

Clause embodied in Report No. 2 of the Economic Development and Parks Committee, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its regular meeting held on February 4, 5 and 6, 2003.

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**Proposed Cultural Centre and Museum
AGA Khan Development Network
(Ward 26 Don Valley West)**

(City Council at its regular meeting held on February 4, 5 and 6, 2003, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Economic Development and Parks Committee:

- (1) received the report (November 20, 2002) from the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism; and**
- (2) requested that City Council express its support and appreciation to the AGA Khan Development Network and all those involved in the proposed Cultural Centre and Museum Development in Toronto.**

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the representatives of the AGA Khan Development Network for their very informative presentation.

The Economic Development and Parks Committee submits the following report (November 20, 2002) from the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism:

Purpose:

This report provides information on the AGA Khan Development Network's proposed major cultural and educational institution.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement :

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

On October 8, 2002, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) announced its intention to establish in Toronto a museum housing exceptional collections of Islamic Art and heritage items, as well as a cultural and educational centre devoted to the study and practice of human pluralism.

The location for this proposed development is a 17.3 acre site located on Wynford Drive in the north-west quadrant of the Don Valley Parkway and Eglinton Avenue. The site includes a 9.0 acre parcel upon which the AKDN had previously proposed constructing a mosque, and an adjacent 8.3 acre parcel which the AKDN has recently acquired from Bata Industries. The latter parcel includes a 58,000 square foot building, which currently houses the head offices of Bata Industries.

Comments:

The AKDN has been searching throughout the world for a prestige location for an Islamic museum to house their collections of Islamic art and heritage for several years. In early October of 2002 the Network offered £24 million pounds for a 1.38 acre site opposite the parliament buildings in London, England. News reports indicate the AKDN was seeking to create a home for “the largest collection of Islamic art and historical manuscripts in the English-speaking world”. Shortly after their offer was rejected in favour of a £12 million-pound offer from another party, the AKDN acquired the Bata property and announced the museum and cultural centre would be located in Toronto.

Plans for the design of the project are still preliminary. Discussions with the architect indicate the museum alone will be approximately 200,000 square feet, and will be of world wide prominence. The museum’s collection is to include ceramics, metalwork and paintings from all periods of Islamic history. The collection of manuscripts is to include the earliest one extant of the Avicenna’s Qanun fi’l Tibb (The Canon of Medicine) dated 1052.

Discussions are underway concerning the educational centre, which is collaboration between the AKDN and the Government of Canada focusing on human pluralism. The AKDN has longstanding relationships with the University of Toronto, McMaster University, McGill University, Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Prime Minister Chrétien and senior government ministers are understood to have been involved in discussions concerning this initiative.

The AKDN is an umbrella organization that operates numerous agencies in the fields of health, education, culture and rural economic development. These agencies, which include the Aga Khan Foundation, Aga Khan Education Services, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Aga Khan University and the Aga Khan fund for Economic Development, operate primarily in Asia and Africa.

All AKDN agencies are private, international, non-denominational organizations. Their programs are open to everyone within their areas of operation without reference to religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. These groups are funded extensively by the Aga Khan, who is the hereditary leader of the approximately 15,000,000 Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims world wide. Funding is also received from governments and private donations.

Bata Industries' relocation plans are unknown at this time. Economic Development staff contacted the company before their property was put on the market, and Bata has indicated that no decision about their future location has been made. Staff have assured Bata that every effort will be made to assist them to find a new location within the City of Toronto.

The Economic Development Division will continue contact with the AKDN and their development team, and provide any necessary assistance with respect to obtaining permits and approvals. Introductions to staff from Culture and Tourism will be facilitated to maximize the opportunities associated with the museum and cultural centre.

Conclusions:

The AKDN proposal would appear to be a major acquisition for the City of Toronto, and demonstrates that the world recognizes Toronto's longstanding tradition of tolerance. It further adds to Toronto's appeal as a vibrant international city capable of competing for prominent business, research and cultural attractions. This announcement made world coverage in many major newspapers increasing Toronto's world wide profile.

Contact Name:

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No. 1 - Location Map
Attachment No. 1



The following persons appeared before the Economic Development and Parks Committee in connection with the foregoing matter:

- Ms. Asmita Gillani, Vice-President, Prince AGA Khan Council for Canada;
- Mr. Nizar Sultan, CEO, Prince AGA Khan Foundation;
- Mr. Zool Samji, Chairman, Imara Wynford Drive Ltd.;
- Mr. Mehboob Dhalla, Volunteer, Prince AGA Khan Foundation; and
- Councillor Jane Pitfield, Ward 26 Don Valley West.