



Developing a Cultural Districts Program

Presentation – Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee, October 22, 2021

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Overview

1. Purpose and Considerations
2. Council Direction
3. Policy Gap / Opportunity
4. Preliminary Research and Findings
5. Early Engagement and Findings
6. Strategic Approach and Next Steps
7. Questions: Advice and Recommendation



Purpose



Share information

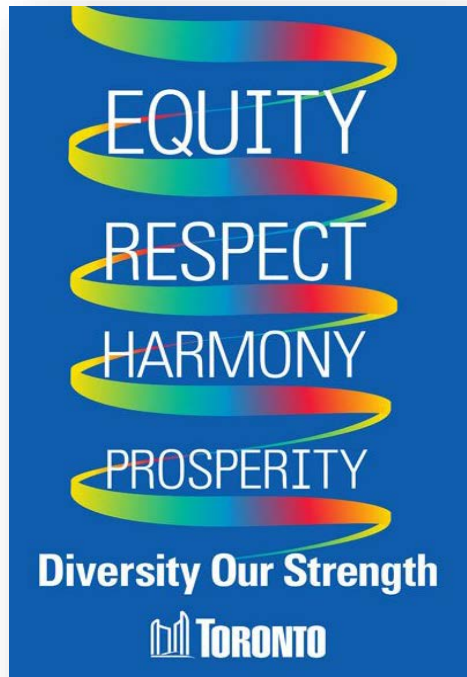
about the preliminary report for consideration at the November 9 City Council meeting about developing a cultural districts program

Seek your advice

and guidance on a potential cultural district program that advances broader understanding of Indigenous history and self-determination, through local place-keeping and place-making methodologies

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on is 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. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

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 designation” as a placeholder.

The goal is to develop a program that reflects the unique context of Toronto.

We recognize that the entirety of Toronto is Indigenous.

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.



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-December

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)

AA8.3 Indigenous Place-Making Initiative (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

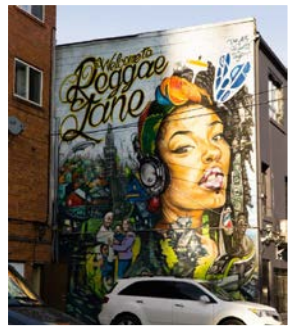
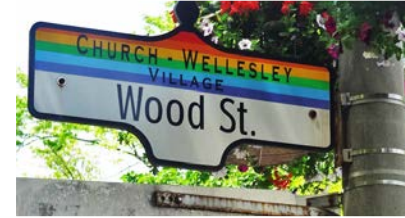
Sense of community

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 - Findings

- There are many “Cultural District” programs across the world. In the United States, there are over 343 formalized ones.
- Some cities are proactive in embedding Indigenous history and programming.

Founded on March 31st, 2020, the American Indian Cultural District (AICD) is the first established Cultural District of its size in the United States dedicated to recognizing, honoring, and celebrating the American Indian legacy, culture, people, and contributions.

AICD Activities include:

Native Visibility Project
Indigenize SF Project
Land Acknowledgment of the Ramaytush Ohlone people



Early Engagement - Findings

Met with 60 partners, stakeholders, community members. 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

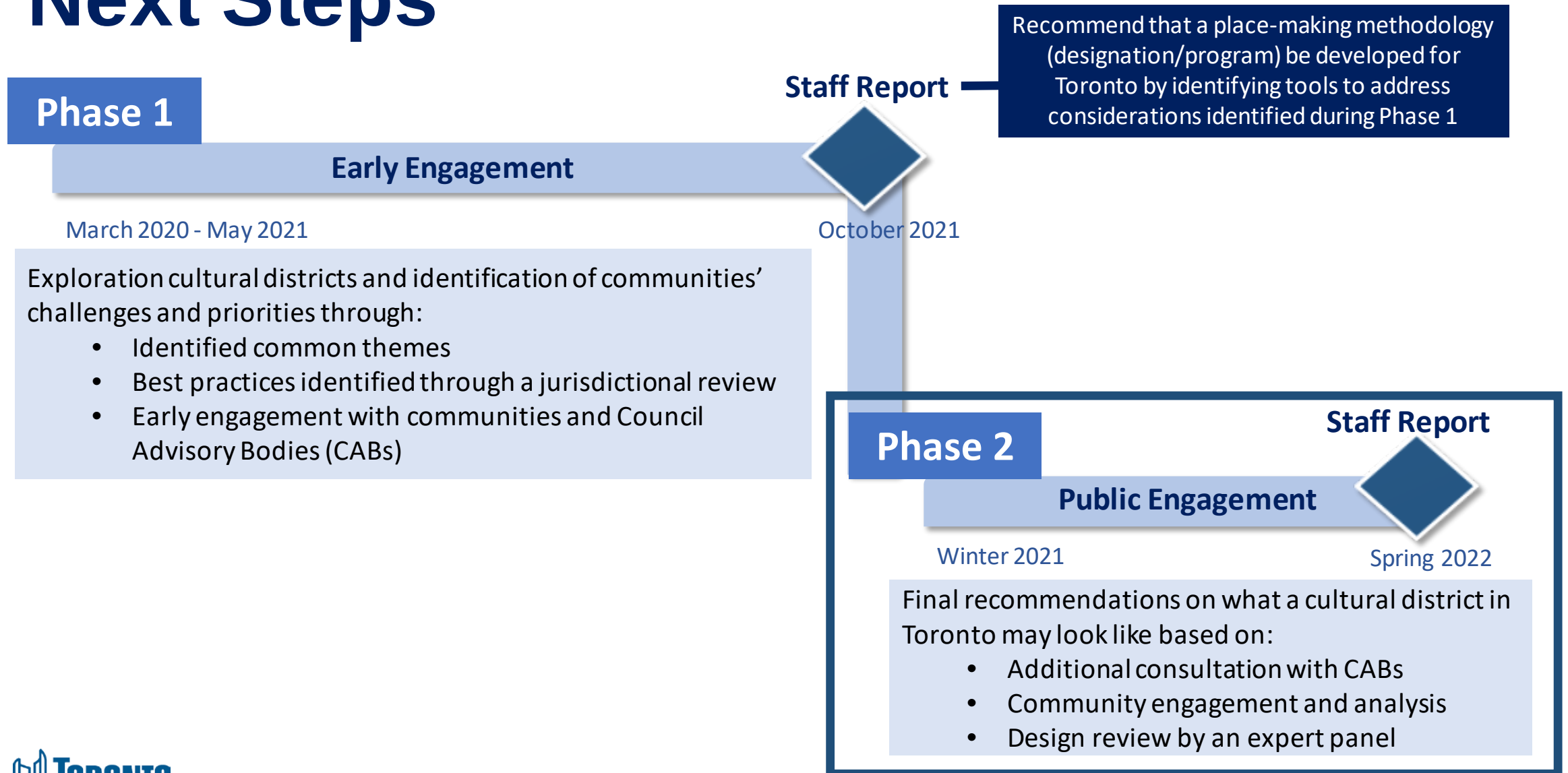


Supported by best practices and research findings



Informed by early engagement and future meetings

Next Steps



Advice and Recommendations

1

How could the notion of a cultural district be modified to support Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous place-making?

2

What do you see as important steps for us to take in Phase 2/Public Engagement to work with Indigenous communities and ensure that a cultural districts program:

- a. reflects communities' priorities and
- b. is aligned with the upcoming City of Toronto Reconciliation Action Plan?



Thank you