

Targeted Expansion of the Association of Community Centres to Support Community Development in Toronto

Date: June 19, 2024

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Community and social service organizations provide critical social infrastructure that is essential in the development of complete communities. As the City of Toronto undergoes continued growth and development, the need for additional community-based social infrastructure becomes increasingly important. The City can help meet this need through a renewed approach to developing City-owned, community-operated service spaces through a policy framework to facilitate the expansion of the Association of Community Centres (AOCCs) model. The purpose of this report is to put forward an Association of Community Centres (AOCCs) Expansion Framework.

Currently, the City of Toronto has ten centres that are operated and maintained by volunteer Boards of Management appointed by the City, which is collectively referred to as the Association of Community Centres. The Centres are multi-purpose facilities that provide public space, programs, and services to meet the social and recreational and needs of local communities. The ten centres are managed, operated, and maintained by Council-approved volunteer Boards of Management. The City of Toronto provides each Centre with access to a City-owned or City-leased facility and core administrative funding. Programming funds are raised through membership and program fees, as well as donations and grants. The Association of Community Centres portfolio has not been expanded in more than 30 years. Although the Centres are designated as part of an association, they operate independently as ten separate local and City boards under the City of Toronto Act, 2006. A Relationship Framework sets out Council's delegation of authority, expectations and requirements for the Boards of Management.

These ten Centres are distinct from the City's 126 Community Recreation Centres, operated by Parks, Forestry and Recreation, as well as centres that are operated by other nonprofit agencies, such as the YMCA. AOCCs aim to achieve the following community development outcomes:

- Social Connectedness and Cohesion, contributing to fostering social connectedness and cohesion among community members through the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, access to barrier-free spaces, diverse programming, volunteer opportunities and local community engagement.
- Community Resilience, including increasing access to health-related resources and services, engaging and prioritizing vulnerable or marginalized groups, and maintaining long-term, often local staff to build enduring relationships with residents.
- Local Leadership and Collaboration, focusing on partnerships with local agencies, grassroots groups, educational institutions, BIAs, and various City divisions to provide locally relevant opportunities and supports.
- Improved Health and Well-being, offering a range of tailored and responsive programs, services, and support networks that address the physical, social, emotional, and educational needs of meet the needs of vulnerable populations, such as seniors, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities.

The report outlines an equitable, location-based methodology to guide expansion, including alignment with the advancement of Complete Communities, use of equity metrics, geographic distribution, as well as community leadership and resident activation and the alignment with planning frameworks and area-based plans. Procedural, financial and legal considerations for expanding the Association of Community Centres are included, and the framework will place priority on understanding programming requirements, identifying existing space and locating potential development opportunities, formulating a capital resourcing strategy, and establishing a local Program Advisory Body.

Social Development, Finance and Administration will coordinate a City of Toronto Association of Community Centres Interdivisional Working Group to provide continuous input, references, and leadership to implement the Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework. The Interdivisional Working Group will develop an Implementation Plan and Resourcing Strategy including shortlisted areas and sites for expansion, by Q3 2025, for potential consideration as part of the 2026 budget process. The Working Group will explore the potential application of the Framework to existing development projects as well as new opportunities. A multi-stakeholder, city-wide Expansion Advisory Group will also be developed to guide the expansion of the Association of Community Centre model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework shown in Attachment 1, and direct City staff to apply it when considering space development opportunities.
2. City Council direct the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, the Chief

People Officer, People and Equity, the Executive Director, Financial Planning Division, the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management Services, the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Chief Executive Officer, CreateTO, in consultation with the City Manager's Office, the City solicitor and other relevant divisions and agencies, to develop an Implementation Plan and Resourcing Strategy and report back in Q3-2025 with recommendations to advance the City of Toronto's Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework, including shortlisted areas for expansion, and indication of the required resources.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report seeks approval for the Association of Community Centres (AOCCs) Expansion Framework and Divisional collaboration and support to implement the framework.

The City of Toronto currently has ten centres that are managed, operated, and maintained by volunteer Boards of Management, which are collectively referred to as the Association of Community Centres. The City has a Relationship Framework with the Association of Community Centres, wherein the City provides each Centre with facility and core administrative funding, subject to approval through the annual budget process, with the centres raising the required programming funds through membership and program fees, grants, special projects and philanthropic donations. Under the Relationship Framework, the City also provides each Centre with access to a City-owned or City-leased facility. Social Development, Finance and Administration is the program liaison for the Association of Community Centres, with the City Manager's Office being responsible for governance, legislative matters, municipal code provisions, board relations, and the Relationship Framework.

