



Community

Perspective



Federation
of Calgary Communities

Improving neighbourhood life in Calgary

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Sense of Belonging to CA's maybe Higher than Reported Membership Statistics

The Community Sustainability Project Final Report (City of Calgary, March 2008) indicates "decreasing CA memberships... an average of only 14% of residents actively engage with their local community association. This average is dangerously low, leaving traditional community associations at risk of becoming irrelevant..." This is also a concern felt by many Alderman and some CA's.

One must bear in mind that these numbers are based on reporting to the Federation in the context of membership fees, which are based on the number of members. Some CAs may be reporting at the low end of an annual membership cycle. In a 2006 phone survey of 3,100 people (City of Calgary Comprehensive Community Assessment Survey of November 30, 2006 – Derek Cook), 32% of respondents said that they were members of their community association. There may be some over-reporting here – perhaps some people are confusing "community associations" with other groups, or some with lapsed

membership reporting current community membership. But it is just as likely that the actual CA membership rate is higher than 14%. At the very least, this poll indicates a large reservoir of latent CA membership/goodwill that can be tapped into.

Is 14% bad?

A 1999 FCC report "The Ideal Community" and a 1993 study by Davies and Townshend both found an average 19% of Calgary households with CA memberships. (Davies and Townshend opened that this was "not strong" but also said it was slightly higher than in studies of other North American cities.) If we can assume that we are comparing apples to apples here, and that the data came from similar FCC sources, then arguably household participation has dropped from about 19% to about 14%. However, 1993 was after several years of slow population growth and 1999 was before the boom. Since 1999 Calgary's population has exploded and many

new community areas have been developed. The reduction in average membership may be partly due to the arrival of so many newcomers who are not yet established.

The Federation believes CA membership development is needed in some communities and is valuable in and of itself—especially if membership leads to additional volunteer support!

While the Federation will not directly be able to "recruit" members to community associations due to the unique nature, programming and readiness of each association. We will set our sights on raising awareness of Community Associations as valuable community assets, especially to people that might not have grown up here.

Did you know our CA model is unique to Western Canada? In fact, one of our key strategic objectives will be to promote community life in Calgary.

See page 2 to see how The Federation has delivered on our strategic plan to raise community awareness.

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The Inside Scoop

In an effort to keep the Federation of Calgary Communities' stakeholders informed about our programs, services and issues facing our Community Associations, we are launching this bi-annual update. "Community Perspective" is meant to provide an overview of our activities, as well as provide insights and foster further understanding for the issues facing our communities. It is not meant to be exhaustive but rather a snapshot.

We hope that you, as our valued stakeholder, will find the information useful in your role.

We invite you to communicate with us about issues, concerns or ideas. By working

together we can "Improve Neighbourhood Life in Calgary."

Special points of interest:

- Membership is an estimated 14% of residences
- Federation launches new profile raising partnership with Calgary Real Estate News
- Over 227 community volunteers have enrolled in Partners in Planning since November 2007 (most in the Land Use Bylaw Course)
- Partners in Planning will have more graduates this year than ever before
- Federation receives encouraging feedback from members as we expand our "member services"

CA's Brainstorm Around the Value of Belonging



Community leaders working in small brainstorming groups

Twenty six community representatives from all quadrants of the city gathered on March 26 at Crescent Heights CA to learn, network, and share ideas.

As part of Federation General Meetings, we invite speakers to educate and inform communities on topics of interest to them.

At this meeting we had two presentations:

- South Shaganappi Community Led Planning Process
- Diversity and Inclusiveness—South Area

CNS.

The Federation also engaged the members in a facilitated small group discussion and brainstorming session about “The value of membership and barriers to belonging”. The Federation will use this information to help communities struggling with membership by developing membership development resources. We will also work to reduce some of the barriers overtime. A full report is available in the June ENGAGE! Newsletter.

The final part of the meeting was a roundtable discussion where communities shared ideas, concerns and sought advice from their peers.

Items discussed included:

- Need for advocacy at the city level in terms of the planning process
- Graffiti
- Transportation (regional rail transport,

ring road and West LRT)

- Facility care and maintenance
- Cash flow and financial issues
- Working with other communities—collaboration
- Need for volunteers
- Membership
- Programming (community clean-up, Earth Day, pond party, Movie in the Park, garage sale, summer festival, etc.)
- Diversity and inclusiveness—understanding community demographics
- Communicating with residents

At the end of the meeting, one thing was sure—there is a great deal of passion and enthusiasm among our CA Leaders and there is no end to the support The Federation can and will continue to offer to our members.

