

# LYNC

Love Your Neighbour Communities



## Building in a Changing Environment.



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### Change, change and more change?

Remember those long car rides with family? No matter how prepared you were something always seemed to cause a delay... a wrong turn, an upside-down map, someone's need for an unscheduled pit stops, an accident, police checks or the constant and unavoidable construction. Inevitably you would hear the plaintive wail from a little voice in the back.

"Are we there yet?"

Those of you who have had the privilege to experience the frustration of those marvelous family car trips will understand exactly what we at LYNC have experience in 2024. Our theme for the year was "arise and build." And we did everything we could to prepare to build the Mill Block Community. But nothing could prepare us for the constant delays we faced. Delays due to changing economics, changing benchmarks for acquiring funding, changing criteria to meet building and environmental standards. Change, change, change, and with every change our cost increased and our timeline to arise and build got pushed back.

"Are we building yet?"

I was contacted by a single mom (one of the first to request a place in the Mill Block) with a disabled child. She is desperate, knowing that come August she and her child will be homeless. Her current landlord has refused to maintain her apartment, and it is now unlivable giving a justifiable reason to kick her out. She needs a place now and I can hear the desperation in her voice as she asks...Are we building yet?

No, we are not but we are working hard. The changes have not hindered our preparation for building. In fact, we have made prudent use of these changes and resulting delays to make sure we have everything in order so that when the time is right, we will be ready to build. LYNC has been busy,

- busy adding new directors to improve our skills and capabilities.
- busy perfecting our public fund-raising campaign
- busy working with government agencies to make sure our funding applications are ready
- busy restructuring our financial process for transparency and accountability
- busy completing all that is necessary to obtain site plan approval.
- busy working collaboratively with our new construction managers (Nith Valley Construction), our design team and local governments as we move ever closer to obtaining building permits.
- Busy designing a tenant management system in preparation for those who will live at the Mill Block

Delays are inevitable but we continue to move forward, and I am pleased to say that after two years LYNC is closing the door on its highly successful Seed to Feed Campaign. I personally want to extend my appreciation of your continued support of LYNC's vision for the old feed mill. The incredible support we have received from the community whether it be individuals, businesses, local governments or foundations has made it possible to complete the purchase of the Mill as well as to cover the soft cost of a new development. LYNC has recently launched its capital campaign, and I am asking for your continued support as we see to raise the \$6 million equity shortfall needed to build. I am also asking for patience as we press on to complete what we have been called to do.

B Boris Emanuel Executive Director.

We started the year with the goal that construction on the Mill Block redevelopment could begin in the early fall of 2024. Things were looking very positive at the start of the year when we received verbal commitment from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that we would receive seed funding the amount of \$124,00. This grant would also set us up for other potential grants as we approached our construction stage. However, the constant changes and delays we face when from various government agencies have resulted in our construction date being significantly delayed.

This was also a year when LYNC began to expand beyond Wilmot, conducting a feasibility study in Drayton Ontario with the Drayton LYNC Advisory team. Our goal is to establish an affordable housing community in the township of Mapleton. LYNC also engaged in a feasibility study with Zion United Church in New Hamburg to consider the possibility of converting the church to a multi-use affordable housing community. We are very pleased that we were able to receive seed funding from CMHC for these two studies and are excited about the potential for developments that would provide more housing for families and individuals in the future. The work put into these studies is in keeping with LYNC's strategic goal to expand beyond the Mill Block. We will continue to work with and support others who are seeking to organize and create a similar vision to LYNC in their communities.

While these outreach programs took some of our resources the bulk of our work was focused on working with Wilmot Township and the Grand River Conservation Authority to receive our site plan approval. We are pleased to report that we finally received this approval in August and are grateful for the support of Wilmot Councilors and the planning staff at Wilmot advocating for the approval of the development of the old feed mill into a housing community.

The Region of Waterloo continues to support LYNC by extending our lease agreement for 34 Peel Street on a bi-annual basis until the conditions for funding have been met at which time they will sign the title for the police station property over to LYNC.

