

Mount Dennis "Community for All Action Plan": Update

Date: November 14, 2023

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed development and reporting timeline for the Mount Dennis Community for All Action Plan.

The Mount Dennis area is set to become one of the most transit-connected neighbourhoods in Toronto. When the Eglinton Crosstown LRT is complete, Mount Dennis will be the western terminus station and a key interconnection point between the subway and commuter rail systems, providing access to the Kitchener GO Line and UP Express. Ultimately, the population of Mount Dennis is projected to triple in the next 20 years.

In anticipation of this connectivity and resultant transit-oriented development interest, a significant amount of study work has been completed in the area over recent years. This includes the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan, the Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework, and the Mount Dennis Economic Development Study.

The result has been the development of a comprehensive vision and planning framework based on the input of area residents, businesses, local services, non-profit organizations, and Indigenous partners.

As part of the ongoing work, City Council has requested staff to develop a responsive community focused plan for the Mount Dennis area. Building on the established planning framework, the "Community for All Action Plan" will propose specific strategies and quantifiable targets for preserving and building new affordable housing, improving social and economic outcomes including upgraded infrastructure, enhanced community and social services, retaining and expanding local businesses, and cultivating high-quality parks and outdoor amenities.

By way of motion, City Council requested the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to provide biannual reports on the development and implementation of a Mount Dennis Community for All Action Plan, with the first report to the Economic and Community Development Committee. This report represents the inaugural update.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report. Additional funding and resources may be required in future years and will be identified and submitted for consideration through future budget processes.

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

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

New investments in transit in Mount Dennis provide an opportunity to leverage benefits from future development that can address barriers to affordable housing, social services, employment and economic opportunities for equity seeking groups who live in Mount Dennis area. Indigenous Peoples, Black communities, equity deserving groups, Women, persons with disabilities, low-income households, vulnerable seniors and youth who are in need of improved access to affordable housing, access to affordable childcare, access to City spaces, access to public transit, safety and security have the potential to be positively impacted by this community planning exercise and its inclusive engagement process.

The Mount Dennis Community For All Action Plan, and the work that has come before it, will help to shape future growth and development in the area in ways that can improve quality of life for current and future residents, informed by an understanding of the area's heritage and sense of place.

The plan will be focused on affordable housing as well as improvements to community facilities such as childcare, recreation facilities, space for human service agencies, and arts and culture groups.

Previous planning work has laid out a guide for the area's transformation to a more transit-supportive complete community; one that supports walking, cycling and transit,

thereby promoting better health outcomes. This includes supporting improvements to public parks and community gathering spaces with focus on community safety.

The plan's original vision is to balance residential, commercial and employment uses that enable growth in local jobs and renews the neighborhood through investment and a range of affordable housing outcomes.

As an outcome of ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities, the plan will build on policies that acknowledge the significance of the Humber River and the Black Creek and surrounding lands to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat and Mississauga's nations and would put in place policies, including support for Indigenous place-keeping and place-making initiatives.

The Community For All Action Plan will also develop specific actions and policies to recognize the risks of growth and development to potential displacement of small local businesses in the area including those that are Black-owned and -serving. These policies are intended to mitigate displacement of existing businesses by encouraging replacement of small-scale retail space with similarly sized units that support the continuity of small-scale, independently owned and locally serving businesses.

In the development of a Community For All Action Plan, staff will continue to be mindful to achieve complete and inclusive communities. Staff will take steps to continue to involve diverse voices through the consultation practices being deployed in engaging with a broad and representative spectrum of the community.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 10, 2016, City Council adopted a motion (EY12.30) to request the Chief Planner and the Executive Director, City Planning to:

- Undertake a review of the current (2016) planning framework for the Mount Dennis area including: built-form, density, height, and public realm of the properties on Weston Road between Ray Avenue and Humber Boulevard;
- Consult with the community, including landowners and other stakeholder groups, together with the Ward Councillor, to understand the community's concerns and to develop a vision for future development in the study area; and
- Report back on the findings of the review and to provide recommendations for changes, if necessary, to the planning framework for the study area.

The motion can be accessed at the following link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.EY12.30>

At its meeting on July 23, 2018, City Council considered a report from the Director, Community Planning, Etobicoke York District entitled Status Report – Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study – City Initiated Official Plan Amendment (EY32.21), and requested staff to undertake a review and update of the planning framework for the

Mount Dennis area, endorsed the recommended study area boundaries and provided direction regarding inclusive community consultation. The decision can be accessed at this link: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EY32.21>

At its meeting on November 9, 2021, City Council considered a report from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, entitled Inclusionary Zoning Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Draft Implementation Guidelines. This resulted in Council requesting City Planning staff to undertake additional market analysis in additional areas, including around the planned Mount Dennis LRT Station area, to determine whether these additional areas should be added to the Inclusionary Zoning Map of the Official Plan policy. The Decision History can be accessed at this link: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.PH28.1>

At its meeting on January 5, 2022, Etobicoke York Community Council considered a Status Report on the Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study which included the findings and recommendations of the consultant's final report. The purpose of the status report was to provide an overview of the study process to that date, summarize community engagement input, and make recommendations on the next steps required to bring forward an area-based Official Plan Amendment. Community Council requested, among other matters, that staff make best efforts to bring forward a proposed Official Plan Amendment for the Mount Dennis study area by June of 2022, continue to consult with the community as necessary in the development of the policy framework, and advance for 2023 the supporting implementation tools including draft urban design guidelines and a draft zoning by-law amendment. The decision can be accessed at this link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EY29.2>

At its meeting on July 19, 2022 City Council considered a report from the Director, Community Planning, Etobicoke York District titled Mount Dennis Secondary Plan - Final Report. City Council adopted Official Plan Amendment 571 including the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan; requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to bring forward a Zoning By-law Amendment and urban design guidelines; directed the General Manager, Transportation Services to conduct further work with respect to mobility and the public realm; and requested the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to direct Social Development, Finance and Administration, Economic Development and Culture, Housing Secretariat and other appropriate City Divisions in consultation with the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to work with the Councillor for Ward 5 York-South Weston and local community organizations, residents and businesses to develop a Mount Dennis community development plan: "Community for All Action Plan". The decision can be accessed at this link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EY33.11>

At its meeting on July 19th 2023 City Council adopted a motion requesting the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to immediately engage with local community organizations, residents, and businesses and participate in community meetings concerned with the Mount Dennis Community for All Action Plan. Council also requested that Community and Social Services provide biannual reports on the development and implementation of a Community for All Action Plan with the first report

due to the Economic and Community Development Committee on October 24th 2023. The decision can be accessed at this link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.MM8.16>

COMMENTS

Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework and Secondary Plan

In 2019, City Planning retained a consultant team to undertake the Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study. The work was awarded through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process to a multi-disciplinary consulting team. The study scope was amended to include targeted Indigenous engagement.

The Picture Mount Dennis Study was conducted from October 2020 to December 2021. A vision, guiding principles (as listed below) and concrete plans and strategies were developed, along with a range of alternative options that were explored, tested and confirmed through engagement with the community. A draft planning framework and policy directions were prepared and all input received through engagement with the local community, stakeholder groups and Indigenous communities and nations throughout the entire process was synthesized and included in the final report. As required under the Planning Act, the City held a final community consultation meeting on the proposed Official Plan Amendment, including the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan, on April 28, 2022.

City Planning also undertook a comprehensive consultation process for the Study and Secondary Plan process that included stakeholder and community involvement in all three phases of the process. This included: five Community Consultation Meetings; four Local Advisory Committee (LAC) meetings; two York South Weston Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIA) Planning Table meetings; two Heritage Focus Group meetings; and two presentations to the Design Review Panel.

A separate Indigenous engagement stream was undertaken for Indigenous rights and treaty holders, Indigenous residents in and around the study area (two sessions) and Indigenous youth (one session).

In partnership with the City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit, City staff reached out to Black-owned and -serving businesses within the Secondary Plan area to learn more about how Black-owned and -serving businesses would like to see the area change over time, impacts felt by local businesses, and what should be considered in City plans, policies and programs.

