



EMERGENCY & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT 17-012

4:00 pm

Monday, November 6, 2017

Council Chambers

Hamilton City Hall

71 Main Street West, Hamilton

Present: Councillors A. Johnson (Chair), J. Farr, M. Green,
S. Merulla (Vice Chair), T. Jackson, D. Skelly,
T. Whitehead and J. Partridge

Also in Attendance: Councillor C. Collins

THE EMERGENCY & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE PRESENTS REPORT 17-012 AND RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDS:

- 1. Neighbourhood Action Strategy Annual Update 2017 (CES15052(b) (Item 7.1))**
 - (a) That the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Annual Report, attached as Appendix A to Report 17-012 be received;
 - (b) That staff enter into a funding agreement with Hamilton Community Foundation for Community Development staff from January 1 to December 31, 2018, and funded as follows:
 - (i) \$81,250 funded from the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Capital fund (#20551255204); and,
 - (ii) \$65,000 funded from the Best Start Reserve (#112218);
 - (c) That the existing partnership agreement with the Hamilton Community Foundation for the provision of the Neighbourhood Leadership Institute be extended to December 31, 2018, in the amount of \$20,000 funded from the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Capital Fund (#2051255204): and,
 - (d) That the Neighbourhood Engagement Matching Grant Pilot Program extension to December 31, 2018 with additional funding in the amount of \$10,000 from the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Capital Fund (#2051255204), be approved.

FOR INFORMATION:

(a) CHANGES TO THE AGENDA (Item 1)

The Committee Clerk advised there were no changes to the agenda.

The Agenda for the November 2, 2017 meeting of the Emergency & Community Services Committee was approved, as presented.

(b) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)

None declared.

(c) APPROVAL OF MINUTES (Item 3)

(i) October 23, 2017 (Item 3.1)

The Minutes of the October 23, 2017 Emergency & Community Services Committee meeting were approved, as presented.

Councillor A. Johnson relinquished the Chair to Councillor Merulla.

(d) PRESENTATIONS (Item 7)

(i) Neighbourhood Action Strategy Annual Update 2017 (CES15052(b) (Item 7.1))

Vicki Woodcox, Acting General Manager of Community and Emergency Services introduced the presentation regarding the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Annual Update 2017. The Committee heard from resident representatives, Neighbourhood Action Evaluators, and the “Re-Imagining The Neighbourhood Action Strategy” Research Team, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

The Presentation respecting the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Annual Update 2017, was received.

A copy of the presentation is available through the office of the City Clerk, or online at www.hamilton.ca.

For further disposition of this item, refer to Item 1.

(e) ADJOURNMENT (Item 13)

There being no further business, the Emergency & Community Services Committee was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor A. Johnson
Chair, Emergency & Community
Services Committee

Councillor S. Merulla
Vice-Chair, Emergency &
Community Services Committee

Lisa Chamberlain
Legislative Coordinator
Office of the City Clerk



Hamilton



Hamilton

NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION STRATEGY

2017

ANNUAL
UPDATE

Looking Back, Moving Forward

Hamilton

NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION STRATEGY

Vision

Vibrant, healthy and inclusive neighbourhoods built on opportunity and trust by an engaged community.

Mission

Mobilize, encourage and support Hamilton residents and community partners to work together for positive neighbourhood change.

Principles/Values

Equity	Asset-Based
Integrity	Collaborative
Innovation	Inspiring & Fun



His Worship Mayor Fred Eisenberger and Hamilton City Council

In 2011, the City of Hamilton partnered with our community agencies to address the inequities across our neighbourhoods - and together we created the Neighbourhood Action Strategy.

Every day we see the results of that collaboration in our Neighbourhood Action Strategy neighbourhoods.

Hamilton is home to vibrant, welcoming and inclusive neighbourhoods. The residents who live in our Neighbourhood Action Strategy neighbourhoods are some of the most passionate, giving and spirited people in Hamilton.

The social determinants of health tell us that communities can thrive with supportive community development, resident-led neighbourhood action planning and strong relationships with the City and its' partners. I am very grateful that we have partner agencies, institutions and funders who understand that lasting change takes time, patience and support.

I'm proud to continue on this exciting journey, working towards healthy, resilient and strong neighbourhoods for all our residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fred Eisenberger". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mayor Fred Eisenberger, City of Hamilton



MESSAGE FROM NAS FUNDING PARTNERS

As we look back over the first six years of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, it is with gratitude that we thank the support of Hamilton City Council and the Senior Leadership Team, the Hamilton Community Foundation and the hundreds of residents that placed their trust in this initiative. Without this leap of faith, the NAS could not have achieved so many successes over these six short years. As you will see throughout this Annual Update, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is working! It is not without some challenges and set-backs, but overall the benefits are outweighing the adversities in the work. As Hamilton changes before our eyes, it is now more important than ever to be strongly connected to residents and partners in institutions and agencies to understand what is happening on the ground in our neighbourhoods as the city evolves.

In 2011, based on the success of the Hamilton Community Foundation's community development investment and a series of articles detailing the health inequities between Hamilton neighbourhoods, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy was born. As the primary funders, we acknowledge our Council and Board for their trust in this messy and unknown process. While we have begun to build confidence in relationships between residents, institutions, agencies, the Foundation and the City based on the principles of community engagement and asset based community development, every once in a while an issue arises that creates conflict between neighbours and the systems around them. As a collective, we acknowledge that the bumps in the road are part of the journey and we are committed to working through and resolving them as we go.

Our evaluation shows that neighbourhood satisfaction and pride is increasing, as are social connectedness and social capital. With the dedication of community developers, relationships are improving as community development becomes more embedded in the Strategy and Planning Teams. Trust within city-neighbour relations is slowly building with residents more engaged in, and demanding, more autonomy over the decisions that affect their lives. Partners are coming to the table and staying with us in this journey. The Province is investing in the work through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund. The \$2 million investment from City of Hamilton has leveraged almost \$7 million in resources for neighbourhoods.

While this is all great news, there are some issues and challenges that continue to evade resolution. Inclusion and diversity on planning teams, especially in executive positions, continues to be problematic. Training and education on anti-oppressive practice has been offered to many neighbourhoods, along with continued support of community developers in outreach and engagement, yet diversity at the Planning Teams is not representative of the neighbourhoods broadly.

An unintended but serious consequence of increasing neighbourhood satisfaction, pride, safety and cleanliness is gentrification. While the NAS initiative is but one small force in this community change, we can't bury our heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich and not acknowledge that with increases to neighbourhood health and safety comes the desire of others to live in that neighbourhood. Now, more than ever, it is up to all stakeholders, residents through to Council, to stay closely connected to what is happening to people and look for solutions to ensure residents living close to the margins are not displaced by their own commitment and hard work to make their neighbourhoods great places to live, work and play. The Neighbourhood Action Strategy is uniquely positioned to work with residents and institutions to mitigate the risk of displacement through gentrification.

NAS is now recognized as a legitimate means of engagement and understanding resident and neighbourhood assets and needs. Institutions from across Hamilton and the province continue to ask about the neighbourhood action plans and how they can help to implement the actions documented by residents. We're hearing from Hamilton Anchor Institutions Leadership group, the Local Health Integration Networks, Boards of Education, dozens of partners and new Community Hub work, all wanting to understand the resident experience. NAS expertise in this area is becoming a respected source of valid information in service and system planning.

A core principle of NAS is to address the Social Determinants of Health. This is work that will take a generation to be fully recognized. As funders, we are committed to staying the course with the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Forgive the sports analogy, but we are all playing the long game in recognizing that place-based change happens more quickly but people-based change make take a generation. And of the many reasons to continue to stay the course in this work, perhaps none is more important than the fact that increasing equity in neighbourhoods is about social justice. It is about doing what is right and doing it in a way that respects and values all members of the partnership.

The City of Hamilton and our anchor institutions have a bigger role to play in implementation of actions – as our engagement becomes more sophisticated and embedded as best practice, as citizens expect more from their governments, NAS is a proven method of engagement. Through (Re)Imagine we are pushing the envelope again by working together, funders and residents, to co-create a new structure for community development.

The City of Hamilton is a growing, vibrant, exciting place to be – let's make sure it stays that way for everyone who calls Hamilton home.



*Suzanne Brown, Director
Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives
City of Hamilton*



*Matt Goodman, Vice-President
Hamilton Community Foundation*



*Grace Mater, Director
Children & Home
Management Services
City of Hamilton*

FROM THE MANAGER'S DESK

The 2017 NAS Annual Report theme is that of a journey of learning from our experiences of the past to (Re)Imagining what is possible for the residents of the City of Hamilton. Many will speak of the large and small successes all of which hold equal importance to the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS). To me our greatest success has been the collaboration with residents to understand their dreams and then partnering with so many great organizations to support these dreams. Helen Keller's insight remains true – "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

I remain in awe by the volunteerism within Hamilton - the many hours residents put into making their communities better, and where a simple ask within a neighbourhood brings so many to the table. New initiatives and requests of community partners bring excitement and a willingness to jump in and assist wherever needed.

