10

RECONNECTING AND MAKING COMMUNITY ESSENTIAL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Over the last five years, the Deepening Community network has been a timely and powerful response to the growing social isolation, loneliness and disconnection occurring across Canada. This is a network where citizens and leaders are exploring the unique role that communities and neighbours play in creating positive futures. Together, we are discovering the power of community as an essential driver of social change.

At the time of this guide's publication, we have had over 18 months of "social distancing" and shutting down the vital components of what is at the heart of community, such as parks, trails, cafes, community centres, events and social gatherings. Cities and towns have been working hard to find solutions to a problem that is beyond anything we've ever encountered before. The effects are deep, impacting our jobs, our families and our communities. It is in that last word – *communities* – that we will find the strength to not only persevere but to emerge stronger and more resilient than ever.

With the growing sense of disconnect and social isolation happening in communities across Canada and the lack of civic participation in our towns and cities, we need to declare community essential. We believe that Deepening Community is the answer. Using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach with Collective Impact to build Neighbourhood Strategies, we can have the following community impacts:

- **Belonging**: Increasing a sense of belonging to place and people
- **Equity**: Fostering equity and inclusion in the places people live
- **Citizenship**: Increasing a sense of citizenship (enabling care, raising our children together)
- **Resilience**: Increasing a sense of resilience by stewarding local ecology and investing in disaster preparedness
- **Community Security**: Increasing a sense of safety
- **Community Wellness**: Increasing a sense of well-being and enabling health
- **Shaping Local Economies**: Investing in community economic development and local food production

This guide has been developed to support community champions, concerned citizens, municipal staff and decision-makers such as mayors and elected officials to build the case to deepen community and make your community essential. There are five sections that will get you thinking about developing your own local Neighbourhood Strategy.

Section one is where you will get started. In this section, you will assess how well your city or town is currently working to deepen community.

Section two is designed to inspire you to think about ideas to deepen community further. There are many ideas and activities that are happening across Canada, and this list includes 10 ideas that could be done at a neighbourhood or city level.

Section three has 10 short stories from communities across Canada that are highlighting programs and activities that deepen community. These stories will have elements of the ideas from Section Two threaded throughout their stories.

Section four provides resources that will help you to deepen community based on what you've learned.

Section five includes 10 ways to get started if you are at the very beginning of your journey to deepen community.

SECTION 1

Assessing Your City's Commitment to Deepening Community

In this section, we are posing 10 questions that will help you consider and better understand your community's approach to deepening community. Use this quick assessment to indicate what your city is currently doing and then use these results to guide you through the rest of this booklet.

Use the following scale to score responses:
1 = Not yet   **2** = Just getting started   **3** = We are part way there   **4** = We are doing this   **5** = We are there!

Here are 10 questions to think about:

Assess your Readiness	Rank
1. Does your city or town have a municipal neighbourhood– or city-wide strategy? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
2. Does your community take an <u>Asset-Based Community Development</u> approach? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
3. Does your city or town's engagement process put citizens at the centre of its community work? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
4. Have you carried out asset-mapping in your community (e.g., individual, cultural, physical, community, group/organizational assets)? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
5. Does your city or town have a history of building socially connected neighbourhoods to create mobility, safe public space and participation for all citizens? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5

Assess your Readiness	Rank
6. Do citizens in your city or town have equitable and inclusive access to municipal services and programs regardless of socioeconomic status; where they live; or their age, culture, ability, race, gender or sex? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
7. Do residents actively participate in civic life? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
8. Is your local Public Health Agency/Authority addressing social isolation or social connection as public health issues and priorities? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
9. Are business leaders in your city or town actively working within a community-driven and socially responsible lens? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5
10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how committed is your city or town to deepening community? **Notes:**	1 2 3 4 5

10–25 points: Reach out to us, we can help.

25–40 points: You are doing well. Keep going!

40–50 points: Please reach out to us, we want to learn from you.

Score: _____

What have you learned by taking this assessment? Spend a few minutes jotting down the thoughts or observations that came to you while choosing your answers.

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 2

10 Really Good Ideas

These 10 ideas offer meaningful ways of deepening, reconnecting and bolstering the importance of community within your neighbourhoods so that we can make community essential again. While you can consider each idea on its own, they are most powerful when weaved together to create mutually reinforcing actions to build community-wide momentum and change.

1 Use innovative engagement techniques to hear from your whole community as you develop your plan

2 Recognize the value and gifts of diversity through an asset-mapping exercise

3 Encourage innovative ideas that build a sense of belonging for all

4 Involve seniors and youth in shaping the community activities

5 Build opportunities for municipal and civic leadership in your plan

6 Spend time defining your neighbourhood

7 Build back your local economies by investing in social capital

8 Design and open spaces that enhance social interactions

9 Organize a 'neighbouring' movement to create safer communities

10 Take an Asset-Based Community Development and Collective Impact approach to building community

Want some help implementing some of these ideas?

Get in touch with Heather Keam at heather@tamarackcommunity.ca.

1 Use innovative engagement techniques to hear from your whole community as you develop your plan

A growing number of municipalities have recognized the importance of developing community plans that build on social and economic well-being in their cities or towns. But for a plan to benefit the whole community, it must involve everyone. It needs to include people representing and working in various disciplines and, most importantly, reflect the diverse members of the community such as newcomers, people with disabilities, BIPOC, LGBT2SQ and other marginalized communities.

It is through the involvement of all these different points of view that a plan can truly be considered collaborative and innovative. Transformative change within cities and towns occurs when we embrace local, place-based strategies that are reflective of the whole community and all residents can see themselves in the plan.

There are various innovative ways to engage and empower citizens to express themselves and take action in developing a plan. Online tools such as well-designed surveys have shown to be very accessible and don't require displacing community members as they provide their input. More conventional ways of engaging community members such as well-facilitated town hall meetings and community events (online or in person) are still great ways to bring people together. Their success depends largely on assuring that community members feel safe and free to be self-expressive.

Learn more:

- Creating a Culture for Community Engagement: This paper explores how fear can be a barrier in the engagement process and provides practical strategies for transforming and applying fear in community engagement.

- Index of Community Engagement: This resource is a comprehensive list of community engagement techniques that can be selected based on the level of engagement you are conducting.

2 Recognize the value and gifts of diversity through an asset-mapping exercise

Tamarack has long championed Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) as an approach to sustainable, community-driven development. ABCD looks for and starts from people's gifts and strengths (assets). These assets equip people to create local opportunities and respond to needs and challenges in their neighbourhoods. ABCD goes beyond any individual's gifts or group's strengths to consider how these may come together to create broader changes for the common good within a community. Rather than allowing for a deficit-based model to take hold, one which focuses on what individuals and communities *cannot* do, an asset-based model is focused on what individuals and communities *can* do to mobilize assets and create community change for the better.

One powerful strategy from the ABCD approach is asset-mapping. Asset-mapping involves creating an inventory of the six gifts that the community possesses:

- **The gifts of residents**: This includes the gifts, skills and passions and knowledge of residents, which are contributed towards the collective well-being of their community.

- **Local clubs, groups and associations**: Many associations (groups of people with common interests) are unnamed. Pooling the gifts of individuals in associations makes those gifts more powerful.

- **Local institutions**: There are the kinds of institutions: for-profit, not-for-profit and governmental. Unlike associations, their members are paid to do the work they do. This group also includes local government and non-government agencies (e.g., churches, schools, departments, neighbourhood centres etc.).

