
Rotarians Involved in Civic Action

SCARBOROUGH ROTARY COMMUNITY RENEWAL CAMPAIGN

DAVE HARDY, 2017

What motivates us!

Five Scarborough Rotary Clubs have met once a month for many years.

Increasingly discussed problems in the community:

- To a retail economy from a strong industrial economy.
- Job loss and lack of good jobs.



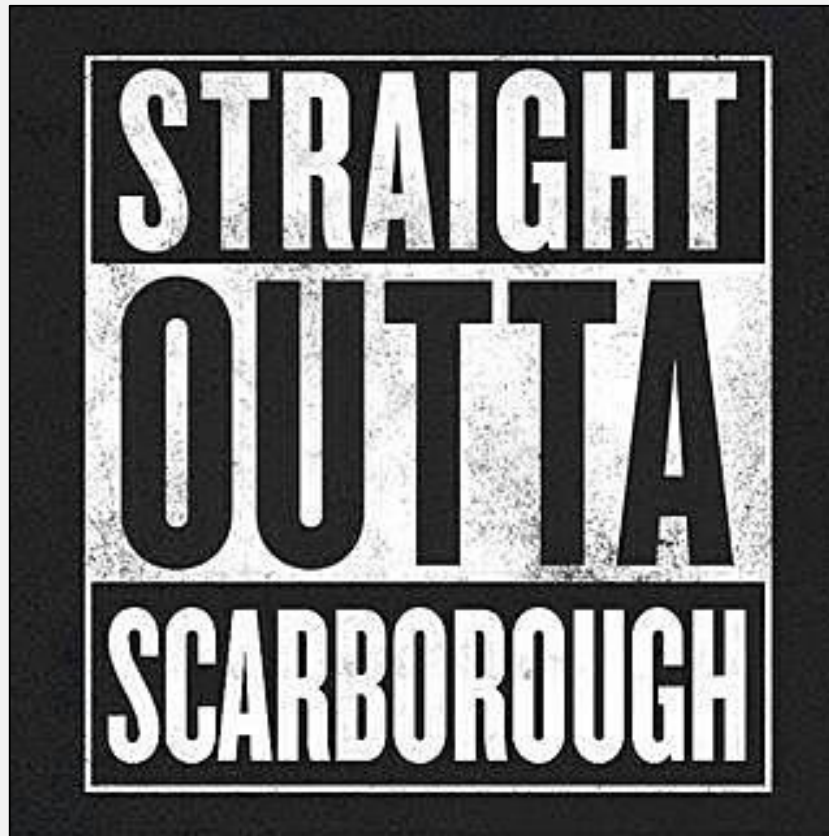
What motivates us!

- Post amalgamation, Scarborough went from being a proud “City of the Future” to having the highest number of neighbourhood’s in need.



What motivates us!

- Scarborough's brand needs a lot of work.



Let's talk to our leaders...

We knew that the difference between a strong and weak community is leadership.

First solution: talk to community leaders. But, who?

Could it be that Rotarians are the community leaders?

If so, how do we lead?



What motivates us!

Identified our self-interest:

- Want to build membership.
- Identify people who would be good new Rotarians.
- Look for companies who can support community prosperity.
- Build some capacity to support the 2018 International Conference.



Started with Research.

Completed a community research piece in 2013, based on Statistics Canada data.

- Large population (650,000 people).
- Heavy multi-cultural (a world within a city).
- Aging demographic.
- Working class with some middle and upper middle class.
- Lots of organizations, with most struggling for support.

We saw a mosaic of institutions, several BIAs, ratepayer organizations, faith groups, cultural groups, social agencies, some City staff, arts organizations all working independently.

Developed a Six-Month Plan

1. Get members of the five Clubs on board first.
2. Launch the “Rotary Scarborough Community Renewal Campaign”.
3. Initiate public consultations on three questions and based on the responses, develop a renewal strategy.
4. See if we can get media interest.
5. See if we can pick up some partners.
6. Sponsor an all-candidates meeting (2014 was an election year).
7. End with an event presenting the strategy.
8. We’re done!

