

Refreshed Regent Park Social Development Plan

May 2018 DRAFT

This Draft Refreshed Regent Park SDP was written by the team of Swerhun Inc. and the Canadian Urban Institute, including Jeff Evenson, Nicole Swerhun, and Matthew Wheatley. The information on which it is based has come directly from the residents of Regent Park who participated in the 10 year Lessons Learned process in December 2016 and the residents, organizations, governments, and public agencies who participated in various workshops and meetings to inform the refresh effort.

This draft is subject to the review of participants during the third and final working session of the SDP refresh process.

The refreshed SDP is organized as follows:

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1. Why Does the 2007 SDP Need a Refresh?

The Social Development Plan (2007) is more than a decade old. Many residents and service organizations no longer consider it to be a 'live' document. Ten years into the revitalization, social conditions have evolved in Regent Park along with the physical changes.

The purpose of the 'refresh' is to engage the community and use residents' lived experiences to refocus the SDP on issues they feel are necessary to continue to build a cohesive and inclusive mixed-income community over the next ten years.

2. Two Parts to the Regent Park Revitalization

For 50 years Regent Park was a low-income community comprised entirely of social housing physically separated from the neighbourhoods around it. This physical separation was matched by low social outcomes in education, access to employment, good affordable food choices and recreational opportunities. Prospects for social and economic advancement were limited.

To change these physical and social conditions Toronto Community Housing and residents organized themselves to rebuild Regent Park as "a diverse, mixed income community in an open and integrated neighbourhood"¹ This was called Regent Park Revitalization. It consisted of two parts.



The **physical development plan** called for restoring the grid street pattern to connect to nearby neighbourhoods, adding new streets, facilities and parks and building additional new market housing to attract "a wider range of incomes, professions, skills, relationships and backgrounds to Regent Park."

The **Social Development Plan** (2007) focused on social inclusion because it is recognized as an "almost indispensable mechanism for ensuring the benefits of revitalization and the success of a mixed-income community" It detailed 75 recommendations for building a successful mixed use community in Regent Park. For discussion, the recommendations were grouped into strategic themes:

- Social inclusion is central to the mission of renewing Regent Park
- Social inclusion is aided by casual social activities
- Community associations and governance
- Local services and community-based agencies
- Facilities
- Funding for community service facilities
- Schools
- Employment and economic development
- Change management

¹ Regent Park Social Development Plan, Toronto Community Housing, 2007 pg.1

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3. Why is a Social Development Plan (SDP) Important?

A Social Development Plan is a roadmap to achieving the benefits and social conditions necessary for building a successful mixed-use community in Regent Park. It is based on the principles of respect, belonging, communication, social inclusion and social cohesion.

When a community **values** and **respects** the needs and priorities of all its members, then it is considered to be **inclusive**. When community members from different backgrounds get to know each other through everyday interactions it creates opportunities for different groups to **relate, engage and communicate**. This is **social cohesion**.

Taken together this creates a sense of **belonging**.

4. Reflecting on the Last 10 Years

The last 10 years have seen new investment, new demographics, and new governance models introduced to Regent Park, as well as new pressures.

New Investment

Regent Park has changed to become a neighbourhood that is attractive to residents, new residents and residents of nearby neighbourhoods. This is due in part to new investment in community facilities such as the Aquatic Centre, the new Regent Park with its community gardens and bake oven; a new Community Centre, the Regent Park Athletic Grounds with a soccer / cricket pitch, the Daniels Spectrum Arts and Culture facility, and a rebuilt and refurbished Nelson Mandela School. New investment from national retailers like Shoppers Drug Mart, FreshCo by Sobeys, Tim Hortons, RBC, and Rogers as well as the catering and restaurant facility PaintBox has changed the commercial landscape in Regent Park.

Creating or preserving spaces, like large scale community gardening plots that create opportunities for people of all cultural groups and incomes to be visible to one another, whether it is to actively engage or just to be seen, have been very successful in Regent Park. These spaces include the new central park, the bake oven, a greenhouse, farmers market, dog areas and the running track as well as benches and other places to sit throughout the neighbourhood.

A mix of at least 5,400 units of market housing will be added to the 2,083 rebuilt units to replace the old social housing and RGI units in Regent Park. A return to the original street grid has been part of the physical reconfiguration of Regent Park. Housing now faces the street and walking through the community feels safer and more integrated with nearby neighbourhoods. Phases 1 and 2 of the redevelopment are complete and Phase 3 is underway. Phases 4 and 5 are being planned.

New Demographics

The SDP (2007) noted that this additional new housing would draw in new residents with a wider range of incomes, professions, skills, relationships and backgrounds to Regent Park. These changes would add more economic resources, social networks and contact with

decision makers to the current community, providing Regent Park residents with tools to improve both the neighbourhood and the opportunities for the people who live there². The 2016 Census indicates that management occupations are the largest growing occupation types – an increase from 175 in 2006 to 605 in 2016. This was followed by occupations in social science, education and government service – a 187% increase, and a 1305 increase in natural and applied science occupations. Regent Park also saw an 88% increase in median household income and forty percent fewer people below LICO-AT.³

New Governance

The SDP (2007) said that “Community associations and other governance mechanisms play a critical role in the success of mixed-income communities and should be supported by all stakeholders.”⁴ The Regent Park Neighbourhood Association, the TCHC Tenant Council and organizations like the Friends of Regent Park have been a particular success. Elections were held in every building in Regent Park to select delegates to the RPNA and elect tenant council members in a refreshed system.

The community-wide effort led to a leadership team comprised of 50% TCH and 50% condo owners created for the RPNA. At the same time, participation in the Tenant Council was increased fivefold as result of the election of Building Committee members representing TCHC buildings across the community. Together these resident-led organizations are the key to ensuring that service providers, landowners and building managers remain accountable to a refreshed SDP.

Other successes include the community’s impact on redevelopment. There are a number of ways in which the redevelopment has changed based on feedback from the community. Some of the most significant changes include:

- Accelerating building of the large central park from the last phase of the revitalization to Phase 2;
- Adjusting the scheduling of relocation to take place over the summer so students don’t have to change schools during the school year;
- Designing and programming the aquatic centre to take into account cultural needs;
- Adding facilities which were not in the plan, including: Daniels Spectrum arts and cultural centre; and the Regent Park Athletic Grounds; and
- Introducing engagement initiatives to educate and involve youth in revitalization.

Further, the TCH Community Animators have emerged as an excellent model of outreach. Their role was originally conceived to support the revitalization. At present, the Community Animator model works to support revitalization activities including:

- Community Development related to the SDP;
- Community Updates and Surveying;
- Strategic Partnerships that further the goals of revitalization and the SDP

The expansion of this model as general communication mechanism in the neighbourhood remains an opportunity for further consideration.

² IBID pg.1

³ LICO-AT was replaced with LIM-AT in subsequent censuses

⁴ IBID pg. 12

New Pressures

Socially, the definition of ‘inside the community; outside the community’ has changed. The range of people accessing community resources (community centre, aquatic centre, cultural facility) and the scope and complexity of their needs and expectations has changed. While Regent Park is now integrated with nearby neighbourhoods – (an important objective of the 2007 SDP), some residents are feeling pressure when it comes to accessing programs, community amenities and facilities.

Despite all the good changes (physical development, public spaces, residential buildings), there are still social pressures for TCH residents that stem from family make-up (more children); cultural background; socio-economic issues (wealth creation, interaction across the class divide.) Having removed the barriers with surrounding neighbourhoods, Regent Park residents are focused on building cohesion and inclusion **within** the Regent Park community.

Changes to the demographic context of Regent Park may have impacts for agencies and organizations delivering services. Overall within Regent Park, the neighbourhood context has been changing over the last decade. There has been a decrease in the number of children 0 - 19 years old and a 25% decrease in households with children. The 2016 census shows a significant increase in the number of young adults – 34% increase in 20 - 24 year old and a 100% increase in 25-29 year old groups. This is a similar profile to young renters in other condo neighbourhoods like the West Waterfront and King Spadina. There has also been a 94% increase in seniors in Regent Park.



5. Who is Involved?

Table 1 contains a list of agencies and actors. Map 1 shows the spatial distribution of community services delivered in Regent Park.

Table 1. Regent Park Actors			
Government & their Agencies	Community Organizations	Residents & their Organizations	Other / Private
City of Toronto Children's Services (TCS) Parks, Forestry & Recreation (PFR) Social Development, Finance & Admin (SDFA) Public Health (TPH) Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS) City Planning Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCH) Community Safety Unit Development Operations Resident and Community Services Toronto District School Board & Toronto Catholic District School Board: Lord Dufferin P.S. Nelson Mandela P.S. Sprucecourt P.S. St. Paul Catholic School Toronto Police Services	416 Community Support for Women Art Heart Central Neighbourhood House Centre for Social Innovation (Regent Park) CRC/Regent Park Community Food Centre Council Fire Native Cultural Centre Daniels Spectrum Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services East York East Toronto Family Resources Farahway Global George Brown College – RX Fashion Exchange Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto Neighbourhood Information Post Neighbourhood Legal Services Peacebuilders Regent Park Community Health Centre Regent Park Film Festival Regent Park FOCUS Regent Park School of Music Support Enhance Access Service (SEAS) Centre Salvation Army (Corps 614) Sumac Creek Health Centre / Family Health Team South Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership South Riverdale Community Health Centre St. Jude Community House St. Michael's Hospital Street Health Toronto Artscape Toronto Centre for Community Learning & Development Toronto Kiwanis - Boys & Girls Club Toronto Public Library – Parliament Street Library Yonge Street Mission	Regent Park Neighbourhood Association Friends of Regent Park TCH Tenant Councils and Building Committees (with tenant representatives) Community Reference Group – Regent Park Legacy Fund Condo Boards	Daniels Corp.

6. What's the Value of a Refreshed SDP?

A Social Development Plan is a roadmap to help agencies, community organizations, the City and TCHC achieve the social conditions and outcomes necessary for building a successful mixed-use community in Regent Park. An inclusive and cohesive mixed use community is likely to flourish when it is supported by all the organizations, agencies and individuals that are active in the community.

The refreshed SDP recognises the complex array of stakeholders, mandates, funding arrangements and interests at work in Regent Park. Deliberately, it is **not** prescriptive in terms of assigning who-does-what. Rather, it is grounded in a set of suggestions about how to achieve the social conditions and outcomes necessary for building a successful mixed-use community in Regent Park. These suggestions and the process that developed them (described in the following two sections) emerged from residents reflecting on their lived experience with the revitalization to date in Regent Park.

Agencies are encouraged to align their strategic plans to the priorities suggested in the refreshed SDP.

When agencies, community organizations, the City and TCHC align their plans and programs to suggestions based on residents' lived experiences, and embrace accountability mechanisms that report back to residents and their governance organizations, the relevance and legitimacy of these plans and programs is created and connected to all the organizations and individuals active in the community.

Map 1. Organizations in Regent Park and the surrounding area



7. A Resident Driven Process

Refreshing the 2007 Social Development Plan was initiated by TCH and the City of Toronto. It began with a two day participatory process (December 9 & 10, 2016) held to celebrate the ten years of redevelopment **and** a forum to discuss what it's like to live in Regent Park today, as well as to develop ideas for the future. The discussions at the forum's workshops referenced the SDP (2007) and focused specifically on **activities people are doing and the spaces they're doing them in** – whether that was casual activities (like community gardening, worshipping, informal gathering/hanging out, playing with kids, etc.), organized/programmed activities, recreation (swimming, playing sports, etc.), or shopping, work, etc.

