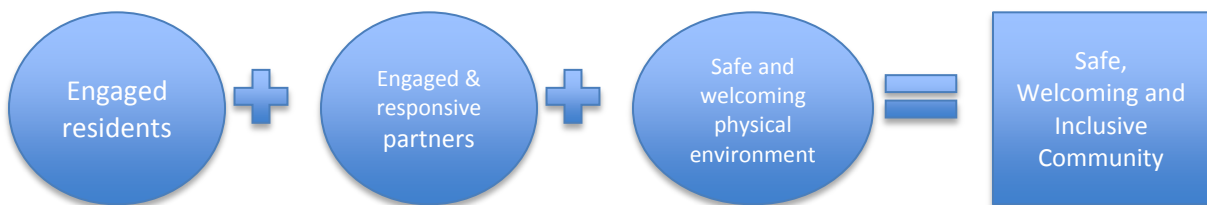


Lowertown Our Home Strategic Planning Report - 2017-2020

October 2017

Background

Lowertown Our Home is a collaborative, multi-stakeholder and neighbourhood-based initiative focused on making Lowertown East a safe, welcoming and inclusive community. Funded by United Way and the Community Development Framework, LOH is coordinated by the Lowertown Community Resource Centre, which acts as a backbone organization for convening residents and local organizations to work together on issues related to neighbourhood crime and safety. LOH's Theory of Change has been described as:



LOH Values

"We believe that residents and organizations working together collectively will result in the best outcomes for the neighbourhood by respecting the voice of diverse residents as an integral part of this community."

How LOH Works

All partners, including residents, meet bi-monthly at an LOH Partners' meeting to share information and work collaboratively on strategies to promote safety and security in Lowertown identified by the group. On alternative months, a Steering Committee comprised of key partners and the chair of the Lowertown East Residents' Committee, also meets. In addition to convening residents and partners, the LOH Coordinator leads a number of other activities on behalf of LOH, including:

- supporting the Lowertown East Residents' Committee to recruit new members, hold monthly meetings and to carry out resident-led activities
- working with LERC and other partners to organize Movies in the Park, Winterfest and Basse-ville en Fete - community gatherings designed to promote the positive use of public space and build community cohesion.
- supporting a peer- led drop-in at 380 Murray St for adults who may be (or have been) drug users, in partnership with OCH and DUAL.

- outreaching to the diverse residents who live in Lowertown East and connecting them with LOH, LERC, and other resources and services in the community.
- liaising with the Lowertown Community Resource Centre

Using Results-Based Accountability (RBA)

In 2015, a third-party evaluation of LOH was conducted, which introduced the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework. This framework emphasizes using information from multiple sources to drive decision-making about strategies and priority areas for action. Following this evaluation, LOH has used RBA to guide its work, including conducting very short resident surveys each year at different groups and events to track resident perceptions related to safety and belonging. More information about this evaluation and the RBA survey can be found in Appendix I.

Challenges and Constraints

LOH is supported by short-term project funding that must be renewed each year. As a result, the LOH Coordinator position is not core-funded, and is not guaranteed to be full-time every year, which has contributed to a relatively high turn-over rate since LOH's inception. This in turn has contributed to regular shifts and changes in the focus of LOH's activities, depending on the skills and experience of the person in the position at any given time. The position and role have also increased significantly over time as LOH has expanded its partners, taken on more ambitious projects, and focused increasingly on supporting more marginalized residents to be engaged with LOH. At the same time, partner organizations are also stretched in their capacity to play an active role in LOH's activities beyond participating in partner meetings and helping out at community events. Lowertown Community Resource Centre, has had to expand its role from coordinating a project with support of partners to that of a backbone organization supporting a large collective impact initiative with multiple stakeholders. Finally, LOH is committed to sharing decision-making with all stakeholders, including residents and a large number of partner organizations, many of whom have very different goals and ways of working. All of these factors contribute to limiting LOH's capacity to address some of the more complex issues related to crime and safety, in spite of strong interest and commitment to doing so.

Recent Funding and New Opportunities for LOH

In spite of these challenges, LOH has been successful in not only renewing its annual funding for the LOH position for several years, it has also succeeded in securing additional project funding to support its activities this year. LOH recently received one year of "Seed" funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to expand the Murray St drop-in and LOH's partnership with DUAL, OCH and John Howard. This project emphasizes an inclusive and peer-led approach to supporting adults who may use drugs in the community, while helping to reduce stigma, promote harm reduction and build

greater understanding among all residents. The LOH Coordinator currently oversees this project.

LOH also received one year of funding from CDF for the LOH Coordinator to work with the Lowertown East Residents Committee to engage more residents to participate in this group and strengthen its capacity. This funding provides an additional day of work per week for the LOH Coordinator.

Focusing the Work of LOH

In the summer of 2017, LOH decided to embark on a strategic planning process to help identify priority areas for action for the next three years and to articulate a more focused and intentional approach to responding to safety concerns. The group wanted to have a clearer road map and direction for LOH over the next three years, especially given the expanding and, at times, changing role of the LOH Coordinator over the years. It was also important to LCRC, as the backbone organization, that this process take into consideration the capacity of the LOH Coordinator, given current funding and existing demands on that position, and to look at how to further engage residents and partner organizations to support the work of LOH over the next three years. Finally, the LOH team was committed to following the same Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework that was used during the 2015 evaluation. This includes using information gathered from the resident surveys, along with OPS reports on crime statistics and OCH reports on calls for service to determine these priorities as much as possible.

Strategic Planning Process

Originally, LOH had envisioned holding a one-time Strategic Planning session with all partners in September. A facilitator was hired to support the design and facilitation of this process. In the end, the Strategic Planning took place over a series of meetings and sessions with different groups of stakeholders, reflecting the time needed to adequately involve multiple stakeholders, including residents, in a collective planning process addressing community safety issues. The steps undertaken are summarized below.

- A Partner Survey was conducted to assess the priorities and goals of organizations participating in LOH, and their capacity to play an active role in supporting or leading LOH activities. The findings showed that most partners wanted to see LOH focused on collective planning and action (rather than networking or capacity building). There was some interest in addressing problem-addresses but not among the majority of partners. The survey also made clear the very limited capacity of most LOH partners in contributing beyond attending meetings and providing in-kind staff support at events.
- In late August an initial meeting was held with the Steering Committee to look at data and to start to identify priority issues based on this data. At this meeting, the results of the RBA Resident Survey were presented showing a strong sense of belonging and moderate sense of safety overall in Lowertown, yet a markedly

low sense of safety in some of the OCH buildings that tend to house single adults, many of whom may be dealing with mental health issues. It was also acknowledged that we were lacking surveys specifically from the town houses where more families lived, although surveys were done at big community events attended by families. OPS also presented a year-by-year report on criminal offences, which provided much more detail than any reports LOH had seen in the past. Overall, it was noted that Lowertown did not have a recurrent problem with violent crime, especially compared to some other communities in Ottawa, and there was no single issue that stood out as being clearly a priority issue, although break-and-enters, small thefts, intimidation and drug offences were highlighted. This report led to a rich conversation and raised more questions, resulting in the OPS representative offering to bring in a crime analyst to provide more answers to the questions raised.

- A separate meeting was held in September between LCRC, LERC, OCH and OPS to summarize the OPS and OCH data collectively and identify trends to bring back to the broader group in September.
- Another set of RBA surveys were done by one partner, Options Bytown, at two of their buildings, to ask residents there more about why they felt unsafe in their community, and what they meant by "community" (ie just their building or Lowertown overall)
- A Strategic Planning Session (Part One) was held with all partners on September 20th. The focus of this session was to dive deeper into the data and information available from OPS, OCH and Options Bytown, to hear more from residents about what safety concerns they were seeing and experiencing, to hear from partners what they were hearing from residents and to develop a list of priority issues based on all of this information. The priority issues highlighted from this process were:
 - Trespassing/Intimidation/Loitering in public space in buildings and throughout the neighbourhood
 - Drugs - people seeing drugs bought and sold, also as related to the issue above
 - Home takeovers - also seen as potentially related to the two issues above
 - People's feelings about personal safety - their knowledge and confidence to deal with the issues above, and/or to report suspicious activity safely
 - Traffic safety - speeding through certain streets and intersections
- A small working group made up of LCRC, LERC, OPS and OCH met again in early October to try to develop possible strategies in response to these priority issues. However, at this meeting there was not agreement about how to respond, as some people present felt the group needed to do a more in depth analysis of the root causes of these problems (including looking at the role of homelessness and mental health) before jumping into action. It was also seen as important by some that the group take time to learn more about possible best practices, such as the problem address practice from PQ CHC, that were aligned with an inclusive and caring community-based response to such complex issues, rather than one that might

appear to be simply an extension of enforcement and suppression tactics already in place. There was concern raised at this meeting that any action plans needed to reflect LOH's Vision and Values, and not be seen as LOH just helping OPS and OCH evict or arrest vulnerable people in the community.

- Based on this discussion, the facilitator worked with key staff from LOH and LCRC to develop a framework of Strategic Directions based on four key pillars (described in more detail below) that would guide LOH's work over the next 3 years, integrating the following:
 - responding to the desire for more focus on priority issues and action while taking time to ensure actions would be effective and reflect the vision and values of LOH
 - integrating existing commitments and activities seen as core to LOH with the new focus areas with current capacity and resource
- This framework was presented to the broader group of LOH partners at a session on October 18, 2017 for feedback and approval, along with proposed implementation strategies. There was general approval to adopt the framework, and participants provided feedback and suggestions to be considered to support implementation (see Appendix II for summary of feedback). The group also brainstormed a preliminary "wish list" that could be considered should capacity increase in the future (see Appendix III).

Strategic Direction for 2017-2020 - The 4 Pillars of LOH

Pillar	Action Areas and Implementation Strategies	Timeline
1. Ensure sustainability of LOH	A. Apply to United Way for continued funding for Coordinator's position	Years 1 -3
	B. Look for other sources of funding to increase capacity and/or fund any wish list activities	Years 1-3
	C. Oversee other projects already funded and committed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities related to 380 Murray Drop-In project funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation, in partnership with DUAL and OCH • activities related to resident engagement in LERC, funded by CDF and in partnership with LERC 	Year 1
2. Strengthen resident engagement	A. Encourage resident participation and volunteering in community events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to host community events and celebrations 	Years 1-3

Pillar	Action Areas and Implementation Strategies	Timeline
and voice in LOH processes	<p>to help people gather, build community cohesion and promote the positive use of public space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support LERC, the 380 Murray St Drop-In, and other groups to build connections with diverse residents, learn about resident concerns and priorities, and help connect them to broader LOH processes 	
	<p>B. Support residents to take on leadership roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue efforts to recruit residents to participate on LERC and on the LOH Partner Table. Years 1-3 Create a new Working Group with partners and residents to focus on and strengthen this outreach and recruitment process. Year 1 Explore funding opportunities to offer resident leadership training as a vehicle to engage new residents Year 2-3 	
	<p>C. Consult with residents about issues that are important to them, to support future planning and decision-making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to conduct the RBA survey with different groups of residents and look at expanding the RBA survey to include a few more questions about priorities and why people feel safe or not. Work with partners to reach residents from townhouses and other buildings to ensure feedback from a broad sample of population. (see also Pillar #4) Years 1-3 Help organize a Community Forum on Harm Reduction in Year 1 (already committed to as part of OTF grant) Year 1 Support a more extensive, resident-led survey once during three year period with the goal of getting deeper feedback from a larger sample of residents about safety concerns. Year 2 Organize a Safety Forum to bring residents and partners together. Year 3 	
3. Focus on collective planning and action in	<p>A. Continue to convene partners and residents with a focus on the issues identified during Strategic Planning process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trespassing/Loitering/Intimidation 	Years 1-3

Pillar	Action Areas and Implementation Strategies	Timeline
<p>response to identified priorities and emerging issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs • Home takeovers • Feelings of Personal Safety • Traffic Safety 	
	<p>B. Create new Working Group or use Steering Committee to focus efforts on these priority issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyzing and better understanding the root causes of and interconnections between these issues, Year 1 • identifying best and promising practices in response to these issues Year 1 • Coordinating and implementing concrete actions that are consistent with LOH's vision of creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive community Years 2-3 • Evaluating the effectiveness of these actions Year 3 	
	<p>C. Modify Agenda of Partner meetings to ensure focus on priority safety issues Year 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure information is shared about these 5 issues at each bi-monthly meetings, including updates from Working Group • Use Partner meetings to ensure both Working Groups are communicating and collaborating • Include regular reports from Resident Engagement Working Group, LERC, OPS • Review as a group other regular reports and updates and modify as needed to ensure focus on priority action areas and implementation of the 4 Pillars 	
	<p>D. Modify existing LOH Partnership Agreement Year 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect new priorities and ways of working as outlined in this framework • Have partners sign new Agreement for the period of 2017-2020 	
<p>4. Ensure information from multiple sources is used to drive decision-making</p>	<p>A. Expand RBA resident survey Year 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the core 5 questions to track changes over time • Consider adding questions about residents' concerns/priorities related to safety, and why people feel unsafe • Look for ways to increase capacity to broaden the sample of residents who complete this survey (eg, including townhouses, co-ops, private market rentals, 	

Pillar	Action Areas and Implementation Strategies	Timeline
	etc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at how partners can contribute to getting more of these surveys completed to ensure the feedback represents a broad sample of residents. (see also Pillar #2) 	
	B. Set up yearly sessions focused on compiling and understanding data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBA Residents Survey results • OPS Crime Statistics • OCH statistics related to Calls for Service • Post-Incident Responses 	Years 1-3
	C. Determine what other data or performance measures should be tracked related to the priority issues and actions taken	Years 2-3

Conclusion

This strategic planning process demonstrated how highly committed and engaged the participating residents and partners are in LOH. It also highlighted the strong leadership and dedication from staff and management at LCRC, including the LOH Coordinator. Attendance and engagement was strong at each of the sessions, and partners willingly agreed to additional meetings to ensure adequate time was given to the process. As a result of this time and commitment, a clear framework for LOH has been developed with input and support from multiple stakeholders. The 4 Pillars can help guide and focus the efforts of LOH over the next three years ensuring that Lowertown East is a safe, welcoming and inclusive community.

