

Clause embodied in Report No. 3 of the Economic Development and Parks Committee, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on April 16, 17 and 18, 2002.

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**Leaside Business Park Action Plan
“Focusing Reinvestment in Leaside”
(Ward 26 Don Valley West)**

(City Council on April 16, 17 and 18, 2002, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Economic Development and Parks Committee recommends the adoption of the following report (February 26, 2002) from the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism:

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to describe the background and activities of the Leaside Economic Revitalization Initiative Committee (LERI), to present the Leaside Business Action Plan “Focusing Reinvestment in Leaside” (Attachment 1) and to discuss its implementation.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Chair of the Leaside Economic Revitalization Initiative Committee and the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism or his designate meet with various City departments, agencies and senior levels of government staff to discuss the resources necessary to implement the recommended actions and to report back as appropriate;
- (2) copies of the Leaside Business Park Action Plan, entitled “Focusing Reinvestment in Leaside”, be forwarded to appropriate staff in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities, Bell Canada, Centennial College, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Human Resources Development Canada; and
- (3) the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The Leaside Business Park is a 390-acre industrial commercial park between Eglinton Avenue East, the Don Valley park system, Overlea Boulevard, Millwood Road and Laird Drive. It is one of fourteen targeted employment revitalization areas administered by the Economic Development Division's Small Business and Local Partnerships program. This area was selected to address such issues as business closures, vacancies and job loss whereby the area suffered a 34 percent employment decline between 1990 and 2001. This includes the loss of such companies as Philip Electronics, Corning Glass, Canadian Wire – Alcatel, Sanyo, and more recently, Norampac and Coca Cola. Property, street and sidewalk maintenance and appearance along with a general perception that the area is deteriorating has added to this declining employment concern.

While the area has been in decline, the Leaside Business Park has the potential of again being one of the City's important employment areas. Certain clusters have done exceedingly well such as chemical products and medicines, retail and warehousing. Other employment clusters include apparel and textiles, biomedical and biotechnology, business and professional services and information technology. More than 650 establishments operate in the business park and it is estimated that these businesses generate over \$6.8 million in industrial taxes.

The Leaside Business Park initiative began in the summer of 2001, when the representatives of the Leaside Business Park Association, the Leaside Property Owners Association and the local Councillor met with Economic Development to discuss various methods to address the above-mentioned issues.

Through co-operation with the City's By-law Enforcement Unit, Urban Forestry of Parks and Recreation Division, Works and Emergency Services, the Toronto Police Service and the Economic Development Division, several initiatives have been accomplished by the Leaside Business Park Association. These include a reduction in crime through a safety and street lighting audit of all industrial properties; and setting a new image for the area by the installation of new decorative street signs. In addition, the Leaside Business Park Association and the City have completed the Millwood Bridge Study to enhance the image for the Millwood Bridge at the entrance to Laird Drive from Millwood Road and a capital works improvement plan for the Leaside Business Park.

Comments:

As a result of this process, the Leaside Economic Revitalization Initiative (LERI) Committee was formed in August 2001 to undertake an economic revitalization strategy through consultation with the various stakeholders. This project lasted three months with community consultations involving key stakeholders as well as a one day workshop with over sixty people attending.

As a result of this extensive consultation, the Committee completed its strategy in January 2002, Attachment No. 1, entitled "Focusing Reinvestment in Leaside - A Business Action Plan". The strategy presents a summary of the issues and ideas that emerged from the consultations and provides a guide to LERI in its revitalization efforts over the next five years.

The implementation of the strategy will include seven objectives:

(a) Creating an Effective Organizational Structure

LERI will focus on encouraging broader stakeholder participation through an effective communication strategy. This includes maintaining LERI as a permanent organization meeting regularly and creating four task groups. First is a government liaison committee to monitor government initiatives and to advocate positions on behalf of local businesses; the second is an area infrastructure and appearance committee to advocate for capital improvements and monitor street and right-of-way maintenance; the third is an area marketing and communications committee to develop and promote a business recruitment package and to develop a positive media image; and the fourth is a local employment committee to strengthen training and local employment linkages and to recruit new LERI members such as local training institution professionals, real estate professionals and employment service providers.

(b) Mobilizing Resources Through Effective Partnerships

LERI will identify and advocate support on behalf of its neighbours for co-operative funding programs to promote economic revitalization and employment opportunities. In addition to requests to the City, LERI will investigate opportunities for accessing funding from various sources such as Human Resources Development Canada under the Local Labour Market Partnerships and Job Creation Partnerships program; Bell Canada Community Economic Development fund; the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism under their Prosperity Development fund as well as support from the Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities under their Ontario Youth Apprenticeship and Job-connect programs.

(c) Improving Public Infrastructure and Amenities

LERI will select and prioritize improvements listed in the Design for Capital Works report prepared for the Leaside Business Park Association in 2001. This will include exploring methods of financing these improvements from public and private sponsors, from partnering with City departments when public works are scheduled, and from property owners within the business park when redeveloping or improving their own properties.

(d) Attracting New Business Investment

LERI will raise the profile of its business park by identifying and targeting markets that would consider locating in the park. This work will include maintaining an inventory of available space for lease and sale for commercial real estate agents and economic development organizations; developing a focused marketing plan and improving the park's branding by prioritizing capital improvements at key entry points into the business park.

(e) Developing an Employment-Supportive Regulatory Framework

LERI will develop a rationale for the future development of its business park. This will be accomplished by preparing a position statement that illustrates the land-use related priorities of its strategy; monitoring the City's employment and industrial land policies including local development applications with regard to their compatibility with the strategy; and requesting a community improvement plan for the Leaside Business Park to address various incentives for the area.

(f) Improving Local Labour Skills Development

LERI will identify the required local labour skills base to address current and future demand and to capitalize on untapped local labour market assets. This includes undertaking labour market research in association with universities and colleges, Human Resources Development Canada and Economic Development to identify supply and demand needs in the area; contacting area institutions to identify skills upgrading opportunities; and identifying mentorship opportunities between Leaside businesses and local high school and colleges.

(g) Enhancing Environmental Performance

LERI will improve the environmental performance of businesses in the area by improving environmental awareness and stewardship and developing innovative partnerships, and to initiate the reclamation of brownfield sites. This includes meeting with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to identify sustainable business practices lobbying the provincial government with respect to its new provincial brownfield legislation to attract possible pilot projects to the business park; and to partner with Canadian Eco-industrial Network to develop an eco-industrial project in the business park.

In summary, there are twenty-nine actions recommended in the strategy to be commenced over a three year period. Each action has an identified stakeholder such as LERI, subcommittees of LERI, the City, agencies and other government levels to initiate and guide the action through to completion. Addressing the issues described in the strategy will require an expanded membership of LERI. This will include, but is not limited to, owners and senior management of businesses located in the Leaside Business park, community volunteers, merchants in adjacent commercial areas, financial institutions, federal and provincial governments, community police officers and City and agency staff.

Conclusions:

The Leaside Business Park is one of the City's largest concentrations of employment lands. The development of the strategy, resulting from significant community involvement and volunteer time and resources, completes the first part of the employment revitalization for the area. The Economic Development Division with business and residential interests have supported this community based initiative.

Carrying forward the momentum of this initiative requires an effective organizational structure, which the LERI executive committee is now implementing. This will include having the Chair of the Leaside Economic Revitalization Initiative (LERI) Committee and the City's Economic Development staff meet with various City departments and senior levels of government staff to discuss the resources necessary to implement the recommended actions, expanding LERI stakeholder membership and creating LERI subcommittees to undertake specific actions. Meetings have already been scheduled to commence the first year actions. Support of the strategy in Attachment 1 will provide additional encouragement for the LERI volunteers.

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(A copy of Attachment No. 1, entitled "Focusing Reinvestment in Leaside – A Business Action Plan", referred to in the foregoing report, was forwarded to all Members of Council with the March 27, 2002 agenda of the Economic Development and Parks Committee, and a copy thereof is on file in the office of the City Clerk.)