



Planning and Housing Committee
West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

RE: City-wide Heritage Survey Feasibility Study

Dear Planning and Housing Committee Members,

The City-wide Heritage Survey Feasibility Study includes a number of exciting recommendations. We are particularly pleased that diversity and social equity will be fundamental principles of the Survey. We are also enthusiastic about the opportunity to better understand and articulate sites of cultural and associative heritage value through this survey, as these sites have typically been paid less attention than sites valued for their built form. Finally, we are supportive of the Survey's focus on Toronto's suburbs, as these have been under-studied compared to those in the downtown core. The Survey process has the potential to engage residents across Toronto to articulate sites that are of value to them, whether that value is rooted in built heritage or a result of their contributions to community life. It also offers an opportunity to strengthen inter-cultural community-building and governance in Toronto neighbourhoods. With strong support from Council, we believe the Survey has the potential to enrich our city-wide understanding of heritage itself, bringing underrepresented perspectives into both the heritage and planning sectors.

One section of the Staff Report on the Survey's feasibility focuses on public engagement, which will be vital to the success of the initiative. Given the exciting opportunities that the Survey represents, the Toronto Ward Museum recommends that an equity-based public engagement approach be articulated early in the process, and be shared widely as part of public communications about the survey. Our experience running the Toronto Ward Museum's multi-year Block by Block program, a program that preserves and animates cultural heritage, has underscored the current disconnect between the heritage sector and many equity-seeking groups, particularly immigrant communities and young racialized residents who live and work outside of the downtown core. Put frankly, the residents we engage in this program do not typically see heritage initiatives as for them, nor as something they can meaningfully contribute

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to. Our program model for Block by Block works to redress this marginalization in a number of ways. In Block by Block, we:

- Hire racialized and newcomer residents to conduct research with and for other residents in their neighbourhoods, drawing on their own social and cultural networks
- Support the work of neighbourhood research teams through multi-sector partnerships, particularly with agencies that serve Indigenous residents and new immigrants and refugees
- Seek leadership and support from our partner agencies when designing consultations, exhibitions and events, to ensure we meet community needs
- Learn from residents about the associative and cultural values of local sites through story-sharing, intergenerational exchange and cultural and arts-based methods

The Block by Block model has been extremely successful. Our approach to preservation of cultural heritage has been recognized both provincially and federally and has received over \$800,000 in funding to date. In 2017, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ontario 150 fund supported us to work nationally with over 5,000 people, preserving oral histories in historic immigrant neighbourhoods in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto. Now, with support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation we are working intensively for three years in four Toronto areas; Agincourt, Victoria Park, Regent Park and Parkdale, learning about sites of cultural value from residents who are not typically engaged in heritage or planning initiatives.

We welcome the commitment to diversity and social equity in the City-wide Heritage Survey report. With an equity-based approach to public engagement this Survey will both strengthen Toronto communities and enrich our collective understanding of Toronto's heritage.

Sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is for Maggie Hutcheson and the second is for Susan Jama.

Maggie Hutcheson, PhD, Block by Block Program Director
Susan Jama, MMSt, Block by Block Assistant Curator

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