GRANGE PRECINCT ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Community Infrastructure and Social Needs Findings and Recommendations

Prepared By:

UNTITLED PLANNING

2026

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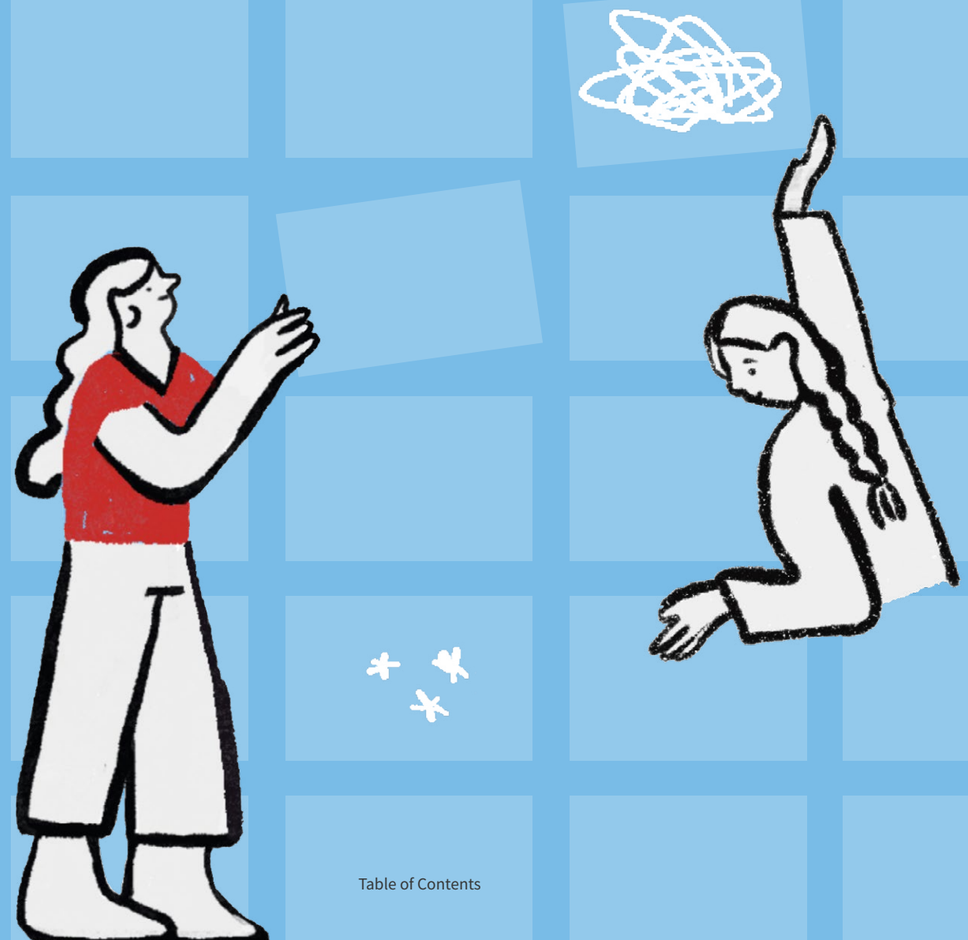

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This report was prepared by **Untitled Planning Inc.** under contract to **University Settlement** for the City of Toronto (Social Development Division) and CreateTO's Grange Precinct Real Estate Strategy.

Land Acknowledgement

We express our gratitude to the Indigenous Nations who are the original stewards of the lands on which the research team, project partners, and participants reside, work, and engage — including the focus of this study. We acknowledge, with deep respect, the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat, who have historically cared for the lands encompassing the area known as Tkaronto (Toronto). This region is now home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. This territory is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands, and is also subject to the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an understanding between nations symbolizing the collective responsibility to peacefully share and care for these lands and waters. This report is grounded in the understanding that planning, land use, and community infrastructure decisions are inseparable from histories of displacement, stewardship, and ongoing responsibilities to Indigenous communities and equity-deserving residents.

We also acknowledge those who came to these lands as settlers — as migrants either in this generation or in generations past — and those who came involuntarily, particularly those brought here as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The Grange Precinct and the broader Kensington-Chinatown area are home to diverse communities whose presence reflects both this history and its ongoing legacy. In support of ongoing efforts to confront and dismantle anti-Black racism, we pay tribute to the ancestors of African origin and descent whose labour, resilience, and contributions continue to shape this city.

Indigenous Engagement & Knowledge Contributions

Indigenous engagement for this project was co-facilitated and guided by **Nbisiing Consulting**. An Indigenous Engagement Summary was independently prepared to reflect Indigenous perspectives, priorities, and insights shared through this process.

Community Participants & Contributors

We extend our sincere thanks to the many community members, service users, and residents who generously shared their time, experiences, and perspectives through surveys, focus groups (Conversation Corners), workshops, pop-ups, and informal conversations. Your insights were essential to understanding lived realities and shaping the findings and recommendations in this report.

Grange Agency & Service Provider (GASP) Stakeholder Group

Special thanks to members of the **Grange Agency & Service Provider (GASP)** stakeholder group for their ongoing guidance, sensemaking, and system-level insight throughout the project. Their contributions helped ground this work in operational realities, strengthen the analysis, and ensure the recommendations reflect current service system needs.

Host Organizations & Engagement Partners

We are grateful to the organizations and institutions that hosted engagement sessions, supported outreach, and helped create welcoming spaces for dialogue, including:

- Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)
- OCAD University
- Scadding Court Community Centre
- Stephen's Community House/The Neighbourhood Group (TNG)
- University Settlement
- Wildseed Centre for Arts & Activism

Volunteers & Community Support

We also extend our sincere thanks to the volunteers who supported outreach, survey distribution, pop-up engagements, translation, note-taking, and event logistics. Their time, care, and commitment helped make the engagement process accessible, welcoming, and responsive to community needs.

Additional Thanks

We also acknowledge the support of the City of Toronto (Social Development Division), CreateTO, and University Settlement staff and project partners whose coordination, feedback, and stewardship helped advance this work.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Grange Precinct Engagement Project (GPEP), led by Untitled Planning with Indigenous engagement led by Nbisiing Consulting, in collaboration with University Settlement, the City of Toronto's Social Development Division and CreateTO, was delivered to identify nuanced social and programmatic needs in the Grange Precinct and broader Kensington-Chinatown area from a diversity of perspectives including Black, Indigenous and equity-deserving groups, local service providers, human services users, and residents.

The GPEP was launched to provide critical insights on community service space requirements to inform CreateTO's Council-directed (2021.EC23.2) Real Estate Strategy focused on options for coordinated redevelopment and optimization of City-owned assets within the Grange Precinct – University Settlement, Harrison Pool, St. Patrick's Market, St. Patrick's Square, and Grange Park – to better respond to service pressures, meet current and future community needs and guide long-term investment to enhance the Downtown West.

The Grange Precinct Engagement Report: Community Infrastructure and Social Needs Findings and Recommendations presents detailed findings of the engagement process and translates them into strategic considerations to help inform holistic asset planning for the Grange Precinct.The GPEP was undertaken to ensure that development concepts for the Precinct's City-owned assets are grounded in both the lived realities of local communities and the operational realities of the service system that supports them.

1.1 Methods and Participants

Engagement was conducted between August 2025 and February 2026 through a mixed-methods approach that combined broad public reach with targeted, relationship-based outreach, deliberately designed to ensure that the communities most affected by decisions about the Precinct's future were not the least likely to be heard. Across **38 engagement activities**, the GPEP engaged **655 participants and respondents** across the following activities:

- 7 community pop-up sessions in high-traffic public spaces, reaching 293 participants
- A public survey targeting residents, workers, and service users, receiving 215 responses
- A service provider survey capturing operational data, capacity constraints, and facility needs, receiving 21 responses
- 6 facilitated Conversation Corners with equity-deserving cohorts, reaching 68 participants
- An Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting led by Nbisiing Consulting, reaching 41 participants
- 4 strategic working sessions with the 19-member GASP (Grange Agency and Service Provider) group, reaching 19 participants
- One-on-one interviews with 19 key stakeholders

Input was gathered from a wide range of participants, including staff and leadership from local community organizations, civic institutions, cultural organizations, and social service providers serving the Precinct, including the Art Gallery of Ontario and OCAD University; residents, including Toronto Community Housing (TCH) tenants, housing co-operative members, condominium residents, and service users reached through agencies such as University Settlement, Wildseed Centre for Arts and Activism, and Scadding Court Community Centre; Indigenous-led organizations, Indigenous residents, and First Nations Rights Holders engaged through a dedicated Indigenous-led engagement stream; and equity-deserving groups, including African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities, newcomers, seniors, youth, and unhoused community members.

As with any engagement-based process, these findings reflect the perspectives of those who participated and are shaped by the methods and outreach strategies used to reach them. While the engagement was designed to be inclusive, accessible, and equity-centred, some populations remain difficult to fully capture through formal engagement instruments, such as undocumented individuals and people with limited digital access, who may be underrepresented relative to their presence in the Precinct. The findings are therefore representative but not exhaustive, and thus intended to complement the technical analysis, feasibility review, and City-led due diligence that will be undertaken in subsequent phases of the Real Estate Strategy.

1.2 Thematic Findings

Six key themes emerged from the engagement process. While each is addressed separately below, they are closely linked and should be read together as a full picture of what communities told us about life in the Grange Precinct. Across all groups and all sites, participants described a Precinct they value deeply but one where existing infrastructure, services, and spaces are not keeping pace with the community's needs. The themes below capture where those gaps are most acute and where the greatest opportunities for change exist.

1. Participants consistently raised concerns about safety, dignity, and the public realm experience in and around Precinct spaces. Safety was understood differently across populations—ranging from physical security to freedom from discrimination and the ability to access spaces without fear or surveillance. Across all groups, there was a shared desire for spaces that feel genuinely welcoming, inclusive, and community-led.
2. Service system pressures and limited formal coordination between providers were identified as significant barriers to effective service delivery. At the same time, strong informal networks of trust

and reciprocal referral already exist, providing a foundation for more formal collaboration structures.

3. The need for community service spaces, cultural infrastructure, and meaningful placemaking was a recurring priority, particularly among equity-deserving and culturally distinct communities. Arts and culture emerged as the most-used and highest-satisfaction service category, reflecting the Precinct's strong sense of belonging, creativity, and intercultural exchange.
4. Housing instability and gaps in care infrastructure were prominent concerns across nearly all engagement streams. Basic infrastructure—such as public washrooms, showers, and secure storage—is misaligned with the needs of vulnerable users, while harm reduction and mental health crisis response remain insufficient. At the same time, participants identified promising integrated service models already operating in the Precinct that demonstrate what coordinated neighbourhood-scale care can look like.
5. Participants also identified a need for greater economic pathways, including opportunities for skills development, local enterprise, and community wealth-building. Existing social enterprise models and the proximity of anchor institutions such as OCAD University represent underutilized assets for local economic development.
6. Site-specific insights highlighted operational and physical constraints across key locations, while findings from priority population sessions and service provider perspectives reinforced the systemic nature of these challenges. Participants identified strong reactivation and revitalization potential at each site and clear directions for renewal.

While not all findings speak to specific opportunities that may be advanced directly through the Real Estate Strategy, they meaningfully reflect the tenor of community concerns and perceptions shaped by lived experience, and offer valuable insights for the long-term planning process.

Findings indicate that **the Precinct's challenges are not primarily about the absence of services or institutions, but about capacity, accessibility, and coordination gaps** between existing infrastructure and the needs of a rapidly densifying and increasingly diverse community. Facilities are operating beyond capacity, and physical infrastructure constraints are preventing the service delivery models that communities have identified as essential. At the same time, the Precinct is home to strong organizations, deep community relationships, and significant cultural assets that the Real Estate Strategy can build on and strengthen.

Thematic Findings: GPEP Engagement

1.3 Key Recommendations

Driven by extensive community and service provider engagement , these recommendations reflect current community and service network priorities and are intended to guide future work on public-benefit infrastructure in the Grange Precinct, recognizing that additional analysis, feasibility review, and City-led due diligence are needed, and will be undertaken in subsequent phases.

Recommendations are intended to ensure that context-sensitive social and programmatic needs are central to the Real Estate Strategy's vision and to inform the broader mandates of relevant City divisions.

1. **Revitalize and redevelop Precinct assets to expand community service infrastructure.** The Real Estate Strategy presents a significant opportunity to address documented space deficits by revitalizing and/or redeveloping key Precinct assets to expand and intensify community service infrastructure. Potential opportunities include the expansion of University Settlement as a central hub for integrated service delivery, the reactivation of St. Patrick's Market as a community-serving and social enterprise space, the revitalization or redevelopment of Harrison Pool to support enhanced recreation and community use, as well as integration of new Indigenous-focused and co-managed community service spaces. Together and supported by a cohesive public realm, these investments can create a central social service destination, with facilities designed to offer flexible, shared spaces that can adapt to changing community needs.
2. **Create a cohesive public realm that supports a coordinated and connected network of Precinct assets.** Beyond individual sites, the Real Estate Strategy should prioritize the integration of Precinct assets into a cohesive and easy-to-navigate network. This includes strengthening physical connections between sites, improving wayfinding, and enhancing the public realm to support safety, movement, visibility, and activation across the Precinct. A coordinated approach to public space design—including streets, open spaces, and building frontages—integrated with cultural and arts-based programming and activation can help link key sites into a unified system. This supports more seamless access to services, increases use of community assets, and improves how residents and service users move between and experience the Precinct.
3. **Use infrastructure and programming to create a more equitable community with more economic opportunity.** Precinct facilities should do more than deliver crisis-oriented services. Programming should create pathways to employment, skills development, food resilience, and cultural connection, particularly for residents facing multiple barriers. This depends on strong operational support, including extended hours, after-hours access to essential services such as washrooms and showers, and harm reduction infrastructure aligned with the realities of the Precinct's most vulnerable users. Existing assets and relationships provide a strong foundation for formalizing, resourcing, and scaling what is already working.
4. **Design for dignity, diversity, and belonging.** Against a backdrop of rapid densification, demographic diversity, and significant public realm investment in the surrounding area, the Precinct is already a place people want to stop, linger, and return to—and the Real Estate Strategy is an opportunity to make it work better for everyone. New and renewed facilities should feel warm and non-institutional, accommodate multi-use programming; be designed for flexibility, safety, and accessibility, and reflect the cultural identities of the communities they serve, with a permanent Indigenous cultural presence woven into the public realm. The Precinct's sites should be knit together through cohesive wayfinding and activation that makes moving between spaces feel natural and inviting.
5. **Invest in coordination, navigation, and organizational capacity.** The Precinct's service system can be difficult to navigate for residents and providers alike — not because services are absent, but because the infrastructure connecting people to them is limited. Reducing these barriers involves sustained operating funding, formalized coordination bodies, shared referral pathways, public-facing navigation tools, and affordable, accessible space for organizations, grassroots groups, and community activities of all kinds. The result is a service system that is navigable for residents and collaborative for providers and a Precinct that works better for everyone.
6. **Embed Indigenous-led governance and placemaking from the outset.** Indigenous communities require dedicated spaces owned, governed, and operated by Indigenous organizations, with designs that reflect specific nations and territorial relationships rather than generic inclusion. Early, resourced, and relationship-based Indigenous engagement is essential to all subsequent phases of the Grange Precinct planning process and is consistent with the City's 2022 - 2032 Reconciliation Action Plan.

All recommendations are subject to feasibility review by CreateTO and the City of Toronto's Social Development Division to assess applicability to the Real Estate Strategy and subsequent phases of Grange Precinct planning.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 Purpose of the Project

In July 2021, City Council directed (2021.EC23.2) CreateTO to develop a long-term asset planning framework for the Grange Precinct in partnership with City divisions, including Social Development and Corporate Real Estate Management. The Grange Precinct Engagement Project (GPEP) was undertaken to support this broader planning process by identifying current and future social and programmatic needs across five City-owned assets in the Precinct: University Settlement, Harrison Pool, St. Patrick's Market, St. Patrick's Square, and Grange Park.

It builds on a multi-year interdivisional review of City facilities and services in Downtown West led by the City of Toronto's Social Development Division, and prioritizes data from Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities to address systemic service disparities and plan for the social infrastructure required to accommodate the projected doubling of the downtown population, as outlined in the Downtown Community Services & Facilities Strategy (2018).

2.2 Purpose of the Report

This report presents the findings of the GPEP and serves as a key input to the CreateTO-led Real Estate Strategy. Beyond informing real estate concepts, it may also support service agencies, community organizations, and City divisions in understanding spatial and service needs, identifying opportunities for collaboration and funding, and strengthening future planning and programming across the broader Downtown West area.

2.3 Project Partners

The GPEP is the product of collaboration between facility operators, municipal divisions, and technical consultants.

Located in the heart of the study area, **University Settlement** served as the project lead and primary community anchor, supporting engagement through connections with local organizations and providing logistical and operational insights. Similarly, the **Grange Agency & Service Provider (GASP) Group** was convened as a stakeholder table to provide operational insights, validate findings, and identify opportunities for collaboration and service coordination within the Precinct.

The **City of Toronto's Community Infrastructure Unit (Social Development Division)** served as the municipal lead for the project, providing project management oversight and applying an equity lens to ensure that social and programmatic needs were meaningfully assessed and translated for consideration in the CreateTO Real Estate Strategy.

CreateTO functions as the City's real estate agency and is the primary recipient of this report. The agency will utilize these findings to develop the Real Estate Strategy, conduct high-level massing studies, and determine the financial and logistical feasibility of revitalizing and/or redeveloping the city-owned assets within the study area.

Finally, **Untitled Planning** serves as the engagement consultant responsible for the methodology, data collection, and synthesis of this Final Summary Report, partnering with the **School of Cities' Housing Justice Lab** for data analysis.

2.4 Study Area Overview

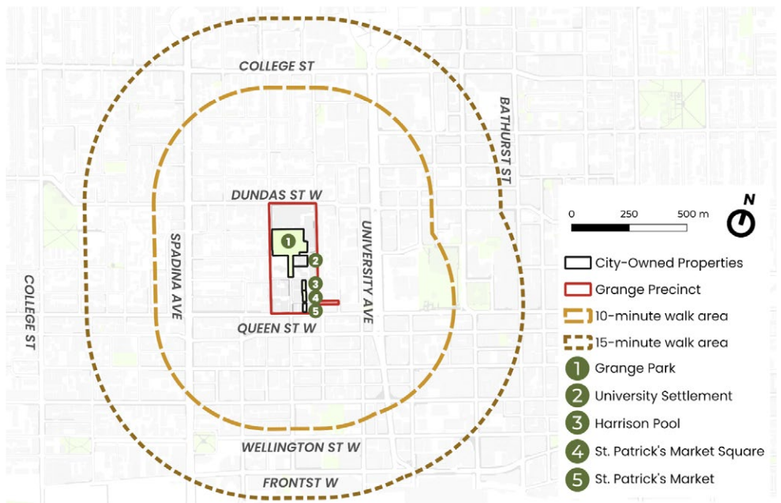


Figure 1. Study Area Map

The **Grange Precinct** is defined by Queen Street West to the south, Dundas Street West to the north, McCaul Street to the east, and Beverley Street to the west. While the physical scope of the Real Estate Strategy focuses on this specific block, the GPEP engagement methodology recognizes a broader service catchment area extending into the adjacent Kensington-Chinatown neighbourhood. This approach reflects both the actual usage patterns of residents who rely on the Precinct's facilities and public spaces, and the opportunity for a revitalized Precinct to help address service gaps and strengthen community infrastructure across the broader Downtown West area.

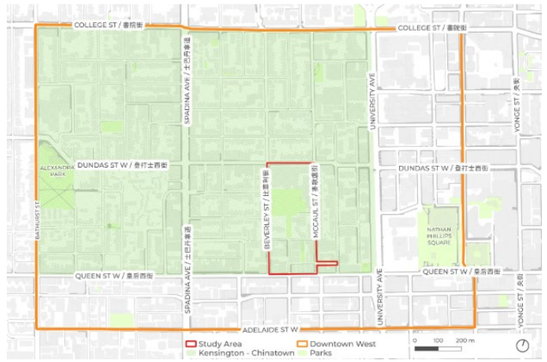


Figure 2. Broader Study Catchment Area Map

To situate the Grange Precinct within its wider urban context, the study considers both the Kensington–Chinatown neighbourhood and the broader Downtown West area.

The Downtown West area is bounded by Bay Street to the east, College Street to the north, Adelaide Street West to the south, and Bathurst Street to the west.

The Kensington-Chinatown neighbourhood is bounded by University Avenue to the east, College Street to the north, Queen Street West to the south, and Bathurst Street to the west.

The study area is characterized by a high-density, mixed-use urban fabric containing a cluster of significant City-owned assets: **University Settlement, Harrison Pool, St. Patrick's Market, St. Patrick's Square, and Grange Park.** These public assets are situated alongside major cultural and educational institutions, including the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) and OCAD University.

2.4.1 Overview of City Assets of Interest

Map 1: Grange Precinct and City-Owned Properties and Right-of-Ways

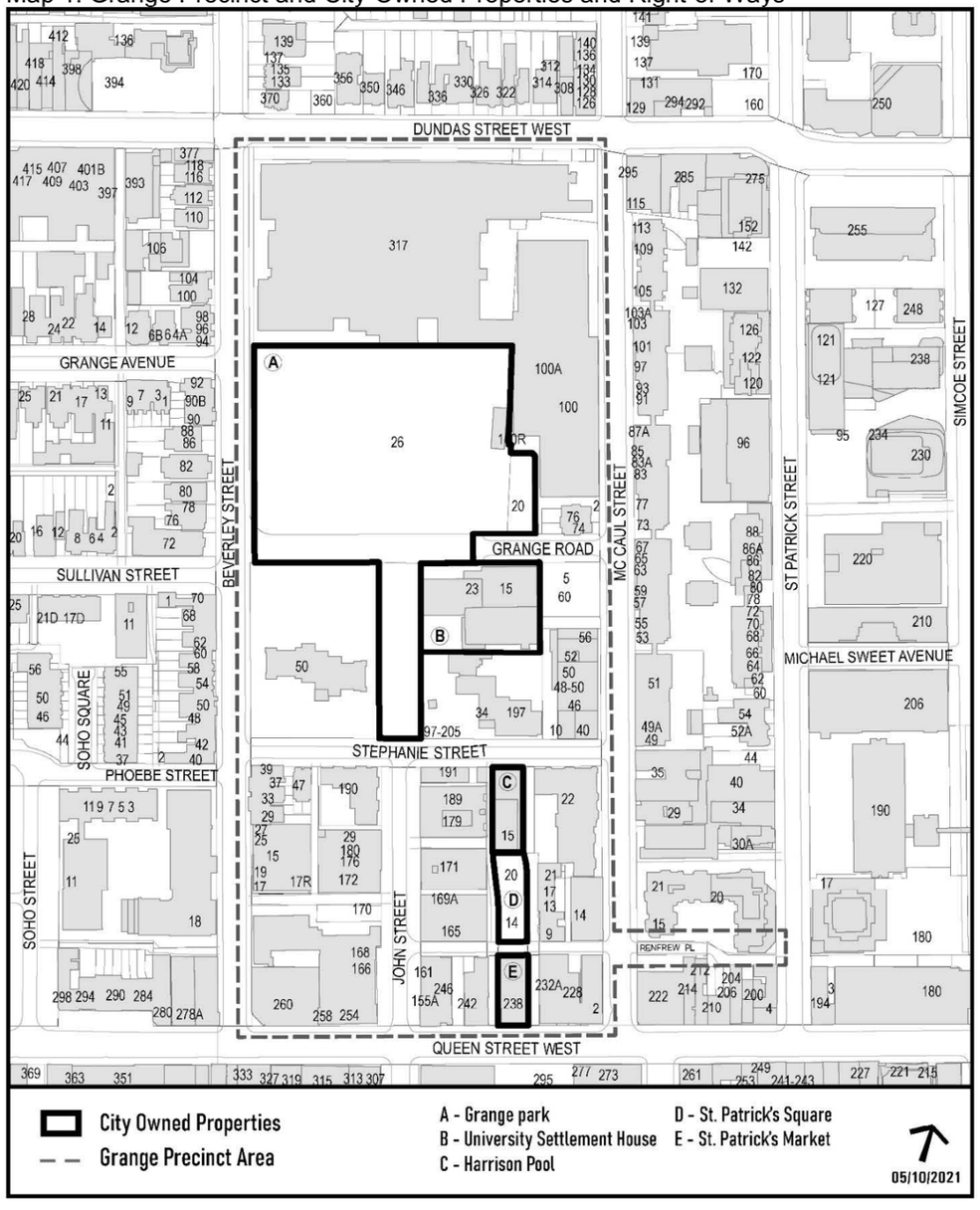


Figure 3. Map of Grange Precinct and City-Owned Properties and Rights of Way (Source: City of Toronto)

University Settlement

23 Grange Road, Toronto (Courtesy of Chun Fu Liu)

- **ADDRESS:** 23 Grange Road
- **YEAR:** Established 1910
- **SIZE:** Not specified (multi-building community campus)
- **OPERATOR:** University Settlement (non-profit)
- **STATUS:** Active community hub

University Settlement was established in 1910 as part of the settlement house movement, founded by University of Toronto faculty and students to support newcomers and working-class communities in and around St. John's Ward. Over time, it expanded into a major community institution in Downtown West, adapting its programs and facilities to respond to changing neighbourhood needs.

Today, the organization functions as a multi-purpose community hub delivering a wide range of services, including licensed childcare, children and youth programming, settlement services for newcomers, English language training, seniors programming, and employment and financial support services. It also hosts an indoor pool, gymnasium, fitness centre, and the Music & Arts School at University Settlement—the oldest community music school in Toronto. Many programs are offered free of charge or at subsidized rates to support access for low-income households and vulnerable populations.

University Settlement operates key components of the facility through a Board of Management established under the Community Centres Act and City of Toronto By-law No. 20624, through which it delivers programs and services on behalf of the City.

Harrison Pool

215 Stephanie St. (Courtesy of Chun Fu Liu)

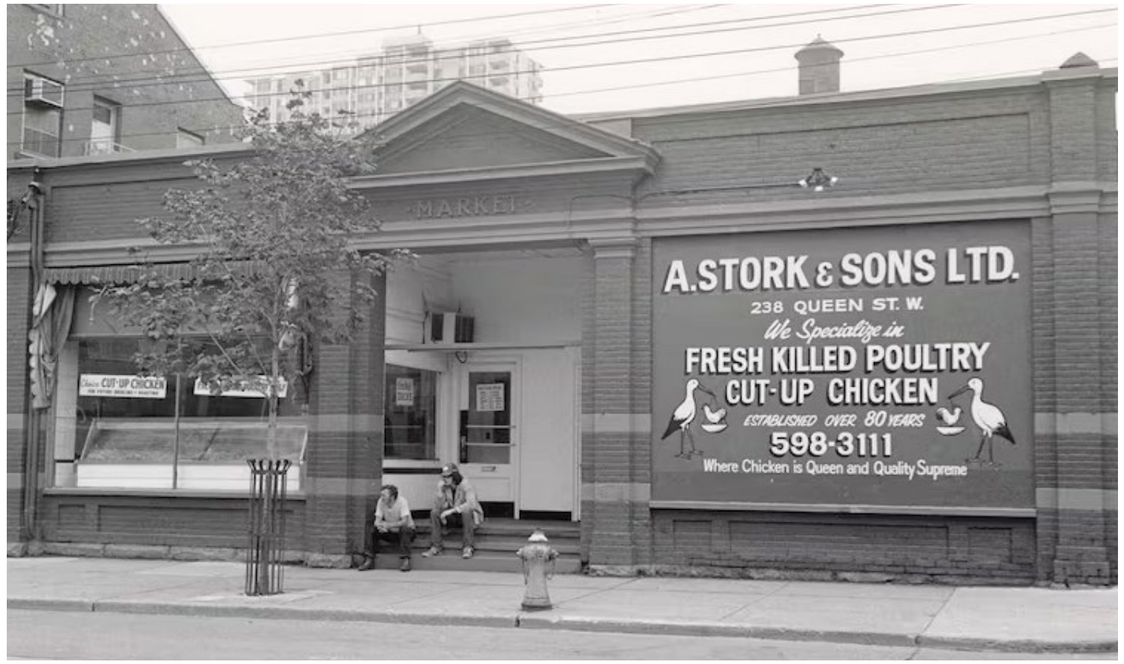
- **ADDRESS:** 15 Stephanie Street
- **YEAR:** Original bathhouse 1909 (current facility later rebuilt)
- **SIZE:** Not specified (includes 20-yard indoor pool)
- **OPERATOR:** City of Toronto (Parks, Forestry and Recreation)
- **STATUS:** Active public recreation facility

Harrison Pool is a City-owned indoor recreational facility operated by the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division. It includes a 20-yard indoor pool and change rooms, offering free drop-in aquatic programming for residents. As one of the few publicly accessible aquatic facilities in the neighbourhood, it serves as an important amenity for health, hygiene, and social interaction—particularly for residents experiencing housing instability.

The site originated as the Harrison Public Baths, opened in 1909 as Toronto's first public bathhouse to address public health needs in St. John's Ward, offering bathing and laundry facilities to residents lacking indoor plumbing.[1]

[1] Healthcare Legacies: The Harrison Public Baths – Heritage Toronto

St. Patrick's Market



238 Queen St West

- **ADDRESS:** 238 Queen Street West
- **YEAR:** Site established 1836; current building 1912
- **SIZE:** Not specified
- **OPERATOR:** City of Toronto
- **STATUS:** Vacant (City regained control in 2019)

St. Patrick's Market is a historic City-owned market building on Queen Street West that is, currently vacant. The site was established in 1836 when D'Arcy Boulton granted the land to the City for permanent market use. A new building was constructed in 1912 after the original was destroyed by fire, but the site later shifted away from its market function and was occupied by a poultry-processing operation for several decades. The City leased the building for redevelopment as a neighbourhood food market in 1989; after ongoing operational and legal challenges, the City regained control in 2019. Located within the Queen Street West BIA and adjacent to St. Patrick's Square and Harrison Pool, the site's heritage character and central location provide context for considering future food-related and community-serving uses.[2]

The City's Economic Development and Culture Division in collaboration with City divisions and community partners to develop policies and strategies to improve the establishment, sustainability and promotion of Toronto's Public Markets Sector through the creation of a Public Markets Action Plan. The action plan is still in development and includes short term and long term direction for the activation of St. Patricks Market.

[2] Good Eats: St. Patrick's Market (Heritage Toronto)

St. Patrick's Square

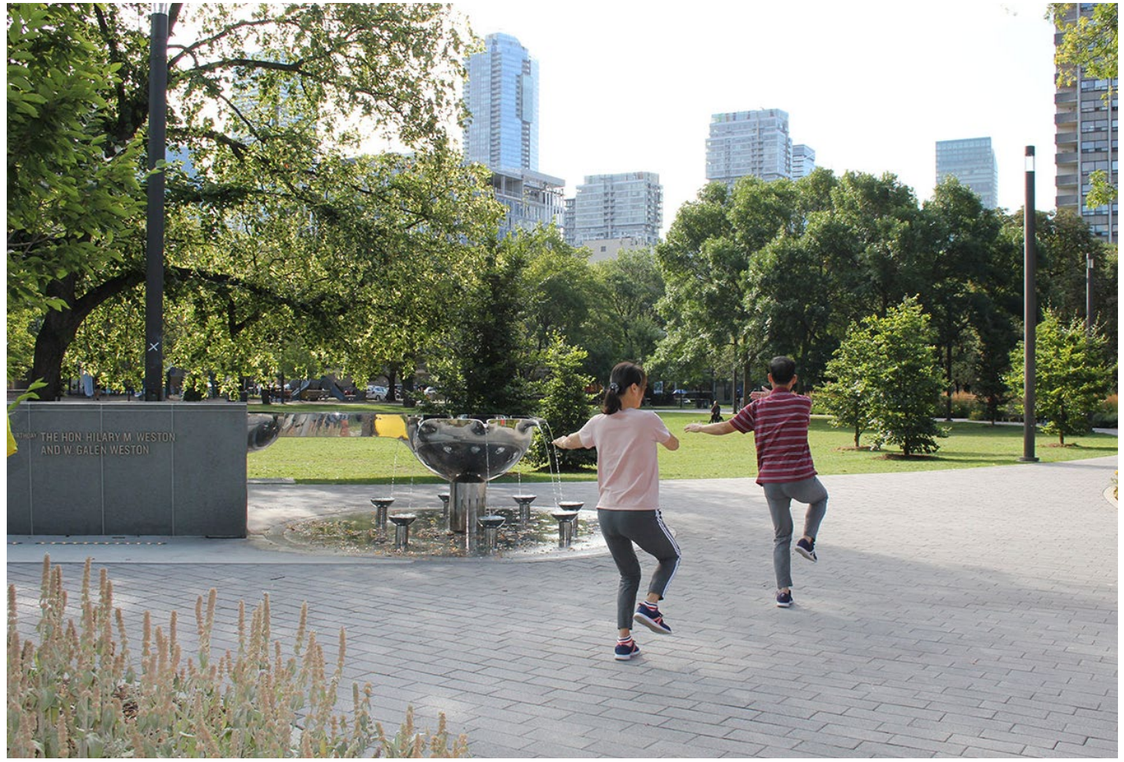
14-20 St. Patrick's Square

- **ADDRESS:** 14–20 St. Patrick's Square
- **YEAR:** Not specified (contemporary public space)
- **SIZE:** Small urban open space
- **OPERATOR:** City of Toronto
- **STATUS:** Active but underutilized public space

St. Patrick's Square is a small, publicly accessible open space that provides seating, a drinking fountain, and opportunities for passive recreation within the Queen Street West corridor. Despite its central location adjacent to St. Patrick's Market and several institutional and community facilities, the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (2018) found that the square captures only about two percent of weekday pedestrians — suggesting significant untapped potential as an active public space.[3]

[3] Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan: Public Space Public Life Study (City of Toronto)

Grange Park



20-26 Grange Park Road

- **ADDRESS:** 20–26 Grange Park Road
- **YEAR:** Estate 1817; public park formalized 1911; revitalized 2017
- **SIZE:** 1.8 hectares
- **OPERATOR:** City of Toronto (with AGO partnership)
- **STATUS:** Active public park

Grange Park is a 1.8-hectare public park adjacent to the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), owned by the AGO and operated by the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division. It offers a range of recreation amenities, including a playground, splash pad, wading pool, dog off-leash area, open lawn, picnic space, and washrooms, and is used by a wide range of residents, families, workers, students, and visitors to surrounding institutions. Local service organizations also use the park for programming ranging from festivals to summer camps.

