



**Appendix B: CSD-2023-125**

Summary of Survey Responses from Neighbourhood Associations  
June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

## **APPENDIX B: Summary of Neighbourhood Association Survey Responses**

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, all affiliated Neighbourhood Associations were sent a link to an online survey asking for input on how to best address challenges with the outdated community centre operating model through a series of proposed recommended changes. Each NA was asked to complete one response to the survey, and all were given until May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to respond. 17 of the City's 26 affiliated associations responded to the survey.

The structure of the online survey for Neighbourhood Associations was organized around the following potential recommendations:

- 1. Expand the city's Leisure Access Program to cover some or all NA programs**
- 2. Fund the costs of NAs using Inclusion Support Workers**
- 3. Increasing resident use of community centres**
- 4. Expanding community centre hours of operations on weekends**
- 5. Modernizing the City's Affiliation Policy**
- 6. Comprehensive awareness campaign promoting community centres**
- 7. Multi-Year Partnership Agreements with Larger Neighbourhood Associations**
- 8. City support for changes**

Neighbourhood Associations were asked for suggestions on how the City might most effectively go about implementing the above changes if they were recommended by staff and approved by Council. They were also asked how City staff could best support NAs in implementing these proposed changes.

All the responses, suggestions and questions received from Neighbourhood Associations were considered carefully by staff, and a number of changes were made to staff's recommendations based on the input.

The following is a high-level summary of the responses received from Associations:

### **1. Expand the city's Leisure Access Program to cover some or all NA programs**

- The majority of responses were in favor of this suggestion, citing a need for consistency across all community centres and a focus on reducing barriers.

### **2. Fund the costs of NAs using Inclusion Support Workers**

- The majority of responses were in favor of this suggestion, citing a need for consistency across all community centres and a focus on reducing barriers.

### **3. Increasing resident use of community centres**

- The majority of responses were supportive of this idea, and many helpful suggestions and considerations were provided by NAs, such as:
  - Prioritization should be considered for areas of greatest social needs
  - The current registration system needs to be more user-friendly
  - Community needs should be assessed on an annual basis through data collection with community members to identify programming needs
  - Program development should be done in collaboration with other community centres and NAs to avoid duplication and share ideas

### **4. Expanding community centre hours of operations on weekends**

- The majority of responses were generally supportive of this recommendation, with helpful suggestions provided on how to best go about making these changes, such as:
  - Pilot expanded hours on weekends to test the community need, starting in the winter months when there is more of a need for indoor gathering space
  - Include additional uses within the expanded hours of operation such as warming/cooling centres, computer use and washroom access

### **5. Modernizing the City's Neighbourhood Affiliation Policy – EDI and Transparency**

- Many of the responses provided to these proposed recommendations included helpful points of consideration and suggestions around how to best implement changes, such as:
  - Staff supports to help with implementing any changes will be key to the success for NAs, particularly with the policy development/writing
  - Easy-to-use templates and example materials should be provided to NAs for any mandatory components
  - Many NAs addressed the issue of declining volunteer rates and wanting to ensure that any changes to the affiliation policy will not play a part in deterring volunteers to sit on NA boards
  - EDI training for members of NA boards was generally supported – a few NAs indicated that doing training every 2 years is too frequent, others indicated that it is not frequent enough
  - The proposed reinvestment policy around use of surplus funds should be designed as a flexible document
  - Overall support was seen for the requirements around financial accountability to the City, though several respondents expressed hesitation about the requirement of publicly posting financial statements due to the possibility of misinterpretation or a lack of understanding from the public of

how NAs are run and the need to hold reserve funds in order to cover unforeseen circumstances

## **6. Comprehensive awareness campaign promoting community centres**

- All survey respondents were very much in favor of this recommendation, with many suggestions made around how to best implement this idea, including:
  - Use a diversity of tactics when advertising community centre programming that go beyond internet-based communications such as social media, websites, and focus on flyers, door knocking, posters, and leveraging outside promotion companies to assist in awareness-raising
  - Promoting community centres at City-wide events through a booth
  - Host open houses at each community centre
  - Hold public events focused on vulnerable and difficult to reach populations
  - Advertise the City's commitment to have accessible and low/no cost programs for those in underserved populations
  - Advertise on busses, use digital screens throughout the City, partner with local groups

## **7. Multi-Year Partnership Agreements with Larger Neighbourhood Associations**

- Fewer responses were gathered in response to this recommendation, as there are just a handful of NAs who would fall into this category. For those who did respond, some of the comments include:
  - There definitely should be accountability that these associations are doing what they set out to do and that they are reinvesting in their local community
  - Multi-year agreements would support the NA and volunteers to plan for multiple years ahead
  - In our complex society, formal partnerships are very important to handle both the Neighbourhood and City liabilities
  - The priority should always be on providing programming to meet the needs of the community, the City should ensure that these agreements with larger NAs are taking that into account
  - Rules of conduct should be included in these multi-year partnerships for both the City and NAs, such as equitable dispute resolution mechanisms

## **8. City support for changes**

The final question of the survey asked NAs how the City can best support them in carrying out the changes if they are ultimately recommended by staff and approved by City Council. Many suggestions and comments were provided in response to this question, the most prominent themes are the following:

- Communication and transparency throughout the entire process is key

- The City should provide staff support for all approved changes to avoid putting more work on the already stretched volunteers who run the NAs
- Get all NAs representatives together for working sessions and face to face consultations
- Introduce changes slowly over time, pilot some things first and then evaluate before full implementation
- Any extra costs involved in fulfilling the recommended changes should be covered by the City