

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

October 5, 2005

To: Policy and Finance Committee
From: Sue Corke, Deputy City Manager
Subject: Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy

Purpose:

This report recommends that City Council adopt a Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy to strengthen priority neighbourhoods through targeted investment. The strategy encompasses the learnings of the Community Safety Plan and other City initiatives as well as the directions proposed by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no immediate financial implications to this report. Potential financial impacts will be reported out through the 2006 budget process.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) Council adopt the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy containing the following elements:
 - (a) designating the 13 neighbourhoods identified in this report as having priority for infrastructure investment;
 - (b) establishing a neighbourhoods investment board to guide implementation and expanding Neighbourhood Action processes at the local level; and
 - (c) using appropriate monitoring tools to identify existing infrastructure gaps and to determine which neighbourhoods are most in need of future investment by further developing the assessment methodology used by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force;
- (2) Deputy City Manager Sue Corke, working with the Interdivisional Committee on Integrated Responses for Priority Neighbourhoods, report through the 2006 budget

process on the City resources required to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy in all 13 priority neighbourhoods;

- (3) the City seek funding support for implementation of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy through ongoing discussions with the federal and provincial governments;
- (4) the City begin working with inter-sectoral partners to determine the composition and mandate of the neighbourhoods investment board and to develop a plan for expanding Neighbourhood Action in priority communities; and
- (5) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

At its meeting of July 20, 21 and 22, 2004, City Council adopted a report from the Mayor titled "Council Priorities for the 2003-2006 Term." The report was the outcome of strategy sessions held by councillors and senior staff to develop a set of priorities for Council to accomplish before the end of the current term. Among the nine priorities was strengthening at-risk neighbourhoods. The report specified what Council sought to achieve with respect to each priority. Related to strengthening at-risk neighbourhoods were the objectives of finding the right balance between prevention and response to neighbourhood problems; improved services and programs for youth and improved community safety.

The statement of Council priorities confirmed and expanded the direction of an existing major initiative, the Community Safety Plan (CSP) which was adopted by Council at its meeting of March 1, 2 and 3, 2004. Two of the elements of the CSP were to "develop neighbourhood action plans for key at-risk communities" and "target programs and services to designated at-risk neighbourhoods." The report designated three priority neighbourhoods, Malvern, Jane-Finch and Jamestown. A fourth, Kingston-Galloway, was subsequently added. At its meeting of September 28, 29 and 30, 2005, Council adopted a progress report on the Community Safety Plan in which Mayor Miller recommended the addition of three more CSP neighbourhoods, Lawrence Heights, Steeles-L'Amoureux, and Eglinton East-Kennedy Park.

At the same Council meeting (March 1, 2, and 3, 2004) at which the CSP was adopted another important neighbourhood-strengthening initiative was put in motion when councillors adopted a report from the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services informing Council of the formation of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force (SNTF). Under the joint leadership of the City of Toronto, the United Way of Greater Toronto and the private sector, and with the financial support of the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario, the 23-member Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force began its work in May 2004 and released its final report, "Strong Neighbourhoods: a Call to Action," on June 30, 2005.

Comments:

During the current term of Council, the City of Toronto has placed increasing emphasis on identifying vulnerable neighbourhoods and targeting resources to improve outcomes for their residents. This report recommends the adoption of a civic strategy on neighbourhood building that encompasses current activity and provides a framework for future initiatives. The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy builds on the strategic groundwork laid by previous Councils. Promoting “strong and healthy neighbourhoods and communities” is one of the City Directions adopted by Council in August 2000 as part of the City’s Strategic Plan. Similarly, strengthening communities is one of the three major strategic directions adopted by Council in December 2001 as part of the Social Development Strategy which is the social component of the Strategic Plan.

The strategy for strengthening neighbourhoods takes place within a context in which some areas of the city are at greater risk of negative outcomes than others. Persistently low incomes and a widening income gap between the rich and the poor in many communities threaten the social cohesiveness that has marked the success of the city. Some neighbourhoods have experienced increasing levels of gun violence and criminal gang involvement resulting in city-wide concerns about community safety. An unequal distribution of services and facilities has left some neighbourhoods less well-equipped to deal with the social challenges they face. Working with local residents to identify the neighbourhoods which most need assistance and ensuring they get the assistance they need has become a City priority.