Core administrative funding budgeted from the City in 2024 for existing medium to large-size AOCCs ranges from approximately \$0.868 million to \$2.268 million. The estimated cost to construct a new AOCC would be \$20-\$60 million for 20,000 to 40,000 square feet of space, with an additional 2-3 percent required annually for long-term state-of-good-repair (SOGR) costs. Savings could be realized by re-purposing surplus City buildings, co-locating City and Community Services and/or leasing City facilities and lands at concessional rates to establish additional AOCCs.

There are no immediate additional financial implications arising from the approval of the recommendations in this report. Funding requirements to expand the Association of Community Centres, as per the Expansion Framework, will be submitted for consideration as part of future budget processes subject to the City's financial and resource capacity against other critical City-wide operating and capital priorities.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer have reviewed this report and agree with the financial implications as presented in the Financial Impact section.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

In 2001, when Council adopted the Social Development Strategy for the City, Council recognized the important contribution of community programs towards enhancing social equity, social well-being, and resident engagement. The City directly provides social, recreational and community programming and indirectly through the provision of funding and other support mechanisms to community-based organizations. In serving and engaging their local communities, the Boards of Management of the Association of Community Centres serve vulnerable populations across the City of Toronto and receive funding to support equity-deserving communities to have improved access to quality services and facilities. Association of Community Centres have a demonstrated positive equity impact on Indigenous peoples and Black residents, among other diverse equity-deserving community members, including other racialized residents, women and gender diverse people, seniors, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, youth, newcomers, those with low-income levels, and those living with disabilities, among others.

DECISION HISTORY

On November 8, 2023, City Council adopted the report, entitled "Association of Community Centres Settlement of Operating Results for the Year Ended 2021", and directed the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to undertake a feasibility study on opportunities to add new Association of Community Centres in the City, funded from unspent Association of Community Centres funds for 2021, and to report on the scope of the study to the January 11, 2024 meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EX9.6>

At its meeting on December 9, 10, 2015, City Council adopted the report, entitled "Association of Community Centres Settlement of Operating Results for Year 2014" and requested the City Manager to write to the Association of Community Centre Boards and reinforce with the Boards the request to seek Executive Director, Financial Planning (delegated by City Council in 2008) approval for over expenditures before incurring them and remind them of their responsibility to comply with the City's financial policies.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-85658.pdf>

At its meeting on April 12 and 13, 2011, City Council adopted the report entitled "Managing Through Agencies and Corporations" which requested the City Manager review the practices and governance of a number of City agencies including AOCCs. Council endorsed accountability mechanisms such as requiring Council to approve the board by-laws of all agencies that regulate the internal conduct of the business and affairs of the agency.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2011.EX4.6>

At its meeting on September 25, 26 and 27, 2006, City Council adopted the Relationship Framework for the City of Toronto and the Boards of Management for the 10 community centres known as the AOCCs. The main purpose of the Relationship Framework is to delegate authority to the Boards of Management to oversee the

business and affairs of the community centre; set out delegations of authority, responsibilities and obligations of the Boards and reporting requirements; and the conditions that promote an effective and collaborative relationship between the City and the Boards and supports provided by the City to the Boards.

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/971c-spc-community-centres.pdf>

On April 14, 15, and 16, 2003, City Council adopted Policy and Finance Committee Report 3, Clause 11, entitled “Governance Review of the Association of Community Centres (AOCCs)”. Among others, Council determined that the City continue to provide core administration funding to the AOCCs; the Centres' Boards are expected to operate within their approved budgets; that administrative surplus be returned to the City and administrative deficits be funded by the City, upon Council approval.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2003/agendas/council/cc030414/pof3rpt/cl011.pdf>

On July 24, 25 and 26, 2001, City Council adopted Policy and Finance Committee Report 11, Clause 6, entitled “Association of Community Centres (AOCCs), Community Centres Deficits”. Among others, Council directed that the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer report on the AOCCs surplus/deficit upon receipt of the annual audited financial statements, as the practice in the former City of Toronto.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2001/agendas/council/cc010724/pof11rpt/cl006.pdf>

COMMENTS

Community and social service organizations provide a critical social infrastructure and are essential components in the development of complete communities. Community organizations are important sector partners, offering vital social services, increasing social cohesion and resilience among diverse neighbourhoods, driving inclusive local economic development, and advancing the City's strategic goals while aligning with other place-based and equity-focused strategies.

As the City of Toronto undergoes continued development and growth, the need for additional community-based social infrastructure becomes increasingly important. Community organizations are facing escalating pressures from real estate, redevelopment, and financial challenges; conditions which are leading to a gradual decommissioning and loss of vital social purpose infrastructure spaces across Toronto. Since 2020, community programs and social services have increased by 29% in Ontario, and the non-profit sector faces significant challenges, with program and operating costs projected to rise by 131% by 2026.¹ In a recent study conducted by the Toronto Social Purpose Real Estate Reference Group, 64.6% of non-profits surveyed in the Greater Toronto Area indicated that the lack of affordable space is a major barrier to their operations, and 59.7% also said that their current space is insufficient to address organizational needs.²

The deficit of community service facilities in neighbourhoods disproportionately affects Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups who rely on access to social and health

¹ [Ontario Nonprofit Network. \(2023\). State of the Sector: At a tipping point – policy report](#)

² [Toronto Social Purpose Real Estate Reference Group. \(2022\). Community space survey report](#)

programs. Recognizing the significant public benefit provided by community-led spaces, the City must remain committed to the procurement of future spaces and enhance sector capacity to leverage real estate assets effectively.

A Renewed Approach to Developing Social Infrastructure Using the Association of Community Centres Model

This report offers a renewed approach to developing City-owned, community-operated spaces under the Association of Community Centres (AOCCs) model. This strategy is in line with the City of Toronto's ongoing commitment³ to developing policies and partnerships that improve access to quality, affordable facilities, and spaces to provide community services and programming.

The City of Toronto has ten centres that are managed, operated and maintained by volunteer Boards of Management, which are collectively referred to as the Association of Community Centres. Although the centres are designated as part of an association, they operate independently as ten separate local and city boards under the City of Toronto Act, 2006. The centres are multi-purpose facilities that provide public space, programs, and services to meet the recreation and social needs of local communities. They are committed to fostering a sense of community, promoting civic engagement, and enhancing the quality of life through their community, recreational and social service programs.

Table 1: List of Association of Community Centres Locations and Size

Community Centre	Address	Size (Square Feet)	Ward
The 519 Community Centre	519 Church Street, Toronto, ON. M4Y 2C9	28,255	13
Applegrove Community Complex	60 Woodfield Road, Toronto ON M4L 2W6	7,911	14
Cecil Community Centre	58 Cecil Street, Toronto, ON. M5T 1N6	5,764	11
Central Eglinton Community Centre	160 Eglinton Ave. East, Toronto ON M4P 3B5	13,875	12
Community Centre 55	97 Main Street, Toronto ON M4E 2V6	9,000	19
Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre	86 Blake Street, Toronto, ON. M4J 3C9	19,901	14
Ralph Thornton Community Centre	765 Queen Street East, Toronto, ON. M4M 1H3	18,277	14
Scadding Court Community Centre	707 Dundas Street West, Toronto, ON. M5T 2W6	35,530*	10
Swansea Town Hall Community Centre	95 Lavinia Ave., Toronto ON. M6S 3H9	11,695	4

³ [For Public Benefit: City of Toronto Framework for Working with Community-Based Not-For-Profit Organizations](#)

Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre (formerly Harbourfront Community Centre)	627 Queens Quay West, Toronto, ON. M5V 3G3	44,950*	10
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* The Scadding Court Community Centre facility includes an indoor pool managed by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The pool, tot pool, pool storage area, change rooms, sauna, staff change room and office are 11,162 square feet in size and have been excluded from the calculation of square footage.

* The Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre facility includes a TDSB elementary school and childcare space, which are 78,265 square feet in total and have been excluded from the calculation of square footage.

Historical Context and Key Components of the Association of Community Centres Model

The Association of Community Centres and their Boards of Management were established through pre-amalgamation community plans and community decision-making processes that recommended to City Council the community centre Board model as the most appropriate mechanism to meet the needs of the local community at that time.⁴

A. Governance Structure

Each Board of Management was established by way of a by-law which included governance information such as board composition and delegated authorities to manage their respective facility. The governance structures of the Boards of Management are set out in the Former City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 25, Community and Recreation Centres. The City Council-approved [Relationship Framework](#) further defines the relationship between the City and the Boards of Management and sets out additional details on City Council's delegation of authority, operating guidelines, and policy requirements for each Board.

Association of Community Centres staff are City employees who carry out programming approved by the Board of Management. Members of the Board of Management are nominated by the community they serve (e.g., individuals living in a designated catchment area) and are appointed by Council. The City Councillor of the Ward in which the Centre is located is a member of the Board by right of office. Although the ten Board-run Centres are designated as part of an association, they operate independently as ten separate local and City-boards functioning within the authorities delegated to them by Council.

B. Role of Council

Council reviews Board of Management requests to amend Chapter 25, other by-laws, Council policies or existing governance structures. Council considers community members for appointment to the Boards of Management. The member of City Council for the Ward within which the Centre is located is a Board member by right of office. The role of the Ward Councillor on the Board of Management is to:

- Perform as part of the Board.
- Balance the role as the custodian of the City's tax dollars and representative of Council policies, with that of fiduciary and other duties as a board member.
- Provide specialized advice and expertise to aid in decision-making.

