



UNDER-UTILIZED spaces



COMMUNITY places



PERKINS
+ WILL

APRIL 2019



Sky-O-Swale green-roof pavilion, East Scarborough Storefront

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Underutilized Spaces project represents a collaborative effort between several partner groups and organizations. With support from the 100 Resilient Cities program of the City of Toronto and the Rockefeller Foundation, the project was guided by a multi-disciplinary Working Group during 2018. The Working Group contributed comments, information, and guided case study interviews throughout the community research process. In addition to the Working Group, several individuals who participated in the events highlighted in the case studies contributed their time and insight to this report.

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Underutilized Spaces-Community Places represents one of the many discovery area projects funded by 100 Resilient Cities in the development of the City of Toronto's first Resilience Strategy (2018-2019). Guided by a Working Group with cross-sectoral experience, this report highlights creative strategies undertaken to activate neighbourhood spaces and overcome design and policy barriers to support a diversity of community activities. The report also highlights the role of public stakeholders – including the City of Toronto – in the process of facilitating neighbourhood investment and supporting community groups that have been able to adapt underused spaces. Lastly, the report puts forth recommendations to support partnerships between City partners, community organizations, and residents to illuminate ways Torontonians can collectively improve access to physical spaces that build resilience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like other cities in Canada, Toronto is experiencing and will continue to experience a changing climate.

More frequent extreme weather events and changes to precipitation and temperature are occurring as rapid urbanization continues to bring intense growth pressures to the Greater Toronto Area. While cities are constantly evolving, the speed of environmental and population change will test the resilience of communities and the neighbourhoods they form. Residents' resilience to environmental, physical, and social change is linked to the health of these community networks and neighbourhood bonds.

In Toronto, the places where these critical networks and bonds develop represent many different types of spaces, from street corners, gymnasiums, libraries, apartment tower lobbies, school sports fields, and laneways.

While not always codified in city regulation, these spaces are critical social infrastructure and support everyday life as places where people gather in times of celebration, protest, leisure, crisis, and business.

However, spaces of everyday community life are not equitably funded or created in Toronto. Across Toronto, neighbourhoods experience unevenness in the level of investment provided through the public and private sectors. The patterns of disinvestment experienced in Toronto's inner suburbs are often attributed to a lower momentum of private development that would otherwise

provide economic ripple benefits in the form of parks, transit, and other public infrastructure. However, the level of disparity experienced also points to inequitable systemic barriers to amenities in the inner suburbs, further exacerbated by challenging socio-economic conditions and a car-oriented environment.

Compounding these patterns, grassroots and non-profit organizations face difficulties in providing much needed services in Toronto's inner suburbs that would build capacity to respond to long-term socio-cultural stressors, including poverty, a lack of affordable housing, barriers to employment, mental health issues, and barriers to essential services.

Policy barriers – such as the after-hour policies of gym spaces – also challenge organizations in their mission to foster well-being in these neighbourhoods, notably, by inhibiting the ability of community members to gain access to underused public space that could house social, cultural, recreational, and local enterprises. Public spaces such as schools, churches, residential towers, and parks are not used to their full capacity, yet have the potential to temporarily or permanently become a spatial solution to strengthening social infrastructure within neighbourhoods. Despite this, there are creative instances of community-led activation of underutilized spaces across the Greater Toronto Area.

1 WHY IS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPORTANT?

NEIGHBOURHOOD SCALE RESILIENCE

Urban Resilience (noun):
/ərbən rə'zilyəns/

"... the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience."

- 100 Resilient Cities

This report highlights research on various approaches to activating underutilized neighbourhood space in Toronto and the lessons that have emerged during the Underutilized Spaces project with the City of Toronto's Resilience Office. This project – like others in this thought space – is working to support neighbourhood resilience today as a way to strengthen the cohesion and capacity of neighbourhoods to respond to climate, social, and investment challenges in the future.

In exploring this topic with project partners and community members, three key questions emerged:

1. Why is the neighbourhood scale important to Toronto's resilience?
2. What approaches or actions support resilience at a neighbourhood scale?
3. How can these approaches support equity across neighbourhoods with varying levels of resources?



Photo by Arnel Hasanovic

The following focuses on the neighbourhood scale stems from a growing movement recognizing that solutions and strategies to many of the global issues we face can best be found at the local level. These solutions and strategies are important to addressing acute shocks (such as weather related events) and long-term stresses (challenges experienced daily that weaken the fabric of the city and impacts its ability to bounce back in response to a shock). Typically, the importance of the neighbourhood scale to Toronto's urban resilience comes into sharp focus when a shock is experienced – such as the 2018 shooting on the Danforth or the 2013 winter ice storm that left dozens of communities without power over the winter holidays.

While the City of Toronto has a comprehensive Emergency Plan in place to mobilize emergency and municipal services, the resource constraints on **Toronto's 83 fire stations, 5,400 police officers, and 215 ambulance and response vehicles for a city of over 2.7 million residents** infers that Toronto community members themselves are key first responders.

As learned from community network responses in aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, residents who greet each other

every day in their building lobby are those that can check on their elderly neighbours during power outages; the parents whose children play together in the local school playground are those that may share important connections to service providers in times of need.

The importance of physical spaces that cultivate these neighbourhood relationships have surfaced in conversations with community partners throughout this project. However, access to these critical relationship-building spaces are not equitably distributed across Toronto and neighbourhoods do not share the same resilience experience. Beyond access, these relationship building spaces must respond to different and diverse needs, depending on the community – a response that requires a multi-stakeholder approach that includes community voices.

While resilience strategies may involve different physical, programming, and policy solutions in different Toronto neighbourhoods, the foundational premise of this work is that responding to diverse resilience challenges with finite resources requires a focus on resilience at the neighbourhood level, where community empowerment and mobilization has the greatest impact.

THE STATE OF INVESTMENT IN TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOODS

Toronto is known as a city of unique neighbourhoods. From Etobicoke to Scarborough, North York to Downtown, the diversity of the City's 140 neighbourhoods is well-known and well-loved. The differences between neighbourhoods adds to the vitality of our city and are celebrated through proud community expression. However, as noted by the **Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (TSNS, 2020)**, if differences between neighbourhoods are unnecessary, unjust, and unfair, they lead to inequality and prevent social cohesion.

The TSNS report identifies 5 domains of neighbourhood wellbeing that have been used to evaluate different neighbourhoods in Toronto and to identify Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs): Physical Boundaries, Economic Opportunities, Healthy Lives, Social Development and Participation in Civic Decision-Making.

These domains are based on a World Health Organization research approach called the Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool (or Urban HEART). These scores are a combination of complex socioeconomic factors that have played out over decades, influenced by both public and private investment.

In terms of public investment in Toronto's neighbourhoods and Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, the TSNS identifies several special, public funding mechanisms that are ongoing. Figure 2 on the left highlights some of these mechanisms, as well as the full spectrum of community investment mechanisms ranging from avenues that are highly controlled by city government, to those led by private stakeholders. The following sections detail 4 of these mechanisms in which there is an opportunity to deepen community input: Community Benefit Agreements, Section 37, City of Toronto Partnerships & Grants, and the City of Toronto budgetary processes.



Figure 1: Urban HEART model, World Health Organization (adopted by the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, 2020)

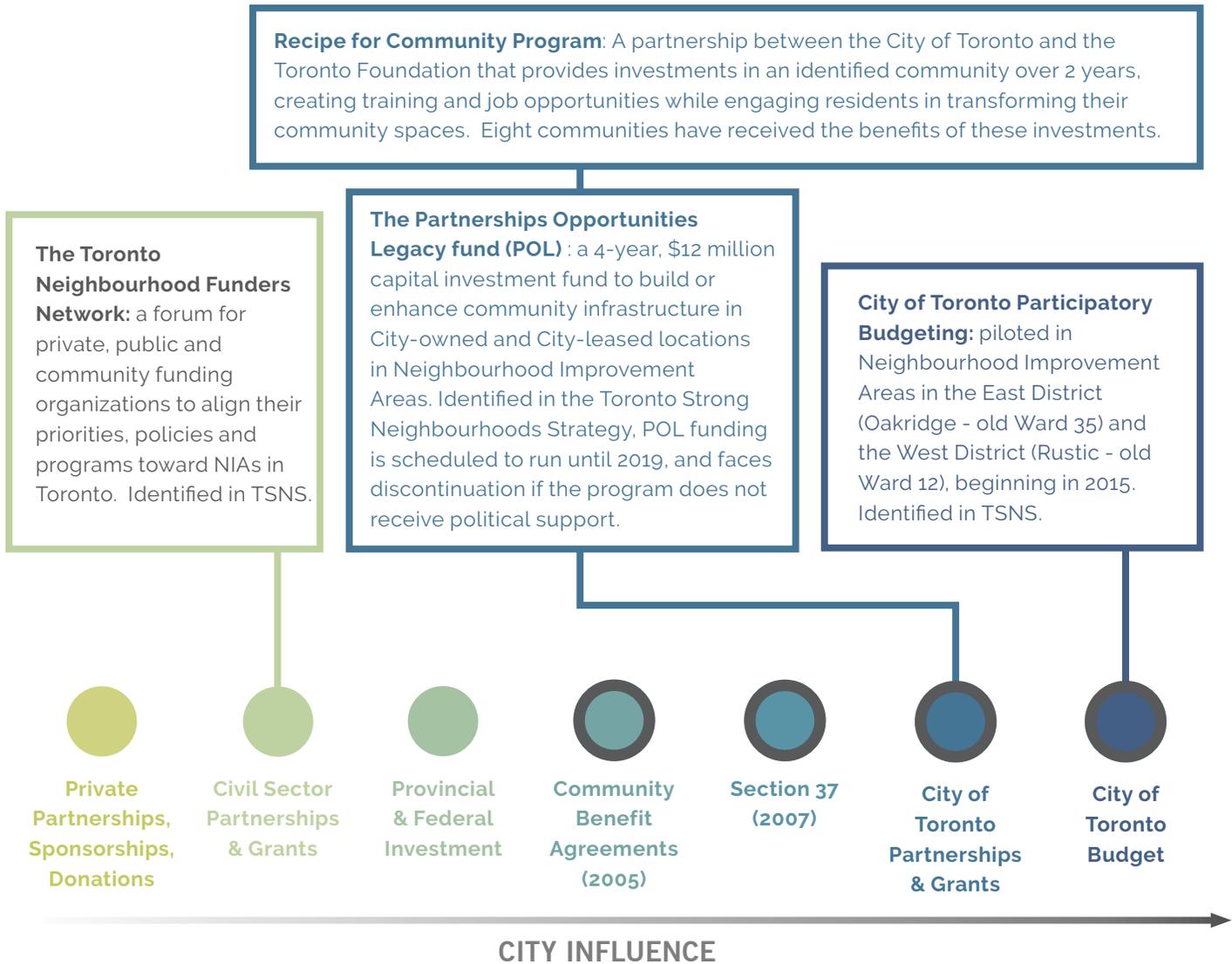


Figure 2: Existing community investment mechanisms

COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENTS

Another strategic tool for funding social infrastructure is the Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) which is gaining traction in Toronto. CBAs are contractual agreements between developers, a government, and/or community, negotiated on a project-by-project basis.

Involving community advocates, developers and local governments, the aim is to form a legally binding agreement between all parties in which publicly funded capital projects and private developments provide physical, social, and economic assurances or to historically disadvantaged or low-income communities.

CBAs are intended to be driven by the community to protect community interests and leverage equitable opportunities. Key components typically include employment and training opportunities (e.g. operation and construction), as well as social procurement targets.

The City of Toronto's only completed CBA was signed in 2018 with private developer One Toronto Gaming, which operates Casino Woodbine in the Rexdale area of Toronto. The Rexdale-Casino Woodbine CBA was driven by the community and the City of Toronto, and includes specific requirements for One

Toronto Gaming to achieve a range of social and economic outcomes, including local and social hiring, procurement opportunities, responsible gambling measures, a child care centre, and community access to use the event venue.

Similarly structured projects - tied to re-zoning - occurred earlier in Regent Park and Lawrence Heights and provided a good template for the Rexdale CBA. The Eglinton Crosstown CBA (2013) is another example of a CBA tied to a Light Rail Transit project, facilitated by the provincial transit agency Metrolinx.

These benefits are catered to the communities and can take the form of employment, affordable housing, community facilities and amenities, or environmental enhancements. CBAs differ from Section 37 as residents are seated at the table, democratizing the process and emphasizing civic engagement.

Uneven levels of private development and investment, and uneven opportunities to leverage planning tools like section 37 and Community Benefit Agreements became an important consideration in this investigation. These considerations informed discussions on approaches available to different communities.

