Date       June 11, 2019      Report No.     HSS2019-344
To          Chair and Members
            Committee of the Whole, Operations and Administration
From        Jo Atanas, General Manager
            Health and Human Services

1.0 Type of Report
Consent Item [X]
Item For Consideration [ ]

2.0 Topic       Parker’s Project Update [Financial Impact: None]

3.0 Recommendation
THAT Report HHS2019-344 Parker’s Project Update BE RECEIVED

4.0 Purpose and Overview
This report provides an update to Council on the progress made to address the priority recommendations identified in the Parker’s Project youth-led Community Needs Assessment, which investigated the needs of local pregnant and parenting youth.

5.0 Background
In 2017, City of Brantford staff supported Parker’s Project youth in securing $100,000 through the Canada 150 Grant Program. This funding provided an opportunity to conduct research into the needs of local pregnant and parenting youth, as part of the City of Brantford’s Together for Youth: Coordinated Youth Services Strategy (PHSSS2017-024, HHS2018-015).
Parker’s Project Youth Leaders engaged with pregnant and parenting youth to understand their experiences, and study their living conditions, pregnancy and postnatal challenges, and support systems. The findings of the needs assessment identified eleven primary challenges:

1. Mental Health
2. Barriers to Accessing Services
3. Breastfeeding
4. Community Connectedness
5. Childcare
6. Medical/Sexual Health
7. Employment
8. Cultural
9. Housing
10. Day to Day Life
11. Education

In March 2018, the Youth Leaders presented the results of the needs assessment to Brantford City Council. In response, Council directed staff to assist the Youth Leaders to prepare a report that outlined how the City of Brantford could support the priorities identified. In May 2018, staff presented a report to Council (HHS2018-026, Parker’s Project Priority Recommendations) that outlined three priorities and projects that had been selected by Parker’s Project Youth Leaders to address key challenges that were identified in their needs assessment.

- Priority #1 Mental Health – Post Partum Mood Disorder Awareness Campaign
- Priority #2 Access to Services – Information Package for New Parents
- Priority #3 Communication and Connectedness – Parent to Parent Peer Support Pilot

Report HHS2018-026 included the following recommendations:

A. THAT Report HHS2018-026 Parker’s Project Priority Recommendations BE RECEIVED; and
B. THAT City Council CONFIRM its support and endorsement of the Parker’s Project Initiative and ENCOURAGE Staff and Parker’s Project Youth Leaders to continue their work in the community.

In response to this Council direction, staff has worked in collaboration with community partners to support Parker’s Project Youth in the design and implementation of the associated projects.

6.0 Corporate Policy Context

Economic Vitality & Innovation

7.0 Input From Other Sources

Parker’s Project Youth Leaders

8.0 Analysis

Parker’s Project has empowered youth to become change-makers in their community. Through mentorship, training, and support, youth have taken a leadership role in identifying and addressing the needs of pregnant and parenting youth. Fifteen local agencies and organizations have formed a Parker’s Project Collaborative committee\(^1\) to support the Parker’s Project Youth Leaders with recruitment, consultation, and subject matter expertise to plan and implement the following priorities.

8.1 Priority #1: Mental Health – Postpartum Mood Disorder Awareness Campaign

Mental health was identified as a key challenge for pregnant and parenting youth, with a significant number experiencing Postpartum Mood Disorders.

\(^1\) The Parker’s Project Collaborative membership includes; City of Brantford, County of Brant, Contact Brant, Brant County Health Unit, Pregnancy & Resource Centre Brant, Brant Family and Children’s Services, Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services, Brantford Native Housing, St. Leonard’s Community Services, Brantford Public Library, Wilfrid Laurier University, Woodview Mental Health & Autism Services, Kids Can Fly, Community Living Brant, and Margot’s Place.
(PPMD), including postpartum depression, anxiety, and psychosis. The needs assessment indicated that youth were often unaware of resources and reluctant to discuss their mental health concerns with family, friends, or community allies. This barrier was largely attributed to the stigma associated with mental health and youth pregnancy.

The PPMD working group took on multiple activities as part of their awareness and anti-stigma campaign. These events and activities were intended to draw attention to the frequency of PPMD and connecting those affected to appropriate community resources for support. The campaign included the following: 1) social event to connect young parents with others who have experienced PPMD to access support, guidance and resources, 2) art display to visually represent the local prevalence of PPMD, 3) original video and score to demonstrate various feelings associated with PPMD, 4) social media campaign to raise awareness about PPMD and available community resources, and 5) PPMD awareness walk through the downtown core, attended by 50 participants.

8.2 Priority #2: Access to Services – Information Package for New Parents

The needs assessment further identified that pregnant and parenting youth experience major challenges when trying to access services and approximately 40% of respondents indicated that a lack of knowledge presented the most prominent barrier to accessing services.

The Parker’s Project Youth Leaders worked with community partners to develop an information booklet and resource website that highlights local supports for parents. To date, over 1000 copies of the booklet have been distributed to over twenty-five locations throughout the community. The Parker’s Project website, www.parkersproject.info, directs parents to appropriate community resources, as well as information about upcoming community events and general information for parents.

8.3 Priority #3: Community Connectedness – Parent to Parent Peer Support Program

Community connectedness was identified as another key challenge for parenting youth. This priority relates to social isolation and the need for non-judgmental peer supports. Youth have indicated that peer support
programming improves their comfort and confidence in accessing services, and reduces the likelihood of discontinuing services.

Parker’s Project Youth Leaders have developed a peer support program that pairs mothers who have experienced the pressures of being a young parent, with other young parents who are struggling to navigate services. Twelve parents volunteered to be peer mentors and have completed various training sessions facilitated by Parker’s Project Youth Leaders and offered by community partners. Through the training sessions youth build their mentorship skill sets, learn more about available resources and support in the community, and become equipped with the knowledge and tools that they need to effectively provide peer support. The parent to parent mentoring program is being offered through Margot’s Place as a Parker’s Project initiative. Mentors are currently being paired with mentees to assist them with accessing local supports.

Over the next year, Parker’s Project Youth Leaders are eager to expand these initiatives, and will continue to work with their community partners to ensure more youth can engage in leadership and mentorship opportunities.

8.4 OMSSA Local Champions Award

The Parker’s Project Collaborative consists of representatives from over fifteen local youth serving agencies, and is led by youth with lived experience. Youth leaders identify their own priorities and plans for action, while partner agencies provide support through mentorship, subject matter expertise, data sharing, engagement strategies, and knowledge of local programing. This model ensures that focus remains directly on the needs identified by the Youth.

Youth and agency partners work together to achieve project goals, while enhancing the relationships between youth and community agencies. This model intentionally places youth at the forefront, and demonstrates the value of youth-led initiatives that are supported by collaborative community partners with a shared vision and commitment.

In May 2019, the Ontario Municipal Social Service Association (OMSSA) presented Parker’s Project a 2019 Local Municipal Champion Award in recognition of the collaboration of community partners in advancing excellence in human services integration.
9.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

10.0 Conclusion

In collaboration with community partners, City of Brantford staff has worked with Parker’s Project Youth Leaders to prioritize key recommendations that respond to the identified needs of pregnant and parenting youth. Parker’s Project Youth have led their community partners through the process of designing, planning, and implementing three initiatives that respond to mental health, access to community resources, and community connections for parenting youth. Parker’s Project Youth successfully launched a campaign for PPMD awareness, developed informational resources, and developed a Parent to Parent Peer Support program. These projects have the potential to create positive, multi-generational impact. By supporting young parents with opportunities to build community connections, access support and services, and develop their skills, Parker’s Project will help to improve the outcomes of young parents and their children.

Parker’s Project Youth have demonstrated their ability to empower and engage youth in their community, and to foster strong and positive relationships with community agencies. With the skills and partnerships developed through these successful initiatives, Parker’s Project Youth are eager to continue their work and plan to identify new projects in the fall 2019.

Aaron Wallace, Director of Strategic Planning & Community Partnerships

Jo Atanas, General Manager, Health and Human Services

Brad Smith, Community Development Coordinator Strategic Planning & Community Partnerships
In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required [ ] yes [X] no
Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk [ ] yes [X] no
Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? [ ] yes [X] no