Roundtable #1:

Where Are We Now?
Understanding Cultural Infrastructure in Toronto

October 10, 2013 at the Rexdale Community Hub
OVERVIEW

The first roundtable of our series of three explored our current understanding of the distribution and typology of cultural infrastructure in Toronto in the context of the wider creative and cultural sector and the broader social, economic and land-use environment for cultural space development outside the core. In line with the overarching goals of the project, this roundtable sought to:

- Build a shared understanding and knowledge of the forms, locations, and users of cultural infrastructure across the city, at the neighbourhood level, and how Toronto’s growth and development will affect cultural infrastructure going forward.
- Start to identify planned and proposed creative space projects and opportunities for creative space projects outside the core.
- Explore the range of partners required to take creative space projects forward.
- To explore shared priorities for cultural space development in underserved neighbourhoods.

With the help of expert presentations by our panelist Sally Han (City of Toronto), Margo Charlton (Toronto Arts Council and Toronto Arts Foundation) Kevin Stolarick (Martin Prosperity Institute) and architect Joe Lobko (DTAH) the discussion tackled the following questions:

- What does cultural infrastructure look like in Toronto right now?
  - Where are Toronto’s cultural spaces?
  - What is the typology of these spaces?
  - Who owns and/or operates these spaces?
  - What wants and needs for cultural space outside the core have been identified through recent consultative processes?
- Where do creative people live and work in Toronto?
  - What do we know about places of residence and work of the cultural labour force and why does this matter?
  - Where are Toronto’s creative businesses and organizations located?
  - What do we know about the factors that attract creative people and organizations to locate in a neighbourhood?
- What is the broader context for cultural space development that we need to understand?
  - Demographic change, cultural diversity and the cultural space typology
  - Barriers to access and participation in cultural activities (cultural, economic, social)
  - The capacity of the cultural sector
- How do plans for the city’s growth, change and development impact opportunities and challenges for cultural space development?
  - How will new transit routes and hubs impact development and density in the city?
  - How will population growth impact development and density across the city?
  - How will real estate affordability shift demographic patterns across the city?
  - The real estate market and the challenge of developing sustainable cultural space...
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PANEL PRESENTATIONS
Sally Han, Senior Cultural Affairs Officer, City of Toronto

In the 2011 report, Creative Capital Gains: An Action Plan for Toronto, the City of Toronto identified its role in supplying "affordable, sustainable cultural space" for use by cultural industries, not-for-profit organizations and community groups.

The past decade has seen major public and private investment in larger cultural facilities (Four Seasons Centre, ROM, AGO, National Ballet School, TIFF Bell Lightbox, etc.), but the upgrade and/or development of facilities for small and mid-size organizations and community cultural groups is a critical next step to ensure a vibrant cultural community. In particular, there is a need to develop and enhance cultural spaces in neighborhoods throughout the city to ensure that all Torontonians have access to spaces to learn, play, practice, and engage with arts and culture of all forms.

To help guide future potential investment when opportunities arise, City of Toronto Cultural Services embarked on a ward-by-ward consultation, planning and mapping process to determine local priorities. Twenty ward consultations were conducted in 2012. The remaining 24 wards are being surveyed in 2013. The entire project will be completed by the end of October 2013.

The project is focussed on receiving input from users of cultural and creative spaces and has focussed on identifying less well known and “hidden” cultural spaces in Toronto’s neighbourhoods that are in regular use, including facilities such as schools and places of worship that are used for regular cultural programming.

In addition to ward-by-ward summaries of the findings from this study, the City of Toronto will use information from this study to update and enrich the cultural facilities database which was completed in 2001-2003 with ERA architects and data will eventually be available on the Wellbeing Index, and also to interested parties through open data.

The process has revealed that:

- Definitions of cultural space (and as a result definition of “culture”) encompass a wide range of activities and practices. The Study has sought to accommodate a broader typology of cultural space than earlier iterations.
- The spread and range of facility types and availability is quite similar across all wards.
- Creative spaces are spread relatively evenly throughout the city, with a concentration in the core.
- Facilities/spaces that are city owned or operated are spread throughout the city, as are those owned by others.
- Every ward has a community centre and a library.
- Many community centres have a lot of opportunity for simple investment to enhance or create cultural space.
Making Space for Culture also includes a component of explaining Section 37 of the Planning Act and other capital funding programs, as well as comparing Section 37 across jurisdictions.¹

View a pdf of Sally Han’s presentation [here](#).