Through these partnerships, residents have built capacity to take on much more within their neighbourhoods. While special events are important for community engagement, it is the deeper social issues we are now seeing the residents targeting in their new actions. Serious social issues are being addressed such as poverty, bullying, inclusion, employment opportunities and affordable housing. These issues are not only within the NAS neighbourhoods but across the City as a whole.

I have learned through the residents, community partners and our team that community development is a very complex exercise. There are no magic wands that can solve social issues in one simple swipe. The promise of a new program, a one-time investment or a decision by City Council cannot guarantee change. Success is built on many small wins and the willingness of people to accept change, which is not always an easy endeavour.

I have had the opportunity to showcase to many interested parties the leading-edge community development work happening within the City. There is still much more work to be done - partnerships to be built and actions to be implemented – but we're well on our way. From recent discussions with our evaluators and given the significant change that has happened within the City over the past five years, the NAS approach of resident engaged and championed decision-making is now more important than ever.

I and the NAS team look forward to more opportunities to support the planning teams as they embark on new challenges, initiatives and opportunities within their neighbourhoods.

*Al Fletcher, Manager
Neighbourhood Action Strategy
City of Hamilton*



NAS Team Members

L-R: Patrick Fusaro, Adam Watson, Deb Clinton, Jocelyn Strutt, Al Fletcher, Bobbi Jo Beitz, Carmen Bian, Irene Heffernan, Mark Weingartner, Rikki Frith

Hamilton
NEIGHBOURHOOD
ACTION STRATEGY

SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL

The SPRC has managed the Community Developer team for NAS since 2014. Through this work we have provided support to the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, in partnership with the Hamilton Community Foundation, Best Start Network and the City of Hamilton. Community Developers engage neighbourhood residents and support efforts to craft and implement their projects and plans. This is done through the building of trusting relationships and providing support to activities that build community resiliency and encourage residents to act as change agents at a local level.

A key part of the work they do is to ensure that all voices are heard, conflict is dealt with respectfully and collaboration ensues. The SPRC CD team has also facilitated access to resources such as funding, learning opportunities and municipal supports for residents working on initiatives that encourage positive neighbourhood development. The Small Grant Program allows for residents to contribute directly with their own ideas, energy and resources to community building.

Key to this work has been the fostering of leadership development for neighbourhood residents through supporting the Neighbourhood Leadership Institute. CDs also actively contribute to building the capacity of planning teams by helping to brainstorm community development activities, problem-solving and participating in ongoing professional development for their own work. This past year the CDs have once again participated in the Leadership and Community Engagement Program with the McMaster Centre for Continuing Education.

As the Neighbourhood Action Strategy moves through the (Re)Imagining NAS process the SPRC continues to be committed to supporting community development as an evidence-based practice that can help move residents to take action for positive change in their neighbourhoods.



Community Developer Team Members

L-R: Laura Ryan, Sunil Angrish, Nazia Zeb, Renée Wetselaar, Matthew Thompson, Judy Kloosterman





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Our Vibrant NEIGHBOURHOODS



BEASLEY Neighbourhood

In 2017 the Beasley Neighbourhood Association (BNA) was pleased to conclude a major milestone. After 16 months of engaging with people who live, work and play in Beasley, in February the BNA announced the publication of its latest neighbourhood plan. With an eye to 2020, the new plan is organized along four objectives: Health & Well-being, Safety, Parks & Recreation and Diversity & Inclusion. Attainable actions are presented for each of 16 objectives to be pursued by the community, the City and our partners. In April, many of the leaders behind the redevelopment of the plan committed to implementing it and were selected to serve terms as the BNA's new Executive.

Among the many activities and events organized or supported by the BNA in 2017, we held our annual Winterfest and Beasley Fair at the newly renamed Bill Simone Hall. We worked with residents and students to further develop the Weather Station in Gallery Alley, and helped advocate for the residents of 181 John and 192 Hughson Street North as they faced economic displacement from the neighbourhood. We also participated in amazing neighbourhood activities like Neighbourhood Hoops and 100-in-1 Day, facilitated the implementation of City and NAS grants to improve Gallery Alley and help residents of 20 Jarvis Street. We honoured the many contributions of our VP for Life, Bill Simone, and the tireless work of our former Community Developer, Brandon Braithwaite.

Over the remainder of 2017 the BNA will be working to advance discussion of inclusionary zoning/ complete communities policies at the municipal level so that we can protect our neighbourhood as it continues to rapidly redevelop.





CROWN POINT Neighbourhood

In the last five years, the Crown Point Community Planning Team (CPCPT) has had a number of great successes in community building and leveraging our community assets. The gardens, parkettes and improvements along the Pipeline Trail have brought local and national recognition. We have strong action teams working on initiatives in our community including traffic calming, the garden club and the pipeline trail. We have supported resident-led initiatives including legal and holistic wellness workshops for women, community building in neighbourhood apartment buildings, DePaving asphalt along Kenilworth Ave, beautification efforts and the fantastic deLight festival that brightens the dark days of February. The Point, our neighbourhood volunteer-produced newspaper, has been a great outreach tool to the community, and we're entering our 5th year of printing! All of these efforts are made possible by the creativity, energy and dedication of a large group of engaged residents. No contribution is too small.

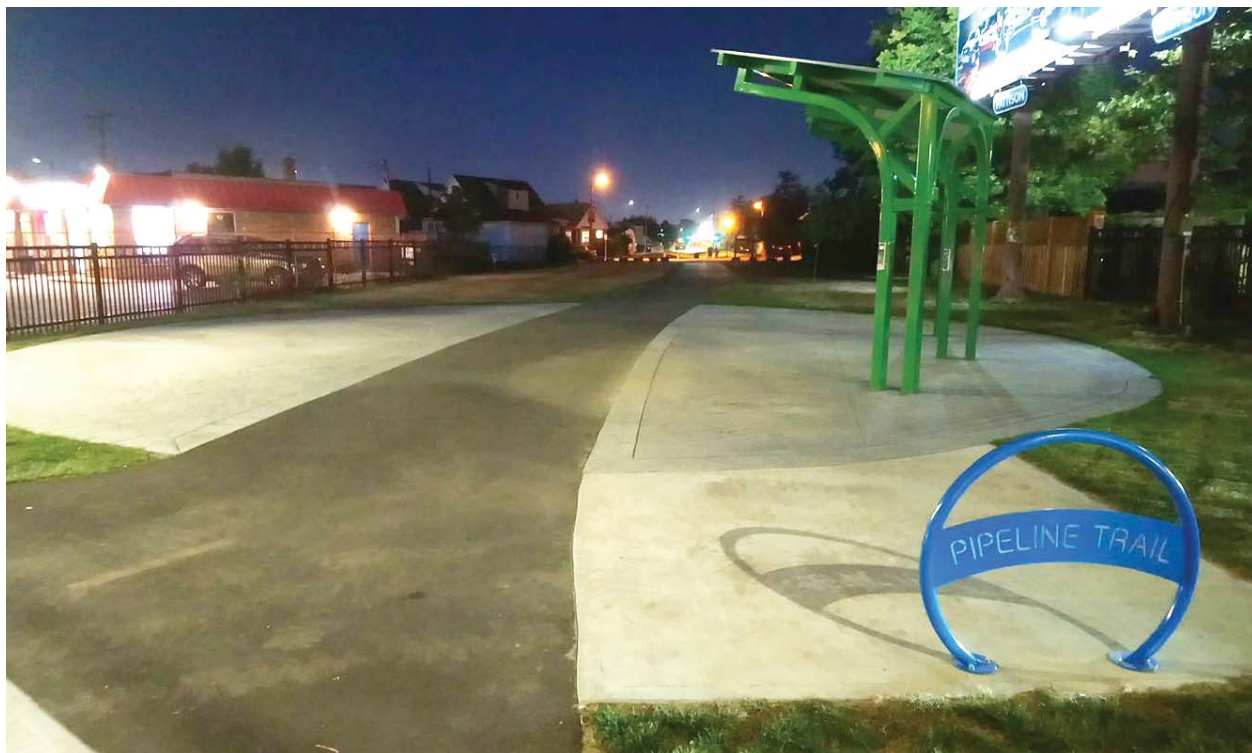
The support we have received from the Hamilton Community Foundation, the City's Neighbourhood Action Strategy team, the SPRC and our community developers help ensure that we have access to the resources needed to make these projects come to life.

Earlier this year we approved a new action plan. As a group, we have learned that action items will only become action plans if they have a champion (or two) to lead them to success. Each project takes time and there are few quick wins. We have also learned that as the CPCPT has

evolved, so too has our collective understanding of whom and what we are. As a result we are currently revisiting our mission, vision and values.

Along with our successes, we also experience challenges. For us, finding space that is accessible for all that meet our requirements (size, parking, accessibility, child care, etc.) has been difficult. We have partnered with a number of community groups and services and we've met in a number of locations, but having a home where the CPCPT and our action teams can meet without concerns is an ongoing challenge. We also have challenges around recruitment, retention, succession planning and broader community engagement, notably with youth and communities of visible minorities. Inclusion is a value that we strive to attain. We recognize there are a number of barriers to engagement, but we struggle to know how best to overcome them and support our neighbours who face them. We see value when action teams are given full power and autonomy to attain their goals.

