



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Regent Park Social Development Plan - Approval

Date:	September 17, 2007
To:	Executive Committee
From:	Deputy City Manager, Cluster A
Wards:	28
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report outlines the key findings of the Social Development Plan in the areas of Social Cohesion, Community Services and Facilities and Employment. There are seventy-five recommendations that provide a plan of action for managing social change in Regent Park over the course of the redevelopment, including an implementation structure. The role for the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division and Toronto Social Services in carrying out the plan is also discussed.

The Executive Summary has been attached. The full document including sections on redevelopment context, research on social inclusion and strategies for social inclusion and appendices are available on the Toronto Community website at www.regentpark.ca. The appendices include the Regent Park Revitalization Strategy for the Provision of Community Facilities (City of Toronto, August 2005), Embracing a Changing Landscape: A Community Effort in Planning for a New Regent Park (Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative, June 2006) and Towards a Neighbourhood of Choice and Connection: An Employment Plan for Regent Park (City of Toronto, 2007). The Employment Plan will also be posted at the City's website through Toronto Social Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Deputy City Manager recommends that:

- (1) The Social Development Plan for Regent Park be approved; and
- (2) The Social Development Plan be forwarded to the Toronto District School Board; the Toronto Catholic District School Board; and the Regent Park Inter-Governmental Coordinating Committee, led by the Housing Division of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to inform their efforts on Regent Park.

Financial Impact

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the adoption of the Regent Park Social Development Plan.

DECISION HISTORY

Toronto City Council approved the Revitalization of Regent Park at its meeting on July 22, 23 and 24, 2003. Council directed that the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division “work with community, stakeholders and Toronto Community Housing (TCH) to identify opportunities for skills training, community employment and education for residents and support TCH’s efforts to develop a social development plan and programs with the community”.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The revitalization of Regent Park is an important City Building initiative for TCH and the City of Toronto. Revitalization balances and integrates the social, economic and environmental needs of an area to create liveable healthy communities. Revitalization efforts support Toronto’s priorities of enhancing the prosperity, opportunity and liveability of its neighbourhoods.

Regent Park represents reinvestment, redevelopment and intensification of more than 70 acres of land in downtown Toronto. It will serve to revitalize the neighbourhood, provide quality housing to residents, create a mix of market and social housing and reconnect the Regent Park neighbourhood both physically and socially to the rest of the City.

Revitalization is about more than planning for the physical environment, it is about planning for people as Regent Park undergoes significant demographic and social changes. This large- scale revitalization effort in Regent Park means significant transition for residents, including relocation and an anticipated increase of 5,000 new residents that will result in a mixed income community. In recognition of these implications for social inclusion, the city required that a Social Development Plan (SDP) be developed as part of the effort. This is the first locality or “place-based” Social Development Plan for the City of Toronto and provides an opportunity to strengthen the community and plan for interactions between current residents, new residents and neighbours in surrounding communities.

COMMENTS

Grounded in Partnership

Toronto Community Housing, the City of Toronto, the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative, community agencies and Regent Park residents have come together over the past three years to participate in the planning process for the Social Development Plan.

Staff from TCH and the City's Social Development, Finance and Administration Division and Toronto Social Services have worked in partnership with a "Core Committee" of community leaders (Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative, Regent Park Community Health Centre, Dixon Hall, Regent Park Focus, Christian Resource Centre and Yonge Street Mission) to guide the engagement process and creation of the Plan.

The SDP has been grounded in a process of stakeholder engagement and consultation with a broad range of stakeholders including community members, boards of directors of local agencies, community agency staff, Parent Councils, faith groups, local businesses, grassroots groups, disabled residents and service providers, harm reduction workers, people with addictions, homeless people, neighbouring communities, youth, City Divisions, other orders of government, and institutions such as schools, child welfare, and health.

The SDP Executive Summary has been widely circulated to community stakeholders and four information sessions were held in early September with community agencies, residents and grass-roots groups to review the findings of the Plan.

This inclusive process has enabled a dialogue with a large number of interested stakeholders and has resulted in the development of a shared agenda with agreed upon issues, community objectives and a set of neighbourhood strategies.

Findings - Framework of Social Inclusion

The SDP provides a framework for building a cohesive and inclusive community in Regent Park over the course of redevelopment and into the long term. The content of the Social Development Plan covers three broad areas - social cohesion, community services and facilities and employment as well as a change management implementation strategy. The Social Development Plan identifies seventy-five recommendations that are designed to guide the work of community-building in Regent Park and promote social inclusion.