SECTION 37 / BENEFITS ACCRUED BY WARD

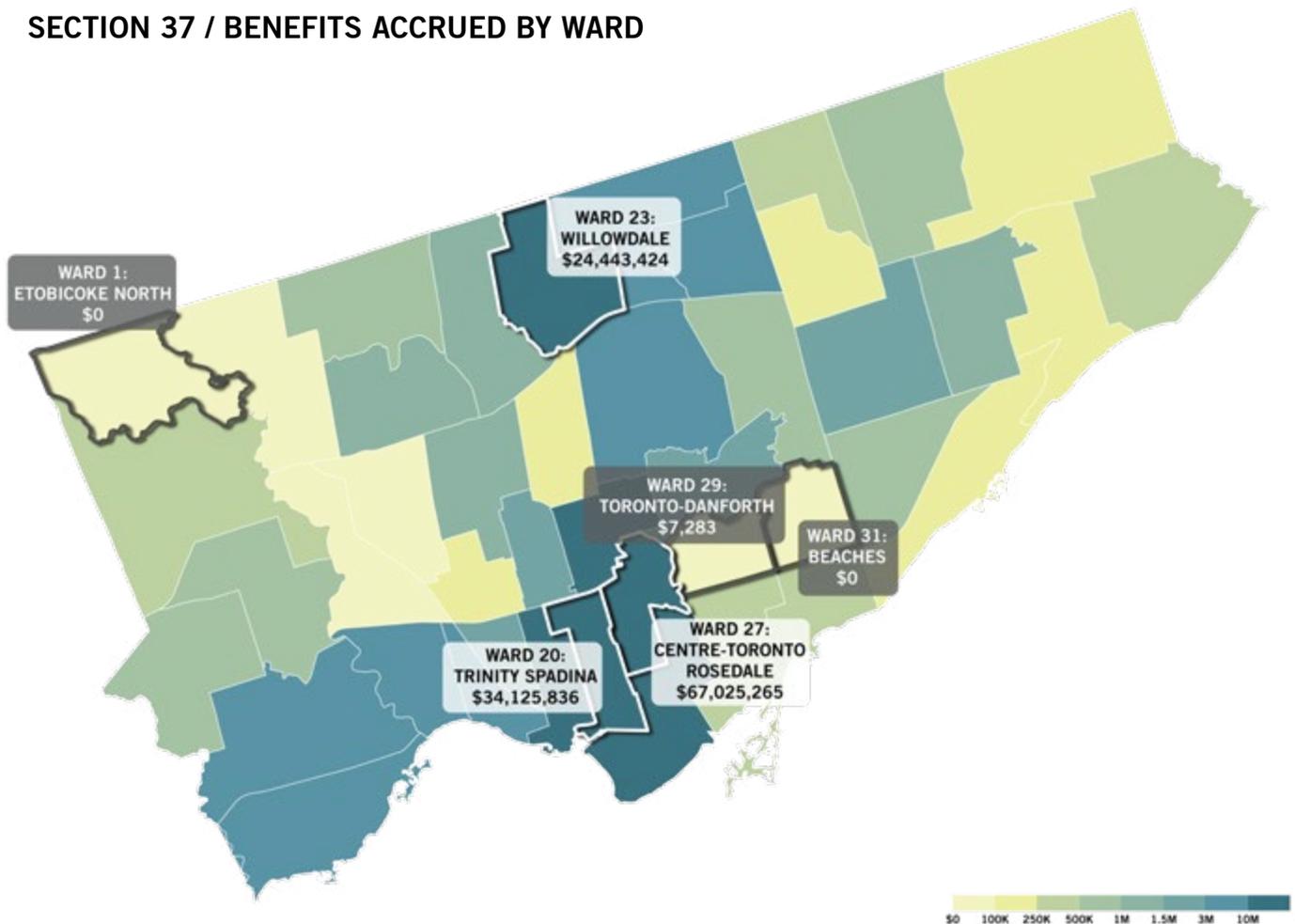


Figure 3: Section 37 benefits, cumulative total by the former 44-Ward system, 2007 - May 2018 (City of Toronto, 2018)

SECTION 37 OF THE PLANNING ACT

The state of physical spaces in Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) - many of which are located in the inner suburbs - points to another layer of complexity that was heard during the case study research. Namely, the planning tools available to leverage benefits spurred by *private development* do not benefit all neighbourhoods equally. An example of this difference is the degree to which different Toronto neighbourhoods have benefitted from section 37 of the *Planning Act*.

"Section 37s" are negotiated deals with real estate developers that secure cash or in-kind contributions for the City in return for allowing developers to exceed existing height and density restrictions in the City's zoning policies. The Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance has reported that between 2007 and 2011, the City of Toronto entered into over 100 Section 37 agreements. It is estimated that these agreements with property developers secured approximately \$136 million in cash for the City, as well as in-kind benefits.

While there is little ward-by-ward consistency in the types of benefits, a large share of the benefits have been "desirable visual amenities" such as parks, roads and streetscapes, and public art. Agreements between 2007 and 2011 were concentrated in the parts of the city that have experienced the most rapid growth and property development, with 3 wards in Toronto's downtown core (wards 20, 27, and 28) receiving 53% of the benefits and ward 23 in North York also securing a significant share.

Figure 3 visualizes a cumulative breakdown of Section 37 funding, accrued to different wards since 2007 up until May 2018. Three of the five wards (in the historical wards model) with the lowest totals are in the **suburbs**: Ward 12 (York

South-Weston at \$2,930; Ward 29 (Toronto Danforth) at \$7,283; and Ward 7 (York West) at \$29,207. Neither Ward 1 (North Etobicoke) nor Ward 31 (Beaches-East York) had any money in its reserve as of May 2018. Only two wards in Scarborough (Wards 37 and 38) had more than \$1 million. In total, Scarborough wards accrued about \$6.2 million since 2007. Many community organizations and councillors representing the suburban wards have advocated for a more equitable distribution of funds across the city, especially in lower-income areas of Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke.

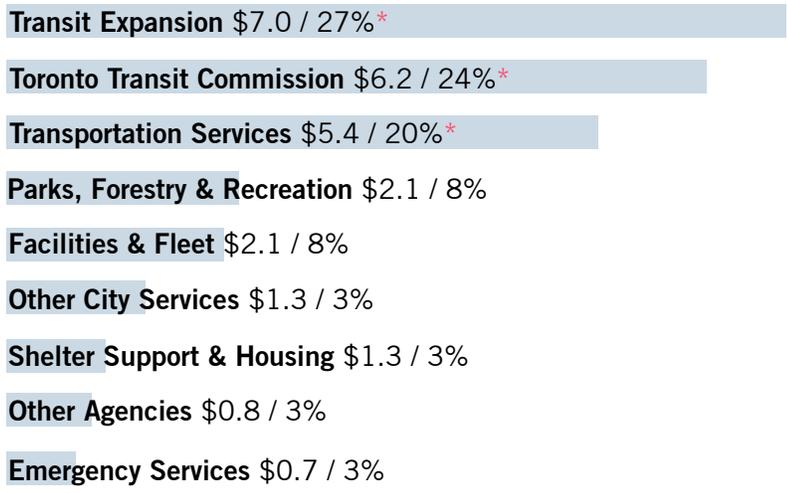
While many infrastructure projects have been executed due to funds from Section 37, it is not without its critiques, which include:

- Section 37 is directly tied to development and must be spent in the community of the development, disallowing distribution across the City. This has greatly impacted the suburbs which have fewer development projects happening. In order to have the same level of funds, the suburbs would have to contend with higher property taxes to fund infrastructure repair / development or residents would have to contend with a higher population that comes with development projects, putting additional strain on infrastructure.
- Community involvement is often missing, leaving decision making to the councillor's discretion and resulting in a lack of transparency
- Section 37 is unpredictable and up to interpretation which leads to inconsistent application from ward to ward
- Section 37 funds can be used for street improvement projects, as well as park improvements, community service facilities (e.g. libraries), and cultural facilities. In the specific case of affordable housing as a community benefit, the appropriate geographic relationship is considered to be citywide.

CITY OF TORONTO BUDGET PROCESSES

CAPITAL BUDGET: WHAT WE HOPE TO INVEST IN

Tax-Supported 10 year capital investment plan

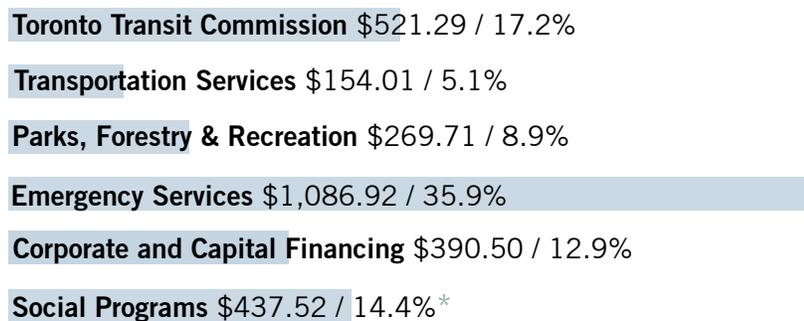


\$ Billions

Approximately 70% of the City's future capital investment is predicted to be spent on mobility.

OPERATING BUDGET: WHERE THE MONEY WILL GO IN 2019

Tax-Supported 10 year capital investment plan



*Cost shared Social Programs

of the taxes generated by the average assessed Toronto home, 14.4% will be spent on Social Programs

*Based on a Toronto home worth \$665,605 and paying \$3,020 in property taxes in 2019.

The largest component of the City's annual operating budget is earmarked for Emergency Services (35.9%). In what ways will this investment support the ability of communities and neighbourhoods to build resilience?

Figure 4: City of Toronto, 2019 Staff Recommended Budget

CITY OF TORONTO PARTNERSHIPS & GRANTS

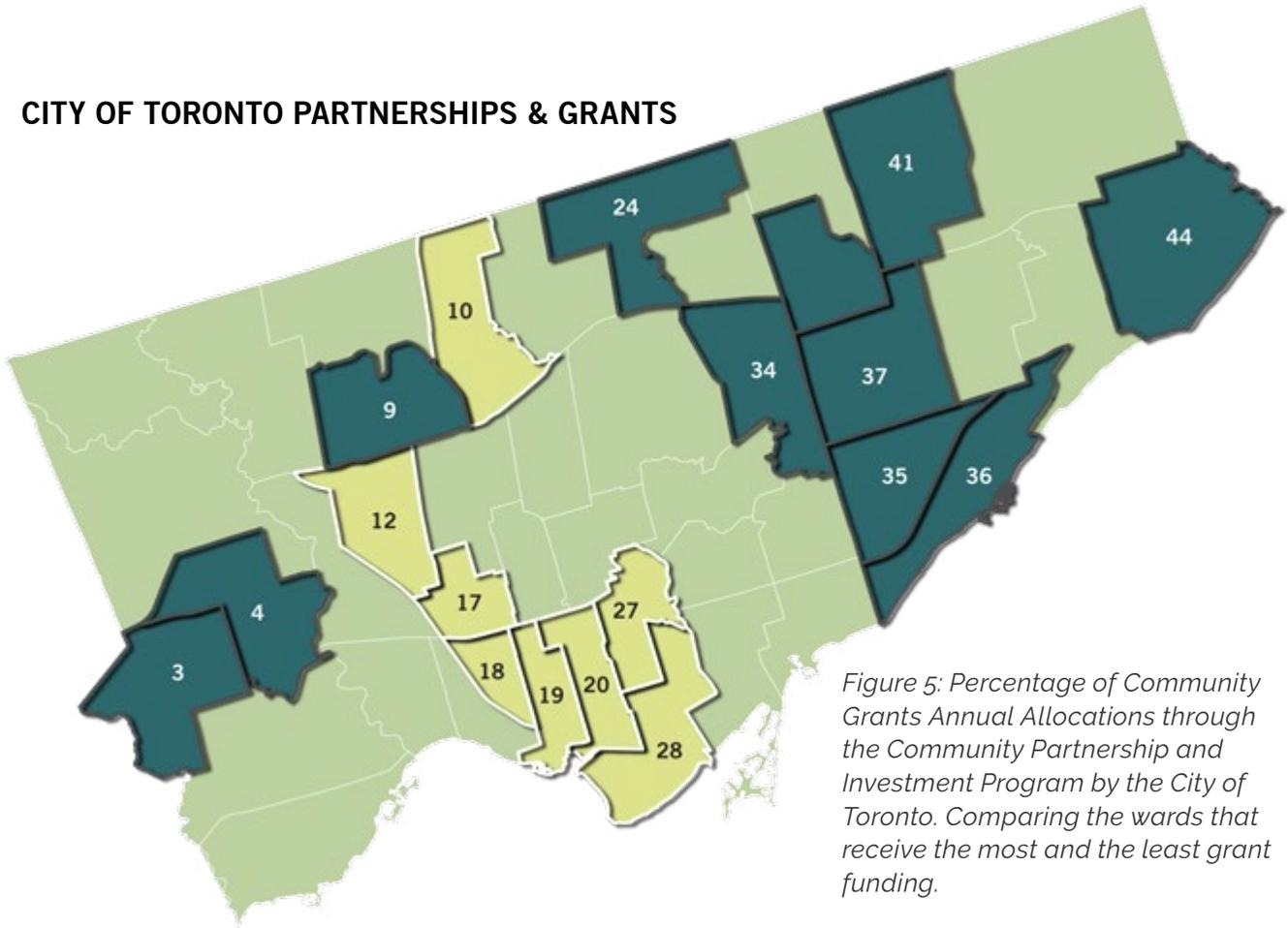


Figure 5: Percentage of Community Grants Annual Allocations through the Community Partnership and Investment Program by the City of Toronto. Comparing the wards that receive the most and the least grant funding.