The park was originally part of the Grange estate, built in 1817 by the Boulton family. In 1910, Harriet Boulton Smith bequeathed the estate to the Art Museum of Toronto (now the AGO) with the condition that the surrounding lands remain a public park, formalized through a 1911 agreement with the City. The park was later expanded in the 1970s and underwent a major revitalization in 2017 through a partnership between the City, the AGO, and community stakeholders.[4]

[4] Grange Park » History ; Grange Park

2.4.2 Service Provider Ecosystem

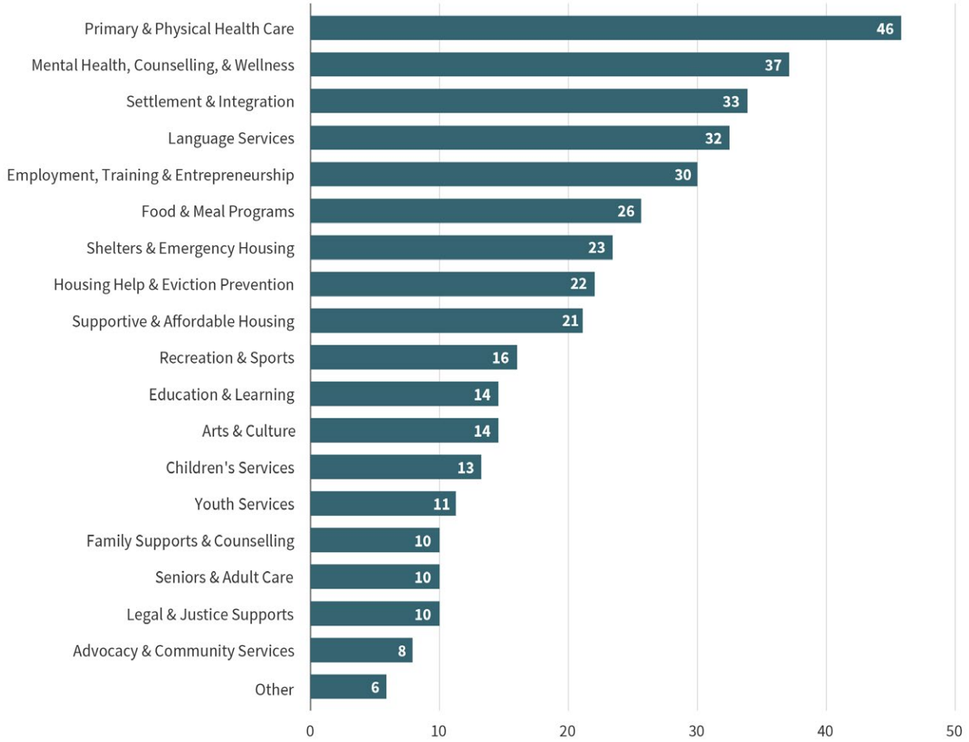


Figure 4. Count of Programs by Type in the Study Area

An overview of the local service landscape was developed using 211 data. This data identifies 139 organizations across the Kensington–Chinatown and King–Spadina neighbourhoods, with a smaller concentration in King–Spadina. King–Spadina is included to capture nearby services accessed by Precinct users and to reflect the broader service network supporting the area.

Organizations may be assigned to multiple categories in the chart above, as many service providers offer a range of programs. For example, community centres that provide recreation, settlement, and youth services. One limitation of this approach is that while organizations may offer multiple programs overall, not all of those services are necessarily available at their specific location within these neighbourhoods. In some cases, the address listed within the study area represents an administrative office, while programs may be delivered at other sites across the city.

Overall, the distribution of organizations indicates a diverse ecosystem of service providers within the Kensington-Chinatown and King-Spadina neighbourhoods, including health, settlement, employment, and community support services that contribute to the broader social infrastructure surrounding the Grange Precinct.

2.4.3 Population Details

The study area (*see Figure 2*) reflects the broader service catchment used for population analysis. This includes the entire Kensington-Chinatown neighbourhood and portions of adjacent downtown neighbourhoods, including Wellington Place and the Yonge-Bay Corridor. These geographies are used based on available population data boundaries to approximate conditions in the surrounding Downtown West area, recognizing that they do not align precisely with the Precinct.

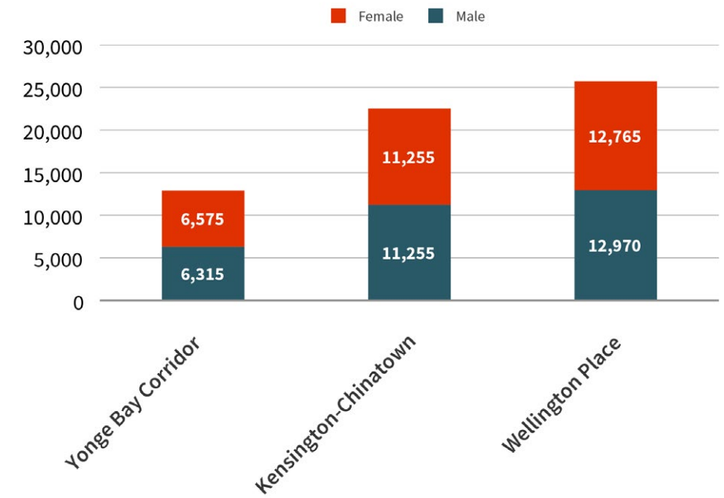


Figure 5. *Population within the Three Neighbourhoods (Source: Statistics Canada, 2021)*

Among these three neighbourhoods, **Wellington Place has the largest population**, while **Yonge-Bay Corridor has the smallest** (*Figure 5*). Roughly 22,510 people currently live in the Kensington-Chinatown neighbourhood. Considering development applications proposed for the Kensington-Chinatown area, City staff project that its population could increase by nearly 80%, reaching between 32,000 and 32,600 once complete.

Age Distribution

All three neighbourhoods see a lower proportion of children (under 19) than the city's average. Similarly, **the proportion of residents aged 55 and older is lower than the city average**, although Kensington–Chinatown has a relatively higher share of older adults compared to the other two neighbourhoods.

In contrast, there is a strong concentration of **university-aged residents (19–24)** and individuals in their early- and **mid-career years (25–54)**, reflecting the downtown context and proximity to employment and post-secondary institutions.

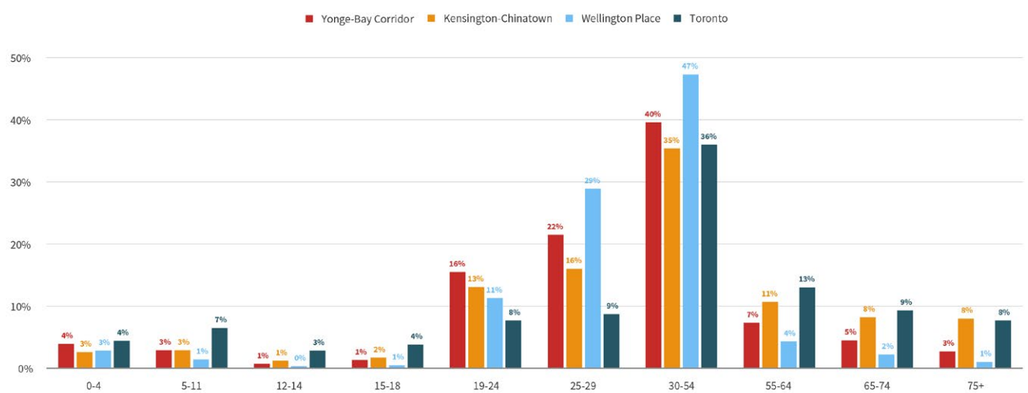


Figure 6. *Age Distribution within the Three Neighbourhoods (Source: Statistics Canada, 2021)*

Income

Median household incomes vary across the three neighbourhoods. **Wellington Place** is the only area with a median household income above the city-wide average. However, this is influenced by **smaller average household sizes** across all three neighbourhoods.

When examining **individual income**, Kensington–Chinatown is the only neighbourhood with a median below the city average, indicating potential income disparities at the individual level despite household-level variation.

Table 1. *Median Income by Households and Individuals Before Tax.*

	Households	Individuals
Kensington-Chinatown	62,000	32,400
Wellington Place	90,000	67,000
Yonge-Bay Corridor	68,500	44,000
Toronto	84,000	39,200

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

Families and Children

Across all three neighbourhoods, the **average number of children per family is below the city average (1.7).** Kensington–Chinatown is closest to the city average, suggesting a slightly stronger presence of family households relative to the other two neighbourhoods.

Table 2. *Average Number of Children*

Neighbourhood	Avg. Number of Children Per Family
Kensington-Chinatown	1.6
Wellington Place	1.4
Yonge-Bay Corridor	1.5
Toronto	1.7

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

Immigration Status

High levels of population mobility and diversity in immigration status characterize all three neighbourhoods. While the proportion of immigrants is slightly lower than the city average, each neighbourhood has a **significantly higher share of non-permanent residents**, particularly in the Yonge–Bay Corridor. Wellington Place has the highest proportion of **non-immigrants**, exceeding the city average.

Race & Ethnicity

The study area is highly diverse, with a strong presence of **racially and ethnically diverse communities across all three neighbourhoods.**

Chinese residents represent the largest group, particularly in Kensington–Chinatown and Yonge–Bay Corridor. There are also notable concentrations of **South Asian, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese populations**.

Compared to the city overall, these neighbourhoods have:

- Higher proportions of Chinese residents
- Lower proportions of Black and Filipino residents
- A diverse mix of multiple racialized communities, particularly in the Yonge–Bay Corridor

Overall, the demographic profile reflects a dense, diverse, and relatively young population, with significant representation from immigrant and non-permanent resident communities. These characteristics point to a need for community infrastructure that is not only scaled to accommodate growth but also designed to address equity considerations, including income disparities, housing precarity, and culturally responsive service delivery. This aligns with broader City policy directions, including the 2016 TOcore Community Services and Facilities Strategy (see *Section 2.5*) and related planning frameworks for the surrounding area (see *Section 2.5*), which emphasize the need for expanded, accessible, and inclusive social infrastructure to support growing downtown populations.

Table 3. Immigration Status by Neighbourhoods

	Yonge-Bay Corridor	Kensington-Chinatown	Wellington Place	Toronto
Non-immigrants	36.3%	47.7%	53.3%	48.2%
Immigrants	44.6%	42.4%	36.2%	46.6%
Non-permanent residents	19.1%	9.9%	10.5%	5.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

Table 4. *Ethnic Minority by Neighbourhoods*

	Yonge-Bay Corridor	Kensington-Chinatown	Wellington Place	Toronto
South Asian	14.7%	6.3%	12.6%	14.0%
Chinese	27.4%	31.1%	15.5%	10.7%
Black	4.5%	6.7%	4.0%	9.6%
Filipino	1.7%	3.0%	1.9%	6.2%
Arab	5.7%	1.6%	2.7%	1.5%
Latin American	2.9%	2.6%	2.9%	3.3%
Southeast Asian	2.3%	3.6%	2.1%	2.0%
West Asian	2.2%	1.2%	2.5%	2.5%
Korean	5.0%	1.7%	2.2%	1.5%
Japanese	1.2%	0.6%	0.8%	0.5%
Visible minority, n.i.e.	1.1%	0.9%	0.9%	1.5%
Multiple visible minorities	2.7%	3.4%	2.7%	2.3%
Not a visible minority	28.5%	37.1%	49.3%	44.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

2.5. At the Centre of Change: The Grange Precinct in Transition

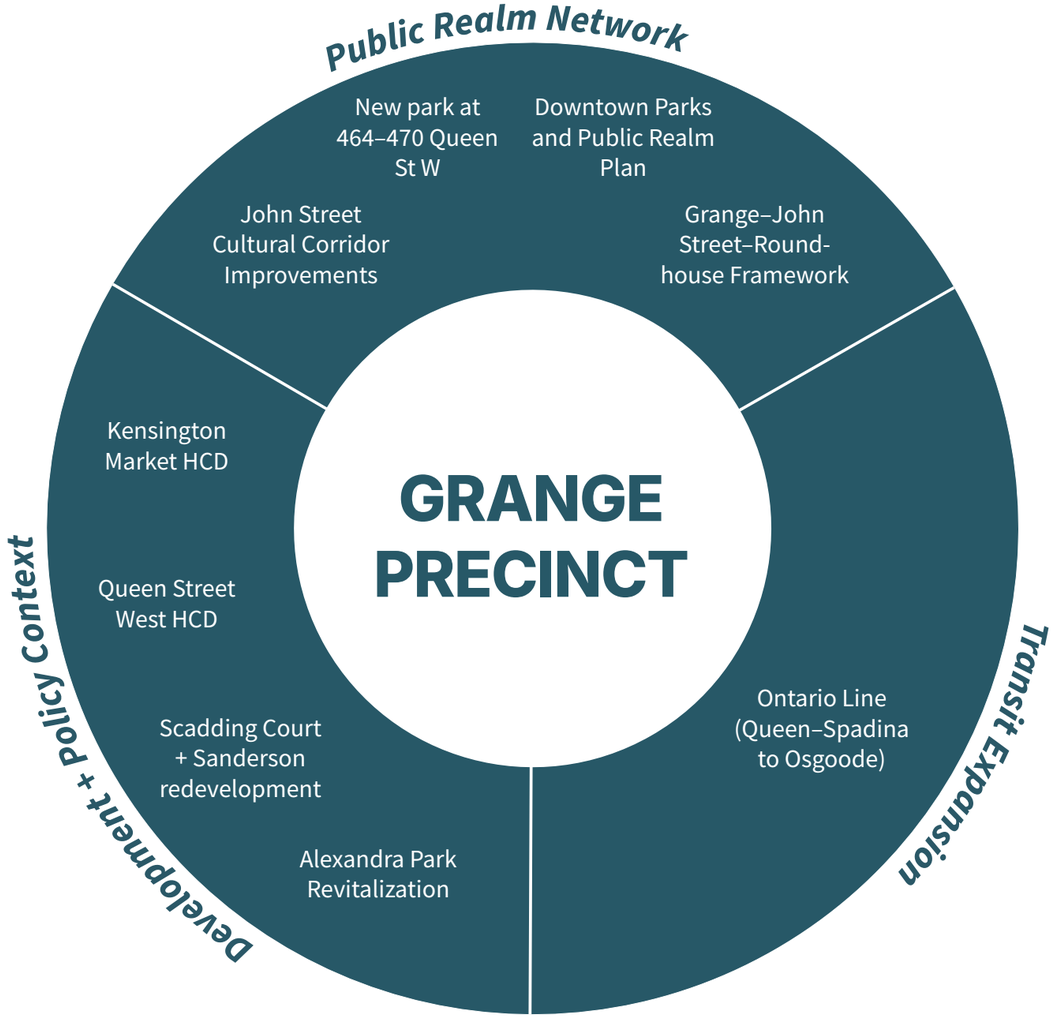
The Grange Precinct sits within a broader area undergoing significant change. Several public and private investments are currently underway or planned across Downtown West, each with implications for how the Precinct's assets are used, accessed, and planned for over the coming years.

Several recurring themes emerge across these initiatives. First, there is a clear and sustained emphasis on public realm quality and pedestrian connectivity. The John Street Cultural Corridor Improvements, the new neighbourhood park at 464–470 Queen Street West, and the directions established in the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan collectively prioritize walkability, green space, and the fluid movement among parks, streets, and community facilities. The Grange–John Street–Roundhouse Park District framework further articulates a vision for integrating the Precinct's assets, including Grange Park, Harrison Pool, and St. Patrick's Square, into a coherent and activated network of public spaces.

Second, the Ontario Line represents a transformative shift in regional transit access. With Queen-Spadina and Osgoode Stations bracketing the Precinct to the west and east, respectively, the completed line will significantly expand the geographic catchment from which residents, workers, and visitors can access the area's services and public spaces. This improved connectivity is expected to increase demand on Precinct facilities and reinforces the importance of ensuring that community infrastructure is appropriately scaled and resourced to meet a growing user base.

Third, the Alexandra Park Revitalization and the proposed Scadding Court Community Centre and Sanderson Library redevelopment both demonstrate an emerging municipal approach to co-locating residential density with expanded community infrastructure. These projects offer a relevant precedent for the asset-planning decisions facing the Grange Precinct, illustrating how City-owned sites can be structured to deliver both housing and enhanced social services within a single development framework. Finally, the nearby Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District Plan and the adoption of the Kensington Market Heritage Conservation District Plan signal a neighbourhood-level commitment to protecting cultural identity and fine-grained urban character, establishing a regulatory and values-based context that any future development in the surrounding area will need to navigate thoughtfully.

Taken together, these initiatives reflect the scale of change underway across Downtown West and underscore the importance of ensuring that planning for the Grange Precinct is coordinated with and responsive to the broader neighbourhood context.



2.6 Overview of Other Reports Grounding this work

The documents outlined below provide the technical justification for the project and define the specific parameters for the Real Estate Strategy. They also convey community priorities as they relate to land use, planning, and Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE).

TO Core Downtown Plan (2019)

The **TOcore Downtown Plan (Official Plan Amendment 406)**, approved in 2019, establishes a 25-year planning framework to manage growth and ensure that Downtown Toronto remains a liveable, economically competitive, and complete community. Recognizing that population and employment growth in the downtown core is outpacing the provision of supporting infrastructure, the plan directs growth to appropriate areas while ensuring development contributes to complete communities supported by adequate services and amenities.[5]

RELEVANCE!
Implementation of the plan is guided by five infrastructure strategies addressing key components of downtown livability: community services and facilities, parks and public realm, mobility, energy, and water.[6] Together, these strategies coordinate infrastructure investment and planning to support continued growth while strengthening public spaces, transit connectivity, and community infrastructure. The Grange Precinct sits within this broader downtown planning framework, in which future changes must consider the relationships among development, public space, and community services.

TOcore Community Services & Facilities Study (2016)

The TOcore Community Services & Facilities Study is a foundational assessment that diagnosed the critical lack of affordable, appropriate, and accessible space as the primary barrier to service delivery in the downtown core. It specifically identified the Harrison Pool and University Settlement as future opportunity sites to explore.

RELEVANCE!
The study established the requirement to explore interdivisional partnerships and co-location models. It directed the engagement to test the viability of integrated "community hubs" as a solution to spatial fragmentation and validates the need to replace aging, standalone facilities with intensified, multi-purpose infrastructure.

Downtown Community Services & Facilities Strategy (2018)

The Downtown Community Services & Facilities Strategy, is one of the five infrastructure strategies of the TOCore Downtown Plan, provided the implementation framework to support the projected doubling of the downtown population to over 475,000 residents by 2041. It quantifies specific sector deficits, including the need for new community recreation centres, expanded library branches, and thousands of new child care spaces.

RELEVANCE!
The Strategy provides the policy rationale for securing "net-new" social infrastructure through development. The GPEP findings, therefore, consider the long-term service capacity required to support a significantly growing downtown population.

Downtown West Facilities Review (2021)

City Council Decision EC23.2 (2021) directs CreateTO, in collaboration with the Downtown West Interdivisional Working Group, to advance Phase Two of the Grange Precinct Plan. This work includes community visioning and stakeholder engagement to inform conceptual design, environmental and infrastructure assessments, high-level cost estimates, and implementation recommendations.

RELEVANCE!
This direction provides the mandate for the Grange Precinct Engagement Project (GPEP), which seeks to gather community input to inform future planning for the precinct, including site design considerations, potential partnerships, and phased implementation strategies.

Chinatown Tomorrow Community Consultation Report (2024)

The Chinatown Tomorrow Community Consultation Report provides vital contextual data on the Kensington-Chinatown neighbourhood. It articulates a community priority of "investment without displacement," highlighting the risk that new development may erode local cultural heritage and displace low-income residents and small businesses.

RELEVANCE!
Among the priorities identified in the report is a clear call for the Real Estate Strategy to prioritize non-commercial "third spaces" that support cultural preservation. Community feedback emphasizes that new infrastructure should stabilize the existing community rather than accelerate displacement.

[5] TOcore: Overview – City of Toronto ; TOcore: Planning Downtown – City of Toronto
[6] TOcore: Infrastructure Strategies – City of Toronto

Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) Final Report (2011)

The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project provided critical baseline data on the Indigenous population in Toronto and their service needs. The study documented that Toronto is home to the largest urban Indigenous population in Canada, with over 26,000 Indigenous people residing in the city at the time of the report.

RELEVANCE!
The research identified significant service gaps affecting Indigenous residents, including barriers to culturally appropriate healthcare, employment supports, and culturally safe gathering spaces that centre Indigenous knowledge, community governance, and protocols. The findings highlight the importance of Indigenous engagement and the need for dedicated spaces supporting Indigenous-led services and cultural programming.

TOCore: Infrastructure Strategy – Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (2018)

The Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan, adopted as part of the five Downtown Plan infrastructure strategies, identifies opportunities to expand, improve, and better connect parks, open spaces, and streets across downtown Toronto to support growing populations and everyday community life.

RELEVANCE!
The Grange Precinct is located within the Grange–John Street–Roundhouse Park District, one of 20 park districts identified in the plan.[7] Community engagement also identified opportunities to strengthen nearby public spaces, including St. Patrick's Square and surrounding laneways and pedestrian connections, reinforcing the importance of improving the local network of parks and public gathering spaces.[8]

To Higher Ground: TARP 10-Year Legacy Review and Indigenous Prosperity Action Plan (2024)

The To Higher Ground study examined progress in Toronto's Indigenous service landscape and found that while the urban Indigenous service system had grown substantially, with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) expanding from 11 to 18 member agencies, fundamental challenges persisted. The Indigenous population, which had grown by 25% since 2011, continued to face acute poverty, with 87% of Indigenous adults falling below the low-income cut-off and 35% experiencing precarious housing or homelessness. The study introduced an Indigenous prosperity framework centred on *Mno bimaadiziwin* (the good life) and *Ganohonyohk* (giving thanks), emphasizing that prosperity encompasses physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being across generations, not merely individual financial success. Community consultations with over 1,000 Indigenous residents identified urgent needs around housing-first approaches, coordinated Indigenous-led financial wellness infrastructure, and culturally safe spaces for Indigenous programming.

RELEVANCE!
The report reinforces that effective Indigenous service delivery requires purpose-built Indigenous infrastructure with dedicated space for cultural programming, employment training, and wrap-around supports that address both immediate survival needs and structural pathways to prosperity. The report emphasized how future development must move beyond crisis services to create space that actively enables Indigenous self-determination and long-term community wealth-building.

[7] Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan: Park Districts; Downtown Parks and Public Realm Strategy Summary; TOcore Implementation Strategy: Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan
[8] Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan: Public Space Public Life Study

3. ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The engagement approach prioritized low-barrier, equity-centred, accessible, and culturally relevant participation tailored to the Grange Precinct. It was designed to reduce barriers through accessible venues, plain-language and multilingual materials (including Mandarin and Cantonese), trusted community spaces, honoraria, and pop-up activities in high-traffic areas. A mixed-methods, multimodal approach integrated quantitative survey tools with qualitative interview, observation, and focus group methods to capture the scale of needs and the lived experiences from which they stem. This engagement strategy was designed to produce a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and defensible understanding of community needs to inform CreateTO's Real Estate Strategy.

This approach afforded findings that reflect both broad participation and targeted insights from service providers, residents, and patrons of the Grange Precinct.

3.1 Who We Spoke With: Engagement Populations

Engagement was executed between **August 2025** and **February 2026** and segmented into distinct cohorts to reflect the service ecosystem and population diversity of the Precinct.

Residents

Engagement included Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) tenants, housing co-operative members, and private condominium residents.

Service Users

Service users were reached through agencies including University Settlement and Scadding Court Community Centre.

Agencies and Institutions

Participants included service providers, cultural institutions such as the AGO and OCAD University, and local non-profits.

Equity-Deserving Groups

Dedicated engagement formats were implemented for African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities, newcomers, seniors, youth, and unhoused residents.

Indigenous Community Members

Indigenous engagement was approached as a distinct and essential component of the project. The Indigenous-focused scope recognized the importance of advancing reconciliation, Indigenous place-keeping, and culturally grounded service planning within the Precinct.

3.1.1 Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a coordinated outreach strategy that included direct outreach to community organizations, distribution of information via partner newsletters and institutional networks, targeted social media campaigns, dedicated project webpages in English and Mandarin, and optional newsletter sign-ups. This approach created multiple entry points into the engagement process and broadened participation beyond formal service networks.

A total of **338 organizations** were directly contacted via email, phone, and direct messages on social media using the **211 database**. Our social media campaign, which combined Instagram and LinkedIn impressions, consisted of **34 posts**, reached **10,190 accounts**, and generated **27,394 impressions**. Finally, information about engagement sessions and interviews was circulated through local and institutional networks, reaching **11,831 accounts**.

3.2 What We Did: Engagement Methods

Operating within a mixed-methods framework, engagement was achieved through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Interviews were conducted as one-on-one, in-depth conversations. Focus group methods included Conversation Corners, the Indigenous Sharing Meeting, and GASP service provider meetings, which brought participants together for facilitated group discussions. Survey methods included the Public Survey and Service Provider Survey, as well as Community Pop-Ups, which functioned primarily as in-person dissemination points for completing the public survey in high-traffic locations.

All engagement methods and the activities they encompassed were informed by preliminary research, which included reviewing relevant primary and secondary literature and documentation, as well as several site visits in the Grange Precinct.

Table 5: *Summary of Engagement Activities*

Engagement Activity	Method
Public Survey *215 responses*	Online and paper-based questionnaire targeting residents, workers, and service users in the Precinct.
Service Provider Survey *21 responses*	Technical questionnaire targeting agency leadership to capture operational data, capacity constraints, and facility needs.
Conversation Corners *6 sessions, 68 participants*	Targeted, facilitated focus groups with specific equity-deserving cohorts.
Community Pop-Ups *7 sessions, 293 participants*	In-person dissemination of survey and information materials in public, high-traffic areas.
GASP Meetings *4 meetings, 19 participants*	Strategic working sessions with the Grange Agency & Service Provider (GASP) group to validate themes and identify system gaps.
Literature review and site visits	Revision of relevant texts and targeted walkthroughs of stakeholder sites.
Interviews *19 participants*	One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders.
Indigenous Sharing Meeting *41 participants*	Strategic working session with Indigenous community members and service providers led by Nbisiing Consulting Inc.
Total: 38 sessions, 655 participants and respondents	

Figure 7. *Grange Flyer*

Figure 8. Outreach Poster Set

3.2.1 Community Pop-Ups (293 respondents)

Taking place between August and November 2025, this phase included 7 sessions that engaged residents, service users, and visitors who may not typically participate in formal consultation processes.

These pop-up consultation sessions were located in high-traffic public spaces and institutional anchors such as Grange Park, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), OCAD University, University Settlement's Grange Festival, Scadding Court Community Centre's Harvest Festival, the Wildseed Centre for Arts & Activism, and the resident lobby at the Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) building at 168 John Street.

Across these settings, **293 people participated**. In addition to serving primarily as dissemination points for the Public Survey, pop-ups used interactive dot-voting exercises, open-ended feedback boards, and rapid intercept interviews to capture priorities, ideas, and place-based insights in accessible, high-visibility settings. This provided context to guide the framing of interview, focus group, and survey findings.

Park activation at University Settlement's Grange Festival in Grange Park

Family-friendly programming at University Settlement's Grange Festival in Grange Park

3.2.2 Survey Data Collection (September 2025 – February 2026)

Two separate surveys were administered, each capturing quantitative data and short-form qualitative responses (i.e., questions requiring participants to answer in 1-2 sentences).

Service Provider Survey (21 responses)

Amongst service providers in the Precinct, a survey was distributed to agency leadership, yielding 21 detailed responses that captured specific operational data on capacity constraints and facility conditions.

Service providers were asked to identify the types of social services they offer. The most commonly offered services included education and learning (11 respondents), food and meal programs (8 respondents), arts and culture (8 respondents), and advocacy and community services (8 respondents). Beyond documenting service provision, the survey collected structured data on organizations' space and operational realities (e.g., tenure, configuration, and adequacy), service capacity (e.g., waitlists and unmet demand), partnership dynamics, and perceived gaps or pressures within the broader service ecosystem.

Public Survey (215 responses)

In the public survey, 52% of participants identified as women, 31% as men, and 8% as non-binary or gender-nonconforming. Additionally, 28% of respondents identified as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and 13% identified as individuals living with disabilities. As for race and ethnicity, 64% of the respondents identified as part of racialized communities. Respondents represented a diverse range of racial and cultural backgrounds, with the largest groups being White (36%), Indigenous (22%), East Asian (13%), and Chinese (9%) participants. Others identified as Black (5%), South Asian (4%), Filipino (4%), Southeast Asian (3%), Latin American (2%), Arab (1%), West Asian (1%), and Japanese (1%). Some respondents also identified with other groups (6%), with 9% preferring not to say.

3.2.3 Focus Groups

Conversation Corners (6 sessions, 68 participants)

Six targeted focus groups (Conversation Corners) served as the primary vehicle for deep qualitative inquiry. Conversation Corners targeted groups that are often underrepresented in traditional surveys, including seniors, youth, newcomers, and African, Caribbean, and Black communities, and individuals with lived experience of poverty, disability, and homelessness via the St. Stephen's Community House/The Neighbourhood Group's (TNG) Member Advocacy Committee (MAC).

Sessions were held in person at Scadding Court Community Centre, the Wildseed Centre for Arts & Activism, St. Stephen's Community House/TNG and University Settlement, with virtual participation options available for resident- and newcomer-focused sessions to reduce barriers to participation.

In Conversation Corners, 55% of participants identified as men and 40% as women, with 5% identifying as non-binary or another gender identity. Notably, 29% of participants identified as recent immigrants, 10.9% as persons with disabilities, and 7.3% as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Participants represented a diverse range of racial and cultural backgrounds, with the largest respondent ethnicity groups being Chinese (29.1%), Black (25.5%), and South Asian (18.2%). Participants also identified as White (14.5%), Arab (7.3%), Indigenous (5.5%), with smaller proportions identifying with other East and Southeast Asian backgrounds.

Participants represented a broad range of age groups. In both the public survey and Conversation Corners, the largest share of respondents was aged 30 to 54. Conversation Corners were particularly effective in reaching younger participants, with approximately one-third under the age of 30 (including children and youth under 18), while 12.7% were between 55 and 64, and 20% were aged 65 and older.

Discussion during GPEP Community Pop-Up at the AGO

Grange Agency & Service Provider (GASP) Meetings (4 meetings, 19 organizations engaged)

The Grange Agency & Service Provider (GASP) group convened key service providers operating within the Downtown West ecosystem over four sessions. This body functioned as an expert working group to validate engagement findings, identify system-level gaps, and explore co-location opportunities. The core working group included 16 member organizations, with additional service providers participating in selected meetings and engagement activities throughout the process. Member organizations are listed below by type:

1. **Arts, Culture & Education:** Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), OCAD University, and Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism
2. **Public Libraries:** Lillian H. Smith Branch and Sanderson Branch of the Toronto Public Library
3. **Business Improvement Areas (BIAs):** BIAs represent and support businesses within a defined commercial district through collective marketing, advocacy, and streetscape improvements. Three BIAs participated: Queen Street West BIA, Toronto Chinatown BIA, and West Queen West BIA.
4. **Community Land Trusts (CLTs):** CLTs are non-profit, community-led organizations that collectively own and steward land to ensure long-term affordability and community control. Two CLTs participated: Kensington Market Community Land Trust and Toronto Chinatown Community Land Trust.
5. **Neighbourhood Community Centres:** Alexandra Park Community Centre, Cecil Community Centre, and Scadding Court Community Centre. Note: All three are part of the Association of Community Centres (AOCC); Alexandra Park and Scadding Court are currently up for redevelopment.
6. **Multi-Service Social & Settlement Agencies:** St. Stephen's Community House/The Neighbourhood Group (TNG), University Settlement, and Yonge Street Mission (YSM) – Evergreen Centre.
7. **Community Health Black Health Alliance** works across research, policy, and community partnerships to address systemic barriers for Black community members.
8. **Resident & Community Groups:** Grange Community Association.
9. **Public Safety:** Toronto Police Service – 52 Division.

Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting (1 meeting, 41 participants)

A dedicated Indigenous engagement process was led by Nbisiing Consulting Inc, designed to centre Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and priorities. This stream included an Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting, which was co-hosted by Nbisiing Consulted and Untitled Planning. The meeting engaged **41 Indigenous community members** through two facilitated activities: an assessment of the current service landscape across five domains (health and wellness, food, employment and skills, arts and culture, and housing) and a visioning exercise for a future Indigenous community space.

3.2.4 Interviews (17 interviews, 19 participants)

In total, 17 in-depth interviews were conducted with 19 participants, each one-on-one, except for one interview that included two participants. which included multiple participants from select organizations (e.g., board members interviewed separately) and a small number of group interviews.

A total of 10 select representatives from GASP member organizations were interviewed to explore operational realities and service system dynamics. Additionally, Nbisiing Consulting led 7 interviews with representatives from 6 Indigenous organizations and Treaty/Aboriginal rights-holder groups (*see Section 5*).

Participants in the interviews led by Nbisiing Consulting represented organizations that collectively serve thousands of Indigenous residents in the downtown core, as well as First Nations whose relationships to the land are foundational to any planning process within their territories. Listed alphabetically, participating organizations included:

1. **Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT)**, providing the perspectives of Elders.
2. **Native Men's Residence (Na-Me-Res)**, providing the perspectives of Indigenous men experiencing homelessness.
3. **Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto** providing the perspectives of Indigenous women.
4. **2-Spirited Peoples of the First Nations**, providing the perspectives of Two-Spirit/Indigenous LGBTQ people.
5. **Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN)**, providing the perspective of the treaty rights holder in the territory.
6. **Six Nations of the Grand River**, providing the perspectives of Aboriginal rights-holders in the territory.