More information on the analysis and findings of the Picture Mount Dennis Framework Study and the input received through the community consultation, stakeholder involvement and Indigenous engagement processes can be found in the report on the Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study at <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EY29.2>

The Need for a Responsive Community for All Action Plan

New development and transit investments will soon make the Mount Dennis area one of the most transit accessible locations in the city. Additionally, while increased new housing development will provide needed density and new homes for Toronto residents, new development along with transit investment will accelerate the market in terms of pricing and demand. An accelerated market will result in increased development pressure and land speculation in the Mount Dennis area.

Residents, not-for-profit organizations, and local businesses have actively engaged the City of Toronto in efforts to ensure that existing residents and businesses are not displaced and continue to live in and benefit from new and affordable housing development and transit investments in Mount Dennis. From 2019 to 2021 the City of Toronto lead in-depth engagements with residents, local not-profit-organizations, and businesses through the [Picture Mount Dennis Framework](#) development process. The framework provides a comprehensive, resident-informed vision and aims to protect what the Mount Dennis community values and align new investments and growth with those values.

In February 2020 (See Council Decision History) City Council adopted a new approach and model to neighbourhood development through the Jane and Finch Initiative. The approach involves three integrated streams of work with the first being a robust engagement process lead by an established community partner. The engagement process is focused on residents, stakeholder groups and businesses, with an emphasis on Indigenous communities and African, Black and Caribbean communities. The second stream of work is the development of a Community Development Plan, a living process that evolves with the communities' transformation and advances initiatives to address displacement, promote reconciliation, confront systemic anti-Black racism, promote equity, community safety, inclusive economics and strong neighbourhoods. The third stream of work includes the development of a land use planning framework or update that shapes the development of a transit-supportive complete community and identifies the community facilities and other infrastructure needed to support anticipated growth and respond to any long-standing or emerging issues in the community.

The Community Development Plan and the land use plan framework are developed as complimentary documents that work in tandem to align people- and place-focused initiatives into an integrated complete community framework for the area. This model provides a foundation for the development of unique and stand-alone Mount Dennis Community For All Action Plan and integrated Anti-Displacement Strategy that responds to and compliments the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan (See Council Decision History) and builds on and leverages key lessons learnt from the Community Development Plan approach and model.

The City of Toronto will borrow lessons from existing plan development approaches and utilize a collaborative cross divisional approach to the development of a Community For All Action Plan and accompanying Anti-Displacement Strategy. The Community For All Action Plan will be advanced through a strategic collaboration between Social Development Finance and Administration (SDFA), Economic Development and Culture

(EDC), Housing Secretariat (HS), City Planning, and with the involvement of additional key divisional partners.

The City of Toronto will also prioritize a community partnership approach and work with local stakeholders and leaders like the Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) to advance ongoing Mount Dennis engagement. The Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) is based in the heart of Mount Dennis and has acted as a central convener for community engagement on matters of equity, opportunity, and affordable housing.

Community For All Action Plan

Building on new collaborative cross-divisional approaches to the development of integrated complete community frameworks the City of Toronto will lead the development of a Community for All Action Plan (the Plan) in partnership with community partner the Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF). The Plan will develop actions that build on and help advance the nine transformative moves presented in the [Picturing Mount Dennis Framework](#). The nine transformative moves include:

- Connect People to the Land;
- Celebrate Indigenous Cultures;
- Support Black and Afro-Caribbean Cultures;
- Expand the Community Heart;
- Revitalize Weston Road;
- Connect Across the Rail Corridor;
- A Mount Dennis for Everyone;
- Develop an Eco-Neighbourhood; and
- Facilitate Local Job Growth.

The Plan will also align with the City of Toronto's broader commitments to reconciliation through the [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) as well as commitments to confront anti-Black racism through intentional alignment with the [Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#). To further this alignment the Plan will seek intentional and focused engagements with indigenous rights holders, residents, organizations and businesses as well as Black residents, Black mandated organizations, and businesses.

Based on initial engagements with residents, local not-for-profit organizations, and businesses, staff will work with City of Toronto divisional partners and community partners to ensure that key ideas and or directions identified through all stages of the engagement process are developed into tangible, implementable, and measurable actions in the Plan. Key ideas identified include improving existing and advancing new affordable housing targets, protecting Black-owned business, infrastructure, and exploring anti-displacement strategies. As next steps the City of Toronto will work with the community partner Learning Enrichment Foundation to explore these ideas and others through community conversations.

