Neighbourhood Strategies from Various Municipalities

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#NEIGHBOURLOO

THE CITY OF Waterloo
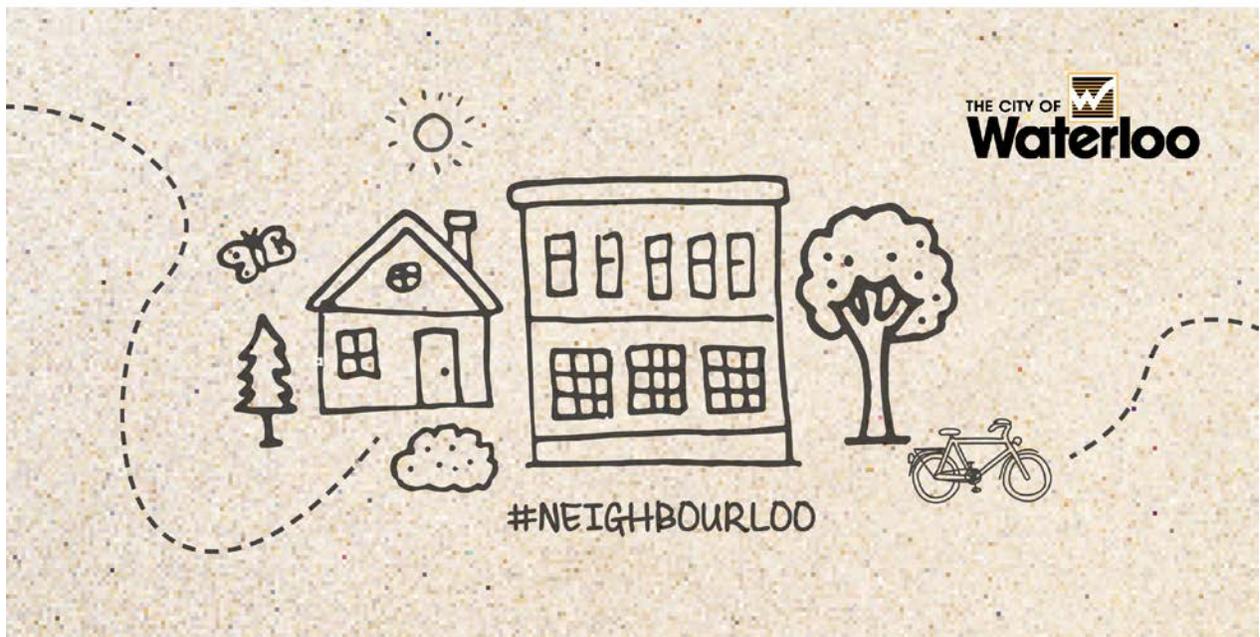
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STRONG CONNECTED

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Section 1: Neighbourhood Strategy Comparison

Overview of themes, goals, and outcomes of the municipality's neighbourhood strategy and/or neighbourhood initiatives

Municipalities similar to Waterloo in terms of population, education, and municipal tier (lower vs single) were selected, as well as a few other municipalities with neighbourhood strategies and initiatives.

Section 2: Summary Chart

Includes a summary of the information from Section 1

Section 3: Background Research

Additional details about the City of Waterloo's neighbourhood strategy development, and the City's involvement in Tamarack's Neighbourhood Strategy Leaders Community of Practice.

Section 1: Neighbourhood Strategy Comparison

Town of Ajax

Strong Neighbourhood Strategy
Town of Ajax strategy

The Town of Ajax is a lower tier municipality with a population of just over 100,000 residents. The Town cares greatly for the connections between neighbours. The Town provided many supports to its residents long before the development of the Strong Neighbourhood Strategy in 2013, including about half a dozen community centres, staff support, affiliation, neighbourhood ice rinks, free drop-in programs for children offered across the city, and neighbourhood activity kits, among others.

In response to two key initiatives at the Town (the Diversity and Community Engagement Plan and the Community Safety Strategy), the Strong Neighbourhood Strategy was developed to "Strengthen resident connections at the neighbourhood level in order to ensure community pride, safety and a strengthened sense of belonging."

The strategy development process was led by the municipality, and the recommendations included in the strategy are intended to be implemented by the Town of Ajax. Early stages of the project looked at the demographic profile of the town and divided the town into 23 neighbourhood catchment areas. Through consultation, the public indicated that the town should focus on neighbourhoods with an above average population of children and young families, older adults, persons with low income, and new residents to the town. Further input from the public and key community stakeholders and partners informed the development of the key goals and 13 recommendations that are presented in the final strategy.

The Strong Neighbourhood Strategy's three goals with associated recommendations are summarized below:

1) **Communications and Promotion:** "To keep residents informed of events and opportunities, increase neighbourhood participation and encourage open dialogue."
   a. Annual day in Ajax to communicate the importance of neighbourhood connections; encourage neighbourhoods and/or businesses to organize a local event.
   b. Award to recognize the volunteer work of groups, individuals or businesses in building local pride and cohesion.

c. Continue Council-driven ward meetings to keep residents informed and receive input.
d. Promote neighbourhood groups on the Town's "Connecting Neighbours" website:
    i. Show unique features of the neighbourhood (trails, parks, etc.).
    ii. List local events and initiatives.
    iii. Share positive neighbour or neighbourhood experiences.
    iv. Provide opportunities for residents to make suggestions, incubate new opportunities, and to volunteer.
    v. Provide Social Media training.

2) **Neighbourhood Capacity Building:** "To engage neighbourhood leaders to organize and empower neighbourhoods to discuss and address neighbourhood issues."
    a. Continue Neighbourhood Watch Committees and other committees; possibly extend volunteer work to include neighbourhood events.
    b. Assess the readiness within neighbourhoods to address local issues.
    c. Build the historic profile of each neighbourhood.
    d. Provide online tools for how to organize neighbourhood discussions and local events.
    e. Identify facilities within neighbourhoods that could be utilized as community hubs or for local meetings.
    f. Provide staff support for navigating municipal system and understanding what services the Town offers.
    g. Support interested neighbours or groups to organize an event or activity in each neighbourhood catchment area per year, which could include:
        i. Consider reduction or waiving of Town fees.
        ii. Consider the use of the Social Infrastructure Fund to support neighbourhood capacity building.

3) **Working with Community Partners:** "To strategize, share resources and concentrate on strengthening neighbourhoods."
    a. Meet with Ajax and Regional Partners annually to discuss the status of the Strong Neighbourhood Strategy, to better understand community priorities, and to maximize resources and reduce duplication of efforts.
    b. Continue to measure the perception of the strengths and challenges of each neighbourhood in a Quality of Life Survey.

City of Barrie

Historic Neighbourhoods Strategy
City of Barrie strategy

The City of Barrie is a single tier municipality of more than 130,000 residents. Over the past few years, the city has been growing, and is expected to continue changing to accommodate more residents. The Historic Neighbourhoods Strategy was developed to address the impact intensification would have on the older residential neighbourhoods. A dedicated team of residents, known as the Historic Neighbourhoods Strategy Community Committee, supported by City staff, led the development of the strategy from June 2009 to June 2010.

The Historic Neighbourhoods Strategy is intended to address existing concerns and future needs related to the historic residential neighbourhoods within the urban growth centre, to ease the transitional pressures related to intensification, including increased traffic, noise, and development.

The following questions were asked during the strategy development process:
- Are there critical issues with the status quo? What are they?
- What do you like about your neighbourhood?
- What do you want to see changed?

From extensive public consultation, a detailed profile was created for each neighbourhood in the urban growth centre. These profiles include neighbourhood characteristics, the residents' vision for the neighbourhood, what residents enjoy most about their neighbourhood, what they would like to see changed, and how they envision growth.

The strategy contains six goals, each of which has a number of objectives and associated action items (short term 2011-2013, medium term 2014-2017, and long term 2018-2021).
Goal 1: The historic neighbourhoods are distinct and reflect Barrie's natural and cultural heritage.
Goal 2: The historic neighbourhoods are clean, green and attractive.
Goal 3: The historic neighbourhoods embrace diversity.
Goal 4: The historic neighbourhoods are accessible and connected.
Goal 5: The historic neighbourhoods are well served by public and private services and facilities.
Goal 6: Residents of the historic neighbourhoods have a strong sense of community.

The recommended action items impact many different areas, including existing processes or specific changes. Examples include:

- Developing architectural design standards and urban design standards, and a heritage conservation plan.
- Addressing property standards concerns.
- Enforcing the noise by-law.
- Examining parking by-laws.
- Sidewalk maintenance.
- Trails and parks maintenance.
- Installing park benches and sidewalk furniture.
- Building a performing arts centre.

City of Brantford

Neighbourhood Hub Strategy
City of Brantford strategy

A core group of stakeholders in the City of Brantford, including representatives from the school board, public health, child and youth worker program, housing and poverty, and Ontario Works Employment, joined afterwards by City staff, led discussions about community hubs. This core group looked to neighbourhood hubs as a viable approach to addressing poverty and its associated social issues.

The Eagle Place and Echo Place were identified as appropriate locations for a community hub based on specific health, social, and economic indicators. Community conversations within these neighbourhoods helped generate ideas for how the implementation of the hubs could move forward and to examine how the needs within the neighbourhoods could be matched by willing community agencies through this approach.

As a result of the Neighbourhood Hub Strategy, both communities identified now have a hub within a school in the neighbourhood. Each hub has a group that meets monthly in order to plan events and activities for the neighbourhood. There is also a coordinator that works out of each hub to support community members and help connect residents with other residents, service providers, and volunteers in the community.

City of Edmonton

Building Great Neighbourhoods
[City of Edmonton project overview](#)

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the importance of great neighbourhoods to the overall strength of the municipality. As each neighbourhood has different needs, the City is working with residents to enhance infrastructure through the Building Great Neighbourhoods initiative and is working with residents to help build social capital through the Neighbourhood Revitalization program.

The Building Great Neighbourhoods Branch resides under the Integrated Infrastructure Services Department. It is a collection of three renewal programs designed to strategically enhance neighbourhoods throughout the City of Edmonton:
1. Drainage Renewal Program: "focused on the renewal and replacement of sanitary and storm sewers."
2. Neighbourhood Renewal Program: "focused on the renewal and rebuilding of roads, sidewalks, and street lights throughout the City."
3. Great Neighbourhoods Capital Program: "improves the livability of Edmonton's neighbourhoods by investing in community-identified projects."

Based on selection criteria, certain neighbourhoods have been identified for reconstruction, and have been placed into a schedule. The Building Great Neighbourhoods Team meets with residents in these areas to understand local concerns and initiatives that could impact the project and to get ideas to improve livability. Residents are invited to provide input into the design phase.

The Neighbourhood Revitalization Framework guides a slightly different process, and leads to the development of neighbourhood plans. "Directed by the community and supported by the City of Edmonton (COE), neighbourhood revitalization is a process which identifies the strengths, issues, challenges and potential of a particular area. Together, people, businesses, and organizations determine goals and action plans to strengthen and improve the quality of life in a community."

As opposed to the three infrastructure-focus programs listed above, the action items in the plans developed through the Neighbourhood Revitalization process could have a social focus, depending on the priorities identified by community members. While the City identifies neighbourhoods to engage in this process, the goal is to develop leadership capacity within the neighbourhood to guide the development and implementation.

Action items could include:
- Community clean up events
- Street scape improvements
- Support community patrol
- Organize a local contest to encourage property improvements

When the plans are approved by Council, they receive a certain amount of capital dollars to implement certain aspects (such as street scape improvements). City staff assists in building that leadership capacity and can help residents apply for neighbourhood matching funds or other grants to implement elements of the plan not covered by the capital funding.

Schools as Community Hubs
School hub project overview

In the City of Edmonton, two of the Edmonton Catholic Schools have become community hubs after school, during the weekends, and throughout school breaks. The space is used for after school programs, summer camps, and other activities. It is also a space where families can gain support, access counselling services, and other information. Community agencies work with the school board to offer programs and share information to the families in the area. While one focus is on education, healthy living and cultural activities are also important.

