



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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TO: Community Services Committee and Council

DESTINATAIRE : Comité des services communautaires et Conseil

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SUBJECT: Vanier Area-Day Programming Like Service Plans

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update and response to the Community Services Committee and City Council regarding the March 31, 2022, Respite Services Sustainability Plan Report (ACS2022-CSS-GEN-002) recommendation 1C, as follows:

Approve the creation of a service hub located at 370 Catherine Street within the Employment and Social Services office and report back on the day programming like service plans and needs for the Vanier and Centretown geographic areas by Q1 2023.

This memorandum includes relevant information on the work and accomplishments completed to date, outlines the transition of Respite Services to 370 Catherine Street Community Service Hub, and the short-term service delivery options currently providing day programming like services for residents in the Vanier area.

BACKGROUND

In April 2020, as part of the COVID-19 response to system capacity issues and needs, the Community and Social Services Department (CSSD) Human Needs Command Centre (HNCC), with the support of Provincial emergency funding, opened and operated the first temporary Respite Centre at the McNabb recreational facility in Centretown. This Respite Centre was branded a success and quickly highlighted the increasing service gaps and challenges being experienced by agencies and impacts on those individuals experiencing homelessness, precariously housed and/or living on low income who were being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Over the following several months, the HNCC opened three temporary Respite Centres: Tom Brown Arena, in the Hintonburg area, Bernard Grandmaître Arena, in the Vanier area, and at St. Paul's Eastern United Church to serve those in the downtown core.

In 2021, the Community and Social Services Department (CSSD) Human Needs Command Centre (HNCC) initiated a COVID-19 recovery strategy that aimed to thoughtfully transition services being offered at the City-led temporary Respite Centres back to the community and stand down operations. This strategy included the creation of a Respite Service Transition Working Group comprised of HNCC staff and other City staff, and community partners. A full list of the membership is found in Appendix A. In August 2022, the Tom Brown Respite Centre closed, and key services were transitioned to the newly opened 370 Catherine Street Community Service Hub to support the sustainability of day programming like services for those in need in the Centretown and surrounding areas. Staff also began work to explore day program like services for the Vanier area, as per Council direction.

On September 2, 2022, respite services offered at Bernard Grandmaître moved to the 2nd floor of the facility to support the resumption of Recreation, Culture and Facility Services (RCFS) community ice programming. All similar service offerings continued with minor modification of the hours of operation to support the community ice programming.

Anticipating the end of provincial emergency funding by December 31, 2022, the Vanier Community Advisory Table comprised of HNCC staff, other City staff, community agencies and local community partners was created to explore options to transition services back to the Vanier area community.

On December 16, 2022, the last City operated Respite Centre Bernard Grandmaître closed, and to ensure service continuation, a pilot Vanier Service Centre opened on December 19, 2022 at 311 McArthur Ave in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) who offered access to the first floor of their building at no charge. The pilot Vanier Service Centre provides residents a safe place to rest, connect with City staff and/or community agencies, including access to service navigation, Wi-Fi and computers.

The costs of operating the Bernard Grandmaître temporary Respite Centre were covered through emergency funding provided by the Province's Social Services Relief Fund. The Vanier Service Centre pilot is being funded through existing Community and Social Services (CSSD) budgets.

DISCUSSION

Vanier Respite Service Needs

In anticipation of the closure of the Bernard Grandmaître Respite Centre, the HNCC launched an engagement strategy which included the creation of the Vanier Community Advisory Table (Appendix B). The Table launched in September 2022, and included representatives that were also members of the initial Respite Transition Working Group that helped inform the closure and transition strategy for the temporary Respite Centres.

The Vanier Community Advisory Table met to discuss service gaps, resident needs, and to explore mitigation plans and/or ways to maintain key services in Vanier after the Respite Centre's closing. A key option explored included collaborating with existing local community agencies who could provide wrap around supports and access to space for residents to drop-in, similar to the services that would no longer be available at the Bernard Grandmaître Respite Centre. Options were limited based on the service delivery model and mandate, staffing resources, building capacity and budget constraints.

In addition to collaborating with the Advisory Table, the HNCC conducted an environmental scan and consulted with City staff and community partners to provide feedback including facilitated discussions, one-on-one conversations, and surveys. The environmental scan and consultation results were presented and confirmed by the Vanier Community Advisory Table..

The feedback collected identified a need to continue to provide a safe space for residents to access during the day and where they could seek basic supports. Partners also indicated their support and desire for a community service hub in the Vanier area. The feedback highlighted that providing ease of access to wrap around services in one location was beneficial and considered a preferred service delivery model.

The environmental scan, Appendix C, identified the following potential gaps in supports and services following the closure of the Bernard Grandmaître temporary Respite Centre. These potential gaps could not be supported through the multiple agencies available within a 20-minute walk from the Bernard Grandmaître Respite Centre due to limitations in their services:

- Space to rest with access to cots,
- Access to showers,
- Wrap around supports such as Ontario Works and Housing,
- Access to primary health care and first aid, and
- Access to food recovery items (meals and/or light snacks).

The HNCC gathered data on the usage of Bernard Grandmaître, showing a decrease in resident visits when services moved from the large arena area to the smaller second floor from an average of 60 residents per day down to 46. However, the most accessed services continued to be a safe place for residents to rest, access to washrooms, showers, Wi-Fi and referrals to other services such as Ontario Works, Housing Services and community resources.

Based on the engagement and environmental scan, and in collaboration with the Vanier Community Advisory Table, various options were reviewed for the temporary continuation of key services, which lead to the development of the current Vanier Service Centre pilot. The Vanier Service Centre pilot is located adjacent to Bernard Grandmaître at 311 McArthur Ave where the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) offered free, short term, access to space to transition key respite services from Bernard Grandmaître to the first floor of their building, and maximizes existing partnerships and staffing resources to deliver services enabling this option to be a cost-neutral transition plan.

370 Catherine Street Community Services (CSCS) Hub

As endorsed by Council, the Catherine Street Community Service Hub (CSCS) opened in August 2022. Since opening in August 2022, the CSCS Hub has served more than 11,000 residents of Ottawa. Residents can walk-in or schedule an appointment to access Hub services and while onsite they can access washrooms, charging stations, public computers, Wi-Fi, telephones and a safe place to rest. The top services being accessed by residents include housing and food resources followed by supports with financial assistance applications, employment assistance, and crisis services. As of May 1, 2023, the Centretown Community Food Centre is now co-located with the CSCS Hub, which provides residents with a three-to-four-day supply of groceries.

City staff and community partners collaborate on-site to deliver a flexible, integrated model of services to an average of 60 residents per day, who access supports including housing and food resources as well as financial assistance. Consultation with local partnering agencies through the Service Hub Community Advisory Table, (membership details attached as Appendix D highlighted the ongoing need to sustain key day program services in the area.

Vanier Service Centre Pilot

As mentioned above, a short-term Vanier Service Centre pilot is currently operational at 311 McArthur Ave, where the City has entered into an initial Service Agreement with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) until August 31, 2023.

The Vanier Service Centre opened in that space on December 19, 2022, as a strategy to address the standing down of Bernard Grandmaître Respite Centre operations. This short-term pilot is a collaboration between multiple stakeholders and was developed based on the environmental scan results and in collaboration with the Vanier Community Advisory Table.

The daily average of 20 residents accessing the Vanier Service Centre are primarily seeking a safe place to rest, followed by washroom facilities, employment and financial assistance. Clothing, housing and food supports are top referrals, with transportation as the biggest noted barrier to accessing services in Vanier. The Vanier Service Centre is staffed by City employees who work closely with other community partners to address client needs. This includes on-site services provided by Ottawa Public Health, CSSD Housing Support staff, as well as staff from Employment and Social Services.

Bus tickets are provided to support residents in accessing alternate services in the area. The consultations, and data collected to date including the environmental scan of services and supports surrounding the Bernard Grandmaître Respite Centre, have helped inform the current service offerings at the Vanier Service Centre, and fill gaps and needs for this area. The preliminary data shows that the Vanier Service Centre is being accessed by residents residing within the immediate vicinity of the location.

As part of the City's standard operating procedures, this pilot incorporates a performance evaluation component that helps inform future planning. The information gathered will support future decision making as this temporary enhanced service delivery model, in collaboration with CMHA, cannot be sustained beyond August 2023.

CONCLUSION

370 Catherine Street Community Service Hub

After a successful pilot phase which saw collaboration with multiple internal and external service providers, the Catherine Street Community Service Hub continues to explore opportunities to improve and address service needs of residents. This includes the recent partnership with the Centretown Emergency Food Centre now operating on-site providing additional food security support.

Vanier Service Centre

Based on the existing service agreement with CMHA, this pilot service centre is accessible until August 31, 2023, and is being operated within existing CSSD budgets. Council direction would be required to sustain the centre for a longer term.

CSSD continues to consult with internal and community partners, such as the Vanier Community Advisory Table, to explore future opportunities and partnerships to support a more integrated social service delivery model for this area of the city.

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendix A – Respite Transition Working Group

Appendix B – Vanier Community Advisory Table

Appendix C - Organizations 20 min walk from Bernard Grandmaître

Appendix D – Catherine St. Community Services Hub Community Advisory Group