Attachment D: Social Development Centre Progress on Priorities – 2015-2019

The Social Development Centre is a non-government public benefit community leader committed to promoting social development in Waterloo Region.

Vision: A healthy, fair and sustainable community where all can participate in finding solutions.

Mission: Advancing community through active participation and objective knowledge.

Goals:

- 1. Increase understanding of social resources, assets, issues, needs and context of the local community by those who need this knowledge to take action.
- 2. Increase citizen participation in social, economic and political life of the community.
- 3. Build social cohesion through relationships, collaboration and community action.
- 4. Reduce inequitable access to knowledge resources resulting from emerging technologies.
- 5. Develop the social infrastructure of the community people, organizations, services and policies.

Activities:

- Actively engage and collaborate on issues important to citizens
- Gather, apply, distribute and archive information on human services and community needs

Outcomes

People (individuals, groups and agencies), are more:

- 1. Informed and have more options for dealing with their concerns.
- 2. Connected and have stronger relationships so they have somewhere to turn.
- 3. Involved, have a voice and take action.

Systems and policies contribute to social development by:

- 1. Sustaining a livable community environment and
- 2. Responding effectively to address social needs.

Setting Priorities

Community Issue Review

- Retrospective analysis of work since 1967
- Topics and discussions from community forums, kitchen table talks, and other community input over previous 10 years
- Review of issues raised by reference and action groups

Priority Topics: Presented for Discussion during the 2014 Municipal Election

Follow up Consultations in early 2015

- Newly elected councillors at Kitchener, Waterloo and Regional Councils
- Disabilities and Human Rights Group
- K-W Poverty Free Action Group

Priorities Established for next 3-4 Years (2015-2019)

- Strong Neighbourhoods
- Poverty Elimination
- Access to Information

Progress Report to Community at the 49th Annual General Meeting June 2016

Progress on Community Social Planning

Established a Community Social Planning Council

- In 2015 established the *Community Social Planning Council* to provide a community based perspective to guide SDC's work
- 18 community members from diverse backgrounds
- Seven (7) meetings since October 2015
- Varied perspectives, lots of great discussion and guidance:
 - o Decent Lives, Strong Neighbourhoods consultation results
 - o Feedback on definitions and assessment framework
 - o Started community perspective for systemic analysis of poverty
 - o Feedback for City of Kitchener Neighbourhood Strategy
 - o Issues being identified for short term community memos
 - o co-hosting national housing strategy consultation in October

Progress on Strong Neighbourhoods & Poverty Elimination

- Launched the Decent Lives-Strong Neighbourhoods series in 2015:
 - o 3 community forums, 10 kitchen table talks: preliminary plan set Integrated other topics: *Civic Engagement; Access and Inclusion, Healthy Environment*
 - Preliminary plan set developing an assessment framework
- Continued Systemic Analysis of Poverty project
- Hosted policy analysis session and all candidate sessions during federal election *used Poverty Elimination Framework tool*
- Created interactive map tool to assess neighbourhood need an excellent model for similar analyses; terms defined, measures and data sources identified, some data gathered, initial indices created for Decent Lives and Neighbourhood Diversity
- Continued VisitAble Housing project with realtors, builders and planners
- Continued partnership in Festival of Neighbourhoods
- Continued Neighbourhood Connections program: *Traynor-Vanier and Cherry Park initial contact*

Progress on Access to Information

- Information Access incorporates Digital Inclusion
- Information services continue: Blue Book published, phone inquiries continue to decline; web access remains high and is deeper than most (average 9 min per visit)
- Municipal funding loss, impacts service capacity:
 - O Duplication of effort does not meet our needs
 - o Misunderstanding of need for mediated support or digital inclusion
- Information focused projects:
 - o Building local information supports to newcomer project training & resources
 - o Women Building Community Project training & resources
 - Seniors Technology Training project training & resources
- Poverty reduction funding proposals: aim to develop *peer to peer information and system navigation programs: workers and tenants*
- Pilot test of Information Access Audit summer 2016

Decent Lives: Preliminary Plan

- 1. Assess and monitor:
 - o Framework has been defined
 - Work has started to develop an interactive assessment tool community wide, neighbourhood specific and individual (summer 2016)
- 2. Set priorities on physical and social infrastructure gaps:
 - o Define standards for 'strong' neighbourhood & 'a decent life'
 - o Determine what to tackle for city wide equity
- 3. Create community development programs:
 - o Proactive projects to fill neighbourhood equity gaps
 - Support community initiatives to enhance physical and social environment through short term projects

Access to Information: Action Needed

- Recognize that *information access* is a basic need, public good and human right in modern society
- Increase awareness and understanding of the importance of local, experienced mediated information access: *Google is* NOT the answer to human needs.
- Understand 'community focused' technical infrastructure is needed and must be anchored in the community i.e. not government nor business; SDC has this expertise and is well positioned to build on this
- Advocate for restoring and increasing SDC funding so innovative work can continue e.g. user friendly 'apps', system navigation and advocacy support to vulnerable groups: renters, low wage earners, persons with disabilities, seniors, immigrants

Other Directions for Action

- Raise profile of human rights and social justice advocacy role: develop a pool of advocates
- Increase profile for innovative, inclusive processes:
 - Engagement in formal consultations
 - o Lived experience advocacy & action
 - Policy and political analysis
- Provide social development training:
 - o Information for problem solving and planning
 - Social data for planning and evaluation
 - Organizing and advocacy skills for social change
- Enlist investments in technical & knowledge management expertise to develop software applications for public good

Community Feedback on Progress

We are on a good track:

- There was unanimous agreement that, yes SDC is on a good track.
- The priorities that have been identified are based on an assessment of community needs and reflect what is important to the community.
- Addressing *Poverty Elimination* and *Strong Neighbourhoods* through *Decent Lives and Strong Neighbourhoods* is a good direction.
- However, there are tracks that still need to be laid.

If we achieved one thing in the next year it would be:

- Continue to work on the identified social issues:
 - o Healthy neighbourhoods.
 - o Ensuring there is adequate income for everyone.
 - The same standard for affordable housing regardless of whether this is privately owned or community housing.
 - o Inclusiveness.
- Funding to ensure the organization's work is sustained.
- Community engagement to build a wider network.
- Market brand to ensure SDC has power to influence.

Activities to achieve these outcomes:

- Raise advocacy profile and more advocacy.
- Deepen community involvement and widen constituency.
- Social media and communication.
- Fundraising.
- A concrete action plan and measurable outcomes.
- Grow business services.
- Use the 50th anniversary as a way to raise profile.

To ensure SDC can sustain and build its work:

- Communicate unique identity, especially with decision makers.
- Engage broadly and form relationships.
- Increase membership.
- Hold community forums 3-4 times a year.
- Social media, advertising.
- As a whole, speak loud and stay united!