

## **Dawes Road Library and Community Hub Development**

**Date:** September 8, 2021

**To:** Economic and Community Development Committee

**From:** Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration and City Librarian, Toronto Public Library

**Wards:** Ward 19, Beaches East York

### **SUMMARY**

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The Dawes Road Library and Community Hub capital project was initiated as response to the locally identified need for more community spaces to address service gaps and to support a consolidation of service and program investments into the community. The Dawes Road branch is located within the Taylor Massey neighbourhood, one of 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas identified in the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 approved by City Council in 2014. As part of this Strategy, City Council also approved a one-time investment of \$12 million for the Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund to increase and enhance City assets for community use. \$1.2 million of the Partnership Opportunities Legacy funding was allocated to build a 2,000 square foot Community Hub in the Toronto Public Library's Dawes Road capital project.

This report provides an update to City Council direction in Item EX21.2 to Toronto Public Library and Social Development, Finance and Administration to advance the public consultation and design of the Dawes Road Library and Community Hub for an expanded hub space of approximately 5,500 square feet. The approved Dawes Road capital project includes funding for the acquisition of the current and adjacent sites and to rebuild a new and expanded 20,000 square foot library and the 2,000 square foot Community Hub on an upper floor. The Community Hub will be operated by Social Development, Finance and Administration.

Extensive community consultation conducted jointly with Toronto Public Library and Social Development, Finance and Administration for an expanded space began in May 2021 building on previous engagement, and is now 80 percent completed; schematic design will be complete by the fall of 2021. Indigenous place-making features, community space welcoming children, youth and families and community meeting space are among the priorities that can be better accommodated through an expanded Community Hub and library.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration and the City Librarian, Toronto Public Library recommend that:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The approved Dawes Road capital project has a total value of \$24.6 million and is comprised of: \$23.4 million for the acquisition of the site and the construction of a 20,000 square foot new library; and \$1.2 million of Partnership Opportunities Legacy funding for the 2,000 square foot Community Hub. The funding for the facility is included in the 2021-2030 Council Approved Toronto Public Library Capital Budget and Plan.

Increasing the Community Hub to 5,500 square feet, an increase of 3,500 square feet, would require additional funding of \$3.7 million, and this additional funding will be included in Toronto Public Library's 2022-2031 Capital Budget and Plan Submission. Resources are required to support the development, operations and engagement related to the Community Hub which will be reflected in the 2022 Operating Budget Submission for Social Development, Finance and Administration. This will include \$0.200 million to support the addition of one position for project management and resources for engagement. Additional staffing resources required to support hub operations once the facility is completed will be included in future budget outlooks.

Due to the recent increase in construction prices related to the global pandemic and additional estimated costs related to the green standard level of the project, Toronto Public Library is proposing to increase the capital project budget for the library by an additional \$3.3 million. When combined with the \$3.7 million additional cost for the Community Hub, this results in \$7.0 million in additional funding requirement for the Dawes Road capital project to be funded by a combination of debt and development charges. The additional \$7.0 million in new funding will be included in the 2022-2031 Capital Budget and Plan Submission for Toronto Public Library. The proposed total value of the project is \$31.6 million, of which \$5.3 million has been already spent prior to 2021.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has been advised of the financial impact associated with the project to be considered along with other priorities in the 2022 Budget process.

## **EQUITY IMPACT**

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The Taylor Massey neighbourhood has been identified as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area within the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. The Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy promotes equitable opportunities for residents and community groups through investments in social and economic development initiatives

along with investments to support healthy lives, civic engagement and the physical surroundings.

The Dawes Road Library and Community Hub development is a capital project and service investment that will positively impact the physical surroundings, health and well-being of the residents of the Taylor Massey neighbourhood. The project was initiated as response to the locally identified need for more community spaces to address service gaps and to support a consolidation of service and program investments into the community.

The new facility will have a positive equity impact on Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities, including newcomers, youth, 2SLGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and people who live on low incomes, by providing residents with increased access to City services, access to training and/or employment supports, and access to health services, social recreational and other community activities.

Furthermore, with Indigenous place-making features prioritized in the planning and design, the new facility will also create opportunities for civic engagement and community participation to foster a sense of identity and belonging, safety and security among diverse residents and community members.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At the special meeting on February 18, 2021, City Council requested Toronto Public Library to advance the public consultation and design of the Dawes Road Library and Community Hub based on a community hub of approximately 5,500 square feet, and City Council requested the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to work with the City Librarian and CreateTO to assist with the development of design options, service plans, operating and capital financing strategies for the Dawes Road Library and Community Hub at the Dawes Road Library for consideration in the 2022 Budget process and to report to the Economic and Community Development Committee no later than the third quarter of 2021 with an update.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX21.2>

On April 2, 2014, City Council adopted the report titled Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 - Recommended Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. The report designated 31 neighbourhoods as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and directed staff to work with partners in the implementation of the TSNS 2020 strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CD27.5>

As part of its 2014 Capital Budget process, Council approved a total of \$12 million in funding for infrastructure investments in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. A total of \$3 million was approved for each of 4 years beginning in 2015. Council also approved \$300,000 per year in Community Funding to support neighbourhoods that were transitioning from the Neighbourhood Improvement Area portfolio.

The Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund has been awarded to 37 capital projects and is now complete. Funded projects include playground upgrades, recreation and community spaces, community gardens, outdoor splash pads and water play areas and

the Dawes Road Community Hub. The approved capital projects have been identified by residents and community partners as prioritized neighbourhood actions that will result in an improved access to community spaces, resulting in more opportunities for community-led events, programs and initiatives.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getCouncilMinutesReport&meetingId=7848>

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Background**

Dawes Road Branch, located at 416 Dawes Road, is situated at the podium of a building with eight residential condominium units located above the branch. At 6,840 square feet, the branch has significant state of good repair issues and is substantially undersized and does not meet the library's service delivery model with regards to the provision of library services for this community. Furthermore, there are limited social and community services in the Taylor-Massey neighbourhood, hence the need for a community hub.

Toronto Public Library has worked closely with the local Councillor, Facilities and Real Estate, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Social Development, Finance and Administration, City Legal, City Planning and Financial Planning divisions for several years to develop a long-term and sustainable solution to address building, library service and social service issues, and the consensus from all parties was that the best strategy is to rebuild a new library at the current site housing a Community Hub, originally proposed at 2,000 square feet, operated by Social Development, Finance and Administration. The scope of the project includes funding for the City to acquire the condominium units above the library and the adjacent property located at 82 Chapman Avenue, and demolition of the current building. The current proposal is for a new facility to be constructed as a larger 20,000 square foot library and a 5,500 square foot Community Hub.

In 2018, a community consultation process was held to determine the service needs of residents in the Dawes Road area. Over 281 residents participated in a comprehensive online survey and in-person consultation. The top priorities community members highlighted include employment opportunities and services, anti-violence programs, anti-racism programs, educational and recreational programs, safe community engagement spaces, health services, and social activities. The input received by residents and community partners through this initial assessment will be included in the overall consultation and development of a Community Hub service plan.

### **Building Design**

On November 16, 2020, the Toronto Public Library Board approved the selection of Perkins + Will Canada Inc., working with Smoke Architecture, Anishinaabeg owned and operated, to proceed with design of the Dawes Road Library and Community Hub. A massing study, Net Zero feasibility study, public consultations, and design development are all included in the scope of work.

This project will aim to restore an Indigenous presence near Taylor Creek at the library site on Dawes Road. The architects, informed by consultations with Indigenous members of the Dawes Road community and beyond, will develop and implement a design that is relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Toronto. This project is part of the Mayor's Urban Design Initiative.

## **Community Consultation**

Extensive community consultation began in May 2021 and will continue through the fall of 2021. The consultation process is focused on engagement of the area's residents, community groups, service providers and other stakeholders to identify local needs and ensure they are reflected in the building design. Toronto Public Library and Social Development, Finance and Administration staff have collaborated on a series of virtual open house events, public consultations, online surveys, paper surveys, one-on-one interviews, as well as meetings with community partners, agencies, and grassroots organizations. The project team has also been working with the local Councillor's office (Ward 19, Beaches-East York) to identify and address local priorities.

This project represents an important opportunity to consult with members of Indigenous communities, and to incorporate Indigenous place-making elements in both the design and building program for the library and Community Hub. Focus groups, interviews, and online surveys have been organized by the project team to connect as widely as possible with Indigenous communities. Support and leadership from Indigenous architectural partners Smoke Architecture has been invaluable in undertaking consultation with the Indigenous community at large, elders, youth as well as representatives from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, holders of Treaty 13.

Though consultation is still ongoing, features requested widely include: spaces and services designed with broad attention to accessibility and inclusivity; increased and expanded access to information technology and equipment; high interest and need in the community for spaces that welcome children, youth and families; and strong support for both expanded collections and additional building space that is flexible and can accommodate community meetings and art exhibits. An urgency to address the community's need for space and services for youth was also a priority.

Outdoor, environmental, and Indigenous place-making features have also been prioritized by community members. Existing use of the exterior spaces and access to Wi-Fi outside of facility hours was highlighted for further development.

## **Service Plan for the Community Hub**

A service plan will be developed for the Dawes Road Community Hub once the first phase of consultation is complete; to formalize the supports, activities and resources required to achieve the community hub goals. The service plan will be evidence-based; and will include a framework for continuous assessment of the decisions and agreements made during a community centered planning process and the establishment of a sustainable hub business model. It will also include structures for outcome based evaluations and accountability in the delivering of integrated services.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

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The Dawes Road capital project will be a multi-year project, with the branch closing during the construction period. The massing and energy feasibility studies are completed; public consultation conducted jointly with Toronto Public Library and Social Development, Finance and Administration is 80 percent completed; schematic design will be complete by the fall of 2021. City approvals for zoning, site plan, urban design and ultimately construction permits have been initiated. Discussions with City Planning and other divisions are also underway. Construction is expected to start in 2023.

The development of the Dawes Road Library and Community Hub is an opportunity for the City and Toronto Public Library to co-create a consultation and a design process with embedded principles of inclusion, partnership and the recognition of Indigenous heritage and place-making. Ultimately, the Dawes Road Library and Community Hub will be a gathering place for community members from the Taylor Massey neighbourhood that is a reflection of the diverse histories and assets of the community.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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