

City of Calgary – Good Neighbour Agreement Policy and Outline

OVERVIEW

Good Neighbour Agreements are instruments that provide a vehicle for community based organizations and service providers whose underlying philosophy is the mutual acknowledgment of the need to build a relationship responsive to the needs of each.

A Good Neighbour Agreement should be part of a proactive community engagement approach when a new Care Facility locates. It can be initiated prior to or during development to promote integration and mitigate community concerns. Existing Care Facilities can also enter into Good Neighbour Agreements with their community, to help maintain relationships and provide awareness to new residents or those unaware of the facility.

Agreements can be formally negotiated, though remain voluntary and without legally binding language. The development of such socially responsible initiatives encourages accountability and cooperation while promoting good will and mutual understanding between service providers and communities.

CITY OF CALGARY

The City of Calgary encourages and will help service providers and communities develop a Good Neighbour Agreement for maintaining relationships and communicating with each other.

The Good Neighbour Agreement is intended to increase understanding by:

- supplying basic information about the nature of the facility and its operation,
- identifying a process for regular communication with the facility's neighbours,
- providing a method of resolving compatibility problems.

The Good Neighbour Agreement is not a contract between the facility operator and the neighbours. It is a document, negotiated by the operator and the community that is evidence of the operator's willingness to build relationships and keep lines of communication with neighbours open. It is a commitment to speedily resolve any difficulties that may arise as a result of the facility's presence in the neighbourhood. The City of Calgary will not enforce the agreement; rather help to work with the community and the facility operator if issues arise.

The Good Neighbour Agreement should be part of an integrated communication strategy that begins early. This is an opportunity to provide neighbours with accurate information and it may be useful to print and distribute a fact sheet similar to that described below. Once an application is made, it may be necessary to have subsequent neighbourhood meetings to answer questions and allay concerns.

Good Neighbour Agreement Outline

These guidelines are intended to assist operators and communities in preparing a Good Neighbour Agreement. These suggestions are not exhaustive or absolute. The Good Neighbour Agreement may contain different information than is suggested here as each facility, and the neighbourhood it is located in, is unique.

PROCESS

Communication with your future neighbours is one of the most effective ways to promote mutual understanding. This establishes accountability on the part of the agency and the receiving community, and it galvanizes commitment to a working relationship – to the advantage of both sides.

Establishing early communication with affected communities as a way to identify potential impacts and concerns is imperative when initializing a Good Neighbour Agreement. Creating and Implementing a Good Neighbour Agreement is a several step process that requires the commitment of a 'stakeholders group' made up of the service provider and community representatives, as well as other interested parties. A facilitator could also be chosen to help support the process.

Initially, the stakeholders group meets to discuss issues they would like resolved and mitigated within the Agreement. This early stage may also involve identification of additional stakeholders who should be brought to the table. Subsequent meetings include the formation of principles and provisions to be included with the agreement.

Parties can then sign off on the agreement, and begin the process of implementing the initiatives.

Each Good Neighbour Agreement will be unique and requires collaboration between adaptive, creative and dedicated team members. Existing facilities without an Incident Log or Good Neighbour Agreement may wish to consider implementing these options. A plan should also be made for further communication dates and methods of notifying the community about changes in operations or management. Contact names and phone numbers can be exchanged for both parties to facilitate communication.

The Good Neighbour Agreement is subject to review at scheduled intervals to evaluate its success. Committee meetings are especially relevant during the initial operating period, but regular communication is essential to continued success.

More information can also be found at www.calgary.ca/gna

Below is an outline of a 'typical' good neighbour agreement

Each Good Neighbour Agreement varies in content depending on its authors and the issues that matter to them, but can include:

Describing the Facility and its Operation

The community may have misconceptions about your facility or you may have new neighbours who are unfamiliar with your facility. A part of the regular Good Neighbour Agreement strategy should be a brief but complete description of your facility and its operation. Describe it in terms of the outward effects the neighbours will experience.

- Operator description
- Address and description of the facility
- Nature of the service and the number of residents served
- Resident profile and protocol
- Funding/Ownership
- Staffing and parking
- Property maintenance

Maintaining Neighbourhood Relations

- a) Indicate in what form, how often, and with whom regular communication will take place.
- b) Indicate how operational changes will be communicated to the community.
- c) Indicate other ways in which the operator and the community intend to foster good neighbourhood relations.

Responding to Complaints and Concerns

- a) Indicate who the community can contact to express a concern or complaint.
- b) Indicate what the complaint resolution process and record keeping method is. Records should be archived so that they may be reviewed in case of a dispute.
- c) Indicate how the complaint will be dealt with in a timely fashion.

Resolving Disputes

- a) Indicate what mechanisms are in place for resolving disputes.
- b) Indicate who else may be contacted to assist in resolving a dispute.

Serving as a good neighbour makes good business sense for a service provider, by promoting social responsibility practices into business decisions. Recognizing and upholding these types of agreements maintain the integrity of the provider, while promoting the values of the community into their every day practices.