

EXPERIENCES DES
COMMUNAUTÉS NOIRES
ENGAGÉES DANS
LA PLANIFICATION
AU CANADA



BLACK
EXPERIENCES
WITH PLANNING
IN CANADA

BLACK PLANNING HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS

A RESOURCE TO ADVANCE COMMUNITY-BASED, BLACK-CENTERED, AND BLACK INFORMED PLANNING PRACTICES

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The logo for Toronto Metropolitan University, featuring the text 'Toronto Metropolitan University' in a bold, sans-serif font, with a stylized 'T' and 'M' in the background.

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The wordmark for Canada, featuring the word 'Canada' in a serif font, with a small Canadian flag above the 'a'.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BLACK EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING IN CANADA 6

Introducing the Black Experiences with Planning in Canada project to planning practitioners

WHY A BLACK PLANNING HANDBOOK FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS? 8

Why this handbook is needed in planning and how it can support your work

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BLACK COMMUNITIES? 12

Recognizing the complexities in generalizing Black identities, particularly in a context as demographically diverse as Canada

BEPIC PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS 14

The community partners whose work shaped this project and the Black Planning frameworks

WHAT BLACK PLANNING MEANS 16

What Black Planning is and how it supports community wellbeing, self-determination, safety, belonging, and cultural resilience

INTRODUCING THE BLACK PLANNING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 19

An overview of the Black planning conceptual framework and what it means for planning practitioners working with/in Black communities.

INTRODUCING THE BLACK PLANNING PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK 23

Overview of the Black planning process-oriented framework and how it can help planning practitioners in supporting Black community planning work

PUTTING BLACK PLANNING INTO ACTION: TOOLS & EXAMPLES FOR PRACTICE 41

Inventory of tools to put the process-oriented framework into action and grounded examples of what strong, community-led Black planning practices look like and can achieve

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES 59

Additional resources for practitioners to support Black planning work

REFERENCES 61

BLACK EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING IN CANADA

INTRODUCING THE BLACK EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING IN CANADA PROJECT TO PLANNING PRACTITIONERS

The Black Experiences with Planning in Canada (BEPIC) project was co-directed by the Black Planning Project and the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Toronto Metropolitan University. Between 2022-2026, BEPIC collaborated with community partners in Toronto, Halifax, and Montreal in order to [I] explore and document the experiences of Black communities and practitioners with/in/against planning; [II] create a framework for community-based, Black-centered, Black-informed planning practices; and [III] pilot framework with Black individuals doing planning work/in historically or predominantly Black communities. Through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and participation in community activities, BEPIC engaged more than 100 individuals – including members of Black-led organizations leading planning work, Black and non-Black planning practitioners, community members, and scholars. Building on the planning work already led by Black individuals, community organizations, planners and other practitioners committed to racial justice, BEPIC's ultimate goal was to visibilize and promote planning practices responsive to the aspirations and needs of Black communities.

The project stems from the recognition that there are significant gaps in planning practice and theory within the Canadian context on how to plan with Black communities. As the following pages outline in more detail, planning history in Canada is rooted in systemic anti-Black racism, which manifests up to this day in a lack of adequate infrastructure and service provision, discriminatory planning practices, and the displacement and erasure of Black communities, among others. In the face of this, Black communities across the country have long built from their own assets to lead important planning and community-building work, even when these practices are not recognized as such. Drawing from community knowledge

and cultural practices, they continue to create and sustain spaces of Black identity, wellbeing, and belonging under conditions of constraint, providing culturally relevant services and programming, developing infrastructure, and practicing community engagement and decision-making approaches that advance planning work responsive to their community needs.

Exploring and documenting Black planning practices in Canada is a vital step in addressing deep-rooted gaps in planning practice and education, and in identifying approaches to planning practice that emerge from and are responsive to Black communities. To move in this direction, the BEPIC project partnered with three Canadian Black-led organizations operating in cities with the largest Black presence in the country – Blackhurst Cultural Centre (Toronto), Maison d'Haïti (Montreal), and the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity (Halifax). They represent a diversity of settlement histories, lived experiences, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and languages, capturing a wide view of Black experiences with planning in Canada. For the past years, BEPIC learned from and documented the organizations' planning work, including the values that guide their mission and actions, the strategies they employ to advance the visions and aspirations of the communities they serve, and the kinds of projects they have brought to life and their impacts. This learning was synthesized through three case study booklets – one about each organization, see the Resources section – and informed the creation of the Black planning conceptual and process-oriented frameworks presented in this handbook.

From organizing land and providing housing, to sustaining cultural and social infrastructures, confronting displacement, and creating spaces of belonging, Black

planning can be seen both as a tradition of community-led practices that sustain Black life and as an approach that explicitly advances the planning visions and needs of Black communities. By showing how Black communities have long planned by themselves and helped shape Canadian cities and regions, the BEPIC project challenges dominant narratives that have historically excluded Black people from planning, and center Black knowledge and priorities in addressing ongoing anti-Black racism within planning systems. In doing so, the project also expands how Black planning is understood and practiced in Canada

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

This handbook hopes to support individual planning practitioners and organizations seeking to advance Black planning through their practice. It offers an overview of the BEPIC project's understanding of Black planning, an introduction to the Black planning frameworks that have been developed by working with the project's community partners, as well as actionable and tangible tools to support Black-centred, Black-informed planning in Black communities.

USE THIS HANDBOOK IF:

- ☐ You identify as a Black or non-Black planning practitioner already working with or within a Black community
- ☐ You identify as a Black or non-Black planning practitioner aiming to support Black planning through your practice, even if you have never worked with or within a Black community before
- ☐ You are looking for tools, approaches, and resources to use in your practice to support Black-centred, Black-informed work

THIS HANDBOOK CAN HELP YOU UNDERSTAND:

- The ways in which planning policies and practices have enabled anti-Black racism historically and today
- How Black communities have led planning work against and in compliance with mainstream planning systems
- What is Black planning and why it is important
- What it means to adopt a Black planning lens in your practice
- The importance of advocating to change existing planning policies and frameworks through a reparative lens to address past harm
- What you can do to best engage in and support community-based, Black-centred, and Black-informed planning work, including:
 - *Important stages to support planning processes that centre the priorities of Black communities*
 - *Practical tools to move from visioning to implementation and evaluation*
 - *Questions to assess your current practice and reflect on how to better embed a Black planning lens*
 - *Concrete examples of Black planning in action in Canada and the US*

WHY A BLACK PLANNING HANDBOOK FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS?

WHY THIS HANDBOOK IS NEEDED IN PLANNING AND HOW IT CAN SUPPORT YOUR/YOUR ORGANIZATION'S WORK

From people of African descent who first settled in Nova Scotia back in the 1700s, to freedom seekers who escaped slavery in the United States through the Underground Railroad in the 1800s, Caribbean women who participated in the West Indian Domestic Scheme in the mid-1900s, and more recent waves of migration from the Caribbean, Africa, and other regions since the 1960s, the Black population in Canada continues to grow, almost tripling between 1996 and 2021.

However, Canadian planning has a tense history with/in Black communities, shaped by a legacy of anti-Black racism and settler colonialism that has created inequitable outcomes until this day. Since the earliest arrival of people of African descent in what is now Canada, planning tools and practices like restrictive covenants, exclusionary zoning, urban renewal, and the location of polluting facilities in historically Black areas, among others, have shaped informal and formal practices of settlement, land tenure and use, urban and regional planning, and development that have marginalized, displaced, and erased Black communities. While the destruction of Africville in Nova Scotia is more widely known in mainstream Canadian discourse, historically Black communities in other cities like Hogan's Alley in Vancouver, Little Burgundy in Montreal, and Dawn settlement in Dresden have faced similar challenges.

Planning's role in anti-Black practices is inseparable from Canada's colonial origins and nation-building project, which was founded on the occupation of Indigenous lands and the labour of enslaved Indigenous and Black individuals (Dorries, Hugill, and Tomiak, 2019). The tools of planning were instrumental in helping European

settlers occupy the territory and establish a society that advanced their visions and aspirations, which included building towns, transportation networks, and all the infrastructures required to ensure their wellbeing.

The intergenerational effects of anti-Black planning policies and practices still harm Black people today. For instance, only 25.6% of Black households in Toronto are homeowners, less than half the city's rate (Hulchanski, 2019). When it comes to rental housing, Black individuals face high levels of discrimination when trying to rent (Ages et al., 2021) and are significantly overrepresented in eviction filings (Lewis and Panou, 2026). Black communities are also disproportionately located close to environmental toxins such as landfills, polluting industries, and other hazardous land uses (Waldron, 2021). Similarly, they tend to live in areas close to highways and in historically disinvested neighbourhoods, which have less access to green space, other environmental amenities, social services, and public transit, all of which have direct impacts on health outcomes and overall quality of life. At the same time, the planning profession lacks racial diversity and there is an underrepresentation of Black practitioners (Ahsan et al., 2020), influenced by the anti-Black policies described earlier and by the broader systemic racism that has intentionally disadvantaged racialized communities in terms of access to education and other civil rights.

But this is one side of the story. Alongside these realities marked by anti-Black racism in/through planning, Black communities and planners have long developed and still enact spatial and community building practices rooted in their specific

experiences, knowledge systems, and traditions, which have enabled Black spaces to survive and thrive through resistance, resilience, and creativity. However, until recently the planning profession has failed to acknowledge how the field has created spatial inequities for Black people, and also to validate community-led practices as planning work. This invisibilization happens even though for centuries Black communities have managed land, organized to provide housing, built cultural and social infrastructures, confronted displacement due to state-led and private development, and created spaces of belonging that build on local knowledge and centre their needs.

What does all of this mean for planning practitioners today? Why is a Black planning handbook like this one relevant? And how can adopting a Black planning lens transform your/your organization's planning practice to confront anti-Black racism and support Black flourishing?

1. UNDERSTANDING PAST HARMS AND ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN PLANNING TODAY:

Adopting a Black planning lens invites practitioners to see it as their responsibility to learn about planning's historical relationship with Black communities, the intergenerational impacts of anti-Black racist policies and practices, and how today's planning decisions might negatively impact Black people. It is also important to understand that many Black communities mistrust planning due to past harmful experiences, so trust-building is a vital aspect of Black-centred planning. This is particularly important for practitioners who are non-Black and/or when working for the first time with Black individuals or communities they are not familiar with. Although some of the explicit anti-Black racist policies of the past might no longer be in place, if contemporary planning overlooks this history and does not confront the racialized impacts – even if unintended – of its interventions today it will continue to reproduce inequities. For example, while public transit initiatives like the construction of the Line 5 Eglinton Light Rail Transit (LRT) and the Line 6 Finch LRT in Toronto have been framed as important to enhance connectivity in the city and improve accessibility for local residents, their planning and implementation have

impacted Black people in particularly detrimental ways. The road disruptions due to the lengthy 15-year construction of Line 5, coupled with residential and commercial price increases due to real estate speculation, have led to the closure of numerous Black-owned businesses and the displacement of longstanding Black Caribbean residents in the Little Jamaica area. A similar trend is happening in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood, where gentrification and displacement pressures are growing due to Line 6, threatening the longstanding African, Black, and Caribbean communities that have made up a large proportion of the area's population since the 1960s-70s. Similarly, large-scale urban redevelopment projects are often framed as seeking to "revitalize" areas historically disinvested, increasing the housing supply, bringing in new amenities, and creating diverse and complete communities. However, many of the areas where such redevelopment projects take place are predominantly inhabited by lower-income, racialized, and immigrant communities, including historically and/or predominantly Black neighbourhoods. When not emerging from community calls – and in the absence of strong measures to prevent the displacement of residents and businesses, the destruction of significant spaces, and the erosion of the existing social relations in a community – such projects have shown to replicate the disruption and erasure of Black communities under new veil.

