

## Introduction

The City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit (CABR) is responsible for rolling out the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism<sup>1</sup>. Action 19.2 in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism calls for the City to out-reach, recruit, and appoint diverse people of African descent to advisory bodies in the City of Toronto. The Partnership and Accountability Circle (PAC) was established to guide and support the full implementation of the Action Plan.<sup>2</sup> The PAC is informed by African values, principles, and practices and reflects Torontonians' diversity of African descent. Membership of the Circle comprises 12 Torontonians with diverse lived experiences, education, professional expertise, and historical knowledge of anti-Black racism in Toronto. This includes:

- (4) Four elders who represent the wisdom of the community to hold the integrity of the Circle's principles, values and practices;
- (4) Four youth, defined as being between the ages of 13 to 29 with diverse lived experience; and;
- (4) Four people who represent key stakeholder groups of Black Toronto communities.

As part of reflecting on Year Four of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, the Partnership and Accountability Circle (PAC) has written this report, organized by the key priorities approved by the City Council for the Year Three work plan and is structured as follows:

1. Continuing to Create Culture Change at the City
2. Community Capacity Building
3. Community Safety, Wellbeing and Alternatives to Policing
4. Black Community Resilience

## Key Impacts

- COVID-19 continues to have an acute impact on Black Torontonians, especially in the areas of housing security, mental health, and business communities:
  - *“The COVID-19 pandemic has really brought to light the disproportionate health, housing security and economic inequalities that Black Torontonians face.”*  
- PAC Member
- The Mental Health Support Strategy and the efforts towards ensuring police officers are not first responders for mental health crises are a positive step toward protecting Black Torontonians:
  - *“Well, I am very pleased that they have made these programs to make sure that it's not just police that are just being called. They had been talking about doing this for years.”*  
- PAC Member

## Key Achievements

- PAC was consulted by Economic Development and Culture for cultural designations for cultural zones in the city; including the Little Jamaica initiative and the renaming of Dundas Street which signify acknowledgement of the past harm done by colonial legacies, and the present threat of gentrification for Toronto's Black communities.
- The development of the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee (CABRAC) focused on confronting anti-Black racism in Toronto and will help further advance the objectives of the Toronto Action Plan to Confronting Anti-Black Racism, which was adopted by Council in December 2017.
- The CABR Unit in partnership with City divisions has done a good job of institutionalizing anti-Black racism training in City divisions.
- Public health campaigns aimed at addressing vaccine engagement in Black communities have resulted in improved community health education.

<sup>1</sup> City of Toronto. (2020, October 01). Confronting Anti-Black Racism. Retrieved January 08, 2022, from <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-Black-racism/>

<sup>2</sup> City of Toronto. (2020, October 01). Confronting Anti-Black Racism. Retrieved January 08, 2022, from <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-Black-racism/>

- Although COVID continues to impact the lives of Torontonians, the progress of initiatives in Year 3 made strides despite constraints.

**Feedback on Progress of Year 3 Action Plan Work Plan Priorities**

Priorities	Action/PAC Perspective	Recommendations
<p><b>Priority 1:</b> Continuing to Create Culture Change at the City</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Renaming Review of Toronto landmarks linked to historical figures responsible for anti-Black racist policy is an important step forward to recognizing the impact of history on the present. Renaming Dundas Street is symbolic of a positive shift in how the City of Toronto commemorates public figures and events in street and place names.</li> <li>• The creation of the Black Staff Network for Black city staff is an important deliverable of the Action Plan. As a result of action taken by city departments, there has been an improvement in recruitment and outreach to Black communities which has increased Black staff hires. This shows that city departments are thinking about Black talent recruitment intentionally.</li> <li>• Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee (CABRAC) recently updated their work plan, reflecting the four following focus areas:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employment and Entrepreneurship</li> <li>2. Education</li> <li>3. Housing, Health and Mental Health</li> <li>4. Policing and the Criminal Justice System</li> </ol> <p>PAC believes these policies are a positive step toward addressing the anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination that is deeply embedded in the policies, practices and institutions at the municipal government level.</p> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC recommends that City divisions continue to use anti-Black racism training modules as we believe the results of such initiatives will be seen in generations to come. These actions must be sustained over time to ensure that the intended culture change is embedded in policies, procedures and practices within city divisions.</li> <li>• PAC recommends that City divisions continue to focus on diversity in personnel recruitment, with additional focus on creating inclusive cultures within the Black Staff Network.</li> <li>• PAC recommends that City divisions dedicate additional funding to the Black Staff Network to ensure Black talent within the city can create a community to encourage talent retention.</li> <li>• PAC members have noted that executive leadership in City divisions is a lot less racially diverse than frontline or mid-level. Therefore more effort needs to be made toward ensuring Black staff are retained and encouraged to apply for higher leadership positions to improve representation.</li> <li>• Given the rate at which data is collected in Black communities, through policing and other measures, PAC recommends increasing transparency by doing a public awareness campaign to demonstrate how data is collected and used to advise policy for Black communities.</li> <li>• PAC members recommend a longer onboarding transition period between old PAC and new PAC members to improve knowledge sharing, increase group cohesion, and keep previous PAC members engaged in the process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 1:</b> Continuing to Create Culture Change at the City (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a result of the actions of the CABR Unit and CABRAC, there has been an improvement in the use of anti-Black racism training and language in City divisions, as this training has been made mandatory. It is encouraging to witness how different teams are working with anti-Black racism tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC recommends that the City do more to address the retention of Black staff. At large, Black staff are leading the charge and doing the labour of ensuring anti-Black racism is addressed at the City, which can add a layer of stress and trauma to their work. Retention is crucial to ensure that continued</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Black Youth Fellowship program is another positive step toward encouraging Black youth to prepare for employment and leadership positions in the city.</li> </ul>	<p>progress is made toward addressing anti-Black racism within the City divisions.</p>
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<p><b>Priority 2:</b> Community Capacity Building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PAC is encouraged by the implementation of community capacity-building programs in Black communities, including the Cultural Districts Program, Toronto Arts Council - Black Arts Program, Awakenings, and the Jane and Finch Initiative.</li> <li>The Black Mandated Funding Framework is slated to support marginalized Black communities such as the LGBTQIA+ community. However many initiatives were put on hold due to COVID. We are hopeful about the resumption of programming in 2022. Furthermore, many resources for LGBTQIA+ persons are concentrated in the downtown area. PAC would like to see more LGBTQIA+ resources outside of the downtown core.</li> <li>PAC is in support of Black cultural landmark spaces such as A Different Booklist receiving long-term leases with the city.</li> <li>PAC is in support of the Economic Development and Culture (EDC) division’s initiatives that provide resources for Black arts, Black artists are targeted with internships and programming. However, more needs to be done to support Black artists as COVID has negatively impacted artists who rely on public spaces or community gatherings to sustain their lives. PAC believes more post-COVID recovery investments will be necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PAC recommends addressing Black art funding gaps by continuing to increase grants, and by increasing access to a subsidized artist living and exhibition spaces. Artist spaces are expensive which decreases accessibility. Increasing access through dedicated funding and spaces will give more Black artists opportunities to thrive in the city.</li> <li>PAC recommends extending inclusive support for Black LGBTQIA+ persons outside of the downtown core and towards the suburbs.</li> <li>PAC recommends more long-term lease contracts and public/private partnerships with Black-owned spaces, especially in rapidly gentrifying areas such as Jane and Finch and Little Jamaica, to ensure that Black businesses are not priced out of these areas.</li> <li>PAC recommends developing partnerships with banking institutions to support Black communities in all areas of economic development.</li> <li>PAC recommends more support for Black cultural festivals like Toronto Caribbean Carnival to access sponsorship and funding opportunities.</li> <li>PAC recommends Toronto Public Library (TPL) spaces provide more Black-focused programs as TPL are essentially community cultural centers.</li> <li>PAC recommends initiating transformative Black art projects at police divisions as a way to inspire community connection and serve as a reminder of police’s accountability to Black communities.</li> <li>PAC recommends that the city improve its current marketing and advertising strategy to educate the public on (a) the great work that is being done and (b) funding and resource opportunities that can positively impact the lives of Torontonians.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Priority 2:</b> Community Capacity Building (continued)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC recommends more partnership between provincial and municipal governments to address the needs of Black communities.</li> <li>• PAC recommends ensuring that the city’s recreational activity and spaces booking system is revamped with an anti-Black racism lens to improve accessibility for Black Torontonians.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Priorities</b></p>	<p><b>Action/PAC Perspective</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>
