

THE SOMALI CENTRE FOR CULTURE AND RECREATION

# INHIBITED GROWTH

Examining Public Investment Gaps  
in Black Infrastructure Needs

DECEMBER 2022

**sccr.**



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO

PREPARED BY:



Infrastructure  
Institute

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After a landmark decision by Toronto City Council in July 2022 committing to the establishment of the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation (SCCR), the SCCR has partnered with the Infrastructure Institute at the University of Toronto's School of Cities, to examine the diverse Black communities' needs for social infrastructure. This report emerges as part of the Institute's mission for supporting local infrastructure planning, the School of Cities' vision to be a leading centre for urban research that engages diverse communities, and within the broader context of government commitment in Canada to addressing anti-Black racism and aligning with the UN Decade for People of African Descent. This report seeks to:

1. Highlight the growing importance of community-led social infrastructure as recognized by academic literature, policy directions, and government commitments; and,
2. Identify the SCCR's ability to address existing gaps in Toronto's network of community-led cultural and recreational centres.

## Our approach

To address these research goals, the Infrastructure Institute conducted a policy context scan, a high-level case study of 36 community centres led by ethno-cultural community organizations, a detailed study of four of these centres, and an analysis of existing gaps in social infrastructure serving Black communities. In the case studies, patterns in geography, partnership structure, financing, and community involvement were identified. The detailed cases provided best practices to help inform development strategies for the future of Black-led community infrastructure in Toronto, like the proposed SCCR project. Lastly, the analysis for gaps in social infrastructure serving Toronto's Black communities included an examination of the existing Black-led community centres and data from Canada's latest census.

## Findings

The findings show that community-led cultural centres built from the 1980s and onwards were more dependent on public funding than historical examples that relied on fundraising, and the vast majority were owned by the non-profit ethnocultural community organizations. Only 6 of the 36 case studies leased their spaces, 3 of these included the Black-led cultural centres identified- which were 5 in total. Most of the existing stock of community-led cultural centres are in downtown or North York areas, with a few found in Etobicoke and Scarborough - areas where a high proportion of the Black, and in particular, Somali community lives. The SCCR is well-poised to address the existing social infrastructure gaps among Black communities.

The policy context scan shows that all orders of government view investment in community-led social infrastructure not just as essential for strong communities in the post-pandemic recovery, but also important for addressing anti-Black racism and inequities. While social infrastructure is often focused on the local scale, it relies heavily on capital investment from all levels of government to help establish community-led projects, particularly those neighbourhoods that have faced marginalization and dis-investment. Currently, the most relevant commitments include the federal 'Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program' and associated bilateral agreements with the provincial government, and the City of Toronto's goals to address anti-Black racism. The case for community-led social infrastructure investment is also supported by the demonstrated resiliency of the studied cases, whereby over half of the existing stock underwent an expansion, relocation, or renovation to meet growing community demands.

## Recommendations

The Infrastructure Institute recommends the following directions:

1. **Federal and provincial policy should prioritize capital funding for Black-led community organizations to create hubs that include recreational space, culturally appropriate services, arts, culture, and heritage.**

Projects like the proposed Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation follow an established pattern in Toronto of community members mobilizing to build a facility that would help their



community thrive while also serving the broader public. Providing Black-led organizations like the SCCR with funding for capital costs can help fill this gap and create even more access to valuable social infrastructure in the city.

**2. Public and private investment in social infrastructure should encourage multi-use facilities that can address inequities Black communities face in accessing services, while providing a broader community benefit.**

A Black-led cultural and community centre such as SCCR aligns with the Toronto Action Plan for Combatting Anti-Black Racism’s recommendations to expand models of Black-led community services in under-served neighbourhoods, engage the community on improving access to recreational facilities, and create a Black community hub in Toronto. The SCCR project also aligns with both federal and provincial commitments to invest in diverse communities and build community infrastructure.

**3. Public, private, and non-profit stakeholders in real estate development should support the creation of the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation as part of meeting the growing needs of the Somali community.**

A facility that integrates recreational programming and services can address the documented service gap for communities with large Black populations, including neighbourhoods across the city’s Northwest where a large proportion of the Somali community reside. Finding a site for the future SCCR facility in these parts of Toronto would align with municipal policy recommendations on making recreational space more accessible.

**4. Policy makers should provide a framework for how social infrastructure spending will address the needs of marginalized populations and communities while placing them at the forefront of this process.**

The current bilateral agreement between Ontario and the federal government (‘Investing in Infrastructure Canada Program’) does not outline details on how the government determines that these projects address and prioritize the needs of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized populations. Defining this and providing criteria for projects that are community-led is important when considering the ways in which BIPOC communities have been traditionally left out and displaced by conventional planning processes. Developing a framework will help align federal and provincial governments to existing commitments towards investment in diverse communities through building community infrastructure.

**5. Organizations undertaking community hub projects should explore creative approaches to integrating community centres as part of a mixed-use development.**

Except for plans for the new Blackhurst Cultural Centre, most of the cultural and community centres examined in this report are low-rise buildings and represent a missed opportunity for development and intensification. Particularly for sites that are well positioned in proximity to transit, integrating various uses such as housing above where possible, could both generate revenue for the project while providing benefits to the community and the broader public.

## **Conclusion**

Our analysis of community-led cultural centres in Toronto demonstrates a lack of Black-led assets, particularly in proximity to where much of the Black population in Toronto lives. Building a centre that incorporates various uses for the Somali community aligns with federal and provincial policies, the City of Toronto’s strategies for addressing gaps in community and recreational services and addressing anti-Black racism. The lack of multi-use facilities that include recreation and event spaces for Black community organizations mean they miss out on potential revenue streams, as most of the case studies showed a mix of fundraising events, philanthropy, space rentals and membership fees help fund their operations and maintenance. Further research could explore the nuances of the governance models of community-led centres, funding strategies in the context of rising land values, and increasing momentum to address social infrastructure inequities.

# sccr.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize the members of the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation for their collaboration and insights that informed this report.

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## INTRODUCTION

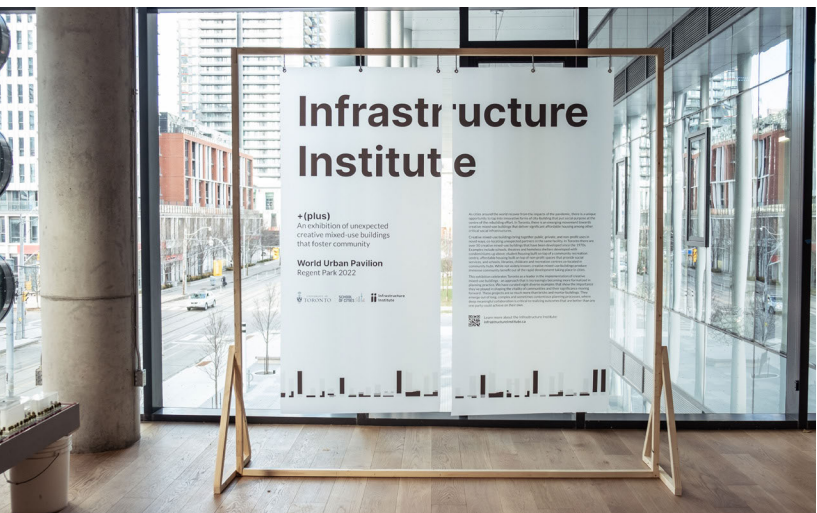


### **Background**

Much can be said about contemporary issues in the planning, provision, and maintenance of infrastructure such as transportation systems, power and water supplies, emergency services, and particularly in the past two years, public healthcare systems. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the importance of an even broader conception of infrastructure; social infrastructure, or specifically the spaces that provide connection to community, access to public services, recreation, and cultural enrichment. This report focuses on physical spaces in Toronto that are controlled by various communities and provide a variety of social services, access to community space, recreational space, and cultural programming.

As a member of the first cohort of the Infrastructure Institute’s Social Purpose Real Estate Accelerator Program, the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation (SCCR) has worked to refine their project concept. The SCCR team and the Infrastructure Institute have partnered on this report to explore the need for community-led social infrastructure geared to Toronto’s diverse Black communities. Over the past decade, the Somali community in Toronto have relentlessly advocated for the establishment of a community centre space to serve the diverse programming needs of the community while also being a hub that preserves and celebrates the rich contribution of Toronto’s Somali communities. Their efforts culminated in a landmark decision by Toronto City Council in July 2022, through the unanimous adoption of [Motion MM47.29](#), that commits to the establishment of the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation (SCCR) in Toronto. Based on broad initial consultations across the Somali community in Toronto, the vision of the SCCR is to by 2027 create:

- A hub for Somali-serving agencies and regionally based non-profit organizations;
- An access centre for culturally appropriate city services;
- A recreational centre providing diverse programming to community members of all ages, including children, youth and seniors;
- A centre for the preservation of Toronto’s Somali community’s history and their cultural contributions; and,
- A dynamic space that advances community belonging and serves the Somali community and all other residents near its place of operations



## Report Objectives

This report emerged from the partnership between the Infrastructure Institute and the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation. It has two main objectives:

1

Highlight the growing importance of community-led social infrastructure as recognized by academic literature, policy directions, and government commitments

2

Identify the SCCR's ability to address existing gaps in Toronto's network of community-led cultural and recreational centres

## Our approach

To address these research goals, the Infrastructure Institute conducted a policy context scan, a high-level case study of 36 community centres led by ethno-cultural community organizations (non-publicly owned and operated facilities), four detailed case studies, and an analysis of the existing gaps in social infrastructure serving Black communities.

The policy context scan identified current commitments, policies, and programs on investments into social infrastructure and how they address the needs for vulnerable populations (including Black communities). In the case studies, patterns in geography, partnership structure, financing, and community involvement were identified. From these case studies, four were studied in detail for best practices to help inform development strategies for the future of Black-led community infrastructure in Toronto, like the proposed SCCR project. Lastly, the analysis for gaps in social infrastructure serving Toronto's Black communities included an examination of the existing Black-led community centres and data from Canada's latest census.



## DEFINING COMMUNITY-LED SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Social infrastructure can be broadly defined as the organizations or physical places that shape people's capacity to interact and support one another. This is illustrated in the development of social connections in libraries, parks, schools and community centres that help counter social isolation in urban environments and serve as key infrastructure for the public life of cities (Klinenberg, 2018); (Latham & Layton, 2019). Academic and policy research has shown the ways in which infrastructure, land, and resource management have traditionally displaced and dispossessed Indigenous and Black communities across the country (Rutland, 2018); (The Yellowhead Institute, 2019). Post-war urban sprawl, shifts in demographics, and economic conditions from the 1970s onwards have led to greater income inequality and poverty amongst racialized groups in Toronto, with particular impacts on access to social infrastructure in suburban areas (Cowen & Parlette, 2011); (Lo, Anisef, Wang, Preston, & Basu, 2014).

Black individuals in Toronto have statistically faced higher unemployment rates, lower median annual wages, and higher rates of children living in low-income than the rest of the population (Statistics Canada, 2020). These conditions have left many communities with inadequate access to infrastructure such as public transit and well-maintained schools, but also lacking the resources necessary to build physical spaces for gathering and strengthening networks that community and cultural centres can provide. Individuals that identified Somali as part of their ethnocultural origin were 6th highest amongst the Black population in Canada's most recent census (Statistics Canada, 2021).

### **THIRD PLACES:**

ARE PUBLIC PLACES WHERE PEOPLE CAN GATHER AND INTERACT. IN CONTRAST TO FIRST PLACES (HOME) AND SECOND PLACES (WORK), THIRD PLACES HOST THE REGULAR, VOLUNTARY, INFORMAL, AND HAPPILY ANTICIPATED GATHERINGS OF INDIVIDUALS BEYOND THE REALMS OF HOME AND WORK.

- DEFINITION BY  
SOCIOLOGIST RAY  
OLDENBURG



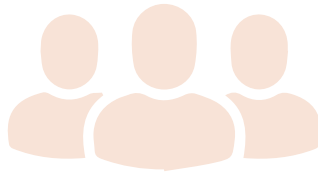
As a growing demographic of Toronto’s Black population, the SCCR seeks to join Toronto’s diverse ethnocultural communities in creating a physical hub that can help address social infrastructure needs from a community-led perspective.

There is strong advocacy from the community sector calling for social infrastructure partnerships between public, private, and non-profit actors to co-create places with the communities they intend to serve. At the core, these partnerships should be, “relational, predicated on practices, policies and social covenants that increase individual agency and dignity” – a type of collaboration that can deliver tangible impacts for all members of society to fulfill their basic needs (Pitter, 2021, p. 5). Research strongly shows how third places play important roles in social mobility for historically marginalized ethnic groups, and the overall health and wellbeing of neighbourhoods (Brookings Institution , 2016); (Finlay, Esposito, Kim, Gomez-Lopez, & Clarke, 2019). The idea of community-informed development is not new. The movement of people in under-resourced areas rebuilding their communities and re-establishing a sense of pride in their neighbourhoods is also known as “community-led development” (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

While the degree of community involvement significantly ranges from just a community consultation to a community-owned project, it is generally considered to be community-led change when community members hold the power to make key decisions and many community members are involved (Attygalle, 2022). These types of development have been gaining traction for over a decade and often share these characteristics:



Empowerment of community members to assume leadership roles, where local leaders co-create a governance process and community members have stewardship over the site they operate



Residents have a voice in the project vision, where they collectively inform the development process, rather than by an external organization or outsiders (Wessells, 2018)



Guided by locals, but supported by governments, philanthropists, other non-profits, and private sector partners who play an exemplar, investor, and enabler role

Although social infrastructure is often focused on the local scale, it relies heavily on public policy and capital investment that is not local (Cowen & Parlette, 2011). Therefore, policy support and investment at all levels of government are required to establish community-led projects amongst groups and neighbourhoods that have faced marginalization and dis-investment.

## POLICY CONTEXT

The current political context is one where both federal and local governments have committed to investing in community-led social infrastructure and addressing the needs of communities as part of the COVID-19 recovery.

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### **Federal Infrastructure Investment**

In 2016 the federal government launched the “Investing in Canada Plan” which committed over \$180 billion over 12 years for various types of infrastructure across the country. It follows the legacy of public infrastructure investment started by the 2007 “Building Canada Plan” and the 2014 “New Building Canada Plan”. In the current plan, the social infrastructure stream supports affordable housing, childcare, community, cultural and recreational facilities and is aligned with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This investment will be implemented by various federal agencies, examples include Canadian Heritage’s ‘Canada Cultural Spaces Fund’, and Infrastructure Canada’s ‘Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program’.

#### **Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program**

The ‘Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program’ will dedicate over \$33 billion in funds through bilateral agreements with provinces and territories to provide long-term, stable funding to help communities with climate change resilience, to build strong, dynamic, and inclusive communities, and ensure access to modern, reliable services that improve quality of life. Eligible recipients include non-profit organizations, municipalities, and Indigenous communities. From the



program, \$407 million will be invested specifically for Ontario under the Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure Stream over the next decade. It focuses on the construction of new facilities and upgrades to existing space that improve community services, recreational and cultural spaces for Canadians, Indigenous peoples and vulnerable populations (Infrastructure Canada, 2018). Recent investments to Toronto community-led cultural centres from the Community, Culture, and Recreation stream include \$2.8 million towards renovations for the Chinese Cultural Centre and \$26.7 million to construct a new YMCA building in the Bridletowne neighbourhood of Scarborough (Government of Ontario, 2021). Notably, these projects have also received an almost equal amount of bilateral funding from the province, with additional funders that include the City of Toronto and other non-profits like the United Way and YMCA of Greater Toronto.

Community and cultural centres have also benefitted from funding through the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS). More than \$13.6 million has been promised to 14 projects in Toronto, including the Young Centre for the Arts, the Don Montgomery Community Centre, and the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (Government of Ontario, 2021). There are currently about 30 different projects in the GTA approved for funding from the social stream of the ‘Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program’.

### **Canada Community-Building Fund**

The Canada Community-Building Fund will also provide Ontario with \$853,621 for the 2022-23 fiscal year for local infrastructure projects (Infrastructure Canada, 2022). Communities select how best to direct the funds with the flexibility to make strategic investments across 19 project categories, of which culture and recreation are included.

**RECENT INVESTMENTS TO  
COMMUNITY-LED CULTURAL  
CENTRES IN TORONTO FROM  
THE INVESTING IN CANADA  
INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM**

1. Chinese Cultural Centre
2. YMCA in Bridletowne
3. Young Centre for the Performing Arts
4. Don Montgomery Community Centre
5. Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre

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## Provincial Social Infrastructure Strategy

Many of infrastructure programs implemented by federal agencies, like the aforementioned ‘Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program’ rely on bilateral agreements between the federal and provincial levels of government. The various streams of this program have led to the Ontario government’s commitment to investing into centres for arts, culture, heritage, and recreation across various communities. The Ontario government has also invested \$105 million in the Community Building Fund through the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to support these sectors in the province as part of the COVID-19 recovery and provide grants for organizations looking to improve community facilities and spaces (Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2022).

Past Ontario governments have prioritized community-led social infrastructure, as demonstrated in the Community Hubs in Ontario strategic framework and action plan in 2015, and recommendations in the Roots of Violence report which noted the benefits of community hubs for youth development (Pitre, 2015); (Curling & McMurtry, *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence Report*, 2008). The United Way Greater Toronto and the City of Toronto’s *Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy* was key in establishing the ‘community hub’ model in Toronto; centres run by local non-profits that provide social services, health care, and spaces for residents and groups. Although the hub model has increased neighbourhood-based services for newcomers, youth, and families, many do not focus on culturally specific programming like the case studies explored in this report, and not every neighbourhood has a community hub in proximity.

## City of Toronto

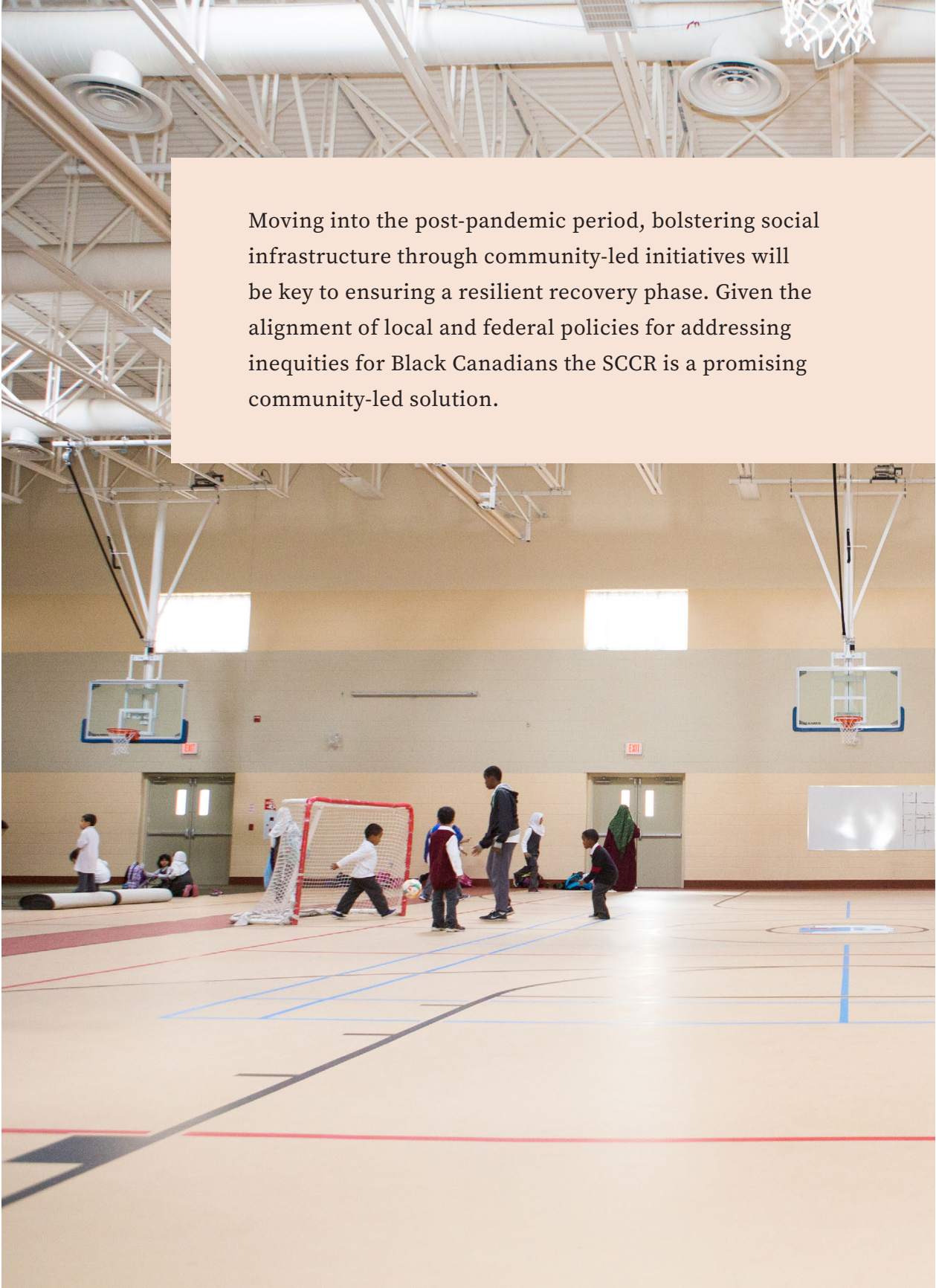
The majority of publicly run social infrastructure, such as public libraries and recreation centres, are led by municipal agencies. In Toronto, many Community Recreational Centres (CRCs) are co-located with library branches, daycares, and other key public services. The City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division Facilities Master Plan for 2019-2038, recommended new CRCs in Etobicoke City Centre and North Rexdale wards, showed 7 of the 11 existing CRCs recommended for replacement were in Etobicoke, North York or Scarborough, and flagged Central Etobicoke and Southwest Scarborough as areas with inadequate access to facilities (Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, 2017). These are all neighbourhoods with high proportions of Black and racialized residents in Toronto (See Figure 2). A report by Social Planning Toronto also highlighted the existence of only one City-owned CRC and no community hub in Central Etobicoke, findings demonstrated that residents identified various service needs, a shortage of community and recreational space, and desired a balance between community-based and City of Toronto governance of a new centre (Social Planning Toronto, 2017). The Master Plan noted that partnerships with schools, non-profit organizations, and developers will be required to realize this future need, and that through public consultation residents expressed a strong desire for multi-sectoral partnerships (Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, 2017). In addition to gaps in access to social services, community, and recreational spaces in certain parts of Toronto, arts and culture organizations continue to face insecurity and barriers to affordable space to operate in. Although the municipality has identified these gaps, a multi-sectoral approach is required to accelerate projects that can help address these needs.



