TO:	**CHAIR AND MEMBERS** **COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE** **MEETING ON MAY 28, 2019**
FROM:	**LYNNE LIVINGSTONE** **MANAGING DIRECTOR** **NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN AND FIRE SERVICES**
SUBJECT:	**LONDON STRENGTHENING NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY:** **NEIGHBOURHOOD DECISION MAKING PROGRAM**

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RECOMMENDATION

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That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

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PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

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- London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy 2017-2020 (April 26, 2016, May 24, 2017, June 20, 2017)

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BACKGROUND

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The heart and essence of every city and community are its neighbourhoods

On June 26, 2017, Council resolved that, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (LSNS) Neighbourhood Decision Making Program BE IMPLEMENTED city-wide, based on the model using five geographic areas of the city (Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central).

The purpose of this report is to:
- provide a brief overview of the current program;
- highlight results to date;
- provide a summary of the early evaluation results; and,
- outline suggested improvements for the 2019 Neighbourhood Decision Making Program.

The Neighbourhood Decision Making Program

London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy's Neighbourhood Decision Making Program is aligned to the Strategic Plan for the City of London 2019 – 2023 under the Strategic Area of Focus - *Strengthening our Community*; Outcome *Londoners are engaged and have a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods and communities;* Expected Result – *increase the number of meaningful opportunities for residents to be connected in their neighbourhood and community;* and Strategy - *Strengthen engagement opportunities for all Londoners to participate in their neighbourhoods.*

London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy's focus is to support neighbourhood driven activities and decision making. A priority identified by residents in LSNS was the need for "tools and resources to support neighbourhoods". One of the actions residents identified to accomplish this was to build a program that supports neighbourhood decision making, city-wide.

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Decision Making Program (NDM) is to engage, empower, and connect residents by bringing neighbours together around community-driven projects that enhance and strengthen their neighbourhoods. LSNS and NDM are fundamentally resident-driven strategies that encourage resident participation and engagement to help make all of London's neighbourhoods stronger.

The program supports residents to propose ideas for how to spend a portion of the municipal budget in their neighbourhoods. Upon submission, resident ideas are vetted for feasibility by Civic Administration, and once approved, developed into proposals by the residents to be represented on a ballot. A community vote is then held to determine which proposals will receive funding. After the results are compiled from the community vote, Civic Administration then works with residents to implement the proposals in their neighbourhoods.

Highlight of 2017 and 2018 Results

In 2017, 314 ideas were submitted, 4,900 residents of all ages voted, and 13 projects were successfully implemented with one being combined with a scheduled park improvement that will occur in 2019.

In 2018, 226 ideas were submitted, 7,114 residents of all ages voted and 17 projects will be implemented this year.

A list of the 2017 and 2018 winning projects including an update on the implementation status of each project is attached as Appendix A.

Early Evaluation Results

In order to understand if the Neighbourhood Decision Making Program was accomplishing its purpose, Civic Administration developed an evaluation to examine the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved and whether any program changes were required to support the implementation of the program in future years.

As part of the evaluation, Civic Administration collected data from individuals who participated in NDM in both 2017 and 2018. Surveys were sent to all residents who submitted ideas, residents who participated on the five geographic engagement teams and surveys were available to all residents who voted on Vote Day, both online and at the in-person voting locations.

In total, 3,390 surveys were completed over the last two years. The full survey results can be found in Appendix B. Overall, the results of the evaluation show that respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the core components of NDM and its city-wide implementation. Of those who were unsatisfied, comments were utilized to inform improvements to program implementation.

Suggested Improvements for NDM 2019 Implementation

Based on the early feedback from the resident surveys, Civic Administration will undertake the following steps to improve the Neighbourhood Decision Making Program for 2019:

- Communication Strategy: Civic Administration will review current avenues of communication and eliminate those that are ineffective and build on the communication methods that residents rated as most effective. In addition, communication assets will be translated and Civic Administration is exploring creative ideas that reach multiple audiences that will explain and promote NDM.

- Outreach Strategy: A concentrated effort will be undertaken in 2019, to engage neighbourhoods that haven't participated or have had minimal participation with the NDM program. City staff will continue to build key networks of resident leaders, neighbourhood associations, community groups and organizations across the city to assist in targeting neighbourhoods who may be less "organized", less involved, or are experiencing barriers to participation. Outreach strategies include:
    - Increase promotion in neighbourhoods with low participation rates in NDM over the past two years (activities may include pop up events, participating in organized neighbourhood events, attending neighbourhood meetings, and targeted social media posts).
    - Engage with community champions and local organizations to increase the reach to newcomers, cultural groups, youth, and isolated residents of London by creating specific short promotional videos describing the Neighbourhood Decision Making Program and offering presentations to a variety of organizations and associations who are interested in reaching out to their communities to promote the NDM Program.

