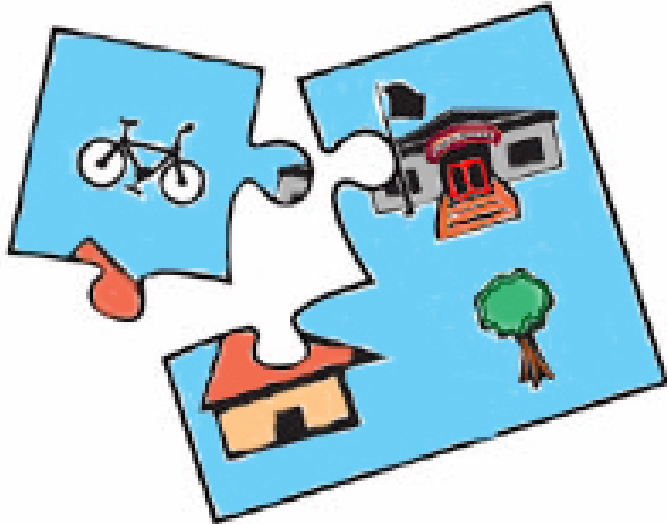


Neighbourhood Planning Initiative



Mandate

The Neighbourhood Planning Initiative gave citizens an active role in planning and determining the future of their neighbourhood. Citizens, business and property owners, community groups and other stakeholders collectively formed partnerships with the City to assess their neighbourhoods' strengths and weaknesses, and developed strategies together to improve the social, economic and physical infrastructure of their community.

Goals

- Developed a process for Neighbourhood Planning and aligned internal resources for the initiative to identify ways to improve the way we work across departments.
- Implement and evaluate the Neighbourhood Planning process in two demonstration sites by the end of 2008: one with an urban focus (Hintonburg) and one with a rural focus (Vars).

How Did We Help? Key Results & Impact

Continuous Service Improvement

- In May 2006, Council approved a planning process and pilot for two neighbourhoods, Hintonburg/Mechanicsville (urban) and Vars (rural).
- In 2006, a partnership was formed between the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative and the Centre for Urban Research at Carleton University. The Centre for Urban Research at Carleton University successfully secured a \$75,000 grant from Infrastructure Canada to provide resources and expertise to assist with the evaluation of the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative.
- Five Hintonburg community consultation sessions and 15 planning sessions with community stakeholders were held in 2006. A core neighbourhood stakeholder team called the Continuity Task Force was created to assist in developing the community involvement model and workplan.
- Since 2006, four Open Houses, 33 Continuity Task Force meetings and over 65 other initiative-related meetings were held on the Hintonburg initiative.

Overall Summary

The Neighbourhood Planning Initiative was identified to develop a new process to improve the way the City of Ottawa plans, designs, and (re)develops neighbourhoods across the City. Through collaboration and dialogue between City departments, residents and community stakeholders, the social, economic and physical infrastructure of local neighbourhoods, are enhanced based on the identification of local needs and priorities.

In order to explore the potential benefits of neighbourhood planning, the City of Ottawa committed to a pilot project to undertake a Neighbourhood Planning Initiative in the Hintonburg/West Wellington/Mechanicsville (Urban) and Vars (Rural) neighbourhoods.

The Neighbourhood Planning Initiative has provided residents in the two neighbourhoods with the ability to take an active role in determining what they would like for their neighbourhoods in the future. This initiative has also resulted in improved collaboration between departments within the City of Ottawa allowing for "one-stop" initiative planning and implementation, based on sharing ideas and identifying outcomes that can impact land use, social, and economic issues together.

- Planning for the Vars demonstration site began in September 2007. To date work has included site visits, area mapping, development and implementation of an initiative workplan. An initial community consultation meeting was held in September 2007, which allowed members of the community to ask questions and identify issues within their neighbourhood. A community steering committee was struck, and to date this body has held 9 meetings in the Vars community. The Committee felt that the issue of the group homes needed to be resolved prior to the initiative going ahead. A subgroup dealing with the community's concerns surrounding the group homes in the neighbourhood has had 3 meetings to date. As a result of these meetings, a workplan was developed to implement the next steps which involves the completion of a Neighbourhood Plan document. An Open House has been planned for June 2008 where the Vision Document developed by the community will be presented.

Prevention

- The Neighbourhood Planning Initiative team developed a place-based customized process and approach in addressing the unique needs and issues facing a community. This approach opened doors to creative solutions that made a significant difference at the neighbourhood level. Some examples of potential solutions to be considered for the Hintonburg Neighbourhood Planning Initiative include: the green roofs project that would pilot the introduction of green roofs intended to prolong the life cycle of the storm sewer system by delaying the run off during rainstorms and the introduction of a new designated bicycle route to be added along Spencer and Armstrong.

Collaboration

- This initiative has had a significant impact on cross-departmental collaboration and has resulted in shifting of departmental cultures for the three involved departments: Public Works and Services, Planning, Transit and the Environment, and Community and Protective Services. City staff considered issues from different perspectives and identified holistic opportunities and options. This increase in collaboration has resulted in positive impact at the neighbourhood level and clear benefits to the final products of the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative. Some examples of the results of this collaborative work include aesthetic improvements to be made to Somerset Square as well as a more comprehensive engagement with respect to the road reconstruction which is currently underway along Wellington Street.
- Over 85 meetings and 5 surveys (1763 surveys analyzed) in 2007 provided in-depth community consultation, which focused on neighbourhood needs and priorities. This level of consultation has ensured that the residents of the pilot sites have had meaningful and significant input into the look and feel of the neighbourhood they wish to live in. This extensive consultation has created a clear sense of ownership and pride for residents who have demonstrated true investment and interest in the outcome of the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative in their neighbourhood. The commitment of the community has been extraordinary and the departments involved are acknowledging the benefits of working collaboratively. The Vars initiative has included the completion of 2 surveys with 150 surveys analyzed to gain feedback on community needs and issues. This consultation contributed to the development of a workplan that includes participation from City staff from all departments and various branches including the Rural Affairs Office. Together with all sectors of the Vars community, a neighbourhood plan is in development.

Moving Forward

Both Neighbourhood Plan documents will be completed by year-end, at which time they will rise to Council along with a "Lessons Learned in the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative" report.

City of Ottawa staff members continue to take special note of the lessons learned and best practices to be used in other projects and initiatives.