



Working Together for Children and Families



In January 2015,

the provincial government put their support behind a new approach to collaboration to change how programs and services are delivered to children and families. If this new approach is successfully implemented in one community, government agreed that they would work to expand it to other communities in Nova Scotia. The community of north end Dartmouth was selected as an initial area to test this new approach because it is an area of Nova Scotia with many individual, family and community risk-factors.

The project in North End Dartmouth is called *Between the Bridges*.



STEP 1

Listening to Residents

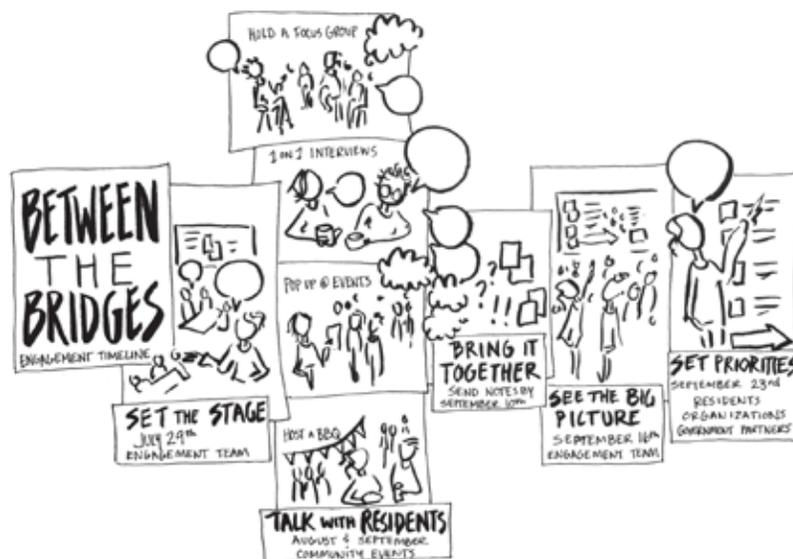
The success of Between the Bridges depends on the community creating a vision of change for their neighbourhood. Regular community conversations are a critical part of this process. To begin these conversations, a team of community leaders was identified to reach out to their friends and neighbours.

Over the summer of 2015 a small group of community leaders who live and/or work Between the Bridges met to plan different ways to consult with residents about their experiences of living in North End Dartmouth. In just six weeks this team spoke with more than 200 residents: they held focus groups, hosted a street party, spoke with people at a community carnival, sat down and had one-to-one interviews, hosted pot-lucks, created graffiti walls, and captured ideas for change on post-it notes!

The following pages show the ideas that residents talked about most often. The ideas covered 9 areas of concern:

Feeling Safe	Programs and Services
Community Pride	Breaking the Cycle
Youth	Feeling Healthy
Caring for Each Other	Basic Needs
Student Success	

These ideas help us to understand what residents are concerned about and what they feel we might be able to do to lessen the impact of these issues on everyone's lives.



Feeling Safe

What do we worry about?

- Our neighbourhoods and parks aren't safe for kids
- Relationships with police aren't always positive
- There are no consequences for youth who break the law
- We don't have a good way to responding to crime

What can we do?

- Hire more community constables, and have more police on foot patrol in trouble spots
- Educate the Police on the needs of Dartmouth North
- Strengthen Neighbourhood Watch
- Make sure there are consequences for anyone who breaks the law ... no exceptions!

Community Pride

What do we worry about?

- Trash
- Crumbling roads, sidewalks and parks
- Broken street lights
- Too few outdoor spaces
- Buildings that need repairs
- Pollution

What can we do?

- Improve the curb appeal of our community (paint/maintain old buildings, repair roads/sidewalks/parks, more trees less trash)
- Fix lights on the street, basketball court, and parks
- Build more playgrounds and a splash park for kids
- Everyone can commit to do one small thing for the community

Youth

What do we worry about?

- Our opinions don't matter
- We need more help with our school work
- We can't afford to join sports and clubs in our own community
- We have a lot of responsibilities placed on us
- We don't see ourselves in the people who run programs in our own communities
- We are bored
- Options for learning after high school are out of our reach
- We need more ways to get job experience

What can we do?

- Draw our attention to positive role models
- Acknowledge and recognize kids when they do good work
- More activities for teens/free and cheap things to keep them busy, off the streets
- Help kids to get the knowledge and skills they need to use their feelings and interests in a positive way
- More addiction supports for youth

Caring for Each Other

What do we worry about?

- We don't feel welcomed when we ask for help
- Parents are being selfish and not treating kids with respect
- There is a lot of bullying that comes from fear
- We experience discrimination because of where we live, our race, mental health challenges, etc.
- There is a lack of respect, we don't take care of each other

What can we do?

- More community events needed to bring people together and get to know their neighbours
- Improving family relationships in the home
- “Community is about being there for each other – helping each other – no one goes without”
- Respect others
- Let’s help each other out more, community spirit is on the rise

Student Success

What do we worry about?

- Our kids are being pushed through the system
- Youth feel they are learning what they need only to realize they are far behind
- We don’t have high enough expectations for students
- There are too few supports for kids who are struggling at school
- Too many students are on IPPs or adaptations, sometimes without parents even knowing
- Behavior and violence are getting in the way of student learning and schools don’t have the resources to deal with it
- Schools don’t understand the needs of the community and come with attitudes towards our kids

What can we do?

- Needs to be emotional learning in school about how to handle anger and frustration appropriately
- Schools need to encourage parental involvement and give parents more access to schools and be welcoming and transparent
- More parents support needed on conflict resolution and how to deal with teachers/schools and how to be a good role model

Programs and Services

What do we worry about?

- The way services are delivered don't make sense in our daily lives
- Recreation programs are too expensive
- We can't access affordable childcare, especially if a child has special needs
- There is no diversity in the organizations that serve the community
- We need a better way of advertising programs – people don't know about them
- People delivering services lack empathy and do not understand the problems we are dealing with

What can we do?

- Take services to the people, in the community
- We need a walk-in medical clinic
- Train staff to make sure we feel welcome and accepted
- Stability in services, rather than grant funding.
- Need to start hiring from the community to properly serve the people who live there: "You need to hire the "right" people that are qualified to work in low economic communities- you need to change the hiring practices to be more inclusive to residents"

Breaking the Cycle

What do we worry about?

- There are too few pathways from social assistance to employment
- We are caught in too many catch 22 situations
- Where are the safety nets for us when we stop receiving assistance?
- How can we gain the skills and experience we need?
- We need more second chances!

What can we do?

- Community mentoring/reintegration programs to help people find work and education once released
- Local employment opportunities – remove barriers (many require education that is unattainable)
- More food bank locations in the community, so people do not have to travel as far
- Teach budgeting/money management skills
- Support more prevention programs, like Ceasefire

Feeling Healthy

What do we worry about?

- A mobile crisis unit does not replace a Mental Health Clinic
- We can't afford our medication or dental care
- We wait a long time for some essential services
- There is no walk-in health clinic in the neighbourhood

What can we do?

- Mental Health Clinic in the community open 24hrs/day. Help needs to be in the moment (with immediate follow up support)/more professionals and services need to be available
- More support for the Direction 180 Methadone bus (it is working)
- Drug rehab or supports for youth and focus/resources on prevention
- Dartmouth Community Wellness Navigator is working, helping people more than any organization

Basic Needs

What do we worry about?

- Safe, affordable housing
- Access to safe shelters
- We need access to a living wage!
- We can't afford good quality food
- A lot of us can't make it to the grocery store so we shop at the drug or corner store – these are expensive and poor quality
- Too many of us are stuck in survival mode!

What can we do?

- Need a walk in medical clinic in the neighbourhood, people cannot afford to travel to a neighbourhood that has one
- More subsidized daycare
- Rental caps and/or rent budget increased on assistance so people can find safer places to live
- Free/subsidized transit

STEP 2

Setting Priorities

The community engagement team learned what was on the minds of many residents. Then we asked, what's most important to people living Between the Bridges? What changes do we need to work on together?

To find answers to these questions we held two community meetings on September 30, 2015. In the gym at Harbour View Elementary the engagement team, volunteers from the United Way and the provincial government had an incredible evening of conversations. Residents voted on the issues that mattered most to them and crafted some goals for change.

We ended the night with six priorities...

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|------------------------|---|
| Meeting Basic Needs | everyone has access to an affordable and adequate standard of housing, health, and income |
| Breaking the Cycle | people are able to transition from crisis (unemployment, illness, incarceration, poverty) to wellness |
| Caring | neighbours supporting neighbours |
| Healthy Bodies & Minds | a warm and welcoming community space where people can access support and friendship whenever they need it |
| Engaging Youth | youth have use of a safe building in the community where evening programs will run |
| Student Success | let kids achieve – stop pushing kids through the system |

Meeting Basic Needs

Housing Goals

- Everyone has access to an adequate, affordable standard of housing
- No one is houseless/homeless

Reaching the Goals



Health Goals

- Everyone has the supports they need to achieve an acceptable standard of health
- More options for natural healing

Reaching the Goals



Income Goals

- Politicians understand the reality of living on social assistance
- Less bureaucracy dealing with community services
- Everyone works together to change policy

Reaching the Goals



Breaking the Cycle

Goals

- People are able to seamlessly transition from unemployment to employment
- People are able to transition from crisis to wellness

Reaching the Goals

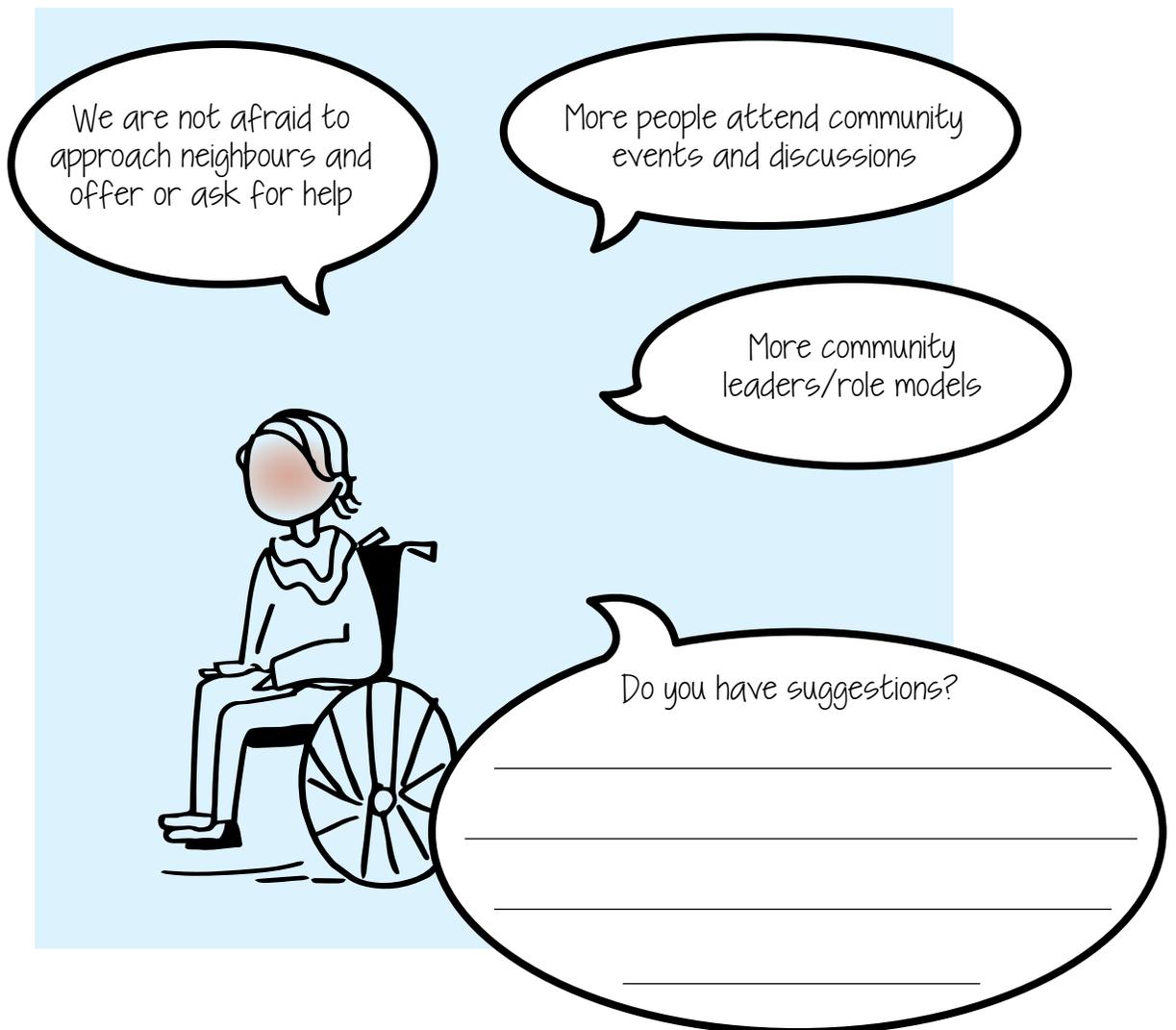


Caring

Goals

- Neighbours supporting neighbours: ripple effect/pay it forward
- More friendliness, less judgement
- Neighbours help each other with problems
- Neighbours get to know each other, are nicer to each other

Reaching the Goals



Healthy Bodies & Minds

Goal

- A warm and welcoming community space where people can access support and friendship whenever they need it.

Reaching the Goals



Engaging Youth

Goals

- Youth have use of a safe building in the community (e.g. school gym) where evening programs will run (e.g. basketball, games night)
- Kids are involved in sports and extracurricular activities

Reaching the Goals



Student Success

Goal

- Foster better staff/parent/child relationships
- Teachers have an interest in the community and kids
- Better communication by the school
- Let kids achieve—let kids fail to learn ... Stop pushing kids through the system
- Have safer, more positive learning environments
- Have higher expectations for teachers, parents and students
- Build more respect FROM the system and FOR the system
- Invest in kids
- Parents are accountable for ensuring that kids are ready for school
- Create special classes for students with severe behaviour issues

Reaching the Goals

