

New Edinburgh Community Alliance

Strategic Priorities 2014 –16

Revised Draft

September 27, 2014

## Introduction

In June, 2013, the Board of Directors of the New Edinburgh Community Alliance (NECA) met to discuss its priorities. It was agreed that a top concern was to promote engagement with the community, and to use the results of consultations with the community to help shape board plans.

This led to a decision to organize a Forum on the Future of New Edinburgh, working in collaboration with two other community organizations: the Crichton Cultural Council (or "3Cs") and the New Edinburgh Community and Arts Centre (NECTAR). All community members and residents were invited to participate. The Forum took place on April 27, 2014; the event, which was well received by participants, resulted in a report which is on the New Edinburgh website at <http://www.newedinburgh.ca/news/new-edinburgh-community-forum-report>.

The Forum provided a helpful perspective on what people valued about New Edinburgh, and insights into their areas of concern or interest. The Board of Directors of NECA held several discussions in the wake of the Forum to review its results and to use those results to help shape a draft strategic plan for NECA.

This document is that plan, which we are sharing with the community to seek reaction. At the Annual General Meeting of NECA, on October 29 2014, we will hold a discussion of this document with NECA members and others from the community. We will welcome comments and suggestions. Following that discussion, we will finalize this plan; it will then guide NECA priorities for the next two or three years.

## NECA Priorities

Two overarching NECA objectives will continue to guide our actions: first, our desire to be seen and to act as an organization that embraces the entire community of New Edinburgh and all the issues within it, and second, to continue to build strong relationships with community members and seek opportunities to engage them in our deliberations and our activities.

### 1. Promoting Responsible Development of the Beechwood Corridor

It is clear that community members are deeply concerned about how Beechwood Avenue will evolve. The presence of two major new condominium/commercial projects at either end of the avenue will bring life to the street, but will bring new challenges, notably in the areas of traffic and safety. The opening of a major new residential area on the former Rockcliffe Air Base will amplify those challenges. Meanwhile, there is much to be done to improve the streetscape and to encourage its development in line with the Community Development Plan that was approved several years ago, but which often seems to be ignored as new developments take place along the avenue.

New Edinburgh fronts upon only a small section of Beechwood and is not in a position to exercise a strong influence over its evolution. However, its development is a shared concern of a number of other community associations in the area: Vanier, Lindenlea, Rockcliffe and Manor Park. NECA anticipates working closely with these other community groups, but we believe the Beechwood Village Alliance (BVA) would be the logical organization to bring all these groups together proactively and to present a united front to developers and to the City.

In the past year, Catherine Lindquist served as our liaison person with the BVA and she will continue in this role in the coming year supported by two other board members. We hope the BVA will play a proactive role on Beechwood-related issues and we will do what we can to support its activities.

Specific goal: Our goal in so doing will be to give expression to the opinions voiced in the community Forum, including the values of aesthetics, diversity and safety, and to promote the consistent application of the Community Development Plan working through the BVA and in concert with other communities.

## 2. Transportation and Safety

Many concerns were expressed at the Forum with respect to traffic flow, automobile speed, parking, bicycle use and pedestrian safety, particularly for the elderly. Community members suggested a variety of measures that could be helpful in addressing these issues.

There are also issues of safety and security arising from the threat of flooding that was very present in our community in the spring of 2014. Fortunately, the heavy rains that may have caused the Rideau River to overflow its banks did not materialize. However, this threat might well materialize in future years. A key step in this regard will be to update the flood plain plan of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority. The city has shown some indication of the willingness to take this step; NECA members will pursue this objective.

Finally, the NECA Board has noted that there have been several developments in recent years that have posed threats for individuals in the community or for the community at large. The ice storm was one such development. There have also been several significant fires in the community, inflicting serious damage on both commercial properties and residences. Personal safety and security is always a concern, particularly since the demise a few years ago of the Block Parent initiative in New Edinburgh.

NECA proposes to establish a new Transportation and Safety Committee to consider these interlocking questions and to set priorities, with a community-wide perspective.

Specific goals: to determine the best ways of addressing the above issues; to lobby for the updating of the flood plain plan; to develop a broad-based emergency plan encompassing a range of issues and threats of concern to the community. Some issues in this area may be somewhat controversial; if necessary, the Task Force may organize specific issue-focused community forums to seek input on such questions.

## 3. Protecting Heritage While Promoting Responsible Development

The heritage character of New Edinburgh was cited on many occasions during the Forum as a treasured dimension of our community. Residents did not want NECA to adopt the stance of opposing all development, but rather to encourage development that is in keeping with the character of our community while at the same time protecting its heritage dimensions.

Specific goals: NECA's Heritage and Development Committee will continue to pursue these goals, looking to strengthen our relationship with the City, and with the local Councilor in particular, and also to form more collaborative relations with responsible developers. In addition, a critical goal will be to ensure that the Heritage Conservation District Plan of the City, which is to be updated in the coming year, is drafted in a

manner sensitive to New Edinburgh concerns and is ultimately converted into a bylaw, which will give it (and us) more clout.

#### 4. Fostering Community Engagement

A rich variety of suggestions were announced during the Forum with respect to how stronger bonds with community members and residents could be forged. These included proposals for the holding of more community events, outreach initiatives to different groups in the community, more efforts to secure city funding for NECTAR, and greater use of volunteers to spread the workload around, and offer residents a chance to contribute to community activities.

Community members also pointed to the confusing variety of organizations serving the community in New Edinburgh, and recommended that these organizations work more closely together, or even examine the possibility of uniting.

In discussing these proposals, Board directors that NECA has not been well-equipped to engage volunteers from the community. Directors also noted that some of the programmatic initiatives proposed in the Forum seemed better suited to the role of NECTAR or the 3Cs than to NECA itself. Directors felt that it would make sense to have a single focus within New Edinburgh for promoting and liaising with potential volunteers, and for identifying specific areas where they could contribute.

Specific actions: in light of these considerations, directors felt that NECA should take a proactive role in exploring opportunities for closer collaboration, or perhaps even fusion, with other community organizations who might be open to this possibility. We will examine the possibility of establishing the position of Volunteer Coordinator, or something similar, in collaboration with NECTAR and perhaps the 3Cs. Discussions have already been set in motion with NECTAR, and further discussions with them and possibly other community organizations (depending on their interest) are anticipated in future. At the same time, directors noted that there are many practical issues that will need to be addressed as these discussions go forward.

In the context of those discussions, joint initiatives along the lines of some of those suggested by residents, such as more community events, may be launched.

#### 5. The Greening of New Edinburgh

The Board noted that many residents expressed appreciation for the green spaces and trees in our community. These are valuable assets and more might be done to promote New Edinburgh as a "green" community. This could include greater responsiveness to environmental considerations.

Board members noted that "Friends of the Park" is already active in protecting Stanley Park in promoting its interests. However they felt that more could be done beyond the park itself to enhance the "green" character of the community. But directors did not feel that, as currently constituted, the NECA board had the resources to be able to tackle this priority in addition to the four others mentioned above. Therefore this would not be adopted as a "top priority" by the board for the next year or two.

Specific action: it was agreed that at the Annual General Meeting In October 2014, our interest in this issue would be flagged and community members attending the meeting would be invited to step forward if they wished to contribute to this challenge. Whether any more could be done would depend on the community's response.