

June 14, 2007

To: Executive Committee

From: Affordable Housing Committee

Subject: Lawrence Heights Revitalization – Initiate Preliminary Planning

Recommendations:

The Affordable Housing Committee on June 14, 2007, recommends to the Executive Committee and City Council that:

1. the Chief Planner be authorized to begin the development of a Vision and Planning Framework for the revitalization of Lawrence Heights at a cost of \$500,000 and funded from the Capital Revolving Fund (CRF), subject to Council approval of the transfer of the Federal Housing Trust Fund - Provincial Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) Initiative to the Capital Revolving Fund;
2. the Deputy City Managers report back to the Affordable Housing Committee in six months on the progress of the revitalization planning including the resources required and the progress in securing additional funding to support this initiative;
3. the Deputy City Manager's report to the Affordable Housing Committee in six months include a comprehensive program for consolidating all City land holdings under the direction of the Steering Committee including a protocol for dealing with the lands held by the school boards and other orders of government, including the Toronto Transit Commission;
4. as a first order of business, staff work toward securing formal agreements with the school boards, CMHC, provincial and federal ministries and their agencies for a mechanism to facilitate quick decisions on land issues and other intergovernmental matters and report progress on this in the Deputy City Manager's report;
5. a copy of this report be forwarded to all stakeholders with a formal request that it be placed on the agenda of their governing body for information including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Toronto District School Board;
- b. Toronto Catholic District School Board;
- c. Toronto Transit Commission;
- d. Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation;
- e. Toronto Hydro;
- f. Baycrest Centre;
- g. Jewish Board of Education;
- h. Italian Canadian Benevolent Corporation (ICBC);
- i. United Way;
- j. Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre;
- k. Lawrence Gardens Co-op;
- l. Wilmont 8 Co-op;
- m. North York Community House;
- n. Toronto Community Housing Corporation;
- o. Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO);
- p. York University;
- q. Downsview Park;
- r. ShareLife;
- s. United Jewish Welfare Fund;
- t. Jewish Family and Child Services; and
- u. COSTI Immigrant Services.

Background:

The Affordable Housing Committee on June 14, 2007, considered a report (May 31, 2007) from Deputy City Managers, Cluster A and B, respecting Lawrence Heights Revitalization – Initiate Preliminary Planning.

City Clerk

Patsy Morris
Item AH4.7

Sent to: Deputy City Manager, Sue Corke
Director, Affordable Housing Development, Affordable Housing Office
Director, Partnerships, Affordable Housing Office



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Lawrence Heights Revitalization – Initiate Preliminary Planning

Date:	May 31, 2007
To:	Affordable Housing Committee
From:	Deputy City Managers, Cluster A and B
Wards:	15
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report outlines the opportunities the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood revitalization presents, and the corresponding need for a corporate structure to support this initiative and coordinate associated stakeholder partnerships. This potentially presents the City with an opportunity to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood revitalization that will incorporate social, physical, economic, environmental, health-related and community-based supports into a planning framework that will ultimately strengthen the community.

A first step to beginning a City Building exercise of this complexity and scope is developing a Planning Vision and Framework. This report requests authorization for \$500,000 for City Planning to begin this work. These funds will be drawn from the \$26.69M Federal Housing Trust Fund – Provincial Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) Initiative and will have zero net impact on the City's budget.

The \$500,000 allows this work to begin but will not be sufficient to fully fund the first phase of activity. City staff will be working closely with Toronto Community Housing Corporation, community stakeholders, and neighbourhood residents to identify potential partnerships and additional resources for this unprecedented opportunity for neighbourhood revitalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Deputy City Managers recommend that:

1. The Chief Planner be authorized to begin the development of a Vision and Planning Framework for the revitalization of Lawrence Heights at a cost of \$500,000 and funded from the Capital Revolving Fund (CRF), subject to Council approval of the transfer of the Federal Housing Trust Fund - Provincial Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) Initiative to the Capital Revolving Fund.
2. The Deputy City Managers report back to the Affordable Housing Committee in six months on the progress of the revitalization planning including the resources required and the progress in securing additional funding to support this initiative.

Financial Impact

The work to initiate developing a vision and Planning Framework for the revitalization of Lawrence Heights, costs of \$500,000, is recommended to be funded from the Capital Revolving Fund subject to Council approval of the transfer of the Federal Housing Trust Fund - Provincial Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) Initiative to the Capital Revolving Fund.

These funds will be used in City Planning to fund some of the staff required and contribute to the preliminary planning work associated with the revitalization. The detailed budget implications for the current year will be reported to Budget Committee in September, 2007 and any future year budget implications associated with this project will be reported and included in future year program budgets as development proceeds.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer have reviewed this report and agree with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

In October 2005, Council designated Lawrence Heights as one of thirteen priority neighbourhoods targeted for infrastructure investment and community service improvement.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Toronto Community Housing Corporation community within the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood was built in 1957. It is part of the larger community bounded by Lawrence Avenue in the south, Bathurst Street to the east, Dufferin Avenue to the west and Highway 401 to the north. There are currently 1,235 rent-geared-to-income housing units serving 3,715 tenants, constructed on 60.5 hectares of land. Other major public land owners in this area include: the City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and Canada Mortgage and Housing (CMHC). The remaining approximately 281.5 hectares that make up the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood are comprised of private residential housing, schools and commercial property (including commercial frontage along Lawrence Ave. and Dufferin St. and the Yorkdale and Lawrence Square malls).

Lawrence Heights provides an excellent opportunity for social and economic change in the north-west part of Toronto. A number of private land owners have signalled their intention to proceed

with the redevelopment of their own lands. Capturing this interest and ensuring that these plans are developed as part of a larger, more comprehensive planning exercise will be critical in moving the revitalization forward. Revitalizing Lawrence Heights also allows Toronto Community Housing Corporation to leverage its asset, attract the residential market development to assist in renewing its housing and better integrate the TCHC Lawrence Heights residents into the fabric of the City. The redevelopment of the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood meets the City of Toronto's priorities and Toronto Community Housing Corporation's objectives for building healthy communities.

COMMENTS

City Building – The Lawrence Heights Planning Area Revitalization

The revitalization of Lawrence Heights is a complex undertaking that seeks to develop and more fully integrate the various residential neighbourhoods, community and institutional infrastructure and commercial uses of a geographic area 342 hectares in size.

Lawrence Heights' neighbourhood revitalization will become a catalyst for a much broader City Building initiative. City Building involves balancing the social, economic and environmental needs and priorities of an area and integrating these to create liveable communities. The City has made a priority of enhancing the prosperity, opportunity and liveability of its neighbourhoods. The Official Plan will provide the planning policy framework for the revitalization of Lawrence Heights. This framework will be structured through the review and development of strategies that will address: the built environment; the human environment; and the natural environment.

This City Building exercise is an opportunity to create a mixed-income, mixed use community, improve transit access, improve access to community space, recreation, services, education and training, promote social inclusion through enhanced design structure and create a community that is integrated with the surrounding city. It will also enhance quality of environment by ensuring that sustainable practices and standards are incorporated into the revitalization. Such practices will include reduced energy consumption, the construction of green buildings, improved air and water quality, expanded public transit access, the protection and creation of more green space and vibrant community building processes.

Opportunities and Challenges

If revitalization of the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood is to be successful, a significant challenge will be for the area to feel like and function as an integrated part of the City's fabric. This requires the area to be revitalized from its current post-war suburban existence into a more integrated, mixed, vibrant and vital urban component of the City. This will necessitate a significant restructuring and re-thinking of the role and function of this area.

The area is currently a patchwork of isolated uses that are not well connected and do not always support one another. Lawrence Ave. and Dufferin St., whose intersection serves as a "gateway" to this area are largely underdeveloped and create a somewhat harsh and unfriendly urban environment. The TCHC properties within Lawrence Heights sit almost entirely within the concession with only two road connections to Lawrence, one to Dufferin and Bathurst. The Allen Expressway bisects the residential communities that are hidden in the areas interior, with limited access to the rest of the City. The community continues to struggle to function as a "single"

neighbourhood given the overwhelming physical challenges it faces. Finally, the recent recognition of this larger area as one of City Council's 13 priority neighbourhoods reflects the issues and ongoing struggles facing area residents and the local agencies that serve them.

Even with all of these challenges, there are signs that the interest and will exists to revitalize this community. The area is served by two subway stops (Lawrence West and Yorkdale) and is framed by three major arterials (Lawrence, Bathurst and Dufferin) and has major highway access (401). Toronto Community Housing Corporation's expressed interest in redeveloping their sites is a pivotal decision that will help fuel the revitalization discussions for Lawrence Heights.

Private land owners have expressed interest in redevelopment and are in the process of undertaking studies to support their submission of a planning application. Capturing this interest and ensuring that these plans and studies are developed as part of a larger planning exercise will be critical in moving the revitalization of this area forward. Unlocking the area's potential will require the development of key partnerships with the School Boards, the Province, Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the private landowners. It will be during the development of the areas Planning Framework, that the partnerships and commitment with these stakeholders will be identified and where possible secured.

Corporate Structure and Support

The revitalization of Lawrence Heights requires a comprehensive approach that considers physical, social, community and investment aspects. The project will involve coordination of efforts for a number of City Divisions (City Planning, Affordable Housing Office, Social Development, Finance and Administration, Transportation, Technical Services, Children's Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, etc.), the Neighbourhood Action Team, as well as a wide array of stakeholders including Toronto Community Housing Corporation, both School Boards, other orders of government and community partners.

This work will be led by a high level Steering Committee (including the local Councillor as Chair, as well as the Planning and Growth Management Committee, the Affordable Housing Committee and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation).

The cross-departmental work programs involved in the revitalization of Regent Park, resulted in the establishment of several coordinating teams. To assist in developing a more streamlined and focused coordinating approach for Lawrence Heights and recognizing the need for this based on the TCHC interest in this area, a Revitalization Secretariat is being established. The Secretariat will be responsible for overall project coordination, and the facilitation of City and partnership efforts to keep pathways open.

The Revitalization Secretariat will provide corporate resources for this initiative through the support of the Steering Committee, act as the lead coordinating agency for City divisions, TCHC, other orders of government and other potential partners on the Lawrence Heights Revitalization project. The Secretariat will rest in the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division and will not require additional resources.

The planning work that needs to be undertaken to support this initiative is substantial. The City and TCHC are seeking additional funding from community partners such as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Company as currently the resources required for the planning process are insufficient.

City Planning will be the project management lead for the necessary planning initiatives which include coordinating the various consulting work and planning reports and products required. To even begin this work, City Planning immediately requires a Project Manager, two Senior Planners and an administrative assistant. To initiate this work, additional resources are required immediately.

A complete budget will need to be developed for the consulting costs and community engagement strategy as \$500,000 will not be sufficient to undertake the comprehensive planning and community engagement framework required for this initiative. The Deputy City Managers will report back to the Affordable Housing Committee in six months on the progress of the revitalization planning including the resources required and the progress in securing additional funding to support this initiative.

Beyond Regent Park

The Lawrence Heights area is not like Regent Park, the City's first large scale Toronto Community Housing Corporation revitalization initiative. It faces a far more complex set of challenges that must be addressed in order to unlock its redevelopment potential. Regent Park sits within a structure of arterial roads, transit services and adjacent to one of the largest park systems in the City. Regent Park also benefits from the multitude of social service providers within and around it. This reality allowed the first phases of Regent Park's redevelopment to proceed without significant infrastructure investment.

Lawrence Heights rests in a completely different urban context. If matters such as the transportation network (including most significantly the Allen Expressway) and connections to the major road network are not addressed, then the subsequent opportunities for the redevelopment of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation lands will simply not exist. The Toronto Community Housing Corporation land interests in Lawrence Heights are twice the size of the Regent Park community. These lands represent eighteen per cent of the total area being reviewed. The presence of multiple stakeholders in this area generates the need to comprehensively engage them in building a vision to successfully revitalize this area.

	Lawrence Heights Study Area	Lawrence Heights (focused area)	Regent Park	East Bayfront	West Don Lands
Area (ha)	342	60.5	33.5	44	32.4
Population		3,715	6,510		
Dwelling Units		1,235	1,885		

The Study Area and Planning Process

The proposed planning approach is distilled from other major re-urbanization initiatives coordinated by City Planning (East Bayfront, West Don Lands, Railway Lands, Sheppard Corridor, Warden-St. Clair, Downsview, York University etc.). The creation of a vision that will serve as the foundation document to guide Lawrence Height's revitalization will be critical to allow for considering and evaluating the big moves and new-thinking that will be the hallmark of this areas revitalization.

The proposed planning approach involves three phases. The first is the development of a Vision and Planning Framework for the area to serve as a foundation document, recommend a context for Lawrence Heights and direct all future planning initiatives in this area. This work is expected to be completed over the next year or so, once the necessary resources for the project are secured.

This would be followed by the development of a Secondary Plan which would provide the area specific policies and directions required to revitalize this community.

The third phase would see the potential development of precinct plans, guidelines and implementation plans. These documents would create a more detailed implementation framework to support the Secondary Plan for the Lawrence Heights planning area.

Community Engagement

A key component of this process will involve developing a strategy to collaborate with local residents to identify community needs and priorities. This process would recognize the current initiatives being undertaken by the Neighbourhood Action Team (NAT) as well as the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. The Neighbourhood Action Team provides a good foundation for engagement and consultation and efforts will continue as revitalization moves forward. Toronto Community Housing Corporation staff have begun a community engagement process with the residents of Lawrence Heights to seek their input into the revitalization. This work is designed to identify key community issues and to build community capacity and leadership skills in order to participate in the revitalization initiative.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation has also begun other stakeholder consultations in order to find public and private partners in transforming Lawrence Heights into a healthy community. The local Councillor has shown leadership on the revitalization process by holding meetings with residents and community stakeholders. The Councillor will continue to play an active role in the Lawrence Heights revitalization.

Community consultations would also recognize the multiplicity of stakeholders involved as revitalization encompasses more than a single community. A framework for consultations should be developed to assist the City, Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the consultants in their outreach efforts.

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