

Neighbourhoods Alive!

A Multi-Pronged Initiative for Community Based Neighbourhood Revitalization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This case study evaluates the Province of Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) initiative as a multi-pronged model for community-based neighbourhood revitalization in Winnipeg's North End neighbourhoods. The evaluation focuses on the processes by which NA! facilitates community-based neighbourhood renewal

through an established partnership with the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC). Emphasis is placed on partnerships that encourage a grassroots approach to community development and neighbourhood revitalization. The evaluation is articulated through multi-pronged NA! project initiatives that respond to the diverse areas of physical improvements; employment and training; education and recreation; and safety and crime prevention.

The purpose of this case study is to identify opportunities and challenges of the NA! model in order to develop enhancement recommendations for NA! to function as a service vehicle through which effective inner city revitalization in Winnipeg can occur.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The challenge of inner city decline and disinvestment is multifaceted and requires multi-pronged approaches to renewal. There is no single way to rebuild neglected communities. However, community-based neighbourhood revitalization is one approach which attempts to reverse the progression of neglect and decline. The intent of this approach is to identify the local strengths, capacities, issues and challenges of a specific neighbourhood. It is assumed that this approach will aid the community in the development of a comprehensive grassroots neighbourhood revitalization plan which will work toward improving the overall quality of life in the community. To sustain the community building process, it is essential to build

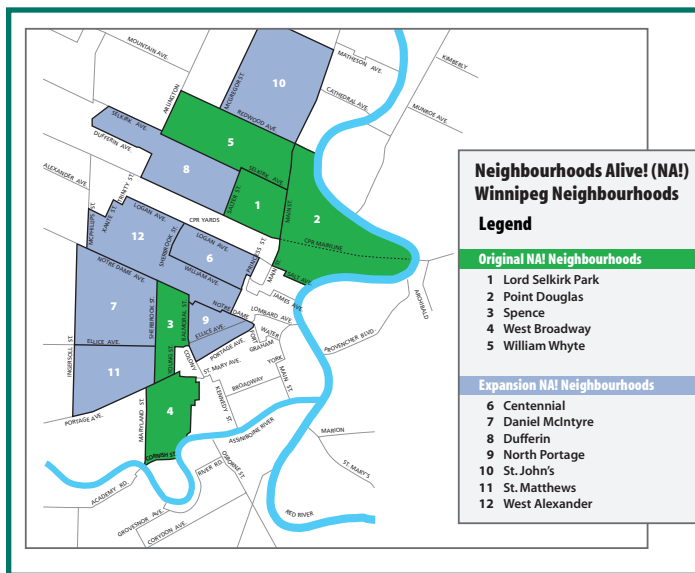
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local capacity, foster community learning, establish and sustain community partnerships.

Neighbourhoods Alive!

Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) is a local community development initiative that can be considered ‘cutting edge’ for its approach to urban neighbourhood revitalization. NA! was launched in 2000, and is best described as the Province of Manitoba’s long-term, community based, social and economic development strategy. The goal of NA! is to revitalize designated neighbourhoods in Manitoba’s three largest cities, including Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. NA! works toward revitalizing communities by providing community based organizations with financial assistance and planning tools and supports. These supports are intended to facilitate local strategic/neighbourhood planning processes, capital/enhancement projects, economic development and community support programs. Specifically, NA! adopts a *community-led model* to address neighbourhood revitalization. Although NA! is administered at the provincial level, the community-led model enables Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) to establish goals and develop strategies that best meet community objectives. The community-led model to neighbourhood revitalization is what renders NA! as a responsive, multi-pronged and progressive cutting edge initiative. The community-led model has been a valuable approach through which provincial funding and community-driven strategies have encouraged positive neighbourhood change.



Map of Neighbourhoods Alive! Winnipeg Neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhoods Alive! Programs

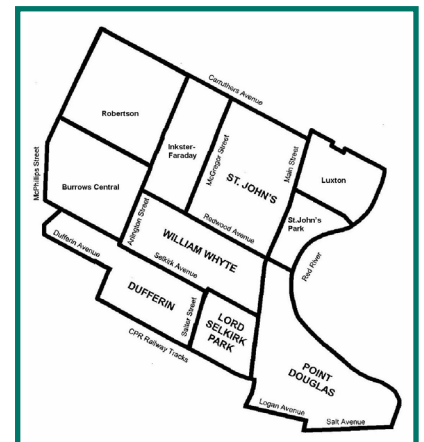
NA! identifies that the community is in the best position to generate objectives and strategies to support neighbourhood revitalization. NA! funding responds to four key areas which are designed to address the revitalization process. These areas of eligible funding include *housing and physical improvements; employment and training; education and recreation; and safety and crime prevention*. Designated NA! neighbourhoods have access to a series of programs, including Lighthouses, Training Initiatives, Community Initiatives, Neighbourhood Housing Assistance, Neighbourhood Development Assistance (NDA) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). For further descriptions of the NA! programs, refer to the Neighbourhoods Alive! website.

