



2020 Vision

Strategic Plan

(2016 - 2020)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For almost two and a half decades, UrbanArts has built on the strength and clarity of its mission: *Enhancing neighbourhoods by engaging youth in community development through the arts*. First as Arts York (prior to amalgamation of the former City of York), and subsequently as UrbanArts, this local arts service organization (one of six LASOs, designated by the Culture Division of Toronto), has been responding to an under-served and growing need in the Weston Mount-Dennis neighbourhood for a different kind of arts organization, one that addressed the community's youth and diversity, a segment previously under-resourced by many traditional approaches.

Since 1992, neither the neighbourhood nor UrbanArts has remained static. The City expanded beyond its previous 13 Priority Neighbourhoods to develop a more robust, inclusive Neighbourhood Improvement Area structure.¹ By 2013, UrbanArts had grown significantly, opened up a second facility on Bartonville Avenue E., continued with programming at John Street, established signature youth leadership training programs in partnership with the Boards of Education, created a diverse gallery of public art murals, opened the *ProTech Media Centre*, and launched the *Beats.Mind.Movement* music lab.

However, municipal and provincial funders have recently brought new lenses to bear on how best to address broad social needs, how best to contribute to collective impact,² with the Ontario Trillium Foundation taking a strategic stand. The Ontario Arts Council's new strategic plan – *Vital Arts and Public Value* - continues to speak to the two pillars of its foundation – access and excellence – and finding an inclusive and balanced approach to address these two needs. The *City of Toronto's Strategic Plan (2013 – 18)* embraces the dual challenges of social development (strengthening neighbourhoods, enhancing the quality of life, and diversity as a strength) and city building (and the part that culture should play in this), as has the *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020*.

Within a now-expanded UrbanArts geo-demographic footprint (York South-Weston), the built environment has evolved significantly as well, with enhanced new transit capacity – Mount Dennis Station is the western terminal station of the Eglinton-Crosstown Light Rail Transit (LRT), a Mobility Hub to include a transfer to the GO Transit Kitchener Line, the UP

¹ As part of the newly minted 31 Neighborhood Improvement Areas, York South-Weston includes several new NIAs beyond Weston Mount Dennis, including Rustic, Weston-Pelham Park, Keele-dale-Eglinton West, Rockcliffe-Smythe and Beechborough-Greenbrook.

² The concept was first broadly, captured and acknowledged in the Stanford Social Innovation Review in 2011, and the concept is an attempt to capture a new phenomenon in the non-profit/government sector about working in a different way where complexity is impacting society's well-being. It is a method of getting people to work together differently in pursuit of a clearly defined common goal to address complex social issues in communities. Issues suited to collective impact are those that are not easy to resolve, have persisted over time and cannot be solved in isolation. *Ontario Trillium Foundation, Collective Impact Funding Streams: Backgrounder, August 2015.*

Express, an off-street TTC Bus Terminal and a Passenger Pick-Up and Drop-Off (PPUDO) area - the impending opening of the City's newest community centre on Black Creek Drive, and the potential impact of development of the Kodak Lands. For UrbanArts, the City Council's recent approval of the Artscape Weston Cultural Hub project, to include 8,000 sq. ft. of creative programming spaces, 12,400 sq. ft. outdoor community area, and 26 affordable housing units for artist led families, is a vital element of its renewed focus.

In response to these shifts, UrbanArts initiated a strategic review and planning exercise, *Vision 2020, Urban Arts Strategic Plan 2016 – 20*. While [community development + youth + arts] remain at the core of UrbanArts' work, the emphasis has become more inclusive. Artists – and their art practice – will be at the heart of UrbanArts; the organization is committed to creating and supporting vital, meaningful links between and among artists – of all levels – artists and their supporters, artists and those seeking access to the benefits that accrue to an arts-vital neighbourhood. The UrbanArts potential market can be characterized as:

Individuals and groups, of all ages, who live, work, shop and play in York South-Weston; it includes those who create art, those who support the artist and their creative process as essential ingredients in their own development, and those who wish to support UrbanArts because it adds value to the community. The UrbanArts target market includes three segments: artists/creators, users/clients and supporters/collaborators.

