



STAFF REPORT
Recreation & Facility Services

Title: Neighbourhood Strategy Project Update
Report Number: COM2017-023
Author: Beth Rajnovich, Policy & Performance Analyst
Janet Norman, Jr. Research & Policy Analyst
Meeting Type: Finance & Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
Council/Committee Date: September 18, 2017
File: N/A
Attachments: Appendix A: Public Engagement Details
Appendix B: Steering Committee Members
Appendix C: List of Themes
Ward No.: All Wards

Recommendation:

That Council receive COM2017-023 as information.

A. Executive Summary

The City of Waterloo is currently developing its first ever Neighbourhood Strategy to clarify how the city can support community members in creating strong and connected neighbourhoods. This report provides an overview of the work completed to date on the project and the next steps proposed to complete the draft Strategy.

On June 27, 2016, Council directed staff to begin to develop the Neighbourhood Strategy. Since then, a staff team, supported by a Steering Committee of community stakeholders, has advanced the Neighbourhood Strategy project according to the timeline and approach approved by Council in June 2016.

Throughout the Strategy development process, community members have shared ideas for how their neighbourhoods can be improved to better suit the needs of the community and help bring neighbours together. Over 1,600 community members have shared their thoughts and ideas to inform the draft strategy.

To guide recommendation development for the draft Strategy, 21 key theme areas have been identified from an in-depth analysis of all of the information gathered through the earlier phases of the project, including public input and other research. Appendix C lists the 21 key themes.

In addition, the project staff team has also conducted two reviews which will also inform the draft Strategy:

1. Neighbourhood Matching Fund program review: to determine how the program can be improved.
2. Red Tape review: to determine how the city can make it easier for residents to lead neighbourhood projects, while also supporting resident safety, risk mitigation, and compliance with legislative requirements. In February 2017, Council requested that this review take place to better understand the barriers in municipal processes that hinder neighbourhood initiatives. Staff is currently sharing findings with senior leadership.

During September and October, the project team will be working with the Steering Committee and other stakeholders to develop draft recommendations for the Strategy. The draft Strategy and recommendations will be presented to Council on November 27th, 2017. Staff will then seek public input on the draft strategy and return for Council approval of the final strategy in March 2018. The final strategy will include estimated financial implications and a high level implementation plan.

B. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications at this time.

C. Technology Implications

There are no technology implications at this time.

D. Legal Considerations

Staff did not seek legal advice at this time. Legal advice will be pursued as the draft strategy recommendations are developed in relation to any proposals to change current policy or practices related to public safety/risk management/liability issues

E. Link to Strategic Plan

(Strategic Priorities: Multi-modal Transportation, Infrastructure Renewal, Strong Community, Environmental Leadership, Corporate Excellence, Economic Development)

Strong Community: developing a strategy to strengthen ties within the community, build social capital at the neighbourhood level, and support vibrant neighbourhoods.

F. Previous Reports on this Topic

COM2016-013 City of Waterloo Neighbourhood Strategy – Proposed approach and scope

COM2017-002 Neighbourhood Strategy Workshop
COM2017-005 Neighbourhood Strategy – Public engagement summary

G. Approvals

Name	Signature	Date
Author: Beth Rajnovich	<i>B. Rajnovich</i>	September 5, 2017
Author: Janet Norman	<i>Janet Norman</i>	September 5, 2017
Director: Jim Bowman		
Commissioner: Mark Dykstra		
Finance:	N/A	

CAO



Neighbourhood Strategy Project Update COM2017-023

On June 27, 2016, Council directed staff to initiate work on the development of the Neighbourhood Strategy.

Since this time, the City of Waterloo has been developing its first ever Neighbourhood Strategy to identify how the city can support community members in creating strong and connected neighbourhoods, where neighbours know each other and spend time together, and support each other. The city recognizes that community members are well positioned to identify what could make their neighbourhoods stronger and more connected. They are also best positioned to actively build neighbourliness, but the city has a role to play in helping them achieve their neighbourhood goals.

The information below provides an overview of the work completed on the project to date and the next steps toward completing the Neighbourhood Strategy.

Neighbours are at the heart of neighbourhoods, and so it has been important that residents be a central part of the development of the Neighbourhood Strategy. Given this, the Neighbourhood Strategy staff team has sought to involve the public in many different ways throughout all project phases (Appendix A). Over 1,600 community members have shared their thoughts and ideas to inform the draft strategy.

The strategy development process is being guided by a Steering Committee comprised of city staff and community members representing various stakeholder organizations that play a role in building Waterloo's community (Appendix B).

