

Toronto Community
Housing Corporation
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**Toronto
Community
Housing**

HAND DELIVER

October 25, 2007

Executive Committee
Ms. Patsy Morris, Administrator
10th Floor, West Tower
100 Queen Street West

Executive Committee Members:

Toronto Community Housing provides geared to income and low end of market rental housing to over 58,500 units across the City of Toronto. It is incorporated under the Ontario Business Corporations Act and is governed by a 13 member Board of Directors. The City of Toronto is the sole shareholder.

Toronto Community Housing is undertaking numerous initiatives geared to improving the quality of its buildings, the health of its communities and the homes of its tenants, one of which is the revitalization of Regent Park. The Regent Park initiative is strongly supported by many stakeholder groups, including the city.

The revitalization plan originally forwarded to and approved by the Toronto Community Housing Board of Directors, and subsequently by City Council, included the development of a 'community plan' which was intended to ensure that the aspects of revitalization beyond the 'bricks and mortar' were not overlooked. When City Council endorsed the Regent Park plan it also directed city staff from the Social Development and Administration Division to support the development of the community plan. City of Toronto planning approvals renamed this document, the Social Development Plan.

Attached to this transmittal is a copy of the Social Development Plan for Regent Park. The plan was approved by the Toronto Community Housing Board of Directors at their September 28th, 2007 meeting. Due to the importance of the involvement of the schools within the area, the Board requested that staff forward a copy of the report to the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board requesting that they review and adopt the Plan and that they subsequently share the plan with their school communities in the Regent Park area. The Board also requested that staff forward a copy of the plan to the City of Toronto, through its Executive Committee, requesting that the Executive Committee adopt a similar motion with respect to the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board.

The attached report is being forwarded to the City's Executive Committee of Council on behalf of the Toronto Community Housing Board of Directors, requesting that the Executive Committee adopt a motion similar to that of the Toronto Community Housing Board of Directors, requesting the school boards to adopt and share the plan with schools in the Regent Park area.

Yours truly,

Elora Nichols
Corporate Secretary
Toronto Community Housing

Attachment: Regent Park Revitalization: Social Development Plan, Executive Summary

C Nancy Autton - City Managers' Office, City of Toronto
Joe Borowiecz - City Managers' Office, City of Toronto



Regent Park Revitalization: Social Development Plan

Item 7
September 28, 2007

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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To: Board of Directors
From: City Building Committee
Date: September 17, 2007

Report: TCHC:2007-128

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PURPOSE:

To provide the Board of Directors with an overview of the Regent Park Social Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Board of Directors:

- (1) approve the recommendations in the report;
- (2) authorize staff to take the necessary actions to implement recommendations pertinent to Toronto Community Housing and which are supported by the Regent Park Revitalization Plan and other Toronto Community Housing initiatives; and
- (3) request staff to forward this report to the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) requesting that they review and adopt the Plan, and subsequently share the Plan with their school communities in the Regent Park area. The Committee requests that staff forward the report to the City, through the Executive Committee, asking that the Executive Committee adopt a similar motion with respect to the TDSB and TCDSB.

CITY BUILDING COMMENTS:

At its meeting on September 17, 2007, the City Building Committee made a further recommendation (3) as captioned above. The City Building Committee adopted the report as amended and recommended it be forwarded to the Board of Directors for approval.

BACKGROUND:

In December 2004 the Board of Directors approved proceeding with the Regent Park planning approvals, which included the development of a "community plan". This plan was seen as the elements of the community revitalization that go beyond "bricks and mortar" changes. Toronto City Council endorsed this approach and directed City staff from the Social Development and Administration Division to support this initiative. The

“community plan” was renamed a Social Development Plan (SDP) in the City of Toronto planning approval documents.

The Regent Park Secondary Plan includes specific policies directed at improving Community Services and Facilities by setting out a policy framework that requires the creation of comprehensive plans and programs to assist in the optimization of the delivery of community services, which should address the integration of initiatives to support local employment, community economic development and resident participation. The goal of the social development planning process is to put in place the mechanisms that will focus on achieving greater levels of equity, access, participation, social cohesion and community capacity, as articulated in the Secondary Plan. The SDP is a response to that directive.

The SDP process was initiated by Toronto Community Housing with an “open space” workshop in 2004 that invited a broad range of stakeholders to identify key issues and explore ideas on how social development could be approached. Following that process, the SDP has been guided by an inclusive process centered on extensive consultation with stakeholders. A Core Committee of community agency leaders, City staff and Toronto Community Housing staff has provided ongoing direction to the creation of the plan. Participants in the Core Committee, which include Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative, Regent Park Community Health Centre, Dixon Hall, Regent Park Focus, Christian Resource Centre and Yonge Street Mission, have carried out consultations with community members, boards of directors of local agencies, community agency staff, parents’ councils, faith groups, local businesses, grassroots groups, disabled residents and service providers, harm-reduction workers, people with addictions, homeless people, neighbouring communities, youth, city staff, and institutions such as schools and police.

The SDP provides a framework for social change within Regent Park over the course of the Revitalization and into the long-term. It is not a service plan; rather it is a plan that will enable better service planning by fostering local culture and cohesion, security and participation, service access and continuity, and the volume of services. The SDP seeks to achieve a high level of social inclusion in the revitalized Regent Park by contributing to building effective neighbourhood associations, developing community capacity to address community needs, engaging old and new residents in the revitalization process, by working with local agencies to support a variety of community activities, and working with schools to expand their role in the community through service provision and as meeting places. The Plan includes an Employment Service Plan which seeks to provide services to individuals and employers. The Employment Service Plan will develop a unique approach to local service delivery and generate a method of employment and training that can be adapted to the changing needs of Regent Park residents over time.

The purpose of this report is to provide the City Building Committee with a broad overview of the key components of the SDP, the role of Toronto Community Housing in supporting the SDP structure and to identify how Toronto Community Housing will contribute to the process as a community stakeholder that is committed to strengthening and improving the social vitality of the Regent Park community.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1 ***That the City Building Committee adopt this report and forward it to the Board of Directors recommending that:***

(1) Toronto Community Housing approve the recommendations in the report:

- (2) **Authorize staff to take the necessary actions to implement recommendations pertinent to Toronto Community Housing and which are supported by the Regent Park Revitalization Plan and other Toronto Community Housing initiatives; and**
- (3) **request staff to forward this report to the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) requesting that they review and adopt the Plan, and subsequently share the Plan with their school communities in the Regent Park area. The Committee requests that staff forward the report to the City, through the Executive Committee, asking that the Executive Committee adopt a similar motion with respect to the TDSB and TCDSB.**

The Social Development Plan (SDP) process is the first neighbourhood-based plan of this kind in Toronto. The purpose of the SDP is to put in place a plan that will guide social development and promote social inclusion as an ingredient in the success of the community. Before the planning process began, it was widely recognized that a plan to guide the social development of the community was as critical an element as the physical redevelopment planning process. In that sense, the “revitalization” of Regent Park, is a term that conveys the importance of creating a social infrastructure to support the creation of a socially cohesive mixed income community. The SDP is the change management framework that is meant to guide this process.

Key stakeholders in the Revitalization process have been engaged in creating the SDP document. Toronto Community Housing, the City of Toronto, the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative, community agencies, and Regent Park residents have come together to participate in the planning process for the Social Development Plan. The SDP Core Committee provided ongoing direction in the creation of the plan and a Writers Group was also struck as a subcommittee of the Core Committee to act as a vehicle to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders and inclusion of feedback in the final document. *Public Interest Strategy and Communications Incorporated* was contracted to conduct focus groups with stakeholders, proxy, and targeted groups and work with the Writers Group in the production of the comprehensive final document. In addition to local consultation, background research was conducted and included in the Plan to examine “best practices” from other jurisdictions. The drafting of SDP document was iterative, which provided the Core Committee with the opportunity for feedback as the document evolved.

Key Components of the Social Development Plan

The Social Development Plan is comprised of four key areas:

1. **Social Cohesion**
2. **Employment Services Plan**
3. **Community Services and Facilities**
4. **Long-term Change Management**

In total, the SDP identifies seventy-five recommendations that are designed to guide the work of community-building at Regent Park and increase social inclusion through processes that promote formal and informal social connections. In part, these objectives are supported by governance models that serve as a

framework to invite a variety of interests to participate in community processes and to inform the social service infrastructure. The recommendations also identify the significance of community facilities in supporting social inclusion and strategies for developing the necessary facilities. In addition to strategies to facilitate social inclusion, the document provides a substantial chapter that describes the provision of a neighbourhood based employment program.

The SDP acknowledges that actions associated with social development in the Regent Park community are a cross-sectoral responsibility insofar as a broad range of stakeholders have an interest and role to play. Toronto Community Housing is represented in approximately one-third of the recommendations, in which Toronto Community Housing is either the entity responsible for implementation of the recommended action or as a support to another body. The practices and processes that were developed as part of the SDP are consistent with current Toronto Community Housing practices, which will continue to support the activities that are aimed at improving the overall health of the community.

