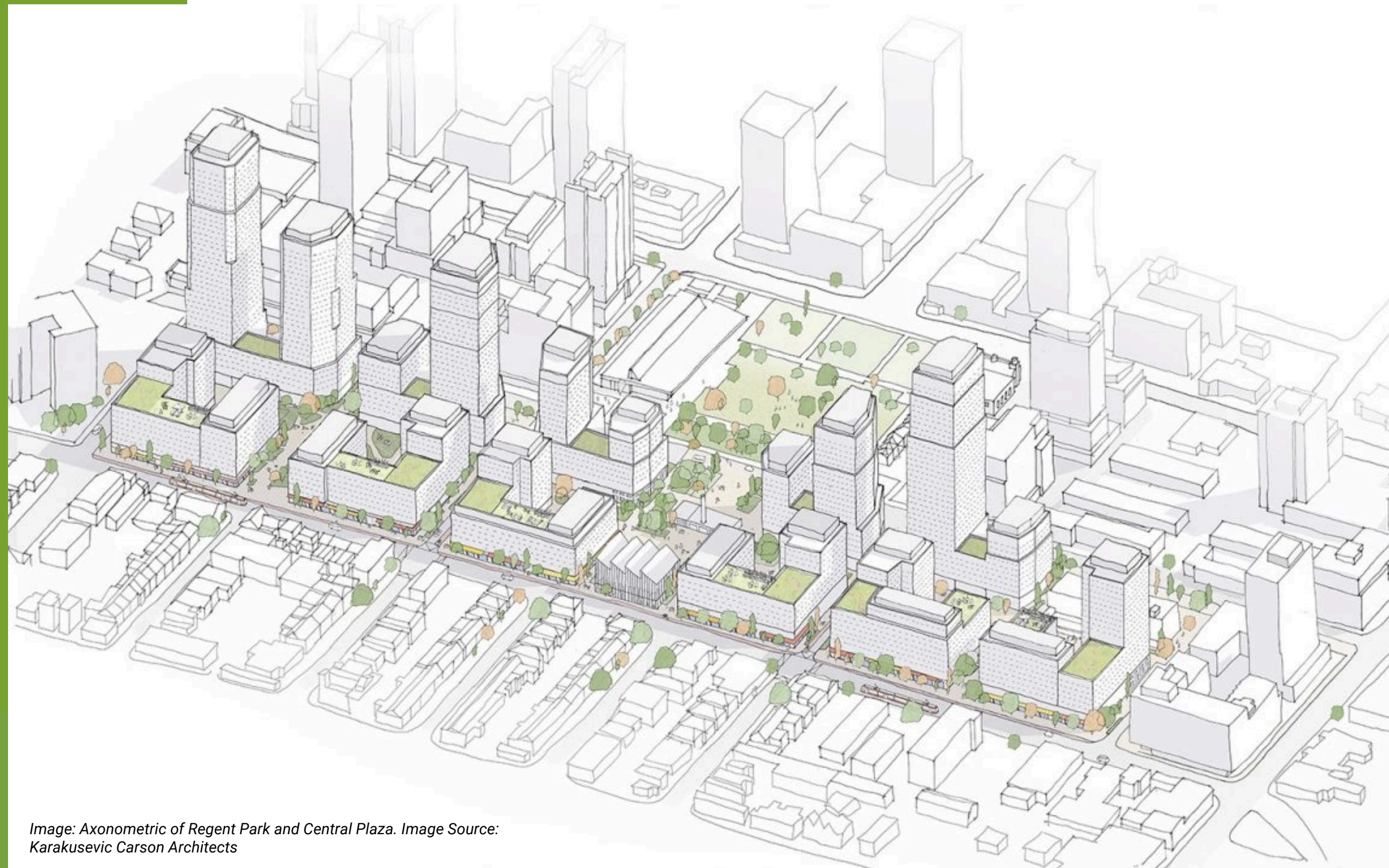


# Creating and Sustaining Animated Community Spaces in Regent Park's New Central Plaza

May 2025

ULI Toronto Technical Assistance Panel Report

Prepared for Toronto Community Housing Corporation



*Image: Axonometric of Regent Park and Central Plaza. Image Source: Karakusevic Carson Architects*



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Image: ULI/TAP team and TCHC staff on a walking tour of Regent Park.  
Image source: ULI/TAP team.



# Executive Summary

In 2024, with Regent Park entering its final two phases of revitalization (Phases 4 and 5), the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) was interested in participating in a ULI (Urban Land Institute) Toronto Technical Assistance Panel (TAP). It sought to explore innovative ways to develop the Central Plaza site which lies in the heart of a 16-acre parcel of land being revitalized by TCHC in partnership with Tridel Builders Inc., as part of the revitalization.

TCHC envisions the Central Plaza as a focal point in Regent Park. Their overarching challenge to the TAP was **“How to create a framework for sustainable animation of the central plaza area and its adjacent buildings and spaces?”**

ULI Toronto convened an eight-member volunteer team of experts esteemed for their work in land use, urban planning and design, food security and community development to tackle this challenge. On November 8, 2024, they embarked on a two-hour walking tour of Regent Park to consider TCHC’s challenge. During the tour, the team surveyed the Central Plaza site and heard from Regent Park residents, community and youth advocates about the history and heritage of Regent Park and the challenges facing the community as it continues to evolve.

Staff from TCHC and the City of Toronto provided background information to contextualize the civic uses of the site, such as the planned relocation of the Parliament branch of the Toronto Public Library and the decommissioning and possible re-purposing of the boiler house. This enabled the volunteer team and TCHC staff to assess the great opportunity to connect the “Big Park” to the Cabbagetown neighbourhood on the north side of Gerrard Street.



Image: Aerial view of Regent Park. Image source: TCHC



On November 15, 2024, the TAP experts reconvened for an all-day workshop of brainstorming and ideation, during which they considered the various obstacles and opportunities facing TCHC's vision for the Central Plaza and drafted the following three high-level principles to guide its future development:

- **Continue to create diversity by upholding the mixed-use model in Phases 4 and 5** by thoughtfully integrating residential, commercial, retail and communal spaces, making Regent Park a true and complete live-work-play community.
- **Uphold Regent Park as a “community first, destination second” neighbourhood** where access to amenities in the public realm is prioritized for residents of Regent Park first, followed by the community at large.
- **Preserve the multicultural spirit of Regent Park** by encouraging the creation of community-led programming to bring people together, empower them to realize their collective capabilities and agencies, and act for true community connection and pride.

With these principles top of mind, the Panel tabled the following eight recommendations, which are enumerated with examples on pg. 30 of this report:

**Recommendation 1: Listen to the community**

**Recommendation 2: Adopt a social return on investment framework**

**Recommendation 3: Focus on creating a food economy**

**Recommendation 4: Prioritize safety and accessibility**

**Recommendation 5: Demolish the boiler house**

**Recommendation 6: Focus on programming – youth-centric and beyond**

**Recommendation 7: Explore other existing and successful public space governance models**

**Recommendation 8: Explore multiple funding options**



Image: Site Plan of Phases 4 and 5 lands in Regent Park. Image source: [rp4and5.ca](http://rp4and5.ca)



# What is a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP)?

ULI Toronto's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) provides comprehensive and strategic advice in response to a specific land use or development assignment. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide organizations with a customized approach to addressing specific local issues.

The TAP is a high-profile program organized by the ULI Toronto Advisory Services Committee and typically convenes eight-12 industry volunteers from the ULI Toronto community to provide their subject matter expertise as a meaningful contribution toward the revitalization of a city neighbourhood or district. Upon the completion of the TAP meeting, ULI Toronto compiles and publishes a summary of the presentations and non-binding recommendations in a TAP Report.

In November 2024, ULI Toronto organized a TAP of eight esteemed professionals from across the real estate, urban planning and design, food security and community development industries (see Appendix B – TAP Bios) to examine the Central Plaza site—part of Phases 4 and 5 of the Regent Park Revitalization—in Toronto's downtown east.

TCHC's overarching challenge to the TAP was **"How to create a framework for sustainable animation of the central plaza area and its adjacent buildings and spaces?"**



Image: 2024 ULI TAP members. Image source: ULI/TAP team.



Additional questions tabled by TCHC were:

1. What programming and/or economic activities (e.g., food-related) would support the economic sustainability of this space and the needs of the community?
  - a. Which would be well-suited to creating community wealth, opportunities for local tenant businesses, and confronting anti-Black racism?
  - b. Which would be viable over the long term?
2. What is the recommended long-term governance model of the space that is accountable to and serves the long-term interests of the community? (i.e. Who will decide on programming, repairs, cleaning, etc.?)
  - a. Are there existing models with proven effectiveness that are accountable to the community and responsive to changes over time?
  - b. How can this be accomplished while remaining accountable to TCHC's governance responsibilities?
3. How can the new space integrate into the existing public spaces within and surrounding Regent Park to express the neighbourhood's identity and support a vibrant community experience and improved quality of life?

The group participated in a walking tour of the Central Plaza site on November 8, 2024, before attending an all-day deliberation on November 15, 2024, in an amenity space in TCHC's building at 50 Regent Park Boulevard, south of Dundas between Sackville and Sumach in Regent Park. Together, both TAP sessions included a series of presentations about the site by TCHC and City of Toronto staff, Regent Park residents, community advocates, youth workers, and employees from Tridel Builders Inc. Following the presentations on November 15, the Panel convened a closed-door working session (as part of the TAP process), resulting in the tabling of a set of recommendations intended to inform the revitalization of the Central Plaza site, in the short and long-term.



