



# Developing a Cultural Districts Program

**Presentation** – Economic and Community Development Committee, October 21, 2021

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# Purpose



## Share information

*about the preliminary report for consideration at the October 21 ECDC meeting about developing a cultural districts program*

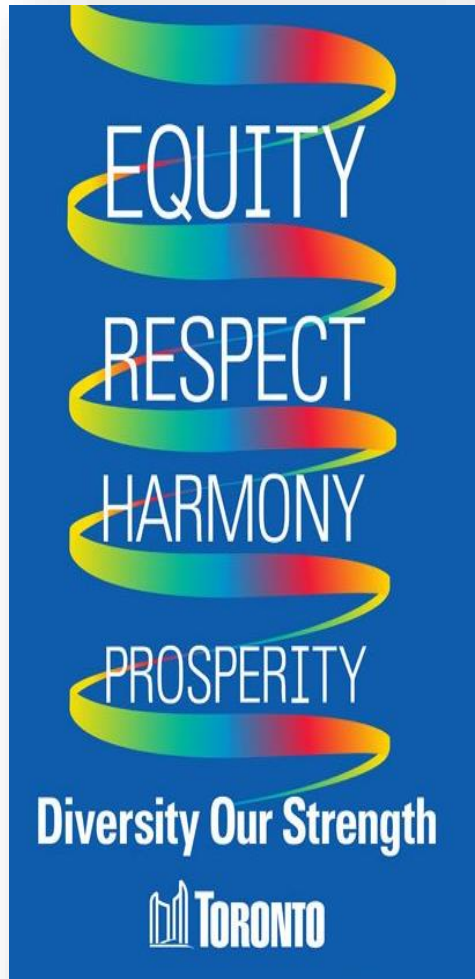
## Seek your advice

*and guidance on a potential cultural district designation or program that is meaningful for communities and for Toronto*

*The City of Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The City also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.*

*The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.*

# Important Considerations



Work is in early stages to respond to existing Council directions we will go through during this presentation, and we use the term “cultural district program” as a placeholder. We are developing a program that reflects the unique context of Toronto.

We also understand that there are no specific districts that are more or less cultural, and that every part of the city is Indigenous and meaningful to different communities.



We recognize that the entirety of Toronto is the Indigenous cultural district, and that a ward specific approach will not fully support self-determination as Indigenous rights apply to all wards – it is being considered as a form to support projects in specific wards, based on guidance from Indigenous partners

Through this presentation, EDC aims to hear strategic advice, guidance and recommendations – these will help inform next steps of this work to ensure that it is meaningful for communities.

# Overview

1. Economic Development and Culture (EDC)
2. Council Direction
3. Policy Gap / Opportunity
4. Preliminary Research and Findings
5. Early Engagement and Findings
6. Next Steps
7. Questions: Advice and Recommendation



# Economic Development and Culture (EDC)



Making Toronto a place where  
**business and  
culture thrive**

EDC leads a broad range of activities, which include programs and services related to:



**BUSINESS GROWTH SERVICES**



**FILM & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES**



**ARTS & CULTURE SERVICES**



**MUSEUM & HERITAGE SERVICES**



**PROGRAM SUPPORT**

# Council Direction

Formal declaration of a municipal emergency made on March 23, 2020 by Toronto Mayor John Tory. Emergency response focused on saving lives and vaccine rollout

2020

2021

January

March

September

June

July

**MM14.8** Protecting LGBTQ2S+ Small Businesses and Cultural Space - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Paul Ainslie (Ward All)

**MM24.36** Supporting Black-Owned and Operated Businesses and Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Eglinton Avenue West's "Little Jamaica"- by Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson (Ward All)

**MM24.17** Eglinton Avenue West - Little Jamaica - by Councillor Mike Colle, seconded by Councillor Ana Bailão (Ward All)

**MM34.22** Protecting Downtown Chinatown's Cultural Heritage - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy (Ward 11)

**PH24.1** Geary Works Planning Study and City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment (Ward 9)



# Council Direction

Businesses



Culture

Sense of community

Tourism



Heritage

# Policy Gap and Opportunity

## Identified common themes that call for a coordinated policy approach

Need to protect the area from displacement and cultural erasure through community ownership

Avoid the loss of character, identity and roots – and ensure safe spaces that promote sense of belonging

Celebrate communities, and encourage new cultural employment hubs

Celebrate the rich history of neighbourhoods beyond built forms

**Research / Jurisdictional Review** – how have other cities responded to similar issues and challenges in a coordinated way?

**Early Engagement** – what needs to be considered for a coordinated approach to be meaningful for communities in Toronto?



# Preliminary Research

“Cultural Districts”  
have been widely  
used to respond to  
similar challenges in  
other cities



Boston, Latin Quarter



Castro Cultural District, San Francisco



Singapore, Civic District



Minneapolis, 38th Street Cultural District



Sydney, Walsh Bay Arts and Cultural Precinct

# Preliminary Research

## Research / Jurisdictional review

There are many cultural districts across the world (in the US, there are over 343 formalized ones). Upon a scan, in-depth research was undertaken for 9 cities.

Selection criteria based on:

- Existence of officially recognized cultural district programs
- Consideration regarding population density and diversity

1. San Francisco, CA, USA
2. Los Angeles, CA, USA
3. Seattle, WA, USA
4. Minneapolis, MI, USA
5. Sydney, NSW, AU
6. Singapore, SG
7. Mississauga, ON, CA
8. Boston, MA, USA
9. Houston, TX, USA

Number of Cultural Districts

Application/Designation Process

Eligibility Criteria

Policy tools

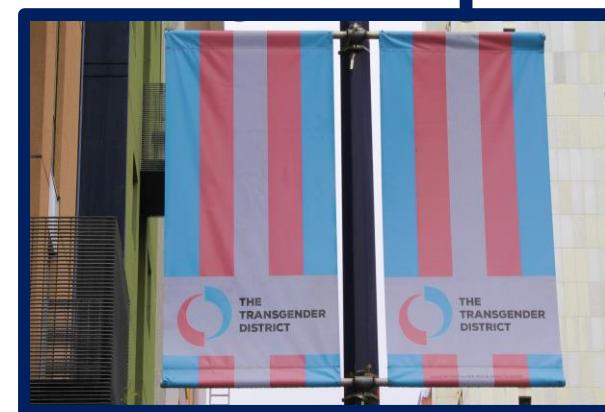


# Preliminary Research - Findings

- Intangible cultural heritage: close attention is given to cultural heritage and history to prospective cultural districts
- Equity efforts: some cities explicitly seek to strengthen racialized, immigrants and equity-deserving communities
- Community engagement: the public is involved at several points in the cultural district designation process
- Indigenous history: some cities are proactive in embedding Indigenous history and programming
- Policy Tools: cultural fund, programming to celebrate the identity and promote tourism

Although not specific to cultural districts, other jurisdictions have tools that support intangible culture and heritage that may be explored as part of CDDs for Toronto

- Legacy business program (San Francisco)



Compton's transgender cultural district

# Early Engagement

**OVER  
60**

**PARTNERS,  
STAKEHOLDERS AND  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

*These include:*

Council Advisory Committees

Friends of Chinatown

Confronting Anti-Black Racism Partnership  
Accountability Circle

Chinatown BIA

EDC Program Advisory Committee

Friends of Kensington Market

Canada Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

The 519

Geary Avenue

ERA Architects

Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce

Pride Toronto

Church-Wellesley BIA

Cecil Community Centre



# Early Engagement - Findings

*What we heard (among other important points):*

**It is important to**

recognize the history in pushing oppressed communities into spaces that were not ideal, and also acknowledge the history that led to geographic areas being meaningful for communities: safety, sense of identity, sense of community.

ensure that government support for communities is not bounded by the district – specific geographic areas may be meaningful and serve as community anchors, but do not and should not concentrate all of a community’s businesses and cultural spaces.

acknowledge and target root causes of displacement and gentrification, such as affordability and community ownership, and ensure that the combination of policy tools is inclusive and that an intersectional lens is applied at all times.

consider the “designation” or “program” a place-making methodology for communities to lead and advance their own priorities, and ensure that it is not fully focused on the past, also enabling possibilities for the future – and supporting new communities hubs and creative scenes in the city.

# Strategic Approach

## Proposed approach

A Cultural District Program - a combination of tools to protect small business, cultural spaces and heritage within areas meaningful to communities and Toronto - may address this policy gap



**Addresses common themes**



**Enhances effective use of resources**



**Supported by best practices and research findings**



**Informed by early engagement**



# Next Steps

## Phase 1

### Early Engagement

March 2020 - May 2021

Exploration cultural districts and identification of communities' challenges and priorities through:

- Identified common themes
- Best practices identified through a jurisdictional review
- Early engagement with communities and Council Advisory Bodies (CABs)

### Staff Report

Recommend that a place making methodology (designation/program) be developed for Toronto by identifying tools to address considerations identified during Phase 1

October 2021

## Phase 2

### Public Engagement

Winter 2021

Spring 2022

Final recommendations on what a cultural district in Toronto may look like based on:

- Additional consultation with CABs
- Community engagement and analysis
- Design review by an expert panel

### Staff Report



**Thank you**