

# A SUMMARY OF "PEOPLE AND PLACE: EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD HUBS IN CALGARY"

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In 2013-14 the Joint Strong Neighbourhood Initiative of the United Way of Calgary and Area and the City of Calgary Community and Neighbourhood Services (CNS) undertook a Neighbourhood Hub pilot project focused on four priority neighbourhoods. They released a document in February 2015 outlining their initiative to explore hub development in Calgary and the early leanings of the process of hub and partnership development.

The project had three purposes:

- Advance their common understanding of neighbourhood hubs and how they can be developed in area neighbourhoods
- Support activities that test out shared spaces
- Offer suggestions for participating partners/stakeholders interested in pursuing hub development

An outcome of the project was the creation of an engagement framework reflecting the various stages of hub development.

*A working definition of a neighbourhood hub was created and is: "A place that by design brings people together to make connections and to plan and undertake community activities. It house resources and services that residents identify as needed in their neighbourhoods. A neighbourhood hub fosters resident involvement and leadership. It also created opportunities for collaboration between residents and service providers."*

It is important to note that Calgary has had experience already in bringing resources closer to the people who need them the most, as it has nine Community Resource Centres (CRC) established by the provincial government. The report notes that when first established, these CRCs provided a range of services and also promoted community development, much like a hub, but that they have since barrowed their focus to reflect the specific direction of the provincial authority. The report suggested the CRCs can be possible participants in the hub initiative. In addition, in 2014 the Alberta government indicated an interest in developing its own hubs for service provision and are planning 5 multi-service sites to be launched across Calgary over the next 2 years.

A major outcome of this pilot project was the creation of an engagement framework reflecting the stages of hub development (outlined on pages 12-18 of the report). The six stages are:

1. Understanding community /establishing starting points
2. Engaging to build a working group and community engagement process
3. Creating a community vision and plan for a neighbourhood hub
4. Engagement for the social and physical design of a hub
5. Mobilizing resources for the establishment of the hub
6. Developing governance and operations framework

The stages are not necessarily going to be linear, and may overlap, but point to the integration of engagement, local leadership, vision, proper resources and appropriate governance and operation processes. The role of an internal or external community organizer is highlighted in the stages of hub development diagram. The first stages of hub development highlight the importance of a community organizer or group of organizers. The next steps in the process then begin to depend on the resident's leadership or ownership and this is the critical point to reflect on whether there is adequate local participation to continue to the next stage. A complementary tool, an "engagement matrix" (Appendix 6) was also developed to track the process and the community's readiness for exploring the idea of a hub.

The report also outlines the progress to date of the four neighbourhoods (Appendix 7). By the end of the pilot the three of the communities have developed a committee or leadership group that are actively involved in the project. Only one community was at the stage where they could engage the community in the physical and social design of the hub. One community already has the physical space and is exploring next steps.

Key leanings during the one year pilot:

1. Engagement is the main guiding principle for successful hubs
2. The full development of hubs to their intended vision takes time. The use of available shared spaces can enhance this process (to allow for testing out and shaping different elements they want to see in their hub)
3. Clear communication about the hubs and what it takes to create a hub is important (for example, clarity on the role of the key stakeholders/organizers)
4. Managing multiple partnerships at several levels is challenging
5. Capacity building for local leadership and partnerships is essential
6. Further exploration is required to support places interested in becoming hubs

Other useful information in this report include discussions around the definition of a hub in the beginning of the report and internal City of Calgary documents (Appendix 1) which provide an overview of the project and states the City of Calgary's position on neighbourhood hubs.