2. LEARNING DIRECTLY FROM BLACK COMMUNITIES:

Black communities have long engaged in planning and community building work, both in opposition to and leveraging mainstream planning frameworks. These knowledge and practices have enabled Black communities and spaces to survive and thrive, even under conditions of constraint. Adopting a Black planning lens invites practitioners to work alongside and learn directly from Black communities and organizations involved in planning work in order to understand their historical and present experiences with planning, witness the practices and strategies they employ to achieve their goals, and identify how to best support their planning agendas from your position/role. Black communities hold firsthand knowledge about their members and the spaces significant to them, and are best positioned to define the

vision for their collective futures. Ignoring the experiences and knowledge of Black communities not only limits planning's ability to serve their needs and aspirations, but actively reproduces anti-Black racism and deepens racialized inequities, which are largely perpetuated through institutionalized practices, tools, and policies. It is the responsibility of planning practitioners to put in place the procedures, frameworks, and timelines that allow planning processes to respond to the particular realities of Black communities – regardless of whether the focus is on heritage or cultural preservation, new housing or infrastructure development, confronting environmental racism, or anti-displacement work, among many others. Partnering with community-based, Black-led organizations; showing up at community events when invited; taking the time to do a guided walking tour of an area; listening to community leaders and residents, are all ways of gaining a firsthand understanding of how Black communities experience and plan the spaces where they live, what they are already doing, what is working for them in existing planning frameworks and what is not. This is a solid starting point to identify what can change in mainstream planning practice to support Black communities in advancing their planning goals.

3. RETHINKING THE ROLE OF THE PLANNER:

A Black planning lens invites practitioners to reconsider their role in support of community-led planning. A commitment to planning practices that are community-based, Black-centred, and Black-informed challenges the conventional view that planning practitioners are technical experts whose job is to ensure adherence to existing frameworks to advance a single common good. The previous pages have shown that existing policy and planning frameworks have often legitimized unjust and anti-Black racist agendas. They have also shown that definitions of the common good have often excluded and even directly sought to disadvantage Black people. Adopting a Black planning lens demands a willingness to support community-identified planning visions for the future of Black communities, grounded in their particular histories, experiences, and knowledge of the spaces they inhabit. It

requires genuine listening and building relationships of trust before defining planning goals or engaging in action. This in turn requires reconsidering timelines to allow for meaningful community engagement on the community's terms. In planning contexts marked by tight deadlines, narrow approaches to public input, and a tendency to present planning frameworks as unmovable, supporting Black planning requires active advocacy work. This might mean working with Black communities to identify and leverage existing planning tools that can help achieve their goals, but also challenging the status quo to transform current planning and policy frameworks.

4. TRANSFORMING EXISTING PLANNING AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS:

Adopting a Black planning lens is fundamentally about ensuring the experiences, firsthand knowledge, and aspirations of Black communities are at the centre of planning action. However, deep and long-term transformation cannot be achieved without wider institutional change. While not all planning practitioners are in positions that allow them to write policy and legislation, taking a Black planning lens seriously involves challenging and actively pushing against any frameworks, processes, and tools that reproduce injustice for Black communities from any role and position. If planning systems have produced harm and inequities for Black people, they can also help undo and prevent such harm through institutionalized reparations and redress. Crucially, there is dire need to rethink existing planning and policy frameworks so that they centre and advance Black wellbeing, joy, and flourishing rather than just reactively responding to anti-Black racist planning practices and their impacts.

This handbook aims to offer guidance in this regard to all planning practitioners who have a commitment to confronting anti-Black racism in planning and to work towards racial justice in the field. Whether you are Black or non-Black, working with Black communities for the first time or for years, and/or wondering whether your

work can adopt a Black planning lens and how, the handbook offers conceptual and practical insights to guide your work. In the following sections you will find the following:

- The definition of Black planning proposed by the BEPIC project
- A Black planning conceptual framework that fleshes out the term in more detail
- A 7-stage process-oriented Black planning framework to assist Black communities and practitioners in moving forward planning processes in community-based Black-centred, Black-informed ways
- A list of self-evaluation questions for practitioners to reflect on their current practice in light of the process-oriented framework
- An inventory of tools that can be used at different stages of the process-oriented framework to lead or support Black planning processes
- Concrete examples from Black-led organizations in Canada and the US that show how they address planning priorities affecting Black communities, how their engagement with planning and/or planning-related work differs from mainstream planning, and what it means to work with Black communities in a way that is informed by Black experiences

We hope these resources will serve Black organizations and planning practitioners striving to support more inclusive and equitable planning outcomes in Black communities.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BLACK COMMUNITIES?

It is important to recognize the complexities in generalizing Black identities, particularly in a context as demographically diverse as Canada. Despite some important commonalities informed by collective experiences of colonialism, slavery, systemic racism, and resistance, Black individuals and groups hold diverse experiences, histories, and cultural backgrounds. The BEPIC project recognizes that Black identity is multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of cultural expressions, often shaped by connections to specific geographies. In the context of this handbook, we understand Black individuals as those with Black African origin or descent, and those who identify as such. Terms such as African Nova Scotian, Black Canadian, Afro-Caribbean, African American, and Afro-Latinx reflect the plurality of Black populations in Canada. When we talk about Black communities and geographic locations we refer to those where a higher proportion of the population is Black compared to other local areas and/or where there has been a longstanding historical Black population.

For planning practitioners, especially those who are non-Black and/or approaching a Black community for the first time in their work, it is crucial to develop awareness of this complexity and avoid making assumptions about the community's experiences, needs, aspirations, and knowledge when it comes to planning. It is also important to consider whether you think your/your organization's work involves and/or impacts Black communities. For instance, a planner working in the North Preston area or other historical African Nova Scotian communities – where sometimes up to 70% of the population identifies as Black (REF) – might clearly see their practice as directly relevant to Black individuals and communities. On the other hand, planning practitioners working in large and diverse metropolitan centres like the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and Montreal might not see the relevance of the BEPIC project as clearly, even though these cities concentrate most of the Black population in Canada, encompass neighbourhoods with significant Black presence today, and have been home to important Black settlements in the past.

BEPIC's vision is that planning processes – whether initiated by communities themselves, governments, the private sector, or through partnerships – are transformed to centre the specific realities and visions of Black communities in all their diversity, as defined by them, building on the knowledge they have about their members and the places that are significant to their collective futures. This is not meant to be a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, this handbook seeks to offer a conceptual and practical framework planning practitioners can adopt to plan together with Black communities on the matters that directly impact them, recognizing that they have been and continue to be impacted by planning action in particular ways.



SNAPSHOT OF BLACK HISTORY IN CANADA

CANADA HAS A RICH HISTORY OF BLACK PRESENCE

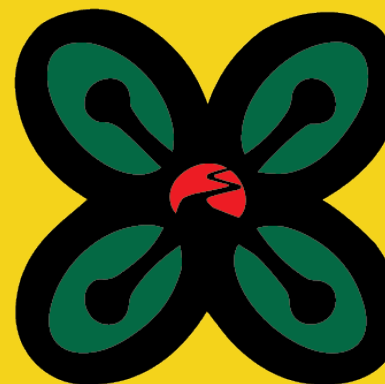


BEPIC COMMUNITY PARTNERS

BEPIC'S THREE COMMUNITY PARTNERS—BLACKHURST CULTURAL CENTRE, MAISON D'HAÏTI, AND THE AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, OPERATE IN CITIES WITH THE LARGEST PRESENCE OF BLACK COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTRY: TORONTO, MONTREAL AND HALIFAX RESPECTIVELY. EACH ORGANIZATION REPRESENTS A DIVERSITY OF SETTLEMENT HISTORIES, LIVED EXPERIENCES, ETHNICITIES, AND LANGUAGES, CAPTURING A WIDE VIEW OF BLACK EXPERIENCES WITHIN PLANNING IN CANADA. THEIR WORK CHALLENGES DOMINANT NARRATIVES THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED BLACK PEOPLE, AND CENTER BLACK KNOWLEDGE AND PRIORITIES IN ADDRESSING ONGOING ANTI-BLACK RACISM WITHIN PLANNING SYSTEMS. COLLECTIVELY THEY EXPAND HOW BLACK PLANNING IS UNDERSTOOD AND PRACTICED IN CANADA.

ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The Road to Economic Prosperity (REP) is a Halifax-based non-profit organization working to improve the economic and social wellbeing of historic African Nova Scotian (ANS) communities with roots in Nova Scotia since the 1600s. This is primarily accomplished through leveraging an Afrocentric approach to strategic planning, policy development, increasing community engagement, and capacity. In collaboration with the ANS communities, REP developed the Prosperity Plan, which seeks to build capacity, establish land ownership and infrastructure, and increase opportunities. REP's work spans from community to policy and has involved implementing Community Action Plans, creating a Community Wellbeing Index, hosting an annual symposium, and organizing to transform planning policies and processes within the Halifax Regional Municipality. An important part of REP's approach is Community Action Planning, bringing communities together to develop plans that address their unique challenges and equipping local members with skills and knowledge to advance these plans.



African Nova Scotian
Road to
Economic
Prosperity

BLACKHURST CULTURAL CENTRE

The Blackhurst Cultural Centre (BCC) is a non-profit organization and community space located in the Bathurst–Bloor neighbourhood in Toronto, with a Black presence dating back to the late 1800s. Originally established as A Different Booklist Cultural Centre, the centre has expanded its vision beyond literature to encompass cultural preservation and arts-related initiatives, community events, and education. Through their work, BCC amplifies and educates the public on the cultural contributions of Canadians of African and Caribbean descent and aims to be a world-class model in “preserving both a neighbourhood and a people’s history”. Through long-term community advocacy and partnerships, Blackhurst has implemented several initiatives, including arts-based youth programming, walking tours, elders’ social circles, and street parades. In 2026, the Centre will move into a new space in the Mirvish Village redevelopment that recognizes the historic Black business corridor in Toronto.



MAISON D'HAÏTI

Maison d'Haïti is a community and cultural center located in Saint-Michel, a neighbourhood in Montreal with a large population of Afro-descendant communities, including a large Haitian population. Founded in 1972, the organization originally took a strong political militant stance, speaking out against the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti and its impact on Haitians in Quebec. In response to the neighbourhood's geography, as well as a broader history of migration, systemic displacement, and the marginalization of Black communities in the city, the cultural center functions not just as a place for gatherings, but also as a vital part of the urban landscape,



WHAT BLACK PLANNING MEANS

WHAT BLACK PLANNING IS AND HOW IT SUPPORTS COMMUNITY WELLBEING, SELF-DETERMINATION, SAFETY, BELONGING, AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE

WHAT IS BLACK PLANNING?

Black Planning is both a practical (practice oriented) and a theoretical (conceptual) approach to planning that is built upon lived experiences, traditions, and community knowledge of Black individuals and populations.

It encompasses practices that aim to help advance the planning priorities, needs, and aspirations of Black communities in Canada, practices that are:

COMMUNITY-BASED:

COMMUNITY IDENTIFIES THEIR PLANNING PRIORITIES AND HOW TO ACHIEVE THEM

BLACK-CENTRED:

PLANNING ACTION IS RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE TO LIVED EXPERIENCE OF BLACK INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

BLACK-INFORMED:

BLACK KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES SHAPE PLANNING PROCESSES AND DECISIONS



BLACK PLANNING AS A THEORY

To help theorize Black planning, BEPIC proposes a Black Planning Conceptual Framework structured as a three-pillar diagram. The pillars are grounded in the lived experiences and practices of Black communities and shaped by insights from scholarly work, centering on the themes of Black place-acknowledgement, Black place-keeping, and Black place-making, described in more detail below.

BLACK PLANNING AS A PROCESS AND PRACTICE:

To put into practice the conceptual framework and provide resources to support planning work that is community-centred as well as guided and led by community members, BEPIC also proposes a Black Planning Process-Oriented Framework. The framework involves seven stages and provides resources to assist communities through planning processes.

Together, the Black Planning Conceptual and Practice-Oriented Frameworks introduced in the following sections are guides for Black communities and planning practitioners working to strengthen Black community building and Black spaces; advance the planning priorities, needs, and aspirations of Black communities; and work towards equitable and just planning outcomes for Black communities



Photo credit (BEPIC)

WHY IS BLACK PLANNING IMPORTANT?

Black planning is able to influence important matters such as housing, transit, public space, local economies, heritage, and community health in ways that are grounded in Black experiences and respond to how Black communities envision their futures.

However, while Black peoples have long led planning work involving long-term visions, spatial coordination, and political negotiation, their practices and contributions have not been seen and/or theorized as such in formal planning

education and professional spaces. In this context, naming, defining, theorizing, and visibilizing Black planning is a political exercise. The frameworks presented in this handbook shed light on what makes Black planning a unique approach to guide planning work and offer tools to put it in practice. They challenge assumptions about what planning is and who can legitimately engage in it, while also showing the limits of planning frameworks that fail to confront the impacts anti-Black racism.



Photo credit: (A) (C)

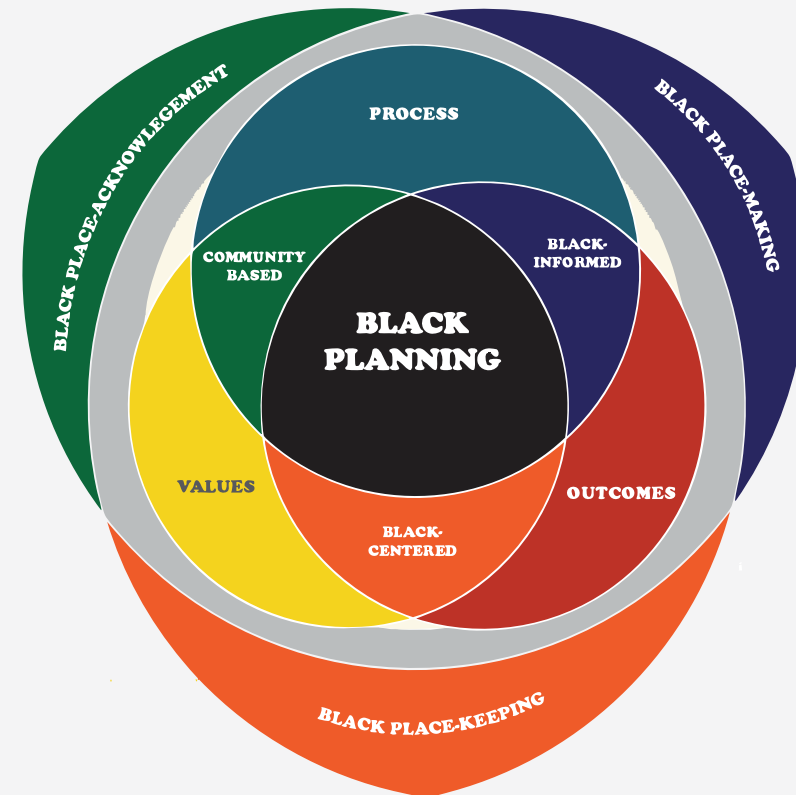
INTRODUCING THE BLACK PLANNING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BLACK PLANNING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS WORKING WITH/IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

BLACK PLANNING IS BOTH A PRACTICAL (PRACTICE) APPROACH TO PLANNING THAT IS BUILT UPON LIVED EXPERIENCES, TRADITIONS, AND COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE OF BLACK INDIVIDUALS AND POPULATIONS. IT ENCOMPASSES PRACTICES THAT AIM TO HELP ADVANCE THE PLANNING PRIORITIES, NEEDS, AND ASPIRATIONS OF BLACK COMMUNITIES IN CANADA, PRACTICES THAT ARE:

- **COMMUNITY-BASED:** COMMUNITY IDENTIFIES THEIR PLANNING PRIORITIES AND HOW TO ACHIEVE THEM
- **BLACK-CENTRED:** PLANNING ACTION IS RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE TO THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES
- **BLACK-INFORMED:** BLACK KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES SHAPE PLANNING PROCESSES AND DECISIONS

The Black Planning framework developed by the BEPIC project provides an organizing frame to conceptualize and understand Black Planning. It is structured around three pillars – Black place-acknowledgement, Black place-keeping, and Black place-making – which articulate distinct but interconnected dimensions through which Black communities interpret, sustain, and transform space. Together, these pillars function as both an analytical framework and an expression of Black spatial knowledge and practices that are rooted in historical acknowledgement, spatial preservation, and collective future-making. The framework has been informed by the work of BEPIC’s three Black-led community partner organizations, Black planning professionals, and non-Black planners working with Black communities, as well as by the work of Black thinkers and scholars.



BLACK PLACE-ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Black Place-Acknowledgement involves acknowledging the historic and current presence of Black communities, their lived memories and situated identities, as well as the practices that have attempted to disrupt these connections. It is also about acknowledging the planning knowledge and contributions of Black communities, individuals, scholars, and practitioners.

BLACK PLACE-KEEPING

Black Place-Keeping involves grounding Black experiences and reestablishing, strengthening, restoring and celebrating the connections to the past and spaces historically inhabited by Black communities that have been eroded, erased or forgotten. It highlights Black knowledge, intergenerational memory work, and reclamation practices as central to cultural and spatial preservation.

BLACK PLACE-MAKING

Black Place-Making is about creating spaces for Black futures – spaces that are safe and beautiful, spaces of joy, spaces that foster economic opportunities and resist erasure, which facilitate equitable and just environments for Black communities to grow and thrive. It affirms creative and resistant practices that reclaim agency across urban and rural contexts.

BLACK PLACE-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CORE THEMES: MEMORY WORK, STORYTELLING, BLACK LIVED EXPERIENCE

Black place-acknowledgement involves recognizing the history of Black individuals and their connection to particular lands and heritages, as well as Black communities' place-based contributions and knowledge.

DID YOU KNOW?

Located in Windsor, Ontario, the McDougall Street Corridor was once a largely self-sufficient African Canadian community¹⁹. Following the conclusion of the American Civil War and the end of the Underground Railroad era, Windsor's Black population continued to grow and establish deep roots in the area. However, as a result of urban renewal initiatives introduced in the mid-20th century, the corridor and its surrounding community were displaced from the area.

Today, the McDougall Street Corridor honours the legacy of important and influential community members and serves as a site of Black place-acknowledgement by making visible the histories, contributions, and lived experiences of Black residents that were long overlooked or erased due to planning action.

THINK ABOUT THIS...

LAND AND PLACE-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The concept of Black place-acknowledgement acknowledges the lands that Black people have previously lived on and continue to live on. It understands Black individuals have historical ties to their land, culture, and heritage that are becoming further detached. In this regard, Black place-acknowledgement contributes to remembering and accepting the history, origins, and experiences of space.

Photo Credit: <https://mymainstreet.ca/>



BLACK PLACE-KEEPING

CORE THEMES: SPATIAL JUSTICE, MEMORY WORK, STORYTELLING

Black place-keeping centres the preservation of Black spaces and Black cultural identity through education, reflection, and community engagement. It exposes Black places that have been eroded, erased, or forgotten and attempts to make these connections to ensure they are celebrated in the present time.



Source: <https://blackhurstcc.org/>

THINK ABOUT THIS...

BLACK PLACE-KEEPING AS A POLITICAL ACT:

Black place-keeping can be understood as a political act that can produce material outcomes for Black communities in the fight for racial justice. This can be done through contesting space, affirming cultural identity, fostering political agency, and increasing the visibility of Black spaces.

BLACK PLACE-KEEPING AS A LEARNING PROCESS:

Black place-keeping also involves applying past learnings and experiences to the present in ways that resonate with Critical Sankofa Planning. Drawing on the word sankofa, meaning “going back and getting”²⁰, it is a process of retrieving knowledge from the past to inform the future.

BLACK PLACE-KEEPING AS THE PHYSICAL SHAPING OF SPACE:

Black place-keeping also materializes in acts of physical reconstruction and preservation of Black heritage spaces. This can look like establishing physical markers of Black cultural narratives (e.g., murals), place reclamation projects seeking to preserve heritage spaces^{21 22 23}(e.g., expanding existing community boundaries), and acts of storytelling of Black histories through cultural tourism efforts (eg., walking tours), among others.

BLACK PLACE-MAKING

CORE THEMES: SPATIAL JUSTICE, AFROFUTURISM

Black place-making involves the creation of new and the resistance of existing Black spaces, promoting and strengthening a “Black sense of place.” It seeks to transform communities into areas of play, pleasure, and celebration to express identity, reclaim space, and envision the future^{24 25}.

DID YOU KNOW?

Black Meccas are communities, neighbourhoods, and cities that serve as important sites of Black cultural production, political mobilization, and community building. They make demands on the future by reading Black geographies as both past and present and by scaling Black place-making as a practice that takes place from small-scale to larger-scale geographies. Examples of Black Meccas include Little Jamaica, a Toronto Black hub located on Eglinton West.

KEY NOTE:

The term ‘place-making’ has been controversial due to the concept being co-opted and depicted as contributing to gentrifying processes that produce displacement. Building on the work of Black community builders and scholars, BEPIC’s reclamation of the term contests this trend and seeks to centre Black community voices and leadership in the creation of spaces that enable Black flourishing.

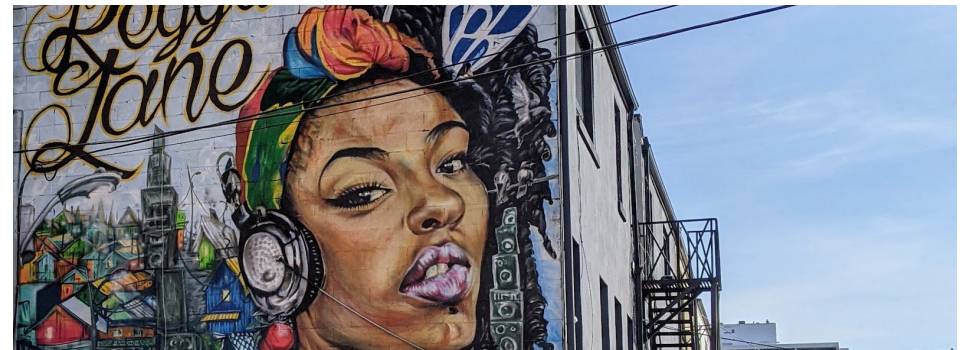
THINK ABOUT THIS...