A Resident Panel of over 90 community members representing a variety of ages and interests, and from many different areas of the City of Waterloo, was also established to provide in-depth community input into the Strategy. The Panel met six times between September 2016 and March 2017 to learn about the project goals and areas of focus, and to offer in-depth input and advice for how Waterloo neighbourhoods can be strengthened. The Resident Panel will come together again in October to help prioritize the draft recommendations.

The Neighbourhood Strategy staff team is also sharing relevant information collected through public engagement with other staff teams to support other municipal projects including the Parks Strategy development and implementation of the Culture Plan and the Built Heritage Strategy.

Project Steps Completed:**1) Define project scope and approach (March – June 2016)**

Staff began work to develop the scope and approach for the Neighbourhood Strategy by reviewing the Corporate Strategic Plan, Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, and other strategic documents, as well as examining neighbourhood strategies from other municipalities, and academic research and literature related to developing strong neighbourhoods.

Throughout the spring of 2016, staff consulted neighbourhood groups and community leaders to gather their input on the project scope and approach. About 100 individuals were engaged at this time through meetings and surveys to neighbourhood associations and interviews with neighbourhood and community leaders.

Through the research and public engagement, five areas of focus were identified to guide the strategy development:

1. Social connections: neighbours know each other.
2. Neighbourliness: encourage people to be good neighbours who are kind, friendly, considerate, and helpful.
3. Inclusivity: everyone can participate.
4. Sense of belonging: everyone feels welcome.
5. Placemaking: spaces and events that bring neighbours together.

The project scope, including the areas of focus, and the approach to developing the Strategy were brought to Council for approval June 27, 2016. At this time, Council directed the Neighbourhood Strategy staff team to begin developing the Strategy.

2) Phase 1 (September 2016 – February 2017)

This first phase of work focused on understanding the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and trends in Waterloo neighbourhoods. Approximately 420 community members contributed their thoughts about what is great about their neighbourhoods, challenges they encounter, and ideas for how their neighbourhoods can be strengthened.

Input was collected in the following ways:

- Resident Panel input.
- Steering Committee input.
- Focus groups with the general public.
- Targeted focus groups.
- Focus groups with staff teams.
- Online survey.
- Council Workshop.

A summary of the information collected during Phase 1 was presented to Council February 27, 2017 (COM2017-005) and is available on the project webpage: waterloo.ca/neighbourhoodstrategy.

During this phase of the project the following work was also advanced:

- A review of the current context, including existing City of Waterloo programs impacting neighbourhoods, was conducted. This information was shared with Council (COM2017-002), the Steering Committee, and the Resident Panel to inform their input into the Strategy and future stages of the project.
- Staff researched how other municipalities are addressing opportunities, challenges and trends similar to the ones identified by the Waterloo community.

Guided by the research and public consultation, and with the support of the Steering Committee, a second phase of public consultation was planned.

3) Phase 2 (March – August 2017)

The second phase of the project explored in greater depth the ideas and information gathered through the first phase to better understand what matters most to Waterloo residents and what strategies would have the best impact for Waterloo neighbourhoods.

Several different consultation strategies were used to capture the opinions and ideas of community members, including:

- A Street Team (comprised of city staff and volunteers) attended a broad range of events and visited neighbourhood spaces in Waterloo to speak with residents about their neighbourhoods.
- Neighbourhood Association and Homes Association Summit.
- Online survey for the general public.
- Collaboration with the Arts & Culture team on the Artist in Residence Program.
- Kitchen Table Talks (community members volunteered to host a conversation with neighbours to contribute to the neighbourhood strategy).
- Neighbourhood Strategy contest about what makes a good neighbour held at UW Canada event.

In total, approximately 1,115 community members were consulted, including: community members of various ages and from different neighbourhoods, and residents who had recently moved to the area as well as long-term residents.

This phase of the project also included advancement of:

- In-depth best practice research and exploration of other municipalities (including online research and phone interviews with other municipalities, regular participation in a nation-wide neighbourhood strategy community of practice, and attendance at a Neighbourhood Community Development conference).
- Exploration of what other Ontario municipalities similar to Waterloo are investing in neighbourhoods.

- Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Matching Fund program to determine how the program can be improved. The residents on the Neighbourhood Matching Fund Committee requested that this evaluation be completed. The findings will inform recommendations in the draft neighbourhood strategy.
- Red Tape review to determine how the city can make it easier for residents to lead neighbourhood projects, while also supporting resident safety, risk mitigation, and compliance with legislative requirements. In February 2017, Council requested that this review take place to better understand the barriers in municipal processes that hinder neighbourhood initiatives. Staff is currently sharing findings with senior leadership.
- Development of the draft vision and guiding principles for the Strategy based on input from the Resident Panel and Steering Committee.

Summary of Upcoming/Next Steps:

1) Phase 3 - Developing Draft Strategy (September – November 2017)

As per the project plan outlined in COM2016-013, the project is proceeding in accordance with the proposed timeline and work is now underway on developing the draft strategy.

Building on all of the public consultation input and research completed to date, the project team will work with the Neighbourhood Strategy Steering Committee to develop a draft Neighbourhood Strategy, which will include a draft vision, guiding principles, and recommendations.

To guide recommendation development, 21 key theme areas have been identified from an in-depth analysis of all of the information gathered through the earlier phases of the project (Appendix C).

As the staff team works with the Steering Committee to develop the draft recommendations a focus will be placed on fiscal responsibility. This will mean looking for solutions that will have the desired impact, but that are cost effective. Emphasis will be placed on better use of existing resources, and opportunities for partnerships and collaborations to support implementation will be explored. Additionally, the draft recommendations will seek to find an appropriate balance between reducing “red tape” while supporting public safety and risk mitigation.

The Neighbourhood Strategy staff team aims to present the draft Strategy to Council at the end of November 2017 and will seek Council approval to engage in a final round of public consultation on the draft Strategy to ensure it aligns with community needs and goals for Waterloo neighbourhoods.

2) Developing Final Neighbourhood Strategy (December 2017 – March 2018)

Pending Council approval to seek community feedback on the draft Strategy, staff will complete a final round of public engagement between December 2017 and February 2018. The Strategy will be revised, in consultation with the Steering Committee, based on community feedback. The project team will also work with staff in finance to identify any financial impact associated with each recommendation. The final Strategy report will include a high level implementation plan for the Strategy.

As per the project plan outlined in COM2016-013, staff aims to return to Council March 2018 to seek Council support for the final Strategy.

Public Engagement Details

Early Stages

To help define the project scope and approach, approximately 100 individuals were consulted. This included:

Survey of neighbourhood associations and homes associations

47 individual participants from 4 homes associations and 9 neighbourhood associations.

In-person visits with affiliated neighbourhood associations

Roughly 60 association members were consulted from 10 neighbourhood associations.

Committee meetings

The Safe and Healthy Communities Advisory Committee and the Immigration Partnership Belonging Steering Group were consulted, engaging 20 participants in total.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 17 different community leaders and representatives from relevant community organizations (including House of Friendship and Carizon, among others).

Phase 1: Public Engagement: Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Trends

This phase of consultation focused on identifying the strengths and challenges of Waterloo neighbourhoods, current trends impacting neighbourliness, and opportunities to make Waterloo neighbourhoods even better. In addition to an extensive social media marketing campaign, approximately 500 promotional magnets were distributed to residents to raise awareness of the project. Approximately 420 people participated in this phase of engagement. Opportunities to provide input included:

Community focus groups

15 focus groups were held to reach various populations and groups across the city (target groups included participants at the Adult Recreation Centre, post-secondary students, and newcomers to Canada, among others). Two of the sessions were open to the general public and were widely advertised. Through the 15 focus groups, a total of 108 individuals were consulted.

Online survey for general public

165 individuals responded to the online survey hosted on EngageWaterloo.

Staff interviews and survey

8 staff interviews were conducted with 38 staff members. 7 other staff responded through an online survey.

Resident Panel

A total of 91 community members were engaged through resident panel sessions during Phase 1. A total of 6 residents panel session were held between September 2016 and March 2017. Through this process, resident panel participants were able to learn more about city services shaping neighbourhoods, share ideas, participate in collective problem solving, and provide input into the vision and guiding principles for the project.

Council workshop

Council members shared their input during the Council workshop January 9, 2017.

Phase 2 Public Engagement: Great Ideas

Approximately 1,115 community members shared their input during this phase of the project. To help build awareness of the project, how to get involved, and the importance of neighbourhoods, the promotion campaign included distribution of 1,700 Frisbees printed with the project graphics and website, 1,000 postcards, as well as a social media campaign that included a series of 15 #neighbourloo stories – stories about successful neighbourhood initiatives, about acts of neighbourliness and what residents love about their neighbourhood. These stories and photos are being shared in an album on the City of Waterloo's Facebook page.

