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**To:** **Community Development and Recreation Committee**

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c/o City Clerk, [clerk@toronto.ca](mailto:clerk@toronto.ca)

**Cc:** Chris Brillinger, Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

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Scott McKean, Manager, Community Development, [smckean2@toronto.ca](mailto:smckean2@toronto.ca)

Councillor Josh Colle, [councillor\\_colle@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_colle@toronto.ca)

**From:** Shelley Zuckerman, Executive Director

**Date:** Friday March 14, 2014

**Re:** Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020

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Dear Community Development and Recreation Committee Members,

We would like to commend the City for the outcome-driven framework currently proposed for the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. As an agency who has worked in a number of Priority Neighbourhoods (Lawrence Heights (Lotherton more specifically), Westminster-Branson, and Weston-Mount Dennis just to highlight a few), we have seen the difference targeted investment has been able to make to a community.

North York Community House (NYCH), through United Way's Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) funding, has coordinated ANC work in the Lotherton-Caledonia community (part of the priority neighbourhood Lawrence Heights). We have seen a great deal of impact from our work in the community. There are many new resident leaders who can speak to larger community needs and issues. There are new partnerships with local service providers who are bringing in much needed programs and services. There are also many residents who report that they no longer wish to move from this community because the community now offers services, programs, friendships and supports for themselves and their families. We believe that having the neighbourhood investment has really supported this community and made large impacts. While Lawrence Heights is not a named Neighbourhood Investment Area, we believe that it should be recognized for the Revitalization process and that the neighbourhoods of Neptune and Lotherton should remain included as part of Lawrence Heights. However, we also believe that the City should recognize the unique needs of Lotherton as it is not a Toronto Community Housing (TCH) community and is not in the direct geographic revitalization area.



**Recommendation: That Lawrence Heights be identified as a Revitalization community with the relevant and necessary supports.**

**Recommendation: That the communities of Lotherton Pathway and Neptune be included as the Lawrence Heights Revitalization area but recognized for their distinct and unique needs.**

We have learned a great deal by working in the community – particularly how the community has often “fallen through the gaps” for various measurement tools, criteria for eligibility, and boundaries. Many of the residents in this community are no longer ‘newcomers to Canada’ but still face many settlement challenges, such as language barriers and accessing mainstream services/networks. They often come with higher levels of education which score well on the social development indexes but do not reflect the underemployment that many face. Many of the families are struggling with 2 or 3 low-end jobs working 12+ hours a day. They are not considered “unemployed” or “low income on social assistance” but rather the “working poor”. These families are often not found in the collection of data – because of the points outlined above and because the measure for healthy food stores does not account for ‘affordable’ food stores and because many of these communities do not access mental health services and are often un-diagnosed. We also believe that marginalization should account for conditions of housing as many families are faced with serious issues of pests (whether bed bugs, mice, cockroaches) or other safety issues in their neighbourhood. This is not only the case for the Lotherton community but for other communities as well, such as Westminster-Branson. Therefore, we believe the outcome measures and indicators should not only be based on available data but what’s needed for an accurate measurement of inequities across neighbourhoods and the realities faced by residents in those communities.

**Recommendation: That the UrbanHEART measurement tool include “underemployment” as one of the indicators for the Economic Opportunities Domain, not just “unemployment”.**

**Recommendation: That the UrbanHEART measurement tool include housing measurements (i.e. housing conditions, affordability, safety) as one of the indicators for the Social Development Domain.**

**Recommendation: That the UrbanHEART measurement tool include within the Healthy Food Stores indicator, “affordability” and “accessibility” as a measure under the Physical Surroundings Domain.**

Since we began the work of ANC in Lotherton, we have brought in more than 20 new and on-going programs and services into the community. Moreover, we have been able to leverage small ANC resident grants (\$1000-\$5000) to bring in more than \$500,000 in other government and foundation dollars. We have seen significant change to the community. We have also seen significant changes as part of the Jane St. and Bathurst-Finch Community Hubs. We are encouraged by the commitment of partners in these neighbourhoods for joint partnership opportunities and investment. We are concerned that the work of the 7 ‘transition’ neighbourhoods will lose their momentum and also that other communities will not have

access to non-City funding sources, especially if the City's partnerships and alignment efforts influence many of the other key funding partners. We believe that there is much to be learned from the 7 'transition' communities and that they should be designated 'leader' or 'legacy' communities rather than 'transition' communities.

**Recommendation: That the City work with City divisions, agencies, and City partners to not only align and coordinate investments for the NIAs but encourage that their funding partners continue to provide funding opportunities to non-NIAs as well so that advancement continues in all neighbourhoods throughout Toronto.**

**Recommendation: That the 7 "transition" communities (i.e. the 7 priority neighbourhoods not recommended as NIA) be designated "legacy" communities and continue to be connected with City Community Development Officers (CDOs) so that leadership and learnings can continue to be shared across neighbourhoods.**

We believe that the Council should approve the 3 Recommendations put forth by the Social Development, Finance, and Administration with the additional recommendations named above.

Thanking you in advance for taking these recommendations into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Zuckerman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shelley Zuckerman  
Executive Director  
North York Community House