

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

**FROM:** Samantha Howard, Manager of Recreation Services

**DATE:** May 28, 2019

**MEMORANDUM NO.:** MEM-RP-2019-0003

**RE:** Youth Services Update

### **PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:**

The purpose of this Memorandum is to update Members of Committee on the status of Youth Services in Halton Hills.

### **BACKGROUND:**

In April 2018, Council approved Memorandum RP-2018-0013 regarding Youth Services Update through Resolution No. 2018-0082 that provided an update on the work of the Youth Network and the delivery of youth services in Halton Hills.

Following two years of interim funding through Tax Rate Stabilization, in 2019 Council approved an operating budget of \$324, 400 to support continued operations of the youth centres and the overall youth program.

### **COMMENTS:**

The purpose of this memo is to provide Committee with an update on the following information regarding the provision of Youth Services in Halton Hills:

- a) Impact and status of Halton Hills Youth Centres in Acton and Georgetown;
- b) Actions resulting from the Youth Network and continued coordination with youth service providers.

Refer to Appendix A for a graphic summary of key highlights.

## **Halton Hills Youth Centres**

The Town of Halton Hills Youth Centres are committed to the development of recreation programming that promotes an active, social and educational environment for youth visiting the space. The Youth Centres are supervised locations for youth to engage in activities which encourage the development of assets and quality use of time. The participants' ages range from 12 to 21 years for daily recreation programming and wrap-around services (e.g. counselling, system navigation) are available for youth up to age 24 years. Participants are able to come and go to this program freely and there are no barriers to entry and Centres do not charge a fee. Since 2017, there have been substantive changes to core operations of the Halton Hills Youth Centres, resulting in an overall enhancement in recreation and socialization as well as greater access and connection to wrap-around services. A wide range of activities are offered daily including: sports, billiards, video games, movie nights, guest presentations on current issues, and access to a variety of health and social services as provided by agencies within the Youth Network. Recreation staff facilitates opportunities for youth to have access to internet, provide homework assistance, peer mentoring, food security programs, and educational workshops that encourage youth to make healthy life choices. The sites connect youth with the local community, encouraging leadership and volunteerism to make a difference.

Youth taking advantage of these drop-in facilities enjoy:

- increased physical fitness levels
- increased life skills through participation in workshops such as employment
- getting involved in the community, thereby fostering and promoting civic engagement
- spending time with other youth in a non-judgmental environment where they feel safe
- developing leadership skills
- developing budgeting and fundraising skills through special event planning
- having their achievements recognized and celebrated
- having access to health and social service agencies and obtain referral services to which they may otherwise not have access

Recreation has long been recognized as a method of attaining and maintaining mental, emotional, and physical health. Through the Youth Centres, Recreation and Parks is playing an integral role in supporting youth along the healthcare continuum. The participation and outcomes from recreation programming within the Youth Centres is an example of this, and planning efforts are directed towards functional interventions, leisure education and fostering participation opportunities all with the intention of maximizing optimal health and the highest possible quality of life for our youth. The integrated youth service model is the preferred model for serving this population. It aligns with recommendations in the Town's 2012 Youth Needs Study and is further validated through the Ontario Youth Framework and the 2017 Clinical Services review.

In 2019, the Halton Hills Youth Centres have seen substantive growth in participation and engagement in recreation programming. In the gym, the top activities are 4 on 4 basketball, dodgeball and badminton. In the lounge youth enjoy programming focused around food including preparing meals and healthy snacks as well as trying their hand at DIY projects like soap and candle making and monogrammed mugs.

### **Halton Hills Youth Centre – Georgetown**

In September 2018, the Halton Hills Youth Centre in Georgetown relocated to Gary Allan High School. This space supports the well-being of youth in many capacities including increased program space, a gymnasium to foster active living, and the opportunity to integrate wrap around services to support the holistic well-being of youth. On average, 30 youth attend the Centre per day with the highest being 49 participants. In support of this community partnership, the Halton District School Board has completed an extensive renovation to the kitchen and creation of an accessible washroom to support activities for both the school and the Youth Centre. This lends itself to increased programming with focus on food preparation and food security. Staff is pleased to report that the lease has been renewed for another year within increased hours of operation.

### **Halton Hills Youth Centre – Acton Hub/Mackenzie-Bennett Smith Public School (MSB)**

In September 2016, Recreation and Parks partnered with the Acton Hub and Halton District School Board to use dedicated spaced within those facilities to offer youth drop-in programming. Once per week, youth have the opportunity to lounge, engage in active and passive programming followed by a free swim at Acton Indoor Pool. Participation and engagement has continued to grow over the past 3 years. On average we see 25 – 30 youth per night with the highest being 73 participants.

### **Halton Hills Youth Centre Acton**

Since assuming operation of the Youth Centre in Acton in 2017, it remains operating out of a storefront on Main Street in Acton. On average 16 youth attend drop-in recreation programming per evening with the highest being 30 participants. This space supports the well-being of youth in many capacities however more space is needed to fully integrate “one-stop-shop” services in a central location. In 2015, Budget Committee approved funding to proceed with a conceptual design for dedicated youth space in Acton in the former Acton Town Hall. In 2018, an architect was commissioned and in consultation with Youth and the Youth Network, a conceptual design was completed.

The design of the Youth Centre is premised on the preferred integrated service delivery model. The new space will continue to build on the principle of youth services in one location that is easily accessible, increases focus on community wellness and support, and enhances positive mental health and other wrap around services.

The conceptual design is based on the following overarching design principles:

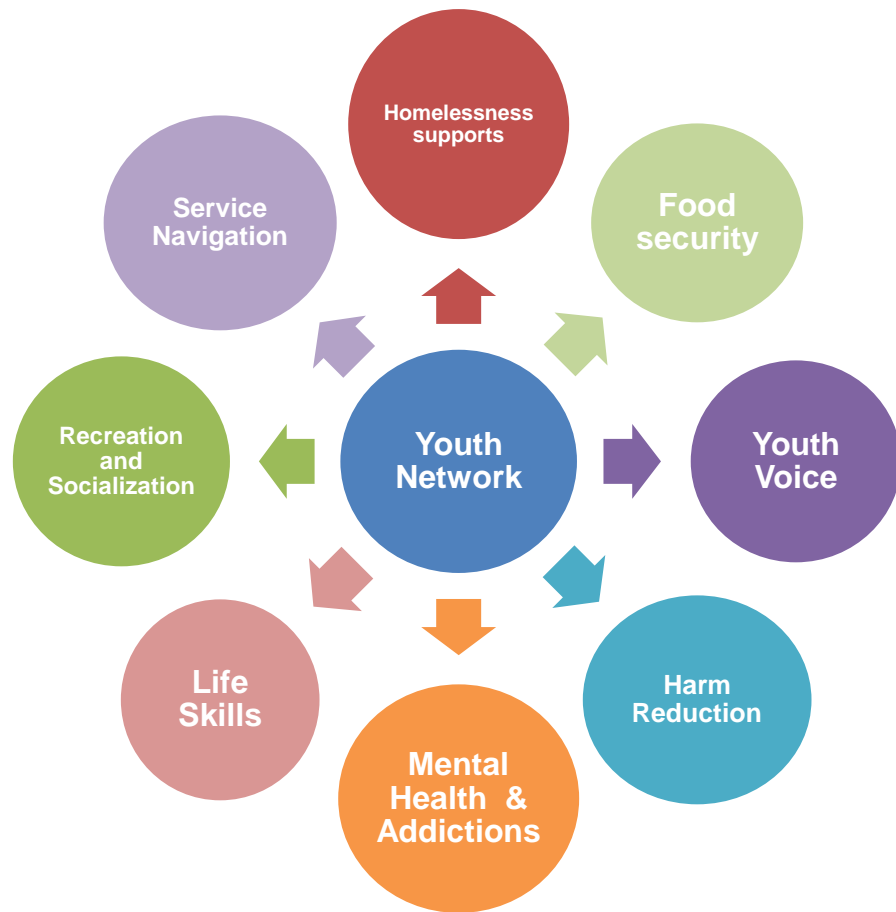
- Provide an entrance from both Bower and Willow Street
- Maximize the amount of daylight entering the space
- Minimize the size of service spaces to maximize usable space
- Design space to support integrated service delivery
- Create unobstructed sightlines with clear view into the main space
- Provide flexibility of use, with the ability for the interior spaces to be reorganized when needed
- Create an economical design and layout
- Retrofit the existing space to be a comfortable space that is energy efficient
- Create a space that has a “family-type” feel
- Create a space that is fully accessible
- Compatible with existing tenants and neighbours
- Provide opportunities for complimentary programming with Heritage Acton (e.g. use of stage for special events)

Based on this conceptual design staff will proceed with next steps including detailed design and engineering with construction to follow in early 2020 as approved through capital budget process.

