

**Appendix A –  
Town Hall Overview and Report Back**

## Appendix A – Town Hall Overview and Report Back

The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) is developing a new Divisional Strategy (2018-2022). The new EDC Strategy will advance City Council's goals of economic vitality, quality of place and opportunities for cultural participation, update the Division's key objectives, and set its priorities for the next five years in one integrated strategy.

Four public Town Halls, were held in September 2017 one in each community planning district of the City, to provide multiple opportunities for participation. The purpose of the Town Halls was to encourage broad participation and seek feedback to inform the development of the new EDC Divisional Strategy. Each Town Hall consisted of a brief overview presentation, a panel discussion featuring local experts, and facilitated roundtable discussions followed by a report back session.

The date, time, and location of the four Town Halls were as follows:

- Etobicoke: Thursday September 14, 7 pm – 9 pm  
Assembly Hall, Performance Hall, 1 Colonel Samuel Smith Park Drive
- North York: Tuesday September 19, 9 am – 11 am  
North York Civic Centre, Burgundy Room, 5100 Yonge Street
- Scarborough: Saturday September 23, 2 pm – 4 pm  
Scarborough Civic Centre, Rotunda, 150 Borough Drive
- Toronto Centre: Wednesday September 27, 9 am – 11 am  
Toronto Reference Library, Bram & Bluma Appel Salon, 789 Yonge Street

This document provides a synopsis of the panel discussions and report back sessions from each Town Hall. Feedback obtained through facilitated roundtable discussion and submitted Town Hall Workbooks is documented in the body of the consultation summary report.

## 1. Etobicoke Town Hall

### Panelists:



Ilana Ben Ari  
Inventor, Founder, Empathy Toy



Menon Dwarka  
Executive Director, Etobicoke Arts

The following summary highlights key points from the moderated panel discussion and the question and answer period:

- Build more collaborative spaces that allow people in arts, culture, and business to work together and innovate;
- Respect the skills of artists and recognise their transferability to other sectors: artists have developed many skills that are transferable to worlds outside of art (e.g. business and advertising);
- Engage with diverse audiences by creating engagement strategies that are inclusive by design (cognisant of different identities and personalities);
- Transculturalism is a strength that provides residents of Toronto with freedom to move within cultural identities;
- Provide more grants and microfinancing opportunities; these are an important way to support artists and can help launch careers;
- Artists should take advantage of available resources, spare time, and creative freedoms; and
- Give artists free or affordable space to dream, think, and create.

### Plenary Report Back:

The following provides a summary of the key themes from the plenary report back session:

- Involve young people in arts and culture: this is a means to invest in the future (when youth become adults they will lead and invest in arts and culture), and to teach young people adaptation, problem solving, and collaboration skills;

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- Ensure equity and inclusion in arts, culture, and business (especially geographic equity, outside of the downtown core);
- Position the City as a broker for cultural organisations looking for funding;
- Ensure qualitative measures are used to value progress and change (along with quantitative economic measures); consider using storytelling as a way to gather data on the impacts of the new Strategy;
- Create a strong cultural ecosystem that support entrepreneurs and artists through funding and advice; provide affordable spaces where people can come together to collaborate;
- Make use of underutilised spaces across Toronto to create more free or affordable arts and culture spaces;
- Improve how information about arts, culture, and economic development are communicated to the public; use existing communications infrastructure more effectively (e.g. schools, BIAs, art institutions, business institutions, community centres etc.); and
- Ensure success stories from the arts, culture, and economic development landscape in Toronto are used to guide this strategy; ensure that diverse experiences and voices are included and valued.

## 2. North York Town Hall

### Panelists:



Salim Teja  
President, Venture Services, MaRS



Kim Katrin Milan  
Writer, Multidisciplinary Artist, Activist,  
Owner Glad Day Bookshop

The following summary highlights key points from the moderated panel discussion and the question and answer period:

- Arts and culture are a very effective way to engage disparate communities, especially those with unique needs like newcomers, and people with disabilities. For example, work with recent newcomers and refugees on a large-scale public mural at Pride provided an opportunity to engage newcomers in the community and connect them with service workers;

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- Art is useful in shifting lines of equity by engaging people in difficult conversations through creative experiences; the arts create an opening point where people can begin those valuable conversations;
- Arts, culture, and business are also connected through technology (e.g., technology enabled opera companies across Canada to develop a new business model to continue to thrive in the face of changing demographic trends);
- Arts and culture industries are merging with other sectors as a means of innovating. For example, design has a huge influence in almost all sectors, helping to solve the world's problems, and individuals' every-day problems. The City can create and enable more events that highlight and foster these cross-sector collaborations (e.g. Design Expo);
- Improve access to information and mentoring for new and small businesses and arts and culture organisations in order to connect people with the opportunities already available in Toronto (especially underrepresented groups);
- Design opportunities that are accessible for people with different abilities;
- Diversity is good for business; provide equal access to education and tools for disadvantaged groups to ensure they are not left behind as business and technology advance;
- Showcase the best of the City to create possibility models for artists, while also providing opportunities for smaller artists to gain experience and exposure; and
- Foster collaboration between sectors, as strong collaboration between business people, and artists is what it takes to build a vibrant global city.

### Plenary Report Back:

The following provides a summary of the key themes from the plenary session:

- Arts, culture, and economic development are deeply connected in Toronto: Many people are employed in arts and cultural production and culturally based tourism is an important driver of Toronto's economy;
- Arts, culture, and economic development need to be connected in a thoughtful and careful way that ensures arts and culture are not undervalued by economic development measures
- Access and affordability of space is a major challenge; enable the use of underutilised spaces to make the most of infrastructure that already exists;
- Support diverse communities in arts, culture, and business by ensuring programming and opportunities are available throughout Toronto;
- Affordable housing and transportation are key to a thriving arts, culture, and business sectors. Affordable housing and transportation also help correct inequalities around access to space, services, and events between the downtown core and other areas of Toronto;
- Ensure arts education and funding includes building entrepreneurial skills, which improve the employability of artists;
- Ensure arts and culture workers are paid living wages; and
- Help arts, culture, and business adapt to, and integrate, with technology changes;

- Reduce silos in City governance; ensure EDC works with City Planning and that this strategy is coordinated with other plans and strategies the City has (e.g. around climate change and homelessness).

### 3. Scarborough Town Hall

#### Panelists:



Roger Francis  
President, Scarborough Business  
Association



Sergei Petrov, Executive Director,  
Scarborough Arts Council

The following summary highlights key points from the moderated panel discussion and the question and answer period:

- Arts, culture, and business are related in many ways:
  - Business needs to understand the arts and culture landscape to identify who attends events, where, and when, to help propel the arts and culture industry forward; and
  - Many small businesses in Scarborough are deeply connected to cultural landscapes; an estimated 30,000 unincorporated businesses in Scarborough (family businesses and start-ups with 1 to 4 employees) rely on connections made, in part, through cultural landscapes. It is important to engage with and understand the experiences of these small unincorporated businesses when developing the EDC Divisional Strategy.
- Art and culture brings people together and helps create social change;
- Shift how people view and value the arts and culture: many competencies are built through arts and culture training that are applicable in a variety of situations and sectors. The City should then connect those trained in the arts and culture to non-traditional fields to create more innovative markets;
- Encourage youth to study the arts and culture if that is what they are drawn to and good at; and
- Recognise and utilise the strengths, and opportunities that already exist in Toronto while continually striving to create a city that is better for its residents.

#### Plenary Report Back:

The following provides a summary of the key themes from the plenary session:

- Amplify the opportunities, programs, and events that already exist in arts, culture, and business through improved communications; many residents are unaware of what is already available to them;
- Invest more in arts, culture and business outside of the downtown core (e.g. Scarborough, Etobicoke, and North York) by building more arts and culture infrastructure and by supporting and showcasing the arts and culture organisations, talent, and businesses that already exist outside of the downtown core (e.g. build a Living Arts Centre in Scarborough). In relation to this, create community hubs for arts and culture outside of the downtown core to foster growth and collaboration; these can also help build a sense of community, local identity and local pride;
- Build better transit to improve access to arts, culture, and business opportunities in all areas of Toronto;
- Create stronger relationships between local businesses and local arts communities; and
- Look for solutions to gentrification that keep neighbourhoods affordable while allowing businesses to grow.

#### 4. Toronto and East York Town Hall

##### Panelists:



**Rania El Mugammar**  
NPO Sector Managing Director, Artist,  
Arts Educator, Community Organizer,  
Equity, Anti-Oppression and Inclusion  
Educator and Consultant



**Mark Garner**  
Chief Operating Officer and  
Executive Director, Downtown  
Yonge BIA

The following summary highlights key points from the moderated panel discussion and the question and answer period:

- Arts, culture and business are interconnected in various ways: People make their living in the arts and culture fields and then reinvest their earnings in the local economy; arts and culture in

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public spaces (e.g., murals and festivals) stimulate local economies; Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) are transforming to act as incubators for local artists, and to provide local arts and culture spaces, in order to promote community vibrancy and commerce;

- Support diverse groups in arts, culture, and business (different incomes, ethnicities, abilities, and ages). Move beyond conversations about multiculturalism and diversity; start thinking deeper about meaningful inclusion. Provide more than just a seat at the table; engage people where they are and make them a part of the planning process by handing over some of the power (not designing the process and inviting people in). It is also important to ensure inclusion is designed for those at the margins, not just those who are privileged within diverse groups;
- Apply an equity lens to everything the City works on;
- Engage arts and culture producers in all City decision-making, including urban planning, housing, etc.; this can help reduce precarious conditions that many arts and culture workers experience (e.g. by providing more suitable affordable housing);
- Support and enable local organisations and businesses that are already doing good, important, impactful work;
- Businesses and organisations should promote diversity by leading by example and hiring diverse teams that reflect the neighbourhoods they operate in;
- Encourage community ownership over shared spaces as a means to build up community cohesions; include local arts, culture, and business communities;
- Make arts and culture more accessible through temporary activations of public and underutilised space (e.g. porch artists and painting sidewalks); activate spaces in different ways, based on what communities want, while making activities more accessible;
- Collect meaningful data at every level to support informed conversations around poverty, inclusion, and diversity (e.g. analyse who attended the EDC Town Halls);
- Create better programs and supports for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and youth looking to gain experience and knowledge; and
- Shift cultural discourse around immigrants so their skills, talents, and education are recognised in Canada, and they are enabled to contribute to society; conduct cultural competency training, and encouraging entrepreneurship and collaborative ventures as part of the solution (e.g., Regent park women who share childcare responsibilities).

### Plenary Report Back:

The following provides a summary of the key themes from the plenary session:

- Arts and culture support livelihoods throughout Toronto (e.g., the film industry employs many Toronto residents);
- Create more partnerships between arts and culture organisations and businesses (e.g., through the creation of hubs);
- Ensure the Strategy values arts and culture progress when measuring success, not just economic development;



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- Ensure equity and diversity are guiding factors in the creation and evaluation of the Divisional Strategy (including geographic equity);
- Collect good data to measure if equity and inclusion are outcomes of the Strategy;
- Consider alternate means for investing in arts, culture, and economic development, including impact investing and Section 37 funding (ensure decision-making around funding is transparent);
- Protect the infrastructure that enables Toronto to host world-class arts, culture, and business events (e.g. ensure hotel space is protected);
- Build better transit infrastructure to connect people to arts, culture and business events, programs, and opportunities throughout Toronto;
- Integrate existing strategies and plans into the EDC Divisional Strategy (e.g. Youth Strategy, Antiracism Strategy, affordable housing, transportation) and ensure interdepartmental coordination for Strategy's implementation;
- Foster increased private investment in arts and culture;
- Improve the affordability of arts and culture spaces (e.g. create a new tax category for the arts to reduce the cost of arts and culture spaces);
- Reassess the combination of arts, culture and economic development in one strategy in five years to assess if it is a combination that is beneficial to all involved sectors; and
- Create more arts and culture opportunities and jobs for youth and recent graduates.