- **The land**: The land and everything on it and below it is a valuable neighbourhood asset. This includes small, local, bounded places that people relate to as their shared place, like neighbourhoods or villages.

- **All kinds of exchanges**: These exchanges among people in the neighbourhood include giving, sharing, trading, bartering, swapping, buying, selling, time-banking, babysitting and establishing co-ops, among many others.

- **Culture, stories and history**: These remind neighbours of how they have done things successfully in the past. They also strengthen the culture of the neighbourhood by creating a common history, culture and identity.

Photo courtesy of the **Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness**

Learn more:

- A Guide to Community Asset Mapping: This manual developed by the Falls Brook Center helps communities start a process of renewal and resilience. It aims to facilitate the initial steps towards innovative development based on the unique resources within each community.

- Hidden Assets: This blog post by Tamarack Institute Co-CEO Liz Weaver features the Personal Asset Inventory Tool, which can be used by collaborative tables to uncover the assets that each partner brings to the collaborative effort.

3 Encourage innovative ideas that build a sense of belonging for all

Having a sense of belonging is a vital attribute of one's membership to a community. A sense of belonging may lead to improved mental health and overall well-being, as well as citizens and communities that are ultimately happier. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is most important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions. Some find belonging in volunteering, joining a sporting group or participating on boards.

It is crucial to transparently identify and celebrate diversity among the community while finding ways to ensure it is a welcoming and safe community for all. Building belonging in your communities requires everyone to work on the acceptance of others and to look for ways in which you are similar with others instead of focusing on ways in which you are different.

That being said, the process should consider different aspects of the community (e.g., green spaces and parks, transportation and mobility, groups and clubs or associations), how the community interacts with these components and how access will vary depending on the individual or sub-group. Is a proposed community garden for everyone and does it need to be? Or can there be something for everyone? This sense of belonging connects directly with relational well-being and social capital, residential satisfaction, perceived safety and trust, and quality of living.

Learn more:

- Exploring and Designing Belonging: This blog post by Tamarack Institute Director of Collective Impact Sylvia Cheuy unpacks the We Can Design Belonging report, a publication showcasing research on the experience of belonging for residents of Kitchener, Waterloo and Woolwich, Ontario. The report outlines an approach to improving people's sense of belonging in their region.

- Enhancing Belonging Guidebook for Individuals, Organizations and Communities: This guide is an important tool for people to intentionally implement strategies that enhance belonging and well-being in their communities.

Photo courtesy of the **Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness**

4 Involve seniors and youth in shaping community activities

A key element of well-being is a sense of control that community members feel they have over influencing activities occurring withing their communities. All too often, there is an imbalance of control and power whereby certain groups are excluded from decision-making; seniors and youth are important sub-groups in society that can fall into this category.

Global initiatives such as Child-Friendly and Age-Friendly Communities and Universal Design all advocate for keeping these groups in mind. Youth are our future and our senior population is growing, so all generations must be valued and included.

Creating space for intergenerational exchanges can be valuable. The Canadian organization 8 80 Cities, which asserts that cities designed with both 8- and 80-year-olds in mind are best for everyone, is an example of an initiative that recognizes these interactions and designs space and community with this in mind. Moreover, we are also seeing greater opportunities to engage age diversity in policy and systems change. For example, the Prime Minister's Youth Council ensures youth are at the table and have a voice and role in decisions shaping the country. At a local level, youth- and senior-led initiatives are creating real community change across Canada.

Communities can work towards achieving this through incorporating the Pan-Canadian Age-Friendly milestones, which include actions such as:

- establishing advisory committees with active engagement of older adults who participate in shaping the community plan; and

- in municipalities, adopting a resolution to actively support, promote and work towards becoming age friendly.

Youth-friendly communities enhance the collaboration and coordinated effort of all partners and service providers on the ground. Most importantly, they also invite participation of youth themselves to create communities where youth want to live.

Learn more:

- Meaningfully Engaging Youth: This guide was co-developed with youth leaders and representatives from youth-serving organizations to shine a light on the principles and practices that lead to meaningful youth engagement.

- National Seniors Strategy: The National Seniors Strategy is a Canadian policy response to Canada's shift to a more senior-driven population. One of the four pillars of the strategy is enabling the creation of age-friendly physical environments and spaces.

5 Build opportunities for municipal and civic leadership in your plan

Municipal and civic leadership can come in several forms that aim to benefit the community and wider society, including volunteering and voting in elections, but it is much more than that. In a true democracy, people need to feel that they have a voice and that their voice makes a difference. They need to feel that doing things 'for' the community is not enough; doing things 'with' the community has the most potential. Opinions may differ, but when community members are involved and have ownership in their own community, they are more likely to unite with a common vision for the greater good than be divided by individual differences or power imbalances.

Residents need to see themselves reflected in the leadership and in the formal structures that represent them. Opportunities must be enabling and supportive and building these opportunities must put equity front and centre while identifying and removing barriers for participation. Having leaders who reflect the makeup of the diversity in the community helps us identify and understand the most relevant issues and address them in the most appropriate way.

Community-led actions that nurture community power and political engagement help to establish trust, to build bridges between municipal staff and the community and to demonstrate investment in a thriving community. Whether it is housing, recreation, transportation, education or employment, bottom-up decisions with support from the top will have the most potential. Citizen groups, neighbourhood associations and local councils, to name a few, all feed into these structures that shape decisions and actions.

Learn more:

- Building Democracy "with" Community: This blog post unpacks David Mathew's 2020 book *With the People: An Introduction to an Idea*. The book takes readers on a learning journey to understand what has shifted in our view of democracy (trust, confidence and roles) and how a *with* strategy could be the solution to strengthen democracy.

- Building a Neighbourhood Plan: Doing *With* Not *For*: This case study explores how coordinators at the Lakeview Harbourside neighbourhood in Durham, Ontario, (a Deepening Community member) are shifting away from acting *for* residents to supporting residents to act for themselves.

6 Spend time defining your neighbourhood

If neighbourhoods are going to play a role in the future of your city or town, we need to know what and where they are in a more meaningful way. More specifically, we need to reevaluate the basic building blocks of cities so that neighbourhoods are more than a label and more than a shaded area on a map.

Emily Talen, author of *Neighborhood*, states that cities need to build the "Everyday Neighbourhood." The Everyday Neighborhood is what a neighbourhood could be if based on a traditional understanding in which the neighbourhood is a vital supportive social unit, a village that connects those who live within its boundary. Some elements of an Everyday Neighbourhood are as follows:

- It has a name
- Residents know where it is, what it is and whether they belong to it
- It has at least one place that serves as its centre
- It has internal and external connectivity
- It has diversity within it or is open to enabling diversity
- It has a means of representation, a means by which residents can be involved in its affairs and an ability to speak with a collective voice

During the development of the City of Kitchener, Ontario, Neighbourhood Strategy, the project team tried to define what a neighbourhood is and what people value in a neighbourhood. Their results showed that most people related to a neighbourhood being between six and 20 streets and the top three places to hang out in a neighbourhood were parks, homes and trails. When developing a strategy, you will need to think about scale and whether what you're working on is a neighbourhood-scale strategy or a strategy that spans a whole city or town.

