

**Ralph Thornton Community Centre  
2018 – 2022 Strategic Priorities and Plan**

May 17, 2017

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## Introduction

The Ralph Thornton Community Centre (RTCC) was established by the Toronto City Council in 1980 as a multi-purpose community facility and “Town Hall” to recognize its historic role as a gathering place for community members. Over the past 38 years, RTCC has played a key role in bringing residents together to identify, discuss, and address local issues and needs. The Centre has a track record of supporting social justice, civic engagement and social, recreational and cultural activities.

## Strategic Planning:

In 2017, the Board of Management (Board) initiated a strategic planning process to update and build upon the previous *2014-2017 Renewal Plan*, this time with a five-year planning horizon (2018-2022). An updated socio-demographic profile prepared by Social Planning Toronto using the 2016 Census, and a land use and service profile prepared by Ryerson University’s School of Urban and Regional Planning Graduate Studio were developed.

For the purposes of strategic planning however, the Board also took into consideration the potential impact of population changes within a 1.5 mile walking distance of the Centre (including the West Donlands neighbourhood).

In addition to assessing the success of and lessons learned from the *2014 -2017 Renewal Plan*, the Board held a special members’ planning session in which 80 plus members participated in January 2017, and conducted strategic conversations with RTCC partners, tenants, and funders to gather information about opportunities and challenges faced by the Centre, and stakeholder expectations. These planning initiatives generated a robust array of data for Board analysis and consideration in determining future strategic priorities for the Centre.

## Community Context:

Key social, demographic and economic trends affecting the Centre’s Catchment area (Riverdale or Ward 30), which represents both opportunities and threats to the community’s culture and has implications for future Centre programming, include:

- Continued gentrification and increased income inequality, signaling displacement of Riverdale’s original working class and low-income populations.
- Continued intense urban redevelopment south of Gerrard Street East, exacerbating the on-going decline in affordable housing generally, and affordable rental units in particular, across many Riverdale neighbourhoods. Planned redevelopment of lands south of Queen Street East and the potential

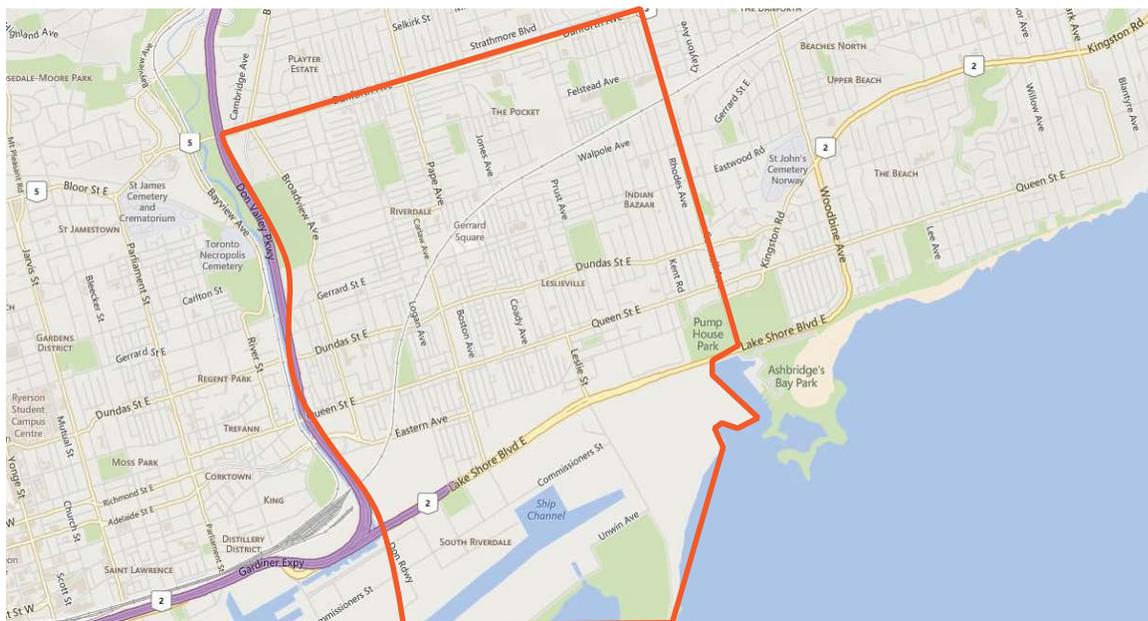
introduction of a subway relief line from Danforth Avenue to Union Station along the Pape/Carlaw corridor will likely accelerate the impact of these factors.

