

Mount Dennis Campus Opportunity

Date: March 30, 2022

To: The Board of Directors of CreateTO

From: Chief Executive Officer

Wards: Ward 5 - York South-Weston

REASON FOR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

The information contained in the Confidential Attachment 1 relates to a position plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the Board of Directors, CreateTO or the City of Toronto.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to City Council's request to CreateTO to identify lands in the Mount Dennis area that may be suitable for a post-secondary campus and to seek direction for CreateTO and City staff to engage in a collaborative exercise with a local post-secondary school to review the feasibility of a campus project in the Mount Dennis area, as part of a broader City-building initiative.

Also, as directed by City Council, Economic Development and Culture reached out to Toronto based post-secondary institutions and the entity named in Confidential Attachment 1 ("the Entity"), has come forward identifying an interest in investigating the feasibility of a campus investment project in the Mount Dennis area, as part of its Campus Master Planning exercise that is currently underway.

The feasibility exercise by the Entity and the necessary due diligence work by CreateTO and the City for this opportunity will determine whether a collaborative project involving a post-secondary investment in the Mount Dennis area may be possible. A campus project represents a strong opportunity for CreateTO to lead a potentially transformational City-building initiative that could deliver not only a campus/satellite campus but also wide-ranging social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits to the Mount Dennis area, and potentially other parts of the City where the City partners with the Entity on real estate solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Executive Officer of CreateTO recommends that:

1. The Board of Directors of CreateTO recommend that City Council authorize the Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO, in consultation with the City Manager, the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, and other Divisions as needed, to engage and if required, enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with representatives from the entity named in Confidential Attachment 1 ("the Entity"), and to participate in a Campus Master Plan review exercise that includes the exploration of the feasibility of a post-secondary campus and City-building opportunity in the Mount Dennis area and potentially other areas of the City in relation to the Campus Master Plan review.
2. The Board of Directors of CreateTO recommend that City Council request the Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO, to update the Board of Directors of CreateTO in the third quarter of 2023 with the results of this work, next steps and recommendations.
3. The Board of Directors of CreateTO recommend that City Council direct the confidential information contained in Confidential Attachment 1 remain confidential until after the recommendations have been adopted by Council unless it has otherwise been made public.
4. The Board of Directors of CreateTO direct the confidential information contained in Confidential Attachment 1 remain confidential until after the recommendations have been adopted by Council unless it has otherwise been made public, and at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no immediate additional financial impacts arising from the recommendations in this report. Resources required to support this project including the feasibility exercise and the necessary due diligence work undertaken by CreateTO and the City are being allocated from the current staffing complement and are part of the 2022 Council Approved Budgets for CreateTO as well as partnering City Divisions.

CreateTO staff will provide the Board in the third quarter of 2023 with an update on the results of this work, next steps and recommendations. Any potential costs and funding requirements will be presented for City Council consideration in future budget submissions by partnering City Divisions.

DECISION HISTORY

On March 10, 2021, City Council requested CreateTO, in consultation with Corporate Real Estate Management and Economic Development and Culture, to identify City-owned, other publicly-owned and privately-owned land in the Mount Dennis area that would be suitable for a post-secondary campus and that the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to continue to engage post-secondary institutions on the creation of a post-secondary campus or presence in the area.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaltemHistory.do?item=2021.MM30.12>

COMMENTS

Background

In 2020, the Economic Development and Culture Division oversaw completion of the final consultant's report for the [Mount Dennis Economic Development Strategy](#), which identified potential initiatives for a multi-year action plan focused on realizing economic growth opportunities within the local business community comprised of the Mount Dennis "main street" area along Weston Road and the nearby industrial/employment lands. See Attachment 1 for the Mount Dennis Study Area.

One of the identified actions was to initiate efforts to attract a post-secondary institution/satellite facility to Mount Dennis. Phase 1 of the study found that Mount Dennis is one of the most underserved areas of the city with respect to access to post-secondary education. In addition, the study recommended that the City leverage the area's new transit infrastructure and connectivity by promoting available or under-utilized sites for revitalization, investment and job growth.

The Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study, which was considered by Etobicoke York Community Council at its meeting of January 5, 2022 ([EY29.2](#)) also identified a potential post-secondary campus opportunity under the broader theme of economic development and local employment. The Planning study is still in progress, with draft policies anticipated to be brought forward in June, 2022.

There has been long-standing interest in the Mount Dennis community for the attraction of a post-secondary institution. With the support of the local Ward Councillor, the community, through the Mount Dennis Community Association's (MDCA) "Mount Dennis ecoCampus Development Planning Group", has been actively exploring a campus opportunity in parallel with work being conducted by the City.

In response to City Council direction ([MM30.12](#)), Economic Development and Culture staff convened a workshop with post-secondary institutions that was held on November 15, 2021, to discuss a Mount Dennis campus opportunity. The workshop was a further outreach opportunity for staff to engage with the Toronto post-secondary school sector in relation to Mount Dennis, for which efforts had commenced in Q4 2020. The session focused on the opportunities and the strengths of the Mount Dennis community: the availability of high order transit; a significant population of post-secondary aged
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residents and the current lack of access; key economic development strategies underway to focus and drive economic growth; alignment with and support from key City initiatives; and, business and local community support. The workshop was well received as it gave the post-secondary institutions an opportunity to think strategically about their programs and building assets and how to best serve the needs of existing and future students within a changing educational environment.

Since the time of the Q4 2021 workshop held by City staff, the Entity has come forward identifying an interest in investigating the feasibility of a campus investment project in the Mount Dennis area, as part of its Campus Master Planning exercise that is currently underway. The Entity has discussed this opportunity with City and CreateTO representatives.

It is proposed that CreateTO, in coordination with the appropriate City Divisions and others, engage in a collaborative process with the Entity in relation to its Campus Master Planning exercise. This work would include exploring the feasibility of a campus opportunity in the Mount Dennis area as part of a broader City-building initiative.

The establishment of a post-secondary campus/satellite campus in the Mount Dennis area, in coordination with the appropriate City Divisions, programs and services, represents a potentially transformational City-building opportunity for a traditionally under-served area of Toronto, and in the context of the Campus Master Plan review may identify other potential partnership opportunities between the Entity and the City.

Identification of City-owned sites

The sites identified below are preliminary. There may be other sites, including other publicly and privately-held lands that are evaluated in the context of the Entity's specific needs for land/space/real estate and educational programming. How and if the sites below play a role in the Campus Master Plan review will be further articulated as CreateTO and City staff work collaboratively with the Entity.

a) 2700 Eglinton Avenue West – York Civic Centre

The most prominent City-owned site is the York Civic Centre at 2700 Eglinton Avenue West. Toronto Court Services operates its West Court Office at this location and in addition to court rooms and offices, it has payment counters and a daycare. A post-secondary campus/satellite campus at this location presents an opportunity to create a vibrant civic and institutional hub, returning the Civic Centre to its role as a community landmark. With the Eglinton Crosstown providing higher order transit, the York Civic Centre could also become a prominent destination place for cultural events, festivals and public gatherings. Although the York Civic Centre does not have a traditional public square, it is adjacent to Coronation Park and Toronto District School Board lands, making this portion of Eglinton Avenue West one of the largest publicly owned sites in the area.

CreateTO is currently studying the provision of affordable housing at the York Civic Centre site. At its meeting of November 9, 2021, City Council added the two Toronto

Parking Authority (TPA) parking lots along Municipal Drive, northeast of the York Civic Centre as a Phase Three site within the Housing Now initiative.

Should the York Civic Centre be considered as a location for a post-secondary campus, CreateTO and City staff would work collaboratively with the Entity to optimize strategic opportunities for renewal and investment, including affordable housing and other community needs and services.

b) City-owned Lands at corner of Eglinton Avenue West and Photography Drive, west of Black Creek Drive

Since 2015 this parcel has been under a temporary license agreement to Metrolinx for the construction of an upgraded driveway and bridge to the new bus terminal at Mount Dennis station. Immediately south is a large "No Frills" grocery store, parking lot and gas station. City Planning is in receipt of a development application to redevelop this "No Frills" store, parking lot and gas station site for seven mixed use buildings ranging in height from 20 to 49 storeys.

Given the parcel's strategic location, immediately across from Mount Dennis station, it has the potential to provide for a complementary institutional and employment use to the mixed use development, through the introduction of academic uses, programming and related activities.

c) Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) lot at 1169 Weston Road and Mount Dennis Community Hall at 4 Hollis Street

There may be an opportunity to explore the assembly of the parking lot and community hall lands with adjacent privately-held lands to provide for a post-secondary campus opportunity.

Ministry of Colleges and Universities Requirements

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities has established a policy framework governing any campus expansion opportunity, which the Entity would need to fulfill:

<https://files.ontario.ca/mcu-major-capacity-expansion-policy-framework-july-2020-en-2020-08-11.pdf>

Next Steps

This report recommends that CreateTO and City staff engage and if required, enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with representatives from the Entity to participate in a Campus Master Plan review exercise that includes exploring the feasibility of a post-secondary campus and City-building opportunity in the Mount Dennis area and potentially other areas of the City, in relation to the Campus Master Plan review.

The Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO, will update the Board of Directors of CreateTO in the third quarter with the results of this work including next steps and recommendations.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vic Gupta
Chief Executive Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Mount Dennis Study Area
Confidential Attachment 1 - Name of Entity

Attachment 1: Mount Dennis Study Area