LYNC also made a number administrative changes in 2024 including appointing MNP, LLP. as our auditors. We are thankful for the guidance they have provided in terms of our financial reporting. We also welcomed Bryan Huck to our board as a director. Bryan brings an accounting background to our team and a detail for governance that has helped guide our discussion and focus our efforts. He was no stranger to LYNC as he has been the Facilitator at our Strategic Planning sessions in 2023 and in early 2024.

What a privilege it is to work with a dedicated Board of Directors and Executive Director who are all committed to staying the course in order to see the Mill Block Development become a reality.

Respectfully,

Steve Wagler, Board Chair



## Seeds of Change

Community Engagement Team Report:

**Together, We Planted the Seeds of Change — and Raised Over \$1,000,000!**

2024 saw the close out of our initial Seed to Feed Campaign.

Thanks to your incredible generosity, our Seed to Feed Campaign raised over \$1 million to support equitable housing in New Hamburg. This is more than a number — it's the foundation of a future where everyone has a place to call home.

With these funds, we secured over half the purchase price for the historic Mill and Warehouse properties, breathing life into our vision for the Mill Block.

The rest has been invested in critical pre-construction steps including:

- Engineering Assessments
- Environmental Assessments
- Site Plan expenses
- Final Architectural drawings
- Professional fees such as audit and legal
- Critical Operating expenses such as insurance, building maintenance, debt servicing and salary for our staff Executive Director

This milestone was made possible by you — our passionate, dedicated, and diverse community. From local businesses that gave over \$300,000 to churches that shared holiday offerings, to individuals who gave what they could, time and again — your commitment fuels this movement.

**The seeds are planted. The ground is ready. Let's keep growing — together.**

In June of 2025 we will be launching our next campaign “The Story of a Mill: From the Founding of a Community to Hope for the Future”

Lisa Doherty Chari Community Engagement Team

Submitted by Lisa Doherty, Vice Chair Community Engagement Team

## Planning for Change

The board and ED gathered June 13, 2024, for our annual strategy plan update meeting. At our first strategy planning meeting (fall, 2022), we identified four pillars that will guide our board’s priorities each year: At our 2024 meeting, we reviewed key wins and lessons learned. Through this process we are nurturing a continuous improvement and transparent mindset at the board and ED level. Initiatives that flowed from this activity were matched to our four pillars.

### 1. Aligned board

Regular review of conflict of interest; Assess board skills, competency gaps; Schedule activities at each meeting specifically designed to build trust’ Seek learning resources to support and help a charity to scale up quickly and Seek new treasurer by September 2025

### 2. Project principles

LYNC is pleased by the number of opportunities to create new projects in rural communities. LYNC’s board is creating an application and vetting process for all new projects guided by the following guidelines and evaluation criteria

- Must align with LYNC 3 prongs and values
- Must have a community champion
- Define the meaningful impact on associated rural communities
- Gain knowledge / relationships with local gov. before proceeding with projects in new jurisdictions
- Must understand legal structure of property and introduce stages of vetting
- Receive clarity on path to LYNC ownership over project
- Define LYNC resources to be assigned
- seek community groups with capabilities in leadership, finances, fundraising and community engagement.

### 3. Operational excellence

- LYNC will Strive for a 2-year buffer in forecasting projects
- Seek all perspectives when making important decisions
- Be conservative with timelines – expect delays

### 4. Scale up fundraising and marketing

- Create and launch a capital campaign to reach our 6 million equity shortfall
- Create planned giving strategy to ensure long term support for the organization





### Adapting to change

The Mill Block Development project continued to advance towards the building permit application stage, with the advancement of the final design and construction drawings. The project consulting team worked on completing the required soil testing and building materials inspection to determine the level of contamination and hazardous substances. The Construction Manager (CM) position was publicly tendered, and the successful bidder was Nith Valley Construction. Nith Valley is a local contractor with an extensive resume which includes affordable housing and building restoration/renovation projects. Nith Valley has already worked on securing bids for the removal of the steel grain bins, the remedial site work and completing a thorough review of the Class B project estimate. Nith Valley has also assumed responsibility to secure the mill building and to coordinate building access by consultants and bidding contractors. We are glad to have them as part of our team as we prepare to build in 2025.

