

City of Toronto Planning and Housing Committee
Attention: CreateTO Development Lead, Tina Panagoulia
Date: January 20, 2026

Subject: Letter of Support for a Non-Profit-Led Development at 9 Shortt Street, Eglinton West's Little Jamaica

Dear Members of the Planning and Housing Committee and CreateTO,

The City of Toronto's proposal for 9 Shortt Street presents a vital opportunity to create deeply affordable housing, equitable community spaces, and meaningful economic opportunities in Toronto's Little Jamaica, a neighbourhood experiencing displacement pressures and cultural erasure. We commend the City of Toronto, Councillor Mike Colle and CreateTO for advancing this project.

As CreateTO and Toronto City Council work to prepare this site for future development, which will include the release of an eventual Request for Proposals (RFP), Black Urbanism TO is requesting that future development at 9 Shortt Street to be non-profit led and community-serving.

About Black Urbanism TO

Black Urbanism TO (BUTO) is a Toronto-based, Black-led non-profit organization advancing equitable community development, cultural preservation, and inclusive economic opportunity in historically Black neighbourhoods. Our work sits at the intersection of land stewardship, cultural heritage, and community-rooted economic development.

BUTO was established in response to long-standing structural inequities in city-building processes that have disproportionately impacted Black communities particularly in areas experiencing major infrastructure investment and market-driven displacement. We work to ensure that development outcomes are shaped with communities, not imposed upon them, and that land, culture, and local enterprise are protected as shared community assets.

In Eglinton West's Little Jamaica, BUTO has played a central role in community planning, business preservation, and cultural heritage initiatives, including serving as the incubating organization for the Little Jamaica Community Land Trust (LJCLT). Through this work, we have supported, residents, legacy businesses, advanced non-profit land ownership models, and collaborated closely with City divisions, local BIAs, and community stakeholders to stabilize and reinvest in the corridor during and after the Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction period.

BUTO strongly supports non-profit-led development as a mechanism to deliver long-term community benefit, protect affordability, and ensure accountability to local residents and businesses. A non-profit ownership and governance model at 9 Shortt Street aligns with our

mandate to prevent speculative displacement, preserve Black cultural presence in Little Jamaica, and embed social, cultural, and economic outcomes into the built environment.

For these reasons, Black Urbanism TO views a non-profit-led approach to the redevelopment of 9 Shortt Street as not only appropriate, but essential to achieving equitable, sustainable, and community-serving outcomes in Eglinton West.

Over the past five years, community members have been successful at working with local City Councillors, including Councillors Josh Matlow and Mike Colle, to advance several motions that prioritize local affordability, community-led planning and community ownership in Little Jamaica. This includes **2020.MM24.36** passed by Council in 2020 to initiate the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan, a local Planning Framework and a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment. Other motions, such as **EC29.8** and **EC.12.14** have also been brought forward to advance economic and social wellbeing through programmatic support for Black business owners.

As the Eglinton Crosstown LRT nears an official opening, we have a responsibility to ensure that new development actively repairs harm and builds genuine community wealth. Selecting a non-profit, community-rooted partner for 9 Shortt Street is the most direct way to demonstrate the City's commitment to these goals.

Drawing inspiration from the successful community-led framework for the Parkdale Hub West Block RFP which resulted in the selection of the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT), as well as the precedent set at 140 Merton Street, where the City selected an Indigenous-led non-profit to deliver seniors' housing, we believe 9 Shortt Street must follow a similar model for the benefit of Toronto's Black community.

Specifically, we urge the City to:

1. Prioritize a Non-Profit Development Partner

The future RFP for the 9 Shortt Street site should explicitly require that the development partner be a non-profit housing provider, a community housing co-operative, or a Black-led housing organization with deep roots in Toronto. As demonstrated in the Parkdale Hub RFP, such providers are best positioned to deliver housing that remains affordable in perpetuity (40-99 years) and in ways that are responsive to the social and cultural fabric of local communities. This would also ensure that culturally relevant services could be provided to new and existing residents, following in the precedent set when the Missanabie Cree First Nation became the development partner at 140 Merton Street.

2. Ensure Non-Profit Operation of Commercial and Amenity Spaces

The proposed 5,000 sq ft of retail/community space and 12,000 sq ft of outdoor amenity space should be operated by a non-profit entity to ensure community needs guide their use. These spaces should serve as hubs for local cultural programming, small business incubation,

community services, and gathering much like the community agency spaces embedded in the Parkdale Hub.

3. Embed Long-Term Affordability and Community Benefits

We support the City's commitment to 20-30% affordable units on this site, but urge that this housing be affordable based on people's income's in alignment with the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan. Additionally, the project should include a Community Economic Benefits Plan, as required in the Parkdale Hub RFP, that prioritizes local hiring, procurement from Black-owned businesses, and workforce development for equity-deserving groups. Non-profit organizations like the African Canadian Contractors Association and Toronto Community Benefits Network have made sure there is a successful bridge between local procurement processes and marginalized communities for decades across the City of Toronto.

4. Centre Community Voice in Governance

The language of the RFP and selection of a non-profit development partner should also be explicit in working collaboratively with local residents and organizations in the design, operation, and ongoing governance of the buildings. This aligns with the City's commitment in projects like 140 Merton Street, where Indigenous elders and community members were centred in the planning process and the Parkdale Hub site which will draw upon a non-profit housing provider which has strong community governance practices.

In summary, we urge that the Planning and Housing Committee direct CreateTO to structure the upcoming market offering for 9 Shortt Street to explicitly prioritize non-profit, community-based proponents. Together, this development can be a landmark of Toronto's commitment to equitable city-building, one that reflects the resilience, creativity, and vision of the Eglinton West/Little Jamaica community. Let's continue to work together.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dane Williams
Executive Director
Black Urbanism TO

cc: Ben DiRaimo, Community Planner, City of Toronto
cc: Zoie Edwards Browne, Engagement Consultant, LURA

Relevant City Motions and Items Related to Little Jamaica

- [Black Business Conversation: On Planning for the Future of Black Residents and Businesses on Eglinton West](#)
- [MM24.36 - Supporting Black-Owned and Operated Businesses and Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Eglinton Avenue West's "Little Jamaica"- by Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson](#)
- [MM31.11 - Preserving the Past, and Protecting the Future of Little Jamaica - by Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson](#)
- [Commercial Property Ownership Mechanisms in Little Jamaica](#)
- [Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan Backgrounder by Jay Pitter Placemaking, commissioned by the City of Toronto](#)
- [Little Jamaica & Eglinton West Neighbourhoods](#)
- [EC29.8 - Commercial Property Ownership Mechanisms in Little Jamaica](#)
- [EC12.14 - Supporting Small Business Operators in Little Jamaica](#)