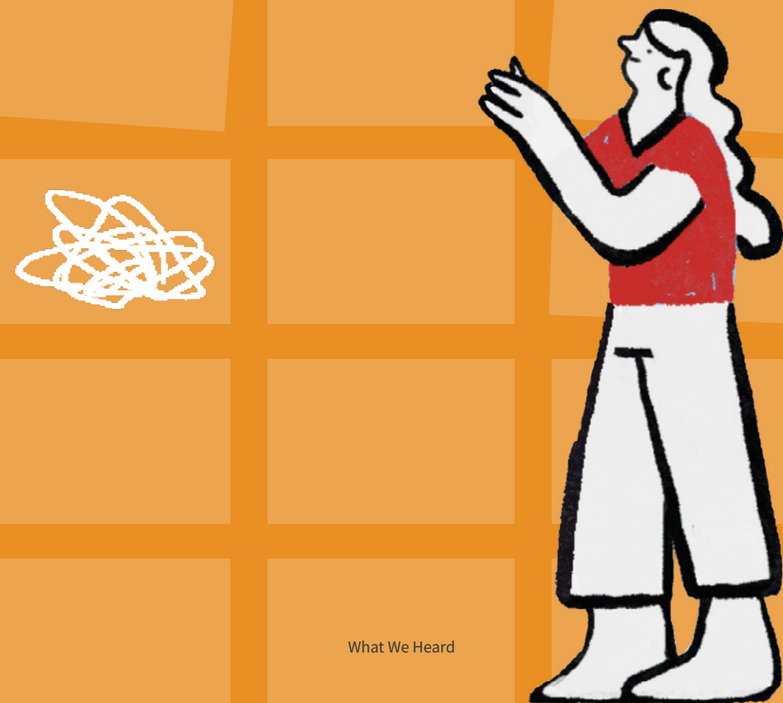
All interviews followed a standardized format addressing four areas of inquiry: 1) challenges, dynamics, and community realities affecting service access and delivery in the Grange area, 2) what would help organizations increase their impact in the community, 3) top priority areas for social services investment over the next five to ten years, and 4) must-haves for a hypothetical dedicated Indigenous space in the downtown core.

3.3 How We Put It All Together: Analytical Approach

Engagement data from all streams were synthesized to inform the findings presented in this report. Quantitative survey data were analyzed to produce descriptive statistics, while focus group and interview data were thematically analyzed using Dedoose (qualitative coding software) to identify trends and patterns. Similarly, qualitative survey data were analyzed for emergent themes through hand coding. Together, these streams were integrated to ensure findings reflect both measurable demand and nuanced community insight, supporting a defensible, community-informed vision for the Real Estate Strategy.

Community dot-voting board capturing local service needs and priorities.

4. WHAT WE HEARD



WHAT WE HEARD

This section presents findings across all engagement methods, organized thematically. Each theme reflects commonly shared feedback and a range of perspectives, drawing on qualitative input from engagement activities and quantitative data from the Community and Service Provider Surveys.

1. **Safety, public realm experience, and dignity (Section 4.1);**
2. **Service system pressures and integration (Section 4.2);**
3. **Community spaces, cultural infrastructure, and placemaking (Section 4.3);**
4. **Housing, essential needs, and care infrastructure (Section 4.4);**
5. **Economic pathways, skills development, and local enterprise (Section 4.5);**

Section 4.6 presents site-specific insights related to individual locations.

4.1 Safety, Public Realm Experience, and Dignity

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- **Safety is experienced differently across populations:** Housed residents and seniors associate safety concerns primarily with the visible presence of encampments and drug use in public spaces; unhoused residents define safety as protection from violence, theft, and victimization; Indigenous and other racialized communities define safety as freedom from discrimination and surveillance, and tied to belonging and culture.
- **Safety is the most frequently cited concern** across three of five City facilities surveyed (Grange Park, Harrison Pool, and St. Patrick's Market Square), yet its meaning varies substantially across community groups.
- Service gaps are increasing visibility without reducing need: Participants and service providers report that visible drug use in parks and sidewalks has intensified, and noted that the Precinct currently lacks supervised consumption services, safe inhalation sites, and adequate naloxone distribution.
- **Safety concerns affect use unevenly across sites:** Despite safety concerns, Grange Park remains the Precinct's most-visited facility, with 51% of survey respondents visiting weekly. Harrison Pool, by contrast, has 78% non-visitation, with safety identified as the primary deterrent.
- **Participants identified practical, near-term interventions**, including improved lighting, harm-reduction infrastructure, and design that enhances visibility and natural surveillance, alongside Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)-informed approaches. Participants also emphasized the need for dignity-centred responses that do not displace vulnerable populations.

What We Heard

Public Space Use and Perception

Safety is consistently understood not only as a matter of behaviour, but as a function of infrastructure, service availability, and the design and governance of public space. For seniors and housed residents, safety concerns in the Grange Precinct are rooted in the visible presence of encampments and public drug use, particularly in parks. These concerns shape daily routines, with participants describing avoiding parks after dark, altering walking routes, and reducing time spent in public spaces. These experiences are highly spatial and temporal, linked to specific locations and times of day rather than generalized perceptions of the Precinct.

Dignity and Design in Community Facilities

Community facilities such as Harrison Pool and St. Patrick's Market Square continues to meet demand for hygiene and basic-needs infrastructure, despite physical limitations and design shortcomings identified by participants. For example, public washrooms were described as frequently unavailable in the evenings and on weekends, creating a mismatch between service availability and community need.

Harrison Pool, in particular, presents a distinct set of concerns. Participants identified the pool's shower facilities as inadequate for safe, dignified use: there are no private changing areas and no visible security presence. These conditions act as a deterrent not only for residents who express discomfort but for the populations who would benefit most from the service, including unhoused residents who rely on the facility for basic hygiene. The Community Survey reinforces this deterrence: 14 of 20 respondents who identified safety as a concern at Harrison Pool rarely or never visit, despite knowing it exists. The facility continues to function as critical hygiene infrastructure in the Precinct, reflecting its historical role. Still, its current design and condition have not kept pace with the needs it serves.

Safety for Vulnerable Populations

For people with lived experience of homelessness, safety is defined by exposure to risk. Common concerns included theft, violence, victimization, and the absence of secure spaces in which to rest or store belongings. These risks are compounded for specific groups, including Indigenous women living in encampments, whose exposure to these risks is compounded by isolation and the absence of culturally safe support.

Belonging, Access, and Cultural Safety

For many participants, safety extended beyond physical conditions to include cultural safety: the ability to access spaces without discrimination, surveillance, or exclusion, and to feel recognized and reflected in the environments and services around them.

For African, Caribbean, and Black participants, safety is closely tied to freedom from discrimination and surveillance in public spaces. Some youth participants identified only a small number of spaces in the Precinct as genuinely welcoming and free from scrutiny or policing of their presence.

Similarly, some Indigenous community members emphasized the importance of culturally safe spaces and programs. This includes environments where First Nations people feel a sense of belonging and can see themselves reflected in both the space and its programming. Participants described the need for spaces that feel like home: warm, non-judgmental, and welcoming to children and elders.

The absence of visible Indigenous cultural presence and Indigenous-led services means that when Indigenous residents seek to access services, they often encounter mainstream institutional environments that do not reflect their needs or experiences. In this context, safety for Indigenous communities in the Precinct is not only a question of physical design, but of whether its spaces and services are structured to include, reflect, and support them. *Full findings are in Sections 5.2 and 5.4.*

Service Capacity and Frontline Pressures

Service agencies operating in the Precinct reported being under-resourced to manage escalating mental health and substance-use incidents, with staff encountering situations that require de-escalation and harm reduction skills that most have not received adequate training to apply.

The closure of nearby harm reduction sites was reported to have increased the visibility of drug use in public spaces, without reducing its prevalence. The Precinct currently lacks supervised consumption services, safe inhalation sites, and sufficient naloxone distribution.

Gaps in access to clear and accessible information about available services were also raised. Service providers also identified an opportunity to strengthen public awareness and capacity to respond to emergencies, particularly overdoses.

Successful Models to Explore

1. **Community Safety Design Audits:** Improved lighting, needle-disposal infrastructure, transparent building design, and CPTED-informed approaches were consistently identified as practical, near-term interventions. For example, *the Toronto Police Division 52's Community Response Unit* already conducts CPTED audits for local businesses and public spaces.
2. **Programming activation:** Tai Chi programming in Grange Park and Wildseed Centre's welcoming, culturally specific design demonstrates how consistent community presence and governance shape who feels safe in a space.
3. **Indigenous-led spaces as safety infrastructure:** Indigenous-led, culturally specific spaces were identified as environments where safety is produced through belonging. The importance of spaces where First Nations communities see themselves reflected in both design and governance, and where the environment signals genuine welcome rather than conditional or institutional access, was a consistent theme. This positions Indigenous-led community infrastructure as a safety intervention in its own right, not only a cultural offering.
4. **Explore a range of governance and management models for Precinct assets, with a focus on long-term affordability and community benefit:** Conveyance of net new community space to the City to be managed under its Community Space Tenancy (CST) Policy is one avenue to secure affordable, stable real estate that can be leased to non-profit service providers.

4.2 Service System Pressures and Integration

SECTION SUMMARY

- The Grange Precinct contains **one of the highest concentrations of community-serving organizations in downtown Toronto**, yet the service system is experienced as fragmented, difficult to navigate, and lacking in coordination infrastructure.
- **Access often depends on informal networks:** In the absence of a centralized directory, intake system, or service hub, residents and providers rely heavily on word-of-mouth, incidental encounters, and outdated tools to find and connect people to available supports.
- **Facilities are operating beyond capacity:** Physical infrastructure is aging, undersized, and not designed for the scale or complexity of services now delivered. Programs consistently reach capacity, with months-long waitlists reported across multiple organizations.
- **Service providers face overlapping operational constraints:** Insufficient staffing (67%), limited funding (56%), and inadequate space (39%) were identified as the primary barriers limiting providers' ability to respond to growing community needs.
- **Opportunities for stronger integration already exist:** Emerging models of partnership, co-location, and organizational consolidation offer pathways to reduce fragmentation, but many remain informal, relationship-dependent, and not yet embedded in governance, funding, or long-term planning frameworks.

What We Heard

Fragmented Service Navigation

The Grange Precinct is distinguished by the density of its social service infrastructure. Within a compact geography, dozens of community-serving organizations deliver programming across health, housing, food security, recreation, legal aid, newcomer settlement, youth development, and crisis response. This concentration reflects decades of institutional investment and community organizing, anchored by facilities such as University Settlement and Harrison Pool, and supported by nearby community hubs such as Scadding Court Community Centre.

Yet the engagement process revealed a disconnect between the volume of available services and the ability of residents, service users, and providers to locate, access, and coordinate them. The absence of a centralized directory, common intake process, or coordinated referral system means that accessing services depends heavily on informal channels: personal relationships, social networks, and incidental discovery. Some residents described service discovery as accidental rather than systematic. This pattern has significant equity implications: residents connected through existing social ties or long-term neighbourhood residence can assemble a network of supports over time, while newcomers, recently unhoused individuals, and isolated seniors are disproportionately excluded from available services.

Capacity and Accessibility Pressures

The physical infrastructure of the Precinct's service facilities is under significant strain. University Settlement and Harrison Pool, the two most heavily utilized community-serving facilities, are both operating at or beyond their designed capacity, with programs consistently reaching maximum enrollment and generating months-long waitlists. Through the Service Provider Survey, capacity emerged as the most significant challenge across all responding organizations: among the ten organizations with more than 50 staff, 60% reported staffing and volunteer shortages; among the eight smaller organizations, 75% reported both insufficient staffing and funding constraints.

The Community Survey reinforces these provider-side findings. The three service categories with the highest rates of user dissatisfaction are Legal and Justice Supports (60% dissatisfied), Mental Health, Counselling, and Wellness (57%), and Family Supports and Counselling (54%). Common contributing factors include insufficient facility capacity, long waitlists, and difficulty accessing timely information about available services. The convergence of provider-reported constraints and user-reported dissatisfaction points to a systemic mismatch: the services experiencing the greatest unmet demand are those where organizational capacity is most constrained.

Multi-Service Dependency and Coordination Gaps

The average service user in the Precinct accesses two or more services regularly, assembling support across a network of organizations rather than relying on any single provider. This reflects the specialized nature of services and the need for multiple forms of support. However, in the absence of coordinated systems, this pattern can create challenges for users in navigating services, repeating information, and maintaining continuity of care. This underscores the need for coordinated infrastructure that reflects actual user movement across the system.

Coordination across agencies remains informal and relationship-dependent, with no shared database, common intake system, or formalized referral network connecting the dozens of organizations operating in the Precinct. The engagement process demonstrated this directly: service providers operating in proximity had, in some cases, never met before being convened through the GASP sessions.

Operational Barriers

Operational conditions further constrain access. Service delivery hours are poorly suited to populations that do not follow standard weekday schedules, including unhoused individuals, shift workers, caregivers, and seniors. Mobile outreach was identified across engagement streams as a critical complement to fixed-location services, extending the system's reach to populations who cannot or will not access facility-based supports. Features affecting comfort, safety, and belonging—such as lighting, privacy, and the overall feel of facilities—shape whether people use available services regardless of program availability. Existing navigation tools are either incomplete or no longer functional; there is no single, up-to-date resource that maps the full range of services available in the Precinct, and organizations rely on their own informal networks or on partial information from platforms when supporting residents who may be seeking services in moments of crisis.

Institutional silos also impede service coordination. The GASP process revealed both the extent of the Precinct's service ecosystem and the degree to which its constituent organizations operate in isolation, underscoring the need for coordination infrastructure that matches the complexity of the system residents are expected to navigate.

Successful Models to Explore

1. **Co-location and partnership models:** Approximately 43% of surveyed service providers share spaces or use spaces provided by other organizations, with Scadding Court Community Centre functioning as a key co-location hub. Cross-organizational programming operates through models of reciprocal referral, in which organizations exchange participants rather than compete for them.
2. **Organizational consolidation:** One service provider described how bringing smaller organizations under a shared umbrella increased both service capacity and fundability, illustrating how structural collaboration can enable economies of scale that individual agencies cannot sustain on their own. Service providers noted the funder landscape increasingly disadvantages smaller agencies that lack the scale to compete for grants, with implications for the diversity of the Precinct's service ecosystem and the viability of specialized or culturally specific organizations.
3. **Health and crisis service partnerships:** The Gerstein Crisis Centre provides drop-in crisis counselling at the Lillian H. Smith Library. CultureLink delivers satellite newcomer settlement services through library partnerships. These embedded service models bring support to where people already are, reducing barriers related to access, cost, and stigma.

4.3 Community Spaces, Cultural Infrastructure, and Placemaking

SECTION SUMMARY

- **Participants emphasized the importance of cultural spaces as social infrastructure:** Beyond programming, these spaces serve function as places of belonging, intergenerational connection, support in navigating systems, and cultural continuity, particularly for equity-deserving and culturally distinct communities who may face barriers to accessing and navigating traditional institutional services.
- Participants across all engagement streams **identified a shortage of free, non-commercial gathering spaces as a defining gap in the Grange Precinct.** Youth, seniors, newcomers, and artists described having few places to spend time without purchasing anything.
- **Creative and cultural infrastructure is limited:** The Precinct lacks purpose-built spaces for creative production, cultural expression, and unstructured social gathering. The closure of the Alexandra Park Community Centre recording studio, alongside the absence of maker spaces, animation labs, and affordable studio space, was cited as a significant loss.
- **Arts and culture remain highly valued but under-supported:** Arts and Culture is the most-used service category (179 users) with the highest satisfaction rate (78%), yet engagement findings indicate that much of this support depends on informal relationships rather than stable physical infrastructure or long-term operational support.
- **Cultural anchors remain vulnerable to displacement:** Community-based cultural programming in Chinatown, including the Wong Family Association mahjong program and Lion Dance rehearsals at Cecil Community Centre, relies heavily on relationship-based access to space rather than on formal tenancy protections or institutional support.

What We Heard

Lack of Accessible Community Spaces

The shortage of accessible community gathering spaces—places that are neither home nor work (also called third spaces), where people can gather, create, rest, study, and socialize without a financial barrier to entry was identified across every engagement stream and by every priority population group. Youth participants described a lack of inexpensive, welcoming spaces to go after school. Many indoor spaces in the Precinct require a purchase for entry, functioning as gathering places for residents who can afford them while excluding those who cannot.

Gaps in Creative and Production Infrastructure

The need for purpose-built creative infrastructure was raised most urgently by youth and OCAD students. Participants identified the absence of recording studios, maker spaces, animation and media labs, co-working spaces, commercial kitchens for food entrepreneurship and cultural programming, and affordable studio space. OCAD students described needing accessible production space that could function alongside other community uses, noting that the university's own facilities are insufficient and most students cannot afford private studio rental. High-demand technical skills, including coding, digital design, animation, and video editing, require hardware and software that are unavailable in the Precinct.

