



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Erin Burger, Community Development Supervisor – Event and Neighbourhood Support

DATE: May 6, 2021

MEMORANDUM NO.: MEM-RP-2021-0006

RE: Neighbourhood Programming and Engagement Initiatives

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Members of Council information regarding neighbourhood programming and engagement initiatives that will be introduced to the community in 2021.

BACKGROUND:

Council received Memorandum NO. RP-2020-0004 dated November 6, 2020 regarding Community Development Action Plan which introduced Community and Neighbourhood Engagement as part of its framework. Community and Neighbourhood Engagement outlined the scope and action items for supporting people in feeling connected and enjoying all aspects of community and neighbourhood life. Specific action items included;

- Continue and expand outdoor neighbourhood programming opportunities as introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g., ambassadors, pop up play events).
- Research best practices and establish procedures for supporting neighbour groups in organizing and hosting citizen led neighbourhood events and programs.

Staff have since proceeded with the development of plans, opportunities, and initiatives to address the Community Development Action Plan specifically for Community and Neighbourhood Engagement.

Through staff research on best practices in neighbourhood programming and engagement, it has been noted that there are several benefits to residents. Some of these benefits include:

- Meeting their neighbours – the people that live near them.
- Learning what is going on in their neighbourhood.
- Connecting with resources in their neighbourhood.
- Connecting with nature - using park and trail amenities.
- Giving back to their community.
- Mobilizing and responding in the case of an emergency.
- Having a unified voice and advocating for their area.

There are also several benefits to the Town and community at large which include:

- Developing cleaner, safer, and healthier neighbourhoods.
- Creating open communication networks with government officials.
- Promoting and celebrating diversity in the community.

Staff will be working towards a comprehensive neighbourhood strategy that incorporates best practice with defined priorities and vision specific to Halton Hills. The neighbourhood programs and engagement initiatives introduced in this memorandum will be used as a starting point for the strategy and act as a place to build upon for future Community and Neighbourhood Engagement work.

COMMENTS:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Members of Council with an overview and details of the Neighbourhood Programming and Engagement Initiatives that will be introduced by Town staff in 2021.

Neighbourhood Pop-Ups

Neighbourhood programming in parks was launched in the summer of 2020, with a goal of connecting Town staff with children and families in our community, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff brought fun and physical activity to our local parks by organizing games and activities for anyone who wanted to join.

Town staff seek to expand on this successful program by increasing the number of 'pop-ups' in 2021 and by building in collaboration from Cultural Services and the Halton Hills Public Library. This 'pop-up' programming will provide a variety of components and engagement with neighbors of all ages in parks such as:

- Active Programming - obstacle courses, fitness-based programming, disc bash, parachute games, frisbee golf, target toss, etc.

- Nature-Based Programming - nature art, nature walks and scavenger hunts
- Winter Programming - snow angels, fort building, snow creatures, snow painting, etc.
- Community-Engaged Art Programming
- Literacy-Based Programming – story walks, educational robots, 3D printing pens, crafts, etc.

Neighbourhood Pop-Ups will be offered in different neighbourhoods throughout the year. Four of the pop-ups will be offered in our largest community parks; Georgetown Fairgrounds, Gellert Community Park, Prospect Park and Dominion Gardens, to provide great access to many residents. The remaining pop-ups will be offered in alternative key neighbourhoods where residents can easily access these programs.

To create community, build relationships, and provide residents with a predictable schedule of activities, this program will operate on a 2-week schedule – rotating the locations that are offered each week.

Play Streets

Play Streets are short road closures, creating a safe space to play outside together, in neighbourhoods. This program offers increased space for individuals to be physically active by transforming streets into shared spaces. Play streets typically allow children to play freely, or with organized games or activities with a focus on active transportation (cycling skills course and bike rodeos), and sports (road hockey).

The Play Streets initiative is part of the Active Living Strategy and coincides nicely with the already established Open Streets initiatives that have occurred in the community since June of 2017. Play Streets are smaller than Open Streets and are delivered at the neighbourhood level, where Open Streets are larger events that coincide with other activities in the community, such as the BIA Farmer's Market or Leathertown Festival.

The Town's Play Streets program will provide quality, free, accessible programming in non-traditional locations while responding to the Provincial COVID-19 framework and following public health guidelines. This program will be offered from July to September in 2021. The location of the Play Streets will vary to provide several neighbourhoods an increased space for physical activity and community engagement opportunities.

Let's Talk Survey

Staff will prepare and launch a "Let's Talk" survey discussing the concepts around neighbourhood engagement and focus on what assets already exist in our community. This survey will gauge interest in areas that can be built upon and seek to understand gaps. Further questions will identify any needs for community connections or additional opportunities.