While the City of Toronto disbursed over \$59 million in grants in 2017, over 50% of grant funding has been consistently awarded to 8 wards per year between 2010 and 2017. During this time frame, the average grant amount has *increased* and the number of grants has *decreased*. Clear disparities exist between the high-grant recipient wards and the low-grant recipient wards across Toronto, as seen in Figure 5 above and Figure 6 on the following page.

HIGH CITY GRANT RECIPIENT WARDS (2010-2017)

- 10 York Centre
- 12 York South-Weston
- 17 Davenport
- 18 Davenport
- 19 Trinity-Spadina
- 20 Trinity-Spadina
- 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale
- 28 Toronto Centre-Rosedale

LOW CITY GRANT RECIPIENT WARDS (2010-2017)

- 3 Etobicoke Centre
- 4 Etobicoke Centre
- 9 York Centre
- 24 Willowdale
- 34 Don Valley East
- 35 Scarborough Southwest
- 36 Scarborough Southwest
- 37 Scarborough Centre
- 40 Scarborough Agincourt
- 41 Scarborough-Rouge River
- 44 Scarborough East

CITY OF TORONTO PARTNERSHIPS & GRANTS

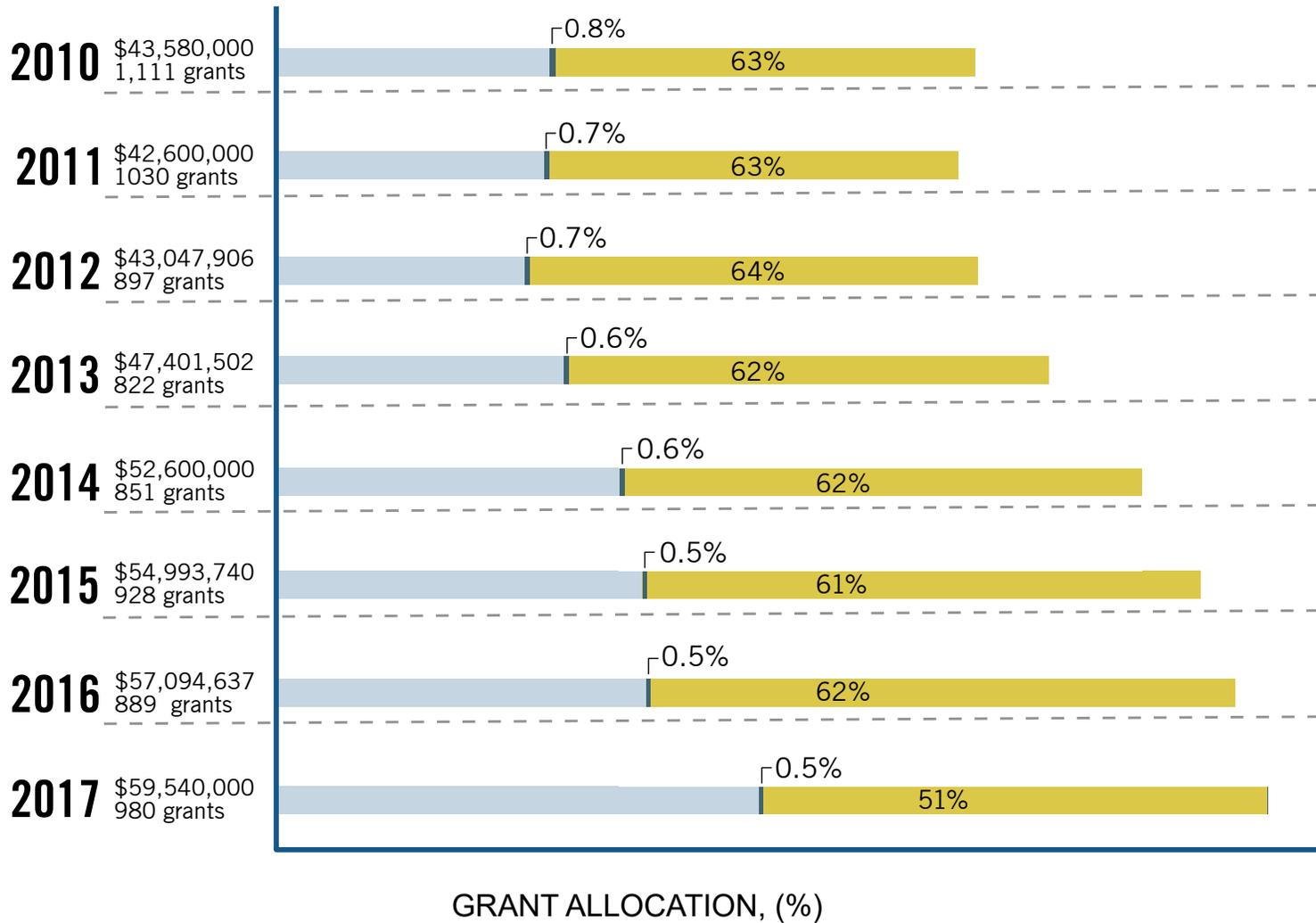


Figure 6: Percentage of Community Grants Annual Allocations through the Community Partnership and Investment Program by the City of Toronto. Comparing the wards that receive the most and the least grant funding.

*Calculations represent an estimate of funding and percentage made available from the City of Toronto's open data on Community Grant Allocations 2010-2017

Wards receiving the most grants (\$)

63%, \$27,380,000, went to wards:
12, 19, 20, 27, 28 through 487 grants

63%, \$26,9630,000 went to wards:
12, 19, 20,27,28 through 527 grants

62%, \$27,380,000 went to wards:
12, 19, 20, 27, 28 through 442 grants

62%, \$29,365,000 went to wards:
12, 19, 20, 27, 28 through 425 grants

62%, \$31,880,000 went to wards:
12, 19, 20, 27, 28 through 484 grants

61%, \$33,440,00 went to wards:
12, 19, 20, 27, 28 through 456 grants

62%, \$35,170,000 went to wards:
12, 19, 20, 27, 28 through 416 grants

51%, \$30,600,000 went to wards:
10, 17, 18, 19, 20 through 366 grants

Wards receiving the least grants (\$)

0.8%, \$338,000 went to wards:
3, 24, 34, 40, 44 through 23 grants

0.7%, \$280,000 went to wards:
4, 34, 37, 40, 44 through 13 grants

0.7%, \$306,000 went to wards:
3, 4, 34, 37, 40 through 14 grants

0.7%, \$306,000 went to wards:
3, 4, 34, 37, 40 through 20 grants

0.6%, \$308,000 awarded to wards:
3, 4, 24, 34, 44 through 19 grants

0.5%, \$290,000 awarded to wards:
3, 4, 24, 34, 44 through 16 grants

0.5%, \$300,000 went to wards:
3, 4, 9, 34, 44 through 14 grants

0.5%, \$276,000 went to wards:
35, 36, 40, 41, 44 through 30 grants

Average per grant (\$)

\$39K

\$41K

\$48K

\$58K

\$61K

\$59K

\$64K

\$61K

WARDS

- 10 York Centre
- 12 York South-Weston
- 17 Davenport
- 18 Davenport
- 19 Trinity-Spadina
- 20 Trinity-Spadina
- 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale
- 28 Toronto Centre-Rosedale

WARDS

- 3 Etobicoke Centre
- 4 Etobicoke Centre
- 9 York Centre
- 24 Willowdale
- 34 Don Valley East
- 35 Scarborough Southwest
- 36 Scarborough Southwest
- 37 Scarborough Centre
- 40 Scarborough Agincourt
- 41 Scarborough-Rouge River
- 44 Scarborough East

2 NEIGHBOURHOOD SPACES ACROSS TORONTO

“UNDERUTILIZED SPACES” TO “COMMUNITY PLACES” IN TORONTO

Cities around the world are exploring the concept of “space utilization” in different ways and through different perspectives.

Informed by various approaches across the globe, the Toronto-grounded work is built on two foundational principles to guide an exploration of how “underutilized spaces” can become meaningful community places.

1. Residents have an inherent ‘right to the city’
2. Both formal and informal relationships that people have with community space matter

The first of these principles is that **residents have an inherent ‘right to the city.’** Described by theorists Lefebvre and David Harvey (2003; 2008), the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a ‘right’ to change ourselves by changing the

city. It is a common rather than an individual right, given that the transformation inevitably depends on the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.

The second foundational principle is that **both formal and informal relationships that people have with community space matter.** While formal utilization studies may capture vacancy rates and programmed use rates, they often miss the informal gatherings and connections that different people have with spaces in their neighbourhood. Little thought is given to the meaning given to spaces by the community that morph over time. The spaces themselves may also be informal: a local parking lot, convenience store corner, or building lobby.

Grounded by these two principles, the following research adopts a broad understanding of space utilization and applies lens to explore how community voices have been enabled in the overall implementation process.



Photo by Sandro Schuh

Stakeholders in other cities are developing other approaches to articulating their own understanding of neighbourhood space use. The City of Boston is in the process of exploring “third spaces” as a way to investigate the democratic systems and forces that shape space in the twenty first century. Boston has defined third spaces as an conceptual type of space and has developed guiding values around what these spaces should be: welcoming; connective; creative; caring; resilient; and equitable; and flexible, all which reflect necessary characteristics in building community. Alternatively in Paris and the UK, the concept of “meanwhile space” or “meanwhile uses” takes on a more physical approach and is gaining traction to highlight the positive possibilities of utilizing empty urban sites in urban landscapes where there is developmental pressure on space.

These conceptual framings differ in how they embody and consider the permanence of spaces used by community members the guidelines under which they are accessed, and also the inclusivity of that space in the face of racism, discrimination, and systemic barriers.

third spaces (City of Boston)

Places separate from where you sleep (your *first* space) or where you work to make ends-meet (your *second* space). Third spaces are the spaces in-between, where you freely encounter other people, ideas, and experiences.

(City of Boston, 2018)

meanwhile spaces (Paris)

A disused site temporarily leased or loaned by developers or the public sector to local community groups, arts organizations, start-ups and charities (e.g. Les Grands Voisins, or the Great Neighbours: a hostel providing 600 beds for the homeless, with artisan studios, pop-up shops and start-ups).

(*Meanwhile, in London: Making use of London's empty spaces, 2018*)



Google Earth imagery of the Jane and Finch intersection in 2018

NEIGHBOURHOOD INVENTORIES

Taking stock of community spaces and priorities in the Jane/Finch Neighbourhood

Like many other areas of Toronto, neighbourhoods in the northwest of the city are characterized by different development patterns and community needs. Jane and Finch, one of Toronto's most diverse neighbourhoods is located northwest of the City of Toronto. As an inner suburb, the community is a mix of single family homes and apartment towers, of density and large open spaces. Demographic data from the 2016 Census for the representative City Wards that approximate the the Jane/Finch neighbourhood (old Ward system: Wards 7, 8, 9) indicate that there is a relatively large child and youth population in comparison to the rest of the city and a significantly larger proportion of immigrant community members (approximately 10% higher than the overall City proportion or immigrant status to non-immigrant status). From a 2015 research report by the Jane Finch Toronto Strong

Neighbourhoods Strategy, the community's priorities fall under economic activities, health, and social development. While there is presence of community organizations and grass roots groups to tackle these issues, the community experiences a lack of appropriate community space to host service providers leaving many of the neighbourhood under-served.

COMMUNITY MOBILIZING

In 2015, Metrolinx announced that it would be moving forward with the construction of the Finch West Light Rail Transit (LRT) in northwest Toronto. After learning that the Finch West Maintenance and Storage Facility would be located in the heart of the Jane and Finch neighbourhood, local residents began advocating for Metrolinx to accommodate a community hub and centre for the arts on the site. In 2017, the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, Community Action Planning Group (CAPG), and a team of community



Ephraim's Place, photo by the Jane Finch Community Centre

facilitators initiated a community engagement process to help define the vision and programming for the community hub.

Through this engagement process, a discussion of existing community spaces and needs evolved and sparked conversation about mapping local assets through the lens of arts and culture, recreation, food, health, employment, youth, and sharing.

CREATING A LIVING INVENTORY OF COMMUNITY SPACES

In 2018, the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre began an space evaluation of their community towards identifying community places in need of activation in light of the upcoming Metrolinx transit expansion scheduled to affect the core of the neighbourhood. The Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre is in the process of detailing over 150 indoor and outdoor spaces in the online inventory; the team is also fine tuning the design of the interface so it can be updated and evolve with the community's needs over time (see Figures 7 and 8).

The ongoing study by the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre involves

the creation of a web-based inventory looking at existing community spaces in the neighbourhood (indoor and outdoor), highlights the status of use of these spaces, and contrasts them to the needs of the community. The community spaces inventoried are a mixture of private and public spaces, and represent property owned and operated by diverse stakeholders ranging from Toronto Community Housing, the Toronto District School Board, and private landlords. Additionally, the Centre focuses on public spaces that are underutilized and could be shared for community use.

As a part of the study, the Centre aims to publicly release a visual representation of the inventory on an online platform that serves as a living summary of community space. Using an annotated map platform, which will be maintained by the Centre, the inventory will be available to stakeholders interested in advocating for community solutions, as well as residents who will be able to locate services and spaces closest to them. The map will serve as comprehensive database for future advocacy work, providing detail on space characteristics, the difficulties in accessing spaces, and an assessment of which future services will best fit the community.