Cultural Spaces at Risk

Existing cultural anchors in the Precinct are endangered. Participants shared how initiatives like The Wong Family Association's weekly mahjong program and the Chinatown Lion Dance rehearsals at Cecil Community Centre are sustained through personal relationships rather than formal tenancy, making them vulnerable to changes in facility management or scheduling priorities. Some participants described how rising commercial rents, development pressure, and the turnover of long-standing businesses are eroding Chinatown's cultural fabric. The African, Caribbean, and Black Conversation Corner emphasized the need for programming rooted in specific cultural traditions rather than generic multicultural programming, and identified only a small number of spaces in the Precinct where racialized residents feel genuinely welcome.

Community Spaces as Social Lifelines

Existing community spaces serve as sites of belonging and social connection, particularly for populations at risk of isolation. The Stitch Lab at Scadding Court Community Centre, a textile arts program serving six to ten women three days per week, provides structured social contact for women who might otherwise remain isolated at home. For seniors, University Settlement functions as far more than a service provider—participants described it as a lifeline. The loss of communal activities, walking groups, and neighbourhood social rituals has intensified feelings of isolation.

Cultural dance performance during University Settlement's Grange Festival

Indigenous-Led and Community-Governed Spaces

Indigenous community members identified the need for spaces that are not only culturally safe but Indigenous-owned and governed, where First Nations people see themselves reflected in both the physical design and the governance of the space. This principle - that who owns and operates a space determines whether it serves the community it is intended for - was echoed across engagement streams. Indigenous engagement also identified permanent, culturally specific placemaking as essential to creating spaces of belonging: not temporary installations or generic diversity messaging, but enduring design that reflects specific nations and territorial relationships. Full findings on Indigenous-led spaces are in *Section 5.2*; full findings on Indigenous placemaking are in *Section 5.5.*

The Community Survey confirms strong demand for cultural and recreational infrastructure: Arts and Culture is the most-used service category (179 users, 78% satisfaction) and Recreation and Sports follows closely (154 users, 64% satisfaction), yet the physical infrastructure supporting these activities is consistently described as insufficient, aging, or absent.

Institutional Disconnection

The AGO, OCAD University, and the University of Toronto operate adjacent to the Precinct with significant resources, facilities, and programming capacity, yet have limited formal connections to the community service ecosystem. There may be opportunities to strengthen these relationships. Many OCAD students interviewed were unaware that University Settlement exists, despite it being less than 200 metres away. These institutional resources represent an untapped asset for community space, cultural programming, and creative production.

Successful Models to Explore

1. **Programming activation:** Tai Chi programming in Grange Park demonstrates how regular, visible, culturally specific activity can activate public space, create a sense of safety through consistent presence, and build community connections. University Settlement's Grange Festival illustrates how organized community programming strengthens neighbourhood belonging.
2. **Green space as cultural infrastructure:** Grange Park functions not only as a recreational open space but as a venue for cultural programming, informal gatherings, and unstructured social encounters. Investing in the park's capacity to host programming-with adequate washrooms, lighting, seating, electrical supply, and weather protection—would expand its role as cultural infrastructure without requiring new buildings.
3. **Culturally specific, community-governed spaces:** The Wildseed Centre's welcoming, culturally specific design demonstrates how community governance shapes who feels safe in a space. Indigenous-led spaces (*Section 5.2*) and community-directed cultural programming offer models for ensuring that community infrastructure serves the populations it is designed for. Engagement findings suggest that the Precinct's cultural infrastructure needs may not be fully addressed by generic community spaces alone; participants emphasized the importance of spaces designed and governed by the communities they serve.

4.4 Housing, Essential Needs, and Care Infrastructure

SECTION SUMMARY

- **Housing is the top priority across all engagement streams.** Supportive and Affordable Housing was identified as needing improvement by 14 of 21 service providers, the highest of any service category.
- **Essential needs gaps are immediate and compounding:** Participants described locked public washrooms, three-hour waits for showers, food banks operating beyond capacity, and the absence of secure personal storage for unhoused residents as daily barriers to dignity and stability.
- **Service hours do not reflect lived realities:** Many services operate on standard weekday schedules that are misaligned with the needs of unhoused individuals, shift workers, and caregivers, creating temporal gaps in access to hygiene, food, and crisis support.
- **Gaps in harm reduction and crisis response increase public visibility without reducing need:** The closure of harm reduction sites has displaced drug use into parks and public spaces. Mental health crisis response wait times exceed eight hours, and harm reduction infrastructure (e.g., needle disposal, safe inhalation sites, naloxone distribution) remains insufficient.
- **Digital-first access creates additional exclusion:** Online-only intake systems, digital service directories, and internet-based program schedules create barriers for seniors, unhoused individuals, newcomers with limited English, and people with disabilities trying to access available supports.

What We Heard

Housing as a Foundational Need

Housing was identified across engagement streams as the foundational issue compounding all other challenges in the Precinct. The absence of adequate, affordable and supportive housing means that vulnerable residents cycle through shelters, emergency departments, and encampments without achieving stability. Seniors expressed particular concern about the absence of affordable, age-appropriate housing options, noting that condominium development does not serve their needs.

Specific needs identified included RGI housing, mixed-income developments, co-operative housing and models such as Community Land Trusts (CLT), and housing for Indigenous communities. Indigenous engagement streams reinforced housing as the most urgent priority, with participants drawing a clear distinction between affordable housing as defined by the City and deeply affordable housing that reflects the realities of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness (*see Section 5.1*).

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Infrastructure

Access to basic hygiene facilities emerged as one of the most immediate and visible gaps. Some participants reported that public washrooms are locked during evening and weekend hours, precisely when unhoused residents need them most. Shower facilities provided at local agencies involve waits of up to three hours, lack privacy and security, and operate with conditions that compromise dignity. The need for secure personal storage was repeatedly raised—unhoused residents have no reliable place to store their possessions, creating a practical barrier to accessing services, attending appointments, or seeking employment.

Food Security and Dignity

Service providers and community members reported that food banks in the Precinct are operating at or beyond capacity, with daily lineups reported. Quality concerns include a lack of fresh produce and limited accommodation of dietary needs related to chronic conditions. Restricted hours and limited weekend availability create further obstacles, particularly for seniors and people with reduced mobility. The infrastructure constraints extend beyond food banks: commercial kitchens for food-based social enterprises remain unavailable despite demand across multiple engagement streams, and community fridges face regulatory barriers that limit grassroots food-sharing initiatives.

Harm Reduction and Mental Health Crisis Response

Mental health crises and substance use are visible throughout the Precinct, but the infrastructure to respond is inadequate. Staff across libraries, community centres, and service agencies encounter mental health emergencies without adequate training in de-escalation or harm reduction. Participants suggested that the closure of harm reduction sites has displaced drug use into parks and public spaces without reducing its prevalence. Needle disposal infrastructure is limited in number and placement, safe inhalation sites are absent, and naloxone distribution is under-resourced. One service provider reported a wait of over eight hours to connect someone in crisis to appropriate mental health support—a system-level issue that places the burden of crisis management on frontline staff who are not trained or resourced for this role. Participants from racialized communities described limited access to community-based or culturally specific mental health care where experiences of racism in service settings create additional barriers to seeking support. Indigenous engagement findings documented racism in mainstream health care settings as a primary reason Indigenous people avoid seeking medical attention, compounding these access barriers (*Section 5.4*).

Service Provider Perspective

The Service Provider Survey confirms these qualitative findings: the three service categories most frequently identified by providers as needing improvement all relate to foundational care infrastructure. Service providers identified affordable housing as the root condition that intensifies reliance on frontline services and constrains the effectiveness of programming intended to support longer-term stability.

Successful Models to Explore

1. **Integrated health service delivery:** The YSM's Evergreen Centre operates a free on-site health clinic with volunteer practitioners drawn from private practices and institutional partners, including dentists and clinicians affiliated with the University of Toronto's dental programs, as well as psychiatrists, naturopaths, chiropractors, and other specialists. The Gerstein Crisis Centre provides drop-in crisis counselling at the Lillian H. Smith Library. These models demonstrate how co-locating health services within community-serving facilities reduces barriers related to cost, transportation, stigma, and system navigation.

4.5 Economic Pathways, Skills Development, and Local Enterprise

SECTION SUMMARY

- St. Patrick's Market was repeatedly identified as a key site for **integrated economic and employment-generating activity.** Although the facility currently has no active service role, its potential as a social enterprise hub was a consistent theme across engagement.
- **Participants identified strong demand for local, community-rooted economic pathways:** Opportunities for skills development, entrepreneurship, and low-barrier employment were seen as critical for residents facing barriers to traditional employment systems.
- **Existing social enterprise models demonstrate viable pathways:** Programs such as the Stitch Lab at Scadding Court show how skills development, employment, and community connection can be effectively combined through locally grounded, community-serving enterprise models.
- **Access to economic programming is shaped by wraparound supports:** Childcare, transportation, and flexible scheduling were identified as essential conditions for participation. Past programming that provided childcare during job interviews was described as especially critical, and its discontinuation was noted as a significant loss.

What We Heard

Opportunities to Increase Economic Infrastructure

The engagement process revealed consistent demand for infrastructure that moves beyond crisis response toward building the economic capacity of Precinct residents. Across engagement streams, the Precinct was described as rich in social services but lacking in the physical spaces, programming, and institutional connections needed to support skills development, entrepreneurship, and sustainable employment.

Integrated Employment and Skills Support

Newcomer participants shared a need for employment support that combines skills development, mentorship, and sustained support. The current supports were described as fragmented, with mentorship and professional connections existing informally but on a limited scale. For example, some participants identified the need for support in navigating Ontario's credential recognition systems. Internationally trained professionals face particular barriers, as licensed professions such as nursing, teaching, and engineering involve complex, bureaucratic processes that can require sustained support, dedicated staff, and accessible space for credential navigation .Participants also noted that digital literacy training for basic skills such as email, online forms, and video calls remains insufficient for seniors and newcomers, and that training in financial literacy, resume writing, interview preparation, and workplace communication is as critical as technical skills.

Local Enterprise and Market Infrastructure

St. Patrick's Market was repeatedly identified as a site for integrated social, economic, and employment-generating activity. The facility has been closed for an extended period and currently has no service role, but its heritage character and central location position it as a potential community economic hub. The vision that emerged was a space that combined social enterprise, small-business incubation, skills training, and community gathering. Participants also identified the need for small-business support infrastructure, including tax clinics, financial planning, and accessible advisory services. Service providers noted that, in partnership with appropriate social service organizations, these uses could create opportunities for equity-deserving and vulnerable populations while supporting a pipeline of prepared food for local organizations in the Precinct and beyond (e.g., daycares, health care centres, and community programs such as *Meals on Wheels*).

Indigenous community members expressed interest in seeing Indigenous vendors participate in the local economy, perhaps through storefront space or a marketplace that includes food trucks and Indigenous food vendors.

Childcare as Economic Infrastructure

Access to economic programming is constrained by the absence of wrap-around supports, particularly childcare. A past pilot program at Scadding Court provided childcare for young single mothers attending job interviews; the program was described as effective but has since been discontinued. Employment, Training, and Entrepreneurship in the Community were key priorities for Grange residents – opportunities to unlock full participation in employment and training programs are available through childcare programming.

Successful Models to Explore

1. **Social enterprise models:** Social enterprise models were also raised as a practical example of how community facilities can support local economic resilience. Participants referenced the Thorncliffe Hub catering company, a social enterprise that provides food-preparation jobs for events, business meetings, and institutional clients, including Meals on Wheels and childcare centres. This model demonstrates that social enterprise can operate in community facility settings when supported by appropriate infrastructure, such as commercial kitchens and production space.
2. **Container-based commercial space:** *Market 707* at Scadding Court provides a local example of container-based commercial space supporting small businesses, combining affordability with vendor support. The Downsview Park model was cited as an example of a market setting that combines affordability, cultural diversity, and vendor support. Community-led stewardship models were identified as potentially more effective than City-run facilities for delivering accessible, culturally responsive economic spaces.
3. **Institutional partnership potential:** The proximity of OCAD University represents an underutilized asset for economic programming. Local Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) already collaborate with OCAD on creative projects for local businesses, including murals, public art, branding, and marketing. These existing points of connection demonstrate how formalizing and expanding institutional relationships could create structured pathways between institutional resources and community economic development.

4.6 Site-Specific Insights

SECTION SUMMARY

- **University Settlement** is the Precinct's most deeply embedded community hub, but aging infrastructure, accessibility barriers, and constrained space limit its capacity to meet growing demand.
- **Harrison Pool** is the least-visited facility, with 78% of respondents not visiting. Its legacy as Harrison Baths shapes current use patterns, and safety concerns deter most people who are aware of it.
- **St. Patrick's Market Square** has the highest rate of unawareness (38%) and 32 mentions of safety concerns. Engagement participants identified the **Market** site as having significant potential for reactivation as a community economic asset.
- **Grange Park** is the most well-known and most-visited facility (51% weekly, 3% unaware), valued for its natural elements and culturally relevant programming. Engagement insights suggest that its potential for broader community connection remains only partially realized, with participants noting that nearby institutions such as OCAD and AGO are not visibly active in the park despite proximity.
- Across all five assets, participants emphasized that physical renewal alone is not enough: **programming, operations, visibility, and stronger connections between sites are equally important** to improving how these spaces function within the broader Precinct.

This section brings together site-specific findings for the key community assets within the Grange Precinct, highlighting how each place functions, the challenges it faces, and its role within the broader Precinct.

What We Heard

University Settlement

University Settlement is the Precinct's most deeply embedded community asset, serving newcomers, seniors, families, and youth through a broad range of programming. However, the facility's physical infrastructure constrains its ability to meet current demand, with aging infrastructure, frequent mechanical failures, and unreliable heating systems. The Community Survey reveals a significant gap between the facility's community role and its reach: only 15% of respondents visit frequently, while 60% do not use its services. Of those non-users, 26% are entirely unaware of the facility, and 30% are aware but choose not to visit. Among those who know the facility but do not attend, program costs are the biggest barrier, with respondents requesting free community centre access comparable to that available at Regent Park or St. Jamestown. An *Out of the Cold* program was previously operated at the site on weekend nights but was discontinued, as the building was not designed to support both overnight shelter operations and children's programming. Any potential future redevelopment of University Settlement should be designed to accommodate a broader range of services, to meet current and forecasted community needs. Vertical expansion is a practical strategy to increase community space without acquiring new land, and University Settlement generated the most concrete suggestions for future space use among the five sites assessed.

Harrison Pool

Harrison Pool is the least-visited facility among those assessed, with 78% of survey respondents not visiting it. Of that 78%, approximately 30% are unaware of the facility, and 48% are aware but choose not to visit. Safety is the dominant challenge and the primary deterrent to visitation: of the 20 respondents who expressed safety concerns, 14 rarely or do not visit despite knowing the facility. Additional challenges include hygiene and cleanliness concerns, travel time, and limited operating hours. The facility's strengths are its free-of-charge access and its function as a backup pool when University Settlement is at capacity. Focus group participants proposed reimagining the site to continue to support its key function as an accessible space for personal hygiene for the unhoused population.

St. Patrick's Market and Square

St. Patrick's Market has been closed for an extended period and currently has no service role. St. Patrick's Market Square has the highest rate of unawareness among all assessed facilities, with 33% of survey respondents not knowing its location. Safety is a significant concern, with 32 mentions across respondent groups. Engagement participants identified the Market site as having significant reactivation potential, with proposed uses oriented toward economic development and community-based enterprise (*see Section 4.5*).

Grange Park

Grange Park is the best-known and most-visited facility in the Precinct, with 51% of survey respondents visiting weekly and only 3% unaware of its existence. The park's strengths centre on its natural elements, peacefulness, and function as a space for meeting and social connection. Safety is the biggest challenge identified by frequent visitors, with concerns about encampments; however, the survey data indicate that these concerns do not prevent most respondents from using the park. Tai Chi programming was cited as a successful example of community-initiated activity that operates without formal infrastructure investment.

Successful Models to Explore

1. **Vertical Expansion of Public Assets.** Participants identified vertical expansion of existing public facilities as a potential strategy to increase community space without requiring new land acquisition. University Settlement emerged as a site with strong potential for vertical expansion within the Precinct, while Scadding Court Community Centre was referenced as a comparable example. Adding floors to existing public footprints was described as an opportunity to explore.
2. **Harrison Pool Reimagined.** GASP participants referenced the *Homeless Connect* model as a potential framework for repositioning Harrison Pool from a stigmatized facility to a modern service access point that provides integrated supports (e.g., clothing, haircuts, employment counselling, dental care). This "one-stop-shop" format could reduce the navigational burden on individuals seeking assistance while improving coordination among service providers. Participants noted that similar co-location approaches already exist in the broader service ecosystem. For example, some residents access satellite medical services at Scadding Court Community Centre. Other examples include the Gerstein Crisis Centre's partnership with the Toronto Public Library's Lillian H. Smith Branch and the YSM Evergreen Centre's on-site medical clinic.
3. **St. Patrick's Market Economic Reactivation.** Engagement participants consistently identified the closed Market site as an opportunity for community economic development, with strong consensus around social enterprise, small business incubation, and skills development as core uses. Full findings and models are discussed in *Section 4.5.*
4. **Multi-Organizational Park Activation.** Grange Park's high visitation rate and strong community attachment provide a foundation for expanded programming through collaboration with adjacent institutions. Existing initiatives, such as University Settlement's *Grange Festival* or the *Newcomer Welcome Fair* at TPL Lillian H. Smith Branch, demonstrate how organizations can come together to activate the space and attract diverse audiences. Engagement insights suggest there may be opportunities to build on this model through broader participation from nearby institutions, including OCAD University, the University of Toronto, the AGO, and other community partners, to continue co-programming the space, diversifying activities, and attracting new audiences.

5. INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT INSIGHTS

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT INSIGHTS

Indigenous engagement was approached as a distinct and essential component of the GPEP. Recognizing that Indigenous communities require engagement processes grounded in Indigenous values and cultural protocols, and that these processes are Indigenous-led.

This stream ran parallel to the broader community engagement described in Section 3, with project materials adapted collaboratively as needed.

The findings from the Indigenous engagement are organized around seven central themes that emerged across the key informant interviews (see Table 6) and were reinforced by the Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting.

These themes reflect the priorities, needs, and aspirations articulated by Indigenous organizations, First Nations and community members for the Grange Precinct and the broader downtown core. Sections 5.1 through 5.7 present each theme in detail.

Not all findings from the Indigenous engagement relate directly to the scope of the Real Estate and Engagement Strategy; where themes extend beyond this study's scope, they are included to preserve the integrity of the engagement process and to ensure these priorities are documented for consideration in related City initiatives.

The **SEVEN** themes are:

1
Affordable and Supportive Housing (Section 5.1)

2
Culturally Safe, Indigenous-Led Spaces (Section 5.2)

3
Integrated Wrap-Around Services (Section 5.3)

4
Health, Harm Reduction, and Mental Health (Section 5.4)

5
Indigenous Cultural Presence and Placemaking (Section 5.5)

6
Sustained Funding and Staffing (Section 5.6)

7
Early, Ongoing, and Deep Indigenous Engagement (Section 5.7)

Table 6. Indigenous Participants

Organization	Type	Role(s)
Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT)	Indigenous-led health/social support agency	Providing the perspectives of Elders.
Native Men's Residence (Na-Me-Res)	Indigenous-led health/social support agency	Providing the perspectives of Indigenous men experiencing homelessness.
Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT)	Indigenous-led health/social support agency	Providing the perspectives of Indigenous women.
2-Spirited Peoples of the First Nations (2-Spirits)	Indigenous-led social support agency	Providing the perspectives of Two-Spirit/ Indigenous LGBTQ people.
Mississaugas of the Credit (MCFN)	Treaty rights-holder	Providing the perspectives of Treaty rights-holder in the territory.
Six Nations of the Grand River	Aboriginal rights-holder	Providing the perspectives of Aboriginal rights-holder in the territory.

5.1 Affordable and Supportive Housing

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- Indigenous engagement participants identified deeply affordable, supportive, and culturally safe housing as foundational to community well-being.
- Affordable housing and on-site support and resources are critical for Indigenous residents experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, or addictions to achieve stability.
- Indigenous residents experience an intersection of housing insecurity with racism, disconnection from community, and the absence of culturally safe options.

What We Heard

Housing as a Structural and Systemic Barrier

Housing was the most urgent priority identified across Indigenous engagement streams. Participants pointed to housing as the foundational condition upon which the effectiveness of all other services depends: healthcare, cultural programming, mental health supports, and harm reduction cannot achieve their intended outcomes without housing stability.

Participants framed housing unaffordability as structural, identifying the commodification of housing as a root cause. The investment driving land and rental markets in downtown Toronto makes stable and affordable housing unavailable for Indigenous residents, regardless of available support. A clear distinction was made between affordable housing as defined by the City and deeply affordable housing that reflects the realities of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

For organizations serving Indigenous women and Two-Spirit peoples, housing insecurity creates conditions of heightened vulnerability. Exposure to violence, racism, and financial instability often results in interaction with multiple crisis systems at once.

Gaps in Indigenous-Specific Housing

A consistent distinction was drawn between affordable housing and supportive housing. For many Indigenous residents, particularly those experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, or addictions, housing without integrated, on-site support is insufficient to achieve stability.

Participants identified critical gaps in housing types and governance models specific to Indigenous communities:

- Indigenous-designed and community-controlled housing, including subsidized units reserved for First Nations
- Supportive housing with integrated services, including mental health, addictions, and on-site counselling
- Sober living and transitional housing models to support healing journeys
- Restoration and reuse of existing buildings in the Grange area for Indigenous housing

Participants also identified enabling supports, including eviction-prevention services, partnerships with community legal clinics, financial literacy programming, and affordable short-term accommodation for Indigenous residents travelling to the GTA for healthcare and essential services.

Emerging Opportunities

- Directions for housing specific to Indigenous communities in the Precinct include: deeply affordable, culturally safe housing governed or managed by Indigenous organizations, building on models such as Nishnawbe Homes.
- Integrated housing models that co-locate mental health, food security, childcare, and harm reduction supports within housing developments reflecting the consistent community emphasis on wraparound service delivery.
- Indigenous ownership and governance of housing, while recognizing the complexity of governance in this territory, given the diversity of perspectives among First Nations and the broader community.

5.2 Culturally Safe, Indigenous-Led Spaces

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- Participants expressed a strong desire for Indigenous-led, governed, and owned spaces in the Grange Precinct and downtown core. These spaces, described as community centres, art centres, ceremonial grounds, and medicine gardens, must be designed with Indigenous cultural priorities from the outset, not incorporated as an afterthought.
- The demand for culturally safe space extends beyond physical infrastructure to encompass governance, accessibility, and the principle that Indigenous communities must own, manage, and regulate the spaces that serve them.
- Indigenous ownership and governance of spaces were identified as non-negotiable across engagement.

What We Heard

The call for culturally safe, Indigenous-led spaces was among the most consistent themes in the Indigenous engagement. Every participating organization articulated some dimension of this need, whether focused on the physical design of buildings, the governance structures determining how space is managed, or the principle that Indigenous communities must lead and own the spaces intended to serve them.

A recurring concern was that cultural design elements are consistently deprioritized in the planning and design of community facilities. Participants described experiences in which Indigenous cultural components—including ceremonial spaces, medicine gardens, and culturally appropriate materials—were sometimes treated as optional additions rather than core design requirements. When Indigenous clients enter a space and encounter design elements that reflect their cultures and protocols, it signals that the space was designed with them in mind; the absence of such elements communicates the opposite.

The principle that Indigenous spaces must be Indigenous-led and that multiple participants be Indigenous-owned was stated as a requirement. When Indigenous organizations own the spaces they operate from, they gain leverage, stability, and the capacity to determine their own programming. Conversely, when spaces are managed through mainstream mechanisms, Indigenous organizations reported significant barriers to access and cultural appropriateness. Participants articulated specific spatial requirements, including indoor community gathering spaces, outdoor ceremonial areas, HVAC systems designed to accommodate smudging, spaces for full moon ceremonies and drum circles, sacred fire areas, and commercial kitchens for feasts. The need for rapid, low-barrier access to space for ceremonies, feasts, and gatherings was identified as a critical gap—current City booking processes were described as too slow and bureaucratic to meet the urgency often required by Indigenous cultural practices. Indigenous ownership and governance of spaces, while recognized as a priority, are complex in this territory given the diversity of perspectives among First Nations and the broader community, and will require further study and focused engagement.

Emerging Opportunities

- **Outdoor ceremonial and cultural space and medicine gardens**, ceremony areas, and access to green space for cultural programming, which were identified as essential and currently unavailable to several organizations.
- **Low-barrier, Indigenous-managed booking**: Indigenous management of scheduling and access, with rapid turnaround for time-sensitive cultural events, should be considered for inclusion in the governance model of any new Indigenous space.

5.3 Integrated, Wrap-Around Services

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- Indigenous agencies described a strong consensus around integrated, co-located service models that bring health, social, housing, and cultural supports together under one roof or within coordinated delivery networks.
- Mobile outreach was identified as essential for reaching homeless and disconnected Indigenous populations who cannot or will not access fixed-location services.
- The Medicine Wheel framework, addressing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, was articulated as the foundational model for holistic service delivery.
- Integrated, wrap-around service delivery was identified as essential for addressing the interconnected barriers facing urban Indigenous communities.

What We Heard

The call for integrated, wrap-around services was a recurring theme across the Indigenous engagement. The dominant vision was a co-located service model in which diverse supports are available within a single facility or coordinated campus—essential for populations experiencing multiple, overlapping barriers, including homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges, and disconnection from community.

The geographic concentration of Indigenous services in the Downtown East was identified as a structural inequity. While the downtown east corridor has a higher density of Indigenous-specific service providers, the downtown west and Grange area have very few, creating a service desert for Indigenous people living, working, or experiencing homelessness in the western downtown core.

One participant articulated a holistic service model rooted in the Medicine Wheel framework, in which programming addresses four interconnected dimensions of well-being: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. This framework was presented as a practical organizing principle for integrated service delivery, with implications for facility design, staffing models, and partnership structures. A facility designed to support this model would need to accommodate clinical health services, counselling, cultural and ceremonial programming, and community-building activities within a single coordinated environment.

Mobile outreach was identified as a critical complement to fixed-location services for Indigenous populations who cannot or will not access facility-based services. Community members described a vision for an Indigenous gathering centre run by Indigenous people, with a kitchen, a ceremonial space, rooms for temporary use, medical services, and Indigenous community navigators as dedicated contacts for information and referral. Partnerships with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC)-affiliated Indigenous agencies for rotating drop-in service days were identified as a practical model.

Successful Models to Explore

- **Mobile outreach infrastructure:** Base-of-operations capacity for mobile outreach teams, including mobile health services and mobile visiting units, extends the reach of fixed-location facilities to Indigenous populations who face barriers to accessing them directly.
- **Medicine Wheel-based programming model:** The holistic, four-dimensional service model can inform both facility design and programming frameworks, including dedicated space for cultural and spiritual programming alongside clinical and social services.

5.4 Health, Harm Reduction, and Mental Health

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- Health, harm reduction, and mental health emerged as critical priorities across all participating organizations and First Nations.
- Racism and cultural unsafety in mainstream health care settings were identified as primary barriers preventing Indigenous people from seeking services.
- Participants described the need for expanded, culturally rooted health, addiction, and harm reduction services, including mobile and low-barrier options.
- Mental health and addiction system failures were identified as root causes of homelessness. At the same time, the expansion of Indigenous-led primary care capacity was cited as both a current commitment and an ongoing need.
- Racism in mainstream health settings was identified as a direct barrier to care, driving demand for Indigenous-led health service alternatives.

What We Heard

The need for expanded, culturally rooted health, harm reduction, and mental health services was among the most urgent priorities identified through the Indigenous engagement. All six participating organizations raised some dimension of this theme, with particular emphasis on systemic barriers that prevent Indigenous people from accessing mainstream health care.

Racism in mainstream health care settings was identified as a primary reason Indigenous people avoid seeking medical attention. Participants described a health care environment in which Indigenous people face discriminatory treatment ranging from inappropriate questioning to outright profiling. Rather than risk these encounters, Indigenous community members forego health services entirely, leading to delayed diagnoses, untreated conditions, and escalating crises. This avoidance creates a feedback loop in which the populations with the highest health needs are the least likely to access the services designed to address them.

Multiple participants drew a direct link between failures in the mental health and addiction systems and the persistence of homelessness among Indigenous populations. If homelessness is understood as a downstream consequence of these system failures, then investments in housing alone, without concurrent investments in culturally appropriate mental health and addiction services, are unlikely to achieve strong outcomes.

The current landscape of Indigenous-led health service providers is insufficient to meet demand. While one major Indigenous health organization serves approximately 27,000 to 30,000 clients annually, having only a single comprehensive Indigenous health provider leaves Indigenous people without meaningful choice. Community members identified an extensive range of unmet health needs, including free health clinics; dental and vision care accessible through status cards; harm reduction facilities; counselling services; Indigenous health navigators, given the proximity of the Grange area to several hospitals; and an ID clinic for status cards and other identification.

Opportunity to Explore

- Expanded Indigenous-led health service space in the Downtown West to accommodate primary care, mental health, addiction, and harm reduction services. The western downtown core is underserved relative to the downtown east.

5.5 Indigenous Cultural Presence and Placemaking

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- The Grange Precinct and surrounding area were described by a participant as lacking any meaningful Indigenous cultural presence, with Indigenous visibility limited to homelessness.
- Participants called for visible Indigenous art, ceremony spaces, and permanent design elements as essential for belonging, identity, and community trust.
- Both First Nations provided specific design recommendations, including the use of culturally significant materials, Indigenous narrative features, and distinct recognition that avoids blending Indigenous identity into generic diversity messaging.
- The demand for permanence was a key theme: Participants rejected temporary or token installations in favour of enduring cultural features.
- The Grange area was identified as devoid of Indigenous cultural presence, creating an urgent placemaking opportunity.

What We Heard

Placemaking—the active shaping of physical spaces to reflect Indigenous cultural identity, history, and presence—emerged as a theme with particular relevance to the Grange Precinct. Participants described the Grange corridor as an environment in which Indigenous people are invisible except through the experience of homelessness, and called for deliberate, permanent, and culturally specific interventions to change that condition.

The absence of Indigenous art, cultural institutions, programming, or design elements means that the only way Indigenous people are visible in the area is through the lens of homelessness and crisis. Participants framed this as both a representational failure and a practical barrier: when Indigenous people do not see themselves reflected in a space, they are less likely to access services located there or to feel that the space belongs to them.

A central emphasis was on permanence. Indigenous cultural elements are often treated as temporary or decorative additions that can be removed or replaced. Participants called for features that endure—incorporating culturally significant materials such as copper (used in Anishinaabe water ceremonies), stone, wood, and water features. A significant concern was the risk that Indigenous identity would be subsumed into generic diversity messaging. Indigenous cultural presence must be distinct and recognizable: the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation's relationship to the territory through Treaty 13, the Haudenosaunee presence and rights in the region, and the broader urban Indigenous community's identity must each be recognized in culturally specific and contextually grounded ways. These perspectives may vary from First Nation to First Nation.

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Community members identified specific cultural features, including a walkway with dodemag (clan symbols), Indigenous plants such as maple trees, wild blueberries, and wild strawberry plants, the Seven Grandfather Teachings displayed, public art and murals, the Moccasin Identifier symbol, night features including star teachings, and land acknowledgement signage. Participants called for telling the history of the land before it became Toronto, a monument honouring the original people, Indigenous-designed seating, benches, tables, and pavilions, and having Indigenous people providing security in the spaces.

Opportunity to Explore

- **Formalized design input from First Nations:** The detailed design recommendations provided by First Nations could be advanced through formal, ongoing relationships with their respective First Nations and relevant departments, rather than through one-time consultations. It is recognized that sometimes, these perspectives differ from First Nation to First Nation. The specificity of the recommendations provided in the engagement demonstrates the depth of knowledge available when First Nations are meaningfully engaged.
- **Consider the iconic use of the Moccasin Identifier across the precinct:** It is a First Nations-led initiative designed to make Indigenous presence visible on the land and to educate the public about Treaty relationships. Founded in 2011 by Carolyn King, a former Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, its ultimate goal is to "cover Canada in moccasins." Large-scale, permanent versions of these identifiers can be found at Ontario Place (Trillium Park), Centennial College, and various parks and public realm spaces across the Greater Toronto Area and the Greenbelt.

5.6 Sustained Funding and Staffing

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- All participating organizations and First Nations identified resource constraints as a systemic limitation on the impact of Indigenous service delivery.
- Staffing shortages, inadequate and limited access to funding, physical space constraints, and the demand for uncompensated engagement labour were described as interconnected barriers that prevent Indigenous organizations from meeting community needs at the required scale.
- Participants emphasized that sustained funding for staff is more critical than project-based or space-focused funding, and that capacity funding must be provided to enable meaningful Indigenous participation in City engagement processes.
- Funding competition among Indigenous agencies was identified as a structural problem that pits organizations against each other rather than supporting collaborative service delivery.

What We Heard

The theme of sustained funding, staffing, and capacity was raised by every participating organization, making it one of the most universally shared concerns in the Indigenous engagement. While the preceding sections describe what Indigenous communities need, this section addresses the systemic resource constraints that limit Indigenous organizations' ability to meet those needs.

The consequences of resource constraints are not abstract. One organization described pulling back primary care services due to resource limitations, meaning Indigenous clients are losing access to an already-limited provider. Another described the direct connection between staffing levels and the ability to move homeless Indigenous people into affordable housing. These are active reductions in service delivery to populations in crisis.

A particularly concerning dimension is the competitive funding structure that pits Indigenous agencies against one another for limited funding pools. Rather than enabling collaborative service delivery, the current funding architecture forces agencies to compete for the same resources, resulting in fragmentation, duplication in some areas, and gaps in others. Space constraints compound the problem: one organization reported operating with more than 100 staff in the same office space it has occupied for years, with no room to expand programming or hire additional staff.

