

Public Knowledge Summary

Prepared by the Napa County Library, 2017

Introduction

When you think about Napa, what comes to mind? Is it the rolling hills and numerous grapevines? Or perhaps you think of the river gliding through the heart of downtown. Napa is a beautiful place, rich in agriculture and gastronomy. However, for the typical Napa local, what is the ideal Napa? Do the aspirations of Napa's citizens, those who live and work in the valley, match the current direction that our community seems to be heading?

Napa County Library, using the Harwood Practice*, set out to discover the aspirations of our community. Over the course of one year, staff at the library have conducted several Community Conversations—kitchen-table talks that are meant to learn what Napa's people want in a positive, forward-thinking way. The library used the Harwood Practice to begin a conversation in the community, to start to understand the aspirations of the people who live here. The next steps forward are up to the community as a whole.

Our mission statement at the library is “Enriching lives through books and information,” and conducting these conversations has given us information that was previously missing from our public discourse. What we have learned from these conversations is what the heart of Napa's community strives to be and achieve. Using what we have learned, we can further enrich people's lives by sharing and proactively reacting to the community's goals and aspirations for Napa.

Who we talked to

The information shared in this report is the result of 17 Community Conversations and several smaller interviews. In just under a year, we have talked to over 200 people to identify Napa’s aspirations. To get a wide variety of responses, we expanded beyond the library and went out into the community. There were several conversations held within the homes of Napa locals, a few held with high school students, and some conducted with organizations and non-profits in the valley. We heard from Napa’s seniors, Napa’s youth, Napa’s LGBTQ community, and from local non-profits and philanthropic groups. We attempted to get a thorough cross-section of Napa’s community and will continue to host conversations in order to pursue an even more inclusive span of public knowledge. Some groups that we hope to interact with soon include our Spanish speaking population and homeless population.

What we learned

This is the beginning of an ongoing conversation; it does not capture all of the passion, commitment, concern and compassion expressed by our community. As we worked with several diverse groups that spanned across age and socioeconomic brackets, common themes and aspirations quickly emerged. These had different levels of significance to the various groups, but certain ideas were repeated in nearly every conversation. While we cannot capture exact phrases or ideas, we hope to convey the spirit of the conversations. Ultimately, we learned that Napa’s people want a **diverse, safe, and inclusive** community.

*The Harwood Practice, created by Richard C. Harwood, focuses on five key areas to help organizations shape communities. The five areas are being turned outward, having a deep understanding of our community, developing the conditions necessary for change, deciding on the right path, and making an agreement with ourselves about what we value and staying true to that. Napa Library staff underwent thorough training in this practice and have continually worked with Harwood coaches to ensure that we are staying true to our goals.

Diversity

Napa County has a rich cultural history. People from all over the world visit Napa and some even choose to live here permanently. However, Napa’s locals are concerned that there is not enough diversity in our community. They talked



about cultural events only drawing people from the same background. Their desire is that everyone feels welcome to join.

People also felt that Napa does not host enough events highlighting different cultures. There are some, but they are not well advertised and often go unknown. One group discussed the Aloha Festival in September. It is a free event that celebrates Hawaiian culture, but many people were unaware that it had already passed.

Napa's people want to feel connected to the celebrations and events that happen in town. They also want more diversity in what is offered. In our multiple conversations with teen groups, it was apparent that they felt that their options for hang-out spots were very limited and mostly confined to their family homes. Likewise, adults felt that restaurants and venues were quickly soaring out of their price range.

Locals definitely support the tourism that helps boost Napa's economy; however, they would like to work towards more acknowledgment of economic diversity amongst locals and tourists. They would also like to see a wider variety of activities that locals can participate in as well. They want to see more of a balance between the needs of locals and the needs of visitors. Participants were interested in knowing each other better and learning about each other's cultural ties. People were also concerned about employment opportunity diversity—having more employment opportunities that includes jobs beyond just the wine and hospitality industry. They want teens, skilled college graduates and those in-between to be able to find employment in Napa County. The community wants economic, cultural, ethnic and social diversity in Napa.

Safety

Safety, as defined in the dictionary, is the freedom from the occurrence of risk of injury, danger, or loss. When we think about safety, we often think of it in terms of physical danger and crime. As we dove deeper into the conversations, we learned that people feel safe from crime; however, they spoke of a broader definition of safety. Examples of this concern included seniors needing help to cross a busy intersection or perhaps young people walking home alone in the dark. Neither of these situations involves a criminal act; however, they could be considered unsafe due to the high risk of danger.

Napa's community talked a lot about safety. People are concerned about the safety of the roads: they are concerned that poor transportation infrastructure could lead to injury or damage to their vehicles. Teens are concerned about walking from place to place due to threatening comments from passersby. People are afraid of losing their homes due to the high cost of living here. They are concerned that the *risk* associated with

living in Napa is growing: people are unable to buy homes or rent at reasonable prices; fewer local businesses open and when they do, they do not always succeed; and they are concerned that they don't know fellow community members like they used to.



They are also afraid of losing their sense of community. Multiple times over the span of our conversations, people brought up the concern of losing Napa's "small town feel." When pressed to speak more on this concern, they talked about not feeling connected to their neighbors and not knowing other people who lived in the community. They were afraid of losing local relationships.

Napa is generally considered a safe place. Parents can drop their teens off downtown, relatively worry free. Feedback was that law enforcement does a good job of protecting the citizens. However, locals want to feel a true sense of belonging, security, and safety from loss of relationships and community.

Inclusivity

Having an inclusive community was a common thread that wound through all of our conversations. Like what was shared about diversity, people want to feel like they belong and want others to feel like they belong as well. A common concern was an imbalance in the focus on the needs of tourists versus the needs of locals. Many feel that Napa caters to tourists, providing many costly and commonly inaccessible events or venues for them, while Napa locals struggle to find opportunities for community gatherings or affordable locations. The teen groups we met with mentioned Bottlerock as a prime example of this problem: wealthy tourists can afford to attend this event, but the locals who have a desire to go and are greatly impacted by the event, cannot afford it.

Inclusivity resonated specifically with our teens and LGBTQ groups; however, many of the conversations acknowledged the lack of teen-centric events and venues. One participant stated that they felt “accepted but not included.” Another mentioned that adults often plan events for teens without consulting teens, and still expect them to help facilitate and attend the event. While they felt Napa does a great job of making everyone feel welcome, there is a need to address specific groups and ensure that they feel included in decision-making.

Many people also mentioned missing Chef’s Market as an event for locals that all ages and economic levels could attend. There were comments from a high school conversation that they enjoyed meeting other students from different schools in a noncompetitive environment, like that of a sporting event. People talked about using Chef’s Market as a place for family gatherings, that was multicultural, multi-generational, was free and a place where they genuinely felt community and belonging. The community deeply feels the loss of Chef’s Market and people would love to see something similar come back in the future.

Another concern was a lack of affordable housing. Napa teens who leave to go to college often cannot afford to move back afterwards, unless they live with their parents. Likewise, senior citizens who have homes in the valley have children who live some distance away in an area they can afford. Napa residents do not want to feel separated from their families or have expensive housing be a barrier to keeping families close together. They want Napa to be a place where they can raise their families and have generations afterwards continue to be born here, go to school here, come back and age in place here with family. We found that there is a tension between wanting to be able to afford to live here and the cost of what it takes to make Napa the place it is. People appreciate the growing tourism industry, but desire a small-town feel as well.

These concerns echo concerns about diversity and safety. They sound similar because Napa’s people want to be heard and acknowledged in these concerns. Inclusivity implies taking everything into account, and our citizens want their concerns taken into account when decisions are made. They want to feel like Napa supports a diverse climate and that Napa is a safe place to be for everyone who lives or visits here. Locals want to feel included in decision-making, in event planning, and in Napa’s community overall. We heard that people want to be involved and informed, but just don’t know where to start. Many times they find out about issues or events too late, and do not feel included. They want to be involved but do not know how to make their voices heard.

Concluding Thoughts

Napa is a wonderful place to live and our community knows and appreciates that. The fact that so many took their own personal time to discuss their goals for Napa was inspiring. The passion with which they shared and the vulnerability they expressed helped make these conversations meaningful. Our citizens are concerned about each other; they want Napa to be a place where everyone feels safe, included and welcome. Listed below are the trusted organizations mentioned specifically in the course of the conversations. These are the people that Napans felt can help incite change and reach our aspirations. At the bottom of this list, it simply says, “You,” because Napa locals feel like they can make a change, that we can make a change, and you too can help Napa be its very best.

What's Next?

The library intends to make this report available to the public and to other local agencies in order to help them decide where they can make a difference. Hearing from so many people in the community has inspired library staff to continue to be turned outwards and look for ways that we can contribute to Napa's aspirations.

Using our findings, we have started the process of writing our new strategic plan. Four specific service areas were chosen based on our mission statement and what we heard directly from the community. They include:

Be an Informed Citizen, Know your Community: Residents will have the information they need to support and promote democracy, to fulfill their civic responsibilities, and to participate in their community.

Celebrate Diversity, Cultural Awareness: Residents will have the programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.

If you have any questions or comments, you can contact us at (707) 253-4242 or on the web at www.napalibrary.org