Response to the Campaign...

From Rotarians

"I don't know which organization you represent but Rotarians won't support it."

"If you want something done, you need to go to the politicians."

"Not the way things are done"

"What's this going to cost our Club?"

"We'll give this two weeks"

"What the hell, let's give it a try."

Response to the Campaign ...

From the public

"Finally someone is doing something."

"Why isn't the City doing this?"

"Congratulations to Rotary."

"How can we help?"

"What's Rotary?"

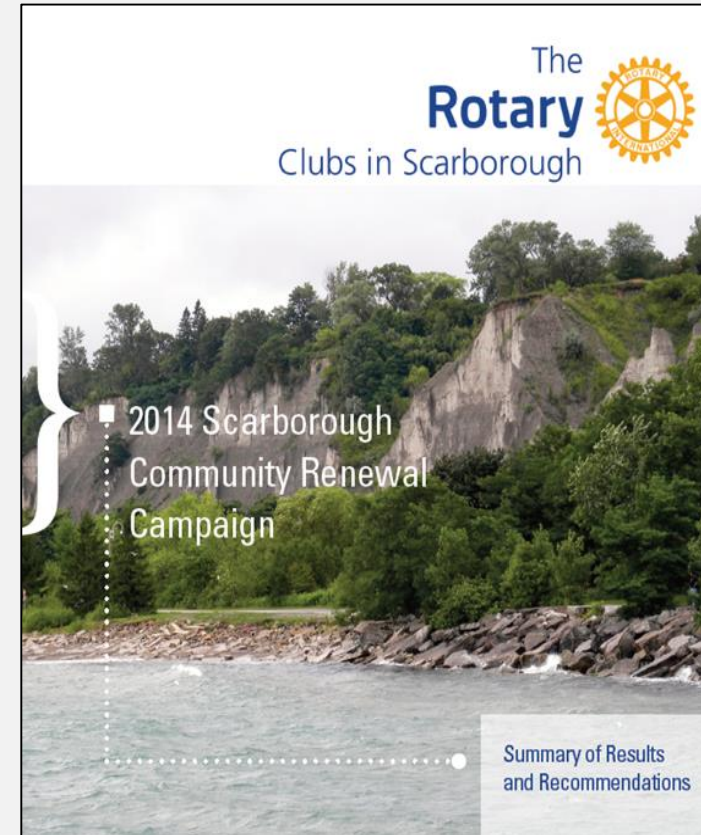
Roll out of the Campaign

Global News, Metroland Newspapers and SNapD stepped up as media partners.

The Campaign was included on list of Scarborough Mirror's newspaper's 2014 story's of the year.

100 people from across the community turned out for the launch.

Good attendance at the four Rotary community roundtable public consultation sessions.



Roll out of the Campaign

Invited (got ourselves invited) to talk to dozens of social agencies, government departments, ratepayer groups, arts groups, some politicians.

University of Toronto Scarborough Campus, Centennial College, The Scarborough Hospital system and Rouge Valley Health System stepped up.

Rotarians set up booths at every community event throughout the summer and fall.

Talked to hundreds (likely thousands) of people at Ribfest.



Roll out of the Campaign

- 2014 Mayoral Debate
- Over 700 people attended the Mayor's Debate sponsored by the Scarborough Rotary Clubs and Global News. UTSC picked up the costs.



Roll out of the Campaign

Three community questions:

What do you love about your community?

What do you see as a desirable future?

How do we get there?

Hundreds of responses. Boiled the comments down to 14 recommendations. Prepared and distributed 2000 copies of the Community Renewal Report.

About 125 people and organizations attended (what we thought was) the wrap-up event in February 2015, one year after the launch.

Where do you think you're going?

Who's going to implement those recommendations?

What we thought would be a well thought through strategy for future community renewal by others became an action plan that the community wanted to have implemented.

Rotary response...

“This is not about ‘what government should do’, this is about what we need to do as a community.”

If we want positive change, the whole community needs to work together.

