

# Community Social Planning

## What are the issues that are most important to people that need to be dealt with?

1. Poverty
2. Homelessness
3. Lack of employment
4. Mental health
5. Drug Issues
6. Lack of accessibility to public amenities such as public washrooms.

Even though there is funding from governments to support organizations, there is a disconnection between the citizens who are affected by an issue and the governments and organizations that provide support. Overall, there is ineffective communications among organizations, governments and citizens due to:

- Lack of information
- Citizens who need support seem to be lost on whom they should ask for help
- Lack of support from all levels of government
- Overlap in the support provided by organizations
- Lack of accessibility to information such as internet.

Citizens also lack awareness of poverty issues, mental issues, and homelessness issues in the city. There is a misconception of the true nature of poverty. For instance, providing a shelter to a homeless person does not necessarily mean it solves the issue of poverty.

## How should these issues be dealt with?

- Improve the complex communication between the stakeholders, organizations, and the government
- There should be a halfway meeting point in which citizens, organization and the government can collaborate on the issue
- Show that there are programs available for these issues
- Affordable housing will reduce mental stress
- Connect the citizens through social networking
- Build trust between citizens and the organization

## How can we put these into action?

- Commitment of the government to support the programs that deal with the issues
- We need to break down the barriers and silos to create a shared focus.
- Bring the people together, discuss the issues
- Invite stakeholders in a strategic discussion session and build a strategic plan that is set up for long term plan, and every year, work on what we want to achieve.
  - This way, the people will stay united and focus in one common goal

- do this in a non-confrontational way and have answers come from the stakeholders
- Put pressure on the provincial government to avoid inflation of tax
- Power-holders (councillors, mayor, social services personnel) should have first-hand experience to truly understand the problem and to understand what people most need and want. This will build trust and connection between the power-holders and citizens

# Strong Neighbourhoods

## WHERE is the heart of your community?

- the popular bar near my house
- the school
- community center

But the community center only has specific programming for age groups. If you aren't in the age group, there isn't anything for you. The scope is too limited.

## WHO makes our communities strong?

- Citizens aren't sure whose responsibility this is.
  - Do we have a point person?
  - How do we connect to them?
  - How do we even find out?
- We'd like a booklet with information about our neighborhood: services, events, connections.
- There's a lack of information distribution in our neighborhood. There are great things going on, and we want to know about it!
- We are looking for CONNECTION.

## Is the neighborhood the responsibility of the region or the city?

- This isn't clear to anyone!
- People feel shuffled between city and region on neighborhood issues.
- good transit (a regional issue) helps families thrive
- Citizens want clarity: WHAT is a city issue? WHAT is a region issue?

We have strong connections between our school/families and the neighborhood. We want strong relationships amongst city to school to neighborhoods.

We want our **Neighborhoods** to be **INCLUSIVE**.

People are disengaged and do not participate in politics! How do we engage them and help those who feel left out, get involved?

## WHAT is a strong neighborhood?

- Unified voice
- Street party
- Community meeting places e.g. Queen Street Commons Cafe)
- Schools

We like multi-purpose spaces with integrated schools and community centers.

# Accessibility and Inclusion

## 1. What limits our community from being fully accessible and inclusive, physically and socially?

- Sidewalks
  - Sidewalk conditions-due to weather conditions like snow, ice, slippery leaves
  - Construction leaving less available sidewalks/paths
  - Lack of sidewalks on some streets
  - Lack of accessible sidewalks-some have “bumps” making it more difficult for people who use wheelchairs to manage
- Public Transit
  - Bus fare for seniors-prices have gone up 20% in 5 years
  - Difficult for people who are unemployed to search for jobs or go to interviews, if they cannot afford bus fare
  - Lack of bus routes-the 18 Guelph Street bus route was removed in April, leaving the 6 Bridge as the only bus route that stops near the Emergency Food Hamper Program on Guelph Street. Patrons must walk up a hill from Hampers to take the bus, making it less accessible.
  - No direct route leading to the Waterloo Recreation Centre
  - Need bus routes to go directly to community centres, grocery stores
- Unemployment
  - Low employment rate of people with disabilities
- Subsidized Housing
  - Tends to be located in the suburbs, far from downtown
  - Should be closer to community centres and grocery stores
- Lack of accessible housing
  - Need to create VisitAble Housing-more accessible, bathrooms on the ground floor
- Event accessibility
  - Need accessibility at all Kitchener events and all venues
  - Shuttle bus to events (example-Oktoberfest)

## 2. What responsibilities do local elected officials have for ensuring all people are able to participate fully, year round, in the day to day life of our community?

- Inclusive environment needs to be established throughout the region, need to work on inclusiveness in schools, elected officials can set an example, make sure the opinions of marginalized groups throughout the region are heard
- Look into creating more subsidized bus fare programs, or cheaper bus fares at certain times (non-peak hours)
- Encourage home builders to use the VisitAble Housing model
- A possible change of terms-“*universal access*” instead of “*accessibility*”

- Advocate for buttons to open doors automatically at all apartment buildings
- Consider mixed incoming (immigrant) housing-creating communities of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds
- Need more accessible information on sidewalk clearing, to hold the right people accountable
- Advocate for a program where snow and ice is cleared on sidewalks for people with disabilities and seniors-pay students or people who are unemployed to clear them
- Advocate for more accessible parking spots in the downtown core, free parking for these spots
- Raise awareness about bus stops where it is difficult to lower the accessibility ramp on the bus-unsafe on some streets

**3. What is needed to make it possible for public bodies, community organizations and citizens to raise concerns and work together to create a more accessible and inclusive community?**

- Need more information be made clear to the public as to who to contact on a certain issue (example-snow clearing outside of school-is it a school board trustee issue or city council ward issue?)
- Phone numbers and emails have to be made clear to the public, and need more support so that caller wait times can decrease

**4. What is most important to be done?**

- Review and evaluate current programs, seek feedback from the public
- Must seek accountability on programs
- Have representation from different marginalized groups on city committees (example-Oktoberfest committees, to advocate for accessibility at venues)
- Awareness-recognize that a disability is not “one size fits all”-everyone is unique and has different abilities
- Create awareness about the need for service dogs (hand out pamphlets, make a support line for people to contact for more information)
- Employers and businesses should be recognized for helping to create a more inclusive region.

# A Poverty Free Region

## Meaningful Consultation

- Hear all voices: working together through meaningful consultation is key

## Understand Issues Before Acting

- Poverty is a complex issue and contains many unique situations
- Government needs to understand issues before taking action
- Tailored solutions, not blanket solutions

## Inclusive Solutions

- No 'poor doors': we need inclusive solutions
- Take an inclusive approach: instead of "meals for the poor" , do "meals for the community" to build ties within the community and to avoid segregation
- Can we learn about strategies to integrate the homeless population by looking back to periods of time when other groups were marginalized?

## Remove Stigma

- Those living in poverty face stigma and feelings of exclusion
- Need to increase efforts of inclusion and address the stigma of poverty
- Addiction needs to be addressed as a mental health problem, not an issue of morality and ethics

## Working Poor

- More recognition of the "working poor"
- Living Wages as a solution to the working poor?
- Employment needs to become more reliable and regular (less precarious, less part-time)

## Inclusive Neighbourhoods

- Need to ensure that low-income homes close to the LRT route are not taxed out of their homes
- Integrate affordable housing into a variety of communities
- Inclusionary zoning (like in Alberta)

## Decentralize Services in Neighbourhoods

- Access to subsidized housing needs to be located close to other social services and agencies

- Neighbourhood based hubs for social service access

#### Free Transportation

- Free transit to everyone on ODSP

#### Inclusive and Affordable Housing

- Development approvals can become dependent on the creation of/inclusion of new social housing units
- Are smaller (12x12) units a solution to create affordable transitional social housing?
- Current social housing can be very run-down
- Current plans for affordable housing are lower than in previous years
- Not enough Allowance for housing under ODSP funding
- The price of 'affordable' housing is not always 'affordable'
- It costs \$40,000 per year to the system for someone to live on the street, as opposed to \$21,000 per year to have people live in social housing.

#### Inter-government Cooperation for More Effective Investment in People

- Need to work on funding relationships with Provincial and Federal Governments (housing)
  - upper levels of government need to be involved in social housing
  - The issue is getting different levels of government to come together to realise this solution;
  - The different streams of funding prevents one level from carrying all the costs, but also prevents action.
- Good health depends on living above the poverty line: this results in increased costs for governments

#### Ongoing Collaboration

- Need to build partnerships to address these problems at all levels of government and within the community
- Create a special committee on homelessness
- There is a need for more interconnectedness and communication between various services and agencies

#### System Navigation Support Staff

- Need to hire knowledgeable staff that can be dedicated to helping others navigate social services and agencies (current staff already have a lot on their plates)

# Access to Information

## Centralized and Comprehensive

- Access to centralized information
- Information should be centralized and comprehensive

## Easy to Access

- Having easy access to information
- Information should be widely distributed
- Being proactive in disclosing information instead of just waiting for people to ask about the information
- More inclusive access of documentation (not only for people on a mailing list)
- Outreach should go beyond the internet, use of different media
- Be more resourceful than referring people back to a website e.g. 211
- Make sure that accessing the information is not intimidating
- The cost of accessing information hinders accessibility

## Easy to Understand

- Too much jargon in documents make information difficult to understand
- Make sure that information is transparent
- Make sure that information be understood by the public
- Resources should be targeted so that everybody understands
- Making sure that the information is organized and readily available to all those that want to access it
- Make sure that information is translated to certain languages that is spoken by a large population
- Different ethnic group should have access to all information
- Newcomers are not informed when first settled
- Should target all age groups so that the entire population is informed

## Educate People on How to Access Information

- People are not educated on how to access certain types of information

## City of Kitchener Website is Difficult to Navigate

- It is difficult to locate information on the Kitchener (city) website,
  - “un-searchable database”
  - better fonts/ formats on the website layout
  - Information about present constructions and constructions statuses (e.x the ION) should be made more clear
  - Sidewalk/ road signage should be updated during construction
  - Events are not always updated on the city calendar



# Digital Inclusion

## Who benefits from on-line access?

- Online access
- Good for getting people involved and engaged (better 'buy in')
- Community involvement for action
- Educate youth at a young age about elections
- Online access makes it easy
- Avoiding having to access services in person- time consuming
- Live Chat- great communication source

## Who does not?

- Social economic status makes it difficult to access
- Excluding people who don't know how to navigate computers, those who live in poverty, or where there is an accessibility issue of any type
- Still go to office (one on one contact)
- Difficult to access Wi-Fi when travelling because it's locked
- Every time something is put online, the front line workers are gone
- Product online- not always in an accessible form
- Searchable but difficult to find (timely)
- Compatibility of different programs (ex. 2003 Microsoft Word)
- No central place where information about events can be accessed
  - Have to go through other sources such as CTV news

## What can be done?

- Get databases like Google involved
- Reach out to companies in community to sponsor computer use and access
- Places like ODSP don't have online access which makes it difficult for those who have to travel long distances
- Service Canada
  
- Call center and Connect KW- always have a point person to help
- Who do you contact when you run into a problem while using online?
- Mentor for adults- get youth more involved
- Involve youth in educating those who aren't internet savvy
- 'Buddy System'- Children who are tech savvy to assist those who have difficulties (helps with face to face contact and increases comfort level)

## Community Network

- Increase community access
- Have more internet access in public places
- Need to be dealt with at community level eg. Working Center
- Work together as a community to partner with other organizations and companies
- Inexpensive to put internet access in community centers
- Agencies partner with community centers

## Civic Engagement

- Educating people on how to vote \*
- Breaking down the barrier between voting and non-voting individuals
- Face-to-face engagement with municipal candidates. Harder to achieve this with federal members
- Demonstrations, petitions, letters are continuous forms of communication and should be sustained
  
- Raise awareness through leaders of ethnic groups. This way education is widespread to different backgrounds
- NPOs should not be only for their interest but are a great means of communication
- NPOs are busy people. If NPOs focus on one particular idea, it'll create a wider/broader perspective
- NPO can speak with a common voice by getting groups together
- Decisions are about values. If more groups/ NPOs are open about their values we can make better decisions that impact us all
- Role of NPS is to keep politicians driven
  
