

Section 2: Themes and Strategies for Healthy Apartment Neighbourhoods By Design

Themes and Strategies

Theme 1: Natural Environment

Theme 2: Built Environment

Theme 3: Transportation

Theme 4: Housing

Theme 5: Employment, Income and Opportunities

Theme 6: Education and Learning

Theme 7: Food Security

Theme 8: Community Health

Health Strategies Summary Chart



Theme 6: Education and Learning

How do education and learning affect health?

There is a strong relationship between education, health and economic development. Education has an impact on health by:

- **Influencing income, employment and working conditions** – A good education increases the chances that an individual will do work that provides greater control in decision-making, has increased job security, higher income and safe and non-hazardous working conditions (TPH, 2011).
- **Increasing healthy behaviour** – Individuals with higher levels of education have greater access to, and understanding of, information regarding healthy behaviour. They also have the ability to optimize their use of available health services (Davey-Smith et al., 1998).
- **Producing Social and Economic Spin-offs** – Investments in education are associated with higher graduation rates, greater employment earnings, better health outcomes, reduced reliance on social assistance, lower crime rates, greater government revenues and lower government expenditures (Lynch, 2004). Evidence indicates that children who participate in high-quality early childhood education and care programs experience a range of short and long-term health and educational benefits as well (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008).

The Opportunity in Apartment Neighbourhoods

Apartment neighbourhoods tend to be home to large communities of children, youth and young adults. They are also communities that accommodate people new to the city and who are seeking to make improvements to their life and that of their families. In these ways, the City's apartment neighbourhoods are places where education – both formal and informal – is a valuable good.

The following strategies can be used to further access to education in apartment neighbourhoods:

6.1 Introduce Youth Extra-Curricular and Education Programs

6.2 Introduce Newcomer Settlement Support and Adult Education Programs

6.3 Introduce Preschool and Family Resource Services

6.1 Introduce extra-curricular and education for children and youth

Context

Apartment neighbourhoods were generally not designed to include spaces for extra-curricular and educational programs for youth, such as dance, music, art or tutoring and homework groups. While many of these services are offered in surrounding communities, the lack of existing space, as well as the zoning restrictions prohibiting institutional and commercial uses, limits these activities in apartment neighbourhoods.

Solution

Space in the ground floors of apartment buildings is often well-suited for conversion to multi-purpose rooms that could accommodate extra-curricular and educational activities. Space for these uses could also be incorporated into building additions, and new mixed-use infill buildings.



Making it Happen

The following describes the extent to which the current planning framework in apartment neighbourhoods would be supportive, limiting, or neutral, should a community or building owner propose solutions such as these at a particular site.

Official Plan: Supportive

These solutions would generally be supported by current Official Plan policies.

Zoning by-laws: Limiting

Use or programming of multi-purpose rooms for extra-curricular and education is permitted generally. However conversion and leasing of multipurpose spaces for separate use, such as to a not for profit group, may require a minor variance or amendment. Current zoning by-laws would likely not permit private classes offered as a commercial service. A zoning by-law amendment would likely be required.

Images:

Top: New playing field in apartment neighbourhood, Copenhagen, Denmark (Kvarterløft 2007)

Opposite, left: Idea Store, community services and resource centre, addition to tower block, London, UK, 2006

Opposite, right: Community resource centre interior, London, UK, 2006

Bottom: Wellesley Library and Community Centre, St. Jamestown, Toronto, 2011

6.2 Introduce Newcomer Settlement Support and Adult Education Programs

Context

Home to large communities of new Canadians, access to newcomer support services and adult skill training is critical in apartment neighbourhoods. Newcomer support and adult career centres can connect residents with education programs across the city, as well as offer specific courses to improve skills. Locating such services in apartment neighbourhoods provides these services where there is an identified need.

Solution

English as a Second Language (ESL) training, newcomer settlement services and other adult skills training could be located in the base of existing apartment towers, in additions to buildings, or as a part of new mixed-use infill development.

Making it Happen

The following describes the extent to which the current planning framework in apartment neighbourhoods would be supportive, limiting, or neutral, should a community or building owner propose solutions such as these at a particular site.

Official Plan: Supportive

These solutions would generally be supported by current Official Plan policies.

Zoning by-laws: Limiting

As an institutional use, an educational service would likely be a prohibited use under current zoning by-laws. Existing zoning by-laws restrict the construction of new buildings, due to limits on setbacks and floor areas. Introducing such uses in apartment neighbourhoods would likely require a zoning by-law amendment.



6.3 Introduce Preschool and Family Resource Services

Context

Apartment neighbourhoods are home to disproportionately large numbers of youth and new parents compared to other neighbourhoods in the city. [TNRGGH 2010]. Daycares can be found in some apartment neighbourhoods, but they are not widespread. Less common still are centres providing parenting education and support. Such centres, including Ontario's Early Years Centres, can offer early learning and literacy, parenting programs and workshops, as well as health information, referrals and outreach activities.

Solution

An Early Education Centre could be located in the base of an existing apartment tower, in an addition to the base of a tower, or as a part of new mixed-use infill development.

Making it Happen

The following describes the extent to which the current planning framework in apartment neighbourhoods would be supportive, limiting, or neutral, should a community or building owner propose solutions such as these at a particular site.

Official Plan: Supportive

These solutions would generally be supported by current Official Plan policies.

Zoning by-laws: Supportive

The use of an apartment tower site for community parenting education is generally a permitted land use under current zoning by-laws. Earlier reforms to apartment zoning, through the 1970s and 1980s made childcare generally a permitted use within apartment towers across Toronto.



Images:

Top: Children's toys and activities mobile container, run by local community, within apartment neighbourhood, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009

Bottom, left: Childcare facility addition to apartment tower, Toronto, 2012

Bottom, right: Children and youth centre, Delft, Netherlands, 2009

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