

From: [Rob Howarth](#)
To: [Economic and Community Development](#)
Subject: [External Sender] My comments for 2024.EC16.2 on October 23, 2024 Economic and Community Development Committee
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To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the October 23, 2024 Economic and Community Development Committee meeting on item 2024.EC16.2, Sidewalks to Skylines: An Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (2025-2035)

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Dear Councillor Bravo and Committee members,

I am writing on behalf of the **Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (TNC)**, a network of thirty multi-service community agencies across Toronto dedicated to strengthening local neighbourhoods and enabling diverse communities to work together to promote justice and a healthy life for all. Our TNC network is also a member of the **Toronto Nonprofit Network**, and an active partner with **Social Planning Toronto** - organizations that we know share many of our concerns regarding the inadequacy of the 10-year economic development plan you are considering today.

As a blueprint for increasing the levels of economic inclusion in our City, we feel that the plan before you is simply not up to the task. It has neglected a realm of economic activity and vibrancy that contributes much to our city's capacity to generate economic inclusion - that of the nonprofit sector. This sector, according to the city's own policy framework [For Public Benefit](#), "Contributes at least \$14 billion in annual revenue, which is double the reported impact of Toronto's tourism industries and represents over 8% of Toronto's GDP".

While spokespersons from the nonprofit sector seem to have been engaged in the 10-year plan's consultations, there are no recommendations or objectives in the report before you today which would strengthen our opportunities to leverage Toronto's non-profit sector to generate economic inclusion. Some examples of these initiatives could include:

1) Work with the nonprofit sector to generate strategies for ensuring that all Toronto neighbourhoods have affordable community spaces available for the cultural, social service and other activities they provide - pushing back on the economic displacement that is occurring, documented by research undertaken by the Toronto Nonprofit Network, and profiled in a current exhibit at Metro Hall by [United Way Toronto and The University of Toronto's School of Cities](#). Recommendations that could have been integrated with the ten year plan to address these challenges have been previously outlined by the Toronto Nonprofit Network:

- Establish city decision-making processes and targets that expand the opportunities for Toronto nonprofit organizations to steward land development and redevelopment projects in ways that advance public benefits (including affordable/accessible housing

and community space).

- Ensure all municipal real estate and (re)development practices intentionally seek to expand access to secure and affordable community-use spaces for nonprofit community organizations and grassroots groups. This includes better community consultation processes and higher standard for assessing community services needs (space, programming) in areas around any development.
- Ensure a process for community consultations/community space needs before selling, leasing, or redeveloping publicly-owned lands - creating an impact report on the expansion or loss of affordable nonprofit community space, and associated community demands.

2) Integrate targets to expand the nonprofit sector, and levels of community and public ownership in economic markets. Expanding the nonprofit sector will benefit the overall economy. As an employer and economic driver of our city, employing over 105,000 full-time workers, nonprofits are in a position to amplify public benefits, and inclusive economic outcomes for Torontonians in many ways - including providing good jobs that have greater resilience during economic fluctuations than for-profit firms. The City's economic plans could more fully leverage this economic vitality and sustainability if they included recommendations such as:

- Evaluate and set targets for **expanding the percentage of publicly and community-owned (co-op, land trusts) affordable rental housing units** needed to ensure Toronto's overall housing market can counterbalance the current **for-profit development outcomes** that have us losing more affordable rental units to (re)development each month than we can replace.
- Set targets for the City's existing Community Benefit and Social Procurement policies that **expand the proportion of non-profit, co-op and community (small-business) owned participation in private markets** (e.g. construction, food services).
- Partner with the nonprofit sector to **advocate with the Province and Federal governments for funding reforms** that support decent work and nonprofit resiliency.

3) Articulate a bolder vision for inclusive and sustainable economic development and the building blocks to realize it.

- Engage your nonprofit partners in efforts to articulate and champion the expansion of **our care and creative economies** - where public and nonprofit partners can collaborate more fully to expand inclusive economic opportunities for all Torontonians. This planning work could build upon the many "building back better" strategies that have been generated over the previous years to more effectively respond to the economic, environmental and social challenges we so urgently need to tackle together.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Rob Howarth
co-executive director
Toronto Neighbourhood Centres