Find more information about the *Making Space for Culture* project and read project updates [here](#).

Kevin Stolarick Research Director, Martin Prosperity Institute
In 2011, the Martin Prosperity Institute partnered with The City of Toronto, the Toronto Arts Council and partners including University of Waterloo, University of Toronto at Scarborough, OCAD University and E.R.A Architects Inc. on the report “*From the Ground Up: Growing Toronto’s Cultural Sector*”. The goal of the study was to develop different ways of mapping the city’s cultural and creative sector in order to build understanding of the powerful connections between culture, place and economy. The original impetus behind the study came from the experience the City had in the Queen West Triangle and South Riverdale with incoming development; there was a clear lack of a data driven argument for challenging inappropriate development in these areas.

*The Cultural Location Index (CLI)* was developed as one of the key mapping tools for this project. The CLI measures the relative concentrations of the cultural economy within a city by combining three components: The share of creative and cultural sector workers living in a census tract, working in a census tract, and the number of cultural facilities in the census tract. The CLI therefore combines both production (occupations/place of work/residence) and consumption (facilities) components of culture – of course sometimes these take place in the same location.

Once these cultural locations are identified, the impact of conditions, policies, and official plans can be evaluated to facilitate the growth of existing locations, establish new culturally fertile ground, and prevent losses to cultural jobs and to the creative and cultural ecology in the city.

Overall the Study reached a number of key conclusions:

1. “The cultural economy of Toronto is important, impactful, and growing.
2. Jobs and businesses in Toronto’s culture sector are both highly clustered and widely spread. Therefore while there is significant activity in and around the core, cultural workers live and work across the entire city.
3. Cultural geography is fractal – the pattern repeats itself. The cultural sector is both widespread and clustered whether looking across Canada, Ontario, the Greater Toronto Area, Toronto, a neighbourhood, a single building, or even an individual. As you “zoom in” you see the same pattern that was revealed as you “zoom out”.”

¹ Section 37 allows an exchange of height and density in a development for capital goods in that area for public use; it is a bylaw agreement that is entered into by the City and the Developer.
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The CLI is a helpful tool in understanding where culture is created and consumed and where concentrations of activity in the cultural economy are located in the City. However, it is important to bear in mind the limitations of the CLI:

1. Consistent access to data is required to keep the CLI current. Occupational data is based on 2006 Census data, and with the abolition of the long form we do not have access to comparable, reliable data.
2. The CLI is based on permanent cultural spaces. The value of temporary or multi-purpose cultural spaces (a park, street festival, Nuit Blanche, etc.) is not reflected in this model.

Find out more about the Cultural Location Index here.

Margo Charlton, Research Manager, Toronto Arts Foundation

The Toronto Arts Foundation has recently completed a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded study on how arts are created and enjoyed in neighbourhood settings. The Arts Impact Study is part of TAF’s Creative City: Block by Block Program designed to advocate for the arts and to support and foster collaboration between artists, community organizations and local residents.

The research objectives were to:

- democratize the arts by tapping the creativity and cultural expressions of diverse community members;
- defend the arts by supporting advocacy efforts, contributing to alliances to expand city funding; and
- create tools and gather data that can assist community-engaged arts organization strengthen and promote their work.

The Arts Impact Study focussed on in depth engagement in three Toronto neighbourhoods (Malvern, St. Jamestown, and Weston/Mount Dennis), and started with community meetings which posed the question “Where are the creative heartbeats in your community and do the arts matter to you?”

Key findings from the study include:

- Definitions of culture, cultural spaces and cultural occupations are diverse, rich and complex. Traditional terminology begins to break down, and there are a lot of mash-ups, blurs, and distinctions.
- In terms of mapping/measuring arts and cultural activity across the city, you can’t always see what’s there. For example: Who is an artist? Who considers themself an artist?
- Arts activity happens in many different kinds of spaces including storefronts, houses, faith-based buildings, social service agencies, libraries, etc.
- Arts and cultural activities include creative expressions that take place in daily life - for example tattooing, henna hand painting, and nail art.
Arts and creative activities are highly valued for their intrinsic qualities – for the personal pleasure and skills development opportunities they offer.

