Reconnecting Neighbourhoods Amidst COVID-19

9 DECEMBER 2020

Blessing Akinniranye
Harshul Bhanjana
Rebecca Gysbers
Saud Haseeb
Maryam Taj

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

1. Executive Summary

The City of Hamilton regards community engagement and participation as an important municipal priority. The City hopes to collaboratively build a sense of community through transparency, accessibility, and public participation. For many years, this goal has been driven forward by the work of the Neighbourhood Development Section (NDS), formerly known as the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. The NDS works with communities to support resident-led initiatives and help make Hamilton more connected. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought the work of the NDS to a halt as a result of the re-deployment of their staff and an inability to host their usual in-person events. The NDS has partnered with a team of students at CityLAB Hamilton, a collaborative social innovation hub, to tackle this issue. Since September 2020, this group has worked to develop recommendations regarding how the NDS should re-connect with residents and effectively support community organizations.

To achieve this goal, the team of CityLAB students first completed thorough background research on best practices for pandemic-era engagement and how they may be applied to Hamilton. The team then used an online survey and virtual roundtable to gather resident perspectives on the challenges, successes, and priorities of neighbourhood groups in the wake of the pandemic. These engagement strategies also gathered ideas and feedback regarding solutions to the identified challenges.

This feedback was then used, alongside numerous best practices, to develop a set of detailed recommendations. In summary, the primary recommendations indicated that the NDS should implement:
1. Resources for Online Facilitation
2. Resources for Starting a Community Organization
3. Virtual Neighbourhood Development Hub
4. Grant Programs
5. Neighbourhoods Newsletter
6. Resources for Equitable, Non-Digital Engagement

Though the project held clear limitations, the feedback received and connections built were invaluable. As a result, the proposed recommendations were able to be developed around the priorities and needs of Hamiltonians. As Hamilton looks hopefully to the future, CityLAB Hamilton and the Neighbourhood Development Section aim to use these recommendations to help make our city healthier, safer, and more connected.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Introduction

The City of Hamilton's 10-Year Strategic Plan and 25-Year Community Vision both highlight **community engagement and participation** as a key municipal priority.[1,2] Through its engagement efforts, the city aims to create a collaborative place where people work together to make a positive impact on their community, citizens are involved in the decision-making process, and a sense of community pride exists among Hamiltonians. The desired outcome of these actions is to ensure that "Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community."

Two key ways the City furthers this vision is by collaborating with institutional partners via programs like **CityLAB Hamilton**, and supporting community initiatives directly through the **City of Hamilton Neighbourhood Development Section**.

2.2 CityLAB Hamilton

CityLAB Hamilton is a social innovation hub that gathers students, academics, and city leaders to co-create a better Hamilton for all.[3,4] The hub consists of partnerships between the City of Hamilton and local post-secondary institutions, and is guided by its vision of a healthier, sustainable, and more vibrant Hamilton.

Originally established as a pilot program in 2017, CityLAB Hamilton has worked to engage 1,888 students, 46 faculty members, and 73 city staff over 3 years. These individuals have worked on over 106 projects addressing challenges related to healthy neighbourhoods, climate change, and municipal excellence.

2.3 City of Hamilton Neighborhood Development Section

The City of Hamilton Neighbourhood Development section (NDS), formerly known as the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS), was implemented with the goal of working alongside residents and local leaders to **make Hamilton neighbourhoods great places to live, work, play, and learn**.[5] For the past 10 years, the NDS has fostered relationships with neighbourhood associations, planning teams, and community organizations. Working to make our Hamilton communities healthier, safer, and more connected, the NDS furthers the City's vision of ensuring that Hamilton is the **best place to raise a child age successfully**.

2.4 The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for the NDS, including the redeployment of their staff to help the City with urgent pandemic responses. This has resulted in the NDS losing its rapport with neighbourhood associations and planning teams. The pandemic has also placed increased stress on the organizations themselves, as a lack of in-person meetings and increased stress on community volunteers has significantly reduced programming and organizational capacity. As the City looks to recover from the pandemic, the NDS must re-establish its connection with community members and support them in facing new and unique challenges.

In order to work towards this goal, staff from the City of Hamilton NDS have partnered with students from CityLAB Hamilton. Beginning in September 2020, this group has worked to understand how the pandemic has affected community and neighbourhood groups and the best way for the city to support these residents moving forward. The following report will seek to summarize the findings of this project, along with proposing a set of neighbourhood re-engagement strategies for the NDS to use in the near future.

3. Project Focus

3.1 Project Premise and Objectives

This project was initiated at a time when staff from the NDS was redeployed to help the City of Hamilton with its pandemic response. As a result, communication between the section and community groups was lost, in addition to the section's prior activities and projects being suspended. Community groups themselves were also facing increased stress from the pandemic, with many being forced to shutter programming in the short-term.

Within this context, the following objectives were decided upon for this project:

1. **Re-establish contact with residents and community groups through virtual means.**
2. **Engage with residents to identify the challenges that neighbourhood and community organizations are facing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.**
3. **Conduct research on best practices to identify effective community engagement strategies.**
4. **Based on research and resident feedback, present a list of recommendations to be used by NDS to re-engage with neighbourhood and community groups in the near-future.**

3.2 Project Scope

Within scope of this project was conducting research on best practices for community engagement. This included a literature review on community development efforts within Hamilton, in addition to research on best practices from other Canadian municipalities. Furthermore, the project aimed to engage residents through virtual means. As such, a neighbourhood re-engagement survey was sent to residents through email in October 2020, and a virtual community roundtable took place in two sessions in November 2020. Finally, it was expected that all the research and community feedback would be translated into a comprehensive list of recommendations, with examples from other municipalities and implementation considerations, present at the conclusion of this report.

Activities considered out-of-scope for this project included engaging with residents using in-person engagement methods and providing direct support to community and neighbourhood organizations to overcome challenges. Furthermore, the students were not expected to oversee the implementation of the recommendations provided to the City, but rather prioritize them in order of feasibility and community support.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Introduction to Community Engagement

Community engagement (CE) can be defined as a process by which a group of people are brought together to realize a shared vision for their community; it is guided by a commitment to a common set of values, principles, and criteria, and is built upon the democratic belief that all those affected by a decision should be involved in the decision-making process.[6-11] While often used interchangeably with terms such as citizen participation and involvement, essential to the process of CE is building intentional relationships between stakeholders to develop capacity within the community to enact change.[12,13]

Similar to the definition of CE, the values that guide this process differ from one institution to the next, but generally involve aspects of relationship building, reciprocity, inclusion, accountability, trust, and a commitment to act for sustainable change.[6,7,14]

Historically, many diverse models of community engagement have been used by governments and organizations, ranging from passive citizen participation, participation by consultation, interactive participation, and self-mobilization.[15] In recent years, these models have also been stratified between face-to-face CE tools, including public meetings and town halls, in-person surveys, and citizen's assemblies, to digital-first CE tools, consisting of online forums and surveys, digital story-telling, and virtual community panels.[12]

Regardless of model or approach, any successful CE effort must empower a diverse group of people to have a genuine impact on the decision-making process. The ability of any effort to accomplish these goals is often evaluated with the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation an international standard used to characterize engagement efforts as either informing, consulting, involving, collaborating with, or empowering the public.[7] To create sustainable change at the community-level, CE efforts should seek to lie on the right-hand side of the spectrum.

4.2 Introduction to Community Development

Community development (CD) can be defined as the planned progression of all economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects that contribute to community well-being.[16] It encompasses a set of practices and methods that leverage the innate abilities of communities to help members develop shared solutions to common problems. Among the primary goals of CD is a desire to respond to community

needs, learn from lived experiences, and ensure that all actions are equitable and lead to an improved quality of life for those involved.[17,18]

One of the most effective approaches to CD is **Asset-Based Community Development**, which builds on the strengths found within a community (centered on individuals, associations, institutions, place-based assets, and connections) to help community members enact change.[19,20] This approach differs significantly from Deficit-Based Community Development, which places greater emphasis on identifying and servicing needs. Other approaches to CD also include those of CE, as both processes are governed by the same set of values and principles.

CD and CE efforts are oftentimes spearheaded by municipal governments, as both processes are linked to numerous positive outcomes at the city-level. By consulting and collaborating with its citizens, a city can ensure that its decision-making is aligned with community priorities.[21] Municipal campaigns to improve quality of life also show greater success if they prioritize building community capacity, developing sustainable relationships, and empowering community members to enact change.[22] Finally, communities with greater levels of citizen engagement also tend to be healthier, happier, safer, and more connected.[23] These outcomes are in-line with the strategic priorities of most cities, including those of the City of Hamilton.

4.3 Community Engagement in the City of Hamilton

The City of Hamilton largely uses the term public engagement as a stand-in for community engagement, defining it as the act of engaging all identified stakeholders in the decision-making process.[24,25] The City's efforts surrounding public engagement are governed by the City of Hamilton Public Engagement Charter and Policy, a set of guidelines co-created by a diverse committee of Hamiltonians and city staff. The Charter identifies 8 core principles necessary for transparent, informed and effective public engagement.

In recent years, the city's most expansive public engagement effort consisted of the Our Future Hamilton initiative, which involved nearly 55,000 residents to ask the question "What is your vision for the future of Hamilton?".[4] The campaign ultimately produced the City of Hamilton 25-Year Community Vision. Other City of Hamilton public engagement efforts consist of community representation on municipal boards and councils, reviews of institutional strategies guided by community consultation, and collaboration with city partners such as CityLAB Hamilton.[26]

4.4 Community Development in the City of Hamilton

The City of Hamilton's recent work in neighbourhood and community development can be traced back to 2002, when the Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) launched its Growing Roots, Strengthening Neighbourhoods program.[27] Leveraging the use of community developers and small grants, the program helped the Jamesville, Beasley, and McQuesten neighbourhoods identify and build on community assets. Recognizing the barrier that poverty presented to community vitality, the HCF subsequently launched a $3 million Tackling Poverty Together initiative in 2004; the program continued its work in the following years as the Tackling Poverty Together II program.[28]

Much of this work came to a head in 2010, when the Hamilton Spectator released a series of reports shedding light on the health and social inequalities present between Hamilton's most and least affluent neighbourhoods.[29] In response to these "Code Red" articles, the City of Hamilton launched its Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS), earmarking nearly $2 million of funding to establish planning hubs in 11 priority neighbourhoods across the city.[30] Partnering with the HCF, Best Start Network, and the Social Planning and Research Council, the city provided these neighbourhoods with access to community developers and funding to develop neighbourhood action plans (NAPs).[31-33] The first of these plans, presented by the Keith, Stinson, McQuesten, and Beasley neighbourhoods, were endorsed by City Council in September 2012. Over the next four years, NAPs were developed in all other priority neighbourhoods, with the final plan being presented by the Rolston neighbourhood to City Council in March 2016. In total, the NAPs identified 481 neighbourhood actions seeking to increase vitality and community health through an asset-based community development model.

