

EXPERIENCES DES
COMMUNAUTÉS NOIRES
ENGAGÉES DANS
LA PLANIFICATION
AU CANADA



BLACK
EXPERIENCES
WITH PLANNING
IN CANADA

BLACK PLANNING COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BLACK EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING IN CANADA 4

Introducing the Black Experiences with Planning in Canada project and this community handbook

STARTING FROM COMMUNITY 6

How this handbook supports Black community organizations, grassroots leaders, cultural groups, and advocates

BEPIC PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS 9

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

WHAT BLACK PLANNING MEANS 10

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

BLACK PLANNING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 13

An overview of the Black planning conceptual framework and what it means in a community context

BLACK PLANNING PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK 17

An overview of the Black planning process-oriented framework and how it can support community-led planning initiatives

PUTTING BLACK PLANNING INTO ACTION 25

Grounded examples from across Canada of what strong, community-led Black planning practices can achieve

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES 40

Additional resources to assist Black communities engaging in planning work

BLACK EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING IN CANADA

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 significant gaps exist in planning theory and practice within the Canadian context on how to plan with Black communities. 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, and developing 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 practice and education, and in identifying new approaches to planning practice that emerge from and are responsive to Black communities. The organizations presented in this tri-series represent a diversity of settlement histories, lived experiences, ethnicities, and languages, capturing a wide view of Black experiences within planning in Canada. Together, these case studies challenge dominant narratives that have historically excluded Black people, and center Black knowledge and priorities in addressing ongoing anti-Black racism within planning systems. In doing so, they also expand how Black planning is understood and practiced in Canada.

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.

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

This handbook hopes to support individuals and organizations seeking to advance Black planning in their communities.

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 planning in communities.

USE THIS HANDBOOK IF:

- ☐ You identify as a Black community member, community organization, grassroots leader, a cultural or advocacy group interested in and/or engaged in planning work
- ☐ You are working with or within a Black community
- ☐ You are looking for tools, approaches, and resources to use in your community-led planning work

THIS HANDBOOK CAN HELP YOU UNDERSTAND:

- What shared values, principles and visions does my community have for its future?
- What roles can community members play in shaping the plans or design frameworks that meet community needs and aspirations?
- How can we translate community ideas into clear actions that address community priorities and guide the planning work?
- What partnerships, resources, or funding opportunities can help bring our plans to life?
- How can we track progress and assess if we are moving in the right direction?
- What can municipal/local staff or planners do to engage in and support this work?

STARTING FROM COMMUNITY

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.

Despite their longstanding presence and contributions to Canadian society, for generations, Black communities have endured the profound impacts of anti-Black racism. In the face of this, Black communities continue to demonstrate strength, determination, and resilience, building from their assets, cultural practices, and collective efforts to lead impactful work that has helped to create and sustain spaces of Black identity, wellbeing, and belonging under conditions of constraint.

Throughout the centuries, Black communities in Canada have long engaged in planning action, both within and in opposition to dominant systems. However, their practices have rarely been recognized as planning by mainstream institutions. Through the use of culturally relevant approaches to planning and community-building, Black communities have historically been able to deliver and continue to advance services and programming that better respond to their community needs.

The BEPIC project seeks to explore and document Black planning practices in Canada as a vital step in addressing deep-rooted gaps in practice and education, and in identifying new approaches to planning practice that emerge from and are responsive to Black communities.



SNAPSHOT OF BLACK HISTORY IN CANADA

CANADA HAS A RICH HISTORY OF BLACK PRESENCE



UNDERSTANDING AND DEFINING BLACK IDENTITY AND COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

It is important to recognize the complexities in generalizing Black identities, as individuals and groups hold diverse experiences, histories, and cultural backgrounds. Black identity is multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of cultural expressions and shaped by connections to specific geographical spaces.

The BEPIC project understands Black communities and geographic locations as those where a higher proportion of the population is Black compared to other local areas and/or where there has been a historical Black population. 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.



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.

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, enhancing cultural visibility, fostering social unity, and encouraging development driven by the community.

WHAT BLACK PLANNING MEANS

FOR COMMUNITY, LEADERS, AND ADVOCACY GROUPS

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



Photo credit (BEPIC)

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.



