



**STAFF REPORT  
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020**

<b>Date:</b>	February 8, 2012
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

**SUMMARY**

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This report requests Council approval for the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 (TSNS 2020), which has been designed to guide the City's neighbourhood-focused work over the current and next term of Council.

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 builds on learnings from the wide range of place-based initiatives that the City has undertaken since 2004, the 2005 Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and feedback from participants in the City's place-based work. TSNS 2020 introduces a number of new elements to the City's place-based work: clarified goals and objectives; new designation terminology to ensure neighbourhoods targeted for place-based work are not stigmatized; a monitoring and evaluation process that includes an equity-based outcome framework, new designation criteria, and regular reporting; and the development of a new plan to ensure broader regional, provincial and national policies, programs and funding priorities are informed by a neighbourhoods perspective.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance & Administration recommends that:**

- 1) City Council adopt the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020, comprised of the following eight key elements:
  - a. Goals and Objectives: The goal of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 is to advance equitable outcomes for all neighbourhoods. The Strategy has two objectives:

- i. to ensure every Toronto neighbourhood has the public, private and community infrastructure required for equitable resident opportunities; and
  - ii. to ensure broader municipal, regional, provincial and national policies, programs and funding priorities are informed by a neighbourhoods perspective.
- b. Neighbourhood Improvement Areas: Neighbourhoods requiring targeted investment will be designated using the City's 140 social planning neighbourhoods and identified as "Neighbourhood Improvement Areas" (NIA). The current 13 priority investment neighbourhoods will be designated as the first Neighbourhood Improvement Areas;
- c. Targeted Investments: Investments will be targeted at NIAs to create the equitable opportunities for residents required to advance equitable outcomes for neighbourhoods;
- d. Continuous Service Improvement: City services to Toronto residents will be continuously improved in NIAs with inter-divisional collaboration on service planning and delivery;
- e. Networks and Service Partnerships: The City will support the development of neighbourhood-based networks and service partnerships in NIAs;
- f. Engagement: Local residents, businesses and community-based organizations and groups will be engaged in planning the social and economic development of NIAs;
- g. Monitoring and Evaluation: The City will:
  - i. Work in collaboration with United Way Toronto and a broad range of stakeholders to: develop an equity-based framework that identifies the outcomes the City will work to advance for all neighbourhoods; develop an evaluation process that considers progress made in advancing equitable neighbourhood outcomes and equitable resident opportunities using both quantitative and qualitative research methods; and establish new NIA designation criteria based on the outcome framework, the evaluation process, and other analytical tools, including Wellbeing Toronto and the most recent demographic information;
  - ii. Monitor the wellbeing of all 140 social planning neighbourhoods on an ongoing basis using the outcome framework, evaluation results, NIA designation criteria, and drawing on Wellbeing Toronto and other available sources of data; and
  - iii. Report regularly on the progress made against the Strategy's goal and objectives.

- h. Neighbourhood-Informed Policy and Program Development: Learnings from targeted efforts in NIAs will be used to inform both municipal and broader regional, provincial and national policies, programs and funding priorities;
- 2) City Council direct the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to report back on the outcome framework, evaluation process, designation criteria, monitoring process and reporting cycle for NIAs in 2012 and to seek authority to establish the next group of Neighbourhood Improvement Areas at that time;
- 3) City Council direct the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration:
  - a. Collaborate with United Way Toronto to develop and implement a plan for engaging a wide array of private, public and community funders in the development of NIAs, and for ensuring that the federal, provincial, and regional policies, programs and funding priorities that have an impact on the advancement of equitable neighbourhood outcomes and the provision of equitable resident opportunities are informed by a neighbourhoods perspective
  - b. Report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in 2012 on this plan; and
- 4) City Council direct the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration and the Project Director, Tower Renewal to work jointly to:
  - a. Adapt and document the Communities in Flight (CIF) model for the improvement of living conditions and quality of life in low-income high-rise apartment buildings;
  - b. Identify a pilot site and test the adapted CIF model there;
  - c. If the pilot is successful, use a public procurement process to establish a roster of property management companies and community service organizations with the expertise to implement the adapted model; and
  - d. Share learnings from the pilot project with United Way Toronto's Tower Neighbourhood Renewal Committee.

### **Financial Impact**

The adoption of this report will have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the 2012 Operating Budget.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 is an equity-focused strategy. Its goal is to advance equitable outcomes for all neighbourhoods and ensure equitable opportunities for all residents irrespective of where they live.

## DECISION HISTORY

The report *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy* was adopted by City Council at its meeting on October 26, 27, 28 and 31, 2005.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/council/cc051026/pof9rpt/cl006.pdf>

At its meeting on June 29, 2011, the Community Development and Recreation Committee, in response to a communication from Councillor Vincent Crisanti titled *Priority Neighbourhood Designation*, directed the Executive Director of Social Development, Finance and Administration to provide a report updating the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.CD5.9>

At its meeting on November 4, 2011, the Community Development and Recreation Committee directed staff to report back on opportunities to work with Communities in Flight in advancing their tower renewal model.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.CD8.3>

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City's neighbourhood-focused approach to creating equitable opportunities for residents and advancing neighbourhood outcomes has been in place since 2004, and is motivated by the recognition that historical under-investments have created a poor fit between the social and economic infrastructure and resident needs in a number of neighbourhoods. These under-investments have created inequitable access to services and opportunities for residents and have contributed to inequitable outcomes, including low educational attainment, high levels of unemployment, and gang activity in these neighbourhoods.

There is no question that the City's place-based work has been extremely successful in building the neighbourhood infrastructure required to provide equitable opportunities for residents and advance equitable outcomes for neighbourhoods. It has launched over 1,200 initiatives, reached more than 50,000 youth and 38,000 other residents, and left a legacy of much needed community facilities and strong partnerships that will continue to benefit neighbourhood residents over time.

A wide range of organizations and institutions have recognized the successes achieved under the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and are optimistic about the future possibilities for a place-based approach. The private sector has directly contributed to the Strategy's success with support and engagement at the neighbourhood level, and has endorsed the approach at the policy level via the Toronto Board of Trade (TBOT). In its 2010 document *Lifting All Boats: Promoting Social Cohesion and Economic Inclusion*, TBOT identified social inclusion as an essential prerequisite for prosperity and supported the extension of neighbourhood-focused work:

*Many programs, such as the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, are already in place to improve disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In most instances,*

*what is needed is to strengthen, rather than re-invent, these programs and to deploy similar programs in disadvantaged neighbourhoods outside the city of Toronto.*

More recently, the Strategy's effectiveness in addressing complex social issues was acknowledged by the Toronto Police Service. In his presentation to the Budget Committee on the Toronto Police Services 2011 operating budget submission, Chief William Blair noted:

*In virtually every measure of crime and victimization in the city of Toronto, we have seen significant reductions. It can also be demonstrated that those reductions occurred for a wide variety of reasons. The Police played a significant role in that, but we are not alone in that.*

*There have been other investments made in our priority neighbourhoods, in communities where most of that victimization is taking place. We have seen a tremendous effort among community service organizations in neighbourhoods, within the business community, among those who work with young people in our schools, in families and among young people themselves. I think all of us working together have made a difference and continue to make a difference.*

Other civic leaders are also convinced that the Strategy is an important one. In his submission to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in July 2011, John Tory, Chair of the multi-stakeholder Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance (formerly Toronto City Summit Alliance) said:

*In my view the Priority Neighbourhood programs may well offer the best rate of return of almost any dollars spent...if there is to be any review of the Priority Neighbourhood initiatives do it clearly and unequivocally with a view to maintain and make more effective the current programs and to continue to treat this as a high priority of the Toronto government.*

One of the strongest supporters of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy is United Way Toronto (UWT), the city's largest community funder and the City's closest collaborator on its neighbourhoods work. UWT established neighbourhoods as a strategic priority in 2004, and has coordinated its efforts with those of the City to maximize the impact that the work of both partners has on strengthening neighbourhoods.

UWT has jointly authored a report titled *Strong Neighbourhoods: Responding to a Call to Action* with the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division (SDFA). The report, which is attached as Appendix B, describes work undertaken to strengthen neighbourhood infrastructure, build strong social programs, and ensure that neighbourhoods are inclusive, welcoming, cohesive and participatory. The report also details the methodology used to identify priority neighbourhoods for investment, and outlines the challenges inherent in evaluating the impact of place-based work on these

neighbourhoods – challenges that must be addressed as both the City and UWT's efforts to strengthen neighbourhoods move forward.

Over the past year, staff have worked with Councillors, residents, businesses, other governments and community partners to assess the strengths of the Strategy that have earned it the support of diverse stakeholders, and to identify areas that could be improved to increase the Strategy's impact. The full results of this assessment are attached to this report as Appendix A. The assessment process identified five key elements that have been central to the success of this work:

1. Local residents, businesses and community-based organizations and groups have been engaged at the centre of all planning for the social and economic development of neighbourhoods. Resident-centred and engaged planning is the most effective, efficient and equitable way to ensure a fit between resident needs and the public, private and community infrastructure of the neighbourhood.
2. The City has supported the development of the neighbourhood-based networks and service partnerships required for ongoing neighbourhood planning, development and delivery. These networks are one of the key supports for resident-focused planning, and they have been typically minimal or absent in neighbourhoods where investment has historically been low.
3. Targeted investments to designated neighbourhoods have effectively enhanced community facilities and created new social and economic opportunities for residents in areas of historical under-investment.
4. Continuous service improvement has been enabled through inter-divisional collaboration on service planning and delivery. As a result of these improvements, City services are now better attuned to resident needs, and better connected to the community and private infrastructure in neighbourhoods.
5. Ongoing monitoring of neighbourhood wellbeing must inform all neighbourhood-focused planning.

Those engaged with the City's place-based work have also described a number of areas where the City's approach would benefit from additional attention to strengthen its impact:

1. Goals and objectives for the City's place-based work should be clarified.
2. Designating a neighbourhood as a "priority neighbourhood" may stigmatize the neighbourhood and its residents, even when the designation brings much needed attention to neighbourhood challenges and results in new resources to address these challenges. A different terminology might allow the City to avoid any possible stigmatization and better communicate that historical under-investment is one of the main reasons the neighbourhood has been identified for a place-based approach.

3. Refined criteria should be established and used to designate neighbourhoods for place-based work and targeted investment.
4. In addition to monitoring neighbourhood wellbeing, the City needs to be able to evaluate the progress it has made in achieving equitable opportunities for residents and advancing equitable outcomes for neighbourhoods.
5. A plan is required to ensure that the broader policies and programs that affect neighbourhoods, such as income support programs and affordable housing policies, are informed by place-based work.

This feedback has been central to the development of TSNS 2020 which is described below.

## **COMMENTS**

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 described in this report builds on the identified strengths of the City's place-based work, and introduces new features that address areas identified for improvement. The Strategy includes eight key elements, four of which are already central to the City's place-based work: Engagement, Networks and Service Partnerships, Targeted Investments, and Continuous Service Improvement. Additional elements have been developed based on learnings from place-based work and feedback from process participants: Goals and Objectives, Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Neighbourhood-Informed Policy and Program Development.

TSNS 2020 has been designed to guide the City's place-based work through the current and next term of Council. After two Council terms of implementation, or eight years, TSNS 2020 will undergo a full review and a renewed strategy will be developed based on learnings and feedback accumulated over the implementation period.

## **TSNS Goals and Objectives**

The City's place-based work began in 2004, a time of heightened community concern about shooting deaths and gang involvement, widening income disparities and inequitable access to services in some neighbourhoods. The urgency of the situation required immediate action, and effort was quickly focused on building community safety through the development of social and economic opportunities for young people.

Since that time, significant progress has been made in the area of community safety, a result of programs like Prevention Intervention Toronto, which works with at-risk and gang-involved youth, the Community Crisis Response Program, which helps communities mobilize a coordinated response to violent incidents, and the efforts of Toronto Police Services. With this progress, the City's place-based work has gradually shifted to focus on the development of the broader opportunities required to ensure that advances in community safety at the neighbourhood level are maintained, and equitable opportunities are in place for all residents.

Consistent with this evolving focus, TSNS 2020's goal is to advance equitable outcomes for all neighbourhoods, a goal fully supported by participants in the assessment of the City's place-based work. This goal will be pursued with two distinct objectives. The first objective of the Strategy is to ensure every Toronto neighbourhood has the public, private and community infrastructure required for equitable resident opportunities. This objective will be achieved through coordinated work at the neighbourhood level.

The second objective of TSNS 2020 is to inform the broader municipal, regional, provincial and national policies, programs and funding priorities required to ensure equitable opportunities for residents and advance equitable outcomes for neighbourhoods.

Both outcomes and opportunities are affected not only by the neighbourhood public, private and community infrastructure, but also by the infrastructure that lies beyond neighbourhood boundaries. This broader infrastructure includes city-wide services such as water and policing; regional infrastructure such as transit; provincial infrastructure such health care and social assistance; and national infrastructure such as immigration policy and pension programs. As a result, equitable outcomes and opportunities cannot be advanced by working exclusively at the neighbourhood level.

