

Mount Dennis "Community for All Action Plan": Update

Date: March 11, 2024

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services

Wards: York-South Weston, Ward 5

SUMMARY

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

The Mount Dennis area is a residential and mixed-use community in Toronto. Mount Dennis is a welcoming community where long-time residents have welcomed new immigrants to Toronto, providing opportunity and affordable rental and ownership housing.

At the same time Mount Dennis 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 more than double over the next 20 years.

Transit expansion in the area is also expected to result in an increased number of development projects which will increase much needed housing supply but which has also been causing concerns among local residents and organizations regarding the future of their community and the potential residential, commercial, and employment displacement.

In recent years, the City has completed a significant amount of study work including 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 from area residents, businesses, local services, non-profit organizations, and Indigenous partners.

In 2022, 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 actions, 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.

In addition, City Council also 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. This report represents the inaugural update report to be considered by the Economic and Community Development Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council request the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services to create a collaborative, cross-divisional working group, with an assigned lead, to be accountable for co-ordinating various City Divisions in delivering the Mount Dennis Community for All Action Plan.
2. City Council request the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services support the Learning Enrichment Foundation in co-hosting a one-day Mount Dennis for All Symposium ("Symposium") in 2024 focusing on anti-displacement strategies, which will include experts in implementing anti-displacement measures.
3. City Council authorize the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services to negotiate and enter into, on behalf of the City of Toronto, any funding agreements with the Learning Enrichment Foundation to provide one-time funding in the amount of up to \$35,000 to support the planning and co-hosting of the Symposium and the production of a report on the Symposium results, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services, in a form approved by the City Solicitor.
4. City Council request the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services to work with Divisional staff leads to provide an inventory of existing municipal services and assets in Mount Dennis, built upon the Picture Mount Dennis Community Services and Facilities Study, available at the time of the Symposium.
5. City Council request the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services and Divisional staff leads to work with the local City Councillor, the Learning Enrichment Foundation, and the community of Mount Dennis to develop an "Equity Score Card" to measure the impact of new development in the community and to set goals and targets to support achieving positive equity outcomes, and provide an activity report to the Economic and Community Development Committee in Q4 2024.

6. City Council request the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services and Divisional staff leads to work with the local community to prioritize and achieve positive investments needed from federal, provincial and municipal governments and report with an update to the Economic and Community Development Committee in Q4 2024.

7. City Council request the Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services to report in Q4 2024 on progress made in implementing the Mount Dennis for All Action Plan and make any additional recommendations required for its effective implementation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Sufficient funding is identified within the Housing Secretariat's 2024 Operating Budget to provide a grant of \$35,000 to support the Learning Enrichment Foundation in hosting a one-day Symposium in 2024 to gather information, examine best practices and further implement the Mount Dennis for All Action Plan.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as contained the Financial Impact Section

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Currently, Mount Dennis is among the few Toronto communities where families and individuals can secure affordable housing. The Mount Dennis community, therefore, is home to many new immigrants, Indigenous Peoples, Black communities, women, persons with disabilities, low-income households, vulnerable seniors and youth.

With new investments in transit and increased development activities resulting in a growth in housing supply, there is a need for a viable action plan to ensure existing and future low-and moderate-income families and individuals have improved access to affordable housing, affordable childcare, City spaces, and public transit. The action plan also needs to address residents' safety and security needs, and provides the opportunity to live, work and thrive in the community.

It is intended that the Mount Dennis Community For All Action Plan, and the work that has come before it, 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, inclusivity, and sense of place.

The action plan will focus on affordable housing as well as improvements to community facilities such as childcare, recreation facilities, space for human service agencies, arts and culture, and truth, justice, and reconciliation efforts that aligns with the City's Reconciliation Action Plan.

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 Mount Dennis Secondary Plan envisions a balance of 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 Mount Dennis Community for All action 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 in order to implement mitigating measures to prevent the displacement of small local businesses in the area including those that are Black-owned and Black-serving. These policies are intended to support existing and future 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 work in tandem with local organizations, including the Learning Enrichment Foundation, residents and businesses to ensure a broad spectrum of diverse community representation throughout the process.

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> OPA 571, including the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan, was subsequently appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal and is not currently in-force.

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 range of alternative options were explored through engagement with the community based on a set of established guiding principles (as listed below). A draft planning framework and policy directions were prepared and input received through engagement with the local community, stakeholder groups and Indigenous communities and nations were included in the final report. In accordance with 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 these 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.

Mount Dennis Secondary Plan policy 12.4 states that a community development plan, which shall include an anti-displacement strategy, will be adopted for Mount Dennis. Subsequent policy 12.5 requires applicants to demonstrate, through their applications,

how the proposed development responds to the community development plan, including addressing the anti-displacement strategy. The development of the Mount Dennis for All Action Plan will activate these policies.

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>

Staff note that the Mount Dennis Secondary Plan remains under appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

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 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. Without intentional and effective programs and policies, the community may experience the displacement of local residents, businesses, and essential services provided by the third sector.

In response, the City of Toronto has actively engaged local residents, not-for-profit organizations, and local businesses in efforts to ensure that existing residents and businesses are not displaced and continue to live in and benefit from development and transit investments in the Mount Dennis community.

In February 2020, 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 (See Community Partnership and Plan Development Section below). 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. In the case of Mount Dennis, the land use planning framework has been developed as part of the Secondary Plan.

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. The Mount Dennis Community For All Plan is a distinct process tailored to Mount Dennis needs that will borrow lessons from the City of Toronto's Community Development Model. This approach will provide a foundation for the development of a 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 Mount Dennis Community For All Action Plan and accompanying Anti-Displacement Strategy. 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.

The City of Toronto will also prioritize a community partnership approach and work with local stakeholders and leverage the leadership of the Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) to advance ongoing Mount Dennis engagement. 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 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.

Additionally, the Plan will seek to activate and support housing measures and projects which will contribute to the City of Toronto's overall housing goals, including the target of creating 65,000 affordable and rent-controlled homes within a community that has historically welcomed non-profit and supportive housing.

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 LEF to explore these ideas through community conversations and the development of an "Equity Score Card" to measure and report on the impact of new development in the community in achieving specific equity goals.

Social Development Finance and Administration (SDFA) division 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 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 targeted to area residents. The organization also advocates for equity and affordable housing and has now successfully rezoned a consolidated group of properties as a part of the [Mount Dennis Quilt Project](#). The project has also been approved for financial incentives as part of the City's Open Door Program. Upon completion, the redevelopment project aims to deliver 175 new rental homes with a significant level of affordability and supports. To advance the Quilt Project, LEF has engaged in an in-depth series of independent consultations to identify the ways in which residents and local businesses support the creation of broader community vision surrounding the development. A representative of LEF was also a member of the LAC

engaged through the Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study and Secondary Plan.

To help advance this work, LEF has recently formed a sub-committee to work with City staff to promote a collaborative approach to the development of the Plan and a process for reporting results back to the 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. In addition, the process will also include representation from other organizations and agencies that operate in the community.

In the first stages of this partnership, LEF 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.

In partnership with the City, LEF will co-host a one-day Mount Dennis for All Symposium in June 2024 focusing on anti-displacement strategies, including community discussions, workshops, and expert speakers on implementing anti-displacement measures. Community mapping will be pivotal to discussions; therefore, City staff will prepare an inventory of existing municipal services, assets, planned developments, and community opportunities in the area.

Collaborative Cross-Divisional Approach

Based on lessons through the [Jane and Finch Initiative](#) and [Update Downsview](#) Community Development Plan process, and taking into consideration the community's unique nature, the Mount Dennis Community for All Action Plan will be advanced through a strategic collaboration between 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 and program 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 in advance of a 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 activating the Mount Dennis 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 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 *the* 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 including a one-day Mount Dennis for All Symposium in June 2024 focusing on anti-displacement strategies.
- **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.
- **Develop an 'Equity Scorecard' in collaboration with LEF:** The City of Toronto will identify relevant divisional partners to support the collaborative development of an Equity Scorecard in collaboration with LEF.
- **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 update report on the development and implementation of a Mount Dennis Community for All Action Plan in Q4 2024 at the Economic and Community Development Committee.

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