Young people, however, see creative activity as not just a past time, but an occupation and a way to make a living – the study found a great interest in youth arts and entrepreneurial activity.

There are many barriers to arts access. There is a push for youth arts activities, and space in neighbourhoods was important in the neighbourhoods’ visions.

There are social and economic factors shaping communities, terms like ‘at risk’, ‘priority’, or ‘underserved’ – and a resistance within these communities to being labeled.

View a pdf of Margo Charlton’s presentation here.
Learn more about the Arts Impact Study here.

Joe Lobko, Partner, DTAH

“Outside the Core” is a major focus right now in Toronto City Planning – “fixing the balance” of our city – and revitalizing communities is a key imperative. Toronto is growing by 17,000 people per year, but intensification is relatively limited and while there is significant residential densification in the downtown core and old municipal centres, this is not the case in the inner suburbs. The reality is that, like Canada as a whole, the City of Toronto is fundamentally a suburban city. While city planners and urbanists are getting away from the 20th century planning notion that uses should be separated, the city faces real challenges in creating sustainable neighbourhoods. “The suburbs are not sustainable - and the inner suburbs are the challenge of our times in Toronto.”

Joe’s presentation explored the multiple and layered challenges facing the inner suburbs through a variety of lenses, access to transit infrastructure and walkability, access to fresh food (food desserts), and access to services. It was noted that while Toronto has some of the worst commute times in North America, there are also huge amounts of employment lands outside of the downtown core which present tremendous opportunity for future development.

As people continue to explore the kinds of spaces that can be used for cultural activity, the definition becomes more and more broad. Organizations are looking for new and innovative ways to solve their space challenges. For example, DTAH is working with a local theatre group, Crow’s Theatre, to create a space east of the Don River as part of a Section 37 development in the base of a condominium tower. Another example is Tafelmusik, which has created a long-term relationship with a church that has attracted renovation dollars to the space. Public Health has also been doing important work, such as walkability maps and a wellbeing index by neighbourhood.

This type of thinking is including increasingly diverse organizations and unusual partnerships. For example, the Rexdale Community Hub is in a school building that has been converted to serve as a diverse community resource. One of the crucial aspects of these projects is a diversity of activity. Food is another kind of catalyst. The Black Creek Community Farm, The Stop, Artscape Wychwood Barns, and Evergreen Brick Works are all examples of this.
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Public spaces outside the core also demand our attention. There is an increasing emphasis on making “complete streets” and turning bad streets into great public spaces.

For any of these projects, the vision must be locally based and strong leadership is necessary. Projects must have many partnerships and be founded on a strong business plan.

View a pdf of Joe Lobko’s presentation here.

ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION
A number of recurring themes from the presentations resonated with the group and informed the discussion, as follows:

- The complex and evolving definition of culture and cultural activity and the typology of creative and cultural space which embraces both traditional arts and cultural facilities, multi-purpose-multi-sector facilities, places of worship, public space, “third” spaces and retail and other spaces.
- The concept of the cultural economy as “fractal”: that there is cultural activity everywhere but it is always concentrated.
- The layered challenges faced in many inner-suburban communities which include access to transit, walkability, poverty, access to fresh food and access to services.

Clustering and Critical Mass
- The clustering of creative people, organizations and business and cultural activity in downtown areas, drawn to density, diversity and particular types of built form, is an internationally recognised phenomenon. Indeed, many towns and cities across the globe have invested heavily in securing, attracting, anchoring and sustaining creative and cultural industry clusters and cultural districts in their cities as a key revitalization strategy.
- Clustering creative people and organizations together within creative spaces is Artscape’s approach to leveraging the power of the arts to contribute to community revitalization. Clustering creative people and organizations creates economies of scale and a critical mass of activity. It provides a platform for collaboration between individual artists and arts organizations and between them and the wider community, and once operational there are many unexpected opportunities and benefits, although it is true to say that this kind of approach may not be suitable for all artists/organizations.
- Creative space strategies in areas outside the core focused on this approach to clustering and critical mass might be the most effective approach to leveraging the arts to achieve wider community revitalization.
- Given the challenges presented by the built form (lack of density) and the fact that fewer creative and cultural professionals live and work in the inner suburbs than in some parts of the
downtown, the development of live/work space may be key to supporting this clustering effect and in creating a magnet for other cultural activity.

- North York Arts has used the clustering model since inception, and it has been very beneficial for them. Their permanent home will be at the Toronto Centre for the Arts, and they are working on developing that partnership, and on bringing the community into that space to animate it.

**Diversity**

- The magic of cities comes when artists mix with other types of people. It is often the diversity of individuals and organizations, uses, users and participants that creates the dynamism and draw to projects like the Evergreen Brickworks and Artscape Wychwood Barns.
- Clustering strategies outside the core should embrace arts and cultural and non-arts and cultural uses and users. When you connect these activities with food security for example, or the delivery of local services, exciting things can happen.
- Cultural spaces need to be built from the ground up and reflect the aspirations, unique character and identity of the community. Getting the space is one layer, but getting the pulse of the community is another layer. “Reimagining art” and understanding the diverse definitions of culture and cultural space is something Manifesto is deeply entrenched in.

**Silo-Busting and Partnership Activation**

- In some ward consultations for *Making Space for Culture*, nobody came. Some individuals mentioned that it was a two-bus trip to reach a grocery store. We cannot address cultural space unless some of these other issues are addressed first. Culture isn’t always people’s biggest priority. Poverty is an overarching challenge in some neighbourhoods.
- Three major issues in neighbourhoods outside the core are transportation, access, and one stop shopping for services. In light of the fractal nature of cultural activity and the benefits of clustering and diversity to cultural activity, it makes sense to think about the model for cultural spaces outside the core as one that engages and combines with other sectors.
- The arts and cultural activity can also contribute to a whole range of other public policy objectives, economic development and youth entrepreneurship/employment; the development of individual and community confidence; enhanced civic engagement; contributions to public health and mental health strategies, etc. We need to think more creatively and holistically about how the arts, culture and creative activity can provide an overlay in non-arts spaces and contribute to other public policy agendas.
- One of the major challenges is the “silo-ing” of different sectors. This needs to be overcome if the opportunities for cross-sector partnership and collaboration around the development of creative spaces outside the core, which can genuinely serve a community’s interest while driving a wider agenda for transformation, are to be activated.
- The commercial sector, commercial landlords, Business Improvement Areas, etc., also need to become more engaged in the conversation.
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- There are many current spaces that are looking to be hubs. For example, the City is looking for a different model for the Zion Cultural Centre. The City wants to use it for cultural purposes but have lost staff to do the programming. Zion has had great success bringing in residencies and is looking for a tenant or partner. How do people/organizations that have spaces, communities who have aspirations, individuals and organizations in search of space get together or find others interested in the same thing?

Cultural Planning and Planning with a Cultural Lens

- Culture is not isolated from the complex challenges faced by many communities outside the core. Silo-busting and partnership activation needs to be supported by a public policy perspective that understands the shared values and shared benefits that cross-sector collaboration can offer.
- Is it possible to develop criteria for what might make a good place for the development of community cultural hubs and other infrastructure with diverse benefits/services? This might include accessibility, transportation, local population base, transit investment, older buildings with lots of spaces, etc.
- Mapping these kinds of components alongside the Cultural Location Index would help agencies, not for profits and communities understand there is huge opportunity, which in turn might help stimulate and focus investment across the city and in different neighbourhoods.
- There has been a significant investment across the province in cultural asset mapping in recent years. This approach is not just about mapping culture, but planning through a cultural lens - a more integrated, holistic approach to planning. This approach could yield powerful results in neighbourhoods outside the core.

Communications

- Culture is everywhere – it’s so hard to map. It would probably look like a “weather map”, with spaces like lightning rods. Having space is important, but the other challenge is marketing and awareness. There is a potential for raising awareness about what already exists.
- It’s important to keep “the virtual world of Toronto” in mind. Social media can be very useful in connecting people from across the city and engaging people through the arts. The challenge is often lack of awareness of opportunity, not lack of opportunity itself.
- The increasing investment in arts activity from the City will begin to be felt. The inner suburbs are a major focus and this will start to have an impact.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Two key recommendations emerged from the conversation and these will be explored further by the group throughout the course of the Creative Spaces Outside the Core initiative.

- **Challenge:** How do we activate cross-sector partnerships and collaboration, and bust out of the sector siloes we so often find ourselves in? What are the mechanisms for making these connections?
  - **Recommendation:** Explore the development of an online creative space directory and brokerage service to connect spaces, partners, projects, communities and programmers. Similar online services exist in Melbourne (AUS), Chicago, and Seattle for example. Is there a “made in Toronto” version that would specifically have the capacity to facilitate complex cross-sector opportunities and help connect people, places and ideas?

- **Challenge:** How do we develop a more holistic and cross-sector approach to public policy and to planning and developing cultural and other infrastructure in neighbourhoods outside the core?
  - **Recommendation:** Invest in a mapping exercise, perhaps focused initially on a small number of neighbourhoods, which layers cultural data with diverse other layers of information to help identify the kinds of locations and partnerships best able to activate community cultural hubs and other infrastructure and to focus activity, attention and build community confidence.

PANELIST BIOS

**Sally Han** is a Senior Cultural Affairs Officer at the City of Toronto. She is currently the project lead on Making Space for Culture and was the project lead on the 2011 Creative Capital Gains report. Prior to joining the City, Sally served 7 years with the Department of Canadian Heritage including managing the program delivery of the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund across Ontario. She has also served as a Theatre Officer for the Canada Council for the Arts. Prior to public service, Sally spent two decades working in professional theatre, radio, and television as a producer and director. She has volunteered on numerous boards including Volcano, Cahoots Theatre Projects, Nightwood Theatre, Canadian Actors' Equity Association, and as a committee member United Way of Toronto. She is a graduate of the University of Toronto.

**Kevin Stolarick** is the Research Director at The Martin Prosperity Institute at the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto and the Inaugural Walton Distinguished Visiting Fellow in Sustainability at the School of Sustainability, Arizona State University. He combines a depth of knowledge with an appreciation of the importance of finding and sharing the knowledge gained from his comprehensive understanding of the Creative Class and the Creative Economy. He has held faculty positions at Carnegie Mellon University and for over a decade has worked with technology in the insurance industry as a manager of strategic projects. He holds a PhD in Business Administration and an MBA from the Tepper School of Management, Carnegie Mellon University and a BS in Honors in Applied
Computer Science from Illinois State University. His research interests include the relationship between firm performance and information technology and the impacts of technology, tolerance, talent, and quality of place on regional growth and prosperity. Kevin provided quantitative research and analytical support for several of Richard Florida’s books including The Rise of the Creative Class and Rise Revisited (the 10th Anniversary Edition). This research includes primary development of measures, indicators, and benchmarking approaches with significant impact on the growth and development of the Creative Class and Creative Economy theory.

Margo Charlton has worked in professional and community-engaged arts in Canada for nearly 30 years as a theatre director, producer, community facilitator and consultant. Her extensive experience and understanding of the arts has been gained through hands-on work at a community level – in urban, rural and northern communities. She has an interest in community-based research methodology and art-based evaluation and was the principal investigator for a SSHRC-funded study of the transformative effects of the arts in three Toronto neighbourhoods. She is currently the Research Manager at the Toronto Arts Foundation and the Grants Officer at the Toronto Arts Council. She has served on advisory committees for ArtReach Toronto, the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts, Neighbourhood Arts Network, and the City of Toronto’s Community Arts Action Plan.

Joe Lobko, OAA/FRAIC/LEED AP BD+C has over 30 years of experience as an architect and urban designer with a broad range of experience on public and private developments, and particular emphasis on urban design, adaptive reuse and the non-profit sector. In 2006, he joined DTAH as a partner with the merger of his practice Joe Lobko Architect, and in the same year he received an urban leadership award from the Canadian Urban Institute and became a fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. In 2012 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Sustainable Buildings Canada. Volunteer efforts include serving on the Board of Directors for ArtsBuild Ontario, past chair of the Toronto Society of Architects, and as a current member of the City of Toronto Design Review Panel.
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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.