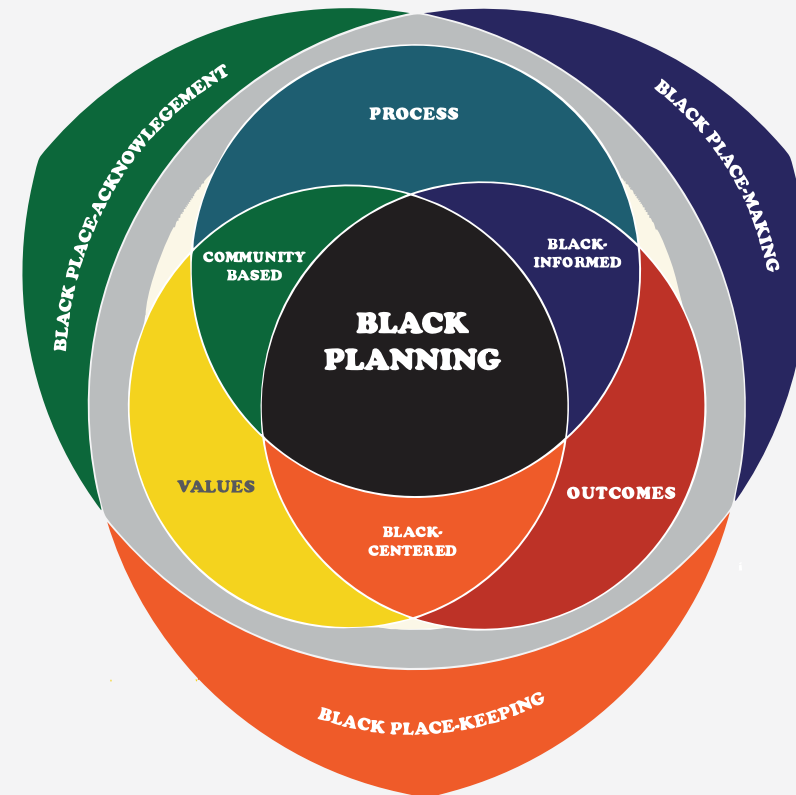
Photo credit: A. H. C.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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.

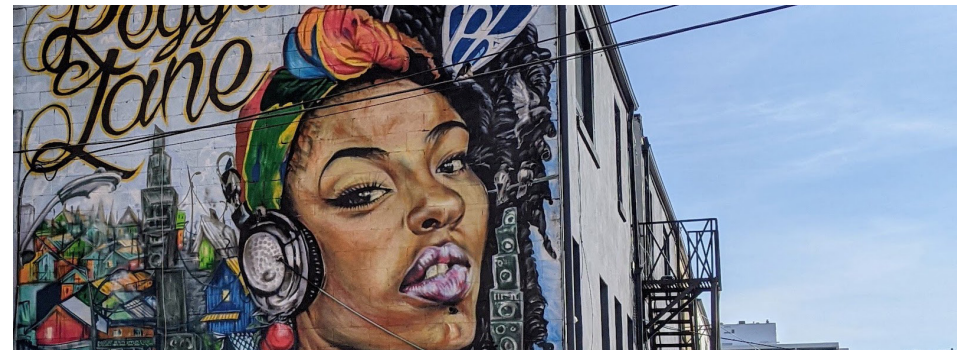
THINK ABOUT THIS...