City of Guelph

Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework
City of Guelph strategy

The City of Guelph is a single tier municipality of just over 100,000 residents, with a large post-secondary student population. The City of Guelph recently conducted a review of the operational procedures guiding how the City engages and partners with neighbourhood groups. The Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework was the outcome of this review, and established a unique approach to neighbourhood development through the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition.

The Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework highlights four key principles that should guide all city-supported neighbourhood groups:
1. Inclusive
2. Engaging
3. Responsive
4. Building a Sense of Belonging

The framework defines a number of activities, divided into five categories, in which neighbourhood associations can engage in order to support these four key principles. It is expected that a neighbourhood group focus on at least one of these categories:
1. Delivering accessible services (economic, physical, social)
2. Delivering responsive services (relevant, appropriate)
3. Basic engagement (decision-making process, fostering dialogue with neighbourhood groups, communities and partners)
4. Creating a sense of belonging (involvement, outreach, awareness, leadership)
5. Providing a voice for the community on issues (policy process, advocacy, community issues)

From the Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework, the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition became a non-profit corporation organization operating separately from, but still supported by the City. As such, this organization can help neighbourhood groups secure funding and can determine how this funding is allocated. Through the Coalition, neighbourhood groups can access support from community development workers and can share information with other neighbourhood groups. It is a means of sharing tools, resources, and best practice between neighbourhoods across the City. The City is one of several partner organizations supporting the Coalition.

City of Hamilton

Neighbourhood Action Strategy
[City of Hamilton strategy](#)

The City of Hamilton is a single-tier municipality of over 500,000. A few years ago, a startling report identified significant inequities between key neighbourhoods in Hamilton; following this report, the city council committed $2 million to focus on developing 11 priority neighbourhoods as part of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy partnership between Hamilton Community Foundation, Best Start network and the City.

The focus of this approach was on socio-economic issues, education, and the health and wellbeing of residents. Core elements of the approach included:
1. Enhancing community development work
2. Developing resident-led neighbourhood plans
3. Increasing investments in neighbourhoods
4. Building new partnerships to support healthy neighbourhoods

Following this approach, Neighbourhood Action Plans have been developed for the priority neighbourhoods. The action plans were developed with the support of municipal staff, residents and community partners, and funding to implement these plans is drawn from the $2 million allocated for these priority neighbourhoods. Community developers are working with the neighbourhoods to increase engagement and implement action items in the plans to address local issues.

To ensure sustainable support of Hamilton neighbourhoods, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy office has been established. "The City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) is focused on helping neighbourhoods be great places to live, work, play and learn. The City's NAS supports community planning teams as they develop and implement action plans that build healthier communities. Through partnerships with businesses, Provincial and Federal governments and non-profit organizations, the NAS aligns existing resources and supports additional relationships that help these neighbourhoods meet their goals."

City of Kitchener

Neighbourhood Strategy
City of Kitchener strategy

The City of Kitchener has a population that is approximately double that of its neighbour Waterloo. With a large number of neighbourhood associations that provide programming at the 15 community centres dotted throughout the city, Kitchener's neighbourhood model differs from Waterloo's.

From March 2015 until the Winter of 2017, the municipality is leading the development of the city's first ever neighbourhood strategy. Various community organizations and stakeholders are supporting the development of the strategy. Input from the community is very important to the strategy development process, and the project team has already heard from 5,343 people through 3,842 hours of input and discussion.

The strategy development was designed to engage residents in neighbourhood activities and to increase interest in placemaking at the neighbourhood level. One public consultation initiative, for example, involved the City holding a neighbourhood party, with a free BBQ, keynote speaker, and examples of neighbourhood placemaking projects or other activities the community could then implement in their own neighbourhoods (including Little Libraries, Street Garage Sale, among others).

The draft strategy has been completed, and the City is seeking feedback from the community. Three themes and 18 recommendations are including in the draft report:
1. Great Places
   a. Neighbourhood Places Program: steps to make it easier for residents to improve public spaces (i.e. public art, public seating, neighbourhood signage)
   b. Placemaking Guidebook: to help residents work with the City to implement projects not already outlined in the Neighbourhood Places Program
   c. Placemaking Challenge: educate and inspire residents to participate in more placemaking initiatives, hosting an annual challenge
   d. Tree Planting on Private Property: through partnerships with the private sector
   e. Parks, Playgrounds and Trails Community Engagement: transform the way the City engages residents in developing or redeveloping neighbourhood parks, playgrounds, and trails.

2. Connected People
    a. More neighbourhood events: creating steps residents can follow to work with the City to organize an event, especially street parties
    b. Event-in-a-trailer: bookable trailer of event supplies
    c. Inviting Front Porches: improving zoning requirements and urban design guidelines
    d. Community Spaces in Multi-Residential Buildings: research how to create indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, working with community partners.
    e. Block Connector Approach: someone who will engage neighbours and welcome new residents to the area
    f. Snow Angel Program: connecting volunteers with people who cannot shovel their sidewalk or driveway
    g. Neighbourhood Website: intended to share stories so residents can learn from each other, and to promote programs and initiatives to build stronger connections in the neighbourhood
3. Working Together
    a. Neighbourhood Action Plans: resident-led, city-supported plans specific to the neighbourhood, with a vision and actions to achieve that vision
    b. Neighbourhood Matching Grant: increasing the grant budget and the maximum funds a group can apply for
    c. Reduce Municipal Barriers: review of municipal policies and procedures to make it easier for the community to hold an event
    d. Neighbourhood Leadership Program: developed in collaboration with community partner, to build capacity of neighbourhood volunteers
    e. Neighbourhood Demographic Profiles: to help residents understand diversity of their neighbourhood
    f. Neighbourhood Use of Schools and Faith-based Facilities: explore opportunities for residents to gain greater access to indoor and outdoor facilities

City of London

London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy
City of London strategy

London is a single tier municipality of 366,000 residents. The City is intentional about strengthening neighbourhoods, offering a variety of supports, including grants and other resources.

The City of London recognized a need for a neighbourhood strategy to enhance community vitality. The City facilitated a strategy development process that was entirely resident-led. Over one hundred residents, representing most of the 42 planning districts, participated on the resident task force, developing the project scope, identifying community priorities, and developing the recommendations contained in the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy.

A cross-departmental team of staff supported the strategy development and implementation. The strategy, completed in 2009, was intended to be implemented over five years, although there are elements of the strategy that will be ongoing.

The strategy had a very comprehensive focus, including planning, political involvement, environment, transportation, safety, public art, etc. The recommendations fell into the following sections: People (Engaged, Connected, Active, Pride, Empowered) and Places (Sustainable, Safe, Services and Activities, Connectivity, Parks, Amenities, Responsive City). From the recommendations listed in the strategy, a variety of programs were developed, categorized on the NeighbourGood London website as:
1. Create new Opportunities
2. Improve Street Safety
3. Meet the Neighbours
4. Protect Our Environment

These programs offer tools for neighbours to begin associations, host events, build community gardens, access funding, among other supports. A new neighbourhood strategy is now underway, to guide the City of London over the course of 2017-2020.

Section 2: Summary Chart

Municipality	Strategy	Details
Ajax (109,600) Lower Tier	**Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (2013)** "Strengthen resident connections at the neighbourhood level in order to ensure community pride, safety and a strengthened sense of belonging."	Goals: 1. Communications and Promotions: increase neighbourhood participation 2. Neighbourhood Capacity Building: empower community members to address neighbourhood issues 3. Working with Community Partners: strategize, share resources, find efficiencies
Barrie (136,063) Single Tier	**Historic Neighbourhoods Strategy (2010)** Examine the future needs of the oldest residential neighbourhoods	Recommended action items: • Architectural design standards • Heritage conservation plan • Address property standards concerns • Sidewalk, trails, parks maintenance
Brantford (93,650) Single Tier	**Neighbourhood Hub Strategy** Address poverty/associated social issues through neighbourhood hubs.	Two pilot hubs (located in schools) organize events and activities. A coordinator works out of each hub to support residents and help connect residents, service providers, and volunteers in the community.
Edmonton Single Tier	**Building Great Neighbourhoods** Establish infrastructure to support healthier neighbourhoods. **Schools as Community Hubs** Services and activities for students and families	3 Programs: 1. Drainage Renewal Program 2. Neighbourhood Renewal Program (replacement) 3. Great Neighbourhoods Capital Program (new infrastructure) Two Catholic schools are community hubs, delivering activities and services after school hours.