The SDP process has also created an opportunity to build an understanding about the different roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. In that regard, the process has challenged all participants to consider ways in which each could contribute to the social revitalization process. Throughout the process Toronto Community Housing has worked to incorporate the principle that it is part of a multi-sectoral effort, not the major player, responsible for assuring social cohesion and social inclusion in the Regent Park neighbourhood. Other agencies and the City of Toronto have acknowledged that they have an equal responsibility to achieve community aims. This approach is consistent with normalizing the community insofar as the Regent Park neighbourhood does not continue to be dominated by a single agency and that there is not a disproportional financial burden placed on the housing system for community-wide benefits.

The attached Executive Summary provides a comprehensive list of the recommendations and provides a short summary of the key components of the SDP (Appendix A).

Below is an overview of the key themes contained in the Social Development Plan and highlights some of the recommendations that are directly applicable to Toronto Community Housing.

1. Social Cohesion

The notion of social inclusion is a key theme that frames the SDP. According to background research, and the experience of community development efforts in other jurisdictions, it is a principle that underlies the mechanisms that will work to facilitate the creation of a balanced, equitable community where people from all backgrounds feel they have a stake in the success of the neighbourhood and of their neighbours.

In practice, Toronto Community Housing will support a variety of recommendations that are aimed at social cohesion and inclusion. For example, extensive discussions took place about the kinds of new governance structures that would be necessary to support social integration between new community members in market housing and Toronto Community Housing rental housing, including how to manage the transition between phases of the redevelopment. The SDP recommends that Toronto Community Housing examine the Tenant Council structure in 2008 to determine if there is a need to modify the structure prior to the tenant elections slated for 2009. While Toronto Community Housing is willing to make such an examination, it should be noted that in all other communities, the Tenant

Participation System exists as an internal Toronto Community Housing participatory system and that many tenants join community associations and groups to pursue community-wide initiatives of their own volition.

Community gardens were also seen as an important vehicle for promoting opportunities for social inclusion. The SDP recommends that Toronto Community Housing continue to find ways to support and develop community gardens through rooftop gardens, courtyards and balconies. The Regent Park Plan already incorporates these commitments on the part of Toronto Community Housing. Similarly, the SDP recommends that the City of Toronto, through the Parks Forestry and Recreation Division, consider opportunities for including community gardens within the development of new park space, including the Peace Garden.

As a central feature of the SDP, many of the recommendations to support social cohesion relate to the work of community based agencies and the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI, a resident-based, multi-stakeholder community convener and planning body), and ask that all stakeholders place social cohesion and inclusion as a priority in their respective areas of work. These recommendations also addressed the role of Toronto Community Housing and service providers in creating programs and facilities that assist tenant-driven initiatives, grassroots groups, and ethno-cultural communities.

2. Community Services and Facilities

A number of community services are housed in Toronto Community Housing buildings in Regent Park, which will be rebuilt as part of the redevelopment process. This is historic as there are currently only Toronto Community Housing spaces in the community, and many agency programs were housed in residential and non-residential space as a way of offering support to agencies delivering services in the area. Unlike other communities, there are few alternatives in terms of renting commercial space.

Redevelopment plans provide for the replacement of the facilities scheduled for demolition, as indicated in the Community Facilities Strategy (2005). Community services and facilities are understood to be a vehicle for providing opportunities for casual interaction, participation in community events, and a place for community-building opportunities. The SDP identifies a relocation process for those agencies and organizations that will be impacted on a phase-by-phase basis and for organizations that may wish to locate to Regent Park in the future. In that process, Toronto Community Housing retains its rights as a landlord to make all final decisions regarding space, but will be guided by the principles and goals of the SDP.

Toronto Community Housing is committed to working with existing agencies to find replacement space. The process highlighted how many formal and informal groups and programs rely on space provided by Toronto Community Housing for their operations and services. This has also highlighted the need for funding to support the replacement and improvement of existing spaces and community facilities because the Regent Park Revitalization financial plan has not been designed to support the building of this social infrastructure. The intensive capital requirement needed to replace all 2,083 rent-geared-to-income, additional affordable rental housing, and the district energy system will not carry the cost of additional community facilities, such as additional daycares, parks, and other amenities. This was acknowledged in the approval of the July 2005 report to Toronto City Council, "Regent Park Revitalization – Financial Strategy".

