

Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan

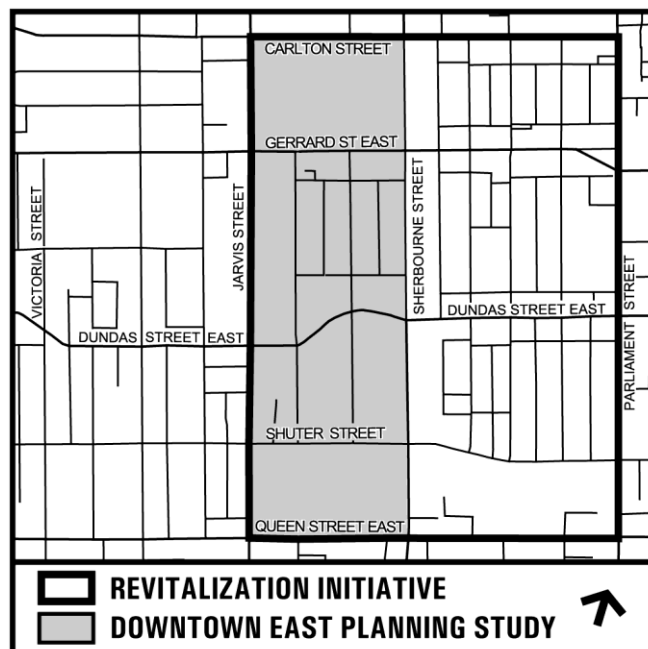
Date:	July 30, 2014
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District
Wards:	Wards 27 and 28, Toronto Centre-Rosedale
Reference Number:	AFS# 20178

SUMMARY

On December 20, 2012, City Council adopted the Downtown East (DTE) Revitalization Initiatives - Status Report that provided a status update on the Downtown East Revitalization Initiatives within the area bounded by Jarvis Street, Sherbourne Street, Queen Street East, and Carlton Street.

This follow up report outlines the Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan based on community consultation and City staff engagement.

The Action Plan includes 22 actions across 6 revitalizations themes. The purpose of the DTE Action Plan is to guide local reinvestment and redevelopment while simultaneously strengthening social infrastructure.



This approach will build on existing community services and infrastructure development actions of City divisions and community partners already underway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director of Social Development, Finance and Administration and the Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District recommend that:

1. City Council adopt the Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan as described in Appendix 1.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from the adoption of the recommendation included in this report beyond what has been included in the 2014 Approved Operating and Capital Budgets for the City. Should key aspects of project or program initiatives required to support the DTE Revitalization Action Plan not be funded within existing divisional budgets, individual City divisions will provide separate reports to Council at a later date on the financial implications for resourcing those initiatives

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

DECISION HISTORY

On July 6, 2010, City Council directed staff to conduct a full local area review for the lands designated in the Official Plan as Mixed Use and Neighbourhood adjacent to Dundas Street East between George Street and Sherbourne Street, and on Sherbourne Street between Dundas Street East and Shuter Street.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2010.TE35.96>

On November 29, 2011, City Council provided a number of directions with respect to a planning study and a revitalization strategy for the Downtown East area, including, expanding the boundaries of the study, forming an interdivisional working group and a George Street Working Group as part of continued consultations, and reporting back on a Heritage Conservation District Study, and various recommendations to implement a revitalization strategy for the area.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.TE11.43>

On October 2, 2012, Council directed staff to initiate the Heritage Conservation District (HCD) study of the Garden District, as a result of the application of the prioritization criteria for HCD study areas.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.PG17.12>

On December 20, 2012, City Council approved the Downtown East Revitalization Initiatives Status Report. This report provided a summary of staff actions taken to date to advance the revitalization of the Downtown East, and outlined the framework to guide revitalization initiatives in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-53970.pdf>

On July 16, 2013, City Council unanimously approved the Update and Next Steps of Proposed Redevelopment of Seaton House and Revitalization of George Street that approved in principle the redevelopment of Seaton House. This report directed staff to develop detailed plans for new facilities in the area to include an emergency shelter, a long-term care home and a service hub.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX33.17>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City Planning Division initiated a planning study for the Downtown East in October 2011. The study's initial community consultation identified a number of issues and challenges in the area that extended beyond the scope of a conventional land use and development study. As a result, an interdivisional Project Management Team (PMT), led by Social Development Finance and Administration and City Planning, was established in 2012 to apply a broader scope across a larger geography to address the issues. The PMT has developed the Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan (Appendix 1) based on community consultation and City staff engagement. The purpose of the DTE Action Plan is to guide reinvestment and redevelopment appropriately given the complexity of the surrounding communities and the vulnerability of a large number of local individuals.

