



Cheryll Case

Founder and Executive Director

Phone: (647) 905-0197

2575 Eglinton Avenue W

Email: Cheryll.Case@CPplanning.ca

Web: <https://cpplanning.ca/>

To:

Councillor Alejandra Bravo

Councillor Shelley Carroll

Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee

Date: April 8, 2026

Re: EC27.12 – Advancing Community Development through Evidence-Based Planning

Dear Councillors,

Community in Public submits strong support for scaling investment in Social and Community Development Plans as a core mechanism to deliver inclusive, place-based economic development. While Toronto has strong policy frameworks, the lack of sustained funding for neighbourhood-level implementation is limiting the City's ability to translate these commitments into measurable outcomes.

As a Toronto-based non-profit working at the intersection of land use planning, economic development, and community governance, we focus on aligning public, non-profit, and private sector actors to unlock community wealth, protect affordable housing, and strengthen local economic ecosystems. Our work supports communities across Ontario - particularly those facing systemic barriers - to meaningfully participate in shaping development and accessing the economic opportunities it generates. We have supported several Toronto neighbourhoods.

In our experience, Social and Community Development Plans represent one of the most effective tools available to operationalize your priorities at the neighbourhood level.



A Critical Implementation Opportunity

Toronto has developed strong policy frameworks across economic development, housing, and equity. However, the absence of sustained funding for Social and Community Development Plans is a structural barrier to coordinated, neighbourhood-level implementation.

Neighbourhoods such as Jane Finch and Mount Dennis demonstrate what becomes possible when the City recognizes and supports community leadership. In Jane Finch, a long-term, resident-informed Community Development Plan has created a shared framework that aligns social, economic, and cultural priorities while embedding community leadership into implementation. In Mount Dennis, partnerships between the City and local organizations have supported community-driven planning tied to workforce development, anti-displacement strategies, and local economic opportunity. In both cases, dedicated funding and collaboration have enabled communities to **move beyond consultation toward coordinated, sustained collaboration.**

What We Are Seeing on the Ground

Across Toronto, several neighbourhoods illustrate both the potential and the current limitations of place-based planning when it is not consistently resourced.



Little Jamaica community leaders speaking at [NIA Centre at the Nothing About Us Without Us](#)

In Little Jamaica, extensive economic disruption caused by transit construction and market pressures has led to the displacement of significant portions of the community, including the closure of many long-standing Black-owned businesses. In response, residents and organizations have mobilized their own solutions, including the creation of the [Eglinton Vaughan Community Land Trust](#) to protect affordable housing and the Little Jamaica Land Trust to protect affordable business spaces. The City of Toronto expressed commitments to maintain an ongoing Partnership and Accountability table for the neighbourhood; however, this level of sustained coordination has not yet been realized. There continues to be significant gaps between the scale of need and the level of sustained investment and coordination.



[Build a Better Fairview](#) community leaders



Neighbourhoods such as Don Valley Village are seeing significant grassroots organizing to secure community benefits in the redevelopment of the Fairbank Mall. While the Build a Better Fairbank Mall group won a Community Champion Award from the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, and had their local Councillor Shelley Carroll attend key community gatherings – their calls for inclusive economic development and affordable housing have not been met.



[Build a Better Fairview](#) Community Event with local City Councillor Shelley Carroll

These examples point to a broader structural gap. In the absence of sustained funding and coordinated implementation through mechanisms such as Social and Community Development Plans, the responsibility for stabilizing neighbourhoods, establishing inclusive local economies, and responding to displacement is too often placed on residents and community organizations that do not have the capacity to conduct the work at the scale required.

Community-Led Planning as Economic Infrastructure

Social and Community Development Plans should be understood not only as social policy tools, but as essential local economic infrastructure - enabling a shift from fragmented, time-limited initiatives toward coordinated, place-based systems that generate both economic and social returns.

By centring community leadership and aligning cross-sector partners, these plans:

- Support labour market participation by connecting residents to training, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Strengthen neighbourhood-level economic ecosystems, including small businesses and cultural industries
- Enable more effective use of public investment by ensuring it is responsive to community-defined priorities



Advancing Equity Through Participation and Governance

A key strength of Social and Community Development Plans is their ability to address structural barriers to participation in decision-making. Without dedicated funding for community leadership, decision-making processes are disproportionately shaped by profit driven organizations with greater institutional and financial capacity, limiting equitable participation. This is leading to increased unemployment and housing unaffordability.

Councillors, your decision to invest in Social and Community Development Plans will correct the balance of the negotiating table, so that it is more inclusive and representative of the people living in the neighbourhoods you serve.

To enable equitable participation, we recommend the Economic and Community Development Committee and City Council:

1. Increase funding for the Social Development Division to support a minimum of six neighbourhoods to develop and/or implement a Social / Community Development Plan. This includes Regent Park, Moss Park, Little Jamaica, Don Valley Village, Lawrence Heights and Alexandra Park.
2. Establish a Community Advisory Table to guide the equitable scale up of funding for Social & Community Development Plans, targeting 158 neighbourhoods by 2030.
3. Request the Mayor to consider, in the development of the 2026 budget, allocating sustainable funding in the range of \$250,000–\$500,000 annually per neighbourhood to support neighbourhood associations or coalitions leading the implementation of Social Development Plans and Community Development Plans.
4. Request the City Manager to report to City Council as part of the 2027 budget process on a city-wide framework for scaling Social Development Plans and Community Development Plans, ensuring consistent access across all neighbourhoods based on need.
5. Request the Executive Director of Social Development to consider establishing equity-based indicators and accountability mechanisms to guide the development and implementation of these plans, ensuring measurable outcomes and transparency.
6. Reaffirm that Social Development Plans and Community Development Plans are core anti-Black racism interventions, recognizing their role in addressing systemic barriers to housing, economic opportunity, and community wellbeing.



Conclusion

Scaling investment in Social and Community Development Plans provides Toronto with a proven, scalable model to advance inclusive economic development, strengthen community safety and wellbeing, and improve the effectiveness of public investment. Toronto is filled with incredibly brilliant and passionate people. A ripe opportunity to invest in neighbourhood-level implementation that aligns resources and builds community leadership.

Without sustained funding, the burden of responding to displacement and economic exclusion will continue to fall on residents and volunteers and the costs to address the resulting crisis of escalating poverty will bite much worse than the barriers to raise the funds required to invest in community-led planning.

Community in Public is prepared to support you in this incredibly important work. We encourage the Committee to take leadership in advancing this approach through sustained investment across the city, as follows:

Sincerely,

Cheryll Case

Founder and Executive Director
Community in Public

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryll Case', with a horizontal line underneath.