NA! partners with five NRCs including the Spence Neighbourhood Association, West Broadway Development Corporation, Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation and the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC) to deliver the multi-pronged initiative. NA! provides project funding (through the NRF) and core operational funding support (through the NDA) to assist NRCs in the management and coordination of community based renewal in their respective communities. The coordination of revitalization initiatives are guided by the goals set out in *Five Year Neighbourhood Plans*, developed by each NRC in consultation with their community.

FACTS OF THE CASE

In 1998, NECRC was established to promote the social, economic, and cultural renewal of the North End of Winnipeg. NECRC works within 11 neighbourhoods, five of which are designated NA! neighbourhoods (North Point Douglas, Lord Selkirk Park, William Whyte, St. John's and Dufferin).

NECRC engages and collaborates with North End residents, businesses and



Map of North End Neighbourhoods.

community organizations. The work of NECRC is guided by the principles of Community Economic Development and their Five Year Neighbourhood Plan. The seven focus areas in NECRC's neighbourhood renewal plan include: *community development, community economic development, housing, employment, recreation and wellness, culture and diversity and safety.*

CED Principles

1. *Local Employment*
2. *Local Ownership & Decision-making*
3. *Local Economic Linkages*
4. *Re-invest Profits Back into the Community*
5. *Local Knowledge & Skill Development*
6. *Positive Environmental Impact*
7. *Health & Well-being*
8. *Neighbourhood Stability & Community Cohesion*
9. *Human Dignity*

For a further description of the CED Principles, refer to:
www.gov.mb.ca/ai/programs/neighbourhoods/toolbox/ced.html

North End Case Studies

The NRF provides financial support for community-driven initiatives that enhance local capacity. To be eligible for the NRF, projects must commit to building neighbourhood capacity; neighbourhood stability; neighbourhood economic development; and/or neighbourhood well-being.

The NA! multi-pronged initiative responds to the *physical, social and economic* priorities of NRCs and their communities. The following four projects, funded by the NRF, showcase the value of a holistic, multi-pronged approach to neighbourhood renewal:

1. The **North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project**, administered by NECRC, was developed to encourage the physical improvement of storefronts and safety features of North End businesses, agencies, organizations and cultural centres. The project allows for a 50/50 cost sharing grant to undertake exterior enhancements. Eligible applicants are able to apply for a maximum \$3,000 grant to supplement their Storefront Improvement projects.



Eddy's Restaurant & Billiards, Before and After Photos, North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project.

2. The **Aboriginal Youth Business and Money Management Project** is administered by SEED Winnipeg. This project aims to increase economic development opportunities and services for North End Aboriginal Youth through introductory economic and business development skills workshops for youth aged 16 to 30 years.

3. The **North End Wellness Centre**, administered by the North End Wellness Centre Inc., is designed to become a multi-service centre that will focus on community wellness. This project is a collaborative endeavour between NECRC, YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, Splash Child Care, and Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. The North End Wellness Centre will include a gymnasium, a youth recreation centre, an indoor skateboard park and play structure; a childcare facility; a community kitchen; and community meeting spaces.

4. The **North End School Resource Officer Project**, administered by NECRC, offers resources to reduce the risk of youth involvement in the justice system through the placement of School Resource Officers (with a policing background) in North End High Schools. The project responds to parent councils' identified need to address safety in their children's schools, and aims to enhance partnerships and communication between the police, schools and the community at large.



Proposed Design of North End Wellness Centre.

ACTIONS & INTERACTIONS

In order to analyze the effectiveness of NA! as a multi-pronged initiative for community-based neighbourhood revitalization, a sample of interviews were conducted. For a balanced perspective, interview participants were recruited to include academics, technical assistance providers, project staff and NA! staff. The focus of the interviews was to highlight how the North End case studies implemented planning processes necessary for community-based neighbourhood revitalization to occur. These processes include **collaboration**, **evaluation**, **technical assistance**, **project sustainability**, **community investments**, and **building capacity**.

The interviews highlighted how each North End case study responded to the NA! goals. Specifically, the North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project works to facilitate physical improvements in the North End. The Aboriginal Youth Business and Money Management Project aims to enhance youth opportunities in employment and training. The North End Wellness Centre Project responds to the North End's need for a recreation and wellness centre. Finally, the North End School Resource Officer Project works toward improving safety and preventing crime in the North End.

The interviews also revealed that while all of the above mentioned processes are fundamental components for neighbourhood revitalization, some processes were more relevant than others for each project. For instance, the North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project responds to the community-identified need for physical improvements to businesses. To determine eligible grant recipients, the project has a small Steering Committee comprised of representatives from NECRC and several North End Business Improvement Zones. This project is evaluated with before/after

photos along with grant recipient surveys or focus groups. Therefore, this project relates to the planning processes of *collaboration*, *sustainability*, *evaluation* and *investment*.

The Aboriginal Youth Business and Money Management Project has not yet been fully implemented. However, the project required the development of a workshop outreach plan. This was done in consultation with specific project stakeholders including community groups such as the Manitoba Métis Federation, NECRC – Path Centre, Urban Circle Training Centre, Partners for Careers and two North End high schools. SEED Winnipeg was also required to develop promotional materials and implement the outreach plan to enlist approximately 100 participants. Finally, SEED Winnipeg was required to develop strategies for implementing the workshops. As such, this project relates to the planning processes of *collaboration* and *building capacity*.

The concept for the North End Wellness Centre began to take shape when the former North End YMCA closed in 1995. With the closing of the North End YMCA, the North End became deficient of a social gathering and recreational facility. To date, the project has received capital funding from the Province of Manitoba (NA! and Urban Development Initiatives) and the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program. The Province of Manitoba also committed funding to facilitate project development, allowing for the development of business and building plans. This funding further contributed to a community consultation process regarding the design of the building. Therefore, this project relates to the planning processes of *collaboration*, *technical assistance*, *evaluation* and *investments*.

The North End School Resource Officer Project is supervised by a Management Committee which includes representatives from NECRC, the Winnipeg Police Service, the Winnipeg School Division, Manitoba Justice, the community and the student population. Three School Resource Officers (SROs) are placed in three North End high schools and are responsible for an additional twelve elementary and junior high schools. The SROs are responsible for collaborating with school administrators, staff, students, parents, and the community to identify and respond to crime and safety issues. To date, this project has undergone a positive evaluation, conducted by Prairie Research Associates. Therefore, this project relates to the planning processes of *collaboration*, *evaluation*, and *building capacity*.

LESSONS LEARNED

Project Highlights

The following project highlights reveal particular successes and/or challenges that each North End project has encountered in the neighbourhood revitalization process.

Collaboration

North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project: The success of this project was partly due to the collaboration inherent in the small Steering Committee. The committee assists in reviewing grant applications. Committee members ensure that grants are accessible to their own constituent businesses. As well, they provide financial support to supplement physical improvements in the community.

Aboriginal Youth Business and Money Management Project: To support their funding proposal to NA!, SEED Winnipeg acquired support letters from community organizations, including Manitoba Metis Federation, NECRC Path Centre, Urban Circle Training Centre, and Partners for Careers. Although this project did not come to fruition as a result of collaboration between community partners, communication among community organizations ensures that programs are not being duplicated. Communication further ensures that programs receive greater exposure and are accessible to groups from diverse community-based organizations. However, in bringing this project to fruition, trying to meet the needs of the funder while meeting the needs of the organization has been challenging. To address this challenge, NA! offers consultation at an early stage. Through this consultation process, NA! staff determine whether this project is eligible for NA! funding. If the project is not eligible for NA! funding, NA! suggests alternative funding sources that would be more appropriate for the project.

North End Wellness Centre: Considering that this project involves multiple project stakeholders, collaboration has been key to the success of the project. It has been identified that bringing together diverse groups on this project has been both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge of bringing together different partners is in ensuring that all partners feel that their needs are being met. Yet this also creates opportunities for future collaboration and community support on future projects.

North End School Resource Officer (SRO) Project: The key to success of this project has been effective collaboration between NECRC, the Winnipeg Police Service, the Winnipeg School Division, Manitoba Justice, the community and the student population. The success of this process of collaboration was that the community affected by safety issues were also involved in the process. As well, several community organizations came together and provided their in-kind support to identify priorities through a community consultation process. Some organizations included NECRC, Community Education Development Association, and SEED Winnipeg. Although each organization has its own mandate, this process highlighted the value of working together and the importance of collaboration to ensure project success. This project has also demonstrated success in the positive interactions and relationships that have developed between youth, the police and the community. Having School Resource Officers with a policing background working with youth in schools has given youth the opportunity of interacting with positive role models and dispelling negative stereotypes about the police.

Evaluation

North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project: The evaluation of the Storefront Improvement Grant Project is based on project outcomes. This helps NECRC establish project impacts for grant recipients. However, this approach does not highlight the impact of the project within the community at large. This type of evaluation would help NECRC to contextualize the project and analyze the impact of physical improvements in the North End.

North End Wellness Centre: Once the project is complete and programming is underway, a challenge for the North End Wellness Centre Inc. will be to evaluate the impact of the programs and services on local residents

and the effect of a wellness facility within the community. Specifically, the North End Wellness Centre could benefit from a post-occupancy evaluation, to determine how the building matches the users' needs, and subsequently determine ways to improve building design and performance.

North End School Resource Officer Project: Previous evaluations have determined that this project has had a positive impact in terms of fostering positive relationships and enhancing the perception of safer schools. However, identifying whether the project has made a difference financially in the community continues to be a struggle. A cost benefit analysis would supplement previous evaluations and further assist NECRC in enhancing and sustaining the delivery of this project.

Technical Assistance

North End Wellness Centre: The multiple partners, priorities, and expectations involved in this project made establishing consensus a challenge. NA! played a key role in providing technical assistance for project development and facilitating the collaboration among the partners at an early stage. With this technical assistance, the parties involved eventually gained the capacity to work together without the need for an external facilitator.

Sustainability

North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project: Although this project has shown success and popularity within the community, it is funded on a yearly basis. The lack of long term funding represents one of the bigger challenges for this project. Particularly, the delivery of funding on an annual basis threatens the sustainability of this project, and thus its overall impact on the community.

Investments

North End Storefront Improvement Grant Project: This project is an incentive to encourage current business owners to stay in the North End rather than to relocate. Also, current business owners have a network system of suppliers and other businesses with whom they interact. This provides the opportunity to inform other businesses of this project through word of mouth.

North End Wellness Centre: The North End Wellness Centre represents not only a financial investment but a social investment into the community. The North End Wellness Centre Inc. has received funding from different levels of government. Funding support from government, foundations, corporations and private sources encourage the larger community to mitigate negative perceptions about the North End, and that the neighbourhood is worthy of such investments. Specifically, a project of this scale will elevate the profile of the neighbourhood. The former North End YMCA is now 90% demolished, and the new recreation and wellness centre has yet to be built. Whether the new North End Wellness Centre will attract additional investments into the North End remains to be seen.

Building Capacity

Aboriginal Youth Business and Money Management Project: This project will assist youth to understand the options available to them. It will also help youth set goals and plan the next steps in their lives to better prepare them for the future. The project directly plays a role in building the capacity of both workshop providers and youth in the community, and provides a catalyst for sustaining the community building process.

North End School Resource Officer Project: To build the capacity necessary to undertake this project, the Management Committee (which supervises this project) recognized the need to offer tools, training, and workshops. The committee received funding from the federal government to undertake workshops on aboriginal perceptions, suicide intervention, mediation, conflict resolution, and other skills necessary for working with youth. These workshops were made available to school students/staff, police officers, community residents, and local organizations. Building the capacity of different stakeholders in the community was key to the success of this project.

LESSONS LEARNED

Analysis of Project Highlights

The above section highlights how the four North End case studies utilized the planning processes of *collaboration*, *evaluation*, *technical assistance*, *sustainability*, *investments* and *building capacity*. To synthesize the lessons learned by each case study in the six planning processes, the following analysis assesses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of both the NA! model and the NRC model in the process of community based neighbourhood revitalization.

Strengths

- The NA! model gives NRCs the flexibility/autonomy to identify the needs of the community and develop objectives and strategies to best meet those needs. This also enhances the capacity of NRCs to develop neighbourhood revitalization plans.
- NA! plays a fundamental role in the process of community development planning and assists NRCs to implement their strategies with financial assistance and planning supports.
- NRCs have the history and credibility to develop and sustain community partnerships which are essential to establishing and sustaining revitalization processes.
- NRCs are at the grassroots level and are best positioned to act as a conduit to implement strategies to build the capacity of their organization, staff and the community at large.

Weaknesses

- The NA! model is primarily a consultative funding initiative, as opposed to a collaborative initiative. However, the planning process is particularly effective and credible when it is approached as a collaborative effort.
- NRCs continually struggle to respond to multiple needs of the community, their own organization and the needs and requirements of the funder.
- In order for the planning process to be effective and accepted by the community, language and communication must be clear and straightforward. This minimizes misunderstandings and apprehensions regarding planning processes.

Opportunities

- There is a perception that NRCs are the gatekeepers of NA! funding. NRCs assist in the first step to evaluate a proposal to determine if the projects align with the local Neighbourhood Plan. However, if NA! determines that a proposed project is filling a need in the community or gap in service, NA! will fund the project, even if it does not directly align with the Neighbourhood Plan. This provides smaller community organizations with the opportunity to seek project funding from NA! without worrying that NRCs will reject their project proposal.

Threats

- NA! is a creature of the province and is therefore not a permanent initiative. NRCs are dependent upon external funding sources to support organizational and project sustainability. To minimize the threat of organization or project termination, the planning process could include the development of strategies to sustain the organization and established community projects. Program and project sustainability can be fostered in several ways including diversifying funding sources to ensure available funding for the continuation of projects and establishing project partnerships.
- NRCs may not have the necessary tools or expertise to develop evaluation strategies that measure the success and impacts of programs in the community. This would be a valuable addition to integrate into the planning process as it would allow for a contextual analysis of project outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation of the NA! model as a multi-pronged community revitalization initiative through interviews and a SWOT analysis of the lessons learned, the following recommendations have been identified to enhance the NA! model and the NRCs' processes:

NA! could reassess how funds are delivered to the community. There is an identified need for more long term funding for other community-based organizations (other than NRCs) which have proven their accountability and proficiency to NA! However, it should be noted that NA! has begun to acknowledge this need by providing some proponents with multi-year funding for priority projects that have been proven successful.

NA! could benefit from developing their own technical competence to evaluate the viability of NRC proposals through ongoing staff training/development to inform project analysis i.e. aboriginal cultural awareness, evaluating renewal corporations in other jurisdictions, etc.

NA! could further facilitate communication between NRCs and other community groups by hosting one or two events per year for NRC staff and boards to identify best practices and develop learning toolboxes. It should be noted that to date, NA! has delivered three community forums on the following topics: CED principles, neighbourhood toolboxes, and the basic principles of partnerships (see: www.gov.mb.ca/ia/programs/neighbourhoods/news/reports.html). However, there have been no additional community forums since 2002.

NA! could foster enhanced collaboration among other provincial departments that have authority to affect change in project status or programming in the community. Ideally, this would increase the level of communication and achieve a higher level of collaboration between the community, NRCs, and different governmental departments. These agencies could include the regional health authority, the school divisions, the policing system, social assistance providers, and advanced education and training providers among others.

NRCs could provide a series of courses for board and staff in critical areas, including systems management considering that NDA core operational funding permits the NRCs to seek these developmental opportunities on their own.

NRCs could explore in-kind or funding opportunities for student internships. Often, renewal corporations do not have sufficient administrative staff and could benefit from participation in internships with colleges and universities.

NRCs could continue to diversify funding resources and explore strategies for sustaining the NRCs and their initiatives beyond the scope of NA!

LOOKING AHEAD

Neighbourhoods Alive! was designed to respond to the physical, economic and social concerns of neighbourhoods defined as major improvement areas (MIAs). When it was launched in 2000, NA! provided financial assistance and planning supports to five neighbourhoods in Winnipeg that were identified as the highest need MIAs. These neighbourhoods included Spence, West Broadway, William Whyte, Point Douglas and Lord Selkirk Park. In 2005, NA! expanded their catchment area to include the remaining seven MIA neighbourhoods, namely St. Matthews, Daniel McIntyre, Centennial, West Alexander, North Portage, Dufferin and St. John's.

To respond to the needs of shoulder neighbourhoods beginning to experience early symptoms of decline, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg developed the Building Communities Initiative (BCI). This is a bi-partite capital initiative, which was designed to respond to the physical needs of these residential neighbourhoods. BCI is managed by the Planning, Property and Development Department of the City of Winnipeg and currently has a budget of \$14 million for a total of six neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods include Burrows Central neighbourhood; Luxton, Seven Oaks and St. John's neighbourhoods; Sargent Park and Minto neighbourhoods; Central and North St. Boniface, Tissot and Dufresne neighbourhoods; St. George and Worthington neighbourhoods; and the Wolseley neighbourhood.

BCI is one strategy designed to tackle physical revitalization before neighbourhoods reach greater symptoms of decline that currently define major improvement areas. The experiences and the lessons learned of the NA! model could provide the foundation for ensuring planning support to continually refine community-based neighbourhood revitalization processes. The Province's NA! initiative reveals that it is necessary to develop 'cutting edge' strategies that continue to contribute to neighbourhood revitalization.

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- Tamara Peralta