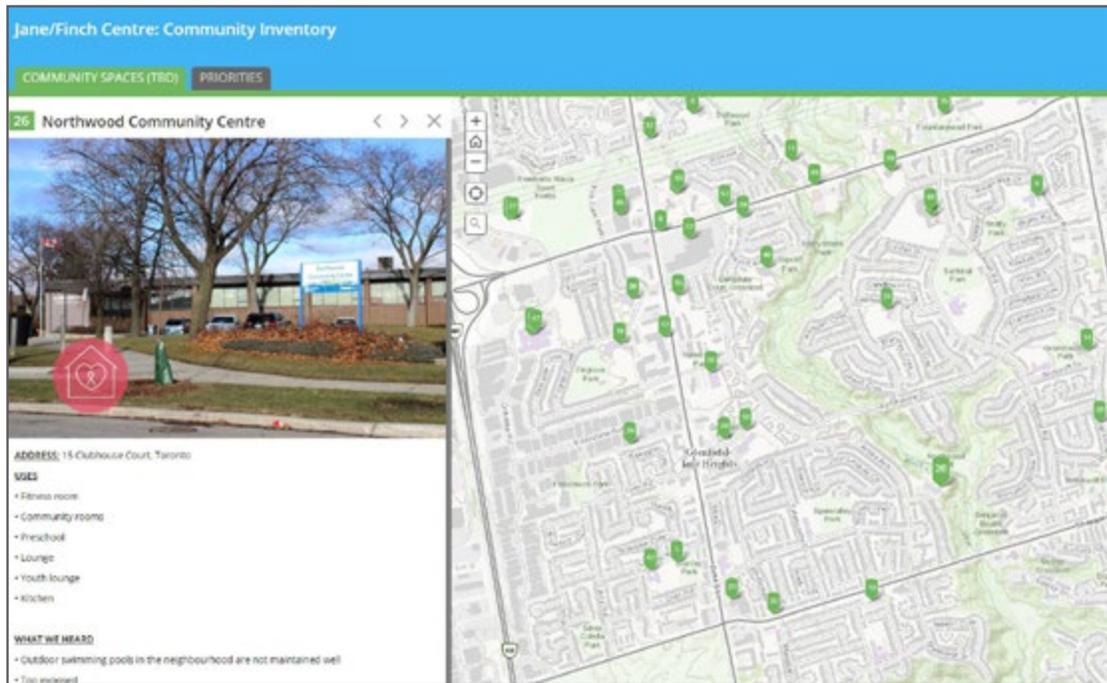


Figure 7: The "Community Spaces" tab of the inventory documents spaces considered as assets for the community. Each entry details the type of space, features of the space, and community input on the barriers to access. This tab may be expanded to detail more social history on each space.

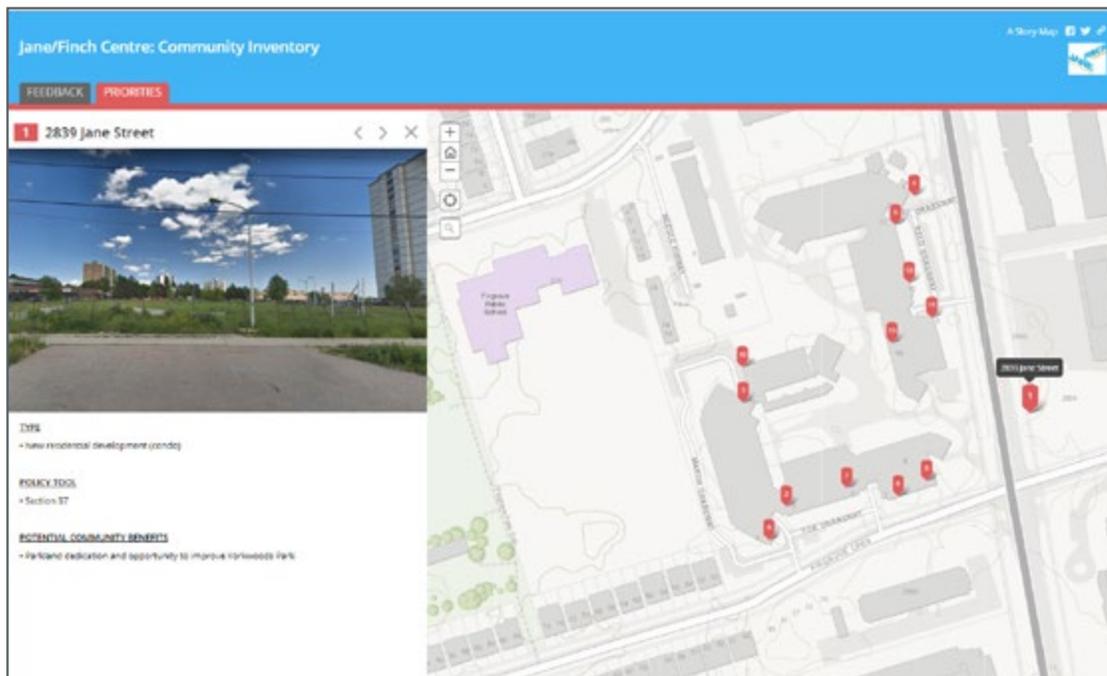


Figure 8: The "Priorities" tab of the inventory documents the spaces that have been identified by the community as needing activation. Similar to the assets, these spaces range in ownership and type.



Domenico DiLuca Community Recreation Centre, photo by the Jane Finch Community Centre

CITY-WIDE PATTERNS OF ACCESS, USE, AND BARRIERS

The need to improve access to and activate underutilized public spaces illustrated in the inventory is not isolated to the Jane/Finch community. As one travels outwards from the city core, it becomes apparent that the number of social and cultural services available shrink disproportionately to the size of the population requiring amenities. Discussions conducted as part of the case study research in Section 3 of this report suggest that the regulatory barriers affecting the Jane/Finch community and residents access to space are experienced across Toronto's inner suburbs, and that there is a disproportion between access to services and density needed to support these neighbourhoods.

ADDRESS:

25 Stanley Road, Toronto

USES:

- Outdoor swimming pool

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:

- Outdoor swimming pools in the neighbourhood are not maintained well
- Too exposed
- Gyms in the neighbourhood are old and outdated

3 CASE STUDIES OF COMMUNITY LED ACTIVATION

COMMUNITY-LED SPACE ACTIVATION

The initiatives represented in the following case studies are a few of the unique examples of underused space that have been adapted for community use through community-led innovation in inner suburb communities across the Greater Toronto Area. **Although each case study represents success and creativity, each case also demonstrates the enormous collective effort involved in activating neighbourhood spaces, as well as the challenges that communities continue to face in leading this change and having their voices heard.**

All of the case studies in the following section highlight the particular challenges experienced in Toronto's inner suburbs. Some case studies highlight the particular challenges experienced in areas designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. Communities in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas have faced more acute historical service disparities and mis-alignment of investment, making the stories of community groups and individuals who lead the transformation of their communities with little to no resources even more powerful.

The case studies are categorized thematically and feature:

Pop-Up, Community Infrastructure, looks at a community group's path to piloting a temporary structure for a community centre.

Community Space in Apartment Towers, looks at the Residential Apartment Commercial Zone, a bylaw passed to ease the non-residential utilization of space on selected apartment tower sites.

Activating Open space, which features two approaches to animating outdoor spaces - a park and a parking lot - based on significant community input and volunteerism.

One-stop Shop, looks to the east of Toronto at a non-profit organization that facilitates service delivery.

Neighbourhood Mall redevelopment details the planning process around 5 medium-sized shopping centres in Mississauga, called *Reimagining the Mall*.



Photo by rawpixel

CASE STUDIES



POP-UP, COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE



COMMUNITY SPACE IN APARTMENT TOWERS



ACTIVATING OPEN SPACE



ONE-STOP SHOP



NEIGHBOURHOOD MALL REDEVELOPMENT



POP-UP, COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE:

Weston-Mount Dennis

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION IN WESTON-MOUNT DENNIS

The Weston-Mount Dennis community has its roots at the confluence of Weston Road, Jane Street, and Eglinton Avenue West in northwest Toronto. Like many neighbourhoods along the Eglinton Crosstown transit corridor, this historic neighbourhood experiences a lack of space for community programming. The recently completed York Recreation Centre (opened in 2016) is a fully accessible 70,000 square foot facility – designed with extensive community input – which features numerous amenities including a swimming pool, gymnasium, fitness area, and community rooms.

Despite this new addition, the neighbourhood still experiences a deficit of community space for youth programming. This experience is similar to other neighbourhoods in the city's inner suburbs: in the downtown core, there are 21 – 39 community places for meeting within a 10 minute walk of a residential block. In comparison, 3 to 12 can be found in the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas of Toronto's inner suburbs. Within these existing spaces, access is challenging due to costs which prevent use by low- to moderate-income communities.

“Community space to run our programs is always hard to find, so we wanted to look at some alternatives...Through that, we saw what Market 707 had done for Scadding Court using shipping containers, so we thought that was something that could be used here, too – not just for commercial uses, but for community space, as well.”

(Delta's Executive Director, Kemi Jacobs)



Figure 9: York Recreation Centre. Photo by Perkins+Will.

THE ANC NETWORK

Several years ago, United Way created Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) offices across the city, each tackling a different theme. Some ANC offices focus on business development; some on more urban planning connections. The ANC initiative came out of the era of the “summer of the gun” and research on “poverty by postal code” in Toronto. As part of this larger effort, an ANC office was established in Mount Dennis with a focus on economic development and urban planning.

In 2009, residents from the Weston-Mount Dennis Neighbourhood, Action for Neighbourhood Change and Weston-Mount Dennis group of Social Planning Toronto and St. Albans Boys and Girls Club came together due to their shared concern over lack of youth programming in the community. A group of community professionals – Urban Priorities – soon became involved because of the prominence of the issue in the community and familiarity with the ANC team. Urban Priorities is a group that represents a mix of people from the west urban suburbs who know the on-the-ground issues; the group is a collective that works to bring the urban planning world closer to these issues.

EVOLVING PARTNERSHIPS & COALITIONS

Beginning as a partnership between Urban Priorities and ANC Weston Mount Dennis, a formal commitment to address the need for community space began to build momentum. The idea to create infrastructure for people to meet-up in for recreation and business – particularly for youth – was brought to the Delta Family Resource Centre who had been looking into how to create infrastructure in historically underserved communities. Around this time, the Delta Family Centre was also faced with the challenge of space, which was brought to their attention repeatedly through consultations with residents.

Evolving into a multi-group partnership, the coalition effort began to look at alternatives that could meet immediate needs without sacrificing long-term infrastructure goals – temporary structures that could be taken down quickly while discussions on sustainable solutions could continue.

The partners were aware that public agencies, like the TDSB and the TCHC, owned a vast amount of land and assets in their community. They were also inspired by Market 707’s use of temporary shipping containers – repurposed to serve as miniature shops and food booths as a model for providing community space.



Figure 10: Original Emmett Avenue site on TDSB property

Together with residents, Social Planning Toronto, the Boys and Girls Club, and other community organizations, the coalition identified an underused school parking lot at 100 Emmett Avenue (York Humber High School) and approached the TDSB to allow them to install a re-locatable building on the site (portable discussed first, then shipping containers). The success of this initiative in 2012 has ignited the community to discuss how marginalized and underserved groups could use re-locatable building models to access underused land for community purposes.

DESIGN

While pop-up terminology varies, the general design approach is something that is temporary, quick, and removable. Pre-fabricated structures became a natural fit for the original Emmett Avenue site in the TDSB parking lot, eventually becoming the home of the ANC Weston-Mount Dennis office. Initially designed using one portable unit, the group later expanded the facility by adding two more portables on the site.

“It’s very important to map out who owns what; who is related to who. There are interest groups, the BIAs, school trustees, city councillors, etc. It is key to profile and understand everyone sooner rather than later and to leverage these networks.”

(Urban Priorities team member)

THE LANEWAY PROJECT



The Laneway Project is a not-for-profit social enterprise working in partnership with design and development communities, local residents, municipalities, community groups and businesses, to transform the underused state of Toronto's laneways into vibrant spaces that support strong neighbourhoods and cities.

The Danforth Village Laneway Revitalization, completed in 2018, involved working with the Danforth Village Residents Association to activate the network of laneways in the Danforth Ave and Main St neighbourhood. With support from the local municipality, Section 37 funds were allocated towards the year-long project which included 30 new planters, 20 new street art murals, solar panel lighting and pedestrian-friendly traffic measures, making the laneway better suited for the children in the area.

(Photo by The Laneway Project, authorization pending)

LOGISTICS

To document the original Emmett Avenue project and to provide lessons on the overall pop-up infrastructure model, Delta Family Resource Centre and Urban Priorities released a feasibility study that evaluated the model in three neighbourhoods (two in northwest Toronto and one in Scarborough) that could be served by temporary infrastructure. The feasibility study was released in 2017 and gained media traction throughout 2018. By 2019, Delta aims to have a physical space to test the next iteration of a pilot pop-up project.

While finalizing the search for a space to execute this pilot project on the basis of the 2017 feasibility study, the Delta Family Centre is focusing on the populous yet "under-served" community of Dixon Road. Towards this, Delta and the Somali Women and Children's Support Network (SWCSN) have secured \$125,000 in funding (in 2018) through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) to bring a new pop-up family and parenting centre to life at a yet-to-be-determined location along Dixon Road, between Kipling and Islington avenues.

Dixon Park is located in the middle of six high-rise condos with over "10,000 families" in need. Many of the families are newcomers and there is no space for children or programs in the neighbourhood.

The future pop-up (the Kujistahi Centre) will transform two shipping containers into a 640-square-foot, pop-up community space from which to run its programming. The space is being conceived as flexible enough to change its programming to cater to the next area it has to be moved to.

REFLECTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

Some of the issues encountered during implementation include:

- > The greatest frustration for the community coalition/partnership that implemented the original 100 Emmett Avenue project was the length of time it took to realize the project - it was approximately 5 years before the community partnership (led by ANC Weston-Mount Dennis).
- > Early and ongoing networking on 'who owns what' and on community needs proved critical to the initial pop-up on Emmett Avenue, and to ongoing efforts to replicate the model.
- > Even though they are designed as temporary spaces, the sustainability of the pop-up model beyond the 5-7 year mark is a challenge.
- > Beyond the land control and insurance issues involved, the pop-up model relies on sustainable funding for the operating group.
- > The sustainability of the original Emmett Avenue pop-up space is currently in question as funding for the ANC network is being reviewed and their ability to lease the space may not be feasible. Currently leased by the ANC and Social Planning Toronto from the TDSB, it may be sold or leased to the highest bidder. Social Planning Toronto may take over operation of the space, but the legacy of the project is unclear.
- > Without operators and service providers that animate the space, pop-up spaces may not exist and the momentum needed for long-term change may be diminished.
- > ANC network will be discontinued in 2019 - leaving the institutional knowledge gained from the ANC work at risk of being lost. Without operators and service providers that animate the space, pop-up spaces may not exist and the momentum needed for long-term change may be diminished.

PROCESS LESSONS

The experience of the original community coalition around 100 Emmett Avenue and the follow-up feasibility study completed by Delta and Urban Priorities provide lessons for future pop-up projects. These include:

- > The greatest lesson learned from the original Emmett Avenue pop-up was that it is very important to map out who owns what, who is related to who, etc. early in the process. In every neighbourhood, there are multiple interest groups that range from local Business Improvement Area Associations, city divisions, city councillors, and community groups. It is very valuable to profile
- > All the different stakeholders and understand their interests sooner, to leverage their networks and capacity. By doing so, it will be possible to avoid a disconnect between stakeholders' vision for the community and what the community actually needs.
- > While pop-ups on land owned by public agencies should be more feasible, familiarity with the pop-up model is still growing with these agencies and should not be assumed. Liability and protocol are often constraints for pop-up infrastructure on public property.
- > Places of worship represent an under-explored area for future partnerships.
- > Managing gentrification and the dynamic of outsiders coming into the community to provide infrastructure should be addressed with the community.



COMMUNITY SPACE IN APARTMENT TOWERS:

Residential Apartment Commercial

Residential Apartment Commercial (RAC) zoning is a new City-wide zoning bylaw (enacted in 2013) that provides a more flexible land use framework for Apartment Neighbourhoods. The zoning allows small-scale non-residential uses - such as retail stores, health services, and child care - in the ground floor of apartment buildings that were previously residential-only.

RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT COMMERCIAL (RAC) ZONE

Toronto's neighbourhoods are home to approximately 1,200 apartment towers, of 8 storeys or higher, built before 1985. These post-war apartment tower neighbourhoods were originally designed for middle class tenants with access to cars, following a "tower in the park" aesthetic in the inner suburbs.

Today these buildings represent the primary source of affordable housing in Toronto, increasingly home to large families, children and youth, new Canadians, and elderly residents. Car ownership in many apartment neighbourhoods is below average, with higher dependency on transit and walking for daily trips. Studies over the past 20 years also reveal that the populations that live in many of Toronto's apartment neighbourhoods, particularly those in inner suburban locations, have lower incomes, have less access to fresh food, experience higher rates of diabetes and poor health outcomes.

In addition to significant deferred maintenance and efficiency challenges, Toronto's apartment neighbourhoods lack convenient access to local shops, services, and amenities due to historical zoning which separated residential from commercial uses. Past policy initiatives at the municipal and provincial level, aimed at creating flexible neighbourhood spaces, did not address the barriers on apartment sites due to existing zoning regulations.



Opening of the 415 Driftwood Avenue (North York) community space and Recipe for Community ceremony. Photo by Perkins+Will

RAC zone projects can be located on the ground floor of apartment towers or on their grounds

400+ building sites across the city now have RAC zoning

40 different types of services and businesses are allowed to operate in these RAC zones

The City's Tower & Neighbourhood Revitalization unit (SDFA) is supporting conversations with property owners, community groups, residents and others interested in implementing projects

Through collaboration between the City and partner agencies, the RAC zoning was developed to strategically respond to community access needs, positioning many tower neighbourhoods across the city as potential community hubs that can support human and cultural services.

The RAC Zone strategy responds to the desire of many community agencies to find space to deliver services to local populations, as well as the desire of residents and owners to improve their buildings without causing a raise in rent. The RAC Zone bylaw has been designed as an intervention that maximizes existing space with moderate renovations that creates space to serve building residents and the surrounding community.

The RAC Zone applies to over 400 tower sites across Toronto - these sites are scattered across the city and range from publicly owned property (e.g. Toronto Community Housing property) to privately owned towers.

DESIGN PROCESS

The design of RAC Zone spaces is informed by the rules of the bylaw and the multi-stakeholder process through which activation and programming occurs. The following are key design considerations gathered from research on current and completed projects:

- RAC zoning is restricted to sites with over 100 units. This eligibility criteria avoids destabilizing residential buildings. To receive RAC zoning, the property must have originally had a base residential apartment zone. In this way, most of the RAC zoned sites are not along corridors and avenues where mixed-use designations are more appropriate.
- A direct entrance to the community space must be accommodated for general community access; a more private entrance for building residents must be maintained separately.
- The maximum size of all indoor mixed uses must be equal to or less than 1/2 of the tower's ground floor. The combined area of outdoor uses is limited to a maximum of half the total ground floor. Additions can equal the size of the project inside the building. A single business can use a maximum of 200 sqm. Non-commercial uses can use a maximum of 600 sqm.
- Parking requirements are usually lessened with RAC zoning, with the potential to convert parking spaces into usable project space.
- The design intent is to retain residential units and not to cause the replacement of viable residential units that are occupied.
- The creation of public parks over underground parking garages is not accepted by the City due to the likelihood of water damage; privately-owned, but publicly accessible space above private

415 DRIFTWOOD AVENUE & RECIPE FOR COMMUNITY



In 2018, residents from 415 Driftwood Avenue applied for a Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund (POL) grant to renovate an office in their building into a community resource space. Residents wanted to eliminate barriers and create a place that could address some of the community's needs.

The space was enabled by the new RAC zoning and built on the resident and community momentum behind a nearby community garden completed in the summer of 2018. With support from the Recipe for Community Program, the ground floor resource room was designed and programmed by the community.

Through a renovation scoped under \$100K, the space includes computers with internet access, a kids and youth study space, tutoring program space, a fax/printer/photocopy machine, a job board with space for local job postings, and a community kitchen. The space was officially opened by the community in November 2018, after just 6 months of project initiation.

Photo above: Opening of the 415 Driftwood Avenue (North York) community space and Recipe for Community ceremony. Photo by Perkins+Will.

Around **5** projects have been completed in RAC zone sites with City assistance since 2016; many more sites with RAC activities already happening have become legal (e.g. places of worship)

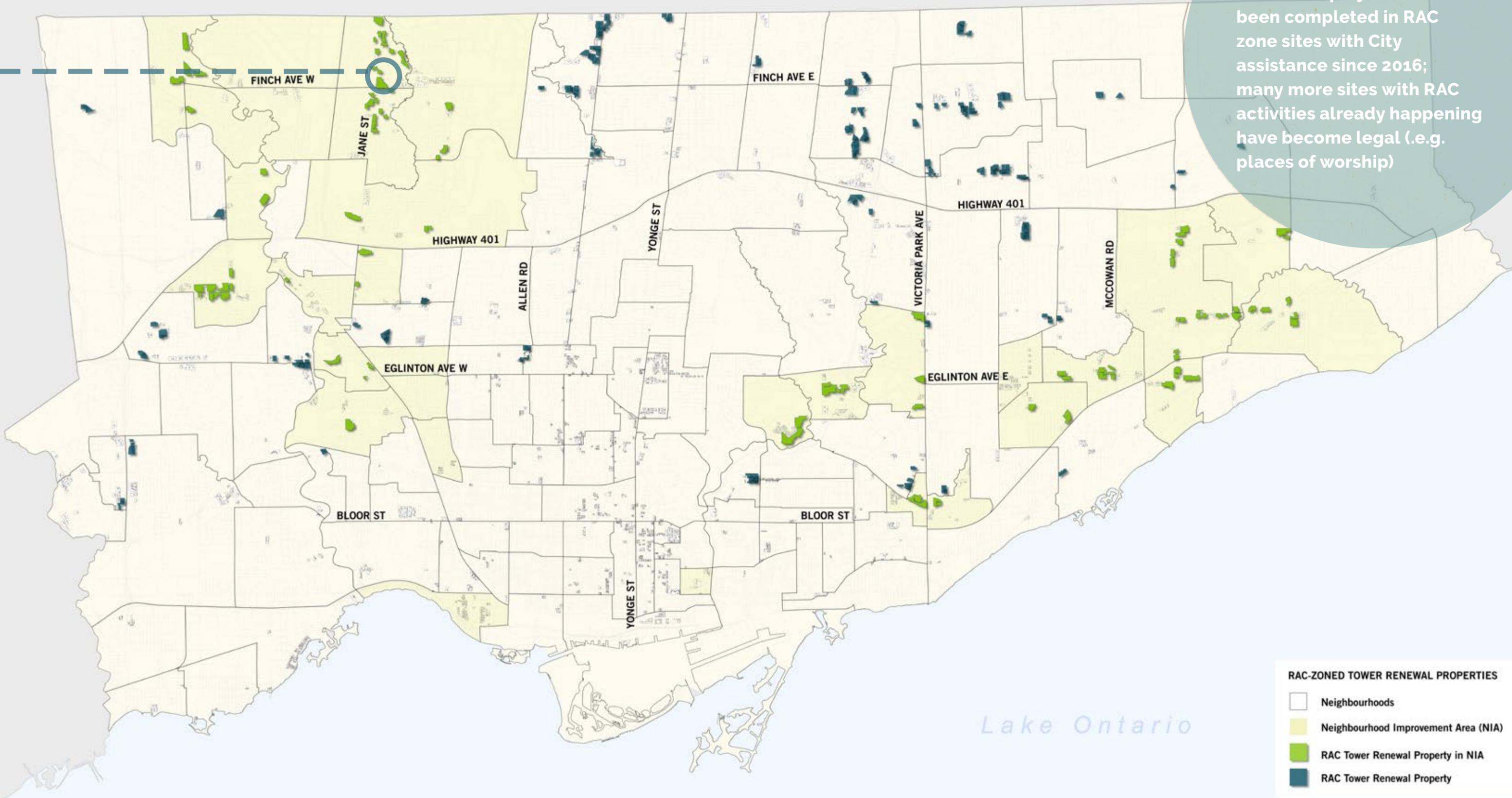


Figure 11: Areas eligible for RAC zoning across Toronto



garages are acceptable (e.g. play areas for daycare or soccer areas for after school programs).

LOGISTICS

The creation of approved spaces and activities in buildings zoned for RAC does not require participation in a City of Toronto program or initiative. However, activation of ground floor spaces and grounds in these sites does require a change of use permit - no minor variance or re-zoning is needed, making the process less onerous for building owners. Despite the benefits for residents and building owners, increasing property-owner awareness of and education around the new bylaw opportunities remains an ongoing effort.

Building owners often become aware of the new zoning application when their property is reviewed in the City of Toronto's Sustainable Towers Engaging People (STEP) Program. At no cost, the STEP Program completes a free building assessment and identifies measures to improve the environmental efficiency

Building owners often become aware of RAC zoning when they go through the Sustainable Towers Engaging People Program (STEP) process - during this assessment, they are informed of the RAC zone opportunity for their site. Outside STEP, utilizing RAC zoning to convert space is a process usually led by residents who identify unused spaces and bring it to the attention of their property owner.

of buildings, lower operating costs, and to improve the quality of life of residents. Once an eligible RAC zoned building site enters this program, City of Toronto staff (Tower & Neighbourhood Revitalization in SDFA) notify the building owner of the RAC opportunity.

The STEP program is a proactive way for the City of Toronto to reach out to older multi-residential buildings to achieve improvements to this affordable building stock, without redevelopment. The SDFA division of the City of Toronto completes approximately 50 assessments every year. As part of the assessment, they complete a walk through and review physical and social aspects of the facility (e.g. do you have a welcome package? Is there a cooling room? Are banks and groceries nearby? What is your population?).

Following the STEP process, the City can facilitate conversations and connections between landlords and prospective community partner organizations. Specifically, the STEP assessment results in an "Action" report, listing opportunities to improve the building, but can also connect landlords and prospective community partner organizations. These partner organizations could range from senior services, education agencies, Indigenous service providers, places of worship, and daycares. The City can also serve as a "matchmaker" for businesses looking for local space.

