Roundtable #3

*Models for Creative Spaces in Underserved Communities*

November 7, 2014 at The S.P.O.T.

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OVERVIEW

The third roundtable of our series of three explored varying models of community cultural hubs and other cultural infrastructure that can be developed successfully in underserved communities, the kinds of services provided, and the communities that use the hubs. The roundtable included a discussion of specific challenges facing this kind of cultural infrastructure, and opportunities for creative space development in a wide variety of underused spaces in our neighbourhoods. The roundtable also addressed the planning and funding toolkit that may support cultural infrastructure development in the city, and challenges and opportunities for the development of sustainable financial models for the operation of cultural spaces.

In line with the overarching goals of the project, the roundtable sought to:

- Advance shared knowledge and understanding of models for community cultural hubs and other cultural infrastructure in underserved communities by understanding factors in their funding, success and long-term sustainability in communities facing multiple challenges.
- Continue to map planned and proposed creative space projects and opportunities for creative space projects outside the core.
- Identify research, advocacy, funding, planning and fiscal tools that could support development of creative spaces outside the core.
- Explore shared priorities for cultural space development in underserved neighbourhoods.

With the help of our panelists Tim Jones (Artscape), Anne Gloger (East Scarborough Storefront), Monica Esteves (Crow’s Theatre) and Lori Martin (City of Toronto), the roundtable tackled the following questions:

- **What models can we draw on to develop sustainable cultural space in underserved neighbourhoods?**
  
  → What has previous research told us about models and best practices for the development of cultural infrastructure than can support revitalization and/or underserved communities?
  
  → What models can we draw on from other sectors to develop sustainable cultural space in underserved neighbourhoods?

- **What challenges do we face in developing cultural infrastructure in underserved neighbourhoods**
  
  → What do we know about the location of cultural spaces, cultural businesses, and the cultural labour force in underserved neighbourhoods?
  
  → How do we tackle capacity building in the sector and in the community to support these projects?
  
  → How do we make strategic choices when gaps and opportunities exist across so many neighbourhoods?
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- How can the planning and fiscal incentive tool kit facilitate cultural space development in underserved neighbourhoods?
  → What planning and fiscal tools can we access now?
  → Specifically, how can Section 37 support cultural infrastructure needs?
  → Are there other planning tools or fiscal tools/incentives that we would benefit from?

- How can funding best support cultural infrastructure development and sustainability?
  → What can we expect from the new Culture Build Fund?
  → How can funding partners support pre-project development?
  → How can funding partners support capacity building and knowledge sharing in real estate and cultural space development and management?
  → How can we achieve long-term operational sustainability without the expectation of significant operational funding?

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Tim Jones, President and CEO, Artscape

Artscape is a 27 year old not-for-profit development organization, in service of the arts community. The organization has developed and manages 9 different creative spaces in downtown Toronto, in which over 1300 artists and cultural workers live and/or work. Five projects in Artscape’s portfolio are “community cultural hubs” – a model that is different from a multi-tenant centre like Artscape Distillery Studios. Artscape’s community cultural hubs include the Parkdale Arts and Cultural Centre, Artscape Wychwood Barns, Daniels Spectrum, and the recently opened Artscape Youngplace.

It has been a longstanding ambition of Artscape to work outside of Toronto’s core, and the organization is now in the midst of thinking about how it can apply the lessons learned from 27 years of practice to development outside of the core. Partnerships will be crucial in taking these aspirations forward.

Daniels Spectrum is located in the Regent Park neighbourhood of Toronto. The project came about as one facet of the large-scale revitalization that is now underway in that community. The community had long identified the need for a place for culture. Artscape undertook the implementation strategy for the project which ultimately came to be through a partnership between Artscape, the Daniels Corporation, Toronto Community Housing and the local community.

Tim emphasized the importance of working with the community for this project. It wasn’t Artscape’s role to parachute into Regent Park and pretend to know what was required. Artscape worked with a community steering committee to create a vision and a place that was rooted in Regent Park but open to the world. The stigma associated with the Regent Park neighbourhood is a real challenge for
residents, and there is a need to change perceptions of the neighbourhood. One of the goals for the project was to create a destination point that would bring people into the neighbourhood from the rest of the city.

Daniels Spectrum has three themes: experience, learning, and innovation. To date there have been hundreds of events held, serving thousands of people. This project has helped Artscape better understand how to work with a whole host of different partners and build something from the ground up in a local community.

How can you apply this model to neighbourhoods that don’t have the density and proximity of neighbourhoods like Regent Park? Artscape completed a study for the City of Toronto 3 years ago which explored the development of a model for community cultural hubs in the priority neighbourhoods. The report took a deeper dive to look at Weston-Mt Dennis and to see what a community cultural hub might look like in that neighbourhood - the model produced was a responsive model that adapts to the needs of the community. In order to stimulate cluster dynamics found in downtown creative districts, the model proposes combining artist live/work units to retain and attract creative people in the area alongside a non-residential cultural hub, the components of which would be specifically designed in response to local needs.

To review Tim’s presentation please click here.

**Anne Gloger, Director, East Scarborough Storefront**

Anne discussed the function of what she referred to as a “neighbourhood backbone organization” – a concept and approach which shares a lot with and draws on collective impact literature, including John McKnight’s work. Neighbourhoods are complex systems and it is important that whatever comes into a space animates it.

To make things happen you need a space, and you need people to congregate and make things happen. East Scarborough Storefront (ESS) was developed as a social services hub 13 years ago. The space was created for service delivery (itinerant services). Fifteen years later ESS still has 35 active partners. ESS’s first space was 5000 square feet in an old library; it was very run down, but it was enough to begin with and the library flourished. It offered social services, but also culture. The community debunked the idea that it would only be used for transactional purposes - it started to be used for dance classes and other groups. When ESS lost their first space, they moved into an old police station. Again, the space was not ideal, but it provided what was needed – space.

Suburbs were designed so that people worked and participated in activities downtown, and lived in the suburbs, sometimes referred to as ‘bedroom communities’. The physical and social infrastructure that is available downtown is not available in suburbs. Social services hubs link tremendous assets together in the neighbourhood to make it all that it can be. While arts projects have tried to make use of towers, car dealerships and malls, the most effective route is integration, not just placement. ESS facilitates human
services, activist citizens, and neighbourhood action partnership, into becoming a cohesive neighbourhood network.

In the last three years, ESS has been facilitating three other groups: local businesses, academics, and designers, urban planners, and architects. All of these groups share the goal of creating thriving, vibrant communities. The dream of a neighbourhood backbone organization is for culture to become an integrated part of the neighbourhood.

Design and location challenges are so important in terms of cultural space and community access. For example, Cedar Ridge Creative Centre is a tremendous arts facility, but it takes enormous effort to get 5 kids to get to an activity or an event there simply because of its location.

To read more from Anne on the importance of public space, click here.

Monica Esteves, Managing Director, Crow’s Theatre
Crow’s Theatre was founded in 1983, and for most of its existence was a touring company with a staff of two. As of 2010, it had no infrastructure. In 2010, the company began to work towards creating a permanent home. They were greatly impacted by the lack of funding by private and public sector to smaller arts organizations - fundraising is very competitive, and with the number of organizations increasing and the funding not improving it is hard to secure funding.

The company set some initial benchmarks, including:

- To nurture and fortify the creative process
- To identify the amount of money they would need to bring to the table to develop new projects
- To be financially viable and sustainable – they did not start with the goal of having their own home
- To enable audience growth and an appetite for new work – to have a model that was not a subscription model, and to lower ticket prices to cater to a more youthful audience
- To fortify the role of arts in under-serviced areas; there are 1.3M people living east of the DVP and no large performing arts facility there

The company went from a staff of two and very little organizational structure and undertook an aggressive 6 month campaign to transform the board and increase organizational capacity. They took time to examine models for social enterprise in the arts and found that while many others were trying to crack that nut – they only found a few examples. They did find a company in Brooklyn that had a facility which transferred between a multi-configurational theatre and an event space. And Crow’s capital project evolved from this kind of approach.
Crows undertook a market assessment to help them determine pricing and what the facility would require to compete on the market for corporate and wedding events. Once a feasibility study was completed, the company began conversations with a private developer – Streetcar Developments, as well as with the City of Toronto. As a result, they are now planning a new state of the art performing arts facility, with a total of 15,000 square feet. It will consist of a main theatre hall, a studio, large gallery, and café. The business model revolves around the weekends being devoted to revenue generation to cover the cost of the operational budget.

34% of the space was funded through a Section 37 agreement, and the rest of the building will be funded through private donations. As a result of the business model, staffing is split 50/50 – 50% of staff are geared towards theatre and programming and 50% of the staff are there from an events background.

Lori Martin, Senior Cultural Affairs Officer, City of Toronto

Lori’s presentation focused on three key messages:

1. The importance of cultural mapping
2. The importance of a keen appreciation of unique places and spaces with imagination
3. How to get started

The Cultural Location Index was a really important step for cultural mapping in Toronto. The CLI map uses data from Statistics Canada as a sort of “density” measure of artists – where do artists work, where do artists live, and where is the bricks and mortar? From a macro perspective this is really useful. Cultural mapping was very useful for recent communities/developments such as the Queen West Triangle and Regent Park. Mapping can provide new ways of looking at neighbourhoods and communities and understanding what is really already there in a community.

Cultural projects often need someone to look at them through a unique lens to see the potential. It can be a very long, difficult process. Each step needs to be presented before council, and city-owned properties can be especially difficult. Community visioning is so important – these projects need to be a collaborative effort. Each project and area is unique. For example, the Lawrence Allen Cultural Hub has a partnership team with the City of Toronto, Toronto Community Housing, a private developer, the local community, and many not-for-profit organizations.

Toronto is looking for authentic and special properties that differentiate it from other cities. There are many of these unique properties outside the core; one example is 150 Symes Road at St Clair and Weston Road. These kinds of former industrial properties have real potential for creative space projects.

The Culture Build fund is a small pot of money that the City has in their budget. It is generally used to ensure that cultural facilities are in a state of good repair, and it’s relatively straightforward to qualify. In future years, the city hopes to earmark some of the funds for feasibility studies to help groups that get
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hold of older buildings or parts of buildings. A feasibility study is like a roadmap and without one it is difficult to get a project moving.

For more information on the Culture Build fund, click here.
To review Lori’s presentation click here.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Pru Robey framed the discussion by introducing emergent forms of cultural space becoming increasingly common across Canada. The final report of a three-year study exploring Canada’s cultural infrastructure, Under Construction identifies the emergence of new, multi-disciplinary and cross-sector models of cultural facilities, including multi-use cultural hubs, “arts incubators” and multi-sector convergence centres. Artist live/work developments are also increasingly used as a tool in public policy to support the revitalization of challenged neighbourhoods, downtowns and main streets facing significant decline. What is notable is that these models all speak to the wide range of public and private benefits (social, economic, cultural, and environmental) that cultural space can contribute but also to the positive benefits that cross-sector partnership and collaboration offer to cultural space development.

Specifically, some of the challenges we face in our neighbourhoods may also present themselves as opportunities. How can we animate public space outside the core? What is the role of the pop-up and the temporary in addressing commercial vacancies, and what are the challenges with this approach? What opportunities exist within tower communities? How can we address the perplexing challenge of retaining public assets for community use, including surplus schools, underused schools, and other public buildings and facilities?

Finding Space and Using Existing Assets

Tower Neighbourhoods

• The built form of neighbourhoods affects the potential for creative space. If the neighborhood is not built around main streets, what are the spaces that already exist that are not being well used? How do you broker these spaces and what would it take to turn one of these spaces into an asset not only for the owner but for the larger community?

• Toronto’s apartment towers have had very strict zoning which allows for parking, tuck shops, daycare and little else. A new zoning by-law will allow for a wider range of commercial uses on the ground floor of some apartments buildings. City Planning is in the process of deciding which of the 1200 towers could use ground floor spaces for commercial uses, including, potential cultural uses such as a gallery or performance space. Pilot projects will be developed to test options and opportunities and to raise awareness.

• The City of Toronto currently has an inventory of about 150 apartment buildings for which a basic assessment of spaces in these buildings has been completed and , in some cases, the
owners are becoming in tune with the idea of services on site. However, the City doesn’t have an inventory of these spaces; where are there spaces that cannot currently be accessed; what kind of activities can take place in these spaces?

**Faith-Based Spaces**
- Facilities owned by faith based communities are an important component of the fabric of cultural space outside the core and there is certainly more opportunity to explore cultural uses in empty synagogues, churches, temples; or those spaces that are only used occasionally.
- In the Jewish community there are many synagogues that are in fantastic locations, and use the arts to enliven and work with the arts to change their usage, and in many cases the struggle is around relevancy, action and life, and they are not necessarily looking to generate revenue – there is an opportunity here and with other faith communities to have a more effective dialogue about their role in supporting cultural communities and cultural activities.

**Surplus/Underused Schools and Out of School Hours Access**
- Surplus schools are offered first to public institutions for lease but the Province controls the lease rates. Some properties, declared surplus by the Board, are sold (through Toronto Lands Corporation) at fair market rate – again controlled by provincial legislations.
- TDSB has a commitment to Integrated Service Delivery – bringing social agencies, arts, external agencies to bring them into schools to maximize the space – but the provincial funding formula is an obstacle. Tackling this, and opening up schools to other community uses – filling up half empty schools rather than keeping them half empty – could have a real impact in the provision of community accessible space in our neighbourhoods.
  - Hubs – Northview Heights at Bathurst and finch. Unison has a new health centre, with a lot of different partners. The school is at 70% capacity and so had space to bring the partners in.

**Surplus Public Buildings**
- Many public buildings become surplus, Parkdale Arts and Cultural Centre is a former police station; Artscape Wychwood Barns a former TTC streetcar repair barn. These facilities were paid for by the public, and often have an important place in the history and identity of a community – schools especially.
- Nia Centre for the Arts, a legacy initiative of the Youth Challenge Fund, had been looking for a space since 2009. Finding space outside of the core was a major challenge and took 4 years.
- Nia’s new space will be at Oakwood and Vaughan in a former Toronto Public Health building. They are currently negotiating with other health partners, so that young people with arts program can access health services; it emphasizes a cross-sector model.
- Nia itself will be a 14,000 square foot African-based arts centre.
- The challenge for funders and organizations is securing long term sustainability - short term operational funding is a start but long term sustainability is a challenge.
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Storefronts
- Danforth East Community Association (DECA) use a 30-day rolling lease, with insurance etc. They do 3 – 4 pop-ups in vacant shops every 4-5 months.
- Finding the spaces was one of the hardest things, initially Landlords were reluctant but now they can see the benefits of participating: more walking traffic, creating some excitement and activity.
- DECA’s partnerships with the BIA, East End Arts, Metcalf, Woodgreen, and the Economic Development and Culture Division at the City have all been important.
- The pop-up shop model is one that could be applied to different parts of the city. It might be relevant to pilot projects for commercial uses of apartment buildings for example?
- There is a fashion for pop ups and the “temporary”. We need to make sure that these projects move towards sustainable longer term solutions for creative spaces. The Street Plans Collaborative have literally written the book on approaches to Tactical Urbanism, with two free guides which you can access here.

Artists and Cultural Workers Outside the Core
- How do you define a cultural worker? Who are the different faces of the cultural worker or artists? There are training programs for foreign engineers, what about artists from Sri Lanka for example? Distinguish between professional, emerging, and artists who are just trying to survive.
- In the core we do talk about cultural workers, outside of the core we need to think more broadly, about future cultural workers and artists. For example, the initial training and eye opening that an art class as a child could translate into a future cultural worker.
- In many communities there are tons of artists; what is needed is the network builder, the person that goes out to connect people and creates support mechanisms.
- ArtReach is a great model in investing in people. This approach is needed for newcomer artists as well. We need to invest in people as much as we are in spaces, in order for the spaces to thrive.
- Mentorship from existing arts organizations can play an important role in building capacity and confidence.

Creative Clusters
- Downtown creative clusters (Yorkville, then Queen West, West Queen West, Parkdale, Leslieville) were catalyzed by access to cheap living and working space but also by density and proximity to other artists, services and amenities. In the suburbs, rent is cheaper than downtown and there may be potential to attract artists with live/work spaces.
- Artists already living in these neighbourhoods should be beneficiaries of this kind of approach rather than simply trying to import artists from elsewhere in the city.
- Building projects from the ground up, engaging people in the process and getting local buy-in are key components of the development of creative hubs.
• It is important to think about the target audience? Do we want to bring people into the neighbourhood or make it a destination and is that realistic?
• Leveraging existing concentration of activity / destinations of commonality (Aga Khan Culture Centre, Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Kurdish Centre) is important.
• It is harder to know how to approach areas like the Sheppard corridor, there is no constituency for culture there - they are not at the table politically or divisionally; how do you get them, and who are they? Why are they not there? Why are they not coming forth?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Three areas for further work, framed here loosely as “draft recommendations” emerged from the conversation. These will be explored further and refined by the partners through the course of the Creative Spaces Outside the Core initiative. In some cases these build on or endorse recommendations made in earlier sessions.

• **Challenge:** How can we access and leverage existing space in our neighbourhoods for cultural purposes?

  • **Recommendations:**
    → There is a need for a concerted cross-sector policy approach to provincial policy which addresses the disposal of public assets. (Is this something the Ontario Non-Profit Network could help with?). This is especially relevant with respect to surplus and underutilized schools.
    → New zoning by-laws allowing for commercial use of apartment building ground floor spaces creates potential space for cultural use in tower neighbourhoods. An inventory of space in these properties would provide an invaluable planning tool and resource to support City of Toronto and United Way plans to pilot and advance interest in these new opportunities and could integrate effectively with mapping associated with the City of Toronto’s Making Space for Culture project.
    → Churches, temples, synagogues and other faith based facilities already often underused space. The value exchange between neighbourhood access for cultural uses and the mission and mandate of these faith based organizations would benefit from more exploration and dialogue.
    → Pop-up and temporary use models, as exemplified by the Danforth East Community Association’s work, offers a valuable model and learnings for neighbourhoods across the city and application in both traditional “main street” environments as well, perhaps in tower neighbourhoods (see above). A platform which can disseminate and share models and tools to support these kinds of innovations would be of value.

• **Challenge:** How do we prioritize investment in creative space development in Toronto in areas outside the core and in areas underserved from a cultural infrastructure perspective?

  • **Recommendations:**
In addition to the development of a “cores strategy” which seeks to focus investment in areas of existing concentration of activity/opportunity, in multiple “downtowns” (Roundtable #2) there should be a focus on cluster development leveraging existing concentrations of cultural activity / destinations of commonality.

In order to make strategic choices we need to be better informed about the depth and range of cultural activity taking place and cultural workers and artists living and or working in a neighbourhood. Traditional definitions of cultural activity and data based definitions of cultural workers and artists do not reflect the diversity of activity, practice, skills and expertise in diverse communities.

The development of live/work artists’ complexes as part of a community cultural hub can play a role in catalyzing creative activity and activating neighbourhood change. Artists already living in these neighbourhoods should be beneficiaries of this kind of approach. Engaging people in the process and getting local buy-in are key components of the development of creative hubs.

**Challenge:** Cultural facility development and operation is expensive, complicated, time consuming and risky. How do we build the capacity of communities to undertake and operationalize these kinds of projects?

**Recommendations:**

- The development of approaches to support investment in community capacity building in cultural space development and operation is required. This should be considered as a key component of creative space development outside the core.

- Support for strategies to build local networks, offer mentorship opportunities and develop transitional training for new immigrants in the sector should be considered as investments in building sustainable community scaffolding in a neighbourhood.
PANELIST BIOS

Tim Jones is a champion for the role that the arts play in transforming cities and communities. Under his direction as President and CEO since 1998, Artscape has grown from a Toronto-based affordable studio provider to an internationally recognized leader in creative placemaking. The term “creative placemaking” was coined by Tim in 2006 to describe the practice of leveraging the power of art, culture and creativity to act as a catalyst of change, growth and transformation of place. In Toronto, Tim has built an impressive portfolio of multi-tenanted arts centres that serve the needs of over 900 artists while also advancing a host of public policy goals, private development interests, community and neighbourhood aspirations and philanthropic missions. In Canada and abroad, Tim acts as a consultant and advisor on projects, policy, university curricula and initiatives and speaks at more than 20 conferences, lectures and events each year. In all of this work he seeks to empower artists as powerful agents of change who play a central role in shaping cities and societies of the future.

Anne Gloger is the founding Director of East Scarborough Storefront. Her work is dedicated to building local social infrastructure in an underserviced area of Scarborough known as Kingston Galloway Orton Park. Anne's unique approach to this work is founded on the idea that complex social issues require collaborative solutions. Her work at the Storefront includes facilitating collaborative initiatives with residents, social service agencies, academics, corporations, governments, architects, lawyers, urban planners, artists, property owners and anyone else with an interest in improving life in Kingston Galloway Orton Park. Anne has won several awards, including the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, William P Hubbard Award for Race Relations and the Leading Women Building Communities Award.

Monica Esteves is the Managing Director of Crow’s Theatre and is responsible for the construction, fundraising and social-enterprise development of the organization’s first facility in its 30 year history, now under construction in Leslieville. Prior to 2010, Monica was the Producer and General Manager for Nightwood Theatre. She was the Artistic Producer and co-founder of The Company Theatre, Producer for BirdLand Theatre’s The Last Days of Judas Iscariot (Winner of 5 Dora Awards) and Company Manager at the Canadian Stage Company. Monica’s career began in stage management, working with Canadian Stage Company, Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Videocabaret, Theatrefront, Nightwood Theatre, The Saidye Bronfman Centre, Resurgence Theatre, Mirvish Productions, and various independent productions. Monica was the Production Manager for the inaugural season of The Montreal Young Company. She has served on Boards and committees at various associations including the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, Canada Council for the Arts, and Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts.

Lori Martin is a Senior Cultural Affairs Officer at the City of Toronto. As an urban planner, Lori Martin has worked on the adaptive reuse of industrial heritage buildings for cultural purposes such as the Artscape Wychwood Barns, Evergreen Brick Works and the John Street Roundhouse. Lori was an expert witness at the Ontario Municipal Board hearing regarding the West Queen West neighbourhood. More recently, Lori was the Planner-in-Residence at the University of Waterloo. Her interests also...
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include collaborating with others who are committed to increasing creativity in the places where we live with the goal of developing new ways to stimulate regional prosperity by leveraging the connections between culture, economy and place.

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Lancefield Morgan, Toronto Community Housing
Lorraine Duff, United Way
Marlene McKintosh, Urban Arts

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE
Creative Spaces Outside the Core is a community-led, capacity-building and partnership development initiative designed to support the planning and development of community cultural hubs and other forms of arts infrastructure in areas outside of Toronto’s core. The initiative is led by Artscape and supported by an interagency partnership comprised of local art service organizations, community service agencies, affordable housing providers, the Toronto Arts Council, and the City of Toronto.