



Brock University - Fitzgerald Neighbours

A CASE STUDY ON ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION: Creating Stronger Neighbourhood Relationships

Contributors: Cody Lee, Korrah Sawyer-Dimech, Hailey Bayne-Foster, Sam Van Clief

Brief Designed by: Matthew Sleeper (Sleeper Studios)

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

In a proudly democratic society, all voices need to have the opportunity to have their opinions heard by leaders at a federal, provincial, and municipal level. In addition, neighbourhood associations bring unity, a sense of belonging and bridge transparent communication between private citizens and local policymakers. In this scenario, Fitzgerald Neighbours (the Fitz) of St. Catharines, Ontario, is looking to bolster their relationship between residents, community partners, and stakeholders to create a more accessible and livable environment while

enhancing civic engagement regarding local projects. This Brock-Fitz partnership can fulfill these objectives after completing two qualitative methods, including a trio of comparative content analysis and a questionnaire done directly with stakeholders from multiple parties ranging from within the Fitz and the examples used in the study. Finally, to close out the brief, the Brock consulting team provided a bulk of high-level next steps and recommendations for Fitzgerald Neighbours to consider implementing for their future endeavours.

METHODS

The first qualitative method is a comparative content analysis between organizations. Research revealed Edmonton, Lambton Shores, and London to be ideal exemplary models of success. These associations aligned with the Fitzgerald's ambitions after extensive online research on their past and conducting informal interviews/questionnaires with some personnel. Due to their comprehensive track records of running neighbourhood organizations and overcoming similar barriers. In addition, these three Canadian municipalities provide multiple outlooks on how to increase civic engagement since it examines a large metropolis (Edmonton), a small township (Lambton Shores), and a very similar city to St. Catharines (London) to cover each diverse approach.

The second qualitative method is a survey and questionnaire done directly with community members of the Fitz, the Fitzgerald itself, Lambton Shores, and Abundant Community Edmonton (ACE). These surveys provided incredible insight into each participant's viewpoints and experiences working with and within neighbourhood associations. For example, Lambton Shores' contacts went in-depth on their past experiences, enormous successes, civic engagement, and future plans. Furthermore, the team successfully held a meeting with ACE Edmonton members Debra Jakubec and Tammy Greidanus to gather an abundance of information that would have been otherwise inaccessible by viewing their website or conducting an online form — further explanation will occur later in this brief. Finally, community members from Fitzgerald Neighbours also provided excellent insight on their involvement with organizations, past experiences, current barriers, and long-term goals. As a result, this bulk of substantial input from several stakeholders significantly influences our group's next steps and future recommendations for the Fitz.

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

A neighbourhood association, in short, is a collection of property owners and residents who work to advocate for activities/events within the neighbourhood. Once formed, neighbourhood associations become the foundational component of the community. These leaders in community development ought to bring their neighbouring families and property owners closer together, facilitating an element of trust between those within the neighbourhood association’s jurisdictions and its municipal counterparts. Furthermore, a neighbourhood association works with their residents and property owners to help share their voices and tackle civic concerns. For example, the St. Catharines Woodland project impacted the community more destructively than initially revealed to Fitzgerald Neighbours. The project resulted in the loss of multiple trees within the community, much to the dismay of residents. As a result, it created some hesitation towards future projects on behalf of the members. Additionally, a neighbourhood association should connect the association’s community members with its municipal government by using efficient and practical communication.

Neighbourhood associations come in a variety of unique shapes and sizes. It is essential to consider that not all models and structures are replicable to other associations. Each has its qualities that differ from one another. In the case of the Fitzgerald Neighbours, asset-based community development utilizes each member’s unique skill set. A thriving neighbourhood association should focus on increasing safety, recreation, sustainability, and community cleanliness within its parameters. These are common goals the ACE association successfully aims to consider when implementing municipal projects. These core considerations are imperative for fostering community engagement as it deems many areas in which such projects could directly impact the community. Opening such channels for civic engagement on the topics facilitates more significant opportunities to strengthen the relationships between community members, its neighbourhood association, and the municipal government.

