Roundtable #2

Developing Creative Spaces in Underserved Neighbourhoods: Understanding Community, Geography, Need and Opportunity

October 24, 2013 at UrbanArts

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW ........................................................................................................................... 2

PANEL PRESENTATIONS .................................................................................................... 3

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION .............................................................................................. 6

Definitions and Criteria for Targeting Investment .............................................................. 6

“Outside the Core” ........................................................................................................... 6

Underserved Neighbourhoods ........................................................................................... 7

Multiple Cores and Multiple Downtowns ........................................................................... 8

Leveraging Public Assets ................................................................................................... 8

Leadership and Capacity ................................................................................................ 9

Mapping and Planning with a Cultural Lens ...................................................................... 9

Connecting people, projects, partners and ideas ............................................................. 9

RECOMMENDATIONS ....................................................................................................... 10

PANELIST BIOS ............................................................................................................... 11

PARTICIPANTS ................................................................................................................ 12

STEERING COMMITTEE ................................................................................................. 13

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE ................................................................................................. 13
OVERVIEW

The second roundtable of our series of three explored what we mean by “underserved communities” in the context of cultural infrastructure and “outside the core” as well as our evolving understanding of “priority neighbourhoods”. The roundtable examined how partnerships, public policy, assets and resources might be leveraged to facilitate creative space development in these neighbourhoods.

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

- Work towards a shared definition of “underserved communities” and “outside the core” with respect to cultural infrastructure.
- Build a shared knowledge and understanding of the community and geographical contexts of underserved communities, and relate these contexts to opportunities and challenges for the development of community cultural spaces in underserved neighbourhoods.
- Identify the range of public, private and community sector partners whose policy, investment, assets and resources can support creative space projects in these local contexts.
- Continue to map planned and proposed creative space projects and opportunities for creative space projects outside the core.
- Identify research and advocacy tools that could support the case for developing cultural infrastructure to support well-being targets.
- To explore shared priorities for cultural space development in underserved neighbourhoods.

With the help of our panelists Sarah Rix (City of Toronto), Lorraine Duff (United Way) and Dwayne Dixon (Manifesto) the roundtable tackled the following questions:

- **What do we mean by underserved neighbourhoods?**
  → How are United Way and the City of Toronto’s narrative, planning and policy evolving with respect to “priority neighbourhoods”?
  → What other areas of the city have fallen behind in terms of cultural infrastructure?
  → For the purposes of prioritizing future investment in cultural infrastructure, what definition of “underserved neighbourhood” and “outside the core” should be advanced?

- **How does culture contribute to community well-being?**
  → What research supports the case for the contribution of cultural infrastructure to social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability?
  → What further research and/or advocacy tools would advance the public benefits case for investment in cultural infrastructure in underserved neighbourhoods?
  → What are the benefits and challenges of target setting for the development of cultural spaces in underserved areas and what research and policy development are required to further explore this?
+++ Creative Spaces
OUTSIDE THE CORE

→ How can the cultural sector engage more effectively in the development of social and economic development indicators (Urban Heart? Neighbourhood Lens? Well-Being Index?) in the city.

• How do we leverage publically owned sites, revitalization and other development and community partnerships to develop cultural spaces in underserved neighbourhoods?
  → How can we build successful partnerships with community partners, including community hubs, public libraries, places of worship, schools and post-secondary institutions to develop sustainable cultural infrastructure in underserved neighbourhoods?
  → What potential opportunities do public sector land-holdings offer and what partnerships might be possible?
  → What lessons have we learned from the Regent Park revitalization project and how will plans for cultural space be built into future large-scale revitalization projects?
  → How will private sector development impact underserved neighbourhoods over the next 10 years, and how will this impact existing and new cultural space?

• Tim Jones framed the conversation by reminding the group that there is significant new investment flowing into the arts and cultural sector from the City of Toronto as a result of the Billboard Tax. Advocating for investment in cultural facilities outside the core should be seen as a priority. This is a strategic moment and it is important to develop a strong consensus and feed this back to the City to inform priority setting and criteria for investment by the Culture Build program.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Sarah Rix, Policy Development Officer, City of Toronto Social Development, Finance & Administration

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 (TSNS2020) is not a new strategy; it builds on learnings from the wide range of place-based initiatives that the City has undertaken since 2004. The 2005 Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force (SNTF) focused on inner suburban neighbourhoods and poverty. While the city had already launched a Community Safety Plan targeting 4 neighbourhoods, SNTF recommended 9 more and these came together to form the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. The strategy identified 13 priority neighbourhoods, and the City worked with a wide range of partners to help build services and facilities, with both hard and soft service infrastructure. Outputs included 1200 initiatives to build infrastructure and 50,000 youth reached through programs.
TSNS 2020 introduces a number of new elements to the City’s place-based work, including establishing new designation criteria and addressing terminology to avoid stigmatizing neighbourhoods. You can access the City of Toronto Staff report on TSNS2020 here.

