

NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE (NII)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Round 1 of This Is My Neighbourhood, formerly known as the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative (NII), is complete and has been implemented in 14 inaugural neighbourhoods. This initiative has engaged more than 11,000 local residents (Attachment 1) in order to better understand neighbourhood gaps and resident priorities for programs and services, and also to share the priorities of The City at a neighbourhood level. Through engagement, 14 individual neighbourhood visions were created. In response to the visions, neighbourhood organizations worked in partnership with residents and The City to address the identified gaps and priorities. The City responded in a coordinated effort to deliver 120 initiatives including the delivery of programs, services and small-scale infrastructure projects which have created new and efficient processes for the future. This Is My Neighbourhood also resulted in 34 resident-led initiatives including community gardens, Little Free Libraries, community association (CA) communications plans and special events which are complete or nearly complete (Attachment 2).

Through This Is My Neighbourhood, City resources were optimized through collaborations to effectively deliver services. A total of 14 business units (BUs) have participated in Round 1 of This Is My Neighbourhood and the initiative is expanding to include other BUs for Round 2. Moving forward, the This Is My Neighbourhood model will be used in other projects and in day-to-day work when working with Calgary residents and stakeholders.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the Standing Policy Committee (SPC) on Community and Protective Services recommend that Council receive this report for information.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION/POLICY

On 2014 September 30, Council adopted PFC2014-0523 Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative and directed Administration to report back to Council through the SPC on Community and Protective Services with an update on the implementation of the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative, by 2017 June.

BACKGROUND

The Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative (NII) was renamed This Is My Neighbourhood and is a community-level approach to transforming government and neighbourhoods through:

- Coordinated, efficient and seamless service delivery to communities through Neighbourhood Action Teams, comprised of front-line staff from relevant BUs across The Corporation;
- Use of the Engage Resource Unit's framework and tools to target the diverse populations in each community;
- Building community visions, which allow citizens to be involved in shaping their priorities for their own neighbourhood;
- Building or enhancing natural environments by providing residents an opportunity to have input on infrastructure requests such as sidewalks, pathway connectors, and improved fitness amenities;

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- Identifying and developing community gathering places for residents to meet one another and form relationships;
- Delivering appropriate programs and services by identifying barriers to participation and offering new or alternate programs and services that respond to resident need; and
- Providing the opportunity to define a cohesive neighbourhood direction.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

1. Summary of Round 1- Engagement and Vision Phase

This Is My Neighbourhood Round 1 is complete in 14 inaugural neighbourhoods. The first phase included broad engagement of residents. More than 11,000 residents of varying ages, demographics and backgrounds were engaged in over 100 events with an average of nine events per neighbourhood. Other key community stakeholders were also engaged through this process including CAs, faith groups, residents associations, local schools and local businesses. Not all neighbourhoods experienced the same level of stakeholder engagement, due to limited time to reach all stakeholders. We are working to improve this targeted approach for Round 2 of This Is My Neighbourhood.

Through this engagement, participating BUs heard what residents valued and areas they wished to improve in their neighbourhoods. There was also an opportunity through these engagement sessions to educate residents on municipal programs, services and initiatives.

Three main questions were asked at all engagement sessions:

- What do you like about your neighbourhood?
- What could be done to make your neighbourhood even better?
- What does your neighbourhood look like in 20 years?

The neighbourhood engagement led to the creation of a neighbourhood vision. All visions turned out to have common themes including walkability, safety, engaged, connected, opportunities for play and fun, diversity, inclusiveness, friendly and active. Once visions were created, participating BUs worked with residents and neighbourhood stakeholders to develop a list of potential initiatives that would bring these visions to life. The initiatives selected were based on the unique visions and demographics of each neighbourhood as well as current services and programs provided by The City and identified shortfalls in capital standards. City resources were delivered based on neighbourhood need, and therefore were not “equal” in every community.

2. Summary of Round 1- Prioritization and Implementation Phase

Participating BUs provided cost estimates on each initiative, which allowed residents to make informed choices during the prioritization phase. Resident prioritization was completed through both community events and online, and feedback was provided from residents, neighbourhood stakeholders and CAs.

The implementation of initiatives occurred through a coordinated and collaborative approach in order to deliver on cost efficiencies and to deliver the right service in the right location and at the right time. Implementation is complete or is nearly complete for 120 City-led initiatives and 34

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resident-led initiatives. Resident-led initiatives have allowed citizens to get involved with planning and to take action in shaping their neighbourhood's future, which helps to build community capacity as well as social cohesion. Initiatives include community gardens, Little Free Libraries, community cleanups and many special events.

One unique initiative which was prioritized by several neighbourhoods was to create CA communications and engagement plans. A communications consulting firm is currently working with North Glenmore Park Community Association, Calgary Marlborough Community Association and Taradale Community Association to create these plans. Many CAs are keen to engage and communicate with residents; however, expertise is needed to support the CAs, as they do not have the skill set to develop communication and engagement plans, which are essential to connecting with and being relevant in their community. These plans identify specific communications, marketing needs and challenges of the CAs and provide relevant tools and information for the CA to implement the recommendations.

Other CA's outside of the Round 1 neighbourhoods involved in This Is My Neighbourhood have expressed interest in communications and engagement plans, and would benefit from these plans. Calgary Neighbourhoods (CN) is further investigating how to best address this need after the completion of This Is My Neighbourhood. There may be opportunities for The City to support CAs with this endeavour. Having access to professional marketing and communications would be a contributing factor in sustaining CAs to be relevant and responsive to their residents, which is a key element in creating inspired neighbourhoods.

3. Evaluation of Round 1

Feedback on Round 1 of This Is My Neighbourhood was gathered from residents and stakeholders through mail-outs, online surveys, and interviews. Eighty-seven per cent of resident survey participants reported they thought the selected initiatives reflected their neighbourhood vision while 86 per cent stated their neighbourhood was better off because of these projects. This suggests that surveyed respondents found the visioning process to be successful in that the vision was accurate, the projects that were selected to fulfill this vision were appropriate and the selected projects made the neighbourhood a better place.

CAs were also asked for feedback on Round 1. Overall, responses were positive. Participants reported that they felt better connected to The City as a result of This Is My Neighbourhood, that there is an increase in feeling of support from The City and This Is My Neighbourhood followed through on what was said would be done. There were also multiple comments stating that This Is My Neighbourhood brought community members together, helped raise the profile of the CA overall and supported the CA to access more programming for their community. Several CAs have seen an increase in volunteers and board members and have reported that This Is My Neighbourhood helped foster partnerships between the CA, The City and residents.

Within The Corporation, the cross-corporate connections have been another successful outcome of This Is My Neighbourhood. A total of 54 per cent of City staff involved with TIMN who responded to the survey indicated they had a better understanding of other City of Calgary BUs, in terms of their structure, and 62 per cent indicated they had a better understanding of other business unit initiatives.

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The evaluation findings from Round 1 are encouraging from both an internal and external perspective. Data collection methods are being improved for Round 2 in order to better measure the impact of the program and ultimately increase success in delivering valued programs and services to Calgarians at the neighbourhood level.

4. Improvements Made for Round 2

The This Is My Neighbourhood Management Committee, Steering Committee and Neighbourhood Action Teams (NAT) have all had several learnings from Round 1 and have made some notable changes to Round 2 to reflect this.

Engagement for Round 2 began in 2017 April with a focus to increase engagement with hard-to-reach residents, local businesses and neighbourhood stakeholders. This is being achieved through improved identification of neighbourhood stakeholders prior to engagement.

The NAT members have been thorough in providing information on 311 statistics, business unit plans in the neighbourhood and identifying opportunities. With this information, internal asset maps have been created to include City assets, programs, current and planned services and previously planned spending in each neighbourhood. External stakeholder data including neighbourhood themes, issues, existing neighbourhood concerns and possible improvements have also been added to the asset maps. The final asset maps were used to inform the engagement plans and will also be a valuable resource in identifying potential improvements and initiatives in each neighbourhood.

Engagement plans have been created and are unique to each neighbourhood. In addition to targeting large community events such as community cleanups, community Stampede events and Neighbour Day events, the engagement plans also identify unique ways to connect with the hard-to-reach populations and neighbourhood stakeholders including businesses, community-based agencies and other local organizations. Planned engagements include: pop-up events in local green spaces; presentations to condo boards; meetings with local businesses; targeting existing seniors and youth programs; adding mobile Adventure Play Days as a way to reach parents; working closely with Calgary Housing Company to reach their residents; and working with local schools. In addition to these unique engagements, four of the Round 2 neighbourhoods have a community social worker (CSW) which increases opportunities for community collaboration and aids in outreach efforts with vulnerable populations while leveraging existing CSW community connection networks.

Another area of focus for Round 2 is to increase the number of creative initiatives. A cross-corporate collaborative toolkit is being developed to assist with this. The toolkit will be an interactive electronic resource with the purpose to better inform residents of programs and services provided by The City. It will support residents in determining creative solutions and initiatives in order to accomplish their community visions. This will be an important visual resource to support conversations with residents. The long-term plan is to continue to grow the toolkit and have it available for staff across The Corporation to use when attending community events. This up-to-date electronic resource will help to improve customer service and provide City staff with information on a number of City services and initiatives outside of their own business unit which will contribute to "One City. One Voice."

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5. Summary of Operating and Capital Budget

A total of \$2.62M was approved for This Is My Neighbourhood operations. This includes \$250,000 one-time funds in 2015 and 2017 for community engagement purposes, \$280,000 to Calgary Recreation for the delivery of programs and \$40,000 to Calgary Fire Department to be used throughout the four year initiative. As well, funding for four FTE's was approved for Calgary Neighbourhoods at \$100,000 per year, Calgary Fire at \$150,000 per year, Calgary Parks at \$120,000 per year and Calgary Recreation at \$80,000 per year.

A budget of \$1.2M was allotted to the This Is My Neighbourhood project to fund small capital improvements over four years. The estimated cash flow targeted the bulk of the capital work to occur at the back end of each round. Approximately \$400,000 is projected to be spent in Round 1 of which \$222K has been spent to date. The balance of the capital allocation will be spent in Round 2.

6. The Future after This Is My Neighbourhood

Cross-corporate connections and increased understanding of other business unit initiatives, which are important outcomes of This Is My Neighbourhood, are continuing to expand through the Regional Manager Teams and Regional Subject Matter Expert (SME) teams. In each Community Services region, these teams have been meeting regularly to work in collaboration to efficiently address resident concerns and support the creation of inspiring neighbourhoods.

Another key component of creating an inspiring neighbourhood is a healthy and vibrant CA. CN is working with CAs to improve support in the areas of sustainability and relevance. An in-depth review and engagement with CAs is being implemented to identify areas where tools, resources and processes can be improved, redesigned or added to better support CAs and other organized community groups to be healthy and sustainable. The next phase will be working with community organizations and both internal and external expertise to develop and maintain required resources including tools, workshops and opportunities for networking.

As well, Calgary Community Standards (CCS) is completing a review of the level of support provided by The City to CAs for grant applications and to maintain community infrastructure on City-owned land. CCS has been providing enhanced support to CAs in order to address capital needs in facilities since 2016 Q3. CCS is currently working with an external consultant on an asset management strategy and implementation plan for the entire portfolio of CA assets, to be finalized within the next several months. The intent of implementing the asset management strategy is to provide additional tools and support to organizations, as required, so they can better operate and continue to maintain their community infrastructure. These tools and additional supports for maintaining infrastructure will increase the capacity of CA volunteers to focus on the delivery of programs and services and creating inspiring neighbourhoods.

Stakeholder engagement, research and communication

Resident communication and engagement are critical components of This Is My Neighbourhood. More than 11,000 residents were engaged through over 100 events in Round 1.

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Strategic Alignment

This Is My Neighbourhood aligns with the following priorities and guiding documents:

- 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;’”
- Community Services strategy, N4: “revitalize the role and ability of CAs, and use of community facilities;”
- Community Services strategy N4.4: “investigate new approaches on how The City can support CAs in their engagement of residents to increase their relevance by delivering applicable programs and services;”
- Community Services strategy N5: “systematically investing in established neighbourhoods as they evolve to accommodate changing community needs;”
- Community Services strategy N5.2: “implement the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative in 28 communities to have effective City service delivery that aligns with neighbourhood visions;”
- Municipal Development Plan section 2.3.7: “foster community dialogue and participation in community planning;”
- Innovation Calgary goals of transparency, accountability, civic engagement, innovation, citizen orientation and sustainability;
- The City’s Cultural Transformation which recognizes that “community success is our success” and the value of a collective impact project such as This Is My Neighbourhood; and
- Imagine Calgary’s direction and target: “by 2016 Calgary City Council establishes a participatory budgeting process.”

Social, environmental and economic impacts (external)

Social

This Is My Neighbourhood has made an impact on all 14 neighbourhoods as the majority of the initiatives have created opportunities or enhanced places for people to gather and connect. Increasing opportunities to connect is a key component to growing social cohesion, which supports the creation of vibrant, safe and active neighbourhoods.

A priority focus area in the engagement of the next 14 neighbourhoods is to better connect with hard-to-reach populations, local businesses and neighbourhood stakeholders.

Environmental

This Is My Neighbourhood has enhanced natural and built environments, including green spaces, pathways, parks and places to play and recreate.

Economic

This Is My Neighbourhood has optimized the use of City resources through collaborative engagement, planning and implementation of initiatives.

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Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The This Is My Neighbourhood initiative is funded by the Action Plan approved operating budgets in each of the Community Services' business units participating in the program.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

Capital projects approved in the The This Is My Neighbourhood communities are funded by the \$1.2M capital budget approved in Action Plan.

Risk Assessment

This Is My Neighbourhood has played a vital role in furthering The Corporate culture of One City. One Voice. Using this program as a prototype, cross Corporate teams have formed to collaborate and create efficiencies in delivery of services at the neighbourhood level as well as promoting cross Corporate solutions to resident concerns. Should this program cease to exist, the success in moving our desired culture into action will be reduced.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The implementation of the This Is My Neighbourhood program is on schedule, with Round 2 underway.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Summary of Engagement
2. Summary of Initiatives