In response to the various articulated needs of these market segments, UrbanArts has refined their mission, vision and mandate:

MISSION: UrbanArts is committed to the goal of building inclusive, engaged communities by enriching peoples' lives through the arts, culture and heritage, through programs, services and resources delivered in York South-Weston and beyond.

VISION: Enhancing neighbourhoods by engaging and building community through the arts; beginning with a focus on youth, UrbanArts provides the thread that weaves together generations.

MANDATE: UrbanArts is a progressive, not-for-profit local arts service organization (LASO) linking the needs of those who create/make art, those who engage the artist as an essential element of their own development, and those who support UrbanArts because it adds value (sense of identity, lifestyle, prosperity) to the neighbourhood.

To meet these needs effectively, UrbanArts will need to make significant changes to both its own structure and its strategic approaches. In anticipation of the impending changes to the legal framework of not for profits incorporated in Ontario (Ontario Non-Profit

Corporations Act, ONCA), UrbanArts will revise its Bylaws and objects. The membership requirements will be refined to establish clarity of rights and responsibilities, and a membership recruitment and support program established. A Governance Board will continue to be comprised of 5 – 12 directors, each serving a term of 2 years, up to a maximum of 3 successive terms; as part of its succession strategy, UrbanArts will establish a robust committee system (Executive, Finance, Programming, Outreach and Development) and Task Forces to address mid-term needs, beginning with direction on a strategic response to the Artscape Weston Arts Hub opportunity.

The staffing structure of UrbanArts has been modified to reflect the distinct but complementary demands of both programming and operations management; with the management duties shared amongst a small core of capable senior staff, the Executive Director will enjoy increased opportunities to turn more attention to the change management/leadership challenges with external stakeholders, collaborators and funders. Time and resources will be committed to increasing professional and career development opportunities for staff, and the next full time hire for UrbanArts will respond the strategic opportunities for Outreach and Development, both expanding and diversifying the user/client and supporter/collaborator base in order to both increase and diversify its current revenue streams.

Programming will continue to be driven by a refocused mission (*UrbanArts is committed to the goal of building inclusive, engaged communities by enriching peoples' lives through the arts, culture and heritage with programs, services and resources delivered in York South-Weston and beyond.*) Building on its signature youth leadership development programs (*It's a Girl Thing; Young Men of Honour*), its community-wide mural program, and its community outreach to youth and their families, UrbanArts is well positioned to expand and diversify its leadership role. The potential community impact through collaboration as a lead programmer/tenant in the new Artscape Weston Cultural Hub, to open by 2018, will enhance UrbanArts role in building vital links amongst artists, artist-led families, clients and supporters. Integral to the strategic planning process, under the leadership of the Programming Committee, the Program Effectiveness, Performance Measurement and Impact Task Force will standardize UrbanArts planning, delivery and reporting approach to program and service delivery.

Building on the valuable experience of collaboration with the Culture Division, City of Toronto Culture Hotspot - East (Scarborough Arts 2014) and Cultural Hotspot – West (Arts Etobicoke and Lakeshore Arts 2015), UrbanArts and North York Arts will host the Cultural Hotspot – North³ (May through October 2016). This unique city project will shine a spotlight on the arts, culture and community to celebrate local arts, connect the local community and

³ An area bordered by Finch Ave. to the North, Lawrence Ave. to the South, Jane Street to the West and the 404/DVP to the East.

grow creative capacity in the community through workshops, courses, youth employment and mentorship, as well as legacy project like the Cultural Loops Guide.

Because of the prominence and potential impact of the Artscape Weston Cultural Hub opportunity, and the expansion of its offering to include more services (information collection and dissemination; representation as a voice of the *arts & culture*⁴ community; consultation; education/training; networking) as well as its program offerings, UrbanArts will establish a volunteer corps to complement its staffing resources, enrich the engagement opportunities throughout York South-Weston, and increase opportunities for diverse segments of the community (youth, seniors, intergenerational; culturally, economically and educationally diverse groups) to join with artists and residents to celebrate the best of the community.

⁴ While 'culture is often seen as "the way we live," arts & culture attempts to capture both the way we live and the roles that the arts can play in that.