<p><b>Priority 3:</b> Community Safety, Wellbeing and Alternatives to Policing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC recognizes and supports the continued effort of Toronto Police Services (TPS) and City divisions to adopt anti-Black racism tools into staff training and onboarding. This has been an initiative stemming from community feedback that police reform is needed, and it is promising that committed steps have been made in the right direction.</li> <li>• PAC is in support of long-term, sustained, and holistic efforts toward rebuilding trust between TPS and Black Torontonians. Given the tenacious relationship between Black communities and Police departments all over North America, much effort needs to be put toward addressing the systemic and historical distrust between Police and Black communities.</li> <li>• PAC is in support of the newly implemented Mental Health Support Strategy that ensures funding will be distributed to community-based mental health organizations.</li> <li>• PAC is in support of the newly implemented Toronto Community Crisis Service Pilot project which will impact how mental health professionals are engaged during acute crises. This is an important step toward community safety, especially since COVID has negatively impacted mental health in Black communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC recommends that TPS continue to increase recruitment of Black officers and employees to increase staff diversity, especially in frontline response personnel.</li> <li>• PAC recommends that Toronto Police Services increase community engagement by enacting a marketing campaign or producing regular reports that inform the public on the following topics:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police conduct complaint process</li> <li>• Understanding of individual rights</li> <li>• TPS process for dealing with mental health crisis calls</li> <li>• How data collected by TPS from Black communities are being used (data transparency).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• PAC recommends for TPS to develop a community presence strategy that ensures police officers are stationed in the same place to build and maintain relationships in communities.</li> <li>• PAC recommends adding culturally sensitive components to mental health outreach and awareness strategies to address mental health in Black communities. For example, engaging religious institutions to support communities demonstrates respect for cultural or traditional approaches to addressing mental health. Also, creating programs that address the mental health needs specific to Black men is a gap that needs to be filled.</li> <li>• PAC recommends starting initiatives to encourage the hiring of more Black mental health professionals with diverse backgrounds in community healthcare organizations.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Priority 3:</b> Community Safety, Wellbeing and Alternatives to Policing (continued)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC recommends having dedicated mental health advocates to support families when engaging with mental health support and experts. As part of the support crisis services, there should be a 3rd party community member who is a dedicated mental health advocate for families. These mental health advocates should have personal experiences (family members) with mental health crises. This 3rd party allows for better communication between the clients and mental health professionals.</li> <li>• PAC recommends that Mental Health Crisis responders at 211 should be trained to triage specifically for Black needs. This may include creating a framework for identifying the intersectional needs of Black communities.</li> <li>• PAC recommends that a centralized database be created that maps community organizations offering different ways to access mental health supports to Black communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priorities</b></p>	<p><b>Action/PAC Perspective</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>
<p><b>Priority 4:</b> Black Community Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC is in support of the Black Scientists Taskforce on Vaccine Equity. After careful integration, vaccination public campaigns and informative workshops in Black communities have increased safety, reduced fears, and improved access to community health resources.</li> <li>• PAC is somewhat satisfied with the extent to which food security in Black communities has been improved, however, the impact of the Black Food Sovereignty Plan is yet to be seen. Still, much is yet to be done to ensure that Black communities own and are in control of the means of production for their food; from farming to the grocery, to support communities that are food insecure.</li> <li>• PAC is not satisfied with the strategies to address the housing crisis in Toronto. The number of new condominium developments is increasing, but the housing crisis is not being addressed. Black Torontonians, and other cultural groups inclusive, need more dynamic and inclusive housing resources, as the perception is that the housing crisis is getting worse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC requests that the City does more to make more sustainable/permanent living spaces for all Torontonians. PAC recommends that all new builds/condos must have a proportionate percentage of affordable spaces for ownership, rent, or subsidized living.</li> <li>• PAC recommends a review of Toronto’s shelter systems as many people have experienced shelters as dangerous places; shelters need to be improved to become safer places especially as more Torontonians are experiencing homelessness due to economic challenges and gentrification.</li> <li>• PAC recommends the City enact a marketing PR campaign geared towards Black youth to encourage them to enter skilled trades that can provide high earning potential.</li> <li>• PAC recommends for the Little Jamaica neighbourhood to be included in the City’s inclusionary zoning plan to ensure affordable housing opportunities will be made available for residents.</li> </ul>