Learn more:

- Kitchener's Neighbourhood Strategy: How Did We Make It?: This resource provides lessons learned from developing the City of Kitchener's irst-ever Neighbourhood Strategy.

- Discussion with Howard Lawrence from the City of Edmonton: In this discussion, you will hear about what *scale* means and the importance of keeping it small and local.

7 Build back your local economies by investing in social capital

Over time, we have seen the effects on neighbourhoods when we neglect to think about the social side of community-building in our cities and towns. Focusing only on economics and building roads and homes has caused communities to lose connections and be isolated. While municipalities have traditionally focused on improving the physical components of a neighbourhood and building strong economic stability, cities across Canada are now recognizing the need to invest in the social well-being of citizens. This means thinking about the social capital needed to create a sense of belonging and connection that will lead to a happier, healthier and more engaged community.

The term *social capital* is gaining popularity in the community development world and is a key part of a healthy community. Social capital is about the value of social networks, bonding with similar people and bridging between diverse people with norms of reciprocity. Social capital also is about creating a network of caring people so that it's easy to share, find help or to help others. Being connected to people in your neighbourhood builds trust, builds a network for the sharing of resources, and collective action.

In a 2001 article by Dr. Trevor Hancock titled "People, partnerships, and human progress: building community capital," he states that cities need to focus on human-centred community development rather than economic one. Hancock

calls it *community capital*, explaining that cities need to balance all four types of capital (Social, Economic, Ecological and Human). Increasing connectedness and building social capital in our communities requires organizations, groups, governments and citizens to work together to make it easier for people to build relationships and connections.

Trevor Hancock's Four Capitals model
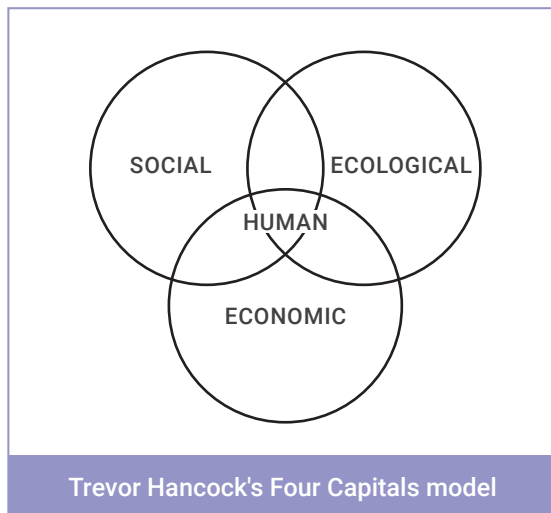
In Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, an initiative called Life. School.House is an example that has been using the development of social capital to address complex issues such as social isolation.

Life.School.House is a model of Asset Based Community Development that draws people together through folk school classes to build more resilient communities with activated citizens hosting each other to foster and accelerate social change and collective future readiness.

Life.School.House demonstrated that social capital is about leveraging local community assets and creating new 'community spaces' by converting what were once solely private space (homes) into spaces for the community.

Learn More:

- Exploring the Importance of Social Capital: This article talks about how social capital is important during a time of crisis.

- Building Social Capital through Community Development: The speakers in this webinar recording explore a new model of community development through stories about how it has been done and how you can bring it to your neighbourhood.

8 Design open spaces that enhance social interactions

Over the past decade, people in Canada have become more isolated and disconnected from their communities, leading to negative impacts on health and well-being.

Social infrastructure is a relatively new term that incorporates social elements into the design of public spaces. It encapsulates how we build spaces that allow people to be social and connect with each other. The spaces in question are sometimes the buildings that house public institutions (e.g., libraries, pools), sometimes green spaces (e.g., sidewalks, community gardens) and sometimes the meeting places for community organizations (e.g., churches, civic associations)

and third spaces (e.g., cafes and barbershops).

According to Eric Klinenberg, author of the 2018 book *Palaces for the People*, there are five elements to social spaces:

- Spaces to gather and mingle with each other
- Safe spaces
- Spaces to learn together
- Spaces for healthy bonds
- Spaces for people to put differences aside and build common ground

Improving connectedness and building a sense of belonging are complex community issues. It requires organizations, groups, governments and citizens to work together to build relationships between communities and how they are built. No one sector working alone can effectively address complex community issues.

Learn more:

- [Open Architecture Collaborative (OACC)](#) Canada is an organization that is hoping to create equitable and mutually beneficial relationships between communities' quality of life and their built environments.

- The [Social Life Project](#) highlights what makes public spaces thrive, drawing from communities around the world.

9 Organize a 'neighbouring' movement to create safer communities

Community safety is an emerging concept that focuses on both perceived and experienced crime and safety within communities. Fostering community safety is complex and must consider many interrelated factors. Concerns over community safety often coexist with other social concerns such as lack of connectedness, poverty, inadequate housing and income, and mental health.

Creating a strong sense of community is important for developing relationships to help reduce crime and increase safety. Research indicates that the simple act of knowing your immediate neighbours increases safety and emergency response.

In order to solve systemic issues around crime, there need to be conditions that increase a sense of community and belonging. This foundation is built on creating trust among individuals and groups that are experiencing vulnerability and who are at risk of harm. Everyone has a role to play in helping to make communities safer together. In a neighbourhood where almost everyone is friendly with almost everyone else, looking out for each other becomes second nature. This is because, on some level, we see the entire neighbourhood as "ours."

Learn More:

- Want to Fight Crime? Plant Some Flowers with Your Neighbor: Neighbourhoods struggling with physical decline and high crime often become safer simply when residents work together to fix up their neighbourhoods.

- Community Security and the Institutional Assumption: In this article, John McKnight talks about safety reform and the need to consider the functions of Police, institutions and associations.

10 Taking an Asset-Based Community Development and Collective Impact approach to building community

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a set of values and principles and a way of thinking about the world. As an approach, it values the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a community. It also sees communities as co-producers of health and well-being, rather than the recipients of services. ABCD begins with the idea that there are amazing things happening in every community. Instead of asking "What's wrong?" the question we should be asking is "What's strong and how do we get more of it?" This generates energy and creativity. ABCD is not a recipe but a place-based framework.

Collective Impact uses a backbone infrastructure to help many people work together toward a common agenda. This approach is used to address complex and stubborn community issues by enabling large-scale systems change. The collaborative works together to measure those things the community really wants to see changed and learns to adapt as they go. Through mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication, communities can align the efforts of government, businesses, charities and citizens towards a collective outcome.

In a paper written by Dan Duncan from Clear Impact he demonstrated how you put an Asset based community development lens on Collective Impact work and how you can put residents into the centre of your work. Here is an ABCD lens on the five conditions of Collective Impact:

Condition 1: Backbone Organization

Members of a Collective Impact effort must recognize that the people they serve are experts in their own lives and communities. All members appreciate the value that residents bring to the table, which comes in the form of unique skills, knowledges and abilities by creating a fun and equitable meeting space.

Condition 2: Continuous Communication

Community members are treated as producers of their own well-being and communicated with on a regular basis. It's about putting a focus on the unreachable and connecting people from the margins to bring them in.

Condition 3: Shared Measurement

Success is measured with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data that includes real-life stories that accompany the data. As it has been said so many times, no numbers without narratives and no narratives without numbers.

Condition 4: Common Agenda

The common purpose serves as the "north star" of a Collective Impact effort, and it should relate to the hopes and aspirations that are created by the people whom the effort seeks to work with. We cannot develop a true common purpose without engaging the people who are impacted by the work and who ultimately see themselves in the purpose.

Condition 5: Mutual Reinforcement

Instead of asking people "What do you need?" we need to ask, "What can you contribute?" "What do we already have? "and "How can we help you share your gifts?" As co-producers, community members become part of the solution.

Learn More:

- The Four Components of Effective Collective Impact: Through the Lens of Asset-Based Community Development and Results-Based Accountability: This resource provides a framework of action for effective collective impact that incorporates four key components.

- The Collective Impact Compendium Series: This webpage created by the Tamarack Institute helps you make the most of your Collective Impact initiative. It provides a collection of compendiums with a vast array of tools, papers and other resources to help you build your toolkit for specific areas of your Collective Impact work.

SECTION 3

10 Inspiring Stories

Here are 10 stories that illustrate how cities can deepen, reconnect and make community essential within their neighbourhoods. These stories will give you a taste of how these groups are championing the 10 Really Good Ideas from Section Two.

1 **Hanna Wellness Network** – Being proactive not reactive in the face of a pandemic

2 **Edmonton Community Development Company** – Project 10 is transforming derelict properties into homes

3 **Kahnawà:ke Collective Impact** – Using Collective Impact and a Food Sovereignty Initiative to connect community

4 **City of Victoria** – Hosting My Great Neighbourhood Community Virtuals to profile resident-focused initiatives and stories

5 **Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness** – Common Threads encouraging innovative ideas that build a sense of belonging for all

6 **Wolfville Front Street Community Oven** – Using food to build social connection and reduce isolation

7 **Calgary Alliance for the Common Good** – Taking small steps to build trust with a community of practice

8 **City of London** – Innovative techniques for community engagement

9 **Abundant Communities** – Connected residents produce safer neighbourhoods

10 **South Kootenay** – Engaging community to build an age-friendly community Aligning its Sustainable Development Strategy to the SDGs

1 Hanna Wellness Network **– Being proactive not reactive in the face of a pandemic**

Like many small towns across Canada, Hanna – an Alberta prairie town located an hour northeast of Drumheller with a population and catchment area of 3,700 – had to pivot and adjust in their community engagement initiatives when the pandemic hit.

It was the Hanna Wellness Network, a collective of members from local organizations, municipalities and volunteers, who heeded the call. Equipped with research results from a community-based assessment they had conducted in 2019, the Network was ready to create supportive

Photo courtesy of the
Hanna Wellness Network

community environments that not only got people active but enhanced their community belonging – a crucial learning from the results of the assessment.

According to Molly Hanson-Nagel, the Community Health Promotion Facilitator for Alberta Health Services, the start of the pandemic threw a "curve ball" at their initial ideas. But due to the network's diversity of members and perspectives, they were able to get creative and think outside the box. The response "really showed our resiliency as a community," she explained.

With indoor gatherings restricted, the network resorted to outdoor winter activities:

- They worked with residents to build snow hills in town for kids to toboggan on.
- They lit pathways so walkers could walk safely.
- They cleared a lake so skaters could get out and enjoy a frozen landscape.

Other exciting activities included a Crokicurl rink (a hybrid between a crokinole board and a curling rink) and a ski trail built by a local resident who groomed a trail around the perimeter of the town. The activities were not only fun, safe, accessible and inclusive, they also created a sense of ownership and belonging for the residents.

An important lesson is that the network was active in their community engagement efforts prior to the pandemic. In fact, they had just formed and begun their work as a network in 2019 when they became one of 20 rural communities to

participate in the Alberta Healthy Communities initiative. This initiative is designed to create supportive physical, social, economic and policy environments to reduce cancer and chronic disease risk. At the heart of this lesson learned is that it's better to be proactive then reactive.

The network is now looking to create a Block Trailer that's full of tables, barbeques and other supplies that can make it easy for communities to host block parties. The trailer will also have billboards with all the great things happening within the community and advertisements on the importance of connection!

Photo courtesy of the Hanna Wellness Network

2 Edmonton Community Development Company – Project 10 is transforming derelict properties into homes

The founding of the Edmonton Community Development Company (ECDC) was a key recommendation in the End Poverty Edmonton Road Map approved by Edmonton City Council in 2016.

In September 2020, the ECDC launched Project 10 with the goal of buying, demolishing and redeveloping 10 derelict properties into affordable homes to be marketed to families and first-time homebuyers. Project 10 was propelled by an outcry from residents within the urban neighbourhoods of McCauley and Alberta Avenue where the density of derelict homes was high and visible. These abandoned buildings attracted drugs, gangs, violence and vandals. Despite the lack of safety and peace of mind, the residents of these neighbourhoods expressed a lot of pride in where they lived and wanted a better community.

If successful, Project 10 would attract families and first-time home buyers to properties that were otherwise vacant, increasing the population density of the neighbourhoods. An increase in population density would, in turn, increase safety (eyes on the streets) and property values; it would attract small businesses, business investment and, most importantly, bring back a sense of safety and community well-being for all residents.

Photo courtesy of the Edmonton Community Development Company

An endeavor of this nature brings with it a lot of challenges. As written on the ECDC Project 10 page, found here:

> *Due to the multifaceted challenges of neighbourhood development and the significant number of such properties in urban core neighbourhoods, it can take years to turn properties like these into new developments that have a positive impact. Also, many of these properties exist in communities with aging infrastructure—therefore, redeveloping those properties into the sort that will contribute to neighbourhood revitalization will require cross-sector partnerships, government funding, private sector investment, and collaboration with developers and builders.*

It's important to mention that engagement with residents throughout the process has been a crucial piece to the success of Project 10. After the purchase of a property, the ECDC staff would drop off flyers containing contact information and an explanation for neighbours of what the plans were for the property. Before construction began, the ECDC would organize a Zoom call with residents to inform them of the progress and upcoming developments. Suggestions from neighbours have led to the ECDC incorporating front porches or decks into the building designs so that homeowners could have a place to sit out on and interact with neighbours passing by.

At the time of writing, the ECDC has purchased seven buildings and are well on their way to meeting their goal of creating properties that can house 24 families.

Photo courtesy of the Edmonton Community Development Company

③ Kahnawà:ke Collective Impact – Using Collective Impact and a Food Sovereignty Initiative to connect community

The Kahnawà:ke Collective Impact is a long-term, grassroots movement to foster greater collective action to address social and economic issues in the community. We support and champion positive change that nurtures a thriving Kanien'kéhaka community rooted in a connection to our culture, identity and traditions.

– Website for the Kahnawà:ke community

The success of the Kahnawà:ke Collective Impact (KCI) is a two-fold story of how to address and solve community issues by taking an Asset-

Courtesy of the KCI

Based Collective Impact approach and discovering what's profoundly important to the community.

 On September 6, 2019, the KCI Action Team held an open house that attracted 200 members from the community. The purpose of the open house was to give community members a voice on the community's six main priorities (food sovereignty, language and culture, wholistic health and wellness for youth, economic development, family, and a community plan to fulfill the Kahnawà:ke vi-

Courtesy of the KCI

sion) to build and share their opinions and provide feedback on how best to address these priorities. By engaging the community in this fashion, the KCI team showed the community that they listened and valued the community input. This authentic engagement helped empower members to contribute their time, skills and gifts in ways that suited them and all who were involved.

Although all six priorities were deemed important and interconnected, the top priority expressed by members was a Food Sovereignty Initiative.

Brandon Cross, the projects manager of KCI, and Kayla Cross, the Administrative Assistant of KCI, expressed that having a food sovereignty initiative as the main priority for the community was not surprising.

Photo courtesy of the Kahnawà:ke Collective Impact

As explained by Brendan:

> *The right to food, which is sufficient, safe, secure, healthy and appropriate, to use and share in a socially and environmentally safe and sustainable way. Nutritious food is needed for an active, healthy life and this knowledge must be utilized and passed on to the next seven generations.*

Food has been central to preserving Kahnawà:ke culture, and having the community come together around traditional Kahnawà:ke foodways would certainly be embraced by both younger and older generations.

Despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the leaders, students and volunteers who took part in the Food Sovereignty Initiative showed resiliency in fulfilling many envisioned projects. They planted the traditional Three Sisters (corn, beans and squash) Communal Garden and held workshops around traditional planting, growing, harvesting and seed-saving techniques. As a result of the Food Sovereignty Initiative, over 300 community members including those in need ate and bonded over traditional Kahnawà:ke foodways and became more connected to the food and each other.

At the time of writing, the Kahnawà:ke Food Sovereignty Initiative is completing its second year and is looking forward to growing and fulfilling the initiative again next year.

4 City of Victoria – My Great Neighbourhood Community Virtuals

Prior to the pandemic, the City of Victoria Neighbourhood Team invited residents and organizations to participate in an annual one-day community development event in the form of an indoor block party. City staff took the opportunity to educate and engage citizens about various grants, city initiatives and resources available to them. Also on hand was local entertainment, food, games and activities and guest speakers. When the pandemic hit, the city had to postpone their annual event and find new creative ways to engage with its residents.

Inspired by a screening of the film *The Great Disconnect* held by Tamarack in the summer of 2019, the Neighbourhood Team created an online lunch-and-learn program called Community Virtuals. Its purpose was to profile resident-focused city programs and resident-led success stories from these programs. A few examples of success stories and programs that were presented in season one of the Community Virtuals includes topics like the boulevard gardening initiative, the Trees in Cities United Nations Challenge, and placemaking and the power of community art. Staff recorded these events and posted them on the city website so people could watch at any time.

The outcome of Community Virtuals is that it provided the city the opportunity to support,

empower and inspire residents to get involved in initiatives they might be passionate about or perhaps start their own project. By acting as catalysts and partners, city staff were able to connect residents to each other and support residents with resources, which has led to building social capital and resiliency; overall, it is truly making neighbourhoods great places to live. The Community Virtuals also gave the Neighbourhood Team the opportunity to support projects through the grant program, which many residents have taken advantage of.

By being available online, Community Virtuals provided staff members with a unique opportunity to extend their reach into the community in a way that wasn't possible before. While an annual event can bring a lot of people together, it can exclude many others as well. As a by-product of the initiative, Community Virtuals opened lines of communication within different departments of the City of Victoria, as well as with organizations within the city already doing amazing work. Since introducing Community Virtuals, other departments were influenced to start their own online forums, providing detailed information on very specific programs.

The City of Victoria has recently launched its second season of Community Virtuals and is looking to expand on the successes of its first season.

Residents

Community Virtuals

MY GREAT
Neighbourhood
COMMUNITY VIRTUALS

Get Connected, Get Inspired, Get Funded

Looking for inspiration to make your neighbourhood even better?

Meet us online for our *Community Virtuals* lunch & learn program. Topics are centered around ideas to help build strong, resilient neighbourhoods, including personal connections within communities.

Wed, Oct 20, 2021 | noon - 1:30pm
Local Champions - Building Community from the Ground Up

Register: localchamp.eventbrite.ca

Are you a community leader-in-waiting? Or maybe interested in advancing some of your innate leadership skills? This session includes an overview of the program along with past participants talking about their experience and some of the great champion projects. Join us as we discuss what it's like to become a Local Champion through a City program that builds foundational skills, confidence and connections to help you become more active and engaged in your neighbourhood.

Wed, Nov 17, 2021 | noon - 1:30pm
A Community Where Nothing is Wasted

Register: nothingwasted.eventbrite.ca

Every day across the City of Victoria, over 120 tonnes of materials are disposed and sent to the landfill. This includes demolished buildings, uneaten food and paper packaging, and old clothes and furniture. Zero Waste Victoria was adopted in 2020 to tackle our waste challenges, with a target of 50% reduction in landfill disposal by 2040. Learn more about Zero Waste Victoria and how residents and visitors are making a difference in the City's waste reduction efforts.

Previous Community Virtuals
Wed, Sept 15, 2021 | Victoria Together Against Graffiti
To learn more about graffiti prevention, click here and/or to volunteer with VTAG contact Neighbourhood Liaison, Gary Pemberton at gpemberton@victoria.ca.

Sidebar navigation
- About Victoria
- Archives
- Arts & Culture
- Building or Renovating
- City Grants
- City Services for Residents
- Climate Action
- Community Planning
- Connect With the City
- Events
- Housing Strategy
- Neighbourhoods
  - City Services
  - Community Virtuals
    - My Great Neighbourhood Grant Program
    - Neighbourhoods and the City
    - Resources and Partnerships
    - Tools and Resources
- Parking
- Parks
- Property Taxes
- Public Safety
- Recreation
- Streets & Transportation
- Utilities
- Waste Collection
- Water, Sewer & Stormwater
- Youth
- Zero Waste

Contact Info
City of Victoria
250.385.5711
Email Us

Related Links
- Neighbourhoods
- Contact the City
- Submit a Service Request
- Connect Newsletter

COVID-19 Response & Recovery

5 Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness – Common Threads encourage innovative ideas that build a sense of belonging for all

The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness is a non-profit centre promoting partnerships, research and advocacy, dedicated to reducing social isolation and building social connectedness. Their programming reaches a wide range of community members and intersects a range of complex challenges. One of their initiatives is known as Common Threads, which aims at creating a sense of belonging for newcomers in Montreal.

Launched in 2019, Common Threads involves a citizen-led approach towards supporting newcomers, who themselves represent more than

Photo courtesy of the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness

30 countries. Part of this program is Common Thread's Welcome Sessions, a weekly offering run by a team of volunteer and community members who connect with asylum seekers in order to provide social connection and education on assets available within the Montreal area.

> *"I feel like we're a family or when I speak to you on Zoom, I feel like I'm not alone in my room."*
>
> – Common Threads participant

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that over <u>96% of the irregular crossings into Canada involving asylum-seekers happened at Quebec's border with New York</u>. Priya Nair, Project Lead for Common Threads, said that, as the initiative began in 2019, a key challenge that the team noticed was that when asylum seekers arrived, they often felt disconnected from the larger Montreal community. With challenges around navigating the city and lack of belonging, many newcomers are rushed into neighbourhoods without an opportunity to become formally introduced to their new community. Common Threads' Welcome Sessions attempt to bridge that gap, providing a citizen-led approach to providing a warm welcome, dispelling myths around resettlement and providing people with more orientation towards the community resources that are available to them.

In 2019, Common Threads, along with the support of various community partners, hosted their Welcome Sessions at Montreal's Atwater Library.

With a location next to a YMCA residence, this provided a community hub that participants could access. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the Welcome Sessions shifted from in person events to one-on-one phone calls between volunteers and participants. The organizers eventually changed their approach again, switching to online video calls because they found that this was a convenient space to create community and have multiple people in a virtual space be able to interact with one another. With significant changes in the structure and delivery of their program, they were faced with questions of how to foster connectedness and solidarity in a virtual space while also providing community outreach.

At its heart, Common Threads is about establishing human connection with people and making sure they feel welcomed and that their gifts are appreciated. Along with supporting newcomers as they navigate a new environment, the program helps build a sense of social capital and connectedness.

In terms of what is next for Common Threads, they see a hybrid version of the program that includes online and in-person connection as a part of their overall vision. They have noticed benefits from the virtual model alongside the deep connections that you can create in an in-person environment. Their hope is to scale to other regions, potentially in Quebec and through the rest of Canada, with partnerships and collaborations that focus on building strong bonds between community members.

6 Wolfville Front Street Community Oven – Using food to build social connection and reduce isolation

"If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime."

– Chinese proverb, though the same can be said about pizza

In the small university town of Wolfville, Nova Scotia, the Front Street Community Oven is using food to build social connection and reduce isolation. Tucked in the Rubie Tufts Nature Park, this oven operates as the centre of a not-for-profit organization, one that is a part of a broader movement of using food as a form of community development. The organizers' aim is to provide a stronger sense of community while celebrating cultural diversity through the preparation of food.

Created in May 2019 in partnership with the Town of Wolfville and supported with funding from the province and the community, this oven is an example of an innovative, citizen-led approach to deepening community. They successfully held 35 events during the first year of operation and had big plans for 2020, which included building an enclosure for the oven site.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the community oven pivoted to provide a safe and inclusive environment that was needed more than ever. As a result, this space provided both nourishment and social connection for those facing restrictions due to the pandemic.

The community oven can be freely booked by any residents in the community, who are also invited to attend demonstrations to learn how to create pizza dough. Those who are clients of the local foodbank can be provided with all the ingredients needed to bake. With an open and inclusive model, this oven has the potential to address food insecurity.

During the pandemic, coordinator Duncan Ebata wrote a guide on how to Start a Community Oven, supported by funding from the Edge Innovation Program of the United Church of Canada. Originally written to support the Bedford United Church as it created its own community oven, this guide is designed for citizens, associations and municipalities interested in developing ovens of their own.

Courtesy of the Front Street Community Oven

7 Calgary Alliance for the Common Good – Taking small steps to build trust with a community of practice

The Calgary Alliance for the Common Good is a non-partisan, non-profit alliance of congregations, unions, schools and community groups representing more than 35,000 people. The Alliance was created a little over five years ago and came together with the goal of helping members organize the power of their communities to shape a just and compassionate Calgary.

The Alliance focuses on five major societal issues:

- Basic income
- Social isolation
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Environmental causes
- Mental health

The work is dispersed amongst 32 member institutions that coordinate and collaborate to address these issues.

Sometime in 2020, the Alliance realized that there was a gap in its capacity to deepen community within Calgary neighbourhoods. The member institutions were predominantly interacting amongst each other and were lacking an understanding of what was truly needed at the block level. One reason for this is an issue that most big cities like Calgary face: urban sprawl. Add the physical distancing measures brought on by the

COVID-19 pandemic, which made creating social connections amongst neighbours that much more challenging.

In response, the Alliance secured a grant to create the Abundant Communities: Calgary Neighbourhood Block Program, which was led by a very inspired and experienced community organizer Jodi Lammiman.

Jodi took an ABCD approach in deepening community ties across 13 neighbourhoods. As with many initiatives with a big vision, 13 neighbourhoods ended up being one too many to take on

all at once. She also came to the realisation that trust needed to be built before neighbour connections could be made.

By taking a step back, Jodi began organizing an online monthly community of practice that was accessible to all neighbourhood residents as well neighbourhood associations. The objective was to connect residents, generate ideas and create a co-learning experience for everyone involved. She also partnered with the Community Development Learning Initiative (CDLI), a member organisation that connects residents to learnings about ABCD.

It was through this community of practice and the partnership with the CDLI that Jodi learned about other local heroes and community members doing great work within their neighbourhoods. This community of practice facilitated connections neighbours with similar interests, as well as those working on similar initiatives. Every community of practice meeting spurred new members and new ideas, and individuals began not only building trust but social capital.

A couple of success stories include:

- community members partnering to work with the municipality install an orchard; and
- two participants putting together a community grief handbook for residents.

Whether the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good renews the Abundant Communities: Calgary Neighbourhood Block Program or not, Jodi hopes that the trust and relationships that the residents have started will continue to grow and that the learning lives on.

8 City of London – Innovative techniques for community engagement

As Canada's 11th largest city, London, Ontario, needed a plan to serve the array of different communities that hold its 400,000 residents. What resulted, the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (LSNS), is built around the idea that "the heart and essence of every city and community are its neighbourhoods."

Through this plan, London has shown a commitment to resident engagement, with cross-departmental collaborations to shape the vision for the city. The city has recognized residents as having unique expertise about their neighbourhoods and valued the opportunity to work alongside residents to support leadership development and capacity at the neighbourhood level as well as providing opportunities for social capital to grow.

This strategy is fundamentally resident driven and encourages resident participation and engagement to help make all of London's neighbourhoods stronger. In total, over 4,500 Londoners contributed to the development of this plan. Having a plan in place to guide the actions of London's strategy has involved taking a multidisciplinary approach and working alongside stakeholders and champions in the community.

London's effective community engagement involved introducing a range of activities and considered the principles of participation, equity and inclusion. Some of their activities included the following:

- Development of a neighbourhood small event fund
- Development of a neighbourhood events team and neighbourhood decision-making process
- Organizing pop-ups at events
- Hosting kitchen conversations
- Planning a photo contest
- Implementing a kid survey
- Creating an online portal on Neighbourhood Decision-Making used to inform projects, generate ideas and vote on favourite ideas

Now over a decade into their Neighbourhoods Strategy, the City of London has demonstrated what is possible when neighbourhoods are empowered, connected and involved in making decisions from the start about the places where they live, work and play. The LSNS is a result of showing up in neighbourhoods and asking residents how they would like to shape their spaces and programming. By taking time to build a culture of cross-collaboration internally and investing in a flexible and resident-led approach, the LSNS provides a guideline for how to engage citizens on a neighbourhood level.

By shifting to this mindset, London's community engagement process became a collaborative effort as city staff and the resident task force worked together. This set the stage for developing an internal culture that valued both community engagement and the focus on building strong neighbourhoods. The success and sustainability of the LSNS can be attributed in part to how the strategy aligns with the Council's focus areas and strategic directions. Where it gains extra traction is in the cross-integration between the LSNS and other city strategies. Neighbourhoods and residents now play a significant role in all city-building initiatives, with LSNS playing important roles in numerous cross-departmental strategies.

9 Abundant Communities – Connected residents produce safer neighbourhoods

Community safety focuses on both the perception and experience of safety and crime within a neighbourhood. Producing community safety is complex and must consider many interrelated factors. Providing a sense of safety and emergency preparedness in our neighbourhoods involves actively connecting and building relationships with our neighbours.

