

## **Closing the Service Gap in the Downtown East Revitalization Area**

Date: May 31, 2018

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

Wards: 27 and 28

### **SUMMARY**

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Toronto's Downtown East area faces a number of complex challenges related to poverty, homelessness, housing affordability, community safety, mental health and substance use, particularly opioid related overdoses. In response to the heightened need for crisis supports in this area, City Council directed staff to establish an expert team with representation from multiple divisions to develop a 12-month and 5 year action plan addressing the community and service coordination needs. This report presents the twelve month action plan (Attachment 1) for consideration.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the short term, 12-month Action Plan for the Downtown East as set out in Attachment 1.
2. City Council direct the Executive Director of Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) to report back in the second quarter of 2019 on a comprehensive five-year Action Plan to coordinate City services and address long term community needs in the Downtown East.
3. City Council approve an increase to the 2018 Approved Operating Budget of Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) of \$0.048 million gross, \$0 net, to support an increase in the approved complement for 2 temporary positions for a 12-month period, contingent on receiving funding approval from the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), as set out in Attachment 1, Action Item 24.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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This report seeks City Council approval for the implementation of a 12 - month Action Plan for the Downtown East area of the City.

As listed in Attachment 1 to this report, actions items 1 to 23 can be implemented within existing resources with funding already included in the 2018 Approved Budget for the identified City divisions and Agencies.

Action # 24 - SDFA will require funding for 2 new temporary positions providing harm reduction supports for a 1-year period at an estimated cost of \$0.048 million gross and \$0 net in 2018 and \$0.143 million gross and \$0 net in 2019. The addition of these positions is contingent on the receipt of confirmed funding from the Toronto Central LHIN.

The implementation of action items 25-27 will require additional funding and staff resources. The additional costs and the resource requirements noted below represent preliminary estimates and more work is needed to evaluate current capacity and staff resources in the divisions to enable identification of any additional funding needs which will be submitted for consideration with other City priorities during the 2019 and future year budget processes.

Additional funding will be required by Toronto Public Health (TPH) for additional outreach workers to provide enhanced harm reduction outreach in 2018 with an initial focus on the Downtown East area; this request will be presented at the upcoming Board of Health meeting. Funding for this initiative is anticipated from the Province of Ontario but will need to be supported with a 25% City contribution.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) will require incremental funding of \$0.627 million gross and net to support 3 additional crews required to increase the frequency of clean up at parks in Downtown East from once a week to four times a week.

PFR will require funding of \$0.350 million gross and net to retain the 2018 service level for Parks Ambassadors of 2 full-time and 4 9-month seasonal positions in 2019.

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

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its August 25, 2014 meeting, City Council adopted the Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan in order to guide local reinvestment and redevelopment while simultaneously strengthening social infrastructure ([CD31.12](#)). This plan was developed through an interdivisional Project Management Team led by Social Development, Finance and Administration and City Planning.

At the May 14, 2017 meeting the Executive Committee adopted a report "Response Times and Service Levels for Various City Divisions" and referred the report back to staff for consideration as part of the 2019 budget process. The items for consideration in the 2019 budget process are to include:

- the frequency of alley and laneway cleaning within the bounds studied in this report and the resources necessary to increase that frequency to a monthly and weekly level;
- the resources necessary to bring property standard inspections and enforcement response times within the bounds studied in this report up to 14 days;
- specific metrics of park maintenance levels for Wards 27 and 28, on a per park basis and in relation to service requests, and the resources necessary to increase maintenance and litter pick-up operations to a daily frequency within the bounds studied in this report;
- specific metrics of litter collection and graffiti removal levels within the boundaries studied in this report and to identify the resources necessary to increase services sufficient to prevent regular waste receptacle overflows; and ensuring graffiti removal within 5 business days.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EX34.6>

The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) places great emphasis on the need to better coordinate and integrate health and social services and programs ([EX9.5](#)). Doing so would allow for the expedient delivery of crisis responses, as well as coalesce individual programs into a strategic and concerted effort to provide wrap-around supports to low-income residents. Specific PRS actions related to this report include:

Action 4.4 - Integrate health system and mental health services with other City programs and services in accessible community locations.