Outside and absent participation in STEP, interested parties pursuing a RAC project will undergo a RAC Zone review that is triggered by the submission of building plans, which then triggers a site visit. If pursued along this avenue, utilizing RAC zoning to convert space is usually an endeavour led by residents, who have identified unused spaces and have brought it to the attention of the property owner.

REFLECTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

Some of the issues encountered during implementation include:

- > The RAC Zone by-law was a combined effort by the City and partner agencies which took over ten years to be implemented due to difficulties in removing barriers, such as single use zoning and site-specific zoning, within the planning framework .
- > Building owners are subject to updating renovated spaces to new building codes.
- > Many owners are more comfortable sticking to a familiar business model - renting residential units - and will evaluate unused space as foregone rental income.
- > While pop-ups do not need a permit, permanent activities necessitate a change of use permit, which requires drawings and the property owner's leadership. Because of these hurdles, illegal conversions occur.
- > Tower neighbourhoods are often not identified as areas for strategic investment resulting in little support for small businesses, community-led commerce and social enterprises.
- > Funding from city programs are not aligned to invest in tower neighbourhoods.

PROCESS LESSONS

- > Building superintendents are valuable allies in the RAC process because of the depth of knowledge they have on the tower community and surrounding neighbourhood. They also have valuable insights on building history and condition.
- > It is helpful to align the RAC process with other renovation or maintenance processes that building owners intend to pursue. For example, if laundry facilities and parking facilities are scheduled for renovation, finding synergies with the creation of community space through RAC zoning may be more feasible for the building owner.
- > Initiatives that support the empowerment of community leaders or organizations in the design process allow for sustainable transitions to stewardship and programming (as was the case in the 415 Driftwood experience - see sidebar, page 24).
- > Having an intermediary (e.g. City staff member) at preliminary meetings is key in helping partner agencies and building owners explore opportunities and alternatives holistically.



ACTIVATING OPEN SPACE:

Albion District Library

RENOVATING A COMMUNITY HUB IN REXDALE

Located on the fringes of Toronto, the Rexdale neighbourhood fits the mold of 1950s planning where single use zoning and dependency on automobiles clash with the current demographic consisting of immigrants, ethnic minorities and low-income Canadians.

At the heart of the community is the Albion District Library, a landmark and vital social infrastructure in the Rexdale neighbourhood for over 40 years. More than a just a source to borrow books, the Library has evolved to address the social and technological needs of a suburban community with few amenities. As one of Toronto's most used libraries, when came news that the space would have to be closed for two years in order to renovate the aging infrastructure, the Library with strong community input agreed to a different approach in order to keep services running.

The renovation of the Albion District Library is just one instance of the Toronto Public Library's mandate of putting the community's needs first and the evolution of a library's function. Additionally, the project falls under the City of Toronto's Strong Neighbourhood Strategy, which looks to strengthen physical environments by partnering with communities.

Originally scheduled to be closed for two years for renovation, the Albion District Library turned into a new construction project in order to remain open to its users which resulted in a shift in its physical location and a focus on creating more space for community events.

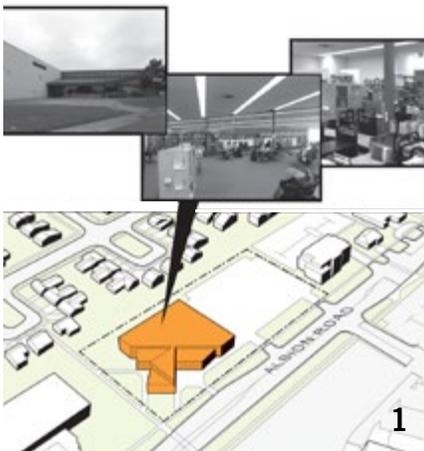
In the article, *What's the worth of your public library?*, mention is given to Vartan Gregorian who revived the New York Public Library system under the premise of "civic renewal" and emphasized the connection between libraries and development. Essentially, as knowledge is constantly changing so should the library. With this in mind the library has changed from a traditional stance to one of communal space and social connections based on feedback gained from numerous workshops and public engagements.

"Libraries are really about being a community space in the neighbourhood. They are a home away from home, maybe an office away from the office. It's not just a transactional place..."

(Susan Martin, Toronto Public Library)



Albion Public Library. Photo by Perkins+Will.



Existing library building and parking lot



Sitting of new building allows existing library to remain in operation through construction.



Once new library is opened, the existing library was demolished, new parking lot doubles as market square



Completed proposed design with landscaped and programmed urban plaza adjacent to new building

DESIGN

The design approach involved constructing a new library on the existing parking lot and once completed, demolishing the old building and turning the left-over space into a landscaped, flexible area for community functions: a public plaza, a market place, concerts and a venue for hosting cultural events - providing an alternative place to meet other than the local mall.

This would prove challenging at a policy level as the former parking lot was designed to fit zoning bylaws which called for 110 spaces to be allocated for library users due to its suburban context.

However, the Library had sufficient data to indicate that around 45% of users either took public transportation or walked, resulting in the space being underutilized and that reducing the number of lots would not impede on functionality.

As a result, the proposed design called for shrinking the lot size, reducing the number of parking spaces by half and equipping the site with water and power outlets for maximum usability and flexibility. In order to get this accomplished, zoning bylaws had to be re-evaluated and the design team underwent a lengthy process before gaining approval by city planning officials.

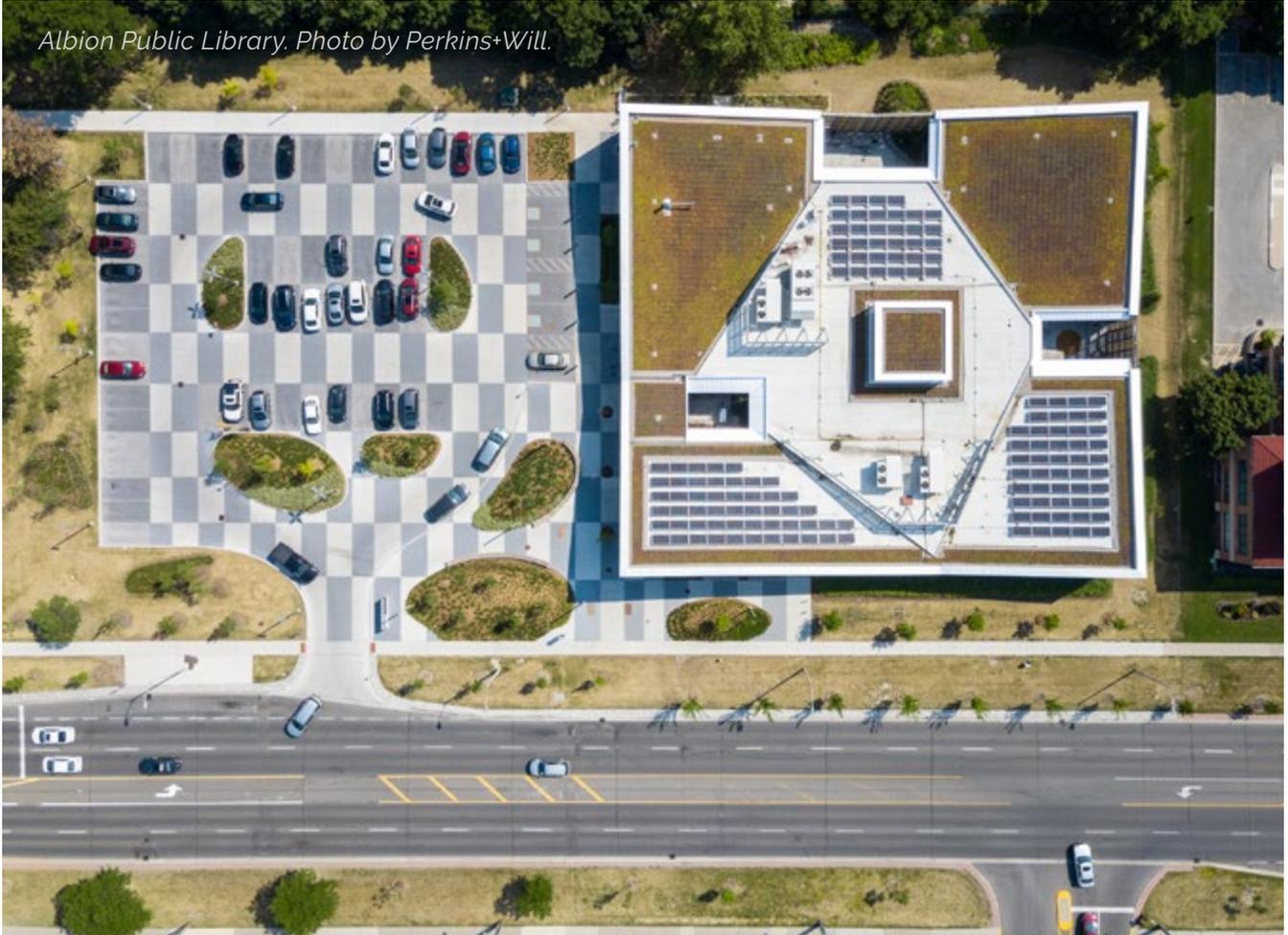
With other design considerations in place such as way finding and improving access from the main street, the entire site has been transformed with every inch now used. Today, the exterior lot is seen as more than a space to park cars. Its primary function now shifted to become an extension of the library and to support the public realm.

Since the opening of the renovated library, attendance has increased by almost 45% when compared to the 2016 time frame when the old library was in use.



Albion Public Library. Photos by Perkins+Will.

Albion Public Library. Photo by Perkins+Will.



The process explored how you interpret the City's urban design guidelines with an inner suburbs perspective: how do you create an animated suburban pavillion? The library and community were the engines of this process

(Design leader, Andrew Frontini)



REFLECTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

Some of the issues encountered during implementation include:

- > Site plan approval involved a 10 month negotiation process with the City of Toronto's City Planning and Urban Design divisions, the Etobicoke Urban Design Review Panel. Following this process and carefully phased construction, the project was ultimately completed in 2016.

PROCESS LESSONS

Some of the lessons learned during the implementation process include:

- > Beginning in 2014, the design process involved extensive consultation with the community, Library, and local stakeholders including the city councillor. As part of the design process, the library facilitated a mobility survey that indicated that 45% of library users walk, bike, or take transit to get to the site. This finding influenced design decisions ranging from the relationship of the site plan to an adjacent bus stop and the placement of the front door on the corner of the building: sited to provide strategic access to the street as well as access to the programmed parking plaza.
- > The process of adapting and interpreting urban design guidelines in a post-amalgamation Toronto landscape is an ongoing effort for design projects in the city's inner suburbs. Enlivening suburban streetscapes and parking lots requires an approach that explores programming with the community early in the design process.
- > The Toronto Public Library's extensive experience with community surveys was a significant asset for the implementation process and the ability to reach community members.

- > The Toronto Public Library and library staff were key partners in generating excitement within the community; they were leaders in moving the conversation beyond a simple renovation-addition project to a transformative site re-design that reduced parking and increased programmable space.
- > The new plaza space has been so successful that the library is in the process of pursuing a change permit to add additional electrical outlet capacity for the exterior of the building.



*Learn to Camp, Albion Public Library.
Photo by the Toronto Public Library.*



ACTIVATING OPEN SPACE:

Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee

USING CIVIC ACTION TO TRANSFORM A COMMUNITY

Thorncliffe Park was originally planned following the "tower in the park" aesthetic popular in the 1960s. In this instance, as a collection of apartment towers in a horseshoe pattern, surrounding a park, and to house up to 12,000 residents who had access to cars to connect them from the inner suburbs to the city. Decades later, the Thorncliffe community reflects a sharp difference with a nearly tripled-sized population ($\frac{1}{3}$ school-aged children), a demographic primarily from South Asia who were immigrants, with minimal access to vehicles and were low-income.

R.V. Burgess Park, located in the midst of the towers, since its construction became derelict with missing playground equipment, neglected grass and was littered with garbage leaving children with no where to play causing a stressful condition for their primary caregivers, the mothers.

Mothers are under stress. Their children need a place to play. This park is our backyard.

(Thorncliffe Park Resident)

As the majority of the community lived in towers, the park was seen as the backyard and with Thorncliffe Park hosting the largest public elementary school in North America, revitalizing the space became crucial. Another devastating element about the condition to group of women who would eventually become the Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee (TPWC), was the sense of social isolation they felt from their neighbours despite living in crowded towers.

With little resources and a strong sense of determination, the group took ownership of the park focusing first on turning it into an environment where children would want to play. As being mothers themselves they knew that where children went, other mothers would follow and socialization amongst neighbours would naturally occur.



FOODSHARE PROGRAM

FoodShare is a non-profit organization that works with communities and schools to deliver healthy food and food education across the City. Through their partnership with Eastdale Collegiate, the organization has started a School Grown program on the rooftop of the school converting unused tennis courts into a rooftop garden spanning 1/2 an acre, a marketplace, an event space and indoor classroom.

The gap between youth and food literacy is addressed as students learn about healthy eating, gain employment and hands on learning on urban farming.

