



To: Toronto Public Library Board – June 10, 2002

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Jane Sheppard Neighbourhood Branch Library – Possible Relocation**

Purpose:

To advise the Toronto Public Library Board of a possible opportunity to relocate the Jane Sheppard Neighbourhood Branch from leased to owned premises; to provide information regarding the potential impact of this project on the existing priorities within the Library's five year capital program; and to recommend an option for the Board's approval.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

If the move from the existing lease location to 7,000 square foot owned premises were to occur, it would have the following impact:

The capital cost of the project to the Library is estimated between \$1,470,000 and \$1,864,000 and could potentially delay other capital projects currently budgeted in the 2002 – 2006 Capital Program if Jane Sheppard is given priority over other capital projects.

The Library's operating budget would have an average annual savings of \$80,000, excluding any debenture costs to be incurred by the City to fund the construction of the project.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) The Toronto Public Library Board endorse the relocation of the Jane Sheppard branch to a City-owned property at 1900 Sheppard Avenue West and that the branch meet the minimum standard for neighbourhood branches;
- (2) The Jane Sheppard branch relocation be included in the Library's 2003 – 2007 capital program at minimal or no net cost to the Library or the City of Toronto; and
- (3) Staff report to the next Board meeting on options for accommodating the Jane Sheppard relocation with minimal or no impact on the capital and operating budgets of the Library and the City.

Background:

At its meeting of May 13, 2002, the Toronto Public Library Board approved a motion by Councillor Augimeri, requesting staff to prepare an information report for the June Board meeting concerning:

- (a) the potential relocation of the Jane Sheppard Neighbourhood Branch Library from leased to city-owned property at a nearby location; and
- (b) the potential impact of this relocation on existing priorities within the capital budget.

Jane Sheppard Neighbourhood Branch Library has occupied 3,500 square feet of leased space in the Jane Sheppard Mall since 1989. Although the leased space is attractive and centrally located in the community, its small size is an impediment to meeting the community's needs and the cost of leasing adds to the operating budget. In 1999, a city-owned property near the Jane Sheppard Mall became available for the possible use of City departments as well as its agencies, boards and commissions. The Library expressed an interest in the property, but was unable to commit to advance this project into the first five years of its capital plan. Shelter Housing and Support Division was given priority to develop the property under the City of Toronto's *Housing First* policy. Council has approved the construction of transitional housing in the form of four duplex units totaling 32 beds at 1900 Sheppard Avenue West; however, development of the property can not proceed until it has been declared surplus. Administration Committee has not yet granted this approval. The site would be suitable for a neighbourhood branch library, either as a stand alone facility or possibly as a joint development with Shelter, Housing and Support.

This report provides information on the possible relocation of Jane Sheppard branch from existing leased premises to a Library-owned building, outlines capital and operating budget impacts and reviews the Board's potential options in this matter.

Comments:

The Jane Sheppard branch operates out of 3,500 square feet of leased space in a small shopping mall (also called Jane Sheppard) located on the northeast corner of Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue West. The branch opened in 1989, and the premises were refurbished in 1998. The space is quite attractive, and the small reading lounge, study spaces and public access computers tend to be well used.

The catchment area population ascribed to Jane Sheppard is approximately 19,000. The report *Social Indicators and Priority Areas*¹ identifies the census tracts in this area as either in the first or second quartile for indicators which provide a "picture of general socio-economic risk." There are many recent immigrants in the area. Branch staff spend a lot of time helping children find information related to school work and helping adults locate material related to their study of English as a second language. Internet access workstations are in "overwhelming demand" - often as a means of communication with the home land.

¹ City of Toronto, Urban Planning and Development Services, 1999

Among neighbourhood branches, Jane Sheppard's performance ranks in the third quartile. Given that it is at the lower end of open hours (40 per week) and has a relatively small collection of library materials, the overall performance can be considered satisfactory.

Leading to Reading, a reading support program that pairs children identified by teachers and parents with volunteer tutors, has been operating out of the small meeting room for many years. There are currently 12 pairs of tutors and students meeting at Jane Sheppard. Two of the tutors are themselves "graduates" of the program. There are 32 children on the waiting list for the program, but the limited meeting space makes it difficult to accommodate more pairs. There are six elementary schools within walking distance of the branch.

Benefits and Costs of Relocation:

The main benefit that could result from relocation to a City-owned site would be to have a larger branch offering the full range of neighbourhood library services. If the Library were to construct a new building at the minimum standard of 7,000 square feet, it would be possible to offer larger collections, more study space, more Internet access workstations and a larger program area. For the collections, this could mean, for example, a permanent collection of materials in the Vietnamese language for the enjoyment of the many Vietnamese-speaking residents in the area and a fuller selection of non-fiction materials to support users' information needs. More children could be helped by the *Leading to Reading* program if there were more space available. People using the Library for quiet study could be separated from areas that generate more noise and activity.