While neighbourhood associations provide the community with significant benefits towards their goals, every association is presented with its challenges. Challenges that the Fitz team experiences are primarily associated with a lack of funding to use as leverage for desired projects. For the Fitz, their lack of accessibility to monetary resources hinders their ability to improve their approach towards pre-existing members and newly welcomed neighbours or members from the younger and older demographics. Other areas of concern aim towards the diversification of local cultures and traditions, which can hinder the welcoming nature of the community if there is a lack of total inclusivity. These issues even can create tensions between the neighbours and their counterparts, such as the local institutions. As mentioned, the intention of a neighbourhood association is to act as a bridge to strengthen such relationships. That being said, outsourcing information bases is a formidable step in the progressive direction in seeking revisions to current approaches and suggestions about restructuring current practices altogether (no idea what this sentence is trying to say).



Your Neighbourhood Budget 2020, 2020

WHAT OTHER CANADIAN NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS HAVE BEEN DOING

Different municipalities and neighbourhood organizations have sets of neighbouring, governance, and leading, allowing cities to share ideas, get inspiration, and learn from each other. The Municipality of Lambton Shores, the Abundant Community Edmonton, and The Urban League of London are three unique communities and municipalities that operate very differently. The Municipality of Lambton Shores acts as a rural community that actively engages its citizens for community development purposes. Abundant Community Edmonton is a large and robust ABCD model. The Urban League of London is a community organization that shares the objective of strengthening community relations.

Lambton Shores

The Municipality of Lambton Shores is a collective community located along Lake Huron within Lambton county borders. This municipality prides itself on its provisions of excellent customer service, which facilitates positive community relationships. This municipality was born from a provincial initiative that advocated the amalgamation of 5 smaller municipalities. The amalgamation was beneficial to the community because it enabled capital and operational budgets to reinvest back into the community.

The municipality structure comprises the five former municipalities with three different municipal support offices. These offices are further broken down into eight tiny departments, allowing representatives to build strong community relationships specified to their departmental skill set. A bulk of the research findings ensured effective communication methods as they are essential for maintaining positive relationships in a community facing geographical barriers. The Municipality of Lambton Shores recognizes that modes of communication are constantly evolving. Therefore, their team is aware that each method they previously or currently use to bridge communication with the community members must be regularly reviewed and updated. The most effective ways of communication within the Lambton Shores Community are tax newsletter inserts, community message boards on recreational facilities such as arenas, utilization of social media pages, and traditional methods of word of mouth to reach their audience successfully.



THE MUNICIPALITY OF
LAMBTON SHORES

The municipality of Lambton Shores, 2018

The Municipality of Lambton Shores also utilizes methods of civic engagement, such as surveys where the municipality orients its website to make surveys accessible to all its residents. In these surveys, public input towards project planning is expressed by participants. At the same time, the municipality waits to proceed with planning and next steps until they have gathered all public opinion before a deadline date to ensure everyone has the opportunity for submission. Their survey format fosters a working relationship with the community members as it caters to their opinions and skillsets.

Other brief findings included allocating funds from municipal operating and capital budget statements to community groups such as the community grant fund and the community vibrancy fund. Community members or group associations can directly apply to the municipality for these grants. The municipality assesses all applications and distributes that portion of the budget based on priority but actively includes every applicant. Furthermore, the municipality practises targeted engagement to facilitate passionate decision-making meetings, such as having parents of small children on decision-making towards community projects like a playground or public park developments.

The final consideration that enhanced community participation was using hybrid approaches towards community meetings. Offering a blend of online and in-person meetings for the community provides opportunities to include people who are unable to be present physically and those who cannot access the online format or are not comfortable doing so. A simple consideration can make a world of difference in terms of participation and engagement.

Abundant Community Edmonton

Abundant Community Edmonton (ACE) is an exceptional example of an asset-based community development organization that creates frameworks, processes, and resources to increase community neighbourliness. ACE began as a small grassroots organization within one community. Through years of development and the spread of positive reactions, ACE grew into a community development of over 160 community associations within 200+ (Tamarack Institute, 2016). A neighbourhood block comprises 1000-2000 houses and employs 40-50 block connectors (Greidanus & Jakubec, 2021). Approximately 98% of the community leagues are incorporated, 10% have charitable status, and each league is a separate entity (Greidanus & Jakubec, 2021). ACE thrives on the fact that neighbourhood leagues have abundant social capital and assets; these associations build on the strengths and needs. ACE operates as a branch of the citizen services department, which is 1 of 6 in their municipality. They fall within the neighbourhood division with the primary objective of community and relationship building. Since ACE is a part of the municipality, they are also connected to a healthy city budget. However, the more minor community leagues, which make up ACE, utilize fundraising opportunities, sell memberships, and provide parties to members as a source of neighbourhood income.

