
id8 DOWNSVIEW

ARTS & CULTURE ROUNDTABLES



FINAL SUMMARY
JULY 20, 2021

Meetings

Roundtable #1: Wednesday, June 23, 2021
Roundtable #2: Thursday, June 24, 2021
Phone/Zoom interviews: June 28–30, 2021

Overview

Two virtual roundtable meetings were held on June 23rd and 24th and supplemented with interviews with organizations that were not able to attend the roundtables. These meetings were held to discuss short- and long-term priorities and a framework for id8 Downsview’s arts and culture, placemaking, and place-keeping strategy. A total of 19 participants attended the meetings, which were joined by representatives from landowners Northcrest Developments and Canada Lands Company. *This summary was written by Pauline Craig and Mia Hunt, Dept of Words & Deeds.*

Meeting Objectives

The meetings were held to gather input that will:

- inform the creation of an arts and culture decision-making body and framework;
- direct arts and culture uses, partnerships, placemaking, and place-keeping;
- identify mechanisms to involve the local arts community; and
- create a vision for interim uses, arts, and site activations during the short- and long-term.

The following is a summary of the discussions that took place. These notes were reviewed and approved by participants before they were finalized.

Opening

Following a round of introductions, Ian Hanecak from Northcrest Developments and David Anselmi from Downsvie Park/Canada Lands Company presented an overview of the site, redevelopment process, engagement activities to date, and themes of participant feedback. Arts and culture has been identified as a priority by participants in engagement rounds one and two. The landowners expressed a commitment to draw from and amplify local arts and culture in the buildout of the site and in the interim while the development is underway.

Jane Farrow and Mia Hunt (Dept. of Words and Deeds) spoke to the opportunities for interim uses on the site and how a transparent, defensible framework will guide on-site activations in the future. They shared that, while this framework is being developed, an initial suite of on-site installations is being planned and coordinated with North York Arts, ArtworxTO, and other local arts and culture organizations.

Key Feedback

Participants expressed strong support for the following program objectives, priorities and themes:

- connect to, include, and engage with the local community;
- nurture and support artists in the community through fair compensation, mentorship, and other supports;
- create space for art that is accessible, inclusive, flexible, and affordable;
- remove barriers for emerging and marginalized artists; and
- create a long-term plan to guide decision-making.
- protect the natural environment and enhance the natural setting; and
- ensure accountability to artists, the community, and all stakeholders and rightsholders.

Detailed Feedback

BEST PRACTICES FOR ARTS AND CULTURE DECISION-MAKING

All participants agreed that **local communities should be included in decision-making** and that leadership structures should include those with knowledge of on-the-ground-conditions as well as curatorial skills.

There was unanimous agreement that **Indigenous communities should be consulted**, and participants were pleased to hear that a parallel Indigenous engagement process is underway.

Universally, participants said that **equity should be a key principle** to direct arts and culture decision-making and that there are opportunities to understand and **remove barriers for local, emerging, and marginalized artists**.

All participants agreed that the **curatorial process should be inclusive** and use accessible language, clear qualification criteria, and transparent application processes.

The majority of participants said the process should **include a multitude of voices on decision-making committees** that represent many different kinds of arts practices, career-stages, and communities, especially voices from marginalized groups.

Environmental stewardship is an important guiding principle, according to some participants, to minimize the ecological footprint of arts and culture activities and to build reconciliation with Indigenous communities into arts and culture programming.

We heard calls to **build accountability and longevity into decision-making processes** to protect and support artists and the community. One suggestion was to create an administrative position that would oversee adjudication processes and provide ongoing support and mentorship to artists after the awarding of projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARTS & CULTURE USES, PARTNERSHIPS, PLACEMAKING, AND PLACE-KEEPING

Several participants felt it was important to **prioritize inclusive forms of art** that community members can participate in or interact with. A diversity of methods to encourage maximum participation was suggested, including a recommendation to regularly “walk the site” with community members, including differently-abled people.

