

City of Mississauga Corporate Report



<p>Date: September 24, 2020</p> <p>To: Chair and Members of General Committee</p> <p>From: Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p> <hr/> <p>Meeting date: October 21, 2020</p>
---	--

Subject

COVID-19 Corporate Pillar Recovery Plan and Office Space Strategy Update

Recommendation

That the corporate report dated September 24, 2020 entitled "COVID-19 Corporate Pillar Recovery Plan and Office Space Strategy Update", from the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer be received.

Report Highlights

- Our response to COVID-19 created an experience that enabled approximately 40% of our workforce to begin working remotely with minor interruptions to our service delivery. Leveraging technology and pre-existing innovative improvements has increased the staff and leadership readiness to work remotely as part of our new normal.
- Learnings from our COVID-19 experience have informed our Office Space Strategy which was to include reducing our space portfolio by approximately 20% and implementing a progressive mobility ratio that supports working remotely.
- Critical areas of focus include leadership alignment, technology, information and records management, the right mix of collaboration spaces and profiles that support mobility.
- Early adopters have been identified as our opportunity to expedite the implementation of the Office Space Strategy principles. This is our opportunity to be transformative and positively move forward from this crisis.
- To proceed with the full implementation of the Office Space Strategy, including construction, technology, building infrastructure and furniture solutions, staff will seek funding approval through the annual capital budget process.

Background

Developing a New Work Experience

Over the past few years the City has taken steps towards developing a dynamic work experience that gives staff choice and control over how and where they work while encouraging a culture of collaboration and innovation. This new work experience includes a variety of work settings such as working remotely from any City facility as well as off campus options such as working from home. Using technology to support collaboration and communication, and creating an environment that will attract and retain staff is critical for the corporation's future success.

In July 2017, a proof of concept (City Hall 5th floor – Our Future Corporation Pilot Project) was implemented to help inform our space strategy and future work experience for all office staff. In March 2018 with the completion of the post occupancy review and utilization study, findings confirmed that teams could remain productive and maintain service levels within this piloted environment. Our recommendations included proceeding with developing an Office Space Strategy (OSS) for eight of our administrative offices, with a focus on the programming needs of each service area to determine the extent of mobility that can be introduced.

Phase One – Office Space Strategy

In November 2018, through a competitive procurement process, HOK was awarded the contract to begin phase one, their review and assessment of our space portfolio. The scope of phase one work included, Leadership Information Sessions, a Leadership Survey, review and assessment of our space portfolio including an occupancy load and code review analysis, and the development of scenarios based on defined profiles and sharing ratios which would inform our space needs now, and into the future. In March 2020, months prior to providing our phase one recommendations to the Leadership Team, we were struck with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Present Status

COVID-19 Pandemic Learnings

This pandemic changed the world and how we work. According to Statistics Canada 5 of the 12 million in the workforce transitioned to work from home as their response to COVID-19. With the investments made in technology and innovative service design, the City's response to COVID-19 created an experience that enabled staff to work from home or an alternative way of working. Approximately 40% of our workforce began working remotely with minor interruptions to our service delivery. Our response has been positive. Leveraging technology and pre-existing innovative improvements has increased the staff and leadership readiness to work remotely as part of our new normal. During our response the organization provided access to collaboration tools needed to freely work anywhere, these include:

- the introduction and launch of Cisco WebEx meetings and Cisco Jabber soft phone application to meet and communicate virtually from any device
- improved connectivity - creating an additional virtual private network (VPN) to allow 2,500 more staff to concurrently connect to the network

- WebEx Events – introducing the use of technology to support large events such as town halls and large virtual team gatherings

The OSS project team connected with our Divisional leads to ask questions and learn about their current experience related to people, space, technology and business and alternative measures implemented to support their COVID-19 response. The information shared during these discussions has been very informative and used to inform the OSS phase one work.