The organization has a well-implemented structure that allows its community associations to thrive. Aside from the excellent ACE city staff, leaders, volunteers, block connectors, board of directors, neighbourhood resource

developers, and local churches within each community. These individuals see their work as genuine, organic connections with their neighbourhoods. Following the structure of an asset-based organization, the administration team prepares their neighbourhood leaders by providing them with handouts, conversation guides, information books, and resources. Conversation guides are a warm welcome into the organization and open the door for follow-up connections. Different leagues share their best practices and get inspiration from each other.

Some significant accomplishments for the ACE include the municipal council and administration recognizing an abundance of happy citizens; as a result of ACE practices, they put in a package for support and allowed ACE to become part of the city formally. Furthermore, ACE utilizes their online platform in their favour; they did not see COVID-19 as a barrier but rather a guide to new opportunities that allow an outreach stretching beyond



Abundant Community Edmonton, 2021

borders to host workshops, lectures, and discussions with authors and other professionals. In addition, ACE works with large municipalities abroad to learn from other robust governing bodies to spread kind community principles and ensure communities prepare for the future. Finally, ACE hosts an annual Awesome Block Awards, where communities submit their block as excellent as an exciting way to earn an award while connecting with other leagues.

Exceptional practices do not come without potential challenges. Carrying out this type of infrastructure and

organization is not easy. It is easy to appreciate and understand the importance of the actions of ABCD like the ACE but dealing with the transiency of neighbourhoods while staying motivated to carry out the principles, events, administration, and activities is labour intensive. Nevertheless, the ACE does an excellent job as acting as a leader for other neighbourhood associations, and their willingness to collaborate, learn from and educate other municipalities is inspiring.

The Urban League of London

Although the Urban League is not officially classified as a Neighbourhood association, it is an organization that works with its partner neighbourhood associations to serve as a bridge between the municipal government of London and the 15+ neighbourhood associations they work with across London. The Urban League of London effectively bridges the gap between its neighbourhoods and the City of London by placing an Urban League representative to represent the interests of its partners by reviewing proposals, researching issues, and providing responses and presentations to the city on behalf of their member associations.

The Urban League of London was created on the principle that a city-wide group of representatives from different community groups would be beneficial to the overall development, and sustained quality of life for the neighbourhoods of London is maintained. Officially founded in 1969, the Urban League has operated in London by involving itself in many facets of city life. These include municipal elections, city planning, education, traffic and transportation, architectural and heritage preservation, social housing, parks, conservation lands, and public recreation facilities.

One of the many organizational strategies used by the Urban League and its partner associations is the establishment of a publicly available constitution and by-laws with clear goals and objectives. Another resource the Urban League has employed with their partner associations is allowing them access to grants offered through the provincial and

federal government and other private grants offered through charitable groups and foundations by becoming incorporated and operating as a representative on their behalf.



The Urban League of London, 2021

While a direct comparison between the Urban League and the Fitzgerald is not very feasible because of their difference in size and scale, research into the strategies and constitutions of The Urban League partner associations is important in establishing effective means of organizational improvement for the Fitzgerald.



London Tourism, 2021

LESSONS FROM SURVEY RESULTS/INTERVIEWS

Abundant Community Edmonton

A multidimensional interview approach through qualitative research, both written and face-to-face, with Howard Lawrence, Debra Jakubec, and Tammy Greidanus from Abundant Community Edmonton, assured clarity on what makes their association so prosperous. As the organization unites with almost one million citizens, it must find unique contemporary ways to reach out and create effective communication strategies. ACE utilizes modern platforms such as social media and the app Nextdoor to connect with individual neighbourhoods.

In addition to digital usage, the organization identifies as non-profit through the society's activities and implements robust infrastructures of neighbourhood governance, connectors and leaders. The organization acquires support from local institutions to find active citizens to contribute to neighbourhood leadership roles. ACE acts as a framework for block-level connection, and these blocks bring increased support, connection, and social capital to the neighbourhood. ACE block connectors, neighbourhood leaders and community members utilize meaningful organic moments to create lasting relationships within the community; this brings back the simplicity of neighbouring and enjoying small social parties or events, which is the objective of ABCD organizations. To promote civic engagement, block-level connections and social capital are significant while creating relationships between the blocks. ACE recommends that other neighbourhood associations prioritize simple direct interactions between residents through the organization's presence.

