

October 2018



# Cultivating Community Spirit

A plan to capitalize on the priorities and feedback of residents of Griesbach.



# Cultivating Community Spirit

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# Executive Summary

In 2017, a volunteer committee was put together to analyze the results of the community survey (see APPENDIX A for Survey Summary). The mandate of the committee was to look at the priorities the residents identified (APPENDIX B) and go through all the open-ended comments to identify common themes, concerns and priorities (APPENDIX C). The committee was not formed to make decisions, but to provide the GCL Board with an in-depth analysis of what residents would like to see in the future, and make some initial recommendations to address the issues and opportunities. These recommendations are a combination of high-level strategies and individual tactics. The recommendations are a starting point to encourage more discussion and ideas. Final decisions, outcomes and parameters will need to be determined by the major stakeholder groups depending on the scope: GCL Board, GCL Members, and Volunteer Committees as suggested in this plan.

The 2017 Community Survey provided valuable feedback on what is important to residents of Griesbach. The survey allowed residents to rank specific priorities but also provided them the opportunity to provide comments. This plan outlines each priority in the order prioritized by residents from 1 - 10. There were seventeen priorities listed on the survey, but some priorities have been grouped together within this plan. It was evident through the comments that residents had other concerns and suggestions for what they would like to see beyond the list that was provided within the survey. The themes of these have been incorporated into each applicable priority section.

One theme is evident from the survey and ongoing interaction with residents through social media and events: residents are proud to live in Griesbach and are very engaged in ensuring the Community Spirit remains strong. There are a number of recommendations for the Board within this plan that centre around this theme.

It is important to note that this plan cannot be implemented by the GCL Board alone. It requires volunteers, the formation of committees, and specific areas of expertise which may require hiring specialist. The Board continues to work very hard and it is important moving forward that more residents get involved in volunteering within the community to help alleviate the work load from the Board. It is strongly recommended to develop a volunteer recruitment campaign to enlist the help of the community. The specific areas of responsibility along with required areas of expertise are outlined clearly in order to recruit the right people required for the specific roles.

# 1. Community Safety & Crime Prevention

Community Safety and crime prevention was listed as the number one priority for residents. Griesbach residents are very active on the neighborhood watch Facebook page posting about suspicious activity. People are concerned about the amount of criminal and suspicious activities in Griesbach. The number one crime issue is break-ins, predominantly cars and garages.

## Recommendations:

- More proactive tips and seminars on crime prevention
- Increased involvement and communication from Neighborhood Watch
- Strengthen relationship with local community Police Constable
- More proactive initiatives from GCL to encourage residents, for example:
  - Light the Lanes – Form a small group of volunteers to install LED light bulbs in outdoor garage door lights. GCL pays for the lightbulbs and the volunteers go and install them for any resident who request them. Communicate the costs of keeping the LED lights on per month, year etc. Encourage all participants to keep their garage alley lights on at night or all the time. Could extend to helping install motion lights and other theft deterrent products to those that need assistance with the install – neighbors helping neighbors.
  - Work with local hardware store (home depot, Lowes or Canadian Tire) to offer a community discount on theft deterrent products (window alarms, cameras, etc.) or organize a group buy. Could put together a few different packages that have various items included for one price available for purchase by residents. Have the community police officer or a specialist come and give a presentation on various products and tips to secure a home.

# 2. Parks, Trails and Naturalized Areas

Residents really enjoy and are proud of the parks and trails within Griesbach and feel this is one of the aspects that makes our community unique. There was a significant amount of comments regarding the natural grass (weeds) on the Griesbach Central Park hill. Residents like having the hill and feel it is a unique feature, but would be much better if it could be properly maintained. The long grass/weeds inhibit the activities on the hill in both Summer and Winter (snow needs to be deep to cover the long grass).

It should be noted that the city has been mowing the grass in the bowl (the base of the hill) and this area could be used for a variety of activities, some of which are discussed in other sections. Because the location is hidden, it is likely residents are unaware that it is maintained in the Summer.

