

## **Transforming Employment Services in Lawrence Heights**

<b>Date:</b>	July 28, 2010
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Employment & Social Services
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

### **SUMMARY**

---

Responding to the recommendation made by the Community Development and Recreation Committee at their meeting on June 24, 2010, this report describes the work to date to make employment services work better for residents of Lawrence Heights, the actions underway and the steps that will be taken over the next 6 months and beyond.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

The General Manager, Employment & Social Services, recommends that:

1. The General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS) be requested to report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee on the continuing work to improve employment services in Lawrence Heights through the development of an Employment Service Plan as part of the broader Social Development Plan for Lawrence Heights.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

At the June 24, 2010 meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee it was recommended that:

1. the General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services, report back to the next meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee on a

work program for the employment service plan which would establish services and programs within the Lawrence Heights community by January 2011.

Describing the significant investments that the City has already made in the broader Lawrence Allen community, a range of initiatives that are currently underway and the steps that are anticipated over the next 6 months and beyond, this report responds to the above recommendation. In doing so, the report highlights a number of concrete achievements over the last two years, including thousands of individuals attending hiring and recruitment events, more than 700 individuals being connected to employment and job interviews, 175 employers becoming actively engaged in recruitment initiatives and the introduction of a state of the art employment centre in the heart of the community.

The report explains that, building on the successful strategy adopted in Regent Park, the focus in Lawrence Heights is to address immediate employment service needs, while also preparing residents to capitalize on both the direct and indirect opportunities that will result once revitalization begins. The aim is to build strong foundations and develop the capacity and infrastructure required to ensure sustainability and success throughout the life of the revitalization and long into the future.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

Over the next 20 years, the Lawrence-Allen area, with the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood at its heart, will undergo a profound transformation. Informed by two years of planning and engagement, the Lawrence Allen Revitalization Plan (LARP) sets out a long term vision for the creation of a mixed-income, mixed-use community that is fully integrated into and connected with, the broader city.

The plan provides for the replacement of all 1,208 existing social housing units in addition to the construction of 5,500 to 6,300 new market units. Recognizing both the pressing need and unique opportunity to improve the social and economic infrastructure, the plan extends far beyond improvements to the social housing stock. Encapsulated under the key themes of reinvestment, mobility, liveability and place-making, the plan addresses a range of issues that are essential to improve residents' quality of life and to strengthen the local economy. These include improved transit and community facilities, new schools and daycares, and the provision of various social, economic and employment opportunities for residents of all ages.

Currently, residents of Lawrence Heights have lower levels of education, lower incomes and higher levels of unemployment than surrounding areas. Many internationally educated professionals, for example, are unable to find jobs that match their skills. With large proportions of youth and lone-parent families, it is evident that both considerable and complex service needs exist.

The comprehensive and coordinated approach to revitalization that was set out in the Lawrence Heights Revitalization-Corporate Implementation Actions and Social Development Plan report adopted by City Council on July 6, 7, 8, 2010, provides a

unique opportunity to address these needs. The following emphasizes one critical aspect of this work: the need to provide local residents with enhanced opportunities to find jobs, access employment services and participate in employment and training opportunities.

Rather than a targeted or time-limited employment program, the scope and scale of activities and the long-term nature of redevelopment - with 4 specific phases over 20 years - calls for an ongoing approach to employment and skills that are grounded in the community, connected to employers and which provides residents with a continuum of services and supports so that they can capitalize on local opportunities that result from revitalization and be better connected to broader employment opportunities across the city.

This kind of strategy is central to the work that the City, particularly through the leadership of TESS, has been undertaking to make employment services work better for residents across the city.

### **An Evidence Based Approach**

The Regent Park Employment Plan epitomized the new approach to revitalizing communities adopted by TESS and the City. As part of a broader social development plan for Regent Park, the City, for the first time, developed an employment plan to ensure that opportunities arising from this public investment were made available to local residents, that employers and commercial partners were provided the supports to make this happen and that a framework was established for the ongoing evolution of services, supports and service delivery in the community.

Over recent years, TESS has worked with other City divisions, as well as a range of other stakeholders to embed, both practically and conceptually, this new approach to employment services and employment planning. Within this work, employment services are distinguished by two key features. First, they address both the supply and demand sides of the labour market. Second, they serve people and places in integrated ways.

The concepts underpinning this transformation, coupled with the practical experience of initiatives on the ground in communities across Toronto, are being harnessed to inform the development of a stronger, more effective employment service system in Lawrence Heights.

### **COMMENTS**

Revitalization brings with it a range of employment opportunities, both as part of the physical transformation of the neighbourhood and through the introduction of new businesses. The majority of the employment and training opportunities that result from revitalization activities, however, do not emerge until TCH's development partner is on board, contracts and partnerships are in place and work begins on the ground. It is important, therefore, that residents are also connected to employment opportunities across the city.

For these reasons, the City approach in Lawrence Heights is deliberately focused on acting now to address immediate needs while also building for the future. Although these are the early stages of a long-term commitment to revitalize the community, a consistent strategy is being pursued to:

- Improve access to employment services;
- Prepare residents for employment and connect them to employment;
- Transform the service delivery system; and
- Capitalize on the opportunities that result from revitalization.

## Outcomes

Over the past two years, TESS, in partnership and collaboration with Toronto Community Housing (TCH), Social Development, Finance & Administration (SDF) and a range of other partners<sup>1</sup>, has initiated a wide range of activities to improve employment opportunities for current residents and to transform the employment service infrastructure for future residents. (Attachment 1 provides an overview of the employment initiatives undertaken in the Lawrence Allen area which includes Lawrence Heights). As a result of this approach, a number of critical outcomes have been achieved, most notably:

	<b>Residents Employed</b>	<b>Employers Engaged</b>	<b>Resident Job Interviews</b>	<b>Agencies Involved</b>	<b>Agency Staff Attended</b>
<b>Total</b>	234	175	477	182	287

## Actions to Date - Laying the Foundations

Three inter-related sets of activities have been pursued to address current needs, while also laying the foundations for the future:

1. Providing Employment Opportunities
  - To date, the Partnership to Advance Youth Employment (PAYE) has engaged 233 youth, of which 180 have attended job interviews and 67 have been hired. More than 20 agencies and 69 employers have been actively engaged.
  - In Lawrence Heights, the Investing in Neighbourhoods (IIN) initiative has been used as a catalyst to facilitate local hiring in the community. To date 13 agencies have been involved with IIN locally, hiring 28 individuals, 50% of whom were from Lawrence Heights.

<sup>1</sup> These include City Planning, Toronto Public Library, Economic Development and Culture, the City Social Infrastructure Staff Team, the Neighbourhood Action Team and Neighbourhood Community Partnership (Lawrence Heights Inter-Organizational Network), along with other orders of government and local employment service providers.

- Currently, in Lawrence Heights, more than 200 families are being helped to increase their employability and better access employment through the Investing in Families (IIF) initiative.
  - A large number of successful career and recruitment events have taken place, including the Opening Doors to your Future Job Fair (Spring 2009 & 2010); the Green Energy Career Fair (Summer 2010); and the Career and Community Connections Fair (Summer 2009). Each event engaged an average of 25 community agencies and/or employers.
2. Enhancing Employment Service Capacity & Coordination
- An innovative employment service – the Tuesday Employment Café - was established as an itinerant service for residents of Lawrence Heights seeking employment. By making employment services more accessible in this way, more than 140 residents have benefitted and connections between service providers have been strengthened.
  - A Lawrence Heights Service Awareness Fair was held in 2009 for various agency and City staff to enhance networks, share knowledge about services and improve capacity to make referrals. More than 80 agency staff attended.
  - To better align services and to address service gaps the Lawrence Heights Inter-Organizational Network (LHION) Employment & Training Workgroup was established in 2008. This LHION workgroup has sponsored various initiatives to enhance employment service capacity.
3. Community Engagement & Needs Assessment
- The actions taken to date - as well as the actions that will be taken - have been informed by significant community engagement and needs assessment. A range of partnerships and networks have also been established to align priorities, coordinate actions and make best use of resources. Accomplishments include a major resident employment survey and an additional survey of adult newcomers which were completed by almost 600 residents (Attachment 2 provides a summary of both surveys) and the development of bodies such as the LHION, the Employment & Training (Service Delivery) Workgroup and the Integrated Local Labour Market Planning (ILLMP) pilot for Lawrence Heights.

### **Current Activities - Continuing to Make a Difference**

In addition to the actions already taken, a variety of activities are currently being implemented. Based on the City's prior experience of revitalization, actions have focused on:

- Developing the infrastructure to deliver more accessible services to residents;

- Implementing the programs and initiatives that connect residents to employment opportunities; and
- Planning future programming to capitalize on employment opportunities as generated through the next phases of the revitalization.

Most significantly, in the fall of 2010, TESS will open a state of the art employment centre in the heart of the community at 700 Lawrence Avenue West (Attachment 3 shows this location). The new facility, within walking distance for residents, directly addresses the need for neighbourhood-based employment services. With Employment & Social Services staff that include Career and Employment Information Specialists, the centre represents a major City investment in the community.

This new employment centre, modelled on the successful Metro Hall Employment Services centre, will provide a far more visible and accessible location with new and expanded employment services targeted on the specific needs of local residents and employers (Attachment 4 describes the range of services that will be available). Acting as a hub supporting the employment needs of the community, the emphasis is on providing a personalized and integrated approach that connects residents to current and future employment and skills building opportunities. The central location will raise the profile of training and services among residents, agencies and employers. Co-location with a range of service providers will also strengthen relationships, connect services and improve outcomes for residents.

To further strengthen the presence and awareness of employment services in the community, TESS has also been working with TCH to expand the employment services available at 37 Varna. The additional service capacity that has resulted is enabling TESS to launch focused service interventions, workshops needed to prepare residents for upcoming revitalization opportunities, and to establish a smaller-scale community/employment hub for residents to access information and resources.

Once revitalization begins, a number of employment opportunities will arise in areas such as the trades and construction, as well as the new commercial opportunities that are established over time. To prepare residents for these opportunities, TESS has introduced a range of targeted basic skills training initiatives that include: First Aid/CPR, WHIMIS and Fall Arrest. Similarly, Career Exploration Workshops, Information Sessions, and Career Fairs are being implemented in areas such as consulting, planning and design, construction, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs and transitional programs for internationally educated professionals. Together these initiatives are informing residents about the opportunities that revitalization will bring and providing the skills needed to work in construction, retail and hospitality sectors as part of revitalization and more generally.

Finally, planning and research activities are ongoing to identify service gaps in the community and to coordinate responses to best address them. For example, the local ILLMP pilot, launched by the City and the Ministry of Training Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) in June 2009, is undertaking a Strengths, Weaknesses,

Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and identifying how best to leverage other local planning efforts.

### **Immediate Next Steps**

To continue preparing residents for the initial opportunities that revitalization will bring, TESS is working in collaboration with TCH through their value-based procurement process to influence and maximize the opportunities for employment, training, and community economic development.

In addition, TESS will continue to implement new programs and services that meet the needs of local residents and employers. These programs and services will benefit from the strong relationship that is being formed with the MTCU and result in better coordinated education and training opportunities for residents.

Once the revitalization of Lawrence Heights begins, the distinct stages that follow, such as design, de/construction and occupation, will require certain skills and create certain job opportunities. Attachment 5 lists the potential career development opportunities that might be expected to arise. In anticipation of these opportunities, TESS will expand the targeted basic skills training and career exploration workshop initiatives highlighted in the previous section.

TCH has shared with TESS their identified three priority areas associated with the development partner's procurement process under consideration. These are Workforce Development; Small Business Development; and Business/Commercial Development/Rentals. To align with these priorities, TESS will continue to prepare residents to access the employment and training opportunities that support workforce development throughout Phase 1 of the revitalization and beyond. In addition, once the development partner for Phase 1 is selected in late 2010, the specific opportunities arising from that contract will be integrated into the employment services plan and incorporated as part of the Social Development Plan for Lawrence Heights.

A number of direct employment opportunities will also be created and will emerge as a result of the developing retail and business sectors, the City of Toronto, and other employers. At this early stage in the process, TESS is working closely with TCH and other partners to identify and plan for these opportunities in advance.

TESS will sponsor activities and initiatives that increase resident access to employment and training opportunities beyond the revitalization efforts. These include:

- Basic Skills Training related to areas such as Food Handling, SmartServe and Child Minding;
- Employment Skills Sessions including resume development, job search skills and interview skills;
- Workshops on Entrepreneurship, Home-Based Businesses, and Small Business Development; and

- Career Exploration Sessions for Non-Traditional Jobs including careers in the Arts and Culture sectors.

These activities will enhance the overall employability of residents by providing industry-recognized certification. They will also support self-employment and home business development, which reflect broader trends across the city and are of interest to residents.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the concrete experience and insights acquired through the development of the successful Regent Park Employment Plan, as well as other related employment initiatives, Employment & Social Services, working with its partners, has put in place the necessary infrastructure to directly and immediately assist local residents, and to formulate and implement a successful employment service plan for Lawrence Heights. Finally, once the development partner for Phase 1 is selected in late 2010, and the specific opportunities arising from that contract identified, TESS will work to link residents with available jobs while also finalizing the employment services plan for Lawrence Heights, which will ultimately be incorporated into the overall Social Development Plan.

## **CONTACT**

Heather MacVicar  
General Manager  
Employment & Social Services  
Telephone: (416) 392-8952  
Fax: (416) 392-8931  
Email: hmacvic@toronto.ca

## **SIGNATURE**

---

Heather MacVicar  
General Manager, Employment & Social Services

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1: Lawrence Heights Employment Initiatives
- Attachment 2: Summary of Major Surveys
- Attachment 3: Map of Lawrence Square Employment & Social Services
- Attachment 4: Services available to residents at new employment centre
- Attachment 5: Construction and Trade Job Opportunities that Typically Appear through Initial Revitalization Activities