TSNS's second objective will be advanced with the implementation of a plan to ensure that policies, programs and funding priorities are informed by a neighbourhoods perspective. The development of this plan is described below.

## **Neighbourhood Improvement Areas**

The designation "priority neighbourhood for investment" – or more simply "priority neighbourhood" – has been in common usage since the City adopted a place-based approach in 2004. The term has served well in many ways by reflecting the under-investment that has affected these neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, there has been a concern that the term sometimes has a stigmatizing effect, making potential business investors or homebuyers apprehensive about locating there.

TSNS 2020 will use the designation "Neighbourhood Improvement Area" (NIA) to more precisely reflect the work underway in targeted neighbourhoods and emphasize its positive impacts. This designation parallels and complements the designation of "Community Improvement Areas" under the Planning Act, and the designation of "Business Improvement Areas" by the City.

The existing 13 priority neighbourhood areas will be designated as the first Neighbourhood Improvement Areas under TSNS 2020. As a result, several of the first 13 NIAs will be larger than any of the City's 140 social planning neighbourhoods, and in the case of Jane-Finch, will contain four social planning neighbourhoods.

The next group of NIAs will be designated using the boundaries of the City's 140 social planning neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were developed to help government and community agencies with their local planning by providing socio-economic data at a



meaningful geographic level, and boundaries were identified through an extensive process of consultation with City divisions and community agencies. Using these neighbourhood boundaries to designate NIAs will support a focus on complete neighbourhoods and provide a consistent basis for comparison over time, a consistency that is essential if the City's place-based work is to be evaluated.

### **Targeted Investments**

Targeted investments have been an effective tool for enhancing community facilities and creating new social and economic opportunities for residents in prioritized neighbourhoods, and will continue to be a key element of TSNS 2020. In combination with support for networks and service partnerships, considerable investments have been leveraged for neighbourhoods, including: ProTech Media Centres, established in four neighbourhoods with the support of Microsoft Canada to help young people develop their multi-media and high-tech skills; 26 youth-focused community infrastructure projects such as playgrounds, youth program spaces and recreation facilities; and 8 community multi-service hubs in collaboration with United Way Toronto and government partners.

### **Continuous Service Improvement**

Inter-divisional collaboration on service planning and delivery was one of the very first elements developed as a part of the City's place-based approach. As a result of this coordination, City services are now better attuned to resident needs and better coordinated with those of other service providers.

Neighbourhood Action Teams of City staff and Neighbourhood Action Partnerships that include a broader range of stakeholders are the mechanisms that have been used to support service collaboration and continuous service improvement. These two mechanisms will be an important element of TSNS 2020; however, consistent with feedback from participants in the City's place-based work, these coordinating bodies will be expanded to engage additional partners and residents where appropriate.

Under TSNS 2020, Neighbourhood Action Teams and Partnerships will also align local priorities in order to take advantage of broader City strategies where appropriate. These strategies, including the new Workforce Development Strategy and Economic Development Strategy (both of which will be before the Economic Development Committee at its February meeting), are not in themselves place-based, but will have a significant impact on the social, economic and physical infrastructure of neighbourhoods and on the achievement of equitable opportunities for residents.

### **Networks and Service Partnerships**

The City's place-based work has included support for the development of neighbourhood-based networks and service partnerships – linkages required to build a strong system of services that is responsive to local needs. These networks have supported the development and improvement of neighbourhood services in the short term, and are an important vehicle for supporting neighbourhood planning capacity in the longer term.

Participants in the assessment of the City's place-based work identified support for networks and partnerships as critical to the success of TSNS 2020. As a result, TSNS 2020 will continue to prioritize support for these kinds of linkages in targeted neighbourhoods.

## **Engagement**

The City's willingness and ability to engage local residents, businesses and community-based organizations and groups in planning for the social and economic development of neighbourhoods is perhaps the most important element of TSNS 2020. Engagement with a variety of stakeholders supports the development of innovative solutions that are well understood, widely supported, and well tuned to resident needs and local neighbourhood conditions.

Participants in the assessment of the City's place-based work suggested a number of ways that engagement could be strengthened as a part of TSNS 2020, including by engaging a greater number of residents in neighbourhood planning. As a part of TSNS 2020's implementation, the City will continue to work closely with United Way Toronto's Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) to advance this goal. ANC is an initiative that aims to establish resident-led neighbourhood associations in all of the current 13 priority neighbourhood areas. ANC-supported resident associations are an important tool for the development of local decision-making, planning and problem solving abilities, and they provide residents with an opportunity to play a central role in shaping their neighbourhood.