We look forward to continued support from the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation as we work to add to our successes and tackle our challenges.





DAVIS CREEK Neighbourhood

Looking back over the past five years, the Davis Creek Community Planning Team (DCCPT) continues to be incredibly proud of our productivity. Members exchange ideas in a mutually respectful environment resulting in successful initiatives and events. One of our more recent successes is our new Youth Committee. Amongst other youth-driven initiatives, they have taken on production of a community newspaper, the "Davis Creek Locker". It is distributed electronically, at local businesses and soon in refurbished lockers in parks.

The DCCPT has engaged in plans for renovating Sir Wilfrid Laurier Recreation Centre. The ability and desire of residents to provide input has resulted in positive changes for the community, some of which have already been implemented. Residents undertook a bus tour of several recreation centres in the city to get some great insights, followed by a youth-led presentation. It has been incredibly helpful having Councillor Chad Collins involved in this initiative and keeping us informed and engaged.

Councillor Collins regularly attends our DCCPT meetings, allowing for engaging neighbourhood dialogue. With Councillor Collins' support, we pushed for the installation of a railway crossing on Quigley Road and speed signs erected near schools. We designed the Davis Creek welcome signs and the DCCPT information signs in our parks. We are also involved in the planting of 5,000 new trees in Davis Creek with the majority of them replacing those lost due to the Emerald Ash Borer infestation and hydro cutting.

Our Planning Team numbers have greatly increased over the past five years to an average of twenty-five people per meeting. We have a very cohesive team with an extensive network that includes a variety of service providers such as Hamilton Public Health Services, Green Venture, Red Hill Library and the John Howard Society. Guest speakers will give timely information on projects we are working on or issues we need to be aware of (rabies, Youth at Risk Development programs, tree species), and members attend Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Parent Council meetings on a regular basis to stay connected. A fantastic DCCPT marketing tool has been the distribution of door hangers that include a questionnaire and information on the DCCPT.

Over the past five years Davis Creek has hosted a multitude of events including movie nights, annual egg hunts, cleanups, colouring contests and Winter Discovery Days. We are proud of our indigenous heritage and have hosted medicine walks, workshops and salve making with some of the Haudenosaunee elders. We also produced a cookbook with recipes submitted by residents. Davis Creek supported a youth-led LGBTQ Valentine's Day Dance that also included information for LGBTQ youth. Feedback from some of the youth in attendance indicated that they really enjoyed it, felt welcome and made new friends and connections. As we move forward, we want to improve our engagement with fellow residents by hosting larger events resulting from larger grant allocations. We love our Community Developer, Judy Kloosterman. Judy is the hub of our hub. She is very approachable, resourceful, accessible and a great connector. Looking back our only regret is that we didn't capture the smiles of every community resident who attended our events.





Neighbourhood

The residents of GALA have witnessed some incredibly positive changes over the past five years, starting with the growth of the Community Planning Team. This team of engaged residents has worked on environmental initiatives, park makeovers, community gardens, beautiful alleys, pollinator paths and community corridors. Our efforts have resulted in an increased pride of neighbourhood. We've supported the Repeal the Tax initiative for owners of vacant properties, and we've instituted a community safety team.

In a nutshell, GALA has become a neighbourhood again. People stop to chat, help each other out, share resources and engage in neighbourhood projects and events. Residents are reaching out to other active neighbours to inquire about things happening in their neighbourhood. This interaction and neighbourhood engagement builds trust and relationships throughout GALA.

Although we've come so far, there is still much work to be done! We'd like to see a community champion for every street in GALA, and more community corridors. The Beautiful Alleys initiative is wonderful, but it would be great if we didn't need as many of these events as that would mean that residents are caring for their alleys year-round. GALA will continue to focus on resident-led initiatives and fully-involved resident decision making based on our action plans. We will continue to encourage City Council to listen to residents needs and desires, while looking back throughout history to ensure mistakes are not repeated. Hamilton is truly a City built on the concept of "community".

As we focus on the future there are a few things we've learned that will help us to continue to forge new relationships, build capacity amongst residents and meet our GALA neighbourhood action plans:

- Focus on the positive. If you dwell on the negative you will just continue to get negative.
- Start small to get some quick wins. A single planted bulb in year one becomes a multitude of beautiful flowers five years down the road. Remember that nothing is too small! Even a small win can be a BIG or important accomplishment for your neighbourhood.
- Promote neighbourhood pride – pride of place, of ownership, etc. Beauty breeds beauty.
- Neighbourhood mentors need to be willing (and able) to pass along credit to others. It isn't "me", it's "we". Be quick to praise!
- Give people the tools to succeed...teach them to fish. But make sure you are patient while they are learning!
- Dare to be bold – expect accountability by those involved on the team.
- Encourage "internal" communities (i.e., Apartment resident councils) to connect with "external" community planning teams as those tend to be more fulsome.
- Understand that City Hall bureaucracy can be frustrating and it may limit what you can accomplish, but don't give up! Keep fighting the good fight.
- Annual neighbourhood events are really important! They build tradition, expectations, trust, relationships and excitement in a neighbourhood. They truly build community.





JAMESVILLE Neighbourhood

Over the past five years the Jamesville planning team, with support from NAS & SPRC community developers, have found ways to engage with the local Councillor and the City of Hamilton on a number of community projects. These include the Sunset Multicultural garden, resident-led projects through small grants and support for larger initiatives including support of Complete Streets, the Somali Youth Soccer program and Open Streets Hamilton.

Jamesville has seen significant change within its community, resulting in a number of challenges. With a significant amount of new investment and development in the downtown core, Jamesville has faced issues of gentrification and displacement among many of its residents. This has affected its ability to engage and recruit residents for the long-term.

To address these issues and more, Jamesville is seeking to refocus its energy on engaging and supporting the existing neighbourhood groups within its boundaries. By providing support to neighbourhood and resident-led goals such as community gardens, apartment engagement and community events, we hope to reinvest our time and energy more directly on the people within our borders.

After five years of experience with the NAS, the Jamesville planning team recognizes the challenges in engaging residents in a meaningful way that supports community building. By refocusing our attention on neighbourhood groups and their residents we hope to achieve our goal of “Connecting people who live, work, play and learn in the Jamesville Neighbourhood so together we create a vibrant, strong community.”





KEITH Neighbourhood

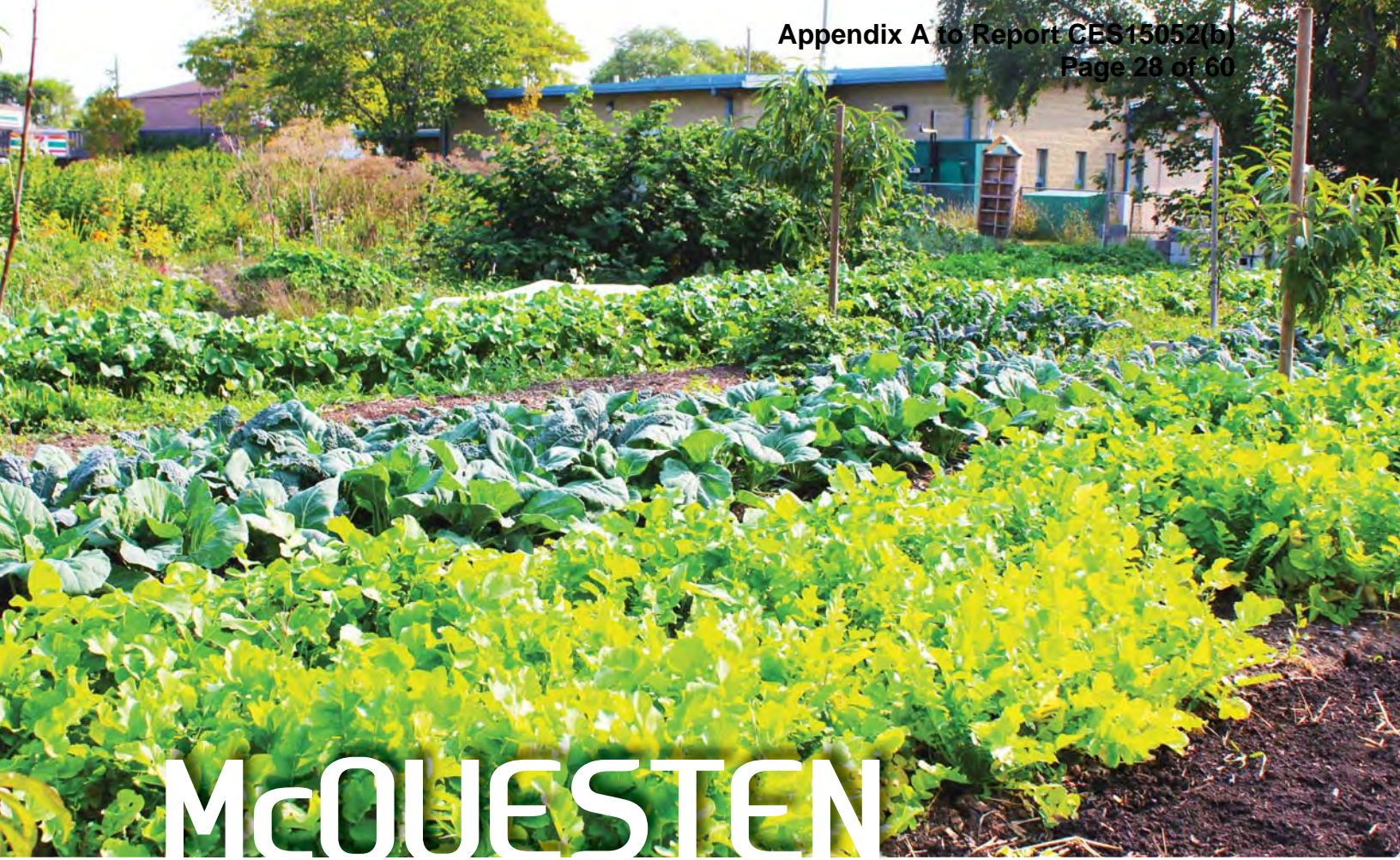
Much like fingerprints, every neighbourhood is unique. No two communities are identical so no program of community development can be identical for every City of Hamilton neighbourhood. Each neighbourhood needs to be allowed to grow and flourish under their own timetable and in their own way.

In Keith, there is a very intense desire to develop in our own unique way. We will always encourage partnerships and assistance, but trying to implement an idea from somewhere else, without first developing an understanding, and acceptance, of what the current situations and ideals are is almost assuredly destined to fail.

With the residents of Keith and the allies and assistance found throughout the city, we will define our own destination through our own abilities. When our abilities don't meet the task, we are blessed to have those around us to help show the way. If, by chance, we do not already have those assets at our call this opens the opportunity to create new friendships and camaraderie as we continue to move forward.

While it might have been nice to manage the wrongful external perceptions made about the Keith Hub in the beginning, it seems that these trials have had the unexpected outcome of creating a more robust and resilient Hub as we move forward.





McQUESTEN Neighbourhood

The McQuesten neighbourhood has had extraordinary change in the preceding five years, and at the core of that success have been the people driving it. There have been some consistent faces among that group, some fleeting faces, and some faces that consistently pop in and out for support when it is needed the most. We depend on all of those contributions, and we open up opportunities to suit everyone's gift of time. We've been fortunate to have a wonderful working relationship with Ontario Works who provide us with volunteers to keep our volunteer base solid.

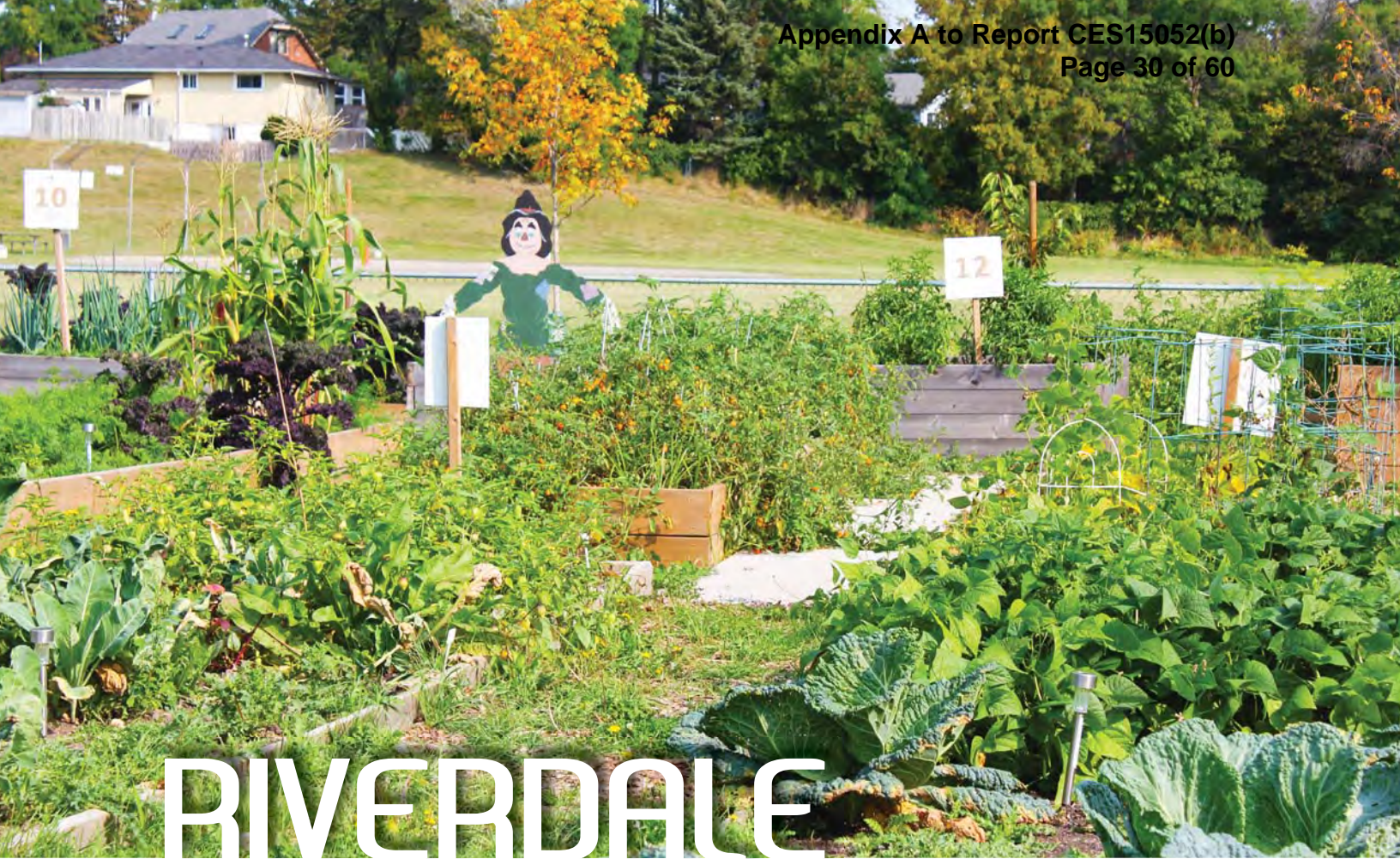
We know what needs to change, and the issues that are most important- just ask us! No really, ask us and get to know us, and make sure that we're at the table to decide the best approaches to effect the changes that we need. We are thankful for everyone who has come out to the McQuesten neighbourhood to do exactly those things. Relationships help us build capacity. That is why we have so much success – it is also key to our continued growth. One of our proudest successes is the number of volunteers that we now have. It is a good base to build upon and we hope to encourage more to volunteer. We have a great working relationship with Ontario Works who are helping us to receive volunteers from their program. The important part of the volunteer component is building friendships and developing capacities.

The distribution of our wonderful newsletter has been a source of aggravation. The cost to print is high and it has been challenging to get the newsletter delivered. For a few years we paid residents to deliver the newspaper throughout 12 routes. This month we are going digital only.

We have so much more to get done! Our plan has so many tasks checked off, but so many more to do, and more ideas and opportunities emerge every year. As our neighbours have taken on new tasks, initiatives and roles, the sophistication of our skills and the projects that we are willing to undertake has grown. Our Urban Farm hosts an on-site market Saturdays as well as being part of Ottawa Street Farmers' Market. The farm is host to many workshops, tours and training opportunities, as well as providing paid employment for local residents. We are seeing the beginnings of a social enterprise at the farm with event catering, preserving and canning excess produce for sale. Staff and counsellors from CityHousing and Ontario Works, and a Nurse Navigator from Public Health, are onsite on scheduled days at St. Helen's to provide much-needed supports for residents. The Bistro, foodbank and clothing closet continue to offer free services, fellowship, food and clothing, and of course everyone loves McQuesten's neighbourhood BBQs, movie nights and seniors' activities. All of this creates community. We know we can do even more by working across communities, borrowing knowledge and resources from outside our community and sharing our knowledge with others.

The next five years are important. Together with our many partners we have helped create a business with the Urban Farm, a social and service hub with the Bistro, clothing closet and partner programs sharing St. Helen Centre. Each serves the needs of the other. Our next challenge is to develop sustaining human and financial resources to maintain them. We have plans for both, but we still need the supports of the City of Hamilton and our many partners to meet these challenges.





RIVERDALE

Neighbourhood

Riverdale is a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse neighbourhood in Hamilton’s east end, home to friendly and welcoming residents from across the Globe. Residents enjoy celebrating each other’s holidays and events together which allows for learning and understanding while having fun. The Riverdale Planning Team organized a Spring/Easter festival for children, as well as a Winter/Christmas celebration. These events provided an opportunity for families to participate in a wide variety of activities such as family games and crafts, community building through socialization and outdoor movie nights. The planning team organized the first ever Fun Day for residents of Riverdale this year. It was a wonderful day for all with food, games, music and activities for all residents to participate in.

The community garden continues to grow (literally and figuratively) which is a source of pride in our neighbourhood. We have managed to create a learning opportunity for grade three students from Lake Avenue School who joined us in the garden this past spring and helped with prep work and planting.

For a variety of reasons, it continues to be a challenge to recruit culturally diverse Riverdale residents to be part of the community planning team. It also continues to be a challenge to engage residents in the planning team initiatives and activities, but with more diverse planning team representation we hope that this will change. We will continue to offer more inclusive events, Fun Days and BBQs to encourage more residents to engage in the activities happening in Riverdale.





ROLSTON

Neighbourhood

Rolston continues to be the new kid on the NAS block, being the most newly-formed team and having the most newly-minted plan. It is one of the smaller populations of residents and one of the more geographically isolated neighbourhoods from any of the other eleven. Despite all of that, we have started to make good progress by building, with our partners, on our successes.

The neighbourhood does not have a recent memory of a formally organized resident association, and it continues to be a challenge to recruit and maintain a large group of committed volunteers to undertake the work that we dream about. More importantly, we struggle to recruit a group that reflects the diversity that we enjoy in this community at large. The residents we have are wonderful and the numbers that come out to our meetings has grown.

We have a demanding and sophisticated plan to effect positive changes in our neighbourhood. The next five years is our opportunity to settle into the work that we need to do, and along with beating the drum for change, we want to start leading by example for our community and in support of our partners. We aspire to build the culture of justice and inclusion that we need to establish and sustain great relationships among our neighbours. We need the support of our partners to help us secure the resources to achieve this, and we also need their commitment to do this same work towards the same/mutual goals along with us.

Justice and inclusion are foundational to our healthy neighbourhood. As we enhance and improve this foundation, we expect to increase the number and the diversity of neighbours who lead and participate in the changes that improve Rolston. These efforts are welcome as initiatives driven by the planning team, and also as efforts that emerge from the many distinct communities of interest throughout our neighbourhood. We commit to support our neighbours towards full participation, in hopes of securing their ongoing commitment alongside our own to help Rolston continue to develop and grow.





SHERMAN Neighbourhood

Our neighbourhood has changed in recent years - in some ways that are very noticeable to visitors and in ways that are experienced mostly by long-time residents. Here are some notable successes:

Safety:

Installation of a "Flashing 40" speed zone around Adelaide Hoodless school and advocating for safer streets, with lowered speed limits, in the rest of the neighbourhood. Wentworth was converted to two-way, and there are now stop signs, speed bumps and bump outs on many of the streets that are used as high speed "cut-throughs". There's been enthusiastic uptake of lawn signs encouraging motorists to slow down and watch for children.

Parks:

Major work has been done at parks at opposite ends of the neighbourhood. In the north, a dedicated group of volunteers has adopted Lucy Day Park and hosts regular parties and seasonal family-friendly events in the park such as a corn roast in late summer and Winterfest. Lifesaver Park in the South has received a major makeover including new playground equipment and equipment for outdoor movies.

Neighbourhood Yard Sale:

An annual community-wide yard sale is held in June. Residents who register their yard sale have their location indicated on a digital map and are provided with signage. This popular event has expanded and is now being co-organized by other neighbourhoods in the lower city.

History:

A former cotton milling factory at 270 Sherman North has been restored and now houses workspaces for artists and craftspeople, galleries and events. The stories about the neighbourhood - both the people and the places - have been shared through historical walks, garden tours and Jane's Walks. The history of the neighbourhood continues to be a draw for many new residents.

Art & Engagement:

An exciting initiative brings together artists and residents to beautify public spaces. The alley that is parallel to Lottridge Street has been used as a canvas to showcase First Nations history in the area. Professional artists and the environmental group Green Venture have worked with residents to decide on art to paint in alleys and on private garages, and teamed up with children and youth to do the actual painting.

We are very proud of our neighbourhood, and excited for our future!





STINSON Neighbourhood

Over the past five years the Stinson Community Association (SCA) has seen great changes and challenges. Supported by a mix of new membership and long-term residents with incredible ongoing year-on-year passion, our community's core goal of betterment in the Stinson Community continues to grow.

The residents of Stinson have been empowered via the SCA with support of NAS & SPRC community developers to engage with the local Councillor and the City of Hamilton on projects including the Carter Park Revitalization, Central Memorial Recreation Centre improvements, Stinson bike lanes and Wentworth pedestrian crossing and community building based initiatives.

Some successes in the past five Years:

Members of the SCA created the StinZine as a local community publication. The StinZine shares community stories, successes, events and information. Currently the StinZine is going through a rebirth and reimagining process. It has grown and continues to be Stinson's local community publication.

Annual Community events have been developed to bring the community together. Examples of this are StinsonConnects! BBQ & Songs from the Bishop music concerts. At these events we host neighbourhood residents with food, entertainment, community information tables and community planning activities at no charge.

Over five years, Carter & Bishop parks have been adopted by SCA members. The Carter Park Shed got another painted makeover this year including a chalk board at the highly successful “Where the Sidewalk Ends” event hosted by The Stinson Creative Lab’s Art in the Park series.

Murals and art projects have been supported by the SCA and the City of Hamilton through the public art process and resident-led projects. Examples of these are the Carter Park Mural, Slow Down Snail and the ongoing projects. Residents of Stinson demonstrate significant support for improving and enhancing our public spaces through community and public art.

The SCA maintains a website to improve communications, promotion and sharing of information. The website was recently updated from its original iteration to organize and share information more effectively.

This year, after years of interest, the Stinson Community Garden team has built a community garden with 12 raised bed gardens providing fresh local produce to our neighbourhood. With the help of a Canada 150 grant, a series of art and benches will be added to the community garden to integrate it as a public space for all.

Ongoing challenges in Stinson include gentrification, poverty and expanding our membership to be more inclusive and representative of the diversity in our neighbourhood. To address these issues and more, expanding and development of tools to better equip SCA members to deal with issues would be welcome, including ARAO training, conflict resolution and decision-making processes, amongst others.

As a result of five years of experience with the NAS, the SCA has built upon the ongoing Stinson Neighbourhood Action Plan and maintains a one year snapshot to focus on.



NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION STRATEGY Evaluation Update 2017

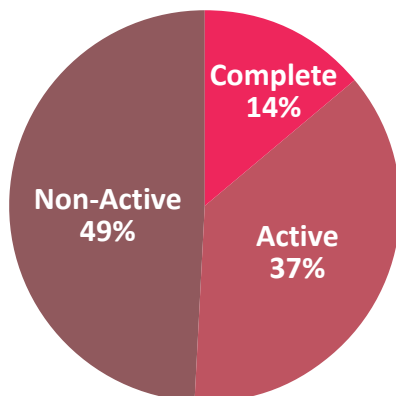
*By Dr. Sarah Wakefield, Associate Professor
University of Toronto and Director of the Health Studies Program*

The Neighbourhood Action Evaluation (NAE) has now completed the fourth year of our process evaluation of the NAS implementation. In the last year, we have completed 104 interviews with residents, service providers and city staff and conducted 11 focus groups with NAS planning teams. Below, we share some overall themes that we've heard from NAS participants.

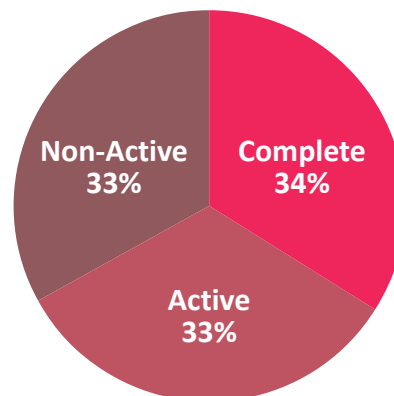
Tracking Update

- From 2014 to 2017 the percentage of "Complete" action items increased by 20% (from 14% to 34% of all action items).¹
- In the same period, "Non-active" items decreased by 16% (from 49% to 33%).
- "Active" items decreased from 37% to 33%.

**2014 Status of
Neighbourhood Actions**



**2017 Status of
Neighbourhood Actions**



¹"Complete" action items include those that are "Complete" and "Complete, but re-occurring." "Active" action items include those that are "Underway." "Non-active" action items include those that are "Discontinued," "Not Started," "On Hold," and "Status Unknown."

MAJOR THEMES

Residents are celebrating

Residents in NAS communities are celebrating successes of the planning teams, both those that were part of the action plans and those that were more spontaneous. In particular, residents are feeling increased momentum in terms of resident leadership and input in local matters. Planning teams have increased their visibility in many neighbourhoods and are feeling proud of their collective accomplishments. In addition, residents appreciate the opportunity to shape their neighbourhoods through their work with the NAS, and feel that involvement in the NAS has created a renewed interest in local issues and new prospects for resident leadership.

Community Developers are invaluable

Participants across the board recognize that CDs are central in supporting resident engagement and facilitating neighbourhood work. Residents and planning teams often express that they would struggle without the CDs' administrative and technical support, outreach efforts, capacity building and advocacy work, conflict resolution, grant writing help, and their ongoing idea-generating and brainstorming work with residents. The CDs provide not only the technical support necessary to complete planning team tasks, but they also do important work in encouraging residents to dream big and realize their vision for neighbourhood projects. In the context of the community development contract with the SPRC not being renewed at the end of 2016, we have heard overwhelming support for the continued presence of CDs in NAS communities. However, there may be a need to more clearly define their roles, since the current arrangement requires significant juggling of responsibilities on the part of CDs and they may not have the time/energy/support to tend to all of their roles adequately.

