

## **Project Robin Hood**

### **Who's missing a sense of community?**

Some say that real communities are a thing of the past. We've apparently all got money now; we just don't need our neighbours like we used to. A strong community sounds nice, but the only times we hear from each other is when we're screaming about barking dogs and traffic problems!

Let's be honest though: the authorities nowadays are often not helping. With governments providing and deciding everything, is it any wonder our community muscles are a little flabby?

Fortunately we can turn the whole game around.

Project Robin Hood is your chance to build your neighbourhood, your way. And the City will help you rather than smother you with red tape. Imagine the people around you giving you the money for your own special project - a veggie garden in the park across the road, a drink fountain somewhere you always wanted one, or some artwork on a boring blank wall – then rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty beside you!

This isn't a theory – it really works! Over 1,500 people were involved in Project Robin Hood last year. Could this be an idea whose time has come?

Read on to find out how you can bring your own idea and your own community to life with this unique initiative.

### **What the City likes**

To make it work, the City will do business with you in a whole new way. Here's what tickles your friends at the City of Melville:

1. Building community resilience, skills and cooperation
2. Giving people permission to create places they'd like to use
3. Shifting the local government culture from "provider" to "facilitator"
4. Opening minds and changing cultures is more important than physical outcomes
5. Community-driven not expert-driven projects
6. Encouraging quick wins rather than expensive, long and complicated projects
7. Staying true to the concept of "by the community, for the community"; involving the City of Melville as little as possible in each project

# What to expect

Who does what?	
Citizens: “The Creators”	City of Melville: “The Facilitators”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devising project ideas</li> <li>• Identifying people in the community to work with</li> <li>• Costing the project</li> <li>• Putting the application together</li> <li>• Applying for Project Robin Hood funding</li> <li>• Encouraging people to vote for the project!</li> <li>• If/when your project gets funded:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Working out what needs to be done, when, how and who will do what (remember – it’s your community project)</li> <li>○ Spending Project Robin Hood money responsibly</li> <li>○ Encouraging others to get involved and donate time, money or supplies</li> <li>○ Managing the project, problem solving</li> <li>○ Involving and communicating with the community</li> <li>○ Liaising with the City (if building on public land) to make sure infrastructure’s not damaged</li> <li>○ Completing the project</li> <li>○ Celebrating when you are finished</li> <li>○ Sharing successes!</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maintaining the asset/structure in the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the voting process</li> <li>• Engaging with the wider community and encouraging them to enter or vote for their favourite projects</li> <li>• Facilitating project funding</li> <li>• Finding ways to say “yes” to the spirit of your project</li> <li>• Providing an “Ombeardsman” to each Robin Hood project. Ombeardsmen will be points of contact and people to bounce ideas off. Ombeardsmen will encourage the groups if required, but <u>will not</u> be directly involved in managing or completing Robin Hood projects</li> <li>• Helping with location of underground infrastructure if required</li> <li>• Helping groups keep things “safe and legal”</li> <li>• Helping unfunded groups find other sources of funding</li> <li>• Facilitating contact between groups</li> </ul>

## What the City can't do:

- Supply materials or buy materials on behalf of groups
- Loan trucks and other equipment
- Act like an umpire in the event of conflict within groups
- Manage your project
- Handle public queries about your project
- Encourage something blatantly unsafe or something that will damage service pipes or cables
- Replace stuff that gets broken, guarantee upkeep in the future

# FAQs

**Q: We've got a great idea but it may be a bit too big for Project Robin Hood. What should we do?**

**A:** Easy, just start small! Break the project into steps and set your targets for half or a quarter of whatever your ideal might be. Then apply for funds accordingly.

You'll be amazed at what can happen once you get started. People show up out of nowhere to help. Companies with PR money prove even more generous than anyone dared dream. Someone will have exactly what you need lying unused in their garage and they'll be delighted to give it to you.

Last year one of the groups generated so much momentum in the planning of their idea that they didn't even need community funding at all!

**Q: I love the idea but I can't think of what to apply for. Can you help?**

**A:** By all means! The Ombeardsman would be very happy to help here. We can point you towards some of last year's most successful projects. We can lend you placemaking kits specifically designed to help you work your way through your ideas and put them into action. Or to start with you may prefer it if we simply put you in touch with groups that are already working on something that's right up your alley.

Drop us a line!

**Q: We're halfway through and we've run out of money/supplies. Can the City give us more? It's for a good cause.**

**A:** The real goal of Project Robin Hood is stronger communities. In the same way that lifting weights for your friend in the gym would not make your friend stronger, the City undermines community spirit if it puts money into every idea that needs help.

Think instead like the tough, resilient people of old, who would ask "what can we do to make the idea work? Are there some local businesses who can help? What about we hold our own small fundraising event? Are there ways we can obtain our supplies cheaper?" You'll be utterly astounded at how effective these simple questions are, and you'll be so much prouder of the final result when you've stared down the hard times yourselves.

**Q: We're building something on land owned or managed by the City. Does that mean we hand the asset over to the City when we've built it?**

**A:** The City indemnifies you from liability once the structure is complete, which means you don't have to have it insured or anything like that (though you do need to keep the site safe while you build).

But remember the real aim of Project Robin Hood is stronger communities. Ultimately, of course, you're not a contractor building things to order for the City. You're a citizen who is creating something for his or her community. The City ruins this citizenship model if it acts like a big brother and takes over the maintenance of new structures.

The best way forward is to factor a few years maintenance costs (paintbrushes, varnish, paint etc) into the sum you'll be asking the community for upfront at voting time. Down the track don't forget there may be local businesses that might love to help with your winning idea! Maybe you could sell them on the idea of a simple sponsorship?

**Q: We've run into a snag. Can someone at the City help us fix it?**

**A:** We can sometimes offer limited technical advice but it's far better if you think of ways to use (or expand) your own networks to solve the problem.

Let's say you're having trouble with your community garden. Maybe there's someone else nearby who's worked in a community project like yours before? Could you approach the local Men's Shed or a nearby carpenter for offcuts to use as stakes? Is there an internet forum you could join? Maybe you could ask someone at the local nursery about how to get rid of cabbage moths? Questions like that will win the day for your garden and they'll build the long lasting, deep rooted connections that make a community strong.

**Q: What happens if our garden dies or our community gazebo is vandalised?**

**A:** What would happen if the garden or gazebo were in your backyard? You'd make a decision about whether to replant the garden or repair the gazebo. You'd find your own funds and you'd press on. If you decided not to go ahead you'd simply pull out the dead plants or pull down the gazebo so it was safe. You wouldn't call the City!

But maybe the setback is just the challenge you need? One of the most inspiring moments of 2013 was watching a group bounce back from the theft of thousands of dollars' worth of crucial supplies. These folks asked themselves questions like: "How can we turn this around? How can we use this incident?" and almost all of the stolen goods were replaced in no time. They can be just as proud of their resilience as they are of their finished project.