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/>

PROCESS ORIENTED FRAMEWORK

HOW BLACK COMMUNITIES LEAD THE WORK

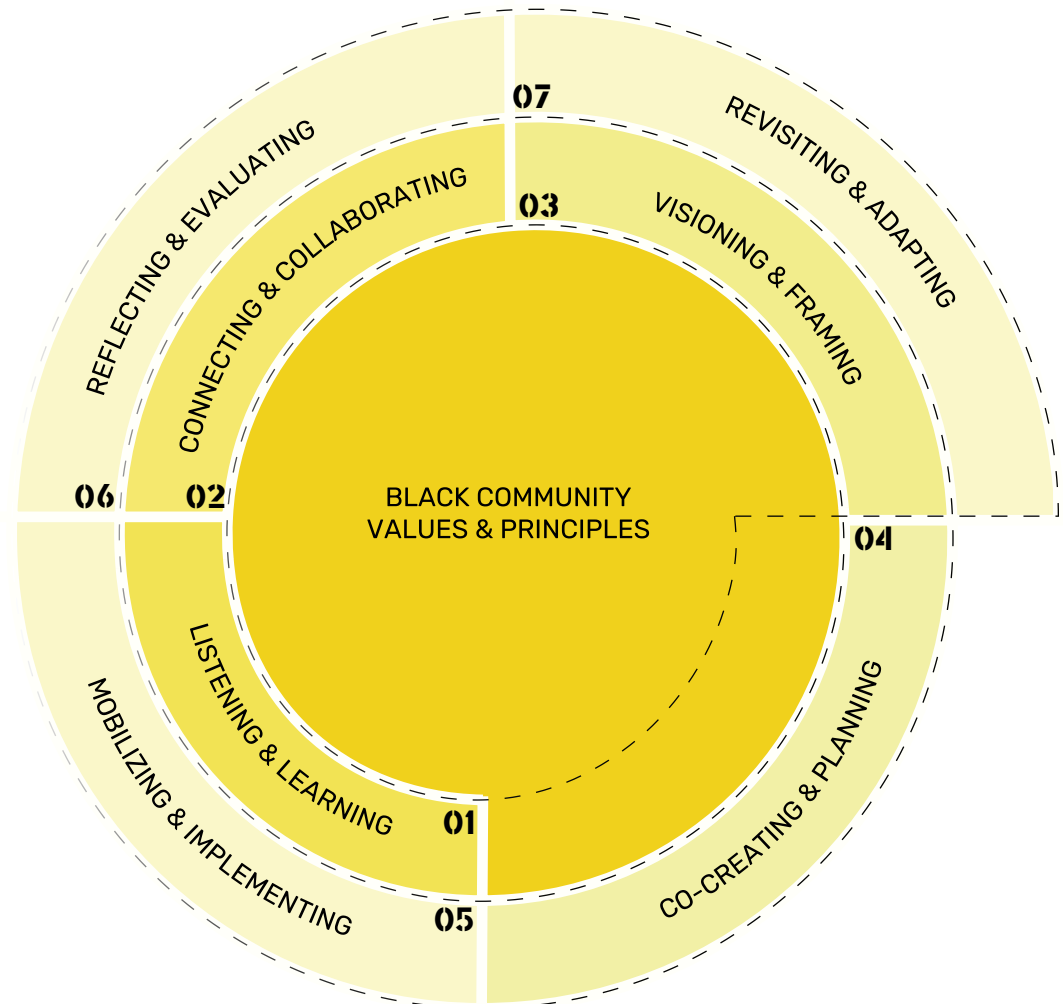
WHAT IS IT?

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.



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 MY COMMUNITY DO?

- 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.

WHAT CAN PLANNERS & DECISION MAKERS 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.

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 our community acts as stewards, protectors, or caretakers of our shared spaces?
- What threats to belonging or continuity do we recognize or experience?



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 MY COMMUNITY DO?

- Understand who the key partners, staff, and institutions needed to be engaged are.
- Begin building relationships with relevant planners and partners.

WHAT CAN PLANNERS & DECISION MAKERS 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).

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Which city staff, planners, or institutions need to be engaged, and how do we bring them in meaningfully?
- How can we strengthen relationships with key partners?
- How can we create opportunities for residents and partners to learn from each other?
- What partnerships can help us access space, materials, funding, or operational support?



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 MY COMMUNITY DO?

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

WHAT CAN PLANNERS & DECISION MAKERS 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.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What does a future that honours Black presence and belonging look like for this neighbourhood?
- 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 we're shaping together?
- How should we define successful placemaking, and how do we hold partners accountable to that definition?



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 MY COMMUNITY DO?

- 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.

WHAT CAN PLANNERS & DECISION MAKERS 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.

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?



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 MY COMMUNITY DO?

- Take plans into action by implementing action plans and objectives identified in the previous stage.
- Share action plans back with the community and begin to build momentum, excitement, and visibility for project plans within the community.

WHAT CAN PLANNERS & DECISION MAKERS DO?

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

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 the community's vision?



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 MY COMMUNITY DO?

- 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.

WHAT CAN PLANNERS & DECISION MAKERS 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.

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?



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 MY COMMUNITY DO?

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

WHAT CAN PLANNERS & DECISION MAKERS DO?