A permanent library building would ensure continuity of service. The shopping mall where the library is currently located has a significant proportion of vacant stores and is not particularly inviting, but there do not appear to be many suitable rental alternatives in the immediate area.

The City-owned site at 1900 Sheppard Avenue West is approximately 100 metres east of the shopping mall on the north side of Sheppard Avenue. The building, which housed the former 31 Division police station, remains on the site and would have to be demolished. A review of the site would be required to determine whether it could accommodate the needs of both housing and a branch library, including parking.

The Jane Street corridor has a large proportion of subsidized and low-rent housing. A new library would help to revitalize the neighbourhood and would serve as a community focal point. The community is thought to favour a new neighbourhood library on this site.

The Library's Finance staff have worked with staff of the City's Budget Services Division to develop a financial analysis (Attachment 1) of the relative merits of continuing to incur leasing costs at the current location versus the projected cost of a capital project. The City analysts reviewed two branch-size options: 7,000 square feet, the Library's minimum standard for a new library, and 4,500 square feet, the minimum required to replace the existing leased space. Although the 4,500 square foot option is less costly, it is not recommended for the Board's consideration. The small size of the current location prevents the branch from adequately serving its community. Impediments to service include inadequate numbers of computer

workstations, extremely limited collections of Library materials and a lack of meeting space for *Leading to Reading* and other programs. These impediments would not be removed by constructing a 4,500 square foot building. In fact, an undersized building would only ensure continued inadequacies in service.

Total project costs are estimated to be between \$1,470,000 to \$1,864,000 net of estimated development charges of \$370,000. Operating savings would not fully cover the cost of the required capital expenditure. Lengthening the standard debenture period of ten years, which is assumed in the analyst's briefing notes, would reduce the shortfall. The availability of development charges will require further discussion with City staff.

Impact on Existing Capital Priorities:

A capital project to relocate the Jane Sheppard branch from leased to owned premises has been included in the Library's ten-year capital program since amalgamation. However, urgent building needs in other areas have required priority attention with the result that Jane Sheppard has not been included in the five-year capital program.

The Library's 2002 – 2006 Capital Budget is attached (Attachment 2). Only projects in the year 2002 and associated future year costs have received Council approval. It is unlikely that all of the projects listed for the period 2003 – 2006 can be accommodated within the City's capital spending envelope. If Jane Sheppard were moved forward into the five-year plan, it obviously could not displace projects which are underway, nor is it likely that it would be given precedence over the Beaches, Long Branch and Pape Danforth renovation projects which the Board was asked to consider as high priority for 2003. The effect of moving Jane Sheppard forward would be to delay one of the projects currently listed in years 2003 to 2006.

Options:

The availability of a City-owned site close to the existing branch location presents an opportunity to improve library service and to ensure continuity of service to this community. The operating savings achieved through relocation would, over the long term, offset a substantial portion of the capital cost of a new facility. The challenge to implementing this improvement is to avoid delaying the Library's existing high-priority projects. The options going forward are outlined below.

1. Status quo: Continue leasing in the mall. Jane Sheppard remains in the long-term capital plan and is not moved forward:
 - An opportunity to obtain a site for a permanent library building is missed;
 - the priority of other projects in the Library's five-year capital program is not affected.
2. Include Jane Sheppard in the 2003 – 2007 Capital Program:
 - clearly indicates that the Jane Sheppard relocation project is a priority for the Library;
 - this service improvement project has to compete with state of good repair projects;
 - the priority of other projects in the Library's five-year capital program is affected;

- as part of the review process for the 2003 – 2007 Capital Program Budget Request, Council will not give approval for projects which start after 2003. If Jane Sheppard branch relocation were included in 2004, then the earliest Council approval would occur in early 2004.

3. Include Jane Sheppard in the 2003 – 2007 Capital Program at minimal or no net cost to the Library or City:

- Alternative funding arrangements must be explored, e.g., extend the debenture period beyond the standard 10 years, utilize maximum available contributions available from development charges accrued in the former municipality of North York, raise funds in the community under the aegis of Councillor Augimeri and the TPL Foundation;
- funding may not permit a full 7,000 square foot neighbourhood branch to address.

Conclusion:

Relocation is attractive from a service perspective and ensures continuity of service to the community. Seen on its own, this is a worthwhile opportunity to take advantage of available land; however, the project has to make sense within the context of how capital projects are approved in the City of Toronto and the total funding envelope available to the Library.

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City Librarian

List of Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Briefing Note – 1900 Sheppard Avenue West: A Review of Property Utilization Options
- Attachment 2: Toronto Public Library – 2002 - 2006 Capital Budget
- Attachment 3: Map – Jane & Sheppard Intersection
- Attachment 4: Jane Sheppard Branch Profile