Social Cohesion

Informal activities such as community events, celebrations and casual gatherings that attract residents from all socio-economic backgrounds and provide opportunities for interaction are important. The role of community gardens, cultural communities, ethno-specific grass-roots groups, faith groups and schools are specifically highlighted. Community associations and mechanisms for joint decision-making play a key role in the success of mixed-income communities.

Community Services and Facilities

Formal service providers, both City and community-based, play a key role in promoting and facilitating social inclusion. Revitalization provides opportunities for integrated service planning, expanded outreach, new service models and

shared facilities. Access to quality community facilities and the need for new funding sources is also highlighted.

Employment and Economic Development

Employment is a key factor in improving the quality of life for residents in Regent Park and is a key component of the Social Development Plan. Given the importance of this area, a local employment plan entitled “Towards a Neighbourhood of Choice and Connection” was developed, and is attached to the SDP as an attachment. Like the SDP itself, there was no existing template to guide the development of this Plan. The employment plan has four key areas; Serving Individuals, Serving Employers, a New Service Delivery Approach and a Dynamic Employment and Training System.

In the short term, the essence of the employment plan is to make sure employment opportunities offered through the revitalization process are made available to local residents. This requires ensuring that the necessary processes, mechanisms and resources are in place to enable them to take advantage of these opportunities and others that may arise. One concrete example of this involves TSS, in conjunction with TCHC and community partners, increasing connections between residents of Regent Park, community programs and employers by placing Career and Employment specialists in the RPNI office. These staff also support TCHC and employers directly involved in the revitalization in hiring local residents.

In the longer term, the plan sets out a new integrated approach to service delivery to job seekers, agencies and employers. Key to this approach is the creation of an Employment and Enterprise Hub, which focuses both on employment services and economic development. The Hub itself is a physical location that acts as single access point, connecting various networks of people, agencies and businesses. It also serves as a focal point for local planning and service management.

Change Management – Implementation Strategy

The Social Development Plan is a change management framework. The seventy-five recommendations comprise a work plan to support efforts to build social inclusion, community services and facilities and employment. Redevelopment will occur over a fifteen year time frame so the SDP must be embedded in a process and a structure that can adjust to unanticipated outcomes and changing circumstances.

An implementation strategy has been developed to carry forward the recommendations and work outlined in the SDP through a series of Tables that will meet regularly including a City Project Management Team, Employment Committee, Community Services Planning Table (agencies), Grass-roots Network, Neighbourhood Forum and School Planning Table. An overall Stakeholders Table will meet quarterly to monitor the progress of the Social

Development Plan and provide a forum for identifying cross-sectoral opportunities, sharing information, harmonizing respective plans and working together on the broader analysis of the social development needs of Regent Park.

Implementation - City of Toronto

An inter-divisional team of City services, both hard and community services, has been meeting since 2003 to manage the development application for Regent Park Revitalization. For the past six months, the City team has shifted its focus to implementation issues such as planning for community services and capital needs and has been renamed the Regent Park City Project Management Team.

The Project Management Team has representation from the Affordable Housing Office, Children's Services, City Planning, Corporate Finance, Culture, Economic Development, Legal, Facilities and Real Estate, Parks Forestry and Recreation, Shelter Support and Housing Administration (Social Housing), Social Development, Finance and Administration, Social Services, Toronto Building, Technical Services, as well as Toronto Community Housing and the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative.

This City Project Management Team provides an excellent foundation for service coordination and planning of City services in Regent Park. It will be a key link to the SDP Stakeholders Table and is supported by the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division.

The Social Development, Finance and Administration Division will work with Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative to convene the SDP Stakeholders Table on a quarterly basis. The Employment Committee will be led by Toronto Social Services and will have representatives from various stakeholder groups. The Employment Committee will guide the implementation of the Employment Plan.

Conclusion

There was no template to follow in the creation of the Regent Park Social Development Plan. The SDP is grounded in engagement and partnership and is an innovative approach to building social inclusion at the neighbourhood level. There is substantive experience and research generated that can help to inform other large scale revitalization efforts.

The Social Development Plan creates a common agenda with agreed upon issues, community objectives and a set of neighbourhood strategies that form a plan of action for social inclusion over the coming decade of redevelopment in Regent Park. This SDP will be a "tool" for advancing discussions with other orders of government, funding bodies and partners. The SDP will support and inform efforts of the City of Toronto, TCH and community partners in the areas of investment, service coordination and maximizing efficiencies.

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SIGNATURE

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