BLACK PLACE-MAKING AS PROMOTING A BLACK SENSE OF PLACE:

Black place-making provides a Black sense of place in which Black people are able to reclaim space and congregate in physical environments that are welcoming and safe.²⁶ This creation of space is not just physical, but can also be digitally produced through social media platforms. Digital spaces, such as X (formerly Twitter) and personal blogs, allow Black individuals to create sharp critical commentary on the world around them and organize for social change.

BLACK PLACE-MAKING AS PROMOTING CULTURAL ACTIVITY AND STORYTELLING:

Black place-making activities are often expressed through cultural activities and storytelling. They seek to recover Black agency, involving the sharing of stories and knowledge that continues the legacy of the Black community, keeps traditions alive, and preserves cultural knowledge through space and time.



Source: <https://www.azuremagazine.com/>

INTRODUCING THE BLACK PLANNING PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW OF THE BLACK PLANNING PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK AND HOW IT CAN HELP PLANNING PRACTITIONERS IN SUPPORTING BLACK COMMUNITY PLANNING WORK

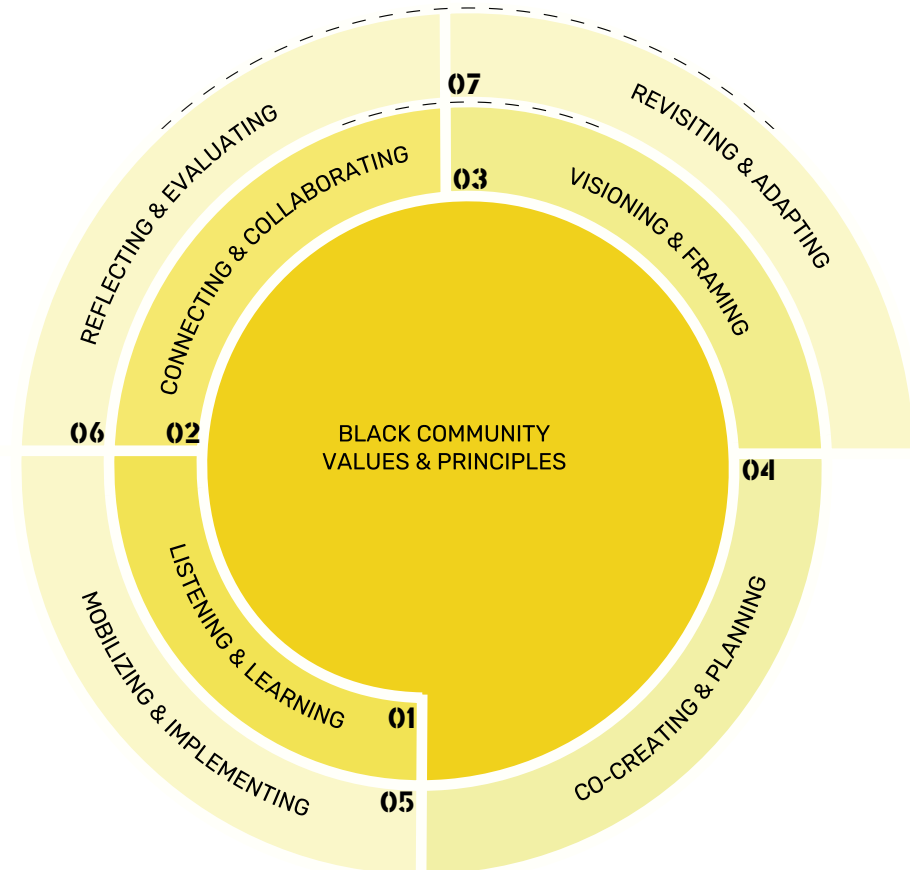
WHAT IS IT?

THIS FRAMEWORK IS DESIGNED TO BE A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO STRENGTHEN BLACK COMMUNITY BUILDING AND BLACK SPACES; ADVANCE THE PLANNING PRIORITIES, NEEDS, AND ASPIRATIONS OF BLACK COMMUNITIES; AND ACHIEVE EQUITABLE AND JUST PLANNING OUTCOMES FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES. IT TRANSLATES THE BLACK PLANNING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK INTO CONCRETE ACTIONABLE STEPS THAT CAN SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING PROCESSES.

HOW IS IT ORGANIZED?

The process-oriented framework outlines seven actionable stages that help move from a present situation to desired planning futures. Meant to be cyclical in nature, this framework helps ensure continuity and adaptability throughout the planning process, making sure it stays community-centred and is informed, guided, and led by community members.

Crucial to achieving this is the identification of community values and principles, placed at the centre of the diagram. These values and principles will be specific to each community and might change over time or depending on the nature of the planning process/initiative in question. However, it is important for community members to start by generating the spaces that allow them to collectively agree on what those foundational pieces are, which will serve as anchors for the whole planning process.



BLACK PLANNING PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO KEEP IN MIND THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PLANNING PROCESS

- What is/should be my role in this planning process?
- What do I know and do not know about this community? What additional preparation work should I do to respectfully engage with this community in particular? (i.e. learn about its history; connect with community organizations, leaders, and members; learn about past negative experiences with planning, etc.)
- Who else needs to be in this conversation that is not in this room?
- How can I best support the community in identifying its planning goals?
- How can I best support the community in achieving its defined planning goals?
- Particularly if I have a leadership role in this process/initiative:
 - Are we making the best use of the community's time?
 - How will we ensure that community visions and priorities inform decision-making?
 - Are community members being compensated for their time, knowledge, and work?



The Legacy Of A Community Is In The Heart of Its People

**BEECHVILLE DAYS
CELEBRATIONS**

BEECHVILLE DAYS
40th ANNIVERSARY

BEECHVILLE DAYS
40th ANNIVERSARY

BEECHVILLE DAYS
40th ANNIVERSARY

BEECHVILLE DAYS
40th ANNIVERSARY

HIGGINS

STAGE 1 - LISTENING & LEARNING

THIS STAGE ENGAGES IN ACTIVE LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK RESIDENTS, INCLUDING HISTORIES, ROUTINES, AND CHALLENGES, TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS WORKING, WHAT IS NOT, AND WHAT MATTERS MOST TO THE COMMUNITY

WHAT CAN I OR OTHER PLANNING PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Engage in ongoing learning and conversations with Black communities.
- Provide safe and open spaces for Black residents to express their thoughts.
- Document shared stories, and lived experiences of Black residents, and their meaning for future planning decisions.

WHAT CAN I SUPPORT COMMUNITIES WITH?

- Identify who the knowledge and cultural holders in the community are.
- Identify community values.
- Engage in conversation and documentation of the stories and lived experiences of Black residents.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What are we hearing from community members about their priorities, challenges, and hopes?
- How can we honour cultural knowledge, memories, and lived experience as expertise?
- Who in the community can acts as stewards, protectors, or caretakers of shared spaces?
- What threats to belonging or continuity do communities experience?



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
I create space to listen to Black community members before co-defining planning goals	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I take the time to consider whose voices are overlooked/not being heard	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I create spaces for community story-telling in the planning process I lead/participate in	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I partner with a trusted community organization before setting up listening circles	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I stop to consider that a safe space for me may not be a safe space for Black community members	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I challenge my own assumptions when listening and learning from the Black community	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered

STAGE 2 - CONNECTING & COLLABORATING

THIS STAGE SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED, HOW THEY WORK, AND WHAT THEY BRING TO THE PROCESS. BUILDING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING, TRUST, AND COLLABORATION ACROSS PLANNERS, PARTNERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS IS ESSENTIAL

WHAT CAN I OR OTHER PLANNING PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Engage in ongoing learning and conversations with Black communities.
- Provide “formal” expertise on important staff and city actors, as well as relevant planning tools and processes.
- Provide opportunities for relationships and partnerships to be built between community members and key decision makers (e.g., city staff, city institutions).

WHAT CAN I SUPPORT COMMUNITIES WITH?

- Understanding the key partners, staff, and institutions who needed to be engaged are.
- Building relationships with relevant stakeholders and partners.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Which city staff, planners, or institutions need to be engaged in advancing this work, and how do we ensure they engage meaningfully with the Black community?
- How can we strengthen relationships between community members and key partners?
- How can we create opportunities to create shared learnings between community and planning practitioners?
- How can we facilitate partnerships that help community access space, materials, funding, or operational support?



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
I work closely with community to assess who needs to be involved in the planning project	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I feel that my relationship with the Black community is grounded in trust and reciprocity	☐ Always	☐ Often	☐ Sometimes	☐ Rarely	☐ Never
I hold myself accountable to report back with complete transparency to the community I consulted	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I consider how power structures influence the outcomes of a project when bringing stakeholders together	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I approach collaboration with the intention of rebalancing power dynamics and offering the community an equal say in the project	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
Are there systems in place where I work that support co-creation and collaboration with the Black community?	☐ Yes, there are clear systems in place	☐ There is a shared understanding in the workplace	☐ It is a case-by-case approach	☐ There are no systems in place	☐ This is not relevant to my work

STAGE 3 - VISIONING & FRAMING

THIS STAGE INVOLVES WORKING WITH COMMUNITY RESIDENTS TO SHAPE A VISION THAT REFLECTS SHARED CULTURAL IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, LIVED EXPERIENCE, MEMORY, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS.

WHAT CAN I OR OTHER PLANNING PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Engage in ongoing learning and conversations with Black communities.
- Provide physical spaces to engage in discussion about a shared community vision.
- Assist in documenting this shared vision.
- Provide expertise on planning tools to help communities articulate their visions to city actors.

WHAT CAN I SUPPORT COMMUNITIES WITH?

- Work with residents to articulate a shared vision for the future.
- Identify tools and practices that support residents in imagining change.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What does a future that honours Black presence and belonging look like for the Black community?
- What cultural practices of care or continuity should guide the vision and tools used?
- What stories, cultural narratives, and visual languages should guide the vision community is shaping together?
- How do we hold partners accountable to commitments made to community?



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
How often do you support the Black community in defining its vision without imposing your own agenda?	☐ Always	☐ Often	☐ Sometimes	☐ Rarely	☐ Never
I use engagement methods that reflect the cultural practices, languages and gathering styles of the community	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I assess the barriers that may prevent residents from participating in visioning exercises and put in the effort to remove them	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
Do you consider Black lived experience as a valid form of planning knowledge?	☐ Always	☐ Often	☐ Sometimes	☐ Rarely	☐ Never
I use my technical knowledge to expand possibilities for the community rather than shutting down community concerns	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I hold myself accountable for bringing forward the community's vision faithfully into planning reports	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered

STAGE 4 - CO-CREATING & PLANNING

THIS STAGE TRANSLATES IDEAS INTO PRACTICAL ACTION PLANS, GUIDELINES, AND DESIGN DIRECTIONS GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, CAPACITY, AND CULTURAL INTENTION.

WHAT CAN I OR OTHER PLANNING PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Help identify how plans can be adapted to formally communicate actions and goals clearly to planning audiences.
- Provide physical spaces to engage in discussion about a shared community vision.

WHAT CAN I SUPPORT COMMUNITIES WITH?

- Identify how ideas can be translated into clear actions that address community priorities.
- Identify roles and responsibilities for community members in shaping the plan or design.
- Identify ways to incorporate cultural identity throughout the planning process.
- Identify what partnerships, resources, or funding opportunities are needed for a successful outcome.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How can we ensure community leadership is reflected in decision making?
- What elements of our community identity or spatial design should be preserved, protected, or uplifted in the plan?
- How can our planning stay flexible to changing needs?