- The city will select 12 neighbourhoods for targeted investment in Spring 2014, and these areas will be known as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). There will be a transition plan for any existing NIAs (Priority Neighbourhoods) that are not included in the recommended set.
- Urban HEART @Toronto is a research initiative with United Way Toronto and other partners, which adapts a World Health Organization tool for identifying inequities to Toronto. The results of this research, along with community consultations taking place in the Fall of 2013, will be used to identify NIAs.
- Urban HEART uses a simplified framework - 5 keys looking at equity and inequity which the City is consulting on:
  - Economic opportunities
  - Social development
  - Participation in decision making
  - Healthy lives (actual lives, access to medical services, etc.)
  - Physical surroundings (green space, etc.)
- This strategy is looking at inequity in a broad range of areas across neighbourhoods, some of which may be inside the core, and is less service and facility focused than before.
- The city is also working on a Neighbourhood Lens, modeled on an equity lens approach. Right now the City doesn’t have a place-based lens, and this will help policy planners focus on the physical nature of neighbourhoods, for example walking distance and urban design. The neighbourhood lens could provide a really helpful tool to enable the sector to talk to funders about infrastructure investment.

To review Sarah’s presentation please click here.

Lorraine Duff, Director, Programs, United Way Toronto

How do we put infrastructure in communities, how do funders support this, and what tools do we have for planners, policy makers, and everyone? United Way of Toronto has three components in their Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy:

- Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC); resident engagement work in 13 priority neighbourhoods
- Tower Neighbourhood Renewal (TNR); vertical poverty, tower neighbourhoods, a lot of newcomers, lower income and they are falling apart, United Way is completing 4 pilot projects to reclaim “space within the space”
- Community Hubs; of which 7 of the planned 8 are now open.
The development of Community Hubs has been a key component of UWT’s strategy. The development of Community Hubs was identified as a priority through the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy to address neighbourhoods with high rates of poverty, a physical landscape and transit access that creates isolation and creates barriers to access to services, lack of places for the community to gather and where services and facilities had not kept up with population growth.

Each Community Hub has a lead or coordinating agency with other anchor organizations. Five hubs are in partnerships with community health organizations. Each hub also has some space for resident use, at no charge. Plans for itinerant partners haven’t been as successful. UWT contributes:

- Community Fund - $153,000 in ongoing operating to hubs, hubs not seeing it as enough
- Major Funds - $1M capital funding to hubs to get them going, $2.4 to Rexdale
- Capacity Support - Co-locating, community hub day, lead agency group, consultant support, small reserves fund

There are many lessons to be learned from the UWT experience of developing 7 (soon to be 8) community hubs in a very short period of time:

- Partnerships are key and resident leadership is essential
- The development process is complex, time consuming and expensive
- Rushing to operations without planning sufficiently for the impacts of co-location and the requirements for collaboration; how to keep it sustainable?
- Renovation isn’t necessarily a cheaper option
- Only 2 of the 7 spaces are based in publically owned spaces, the rest are in private facilities. Access to facilities held in the public sector (i.e. surplus schools) and how the public sector divests itself of community space is a policy question that needs attention.
- You have to have a strong vision
- Are we really there for colocation, partnership, collaboration? Some agencies are just there for space, and some buy into the process. But the idea of shared space - we need to re-think this a lot more, it is an amazing community engagement tool.

Building stronger links with the arts and cultural sector will be an important feature of the hubs going forward:

- The hubs have been focused on community social services, but UWT would like to get some spaces that can be used by artists, this is a piece in our last hub that we want to focus more on
- We must consider performance space and look at how this will be included
- Community hubs are closed Friday evenings and Saturdays, it would be good if we can think about having them open during those times
- We need to be broader in our thinking about culture and work with some of the partners around the table – food for example.

To review Lorraine’s presentation please click here.
Dwayne Dixon, Executive Director, Manifesto Community Projects and Founder, Follow Your Instinct

Dwayne asked the group to remember that while metrics and data are important in growing our understanding of needs and gaps in Toronto’s neighbourhoods, they are only part of the story. Dwayne used the narrative of his own personal journey to emphasize the lived experience of first generation Canadians in Toronto, the psychological geography of life in the inner suburbs and the “4 corners”, the experience of discrimination and the importance of communication and effective and meaningful community engagement.

Dwayne emphasized three key factors to consider: the need to build trust between the establishment/institutions and the community; the need to use language that doesn’t stigmatize or denigrate neighbourhoods or communities (“priority neighbourhoods”, ‘at-risk-youth’) “I can’t imagine what the kids think these days, seeing these words come at them and speaking of them it is condescending, that may not be the intent but it is the interpretation...” and the importance and complexity/duality of the cultures and cultural experiences of Toronto’s diverse communities.

Dwayne encouraged the group to:
- Continue to look beyond the numbers and to look at community, reaching outside the core and engaging the community
- Pay attention to the little details and the subtlety of our language
- Recognize the power that small groups or actions can ultimately have – Manifesto started during the summer of the “gun” with just 7 people around a kitchen table
- Value the role that individual community leaders play and the importance of building community capacity, confidence and self-esteem.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Definitions and Criteria for Targeting Investment
Participants used red and yellow dots to identify their understanding of underserved neighbourhoods from a cultural infrastructure perspective and where “outside the core” starts on a large map of Toronto. The exercise was used as a starting point for a discussion that focused first on the question of definitions and the implications for priorities and criteria for investment in cultural infrastructure. You can access images of the mapping exercise here.

“Outside the Core”
- Definitions of “outside the core” ranged significantly from areas in the downtown only 2.5km from the Central Business District to midtown; but with a greater number of participants identifying the inner and outer suburbs.
• Although it is challenging to consider these two definitions as separate it is important to have a definition of “outside the core” because of the concentration of the arts community in the downtown. We can be explicit, and it is important that we have a definition; otherwise we may be unhappy with the results of funding.
• Separating out the definition of what is outside the core, and what is underserved is helpful and politically important. The mapping exercise also shows us that “outside the core” does not mean the same thing to everyone. Some people see this as an inner suburbs conversation, some focus on the needs of the pre-amalgamation cities of Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough. Equally there are neighbourhoods in the core that are identified as being underserved from a cultural infrastructure perspective. So the distinction may result in a range of weighted criteria to help guide funding and investment.
• When addressing council, divisions with respect to the pre-amalgamation cities, are huge. Exacerbating this can be counterproductive, even within the former municipalities. We should beware of pitting downtown against the outside of downtown, though there may be other reasons to not focus on the downtown.

Underserved Neighbourhoods
• Among areas outside the core identified as being underserved in terms of cultural infrastructure were: North of the 401 (‘Top of Toronto’), Leslie/Sheppard, Don Mills/Sheppard, Keel and Wilson, Dorset Park, South Etobicoke’s Stonygate community, and the north & west of the City including Weston and Mount Dennis, Lawrence Heights, and Rexdale.
• In the downtown, areas identified as underserved in terms of cultural infrastructure included St. Jamestown (a tower community), the east end where there is no large cultural facility, and the Junction in the West End.
• In mapping both cultural facility projects in development and in this exercise, the north west of the city outside the core appears to be more dynamic – to have more opportunities but also to be identified as being underserved. This may be weighted based on who is attending these meetings but it may also reflect something to do with the built form of the West End, with older building stock, existing high streets, forms etc. Habitat for Humanity noted that they’ve experienced a large demand for property in the west end. Thinking back to amalgamation, York and East York were two of the poorest boroughs of the old city, and investment takes a long time. Perceptions of community need in response to particular events (i.e. gun violence) may also shape our thinking about where resources are most needed.
• Cultural Space is being carved out in apartment neighbourhoods. Art Starts works in Villaways, Glendower, as well as Birchmount and Finch, in the ground floor of Toronto Community Housing apartment buildings.
• In other examples great spaces do exist but may be underused and in need of sustainable funding for programs, i.e. Oakwood Village Library and Cultural Centre.
• While there is a cluster in Etobicoke, there remain challenges with accessibility, walkability is
eighbourhood driven and by a block radius; how do we create satellite spaces to service the
whole community?
• TRCA thinks on a watershed basis; their goal is to try to get people to look at these spaces in a
cultural context and is looking to better engage with community spaces, a lot of priority
communities tend to be defined by the watersheds and this is an asset they can draw on.
• A range of possible criteria to inform priority setting emerged from the conversation. In addition
to considering geographic considerations, and lack of cultural infrastructure, these should
include questions of community capacity, leadership and volunteer engagement.
• Are the arts and cultural sector doing well at advocating for community impacts? We have not
done a good job in advocating for the positive impacts of the arts across a whole range of
indicators (community well-being, health and mental health, community and individual
confidence, education and personal skills development, economic and environmental impacts
etc.). This is challenging when we are arguing for investment. How can we improve our
advocacy in this area? What additional research and/or tools are required?

