

**Appendix C –  
Focus Group Summaries**

## Appendix C – Focus Group Summaries

Key stakeholders were invited to participate in a series of focus groups held in September and October 2017 as part of the EDC Divisional Strategy consultations. The purpose of the focus groups was to encourage broad participation, seek feedback to inform the development of the EDC Divisional Strategy, and to ensure the ensuing EDC strategy reflects the needs of the City's diverse communities.

Each Focus Group was customized to enable meaningful conversation using a combination of consultation formats and feedback mechanisms (i.e., facilitated plenary discussions, facilitated small group discussions, and interactive exercises using sticky notes and worksheets).

The date, time, and location of each focus group is provided below:

- **Newcomers:** Tuesday, September 19, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
Metro Hall, Room 308, 55 John Street
- **African, Black and Caribbean Communities:** Thursday, October 5, 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm  
Ontario Investment and Trade Centre, 250 Yonge Street
- **Youth:** Wednesday, September 27, 6:45 pm – 8:00 pm  
City Hall, Committee Room 3, 100 Queen Street West

Feedback obtained from each focus group is documented below and organized by the questions used to guide the discussions at each session.

### A. Newcomers

#### 1. Which events or attractions have you visited and has participating in these events and/or attractions influenced or shaped your experience in Toronto?

- A number of events and attractions were identified by participants, including:
  - Summerlicious and Winterlicious;
  - Nuit Blanche;
  - Free events at Harbour Front Centre and Nathan Philips Square;
  - Indigenous Arts Festival; and
  - Newcomers Day at City Hall.
- Festivals and events are a good way to get to know your neighbour and learn about different cultures in the city.
- City funding helps make these events accessible to everyone.

The discussion question also prompted conversations about funding, access and youth engagement:

### *Affordability & Access*

- Accessibility and awareness of events is sometimes limited in the newcomer community; people are unable to attend events if they do not know they are occurring. This gap in communication creates a missed opportunity to share and learn about new cultures.
- Entry fees are a barrier to accessing culture (e.g., museums and art galleries). It was suggested that entry fees should be waived or more passes through the Toronto Public Library should be made available to enable visiting arts and cultural attractions by newcomers. These experiences can help a newcomer learn about Toronto's culture, and see their own culture reflected in the fabric of the City.
- Traveling to the downtown core to participate in cultural activities is challenging; Toronto is a big city and events and opportunities should be everywhere, not just downtown.

### *Youth Engagement*

- Many of the cultural events in the City are catered to adults; there should be more youth-oriented events. Providing activities for youth in arts and culture events also encourages participation by entire families.
- Youth often bridge communication gaps for their parents; the Strategy should consider communicating through youth in order to get messages or information to parents.

### *Other*

- Seniors are a vulnerable group in the community; the Strategy should consider ways to engage them in arts and culture.
- Offer an initiative or program that teaches newcomers about Canada's Indigenous cultures.

## **2. There are many business services or supports such as advice, incentives, and training available through the City. Have you made use of these services or supports?**

## **3. How has using these services or supports influenced or shaped your experience in Toronto?**

- A few participants noted they used resources and assistance provided by Enterprise Toronto to start a business.
- Participants indicated that they were largely unaware of training opportunities and other services and supports offered through the EDC Division. The conversation revolved around improving communications and awareness including:
  - Tackling language barriers with newcomers and requesting alternative ways of informing newcomers of events;
  - Technology-based solutions or social media to target newcomers (e.g. a cell phone app with a list of City organizations and the services they provide); and,
  - Recognizing that 311 Toronto is time consuming and not ideal for someone whose first language is not English.

**4. What are the barriers or challenges to participating in activities related to the arts, culture and/or business?**

- Inequality among newcomers with respect to access and awareness of programs and services; there is a need to ensure that everyone has equal access to the services.
- Newcomers require assistance and support upon arrival to transition into a new society.
- Geographic exclusion occurs in Toronto; the neighbourhood you live in impacts your experience and participation levels.
- Newcomers face additional barriers including: language, education, employment and poverty.
- Information on how to gain employment in the City is difficult.

**5. What are the opportunities to reduce these barriers or challenges as a way to improve quality of life for all residents, including newcomers, in Toronto?**

- Addressing issues of affordable housing, poverty reduction and employment that newcomers initially face upon arrival to Canada.
- Providing workshops for newcomers on how to access grant opportunities.
- Enabling networking opportunities for newcomers.
- Providing more programs that help newcomers achieve self-reliance.
- Providing or facilitating internship programs and placements geared towards highly skilled newcomers.
- Engaging youth to communicate City messages to newcomer parents and families.

## **B. African, Black and Caribbean Communities**

**1. In your opinion, how are economic development and culture connected and how do they contribute to growth in the African, Black and Caribbean Communities?**

- Economic development and culture are intrinsically linked in that the economic growth of cities relies heavily on the consumption of culture and the arts.
- The relationship between arts, culture and economic development is an important one for the City and local communities; that relationship should improve and contribute to quality of life of the people who produce it.
- African, Black and Caribbean communities have a strong history in the Toronto arts and culture scene.
- The role of Culture in the African, Black and Caribbean communities is to tell stories and improve the well-being of individuals and the local community.
- The impact of Black culture on the City's economic development is undervalued:
  - Black communities are not the direct beneficiaries of the economic growth associated with the culture they help produce; and,

- African, Black and Caribbean communities lack control and influence over their economic base.
- Culture contributes to economic growth and job creation (e.g., the design, materials and labour associated with the production of the Caribbean Festival costumes creates local job opportunities year-round).
- Small businesses should be recognised as the anchors of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods that help contribute to the cultural capital and identity of the area, while attracting visitors.

**2. What are the opportunities to strengthen Economic and Cultural Growth in the African, Black and Caribbean Communities? What can the City of Toronto do in its overall strategies to support that growth?**

*Resources & Investment*

- The City should invest in large scale events and programs that celebrate African, Black and Caribbean cultures. The Caribbean Festival is a global event that celebrates a diverse culture and Toronto; funding for the Caribbean Festival should be equivalent to other popular, income-generating events in the City.
- Reduce or eliminate barriers (e.g., fees and regulations) for organizations who wish to carry out smaller cultural events or festivals.
- Offer opportunities for grassroots organizations to receive funding, resources and support.
- The City is in a unique position to work with other levels of government and advocate for increases in funding and support for African, Black and Caribbean communities.
- Put mechanisms in place to ensure that a percentage of profits from major cultural events go back into communities they represent.
- Preserve local culture by enacting policy that protects small businesses and artists from being priced out of the neighbourhoods they helped define.

*Communication & Engagement*

- The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism Plan should be embedded into the Strategy as a way to educate policy-makers and residents of Toronto about African, Black and Caribbean culture and values.
- The City should conduct more outreach with African, Black and Caribbean communities to ensure they are represented in plans and strategies. This includes more support from City Councillors.
- The City requires a more comprehensive communication system to ensure people from diverse backgrounds know how to access arts and culture-related resources.
- Build trust with communities by being transparent about policies and planning and ensure that there is representation and input from African, Black and Caribbean groups.

### *Youth Engagement*

- The City can support African, Black, and Caribbean youth by offering training and support for those interested in entering the work force, developing business skills and creative skills and those accessing higher education.
- Support youth entrepreneurship by providing funding and access to a creative work space.

### **3. What are the issues and challenges?**

#### *Affordability and Access*

- Many people do not know how to access City funding, programs, and contracts (i.e., procurement processes) and resources to help support their work.
- The economic benefits of arts and culture does not trickle down to the communities that create that culture. Efforts need to be made by the City to change existing dynamics and ensure that significant cultural contributors are the ones who benefit from what they create.
- The rise of property values and the pressures of development are displacing cultural shops and businesses resulting in bland spaces with no diversity or identity.
- The high cost of living in Toronto impacts the ability for arts and culture professionals to rent affordable work space in the City.
- Rules and regulations and the costs associated with running events can be a barrier to achieving economic success and sustainability for organizations and businesses.

#### *Resources & Investment*

- Project grants are not sustainable and do not encourage long-term growth of a project or business.
- There is uncertainty about how City funds are allocated by the City and a concern that African, Black and Caribbean organizations do not receive equal funding as other groups.
- Historically, the economic benefit of cultural products has benefitted non-producers (e.g., Caribbean Festival brought in \$480-million in revenue in 2016 but did not directly benefit the event organizers).
- Arts and culture programs in schools are underfunded.
- African, Black and Caribbean arts and culture entrepreneurs are excellent at their craft but lack the business acumen needed to ensure that their ventures are successful and sustainable. Create more business training, workshops and supports.

#### *Communication*

- Improve outreach and communication practices with African, Black and Caribbean communities regarding arts, culture, and economic development opportunities. Some participants indicated that decision-makers at City Hall do not reflect the needs and perspectives of Toronto's African,

Black and Caribbean communities and would like to see more efforts in information sharing, engagement and dialogue.

- There is concern that City Divisions operate in silos, preventing coordination and collaboration to solving arts, culture, and economic development challenges.

#### **4. How will we know if we are successful?**

- The number of African, Black and Caribbean businesses, entrepreneurs and artists funded by the City has increased.
- Financial and structural support for Caribbean Festival has increased.
- New paid mentorships, industry training and internships for African, Black, and Caribbean youth.
- A new Caribbean Arts Centre or Caribbean Community Centre is established in Toronto that is sustainable and supports arts, music and archival research.
- The City is host to a diversity of events focussed on African, Black, and Caribbean cultural activities beyond the Caribbean Festival or Black History Month.
- Equal funding to African, Black and Caribbean organizations with reinvestment into the communities they serve and represent.
- Entrepreneurs and artists have access to more to sustainable funding and supports.
- There is collaboration between City departments and people at the table reflect the community they represent.
- Data or metrics that show how African, Black, and Caribbean communities benefit from major cultural events.

#### **5. How can we make sure the prosperity of Toronto's business and culture sectors benefit the African, Black and Caribbean Communities?**

- Ensure ongoing partnerships and conversations with the Black community.
- Offer basic skills training and support for start-ups and entrepreneurs.
- Increase equity in the access and distribution of resources.
- Reduce the barriers to funding; too many rules and regulations exist, particularly for people in the arts and culture. There needs to be greater flexibility to improve access to resources for artists, organizations and entrepreneurs.
- Recognize the value of African, Black and Caribbean culture and provide more funding for cultural events.
- An anti-Black racism lens must be incorporated into economic development policies and practices.
- Acknowledge the issues faced by African, Black and Caribbean communities in Toronto and foster change at the institutional level.

## C. Youth

### 1. In your opinion, how are the arts, culture and business connected?

- Arts, culture and business are all connected to where people spend free time (e.g., art installations, coffee shops).
- Arts and culture events and programs can draw people into local businesses (e.g., people eat at local businesses during Nuit Blanche).
- Arts and cultural products are sold to support livelihoods (e.g., artists sell paintings).
- The business community funds arts and cultural events; however, funding partnerships may benefit some other artists over others (i.e., funding not making its way to local artists and businesses).
- Equitable access to funding, space, and recognition is an important consideration when promoting arts, culture, and economic development, as access is not equal for all members of Toronto's diverse community.

### 2. The issues(s) I face when trying to participate in arts, culture, and business is (are):

- Financial barriers including the cost of attending events, the cost of getting to events and the cost of event or program space. Requirements for sponsorship and funding can also be highly challenging and therefore prohibitive for youth to attain.
- Timing and scheduling of events and programs that do not align with busy youth schedules around school, homework, part-time jobs, and curfews.
- Geographic barriers, as most arts, culture and business events occur in the downtown core; this is exacerbated by transportation network challenges that prevent easy, affordable, and fast movement between different neighbourhoods in the City.
- Advertising of arts, culture and business events that does not target the youth community, especially for grassroots events.
- Uncertainty about participating in something new, including a fear of failure, fear of not fitting in, and fear of doing the "wrong" thing while participating.
- Lack of public interest in youth-led arts, culture and business events and programs.
- Lack of inclusive spaces, programs, and events to showcase the work of equity seeking groups in arts, culture, and business sectors.

### 3. I could participate more in arts, culture, and business if:

- Incentives for youth to participate in arts, culture, and business events were offered, including transit fare and free or cheap food.
- Access to spaces that are accessible physically, geographically, and financially, and are open at various times (e.g., subsidised event spaces outside of the downtown core, youth pricing options, 24/7 arts spaces).



- Improve outreach and engagement to raise awareness of arts, culture, and business events in youth communities, especially for grassroots and independent events. Participants suggested various pathways to improve engagement:
  - Increase the use and efficacy of social media outreach (e.g., Snapchat, Instagram) to create trending events;
  - Consider hiring youth to run social media accounts and effectively use hashtags to promote events and programs;
  - Create partnerships and programs with school boards to spread information through student representatives at every school;
  - Advertise in daily morning magazines (e.g., Metro);
  - Advertise on websites like BlogTO or Toronto.com;
  - Create funny and eye-catching TTC advertisements (bus and subway); and,
  - Create a single website to host information on all arts, culture and business events.
- Provide training for youth by creating opportunities for youth to gain volunteer hours, internships, mentorships, or part-time jobs through arts, culture, and business events and programs.
- Improve transportation networks to provide safe, affordable, and fast transportation to arts, culture and business events in various parts of the city (not just downtown).
- Create more opportunities for diverse and independent artists and businesses, including Indigenous artists and business people, by ensuring these creators are celebrated and represented in events and programming.
- Help youth feel more confident and comfortable participating in arts, culture and business events and programs by creating inclusive and welcoming spaces, free of judgement and jargon (e.g., participation is not dependent on skill or prior knowledge).
- Align EDC efforts with other departments to improve art and artist subsidies (e.g., providing social housing to artists).
- Create stronger partnerships between various arts, culture, and business groups and educational institutions.
- Improve youth business and entrepreneur education through the high-school curriculum and providing a database of youth entrepreneurial resources.
- Hold arts, culture, and business events in all seasons (while being seasonally appropriate or indoors when necessary).

**4. The EDC divisional strategy will be successful in 5 years if:**

- Greater participation is observed in arts, culture and business events, programs, and entrepreneurial activity from youth across the City.
- Arts and culture events and programs are accessible:
  - Affordable: subsidised spaces, events and programs that are free, provide youth pricing, or provide other incentives (e.g., free food or transit fare);

- Geographically diverse: occurring outside of the downtown core, and in marginalised or underserved neighbourhoods; and
  - Inclusive: events where all youth can feel comfortable.
- More financial resources for youth-targeted arts and culture events (e.g., through increased government funding and stronger partnerships with local businesses).
- Improved awareness of arts, cultural, and business events in youth communities through improved outreach, especially through more effective use of social media.
- And increased amount of diverse youth artists and entrepreneurs in the City.
- More training opportunities as part of arts, culture, and economic development efforts.
- Alignment of the EDC Divisional Strategy with the City's Youth Equity Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy.