



**STAFF REPORT**  
**Recreation & Facility Services**

Title: City of Waterloo Neighbourhood Strategy – Proposed approach and scope  
Report Number: COM2016-013  
Author: Beth Rajnovich, Policy & Performance Analyst  
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File: N/A  
Attachments: None  
Ward No.: City-wide

**Recommendations:**

1. That Council receive report COM2016-013.
2. That Council direct staff to begin to develop a neighbourhood strategy as outlined in this report (COM2016-013).

**A. Executive Summary**

The Waterloo community has come a long way in supporting its neighbourhoods and has seen great success over the years. As the city continues to change and grow, it is time to take another look at the current model and examine how neighborhood supports can be further enhanced and where new direction may be needed. Recently, a number of City plans, including the Community, Culture and Recreation Services Master Plan (formerly Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan), the Culture Plan, the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, and the Community Services business plan, call for the development of a neighbourhood strategy to strengthen Waterloo neighbourhoods.

The purpose of the neighbourhood strategy is to define the City's role in supporting neighbourhoods, including the resources and tools that the City can provide to facilitate continued growth of environments where community members are empowered to create strong, connected and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Staff reached out to neighbourhood association and homes association board members to gain a preliminary understanding of community priorities for this project. Based on this input as well as research on other municipalities, the strategy will focus on five key themes:

1. Increasing Social Connections
2. Improving Neighbourliness
3. Fostering Inclusivity
4. Building a Sense of Belonging
5. Enhancing Placemaking

A project staff team and a steering committee, comprised of City staff and community stakeholders, will guide the development of the strategy. They will review research and public input, discuss project goals, and give input on project deliverables.

A resident panel, recruited through an application process and selected by the project staff team, will meet multiple times to provide in-depth input; for more broad community feedback, staff will also be conducting surveys, focus groups, and other public involvement opportunities.

Staff will present updates to council periodically over the course of the strategy development. It is anticipated that the draft strategy will be presented to council December 2017 and the final strategy will be presented March 2018.

The neighbourhood strategy will recognize the City's Official Plan, current City studies, and legislation to ensure the strategy aligns with prescribed processes. The final strategy will include a number of recommendations as to how the City can support community members and groups in strengthening neighbourhood vibrancy over the next 10 years.

With council's direction, staff will use the approach and scope proposed in this report (COM2016-013) to guide the development of the neighbourhood strategy.

## **B. Financial Implications**

Funds for the development of the strategy are already allocated in the CCRS Master Plan Implementation Studies budget (project number 120105). Total budget for the Master Plan is \$342,000 over 2016-17. Of this total budget, approximately \$85,000 per year will be expended on the development of the neighbourhood strategy. This is a routine project; therefore, funding was approved on budget day and no further approvals are required. It is not anticipated that any external consulting services will be required to deliver this strategy. The project will be completed by existing staff as part of their workplan.

While the strategy will focus on how to best use existing resources to meet community needs in neighbourhoods, it is likely that some recommendations will require new resources or investment. The final strategy will include cost estimates to assist council in prioritizing the recommended actions.

### C. Technology Implications

There are no technological implications.

### D. Legal Considerations

Staff did not seek legal advice.

### 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

N/A

### G. Approvals

Name	Signature	Date
Author: Beth Rajnovich	<i>B. Rajnovich</i>	
Author: Janet Standen		
Director: Jim Bowman		
Commissioner: Mark Dykstra		
Finance: Keshwer Patel		

CAO



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

### Background

The City of Waterloo has consistently shown a strong commitment to fostering safe, healthy, and active neighbourhoods through a variety of policies, programs and investments, including: affiliation of neighbourhood associations, staff support for neighbourhood initiatives and grant programs.

The commitment to neighbourhoods is also reflected in City's Strategic Plan for 2015-2018, where a strong community is one of six areas of focus. This plan identifies a neighbourhood strategy as a means to "harness social capital to increase neighbourhood vibrancy and resident leadership." The 2016-2018 business plan for the Community Services Department also notes that "a neighbourhood strategy will foster a level of inclusiveness and vibrancy that is built from the grassroots of the community and our neighbourhoods."

The City of Waterloo and its neighbourhoods are changing in many ways, including increased ethnic diversity and newcomers, a growing aging population, a changing economy, and urban intensification. These factors are shaping what neighbourhoods look like and how neighbours interact with each other. The City needs a strategic approach to respond to this changing context.

### The Purpose of the Neighbourhood Strategy

The neighbourhood strategy will look at what is already happening in the city and the vision community members have for Waterloo neighbourhoods. It will recommend approaches for how we can get from where we are now to where we want to be 10 years from now. The strategy will define the City's role in its partnership with neighbourhoods and the supports, tools, investments and resources that the City can provide to facilitate the growth of strong, connected and vibrant neighbourhoods. Community members, whether through neighbourhood associations or more informal groups, will be able to use these supports combined with the assets in their own neighbourhood to engage in community development and ultimately improve quality of life.

**Anticipated Long Term Outcomes**

It can be challenging to anticipate the long term impact and outcomes of implementing a neighbourhood strategy. Based on best practice research, what other municipalities have done and comments already received from the community, a few possible outcomes include:

- Increased communication and information-sharing between neighbourhood groups and between the City and neighbourhoods
- Increased frequency and diversity of community events and opportunities to gather within neighbourhoods
- Increased number of placemaking initiatives, where residents explore how to use existing spaces to encourage neighbours to meet and interact, strengthening social capital
- Increased alignment between City and neighbourhood goals
- Increased neighbourliness and support among neighbours
- Increased sense of belonging to a neighbourhood and the broader community among community members

**Guiding Framework**

This strategy will be developed through a community-focused approach, meaning the general public and community stakeholders will be heavily involved in the process, including community members, neighbourhood associations, homes associations, and relevant organizations, institutions and businesses. The process will seek to be inclusive and to reach a broad range of demographics across the city.

This project will also require corporate-wide involvement, as City supports for neighbourhoods does not rest with just one staff unit, but with many including Community and Neighbourhood Services, Recreation and Facility Services, Parks and Environment, Municipal Enforcement, Arts and Culture, among others.

The City is not the only organization with an interest in supporting neighbourhoods. Collaboration with other community organizations, such as the KW Community Foundation, United Way KW & Area and post-secondary institutions, will be critical to ensure strategic alignment, avoid duplication, and ensure efficient use of resources.

It is anticipated that the draft strategy will be presented to Council in December 2017 and the final strategy will be brought to Council March 2018. This timeline will ensure adequate time for public consultation, Council feedback and input from community organizations (a high-level timeline is outlined in Appendix A). During this time, staff will seek opportunities to support neighbourhood-building initiatives, when appropriate.

Measurement tools (gathering data on number of events, number of associations, etc.) to evaluate success of the strategy will be developed based on the final recommended actions. The City will track success over the strategy's 10-year implementation phase.

### Governance and Reporting Structure

It is proposed that the development of the neighbourhood strategy employ the following governance and reporting structure (visually represented in Figure 1, followed by written descriptions).



Figure 1

#### A) Council:

By approving the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan and the Community Service Department's Business Plan for 2016-2018, council has shown its support for developing a neighbourhood strategy. Project staff will provide council with regular updates over the course of the project and council will have opportunities to provide input into the development of the strategy.

#### B) Project Champion:

Jim Bowman, Director of Community Programming and Outreach Services, is championing this project, providing direction and advice to the project team and ensuring that project needs are met.

#### C) Project Staff Team:

The project staff team will be responsible for overall project management, research and analysis, public consultation, recruitment and selection of committee and resident panel members, working with the steering committee and resident panel, leading the development of project deliverables and preparing reports for the community and council to support the development of the neighbourhood strategy. The project staff team will be supported by Corporate Communications staff to ensure broad community awareness of this project.

The project staff team will collaborate with staff working on related municipal projects to find efficiencies. Specifically, given that parks, especially passive parks, are important assets in neighbourhoods, staff working on both the neighbourhood strategy and a parks strategy, initiated in 2016, will share information across the projects and seek opportunities for joint public engagement. It will be important to ensure the projects' visions, guiding principles and recommendations are aligned and support the goals and needs of the community.

To help support this collaborative approach, the project staff leading the parks strategy will participate on the neighbourhood strategy steering committee, and staff leading the neighbourhood strategy will have a role in the parks strategy working group.

The project staff team will also connect this project with other relevant City reports. For example, the Community, Culture and Recreation Services (CCRS) Master Plan (2008), the Culture Plan (2013), the Northdale initiative, Age-Friendly Cities Mayor's Advisory Committee report (2013) and the Older Adult Recreation Strategy (2015) all highlight themes linked to this strategy, such as neighbourliness, sense of place and neighbourhood level programming.