## Addressing Anti-Black Racism and Inequities

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism found that Black residents often experience a ‘service desert’ in the neighbourhoods they live in, and recommends improving the quality of health, community, and recreational services in neighbourhoods with high proportions of Black residents (City of Toronto, 2017). The action plan also suggests increasing funding to Black community organizations, expanding models of Black-led health and community services to under-served neighbourhoods, and regularly engaging with diverse Black residents on how to expand and improve recreational programming and facilities. The plan also recommends making City spaces more welcoming of Black residents by leveraging city spaces to create a Black community hub in partnership with Black service-providers and investing in Black arts and culture. These recommendations have been identified as a key priority for Year Four (January to December 2022) of the action plan by the City of Toronto (City of Toronto, 2022).

Ontario’s ‘Black Youth Action Plan’ is an existing fund for programs supporting youth and families through mentorship, wellness, education, career development and community outreach. All these initiatives are guided by principles of “collective impact and cultural identity” to promote protective factors related to identity and belonging. Through the newly launched, Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund, the Government of Canada will provide 1 national Black-led and Black-serving recipient organization with an endowment of \$199,476,227 over a minimum of 10 years, with a decision set to be made in early 2023. The Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative (SBCCI) is a \$25 million fund that supports Black-led not for profit organizations and various priorities for Black Canadians. The government is advised on this initiative by an External Reference Group who are also engaged on issues related to the UN Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD). Governments at every level have signalled that providing resources directly to community to address anti-Black racism is a priority.

A large indoor sports facility with a wooden floor, basketball hoops, and a group of people playing soccer. The ceiling is high with exposed wooden beams and large circular vents. The walls are light-colored with windows and doors. The floor has blue and red markings for sports. A group of people, including children and adults, are playing soccer on the field. A red goal is visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is bright and active.

Moving into the post-pandemic period, bolstering social infrastructure through community-led initiatives will be key to ensuring a resilient recovery phase. Given the alignment of local and federal policies for addressing inequities for Black Canadians the SCCR is a promising community-led solution.

## MAPPING OUT COMMUNITY-LED CULTURAL CENTRES

### Criteria

The team at the Infrastructure Institute conducted a high-level case study exercise to identify the gaps in Toronto's existing stock of community-led cultural centres (see Figure 1). Given the wide spectrum and definition of 'community-led', for the purpose of this report, centres that met the following criteria were included:

- Non-profit organization that pursued the development of the community facility independently or in partnership
- serve a specific ethno-cultural community but provide facilities for the broader community
- is not only a city-owned and operated facility, a place of worship or social service organization / health provider

These criteria help highlight spaces in the city with various levels of community ownership, mix of uses such as recreation, performance, and meeting spaces, while serving as a hub for a specific community and cultural activity. This report provides a snapshot of most community-led cultural centres but is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

[VIEW ONLINE MAP.](#)

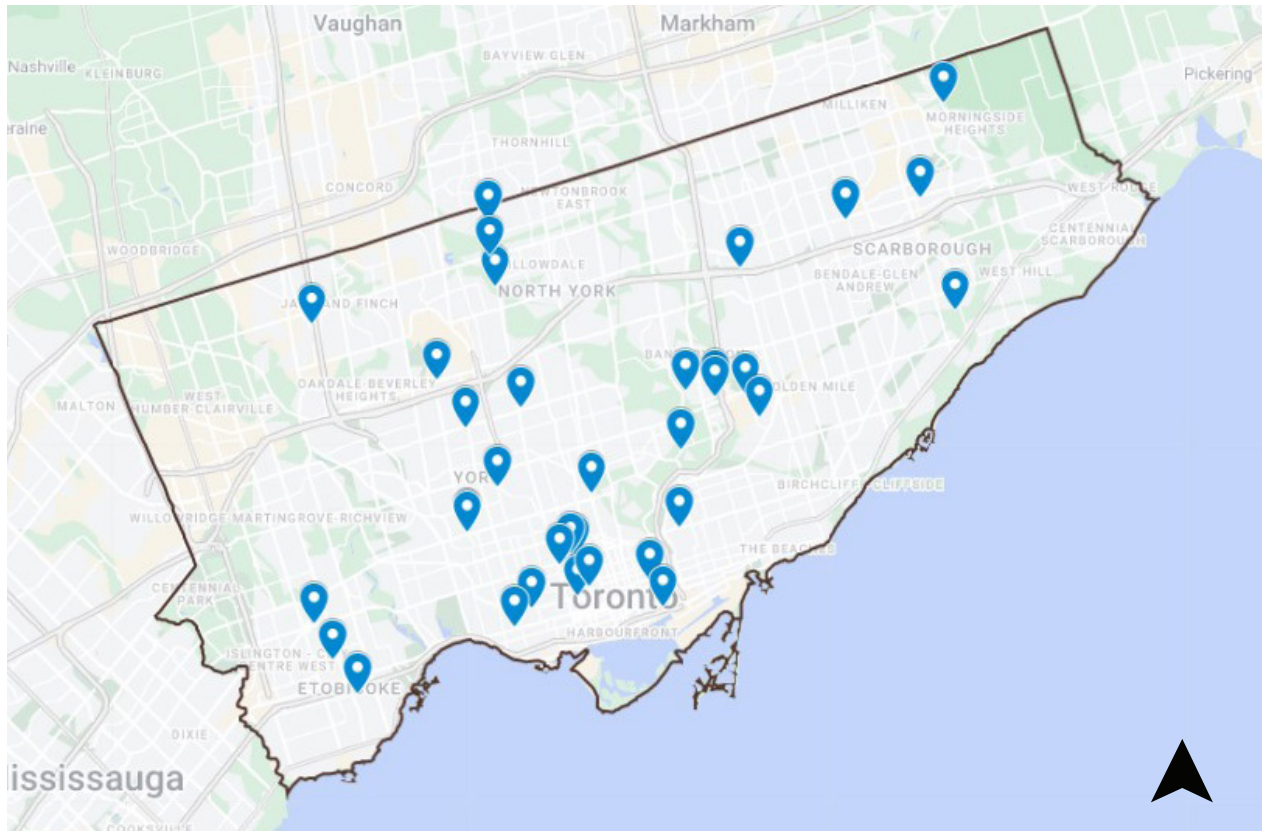


Figure 1. Map of the 36 Community-Led Cultural Centres in Toronto

The following 36 cases were studied and mapped:

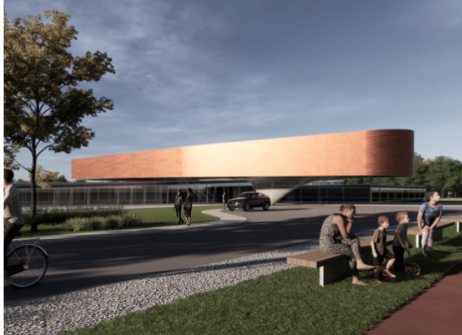
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto                   | 18. Deaf Culture Centre                      |
| 2. Miles Nadal JCC  | 19. Blackhurst Cultural Centre               |
| 3. Tamil Community Centre                                       | 20. Kababayan Multicultural Centre           |
| 4. KESKUS International Estonian Centre                         | 21. Lithuanian Canadian Community            |
| 5. Jamaican Canadian Association                                | 22. Workmen's Circle / Arbeiter Ring         |
| 6. Columbus Centre  | 23. Casa Das Beiras                          |
| 7. Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre                            | 24. Graciosa Community Centre Of Toronto     |
| 8. Korean Canadian Cultural Association of Metropolitan Toronto | 25. CNIB GTA Community Hub                   |
| 9. Armenian Community Centre of Toronto                         | 26. Lao Association Ontario                  |
| 10. Prosserman Jewish Community Centre                          | 27. Pan-Macedonian Federation Of Ontario Inc |
| 11. Jewish Russian Community Centre of Ontario                  | 28. Masaryk Memorial Institute Inc           |
| 12. Nia Centre For The Arts                                     | 29. Cypriot Community of Toronto Inc.        |
| 13. Native Canadian Centre of Toronto                           | 30. Kapisanan Philippine Centre              |
| 14. Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre                 | 31. Ukranian-Canadian Art Foundation         |
| 15. Latvian Canadian Centre                                     | 32. BAND Gallery                             |
| 16. Hungarian Canadian Cultural Centre                          | 33. The Ismaili Centre                       |
| 17. First Portuguese Canadian Cultural Centre                   | 34. The Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism |
|   | 35. Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre         |
|   | 36. Filipino Centre Toronto                  |



### 1. Chinese Cultural Centre



### 2. Tamil Community Centre



### 3. Miles Nadal JCC



### 4. KESKUS IEC



## Detailed Case Studies

Four case studies were examined in detail to understand the pattern of development, the partnership agreements, the financing and funding stack, and the risks, challenges and timelines associated with the implementation of community-led cultural centres. The four cases were:

1. The Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (CCC)
2. The Tamil Community Centre (TCC)
3. The Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre (MNJCC)
4. KESKUS International Estonian Centre (IEC)

To read cases in detail, please see Appendix A.

*Image courtesy of the TCC and IEC from their respective websites.*

## FINDINGS

The high-level case study has identified 36 examples of community-led cultural centres across Toronto at varying sizes, locations, and conditions. Below is a summary of the high-level patterns from the cases studied.

NOTABLY, ALL THE CULTURAL CENTRES ARE IN AREAS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS THEY INTEND TO SERVE.

### Geography

Most community-led cultural centres are located within the Toronto and East York Community Council Area Profile, housing 16 out of the 36 centres. At a close second place is North York, which contains 13 of the centres. Etobicoke and Scarborough have the lowest number at 4 and 3 centres respectively. The 4 community-led cultural centres in Etobicoke are the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Lithuanian Canadian Community, the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, and the Ukrainian-Canadian Art Foundation / KUMF Gallery. Only one of these spaces specifically serve Black and African-Canadian communities.

Additionally, at the time of study, four new centres are being proposed, including the Nia Centre for the Arts, the Blackhurst Cultural Centre, the KESKUS International Estonian Centre, and the Tamil Community Centre. All of them are located within the Toronto and East York Area, except for the Tamil Community Centre in Scarborough.

Notably, all the cultural centres are in areas in close proximity to the demographic groups they intend to serve. In cases of cultural centres for communities sharing a disability, they are located along main transit nodes.

## Financing

Most of the very early community-led cultural centres were also built because of advocacy and generous donations from community members. Oftentimes, people of the same ethnic background (usually new immigrants) saw the need to work together and create space that would serve as the social glue of their communities. This includes the Japanese Cultural Centre, where the Japanese community primarily funded their own community centre in 1964 to heal and re-establish themselves after the internment camps. This was a similar case for the Czech and Slovak community in 1950s Scarborough, where all members of the community donated a significant amount for the time (\$30-50 per person, being 5-9 times the average daily wage). In comparison to examples from the 1980s and onwards, the completion of community-led cultural centres shifted to being increasingly dependent on government grants in addition to philanthropy (see detailed case studies for examples of a more contemporary funding stack).

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...THE COMPLETION OF COMMUNITY-LED CULTURAL CENTRES SHIFTED TO BEING INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON GOVERNMENT GRANTS IN ADDITION TO PHILANTHROPY.

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The first Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre was built in 1964, heavily funded by the Japanese community.

## The Resilience of Community-led Cultural Centres

The recognition of what it means to be a community has also largely been associated with members who identify within the same ethnic group. The only exception to this definition of community are groups that unite over the shared experiences of disability. They include the CNIB Community Hub for those experiencing vision loss and the Deaf Culture Centre.

Among the existing stock of community-led cultural centres, they have proven to be extremely invaluable as social infrastructure assets. Out of the 36 centres, 18 underwent a location change or significant renovations since their initial opening. While some renovations were due to the existing facility being in poor repair, many expanded or relocated due to increasing community demand. In some instances, an additional site was acquired and used to extend the centre’s programming (though not entirely a separate centre). See Table 1 for a breakdown of how some cultural centres have evolved through time. Only cultural centres with this information available have been shown.

Relocation due to need of larger space	Expansion and Renovation	Renovation Only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre’</li> <li>• Korean Canadian Cultural Association</li> <li>• Native Canadian Centre of Toronto</li> <li>• Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre</li> <li>• Latvian Canadian Centre</li> <li>• Hungarian Canadian Cultural Centre</li> <li>• KESKUS International Estonian Centre</li> <li>• Workmen’s Circle / Arbeiter Ring</li> <li>• Filipino Centre Toronto</li> <li>• Masaryk Memorial Institute Inc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese Cultural Centre</li> <li>• Armenian Community Centre of Toronto</li> <li>• Prosserman Jewish Community Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miles Nadal Jewish Cultural Centre</li> <li>• Columbus Centre</li> <li>• First Portuguese Canadian Cultural Centre</li> <li>• Pan-Macedonian Federation of Ontario Inc.</li> <li>• Ukrainian-Canadian Art Foundation</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Community-Led Cultural Centres that have had to relocate, expand, or undergo renovation due to ongoing or increased demand for facilities



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## Build Type

There was a relatively even mix of cultural centres that were new builds and renovation projects, where 11 were identified as newly constructed building facilities. To note, many of the centres built in the 1970s and earlier have already undergone renovation work to maintain the facility state-of-repair in good standing. Most of the centres are also low-rise buildings.

Additionally, there was a significant range of investment between various cultural centres. Some centres, such as the Jamaican Canadian Association, bought the facility with a mortgage of \$360,000 and renovation loan of \$980,000 (in 1998), while the Prosserman Jewish Community Centre expansion cost \$72 million (opened 2021).

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## Year Built

Many of the community-led cultural centres were also built between the 1960s-1980s. While 5 were opened in the 1990s, 3 were renovations of already existing centres. Moving into the 2000s to current day, 9 centres opened with another 3 existing centres undergoing renovation. As of November 2022, there are 4 centres being planned, with one being a replacement of an existing centre (KESKUS International Estonian Centre originally opened in the 1960s).

## Ownership vs Rental Patterns

To note, the ownership or rental status information was not always available through public and secondary sources. However, enough information was available to show that most of the community-led cultural centres are owned by the non-profit community group who initiated the project. Only 6 of the 36 were leased space, including the Tamil Cultural Centre, the Workmen's Circle, the Korean Canadian Cultural Association, Nia Centre for the Arts, BAND Gallery, and the Blackhurst Cultural Centre . Leased cultural centres appear to be a more recent phenomenon, with all the leased spaces being opened in the 2010s aside from the Korean Canadian Cultural Association.

Despite being leased, many are in favourable terms with the City of Toronto. For example, the Blackhurst Cultural Centre has a 49-year lease with the City at \$2/year and the Tamil Community Centre is able to lease a \$25 million property at \$1.

Some of the cultural centres also belong to an umbrella or sister non-profit organization. For example, both the Miles Nadal and Prosserman Jewish Cultural Centres belong to the same organization and are heavily supported by the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. Other examples include the CNIB Community Hub that is intended to be the first of many hubs for those experiencing vision loss, and the Ismaili Centre in partnership with the Aga Khan Museum.

## ANALYSIS

The Chinese Cultural Centre, the Tamil Community Centre, the Miles Nadal JCC, and the KESKUS International Estonian Centre were studied in further detail. This section presents the summary of detailed findings. Please see the Appendix for the full case studies.

The four cases studied all contain multi-purpose spaces and diverse facilities, ranging from 35,000 sq.ft. to 85,000 sq.ft in total gross floor area size. Common facilities include recreational facilities or studios, classrooms, event spaces, and multipurpose rooms. Project costs varied, ranging from \$14 million for the Miles Nadal JCC (renovation in 2004), ~\$22 million for the Chinese Cultural Centre (estimate, Phase II opened 2006), \$41 million for the KESKUS International Estonian Centre (to open 2023), and \$40 million for the Tamil Community Centre (to open 2023).

All four cultural centres, while spearheaded by the community, were a result of partnerships. The Chinese Cultural Centre was a tri-partite partnership between the Chinese Cultural Centre, the City of Scarborough (before amalgamation with Toronto), and private developer CMS Development Inc. (now Metrus). Their agreement, signed in 1993, took four years since the first feasibility study was implemented in 1989. The Tamil Cultural Centre is a partnership with the City of Toronto, after nearly a decade of local community organizing. While the Miles Nadal JCC did not have any partnerships with public partners, they were closely supported by the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) of Greater Toronto and is one of several incorporated entities controlled by the UJA. Fundraising for the Miles Nadal JCC began in 1948 and they were able to build the first community centre by 1953. Similarly, the future KESKUS International Estonian Centre partners also included philanthropic groups from the community, including the Estonian Credit Union, Estonian



Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto

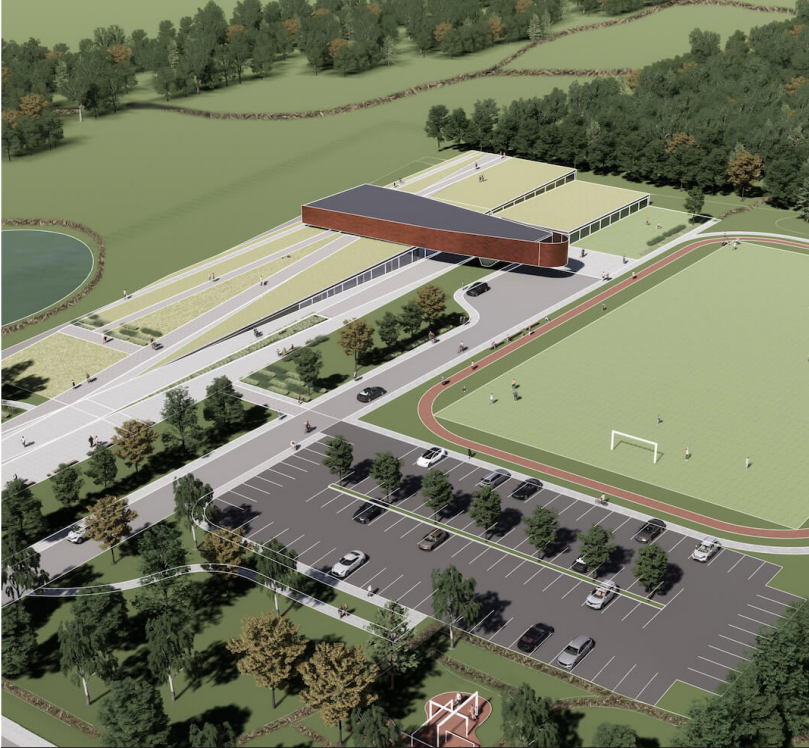


Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre

Foundation of Canada, and Tartu College. All centres had strong community advocacy at least in the first 3-5 years prior to any fundraising campaign.

Significant fundraising and philanthropy contributed towards the capital costs, with much investment by community members. The degree of government funds varied. In the case of the Miles Nadal JCC, most funds were provided by the Jewish community or by Jewish philanthropic groups like the UJA, who is the largest patron of Jewish culture in Toronto to this day. The International Estonian Centre was able to fund their centre through selling the former property and a large international fundraising campaign. In contrast to these two centres that did not depend heavily on public funding, the Chinese Cultural Centre and Tamil Cultural Centre secured funds from all orders of government in addition to community fundraising. Specifically, both have been able to benefit from the federal government’s “Investing in Canada” Infrastructure Program, though this fund was used for renovations in the Chinese Cultural Centre’s case. In both cases, land was provided by the City, with the Chinese Cultural Centre receiving special tax exemptions.





Tamil Community Centre, image courtesy of the Tamil Community Centre and Andrew King



KESKUS International Estonian Centre, image courtesy of International Estonian Centre, and Kongats Architects

In the case of the Miles Nadal JCC and the Chinese Cultural Centre, revenue for operations and maintenance comprise a mix of annual fundraising events, philanthropy, facility space rentals, and membership fees. Funds for renovations were also often secured from federal and provincial government programs. The CCC received over \$100K and \$5 million in 2013 and 2021 respectively while the Miles Nadal JCC received \$870K, a portion of \$15million, and \$420K in 2004, 2009, and 2017 respectively.

Cultural diversity is central in all four community centres, each emphasizing their desire to serve and support the broader community in addition to their own ethnocultural community. The Tamil Community Centre frequently acknowledges the positive impact that the future centre will have on, not only the Tamil community, but also local Black, Indigenous, and other racialized residents who are all experiencing a lack of access to community spaces. The Miles Nadal JCC features celebrated accessibility and inclusion programs that include commitments to anti-racism as well as creating LGBTQ+ positive spaces.

# BLACK-LED COMMUNITY CENTRES IN TORONTO

## BLACK-LED AGENCIES:

- A MINIMUM OF 2/3 OF THE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, ACROSS ALL OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE, ARE HELD BY PEOPLE WHO SELF-IDENTIFY AS BLACK; AND,
- AN ORGANIZATION FOR WHOM BLACK COMMUNITIES ARE AN IMPORTANT OR THE MAIN BENEFICIARY GROUP

## - DEFINITION OF "BLACK-LED" ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S 'BLACK-LED PHILANTHROPIC ENDOWMENT FUND'.

While this is the federal government's criteria, B3 is the universally accepted approach, which is defined as "Black-Serving, Black-Led, and Black-focused/mandated". To learn more, please visit the Foundation for Black Communities [website](#).

## Lack of multi-space facilities for the Black community

There are many Black-serving and led community organizations and social service agencies in Toronto. However, our analysis identified only five organizations that fit the criteria of a community-led cultural centre (see Fig. 3). Like many community organizations, Black-led agencies often rent their space and focus on certain aspects of community development, such as health clinics, settlement services, youth programs, or arts and culture organizations. Certain organizations such as the Jamaican Canadian Association, have been able to purchase and renovate their current location where they provide programming and event space for rent. Although there are some notable Black-serving agencies such as Tropicana Community Services and Taibu Community Health Centre, that provide a multitude of services and programming, they don't appear to advertise their space for community use outside of the main social services they offer.

## Emerging spaces for arts and culture

Most of the community-led facilities offered by Black organizations are heavily arts-focused. They include long-standing organizations like the Blackhurst Cultural Centre, the BAND Gallery, Nia Centre for the Arts, and the newly launched Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism. All are currently ongoing redevelopment or renovation projects that include multi-purpose community space, galleries,



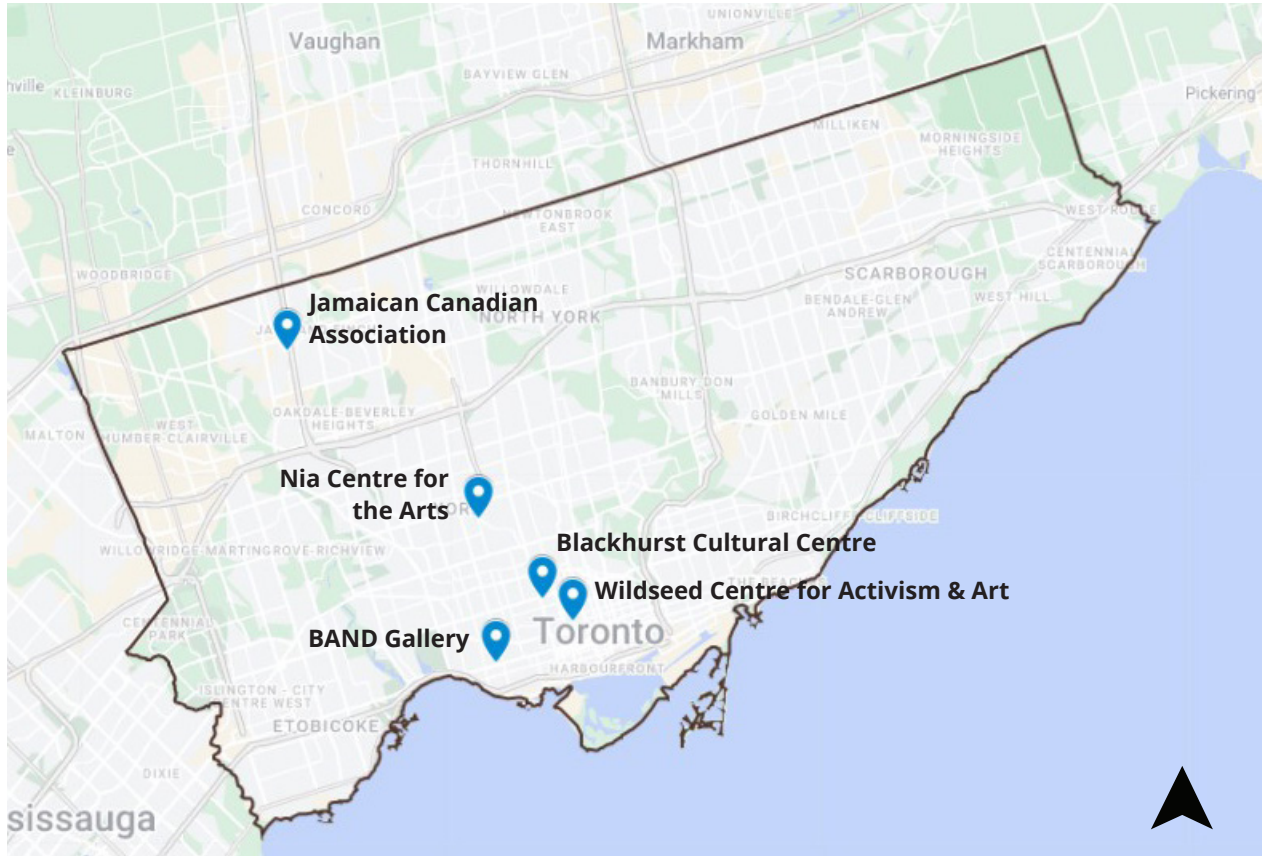


Figure 3. Map of the 5 identified Black-Led Cultural Centres in Toronto

studios or performing spaces. These examples follow a trend where the limited investment from the public purse have been allocated towards supporting the arts as a critical cultural asset. However, there continues to be a major investment gap for Black-led capital projects for multi-use and recreational facilities that can serve as a broader hub for culturally relevant services and organizations.

### 5 Black-Led Community Centres Identified:

1. Jamaican Canadian Association
2. Blackhurst Cultural Centre
3. BAND Gallery
4. Nia Centre for the Arts
5. Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism

## Lack of proximity of cultural centres to Black populations

Aside from the Jamaican Canadian Association, existing, Black-led cultural centres are located downtown, demonstrating an accessibility gap for Black communities. Much of the Black population also resides in North Etobicoke or in Scarborough (see Fig 4). Of this population, those of Somali-ethnic backgrounds are primarily located in North Etobicoke (see Fig 5).

### Black-led Cultural Centre

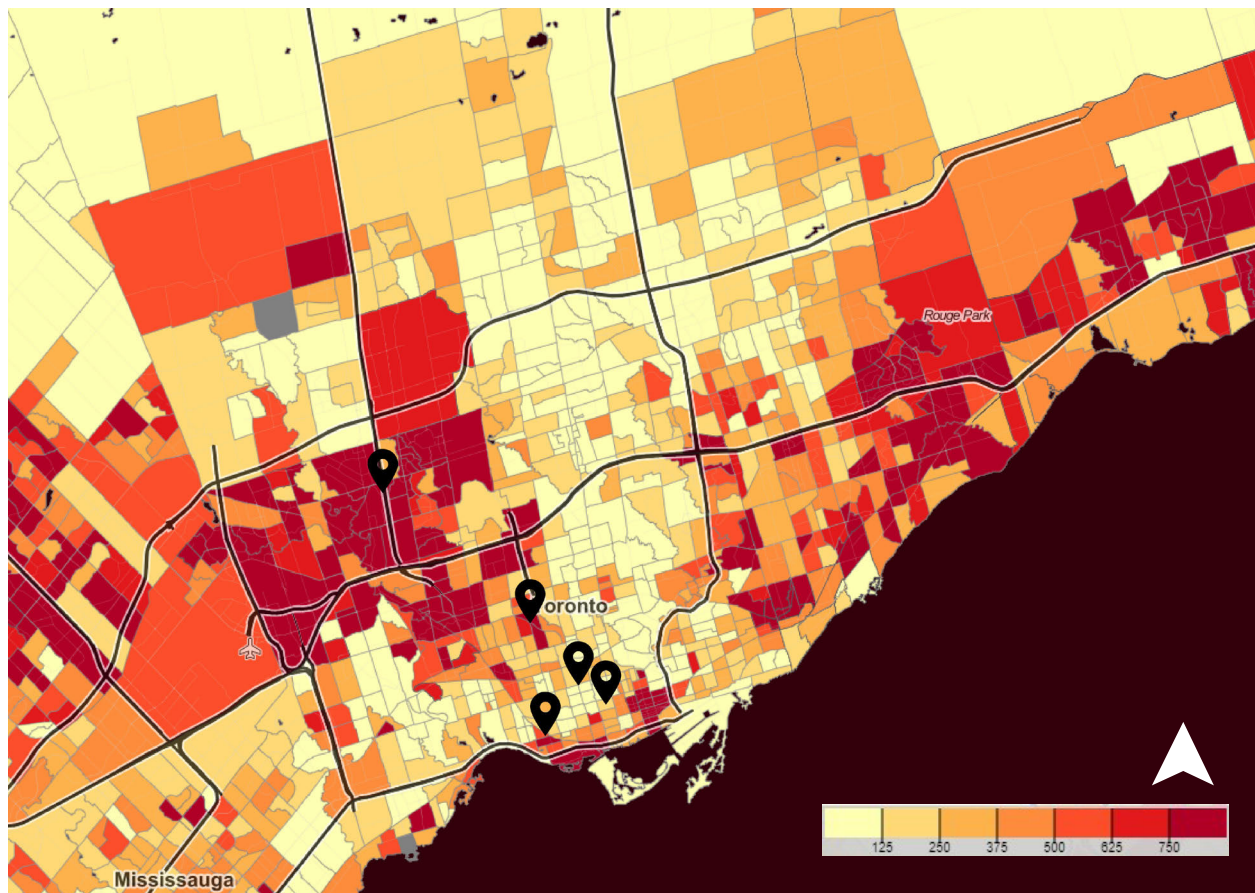


Figure 4. Black Population by Census Tracts (2021) Overlaid with Toronto's Black-Led Cultural Centres