- An increased proportion of young families, and continued growth in the population under 6 years of age; little change in the population 15-17 years of age; and a slight increase in the proportion of adults aged 65 and over, a significant proportion of whom live alone in private residences.
- Continued ethno-cultural diversity. While the majority of residents speak English at home, more than one-third of residents have a non-official<sup>1</sup> mother tongue. The vast majority of these residents speak a Chinese language (such as, Cantonese, Mandarin and Fukien).
- Increased consolidation of community-based organizations, diminishing direct neighbourhood access to programmes and services.

A more detailed summary is available in the Appendix.

### Catchment Area

The RTCC is mandated by the City of Toronto to provide a range of programming and/or services to the residents of **Riverdale**, the boundaries of which are framed by: *the Don River to the West, Danforth Avenue to the North, Lake Ontario to the South and Coxwell Avenue on the East*. However, as a City of Toronto agency, any resident of the City of Toronto is welcome to participate in RTCC programming or use its facilities.



<sup>1</sup> A language other than English or French.

## Mission and Vision

### Vision

*Working to ensure a more vibrant, diverse, inclusive, liveable, participatory, healthy, and equitable Riverdale.*

### Mission

*The Ralph Thornton Community Centre is a gathering place that welcomes, connects and engages the community in all its diversity.*

### Values

- ***Inclusion and Respect:*** The RTCC supports and adheres to the City of Toronto Human Rights and Anti-Harassment Policy. We operate in a manner which models ethical, respectful, and inclusive service delivery and employment, and procurement practices, encourages diverse perspectives, and ensures equitable treatment for all. The RTCC promotes social inclusivity in all its activities and programming.
- ***Equity and Social Justice:*** The RTCC supports, acts, and advocates for solution-focussed policies and systemic changes that create long term improvement and fairness for all within our community and the larger society.
- ***Collaboration and Partnership:*** The RTCC works collaboratively and in partnership with individuals, groups, and organizations to achieve our mission and vision. We work in ways that engage community members, foster on-going relationships and build the strengths of the whole community.
- ***Capacity Building:*** The RTCC supports community members, especially the more marginalized, to increase their ability to solve problems, define and achieve their objectives and fully participate in and contribute to community life.
- ***Community Building:*** The RTCC actively promotes the building of relationships and collective action across and between our diverse communities to strengthen the whole.

## How We Will Work

In implementing its programme priorities, the RTCC may play one or more of the following three roles.

RTCC Will...		Resource Commitment:
<p><b>Advocate</b></p>	<p>The RTCC will foster and promote good public policy and action that support and advance community well-being objectives by sharing information, engaging community, fostering collective action, or communicating support to political or institutional decision-makers and/or the public media.</p> <p>The RTCC is fully accountable for its advocacy.</p>	<p><b>Low – Medium</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public communication by Board of Management and/or Executive Director.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enable</b></p>	<p>The RTCC will provide supportive environments and access to information, skills/knowledge, opportunities, and resources for making and effecting community or individual choices. As appropriate, RTCC may also facilitate or coordinate stakeholder action to build consensus and support collective action to achieve community priorities.</p> <p>The RTCC is accountable for its contribution to the process/initiative. Accountability for outcomes may be shared with partners and participants.</p>	<p><b>Medium – High</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May involve commitment of some human and/or financial resources (including free or discounted space) to time-limited projects or other activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide</b></p>	<p>As appropriate and feasible, RTCC will fund, deliver, manage and be accountable for activities and use of its resources to achieve identified RTCC programme and organizational objectives and outcomes.</p> <p>The RTCC is solely accountable for outcomes for RTCC-only programming, and shares accountability with partners for co-sponsored projects.</p>	<p><b>High</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment of RTCC funds, staff and/or facilities.</li> </ul>

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES

### A: PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

Seven programming areas were identified where opportunities may exist for RTCC to make a positive impact over the next five years. These areas were identified through assessment of service patterns in the vicinity of the Centre, but did not include assessment of service capacity. They are (in alphabetical order):

- *Affordable Housing* (as our neighbourhood changes, promoting a healthy mix of housing types and units for all income levels)
- *Civic Engagement* (engaging and empowering individuals and groups to provide informed input and take action on decisions that affect their community)
- *Educational Supports* (programmes and opportunities that promote and enhance the educational success of learners at all levels)
- *Employment Supports* (skills and supports to acquire and maintain meaningful, gainful employment)
- *Financial Literacy* (information, skills, and resources to understand and effectively manage personal finances)
- *Health and Wellness* (information, skills, and strategies to promote and protect personal and community health)
- *Technological Aptitude* (information, skills, and resources to employ changing technology in everyday life)

In identifying opportunities to pursue, the RTCC will consider the following:

- The population that will use or benefit from the opportunity;
- The availability of similar services or programming nearby and the RTCC's potential impact on accessibility and programming;
- The willingness and capacity of collaborators or partners to deliver programming;
- The resources required to deliver effective programming, including the RTCC's capacity to leverage its existing resources, skills, and connections to maximize community benefit; and,
- The availability and duration of funding for the proposed programming.

## Strengthen Communities

### Strategic Goal:

***The RTCC will cultivate and engage diverse communities to strengthen inclusivity, resident engagement, and community and individual capacity building, and to advance equitable social development outcomes.***

<b>RTCC WILL...</b>	<b>RTCC's Role(s)</b>
Foster inclusion and engagement of communities facing redevelopment and/or gentrification.	Advocate/Enable
Support advocacy, programming, or events that advance social justice and equity.	Advocate/Enable
Reach out to and engage the community in discussion and decisions regarding community concerns and priorities.	Enable/Provide
Nurture community building initiatives.	Enable

Potential opportunities may include:

- Collaborating with community partners and social groups to host or co-sponsor community forums, town halls, workshops, and information fairs to address community concerns, such as gentrification, tenant issues, and affordable housing.
- Participating in community development and capacity building projects, and supporting community animation and networking initiatives among and between resident and community groups and organizations.
- Sharing information or data with key decision-makers to inform policy discussions and decisions. For example, promoting inclusion of affordable housing and shelters within all new developments.
- As appropriate, participating in local community planning networks to foster consensus, coordination, partnership and effective action.

## **Provide Accessible Community Space**

### **Strategic Goal:**

***The RTCC will provide affordable, accessible community public space where the community can meet, gather and participate in activities and events, and access services.***

<b>RTCC WILL...</b>	<b>RTCC's Role(s)</b>
Foster use of our public community space by diverse groups.	Enable
Facilitate local social enterprise initiatives.	Enable
Co-host or facilitate community celebrations.	Enable/Provide
Make affordable community space available to groups that reflect and respect RTCC's values.	Enable/ Provide
Manage the facility at 765 Queen St. East to ensure accessible and safe public space.	Provide

Potential opportunities may include:

- Providing affordable, safe and well maintained space to RTCC partners, local social justice and community groups, and social enterprises that support individuals and groups in the community.
- Providing a safe, welcoming, and accessible space at low or no cost for local volunteer-run groups and organizations.
- Creating and implementing a plan for capital upgrades, enhancements, and regular state of good repair projects to ensure that the building and its spaces are functional and attractive.

## **Deliver High Quality Programming**

### **Strategic Goal:**

***The RTCC will enable and/or deliver high quality programming for local communities.***

<b>RTCC WILL...</b>	<b>RTCC's Role(s)</b>
Foster employment programmes to facilitate transitions to the workforce or new employment	Enable

<i>RTCC WILL...</i>	<i>RTCC's Role(s)</i>
Promote programming that supports financial literacy for individuals.	Enable
Facilitate programming that promotes and protects health and well-being.	Enable
Partner and collaborate with other not-for-profit service providers to maintain or facilitate local access to key community supports.	Enable/Provide
Offer programming that supports the educational success of children, youth, and learners of all ages.	Enable/Provide
Increase access to resources and skills to employ information technology in everyday life.	Enable/Provide

Potential opportunities may include:

- Partnering with businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to offer activities, workshops, and programmes that provide resources and skills that foster personal growth and empowerment while creating connections for social engagement.
- Continuously reviewing and evaluating RTCC's direct programmes to ensure that they are of high quality, address our strategic priorities, and are financially viable.
- Promoting quality standards for programming hosted by the RTCC.
- As appropriate, participating in community service planning networks to foster and build effective programming responses to community needs, including identifying new programming opportunities.