Both the Social Development Plan (2007) and feedback from the workshops were used to produce a Lessons Learned document to contribute to the refreshed SDP and inform work by TCHC on the final two phases of revitalization (Phases 4 and 5) and to help shape a renewed vision for the future.

What the residents said at the forum workshops held on December 10, 2016 was compiled in a report. Residents at the workshop said:

- **We are Regent Park.** Everyone in Regent Park is different but also the same – despite differences in culture, ethnicity and nationality, the community is closely knit and strong.
- **Residents know what they need and should be listened to.** Communication between TCH, the City, local service providers and residents needs to be continuous.
- **Safety for everyone should be a number one priority.** TCH was urged to make safety a top priority.
- **Reserved space and programs at community facilities are required for Regent Park residents.** A clear and transparent process for booking space at community facilities. Non-English speakers need more translation services for programs and registration.
- **Affordable, accessible spaces are needed for seniors and youth.** Seniors need more space that is accessible; youth need more dedicated space to hangout, especially after hours and in the winter.
- **More integration between TCH and condo residents is needed.** More ways to make connections between people living in condos with people living in TCH buildings.
- **Additional employment opportunities and services are needed for all.** More jobs and services to help residents from different groups find jobs, including adults, youth, and newcomers

To develop the **Lessons Learned** report, residents' reflections on their lived experience were used to identify what changes could be considered in the next stages of revitalization. This is what emerged:

1. The design of the complete hierarchy of public spaces in Regent Park from the large park to community garden plots to the placement of benches needs to be continuously assessed to build on the success these components have had at contributing to social inclusion.
2. Investigate opportunities to make affordable, accessible space available for grassroots programs prior to the demolition of buildings currently being used and redevelopment of Phase 5.
3. As walking is a key factor in promoting casual interactions, special attention should be paid to promoting and enhancing pedestrian (including children's) comfort and safety – speed limits on Dundas, safe crossings, the placement of hoarding and construction equipment interactions between cyclists and pedestrians, street trees for shade, publicly accessible washrooms, benches to rest as well as safety on streets and in public spaces.
4. More attention needs to be paid to the allocation of space for dogs and their owners and the interaction between dogs (especially larger dogs) and humans.
5. Because shopping is an important activity for promoting social interaction and inclusion, more attention should be paid to the allocation of commercial retail leases in future phases of redevelopment. For instance, an additional, cost competitive food store or a small mall as well as a variety of smaller, local retail shops at grade in residential buildings have been suggested.
6. Ensure opportunities for discussions in which residents can affect positive change in the Community
7. Improve opportunities for engagement between TCH tenants and condo residents.
8. The City should consider offering more swimming programs (including separate times for Muslim men and women).
9. Investigate ways to ensure that program activities are fairly distributed to Regent Park residents by reserving spaces for low income, vulnerable or marginalized participants.
10. Investigate a method for offering local resident discounts on tickets for events in the neighbourhood.
11. Investigate restoring communal space in Seniors' Building providing access to home care, and scheduling activities at times more convenient to seniors.
12. Investigate using Daniels Spectrum to host BIG EVENTS - community gatherings for events like the Euro Cup, World Cup, TFC Raptors.
13. Investigate opportunities to make affordable, accessible space available for grass root programs prior to the demolition of buildings currently being used and redevelopment of

Phase 5.

14. Investigate fast tracking the Regent Park Children and Youth Hub.
15. Investigate how community rec centres can respond to space needs for women's sports and activities.
16. Investigate
 - more local jobs and skills training for youth, particularly for new community facilities
 - Improving employment services (adult employment opportunities, eligibility, follow ups, inter-agency collaboration for job creation)
17. Investigate how to give residents a say in what new businesses come into Regent Park.