Action 14.1 - Stabilize funding for community based organizations.

Action 14.3 - Coordinate seamless care and support among hospitals, the child welfare system, correction and mental health facilities and City services.

On March 20, 2017 the Board of Health adopted the Toronto Overdose Action Plan: Prevention and Response ([HL18.3](#)). This report outlines actions taken by Toronto Public Health to address the opioid crisis in the city.

On December 5, 2017 City Council adopted a motion to address the service gap in the Downtown East Revitalization Area ([MM37.17](#)). Council requested City staff to identify resources required to address current challenges and report to Budget Committee with a funding request. Council also directed City staff to establish an expert staff team to develop a 12-month immediate response plan for the area, as well as a comprehensive 5-year plan.

The 2018 budget adopted by City Council approved an allocation for one temporary full-time staff to support service coordination in Downtown East and a request for two temporary full-time staff to provide enhanced harm reduction response in the area to be funded by the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network ([EX31.2](#) BN #45). The City is awaiting response on the funding support for these two temporary positions.

## COMMENTS

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### Background

The Downtown East Area is bounded by Bloor Street on the north, Front Street on the south, Yonge Street on the west, and the Don Valley Parkway on the east. It is home to approximately 115,255 Toronto residents, about 4.2% of the city's population and the area covers about seven square kilometres, less than 1% of the city's land area. The area is facing a number of issues and challenges that require an immediate and long-term response. Key issues include substance use and high rates of overdose, mental health concerns, the prevalence of poverty, and a lack of affordable housing options. There are also negative community perceptions about safety and security. For example, there has been particular concern in parts of Downtown East which have experienced a 53% increase in violent critical incidents from 2016 to 2017. The area is also experiencing significant change as a result of new development.

A number of City initiatives have been undertaken in the area. City Council adopted a Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan in 2014 to guide reinvestment and redevelopment while strengthening social infrastructure. The initial plan only focused on part of the current area boundaries. Other complementary City initiatives include:

- George Street Revitalization – a shared service facility resulting from the redevelopment of Seaton House that will combine shelter services, long-term care, affordable housing and a community hub;
- Regent Park Social Development Plan (SDP) Refresh - the plan is in the process of being refreshed to reflect current trends and the needs of the neighbourhood;
- Tenants First Project and Homes for Good Program - a proposal was developed for additional supportive housing units in the area;
- Toronto Public Health Supervised Consumption Services at 277 Victoria Street - this service opened in August 2017;
- Furthering Our Community by Uniting Services (FOCUS) – the FOCUS table is facilitated by the Toronto Police Services, SDFA, and the United Way convening approximately 40 community and public organizations, weekly, to identify and address situations of high risk of anti-social or criminal behaviour.
- The Community Crisis Response Program (CCRP) works across the City of Toronto in partnership with community members, agencies, and internal City divisions to enhance community safety. The CCRP team supports communities with the development of safety networks that create neighbourhood strategies for Crisis Intervention, Crisis Prevention, and Crisis Preparation. When communities have been impacted by violent and traumatic incidents, CCRP further supports the recovery and healing process.

- The Specialized Program for Interdivisional Responsiveness (SPIDER) to vulnerability delivers customized responses for the purpose of mitigating elevated risks that affect people, their properties or their neighbours.

- Downtown Community and Facilities Strategy - sets a supporting framework and guides implementation of TOCore: the Downtown Plan for growth and redevelopment in the area.

Although a number of City initiatives are in place to support revitalization in the Downtown East, many serious issues continue to affect the area:

- Downtown East has three of the ten poorest census tracts in the city with low-income prevalence rates for adults (15-64 years of age) ranging from 44%-51%. The overall average for the City is 20%.