In 2017, a few GCL Board members volunteered on a committee with Canada Lands to help design the last lake area (Maple Leaf Pond). One of the recommendations brought forward was for the lake to provide functional trails and activity areas. A fitness trail and skating rink were suggested and incorporated into the design. It is recommended that GCL stay involved and up to date with Canada Lands to ensure these elements stay incorporated and are executed in way that is satisfactory to GCL and the community.

## Recommendations

- Look for other examples within Edmonton for best practices with grass on large hills
- Explore options for the grass with Canada Lands and the City of Edmonton
- Develop organized activities and explore other uses for the hill to encourage (see Beach Volleyball page 11)

## 3. Traffic and/or Traffic Safety

Another priority area with significant concerns was traffic safety within Griesbach. This was broken down into two specific concerns, speeding and parking on the streets.

### Speeding

Residents addressed concerns of speeding throughout the community and specifically in certain areas such as the northeast roundabout near the school, and Sir Arthur Currie Way. Speeding has been an ongoing concern of residents even before the survey. Preliminary research indicated that lowered speed limits could be pursued but required support from majority of residents. The process to change the limit requires significant effort and coordination. There are pros and cons to achieving a reduction in the limit as some communities have successfully gone through the process.

The City recently changed speed limit restrictions so park and school zone areas are 30kmh for an extended period of time, 7:30am – 9:00pm every day. This should help in the park and school zone areas, but won't affect other intersections and residential areas.

## Recommendations:

- Form a committee to look into issues and explore possible solutions
- Seek out communities that have lowered speed limits to get feedback on the process and outcomes
- Work with the City and Edmonton Police to explore other possible solutions (i.e. flashing pedestrian crossing signs, advocacy, etc.)

### Parking on streets

There were significant comments about the number of cars parked on the street. Residents are unsure why so many people park on the street when everyone has a garage. This makes the streets narrow, allowing for only one car at a time in some areas. It also compounds the dangers of pedestrian accidents with drivers speeding and pedestrians crossing the streets from behind parked cars.

There is likely not much that can be done about the parking other than encouraging residents to use their garages for the safety of residents and to decrease the amount of vehicle break-ins. The streets were designed to be narrow to provide traffic calming, and slower traffic.

## Recommendations

- Keep encouraging residents to park in garage in order to: free up streets, increase visibility on streets and provide less opportunities for theft from cars

# 4. Community Beautification

### Litter

Complaints regarding litter fell into too separate types, garbage and dog poop. Much of the garbage is attributed to building sites where it can be scattered by the wind, but also from kids dropping wrappers and fast food bags.

The GCL Board has discussed the dog poop situation before, but further action hasn't proceeded.

## Recommendations

- Work with the city to get some poop bag dispensers in key areas (i.e. around the lake and walking trails)
- Organize regular clean up events (not just Spring) - could use volunteer commitments for this
- Survey residents to identify any areas that need more garbage bins

- Promote the appropriate email address and process for residents to report issues and work with Canada Lands to report any building site garbage infractions

### Architectural guidelines slipping

There were substantial comments that architectural controls seemed to be slipping or not enforced. The majority of the comments were directed toward the Juno Townhome developments.

This has been addressed by the developer. The new townhomes and developments are following the architectural controls and we have been assured by both Canada Lands and the developers that there won't be any more Juno style developments.

It is important to continue working with appropriate stakeholders and monitor this situation to avoid a reoccurrence of this issue in the future.

### Recommendations

- Meet regularly with Canada Lands and home builders to learn about upcoming plans. Position GCL as being a valuable stakeholder to their development plans. Working with Canada Lands on the new lake was a good example of how GCL can be more involved with planning the planning process to represent residents and provide valuable input.

## 5. Outdoor Skating/Hockey Rink in Griesbach

A skating rink rated high as a priority # 5 overall and #1 when grouping the capital type projects together. A skating rink can either be temporary in the form of a snowbank rink, or more permanent with a cement base and rink boards (hockey rink style).

There is a snowbank skating rink area proposed in Canada Lands Maple Leaf Pond plan, but that will likely be a few years away from completion.

### Recommendations:

- Review the implications, costs and requirements for the various styles of skating rinks and submit to GCL Board of Directors for review
- Gather feedback and best practices from other communities that have skating rinks
- If feasible and residents support it, consider test piloting a snowbank rink

- Stay involved and updated with Canada Lands on planning and progress of last lake with proposed skating rink

## 6. Community Hall

Building a community hall ranked #6 overall as an identified priority and #2 in capital projects. A community hall is part of a long-term vision that would require a significant capital investment and ongoing management. It also requires significant research and pre-work (needs assessment, etc.) before a decision is made.

There has been some discussion started with the GCL Board to determine if there is a need for our own community hall, the total costs of building a hall, a possible location, and some other options. One of these options includes a suggestion from Canada Lands to take over an existing building within Griesbach. This building is currently being used by the Edmonton Police Department as a training facility. This building is much larger than a traditional hall, but could offer an invaluable opportunity to the community as a multi-use community centre.

The cost of purchasing the land is estimated to be in the \$2 - \$4 million range.

### Recommendations:

- Form a committee to explore all options and complete a needs assessment and feasibility study. Considering the magnitude of this type of project, it might be advisable to consider hiring a consultant who has experience in this process
- Continue discussions about existing building with Canada Lands
- Gather feedback and best practices from other communities and hold consultations with key stakeholders: City of Edmonton, Provincial and Federal government

## 7. More Events, Programs and Activities for All Age Groups

The survey identified priorities for more activities in various separate age groups. These have been grouped together in one section. The categories were ranked in the priority list as follows (numbers indicate standing in complete list of 17 identified priorities):

- 7 of 17 More family focused community events
- 9 of 17 More kids/youth sports programs
- 12 of 17 More adult sports/recreational programs
- 16 of 17 More adult community social events



- 17 of 17 More seniors focused programs and activities

GCL already holds events targeted to these demographic profiles with the exception of specific senior focused events. Putting on more programs, events and activities requires more volunteers. Some other ideas for community social events have already been discussed by GCL and are included in the recommendations.

There are some signature events like Party in the Park, Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Fling that require significant planning and resources but are well liked and attended by the community. It is recommended to plan more events for families and adults that don't require a lot of planning, volunteers and investment. A simple community pub night during the week or Toboggan party are examples of events that don't require a large undertaking.

It is also recommended to encourage more grassroots events and activities organized by the residents. Some of this is already being done with GCL helping with promoting and funding various events. This is a great way to promote Community Spirit and the process should be formalized and promoted to residents.

## Recommendations:

- Discuss other events with Programming and Social Directors. Other GCL organized events that have been mentioned previously include:
  - Christmas in the Village
  - Community Picnic
  - Outdoor movies in the park (could be inside the gym in winter too)
  - Toboggan days (serve hot chocolate etc. on hill)
  - Food Truck evenings
  - Regular pub nights
  - Bicycle Safety course for kids
- Resident organized social events - encourage and support grassroots programming and activities (organized bike rides, runs, yoga on the hill, block parties, etc.) organized by residents. GCL could encourage residents to plan activities by providing support with communicating and promoting the event, funding to help with related costs, loaning GCL equipment (pylons, tables, etc.) and even providing promotional items (water bottles etc.) to giveaway to participants. These events will also provide some good content for website and social media to help cultivate the Community Spirit.

## Residents feeling isolated

There were a few comments that equipment, activities and the social network seems to be concentrated in specific areas of Griesbach, in particular the Southeast quadrant. This have left some residents feeling isolated (i.e. Northwest quadrant). This is likely due to the age of the developed areas. Southeast was the first to be developed and has given more time for the residents to interact and socialize. The trail system and streets not being fully connected is also likely a factor in the perception of isolation.

GCL needs to be seen as inclusive for all areas, including the rental areas. There were some negative comments regarding the rental housing, but it is important to remember that they are also residents of Griesbach and are to be included in any community focused initiatives.

## Recommendations

- GCL to organize a series of community events (Explore Griesbach BBQs) in different areas of Griesbach to encourage residents to come out to the different areas and socialize with residents from other areas of Griesbach. BBQs would be held in the various park/monument areas and could even include a location in the rental division park. Alternately, community picnics could be organized at the various locations so residents can bring their own lunches and GCL could organize some fun activities.
- Encourage more resident organized events like block parties (see previous recommendations list)
- GCL Welcoming Committee (see Section 10. Other Priorities/Concerns)

## Local Preschool and daycare

- The lack of local preschool and daycare is a concern of many residents. One local daycare/after school care has since opened up and another is to be open soon in the commercial area which will help to alleviate this concern. No immediate action is recommended.

# 8. Advocacy – Community Development & Civic Matters

It is the duty of any community league to act as an advocate on behalf of its members in civic matters. This is not being listed as an area of concern as the GCL already advocates on behalf of residents and works with various stakeholders, as was shown in its response to issues such as the Pokémon Go invasion and the theft of the monument plaques.

Griesbach is a distinct neighborhood. There are many things that contribute to its uniqueness including the monuments, landscaping, design, architecture, plants and flowers that all help make Griesbach unique and beautiful. These tangible elements are what make up Griesbach's Community Character. If this Community Character is not looked after and governed properly, it could soon have the opposite effect and become a burden to the community.

Continuing to advocate, both proactively and reactively, is vital to preserving the Community Character of Griesbach. The following are high level strategic recommendations, some of which may also be addressed with specific tactics in other areas of this plan.

## Recommendations

- Increase engagement with residents to: increase specific areas of expertise and get more people involved with the Board and the various committees:
  - Volunteer recruitment campaign for specific areas of expertise
  - Hold special GCL Board Open House Meetings occasionally and invite the residents to come and meet the Board and see what they're working on
  - Organize Town Hall discussions for residents a couple times a year to discuss priorities and areas of concern, provide updates on major projects, strengthen relationships and encourage Community Spirit
- Continue to build a strong relationship with Canada Lands and the home builders in order to be involved in the planning and development of the remaining areas of Griesbach
- Consider developing a new Board position focused strictly on monuments (register the monuments with various levels of government and look into any possible grants for maintenance and bring forward any issues to the GCL Board)

## 9. Develop More Playgrounds and Activities in Other Areas

The new playground opened in the Fall of 2017. It took over 6 years of fundraising and planning to build the playground. Since that time, Griesbach has expanded and continues to expand. With the existing playground currently being refurbished, the East side of Griesbach is well served with playgrounds, however more playgrounds will need to be considered in other areas. Residents would like to see some playgrounds in other areas of Griesbach where they can be more easily accessed. Grants towards playgrounds are included with any new schools being developed, so any future schools planned in Griesbach will have some initial funding provided, but Griesbach Community League should be involved in the planning.

It should be noted that building a spray park ranked 10 out of 17 by residents. The addition of a spray park has been discussed by the Board and has also recently been verbally suggested by Canada Lands as something they might be able to build. This plan does not specifically address a spray park, but it is recommended that the Board continue to explore the option with Canada Lands to see if it's viable.

Residents are clear on the importance of parks, trails and naturalized areas, ranked as #2 overall priority. They like being outdoors in their neighborhood. This is one of the founding design principles of the design of Griesbach. Getting people active outdoors in their neighborhood encourages interaction with others which drives the Community Spirit. Having specific areas or activities that can be enjoyed by adults is also important.

## Recommendations:

- Have Structures & Facilities Director work with Canada Lands and City of Edmonton to explore Playground areas/equipment in other areas of Griesbach, including popup playgrounds (smaller play areas)
- Work with Canada Lands to ensure the proposed fitness trail in the new Maple Leaf Pond development proceeds and aligns with what the GCL envisions
- Investigate the feasibility and demand of installing a beach volleyball court (see next page)
- Research other unique developments and initiatives from other communities if needed and measure interest from residents

## Beach Volleyball

During a conversation with a resident of Griesbach, a suggestion for a beach volleyball court was brought up. The idea has since been casually discussed with a few Board members and seems to have some traction. Woodcroft community switches their skating arena to [beach volleyball courts](#) (see APPENDIX D) in the Summer and working with the [Edmonton Sport and Social Club](#) (ESSC), the courts are well used. Previously, the only beach volleyball courts were on the southside in Lendrum Community.

Beach volleyball is something that could be used by both adults and families and would give Griesbach Community something unique to offer. The bowl of the hill is now maintained and mowed by the city, however isn't really used much during the summer. This would be a great spot for the beach volleyball courts and shouldn't affect tobogganing in the winter. This could be a great area for group activities beyond beach volleyball as well.

## Recommendations

- Form a committee to look into logistics and costs of a beach volleyball court and gather information from various stakeholders and interest groups including: Edmonton Volleyball Association, ESSC, Woodcroft and Lendrum community leagues and the City of Edmonton
- Gauge interest from the community on the proposed idea (the resident who suggested the idea is a volleyball coach and would likely be interested in being part of the committee)

## 10. Other Priorities/Concerns

There were a few other priorities and concerns that were not included in the survey but have been brought up by residents or in GLC Board meetings and should be addressed.

### School capacity

School capacity was not specifically listed on the survey as it was not an issue when the survey was completed. It has become evident that it is now an issue that will only continue to get worse as the population in Griesbach continues to grow. A couple unattached portables have been built, but that only offers limited temporary relief. School expansion is limited due to design of school and location of playground.

## Recommendations

- Start proactively engaging and forming relationships with respective School Board Trustees, School Principal, School Parent Council and appropriate Provincial Government contacts.
- Form a Board Position or committee to liaise with above stakeholders to address overcrowding concerns and help advocate for solutions

### Community Sign/Message Board at Playground

Discussion has taken place about placing a sign at the new playground that promotes the name but also could act as a central message board if needed.

## Recommendations:

- Structures & Facilities Director (or other) check into costs and grants available to determine if adding a sign is feasible

## More bike racks

Griesbach has many parks and trails which makes it very conducive to activities such as walking and biking. It has been discussed that there is a lack of bike racks to lock up bikes at key areas such as playgrounds, community gardens and Griesbach Central Park. There are a couple metal maple leaf monuments which can be used to lock a bike to, but these only accommodate a couple bikes and residents are likely unaware that these can be used for bike racks.

## Recommendations:

- Poll residents to determine if this is indeed a concern
- If it is a concern, discuss options with Canada Lands and the City to place a couple racks at key areas

## Beautification Fee

One of the questions asked on the survey was whether residents would support a fee or levy that would be added onto their annual property tax to support the maintenance and upkeep of Griesbach including fountains, community gardens, flowers, benches, monuments, etc. Results showed that 60% would support this, 19% would not and 21% were unsure.

A community fee has been discussed by the Board. While no decision has been made, most felt it was worth looking into and might be easier to get implemented before Griesbach gets too big. Implementing a fee requires a significant majority support from the community and would need to involve consultation with various stakeholders including the City.

It is recommended that the Board continue the conversation and investigate what would be needed to implement.

# Community Spirit

Community Spirit has been identified as something that is very strong, important to residents and unique to Griesbach. It is important that this continue to be cultivated both by the Board and by residents. Community Spirit is non-tangible, but it can be measured. It is not the result of a single activity or initiative, but the outcome of all the activities and initiatives that GCL does combined with the engagement from residents. It is therefore everyone's responsibility to help strengthen the Community Spirit.

