

## **Supporting Food Security in St. James Town**

**Date:** November 17, 2021

**To:** Economic and Community Development Committee

**From:** Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

**Wards:** Ward 13, Toronto Centre

### **SUMMARY**

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This report responds to City Council direction to determine the operational and staffing cost requirement to support the mandate of the Interim Collaborative Framework for Healthy Food Security in St. James Town and the costs related to providing community space at 200 Wellesley Street East. The report provides a summary of the Collaborative Framework, actions taken to date, a model for supporting the mandate of the Collaborative Framework as well as details of the design and costs for redesigned community space at 200 Wellesley Street East.

The St. James Town Community Food Table was established in January 2021. This table was initiated by City staff following direction from City Council and convened with representation from community agencies, residents and residential apartment owner groups, including Toronto Community Housing Corporation and City divisions. In July 2021, a report was submitted to Council outlining the outcomes of the table, including an Interim Collaborative Framework developed by the members of the table.

The report recommends that funds be provided: i) to advance the goals and principles of the Collaborative Framework and key actions of the Food Table through start-up resources for facilitation, coordination, activation and resident focused capacity building and ii) to advance capital investments in a new community food space at 200 Wellesley Street East.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. City Council request the Board of Directors of Toronto Community Housing Corporation to request the President and Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Community Housing Corporation to undertake the capital improvements required to establish a community food space at 200 Wellesley Street East and to lead a Request for Expressions of Interest process, identifying a collaborative of community agencies to activate the space and operationalize the coordination, activation and resident participation for the space.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The financial impacts expected as a result of the recommendation in this report are as follows:

Social Development, Finance and Administration will provide funds of \$0.050 million to Toronto Community Housing Corporation in 2021 for the collaborative of community agencies selected through a Request for Expressions of Interest process to operationalize the coordination, activation of the space, engagement of residents, resident capacity building, training and other needs related to food-related programming in the community food space at 200 Wellesley. These funds will be accommodated within existing resources in the 2021 Social Development, Finance and Administration budget.

Additionally, Toronto Community Housing Corporation will require \$2.004 million to complete the capital improvements related to the community food space at 200 Wellesley. To renovate the space from its existing condition and provide for basic amenities for the functioning of the Food Hub, approximately \$1 million will be invested from the existing Toronto Community Housing Corporation capital plan. Additional funding of approximately \$0.967 million required to cover the costs of individual kitchens at each multi-purpose space and for the proposed public entrance, including the elevator, will be funded from Section 37 funds.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

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The actions to support food security in St. James Town have been determined to have positive impact on the community, with potential benefits for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving residents. Specifically, the work and investment in a community food space at 200 Wellesley supports better coordination of programs, access to services and opportunities for resident participation and leadership in the community. Improved coordination and access may also benefit women, immigrants, refugees, undocumented individuals, seniors and youth in the St. James Town neighbourhood.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on November 25 and 26, 2020, City Council considered Item EC17.6 and directed the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, in consultation with the President and Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Community Housing Corporation, and other City divisions as required, to work with community-based agencies and other stakeholders, including the OASIS Food Hub, in St. James Town to establish a community food table to lead the development of a collaborative framework to address food security in the St. James Town neighbourhood and report to the Economic and Community Development Committee on the outcomes of the community food table in April 2021.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.EC17.6>

At its meeting of July 14-16, 2021, City Council considered Item EC23.4 and directed the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration in consultation with the President and Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Community Housing Corporation, to work with the St. James Town Community Food Table to determine the operational costs of staffing to support the mandate of the Collaborative Framework and the costs of space at 200 Wellesley Street East.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EC23.4>

## COMMENTS

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### Background

The St. James Town Community Food Table was convened in January 2021 by City staff at the direction of City Council. The intent of establishing the Food Table was to lead the development of a collaborative framework to address food security in the St James Town neighbourhood. Over the course of 11 meetings, outcomes were achieved including the development of an interim collaborative framework as noted in the June 30, 2021 report to the Economic and Community Development Committee. Since that report, the Food Table has continued to meet, convened by three co-chairs that were selected by members of the table. Staff from the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division and Toronto Community Housing Corporation have continued to attend meetings of the table as participants.