Current Neighbourhood-Strengthening Initiatives:

Significant progress in neighbourhood building through targeted investment has already been made through the ongoing implementation of the Community Safety Plan. A central component of the Community Safety Plan has been the Neighbourhood Action process which has been initiated in the four original Community Safety neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood Action has brought together City and community-based service providers to determine local needs and better coordinate services. By coordinating resources and developing new inter-sectoral partnerships, a broad range of opportunities have been created for youth living in at-risk neighbourhoods. The learnings from the Community Safety Plan and in particular the Neighbourhood Action process will be instrumental in the planning and investment decisions which will be key components of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy.

The Toronto Community Housing Corporation is also involved in major community revitalization initiatives. The redevelopment of the Regent Park neighbourhood—home to 7,500 residents—is about to begin and will take about 12 years to complete. Revitalizing Regent Park is estimated to require investments of close to \$1 billion. Social development plans for the neighbourhood have been an integral part of the redevelopment planning process. The reconstruction of another, nearby social housing project, Don Mount Court is now underway and plans are also in progress for rebuilding of social housing in Lawrence Heights.

New Neighbourhood-Strengthening Initiatives:

The report of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force is another cornerstone of the City's Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. It arrives at a time when work is underway within the City government and its associated agencies which will bring a more focused and effective approach to strengthening neighbourhoods and City building.

Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force Recommendations:

To strengthen vulnerable neighbourhoods and create a funding and policy climate favourable to neighbourhoods, the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force recommended that the three orders of government enter into a five-year renewable agreement to implement its proposed strong neighbourhoods plan. The plan has two main elements:

- (1) targeted investments in specific neighbourhoods to ensure a responsive system of services and accessible community space; and
- (2) the use of a neighbourhood perspective to evaluate and reshape government policies, programs and funding mechanisms so that they better support all neighbourhoods.

Using commissioned research and research conducted by the City of Toronto, the Task Force developed a new technique for identifying neighbourhoods to be targeted for investment. This approach combines measures of social health and well-being with measures of geographical access to community services and facilities. The technique provides a clear picture of which neighbourhoods lack the services they require. Using this innovative methodology, the Task Force identified nine of Toronto's 140 neighbourhoods as having a higher degree of social need and poorer access to necessary social services and facilities. The Task Force also proposed a governance structure and local decision-making bodies to guide the implementation of the plan.

Attachment I lists the Task Force's ten recommendations.

Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy:

Strengthening Toronto's neighbourhoods requires the financial and decision-making involvement of all orders of government. It requires a commitment to allocate resources to where they are most needed. And it requires a willingness on the part of service providers—both public sector and community-based—to work together to coordinate the planning and delivery of services. The Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy incorporates the neighbourhood-based work of the Community Safety Plan and other City initiatives that are investing in neighbourhoods as well as the directions suggested by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force. It proposes targeted investment in priority neighbourhoods and the establishment of new collaborative implementation structures.

Priority Neighbourhoods:

Thirteen neighbourhood areas have been identified for priority investment. These include all seven of the neighbourhoods identified in the Community Safety Plan; the nine neighbourhoods

identified by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force (there is some overlap in these areas) as well as other underserved neighbourhoods. Some adjacent neighbourhoods have been clustered together. The 13 priority neighbourhoods take in at least parts of 24 of the City's 140 social planning neighbourhoods.

The proposed priority neighbourhoods are: Jamestown, Jane-Finch, Weston-Mount Dennis, Lawrence Heights, Westminster-Branson, Crescent Town, Flemingdon Park-Victoria Village, Steeles-L'Amoureux, Dorset Park, Eglinton East-Kennedy Park, Scarborough Village, Kingston-Galloway and Malvern. With the assistance of local residents and service-providers, specific areas of focus will be identified within these areas.