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## 2024 ULI TORONTO TAP MEMBERS

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Community Centre Manager, Parks and Recreation, City of Toronto

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Regent Park Resident and member of Mothers of Peace

**Sureya Ibrahim**

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Youth Advocate

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Dixon Hall

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## TAP REPORT TEAM

The report was written by Sohini Bhattacharya from Allegoro Communications in collaboration with the TAP Chair, panellists, and ULI staff. Report design provided by Sohini Bhattacharya.



# Background Information



*Image: Regent Park- Pre Revitalization. Image source: TCHC*



# The Site: Central Plaza and Regent Park– History and Heritage

The Central Plaza is a pocket of land located in the heart of Phases 4 and 5 in Regent Park, Toronto, bordered by Gerrard Street East in the north, Oak Street in the south, Sackville Street in the west and Sumach Street in the east. The site is officially part of the final two phases (4 and 5) of the Regent Park Revitalization. The Central Plaza is sandwiched between what is to become the new Regent Park branch of the Toronto Public Library and Oak Street. This includes the existing boiler house building, which is slated for possible retrofitting and repurposing for public use.<sup>1</sup>

As part of the Regent Park neighbourhood, the site has a history and heritage that dates to centuries ago when it was home to different Indigenous cultures such as the Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Eries, Petuns, and Neutrals who united to trade, hold councils and seasonal ceremonies in this region of Ontario. They used the nearby Don Valley to hunt, fish, and trade.<sup>2</sup> In more recent Victorian times, Regent Park came to be known as Cabbagetown—a name that has now been relegated to its more sought-after neighbour just north of it.<sup>3</sup>

Claiming 69 acres of Toronto's Downtown East in the post-war era, the planning of Regent Park was modelled on the "Garden City" principle pioneered in the United Kingdom, which at the time was considered the gold standard for urban renewal.<sup>4</sup> The neighbourhood became home to social housing that consisted of 2,083 Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) units. Over time, funding cuts to federal housing programs impacted the neighbourhood negatively.



Image: Regent Park's Central Plaza site plan. Image source: TCHC

Citation:

1. Karakusevic Carson Architects. Regent Park Phases 4 & 5.
2. Cabbagetown's First People- Before the Europeans: <https://www.cabbagetownpeople.ca/person/cabbagetowns-first-people/>
3. Toronto Centre for Learning and Development: [https://www.tcld.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/RegentPark\\_2011-12\\_CRNA-Murshida.pdf](https://www.tcld.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/RegentPark_2011-12_CRNA-Murshida.pdf)
4. Urban Regeneration in Toronto: Rebuilding the Social in Regent Park by Astrid Greaves: [https://preservedstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Greaves\\_Astrid\\_E\\_201109\\_MA.pdf](https://preservedstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Greaves_Astrid_E_201109_MA.pdf)



In the 1970s, Regent Park became home to Canadian newcomers from across the world and soon was known as one of the most ethnically diverse communities in the city.

However, due to bureaucratic procedures of the Provincial government at the time, and their change in focus from “fairness in rent to the economic costs of providing services, including maintenance and operating costs,” the living conditions of Regent Park residents were de-prioritized. This limited residents’ ability to carry out their daily activities and have fair access to resources. The chronic lack of social housing funding resulted in the further deterioration and isolation of the neighbourhood.<sup>5</sup>

Its reputation notwithstanding, Regent Park residents have demonstrated great pride in their vibrant and close-knit community and have been the most powerful advocates of change, tirelessly dedicated to lobbying successive governments to address the various systemic socio-economic challenges plaguing the community.

In the early 2000s, the City of Toronto was given ownership of the city’s social housing portfolio, which was subsequently amalgamated under its new housing agency, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). With this change, residents of Regent Park recognized the opportunity to work in partnership with the city to launch the revitalization of Regent Park.

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Citation:  
5. Producing Race, Producing Space: The Geography of Toronto’s Regent Park by Vanessa Rosa:  
<https://utoronto.scholaris.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/64d85639-73db-4e1b-bdd5-52fe82a9e3bf/content>



# Regent Park Revitalization (Phases 1-5)

With a budget of over \$1 billion, the Regent Park Revitalization has been underway since 2003 and spans over 69 acres to be completed in five phases. As one of the most significant urban revitalizations of its kind, the Regent Park Revitalization's development goals are to transform the once socially and economically isolated community of Regent Park into a mixed-income, mixed-use, complete neighbourhood. Led by TCHC, the revitalization has been reshaping not only the physical landscape but also demonstrating a commitment to building a healthy social infrastructure, local economic development, and community well-being.



Top L-R: Aerial View of Regent Park Phases 4 and 5; Children's playground in Regent Park; Aerial image of Regent Park community, looking west; Regent Park community and green park, looking north. Bottom L-R: Outside view of Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre in Regent Park; "Self Respect" mural in Regent Park community created by community members; City of Toronto sign in Regent Park; TCHC hosts a community event in Regent Park. Images source: TCHC.



# Regent Park Revitalization Quick Facts

- Phases 1-3 developed by TCHC in partnership with The Daniels Corporation.
- Replaced 2,083 Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) social housing homes, including townhouses, mid-rises, and high-rises, with 1,178 RGI homes in Regent Park + 272 RGI homes outside Regent Park.
- Built 324 affordable rental units in Regent Park + 103 affordable rental units offsite. (Affordable is 10% less than the CMHC average rent by unit type in Toronto).
- Built 4,000 + market units. (Market is private condominiums and townhouses).
- Right-of-return policy was central to the revitalization to ensure that public housing residents were not displaced.
- To date, about 1,170 TCHC residents have moved back into rebuilt subsidized units.
- Currently, about 32% of the new apartments are at a below-market rate, while 68% are market-rate housing.
- Home to 7,500 residents before revitalization, the population is projected to increase to more than 17,000 once all five phases are completed.
- Phases 4 and 5 will be developed by TCHC in partnership with Tridel Builders Inc.
- In 2023, the master plan and rezoning process for Phases 4 and 5 were approved by Toronto City Council.
- Targeted to build 633 RGI homes + 637 affordable rental units in Phases 4 and 5.
- Targeted to build 1,976 market homes (mix of low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise) in Phases 4 and 5.

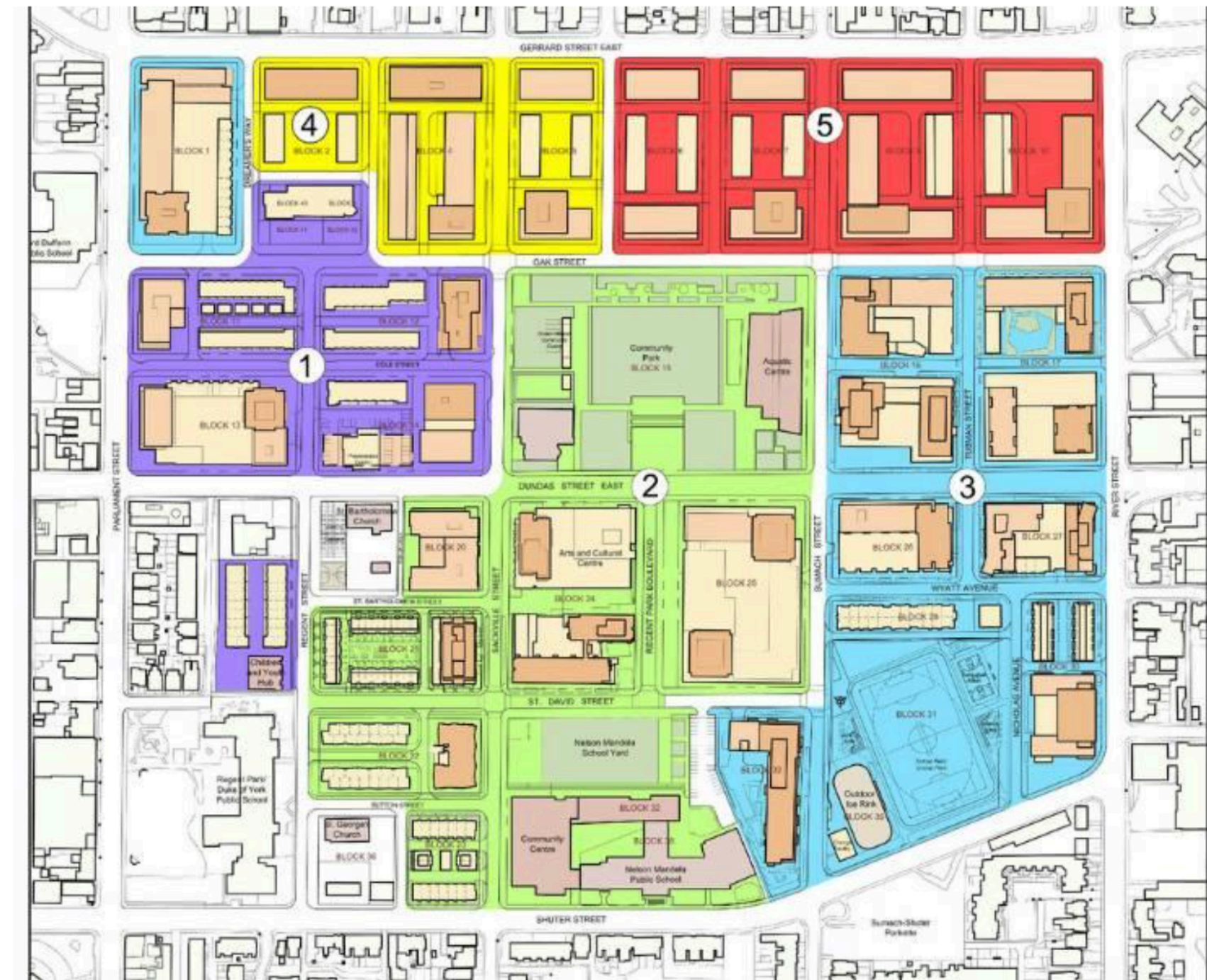


Image: Map of Regent Park Revitalization project with phases. Image source: TCHC



# Revitalization Timeline

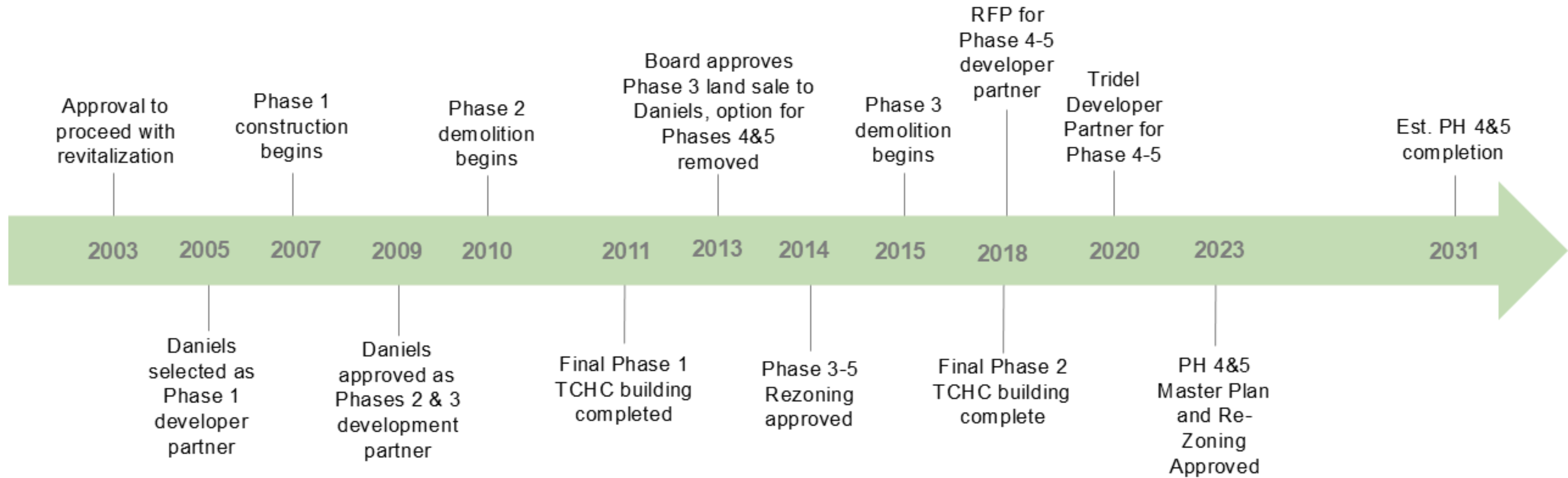


Image source: TCHC



# Considerations of Central Plaza as a Sustainable Community Hub to Strengthen Connections

The planning of Phases 4 and 5 includes approximately 3,710 square metres of community space in TCHC buildings. The Central Plaza extends in a north-south direction, located in the middle of the Phases 4 and 5 re-development blocks. It provides approximately 5,520 square metres of open space for recreation and potential community programming, as well as opportunities for civic and community uses in the new Regent Park branch of a Toronto Public Library building and the conversion of the existing TCHC boiler house building, if feasible.

There is potential for the central plaza to function as a connector for pedestrians and cyclists from Cabbagetown and Gerrard Street East to the “Big Park” while also opening spaces within Phases 4 and 5 of the development to the public realm.

The public realm network in Phases 4 and 5 also includes a continuous east-west pedestrian and bicycle connection through the middle of the site, bisecting each of the blocks and creating mid-block connections across the length of the site from Dreamers Way to River Street. Within each block, there are landscaped areas that have the potential to serve as recreational spots for the community.

The removal of townhouses from Phases 4 and 5 has created pathways for greater community interaction and engagement through public outdoor spaces where Regent Park residents can feel safe, ownership, and belonging.

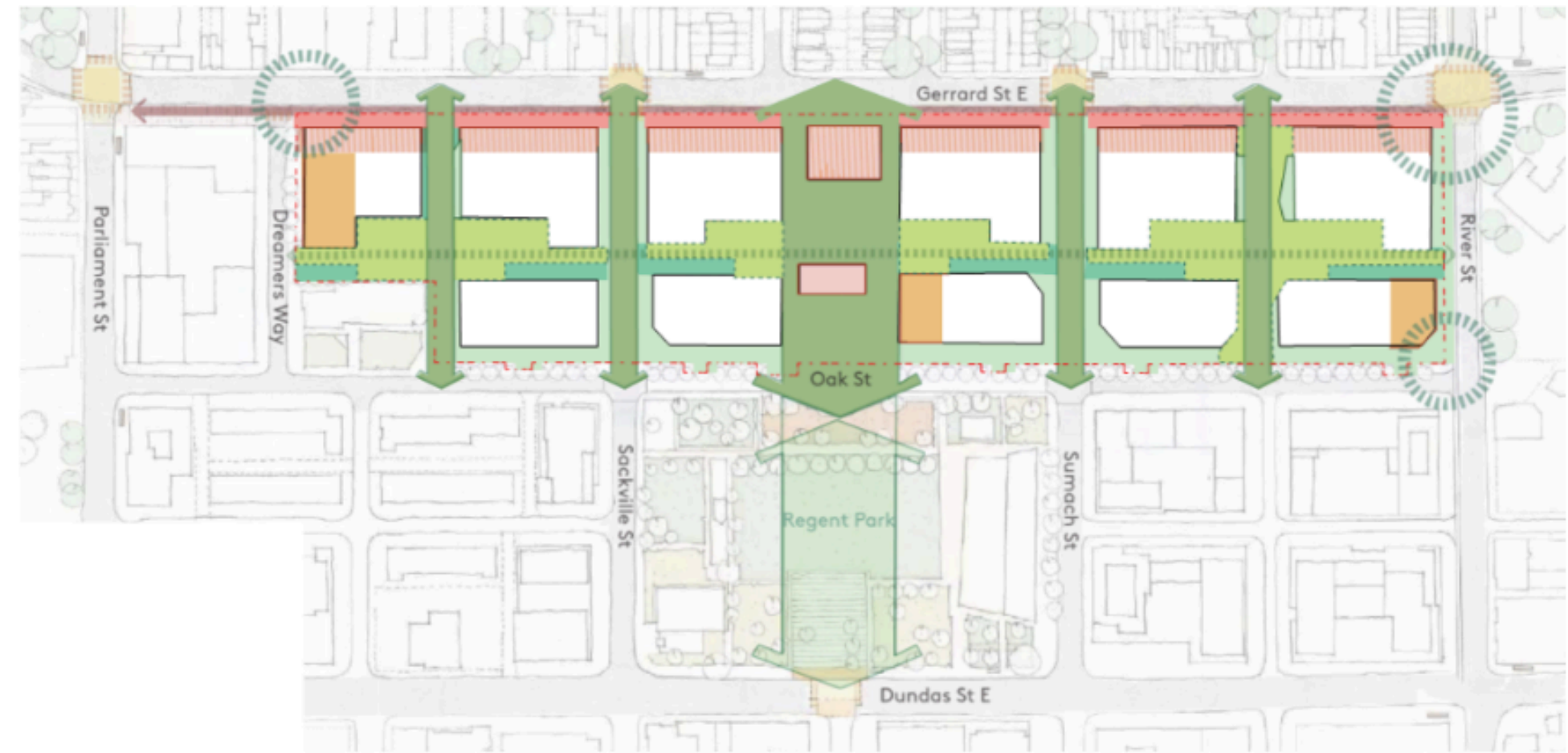


Image: Phases 4 and 5 Open public spaces around the Central Plaza area. Image Source: TCHC



Community wealth creation is vital to the flourishing of the Regent Park community. The central plaza can act as a hub for developing local economies and strengthening community infrastructure. In built form, the central plaza, with the inclusion of the library and removal of the boiler house building, has the potential to foster community connections through the development of social spaces and economic activities, thus transforming lives at Regent Park.

Furthermore, survey feedback collected from 2,200 community members, local youth groups and agencies in Regent Park has expressed the need for the creation of meaningful and equitable access to indoor and outdoor shared meeting spaces that can be adapted for farmers’ markets, art festivals, pop-up shops, community gardens, sports and recreation, and more. TCHC’s priority for Phases 4 and 5 is the realization of a new central plaza and pedestrian-friendly boulevards that offer multiple options to create such opportunities for the community.



*Image: Regent Park community members engaging in community activities.  
Image Source: Tridel Builders Inc.*



# Programming Needs for the Regent Park Community

In 2020, the Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC), a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to improving the health of Regent Park and surrounding area residents, published a Regent Park Children, Youth and Family Needs Assessment report that identified the following programming needs for the community:

- More infrastructure and programming geared toward mental health
  - An increasing number of Regent Park youth have reported barriers to accessing mental health support or experiencing stigma when trying to access mental health support. Currently, Wanasah, a new non-profit mental health agency, works to address the urgent mental health needs of Black youth and their families in Regent Park and neighbouring areas. However, there is a lack of formal and structured programming to help address adult mental health. There is also a need for programming to connect with the seniors of Regent Park, who act as community advocates and knowledge keepers, thereby playing a crucial role in mentoring Regent Park youth.
- Safe spaces for programming
  - Both youth (ages 15-24) and parents identified a need for safe spaces and programming that engages youth to counter a low sense of belonging among Regent Park parents and youth in comparison with a sense of belonging data for the City of Toronto residents overall.
- Programming for parents and children
  - Most Regent Park parents work multiple jobs; therefore, parents have identified a need for programming that provides opportunities for parents to spend time with their children, including teenagers.
- Creative and engaging community and youth-focused programs
  - Regent Park youth and parents have identified the need for social or recreational programming to keep youth too “busy” to become involved in risk-taking activities. However, there is also a need to address the social determinants of health that contribute to inequities, for example, by creating opportunities that will help to improve education and employment outcomes for youth.



On November 15, 2024, TAP experts also heard from a Dixon Hall youth worker who indicated programming needs in line with RPCHC’s report. Additionally, the youth worker identified the need for more access to technology-enabled safe spaces to facilitate customized weekend programming for Regent Park children. Currently, Dixon Hall hosts its activities at the Nelson Mandela Park Public School once a week. Ideally, they require a space that can be accessed more than once throughout the week.

Food insecurity and low income are realities for many Regent Park families. As such, out-of-the-box programming geared toward food security, food entrepreneurship, financial literacy, successful parenting and summer camps would be a great value-add to the community. Presently, food-related community events such as weekend BBQs have been hugely successful in bringing the residents of Regent Park together and connecting with the next generation.

Big Brother/Sister-type programming has the potential to provide Regent Park youth with the mentorship and support they need while paving the way for them to give back to their community by assisting the next generation.

While the multiculturalism of Regent Park is one of the biggest drivers in bringing the community together, it also acts as a deterrent for some Regent Park youth who are struggling to adapt within the diverse socio-cultural milieu due to language, culture, and other experiential barriers. Programming is needed for youth to be able to safely engage and identify with their cultural practices without feeling isolated from the rest of the community.



*Image: ULI TAP members and City of Toronto staff surveying the Central Plaza during a walking tour.  
Image source: ULI/TAP team.*



# Demographic Characteristics: Regent Park’s Current Neighbourhood Statistics and Indicators

According to the 2021 census, Regent Park’s population stood at 12,750, up 18.2% since the 2016 census. Regent Park continues to be one of the city’s largest sites for social housing. The population of Regent Park is projected to increase to 17,000 after all five phases of redevelopment.

The neighbourhood has a dynamic and predominantly young population where the proportion of youth (age 15-24) and working-age adults (age 25-54) is larger than other neighbourhoods in the city. Regent Park residents are more likely to rent than own. While the proportion of immigrants living in Regent Park is similar to the rest of the city, the neighbourhood has a higher percentage of residents who identify as members of a visible minority (over 70%). While most households know English, the six main languages spoken other than English include (in this order) Bengali, Tamil, Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish and Vietnamese.

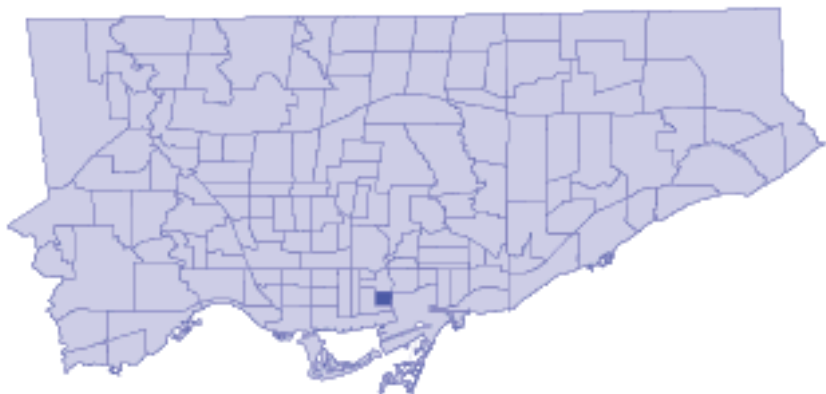
Single-person households represent most families at 44.7%. Most of the households (over 50%) have reported lower income (less than \$70,000). As such, the income statistics speak to the economic need in this neighbourhood.

Regent Park is the 5th most walkable neighbourhood in Toronto, boasting a neighbourhood Walk Score of 87 and bike score of 99, with 35.3% of the population using public transport to commute.<sup>8</sup>

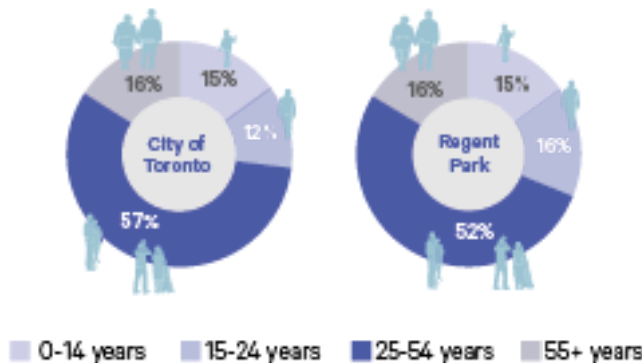
Citation:  
8. City of Toronto, Regent Park Neighbourhood Profile Data: [https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/find-your-neighbourhood/neighbourhood-profile-detail/?id=NeighbourhoodProfiles-CityofToronto/Snapshot110&title=Neighbourhood%20Profile%20Data#type=filtered&filter=Select+a+Neighbourhood&value=Regent%20Park%20\(72\)](https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/find-your-neighbourhood/neighbourhood-profile-detail/?id=NeighbourhoodProfiles-CityofToronto/Snapshot110&title=Neighbourhood%20Profile%20Data#type=filtered&filter=Select+a+Neighbourhood&value=Regent%20Park%20(72)) 4



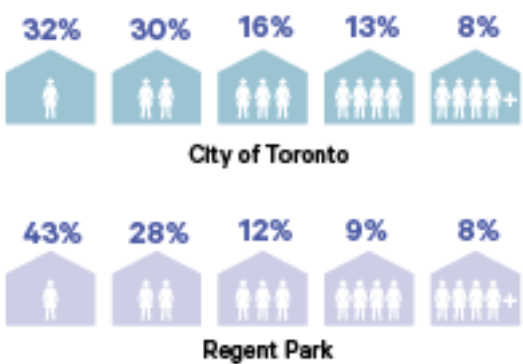
RECENT PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD PROFILE



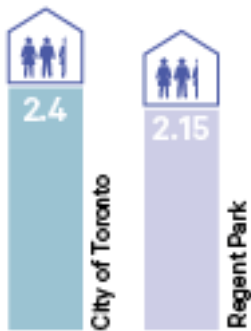
POPULATION AGE



HOUSEHOLD SIZE



AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE



DWELLINGS BY BUILDING TYPE



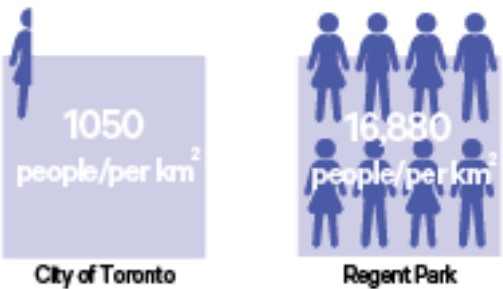
POPULATION



POPULATION CHANGE (2011-2016)



GROSS POPULATION DENSITY



TENURE



PUBLIC TRANSIT COMMUTE TO WORK



IMMIGRANT POPULATION



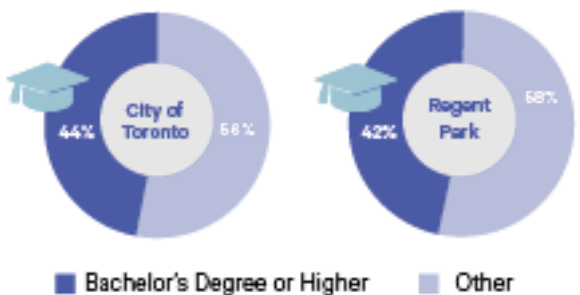
NON-ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



EDUCATION



COMMUTES GREATER THAN 1-HOUR



# Current and Proposed Uses of Site

## Current Uses:

Since 2013, Regent Park has seen the opening of many public amenities, such as:

- the 6-acre community park – located in the heart of the community that is often host to the neighbourhood’s events and celebrations;
- the Regent Park Community Centre – home to a variety of recreation support amenities like Regent Park’s employment hub and a childcare centre;
- the Regent Park Athletic Grounds – a fully equipped space with a hockey rink, running track, basketball court, a field house, and an artificial turf field for soccer and cricket;
- the community also now features the award-winning Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre;
- the Daniels Spectrum;
- the Toronto Birth Centre;
- the Dixon Hall Youth Centre;
- St. Mike’s Hospital opened the Sumac Creek Health Centre, a clinic dedicated to offering services to the Regent Park, Moss Park and St. James Town communities;
- there are many local and national retailers in the neighbourhood, like Shoppers Drug Mart, Rogers, Enterprise Car Share, RBC and Scotiabank, Tim Hortons, Le Beau Croissanterie, Café Zuzu, F45 Fitness, etc.



*Top (L-R): Balcony view of Block 16 north under construction; “Clandestinos” mural in Regent Park community; Townhomes and running track at Wyatt Avenue in Regent Park; Interior view of Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre; Bottom (L-R): Exterior view of Daniels Spectrum; Exterior view of completed building in Regent Park. Images source: TCHC.*



## Proposed Uses:

- Central Plaza
  - The central plaza is an area of approximately 5,520 square metres within 14,000 square metres of privately owned, publicly accessible space (POPS) located in Phases 4 and 5 lands. The Central Plaza is nestled within the block bounded by Gerrard Street East, Oak Street, Sackville Street and Sumach Street. TCHC proposes that the central plaza be used for recreation and community programming and activated in part by civic and community uses in the new Regent Park branch of a Toronto Public Library building and the conversion of the existing TCHC boiler house building, if feasible.
- Toronto Public Library
  - A new Toronto Public Library branch is proposed in Phases 4 and 5, which would replace the Parliament Street branch currently located at 269 Gerrard Street East. The library is expected to include a minimum of 2136.8 square metres over two floors in a new building fronting Gerrard Street East. The building would also front the central plaza and provide opportunities to animate the surrounding open space. The library is expected to include collections for children, teens and adults; lounge spaces and reading areas; small group and individual study spaces; and program rooms that may be booked for use by external groups. Funding for the library is included in the Toronto Public Library 2021-2032 Capital Budget and Plan. Toronto Public Library will be undertaking further community consultation related to the design and service offerings to be included in the new library, which may include specialized services such as a Digital Innovation Hub, business incubation spaces, a KidsStop Early Literacy Centre, or a Youth Hub.

# What We Heard

On November 8, the TAP team embarked on a two-hour walking tour of Regent Park to consider TCHC's challenge, **"How to create a framework for sustainable animation of the central plaza area and its adjacent buildings and spaces?"**

During the tour, the team surveyed the central plaza site and heard from Regent Park residents, community and youth advocates about the history and heritage of Regent Park, along with the challenges facing the community as it continues to evolve.



Image: Regent Park residents and community advocates with TCHC staff and TAP members. Image source: ULI/TAP team.



# Here's what the TAP team heard from Regent Park's residents, community, and youth advocates, in their own words:

*"When TCHC residents organize events, they place food orders from local "homegrown" caterers in Regent Park, instead of placing large scale orders from restaurants. This helps to keep the money within the community, in addition to creating a sense of belonging and giving back to the community. Catering is a successful model of income generation for Regent Park residents and has created employment opportunities for TCHC residents who work as lunchroom supervisors in the TDSB schools or food vendors."*

Regent Park resident and leading community advocate

*"The world is Regent Park; the world comes to eat at Regent Park."*

City of Toronto staff

*"Everyone has to be on the same table and talk about the issues."*

Regent Park resident and leading community advocate

*"Me and my best friend have done a lot of youth work and event planning. But recently, we have gotten heavily involved in entrepreneurial and economic growth in Regent Park. So, since we are going to be the next tenants within this space (Daniels Spectrum), we will be running the "Carousel Café and Bistro." We just got our lease and are hoping to launch in January (2025). We are recruiting local entrepreneurs to create a rotating roster of entrepreneurs featured in this space and will act as a cultural incubator for people to come and enjoy. Food is such a niche in this community because of the different taste palates that we have. People connect through food, and the people who meet here call it a community living room. Imagine what it would mean if they could meet here socially and have a coffee and some cute snacks at an affordable rate while also allowing mothers and those interested in the food business to sell."*

Regent Park youth advocate

*"I had a dream that I saw lots of children, like babies and grown-up children, at Saint Bartholomew Street. And I saw a group of children dressed in blue in the sky, and they floated and made a left turn on Regent Street. These are the children that died through violence and accidents. On Monday morning, I woke up and I saw the property manager, Albert Koke, and said, "Albert! We have to have a memorial garden in Regent Park," and he said, "Go ahead and have it. So, I was down there until I started to dig the place up. I got a few of the neighbours and searched for a spot until I found a spot that I wanted, and I started to gather people and such, and that's the way the Peace Garden came."*

Planter of the Dreamers' Peace Garden - a small memorial garden in Regent Park. The Peace Garden is dedicated to victims of violence and accidents and was founded in 2004 by a long-time resident and community advocate of Regent Park and a group of mothers who call themselves "The Dreamers." Many of these mothers have lost their children to street violence, and they have been passionately rallying for community solidarity and an end to violence since the 90s.

# IDEATING TO CREATE COMMUNITY IMPACT AT REGENT PARK



*Image: TAP members during closed deliberations.  
Image Source: ULI/TAP team.*



# Guiding Principles

The TAP's day-long brainstorming workshop session was informed by a discussion with youth workers from Dixon Hall and a series of presentations about the site by TCHC and Tridel staff.

After the presentations, the group began closed-room deliberations and outlined some key principles to govern planning processes. The following three guiding principles emerged from the deliberations:

## **1. Create diversity by upholding the mixed-use model:**

The TAP reinforced the importance of continuing what has been achieved in Phases 1-3, and implementing the mixed-use model of development for Phases 4 and 5. This can be achieved by thoughtfully integrating residential tenancies (TCHC + market) throughout Phases 4 and 5 of construction, to ensure that the built form represents a mix of TCHC and market housing in each building. Additionally, there should be a good representation of commercial, retail and communal spaces, making Regent Park a true and complete live-work-play community. Strong emphasis needs to be placed on not separating the market and TCHC housing on the ground floor, to ensure that “poor door” conditions are avoided.<sup>9</sup> There should also be a representation of the public realm within the market buildings to promote social gatherings, encourage youth to gather safely, facilitate all-season/year-round programming, and encourage the mingling of different communities and generations. Focus should be put on creating intimacy by drafting retail/ground floorplan designs that are customized for micro businesses and operations unique to Regent Park, enabling small businesses and the community's entrepreneurial spirit to thrive. The ground floor retail fronting the plaza should be boutique in form, with smaller footprints of approximately 50 square metres in size to support independent and entrepreneurial retailers, rather than providing a big-box retail experience. Independent businesses have greater potential to provide their local economies with new jobs, products, revenue, services, and more. This will encourage local and emerging entrepreneurship while supporting the local economy.

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Citation:

9. Poor doors: the segregation of London's inner-city flat dwellers: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/25/poor-doors-segregation-london-flats>

**2. Preserve the notion of “Community first, destination second” ethos:**

Access to amenities in the public realm should be prioritized for residents of Regent Park first, followed by the community at large. Ensuring that community needs are met first before any private/commercial needs are key. Regent Park residents have, in the past, competed with visitors from nearby Toronto neighbourhoods for the use of the Pam McConnell Aquatic centre, for example. The Aquatic centre was understood to serve and support Regent Park residents first before opening its doors to visitors from neighbouring communities. But after opening, community members found that they were competing against visitors from neighbouring communities for access to the pool. While this issue seems to have now been resolved, the example helps to inform future operational policies.

It is vital to ensure that all future public amenity spaces in Regent Park are made equitably accessible for events and groups that bring residents together and build bridges, especially between market and TCHC residents, thereby increasing social inclusion and cohesion of residents from various cultures and faith groups. A “community first, destination second” approach will focus on the designing of spaces for the residents of Regent Park as a priority. These spaces should aid the removal of social and physical barriers, be welcoming, and encourage residents of all backgrounds and income levels to co-mingle.

**3. Uphold the Multicultural spirit of Regent Park:**

As one of Toronto’s most culturally diverse neighbourhoods, it is imperative for TCHC and Tridel Builders Inc. to create physical space for the community, encourage the creation of community-led programming to bring Regent Park people together, empower them to realize their collective capabilities and agencies and act for true community connection and pride. The recent redevelopment of this area has largely contributed to the multiculturalism of this community. As such, it is important to contribute to Regent Park residents’ existing sense of pride in legacy and of being part of a new mixed community. Fostering true community connection and ensuring that old and new residents alike are engaged and feel included when participating in the community activities facilitated by the central plaza, are key to the successful completion of the final two phases of the revitalization.



# Key Obstacles and Opportunities

Based on what was heard from the Regent Park community during the walking tour and from TCHC staff, the TAP team identified the following obstacles, and opportunities presented by the obstacles, in implementing the three guiding principles toward recognizing TCHC’s vision for the central plaza.

Obstacles	Opportunities
Access to spaces for year-round youth programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The planning of Phases 4 and 5 includes approximately 3,710 square metres of community space in TCHC buildings. Within this, the central plaza provides approximately 5,520 square metres of open space for recreation and community programming, as well as opportunities for civic and community uses in the new Regent Park branch of a Toronto Public Library building with the removal of the existing TCHC boiler house building.</li><li>• Opportunity to provide ‘safe spaces’ which are efficient and modern learning environments.</li></ul>
Support food entrepreneurship to flourish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is an opportunity to build a 1,000 square metres industrial/community kitchen within the central plaza area that can be used for training, production, and growing of food with the application of a supply chain mind-set.</li><li>• Opportunity to create a testing ground and an adaptable space that invites continual change and activity, interest and vibrancy from the Regent Park community.</li><li>• Use of this space could be a demonstration for a process and a place that shapes "better outcomes" and instills the concept of "legacy".</li></ul>
Spatially, the library and boiler house act as blockers of the central plaza, separating market and TCHC residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider the demolition of the boiler house to remove a physical and visual impediment on the street level and help increase pedestrians’ sense of security.</li><li>• Opportunity for the new Toronto Public Library to act as a beacon of community engagement that unites market and TCHC residents. This space could function as a ground floor pavilion, animated on all sides, adopting a new front-facing retail model, and flexible for use by the community as needed.</li><li>• Opportunity to activate the linear park along the east side of Regent Park Boulevard to address potential shortfall of public space, if density increases.</li></ul>

Obstacles	Opportunities
Gaps in supports for Regent Park parents and seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is an opportunity to use the site to build intergenerational and social connections for Regent Park residents that create interdependence between seniors and youth and help bridge generational gaps.</li><li>• Opportunity to create programming that celebrates the community- its story, history, multiculturalism, and unique design.</li><li>• Opportunity to increase mental health programming offering support to parents and seniors who live alone and have no social connections outside of their jobs.</li><li>• Opportunity to incorporate local businesses in the plaza and encourage local “mom and pop” stores to help alleviate economic woes that single parents or seniors may experience.</li></ul>
Gun violence continues to be a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunity to create more programming that provides mental health support for youth and adults.</li><li>• Opportunity for more programming for youth to participate in, lead, and take stewardship of.</li><li>• Opportunity to build safer and pedestrian-friendly streets.</li></ul>
Lack of measuring/evaluation process for the success of the sustainable animation of the central plaza area and its adjacent buildings and spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunity to start at the drawing board, in consultation with the community, to create a customized evaluation process for Regent Park.</li></ul>



# IN SUMMARY: TAP RECOMMENDATIONS



*Image: TAP Members presenting recommendations to TCHC. Image Source: ULI/TAP team.*

# Key Recommendations

## 1. Listen to the Community. Need for Continuous Community Consultation – “Nothing for us, without us.”

The TAP’s opinion is that community consultation (with emphasis on equity-deserving groups) is a major enabler for the successful completion of the central plaza project in Phases 4 and 5, as it has been in past phases. The community should be treated as part owners, where possible, particularly as it pertains to community and public benefits. Prioritizing community needs through continuous consultation and consideration of Regent Park’s resident demographics at every step of developing the central plaza area is key to understanding the prevailing and evolving mindsets, community needs, challenges, and opportunities. Given that this TAP exercise presents a “blue-sky” outlook, it is essential to account for the diverse local narratives and stakeholders while identifying solutions and initiatives that will impact the future of this community.

## 2. Adopt a Social Return on Investment Framework.

The Panel debated the adoption of a Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework. As defined by the SROI Network in the UK and as adopted by the United Nations, the SROI model “measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organizations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them. This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value.”

While some panellists indicated a strong sentiment towards the adoption of the SROI model, there were also valid counterpoints raising considerable doubt about whether a complex SROI model will live up to its true promise in the Regent Park context.



Panellists in favour of the model felt that adopting an SROI framework would help provide a deeper understanding of the social, health, environmental, and economic value and long-term viability of the programming needed for the Regent Park community that is well-suited to creating community wealth, opportunities for local tenant businesses, and confronting anti-Black racism. An SROI model may help community members, decision-makers and the governance structure make informed decisions about how to allocate resources and provide an extra layer of transparency. There is an opportunity to consult with the community and collectively define how SROI may or may not work in Regent Park.

An informal example of SROI put to work by a Regent Park resident is the creation of the existing sewing circle, which, during the pandemic, proved to be greatly beneficial because of the need for masks. Originally, the sewing circle grew out of a need for immigrant women to share sisterhood and create. However, during the pandemic, ladies in the sewing circle earned an income of \$800+/day, sewing masks and supplying to the growing demand within the community. This also helped build social connections for immigrant women who were isolated during that time. The economic, social, and public health value of the sewing circle far exceeded the dollars invested in making the masks.

### **3. Focus on Creating a Food Economy.**

The Panel concluded that food is the gateway that everyone reaches for, particularly newcomers, creating pathways for local entrepreneurship, community gatherings and celebrations. They strongly recommend prioritizing the creation of a food economy representative of Regent Park's multi-cultural diaspora to create economic opportunities for residents. The focus should be to use food as a gateway to build a community through a multicultural food economy with an ability to scale by adopting a farm-to-table concept, investing in training, production, selling, distribution, and growing food in an educationally fun way, thereby maximizing impact. Establishing urban agriculture programs and focusing on community-led food production should be a priority.

Hands-on programs will be needed to teach food handling, preparation, and preservation. Educational programs should be facilitated to connect youth to the land, modern farming practices, plant life cycles and nutrition, with emphasis on engagement with local schools. It is important to prioritize culturally appropriate food programs by partnering with local food banks, community kitchens and grocery co-ops, and connecting Regent Park residents to food producers' networks or online platforms for broader reach.

As an example, Community Food Centres Canada is launching a Community Food Centre at 340 Gerrard St. E. in the summer of 2025 to serve downtown east Toronto with a variety of food programs aimed at supporting health and belonging. The main floor houses a dining room and commercial kitchen, and the second floor has a kitchen and classroom space for additional program uses. Programming will include community meals, gardening, cooking and community action programs for all ages and cultures. The outdoor space features an outdoor kitchen and seating area, a bake oven, and landscaped decorative food gardens.

Currently, residents are not happy about the loss of their community gardens. Community gardens on the ground level come with a lot of challenges, i.e. maintenance, fencing, sanitation, etc. Therefore, the Panel recommends exploring the possibility of building rooftop gardens using modular self-watering planters and solar-powered irrigation systems while also tapping into local schools and the elder community to foster generational engagement. Toronto Metropolitan University's rooftop Urban Farm serves as an example.

The central plaza can be used to potentially build a 1,000 square metres industrial/community kitchen that may serve as a testing ground that is inviting to continual change and activity, interest and vibrancy, and is an adaptable space to future-proof Regent Park as it continues to evolve. This space would serve as a hub for entrepreneurship, skills development, and food production. Rental rates should be subsidized to enable small food businesses to scale, along with other opportunities such as catering and/or food service.

Examples of food halls and shipping container marketplaces in Toronto, such as STAKT market, Waterworks, and Market 707, provide other possible ways of using the central plaza area, that promote a sense of stewardship and ownership. Rent-to-own options for these retail spaces and food stalls should be explored. Additionally, a fractional model of ownership could be considered where multiple individuals or entities collectively own and share ownership rights to a single retail space.



A food ecosystem can benefit the Regent Park community by creating pathways to local entrepreneurship. Food businesses can become a low-barrier entry point for Regent Park's diverse residents, many of whom are newcomers with rich culinary traditions. Through community gatherings and celebrations such as food festivals and markets showcasing multicultural cuisines (Ethiopian, Caribbean, South Asian, etc.), the community can unite to celebrate Regent Park's diaspora.

A food ecosystem also facilitates maximized community wealth-building economic opportunities. According to the Ontario Nonprofit Network, "Community wealth building (CWB) means doing community economic development in a way that is sustainable and permanently keeps resources within the community through enterprises that are local, democratic, and inclusive." CWB can be achieved by creating food-related career pathways, from farming and production to marketing and logistics and collaborations with food entrepreneurship hubs. By prioritizing adaptable spaces and scalable models, Regent Park can evolve as a resilient and inclusive food ecosystem. Leveraging technologies such as vertical farming could enhance and accelerate entrepreneurial success and enhance food security and local economic activity.

This approach not only helps address food insecurity and economic challenges but also transforms Regent Park into a vibrant hub for culinary innovation and cultural celebration.

#### **4. Safety and Accessibility Must Be Prioritized.**

The panel recommends the adoption of a resident-focused lens to improve the safety and accessibility of Regent Park streets, homes, buildings, public spaces, and neighbourhoods. Community spaces should be equitably accessible to Regent Park residents within outdoor and indoor shared spaces for Phases 4 and 5 so TCHC residents feel they belong. More indoor spaces should be created for youth to meet and socialize.

Designs and planning should ensure that new pedestrian spaces along the east west spine feel like they are welcoming and accessible to the entire community and should be opened to allow clear views to the spaces, minimizing blind spots and "private" pockets. Possible north south atrium connections through the buildings should be considered. Connection and access to the central plaza should be facilitated in every way.

The focus should be directed toward de-emphasizing automobiles through a pedestrian-first approach, which can provide ample space for people to walk, cycle, socialize, and enjoy their surroundings without the constant noise and pollution of cars. This can include using the minimum width requirements for streets to prioritize increased space in the public realm. These pedestrian-friendly spaces can improve the quality of life for Regent Park residents and visitors, as well as boost local economies by attracting more foot traffic to local shops, cafes, and cultural venues.

For example, the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood, also referred to as The Esplanade, is a high-density, socially mixed community in the centre of downtown Toronto. Built to provide affordable downtown housing, it houses over 10,000 people. It is seen as one of the best municipally organized inner-city redevelopments in Canada. It is also an excellent example of how the public sector, in cooperation with the private sector, can work together to develop a successful new community.

## **5. Demolish the Boiler House.**

The Panel recommends the demolition of the TCHC boiler house that once supplied energy to the entire Regent Park estate but is no longer environmentally sustainable. However, differing opinions within the Panel indicated that there may also be value to preserving and re-purposing the boiler house. The community has not displayed any strong emotional attachment to the boiler house in its historic function. The Panel felt that spatially, the boiler house acts as a visual and physical impediment within the central plaza, separating market and TCHC residents, in addition to hindering a clear line of sight for pedestrians. The TAP believes that removing the boiler house would help eliminate blind spots so pedestrians feel safe when walking.

If demolished, the building's square footage would increase the amount of open space in the plaza, create an animated and transparent frontage as a visual terminus to the plaza, and create more use opportunities as a community and cultural venue.



The following are important considerations when the boiler house is decommissioned:

- Allow for a more seamless and uninterrupted plaza space, with the removal of the boiler house.
- Integrate Toronto Public Library into community activities and the plaza and create a connection with Cabbagetown to ensure that Cabbagetown residents feel welcome and included to participate in library and other community activities in the plaza.
- Enable daily at-grade animation for 18 hours with fine-grain frontages that are modular and adaptable. This will ensure that shops and other facilities, such as the library, can remain open for longer hours, thereby extending the animation of the plaza beyond the usual 9 am - 5 pm.
- The TAP supports the current thinking of utilizing the linear mews space as an inclusive and activated spine that unites TCHC and market residents and prioritizes pedestrians. Emphasis should be placed on reducing car access and animating the interior building uses that front the lane. This will provide a higher level of vibrancy and visibility to the lane. Ratna Lane is a living laneway that currently exists on Tubman Avenue in Regent Park and houses four work-live studios. TCHC's design vision for Ratna Lane was to use it as a thoughtful community gathering space. However, many TCHC residents feel they have no access to or use of this laneway.
- Ensure clear delineation of public and private spaces through thoughtful and integrated design, to facilitate seamless running of operational responsibilities.
- Ensure that space is flexible and amenable to year-round programming.
- Emphasize placemaking to represent the people – e.g. relocate the Peace Garden to the plaza to better celebrate life, culture, and significant history of place at Regent Park. Currently, the Peace Garden is tucked away.
- Potentially, use the space as a brewery, art space, or performance space, but seek community feedback to see if the idea resonates.
- If the boiler house is deemed valuable by the community for future uses, the design should focus on making the space completely transparent to ensure that it is not a visual or physical impediment to the space and allows for clear sightlines through the plaza.

## 6. Focus on Programming - Youth-centric and Beyond.

The TAP recommends creating youth-centric programming unique to Regent Park's diversity and multiculturalism. Incorporate community needs (see pg. 16-17 of this report) while determining future programming to ensure that it is in step with community feedback. This will strike the right balance between community use and revenue generation while addressing the gap in intergenerational connection that currently exists. Showcase success stories and the work of community advocates. Challenge and dismantle the “anywhereness” of the plan as it stands today and create something that sets Regent Park apart. Cast a new mould for Regent Park instead of replicating models that already exist in the Greater Toronto Area. The central plaza should act as a key connector to integrate Regent Park into the broader community by creating highly animated gathering spaces that allow for year-round indoor and outdoor programming for Regent Park residents and visitors from neighbouring areas.

The Canary District's Maple House serves as a good example of how a 3,800 square metre space is being used for indoor and outdoor amenity spaces. These include a gym, an outdoor swimming pool with city views, co-working spaces, a kids' playroom, a music recording studio, and a dog spa. As part of the 3,800 square metre space, Maple House also includes multiple outdoor terraces, totalling 1,500 square metres.

## 7. Explore Existing and Successful Public Space Governance Models.

The creation of a new and expanded governance system is critical to accurately reflect the goals, priorities, and practices of Regent Park tenants and homeowners. The Panel recommends embracing governance as a part of every design conversation from the very beginning. Further research needs to be conducted into existing and successful models of public realm governance that Regent Park can sustainably benefit from because of the evolving nature of the Regent Park community.



Important considerations are:

- Community champions need to be sought and identified to step up and establish a good governance model.
- Residents should be treated like shareholders. Markham’s public realm strategy report, “Shared Places, Our Spaces,” may provide some examples.
- Grassroots training, inter-generational learning, and mentorship should be enabled across all aspects of the revitalization, specifically in governance.
- The chosen governance model should have a sustainable funding system.
- Some public space governance models tabled by the TAP for exploration are:
  - **A non-profit model with a community board.**
    - This is a community-owned model where the community is the ultimate owner. Consider the risks of working with a non-profit. Some examples are The Albina Vision Trust (AVT) - a community-driven non-profit created to buy back land, rebuild community, and re-root Black legacies and Black futures in the heart of Portland, Oregon’s central city; DECA – Danforth East Community Association; Downtown Seattle Association – DSA; Quartier des spectacles in Montreal; Bentway - as a model for community outreach/capacity building.
  - **A tiered model of governance** as displayed in most P3 infrastructure projects as enumerated by the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships. “The P3 model integrates multiple project elements (design, build, finance, maintain and/or operate) into one performance-based contract.” For example, in Toronto’s Jane and Finch neighbourhood, the P3 model is used by the Black Creek Community Farm and the Corner Commons. Corner Commons is private land managed by BGO Properties. However, an independent security team oversees the safety of the community. The Jane-Finch Family Centre secures funding to ensure that the site is maintained and supports community members, other organizations and community leaders to provide programming to animate the space. The Family Centre creates an independent community board to oversee this project. While this model may have its shortcomings, it has positively resulted in 1) significant animation of the space, and 2) creating a shared sense of ownership from community members. The benefits of the P3 model can be 1) multiple stakeholders have a sense of ownership, thus increasing the use of the space, 2) responsibility can be allocated to the party best suited to handle it, 3) residents and other community leaders can be included to focus on animating the space, allocation and contribution of resources, and 4) mitigates the risk of a single entity or central governing organization leaving and jeopardizing the cause.

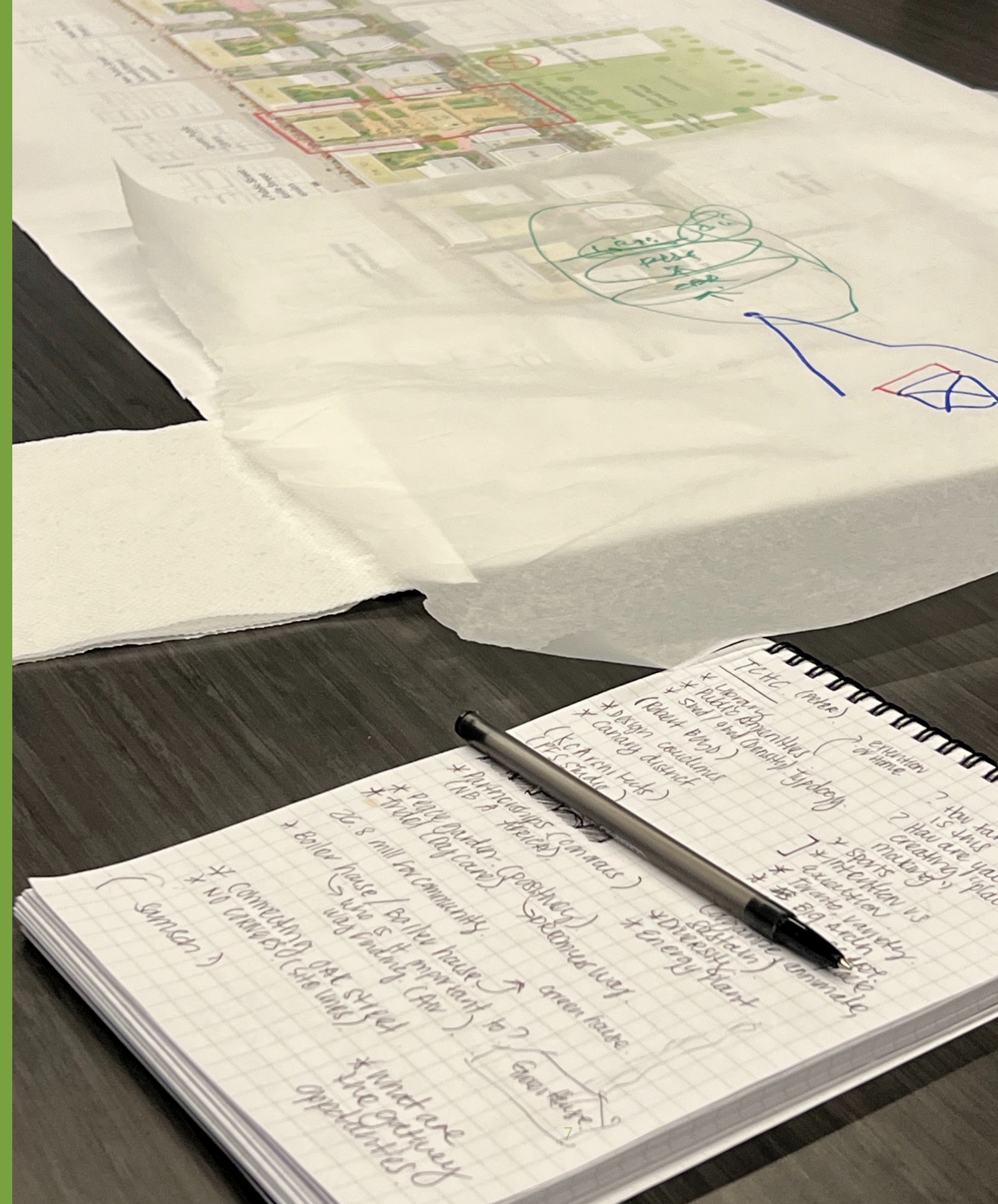
## 8. Explore Funding Options.

Based on the unique nature and needs of the Regent Park community, there is an opportunity for a blended financial approach that will help build Regent Park's community wealth ecosystem and capacity building. As a first step, the Panel deems it crucial that TCHC and Tridel Builders Inc. work together proactively to determine the necessary funding and funding sources required to animate the central plaza in perpetuity. This must be done by conducting a thorough exploration of multiple streams of funding options. The Panel agreed that based on the revitalization timelines, TCHC has the advantage of having time to start exploring viable funding options now without having to rush the process. Funding considerations and ideas to explore are:

- Various sources of funding could contribute – e.g. impact investment, community bonds or private donations.
- An example to explore is the Kensington Land Trust, whose “mandate is to buy property in the neighbourhood, keep it out of the hands of speculative investors who want to renovate units and jack up rent prices, and continue to rent it out at affordable rates.”
- To facilitate the commercial use of the central plaza, TCHC may consider operating it as a Commercial Real Estate social enterprise to fund social investment. An example that may be researched is the Vancouver-based Community Impact Real Estate Society.
- Consider the option of adding a levy on rents to animate the public space, which will further increase foot traffic to tenant businesses.
- TCHC to explore the opportunity of working with Tridel to possibly unlock the community benefits portion of funding investment earlier in the revitalization process of Phases 4 and 5, as it may help them meet ESG targets.



# APPENDICES





# Appendix A: Additional Ideas for Consideration

These ideas were raised by TAP members and warrant further exploration and consideration:

- An alternative to removing the boiler house completely is to consider keeping the stack. Can parts of it be conserved and reused sustainably to preserve the “heritage” value of the building? What could it accommodate for the community? What could its new life be? What is the cost of doing so? Could it be a revenue generator? The fate of the boiler house can be subjected to a community engagement process via an SROI assessment to determine whether it should be kept or not.
- Community garden opportunities – all TCHC buildings have the potential for gardens. There is a need to explore ways to make the TCHC community gardens accessible for all Regent Park residents.
- The mews is a response to the “desire for smaller points of engagement that are connected” – as pockets of programmable space within each block, the “mews” is a vehicle to get people to the central space.
- Daniels Spectrum – there is a challenge of losing this operator, and the space is too expensive for the community to use.
- TCHC does not want to be involved in the day-to-day operations. They need a third-party operator that has a governance model with a strong accountability and business mindset but also keeps the community interests central.
- There is a need for tenancies that are open at night/on the weekend. Banks close at 5 pm and on the weekends, so they are not ideal.
- Be intentional about referring to the community. Refer to the original Black community.
- The biggest challenge for food entrepreneurs is the ability to scale. Regent Park can be the solution.
- Could the library be multi-functional and be used as a food innovation hub?
- Explore how (a portion of) ongoing condo fees could get re-appropriated/reserved to contribute back to the community to sustain programming.
- Consider the option of creating a BIA specific to the central plaza area or one for Regent Park as a whole.

# Appendix B: TAP Bios

## Janice Bartley

### Founder and ED, Foodpreneur Lab

As a Black woman and an entrepreneur in her own right, Janice Bartley is the founder and executive director of the nonprofit Foodpreneur Lab, personal mission is to level the playing field and open doors in underserved communities for ‘would be’ and established food entrepreneurs. Founded in January 2019, Foodpreneur Lab was created to tackle systemic barriers head-on and pioneer new approaches to creating access for those historically prevented from fully participating in the food sector.

Janice brings a wealth of experience to the food sector as a former Operations Manager in Culinary & Hospitality management. Her 30+ years as an entrepreneur brought her to Food Starter as part of the Management team. She has mentored many young and experienced Chefs in the food industry and has been able to transition those mentoring skills to food entrepreneurs. Janice has worked with community-based Organizations, such as JumpStart Refugee Talent and Ryerson Diversity Institute, both of which support women entrepreneurs and newcomers. In 2019, her first mentee won the JumpStart pitch competition, and in 2020, she mentored participants in HERStartup, a newly created division of JumpStart Refugee Talent focused on providing support to newcomer women in food.

Janice also serves as a Mentor/Advisor with StartGBC, George Brown College, helping students in the food space. Janice serves as a Mentor to the Elizabeth Fry Society, EnterPRISE program supporting young women to launch or scale their businesses. She also provides consulting services to food entrepreneurs and serves as an Advisory Member for the York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Committee. Janice is the former General Manager for VenturePark Labs, a 20,000 sq. ft production facility that provides access to commercial shared kitchens and Accelerator spaces supporting food entrepreneurs. VenturePark Labs is a division of five communities within VenturePark owned by Dragons Den, Arlene Dickinson.

## Troy Budhu

### Community Leader and Specialist, Social Finance and Community Wealth, North York Harvest Food Bank

Troy is a seasoned cross-sector leader and social entrepreneur specializing in Community Economic Development. He brings over 15 years of dedicated experience to support and empower Toronto’s historically underserved communities, including the neighbourhood where he was raised. His career is defined by a commitment to bridging social and economic gaps through strategic partnerships, focusing on inclusive approaches to education, employment access, and small business support while leveraging real assets to drive systemic change. As a catalyst for transformative initiatives, Troy has been pivotal in advancing social enterprise, community benefits, and collaborative efforts across public, private, and social sectors, all reinforced by a holistic view of real estate and infrastructure development as tools for community resilience.

Currently, Troy is deeply involved in multiple projects that reimagine economic development. He currently works for North York Harvest Food Bank exploring social finance and community wealth building, has a key role in community benefits with the Jane-Finch Mall redevelopment (JFM+), and is one of the leaders of the development of the Jane-Finch Community Hub and Centre for the Arts.

Beyond his extensive professional and lived experience, Troy’s thought leadership is informed by a robust educational foundation. He is an alumnus of Seneca College’s post-graduate Non-profit and Social Sector Management program. He holds an MBA in Community Economic Development from Cape Breton University and a Master of Real Estate and Infrastructure from the Schulich School of Business. His unique blend of practical and academic expertise positions him as a strategic advocate for resilient, inclusive community advancement.



Cheryll Diego  
Public Realm Experience Director, Downtown Yonge BIA

Cheryll Diego is the Director of Public Realm Experience for the Downtown Yonge BIA. She has over ten years of experience in downtown management and city building. Her portfolio at the BIA includes arts and culture, street operations, planning and development. She oversees the interplay amongst these disciplines to create a welcoming and vibrant community. She has extensive experience in placemaking initiatives that bring people together to share a common experience and (re)connect with the spaces that we all share.

At the centre of Cheryll’s work is building meaningful relationships with different stakeholders to create a collective impact in addressing the ever-changing needs of the Downtown Yonge Community.

Nicole Moyo  
Associate, Dialog Inc.

Nicole is an award-winning Urban and Architectural Designer and sessional Lecturer and currently works at DIALOG. Her work focuses on human-centric design, public space, community engagement, and intersectional sustainability. Internationally recognized on platforms like World Architecture Community, Dezeen, and ArchDaily, her designs emphasize future-forward, off-grid concepts. She presented her award-winning thesis, UKUBUTHA, at Africa's premier design conference, Design Indaba, and was selected as one of 50 international young trailblazers for the inaugural Architecture Biennale College. FRAME Magazine also named her one of the world’s top emerging designers. Nicole’s holistic approach integrates cultural expression and site-responsive design, as seen in her Pearl Jam project, which honours African heritage and Ndebele artistry. Based in Toronto and enriched by her global upbringing, Nicole creates socially responsive spaces that reflect her passion for cultural diversity.

Pamela Robinson, MCIP RPP  
Professor & Graduate Program Director, School of Urban and Regional Planning, Toronto Metropolitan University

Throughout her career as a planner her research and practice have focused on complex, emergent challenges that Canadian communities face. Her current research asks: who is planning the Canadian smart city? Who owns the map? And how do we meaningfully engage the public in the governance of artificial intelligence? In 2020 Pamela received the inaugural Canadian Institute of Planners President’s Award: Academic. She is an Advisor on the Toronto Public Library’s Innovation Council and serves on the Board of Directors for the Metcalf Foundation.

Nick Saul, C.M.  
Co-founder and CEO, Community Food Centres Canada

Nick is the co-founder and CEO of Community Food Centres Canada, a national organization that builds and supports vibrant, food-focused community centres in low-income neighbourhoods. These centres are based on the idea that good food is a powerful force for greater health, equity and social change. Nick is a member of the Order of Canada, a recipient of the Jane Jacobs Prize, as well as the Queen’s Jubilee Medal and has an honorary doctorate from Ryerson University. In his volunteer time, Nick serves as the Chancellor of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. Born in Tanzania and raised in Canada, he studied at the University of Toronto and Warwick University in the UK as a Commonwealth Scholar. Nick's bestselling book, The Stop: How the Fight for Good Food Transformed a Community and Inspired a Movement, written with his wife, Andrea Curtis, was nominated for the Toronto Book Award and won several other awards.

Gail Shillingford

Director, Urban Development, Principal, Master Planning and Urban Design,  
B+H Architects

Gail brings a rich background in creating high-quality places that foster connectivity, inclusivity, cultural diversity, sustainability, and healthy living. She strives to change the view of what healthy community planning and design means from every dimension.

With more than 30 years of experience in master planning, urban, and landscape design, Gail Shillingford is passionate about applying her professional and personal knowledge to create processes and deliver solutions that encourage equitable and inclusive design. Her work is driven by a collaborative process in which community and stakeholder engagement is paramount, particularly where the voice of underrepresented communities needs to be heard.

Gail’s experience encompasses a variety of streams, including all scales of city master planning, landscape and urban design. She has developed award-winning visions, design frameworks, policies, guidelines, and detailed designs for projects, including community improvement and secondary plans, post-secondary campus master plans, heritage conservation districts, LEED ND neighbourhoods, downtowns and waterfront plans, and open space and streetscapes design. In a rapidly changing world, Gail’s focus on her projects is entrenched in building resilient communities. She thrives on pushing the frontiers of design and enabling new approaches and new ways of thinking.

Julia Stefanishina (TAP Chair)

Partner, Infrastructure & Real Estate Advisory, EY

Julia Stefanishina is a Partner and Senior Vice President at Ernst & Young in the Transaction Real Estate practice. She has 20+ years of professional experience in real estate and infrastructure advisory including over 15 years of service with EY.

Julia’s background combines both industry and professional services firms. She formerly held the position of Global Infrastructure Advisory Lead for Hatch and before that she was a partner leading Major Project Advisory practice for the Big4 firm in the CIS countries. Julia has a wide international background and worked across Canada, US, and European, African and Latin American countries.

Julia focuses on the public sector and supports government agencies, ministries and municipalities on development and transaction advisory as well as corporate real estate. She managed more than 100 projects in real estate and infrastructure, specializing in complex projects with multiple stakeholders, such as: transit-oriented developments, flagship real estate development projects, light and heavy rail, high-speed rail, social and urban infrastructure, and economic development mega-projects.

Julia is a regular speaker at Real Estate and Infrastructure forums, a lecturer for the Sustainable Infrastructure Fellowship Program (G7 Initiative) at York University Schulich School of Business, as well as a co-lecturer for the Master in Real Estate and Infrastructure program at York University.



# Appendix C: About the Urban Land Institute & ULI Toronto District Council

## **The Urban Land Institute (ULI)**

ULI is a nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute now has 45,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service. As the preeminent multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policymakers dedicated to creating better places. Our mission is to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. We provide our members with independent forums for discussion and debate about city-building issues and best practices. Members say that ULI is a trusted idea place where leaders come to grow professionally and personally through sharing, mentoring and problem-solving. With pride, ULI members commit to the best in land use policy and practice.

## **ULI Toronto District Council**

Supported by 2,200 public and private sector members, ULI Toronto is one of the largest chapters worldwide. It carries forth ULI's mission while helping to shape a sustainable and thriving future for the Toronto Region with independent forums for discussion and debate about city-building issues and best practices.

# Thank You!

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