Rooftop of Eastdale Collegiate showing a few garden planters. (Image by Rebecca Field/ Toronto.com)

Relying primarily on their skills to organize and with a small grant from the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, the Committee began navigating complex civic and political systems and formed connections with the City of Toronto Department of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, Dufferin Grove Park, and Park People to name a few. The Committee used their networking skills to form connections with Dufferin Grove Park and drew inspiration and tips on setting up their farmer's market, arts in the park performances and gardening projects.

What started as an initial idea for new planting and playground equipment quickly shifted into turning the park into a critical hub for the community based on feedback from surveying residents. This meant creating opportunities for the women of the community to engage in economic for activity as a means of networking and gaining financial independence. The benefits proved to be two-fold: while the women ran their micro-enterprises, their children were able to play nearby.



Community tandoori oven in action (Image by Nick Kozak/ Toronto Star)

PROGRAMMING

As their mandate broadened to include a weekly bazaar, they began to encounter issues with navigating a newly amalgamated Department of Parks, Forestry and Recreation which had experience with tangible operations but no experience with community engagement. Their attempts at incorporating the Bazaars were continuously denied as the City interpreted the local enterprises as businesses. The City of Toronto strike in 2009 proved to be advantageous. With systems down, the TPWC went forward and hosted nine Friday night bazaars with five local vendors at the first event, and to much success. When business returned to usual at the City, the Committee was able to demonstrate that they could handle an event that was local, small in scale and community-led.

The success of the bazaars provided participants with the know-how as to whether their products were viable as they could test them in a low-risk environment. They were able to gain the confidence to sell their products outside of their immediate community at other food markets and cultural festivals, and provide food catering for events as they were provided with training for menu planning, food safety and budgeting by the TPWC.

In 2018, the TPWC opened their latest project, the Park Cafe, to support entrepreneurship by-and-for women in the community using a sustainable park-based economic model. Using a refurbished shipping container, the Cafe has a built in kitchen. The Park Cafe boasts a kitchen, allowing for fresh food to be served at affordable prices throughout the cooler months.

So we asked ourselves, how can we empower women while recognizing their responsibilities and the constraints on their time?

(Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee)



Park Cafe. Photo by Guntar Kravis.

TIMELINE

2008 Committee begins

2009 Pilot of the Bazaar

2010 First official Bazaar

2012 TPWC became partners in Metcalf's Resilient Neighbourhood Economies

2013 Acquired first outdoor tandoor bake oven in North America

2013 Recognized by American organization as a Frontline Park

2014 Thorncliffe Park designated as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area

2015 Launch of Toronto Arts Council's Arts in the Parks program inspired by the TPWC arts program

2018 The Park Cafe opens

REFLECTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

Some of the issues encountered during implementation include:

- > It was difficult for newcomers to navigate the complex system of how to obtain permits and to overcome liability issues brought forth from City Hall,
- > A framework did not exist for decision making that was cross-city and fair to all groups,
- > Existing permits allowed for food/ farmers markets but was not able to support non-food based items such as jewelry, clothing,
- > The permit process was tedious, costly and demanded approval from multiple city departments silo-ed from one another,
- > As a nonprofit organization, TPWC does not have core funding, relying heavily on volunteerism and grants to cover expenses such as permits and insurance. The Committee was declared a nonprofit in 2017 and as such, can apply for particular grants as a formalized community group.
- > The needed to be a balance between having enough opportunities for economic activity without interfering with children playspace and without excluding members of the community financially.

LEGACY

The Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee has received numerous accolades and used as a point of reference for community renewal worldwide. Some of their achievements include:

- > Reinventing the park to become a space for work and civic engagement.
- > Being a part of steering committees of larger organizations with experience in food, park animation and community building.
- > TPWC worked with Public Health and Parks, Forestry and Recreation officials to change practice and policy. These changes have made it easier for grassroots groups and community organization to animate their parks and has made it easier for the City to accept socially sustainable enterprise in parks.
- > Earned a reputation as civic champions, TPWC became a partner in the Metcalf's Foundation Neighbourhood Economies initiative, a 3-year pilot designed to support people and organizations wants to build resilient and inclusive neighbourhood economies.
- > Became the first park outside of the USA to be recognized as a Frontline Park a Washington, D.C's City Park Alliance* - designation is awarded for creative revitalization of urban green space that brings people together across social, economic, and racial divides
- > Jane Jacobs Prize award to TPWC chair Sabina Ali, which recognizes leaders in civic engagement.
- > The Committee is credited to opening the first tandoori oven in a park in North America. The oven reflects the community with members from Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, is also used a teaching tool and to bring the community together.



ONE-STOP SHOP SPACE:

East Scarborough Storefront

The East Scarborough Storefront started as a facilitator for program delivery to the residents of the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park neighbourhood and have since evolved into a model for relationship facilitation.

EARLY DAYS OF THE STOREFRONT

East Scarborough in the 1990s was an underserved, under-engaged part of Toronto due to the low level of social services being provided to a growing population with diverse needs. The majority of service providers were located in the downtown core, requiring residents to commute for long periods of time on a poor transit system. At this time, the community had the highest percentage of public housing and residents living below the poverty line and ever increasing numbers of people experienced worsening conditions. At the same time, a large influx of refugees moved to the area. By the year 2000, 800 refugees were in the community, housed along an aging motel strip, putting an already strained system under duress.

In response to this situation twenty years ago, an informal group of agencies mobilized to call people together. This group included the Caring Alliance, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Social Services and Shelters, community planners, and local service agencies, and together, these agencies surveyed the community in order to determine what was needed. The Caring Alliance was an organization consisting of members from multiple faith groups to help families living the Kingston Road motels. The conclusion of this collective mobilization demonstrated that while one organization was unable to provide the myriad of resources required, a collective of agencies was needed to effectively serve the community.

As the idea for the Storefront started to develop, the group looked to service frameworks that already existed across the city, such as the Women's Place (located in Scarborough), Dufferin Mall Youth Services and York Gate Information Centre (both located in Toronto). Drawing on these examples they aspired for the Storefront to be a community hub that would address the health and social concerns facing residents and the needs that existed on service provision as well, emphasis was placed on relationship facilitation, placing itself between organizations and the people.

Front desk of the East Scarborough Storefront. Photo by Perkins+Will.



Today, the Storefront has become source of inspiration due to their unique partnership model which consists of local residents, staff, agencies, funders, volunteers and academics. All groups are considered autonomous and through their interaction can account for "spontaneous bursts of collaboration", leading to progressive ideas that otherwise would not have come about.

The 'relationship facilitation' process began by forming partnerships with local organizations. The partnerships stress the removal of a landlord-tenant relationship, allowing agencies to focus solely on service provision. Organizations, in turn, are able to have effective outreach within the community due to their association with the Storefront which has a long-standing reputation within the community. Over the history of the Storefront, over 200 partnerships have been developed with 35-40 organizations contributing to the Storefront hub each year, based on needs determined by the residents.

The Storefront was initially conceived to solve access problems by being a one stop shop where agencies could offer services.

Developing the ability of residents to design their own solutions to community problems was essential to helping them improve their quality of life and their community.

The formation of partnerships with the residents is a critical aspect of the Storefront's "people first" approach. Under the mandate of supporting agency within the community, the Storefront's role is to encourage residents to identify and sustain solutions to their challenges. This approach has been successfully integrated into programming through formal and informal events. These events are held throughout the year to ensure residents' voices are heard and the Storefront will add or take away resources/programming to suit those needs.



**LEARNING ENRICHMENT
FOUNDATION**

Since 1991, The Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) has housed services provided to the Weston-Mount Dennis community under the roof of a converted warehouse. Multiple organizations provide a range of programming such as language classes for newcomers, bicycle workshops, child-care services and kitchen skills training program to the community, deemed as one of Toronto's poorest inner suburbs.

The importance of a central space goes beyond ease of accessing services. The LEF found sharing space led to opportunities for unplanned partnerships, lessened isolation, and strengthened social networks. It is a haven as typical shared spaces, such as libraries and churches are being closed in the area due to development pressures.

One such event is the Community Speak, held three to four times a year. Residents are able to discuss community issues amongst themselves and with the Storefront and community partners. This has proven to be a powerful catalyst for community changes and for providing guidance to agencies and politicians serving the community.

The role of the resident is particularly evident in the design of the current Storefront space. Through a community-led design project, youth under mentorship by team consisting of planners, architects, and designers, led the design of a refurbished police station over a three year period. Part of the redevelopment led to the construction of a sky-o-swale, a water filtration and catchment system which is trademarked in the youths' names so that they receive credit should the design be recreated.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The Storefront's role as a hub is to facilitate program delivery but they soon found themselves being evaluated under the social services model which relied heavily on statistics and tangible outcomes. The social services model also dealt with a

FAST FACTS

- 2001** East Scarborough Storefront opens in Morningside Mall
- 2007** After the closure of the Morningside Mall, East Scarborough Storefront moves to a repurposed police station
- 31,877** Population in the East Scarborough community of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) (2016)
- 50%** Percentage of population that are immigrants (2016)
- \$23,547** Average income of individuals within the KGO neighbourhood (2016)
- 12.51%** Unemployment rate of individuals living in the KGO vs. 8.2% in Toronto (2016)
- 134** Number of individuals finding employment and training support at the Storefront
- 25** Number of partner agencies providing services to residents
- 610** Number of residents receiving one-on-one support from partners
- 23600** Number of resident visits
- 3035** Number of youth visits

Based on most recent information from Statistics Canada 2016

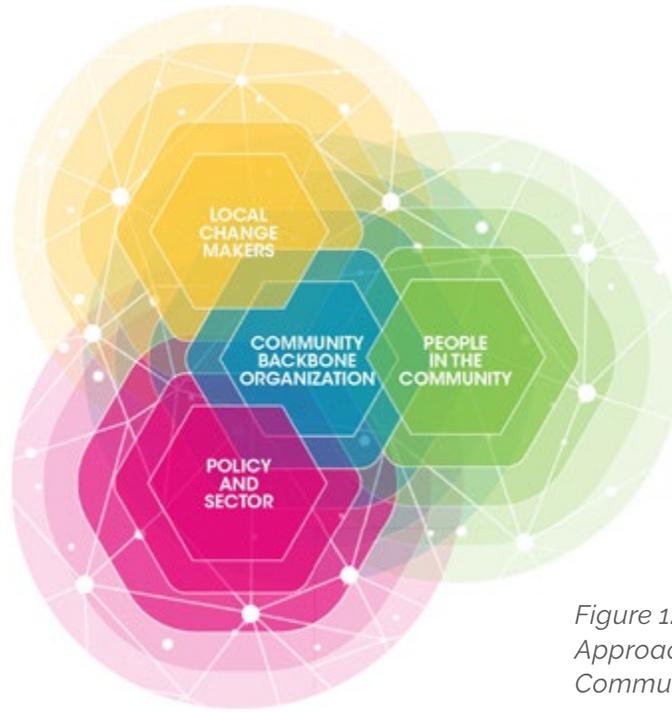


Figure 12: The Connected Community Approach and connectedness of Community Backbone Organizations

top-down, solution-based approach to servicing communities which proved to be counterintuitive to community investment.

The Storefront performed an evaluation of their role within the community and found their services were value-based, consisting of collecting, convening and sharing information. Based on these reflections and experiences, the Storefront created the Theory of Change (and consequently, the Connected Community Approach, CCA). The Theory of Change is an internal tool that serves as a framework for decision-making and used to share the Connected Community Approach as a method of community development which focuses on leveraging community assets.

By being able to formulate these theories, conversation around their work began to become accepted by institutions and academia making it easier to galvanize towards leveraging ideas such as “collective impact” and “design thinking” - two principles that helped to operationalize the theory of change.

THE CONNECTED COMMUNITY APPROACH

The Storefront works across boundaries so that people are connected to the systems that support them and those systems are better connected to each other and the people they support. People and organizations are encouraged and supported to collaborate and co-create initiatives. The space and organization facilitates interactions between and among three key audiences in order to amplify change:

- **People in the Kingston Galloway/Orton Park neighbourhood (KGO)** which includes people who live (residents) or work (businesses/entrepreneurs) in the neighbourhood
- **Local Change Makers** who include anyone and everyone intentionally working to make KGO a better place. This includes resident leaders, social service organizations, academics, designers, funders and corporate partners.
- **Policy and Sector Players:** the larger systems that are influenced by and influence The Storefront's work.

REFLECTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

Some of the issues encountered during implementation include:

- > The challenge in providing services to the community reflects a wider socio-political environment where government cuts and downsizing impacts the nonprofit sector.
- > A lack of funding forced the Storefront from its first home in Morningside Mall in 2001 and threatened its closure. This situation changed the Storefront's funding approach to a model where funding is received on a long term basis with a relationship formed directly with the funder to ensure deliverables and expectations are kept realistic.

LEGACY

- > The Storefront has received numerous accolades and is considered a model

for providing the community with a platform for development

- > The Storefront still fills the role of a one-stop shop for service delivery and has extended its reach towards economic development through the East Scarborough Works, and youth engagement through Sport for Change and KGO Act.
- > Through the Center for Connected Communities, resources are shared to help other grassroots groups and community leaders across Toronto to catalyze development in their communities
- > The Storefront published a Community Mapping: Community Profile of Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park in 2018. The report highlights people and organizations in the community along with perceive assets and deficits



NEIGHBOURHOOD MALL REDEVELOPMENT

Reimagining the Mall, Mississauga



Figure 12: Reimagining the Mall Logo Banner (City of Mississauga).

