



PETERBOROUGH

A neighbourhood revitalization movement

The history of the Stewart St. neighbourhood in downtown Peterborough begins during the “Gilded Age” of the early 20th century, when the area had several large industrial employers. Much of the neighbourhood’s rental housing stock was built for the factories’ workers and managers. In the 1980s, the neighbourhood started to show signs of economic decline. The loss of high-wage manufacturing jobs, combined with the growth of the suburbs, led to a population exodus.

RESIDENTS WHO EMBRACE THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the last decade, the neighbourhood's residents have started to take charge of their community. It all started with an under-used park and a simple question: "How can we get neighbours to talk to each other more often?" The answer was short and to the point: "meet your neighbours through a new community garden and bring life to this homegrown gathering place."

With the help of organizations like GreenUP, the Peterborough Community Garden Network and Nourish, residents transformed the park into a source of community pride. The project was just the beginning of a major citizen-driven revitalization process in the neighbourhood.

Next, the municipality announced that a local street was scheduled to be torn up for major underground work to help the city's flood-control program. Already mobilized by the park revitalization project, residents saw the announcement as an opportunity to extend the revitalization movement beyond the park and rebuild this street to serve the community.

Along with GreenUP, representatives of the City of Peterborough, Trent University, BIKE, the local Health Unit and the Trent Centre for Community Research, these residents formed a neighbourhood consultation committee. Together, the committee members diversified and documented the use of local streets, what residents loved about their community and priorities for the neighbourhood's future. The committee used several different tools in order to develop a thorough understanding of residents'



priorities, including a community asset mapping exercise, a survey of local travel habits and conversations out in the neighbourhood during local events.

The next major challenge was to help link up the documented resident priorities with the official consultation process launched by the City for the revitalization of the street.

UNITING RESIDENTS' AND PROFESSIONALS' VOICES

The Peterborough project brought a central principle of the ANC project approach to the fore: the importance of connecting different people and sectors, facilitating collaboration among a wide range of groups and professionals involved in a project. The consultants hired to redevelop the street were invited to a workshop focused on learning about the neighbourhood's experts - its residents. The event had presentations on resident priorities and from then on, the consult-

ants clearly saw how this project and its results could be incorporated into the formal consultation process.

Currently, the design options on the table for the revitalization of the street address some of residents' top priorities. This will surely help the neighbourhood become even more welcoming, dynamic and accessible for all residents, whether they walk, cycle or drive to get around their community. The multi-sector work done in Peterborough demonstrates that building trust among stakeholders with different perspectives takes time and can be difficult, but that the voices of many are stronger than one voice alone when you are working toward long-term change.

The example of Peterborough demonstrates the extent to which public spaces and streets are fertile ground for a community's growth and progress. They are unique gathering places that help strengthen the sense of community belonging - to the extent that residents are able to participate in developing these places as their own.

Intersectoral work in Peterborough has shown that developing trusting relationships between stakeholders with seemingly opposing interests, takes time and can be difficult both internally and externally.



VIEW THE PORTRAIT HERE:

Stewart Street Neighbourhood, Peterborough
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