

## ON THE ROLE AND FUTURE OF CALGARY'S COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

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### SUMMARY

Calgary's 151 volunteer-run, non-profit community associations (CAs) need updated and clearly defined roles as they strive to deliver programs and services to their neighbourhoods, and advocate in local planning issues. With a council-driven mandate to begin a review of CAs' roles in community representation, The City of Calgary has a prime opportunity to help them to better deliver local government to the people whose interests they represent.

This paper is intended to inform The City's review by examining the forces at play in Calgary's network of CAs, such as the need to maintain aging infrastructure, competition with residents associations and The City itself in providing recreational amenities, misaligned expectations in local planning and volunteer burnout. The paper explores the neighbourhood association systems in Seattle and Portland, two cities that undertook large-scale institutional formalization in the late 1980s and 2000s, respectively, and outlines best practices that are applicable to the local context.

Potential solutions to the problems CAs face involve partnering with local businesses and other community-oriented organizations, bringing together CAs into a district-based system that elevates neighbourhood decisions above the block-face – aggregating multiple perspectives up to The City and directing money and resources down to individual neighbourhoods – and generally moving beyond the present system which focuses primarily on neighbourhood livability.

The City of Calgary needs to decide the extent of its own future involvement in community governance, and this paper provides several prospective methods from which to choose. Including strengthening the support services already provided, taking a leadership role in neighbourhood representation, or downloading authority and resources to a dedicated third-party, such as the non-profit Federation of Calgary Communities. Key to governance is reviewing how the system is funded. If the role of CAs is valued, then dedicated funding needs to extend beyond facility maintenance. Furthermore, creating opportunities to support CAs partnering with residents associations – instead of competing – would aid in resolving problems faced by CAs connected with funding, resources, space-sharing, amenities and volunteers.

Calgary's CAs have come a long way from the informal community “get-togethers” of the early 20th century. As they continue to evolve, The City must take charge to prevent existing problems from languishing, and strengthen CAs' ability to provide the programming and services Calgarians expect and enjoy.

<sup>†</sup> The authors wish to thank staff from The City of Calgary and the Federation of Calgary Communities for their invaluable insight and perspective, as well the helpful comments of two anonymous referees.

## INTRODUCTION

Calgary's network of 151 community associations (CAs) is an integral part of the city's fabric. Together, these volunteer-driven, non-profit organizations provide a critical quasi-institutional fourth level of government for Calgarians. They provide programs and amenities at the neighbourhood level — much of it within dedicated facilities — in addition to acting as local planning advisory boards and functioning as a theatre for grassroots community participation. However, CAs have faced increasing pressures and challenges as a result of growing competition for the services they provide, limited financial support, and the need to maintain sometimes decades-old infrastructure. As a result, there is mounting concern over the CAs' capacity to fulfil their numerous community-oriented roles, as evidenced in the November 2015 motion to city council from the Calgary Planning Commission to establish a working group to examine “the evolution of community associations and residents associations over time in an effort to identify appropriate roles as they apply to community building.”<sup>1</sup> Council's decision to review community associations, alongside their close cousins, the residents associations (RAs), signals that CAs may be on the precipice of either greater formalization, or potential irrelevance as Calgary continues to grow and change.

The intent of this landscape paper is to gain a better understanding of the role and future of Calgary's community associations through an examination of 1) their successes and shortcomings, 2) the exogenous threats that they face, and 3) practices in other municipalities that, if adopted, could address many of the issues CAs currently face.<sup>2</sup> To achieve this end, we have divided this paper into five sections. Section 1 explores the history and evolution of Calgary's CAs. Section 2 outlines the multiple roles CAs currently conduct. Section 3 evaluates the pressures and challenges CAs face. Section 4 reviews the role of RAs and the interplay between them and CAs. Section 5 reviews practices in other North American community-oriented systems for their applicability to the Calgary context. We conclude with recommendations that address the future of Calgary's community associations.

## SECTION 1 - CALGARY'S COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Calgary's community associations have their roots in the interwar ratepayers associations that were established when new residential areas were being developed outside of the range of existing municipal utilities.<sup>3</sup> As Davies and Townshend explain, “These associations were organisations that originally fought for the provision of public utilities ... in the new areas of the growing city. At the same time, a number of associations more specifically oriented towards meeting the social and recreational needs of local area residents came into being.”<sup>4</sup> The “proto” community association, noted in Figure 1, was the Bridgeland-Riverside Community Association (BRCA). Established in 1908, “The BRCA started as informal ‘get-togethers’ at games to organize community recreational activities, such as hockey and soccer.”<sup>5</sup> The Alberta Societies Act of 1924 (in force by 1928)

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<sup>1</sup> Colleen McPhee, City of Calgary, Community Services & Protective Services Report to SPC on Community and Protective Services, *Community Representation Framework: An Update to the Future of Community-Building Scoping Study (CPS2016-0393)*, (Calgary, AB: 2016), <http://agendaminutes.calgary.ca/sirepub/agdocs.aspx?doctype=agenda&itemid=44070>

<sup>2</sup> This paper builds on initial research that was presented at the 2016 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences on June 2, 2016, under the title “Energizing Cities: The Role and Future of Community Associations.”

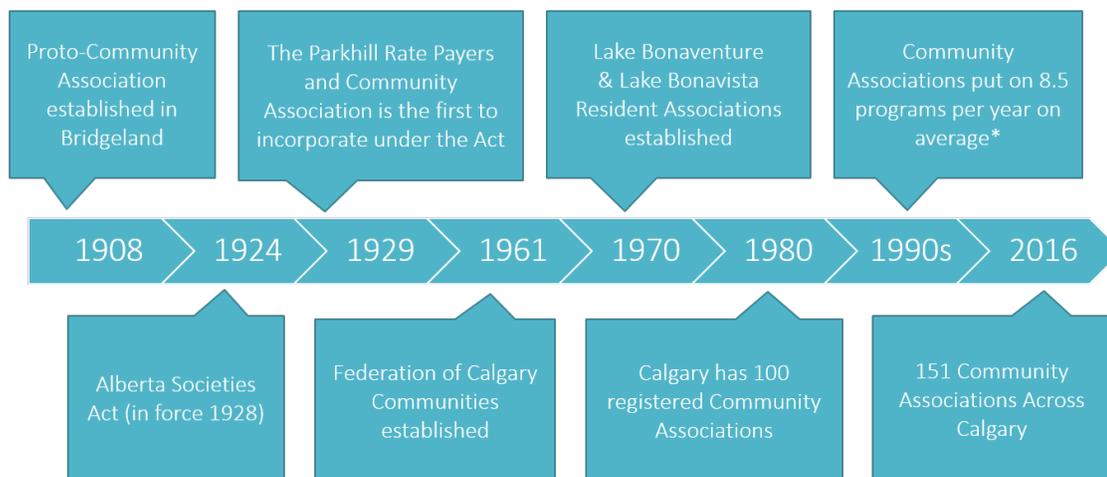
<sup>3</sup> Herb Surplis, ed., *Communities of Calgary: From Scattered Towns to a Major City* (Calgary: Century Calgary Publications, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> Wayne K.D. Davies and Ivan J. Townshend, “How Do Community Associations Vary? The Structure of Community Associations in Calgary, Alberta,” *Urban Studies* 31, no. 10 (1994) 1742.

<sup>5</sup> Corbet Locke et al., “Communities Six,” in *Communities of Calgary: From Scattered Towns to a Major City*, edited by Herb Surplis, (Calgary: Century Calgary Publications, 1975) 71.

provided for the incorporation of non-profit societies, and with it, the formalization of community associations — known in Edmonton as community leagues — occurred in Alberta.<sup>6</sup> The first CA in Calgary incorporated under the Societies Act was The Parkhill Rate Payers and Community Association in 1929, which was eventually struck and replaced by the current Parkhill Stanley Park Community Association in 1955.<sup>7</sup>

**FIGURE 1 - COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION TIMELINE**



\*Davies & Townshend (1994)

In the Depression years, a trend towards developing community centres emerged as economic hardships made the provision of entertainment and recreation options difficult, and it became more feasible for groups to pool their limited individual resources. During this period, CAs used donations and volunteer labour to build community centres, and offer activities that were otherwise out of reach.<sup>8</sup> The post-war period saw the rapid expansion of CAs across the city, as shown in Table 1. This growth was partially due to the federal Turgeon Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishing which announced a \$10 million grant in 1944 to assist “a number of specific types of communities to build community centres,” and aimed to encourage municipal governments to help fund projects.<sup>9</sup> In the 1960s and early 1970s, additional provincial grants were available, and CAs were able to combine these with bank loans, community fundraising and lotteries to raise substantial amounts of money to build large buildings involving higher capital cost than seen previously.<sup>10</sup> The rapid growth of Calgary’s CAs was also supported by the establishment of the Federation of Calgary Communities in 1961, a member-based organization that today supports over 220 not-for-profit organizations in Calgary, including the majority of CAs. As outlined on the federation’s website, it provides members with educational workshops, one-on-one support, online resources, networking opportunities, and specific service areas that address their needs.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Province of Alberta, Statutes of the Province of Alberta, 1924, An Act Respecting Benevolent and Other Societies (Edmonton: J.W. Jeffery, King’s Printer), 93-101, <http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/law/page.aspx?id=2903593>

<sup>7</sup> Province of Alberta, “Alberta Non-Profit Listing,” accessed on July 15, 2016, <http://open.alberta.ca/opendata/alberta-non-profit-listing>

<sup>8</sup> Donald Cameron, *Community Centres in Alberta* (Edmonton: Department of Extension: Edmonton, 1946)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>10</sup> Letter correspondence between Huntington Hills CA president J.L. Cotterill and J.M. Wonsfold, Manager of Central Recreation Services. December 1974 and January 1975. Retrieved from the City of Calgary Archives (CA0000-Huntington Hills CA, 1969-1976).

<sup>11</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities, “Who We Are & What We Do,” accessed on July 15, 2016, <https://calgarycommunities.com/about-us/who-we-are/>

**TABLE 1 COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INCORPORATIONS BY DECADE<sup>12</sup>**

Decade Incorporated	NW	NE	SE	SW	Total #
1930s	--	--	1*	3	4
1940s	3	2	--	1	6
1950s	9	2	6	13	30
1960s	8	3	4	11	26
1970s	6	8	8	8	30
1980s	4	1	7	7	19
1990s	6	3	--	3	12
2000s	3	1	3	7	14
2010s	2	1	5	2	10
Total	41	21	34	55	151

\* The Shepard Community Association was incorporated in 1930 in the Hamlet of Shepard that was then annexed by the City of Calgary from Rocky View County in 2007.

Equally important to this timeline is the development of the first residents associations in the neighbourhoods of Lake Bonaventure and Lake Bonavista in the mid-1970s. Different from CAs, RAs focus solely on the recreational or maintenance needs (e.g., landscaping of common property) of residents within their catchment areas. In order to fund their operation, encumbrances are placed on individual landowners' properties. The success of RAs in providing recreation amenities, and their increasing prevalence in Calgary, has led many to perceive them as direct competitors with CAs, an issue we will cover in detail later.

### Community Associations Today

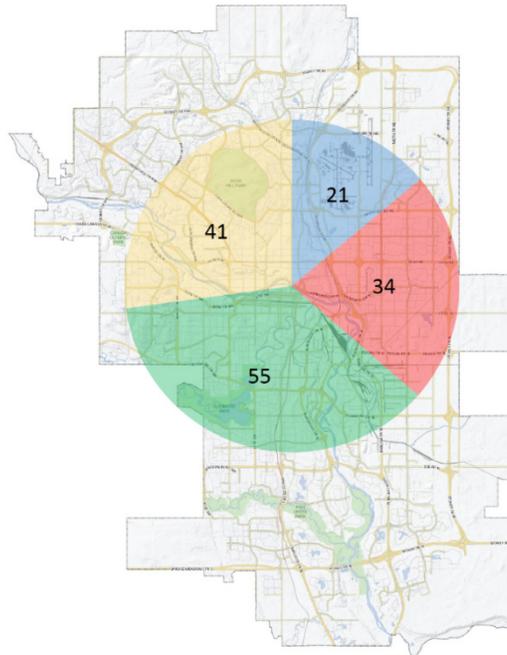
Today, there are 151 community associations in Calgary, all of which are registered as incorporated not-for-profits. As illustrated in Figure 2, 41 are located in Calgary's northwest quadrant, 21 in the northeast, 34 in the southeast, and 55 in the southwest. The predominance of CAs in Calgary's northwest and southwest is largely the result of residential growth patterns in the 1950s-1970s when over half of the CAs were established.<sup>13</sup> It is also important to note that CAs established during this period have considerably smaller neighbourhood boundaries than contemporary CAs. While this difference in scale is organic, largely reflecting the intensity of contemporary development and the rapid pace of growth in Calgary, the size of the local population served by a CA influences its priorities, in terms of capacity (i.e., number of members and potential funds) and the nature of programming, as well as the immediacy of decision-making on local planning issues.

Membership in a CA is available to all residents within their geographically defined neighbourhood catchment area for a nominal fee. This membership frames the services and programming provided by a given CA. It is important to remember, however, that CA membership is voluntary, and because CAs are often run solely by volunteers, the range of services and programming individual CAs provide is limited by their capacity to provide them. Also the nature of services and programming provided shift over time as a result of changing demographics.

<sup>12</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities, *Calgary CA Typologies Data Set*, received May 16, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> For groups aspiring to establish new community associations, the Federation of Calgary Communities provides guidance on how they and The City are available to assist interested parties.

**FIGURE 2 INCIDENCE OF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS BY QUADRANT<sup>14</sup>**



Many CAs are facility-based, formally leasing city-owned buildings on city-owned land via a lease (or a license of occupation when the CA is located within municipal reserve land), for a fee of \$10 per year for a term of a maximum of 15 years.<sup>15</sup> Those CAs without dedicated facilities often utilize partner space in various public and private buildings, in addition to using municipal reserve land The City has set aside for recreation purposes. The City of Calgary does not fund the construction of new CA facilities, nor does it provide a guaranteed revenue stream for the operations and maintenance of CA facilities.<sup>16</sup> CAs are responsible for the general upkeep and maintenance of facilities, as well as for insuring the facility, while funding for capital repairs is available from The City as part of the Community Capital Conservation Grant open to CAs and other community-oriented organizations.

In an effort to assist community associations, The City has a team of 24 Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators (NPCs) on staff that work with CAs and social recreation groups by, “... providing consultation and resources to assist them in identifying and responding to community needs.”<sup>17</sup> The City’s NPCs support the internal organizational development and external neighbourhood engagement of CAs, initiate the Licence of Occupation/Lease process, and connect CAs with The City’s internal business units and departments.<sup>18</sup>

## **SECTION 2 - THE MANY ROLES OF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS**

As discussed previously, the roots of Calgary’s CAs lay in the provision of recreational amenities and programming in the city’s early neighbourhoods. The nature of amenities and services CAs

<sup>14</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities, *Calgary CA Typologies Data Set*, received May 16, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> City of Calgary, *The Lease/License of Occupation to Community Organizations (CSPS011)* (Calgary: CS95-26-02, July 3, 1995, amended to Feb. 27, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities and The City of Calgary, Community & Neighbourhood Services, *Typologies: Environmental Scan of Select Community-Based, Not-For-Profit Networks Across Canada* (Calgary: 2014).

<sup>17</sup> City of Calgary, *Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator Core Services (Summary)*, July 6, 2016, (Calgary:2016) 1.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

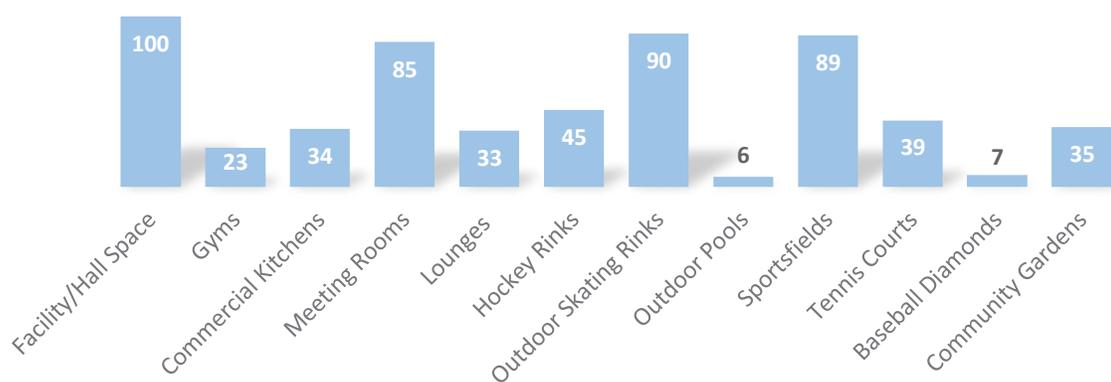
provide has evolved and new roles have emerged. Within this section, we will explore what we consider to be the three key roles CAs play at the neighbourhood level as a 1) provider of local amenities, 2) local planning advisor, and 3) neighbourhood advocate.

### Role No. 1 – Local Amenity Provision

According to data provided by the Federation of Calgary Communities, 100 of 151 CAs have dedicated facilities.<sup>19</sup> These facilities provide essential space for social activities and recreational programming throughout the city and have largely become synonymous with community associations (even though a full third of CAs do not have dedicated facilities). Of the remaining 51 CAs without a facility, seven use a residents association facility, and a further 11 have alternative meeting spaces located in various recreation facilities (e.g., Northern Hills CA in Vivo and Lindsay Park CA in the Talisman Centre), or other public service buildings (e.g., Silverado CA in the South Fish Creek Library and the Downtown West CA located in the Kerby Centre). The remaining CAs often rent space from schools and/or churches within their neighbourhoods from which they conduct various programs.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the range of amenities CAs maintain is quite extensive, including gyms, commercial kitchens, hockey rinks, outdoor pools, skating rinks, sports fields and community gardens. The facility’s size roughly correlates with the size of the main hall, which ranges from a 30-person capacity in Rideau/Roxboro to 800 in Thorncliff-Greenview. Of the 100 facilities, 17 have a capacity of 100 or less, 44 have a capacity of 101 to 200, 24 have a capacity of 201 to 300, and 15 CAs can facilitate groups larger than 300.

**FIGURE 3 COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AMENITIES<sup>20</sup>**



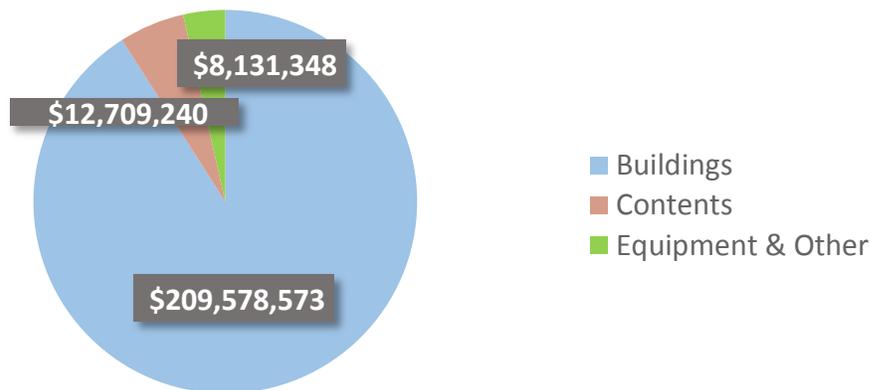
Determining an approximate value of these amenities is possible through an analysis of their insurance coverage. The Federation of Calgary Communities and Toole Peet Insurance provided coverage data for 112 CAs. As illustrated in Figure 4, the total building values for the 112 CAs are insured for \$209,578,573, the total content values are insured for \$12,709,240, and the total values of equipment and other items are insured for \$8,131,348. The total value of property of every description is \$230,419,161. The Federation of Calgary Communities estimates that the majority of CAs are underinsured (as they often only insure their leasehold improvements), and provides a revised estimate of \$326,953,595.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities, *Calgary CA Typologies Data Set*, received May 16, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Leslie Evans, conversation with authors, Calgary, May 13, 2016.

**FIGURE 4 INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR 112 COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS (2016)<sup>22</sup>**



In addition to the programs directly related to recreational amenities, CAs and their facilities also provide space for the functioning of critical community services such as babysitting training, first aid courses, children’s day camps, and weekly worship for religious groups without their own facility. Added to this is the fact that CA facilities offer a low-cost place to bring people together for celebrations like weddings or reunions. Unlike physical amenities, however, it is difficult to analyze the individual programming each CA provides. This is largely due to the seasonal nature of programming and variation in what is offered from year to year. One of the most comprehensive studies on programming, conducted by Davies and Townshend in 1994, found that CAs vary significantly in their level of program activity, putting on 8.5 programs per year on average, with a median of 6.5, indicating that while CAs are generally active, some organize little or no programming, while others have a large number of programs and events.<sup>23</sup>

## **Role No. 2 – Local Planning Advisor**

Community advocacy for local improvements goes back to the pre-Societies Act ratepayer associations, and CAs’ involvement in local planning has increased steadily over the years, being formalized to an extent in 1993.<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to determine exactly when CAs began to take on the role of planning advisory bodies, because they lack formal authority. Despite this, and the fact that community associations were not initially set up for the purpose of being local planning advisors, CAs have become one of many participants in Calgary’s planning and land development processes.

CAs today form planning committees typically consisting of six to 12 members (there are no set requirements) who are involved in reviewing applications for redesignation, subdivision and development permits. The City of Calgary circulates planning committees on planning and development applications within their boundaries as they arise and asks them for their input. As the federation notes, the “[planning committees] job is to comment on how a proposed development fits into the community and, where possible, suggest changes, which could make the proposed development more compatible or beneficial.”<sup>25</sup> CAs are generally consulted based on the acknowledgment that they possess important local information and lived experiences, which provide City of Calgary planners with unique insight into a community. Thus, CAs have the power

<sup>22</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities, *2016 Insurance Congress Data Set*, received May 16, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Davies and Townshend, Table 1, 1745.

<sup>24</sup> City of Calgary, *Public Participation in the Planning Process* (Calgary: 1993).

<sup>25</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities, *The Community Guide to the Planning Process* (Calgary: 2014) 44, <https://calgarycommunities.com/content/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The-Community-Guide-to-the-Planning-Process-2014-Small.pdf>

to influence broader planning activities and are routinely involved in the creation and refinement of planning guidelines in their respective neighbourhoods even though planning committees have no formal jurisdiction or authority in planning matters. As noted by the federation, “[planning committees] are not involved to state whether they approve or disapprove an application, or share the results of a planning committee vote.”<sup>26</sup> Section 3 discusses further this lack of authority and the externalities arising from it.

### **Role No. 3 – Neighbourhood Advocate**

Finally, community associations play an important role as advocates for their neighbourhoods. At the heart of this role is the fact that CAs are a space for collaborative co-production, wherein different people get together to participate in community life (tied to the amenity role of CAs), that encourage participatory democracy through the broad participation of members in the direction and operation of the local political system (tied to the planning advisor role of CAs). This view is supported by Loomis, who found that the CA’s role is to contribute to a community’s identity, to be a natural focal point, to advocate on behalf of the community, and to provide social and recreational programs.<sup>27</sup>

As advocates, CAs function as an interface between residents and The City as well as other community-oriented organizations. In this role, community associations can be interpreted to be a quasi-institutional fourth level of government: that of the neighbourhood. Often, the Federation of Calgary Communities plays an important role in facilitating such collaboration, as is the case with the Partners in Planning (PIP) training program, delivered jointly by the federation and The City, which is aimed at helping CA planning volunteers develop skills for effective participation in Calgary’s planning process.

The rise of other community-oriented organizations in Calgary, such as business revitalization zones (BRZs), presents an opportunity for the expertise and interests of CA volunteers to intersect with the strengths of local businesses. BRZs, which are “self-help programs by which businesses in an area can jointly raise and administer funds to improve and promote their businesses,” and CAs have aligned in the past to create greater collective impact, such as the community association and businesses in Inglewood partnering to host events and promote a “shop local” mindset.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, the advocacy role of community associations is shaped largely by the interests of the volunteers who comprise a given CA. When these interests align, CAs are a natural fit to work along with other community-oriented organizations.

## **SECTION 3 – PRESSURES AND CHALLENGES COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS FACE**

At the neighbourhood level, community associations play a critical role as providers of recreation and social amenities, as advisors in local planning and land development activity, and as neighbourhood advocates between residents’ needs and other community-oriented organizations within Calgary. In fulfilling these roles, there are several pressures and challenges — in the form of both internal shortcomings and exogenous threats — which affect CAs’ ability to effectively fulfil their community roles. Many of these are known to the City of Calgary as outlined in the

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<sup>26</sup> Federation of Calgary Communities, *The Planning Committee Guide* (Calgary: 2013) 8, <http://calgarycommunities.com/content/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/The-Planning-Committee-Guide.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Jeff Loomis, “Privatizing Community: The Growth of Private Residents’ Associations,” (Calgary: Federation of Calgary Communities, 2006) 32-33.

<sup>28</sup> City of Calgary, “Business Revitalization Zones,” accessed on July 15, 2016, <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Partnership-programs/BRZs.aspx>

preamble to The City’s 2002 Community Capital Conservation Grant: “[o]ur community partners are experiencing increased pressure and challenges to maintain and operate their facilities. The challenges range from decreases in funding, [and] volunteer retention, to aging facilities.”<sup>29</sup> Within this section, we will explore the pressures and challenges that affect the CAs’ capacity to fulfil their three key roles effectively.

## Pressures and Challenges to the Amenity Role of CAs

As discussed in the previous section, one of the primary roles of Calgary’s community associations is the provision of recreation and social programs, either from dedicated facilities that they operate, or in spaces rented from other private and public facilities. While the responsibility to maintain rented facilities lies with the space’s provider, the responsibility to maintain the 100 CA facilities that are leased from The City of Calgary — so-called “community-operated infrastructure” — remains with the CAs themselves (as outlined in section 11.1 of the lease agreement between The City and the respective CA).<sup>30</sup> These CA facilities not only range in size, capacity and amenities available for public use, but also in their age and the maintenance level required to keep them “in a tidy, clean, sanitary and safe condition.”<sup>31</sup>

Recognizing the need to maintain CA facilities, city council directed administration to establish a community life cycle assistance and energy maintenance program, known as the Community Capital Conservation Grant (CCCG) in 2002. In 2004, the grant was expanded to include social recreation organizations and further amended in 2009 to target aging community-operated infrastructure. The intent of the CCCG is, “[t]o facilitate the long-term sustainability of community groups that hold a lease or license of occupation with The City of Calgary through the provision of a capital grant program that enhances and maintains community-operated facilities for citizens to participate in healthy, active and creative lifestyles.”<sup>32</sup> The threshold for eligibility includes community groups that hold and have met all conditions within a current lease or licence of occupation with The City, and have demonstrated good governance and sound financial management. The policy does not clearly outline the definition of what constitutes good governance and sound financial management.

CCCG monies can be used for facility life cycle plans, engineering consultant reports, capital conservation/life cycle projects, emergency capital conservation/life cycle projects and upgrade projects. The life cycle plans, which establish the condition, probable cost and timing of renewal activities over a 25-year period, and engineering consultant reports, which establish a given issue and solution along with a scope of work that can go out to tender, receive 100 per cent funding. All other eligible projects are covered up to 75 per cent of total project cost (including a 15 per cent contingency), with administration allocating an annual maximum of \$300,000 per organization. While the CCCG does assist in addressing the CAs’ maintenance needs, there are several shortcomings, notably that:

1. The grant is shared among more than 200 CAs and sports and recreation societies. Worth only \$4 million in 2014, the CCCG is not nearly sufficient to meet the needs of all organizations;

<sup>29</sup> City of Calgary, *Community Capital Conservation Grant (CSPS006)* (Calgary: CPS2002-75, March 6, 2002, amended to Feb. 20, 2012) 1.

<sup>30</sup> City of Calgary, *Lease for Community Associations* (Calgary: CPS2012-03 Attachment 8), <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/Neighbourhood-Services/Lease,-license-of-occupation-review.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> City of Calgary, *Community Capital Conservation Grant (CSPS006)* (Calgary: CPS2002-75 ...) 2.

2. CAs are still responsible for covering 25 per cent of projects from non-City of Calgary sources (although there are other grants available that can assist in covering the remaining portion of a given project); and
3. The grant does not assist with any operating costs associated with running a CA facility.

Operating costs are a significant factor given the uncertain nature of CA funding. CAs are reliant on self-generated revenue through memberships and community events, and as registered societies, they are able to engage in fundraising events through gaming.

The lack of a guaranteed source of funding is a critical shortcoming of CAs, made increasingly important given the general erosion of their recreation function as they compete for scarce leisure time with The City's expanding recreation facilities, private sports and recreation societies such as the YMCA — who more and more operate the recreation component of new city facilities, such as the Remington YMCA in Quarry Park and the forthcoming Rocky Ridge and Seton recreation centres in the city's far northwest and southeast corners — and the increasingly prevalent residents association facilities in new neighbourhoods.