The Great Disconnect - Film Screening and Neighbourhood Networking

As a launch to neighbourhood work, Town staff will host a virtual film screening of *The Great Disconnect* in June. This documentary is directed and produced by wellness expert, Tamer Soliman, as he journeys through North American cities to meet with local citizens, community activists, and leading authorities on social, economic, and urban planning to discover the true factors that have profound and lasting impacts, not only on our health, but the health of the communities in which we live.

Following the film screening, staff will lead interested residents through a discussion in neighbourhood engagement and encourage residents to join a resident-led network. Staff will share networking opportunities with invested individuals who will ultimately guide the priorities and establish the path towards a neighbourhood strategy.

Town staff will work collaboratively in promoting, implementing, and sustaining neighbourhood networking opportunities across Halton Hills by:

- Establishing a term of reference for the group
- Recruiting community stakeholders and partners as needed
- Creating community awareness about the Neighbourhood Networking initiative
- Hosting networking meetings
- Providing technical and sector-specific expertise
- Providing guidance towards program sustainability
- Committing to ongoing learning

“Building Neighbourhood Connections” Initiative

It is well documented that strong neighbourhoods are essential to a thriving community. Residents who live in a connected neighbourhood have an overall sense of belonging which leads to feelings of safety, security, and better health.

This summer, Halton Hills residents are invited to build connections and capacity in their neighbourhood through the delivery of the Town’s “Building Neighbourhood Connections” initiative. A fun and socially distanced interactive project encouraging residents to execute “random acts of kindness” in their neighbourhoods. A list of various activities will be provided by the Town to give residents some encouragement and direction. These activities can be as simple as cutting their neighbour’s grass, sharing motivational messages in their windows, or picking up trash on their street and surrounding trails.

Throughout the summer, residents can track their activity by registering with the Town and using the free scavenger hunt app, GooseChase. Once registered with the Town, residents can choose their own adventure, collect points, and share their experiences and neighbourly activities on social media.

Neighbourhood Kit

In collaboration with the Halton Public Library, Recreation and Parks staff will coordinate the production of a neighbourhood themed kit. The kit will include all the materials and instructions on how to use it and will be available to residents through the library's catalogue program.

Inspired by Kristin Schell's book, *The Turquoise Table*, the neighbourhood kit encourages the casual meeting of neighbours. The kit will allow residents to set up their own 'turquoise table' in their yard and will include:

- A copy of the book *The Turquoise Table*
- Two turquoise table clothes (one rectangle and one round)
- Instructions for using the kit
- An instructional sign for table guests
- A table centre piece
- A guest book

Neighbourhood and Building Community - Library Collection

A neighbourhood is a special place where people come together. Residents can explore the diverse range of perspectives around neighbourhood connections by immersing themselves in our local "Neighbourhood and Building Community" library collection.

The idea around Neighbourhood and Building Community library collection was created by Recreation and Parks and will be delivered in collaboration with the Halton Hills Public Library. This collection will be available to residents starting in June and includes five titles, with the intent to expand the collection through the year. The titles that will be available in June include:

- The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods
- The Turquoise Table: Finding Community and Connection in Your own Front Yard
- This is Where You Belong: The Art and Science of Loving the Place You Live
- The Good Neighbor Cookbook
- Playborhood: Turn Your Neighborhood into a Place for Play

Good Neighbour Day

Good Neighbour Day is on **Tuesday, September 28th, 2021** and creates an opportunity for neighbours to get to know each other better. This day acknowledges and celebrates the importance of a good neighbour. The goal of Good Neighbour Day is to build

relationships between neighbours because knowing your neighbours can help transform neighbourhoods into welcoming, safe, and inclusive place to live.

Halton Hills residents will be invited to share stories about their 'good neighbours' or download the Town's "Good Neighbour Day" postcard, fill out the prompts, and introduce themselves to a neighbour by dropping it off on their doorstep. During the week leading into Good Neighbour Day, residents can share photos of their initiatives on social media.

CONCLUSION:

Due to the continuation of the pandemic, residents are spending additional time in their neighbourhoods which has presented a unique opportunity. As a result of this, staff have been presented with ideal timing to introduce these neighbourhood programs and engagement initiatives. Staff will ensure Council is apprised of the outcomes of these programs and initiatives and any resulting projects to be brought forward.

Reviewed and approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mandy Keller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mandy Keller, Senior Manager of Community Development

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Warren Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Warren Harris, Commissioner of Recreation and Parks

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Mills". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer