

BARRIE EXAMINER

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A new way of doing business

A new project for our older neighbourhoods is an example of a new way of doing business at city hall.

'The people are the city' is the City of Barrie's motto, but we haven't always been that good at walking the talk.

The new Historic Neighbourhoods Strategy (HNS) is aiming to change that.



Jeff Lehman

WARD 2 COUNCILLOR

For the first time, residents of older neighbourhoods will be directly responsible for telling city hall what needs to change in their community and how we are going to make those changes happen.

This project is a template for how I think planning needs to happen in Barrie — led by residents, not staff or consultants.

Through an unprecedented public consultation effort, this project will see the residents of seven older neighbourhoods in Barrie establish a vision for their neighbourhood, and build the plan to achieve it.

This is a big change in two ways.

The first major change is that instead of looking at a single issue (say, parks) and looking at the whole city, the HNS will take a single neighbourhood and look at all services within the area — from safety and security, to roads and pipes, to parks and culture.

Secondly, the residents themselves are at the centre of this — the vision will come from them and they will be writing parts of the report themselves.

Over the past several months, a co-ordinating committee comprised of representatives from each of the seven neighbourhoods has been setting direction for the project, and helping the city come up with new ways to ensure everyone in the neighbourhoods can get involved. Some of their innovative ideas have already been rolled out.

As this is a new approach to planning for Barrie, we are starting by focusing on a relatively small number of neighbourhoods in the central part of the city, including Allandale, the Innisfil and Bradford Street area, and the areas west and north of downtown.

These areas have some unique challenges, where facilities and infrastructure are in need of renewal, and where social issues exist that aren't present in newer suburbs. They are also areas with an enormous reservoir of strengths, with older properties being redeveloped for new uses, a significant number of small businesses and start-up companies, and a wide diversity of residents.

If the HNS succeeds in mobilizing the residents of these neighbourhoods and building a strong and viable action plan, it can become a model for a new way of doing business in other neighbourhoods in Barrie that are experiencing change.

There's more information on the HNS on the project website at hns.barrie.ca, or you can call Barrie City Hall and speak with Stacey Forfar in our planning department, who is co-ordinating the project.

One of the new ways to get people involved is a barbecue planned for Saturday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Centennial Park.

All are welcome and I hope many Barrie residents will come out to learn more about this exciting new project.

Jeff Lehman is Barrie's Ward 2 councillor