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
I centre community priorities and community expertise when developing action plans and frameworks	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I tailor planning tools and processes to meet the needs of Black communities	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I apply an equity lens to the plans that I am working on/ developing	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I provide the community with the support and resources needed to lead the planning process	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I use my technical expertise to transform community visions into clear workable actions for co-implementation	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I use a culturally informed approach when communicating the plans back to the community	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered

STAGE 5 - MOBILIZING & IMPLEMENTATION

THIS STAGE MOVES FROM PLANNING ACTIONABLE STEPS TO ACTIVATING PLANS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK SPACES, PROGRAMMING, AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT RESOURCE ALLOCATION THAT SUPPORTS LOCAL PRIORITIES.

WHAT CAN I OR OTHER PLANNING PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Support the implementation of community action plans.
- Provide resources to support the implementation of community action plans.

WHAT CAN I SUPPORT COMMUNITIES WITH?

- Implementing action plans and objectives identified in the previous stages.
- Share action plans back with the community and begin to build momentum, excitement, and visibility for project plans within the community.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How can we move from planning to action in ways that remain rooted in community leadership?
- How can we share knowledge back with the community in accessible and engaging formats?
- What early projects or community events can build momentum and visibility?
- How are we ensuring that implementation remains aligned with community's vision?



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
I support the community to take the lead during the implementation phases of the project	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I work with the community to build the community capacity needed for the implementation of the projects	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I carefully consider power dynamics when presenting partnership opportunities needed to move the plans forward	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I carefully consider accessibility, relevance and usefulness when sharing knowledge with the community	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I take the time at the start of the project to build the trust necessary for sustaining the momentum of the project	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I regularly evaluate implementation to ensure that it continues to be aligned with community visions	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered

STAGE 6 - REFLECTING & EVALUATING

THIS STAGE SEEKS TO EVALUATE HOW ACTIONS SHAPED BELONGING, SAFETY, CULTURE, AND WELLBEING. IT GATHERS STORIES, FEEDBACK, AND OBSERVATIONS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT CHANGED—AND WHY.

WHAT CAN I OR OTHER PLANNING PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Support the documentation and reporting of resident feedback to city actors.
- Identify or create systems where city actors can hold themselves accountable to commitments made.

WHAT CAN I SUPPORT COMMUNITIES WITH?

- Identify a community definition of success and failure, along with key metrics to help measure them.
- Identify partners, institutions, and individuals to hold accountable to commitments made.
- Collect feedback from residents on their thoughts and feelings.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What indicators, stories, or outcomes reflect meaningful change?
- Did the work help strengthen intergenerational connection, cultural pride, or community presence?
- How did the activation support local creatives, cultural workers, vendors, or small businesses?
- What learnings guide our next steps?



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
Do you use community-informed metrics when evaluating the success of a project?	☐ Always	☐ Often	☐ Sometimes	☐ Rarely	☐ Never
Do you measure impact by balancing community goals with technical indicators?	☐ Always	☐ Often	☐ Sometimes	☐ Rarely	☐ Never
I actively search for stories, changes and outcomes that demonstrate how meaningful the project was to Black residents	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I allow the community to evaluate my work as a common practice when engaging with the Black community	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I hold myself and other stakeholders accountable to commitments made throughout the project	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
I document learnings from my work with the Black community to avoid similar pitfalls in the future	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered

STAGE 7 - REVISING & ADAPTING

THIS STAGE RETURNS TO EARLIER STAGES TO REFINE, ADJUST, AND EXPAND BASED ON WHAT WAS LEARNED. THIS ENSURES THE PROCESS STAYS RESPONSIVE, CYCLICAL, AND GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE.

WHAT CAN I OR OTHER PLANNING PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Identify avenues for continuous engagement with city actors and bodies.
- Identify planning practices that can support ongoing responsiveness and continuous learning.

WHAT CAN I SUPPORT COMMUNITIES WITH?

- Identify how to incorporate feedback and evaluation findings back into the plan or strategy.
- Identify what needs to be updated or reimaged as needs evolve.
- Identify how to continue sustaining community momentum and Black leadership over time.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What new stories, memories, or needs surfaced that require returning to earlier stages?
- How can we sustain ongoing acknowledgement of Black presence, memory, and cultural continuity?
- How can we evolve or expand placemaking initiatives based on community feedback and reflection?
- What neighbourhood changes require us to adapt or refresh our vision or priorities?



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Questions	5	4	3	2	1
Do I carefully consider community needs when revising, refining and updating the plans?	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
Do I openly admit the mistakes that have been along the way and the highlight key learnings that help build trust with the Black community?	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
Do I engage in continuous learning and adapting when working with the Black community?	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
Do I have systems in place to support changes and adaptations to the project to meet the changing needs of the Black community?	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
Do I keep avenues open at the end of the project that allow community to revisit and inform the project outcomes?	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered
Do I ensure that community is made aware of any changes, alterations, updates and/or edits to the project outcomes.	☐ Embedded in Practice	☐ Routinely apply	☐ Apply with some consistence	☐ Beginning to explore	☐ Never Apply/Not considered

PUTTING BLACK PLANNING INTO ACTION

TOOLS & EXAMPLES FOR PRACTICE

INVENTORY OF TOOLS TO PUT THE PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK INTO ACTION AND GROUNDED EXAMPLES OF WHAT STRONG, COMMUNITY-LED BLACK PLANNING PRACTICES LOOK LIKE AND CAN ACHIEVE

THIS SECTION OFFERS A COMPILATION OF TOOLS TO SUPPORT PLANNING PRACTITIONERS WHO ARE ENGAGING WITH BLACK COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK. THEY ARE INTENDED TO BE USED AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF A PROJECT TO FACILITATE COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE, GUIDE COLLECTIVE THINKING AND ADAPT NEEDS AND GOALS THROUGH REFINEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.

IN ENGAGING WITH THE TOOLS BELOW, PLANNING PRACTITIONERS ARE CHALLENGED TO REFLECT ON AND EXPAND THE CONVENTIONAL DEFINITION OF PLANNING AS A TOP-DOWN, EXPERT-LED PRACTICE. WHILE SOME TOOLS IN THE INVENTORY ARE WIDELY KNOWN AND USED IN PLANNING WORK, WITHIN AND BEYOND BLACK COMMUNITIES, OTHERS SPECIFICALLY REFLECT BLACK COMMUNITIES' LONG HISTORY OF PLANNING OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORKS.

THIS SECTION ALSO HIGHLIGHTS REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-BASED, BLACK-LED INITIATIVES FROM ACROSS CANADA. THEY DEMONSTRATE HOW PLANNING-RELATED EFFORTS, LED BY NON-PRACTITIONERS, CAN YIELD MEANINGFUL, COMMUNITY-DEFINED OUTCOMES FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES AND STRENGTHEN BLACK PLACE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, PLACE-KEEPING, AND PLACE-MAKING. IN THE ABSENCE OF EXAMPLES FROM BLACK COMMUNITIES IN CANADA, EXAMPLES FROM THE U.S. HAVE BEEN INCLUDED.

TABLE OF PROCESS ORIENTED TOOLS

STAGE	PROCESS ORIENTED TOOL	EXAMPLES
STAGE 1 - LISTENING & LEARNING	COMMUNITY WALKING TOURS	WELCOME TO BLACKHURST WALKING TOURS
		LITTLE JAMAICA MUSIC HISTORY WALKING TOUR
	BLACK-LED COMMUNITY PLANNING EDUCATION PROGRAMS	BUILD MY BLOCK, BLACKHURST
		FUTUREBUILDS NEXT, MONUMENTAL
	COMMUNITY-LED TOWN HALLS	SIMCOE COUNTY BLACK COALITION TOWN HALL
		RAINIER BEACH TOWN HALL MEETINGS
	CULTURAL INVENTORIES	MAPPING ONTARIO'S BLACK ARCHIVES (MOBA)
		ONTARIO BLACK HISTORY SOCIETY (OBHS)
STAGE 2 - CONNECTING & COLLABORATING	AFRICENTRIC ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES	AKOMA HOLDINGS AFRICENTRIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES
	COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES	AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY: SENIOR AND YOUTH COUNCILS
STAGE 3 - VISIONING & FRAMING	COMMUNITY CHARRETTEES	HOGAN'S ALLEY WORKING GROUP CHARRETTE
	ASSET MAPPING	PROJECT WILLOWBROOK CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING
STAGE 4 - CO-CREATING & PLANNING	COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS	AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (ANSCAP)
	CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATIONS	LITTLE JAMAICA CULTURAL DISTRICT PLAN
STAGE 5 - MOBILIZING & IMPLEMENTATION	COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC ART PROJECTS	REMEMBER HOGAN'S ALLEY MURAL BY EJIWA "EDGE" EBENE
	COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS	UPPER HAMMONDS PLAINS CLT
		HOGAN'S ALLEY CLT
		LITTLE JAMAICA COMMUNITY LAND TRUST
	BLACK DESIGN AND PLANNING	CENTRE DES ARTS DE LA MAISON D'HAÏTI
STAGE 6 - REFLECTING AND EVALUATING	COMMUNITY WELLBEING INDEX	AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN (ANS) PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING INDEX
	EQUITY SCORE CARDS	WEST SIDE EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT SCORECARD

COMMUNITY WALKING TOURS



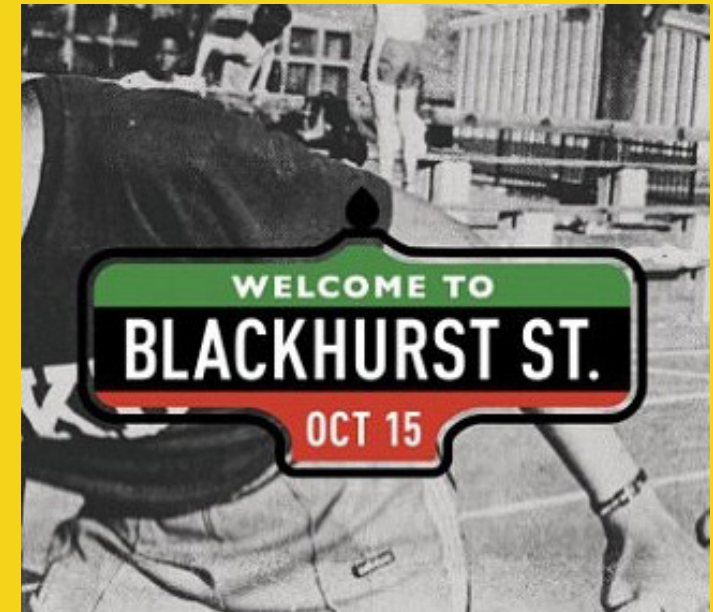
WALKING TOURS ARE EDUCATIONAL WALKING TRIPS LED BY A GUIDE OR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS, DESIGNED TO BRING PARTICIPANTS TOGETHER TO EXPLORE AND LEARN ABOUT A COMMUNITY'S HISTORY AND CULTURE. THEY USE STORYTELLING AND PHYSICAL MOVEMENT THROUGH SPACE TO SHARE COMMUNITY HISTORIES, MEMORIES, AND MEANINGS.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Increase cultural visibility, educate participants, and reaffirm place-based knowledge.
- Carry on the tradition of oral storytelling, from community elders and the families of historical figures.
- Transfer knowledge and share oral histories among activists, the next generation, community leaders, and youth post-secondary students who lead the walking tours.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Learn the community's deep history and knowledge directly from its members.
- Respect sacred or sensitive sites.
- Provide fair compensation for knowledge holders.
- Ensure the insights gained are captured and systematized in ways that are usable in your practice setting and can inform future planning work.



WELCOME TO BLACKHURST WALKING TOURS

The Welcome to Blackhurst walking tour, led by the non-profit organization Blackhurst Cultural Centre, is a 90-minute guided experience centring Black and Caribbean presence in Toronto's Bathurst-Bloor-Annex neighbourhood. The walking tour is a living example of how generations of Black presence in the neighbourhood have shaped the community through arts, media, law, infrastructure, and politics. The tour highlights how community, culture, and resilience have shaped, and continue to shape, the urban fabric (Welcome to Blackhurst, 2020). The content of the tour is sourced from independent research, oral storytelling by elders, and family members of pioneers in the area. The experience invites reflection on themes such as cultural preservation, entrepreneurship, arts, and Black place-making in the city.

To learn more about the Welcome to Blackhurst Walking tour and the Black history of the Bathurst and Bloor neighbourhood, visit: <https://blackhurstcc.org/welcome-to-blackhurst/>.

LITTLE JAMAICA MUSIC HISTORY WALKING TOUR

The Little Jamaica Music History Walking Tour, organized by the Black Canadian Music Archives, is a 90-minute interactive tour of the influential music presence in the Little Jamaica neighbourhood in Toronto. From the record shops to a music school and recording studios, Little Jamaica was once given the title of the "second largest producer of Reggae music outside of Jamaica" (CBMA, 2025). This tour recognizes the cultural imprint that Jamaican and Caribbean influences had on the city, which nurtured many famous artists, including Jay Douglass, and musical theatre performances based on Little Jamaica, such as the Da Kink in My Hair Musical.

To learn more about this tour, visit: <https://thebma.com/little-jamaica-music-history-tour/>

BLACK-LED COMMUNITY PLANNING EDUCATION PROGRAMS



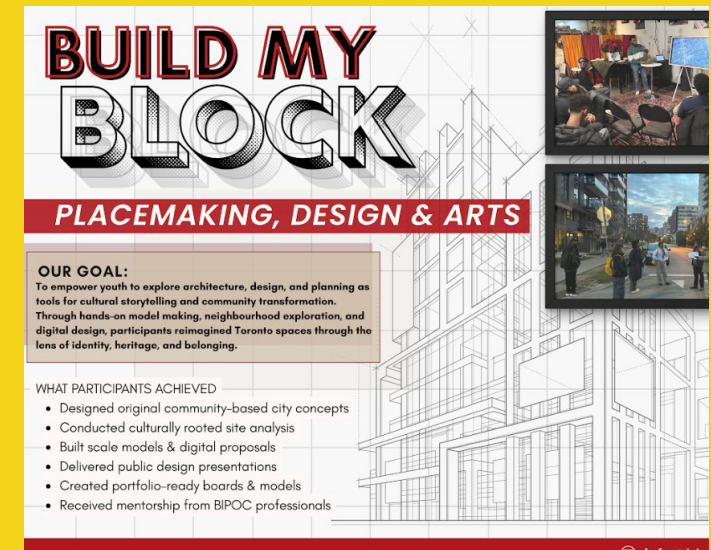
BLACK-LED COMMUNITY PLANNING EDUCATION PROGRAMS AIM TO EQUIP YOUTH AND EARLY-CAREER PROFESSIONALS WITH SKILLS IN EQUITY-CENTRED PLANNING AND PLACE-MAKING. SPANNING FROM ARTS-BASED PUBLIC ACTIVATIONS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, ANTI-DISPLACEMENT DEVELOPMENT, AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING, AT THEIR CORE, THEY SEEK TO PROVIDE PLANNING-RELATED EDUCATION THAT FILLS GAPS THAT TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS MIGHT MISS.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Provide a learning environment that centres Africentric planning practices.
- Foster an environment where Blackness is celebrated and empowered as a tool for learning from Black community builders.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Ensure that planning is taught from the perspective of Black communities.
- Acknowledge that Black communities have been doing planning work in the past that was not recognized as such.
- Provide transparency on how different planning fields may not always work in the best interest of communities.
- Foster a safe space where mentors and students can speak transparently of their experience with conventional planning education and practice



BUILD MY BLOCK

Build My Block is a free youth program developed and offered by Blackhurst Cultural Centre in Toronto that aims to provide accessible education on the principles of urban planning, design, and architecture. Black professionals lead the program, and it is open to all BIPOC youth under 30 who are interested in exploring these topics in the context of Black-led planning and placemaking (“Build My Block”, 2026). The program equips youth with technical skills, including public speaking, model drafting, and research. This program aims to provide mentorship and empower young individuals to explore community development-related professions and actively fill gaps in formal planning education.

To learn more about Build My Block, visit : <https://blackhurstcc.org/product/windows-to-opportunity/>

FUTUREBUILDS NEXT

FutureBUILDS NEXT, created by Toronto-based social purpose consultancy and studio Monumental Projects, is a free 2-month intensive fellowship program that focuses on enhancing leadership skills for early-career Black professionals under 30 in the nonprofit housing sector. The program’s past fellows brought a range of diverse experiences across sectors, including policy, community engagement, real estate, and entrepreneurship (“FutureBUILDS NEXT”, 2025). The goal of this program is to empower discussions on innovative non-profit housing development strategies.

To learn more about the FutureBUILDS Next program, visit their website here: <https://futurebuilds.ca/next/>

COMMUNITY-LED TOWN HALLS



COMMUNITY-LED TOWN HALLS ARE PUBLIC EVENTS THAT PROVIDE RESIDENTS WITH A SPACE TO SHARE IDEAS, CONCERNS, AND FEEDBACK ABOUT PROJECTS AFFECTING THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Support early engagement, transparency, and relationship-building to help community voices shape priorities from the outset.
- Provide a network of individuals and organizations to support one another and make connections.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Create welcoming and safe environments for honest dialogue.
- Ensure that the conversation is led by the community and is not redirected to the planner.
- Clearly communicate next steps and how feedback will be used.



SIMCOE COUNTY BLACK COALITION TOWN HALL

The Simcoe County Black Coalition is a network of Black-led, Black-serving, and Black-focused organizations to address anti-Black racism in Simcoe County, Canada. In partnership with UPLIFT Black Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, a non-profit organization in Barrie, Ontario, focused on newcomer settlement and community programming, the Simcoe County Black Coalition hosted the Simcoe County Black Coalition Town Hall (UPLIFT Black, 2025). The main focus of the town hall was to discuss the unique challenges faced by Black communities in Simcoe County when seeking access to opportunities and resources. This inaugural town hall aimed to create a network of Black communities to address these challenges, while also ensuring these organizations do not impose extra labour, as they recognize non-profit organizations are typically resource-limited.

To learn more about the Simcoe County Black Coalition Town Hall, visit: <https://www.upliftblack.org/post/supporting-black-communities-beyond-black-history-month>

RAINIER BEACH TOWN HALL MEETINGS

The Rainier Beach Action Coalition (RBAC), located in Rainier Beach, Seattle, is a Black-led non-profit organization in the United States committed to equitable community development, promoting quality education and employment, and accessible transportation and affordable housing. RBAC regularly schedules town halls, open to everyone, to discuss community-related topics. In the past, they have held their Economic Development Town Hall to address upcoming updates to affordable housing projects, building resilient small businesses, and displacement-reduction strategies (RBAC, 2026).

To learn about RBAC and their town halls, visit: <https://www.rbcoalition.org/town-hall/>

CULTURAL INVENTORIES



CULTURAL INVENTORIES DOCUMENT TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL ASSETS SUCH AS TRADITIONS, LANDMARKS, STORIES, BUSINESSES, AND SOCIAL PRACTICES.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Help ensure planning builds on cultural continuity and recognizes community strengths.
- Preserve and celebrate cultural heritage through developing new ways to record intergenerational storytelling.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A PLANNING PRACTITIONER:

- Understand that culture can be defined differently by community.
- Respect ownership of knowledge and provide proper credit.
- Acknowledge that some community knowledge can be private, sacred or vulnerable to exploitation.



MAPPING ONTARIO'S BLACK ARCHIVES (MOBA)

Mapping Ontario's Black Archives (MOBA) is a research and digital mapping project that documents Black histories, stories, and cultural records across the province. By bringing together archival studies, digital technology, and Black studies, the project makes visible the depth and breadth of Black presence in Ontario. This work is a clear example of Black place acknowledgement, as it affirms Black historical and contemporary relationships to place that are often erased or fragmented. It also supports place-keeping by preserving memory and storytelling as essential planning and cultural tools.

To learn more about MOBA, visit <https://mobaprojects.ca/about-moba>

ONTARIO BLACK HISTORY SOCIETY (OBHS)

The Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 that aims to support and promote Black history in Ontario. The organization offers rentals for exhibits, presentations, and guided bus tours, and hosts community events led by organizational members (OBHS, n.d.). The OBHS also offers an archive that serves as an educational tool for anyone interested in learning about historical figures and books, featuring recorded oral stories. Therefore, OBHS actively preserves the tangible and intangible cultural inventories.

To learn more about OBHS, visit <https://blackhistorysociety.ca/about/>. To visit the OBHS Archives, visit <https://blackhistorysociety.ca/about/>

AFRICENTRIC ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES



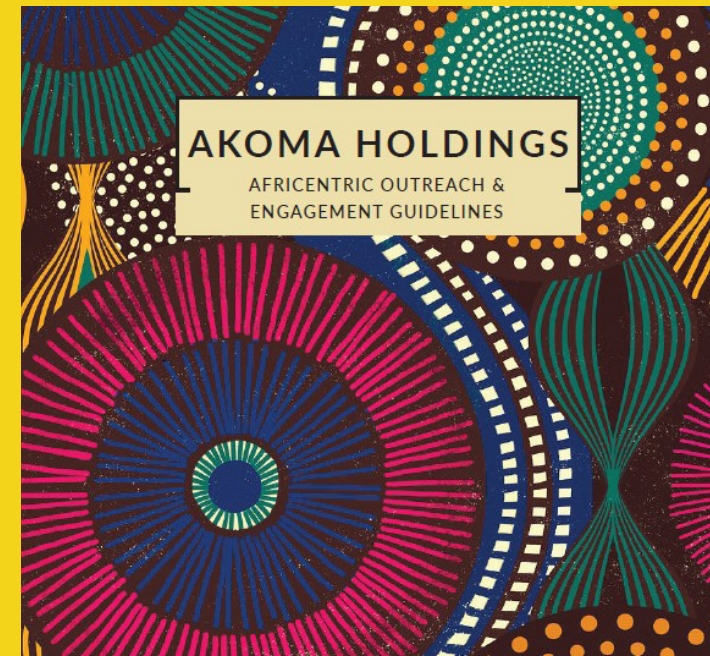
AFRICENTRIC ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT THAT CENTRES THE COLLECTIVE VOICES AND VALUES OF INDIVIDUALS OF AFRICAN DESCENT, CREATING A SPACE WHERE UNITY, UNDERSTANDING, AND RESPONSIBILITY ARE ALL PRIORITIZED.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Build a strong network of community and diverse stakeholders to enable informed, intentional engagement.
- Create a process that places individuals of African descent at the forefront of engagement, and is repeatable and reliable for long-term decision-making and planning.
- Provide a sample of tools and resources that can be used to engage different stakeholders at various stages of a project.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Identify and employ clear, community-relevant engagement methods in collaboration with the community.
- Integrate continuous opportunities for engagement and feedback that are accessible to diverse subgroups or demographics within the community.
- Identify ways to track progress and measure success for suggestions emerging from engagement.
- Capture the recommendations emerging from the engagement process in usable ways that can support a fair and transparent dialogue between the community, private and public institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to advance their planning aspirations.



AKOMA HOLDINGS AFRICENTRIC OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The Akoma Africentric Outreach and Engagement Guidelines, created by Regenerating Roots for Akoma Holdings Inc. in Westphal, Nova Scotia, are a framework of guiding principles, strategies, and approaches that are based on ideologies that respect the right of all African Nova Scotian (ANS) community members to be informed, consulted, involved, and empowered (Simon et al., 2022, p. 39). Africentric community engagement is a process of collective work that

embraces a sense of responsibility and self-definition to develop purpose and shared social wealth. Through this form of engagement, ANS communities can contribute to the planning and decision-making processes. This serves to bridge the historic and ongoing disadvantages within communities.

To learn more about Akoma Holdings, visit: <https://akoma.ca/holdings-about-us/>

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES



COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES ARE A GROUP OF TRUSTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO PROVIDE GUIDANCE, OVERSIGHT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGHOUT A PLANNING PROJECT'S LIFECYCLE.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Ensure community representation by including several appointed or elected representatives who are actively a part of the community.
- Facilitate information exchange between the community and government through recurring meetings to discuss emerging issues and provide updates.
- Align decisions with community values, priorities and lived experience over time.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Ensure the committee reflects the diversity of the community.
- Clearly define decision-making power and responsibilities within the committee.
- To not lead, but provide adequate support and provide them resources to support the committee.



AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY: SENIOR AND YOUTH COUNCILS

The Road to Economic Prosperity, originally started in 2021 as a five-year economic development strategy for African Nova Scotians, addresses systemic issues to improve the quality of life for African Nova Scotians. This organization includes two key councils that represent different demographic groups within the African Nova Scotian Community.

The Senior Council is a representative body that reflects Nova Scotia's diverse Black population, and its main role is to participate in intergenerational leadership and provide invaluable support. The council includes 12 representatives, two of whom are co-chairs, and each member represents a different area of Nova Scotia (Road to

Economic Prosperity, 2022). The council serves as an advisor and guardian of the work the Road of Economic Prosperity plans to achieve.

REP also has a Youth Council made up of 10 members, including two co-chairs. This council represents the future of African Nova Scotians and, like the Senior Council, reflects the diversity of the Black population across the province ("Road to Economic Prosperity", 2022). Having the two councils is extremely valuable to the organization, as it exemplifies intergenerational knowledge transfer and advocates for both groups.

To learn more about the Road to Economic Prosperity and their Youth and Senior Councils, visit: <https://anseconomicprosperity.com/the-plan>

COMMUNITY CHARRETTEES



COMMUNITY CHARRETTEES ARE HANDS-ON, CREATIVE DESIGN WORKSHOPS WHERE COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS CAN COLLABORATIVELY MAP IDEAS, PROPOSE DESIGNS, AND DEVELOP SOLUTIONS IN REAL TIME.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Ensure that community aspirations and priorities are transferred into the plans of the built environment to foster collective ownership and shared authorship of ideas.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Make sessions accessible in language, location, and timing.
- Avoid technical jargon that may limit participation. When technical jargon is used, ensure clear communication.
- Clearly communicate how ideas from the charrette will be used.



HOGAN'S ALLEY WORKING GROUP CHARRETTE

The Hogan's Alley Working Group Charrette Report outlines the three-day collaborative process that helped inform the Northeast False Creek Area Plan. This plan overlaps with the historic site of what was once Vancouver's Black community, Hogan's Alley. Included in this charrette were Hogan's Alley Working Group, which included 22 members representing the community, the City of Vancouver, Perkins+Will and PWL. The collaboration among the groups involved was an opportunity to understand how the area plan would impact Hogan's Alley, while also incorporating the valuable storytelling of Hogan's Alley's history of loss due to redevelopment.

Over the three days of the charrette's workshops, the Hogan's Alley Working Group shared the history and lived experiences of the historic Hogan's Alley, developed

ideas and priorities for what they envisioned the future to look like, and held workshops that informed ideas for the redevelopment of Hogan's Alley. Rather than the City and the design team acting as the community's professionals, the working group charrette functioned as a mutual dialogue in which all parties exchanged knowledge. Therefore, the main principles of recognition, honouring, access and inclusion, security of tenure, and the definition of land use and investment brought valuable insights that informed the drafted plans, diagrams, and narratives (Hogan's Alley Working Group Report, 2017).

To learn more, visit: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/hogans-alley-working-group-charrette-report-170721.pdf>

ASSET MAPPING



ASSET MAPPING IS A PROCESS WHERE COMMUNITIES IDENTIFY THEIR INDIVIDUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, INSTITUTIONAL, ECONOMIC, PHYSICAL, AND CULTURAL STRENGTHS.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Build from community strengths and capacities, supporting self-determination and informed planning decisions.
- Helps shift narratives from “what is missing” to “what we already have”

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Establish a broad definition of what an asset means to include both physical and social assets.
- Recognize informal and cultural assets, not just cultural institutions.
- Ensure mapping reflects community definitions of value and success.



PROJECT WILLOWBROOK CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING REPORT

The Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture (LACAC) in the United States of America, in partnership with LA Commons, a Black-led nonprofit organization in Willowbrook, Los Angeles, focused on implementing local public art installations and community engagement, conducted a project called “Cultivating a Healthy Community through Arts and Culture” (Project Willowbrook, 2013). The main goal was to include community participation to identify the community’s cultural assets. One of the key components of the project was a Cultural Asset Map, which included “People, places and programs that support, or have the potential to support, the participation of community members in art, culture and creativity,” which was identified in stakeholder interviews, focus groups, targeted surveys, workshops, and community meetings (Project Willowbrook, 2013). The findings from the asset map and interviews were utilized to inform options for cultural programming.

To learn more about the cultural asset map report, visit <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Cultural-Asset-Mapping-Report-Willowbrook.pdf>.

BLACKSPACES: BROWNSVILLE SITE DOCUMENTATION & PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

The Brownsville Site Documentation & Participatory Design one-pager, led by Blackspace, a NYC-based non-profit collective of Black planners, designers, and architects, outlines their process for developing heritage conservation initiatives in Brownsville, NYC. Included in their process was having community members document memories by identifying cultural assets.

To read the one-pager, visit <https://blackspace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Copy-of-BlackSpaces-Brownsville-One-Pager.pdf>

COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS



COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS ARE DOCUMENTS THAT TRANSLATE SHARED COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED VISIONS INTO CLEAR STEPS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TIMELINES. THEY HELP ORGANIZE PRIORITIES INTO ACTIONABLE PATHWAYS.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Create clarity, shared accountability, and momentum toward implementation.
- Engage communities to move from visioning to action.
- Establish clarity on community needs and aspirations to inform planning decisions made about specific communities / geographic areas.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Act as a technical advisor to facilitate engagement and provide knowledge the community might not already have, such as identifying existing planning tools that can help achieve community goals.
- Support the community to make informed decisions to address evolving needs.
- Support the community to keep plans realistic and aligned with community capacity and resources.
- Ensure that the community's needs and concerns are represented when presenting to municipal/ public bodies.
- Consider what changes to existing planning processes, tools, and frameworks might be needed to support community action planning in Black communities moving forward.



AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (ANSCAP)

The African Nova Scotian Community Action Program (ANSCAP), created in 2023 by the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), is a team of municipal staff that works closely with the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity (REP) and the broader African Nova Scotian community to create community action plans (African Nova Scotian Community Action Program, 2025). The purpose of this relationship and the community action plans is to ensure that municipal matters such as land use, transportation services, and heritage programming are addressed with and for the African Nova Scotian community.

ANSCAP's implementation involves REP as an advisor and educator, helping ANS communities develop policies and processes to achieve their goals through planning. To achieve results, ANSCAP must work across Halifax Regional Municipality divisions to ensure that decisions align with the community action plans.

To learn more about the African Nova Scotian Community Action Program, visit:

<https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/regional-community-planning/african-nova-scotian-community-action-program>.

CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATIONS



CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATIONS, USUALLY GRANTED BY MUNICIPALITIES OR OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, FORMALLY RECOGNIZE AREAS RICH IN CULTURAL LIFE, INCLUDING ARTS VENUES, HISTORIC SITES, CULTURAL BUSINESSES, AND GATHERING SPACES.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Protect cultural heritage, guide respectful development, and strengthen community identity while encouraging aligned investment in an area.
- Support local arts, culture, and local business initiatives.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Ensure that the community is involved in defining the culture of the neighbourhood, including arts, history, ethnic identity, and traditions.
- Ensure the district's name is reflective of, or decided by, the community.
- Ensure community leadership in defining the district's boundaries and priorities.
- Pair designation with anti-displacement protections to prevent potential gentrification and the dislocation of the existing community.



<https://www.azuremagazine.com/>

LITTLE JAMAICA CULTURAL DISTRICT PLAN

The Little Jamaica Cultural District plan, created in 2023 by Jay Pitter Placemaking for the City of Toronto, acknowledges and seeks to contribute to the restoration of Little Jamaica's distinct Jamaican, Caribbean, and broader Black cultural imprint. This plan focuses on responding to the lived experiences of residents and business owners who have faced social and economic impacts due to the prolonged construction of the Line 5 Eglinton Crosstown LRT (Pitter, 2023, p. 39).

Through extensive community engagement, research, and an emphasis on joy, this plan challenges the traditional format of cultural plans by directly addressing gentrification and cultural erasure. The Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan is a

testament to the importance of formal recognition of the district and to addressing the challenges of envisioning a community that celebrates everyone's collective heritage and revives a powerful sense of place for all. As of 2026, this project is in its initiation phase and will begin public engagement in the Fall with a detailed schedule and upcoming steps (Little Jamaica & the Eglinton West Neighbourhood, 2024).

To learn more about the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan, visit: <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/9487-city-planning-little-jamaica-cultural-district-plan-final-report.pdf>

COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC ART PROJECTS



COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC ART PROJECTS ARE CREATIVE INITIATIVES LIKE MURALS, INSTALLATIONS, PERFORMANCES, OR TEMPORARY ACTIVATIONS THAT ARE INFORMED, LED, AND CARRIED OUT BY THE COMMUNITY.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Foster cultural expression, collective ownership, and meaningful engagement with shared spaces through the production of publicly accessible art.
- Centre community knowledge and leadership.
- Create an opportunity for arts-based community engagement.
-

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Work with the community to ensure that the chosen artist(s) has a deep connection to and understanding of the community.
- Ensure decision-making power remains with community members at every stage, from conceptualization to installation.
- Prioritize fair compensation for artists and contributors.



REMEMBER HOGAN'S ALLEY MURAL BY EJIWA "EDGE" EBENEBE

Remember, Hogan's Alley is a work of art by Nigerian-Canadian artist Ejiwa "Edge" Ebenebe, displayed on the west wall of Nora Hendrix Place, a housing initiative operated by the Hogan's Alley Society in Vancouver. Located on the Hogan's Alley Block, it commemorates and honours Hogan's Alley's role as a place of cultural, social, and economic life for Black Canadians, which was destroyed in the 1960s and 1970s due to highway development. The mural offers a vibrant, joyful perspective: one of hope and a future built from remnants of the past. In the words of the artist, "Learning that a vibrant community of Black Canadians was not only tragically

erased, but that their memory is nearly forgotten, comes as a harsh shock. But focusing only on the pain of this tragedy doesn't tell the full story. Instead, I've become driven by how strongly the voices of triumph and hope still ring out from underneath the loss" (Remember Hogan's Alley, 2019).

To learn more about Remember Hogan's Alley and Ejiwa "Edge" Ebenebe, visit <https://www.artofedge.com/public-art?itemId=0ckzef8bt5jkrjl302w3pyvv1cz86c>

COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS



COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS (CLTS) ARE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT OBTAIN LAND FROM THE TRADITIONAL FOR-PROFIT MARKET TO HOLD AND STEWARD FOR THE COMMUNITY'S BENEFIT. COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS ENSURE THAT COMMUNITY VOICE IS THE PRIMARY PRIORITY IN NEW DEVELOPMENT, THAT AN APPROPRIATE CALL-AND-RESPONSE TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONCERNS IS MADE, AND THAT TRUST IS BUILT.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Secure land with the purpose of prioritizing the community through affordable housing, access to resources, supporting the local economy, and ensuring long-term growth.
- Create an organizational body that represents a community in decision-making.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Provide technical support to Black communities or Black-led organizations seeking to create a land trust to facilitate its establishment.
- Provide technical assistance to support existing Black-led land trust in making informed planning-related decisions.



UPPER HAMMONDS PLAINS CLT

The Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust, founded in 2022 in the Halifax Regional Municipality, focuses on affordable housing and the cultural preservation of the African Nova Scotian (ANS) community. The land trust encompasses the lands that were once home to Black refugees from the War of 1812 and that were settled in areas once considered remote, which are now part of Upper Hammonds Plains. The Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust has had several initiatives to ensure that Black families have access to safe and affordable housing, economic opportunities, and support for the community in building stability (About, n.d.). The land trust has gone on to include the community in the engagement process in many

ways, including their Solutions Lab, an extensive co-design process that enables the community to participate in a prototyping lab to devise a fair framework for acquiring the lands (Driving Transformation, 2024, p. 8). This process shifted decision-making power to longtime residents, enabling them to identify long-standing issues and develop actionable solutions in collaboration with the municipal government and partners.

To learn more about the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust, visit their website: <https://www.uhpcit.com/>

AFRICENTRIC/BLACK DESIGN AND PLANNING



AFRICENTRIC/BLACK DESIGN AND PLANNING INCORPORATES ELEMENTS OF BLACK CULTURE INTO PHYSICAL SPACES THROUGH SYMBOLISM, COLOUR SCHEMES, AND INTENDED USE. ITS GOAL IS TO ENSURE THE EXPERIENCE OF AFRODESCENDANT AND BLACK INDIVIDUALS TO BE REFLECTED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Include design elements that reflect the community's cultural heritage and values.
- Include the community as an integral part of the design process.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Ensure that designers and the community work with a mutual understanding that both of their roles are integral to the project.
- Work with other technical professionals to align with the Africentric principles and seek to work in a community-focused way.
- Carry out engagement processes that encourage exploration of how the Black communities would like to represent themselves in physical spaces.



DESIGN OF THE MAISON D'HAITI CENTRE

Maison d'Haiti is a non-profit organization in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood of Montreal that aims to serve the Haitian, Black, and African diaspora communities through family, women's, youth, and arts programming. The design and construction of Maison d'Haiti's permanent space involved extensive intentional collaboration among the organization, the community, and the various professional teams who understood and aligned with the community's vision. Maison d'Haiti's role was to ensure that community engagement and cultural direction were maintained. Therefore, it was integral that Maison d'Haiti was heavily involved in the design

process to reflect on the cultural identity of Haiti and francophone Africa. The symbolism present in the design was treated as a function to ensure principles such as safety and encourage social interaction. The permanent facility includes multi-purpose spaces for cultural exchange, education, social gatherings, and fostering a sense of belonging.

To learn more about the design of La Maison d'Haiti, visit: <https://www.mhaiti.org/web/historique/>

COMMUNITY WELLBEING INDEX



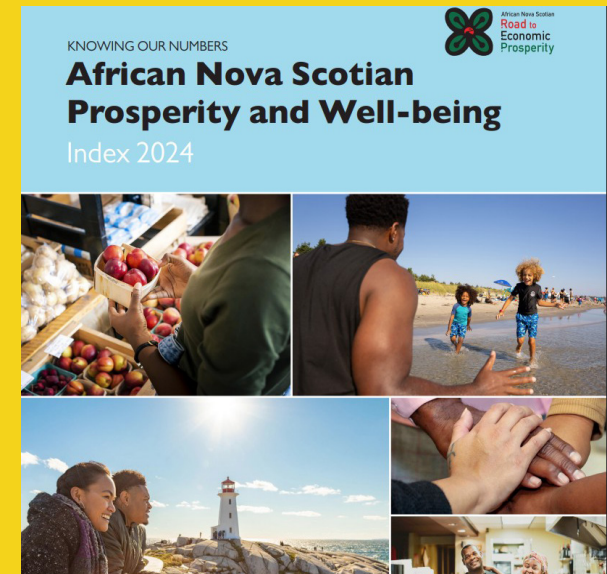
A COMMUNITY WELLBEING INDEX IS A TOOL TYPICALLY DEVELOPED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS, AND/OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TO TRACK A COMMUNITY'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OVER TIME USING RELEVANT, COMMUNITY-INFORMED INDICATORS. IT IS A VALUABLE QUANTITATIVE TOOL THAT CAN BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TO DEVELOP INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY WELL-BEING.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Identify and develop relevant indicators and metrics to monitor and assess various aspects of community wellbeing, as defined by the community itself.
- Create accessible, public data on a community's wellbeing that fosters high levels of transparency and collective responsibility.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Ensure that the included metrics are agreed upon by the community.
- Ensure that data is readily available or possible to collect.
- Ensure that the data accurately represents the community's geographic area, including cases where aggregation is required.
- Help establish trust between community members whose wellbeing will be monitored and other relevant partners involved in creating the index, such as governments, consultants, research, or other professional partners.
- Prioritize community benefit when collecting, interpreting, and publishing information.
- Ensure transparency about the data's limitations so the community and other data users can understand the full context of the figures presented.



AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN (ANS) PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING INDEX

The ANS Prosperity and Well-being Index, created by the Road to Economic Prosperity Plan (REPP), measures progress across key statistical indicators to assess the needs of African Nova Scotians (ANS). The ANS Index includes census data provided at the smallest geographic units and covers six main areas: population, labour, income, education, housing, and well-being (African Nova Scotian Prosperity and Well-being Index, 2024, p. 8-9). What makes this data unique is that it centres community well-being, keeps ANS engaged in the process, promotes transparency, and considers structural and systemic barriers to inform policy. This index also considers the diversity of the Black community, since the data points include all Black-identifying individuals living in Canadian communities.

By understanding the numbers, policymakers and decision-makers can evaluate the impacts of implementing the REPP, allowing for informed modifications to community planning informed by the lived experiences of ANS communities. Additionally, this index serves as a tool for the community to organize priorities and action items to address social and economic concerns. This index is the first of its kind in Canada and will provide REPP with unique data points for measuring progress towards equity and prosperity in ANS communities. To learn more about the ANS Index and the Road to Economic Prosperity, read the report: https://halifaxpartnership.com/sites/default/uploads/Documents/ANS-INDEX_May2024_FINAL.pdf

EQUITY SCORE CARDS



EQUITY SCORECARDS ARE A MEASURABLE TOOL FOR TRACKING EQUITY-RELATED TRENDS OVER TIME TO INFORM FUTURE DECISION-MAKING. BY USING THIS TOOL, COMMUNITIES CAN MONITOR PROGRESS OVER TIME AND MAKE DATA-INFORMED DECISIONS.

GOALS & PURPOSE:

- Provide a tool that enables transparency about equity-related indicators and keeps the community informed.
- Track social and economic progress over time in a given community, with particular attention to reducing equity disparities.
- Hold institutions accountable for creating policies that reduce or at least do not exacerbate systemic inequities.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTITIONERS:

- Ensure that specific equity issues identified by the community are addressed through the planning initiatives you are engaged in in your practice.
- Provide a clear explanation of how the scorecard will be used to seek tangible outcomes.
- Provide transparency to community members about the collection of or lack of data that may impact scoring values.



WEST SIDE EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT SCORECARD

West Side Community Organization, located in St Paul, Minnesota, aims to build collective power to address racial inequity in the community. Historically, the West Side Community Organization has been a place for individuals who are in need of housing and recent immigrants to the United States, and as of 2018, the neighbourhood has had a racialized population of 55%.

The West Side Equitable Development Scorecard, developed by a team of West Side resident volunteers, organizes community priorities into a measurable accountability

tool and informs policymakers. This scorecard is used when new developments arise in the community to determine whether the community believes they would benefit it. Additionally, the scorecard is divided into five Equitable Development Principles that address community engagement, housing, anti-gentrification, the local economy, and environmental justice, which together provide a weighted score at the end.

To learn more about the West Side Equitable Development Scorecard, visit : <https://www.wSCO.org/wscoscorecard>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PRACTITIONERS TO SUPPORT BLACK PLANNING WORK

PLANNING RELATED LEARNING RESOURCES	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS	COMMUNITY RELATED PROJECTS
Equity Planning Resources: https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9178541/	Blackhurst Cultural Centre: https://blackhurstcc.org/	African Nova Scotian Community Action Program: https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/regional-community-planning/african-nova-scotian-community-action-program
Land Use Planning Learning: https://cpplanning.ca/from-the-ground-up?	Black Urbanism TO: https://www.blackurbanismto.com/	Emancipation Day Underground Freedom Train Ride: https://blackhurstcc.org/product/emancipation-day-underground-freedom-train-ride/
Ontario Citizens Guide to Land Use Planning: https://www.ontario.ca/document/citizens-guideland-use-planning?	Hogan's Alley Society: https://www.hogansalleysociety.org/	Little Jamaica Community Land Trust: https://www.ljclt.ca/
Sustainable Planning: https://www.c40.org/what-we-do/scaling-up-climate-action/urban-planning-design/	Maison d'Haiti: https://www.mhaiti.org/web/	McDougall St. Corridor Heritage Project: https://www.mcdougallcorridor.ca/
Youth Engagement Resources: https://urbanminds.co/youth-engagement/	New Roots Community Land Trust: https://www.nehclt.ca/aboutus	Toronto Cultural Districts Program: https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/long-term-vision-plans-and-strategies/cultural-districts-program/
	Road to Economic Prosperity: https://anseeconomicprosperity.com/homepage/	Welcome to Blackhurst Walking Tour: https://blackhurstcc.org/product/welcome-to-blackhurst/

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EXPERIENCES DES
COMMUNAUTÉS NOIRES
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BLACK
EXPERIENCES
WITH PLANNING
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