Report to Council

City of
Kelowna

Date: July 24, 2023

To: Council

From: City Manager

Subject: Building Strong Neighbourhoods

Department: Active Living & Culture

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from Active Living & Culture, dated July 24, 2023, that outlines the Strong Neighbourhoods program and Kelowna's Neighbourhood Associations;

AND THAT Council directs staff to develop a pilot program that supports and provides funding for Neighbourhood Associations as outlined in the report dated July 24, 2023, for Council consideration during the 2024 budget deliberations;

AND THAT Council Policy 305 Guidelines for Communications & Cooperation Between the City and Neighbourhood Associations be rescinded.

Purpose:

To provide Council with background information and opportunities to better support and engage with Neighbourhood Associations and advance the goals of the Strong Neighbourhoods program.

Background:
Strong Neighbourhoods:
Great cities are made up of strong neighbourhoods. In turn, it takes citizens that are inspired, involved, connected, and empowered to create strong neighbourhoods. Since 2014, the City's Strong Neighbourhoods team has been a catalyst for resident connection with the understanding that the more neighbours feel connected, the more they will contribute to a culture of care, increase sense of belonging and inclusion, enhance safety, and ultimately will lead to a more inclusive and livable city.

The Strong Neighbourhoods program provides tools and resources to support residents in creating the neighbourhoods they envision. This is achieved through various programs:
- Events
  - Neighbourhood events - provide support for neighbours to host get-togethers
  - Meet your Street kit – loan lawn games and connection resources for block socials

- o Community events – support school-based and other community led events
    - o Park & Play – activate neighbourhood parks to encourage families to go outside and connect with neighbours and friends
- Grants
    - o Neighbourhood Grants – offer up to $1,500 in matching grant funds to support hyperlocal projects that socially connect neighbours, enhance the neighbourhood through placemaking projects or involve neighbours sharing skills or talents with each other
    - o Youth Development & Engagement Grants – provide up to $1,000 in matching grant funds to support youth-led (13-19 years old) community building projects
- Recognition and Resources
    - o Neighbour Day - an annual celebration to meet a new neighbour, get to know neighbours even better, tackle a neighbourhood project, or lend a helping hand to a neighbour in need
    - o Kind Neighbour Kudos – neighbours recognize neighbours who make a difference, make contributions to the neighbourhood and stimulate neighbourhood engagement
    - o Good Neighbour Toolkits – provide resources to help neighbours connect, such as conversation starter cards, 'Hello Neighbour' door hangers and neighbourhood safety pamphlets.
    - o Block Connectors – residents committed to connecting face-to-face with the closest 10-20 neighbours on their block or apartment floor. They are dedicated to animating the block and inspiring others to share their skills, passions and talents.

Strong Neighbourhoods also plays a key role in making communities safer. In partnership with Community Safety, Block Connectors receive tips, tricks and best practices for keeping themselves and their neighbourhoods safer. They also play a role in Emergency Preparedness in building an understanding of what neighbours have pets or may need additional assistance in the event of an emergency.

Neighbourhood Associations:
Neighbourhood Associations (NA's) are non-profit organizations that run neighbourhood-level events and advocate for the interests and goals of residents within the neighbourhood.

Today, there are seven registered NA's under the BC Societies Act and one unincorporated organization in Kelowna. In addition, there are at least four neighbourhood groups interested in forming a non-profit organization and two NA's that are no longer active. Each association ranges in the number of members and level of activity. The chart below provides a snapshot of the existing organizations, using information provided by the NA as well as current population data from Environics Analytics:

Neighbourhood Association	Status	Membership	Population within boundary
Clifton Highlands Community Association	Active, registered non-profit	~40 paying members Mailing list: ~160 subscribers	Population: 1831 Households: 652
Kelowna Downtown Knox Mtn Neighbourhood Association	Active, registered non-profit	"low membership"	Population: 7328 Households: 3823
Kelowna Lands and Orchards (KLO) Neighbourhood Association	Active, registered non-profit	~50 paying members Mailing list: ~400 subscribers	Population: 15,692 Households: 7735
Kelowna South Central Association of Neighbourhoods (KSAN)	Active, registered non-profit	~65 paying members	Population: 13,372 Households: 6987
Kettle Valley Neighbourhood Association	Active, not registered	No paying membership Mailing list: ~600 subscribers	Population: 3466 Households: 1071
Okanagan Mission Resident's Association	Active, registered non-profit	~40 paying members Mailing list: ~200 subscribers	Population: 21,568 Households: 7332
Quail Ridge Residents Association	Active, registered non-profit	~461 paying members	Population: 1160 Households: 495
Rutland Residents Association	Active, registered non-profit	~30-40 paying members	Population: 32,480 Households: 12,547
Hall Road	Forming		
Glenmore	Interest in forming		
Wilden	Interest in forming		
Landmark	Interest in forming		
Belgo-Black Mountain	No longer active		
McKinley Landing Residents Association	No longer active		

Recognizing that Kelowna remains one of the fastest growing cities in Canada, with demographics that have changed substantially over the past ten years, the role of NA's in fostering community connection and social cohesion remains important.

Over the past 12 months, Strong Neighbourhoods set out to gain a better understanding of Neighbourhood Associations and how to best work with them moving forward. From May 2022 to January 2023, Strong Neighbourhoods held separate meetings with the board members of eight active NA's and three groups interested in forming an association. These meetings focused predominantly on how NA's can work more closely with Strong Neighbourhoods, however there was also valuable learning about the roles, responsibilities, expectations, capacity, mandate, strengths, and challenges of NA's that is pertinent to other City departments.

Key themes from the engagement include:

- **Role ambiguity** - nearly all groups saw their primary purpose as organizing the neighbourhood to be able to better represent their neighbourhood's needs and concerns to the City; however, there was uncertainty about what the City expects and requires of them for their voices to be considered. Additionally, many groups mentioned that being an information conduit from the City to residents and connecting and bringing the neighbourhood together were important roles for association.
- **Low membership** - Most NA's struggle to recruit members and most of their activities are board-led with few other volunteers. There is a clear discrepancy between the membership numbers and the population in the neighborhoods, in all cases.
- **Limited capacity** - Nearly all associations expressed an interest in growing their membership and doing more initiatives and events that brought neighbours together but felt their current capacity was already stretched. Additionally, the cost to start and maintain the operation of the organization, implement community events, recruit members, and have regular meetings were expressed as challenges. Many of the groups mentioned that they would have the capacity to do more connection and engagement initiatives for the neighbourhood if additional support was made available to associations (i.e., financial or rental space for meetings). Many groups also mentioned barriers such as the cost to print flyers, maintain a website, or advertise through various online media channels.

In addition to the City's engagement, some of the NA's met as a group in January to discuss their collective goals and challenges. This meeting resulted in five NAs writing a letter to Mayor and Council requesting a review and update to Policy 305 along with several requests to help improve their capacity:

- **Operational funding** – financial support towards administration, ongoing operations, and events/initiatives.
- **Meeting space** – access to public meeting space at minimal to no cost
- **Communication support** - ability to utilize City resources to better reach and inform residents of their NA representative.

Discussion:
Community Development Opportunities
NA's are an engaged group of residents who care about their community. Through the Strong Neighbourhood program and other City capacity building initiatives, the NA's could be a greater asset to community development and neighbourhood connectedness. They are uniquely poised to host events, share neighbourhood-level opportunities for residents to get involved in their neighbourhood, and foster welcoming, safe, connected communities in a variety of ways:

- Animating neighbourhood spaces
- Building connections between neighbours and hosting gatherings
- Identifying neighbourhood enhancement projects as well as safety and sustainability initiatives

Other communities, such as the City of Waterloo, have developed *Affiliation Agreements* which outline the role of the NA's and clarify expectations of the municipality. The intention of these agreements is to identify value alignment between the city and the NA as they work together to build stronger communities. These agreements enable NA's to become a vehicle for building stronger neighbourhoods by furthering community development initiatives.