 **Black-led Cultural Centre**

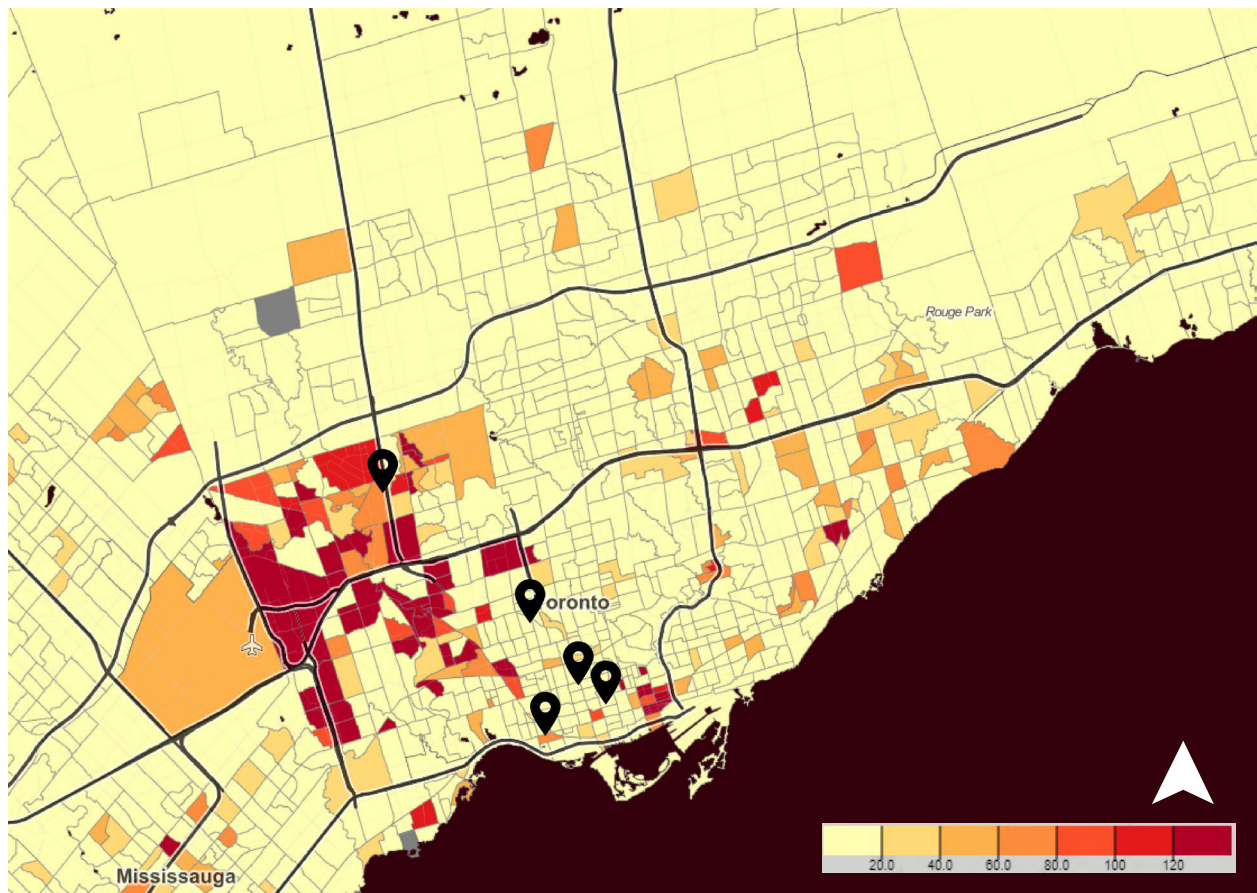


Figure 5. Somali Population by Census Tracts (2021) Overlaid with Toronto's Black-Led Cultural Centres

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on analysis of the existing stock of community-led cultural centres and social infrastructure in Toronto, the Infrastructure Institute recommends the following directions:

01

### **Federal and provincial policy should prioritize capital funding for Black-led community organizations to create hubs that include recreational space, culturally appropriate services, arts, culture, and heritage.**

Projects like the proposed Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation follow an established pattern in Toronto of community members mobilizing to build a facility that would help their community thrive while also serving the broader public. The SCCR have also committed to continue consultations with the Somali community in Toronto throughout all phases to ensure their collective input in building the project. Our findings show Black communities are underrepresented in existing community cultural centres, and when they do access funding for cultural centres they are often restricted to renovations. The case studies demonstrate how these spaces can be a long-standing community asset. Therefore, providing Black-led organizations like the proposed SCCR with funding for capital costs can help fill this gap and create even more access to valuable social infrastructure in the city.

02

### **Public and private investment in social infrastructure should encourage multi-use facilities that can address inequities Black communities face in accessing services, while providing a broader community benefit.**

A Black-led cultural and community centre such as SCCR aligns with the Toronto Action Plan for Combatting Anti-Black Racism's recommendations to expand models of Black-led community services in under-served neighbourhoods, engage the community on improving access to recreational facilities, and create a Black community hub in Toronto. The

SCCR project also aligns with both federal and provincial commitments to invest in diverse communities and build community infrastructure. The SCCR proposal is one example of how a centre geared towards specific members of the Black community can also provide broader community benefits. It is important that the SCCR team consider how they will structure access to space, governance, and revenue models depending on the neighbourhood context and need.

03

**Public, private, and non-profit stakeholders in real estate development should support the creation of the Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation as part of meeting the growing needs of Toronto’s Somali community.**

A facility that integrates recreational programming and services can address the documented service gap for communities with large Black populations in Toronto, including neighbourhoods in the City’s Northwest where a large proportion of the Somali community reside. Finding a site for the future SCCR facility in these parts of Toronto would align with municipal policy recommendations on making recreational space more accessible. Our analysis has shown the Northwest of the Toronto, an area with high proportions of Black and specifically Somali residents, is underrepresented geographically compared to where most of the community-led cultural centres are located. Many cases of existing community cultural centres were situated in proximity to where community members lived. Although community demographics are not fixed, there is value in building a future Somali Community Centre in this part of the city. Continuing to advance policies that address the existing gaps in public transportation, walkability and bike infrastructure in the Northwest can also help ensure this future centre will remain accessible to community members.

04

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**Policy makers should provide a framework for how social infrastructure spending will address the needs of marginalized populations and communities while placing them at the forefront of this process.**

The current bilateral agreement between Ontario and the federal government state that outcomes for eligible projects of the ‘Investing in Infrastructure Canada Program’ must meet the criteria of “improving access to and/or increased quality of cultural, recreational and/or community infrastructure for Canadians, including Indigenous peoples and vulnerable populations” (Infrastructure Canada, 2022). However, there are no details on how the government determines that these project address and prioritize the needs of Indigenous people and “vulnerable populations.” Defining this and providing criteria for projects that are community-led is important when considering the ways in which BIPOC communities have been traditionally left out and displaced by conventional planning processes. Although policies for addressing anti-Black racism on multiple levels of government seem to prioritize Black-led initiatives, it is important not to only consider a static definition for ‘community-led’, but maintain the principles of community-led development, including engagement and decision-making that is accessible to a wide array of community members, and establish clear expectations for accountability and transparency when implementing community-led centres. Lessons from the diverse case studies outlined in this report can help inform the various models of governance that community and cultural centres can take on.

05

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**Organizations undertaking community hub projects should explore creative approaches to integrating community centres as part of a mixed-use development.**

Except for the future site of the Blackhurst Cultural Centre, many of the cultural and community centres examined in this report are low-rise buildings and represent a missed opportunity for development and intensification. Particularly for sites that are well positioned in proximity to transit, integrating various uses such as housing above where possible, could both generate revenue for the project while providing benefits to the community and the broader public.



## CONCLUSION



Our analysis of the landscape of community-led cultural centres in Toronto demonstrates a lack of Black-led organizations that hold these community assets overall, particularly in proximity to where much of the Black population in Toronto lives. Building a centre that incorporates various uses for the Somali community aligns with federal and provincial policies, the City of Toronto’s strategies for addressing gaps in community and recreational services and addressing anti-Black racism. The lack of multi-use facilities that include recreation and event spaces for Black community organizations mean they miss out on potential revenue streams, as most of the case studies showed a mix of fundraising events, philanthropy, space rentals and membership fees help fund their operations and maintenance. The case study analysis also revealed community fundraising and philanthropy has contributed to capital costs, whereas more recent case studies relied more on public funding and were provided land by the City at low costs or through low long-term leases.

Moving forward, future studies should examine contemporary public funding for this type of cultural and recreation centre. It may require identifying disparity of public investment in Black communities by examining the historical allocation of infrastructure investments. Further research should also explore the nuances of governance models of community-led centres and the experiences of the actors involved in creating them. These areas of study will help inform a strategy for SCCR to be built successfully as an invaluable community asset within the context of rising land values and construction costs.

## APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES

### Case Study 1: Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (CCC)

#### Quick Stats

- Address: 5183 Sheppard Avenue East
- Total GFA: 85,000 sq.ft.
- Year Built: 1998 (Phase 1), 2006 (Phase 2), future work TBD
- Total cost: \$15-\$22 million (estimate, includes current renovation / construction initiatives)
- Partners:
  - Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (CCC)
  - City of Scarborough (now City of Toronto)
  - CMS Development Inc. (now Metrus)
- Build: New construction & renovation

#### Introduction & Timeline

The Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (CCC) is a multicultural hub with three decades of serving the community. It is the largest community-led social infrastructure centre in North America at 85,000 sq.ft., and houses a performing arts theatre, a recreational centre, a multi-purpose hall, studios, classrooms, dance studio, gallery space, and many other flexible spaces for lectures, large meetings, and special events. The construction of the centre was phased over a decade and was carried out through a tri-partite partnership between the City of Scarborough (before amalgamation), CMS Development Inc. (now Metrus), and the CCC.

The full project from ideation to finished construction of Phase II took 18 years, starting with founding of the Steering Committee in 1988 and the opening of Phase II in 2006. Early key milestones included completion of the Feasibility Study in 1991 and the registration of the CCC as a charitable organization in 1992. After the partnership and the Request for Expression of Interest was issued 1993, the next couple of years involved heavy fundraising, until 1996, when construction of Phase I began. It opened two years later in 1998. Two years later in 2001, the application for Phase II began and fundraising efforts continued to be made. In 2003, construction began for Phase II of the CCC and was complete in 2006, which officially opened on September 9, 2006.

Recent efforts have been made for expansion and renovation. In 2013, additional funds were secured to build new dance studios and recreation spaces. More recently in 2021,

significant funds were able to be secured towards additional renovation, expansion, and the building of a new garden.

- 1989: Phase 1 Feasibility Study by Price Waterhouse completed
- 1991: Phase II Feasibility study completed
- 1992: “request for expression of interest” sent to developers for partnership
- Signing of MOU with the City of Scarborough and CMS Development
- 1993: Signing of Tri-partite Agreement with the City of Scarborough and CMS Development Inc. Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg and Patrick Chan Architects brought on as design team
- 1994: CCC received major corporate and individual donations and hosts first major fundraising event
- 1995: awarded \$1 million Jobs Ontario grant, more corporate donations and 2nd major fundraising event held. Partnership with Centennial College
- 1996 -1997: More public grants and corporate fundraising efforts
- 1998: Official Opening of Phase 1
- 2001: Application for Phase II
- 2003: Construction begins for Phase II
- 2006: Opening of Phase II
- 2013: Funding secured from the Federal Community Infrastructure Investment Fund (CIIF) & Ontario Trillium Foundation to build a new dance studio and new recreation rooms
- 2021: Funding secured for expansion, renovations, and the building of the garden

## **PARTNERSHIP**

In 1993, the Corporation of the City of Scarborough entered into a Tri-Party Agreement with the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (CCC) and CMS Investment Inc. for the development of 5183 Sheppard Avenue East.

The Agreement deals with the joint development of a Community Complex, where the City was given responsibility to build the Burrow’s Hall Community Centre and the CCC the new cultural centre. The agreement also called for the joint provision of parking for the complex, where CMS provided 21.5% of required parking on its land on the west side of Progress Avenue, the City of Scarborough provided 71.5% of total parking, and the CCC provided 7% of the parking. The plan also provided for construction of an elementary school by the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) in its parcel located immediately south of the Community Centre (development covered by a separate agreement between City and the TCDSB).

## **LAND**

The land is owned by the CCC and held in trust for the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto Foundation. The contract to purchase a freehold interest of the former city-owned site of 5183 Sheppard Ave E was entered in October 1997. The CCC also applied for special legislation to authorize the cancellation of taxes for municipal and school purposes. The location of the chosen site was and remains to be within an area with a high concentration of Chinese-ethnic residents.

## Financing / Funding

As of 1996, the project was approved to proceed with the design and construction, with a project budget of \$7.9 million to cover Phase I of development, including the community centre and library building, site development and parking, a new park development. \$280,000 of this was dedicated to the future Chinese Garden, which was to be built out in phases, with the total build-out cost at \$13 million. The building out of the garden was never realized; early agreements set it out to be self-funded by the CCC at a zero net-cost to the City of Scarborough. However, funding was secured in 2021 towards realizing the garden.

Helping to kickstart this was a start-up fund of approximately \$200,000 obtained from the land developer (1999, City of Scarborough) that was used towards the conceptual design phase, with \$20,000 towards promotional material for fundraising.

After the completion of the conceptual design, the major fundraising campaign started. The fundraising committee included City Councillors, appropriate city staff, and representatives of the CCC. While there was no information found on the total amount fundraised, capital cost support was given from all three orders of government, foundations, private corporations, overseas donors, and the community groups. Publicly disclosed amounts include:

- 1995: \$1 million by the provincial government (Jobs Ontario)
- 1996: \$1 million by the Federal Government of Canada (grant)
- 2002: \$500K from Ministry of Canadian Heritage
- 2005: \$500K additional grant from the Federal government of Canada
- 2006: \$1 million grant to Phase II construction by the Provincial Government (announcement by Dalton McGuinty)

After the completion of Phase II, the CCC secured several rounds of significant funding towards additional expansion and renovation. In 2013, a grant of \$53,550 from the federal Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund (CIIF) was secured to expand the landmark. The CCC also received an additional \$51,600 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. These funds were used to build a new dance studio and recreation rooms.

More recently, in 2021, the CCC was able to secure over \$5M in funding for renovations, expanding spaces, and building the Chinese Garden was never realized (City Council motion passed June 16, 2022 to authorize the garden). The breakdown:

- \$2.3M from the Government of Ontario
- To receive \$2.8M from the Government of Canada
- CCC to contribute \$1.8M towards this renovation



## **Public Investment & Policy Mechanisms**

The Cultural Centre was able to secure public funds and financing successfully by its position as a strategic social infrastructure investment. Almost all the public funds were justified as an investment into the community's social fabric, boosting economic activity and general wellbeing for residents. The rationale for the public investment in line with policy objectives included:

- The initial feasibility study completed and approved by the former Scarborough Council in 1997 pointed towards the enormous cultural, tourism, and economic significance of the project. It was deemed to be a facility which provide “an economic and social benefit to all residents” of the City of Scarborough (2002, City of Scarborough)
- 2013 – financing from the Ontario Trillium Foundation: towards investing in the wellbeing of Ontarians through building resilient communities
- 2013 – investment from the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund intended as part of Canada's 2012 Economic Action Plan with a nationwide budget of \$150 million towards non-profit, public, and parapublic organizations to improve existing community infrastructure (doesn't exist anymore)
- The latest round of financing in 2021: Over \$5M from the Government of Canada and Ontario, where the \$2.8 million from the federal government was through the Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure Stream of the Investing in Canada plan. It was also justified as part of the post-pandemic recovery efforts to rebuild businesses, promote job creation, growth and investment

## **Governance & Operations**

The CCC is governed by a Steering committee that was founded in 1988. Additionally, the CCC constitution and by-laws were approved in 1990, the first Board of Directors formed in 1991, and CCC is status as a charitable organization registered in 1992. The Board of Governors include the ‘Founding Chairman’, where the majority are represented by members of the Chinese community.

The Board of Directors appear to change annually and include a Chairman, President, Senior Vice President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. The Board also includes subcommittees for Community Services, Donations and Sponsorship, General Management, Membership & Volunteers, Program and Education, Special Events, Strategy Planning, and Youth Leadership.

The operational business model seems to be a combination of ongoing fundraising events, government grants, and rental revenue. The wide diversity of spaces is often rented to community groups, non-profits, and private groups. It has been the location of choice for both local and prestigious events, ranging from local music competitions, community performances, and youth events to partnerships with the Toronto Zoo, the ROM, the Pan Am Games, and celebrity visits.

## Case Study 2: Tamil Community Centre (TCC)

### Quick Stats

- Address: 311 Staines Road, Scarborough
- Total GFA: ~37,000 sq.ft.
- Year Built: 2025 (anticipated)
- Total cost: ~\$40-million
- Partners:
  - The Steering Committee for the TCC
  - City of Toronto
  - CreateTO
- Build: New construction

### Introduction & Timeline

The Tamil Community Centre (TCC) is a forthcoming multi-purpose community hub that will serve the needs of Toronto's diverse Tamil population, which is the largest Tamil-speaking community outside of India or Sri Lanka, as well as the broader community residing in northeast Scarborough. The centre will offer recreational facilities including a gym, outdoor playing fields, library, museum, auditorium, and meeting spaces for educational and other community programming.

In addition to promoting strong, healthy, and socially cohesive communities through its facilities and programming, the TCC will also function as a site for municipal policy makers and community partners to convene and produce data on the area's health, education, and labour market needs that is difficult to obtain presently.

- 2018: City Council directed City staff to work with the TCC
- 2019: Public Meeting was held and the Steering Committee was formed
- 2020: Land lease was approved and Pre-Design Study was initiated
- 2021: Government grants received

Construction is slated to begin in September 2023 with doors opening in 2025.

### Partnership

A partnership between the TCC and the City of Toronto began in April 2018 when, after nearly a decade of local community organizing to promote the idea, City Council passed a unanimous motion directing City staff to work the Tamil community to explore opportunities for a new community centre. The TCC then secured land through collaboration with the City of Toronto's Mayor's Office and CreateTO.

## **Land**

Following the 2018 Council decision, the TCC began its work with CreateTO to identify a suitable publicly owned site. In October 2020, the City approved the lease of 311 Staines Road in the Morningside Heights neighbourhood of northeast Scarborough. This site was selected for its proximity to a significant portion of the Tamil community in Toronto, Markham, Pickering, and Ajax in addition to the lack of community services in the area.

The land was leased to the TCC for 30 years with the option of extending for an additional 10 years. A capital investment of at least \$26.3-million of the estimated \$40-million total for the project was to be secured prior to the finalization of the lease and it was agreed that the centre would be operational within 10 years.

This City had acquired this site from a developer in 2007 for \$17.2-million with the intention of building a new community centre. However, the site has remained vacant since the City determined an alternative location for the now-operational centre at Joyce Trimmer Park.

## **Financing / Funding**

The TCC applied for funding with the expectation that the project would cost \$38.5-million. The capital costs of construction (excluding HST) for this project were broken down as follows:

- Federal \$14.3 M (40%),
- Provincial \$11.9 M (33%) and
- the Owner \$9.6 M (26.7%)

After applying for funding from the federal government's Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program in November 2019, a pledge campaign was organized within the Tamil community to demonstrate the ability to finance the Owner's costs required under the program guidelines. Within just two months 120 local community members, businesses, and organizations pledged \$11.2 million, exceeding the amount required of the Owner. In 2021, the Canadian government agreed to pay 73% of the \$26.3-million budget gap that was identified in the initial application.

The total cost of the project is now estimated at approximately \$40-million including taxes so, if it is deemed necessary, the TCC may apply for further funding through the same grant if it becomes available.

The TCC is currently applying for charitable status.

### **Public Investment & Policy Mechanisms**

The TCC secured public funding through meeting the eligibility criteria of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which requires the mandatory benefits of improving and making access to and increasing the quality of cultural, recreational, and community infrastructure for Ontarians, including Indigenous peoples and vulnerable populations. The project aligns with provincial priorities by providing subsidized and free services for vulnerable communities and promoting innovative solutions for greater accessibility. In a press release announcing this funding Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland, stated that social infrastructure like the TCC that helps communities and local economies grow through quality services and education is central to the federal government's pandemic recovery plan.

### **Governance & Operations**

The Steering Committee for the Tamil Community Centre is composed of community organizations and business leaders who oversee the feasibility of the design, construction, and operation of the TCC. The committee's intergenerational community members hold long-standing connections to Tamil culture, arts, philanthropy, business, and activism.

### **Community Consultation**

In March 2019, a grassroots public meeting was attended by representatives at all levels of government and local community members and organizations. Here it was determined that a more flexible approach to planning and the use of public spaces for community services was necessary to address existing service gaps among the Tamil community and broader northeast Scarborough residents.

