



PRELIMINARY REPORT

Research, Mapping & Engagement

Little Jamaica Cultural District Planning Process

Consultant: Jay Pitter Placemaking

Client: City of Toronto

Autumn 2022



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INTRODUCTION & Objectives

Within the field of archeology, a cultural layer is a key concept referring to actual layers of earth, composed of remnants of building structures, art, symbols and tools, as well as sacred and everyday artifacts that tell the story of how a group of people created “place” within a particular time period. Similarly, when undertaking the Little Jamaica Cultural Plan initiative, Jay Pitter Placemaking (hereinafter referred to as the practice) sought to first understand the multiple, intertwined cultural, political, policy and place-based dimensions of the study area to build on previous work conducted by City staff, community advocates, rights holders and other stakeholders. All of them have been engaged in long-standing conversations pertaining to the study area’s challenges—largely spurred by the displacement disproportionately impacting Black people and renters—and the implications of the current growth that all community members in the area are experiencing.

This preliminary report is informed by research, community engagement, mapping and raw data received from the City of Toronto (hereinafter referred to as the City), and practice expertise. Most importantly, this document synthesizes insights and concerns articulated by Little Jamaica community members who have been engaged in unyielding advocacy to preserve local cultural vibrancy. The objectives of this document are as follows:

- » Present a high-level background of the area to establish a general area profile;
- » Review documents and data from public conversations spanning a decade to both mitigate the fatigue of community members while translating and consolidating disparate pieces of important information into clear themes that serve as focal points for the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan;
- » Summarize Phase 1 work undertaken by the practice—small, in-depth engagements, key stakeholder literature review, socio-cultural mapping, and policy and placemaking precedent research;
- » Based on the aforementioned, propose a boundary for the Little Jamaica Cultural District.

As directed by the City of Toronto, the development of the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan is underpinned by an equitable planning and placemaking approach. Specifically, this process centres Black communities whose cultural contributions have both defined and characterized the area for more than 50 years. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the Indigeneity of all lands within and outside the area, and to respectfully honour the sacrifices and aspirations of all people who've contributed to the area.

This preliminary report does not purport to create a comprehensive summary of this place-based complexity because most of the long-standing conversations have been centred around the retail corridor and Black communities. This is understandable, given the disproportionate adverse impacts faced by Black-owned businesses resulting from the construction of the Metrolinx LRT project.

However, it is important to note that the next phase of the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan work will expand this crucial conversation to include other urgent issues and opportunities typically covered by place-based plans, such as the provision of public spaces, dignified and affordable housing, safe mobility, shared prosperity, sustainability and other topics relevant to, and in service of, local stakeholders of all identities.

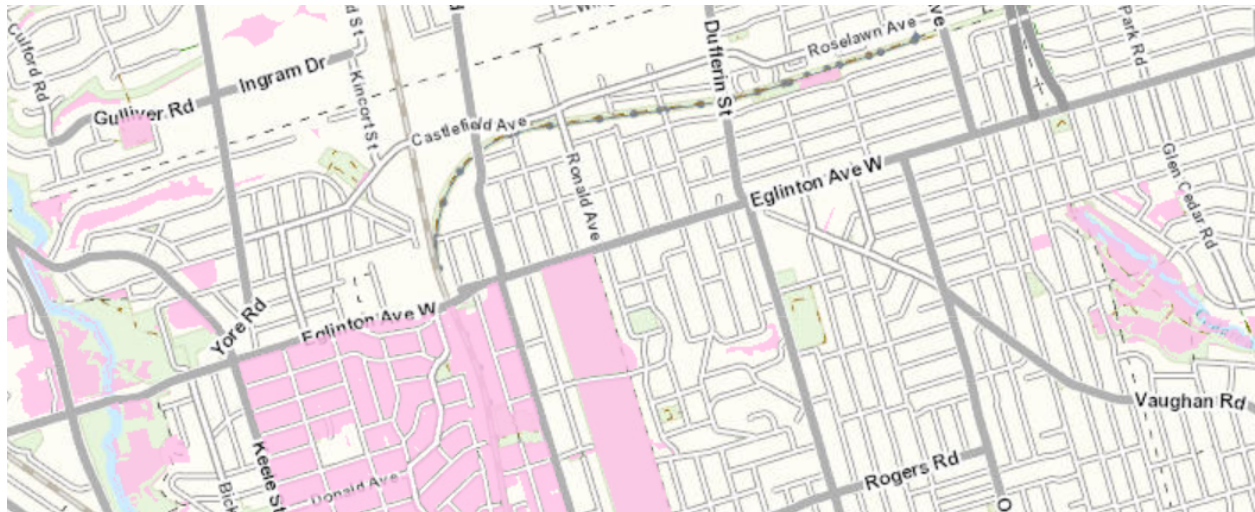
Here is what we've gathered, undertaken and assessed so far.

Summarized BACKGROUND

Indigeneity

Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. In addition to the Mississaugas of the Credit, it is the traditional territory of many nations including the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat Peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. Ojibway oral histories reference the Ice People, who lived in the area at a time when ice covered the land, dating back at least 13,000 years and likely earlier. Over the past millennia, Indigenous Peoples have stewarded these lands, adapting to seismic environmental, social and technological changes. There are several recorded archeological sites that

confirm Indigenous presence in close proximity to the study boundary—many within five kilometres. Also, it is important to note that Indigenous Peoples continue to live on these lands, making invaluable contributions within and beyond the study area.



Development Overview

Eglinton Avenue began as an east-west concession road planned parallel to Lake Ontario's shoreline to the south, and was intersected with several north-south concession roads that have now developed into major thoroughfares, such as Dufferin and Bathurst. It is the only major road to extend across the full east-west length of Toronto through all four districts of the city: Etobicoke, North York, Toronto-East York and Scarborough. In doing so, it also traverses the city's complex socio-cultural landscape and includes significant, environmentally rich sites such as the Humber River to the west and the Don River to the east.

Given its distinct and expansive imprint, the stretch of Eglinton Avenue within Little Jamaica was the site of early transportation development. In the early 20th century, rail lines intersected Eglinton at several points and a streetcar line ran from St. Clair to Eglinton along Caledonia Road. These and other early transportation developments in the neighbourhood, followed by the completion of major projects such as the Allen Road Expressway in 1976 and the Eglinton Avenue West subway station in 1978, spurred both industrial and residential development.

Currently, the development pipeline shows more than 25 housing developments in the area, approximately half of which are under review. Also, the Eglinton Crosstown will create five new stops in Little Jamaica—Keelestdale, Caledonia, Oakwood, Fairbank and Cedarvale—providing an unprecedented level of transit service in the area. There are several lane restrictions due to mobility-oriented developments such as roadway and sidewalk reconstruction, resurfacing and construction. While there are many benefits bound up in ongoing mobility-oriented development in the area, adverse impacts continue to be experienced by local businesses, organizations and residents.

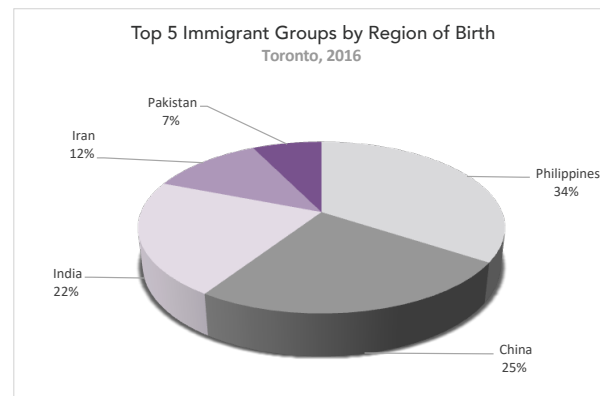
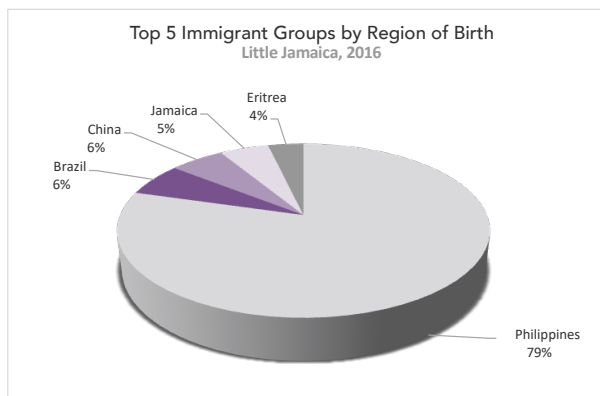
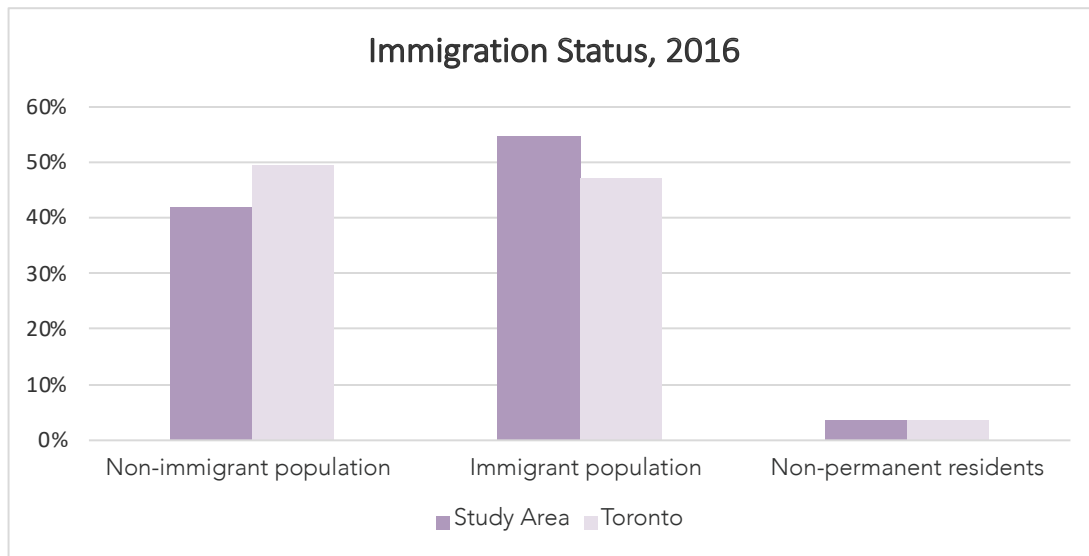
Demographic Summary

Due to the broad study area boundary established by the City, we worked with its Planning and Development Department to conduct demographic research. Using the same demographic information drawn from the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles Map,¹ the Planning team generated an aggregated overview of the seven neighbourhoods that have any portion of their neighbourhood boundaries within the study area. For example, less than 10% of Forest Hill North falls inside of the study area while almost 100% of Caledonia-Fairbank falls within the study area. The other five neighbourhoods fall somewhere between 10% and almost 100%.

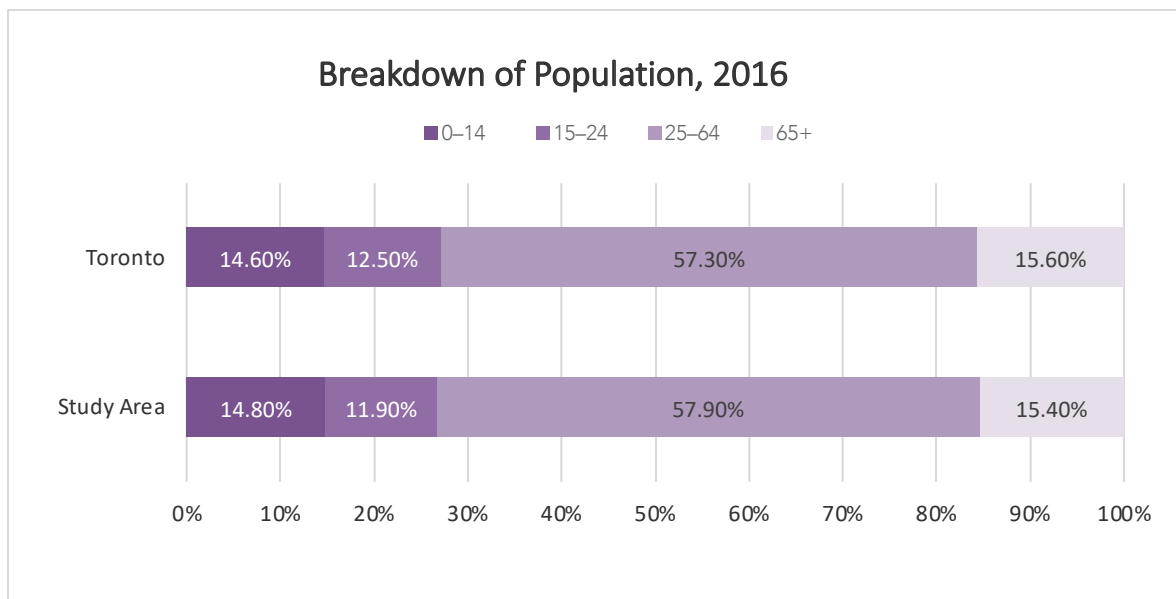
For the most part, neighbourhood demographics within the study area are quite diverse. Individuals of British Isles, Jewish, Italian, Portuguese and Jamaican heritage have a long-standing presence in the neighbourhood. Today, broader Black, Latin American and significant Filipino populations comprise the largest visible minority populations in the study area and are adding important contributions to the area's vibrant and constantly evolving local cultural fabric.

It is important to also note that while Jamaican and other Black communities do not comprise the top immigrant populations arriving in communities across Toronto, Jamaican and people from other predominantly Black countries such as Eritrea continue to be represented among the top immigrant groups arriving in Little Jamaica. Again, while extraordinarily diverse, Little Jamaica remains a distinct site of arrival for Black-identified people of various cultural backgrounds.

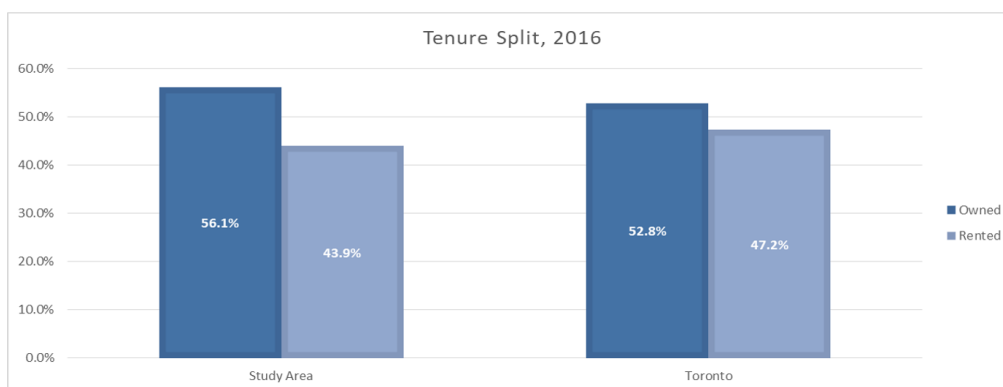
1 City of Toronto (n.d.). *Find Your Neighbourhood*. <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/find-your-neighbourhood/#location=&lat=&lng=>



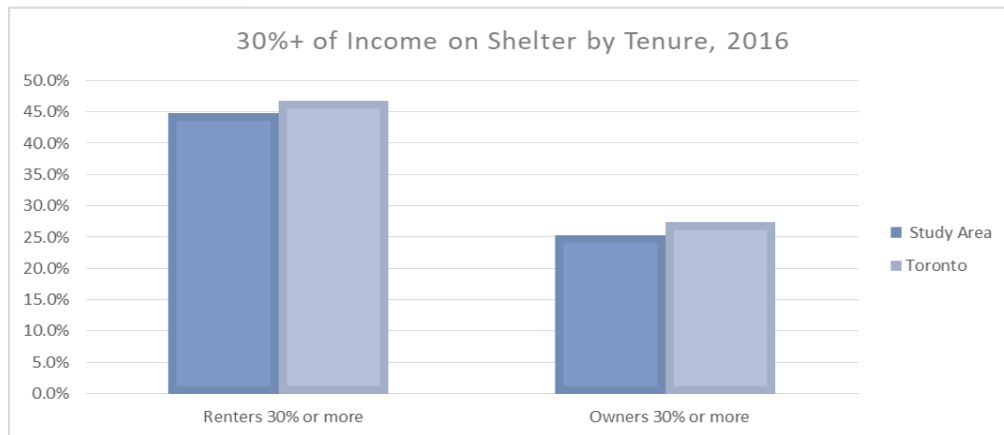
Some of the largest areas of population growth have been in those aged 65 and up for the study area, in line with patterns found in the city of Toronto. Adults aged 65 and older made up 14.3% of people in 2011, but grew to 15.4% in 2016 for the study area. Several age cohorts, mainly children and young adults, have declined slightly in population for the study area, as they have for Toronto as well. For example, children aged 0–4 and 10–19, as well as young adults aged 25–29, declined slightly in population in the study area. Similarly, adults aged 40–49 also saw a slight decline in the study area between 2011 and 2016.



Additionally, the charts below show that renter households comprise 43.9% of the aggregated demographic, and within this group, 45% of these households are navigating unaffordable housing costs.²



² In Canada, housing is considered “affordable” if it costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income. CMHC (2022). *About Affordable Housing in Canada. What is affordable housing?* <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/about-affordable-housing/affordable-housing-in-canada>



Residents have expressed concerns about a growing street-involved³ population in the neighbourhood that has created tensions and divisions, highlighting the long-standing need for additional infrastructure and community programs in some parts of the area.

These gaps have primarily been addressed by local advocates, and more recently through small grants for community-led interventions, primarily disseminated by the City’s Economic Development and Culture Division, and the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit.

Complex Governance Context

There are four municipal wards and councillors who influence governance in Little Jamaica—Josh Matlow, Toronto-St Paul’s; Mike Colle, Eglinton-Lawrence; Frances Nunziata, York South-Weston; and Alejandra Bravo, Davenport. Additionally, there are two Neighbourhood Improvement Areas—Beechborough-Greenbrook and Keelesdale-Eglinton West—with place-based strategies that aim to strengthen social, economic, and physical conditions of these neighbourhoods.⁴ Three Business Improvement Areas (York-Eglinton BIA, Fairbank Village BIA, Eglinton Hill BIA), with overlapping objectives but distinct internal cultures, add another dimension of complexity to local governance. Local groups such as Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization and Black Urbanism TO, as well as multiple City divisions (particularly the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit) contribute to the ongoing concern-raising, priority-setting and decision-making processes in the area.

3 Often used to describe youth, this term applies to individuals of all ages experiencing homelessness and/or individuals involved in precarious street-based activities such as panhandling, squeegeeing and sex work.

4 City of Toronto (n.d.). *Find Your Neighbourhood*. <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/find-your-neighbourhood/#location=&lat=&lng=>

Why is the City Formally Recognizing Little Jamaica as a Cultural District?

The city of Toronto is acclaimed as one of the most livable, economically prosperous and culturally diverse cities in the world. Its distinct, vibrant character has historically been informed by an enviable range of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, by neighbourhood-based cultural practices and by places that foster the flourishing of culture. Like most North American (Turtle Island) cities, Toronto is undergoing unprecedented urban growth, which is a stimulus for economic development, technological advancement and the construction of sustainable infrastructure. Increasingly, unrestricted market forces and the lack of adequate municipal finance, planning and development tools are contributing to cultural displacement across many cities. Cultural displacement refers to the loss of places that foster cultural practices, economic prosperity and belonging, and is often catalyzed by gentrification, immigration, commodification and extreme weather events. This phenomenon especially impacts neighbourhoods with high populations of Indigenous Peoples, Black people, other racialized people and broader equity-deserving groups such as 2SLGBTQ+ communities.⁵

In response to community-based advocacy related to this issue and council motions, the staff report “Developing a Cultural Districts Program” was adopted in November 2021. City Council directed the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to undertake broad public engagement with community members, stakeholders, Business Improvement Areas, local City Councillors and relevant Council Advisory Bodies on the development of a Cultural Districts Program, which would recognize Little Jamaica and other areas as formal cultural districts.⁶

Despite this decision, many community members may wonder why the City of Toronto is recognizing Jamaican, Caribbean and broader Black cultural contributions in the area, especially given Little Jamaica’s storied history and diverse demographic. There are several key indicators that have historically informed official designations of cultural districts. These places are sites of arrival, often etched in the collective imagination of entire cultural groups prior to emigrating here. The retail corridors are lined with a critical mass of co-located businesses that provide cultural services and products for waves of immigrants and long-standing citizens alike. The vibrancy of these places is almost always predicated on arts venues, artistic practices and/or informal cultural practices illuminating the soul of formally recognized, culturally rich communities.

Contrary to popular belief, cultural districts are not strictly tethered to the largest

5 Pitter, J. (2022) *Cultural District Plan Proposal*. [Report submitted for publication]. p.6.

6 City of Toronto. Communications Note. (2022, April 14) Cultural Districts Program—Social Media Campaign and Engagement

demographic within local contexts, especially in the case of individual racialized groups that represent a smaller number within urban demographics overall. In many instances, relatively small demographic groups can both create and leave a large cultural imprint on an area. Given that the area referred to as Little Jamaica has, for decades, been a key site of arrival for Caribbean communities, a key retail corridor populated by a large number of culturally responsive businesses serving Caribbean communities, a key global site of reggae music production, a key site of Caribbean cultural celebrations such as Junior Carnival Parade (locally known as Kiddie Carnival)⁷ and Jamaica Day,⁸ and a key site of informal gatherings and intangible cultural heritage, it is clear that it should be formally recognized as a cultural district.

Black presence in Canada dates back centuries. Specifically, enslaved and free Black individuals lived in York at its founding in 1793. During the War of 1812, the Rebellion of 1837 and all subsequent military conflicts, members of the Black community served as soldiers, militiamen and sailors. Through time, Black people settled in many areas of the city, most notably the Ward. In 1969, a newer Black community was also being recognized.⁹

In 1995, Eglinton Avenue West between Marlee and Oakwood avenues was described as having “the highest concentration of black and West Indian businesses in Metro [Toronto].” The community has also been described as a reggae capital of the world, second only to Kingston, Jamaica.¹⁰ Through extensive hands-on archival and academic research, the area is also shown to be a hub for Caribbean peoples’ advocacy, leadership and culturally responsive programs.¹¹

For example, in the early 1970s, Oakwood Collegiate Institute partnered with the Harriet Tubman Centre, an organization dedicated to providing “African Canadian youth with a sense of belonging and connection to their heritage,” to deliver after-school educational and arts-based programs. The headquarters of the Black Action Defence Committee (508 Oakwood Avenue,¹² 7 Ashbury Avenue,¹³ 393 Vaughan Road¹⁴), an activist group founded in 1988 in response to the police shootings of several Black

7 Heritage Toronto. (n.d.) 20th and 21st Century Little Jamaica. <https://www.heritagetoronto.org/explore-learn/little-jamaica-toronto-history/little-jamaica-business-reggae/>

8 Daley, K. (n.d.). *Jamaica Day 2008 15 years ago*. Jamaicans.com. <https://jamaicans.com/jamaica-day-2009/>

9 Pitter, J. (2021, December 17) *A Big Vision for Little Jamaica*. AZURE <https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/a-big-vision-for-little-jamaica/>

10 CBC Music (2018, November 18). *The true story of Canada's reggae capital*. <https://www.cbc.ca/music/the-true-story-of-canada-s-reggae-capital-1.6252740>

11 Pitter, J. (2021)

12 Can 1 Business. (n.d.). [Listing for Black Action Defense Committee Inc.] <https://www.can1business.com/company/Active/Black-Action-Defense-Committee-Inc>

13 Canadian Company Registry. (2023). [Listing for Listing for Black Action Defense Committee Inc.] <https://www.canadacompanyregistry.com/companies/black-action-defense-committee-inc/>

14 Phone Pages (2020). [Listing for Listing for Black Action Defense Committee Inc.]. <https://www.phonepages.ca/ON/York/Black-Action-Defence-Committee-b9371857>

men, was located in close proximity to the area, and several convenings and marches took place within the community and broader city. Share—one of the country's longest-standing and most influential ethno-racial publications—has been in existence for more than four decades and is currently located at 658 Vaughan Road.

In addition to organizations of all types, numerous noteworthy individuals have deep roots in Little Jamaica. For instance, Jean Gammage, now known as Kamala-Jean Gopie—a highly accomplished community leader who served as President of the Jamaican Canadian Association, a member of the Ontario Advisory Council on Multiculturalism and Citizenship, and an activist who has an award named after her at the University of Toronto—opened her Liberal campaign office on Eglinton Avenue when she was a candidate in the Ontario provincial election in 1981. This community has also been home to Caribbean residents such as Donald Moore—a recognized Black activist and owner of Occidental Cleaners & Dryers—who purchased a residential property in the area in 1924. Whether in the media spotlight or quietly contributing to their corner of the community, countless individuals of Caribbean descent have made long-standing contributions to the area.



This collage contains historical images gathered as part of archival research.

Through community engagement and Phase 1 research we learned this cultural history and ongoing legacy, which in no way invalidates other cultural contributions in the area, nor are they mutually exclusive. Many Jamaican and Caribbean residents who have had a long-standing presence in the community underscore wonderful cross-cultural relationships and childhood memories with Jewish, Italian, Portuguese and other groups who have also had a long tenure in the area, and whose important cultural imprint is recognized in other areas of the city. Business owners of all identities have had friendly exchanges throughout the years. Eastern European tenants in a few of the

low-rise buildings in the area fondly recount memories of Caribbean music and aromatic scents emanating from kitchens wafting through the hallways. Practice research also uncovered the story of Jack Riley, Toronto's first Black electrician, who grew up in the neighbourhood and who worked on many buildings including the Beth Sholom Synagogue on Eglinton Avenue West.

Like every community, there are tensions between people with different lived experiences and structural inequities that diminish some community members' sense of belonging and pathways to prosperity. However, in the same way that individuals of all cultural and racial identities can appreciate culturally rich areas such as Little Italy or Little India, there is an opportunity for all community members in this area to both celebrate and benefit from the formal designation of the Little Jamaica Cultural District.

Establishing Good Ground

To ensure that the community's needs and aspirations are honoured, the first phase of developing the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan was dedicated to understanding findings from previous community engagements. In addition to building on the incredible work of community leaders and advocates, this approach enabled us to piece together and make meaning of disparate community conversations that have taken place and continue to take place across numerous City divisions to increase transparency and accountability. This section of the document is a result of a comprehensive review of previous reports (primarily generated by non-City stakeholders), City raw data and presentation decks, a review of media related to the topic, and supplementary interviews. The seven themes emerging from this work are as follows, highlighting direct reports' content and first-voice contributions to previous conversations pertaining to the transformation of Little Jamaica.



Lost Street-Based Cultural Heritage

Although complex and contested, streets serve as living sites of cultural expression. In our day-to-day interactions, streets are a dynamic backdrop where cultural heritage is ideally affirmed and co-created—where neighbours bump into each other and stop for a chat; where youth meet at a shop or a corner after school; where music from the record store flows out onto the street; and where people from all backgrounds and

lived experiences have the opportunity to connect across differences. During events and festivals, streets are transformed into sites of celebrations of belonging and shared connection. The cultural heritage in Little Jamaica is not embedded in the design of lofty buildings or officious heritage plaques; it's embedded in, and emanates from, the streets. Recently, amid shuttered businesses, constant construction and lack of street festivals, these formal and informal expressions of cultural heritage have become almost entirely erased.

Residents of all cultural backgrounds have benefited from the rich, street-based cultural heritage of Little Jamaica, and collectively lament the loss of events such as the Kiddies Carnival, and the Caribana Junior Carnival where young children and youth participated in a costume competition and performed in an internationally lauded street parade. The event moved from Eglinton West to Malvern in the 2000s. Similarly, Air Jamaica Day (later called Jambana)—an annual celebration featuring decorated storefronts, dance competitions and musical performances—is no longer held in the area. In addition to these street-based cultural events, oral conversations reveal the loss of informal, daily interactions overflowing with sentiments of pride, safety, belonging and cherished childhood memories, which created community cohesions within and beyond Black communities.

Several sources, including Councillor Matlow's Little Jamaica consultation in May 2021, the Black Futures on Eglinton youth engagement project compiled by CP Planning, and Black Urbanism TO's extensive business-owner engagement in its report *A Black Business Conversation: On Planning For The Future Of Black Businesses And Residents On Eglinton Ave W.*,¹⁵ have noted a strong desire among residents to bring back traditional cultural events. Many community stakeholders feel strongly about the role that arts and culture can play in re-energizing and healing the community. They often cited murals, cultural museums and the excitement surrounding the upcoming opening of the Nia Centre for the Arts. The desire for a "permanent cultural centre to recognize and preserve the historical texture and vibrancy of the area"¹⁶ was also amplified multiple times as a priority.

15 These excerpts (all excerpts more broadly) were taken from the community reports and consultations listed above, along with an interview with Sharine Taylor, director of the short film *Tallawah Abroad: Remembering Little Jamaica*.

Taylor, S. (Director). (2019) *Tallawah Abroad: Remembering Little Jamaica*. <https://cinefam.ca/2020-cinefam-film-festival/tallawah-abroad-remembering-little-jamaica/>

16 Josh Matlow.ca (2021, May 31) *Little Jamaica Community Conversations: Meeting Highlights & Next Steps*. Memory Sharing Segment - Highlights - bullet #11.



Black residents participate in festivals and events to indulge in their culture, experiment with expression of their heritage and creativity, and connect with one another to meet a variety of needs. This active shaping of their culture is a core component of building new relationships between residents, supporting the economy, and seeking justice. The landscape of Black-led or serving organizations or events within the neighbourhood reflect the diversity of the neighbourhood. Of the Black survey respondents, about one third or more participated in anti-poverty, food, or music-based events each. These events [and programs] are an important component of developing community leaders [and] represent the cultures of care that are expressed as a cherished element of the neighbourhood.”¹⁷



The Dual Role of Local Businesses: Economic Drivers and Community Hubs

Local businesses—especially those tethered to racialized and newcomer communities—often bolster the economy, providing essential services such as the provision of culturally desired foods and services. Also, many of these businesses serve as community hubs that provide informal mental health support, opportunities for intergenerational exchanges, safe(r) gathering spaces for youth and compassionate mutual aid exchanges. This is especially true for long-standing Black businesses operating along the Eglinton West retail corridor.

Examples of the dual role of local businesses are exemplified by programs such as *More Than A Haircut*, a series of conversations with African-Caribbean fathers held in barbershops along Eglinton Avenue West. The program facilitated culturally informed parenting discussions between Black fathers living within and outside the community.¹⁸ Also, Centro Cultural Latinoamericano was a thriving performance space for Latinx music, poetry and literature prior to March 2020. At the beginning of the pandemic, in recognition of the rising food insecurity in the neighbourhood and urgent community

17 CP Planning. (2021, January 14). [Quote by Cheryll Case] *Black Futures on Eglinton*, p. 20. <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/4cd413b4-f4ee-4988-bacf-4d6dd233bf9a/downloads/BFoE-Report.pdf?ver=1676634584199>

18 The Macaulay Child Development Centre (2022). *More Than a Haircut*. <https://macaulaycentre.org/services/community-programs/more-than-a-haircut/>

need, the establishment quickly pivoted to launch a neighbourhood food bank, honouring one of its mandates “to be in solidarity and generate solidarity.”¹⁹ Similarly, Italian, Jewish, Portuguese and other small businesses have served and continue to serve as vital, culturally responsive community hubs in the area. The devastating closure of numerous local businesses has not only had an adverse impact on the local economy, it has also displaced culture in ways that have not been wholly understood and therefore addressed.

During our two-part consultation series in February, attendees frequently referenced the unique role that businesses such as barbershops and salons play in Little Jamaica, which fulfill the need of community hubs that offer supportive interpersonal connections and spaces that enable the transmission of culture and the sharing of essential, often critical information.”²⁰

3 > Lack of Infrastructure and Displacement

Business owners, service providers and a diverse range of residents (across age, class and ethnicity) have all articulated an urgency to address what they describe as a historical lack of services and amenities in the area. As early as 1985, City-led consultations with community stakeholders identified key amenities and services gaps in the Oakwood Vaughan area. In the minutes of a public meeting, the community clearly expressed the need for a multi-purpose community space that “would provide services to young people in need and to the community at large.”²¹ Later, at a community engagement called EnVisioning 2010: An Eglinton-Oakwood Community Forum, desires were again raised pertaining to “a community hub for recreational and cultural

19 HerreraGomez R. (2021, March 16). *Save the Centro Cultural Latinoamericano Toronto*. Go Fund Me. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/save-the-centro-cultural-latinoamericano-toronto>

20 Black Urbanism Toronto, Studio of Contemporary Architecture, and the Open Architecture Collaborative Canada. (2020, July): *A Black Business Conversation: On Planning For The Future Of Black Businesses And Residents On Eglinton Ave W*, p. 27. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee50028e2a496763f512cc1/t/5fc5997d5147b14804f35347/1606785495837/LITTLE+JAMAICA+REPORT+-+2020-09-23>

21 Thomson, I. (1985, April 3). *Minutes of Public Meeting Sponsored By The Oakwood/Vaughan Task Group*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vKPX7HKf6RIJVgBwZhtEvJ_6zySFZLCI/view

programs and services.”²² That same year, in response to community feedback from the EnVisioning 2010 engagement, City Councillor Howard Moscoe put forth a recommendation for a zoning study to establish an Oakwood Avenue Arts District for the commercial areas between Vaughan/Oakwood and Rogers Road/Oakwood, with the hopes that the initiative will “lay the groundwork for the renaissance of the neighbourhood.”²³

In 2015, the *Central West Toronto Community-Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis* report highlighted the lack of health-related infrastructure and services in the area, also pointing to the need for a community hub to address health and social needs.²⁴ Many of the documents above (and more) were collected and archived by the Oakwood Vaughan Neighbourhood Action Partnership (OV NAP), a community-led organization that has been a leader in community advocacy in the neighbourhood. OV NAP works to “improve neighbourhood well-being and active communication, coordination, and service delivery.”²⁵

More than three decades later, this ongoing infrastructure gap has become aggravated by the closure of businesses which once provided the community with gathering spaces and essential cultural services, resulting in what some community members have described as “on-going and imminent future displacement.” For example, a Black Urbanism TO (BUTO) report expresses fear that by the time the neighbourhood undergoes this current transformation, “there would be ‘no more Little Jamaica’.”²⁶

Business owners, such as the late Ronald “Jimmy” Wisdom, owner of Wisdom’s Barber Shop and Beauty Salon, featured in Sharine Taylor’s short film, *Tallawah Abroad: Remembering Little Jamaica*, added: “I hope it still remains... called Little Jamaica. I hope, I hope, I hope, I hope we can still hold on to what was.”²⁷

Visible displacement is amplified at the street level, in front of vacant buildings along the retail corridor and in laneways across residential neighbourhoods. Community members have also noted significant invisible displacement such as increased

22 Colle, J., & Massey, T. (2010, Jan 20). *A Report on “EnVisioning 2010”: An Eglinton - Oakwood Community Forum*. 5 Points Community Action, p. 11. https://drive.google.com/file/d/14NHxOSL1nqxLAl3rZfErK-8j7nd_npiq/view

23 Moscoe, H. (2010, April 28). *Zoning Study of Oakwood Avenue Arts District*, p. 20. City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-30030.pdf>

24 Santis Health. (2015). *Central West Toronto Community - Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis Report*, p. 26 - 27. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KH3wvneJlabZWbpjUq2kgFntzw5Z9kf3/view>

25 Oakwood Vaughan Neighbourhood Action Plan. (n.d.). “About”. <https://sites.google.com/view/ovnap/about>

26 Black Urbanism Toronto, Studio of Contemporary Architecture, and the Open Architecture Collaborative Canada. (2020, July): *A Black Business Conversation: On Planning For The Future Of Black Businesses And Residents On Eglinton Ave W*, p. 24. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee50028e2a496763f512cc1/t/5fc5997d5147b14804f35347/1606785495837/LITTLE+JAMAICA+REPORT+-+2020-09-23>

27 Taylor, S. (Director). (2019) *Tallawah Abroad: Remembering Little Jamaica*. <https://cinefam.ca/2020-cinefam-film-festival/tallawah-abroad-remembering-little-jamaica/>

couch-surfing; informal gig economy workers who once harmoniously co-existed with businesses; and an erasure of informal youth gathering spaces. These and other issues have created a visceral sense of cultural displacement and disregard among many Black community members.

“Across the needs assessment, youth services were listed as a priority for the community by service providers, the general public, and youth themselves... Places to safely gather and socialize, places to access healthy food, recreational programs, educational counselling, mental health supports, and employment services are needed within the area for both younger and older youth. Service providers observed that youth are being referred to services located outside of the neighbourhood, and because of transportation cost, this can be a barrier for lower income populations. Lack of [community] spaces to book for programming were also noted by several agencies.”²⁸

4 Economic Precarity and Barriers to Prosperity

All businesses within the Little Jamaica area were adversely affected over the past several years. Again, this disproportionately impacted Black communities as the Eglinton West retail corridor is the largest enclave of Black businesses in the city. Unfortunately, since 2020, approximately 140 Black businesses²⁹ have closed. This is especially devastating because Black people—considered legal property for centuries—have navigated distinct state-sanctioned barriers to accessing economic prosperity, including gaining access to capital loans and professional networks that foster thriving businesses.

In response, the City’s Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit convened the Mayor’s Roundtable on Black Businesses³⁰ to explore a conversation “focused on retaining

28 Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration. (2020, Nov 23). EC18.12 *Activating Community Space in the Oakwood and Vaughan Area*, p. 7. City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ec/bgnd/backgroundfile-158770.pdf>

29 Bessonov, A. (2020, Mar 4). “Little Jamaica businesses suffer amid yet another delay in Eglinton LRT construction”. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/little-jamaica-lrt-construction-1.5484610>

30 While different names were initially used when the Roundtable was convened, the final agreed-upon name was “Mayor’s Roundtable on Black Business”. The name of the engagement appears interchangeably as Mayor’s Roundtable on Black Business Roundtable, Mayor’s Black Business Roundtable and Mayor’s Business Roundtable for Black Businesses.
Partnership and Accountability Circle (PAC). (2020). EC17.3 Appendix B - Year 2 Partnership and

the presence and livelihoods of Black Business in the ‘Little Jamaica’ area of Eglinton West.”³¹ This convening and others were intended to bring together a diverse range of individuals working across professional contexts to explore gaps, opportunities and promising practices for supporting Black businesses. Additionally, Black Urbanism TO has been engaged in impactful community advocacy and has developed a report to combat business displacement through exploring innovative commercial land trust and business ownership models, predicated on deep engagement with Black business owners. Its report also includes a few related precedents that highlight the root causes of the disproportionate adverse impacts faced by Black businesses, such as the decade-long Metrolinx LRT construction; lack of Business Improvement Area representation and responsiveness; and unclear pathways for accessing economic support.

Examples of summarized, short- and long-term recommendations derived from both of these aforementioned initiatives include:

- » Conduct a comprehensive study on the economic impact of street festivals/ cultural events and Black-owned businesses along Eglinton, and economic vulnerabilities that have arisen as a result of LRT construction and the COVID-19 pandemic, including mapping business closures;
- » Incorporate an equity-based community benefits framework to any future development, ensuring accessible opportunities for neighbourhood residents and business owners;
- » Implement temporary fee waivers, rebates and tax breaks for Black-owned businesses;
- » Direct funding to business owners as part of an emergency stabilization initiative;
- » Extend specialized grants, cultural funds and loan programs to preserve and protect Little Jamaica’s cultural assets, including small businesses and Black-led community organizations;
- » Provide digital hardware and training for business owners to transition to and/ or maximize online sales and presence.

Accountability Circle (PAC) Report. City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-157932.pdf>

31 City of Toronto (2019, June 26) *Meeting Minutes: “Mayor’s Roundtable on Black Business Roundtable- Growing In Place: Black Business in Little Jamaica Eglinton West”*. Confronting Anti-Black Racism unit, City of Toronto.

Many members of the Black community have expressed gratitude for Black Urbanism TO's unyielding efforts on their behalf, and commended the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit for facilitating important conversations.

In 2021, the City dedicated \$1 million to support 72 Little Jamaica Black businesses. It extended its partnership with the Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA) to provide general support, marketing and the development of various support initiatives, including non-financial wrap-around services catered to the needs of individual business. However, many community members remain adamant that direct relief granting to individual businesses themselves is required to respond to their most urgent needs, and that greater front-end consultation pertaining to how resources will be allocated and disseminated is paramount.



The global COVID-19 health pandemic has been detrimental for businesses nationwide and the city of Toronto has seen numerous small to medium sized businesses shutter their doors. However, businesses along Eglinton West, in particular the Black-owned businesses, have been in a state of precarity well before the pandemic began. The Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC) made it clear in their advocacy to government officials that there must be special consideration given to Black-owned businesses to address the historical inequities that Black business owners have faced. This speaks directly to Black business owners in Little Jamaica who have been struggling through the Crosstown LRT construction project.”³²



5 Lack of Meaningful Consultation and Accountability

Meaningful community engagement necessitates a substantial amount of labour from community members who contribute time, ideas, vulnerabilities and sometimes finances (e.g. child care) to participate in consultation processes, but all too often this invisible labour is not acknowledged. Coupled with power imbalances between communities

32 Black Urbanism Toronto, Studio of Contemporary Architecture, and the Open Architecture Collaborative Canada. (2020, July): *A Black Business Conversation: On Planning For The Future Of Black Businesses And Residents On Eglinton Ave W*, p. 21. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee50028e2a496763f512cc1/t/5fc5997d5147b14804f35347/1606785495837/LITTLE+JAMAICA+REPORT+-+2020-09-23>

and municipalities, community engagement processes often lead to community engagement fatigue, something which has been articulated by many Little Jamaica stakeholders. The Eglinton Connects engagement, which included Little Jamaica, employed a wide range of engagement approaches, and as aforementioned, the BBPA received funding from the City to support Black businesses. However, aside from a couple of councillors and the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, which have been credited for continued presence in the area, many community stakeholders articulated the overall lack of deep and co-ordinated municipal engagement:

“It seems that we have been having this conversation for 10 years, but what are the realities tied to this, resources and action.”³³

“All I’ve seen is talk, no action. We’ve lost faith. Want to see more action. Want to come together more frequently.”³⁴

“We don’t have access to programs... We don’t know where our resources are going, but we’re ready to do it on our own... [It feels like] this has been intentional to try and push us out... like we feel like we’re being toyed with.”³⁵

Additionally, some community members who are not Black have voiced concerns about not having their priorities, concerns and cultural contributions included in community engagement conversations. Some of these individuals have expressed anti-Black sentiments, resisting respectful recognition of Black peoples’ cultural contributions in the area while others have expressed a genuine desire to find their rightful place in a conversation centred around a neighbourhood about which they deeply care. Moreover, some community members have expressed appreciation for the City’s response to the problematic street-involved activities occurring in Reggae Lane; support for small-scale funding from the City’s Economic Development and Culture Division and its Confronting anti-Black Racism Unit; and ongoing conversations initiated by a couple of local councillors.

33 Office of City Councillor Josh Matlow (2021, May 31). “Little Jamaica Community Conversation”: Councillor Matlow Community Consultation [Quotes from participants]. Toronto, ON. Pg.5

34 Office of City Councillor Josh Matlow (2021, May 31). “Little Jamaica Community Conversation”: Councillor Matlow Community Consultation [Quotes from participants]. Toronto, ON. Pg.8

35 Leighana Mais, personal communication [Interview], April 22, 2022.



Black business owners expressed that they had been largely left out of the [Eglinton Connects] consultation process. They were not aware that its recommendations are currently being implemented. Business owners described experiencing basically no engagement with the City, except in sessions involving the BIA, which few businesses had been informed of... Despite being largely excluded from the process thus far, business owners were eager to find out how they could influence the implementation of the study's recommendations moving forward."³⁶



Diminished Individual/Collective Mental Health

Place-based changes affect people's wellness, especially for those who generally have less control over where they live or who have historically experienced a sense of placelessness, such as Black populations, Jewish populations, refugee populations and low-income populations. In Little Jamaica, these place-based pressures have been particularly pronounced among Black residents. Other racialized and equity-deserving groups have also been experiencing similar pressures. Unfortunately, despite shared concerns, many from these latter groups and community members of European descent have expressed their disapproval by claiming that a designation centring Black culture may diminish their sense of place in the area. To address the former concern, Little Jamaica residents, such as Leighana Mais and Prophetess Elijah-Marie Reid, have respectively developed initiatives—in some instances with the support of Confronting Anti-Black Racism funding—to address urgent mental health challenges among Black people in the area. When describing the state of mental health among Black community members, Ms. Reid stated, "Our community is literally hemorrhaging right now—mentally, physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually... We're bleeding out and there's nobody around to resuscitate us. Nobody. Nobody cares a rat's tail about our community... And the reason why, I think in a lot of instances, they do not see us as human beings. We're not human. It's a consistent theme.... We are invisible and we continue to be invisible."³⁷

36 Black Urbanism Toronto, Studio of Contemporary Architecture, and the Open Architecture Collaborative Canada. (2020, July): *A Black Business Conversation: On Planning For The Future Of Black Businesses And Residents On Eglinton Ave W*, p. 23. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee50028e2a496763f512cc1/t/5fc5997d5147b14804f35347/1606785495837/LITTLE+JAMAICA+REPORT+-+2020-09-23>

37 Prophetess Elijah-Marie Reid, personal communication [Interview], April 20, 2022.

Ms. Mais's comments were primarily focused on financial stresses related to housing affordability and poor maintenance. When addressing the concerns of youth specifically—an imperative priority for Ms. Mais—she noted that youth in the area have reported that maintenance neglect and increased pest issues make them “feel dirty all the time.”

Based on oral interviews with these two community advocates and others, the primary issues diminishing the mental health of Black and other historically marginalized groups in the area are as follows:

- » Housing precarity and unaffordability due to rising rents, landlord abuse and housing maintenance neglect, all while witnessing the development of (unaffordable) luxury condos in or near the area;
- » Financial stress, resulting in depression, anxiety and self-harm by Black community members;
- » Lack of sufficient, culturally responsive social service supports that extend beyond conventional charity and client models;
- » Lack of space to gather to access informal mental health boosters such as informal inter-generational exchanges and joyful street-corner conversations;
- » Sense of invisibility due to the erasure of a once-vibrant and socially connected retail corridor.

