

# STAFF REPORT



TO Community and Social Services committee

SERVICE AREA Community and Social Services

DATE April 9, 2014

**SUBJECT Brant Neighbourhood Hub Development**

REPORT NUMBER CSS-

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To describe the work to date with community partners to explore the feasibility of a “community hub” in the Brant neighbourhood, and how this request aligns with the City’s Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework (SNEF). Also, to provide initial scoping requirements for the City to determine decision-making criteria and feasibility of developing a community hub on Brant Avenue Park lands (attachment 1).

### KEY FINDINGS

In 2013 The City of Guelph has been involved in a series of meetings with the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition (GNSC), community partners and the Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group to support and contribute to the development of a “community hub” model of service delivery on Brant Avenue Park lands, similar to the Shelldale Centre in the Onward Willow/Norm Jary Park neighbourhood. A community hub consists of a building located in a neighbourhood setting, where community service provider’s offer integrated programs that address the needs and priorities identified by the local community. The Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group and GNSC community partners have asked for the City to identify what is required and the timeline it will take for the City to decide if it is feasible to develop such a hub.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Associated additional staff time to develop the feasibility study, over and above current 2014 work plans.

### ACTION REQUIRED

To receive report # CSS --- and approve recommendation.

## RECOMMENDATION

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1. That City staff conduct a feasibility study, and determine a decision criteria and timeline for locating a community hub on Brant Ave Park lands, and bring back to Council a recommendation for further consideration at the CSS Committee meeting August 13, 2014.

## BACKGROUND

In July 2010, Council approved the Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework (SNEF) (attachment 2), which provided a new structure for City support to Neighbourhood Groups. This involved an expanded role for the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition (GNSC) as an independent organization ( GNSC incorporated in 2012) to be a bridge between Neighbourhood Groups and other community partners, including the City of Guelph, through a Partner Panel. Current GNSC Partner Panel members are:

- City of Guelph
- Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County
- Canadian Mental Health Association - Wellington, Waterloo, Dufferin (formerly Trellis Developmental Services)
- Guelph Community Health Centre
- Guelph Police Service
- Guelph Wellington Immigrant Services
- Upper Grand District School Board
- Wellington Catholic District School Board
- Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health

In 2013, the GNSC made the development of a “community hub” model of service and program delivery in the Brant neighbourhood a priority, and has been working with neighbourhood leaders and community partners to move this initiative forward. The GNSC and Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group leaders have requested that the City scope requirements to determine if a community hub could be built on Brant Avenue Park lands adjacent to the north of Brant Avenue Public School, as their preferred site.

The Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group boundaries are: east of Victoria Road and north of Eramosa Road. Brant Avenue Park lies between Brant Avenue and Woodlawn Road, adjacent to Brant Public School. It is currently zoned as a “P2 Neighbourhood Park” and includes an outdoor ice rink and play structure. There are three other parks in this area, also zoned P2: Dakota Park north of Dakota Drive, Beverley Robson and Ferndale Parks north of Woodlawn Road. Currently, P2 zoning of parkland allows for informal play areas, outdoor skating rinks, picnic areas, play equipment, public washroom, trails, and splash pads or water play areas.

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## REPORT

The guiding principles of the SNEF are based on the “shared understanding that for participating organizations - neighbourhood groups, partner organizations and City staff - grassroots and community initiatives are most successful when they strengthen and build on the connections, interests, and skills of people who are already involved,” (SNEF, p. 16). Currently, the City provides on-going implementation support to the SNEF and neighbourhood groups through a Community Benefit Agreement with the GNSC. Community and Social Services allocates Community Engagement staff time to work with GNSC staff, neighbourhood leaders and community partners to build broad community capacity to implement the SNEF. In addition, Community and Social Services currently provides annual funds to Kindle Communities Organization, owner of the Shelldale Centre, to support the operation of the gymnasium at this site. This investment increases neighbourhood residents’ access to no/low cost recreation and leisure opportunities through the Onward Willow Neighbourhood Group.

Since 2008, the Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group has formally identified a “wish” for a community hub in their neighbourhood, similar to the Shelldale Centre model in the Onward Willow/Norm Jary Park neighbourhood. Local community members identified a lack of transportation and locally accessible programs and services as major barriers to their well-being. In addition, the current Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group space in a local townhouse is too small for existing program and service priorities. It also faces stigma in the community as a place where only those with low incomes go, and is not accessible under the requirements of the Accessible Ontarians Disability Act (AODA).

The community’s preferred choice for a community hub location would be as close to Brant Ave Public School as possible, either on Upper Grand District School Board or Brant Avenue Park property, or a combination of both. It is felt that this location is central in the neighbourhood and one where many community members already come. Further, they could easily access future community hub programs and services at this location with less risk of being stigmatised by income, health or mental health issues, similar to the relationship between Willow Road Public School and the Shelldale Centre.

In 2013, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health released a report entitled *Addressing the Social Determinants of Health in Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph* (attachment 3). The report identifies four priority neighbourhoods in Guelph (Brant, Onward Willow, Two Rivers, West Willow Woods), where high percentages of the residents have low incomes, high unemployment rates and spend 30% or more of their income on housing. The report describes how low income families cannot afford reliable transportation, which impacts employment levels and access to grocery stores, food banks, services and programs. The report also describes how locally-based community hubs allow services and programs to reach the people who need them the most.

In response to the *Social Determinants of Health* report, in 2013 Family and Children's Services lead four meetings with neighbourhood leaders and GNSC Partners to explore the possibility of developing community hubs in two more of the four "priority" neighbourhoods, Brant and Two Rivers. In February 2013, Family and Children's Services Executive Director requested City General Manager Parks and Recreation to partner in "engaging the Brant community regarding the possibility that we might build a community hub in the Brant neighbourhood." In March 2013, Parks and Recreation staff met with Upper Grand District School Board staff to begin exploring the feasibility of locating a community hub behind Brant Public School.

Parks and Recreation staff have identified that a community hub located in Brant Avenue Park supports the City goal of park animation and the development of a social-environmental infrastructure in neighbourhood parks; however, a facility could also impact informal recreational opportunities currently afforded the neighbourhood. It also aligns with the community building principles of the SNEF, and community wellbeing goals of Guelph Wellbeing in particular their recently announced theme, connectivity, "everyone has a sense of belonging and inclusion through volunteering and access to services."

To date, in conjunction with UGDSB staff, Parks and Recreation staff have identified the following initial scoping requirements for the City to determine decision-making criteria and feasibility of developing a community hub on Brant Avenue Park land:

- Re-Zoning, Site Planning, and Building Code requirements
- Site servicing requirements c: water, sanitary, parking/lay-by
- Transit access
- Community engagement process through the City's Community Engagement Framework
- Formalized agreement to establish a satellite facility
  - Capital and on-going operating cost considerations
  - Primary, secondary and tertiary accesses: restrictions/hours of access to UGDSB or park land

## **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN**

### Innovation in Local Government

2.2 Deliver public services better

2.3 Ensure accountability, transparency and engagement

### City Building

3.1 Ensure a well-designed, safe, inclusive, appealing and sustainable City

3.3 Strengthen citizen and stakeholder engagement and communications

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## **DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATION**

To date, Community and Social Services: Parks and Recreation, Community Engagement

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Associated additional Parks and Recreation staff time required to participate in the development of the feasibility study, over and above current 2014 work plans.

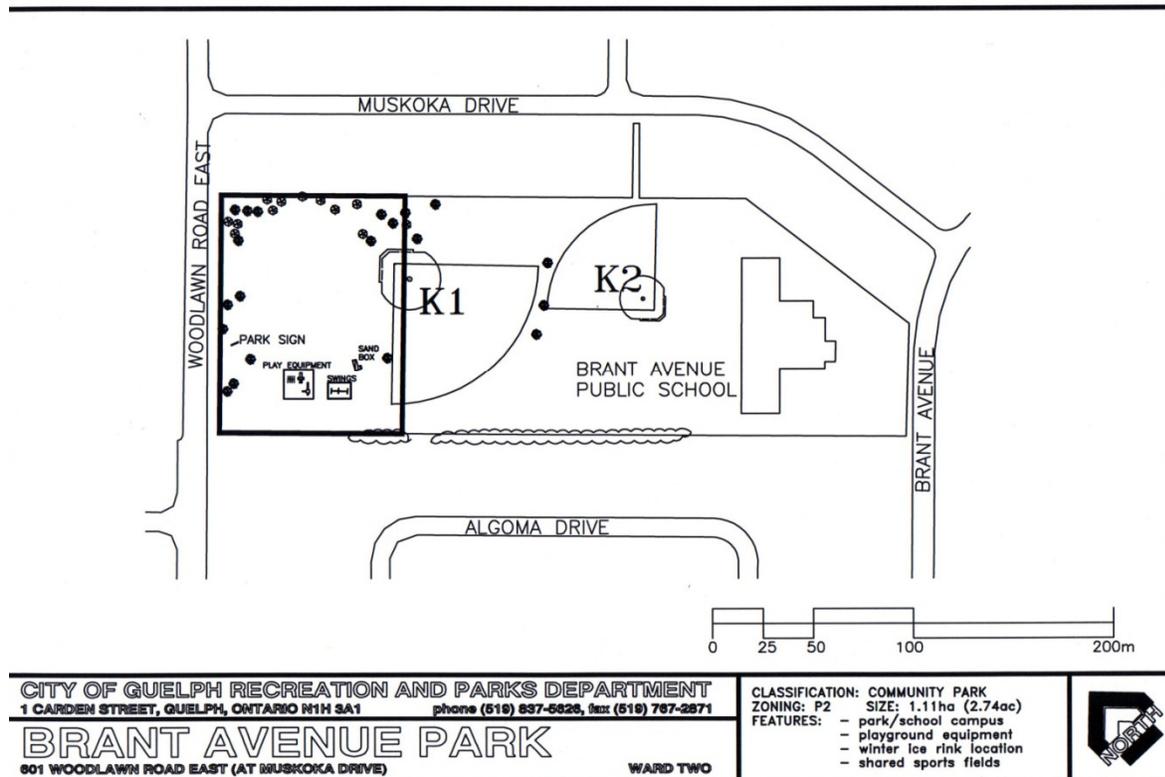
## **COMMUNICATIONS**

A communication strategy would be developed subject to Council's approval to proceed with this preliminary work.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- ATT-1 Brant Avenue Park Map (below)
- ATT-2 Sustainable Neighbourhood Engagement Framework  
[http://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/SNEF\\_Final\\_Report\\_June-21\\_2010.pdf](http://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/SNEF_Final_Report_June-21_2010.pdf)
- ATT-3 Addressing the Social Determinants of Health in Wellington Dufferin Guelph report  
<https://www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca/sites/default/files/wdgphfiles/sdoh-wdg-report-2013-for-web.pdf>

# STAFF REPORT



## Report Author

Kate Bishop  
 Supervisor  
 Community Engagement  
 Community and Social Services  
 519-822-1260 ext.2679  
 kate.bishop@guelph.ca

## Approved By

Barbara Powell  
 General Manager  
 Community and Social Services Liaison  
 Community and Social Services  
 519-822-1260 ext. 2675  
[barbara.powell@guelph.ca](mailto:barbara.powell@guelph.ca)

## Recommended By

Derrick Thomson  
 Executive Director  
 Community and Social Services  
 519-822-1260 ext. 2665  
[derrick.thomson@guelph.ca](mailto:derrick.thomson@guelph.ca)