**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE**

**Strathcona County Community Hub Study Final Report**

**Report Purpose**
To provide the Priorities Committee a presentation on the final report for the Community Hub study.

**Our Prioritized Strategic Goals**
Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents
Goal 5 - Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships
Goal 6 - Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents

**Report**
Background
In Budget 2018, Strathcona County Council approved the exploration of a community hub model for Strathcona County. This feasibility study is an important milestone in implementing the Social Framework and aligns with all four outcomes of improving affordability, access to programs and services, safety, connectedness and inclusion. A community hub model also aligns with five of the eight strategic goals for Strathcona County.

A community hub would serve as a physical location to further increase program delivery, promote community connections, reduce geographical challenges, and offer integrated service delivery where a variety of community partners, organizations and various levels of government collaborate to offer support, social services and interventions.

Intelligent Futures was procured to explore a potential community hub model for Strathcona County. Various existing community hub models throughout Canada were examined for best practice research. To honour a principle of co-creation seen throughout the Social Framework, it was important that potential non-profit and government partners, along with Council and appropriate County departments, were engaged in this thinking and conceptualization process.

During phase one, a steering committee consisting of staff and community partners directed the project management in consultation with Intelligent Futures. Key community stakeholders were further identified in a workshop in March to initiate a community conversation. Phase two began with a brief public survey held in April and open to anyone who lives or works in Strathcona County to determine the interest and mix of services for a potential community hub. The first community partner engagement workshop was held April 19 to empower a diversified mix of community partners and stakeholders to ask questions, offer opinions and provide insight into the Community Hub Feasibility Study. Based on this feedback, a draft purpose package was tested amongst stakeholders through a survey. A second workshop was held on June 26 during which time community partners were asked to further define services and build prototypes that were tested through a visitor journey. In July, partners interested in a potential co-located space were asked for additional feedback through a final survey to define space and leasehold requirements as well as express a preference for a governance model. Phase three was focused on examining the results of the previous two phases.

Final Report
Through a conversation with a wide variety of community stakeholders, clear interest and enthusiasm for a potential community hub in Strathcona County was established. Based on the results from the research and engagement process, the attached final report offers a series of guiding principles, insights and recommendations for a potential Community Hub model in Strathcona County. Key considerations include interdependent elements defined as services, space, synergy and visitor experience. Information gathered through best practice research indicated there is no conclusive "formula" for a community hub model, however most have a core service or mandate which all the other services complement.

The vision for a community hub is a welcoming and inclusive gathering place that celebrates connectedness and diversity as well as promotes acceptance, collaboration, information sharing and cooperative delivery of key social services to address complex social issues. Integrating the County's assets, connections and resources with community partners within one hub provides community members new opportunities to create value in their own lives and the lives of others. A community hub is about serving the needs of Strathcona County residents and building community. The ideal experience will create a sense of belonging, a clear pathway for supports and a safe space that ensures everyone is part of a community that cares about them.

Core services offer visitors social service support, skill building and capacity building through all life stages. Complimentary services provide reasons for residents to visit beyond accessing social services. They are structured services, businesses, social enterprise and activities like coffee shops, yoga studios, library, job training, post-secondary education or medical offices. Casual interactions and community building activities will provide the opportunity to increase connectedness, provide an opportunity to "hang out" and reflect that everyone is welcome, safe and comfortable.

The community hub is for all ages, incomes, genders and ethnicities. It has a casual, comfortable and inviting atmosphere that promotes informal interactions between community members and removes stigma often associated with accessing social services. A "wayfinder" acts as the concierge to provide a welcoming, friendly and informative experience while Solution Navigators focus on providing visitors a customized social service experience and increase accessibility by identifying solutions to reduce barriers to service delivery as well as implement capacity and skill building approaches. Hub visitors come first so breaking silos and cross training staff and volunteers make the social service experience seamless for visitors.

Design features should include flexible and shared functional spaces that evoke connectedness and ignite relationship building. The design should encourage and enable cooperation between the user groups, to allow for shared multi-use spaces and facilities, and create a common vision that benefits individual aspirations as well as those of the broader community. For that reason, private, semi-private and public spaces should be considered. These include a community kitchen, drop in childcare, lend and swap shop, job training, café or restaurant, gym or yoga studio and an art gallery, library, or museum. The hub effectively facilitates sharing, learning and lounging in a warm, welcoming environment. The interior would include a welcome kiosk, publicly displayed art, an information centre, and open communal spaces. The exterior could include comfortable outdoor spaces, a community garden, play space, event space, community libraries or pantries and public landscape or art feature.

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The community hub concept exemplifies what can be achieved when organizations and individuals come together to create a community in action. The hub would reflect a shift in the way organizations, community groups and individuals think, behave, and convene as described in the Social Framework. Partners should share a vision, be well versed in each other's role and share ownership, decision making and resources. Service providers should be bold, sensitive, foster innovation and commit to supporting internal structures. To date, over 30 organizations have expressed interest in co-locating. As the discussion shifts from exploratory to the tangible, consideration around which partners have the interest and capacity to contribute will become an important topic. Criteria for determining co-location include operational mandates that address root causes, their ability to welcome and inspire others, the immediate need and variety of service delivery, their skill to empower citizens, assessment of potential organizational tensions and long-term planning. A clear agreement acts as a guide to work cooperatively towards a shared vision of improving the identified outcomes through the Social Framework.

While early signs indicated there is not a preferred governance model, as clarity on partners emerges through subsequent stages in the hub development process, considerations around the governance model, space requirements and operations can be explored. Based on existing hubs, research indicated majority of the hubs studied are non-profits, organized by a Board of Directors. Two were led by municipal governments. Some were partially private (renting out space for events or meetings), to help financially sustain the hub. Overall, the hub model (in terms of operation, servicing, tenancy and governance) varies based on the context of the specific community.

Proximity to transit, parking and visitor access to active modes of transportation are essential when considering a primary urban location while a pop up or digital community hub would provide support for rural residents.

Next Steps
A timeline is provided detailing each of the following next steps over a 18 month period for consideration.

- Broader Public Engagement: While the study focused on community partner engagement, the conversation would shift to an inclusive and welcoming conversation with the public. This will determine whether a Community Hub is supported in Strathcona County and allow decisions-makers to understand the desire for complimentary services and casual interaction spaces.

- Potential Partner Engagement and Exploration: While there is a significant level of interest among organizations who have participated in the process to date, the stage will begin to distinguish between those that are able and willing to commit to the concept and those that are supportive of the concept. This will provide an increased clarity on the spatial, economic, design and temporal requirements of a Community Hub. At this stage, a written commitment to continue the process should be made by the organizations that identify themselves as potential partners, rather than allies. This would include Strathcona County, which would require Council approval to proceed as a partner in the Community Hub initiative. These organizations will then collaboratively explore governance options.

- Potential Partner Business Planning: In order to ensure a sustainable Community Hub, an understanding of the sources of funding and the anticipated costs to operate

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are key considerations. A Community Hub will face the same costs of construction and operation as any building, but the integrated nature of the facility and the diversity of the organizations involved add significant complexity to the process.

- Hub Location Review: Currently, there is no definitive site for the Community Hub. As the Hub exploration proceeds to this stage, there are likely three possibilities for locating the facility. These are:
    1. A single site has been identified for the Hub.
    2. Multiple candidate sites have been identified for the Hub.
    3. There is uncertainty of possible Hub site locations.

- Refined Design Planning: The following is an outline of three distinct possibilities for pursuing the building design procurement process:
    1. Scenario 1 – Design Process
       *A single site has been identified for the Hub. A detailed facility design is established through this process.*
    2. Scenario 2 – Hybrid Feasibility & Design
       *Multiple candidate sites have been identified for the Hub. Analysis of each site is completed, followed by detailed facility design.*
    3. Scenario 3 – Bridging Approach
       *There is uncertainty of possible Hub site locations. This process will define design outcomes, preferred site and project budget.*

## Council and Committee History

December 4, 2017  Council approved the 2018 Budget – 2018-INIT-19-FCS-Community Hub/Seniors Centre Feasibility Study

January 30, 2018  The Priorities Committee was provided an overview of the Social Framework and update on the implementation progress

## Other Impacts
**Policy:** N/A
**Legislative/Legal:** N/A
**Interdepartmental:** Planning and Development Services; Facility Services; Recreation, Parks and Culture; Facility Services; Economic Development and Tourism; Corporate Finance
**Master Plan/Framework:** N/A

## Enclosure(s)

1                Strathcona County Community Hub Study
2                Strathcona County Community Hub Study Presentation

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