More potential ideas are forming groups, such as new mom groups, and hosting other events where neighbours can connect and create relationships within "simple is best." In addition to this, ACE recommends considering "'human scale size' in size and 'delineation' of your neighbourhood, and concentrate leadership on organizing 'blocks.' i.e. approx 20 contiguous households and affinity-based groups (New moms, men's soccer, book club...). The primary role of good leadership is to convene the leaders/connectors of these groups" (Lawrence, 2021). Finally, ACE reveals that Incorporation may not be necessary as it comes with great responsibility, more work, and reporting maintenance.

Fitzgerald Neighbours

A direct survey with Caleb Ratzlaff, one of the founding members of the Fitz, offered substantial insight on his experience with running a neighbourhood association and his future vision for Fitzgerald Neighbours. Caleb described some challenges being the lack of volunteer capacity to support some of their projects and getting the "word out" to the community. In contrast, some strengths include the focus on advocating for marginalized voices, an overwhelmingly positive relationship with its members, and ensuring their events are as low-barrier as possible for all residents to participate. Lastly, Caleb's visions for the community involve enhancing public transportation via investments in economic development and social capital similar to ones they have elevated to the municipality in the past. He also mentioned that the greatest asset in a neighbourhood is the people there. Therefore, the Fitz must create a culture that heavily focuses on collaboration, transparency, and familiarity with everyone's common visions and goals for society.

In a survey with the community members of Fitzgerald Neighbours, the input provided was highly important for research and future recommendations. It gave our group a sense of the relationship between the Fitz and its members. Regarding

the roadblocks encountered by the Fitz, the members echoed Caleb’s statements above on the lack of human power in volunteering, the difficulty of promoting awareness within the community, and inconsistent relationships with various institutions - all barriers our group will cover for future recommendations. On the other hand, according to the members, the most significant advantage is their current relationship with the Fitz, universally described as overwhelmingly positive. Each participant stated the support they have received from the organization when sharing their voices and shared goals for the future. These goals usually revolve around relationship-building, creating new opportunities, increasing civic participation, and continuing to bolster economic and social development (i.e. infrastructure, parks, recreation, events).



Compassionate STC, 2018

Overall, there were little to no drastic discrepancies in the answers from respondents. Going by their specific solutions, everyone’s relationship and involvement with Fitzgerald Neighbours seems well defined and with positive morale, crucial to creating positive change for the community’s future.

Lambton Shores

Furthermore, our group sent a survey similar in structure to the one directed to the ACE to Brock University Alumni Ashley Farr, the Municipality of Lambton Shores Manager of Community Development. Much consideration went into each of the responses in the particular survey to apprehend the skills and practises that the municipality in Lambton Shores utilizes in terms of community building.

Considerations regarding the management and effectively bridging communication between residents within the

