

# Exploring Community Land Trusts in Cooksville

Recap & Next Steps

November 2024

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special thanks to:







### **Acknowledgements**

#### Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Cooksville is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and The Huron-Wendat and Wyandot Nations. In engaging with racialized communities around displacement and land use across Southern Ontario, we must acknowledge and prioritize the presence and leadership of the many diverse Indigenous groups, First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who were first displaced from this land. We commit to prioritizing actions to support Indigenous communities throughout all aspects of our work.

## African Ancestral

**Acknowledgement** 

We acknowledge all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers –as migrants either in this generation or in generations past - and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

## **Community Acknowledgement**

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the many community members that have supported CP Planning's Roadmap for Redevelopment Plans to Confront Systemic Racism (Roadmap) work. Your invaluable insights, feedback, and unwavering support have been instrumental in our journey towards developing new affordable housing. This endeavour is not just about buildings; it's about fostering communities, hope, and a future where everyone has access to affordable housing. The collaborative spirit and collective efforts have been the cornerstone of our progress.

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#### 1.0 Context

Cooksville is a vibrant and diverse neighborhood in Mississauga, with a strong sense of community.

It is centered around the intersection of Dundas Street and Hurontario Street near the Cooksville Creek. The neighbourhood is also home to a variety of community organizations that support residents and foster a connected, inclusive community. In Downtown Cooksville, nearly 70% of residents were born outside Canada. The area is a popular destination for new immigrants, partly because of the numerous settlement agencies and programs designed to support newcomers. However, many of these residents tend to move away after a relatively short period—typically one to five years (Vision Cooksville Report, 2016). This may be due to the lack of affordable housing options that appeal to newcomers.

Additionally, the neighborhood is currently undergoing significant changes with the arrival of the new LRT and transit hub. While these improvements will enhance mobility for residents, they also bring increased rent value and interest in redevelopment, raising the risk of displacement for existing community members. In Mississauga, "market rents far exceed affordable rent levels for even moderate-income

renters. Renter households require a yearly gross income of almost \$100,000 to afford a one-bedroom apartment in the city" (City of Mississauga, 2024). This highlights the urgent need for increasing affordable housing options to ensure all residents, including those with lower incomes, have access to suitable housing.

In response to these challenges, CP Planning, in collaboration with Indus Community Services and a range of dedicated local organizations, initiated engagement efforts focused on Affordable Housing and Community Land Trusts (CLTs). The goal is to address the potential displacement of long-time residents by ensuring long-term affordability and community control over land.

## 1.1 Purpose & Partners

This report is part of CP Planning's Roadmap for Redevelopment Plans to Confront Systemic Racism ("Roadmap"), a multi-year program aimed at building the capacity of racialized communities to protect and increase affordable housing in areas affected by gentrification due to transit infrastructure investment.

The report draws on the ongoing engagement around community land trusts (CLT) in Cooksville, Mississauga in 2024, to provide

a summary of the information, discussions, and insights shared thus far including emerging themes from workshops, engagement sessions and further next steps towards creating momentum around creating a community land trust in Cooksville.

## 1.1.1 Organizations and Partners Involved

Throughout the exploration of community land trusts and affordable housing solutions in Cooksville, various organizations contributed to different aspects of the work. Some were funded to carry out specific tasks, while others took a collaborative role in supporting community initiatives. The following section highlights the involvement of each organization, outlining their contributions and the timeline of their efforts.

CP Planning, a non-profit network bringing a human-rights lens into community planning. The organization builds the capacity of non-profits to protect and generate affordable housing and community spaces at the scale required to meet community needs. This includes developing and stewarding strategic programs and partnerships that prioritize the engagement of those most impacted, especially those from equity deserving demographics such as the Roadmap for Redevelopment Plans to Confront

Systemic Racism ("Roadmap"), CP Planning has engaged with the Cooksville community, as one of the Hub partners, along with support to Indus to address the challenges of affordable housing, especially for transit-oriented and racialized communities.

Indus Community Services is a non-profit community benefit organization in the heart of Cooksville providing services to newcomers, families, women and seniors. The organization's vision is to build strong and inclusive communities by offering personcentered, anti-oppressive programs and services.