### Pressures and Challenges to the Planning Role of CAs

Community associations are the official voice of the community in planning matters on a project-by-project basis. They have the power to influence land use decisions and are routinely involved in the creation and refinement of planning guidelines in their respective neighbourhoods — acting as local planning advisory boards. There are, however, shortcomings inherent to this planning role that differ depending on one of two perspectives:

**The Outsider Perspective:** that CAs are intent on preventing new development within their communities — so-called NIMBY-ism. NIMBYism is compounded by the spatial immediacy of planning decisions, in that in geographically smaller CAs, residents are in closer proximity to proposed developments, raising the likelihood of opposition to new development even on projects that are not inherently controversial. The immediacy of local planning and land development activity is tied to the phenomenon of episodic engagement, wherein involvement in a community-oriented organization increases when something is at stake. This is supported by Koschmann and Laster, who found that people only tend to get involved with their neighbourhood association when something is at stake, or when something might change in the community.<sup>33</sup>

**The Insider Perspective:** that planning committee volunteers are undervalued and ignored in the planning process. The advisory nature of planning committees means that their comments on planning projects are based on committee members' local knowledge and expertise; however, the lack of real planning authority can be interpreted as a form of tokenism. This view is supported by Arnstein's work, *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, wherein she outlines eight levels of participation ranging from "manipulation" to "citizen control"; with each level reflecting an increased degree of control that citizens have over local policy-making.<sup>34</sup> Within this ladder, advisory boards such as community association planning committees "typically represent a form of tokenism in which elected officials and public administrators consult local residents about policy issues, but the residents have no direct control over the local decision-making process."<sup>35</sup> Following Arnstein's argument, the advisory nature of CA planning committees means that they

<sup>33</sup> Matt Koschmann and Nicole M. Laster, "Communicative Tensions of Community Organizing: The Case of a Local Neighborhood Association," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 1 (2011) 46.

<sup>34</sup> Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969) 216-224.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Mark Silverman, "Citizens' District Councils in Detroit: The Promise and Limits of Using Planning Advisory Boards to Promote Citizen Participation," *National Civic Review*, Winter 2003, 4.

fundamentally have a low level of political power because decision-makers are not required to act on their recommendations.<sup>36</sup>

In reality, both the outsider and insider perspectives are intertwined in that the tokenism that community association planning committees experience fuels NIMBYism especially in large and/or controversial projects. It should also be noted that not all forms of NIMBYism are bad in that “If members of a community mobilize to block a disproportionate burden of undesirable land uses or noxious facilities, these movements may result in a more just distribution of such facilities.”<sup>37</sup>

## Pressures and Challenges to the CAs’ Neighbourhood Advocacy Role

As a neighbourhood-level institution, CAs play an important role as advocates between the needs of residents and The City of Calgary. However, the CAs’ voluntary nature is both an asset and a pitfall to this advocacy role. On one hand, the voluntary nature means that people involved have a shared sense of community that inspires them to participate. On the other hand, when there are low levels of membership in a given CA, member views are not representative of the community overall, leading to “too much work and too little help.” Research has also found that CAs may be unable to act as cohesive units based on contradictory interests and motivations, compromising this advocacy role.<sup>38</sup> And there is some concern that CAs can be controlled by vested interests, “[g]iven the low percentage of residents who join CAs, most residents ... have no voice and the CA is run by a small group (clique?) of willing volunteers.”<sup>39</sup> These issues are compounded by the not-for-profit nature of CAs, which can lead to challenges in the construction and governance of boards. Unlike a corporation, there are no shareholders and no management team to shoulder the burden of operations. CAs must therefore act as both strategic oversight bodies and the operations teams — two very different roles that can often result in misaligned volunteer expectations and burnout.

Studies often show that social class and social capital have an impact on the probability of volunteering — a lack of economic and social resources can produce barriers to participation, while certain skillsets might result in an invitation to volunteer.<sup>40</sup> However, Davies and Townshend did not find that community activity variation could not be adequately explained by socio-economic status, family or ethnic status, although there was evidence that the relationship between income and participation in community association activities is curvilinear.<sup>41</sup> Current data on socio-economic status of residents and level of CA activity and participation rates are unfortunately not available in order to explore this further.

This reliance on volunteers does not undermine the co-productive ability of CAs but it does point to the need for them to engage with other community-oriented organizations in Calgary. Knickmeyer, Hopkins and Meyer found that neighbourhood associations (a term often used in the U.S. for systems equivalent to Calgary’s CAs), especially ones that have few active members, rarely consider the possibilities of reaching out to other organizations operating within the same area.<sup>42</sup> Even if CAs do collaborate with other community-oriented organizations, collaboration does not follow

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<sup>36</sup> As was the case with Detroit’s ill-fated Citizen’s District Councils, reviewed in detail within Silverman’s “Citizen’s District Councils in Detroit ...”

<sup>37</sup> Feedback from Anonymous Referee No. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Koschmann and Laster, 28-51.

<sup>39</sup> Feedback from Anonymous Referee No. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Kevin L. Selbee, “The Influence of Class, Status and Social Capital on the Probability of Volunteering,” (Ottawa: Report to Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> Davies and Townshend.

<sup>42</sup> Lisa Knickmeyer, Karen Hopkins and Megan Meyer, “Exploring Collaboration Among Urban Neighborhood Associations,” *Journal of Community Practice* 11 no. 2 (2003) 13-25.

a natural or defined path. For every successful “shop local” program, there are also cases of CAs collaborating with grassroots initiatives, where the spectre of NIMBYism prevails. For example, grassroots groups such as Calgarians for Responsible Development and Ready to Engage emerged from a segment of impacted communities that oppose proposed changes to their neighbourhoods. Calgarians for Responsible Development is playing an advocacy role for preserving defunct private golf courses as green spaces rather than redevelopment sites. Ready to Engage formed to oppose the proposed southwest bus rapid transit (SW BRT) routes planned in Calgary. In both of these cases, CA alignment with an external community-oriented organization resulted in increased conflict with The City of Calgary. For this reason, while CAs certainly can benefit from partnership, it is important that the partnerships be aligned with the CAs’ mandate, something that is again contested by the view that a CA cannot possibly represent the views of all residents.

## **SECTION 4 - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS**

To better understand Calgary’s community associations, it is important to also review residents associations, which have replaced CAs in their recreation function in many of Calgary’s new neighbourhoods, but have roots back to the mid-1970s with the development of Lake Bonaventure and Lake Bonavista. Often, services provided by RAs can overlap with the services undertaken by CAs; however, services and amenities are private in RAs, available only to homeowners and their guests. Unlike community associations, RAs are most commonly “private, non-profit organizations run as corporations” which gives them significant power in enforcing covenants, conditions and restrictions within a catchment area.<sup>43</sup> Within an RA’s geographical boundaries, property owners are automatically part of the association through an encumbrance on their property, making membership compulsory. Membership fees cover amenities that are outside the municipality’s scope, because there is either no budget or desire to expend capital or cover operating costs. In some cases, these are extra amenities such as lakes, landscaping and recreational facilities. Other times, the RA becomes responsible for maintaining amenities and features that create better community design but fall outside the municipal expectation for 10 per cent of a new community to be dedicated as municipal reserve. In such cases, the ongoing maintenance of the additional green spaces, walkways or other design features becomes the RA’s responsibility.