7 Community Safety Challenges

Community safety is a multi-dimensional concept inclusive of historical, physical, personal history, and infrastructure and structural factors. It is at once bound up in deep structural policies and daily interpersonal interactions. Safety is also profoundly personal; a place or incident that one individual deems innocuous can engender a sense of unsafety in another individual.

Multiple engagements and reports have highlighted the safety concerns of community members in the area. In August 2018, the Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization (OVCO) engaged METRAC, an organization that “works with individuals, communities

and institutions to change ideas, actions and policies with the goal of ending violence against women and youth,” to conduct a community safety audit for the Oakwood Vaughan area. Comments from this audit include:

“I feel fairly safe, though I might be a little worried in some areas at night.”

“Racism, nowhere for youth to safely hang out or multiple options, police harassment, isolation between black folks & people of colour versus middle class community, sexual harassment, no food.”

“Concerns about the booze can - afterhours clubs at the corner of Belvidere Avenue & Oakwood Avenue; tensions between new people moving in (gentrification) and long-time residents.”

“Police targeting black people. Racism in school, misconceptions of newcomers to the community regarding the longstanding community members.”

“There is a big racial divide in our community that is unsafe for a lot of people. The police and City officials heed the concerns of non-racialized folks more.”

“Must address the anti-black racism cloaked under citizens concerned about safety. Citizens are only concerned about policing black youth and residents and not addressing the systemic and social gaps and negligence.”³⁸

OVCO also released a position paper on community safety in January 2020. The City also conducted outreach interviews with Oakwood Vaughan youth, highlighted in a City report called *Activating Community Space in the Oakwood and Vaughan Area*. These reports and other engagements raised the following community safety concerns:

- » Pedestrians, especially seniors and young families, have serious traffic-related concerns related to the risk of fast-moving and impatient drivers, by blockage along Eglinton and at the Oakwood and Vaughan intersection;
- » Some Black community members have complained about overpolicing and police harassment, oftentimes initiated by newer residents from other racial backgrounds, while other community members of all identities believe there needs to be a more strategic effort to address growing safety issues;

38 METRAC (2018, August) *Community Safety Audit Report Card, Oakwood Avenue & Vaughan Road*. v1.0. pp. 28–30.

- » There is a perception that the area is experiencing a rise in gun violence and, more egregiously, growing apathy around this issue or a perception among some Black community members that this is acceptable;
- » Housing precarity and food insecurity have been categorized as safety threats—in terms of the threat of displacement and increasing disputes between landlords and tenants;
- » Homophobia, transphobia and gender-based harassment have been identified as a safety issue, including issues arising from displaying PRIDE flags, excessive cat-calling and lack of gathering spaces for individuals within and across these identities;
- » Some people do not have secure jobs, have difficulty getting enough food for themselves and their family, and are living in unstable housing. All of these factors contribute to an inability to leading lives free of harm. These structural barriers or structural inequalities can be harmful, which is in itself a form of violence.”³⁹

The word resilience is often applied to communities navigating structural oppression. While a degree of resilience is a fundamental attribute of healthy individuals and communities, this concept can also be used to normalize struggle. If a group is constantly forced to demonstrate its resilience to survive, rather than thrive, the state has abdicated its responsibility. Little Jamaica is inarguably a fiercely resilient community. It is composed of intelligent and passionate community advocates, business professionals, artists, elders and others who’ve stood in the gap over the past decade to support their community. Despite understandable community engagement fatigue and righteous outrage, the number of community-led and generated reports, workshops, engagements and socially responsive art-based initiatives tells the story of a powerful community that has not yet given up all hope.

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39 Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization (OVCO) (2020, January 16) *Brief position paper on community safety*. p.1.



What We've Done & Heard So Far

Since November 2021, Jay Pitter Placemaking concurrently completed the following community engagements, local mapping and research initiatives while completing the Cultural District Plan Proposal, guiding the formal designation of Little Jamaica as a City of Toronto Cultural District:

- » Conducted stakeholder interviews and a community literature review to ensure that the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan builds upon the advocacy, insights and recommendations of Little Jamaica community leaders and activists;
- » Hosted 12 Deep Listening Circles, co-facilitated by 16 local community members, to bring local leaders and advocates together across differences and to more deeply understand urgent community needs;

- » Compiled a preliminary list of placemaking policy and precedents that are responsive to identified spatial, economic and cultural challenges;
- » Collaborated with local leaders to identify possible development sites that may meet community needs (e.g., retail corridor revitalization, affordable housing, community hub space) via an infrastructure-mapping exercise in collaboration with LGA Architectural Partners;
- » Established a weekly presence at the Afro-Caribbean Farmers' Market, the York-Eglinton BIA and the Maria A. Shchuka Library, and participated in community events including The Mane Event and Sinting Fest, engaging in 200+ hours of informal conversations with 550+ diverse local stakeholders;
- » Conducted Black tangible and intangible cultural-heritage mapping (institutionally unacknowledged sites of significance, stories, celebrations, place-based rituals, etc.) through local archival research, academic research, oral storytelling and local walks.

Deep Listening Circles

The Deep Listening Circle process is an integral component of Jay Pitter Placemaking's equitable community-engagement model. It is a simple process in which community members are integrated into the community-engagement team, while land-use professionals, policy professionals and municipal leaders participate as "listeners." The process is guided by three powerful questions, related to each theme, that create space for constructive critique, priority setting and hope:

What is your most pressing concern?

What is one uncomfortable thing the project team needs to hear to get this right?

What are you most hopeful about at this time?

The topic is intentionally not defined. Instead, we offered the above three questions as prompts, enlisting the expertise of local stakeholders and creating space for community members to shape the conversation. From May–June 2022, Jay Pitter Placemaking hosted 12 of these circles, facilitated by 16 local community residents and stakeholders. To address accessibility concerns and to increase participation, the practice co-led both in-person and online Deep Listening Circles. Although these circles are not intended to be conventional, large-scale engagements, the practice conducted extensive outreach to raise awareness of them throughout the community.

Deep Listening Circle (DLC) postcards and posters were distributed to a total of 81 businesses, individual residents and residential buildings in Little Jamaica. Additionally, in partnership with the York-Eglinton BIA, information about the DLCs and the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan were featured in the May edition of the BIA newsletter, and distributed to the 150 businesses along Eglinton West between Marlee Avenue and Dufferin Street. Our team also conducted email outreach to community leaders running local community initiatives, services providers, other BIAs and organizational partners within Little Jamaica, as well as relevant Facebook groups and platforms. The Deep Listening Circle details and summaries are as follows:

Community & Systemic Safety	Community Co-Facilitator(s) Neil "Logik" Donaldson	When & Where Saturday, May 14, 2022, 1:00 pm–2:30 pm Online
	Description » This Deep Listening Circle built on informal and formal conversations pertaining to a wide range of institutional and interpersonal safety concerns raised by the community for several years. The issues included: street violence; police harassment; drug and sex trade; and fear of displacement. Participants had divergent viewpoints pertaining to these and other safety issues and how they should be addressed.	
Being a Good New Neighbour	Community Co-Facilitator(s) Kai Wong	When & Where Tuesday, May 17, 2022, 12:30 pm–2:00 pm Online
	Description » This Deep Listening Circle explored publicly unspoken race and socio-economic tensions between long-standing neighbours and newer neighbours. With the rapidly changing demographic of the neighbourhood, the conversation unpacked how new residents could respectfully recognize and build on the cultural character of the neighbourhood, and leverage their social influence to achieve a collective community vision that benefits everyone.	

Community Co-Facilitator(s)

Stefan Novakovic, Shane Laptiste and
Tura Cousins Wilson

When & Where

Tuesday, May 17, 2022, 6:00 pm–7:30 pm
1603 Eglinton Avenue West
(Oakwood and Eglinton)

Description

- » This Deep Listening Circle explored housing precarity and the increasing fear of displacement in the neighbourhood. Community members shared their diverse housing experiences, including low-income seniors fearing that they will be pushed out of their affordable homes; the growing number of people experiencing homelessness and the need for social supports; and long-time, moderate-income elderly homeowners being pressured by developers to sell. Residents cited the vulnerability of being a neighbourhood composed predominantly of renters and expressed interest in solutions such as community ownership models (e.g., land trusts, co-ops) that would support community members of all identities while prioritizing Black home and commercial space ownership.

Community Co-Facilitator(s)

Brian Porter

When & Where

Thursday, May 19, 2022, 6:00 pm–7:30 pm
Online

Description

- » This Deep Listening Circle aimed to explore the various dimensions of Indigeneity—including oral place-based stories, Indigenous ecosystems and contemporary Indigenous presence in Little Jamaica. Community co-facilitator Brian Porter brought some key learnings for participants to consider, including how the natural environment influences preferences for communal gathering spaces, and the importance of finding the intersection of commonalities between cultures and people. It was clear from the discussion that while community members had an interest in learning about Indigeneity in the area, they didn't have the knowledge or confidence to actively participate in the conversation. As a group, the circle committed to adopting a co-learning approach so that everyone could share the labour of considering Indigeneity within the context of the area's rapid transformation.

Open Topic	Community Co-Facilitator(s)	When & Where
	Louroz Mercader	Saturday, May 21, 2022, 1:00 pm–3:00 pm York-Eglinton BIA Office, 1704 Eglinton Avenue West, York, ON M6E
	Description	
	» As its title suggests, this Deep Listening Circle explored various topics. Many community members expressed frustration about the Metrolinx construction, noting how lost foot traffic reduced patronage along the retail corridor while rendering the area unsafe. They also expressed a desire for the three Business Improvement Area groups to work more collaboratively with Black business owners who have not historically been well-represented within these organizations. Street and bus shelter maintenance were also central conversation topics.	

Cross-Racial Respect and Understanding	Community Co-Facilitator(s)	When & Where
	Adil Dhalla-Kim and Bill Worrell	Saturday, May 21, 2022, 1:00 pm–3:00 pm Cy Townsend Park, 455 Winona Drive (Vaughan Road and Winona Drive)
	Description	
	» This Deep Listening Circle unpacked the spoken and unspoken racial tensions and divisions that have arisen since community advocacy efforts began to have Little Jamaica formally recognized as a cultural district. The circle, led by two facilitators who do not identify as Black, acknowledged that many of these racial tensions are part of larger systemic anti-Black depiction of “Black neighbourhoods”—for example media depictions of poverty, neglect and gun violence. Community members shared stories of racial solidarity in the neighbourhood, including a bond between Jewish and Black communities in the 1950s and 1960s—an era when a Jewish landlord rented to Black families at a time when few landlords did; and a particular building with a deep community bond between its Black, Portuguese and Eastern European residents. At the same time, residents lamented that the neighbourhood feels more racially segregated now.	

Community Co-Facilitator(s)

Toronto Black Farmers and Growers Collective and Lori Beazer

When & Where

Saturday, May 28, 2022, 1:00 pm–3:00 pm
Online

Description

- » This Deep Listening Circle explored the integral role that food plays within Black cultural identity and cultural expression. The circle highlighted the Afro-Caribbean Farmers' Market, and participants were given a mini-virtual tour of the Toronto Black Farmers and Growers Collective farm by co-facilitators Jacqueline Dwyer and Noel Livingston, and farm workers. Participants emphasized the importance of Black food sovereignty and the ability to develop and define a culturally affirming, Black-centred food system to enhance Black wellness, mental health, economic opportunities and cross-cultural connections with all members of the community

Community Co-Facilitator(s)

Alica Hall, Nia Centre for the Arts

When & Where

Tuesday, May 31, 2022, 6:00 pm–7:30 pm
Online

Description

- » This Deep Listening Circle explored arts and culture as an inherent aspect of Black cultural identity—tethered to liberation movements, as well as formal and informal expressions of cultural heritage that have generated global influence. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Little Jamaica area became recognized as a reggae capital of the world, second only to Kingston, Jamaica. Community members reminisced about the positive impacts of community arts programs in the 1990s such as Art Starts to Curtia Wright's Celebrating Queer Black Lives mural unveiled in 2021 to the anticipated opening of the Nia Centre, Canada's first multi-disciplinary Black arts centre. Artists who participated in the circle emphasized that making art was vital for their mental health, and named housing unaffordability and economic displacement as constant stress factors, with many expressing worry that they would not be able to afford living in close proximity to the thriving new Nia Centre.

Missing Services & Amenities	Community Co-Facilitator(s) Juanita Joubert	When & Where Thursday, June 2, 2022, 6:00 pm–7:30 pm Walk - 1416 Eglinton Avenue West (formerly the site of a TD Bank)
	Description » This Deep Listening Circle was a walking tour, which explored the desperate need for increased services and amenities in the area. The session began at the former TD Bank site at the corner of Marlee and Eglinton, spurring conversation regarding the loss of a major bank in the neighbourhood and the increasing presence of numerous predatory loan and cash advance businesses charging excessive fees. This trend significantly affects fixed-income seniors in the community, who may have mobility challenges to travel farther for banking services, and signals an overall feeling of vulnerability and neglect. Other topics explored included the need for culturally responsive services, health care and gathering spaces.	
Aging in Place	Community Co-Facilitator(s) Anne Fourt	When & Where Saturday, June 4, 2022, 12:30 pm–2:00 pm Online
	Description » This Deep Listening Circle unpacked the issues affecting a wide diversity of elders across race and class, from low-income seniors in the TCHC Doug Saunders building to elder homeowners concerned about the financial strain of property taxes and home maintenance. Residents noted that Oakwood Vaughan has a higher percentage of seniors living alone and low-income seniors than the city average. Many elders have lived in the neighbourhood for 30-40 years and they expressed worry that it will become too expensive to stay, but equally too expensive to move. Elders expressed a deep desire to stay in the neighbourhood and are looking to the City to initiate an intervention that enables elders of all identities to age in place.	

Shared Local Prosperity	Community Co-Facilitator(s)	When & Where
	Olusegun Villasa, Black Urbanism TO (BUTO)	Tuesday, June 7, 2022, 6:00 pm–7:30 pm Online
	Description	
	» This Deep Listening Circle focused on the important role that cultural Black businesses played in attracting patrons into the neighbourhood (by offering culturally responsive services) and the positive ripple effect that their businesses have had on the wider local business economy. However, community members expressed feeling disappointed that this has not been acknowledged among business owners and residents of all identities. They also discussed disappointment in the lack of direct funding to save many Black-owned businesses and the lack of creativity in terms of directing existing funds into tangible supports such as matching Black businesses with proposal writers or creating ongoing revenue-generating opportunities for them.	
Open Topic What are additional pressing issues?	Community Co-Facilitator(s)	When & Where
	Morgan Miya	Thursday, June 9, 2022, 6:00 pm–7:30 pm The Maria A. Shchuka Library, 1745 Eglinton Avenue West, York, ON M6E 2H4
	Description	
	» This Deep Listening Circle was attended by a number of long-time residents who echoed concerns related to previous sessions including housing precarity, cultural displacement, desperately needed community support and the overall need for space. Community members also expressed a desire for a more equitable and proactive municipal approach to service navigation and provision, and to removing barriers to access for the most vulnerable community members of all identities.	



Deep Listening Circle

Interview with Adil Dhalla-Kim and Bill Worrell

Q: Why was it important to have this circle?

A: Briefly: Race has divided our community, has created opportunities to learn, as well as being an issue that has been romanticized. Our community has been stigmatized because of race and in particular anti-Black racism. While there are many occasions when friendships, acts of solidarity, and neighbourliness can mitigate impacts of racism, it is clearly a fact of life in many aspects of our community... in the education system, the lack of allocation of public funds, very uneven political focus or attention paid to community needs. With the economic crisis of affordability weighing down on our community, the arrival of new residents, the devastation of Eglinton West by the LRT construction, structural and overt racism is leading to the displacement of Black residents and anger. For the community to effectively unite around a plan for recovery, racism needs to be discussed and understood by non-BIPOC residents to create a stronger community vision.

Q: Was there any significance behind why the circle was held at that particular location?

A: Cy Townsend Park has several significant meanings. The corner where we met was actually designed by Art Starts (in the late 1980s, early 90s) under the leadership of Starr Jacobs, an arts program from and for our community. Starr was also part of our group, and shared some of the history of Arts Starts. Art Starts was one of the local programs that focused on Black children and youth and welcomed all (including my [Bill Worrell's] daughter back in the day). In addition, the park is near a series of medium- and low-rise buildings with many residents of African origin. Cy Townsend Park is a small and heavily used park where children across a spectrum of racial identities play.

Q: There was an interaction during the workshop when a Black child asked what a community centre is. Can you elaborate on that moment and why it was significant?

A: As we were discussing the need for a community centre, and questioning why we do not have one, several children in the park came over to listen. One of them put their hand up and asked, "What's a community centre?" They had never heard of one, and we don't have one in our community. Once we explained what can happen in a community centre, they immediately got it and immediately agreed we need one! The moment shows that community amenities are unfamiliar to many residents, there is a lack, and that it would be supported.

Q: What did you two gain from working together?

Bill

A: I got to meet and work with Adil, a newcomer into our community. I became informed of the Reset program. We will be working together in the future on community projects. In our preparation for the event, Adil gave me feedback on my approach regarding the issue of race and how we need to address it. The circle itself was a very active discussion where several Black women contributed a lot to the discussion. I think we planned it well, although we ended up deviating from the original format.

Adil

A: I got to meet and work with Bill, a long-term resident and leader in the community who inspired me with his decades-long activism and informed me of the history, through his lens. Our relations have now evolved into a new project so we're collaborating again! As a newcomer to the neighbourhood, I learned a lot from Bill and from what the residents shared. These lessons resulted in Reset immediately making changes to better respond to what the community has been asking for. A good example of this is that we put a picnic bench outside our space after the circle, given the comments that there are not a lot of benches and places to sit in the neighbourhood.

Q: What are three takeaways from your Deep Listening Circle session?

- A:**
1. We need a community centre, which would have a lot of support.
 2. Historical systemic racism needs to be brought forth and those responsible for those systems, be it white folks or other folks of colour, need to hear and learn and act in solidarity. The first step for cross-racial respect, understanding and solidarity is listening and truth-speaking, with the goal of community-building.
 3. The circle itself was a very active discussion where several Black women contributed a lot to the discussion. We were able to further (re)connect with community members, in our ongoing community engagement work.

Preliminary Placemaking Policy & Precedents Research

In addition to valuing the lived experiences and local knowledge of all of the communities with which we're privileged to collaborate, the practice places considerable significance on evidence-based practice because Ms. Pitter is also an urban planning scholar who lectures, develops syllabi and co-leads research with academic institutions across North America. While serving as Planner-In-Residence at the University of Waterloo's School of Planning, Ms. Pitter included this initiative in her PLAN 409 Urban Design Studio syllabus. Together with Dean Markus Moos and teaching assistants Timothy J. Hunting and Victoria Mance, the practice engaged 90+ students in identifying precedents that may be helpful in addressing the multifarious, complex issues with the Little Jamaica area. The questions, which guided this research, are as follows:

- » How can a conventional retail mapping and analysis approach be expanded to include a more comprehensive approach to building pathways to prosperity for Little Jamaica residents?
- » How can housing development in Little Jamaica be implemented in a manner that contributes to Black people being able to "grow in place" (especially Black disabled individuals, elders, 2SLGBTQ+ and single Black mothers) while also responding to the housing needs of current and future residents across all races in Little Jamaica?
- » Which design, development and policy approaches are good for creating greater densification in existing residential neighbourhoods vs. solely focusing on high-density condos along the retail corridor?
- » How can an environmental justice lens be added to conventional urban sustainability and resilience approaches?
- » How can the redevelopment of Little Jamaica create the foundation for community care and grassroots-led initiatives to improve the cultural significance of Little Jamaica?

Precedent Examples

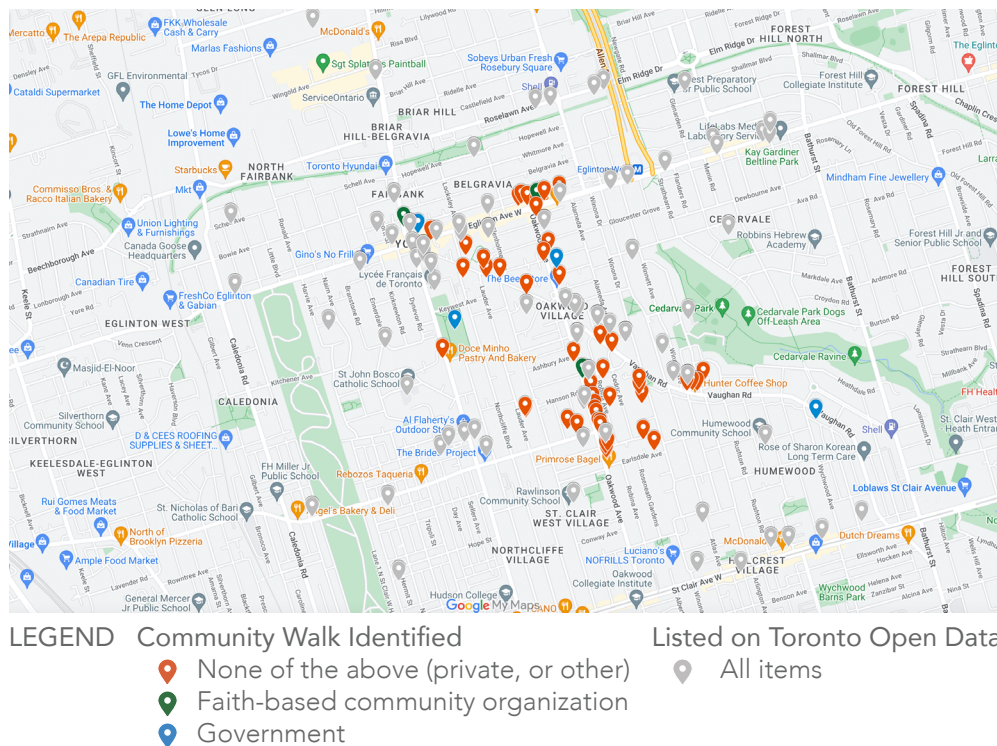
Building on the initial research conducted by University of Waterloo students, the practice researchers and policy experts identified more than 50 program and policy precedents to respond to the primary issues and opportunities related to Little Jamaica. The following is a brief snapshot of some options:

1. “**Just-cause eviction clauses**” in leases limit the reasons for landlords to evict tenants only to serious issues such as failure to pay rent, continued violation of lease provisions, disturbance of other tenants, substantial damage to the unit, and/or use of the unit for illegal activities. Versions of this can be found in Oakland and San Jose, California.
2. “**Ground-floor activation**,” a concept promoted by the City of New York, is basically zoning that requires ground-floor retail, with attractive facades and signs, in high-density towers. The goal is to create an environment where consumers are more likely to utilize the amenities in the area.
3. “**Tiny homes**” have a living space of no more than 400 square feet but contain all the usual amenities and utilities of bigger homes. Aimed at providing housing for the homeless and low-income people, residents in Detroit can pay reduced monthly housing rates for “tiny homes” until the cost of the house and the surrounding property is fully paid off and becomes their personal property.
4. “**Equitable development initiatives**” (EDIs) in cities such as Seattle provide funds to community groups, such as the African Community Land Trust (ACLT), to further their goals of reducing displacement and gentrification within Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities.
5. The “**East Portland Community Investment Trust**” is a non-profit that provides loans and financial education to low-income individuals and businesses with a goal of helping them build equity and fight displacement by having community ownership of local property. East Portland, like Little Jamaica, is an area that is experiencing development pressure and is home to many Black people.
6. “**Edible landscaping**,” as practised in several countries, is a concept whereby vegetables, fruits, herbs and crops are deliberately introduced to urban public spaces to create a different kind of landscaping and help provide food security for city-dwellers. A study in Wuhan, China, shows it also supports support carbon sequestration, rainwater retention and heat-island mitigation.
7. The “**Little Haiti Revitalization Trust**” was created to promote economic development, business and commerce in that well-known area of Miami. The trust is tasked with developing a plan to create jobs, attract industry and facilitate the production of goods and services in the area for residents and non-residents alike, as well as facilitating the development of affordable housing.

Infrastructure Mapping Engagement

Infrastructure refers to facilities and systems such as bike lanes, bridges, residential buildings and community gathering spaces required for healthy community living. This particular infrastructure opportunity mapping walk was focused on residential housing and community gathering spaces. Conventional mapping tends to prioritize geographic places and phenomena without meaningfully engaging with social equity.

When working with community members, the practice seeks to translate their concerns and aspirations—often communicated through a social lens—to a cartographic context that considers political, cultural, structural and interpersonal factors that help to create a more comprehensive understanding of places. Together with community members, City staff and LGA Architectural Partners, the practice both generated maps and led mapping engagements. As always, we began by building on the work of community stakeholders. The Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization, with CP Planning, a non-profit group, conducted a grassroots mapping exercise, which identified potential sites to accommodate the development of affordable housing and space for community initiatives. They identified the following 64 sites as shown below.⁴⁰



40 Source: Case, C. (202, October) TSP - Walk. Google Maps. <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?ll=43.69205626446105%2C-79.44769928717153&z=14&mid=1-18XdpEuYrCZfzsJ7BXVzoDwfef8Kdc>

Together with LGA Architectural Partners, the practice sought to understand the current building typology across various parts of the community within the City's established study area.

High-Level Infrastructure Mapping List

1. Eglinton & Dufferin - High-Density Residential (16 storeys max)
2. Eglinton & Northcliffe - Medium-Density Residential and Commercial with Parking (4 storeys max)
3. Eglinton & Oakwood - Commercial at Street Level with Residential Above (3-4 storeys max)
4. Eglinton & Oakwood - High-Density Residential with Commercial Grade and Green 'P' Parking Below (16 storeys max)
5. Eglinton and Marlee - High-Density Residential and Commercial/Industrial (10 storeys max)
6. Oakwood - Detached and Semi-Detached Residential (1-2 storeys max)
7. Oakwood and Vaughan - Mixed Commercial and Residential (2-4 storeys max)
8. Vaughan - Detached and Semi-Detached Residential (3 storeys max)
9. Vaughan Road Academy - Defunct School (3 storeys)
10. Typical Residential Block - Detached and Semi-Detached Residential (3 storeys max)

Examples

1. Eglinton & Dufferin - High-Density Residential (16 storeys max)



2. Eglinton & Northcliffe - Medium-Density Residential and Commercial with Parking (4 storeys max)



Image sources: LGA Architectural Partners, the BREL team. <https://www.getwhatyouwant.ca/listings/commercial-residentialinvestment-1559a-eglinton-ave-west>, Value Insight Realty. <https://www.valueinsightrealty.com/listings/2250-eglinton-avenue-west/>, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York,_Ontario

Next, LGA Architectural Partners and the practice co-led an infrastructure mapping engagement with a small group of community advocates who have been deeply engaged in identifying potential properties for affordable housing, cultural space and broader community space.

The practice provided the 20+ participants with an Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Checklist to build on their previous mapping initiatives while developing their capacity regarding the numerous complex factors, such as zoning, building conditions and building setbacks that determine whether a site or building has legitimate redevelopment or renovation potential. This two-hour walk explored various sites for potential development in the neighbourhood and the group used the checklist below to deeply explore three sites—1416 Eglinton Avenue West, the vacant lot next to 741 Vaughan Road and 504 Oakwood Avenue.



INFRASTRUCTURE
OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan

Developed by Jay Pitter Placemaking | September 2022

Participant Name: _____

Checklist: Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping

ITEM	YES	NO	N/A
Is this building and/or property owned by the municipality?			
Is this building and/or property connected to Jamaican or broader Black cultural heritage—both intangible and tangible?			
Is this building and/or property located close to amenities such as libraries, schools, markets, etc.?			
What is the developable area of the building and/or property (gross and net size of the property)?			
Is there enough developable area to accommodate a building and required public/common spaces that constitute dignified density while advancing critical equitable placemaking interventions that advance accessibility, agency, sustainability, flexibility, etc.?			
What is the development history and past uses of this building and/or property?			
What governmental entities have jurisdiction over this building and/or property?			
Does the building and/or property have the potential of being developed using an adaptive reuse approach (renovation and reuse of a preexisting structure for new or enhanced purposes)?			
Does the building and/or property have enough developable area to include a buffer that accommodates the appropriate building setback, outdoor seating area, landscaping, etc.?			
What is the condition and approximate value of the building and/or property?			
Can this building and/or property be developed in the short-to mid- term?			
Community Criteria			

Key redevelopment priorities emanating from this engagement included:

- » A high-visibility, mixed-use cultural centre, showcasing the history of Little Jamaica while providing services and programs for the entire community such as holistic community health services, affordable commercial space for local businesses and flexible gathering spaces;
- » A community garden, farmers' market and year-round commercial kitchen to support food-based businesses, to address food insecurity and facilitate cross-cultural food sharing;
- » Affordable, mid-rise housing developments throughout the residential neighbourhoods to balance out numerous high-priced, high-density developments underway along the retail corridor.

Weekly Engagements, Special Events and Informal Conversations

The practice established weekly hours at the Afro-Caribbean Farmers' Market, Maria A. Shchuka Library and the York-Eglinton BIA office. Additionally, the team further met community members where they were by attending local events such as the Sinting Festival and The Mane Event, and by collaborating with Gino's No Frills to set up a table to intercept weekend grocery shoppers. Finally, our team had more than 550 one-to-one conversations, totaling more than 300 hours of informal engagement. These community engagement efforts enabled community members who might otherwise be excluded from, or uninterested in, large-scale community engagement events to ask questions, share concerns and provide their insights pertaining to the Little Jamaica Cultural District. Recurring engagements at these sites also helped the practice to foster trust and build relationships between community stakeholders and ourselves, and among themselves.

Business Outreach

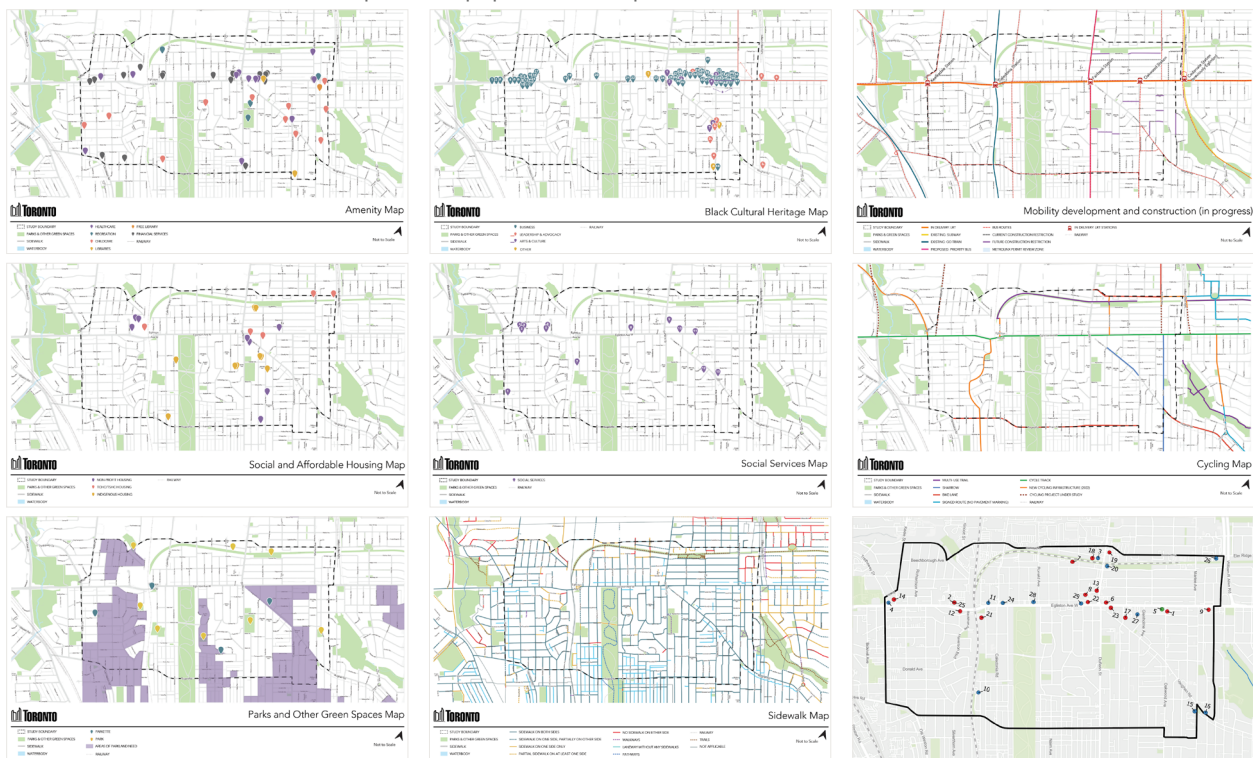
The practice engaged in informal conversations with 57 business owners during a poster outreach campaign. These conversations revealed their interest in the community beyond the revitalization of the retail corridor. Many business owners are also concerned about the broader cultural erasure occurring in the neighbourhood; the lack of informal community hub space that their businesses used to facilitate; and the provision of affordable housing for all. Equally important, business owners with a front row seat to growing street-involved activities expressed a combination of frustration about the ways these behaviours adversely affect already low levels of patronage, while conveying compassion for individuals who require increased services and care.

In addition to gathering these inputs, engagement with business owners enabled the practice to forge partnerships with 10 local businesses that agreed to allow community insight boxes to be stationed in their storefronts.

Socio-Spatial Mapping

Using the City's base map and broad study area boundary, the practice generated 15+ maps to develop a neighbourhood profile, and to validate community concerns while assessing the viability of the priorities they've expressed over the past several years.

This mapping exercise integrated an equitable placemaking analysis, which focused on assessing the number and quality of amenities, supportive services, safe infrastructure, sites of cultural significance and infrastructure opportunities (spaces and places that may accommodate community needs and aspirations). The practice also conducted Black cultural heritage mapping exercises, using an unconventional and deeply equitable approach that included academic and invaluable community contributions. Additional mapping was done leveraging existing City maps such as cycling, parks, sidewalks and the development pipeline map.



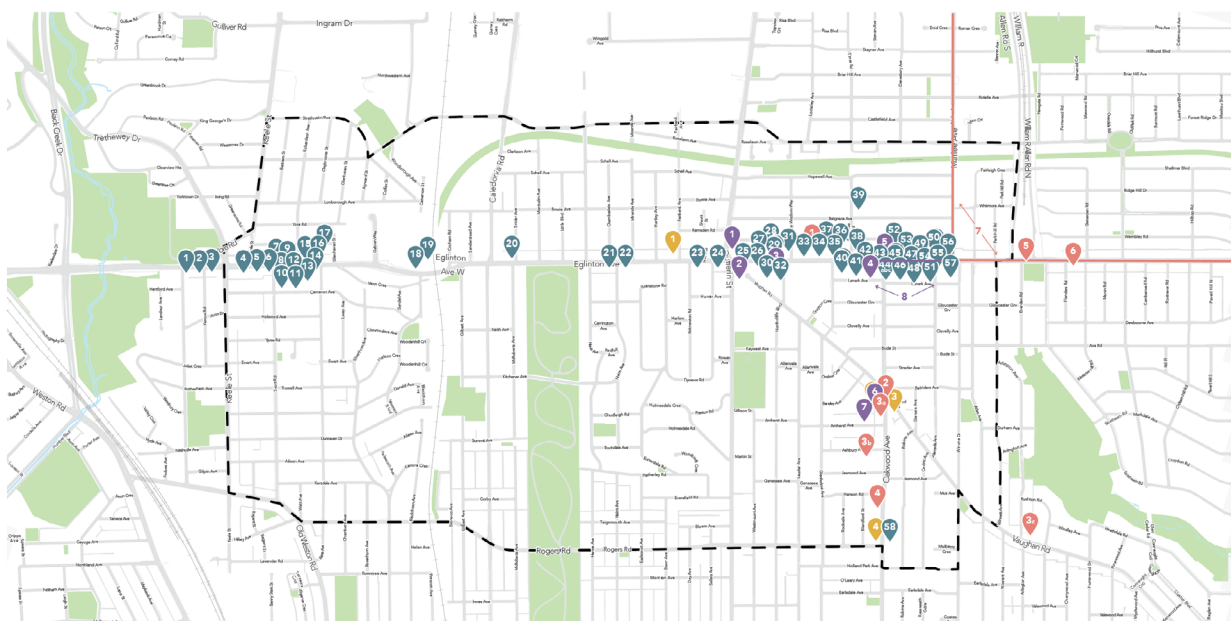
- » Amenity Map
- » Black Cultural Heritage Map
- » Mobility Development and Construction Map
- » Social and Affordable Housing Map
- » Social Services Map
- » Cycling Map
- » Parks and Other Green Spaces Map
- » Sidewalk Map
- » Development Pipeline Map

Black Cultural Heritage Mapping

Again, the moniker “Little Jamaica” has been used to describe the area for more than a half-century; however, as due diligence, the practice conducted extensive oral interviews, hands-on local archival research, academic research and local walks to validate assertions made by many community members and City staff. Through this extensive work, the practice uncovered a rich cultural presence dating back to the early 1920s and extending well beyond the retail corridor. This cultural research has been catalogued in four main categories—business; leadership and advocacy; arts and culture; and other—to capture cultural practices, values and contributions that defy categorization. It should also be noted that many of these categories include items that are not mutually exclusive; there are numerous occurrences of overlap reflecting the boundary-blurring nature of Black culture. The following is a small sampling of the archival documents retrieved by citizen historian Kathy Grant in collaboration with the practice.

The map below has been co-created using the archival research referenced above, along with supplementary mapping conducted by Debra Ross and Kojo (Orville Smith), longtime Little Jamaica residents and leaders of Amexem Mu Centre, and from interviews conducted by other residents who supported community engagement efforts.

All of the content presented in this section is preliminary engagement feedback. Community members who have not engaged in Phase 1 will have an opportunity to share their insights during the second phase of the process.



Business

1. Jacko's Restaurant | 2679 Eglinton Ave W
2. Captain's Barber Shop | 2667 Eglinton Ave W
3. Natural Vybes Juice & Tea Bar | 2637 Eglinton Ave W
4. Irie Veggie Takeout | 2593 Eglinton Ave W
5. Team Taxman | 2565 Eglinton Ave W
6. Ther's Beauty Salon | 2561 Eglinton Ave W
7. Unnamed Lingerie Store (sign not present) | 2566 Eglinton Ave W
8. Smile Back Mattress & Furniture | 2547 Eglinton Ave W
9. York Church of God (Bed & Breakfast, Church Food Bank) | 2549 Eglinton Ave W
10. Dr. Nana Barnor Pediatrician (closed September 2022) | 2545 Eglinton Ave W
11. Super Smart Styles | 2541 Eglinton Ave W
12. Notable Cleaners | 2535 Eglinton Ave W
13. The Place Of Beauty | 2533B Eglinton Ave W
14. TinNel's Patties & West Indian Take-Out | 2517 Eglinton Ave W
15. King Culture | 2520 Eglinton Ave W
16. Beni Boo Styles | 2522 Eglinton Ave W
17. Spanky Papers, DJ Records | 2508 Eglinton Ave W
18. Eric's Upholstering | 2036 Eglinton Ave W
19. Cliff's Hair Place (1975) | 2322 Eglinton Ave W
20. Miss Unity Beauty Salon | 2174 Eglinton Ave W
21. Glamourama Hair | 2033 Eglinton Ave W
22. Ross Courier Carpet, formerly Eglinton Carpets (closed) | 2019 Eglinton Ave W
23. Spice Isle Sports Bar (closed) | Fairbank Avenue & Eglinton Ave W
24. Tee Shirt People | 1897 Eglinton Ave W
25. Wisdom's Barber Shop and Hair Salon (1974) | 1802 Eglinton Ave W
26. Ondre's Convenience Store | 1790 Eglinton Ave W
27. Roman's N Care Inc. | 1772 Eglinton Ave W
28. Caribbean Slice | 1764 Eglinton Ave W
29. Lady Ann Superstore African Boutique, Victoria Food Mart (1975) | 1758 Eglinton Ave W
30. Blue Nile Bar and Grill (2012), (closed about 10 years, the sign remains) | 1757 Eglinton Ave W
31. Jimmy Wisdom Barber Shop & Beauty Salon (1980) | 1754 Eglinton Ave W
32. Roy's Fashion & Enterprise (closed) | 1753 Eglinton Ave W
33. Sheryl's Caribbean Cuisine, formerly Judy's Island Grill | 1720 Eglinton Ave W
34. Chakula Tamu East African Food Store | 1690 Eglinton Ave W
35. Rasta Flex Clothing and Accessories | 1604 Eglinton Ave W
36. The River's Restaurant and Bar | 1602 Eglinton Ave W
37. Roti King | 1688 Eglinton Ave W
38. Wailer's Connection & Caribbean Tailor | 6 Times Rd, currently The Barber
39. Redmon Haulage | 122 Belgravia Ave
40. Ross Courier Carpet, formerly Eglinton Carpet (closed) | 1632 & 1639 Eglinton Ave W
41. The Barber | 1627 Eglinton Ave W
42. Family Tree Variety Grocery Store | 1621 Eglinton Ave W
43. Jamall Caribbean Custom Tailor | 609 & 611 Oakwood Ave
- 44a. Flea Flea Furniture (2003), (closed) | 601 Oakwood Ave

Business (continued)

- 44b. Pringles Jerk Pit (1992), Errol's Caribbean Cuisine (1999), The Jerk House Restaurant (2000), One Stop Restaurant (2006) | 603 Oakwood Ave
- 44c. Tropical Food King (1985) | 605 Oakwood Ave
- 45. Randy's Take-Out (opened 1978, closed February 2022), The West Indian DJ Pool (1979) | 1569 Eglinton Ave W
- 46. Castries Barber Salon | 1565 Eglinton Ave W (has moved to Pape)
- 47. All Seasons Food Market | 1555 Eglinton Ave W
- 48. Monica's Beauty Salon (1979) | 1553 Eglinton Ave W
- 49. RAP'S | 1541 Eglinton Ave W
- 50. Michael's Barber Shop & Hair Salon, Carib Photo Studio (1976) | 1532 Eglinton Ave W
- 51. Just Incredible Hair | 1551 Eglinton Ave W
- 52. Lester's Caribbean Food Market (1975) | 1530 Eglinton Ave W
- 53. TreaJah Isle | 1514 Eglinton Ave W
- 54. Spence's Bakery (1968) | 1539 Eglinton Ave W
- 55. Afro-Caribbean Farmers' Market (seasonal) | 1531 Eglinton Ave W
- 56. Celebrity Vegetarian (closed) | 1474 Eglinton Ave W
- 57. Carib Jewelry (closed) | 1475b Eglinton Ave W
- 58. Danny's W.I. Food Store (1975) | On Oakwood (at Roger's Road)

Arts & Culture

- 1. Christ Church, The British Methodist Episcopal Church | 1828 Eglinton Ave W
- 2. St. Hilda's Church | 2353 Dufferin St
- 3. Maria A. Shchuka Library - Black and Caribbean Heritage Collection | 1745 Eglinton Ave W

- 4. The Durham Caribbean Festival | 1603 Eglinton Ave W
- 5. Kiddies Carnival | Eglinton Ave W at Oakwood Ave
- 6. Nia Centre for the Arts (under construction) | 524 Oakwood Drive, York
- 7. For Youth Initiative | 504 Oakwood Ave
- 8. Sinting Festival Area | Dufferin Ave to Marlee Ave along Eglinton Ave W

Leadership & Advocacy

- 1. Constituency Office of Jean Gammage - Liberal Candidate for Oakwood (1981) | 1696 Eglinton Ave W
- 2. Reclaim, Rebuild, Eglinton West (RREW) Little Jamaica Rally | Eglinton Ave W & Oakwood Ave
- 3a. Black Action Defence Committee Head Office | 508 Oakwood Ave
- 3b. Black Action Defence Committee Head Office | 7 Ashbury Ave
- 3c. Black Action Defence Committee Head Office | 393 Vaughan Rd
- 4. Occidental Cleaners (1924) Owned by Black Activist Donald Moore | 416 Oakwood Ave
- 5. BLM Protest, Justice for Jermaine Carby and Andrew Loku | Eglinton Ave W & Allen Rd
- 6. Black Urbanism TO | 1061 Eglinton Ave W
- 7. Albert Johnson police protest route (1979) | Eglinton Ave W and Marlee Ave

Other

- 1. Informal Community Gathering Place (sitting area near TD Bank) | 1886 Eglinton Ave W
- 2. Sam's (formerly 7/11) | 620 Vaughan Rd
- 3. Checo's Café and Amusement | 354 Oakwood Ave
- 4. Club Focus/The Cave (youth hangout spot in 90s) | same site as NIA Centre for the Arts | 524 Oakwood Ave

Proposed Little Jamaica Boundary

To impose boundaries on culture is at once counterintuitive and pragmatic within the context of establishing formal cultural districts. Keeping this tension in mind, the following map depicts the practice's proposed Little Jamaica Cultural District boundary. This unconventional two-part cultural district features a discontinuous, permeable boundary informed by extensive research, community engagement, mapping activities and our equitable placemaking principles.



Proposed Boundaries: Rationale and Considerations

- » Recognizes the long-time cultural imprint along the Eglinton West retail corridor despite the fact that there is an area in-between that is not now, nor has been historically, characterized as part of Little Jamaica;
- » Although atypical, includes and deeply considers residential neighbourhoods ensuring that amenities such as the provision of food, shelter, greenspace, and child and elder care are prioritized while recognizing the need for policy amendments that recognize and support home-based businesses—this approach also resists touristification;
- » Promotes prosperity by responding to synergies related to the co-location of businesses in both areas while maintaining relational and economic bonds across areas;
- » Fosters sustainability by encouraging a pedestrian-oriented experience in both areas of the cultural district while leveraging upcoming active and public transportation options (bike lanes, LRT, etc.);
- » Does not diminish the City's ability to provide focused resources (infrastructure, funding and programming) or render them too thinly distributed to make meaningful impact because the combined areas are not too sizable.

Jay Pitter Placemaking is an award-winning, bi-national practice mitigating growing divides in cities across North America. The practice leads institutional city-building projects focused on public space design and policy, mobility equity, cultural planning, gender-responsive design, transformative public engagement and healing fraught sites. Additionally, Jay Pitter, Principal Placemaker, shapes urgent urbanism discourse through media platforms such as the Los Angeles Times and Canadian Architect. Ms. Pitter is a sought-after speaker who has delivered keynotes for organizations such as United Nations Women and the Canadian Urban Transit Association, and is also an urban planning lecturer who has engaged students at Cornell University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Princeton University and numerous other post-secondary institutions. Guided by Ms. Pitter's expertise, which is located at the nexus of urban design and social justice, the team translates community insights into the built environment and urban policy.

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