Based on what the residents of Regent Park said, a refreshed Social Development Plan has been developed consisting of a Vision; four Core Elements, and a set of Actions.

8. Vision

“Regent Park is a place where everyone who lives here feels they belong.”

Regent Park Neighbourhood Association

9. Core Elements of a Refreshed SDP

To be accessible and useful to residents, agencies and organizations, the City and TCH, the refreshed SDP is organized around four **core elements**. Each element has a **goal** that has been identified by residents and a **series of actions** identified by residents to support progress toward the goal. The actions are organized according to their intended impact – actions that have an impact on **things** (e.g. buildings, landscapes); actions that have an impact on **people** (e.g. training, opportunities, connections); and actions that have an impact on **policies** (e.g. amendments to current practice, new policy).

The four core elements are:

1. Safety
2. Employment
3. Spaces to Interact
4. Access to Information

In addition to these core elements, residents were clear that TCH building maintenance also has an important influence on social inclusion and cohesion. Poor or slow maintenance is viewed by some residents as a lack of respect that TCH has for its tenants, and contributes to a lack of safety and security in individual units. Delays in responding to broken pipes that cause flooding in units and the time it takes to repair damaged door locks were among specific concerns raised.

10. Actions & Impact

The actions are included in the table below.

Core Element			
Safety	GOAL: Create the perception and the reality that Regent Park is a safe space for everybody		
	PROPOSED ACTIONS		
	Things	People	Policies
	Create a safe environment in TCH buildings	Train and hire local residents for security jobs in residential buildings	Protect anonymity when residents report crimes
	Install more cameras in TCH building hallways to have something looking out for residents' safety	Develop resident-led safety programs (e.g. Safety Walks) involving TCHC and Market residents.	Conduct regular safety audits, including Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design audits, to assess community safety.
Design spaces with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)	Train residents to conduct safety audits in their community	Create policy commitment to hire locally, including security.	

Safety	elements to deter illegal behaviour		
		Evolve the Community Crisis Response Network (CCRN) to be more 'pro-community	
		Strengthen community policing strategies and tactics	
		Increase diversity of police in Regent Park and ensure cross-cultural training	
		Improve the Toronto Police Service (TPS) communication with all residents to ensure more updates and information are shared in a timely manner.	
		Create an asset map of safety programs /campaigns to see the changes and impact in the community	
		Celebrate the achievements and positive things going on in Regent Park to improve residents' sense of safety in the community.	
		Create opportunities for parents and families to connect across racial, economic and social lines.	

Employment	GOAL: Increase employment rates and opportunities for local residents.		
	PROPOSED ACTIONS:		
	Things	People	Policies
		Prioritize hiring of local residents.	Establish a local hiring policy in government agencies and community organizations in the community
		Hold more job fairs, particularly for adults and newcomers	Build a local hiring requirement into the business or lease agreements
		Provide training supports and opportunities for residents to start their own business	educate about RGI policies and employment
		Provide social supports to help residents sustain employment including childcare, flexible hours and mental health support	
		Develop an Employment Table involving key agencies (e.g. TESS, BIAs, PFR, TCHC, TDSB, TCDSB, etc.).	
		Improve residents' awareness of job opportunities.	
	Have youth facilitate local youth hiring events		

Spaces to Interact	GOAL: Create a welcoming space that encourages organic interact between TCHC and Market residents.		
	PROPOSED ACTIONS		
	Things	People	Policies
	Allocate accessible meeting space on the ground floor of new buildings to promote resident interaction.	Involve RPNA and Tenant Council in shaping the development and land use of Phases 4 and 5 of Regent Park.	Make the application process for booking and accessing space easier, especially for youth groups and residents who do not have agency affiliation.
	Install comfortable seating throughout the community and lighting around buildings to allow residents to gather informally	Organize events that encourages TCHC and Market residents to participate, such as gardening, food, sports, crafts, neighbourhood clean-up, etc.	Provide spaces that are accessible after regular operating hours and that don't require an application so residents have a place to meet and connect.
	Create more community gardens to encourage interaction between residents from different buildings		Provide Regent Park residents priority registration and access to programs.
	Provide sufficient visitor parking because it plays an essential role to residents' social well-being and the community's vitality.		
	Create space for local vendors and different retail uses to attract people and increase foot traffic in the community.		
Animate 'canyon' spaces (e.g. stretch of Dundas east of Parliament) and encourage its tenants to spill onto the street instead of being closed off from the community.			

Access to Information	GOAL: Make information easily accessible for everyone in the community		
	PROPOSED ACTIONS		
	Things	People	Policies
	Install TV monitors in TCHC building lobbies to inform residents of events, news, etc., happening in the community	Provide accessible information to residents by: translating; easily readable material; distribution on all platforms + pictures	
Ensure all residents in TCHC buildings have access to Regent Park TV on Rogers channel 991.	Promote existing communication platforms to increase resident awareness of available community information sources through all TCHC communications to residents, tenant meetings and other resident gatherings (e.g. Regent Park TV on Rogers channel 991; Radio Regent; TCHC newsletters, CSI newsletters, various agency newsletters, etc.).		
	Improve communication to residents by building on existing resources. It could include collaboration between different resources to align funding opportunities, and reduce duplication and competition for funding to deliver similar programs.		

		<p>Hire a communications expert to work with the community in creating a communications strategy to maximize existing communication resources. This could include mapping all communication assets to have a centralized source for residents to find programs, services, and activities in the community. The asset mapping could also include an analysis of the gaps in each communication resource.</p>	
		<p>Create job opportunities for residents to serve as translators of communication materials in Regent Park.</p>	
		<p>Conduct surveys to identify how residents access and receive information to understand the best way to share information with residents</p>	
		<p>Provide funding to organizations (e.g. Regent Park Focus) covering events, meetings and activities in Regent Park and distributing relevant information to the community.</p>	

11. Implementation & Monitoring

There are two items that are critical to successful implementation of the refreshed SDP:

1. It must be driven by the vision and priority outcomes that residents have identified; and
2. With social cohesion and inclusion as the goal, it is ultimately the residents of Regent Park who will determine the extent to which they feel as though they belong in the neighbourhood and what progress they see being made towards achieving the goals identified in this SDP.

There are a number of other important realities that have informed the refreshed approach to implementation of the SDP, including:

- The SDP is a Toronto City Council endorsed Plan that guides the work of many City departments and divisions in Regent Park, Toronto Community Housing, as well as the many non-profit and community-based organizations that work in Regent Park;
- The vast majority, if not all, of the governments, public agencies, organizations, and networks working in Regent Park have mandates, policies, and/or programs that are relevant to supporting the implementation of the SDP;
- There are existing mechanisms in place to support collaboration in Regent Park (e.g. SDP Stakeholder Table, the Executive Director's Network, Community Crisis Response Network, Safety Sub-Committee of the Tenant Council, etc.);
- Governance mechanisms are in place to support connections between the City, organizations, to residents, including the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA) and the Tenant Council, supported by TCH Building Committees and Condo Boards; and
- The intent of the SDP is to guide and inform existing and new efforts underway in Regent Park and not to duplicate existing work.

Based on the above, the SDP will be implemented by:

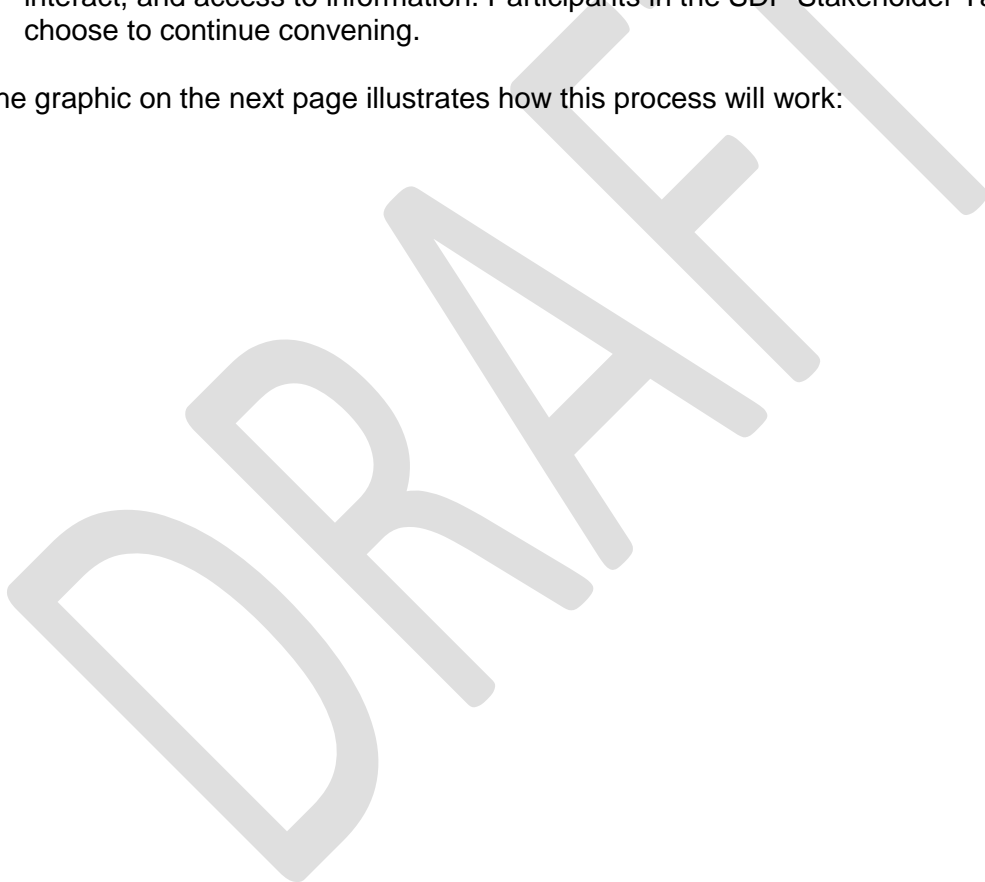
- Any and all governments, public agencies, and organizations with a mandate to support Regent Park, and particularly those whose activities address the four SDP priorities of (1) safety, (2) employment, (3) spaces to interact, and (4) access to information; and
- Individual residents and the organizations that represent residents.

To monitor and assess progress toward the vision and priorities:

- The existing SDP Stakeholder Table be realigned to focus on the four core elements of the refreshed SDP. Each core element will be represented by a sub-committee of the SDP Stakeholder Table. The subcommittee will be led by a chair or co-chair and have at least one member of RPNA and one Member from the Tenant Council represented. The sub-committees will meet regularly.

- The first year of the realigned Stakeholder Table will be supported by a coordinator whose role will be to support each subcommittee in establishing short, medium and long-term goals.
- Once a year, the City of Toronto will work with TCH, the Tenant Council and the RPNA to convene a coordinated report from each sub-committee (representing government, public agencies, and organizations) who are working to support the implementation of the SDP to Regent Park residents. The purpose of these coordinated reports is to track progress against the SDP vision and goals, and to evolve implementation of the SDP, as necessary to respond to the changing needs and context.
- Outside of those twice-annual coordinated reports, governments, public agencies, and organizations will continue using any existing and/or new opportunities to collaborate, connect, and effectively support achievement of the SDP vision and priorities. This could include existing or new working groups to address safety, employment, spaces to interact, and access to information. Participants in the SDP Stakeholder Table may choose to continue convening.

The graphic on the next page illustrates how this process will work:



**Resident Priorities to achieve
Social Inclusion and Cohesion**