Monitoring:

Establishing a monitoring tool to identify needs and assess social infrastructure investment in Toronto's neighbourhoods will be important to the success of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. The City already has a number of monitoring processes in place. The service planning activities of program areas identify local needs and determine what services and facilities are required. Other City monitoring and reporting initiatives such as the Children's Report Card and the work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System (which measures changes in social, economic and environmental factors in Canadian municipalities) also contribute to a better understanding of the situations facing neighbourhood residents.

The methodology developed by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task, which combines social indicators with a measurement of access to services, further advances the City's ability to monitor the health and well-being of neighbourhoods and prioritize neighbourhoods for investment. It is proposed that this methodology be further developed as part of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. This will provide the City with the capacity to identify any service disparities such as those referred to by Councillor Del Grande in his communication to Community Services Committee, June 28, 2005

It is recommended that the City further develop appropriate monitoring tools to identify existing infrastructure gaps and to determine which neighbourhoods are most in need of future investment by building on the assessment methodology used by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force as well as other processes already in place.

Integrated Responses:

To bring focus and coordination to the delivery of services in priority neighbourhoods a new committee of senior managers in City divisions and associated agencies has been convened. Under the leadership of Deputy City Manager Sue Corke, the Interdivisional Committee on Integrated Responses for Priority Neighbourhoods is intended to maximize the impact of investments in these neighbourhoods. Participants in the committee include senior-level representatives from Parks, Forestry and Recreation; Children's Services; Social Services; Public Health; Shelter, Support and Housing Administration; Social Development and Administration; City Planning; Municipal Licensing and Standards; Economic Development, Culture and

Tourism; Transportation Services; Emergency Medical Services; Corporate Communications; Toronto Police Service; Toronto Public Library; Toronto Community Housing Corporation; Toronto Catholic District School Board and Toronto District School Board. The committee's objectives are to:

- (1) coordinate City leadership in building stronger neighbourhoods, based on community priorities;
- (2) develop a collaborative, effective and sustainable approach to delivering services to neighbourhoods in need;
- (3) contribute to community safety by providing leadership in coordinated service delivery; and
- (4) support the development of programs and facilities in underserved neighbourhoods.

Since its formation in late August, the committee has already been successful in advancing the Neighbourhood Action process within priority neighbourhoods by identifying a group of directors from a variety of program areas who will coordinate collaborative work at the local level. Members of this directors group will facilitate service delivery partnerships within neighbourhoods and will provide guidance for the city-wide Neighbourhood Action process.

It is recommended that Deputy City Manager Sue Corke, working with the interdivisional committee, identify the resources required to implement the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy in all 13 priority neighbourhoods and report through the 2006 budget process.

Intergovernmental Partnerships:

The City will not be able to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy without the cooperation and financial support of other orders of government. On March 31, 2005, the City Manager reported to the Policy and Finance Committee on the Mayor's proposal to the Premier and Prime Minister that Canada, Ontario and Toronto enter into a tri-partite framework agreement to establish a common vision and shared goals for urban sustainability and to facilitate government decision-making and negotiations on complex urban issues. A Canada-Ontario-Toronto Framework Agreement will create a partnership table for the orders of government, consistent with the New Deal that Toronto is pursuing. Fundamentally the Framework Agreement is about building relationships at the political and senior staff levels through which focus can be brought to specific issues and initiatives. It also reflects the recognition that the challenges facing Toronto and its neighbourhoods will require significant financial contributions from all orders of government. The intergovernmental collaboration proposed by this Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy is compatible with the intergovernmental table envisioned under the Canada-Ontario-Toronto Framework Agreement.

It is recommended that the City seek funding support for implementation of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy through ongoing discussions with the federal and provincial governments.

New Local Partnerships:

The Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, following the directions laid out by the SNTF, proposes that a broad collaborative, neighbourhood-centred approach be formalised with the establishment of a neighbourhoods investment board, a stakeholder group responsible for fully developing community and private sector resources and for guiding the implementation of the investment plans across the city.

The critical work of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy will take place at the neighbourhood level. By expanding the scope of the current Neighbourhood Action process a broad range of residents, businesses, faith groups, service providers, organizations and other local stakeholders will be brought together to identify local priorities and recommend investments.

It is recommended that the City should begin the process of implementation of the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy by engaging partners such as the United Way and other stakeholders in determining the composition and mandates of the neighbourhoods investment board and in developing a plan for expanding Neighbourhood Action activity at a local level in the priority neighbourhoods.

Conclusions:

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy proposed in this report is designed to strengthen priority neighbourhoods through targeted investment in services and facilities. The strategy builds on the learnings of the Community Safety Plan and other City initiatives as well as the directions proposed by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force. It proposes that investment be made in the social infrastructure of 13 priority neighbourhoods and that funding support be sought from other orders of government. Work is already underway at a senior staff level to reallocate resources within the City's control to better serve the priority neighbourhoods and it is proposed that work begin on establishing the partnerships with the community-based sector, the federal government and the Ontario government necessary to implement the strategy.

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List of Attachments:

Attachment I — Recommendations of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force
Attachment II — Proposed Priority Neighbourhoods Map

Attachment I

Recommendations of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force

Recommendation 1:

The Task Force recommends that the three orders of government enter into a five-year renewable agreement to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and commit senior elected representatives to establish the Inter-Governmental Table as the first action under the implementation of the Strategy.

Recommendation 2:

The Task Force recommends that the Inter-Governmental Table designate the nine Investment Neighbourhoods for targeted investment under the Strategy.

Recommendation 3:

The Task Force recommends that the Inter-Governmental Table identify and commit the resources required to implement the Strategy in the neighbourhoods selected for investment. These resources will support the Neighbourhood Investment Fund, and the Strong Neighbourhoods Unit. The Strong Neighbourhoods Unit will develop and maintain a comprehensive monitoring system incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data for use by Local Neighbourhood Investment Partnerships.

Recommendation 4:

The Task Force recommends that the Inter-Governmental Table establish the Strong Neighbourhoods Investment Board and work together to identify community representatives for this Board.

Recommendation 5:

The Task Force recommends that a Local Neighbourhood Investment Partnership be established in each of the neighbourhoods selected for investment, and that Neighbourhood Investment Plans be developed and implemented for each of these neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 6:

The Task Force recommends that the three orders of government establish a “Neighbourhoods First” approach to the disposal of surplus public facilities and real estate in investment neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 7:

The Task Force recommends that the three orders of government use a neighbourhood perspective to identify opportunities to enhance the use of existing public investments, a need for improved co-ordination among programs or governments, conflicts between existing government policies and the need for new programs.

Recommendation 8:

The Task Force recommends that all orders of government address systemic issues affecting Toronto’s neighbourhoods through consideration of the recommendations of the Task Force on

Modernising Income Security for Working Age Adults, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, and through a long-term commitment to increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Recommendation 9:

The Task Force recommends that United Way of Greater Toronto work with neighbourhood agencies, the private sector, organized labour, charities, charitable foundations and individual donors to facilitate investment in community services in the neighbourhoods identified in this report in a manner that is consistent with Neighbourhood Investment Plans, and coordinated with government investments in these neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 10:

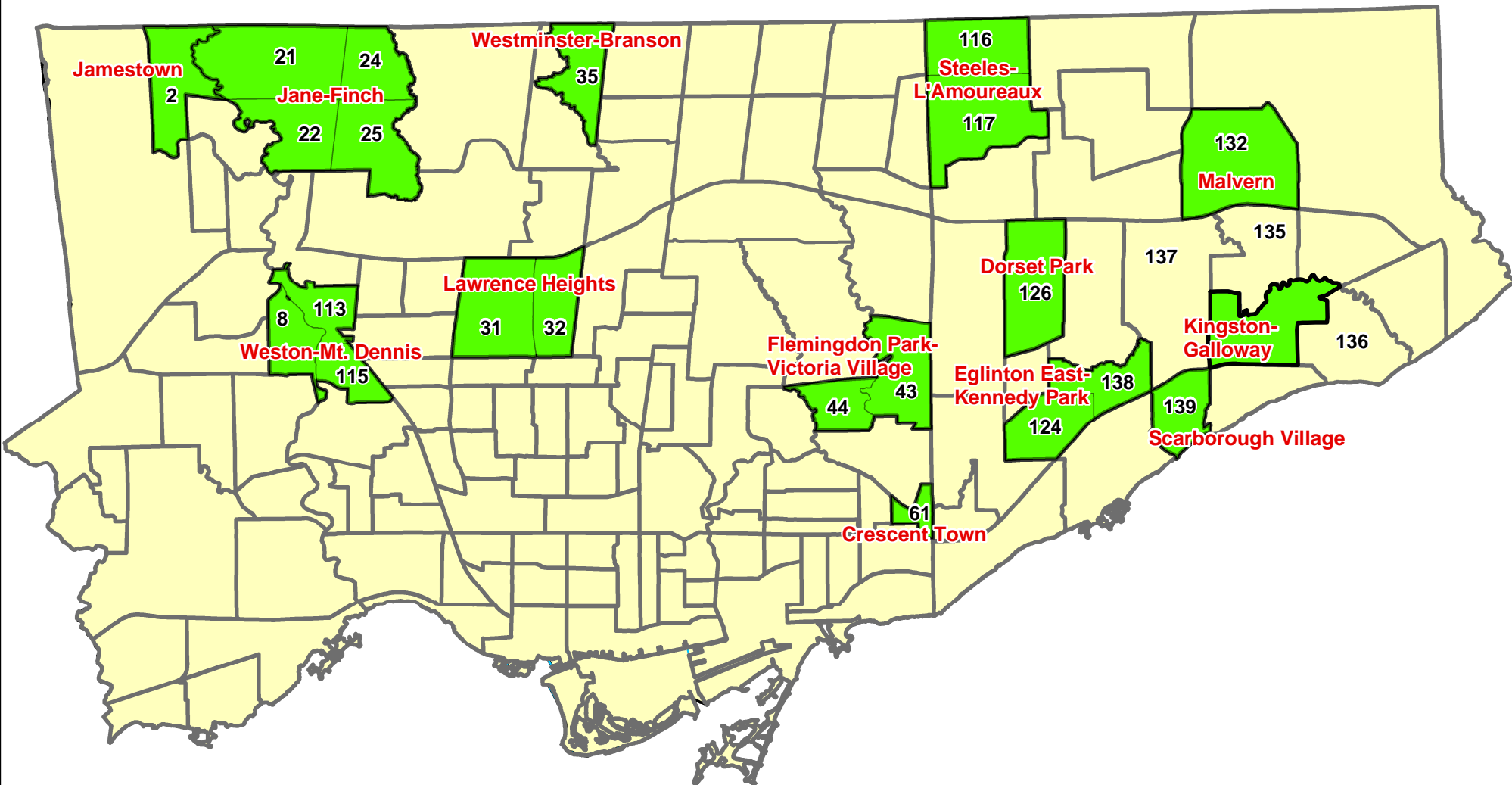
The Task Force recommends that the three orders of government commit to the following timeline for implementation of the Toronto Neighbourhoods Strategy:

By December 2005, governments will have:

- (a) Established the Inter-Governmental Table;
- (b) Confirmed the neighbourhoods for initial investment;
- (c) Identified and committed resources to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy;
- (d) Established the Strong Neighbourhoods Investment Board;
- (e) Established the Strong Neighbourhoods Unit; and
- (f) Established the Local Neighbourhood Investment Partnerships.

By December 2006 and every year thereafter, governments will issue annual reports under the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy.

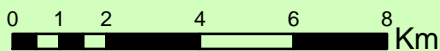
Proposed Priority Neighbourhood Areas



Legend

- Neighbourhoods
- Priority Neighbourhood Areas

Notes: Neighbourhood Areas are comprised of the City's 140 neighbourhood definitions. Please consult the neighbourhood map for official names. The Kingston-Galloway area was defined through the Community Safety Initiative.



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