

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY and PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON DECEMBER 15, 2015
FROM:	WILLIAM C. COXHEAD, MANAGING DIRECTOR PARKS AND RECREATION and LYNNE LIVINGSTONE, MANAGING DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN AND FIRE SERVICES
SUBJECT:	UPDATE ON THE EAST COMMUNITY CENTRE PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Directors of Parks and Recreation and Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- East-Southeast Recreation Facility Siting Project Final Report on Site Recommendations (Confidential) (Jul. 16, 2012)
- East-Southeast Recreation Facility Siting Project – Final Report (Dec. 19, 2011)
- East/Southeast Recreation and Community Centre Siting Project (May 17, 2011)
- East/Southeast Recreation and Community Centre Siting Project (Jan. 18, 2011)
- Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan Update (Nov. 23, 2009)

BACKGROUND

The City is embarking on an exciting community centre project to serve the East and Southeast areas of the city which will see the development of a long awaited indoor pool, gymnasium, and multi-purpose community space. This community centre construction project is unique in that it builds on all 4 of Council’s Strategic Areas of Focus:

1. Strengthens Our Community – this centre will serve as a community hub for the local neighbourhood of Argyle and for the larger district including Huron Heights, East London, Hamilton Road, Glen Cairn, Westminster, and Jackson. *“Building an amazing arts, culture and recreation experience.”*
2. Building a Sustainable City – this new infrastructure project will create a *“beautiful place and space”* within the community
3. Lead in Public Service – a range of city services will now be available and allow the city to provide *“excellent service delivery”* to a previously underserved area
4. Grow Our Economy - this project, located within an existing neighbourhood, allows the City to contribute to *“urban regeneration”* of a key community space

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide background on this overall project since its early consideration in the 1990 PUC Master Plan for Parks and Recreation Services. New information following Council’s decision to advance the timing of the project earlier this year is included. Also, an overview of how Civic administration is advancing the project, results of the Expression of Interest for Partners, updated Financial Impact and next steps are also provided.

Planning Context

In 1990, the PUC Master Plan for Parks and Recreation Services gave early consideration to a community centre in southeast London. This project was further refined in subsequent City of London Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plans (1996, 2003, and 2009) that identified the need for a large multi-purpose recreation facility for the Southeast area of the city. This project was to include an indoor pool, double pad arena, gymnasium and multipurpose community centre spaces. However, in 2009, during the Master Plan Update, the community voiced

concerns regarding the complexity of the Southeast/East area of the city (7 Planning Districts, 5 Wards) and the inability of one large district facility to meet the complex needs of the existing and new neighbourhoods in the area. As a result the updated 2009 Master Plan recommended that the City develop a new facility provision model for this area of the city with a greater neighbourhood-focus. Instead of building one large multi-purpose centre, the City was to consider the possibility of constructing the components on two sites. The new centres could then serve as both neighbourhood gathering places/community hubs and as district facilities and better serve the overall population in the area. Design and construction of these 2 projects was scheduled to begin in 2018.

Allan Ramsay Planning Associates Inc., along with urbanMetrics and PMHubbard and Associates, were retained in November 2010 to lead a facilitated public engagement process around site selection. The community was provided 4 opportunities at community meetings (8 individual meetings at several locations across the broader East and Southeast area of the city) to deliberate in large and small groups:

- the pros and cons of each option (one site versus two);
- the components to be included at each site;
- the general areas to search for sites;
- how to assess individual sites; and,
- a long list of potential sites to consider.

A total of 127 residents and stakeholders attended at least one of the community meetings and remained in contact and received regular updates from the Project Manager throughout the process. Taking the time to address community concerns and to engage the public in the process from the start resulted in very strong recommendations for Council to consider. In December 2011 Council approved:

- the new two-site model of an arena anchored facility and an aquatics anchored facility;
- the two general areas to locate the facilities (pool anchored facility within Argyle Planning District and community centre, gymnasium and arena facility in the Highbury Ave./Commissioners Rd. area); and,
- the criteria matrix with which to evaluate individual sites within these areas. Criteria included:
 - real estate criteria (size of site, availability, development constraints);
 - service delivery criteria (proximity to other facilities, proximity to underserved populations); and,
 - accessibility criteria (access by walking, biking, transit, population of children and older adults within a 15 minute walk)

The consultants then applied the criteria matrix to a long list of 19 potential sites provided by residents, Council, and other stakeholders within the 2 general areas. In July 2012, Council unanimously approved the East Lions Park site for the aquatics anchored facility and directed Civic administration to continue the search for, and acquire, an appropriate site within the Highbury-Commissioners area for the arena anchored facility. This search continues.

The East Lions Park site scored highest in all of the community developed criteria, is a large site located in the middle of the underserved Argyle neighbourhood with excellent public transit and arterial location. Many potential options for building placement exist within the large park complex and the opportunity to maintain existing parks features with room for enhanced amenities. The East Lions Park site also has the added benefit of being City owned and did not require an additional outlay of funds to secure the site. Development of this site will also allow the City to replace the aging Artisan Centre and aging outdoor pool, both of which will require major lifecycle investments in the coming years.

Advancing the Project

During budget discussions on February 26, 2015 Council resolved "That the 2015 Capital Budget for Growth Projects (Pages 178-193) BE APPROVED as follows: Page 181 - Parks, Recreation & Neighbourhood Services/Neighbourhood & Recreation Services - \$10,817,000; (first installment) it being understood that Project RC2756 - Multi-Purpose Recreation Centre East, Aquatics Anchored will be accelerated, and Project RC2758 Multi-Purpose Recreation Centre Southeast, Arena Anchored follow, rather than to have the two projects proceed simultaneously." The project funding could therefore be in place by 2016 to start design and construction and allow the community to enjoy their much anticipated community centre 2 years ahead of schedule.

Prime Consultant Selection

Civic administration have advanced several steps of this project since the spring. A request for qualifications for a prime consultant (architect) was issued in May, with a short list of approved candidates identified over the summer. The short list of 4 firms was invited to complete a full proposal and a firm is being recommended to Council in an accompanying report.

Seeking Potential Partners

Through the fall of 2015, an Expression of Interest was posted seeking a not-for-profit organization(s) both capable of, and willing to, invest in the design, construction cost, partial finance, maintenance and/or operation of all, or part(s) of the facility. Targeted conversations were held with other non-profit recreation service providers/operators and health care sector organizations to introduce the project and gauge their potential interest in partnering. There were no submissions to contribute capital to the project. Expressions of interest were received from organizations that wish to continue to rent space within the new building. Artisans London Inc. identified their specific space needs within the new building and Community Living London indicated their desire to continue to utilize space within the building with the potential to expand their current rental contract.

Next Steps

Once a Prime Consultant (architect) has been retained the design process can unfold. There will be multiple opportunities for the community to be engaged to create a truly community-focussed facility. The first opportunity for input into conceptual programming and site design could begin as early as February 2016. It is anticipated that the centre could be open by winter 2019.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This project is identified in the 10 year capital budget plan. During the 2015 budget deliberations the funding for this project was advanced by 2 years to allow earlier design and construction.

The site selection of East Lions Park has allowed for further development of the estimates. Refined spatial allocations for program needs, existing facilities to be demolished and other assets to be refurbished or repositioned have been recognized in the updated estimates. These modifications result in a revised budget of \$18,180,200, the balance of which will be included in the 2016 capital budget submission. It should be noted that lifecycle renewal costs for an aging East Lions Artisan Centre and outdoor pool will be avoided.

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared with input from Kyle Murray and Steve Whitmore, Financial and Business Services.

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