

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Information Report

Building Bridges Coalition Overview

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview on the Building Bridges Coalition, and community-serving non-profit organizations in the City.

Background:

In June 2005, the Family and Community Support Services Board (FCSS) and the Fort Saskatchewan Policing Committee came together to host part one of a workshop entitled "Building Bridges". Forty-four participants representing social service, community justice, policing and community organizations attended the workshop. Over the next seven years Building Bridges existed as a series of networking and learning workshop events taking place quarterly. In 2012, these quarterly workshops shifted to monthly meetings. In these meetings, attendees worked together to produce the Community Safety Strategy, primarily an internal document that highlighted nine core areas of focus for the group.

Today, the Building Bridges Coalition is an open stakeholder table that meets monthly. Members take collaborative approaches to address community needs, whenever possible, through joint projects and grant applications. Networking in this way has allowed the organizations to implement a 'no wrong door' approach to service in the community where no matter what organization residents initially reach out to, the organization is able to assist them and connect them to the best suited organization for their needs.

In 2017, the membership of the Building Bridges Coalition provided feedback that they thought they had lost momentum in their collective work. In response, the City's FCSS Department led a review of the Community Safety Strategy and the current alignment of initiatives in the community. Through this process, the new Strong Community Strategy (attached as Appendix A) was created expanding the areas of focus and adding the lenses through which they are viewed. Building Bridges views its priorities through the lenses of 'Equitable Access', 'Mental Health and Wellness' and 'Connected Community'. New areas of focus that emerged through this process were housing, mental health, poverty reduction, transportation and awareness.

Building Bridges is a large stakeholder table making it effective at coordination and finding opportunities for collaboration, however this creates challenges for working on specific projects. To maintain the action oriented intent of Building Bridges, standing committees and project specific working groups are formed to coordinate around specific work and learning. The current standing committees and working groups are the Youth Working Group, Seniors Working Group, Poverty Awareness Fort Saskatchewan and the Integrated Youth Mental Health Hub Steering Committee.

The following include examples of work undertaken through Building Bridges, which align with the new areas of focus through the Strong Community Strategy:

1. In line with awareness, there is the work of the Our Way Forward Project aimed at addressing intimate partner violence and prevention.
2. In line with transit and equitable access, Building Bridges members wrote letters of support for a reduced transit rate for residents living on low income. Council unanimously adopted

the 'Everyone Rides Program' on August 28, 2018, providing a 50% transit discount for residents living on low incomes.

3. Supporting the mental health priority, several members have been working toward the implementation of an Integrated Youth Mental Health Hub in Fort Saskatchewan. A successful joint application from the Fort Saskatchewan Boys and Girls Club and Alberta Heartland Primary Care Network has resulted in grant funding to support the planning and preparation required to implement a multi-agency collaborative project. Several organizations have committed in-kind services to enable the operation of a hub, and a preliminary location is targeted to launch in early 2019. This project has also applied to the City's Community Initiated Projects program to pursue the City's support of a permanent location for the hub.

The Building Bridges Coalition is an entity unique to Fort Saskatchewan. The collaborative approach taken amongst local non-profits and service providers is a significant asset for finding new approaches and addressing community issues beyond the scope of any one organization. Collaboration in the non-profit sector is challenging as many groups are often positioned to compete over the same limited funding and resources. Undertaking coordinated and collaborative approaches, member organizations are putting the community first and pursuing the efficient use of what each group can offer. Involvement with the Building Bridges Coalition does not ensure every organization will or can take this approach, but through regular attendance at meetings, building trust and awareness of shared objectives, Building Bridges fosters an environment among community agencies where collaboration can occur.

Plans/Standards/Legislation:

The work of the Building Bridges Coalition aligns with multiple City plans. The Community Sustainability Plan and the City of Fort Saskatchewan Strategic Plan 2018-2022 contain the following goals that Building Bridges members support in the community.

Community Sustainability Plan

Priority: Compassionate Community & Sense of Community.

The top 4 priorities in this area of the Community Sustainability Plan align with the Strong Community Strategy and work of the Building Bridges Coalitions.

1. Housing and Affordability
2. Education
3. Health Care
4. Social Services

City of Fort Saskatchewan Strategic Plan 2018-2022

A Vibrant and Thriving Community

Goal: Support diverse community needs to create a complete community where everyone, regardless of circumstance, is able to experience all the City has to offer.

Outcome: Residents live in vibrant, inclusive and livable neighbourhoods where they are able to participate fully in all aspects of the community.

Strategic Initiative: Undertake a collaborative approach to addressing community needs through coordinated partnerships with local agencies and organizations.

Strategic Initiative: Follow the Strong Community Strategy as a guiding document to address the priorities of the community as identified through the Building Bridges Coalition.

Internal Impacts:

The FCSS Department will continue to lead the Building Bridges Coalition meetings and provide strategic input and opportunities to member initiatives.

Attachments:

Appendix A - Building Bridges Strong Community Strategy

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