### **Youth Network**

The Halton Hills Youth Network is a collection of youth serving agencies across the Town of Halton Hills. Co-Chaired by the Town and the Region of Halton, the network continues to grow in numbers and strength. The purpose of this network is to ensure youth service provision is aligned and most effective in addressing youth needs through identification of service gaps, explore opportunities to address these gaps and enhance the coordination of services to cover the full spectrum of needs for youth in Halton Hills.

The outcome of the work of the Youth Network has been to develop a model for the delivery of youth services in Halton Hills. Since 2016, eight priority areas have emerged and are being addressed. The 2019 work program will continue to focus on these eight priority areas.



Two positions that have emerged as a result of the Network and align with the priority areas of focus are that of Intensive Youth Worker and Service Navigator.

i) Intensive Youth Worker

The vision of the Halton Hills Youth Network (HHYN) is for the community to plan together to enhance collaboration on issues that impact safety and well-being for youth in Halton Hills. Since 2017, Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK) and the Town have partnered to pilot a project that integrated an on-site mental health youth worker into the Youth Centres. Initially launched as part of a clinical review, ROCK provided an on-site intensive youth worker to understand the needs of youth who frequented the Centres and provided mental health supports. The availability of on-site supports for extended periods of time was clearly preferred by youth. This position does not have sustainable funding and has been supported since 2017 by donations from community organizations including Service Club Collaborative and proceeds from Movie in the Park Event. The number of youth supported by the Intensive Youth Worker within the Youth Centres has significantly increased since moving to the Gary Allan location. This increase can be attributed to staff outreach, word of mouth and community information nights. In September 2018, the Intensive Youth Worker was providing individual support to 8 youth across both locations. As of May 2019, the Intensive Youth Worker

had 14 active clients across two sites and approximately 18 closed enrolments requiring private counseling sessions with a wide range of presenting concerns.

In January 2019, ROCK, in partnership with ADAPT (Halton Alcohol Drug And Gambling Assessment Prevention and Treatment), submitted a proposal to the Halton Region Community Investment Fund to provide dedicated on-site mental health, addictions and substance use supports for youth in the Halton Hills Youth Centres. This support will be offered through a relationship-developed model and will be comprised of on-site counseling, evidenced-based group interventions, education and information sharing. Building off the tested pilot, youth will access support if available through both an on-site intensive youth worker and peer addictions worker.

On May 22, 2019, Regional Council approved this funding submission. ROCK will receive \$289,478 over three years to provide 2 positions at 0.6 FTE each for dedicated staff for on-site mental health, addictions and substance use supports for youth, and provide educational information sessions to caregivers, working in partnership with ADAPT. This is a significant milestone for the work of the Youth Network in securing short-term funding solutions as we continue to work towards a long-term sustainable model.

#### ii) Service Navigation

The Service Navigator is a position housed with Bridging the Gap (Children's Aid Society) funded in 2018 by the Halton Region Community Investment Fund. This position provides a range of supportive interventions for youth ages 14 – 24 years identified as being in need of system navigation and connection to community supports in Halton Hills. The Service Navigator connects youth with supports to the services they need in areas of mental health, addictions, financial literacy (OW, ODSP), housing, coordination with probation services for youth involved in youth justice, and life skill development. The Service Navigator can make referrals to a variety of community services and is a source of central information for youth and families.

Following a one year pilot, in July 2018 Bridging the Gap received 3 years of funding through Halton Region Community Investment fund to continue this position until 2021. The position is currently wrapping up year one of the three year term. During the first year the Service Navigator continues to have an average caseload of 30 youth per month. The largest amount of time is spent helping youth navigate the court and legal system, providing mental health supports and transportation to appointments. The Youth Centres remain a key location for meeting and connecting with youth.

The Network will continue to work with Bridging the Gap to find a sustainable solution after funding ceases.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Staff remains committed to being the lead organization in the continuation of the Halton Hills Youth Network in guiding the work of youth service provision in Halton Hills. The Halton Hills Youth Centres play an integral role in making recreation opportunities more

available to our youth while actively promoting this as a link to positive health and connecting youth to health and social services. The Youth and the Youth Network have been active in participating and confirming the key elements of both Youth Centres and staff is committed to moving forward with these principles in all dedicated youth spaces.

Reviewed and approved by,

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Samantha Howard, Manager of Recreation Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Harris". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letter being a large 'W'.

Warren Harris, Commissioner of Recreation and Parks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Marshall". The signature is cursive and stylized, with the first letter being a large 'B'.

Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer