

Kitsilano Neighbourhood House

Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027



K I T S I L A N O

Neighbourhood House

Foreword

We began the process to create this strategic plan in early 2020, just before the world as we knew it was thrown sideways during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was over two years of starts and stops, while just like the rest of the world, our Board, staff, and community looked to adapt to a new reality and changing obligations at home, at work, and in our neighbourhoods. As we continued through the process with these considerations in mind, we worked hard to ensure our plan not only includes all that we have learned over this time, but also leverages the reflections to build a stronger and more unified tomorrow. This has resulted in a plan that maintains our values, is creative, and is flexible to meet the challenges of our dynamic and changing world.

Most importantly, our plan was developed to keep the community forever as the focal point of our work. We exist for our neighbourhood, and to ensure that everyone within it can participate fully. Coming out of a period in our lives where more voices have been inadvertently minimized and distanced, we aim to re-animate space and increase opportunities for people in our community to belong. People involvement and connection is more important than ever as we look to re-build momentum on work that has been stalled by an unprecedented event that changed the ways we interact and exist.

On behalf of the staff and Board team at Kits House, we want to acknowledge the incredible level of community participation that has informed this plan. Over 300 contributed their ideas and passions to this work, and we are grateful for every person who shared their perspectives and stories with us. And of course, we are grateful to our talented facilitator, Christien Kaaij, who provided thoughtful and thorough advice through the entire years-long process. This plan is a culmination of the collaborative conversations within our community, and throughout this process we were reminded more than ever that Kitsilano Neighbourhood House (Kits House) is comprised of a strong and resilient membership that can collectively tackle future opportunities and next challenges.

We are looking forward to continuing this exciting journey of growth and community-building with all our neighbours, partners, and friends.

Kyle Simunovic
Chair, Community Board

Teddy Chan
Executive Director

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Strategic Framework



K I T S I L A N O

Neighbourhood House

VISION

Vancouver’s diverse Westside is a sustainable, healthy and connected community where everyone thrives

MISSION

Kitsilano neighbourhood House increases a sense of belonging in Vancouver’s Westside by addressing community needs and connecting people, ideas and opportunities

OUR VALUES

EQUITY

We strive for social justice and believe social and economic benefits should be distributed equitably for the benefit of all people.

INCLUSIVITY

We create places where people are welcomed and feel a sense of belonging. We celebrate diversity and treat everyone with respect and compassion.

COLLABORATION

We work together with our neighbours, community members, and partners to build stronger connections and communities.

LEADERSHIP

We are leaders in community development and foster and empower leadership in staff, volunteers, and participants to create sustainable change.

OUR PRIORITIES

Foster values driven work that promotes inclusive spaces for meaningful community-building

Service delivery that meets current and emerging community needs

Organizational sustainability and growth, focused on operational maturity and a diversified funding model

Introduction to Kitsilano Neighbourhood House

Kitsilano Neighbourhood House (Kits House) is a neighbourhood-based community organization dedicated to building and supporting a sense of community on Vancouver's Westside. We are a member of the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia (ANHBC) and through ANHBC, part of the International Federation of Settlement Houses. Neighbourhood houses are the foundation of place-based community building, and are committed to universal access to programs and services.

Kits House, in some form or another, has served the Westside of Vancouver since 1894. We are honoured to be a part of the community, and proud to have made a significant contribution to the strong sense of community in the area. Highlights of Kits House through the years include:

- 1894 The Alexandra Community Activities Society is officially incorporated as one of the first charities in BC and begins operating an orphanage at W 7th Avenue and Pine Street in Vancouver's Kitsilano Neighbourhood
- 1938 The Alexandra Society opens Alexandra House, the first Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, on the site of the orphanage
- 1966 The Alexandra Society changes its name to the Neighbourhood Services Association (NSA), later to become the ANHBC
- 1968 NSA acquires Hay House at 2325 W 7th Avenue
- 1972 NSA acquires the St George's Greek Orthodox Church building at West 7th Avenue and Vine Street and begins operating a neighbourhood house at the current Kits House location
- 1974 Kitsilano Neighbourhood House officially opens under its current name
- 1974 Green Peace (founded in 1971) begins meeting regularly at Kits House as they develop their new direction focusing on environmental justice and animal rights
- 1974 Sunny Seniors group, Vancouver's oldest seniors' program, moves from Alexandra House to Kits House, the first of many programs focused on seniors' wellness and social connection
- 1974 Kits House begins hosting community arts and cultural activities, including the popular Kits House Folk Fest
- 1978 Kits House, with help from Paralympic medalist Darlene Millar, initiates Operation Wheelchair, focused on increasing accessibility at Kits House and developing leadership skills within the disabled community

- 1979 The Kitsilano Theatre Company starts operating at Kits House, providing innovative artistically and politically challenging theatre to the Kits community until the early 1990s
- 1980 Kits House partners with SPEC (Society for Promoting Environmental Conservation) for the first time on the Garden Demonstration Project
- 1983 Kits House works with the Kitsilano Local Area Planning Committee to open a community garden at W 6th Avenue and Maple Street
- 2008 Kits House completes the Westside Youth Mapping Project, engaging over 500 youth in the process
- 2010 Kits House receives a “Places that Matter” plaque from the Vancouver Heritage Foundation
- 2012 UBC professor Sean Lauer and student Maya Reisz document history of Kits House in [*A Place on the Corner*](#), highlighting the role Kits House plays in healthy vibrant and connected neighbourhoods
- 2012 Kits House opens and begins operating Linden Tree Place, providing 30 affordable housing units for seniors and people with spinal cord injuries. The project was developed in partnership with the BC Paraplegic Housing Society and BC Housing and is the first seniors affordable housing to be operated by a Neighbourhood House in BC
- 2014 Kits House completes the seven-year, \$20 million dollar LEED Gold certified Kitsilano Neighbourhood House redevelopment project, incorporating the 25-space Bumble Bear Daycare centre, 15-unit Red Oak Place seniors affordable housing, and expanded community space.
- 2020 Kits House forms its Truth and Reconciliation Committee to prioritize the work of decolonization, and begins hosting reconciliation-focused events, including Orange Shirt Day and Red Dress Day
- 2020 Kits House rapidly transitions programs from in-person to virtual and develops additional community supports in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic
- 2021 Kits House opens the Collective Childcare Centre within the new Lord Tennyson School building, providing 59 childcare spaces in addition to Pre-K and before and after school care
- 2021 Kits House opens and begins operating Arbutus Housing within the Arbutus Village redevelopment, providing 56 below-market housing units on behalf of the soon to arrive Arbutus Neighbourhood House. The project is made possible by an innovative partnership with the YWCA of Metro Vancouver
- 2021 Kits House returns to a hybrid in-person and virtual programs as COVID-19 restrictions are gradually reduced, implementing learnings from the pandemic

Setting the Stage: Our Strategic Plan and its Context

The development of this plan took place amid several crucial events that affected our organization, our communities, and the world:

- The COVID-19 pandemic halted the world and further highlighted the existing inequities in our communities
- The death of George Floyd, a black US citizen whose murder at the hands of the police on May 25, 2020 rekindled the Black Lives Matter movement all over the world and within our organization
- The illicit drug crisis continued, having killed more than 10,000 British Columbians since 2016
- The development of the Broadway corridor began, increasing density and growth in our neighbourhoods
- An exponential rise in anti-Asian racism was experienced across the world, as well as increased violence against the Asian-Canadian community locally
- Systemic Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination came further to light through several incidents in the BC Healthcare system, and further highlighted in the report [In Plain Sight](#), published in November 2020
- On June 1, 2021, the remains of 215 Indigenous children were discovered on the former grounds of the Kamloops Residential School, bringing to the forefront the atrocities that existed in the Residential School system and the need for more genuine actions towards reconciliation
- The increasingly negative impacts of climate change are felt in BC and around the world, putting climate resiliency among the top spending priorities in the province's 2022 budget

While COVID-19 significantly stretched the strategic planning process and impacted our ability to engage our stakeholders in the development of this plan, the events taking place in our communities and around the world highlighted the importance of centralizing our work around diversity and equity, and the role Kits House can play in further advancing those voices.