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF SHOPPING CENTRES & NEIGHBOURHOOD MALLS IN TORONTO

In the past two decades, trends in e-commerce and retail have been changing the landscape of retail across Canada. The demise of major retail chains such as Sears and Toys “R” Us, has triggered new conversations on the lifecycle of existing malls, and the role of neighbourhood malls and the large parking lots associated with them.

While mall redevelopment is occurring across Canada and the United States, Canadian mall redevelopments differ from those in the United States in 2 main ways: (1) the inclusion of high density forms (e.g. high rise buildings) and (2) the proximity of higher order transit (Gladki Planning Associates, et al., 2018). A review of case studies

conducted in 2018 indicates that in many recent instances, transit system expansion has been the catalyst for reconsidering the highest and best uses of mall sites. In these cases, retail uses still feature prominently, but are often accompanied by major residential intensification. Where higher order transit is not available, but good local transit is, redevelopment proposals have also included tall buildings and significant residential uses (Gladki Planning Associates, et al., 2018).

Across Toronto, the owners of several large shopping centres are pressing ahead with transformative re-zoning and redevelopment applications that aim to add residential, office, and entertainment projects onto the edges of malls. These include sites such as the “Golden Mile” on Eglinton Avenue, a sprawling Loblaws-owned site at Roncesvalles and Bloor, and plazas in Etobicoke, Scarborough, and North York. In addition to changes in built form footprints, the “facade” of retail is also changing, with some shopping centres adopting a “power centre format” with retail facing outward, rather than inward.

The landscape of *neighbourhood* malls in Toronto – such as Jane Finch Mall, Don Mills Mall, Galleria Mall, and Peanut Plaza – is also shifting. The redevelopment of Don Mills Mall provides a particularly strong example of the role these malls played. The former Don Mills Mall represented the centre of the planned community: framed by a hierarchy of streets, neighbourhood amenities (library and ice rink), pedestrian walkways, and green space;

the mall formed the heart of the community as a functional town-centre. Faced with increased competition from other shopping malls and the closure of the main anchor tenant T. Eaton Co., the mall owner began redevelopment of the site in 2003, replacing the indoor shopping mall with an open-air retail setting and an overall intensification of the site with mixed use and higher density parking. First opened in 2009, the Shops at Don Mills opened without a main anchor tenant and is characterized by a village-style setting of upscale retail. The conceptual diagrams in Figure 13 below depict the different typologies of urban neighbourhood malls (including Shops at Don Mills) now visible in Toronto. As more traditional configurations evolve from inward to outward typologies, the redevelopment potential and impact of these properties will continue to change for Toronto neighbourhoods. Demonstrating the magnitude of this change across the city, figure 14 highlights "major" and "neighbourhood" scale shopping centres in 2019.

Although facing different pressures, the physical redevelopment trends on and adjacent to large/major and neighbourhood shopping centre sites in Toronto underscore changing community relationships. Physical conditions such as large parking lots, traditional points of entry, indoor storefronts, and retail concentration are being

re-evaluated for their walkability, mixed-use potential, and synergy with surrounding development and amenities. The following case study examines a planning study - "Reimagining the Mall - undertaken to provide policy guidance on the potential intensification of 5 areas anchored by medium-sized indoor shopping malls in the City of Mississauga.

INITIATING CONVERSATIONS

Managed by the City of Mississauga and co-funded by the Region of Peel (Peel Public Health), Reimagining the Mall was conceived as a proactive policy initiative to investigate the intensification designation and potential of key commercial-retail sites and surrounding areas. The study focused on Nodes that developed around 5 indoor shopping centres and the mixed use areas surrounding them. Reimagining the Mall represented a three-phase planning process that spanned fall 2017 to winter 2018. The process aimed to guide the long-term evolution of the 5 areas anchored by indoor malls into healthier, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use communities:

- **Meadowvale Town Centre**
- **Erin Mills Town Centre**
- **South Common Centre**
- **Sheridan Centre**
- **Rockwood Mall**

Figure 13: Major forms of urban neighbourhood malls in Toronto that characterize the "pre- e-commerce" era of retail





Figure 14: Major and Neighbourhood scale Shopping Centres in Toronto in 2019. As the retail landscape changes, there is an opportunity to explore new opportunities for community access to spaces with property owners



Figure 15: Mall properties and Nodes under study in Reimagining the Mall. Map by Gladki Planning Associates (Gladki Planning Associates, et al., 2018).



Participants tour the South Common mall area as part of a Walking Audit in September 2017 (City of Mississauga, 2018; walking tour led by Peel Public Health).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In 2017, the City of Mississauga hired a team of consultants to undertake the planning process for \$200,000 with **extensive public engagement that included walking tours/audits, community pop-up events, digital engagement (featuring a project website), a series of 5 community meetings, and a community open house to develop guiding principles for redevelopment.** The 5-site study was designed as a comprehensive investigation and proactive strategy development process for a class of land uses that has significant community impacts.

Framing the study was the Mississauga Official Plan policies, which identify Major Nodes and Community Nodes that fit within a hierarchy of intensification areas that are intended to be the focus of growth in population and jobs. In order to provide policy and implementation recommendations, the study focused on nodes that have developed around indoor shopping centres. While the mall properties were the crux of the investigation, the Node boundaries were larger than the mall sites and encompassed the mixed use areas around them to encourage an investigation of the sites in the framing of complete communities.



Residents joined the Reimagining the Mall team at Meadowvale Community Centre in 2017 to share their thoughts for the future. Photo by Gladki Planning Associates (Gladki Planning Associates, et al., 2018).

The consultant team - led by Gladki Planning Associates - provided technical analysis and guided engagement on the shopping experience, desired mix of uses, public spaces/community spaces, streetscapes, transportation, and built form. The project was structured in three phases: (1) What's there today?, (2) What does the future look like?, and (3) What's the plan to get there?

The engagement process focused on people's experiences of the nodes, including what they valued and what they thought should be preserved or improved. It also explored how changing experiences can be tailored to fit the needs of the community, the mall sites, and the evolving market - the key formula that would allow the sites to be financially viable and community-serving within a more holistic development. Because it was acknowledged that redevelopment may change these spaces, the engagement process explored how new spaces that serve as community meeting places could replace them, including a combination of privately- and publicly-owned spaces both indoor and outdoor. To understand the aspirations of the community, one of the key questions put to the public

included "what kinds of public spaces and community spaces should be encouraged?"

With the City of Mississauga providing facilitation support, the consultant-led engagement process began with pop-up events in-situ at each mall - an approach that successfully caught people who may not have engaged otherwise. In addition to in-person events (e.g. community workshops off-site) and online engagement, each mall site presented unique opportunities. For instance, the planning process for Meadowvale Town Centre was assisted by the local Councillor who facilitated automated information calls to residents. Important to all mall sites was the building of trust through carefully sequenced conversations. The public consultation process was preceded by thorough individual interviews with each mall owner and also consulted key adjacent landowners in the "Node" study areas.

In the study of public and community spaces, it was found that the traditional interior mall fused the ideas of the "main street" and "town square," and moved their function inside into private, but publicly accessible spaces.

The Reimagining the Mall team at Erin Mills Town Centre. Photo by Gladki Planning Associates (Gladki Planning Associates, et al., 2018).



REFLECTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

Key observations from the Reimagining the Mall study process can be instructive for future investigations that seek to understand community interests around neighbourhood malls. These process observations include:

- › While mall owners and community members represented different constituencies, there were notably 2 different ways of looking at malls that characterized the perspectives and interests of the communities around the 5 locations studied: These perspectives influenced the tone and type of feedback provided:
 1. Malls serve a key community function
 2. Malls provide convenient access to retail and services
- › Intensification of the 5 shopping centre areas and the creation of complete communities was viewed as *positive* potential for the sites by most constituencies.
- › The preservation of swaths of surface parking was not raised as a contentious issue by communities: it was generally felt that the parking situation was unattractive.
- › Among the sites studied, Sheridan Mall was unique in that it is annexed to an apartment building and serves as a quasi-community space for that building.

- › While vacancy is an issue for some of the shopping centres, this has created unique opportunities for affordable community uses (childrens' book store, Toronto Public Library). Meadowvale Mall previously housed a Mississauga Public Library, which recently moved into the Meadowvale Community Centre and Library, completed in 2016.
- › All but one mall was owned by a large company (publicly traded, REITs). While owners had different perspectives on redevelopment, all were attuned to core considerations of sustaining a retail business mode, including:
 - › Phasing
 - › Lease agreements
 - › Long-term income vs. sale value

LESSONS LEARNED

While the outputs of the study are still being integrated into municipal policy, the following are lessons learned through the process to support constructive conversations in other communities:

- › The involvement of Councillors and Planning Department staff - in advance of redevelopment discussions - is key to shaping positive conversations on "how are we going to guide change."

- > While the form of a neighbourhood mall may change, the function should not. Many malls were designed and function as community nodes and crossroads; this function should be preserved and protected.
- > The appropriate bundling of mall sites for "general potential" studies may reduce tension when specific redevelopment pressures arrive. However, neighbourhood malls are unique in their environments.
- > Discussions on the public vs. private ownership of outdoor spaces is important. (e.g. rights of way). Many mall redevelopment precedents across Canada are projects wherein the outdoor environment is curated in terms of street furniture, paving, lighting, etc.
- > The 'meshing' of the **public**-public realm and the **private**-public realm is important. Leveraging publicly owned assets and adjacencies to places such as libraries and community centres should spur the creation of new partnerships.

4

POLICY THAT ENABLES COMMUNITY- LED CHANGE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

As demonstrated in the case study conversations, Toronto is home to many different types of underutilized spaces that fall along the spectrum of public, private, and 'privately-owned public space.'

Whether used formally or informally, greater community access to and community-led adaptation of these spaces has the potential to increase impact to residents affected by socio-economic stressors and the equity gap. Capacity building at the neighbourhood level – through meaningful processes that lead to meaningful places – is important for cultivating community connections and overall neighbourhood health. The case study research and project support for the Jane/Finch Community Inventory process is producing recommendations for neighbourhood-led resilience that have applicability across Toronto.

The recommendation is three-fold:

- 1. Enable better connections to existing neighbourhood amenities;**
- 2. Introduce a pilot quota for projects implemented with a participatory budgeting approach within the Parks, Forestry, and Recreation division to support community-led place making and pathways for greater community voice in open space development**
- 3. Study and develop an affordable retail replacement policy and incentive program**



Photo by Matt Quinn

The recommendations center on improving access to and the creation of physical spaces that strengthen the social networks which allow Torontonians to adapt and thrive.

Similar to how quality and quantity of amenity spaces differ across the city, underutilized spaces manifest differently across the city's neighbourhoods. In the downtown, these spaces range from laneways, coach houses, storefronts, and industrial brownfields; in the inner suburbs (ex. North York and Scarborough), they range from storefronts, malls, parking lots, fields, hydro corridors, and ancillary space in high rise towers.

Supporting resident capacity to strengthen their own neighbourhoods through place-based strategies is a response to all of the broad resilience challenges that have been identified for Toronto, and that may emerge in the future.

The recommendations seek to build access to existing amenities and a culture of creative solutions for spaces determined to be underutilized by communities, one in which equitable access for neighbourhood amenity space is improved and in which pathways are enabled for community members to lead this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

To support further conversations across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors on how to facilitate neighbourhood resilience, the Underutilized Spaces-Community Places Working Group has developed the following recommendations.

OUTPUT 1

City of Toronto support for community-led inventory processes that support information sharing on city services and programs to improve visibility of existing community amenities.

Desired Outcomes:

- Reduce information barriers in accessing spaces by residents, resulting in a better-informed community
- The creation of additional resources for social organizations to support more effective outreach
- Strengthen the existing City of Toronto's Open Data Portal, Wellbeing Toronto, and Interactive Toronto Map with neighbourhood specific input to identify gaps in community amenity and City service access.

OUTPUT 2

Building on the pilot projects of the TSNS 2020, a renewed City commitment to both participatory planning in budgetary and open space development processes.

Desired Outcomes:

- A reciprocal relationship between community groups and the City
- Strengthen approaches to community-led planning and open space design that activate spaces identified as underutilized by communities
- Continue and enhance City investment to further involve community input
- More equitable distribution of City resources across neighbourhoods
- A renewed commitment and expansion of the Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund

Output 3

A City-wide affordable *local commercial-retail strategy* that supports the retention, replacement, and new creation of small affordable retail, commercial, and service spaces to support local enterprises across different neighbourhoods.

Desired Outcomes:

- Protect Toronto's small business ecosystem
- Support a culture of diverse and affordable neighbourhood retail
- Address food deserts and provide affordable food options in areas underserved by grocery retailers

Output 4

Improved methods for how the City and City agencies manage and evaluate surplus property, that take into consideration civic value, stewardship potential, future needs, and endowment opportunities.

Desired Outcomes:

- Create transparency for how public assets are being used and managed
- Greater understanding among stakeholders and the community as to who owns land
- Protocols for identifying “underutilized spaces” with community members
- Targets for innovative space projects in key neighbourhoods as a way to meet short-term and long-term facility master plans

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