Appendix I

Learnings from the LOH Evaluation

In 2015 a third-party evaluation of LOH was conducted with support from the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. The evaluation looked at the original Theory of Change and found that significant progress had been made in improving the positive use of public space in the community and building a strong sense of community cohesion, especially with the renewal of Jules Morin Park, and with the success of the many community gatherings that LOH had helped organize. Feedback from both partners and residents indicated that people felt public space was much safer and better used than in the past. The evaluation also found that LOH, like many similar community development initiatives, struggled with engaging more residents, especially those from diverse backgrounds, to take on leadership roles and get involved in LERC and LOH Partner meetings. This lack of broad and diverse engagement made it difficult for LOH and its partners to know how residents felt about safety and belonging, and what areas LOH could focus on improving in its collective action that would align with residents' concerns.

As a result of these findings, LOH staff have prioritized, since 2015, doing mini-consultations with groups of residents using a quick on-the-spot RBA survey that asks residents:

1. Do you feel safe walking in your neighbourhood at night?
2. Do you feel a sense of belonging in your community?
3. Do you feel comfortable accessing social services in your community?
4. Do you feel comfortable accessing police services?
5. Are you familiar with LOH activities?

This short survey serves two purposes - it provides a baseline of information about a few key indicators related to residents' perception of safety and belonging that can be tracked over time to show any trends or changes in resident perceptions; and it gives LOH staff and partners a way to engage with and talk to different residents about how they felt about living in Lowertown East and how to get more involved through LERC and LOH. In this way, the survey helps facilitate broader consultation and engagement with residents. Because there are only 5 questions, the survey can be conducted easily and quickly with residents wherever they were already gathering, with existing staff capacity, unlike a more extensive survey or needs assessment. The evaluation recommended the LOH continue to compile and use this data, along with crime statistics from Ottawa Police Services and statistics related to calls for service from Ottawa Community Housing, to inform future planning processes. LOH has implemented this recommendation and as a result, had significantly more data than in the past to help inform this strategic planning process.

Appendix II

Feedback on Framework and Implementation Strategies

At the end of the second Strategic Planning Session, small groups discussed the framework and proposed implementation strategies. The following is a summary of that feedback for LOH partners and Working Groups to consider as they work collectively to implement this Strategic Plan:

1. Priority Issues

- Ensure focus on action for priority issues, even in Year 1, if possible.
- Look at the SARA model used by OPS when looking at action planning around priority issues: "Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment"

2. Partnership Agreements

- Changes still need to be reviewed and approved
- Explore inviting new partners with experience and expertise related to homelessness, mental health (e.g, Shepherds of Good Hope)
- Clarify language around "Partners" and "Residents" - LOH sees residents as partners but this may not always be clear to residents
- Consider how/whether residents should be signing the Partner Agreement or a similar type of document

3. Partner Meetings

- Consider adding new Agenda item to Partner meetings that look at Post-Incident Debrief reports
- Look at other reports and updates to see if still necessary
- How can we hear more from residents during Partner meetings? (see more below)

4. Resident Engagement

- Look at ways to share LOH successes with residents
- Consider developing a plain language document that describes what LOH is and what it does to help recruit residents. This could include sharing the results of RBA Surveys and a plain-language version of the 4 Pillars with the residents who did the survey.
- Ensure resident participation on all Working Groups
- The ECHO will be revived and there will be one page for partners to promote events, activities - this is an opportunity for LOH
- Ensure Lowertown Community Association is working with LOH, attending Partner meetings.
- Look at how to connect with other resident groups (ie Friends of the Park)

- Look at when and where to have meetings to increase resident participation, especially for those who work during days
- Explore funding with OCH to support tenant engagement
- Look at how to engage youth

Appendix III

LOH Wish List

As the final step of the second Strategic Planning session, the group brainstormed a "wish list" of things they would like to see LOH be able to do if capacity and resources allowed:

- Resident-led Coffee Houses
- Celebrations acknowledging resident contributions
- Permanent funding for LOH Coordinator position
- Communication campaign, branding for LOH
- Social enterprise/incubator/accelerator in community