Most participants want the process to **invite a wide variety of projects** that connect with and represent many different communities, and particularly local marginalized communities.

The idea to **create art skills development, training, mentorship and leadership opportunities** for community partners received strong support from participants

A suggestion was given to **tie art into the development process** to document construction work, or embed artists in the infrastructure planning and design work. The idea for ‘land art’ was mentioned, as construction involves moving mounds of earth. Other suggestions included the reuse of waste construction material for art production.

Nearly all participants said they liked the idea to **make Downsvie an arts and culture destination** and the visibility that this would bring local artists.

All participants wanted this process to **ensure fair compensation and jobs for artists**, including the development of local arts and culture jobs and leadership opportunities.

Some participants wanted to see opportunities to **continue providing space for circus arts**, which have been present on the site for more than a decade.

Participants unanimously agreed that there is an opportunity to **create affordable spaces for art production, presentation, and for artists as residents** including temporary and long-term spaces, flexible spaces, material storage, work-live or co-living spaces, and accessible spaces for artists with disabilities. Self-governed spaces that prioritize livability and community and provide opportunities for creative interdisciplinary exchange were also suggested.

OTHER FEEDBACK

Some participants want to see programming to educate audiences on the positive impacts of art in the community.

A small number of participants suggested that the process explore complimentary uses on the site, including:

- social enterprises like a restaurant or café; and
- small-scale farming or community gardens

Access to the site was also raised as a potential issue by some participants with one suggestion to provide bike share to facilitate convenient access to transit.

Questions of Clarification

Participants asked several questions about:

- artist compensation;
- long and short-term budgets for arts and culture;
- the types of spaces and other supports available now and into the future;
- decision-making processes;
- artwork that is being planned for the first installations;
- the demographics of the Downsview area; and
- Indigenous consultation.

At this early stage, no specific details were available regarding budgets, compensation, other supports, and decision-making frameworks. However, these elements will be part of the future decision-making process that will be informed by input from these sessions.

Responses to questions also included more information on:

- a parallel Indigenous consultation process being undertaken by Dept of Words & Deeds with the guidance of Bob Goulais' from Nbisiing Consulting;
- the outdoor spaces that are the focus for quick-start installations;
- the demographics of Downsview and history of cultural events at the site; and
- the work that ArtworxTO is doing on the site for Year of Public Art.

Wrap-Up

Jane Farrow (Dept. of Words and Deeds) reminded participants about the third round of engagement kicking off the week of June 28, 2021. A public online survey will be available and participants were invited to send additional thoughts by email. The decision-making framework will be prepared by early fall 2021 and participants will be sent this summary of the meetings for review in the coming weeks.

David Anselmi (Canada Lands Company) and Ian Hanecak (Northcrest Developments) thanked participants for their perspectives and shared their excitement about showcasing local arts and mentoring artists on these lands.

Participants

ROUNDTABLE REPRESENTATION

- Art Starts
- ArtSpin
- ArtworxTO – Year of Public Art
- Canada Film Day
- CARFAC
- The Cyborg Circus Project
- Immigrant Writers
- Mural Routes
- Myseum Toronto
- Neighbourhood Arts Network
- North York Arts
- Steps Public Art
- Toronto Biennial of Art
- Toronto School of Circus Arts
- WorkInCulture

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS/PHONE CALLS

- Akin Collective
- Neighbourhood Arts Network
- Vibe Arts

NORTHCREST DEVELOPMENTS

Ian Hanecak, Manager Community and Stakeholder Relations

CANADA LANDS COMPANY

David Anselmi, Director, Real Estate

DEPT OF WORDS & DEEDS STAFF/SUPPORT

Jane Farrow, Mia Hunt, Pauline Craig, Julian Caravajal, Sneha Mandhan

ASL INTERPRETERS

Two ASL interpreters were present during Roundtable meeting #1