

To: COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 5/28/2024

Subject: Neighbourhood Associations Support Services Policy Review

Submitted By: Lesley Head, Director of Recreation & Culture

Prepared By: Rachel Fraser, Manager of Recreation, Sports and Culture and
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Report No.: 24-038-CD

File No.: Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 24-038-CD Neighbourhood Associations Support Services Policy Review be received;

AND THAT Support Services to Neighbourhood Association Policy# C-80.020 revisions identified in report 24-038-CD be approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an updated policy to better support the services of our Neighbourhood Associations (NAs).

Key Findings

The City works in collaboration with the NAs to meet the varied needs of community members. The Support Services to Neighbourhood Associations Policy# C-80.020 (Appendix A) has been revised to reflect the needs of our changing neighbourhoods more accurately.

Revisions to the policy include:

- Dedicated staff liaison with the creation of the Recreation Coordinator – Community Development position.

- Introduction of core funding providing greater flexibility related to how NA's utilize existing funding amounts.
- Provision that each NA (beyond Volunteer-Based Neighbourhood Association: Unstaffed - Level 1) confirm their own general liability insurance and strategic plan.
- Neighbourhood Associations will work with the staff liaison on business plan development regarding space needs.
- Neighbourhood Associations will be consulted as a collaborator in Strategic Plan reviews.
- Clarity into the steps to modify existing boundaries and the requirements to develop an association.
- All leadership staff and City Council will receive awareness information related to the Neighbourhood Associations as a part of the onboarding process.
- Calendar year outcome reporting, including key performance measures are required.
- Requirement to provide confirmation of sustainability and ability to maintain as an ongoing concern by supplying an actual to budget variance bi-annually for City staff review.
- The Neighbourhood Associations will present an annual update to Council.

Financial Implications

The policy revision does not have direct financial implications. The implementation of the policy may result in future financial requests that will support the growth and development of existing and new NAs in Cambridge. These would be presented to Council during annual budget deliberations for consideration.

The City acts as a core funder for each Neighbourhood Association. In a strategic manner, the City provides base funding which supports community development and the provision of neighbourhood specific programming.

The core funding provided to each Neighbourhood enables each neighbourhood access to additional financial support from other funders that further increases community member access to programs and services. The financial return on investment varies amongst NAs.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategic Action

Objective(s): WELLBEING - Connect people to services that support individual and community wellbeing

Strategic Action: Encourage safe and healthy neighbourhoods

OR

Core Service

Program: Not Applicable

Core Service: Not Applicable

BACKGROUND:

Neighbourhood Associations have long been a part of Cambridge. Langs was the first association established in Cambridge in 1978. The Support Services to Neighbourhood Associations Policy # C-80.020 was last amended in 2013. The policy revisions have been minimal since its implementation in 2004.

In 2024, the City supports the operation of 10 different NAs that service 11 geographic communities. One association is currently unstaffed and 9 are staffed associations. There are neighbourhoods within Cambridge that are currently not serviced by a Neighbourhood Association. The success of the NAs in mobilizing and organizing communities has set Cambridge apart from other cities.

The current policy does not meet the diverse needs of our growing neighbourhoods. The application of the current policy leads to inconsistent practices and lacking processes that support the City's ability to effectively collaborate with the Neighbourhood Associations (NAs).

The City is unique in its grassroots neighborhood association development approach. The success of such groups in their ability to mobilize communities has set Cambridge apart as a model for other cities. Neighborhood Associations have evolved, some are volunteer-run associations while others are incorporated and/or charitable not-for-profit associations. Neighbourhood Associations have historically offered community-based upstream recreation and social community programming and events.

ANALYSIS:

The previous policy was from 2004 and is no longer reflective of what is the current operating model and representative of today's support levels by the City.

A Cambridge Neighbourhood Association, theory of change was created in collaboration with the NAs to clarify the role of the NAs in Cambridge. The theory of change demonstrates the capacity of neighbourhoods to meet the varied needs of community members. This tool assisted staff in consultation with the NAs on how and what resources are used to meet the needs of our community.

NAs provided feedback on the current policy through a coding and theming exercise. Two sets of clarifying questions were circulated to NAs for feedback. The feedback from individual associations and the collective informed the policy revisions. The themed findings included the need to enhance the autonomy and communication of NAs along with a requirement to review/modify boundary establishment. The findings further emphasized the need to clarify the City's role in supporting Neighbourhood Associations.

The adoption of the policy will assist the capacity of the City to meet the many programming and service needs of neighbourhoods.

Included in the Community Development Coordinator's future work plan is a detailed review of the Neighbourhood Association geographic boundaries, funding allocation and future-forward space plan. As these projects are evaluated, recommendations will be brought to Council for approval.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

The existing policy being reviewed is # C-80.020, Support Services to Neighbourhood Associations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Costs associated with support to NAs are allocated as part of the annual operating budget. In 2024 the associated budget totaled \$1,235,800.

PUBLIC VALUE:

This policy revision aims to promote sustainability and support the community through partnerships with NAs. The implementation of the policy will require collaboration between the city and the NAs as well as transparent reporting to demonstrate the impact of the city's supports and services. Additionally, the Neighbourhood Association approach provides many opportunities for engagement within the City's neighbourhoods.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Advisory Committees are consulted based on event participation or programming content as applicable.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Posted publicly as part of the report process.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

The City worked with the Tamarack Institute to establish how the city would review the policy with NAs. The Tamarack Institute are leaders in applying community engagement to systems-thinking. The Institute is widely recognized by the NAs who have utilized their services for past projects. The Executive Directors and Management teams of each NA were invited to review the current policy and provide feedback. The feedback was themed, and the findings of the review were presented to NA executives and management. The NAs also worked with the city in the development of their theory of change, which informed the policy revisions.

City staff consulted with 10 municipalities/townships regarding best practices when providing support services to NAs or similar community organizations/groups. The 10 municipalities/townships consulted included: Brantford, Edmonton, Guelph, Kitchener, London, North Dumfries, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Waterloo.

Internal consultation also occurred with staff from Finance, Engineering, Planning, Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Facilities, Legal, Operations, Planning, Realty and Risk Management.

CONCLUSION:

The City values NAs as they bring services and programming to communities. The policy revision will further enhance the support services for NAs. Staff are recommending approval of the policy revision to continue support for these key Cambridge institutions.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **Yes**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

Deputy City Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 24-038-CD Appendix A – Policy Amendment – Support Services to Neighbourhood Associations