.). We also established a volunteer assistive technology test group to ensure that the completed website is fully accessible (e.g. labeling of pictures for JAWS users and alignment of text tables, etc.).

We then researched other community information sites to find the best template and practices for grouping information and made connections with local community services to gather information including Information Services Vancouver (ISV), Affordable Housing inventory lists, Community Living BC (CLBC), and 211. All these foundational steps were important prior to connecting with a local web designer to create or establish the following:

- User-friendly web design (W3 compliant);
- Categories and sub-headings;
- Search capabilities (key word using Google search and map capabilities);
- Format and alignment;
- Website features (password reset options and anti-spam);
- Online database form (for collecting resource information);
- Inventory database format (for posting resource information);
- Domain name (www.infomission.ca); and

- Web hosting details.

The process of gathering information continued for many months as we collated previously collected community documents into one source (e.g. Mission Chamber of Commerce, Mission Community Skills Centre, Seniors Connection, Crisis Line, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Housing and Social Development, Fraser Valley Housing Society, Leisure Guide, CLBC Directory, Mission Literacy Association, etc). Other sources included newspapers, yellow pages and existing online resources.

The online database forms were sent to selected stakeholders and adaptations were made for ease of navigation based on feedback received. The assistive technology test group also provided key comments that enabled us to improve format compatibility.

A brochure detailing the purpose of Go Mission was produced to promote community interest in this virtual information portal. Throughout the development stage, we continued to meet regularly with the CRB sub-committee to discuss all the above actions.



There were four critical issues that had to be addressed:

Ownership: The District felt that InfoMission would be more effectively embedded into the economic and social framework of Mission if hosted by a local community resource. Mission Community Service Society (MCSS), a well-established non-profit, partnered with the municipality to take on the oversight of this virtual information portal.

Oversight: The CRB sub-committee's goal of developing a mechanism for community information will be fulfilled when the website goes live. To oversee the effective operation of this virtual portal, an interagency alliance, comprised of representatives from local community businesses and agencies, was formed to work with MCSS. The role of the alliance is to guide the ongoing needs for marketing, maintenance, updates and improvements to ensure that the site remains current and useful. In the interim these two committees joined forces to ensure a smooth transition from development to implementation.



Sustainability: The District of Mission has committed to fund this website for a two-year period. This will allow for ongoing maintenance (technical support and information updates) to ensure that infomission.ca remains in good working order and provides current information for the benefit of the users. A funding request has been submitted to the Mission Foundation to fund a 2010 marketing campaign to continue to bring this important community resource to the attention of all new and existing Mission residents so they will be more connected to the community.

Marketing: To really do its job, infomission.ca must be marketed to the public through a variety of media options. Using a small amount of the Go Mission funding (provided by 2010 Legacies Now), plus in-kind support from the District of Mission and key community stakeholders a modest 2009 marketing campaign was put in place.

The campaign used a multi-media approach including press releases; articles in community and business newsletters; promotional flyers, placed in strategic locations throughout the community and emailed to community partners for posting on their premises; business card information handouts; website links; radio public service announcements; presentations at local events and professional clubs; and a print advertisement in the Fall Mission Leisure Guide.

Outcomes

We are pleased to say that infomission.ca has now become a reality. It was launched by Mayor James Atebe at a public forum on November 17, 2009. The Go Mission project will end in December 2009 with the completion of a virtual information portal, to address underlying problems in Mission caused by fragmented information, along with many other benefits. These include:

- Enhanced community capacity for inclusion;
- New business and non-profit community collaborations;
- Increased access to information and resources for the general public;
- Improved cross-community participation; and
- A legacy of social change.

We hope that this clearing house of community information will promote systemic changes and create long-term inclusion benefits for all Mission minorities, including people with both visible and hidden disabilities. We have laid a foundation and built strong community connections, along with the financial support needed, to cement communication channels and meet identified needs.