The Block Connector initiative developed in Edmonton has been an innovative way of creating safety though social connectedness. Utilizing the strengths and input of local citizens, the Neighbourhood Services section of the City of Edmonton co-developed Abundant Community Edmonton (ACE). With inspiration from John McKnight and Peter Block's book, *The Abundant Community*, the ACE's process of developing a Block Connector initiative has had some impact on community safety.

The Block Connector initiative involves an ABCD approach that uncovers and connects residents' gifts, skills, abilities and knowledge. It puts an emphasis on creating more neighbour-to-neighbour connections through shared activities and interests with the intention to:

• increase social capital and broaden networks;

• grow the neighbourhood's positive sense of community; and

• effectively increase the neighbourhood's ability to provide solutions to some of their most pressing issues such as social isolation.

The assets of neighbours are celebrated and connected, encouraging neighbours to form new groups and associations that can increase neighbourliness. With increased connections at the neighbourhood level there is an increase in public safety, health and inclusion, while also creating new opportunities and connections for neighbourhood children and seniors.

The Block Connector program promotes safety because it focuses on the following areas, among others:

- Decreasing the sense of "Stranger Danger" because children learn the names of neighbours and residents get to know more about each other

- Building resident insight about each other's needs and schedules, encouraging people to watch out for each other

- Increasing safety through the creation of a Block Connector list, which can be used to connect in case of an emergency or disaster. Neighbours are often the first to respond when an unexpected situation occurs. Knowing your neighbours makes it easier to ask for help or offer help when it is needed most.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, it is more important than ever that we are connected to our neighbours and looking out for one another. A revival of the importance of the neighbour-to-neighbour relationships should be front and centre for municipalities. By strengthening local social capital, the City of Edmonton created the groundwork for healthy neighbourhoods before shutdowns and restrictions around social gatherings began. Many neighbourhood connections moved online or met outside to continue supporting each other. They have learned the potential for neighbourly relationships when it comes to guiding and supporting the physical, social and mental health of the people of Edmonton. By pivoting plans due to COVID-19, Edmonton used the foundation created by ACE to create a safer and more inclusive community.

There are some who think that police presence is the greatest contributor to whether residents feel safe and secure in their own neighbourhoods, but many studies show that there are two major – and non-policing-related – determinants of our local safety and security. One is how many residents in a neighbourhood know one another by name, and the other is how often they are present and associated in public outside their houses. The extent to which these factors are largely within a neighbourhood's own control is why most informed municipal leaders advocate for a block- or neighbourhood-level framework for connecting to keep neighbourhoods safe.

10 South Kootenay – Engaging community to build an age-friendly community

A pressing question that is facing communities across Canada is how to prepare for the trend of a rapidly aging population. It is expected that, by 2032, 25% of British Columbia's population will be over the age of 65. Through the Age-friendly BC initiative, the province is working with local governments and community stakeholders to create the conditions for citizens to socialize, contribute to and live independently in their communities. The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) is providing funding to support age-friendly community planning and projects across the province.

One example of an age-friendly community is the east shore of Kootenay Lake in BC. Within this region, the average age of residents in 2022 is 58 years old. Due to the aging population, residents are highlighting the need for communities to support the concept of *aging in place* in their rural, unincorporated neighbourhoods. With lower-density population spread across the region, their services are expected to support a diverse range of needs from aging residents.

The community successfully received a grant from UBCM to do an age-friendly assessment in their area, with the goal of identifying practical ways for community members to share their gifts, skills and resources while improving the livability of their community. Their age-friendly initiative

was launched in August 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite not being able to meet in person, the community has already achieved several important milestones. First, they formed an Age-Friendly Advisory Council made up of seniors, parents, representatives from seniors and youth organizations, and regional staff. The group has met regularly via Zoom.

As part of adapting, the community developed a COVID-safe community engagement approach. They put together a comprehensive survey and used engagement techniques appropriate for their demographic, such as one-on-one phone calls. They successfully connected with over 130 residents above the age of 55, asking questions about how they were coping during the pandemic and what they needed to thrive in their own homes and neighbourhoods. The survey included questions from the Sense of Community Index, a survey tool for measuring social inclusion and sense of belonging. Their age-friendly project addressed various topics of interest for residents including health care, transport, and food.

An outcome from this program involved the development of community halls as central hubs for residents to gather in the heart of the community in the east shore. Laverne Booth, a coordinator with the Age-Friendly Council, stated that their

"Travel Taps" program is aimed at re-envisioning four hubs that would transport residents to each of these spaces. Within each hub, community members are encouraged to provide programming and inclusion for a range of participants. Partnering with BC Healthy Communities, a community bus provides transportation to connect residents to hubs from across the region.

The program is also continuing to engage with residents using an ABCD approach. Their efforts to foster an age-friendly community are continuing, even as pandemic restrictions are lifted. With an innovative engagement process, they are learning how to best create meaningful connections and build a truly age-friendly community.

SECTION 4

10 Really Useful Resources

We have put together 10 useful resources that we think will help you to develop your neighbourhood strategy. We have broken them down into three sections that help you to build the case, put your plan together and, lastly, sustain your strategy.

Getting Started

1 **Deepening Community by Paul Born**

The hardest part is knowing how to start. In this book, you will read about the four pillars of deepening community: sharing our stories, enjoying one another, taking care of one another and working together for a better world.

2 **Building Your Case for a Neighbourhood Strategy**

To get approval for a strategy, it is necessary to build a business case that demonstrates why the strategy is needed and what the benefits of the strategy will be when it is finalized. The reasons and benefits of a strategy may seem perfectly obvious to you; they may not, however, be so apparent to decision-makers. A well-prepared business case can help your project stand out amongst the competing priorities. This guide is for municipal staff or community groups interested in building the case for the development of a Neighbourhood Strategy.

3 **Social Reconnection as a Solution**

A big part of getting started is doing your research and gathering data to use in your case for building a strategy. This podcast episode outlines how community is connected to our well-being and some of the solutions we can implement at the local level.

4 **Building Community into Neighbourhoods**

Neighbourhoods are one of the foremost opportunities available when it comes to fostering a sense of belonging. Neighbourhoods are home to an abundance of people with shared experience, while at the same time offering great diversity in personalities, experiences, gifts, cultures and backgrounds. In this webinar recording, Jim Diers talks about how to bring community back into neighbourhoods and how to create more vibrant connections in the places where we live.

Putting it Together

5 **Two Foundational ABCD Resources**

The ABCD Canada website and the Asset-Based Community Development at a Glance Guide are two great places to build your knowledge of the ABCD approach.

6 **Socially Connected Communities: Solutions for Social Isolation**

This report will help communities contribute to reframing the national conversation around social isolation, shifting toward one that recognizes the root causes of social isolation the need for systemic solutions. It is more important than ever for local leaders to work with residents to create socially connected communities.

7 **Kitsilano Case for a Neighbourhood Strategy**

This presentation features one of our Deepening Community members who shares her experience on how she is building the case for a Neighbourhood Strategy in Vancouver's Kitsilano neighbourhood.

8 **Happy City – Pavement-to-Plaza Wellbeing Assessment**

Can public space improve well-being? How we build and plan our cities and towns is critical to building connection and belonging. The Pavement to Plaza program supports residents with gains in social interaction, inclusion, place attachment and more.

Sustaining

9 **The Movement for Community-Led Development Assessment**

While policymakers increasingly recognize the value of community-led development (CLD), its complexity has made it difficult for programs to measure long-term impact. Over the past two years, this movement's collaborative research team has sought to understand the impact of CLD practices and the relationship between CLD and development.