March was Membership Awareness Month

For the past number of years, The Federation has celebrated “March Membership Awareness Month” with the support of Mayor Bronconnier’s declaration. This year was no exception. In fact, The Federation looks upon this event as a real opportunity to promote communities—and promote we did:

- Eight banners were hung between March 8th—March 22
- An article in The Calgary Herald “Neighbours” Section highlighted the importance of buying a membership
- Television coverage—CBC evening news
- Television PSA—A 30 second PSA was recorded at Acadia Rec Centre and aired on CBC’s Completely Calgary
- Radio—coverage CBC Radio and a segment on the Eye Opener as well as a 30 second PSA which aired in March over the Corus radio network.

Our work resulted in increased calls to the Federation and media inquiries about membership.

New Partnership with Calgary Real Estate News

To increase the profile of community associations and The Federation, we are working in partnership with the Calgary Real Estate News (CREN) on a weekly basis. Through contracting of freelance writers we will provide interesting and meaty stories about how communities are making a difference.

CREN is Calgary’s favorite source of housing information about resale housing. They are the vehicle most used by the 5, 700 member REALTORS of Calgary Real Estate Board (CREB). At 25,000 copies (and about 85% pickup), they have about 10% of the Heralds circulation, but are still viewed by more Calgarians for this key community data. As well they have 10,000 to 20,000 viewers visit their website every week. Their newspaper averaged 121 pages in 2007.

Don’t forget to send in your “Community is” statement and to pick up a new copy of CREN every Friday to see how our communities are “Improving Neighbourhood Life in Calgary.”

“ Thank you for all the helpful information at the Administrator’s Meeting.”
Crystal Rose, Erin Woods



Partners In Planning More Popular than Ever

Since its inception in 2001, Partners in Planning (PIP), a joint City of Calgary and Federation of Calgary Communities program, has hosted over 760 people in various workshops. To date, PIP has graduated 172 volunteers.

This program has been critical to the development of community planning committee volunteers—helping them learn about the City planning process. This certificate program requires graduates to complete three core courses and one elective. The core courses include: Basics of Implementation Planning, Land Use Bylaw and Development Appeals/SDAB. The core courses are offered each year due to community association turnover. The course on the new Land Use Bylaw was offered four times this season due to high demand. Electives offered this season were Community Sustainability and Heritage Planning.

Since September 2007:

- 227 people have attended Partners In Planning workshops.
- 41 people have completed their full PIP training (a record year)

The transfer of the SDAB to the City Clerk's office posed a significant challenge for delivering the core course on Appeals due to differing priorities and views of the City Clerk and the Planning Department. After one cancellation, a modified course was presented by planning staff which was much appreciated by community participants. The Federation is committed to working with the City to ensure that community volunteers are provided with information on how to properly appeal and present themselves at SDAB.



Community members reviewing development plans

Land Use Bylaw / Notice Posting

The efforts of a working group of City, industry and Federation representatives (sparked by Federation concerns about inadequate notice posting in the initial version of the new Land Use Bylaw) has resulted in needed bylaw amendments. The Federation is also represented on the LUB Sustainment Advisory Committee.

Federation Convenes CA's for Feedback to the City of Calgary

As per our new strategic plan, The Federation is well positioned to convene our associations for a variety of different purposes. We have developed our Community Association database so that we can communicate via email very quickly with any position on all or a few community associations. Using our database to contact potential participants, The Federation has convened groups for the following:

1. Special Care Facilities/Non-Market Housing—This initiative was launched by the City in the wake of the controversy around the John Howard facility in Sunalta. Over 30 CA reps attended an initial meeting; following this a group of 6 reps plus the Federation planner worked on a stakeholder group developing recommendations for Council.
2. Plan-It Consultations—38 representatives from different communities participated in dialogues and focus groups in February and March. Over 40 representatives participated in further consultations on Plan It Key Directions in June.
3. Construction and Demolition Site Code of Practice—The Federation helped the City to gather input from busy development communities and to recruit community participants for stakeholder meetings in March and April.