Indus was funded and supported by CP Planning as a Community Anchor Partner through the Roadmap for Redevelopment Plans to Confront Systemic Racism program. Their role included undertaking outreach, bringing community knowledge, and providing leadership to encourage local participation in the Roadmap, while building community engagement around affordable housing and displacement in Cooksville from January 17th, 2023 to June 10th, 2024.

Heart Comonos, a non-profit organization dedicated to building a connected and empowered community in Cooksville-Mississauga. They focus on fostering connections among residents, organizations and institutions to

combat loneliness and isolation. By facilitating meaningful interactions, programs, and activities, they create opportunities for individuals to form friendships, discover solutions to local challenges, and explore opportunities for personal and collective growth.

Heart Comonos plays a supportive role in community engagement initiatives and actively participates in workshops led by CP Planning in collaboration with Indus Community Services. As one of the key partners in the Cooksville Hub, they help strengthen community ties and enhance local support networks.

The Cooksville Community Hub, led by Indus Community Services,

began engaging with the community in 2021 and comprises various community organizations, nonprofits, and for-profits dedicated to creating gathering spaces, enhancing community engagement, and empowering Cooksville residents. The Cooksville Community Hub came together as a response to conversations in the neighbourhood about the communities' priorities, challenges and opportunities. In response to this, The Cooksville Community Hub is currently working towards becoming the Cooksville Neighbourhood Solutions Table in partnerships with United Way GT to address these challenges.

The Cooksville Community Hub was actively involved through

engagement in various CP Planning events as part of our collaboration with Indus Community Services on affordable housing initiatives.

# 1.2 Community Session on Future Developments and Need for Action

On January 26th, 2024 Indus Community Services, The Cooksville Community Hub, and CP Planning partnered to hold a community session to address upcoming developments in the Cooksville neighbourhood and gather feedback from residents on how to come together as a community to address these changes. Through CP Planning's support of public engagement, the CLT initiative has engaged over 270 community members between July 2023 and November 2024.

The need for affordable housing and future community development in Cooksville was discussed, with a focus on involving residents in the decision-making process. Residents and CP Planning emphasized the importance of having a plan of action to achieve affordability that matches people's needs, and highlighted the need for implementing an urban plan that takes into account the needs of residents. They also discussed ways

to increase community engagement in local decision-making, including advertising, outreach, and inperson events. The importance of community engagement for affordable housing was also stressed, emphasizing the need for policy mandates to ensure affordable housing is included in development projects. Case studies highlighting successful Community Land Trust (CLT) models from other regions were presented to provide insights into potential community housing initiatives.

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Sean Meagher, a community leader with a long history of community engagement, leading the discussion with the attendees at the Cooksville Community Hub meeting.



List of active partners in the Cooksville Hub working towards enhancing the wellbeing of the Cooksville community.

## 2.0 Community Engagements & Finding

Engaging residents and local organizations operating in the community is a crucial component of understanding the community's needs, building trust, and ensuring that initiatives like affordable housing and Community Land Trusts address local concerns.

Hosting forums for open dialogues and collaborations, allows for the development of solutions that reflect the priorities of those directly impacted by upcoming developments. We continue to see that involving the community empowers residents by providing them with opportunities to participate in the development process, thereby strengthening community cohesion and ownership over local changes.

CP Planning actively engaged in the Cooksville community through two significant pop-up events: the Cooksville Community Health Fair and the Cooksville Community Festival, as well as a follow-up workshop session on Community Land Trusts. These events provided opportunities to connect with residents and non-

profit organizations engaged in the Cooksville community, gather input, and raise awareness about the importance of initiatives like affordable housing and Community Land Trusts.

# 2.1 Community Health Fair: Local Community Organizations Uniting to Provide Services and Raise Awareness

The community health fair on March 30th, 2024, led by the Cooksville Hub and Indus Community Services, brought together various community organizations, including CP Planning and Heart Comonos to showcase essential health services, resources, and information to residents. As part of the event, CP Planning conducted a dotmocracy activity to gather input from community members about their affordable housing priorities and aspirations. Participants, primarily families, and newcomers from diverse backgrounds, engaged in identifying their top three affordable housing needs (see below for results).

