



To whom it may concern:

Black Urbanism TO (BUTO) is a non-profit organization founded to advance the economic, social, and cultural interests of Black communities with respect to the neighbourhoods we call home. BUTO's primary efforts have centered around engaging Black residents and business owners in Little Jamaica along Eglinton Ave West. A recurring theme is the need for broader integrated community support such as culturally relevant youth programs and spaces.

Councillor Matlow's recently passed motion **MM 24.36 Supporting Black-Owned and Operated Businesses and Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Eglinton Avenue West's "Little Jamaica"**, serves as a catalyst for economic and social renewal along Eglinton West and for the surrounding neighbourhoods, including Oakwood-Vaughan. We trust that the proposed multi-year pilot for youth community spaces will be complementary to this work.

Last year, BUTO collaborated with CP Planning, an independent urban planning firm, to create the Black Futures on Eglinton (BFOE) Initiative. This project was meant to support local Black youth in leading the narrative on the cultural and artistic legacy of Little Jamaica to increase awareness of issues affecting participation in society, build capacity to address discrimination, and improve the sense of belonging and pride in themselves.

As part of a creative writing workshop, youth were asked to explore the impact of Black culture on the community, the City of Toronto and beyond, the lived experience of being Black in and around Eglinton and their aspired future lifestyle for Black youth in the neighbourhood.

Through this exercise we learned that engaging young people in the community development process and creating a space for their insights to be recognized, is an extremely important component to the future of this neighbourhood and to a healthy society.

With access to more youth spaces in the Oakwood-Vaughan community, we can expand these programs and allow young people to grow and shape their communities/neighbourhoods. We give our support for the proposed multi-year pilot for community youth spaces at the former Vaughan Road Academy. Black Urbanism TO is looking forward to monitoring its outcomes for this community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Romain Baker", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Romain Baker
Chair
Black Urbanism TO