Accomplishments

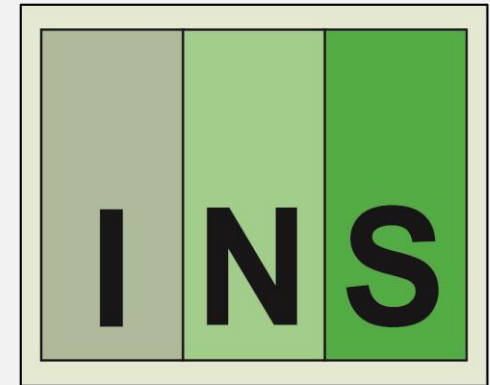
By the end of our third year (Feb. 2017), accomplishments that either directly or indirectly resulted and continue to result from the Rotary Scarborough Community Renewal Campaign:

Everyone talks to each other.

Anchor Institutions formed a permanent committee to discuss how to work closer with the community and procure and hire locally.

Scarborough Business Association formed and is now in its second year.

Institute for New Suburbanism formed as Scarborough-based urban affairs think tank. Speakers coming to Scarborough from Chicago and elsewhere.



Accomplishments

Scarborough Community Renewal Organization (SCRO) formed as successor organization – with a strong Rotarian presence on the Board. # 1 Recommendation.

SCRO Economic Development Committee:

- attracts over 100 tech entrepreneurs to meet-ups.
- with City of Toronto staff support initiates “Scarborough Advantage” investment attraction program.

SCRO Outreach Committee partnered with Centennial College on workshop on the “Workforce of Tomorrow in Scarborough” with former MPP Sean Conway.



Scarborough Community Renewal Organization



Accomplishments

SCRO Arts, Culture and Sport Committee exploring advocacy of a Living Arts Facility for Scarborough.

Continued Rotary media exposure, including on CBC. An extensive media (release) list developed.

Rotary (now SCRO) Community Newsletter maintains monthly communications with over 750 individuals.

Monthly social media reaches another 1000 organizations and individuals.

Occasional retweets by Toronto media.



Accomplishments

Stronger partnerships between Scarborough Rotary, Toronto Board of Trade.

Rotary presence at City Hall.

Great support from the Mayor.

We are now working with lots of volunteers and are able to magnify our actions.

We found our leaders!



Challenges

The campaign required (s) a commitment from select individuals in all 5 Clubs.

Each Club contributed financially.

The Campaign was an add on to ongoing Club activities.

Maintaining partnerships takes time and resources.

“City-wide” level of action required financial and staff support.

This level of staff and financial support not required at a neighbourhood level.

Still on the lookout for new Rotarians.

Learnings

Rotarians either needed to make something happen to attract people, or, go to where the people are and talk to them there.

Needed to manage and leverage the contacts we make. Thus, the database of contacts is maintained through the Newsletter.

Importance of doing homework and thinking before acting.

Importance of understanding, who is the community we are serving?

Learnings

Importance of reaching out to community organizations and individuals on the ground and partner with them. A small amount of Rotary support can be a big deal for some organizations.

Leveraged the Paul Harris Fellowship Award to thank community leaders and honour them.

Careful to make positive recommendations rather than criticize or oppose. No criticism of politicians.

Leverage outreach activities we are already doing, such as Ribfest.



Rotary as a Civic Action Organization

We are actually a strong organization.

- We are well organized and know how to make change. Many groups have a hard time pulling off each year what we manage to accomplish each week.
- We don't have any axes to grind.

We have a very good brand and are trusted.

If needed, we have more muscle than we realize.

We are good at bringing groups and organizations together.

Advice to other 7070 Rotary Clubs

In 1905, Paul Harris planned a new avenue of service and created a committee to find civic projects for Rotary members to participate in...need to find a project that meets members needs as well as has the greatest community impact¹.

Every community is different. So there needs to be a unique approach to civic action depending on local circumstances.

Develop a sense of who you are and where your comfort zone is, *and then step outside that zone.*

Be proud to be a Rotarian in the community.

1. "The motives behind motivation", Nancy Shepherdson, The Rotarian, September 2016.