⁴ [Relationship Framework](#) for Boards of Management of Association of Community Centres

- Provide an essential link between the body and Council such that Council positions can be conveyed to the body and vice-versa.

C. Funding Mechanism

Under the Relationship Framework, the City of Toronto provides each Centre with access to a City-owned or City-managed facility and core administrative funding. Programming funds are raised through membership and program fees, as well as donations and grants.

Core administration costs include all salary and benefit costs related to administration, program and volunteer coordination, reception, maintenance and security; materials and supplies related to administration and maintenance; furniture and equipment for general use of the community centre; annual insurance premiums costs, purchased services such as, but not limited to utilities, printing, and auditing costs; and building repairs up to \$50,000 in Centres where the Board has been delegated maintenance responsibility. Core administration costs are eligible for direct City funding, subject to approval through the City's annual budget process. Core administrative funding budgeted from the City in 2024 for existing medium to large size Centres ranges from approximately \$0.868 million to \$2.268 million.

The Boards of Management are responsible for securing and managing funding for programs and services. In addition to raising funds through donations, membership and program fees, the Boards are eligible to apply for City funding through grant programs or other funding opportunities (e.g., provincial, and federal funding programs, foundations, United Way Greater Toronto).

D. City Supports and Services

A Relationship Framework⁵ sets out the responsibilities of the City's corporate supports (Article 8.1) to the Association of Community Centres Boards of Management. City divisions provide human resources, labour relations, technology services, legal, financial, real estate and lease support directly to each of the ten community centres. These divisions include People & Equity, Technology Services, Corporate Real Estate Management Services, Financial Planning Division, Financial Management Services, Legal Services, City Clerk's Office, City Manager's Office, and Social Development, Finance and Administration.

Through the Relationship Framework, Council directed that the Centres be functionally aligned with the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division. The Director of Community Resources in Social Development, Finance and Administration, reporting to the Divisions' Executive Director is the Program Liaison for the Association of Community Centres. The City Manager's Office remains responsible for governance, legislative matters, municipal code provisions, board relations, and the Relationship Framework.

⁵ [Relationship Framework](#) for Boards of Management of Association of Community Centres

Key Success Factors of the Association of Community Centres

The key factors that contribute to the success of the Association of Community Centres model are clear: active community engagement, responsive programming, financial stability and independence, and the co-location of City services and community services. These factors align with the model's goals of building community, encouraging civic participation, and enriching people's lives through various programs. Additionally, the model's funding structure and the co-location of services play significant roles in its effectiveness. These aspects of success and their positive effects have been confirmed through discussions with the Association of Community Centres and by reviewing past financial and program reports.

Community and Civic Engagement: The Centres provide residents with opportunities for skill-building, leadership development, and civic engagement. Through training programs, workshops, membership and volunteer opportunities, they equip community members with capacity building, tools and resources to play active roles in shaping their community. Boards of Management further provide civic engagement opportunities to local community members who are appointed by City Council to represent the interests of the community in guiding the work of the Centres.

Responsive Programming: The Centres actively engage with residents, community groups, and stakeholders to identify the needs, challenges, and priorities of the local community. By involving community members in the planning and development of programs and services, the Centers ensure that programs and services are culturally responsive, contextually relevant, and responsive to the diverse needs of the community. This collaborative approach leads to relevant and effective interventions that address barriers to access for low-income and equity-deserving communities.

Financial Stability, Diversification and Return on Investment: In addition to receiving access to a City-owned or City-leased facility, the Centres operate on a hybrid model, receiving core administrative funds while also generating revenue for community-responsive programming. The City's contribution towards core administration empowers the Association of Community Centres to explore and capitalize on additional funding avenues, thereby amplifying their program outcomes. As per the latest audited financial statements, in 2022, the City's operational contribution constituted 40% of the total funds for the Centres, which they augmented by securing an additional 60% through strategic fundraising initiatives, membership fees, and grants, including those from United Way Greater Toronto, Children's Services, Community Services Partnership program, and trusteeship grants for resident-led groups.⁶

⁶ Based on 2022 audited financial information in Attachment 2, the range of funding for core administrative costs for existing medium to large-sized Centres is \$0.785 million to \$1.903 million. However, core administrative funding budgeted from the City in 2024 for existing medium to large-sized Centres ranges from \$0.868 million to \$2.268 million. It should be noted there is a moderately strong correlation between the size of the Centre and the core administrative funding required. This is driven primarily by the need for additional salaries and benefits and utilities costs in larger centres.

Co-location of City and Community Services: Co-location of City and community services offers several benefits including cost efficiency and savings for infrastructure, overhead, and administrative resources. Co-locating City and community services provides cohesive access for community members and fosters collaboration and communication among different service providers, enabling them to work together more seamlessly to address complex community needs. Overall, co-location, where it exists, has been known to increase efficiency, collaboration, and accessibility for residents.

The key success factors are directly connected to the effectiveness, sustainability, and short and long-term impact of the Association of Community Centres model in their respective communities. The mix of key success factors is unique to the Association of Community Centres model, which sets it apart from the broader ecosystem of City-managed space development pathways, creating the opportunity for the sharing of best practices, applications, and improvement.

Expansion Considerations Amidst an Ecosystem of Space Development Options

The City of Toronto provides an ecosystem of space development models designed to leverage City assets to support community needs. Identification of the needs and intended outcomes, along with a cost-benefit analysis are necessary pre-cursors to making any determination on the preferred application of any one model to a space development opportunity.

The Association of Community Centres model offers a unique governance model and responds to a particular set of community preconditions, which must be informed by an analysis and awareness of the strengths and limitations of other operating models for community services at the City of Toronto.

City-Owned and City-Operated Spaces

A City-owned and operated space typically refers to any facility which is owned, managed and utilized by the City for public use or services. These spaces can vary widely in purpose and function and include parks, community recreation centres, libraries, and municipal buildings.

Community Recreation Centres deliver recreation programs and services for all ages. Typical facilities include gyms, pools, arenas, weight/cardio rooms, multi-purpose spaces and dedicated spaces for youth and seniors. Over 126 centres provide programs and services that support participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community well-being. These centres benefit residents and families and are venues for community-building, and skill development and contribute in a significant way to the social, economic, and environmental priorities of the City of Toronto. Most centres are City-owned, and some are school-owned or located in partnered facilities. Thirty-eight centres offer free programming, as well as some free permitting for non-profit groups. Community

Recreation Centres are operated by Parks, Forestry and Recreation and are staffed, maintained and funded in part, or in full, by the City of Toronto.⁷

In all City districts, Parks, Forestry and Recreation have partnerships and co-location agreements with City services and non-profit agencies, such as Children's Services, Toronto Public Library, and food security organizations. This model of co-location will continue to be applied as the community's need for broader social and community service grows. Some of these opportunities for co-locations are identified during the planning phases of new or revitalized centres, whereas others are implemented through minor capital changes made to a centre or through entering into agreements with a third party.

City-Owned and Nonprofit-Operated Spaces

The City of Toronto leases City-owned or City-managed spaces to eligible non-profit organizations to deliver cultural, recreational, health and social services to meet Council's strategic goals and priorities. The Council-approved Community Space Tenancy Policy sets out a process for leasing City-owned or City-managed spaces at below-market rent to eligible non-profit organizations. There are currently approximately 100 tenancies leased at a below-market rental rate, either operating under the Community Space Tenancy Policy or through historical or special lease arrangements. New and additional Community Space Tenancy facilities are secured, when possible, through development applications, the City's surplus and transfer process, and the Housing Now portfolio. The City is not directly involved in the management or governance of the community organizations.

Leasing City-Owned Lands

The City offers long-term, nominal land leases for communities to design, develop and operate independent organizations on City land. The model is currently being proposed to support the development of the proposed Jane-Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts ([2022.GL31.16](#)) and the Tamil Community Centre ([2021.GL27.11](#)). Facilities will prioritize community needs, deliver community-responsive programming, and ensure public access. The City provides support through the provision of land leases at a lower-than-market rate, allowing community groups to pursue grants and fundraising. This shift in funding responsibility allows non-profit organizations to leverage the City's contribution of land to secure other funding streams. For a land lease, the City does not have a role in the governance or operation of the community facility, however, the City will secure community access through the agreements.

⁷ Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 10-year Capital Budget and Plan includes funding to support the planning, design, and construction of 25 Community Recreation Centres (15 new and ten revitalized). These centres may provide opportunities to co-locate additional City-supported programs and services. As these centres are developed and brought into operation, opportunities for community governance of components of these facilities that do not provide a recreation function or duplicate Parks, Forestry and Recreation's programming will be considered.

Implementing a Strategic Approach to Advance Community Development Outcomes in Future Association of Community Centres

Association of Community Centres serve as focal points for programs and services aimed at improving the well-being of community members and increasing community and neighbourhood resilience within a specific geographical area. This community development approach is unique to the Association of Community Centres model in comparison with traditional Community Recreation Centres. Also given the City's robust recreation-based infrastructure and Parks, Forestry and Recreation's [Facilities Master Plan](#), this report recommends expansion of the Association of Community Centres model to drive the following community development outcomes.

Social Connectedness and Cohesion: Future Centres should continue contributing to fostering social connectedness and cohesion among community members through the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, access to barrier-free spaces, diverse programming, volunteer opportunities and community engagement. These are assessed through measures of social networks, sense of belonging, trust, and social support within the community.

Community Resilience: Future Centres should continue focusing on strengthening resilience within communities including increasing access to health-related resources and services, engaging and prioritizing vulnerable or marginalized groups, and increasing community social connections and collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, social challenges and dynamics, and other societal factors have further magnified the role these Centres play in providing safe and accessible indoor (and outdoor) space for a variety of locally-identified purposes.

Local Leadership and Collaboration: Existing Centres are part of a larger Association that serves as a network and community of practice, sharing learnings, best practices and approaches. Future Centres should continue to focus on local collaboration with agencies, grassroots groups, educational institutions, BIAs, and other stakeholder groups. In addition, future Centres should continue to partner with various City divisions to maximize service opportunities and outcomes. Working with a diverse array of organizations and stakeholders helps community centers increase their social networks, enhance impact, and build stronger communities.

Improved Health and Wellbeing: Future Centres should continue to serve as a valuable resource for promoting improved health and well-being by offering a range of programs, services, and support networks that address the physical, social, emotional, and educational needs of individuals and communities. Furthermore, Centres should continue to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, such as seniors, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities. By offering tailored programs and support services, the centers address specific health challenges faced by these groups and promote overall well-being.

An Equitable, Location-Based Methodology to Discern Expansion

Determining where and how to locate new Association of Community Centres entails analysis of diverse, interdependent factors including alignment with the development of

Complete Communities, equity metrics, geographic disbursement, community leadership and resident activation, and alignment with local area needs and priorities.

Developing Complete Communities: Complete Communities are a key element in the City's Official Plan and set out a vision for how to guide growth and development. These are safe, walkable, mixed-income communities that create a sense of place and enable residents to easily access the necessities of daily life. Equitable distribution of services and amenities through the development of Complete Communities also reduces disparities by addressing the needs of marginalized and underserved populations.

Equity Metrics: In alignment with the City's place-based and population-focused equity strategies, an analysis of socioeconomic inequities across Toronto's 158 social planning neighbourhoods would be required. To determine community priorities, an examination of disaggregated data across demographic categories would be required to identify and prioritize the most pressing social needs within an area, such as access to services or social supports. Collaboration with stakeholders including local organizations, government agencies, and community leaders will ensure programming gaps in community services are identified to inform space needs.

Geographic Distribution: Equitable geographic distribution of community services and facilities should be considered when assessing potential Association of Community Centres expansion opportunities. This will help to ensure equitable access to essential programs, services, and facilities. Existing Centres are primarily located in the former pre-amalgamation City of Toronto. Expansion of the model should prioritize underserved areas of the city, as well as those areas where projected population growth and development activity will strain the capacity of existing community facilities, programs and services.

Community Leadership and Resident Activation: Priority would be placed on mapping and building upon social networks, as well as resident and organizational leadership as indicators of community development, neighbourhood revitalization and resilience. Various resident-led networks in Toronto have been initiated as part of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy and Toronto Community Housing Corporation initiatives. This leadership also exists in the form of community associations and grassroots groups.

Alignment to Planning Frameworks, Community Development Plans and Revitalization Communities: The expansion of the Association of Community Centres model should align with related planning frameworks and other area-based planning studies. This will ensure investments are tailored to address the needs, priorities, and vision of local communities, while also enhancing local community capacity; often articulated through Official Plan and Secondary Plan policies, as well as supporting Community Services and Facilities Studies and Community Development Plans. Expansion of the Association of Community Centres model provides an opportunity to address these identified community needs in a responsive, locally informed way. Additionally, expansion should be prioritized to occur in areas where other social infrastructure and housing projects for vulnerable

communities are occurring, such as Toronto Community Housing Corporation Revitalization areas, Housing Now sites, and other redevelopment projects.

Procedural, Financial and Legal Considerations for Expanding the Association of Community Centres

The Association of Community Centres portfolio has not been expanded in more than 30 years. Therefore, expansion of the Association of Community Centres model necessitates a strategic due diligence approach. This entails reviewing and pinpointing existing space and potential development opportunities, formulating a capital resourcing strategy, and establishing a local Program Advisory Body and a new Board of Management.

New Construction Opportunities: In pursuing new development opportunities, a structured approach is necessary to identify land availability and develop a high-level building program. Space assessments will be informed by community needs and prioritized to benefit underserved areas. Expansion of the Association of Community Centres model will typically coincide with new developments and on City-owned sites, and when feasible, integrate with other essential services such as affordable housing, childcare centers, employment services, public health and/or recreation facilities.

Capital Costs and Resourcing Approaches: Approximately \$20-60 million⁸ is required for the construction of facilities spanning 20,000 to 40,000 square feet. This estimate, costed at 2024 construction rates, includes hard costs for new construction and excludes related soft construction costs. An additional two to three percent, per annum, should additionally be projected for long-term state-of-good-repair (SOGR) expenses. Repurposing existing City-owned facilities presents an alternative, potentially avoiding land acquisition costs and offering potential savings on the initial capital outlay, depending on the extent of immediate renovations needed and long-term investments required to meet program requirements and to ensure the existing facilities remain safe, operational and accessible for continued use.

Table 2 outlines the capital resourcing approaches that will be explored to facilitate the expansion of the Association of Community Centres model in new development projects.

Table 2: Association of Community Centres Capital Resourcing Approaches

Funding Method	Description
Capital Funding	Funding requirements to expand AOCCs, as per the Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework, will be submitted for consideration as part of future budget processes, subject to the City's financial and resource capacity against other critical City-wide operating and capital priorities.

⁸ Valuation is costed at 2024 construction rates, and derived from past City of Toronto capital projects and the [Altus Group 2024 Canadian Cost Guide](#) an industry benchmark of real estate development and infrastructure construction hard costs across all asset classes in major Canadian cities.

Funding Method	Description
External Funding	External sources of funding will be investigated, including federal and provincial funding opportunities. Philanthropic funding opportunities will also be explored.

Program Advisory Body: Establishing a Program Advisory Body is essential for ensuring community input and representation in the development process. This advisory group will provide advice and input to City staff on service needs and program development and may function as a precursor for the future Board of Management for a new Centre within an identified neighbourhood. The Association of Community Centre Boards of Management are composed of public members appointed through the City's Public Appointments process, and the majority of public members must be residents of the Centre's catchment area.

Legal Considerations and Development of a New Board of Management: The creation of a new Centre will require City Council to create a new local, City board under the City of Toronto Act, 2006. City Council will need to enact a by-law which creates the new board and sets out matters including its composition and authorities delegated to it. The existing Association of Community Centres, and their structures, are included in the former City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 25, Community and Recreation Centres, and the new board could be added through an amendment to that chapter. As the powers delegated to the Association of Community Centre boards and their relationship with the City are also generally set out in the Relationship Framework, City Council will also need to amend the Relationship Framework to include the details of the new board. The composition and authorities delegated to each Centre differ (see the schedules in the Relationship Framework) and as such, City Council will have to set out the details of those matters for any new board in creating by-laws and amendments to the Relationship Framework.⁹

Next Steps for Implementation of the Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework

The expansion of the Association of Community Centres model requires a deliberate and proactive approach. Throughout 2024, Social Development, Finance and Administration will establish and coordinate a City of Toronto Association of Community Centres Interdivisional Working Group to provide continuous input, references, and leadership to implement the Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework (Attachment 1).

The Interdivisional Working Group will develop an Implementation Plan and Resourcing Strategy by Q3 2025, for potential consideration as part of the 2026 budget processes,

⁹ The Association of Community Centres model is predicated on these local and city boards receiving funding from the City but also fundraising for their programming. Certain Centres have indicated having their own charitable status, including the ability to issue tax receipts, is beneficial in the course of this fundraising work. Given that 30 years have passed since the Association of Community Centres model was developed by the City, new frameworks around charitable status and the issuance of tax receipts may be in existence. Changes in this field would be investigated and considered alongside any future expansion of the portfolio.

subject to the City's financial and resource capacity against other critical city-wide operating impacts. The Implementation Plan and Resourcing Strategy will include shortlisted areas and sites for expansion, conversion or co-location, construction timelines and targets, stakeholder engagement pathways, resources required to advance construction, and ongoing implementation and expansion of the AOCC Expansion Framework. The Working Group will also explore the application of the Framework to new opportunities, as well as existing development projects or City-owned and City-managed facilities.

A multi-stakeholder, city-wide Expansion Advisory Group will also be developed to provide expertise and guidance for targeted expansion of the Association of Community Centre model. The group will include representatives from various sectors such as City divisions, community organizations, existing Association of Community Centres, developers, funders, and government bodies at provincial and federal levels, as well as Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving community members.

A 'Term Sheet' for the Association of Community Centres will outline responsibilities, terms, and conditions for facility design, construction, commissioning, and transfer. A comprehensive Base Building Condition Schedule will specify precise space requirements, ensuring better quality control, improved site readiness, and standardized space allocations to accommodate future occupants, while enhancing oversight of physical asset delivery.

As areas and locations are identified, a comprehensive community engagement strategy would be designed, including the development of a Program Advisory Body made up of various local stakeholders, community partners and service users to provide advice to staff on the local expansion of the model.

Furthermore, in collaboration with other relevant City divisions and agencies, as well as the existing Boards of Management for the Association of Community Centres, staff will engage in continuous improvement of the model's current governance, operations and service delivery practices.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework

Attachment 2: City of Toronto Funding for Association of Community Centres 2022

ATTACHMENT 1

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY CENTRES EXPANSION FRAMEWORK

The Association of Community Centres (AOCC) Expansion Framework consists of a clear goal, and four guiding principles to guide the City of Toronto to expand the AOCC model, including guiding principles, outcomes to be achieved, and next steps for application. The application of the AOCC Expansion Framework will include a monitoring approach to assess success in meeting intended outcomes.

Goal

Targeted expansion of the Association of Community Centres (AOCC) model in development projects and City-owned or City-managed sites.

Guiding Principles

1. **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensure that the expansion efforts prioritize inclusivity and equity, aiming to serve diverse communities across Toronto. This includes considering the needs of underserved populations and disparities in access to community services in neighbourhoods where services are most crucial and disproportionately affect Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups.
2. **Community Participation and Leadership:** Ensure that the expansion reflects the needs and priorities of the people it aims to serve, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment.
3. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Foster collaboration and partnerships with other organizations, stakeholders, and government agencies to leverage resources, expertise, and support for the expansion efforts.
4. **Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure processes are consistent, transparent, and accountable to all stakeholders. Provide mechanisms for feedback and accountability.

Outcomes

The Association of Community Centres plays a role in community development and social service provision by serving as focal points for programs and services aimed at improving the well-being of community members and increasing community and neighbourhood resilience within a specific geographical area. Expansion of the model requires strategies for evaluation and alignment with the following long-term outcomes:

1. **Social Connectedness and Cohesion,** contributing to fostering social connectedness and cohesion among community members through the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, access to barrier-free spaces, diverse programming, volunteer opportunities and community engagement.

2. Community Resilience, including increasing access to health-related resources and services, engaging and prioritizing vulnerable or marginalized groups, and increasing community social connections and collaboration.
3. Local Leadership and Collaboration, focusing on collaboration with local agencies, grassroots groups, educational institutions, BIAs, and various City divisions.
4. Improved Health and Wellbeing, offering a range of tailored and responsive programs, services, and support networks that address the physical, social, emotional, and educational needs to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, such as seniors, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities.

Application

In applying the Association of Community Centres Expansion Framework, several interdependent factors must be assessed to implement an equitable, location-based methodology to where and how to locate new Centres. These factors include alignment with the development of Complete Communities, equity metrics, geographic disbursement, community leadership and resident activation, and alignment with local area needs and priorities.

1. Developing Complete Communities: Priority will be placed on developing Complete Communities with a focus on equitable distribution of services and amenities to reduce disparities faced by marginalized and underserved populations.
2. Equity Metrics: Analysis of socioeconomic inequities across Toronto's 158 social planning neighbourhoods in alignment with the City's place-based and population-focused equity strategies.
3. Geographic Distribution: Equitable geographic distribution of community services and facilities across Toronto will be considered when assessing potential Association of Community Centres expansion opportunities to ensure access to essential programs, services, and facilities.
4. Community Leadership and Resident Activation: Mapping and building upon areas with strong social networks, as well as resident and organizational leadership as indicators of community development, neighbourhood revitalization and resilience.
5. Alignment to Planning Frameworks, Community Development Plans and Revitalization Communities: Expansion of the model will be aligned with related planning frameworks and other area-based planning studies to ensure investments are tailored to address the needs, priorities, and vision of local communities, while also enhancing local community capacity. Consideration will be given to areas where social infrastructure and housing for vulnerable communities are being developed.

ATTACHMENT 2

CITY OF TORONTO, CORE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING FOR ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY CENTRES IN THE 2022 FISCAL YEAR

Attachment 2 outlines financial information from 2022, the last audited fiscal year for the Association of Community Centres.

Association of Community Centres	Total Revenues 2022	City of Toronto Core Administrative Funding 2022*
The 519 Community Centre	\$8,708,802	\$1,902,865
Applegrove Community Complex	\$1,478,741	\$584,307
Cecil Community Centre	\$1,115,586	\$797,124
Central Eglinton Community Centre	\$1,000,122	\$785,177
Community Centre 55	\$809,583	\$799,548
Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre	\$2,632,512	\$661,661
Ralph Thornton Community Centre	\$1,289,792	\$801,692
Scadding Court Community Centre	\$3,411,493	\$980,978
Swansea Town Hall Community Centre	\$703,246	\$600,249
Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre	\$2,296,896	\$1,512,112
Total	\$23,446,773	\$9,425,713

* Council-approved.