The TCC has launched two phases of consultations to date, Phase 1 addressed program priorities while Phase 2 focused on refining the identified priorities with community organizations. In 2019, Phase 1, an online consultation tool was launched in English and Tamil to identify and engage community members. To maximize the tool's reach and the breadth of feedback received, it was shared through social media, physical pamphlets, and radio, television, and newspaper outlets. In November 2022, a Phase 2 online consultation tool was launched. It was directed specifically to community organizations providing cultural or human services to the community and was able to reach 145 separate groups and individuals. In December 2020, the Board began a pre-design study based on the results of the online consultations to prepare for consultations and public information sessions.

The TCC has initiated discussions with relevant Indigenous stakeholders, recognizing that the TCC will be constructed on the traditional territory of many nations and that the parcels comprising 311 Staines Road in particular hold historical importance to Indigenous community members.



## Case Study 3: Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre

### Quick Stats

- Address: 750 Spadina Ave, Toronto
- Total GFA: ~51,000 sq.ft.
- Year Built: 1953 (Phase 1), 2004 (Phase 2)
- Total cost: \$14-million renovation
- Build: Renovation of previous JCC building

### Introduction & Timeline

The Miles Nadal Jewish Cultural Centre (MNjcc) is a multi-purpose recreational centre located at the intersection of Spadina and Bloor in Downtown Toronto's Annex neighbourhood. The centre is rooted in Jewish values but open to the broader public, emphasizing a commitment to programming that is accessible and socially inclusive. The centre houses a fitness centre, aquatic centre, 263-seat theatre, four schools, a chapel, and meeting spaces for a range of arts, cultural, and Jewish community programming.

Once known as the Bloor JCC, the centre that was built in 1953 at the corner of Bloor and Spadina reopened under the name Miles Nadal JCC in 2004 following a two-year renovation.

### Land

The MNjcc is one of several incorporated entities controlled by the membership of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) of Greater Toronto. The MNjcc rents the land at 750 Spadina Avenue from the UJA.

### Financing / Funding

The initial community centre was built in 1953 using \$1.5-million achieved through fundraising campaigns that began in 1948 and were led, in part, by Jewish war veterans.

In 2004, the centre was substantially renovated to include a theatre, aerobics studio, offices, and meeting rooms as well as swimming pool upgrades. The \$14-million price of these renovations were enabled by a \$2.5-million gift on behalf of entrepreneur and philanthropist Miles Nadal, the centre's namesake, in addition to \$5-million in UJA funding, and donations from community members.

The MNjcc is registered charitable organization.

### **Public Investment & Policy Mechanisms**

In 2004, the NMjcc received \$870,000 in Section 37 benefits from the development charges for adjacent properties to the rear of the site. This financial contribution paid for swimming pool reconstruction and the construction of a family change room and program gym.

In 2009, the provincial government provided \$15-million in funding to the UJA to improve three Jewish community centres, including the NMjcc.

In 2017, the NMjcc received \$420,000 in government funding to cover accessibility upgrades to its theatre through three funding streams: the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, Ontario Trillium Fund, and the City of Toronto.

### **Governance & Operations**

The Board of Directors contains 13 members elected to 3-year terms including an Executive Committee of a President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Board constitutes a Governance & Nominating Committee, an Executive Committee, and an Audit & Finance Committee as well as additional Committees that may be created and removed at the Board's discretion.

The Governance & Nominating Committee, which is chaired by the immediate past President, prepares nominations for vacant director positions annually and nominees require a written petition signed by a minimum of 25 MNjcc members. Directors are eligible for re-election upon completing their term.

The operational business model combines ongoing fundraising, regular donors, membership fees, and space rentals. The MNjcc has a network of 841 donors, 212 community partners, and over 200 staff and volunteers. Over 55,000 participants took part in 2,473 of the centre's programs in 2020-21 and there are 6 spaces available for rent.

## Case Study 4: KESKUS International Estonian Centre

### Quick Stats

- Address: 9 & 11 Madison Ave, Toronto
- Total GFA: ~ 35,000 sq.ft.
- Year Built: 2023 (anticipated)
- Total cost: \$41-million
- Partners:
  - International Estonian Centre Inc.
  - Estonian Credit Union
  - Estonian Foundation of Canada
  - Tartu College
- Build: New construction

### Introduction & Timeline

The KESKUS International Estonian Centre (IEC) is a planned dynamic mixed-use hub designed as a gathering place for Estonians of all generations to connect, showcase their rich cultural heritage, and promote commerce and innovation within the community. The site is located in Toronto's Annex neighborhood, just North of Bloor Street West. The IEC intends to contribute to the arts and culture of the Bloor Street Culture Corridor through art, music, film, and festivals that the centre can host.

The new development will include retail space, a café, the Estonian Credit Union, and a new privately owned public courtyard at grade as well as a 300-person capacity grand hall, flexible learning and office space, meeting rooms, studios, a board room, and a rooftop garden on the upper levels. No on-site parking will be provided, justified by the close proximity to Spadina Station. The building will have a Nordic-inspired aesthetic and a shape that roughly corresponds with shape of the Estonian border, while the site's landscape design will blend the landscape conditions of Estonia with Toronto's urban form.

Estonian House, the community's previous centre, was constructed in the 1960s at 958 Broadview Avenue. In 2009, the community determined that the major repairs it required were not financially feasible and agreed that the properties would be sold in order to construct the forthcoming IEC.

- December 2018: Land at 9 Madison Avenue purchased
- May 2019: Minor variances approved at the City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment
- February 2020: Building Permit application submitted
- September 2020: Previous location sold and leased to the community for 21 more months
- November 2020: Land at 11 Madison Avenue purchased

- December 2020: Construction manager retained
- April 2022: Construction began
- October 2022: Previous location closed

Doors are expected to open in 2023.

### **Partnership**

The new IEC results from a partnership between Estonian House, the Estonian Credit Union, the Estonian Foundation of Canada, and Tartu College.

Estonian House is the organization that was responsible for operating the previous community centre and will continue this role after relocation. The Estonian Credit Union was previously located adjacent to the Estonian House and is also relocating to the new site. The properties of these two organizations were combined to maximize the capital gains from the sale of this land. The integration of the IEC with the bank is seen as an opportunity for a consulate connecting the centre to the Estonian government abroad.

The Estonian Foundation of Canada is a registered charitable organization that supports Estonian culture across Canada and serves as the landowner for the new IEC and the former Estonian House.

Tartu College, an existing Estonian cultural and academic hub, is located adjacent to the new development. It will provide opportunities for cost sharing, event synergies, and collaboration. Tartu College is already established and receives income from student housing.

### **Land**

The IEC replaces a City-owned surface parking lot at 9 Madison Avenue that was declared surplus in 2011 and transferred to Build Toronto, a municipal corporation that develops underutilized City land assets. Build Toronto entered an agreement to sell the property to the IEC partners. Additionally, 11 Madison Avenue to the north was purchased to consolidate the two sites and repurpose the residential heritage building existing on the lot.

This location was deemed ideal by the community for several reasons which include being situated within the Toronto's Bloor Street Corridor and University of Toronto boundaries as well as the proximity to the Spadina subway station and the City's tech and financial core. These factors will positively impact the IEC's ability to share their culture with the city and bring in revenue by offering a location for events and conferences.



## **Financing / Funding**

The IEC project budget is \$41-million with \$26-million allocated to construction costs, which will be funded primarily through private donations in addition to the sale of the Estonian House.

The IEC initiated a capital campaign, a focused effort to raise significant donation during a specified period of time, led by its own Chair and community leaders that individually target donors by dollar ranges (\$100,000+, \$10,000-99,999, and <\$10,000). This campaign offers opportunities for recognition through the naming of the centre's key spaces like halls, foyers, classrooms, and even the centre itself after donors. Membership in the American Fund for Charities allows the IEC to accept American donations, expanding the reach of its capital campaign to the Estonian diaspora beyond Canada. As of April 2022, the campaign had raised over \$17-million from global donors with the highest single donation being \$3-million.

In 2018, the group of properties of the former Estonian House and Estonian Credit Union on Broadview were sold for a base price of \$15.6-million with the possibility of adjusting upward to reflect the final density achieved by the developer who purchased the site.

## **Governance & Operations**

International Estonian Centre Inc. is led by a volunteer board in addition to two project managers. These project managers, each with over 25 years of varied real estate and development experience, were hired at the onset of the project to oversee its due diligence phase.

The centre's business plan is to generate revenue from long-term commercial tenants, Tartu College residential tenants, and events to cover operational costs and maintenance.

The Steering Committee is comprised of volunteers from each of the four organizations that are leading the project, cooperatively undertaking the strategic direction and oversight of all project components including planning, design, building, legal, finance, and operations.

IEC's legal structure was selected based on advice from lawyers for efficiency in taxes and operations. Estonian House in Toronto Limited is the sole shareholder of International Estonian Centre Inc. and sole voting member of Estonian Arts Centre, and appoints the directors of each.

While charitable efforts are currently dedicated to project funding, the Estonian Arts Centre intends to continue charitable programming led by a volunteer charity board after completion.

### **Community Consultation**

Consultation with the Estonian community has been thorough and ongoing since 2009 when the Board of the Estonian House launched a community consultation process to determine the future of the previous centre.

Design updates are shared with the community on a regular basis through their website and at engagement sessions, occasionally with the architect in attendance. Initial design consultations were conducted so the design would reflect community needs, followed by a second phase after the plans for the use of the space evolved to determine a final design. Many of the update sessions are recorded and uploaded to the IEC website.

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## IMAGE SOURCES

### **Page 14. Recent Investments to Community-led Cultural Centres in Toronto from the ‘Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program**

- Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (2015). Image courtesy of Jeff Hitchcock. Retrieved from Flickr (creative commons): <https://flic.kr/p/EijKFp>
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### **Page 20. Detailed Case Studies**

- Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (2015). Image courtesy of Jeff Hitchcock. Retrieved from Flickr (creative commons): <https://flic.kr/p/EPunya>
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### **Page 23: First Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre at 123 Wynford Drive**

- Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (2007). Image courtesy of David Sky. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons (creative commons): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jccc-noor-full.jpg>

### **Page 28: Analysis (Detailed Case Studies)**

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- Tamil Community Centre Aerial View Rendering (2021). Image courtesy of the Tamil Community Centre and Andrew King. Retrieved from: <https://www.tamilcentre.ca/en/>
- KESKUS International Estonian Centre Ground Perspective (2021). Image courtesy of International Estonian Centre Inc. and Kongats Architects. Retrieved from: <https://www.estoniancentre.ca/>