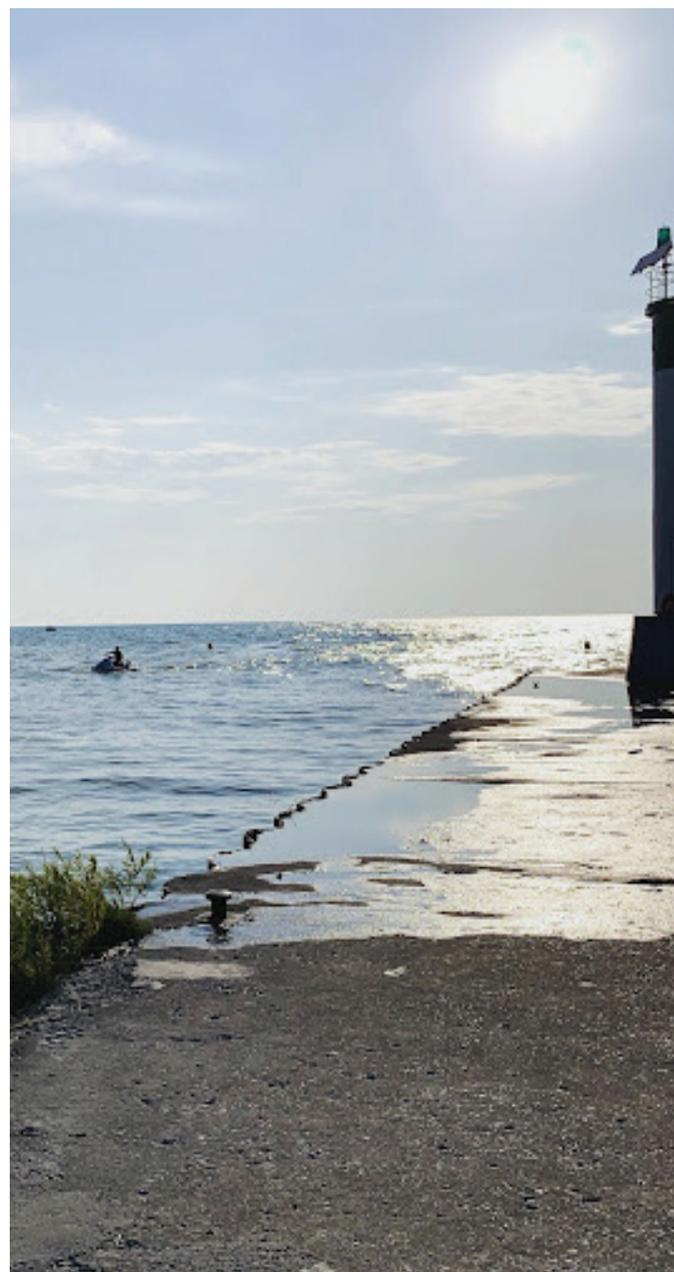
municipal government’s jurisdiction of a scattered rural community. While it is necessary to understand that communication is presented with its challenges, it is vital to utilize methods to reach its community members. The survey suggests that plan communication strategies are essential to regularly review procedures to adapt to current circumstances. The community makeup is constantly changing, as are the demographics, so a total consideration of community input on how they prefer to receive their news such as social media, the neighbourhood association’s

website, and message boards. The survey results also suggest that when planning to relay important information from the neighbourhood association to the community, the neighbourhood association might want to consider looking at the planned announcements or communications of the municipal government to the public.

A significant area of focus the municipality of Lambton Shores prioritizes is establishing meaningful relationships with the community members of a geographically dispersed community. A consideration that Ashley Farr has identified as crucial when looking to foster an element of belonging within a residential area is the geography and population density of the communities. People tend to become very connected to particular places, so for a rural community composed of five smaller and more spaced out communities, methods of communication such as social media, newsletters, and emails are critical components of connecting neighbours of each smaller branch of the community. The municipality also aims to connect to its members through shared initiatives such as community grants and vibrancy funds which offer financial assistance to local community groups, giving them the financial assistance to host things such as community events. Every community group has an equal opportunity to submit claims for the grants offered by the municipality, and everyone receives a portion of that budget relevant to their assessed needs.

Additionally, the Municipality of Lambton Shores offered advice regarding strategies communities can use to target civic engagement on municipal projects. Residents tend to engage more frequently in conversation when a particular decision or consideration directly impacts them. In the case of Lambton Shores, when a project such as a community playground is considered, an engagement tool the municipality uses is engaging with the parents of young children for their input on the project. While a large quantity of engagement is beneficial, the municipality of Lambton Shores argues that targeted engagement provides more effective and meaningful results. For example, when looking at the development of a community playground,

the municipality targets residents with children who can provide passion towards the topic as the decision directly impacts them and their children. Targeting civic engagement in this manner provides opportunities for decision-makers to receive the most valuable input they can from the public without expending unnecessary resources.



Grand Bend Beach, Lambton Shores ON. (Photo by Hailey Bayne-Foster)

NEXT STEPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Leverage Multiculturalism & Interculturalism

One of the many challenges community groups and neighbourhood associations face is finding effective strategies to promote inclusivity within their neighbourhoods. Inclusivity within the operations of neighbourhood associations is essential because it aligns with their primary goals of connecting community members to create a safe and welcoming environment while embracing the cultural practices of different community members. Looking at inclusivity as a potential area of improvement for the Fitz, our research has indicated that Fitzgerald Neighbours strongly advocates for marginalized voices and expands this outreach. Strategies to expand their outreach would include hosting events for newcomers across community leagues to share information on the municipal and federal resources available to support citizens. One challenge that immigrants and newcomers to Canada face is a feeling of isolation and segregation due to language barriers, fear of disapproval, or cultural difference. Confronting these barriers is especially important for neighbourhood associations, and adapting to Canada's increasingly diverse community will help reinforce values of community development and participation that promote multicultural inclusivity. In addition, ensuring new citizens and community members are aware of the support aids available is vital to making new members feel welcomed and creating an environment that harnesses education of other cultures. As a result, it would be incredibly beneficial to continue investing in support aids such as language development, career-building, and phone bills to ensure a high quality of life for families and individuals who are beginning a new chapter of their lives.

2. Economic Development

The following recommendation is economic development after touching on social development and inclusion. Economic growth is one of the core features of achieving the highest quality of life for an entire society. It is

a big reason why much of the world has seen drastic improvements in living standards over the past few generations. Based on feedback from the Fitz, as indicated through the surveys distributed to the members of the Fitzgerald community, a development project they feel is necessary is an improvement in transportation. In response, the Fitz has hosted events designed to consult the city of St. Catharines on the benefits of investing in improvements to the public transportation system. As a result, we would recommend that the Fitzgerald continues proposing ideas for infrastructure investments to the municipality, such as new roads, residential areas, facilities for commerce/education, recreation areas, and updated transit systems as the population grows. By pushing for improved infrastructure, it is a direct investment into society since it opens up endless opportunities for all citizens in terms of accessibility, jobs, businesses, leisure, and relationship building, while ultimately increasing the standard of living within the community. Increased social capital would also be crucial to development, which the Fitz and its community members mentioned throughout the surveys. As mentioned above, one of the greatest assets for building relationships is through social capital facilities such as parks, bike lanes, restaurants, and hiking trails. By increasing the quantity, quality, and usage of these facilities, can help connect a community through leisure and recreation to fulfil the ultimate goal of the Fitzgeralds existence. The Fitz themselves may also leverage these areas to host various events and reach out to neighbourhood residents to grow the organization in terms of involvement and capacity.

3. Youth & Student Involvement

One of the fundamental principles of the Fitzgerald as an asset-based neighbourhood association is utilizing the resources they have available to them within the community to their maximum potential. Being a university town with schools such as Brock University and Niagara College, a key finding from this research and a beneficial recommendation for the Fitzgerald would be to bridge the gap between the Fitzgerald community and secondary/post-secondary students. A key component for any student is finding ways to get involved in the community, whether for

volunteer hours or for a university student looking to build their resume and do impactful work outside their academic career. Taking advantage of St. Catharine’s abundance of ambitious young adults would be a critical step forward for the Fitz and offer them new ideas and resources to entice participation from the younger generation. For example, Fitzgerald Neighbours could do things such as host events and fundraisers for young students, host Niagara College and Brock University events (such as getting a booth at vendor fair), or clubs where the students can mingle and take part in the organization. In addition, Fitz could utilize other strategies such as the Brock news, The Seniors Review, St Catharines Standard, posting flyers around schools, establishing an email list, and recruiting an on-campus student representative. By building a relationship with these local educational institutions, the end goal would be to develop an affiliate partnership resulting in more volunteers, civic engagement with the city, and educated new ideas.

4. Older Adult Engagement

Similarly to the importance of bolstering youth and student involvement through the initiatives and events hosted by the Fitzgerald, a focus towards older adult engagement is another demographic the Fitzgerald should look to work more closely with moving forward. The most recent St. Catharine’s census data indicates that 21.8% of St. Catharine’s residents are aged +65 (Statscan, 2016). Since older adults are a significant portion of the St. Catharines demographic, promoting the development of initiatives focused on supporting the local elderly population would be a great way to expand the Fitzgerald membership base. In addition, a study conducted by The CDC found that 1 and 4 older adults in North America believe they need an increased amount of connectivity in their lives (CDC, 2021). As a result, capitalizing on the rather large older adult population in St. Catharine’s would be an excellent initiative for the Fitz to continue pursuing. Moving forward, some recommendations we have gathered through our research into the strategies used by other municipalities and neighbourhood associations include hosting events and activities that cater to the interests

of St. Catharine’s elderly population. A great example of this would be Lambton Shores’ annual golf tournament for adult autism. These types of events promote great opportunities for relationship building and community involvement. Research has also indicated that older adults are the most actively involved in charity work across the country. This indication creates a significant opportunity to partner with elderly homes across St. Catharines for charitable causes would be a great way to increase older adult participation in the Fitzgerald community. Additionally, another recommendation we would like to offer to the Fitzgerald would be proposing more attention and investment by the St. Catharine’s municipality into facilities that accommodate aging population groups who may not be as physically mobile.

