

## NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE (NII)

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative (NII) was developed from two pilot projects: Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) PFC2012-42 and Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods (ISN) PFC2012-0786. By applying lessons from these two initiatives and building on their successes, NII will launch a transformation of how The City of Calgary works in neighbourhoods.

The initiative will engage local residents, community associations, non-profit organizations and businesses to create a neighbourhood vision. Through this vision, The City will be able to respond in a coordinated effort, to resident-aligned, small-scale capital improvements, programs and services that will create a great place to live, work and play. NII will transform how The City works at the neighbourhood level and is aligned with the current community development work of Community & Neighbourhood Services (CNS) in building the capacity of our neighbourhoods. This report provides a summary of the proposed outcomes, implementation plan and budgetary requirements of the implementation of NII.

### ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommends that Council direct Administration to:

1. Implement the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative program, as detailed in this report, upon approval, as part of *Action Plan 2015-2018*, of a budget to support the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative Implementation Plan; and
2. Report to Council through the SPC on Community and Protective Services with an update on the implementation of the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative, by 2017 June.

### PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2012 May 07 Council adopted PFC2012-42 Application to The City of Calgary Council Innovation Fund, SPUR (Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment), as amended:

1. \$30,000 for engagement and public consultation to develop and verify priorities, and \$202,000 be approved for capital improvements subject to outcome of public engagement and in cooperation with City departments;
2. The capital improvement budget to come to the Priorities and Finance Committee for approval no later than 2012 December;
3. Community volunteer hours be included throughout the project, on an opportunity basis, and that identifying those community participation opportunities form part of the reporting back of the project; and
4. Direct Administration to quantify staff hours required and bring that number forward along with the capital improvement budget as requested in Recommendation 1.

On 2012 November 19 Council adopted report PFC2012-0786 Soul of Your Community – Community Services and Protective Services Citizen Service Transformation Initiative and directed Administration to prepare a final report to Council through the 2013 September 3 Regular Meeting of the Priorities and Finance Committee.

On 2013 January 14 Council approved PFC2012-0826 Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) Capital Improvement Budget Report – Deferral Request.

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On 2013 March 12 Council approved PFC2012-0826 Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) Capital Improvement Budget.

On 2013 September 3 Council adopted report PFC2013-0576 Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods and approved the continued use of the remaining Innovation Fund grant in the amount of \$128,186 into 2014 to complete community projects in the original 12 pilot communities, as well as other communities deemed a priority, and report back to the Priorities and Finance Committee, on the use of the funds, no later than 2014 September.

On 2013 December 10 Priorities and Finance Committee directed Administration to explore lessons from SPUR and Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods to further develop and implement the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative for 2014, and report back to Council through the Priorities and Finance Committee no later than 2014 September.

### **BACKGROUND**

Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) and Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods (ISN) were both community-strengthening projects that provided foundations and lessons for the development of the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative (NII).

SPUR, a Council Innovation Fund (CIF) project, was a pilot in the community of Kingsland. The goal was to bring The City and the community together to identify public spaces that needed to be improved and work together to make those areas better. This pilot is now complete, with 19 projects delivered in Kingsland through collaborative work with the community association, residents, Local Area Planning & Implementation, CNS, Parks, Recreation, Roads and Transportation Solutions. This included park and playground upgrades, pathway improvements, road closure beautification and public art installations.

ISN, also received funding from CIF. This project was developed to ensure City services were well aligned with community needs and expectations, by promoting a more citizen-centric culture. The project was implemented in two phases:

1. Community Engagement & Research Review: which determined the key programs and services (priorities) citizens value most, in the selected communities, that create a desired place to live; and
2. Citizen Service Transformation: which simplified access and delivery of services to citizens, with the resources of the Community Services & Protective Services (CS&PS) department, to deliver on those key priorities identified through the engagement and research.

Through the two phases of ISN, CS&PS focused first on enhancing the understanding of what makes a community a great place to live through the eyes of citizens, and then on transforming service delivery to align with citizen needs. ISN resulted in 55 projects being completed across 24 communities. These included public art installations, urban forestry, community special events and park upgrades that contributed to fostering an increased sense of community belonging and pride, while allowing Administration to coordinate resources and respond to citizen input. A full list of the communities, with projects completed to-date and funds used, as

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well as those planned through the end of 2014, is included in the Attachment. This will complete the ISN project.

Both of these programs improved how The City responds to neighbourhood needs by aligning our work with resident priorities. With the conclusion of these two pilots, it was evident that a new neighbourhood program, building upon SPUR and ISN, would be impactful at a neighbourhood level. There were several key lessons that Administration could apply to a new program, that would continue work to transform government. These include:

- Broader and more thorough engagement is required to truly get a sense of neighbourhood issues;
- Development of a community vision would guide the identification and prioritization of community improvement initiatives;
- A range of stakeholders from the neighbourhood, including businesses and service agencies should be involved; and
- Effective and efficient delivery of City services are required to act upon neighbourhood improvement projects.