Social Development Finance and Administration is currently advancing the development of the Growing in Place Framework focused on fostering cross divisional policy collaboration to address the impacts of gentrification and Black residential and

commercial displacement on communities with historically high populations of Black residents. The Growing in Place Framework will make substantive contributions to the Plan's accompanying Anti-Displacement Strategy.

Community Partnership and Plan Development

Key learnings from the Community Development Plan model point to the strengths associated with partnering with a community-based organization like the Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) who have established networks and relationships in Mount Dennis as well as a vested interest in ensuring the current residents and businesses are able to benefit from new investments and development. A partnership-based model ensures the development of actions and plans that are both rooted in and shaped by residents, local-organizations and businesses.

LEF is based in the heart of Mount Dennis and provides a wide range of support programs and initiatives in the area. The group advocates for equity and affordable housing and is in the process of rezoning a consolidated group of sites they have purchased over recent years as a part of the [Mount Dennis Quilt Project](#). The project aims to deliver significant affordable and supportive housing outcomes. To advance the Quilt Project, LEF has engaged in an in-depth series of independent consultation to identify the ways in which residents and local businesses support the creation of broader community vision surrounding the development sites.

A representative of LEF was also a member of the LAC engaged through the Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study and Secondary Plan.

To further advance this work, LEF has recently formed a 36-person sub-committee including City staff to promote a collaborative approach to the development of the Plan and process for reporting back to community.

The City of Toronto will establish a partnership with LEF to support ongoing engagement with the Mount Dennis community and ensure the development of actions that closely align with community needs, priorities, and visions for Mount Dennis. Importantly, this also includes ensuring representation from the many other stakeholders and agencies that operate in the community.

In the first stages of the partnership with LEF, the foundation will support engagement to shape the focus, scope, and approach to the Plan. This includes timelines, resource requirements, divisional contributions, and City Council update reports.

Collaborative Cross-Divisional Approach

Based on lessons through the [Jane and Finch Initiative](#) and [Update Downsview](#) Community Development Plan process the Plan will be advanced through a strategic collaboration between Social Development Finance and Administration (SDFA), Economic Development and Culture (EDC), Housing Secretariat (HS), City Planning,

and with the involvement of additional key divisional partners. This collaborative, cross-divisional approach will support the creation of an integrated, complete community framework that promotes the development of affordable housing.

The cross-divisional approach will be supported through regular interdivisional meetings co-convened by collaborating divisions. To ensure broader alignment with all participating policy opportunities, divisional partners will collaboratively support and manage the City of Toronto's relationship with community partners, residents, and local businesses. To ensure that the Plan's development process is adequately resourced, participating divisions will identify both staffing and project resourcing needs over early 2024 and in advance of a Summer 2024 report back to Council.

Next Steps

Over the next six months, the City of Toronto will pursue a collaborative cross-divisional approach to the Community for All Action Plan that is grounded in a commitment to community partnership. To advance the next stages of the plan, the City of Toronto will prioritize the following steps:

- **Establish an engagement partnership and process with The Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) and other community partners:** The City of Toronto, through a cross divisional working group, will partner with LEF and other community partners to develop an engagement process and partnership for the Community for All Action Plan. LEF will act as primary community convener, serving as host for ongoing engagement sessions.
- **Support and advance ongoing community consultations:** The City of Toronto will work with LEF, Mount Dennis residents, local not-for-profit organizations and businesses to support, advance, and align with ongoing consultations.
- **Develop a Black focused anti-displacement framework:** The City of Toronto will advance the Growing in Place Framework as a contribution to the development of the Mount Dennis Anti-Displacement strategy.
- **Identify community priority actions and immediate areas of focus:** The City of Toronto will align with and engage in partner-led community consultations to further identify community priorities, actions and immediate areas of focus for the Community for All Action Plan.
- **Community for All Action Plan development update report:** The Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services to provide the next biannual update report on the development and implementation of a Mount Dennis Community for All Action Plan, at the July 4, 2024 meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee.

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