Community Roundtables

The Federation helps to convene issue-based community roundtables. Representatives from dozens of communities and other groups have participated in several Community Heritage Roundtables and Eco-Roundtables since fall 2007.

“ Bob van Wegen...is by far the strongest [planner] so far and is an enormous credit to the organization.

JM, CHCA.

Guide to the Planning Process Being Refreshed

The Federation of Calgary Communities received \$15,000 from the Alberta Real Estate Foundation to work on updating A Community Guide to the Planning Process.

First developed in 1994 as a joint initiative between the City of Calgary and The Federation of Calgary Communities, the Guide was created to provide Community Association volunteers with information and tools to effectively participate in planning.

A Community Guide to the Planning Process assists community association planning volunteers, who are tasked with ensuring that development in their neighbourhoods contributes positively to the overall quality of the community, by providing practical information on how to deal with development applications and other planning issues.

The Guide introduces community members to policy plans, the Land Use Bylaw, principles of good planning, roles of participants in the planning process, traffic/transportation, conflict management and other subjects. In addition it provides practical information on how communities can structure their own planning committee. Watch for the new print and e-version manual in Fall 2008.



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What Our Members Say About Us...

- "I want to thank you so much for your assistance yesterday. It is so critical that finances and reporting obligations be handled properly, and for non-profits this usually falls into the hands of volunteers who often have little knowledge of what is required. It is such a relief to know we have someone to rely on in something so important as this. I want to commend you and the FCC for the wonderful work you do in assisting community organizations in this way. This is a really necessary service!" *Carol Steiner, Northeast East Centre for Community*
- "Very interesting and informative newsletter" *Eilish Hiebert, past board member Cliff Bungalow Mission*
- "You are doing a great job for us!" *Kathie Strathcona Community Association*
- "We sincerely appreciate the guidance offered so far by various FCC members (Bob Van Wegen, Bob Lang, Neil Hughes, Bill Scott, and others)." *Peter Rishaug, Vice-President, Sunalta Community Association*
- "I admire the work that you and your staff are doing." *Fred Hertha, Treasurer, Strathcona Community Association*
- "Thanks for all the information Leslie - It is very helpful." *Bob Brost, Parkdale*
- "Thanks for sending this email...I really enjoy reading this newsletter and am often looking for it. I look forward to next months e-copy." *Chris, Tuscany*

Federation Offers Quality Support to CA's

The Federation of Calgary Communities is well known for our support in the area of Financial Management and Planning Services. Did you know that we also offered the following support in the past six months?:

- Board support** (conflict resolution, compensation (training and mileage), job descriptions, bylaw support and interpretation)
- Connecting Communities** (e-mail distribution from community to communities, networking events, seeking resources from communities)
- Facility Care** (fire box compliance, contractor referral, liquor licensing, noise bylaws, AED care referral)
- Fund Development** (information on funders, review of proposals, letters of support, charitable receipting information)
- Human resources** (job descriptions, HR Manual, recruitment, Employment Standards Workshop and support, salary feedback, employee/employer conflict resolution)
- Insurance Support** (Market value evaluation referral, access through Toole Peet)
- Meeting Support** (AGM preparation, minute taking template)
- Membership** (ideas on how to increase membership, media profile, referral to membership database)
- Programming** (sharing success stories, attendance at special events)
- Recognition** (Milestone awards, celebrating volunteers, sharing of best practices, resourcing Herald Stories)

- Referral and Interpretation** (Canadian Revenue Agency, funders, Volunteer Calgary, CNS, Employment Standards, SOCAN, CentrePoint, lawyers, newsletter editors)
- Risk Management** (articles, referrals, compliance check list)
- Small project financial support** (playgrounds, forums, beautification projects, ice rink equipment)
- Tools and Templates** (rental form, compliance report, financial statements, bylaws development template, timesheets, job descriptions)
- Volunteer Support** (recognition, referral to Volunteer Calgary, tools to recruit volunteers)
- Website** (update, information)
- Workshops** (Land Use Bylaw, GST, Grants/Fund Development, Employment Standards, SOCAN)

Due to the demand, The Federation has hired a full-time Member Services Coordinator to better serve our communities. Watch for increased resources on the web and encourage your communities to call for resources!