The old adage that says, “It takes a village to raise a child” is also true of the commitment it takes to produce a lasting legacy for inclusion. Our experience and trajectory tells us we are on the right path as a community that works together and grows together.



Acknowledgments

The success of Go Mission would not have been possible without the commitment and energy of many community stakeholders that reflect the diversity of the community. These include the First Nations community (Sto:lo Nation) and the multi-cultural community (e.g. Indo-Canadian), as well as the local Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Association and social service providers. Specifically, the Mission Community Services Society (MCSS) took on the responsibility for ongoing oversight of this virtual portal. We also developed a working relationship with the University of the Fraser Valley to access practicum students to help update and upload information.

The District also gratefully acknowledges the expertise of Margaret Hardy (ML Hardy & Associates) who facilitated this social development process, her associate, Annette Williams, who collated website content to ensure accuracy of information, and Brad Haima (Circle Graphics), a local web designer who created a W3 compliant, user-friendly web design.

Under the leadership of Mayor James Atebe, and together with Social Development Manager Kirsten Hargreaves, District of Mission staff and members of the committees listed below, the Go Mission project is turning inclusion rhetoric into constructive action as we move forward to realize the vision of accessibility and inclusion for all. We would also like to acknowledge:

The members of the Mission Measuring Up Advisory group.

- Jenny Stevens, Mission Council
- Anne Stacey, Mission Chamber of Commerce
- Brian Mackie, Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Jodi Milward, Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association
- Carolyn Janousek, Mission Community Services Society
- Colleen McParland, Triumph Vocational Services
- Cyndie Anderson, School District 75 Mission
- David Pasko, Community Living BC
- Jean Potvin, BC Paraplegic Association
- Bobbie Brar, Self-advocate
- Joanne Chadwick, Spirit of Mission BC Community Committee
- Calvin Krause, Career Assistance Resource Centre
- Laura Wilson, Mission Early Childhood Development Committee
- Linnea Battel, Xaytem Interpretive Centre
- Lorrisa Bartholomew, Communitas Supportive Care Services
- Maggie Dodd Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA)
- Michelle Royle, District of Mission
- Nicole Misura, Fraser Valley Child Development Centre
- Rick Bomhof, Mission-Abbotsford Transit Committee
- Robert Keys, Mission Association for Community Living
- Robert Mackovic, Mission Downtown Business Association



- Suzanne Vermeer, Mission Community Services-Seniors Connection
- Rhona Jacobsen, Community Member

The members of the Central Resource Bureau (CRB) Sub-Committee, of the Social Development Commission (SDC).

- Gay Van De Keere, Ministry of Children & Family Development
- Gurpreet Chahal, Indo-Canadian Cultural Association of Mission
- Laura Wilson, Mission Early Childhood Development Committee
- Meredith Egan, Mission business owner
- Laurel Exner, Mission Emergency Social Services
- Glen Robertson, District of Mission
- Ian Fitzpatrick, Mission Fire Chief
- Kirsten Hargreaves, District of Mission
- Stephen Yap, Mission Community Services Society

The members of the Interagency Alliance Committee.

- Phil Glaister, Mission Community Services Society
- Noreen Carter, Mission Community Services Society
- Gary Van de Keere, Ministry of Children & Family Development
- Janet Jurgens, Fraser Valley Women's Resource Centre
- Pia Ritch, Mission Community Skills Centre
- Darlene Carson, University of the Fraser Valley
- Annette Williams, Demal Services Inc.
- Shannon Emery, Fraser House
- Laura Wilson, Mission Early Childhood Development Committee
- Brad Whittaker, University of the Fraser Valley
- Kirsten Hargreaves, District of Mission

As a result of these collaborations, the infomission.ca virtual information portal is a practical and accessible guide to community services and opportunities, as well as an inheritance of social inclusion for the community of Mission.

Contacts

For more information on the Mission initiatives, please feel free to contact those listed below:

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