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

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?



PROCESS ORIENTED TOOLS

THIS SECTION OFFERS A COMPILATION OF TOOLS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROCESS-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK. THEY ARE INTENDED TO BE USED AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF A PROJECT TO GUIDE COLLECTIVE THINKING, SURFACE COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE, AND ADAPT GOALS AS NEEDS EVOLVE.

THIS SECTION ALSO HIGHLIGHTS REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES FROM ACROSS CANADA, WHICH DEMONSTRATE HOW PLANNING-RELATED EFFORTS CAN LEAD TO 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, INDIGENOUS AND BLACK AMERICAN EXAMPLES HAVE BEEN INCLUDED.

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.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- 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.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Keep plans realistic and aligned with community capacity and resources.
- Ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and agreed upon.
- Identify clear, community-relevant ways to track progress and measure success (i.e., indicators and metrics), both qualitative and quantitative.
- Revisit and update plans as conditions and needs evolve.
- Build capacity for sustained engagement over the long term.
- Facilitate community engagement to address evolving community needs



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>.

COMMUNITY WALKING TOURS



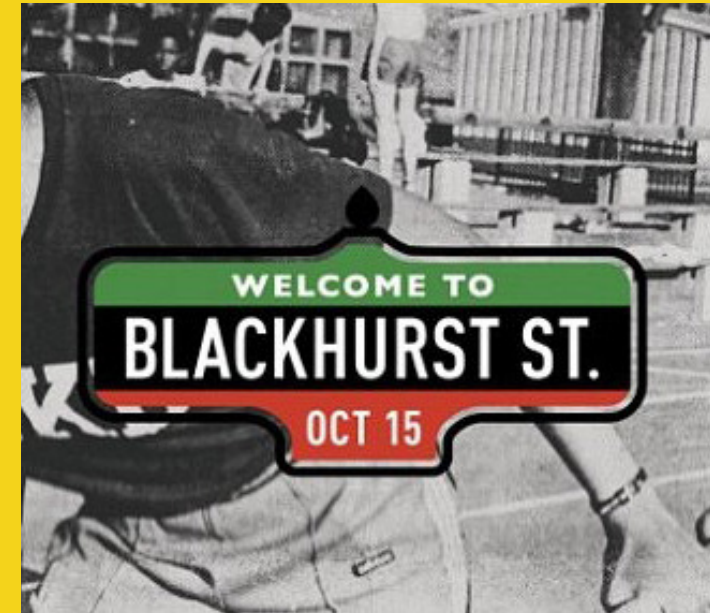
WALKING TOURS ARE EDUCATIONAL WALKING TRIPS LED BY A GUIDE OR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS, DESIGNED TO BRING PARTICIPANTS TOGETHER TO EXPLORE AND LEARN ABOUT A COMMUNITY'S HISTORY AND CULTURE. THEY USE STORYTELLING AND PHYSICAL MOVEMENT THROUGH SPACE TO SHARE COMMUNITY HISTORIES, MEMORIES, AND MEANINGS.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- 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.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure stories are told by or with community members.
- Respect sacred or sensitive sites.
- Provide fair compensation for knowledge holders.



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://thecbma.com/little-jamaica-music-history-tour/>.

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.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- Protect cultural heritage, guide respectful development, and strengthen community identity while encouraging aligned investment.
- Support local arts, culture, and local business initiatives.
- Implement urban design that encourages social interaction and walkability alongside new transportation infrastructure.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure community leadership in defining the district's boundaries and priorities.
- Pair designation with anti-displacement protections.



