

Unlocking Cultural Space

Planning & Development Resources and Strategies

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February 10, 2026

The Office for Cultural Space

- Part of the City's Economic Development & Culture Division, Cultural Partnerships
- Launched in 2022
- Leads cultural planning and policy initiatives (i.e.: Culture Connects)
- Leads development of innovative programs (i.e.: Cultural Districts)
- Leads capital projects and manages a portfolio of City-owned cultural spaces
- Engages in partnership initiatives (i.e. SPRE for Arts Spaces)
- Manages the Creative Co-location Facilities Property Tax Subclass program
- Provides a one window approach to supporting artists and arts organizations and City divisions and agencies to address the city's cultural infrastructure needs.

Tools to Support Culture Space

- **Community Space Tenancy (CST) program:** the City provides nominal leases of City-owned properties for non-profit use, including arts & culture
- **Community Benefits:** The City uses planning tools provided in Ontario's Planning Act to secure in-kind community benefits, such as cultural spaces
- **Capital Projects:** the City has a portfolio of heritage properties, museums, community centres, and cultural centres to host cultural programming and partners with the non-profit sector to deliver cultural infrastructure projects

Ontario's Planning System

Planning Act

Sets the groundwork and processes for planning in the province. All development must comply with the Act.

Provincial Policy Statements

Policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development.

Provincial Plans

Plans applying to various parts of the province with specific subject areas, such as environmental conservation or economic growth. Not all are applicable in every Municipality.

Municipal Official Plan

A Municipality's key long-term planning document to guide development and land use, adopted by Council.

Zoning By-laws

Legal document adopted by Council, controlling permitted uses, location, built form, and parking requirements.

Case Studies

- Each of the following case studies relied on a range of planning tools and other supports.
- A few common themes:
 - Complex redevelopment projects typically require flexible, creative approaches using a wide range of tools. No “one size fits all”.
 - Most had a non-profit organization with a vision advocating, partnering, and pushing the process forward.
- Each case study will describe what the space is, and how it came to be.

CASE STUDY:

Blackhurst Cultural Centre



- 1995: A Different Booklist established in the Mirvish Village
- 2017: ADB displaced due to redevelopment
- 2017-2025: City worked with developer to secure space in the new Mirvish Village, BCC was born
- BCC will provide permanent, affordable, accessible, net zero community cultural space to celebrate the art of Canadians of African and Caribbean ancestry

CASE STUDY:

Blackhurst Cultural Centre

“Old” Section 37 (Density Bonusing)

- \$1M in S. 37 funds helped to fund the development of the BCC
- Section 37 of the Planning Act allowed municipalities to negotiate for community benefits in exchange for additional height and density.
- Toronto used this power to negotiate community benefits across the city, including cultural spaces.
- The outcomes of S37 negotiations could be unpredictable and uneven.

City Contributions

- The sale of the City-owned Honest Ed's Laneway allowed the City to acquire the building and provide a cash contribution.
- BCC has a 49-year nominal net ground lease
- City waived various fees for permits and site plan.
- The City also provided in-kind technical support through an interdivisional working group.

Mitigating Displacement

- Displacement through redevelopment is a critical concern for cultural space.
- Planners have limited tools to require the replacement of cultural space when redevelopment happens.
- Championed by the local City Councillor, community, and developer.

CASE STUDY:

32 Lisgar



- 2012: City secured in-kind space as part of a broader a Section 37 community benefits package
- 2022: ownership transferred to the City, capital work incomplete, initial unsuccessful REOI
- 2022-24: City completes capital work
- 2024-26: meanwhile use
- 2025: City launches 2nd REOI
- 2027: New long-term tenant or group of tenants

CASE STUDY: 32 Lisgar

Zoning By-laws

- Zoning by-laws implement policy with legally enforceable, specific requirements and regulate permitted uses (and conditions on uses), lot requirements, location of buildings, and built form.
- A zoning by-law amendment is sometimes required to change use.
- 32 Lisgar Zoning: charitable institution, non-profit institution, cultural and arts facility, community services and facilities, or other community or social agency acceptable to the City of Toronto

Meanwhile Uses

- 2023/4: City invites expression of interest for meanwhile uses
- 2024: hosts Toronto Biennial of Art
- 2025/26: hosts meanwhile activations by TBA, POV, Inter/Access, Workman Arts, Watah Black Theatre School, and Glad Day Lit

Community Advocacy

- The redevelopment at 32 Lisgar displaced 80 artist live/work units at 48 Abell
- Active 18 organized the community to advocated for non-profit arts and culture space to replace displaced arts spaces in the West Queen West Triangle redevelopment.

CASE STUDY:

It's OK* Studios



- 468 Queen Street West
- 10,000 sq ft, 3 floors
- Acquired by the City in 2021 for future parkland to support affordable housing development at 15 Denison Ave
- City Council authorized a temporary two-year lease to It's OK
- City contribution of \$47,673 in S. 37 funding for improvements
- Municipal Capital Facility designation (tax exemption)
- EDC is working on a permanent relocation site for It's OK

CASE STUDY:

It's OK* Studios

Meanwhile Uses

- Temporary use of space for affordable not-for-profit, arts and culture uses.
- Often become available due to planned redevelopment.
- Typically feature reduced administrative burden or “red tape” for tenants.
- Toronto’s Culture Plan identifies the need to develop a meanwhile space program
- Meanwhile uses benefit the property owner/City, reducing carrying costs of the property and filling an otherwise empty space/storefront.

Nominal Leases

- City charges a nominal rent (i.e. ~\$1/year).
- Fit-up, maintenance and operating costs, and property taxes (if applicable) are tenant responsibility

City-owned spaces for DIY organizations

- The decision to lease to It's OK* came about through the recognition of a space crisis in the DIY music community, combined with the opportunity in the space.
- Many DIY groups/organizations operate out of spaces not designed for public assembly, and lack approvals/permits etc.
- If spaces can remain affordable and flexible and provide the right supports or opportunities these spaces can support DIY groups.

CASE STUDY:

221 Sterling



Image: Turner Fleischer Architects for First Capital

- Residential development - 870 residential units
- Approx. 500 sq. m. community cultural space
- Displaces the existing Sterling Studio Lofts (a variety of artist lofts and workshops).
- Applicant was required to provide 58 replacement rental units.
- At least 18 were required to be designated live-work replacement rental units.

CASE STUDY: 221 Sterling

Community Benefits Charge

- The previous Section 37 was replaced with the CBC in 2022.
- Compared to the previous Section 37, there is now a maximum limit to the value of the contribution.
- In practice this has limited the ability to secure space. Many developments will just pay a charge to the City.
- The CBC can be collected as a cash payment or as an in-kind contribution.

Ontario Land Tribunal (LPAT, OMB)

- Independent tribunal responsible for resolving appeals and applications on municipal and land use planning matters.
- Many municipal planning decisions are made through the OLT as a result of an appeal of a Council's decision (or lack of decision).
- An appeal can also be resolved through an "Offer to settle", which may include matters such as community space.

Rental Replacement

- Under the City of Toronto Act, the City may prohibit and regulate the demolition of residential rental.
- Toronto has a rental replacement policy, and this has been applied to live-work units.

CASE STUDY: Downsview



- Secondary Plan adopted in 2024
- 5.4 square kilometres of land, with a mix of private and public property
- 30 year build-out
- 115,000 new residents
- 52,000 workers
- Strong focus on climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and equitable outcomes for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups
- Support for arts and culture space embedded in policy, including minimum space requirements.

CASE STUDY: Downsview

“Meanwhile” Zoning By-law

- Downsview features a “Meanwhile Zoning By-law” allowing temporary/interim uses on vacant land over the 30+ years it will take to develop.
- Meanwhile uses are typically provided through temporary or semi-permanent structures.
- The intent is to provide “community amenity and placemaking opportunities” in the interim: generally non-residential land uses, including arts and culture, entertainment, and economic development activities.

Official Plans

- Official Plans are municipalities’ key planning tool, guiding long-term growth through policy.
- OPs must conform with relevant provincial plans and be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement.
- Secondary Plans are more detailed local development policies for a defined area of the City.
- Include general or area-specific policies related to land use, including for arts and culture.
- Include policies related to community space.
- Official Plans may be amended – this can be initiated by the municipality or by a private applicant/landowner.

More information

General

- [Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto](#)
- [City of Toronto Official Plan](#)
- [City of Toronto Zoning Bylaw](#)
- [Community Benefits Charge: In-Kind Guidelines](#)
- [City of Toronto: Community Space Tenancy](#)
- [Ontario Professional Planners Institute: Planning Legislative Framework in Ontario](#)
- [Ontario Land Tribunal: Citizen's guide to land use planning](#)

Blackhurst Cultural Centre

- [City Staff Report to Council on long-term lease](#)

It's OK*

- [City-owned Spaces for DIY \(Do-It-Yourself\) Music Organizations](#)

221 Sterling

- [Staff Report to Council - Zoning By-law Amendment and Draft Plan of Subdivision Applications](#)
- [A guide to Toronto's Demolition and Replacement of Rental Housing Policy](#)

32 Lisgar

- [Request for Expressions of Interest](#)

Downsview

- [Update Downsview - City of Toronto Website](#)

Thank you

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