## **B: ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES**

### ***Reinforce Our Organization***

#### ***Strategic Goal:***

***The RTCC will reinforce its organizational infrastructure and capacities through effective management, continuous improvement of programming and administrative practices, and recruitment and retention of skilled, dedicated leadership, volunteers and staff.***

**RTCC WILL...**

Recruit, train, and retain effective staff and volunteers.

Ensure the organizational human and financial resource capacity to meet and implement strategic priorities.

Ensure effective management of financial and human resources.

Establish annual operating plans and undertake programme evaluations to ensure efficacy of programming and activities.

Continuously improve our infrastructure to ensure effective operations.

Potential opportunities may include:

- Establishing professional development strategies and programming for staff to foster continuous improvement.
- Increasing and improving the Centre's volunteer base to provide a more robust experience for volunteers and users, and an increased sense of community engagement and improvement among volunteers.
- Maintaining and pursuing effective engagement practices that maintain and improve morale, team functioning, and continuous improvement.

***Improve and Diversify Our Resource Base***

***Strategic Goal:***

***The RTCC will implement a strategic approach to resource development in order to effectively and efficiently generate revenue and resources from diverse sources to support the Centre's ability to meet our objectives and priorities.***

**RTCC WILL...**

Develop and implement a funding strategy to provide long-term stability and flexibility for organizational priorities, and ensure and improve accountability to funders and the community.

### RTCC WILL...

Develop and deliver a marketing and promotional strategy to increase awareness and the visibility of the RTCC, and engage funders, community members, and local businesses in supporting the RTCC.

Establish and maintain effective relationships with a diverse range of funders.

Potential opportunities may include:

- Actively marketing and promoting RTCC facilities, programming, and services.
- Seeking targeted donations for, and sponsorships of, programming.
- Establishing user fees for space and programmes to help fund RTCC's priorities.

## **Communicate Effectively**

### **Strategic Goal:**

***The RTCC will implement and maintain an effective communications strategy and infrastructure to communicate with and engage its members, volunteers, funders, community, user groups, and staff.***

### RTCC WILL...

Utilize appropriate tactics to share, receive, and respond to information from our various audiences.

Employ accessible and inclusive language in all communications.

Improve capacity to respond to multiple language inquiries within the catchment population.

Potential opportunities may include:

- Using plain language for all policy and procedure documents and other forms of communication, to ensure that material is easy to read and understand.
- Providing opportunities for users and visitors to access information and assistance in languages other than English.
- Improving the visibility of the RTCC and its programming, including its street-level presence.
- Improving accessibility of information about the Centre and activities hosted at the Centre.

## Review:

The RTCC *2018-2022 Strategic Priorities and Plan* provides the foundation for the RTCC's annual operating plan for the identified five-year period.

The Strategic Plan and annual operating plans will be assessed annually by the Board of Management to monitor progress against approved strategic priorities and, as required and appropriate, updated to address changing conditions. A new strategic planning process will be initiated in 2021 to plan programming for the next five-year period.

## Conclusion:

The *2018 – 2022 Strategic Priorities and Plan* provides the basis for Board of Management, staff and the RTCC community to build on the past 40 years of accomplishments that have made and kept the RTCC as a vital community hub. We appreciate all of those efforts, and are committed to stewardship of the resources provided by our funders and community to achieve these strategic goals.

## Acknowledgements:

The Board of Management thanks all those who participated in the development of this strategic plan:

- Members of the RTCC Board of Management, and particularly the members of Organizational Planning and Evaluation Committee and Membership and Outreach Committee;
- RTCC Staff;
- RTCC members, partners, funders and stakeholders who participated in planning consultations and interviews;
- Social Planning Toronto;
- Ryerson University School of Urban and Regional Planning's Graduate Studio, including Professor Mitchell Kozny, and Catriona Moggach, Benjamin Pister, Corinna Priot, Oliver Rohas, Andrew Sgro, Yvonne Verlinden and Matthew Zentner; and
- Peter Clutterbuck, facilitator.

## APPENDIX: Socio-Demographic Profile 2017

The following is a summary of socio-economic data generated through the 2016 Census of Canada.