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>

AFRICENTRIC ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES



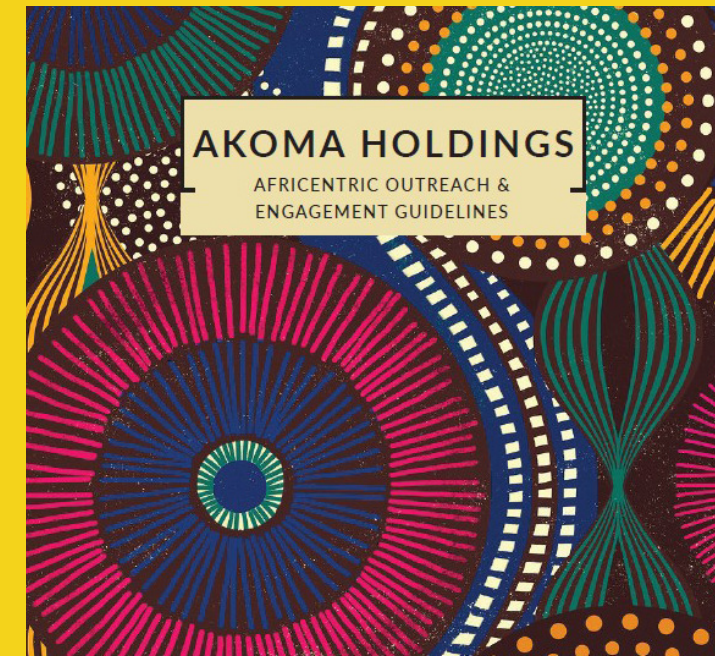
AFRICENTRIC ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT THAT CENTRES THE COLLECTIVE VOICES AND VALUES OF INDIVIDUALS OF AFRICAN DESCENT, CREATING A SPACE WHERE UNITY, UNDERSTANDING, AND RESPONSIBILITY ARE ALL PRIORITIZED.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- 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 and various stages of the project.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure that all stakeholders' concerns are addressed and reflected.
- Identify clear, community-relevant ways to track progress and measure success for suggestions emerging from engagement.
- Integrate continuous opportunities for engagement and feedback.
- Create opportunities for meaningful, transparent dialogue between the community and public and private institutions.



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-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.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- 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.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- 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 WELLBEING INDEX



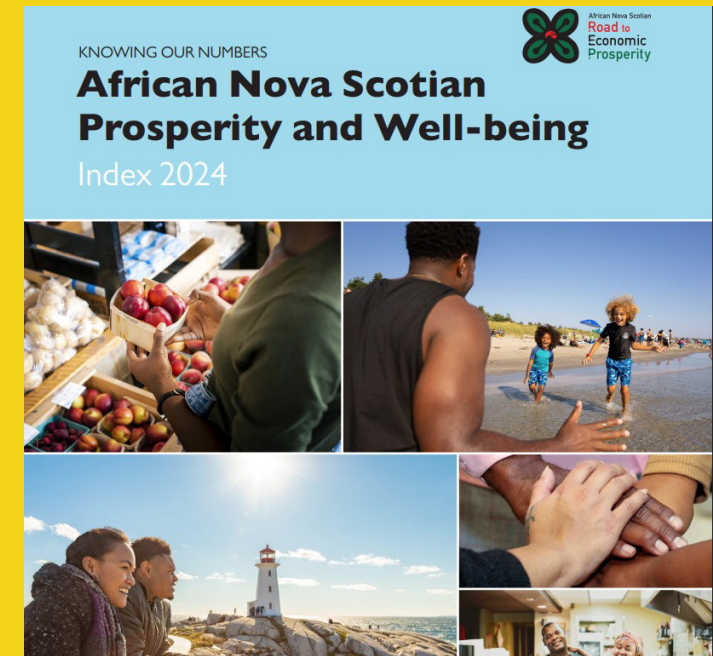
A COMMUNITY WELLBEING INDEX IS A TOOL TYPICALLY DEVELOPED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS, AND/OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TO TRACK A COMMUNITY'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OVER TIME USING RELEVANT, COMMUNITY-INFORMED INDICATORS. IT IS A VALUABLE QUANTITATIVE TOOL THAT CAN BE USED IN CONJUNCTION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

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

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

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Establish trust between community members, the municipal government, and professional partners.
- Prioritize community benefit when collecting, interpreting, and publishing information.
- Ensure transparency about the data's limitations so the community 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

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.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- 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.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure that all decisions include meaningful community participation, including for individuals who may not have much time to participate.
- Select an appropriate leadership structure that allows for long-term prosperity.



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.uhpclt.com/>

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:

- Provide a self-evaluation 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 responsible for creating policies accountable for their decisions and reduce systemic inequities.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure that specific equity issues concerning the community are addressed.
- Provide transparency to community members about the data collection process and any updates to data.
- Ensure there is an outline that provides context for the metric.



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>

BLACK-LED COMMUNITY PLANNING EDUCATION PROGRAMS



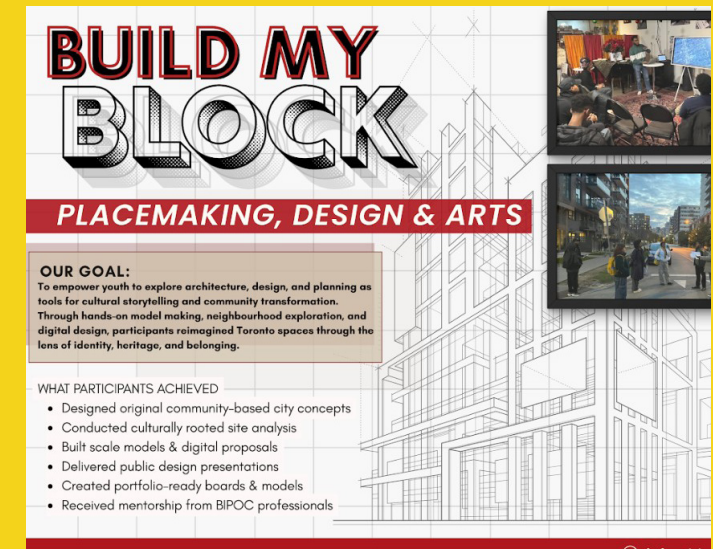
BLACK-LED COMMUNITY PLANNING EDUCATION PROGRAMS AIM TO EQUIP YOUTH AND EARLY-CAREER PROFESSIONALS WITH SKILLS IN EQUITY-CENTRED PLANNING AND PLACE-MAKING. SPANNING FROM ARTS-BASED PUBLIC ACTIVATIONS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, ANTI-DISPLACEMENT DEVELOPMENT, AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING, AT THEIR CORE, THEY SEEK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

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

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

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure that mentors for these programs representative of participating students.
- 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/>

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.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

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

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure that designers and the community work with a mutual understanding that both of their roles are integral to the project.
- Work with architects and designers who align with the Africentric principles and seek to work in a community-engaged 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 ADVISORY COMMITTEES



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

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

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

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure the committee reflects the diversity of the community.
- Clearly define decision-making power and responsibilities.
- Provide adequate support and compensation for members' time and labour needs as they evolve.



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://anseeconomicprosperity.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.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

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

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Make sessions accessible in language, location, and timing.
- Avoid technical jargon that may limit participation.
- 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>

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.

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- 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.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ensure meetings are facilitated by or with community leadership.
- Create welcoming and safe environments for honest dialogue.
- 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>

ASSET MAPPING



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

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

- 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”

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- 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>

CULTURAL INVENTORIES



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

WHAT THE TOOL IS USEFUL FOR:

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

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Centre community definitions of culture and heritage.
- Avoid extractive documentation without community ownership.
- Keep inventories living and adaptable over time.



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/>

SUMMARY 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
		FUTUREBUILDS NEXT
	COMMUNITY-LED TOWN HALLS	SIMCOE COUNTY BLACK COALITION TOWN HALL
		RAINIER BEACH TOWN HALL MEETINGS
STAGE 2 - CONNECTING & COLLABORATING	CULTURAL INVENTORIES	MAPPING ONTARIO'S BLACK ARCHIVES (MOBA)
		ONTARIO BLACK HISTORY SOCIETY (OBHS)
	AFRICENTRIC ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES	AKOMA HOLDINGS AFRICENTRIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES
		AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY: SENIOR AND YOUTH COUNCILS
	COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES	
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" EBENEKE
	COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS	UPPER HAMMONDS PLAINS CLT
		HOGAN'S ALLEY CLT
		LITTLE JAMAICA COMMUNITY LAND TRUST
STAGE 6 - REFLECTING AND EVALUATING	BLACK DESIGN AND PLANNING	CENTRE DES ARTS DE LA MAISON D'HAÏTI
	COMMUNITY WELLBEING INDEX	AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN (ANS) PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING INDEX
	EQUITY SCORE CARDS	WEST SIDE EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT SCORECARD

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

RESOURCES TO AID IN COMMUNITY PLANNING-RELATED 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
ENGAGÉES DANS
LA PLANIFICATION
AU CANADA



BLACK
EXPERIENCES
WITH PLANNING
IN CANADA