Pilot Program:
With Council's endorsement, staff are considering the development of a three-year pilot program that would enhance NA's abilities to build strong, connected, safe neighbourhoods and provide NA's with some operating funding to further increase their capacity.

The Pilot Program would consist of an agreement that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations; an operating grant component; on-going collaboration with a focus on community development; and clear evaluation criteria to measure success.

This would be accomplished through an Affiliation Agreement that the NA's would enter into with the City which would outline the NA's commitment to enhance neighbourhood connectedness and safety through a variety of channels:
- Attend City-hosted workshops that build capacity:
    - Asset Based Community Development
    - Enhancing community safety
    - Emergency Preparedness
    - Effective communication and engagement with neighbours
- Deliver neighbourhood events
- Offer programs and workshops for neighbours
- Coordinate community safety and emergency preparedness initiatives
- Support neighbourhood enhancement projects
- Participate in City events such as park openings and Park & Play
- Recruit and provide volunteers for community events

To support the NA with these initiatives as well as their other base business, the City would provide a small amount of grant funding to those participating in the pilot program. These funds could be used for renting space for meetings, marketing initiatives, materials, and supplies for events, permits and insurance.

The pilot program recognizes the potential of NA's to become an integral part of the Strong Neighbourhood program. By formalizing the relationship with NA's and increasing their capacity, they become a vital part of community development and a key element in taking Strong Neighbourhoods to the next level. This program also addresses the requests from the NAs' letters to Council by providing a small amount of funding, and more clarity on mutual roles and expectations.

Should Council endorse this approach, staff will prepare a budget submission for consideration in the 2024 provisional budget.

Policy #305
Council Policy #305 provides direction on how the municipality should work with NA's. It outlines the scope of projects where NA's will be engaged by the City, as well as financial support and other administrative support provided by the City. However, it was developed 21 years ago and has not been amended since 2010. There has been substantial growth and change in the City over that period that is not reflected in the policy such as, technology and media used to engage and communicate with residents. It also does not reflect the evolution of City departments and how they engage with NA's so there are gaps to be considered when going forward. The proposed Pilot Program sets a broader

framework for interactions between the City and Neighbourhood Associations than the Policy does. Staff recommend Council Policy 305 be rescinded, and a new policy be considered once the Pilot Program is complete.

Conclusion:
Neighbourhood Associations are uniquely positioned to advance the goals of Strong Neighbourhoods through increasing connections among neighbours, improving communication, volunteerism, and engagement. At the same time, they are asking for clarification as to the City's expectations of them and willingness to support them. With Council's endorsement, staff will create a pilot program to engage with Neighbourhood Associations and develop an Affiliation Agreement which outlines how NA's can access additional funds to promote neighbourhood connectedness, safety, and overall well-being. This project will be brought forward to the 2024 budget deliberations for consideration by Council.

Internal Circulation:
Community Communications and Community Engagement
Planning and Development Services
Community Safety
Office of the City Clerk

Considerations applicable to this report:
Existing Policy: Council Policy 305 was approved in May 2002 to improve communications between the City and Neighbourhood Associations and was last updated in 2010. It is out of date, and the proposed Pilot Program sets a broader framework for interactions between the City and Neighbourhood Associations than the Policy does. Staff recommend Council Policy 305 be rescinded, and a new policy be considered once the Pilot Program is complete.

2022 City of Kelowna Community Trends Report

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:
Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:
Financial/Budgetary Considerations:
External Agency/Public Comments:
Communications Comments:

Submitted by: Mariko Siggers

Approved for inclusion: J. Gabriel

Attachments:
2023-07-24 Presentation – Building Strong
Council Policy 305

cc: