

What is a Community Development Plan?

A Community Development Plan is a community-centred process that enhances typical land use planning by engaging diverse residents, property owners, community groups, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, artists, developers, City divisions, City agencies and other partners to identify principles, priorities and subsequent actions that can embed equitable planning to build stronger communities. In areas undergoing high growth and experiencing equity challenges, a Community Development Plan accompanies and complements a Secondary Plan, creating an opportunity to leverage the growth, and use the land use framework and planning approvals lever to drive investment to address community priorities. A Community Development Plan is a collaborative tool, involving a wide array of stakeholders and social and economic investment tools that work to address historically rooted inequities and build on the wealth of community assets and resilience to sustain, preserve, and promote the prosperity of communities. The Secondary Plan sets a shared vision (detailed land use designations and policy directions to fit local contexts) for the community while the Community Development Plan acts on that vision by developing and implementing a series of actions that address community priorities. While the Secondary Plan, once approved by City Council provides a vision for a neighbourhood's redevelopment, the Community Development Plan continues to evolve reflecting the change as the communities under redevelopment, foster ongoing partnership and engagement between diverse internal and external stakeholders including City divisions, residents, local businesses and artists, and broader community stakeholders. Lessons from COVID-19 and the risks of a global recession post-COVID previous Social Development Plans have highlighted the need for a "living" plan that grows and responds to community feedback, emerging challenges, unexpected shocks, as well as opportunities created through new policy change and creation.

Community Development Plans create opportunities to leverage new City-led supports and policy levers developed during the lifespan of the Community Development Plan while also being responsive to changing neighbourhood contexts and needs. A Community Development Plan is built on resident and community assets. It recognizes that neighbourhoods have community leaders with capacity, local resident networks, non-profit organizations, local business and institutional partners that have filled in the structural gaps to services and supports for decades. A Community Development Plan works in collaboration with community assets, expertise, and experience to identify existing and future needs and challenges that can be addressed through a comprehensive resourcing strategy that includes property owners, developers, City (and city agencies), foundations, businesses, not-for-profits and external partnerships.

As a model, Community Development Plans responds to contexts, opportunities, and challenges. To follow is a brief overview of some of the criteria under which a Community Development Plan process should be initiated:

Table 1: Criteria for Community Development Plan	
Initiation of a Secondary Plan Process	The initiation of a Secondary Plan in contexts that require complimentary reconciliation and equity-focused investments provide the necessity for a Community Development Plan. In neighbourhoods facing equity challenges (Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and other neighbourhoods of focus) where City Planning is directed to update or establish a Secondary Plan, a cross-divisional and collaborative Community Development Plan process should be designed to address the unique needs of the neighborhood and context.
New Neighborhood-wide public and/or private Investment	Significant public and/or private investments (i.e. LRT, significant density changes, and/or intensification of development opportunities where significant growth and neighborhood change is expected signal the need for a Community Development Plan given the resources required to design and implement a successful community development plan process of neighbourhood change. Neighborhood Improvement Areas and other identified neighborhoods with comparable demographic profiles require intentional engagement and significant (infrastructure, social and economic) investments during periods of significant transformation.
Neighborhood Profile	Neighborhood Improvement Areas and neighborhoods of focus are priorities for Community Development Plan processes. Lessons learned from the Toronto Strong Neighborhoods Strategy and other evidence-based reconciliation and equity strategies highlight the need for a comprehensive plan for focused investments found in a Community Development Plan.
Commitments to City Service Collaboration and staff Resources	Deep inter-divisional collaboration between the three leading divisions – Social Development Finance and Administration, City Planning, and Economic Development and Culture along with division partners, city agencies, and additional resources for staffing and engagement are fundamental to the design and ongoing implementation of a of Community Development Plan.

Community Development Plan Key Features

Learnings from the Jane and Finch and Downsview Community Development Plan processes have helped the City of Toronto identify the key and defining features of the Community Development Plan model. These key features distinguish the Community Development Plan from other plans and will be a standing component of Community Development Plans in the future. The key features are as follows:

Table 2: Community Development Plan Defining Features	
Truth and Reconciliation, Confronting Anti-Black Racism, and advancing supports for equity-deserving groups and vulnerable populations	Community Development Plans provide strong alignment with policies advancing Indigenous Reconciliation, focused on Confronting Anti-Black Racism and strategies focused on advancing supports for equity-deserving and vulnerable populations. These alignments will seek to ensure that Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups are prioritized across all Plan focus areas and actions.
Cross-Divisional Collaboration	Cross-divisional City teams and policy development collaboration co-led by Social Development, Finance and Administration, Economic Development and Culture, City Planning and other relevant divisions will be a standing feature of Community Development Plans. Cross-divisional collaboration will ensure that the development processes for Community Development Plans and Secondary Plans are aligned from inception to completion.
Policy Alignment & Integrated Policy Design	Community Development Plans create opportunities to leverage and harmonize existing and emerging City-led policies, strategies, funding, and programs for neighborhoods of focus. This can involve the co-design of consistent areas and actions that benefit from ongoing and new initiatives led by diverse divisions across the City. This new way of working also creates the opportunity for diverse divisions to co-lead the creation of tailored policy interventions that meet the needs of neighborhoods of focus.
Neighborhood Partnership and Engagement	Deep engagement and community partnerships will define the Community Development Plan process. The development of a Community Development Plan requires fully resourced partnerships that support implementation and in-depth and ongoing engagement with a diverse cross-section of property owners, developers, community residents, local businesses, local artists, and not for profit organizations and service agencies.