CREATE TO

REPORT FOR ACTION

Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Date: April 6, 2023
To: Board of Directors, CreateTO
From: Chief Executive Officer
Wards: All

SUMMARY

Since its formation in 2018, CreateTO has made great progress as the City of Toronto's real estate strategy and development agency. The organization has advanced City Council's signature affordable housing plan, initiated transformative city-building projects in all four Community Council districts, spearheaded the revitalization of the Port Lands and provided staff effort and expertise to support countless other projects at the direction of the CreateTO Board and City Council.

In the fall of 2022, CreateTO launched a strategic planning process to build on and strengthen the agency's original mandate, namely "to manage the City's real estate portfolio, develop City buildings and lands for municipal purposes and deliver client-focused real estate solutions to City divisions, agencies and corporations."

This process included extensive consultation and engagement with staff, the CreateTO Board of Directors and partners at the City of Toronto and involved a series of discussions, workshops, and focus groups. The feedback received shaped the final Strategic Plan 2023-2027 (Attachment 1) including the development of organization-wide purpose and mission statements, organizational values, and a series of strategic directions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Executive Officer recommends that the Board of Directors, CreateTO:

1. Approve the CreateTO Strategic Plan 2023-2027 as set out in Attachment 1.

2. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Board of Directors in the first quarter of 2024 with an annual progress update.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no additional financial impact to CreateTO arising from the recommendations in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

This is a new item.

COMMENTS

Overview
CreateTO's Strategic Plan 2023-2027 (Attachment 1) intends to build on and strengthen the agency's original mandate, namely "to manage the City's real estate portfolio, develop City buildings and lands for municipal purposes and deliver client focused real estate solutions to City divisions, agencies and corporations."

CreateTO launched a strategic planning process in the fall of 2022 and this work has resulted in the development of the agency's first Strategic Plan. This work was informed by extensive consultation and engagement with CreateTO staff, the Board of Directors of CreateTO and many partners at the City of Toronto. The Strategic Plan establishes organization-wide purpose and mission statements, organizational values, and a series of strategic directions to guide the agency's work over the next five years and beyond. It expands on CreateTO's original mandate and provides a clear articulation of the agency's short- and long-term goals.

Strategic Planning Process
To support the development of the Strategic Plan, CreateTO initiated a Request for Proposal process and through that process retained MacPhie Consulting, one of Toronto's leading strategic planning firms with extensive experience working with public and private sector clients. An internal Steering Committee was formed to guide MacPhie's work. This included the Chief Executive Officer, several mid and senior level staff, and the Chair of the CreateTO Board of Directors. MacPhie's approach to the strategic planning exercise was broken down into four phases: Plan, Learn, Analyze, and Decide, which are outlined below.

- Plan: this phase was focused on reviewing relevant documentation, current initiatives, and CreateTO's work to date. It also consisted of developing consultation and engagement materials including survey, focus group and interview questions.
- Learn: this phase consisted of research, and internal and external stakeholder engagement through surveys, focus groups and interviews. The objective was to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible in speaking to staff, Board members and City of Toronto partners to obtain insights about CreateTO and its future. MacPhie engaged more than 100 people in this process.

- Analyze: this phase included an in-depth analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected in the Learn phase and was summarized in a report for review by CreateTO's Senior and Executive Management teams and the Steering Committee.
- Decide: this phase involved a series of facilitated workshops with Steering Committee members and the Senior and Executive Management teams to ensure alignment on the purpose, mission, values, and strategic directions.

Staff and Stakeholder Engagement
The strategic planning process involved extensive engagement with staff from CreateTO, City divisions, agencies and corporations, members of Council and Board members to decide on the final elements of the Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

This involved numerous focus group sessions and individual interviews - 26 in total - with CreateTO Board Members, CreateTO staff, key representatives from over a dozen City divisions, agencies and corporations, the Mayor’s Office and City Councillors.

In addition, all members of the CreateTO staff were encouraged to participate in an extensive online survey. Encouragingly, the response rate was greater than 90 per cent.

A jurisdictional scan and analysis of over a dozen organizations from around the world with similar real estate mandates to CreateTO was conducted.

Strategic Plan Elements

Purpose
In developing the purpose statement, one idea consistently emerged - that CreateTO is here to be innovative in its approach towards the City of Toronto's real estate assets and to positively impact the city and create social and economic value. In other words, CreateTO is viewed as an organization that can help make the city a better place to live.

Using this as inspiration, CreateTO landed on the agency's first-ever purpose statement: “Building the city we love.”

Staff and the strategic planning team felt this statement captures the essence of why CreateTO exists, why its people choose to work there and what CreateTO is trying to achieve everyday. It builds upon the agency's original mandate and draws a connection to the goal of contributing to a better quality of life for all Torontonians.

Mission
Throughout the Learn phase of the project, another theme that consistently emerged was the unique opportunity the organization has to be creative and innovative, bold and strategic in its approach to city building.

Stemming from this idea, CreateTO landed on the mission statement: "Shaping Toronto’s future through bold and impactful real estate solutions."

This mission statement defines what the agency does and how it does it. It speaks to CreateTO's work now and into the future. In shaping the city's future, CreateTO will work with partners to think creatively and challenge the status quo to ensure the best use of the City's real estate assets.

Values

Values are the core beliefs that shape the way CreateTO staff act, interact, and make decisions. The values aim to define CreateTO's current and aspirational culture.

CreateTO's values are:

- Improve Lives

Cities are about people, and so are we. Everything we do is centred on creating social and economic value for the residents of Toronto. We prioritize work that creates opportunities builds culture and inclusive communities and improves quality of life. This is our city too, and we're motivated by a collective responsibility to Toronto residents.

- Focus on the Future

We leverage our unique city-wide lens to deliver projects that will have the most potential for positive, sustainable impact over the long-term. We know the decisions we make now will affect Toronto for generations to come and we work through short term challenges to ensure long term benefits. Building a better tomorrow through real estate is a journey; and it is our passion.

- Push Boundaries

Our goal is to be a global leader in bold and impactful real estate solutions. We set high standards and ambitious ideals and work to achieve them through proactive and ground-breaking approaches. We pride ourselves on operating as a centre of excellence, as we strive to shape the dialogue around public real estate in our city.

- Create Change Together

As a city-wide agency, our success is dependent on continued dialogue and collaboration with our clients and valued partners inside and outside of City Hall. Our working relationships prioritize responsiveness and mutual respect, and we go the extra mile to help achieve our city's goals through inclusive ideas, actions and approaches.

- Be There For Each Other

We value the quality and ability of our team and trust each other to achieve our shared purpose. Through our commitment to an open, collaborative, and inclusive culture, we seek all perspectives when we make decisions, celebrate each other's wins, and learn from each other in our endless pursuit to make the city a better place.

These values reflect the culture that CreateTO staff are living and continually striving to cultivate.

Strategic Directions

Through this process, CreateTO staff developed a comprehensive set of strategic directions that outline the agency's strategic focus for the next five years. They are as follows:

- Build a Foundation to Deliver Results

CreateTO was formed to better leverage the City's unique and complex real estate portfolio to serve Toronto residents. To live up to that purpose and provide innovative insights and approaches, CreateTO continues to develop a strong foundation of systems, policies and processes to deliver results.

- Maximize the Potential of our Real Estate Portfolio

CreateTO strives to establish a world-leading approach to asset management and is focused on putting the City's portfolio to use for positive short- and long-term impact. The agency's goal is to help address Toronto's urgent public policy objectives - creating housing, taking positive climate action, facilitating job creation, cultural activity and investment, and driving equity and inclusion - and to work with its DAC (Division, Agencies, Corporation) clients to help them achieve more program goals through the better utilization and more strategic use of the city's real estate portfolio.

- Elevate our Partnership Approach

CreateTO exists in relation to City of Toronto and other public and private sector partners. Delivering bold and impactful real estate solutions through a city-wide lens requires intentional and seamless collaboration with these valued partners, to ensure everyone is working efficiently and effectively towards shared collective goals.

- Inspire Internal Success

CreateTO's ambitious goals require innovation, creativity, and hard work. That means the agency needs to keep building a different kind of team supported by an internal culture that brings out the best in people.

- Contribute to the City's Financial Strength

CreateTO is committed to being a good steward of municipal lands while also providing prudent management of its own assets. CreateTO will continue to focus on the financial sustainability of the agency while striving to shape a better future for the city.

These strategic directions will ensure that staff have a plan to guide the agency towards successfully realizing the purpose, mission and values. Further detail on the strategic directions can be found in Attachment 1.

Conclusion

CreateTO's first Strategic Plan is the outcome of an extraordinary amount of input and engagement from the entire CreateTO staff team, members of the Board of Directors and the agency's stakeholders. The plan provides a solid foundation for the agency's organizational development, work planning and, relationship building over the next five years and beyond.

It should also be noted that while this document represents a significant milestone for the agency and the culmination of many months of hard work, it is not the end of the planning process. The Strategic Plan will guide the development of the agency's annual work plans and priorities. And, at the end of the five-year period, the strategic directions in the plan will be reviewed to ensure CreateTO continues to be responsive to the expectations of City Council, the CreateTO Board, and the broader stakeholder community.

The Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, and the agency will work with its partners to ensure it continues to inspire and provide confidence in its mandate over the coming years.

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SIGNATURE

Vic Gupta
Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: The CreateTO Strategic Plan 2023-2027