

Opportunities for Community Spaces in Central Etobicoke

Date: October 27, 2020

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

Wards: Ward 2, Etobicoke Centre

SUMMARY

On December 4, 2019, the Economic and Community Development Committee referred the Central Etobicoke Hub Planning report back to the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, in consultation with CreateTO, for further consideration on the feasibility of a hub in Central Etobicoke with additional information on the opportunity and roles of the City and other stakeholders in the development and sustainment of a community hub.

This report provides a summary of opportunities and constraints for the feasibility of a community hub and to secure better access to community services in Ward 2, Etobicoke Centre. This report outlines a short-term interim solution to improve community programming and services; explores medium-term opportunities for improved service delivery; and, provides a proposal for a possible long-term solution for centralized service delivery for Etobicoke Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to prioritize the consideration of community agency space or the accumulation of funds for the provision of community agency space in the negotiations for community benefits under the Planning Act when reviewing Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications in Ward 2 (Etobicoke Centre).
2. City Council request the Board of Directors of CreateTO to direct the Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO, in consultation with the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, and other service Divisions and Agencies, to consider 399

The West Mall as a potential future site for a Central Etobicoke Community Hub.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

A grant of \$10,000 was allocated to the Central Etobicoke Community Hub Working Group. The grant is being accommodated within the existing 2020 Approved Operating Budget for Social Development, Finance and Administration. The grant will help a local agency create a virtual hub that will help provide better integrated and coordinated service delivery to the community.

The acquisition and funding of community space in the Central Etobicoke Area, including potential capital funding of a community hub will be a required part of reports pertaining to the planning of those spaces.

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

DECISION HISTORY

On December 4, 2019, Economic and Community Development Committee referred the Central Etobicoke Hub Planning report back to the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, in consultation with CreateTO, for further consideration on the feasibility of a hub in Central Etobicoke. Staff were directed to report to the Economic and Community Development Committee in the second quarter of 2020 with additional information on the opportunity for new space and roles of the City and other stakeholders in the development and sustainment of a community hub.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC10.3>)

On September 5, 2019, the Economic and Community Development Committee requested that the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, in collaboration with Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO and the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, report to the Economic and Community Development Committee by the end of 2019, on the Investment Funding grant approved by City Council on June 7, 2016 [CD12.4], the Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative, and on opportunities to co-locate a multi-agency-led service provision model at City of Toronto owned redevelopment sites in Ward 2.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC7.13>)

In June 2016, City Council adopted item CD12.4 which authorized Social Development, Finance and Administration to provide an Investment Funding grant to a not-for-profit organization, to develop a community hub strategy and feasibility study to address the needs of youth and seniors in Central Etobicoke.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD12.4>)

In April 2016, the Community Development and Recreation Committee adopted item CD11.1 to report on the needs of youth and seniors in lower-income neighbourhoods that are not Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.1>)

COMMENTS

Central Etobicoke is an area bounded in the north to Highway 401, south to Burnhamthorpe Road (with some parts reaching Dundas Street), west to include Centennial Park and east just beyond Royal York Road. The area includes the following neighbourhoods: The West Mall, The East Mall, Markland Wood, Eatonville, Willowridge - Martingrove-Richview, Kingsview Village-the Westway, Mabelle, Scarlettwood Court, and Capri.

In November 2019, Social Development, Finance and Administration prepared a report that summarized three service provision reviews that overlapped in the geography of Central Etobicoke. The previous reviews from Social Planning Toronto, BluePrint ADE, and, Let's Get Together! found that:

- Central Etobicoke has fewer community services than most of the rest of Toronto, and a significant service space deficit to provide services.
- Despite the presence of neighbourhoods of affluence in Central Etobicoke, there are large numbers of seniors and youth, from a diversity of backgrounds and low-income residents living in Central Etobicoke.
- There are service agencies who are interested providing local community services in Central Etobicoke, including the potential establishment of a hub.
- Residents are advocating for services provided by the City of Toronto and the not-for-profit sector.