Over its nearly decade-long operation, the NAS experienced many successes. By 2017, nearly 67% of actions were either complete or underway.[33,34] Residents in priority neighbourhoods also indicated increased pride, engagement, and satisfaction in their communities, stating that their neighbourhoods were a better place to raise a child and age successfully now than before the NAS began. The $2 million in funding committed by the City of Hamilton leveraged nearly $7 million in additional neighbourhood resources. The NAS also led to the establishment of additional programming, such as the McQuesten Urban Farm, Xperience Annex, and the Snow Angels Volunteer program. Nevertheless, the strategy also experienced various challenges; diversity within community planning teams was markedly lower than neighbourhood demographics, residents still indicated a lack of financial and employment resources, and the risk of gentrification increased in priority neighbourhoods alongside the stigmatization of these communities.

In recent years, through the "(Re)Imagine The Neighbourhood Action Strategy" initiative, the NAS has transitioned into the City of Hamilton Neighbourhood Development Section.[35,36] This section is now under the Healthy and Safe Community Department and continues to provide many of the same community-level support to Hamilton neighbourhoods as the NAS did. Nevertheless, the transition away from the NAS has led to a loss of resources and community developers within Hamilton neighbourhoods, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic has placed increased stress on the Neighbourhood Development Section.

Looking towards the next ten years, the Neighbourhood Development Section seeks to build upon the success of the NAS strategy while addressing many of the challenges.[7] By building community capacity, leveraging community assets, and relying on community champions, the City of Hamilton seeks to create healthy, safe, and connected neighbourhoods for all Hamiltonians.

5. Background Research and Best Practices

In addition to the literature review, background research for this project was aimed at providing students with a greater understanding of Hamilton as a backdrop for this work. Research into community engagement programming from the City of Waterloo, Kitchener, and Ottawa was conducted in order to identify any best practices that may inform the final list of recommendations and assist NDS staff. Finally, academic and institutional literature for community engagement during a pandemic was also research to identify any evidence-based community engagement practices.

Summary from this research is presented below, largely summarized into tables with linked resources.

5.1 City of Hamilton Demographics

Hamilton's 2020 population is now estimated at 766,688. In 1950, the population of Hamilton was 263,177. Hamilton's population is expected to grow by 37% between 2016 and 2041. In recent years, almost two-thirds of Hamilton's population growth has been attributable to immigration. Half of the new immigrants who arrived in Hamilton were born in the Middle East and Asia, while 23% were from Europe. Hamilton has also become a major Canadian destination for immigrants since the city council voted to declare it a sanctuary city in 2014.[37]

The most common mother tongue in Hamilton was English at 73.5% of the total population. Hamilton also has a large number of French-speaking people. Between 2006 and 2011, the Francophone community in the city grew by 50%. Italian was the most common non-official language mother tongue in Hamilton, followed by Arabic and Spanish. Among recent immigrants, Arabic was the most common non-official language spoken at home. [37]

Finally, the number of seniors in Hamilton has now surpassed the number of children under age 14. The working age population (age 15-64) is now in decline due to the aging of the population and declining rates of immigration. There has also been a steep decline in the number of children in Hamilton since 1996, which has led to the net loss of 32 schools. There is a higher proportion of Millennials in Hamilton compared to Ontario, analogous to the post-war period when the pre-Boomer generation flocked to Hamilton because of its strong economy. [37]

5.2 Best Practices: Waterloo

Research into best practices for the City of Waterloo revealed various different funding programs, in addition to programming for community leaders and an online newsletter.

	Name	Summary	Further Reading
5.2.1	Hey Neighbour! Program	A Block Connectors program that aims to build relationships between neighbours by sharing information, supporting one another, and building a sense of community. Residents can get involved by leading as a Block Connector or joining a Block Connectors group. The program is still in the recruitment stage.	Hey Neighbour! Overview Hey Neighbour! Application
5.2.2	Neighbourhood Matching Fund	A program that provides funding for community events and initiatives at a neighbourhood level through fund matching. Residents may request $1 in funds for every $1 they are contributing to the event, up to $7,500. Residents may apply through an online form with support from an application toolkit.	Neighbourhood Matching Fund Overview Neighbourhood Matching Fund Application Neighbourhood Matching Fund Toolkit
5.2.3	Pandemic Focused Mini-Grants	A grant program for events and initiatives that tackle emergent needs and community building at a neighbourhood level. Residents may request up to $500 in pandemic focused mini-grant funding. The regular mini-grant program provides more general funding, up to $300. Residents may request funding via email.	Mini-Grants Overview

	Name	Summary	Further Reading
5.2.4	Neighbourhoods Webpage	A webpage containing information and resources about neighbourhood initiatives and associations. Specific topics of interest include Neighbourhood Asset Mapping, a Block Connectors program, grant funding, a directory of Neighbourhood Associations, and others.	[Waterloo Neighbourhoods Homepage](#)
5.2.5	City of Waterloo Neighbourhood Strategy	Neighbourhood Leaders Team, and the City's Neighbourhood Strategy.	[Waterloo Neighbourhood Strategy](#)
5.2.6	Neighbourhood Leaders Team	A team of neighbourhood leaders that were recruited to enhance connections between neighbours in support of the neighbourhood strategy over the next five years. This program is still in its early stages, with no results thus far.	[Neighbourhood Leaders Team](#)
5.2.7	Neighbourhoods E-Newsletter	A virtual newsletter that shares good news, grant opportunities, other neighbourhoods' happenings, civic information, and community partner updates. Incentives for subscribing to the e-newsletter are used to encourage engagement.	[Waterloo Neighbourhoods Homepage](#)

5.3 Best Practices: Kitchener

Research into best practices for the City of Kitchener provided greater insight into matching grants, as well as a Community Garden Council that could serve as a useful model for the City of Hamilton.

	Name	Summary	Further Reading
5.3.1	Neighbourhood Placemaking Challenge	An annual competition for public space development grants. There are 15 available grants of various amounts with slightly different purposes, totalling to $60,000.	[Neighbourhood Placemaking Challenge Guidelines](#)

	Name	Summary	Further Reading
5.3.2	LoveMyHood Matching Grant	A program that provides funding for community events and projects at a neighbourhood level through fund matching. Residents may request up to $2,000 for events and $30,000 for other projects. Initiatives are required to have the support of their communities. Residents may apply online, through mail, or through email. Supports for applicants include clear eligibility criteria, a list of previously implemented ideas, and a sample budget template. Prospective applicants may also reach out to neighbourhood liaisons for direct support.	LoveMyHood Matching Grant Overview LoveMyHood Matching Grant Budget Template
5.3.3	Community Garden Council	An incorporated board that helps promote and sustain community gardens throughout the Kitchener-Waterloo Region. The Council uses a Facebook page to connect with different community garden groups and residents. The Council also uses a website to clearly present resources for those looking to get involved, as well as other general updates. Both the Facebook Page and website are easily accessible from one other.	Community Garden Council Homepage Starting a Garden Community Garden Council Facebook Page
5.3.4	City of Kitchener Neighbourhood Strategy	Neighbourhood engagement and development strategy for the City of Kitchener.	LoveMyHood Report

5.4 Best Practices: Ottawa

Research into best practices for the City of Ottawa provided greater insight into different grant programs, in addition to a community associations directory, and considerations for inclusion and equity in the context of the pandemic.

	Name	**Summary**	**Further Reading**
5.4.1	Community Associations Directory	A webpage containing the contact info of all community associations registered with the City of Ottawa. Eligibility criteria for being designated a community association is also clearly stated alongside the directory. An easy-to-use form is also available to be listed with the City as a community association.	Community Associations Homepage Community Associations Listing Form

5.4.2	Civic Events Funding	An initiative that provides one-time funding for family-friendly events for local not-for-profit organizations, particularly community groups and associations. Applicants may request up to $3,000 in funding. This program is on hold until early 2021.	[Community Funding Homepage](#) [Civic Events Funding Overview](#)
5.4.3	Sustainability Fund	An initiative that provides long-term funds for not-for-profit organizations to maintain social infrastructure and sustainable community services. Successful applicants receive funding for a renewable term of 5 years. This fund is currently closed, but reopens in January 2021.	[Sustainability Fund Overview](#) [Community Funding Framework](#) [Community Funding Framework Policy Updates](#) [Community Funding Framework Policy Statements](#)
5.4.4	Community Partnership Capital Programs	Both Major and Minor Capital Programs help fund minor improvements to parks and recreation facilities. These programs provide funding on a cost-sharing basis with local organizations.	[Community Partnership Minor Capital Program Overview](#) [Community Partnership Major Capital Program Overview](#)
5.4.5	An Equity and Inclusion Lens for COVID-19 Recovery	A set of considerations and recommendations for operating with respect to equity and inclusion in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific focus is given to ensuring equitable public engagement and innovative outreach.	[An Equity and Inclusion Lens for COVID-19 Recovery Document](#)

5.5 Best Practices: Academic and Institutional Literature

Research into best practices present in academic and institutional literature provided greater insight into evidence-based methods of community engagement, especially in the context of the pandemic.

	Name	**Summary**	**Further Reading**
5.5.1	Digital Engagement Toolkit (*GHD*)	A brief set of guidelines and strategies for digital engagement, organized using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.	COVID-19 Digital Engagement Toolkit
5.5.2	Community Engagement During COVID-19 (*Urban Institute*)	A detailed report meant to assist community organization with the facilitation of engagement activities and events during a pandemic. The report features non-digital tools, digital tools, best practices, and sample engagement methods.	Community Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond
5.5.3	Event Reopening Guide (*Event Safety Alliance*)	A guide to assist the planning safe in-person events during a pandemic. This document provides comprehensive recommendations for protecting both attendees and organizers.	The Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide
5.5.4	Virtual Engagement Toolkit (*AECOM*)	A guide detailing the purpose and implementation of various virtual engagement tools. Information regarding the cost, accessibility, and limitations is also included.	Virtual Engagement Toolkit
5.5.5	Leading Groups Online (*Training for Change & Sunrise Movement*)	A guide detailing 10 key principles and considerations when facilitating meetings online.	Leading Groups Online
5.5.6	Conducting Zoom Meetings (City of Sacremento)	A webpage detailing basic tutorials, which can be forwarded to residents, for using Zoom video-conferencing software.	Conducting Zoom Meetings
5.5.7	Virtual Engagement Guide (*Learning for Nature*)	A Virtual Engagement Guide to maximize engagement during online courses and meetings.	Virtual Engagement Guide: Tips and Best Practices
5.5.8	Neighbourhood Association Guide	A comprehensive set of tips, tools, and templates to support the creation and maintenance of a neighbourhood association.	https://www.neighbourgoodlondon.ca/nag

	(*NeighbourGood London*)		
5.5.9	Practices for Engagement in the Time of COVID (*Salt Lake City)*	A set of guidelines and recommendations released by the Salt Lake City Civic Engagement team detailing best practices for community engagement in the context of the pandemic.	[Practices for Engagement in the Time of COVID](#)

6. Community Engagement Principles

Our team utilized the following 5 principles of community engagement to increase the viability of the project. By having these fundamental beliefs, we were able to successfully engage in the Hamilton community.

1. **Reciprocity**: Involves people working together for each party's mutual benefit.[6] We kept this principle in mind while designing our community dialogue by asking for input on our stakeholders' goals (via the preliminary survey) to ensure that they would benefit from our event, and so that we would be able to obtain as much genuine feedback as possible during the dialogue.

2. **Equity**: Involves acknowledging the historical and structural inequalities in society and providing access and opportunities to people so that they can overcome these inequalities.[6] We did this by:
   1. Placing a formal land acknowledgement at the beginning of our dialogue session.
   2. Providing a Zoom 101 session (also at the beginning of our dialogue) to ensure that those without experience in virtual discussions would be able to participate without much hindrance.
   3. Sending a copy of our presentation slides to the dialogue participants before the session started.
   4. Providing captioning to our participants (using Otter.ai).

3. **Continuity**: Entails the consideration of different community's timelines, and what the implications of working with them will be in the short-term and long-term.[6] Our group ensured that we followed this principle by sending a summary of our dialogue's findings to our attendees. We also followed this principle when making out recommendations to the NDS, as we know that they have an unknown timeline in terms of when they will get their staff back, so we split up the recommendations into: 1) Primary, 1) Secondary, and 3) Out of Scope.

4. **Openness to Learning**: This is the concept of continually taking the time to reflect, evaluate, learn from, and share successes and failures together in order to grow as a partnership or community.[6] Our team fulfilled this goal by giving several opportunities for community members to provide feedback to us, as well as putting opportunities and plans for implementing further feedback in our recommendations.

5. **Commitment to Act**: A promise to make a positive difference in our societies and communities, utilizing our individual strengths, skills, and knowledge.[6] The NDS works to help communities in Hamilton become healthier, safer, and more engaging. Our group also strives for this, and we believe that this project is a fulfilment of this goal.

7. Community Engagement

The community engagement efforts within this project were guided by two primary objectives: re-stablishing contact between the NDS and Hamilton residents, as well as gathering resident input on the challenges they were facing and how the City can best help. These objectives were largely accomplished via a neighbourhood engagement survey sent out in mid-October, a virtual community roundtable taking place in mid-November, as well as an exit survey following the conclusion of the roundtable.

7.1 Neighbourhood Engagement Survey

7.1.1 Background and Purpose

When CityLAB students first met with Al Fletcher near the beginning of October, it had been a few months since the NDS had been in contact with residents. Moreover, the City of Hamilton was also experiencing a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in an entirely new set of challenges for neighbourhood and community groups. **As such, the most pressing need at this time was for the project team to establish first contact with residents, as well as gather preliminary resident input to guide the development of a subsequent dialogue session.** With these goals in mind, the project team began developing a Neighbourhood Engagement Survey to send out to residents via email.

7.1.2 Development

Development of the survey began with a list of draft questions being were forwarded to Al Fletcher and CityLAB instructors. While awaiting feedback on the questions, CityLAB students worked with instructors to set-up a primary email address through which the survey could be sent out to residents (neighbourhoods@citylabsir.org). Upon receiving feedback from Al Fletcher and CityLAB instructors, the list of survey questions was finalized. The next step of the survey development process included choosing a platform; ultimately, Google Forms was chosen to host the survey as it is both easily accessible for residents and students and would present the survey results in a format where they could be easily analyzed. An introductory email was then written by the CityLAB students, with the purpose of providing residents with context for the project as well as introducing the purpose of the survey.

7.1.3 Implementation and Outcomes

After all elements of the survey were finalized, it was sent out to residents on a NDS mailing list (provided to students by Al Fletcher) on October 20th. To increased

engagement with the survey, as well as provide follow up, reminder emails were sent out to residents on October 28th via a mail merge, which allowed students to input first names in the email greeting, as well as track how many recipients had opened the survey or survey. While residents were encouraged to fill-out the survey by October 30th, responses were open for collection until the end of the dialogue period (November 26th).

In total, 26 residents across 20 different community and neighbourhood organizations completed the survey. This invaluable information was not only used to guide the development of the subsequent virtual community roundtable, but also analyzed when preparing the final list of recommendations (presented at the conclusion of this report).

7.1.4 Reflections and Key Takeaways

Overall, the development, implementation, and outcomes of the neighbourhood engagement survey were successful. The survey provided the project group with its first opportunity to touch base with residents; through regular follow up, not only were these individuals more aware of the virtual community roundtable, and therefore more likely to attend, but many residents were also individually consulted to help guide the development of the sessions. The survey also provided an opportunity for residents who were not able to attend the live roundtable session to still provide key input and have their feedback be considered.

A key takeaway from this process was the significance of being intentional in any community engagement effort. By carefully considering the purpose of every question and what the responses would be used for, as well as ensuring that all emails sent to residents provided enough information, useful feedback was gathered from the engagement effort. Regular follow up with residents also let participants know how their feedback was being used. Furthermore, through the use of the mail merge, students also learned how personalized communication to residents allows for greater engagement.

7.2 Virtual Community Roundtable

7.2.1 Background and Purpose

Upon analysing responses from the Neighbourhood Engagement Survey, it became clear to students that a virtual community dialogue was required to discuss many of the same themes; planning for this event also aligned with the original project agreement and scope. As such, beginning in early November, CityLAB students began developing a plan for a virtual community roundtable. The purpose of this event was twofold:
   1. **Provide residents with a space to connect with each other and City staff.**

2. **Gather resident input on successes, challenges, and priorities for community engagement within a pandemic, as well as brainstorm solutions that the NDS can use for an action plan in the near future.**

7.2.2 Development

Planning for the virtual community roundtable began by first reviewing the survey results to decide on a possible format for the event and a list of themes to be discussed. It was decided that the event would be structured around two small group sessions; the first small group session would discuss successes, challenges, and priorities for community engagement within the pandemic, while the second small group session would provide residents with an opportunity to brainstorm solutions and provide feedback on potential recommendations. This format was suggested to Al Fletcher as well as CityLAB students (via a practice dialogue session) by the first week of November.

By the second week of November, online video calls were also organized with individual community members who had replied to the Neighbourhood Engagement Survey (namely Brenda Duke and Matt Thompson). These calls provided students with an opportunity to build rapport with residents, as well as gather their input on the format, themes, and timings for the event. Based on feedback from Brenda and Matt, the event format was altered to a 90 minute session with an optional half-hour large group session at the conclusion. This allowed for the event to be accessible to an increased number of community members while still providing all with an opportunity to ask questions to City Staff or facilitate discussion in a large group. Furthermore, Matta and Brenda's feedback was also invaluable in deciding on the final dates and timings for the virtual community roundtable (taking place in two sessions on Tuesday, November 24th, 7-8:30 PM and Thursday, November 26th, 11 AM – 12:30 PM).

The second stage of planning for the roundtable largely involved making and sending out invitations. Agenda and context documents for the event were finalized, as well as a Social Media invite. It was decided that invitations would be sent out via email and posted on the Facebook pages of various neighbourhood and community groups within Hamilton. As such, in the days prior to sending out invitations, CityLAB students sent join requests to various Hamilton neighbourhood Facebook pages, as well as messaging to admins to ask for permission to post. Throughout the course of this process, the need for a translated version of the invitations became apparent. As such, the students reached out to their own personal networks to find community members with the skills and resources required to translate the social media invites into Arabic and French. These translation services were also leveraged for the context document and Neighbourhood Engagement Survey, while the translators were reimbursed for their time. After

translations for the social media invites were received, invitations were officially sent out via Facebook and email in the week leading up to the event.

The third stage of planning for the roundtable consisted of finalizing the logistics of the small group sessions. This consisted of creating individual facilitator guides for each of the small groups, which was done collectively by the project group. Furthermore, it was decided that the best way to take notes would be through a notetaker sharing their screen and recording resident responses on a Jamboard. Therefore, a notetaker guide was prepared, CityLAB students were recruited as notetakers, and a notetaker preparation session took place on Monday, November 23rd, the day prior to the first roundtable session.

7.2.3 Implementation and Outcomes

The virtual community roundtable took place in two sessions on November 24th and November 26th. In total, 35 RSVPs were received but only 22 residents were able to attend. However, many of those who were not able to attend provided feedback via the Neighbourhood Engagement Survey.

The first session of the roundtable took place on Tuesday evening without any major issues – the session ran on time, and no residents had any major technical issues. However, a few takeaways were identified to improve how the second session was conducted. Firstly, it was decided that the five minute break between small group session 2 and the large group session would be removed to allow for a smoother transition between the two segments of the roundtable. The debrief session after the roundtable also revealed that a few rooms were overburdened with the number of residents, while others were emptier due to a few residents not attending. As such, a back-up plan was created to alter the number of residents on-the-fly.

The second roundtable session took place on Thursday morning. Overall, the session ran smoother than the first, with the small changes in timings resulting in greater attendance for the large group session at the conclusion of the event. However, it is worth noting that many of the conversation in the small group sessions proved to be more challenges for the facilitators this time around (as discussed in Section 7.2.4).

After each of the virtual roundtable sessions on Tuesday and Thursday, a follow-up email with an exit survey was also sent out to participants. The exit survey provided residents with an opportunity to provide feedback on the session itself, as well as mention any thoughts or ideas they did not get a chance to mention within the roundtable. Feedback

from the exit survey helped provide additional guidance to develop the priorities, in addition to indicating that residents were generally satisfied with the roundtable sessions.

7.2.4 Reflections and Key Takeaways

While the roundtable sessions themselves were quite successful, mistakes were made prior to the event taking place – namely, the original email invitation included an agenda with incorrect timing. While corrections to this invitation were made right away via a follow-up email, conversation among the CityLAB students themselves highlighted how the lack of thorough checking on behalf of the students did not uphold the values of respect and reciprocity the students had committed themselves to when undertaking the project. In order to truly value the residents' time, the material that the project group releases must represent their best work. The reflection was kept in mind when considering the feedback from the dialogue event, preparing the recommendations, and finalizing this report.

Another key takeaway from the event was the importance of being as inclusive as possible. While the group was successful in accessing translation services for the invitations, translation for other documents were not accessed in time, in addition to translation for the event itself. As a result, the group discussed that the event only seemed inclusive at face-value and that we did not fully uphold values of inclusivity. This outcome could have been avoided if these conversations and considerations were made prior to the event, which the group will aim to do with all future community engagement initiatives.

Finally, a few of the small group session in session 2 of the community roundtable were also challenging for the facilitators. In particular, disagreements in community organizations (stemming from events outside of the dialogue) led to the conversations in the room being quite heavy. Nevertheless, the group was quite proud of how the facilitators handled the event. In retrospect, this instance of the conversation going not-as-planned showed the group the importance of being flexible and open when interfacing with the community.

Overall, feedback from the virtual community roundtables was quite positive, indicating the need for similar events in the future.

8. Outcome and Themes

8.1 Results from the Neighbourhood Engagement Survey

Methods for Meetings

When asked what methods of communication were being used by neighbourhood organizations the most popular platform seemed to be Facebook, followed respectively by phone calling, Zoom and texting.

Greatest Challenges

The challenges expressed in the survey results included language barriers for newcomers to Canada, access to technology and the use of Facebook as a main source of communication leaves a lot of people out of loop as not everyone has Facebook or would like to use Facebook as the main source of communication.

Organization Related

The main challenges organizations seem to be facing this year has been the inability to hold in person meetings and events, a shortage of supplies from the city for gardening projects. For many groups leadership and productivity came up very often, they ranged from losing contact with leaders of the organizations, a lack of motivation and time management and the inability to take off as an organization while others needed support to become a legitimate entity.

8.2 Roundtable Feedback: Successes

Fortunately the pandemic has resulted in a number of successes amongst Hamilton communities. Online engagement via social media increased between residents, with neighbours getting to know each other better and supporting each other during the lockdown. Simply saying hello to each other has made them feel more connected, and helped to build trust among neighbours. Marginalized peoples (such as those with mobility disabilities) were able to connect and get involved in the community due to the online environment, as they no longer needed to leave their houses, or seek out childcare to participate. The general consensus is that social media has reached more people and become a useful tool to keep existing members engaged and bring in new members. For community groups and organizations that continued to meet, virtual conferencing platforms were very useful to facilitate meetings and resume the usual group function. Some community groups have had successful ongoing support from City leaders. The Ainslie Woods neighbourhood had positive experiences with their city councillor, where they requested help and received aid within the week.

Community garden groups have seen a lot of success this year. Gardens were thriving as gardening season overlapped with the pandemic lockdown in Hamilton. This left many residents with more time and willingness to invest in their community gardens, as it provided an opportunity to socialize with others in a safe, distanced way, and lead to a lot of produce. Residents even voiced concerns that excess produce from community gardens went to waste, stating a priority to have connections with local food banks/shelters for food could go to those in need rather than be thrown out.

One community benefit network was able to obtain a large grant in the fall and were able to upscale. This included increasing their capacity, hiring additional staff and planning virtual events. Unfortunately, they aren't able to host the wide-scale events that are organized pre-pandemic, but they are pleased with what they've been able to do.

A number of people also found that they had more time on their hands once the pandemic lockdown began in March. This provided people with the opportunity to have some alone time with themselves, learn a new language or skill, and reconnect with faith groups. It also was encouraging to hear that some small businesses garnered ongoing local support and are doing well despite the economic depression caused by the pandemic. The lockdown also allowed people time to engage in the community and develop creative ways to support neighbours. As one resident put it, the lockdown provided "The opportunity to start new organizations to support new Canadians and provide a level of social contact."

8.3 Roundtable Feedback: Challenges

The one main overarching theme of our discussions on challenges was that the pandemic had exacerbated new and existing inequalities as well as created an absence of human contact, and that all of these challenges were taking a toll on their mental health. Residents missed interacting with each other and virtual events do not substitute in-person socialization. Although some residents found the pandemic brought the community closer due to new connections being made online, others found it difficult to talk with neighbours, community leaders and other associations. Some residents have been marginalized further by the shift to online engagement for reasons such as a lack of access to —or a lack of comfort using— digital platforms and technologies. Social isolation for seniors has also been a growing concern as they are often left out of online engagement. A lot of communication is done through Facebook and not everyone has Facebook to stay connected or want to use Facebook to communicate. Community members voiced their concern regarding a lack of technological infrastructure that could allow the continuing original programming.

Certain neighbourhoods struggle specifically with high concentration of positive covid-19 cases in care homes, warning signs outside the buildings has contributed to feelings of isolation for some older residents and has caused fear in the community. The distance has also caused a disconnect in identifying the needs of marginalized folk particularly the elderly at this time. Communities have been left with a lack of many resources since the closure of public facilities due to Covid-19. Many individuals relied on these facilities to assist in the functioning of their daily lives, for them, life without these resources has changed drastically. One of our residents shared working from home whilst balancing raising four children and taking online classes has been overwhelming without support from community facilities.

Leadership and organization function was another significant theme in discussions and survey responses. Multiple groups have had leaders resign or have had no contact with their leaders, some groups have fallen apart entirely, while other organizations have been unable to get off the ground. The pandemic has also made it difficult to identify leaders and new leadership. The transition to online facilitation has made it easy or possible for many groups to stay afloat, especially with regards to funding. Residents are less likely to pay for membership fees for online groups and organizations, limiting the resources groups have access to. The lack of strong leadership weakens the organization's relationship with the City, resulting in little to no support from the City. Organizations and groups expressed that the lack of skills within executive teams limited their abilities to overcome the challenges of adjusting to online programming.

Another challenge that the pandemic has exacerbated for neighbourhood groups and organizations has been to stimulate engagement in the community whilst being as inclusive as possible. Facilitating online engagement and bringing in an accurate representation from the community, especially in relation to age has been a struggle for groups and organizations. Residents made the connection between low engagement from members and residents and a lack of knowledge for community activities and projects. This means groups are functioning with minimal staff setting resident-led initiatives back further in addition to a struggle to transition completely to online meetings. Community garden groups particularly, have voiced concern about staff shortages and low community engagement. Furthermore, groups, especially smaller hubs struggle with planning events and achomishing goals due to the number of permit fees and regulations in place. residents are finding that online events are unfavourable as for most community members a lot of aspects of life are now online and they are zoomed out by the end of the day, and going to an online event is not appealing. On the flipside community leaders are struggling to hold socially distanced events and finding safe

places to meet and gather with COVID restrictions. These challenges force us to rethink the ways we bring people together and how we choose to create spaces.

Residents in both dialogue sessions echoed the need to improve accountability for neighbourhood leaders, and the City, as well as fellow residents. Communities feel hurt by decisions made without their consultation, this is in specific reference to a shelter being built in the community without considering the harm it could cause to residents. The Ainslie wood association this year has struggled with the appearance of their community since McMaster university has been online and the student community has been minimal. Property standards have been lowered, absentee landlords are not keeping up with necessary repairs and garbage is littering the community. Other community groups brought up issues of vandalism to homes, and "porch pirates" the theft of packages. The issue of safety in neighbourhoods was brought up often, the ability to hold community safety meetings has been disrupted due to the removal of police liaisons. The installation of security cameras in Powell Park Clubhouse was suggested but that cannot be accomplished because the park does not have WIFI. The lack of accountability has left residents feeling that they are not heard and that their concerns are not a priority to the city. These feelings are not necessarily specific to the pandemic, residents from neighbourhoods that were a part of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy program expressed that the lack of a transitional strategy for the end of that program in 2017 left those neighbourhoods with many challenges.

Mental health and stress appeared consistently in our discussions with residents. The pandemic has caused a lot of emotional strain, working in a volunteer position during the pandemic with the lack of support for leaders and workers. In addition to the stress caused by the pandemic, there has been a lot of internal conflict within associations. As one resident put it there were "High levels of anxiety and feeling disrespected because connections have been broken [as a result I] have been asked to step back from gardening work." For these groups the pandemic has brought out a lot of negativity and hostility online platforms like Facebook as well as in meetings between members, creating a hostile and draining environment for all.

Another challenge closely related to mental health and that was close to many residents' hearts was homelessness. Hamilton has seen a steady increase of homelessness over the years and the pandemic brought out more issues such as the removal of tent city leading to homeless encampments along rail trails. It has taken a toll on the emotional wellbeing of residents who witness homelessness and poverty in their communities but are unable to do any fundraising to alleviate the problem. Residents note feeling helpless because they can not do anything to help those in need. Pre-COVID events included food, where

homeless folk could enjoy a meal, there was significant distress from residents who shared that these events provided people the only meals they would have in a long time.