3. Employment Services Plan

In Regent Park many residents work, but employment is typically in low-paying, precarious jobs, and receipt of social assistance and other income supports in this community is comparatively high. Employment services represent an essential part of that investment and, as such, are a central feature of the Social Development Plan. Since the fall of 2006 Toronto Community Housing has been working closely with the City of Toronto's Division of Social Services to provide employment support services in Regent Park. In particular, local residents have been hired to work on the Phase 1 demolition and the construction project.

This work is the pre-cursor to the implementation of a comprehensive Employment Services Plan, which is based on the notion of creating an "Employment Hub". The recommendations in the SDP support this initiative and a steering committee led by the City of Toronto, Division of Social Services, is being developed and will include representatives from local social service providers. Toronto Community Housing will continue to play a role and provide necessary support to facilitate employment opportunities for Regent Park residents. Prior to the employment services support provided by the City, the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI) and the Downtown East Community Development Collective (DECDC), a network of local community agencies, assisted Toronto Community Housing and supported the local hiring process for the Phase 1 demolition in 2005/06.

4. Change Management Framework

While not specifically identified in the Change Management Framework section of the SDP, Toronto Community Housing remains a large institutional actor throughout the process given the role that Toronto Community Housing will play as the redevelopment is implemented. Over time as the community transitions from an exclusively low-income area into a mixed income neighbourhood Toronto Community Housing role will likely decrease as the area evolves into a typical neighbourhood. Ultimately, approximately 3,300 non-Toronto Community Housing owned units will reside at Regent Park. Currently, Toronto Community Housing owns all of the residential units within the boundaries of Regent. This will have an impact as more and different interests populate the neighbourhood. The purpose of the SDP is to put in place new mechanisms for dealing with conflict and promoting community-building processes.

Learnings from the Process:

The SDP process has taken longer than anticipated and a substantial amount of commitment from all of the stakeholders to complete the final document. Initiated in 2004, the development of a "community plan" has taken until late in 2007 to be completed. This has meant that there was no plan in place at the start of construction and has contributed to the higher than anticipated cost for the development of the plan. The process created opportunities for robust discussions and ultimately collaborative practices and processes have been developed that will facilitate communication. Building an understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders challenged all participants to consider ways in which each could contribute to the social revitalization process. As a result of this, both the process and content underwent several revisions in order to address issues where stakeholder roles required further clarification. The benefit of engaging all parties with a participatory approach has resulted in commitments on the part of the stakeholders to work with the recommendations identified in the SDP. The original

concept of developing a community plan that would identify three or four key community strategies, which would be adopted by all agencies and organizations in Regent Park, evolved during the development of the SDP. The final SDP document, as summarized in the attached Executive Summary, describes a community strategy based on common priorities for all participating organizations. Its success, as envisioned, is largely dependent on the extent of participation in the process and resources to support the initiatives.

The SDP document will serve as a tool for advancing discussions with other levels of government and private funding bodies. It will also provide a framework on which others can understand how the social development process has been envisioned, which may function as a means to attract additional resources and experience to facilitate improvements to service provision and the planning process as the Revitalization process is implemented.

Further analysis and debriefing with the various participants in the process would be useful to determine how the SDP process could be transferable to other large scale redevelopments. Substantial experience and research has been generated by this process but prudent review of the process and outcomes, and distillation of the key elements, will help to understand its applicability to other redevelopment projects.

CONSULTATION PROCESS:

Extensive community consultations have occurred throughout the SDP process, including a distribution of the final document and recommendations.

CONCLUSION:

The Regent Park Social Development Plan is the first neighbourhood-based plan of its kind to occur in Toronto. The purpose of the SDP is to set out a long-term plan that identifies mechanisms that promote social cohesion and enhance and improve opportunities for community development. Following a substantial consultation process, which commenced in 2004, the SDP identifies seventy-five recommendations wherein a variety of stakeholders have a role and responsibility in the implementation and monitoring process. Toronto Community Housing continues to be an important stakeholder that will play an ongoing role in the social development process, but has worked with stakeholders to support and strengthen the idea of broadening the opportunities for multiple sectors that will contribute towards building a healthy revitalized and redeveloped neighbourhood in Regent Park.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS:

There is a full communications plan developed for the implementation of the Regent Park Revitalization Initiative. Toronto Community Housing staff has also been working with City staff on public information in relation to the Social Development Process.

Derek Ballantyne
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment:	1:	Regent Park Revitalization: Social Development Plan, Executive Summary
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