Priorities	Action/PAC Perspective	Recommendations
<p><b>Priority 4: Black Community Resilience (continued)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAC is supportive of initiatives to address Black community health such as Black Mental Health Week, TCHC CABR Action Plan, and the TCHC Centre for the Advancing the Interests of Black People. These Initiatives focused on Black communities are a good thing and we look forward to seeing the outcomes of increased funding opportunities in the future.</li> <li>• PAC believes it is imperative for Little Jamaica to be included in the city’s inclusionary zoning plan, to ensure affordable housing is made available to residents. Ensuring this will be imperative to protecting the community’s residents, businesses, and cultural heritage from the threat of gentrification.</li> </ul>	

**Lessons Learned**

*“There’s this quote from Desmond Tutu, where he talks about the fact that there are people falling into the river, and we keep pulling them out. But maybe it’s time for us to find out why they keep falling into the river.”*

- PAC Member

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has been detrimental to all communities, especially the Black community, it did provide important opportunities to learn about where the gaps in support for Black communities are. Through the work of the CABR Unit and CABRAC, considerable efforts have been made to address the disproportionately devastating impact of COVID-19 on racialized and Black communities. Therefore, PAC encourages the City of Toronto to ensure the CABR Unit and CABRAC remain permanent bodies of the City’s operating model to ensure Black voices are heard in the work beyond the current 5-year mandate. It will be important to ensure that the systemic issues that cause the disenfranchisement of Black communities, including health outcomes, housing, food security, education, and employment, are addressed through the current initiatives and followed through for the long term. Continued resourcing to the CABR Unit and its associated initiatives is an important way to show committed accountability, especially since the effectiveness of current efforts will be felt in the years to come.

*“It’s really difficult for me to say Happy New Year. When I think about all of the people who have just woken up to their rent increases when they were already just not payable... I think the housing crisis is one of the worst side effects of the pandemic.”*

- PAC Member

The current housing initiatives aimed at supporting Torontonians to access affordable housing seem like a band-aid. The pandemic has increased housing insecurity for many Torontonians from different walks of life, and temporary housing efforts do not provide stability for vulnerable people, especially in Black communities. The inclusionary zoning plan is meant to provide opportunities for affordable housing in select communities, however, Little Jamaica has been left out - a community whose residents have been negatively impacted by

the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT and new condo developments that are increasing the threat of gentrification.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, rent increases during the pandemic should not be happening as homelessness is a huge impact of the pandemic. As a result, the shelter system is overwhelmed, and homelessness has increased all across the GTA.<sup>4</sup> There are grey areas on the margins of housing availability, as there are people who are living on the edges of homelessness by couch surfing, living in cars, or staying in precarious living situations.<sup>5</sup> Many people experience shelters as dangerous places, and would rather stay in unsafe or precarious living situations than enter the already overwhelmed shelter system in Toronto.<sup>6</sup> More resources need to be allocated to support Torontonians on the edges of homelessness, who are being priced out of living in the city as a blind spot for community service. Urgency and considerable efforts should be made to ensure that housing interventions are tailored to support the most vulnerable groups that the shelter system is adequately resourced, and the negative impacts of gentrification are addressed through increased affordable housing programs.

*“Many times, the community at large doesn’t know that some programs are actually City initiatives. The City needs to do a better job of ensuring the public knows about City initiatives, which would give the City better reception and make people know the positive things that the City is working towards.”*

- PAC Member

PAC recommends that in all priority areas, more efforts need to be made to promote and advertise city-wide initiatives. From housing support to business support, to mental health initiatives, there are many Black Torontonians who are not aware of the city-wide resources that have been provided to address their varying needs. More effort needs to be made to expand program marketing efforts, and PAC recommends that the City use strategic marketing techniques that can reach more members of the Black community - including partnering with religious institutions, TV stations, radio stations, community organizations, and community leaders to help spread the word more broadly.

*“Because racism is so deeply entrenched, building trust of the police is something that will take a long time. There have been commitments and I am sure there is action happening in the background, but they need to be showcased - and that kind of momentum to building trust takes a long time. And then an incident will happen that takes us back again.”*

- PAC Member

While PAC recognizes and supports the current initiatives by City divisions and agencies, especially the Toronto Police Service (TPS), to address anti-Black racism, more accountability to Black communities is required. PAC has recommended that TPS make steps toward increasing accountability toward the Black community by providing regular reports or marketing campaigns that are addressed specifically to the Black community that provide clarity about important issues. For example, a marketing campaign could be implemented that informs communities about the police conduct complaint process or encourages a better understanding of an individual’s rights when interacting with TPS. A regular report showcasing internal changes happening at TPS could also increase community understanding of TPS processes, including processes concerned with mental health crisis calls and data transparency. Black Torontonians are asking TPS, and all City departments, to move toward accountability through the transparency of widely shared external communications.

In conclusion, PAC remains hopeful and diligent in their monitoring of efforts made by City divisions toward the City of Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti Black Racism. Given the continued and major impact of COVID-19 and the disproportionately negative impact on Black communities, this action plan is even more crucial at this time. PAC looks forward to continue efforts to implement the Action Plan, as the impacts will be felt for generations to come.

### References

<sup>3</sup> Beattie, S. (2021, October 22). Critics slam 'ridiculous' decision to exclude Little Jamaica from mandatory affordable housing plan | CBC News. Retrieved February 16, 2022, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/critics-slam-ridiculous-decision-to-exclude-little-jamaica-from-mandatory-affordable-housing-plan-1.6219721>

<sup>4</sup> Ibrahim, E. (2022, January 19). Homeless shelters face added strain amid omicron variant, high rates of people on streets. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-homeless-shelters-face-added-strain-amid-omicron-variant-high-rates-of/>

<sup>5</sup> Khanlou, N. (2020, June 22). COVID-19 pandemic guidelines for mental health support of racialized women at risk of gender-based violence. Retrieved January 31, 2022, from <https://www.srchc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/COVID19-Guidelines-for-mental-health-support-of-racialized-women-at-risk-of-Gender-Based-Violence-Synthesis-Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Neufeld, A. (2021, June 15). 'Like a rat cage': Toronto's homeless describe packed shelters, surge in violence and death. Toronto. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/like-a-rat-cage-toronto-s-homeless-describe-packed-shelters-surge-in-violence-and-death-1.5471155>

1. City of Toronto. (2020, October 01). Confronting Anti-Black Racism. Retrieved October 08, 2020, from <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-Black-racism/>
2. City of Toronto. (2020, October 05). COVID-19: Status of Cases in Toronto. Retrieved October 08, 2020, from <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-latest-city-of-toronto-news/covid-19-status-of-cases-in-toronto/>
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