#### **D) Steering Committee:**

A steering committee will be formed to include representation from multiple City divisions, community organizations, the post-secondary education sector, neighbourhood associations and other community members, as well as representatives from other government agencies.

The steering committee will meet every 4-6 weeks over the duration of the strategy development. The primary roles of the steering committee will be to:

- Set the tone for cooperation and collaboration
- Represent stakeholder communities that do not directly sit on the steering committee
- Coordinate with related projects and programs
- Offer input on deliverables
- Provide support for issues management/resolving obstacles
- Forum for developing the strategy that the project team will present to council seeking approval

#### **E) Resident Panel:**

A resident panel will be established as a unique method for in-depth exploration of issues, opportunities and strategies for creating and sustaining strong, connected and vibrant neighbourhoods.

The panel will be composed of 30-40 community members representing the demographic diversity and neighbourhood catchment areas in the city. Creative incentives and advertising methods may be used to encourage broad participation if

necessary. The only eligibility criterion is that applicants must live in the City of Waterloo or own a property or business in the city. There will be an open recruitment process, and resident panel members will be selected from among all applicants based on the goal of demographic diversity and giving priority to community members of the City of Waterloo.

The panel will meet 6-8 times over the course of the project. Each meeting will focus on a different issue as determined by the project staff team to align with project progress. The meetings will involve sharing information, either gathered by staff or panel members, and opportunity for discussion that will influence the final strategy. The work of the resident panel will be shared with the steering committee and vice versa.

### **Involvement of the Safe and Healthy Community Advisory Committee**

Since approval of the CCRS Master Plan in 2008, the Safe and Healthy Community Advisory Committee (SAHCAC) has shown a keen interest in seeing the development of the neighbourhood strategy move forward. Given this interest and alignment, and pending any council direction regarding the committee review processes, members of SAHCAC will be offered the opportunity to participate on the resident panel. A seat on the steering committee will also be held for one member of SAHCAC. All members will have the opportunity to apply for this seat and the project staff team will select the representative that will best fill a gap in the steering committee diversity. These opportunities have been discussed with the SAHCAC members.

### **Broad Public Consultation**

As all community members live in a neighbourhood, everyone has something to contribute to the development of a neighbourhood strategy. The underlying belief of this project is that the best outcomes for neighbourhoods come when community members take the lead, sometimes with support from the City and other organizations. Because of this, broad community engagement throughout the city will be critical to this project's success, as interests and priorities of neighbourhoods can vary widely.

Staff will conduct extensive public engagement to receive a broad understanding of community priorities. Staff will also consult with key community stakeholders as appropriate. While a full public consultation plan will be developed with input from the resident panel and steering committee, preliminary ideas include:

- Conversations with key opinion leaders and community stakeholders
- Meetings with neighbourhood association and homes association board members
- Using engageWaterloo to collect feedback online
- Consultation at City events and community events in neighbourhoods
- Reaching out to specific demographics, such as students, newcomers, etc. as well as targeting neighbourhoods without existing neighbourhood associations
- Hosting a fun community event
- Encouraging resident panel members to host kitchen table talks with neighbours

A key focus of the public engagement process will be combining opportunities to gather input about neighbourhoods with opportunities to learn more about why neighbourhoods are important, how community members can get involved and what neighbourhoods can achieve when community members work together.

The project staff team will actively seek opportunities to consult with communities that are underrepresented in more general engagement opportunities.

### **City of Kitchener's Neighbourhood Strategy**

It should be noted that the City of Kitchener is currently mid-way through developing a neighbourhood strategy. Staff from Waterloo and Kitchener will consult each other during the development of the respective neighbourhood strategies to share information, ideas, and best practice. While community members may expect Waterloo to mirror Kitchener's approach, both in terms of developing the strategy and in terms of the outcomes of the strategy, it is important to remember that historically the City of Waterloo has taken a different approach to service delivery. For example Waterloo has developed a smaller number of larger recreation facilities intended for city-wide use, as opposed to Kitchener's approach of a larger number of smaller community centres throughout the city. The role of neighbourhood associations also differs between the two cities, with Waterloo associations focusing more on events while Kitchener's associations take a greater role in programming at the various community centres. These differences combined with our differing demographic context, requires a made-in-Waterloo solution.

### **Strategy Scope and Areas of Focus:**

While many cities have developed neighbourhood strategies, each has taken a different approach and focus. For example, the City of Hamilton's neighbourhood strategy is focused on lower income neighbourhoods rather than the city as a whole. The City of Edmonton's strategy focuses on physical infrastructure and neighbourhood revitalization. The City of Kitchener, currently in the process of developing a strategy, is placing an emphasis on placemaking city-wide.

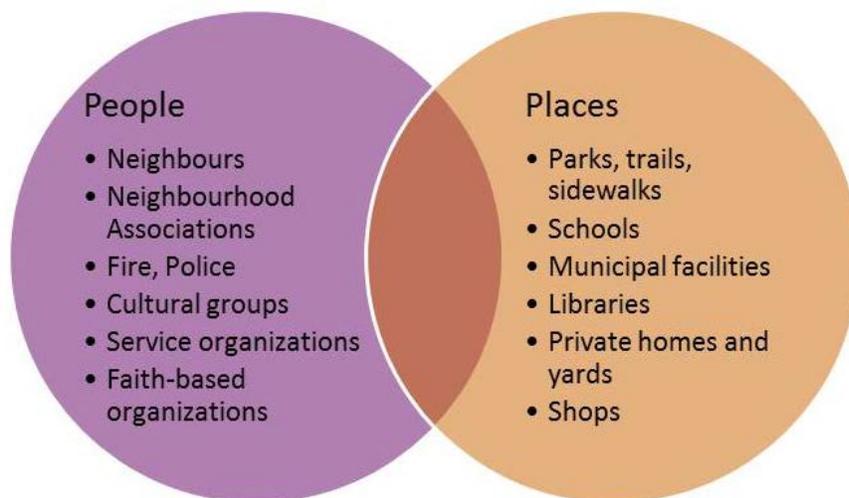
To help develop the proposed scope for the City of Waterloo's strategy, staff approached neighbourhood associations and homes associations to ask members for their first thoughts and assumptions about a neighbourhood strategy. Staff received feedback from 47 board members.

Some common comments included:

- Volunteer recruitment for neighbourhood initiatives
- Enhancing our parks and creating more recreation spaces
- Building relationships between City Hall and neighbourhood associations
- Responding to increasing diversity and being more inclusive
- Safety, health, and wellness
- Strong citizen engagement and sharing ideas

- Relationships with post-secondary students in neighbourhoods
- Impact of intensification and high rise buildings on building community
- Green/sustainable living
- Information sharing among neighbourhood associations
- Access to community spaces
- Connection with neighbourhood businesses

From this community input, combined with research on community building and neighbourhood development, it is proposed that development of the neighbourhood strategy focus on two key factors, *people* and *places*, and where they intersect (Figure 2 lists a few examples of people and places). Whether at a park, school or shop, or along a trail or sidewalk, when individuals come together they build community and can harness local social capital.



**Figure 2**

The key factors, people and places, and how they contribute to strong, connected and vibrant neighbourhoods can be influenced by a myriad of programs, initiatives, and events. Implementation of the recommended strategy will require consideration of new policies and programs, and possible changes in resource allocation, to achieve the community's long term vision for its neighbourhoods. It may also look at ways to improve access to existing facilities, whether municipal recreation facilities, schools, passive parks or other unique spaces.

Staff anticipates a very diverse set of issues, needs and wants to be identified. As such, it will be necessary to identify and prioritize approaches and investments by the City to support the community's vision for neighbourhoods. These priorities will form the recommendations in the final strategy document.

The neighbourhood strategy will also acknowledge the many differences between Waterloo neighbourhoods, and will consider how tactics for neighbourhood development need to be tailored for the diversity of our neighbourhoods.

**Consideration of Factors Beyond Strategy Scope**

When developing the neighbourhood strategy the City will acknowledge the many considerations that impact neighbourhoods, recognizing that the neighbourhood strategy will not be able to address each one. There are already legislative and prescribed procedures to address some of these considerations, including:

- Expiration of homes association covenant agreements, guided by legislative processes.
- The physical form, including such factors as transportation networks, infrastructure and buildings (including neighbourhood/community centres), urban design, traffic calming and land use planning, addressed in the City's Official Plan, Community Improvement Plans, Urban Design Guidelines, the Transportation Master Plan, and other processes.