Given their similarities to an American Homeowners’ Association (HOAs) in terms of how they are funded and the services they provide, it is important to note that Calgary’s RAs are really “HOA light” in that they have a limited operating capacity (they largely stick to recreational amenities or the maintenance of common property), and they do not enforce the restrictive covenants common within HOAs. This can largely be attributed to a general disinclination for private service provision in Canada. Like HOAs, however, RAs are grounded in the idea that developers in a contemporary competitive land development market must provide communities that offer more than just homes; they must sell lifestyles and offer amenities that support those lifestyles. From a social organization perspective, it can be argued that modern society has evolved from the days in which churches and then schools were the heart of the community. With the advent of activity-based social organizations and a renewed planning commitment to the public realm, recreation spaces and facilities have become community hubs with developers providing buildings that boast indoor and outdoor amenity spaces in new communities.<sup>44</sup>

Based on the physical amenities associated with RAs and the ability for these community spaces to drive community activity, it could be argued that RAs can replace CAs. However, the governance

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<sup>43</sup> Loomis.

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that the building of a school is one of the first steps in large-scale greenfield development throughout much of the U.S. In Alberta, the development and operation of schools are controlled by 61 school boards.

structure of these associations is fundamentally different. As Loomis argues, CAs are a result of grassroots effort and are therefore social in nature, while RAs are functional, as they are created by developers. Critics therefore argue that the developer-run nature of RA boards in their early years means that the developer's best interests are being served, not those of residents.<sup>45</sup> CAs on the other hand are formed, in principle at least, to represent the community as a whole and membership is available to all residents regardless of housing tenure. Whereas RAs are for homeowners only. Non-homeowners, by virtue of their tenure, cannot be members of the RA, excluding them from the RA's amenities. Importantly, while RAs have been extremely successful in providing a recreation function in newer neighbourhoods, they are not designed, nor intended, to conduct the same planning and advocacy functions that CAs typically provide.

### **A Mutually Beneficial Way Forward**

Recognizing that the current roles of RAs and CAs are so different based on their mandates and origins, can there be a way forward that allows for more than simple co-existence? Leveraging the strengths of each organization creates unique benefits that could enhance the livability of new neighbourhoods. From a bricks-and-mortar perspective, a tangible example is the housing of both associations under one roof, perhaps with an RA reserving and renting space to the CA (as is the case with the Edgemont CA). While creating dedicated CA space in an RA facility would place additional costs on developers, these costs could be recouped if the need for dedicated CA municipal reserve was attributable to an RA/CA facility. In terms of membership, the RA's mandatory nature may create opportunities for the CA to market its value to an established cohort of residents, utilizing an approach that is not unlike affinity marketing of complementary products. At the same time, CAs have the ability to reach a much broader audience — one that includes renters — as their membership is not tied to home ownership, making their relationships critical at times when CA and RA interests are both simultaneously impacted.

Timing may be a key factor in executing partnership opportunities for CAs and RAs. It may be possible to merge the functions of CAs and RAs into one entity when turnover from the developer to community is complete, providing that all residents, regardless of tenure, can take part. A mix of tenures will likely be of benefit to the community overall as research has shown that homeowners and renters tend to place importance on different things. For example, homeowners tend to care about home values and return on investment, while renters place greater emphasis on social bonds and community development.<sup>46,47</sup>

Ultimately, we are at a crossroads in Calgary where the mandates of RAs and CAs are becoming increasingly similar. Yet, we continue to struggle with the ideology that divides the two. RAs are viewed as exclusivity-based associations that function to privilege one community over others with amenities that only some can afford. CAs, on the other hand, are deemed to be more pure in their intentions to create a sense of community and represent residents' interests. The reality is not so black and white, and with some adjustment to the governance structures of individual CAs and RAs, the functions of both could be combined, without RAs eroding the CAs' mandate and autonomy. By merging the two organizations, there can still be separate streams of responsibility assigned to board members: one group to manage assets, with another group to manage community representation and cohesion. This will not address issues of disparity, particularly because a

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<sup>45</sup> Loomis, 51.

<sup>46</sup> Martin Ruef and Seok-Woo Kwon, "Neighborhood Associations and Social Capital," *Social Forces* 95, no. 1 (2016) 159-190.

<sup>47</sup> Within Calgary, communities like Coral Springs and Panorama Hills have seen their RAs transition to become resident-led as a critical mass of homes have been sold. With Panorama Hills, the issue remains that the RA serves a smaller catchment area than the broader community represented by the Northern Hills CA. In Coral Springs, the situation is different and the RA covers the same territory as the CA, begging the question of why two separate entities are needed.

combined RA/CA model predicates its financial success on mandatory membership (through caveat on title) while stand-alone CAs would still be reliant on grant monies and operating dollars through membership drives and other fundraising activities. It also does not address the bias that developer-run RAs carry until the time of turnover. That being stated, while merging the functions of CAs and RAs would not be an easy task, that should not prematurely end the discussion of how a strategic partnership could be achieved.

## SECTION 5 - LESSONS FROM ABROAD

The pressures and challenges CAs face are very real, whether pertaining to their funding, what influence they exert in planning decisions, or how they align with other community-oriented organizations as neighbourhood advocates. In an attempt to broaden the discussion on the future of Calgary's community associations, we have reviewed alternative community-oriented systems in Seattle and Portland. These cities were chosen as both undertook large-scale institutional formalization and reinvention in the late 1980s and 2000s, respectively. We review their applicability to Calgary's local context, as well as their utility in providing lessons on any potential reform.

### Lessons from Seattle

In 1987, Seattle city council set about creating a system of formal neighbourhood representation with a resolution to promote, support and involve citizen participation at the neighbourhood level.<sup>48</sup> Resolution 27709, Establishment of Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program, laid the framework for several innovative programs that together provide a comprehensive system of support for Seattle's neighbourhoods. As a result, Seattle redrew the catchment areas of pre-existing community service centers to correspond more closely to community needs, and re-designated them as Neighborhood Districts.<sup>49</sup> Within each of the 13 new Neighborhood Districts, they established District Councils, consisting of representatives of interested community councils and neighbourhood business organisations. The city's Office of Neighborhoods was also established (effective Jan. 1, 1988), as was the Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) with \$200,000 earmarked in 1988 and \$1.5 million in 1989. A series of subsequent resolutions have refined or altered Resolution 27709 and shaped the current system, including Resolution 28115 (Amendment to Promote Diversity) in 1989, and Resolution 28948 (Neighborhood District Representation on the City Neighborhood Council) and 29015 (City/Community Partnership) in 1994.

Seattle's system offers unique benefits at different levels. From the resident's perspective, Seattle's system works from the bottom up in that the District Councils provide a forum for residents from the various neighbourhoods within each of the 13 Neighborhood Districts to address concerns and pursue solutions to common neighbourhood problems. An elected member from each Neighborhood District represents each District Council on the City Neighborhood Council (CNC), a citizen-led advisory group. The CNC provides citywide co-ordination for the NMF,

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<sup>48</sup> City of Seattle, "City Neighborhood Council and District Councils," accessed on July 15, 2016, <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoodcouncil/>

<sup>49</sup> Seattle has eschewed a ward system in favour of at-large representation. However, in 1975, the city implemented a system where community service centers, colloquially referred to as "little city halls," assumed responsibility for co-ordinating municipal services. These were renamed neighbourhood service centres in 1991, placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Neighborhoods, and their redrawn boundaries became today's Neighborhood Districts. As of 2016, a reduction in the number of little city halls puts the total at seven, and these are called customer service centres, with the centres themselves being distinct from the Neighborhood Districts.

Neighborhood Budget Prioritization, and Neighborhood Planning programs, as well as advising on policies as they relate to the implementation of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program.<sup>50</sup>

From the municipal perspective, Seattle’s system works from the top down with the Department of Neighborhoods (formerly the Office of Neighborhoods), bringing government closer to Seattle residents through programs and services that encourage community engagement, notably the Neighborhood District Coordinators service and the NMF.<sup>51</sup> The Neighborhood District Coordinators service is a resource and liaison to community members, helping act as a bridge between Seattle’s residents and their neighbourhoods. Neighborhood District Coordinators work in three regional teams serving the city’s 13 Neighborhood Districts. Individual District Coordinators support the 13 District Councils providing a high level of integration between residents and the city’s Department of Neighborhoods.

As explained by Seattle’s Department of Neighborhoods, the impetus behind the Neighborhood Matching Fund was “to provide neighborhood groups with city resources for community-driven projects that enhance and strengthen their own neighborhoods,” importantly, “[a]ll projects are initiated, planned, and implemented by community members in partnership with the City.”<sup>52</sup> The core idea behind the NMF is simple: the city awards grants for neighbourhood-generated projects that commit to matching these funds with their own in-kind contributions, cash and donated labour.<sup>53</sup> Since 1988, the fund has awarded more than \$49 million to more than 4,000 projects throughout Seattle, generated an additional \$72 million of community match, and engaged more than 86,000 volunteers who have donated over 574,000 hours.<sup>54</sup> Table 2 shows the three separate funds within the NMF Program.

**TABLE 2 NEIGHBORHOOD MATCHING FUND**

Funds	Small Sparks Fund	Small & Simple Projects Fund	Large Projects Fund
<b>Awards</b>	Up to \$1,000.	Up to \$25,000.	Up to \$100,000.
<b>Application Deadlines</b>	Applications accepted year-round. Applications must be received at least six weeks prior to the start of the project.	February 1, 2016 June 6, 2016 September 12, 2016	May 2, 2016* *Attendance at mandatory LPF workshop is required.
<b>Notice of Decisions</b>	Within two weeks.	Within eight weeks.	Within three months.
<b>Contracts with City</b>	Within one month from award notification date.	Within one month from award notification date.	Within one to four months from award notification date.

Source: Seattle Department of Neighborhoods: Neighborhood Matching Fund. Accessed on July 15, 2016. [http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/Shared/FactSheets/2016\\_NMF\\_FactSheet\\_2016.05.10.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/Shared/FactSheets/2016_NMF_FactSheet_2016.05.10.pdf)

Seattle has successfully leveraged several bottom-up and top-down community-oriented programs to create a broad network that ties together residents’ interests with the capacity of local government. As Sirianni notes: “The vision behind Seattle’s innovative strategies has been the use of city government to catalyze civic initiative for productive and collaborative solutions to problems

<sup>50</sup> City of Seattle, “City Neighborhood Council and District Councils,” accessed on July 15, 2016, <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoodcouncil/>

<sup>51</sup> The complete list of seven programs includes: Historic Preservation, Neighborhood Matching Fund, P-Patch Community Gardening Program, Neighborhood District Coordinators, Outreach and Engagement, Major Institutions and Schools, and People’s Academy for Community Engagement.

<sup>52</sup> City of Seattle, “About the NMF,” accessed on July 15, 2016, <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/neighborhood-matching-fund/about-the-nmf>

<sup>53</sup> Carmen Sirianni, reviewer, “Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way,” Jim Diers, *National Civic Review*, Fall 2005, 60.

<sup>54</sup> City of Seattle, “About the NMF,” ... <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/neighborhood-matching-fund/about-the-nmf>

without simultaneously undermining the independence of community organizations. Central to this vision is the idea that wise investments by the city enable and motivate citizens to mobilize their own assets and create public value far beyond what municipal staff and tax dollars alone could do.”<sup>55</sup>

Three lessons Calgary can learn from Seattle’s system are:

1. A dedicated funding mechanism can be successfully based on community initiatives (beyond solely facility maintenance) and used to support good governance;
2. A district system of like neighbourhoods elevates neighbourhood decisions above the block-face — aggregating the multiple viewpoints up to the city and directing money and resources back down to individual neighbourhoods;
3. The creation of a formal department of neighbourhoods, that would direct and coordinate a system of associations, brings local government closer to residents and serves to better coordinate the corporation’s community-oriented activities.

### Lessons from Portland

The city of Portland, Oregon’s neighbourhood association system is structurally very similar to Seattle’s, with seven Neighbourhood District Coalitions representing 95 Neighborhood Associations, and a city department known as the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) that supports the neighbourhood associations and district coalitions by providing organizing support, leadership development and technical assistance to community volunteers.<sup>56</sup> In 2005, Portland began a comprehensive review of its then 35-year-old system. This process, known as Community Connect, was a thorough assessment of the existing system which had been criticized as too dominated by homeowners and the white middle class, with Neighbourhood Associations that were too focused on land use issues instead of social issues and community-building opportunities.<sup>57</sup> Community Connect had three goals: 1) to increase the number and diversity of people involved in their communities, 2) to strengthen community capacity, and 3) to increase community impact on public decisions as part of a concerted effort to re-engage Portlanders with their city government and create a culture of partnership.<sup>58</sup> As a result of the three-year community connect program, significant resources were put into this existing system, including:

- The creation of an additional community organizer position for each Neighborhood District Coalition (\$700,000 over two years);
- The establishment of a Neighborhood Small Grants program for use by and between Neighborhood Associations and other community organizations (\$600,000 over three years); and
- The founding of a fund for accessible neighbourhood services that aimed to reduce barriers to participation in Neighborhood Association meetings and community events, such as language translation/interpretation assistance, childcare and transportation support (\$60,000 over two years).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sirianni, 60.

<sup>56</sup> City of Portland, “ONI Programs,” accessed on July 15, 2016, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/28381>

<sup>57</sup> Amalia Alarcon de Morris and Paul Leistner, “From Neighborhood Association System to Participatory Democracy: Broadening and Deepening Public Involvement in Portland, Oregon,” *National Civic Review*, Summer 2009.

<sup>58</sup> City of Portland, “A City for All of Us — More Voices, Better Solutions: Strengthening Community Involvement in Portland (*Community Connect Final Report*) (Portland OR: 2008), <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/article/182408>

<sup>59</sup> Alarcon de Morris and Leistner, 51.

In addition to the injection of cash into the existing system, the ONI implemented many of the strategies within Community Connect, including the creation of a new Public Involvement Advisory Council (PIAC). The PIAC comprises city staff and the broader community to develop guidelines and policy recommendations for citywide public involvement, as well as providing implementation support and advice to city council and city bureaus.<sup>60</sup> The ONI also dedicated funds specifically to build leadership capacity and community organizing among people of colour, immigrants and refugees in Portland as part of a Diversity and Civic Leadership (DCL) Program. Importantly, Community Connect signalled a major shift in viewing the neighbourhood association system as a crucial foundation of the full structure needed in meaningful engagement.

The Community Connect program built on the existing strengths of Portland's neighbourhood association system, broadening and deepening the role of neighbourhood associations by enhancing citizen integration with council (via the PIAC) and strengthening involvement from traditionally under-engaged groups.

