



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: February 27, 2024

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**SUBJECT:** Operational Transition of the Victoria Square Community Centre to the City of Markham – Recreation Services

**PREPARED BY:** Kerry Wakefield – Community Recreation Manager – North Area

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the report entitled “Operational Transition of the Victoria Square Community Centre to the City of Markham – Recreation Services” be received;
- 2) That the transfer of the management of the Victoria Square Community Centre to the City of Markham – Recreation Services be approved;
- 3) That the Victoria Square Community Centre Board be dissolved, and that Council extend its sincere thanks to all Victoria Square Community Centre Board members, past and present, for the unwavering commitment they have demonstrated towards ensuring the community centre’s smooth operation; and
- 4) That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval for the City of Markham - Recreation Services to take on the management responsibilities of the Victoria Square Community Centre (“VSCC”), a facility currently managed by a Community Centre Board, comprised of community volunteers and the Ward 2 Councillor.

**BACKGROUND:**

VSCC, one of the City of Markham's five satellite community centers established under the *Community Recreation Centres Act* R.S.O 1990 (the “Act”), is presently managed by a Community Centre Board established as a "committee of management" under the Act, and continued as a local board under the *Municipal Act, R.S.O. 1990*.

Located in the hamlet of Victoria Square near Woodbine Avenue and Elgin Mills Road, the VSCC originated from a former mess hall owned by Stephen Roman in Elliot Lake, Ontario, dating back to 1966. It was then re-located to Markham to be used as a community centre.

The VSCC contains two multi-purpose rooms and a kitchen. The larger room is approximately 2,200 square feet with a capacity of 150 and a stage for performances, while the smaller room is 1,120 square feet with a capacity of 60 people and ideal for meetings and smaller activities. There is also a kitchen in the facility with three warming ovens, a refrigerator, and a food preparation area.

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Today, the VSCC is used for community rentals, Sunday church service and community organization programs. The use of the facility has significantly decreased since the Covid-19 pandemic. The property on which the VSCC is located is owned by the City of Markham, and includes a children's playground and two baseball diamonds. The park is also home to one of the City of Markham's outdoor ice rinks.

Operational responsibilities of the VSCC currently rest with the Community Centre Board, while capital upgrades are managed jointly with Sustainability and Asset Management (subject to Council approval). Capital projects are reviewed individually and the financial split is determined based on each individual project. The Community Centre Board is comprised of the Ward 2 Councillor and community volunteers, often with significant historical ties to the surrounding community. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, facility usage has decreased significantly.

The 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan (ILMP) identified the Victoria Square community to be an area that requires access to recreation. It noted that a feasibility study should be conducted to "consider facility renewal and expansion to accommodate meeting and multi-use space." (ILMP 2019). As a result, City Staff have worked with the Victoria Square Community Centre Board to develop further recreation opportunities, including the expansion of summer camp programming and evening programs for children.

The City of Markham has identified that there will be significant growth over the next decade. The north-west portion of Markham, including north of the Angus Glen Community Centre and the Victoria Square community, will convert from farm land to housing and employment lands. The proposed development is to accommodate approximately 45,000 residents and 16,000 to 18,000 jobs by 2031. (ILMP 2019) The 2019 Integrated Leisure Master Plan notes that the Angus Glen Community Centre is unable to accommodate the significant growth that will occur and, therefore, identifies that another major community centre will be necessary. Within the ILMP, VSCC is recommended as a possible location for a new multi-use community centre to service residents and provide recreation and library opportunities.

As VSCC has a large space for rentals and programming as well as a smaller space, it makes it an optimal location for further access to the community. The use of larger multi-purpose spaces is common in City of Markham community centres. Larger rooms in the "north" area of Recreation Services are used the most often. The use of the facility at Victoria Square increases the ability to host programs, camps, senior services and rentals.

Since Covid-19, the Victoria Square Community Centre Board has diminished significantly in size, with only three community members remaining (in addition to the Ward 2 Councillor). City Staff provide some support to the Board with regards to minor repair work, and providing guidance for day to day operations.