**Conclusion**

Strong and vibrant neighbourhoods are critical to the health and well-being of the community as a whole. As Waterloo continues to change, the City needs to take a strategic approach to neighbourhoods. Developing the City's neighbourhood strategy will involve public input and dialogue with key community stakeholders. This strategy will clarify the City's role in supporting community members and neighbourhood organizations in strengthening neighbourhood vibrancy through social connections, inclusivity, placemaking, belonging, and neighbourliness.

**Appendix A: High Level Project Timeline**

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>
July- August 2016	Finalize Steering Committee Membership Recruit and select members of Resident Plan Commence project related research
September – December 2016	Steering Committee and Resident Panel meeting underway Complete Current Context Report Conduct SWOT Analysis, including broad public engagement
January – March 2017	Draft Vision and Guiding Principles Continue Best Practice Research Complete Municipal Comparison study
April – May 2017	Launch Primary Phase of broad public engagement Kick off community event to be held
June - July 2017	Complete Primary Phase of public engagement Complete Public Engagement Report Complete Best Practice Research
August 2017	Begin analysis of information gathered through public consultation and research to identify key themes, community goals, and areas of focus for shaping Neighbourhood Strategy
September – November 2017	Develop Draft Neighbourhood Strategy in collaboration with Steering Committee, with input from resident panel
December 2017	Present draft strategy to council and begin public consultation to get feedback on the draft
January – February 2018	Gather public and stakeholder feedback on draft strategy and make revisions to strategy.
March 2018	Present final Neighbourhood Strategy to council for approval along with High Level Implementation Plan.

**Appendix B: Project Staff Team and Steering Committee Membership**

The project staff team includes:

- Beth Rajnovich, Policy and Performance Analyst
- Janet Standen, Junior Research and Policy Analyst
- Lori Ludwig, Manager of Community & Neighbourhood Services
- Kristy Smith, Neighbourhood Coordinator

The steering committee includes:

- City of Waterloo Staff
  - Project Staff Team
  - Arts and Culture Unit Representative
  - Municipal Enforcement Division Representative
  - Environment and Parks Division Representative
- Key Organization Stakeholders
  - Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation
  - Post-secondary Education Sector
  - United Way KW & Area
  - Volunteer Action Centre
  - Waterloo Public Library
  - Waterloo Region District School Board
  - Waterloo Region Police Services
- Resident Representatives
  - Neighbourhood and Homes Association Representatives (2-3)
  - Safe and Healthy Advisory Committee Representative (1)
  - Resident not involved in Neighbourhood Associations (1-2)

Specific individuals for the steering committee to be confirmed over the summer.

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## Appendix C – Proposed Deliverables

Throughout the development of the strategy, it is anticipated that the following deliverables will be prepared:

- **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis:** Through work with the resident panel, City staff, the steering committee and through broad public engagement the SWOT analysis will identify themes and areas of focus for consideration when developing the strategy.
- **Current Context Report:** This report will provide an overview of existing City policies, by-laws, procedures, programs, strategies, plans and initiatives influencing neighbourhoods. It will also identify the key external factors influencing neighbourhoods – including the history of the city, demographic change, intensification, immigration, education, and environmental changes, and will provide high level information about the services and supports offered to neighbourhoods by other community organizations. This report will help those involved in the strategy to understand what is already happening, what works well, what some challenges are, and where there are gaps between where we are now and where we want to go in the future.
- **Promising Practice Research:** Building on the findings from the SWOT analysis, research will be conducted into promising practices for how the City can support and facilitate community members' ability to achieve their own goals for their neighbourhoods. While a focus will be placed on what other Canadian municipalities are doing, consideration will also be given to international successes and to approaches take by community organizations.
- **Municipal Comparison:** A comparison of the investments in neighbourhoods by other municipalities comparable to Waterloo will be conducted. This comparison would include examining staff resources, support for neighbourhood associations, and grant funding in other municipalities. While the strategy aims to build on existing social capital to lead neighbourhood change, in many cases, to achieve community development, support from municipalities is critical. This research would promote discussion and help shape strategy recommendations.
- **Public Engagement Report:** Any public input received that is not included in one of the above deliverables, such as the SWOT analysis, will be summarized in a separate report so that the community and council can access the ideas and information shared by the community as part of this project.
- **Criteria for Defining Neighbourhoods:** Project staff will work with the resident panel and broader community to identify key elements and criteria for defining neighbourhoods in Waterloo (elements could include population, school, park, etc.). This will respect the existing neighbourhood boundaries where neighbourhood and homes associations are in place. This is intended provide a starting point to help community members and staff grow the network of

neighbourhood associations and to support a greater sense of neighbourhood belonging.

All these deliverables will contribute to the development of the final strategic report. This report will outline the vision, guiding principles, goals and recommendations to strengthen Waterloo neighbourhoods.

In addition to these key deliverables, the project team will seek out opportunities to respond to issues and needs identified by the community that can be readily addressed. These “quick wins” will help demonstrate the City’s ongoing commitment to neighbourhoods and start to build momentum for the changes to come from the implementation of the strategy once completed.

## Appendix D – Additional Research

### Why Neighbourhoods?

Current literature in the field of neighbourhood development echoes what many Waterloo community members have known for decades: strong, connected, and vibrant neighbourhoods are beneficial to individuals and to the community as a whole. A strong relationship between neighbours “makes us more resilient, and it makes us healthier... it improves our economic opportunities...and, as studies show, even makes us happier” (Born, 2014, p. 5).

Neighbourhoods are the foundation of a strong community. What would stronger, more connected, and vibrant neighbourhoods look like? Vibrant neighbourhoods bring together those who live in the area to meet and have fun, where everyone feels included. Strong neighbourhoods have community members who rely on each other and are eager to lend a helping hand. They are places where neighbours feel welcome, where they belong and where they have pride in the place they live; they are safe and healthy spaces.

Community development in neighbourhoods is successful when it is resident led – when ideas originate within the neighbourhood, reflect the unique assets, needs and interests of the neighbourhood, and are planned and implemented by neighbourhood community members. It is through harnessing social capital, defined as “the features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putman, 2000, as quoted by Meager, 2008, p. 19), that community members can achieve local goals. Community members will be less willing to mobilize their resources for neighbourhood projects that originate from outside the neighbourhood, such as from the City or other agencies.

So what role can the City play to support neighbourhood-based initiatives? Jim Diers, a former municipal leader in Seattle and well known expert in the field of neighbourhood development, notes that “the community has power where city government does not. [...] Cities work best when local government and the community are working as partners” (Diers, 2004, p. 20). Local government’s most effective role in this partnership is empowerment, “giving citizens the tools and resources they need to address their own priorities through their own organizations” (Diers, 2004, p. 21). With the right supports from the City, community members can successfully collaborate to achieve local goals.

### Benefits of Developing a Neighbourhood Strategy

Recognizing the value of vibrant neighbourhoods, many municipalities have recently developed neighbourhood strategies, including the Town of Ajax, the City of Hamilton and the City of London; the City of Kitchener is well underway on their own neighbourhood strategy. Based on emerging themes related to strengthening neighbourhoods, these and other cities have noted a number of benefits to the process of developing a neighbourhood strategy, including:

- **Relationship Building:** The project will focus on discussion with the community, including neighbourhood associations, homes associations, and community members generally. By bringing community members together for discussion it is hoped that an even stronger positive relationship will be built with the City and between neighbours that will help support the implementation of the strategy over the long term.
- **Increased Awareness of Neighbourhood Opportunities:** The development of the strategy will involve significant community engagement and information sharing. As part of this process, staff will seek to connect with community members who are not already involved in neighbourhood events and programs, thereby increasing awareness of opportunities.
- **Engaged Neighbours:** Community members who participate in the strategy will learn more about the assets (e.g., social capital, places and spaces) within their own neighbourhood, the resources available to support community building efforts, and the importance of neighbourhoods to a strong community. Community members could be inspired to take a more active role in strengthening their own neighbourhood.
- **Align City and Community Efforts:** In addition to the City, many community members, groups, organizations and institutions are also supporting initiatives within Waterloo neighbourhoods. When developing the strategy, shared priorities can be identified, as well as opportunities to support each other's efforts.

## References

Born, P. (2014). *Deepening Community: Finding joy in chaotic times*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco, CA

Diers, J. (2004). *Neighbourhood Power: Building community the Seattle way*. University of Washington Press: Seattle, WA.

Meager, S. (2008). *A neighbourhood vitality index: An approach to measuring neighbourhood well-being*. Toronto, ON: United Way Toronto.