Municipality	Strategy	Details
Guelph (121,688) **Single Tier**	**Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework (2010)** Review of how the City of Guelph partners with its neighbourhood groups.	Framework principles: 1. Inclusive 2. Engaging 3. Responsive 4. Building a Sense of Belonging Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition: independent organization for sharing knowledge and resources between associations, providing networking and fundraising opportunities, building partnerships.
Hamilton (519,949) **Single Tier**	**Neighbourhood Action Strategy (2010)** Support 11 priority neighbourhoods in addressing local issues. The focus of this approach was on socio-economic issues, education, and the health and wellbeing of residents.	Goals: 1. Enhancing community development work 2. Developing resident-led neighbourhood plans 3. Increasing investments in neighbourhoods 4. Building new partnerships to support healthy neighbourhoods
Kitchener (219,153) **Lower Tier**	**Neighbourhood Strategy (Draft)** Resident-led, City-supported initiatives to make great things happen in neighbourhoods.	Themes: 1. Great Places 2. Connected People 3. Working Together
London (366,151) **Single Tier**	**London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy 2010-2014 (2009)** Planning, political involvement, supporting neighbourhood associations, environment, transportation, local business, public art, safety, etc.	Sample of strategy outcomes: • Community gardens • Neighbourhood action plans • Neighbourhood associations • Access to funding • Improved transportation and lighting

Section 3: Background Research

To support the City of Waterloo's neighbourhood strategy development, many different municipalities were examined. This provides an understanding of the priorities of residents in similar municipalities and gives an idea of the types of recommendations that could address these priorities.

Types of Strategies

There are several different approaches a municipality can take when developing a strategy:

Community Strategy: community leads development and implementation of the strategy (e.g. London).

Corporate Strategy: city leads the development of the strategy, based on community input. Action items and recommendations are implemented by the City (e.g., Ajax and Kitchener).

Development Plans: strategy is focused on infrastructure. Projects may be initiated by the municipality (e.g., Edmonton's infrastructure program).

Issue-Focused: the strategy is intended to address a specific, pre-identified issue (e.g., Hamilton, Edmonton hubs).

Divisional Strategy: development and implementation lead by a divisional unit of the municipality (e.g., City of Waterloo's Older Adult Recreation Strategy).

For the neighbourhood strategy, the City of Waterloo has decided to use the Corporate Strategy approach.

Selection of Municipalities

Municipalities similar to Waterloo in terms of population, education, and municipal tier (lower vs single) were selected. This list was expanded to also include a few other municipalities with neighbourhood strategies and initiatives.

The following municipalities were researched (municipalities with * have neighbourhood strategies and initiatives described in greater depth in this document):
- Town of Ajax*
- City of Barrie*
- City of Brantford*
- City of Cambridge
- City of Edmonton*
- City of Guelph*
- City of Hamilton*
- City of Kitchener*
- City of London*
- Town of Milton
- Town of Newmarket
- Town of Oakville
- City of Oshawa
- City of St. Catharines
- City of Stratford

Tamarack: Neighbourhood Strategy Leaders Community of Practice

Staff working on the City of Waterloo's neighbourhood strategy is participating in Tamarack's Neighbourhood Strategy Leaders Community of Practice. The group meets every couple of months through an online conference to discuss these different strategies and initiatives. This group is comprised of representatives from municipalities across Canada engaging in the development of neighbourhood strategies and/or other neighbourhood initiatives. These participants take turns speaking about their municipality in specific, and the initiatives being implemented to strengthen neighbourhoods. About one to two municipalities are featured each session. Municipalities that have spoken at the sessions include:
- Calgary, AB
- Lethbridge, AB
- London, ON
- Victoria, BC