The framework, named an Interim Collaborative Framework for Healthy Food Security in St. James Town, has been developed by the members of the Food Table and articulates a vision, principles and goals. The vision is as follows:

*"A collaborative, resident-led, and sustainable food system that secures healthy, culturally appropriate, quality food that is equitable and just for the community of St. James Town. We envision this neighbourhood system as a part of City and regional food systems."*

Three key actions were also established by members of the Food Table through a backcasting exercise facilitated by City staff. These key actions include:

- 1) Developing emergency response teams in buildings that can provide residents with food and water during a sudden event such as a power outage or fire.
- 2) Ensuring residents are engaged in the development and implementation of food programming in the neighbourhood.
- 3) Mobilizing spaces for food programming in St. James Town.

Preliminary resident feedback on the framework was included in the June report, and members of the Food Table have continued to engage residents on the framework through surveys and conversations.

City Council has requested that staff determine the operational costs to support the mandate of the Collaborative Framework and the costs of space at 200 Wellesley Street East. In response, staff reviewed the elements of the Interim Collaborative Framework including key actions and preliminary resident feedback. Staff consulted with the City's Food Access Team in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Office, and the Community

Development Unit in Social Development, Finance and Administration to identify models for supporting community initiatives and the associated operational costs. Staff from Toronto Community Housing were also consulted to better understand the space opportunity at 200 Wellesley and how it would support the key actions of the framework.

### **Supporting the mandate of the Interim Collaborative Framework**

Several factors were considered in determining a model to support the mandate of the framework. These considerations included:

- the alignment with the vision, goals, and principles of the Interim Collaborative Framework and the key actions articulated by the members of the table;
- the ability for staffing resources to be situated locally and to be responsive to local issues;
- the ability to have consistent staffing availability; and,
- the potential for resident leadership and empowerment, community inclusion and local employment.

Models that support self-sufficiency, collaboration, health equity, sustainability, resilience, and accountability to the community would align with the Interim Collaborative Framework. Further, two key actions established by the Food Table would be supported through models that build upon efforts to mobilize local space for food security, ensure resident engagement, and enhance resident leadership.

Based on the review and discussions by staff, models previously used by the City to support community initiatives were revisited to inform the operational costs determination. A non-City staffing model is recommended to support the mandate given the emphasis on community and resident leadership, self-sufficiency and the capacity in the community. City staff will continue to be involved with the St. James Town Community Food Table as resources.

The proposed solution draws benefits from a number of models. Firstly, the Neighbourhood Pod model is currently supported by the City as a local response to COVID-19. The focus of Neighbourhood Pods is to create 'mutual aid networks' to assist the mobilization of local networks, including community agencies, grassroots groups and residents. They facilitate and build community capacity and social capital that exist within neighbourhoods to respond to emergent issues. The model enhances local resident and community leadership in the collaborative response to community priorities with community agencies supporting the implementation. Other models involve the provision of City funds to enable resources for project coordination and activation. This type of model has been used for other collaborative community initiatives including the Neighbourhood Food Hub which was described in a presentation to the St. James Town Community Food Table.

In order to support the mandate of the Interim Collaborative Framework, one-time funds of \$50,000 will be made available as part of the Request for Expressions of Interest Process for the 200 Wellesley Food Hub. These funds will enable initial start-up including the development, activation and animation of the Food Hub using a community led approach. The funding is designed to support the Collaborative Framework through procurement of a coordination team to undertake the following:

- coordination and activation of the 200 Wellesley Food Hub Space;
- supporting the goals, principles and vision of the Interim Collaborative Framework;
- coordination, communication and information sharing on local supports and services available in collaboration with residents, community agencies and others;
- continued monitoring of local needs and available supports as they arise; and,
- coordination and support for training to enhance resident leadership capacity.

### **Expected Operational Costs:**

Funding for community agency or collaboration of agencies to fulfill the activation, coordination and resident focused activities scoped above were determined based on the projected costs noted below in Table 1.

Table 1: Projected Costs of Operational Support

Expense	Amount
Project Coordination (including benefits): \$25/hour, 20 hours/week for 1 year	\$28,500.00
Supplies and equipment	\$ 2,000.00
Honorariums – resident leadership	\$10,000.00
Training	\$ 5,000.00
Administration Fee (up to 10% of requested)	\$ 4,500.00
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$50,000.00</b>

### **Activating a New Food Hub at 200 Wellesley**

Toronto Community Housing Corporation recognises the importance of secure, reliable, and affordable access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food for its residents and the broader St. James Town Community. Toronto Community Housing Corporation has been participating as an active and engaged partner in the St. James Town Community Food Table discussions. Staff have developed a plan to establish a Food Hub at 200 Wellesley that can help address food insecurity in the local community by converting underutilised space into a renewed community resource that can host local agencies, enable food production, storage and distribution. This plan was developed by taking lessons from the Food Table discussions and through engaging with tenant leaderships, City divisions and other stakeholders.

### **Space Overview - 200 Wellesley Food Hub**

Over 6,000 square feet of space was identified at the building at 200 Wellesley that can be retrofitted and reimagined as a resource centre for tenants and the broader community seeking food programs and assistance. While there are many local agencies

and groups engaged in food provision to the St. James Town community, the Food Table has raised that there remains a need for space for the preparation, storage and distribution of food. The 200 Wellesley Food Hub proposal addresses these needs and provides flexible new spaces, further detailed in Appendix A, for tenants and agencies including:

- Large multi-purpose space that can host events and function for distribution;
- Kitchen, food preparation area and secure storage;
- Office space for agencies; and
- Secure and accessible public entrance and elevator.

The proposed location, draft floorplans and space allocation tables are detailed further in Appendix A.

**Overview of Costs of Toronto Community Housing Space:**

A cost estimate has been prepared for the establishment of the Food Hub. While Toronto Community Housing Corporation would invest approximately \$1 million from its capital plan to renovate the spaces from its existing condition and provide for basic amenities for the functioning of the Food Hub, additional funding of approximately \$0.967 million is required to cover the costs of individual kitchens at each multi-purpose space and for the proposed public entrance including the elevator. This additional funding is required as these amenities go beyond Toronto Community Housing Corporation’s mandate and capital program for state of good repairs. The cost breakdown is provided in Appendix B.

**Operations - 200 Wellesley Food Hub**

The Food Hub will be a flexible space for use by residents and local community agencies and will be governed by Toronto Community Housing Corporation, community agencies and tenant representatives/leadership. Co-management of the Food Hub is envisioned involving a collaborative of agencies (or lead agency) and the Building Townhouse Committee (elected tenant leadership). A Request for Expressions of Interest process will be used to seek a lead agency or consortium to co-manage and oversee the food hub to ensure maximum tenant and community benefit. The responsibilities of Toronto Community Housing Corporation, community agencies and tenant representatives are summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Responsibilities of Food Hub

Toronto Community Housing Corporation	Community Agencies	Tenant Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of community agencies (in consultation with City staff and local Councillor) for placement in the Food Hub</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide food-related programs and supports to TCHC tenants</li> <li>• Coordinate programming and share resources/expertise to maximize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise and coordinate between tenants, agencies and TCHC to ensure tenants' needs are expressed and addressed</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure use of space agreements are being followed</li> <li>• Maintenance for common areas – bathrooms, hallways</li> <li>• Provide security and access control via private security</li> </ul>	<p>tenant/community benefit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of spaces used by community agencies e.g. kitchens, office, garbage removal</li> <li>• Follow use of space agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in collaboration with community agencies to ensure that programming serves tenant benefit</li> </ul>
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**Next Steps:**

Toronto Community Housing Corporation is prepared to launch a process and engage with interested community agencies once full capital funding related to the public amenities of the Food Hub has been secured. At that time, Toronto Community Housing Corporation will release a Request for Expressions of Interest for the space at 200 Wellesley Street East to solicit and review interest from local community agencies in co-managing the Food Hub space. The Request for Expressions of Interest will also articulate the process to award the operational start-up support funds allocated from Social Development, Finance and Administration at the City of Toronto. The process to evaluate applications will be made through an advisory committee comprised of Toronto Community Housing Corporation staff and tenants, other resident representatives and City staff.

**CONTACT**

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**SIGNATURE**

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Denise Andrea Campbell  
Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

**ATTACHMENTS**

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- Appendix A: Diagrams and Plans for the 200 Wellesley Food Hub
- Appendix B: Toronto Community Housing Capital Costs for 200 Wellesley Food Hub