Federation of South Toronto RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

October 8, 2025

Olivia Chow
Mayor
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Mayor_Chow@toronto.ca

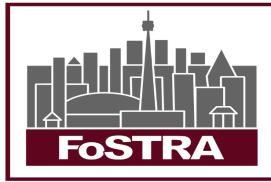**Subject: Adoption and Implementation of Social Development Plans in 2026**

Dear Mayor Chow,

The Federation of South Toronto Residents Associations (FoSTRA) is a community-based organization that currently represents 29 residents' associations (RAs) in the five downtown wards – Wards 4, 9, 10, 11 and 13 – and, through these RAs, hundreds of thousands of Toronto residents.

We are writing to share our recently approved **White Paper on Social Development Plans**. This paper outlines a vision for advancing equity, community well-being, and resident-led planning across Toronto through the adoption of Social Development Plans (SDPs).

The Regent Park Social Development Plan has demonstrated that investing in coordinated, resident-driven strategies for community safety, employment, economic development, and inclusion can achieve significant results. FoSTRA believes that this model should be adopted and expanded citywide to more at-risk neighbourhoods in 2026.

Our White Paper suggests an initial expansion to **six** neighbourhoods in 2026, with the public funds administered by a public trustee, and resident groups in these neighbourhoods being mentored by members of the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association.

We respectfully request a **meeting with Mayor Olivia Chow** to discuss next steps toward adoption and implementation. With municipal elections scheduled for 2026, it is essential that Council address this matter **before the July 2026 recess** to ensure continuity and leadership on this priority.

FoSTRA, alongside the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA) and other community partners, is committed to supporting the City in building a framework for Social Development Plans that can be adapted to diverse neighbourhoods across Toronto.

We look forward to your response and to working together on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Rick Green
Chair
Federation of South Toronto Residents Associations (FoSTRA)

Cc. Walied Khogali Ali, Co-Chair, Regent Park Neighbourhood Association / Regent Park Social Development Plan

Cc. City Council

Cc. John Smith, Manager, Community Development, Social Development Division – John.Smith@toronto.ca

Cc. Mohamed Shuriye, Executive Director (Interim), Social Development – Mohamed.Shuriye@toronto.ca

Cc. Paul Johnson, City Manager – paul.r.johnson@toronto.ca

Cc. Erica Woods – Erica.Woods@toronto.ca

Cc. FoSTRA Member RAs

FoSTRA Policy Paper: Expanding Social Development Plans Across Toronto

A Call to Action for the City of Toronto to Invest in Community-Led Social Development

Introduction

The Federation of South Toronto Residents' Associations (FoSTRA) is a non-partisan public policy coalition committed to advancing responsible urban planning, equitable development, and inclusive governance across Toronto. FoSTRA seeks to influence municipal, provincial, and federal decision-making by creating a transparent forum for collective community consultation and policy dialogue.

As Toronto faces intersecting challenges related to safety, housing affordability, social polarization, and economic inequality, FoSTRA urges the City of Toronto to expand its investment in Social Development Plans (SDPs)—an evidence-based, community-driven model that promotes inclusive, safe, and resilient neighbourhoods.

Building on the demonstrated success of the Regent Park Social Development Plan (RPSDP), FoSTRA calls on the City Council to adopt SDPs across all neighbourhood improvement areas and allocate sustainable funding to neighbourhood associations or community groups, trusteed by a community partner, who are best positioned to facilitate their implementation in partnership with residents and stakeholders.

Definition and Scope of Social Development Plans

Social Development Plans (SDPs) are structured, community-led frameworks that:

- Define clear objectives for neighbourhood safety, equity, and resilience.

- Establish boundaries for implementation (geographic, thematic, and governance).

- Create shared accountability across residents, service providers, and City divisions.

Although new in Toronto, SDPs are **aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly those targeting reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, and community well-being. This alignment provides opportunities for global collaboration and benchmarking against international progress.

A glossary of terms has been expanded in the appendix to ensure consistent understanding across stakeholders.

Why Social Development Plans Matter

SDPs bring together residents, service providers, and public agencies to co-develop localized strategies addressing safety, economic opportunity, housing, health, and social inclusion.

The benefits of SDPs are evident. In Regent Park, the implementation of the SDP—supported by a $500,000 annual investment from the City of Toronto between 2019 and 2024—resulted in:

- Zero gun-related deaths in 2023, a milestone credited to the neighbourhood's collaborative violence prevention efforts.

- Increased community cohesion, youth engagement, and participation in civic life.

- Innovative resident-led initiatives that improved access to employment, housing navigation, and mental health supports.

- Strong partnerships between residents, City divisions, and community agencies grounded in a clear accountability framework.

According to the 2023 Regent Park Social Impact Investment Report, this approach has created sustainable infrastructure for ongoing social development—proving the model's long-term value. The City's own draft Social Development Plan framework (2019) outlines a replicable structure that should now be resourced for citywide implementation.

Governance and Accountability

Effective SDPs require clear governance structures:

- **City divisions** provide technical expertise and policy alignment.

- **Neighbourhood associations and resident-led coalitions** serve as anchor organizations driving implementation with the support of a Trustee through a Trustee Hub.
- **Community partners and agencies** deliver programmatic support through mentorship offered by the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA), leveraging its experience in supporting the Regent Park Social Development Plan.

A light-touch **oversight model** is recommended, including annual public reporting on progress and outcomes to ensure accountability and transparency.

Phased Rollout and Timelines

FoSTRA recommends a **three-phase citywide adoption plan**:

1. **Pilot (2026–2027):** Implement SDPs in five high-need neighbourhoods.

2. **Scale (2028–2030):** Expand annually to additional neighbourhoods, incorporating lessons learned.

3. **Sustain (2031 onward):** Integrate SDPs as a permanent component of the City's planning and social infrastructure framework.

Each phase should include **decision gates** and independent review points.

Costs and Funding Pathways

High-level costing bands suggest that sustainable SDPs require **$250,000–$500,000 annually per neighbourhood**. Potential funding sources include:

- City of Toronto base budgets.

- Reallocation of existing community funding envelopes.

- Philanthropic and private sector partnerships.

- Provincial and federal social development programs.

A **cost-benefit analysis** demonstrates that upfront investments yield significant long-term savings in policing, emergency services, and crisis interventions.

Measures of Success

FoSTRA recommends the adoption of a **citywide outcomes dashboard** to monitor SDP progress. Indicators should include:

- Leading measures (e.g., youth participation, service access).

- Lagging measures (e.g., reduction in evictions, safety outcomes).

- Equity-based disaggregation (race, income, newcomer status) to ensure fairness.

Robust **data stewardship protocols** must be applied to protect privacy and build trust.

Risk Register

Key risks and mitigations include:

- **Duplication of services** → Coordinate through City divisions to integrate efforts.

- **Capacity constraints** → Provide upfront training and resourcing for resident groups.

- **Community trust** → Commit to co-design, transparency, and regular communication.

Alignment and Integration

SDPs must align with and **complement—not duplicate—** existing City strategies such as the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. Integration ensures efficiency while preserving community-led priorities.

Evidence and Examples

- **Regent Park Case Snapshot:** Demonstrates reductions in violence, increased youth participation, and strengthened tenant advocacy.

- **Global Collaboration:** By aligning with the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** monitoring framework, SDPs can position Toronto as a leader in community-led urban renewal while contributing to international reporting and accountability. The **World Urban Pavilion** (https://www.worldurbanpavilion.org/), based in Regent Park, has already collaborated with the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA) to advance such initiatives, showing how Toronto neighbourhoods can contribute to global innovation in social development.

Key Recommendations

FoSTRA urges City Manager Paul Johnson and the Toronto City Council to implement the following policy actions:

1. **Adopt Social Development Plans in All Priority Neighbourhoods**
   Institutionalize SDPs across Toronto as a cornerstone municipal strategy for public safety, community well-being, and equitable development.

2. **Provide Multi-Year Funding to Neighbourhood Associations**
   Provide $250,000–$500,000 annually per association or coalition to support resident leadership, safety initiatives, youth programming, and tenant advocacy.

3. **Formalize a Citywide Community Benefits Framework**
   Embed Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) into SDP implementation to secure equitable jobs, training, social procurement, and deep housing affordability.

4. Establish a Citywide Evaluation and Accountability Mechanism
   Create a social development index with transparent public reporting on outcomes, equity impacts, and lessons learned.

Executive Summary & Calls to Action

Toronto is at a transformational moment. Social Development Plans offer a scalable, inclusive strategy to strengthen neighbourhood resilience and reduce systemic barriers.

FoSTRA calls on Toronto City Council to:

- Adopt SDPs across all priority neighbourhoods, starting with a phased pilot rollout in 2026-27..

- Fund neighbourhood associations or coalitions to lead implementation.

- Embed community benefits into development processes.

- Establish a robust citywide evaluation mechanism.

- Leverage global opportunities by aligning with the **UN SDGs** and collaborating with partners like the **World Urban Pavilion**.
- Collaboration and partnership with philanthropic organizations

By doing so, Toronto can lead the nation in **community-led urban renewal**, setting a new precedent for **participatory governance, international collaboration, and inclusive city-building**.

Prepared by the Federation of South Toronto Residents' Associations (FoSTRA) and the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA)

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