



## Councillor Josh Matlow

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Economic and Community Development Committee  
10<sup>th</sup> floor, West Tower, City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

### **Re: EC 18.12: Activating Community Space in the Oakwood and Vaughan Area**

December 7th, 2020

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing to request that the Committee consider the accompanying recommendations found within Social Development, Finance and Administration's Activating Community Space section in the Oakwood and Vaughan Area report.

As the local representative, the repeated acts of violence committed over many years in the Oakwood-Vaughan neighbourhood is extremely upsetting and unacceptable. The most important initiative we can take is to invest in addressing the root causes of this violence. While we need to support the police to respond when gun violence occurs and ensure that those responsible are no longer a threat to our community, enforcement alone is a short-term and reactive response that doesn't address deeper issues that lead to the violence in the first place.

That is why, I moved a [motion](#) at City Council to ask City Staff to work with the appropriate stakeholders to identify opportunities for creating a vibrant and sustainable community hub that would meet the needs of the local community.

To supplement the work completed by City Staff, I hosted a round table meeting with local residents and released a survey to determine how we can collectively address the root causes of violence in the community.

According to youth, the only community spaces available to gather and socialize were outside of the community, with the exception of the Oakwood Village Library and Arts Centre, which welcomes youth, but has limited space due to demand. This is both problematic and troublesome given that the community has residents living with lower incomes, lower education attainment rates, and a higher percentage of Black and racialized residents than the City average.

That is why it is so important that we move forward with this Youth Space that would be created if these recommendations are supported. This new facility would provide opportunities that support our youth and allow them to thrive in a safe environment.

This initiative would not have been possible without the tireless work and advocacy of community groups such as OVNAP and OVCO, the many neighbourhood residents and youth that provided their feedback, and support from the dedicated Social Development, Finance and Administration Staff- Lauralyn Johnston, Aderonke Akande and Aina-Nia Grant for their work on this.

Thank you for your consideration of this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Councillor Josh Matlow  
City Councillor  
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