



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	November 9, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Neighbourhood Action Strategy Annual Update 2015 (CES15052) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Rikki Frith 905-546-2424 x7604 Colin McMullan 905-546-2424 x3538 Suzanne Brown 905-546-2424 x5598
SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community & Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS), with a specific focus on some preliminary evaluation findings from McMaster University, University of Toronto and the Social Planning and Research Council. The report also provides an update on how City Departments are working together with neighbourhoods on implementing actions from Neighbourhood Action Plans.

The 2015 Neighbourhood Action Strategy Annual Update is attached as Appendix A to Report CES15052.

Hamilton Neighbourhoods Study (HNS):

As reported to Council in the 2014 NAS Annual Update, from November 2013 to June 2014, researchers at McMaster University conducted baseline surveys with 1,896 residents in six of the eleven Neighbourhood Action Strategy neighbourhoods: Beasley, Keith, McQuesten, Rolston, Stinson and Stipley (part of Sherman).

Findings from the baseline surveys in the six neighbourhoods revealed that the majority of residents reported high levels of satisfaction with their neighbourhood. 54% of respondents stated their neighbourhood was either an excellent, very good or good place to raise a child, regardless of whether they had children of their own. Responses

to questions about citizen engagement and local businesses in the neighbourhood were generally positive. On the flip side, the majority of respondents did not agree that there are job opportunities in their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood concerns most frequently identified as “a serious problem” by participants were drug dealing or use, poor air quality and vandalism/graffiti or other deliberate damage to property.

The first two year evaluation follow up has been completed for 267 residents in Stinson and Stiple, with follow up currently underway with the other four neighbourhoods. Preliminary findings from these follow-up surveys indicate that while challenges still exist, residents did report an increase in neighbourhood and civic engagement, social cohesion, trust, community attachment and pride.

Neighbourhood Action Evaluation (NAE):

The University of Toronto and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton have been working collaboratively since 2013 to evaluate the process of developing and implementing the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Through a variety of different approaches, this component of the evaluation focuses on the implementation of the neighbourhood priorities - what's working, what isn't and what could be changed or improved in order to improve outcomes. Feedback has been received through one-time in-depth interviews with 67 participants (residents, services providers and City staff), participant observation at neighbourhood meetings, resident tracking of neighbourhood action plans and focus groups with neighbourhood residents.

Common themes to emerge from these NAE interviews include:

A Changing Culture of Community Engagement – The NAS has opened new channels of communication between residents and the City. Residents involved in the NAS (through the planning teams and their engagement with the Community Developers) have developed more confidence to tell the City what they need. The City's internal culture is changing to welcome new ideas and innovation and to embrace resident-led initiatives. This engagement has promoted the development of trust through enhanced relationships between residents, City staff and stakeholders.

Inclusion and Equity – Planning teams acknowledge the importance of inclusion by reaching out to neighbours to engage them and by making meetings and events welcome to all. There is still room for improvement and all stakeholders must work to acknowledge this, and develop a strategic approach to inclusion and equity.

Playing the Long Game – All agree that patience is important in this work, as neighbourhood development cannot occur overnight. Quick wins are important to keep the momentum going but to make big change, partnerships and relationships are key to assisting Planning Teams prepare for the longer-term, large-scale work..

City Action Plan Implementation:

A database was created by Public Health Services which tracks the progress of all the neighbourhood actions and related work across City departments.

In total, 452 individual actions are identified within the ten completed Neighbourhood Action Plans. City departments were asked to review and identify any actions that align with their departmental responsibilities. In total, City departments are able to support 85% of the actions (382 of the 452 actions). There are 70 actions (16%) that are not applicable to any City department (e.g. the City has no role/jurisdiction in supporting that action). Of the actions with an identified City response:

- **Active:** 61% of the actions (232 actions) are being actively responded to (i.e. underway by at least one City responder);
- **Complete:** 6% of the actions (23 actions) are reported as completed by all City responders; and,
- **Non-active:** 33% of the actions (127 actions) are either “on hold”, “not started”, “discontinued” or were left blank.

The Community and Emergency Services Department has the highest number of identified responses (285 actions) followed by Public Health Services (158 actions). Public Works and the Planning and Economic Development Department each identified responses to 93 actions. Appendix B to Report CES15052 outlines how each department responded.

The Neighbourhood Action Strategy has been involved in a variety of successful initiatives including

- The McQuesten Urban Farm;
- Neighbourhood Engagement Matching Grant Program (NEMGP);
- Building Momentum Hamilton; and,
- The Learning Annex initiative.

The City of Hamilton provides the organizational administration and coordination support to many components of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. These include neighbourhood action planning, action implementation, community development work, project development and management, policy support, grants funding, partnership initiatives and evaluation. The Neighbourhood Action Strategy section also oversees the \$2M earmarked to support neighbourhood development. To date, the City has expended or committed \$1.4M from this fund which has leveraged \$4.5M in direct investments from external sources – a nearly 4:1 return of City investment.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED:

Appendix A to Report CES15052: Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Strategy 2015 Annual Update: Measuring Success! (Printed copies distributed under separate cover).

Appendix B to Report CES15052: City of Hamilton Departmental Response to Neighbourhood Action Plans