The report also identified the following service needs:

- Services for seniors
- Youth spaces, including safe spaces for youth
- Health and mental health services
- Affordable child care
- Parenting, and intergenerational programs
- Employment and training services and programs
- Community/Social spaces
- Recreation services (pool, gym, fitness)

Social Development, Finance and Administration supports the development of community spaces, including hubs, across the City that fulfill and respond to the needs of vulnerable residents and populations. These community spaces often provide service supports as well as accessible community meeting places for people to come together to build community. Community spaces, and community hubs, in particular, support shared resources and integrated services among multiple providers and can foster connections to residents and the communities being served.

Social Development, Finance and Administration, in consultation with CreateTO and Parks, Forestry and Recreation, analyzed the opportunity of developing a community hub for Central Etobicoke, and determined that the development of a new, large multi-purpose City-owned location for agency-led service provision is not feasible in the short term. However, this report details a short-term solution for service coordination and possible improvements, existing medium-term service planning initiatives and a long-term service planning possibility.

Short Term Initiative (1 Year)

In the process of assessing the space and program needs of the community, it was recognized that there are non-City owned locations, or locations operated under a board of management that can and do provide space for community serving agencies and others to provide local services. These include:

- Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board locations
- Libraries
- Commercial locations
- Outdoor spaces on apartment tower sites
- Places of Worship
- Toronto Community Housing locations

One of the identified barriers to agencies and groups programming these spaces, and to the general public, is knowing what services and spaces are available. Currently, many of the locations serving the population are not easily found when looking for them online or via other methods. Programs may be local to individuals, but not well advertised or inconsistently listed on websites, flyers and signs. Who to call and what spaces are available for booking, and the costs associated, may also be difficult for agencies and service providers to easily assess and access.

From 2018 to 2020, Social Development, Finance and Administration met with the Central Etobicoke Community Hub Working Group, a community group formed of over 20 residents and local service providers to organize and advocate for a community hub in Central Etobicoke. This group has incorporated as Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative, a not-for-profit agency, to continue to raise funds and advocate for services and programs. Current membership consists of representatives of school board trustees, the police, the library, local service providers, Humber College and places of worship, amongst others in the community.

An opportunity exists to have this group centralize information about the existing programs, and spaces that could be better used to support them. In discussion with the Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative, a proposal for a "virtual hub" has been formed. This "virtual hub" will leverage the existing assets of this group with some seed funding to create an online portal of spaces for service provision in Etobicoke, including new virtual and online service delivery options. The resulting online tool could help provide better integrated and coordinated service delivery in this community. When new spaces are secured in the future through either private or City developments, they can be added to the network of spaces available by the group managing the online tool.

A virtual hub has the potential to be an opportunity for this Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative to centralize efforts, avoid redundancy and find efficiency in program provision as well as build organizational capacity to create a sustainable framework for leveraging future development.

While the Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative is organized, incorporated and has a virtual presence online, resources were required to action the implementation of a virtual network of spaces. Social Development, Finance and Administration is supporting these efforts with a \$10,000 grant for the creation of the tool. It will be up to the group to procure the services needed to create the virtual platform and to keep it updated to the community's standards. This effort is intended to help the community improve service delivery to residents and improve agencies and service providers' ability to locate affordable locations for addressing a service deficit.

Medium Term Planning (3-7 Years)

Development of a new community recreation centre in Central Etobicoke is part of the Council approved Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. A strategic goal of the Facilities Master Plan is to prioritize co-location and shared space with other City services and community partners, and to seek partnerships that enhance public access to needed spaces, including, considering inclusion of small tenancy co-locations for local service provision by agencies in these future City-run facilities. This new community recreation facility is expected to be developed in the next 3 to 7 years and will contribute to improving City service provision in the Central Etobicoke area, including recreation services that were identified in the previous reports by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. However, there are considerations that may constrain colocation options, including and not limited to:

- Co-location must be possible within the proposed building envelope.
- Agencies must operate within the regular operating hours of the facility.
- Agency business must complement and not conflict with divisional operating priorities.
- The budget to develop for square footage for agency spaces that are not part of a Parks, Forestry and Recreation service model and funds to develop them will not come from the Parks, Forestry and Recreation capital planning budget. Agency spaces would need funding that is currently not secured or approved
- Any agency seeking a below market rent commitment in a City-owned facility would require eligibility and lease approval through Council.

Other City Divisions, such as City Planning, and Shelter, Support and Housing Administration and in partnership with Corporate Real Estate Management, also provide opportunities for the City to own or long-term lease space at below-market rents to community service providers, or permit spaces to the community.

New private multi-residential developments may contribute to the improvement of the service delivery in Central Etobicoke by providing ground-floor locations in areas that are appropriately zoned, or contributing funds for spaces in locations with zoning that supports those uses. Some current development applications, such as 300-304 The East Mall will contribute new Community Space Tenancy spaces. In the next few years,

there may be more opportunities for the City to acquire new spaces in developments to be owned or leased for community agency tenants as approved by Council.

Long term planning (7-9 Years)

CreateTO has confirmed that conceptual master planning of the existing Etobicoke Civic Centre at 399 The West Mall has been completed. Once the new Etobicoke Civic Centre, to be located in the Bloor-Kipling (Six-Points) district is built, the conceptual master planning work can be further refined. This conceptual master plan currently includes new residential development, but also retains a significant portion of the existing Council chambers and the three-storey office wing to the south, given its architectural and cultural heritage significance. This section of the building, which also contains meeting rooms, an art gallery, a day care and offices, is deemed to have heritage value and is intended to be adaptively re-used once redevelopment occurs. Further, it is recognized that part of the civic heritage of the building is as a public asset that provides services to Central Etobicoke.

In discussions with CreateTO, it has been identified that integration of a Central Etobicoke community hub could be contemplated as part of future redevelopment of the site. The following issues would also need to be addressed through this planning process:

- City Council will need to declare the site surplus to the operations of the City of Toronto.
- Although co-location is a possibility, other City divisions and agencies who have an identified service need in the area will have priority for location on the site.
- Site remediation and accessibility compliance will be necessary as retrofits, the costs of which have not been determined.
- The provision of community space is deemed a priority to improve service provision in Central Etobicoke at the time of the work on the redevelopment.
- The site has enough surplus space after City division priorities are met that Community Space Tenancy leases are deemed feasible at the time of the redevelopment.

The process to provide the space to the local agency providers and service agencies will follow the Community Space Tenancy Policy, or any future Council-approved policy, with leases approved by Council.

Next Steps

In August 2020, the Central Etobicoke Hub Initiative was awarded a grant of \$10,000 to create a "virtual hub" to improve service alignment in the Central Etobicoke area by Social Development, Finance and Administration. The Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative is currently working with local partners for stakeholder engagement to begin the development of the tool.

City Planning has advised that two new spaces for community agencies will be secured in Ward 2 in 2020, pending Council approval. Any below-market or Community Space Tenancies in City-owned buildings or spaces must also be approved by Council. City

Planning continues to recommend securing new community space where appropriate in new developments, or funds to secure new spaces in other locations in Central Etobicoke as appropriate. Any such procurement of space would be reported on separately to Council.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Facilities Master Plan has direction to explore the possibility of co-locating with community agencies to provide services when new community recreation centres are being planned, which would be dependent on approvals and capital funding of the community spaces. Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division is actively working on the creation of a new Community Recreation Facility to serve the Central Etobicoke area.

The recommendation of this report is to request that CreateTO commit to future engagement with divisions regarding service needs at 399 The West Mall should it be approved by Council to redevelop the site, including the creation of new community spaces.

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SIGNATURE

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