In addition to expanded resident engagement, participants in the City's place-based work also recommended the active participation of major institutional stakeholders such as Toronto Community Housing, the Toronto Police Service and school boards in all designated neighbourhoods. They also identified additional opportunities to engage less traditional partners, such as the private sector, labour unions and community funders in neighbourhood service planning.

Residents, local businesses, community organizations and groups, governments and public institutions, community funders, and labour unions all have a role in helping to plan the social and economic development of neighbourhoods. To ensure their participation, TSNS 2020 will place a renewed emphasis on expanding resident participation and partner engagement in all neighbourhood planning.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Because of the significant pressure to affect change at the neighbourhood level in areas that were experiencing gun and gang violence in 2004, work in designated neighbourhoods was launched before tools for monitoring neighbourhood wellbeing could be put in place and measureable outcomes established.

Since that time, a number of important developments have taken place that will allow the City to monitor the wellbeing of neighbourhoods, establish outcomes to be advanced for all neighbourhoods, and evaluate its progress in this area. The most important of these

developments is Wellbeing Toronto, an interactive web mapping application that provides a wide range of data at the neighbourhood level to support the ongoing monitoring of neighbourhood wellbeing. Launched in 2011, this City application allows users to combine and compare social and economic data, population characteristics and information about service infrastructure for all 140 of the City's social planning neighbourhoods.

Beginning in 2012, Wellbeing Toronto will be enhanced to include information about the functioning of the community service system in neighbourhoods, information that will be critical to the City's place-based work. During 2011, the Centre for Research in Inner City Health (CRICH) engaged more than 280 residents, community agencies representatives and funders and asked them to identify the things that the City should pay attention to so that it knows whether the community service system is working well in neighbourhoods. The 51 unique items identified and prioritized by participants will be used as the basis for indicator development, and new indicators will be introduced into Wellbeing Toronto as they are tested. The complete CRICH report on this research project, titled *Community Service System in Toronto Neighbourhoods: What Should the City Pay Attention To?*, is attached to this report as Appendix C.

Wellbeing Toronto will be one of the primary sources of data considered as a part of a new partnership among the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, United Way Toronto and the Centre for Research on Inner City Health. This partnership, titled *Urban HEART*, was formed to adapt a World Health Organization model designed to reduce inequities across neighbourhoods in cities, and to identify the outcomes that can be advanced at the neighbourhood level and the indicators that are available to measure progress. This initiative will inform the development of TSNS 2020's equity-based outcome framework for neighbourhoods and its evaluation process. As a part of this work, the City will also connect with a wide range of stakeholders including residents, the private sector, other governments, community organizations and groups, community funders and Councillors to define the most appropriate criteria for the designation of the next group of NIAs.

Once the outcomes framework, evaluation process and NIA designation criteria have been established, SDFR will report back to Community Development and Recreation on the results of this work and on the next group of NIAs. This report back will also include a recommended reporting cycle for TSNS, which will include updates on neighbourhood wellbeing and on progress made in advancing equitable outcomes for all neighbourhoods.

### **Neighbourhood-Informed Policy and Program Development**

To create equitable outcomes for all Toronto neighbourhoods, TSNS 2020 will need to affect policies, programs and funding priorities that operate at a scale that is larger than the neighbourhood. City programs such as transit, childcare, housing, and public health all play an important role in creating equitable opportunities for residents and advancing equitable outcomes for neighbourhoods, but must be planned in the broader city and regional context to be effective.

Policies and programs are most effective when they are developed, tested and implemented using a number of different perspectives or lenses. These lenses may focus on specific populations (such as youth or recent immigrants), specific activities (such as flu prevention), or specific areas (such as the inner suburbs). One of the goals of TSNS 2020 is to ensure that a neighbourhood lens is used to inform the development of policies, programs and funding priorities that operate beyond the scale of the neighbourhood.

To date, the City has worked to embed a neighbourhoods perspective in its policy and program planning by coordinating those divisions directly involved in place-based work. TSNS 2020 will continue this approach, and will extend the use of a neighbourhood lens to the City's capital planning process. New tools for internal capital infrastructure planning will be linked to Wellbeing Toronto so City staff can coordinate and maximize capital investments in a way that provides equitable opportunities for residents and advances equitable outcomes for neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhoods and their residents are also impacted by the policies, programs and funding priorities established at the regional, provincial and federal level, and ensuring that these broader contributors to equitable outcomes are informed by a neighbourhoods perspective has been one of the most challenging elements of the City's place-based work. United Way Toronto has been a key supporter of the City's efforts in this area, and has played a critical role in convincing a range of funders to apply a neighbourhood perspective to their own efforts.

