



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Recreation Services for Youth: Expansion of Youth Spaces

Date:	November 20, 2013
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2013\Cluster A\PFR\CD25-120413-AFS#18724

SUMMARY

In November 2012, City Council adopted the City of Toronto's 2013-2017 Recreation Service Plan (RSP). The RSP will guide the City of Toronto's planning and delivery of recreation programs and services over the next five years. An Implementation Plan was approved in July 2013.

The comprehensive Recreation Services for Youth report was approved by City Council in October 2013. The report included the Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy, an inventory of current recreation programs and services for youth and explored options to expand additional youth drop-in programs and integration with the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy.

This report responds to the follow-up direction by City Council to report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee on the financial impact and criteria to implement an additional 10 new youth spaces, incorporating an enhanced community recreation youth space model proposed by St. Stephen's Community House and Community Recreation for All. This report was informed through community and stakeholder engagement including St. Stephen's Community House, the United Way, community youth workers and Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council receives this report for information.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications from the adoption of the recommendations included in this report.

For information purposes, as requested by City Council, the report contains projected financial impacts of implementing ten additional youth spaces. The Operating Budget cost of such an expansion is projected to be \$0.169 million per location, with an additional \$10,000 required as a one-time start up cost per location. The total cost of implementing ten additional youth lounges using the enhanced community recreation youth lounge model is projected to be \$1.79 million.

The financial implication of expanding the existing 39 Parks, Forestry and Recreation youth lounges based on the enhanced community recreation model is estimated to be greater than \$6.0 Million. This does not include additional funding for one-time equipment expenditures. Based on this current estimate, 65% of the expenditure relates to full-time staff, 30% to part-time staff and the remaining 5% relate to non-salary expenditures such as materials and supplies.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The Recreation Service Plan was approved by City Council in November 2012 and included a request for a report on a youth recreation engagement strategy and youth drop-in programs.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.CD17.2>

The Recreation Service Plan Implementation Plan was approved by City Council in July 2013.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD22.1>

The Youth Engagement Strategy was approved by City Council in October 2013.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD23.1>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Recreation Service Plan (RSP) aims to increase overall participation in recreation, decrease financial barriers, and improve local and geographic access. The Recreation Service Plan was approved by City Council at the November 2012 meeting. The Recreation Service Plan Implementation Plan was approved by City Council at the July 2013 meeting. The Youth Engagement Strategy was approved by City Council at the October 2013 meeting.

The Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy will guide implementation of the Recreation Service Plan and planning for youth and was informed by input from approximately 1,600 individual youth and 80 community agencies.

Throughout these report approval processes, Council and a variety of deputants expressed interest in expanding youth spaces in Toronto.

This report is a follow-up to the Recreation Services for Youth report that was approved by Council in October 2013 and responds to Council direction to report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee on the implementation of ten additional youth spaces.

COMMENTS

Recreation Services for Youth

Youth remain a priority service area for Parks, Forestry and Recreation. In 2012, Parks, Forestry and Recreation offered over 45,000 hours of direct registered programming for youth at 161 location including registered leadership programs at 46 locations. Parks, Forestry and Recreation offers an additional 32,000 hours of drop-in programs at 127 locations. A map of Parks, Forestry and Recreation youth program locations is included as Appendix A.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation also operates the Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) program. There are currently 29 YOWs in neighbourhoods across the city. YOWs provide outreach and engage youth that face barriers to participation, by linking them to recreation programs and services. YOWs also develop relationships with a broad array of social services and referral agencies and connect youth to housing, employment, health and harm reduction services. In 2012, YOWs made over 88,000 youth referrals.

As identified in the Recreation Services for Youth report, Parks, Forestry and Recreation hosts "youth lounges" within recreation centres across the City where youth have access to dedicated spaces or times to participate in recreation programming. An internal inventory of recreation services for youth was conducted in August 2013 and 30 youth lounges were identified that offered dedicated spaces or times within a recreation centre that are designated specifically for youth to participate in drop-in or registered programming. The inventory has been revised to reflect the current total of 39 youth lounges due to additional locations that have been added as a result of seasonal programming changes and additions. The inventory is current as of fall 2013 and reflects 18 locations with dedicated youth space and an additional 21 with dedicated youth times and drop-in programs. A list of current youth lounge locations is included as Appendix B. In addition, where lounge programming is not possible multiple days per week, many community centres are offering creative youth programming including dedicated "youth nights".

Expansion of Youth Spaces - Criteria

The Recreation Services for Youth report included a projected cost to expand a five day/week youth lounge model in existing City of Toronto recreation spaces. In response to Council's direction to report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee with an expanded model similar to St. Stephen's Community House, this report includes criteria for expanding youth lounges and an expanded lounge model with full-time staff.

In order to identify the best locations for youth lounge expansion, a comprehensive needs assessment is required. To begin this work, staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation met with staff from St. Stephen's Community House to better understand their full-time model. In addition, meetings were held with the United Way and community youth workers regarding expansion criteria. A working group of Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff that work with youth was also consulted to provide input. Youth population density and household income were identified as two key factors in assessing the need for a youth lounge. A map showing the Toronto's youth population density and low income census tracts is included as Appendix C.

For this follow-up report, the following preliminary criteria are suggested when identifying potential youth lounge expansion locations:

- Area household income
- Area youth population
- Geographic need and access to other youth programming in the area
- Area access to Community Recreation Youth Outreach Workers

The following additional criteria to be considered in future planning:

- Coordination of neighbourhood support services
- Alignment to other City Divisions and the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy
- Youth specific indicators including drop-out rates, unemployment

The Social Development, Finance and Administration Division is currently developing its Youth Equity Framework. Social Development, Finance and Administration has coordinated an inter-divisional staff team including PFR, to inform the Framework. There are several research opportunities underway that can augment this initial needs assessment. Social Development, Finance and Administration's Wellbeing Toronto tool is expected to include thematic organization of data. The next version of Wellbeing Toronto, expected in January 2014, will include a "Youth" section with indicators such as youth graduation rates and unemployment data. Social Development, Finance and Administration is working with the United Way on a Youth Asset Map in conjunction with 211 that will map youth related services and assets by neighbourhood.

Identifying Expansion Locations and Next Steps

A comprehensive needs assessment and the identification of youth lounge expansion locations will take additional work beyond this report. If the expansion of youth lounges is approved, other City divisions including Social Development, Finance and

Administration, the United Way and community partners would need to be engaged to inform the identification of potential expansion locations based on the criteria established. While consensus has not been reached to identify expansion locations, preliminary consultation has identified the following neighbourhoods and communities as possible expansion areas where current lounges can be expanded or new lounges can be added:

- Rexdale
- Jane and Finch
- Kingston-Galloway
- Central Etobicoke (East Mall and West Mall)
- Mount Dennis
- Weston and Lawrence
- Kipling and Dixon

The need to add lounges where there is little existing youth space or gaps in youth programming was identified. The United Way identified that adding a youth space in areas that have some existing services (e.g. a community health centre, schools) could yield the greatest benefits for youth.

St. Stephen's Community House Youth Space Model

In October 2013, Parks, Forestry and Recreation was directed to report back to the December meeting of Community Development and Recreation Committee on a way to expand youth spaces incorporating the full-time model proposed by St. Stephen's Community House and Community Recreation for All. As a first step, staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation toured the St. Stephen's Community House youth program and met with staff in order to gain better insight into that model.

St. Stephen's Community House is funded by the United Way, direct donations, Provincial grants and the City of Toronto's Community Service Partnerships program. St. Stephen's Community House offers a comprehensive youth program model including the drop-in "Arcade" and additional youth programs and an on-site school partnership program with the Toronto District School Board for disengaged students; counselling, support and referral programs including daily crisis management; youth criminal justice assistance including court support and special projects such as drug prevention. The majority of these services are not provided currently by Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

The St. Stephen's Community House youth drop-in "Arcade" includes a lunch-hour program for local grade 7 and 8 students and a three-hour after school program open to youth from 3:00 to 6:00 pm (Monday to Friday, during the academic year). On Monday evenings, the drop-in follows an open format for the evening. On Tuesday through Friday evenings, the drop-in follows an open format until 4:30pm, followed by structured programming in arts, fitness and nutrition programs, as well as life skills workshops and peer leadership programs. As part of both the lunch hour and after-school programs, St. Stephen's provides snacks for participants. While they receive some funding for the provision of snacks, this service is augmented by donations from other sources.

Expanding Youth Lounges

The Recreation Services for Youth Report explored a strategy to expand youth lounges that included a 5 day a week program, three hours a day, 50 weeks a year (year round). This model was based on the input we received from 1,600 youth regarding the need for dedicated youth space, multiple days a week and an environment that is welcoming for youth. The report estimated that additional youth lounges can be created in existing community centre space for a one time equipment cost of approximately \$10,000 for computers, comfortable “youth friendly” furniture, media and sports equipment. The ongoing cost to operate an additional youth lounge is estimated to be \$73,000 per year. This includes part-time youth staff to provide general supervision and skill based instruction in programs such as fitness and wellness, dance and sports. It was estimated that an expanded youth location could serve approximately 45 youth per day, three hours per day, five days a week, and 50 weeks a year. This would result in an estimated 11,250 additional youth participation opportunities annually.

Moving Towards an Enhanced Youth Space Model

The expanded youth lounge model proposed in the Recreation Services for Youth Report is similar to the drop-in component of the St. Stephen's Community House model. In addition, Parks, Forestry and Recreation has Youth Outreach Workers that outreach to youth and provide information and referral services similar to that of St. Stephen's Community House. However, the St. Stephen's Community House model includes services that are not delivered by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. Moving toward the St. Stephen's Community House model requires the addition of a full-time staff to support information and referral, community based partnerships and supervision of youth lounge staff.

This enhanced youth space model would include a full-time Youth staff dedicated to each youth lounge as well as part-time youth staff to provide general supervision and skill-based instruction in programs such as fitness, wellness, dance and sports. An additional youth lounge can be created for approximately \$0.169 million annually with an additional one-time equipment cost of approximately \$10,000 for computers, comfortable "youth-friendly" furniture, and media and sports equipment.

This proposed model can be created within existing community centre space where capacity exists. The cost of building new community centre infrastructure has not been included. The full-time staff proposed in this model would be dedicated specifically to the youth lounge and is in addition to any current Community Recreation staff at possible lounge expansion locations.

Impact of Expansion

Currently Parks, Forestry and Recreation operates designated youth lounge programming in 39 locations. The introduction of this enhanced youth space model, with full-time staffing component, will create an inequity in Parks, Forestry and Recreation youth programming delivery. As such, it is necessary to assess the impact of expanding this enhanced model to all existing 39 youth lounge locations.

The financial implication of expanding the existing 39 Parks, Forestry and Recreation youth lounges based on the proposed model is estimated to be greater than \$6.0 Million. Note, this does not include additional funding for one-time equipment expenditures. Based on current estimate, 65% of the expenditure relates to full-time staff, 30% to part-time staff and the remaining 5% relates to non-salary expenditures such as materials and supplies.

Innovative Youth Initiatives – Parks, Forestry and Recreation

There are several new projects in development or underway that serve to enhance Parks, Forestry and Recreation’s delivery of youth recreation programs.

A shared-use space dedicated to youth is currently in development at Dennis R. Timbrell Resource Centre. This youth space is an example of potential partnerships or lease agreements related to the expansion of youth lounges. Once completed, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, in conjunction with the local Youth Service Network, will have dedicated and exclusive times to the new space when not in use by the Toronto District School Board or the Toronto Catholic District School Board. A Governing Youth Committee will be established, sustained and maintained by the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office for the purpose of advising the programming and management of the space.

Additionally, Parks, Forestry and Recreation is maximizing its current assets for the benefit of youth programming. When the new York Community Centre opens in Ward 12, neighbouring Centennial Recreation Centre (West) will be converted to a youth-focused centre including a dedicated youth space and a training space where youth programs will have priority booking.

Training

Community Recreation staff are trained in customer service, human rights legislation, anti-harassment policies, workplace violence legislation, and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act legislation. Youth Outreach Workers are also trained in anti-oppression frameworks as well as community engagement practices and referral protocols to City services and community-based supports outside the realm of recreation including crisis response.

Youth lounge staff would benefit from additional training opportunities in the areas of anti-oppression, harm reduction, conflict resolution, vicarious trauma, crisis intervention, mental health awareness, facilitative leadership and youth engagement strategies.

CONCLUSION

This report provides an outline of the financial impacts and criteria to implement new youth lounges as well as an enhanced youth lounge model in line with the full-time model proposed by St. Stephen's Community House and Community Recreation for All. The proposed expansion criteria was informed through engagement with staff from St.

Stephen's Community House, United Way, community youth workers and Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff that work with youth. A more thorough needs assessment, informed by best practices and youth data is required in order to identify possible expansion locations.

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SIGNATURE

Jim Hart
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Map of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Youth Program Locations

Appendix B – Parks, Forestry and Recreation Youth Lounges Fall 2013

Appendix C – Map of City of Toronto Youth Population Density and Low Income Census Tracts