



Ralph Thornton Community Centre

Renewal Plan: 2015-2017 Strategic Priorities



Reflect ➤ **Renew** ➤ **Re-Energize**

September 24, 2014

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION:	2
VISION AND MISSION:	3
Vision:.....	3
Mission:.....	3
Values:.....	3
Catchment Area:	4
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES:	5
Priority Communities/Groups:	5
How We Will Work:	5
<i>A: PROGRAMME PRIORITIES</i>	7
Strengthen Our Neighbourhoods.....	7
Provide Accessible Community Space	7
Deliver High Quality Programing	8
<i>B: ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES</i>	9
Stabilize and Develop the Organization.....	9
Improve and Diversify Our Resource Base	9
Communicate Effectively	10
REVIEW	10



INTRODUCTION:

The Ralph Thornton Community Centre (RTC) 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 34 years, RTC has played a key role in bringing residents together to identify, discuss and address local issues and needs. It has a track record of supporting social justice, civic engagement and social, recreational and cultural activities.

Renewal Planning: In 2013, the Board of Management (Board) initiated a Renewal Planning process to update its understanding of and response to the many socio-environmental and demographic changes that were taking place in the community, to ensure that the RTC’s programming remains relevant to the community and met the quality standards expected by members, partners, funders and the community. To accomplish these objectives, the Board: updated the socio-demographic and environmental profile of the community; undertook strategic conversations with stakeholders, partners and funders; and consulted with members.

Community Context: Key social, demographic and economic trends affecting the Centre’s catchment area (Riverdale) include:

- Increased gentrification and income inequality; a decrease in processing/manufacturing/utility occupations and increase in self-employment/arts/culture/recreation/sport occupations; an ageing population; and urban redevelopment;
- Intense urban redevelopment is occurring primarily in the South Riverdale neighbourhood within our catchment area, fostering a declining proportion of rental and social housing units and increased ownership properties, accompanied by a shift from single-family homes to multi-unit condominium buildings with smaller units;
- An increased proportion of households without children and fewer residents aged 5 – 14 years, but growth in the population under 4 years old; and
- While the majority of residents speak English at home, the vast majority of those speaking “non-official” languages¹ speak Cantonese, Mandarin or another Chinese language. Riverdale continues to be a reception community for new immigrants to Canada, but the proportion of new immigrants² is declining.

Building On Our Successes: The RTC has been and continues to be a strong advocate of community and social justice issues, including: environmental health and sustainability; safe and affordable housing; accessible services for the homeless/under-housed; implementation of bicycle lanes; violence prevention; preservation of the Red Door Shelter; provision of harm reduction programming and community safety.

In the last several years, RTC has successfully partnered with local organizations and groups to host, foster and support initiatives relating to: *literacy* (Queen-Saulter Library and Toronto District School Board); *community development and safety* (People Friendly Rivertowne, Rivertowne BIA and Nellie’s Shelter for Women); *health and well-being* (South Riverdale Community Health Centre and Narcotics Anonymous); *community education and dialogue* (Community Matters and other town halls); *access to healthy food* (Good

¹ Languages other than English and French.

² New immigrants are those immigrating to Canada who arrived after 2001.

Food Market and community gardens); *a sustainable environment* (Citizens for a Safe Environment); *social interaction and activation* (international and country dancing, Chinese Seniors Tea Group); *arts and culture* (Riverdale Mural Project, Improvisers Pool, Joy of Writing and local cultural celebrations); *employment supports* (Computer Resource Centre and Exchange Loft); and *children's programming*, such as the RAC Summer Camp (Jimmy Simpson Recreation Centre) and after-school and Mentor programmes (local primary schools).

Our intention is to build on such initiatives to achieve our strategic priorities.

The following Renewal Plan outlines the Centre's strategic priorities for the three-year period from 2015 to 2017. The Renewal Plan will be supported and expanded by an annual operating plan and both will be reviewed annually and, as required and appropriate, updated to address changing conditions.

VISION AND MISSION

Vision:

Leading and supporting a vibrant, diverse, inclusive, liveable, participatory and healthy Riverdale.

Mission:

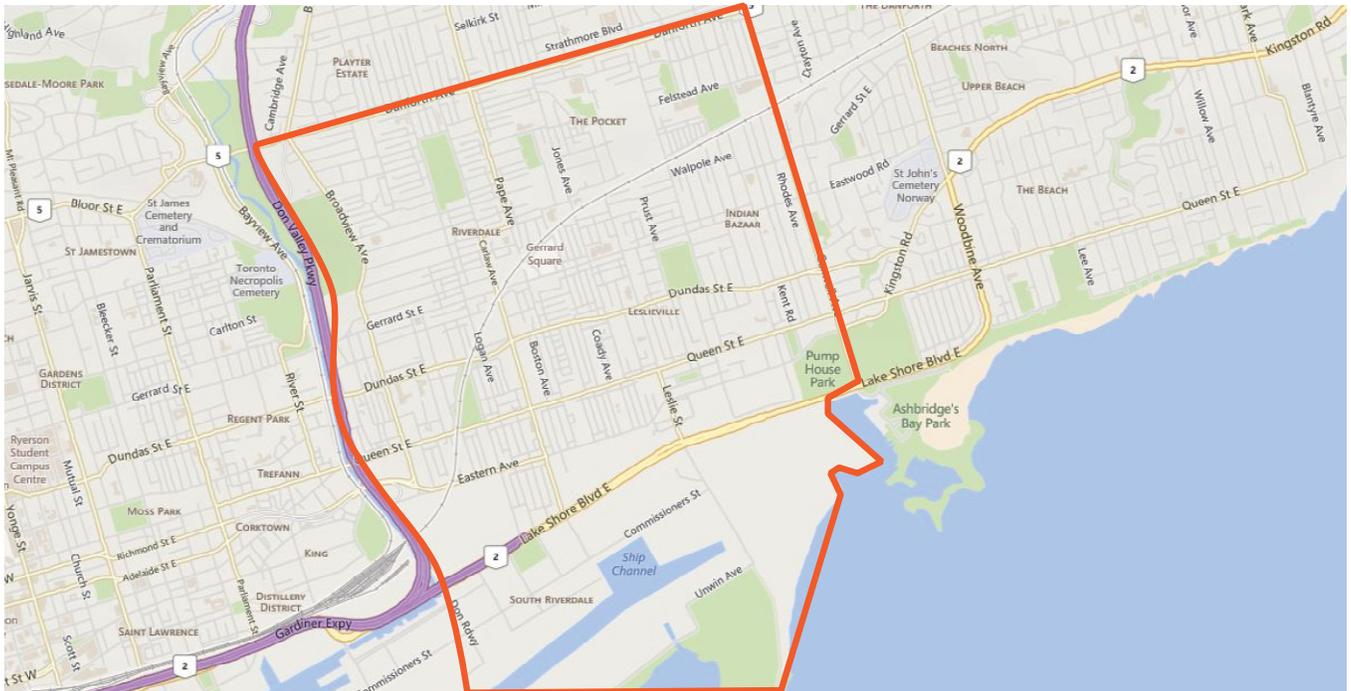
Serving all residents of our catchment area, the RTC shall be where community members gather and work together to celebrate our diversity, foster inclusivity and community well-being, and promote social justice. We will work collaboratively with partners, stakeholders and community members to strengthen our neighbourhoods, support resident engagement and nurture a collective sense of belonging. We will assist individuals and groups to build their capacity to participate in the community's social, political, economic and cultural life.

Values:

- ***Inclusion and Respect:*** The RTC 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 practices, encourages diverse perspectives, and ensures equitable treatment for all.
- ***Social Justice:*** The RTC supports, acts and advocates for solution-focussed policies and systemic changes that create long term improvement for all within our community and the larger society.
- ***Collaboration:*** The RTC works collaboratively and in partnership with individuals, groups and organizations to achieve our mission & vision. We work in ways that engage community members, foster on-going relationships and build the strengths of the whole community.
- ***Capacity Building:*** The RTC 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.

Catchment Area:

The RTC 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: *the Don River to the West, the Danforth to the North, Lake Ontario to the South and Coxwell Avenue to the East*. However, as a City of Toronto agency, any resident of the City of Toronto is welcome to participate in RTC programming or use its facilities.



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES:

Like any organization with limited resources, the RTC is required to make difficult choices in offering programming. When required to choose among direct programming options, the RTC will give priority in programming choices on the basis of the following guidelines:

Priority Communities/Groups:

The RTC serves all residents regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, physical or intellectual ability or socio-economic status. However (in no particular order), the RTC will prioritize services to:

- Groups that are socially marginalized and/or economically disadvantaged;
- Groups that are new to the community or Canada; and
- Young children and their families.

How We Will Work:

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

RTC Will...	Resource Commitment:
<p>Advocate</p> <p>The RTC will foster and promote good public policy and action that support and advance community well-being objectives by communicating its support to political or institutional decision-makers and/or the public media.</p> <p><i>The RTC is fully accountable for its advocacy.</i></p>	<p>Low – Medium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public communication by Board of Management and/or executive director.
<p>Enable</p> <p>The RTC will foster and provide supportive environments and access to information, skills/knowledge, opportunities and resources for making and effecting community or individual choices, and collective action. As appropriate, RTC may also facilitate or coordinate stakeholder action to build consensus to achieve community priorities.</p> <p><i>The RTC is accountable for its contribution to the process/initiative. Accountability for outcomes may be shared with partners and participants.</i></p>	<p>Medium – High</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May involve commitment of some human and/or financial resources (including waived revenue) to time-limited projects.