- In 2017, approximately 19,000 individuals relied on the shelter system and 8,450 individuals relied on the 18 shelters in Wards 27 and 28, representing approximately 45% of all shelter users in the city.

- Downtown East has been significantly impacted by the opioid crisis. The area has seen a 33% increase in accidental overdose cases from 2013 to 2017.

The multiple complex factors affecting the Downtown East area have compounded the level of urgency and the situation requires immediate intervention from all levels of government. On its own, the City is unable to respond to the growing urgent health, mental health and addiction needs experienced by the most vulnerable residents in the area. Additional funding and service coordination by the Toronto Central LHIN is required in order to address these significant issues.

At its meeting of December 5, 2017, City Council adopted a motion ([MM35.17](#)) requesting the Medical Officer of Health, the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR), and the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) to establish an expert staff team to:

- Respond to the immediate crisis faced in Downtown East over a 12 month period in consultation with stakeholders and Ward Councillors; and,

- Establish a 5-year comprehensive plan to coordinate City services and programs to holistically address long-term community needs.

### **Framework for the Downtown East – 12-Month Action Plan and Long-term Plan**

In order to develop the 12-month and long-term action plans, City staff at SDFA have established a Downtown East Steering Committee with Toronto Public Health (TPH), SSHA and PFR as well as a broader project management table with representation from City divisions and agencies that deliver programs and services in the Downtown East. In order to gather information on City services and programs delivered in the Downtown East, a cross-corporate consultation process was initiated to identify needs,

actions and opportunities for better service coordination. This consultation included TPH, SSHA, PFR, SDFA, Toronto Community Housing, City Planning, Toronto Employment and Social Services, Toronto Public Library and Toronto Paramedic Services. At the same time, a community consultation process was launched with local agencies to discuss service needs, prioritize actions and identify service gaps. Two community consultation meetings were convened by the local Councillors' offices.

The 12-month and long-term action plans will address six focus areas: Mental Health; Substance Use & Harm Reduction; Housing, Homelessness & Shelter Support; Community Safety & Violence Prevention; Planning, Parks and Public Realm; and Economic Opportunities. These themes echo the findings from the Downtown East Needs Assessment completed in 2015 for the George Street Revitalization project and feedback from the community consultation meetings noted above.

Due to the high prevalence of substance use in Downtown East, a separate engagement process was led by TPH for all organizations receiving Toronto Urban Health Fund grants and organizations with harm reduction supply distribution contracts with The Works. This process included a survey and consultation to identify policy barriers, service gaps and opportunities, and to determine how homelessness and safety impact service users and the provision of harm reduction services. The findings from both of these consultation processes were used to develop the 12-month Action Plan and framework for the long-term plan.

Consultation findings indicate that even though a high concentration of services exist in the Downtown East area, the complex situations for the most marginalized residents have resulted in multiple unmet service needs. This is particularly the case for many residents who are experiencing poverty, mental health and substance use issues simultaneously. City and community service providers reported that the most pressing services needs are related to: substance use, mental health, primary health care, community safety and well-being, housing and shelter. An urgent need exists for improved service coordination, within a multi-disciplinary approach that fosters collaboration and communication among City and community service providers, as well as the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).

SDFA, TPH and PFR submitted preliminary budget requests in response to the need for enhanced service coordination. SDFA has hired 1 temporary full-time Community Development Officer to lead the service coordination processes. TPH has requested funding from the province for temporary full-time staff to provide enhanced harm reduction support in the area. TPH has also received 100% one-time provincial funding for two additional councillors for The Works. These additional resources are in response to the increasing demand for Supervised Injection Site services. In addition, PFR has enhanced staffing for Parks Ambassadors to provide 4 seasonal and 2 full-time staff to the end of 2018 to proactively provide accessible, equitable and safe parks and public green spaces. These additional City staff will be fundamental to the implementation of the 12-month Action Plan.

The proposed Action Plan lists 27 actions to be implemented within a 12 month time frame. Given the urgent crisis in the area, immediate actions that can have a significant impact on the issues on the ground have also been identified. Some of these actions

can be implemented within existing operating budgets and include: i) increasing access to City washroom and shower facilities at area community centres for people experiencing homelessness; ii) enhancing Respite Services standards; and iii) adding a Community and Client Engagement Coordinator for Respite sites. Other actions that require additional resources include: i) creating dedicated Park Clean-Up Crews to increase the frequency of clean-up of parks in the area from once a week to four times a week; and ii) increasing the number of outreach workers to offer enhanced harm reduction outreach.

## **12-month Action Plan**

The 12- month Action Plan (Attachment 1) includes 27 actions across 6 areas:

### **1. Mental Health**

The goal of this focus area is to address issues arising from mental health concerns.

### **2. Substance Use & Harm Reduction**

The goal of this focus area is to address issues arising from substance use through the lens of harm reduction.

### **3. Housing, Homelessness & Shelter Support**

The goal of this focus area is to address issues related to the precarious housing situation in Downtown East and how this can exacerbate issues of homelessness, mental health and substance use.

### **4. Community Safety & Violence Prevention**

The goal of this focus area is to address the high prevalence of violent critical incidents experienced in the community which has increased in recent years.

### **5. Planning, Parks and Public Realm**

The goal of this focus area is to address the need for safe and hospitable public spaces and parks for all residents and community members.

### **6. Economic Opportunities.**

The goal of this focus area is to address the lack of employment and training opportunities available for residents, and leverage City policies to encourage economic development that incorporates residents.

Divisions in the Downtown East Steering Committee will undertake a review of programming and plans in the area that may further support the revitalization efforts. For example, PFR is investigating permitting space for community agency use to support programming. City staff will also work with relevant partners to engage Indigenous organizations in Downtown East to identify public service needs and recommendations regarding harm reduction, mental health and homelessness. Led by TPH, staff will collaborate to address the needs of marginalized users of City and community services in the area.

Further, there is significant new development activity in the Downtown East area. There may be opportunities for social procurement (1) and community benefits agreements (2) (CBA) to achieve social and economic benefits for local communities impacted by proposed private development and/or public infrastructure projects in the area. These opportunities will be explored in the Downtown East action plan as tangible ways to achieve inclusive economic development intended to benefit people from equity-seeking groups in the Downtown East area, including low-income and racialized people.

### **Long-Term Action Plan**

The 5-year action plan includes a continuation of the focus area work from the 12-month plan and builds on these initiatives to sustain long-term impact. City staff will prepare a comprehensive plan to coordinate City services and address long-term community needs in the Downtown East for the second quarter of 2019. Long-term actions will be developed in partnership with local councillors, residents, agencies, businesses, other levels of government and City divisions.

### **Next Steps**

With approval from Council, City staff will begin implementation of the specific activities identified in the 12-month Action Plan (Attachment 1). The 12-month Action Plan implementation will be coordinated by a Community Development Officer focused on the Downtown East. This staff will facilitate and monitor the process, as well as respond to emergent issues. Community engagement and consultation will continue and consist of a table with City divisions, community stakeholders, and local councillors to provide feedback that will inform the long-term plan. An evaluation strategy will be developed to measure the effectiveness of both the short and long-term plans. Based on the community consultation and feedback from the 12-month Action Plan, staff will report back to City Council with the 5-year Action Plan in the second quarter of 2019.

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(1) Social procurement is the practice of using an institution's regular purchasing processes to leverage positive social and economic outcomes. In 2016, Toronto City Council adopted a Social Procurement Policy.

(2) Community benefits agreements are legally binding contractual agreements between developers and government and/or community, and are negotiated on a project-by-project basis. CBAs are a mechanism to leverage social and economic outcomes for local communities and equity-seeking groups impacted by large private development projects.

### **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Chris Brillinger  
Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1: Downtown East 12-month Action Plan