

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM9.26	ACTION			Ward: 13
--------	--------	--	--	----------

Reviewing North St. James Town for Potential Inclusion as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic and Community Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to determine the suitability for the North St. James Town neighbourhood, focusing on the neighbourhood east of Sherbourne Street, to be identified as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area when the next City-wide review to identify Neighbourhood Improvement Areas is complete and report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee in the fourth quarter of 2020 as part of this process.

Summary

Two major incidents in apartment buildings in St. James Town have created a significant push by local community organizations and service providers to have the City re-evaluate the neighbourhood for inclusion as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area when the City updates its Strong Neighbourhood Strategy 2020.

In 2014, City Council designated 31 neighbourhoods as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas as part of the Strong Neighbourhood Strategy 2020. As part of that work, staff scored 140 neighbourhoods across the City to create a Neighbourhood Equity Score as well as a benchmark to determine which neighbourhoods would be strengthened through the strategy. The 140 neighbourhoods were determined based on grouping Statistics Canada census tracts together.

As outlined in a 2014 staff report, neighbourhoods were scored out 100, with a lower score indicating "unnecessary, unfair and unjust differences faced by neighbourhood residents in five key areas: Economic Opportunities, Social Development, Healthy Lives, Participation in Decision-Making and Physical Surroundings."

The 31 neighbourhoods that had a score lower than the benchmark score of 42.89 subsequently

were approved as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

The North St. James Town neighbourhood - bounded by Bloor Street to the North, Jarvis Street to the west, Parliament Street to the east and Wellesley Street East to the south - ranked number 39 amongst the 140 neighbourhoods achieving a score of 47.55. This did not qualify the neighbourhood to be included as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area in 2014.

Since 2014, residents and community organizations in St. James Town have reported that their low-income neighbourhood continues to struggle. The St. James Town neighbourhood is one of the City's most densely populated neighbourhoods, with a high immigrant population, a lower proportion of post-secondary education and a high proportion of residents living in poverty.

Two major incidents in apartment buildings over the past year have left over 1,000 residents displaced from their homes, and many more St. James Town tenants feeling vulnerable. Dual incidents at 650 Parliament Street and 260 Wellesley Street East have stretched community resources thin, and have stressed the challenges with communicating with, and providing services to, an area with a high proportion of new immigrant families that collectively speak over a dozen languages.

It is notable that North St. James Town may have received a higher score in 2014 because the geographic boundary for the neighbourhood includes a more affluent portion west of Sherbourne Street. This area is not typically associated with "St. James Town" proper, and metrics such as education and income are significantly higher per the 2016 Census compared to the area east of Sherbourne Street. Its influence on how the City evaluated the neighbourhood likely had a positive effect on the North St. James Town neighbourhood's score, and may have resulted in the neighbourhood not being included as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area in 2014.

Including North St. James Town as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area would provide targeted investment in this diverse and resilient community to help improve the lives of residents.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM9.26