- Candidates should do more by GOING to people where they are, leads to accessibility
- Time commitments may be excessive for Candidates. Do this by reducing the number of years of commitment to increase the number of candidates running each time
- Newspapers are only one way of informing candidates; however it is very limited. Candidates should use a variety of communication techniques
  
- The council, such as Social Planning Council, could do more activities to get people together in a public, accessible area
- Convening events in which all candidates come out and mix and mingle and network with different members and people
  
- Partnerships with nonprofits and government would be helpful as it would reach out to different causes -- faith based groups, variety of groups.
- School boards + trustees, community groups, open forums could be alternative to online information
- Developing connections with governments, councils and groups.
- Build community relations with different community groups leads to open dialogue.. and as a result better solutions
  
- Educate all groups!
- Start with basic way of communication; open forums
- Communicate in different ways to dissolve communication barriers
  - Raise awareness to those who don't have access to mobiles/phones
- Facebook, twitter, social media are prime ways of communicating with the new generation\*

- The idea of removing all barriers is important. E.g. Bus tickets should be made available.
  - Attendance should be taken. Synopses should be created for different groups of peoples so that conversations can occur after making decisions to obtain feedback
  - Its not just about attendance but about accessibility to education and information
    - Easy access to all kinds of information i.e. candidate platforms + when elections are happening + how to vote
    - A form of education results in informed citizens, which leads to better decisions being made and overall better solutions
- Removing language barriers. How to engage with people who do not speak English. How to stay in conversation?
  - Go to the people and do it
  - Provide opportunities to talk, to deliberate
  - Its more than just going and talking. It's about getting to know the people and staying in conversation with them
- Listening to the “neighbourhood experts”
  - In order to take next steps, its not necessary to call in expensive consultants.
  - Reassure community members that their voices are heard by following up with their requests
  - Encourage people think about social interests through different interest/faith groups
  - Knowledgeable community members could provide better answers could create an ongoing relationship with residents and councilors. This could bridge gaps overall
- Timelines are a good way to re-evaluate problems after discussions
- Give community members information about processes (via email or telephone) about the decisions that were made. This should be widespread
  - This would make people feel valued and will most likely come back to engage with candidates
- Direct “going back” to communication members
  - If people asked for better sidewalks, inform them about the discussions you (candidate) had with the decision makers. Provide them with explanations about whether or not it is suitable or not
- Bridge gaps and really promote civic engagement

# Environment

- Adequate green space
  - Hidden valley (halt development).
  - Bike lanes & pedestrian balance.
- Waste management.
  - Food waste collection (apartments).
- Clean air and water.
- Water wells sewage ( Oxbow River method)
  - Waste water.
- Energy sustainability ( municipal loans for retrofits), renewables
  - Ties to poverty.
- Availability of money/ resources- prioritize & political will.
  - Include in metrics (triple bottom line).
  - Ties to civic engagement.
- Awareness, education, communication and advertising(buses)
  - Who to listen to.
  - Who is responsible?
- City explosion (growth)
  - Open/greens space – trails, parks plan- 2010
  - Natural beauty of area.
  - Plan for future
  - Capital budgeting
- More connectivity/cohesiveness w/resources +vision
- Sustainability coordinator needed ( regional )
- LRT- better advertising, encourage car shares
- Better bus system, reduce cost, s/b see as public service.
- Reduce cars in downtown area, multiple passengers & less parking lots.
- Save existing trees, plant more in new developments.
- Affects bird habitat( people’s psyche), air quality kO2
  - Replace cutting/acquisition of new land.
- More regional roads
- Enbridge pipeline ( line 9)
  - Environmental impact
  - Old pipe- short distance.
- Divest in (use of) oil resources.

## Environment – Policy items.

- Put environmental rights into charter of rights.
- Policy incentives, e.g. no pick up of garbage w/recyclables.

- Penalize dumping/littering.
  - Enforcement/by-laws.
  - Respond to complaints
  - Ties to resources.
- Availability of garbage cans.
- Incentives for business to reduce/recycle
- Do modelling for government.