Thinking Like a Movement

**Deepening Community at Lakeview Harbourside – The Region of Durham, ON**

Sherril Belille and Lisa Pitcher- Housing Coordinators, Community Programs

Durham Region Housing Services

Durham Region Housing Services has recognized the importance of investing in the people who live in the communities we serve. In 2017 Housing Services created two new Housing Co-ordinator, Community Programs positions with a focus of supporting the Region’s social housing communities, developing innovative programs and services that enhance the comfort, safety and security of residents while encouraging the sustainability of vibrant, inclusive neighbourhoods through partnership with other departments and service agencies.

In the beginning stages of their new roles, Sherril and Lisa were trying to bring programming into the community room at the Region’s largest family site – Lakeview Harbourside in Oshawa, Ontario. They soon realized that in a lot of cases there was a lack of interest from the community to attend the programs, that they, along with their colleagues and local agencies thought the community needed. They became very discouraged until one day a group tenants came forward to say that they were not interested in the programs running in the community room but were interested in using the room to crochet with each other residents. The Crochet Group is now the most regularly attended program in the community and is entirely led and attended by residents. Housings role is simply to arrange access to the room.

Sherril and Lisa will share more information about how this experience led to an “ah-ha” moment which has profoundly impacted how they do their work as it led them to realize that in order for programming to be successful, we need to ask the community what they want instead of assuming we know what they need, and we need to support the residents as they work together to achieve their goals as opposed to trying to meet their needs for them.

**City of Kelowna, BC**

Tanya Sletten, Community Development Coordinator, Kelowna

Great cities are made up of strong neighbourhoods. In turn, strong neighbourhoods are made-up of connected and engaged residents. The City of Kelowna recognizes the vital role neighbourhoods play in building a safe, vibrant, and sustainable city. As such, in 2014 the City of Kelowna implemented a new initiative, the Strong Neighbourhoods program. At its essence the Strong Neighbourhood program is about community development. It’s about empowering, inspiring, and involving residents to help create welcoming, safe, and inclusive neighbourhoods. With this in mind, the Strong Neighbourhoods program has three main objectives:

* To empower residents with the skills and resources they need to transform communities into safe, welcoming, and inclusive places to live;
* To inspire leaders to bring neighbours together to share neighbourhood ideas, passions, skills and talents;
* To foster neighbourliness so neighbours feel connected to their neighbourhood and to their neighbours.

The Strong Neighbourhoods program offers a variety of programs and resources for residents to connect with one another and engage in neighbourhood based activities:

* Events
  + Neighbourhood events - Provide support for neighbours to host get-togethers.
  + Park and Play – activates neighbourhood parks to encourage families to go outside, get active, and connect with others.
  + Neighbour Day - an annual celebration to meet a new neighbour, get to know neighbours even better, tackle a neighbourhood project, or lend a helping hand to a neighbour in need.
* Grants
  + Neighbourhood Grants – empowers residents to work together on a project to enhance their neighbourhood with help of up to $1,500 in matching grant funds.
  + Youth Development & Engagement Grants - supports youth (13-19 years old) to enhance their neighbourhood with up to $1,000 in matching grant funds.
* Recognition and Resources
  + Outstanding Neighbour Recognition – recognizes neighbours who make a difference and stimulate neighbourhood engagement.
  + Good Neighbour Toolkit – resources to help neighbours connect such as, conversation starter cards, ‘Hello Neighbour’ door hangers and connector cards.

**Intentional Neighbouring – City of Red Deer, AB**

Bobby-Jo Stannard, Supervisor Community Development & FCSS, Social Planning

The City of Red Deer is striving to develop a culture of intentional neighbouring through a combination of initiatives. By using the traditional engagement opportunity of a community association and the Red Deer & District Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Board funded Great Neighbours initiative, we are working at both the individual and community levels of our neighbourhoods. Since 2016 Great Neighbours has encouraged individuals to meet the closest ten people on their block and hold a neighbourhood activity once/year which can be supported by a SPARK grant.

As a multi-municipal partnership that includes different-sized communities, the FCSS funding requires that the activities of Great Neighbours be translatable to both urban and rural settings. This requirement has provided many “ah-ha” moments and necessary innovations “on the fly” over the past three years to answer questions such as “what does a rural block look like” and “how does Great Neighbours link to other corporate neighbourhood initiatives?” We are excited to share our story and learning with all of you at the session today.

**City of Waterloo, ON**

Julie Legg- Neighbourhood Coordinator, Community Services

Background

The City of Waterloo has a long history of supporting neighbourhoods through grants, neighbourhood association partnerships, staff support, and more. The recent development of Waterloo’s Neighbourhood Strategy is a way for the city to further support and empower residents to build strong, connected, and vibrant communities. Julie, Waterloo’s Neighbourhood Coordinator, will share information on the development of the Neighbourhood Strategy and information on the strategy’s implementation.

Lessons Learned

* Many elements affect neighbourhood life. Be sure to scope strategy development and engagement sessions to realistic areas for tangible goals.
* Commit to clear roles community members will play in the strategy development and implementation as well as what staff will do.
* The time, resources, and community engagement required for a Neighbourhood Strategy are extensive. However, the strategic and community benefits that come from this process will likely be even more vast than anticipated.