From the financial aspect of challenges, there were a wide array of struggles ranging from the affordability of bus tickets/shuttle buses to the lack of economic diversity/infrastructure in the city as a whole. Specific neighbourhood organization struggles included a lack of funding for printouts to aid in the promotion of events. Leaders specifically wanted physical print outs to reach demographics that would not be able to view advertisements of the event on online platforms. Affordable childcare and an increase in Hamilton housing prices came up as a general concern to residents of the state of their city and the affordability of necessary resources.

8.4 Roundtable Feedback: Priorities

The residents at the roundtable discussion had a wide range of priorities moving forward. Some were related to the community gardens —they expressed the need for seasonal support, as they only need extra help during gardening season. They also wished to be able to donate extra produce from their gardens, but did not have the knowledge of where they could send it to.

Many discussed overarching goals for the Neighbourhood Development Section and community groups. This included:
- The wish that they needed ways to communicate with more people, to be able to send them notices on new COVID-19 rules and also upcoming events.
- A way for leaders in all communities in Hamilton to collaborate, and also to form connections with past leaders, in order to leverage the experience of those who have been involved for a long period of time.
- A focus on creating positive change, and having people with the same values and visions for the community engage and work with each other.
- Maintaining connections between community groups and providing opportunities for them to collaborate with each other.
- Getting assistance from the City to start new initiatives.
- Forming more connections with people through telephones and virtually.
- Creating smaller groups that could be connected together.
- Creating more accessible programs and initiatives that benefit all populations in the community.
- Building a greater sense of community in Hamilton.
- Focusing on the mental health of Hamiltonians and its leaders.
- Making Hamilton a safer place by starting initiatives in each community to make them safer.

- Having the City follow through with its actions and promises to community members, leaders, and groups.
- Sharing methods/initiatives/ideas already happening in other communities.

One big theme was the need to simply bring people together. This was discussed in the form of going back "to the way things were" pre-pandemic (in their ability to host events). They wanted ways that they could gather safely, including online engagement methods and modifying in-person engagements to make them COVID-safe. They also wanted ways to bring in new volunteers for physically helping with various group initiatives.

Some people were very concerned about systemic issues that would be out of the NDS's control, such as homelessness and the ongoing displacement/relocation issues that they face, the need for increasing economic diversity and infrastructure, and the need for better police responses/assistance for community programs.

8.5 Roundtable Feedback: Solutions

Policy change within ND section
- Working with hubs that are not formalized associations
- Allowing hubs to receive grants
- Subsidize permit fees

Leadership workshops
- Support for conflict resolution
  - John Howard Constructive Resolution Method
- Self-care in leadership ex. Evergreen workshop, Neighborhood leadership institute, Mentorship program
- Social media management (to help avoid burnout)
- A manual/transition report for neighbourhood associations
  - Different sections written by the associations that excel in certain areas to create a full manual that can be referred to by associations
- Democratic processes
- appointing a council for community leadership instead of having one leader be the singular voice of that community.

Event and initiatives advertisement
- Promoting online events better for all people--not only on facebook
- Student co-op/internship role for advertisement in community to help engage neighbourhoods/community
  - Students have good insight into what is more attention grabbing, new ideas/innovation, opportunity for new employment/community building
- put up advertisements in the neighbourhood itself
- CHCH News board
- Subsidies for promotion

- Technical assistance for the elderly; identifying when they are in need

Engagement strategies
- Diversify group members by having students and student representatives from Mcmaster in neighbouring associations
- More opportunities to engage with fellow community groups
- community hub

Partner with different organizations/ institutions
- Senior centres, language barriers (HIPC) Hamilton Immigrantion Partnership Council
- Reaching out to organizations that already work with marginalized (ie empowerment squared)

Online meeting resources
- Toolkits and resources to help facilitate online meetings
- Maximizing the functions of online platforms and providing the knowledge of online platforms to all groups.
- Neighbourhoods pay for tools such as SurveyMonkey and Zoom. Connecting with other organizations (who don't have the funds) to provide the subscriptions.
- General operation support
- Neighbourhood association formation resources
  - o Assistance in getting in contact with the appropriate organizations and resources, MSU, city councillours, lawyer
- Technical support, Making user-friendly tutorials for virtual platforms
- Access to information about online platforms to engage with the neighbourhood

Finance solutions
- Safe COVID space for video/ podcast recording with equipment
- Money for advertisements to boost participation and engagement, social media
- Grant system
  - o Application process workshop,
  - o Providing support for accessing grants
- Rent-relief programs
- Notoriety
  - o E.g. community service for youth to participate
- Community benefits concepts to help alleviate some of the systemic problems

City staff support
- Need a good point of contact which will follow through (important!)
- More proactive complaint-based system, community policing
- Online facilitator helps host online meetings
- Staff assigned to guide associations and check in on them
- City staff to hold community leaders accountable

- Accountability from city in return calls and addressing complaints

City services to connect residents to services
- Connecting organizations in a way in which volunteers can connect with other associations to boost and magnify work that is already being done
- Centralized resources
- City housing, legal services
- Opening up recreation centres and programs (Ex: Dominic Agostino Riverdale Community Centre is closed for renovations until Spring 2021)
- Better police response and help for the community programs or dedicated volunteers that are trained

Event/ initiative specific:
- Create programs for isolated seniors where you call them once to twice a week to engage them
- Working with social enterprises and having meals at home that can be heated in the oven, Requiring volunteers to deliver and drop off foods (bypassing skip the dishes and etc. to support local restaurants more). Allowing people to share a meal together
- An online platform for feedback for cycle pathways so citizens can say which routes need to be finished
- Get speakers that come to the libraries to host a session on zoom instead (authors)
- Community Green Team (truck full of supplies) for cleaning up alleys
- Install sharps containers at parks
- Donation bins, food and clothing drives using social media reach to ask for help from residents.
- Transforming empty space to gardens
  - Empowering individuals to take on initiatives by themselves
  - Having a YouTube/webinar series showing how to do different initiatives (e.g. starting a community garden)
- Safe and clean homes in neighbourhood (use community resource community works)
  - University student housing resources (property standards are not up to par due to empty student homes)
  - Resources: Head Injury Rehabilitation Group, Community Living groups, student volunteer role
- Reaching the people that cannot be supported online, that really need the support and help by going out in a team in person.
- Showcasing neighbourhood and ward to build a sense of community pride. (signs)
- Workshops on self-defence, prevention and protection from identity thefts and scammers
- Park and public space development
- Community kitchen

Better updating on city website
- Having clear directions. Where can people go to help and get involved in a non-monetary way

8.5.1 Newsletter

Most of our feedback for the concept of a community and/or Hamilton-wide newsletter came from the Exit Survey, as multiple groups did not have time to discuss the idea during Breakout Session 2. The groups that were able to discuss it during the dialogue were excited about the concept. They emphasized that it would need to be distributed consistently to be effective (such as releasing it monthly or bi-weekly). They said that it should be neighbourhood-specific with emphasis on having contributors/writers from that neighbourhood. It was commented that the newsletter could be utilized to communicate changes in procedures or leadership roles within the local neighbourhood association. One group suggested that the newsletter should be distributed via email. Another comment said that some communities already have an existing newsletter, and so to be careful to only provide a new one where needed, and otherwise to adapt to existing work.

The large majority of the respondents to the Exit Survey supported the idea of a newsletter. These respondents had more ideas for what the newsletter should contain, including:
- Information about programming:
    - Volunteer opportunities for different groups of people
    - New initiatives in the neighbourhood (how recipients of the newsletter could get involved
    - Updates on City Programming and activities in municipal buildings
- Resources for funding or physical assistance that residents can access, and how they can access them.
- News within the neighbourhood:
    - Information about neighbourhood-specific issues
    - Events happening in the neighbourhood
    - Notices on local construction
- Submissions from residents for personal advertisements (such as penny sales or garage sales)
- A resident discussion section, including news from any group or neighbourhood to exchange ideas, and public discussions on local city project proposals.
- Contact information for relevant persons at City Hall

8.5.2 Block Connectors Program

Most of our feedback for initiating a Block Connectors program also came from the Exit Survey, as there was also not enough time in all Breakout Rooms during Session 2 to bring it up. The groups that were able to discuss it mentioned the "Neighbourhood Pond System" that was attempted in the past. They also emphasized that the volunteers in the Block Connectors program would have to be held accountable. One group thought that City Councillors should be block connectors.

The respondents of the Exit Survey had mostly positive but confused responses to the idea of a Block Connectors Program. People were unsure what it would look like, but were open to the idea. Ideas for who could be in charge of the program to coordinate/facilitate/monitor the initiative and its volunteers included municipal staff, neighbourhood association representatives, and City Council.

9. Limitations and Challenges

9.1 Limitations

A primary limitation of this project was digital accessibility. In order for stakeholders to engage with the project it required access to both technology and the internet. Without both of these things, there was no other opportunity to engage with our project at any of the collaborative stages. This inaccessibility, limits the project's ability to account for the unique challenges and priorities for this group within our stakeholder population.

Another significant limitation was the re-deployment of the NDS staff. Throughout the project, the CityLAB team was only able to consult Al Fletcher, NDS manager, to gain background knowledge of the pre-pandemic role of the NDS in neighbourhoods development and relationships with neighbourhood groups. Thus, the entire project was developed and carried out based on these individual consultations. Although Al's insights were extremely valuable, it would have been valuable to leverage some of the relationships, experiences and skills of other NDS staff members.

Another limitation that impacted our work was the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. In the earlier stages of the project, there was the expectation that the NDS staff would likely be returning to their roles in January and that social gathering restrictions would gradually decrease going forward. As the semester progressed, it became apparent that the social restrictions would continue into the new year. It is now more unclear when the NDS staff will return making it difficult to propose effective strategies that align with the human and capital resources available.

9.2 Challenges

A challenge encountered during the project was language barriers. While sharing the Roundtable invitation across the various neighbourhood pages, there were requests for language translations. Although we were unable to secure translators for the Roundtable sessions, this highlighted the value prioritizing accessibility and was included in the final recommendations.

Another challenge was incorporating the diverse needs and priorities of the various neighbourhoods within Hamilton. Since the NDS has transitioned from only supporting a few neighbourhoods to supporting all Hamilton neighbourhoods, it was important that the final recommendations be applicable to all communities. This presented challenges because every neighbourhood was not represented in the surveys, and roundtable discussions.