RTC Will...	Resource Commitment:
<p>Provide</p>	<p>As appropriate and feasible, RTC will fund, deliver, manage and be accountable for activities and use of its resources to achieve identified RTC organizational objectives and outcomes.</p> <p><i>The RTC is solely accountability for outcomes for RTC-only programming, and shares accountability with partners for co-sponsored projects.</i></p> <p>High</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment of RTC funds, staff and/or facilities.

Principles underlying the RTC’s efforts and influencing its programming choices are:

- Social inclusivity;
- Collaboration and partnership;
- Capacity building; and
- Community building.

A: PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

Strengthen Our Neighbourhoods

Strategic Goal:

The RTC will cultivate vibrant, diverse and engaged communities to strengthen community inclusivity, resident engagement and community building, and to advance equitable social development outcomes.

<i>RTC WILL...</i>	<i>RTC's Role(s)</i>
Reach out to and engage the community in discussions and decisions regarding community issues and priorities.	Enable / Provide
Foster inclusion and engagement within communities facing redevelopment and/or gentrification.	Advocate / Enable
Support advocacy, programming or events that advance social justice.	Advocate / Enable
Foster community building/community development initiatives.	Enable

Sample activities include:

- Collaborating with community partners and social justice groups to host or co-sponsor community forums and town halls to address community issues.
- Participating in community development and capacity building projects and sponsoring or supporting community animation and networking initiatives among and between resident and other community groups and organizations.
- As appropriate, participating in local community service and planning networks to foster consensus, coordination, partnership and effective action.

Provide Accessible Community Space

Strategic Goal:

The RTC will provide affordable, accessible community public space where the community can meet, gather and participate in activities, events and services that are beneficial to them.

RTC WILL...	RTC's Role(s)
Manage the facility at 765 Queen St. East to ensure accessible and safe public space.	Provide
Allow for use of public community space by diverse groups.	Enable
Make affordable community space available to groups that reflect and respect RTC's values and strategic priorities.	Enable
Foster social enterprise initiatives that support local residents, especially priority community groups.	Enable

Sample activities include:

- Establishing a RTC rental policy that cultivates community use of its space by diverse groups.
- Providing affordable community space to RTC partners, local social justice and community groups and social enterprises that support local residents and workers.

Deliver High Quality Programing

Strategic Goal:

The RTC will enable and/or deliver high quality programming for the community.

RTC WILL...	RTC's Role(s)
Support programming that addresses the social and cultural participation of children and adults in collaboration with community groups and local schools.	Enable / Provide
Facilitate programming that promotes social and cultural inclusion and civic engagement for newcomers to South Riverdale.	Enable
Strengthen the development and coordination of service partnerships and community networks to support community building and access to community services.	Enable

Sample activities include:

- Reviewing RTC's direct programming to ensure that they address our strategic priorities and are financially viable as well as develop new programming.
- As appropriate, participating in community service planning networks to foster and build effective responses to community needs.

B: ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES:

Stabilize and Develop the Organization

Strategic Goal:

The RTC will stabilize and develop its organizational infrastructure and capacities through development and implementation of effective management and administrative structures, and recruitment and retention of competent management and staff.

RTC WILL...

Recruit and train effective management leaders.

Evaluate organizational human and financial resources and administrative practices to ensure that they meet our strategic priorities.

Improve staff competencies and capacity to meet our strategic priorities.

Facilitate effective management of financial and human resources.

Establish annual operating plans and programme performance evaluation to ensure efficacy of programming and activities.

Clarify and codify the Board and management division of labour.

Establish Executive Limitations Policies to streamline and support effective operational decision-making.

Improve our technology infrastructure to ensure effective operations.

Sample activities include:

- Establishing appropriate policies and procedures to develop and deploy financial and human resources to ensure effective operations and programming, and accountability to the Board, community, funders and stakeholders.
- As required, upgrading the Centre's technical infrastructure to support its operation.
- Implementing effective staff engagement practices and engaging staff to improve staff morale and team functioning, and foster continuous improvement.

Improve and Diversify Our Resource Base

Strategic Goal:

The RTC will develop 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 its strategic objectives and priorities.

RTC WILL...

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

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

Sample activities include:

- Establishing a planned approach to developing effective relationships with a diverse range of funders.
- Improving monitoring and reporting practices.
- Developing marketing and promotional strategies to increase the RTC's visibility and encourage use.

Communicate Effectively

Strategic Goal:

The RTC will develop and implement an effective communications infrastructure and strategies to communicate with and engage its members, funders, community, user groups and staff.

RTC WILL...

Communicate effectively with members, stakeholders, funders, staff and user groups.

Sample activities include:

- Developing a comprehensive communications strategy and the tools to ensure that members, current users and funders are kept informed.
- Reaching out to current non-users.
- Actively promoting RTC and community events and programming.

REVIEW

The *Renewal Plan: 2015-2017 Strategic Priorities* provides the foundation for the RTC's annual operating plan for the identified period.

The Renewal 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 2016 to plan programming for the next three to five-year period.