On July 16, 2013, City Council approved in principle the redevelopment of Seaton House, now referred to as the George Street Revitalization (GSR) project. The project will be a major catalyst for redevelopment in the DTE area. City staff are undertaking the required due diligence and will report back with more detailed plans in 2015. If Council approves the project, the City will break ground two or three years later on a facility to include a long-term care home, an emergency shelter, affordable housing, a service hub and possibly an assisted living residence to meet the complex needs of homeless, vulnerable and elderly individuals as well as the local community. Plans will respect the rich heritage of this historic street and kick-start the revitalization of the George Street neighbourhood. It is expected that this initiative will create a more welcoming, safe and vibrant neighbourhood for all.

Given the GSR's potential to transform the entire Downtown East, the actions undertaken as part of the Downtown East Revitalization will ensure that the area is prepared to leverage that change. The interdivisional approach to both the DTE Action Plan and the GSR project will ensure that both initiatives move forward in a manner that is coordinated, holistic and responsive to community needs. The GSR and the DTE Revitalization Action Plan are parallel and mutually complementary processes that will serve to strengthen the broader community.

COMMENTS

Community Context

The DTE has historically been a community of communities. It is home to property owners and renters, transient communities and families. It is also home to vulnerable individuals who have complex needs arising from mental illness, substance use issues, poverty, unemployment and/or homelessness, among other challenges. The mixed population in the DTE has proven to be challenging when developing a Revitalization Action Plan because many of the identified issues are systemic, and would benefit from on-going government and institutional intervention. It is also challenging to meet community needs when the needs change drastically from one community to the next within the same geographic area.

The DTE is also home to a number of community agencies offering a range of programs and services. The community services planning theme of the DTE Revitalization Action Plan has been integrated into the GSR service hub development. This theme will continue to consider opportunities to streamline service provision to ensure consistent, holistic and accessible services, and avoid duplication. It will also examine ways to address any further gaps identified.

Framework for the Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan

The Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan reflects a variety of City-led initiatives that are intended to improve the social and physical fabric of the DTE community in a manner that is realistic and achievable. The Action Plan represents the beginning of a cohesive effort to proactively plan for the future, and be better aligned to respond to opportunities as they present themselves.

The Action Plan includes 22 actions across six complementary revitalization themes.

1. Planning and Heritage

The focus of this theme is examining the current built form and policy framework in the Study Area including heritage conservation.

2. Community Safety

The focus of this theme is improving community safety and the perception of safety in the physical environment. Community Safety actions will assist in enhancing the livability of the area.

3. Economic Development

The focus of this theme is exploring and creating conditions for increased economic opportunity, addressing workforce development, social enterprise, employment opportunities, and business development. Community partners are engaged to create opportunities for grassroots-led community development initiatives that build on local identity and culture.

4. Parks and Public Realm

The focus of this theme is evaluating strategic directions for potential parks and public realm interventions, including parks improvements, streetscape improvements and the role parks can play as part of the larger revitalization.

5. Local Housing Strategy

The focus of this theme is addressing housing issues, including the availability, access to, and quality of affordable housing. The strategy includes a range of different housing options in the area, including social, co-op, private market housing, rooming houses and shelters. Local Housing Strategy actions ensure the continued presence of affordable housing in Downtown East for residents who rely on it.

6. Community Engagement

The theme of community engagement is central to the work of the DTE Revitalization Strategy. Community members are able to provide staff with nuanced feedback that helps to focus the scope of revitalization work.

These six themes provide a framework to identify areas for improvement and action in order to enhance local assets, safety and community cohesion. These themes were refined based on community feedback over the last two years. The DTE PMT hosted a consultation focussed specifically on the DTE Revitalization Action Plan. Community members also had the opportunity to discuss individual themes and actions via eight divisional consultations on the land use planning study, the heritage conservation district study, and parks and public realm planning. Staff will continue to look for opportunities to leverage public and private resources in the Downtown East.

Each action has a designated Action Lead and Key Milestones to support monitoring of deliverables. Of the 22 actions, 7 actions have been initiated and are currently underway. Two actions have been completed: City Planning Staff recently concluded the Study phase of the HCD and have received permission to continue with the development of an HCD Plan. City Planning Staff have also completed draft site and area specific Official Plan policies for the DTE which will be implemented upon completion of the HCD Plan.

Moving Forward

The development of the Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan is the culmination of two years of work of the DTE Project Management Team. As the DTE PMT continue to implement the Action Plan, this integrated approach to social and physical planning that will result in more cohesive initiatives that better meet community needs.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix 1: Downtown East Revitalization Action Plan