10 **Build Healthy Places Network - A Policy Scan & Strategy**

Revitalizing and repairing healthy neighbourhoods through coordinated policy change can address systemic barriers, structural racism and other root causes of poor health outcomes for low-income communities.

SECTION 5

10 Ways to Get Started

1 **Find local champions**

If you look deeply enough, you'll find your local champions. They are the ones who know what is happening in the community; they know the neighbours' names. They're also the ones connecting neighbours, initiating projects and forming groups that enhance community well-being for all. Identifying your local champions opens lines of communication with stakeholders and influencers and, in turn, facilitates community engagement efforts amongst the community.

2 **Leverage asset-mapping to connect people**

Asset-mapping is a group exercise that allows communities to shift their perspectives and take stock of their gifts. Asset-mapping is more than gathering data for institutions; it involves building relationships between neighbours while mapping out the individuals, physical space, institutions, associations, stories and culture. This practice is designed to build a common view of what is considered important and acts as an initial step towards connecting people within community. You don't know what you don't have until you know what you have!

3 **Host a community celebration**

A community celebration is a great way to get neighbours and community members out, connected and having fun. It could be a talent show, block party or potluck, or it could be a larger event organized at a local park with music, artisans, artists and performers. Get in touch with your local talent, Business Improvement Association, community centre or municipality and make it happen!

4 **Have a viewing of *The Great Disconnect* documentary**

The award-winning documentary *The Great Disconnect* features our very own Paul Born and many other community leaders who will inspire citizens within your community to act, connect with neighbours and make your community a better place. Multiple municipalities, educational institutions, groups and community organizations across Canada have screened the film to both large and small audiences. Learn more and inquire about screening licensing by clicking here.

5 Build (safe and inclusive) spaces for people to meet

Human-centred city planning requires that we design spaces that are both safe and inclusive for all people in all neighbourhoods. Creating gathering places for community members to meet, reflect and play does more than helps shape community ties in neighbourhoods; it also presents health benefits, both physical and mental. People feel better and tend to be more active in attractive public spaces.

6 Get to know 10 of your neighbours

When neighbours know each other, streets are safer, trust is developed and people are happier. There's even evidence showing that children do better in school, there is less bullying and less discrimination. To dive deeper into the importance of knowing your neighbours, read Tamarack's article *Get to Know Your Neighbours, They Might Just Save Your Life* by Deepening Community Associate Director Heather Keam.

7 Think and act like a movement: Take stock of what you are doing and put it all together in a strategy

Being adaptable and forward thinking is important for moving any plans ahead. It is also crucial to provide structure and define goals when building momentum towards community change. Having a mindset built around acting like a movement allows space for long-term planning and visionary thinking.

8 Know your audience and tailor your communication strategy

When we are engaging champions and people in positions of power, there are often varying motivations and agendas at play. When trying to build a shared understanding and common vision, we need to meet people where they are at. Being able to adjust and tailor our messaging is important for communicating our ideas and hopes for our community.

9 **Develop robust community networks that connect households, neighbourhoods, associations and local government**

Each neighbour, association and government agency should work in tandem to remove barriers towards connections for community members. Understanding which lane each of these groups occupies is important for knowing one another's roles in relation to making a more robust network of connected citizens.

10 **Put citizens at the centre and create space for solutions to emerge from the ground up**

Taking a top-down approach to building community does not invite sustained community efforts. Having an emphasis on how citizens can and should provide solutions to their most pressing issues is a key component of deepening community. Institutions and associations should consider how they are holding space for citizens to have shared ownership for the change in their community.

MOVING FORWARD

What we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is the importance of community and how essential it is to our health and wellbeing. I come from a small town and know firsthand that change is not always widely accepted or embraced. However, throughout this pandemic, I have seen my small community rally together and have seen changes that have happened organically and quickly. In order to build on the momentum that's been created during the pandemic, we must honour the role community plays in our lives and how essential it really is – especially in times of change. One meaningful and impactful way to do that is to create a Neighbourhood Strategy.

Neighbourhood Strategies are a way of tracking and understanding the activities your community is already doing and aligning them in a way that helps you achieve a common vision for the future. They provide a roadmap for how we get from here to there, what routes to take and what detours to watch out for. Without a clear idea of where you are headed and how you plan to get there, communities run the risk of wasting time and effort and may fail to take advantage of opportunities as they emerge.

Developing a Neighbourhood Strategy is a way of intentionally claiming our communities as essential – a method of uncovering your community's objectives and taking the actions to reach them. We hope that this guide has helped you to see the possibilities of your community's roadmap and the steps you can take to celebrate and elevate your unique community to create a more vibrant and joyful place to live.

Heather Keam
Associate Director, Deepening Community

ABOUT

The Deepening Community Story

Over the last five years, Deepening Community has been a timely and powerful response to the growing social isolation, loneliness and disconnection occurring across Canada. As we navigate through challenging times and try to find a sense of normalcy in our lives, we know that community is the answer. One of the big lessons that COVID-19 has uncovered is that knowing your neighbours has been critical to getting through the social isolation of the pandemic. Tamarack's Deepening Community work has grown across Canada to address the need to build connected and resilient communities.

We have seen four key impacts over the last five years:

1. We defined the field of Deepening Community in Canada

2. We developed a growing membership of communities that are having an impact

3. We implemented and expanded our technology to support changemakers

4. We built a learning community to accelerate the impact of the movement to deepening community

The impact from this work within communities and across Canada is important. By defining the field, we have rooted the movement in a theoretical understanding of the issues and a practical understanding of what is happening on the ground in communities. Our growing membership implements this framework to develop positive change in communities, and our robust supports accelerate efforts and impacts locally. Finally, our growing learning community of nearly 8,000 learners is building the foundation to spread this movement throughout the rest of Canada. It is building the momentum to deepen community while ensuring efforts to tackle social isolation and loneliness are a priority across all levels of government

ENDING POVERTY
DEEPENING COMMUNITY
BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES
CLIMATE TRANSITIONS

Vibrant Communities
TAMARACK   INSTITUTE

Join the Movement

Deepening Community membership provides an opportunity to support cities to develop and implement their strategies, to create opportunities for significant peer-to-peer learning, to learn from what is happening in communities, to share good news broadly in Canada and to test out new ideas.

Deepening Community members are working to deepen their collective understanding of the power and possibility of community by developing strategies at the neighbourhood or city level. This growing pan-Canadian movement advances and

Deepening Community conference, 2017

increases our ability to learn from our peers and deepen our sense of community. We currently have 35 members from across Canada who are deepening community in the following ways:

1. Leveraging the assets of their whole communities to drive long-term change

2. Promoting citizen-led, multisector engagement and developing common agendas

3. Developing and implementing neighbourhood- or city-wide strategies for change

4. Investing in learning and evaluation every step of the way

5. Cultivating inclusive and equitable communities

6. Supporting policy- and systems-level changes

Each year, more communities are joining the Deepening Community network, helping to strengthen their collective learning and contribute to a national impact. Contact us to learn more about how we can support your community to develop a community strategy.

Join us!

Tamarack Institute
140 Westmount Road North
 Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3G6

www.tamarackcommunity.ca

𝓔 TAMARACK
I N S T I T U T E