Inadequate Affordable Housing Supply	40
Lack of Strong Affordable Housing Policies	23
Homelessness	20

Family-friendly and Multi- Generational Housing Options	
More engagement on the Needs of Racialized Communities and Newcomers	12
Government Funding and Investments	9
Indigenous Housing and Support Services	8
Tenant Displacement (i.e Renovictions)	8
Political Support and Buy in (Fed,Prov, City)	8
Other	3

The dotmocracy results highlight the top concerns within the community regarding housing needs. The most pressing concern is the inadequate supply of affordable housing, emphasizing the demand for increased housing options. In Mississauga, the supply of housing that is affordable to a wide range of household incomes is diminishing. The housing market in Mississauga serves high-income households and provides support for lower-income individuals, but leaving middle-income earners underserved.



A board was used to ask attendees to identify the top 3 affordable housing needs by placing a dot on the options provided on the board. The top 3 ranked needs are inadequate affordable housing supply, lack of strong affordable housing policies, and homelessness.

However, 'missing middle' housing types, including semi-detached homes, row houses, and multiplex apartments, make up only about 28% of the total housing. To better address the diverse needs of its residents, Mississauga requires an increased supply of these intermediate housing options (Growing Mississauga: An Action Plan for New Housing, 2023). This is followed by the need for stronger affordable housing policies, which results in the necessity for more effective regulations. These first two housing needs are interconnected, where the insufficient supply of affordable housing may often stem from the lack of affordable housing policies to support the investment of affordable housing. Working with the city and region to ensure effective policies will prove essential to address the supplydemand imbalance by ensuring that affordable housing is built and preserved.

# 2.2 Introduction to Community Land Trusts: Info Session and Workshop

On June 3rd, 2024, CP Planning and Indus Community Services, with the support from Heart Comonos, organized a session to introduce the concept of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) to the community and highlight their relevance to local affordable housing initiatives and

other prioritized needs. Dominique Russell from the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts (CNCLT) was invited to join the session to delve into the benefits of CLTs, including how they can help preserve affordable housing, provide long-term community control of land, and support local economic development.

The presentation introduced participants to the foundational steps required to start a CLT, which included building a coalition of community stakeholders, identifying potential land for acquisition, and exploring governance structures that align with the community's needs. This session provided a platform to empower the community with the knowledge and tools to move forward with creating a CLT tailored to their specific needs and challenges. Following the introductory session, a visioning workshop was carried out to help identify the desired elements for the Community Land Trust's vision and to determine the necessary stakeholders and groups for its development.

### About Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts:

The Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts (CNCLT) is a national organization dedicated to supporting and advancing Community Land Trusts across Canada. Established to foster collaboration and provide resources for CLTs, and start-up CLTs.

CNCLT aims to promote affordable housing, community control of land, and sustainable development practices.

#### About Dominique Russell:

First elected 2017, Community
MemberDominique Russell is a
writer, activist, scholar and teacher.
She founded Friends of Kensington
Market in 2013 and is also one of the
founders of the Kensington Market
Land Trust. She is also the Research
Coordinator of the Canadian
Network of Community Land Trusts.

# 2.2.1 Activity Workshop: Forming the vision for Cooksville's CLT

A visioning exercise was conducted to gather perspectives and to initiate discussions on a unified vision for Cooksville's Community Land Trust. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure the CLT reflects the community's values and aspirations by drawing inspiration from various CLT vision statements and identifying key desired elements to include into Cooksville's goals.



Attendees grouped together to discuss and share ideas from the visioning exercise.

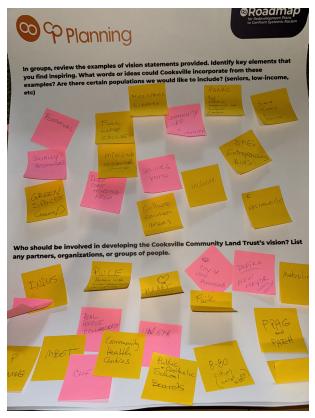
During the visioning exercise, participants engaged in a collaborative review of multiple Community Land Trust vision statements to draw inspiration and identify the key elements that resonated with their goals for Cooksville's CLT. Participants discussed principles such as affordability, inclusivity, and community empowerment. The full list of desired elements gathered are included below.

#### **Desired Elements:**

- Perpetual Affordability
- "Forever"
- Cultural Representation
- Culture Common areas
- Stewardship
- Inclusivity
- Resilience
- · Community-led/Driven
- · Deep Core Housing Need
- Social Housing
- Opportunities for the next generation
- Involvement of Seniors & Youth
- Socially Responsible
- Green Spaces
- Full-Life Cycle
- · Mixed-use Neighbourhoods
- · Community Connection
- Village Feel (reasons to stay)
- Newcomers
- Libraries



Nyasha (from CP Planning) leading the visioning exercise with attendees.



One of the boards from the visioning exercise.

The incorporation of the use of the term "forever" or "in perpetuity" to emphasize lasting community ownership and leadership was also prominently discussed.

#### 2.2.2 Future Collaborators and Partners

During the second part of the visioning session, key future collaborators and organizations were identified on who could also be involved in developing the Cooksville's Community Land Trust Vision. This session emphasized the importance for building strategic partnerships and leveraging resources to support and strengthen the initiative. Participants explored potential collaborations across sectors to maximize impact.

Key collaborators identified included:

- People with Lived Experience (PWLE)
- Parkdale-Activity Recreation Centre (PARC)
- Metrolinx
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Social Housing in the Province (SHIP)
- Co-operative Housing Federation (CHF)
- United Way Greater Toronto Area (UWGTA)

- 880 Cities
- Peel Alliance to End Homelessness (PAEH)
- School Boards
- TAS Impact
- The DAM
- Credit Unions
- Small Businesses
- Peel Multicultural Council
- City of Mississauga Planning Department
- · Ward Councillor Dipika Damerla
- Heart Commonos

## 2.3 Cooksville Community Festival

The Cooksville Community Festival on August 17th, 2024, which celebrated Mississauga's 50th anniversary, was led by Indus Community Services and Cooksville Community Hub partners. With over 300 residents in attendance, the event saw strong community engagement and was an opportunity for residents to engage with the numerous dedicated organizations serving Mississauga. Participating in the festival to bring awareness to the initiative of Community Land Trusts, CP Planning engaged with the community by conducting an interactive activity asking residents to indicate what they would like to see more of in Cooksville. These categories included green space

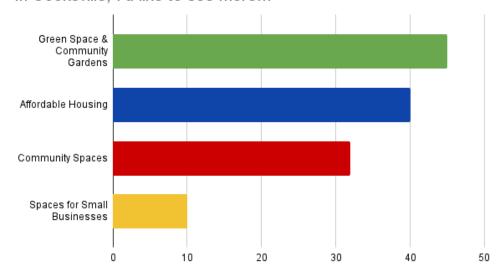
and community gardens, affordable housing, community spaces, and spaces for small businesses, where residents filled in squares on a board to reflect their desires.

The results above reveal a strong community desire for increased green space and community gardens in Cooksville, which topped at 45 responses highlighting a high priority for parks and areas for residents to engage in outdoor activities. Affordable housing also emerges as a major concern, with 40 responses indicating a desire from residents on affordable living options. Community spaces are valued as well, receiving 32 responses, reflecting a demand for places that foster social interaction and community engagement. Spaces for small business received the fewest responses (10), suggesting while important, it is not viewed as immediately pressing as the other needs. During the event, Community Land Trusts were introduced to attendees as a way to address these needs by providing a framework for managing land in a way that prioritizes community benefits.



CP Planning tabling a booth at the Cooksville Community Festival engaging attendees around Community Land Trust and asking what they would like to see more of in Cooksville. This includes affordable housing, community spaces, spaces for local businesses, and Green Spaces and Community Gardens.

#### In Cooksville, I'd like to see more...



A graph showcasing the top priorities expressed by Cooksville residents at the Cooksville Community Festival.

## 3.0 Policy Supporting Community Land Trusts

# 3.1 Mississauga's Opportunities for a Community Land Trust

The "Growing Mississauga: An Action Plan for New Housing" was created in February 2023 to address the housing crisis and to support the set targets by the province to deliver 1.5 million new units over the next 10 years. Of those 1.5 million new units, 8%, or 120, 000 units, are directed to Mississauga. A key objective of the housing plan is the need for affordable housing, purpose-built rental units, older adult housing and long term care beds, units sized for families and student housing (Growing Mississauga, 2023).

Within the plan, it outlines five primary goals and 23 actionable items for the City over the next four years. Key elements relevant to the development of a Community Land Trust in Cooksville include (see below for the images from the plan):

- Action 7: Provide Incentives for Affordable Rental Housing:
  - 7.5: Explore new housing cooperatives and community land trusts.
- Action 8: Advance Housing First on Government Land:
  - Utilize existing governmentowned lands for affordable housing.

During earlier conversations, CP Planning has engaged with the Planning Department, to consider a pilot project for a Community Land Trust in Cooksville. There is expressed interest from the Planning Department to implement the CLT model in this area. Government support is crucial in advancing this initiative, as it provides the necessary resources and policy backing to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of the CLT model.

#### Action 7: Provide Incentives for Affordable Rental Housing

Implementing the approved development charge relief for affordable rental housing allowing Mississauga to incentivize building of affordable units will be priority. Additionally, the City will finalize the Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for property tax relief for affordable rentals. This would complement the Council approved Development Charge reductions for affordable units and provide incentives to support development of new affordable rental housing.

#	SUBACTION	PLANNED TIMEFRAME	STATUS
7.1	Draft community improvement plan policy for Councils consideration	2023	Ongoing
7.2	Develop program and administrative processes for the implementation of the CIP	2023	Not Started
7.3	Engage the Region of Peel to ensure a commitment and coordinated approach	2023-2026	Ongoing
7.4	Prepare guidelines and administrative structure for the City's affordable rental grant program	2023	Ongoing
7.5	Explore innovative housing solutions such as new housing co-operatives and community land trusts to achieve self-administering long-term affordability	2023-2026	Ongoing

A snapshot from the Growing Mississauga Plan outlining incentives for affordable rental housing, including support for Community Land Trusts.

#### Action 8: Advance Housing First on Government Land

Given the rapid cost escalation of developable land in Mississauga, utilizing existing government owned lands for affordable housing is increasingly important.

۰۰	#	SUBACTION	PLANNED TIMEFRAME	STATUS
	8.1	Engage the provincial and federal government to ensure that the disposal of any surplus lands prioritizes the provision of affordable housing	2023-2026	Ongoing
	8.2	Assess opportunities for housing to be integrated into future City and regional facility redevelopments	2023-2026	Ongoing

A snapshot from the Growing Mississauga Plan outlining the action to advance housing first on government land.

## 4.0 Key Takeaways & Emerging Themes

Community Land Trusts present a promising and viable solution for addressing the critical needs and desires of the Cooksville neighbourhood.

The ongoing engagement efforts and discussions among residents, community organizations, and municipal authorities have highlighted a strong interest for CLTs as a model to ensure community control over land and a meaningful say in the development. As Cooksville continues to grow and experience rapid change, it is essential to explore the potential of CLTs as a community-driven solution that addresses both immediate and long-term needs, especially when it comes to affordable housing. Below are key themes found throughout the report and highlight the importance of supporting policies, capacity building and community engagement, and financial sustainability in supporting the development of CLTs and advancing much needed affordable housing initiatives in Cooksville.

#### 4.1 Policies, Regulation, and Government Engagement

The feedback from the engagement activities at the Community Health Fair on January 26th highlighted the urgent need for robust policies and regulations that support affordable housing and Community Land Trusts (CLTs). Participants from the CLT information session and workshop highlighted the need of ensuring perpetual affordability and longterm community control of land, emphasizing the involvement of key organizations like Social Housing in the Province (SHIP) and the Co-operative Housing Federation (CHF) to influence these policies. This session also illustrated the importance of aligning with the City of Mississauga's Planning Department and Ward Councillor Dipika Damerla to promote regulatory changes that support these objectives.

The need for policy and regulatory support is also reflected in the "Growing Mississauga: An Action Plan for New Housing". A key objective of the plan is to promote various forms of affordable housing and exploring co-operatives and Community Land Trusts.

# 4.2 Community Engagement, Capacity Building, and Knowledge Mobilization

The visioning exercise emphasized the need for inclusivity, cultural representation, and community-led initiatives. Attendees highlighted the importance of involving seniors, youth, and newcomers to ensure that the CLT reflects these diverse needs of the community. The concept of fostering a strong community connection and a "village feel" was also discussed, highlighting the need to create reasons for residents to stay and invest in the neighbourhood. Building community capacity and enhancing information sharing can be facilitated through collaborations with organizations such as People with Lived Experiences (PWLE), Parkdale-Activity Recreation Centre (PARC), Heart Comonos, and faith-based organizations. These partnerships are key for empowering communities, ensuring effective engagement, building community capacity and knowledge mobilization.

## 4.3 Funding and Financing of Affordable Housing

Financial sustainability emerged as a key concern across all engagement activities. The discussions during the January 26th session, supported by case studies, highlighted the need for innovative financing models to support the CLT's long-term viability. Community feedback from the health fair and festival further emphasized concerns about the affordability and accessibility of housing. Strategic partnerships with organizations such as United Way Greater Toronto Area (UWGTA), TAS Impact, credit unions, and small businesses were identified as essential for securing funding and resources.

## 5.0 Next Steps & Recommendations

To advance the development of affordable housing and strengthen communities through establishing a Community Land Trust, several key actions are recommended for community members, local organizations, and collaborators in Cooksville.

The steps focus on community needs assessment, outreach to interested organizations, and forming a coalition to support the establishment of a Community Land Trust.

## 5.1 Assess Community Needs and Asset-Mapping:

Through our continued community engagements and discussions, we must ensure that the solutions are tailored to the unique needs and priorities of the Cooksville residents. This process involves inviting City planners, partners, and community members to work together in aligning efforts to seek opportunities for affordable housing and community spaces. Asset mapping will be employed to identify and leverage existing community resources and strengths,

enhancing our ability to address local needs effectively. The feedback from previous community engagements will be used to initiate further conversations of action to refine strategies and build consensus around community-led initiatives. Active participation from community members in future discussions and workshops will be crucial in providing ongoing input and feedback, ensuring the solutions developed are inclusive and reflective of the community's vision.

## 5.2 Reach Out to Interested Organizations:

To further explore and advance the implementation of the Community Land Trust model, it is important to engage with organizations that have expressed interest. This process would begin by discussing the CLT governance model and exploring potential collaborations. Additionally, we will reach out to the other organizations identified by participants in the visioning exercise to build a network of support and aligned efforts.

## 5.3 Form a Working Group/Coalition:

Building a strong foundation for the Community Land Trust requires the formations of a dedicated working

## 6.0 Next Steps & Recommendations

group or coalition. This group should include a diverse range of partners, such as community leaders and local organizations to explore the initial discussions and planning for the CLT. CP Planning, as a partner in the Cooksville Neighbourhood SteeringTable, will play a key role in discussing support for affordable housing and exploring how these efforts align with the table's future priorities. By working collaboratively, CP Planning and the Cooksville partners aim to develop and drive local solutions to address challenges in the community. Local organizations in the housing sector or interest in affordable housing are recommended to collaborate with CP Planning to share and exchange expertise, resources, and network opportunities to support one another in enhancing the Cooksville community.

As we move forward, the steps involve solidifying partnerships, deepening community engagement, and beginning the formal process for opportunities in establishing a Community Land Trust. Our immediate focus will continue on strengthening the partnerships and addressing the priorities identified by the Cooksville Neighbourhood Steering Table. By translating the insights and feedback gathered from our engagements into actionable plans, CP Planning aims to develop targeted strategies, including forming a Cooksville CLT, that promote community-driven development with local organizations and community members.

- Roadmap for Redevelopment
   Plans to Confront Systemic Racism ("Roadmap"): https://cpplanning.ca/roadmap
- <u>Learn More About Community</u>
   <u>Land Trusts on CP Planning's</u>
   <u>Website</u>: https://cpplanning.
   ca/resources/f/new-report-community-land-trusts-guide
- Link for the presentation and Dominique Russell's session on CLTs: https://docs.google.com/ presentation/d/1AlhhmNR3pew- I68KpJ7tl6hAjvngVplp/ edit#slide=id.p1
- <u>CNCLT: Starting a CLT:</u> https:// www.communityland.ca/startinga-clt/
- Growing Mississauga: An Action
   Plan for New Housing: https://
   www.mississauga.ca/projects-and strategies/city-projects/growing mississauga-an-action-plan-for new-housing/
- Visioning Cooksville: A Long-Range Community Visions for Downtown Cooksville: https:// www.mississauga.ca/wp-content/ uploads/2021/02/03164018/ VisionCooksvilleReportJune2016. pdf

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