

COUNCIL MEETING
COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
RECREATION, SPORT AND CULTURE DIVISION

REPORT CS-2025-20
June 17, 2025

SUBJECT: Neighbourhood Association Policy

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APPROVING: Jessica Ruddell – Director of Community Services

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WELLAND approve the Neighbourhood Association Policy found in Appendix 1.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This recommendation is aligned to Council's strategic priority of ensuring "Liveability" by creating a sense of belonging while enhancing mobility by improving access to recreation and community events, ensuring adequate housing options, encouraging job growth, and improving ways to efficiently move people throughout the city.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval from Council on the Neighbourhood Association Policy. Policy concepts were initially presented to General Committee on October 22, 2024. A draft policy was subsequently presented to General Committee on January 28, 2025. Since then, feedback from General Committee has been incorporated into the revised policy, which is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

This policy supports the City of Welland's Strategic Plan by promoting strong partnerships, enhancing community engagement, and increasing access to inclusive, neighbourhood-based programs and services. Neighbourhood Associations play a vital role in achieving these goals by offering residents a collective voice, organizing local initiatives, fostering social connection, and helping to address programming gaps within their communities.

BACKGROUND:

Neighbourhood Associations are community-driven groups formed by residents to address local issues, enhance neighbourhood quality of life, and foster a strong sense of community. These associations have long played a key role in strengthening social ties and improving the overall livability of residential areas. By organizing local initiatives such as clean-ups, safety programs, and social events, neighbourhood associations help build community pride and a sense of belonging. These associations also promote inclusivity, support social connection, and fill gaps in local services and programming, contributing to more resilient and well-connected neighbourhoods.

The Neighbourhood Association Policy provides a clear and supportive framework for the creation, management, and strengthening of neighbourhood associations throughout Welland. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Empower residents to actively participate in shaping their neighbourhoods
- Encourage collaboration between neighbourhood associations and the City of Welland
- Promote the social, economic and cultural well-being, safety, and inclusivity
- Support the development of community-driven initiatives and projects.

The policy was shaped by feedback from both Council and neighbourhood associations, ensuring it strikes a balance between providing structure and offering flexibility to meet the diverse needs and priorities of different neighbourhoods. The policy emphasizes the importance of community-driven action, recognizing that residents have the most valuable insights into their own neighbourhoods. This empowerment enables residents to advocate for their communities, organize events, and address local issues together. The City supports these efforts by providing tools, resources, financial assistance, and technical guidance to ensure the success of neighbourhood associations.

DISCUSSION:

Updates made to the draft version of the policy that was received for information previously at General Committee include:

- Reference to the protected grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code added
- Neighbourhood Associations will receive 50 hours of City space to book annually at no charge. Additional bookings in excess of the 50 hours will be provided at not-for-profit rates according to the City's Rates and Fees schedule
- Language has been clarified to better define what Neighbourhood Associations are accountable for versus what actions groups are encouraged to undertake, in alignment with the City's Strategic Plan
- Explicitly state the ability for Neighbourhood Associations to raise funds through membership fees and other means as they see fit.

For 2025, the current structure and operations of existing Neighbourhood Associations will remain in place. During this period, the City will engage with these associations to determine the most effective way to transition each association in alignment with the policy ensuring success and support throughout the process.

The current levels of support for each group are outlined below:

- **Summerlea Association** received no formal City support in 2024. There were no rental hours used, or event funding provided. Despite this, the group hosted several community-focused events, including an Annual Picnic and Annual General Meeting (AGM), Halloween Night, an Easter Egg Hunt, Movie in the Park, and distributed personal greeting cards for life events.
- **Chippawa Circle Group** had limited City involvement in 2024. A planned movie night was cancelled after a tentative booking, so no rentals took place and no funding was provided. The group remains focused on neighbourhood safety and security and enjoys hosting movie nights and community gatherings.
- **Cooks Mills Development Group** received moderate City support in 2024, including storage access and event permits. They used 8.5 rental hours, valued at \$339.93, but did not receive event funding. Their neighbourhood offerings included an Easter Egg Hunt and a Christmas Party and numerous other events on private property.
- **Dain City Recreation** received the most support in 2024, with access to storage, permits, City services, and \$1,000 in event funding. The group used 461 rental hours, valued at \$17,684.66. This support enabled them to offer a wide range of programs and events, such as recreational programming, a wreath workshop, a children's Easter party, Family Day in the Park, and Halloween and Christmas celebrations.

NOTE: In 2024, the above Neighbourhood Associations were not considered to be non-profit and therefore paid the regular hourly rates.

Dain City Recreation is currently the only the neighbourhood association that receives support in addition to the terms outlined in the policy. Dain City Recreation has been consulted in the development of this policy and will be transitioned to align with the new policy by January 2028. This timing is in alignment with changes to the lease agreement for the Carrie Lynn Pinard Centre and the addition of the community space at the new Dain City Elementary school. We will work closely with Dain City Recreation to assist in identifying grant opportunities and other resources to support their ongoing activities.

In addition, should Dain City Recreation wish to formalize its relationship with the City beyond the scope of this policy, the organization may explore opportunities under the City's [Corporate Partnership Policy](#). This would involve the

development of a formal partnership agreement that clearly outlines mutual benefits, responsibilities, and deliverables. A formal partnership agreement may provide added value to the City and Dain City Recreation through the provision of resources by the City in exchange for benefits, including city-wide accessible programming and shared initiatives, or strategic collaboration. Any agreement would be developed in alignment with City objectives, policies, and priorities and subject to the required approval processes.

This collaborative and flexible approach will help ensure that existing Neighbourhood Associations are well-equipped to serve their neighbourhoods for years to come and that future grassroots community organizers have the tools and resources to start new Neighbourhood Associations.

Once the Neighbourhood Association Policy is approved, staff will implement a number of promotional tactics to promote the availability of the program.

FINANCIAL:

This report has no immediate financial implications.

Funding for Neighbourhood Associations is allocated under account 530560 – Volunteer Services, within 20-405-00000 Recreation – Program/Services.

ATTACHMENT:

Appendix 1 – Neighbourhood Association Policy