

Transportation Report to
Priorities and Finance Committee
2019 June 04

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
PFC2019-0230

ActivateYYC Community Microgrants: Findings

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the ActivateYYC Community Microgrant program, which awarded small grants to community leaders to encourage walking, playing and being neighbourly between 2017 and 2019. This program was funded through the Council Innovation Fund and directly impacted over 13,600 residents in 14 wards. The results also helped Administration identify process barriers to citizen-led enhancements and activations and guide improvement areas.

The microgrants opportunity fulfilled many goals associated with achieving Calgary's pedestrian strategy. First, it created partnership opportunities aligning Administration's efforts with our civic counterparts, including the Federation of Calgary Communities, Sustainable Calgary, the University of Calgary and Alberta Health Services. The program saw 242 applications, 103 funded ideas and 75 executed projects that contribute to walking, playing and being neighbourly. Additional grants, donations and volunteer efforts leveraged over 300% of Council's initial investment. Also, each of the funded ideas help Calgary become more resilient by correcting the urban environment or through social gatherings that strengthen networks. All 14 wards were represented in this two year microgrants program.

One of the ways Administration supported applicants was through a buddying approach with members of the Tactical Urbanism Tiger Team, a cross-corporate working group supported by the City's Innovation Lab. These relationships together with the microgrant feedback forms helped reveal barriers encountered by applicants. Administration has initiated several projects to make it simpler for future ideas including developing a risk assessment tool, offering a new paint the pavement process to residents, partnering on a placemaking lending library and initiating a cross-corporate one-portal in approach for activation and placemaking projects.

Given the success of the ActivateYYC program, a new version is being launched with a focus on engineered walkways and other pedestrian connectors. The program builds on past learnings by matching graduate design students with communities that need design support. The budget for this upcoming round is smaller than the initial ActivateYYC program, drawing \$30,000 from existing budgets to support communities in developing and realizing improvements in these small pedestrian connections within their neighbourhoods.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommends that Council:

1. Direct Administration to follow the recommendations from the three findings summaries attached to this report.
2. Direct Administration to continue to support citizen-led enhancement and activation projects through microgrants and other supports within existing budgets and resources, both internally and aligned with partner organizations offering support and grant funding.
3. Thank The Federation of Calgary Communities and all community applicants for their leadership and commitment to a more walkable and connected Calgary.

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PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2017 April 10, Council approved the Council Innovation Fund Application – Walk21 Community Microgrants in the amount of \$172,500 and Administration report back to the Priorities and Finance Committee no later than Q4 2019.

In 2016 July Council approved Calgary’s pedestrian strategy, Step Forward including Action 40: “Collaborate with partner organizations to identify and prepare business cases for at least three innovative pedestrian projects that can be considered for funding, including through Council’s Innovation Fund”.

BACKGROUND

In 2017 preparations were being made to host the Walk21 International Conference and to celebrate Canada’s 150th birthday. A microgrants program was proposed to leverage the profile of the Walk21 conference and align volunteer efforts in support of grassroots leaders on walking projects throughout Calgary. The influence of the Canada Day celebrations was to challenge the committee and Calgarians alike to develop 150 walking-related ideas.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The Council Innovation Fund submissions identified five evaluation metrics for the program. The results by the completion of the funding period (March 31, 2019) are shown in the following table.

| Measure | Target & Actual (by March 31, 2019) |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Projects completed & feedback provided | Target: 150 ideas Realized: 224 applications were submitted and 103 ideas were awarded funding |
| Number of community projects per Ward | Target: 8 Realized: 12 wards submitted eight or more ideas and saw funding for at least three. Five wards had eight or more ideas funded. |
| Number of people impacted | Target: 6,000 Realized: 13,600 |
| Surveyed residents feel safer walking in their communities | Target: Majority of respondents Realized: 85 per cent increased walking and 33 per cent increased walking a great deal |
| Simpler process to support community-led initiatives | Target: Lessons learned report with recommendations in Q4 2019 Realized: Lessons learned report with recommendations in Q2 2019 |

ActivateYYC Community Microgrants: Findings

Three program evaluation reports are included as Attachments to this report: Federation of Calgary Communities (Attachment 1), ActivateYYC Judges (Attachment 2), and The City of Calgary (Attachment 3). The recommendations for Administration are to:

- explore ways for citizen identified priorities at the local level to inform capital investments or cost sharing.
- prioritize the development of tools and training on risk for process owners and gatekeepers across the Corporation, including typical costs.
- actively survey community-minded behaviour that falls outside current bylaws and make adjustments that favour liveability.
- streamline its intake process and maintain relationships that further align grants and opportunities to make it simpler and more effective for ideas to succeed.
- identify a well-positioned resource to provide this service including for citizen-led initiatives beyond this specific program.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The ActivateYYC program was promoted by The Federation of Calgary Communities using conventional and social media, including 10,000 postcards, sidewalk chalk throughout Calgary, a media launch, and direct invitation letters to community organizations.

Applicants were supported in the development of their plans through six workshops, individual phone calls and in some complex cases by a 'buddy' member of Administration. The intake form provided a useful opportunity to describe the value and goals of their idea which in turn helped staff coach and support.

Following project execution, applicants were required to give feedback on their experience working with City staff before they were reimbursed. One question asked respondents to indicate whether they felt The City was a supporter, collaborator or obstacle and the results are: 74 per cent, 35 per cent, and 10 per cent respectively (applicants could select multiple answers).

Strategic Alignment

This project was designed to support the 2015 - 2018 Council Priorities but also aligns with Council's One Calgary priorities:

1. A city of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods:
 - a. Increasing the number of pedestrians on sidewalks, pathways and community spaces will lead to better driver attention to pedestrians and enhanced safety.
 - b. Small incentives have been effective to encourage communities to undertake a variety of inspiring projects.
 - c. More people walking serves as "eyes on the street", which, along with neighbour to neighbour interaction, is an effective crime-prevention tool.
2. A prosperous city:
 - a. Encouraging walking and vibrancy supports community businesses.
3. A healthy and green city:
 - a. Safer, calmed streets encourage more families and children to adopt active lifestyles through walking, biking, and outdoor play.

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Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

The program directly impacted 13,600 Calgarians directly who shared their time participating or volunteering time with neighbours. Active living and a sense of belonging through community walking initiatives support mental health, resiliency. The applications further support local business, including the many local artists who were employed in nearly a third of all projects. Further, applicants collectively matched each Innovation Fund dollar with other community funding.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The ActivateYYC microgrant program was funded by an allocation of \$172,500 from the Council Innovation Fund. Of that allocation, the program spent a total of \$105,070 and the remaining \$65,430 is being returned to the fund to support other innovation efforts.

The One Calgary 2019-2022 operating budget accommodates ongoing support of citizen-led enhancement and activation projects. Improved and simplified internal processes will allow existing resources to support communities more efficiently.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

Approval of the recommendations of this report have no direct impact on the current capital budget.

Risk Assessment

Endorsing and facilitating community-led initiatives on public land has few negative risks and many positive risks, including growing feelings of belong in communities.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The City of Calgary's pedestrian strategy depends on many actions by many partners to increase walking safety and comfort. Becoming a better partner to residents, businesses and volunteer groups who wish to contribute to their community is critical.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Attachment 1 – Findings Report – Federation of Calgary Communities
2. Attachment 2 – Findings Report – ActivateYYC Judges
3. Attachment 3 – Findings Report – City of Calgary