10. Final Recommendations

10.1 Recommendation Classification System

Each of the recommendations in this section consists of a purpose, guidelines for implementation, and relevant best practices. The recommendations are listed below, with an emphasis on its urgency and importance. The NDS is encouraged to use it's discretion and consider their available resources when choosing the order of which they should carry out the recommendations. They are then elaborated upon in the upcoming sections.

Section	Recommendation	Emphasis
7.2.4	Continuation of Monthly Dialogues	Very Important
10.2.1	Resources for Online Facilitation	Important
10.2.2	Resources for Starting a Community Organization	Important
10.2.3	Virtual Neighbourhood Development Hub	Important
10.2.4	Grant Programs	Important
10.2.5	Neighbourhoods Newsletter	Important
10.2.6	Resources for Equitable, Non-Digital Engagement	Important
10.3.1	Block Connectors Program	Important
10.3.2	Neighbourhood Development Liaison	Urgent
10.3.3	Resources for carrying out in-person initiatives	Neither

To determine our main recommendations, we incorporated our data from our community engagement initiatives, our research into best practices, and our own ideas based on the challenges and priorities given in the dialogue. We then separated these recommendations into two categories: Primary and Secondary. This was done using a decision matrix to reduce bias. The 8 criteria for the decision matrix were as follows:

1. **Level** of interest → popularity of the idea in the dialogue and surveys
2. **Cost** → sustained by the NDS
3. **Feasibility** → overall feasibility considering pandemic restraints
4. **Resources** → number of staff and other resources needed
5. **Generalization** → ability of the recommendation to be replicated for neighbourhoods across Hamilton
6. **Sustainability** → the self-sufficiency of the recommendation once implemented

7. **Applicability** → whether the recommendation is applicable to the needs and challenges of residents
8. **Precedent for Use** → based on the best practices found in our research or its success in other neighbourhoods

We then gave each criterion a weighting factor based on its importance. Each recommendation was then rated on a scale of 1 to 5 and then the sum of the weighted ratings were used to determine the recommendation's total score. The recommendations with a rating over 4.0 were chosen to be our primary recommendation, the secondary recommendations were the ones with ratings below 4.0. The explanation for the criteria's weighting and the decision matrix can be found in Appendix B.

10.2 Primary Recommendations

10.2.1 Resources for Online Facilitation

The Neighbourhood Development Section should develop and provide resources to support the online facilitation of community meetings, events and activities.

Summary of Recommendation
The first resource proposed is subsidized **access to online engagement platforms**. This could come in the form of executive accounts owned by the Neighbourhood Development Section. These centralized accounts would be available for loan by community organizations and residents through an online form. Alternatively, the Section could directly subsidize the purchase of executive accounts for individual neighbourhood organizations.

The development and distribution of a **comprehensive technical toolkit**, designed for residents and leaders, is also recommended. This toolkit would contain information about the use and purpose of relevant online engagement platforms. It would also provide two versions of guidelines for the use of these platforms, tailored for hosts and participants, respectively. The Section must ensure that these guidelines feature considerations for accessible virtual instructions. These considerations include closed captioning, live translation, and others.

Another proposed resource is a set of **virtual workshops for leaders**. These webinars may target various topics that have been indicated as a priority, including virtual dialogue facilitation and conflict resolution.

Purpose of Recommendation
The proposed recommendation would help eliminate financial barriers to accessing engagement platforms. This is especially important, as organizations have indicated that the pandemic has resulted in limited financial resources. Helping leaders become more comfortable with online platforms will allow more programming to continue through the

pandemic. Moreover, increasing technology literacy in residents will help increase the number and diversity of residents involved in neighbourhood activities and initiatives.

Guidelines for Implementation
- Resource developers can and should rely heavily upon existing resources, listed below, to efficiently implement the proposed changes.
- The proposed resources may be primarily hosted on the Neighbourhood Development Section webpage.
- The proposed resources should be provided to neighbourhood associations digitally and physically to allow for equitable distribution to residents.
- Resource developers should ensure that the toolkit is written in large font and is available in multiple languages, to avoid barriers to accessibility.

Best Practices for Reference
- 5.5.1: COVID-19 Digital Engagement Toolkit
- 5.5.2: Community Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond
- 5.5.4: Virtual Engagement Toolkit

10.2.2 Resources for Starting a Community Organization
The Neighbourhood Development Section should develop and provide resources to assist residents looking to start a neighbourhood association or hub.

Summary of Recommendation
The Section should present **clear eligibility criteria** for being designated as a neighbourhood association in an accessible manner. A **directory of current organizations and associations** is also recommended, to allow residents to check if one is currently serving their area. A directory would also be useful for inter-organization collaboration and support.

The development of **guidelines for the processes involved in starting a community group** is also recommended. This includes guidelines for drafting budgets, writing a constitution, purchasing insurance, and other key tasks. A **directory of important contacts** for these processes, such as lawyers and community partners, would help support these guidelines as well.

Support for the development of leadership structures and democratic processes may be valuable. **Workshops on personal leadership and mental health** for new leaders is also recommended.

Additionally, a **point of contact** should be made available for any questions or concerns prospective leaders may have. Neighbourhood Development Section staff would likely fulfill this role. Another proposed strategy to support this recommendation is the **recruitment of existing community leaders** to support those looking to start an organization.

Purpose of Recommendation

The proposed recommendation would help residents overcome the barriers associated with starting a neighbourhood association or organization. The benefits of new neighbourhood groups include an increased sense of community and better support for resident priorities.

Guidelines for Implementation

- Collaborate with existing leaders to create the proposed resources based on the needs they observed while starting their organizations.
- Resource developers may take inspiration from various examples of similar toolkits.
- The proposed resources may be primarily hosted on the Neighbourhood Development Section webpage.
- Resource developers should ensure that the toolkit is written in large font and is available in multiple languages, to avoid barriers to accessibility.
- The exploration of other mediums, such as a video series or interactive presentation, may be valuable to supplement the written resources.

Best Practices for Reference

- 5.2.4: [Waterloo Neighbourhoods Homepage](#)
- 5.3.3: [Starting a Garden](#)
- 5.4.1: [Community Associations Listing Form](#)
- 5.5.8: [Neighbourhood Association Guide](#)

10.2.3 Virtual Neighbourhood Development Hub

The Neighbourhood Development Section should create a digital space where residents can connect with one another and with the Section.

Summary of Recommendation

The Section should use an **online social platform**, likely a Facebook page, to facilitate communication and collaboration between different community groups. Community representatives would be able to share promotional content, volunteer opportunities, and other important updates.

Furthermore, a Facebook page would act as an **avenue of communication** between the City and the groups it supports. Specifically, posts from the Section may include updates regarding City policy, promotions for Neighbourhood Development initiatives, and other valuable information.

It is also recommended that the chat function be used to answer residents' questions and provide other means of **individualized support** to associations. Moreover, the posts

would provide a virtual, moderated forum for residents to discuss challenges and priorities.

Purpose of Recommendation
A Facebook page would facilitate more inter-association collaboration. This will allow residents to take on larger initiatives and share resources, notably volunteers. Organizations would also be able to engage a larger and more diverse audience through the aforementioned promotional posts. Furthermore, a Facebook page allows for the Neighbourhood Development Section to better connect with residents, both through posts and through the chat function. The chat function particularly provides a direct and personal means of support for residents, while not requiring any financial resources or significant human resources from the Section.

Guidelines for Implementation
- Invite residents by distributing the Facebook page link via email, newsletter, Neighbourhood Development Section Webpage, QR code on posters, and other avenues.
- Provide a link to the Section webpage on the Facebook page to ensure that all relevant resources and information are available via this Virtual Hub.

Best Practices for Reference
- 5.3.3: [Community Garden Council Facebook Page](#), [Community Garden Council Homepage](#)

10.2.4 Grant Programs
The Neighbourhood Development Section should establish grant programs to fund the short-term and long-term needs of residents and community groups.

Summary of Recommendation
The creation of a **pandemic-focused mini-grant program** is recommended. The mini-grant program would specifically support initiatives related to neighbourhood engagement and community building during the pandemic. Priority will be given to emergent and urgent needs. Residents would be able to request up to $500 in mini-grant funding, though this value is subject to change.

The Section should also create a more **substantive grant program to tackle long-term priorities**. This grant program could use a fund matching structure in which residents may request $1 for every $1 they contribute to the initiative. The applicant contribution may consist of volunteer labour, donated materials, or cash. Residents would be able to request up to $7,500 in mini-grant funding, though this value is subject to change.

It is also recommended that the Section provide a **toolkit to support applicants throughout the grant application process**. This toolkit should include step-by-step

guidelines, sample budget templates, and a point of contact for any questions residents might have.

Impact of Recommendation/Priorities Targeted/Challenges Tackled
The mini-grant aims to address the immediate needs and challenges faced by associations and residents, particularly because some associations have faced increased financial strain during the pandemic. The fund matching program will help organizations with larger-scale initiatives in the wake of the pandemic. Finally, providing support for the grant process helps keep the process equitable and inclusive, minimizing the barriers to application.

Guidelines for Implementation
- The Section could give priority to grant applications that address the priorities of Hamilton and Hamiltonians, such as affordable housing, community safety, harm reduction, permit subsidies, conflict resolution, and others.
- Information regarding both grant programs should be distributed through the Neighbourhood Development Section webpage, email, newsletter, and Facebook page immediately after their establishment.
- Use the best practices linked below to adjust the proposed grant programs as necessary.

Best Practices for Reference
- 5.2.2: [Neighbourhood Matching Fund Overview](#), [Neighbourhood Matching Fund Toolkit](#)
- 5.2.3: [Mini-Grants Overview](#)
- 5.3.1: [Neighbourhood Placemaking Challenge Guidelines](#)
- 5.3.2: [LoveMyHood Matching Grant Overview](#), [LoveMyHood Matching Grant Budget Template](#)
- 5.4.2: [Civic Events Funding Overview](#)
- 5.4.3: [Sustainability Fund Overview](#)

10.2.5 Neighbourhoods Newsletter
The Neighbourhood Development Section should curate and share a monthly Neighbourhoods Newsletter.

Summary of Recommendation
The establishment of a monthly Neighbourhoods Newsletter is recommended to provide a **reliable and constant stream of communication** from the Neighbourhood Development Section to residents. The Section can provide general development updates and advertise Section initiatives.

The Newsletter could also feature updates regarding **city policies, infrastructural development, and staffing changes**.

Additionally, the Section should **promote resident-led initiatives and opportunities for volunteers**, as contributed by associations and leaders. Uplifting stories from residents and local news may also be included.

It is also recommended that the Section include links to the resources outlined in 10.2.1 and 10.2.2, as well as the link to the Facebook page proposed in 10.2.3.

Purpose of Recommendation
The Newsletter would allow organizations to recruit more volunteers and engage larger audiences. The regularity and transparency that the Newsletter provides will also bolster trust and confidence in the Neighbourhood Development Section.

Guidelines for Implementation
- The Neighbourhoods Newsletter could be distributed digitally through email using a subscription system.
- The provision of incentives for subscribing to the Newsletter may help encourage engagement.
- Physical copies of the Newsletter should also be provided through traditional mail.
- Organizations could also be given physical copies of the Newsletter to distribute to their community and community centers as required.
- Ensure that the Newsletter is translated appropriately and uses a large font

Best Practices for Reference
- 5.2.7: [Waterloo Neighbourhoods Homepage](#)

10.2.6 Resources for Equitable, Non-Digital Engagement
The Neighbourhood Development Section should provide resources for engaging Hamiltonians with decreased access to technology or other digital resources.

Summary of Recommendations
The first of these proposed resources is a toolkit for non-digital engagement that would contain guidelines for various relevant strategies. Examples of such strategies include the use of phone calling, postcards, door-to-door canvassing, flyers, posters, and others.

It is recommended that the Section also increase the accessibility of technology to all Hamiltonians. The addition of wi-fi to public spaces and the provision of public computers are two examples of such methods.

Purpose of Recommendation
The provision of non-digital engagement resources aims to tackle the inequities in public participation that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. These resources will allow for communities to connect and engage with more of their residents, particularly vulnerable populations.

Guidelines for Implementation
- It is imperative that accessibility and equity are prioritized throughout the uptake of this recommendation.
- Resource developers should ensure that all proposed strategies account for the health and safety of all stakeholders in regards to the pandemic.
- The Section should draw heavily from existing best practices during the development of the proposed toolkit.

Best Practices for Reference
- 5.5.2: [Community Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond](#)
- 5.5.9: [Practices for Engagement in the Time of COVID](#)

10.3 Secondary Recommendations

10.3.1 Block Connectors Program

The Neighbourhood Development Section should develop and launch a block connectors program for City of Hamilton neighbourhoods.

Summary of Recommendation

It is recommended that the Section **launch a block connectors program** to help foster a necessary sense of community in Hamiltonians, particularly during the pandemic. Specific aspects of this initiative that must be developed in preparation for its launch include the **development of promotional materials and the recruitment of volunteers**. A resident that volunteers as a Block Connector would be expected to take a leadership role in their neighbourhood by facilitating the sharing of information, building connections, and supporting their neighbours.

Best Practices for Reference

5.2.1: [Hey Neighbour! Overview](#), [Hey Neighbour! Application](#)

10.3.2 Neighbourhood Development Liaison

The Neighbourhood Development Section should create staff or volunteer roles for the provision of direct support to associations and residents.

Summary of Recommendation

The Section should provide staff to help associations navigate civic, financial, and legal processes and resources. Additionally, the provision of external facilitators to host meetings and mediate conflict is strongly recommended. Local best practices that may be relied upon include the Social Planning and Research Council's community developers, as well as Kitchener's community liaisons.

Best Practices for Reference

- 5.3.2: [LoveMyHood Matching Grant Overview](#)

10.3.3 Resources for carrying out in-person initiatives

The Neighbourhood Development Section should develop and provide resources to support the planning of in-person events and activities.

Summary of Recommendation

The resources recommended include guidelines for the safe planning of food drives, clothing drives, donation bins, food safety, video recording, and promotional materials. Comprehensive and relevant best practices are included below. The scope of this recommendation is limited by public health guidelines, community group policies, and personal risk.

Best Practices for Reference

- 5.5.3: The Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide

11. Policy Implications and Relevance to Municipal Priorities

Strategic Plan Priority	Desired Outcome
Community Engagement and Participation	Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.
Economic Prosperity and Growth	Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.
Healthy and Safe Communities	Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.
Clean and Green	Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.
Built Environment and Infrastructure	Hamilton is supported by state of the art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic city.
Culture and Diversity	Hamilton is a thriving, vibrant place for arts, culture, and heritage where diversity and inclusivity are embraced and celebrated.
Our People and Performance	Hamiltonians have a high level of trust and confidence in their City government.

11.1 Community Engagement and Participation

The goal of the project addresses the Strategic Plan Priority of Community Engagement and Participation in a number of ways, between various stakeholders. Firstly, some of the proposed changes will foster more engagement between the NDS and community groups. Examples of such recommendations include the proposed newsletter and city staff support role. In particular, the newsletter will help promote engagement opportunities to residents while acting as a constant avenue of communication from the City. The support role will help the Section serve residents in an active and individualized way. Both of these changes also help increase trust and confidence in the City. Moreover, many of the recommendations support the community engagement and participation efforts of community groups. Recommendations such as the toolkit for online facilitation, resources for organization formation, and neighbourhoods grant program fall under this purview. Finally, The process of the project heavily relied on the consultation and involvement of residents to develop the recommendations, as these decisions have an

impact on them. Residents were consulted through both online surveys and virtual roundtable sessions. This collaborative approach was driven by the passion and pride for the City of Hamilton that is held by the participants and facilitators alike.

11.2 Healthy and Safe Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the priorities and challenges of the residents and organizations at the centre of this project. As such, a large number of the proposed recommendations attempt to navigate engagement and leadership during the pandemic, tying them closely to the Strategic Plan Priority of Healthy and Safe Communities. Many of our recommendations call upon the City to provide resources and guidelines for running initiatives while following public health mandates. This helps leaders maintain the health and safety of their residents without halting programming altogether. Furthermore, some of these recommendations provide guidelines for hosting initiatives that are also inherently related to community health. This includes food and clothing drives. Furthermore, the mental health of various stakeholders is a priority that shapes many of the proposed changes. For example, resources that support the volunteers leading community groups aim to lessen the increased mental and emotional strain felt by these leaders during the pandemic. Other measures, such as the technology literacy resources and webinars, seek to mitigate the isolation felt by ageing populations. Finally, nearly all of the proposed recommendations enable more community involvement for all residents, with a particular focus on equity and inclusion. Participation and engagement in community organizations, such as Hamilton's neighbourhood associations and groups, have been shown to benefit mental and physical health.[38,39] This impact is particularly significant in disadvantaged and minority populations.[40,41]

11.3 Clear and Green

Though environmental and sustainability issues are not directly tackled by the proposed changes, such issues are the primary mission of many of the organizations supported by the proposed recommendations. These groups, including Beautiful Alleys, and various community garden groups, also participated in the survey and roundtable. Supporting these organizations continue their work according to their perspectives helps keep Hamilton neighbourhoods Clean and Green.

11.4 Built Environment and Infrastructure

The Strategic Plan Priority of Built Environment and Infrastructure is not a focus of the proposed recommendations but is impacted by them in other ways. Some neighbourhood associations and groups, for example, the Ainslie Wood Neighbourhood

Association, are heavily involved in advocating for and raising funds for infrastructural development in their communities. Recently, this development has come in the form of a proposed community hub and additions to public park infrastructure. Through the proposed recommendations, these groups will be better able to incite change regarding their built environment. This potentially includes better communication with developers, greater ability to fundraise, and more voices heard regarding new infrastructure. The issue of houselessness is also a priority of many communities and organizations. The proposed grant allocation system gives precedent to such community priorities and has the potential to help tackle such issues.

11.5 Culture and Diversity

The proposed recommendations and the strategies suggested for their implementation aim to include all residents in community involvement and engagement, regardless of age, background, or ability. These considerations aim to increase the diversity of voices present at neighbourhood gatherings, thus better reflecting the culture of these communities. The toolkit for online gatherings and activities provides a few examples of this. Firstly, the translation resources help break down language barriers that may be present for residents when engaging with neighbourhood groups. Next, the guidelines for using online platforms enable the participation of those not yet comfortable with such technology, namely older residents. Finally, the instructions for the provision of captioned activities and resources aim to ensure access regardless of level of hearing.

11.6 Out People and Performance

The Strategic Plan Priority, Our People and Performance, is highly relevant to the recommendations proposed, as they all help City of Hamilton staff support the residents they are tasked with serving. The involvement of citizens in the development of the recommendations also helps ensure that the work of the Neighbourhood Development Section is valuable to taxpayers. The proposed changes to communication methods also aims to help City staff deliver services more effectively and accessibly. Moreover, the recommended increase in accountability and transparency, as well as the increased direct support by City staff, fosters a greater sense of trust and confidence in the City.

12. Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Development Section's work in Hamilton is essential to the creation of a friendlier, happier, and healthier Hamilton community. The goal of elevating community engagement levels is growing increasingly more important as the pandemic and lockdown continues to deeply affect Hamiltonians' lives. The NDS's collaboration with the CityLAB student team has resulted in plenty of food for thought for the NDS, including background research on other municipalities' best practices, feedback from Hamilton community members and leaders, and the student team's recommendations for the NDS going forward. These recommendations were formed within the project's limitations and challenges, and aim to solve or alleviate the challenges that communities expressed in the community dialogue.

Over the course of this project, the Neighbourhoods student team has learned a lot, and are extremely grateful for the experience that this project has afforded them. We are excited to see this project continue beyond our work in Fall 2020, and see the implementation of our recommendations and community feedback. With the future work of the Neighbourhood Development Section, the future looks bright.

13. References

1. Hamilton Cof. Our Future Hamilton [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2015 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/our-future-hamilton
2. Hamilton Cof. Our Commitment to Our Community [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2017 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/government-information/trust-and-confidence-report/our-commitment-our-community
3. Our Story [Internet]. CityLAB Hamilton. [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.citylabhamilton.com/our-story
4. Hamilton Cof. Our Future Hamilton [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2015 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/our-future-hamilton
5. Hamilton Cof. Neighbourhood Development [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2015 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/neighbourhood-development
6. Community- Engaged Education Toolkit [Internet]. Community Engagement. 2019 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://community.mcmaster.ca/education/community-engaged-education-toolkit/
7. Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement [Internet]. NCDD Resource Center. 2008 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://ncdd.org/rc/item/2722/
8. Open Government Declaration [Internet]. Open Government Partnership. 2019 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/joining-ogp/open-government-declaration/
9. Cores Values, Ethics, Spectrum - The 3 Pillars of Public Participation [Internet]. IAP2. 2020. [cited2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.iap2.org/page/pillars
10. What is Community Engagement, Exactly? [Internet]. Bang The Table. 2019 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.bangthetable.com/blog/defining-community-engagement
11. Institute T. Community Engagement: Tamarack Institute [Internet]. Community Engagement | Tamarack Institute. [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/communityengagement
12. What is Community Engagement? [Internet]. Bang The Table. 2020 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.bangthetable.com/what-is-community-engagement/
13. Digital Engagement Tools & Platforms (August 2020) [Internet]. Capire. [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://capire.com.au/communities/publications/
14. Hamilton Cof. Census Data for Hamilton [Internet]. 2014 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/moving-hamilton/community-profile/census-data-hamilton

15. Aslin H, Brown VA. [PDF] Towards Whole of Community Engagement: A Practical Toolkit: Semantic Scholar [Internet]. undefined. 1970 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Towards-Whole-of-Community-Engagement:-A-Practical-Aslin-Brown/8262dca0051f59e724d343cd7b1519386450c647

16. Cornwall A. Unpacking Participation Models [Internet]. Validate User. 2008 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://academic.oup.com/cdj/article-abstract/43/3/269/299854?redirectedFrom

17. IACD is the only global network for professional community development practitioners. [Internet]. IACD. 2017 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.iacdglobal.org/

18. Smith & Fand A. The Canadian CED Network [Internet]. The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity | The Canadian CED Network. 1999 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/toolbox/community-development-handbook-tool-build-community-capacity

19. Community Development: Theory and Practice [Internet]. Urban Center . 2010 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.google.com/url?sa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3D%26esrc%3Ds%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D%26ved%3D2ahUKEwj-r66Hs7_tAhXIm-AKHbDuBAUQFjABegQIAhAC%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.urbancentre.utoronto.ca%252Fpdfs%252Fresearchassociates%252FUCS1000-outline_2010_final.pdf%26usg%3DAOvVaw3fEQJSySz4_QcggJ6Gvk89&sa=D&ust=1607530208478000&usg=AOvVaw0QD4JMbdJlhe16vzBU20wN

20. Haines A. Asset-Based Community Development [Internet]. Google Books. Google; [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://books.google.ca/books?hl

21. Mathie A. From clients to citizens: Asset-based Community Development as a strategy for community-driven development [Internet]. Taylor & Francis. 2010 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0961452032000125857?casa_token=IQ4_OcZjTaYAAAAA%3At888AZ6fVPe9oazX0aG99VFlg3DvpSzHaOUa0dD9_ec5_hXUfkO4ER2Iy4FHmNN2KLmTq6BMY6xE

22. Hamilton Cof. Our Future Hamilton [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2015 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/our-future-hamilton

23. Milton B. Skip Nav Destination Article Navigation The impact of community engagement on health and social outcomes: a systematic review [Internet]. Validate User. 2012 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://academic.oup.com/cdj/article-abstract/47/3/316/262723

24. Hamilton Cof. Neighbourhood Development [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2015 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/neighbourhood-development

25. Hamilton Cof. Hamilton Public Engagement [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2019 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/hamilton-public-engagement

26. Hamilton Cof. Hamilton Public Engagement [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2019 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/hamilton-public-engagement

27. Strengthening neighbourhoods Hamilton Community Foundation [Internet]. Hamilton Community Foundation. [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamiltoncommunityfoundation.ca/leadership/strengthening-neighbourhoods/

28. Strengthening neighbourhoods - Hamilton Community Foundation [Internet]. Hamilton Community Foundation. [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamiltoncommunityfoundation.ca/leadership/strengthening-neighbourhoods/

29. Canada VC. CASE STUDY: Evaluating Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy [Internet]. CASE STUDY | Evaluating Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy. [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/case-study-evaluating-hamiltons-neighbourhood-action-strategy

30. Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy Boundaries [Internet]. City of Hamilton . 2013 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/media/browser/2015-03-06/neighbourhoodactionmaprevisedjuly2013.pdf

31. Hamilton Cof. Neighbourhood Development [Internet]. City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 2015 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/neighbourhood-development

32. Hamilton Neighbourhoods Study (HNS) [Internet]. McMaster Faculty of Social Sciences. 2017 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/crunch/research/hamilton-neighbourhoods-study-hns

33. StinsonCommunity. The Neighbourhood Action Evaluation, and (re)Imagining the NAS [Internet]. Stinson Community. [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: http://www.stinsoncommunity.ca/2017/09/16/the-neighbourhood-action-evaluation-and-reimagining-the-nas/

34. (Re)-imagining The Neighbourhood Action Strategy [Internet]. The Hamilton Community Foundation . Available from: https://www.hamiltoncommunityfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/reImagine-Friendly-Report-FINAL-june-5.pdf

35. Hamilton Cof. Census Data for Hamilton [Internet]. 2014 [cited 2020Dec9]. Available from: https://www.hamilton.ca/moving-hamilton/community-profile/census-data-hamilton

Appendix A – City Staff Deliverables

[Click here to access a summary video of the project.](#)

Context:

The City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Development Section (NDS) is responsible for supporting resident-led initiatives that contribute to safe and healthy communities. This support assists residents in making positive change and taking leadership roles within their communities. The pandemic presented many challenges for the NDS, including the redeployment of their staff, which affected the NDS's rapport with neighbourhood associations and groups. Rebuilding these relationships and connecting with the residents is crucial to the section's work as the city recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with Al Fletcher, Manager of the Neighbourhood Development Section, a group of CityLAB Student in Residence (SIR) students were able to identify some of the unique challenges the pandemic has presented to these groups, and develop strategies to help neighbourhood and community organizations reconnect with residents amidst the pandemic.

Project Goals:

Engage community partners and city staff to identify the needs and priorities that can guide Hamilton's community engagement efforts in the current pandemic setting.

Identify best practices by studying how other municipalities have adapted their policies, priorities, and engagement initiatives since the start of the pandemic

Provide recommendations for adapting the NDS' community engagement strategies to meet the needs of residents and neighbourhood groups during the pandemic.

Project Scope:

In-Scope:
→ Establishing contact with neighbourhood associations to gather community input.
→ Generating multiple ways of engaging with Hamiltonians during a pandemic.
→ Creating a report of recommendations and presenting an action plan to City Staff.

Out of Scope:
→ Leveraging expertise from City Staff to obtain feedback on proposed methods.
→ Testing and implementing recommendations within neighbourhoods to evaluate the performance.
→ Targeting engagement efforts beyond neighbourhood groups (via efforts such as mail-out letters) to gather input.

[Click here to access the transition report.](#)

Appendix B – Recommendation Classification Decision Matrix

Criteria Weighting Explanation

Criteria Weighting Explanation

Criteria	Weighting Factor*	Rating Meanings				
		0	**1**	**3**	**5**	**5**
Level of Interest	0.05	Not applicable or No interest	Low interested	Medium interest	Very interested	Not applicable & doesn't change result
Cost	0.05	Not applicable or too expensive	High cost	Median cost or variable cost	Low cost	Not applicable & doesn't change result
Feasibility	0.10	Not applicable Or not feasible	Not feasible	Feasible	Very feasible	Not applicable & doesn't change result
Resources	0.10	Not applicable or too many	Many resources needed	Some resources needed	Few resources needed	Not applicable & doesn't change result
Generalization	0.10	Not applicable	Very specific to one group in Hamilton	Can be used for some of Hamilton	Can be used for all of Hamilton	Not applicable & doesn't change result
Sustainability	0.10	Not applicable or Not sustainable	Low sustainable	Middle sustainable	Very sustainable	Not applicable & doesn't change result
Applicability	0.20	Not applicable	Not very applicable	Sort of applicable	Very applicable	Not applicable & doesn't change result
Precedent for use	0.30	Not applicable or no precedent	Little precedent	Some precedent	Good precedent	Not applicable & doesn't change result

*these weighting factors were determined subjectively, it is recommended that there be further analysis of each recommendation

Decision Matrix

Criteria		Level of Interest		Cost		Feasibility		Resources		Generalization		Sustainability		Applicability		Precedent for use		TOTAL
		Rating	Weighted Rating	Rating	Weighted Rating	Rating	Weighted Rating	Rating	Weighted Rating	Rating	Weighted Rating	Rating	Weighted Rating	Rating	Weighted Rating	Rating	Weighted Rating	Weighted Rating
Recommendation	**Weight**	0.05		0.05		0.1		0.1		0.1		0.1		0.2		0.3		1
Monthly Dialogues		5	0.25	5	0.25	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	1	5	1.5	5
Neighbourhoods Newsletter		5	0.25	3	0.15	5	0.5	2	0.2	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	1	4	1.2	4.3
Block Connectors Program		3	0.15	3	0.15	3	0.3	3	0.3	3	0.3	3	0.3	3	0.6	5	1.5	3.6
Resources for Online Facilitation		5	0.25	1	0.05	5	0.5	3	0.3	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	1	5	1.5	4.6
Resources for Starting a Community Organization		5	0.25	1	0.05	5	0.5	3	0.3	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	1	4	1.2	4.3
Virtual Neighbourhood Development Hub		5	0.25	1	0.05	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	1	4	1.2	4.5
Grant Programs		5	0.25	0	0	5	0.5	1	0.1	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	1	5	1.5	4.35
Resources for carrying out in-person initiatives		3	0.15	2	0.1	2	0.2	1	0.1	5	0.5	1	0.1	5	1	4	1.2	3.35
Resources for Equitable, Non-Digital Engagement		5	0.25	1	0.05	3	0.3	2	0.2	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	1	5	1.5	4.3
Neighbourhood Development Liaison		5	0.25	1	0.05	3	0.3	1	0.1	4	0.4	3	0.3	5	1	5	1.5	3.9