Pines “Connecting the Community” Project Evaluation of Survey

Final Report – Summary September 2005

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Introduction
The summary follows the model of previous relevant Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy surveys already conducted (Salvaris, 2003) and contains a summary of the findings of the survey. The data is extremely “rich and thick” and a short report of this nature cannot do it (or the researchers and interviewers) justice.

General Findings and Outcomes

The Survey
The 278 surveys represents 2235 households containing 1578 families making this statistically representative as well as reflective of the 2001 Census Data in relation to country of birth and age distribution of the Pines community of Frankston North. Almost 80% of the interviewees have lived in the area for over 2 years, with over 40% being in the area for at least 10 years.

What the people feel good and bad about in The Pines
The following Table summarise perceptions in relation to current conditions in The Pines by subtracting the “poor” responses from the “good” responses (ignoring the average responses) we can derive a positive or negative indicator of the respondents’ views (Salvaris, 2003).

Table 1: Perceived current condition in the Pines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Good</th>
<th>% Average</th>
<th>% Poor</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own housing</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal satisfaction</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood generally</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transport</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of community</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; training</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own health</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>+21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing in local area</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own household income</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local employment services</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; well being in</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime &amp; personal safety</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>+7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job opportunities</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>+4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local economy</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Pines &amp;</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride in Pines</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-13*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What people said they liked about living in The Pines

This section of the survey attracted the most responses (almost 600 different comments from the respondents). Clearly access and proximity to “everything we need” is very important to 43% of the respondents about living in The Pines. Proximity to shops, schools, the beach, the Flora and Fauna Reserve, the pool, public transport and other amenities is highlighted. Interestingly only 4 people commented on the area being close to their work. Equally the quality of the “neighbours is highlighted by 38% who talked about “close knit community” the “availability of help, friendly people”, the “friendly neighbourly people” with one person commenting that “Friendly people could make a series of movies on the dramas that we and the neighbourhood work through”. The “small, friendly community” and the fact that “my friends live close by” was a common remark. Consistently with the previous section a minority commented in relation to quietness, safety and cleanliness of the environment while significant to 5% of the residents is the “affordability” of the Pines in relation to housing.
What people said they disliked (about living in) The Pines

Chart 2: What I dislike about living in The Pines (Q6)

This attracted 278 different comments and reflects closely the issues identified as being the most problematic for residents. 44% felt that crime in all its various forms (including “hooning” youth and hoons in cars, vandalism, disrespectful teens, the disrespect by young hoons to other residents, speeding, loud stereos, and general bad behaviour, lots of kids running around without parental supervision late at night drug and alcoholism) was uppermost in concern.

Drugs and alcoholism are mentioned by 13% as a serious issue including used syringes, drug taking in shopping centres after hours, road rage and alcoholism and drunks walking around the neighbourhood. This is reflected by 19% of comments that the “image” or social stigma of living in the Pines was without doubt a serious issue.

12% of respondents were concerned about transport issues including poorly maintained roads and footpaths (a serious issue for the elderly in particular); reckless drivers and driving in particular by P platers and “hoons” driving too fast through their streets; There were at least 10 who raised the lack of public transport; for disabled and at weekends.

Issues involving rubbish included broken glass (often a result of drunken behaviour and rowdy weekends), untidy nature strips dog droppings and people not looking after their own properties. A number commented that this might be the result of renters as compared to owner occupiers. Only 5% commented about the lack of sport and recreation activities (broadly defined) in particular for youth and children including play equipment and “children/family friendly” parks.
Developments the community would like to see

Chart 3: Improvements or changes that would make (living in) The Pines better (Q9)

Fewer than half of the respondents wanted to suggest a comment in relation to “an improvement”. Infrastructure or “more of” or “wish list” items was highlighted by 44% of the responses- like a new aquatic centre, more doctors and dentists, better shops, a new nursing home (very important for the aged locals who don’t want to leave the area), while improvements to bus shelters and phone boxes reflects the public need of many of the residents.

A number commented on wanting work, in particular for young people in the local area. Issues reflecting the highlighted negative “stigma” in Chart 2 (above) are found here again in some very lengthy comments such as the “Dramas are getting easier to accept, I realise how important it is to let people know what we will accept and what we won’t put up with” and “a general positive attitude by everybody would lift the game of Frankston North and possibly even rid us of some of the bad attention we often receive instead of the good that we should get.”

Similarly the focus on eradicating drugs and crime, cleaning up the environment and the provision of sport and recreation type facilities in particular for young people was again consistent with the previous comments in Chart 2.
Chart 4: What could be done to make people more proud of The Pines (Q62)

Clearly the respondents indicate that “residents need more 'what's going on?' information – [in] shop windows, letter box drops/notices on poles.” 37% of the 350 different suggestions related to a lack of knowledge and publicity – these ranged from more promotion, advertising, use of local newspapers, letter box drops, information and publicity as holding back the areas rejuvenation in order to give “give individuals the right to speak and express themselves in their own glorious individual ways, no matter how different or zany they might happen to be”. Suggestions ranged from community noticeboards, more letter drops, better advertising that is targeted to the audience, “having more local meetings about what going on in the neighbourhood”, creating a local radio station, “more reach-out services.” “provide outdoor BBQs and promotional activities” and “word of mouth - people inviting friends and others to activities” were all considered.

There were 130 or 36% of responses relating to suggestions for various individual, community and family activities. While some wanted “more organised/structured social activities for seniors and other [elderly residents]” others called for “more age related events for everyone” and even “more activities for small children”. A number commented that it seems that others assume what the residents want and they want to be consulted through “more surveys for what people require” and “find out more about what interests residents”. One commented that it is important that “locals/new residents feel welcomed instead of the suggested apathy or conditional acceptance” that seems to prevail.
The perceived (high)cost of activities was important to 9% of respondents who wanted low[er] cost activities suitable for all people to attend and made suggestions like “events being subsidised to enable more participation” and “to make activities more interesting and affordable” so that more people can participate through the “provi[sion of] cheap activities for all ages.

Awareness and Support of Pines “Connecting the Community” Project and its goals
While 54% of the respondents had heard about the PCCP, 1/3 of those had not participated in any of the PCCP supported or designated activities.

Support for all the six goals (Q70) of the PCCP strategy was consistently very high averaging 8.1 out of a possible extremely high 10.

(Perceived) Changes over the period of Pines “Connecting the Community” Project
The following Chart summarise perceptions in relation to critical “benchmark” questions relating to perceived changes in the Pines over the past 12 months by subtracting the “worse” responses from the “better” responses (ignoring the fence sitters or average) so as to derive a positive or negative indicator of the respondents’ views (Salvaris, 2003).

The chart above clearly demonstrates that the respondents’ perception of improvement in The Pines area is very high in the following areas:
- Pride in Pines
- Neighbourhood generally
- Physical environment
- Participation in Pines & local activities
- Housing in local area
Acknowledgements

The survey instrument had been previously developed by Mike Salvaris (Swinburne Institute for Social Research Melbourne) and successfully used by a number of Neighbourhood Renewal Projects in the Latrobe Valley and Wendouree West pilot regions on behalf of the Growing Victoria Together initiative of the Department of Human Services (Victoria). Mike Salvaris met with the researcher together with the PCCP team of Corrie Berkley (PCCP Coordinator) and Rebecca Henshall (Frankston City Council) a number of times and their invaluable assistance is acknowledged. The Survey is used with the permission and assistance of Mike and the data analysis code sheet and a previous training schedule was generously supplied by Tina D’Urbano of the Centre for Social Research, Gippsland Campus Monash University and is used with permission. Their gracious and timely support and assistance kept the costs of the project to a minimum and made reinventing the wheel redundant! I wish to record my appreciation of the work completed by the Research Assistants, Trish Emley in her involvement in the research training workshops, and Melissa Gibson, Marni Dickson, Jennifer Blanch and Justin Karol for their speedy, accurate and good humoured data entry of the surveys into the SPSS software. Each survey entry took between 15-30 minutes each to input. A Herculean effort indeed.

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References

Laughlin, A., (2005) email communication, 16 August 2005