

# YOUTH SPACES:

## a Community Recreation for All Briefing Note

In September 2013, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) released the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report. Community Recreation for All (CRFA) has reviewed this report, and identified several concerns along with concrete actions for moving forward with increasing access to youth space in Toronto. As demonstrated by our own research, by many deputations and submissions by youth and youth groups, and by PFR's own data: additional safe, dedicated youth space is needed in Toronto. There is no more time to waste. Below, please find the beginnings of a road map to get us there.

Part A of this document is a response to the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report.

Part B of this document lists CRFA recommendations to move forward with youth spaces starting in 2014.

Part C of this document is a proposal for 10 new youth spaces for Toronto for 2014, developed in partnership with St. Stephen's Community House.

For more information or to contact Community Recreation For All, please email [communityrecreationforall@gmail.com](mailto:communityrecreationforall@gmail.com). For updates, follow up on twitter at [@comrecforall](https://twitter.com/comrecforall).

September 2013

## **Part A: About the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report**

The 'Recreation Services for Youth' report is a step towards increasing youth space in Toronto. The report identifies 'safe space' and 'places to hang out' as key priorities for youth in Toronto and mentions that PFR currently runs 30 youth lounges. Information to be shared by PFR this fall should also include the locations of the 30 PFR youth lounges; an evaluation of current PFR youth lounges and data about who is attending them (and who isn't); a needs assessment indicating geographic and/or demographic need for additional youth lounges and a look at best practices in terms of creating dedicated youth spaces (hours, programming, staffing, physical set up, resources, etc.).

Further reporting about youth spaces should include data about other, related PFR programs—Council and the public should have the opportunity to consider all information relevant to a given decision. Pending reports include ones assessing the adequacy of the new Welcome Policy allocation; discussing indexing the Welcome Policy to user fee increases; exploring the possibility of universal access to recreation in Toronto and looking at the impact of user fee increases on access. As youth identified 'cost' as a key barrier to access, the results of all of these reports should have been considered as part of both the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report and the youth engagement strategy and should be included in future discussions of youth spaces.

In addition, future reports should be adequately resourced in order to give staff the time needed to do in-depth research and consider the results. One example: the deadline for completing the online survey for youth and youth serving organizations was extended to September 4th, the same date the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report was released, leaving little to no time to analyze responses.

Finally, we are very concerned with the statement in the report that, "PFR's operating budget for youth lounges and drop-in programs has not increased over time and this has limited the ability to expand." To our knowledge, PFR has not approached Council about the need for addi-

tional funds for youth spaces. In fact, in 2012, PFR suggested a permanent \$3.13 million cut<sup>1</sup> to its own operating budget, which it received. PFR could have suggested investing this \$3.13 into the expansion of youth lounges, and/or broader access to recreation.

We hope going forward that PFR will acquire and share the data required to give Council and the public the whole picture of recreation services and community centre space in Toronto. We also hope they will ask for the budget needed to make sure all youth in Toronto have space spaces to hang out, and that every Toronto resident has access to recreation programs, and feels welcomed into their community centres.

## **Part B: Recommendations around increasing access to youth space in 2014**

**1. Introduce 10 new youth spaces in Toronto in June, 2014 based on the St. Stephen's House model** (see Part C for proposal with detailed budget implications) based on the findings of a needs assessment to be completed no later than January 2014.

**2. Conduct a youth space needs assessment and gap analysis to augment the work done through the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report, to be completed no later than January 2014 and designed to identify new youth space locations in 2014** and suggest ways to augment/improve/adjust current PFR youth lounges. The needs assessment should include:

- An evaluation of the 30 current PFR youth lounges including demographics, program elements, adequacy of hours and youth perspectives.
- An environmental scan mapping current PFR and non-PFR youth space in Toronto, including capacity, hours, program mix and demographics served.

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<sup>1</sup>Page 35, Appendix 3, Summary of 2013 Recommended Service Changes, *City Budget 2013, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget Analyst Notes*. (Please note, calculation was made to quantify cuts affecting recreation programming. Cuts related to sign shop operations, turf-management, and parks—though significant and affecting many staff positions—are not factored in.) [www.toronto.ca/budget2013/pdf/op13\\_an\\_pfr.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/budget2013/pdf/op13_an_pfr.pdf)

- An environmental scan of youth services offered in the City of Toronto, including identification of under-served areas.
- Data and perspectives on youth spaces (locations, programming mix, hours, staffing) from community residents, frontline youth workers, youth who use PFR programs, and youth who do not.
- Data that speaks to which communities have youth populations that are under-served. The needs assessment should use disaggregated data to make visible the degree to which specific age groups, girls, Aboriginal youth, racialized youth, LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities and newcomer youth are served by currently available youth spaces and programs.
- A scan of best practices when it comes to dedicated youth spaces, including best practices for service specific youth populations. This should include hours, staffing levels and training, programming, activities, physical infrastructure, transportation supports and healthy snacks.

3. The current PFR model provides for only 3 hours per day, with limited staff support. **We recommend that the 'Recreation Services for Youth' be amended replace the current PFR model (page 9, PFR report), with a model based on St. Stephen's House youth space as outlined in Part C of this document.** The cost per youth space per year would be \$2,046,500 million (a per participant cost of less than a dollar a day).

4. With the exception of 'service levels,' the criteria listed in the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report (page 11) around choosing new youth spaces do not constitute criteria. Instead, they constitute challenges and/or program elements.

For example, 'space availability,' is a challenge, not a criteria. If the urgent need for youth space is identified in a particular area, PFR should work with partners (United Way hubs, community agencies, schools, portables, etc.) to identify and secure appropriate space.

As another example, 'youth engagement' is not a criteria for selection—it is a program element, and one that should be included with any new youth space.