Other approaches to engage the public included:

Street team

A street team (comprised of city staff and volunteers) connected with residents at a wide range of events and public spaces across all wards of the City of Waterloo. The street team attended neighbourhood events, Waterloo Public Library pop-up sessions, Artist in Residence workshops, community festivals, and public square events, among others. The street team also did engagement on post-secondary campuses. An estimated 691 residents were engaged by the street team.

University of Waterloo Canada Day

202 community members participated in the Neighbourhood Strategy contest held at the University of Waterloo Canada Day Event by writing / drawing what they appreciate about their neighbours.

Kitchen table talks

Five community members volunteered to each host a kitchen table talk with their neighbours to gather input for the strategy, engaging 41 neighbours in discussion about their neighbourhoods and ideas to make them stronger.

Neighbourhood association and homes association summit

27 association leaders participated in the summit in April 2017 to provide in-depth input into the neighbourhood strategy from the perspective of the neighbourhood associations and homes associations.

Online survey

66 individuals responded to an online survey on engageWaterloo and questions about neighbourhoods posted on the City of Waterloo Facebook page.

Council for a Day

The 8 students who were chosen for the Council for a Day program contributed their input into the neighbourhood strategy through a mock council meeting.

Neighbourhood Matching Fund review

For the Neighbourhood Matching Fund review 19 individuals were engaged. Meetings and interviews were conducted with citizen committee members (4), United Way Waterloo Region Communities (2), past program participants (11), and staff involved in the program (2).

#neighbourloo stories

15 community members shared stories about successful neighbourhood initiatives, about acts of neighbourliness and what residents love about their neighbourhood. These stories are being posted to the City of Waterloo's Facebook album.

Resident Panel

The Resident Panel met throughout the winter of 2017 to share their great ideas to make Waterloo neighbourhoods stronger. They also contributed to the neighbourhood strategy vision and guiding principles. 47 members participated in this phase of the project.

Appendix B
to
COM2017-023 Neighbourhood Strategy Progress Update

Steering Committee Members

The neighbourhood strategy steering committee has met 8 times since August 2016 to guide the strategy development.

Steering committee membership:

External Stakeholders

- Laurelwood Neighbourhood Association: Tim Osland
- Eastbridge Neighbourhood Association: Cindy Watkin
- Beechwood Homes Association: John Loncar
- Former Safe and Healthy Community Advisory Committee: D'Arcy Farlow
- Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation: Shannon Weber
- United Way Waterloo Region Communities: Jonathan Massimi
- University of Waterloo: Kelly McManus
- Volunteer Action Centre: Jane Hennig
- Waterloo Public Library: Laura Dick
- Wilfrid Laurier University: Adrianna Crusoe / Sheldon Pereira
- Waterloo Regional Police Service: Reid Pridham / Andrew Abra/
- Waterloo Region District School Board: Shawn Callon
- Region of Waterloo: Katherine Pigott / Sanjay Govindaraj

Internal Staff

- Policy & Performance Analyst: Beth Rajnovich (project manager)
- Jr. Policy and Research Analyst: Janet Norman (primary researcher)
- Director, Community Programs and Outreach: Jim Bowman (project sponsor)
- Manager, Community and Neighbourhood Services: Lori Ludwig
- Director, Municipal Enforcement: Shayne Turner
- Coordinator, Neighbourhoods: Julie Legg
- Cultural Planning Specialist, Amy Ross

List of Themes

Based on public consultation and research, the following themes were identified for consideration as the recommendations are developed for the draft neighbourhood strategy:

1. Access to equipment to support neighbourhood events and programs
2. Access to indoor space within neighbourhoods
3. Neighbourhood-City engagement / relationship with City Hall
4. Cross-city connection and collaboration
5. Financial supports for neighbourhoods
6. Healthy and Safe neighbourhoods
7. Support for neighbourhood associations
8. Building and celebrating neighbourhood identity
9. Connecting neighbourhoods with each other
10. Building relationship among neighbours
11. Neighbourhood leadership development/capacity building
12. Neighbourhood diversity, belonging, and inclusion
13. Parks as neighbourhood gathering spaces
14. Placemaking in neighbourhoods
15. Neighbourhood events and programming/corporate-wide support
16. Property standards/Municipal Enforcement
17. Post-secondary students as neighbours
18. Support for neighbourhood groups beyond neighbourhood association
19. Informational tools and idea sharing
20. Vertical neighbourhoods
21. Volunteer recruitment and retention to support neighbourhoods