The lessons of SPUR and ISN have illustrated building a common vision and addressing the short-term needs of the residents, serves to build the foundation for the long-term vitality and capacity of neighbourhoods.

A third initiative, the Strong Neighbourhoods Initiative (SNI), is in the fifth year of a 10-year program with a long-term focus on poverty reduction at the neighbourhood level, through deep community involvement. Research identifies four elements to a vibrant community: social cohesion; healthy natural and built environments; appropriate programs and services; and community economic development. Through the SNI, CNS addresses these four elements using a community development approach, which supports and mobilizes community residents to address neighbourhood concerns where higher concentrations of poverty and vulnerable populations exist.

The community visions created through NII will provide direction and focus to The City allowing for a corporate-wide strategic approach to supporting the delivery of community services, with a focus on short-term projects. This short-term and service-focused approach of NII complements the longer-term, resident-led focus of SNI. NII will work in some of the same neighbourhoods as SNI and will enhance and expedite projects related to the built and natural environments and appropriate programs and services. SNI will continue to support all four elements of a vibrant community in targeted neighbourhoods.

## **INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS**

CNS supports 150 community associations that vary broadly in terms of capacity and sustainability. CNS support ranges from working directly with community associations, to focusing on neighbourhood well-being by working with residents and other stakeholders. While *Action Plan 2015-2018* will include CNS' intent to support revitalizing the role and ability of community associations, and use of community facilities, this report is focused on the development of a specific initiative for neighbourhood well-being. The NII will take into account lessons from SPUR and ISN, and complement the work of the SNI.

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Currently, 25 Community Recreation Coordinators (CRCs) work with community associations to engage residents and develop guiding documents. This work helps to enhance the relevance of community associations to their residents. In 2012 February, Council approved the new lease agreements, under which these organizations are now required to develop business plans. CRCs assist with this work through engagement, support, and facilitation of the plans.

Few communities have the funds or resources to conduct broad engagement to develop these business plans. Communities' information is often limited to that gathered through special events, open houses or small surveys. In many cases, services are delivered without the benefit of full community engagement, and visions are often limited to the capacity of the community association rather than the broader neighbourhood. With City support, NII communities will be able to fully engage their residents, beyond community associations, using the new engage! Framework and Tools to build a neighbourhood vision and identify the gaps in program and service delivery. This will allow community associations to develop new partnerships with other community stakeholders, to provide responsive programs and services, and ultimately increase their relevance to citizens and improve their sustainability.

The ideal state will be that all Community Associations are relevant to their residents as a result of engagement and provision of programs and services. NII will support this outcome by initiating engagement in select communities, building visions with the neighbourhood, and coordinating both City and community partner resources to support those visions. This will result in a strengthened and more vibrant neighbourhood and better delivery of City services in the community.

The value of NII is a regionalized approach to transforming government and neighbourhoods, through:

1. Coordinated and efficient access for select communities to City services, through CNS and Neighbourhood Action Teams, which are comprised of front-line staff from relevant business units across The Corporation;
2. Use of engage! Framework and Tools to target all populations in each community;
3. Building community charters that allow citizens to be involved in shaping their vision and priorities for their own neighbourhood;
4. Building or enhancing built and natural environments by providing residents an opportunity to have input on infrastructure requests, such as bus shelters, sidewalks, and pathway connectors;
5. Identifying and developing community gathering places for residents to meet one another and form relationships;
6. Delivering appropriate programs and services by identifying barriers to participation and offering new or alternate programs and services that respond to resident need; and
7. Providing the opportunity to define a cohesive neighbourhood direction, which will inform the CA's business plan (as per their License of Occupation/Lease requirement) as well as Local Area Planning & Implementation (LPI) as community plans evolve and other corporate initiatives.

As each NII process occurs over two years, the four year budget cycle allows NII to work in 28 neighbourhoods: 14 neighbourhoods beginning in 2015 and another 14 beginning in 2017. In

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2015 and 2017, neighbourhoods (one per ward) will be selected based on criteria set by the NII Steering Committee and supported by the ward Councillor. Although each neighbourhood's implementation plan will be distinct, the high-level implementation plan will be:

2015:

- Engagement of 14 neighbourhoods and a vision developed with community leaders for each. In some cases the engagement may not take as long, this would move implementation ahead.

2016:

- Implementation of programs and services and small-scale infrastructure that aligns with community vision. Some projects may span into 2017.

2017– 2018:

- The same process will occur in 14 new neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods may also include a cluster of smaller communities with similar needs and demographics.

