



April 26, 2018

Chair and Members, Planning and Growth Committee

Attention: Committee Secretary – Nancy Martins

Re: May 1, 2018 Agenda Item PG 29.7 Downtown Community Services and Facilities Strategy

Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre (formerly Harbourfront Community Centre) was established in 1991. Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre is a City of Toronto Association of Community Centres (AOCC) agency of the City of Toronto. The AOCC board model is a hybrid between a City agency and an independent not-for-profit community-based organization. The AOCC model is unique and distinct from other agencies, boards and commissions and the City determined that it was the best service delivery model for our community in order to meet existing and adapt to future community needs. WNC is located in Ward 20, along Toronto's unique waterfront, adjacent to the Canada Malting silos and across from Little Norway Park. WNC services the Waterfront West community primarily, but is open to all city residents, greeting over 700 daily visitors in 2017.

Located at the heart of the thriving Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood, our 44,950 sq.ft. multi-use/multi-component community centre offers a safe and supportive environment for our diverse, multicultural neighbourhood. In addition to offering 537 annual programs with 86,294 hours of service, funded through grants and donations, WNC provides community development initiatives to build community self capacity and our services are far reaching, targeting all sectors of the community. We also provide a vehicle for the City to connect to the community especially to youth, recent immigrants, seniors, people living with disabilities, those with low income, and particularly those living in the 5 neighbourhood TCHC buildings and the homeless.

WNC's Board of Management was pleased to be apprised of the report on the TOcore: Downtown Plan Official Plan Amendment and most particularly the accompanying Downtown Community Services and Facilities Strategy which will set the direction for Downtown Toronto over the next 25 years. Toronto's Official Plan is encouraging residential development in mixed use areas and the core residential population is growing rapidly. WNC can attest to this as the Waterfront West community continues to be one of the fastest growing neighbourhoods as documented in TOcore planning reports – a growth of 216% from 2006 to 2016. Our agency has had to quickly respond and adapt to changing environments and emerging needs in our neighbourhood. Our building that was new 20 years ago still serves us well, however the rapid growth in the City's core is placing tremendous pressure on our physical infrastructure and also on our human resource and volunteer capacity. In the last three years we have expanded our program offerings by 11.21% (2015), 9.69% (2016) and 5.65% (2017) and demand for public meeting and rental space face similar growth pressures and we are at our limits physically to repond.

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Therefore, we strongly encourage the Members of the Planning and Growth Management Committee to adopt the reports you have before you for consideration as we could not agree more **with Recommendation 5 of the Downtown Community Services and Facilities Strategy** report that recommends to:

“review the future renewal, retrofit and/or expansion needs and opportunities for Association of Community Centres (AOCC’s)... Serving the Downtown in consultation with AOCCs ...and further to report back by the fourth quarter 2019 with a long-term capital strategy for AOCC’s”

We completely agree with the Downtown Plan’s five Supporting Infrastructure Strategies and the objective stated to **“create vibrant public spaces that encourage public life”**.

As the prime community service facility that delivers recreation and human services for Toronto’s waterfront, WNC is a stakeholder in the City of Toronto’s Bathurst Quay Streetscape and Public Realm Improvement Plan which will begin implementation in Fall 2018.

The Bathurst Quay Plan contains distinct but overlapping capital improvement projects aimed at transforming under-utilized public spaces in the Bathurst Quay neighbourhood for greater public use and enjoyment. A recent public presentation and a March 19, 2018 City staff report to the Mayor's Executive Committee both speak to the City’s intent to undertake a number of improvements to make Toronto’s waterfront more attractive, inviting and the streetscape safer. This will create a cultural hub, and encourage community engagement surrounding the Canada Malting silos with construction of a new public plaza and event space immediately south of the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre. It proposes construction of a safer student/participant drop off location at the south end of WNC’s building and the new plaza and event space immediately adjacent to WNC represents exciting new opportunities to expand the capacity of our programming further and build on the success of our community engagement. The Bathurst Quay Plan intends to incorporate a community garden and solicit WNC to act as the steward of this initiative.

The Downtown Secondary Plan – Implementing Solutions Strategy includes opportunities to address current and future facility gaps. We welcome the opportunity to participate in those discussions. The Bathurst Quay Plan has also identified the importance of upgrading and expanding WNC’s existing physical facility to meet the increasing program needs of the rapidly growing waterfront community we serve. The future development of 545 Lake Shore Blvd. West, the Rogers Media-owned building which sits directly across from us will bring in even more residents requiring services of our community centre.

In summary, Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre supports the recommendation of a long-term capital strategy for our building and other AOCCs in the Downtown, with a review of possible retrofit and/or expansion needs and opportunities as per Recommendation 5 of the Downtown Community Services and Facilities Strategy and we ask that you adopt this recommendation.

Respectfully,



Linda Ballantyne, Chair
Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre



Leona Rodall, Executive Director
Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre

c.c. Members, WNC Board of Management
Councillor Cressy, Ward 20

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