COVID-19 Employee Pulse Survey

To obtain an understanding of how employees are coping with the current reality of the COVID-19 pandemic a *Checking In During COVID-19 Employee Survey* was launched through our Human Resources team. Some of the questions asked provided insights on how those working from home are managing, and how leaders are connecting and supporting employees during this time. Out of the 1,746 respondents, 1,418 (approximately 81%) responded to the questions related to working from home. The results of this survey shared:

- approximately 70% of respondents working from home felt they were just as productive as compared to working in the workplace
- 75% of respondents working from home indicated they had the document, equipment and technology to be most productive
- 90% of respondents felt connected and supported by their leader in their day to day work, overall safety and personal wellbeing

Leveraging this information can provide us assurance and support that introducing alternative ways of working has been accepted and our COVID-19 response will help inform the readiness state of our organization for implementing the OSS.

COVID-19 Corporate Pillar Recovery Plan

In June 2020, as the pandemic continued and as the Province began to introduce the stages for recovery, our Leadership Team requested a Corporate Pillar Recovery Plan project team to be developed to define recommendations for our recovery plan to rebuild. As we rebuild, it is understood we will not be able to revert to our usual way of work. We have been exposed to new tools and technology, and new business processes that have allowed us to increase our mobility and work remotely from anywhere. We have used technology in the redesign of our services, continuing to put services online. Where possible, these redesigned services have been considered a permanent solution and continue to inform the implementation of the OSS and will modernize our service delivery.

On June 26, 2020, the following Corporate Pillar Recovery Plan recommendations were shared at Council:

- consolidating counters on the ground floors, where possible to improve customer service, introduce efficiencies and limit public access throughout buildings and in person services managed by appointment only

- prioritizing teams that need to be physically present to serve customers and public or require access to resources onsite to complete their duties
- permanent adoption of alternative ways of working – expansion of online services; applying lean to redesign services wherever possible
- Early implementation of the Office Space Strategy new work experience

These recommendations are our opportunity to be transformative and positively move forward and build back better from the COVID-19 crisis. These recommendations will allow us to rebuild and implement early adoption considerations to expedite the work experience for the OSS.

With the increase of staff working remotely, implementing and redefining processes to support the business needs during our response and recovery from COVID-19, has changed how we use space. In addition, over these past few months as we have reopened in-person services we have experienced reduced needs for counters and waiting room spaces, increased controlled access throughout facilities, offered multiple ways to be present and require increased need for collaboration and consultation space. This aligns with the recommendations for the OSS and will continue to help us modernize our services for the future.

Office Space Strategy - Phase Two

After incorporating the learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic response and the recommendations from the Corporate Pillar Recovery Plan, the OSS team shared their phase one scenarios with the Leadership team on July 9, 2020 for approval to proceed with phase two. The recommended scenario included reducing our space portfolio by approximately 20% and implementing a progressive mobility ratio that supports working remotely throughout our facilities and with off campus options.

The next phase of work includes continued staff engagement, test fits, schematic designs and cost estimates to implement the OSS in our administrative office spaces.

Early August the phase two work was awarded to HOK and as of August 24, 2020 visioning focus group sessions began for each Division, followed by surveys, and Divisional business unit discussions to flush out specifics for detailed designs. Site tours were also completed and the final deliverable and schematic designs are expected to be finalized for February 2021. Staff engagement continues and will help inform the next stages of the design and implementation of the project.

In early September the Corporate Pillar Recovery Team helped support the reopening of in-person services to a number of sites, including City Hall. Continuing to leverage technology and hybrid approaches has allowed our staff and public to remain safe. As we continue to support the slow return of in person services we challenge the process and engage the teams to consider new ways of working that will align with the OSS and our recovery plans.

Comments

Office Space Strategy Implementation

The implementation of the OSS will redefine the way we work. As we plan and prepare to implement the OSS, we will ensure that there is safe space for employees and will create dynamic City spaces that will suit the needs of the individual and team and accommodate different work styles and services. As we move forward we will continue to make informed decisions to:

- Encourage the workforce to move away from assigned workspaces to working from anywhere, promoting staff choice and mobility
- Move the office portfolio from an 8% “We” collaborative space to an environment of 40% “We” collaborative space and from 92% “I” individual work space to 60% “I” individual work space – resulting in increased collaboration
- Provide opportunity for team realignments – looking at adjacencies and synergies
- Aid in the identifying of business opportunities - LEAN and small improvements
- Improve the employee workplace experience to attract and retain talent
- Continue to reduce or resolve accessibility concerns where feasible
- Increase average workstation utilization from the 40% - 60%, to 75% or greater
- Increase electronic access to information and target an average file/storage space reduction of 50% or greater (pilot project result 67%)
- Achieve an 18% reduction in space to find cost savings (lease and operating costs)
- Maintain staff productivity and service levels

With the extent of changes related to construction, infrastructure improvements, new furniture solutions and technology the implementation of the OSS will take some time and will require significant funding over a number of years. With the current state, where ever possible we continue to advise staff to continue working from home with occasional drop-ins to the office when necessary. This will keep staff and public safe and allow us to focus on the teams that require in person services to reopen or implement improvements to support a new normal when staff return into the office. During this time we can also dedicate resources to implement the principles of the OSS within existing spaces with teams that are identified as early adopters.

Early Adopters

Phase one work and consultation during the development of the COVID-19 recovery recommendations suggested that there are a number of teams ready for the new work experience that can be considered early adopters. This is based on their success with working from home and finding alternate ways to work during the COVID-19 pandemic, defined profiles that support a high level of mobility, have close to 100% of the support required to move into the new work environment, and are currently located at 201 City Centre Drive.

Early adopters will be introduced to the principles of the OSS with minor changes to the space and with limited construction. The extent of the space changes will include introducing variety

with minimum furniture solutions, repurposing private offices for collaboration and meeting spaces or as undedicated offices to be shared. The key focus for early adopters will be to transition staff working from a dedicated desk/office to a variety of workspace options to choose from. Early adopters will not experience all elements of the OSS, until the budget is available.

Leveraging the exiting toolkit of workshops and supporting resources developed for the proof of concept pilot project, will allow the OSS project team to support the transition of the these teams with introducing mobility. The resources will be intentionally tailored to address the specific needs of the business unit. Please see attached Appendix 1: Early Adopter Sample Project Overview, providing a project approach that has leveraged the same supporting strategies used during the proof of concept implementation and will be used to support the early adopters.

Critical Success Factors

As we continue to move forward on reopening in person services and implementing the principles of the OSS we must adhere to the recommendations and defined critical success factors. These critical success factors require a comprehensive change management process and strategy involving Human Resources, Communications, Information Technology, Legislative Services and Office of the City Clerk, Corporate Performance and Innovation and Facilities & Property Management.

Areas of focus to ensure success include leadership alignment, digital processes and technology, information and records management, private office allocation, maintaining “I”/“We” ratios, and profiles that support mobility and working remotely.

Workforce Policy – Working Remotely

The success of the OSS is highly based on the ability to have flexibility in work arrangements including working remotely from City facilities or at off campus locations. The recent recommendations related to the *Working Remotely Policy* are intended to support the new way of work for employees that will continue to work remotely and will encourage flexibility in work arrangements. In addition, these arrangements provide opportunity to accelerate project timelines by identifying appropriate groups that are ready, continue to support them working from home and preparing the space for a new normal when staff return into the office.

Timeline Overview

The project timeline and plan for implementation is currently under review and we continue to look for opportunities to expedite the plan and identify early adoption considerations to be implemented.

The planning stage for a few identified early adopters has begun. This includes the Human Resources and Finance teams. Minor changes to furniture and content moves are being considered and planned starting in December 2020. Timeline for implementation will be based on the readiness of the teams, resources and space availability.

Financial Impact

Funding required for work related to the OSS implementation will be requested through the annual capital budget and dependent on return on investment, remembering that a lot of the office infrastructure already requires investment. The goal will be to minimize or eliminate \$1.8m of annual lease space costs.

Conclusion

Our response to COVID-19 created an experience that forced staff to work from home. As a result this has increased the staff and leadership readiness to work remotely as part of our new normal. This will also allow early adoption considerations to be implemented and expedite the new work experience when we rebuild. This is our opportunity to be transformative and positively move forward from this crisis.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Early Adopter Sample Project Overview



Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Darlene Utarid, Manager – Facilities & Property Management