The four phases of this initiative, which will apply to each of the 14 neighbourhoods, include:

1. Consultation and Engagement  
Thorough consultation and engagement with neighbourhood stakeholders is important to the success of the NII program. A year of engagement, with all segments of a population within a neighbourhood, will be developed and implemented with the support of engage! and the new engage! Framework and Tools. Social service organizations (e.g. Boys and Girls Clubs), other program providers, faith groups and business owners will also have a voice as to how they contribute to the community and its residents.
2. Neighbourhood Vision  
After full engagement in each neighbourhood, The City will support residents to develop a vision. Each vision will be distinct, based on the unique capacity and demographics of the neighbourhood.
3. Participatory Prioritization and Budgeting  
Through engagement and the visioning sessions, each neighbourhood will be able to identify and prioritize small-scale infrastructure, programs and services that The City and other community partners may provide, in order to achieve their vision.
4. Implementation and Evaluation  
City projects and programs that are in-scope of NII, as defined in the NII charter, will be delivered in all 14 neighbourhoods seamlessly, using a Neighbourhood Action Team model. Over time, ongoing evaluation by all business units involved in NII will determine additional ways to efficiently and effectively deliver services for residents. As well, each Neighbourhood Action Team will seek other stakeholders in the community to partner on the delivery of the community vision. These partners may include local faith groups, service clubs, other community partners such as the Calgary Arts Development Authority, and local businesses. If items are identified in the charter that cannot be implemented within the scope of NII, such as area planning and larger infrastructure, they will be brought to the appropriate business unit for action.

After the four phases are complete, over two years, CRCs will continue to work in each neighbourhood with residents and stakeholders to sustain and further build upon the community vitality and vision.

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### Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The executive sponsors of NII are CNS, Parks and LPI. The development of the NII charter was led by CNS in collaboration with Customer Service & Communications (CSC), Animal & Bylaw Services (ABS), Recreation, Roads, Transit, Parks, LPI, and Fire. Each of these business units include staff positions that respond to community and resident needs, and in many cases also use a regional approach which will support NII. Through the implementation phase, additional City business units and external partners will be engaged, as required by community need.

### Strategic Alignment

NII aligns with the following priorities and guiding documents:

1. Council Priority, CP2, *'A City of Inspiring Neighbourhoods – Every Calgarian lives in a safe, mixed and just neighbourhood, and has the opportunity to participate in civic life'* and the related Community Services & Protective Services strategies, N4, *'Revitalize the role and ability of community associations, and use of community facilities'* and N5, *'Systematically investing in established neighbourhoods as they evolve to accommodate changing community needs'*;
2. Municipal Development Plan section 2.3.7 *"Foster community dialogue and participation in community planning"*;
3. Transforming Government initiative – goals of transparency, accountability, civic engagement, innovation, citizen orientation and sustainability;
4. The City's Cultural Transformation which recognizes that "community success is our success" and the value of a collective impact project such as NII; and
5. Imagine Calgary's direction and target: "By 2016 Calgary City Council establishes a participatory budgeting process."

### Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

#### Social

NII will make an impact as its engagement approach intentionally includes vulnerable populations and tipping-point neighbourhoods. It will create places for people to gather and connect to create vibrant and active neighbourhoods while also increasing neighbourhood safety.

#### Environmental

NII will create or enhance natural and built environments, inclusive of green space, pathways, parks and places to play and recreate.

#### Economic

NII will optimize the use of City resources through collaborative engagement, planning and implementation.

### Financial Capacity

#### Current and Future Operating Budget:

The program will require operating budget to allow for engagement, program supplies and staff to support the implementation. These requests will be brought forward in the 2015-2018 *Action Plan* by each business unit. All other costs will be absorbed within existing operating budgets.

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### Current and Future Capital Budget:

NII project estimates include a capital budget of \$600,000 in years 2016 and 2018 to allow for small-scale infrastructure improvements. Funding for this is to be confirmed in 2014 November through *Action Plan*.

### Risk Assessment

There is no significant risk from this program. Risks of not implementing this program include inability of neighbourhoods to adequately engage their residents and delivering City services in neighbourhoods that may not be the highest priority of residents.

As The City transforms to this way of working, there may be difficulty in managing community expectations and meeting the project funding requirements. *Action Plan* 2015-2018 will allow Council to set this new direction and ensure funding is allocated to NII in the next business cycle either by shifting priorities or allocating new funding.

### REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

Research has demonstrated that vibrant neighbourhoods where people want to live, work and play result from citizens being involved in shaping their community. When neighbourhoods thrive, the people who live in them also thrive. The lessons of SPUR and ISN have illustrated that by building a common vision and addressing the short-term needs of the residents, a foundation will be built for the long term vitality and capacity of neighbourhoods. NII will serve to launch a corporate-wide citizen-focused way of delivering services to Calgarians.

### ATTACHMENT

Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods Projects and Budget Reconciliation