Inclusive neighbourhood planning remains a challenge

The NAS has a stated commitment to Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression (ARAO) since 2014, and most planning teams commit to supporting diversity and inclusion. Yet, significant work remains in further exploring and operationalizing these commitments. Creating inclusive neighbourhood planning processes that reflect neighbourhood diversity continues to be a challenge, and requires ongoing effort and support. Although attendance at public events such as BBQs may be diverse, most planning teams still struggle to continuously engage new immigrant, racialized, and low-income residents, particularly in leadership positions. This can mean that priorities taken up by planning teams may not be representative of overall neighbourhood needs. In addition, the NAE team has also witnessed incidents of exclusion and racism at some planning team tables. However, some planning teams have made significant practical and symbolic gains towards inclusion, such as the BNA's support for racialized tenants facing displacement and Stinson's inclusion of a land acknowledgement to commence meetings.

Concerns about displacement are growing

While residents and other stakeholders have observed positive changes in their communities, many have also been observing (and some personally experiencing) residential displacement in the NAS communities. Many participants wonder if the work of the NAS and planning teams might be contributing to gentrification. Some planning team successes may increase the desirability and cost of living in the neighbourhoods, which can displace existing residents. The participation of newer, more affluent residents can also shift planning team priorities. NAS participants expressed a desire to see the strategy do more to combat resident displacement and to make sure the NAS doesn't become a vehicle that speeds up gentrification. Many hope that the NAS stays rooted in its initial goals of addressing health inequity and the effects of poverty.

Importantly, these challenges are not unique to the NAS or Hamilton. Place-based revitalization projects across the globe have struggled to balance health equity and local development with the potential consequences of gentrification. While the many significant policy levers preventing displacement and promoting health equity (e.g. adequate income and social assistance) are not in the hands of the NAS or the City, there are some things that the NAS could do to support neighbourhood health without displacement. NAS partners have been involved in supporting residents to resist coercive displacement and could offer more of this support, since the issues are very complex. Our evaluation team has written a separate report (forthcoming) on the NAS and displacement, outlining participant concerns, best practices, and recommendations.

Planning teams need consistent, accessible meeting space

Planning teams encounter significant barriers to accessing consistent and adequate space to meet their needs. Most planning teams have inconsistent arrangements for spaces that can lead to gaps in securing spaces, lack of clarity about location, and uncertainty about the future. This can result in: last minute meeting cancellations, no space in which to provide child-care, inaccessibility for people with disabilities, inability to perform office tasks, conflicts with third-party space managers, and a lack of belonging/sense of place in the neighbourhoods. Moreover, the worry and work that goes into looking for future meeting spaces take time away from more pressing issues. Providing administrative support to ensure that planning teams have consistent, accessible meeting spaces would go a long way to supporting NAS values of inclusion and engagement.

Decision-making matters

As residents become more engaged, they are looking for greater levels of involvement in NAS decision-making and more say in (City and other) decisions that affect them. All stakeholder groups are advocating for more clarity about structure, roles, responsibilities, and power distribution among partners within the NAS. In particular, residents are seeking new opportunities to be involved in all levels of decision-making, including the steering committee, small grants process, and evaluation/consultation processes. This would require a different governance structure that includes resident leadership substantively, which is currently under consideration for (Re)Imagining the NAS Phase 2. A revised governance structure may also consider how various partners connect to planning team tables – for example service providers and other stakeholders, who currently have few guidelines or ground rules to guide their conduct.

UPDATES FROM THE Hamilton Neighbourhoods Study

By Dr. Jim Dunn, Professor and Chair, Department of Health, Aging, and Society, and Director, Collaboratory for Research on Urban Neighbourhoods, Community Health, and Housing (CRUNCH), McMaster University

What has been the impact of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS)?

This is the question the Hamilton Neighbourhoods Study (HNS) asks. The study investigates how the NAS neighbourhoods changed over time and what changes can be attributed to the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS). The study focuses on changes in the following areas:

Place-based outcomes	People-based outcomes
housing and physical environment	health
safety and security	education
economic development	employment and income
community	civic engagement and awareness

How was the study done?

Our study focuses on six of the 11 NAS neighbourhoods: Beasley, Keith, McQuesten, Rolston, Stinson, and Stipley (part of Sherman). We recruited approximately 300 residents from randomly selected houses and apartments in each of the six neighbourhoods, for a total of approximately 1,800 participants. In 2013-2014, we conducted “baseline” surveys. Two years later, in 2015-2016, we conducted “follow up” surveys with the same residents. This allowed us to gather data on how the neighbourhoods had changed following the implementation of the NAS.

We also conducted baseline and follow up surveys with 300 Hamiltonians who do not live in NAS neighbourhoods. We recruited participants from small areas of the city (neighbourhood blocks) outside the NAS to create this “benchmark” sample. While residents in this benchmark group do not live in NAS neighbourhoods, they are of similar socio-economic status to the average resident of a NAS neighbourhood. By comparing the data from this benchmark group to the data from NAS residents, we can see which improvements are the result of the NAS and which improvements happened across the city, independent of the NAS.

Figure 1: Neighbourhoods included in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy.





Figure 2: Neighbourhoods included in the Hamilton Neighbourhoods Study.






Progress Observed Across the NAS Neighbourhoods So Far

Overall, **39%** of NAS residents, compared to only **23%** of residents in the benchmark group, agreed that

 Over the past two years [since the implementation of the NAS], I think my neighbourhood has gotten better to live in as a whole.

–Resident 

Some of the biggest improvements were seen in the areas of neighbourhood satisfaction and pride, social cohesion, social capital, and City-neighbourhood relations:

 residents who agree (baseline)  residents who agree (follow up)  improvement

Neighbourhood Satisfaction and Pride	I am satisfied with my neighbourhood as a whole	82%	86%	+4%
	Living in this neighbourhood gives me a sense of pride	67%	70%	+3%
Social Cohesion	People in my neighbourhood can be trusted	71%	76%	+5%
	People in my neighbourhood share the same values	59%	64%	+5%
Social Capital	My neighbourhood has ways of sharing information (talking to neighbours, newsletters, meetings, etc.)	65%	67%	+2%
	In my neighbourhood, neighbours watch over each other's property	79%	82%	+3%
	I have influence over what my neighbourhood is like	40%	44%	+4%
	My neighbourhood continually looks for solutions to local problems rather than being satisfied with the way things are	54%	59%	+5%
City-Neighbourhood Relations	Information is readily available to the public on City services and activities that take place in my neighbourhood	67%	72%	+5%
	The City is responsive to residents' inquiries, input, and/or requests	56%	56%	0
	Residents are invited to be involved in decision-making in my neighbourhood	53%	62%	+9%

Future Priorities for the Neighbourhood Action Strategy

1 Improved Community Engagement

Only, **33%** of residents know that there is a plan for their neighbourhood created by fellow residents and that planning team meetings happen on a monthly basis. Furthermore, only **22%** of residents participate in NAS meetings or events.

What are the main barriers that prevent people from participating?

1. Busy with work (32%)
2. Health reasons/mobility concerns (21%)
3. Busy with children (16%)
4. Lack of time (8%)
5. Busy with other family members, besides children (7%)

Other important barriers to participation mentioned by residents:

- lack of awareness of neighbourhood planning teams and community events
- lack of childcare at meetings
- poor accessibility/transit options to attend meetings
- language barriers
- feelings of exclusion and marginalization

2 Affordable Housing

A large proportion of residents of NAS neighbourhoods moved to these neighbourhoods because they were looking for somewhere affordable to live. Many are spending more than 30% of their monthly incomes on housing costs (rent/mortgage payments + utilities), deemed “precariously housed” and at risk of homelessness. As Hamilton gentrifies and the cost of housing continues to increase, these residents are at risk of being displaced from their neighbourhoods—places where they go to work, go to school, access social services, and have established social networks with friends and family.

	Beasley	Keith	McQuesten	Rolston	Stinson	Stipley	NAS Overall	Benchmark Group
Affordability is the #1 reason why I moved into this neighbourhood.	32%	47%	39%	13%	37%	35%	34%	18%
Housing costs account for >30% of my household income.	41%	56%	57%	26%	55%	44%	45%	35%
It is difficult for my household to make ends meet every month.	46%	50%	54%	27%	35%	44%	42%	32%

3 EDUCATION, JOB CREATION, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Low levels of education and high rates of unemployment and poverty persist in the NAS neighbourhoods. Some quick facts from our follow up study of NAS residents: 35% of participants have a high school diploma or less, 20% of participants report being unemployed, and 41% of participants report household incomes of less than \$30,000/year. In many neighbourhoods, the implementation of the NAS seems to have had little impact on job creation and economic development and much work remains to be done to address these issues.

