

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON JUNE 20, 2017
FROM:	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE MANAGING DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN AND FIRE SERVICES
SUBJECT:	LONDON STRENGTHENING NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY 2017-2020 IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW INITIATIVES

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, the following **ACTIONS BE TAKEN** with respect to the following London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy initiatives:

- a) The LSNS Neighbourhood Decision Making program **BE IMPLEMENTED** city-wide based on the model using five geographic areas of the city (Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central); and,
- b) The Neighbourhood Small Events Fund **BE IMPLEMENTED** to support small neighbourhood events held by local residents and/or neighbourhood associations.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy 2017-2020 (April 26, 2016, May 24, 2017)

BACKGROUND

The heart and essence of every city and community are its neighbourhoods

On May 30, 2017, Council resolved that, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, the following actions be taken:

The London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (LSNS) 2017 – 2020 **BE ENDORSED**; and,

Civic Administration **BE AUTHORIZED AND DIRECTED** to proceed with the implementation of the London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy 2017 – 2020: it being noted that funding to support LSNS is included in the Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services approved budget for 2017-2019 and will be confirmed annually through the budget update process.

As part of this report, LSNS 2017 – 2020, Civic Administration identified three key strategies that the City of London will launch in the first 12 months as part of the implementation of LSNS 2. These are:

Strategy #1: Grow the SPARKS! funding program to increase its reach in neighbourhoods across London

Action	Build the new SPARKS! program: Neighbourhood Decision Making
Initiative	City-wide rollout of the Neighbourhood Decision Making Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the 2016-2019 Multi-Year Budget, Council directed \$30,000 in 2016 to support two pilot projects, and further directed an annual investment of \$250,000 from 2017 – 2019 to support the Neighbourhood Decision Making program across the city.

Strategy #2: Decrease barriers (rules, regulations, and cost) to holding events

Action	Develop a fund to support small neighbourhood/community events
Initiative	Create a new Neighbourhood Small Events Fund to support small neighbourhood/community events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Corporate Services Committee on September 16, 2015, Council directed that <i>Civic Administration be requested to review and report back on innovative funding mechanisms for the funding of various community events, including the potential reallocation of funds from Councillors' Expense Accounts.</i> • By evolving SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund into the new Neighbourhood Decision Making program, resources identified for the existing SPARKS! program in 2018 will be partially re-allocated to support the creation of this new Fund.
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Strategy #3: Improve and coordinate communication within and amongst neighbourhoods

Action	Improve neighbourhood maps – interactive with community association contacts where available
Initiative	Expand the tools and resources on the NeighbourGood London website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the support from community stakeholders, Civic Administration developed a neighbourhood section on the NeighbourGood London website that includes over 70 neighbourhood specific pages.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of these three new initiatives that are to be implemented in 2017 as part of LSNS; and to further seek Council’s endorsement to implement the Neighbourhood Decision Making program and the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund.

1. City-wide Rollout of Neighbourhood Decision Making

In the 2016-2019 Multi-Year Budget process, City Council committed one-time funding of \$30,000 in 2016 for two Neighbourhood Decision Making pilot projects through an expanded SPARKS! Grant program. Starting in 2017, Council has committed \$250,000 annually to support a Neighbourhood Decision Making program across the city. The purpose of this program is to engage, empower, and connect residents by bringing neighbours together around community-driven projects that enhance and strengthen their neighbourhoods.

The Neighbourhood Decision Making program supports residents to propose ideas for how to spend a portion of the municipal budget in their neighbourhoods. Resident ideas are vetted for feasibility by Civic Administration, and once approved, developed into proposals to be represented on the ballot. A community vote is held to determine which proposals will receive funding. Civic Administration then work with residents to implement the proposals in their neighbourhoods.

2016 Neighbourhood Decision Making Pilot Projects

In 2016, Civic Administration worked with three Councillors to pilot the Neighbourhood Decision Making program in two areas of the city: the Medway neighbourhood (Councillors Morgan and Squire), and Ward 13 (Councillor Park). The pilot neighbourhood decision making process involved asking residents to submit ideas about how to spend \$30,000 (\$15,000 in Medway, and \$15,000 in Ward 13) to enhance their neighbourhoods. After the idea submission phase, resident ideas were vetted by Civic Administration for feasibility. Following this, Civic Administration supported residents to develop their ideas into a proposal that was represented on the ballot. A neighbourhood-wide/ward-wide vote was then held to determine which ideas were funded in both areas.

Over 520 residents voted in their neighbourhood/ward, and chose seven neighbourhood projects ranging from events, to nature signs; and from art on utility boxes, to new playground equipment (see Appendix A for a list of all projects).

An evaluation, which included resident surveys and one-on-one conversations, was conducted with residents who participated in the process, idea submitters, Civic Administration, and Councillors involved with the pilot projects. In addition, Civic Administration reviewed other municipal ‘neighbourhood decision making’ programs. Learnings from the evaluation and municipal scan are highlighted below:

Highlights of Key Findings from the Evaluation

- 94%¹ of residents indicated they would participate in the Neighbourhood Decision Making program again if it was conducted in their neighbourhood or ward.
- *“The opportunity for the community to decide is a wonderful inclusive project – All ages can participate. It puts pride in doing something for our community. -Thank you for this opportunity and all the work that went into it to make it happen!”*
- 42% of residents stated that they had not been involved in neighbourhood decision making in their neighbourhood in the last 6 months except for their participation in voting for Medway Decides.

¹ This percent is based on the post-voter survey of both pilot areas (total of 89 responses).

- The result in Ward 13 was similar, with 63.16% of survey respondents indicating that they had not been involved in neighbourhood decision making in the last 6 months, except for their participation in the pilot project.
- The number one opportunity for improvement from residents involved in the pilot projects was that there needed to be better communication about the program (32% of residents provided additional comments in an open-ended survey question related to the promotion and communication methods associated with the pilots).
- Several residents indicated that it would be helpful if there was an idea bank that shared information about ideas that were successfully funded, as well as ideas that were not.

Learnings from other Cities

- Support from an Advisory Committee, made up of residents, organizations and representatives of ethno-cultural groups, and organizations, helps to increase engagement with the whole community (New York, Toronto, Calgary, Hamilton, Dieppe NB).
- Not every resident who submits an idea will be able to see it through the whole process. Idea Champions are volunteers who are able to commit more time to the process, and work with city staff to develop feasible ideas into proposals and then promote the idea to their community.
- Be clear about what can and cannot be funded and give examples of potential ideas with costs and location considerations (Toronto, Hamilton, Halifax, and Guelph).
- A large amount of effort is required to communicate opportunities to participate. City Councillors are an effective method for getting the word out (Toronto, Hamilton, and Halifax).

Based on this information, and following the core principles that guided the development of the London Strengthening Neighbourhood Strategy 2 (see Appendix B), Civic Administration developed three options to support the city-wide rollout of the Neighbourhood Decision Making program.

City-Wide Rollout: Options for Consideration

In 2017, \$250,000 is available annually to support the Neighbourhood Decision Making program across the City. Informed by the results of the evaluation and municipal scan, the following three options have been developed to support the city-wide rollout of this program.

1. Facilitate the Neighbourhood Decision Making program in 10 Neighbourhoods/Planning Districts annually. There are 38 Planning Districts (with a population), therefore the program would rotate planning districts every 4 years. Each planning district would receive \$25,000 once every four years.

With this option, the SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund program would continue, albeit with a smaller grant allocation (\$30K), in order to provide all neighbourhoods with year-over-year access to consistent funding.

2. Align the Neighbourhood Decision Making program with the City's 14 Wards and allocate \$15,000/Ward each year.

In this option, with every resident of the city able to participate in the Neighbourhood Decision Making program, the SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund would cease, and the funding would be rolled into the Neighbourhood Decision Making program.