Multiple Cores and Multiple Downtowns
• There are concentrations of cultural infrastructure and creative and cultural people across the
city. Density, built form, new development, and access to existing or new transit are also
important factors to consider in understanding existing patterns and future opportunities.
• Exploring the development of a ‘cores plan’, building cores that can have an impact in the areas
around them may be an effective strategy to focus investment and leverage these
concentrations.
• The idea of multiple “downtowns” or the old “city centres” supports this approach.
• For example, Young/Shepard area is a “downtown core” within the larger footprint of North
York, and there is a huge amount of cultural infrastructure there – North York Arts mapped 170
cultural facilities in the neighbourhood.

Leveraging Public Assets
• How can we leverage publically held assets and retain community serving cultural uses in former
community facilities (former schools, churches, government facilities etc.)? There are real
opportunities as well as challenges.
• Several of Artscape’s projects are leased on a nominal long term lease from the city for example,
including Artscape Wychwood Barns. The City of Toronto was also supportive of UWT’s
community hub program.
• Surplus schools appear to offer a real opportunity for re-use as cultural facilities. They have a
place in communities, are held in affection by those communities, and form part of the cultural
traditions and identity of neighbourhoods.
• The question of how public bodies divest themselves of properties so that they can be retained
for community use is a provincial policy issue that needs to be taken on.
+++ Creative Spaces
OUTSIDE THE CORE

- Existing schools also offer a significant opportunity for public access and use. Schools are at the heart of our communities and spaces in schools with under-enrolment, auditoriums, gyms all offer potential community cultural space. The Toronto Space Coalition is working to advocate for better community access to school spaces.

Leadership and Capacity
- Community leadership and capacity play a huge role in supporting the development and operation of cultural facilities. Places like UrbanArts’ new facility which we toured today, grow from the capacity and engagement of the community.
- It is not a question of simply trying to replicate a model (like UrbanArts for example), but of connecting community leadership and capacity, community needs, aspirations, assets and resources.
- Operationalizing community capacity and local leadership, creating that kind of sustainable “scaffolding” in a neighbourhood should be a key part of the strategy.
- To build the critical mass of artists and cultural workers it takes to support a creative space also requires capacity building support.

Mapping and Planning with a Cultural Lens
- Mapping cultural infrastructure is a key tool in moving forward with this conversation, for building our understanding of the context and to help partners think about how to prioritize investment.
- In addition to the layers we have already created it would be interesting to add a layer of the “city centres” as an organizing geography.
- In addition to mapping geographic layers it would be interesting to add the mapping of our perceptions of what is there and where the gaps are.

Connecting people, projects, partners and ideas
- The development of an online database/brokerage to connect existing and underutilized spaces with programmers and tenants and to connect partners interested in developing new projects was again explored. The ‘AirBNB’ model may be one way to think about taking this forward. As discussed at the previous Roundtable there are many international examples of the development this kind of tool.
- Downtown based professional arts and cultural organizations are looking for meaningful partnerships and engagement to connect with communities and facilities that are outside the core. This process needs to embrace those organizations and join them to the discussion.
- We also need to understand the importance and think about the sustainability of the enabling environment that supports cultural infrastructure, e.g. Jumblies and Mabelle Arts, Art Starts and many others.
In line with the extensive discussion that took place in Roundtable #1, the group as a whole reflected on the diversity and complexity of definitions of culture, cultural activity and cultural space and of artist or cultural worker. These may vary from neighborhood to neighborhood and community to community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Five key recommendations emerged from the conversation and these will be explored further by the group 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 do we prioritize investment in creative space development in Toronto in areas outside the core and in areas underserved from a cultural infrastructure perspective?
  - **Recommendation:** Advocating for investment in cultural facilities outside the core and in neighbourhoods underserved with cultural facilities should be seen as a priority and the community should be seen to be speaking with one voice. In addition to geographic considerations, criteria should also address community capacity, leadership and volunteer engagement. The development of a “cores strategy” which seeks to focus investment in areas of existing concentration of activity/opportunity, in multiple “downtowns” was strongly supported.

- **Challenge:** How can we access and leverage publically held assets and re-use them for cultural purposes?
  - **Recommendation:** 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?).

- **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?
  - **Recommendation:** 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.

- **Challenge:** How do we activate cross-sector partnership and collaborate 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. AirBNB is a successful crowd sourced model in a different sector. Is there a made in Toronto version that would specifically have the capacity to facilitate the complex cross sector opportunities and help connect people, places and ideas?
++ Creative Spaces
OUTSIDE THE CORE

- **Challenge:** How 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 focussed 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. The “city centres” may provide one organizing geography in relation to the concept of a “cores strategy”.

**PANELIST BIOS**

**Lorraine Duff** has been the Director, Programs, United Way Toronto since 2004, with responsibility for the Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, which includes development of community hubs (i.e. multiservice centres), resident engagement activities through Action for Neighbourhood Change and Tower Neighbourhood Renewal; as well as implementing a number of grant programs. She worked at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care coordinating allocations to community health centres across Ontario and managing a province-wide asthma prevention, management and education initiative. Lorraine was Executive Director of the Rexdale Community Health Centre, and has held other positions related to social service delivery, community development and funding.

**Sarah Rix** is a Policy Development Officer with the City of Toronto's Social Policy, Analysis and Research Section. She is currently managing the update of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, which will identify neighbourhoods for targeted investments to reduce inequities. Her other projects focus on quality jobs and living wages, and on the City’s planning for community infrastructure. Prior to this, she worked in community funding programs at both the City and United Way Toronto.

**Dwayne Dixon** conceptualized his company, Follow Your Instinct, 10 years ago. He wanted to create an organization that was exclusively dedicated to nurturing and celebrating Canadian talent in urban music in particular. Also an emcee, Dixon knows the realities for Canadian urban musicians, and uses his experience, insight, as well as business acumen, to support his peers and lessen the struggle for emerging artists. With the emergence of the FYI Showcase, FYI Kids and the establishment of FYI – Follow Your Instinct Arts Organization in 2010 made this vision a reality. Dwayne has over 9 years’ experience at one of North America’s leading Financial Companies, former VP of the Urban Music Association of Canada (UMAC), and current Co-Chair of one of Toronto's newest Local Arts Service Organization (LASO), North York Arts (NYA). Dwayne is passionate about keeping the interests of the artists in mind, and ensuring that the appropriate steps are taken to strengthen the music/artist infrastructure in Canada. A graduate of Trebas Institute’s Music Production Program, Dwayne consistently and expertly advocates on behalf of the music community and strives to create an environment of development and growth for those who are passionate about seeing this demographic
grow and excel. To date, Dwayne has run, produced or collaborated on projects with The Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Toronto District School Board, CN Tower, NXNE, CMW, Toronto Public Libraries, amongst many others. Now, as the Executive Director of Manifesto Community Projects, he continues to strengthen the collective voice of artists in Toronto.

PARTICIPANTS

Adrianna Beemans, Metcalf Foundation  
Barb Besner, Artscape  
Jean-Marie Boutot, Learning Enrichment Foundation  
Margo Charlton, Toronto Arts Council and Toronto Arts Foundation  
Anette Chawla, North York Harvest Food Bank  
Dwayne Dixon, Manifesto  
Lorraine Duff, United Way Toronto  
Darryl Gray, Toronto Region Conservation Authority  
Lesley Johnston, SPACE Coalition and Social Planning Toronto  
Tim Jones, Artscape  
Lila Karim, North York Arts  
Natasha Laing, City of Toronto  
Micah Lenahan, Junction Flea  
Mira Mandel, Councillor Frances Nunziata, Ward 11 York South-Weston  
Geoffrey McGrath, Habitat for Humanity  
Marlene McKintosh, Urban Arts  
Lancfield Morgan, Toronto Community Housing  
Susan Nagy, Lakeshore Arts  
Nadira Pattison, City of Toronto  
Francesco Petrisano, Artscape (note taker)  
Ewa Piatkowski, Toronto Public Library  
Sarah Rix, City of Toronto  
Pru Robey, Artscape  
Melissa Routley, Artscape (note taker)  
Cindy Rozeboom, East End Arts  
Keith Sweeney, Falstaff Community Centre  
Tim Whalley, Scarborough Arts  
Susan Wright, Toronto Arts Foundation
+++ Creative Spaces
OUTSIDE THE CORE

STEERING COMMITTEE
Pru Robey, Artscape
Tim Jones, Artscape
Louise Garfield, Arts Etobicoke
Nadira Pattison, City of Toronto Art Services
Geoffrey McGrath, Habitat for Humanity
Lila Karim, North York Arts
Tim Whaley, Scarborough Arts
Claire Hopkinson, Toronto Arts Council
Margo Charlton, Toronto Arts Foundation
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.