		Beasley	Keith	McQuesten	Rolston	Stinson	Stipley	NAS Overall	Benchmark Group
There are job opportunities in my neighbourhood.	Time 1	32%	47%	39%	13%	37%	35%	34%	18%
	Time 2	37%	23%	20%	23%	24%	23%	25%	45%
	Change	+6%	+5%	-2%	-2%	-2%	0	0	+9%
New businesses succeed in my neighbourhood.	Time 1	41%	56%	57%	26%	55%	44%	45%	35%
	Time 2	52%	28%	30%	28%	16%	23%	29%	53%
	Change	+14%	+5%	+3%	-1%	-6%	0	+3%	+4%

4 HEALTH

Since the implementation of the NAS, marginal improvements in self-rated health and mental health were seen in most neighbourhoods.

		Beasley	Keith	McQuesten	Rolston	Stinson	Stipley	NAS Overall	Benchmark Group
In general, compared to other people my age, I rate my health as fair or poor.	Time 1	32%	29%	34%	17%	25%	24%	27%	23%
	Time 2	30%	31%	30%	14%	27%	20%	25%	24%
	Change	+2%	+2%	-4%	-3%	+2%	-4%	-2%	+1%

For comparison, 12% of Canadians rate their health as fair or poor (Health Status of Canadians Report, 2016).

		Beasley	Keith	McQuesten	Rolston	Stinson	Stipley	NAS Overall	Benchmark Group
Median Mental Health Score*	Time 1	74	77	77	80	77	80	77	80
	Time 2	77	80	77	83	77	77	80	77
	Change	+3	+3	0	+3	0	-3	+3	-3

*Derived from the Five-Item Mental Health Inventory (MHI-5), a five-question index that provides a standard measure of overall mental health and wellbeing. A score of 0 indicates very poor mental health while a score of 100 indicates excellent mental health.

Since the implementation of the NAS, more residents report having a regular medical doctor. However, access to healthcare continues to be an issue for a significant number of residents.

		Beasley	Keith	McQuesten	Rolston	Stinson	Stipley	NAS Overall	Benchmark Group
I do not have a regular medical doctor.	Time 1	16%	13%	13%	5%	17%	12%	13%	7%
	Time 2	10%	6%	8%	3%	11%	7%	7%	5%
	Change	-6%	-7%	-5%	-2%	-6%	-5%	-6%	-2%
During the past year, there was a time when I needed health care but didn't receive it.	Time 1	16%	13%	17%	13%	18%	15%	16%	14%
	Time 2	11%	13%	17%	7%	15%	15%	13%	10%
	Change	-5%	0	0	-6%	-3%	0	-3%	-4%

For comparison, 15% of Canadians reported that they did not have a regular medical doctor (Statistics Canada, 2016) and 11% of Canadians reported that they did not receive health care when they felt they needed it (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Furthermore, many households continue to struggle to afford food due to lack of money. Food insecurity is associated with overall poor physical and mental health among adults; hypertension and coronary heart disease among older adults; and poor cognitive, academic, and psychosocial development among children.

		Beasley	Keith	McQuesten	Rolston	Stinson	Stipley	NAS Overall	Benchmark Group
At some point in the past year, I worried that there would not be enough to eat due to lack of money.	Time 1	24%	24%	23%	12%	26%	26%	23%	15%
	Time 2	23%	20%	23%	10%	26%	20%	20%	10%
	Change	-1%	-4%	0	-2%	0	-6%	-3%	-5%

For comparison, 10% of Canadian households are living with moderate to severe food insecurity (Health Status of Canadians Report, 2016).

City Departmental Tracking

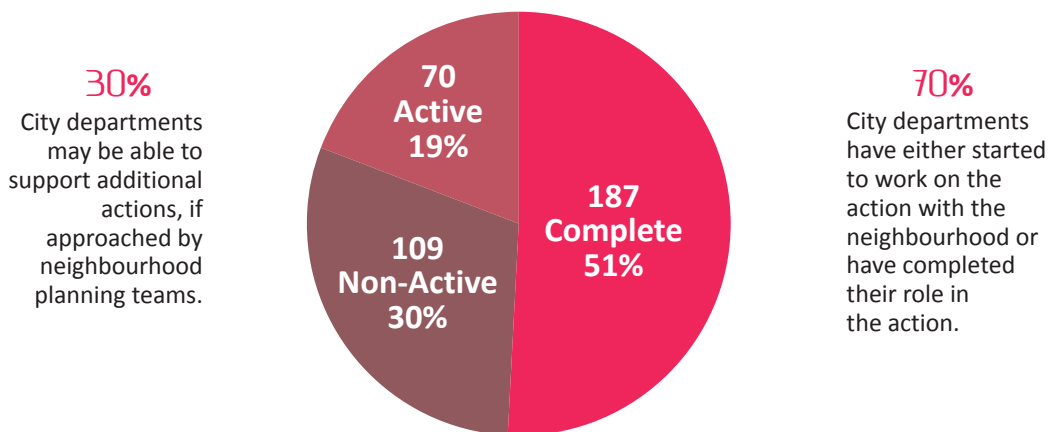
The City of Hamilton is committed to supporting neighbourhoods. Working with resident champions, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy supports the implementation of actions identified in the Neighbourhood Action Plans. To support the implementation, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy also works with City departments to identify their role in supporting the actions as well. The City monitors its contribution in relation to each action and provides an update on its progress status annually.

In 2015, ten of the eleven priority neighbourhoods had completed their Neighbourhood Action Plans, which included 452 actions. City departments reviewed the actions and indicated that there are 366 actions that align with their departmental responsibilities. That accounts for 81% of the total number of actions!

Since the Rolston Neighbourhood Plan, containing 29 actions, was only endorsed by Council in March 2016, it was not included in this analysis.

How are we doing?

2016/2017 City of Hamilton Response Progress Status* (n=366)

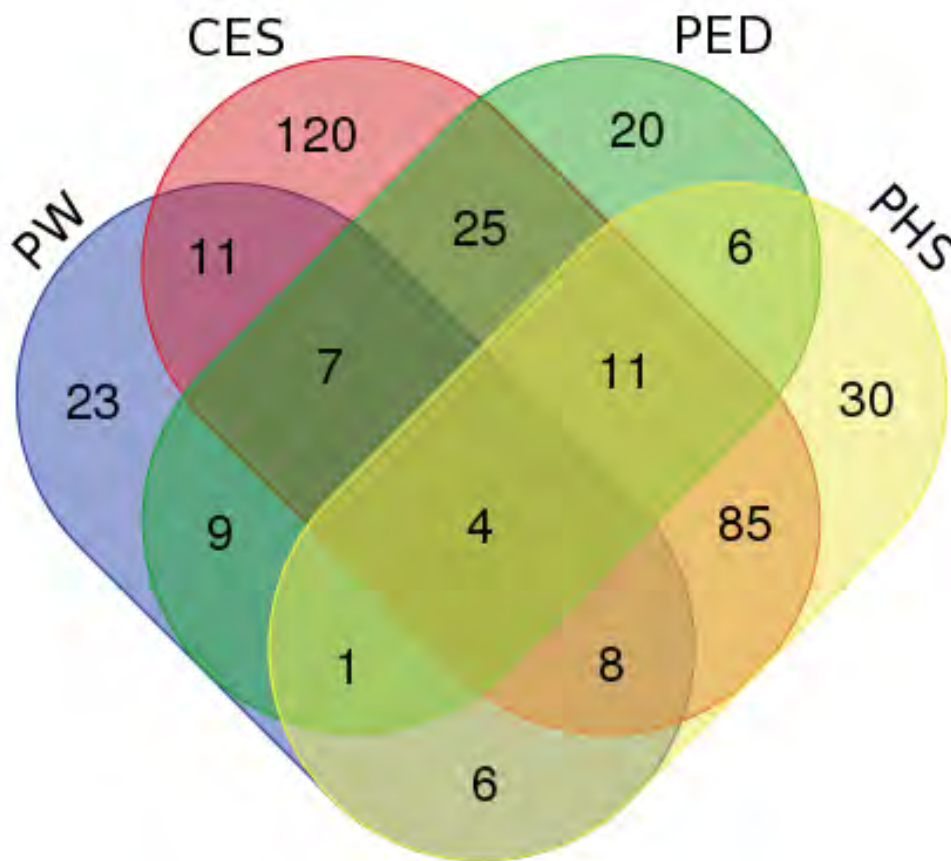


*Complete: responses equal to "completed" or "completed but reoccurring"

Active: responses equal to "underway"

Non-active: responses equal to "on hold", "not started", or blank progress status

Departmental tracking is a valuable tool to show how City departments work together in order to provide sensational service to residents, and demonstrates how the corporate culture pillars influence the work of City employees.



4

The number of actions that four City departments play a role in implementing.

173

The number of actions that involve support from two or more City departments.

31

The number of actions that involve support from three or more City departments.

366 were identified as actions that align with City Department/Section responsibilities in this round of tracking. Some actions were removed because they no longer fell within City responsibilities.

WHAT'S A PLAN?

Updating the Neighbourhood Action Plans

The neighbourhood action plans are resident-developed documents that highlight the changes community members envision to foster strong, healthy neighbourhoods. Using an asset-based community development (ABCD) model, the assets of the community were identified and celebrated, and community needs were used as a basis for the development of actions. With many of the plans having been in place for almost five years, 2017 presented an opportunity to reflect upon the many successes each of our neighbourhoods has achieved. It is also an opportunity to strengthen the work of residents in the community and explore new actions that contribute to strong, healthy neighbourhoods.

The process for updating the plans was directed by each neighbourhood and was supported by the community developer and City staff. As with all the work done within community, resident engagement played a key role. The engagement highlighted what is valued in community, what is needed and where opportunities to enhance their community exist. The community voice directed the priorities for the revised plans. The newly updated plans each has their own look and feel, representative of the neighbourhood and designed in a way to encourage resident involvement and interest in achieving the neighbourhood's vision.

To support work on the actions, working groups are being proposed within each neighbourhood. This will help bring residents together and will be supported by community partners that can contribute to the project's success.

Some of the themes emerging from the updated plans include:

- Addressing bullying in neighbourhoods and across all age groups
- Engaging with community members in new, exciting and meaningful ways
- Contributing to community gardens and supporting clean and green neighbourhoods
- Promoting community health and safety
- Contributing to the affordable housing discussion in Hamilton

Our residents are looking forward to providing annual updates to the community and members of Hamilton City Council on their progress and how their efforts are contributing to positive change in their neighbourhood.

Programs Supported by the NAS

McQuesten Urban Farm

In 2017 the McQuesten Urban Farm started its second full year of operation. It continues to focus on increasing access to fresh organic food in the neighbourhood and building food literacy and skills for residents and volunteers. The farm site continues to be developed and beautified to make it a productive and welcoming place in the community.

The farm has been fortunate to receive financial support from the Maple Leaf Foods Centre for Action on Food Security as well as other donors in the community. This support has allowed us to increase community engagement activities and programming, launch new markets in the neighbourhood and to employ and train neighbourhood residents on the farm. The farm ran another successful session of Sprout Camp this summer, offering a low-cost food and farming camp for neighbourhood youth. The farm also began a new collaboration with the Hamilton Farmer's Market. This fall the farm will launch its school trip program offering food and farming education to 20 schools across the city.



Neighbourhood Leadership Institute (NLI)

The Neighbourhood Leadership Institute builds the leadership capacity of NAS residents through a leadership training process that develops skill by incorporating the development of local project ideas into neighbourhood-enhancing realities. The 2017 NLI session marked the fourth iteration of the re-envisioned NLI. Including the 2017 session, the NLI alumni family has grown to more than 90 alumni who continuously exercise their skills as leaders in the community.

In August 2017, the NLI conducted an evaluation specifically focused on alumni. The evaluation included alumni reflections on their own development and what (if any) impact the NLI may have had on their continual growth as community leaders. The evaluation took the form of semi-structured interviews with alumni from the 2014, 2015 and 2016 cohorts. Alumni were asked to reflect on their experiences within the NLI and how they have used what they have learned in the program in their lives and work now. From the interviews conducted, trends emerged representing four categories: Personal Growth/Self-Awareness, Group Dynamics/Knowledge of Working in a Group, Connectivity and Illuminating Social Change.

Overall, the participants found the NLI to be a positive experience/program that should be continued. That being said, the level of impact varied amongst participants. In terms of personal growth and self-awareness, most participants mentioned that their experience within the NLI helped them reaffirm their identity through self-reflection. One participant said “[The NLI] reinforced so much in me, about being as a person, me believing in who I am, and taking that up step by step”. Another participant described that, at some point through the NLI, namely when talking about social position and indigenous experiences, they experienced “a grounding and turning point in figuring out that this is not just about building a project, but self-reflection, and where you sit and how you perceive the world”.

In addition, participants talked about experiencing personal growth within the NLI through building confidence in themselves as leaders in the community and/or as individuals. Similarly, participants experienced a reaffirmation of commitment to neighbourhood/community work, being adaptive and working through difficult situations.

In terms of group dynamics, most participants recognized that the instructors and peers were the main sources of their learning at the NLI. Whether learning was acquired from topic-specific expertise or from observing others, participants explained that the communal learning atmosphere expanded their knowledge in terms of learning about leadership, patience, passion, or community development work. One participant stated that “when you’re around passionate people you become more passionate”. Another participant said “when you’re at the NLI, you can multiply your own experiences by 100, and you can gain a larger, broader understanding”.

Participants overall felt that it was extremely valuable to be able to learn from the diverse range of experiences that came together at the NLI. Participants also commented on acquiring or expanding on skills to deal with controversy within groups. Participants discussed learning and using conflict resolution techniques through listening, self-reflection and working towards a common goal with respect. For example, one participant explained that “part of the mediation process is listening to other people’s views, and trying to understand them, and then finding options”.

Another theme that emerged from the conversations was connectivity. Most participants shared that they are still connected to their NLI peers and alumni family. Participants also felt confident in accessing support and guidance and sharing ideas for their projects or other community development initiatives from NLI alumni and staff. One participant mentioned “If I have an idea, I have the people I can reach out to.” For some participants, the NLI also provided an opportunity to be connected to other organized community and neighbourhood efforts such as the neighbourhood planning teams or city-wide initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Participants touched on how these networks, supported by the NLI, have provided opportunities for stronger collaboration in the community as participants and alumni continue to share the lessons learned and exercise self-aware leadership. This was highlighted by a few participants: “If I can cooperate [with others], just moving through the community I am a leader” and “The NLI is all about building one person, one person and how they try to function in their community, to build their community.”

Finally, participants commented on their experiences facilitating social change. Some participants explained that the NLI, in addition to their community work and life experiences, helped them realize that leadership comes in different forms. Participants commented that their experiences within the NLI showed them that small changes do matter and can have an impact in the community; “sometimes change doesn’t have to be massive, but if you can have an impact then this is important”. Some participants explained that in their observations of NLI peers, they learned that everyone has the power to effect change and the leaders need to be adaptable depending on the situation; “anybody, any combination of people working together to do something, you can make a change happen”.



Snow Angels

Since 2015, staff in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy have been coordinating the Snow Angels Program - a volunteer-based snow removal service that matches local volunteers with eligible low-income seniors and persons with disabilities. In existence since 2005, this program recruits volunteers to shovel the sidewalk, a pathway to the front entrance and the windrow of the client home within 24 hours of a minimum three centimetre snowfall.

Typically, annual volunteer turnover for this program hovers around 50%. This past winter season the NAS initiated an enhanced recruitment process with increased communications support resulting in 79% of current clients matched to a Snow Angel volunteer. Although many clients live in NAS neighbourhoods, the majority of unmatched clients live in non-NAS neighbourhoods. Residents who are recipients of the generosity of a Snow Angel volunteer are very grateful for this service as the support allows them safe passage to their medical appointments and guarantees accessibility for home supports even in snowy conditions.

As gratitude for their service, Snow Angels are provided with warm winter gear courtesy of Mark's and invited to a volunteer appreciation event in the spring. This past season's appreciation event was a huge success, held at Tim Hortons Field in the Club Level Suite with appearances by Mayor Eisenberger, Councillor Jackson and some Hamilton Tiger Cat players.



**Snow
Angels**
THE NEIGHBOURLY THING TO DO.

The Xperience Annex

Since the Annex opened its doors in June 2016, over 500 youth have utilized our service to seek assistance along their life path. The Navigator has connected youth to community agencies who can support them in obtaining basic needs, education, training and employment opportunities. Our Youth Engagers, of which we have had 11 to date, have given the Annex an authentic voice to our operations and planning with our partners. Strong relationships with our Community partners have helped make the Annex a reliable, welcoming and trusted service in Hamilton, and we are fortunate to now have specialized staff located at the Annex on specific days. A Nurse Navigator from Public Health, an Ontario Works case manager from Housing and an Ontario Works Addiction Services case manager are now part of our Annex community at the Central Library. This has been a valuable addition for our youth who need specialized support.

The Xperience Annex: One Xperience at a Time

“Joe”, a street-involved youth, is a regular at the downtown library. He uses the space to access free Wi-Fi and ‘chill’ during the day. As a gathering spot for him and his peers, he is familiar with the programs offered in the core and at the library in particular. He is resistant to interactions with the Xperience Annex Youth Engagers - the youth-led street team who provide informational support for the Annex.

He sits on the fourth floor, opposite the front door of the Annex. He is aware of the comings and goings of the office but does not venture inside. This routine goes on for a few weeks. On one fateful day, he crosses the threshold and comes into the office. “You looked bored, so I thought I would come in and bug you!” he says. We sit and chat and over the course of time he fills me in on his reality. His dreams, goals and concerns are discussed. He returns numerous times to chat and get direction.

He has some issues that need intensive, specialized assistance. I recommend that he speak with our Nurse Navigator, an on-site public health nurse who can provide insight and assistance for a myriad of health-related concerns. He readily agrees, knowing that he is being seen by Annex support staff that understands him. An issue with his housing is dealt with via an on-site housing worker from the City of Hamilton’s Housing Services division. Again, he is willing to meet with her, secure in the knowledge he is being treated with respect.

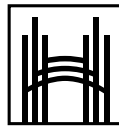
The Annex is his first stop when he learned of a loved one’s death. He says he wants to collect his thoughts before taking his next steps.

He continues to come to the Annex, sometimes to chat, other times to look for assistance as he walks his life path. He says it’s nice to know he has somewhere to turn when he needs guidance.





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