5. Fundraising

One common concern brought to our attention by all members of the Fitz is the lack of funding they receive. An excellent recommendation to build community relationships and accumulate funds to be reinvested into the community is fundraising. Fundraisers are often fun events that naturally promote participation or enthusiasm towards participation. Fundraisers are also an excellent opportunity to foster inclusivity for all population groups. Some strategies that the Fitzgerald can employ to host successful fundraisers would include reaching out to local businesses for donations in exchange for advertising at the event, considering fundraising events that are inclusive for all to participate such as community dances or bake sales, and having a clear purpose and goal as to what the funds are being raised for and why it is important.

6. Marketing & Awareness

As mentioned in the survey section, one of the most extensive needs for the Fitz is getting the “word out” to the community, as it was a standard issue mentioned by most participants in the questionnaires. Thankfully, there are many strategies they can implement to help drive more participation and involvement within their community.

Social media would be a primary source in this scenario. Apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can simultaneously reach millions of people across the globe through the utilization of posts, stories, advertisements, and other tactics to bolster involvement. It is also a cost-friendly method if they choose the correct payment options and utilization while restricting their area's reach to the Niagara region. It would not be necessary to go beyond the boundary.

Also, targeting certain affinity groups during marketing campaigns could benefit the Fitzgerald. The easiest way to gain new participants and members is to reach out to specific groups in a community rather than approaching everyone in the general public simultaneously. ACE Edmonton, as an example, prioritizes new moms, individuals associated with sports teams, and local businesses as their affinity groups. Likewise, the Fitz can attract institutions such as schools, elderly homes, daycares, and businesses. As mentioned in the first recommendation, newcomers to the area would also be an essential group for the Fitz to introduce themselves when helping them know the area and its fellow residents. Additionally, suppose the Fitz team decides to partner with higher education institutes. In that case, the Brock News can instantly reach tens of thousands of staff, students, and personnel who may be interested in what the Fitz does or may be willing to help with volunteering initiatives.

In addition, digital ads are also very effective as they can easily reach an endless amount of people at meagre costs. Google ads, for example, can appear on anyone's screen and are similar to social media. Boundaries can be adjusted so only internet users in the St. Catharines may view the advertisements displayed.

Lastly, door-to-door flyers and communication can also be helpful for Fitzgerald Neighbours. On the surface, this method seems outdated and old-school, but door-to-door has one aspect that our ever-changing digital world cannot replace, and that is the value of human interaction. Unlike most other marketing tactics, the door-to-door strategy

puts faces to names/brands, which is refreshing for the individual who feels the Fitz genuinely wants to help them and would love for their engagement going forward.

FUTURE GOALS

1. Incorporating

One of the many challenges neighbourhood associations face at this level is the lack of funding and a proper means of assembling a budget for operational costs associated with growing the membership of their association, taking on more significant projects, and planning large-scale community events. Some of these costs included in the operation of neighbourhood associations are but are not limited to promotional expenses either through paid advertising for events, geographically targeted advertising over social media, promotional videos, flyers, pamphlets, gift baskets for new neighbours in the community or website upkeep and domain access. Another challenge that unincorporated neighbourhood associations face is not having a clearly defined and publicly available constitution and set of by-laws. Both of which are necessary documents when looking to become incorporated.

Incorporation is critical when working or partnering with established organizations and institutions in the St. Catharines region (schools, charity groups, and businesses) because it adds a sense of legitimacy in the eyes of external stakeholders. When an association clearly defines a constitution and by-laws, it establishes a greater level of trust with the community, allowing those who come across an association to align with their values to connect with them on a deeper level. An incorporated association with a clearly defined constitution and set of by-laws allows them to establish themselves as a legitimate brand. Additionally, it protects its members legally through liability insurance, limiting personal liability from association activities, and facilitating community members' governance and sense of authority. This aspect can be critical when working with schools, charity groups, and businesses. An example of a member association of the Urban League that does this is the Orchard Park Sherwood Ratepayers. They operate,

and work the Medway Valley conservation, acting as the voice for the community. Alongside trust, having these documents available allows for complete transparency between the community members and its association, ensuring that all parties involved understand and know where the funds used by its association are going.

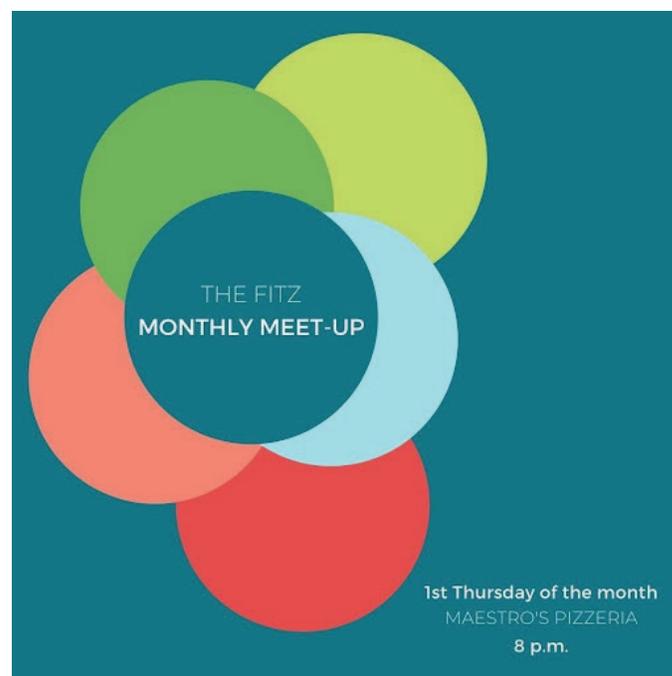
2. Partnering with Other Neighbourhood Associations/Alternatives to Incorporation

Based on the research collected through the strategies used by the ACE Group and the United League of London, an alternative future goal instead of incorporating could involve partnering with other neighbourhood associations or a charitable foundation. It has been expressed by the Fitzgerald and other neighbourhood associations such as ACE that incorporating is not always the best route to take when taking into account the cost-benefit and the sometimes limited resources available to neighbourhood associations. Considering this, an alternative method for the Fitz would involve partnering with other neighbourhood associations, charitable foundations, or an umbrella group that is incorporated or recognized as a charity. Partnerships such as these would allow Fitzgerald Neighbours to leverage access to resources like government grants through a partner organization that is more established and possesses the necessary commitments and resources to hold a non-profit or charity status. This strategy is similar to what the Urban League of London’s many partner neighbourhood associations are doing. By becoming a partner with the Urban League, neighbourhood associations that do not possess the necessary resources to pursue incorporation are still represented by the Urban League, an intermediary when seeking grants and insurance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, to help citizens exercise their democratic rights, it is essential that the society in which they reside respects their voices and opinions. The Fitzgerald Neighbours’ role is to ensure smooth communication as a neighbourhood association between the community members and the local St. Catharine’s municipality.

Throughout this brief, our research employed two forms of qualitative research methods, including a comparative content analysis on ACE Edmonton, Lambton Shores, and London to evaluate their history, organization model, as well as their pros and cons. Additionally, we conducted various surveys from Lambton Shores, Edmonton, the Fitz, and community members of the Fitz to get feedback on their experience working with neighbourhood associations to go along with the success stories they have to share. As a result, most of our group’s recommendations were heavily influenced by the feedback received from all stakeholders alike to meet their future needs and goals of Fitzgerald Neighbours. These included an increased involvement revolving around multiculturalism, bolstering economic development, appealing to people from all age groups within the community, fundraising, and how to get the most out of marketing the Fitz to the neighbourhood residents. Lastly, two imminent future goals for the organization would either be formal Incorporation or an allyship with other neighbourhood associations (an alternative to Incorporation) to fully maximize the capability of Fitzgerald Neighbours’ growth, outreach, and potential to make a significant difference for their community.



Monthly Meet-up - Fitzgerald Neighbours, 2021

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