Three lessons Calgary can learn from Portland's Community Connect experience are:

1. Often the geographic neighbourhood alone is insufficient in representing the needs of a community — co-ordination between different community-oriented organizations is critical;
2. The creation of a hybrid city/community council is an opportunity to formalize engagement between city staff and community associations (or a district system thereof) and build relationships through direct conversation;
3. Enhancing community engagement within and through community associations costs money.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALGARY'S COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Calgary's 151 community associations are important contributors to the quality of life in our neighbourhoods. However, some real challenges exist in how CAs provide recreation and social amenities, advise in local planning and land development activity, and act as advocates between the needs of residents and other community-oriented organizations within Calgary. Because of these challenges, CAs are in a precarious position, facing the looming threat of irrelevance due to the erosion of their roles and, conversely, greater formalization that would likely constrain their independence. We have reviewed alternative systems in Seattle and Portland that point to ways that could strengthen what makes CAs successful and improve their capacity to act as a quasi-institutional fourth level of government for Calgarians. We have also taken a close look at opportunities within Calgary's system of residents associations that could support the capacity of CAs. As The City's forthcoming working group on the future of community representation begins the task of identifying the appropriate future roles of community associations, we offer the following points for consideration:

- 1. Clarify Expectations** — If CAs are to move forward in a meaningful manner as active members in city building, it is important to ensure that all parties clearly understand the role(s) that CAs are to play. In their capacity as community amenity providers, CAs are able to control the nature of amenities and programming on offer, filling service gaps as opportunities arise and striking effective partnerships for better service delivery. However, their capacity as local planning advisors is less certain. It is the responsibility of the development authority — being The City of Calgary — to clearly outline the level of influence CAs have on decision-making. Presently, a great deal of volunteer time is committed to the process of planning

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<sup>60</sup> City of Portland, Oregon, "Public Involvement Advisory Council (PIAC)," accessed on July 15, 2016, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/48951>

and development, with mixed results in terms of influence, often leading to frustration and concerns over tokenism. Ideas for greater clarity include a weighting system for stakeholder comments whereby each is aware of the level of influence. Alternatively, the provision of a planning and development checklist that outlines scope of feedback may clarify areas where CA input is requested. Ultimately, The City must clearly state whether CAs simply provide feedback, or if their feedback is able to directly impact decision-making in planning and development matters.

2. **Think Broad** — As evidenced in Portland, it is possible for CAs to have greater impact if their perspective is broader than a geographical boundary. Specifically, enhanced participation between CAs and merchants' associations, youth clubs and service organizations, among others, allows for consideration of other ways to deliver programs or consider development plans. Creating a collaborative environment between CAs and different community-oriented organizations, through a system of incentives or direct assistance, will broaden and deepen the local perspective in decision-making at all levels — moving beyond maintaining a system that focuses primarily on neighbourhood livability.
3. **Provide Consistent Funding** — Presently, CAs must rely on membership sales to fund operations. Many offer amenities such as sports programs and other social events that also generate additional funds, but there is no consistency or certainty in this ad hoc approach. If CAs are going to continue to be a valued resource for communities, there must be a dedicated stream of funding that extends beyond the maintenance of facilities. Such funding could be tied to a dedicated percentage of municipal/provincial departmental budgets or tied to a city-led apportionment of property tax revenues in a catchment area. Alternatively, an encumbrance on residents' lots could be retroactively applied akin to the model applied to RA funding. Like Seattle's Neighborhood Matching Fund, grants from a secure fund could be tied to neighbourhood-generated projects and made contingent on matching with in-kind contributions, cash and/or donated labour.
4. **Establish Mechanisms for CA/RA Partnerships** — For those RAs that have matured to a level of owner-run boards, there is an opportunity to combine CAs and RAs in strategic partnerships that foster shared use of volunteer time, funding and amenities. Particularly because there is a dedicated funding stream tied to RAs, combining CA/RA functions can increase stability for CAs provided there is a budgetary commitment of proportionate funds towards CA activities. It may be possible for developers in the early planning stages of RAs to dedicate proportionate CA funds in the terms of agreement attached to encumbrances on residents' parcels. This would address the issue of funding and bring CA functions to an RA-bound area prior to the turnover of the RA to the resident population.
5. **Encourage Shared Spaces** — Calgary is replete with schools, recreation centres, community halls and churches that all take up separate spaces in our neighbourhoods. If The City advances its mandate of increased mixed-use development through the planning and land use process, there is opportunity for better mixed-use sites that move beyond the tendency for facilities to be built in a single-use manner — building on the few examples of CAs operating in private and public facilities to date. As an example, CAs and RAs could share not only dedicated municipal reserve land but also the facility and/or amenities in the dedicated space. In the same way, working with school boards and the provincial government could result in CAs taking up space within school sites and their related facilities. The private and public sectors offer numerous opportunities that are being overlooked and both need to focus on how the mixing of uses and activities can best be achieved.
6. **Aggregate Community Districts** — Both Seattle and Portland have taken steps to aggregate their neighbourhood representation systems into districts. Thirteen Neighborhood Districts in

Seattle and seven Neighborhood District Coalitions in Portland act to aggregate the interests of individual neighbourhood associations, filtering community information up to their respective city departments, and directing money and resources back down to the neighbourhood level. Importantly, this model allows districts to address concerns and pursue solutions to common neighbourhood problems and elevates neighbourhood decisions above the block-face. Tying such a system to real decision-making authority in planning and land development would preserve local information and lived experiences yet temper the spatial immediacy of planning decisions that compound NIMBYism. Aggregating community associations along ward boundaries is one possibility that would further formalize the interface between councillors and community associations.

- 7. Formalize The City of Calgary's Role** — Seattle has the Department of Neighborhoods, Portland the Office of Neighborhood Involvement. Both agencies consist of permanent city resources that direct and support their neighbourhood representation systems, bringing local government closer to residents. The City of Calgary's Community and Neighbourhood Services business unit provides programs and services at the neighbourhood level and houses the team of Neighbourhood Partnerships Coordinators that facilitate the undertakings of individual CAs; however, the closest equivalent in Calgary to these systems from an operational perspective is the not-for-profit Federation of Calgary Communities. Arguably, any discussion on the future formalization of community associations involves a discussion of formalizing the role The City plays in them. This could include incorporating many of the federation's functions into The City, or an arms-length corporation thereof, and formalizing the co-ordination of community-oriented activities across city business units. Alternatively, this could mean downloading authority and resources to the federation.

The recommendations above are meant to inform the broader discussion on the community association of the future and lay the groundwork for further examination of neighbourhood representation through community associations. It is important to remember that the community association of today is a not-for-profit that is largely managed and operated by volunteers. The success of CAs in providing amenities, advising on planning matters and advocating for their neighbourhoods is defined by the hard work of volunteering residents and limited by their capacity. Two important themes run through the proposed changes. First, the community association of the future needs better access to professionals that can provide CAs with much needed capacity to properly carry out their amenity, advisory and advocacy roles. This is especially important in relation to planning and land development, which requires trained professionals that can reflect on planning matters and provide a realistic position that is in the best interest of the community and its partner stakeholders. Secondly, the community association of the future needs to embrace the contemporary shared economy approach to facilities and services. Rather than perpetuating proprietary models of managing community halls and programming, opportunities for collaboration and strategic partnerships should be actively sought out and supported. The future of community associations is rooted in their ability to take an inclusionary view of "community" and work alongside partner organisations, including The City itself, for the benefit of all Calgarians.

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