



Centennial Branch Potential Capital Project

Date:	November 21, 2011
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform the Toronto Public Library Board about a potential project at the Centennial Branch. Toronto Public Library has been in discussions with Nia Centre for the Arts concerning a potential project to expand the Library's Centennial Branch and create arts programming and shared community space. More information about this potential project will be provided after completion of a feasibility study currently underway.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The costs of operating the current Centennial Branch are part of the 2011 operating budget and there is no financial impact in 2011. The costs associated with any future potential capital project at this location would be subject to review and approval if a project was brought forward for consideration.

The Director Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Centennial Branch is a busy neighbourhood branch, which serves the area from Sheppard Avenue West to Steeles Avenue, and from Dufferin Street to east of Bathurst Street. The branch was opened by the North York Public Library Board in 1966 and renovated and expanded in 1997. The main floor of the building is 6,866 sq. ft.; including the basement the total square footage is 11,024 sq. ft. There is a 1,848 sq. ft. auditorium in the basement; however, the room has low ceilings and pillars throughout. There is a parking lot with 18 spaces. The branch is identified as requiring \$400,000 in state of good repair work.

The 2006 catchment population was 43,945. Between the 2001 and 2006 census, there was a population increase of 3.4%, well above the Toronto average of 0.9%. Development from 2007 - 2011 has been modest, with projects along Sheppard Avenue

and a recent proposal near the Antibes Recreation Centre. The area has a higher than average percentage of recent immigrants and much higher percentage of non-official home languages. The languages include a large community of Russian speakers as well as Korean and Tagalog speakers. In 2006, the percentage of immigrant youth was 71.9% of 15 - 19 year olds and 64.1% of 20 - 24 year olds compared to 37.3% and 41.5% for the city as a whole. The youth and seniors population are a higher percentage than the city average.

The branch is more than four kilometres from the nearest libraries – North York Central, Armour Heights and York Woods. Five bookmobile stops support library service at the boundaries of Centennial's catchment area, along Steeles Avenue and near Sheppard Avenue. The branch is one of few city services in the Westminster Branson priority neighbourhood. It is located on city-owned land with Library jurisdiction next to the Herbert H. Carnegie Centennial Centre arena. A community hub, including a health centre is being built at the nearby Northview Heights Secondary School, .3 km from the Centennial Branch. This project is well underway with construction starting in March 2011. Partners include the Toronto District School Board, and Unison Health and Community Services. Funders include Ministry of Health, United Way and the Province of Ontario.

Centennial Branch has the 14th highest circulation out of 79 neighbourhood branches with a circulation of 322,240 in 2010 (an increase of 11% from 2009). In September 2010, the hours at Centennial Branch were increased from 40 to 50.5 hours and from five to six open days a week. The branch provides materials in English, Russian, Hebrew, Tagalog, Spanish, French and Korean.

The Nia Centre for the Arts is a non-profit organization focused on the holistic development of Afro-Diasporic young people. The Centre is looking for public land to build a 8,000 - 10,000 sq. ft. multi-disciplinary venue to house a number of arts-based organizations and Nia's own programming activities. Nia Centre for the Arts has capital funding (\$2.2 million) from the Youth Challenge Fund to build an arts centre (see Attachment 1). The Centre has the potential to provide services to some local youth and to attract visitors from across the city. Nia is interested in co-locating with Toronto Public Library in a transit-accessible location in the north central part of the City. Their vision is to have a 10,000 sq. ft. space; however, their confirmed budget will extend to about 5,000 sq. ft. Nia has also applied for a Trillium grant to further support their vision.

A preliminary assessment indicates that a main floor expansion of the Centennial Branch with the addition of a second floor and possible linkage to the nearby arena would meet the Library's needs for increased space for library services and would provide space for the Nia Centre for the Arts on the second floor, with opportunities for partnership and some shared meeting areas. This approach would maximize usage of spaces, leverage alternate funding sources and provide benefits through partnering for the entire community.

COMMENTS

An expansion of the Centennial Branch, while feasible, is not part of the Library's current capital budget. It would support the population and service demands at this busy location. The expanded branch would house larger collections, more computer workstations and study spaces, zoned areas for children, youth and adults and additional program spaces. The provision of increased community meeting space would provide needed access to public space for local groups, programs and agencies; for example, English as a Second Language classes, a Library Settlement Partnership program, and Neighbourhood Action partners. Through the Bathurst Finch Network, the need for an expanded and improved library branch, which includes multifunctional community meeting space, has been identified as a priority by the local community and the Councillor.

The opportunity to partner in a capital project with the Nia Centre for the Arts is being explored further through a feasibility study. This project has the potential to enhance the impact of a renovation and access to cultural facilities in the area. However, the Library's priority is the provision of services and facilities to meet library service needs in the local community. As well, the Library has no funding for capital improvements at this location.

The local Councillor has participated in preliminary discussions with the Library, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Nia Centre for the Arts. The Councillor has endorsed Nia's current Trillium application and indicated that he is prepared to support the advancing of Section 37 funds to match their application of \$500,000. As well, the Councillor has met with Library and Foundation staff to discuss fundraising opportunities for this potential project; at a recent Russian Arts Night reception, proceeds from the event were to be designated for the Centennial Branch.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Nia Centre for the Arts