

# COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2009 APPLICATION

NAME OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT: CITY OF ARMSTRONG

PROJECT OR PROGRAM TITLE: Willowbrook Trail & Rest Area

## SELECT YOUR CATEGORY: (CHOOSE ONE ONLY)

- ☐ BEST PRACTICES
- ☐ BEST PRACTICES, WEBSITE
- ☐ BEST PRACTICES, ANNUAL REPORTING
- ☐ LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, SMALL COMMUNITY
- ☐ LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, MID-SIZE COMMUNITY
- ☐ LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, LARGE COMMUNITY
- ☐ LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION, REGIONAL DISTRICT
- ☒ PARTNERSHIPS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY & HEALTHY LIVING

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SIGNATURE: P. Ferguson NAME (PRINT): PATTI FERGUSON DATE: JULY 17/09

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST:

Remember to send 8 copies of your entire application package for distribution to the Selection Committee.  
**EACH copy should contain:**

- ☒ A completed application form
- ☒ A one-paragraph summary of the project/program being submitted
- ☒ A five-page summary report (max. 5 pgs)
- ☒ A letter from the Mayor supporting the application

IF APPLYING TO ANNUAL REPORTING:

☐ A copy of the Annual Report

IF APPLYING TO PARTNERSHIPS:

☒ A copy of the partner contact info list

**In addition to the eight complete application packages, please include:**

- ☒ One CD/electronic copy of the entire submission

DEADLINE: FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2009

## **City of Armstrong – Willowbrook Trail & Rest Area**

The Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area project was jointly developed by the City of Armstrong, Willowbrook Terrace Ltd. (private developer) and the Armstrong / Spallumcheen Active Communities group (local volunteers), providing an active transportation link between local neighbourhoods and Highland Park Elementary School. Initially, after a review of the Armstrong Greenways Plan, there was not going to be a trail. But public pressure, and then a determination by the City to develop new relationships with the private developer and the local volunteers, prevailed. The Active Communities group committed to take a leadership role in the project and secured ActNow funding through BCRPA, got significant in-kind contributions from local businesses, and engaged local volunteer labour from the high school, Katimavik, Scouts, Lions Club and local residents. Willowbrook Terrace Ltd. negotiated two land swap deals with adjacent home owners to make this trail happen, donated land in excess of the contribution required of them through the subdivision process, and provided in-kind services that far exceeded their initial financial commitment. The City of Armstrong took responsibility for legal and regulatory issues and construction of the trail. As part of the project development process, City Council reversed a recent decision and determined that the 1996 Greenways Plan needed to be fully reviewed and updated, and Council reaffirmed their commitment to active transportation within Armstrong by securing a BEAT grant, through UBCM, for an Active Transportation Plan, which will hopefully lead to recommendations for policy and bylaw changes to provide increased support for a healthier built environment. This partnership between the three groups was hugely successful, and the groups are currently considering new opportunities to develop more active transportation assets in Armstrong. The partner groups broke down barriers, overcame preconceived ideas about each other, and developed more professional and respectful communications. As well, the partnership resulted in the partners having a better understanding of the limitations of each group, and the ways in which they can overcome those limitations by working together.

## **City of Armstrong – Willowbrook Trail & Rest Area**

### **About the Project**

The Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area project was jointly developed by the City of Armstrong, Willowbrook Terrace Ltd. (private developer) and the Armstrong / Spallumcheen Active Communities group (local volunteers), providing an active transportation link between local neighbourhoods and Highland Park Elementary School, within the northern part of the City of Armstrong.

The recently constructed project includes:

- a gravel surfaced trail, approximately 220 metres long, located directly south of Willowbrook Terrace housing development (currently under construction) and directly north of the active CNR railway right-of-way, extending from Schubert Road east to Highland Park Road
- a triangular shaped rest area, approximately 700 m<sup>2</sup> in size, located directly south of Willowbrook Terrace and adjacent to the new trail, complete with benches, drought tolerant trees and shrubs, sod, and a beautiful large boulder retaining wall

### **Creativity of the Initiative**

As part of the Willowbrook Terrace subdivision process, the City determined that development of a trail at the north end of the Willowbrook Terrace site and a future trail connection on City owned land to access an existing park in the Highland Park Subdivision – as identified in the 1996 Armstrong Greenways Plan – were not very feasible or financially prudent due to significant topographical challenges. Therefore, the City requested cash in lieu to be deposited by the Developer to the Park Fund, in accordance with the subdivision bylaw. The City was planning a number of future projects that would be funded from the Park Fund and was anxious to increase the reserves in that fund.

The Developer, being an avid supporter of active transportation, approached the Active Communities group and suggested that a trail could be constructed at the south end of the Willowbrook Terrace site, instead of the north end, and further, that the Developer would negotiate land swaps with the homeowners on both ends of the trail to secure land so that the trail could extend beyond the Willowbrook Terrace site to both Schubert Road and to Highland Park Road.

The Active Communities group then approached the City Council to request that land for a trail be secured at the south end of the Willowbrook Terrace site, rather than taking just cash in lieu for the Park Fund. The Active Communities group committed to Council that if Council secured the land, the Active Communities group would find a way to make the trail happen. Council then revised their position to reflect the will of the community, and secured from the Developer a combination of land for a trail and cash to equal the Developer's 5% contribution requirement.

It should be noted that Council took a huge leap of faith in the Active Communities group when Council reversed their decision, considering that the Active Communities group was a small adhoc group of passionate volunteers with limited financial resources that had only been meeting for a few months.

At the first site meeting held between the three partners to discuss the trail project, the Developer offered to provide additional land, at no cost, that could accommodate a rest area, if the City would cover the legal survey costs for that parcel. The rest area would overlook the adjacent watercourse, provide a setting for relaxing and bird watching, and become a walking destination for area residents. The Active Communities group requested formal support from City Council for this rest area, and committed to find the resources to develop it. City Council immediately supported the project and committed to cover any survey costs associated with it.

The Active Communities volunteers took the lead in spearheading the Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area project, secured funding and significant inkind contributions, maintained communications with the other two partners, developed a project schedule, kept the media informed, and secured dozens of local volunteers to construct the rest area.

This project was creative in many ways, and some of the highlights include:

- the Developer utilized passionate trail advocates (Active Communities group) to request that City Council reverse their decision and agree to develop a trail at the Developer's site to benefit the community
- the City recognized that the 1996 Armstrong Greenways Plan needed to be reviewed and updated to allow the City to capitalize on future trail opportunities not identified in the plan
- a beautiful rest area/park and the adjoining trail were built using only \$2,500 in other levels of government grant funding, through the creative use of City, Developer, volunteer and other community resources
- the Developer negotiated land swaps with two adjoining landowners to allow completion of the trail, and the landowners were very supportive of locating the trail adjacent to their properties
- the City gave up the cash in lieu from the Developer and took a risk that the newly formed Active Communities group could deliver on their commitment to make the trail happen
- Active Communities volunteers successfully managed the project and engaged the participation of a wide variety of community groups and residents
- each of the three partners took on the areas of the project they felt that they could best contribute to, and improved relationships developed between the partners through mutual support provided throughout the project and based on new understandings of each of the partners' abilities and limitations

#### **Health Enhancing Benefits and**

#### **Increased Awareness of and Opportunities for Physical Activity and Healthy Living**

The Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area has just recently been completed, and the ribbon cutting ceremony was held on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, with all three partners in attendance, along with project contributors and volunteers.

This trail will provide a safe active transportation link between local neighbourhoods and the nearby Highland Park Elementary School. The Active Communities group plans to promote active transportation to and from school, via this trail, with the Highland Park teachers and students, building upon the school's recent participation in the Active Communities street dances and Overlander Walk the Walk program.

The rest area is a quiet and peaceful setting adjacent to a small watercourse that attracts a variety of birds and other critters. It is hoped that this rest area will become a walking destination for seniors living in the nearby Three Links residence, and that those residents that lead a sedentary lifestyle will now have a more inviting reason to go out for a walk.

The Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area provides the final link in a 2.8 km trail in the northwest part of Armstrong that is promoted in the Trails Around Town pamphlet, recently prepared by the Active Communities Group and sponsored by the City. It is anticipated that promotion of the Willowbrook Trail through this pamphlet will lead to increased walking activity by many residents of the community.

The participation of a variety of local groups and businesses in the development of the Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area brought an increased awareness to the City Council of the local community support for projects that promote physical activity and healthy living.

#### **Policy Initiative and Change**

The 1996 Armstrong Greenways Plan was rather visionary in its stated goals and objectives of providing active transportation opportunities in Armstrong, but it became apparent to City Council and staff through the Willowbrook Terrace subdivision process that the Plan's identification of potential trail routes was no longer relevant or appropriate in certain parts of town, and that the Greenways Plan needed to be reviewed and updated so that future trail opportunities were not lost due to an outdated Greenways Plan.

#### **Effect on Local Government Policy**

Due to the community feedback on the need for land to be taken for trails, rather than cash in lieu, Council identified the need for a comprehensive review of the Armstrong Greenways Plan. Staff provided

info to Council on the Built Environment & Active Transportation (BEAT) grant opportunity available through UBCM and the City successfully secured funding to undertake an Active Transportation Plan. This Active Transportation Plan will fund a thorough review of built environment and active transportation issues in Armstrong, including a review of the Armstrong Greenways Plan, and will provide recommendations to Council for policy/bylaw changes to more fully support a healthier built environment.

### **Collaboration**

Each of the project partners – the City of Armstrong, Willowbrook Terrace Ltd., and Armstrong / Spallumcheen Active Communities – brought different strengths and resources to this project.

The Active Communities group, with the help of Willowbrook Terrace Ltd., provided a vision to Council of what the project and the partnership could look like. Council chose to move forward into new territory and participate in the partnership and the project. Active Communities volunteers maintained open communications with both the City and the Developer to ensure that the project continued to progress.

In a small community it can be very challenging and daunting for the City to approach land owners to secure access for trail development, so the tendency in Armstrong has been to wait and develop trails as a result of a subdivision process. Through the collaboration on this project, Council realized that the City doesn't have to do trail development and land negotiations all alone, and that partnerships can bring about a successful trail project much more easily. As well, it became clear through this project that landowners directly affected by trails projects may be more supportive of the projects if they are part of the planning and collaboration process.

The lessons and successes of the Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area have served as a catalyst for continued collaboration in the area of active transportation and healthy living. The City's Active Transportation Plan, currently underway, has engaged the participation of representatives of the Active Communities group, Interior Health Authority, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Armstrong / Spallumcheen Chamber of Commerce, School District #83, Armstrong / Spallumcheen Parks & Recreation, RCMP, and members of the public, in addition to representatives from both the City of Armstrong and Township of Spallumcheen.

### **Costs, Contributions and Service to the Community**

The project partners each contributed to the financial success of the Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area in unique ways, as follows:

#### City of Armstrong

- gave up the much-needed cash in lieu payment to secure the land for the trail
- provided administrative staff resources to work with the project partners to plan the project, address the environmental regulations related to the adjacent watercourse, manage the financial accounts for the Active Communities group, and organize the Public Works crews
- provided Public Works crews to construct the trail and provide other assistance to the Active Communities group as needed
- incurred expenses of approximately \$10,000 for vehicle and equipment rental, gravel surfacing for the trail, installation of chain link fence, etc.
- will provide site maintenance with the support of local volunteers

#### Willowbrook Terrace Ltd.

- provided land for the trail + cash in lieu to meet the 5% requirement of the subdivision bylaw
- provided additional land for the trail, secured through two land swaps negotiated with adjacent private land owners, to allow the trail to extend west to Schubert Road and east to Highland Park Road
- provided additional land for the rest area
- contributed more than \$2,500 of in-kind services towards the development of the rest area, to match the grant secured by the Active Communities group, which included removing fenceposts, clearing, stripping and grading of the site, digging eight large holes for tree planting, spreading topsoil, etc.
- constructed a 1.5 metre high by 0.5 m wide large boulder retaining wall along the back of the rest area as an additional and unexpected asset to the project
- is providing water for irrigation of the sod, bushes, and trees

#### Armstrong/Spallumcheen Active Communities

- secured a BCRPA Active Communities grant of \$2,500 that was used to purchase filter fabric, topsoil and plants
- provided project management services
- secured donations of materials from Armstrong Turf Farm, Tolko Industries, Lions Club and Shepherd's Hardware
- enlisted a variety of volunteers to help with the project, including Pete Molenaar of Molenaar Tree Farm, Scouts group, Pleasant Valley Secondary School students and staff, Katimavik crew, local residents, and Lions Club members
- is watering the sod and plants through the first summer season
- worked with the local media to keep the public informed about the project

#### **Future Physical Activity/Healthy Living Policies and Initiatives**

The Developer has brought to the attention of both the City and the Active Communities group a potential and much-needed healthy living initiative in the downtown core, and discussions are ongoing about the possible development of this project.

The City and the Active Communities group have recently worked together to complete the Spirit Trail Conceptual Design Report, a rails to trails project through the downtown area. Council has received this report and authorized Staff to begin an implementation plan for the project.

The Active Communities group is working to develop new and innovative healthy living projects with the City-sponsored Armstrong Community Food Initiative that would tie together themes of food security and walking programs in a unique way, and build upon the recent development of the Community Garden project.

As mentioned previously, the Armstrong Active Transportation Plan, currently underway, will identify a number of potential policies and projects that can be undertaken to improve walkability in the community and support increased active transportation by local residents.

#### **Value of the Partnership**

Development of the partnership was crucial to the development of the project; the project would not have happened without the partnership.

The other significant value of the partnership was the development of a close working relationship among the partners that was not there before this project began. This new relationship, based on mutual respect and understanding, can provide opportunities to work together on more challenging projects in the future.

#### **Outstanding Achievement**

Each of the project partners exceeded their objectives and commitments within this project.

The City found the resources to construct the trail with no budget allowance for it, and more importantly, they took on a new approach to partnerships and trail development that could spur on more aggressive development of trail and active transportation projects in Armstrong.

Willowbrook Terrace Ltd. independently negotiated two land swap deals and provided land for trail well in excess of their required land contribution through the subdivision bylaw, and they provided more land for the rest area. In addition to their commitment to provide \$2,500 of in-kind services to the project, Willowbrook Terrace Ltd. decided unexpectedly, in the final weeks of the project, to construct a beautiful rock retaining wall that provides a very classy look and feel to the rest area.

The Armstrong/Spallumcheen Active Communities met their commitment to the Council: "provide us with land and we will get the trail built". The Active Communities group provided successful project management services for their first ever construction project, with the project completion happening just over a year after that commitment was made to City Council. After securing a grant for construction of some of the amenities, the Active Communities group proceeded to engage the community in the

development of the project, and secured donations of materials and volunteer labour well in excess of the expectations of their partners, and maintained a relationship with the media that provided additional community support for the project and other Active Communities initiatives.

### **Relationship Building**

Prior to the development of the partnership between the City of Armstrong, Willowbrook Terrace Ltd., and the newly formed Armstrong/Spallumcheen Active Communities group, relationships among these groups could be generally described as follows:

- the City and Developer had a polite and professional relationship that was sometimes adversarial due to the general nature of typical City/Developer interactions
- some Active Communities members knew that the Developer was supportive of trails, but didn't know how to build upon that interest
- the Active Communities group was newly formed, but some members of the group who were passionate about trails had had previous dealings with City Council, and there appeared to be some initial friction between the Active Communities group and Council on matters relating to trails; this appeared to be the case in a Council meeting in January 2008 when Council determined that the Active Communities group could work on a few specific trail projects but that there was no need to have a review of the 1996 Armstrong Greenways Plan

The Active Communities group approached the Council at the beginning of this project in the Spring of 2008, in a very professional and respectful manner, and offered to take on the project management and make this project happen, which resulted in Council revising their perceptions of the Active Communities group and choosing to develop a partnership with them on this project. The Developer resolved to negotiate land swap deals with two adjacent land owners, so that a complete trail could be developed, taking on one of the most difficult tasks that can face a small City Council – negotiating a land deal.

The Active Communities group learned to appreciate the limitations that City Council and staff have to work within, developed a new respect for those boundaries, and found ways to overcome challenges and work together i.e. it was much easier for the Active Communities group to ask local businesses for donations to the project and for volunteer labour than it would have been for the City to do the same, and it was much easier for the Developer to negotiate the land swaps than if the City had to do it.

From the City's perspective, both the Active Communities group and the Developer met their commitments and more, and did so in a professional and respectful manner, and engaged community support throughout the process. In the end, all of the project partners enjoyed elevated stature within the community as a result of their partnership and the successful development of the project. Public support for both the project and the partnership will encourage the City to pursue more Active Transportation projects and partnerships to develop these future projects.

And the Active Communities group is pleased to have been asked by the City to be a project partner in the development of the Armstrong Active Transportation Plan and to participate in the review of the 1996 Armstrong Greenways Plan, currently underway.

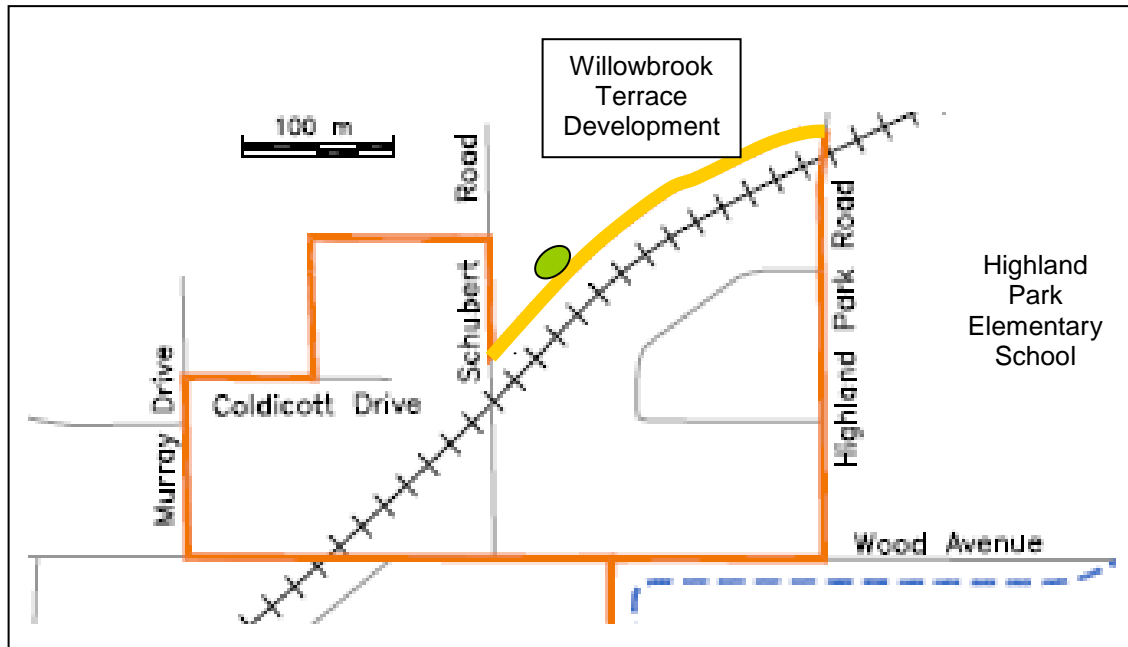
### **Long term Impacts**

The long term physical impacts of this project are the provision of the final link in a loop trail in the northeast corner of town that will encourage more walking by area residents. As the trail is adjacent to the CNR corridor, there may be a potential to extend this trail in both directions as a rails to trails project.

The larger impact though is in the realization by all three of the partners that a partnership between these very different organizations – a city government, a developer, and a volunteer group – can achieve with ease what any one of these organizations would struggle with independently.



## Photos and Graphics



Portion of Armstrong's Trails Around Town pamphlet showing Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area



Active Communities, City of Armstrong, and Willowbrook Development reps meeting onsite at beginning of project





Willowbrook Trail site looking towards Schubert Road



Willowbrook Rest Area one week before planting day



Jill de la Salle, Active Communities trail coordinator, on site with Pleasant Valley Senior Secondary volunteers planting Rugosa Roses, Lilacs & Oregon Grape bushes



Patrick Place, Willowbrook Terrace Ltd. and Pete Molenaar, Molenaar Tree Farm, volunteering their time to plant trees



Katimavik and Active Communities volunteers



Local resident volunteers laying sod





Looking north from rest area



Looking south from rest area



Looking west from rest area



Trail west from rest area to Schubert Road



Trail looking east from Schubert Road towards rest area and Highland Park Road and Elementary School



Chris Pieper, Mayor, Tara Shantz, Active Communities Coordinator, and Patrick Place, Willowbrook Terrace Ltd. preparing to cut the ribbon for opening ceremonies





# CITY OF ARMSTRONG

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## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

July 16, 2009

UBCM  
Community Excellence Awards Committee

Dear Committee Members,

I am pleased to provide a letter of support to the attached Nomination for the Community Excellence Award – Category: Partnerships. Your 2009 Focus of Local Government Partnerships Supporting Physical Activity and Healthy Living is a perfect description of our project.

The bottom line with respect to the value the community received from this Partnership is certainly defined in the last paragraph under Long Term Impacts – the realization by all three of the partners that a partnership between these very different organizations – a city government, a developer, and a volunteer group – can achieve with ease what any one of these organizations would struggle with independently.

The City of Armstrong represents the citizens of Armstrong and I believe those citizens can be very proud of the partnership that their municipal government participated in which has resulted in a wonderful asset for all.

A definition of Excellence = brilliance, superiority, distinction, quality, merit = the Willowbrook Trail and Rest Area project. Volunteers shone brilliantly, we had an advantage we wouldn't have had without the partnership, the project makes a difference that is noteworthy and others can learn from, the quality of the working relationships matches the quality of the finished project and the project merits recognition!

If we can provide you with any further information, don't hesitate to ask.

Yours truly,

Chris Pieper  
Mayor

## **City of Armstrong – Willowbrook Trail & Rest Area**

### **Partner List**

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