## Recommendations:

- Discuss ways to promote, cultivate and sustain Community Spirit in everything the Board does
- Develop the GCL Welcoming Committee and Griesbach Ambassadors (see below)
- Complete the Vision for Griesbach Community (see next section)

### GCL Welcoming Committee

The idea behind the GCL Welcoming Committee is similar to Welcome Wagon. The program is targeted towards new residents to welcome them to our unique community and raise awareness of GCL, community activities and opportunities to get involved. Moving to a new community is stressful, and this program will help reduce the stress in new residents. Positive outcomes expected from the program are:

- Lower risk of dilution of the Community Spirit as Griesbach grows
- Increased awareness of GCL and what it does
- Increased attendance at events, sports and programs
- Increased engagement of residents leading to increased community involvement

Working with Canada Lands and the home builders, GCL may be able to obtain a regular list of new residents, otherwise it would have to be done by canvassing newer homes. Acting as an Ambassador of GCL, the volunteer would contact the new homeowner and try to set up an appointment to introduce themselves, drop off a gift basket, welcome them to the neighborhood, give a quick orientation and answer any questions they have, now or even in the near future. This might be a good program for some retired residents to volunteer for.

- Gift basket for new residents could include:
  - Offers/gifts from businesses in the commercial area
  - Promo items branded with Griesbach Community League
  - A list (could be fridge magnet) with important phone numbers, website addresses, social media, contacts etc. (Griesbach Connect, GCL website, police, Community Gardens, Community Sports info, bylaw, etc.)
  - How to report issues (neighborhood watch, 311, police, etc.)
  - A printout of the latest GCL newsletter
  - Other items or ideas as the committee determines

## Recommendations

- Discuss with GCL Board
- Form a committee with volunteers to structure the program
- Solicit and train a group of Griesbach Ambassadors

- Test pilot the program and seek feedback from new residents

## A Vision for Griesbach Community

It is clear that Griesbach is an engaged community with a very involved and active community league Board. It is important that we continue to encourage residents to be actively involved. Maintaining the strong Community Spirit within Griesbach is essential to the future success of the community. To do that requires everyone working with a common set of values toward a common vision. As the GCL Board has matured and focus is shifting to other priorities now that the playground is built, it is recommended that GCL develop a purpose document that outlines its purpose and areas of focus including vision, mission and values.

Going through this process will help ensure:

- Common goals
- Consistency and focus
- Proper succession planning
- Alignment with identified priorities

Some initial thoughts that came out of discussion within the volunteer committee are included on the next page. EFCL will provide a facilitator for community leagues that will assist the Board with strategic planning sessions to help form a vision and plan. It is recommended that EFCL be contacted to put on a session for the current Board.

### Griesbach Community League

#### **Promise or Mission**

To Cultivate the Griesbach Community Spirit

#### **Vision**

To be a model community that is known for its strong community spirit.

#### **Values or Pillars**

- Community Inclusivity/diversity (something for all ages, in all areas of Griesbach)
- Neighbourly
- Safety
- Nature
- Fitness and health
- Fun

The outcomes of living the values is delivering on the promise of Cultivating Community Spirit.



# Conclusion

There have been many topics, priorities, ideas and issues discussed in this document. It is ultimately up to the GLC Board to determine the urgency of each priority and how to address them. It is the hope of this committee, that the GCL finds value in this plan and that it creates good discussion and prompts further ideas.

Griesbach is a very distinct and sought-after community and we have the opportunity to make it even better and ensure it remains that way in the future. Doing this requires help beyond just the Board, which means engaging residents and specialists to seek their input and help. It may also be that it is time to consider investing in hiring experts to explore projects that are more complex, such as capital projects.

Engaging residents means ensuring we constantly communicate to them and solicit their feedback through all means and channels necessary. This is also important because as developing neighborhood, Griesbach is changing constantly as new areas are developed and new residents move in. Change and growth increase the risk of diluting Community Spirit.

GCL must put residents at the centre of everything it does, as that is our number one stakeholder and ultimately the group that defines the Community Spirit. The previous two sections, Community Spirit and A Vision for Griesbach, are last in this plan but not last in priority. Focusing on these two areas to create a vision and plan for a community like no other is important and should be a priority. The resulting vision then needs to be promoted to residents. It will assure residents that GCL has a vision and a plan for the future, that aligns with residents' needs and concerns. It will also start to form a brand for GCL and strengthen its reputation.

## **APPENDIX A – Survey Summary**

# **APPENDIX B – Survey Priorities List**

# **APPENDIX C – Survey Comment Summary**

**APPENDIX D – Beach Volleyball Article**