This report recommends that Social Development, Finance and Administration continue to collaborate with United Way Toronto to develop and implement a plan for engaging a wide array of private, public and community funders in the development of NIAs, and informing federal, provincial, and regional policies, programs and funding priorities that provide equitable opportunities for residents and advance equitable neighbourhood outcomes. Staff will report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in 2012 on this plan.

### **Tower Renewal and Vertical Poverty**

Over the current and next term of Council, the City will work to strengthen its neighbourhoods not only with TSNS 2020, but also with other place-based approaches such as Tower Renewal, a program designed to drive broad environmental, social, economic, and cultural change by improving Toronto's concrete apartment towers and the neighbourhoods that surround them.

The City's Tower Renewal Program works closely with United Way Toronto's Tower Neighbourhood Renewal (TNR) initiative, an extension of its Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. UWT developed TNR to address the findings of its January 2011 report titled *Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty*, which examines the links between concentrated poverty in neighbourhoods and privately owned, high-rise rental buildings. The report found that not only have inner-suburban neighbourhoods fallen behind others in terms of incomes, but within inner suburban neighbourhoods poverty is increasingly concentrated in high-rise apartment buildings. Living conditions in these

buildings are often quite poor, with malfunctioning elevators, pest infestations, a lack of amenities, and vandalism among the significant issues faced by low-income tenants.

Both the City's Tower Renewal program and UWT's Tower Neighbourhood Renewal initiative recognize that high-rise apartment buildings are an important city asset that allows lower income residents to secure housing at more modest rents than do other forms of housing. Efforts to improve the conditions of these towers and the surrounding areas can have a significant impact on the quality of life for a large number of residents, and can also help to advance equitable outcomes for neighbourhoods.

Tower Renewal has recently identified an additional opportunity to support its work, the work of UWT's Tower Neighbourhood Renewal, and to advance the goals and objectives of TSNS 2020 by working with the non-profit organization Communities in Flight (CIF).

At its November meeting, the Community Development and Recreation Committee directed staff to explore the ways in which the City could work with Communities in Flight (CIF) to enhance the City's place-based work. CIF works with property owners, community service providers and Greenwin Property Management to improve the physical condition and community amenities of high-rise apartment buildings in low-income areas. Working with the City and other partners, the organization contributed to a number of positive changes in the San Romanoway and Chalkfarm communities, including reduced vacancy rates, reduced vandalism and crime, and increased community cohesiveness and safety.

The CIF model is based on the premise that good quality housing attracts tenants who want to stay, and who pay their rent on time and in full. Consequently, apartment building owners who maintain their properties to an acceptable standard and provide community amenities that improve the quality of their tenants' lives experience lower vacancy rates, fewer tenant turn-overs, and realize a greater profit than do owners of poorly maintained properties. In its pilot sites, CIF has been able to demonstrate that this premise is true even when rents are modest and tenants have lower incomes.

The CIF model provides an additional tool that supports TSNS 2020, the City and UWT's tower renewal efforts, and the forthcoming Economic Development Strategy. In addition, by adapting the model so that building residents are trained and employed in property management and other areas, this tool may also create economic opportunities in neighbourhoods.

This report recommends that Social Development, Finance and Administration and Tower Renewal work with CIF to document its model, including key success factors and criteria for site selection, and adapt the model so that it creates economic opportunities in neighbourhoods by training and employing residents in property management and other areas. Once the model has been adapted and documented, the established site selection criteria will be used to identify a pilot site for testing. Additional resources required to support the model's successful implementation, such as the Multi-Residential Apartment Building Audit and Enforcement Program, Community Crisis Response, Community

Partnership and Investment Program, other City programs, and investments from other partners, will also be identified and coordinated to ensure equitable resident opportunities at the pilot site and to advance equitable outcomes for the surrounding neighbourhood.

If the pilot is successful, a procurement process such as Request for Expression of Interest will be issued to establish a roster of property management companies and community service providers with the expertise to implement the adapted CIF model in selected sites.

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## **SIGNATURE**

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A: Consultation Report – Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy
- Appendix B: *Strong Neighbourhoods: Responding to a Call to Action*
- Appendix C: *Community Service System in Toronto Neighbourhoods: What Should the City Pay Attention To?*