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**OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

In January 2019, a meeting was held with Ruth Brock, then Chair of the Victoria Square Community Centre Board, to address the long-term viability of the Board structure. Ruth, who passed away in early 2020, expressed the Board's desire to collaborate with the City on supporting Victoria Square activities, with eventual full operations transitioning to the City within a three to five-year timeframe.

On April 11, 2019, City Staff made a presentation to the Victoria Square Community Centre Board regarding recognized and planned development within the community, the identification of the site in the ILMP, and thoughts regarding transitioning management of the VSCC to the City. The presentation was supported by the Board, with the first steps being that the City would have access to the facility, to provide community programming that utilize the City's staffing structure and program standards and applying costing that aligns with City's Fee Bylaw. Councillor Ho, Ward 2 Councillor at the time, also supported this initiative, expressing community demand for access to the VSCC. The presentation was unanimously supported by the Board, and led to a successful 2019 summer camps program being offered at the VSCC.

Recognizing community growth and Board changes during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board now favors an immediate transition of operations to the City. During the May 2023 meeting of the Board, transitioning management of the VSCC to the City and dissolution of the Board was discussed and unanimously supported by the Board.

Recreation Staff who manage the Angus Glen Community Centre currently manage the operations of multiple satellite community spaces in the Unionville and Angus Glen area, including Crosby Arena, Stiver Mill, Unionville Train Station and Old Unionville Library. This satellite model and management structure make it well-suited for Angus Glen Community Centre to manage rentals and recreation programs and services for VSCC.

Staff recommend that the Victoria Square Community Centre Board be dissolved and that management of the VSCC transition to the City of Markham's Recreation Services throughout 2024. This strategic move aims to facilitate approximately 80 to 85 hours weekly programming opportunities within spacious, multi-purpose areas, along with the provision of substantial rental space to cater to the residents of the Cathedral Town area. This initiative also aligns with the strategic priorities as outlined in the ILMP and is well positioned to ensure a seamless transition in the eventuality of a new community center in the north end of Markham, potentially on the same site.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The Victoria Square Community Centre Board is responsible for overseeing the VSCC operating budget, and actively managing projected program revenues and expenses throughout the fiscal year. As the City owns the property on which VSSC is located, annual capital planning and lifecycle-related assets fall under the purview of the City's Sustainability and Asset Management Department. Capital costs are covered by the City, however, certain capital replacement has required financial contributions from the Board.

Given VSCC's inclusion in the City's capital lifecycle program, the primary financial focus lies on crafting an effective operational budget. From a staffing resources standpoint, the City is expected to leverage existing Angus Glen full-time staff to manage the VSCC, but will incur incremental costs for part-time staff and non-personnel expenses like program supplies, utilities, etc. Expenses should be offset by VSCC revenues, including from rental hall and program registration.

The table below presents a financial projection outlining the anticipated operational impact for the VSCC. The figures are derived from comparable amenities presently overseen by Recreation Services.

| Type                | Budget Projection |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Personnel Total     | \$57K             |
| Non-Personnel Total | \$78K             |
| Revenue Total       | (\$119K)          |
| <b>Net Impact</b>   | <b>\$16K</b>      |

City staff will manage VSCC within the department's 2024 budget and, based on the outcome of 2024 operations, any incremental funding requirement to support VSCC going forward will be considered as part of the 2025 budget process.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

The budget projections provided above encompass the inclusion of additional part-time staff, essential for the delivery of Recreation Services programs and services at the VSCC.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The City of Markham will assume operational responsibility for the VSCC. This aligns with the strategic growth priorities as outlined in the Official Plan and Community Service's Integrated Leisure Master Plan.

#### **BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Sustainability and Asset Management, Legal Services and Financial Services

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

Mary Creighton  
Director, Recreation Service

Morgan Jones  
Commissioner, Community Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A