Over 300 people provided input into this plan through online workshops¹, interviews, and surveys, including engagement from 240 members, volunteers, participants, and/or neighbours, 41 staff, 13 Community Board members, 4 former Community Board members; and 9 funders, peers and/or partners. They provided insight into the organization's strengths and challenges, and laid the foundation for our upcoming Strategic Plan.

¹ With the exception of the 'pre COVID-19' start-up meeting in February 2020, during which the Community Board and Senior Staff reviewed the previous strategic plan and the organization's accomplishments, all meetings were held via zoom. See Appendix A for an overview of all engagement activities and reports.

Through our engagements, a number of key strengths, opportunities, and challenges were identified, including:



Our strategic plan was developed within this context, and with these key areas in mind. The framework presented here will be used by staff in the development of operational plans to bring our strategic priorities and key goals to life.

Strategic Priorities, Key Goals & Actions

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: FOSTER VALUES-DRIVEN WORK THAT PROMOTES INCLUSIVE SPACES FOR MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY-BUILDING

The Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia describes a neighbourhood house as: *A welcoming place where everyone, all ages, nationalities and abilities can attend, participate, belong, lead and learn through programs, services and community building.*

Ensuring Kitsilano Neighbourhood House (KNH) is an inclusive and welcoming environment is essential to our work. By creating space for meaningful sharing and human connectivity, we are building and strengthening community in a way that puts people first.

Strategic Goal 1: KNH is a welcoming and safe place for our diverse community, including differences in race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, nationality, ability, age, and any qualifications that make everyone unique

Key Actions:

- Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) plan with the aim of eliminating all barriers to participation.
- Create inviting and safe, culturally sensitive spaces for equity-seeking, 2SLGBTQIA+, Black, Indigenous and persons of colour communities (BIPOC).
- Share KNH spaces to non-profit organizations/groups with interest in activism that contributes to DEI in our community.

Strategic Goal 2: Embed decolonizing and anti-racist values and practices into all our spaces

Key Actions:

- Be informed by the work of KNH's Truth and Reconciliation committee.
- Develop cultural safety training for all KNH staff and volunteers.

Strategic Goal 3: Enhance staff capacity to work with our diverse community

Key Actions:

- Develop and provide mandatory comprehensive DEI training to all KNH staff and volunteers, including 2SLGBTQIA+ diversity and inclusion curriculum.
- Further embed any learning and reflection as part of our organizational culture.

Strategic Goal 4: Be an active and strong community voice in our commitment to DEI

Key Actions:

- Play an active role in ongoing local dialogues through strong relationships with external community groups, organizations and their representatives.
- Establish a partner database to capture critical institutional knowledge and records.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: SERVICE DELIVERY THAT MEETS CURRENT AND EMERGING NEEDS

Responding to current and emerging needs lies at the heart of our work. Our community is changing and so are its needs: including housing accessibility, and significant population and demographic shifts. This on the backdrop of a defining crisis of our time: climate change. We are an organization that is committed to bold collective action as we explore creative and innovative ways to deliver and grow our services.

Strategic Goal 1: All programs and services reflect the diversity of our community

Key Actions:

- Continuous commitment to serve more people within the capacities of our existing and growing programs.
- Identify opportunities to further leverage the expertise and knowledge within our community, volunteers, and staff to strengthen existing programming and services that meet our commitment to DEI.
- Utilize developing DEI capacities in Strategic Priority 1 to enhance ability to build on service level accessibility and quality.

