



Beautiful Alleys 2017 Clean Ups and Beautification

Introduction

Alleys have served as transportation networks for communities across the globe for decades including vehicular and foot transportation. The maintenance and beautification of back alleys are crucial to urban renewal strategy in communities where alleys are collectively used by its residents. Back alleys could also be a great source of green space contributing to the overall look of the community. Alleys also offer the potential for citizen engagement and neighborhood planning resulting in healthy communities.

In Hamilton, the community members took upon themselves the responsibility of alleys maintenance and beautification with support from Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee, City of Hamilton Public Works Department, Hamilton Community Foundation and Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Donations from several local businesses and individual residents allow us to continue our work.

Beautiful Alleys is a volunteer organized and volunteer led team of people dedicated to maintaining and beautifying their public spaces. The mission is to create safe, enjoyable spaces for people of all ages and abilities regardless of status, gender, race, religion or ethnicity. This community group of volunteers work together to create safe and beautiful green spaces in neighbourhood alleys and laneways. Two cleanup days are organized each year in the Spring and Fall and regular maintenance and monitoring is encouraged throughout the year. The goal is to educate and empower people to take ownership of these public spaces.

History of Beautiful Alleys

A small group of concerned residents from the GALA Planning Team took it upon themselves to work independently to maintain and beautify their alleys under an Action Team called Alley and Laneway Enhancement. This group came together in the fall of 2015 and that was the birth of the Beautiful Alleys project. They decided to bring residents together and hold twice annual alleys cleanups under the banner of Beautiful Alleys. The first cleanup was promoted through social media and community outreach and generated positive results that translated into over 300 volunteers and over one hundred alleys in the spring of 2016. This initiative expanded across the city and included residents from eight of the eleven identified Neighbourhood Action Team (NAS) neighbourhoods.

Since that first clean up in April 2016, Beautiful Alleys has redirected thousands of bags of yard waste and recyclables from our landfills through the twice yearly cleanups. In addition, engaged volunteers continue to keep hundreds of alleys clean on a regular basis.

Residents take pride in accomplishments and an encouraging trend is that each clean-up results in less garbage in their alleys because of the ongoing efforts of the residents and the community. Beautiful Alleys is hoping to work with the City to initiate an “Alley Adoption” program that will recognize these members of our community and their efforts.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

The annual cleanups bring several hundred community members together at each event to share a common goal; Beautiful Alleys. Friendships are formed and many communities start initiatives in their immediate neighbourhoods for regular maintenance. Many of the volunteers look forward to these events to meet and bond with neighbours and peers. Many use the events as an opportunity to build community by holding neighbourhood celebrations. The clean ups average between one hundred and two hundred volunteers at each event with many of them adding additional alleys to their original area so that the area of alleys reached is expanded. The average number of new alleys across the city is about one hundred in addition to the alleys that are regularly maintained. We see a decrease in the amount of waste collected at each event due to the on-going maintenance and our efforts to educate people about waste management and by-law.

The results of that cleanup in the Spring of 2016 were well received and people wanted to expand their goals. Beautiful Alleys initiated the Urban Art Project. Funded by a grant from the Hamilton Community Foundation, six art applications were initiated in different neighbourhoods. These included artwork on fences and garage doors and showcased the work of local artists.





Beautiful Alleys

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In 2016, Green Venture received funding through the Hamilton Future Fund to undertake the Hamilton Alleyway Project. In partnership with Beautiful Alleys, Green Venture brought forward the first Alley Makeover to enhance the alley between Westinghouse and Milton, now known as Westmill Alley, with artwork, signage, lighting and plantings.

The beautification efforts continued in 2017 with an Alley Makeover in the alley between Sanford and Westinghouse. Named after a long time resident who cared for the alley over the years it is now known as Lois Lane. The artwork depicts the history of the Italian Restaurant that has been in her family for three generations. An art installation that speaks to the theme of Super Heroes in our alleys depicts Superman and adds a note of interest. Garden beds, a rain barrel and plantings beautify the space as well.





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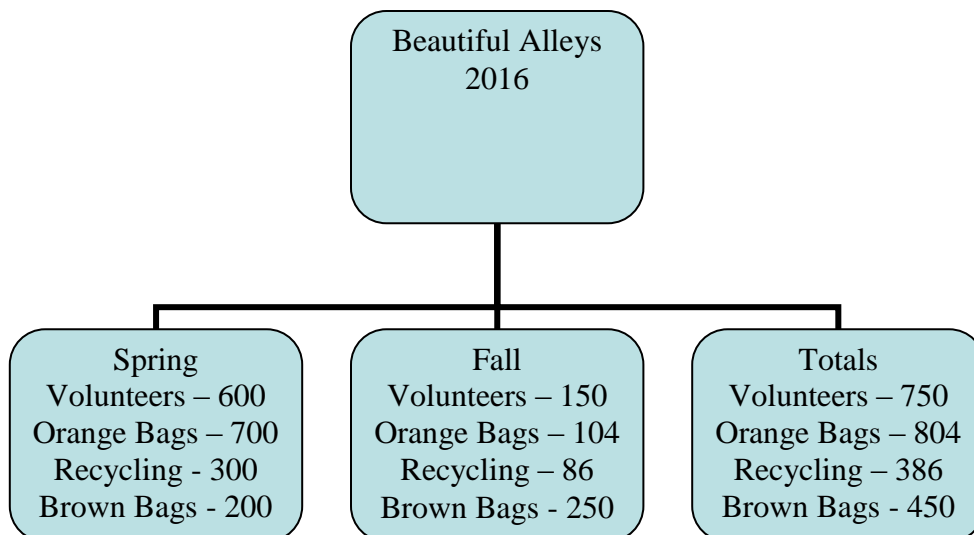
Since then, Beautiful Alleys has partnered with Friendly Streets, Hamilton Health Sciences and Environment Hamilton to create alternative pathways that offer pedestrians and cyclists a safe, clean route that bypasses the busy commercial corridors and heavily trafficked streets.

During 2017, Beautiful Alleys established a partnership with Canadian National Rail (CN) and held the first organized clean up in April 2018 that generated over six tons of waste. CN has committed to carry on this initiative with a partnership between their employees and the community. They have established and committed to regular maintenance on the sections we clean throughout the year. We look forward to reporting back with the results of this partnership next year.

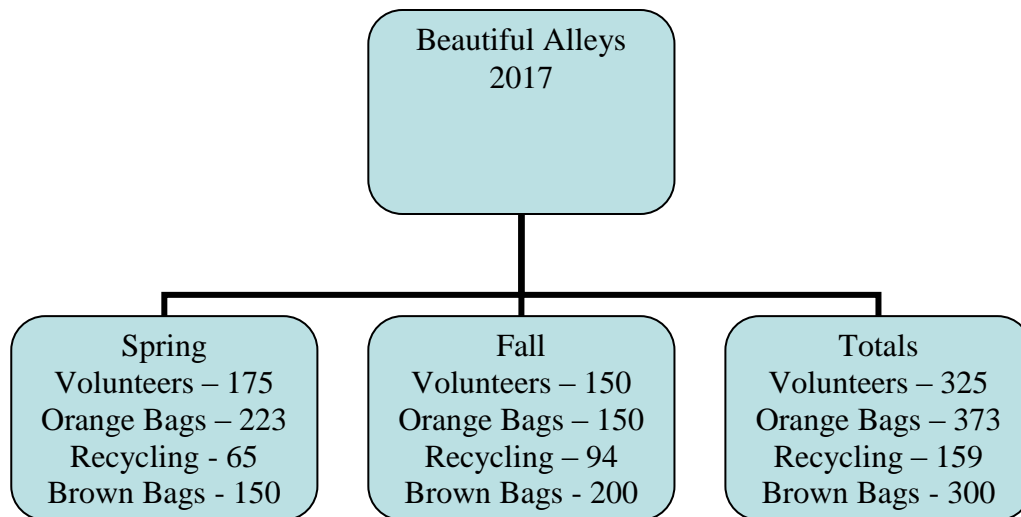
These twice yearly cleanups are supported by various partnerships with the City of Hamilton. Staff in the Public Works Department have worked with Beautiful Alleys volunteers to make regular maintenance more efficient and helped educate the community.

The on-going efforts and results are mainly supported by the Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee, which has supplied thousands of yard waste bags, gloves and garbage bags over the past years. Funding through the Committee's Clean and Green Neighbourhood Grants has enabled us to reward our volunteers with a celebratory gathering following each cleanup. The efforts of Beautiful Alleys and the results would not be possible without their support.

Reporting Statistics



The Spring event in 2016 was the first event that spanned several neighbourhoods across the city where volunteers thoroughly cleaned and removed large items that were dumped in the alley. At the Fall event, the organizers noted many residents that live abutting the alleys had continued cleaning through the Summer months. The upkeep of the alley's cleanliness had a direct correlation to the decrease in garbage collected at the second event. With the continued use and maintenance of the alleyways, the hope is these will become beautiful and useful public spaces again where safety and cleanliness are not a concern.



It is important to note that these numbers only apply to the twice yearly clean ups. On-going maintenance by residents increases the numbers and eliminates waste and illegal dumping on a regular basis. As the project matures and more residents take ownership of these spaces, we hope to see the numbers continue to decrease.

During 2017, Beautiful Alleys focused on building partnerships within the community to build on the beautification projects and making more opportunities available to the residents for their public spaces because each alley is unique to the area it is in. We also looked to funding opportunities that would enable us to become sustainable.

- Friendly Streets
- Hamilton Health Sciences
- Environment Hamilton
- Canadian National Rail
- Urban Art
- The Aids Network



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- City of Hamilton Public Works Department
- Hamilton Community Foundation
- McMaster University

The Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee provide us with supplies for each clean-up. In 2017, we had access to over 1000 orange bags, 500 – 600 recycle clear bags, 1000 brown yard waste bags plus gloves and tools provided with the Community Clean Trailer. With the support of the Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee, we provide supplies throughout the year to residents that maintain their alleys on a regular basis. During 2017, we gave out an additional 250 orange bags, approximately 200 clear recycling bags, over 350 brown yard waste bags. It is difficult to monitor if these clean ups are reported but we can assume that the availability of supplies increases the numbers.

The Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee has also supported our efforts through their Clean and Green Neighbourhood grant program and that enables us to provide a community celebration for our volunteers after each clean-up event.