

# INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF CULTURAL DISTRICT PROGRAMS

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## Land Acknowledgement 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. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.



## African Ancestral Acknowledgement for Toronto

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.



## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of best practices across the globe to create and support cultural districts that may inform Toronto's own designation process. Toronto has many programs that collectively help advance arts and culture, tourism, and neighbourhoods. However, it does not currently have a formalized cultural district designation. This jurisdictional review aims to provide a foundation for potential co-ordinated and comprehensive tools to protect the culture, heritage and local businesses in Toronto communities. The review focuses on "cultural districts" as well-established programs used worldwide to support neighbourhood areas considered meaningful hubs, which foster a thriving arts and cultural sector, and protect a community's cultural identity.

The jurisdictional review consisted of three phases:

- Gathering information about the history of arts-based cultural planning and creative place-making;
- Researching other municipalities' cultural districts, their designation processes, along with good practices regarding eligibility criteria and policy tools in established cultural districts; and
- Reviewing relevant international, national, provincial, and municipal legislation and programs that may inform the development of cultural districts in Toronto.

The report findings are based on information gathered from 16 municipalities: 10 in the United States, two in Canada, and one each in Australia, Singapore, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. These cities were selected based on several characteristics: the presence of a clear cultural district designation process and guidelines, while employing several best practices and policy tools to create and support districts during their operation, along with their relevance to Toronto's context when considering their population density and diversity, geographies and similar urban development.

It is noted that cultural districts typically share these goals and characteristics:

- Promote a sense of belonging by focusing on the community living in the area;
- Involve community leadership to develop or co-develop place-based solutions;
- Protect diverse communities' sense of identity and economy with an equity focus;
- Are easily accessible through public transportation and/or are pedestrian-friendly;
- Celebrate the community's cultural identity through built forms and cultural activities;
- Are seen and promoted as having something unique; and
- Have clear geographic bounds.

The following are some of the specific good practices identified:

- The districts analyzed in this review share the common interest of promoting arts and culture, and celebrating community and history;

- Many districts are seen as forms for communities to develop their own solutions to issues faced by neighbourhoods, and also as a way to formalize an ongoing partnership between communities and the City;
- Nearly all of the cities selected involved the public at several points while creating and drafting their designation process; and
- Most cities for which there is an application process for cultural districts to be established require information on proposed geographic boundaries and on the neighbourhood's cultural assets for the designation to be awarded. Being a meaningful area in terms of historical significance and living history is usually an eligibility factor.

Among policy tools to support cultural districts, it was noted that instead of one type of support, most cities provide a "package" combining multiple supports such as funding, counselling, access to partnership, etc. In addition, most cities have created a cultural fund to financially support their cultural districts throughout their development.

A comparative analysis of existing City of Toronto geography-focused programs was conducted, and included the Business Improvement Area program, Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, and Heritage Conservation Districts. Analysis of these programs revealed that although there are existing programs to support local communities, culture and businesses, none address the specific policy area found through a cultural district program.

This report also analyzes government legislation that may inform the creation of a cultural district designation program in Toronto. It found that the Ontario Heritage Act empowers municipalities to designate property of cultural heritage value or interest. This prevents significant alteration to the physical characteristics of identified heritage properties or heritage districts, as well as lands containing archaeological resources. While the legislation ultimately lacks the means to support cultural districts, the presence of support for preserving cultural heritage for the built form presents an opportunity to create new tools in order to also protect lived cultural heritage.

This review also notes that cultural districts would be aligned with national and international policies on culture, as outlined in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's report on Cultural Hubs and Cultural Districts in Canada (2018), the UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024 proclaimed by the United Nations.

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# 1. Cultural Districts: A Brief History

Although there are many ways of defining a cultural district, there is consensus that the term generally refers to a specific geographic area with a concentration of cultural assets. For example, cultural economist Walter Santagata defines cultural districts as "a spatial agglomeration of buildings dedicated to performing arts, museums and organizations which produce culture and related goods, services and facilities" (Thornton, 2012).

Intentionally creating these spaces and strategically leveraging cultural assets in the planning of cities has existed in North America for over a hundred years (Ashley, 2014, p. 3). In the past, arts-based place-making has taken various forms: as temporary-event based clusters, large-scale capital-intensive projects, and as an integrated downtown city amenity for residents. In North America, more specifically, they have included a range of activities such as world fairs and public art in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the creation of downtown arts anchors to attract tourists in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and investments in urban arts amenities to attract corporate headquarters, middle-class residents and knowledge workers in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

An analysis of the history of cultural districts also reveals that – beyond advancing arts and culture – these spaces started being developed to advance socio-economic objectives. They also served, for instance, to reshape the so-called ‘brownfields’ harming cities. These were areas populated by abandoned buildings and ‘gaping holes’ that negatively impacted tourism and led to residents and businesses moving to other neighbourhoods (Americans for the Arts, 1998). The role of cultural districts rapidly evolved to being a tool not only used to help advance culture, but also to help tourism and education flourish in urban hotspots (Americans for the Arts, 1998). Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, arts, culture and entertainment districts in the United States were formalized through State legislation. There are currently 18 states with a formalized role in the creation of cultural districts, and collectively they have established more than 343 cultural districts (National Assembly for State Arts Agencies, 2020).

This chapter aims to advance the understanding of the evolving role of cultural districts and also of how arts-based place-making has historically evolved in Toronto. Section 1.1, provides an overview of the historical context of three movements that formed the primary foundation of cultural districts in North America, namely: the Beautiful City, the Downtown Arts and the Livable City. Following this, the chapter refers to the emergence of naturally-occurring cultural districts.

## 1.1. Arts-Based Place-making Movements in the Context of North America

### 1.1.1. The "Beautiful City" Movement

At world expositions and world fairs in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, civic leaders and architects promoted mass entertainment and consumerism, technology, and social transformation into urban settings, which garnered huge success (Mumford, 2018, p. 60). The City Beautiful

movement emerged in the 1890 and 1900s, and aimed to promote urban beautification and monumental grandeur, taking inspiration from such early world's fairs – especially the 1900 Paris Exposition. Although the movement occurred in various cities, it was especially associated with cities like Chicago and Washington D.C. in the United States.

Urban beautification, in addition to monumental buildings, included the addition of parks, playgrounds, and cultural institutions to help revive cities and attract visitors (Baker, 2010, p.748). Nevertheless, investments in North America during this period were typically based on profitability (Baker, 2010, p.753). In this sense, despite the increased public interactions, the City Beautiful movement remained an initiative largely organized by the elites, for the elites (Baker, 2010, p.751; Mumford, 2018, pp. 59-60). While the movement produced important architectural legacies, it was ultimately unable to serve most communities.

### 1.1.2. The Emergence of Downtown Arts Anchors

During the post-Second World War period, many North American municipalities experienced urban decline due to the loss of manufacturing jobs and shift to suburban communities. This had a direct impact on the character of a city (Ashley, 2014). Urban decline can be defined by a multitude of characteristics: loss of population and employment, shrinking middle-class, physical deterioration, and increasing crime (Beauregard, 1993, p.189). A study from 1989 published by MIT Frieden Bernard and Lynne Sagalyn, found that between 1954 and 1963, “the top 40 central cities lost an average of 26,000 manufacturing jobs and the central city share of manufacturing work slipped from two-thirds in the early 1950s to less than half by 1963” as cited in Amanda Ashley's article, *"Beyond the Aesthetic: The Historical Pursuit of Local Arts Economic Development"* (Ashley, 2014, p. 10).

In response to the decline at the time, cities invested to increase cultural tourism and to encourage people to be and/or visit downtown through new or expanded anchor projects, including hospitals, convention centres, niche shopping areas and by redeveloping districts through cultural institutions, museums and performing arts centres (Ashley, 2014). That was the time when New York City built the Lincoln Center. However, municipalities like St. Louis struggled with rejuvenation in spite of developments in cultural and research institutions. Even with the Gateway Arch installed to signal a postwar era, poverty rates were ultimately increasing (Heathcott and Murphy, 2005, p.180).

Minneapolis presented a similar scenario to St. Louis, with arts planning failing to serve the general public. While Minneapolis was able to transform downtown spaces by connecting arts institutions to the city through their names, like the Minnesota Theater Company, these institutions had little to do with local history (Engstrom, 2015, p.974). Although some cities experienced success and others did not, this specific period represents a milestone in urban planning in terms of promoting the concentration of arts and cultural assets as a form to revitalize geographic areas and addressing socio-economic issues.

### 1.1.3. "Livability" as a Guiding Principle

In the 1970s, investments in arts and culture continued to focus on the downtown core. However, the objective expanded to attracting corporate headquarters and middle-class residents through amenities for a "livable city". So-called "livability" was used in urban planning to promote a new type of citizenship. It became an option in arts and economic development models due to urbanization, which also reflected a shift from manufacturing and industrial to a consumer and market-driven economy (Ashley, 2014, p.13). The United States State Assembly approved the first zoning category that allowed artists' live/work spaces. Efforts to leverage arts and culture started to prioritize not only the design, but also communities considered important for a geographic space to flourish. The combination of introducing spaces for artists to live and work, in conjunction with cultural consumption through "livability" transformed how urban cores functioned. This period was marked by an increased focus on the social and demographic composition of urban neighbourhoods, with special attention paid to revitalizing downtowns.

"Livability" ultimately differed from the City Beautiful movement because of its priorities to artists and neighbourhoods – factors seen as having the ability to create and foster community – beyond physical forms like design. Despite this shift, the creation of these communities tended to be intentional, favouring some residents over others. For example, some private developers would use the new community-building strategy to attract wealthier residents, including college graduates and highly educated professionals (Ashley, 2014, p.13). This eventually sparked conversations of gentrification since it pushed artists who were already living in certain neighbourhoods away, (Ashley, 2014, p.13).

It is important to note the legacy of this period as "livability" remains an important factor. The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies remarks that a success factor for cultural district programs include sustaining artists' living and working spaces because it "provides artists and entrepreneurs with a productive environment" (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2020, p.9). Cultural districts take pre-existing forms into consideration when forming goals – using business and job development in arts and culture to foster economic activity and make the area a more appealing place to live in, as well as reusing historic buildings and revitalizing them into spaces with opportunities for affordable cultural workforce housing, artists' living and working spaces, and locations for cultural organizations (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2020, p.3).

### 1.1.4. Naturally-occurring Cultural Districts

Naturally occurring cultural districts have existed for centuries, developed over time through community support and collective work instead of being defined or designated by governments. They are characterized by the presence of dense cultural assets in the form of small businesses, artists, and organizations that contribute to the community's arts and culture scene and reap significant benefits (Stern and Seifert, 2007). These districts are rich with cultural history, captivate events and an appreciation for the arts, while also attracting new services and residents. An interesting example of a successful naturally occurring cultural district is Old City in Philadelphia;

the district's residential count is continuously growing and – without government involvement – has thrived in centralizing theatres, restaurants, galleries, and other arts and culture venues.

## **2. Survey of Municipal Cultural District Programs Worldwide**

Cultural districts can have many forms, address different issues and prioritize different sectors. Some of them purely focus on arts and culture, whereas others may also provide support to small businesses and/or have a community focus. The objective of this chapter is to review and analyze cultural districts around the world, identifying good practices to help determine key factors that should be considered in creating a cultural district program in the context of Toronto.

The review was based on publicly available information and undertaken during the period of May to August, 2021. In reviewing the municipalities, special attention was given to:

- Designation process – whether it is application based, etc.
- Eligibility criteria – what qualities make specific geographic areas a cultural district.
- Policy tools – what supports geographic areas can access once they are cultural districts.

The methodology, selection criteria and list of municipalities are outlined in Section 2.1. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of cultural districts in nine cities and by good practices for the context of Toronto identified in additional six cities. The final section of this chapter provides an analytical assessment of the information in previous sections and outlines common characteristics, good practices and other key conclusions.

### **2.1. Methodology, Selection Criteria and List of Municipalities**

Extensive research on how other cities have established and developed their cultural districts and revitalized their communities was undertaken. In order to ensure that findings can be meaningful for the context of Toronto, all the municipalities selected for the jurisdictional review are urban and have some form of a cultural district designation (whether it has been directly awarded by the government with no application process, applied for by an organization, or simply recognized by the government).

Although not eligibility criteria, population density and diversity were key factors considered in selecting cities to be reviewed. As will be noted, some municipalities may have a much higher or lower population density than Toronto, but the value of including those municipalities is significant due to unique policy tools and best practices. Specific cities were included given their relevance for the context of Toronto, which is the case of Mississauga, which shares the same provincial government in addition to being in close proximity with Toronto.

Municipalities in Canada and the United States were preferred in particular because of relative geographies and similar urban development plans. In addition, cities that are popular destinations for international migration were also preferred given that Toronto is a multicultural city that sees diversity as a guiding principle. Finally, the value added by each municipality was also considered in order to avoid having cities with cultural district designation plans too similar (for instance, in cases where the provincial order of government manages cultural district programs).

A total of 16 municipalities across the globe were identified as relevant for this review, each with an official cultural district plan organized or supported by the local government. Nevertheless, further research – considering the public information available in addition to geographical bounds, cultural assets, and benefits for communities as relevant for the context of Toronto – revealed that in-depth analysis should be conducted for nine of these cities, which are as follows:

- San Francisco, CA, US
- Los Angeles, CA, US
- Seattle, WA, US
- Minneapolis, MI, US
- Sydney, NSW, AU
- Singapore, SG
- Mississauga, ON, CA
- Boston, MA, US
- Houston, TX, US

The remaining seven cities were also analyzed, yet with a focus on valuable good practices as relevant for Toronto. These are as follows:

- New York, NY, US
- Oakland, CA, US
- Calgary, AB, CA
- Johannesburg, ZA
- London, UK
- Bloomington, IA, US
- Baltimore, MD, US

## 2.2. Cultural Districts: In-depth Review of Nine Municipalities

### 2.2.1. San Francisco, CA, United States (est. 2014)

As a dense city with distinct cultural neighbourhoods, Toronto and San Francisco are similar in many aspects. In addition, in terms of cultural districts, San Francisco has a clear designation process, and the City's cultural district initiative, adopted by Council in 2018, seeks to celebrate and strengthen each district's unique cultural identity and promote their cultural assets.

#### Year the first Cultural District was recognized

2014, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District

#### Number of Districts

9

#### Cultural Districts

Japantown, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District, SoMa Pilipinas, Compton's Transgender Cultural District, African American Arts and Culture District, American Indian Cultural District, Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, Leather and LGBTQ+ Cultural District, Sunset Chinese Cultural District.

#### Intended Goals of Cultural Districts

San Francisco's Cultural Districts program seeks to formalize a collaborative partnership between the City and communities to stabilize vulnerable communities facing or at risk of displacement or gentrification. Vulnerable communities are considered when a significant portion of its residents or people who spend time in the area or location are members of a specific cultural or ethnic group that historically has been discriminated against, displaced, and oppressed. The program also preserves, strengthens and promotes cultural assets and diverse communities, so that individuals, families, and the businesses that serve and employ them are able to live, work and prosper within the city.

#### Eligibility Criteria

Any Supervisor, the Mayor, or a City department may introduce an ordinance proposing to establish a Cultural District that meets the goals and purpose of the program. The process includes establishing a name for the Cultural District, and describing its geographic boundaries. The boundaries of newly established Cultural Districts should be contiguous and should not overlap with other Cultural Districts.

#### Application and Designation Process

In San Francisco, a district Supervisor, typically a City staff member must submit an application on behalf of the community seeking designation. The district Supervisor creates a "steering committee" (consisting of community members, business owners, etc.) to help establish the district's name and geographical boundaries, which cannot overlap with the bounds of another district. Once boundaries are established, the Supervisor drafts legislation to present to the City's Board of Supervisors to approve, thus creating the district. The entire process lasts from six months to a year.

Also relevant to the process:

- Any Supervisor, the Mayor, or City department may introduce an ordinance to establish a district. For a district to be established, the proposed district's cultural values and valuable contributions to the initiative's purpose and mission must be described;
- The Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development must be engaged in a competitive solicitation process to enter a contract or grant with a community-based organization (such as a local non-profit) with an executive director and advisory body that can report back to the Mayor's Office; and
- City departments must provide input to the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development about their expertise areas related to the proposed district within six months following the effective date of the ordinance establishing the district. Input should include recommendations, assessment of relevant assets and needs, and other recommendations regarding policy and best practices to support the district.

### **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

Once approved, San Francisco has several strategies in place to support new cultural districts:

- The Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development has developed a fund for new districts to draw from to finance its cultural and arts-based activities.
- Application based 14-month grant of up to \$ 230,000 USD.
- Additionally, the Mayor's Office conducts an annual Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategy (CHHESS) report. The report calls on Council and the City's various departments to assess the district's needs and assets, and provide recommendations on existing policies, programs, and funding systems in place to best support the district during its development and advancement.
- The CHHESS report must be updated every three years.

#### **2.2.2. Los Angeles, CA, United States (est. 2017)**

Los Angeles is a culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse city, which is similar to Toronto. Both cities face challenges like homelessness, gentrification, and poverty amongst their communities. Additionally, both cities are densely populated. Los Angeles has two cultural districts, and similarly to San Francisco, is governed by the State of California in terms of establishing and supporting communities through a cultural district designation. While both cities are governed by the State's Cultural District designation process, each city has its own separate municipal legislation regarding District powers, rights, and privileges. Additionally, each District is unique and faces its challenges that require special programming and support beyond the State's general guidelines.

#### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

2017, all districts

#### **Number of Districts**

2



## **Cultural Districts**

Little Tokyo, San Pedro

## **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

Advance the state through the arts and creativity.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

Cultural districts in Los Angeles are designated through the State's Arts Council's program. California views a cultural district as a well-defined geographic area with a high concentration of cultural resources and activities. Assembly Bill 189, 2015, laid out the criteria a cultural district must meet upon applying for official designation. Acting upon the legislation, California's Art Council took concrete steps in 2017 to establish and recognize the state's first set of cultural districts through its program.

## **Application and Designation Process**

Developing the State of California's 14 cultural districts was a year-long process that involved residents every step of the way. In Los Angeles, between September to November of 2016, the state program's Development Consultants leading the project conducted online surveys and interviews with its residents. Several 'public input meetings' were held to share updates on the project with residents, and seek input and recommendations for moving forward with the program's development. In December of 2016, the Consultants brought their recommendations to Council. After discussion and legislation was passed on the matter, applications to become a cultural district were released to the public in January of 2017.

In order to apply, several criteria had to be met:

- Only partnerships between proposed districts or areas and a cultural non-profit, business, or branch of local government may apply. An area itself or community group representing the area may not apply.
- The proposed district must have completed a preliminary cultural asset survey or inventory prior to applying. The purpose of this step was to identify the district's cultural assets and potential benefits for the city.

Applications to the State of California's Arts Council consisted of descriptions of the proposed district's geographical bounds, how the district will advance arts and culture in California, and how the district fits into the program's objectives. After submissions were reviewed from January to July of 2017, finalists were invited to Council to submit their final application materials. On July 13<sup>th</sup>, California officially released their announcement of their 14 cultural districts. In sum, key phases in establishing their districts included:

- Hiring consultants to monitor the project's development.
- Involving residents at every stage of the project while asking for input (public consultation).
- Establishing districts through an application-based process, during which Council meets directly with applicants.

## **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

Once certified, cultural districts in California receive a variety of resources to use:

- Districts receive a yearly stipend of \$5,000 USD to support its activities and refinement of the state's cultural districts program.



- Districts also receive support from the cultural district program’s consulting team to aid the area’s development and the program’s growth; the consulting team conducts at least one site visit a year to meet with residents and community leaders.
- Additionally, the State of California is partnered with several strategic partners to advance their districts through direct support. For example, Caltrans is a partner that provides California districts with liaison services that provide technical support in the form of developing murals and other public arts projects, and creating street closures for public events launched by districts.

### 2.2.3. Seattle, WA, United States (est. 2014)

As a city with clearly defined cultural districts and a direct process for establishing them, Seattle is also home to numerous cultural neighbourhoods and enclaves. Similarly to Toronto, Seattle is densely populated, making it a key city to research and learn from in the present review. The City’s designation process is centered on collaboration between the municipality’s government and its residents, giving programs a unique strategy to uplift communities.

#### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

2014, Capitol Hill

#### **Number of Districts**

4

#### **District names**

Uptown, Columbia City and Hillman City, Central Area, Capitol Hill

#### **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

Protect arts and culture initiatives and preserve designated districts for generations to come.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

Seattle’s Office of Arts and Culture created the arts and cultural district program in 2014 after meeting with Council and the Cultural Overlay district Advisory board (Seattle Government, 2014). Seattle’s process for establishing a cultural district requires collaboration between local government and community members. Any District can apply for designation, but a lead community partner - such as a business improvement area or a local nonprofit - must first initiate the application process by creating a coalition of constituents.

#### **Application/Designation Process**

After being formed, the coalition then presents the program committee with a formal application, outlining the details of the new district (i.e. geographical bounds, how the district would contribute to existing arts and culture, etc.). Surveys of existing cultural assets within the proposed district’s bounds, conversations with key stakeholders, and neighbourhood outreach meetings follow; lastly, the Office of Arts and Culture reviews and approves applications.

#### **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

The City of Seattle employs a unique practice in establishing and supporting cultural districts

called the 'Creative Place-making Toolkit'. The Toolkit is still being tested and developed by the City; designed to uplift and support artists, neighbourhoods, key stakeholders, and art spaces, it is complete with programs, projects and strategies to best support district identification and cultural preservation (Seattle Government, 2014). Specifically, the kit is composed of policy tools that promote several key advancement points for districts:

- Right-of-Way district identification via installation of street signs, sidewalk kiosks, custom sidewalks, and banners;
- Wayfinding through branding buildings and spaces as cultural spaces;
- Art Historic Markers, developed in partnership with HistoryLink.org, that celebrate culturally relevant spots with historic and educational markers;
- Activating pop-up spaces to allow artists to showcase their projects through busking, "plein-air" painting, storefront pop-ups, parklets, creating cultural space infrastructure;
- Historic preservation, conservation and landmarks.

#### 2.2.4. Minneapolis, MI, United States (est. 2020)

As a densely populated and diverse city with thriving cultural neighbourhoods, Minneapolis is similar to Toronto in many ways. Like Toronto, Minneapolis' population is mainly comprised of people of colour, Indigenous people, and/or immigrant (POCII) communities. Minneapolis seeks to strengthen residents belonging to these neighborhoods by prioritizing and accelerating economic development, public transit, and affordable housing policies, practices, and resources.

##### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

2020, all Districts

##### **Number of Districts**

8

##### **Cultural Districts**

38<sup>th</sup> Street, Cedar Riverside, Central Avenue, East Lake, Franklin Avenue, West Broadway, Lowry Avenue.

##### **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

Strengthen arts and culture scene and associated neighbourhoods.

##### **Eligibility Criteria**

Minneapolis' cultural action plan, 'Minneapolis 2040', was launched in 2018 with the overarching goal of designating cultural districts to strengthen neighbourhoods and arts and culture sectors in Minneapolis. The plan seeks to specifically prioritize Indigenous, Black, racialized, and immigrant individuals during its rollout phase.

##### **Application and Designation Process**

Cultural districts must meet a set of criteria outlined in the Minneapolis' Cultural district Policy (Minneapolis Government, 2020):

- A proposed district must be contiguous and be located within the Met Council's definition of Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP50). Areas of Concentrated Poverty are defined as

census tracts where 40% or more of the residents have family or individual incomes that are less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold.

- The district must be walkable, accessible and have access to public transportation, which contributes to prioritizing individuals living with physical disabilities.
- An application form, complete with details of the proposed districts' geographical bounds and cultural asset information, must be submitted and then approved by the director of the Community Planning and Economic Development department.
- Upon receiving the application, the planning commission will hold a public hearing to consider the proposed district. City council then makes the final decision on the establishment of the district.

### **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

The City of Minneapolis has also outlined several actions to uplift prioritized groups:

- Collaborating with racialized, LGBTQ+ and Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs with public grants and funding.
- Enhancing proposed districts' visibility through marketing and promotional efforts.
- Collaborating with priority groups to best expand and retain commercial activities.
- Promoting districts as prime areas for ethical tourism by aligning funding and programs with each district's initiatives and needs.
- Commemorating streets in honour of community activists and leaders, celebrating arts and culture through festivals and community events, and establishing cultural spaces and hubs.

### **2.2.5. Sydney, NSW, AU (est. 2020)**

Sydney is a coastal city in Australia with a blend of both Indigenous Australian and immigrant cultures. The city draws many similarities to Toronto, both being former British colonies and having a deeply rooted relationship with Indigenous populations.

#### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

2020

#### **Number of Districts**

1

#### **Cultural Districts**

Walsh Bay Arts Precinct

#### **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

The redevelopment of the Walsh Bay Arts District will restore the District's character while enhancing arts facilities, including cultural performances and events.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

The City defines culture as "the production, distribution and participation in creativity by the City's community of residents, workers and visitors, and the reflection and expression of its customs,

traditions, heritage and social character." The New South Wales (NSW) government awards these cultural precincts (no differentiation from cultural districts), noting that they can either be new and planned to focus on larger institutions, or already existing and unplanned to focus on small-scale cultural activities and communities. Successful cultural precincts are attributed to two types of factors: pre-existing and common success. The former includes the existence of:

- Creatives, visitors and interested local communities
- Efficient public transportation
- A strong local identity
- Good planning and regulatory frameworks
- Flexibility to new business models

The common success factors include:

- A focus on cultural production and consumption
- Housing with supporting businesses and uses
- The ability to monitor precinct performance
- High-quality, short-term cultural uses and events in the precinct
- A significant tenant (like an organization or education provider)
- Complementary daytime and evening uses

Cultural precincts in NSW are based around the idea of cultural infrastructure, which include buildings and spaces that support cultural development. The Walsh Bay Arts Precinct utilizes pre-existing infrastructure, heritage hubs and additional investment to enhance local culture and arts.

### Designation Process

The provincial government recommends specific cities to build cultural precincts. In 2014, Infrastructure NSW recommended several cities to establish cultural precincts to amplify a 2012 State Investment Strategy. The strategy intended to revitalize clusters of cultural institutions through the development of cultural ribbons, which are similar to Toronto's cultural corridors. Cultural precincts in NSW cannot be applied for but are rather designated under recommendation by the provincial government. Upon review of the 2014 recommendations, Infrastructure NSW states that cultural precincts in Sydney's Central Business District should be located in areas where they can be distinctly defined by:

- Location
- Distance (no more than 1.5 kilometres walking distance between cultural venues)
- Institutional offering (meaning a cluster of cultural assets like museums, arts centres, etc.)

### Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts

Infrastructure NSW plans to use the following policy tools to support the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct:

- Government funding – committed to AUD 207 million for the Walsh Bay Arts and Cultural Precinct
- Renew ageing assets through cultural precincts
- Have cultural assets and institutions located near each other to drive tourism

### 2.2.6. Singapore, SG (est. 1991)

Singapore, which has the reputation of being a global business hub in Southeast Asia, is also known for its diverse populations and multicultural approach to policies. The focus on economic growth has shaped the development of Singapore's cultural and historic districts.

#### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

1991, Civic District

#### **Number of Districts**

2

#### **Cultural Districts**

Civic District, Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct

#### **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

Preserve the city's culture and heritage, such as buildings, and highlight diversity.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

Singapore notes that culture is "intricately linked to all aspects of political, economic and social life" and that "a city's culture is revealed from the way it is planned, built, developed and adorned" (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2017). Prior to designating a cultural district, a 1988 report from the Advisor Council on Culture and the Arts acknowledged the lack of involvement and interest in the arts sector (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2017). Following an examination of case studies, the Urban Redevelopment Authority identified several success factors for cultural districts, including:

- Proximity to transport
- Retail outlets and restaurants
- Walkability
- Availability of facilities for international, regional, and national activities
- Opportunities for adaptive reuse of disused buildings

#### **Application and Designation Process**

Both districts in Singapore were designated as such due to their significance to Singapore's history. The Civic District is commonly recognized as the birthplace of modern Singapore, while the Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct has been the home to religious, educational, and multicultural institutions since the 1800s (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2017). Cultural districts in Singapore are a component of a larger cultural plan (it is important to note that the government operates as a semi-authoritarian city-state). The government is in charge of planning and designating these cultural districts, and therefore there is no application process. Alongside Fort Canning Park, the two current cultural districts will eventually be merged through increasing walkability to create one cultural district (Urban Redevelopment Authority).

#### **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

In preserving the buildings in the Civic District, used and vacant structures became the homes for different museums promoting the arts. The Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct also preserves architectural heritage and brings together artists and venue operators to create programs to revitalize the district (Centre for Livable Cities, 2017). Several policy tools include:

- Creating accessible and pedestrian-friendly walkways;
- Increasing programming and spaces for the Singapore community to gather and share experiences;
- Funding for the arts sector through the National Arts Council and National Heritage Board, with both individual and firm donors, which has helped firms to sponsor arts and culture programs.

These strategies have increased the number of visitors in the area, with the government recognizing that growing the creative industries sector and attracting foreign arts entrepreneurs and businesses into Singapore would have positive effects on the local economy and community.

### 2.2.7. Mississauga, ON, Canada (est. 2020)

Mississauga has a diverse and vibrant arts and culture scene. To identify cultural districts within its own bounds, Mississauga made note of several common characteristics across successful cultural districts worldwide. Mississauga noted the need to have strong political support, a vibrant arts and culture scene, dedicated local partners (i.e. Business Improvement Areas), and existing cultural assets to further develop and grow.

#### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

2020, all districts

#### **Number of Districts**

6

#### **Cultural Districts**

Port Credit, Downtown Core, Streetsville, Cooksville, Clarkson, Malton

#### **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

Enrich cultural spaces to improve quality of life and economic success.

#### **Eligibility Criteria and Application**

After identifying the city’s main cultural districts, Mississauga launched its ‘Cultural Districts Implementation Plan’, which aims to build on its thriving arts, culture, and creative expression sectors. The plan’s development was split across three general phases. First, Mississauga’s Culture Division – Culture Planning Unit researched cultural districts worldwide, reviewed local cultural assets, and carried out a general review of the six identified districts.

#### **Designation Process**

Following the first phase, the project team identified each districts’ geographical bounds and consulted with City staff and Councillors to discuss the project’s highest priorities and tactics to best inform the plan. The third and final phase of the plan, which is currently under development, will include residents’ input on the draft of the implementation plan and make necessary revisions.

#### **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

Once established and certified, Mississauga has several programs and initiatives in place to aid

cultural districts in their development and success:

- The City's Implementation Program directs funds in the form of grants and private sector funding to districts to spark cultural activity and encourage investment in communities.
- The City will fund a *Cultural Investment in Neighborhood Main Streets* program (2022-24) to secure third party services for community-engaged public art and artist designed public realm improvements within the city's six Cultural Districts.
- Additionally, the City has appointed a liaison to Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) in Mississauga, who will support local cultural initiatives and develop marketing strategies for the new districts' businesses.

### 2.2.8. Boston, MA, USA (est. 1998)

Like Toronto, Boston is known as a financial centre. With an abundance of history, the city is the core of many higher education institutions and global innovation. Despite this, it confronts several challenges, including rising living costs and gentrification in its neighbourhoods. Boston's cultural district designation program is also well-established in the municipality and their creative approaches makes it an exemplary model.

#### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

1998, Fenway

#### **Number of Districts**

4

#### **Cultural Districts**

Fenway, Roxbury, Latin Quarter, Little Saigon

#### **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

To be popular areas with cultural facilities and programs while strengthening local economies and amplifying local culture.

#### **Eligibility Criteria and Application/Designation Process**

Under Section 58A of the Massachusetts General Court, cultural districts "attract artists and cultural enterprises to a community, encourage business and job development, establish tourist destinations, preserve and reuse historic buildings, enhance property values and foster local cultural development." It also requires the cultural district to have defined boundaries, be walkable and accessible, and have cultural facilities and assets. While Boston's first cultural district was established in 1998, the State of Massachusetts adopted the cultural district legislation in 2011.

Cultural districts in Boston are designated through an application to the state Mass Cultural Council, which are reviewed on an ongoing basis. The partnership of stakeholders who wish to apply for a cultural district, whether belonging to for-profit or non-for-profit organizations, must have a clear vision, goals, marketing plan, and management for the district, demonstrating that cultural districts in Massachusetts are community-led.

Before applying to be a cultural district, the City must also hold at least one community meeting



and pass a resolution to support the state-designated cultural district. An advisor from the Council will visit the proposed district and meet with cultural district partners to assess whether the district is ready to obtain a designation. The cultural district is assessed on the following factors:

- Management plan
- Cultural assets
- Creative programming
- Public infrastructure and amenities
- Marketing plan
- Goals and success measures

Once awarded, a designated cultural district is in effect for five years, but this can be renewed if they are compliant to annual reporting requirements.

### **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

Each cultural district in Boston has its own goals that affect the different types of policy tools used. The Hyde Square Task Force is the Latin Quarter’s district Managing Partner, and has achieved several milestones, including:

- Receiving a federal grant worth \$100,000 USD from the National Endowment for the Arts to develop cultural programs;
- Contributing to youth community engagement through collaborations with libraries to create bilingual arts programs which fosters deeper cultural identity;
- Using pre-existing infrastructures to create affordable spaces for small businesses and entrepreneurs;
- Retaining relevant businesses through supporting new entrepreneurs and introducing real estate interventions;
- Creating pathways for community leadership and networks;
- Partnerships with artists to create public art.

#### **2.2.9. Houston, TX, USA (est. 1995)**

Cultural districts in Texas are well-established, with close to 50 across the state. Houston, specifically, has a variety of cultural districts. While some are solely based on the arts, others are based on communities and preserving cultural heritage.

### **Year the first Cultural District was recognized**

1995, Midtown

### **Number of Districts**

7

### **Cultural Districts**

Arts District Houston, Fifth Ward Cultural Arts District, Greater East End, Midtown, Museum District, Theater District, Third Ward (The Tre) Cultural District

### **Intended Goals of Cultural Districts**

The Texas Commission on the Arts notes that cultural districts can be used to generate



businesses, attract tourists, stimulate cultural development, and foster civic pride. However, specific goals are contingent on each cultural district's specific needs.

### **Eligibility Criteria and Application/Designation Process**

The Texas Commission on the Arts defines cultural districts as “special zones that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization” (Texas Commission on the Arts). Enacted in 2005, H.B. 2208 in the 79th Texas Legislature authorized the Texas Commission on the Arts to designate cultural districts in Texas, which follows an application process submitted through a single organization's effort or a collaborative effort from multiple groups (Texas Commission on the Arts).

Cultural district designations in Texas are application-based with a limit of one application per organization and a set annual deadline. They are evaluated based on artistic quality (50 points), capability (25 points), and impact (25 points). There are several parts of the application to be filled out by a management entity when applying to approve a cultural district:

- Cultural district governance, including governance structure and membership, qualifications of staff and leadership, group meeting frequency
- Details on the number of establishments in the cultural district, which may include but is not limited to non-profit art and heritage organizations, arts-related for-profit businesses, number of artists, restaurants, and events
- Description on cultural district locale, how it benefits the community, systems to track visitors, district's return on investment, challenges
- Cultural district's artistic and cultural assets, which may include but is not limited to arts, entertainment and cultural organizations, arts schools, historic properties, gardens, and stadiums
- Cultural district planning process, including a vision, mission, and five goals
- Marketing strategies
- Five-year budget

### **Policy Tools available to Cultural Districts**

The Commission recognizes that cultural districts can endure the following local challenges: gentrification, lack of staff, lack of finances, maintaining relevance to local residents, and long-term planning. On the other hand, success factors include having:

- A unique and authentic identity
- Community support
- Strategic partnerships and planning
- Workspace for artists
- A local developer
- Special programming
- Key institutions
- Organized efforts for artist recruitment
- Accessible events and venues

- Clear geographic boundaries
- A user-friendly website
- Marketing and promotion
- Strong amenities

Since challenges and success factors can vary, benefits for local communities are different as well. Houston's Third Ward is recognized as the “epicenter of Black art, culture, and history in Houston” and “enhances and references the quality of life in the Third Ward through the activation and cultivation of artistic resources” (Project Row Houses). In this district, the government plays a limited role, with the community bringing neighbourhood development activities, art programs, and funding on its own (Project Row Houses, 2018).

From an economic perspective, increased programming has clear benefits for communities in cultural districts. The Museum of Fine Arts Houston held an Art Deco exhibition from February to May 2016, which generated an economic impact of USD 3.8 million and 42 jobs. Tourism also increased during the period, with approximately 69,000 people attending the exhibit – and just over 40 per cent of visitors from outside of Houston.

## 2.2.10. In-depth Review of Nine Municipalities: Summary of Key Points

Table 1 - In-depth Review of Nine Municipalities: Summary of Key Points

City	Number of Districts	Current Designation Process	Eligibility Criteria	Policy Tools	Legal Authority
San Francisco	9	Application-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be a well-defined geographic area</li> <li>Must possess high concentration of cultural resources, activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application based 14-month grant of up to \$ 230,000 USD</li> <li>Cultural Districts are required to prepare a Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategy (CHHESS) report every three years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>San Francisco Local Program Ordinance</li> <li>Program Name: Chapter 107: Cultural Districts</li> <li>Established in 2018</li> <li>Municipal Authority: City of San Francisco</li> </ul>
Los Angeles	2	Application-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be a well-defined geographic area</li> <li>Must possess high concentration of cultural resources, activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yearly stipend of \$5,000 USD</li> <li>Consulting team aids district year-round</li> <li>State government pairs districts with strategic partners (i.e. Caltrans)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State of California</li> <li>Program Name: Cultural Districts, Title 2, Division 1, Chapter 9.2, Section 8758</li> <li>Established in 2015</li> <li>State Authority: California Arts Council</li> </ul>
Seattle	4	Application-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be contiguous and be located within the Met Council's definition of Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP50). Areas of Concentrated Poverty are defined as census tracts where 40% or more of the residents have family or individual incomes that are less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold.</li> <li>The district must be walkable, accessible and have access to public transportation, which contributes to prioritizing individuals living with physical disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to a Creative Place-making Toolkit, which contains information on programs, strategies, and resources for districts to use. These include right of way district identification, pop-up spaces, and Art Historic markers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State of Washington</li> <li>Program Name: Certified Creative Districts, Title 43, Chapters 43.46.100-43.46.115</li> <li>Established in 2017</li> <li>State Authority: Washington State Arts Commission</li> </ul>

City	Number of Districts	Current Designation Process	Eligibility Criteria	Policy Tools	Legal Authority
Minneapolis	4	Application-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed district must be located in a low-income community (Area of Concentrated Poverty), and geographical bounds and cultural assets must be outlined in application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possibility for People of Colour (POC) and LGBTQ+ businesses to be partnered with public grants, funding</li> <li>Increased promotion as prime areas for ethical tourism (aligning funding and programs with each district's initiatives and needs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City designates districts independently (no State legislation)</li> </ul>
Sydney	1	Awarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location can be clearly defined</li> <li>Cultural venues should be no more than 1.5 km apart in walking distance</li> <li>Have a cluster of cultural assets and institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporating Indigenous history into cultural districts</li> <li>Based on surrounding arts and cultural institutions to boost tourism</li> <li>Renew aging assets through cultural precincts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State government designates cultural district, and the city's cultural plan is included in policy tools</li> <li>No specific legislation, but cities work with state government through consultations</li> </ul>
Singapore	2	Awarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significance in national history, such as religious, education, and multicultural institutions dating back to the 1800s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programming and space for community gatherings</li> <li>Access to arts sector funding through National Arts Council and National Heritage Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Singapore is a city-state</li> <li>No specific legislation on cultural districts, but follow other planning and development legislation, including the Planning Act (designated conservation areas and attendant conservation guidelines for physical planning and improvement of Singapore), and Preservation of Monuments Act (preserving monuments of historic, traditional, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest, for Singapore's benefit)</li> <li>Follows executive policies, such as the 1988 Master Plan of the Civic and Cultural District, 2014 Master Plan</li> </ul>
Mississauga	6	Awarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local cultural assets, geographical bounds must be identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds and private grants directed to community artists and cultural leaders</li> <li>Small business support programs (grants, marketing strategies, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City designates districts independently (no provincial legislation)</li> </ul>

City	Number of Districts	Current Designation Process	Eligibility Criteria	Policy Tools	Legal Authority
Boston	4	Application-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed geographic bounds, walkable and accessible, with cultural facilities and assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for cultural districts through federal grants</li> <li>Collaborations with local programs such as libraries to create relevant cultural programming</li> <li>Using pre-existing infrastructure to create affordable housing</li> <li>Real estate interventions to retain relevant businesses</li> <li>Partnerships with artists to create public art</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State of Massachusetts</li> <li>Program Name: Cultural Districts, Part 1, Title II, Chapter 10, Section 58A</li> <li>Established in 2010</li> <li>State Authority: Massachusetts Cultural Council</li> </ul>
Houston	7	Application-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness that cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization</li> <li>Unique and authentic identity as determined by an area's specific characteristics, but can include its history or communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A – Government plays a limited role in development, including in programming and funding</li> </ul>	State government designates cultural district

## 2.3. Review of Seven Additional Municipalities: Good Practices

As outlined in the introduction of Chapter 2, additional research was conducted for the following municipalities: New York, NY, USA; Oakland, CA, USA; Calgary, AB, CA; Johannesburg, ZA; London, UK; Bloomington, IA, USA; Baltimore, MD, USA; and Los Angeles, CA, USA. While in-depth research was not conducted due a lack of an established cultural district designation plan and accessible public resources, these provided interesting good practices to be considered for the context of Toronto. The below outlines best and/or unique practices in terms of eligibility criteria, application process, and/or policy tools.

### 2.3.1. New York City, NY, United States (NOCD-NY)

Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts NY (NOCD-NY) is an alliance of artists, neighborhood leaders, activists, and policymakers committed to revitalizing New York City from the neighborhood up. NOCD-NY came together in 2010 in response to the vision, sustained needs, and creative resilience of the city's diverse communities. The organization facilitates peer learning, increases the visibility of community-based work, and advocates for it. Their work is grounded in a shared set of values including equity, diversity, inclusion and recognition of the integral role of arts and culture in communities. The organization's artistic vision and asset-based approach recognizes the powerful culture that already exists in communities and the importance of working across communities to make citywide change. Over the years NOCD-NY has developed long standing relationships with an alliance of artists, neighborhood leaders, community organizations, cultural workers and residents rooted in neighborhood networks. Organizations include: Arts and Democracy, ARTs East New York, Bronx Council on the Arts, Friends of the High Line, Fourth Arts Block, Groundswell, Hook Arts Media, The Laundromat Project, El Museo del Barrio, THE POINT CDC, El Puente, Queens Museum, Staten Island Arts, University Settlement, and Urban Bush Women, among others.

### 2.3.2. Oakland, CA, USA – East Oakland Black Cultural Zone (est. 2014)

While the City of Oakland does not have an official cultural district plan, it supports similar initiatives that are raised by its communities. The East Oakland Black Cultural Zone (BCZ) was spearheaded by 20 non-profits in the area in 2014 to "[address the disparate impact that decades of disinvestment in East Oakland and more recent displacement of Black People and Black Businesses from their legacy communities by centering Black Arts and Culture within a community development framework." The City of Oakland's involvement with cultural districts are therefore limited, but have still been assisting the BCZ through funding, such as the Oakland Coronavirus Aid, Relief, And Economic Security Act.

The BCZ relies on community involvement to ensure that it thrives. Under the Black Cultural Zone Community Development Corporation – a non-profit – the East Oakland Black Cultural

Zone Collaborative continues to develop the BCZ through several arts and cultural strategies, and engaging artists and community members in art activism. From a business perspective, the BCZ also took concerns from the community and established incubator spaces for emerging entrepreneurs and revitalized unused buildings into community assets.

### **2.3.3. Calgary, AB, CA – Olympic Plaza (est. 2016)**

Calgary sees the Olympic Plaza cultural district as the "economic and social heart for [Calgary] citizens (City of Calgary, 2016). In Calgary, culture is defined as the "unique identity of a community or social group" (City of Calgary). The culture in the city is expressive and "as diverse as its population," and that cultural development has been rooted in its Indigenous and immigrant history (City of Calgary). The cultural district was awarded by the Calgary City Council in 2016, after citizens and stakeholders recognized that the area was significant to public memory. There are important good practices regarding the City of Calgary' Olympic Plaza:

- Using existing structures left from the 1988 Olympics and a multicultural history of the city to reshape the district's character
- In-depth public consultation was conducted, which asked citizens what they wanted to see in the area. Public engagement took place through multiple means – stakeholder meetings, mobile offices, social media, sounding boards, a walking tour and scavenger hunt.

### **2.3.4. Johannesburg, ZA – Maboneng (est. 2010)**

Johannesburg has one cultural precinct and does not have an official designation program. However, the municipal government recognizes Maboneng's successes in creating business and employment opportunities for youth, especially those in the arts sectors. The cultural precinct is largely community-led and has limited government intervention. The precinct was initiated by Jonathan Liebmann, who bought and converted old warehouses to create working spaces for artists and entrepreneurs. The precinct aims to foster new businesses and encourage people to buy locally. While Maboneng initially started as a spot for businesses and artists, it has expanded to incorporate other facilities, including but not limited to galleries and restaurants. A good practice in Johannesburg concerns using pre-existing infrastructure to transform cultural spaces

### **2.3.5. London, UK – Culture Mile (est. 2017)**

London combines economic growth and cultural planning in its business development plans, with an emphasis on enhancing and preserving the city's history. The city is one of the major cultural epicentres in Europe and faces similar issues as Toronto, such as rent unaffordability, yet also confronts problems like the regular upkeep of physical infrastructure. London takes underdeveloped clusters of the city and enhances them through cultural initiatives. The creation of Culture Mile redevelops north-west London to create a distinct sense of identity and arrival, which encourages tourism and ultimately collaboration between organizations (City of London, 2017). However, the city recognizes the commerce and economic benefits that come from boosting cultural and creative industries (City of London, 2021). Good practices regarding London include increasing cultural learning in the city and promoting educational goals through

partnerships with 26 organizations such as museums, arts schools, and libraries (City of London, 2020).

### **2.3.6. Bloomington, IA, US – Entertainment and Arts District (est. 2010)**

Bloomington's Entertainment and Arts District is one of Indiana's 10 cultural districts. Indiana's cultural district designation process is a step implemented into the state's Creative Community Pathway. The Pathway is a capacity-building program that seeks to aid Indiana communities in starting, focusing, or deepening arts and culture-based strategies to grow collective well-being. The process is spread out across several stages. First, the Pathway's administrative team assesses the proposed district's cultural and creative assets and ensures it meets necessary criteria. The Pathway then invites the proposed district to submit a formal application, complete with a letter of intent. However, applicants must be recognized by the Pathway team as a Spotlight Community in order to apply; these are state-identified communities that show the greatest promise in arts and culture development. Current Spotlight communities within Indiana include Fort Wayne, Goshen, Kokomo, and Wabash. After the application is received and reviewed, it is either accepted or rejected by the Indiana General Assembly. In essence, Spotlight communities help communities foster a secure cultural development process before deciding to become a cultural district. Good practices for Bloomington include:

- Coordinating research focuses and goals for relevant stakeholders and partners, and
- Creating a brand identity to ensure a strong district brand and recognition within the community and region.

### **2.3.7. Baltimore, MD, US (est. 2002)**

Maryland has 29 official designated cultural districts, three of which are in Baltimore. Districts are designated through the state's Arts and Entertainment districts program, which seeks to develop, promote, and uplift diverse artistic and cultural centres and spaces across Maryland. The program also intends to provide residents and tourists with unique artistic experiences, boost economic development, and create a sense of pride in their neighbourhoods for Maryland residents.

To receive official designation, applicants must first contact all municipalities and counties that lie within the proposed district and obtain agreement regarding the tax credits that will result from designation. Applications must ensure the proposed district's geographical area lies within one of the state's designated Priority Funding Areas; the program seeks to prioritize districts that may face financial struggles or are at risk for poverty, so it is imperative that proposed districts exist within these bounds. Additionally, applicants must submit a five-year plan that outlines how the district will benefit the municipality. Good practices for Maryland include:

- Priority grant funding for artists and organizations identifying as low-income, racialized, and Indigenous.
- Providing organizations using physical spaces for arts and cultures activities with a property tax credit and an income tax subtraction to relieve financial pressures.



## 2.4. Review of Cultural Districts in 16 Municipalities: Analytical Assessment

Although each city differs in the case of arts and culture development and support for communities, there are clear identifiable patterns and best practices. In terms of common traits shared by most of the cultural districts reviewed, it is possible to observe that:

- They tend to be accessible through public transportation and/or are pedestrian-friendly;
- They celebrate the community's cultural identity through built forms and cultural activities;
- They are promoted and seen as having something unique.

The first point above is shared among many cultural districts, but is a requirement for cultural districts in the case of Boston. The second point, in turn, refers to celebrating communities through public art, laneways, murals, banners, historical plaques, etc. A specific example is Seattle's "Creative Place-making Toolkit", which is provided to cultural districts and supports artists' work. Artists are able to display their work through installing street signs, sidewalk kiosks and banners, and also through pop-up spaces that display individual projects. When it comes to seeing and promoting the cultural district as having something unique, cities have made use of different approaches – many of which are presented in the good practices below; to attract visitors, in specific, Calgary emphasizes greenery of the Olympic Plaza cultural district while other municipalities like Sydney have highlighted institutions with well-established programs.

In terms of good practices, the jurisdictional review has illustrated the following:

### ❖ Intended Goals of Cultural Districts

- The districts analyzed in this review share the common interest towards promoting arts and culture and celebrating community and history. A focus on increasing tourism in the area and on combating unaffordability have also been mentioned as objectives in specific cities such as Boston.
- Many districts are seen as forms for communities to develop their own solutions to issues faced by neighbourhoods, and also as a way to formalize an ongoing partnership between communities and the City. This is the case of cultural districts in San Francisco.
- Most districts have applied an 'equity lens' to one or more components of cultural programs, and at times embedded equity in the objective of cultural districts. As an example, Minneapolis' cultural plan, Minneapolis 2040, seeks to strengthen people of colour, Indigenous people, and/or immigrant (POCII) communities. The City aims to do so through prioritizing and accelerating economic development via strategies like partnering POCII businesses with public grants and funding.
- Several cities are proactive in ensuring that Indigenous history is represented in their cultural plan, which is reflected in cultural districts. Sydney's Walsh Bay Arts Precinct incorporates Indigenous programming and businesses such as the Bangarra Dance Theatre, a performance company that aims to promote awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

- Some cities have cultural districts with a focus on specific communities. San Francisco's American Indian cultural district has made significant progress in representing the city's Indigenous peoples by making sure that their history is remembered. Other cultural districts in San Francisco specifically focus on Latino and LGBT communities.

#### ❖ **Eligibility for parts of the city to become cultural districts**

- Most cities for which there is an application process for cultural districts to be established require information on proposed geographic bounds and on cultural assets for the designation to be awarded. Being a meaningful area in terms of historical significance (including living history) is usually an eligibility factor.
- Specific cities – like Minneapolis – require that the proposed cultural district be within "Areas of Concentrated Poverty" as defined by the City. In addition to advancing arts, culture and diversity, Minneapolis also sees cultural districts as tools to address ongoing socio-economic issues across the city.
- Provincial and municipal governments ensure the sustainability and meaningfulness of cultural districts through different means. For example, the Mass Cultural Council, which designates cultural districts for Massachusetts, has a "renewal" process whereby cultural districts need to demonstrate that they comply with state standards to be able to renew their membership,

#### ❖ **Application or designation process**

- Having a designated Project Lead to submit applications on behalf of the proposed cultural district and their communities is a common feature. Throughout the process, Project Leads share updates, take recommendations, and collaborate to identify cultural assets and strengths.
- A focus on the historical and cultural significance of the area and in protecting a community's cultural heritage and living history are embedded at different points of the process and in different forms. One of them consists of establishing steering committees made of community members.
- Nearly all of the cities selected involved the public at several points while creating and drafting their designation process. This includes holding town hall meetings, offering office hours with Arts and Culture department staff, and seeking input from residents at vital stages of the process (i.e. drafting and revising cultural plans).

#### ❖ **Policy tools used to support cultural districts**

- Most cities do not provide a one-size-fits-all policy or support to cultural districts, focusing instead on providing a set of tools for the community to determine how to advance their own solutions according to the specific goals of the cultural district.
- Instead of one type of support, most cities provide a "package" combining multiple supports. For instance, California provides funding, assistance from a consulting team to help the area grow, and partnerships with for-profit organizations.

- Most cities have created a cultural fund to financially support their cultural districts throughout their development.
  - Several cultural districts in Boston provide rent discounts for local businesses for development. Additionally, Houston's Fifth Ward cultural district is constructing residences with flexible designs for artists so that their living space can double as a studio space, thereby increasing affordability.
  - The organizers of Houston's Fifth Ward Cultural Arts district employed strategies to promote small business formation and retention, which included hiring and using businesses from the district, holding arts-focused business workshops, and providing economic incentives for the district. These economic incentives include consistent marketing of local businesses on travel sites and platforms to encourage consumer engagement, aiming to increase profitability.
  - Some cultural districts have been provided access to partnerships with government agencies. An example is San Francisco's' American Indian Cultural District, which has partnered with several governmental agencies and led educational resources and tactics to increase community engagement.
  - Cultural districts that have equity as part of their mandate have provided important opportunities to advance diversity. Little Saigon in Boston, designated as a cultural district in May 2021, aims to preserve Vietnamese American culture by supporting small businesses and non-profit organizations through the "Partners Program" by introducing opportunities, sharing resources, and supporting marketing efforts. Specific policy tools include legal and financial assistance, office and vendor rental discounts, business referrals, and storefront signage.
- **Other themes**
    - The advancement of equity in cultural districts is not limited to eligibility and application processes, but also reflected in programming. A key focus area of New York City's cultural plan for the next decade is allocating recreation and arts funding to artists identifying as having a disability.
    - An area of importance for many of the cities concerns prioritizing and improving arts education programming in schools for children, especially those living in cultural districts or 'ethnic enclaves'. For example, New York City has directed funding to non-profit organizations and arts and culture councils to provide free arts programming to NYC schools. Other examples include:
      - London's Cultural Mile Learning program aims to provide creative learning opportunities for all ages, and also support employment pathways and apprenticeship programs in the arts sector.
      - In Singapore, government reports recognized that participation in the arts was generally low. Subsequently, the Singapore government took a systemic approach in fostering cultural development in the city-state, including the creation of the Civic district, which later saw progress in community-oriented activities.

### 3. Review of International and National Legislation

Previous chapters have illustrated the vital role of "culture", both tangible and intangible, in recognizing and establishing cultural districts through a designation. This chapter presents international legislation and formal documents regarding the protection and advancement of cultural heritage worldwide. Research indicated that the following are of great relevance to this work: a report on Cultural Hubs and Cultural Districts in Canada, produced by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (2018); UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage; and the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024 proclaimed by the United Nations.

A brief description of each of these is provided below in Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. Section 3.4, in turn, provides a brief analytical assessment on their alignment with cultural districts.

#### 3.1. Report on Cultural Hubs and Cultural Districts in Canada (2018)

In April 2017, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (the Committee) adopted the following motion: "That the Committee undertake a study of at least five meetings on cultural hubs and cultural districts in Canada, including their economic impacts, their effects on arts and culture in Canada, the role they play in city building, and how the federal government can foster and support their development." The official report summarizing the main concerns, ideas, and thoughts expressed across the eight meetings held by the Committee, was published in 2018. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage studies the policies and programs of the Department of Canadian Heritage and the organizations within the Portfolio. These organizations are active in the fields of arts, culture, heritage and sports.

Funding for cultural districts was an important point of discussion and concern across the meetings. Ramzi Saad, Director General of the Arts Policy Branch, expressed to the Committee that although federal funding for cultural hubs is made possible through the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund (CSSF), new funding should be established specifically for districts. It was noted that there are gaps in funding for arts and culture programming, and the federal government should steer clear of submitting new districts to the same struggles. This should be possible through the Creative Canada policy, which was established in 2017. The policy framework charts the course for federal policy tools that support our creative industries, strengthens the nation's existing cultural policy tools, sets out a path to renew the ones that require updating, and includes legislation, funding programs and policies (Canada, 2017).

The report defines a Cultural District as "a well-recognized, branded, mixed use area where a high concentration of cultural facilities serve as an anchor of attraction. Facilities include amenities like performance spaces, museums, galleries, artist studios, arts-related shops, music or media production studios, dance studios, colleges for the arts, libraries, arboretums, and gardens. Because they are mixed use developments, cultural districts incorporate other facilities, such as office complexes, retail spaces, and occasionally residential areas" (House of Commons, 2018).

### **3.2. UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)**

The General Conference of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) met in Paris in 2003 to adopt the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage on October 17<sup>th</sup> of 2003. "Intangible cultural heritage" is defined by UNESCO as "traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. In other words, intangible cultural heritage is the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next" (UNESCO, 2021).

The Convention recognizes the importance of ensuring that intangible cultural heritage worldwide is respected and safeguarded, and the importance of providing co-operation and assistance to heritage sites worldwide. Articles 13, 14, and 15 urged State parties present for the Convention's adoption to follow a specific set of best practices to support and protect cultural heritage. Article 25, in turn, addresses the need to financially safeguard cultural heritage worldwide by outlining guidelines regarding the use of the 'Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage'. Details on these articles are provided below.

#### ***Article 13 - Other measures for safeguarding***

'To ensure the safeguarding, development and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, each State Party shall endeavour to:

- (a) adopt a general policy aimed at promoting the function of the intangible cultural heritage in society, and at integrating the safeguarding of such heritage into planning programs;
- (b) designate or establish one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory;
- (c) foster scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, with a view to effective safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular the intangible cultural heritage in danger;
- (d) adopt appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures aimed at:
  - (i) fostering the creation or strengthening of institutions for training in the management of the intangible cultural heritage and the transmission of such heritage through forums and spaces intended for the performance or expression thereof;
  - (ii) ensuring access to the intangible cultural heritage while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage;
  - (iii) establishing documentation institutions for the intangible cultural heritage and facilitating access to them.'

*Article 14 – Education, awareness-raising and capacity-building*

'Each State Party shall endeavour, by all appropriate means, to:

(a) ensure recognition of, respect for, and enhancement of the intangible cultural heritage in society, in particular through:

(i) educational, awareness-raising and information programs aimed at the general public, in particular young people;

(ii) specific educational and training programs within the communities and groups concerned;

(iii) capacity-building activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular management and scientific research; and

(iv) non-formal means of transmitting knowledge;

(b) keep the public informed of the dangers threatening such heritage, and of the activities carried out in pursuance of this Convention;

(c) promote education for the protection of natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for expressing the intangible cultural heritage.'

*Article 15 – Participation of communities, groups and individuals*

'Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management.'

*Article 25 – Nature and resources of the Fund*

1. A "Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage", hereinafter referred to as "the Fund", is hereby established.

2. The Fund shall consist of funds-in-trust established in accordance with the Financial Regulations of UNESCO.

3. The resources of the Fund shall consist of:

(a) contributions made by States Parties;

(b) funds appropriated for this purpose by the General Conference of UNESCO;

(c) contributions, gifts or bequests which may be made by:

(i) other States;

(ii) organizations and programs of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Development Program, as well as other international organizations;

(iii) public or private bodies or individuals;

(d) any interest due on the resources of the Fund;

(e) funds raised through collections, and receipts from events organized for the benefit of the Fund;

(f) any other resources authorized by the Fund's regulations, to be drawn up by the Committee.

4. The use of resources by the Committee shall be decided on the basis of guidelines laid down by the General Assembly.

5. The Committee may accept contributions and other forms of assistance for general and specific purposes relating to specific projects, provided that those projects have been approved by the Committee.

6. No political, economic or other conditions which are incompatible with the objectives of this Convention may be attached to contributions made to the Fund.

### **3.3. United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024**

The United Nations designates specific days, weeks, years and decades as occasions to mark particular events or topics in order to promote, through awareness and action, the objectives of the Organization. In December 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 68/237, by which it proclaimed 2015 to 2024 to be the International Decade for People of African Descent, with the theme "People of African descent: recognition, justice and development". As a diverse continent with a rich cultural history and set of assets, Africa is home to valuable culture that must be protected and celebrated by the international community. The resolution established the following specific objectives for the International Decade:

- To strengthen regional, national and international action and co-operation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society;
- And to promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies.

In alignment with the Decade's goals, The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presents annual reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. The OHCHR specifically prepares annual thematic reports on the protection of the rights of people of African descent; processes cases of alleged human rights violations of people of African descent through its communications procedure; and undertakes country visits to review the human rights situation of people of African descent.

In terms of specific support to the world's African communities, the resolution "calls for the allocation of predictable funding from the regular budget and extra-budgetary resources of the United Nations for the effective implementation of the program of action and activities under the International Decade (United Nations, 2020)."

### 3.4. A Vision for Culture: Analytical Assessment

The analysis of the three documents revealed that the creation of a cultural district designation in Toronto would be aligned with the current international perspective on culture, and the need to protect communities. Cultural districts are aligned with the United Nations International Decade for People with African Descent because they may use an equity lens to advance people of African descent's rights to fully participate in all aspects of society. Moreover, through a community-led process to identify and develop programming and activities, it would be possible to promote knowledge, heritage, culture, and contribution of people of African descent in the city.

A cultural district designation is also aligned with UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage. Through relevant programming and activities, cultural districts can express intangible cultural heritage because they will promote and protect "traditional or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants." Furthermore, cultural districts may allow for the "wealth of knowledge and skills [to be] transmitted...from one generation to the next." By following articles 13, 14, and 15, cultural districts can be researched thoroughly to see how communities can be educated and how intangible cultural heritage can be safeguarded.

A designation in Toronto could also draw on recommendations provided in these documents, which include:

1. Creating a specialized fund to support cultural districts in their operations and develop cultural heritage programs, which would align with the Convention adopted by UNESCO and the United Nations' Decade for African Peoples;
2. Conducting research on Toronto's intangible cultural heritage across communities, or develop methodology to do so, as advised by UNESCO;
3. Establishing a sovereign body or committee to oversee the protection and advancement of intangible cultural heritage, as suggested by UNESCO;
4. Raise awareness about each district and how it benefits the city through educational programming online and in schools, as recommended by the UN per the Decade for African Peoples;
5. Releasing an annual report on how racialized and at-risk communities within cultural districts are being protected, supported, and prioritized as districts are designated and begin their first set of activities following designation, as demonstrated by the OHCHR;
6. And regularly updating the public on the progression of each districts' development through town hall meetings or email communication, and any persistent threats to their success, as recommended by UNESCO.



## 4. Analysis of Existing Toronto Bylaws and Programs

This chapter consists of an analysis of how a municipal Cultural District Designation (CDD) program may fit within the City of Toronto's existing legislative and programming framework. Section 4.1 provides a review of relevant documents that may affect the development of a cultural district designation in Toronto with the objective of identifying potential government partnerships, and potential policy conflicts and alignment. Special attention is dedicated to assessing whether key aspects related to cultural districts are within the authority of the City of Toronto. Section 4.2, in turn, provides a review of how a potential CDD program may compare and contrast with existing City of Toronto programs and supports that are geography-focused.

### 4.1. Key Considerations: Legislation and Bylaws

The City of Toronto is governed by different legislation in terms of its authority as related to the four points outlined in the introduction of this chapter. These are namely: the City of Toronto Act, the Provincial Policy Statement, and the Ontario Heritage Act. A brief overview on each of them with special focus on items of interest as related to cultural districts is provided below in 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3. A summary of findings is provided in 4.1.4.

Drawing on the findings from earlier comparative analyses across various international cities and on the history of cultural districts in North America provided in Chapters 1, this section considered the following core features to create cultural district in order to undertake the analysis:

- The establishment of an official geography-based designation program;
- The delineation of geographic boundaries based on local character for districts;
- The creation of a "cultural district fund" or financial aid support program for districts;
- The establishment of direct support systems – financial and others – to small businesses.

#### 4.1.1. The City of Toronto Act, 2006

The City of Toronto Act established the power(s) the City possesses to create and support economic prosperity and a high quality of life for the people of Ontario. Specifically, the Act's main purpose lies within creating a framework of broad powers for the City, which balances the interests of the Province and the City and recognizes that the City must be able to do the following things in order to provide good government.

Items of Interest for a Cultural District Designation in Toronto:

- Municipalities are allowed to exercise control over culture, parks, recreation, and heritage in the City – Part III Law 74, the City of Toronto Act
- Municipalities are allowed to provide financial support in the form of grants (including loans, land, manpower, foodstuffs and merchandise) for "any purpose that council

considers to be in the interests of the City” – Part III Laws 82 and 83, the City of Toronto Act

- a. However, the City is limited in its ability to provide grants of varying forms - 81(1) clearly stating that ‘the City shall not assist directly or indirectly any manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise through the granting of bonuses for that purpose’ (2006, c. 11, Sched. A, s. 82 (1)).
  - b. Despite 82’s restrictive power, municipalities are able to grant heritage sites tax reductions or refunds (2006, c. 11, Sched. A, s. 334 (1)).
- Municipalities are allowed to provide counselling services and maintain programs for small business support – Part III Law 84, the City of Toronto Act
    - a. The City is able to do so through:
      - i. Establishing and maintaining small business programs and allowing businesses to participate in programs administered by the Crown (84(2));
      - ii. And acquiring land, erecting and improving buildings and structures in order to provide leased premises for eligible small businesses or a similar corporation - and provide them with grants and land leasing (84(3)).

#### **4.1.2. Provincial Policy Statement, 2020**

The Provincial Policy Statement provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. As a key part of Ontario’s policy-led planning system, the Provincial Policy Statement sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. It also supports the provincial goal to enhance the quality of life for all Ontarians. It takes community consultation, particularly with Indigenous communities, into consideration when planning and moving forward with land development and use projects. In relation to a cultural district designation, the City of Toronto would have to:

- Evaluate pre-existing cultural tangible heritage landscapes, and
- Ensure appropriate consultations with communities that are involved and affected by the designation process.

Based on Section 2.5, when conserving an area of significant tangible cultural heritage, municipal plans should consider the following to protect cultural heritage and conserve built features and landscapes:

- 2.6.1 significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved;
- 2.6.2 development and site alteration shall not be permitted on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential unless significant archaeological resources have been conserved;
- 2.6.3 planning authorities shall not permit development and site alteration on adjacent lands to protect heritage property except where the proposed development and site

alteration has been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that the heritage attributes of the protected heritage property will be conserved;

- 2.6.4 planning authorities should consider and promote archaeological management plans and cultural plans in conserving cultural heritage and archaeological resources;
- 2.6.5 planning authorities shall engage with Indigenous communities and consider their interests when identifying, protecting and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

#### 4.1.3. Ontario Heritage Act, 2021

The Ontario Heritage Act (the Act) governs the various powers and associated rights Ontario municipalities and the provincial government possess to preserve the heritage of Ontario. Its primary focus is to protect heritage properties and archaeological sites. Specifically, the Act allows the Province's various municipalities to designate individual districts and their properties as being of cultural heritage interest or value. It also mandates the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Conservation Review Board, a tribunal that hears objections to both provincial and municipal decisions under the Act. The Act outlines the process for designating a heritage conservation district, yet only refers to tangible structures such as buildings. In 2005, new amendments to the Act were passed that gave the Province and municipalities new powers to delay and stop the demolition of heritage sites, enhance protection of heritage conservation districts, and provide clear standards and guidelines for the preservation of provincial heritage properties.

- Under Part V, subsection 40 (1), any City Council may 'undertake a study of any area of the municipality for the purpose of designating one or more heritage conservation districts'. (2005, c. 6. s. 29). In terms of the scope of studying the potential District, 'a study under subsection (1) shall
  - (a) examine the character and appearance of the area that is the subject of the study, including buildings, structures and other property features of the area, to determine if the area should be preserved as a heritage conservation district;
  - (b) examine and make recommendations as to the geographic boundaries of the area to be designated;
  - (c) consider and make recommendations as to the objectives of the designation and the content of the heritage conservation district plan required under section 41.1;
  - (d) make recommendations as to any changes that will be required to the municipality's official plan and to any municipal by-laws, including any zoning by-laws' (2005, c. 6. s. 29).
- It is also noted that establishing a Heritage Conservation District requires a well-detailed, elaborate plan to be presented to council. 'A heritage conservation district plan shall include,
  - (a) a statement of the objectives to be achieved in designating the area as a heritage conservation district;

- (b) a statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest of the heritage conservation district;
- (c) a description of the heritage attributes of the heritage conservation district and of properties in the district;
- (d) policy statements, guidelines and procedures for achieving the stated objectives and managing change in the heritage conservation district; and
- (e) a description of the alterations or classes of alterations that are minor in nature and that the owner of property in the heritage conservation district may carry out or permit to be carried out on any part of the property, other than the interior of any structure or building on the property, without obtaining a permit under section 42. (2005, c. 6, s. 31).

#### **4.1.4. Analytical Assessment: Existing Legislation and Bylaws**

Overall, existing legislation requires the City of Toronto to operate under guidelines when making land development changes on culturally relevant heritage sites and engaging in processes to promote 'economic prosperity'.

More specifically:

- The Ontario Heritage Act limits conservation only to Heritage Conservation Districts, and only considers built structures and features as a part of heritage;
- The Provincial Policy Statement only considers protecting tangible cultural heritage, such as built features and landscapes, with no mention of intangible forms of culture.

It was found, however, that the following is within the City of Toronto's authority:

- Provision of support to businesses through counselling to boost participation in City programs and through the creation of programs;
- Provision of tax incentives and refunds for eligible heritage sites.

#### **4.2. Key Considerations: Existing Geography-focused Programs**

The City of Toronto has many programs dedicated to supporting small businesses, tourism, heritage, and arts and culture. This chapter aims to examine how the creation of a cultural district fits within the existing City of Toronto programming framework. Programs and supports identified as relevant for this analysis, in addition to being geography-focused, (a) aim to help small businesses thrive, (b) aim to support the cultural identity of a neighborhood, and/or (c) aim to protect arts, culture or heritage. The programs covered in this analysis include: the City of Toronto's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), Neighborhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), and Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs). For each of them, a brief description will be provided with a focus on their objectives and the kinds of support they offer. An assessment of similarities and differences with what a cultural district may offer to Toronto's communities is then provided in 4.2.4.

Drawing on the findings in Chapter 2, this section considered the following cultural district characteristics in order to conduct the comparative analysis in this section:

- Preserving a neighbourhood's character based on intangible cultural heritage;
- Promoting a sense of belonging by focusing on the community living in the area;
- Involving community leadership to develop or co-develop place-based solutions;
- Protecting diverse communities' sense of identity and economy with an equity focus;
- Being accessible through public transportation and/or are pedestrian-friendly;
- Celebrating the community's cultural identity through built forms and cultural activities;
- Being seen and promoted as having something unique; and
- Having clear geographic bounds.

**4.2.1. Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)**

A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is made up of commercial and industrial property owners and their non-residential tenants who join together under a volunteer Board of Management (BIA Board) to carry out improvements and promote economic development within their designated area.

Toronto has the largest number of BIAs of any urban centre in the world - 83 at this time - representing 45,000 members. BIA Boards are established by City Council as City Boards under the City of Toronto Act, 2006 in accordance with Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 19, Business Improvement Areas, which sets out procedures for the establishment and operation of BIA Boards and the composition of each BIA Board.

*Table 2 - Business Improvement Areas: Objectives and Supports*

BIAs – Objectives and Supports	
Objectives	BIAs support small and independent businesses within a geographic area.
Supports	<p>BIAs are involved in various activities, and have programs and grants to promote the area's beautification, revitalization and maintenance, marketing promotion, special events, business recruitment, and communication, among others. Examples of BIA support programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commercial Industrial Façade and Property Improvement Program – provides funding to commercial and industrial property owners to enhance a building, neighbourhood streetscapes, and environment</li> <li>● Innovation Fund – provides grant funding to innovative solutions in BIAs, allowing untested pilots to solve unique, local problems</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Outdoor Mural and Street Art Program – provides funding for outdoor mural projects to promote a local theme and construct neighbourhood identity</li> <li>● Streetscape Master Plan Program – provides one-time funding to acquire consulting services to create streetscape plans that will identify a long-term vision for streetscape improvements</li> </ul>
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#### 4.2.2. Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs)

In March 2014, the City of Toronto identified 31 Toronto neighbourhoods to be designated as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) under the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 (TSNS2020). Special attention is paid to these NIAs to stimulate community collaboration, economic development, and bring neighborhoods closer together. NIAs are supported by Neighbourhood Action Teams to promote development and provide aid to neighborhoods at critical points of development. In determining and plotting out NIAs, the City paid special attention to five areas of ‘neighbourhood well-being’ that NIAs would focus on to best support their residents:

- **Economic Opportunities:** The Economic Opportunities theme is about the economic status that neighbourhood residents can achieve; it includes income levels and quality job opportunities.
- **Social Development:** The Social Development theme is about the opportunities and connections that help residents reach their full potential; it includes education, literacy, and access to social, recreation, and cultural services.
- **Participation in Decision Making:** The Participation in Decision Making theme is about the opportunities for neighbourhood residents to get involved in making local and city-wide decisions; it includes voting in elections and working with neighbours to make plans and priorities.
- **Healthy Lives:** The Healthy Lives theme is about the physical and mental health of neighbourhood residents; it includes medical care, disabilities and illnesses that residents live with, and the number of years that residents live in good health.
- **Physical Surroundings:** The Physical Environment theme is about the natural and built environment in the neighbourhood, community, or workplace; it includes access to transportation, parks and green spaces, public meeting spaces, and air quality.

Table 3 - Neighbourhood Improvement Areas: Objectives and Supports

CDD – Similarities and Differences	
Objectives	<p>NIAs aim to support specific neighbourhoods’ economies through collaboration and activating people, resources, and neighbourhood-friendly policies. The TSNS2020 strives to generate the following for NIAs through these broader goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More clearly defined goals and actions</li> <li>● A consistent, evidence-based strategy and participatory methodology</li> <li>● Support for networking among neighbourhoods</li> <li>● Resident participation in TSNS program design and evaluation</li> <li>● New connections with the health care sector and other sectors</li> </ul>
Supports	<p>Action plans for NIAs are personalized so that each neighbourhood can choose to focus on projects and initiatives that best benefit their residents. The five themes aim to support neighbourhood residents by linking local action and resident engagement to broader social and economic change. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● South East Scarborough’s plan to create a physically and mentally healthier neighbourhood (using the Healthy Lives theme) by partnering with local organizations to start initiatives like a Pedometer Lending Program to encourage physical activity and a Coping with Stress program to launch mental health workshops for middle and high school students</li> <li>● Don Valley NIAs’ plan to improve infrastructure (through the Physical Surroundings theme) by working with the neighbourhood to enhance landscape such as developing Thorncliffe Hub with community groups, agencies, funders, and partners, and also revitalizing areas to create the Leaside Park Community Garden and Wakunda Community Garden, among other projects</li> </ul>

### 4.2.3. Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs)

A Heritage Conservation District (HCD) aims to preserve the physical history and character of a neighbourhood – specifically its cultural heritage value, character, and integrity through the built form – and are legally protected by municipal by-laws passed by the Ontario Heritage Act (Part V). Community leadership is encouraged in HCDs during the designation process to ensure that appropriate research is conducted to maintain and preserve an area’s historical significance. HCDs are well-established in the City of Toronto with over 15 districts in the city and several more currently under development. Many of these HCDs focus on preserving the historical significance of an area, including Cabbagetown, which preserves the Victorian character of the neighbourhood, and Fort York, which is known historically as a major military site.

*Table 4 - Heritage Conservation Districts: Objectives and Supports*

HCDs – Objectives and Supports	
Objectives	There is an emphasis on tangible items in HCDs, which include but are not limited to the built form, landscape, and streetscape.
Supports	<p>HCDs primarily provides support to protect and conserve built forms. Using the example of the Queen Street West HCD, a district’s distinct heritage character is preserved through guidelines that include but are not limited to ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New buildings being erected must align with historical architectural features</li> <li>● Buildings that contribute to the heritage character should not be demolished</li> <li>● Public space for street vendors and artists should be protected to ensure vibrant street life</li> </ul>

### 4.2.4. Analysis of Cultural Districts and existing City Programs/Support

The review of existing relevant City of Toronto programming as related to cultural districts has revealed that:

- BIAs rely on local property owners for decisions that affect the areas' small businesses. Currently, the City of Toronto does not have programs that allow community leaders to form a similar steering committee and co-develop solutions for the cultural development of the neighbourhood.
- NIAs have strategies in place for general community improvement, with opportunities for community leadership and involvement. This is achieved through the development of Local Action Plans that focus on economic opportunities, social development, participatory decision-making, healthy lives and physical surroundings.



- HCDs focus primarily on conserving the architectural resources in a city. Although HCDs have the capacity to also assist the community, the priority of HCDs evidently is to protect the physical properties that reflect a neighbourhood's distinct heritage character. In some cases, historical designations are not always feasible, nor does designating a heritage property protect it against rent increases, evictions or challenges with business succession.

The table below outlines and summarizes the similarities, differences, and gaps between programs/supports offered by the City to support neighbourhoods and small businesses:

*Table 5 - Cultural Districts and the City of Toronto Programming Framework: Overview*

<b>Program/Support</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Policy Tools</b>	<b>Similarities (CDDs)</b>	<b>Differences (CDDs)</b>
BIA	Improvement, beautification, and maintenance of municipally owned land, buildings, and structures; promote business development area; undertake safety, security, and crime prevention initiatives; prepare strategic plans	Financial incentives and programming for innovation, arts programs, streetscape improvements, redesigning properties	Promotes sense of belonging by focusing on community; involves community leadership to develop place-based solutions; protects diverse communities' sense of identity through equity focus; Geography-focused support; Promotes economic development, economic revitalization	Support available to all small businesses; not centred on cultural activities
NIA	Activate people, resources, and neighbourhood friendly policies	Place-based strategies; thematic structures suggestions for NIAs to follow	Promotes sense of belonging by focusing on community; involves community leadership to develop place-based solutions; protects diverse communities' sense of identity with an equity focus on economic development, and supports economic revitalization	Broad geographic boundaries; lacks opportunities to celebrate cultural heritage
HCD	Conserve and enhance historic neighbourhoods while creating appropriate change	Conservation of buildings and landscapes are dependent on historical context of neighbourhood	Preservation of a neighbourhood's character; celebrates community's cultural identity through built forms; clear geographic boundaries; community leadership	Focused on tangible forms of cultural heritage

## 5. Conclusion

Cultural district programs intended to protect or enhance a local area's cultural, heritage and community-based assets are recognized as an established place-making tool the world over. American cities such as Minneapolis, San Francisco, Seattle, East Oakland and Austin have all adopted cultural districts to combat the displacement of communities and address long-standing social and economic inequities in their communities. Within Ontario, Mississauga recently adopted six cultural districts to improve the life for residents and the economic success of the city.

The international review of 16 cultural district programs highlights several good practices employed by other jurisdictions:

- Create an application-based designation process to allow all potential districts an equal and fair basis to achieve designation;
- Develop a cultural district fund to support each district's development and operation, especially in the first few years of establishment;
- Appoint a project lead to submit an application on behalf of the district;
- Partner districts with local non-profit organizations and government bodies to co-ordinate cultural events and increase community engagement;
- Consult with the public at every stage of the designation process, especially residents of potential districts; and
- Publish an annual report detailing each district's progress on all cultural, financial, and community matters.

Cultural districts emphasize local arts and culture while supporting the growth and sustainability of small community business development and tourism municipal policy tools. Through these programs, the community's living history can generate great benefits, like fostering economic development and serve as a hub for community knowledge sharing and learning. Cultural districts also have the opportunity to address community displacement and the lack of affordable space, especially for equity-seeking communities facing change through intensification, infrastructure development and other urban renewal investments.

● **Appendix A: Population Density of Reviewed Cities**

City	Population density (people/square kilometre)	Sources
Houston	1,494	2019 US Census (estimated)
Calgary	1,500	2016 Canadian Census
Mississauga	2,468	2016 Canadian Census
Johannesburg	2,696	2011 Stats South Africa Census
Baltimore	2,832	2019 US Census (estimated)
Oakland	2,997	2019 US Census (estimated)
Minneapolis	3,073	2019 US Census (estimated)
Los Angeles	3,279	2019 US Census (estimated)
Seattle	3,466	2019 US Census (estimated)
Toronto	4,334	2016 Canadian Census
Boston	5,541	2019 US Census (estimated)
London	5,701	Estimated, 2019 UK Office for National Statistics
San Francisco	7,262	2019 US Census (estimated)
Singapore	7,810	2020 Singapore Department of Statistics
Sydney	9,212	2019 City of Sydney (estimated)
New York City	10,636	2019 US Census (estimated)
Bloomington	N/A – US Census QuickFacts page is currently under maintenance	2019 US Census (estimated)

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