### **Population:**

- The Ralph Thornton Community Centre catchment area is home to 64,326 residents in 2016. Over the past 20 years, the population has shown modest fluctuations, but significant increase is projected over the next five to 10 years as the area continues to experience intense urban redevelopment.
- Population change varies across catchment area, but the census tracts around the Centre (south of Gerrard St E and between Broadview and Jones Ave) have shown the largest increases.

### **Age**

- The average age of residents in the catchment area is 38.8 years – similar to the average for the City overall.
- Compared to the City overall, Riverdale has:
  - A larger proportion of children (0-4 years), but a smaller proportion of children aged 6 – 14 and 15 – 17 years old;
  - A greater proportion of working-age people (25-64 years); and
  - A smaller proportion of seniors (65 years and over).

### **Children:**

- *Of the 16.2% of residents who are children under age 18 years:*
  - *Two out of five are under the age of 6;*
  - *Just over two in five are 6-14 years of age, and*
  - *Over one in seven is 15-17 years of age.*
- *8,560 families with children (7,050 couples and 1,510 lone-parent families) reported having employment income in 2014.*
- *TDSB data indicate that many students are struggling academically.*

### **Seniors:**

- Seniors represent 10.9% of all residents;
  - 26.9% of seniors live alone in private residences (similar to City overall).
  - Tend to be younger than similar City population.
- Of those living alone...
  - Almost one-third are 65-69 years old (compared to just under one-quarter for the City).
  - 12.9% are 85 years or older (compared to 18% for the City)

### **Households**

- *Riverdale and the City have a similar mix of household types:*
  - *Four out of five residents live in a Census Family<sup>2</sup>;*
  - *One-third live in one-person non-family<sup>3</sup> households;*

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<sup>2</sup> *Census family* includes: A married or common-law couple living with the children of either or both parents; or, a lone parent with at least one child. Couples may be opposite or same sex. Grandparents living with grandchildren, without parents present. All members live in the same dwelling.

- *Almost one in five live in couple families without children; and*
- *One in ten live in lone-parent families.*

### **Languages**

- Two-thirds of residents with a single mother tongue speak English. Four of five residents reporting a single mother tongue speak English most often at home
- One-third of residents report a non-English mother tongue. Of these residents 10% speak French and approx. one-half speak a Chinese language, such as Cantonese, Mandarin and Fukien. The Chinese-speaking population resides throughout the catchment area with the largest concentration south of Garrard St. E.
- 8.2% of residents do not speak English well enough to have a conversation in English. Of these ...
  - Just over 50% are working age adults and
  - Just over one-third are seniors; and
  - 85% have a Chinese mother tongue language.

### **Dwelling Types and Housing**

- Riverdale's housing stock is predominantly comprised of:
  - Apartment buildings with less than 5 storeys;
  - Semi-detached houses; and
  - Row houses.
- Bachelor and one-bedroom units make up greatest proportion of *private rental housing* (in City, majority stock is two- and three-bedroom units).
- Vacancy rates for private rental units are very low; availability of larger "family-type" rental units is almost non-existent.
- Average rents are generally lower than the City's, but increasing at a higher rate.
- There are 3,158 social housing units<sup>4</sup>, of which 2,224 are rent-geared-to-income units.

### **Income and Poverty**

- One in four couple families have annual incomes below \$50,000.
  - Almost one in four have incomes between \$50,000 and \$99,999.
  - Just over half have incomes of \$100,000 or more.
- Over half of lone parent families have annual incomes below \$40,000.
- Over half of non-family residents have annual incomes below \$30,000
- Within the catchment area, poverty is concentrated in certain areas with rates as high as 51% for some groups.
- Between 2005 and 2014, poverty rates have declined in the catchment area. In contrast, poverty rates in the City overall have increased except for lone parent families.
- Declining poverty rates in South Riverdale, in part, are likely an indicator of gentrification, leading to displacement of low income families and individuals.

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<sup>3</sup> *Non-census person or family* means: "Either one person living alone in a private dwelling or a group of two or more people who share a private dwelling, but who do not constitute a census family."

<sup>4</sup> These include "Toronto Community Housing Corporation locations, Housing Connections locations, non-profits and co-op developments participating in the Social Housing Wait List".

## Graphic Representation of RTCC's Strategic Priorities



This above graphic representation of RTCC's strategic priorities identifies that programming priorities are to be pursued equally and will be based on a strong organizational infrastructure