**We recommend that the 'Recreation Services for Youth' report be amended to include the following, needs-based criteria** for choosing new youth spaces in Toronto:

- Area household income;
- Geographic need: areas where there are no PFR or other dedicated youth spaces—or where these spaces have limited capacity or are not appropriate for area youth;
- Demographic need: areas where particular populations (ie. girls, particular age groups, particular ethno-cultural groups, LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities) do not have access to youth space;
- Service level: areas with limited access to youth-specific services;
- Specific needs: Specific and/or urgent needs identified by particular communities for use space.

5. The Recreation Services for Youth' report mentions (page 7) a recommendation from youth that PFR staff receive training on making spaces welcoming to use.

**We recommend the introduction of mandatory training on making spaces welcoming for youth for all PFR staff (management, frontline recreation staff, administrative staff and maintenance staff) for 2014. Mandatory anti-racism and anti-oppression training for all PFR staff should be included as a component of or in addition to youth-specific training.** Training to be developed in partnership with ethno-specific organizations, and some budget should be set aside for collaborating with small organizations. Staff to report back on the cost of this training in time for it to be included in the 2014 budget.

## **Part C: Youth spaces proposal**

Goal: Set-up and implement 10 full-time youth spaces run by the City of Toronto in community centres or other appropriate sites in 2014 with the capacity to offer free, welcoming, appropriate and safe space at 10 sites, five afternoon/evenings a week, city-wide. This program has the capacity to serve approximately 10,000 youth per year, at a per participant cost of less than a dollar a day. \*

Background: This budget and implementation schedule was put together by Community Recreation for All and St. Stephen's Community House.

Contact: For more information, please contact: Bill Sinclair, Associate Executive Director, St. Stephen's Community House, 416-925-2103 ext. 241 or [sbill@ststephenshouse.com](mailto:sbill@ststephenshouse.com)

### **Implementation schedule**

#### **February - June 2014**

- Hire youth spaces coordinator.
- Create city-wide implementation steering committee of youth workers, youth and other relevant stakeholders to assess appropriate sites and neighbourhoods and help with program design and implementation.
- Create detailed budget of start-up capital and training costs.
- Design training for staff.
- Finalize site-specific program design, outcomes, training and evidence collection.
- Hire or allocate staff.
- Train staff.

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\*Please note, we are assuming that, while some youth will attend every night, there will be some rotation over the course of the week. In addition, we are assuming some variance in attendance per season. Assumptions are based on St. Stephen's experience with youth drop-ins and youth drop-in capacity. The per participant cost is based on the total budget divided by the total number of youth served annually.

- Create and begin to implement outreach programs.
- June 2014 - begin running 10 youth spaces.

### Budget and resources, 2014

#### Staffing and volunteer supports

- Full-time coordinator - February 2014 - December 2014 - (\$22.36 per hour, 35 hours per week, plus MERCs, pro-rated for 11 months): \$49,000.00
- 30 full-time youth space coordinators/workers (3 per drop-in) - June 2014 - Dec. 2014 - (\$22.36 per hour, 35 hours per week, plus MERCs, pro-rated for 7 months): \$916,000.00
- Supports including child care, honoraria, training, and TTC tokens for up to three volunteers per night, per site, to help with homework, pro-rated for 7 months.: \$23,000.00
- Please note, it might be possible to allocate some present PFR staff time to youth spaces, but we don't have sufficient detail re: PFR staffing to make this recommendation. In addition, we recognize that current city-funded youth outreach workers have necessarily wide-ranging mandates that bring them out into the community and would not permit them to focus on implementing and running youth drop-ins.

#### Start-up costs and steering committee

- Approximate capital costs including computers for homework, computers for staff, printers, internet connection, furniture, kitchen supplies, etc. (some of this might be available in-kind through current PFR equipment, which would bring this number down): \$200,000.00
- Space for steering meetings and youth spaces to be provided by City or in-kind by partners.
- Training costs (2 groups of 15, 5 full days of training, additional training to be supplied in-kind): \$7,500.00

- Food, honoraria, child care and transportation supports for steering committee: \$10,000.00

#### Youth space operating costs, 2014

- Healthy snacks, pro-rated for 7 months: \$84,000.00
- Program costs including supplies, transportation supports for participants as needed and structured programming, pro-rated for 7 months: \$120,000.00
- Space: in-kind, using existing space from PFR or a partner.

**Total costs, 2013: \$1,409,500.00**

#### Budget and resources, 2015

While we expect to see the number of youth spaces expand in 2015, we've provided the ongoing operating costs of 10 youth spaces for a full year following the implementation phase for discussion purposes.

#### Staffing and volunteer supports

- Full-time coordinator - (\$22.36 per hour, 35 hours per week, plus MERCs, pro-rated for 11 months): \$52,500.00
- 30 full-time drop-in coordinators/workers (3 per drop-in) - (\$22.36 per hour, 35 hours per week, plus MERCs): \$1,575,000.00
- Supports including child care, honoraria, and TTC tokens for up to three volunteers per night, per site, to help with homework, etc.: \$40,000.00
- Please note, it might be possible to allocate some present PFR staff time to youth drop-ins, but we don't have sufficient detail to make this recommendation. In addition, we recognize that youth outreach workers have necessarily wide-ranging mandates that bring them out into the community and would not permit them to focus on implementing and running youth drop-ins.



Steering committee

- Space from steering meetings and drop-ins to be provided by City or in-kind by partners.
- Food, honoraria, child care and transportation supports for steering committee: \$10,000.00

Youth space operating costs, 2015

- Ongoing training costs: \$8,000.00
- Program costs including supplies and structured programming: \$205,000.00
- Healthy snacks: \$156,000.00
- Space: in-kind, using existing space from PFR or a partner.

**Total costs, 2015: \$2,046,500.00**