

## NEXT50: Building Momentum

NEXT50 is a multi year project to develop understanding on what improvements to the facilities, programs, events, and activities would entice more neighbours to join the BPHA. The project is a work in progress! Ultimately, our task is to develop a **common vision for community building in our very own Beechwood neighbourhood**. All based on input and ideas of the people who live here!

## WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN 2020

Despite COVID throwing a wrench in the team's plans for face-to-face discussion sessions this summer, great progress has been achieved on many other fronts:

1. We have surveyed members and local prospects and used ZOOM to share the findings. A key learning in this survey was the focus on community building evident in our history. These events are viewed as part of BPHA but are, in fact, separate community initiatives which are Board supported. Of particular interest is the affinity shown for the Produce Stand. Before COVID, the Produce Stand was the most highly rated aspect of the BPHA's total offerings (it scored even higher than the pool). It is one of several community building activities that have 'spun out' of the BPHA over the years. Others include producing a neighbourhood history book (2019), organizing the sourcing & planting of 50 trees throughout the neighbourhood (2018), neighbourhood wide bicycle safety clinics (2016), sponsorship of a refugee family (2016), working collaboratively with Beechwood South to fundraise & build a local playground (2017), planning & construction of neighbourhood 'little library' (2014 & 2019), Clair Lake dredging & rehabilitation (2008 -2015).
2. We involved UWaterloo Engineering experts in pool concrete and tennis wall assessment. This first assessment was generally optimistic about the condition of the concrete. A 2<sup>nd</sup>, more in-depth inspection is planned for the Spring of 2021 (assuming COVID restrictions are easing allowing, access to the University equipment).
3. We collected more 'ideas' on the BPHA website between March & October 2020. We have clipped out the verbatim ideas, creating an anonymous spread sheet.
4. We were successful in an application to the City of Waterloo, Neighbourhood Matching Fund (NMF) and received a grant of \$2,000.00. This was used in part, to create a 'launch kit' for the project, which we distributed to every mailbox in the catchment (the kit included information about the BPHA and the objectives of the NEXT50 project, plus a small gift of a pen).
5. We have done due diligence on assessing our eligibility to obtain charitable status with CRA. At this point the conclusion is that we would not qualify for charitable status. A private club set up for the enjoyment of members only will not qualify. **If** the constitution were to be updated and **if** its stated objectives fit with the CRA criteria, then we should reconsider an application. To that end we recommend that the Board recruit a Member-at-Large to focus on updating our BPHA constitution, and if possible align it's objectives with the CRA criteria for charities.
6. We worked with the UW School of Planning to design a course for 4<sup>th</sup> year planning design students. The course focuses on possible site and program designs for the NEXT50 project. It is currently underway. These design concepts will be finalized by December 2020 and shared with community members during 2021. They will serve as exciting stimulus material for dialogue.

## 2021 – Concepts for the future of this community

Essentially, we have a much-loved community association (Board and volunteers) that is Beechwood (Park)-based, but not constrained by boundaries. However, within our 'claimed' catchment area there are approximately 260 non-member households that currently see no value in becoming members. Let us discover what would motivate them to become involved and lend their support!

As we move through 2021, members and non-members alike, will have several chances to share their views on the future of this community. In addition, the design concepts & ideas provided to us by the UW Planning students will provide an exciting opportunity for discourse. As the world looks to emerge from the COVID pandemic, many people are focusing on **'building back better.'** In many ways the timing for our NEXT50 project could not be better.