Strategic Goal 2: Develop new opportunities to support underserved people in the community

Key Actions:

- Research and plan for growing and changing community needs.
- Support the change in community through community building and fostering the operating presence of other community non-profits/groups.
- Develop intergenerational programming and services for underserved people identified in research and planning.

Strategic Goal 3: Ensure creative and innovative approaches to providing services and engaging community

Key Actions:

- Establish online operating platforms that meet the accessibility need of our communities.
- Address the need for expanded technical capabilities to support hybrid (in-person and virtual) engagement activities.
- Enhance family engagement practices, led with strategies developed by KNH's Childcare and Family Committee.
- Increase ability to intersect work between KNH program departments.

Strategic Goal 4: Be a strong extension of community advocacy towards accessible housing

Key Actions:

- Define what housing means to KNH through the work of the KNH Housing Committee.
- Allow KNH Housing Committee to inform the direction of KNH's housing work.

- Continue to advocate for expanded access to affordable housing in the City of Vancouver, as both a housing provider and as thought leaders.
- Seek opportunities to partner in the delivery of additional units of supportive and affordable housing, particularly for seniors and families.

Strategic Goal 5: Increase KNH's commitment to climate change

Key Actions:

- Build a more environmentally friendly community by providing residents, neighbours, staff, and other users with easy access to relevant information and resources.
- Provide accessible ways to engage in projects aimed at environmental protection, climate change minimization, and improved preparedness and adaptation.
- Actively engage in opportunities to promote a positive and environmentally friendly community.
- Foster a work culture where environmental sustainability is built into the actions of all KNH staff and volunteers.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: ORGANIATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH, FOCUSED ON OPERATIONAL MATURITY AND A DIVERSIFIED FUNDING MODEL

In commitment to, and guided by, KNH's values and service delivery, we are committed to continuously reviewing our overall organizational sustainability. We have to look at our operations with a critical lens to seek areas of maturation, opportunities for investment, and commitment to systematic growth.

Financial sustainability is key to the health of the organization, and our ability to continue to deliver much needed services in the community. More diversification is needed, even more so in a post-pandemic time when COVID-specific funding is coming to an end and provincial and federal funding is unstable.

Strategic Goal 1: Develop new and diverse revenue streams

Key Actions:

- Identify funding opportunities and gaps: corporate sponsorships, grants and foundations, individual donors.
- Identify internal expertise and assign responsibility for developing relationships, fundraising event opportunities, and grant writing.
- Develop Community Board fundraising committee.

Strategic Goal 2: Increase funding and service delivery collaboration with ANHBC and in partnership with other community organizations

Key Actions:

- Identify opportunities for shared service delivery partnerships in effort to make most efficient use of operational resources.
- Share fundraising ideas with other neighbourhood houses and partner on fundraising campaign activities across multiple houses.

Strategic Goal 3: Foster growth and development in key areas of administrative supports to program and service delivery

Key Actions:

- Review and develop recruitment, retention, and succession planning strategy.
- Expand digital and web-base accessibility for everyone.
- Develop capacity for internally managed facilities management role.

Appendix A: Overview of Engagement Activities and Supporting Reports

- Feb 2020: Kick-off meeting Board and Managers, report: *2020 Feb 28 Strategic Dialogue Workshop notes*
- Oct: Restart meeting Board & Managers, report: *2020 October 17 Strat Plan Restart Meeting Notes*
- Dec: Survey- Members, Volunteers & Neighbours, report: *2021 March 3 KNH Members, Volunteers and Neighbours Survey Results*
- Jan 2021: Staff workshops (3 in total), report: *2021 March 3 Summary Results Staff Engagement Workshops*
- March: Funders, Peers & Partners surveys and interviews, report: *2021 March 3 KNH Funders, Peers and Partner Engagement Results*
- March 6: Board & Managers Strategic Retreat, report: *2021 March 6 Strategic Retreat - Final*
- May 7: Senior Staff workshop, report: *2021 May 7 Kits Senior Staff workshop*