3. The Neighbourhood Decision Making program would be based on five geographic areas of the city: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central. Each area would receive an allocation of \$50,000 annually. An advisory group would be established in each area in an effort to include all neighbourhoods, and to encourage a diversity of residents to participate each year.

In this option, with every resident of the city able to participate in the Neighbourhood Decision Making program, the SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund would cease, and the funding would be rolled into the Neighbourhood Decision Making program.

Considerations

In reviewing the three options, the following factors were considered:

Resources

One of the learnings from the two pilots was that the Neighbourhood Decision Making program involves many relationships and community meetings, which require a large amount of staff time to manage and coordinate. The \$250,000 allocated to the Neighbourhood Decision Making program does not include extra staff resources or other administrative costs. Therefore, the program will need to be managed within existing staff resources.

Equity and Accessibility

A desired outcome of this program is to work towards an equitable distribution of neighbourhood-based funding across the city. Evidence from the last seven years of administering the SPARKS! program demonstrates that neighbourhoods that have more established neighbourhood associations, and/or resident-led groups tend to receive more funding than neighbourhoods that have less formalized resident groups. Civic Administration will need to develop targeted strategies to empower residents from less formalized neighbourhoods and underrepresented populations to improve access to the program and increase participation across underrepresented groups.

Communication

One of the main lessons learned from both pilots was that effective communication is critical to the success of neighbourhood decision making initiatives. Neighbourhood decision making is a new concept for most residents, and therefore Civic Administration will need to employ an innovative communication strategy and work with many community partners to achieve the desired impact for this program. It is also understood that awareness and engagement for the Neighbourhood Decision Making program will take time and require a long-term commitment from the City to facilitate public education about this program that is necessary for its success.

Opportunities and Challenges with each Option

Civic Administration conducted an analysis to better understand the opportunities and challenges associated with each option for the city-wide rollout of the Neighbourhood Decision Making program. Highlighted below are some of these key factors to consider:

OPTION 1: Ten Neighbourhoods/planning districts per year participate in the Neighbourhood Decision Making program each receiving \$25,000 each. Each neighbourhood would access funding once in a four-year cycle.	
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller scale program may result in greater engagement in individual neighbourhoods. • Allows for more neighbourhood-focused knowledge, skills and capacity building. • More neighbourhood-based connections. • Greater access to individual neighbourhoods, once every four years. • Potential for targeted efforts to increase equity by neighbourhood. • Collaboration focused within neighbourhoods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning District population varies from 410 (Brockley) to 27,435 (Argyle). • Planning District boundaries divide some resident-identified neighbourhoods, and cross multiple wards. • 10 resident-led processes could be challenging for staff to coordinate. • Neighbourhoods only have access to participate once every four years. • Additional education may be required as many residents do not know the name of their Planning District.

OPTION 2 : Divide the City by its 14 Wards and allocate \$15,000 per ward	
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All neighbourhoods and all residents have access to participate every year. • Councillor's connections with constituents can enhance the process, especially through communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several neighbourhoods cross multiple wards, dividing neighbourhoods. • Communication may be a challenge based on the above consideration. • Population per ward varies from 22,262 (Ward 13) to 37,523 (Ward 7). • Staff resources required to facilitate 14 concurrent processes will limit the capacity of staff to provide comprehensive support to all residents.

OPTION 3: Divide the City into five geographic areas each area would receive \$50,000 to support the Neighbourhood Decision Making program.

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population per area would be more consistent ranging from approximately 74,000 to 80,000 residents. • Areas would be aligned with resident-identified neighbourhoods – this would assist with communication strategies. • All neighbourhoods and all residents have access to participate every year. • Five concurrent processes will be easier to manage with current staff capacity. • Advisory committees could be created to better facilitate access to all residents in each geographical area. • Neighbourhood-focused and larger collaboration opportunities among residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The larger geographic areas for the program may make the neighbourhood focus more of a challenge. • This model may require additional support from neighbourhood associations, community groups and networks, etc to make sure all neighbourhoods are involved. • Small-scale neighbourhood collaborations may occur less.

Recommendation: Option Three

Based on the above analysis, Civic Administration recommend using Option 3 to rollout the Neighbourhood Decision Making program commencing in 2017: **Divide the City into five geographic areas; each area would receive \$50,000 to support the Neighbourhood Decision Making program.** A map of the five proposed geographic areas is attached as Appendix C. The reasons for this recommendation are:

- Many residents identify with their geographic area of the city (Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, Southwest, Central) more so than their Planning District or Ward;
- The boundaries of the five geographic areas can be drawn to align with resident-identified neighbourhoods to minimize cross-over and confusion;
- Five geographic areas allow Civic Administration to implement and support an advisory group in each area.
- This approach supports greater resident participation and increased diversity of participation with the involvement of the advisory groups to support engagement and implementation of the process;
- It will be possible to coordinate five concurrent processes and advisory groups with existing staff resources;
- This option supports all neighbourhoods and residents to participate annually in neighbourhood decision making; and,
- An allocation of \$50,000 allows residents to develop large scale ideas that will have a big impact on their neighbourhoods (i.e. district park upgrades).

2. Neighbourhood Small Events Fund

Councillors and Civic Administration regularly receive requests from neighbourhood groups, community associations, and small grassroots organizations to assist with small one-time costs associated with running small community events. Examples of event-related costs might include: portable washrooms, rental fees, or the mobile stage, etc.

At Corporate Services Committee on September 16, 2015, Council directed that *Civic Administration be requested to review and report back on innovative funding mechanisms for the funding of various community events, including the potential reallocation of funds from Councillors’ Expense Accounts.*

It was very important to align the development of this funding mechanism with the strategies laid out in the development of LSNS 2.

One of the new LSNS strategies in the “tools and resources to support neighbourhoods” theme is to **“decrease barriers to holding events.”** One of the action steps to accomplish this is to *develop a fund to support small neighbourhood/community events.* Through the engagement process, residents and neighbourhood association leaders identified funding as one of the resources that would support increased neighbourhood driven activities.

Based on past experience and input from the LSNS 2 engagement process, Civic Administration is proposing to implement an events fund to support grassroots activities in neighbourhoods across London. The Neighbourhood Small Events Fund would provide a one-time grant of up to \$500 to

neighbourhood/community groups and would be available starting January 1st of each year until the funds are exhausted.

The fund would support local community/neighbourhood events that align with the Strategic Plan for the City of London: “Strengthening our Community – Building Vibrant and Connected Neighbourhoods”.

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund is to:

- Provide one-time financial assistance to local groups who need some additional funds to hold their planned event; and,
- Assist groups with their events that will build capacity of local leaders, increase partnerships and/or provide public engagement opportunities.

How the fund would work:

- Support groups with some of the costs of their small local community/neighbourhood events
- Provide a one-time grant of up to \$500 to neighbourhood/community groups
- Be available starting January 1st of each year, to be allocated until funds are exhausted

Please see Appendix D for the complete details about the fund.

3. Expansion to NeighbourGood London Website

The NeighbourGood London website (neighbourgoodlondon.ca) was launched in 2015 as a resource for residents and neighbourhood groups. The website is an easily accessible “one stop shop” for all the programs and resources the City of London uses to support residents to build community in their neighbourhoods. This includes the Outdoor Movie Kit, Adopt-A-Park, Neighbourhood Event Booking, Equipment Lending, Neighbourhood Association Guide, and more.

One of the new LSNS strategies in the communications theme is to “**improve and coordinate communication within and amongst neighbourhoods.**” To support this theme, a “Neighbourhoods” section was added to the NeighbourGood London website and launched in June 2017. London’s many resident-identified neighbourhoods are listed with a brief description, map, images, and links to their Ward Councillor and community association contacts, where available. Where no community association exists, residents will be invited to explore the programs available on the site to support them to build a new community group.

NEXT STEPS

The Neighbourhood Decision Making program

Based on the Council endorsed option for the city-wide rollout of the Neighbourhood Decision Making program, Civic Administration will finalize the process and communication strategy to actively implement the Neighbourhood Decision Making program across the city by September 2017. This will involve an extensive communication strategy to make sure all residents are aware of this opportunity. The communication plan will include informing residents that the current SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund will cease in 2018.

Neighbourhood Small Events Fund

Civic Administration will continue to support small neighbourhood and community events through existing resources in 2017. Commencing in 2018, subject to Council’s endorsement, the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund will be rolled out city-wide. This fund will provide one-time financial assistance to local groups who need additional funds (up to \$500.00) in order to hold their neighbourhood events. Civic Administration will develop a simple online application and communication strategy to promote the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund.

The Neighbourhood Small Events Funds will be allocated annually until the program funding of \$20,000 is exhausted. Civic Administration will review the process after the first year and make enhancements to the program if necessary.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding to support the administration and oversight of LSNS 2017-2020 is included within the Neighbourhood, Children and Fire services budget for 2017-2019, subject to annual confirmation through the annual budget update process. Additionally, as noted above, Council approved Strategic Investment Business Case #13 – London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy – which provides a total of \$750,000 from 2017 to 2019 to support the full roll-out of Neighbourhood Decision Making as outlined in this report.

Starting in 2018, the current SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund (\$50,000) will be re-purposed: \$20,000 to fund the proposed Neighbourhood Small Events Fund and \$30,000 to fund miscellaneous costs (e.g. supplies, communications, etc.) associated with administering the Neighbourhood Decision Making program. This division of funding will be assessed annually to make sure Civic Administration is able to adequately address the resident requests through the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund, and costs to support the successful implementation of the Neighbourhood Decision Making program.

CONCLUSION

London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy and its related strategies and actions builds on Council's commitment to "*Strengthening Our Community; by building vibrant, connected and engaged neighbourhoods*" through supporting neighbourhood driven activities and decision making.

Initiatives such as neighbourhood decision making and a neighbourhood event fund, brings neighbours together around community-driven projects that enhance and strengthen their neighbourhoods. Funded projects can transform the culture, pulse, and even the physical appearance of neighbourhoods. These projects have the potential to build a stronger sense of community by engaging a diverse range of residents across London's neighbourhoods.

With the support of the City of London, neighbourhood driven activities and decision making allows neighbourhood groups to initiate, manage, and implement projects that truly make a difference and strengthen London's neighbourhoods.

PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
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**APPENDIX A
Neighbourhood Decision Making 2016 Pilot Project Results**

Medway Decides	
Polar Express Saint André Bessette Secondary School Total:\$ 2500	High School students started a tradition by holding a gift raising event called the ‘Polar Express.’ Funding provided rental of a large bus, snacks, and warm drinks. A parade, games, and snacks drew residents to the event and gifts were raised for families at elementary schools in their community.
Little Libraries The Driscoll Family Total: \$ 800	Funding provided two small library structures to share books in and around the neighbourhood. People can leave a book or take a book. Two libraries were constructed and now reside in North West Optimist Park and University Heights Park.
Nature in Medway Friends of Medway Creek Total: \$ 11,700	The project will install Interpretative Signage in specifically designated areas along the Medway Heritage Forest ESA hiking trails with benches so people can slow down from their fast paced lives and enjoy the smells and sounds of nature. Content for the signs has been finalized, and sites for benches and signs were recently confirmed on a hike through the area in May.



Ward 13 Decides	
Gleaning Food Forest Total: \$ 5,000	A food forest has been planted to be used by community groups for the benefit of people in need. A gleaning food forest aligns with London's goal of ending poverty in the next generation. Residents hope this forest will set off a chain reaction to encourage all of London's neighbourhoods to plant food forests to increase food security and decrease poverty across our city.
Kindness Meters Total: \$ 1,500	Five "Kindness Meters" have been placed throughout parks in Ward 13. Kindness Meters are refurbished parking meters that allow people to donate their spare change to local charities. The funds would go to local organizations working in the areas of poverty and homelessness. Kindness Meters are a way for people to use their spare change to make real change in our community.
Art on Utility Boxes Total: \$ 4,250	Nine Bell boxes will be painted by local neighbourhood artists. This will improve the quality of life in the neighbourhoods and serve to build awareness and identity of each neighbourhood.
New Play Equipment in Blackfriars Park Total: \$ 4,250	Play equipment for young children has been installed in the existing play area in Blackfriars Park. This will create more opportunities for community connections and improve the overall quality of the park and surrounding neighbourhood.



APPENDIX B

London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy Core Principles

The core principles used to develop LSNS 2 were used to inform the development of the three models outlined in the body of the report above. These principles include:

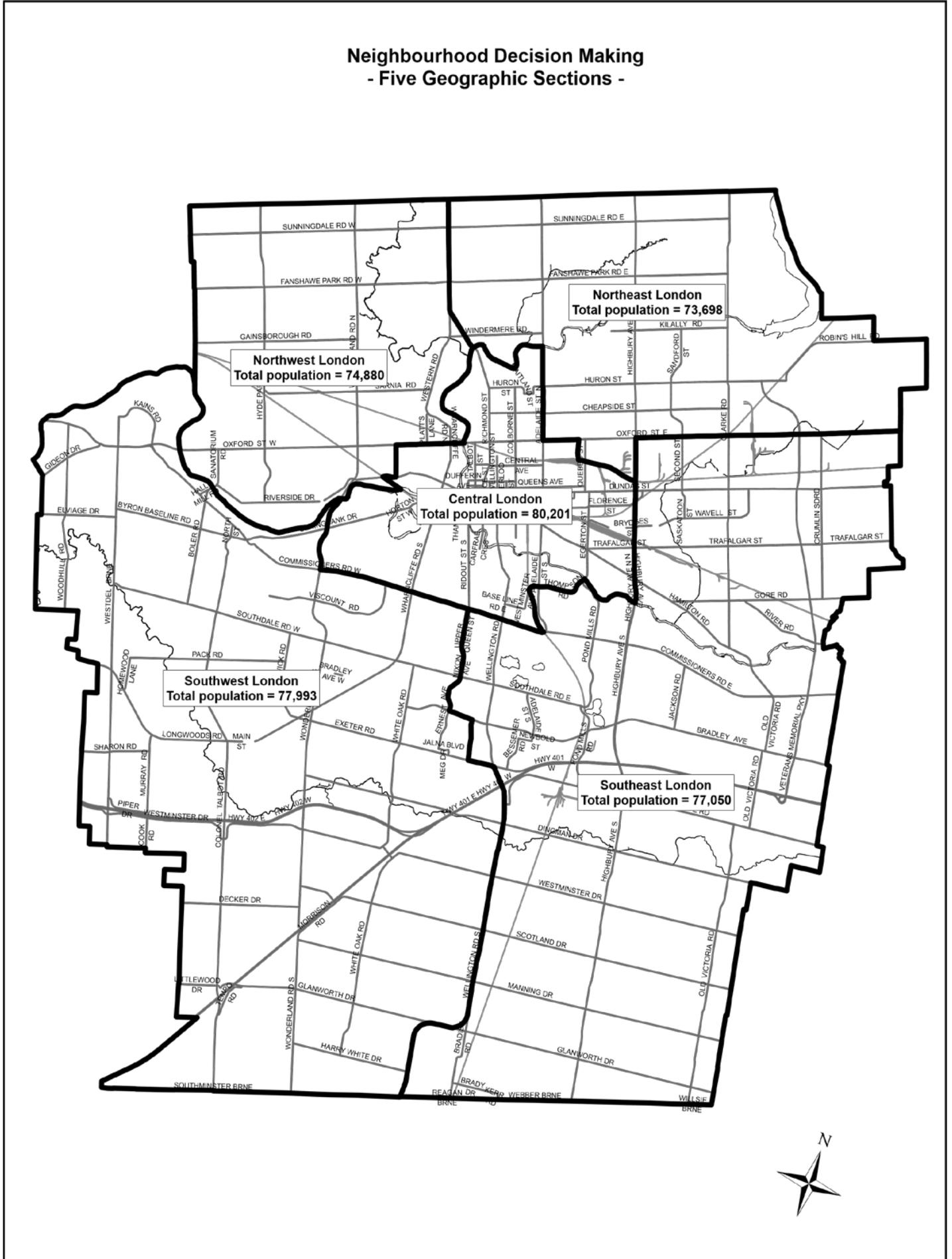
- *Engagement:* Residents are inspired to participate in the process, resulting in greater involvement in their neighbourhoods and the city as a whole.
- *Empowerment:* Residents gain knowledge, skills, and capacity to actively participate in building their neighbourhoods, and the city as a whole.
- *Connecting:* Residents get connected to their neighbours, neighbourhood, city-wide organizations, City Staff, and Councillors.
- *Resident-Driven:* The process is led by residents. All ideas come from residents and residents decide which ideas receive funding.
- *All Neighbourhoods:* Every neighbourhood in the city has equal access to participate.
- *All Residents:* Every resident in the city has equal access to participate.
- *Collaboration:* Both the process and the implementation of the projects will include many City service areas, Councillors, organizations, and residents.

APPENDIX C

Neighbourhood Decision Making City-Wide Rollout: Five Geographical Areas

Below is a map of the city divided into five geographical areas (Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central). The boundaries created below take the following into account:

- The similar population size of each area; and,
- The boundaries of the five geographic areas are drawn to align with resident-identified neighbourhoods to minimize cross-over and confusion as accurately as possible.



APPENDIX D

Neighbourhood Small Events Fund

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund is to:

- Provide one-time financial assistance to local groups who need some additional funds to hold their planned event; and,
- Assist groups with their events that will build capacity of local leaders, increase partnerships, and/or provide public engagement opportunities.

How the fund would work:

- Support groups with some of the costs associated with running small, local community/neighbourhood events
- Provide a one-time grant of up to \$500 to neighbourhood/community groups
- Be available January 1st of each year, to be allocated until funds are exhausted

Proposed Criteria:

Successful applicants will be:

- A group who does not have the financial means to fund their event requirements (have exhausted all other resources);
- A London-based grassroots neighbourhood or community group;
- A group with a desire to strengthen their community or neighbourhood; and,
- A group with liability insurance.

The small community/neighbourhood event must be:

- Open to the public and held on public property;
- Occur within the London city limits;
- Free with no generated revenue; and,
- Accessible, encouraging diversity and inclusion.

Eligible Expenses:

Funding through the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund would be used for expenses directly related to holding a community event on public property. Eligible events must be time-limited and deemed to be low to medium risk according to the Managing Director of Neighbourhood Children and Fire Services or his or her designate.

Examples of eligible requests may include:

- Mobile Stage
- First Aid Station
- Portable washrooms
- Signage
- Fees associated with booking a public venue

Funds cannot be used to:

- Fund staff positions;
- Pay for an event on private property;
- Fundraise;
- Support events that include alcohol;
- Support events where participation is conditional upon participation in religious activities;
- Fund activities that could be deemed discriminatory, as outlined by the Ontario Human Rights Code; or,
- Pay for expenses that have already been incurred.

Implementation and Next Steps

- Civic Administration will develop a simple online application
- Community Development and Funding will work with Corporate Communications to develop a communication strategy to promote the Neighbourhood Small Events Fund
- Funds will be allocated annually until the program funding of \$20,000 is exhausted
- Civic Administration will review the process after the first year and make enhancements to the program if necessary