- Improving the "Idea Development" process: Based on suggestions from residents, additional resources will be added online including expanding the current "idea bank", improving cost estimates, and providing simple process flow charts. In addition, Civic Administration will leverage opportunities to explore collaboration when residents in the same neighbourhood submit similar ideas.

Civic Administration will continue to monitor and evaluate the program to make sure NDM meets the purpose it was set out to accomplish: *engage, empower, and connect residents by bringing neighbours together around community-driven projects that enhance and strengthen their neighbourhoods.*

FINANCIAL IMPACT

As part of the 2016-2019 Multi-Year Budget process, Council approved Strategic Investment Business Case #13 – London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy – which provided annual funding of $250,000 starting in 2017 to support the full roll-out of Neighbourhood Decision Making.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Council's endorsement of this report, Civic Administration will be launching NDM 2019 this August with a targeted vote day of November 16, 2019. Staff will begin promoting NDM 2019 at community events and festivals this summer.

CONCLUSION

Initiatives such as Neighbourhood Decision Making bring neighbours together around community-driven projects that enhance and strengthen their neighbourhoods. Funded projects can transform the culture, pulse, and even the physical appearance of neighbourhoods. These projects have the potential to build a stronger sense of community by engaging a diverse range of residents across London's neighbourhoods.

PREPARED BY:	PREPARED BY:
KAREN OLDHAM MANAGER, NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT	DONNA BAXTER MANAGER, POLICY AND PLANNING SUPPORT
PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
CHERYL SMITH MANAGER, NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & FUNDING	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE MANAGING DIRECTOR, NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN & FIRE SERVICES

APPENDIX A

2017 NDM Winning Ideas

North West London		
Idea	**Amount**	**Status**
Ninja Warrior Course in Medway	$50,000	Complete
North East London		
Outdoor Ice Rink in Forest Hill Park	$2,300	Complete
Cedar Hollow Park Improvements	$30,000	Complete
Stoney Creek Nature Trails	$17,700	Complete
Central London		
Clay Mosaics along Dundas St. in Old East Village	$15,000	Complete
Planting Fruit Trees near Community Gardens	$4,000	Complete
Outdoor Piano in Market Lane	$1,000	Complete
Community Garden and Gathering Space @St. Andrew's United Church	$30,000	Complete
South West London		
Outdoor Education Centre at Byron Northview Public School	$30,000	Complete
Outdoor Ice Pad in Jorgenson Park	$6,000	Complete
Save the Bee Pollinator Garden – Byron	$3,000	Complete
South London Canada Day	$11,000	Complete
South East London		
Natural Landscape Playground – Kiwanis Park	$35,000	Scheduled for 2019 in conjunction with original plan
Community Movie Theatre	$15,000	Complete

2018 NDM Winning Ideas

North West London		
Ideas	**Amount**	**Status**
Ninja Student Drop Zone	$15,000	In Progress
Accessible Toddler Playground in Northwest London	$4,000	In Progress
Nature Sanctuary in Hyde Park	$30,000	In Progress
Bat Boxes in Masonville	$1,000	Complete
North East London		
Cedar Hollow PS Outdoor Classroom and Natural Play Space	$50,000	In Progress
Central London		
Here Before Us: Oxford Park Neighbourhood Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER)	$14,260	In Progress
London's Free Fruit	$5,000	Complete
Bee Pollinator Garden	$7,000	In Progress
Pollinator Pathways Project	$640	In Progress
Reimagine Waste	$8,000	Complete
Oxford Park 1901: Unique Street Sign Design for the Oxford Park Community	$7,500	In Progress
Christmas Market on the Green	$7,600	Complete
South West London		
Community Beehives	$8,000	In Progress
Add a Swing Set to Grandview Park (in Byron)	$15,000	In Progress
Outdoor Workout Equipment in Springbank Park	$27,000	In Progress
South East London		
F.D. Roosevelt Yard Enhancements	$17,400	In Progress

APPENDIX B

Neighbourhood Decision Making 2017 and 2018 Survey Results

Summary of Respondents
Data were collected from individuals that participated in the submission of ideas, neighbourhood engagement teams, and vote days in 2017 and 2018.
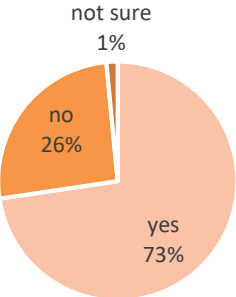
2017
Surveys completed:
- Idea Submitters 77
- Engagement Committee members 16
- Voter exit surveys 2,683

2018:
Surveys completed:
- Idea Submitters 74
- Engagement Committee members 22
- Voter exit surveys 518*

* The external vendor supporting the City's engagement platform (getinvolved.london.ca) updated the website in 2018 and removed the "exit survey" function which automatically opened a survey after votes were submitted. This resulted in a drop in voter exit surveys in 2018. Communications is currently exploring other alternatives that will support additional functions including a voter exit survey option.

Question	2017	2018
How did you hear about NDM?	1. Social Media (32%) 2. Word of Mouth 3. Neighbourhood Association 4. School 5. Poster or Postcard	1. Social Media (27%) 2. Word of Mouth 3. Library 4. Neighbourhood Association NeighbourGood Newsletter
Comments	7 comments received suggesting use of radio and social media and more advertising for the idea submission phase	
In addition to voting did you also submit an idea for NDM?	Yes = 6% No = 94%	Yes = 14% No =86%
Is this your first time participating in the NDM program?	N/A	Yes = 73% No = 26% Not sure = 2%
Is this your first time participating in the NDM program?		
Over the past 12 months, have you participated in any of the following activities in your neighbourhood?	N/A	Event = 33% Cleanup = 16% Meeting = 15% Rallied around a common goal/challenge = 12% (80) None of the Above = 22% (148) Other = 1% (5) Not sure = 0
How likely will you be to participate in NDM again?	Likely + Very Likely 88%	Likely +Very Likely 85%

How likely would you be to recommend this program to your family, friends, and neighbours?	Likely + Very Likely 82%	Likely + Very Likely 83%
For the NDM program, the city was divided into 5 geographic areas. Did you feel this approach worked well?	Yes – 64% No – 30% No Opinion – 6%	Yes –71% No – 15% No Opinion – 14%
Comments	- 23 Comments (7% of total comments recorded) like the current 5 area approach with several individuals citing the method as being "*diplomatic and fair*" as each area "*got a fair distribution of the allotted funds*" - 31 comments (15%) relating to increasing the number of areas because of fairness, some of the "*areas were far too large and many neighbourhoods were left with nothing*", some individuals recommended increasing the funding and then "*spread the money to more neighbourhoods*", "*more even distribution across neighbourhoods*". Some mentioned that the current model "*disproportionately benefits people who are good at organizing*", "*some areas are more in need than others*", "*pay attention to the lower income areas*" - 2 comments related to the desire for a city-wide approach	
For this program, $50,000 was allocated to each of the five areas in the city; there was no limit on the amount of money that could be spent per idea. In future, do you think there should be a limit?	Yes – 24% No – 62% No Opinion – 14%	Yes – 33% No – 47% No Opinion – 20%
Comments	20 comments (8% of all comments) related to requests for smaller projects: - Ranged from suggestions of a cap of $5,000 to $15,000 per project to allowing funding of one large project only (maximum $35,000) with the remainder of funds going to small projects - "*More smaller projects would benefit many neighbourhoods*"	
Currently London residents may submit an unlimited number of ideas to the program. Do you think there should be a maximum number of ideas an individual can submit to the program?	Yes – 25% No – 60% No Opinion – 15%	Yes – 36% No – 52% No Opinion – 13%
What do you think would be appropriate for the maximum number of ideas an individual can submit to the program?	1 – 40% Up to 3 – 60% Up to 5 – 0 Up to 10 - 0	1 – 57% Up to 3 – 39% Up to 5 – 4% Up to 10 - 0
Comments	3 comments related to the idea of encouraging more commitment to the projects from the idea submitters – proposing a similar process to the former SPARKS! process where volunteer contribution is required or collecting signatures from neighbours to verify that the project is a "*community*" idea	

Only Idea Submitters Responded to the survey questions below		
How easy was it to submit your idea?	Somewhat to Very Easy 81%	Somewhat to Very Easy 98%
Comments		
The Idea Bank was created to help residents develop ideas for their neighbourhoods. The Idea Bank contained a list of potential projects, including estimated costs. Were you aware that this was a tool available to you?	Yes – 56% No – 44%	Yes – 71% No – 29%
How helpful did you find the Idea Bank to support your participation in NDM?	Helpful + Very Helpful 80%	Helpful + Very Helpful 80%
Was your idea on the ballot for the 2018 NDM program?	N/A	Yes – 74% No – 26%
Do you feel like you now have a better understanding about how the city works?	Agree + Strongly Agree 33%	Agree + Strongly Agree 46%
Do you feel more connected to your neighbours?	Agree + Strongly Agree 36%	Agree + Strongly Agree 41%
Do you feel more engaged in your neighbourhood?	Agree + Strongly Agree 50%	Agree + Strongly Agree 48%
Do you feel more empowered to work with the City?	Agree + Strongly Agree 48%	Agree + Strongly Agree 55%
Did your opinion of the City of London improve as a result of your experience?	N/A	Yes – 43% No – 45% Other – 12%

Survey Respondent Age Categories