: Glen Good, Chairperson, Facility Development Team

### Financial Team Report

It gives me great pleasure to approve the financial statements prepared by MNP

LYNC is now in its third full year of operation and is determined to make our vision a reality with the support of our community. The continuing support from individuals and businesses is truly amazing. The completion of this project needs all of us, whether through large corporate donations, community grants or individuals giving what they can; we need everyone to cover our everyday soft cost including utility bills, maintenance, community engagement as well as daily administration including wages for LYNC's one employee.

As a Volunteer, and Director, I bring my life experiences in a simple form to the table. My crayons and posting notes and scrap paper are then professionalized by LYNC's Director Bryan Huck and our accountants MNP LLP. Thanks for making me look good. I can't express how important it is to connect ourselves with the knowledge of truly talented individuals and service providers that share the same vision. LYNC is a faith driven organization that continues to be amazed at the support we receive. Since I have an obligation to ensure our financial success, I can't close without directing you to our website [www.lyncommunities.com](http://www.lyncommunities.com) You will find lots of important information about LYNC and our housing initiatives AND our secure QR code for donations. In notes mention my name

Thank-you/God Bless

Paul Ming Treasurer

### Strategic financial restructuring and update.

LYNC became a Canadian Charity in April 2023. During the 2023 audit process, we identified the need to switch accounting firms to one that had greater expertise and experience working with new, small charities with strategic focus to scale up quickly. At our Sept 2024 board meeting and special members meeting that immediately followed, we passed a resolution to replace Pollard Gagliardi Navickas LLP with MNP LLP. The vote was unanimous, with all 6 members present.

We successfully migrated to QuickBooks Online which streamlined our accounting practices and simplified our monthly reporting and reconciliations. Noted in our 2024 audited financial statements, we identified and corrected the handling of certain accounting transactions related to the property under development (Mill Block). The corrections and impact are noted in Note # 2 in our financial statements. These changes have been applied retrospectively, and the prior period has been restated. Our new accounting policies are noted in Note # 3 in the financial statements.

The board is very pleased with the support from MNP LLP Waterloo partner Erin Evans and her team. We're excited to build a lasting partnership that delivers expert financial and government reporting guidance while helping us strengthen our board and financial structures for the Mill Block and future initiatives.

On behalf of the finance team

Bryan Huck

# About LYNC

## *Our Mission*

Our mission is to revitalize people and rural communities through equitable housing and social enterprise. As an organization we wish to meet the needs of our neighbours for equitable and affordable housing, food security, social isolation and environmental responsibility.

## *Our Vision*

Love Your Neighbour Communities is a faith-based organization. What does that mean for us? What does that mean for you? For us it means that our desire to serve God and our neighbours underpins all that we do. Our mission is to reflect the character of Christ by revitalizing people and rural communities through social enterprise and intergenerational, affordable housing. It's as simple as that.

We ask that you put aside any pre-conceived ideas you may have about Christianity and people of faith. For us, our faith inspires us to act, and to love our neighbours, ALL our neighbours.

For you it means that we will act based on a vision of healthy, equitable and hope-filled communities where everyone feels they belong. Our values compel us to action. Here are our values and the action spurred by these values.

### **Love Your Neighbour**

**Action:** We believe that all people are unique, have value and are created for community. Based on this belief, we are inclusive to all. LYNC exists to support diverse communities: people from every religion, creed, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. We actively work to identify and remove barriers that prevent people from accessing and participating in our services and the community around them

### **Community as a Foundation**

**Action:** We create spaces and design programs for people to gather and support one another. Community is at the center of all we do. We will listen to our residents and local neighbours and together, build a community that is vibrant and meets relevant and meets needs.

### **Serve One Another**

#### **Action:**

We provide opportunities for all people to grow together through knowledge and skills exchange. All residents will agree to partner with LYNC through a community partnership agreement.

### **Stewardship**

#### **Action:**

We care and cultivate all things that have been entrusted to us, whether they are people's stories, a volunteer's time, the environment, or financial contributions.