First Nations representatives raised a distinct dimension: the demand for uncompensated engagement labour. The City routinely seeks input from Indigenous partners on planning, design, and policy matters, but does not consistently provide the resources necessary for meaningful participation. If Indigenous organizations and First Nations are expected to participate in design, governance, and programming decisions, the resources to support that participation should be built into project budgets from the outset. Without capacity funding, Indigenous engagement risks becoming extractive.

Participants were clear that the most impactful investments are in people, not buildings. New facilities without adequate staffing will not deliver the services or programming that communities require.

Opportunity to Explore

- **Capacity funding for Indigenous engagement:** Indigenous organizations and First Nations that participate in the design, governance, and programming of future initiatives would benefit from dedicated capacity funding covering staff time, travel, administrative costs, and other resources necessary for meaningful participation.

5.7 Early, Ongoing, and Deep Indigenous Engagement

SECTION AT A GLANCE!

- Participants described a fundamental reorientation of how the City engages with Indigenous communities: from consultation after decisions are made to co-creation from the earliest stages.
- The rejection of tokenistic engagement was emphatic, with participants describing experiences in which Indigenous input was sought only after project parameters had already been defined.
- The vision articulated was one of Indigenous sovereignty over the engagement process itself, in which Indigenous communities invite the City in on their terms rather than being consulted within City-defined frameworks.
- True Reconciliation, in the words of some participants, requires Indigenous communities to lead and shape projects from the outset, not to be consulted as an afterthought.

What We Heard

The call for early, ongoing, and deep Indigenous engagement was the final central theme identified through the Indigenous engagement. Participants described a requirement for Indigenous communities to be involved before project concepts are finalized—framing early engagement as directly connected to sovereignty, land recognition, and Reconciliation. This establishes a standard that differs fundamentally from conventional consultation processes, which typically present draft concepts for stakeholder feedback. The participants described involvement at the stage of idea formation, before parameters are set or decisions framed.

This vision extends to an inversion of the conventional engagement relationship. Rather than Indigenous communities entering City-defined spaces to participate in City-defined processes, the vision is for Indigenous communities to create their own spaces and invite the City in. This approach requires that Indigenous communities have the resources, space, and authority to convene engagement on their own terms, using their own protocols and processes, with the City participating as an invited partner rather than the convening authority.

Participants were explicit in their rejection of tokenistic engagement, describing experiences in which Indigenous input was sought in ways that reduced cultural meaning to stereotypes. The City of Toronto has made progress in Indigenous engagement and placemaking, but these efforts remain limited in scope and frequency. The vision described was one in which the community is given the time, resources, and space to determine what engagement looks like and to own the outcomes. The aspirations described in the preceding sections of this report will only be realized through engagement processes that meet this standard: early, deep, resourced, Indigenous-led, and sustained from concept through to implementation and governance.

Opportunity to Explore

- **Engagement quality as outcome determinant**: The findings demonstrate that the quality of engagement directly determines the quality of outcomes. Projects that bypass meaningful Indigenous engagement risk producing infrastructure without community buy-in—participants describe this as “wasted space.”

Principles for Continued Indigenous Engagement

The following principles are intended to guide continued Indigenous engagement through the Grange Precinct planning process and offer transferable learning for City staff undertaking other projects, helping to demonstrate a sustained commitment to meaningful, impactful engagement that centres Indigenous perspectives.

- **Relationship Building.** Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit is not solely about business objectives and deliverables. Relationships need to be built and nurtured with Indigenous peoples to establish trust and strong community networks. This requires time to nurture.
- **The City of Toronto may want to consider developing a dedicated relationship-building strategy.** This might include informal conversations with First Nations officials, staff members, Elders and community leaders. The strategy may include regular, relationship protocol meetings with First Nations and urban-based Indigenous organizations. Considerations might include formalizing dedicated community engagement protocols and respecting City planning processes. The City might consider participating in and sponsoring Indigenous community events, including community pow-wows and round dances, community gatherings, and the annual Indigenous Legacy Gathering at City Hall.
- **Early, Ongoing, and Deep Indigenous Engagement.** True Reconciliation requires Indigenous communities to lead and shape projects from the outset, not as an afterthought. Early and deep engagement is critical for meaningful outcomes.
- **Engagement planning should begin as early as possible when contemplating future heritage plans, including Heritage Conservation Districts.** It is recommended that Indigenous engagement take place as early as possible, even before a project is officially underway. This can be done through developing a pre-engagement phase targeting First Nations and urban-Indigenous organizations.
- **Re-evaluate Project Timeframes.** The City may need to adjust project timelines to facilitate relationship-building and to ensure effective, meaningful community engagement.
- **Coordinated, Proactive Engagement Structures.** There are limitations to First Nations participation in project engagement, including capacity constraints. This is especially true when engagement efforts are ad hoc and under-resourced. Suggestions to mitigate this include developing clear points of contact across relevant departments (e.g., Lands and Resources, Development Corporations, cultural departments, health departments, housing departments); engaging early with First Nations consultation officials to advocate and keep files moving; and seeking out avenues for collaboration, such as joint work plans.
- **Indigenous-led Engagement.** Indigenous people themselves should lead the engagement of First Nations, Métis and Inuit. From engagement planning to facilitation, an experienced Indigenous facilitator is invaluable in informing and delivering community engagement targeting Indigenous communities. An experienced facilitator will consider Indigenous values and ways of knowing and being in the engagement strategies. Engagement meetings should be led by an Elder or traditional knowledge holder, and begin with a ceremony and customary protocols (e.g., tobacco offerings).
- **Implementation of Advice and Feedback.** Throughout the engagement, comments were made that Indigenous people want to see themselves in the design of The Grange Precinct and ensure their cultures are reflected throughout. Participants expressed clearly that Indigenous space must be run by Indigenous people themselves. Given these pointed recommendations, participants expect these measures to be considered in good faith. This would be consistent with reciprocity and accountability.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are grounded in the engagement findings documented in Sections 4 and 5. Where a recommendation has near-term applicability, this is noted.

The findings reveal a Precinct that is valued but under-resourced — not because services and institutions are absent, but because existing infrastructure has not kept pace with a rapidly densifying, increasingly diverse community. Taken together, these conditions point to an opportunity that goes beyond asset replacement: the Real Estate Strategy can reposition the Grange Precinct as a model for integrated social infrastructure planning in a high-growth urban context.

These recommendations are intended to support that ambition. Those within the scope of the Real Estate Strategy are identified as such. Those addressing programmatic, service coordination, or operating capacity considerations for strengthening the Grange Precinct are included, as they were important, commonly expressed ideas by engagement participants and local agency stakeholders, and can offer critical insights to the multiple City divisions that may refer to this report.

Driven by extensive engagement, these recommendations reflect current community and service network priorities and are intended to guide future work on public-benefit infrastructure in the Grange Precinct, recognizing that additional analysis, feasibility review, and City-led due diligence will be undertaken in subsequent phases.

- **Cultural and Community Displacement:** The Precinct's cultural, residential, and economic fabric — cultural organizations, long-standing service providers, residents — is not incidental to this work. It is the foundation. Without strategic enabling actions and intentional space allocation for community service space— such as below-market lease arrangements, priority tenancy for community organizations, and dedicated affordable co-working space for grassroots groups, community-serving uses, and early-stage enterprises — built into the vision and future implementation of the Real Estate Strategy, there is a risk that redevelopment can displace very assets the Strategy seeks to strengthen.
- **Service System Decline:** Nearly all social service organizations that participated in the engagement operate beyond capacity in aging infrastructure. Without expansion of the physical footprint and service capacity, providers will be unable to meet the needs of a growing population, and existing gaps will deepen.
- **Fragmentation Over Cohesion:** Physical infrastructure changes alone are not sufficient. The findings consistently point to a need for coordination among service providers and local organizations, and for intentional placemaking across Precinct sites — without which investments risk operating in silos rather than reinforcing one another.

6.1 Real Estate Recommendations

The following recommendations address the physical conditions, types of space, and facility characteristics required to enable the programs and experiences identified in the findings, to help inform the vision for the redevelopment of City-owned assets in the Grange Precinct. They are organized into Precinct-wide and site-specific recommendations.

Precinct-Wide

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.1:** Develop an integrated, mixed-use community hub that co-locates community services and facilities within the Precinct.

There was strong consensus across engagement streams on the need for a centralized, multi-service facility where health, settlement, recreation, food security, and cultural services are co-located (*Sections 4.2 and 4.6*). An integrated hub reduces the navigation burden on users, improves provider coordination through shared space and proximity (*see Sections 6.2.10 and 6.4.2*), and provides satellite capacity for nearby agencies that do not currently have a physical presence in the Precinct. This model positions the hub as both a service anchor and a piece of social infrastructure that supports daily use, a sense of belonging, and community life.

The hub should not replicate institutional environments. Community members described a 'living room' concept: spaces that feel welcoming, informal, and community-oriented, with active lobbies, atriums, and common areas functioning as free, non-commercial gathering places with natural light and non-institutional aesthetics.

Key Considerations:

- **Scale and capacity:** Determining the appropriate scale of a future facility should be a first-order planning task, informed by population growth projections, current square footage inventory, and massing feasibility
- **Mixed-use development models:** Integrating uses such as community services, cultural space, and economic programming with residential or commercial uses may provide greater long-term sustainability

Indigenous engagement identified a significant geographic gap in Indigenous-led health services in Downtown West. While the Downtown East corridor has a higher concentration of Indigenous-specific providers, the Grange area and surrounding Downtown West have comparatively limited access to Indigenous-led primary care, mental health, addiction, and harm reduction services. These insights highlight the importance of including dedicated, co-located space for Indigenous-led services within integrated hub developments, recognizing that mainstream health settings can present barriers related to racism and cultural safety.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.2:** Target significant net-new programmable space to address documented deficits and projected population growth.

Existing facilities are operating beyond capacity and are not designed to accommodate the current population density or the complexity of services (*Sections 4.2 and 4.6*). While redevelopment of City-owned assets may result in the replacement of existing community space, replacement alone will not be sufficient to meet current and future needs. With the downtown population projected to double, a substantial increase in community services and facilities space will be needed. Consideration can also be given to different delivery and stewardship approaches. For example, conveying net-new community space to the City for management under its Community Space Tenancy (CST) Policy is one avenue to secure affordable, stable real estate that can be leased to non-profit service providers.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.3:** Develop a phasing strategy that ensures service continuity throughout the redevelopment process.

Service relationships are built on trust and consistency; displacement during construction could sever those relationships. A phasing strategy should maintain operational capacity to some degree throughout delivery, explore temporary relocation options where full continuity is not possible, and include clear communication to service users, partner organizations and other stakeholders about timelines, alternative locations, and plans for enhanced facilities.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.4:** Explore alternative ownership and governance models for Precinct assets, with a focus on long-term affordability and community benefit.

Engagement findings identified ownership and governance as critical levers for maintaining affordability, preventing displacement, and ensuring community-serving uses over time (*Section 4.3*). As part of subsequent phases building on the Real Estate Strategy, a range of ownership and management scenarios can be explored, including City ownership, partnerships, community-based ownership, and shared governance structures.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.5:** Support Indigenous-led governance, ownership, and operation of dedicated Indigenous spaces within the Precinct, through a distinct governance and tenancy model.

The Indigenous engagement findings documented a clear and consistent call for Indigenous-led, culturally safe spaces that are owned or co-managed, governed, and operated by Indigenous organizations. Key considerations include deeply affordable spaces governed by Indigenous organizations; programming informed by holistic Indigenous frameworks, such as the Medicine Wheel model; and Community Space Tenancy (CST) models in which an Indigenous organization operates as the primary tenant under a below-market lease, with full autonomy over programming, staffing, and cultural protocols. Requests for Expressions of Interest (REOIs) to tenants for future net new space can also embed Indigenous engagement criteria and prioritize Indigenous organizations in tenancy decisions for designated Indigenous spaces.

Indigenous ownership and stewardship are identified as priorities under Action 19 of the City's 2022-2032 Reconciliation Action Plan.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.6:** Integrate Indigenous cultural presence and placekeeping into the public realm across the Precinct.

The Indigenous engagement findings identified a strong desire for Indigenous cultural presence to be woven into the physical fabric of the Precinct through deliberate placekeeping, rather than being confined to designated Indigenous spaces (*Sections 5.2 and 5.5*). Subsequent phases could consider:

- Permanent, culturally specific public art and design elements
- Indigenous plants and natural materials
- Gathering spaces such as medicine gardens and ceremonial grounds
- Interpretive features such as signage, plaques, and embedded storytelling

Site-Specific

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.7: Redevelop and expand University Settlement as the Precinct's primary community hub.**

University Settlement is the Precinct's most deeply embedded community asset, yet aging infrastructure, program costs, and limited visibility constrain its reach (*Section 4.6*). This site is central to advancing the integrated community hub model described in Recommendation 6.1.1. Redevelopment could consider:

- Addressing physical accessibility barriers, mechanical systems, and space constraints
- Incorporating flexible, multi-use spaces that allow for expanded programming, shared use by other organizations, and adaptation over time
- Vertical expansion as a strategy to increase community space on the current footprint
- Continuation and improvement of current operating models to ensure programming is affordable and accessible to high-need communities

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.8:** Redevelop Harrison Pool as an accessible, inclusive recreation and wellness facility, with expanded opportunities for vulnerable populations.

Harrison Pool was identified as a valued but constrained facility, with limited hours, safety concerns, and accessibility barriers (*Sections 4.1 and 4.6*). Options for expanded capacity should be explored, including adding floors above the existing facility to accommodate net-new community-serving spaces. Any intervention should consider:

- Extended operating hours to improve access
- Barrier-free and universally accessible design to support mobility and aging populations
- Enhanced safety and dignity features, including private changing facilities, adequate storage, and improved lighting
- Flexible, multi-purpose space to support expanded programming and potential service co-location (*see Section 6.2.9*)

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.9:** Redevelop St. Patrick's Market as a social enterprise food hub, including a community kitchen, food incubator, and affordable vendor space.

Community feedback strongly supports a social enterprise model — where commercial activity is structured to generate community benefit through affordable access and reinvestment in the neighbourhood — rather than a purely commercial retail model (*Section 4.5*). This positions the market as a community-serving economic hub that supports food access, skills development, and pathways to employment and entrepreneurship for nearby residents (*see Section 6.2.3*). The market should be designed to accommodate:

- Small-scale food entrepreneurs and local vendors, including pathways for residents to test, grow, and formalize food-based businesses
- Cooperative and community-led business models, supporting shared ownership, collective economic development, and employment and training opportunities for Precinct residents (including people experiencing homelessness and older adults)
- Cultural food programming and catering capacity, serving local institutions and creating spaces for cross-cultural and intergenerational exchange and connection.
- Near-term pilot tenancies to test programming and vendor models, followed by a longer-term, stable tenancy structure

Revitalization of St. Patrick's Market would be strengthened through close collaboration with local community food organizations, existing food banks, and First Nations, ensuring the model addresses real gaps in the food security ecosystem and maximizes community benefit.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.10:** Enhance Grange Park to prioritize natural surveillance, active uses, and accessible public amenities.

Grange Park was identified as both a valued public space and a site of significant safety concerns (*see Sections 4.1 and 4.6*). Design improvements should consider:

- Active ground-floor uses facing the park to improve natural surveillance
- Adequate lighting for passive surveillance
- Accessible public washrooms with extended hours
- Infrastructure supporting both formal programming and community-initiated activities, such as the morning Tai Chi program

These directions align with and build on the improvements identified for this area in the *Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (2018)*, which prioritizes pedestrian safety, increased foot traffic, and public realm activation across the *Grange–John Street–Roundhouse Park District.*

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.1.11:** Activate St. Patrick's Square as a safe, programmed public space that anchors the western edge of the Precinct.

St. Patrick's Square has the highest rate of unawareness among all assessed facilities and significant safety concerns, yet its central location adjacent to Harrison Pool and the future Market site positions it as a key connective public space (*Section 4.6*). Activation should prioritize regular programming, improved lighting, and placemaking and design interventions that increase visibility, activation, and pedestrian flow. The Square should be considered in conjunction with the Market redevelopment or revitalization, as each has the potential to animate and reinforce the other.

6.2 Programmatic Recommendations

These recommendations address both immediate programming priorities that can be advanced within existing facilities and longer-term service models that should be integrated into future redevelopment and operational planning.

Near-Term Programming Priorities

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.1:** Better leverage existing facilities and spaces through flexible use, extended hours, and improved coordination.

The findings point to near-term opportunities that do not require capital investment to realize. Many existing assets are underutilized, not for lack of demand, but due to limitations in visibility, flexibility, and coordination. Service providers and City divisions can explore more flexible use of existing space through shared or multi-use arrangements, extended hours, and rotational programming by multiple organizations. Investing in shared referral systems and public-facing service navigation tools (*see Section 6.4.1*) can meaningfully improve access to existing programs while longer-term redevelopment is underway.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.2:** Ensure dedicated programming and services models for populations with distinct access needs.

Resident and service provider insights that many residents face barriers to accessing services when programming is designed primarily around generalized service models. Equity-deserving populations often require tailored programming, trusted entry points, and service delivery approaches that reflect different schedules, cultural contexts, language needs, and lived realities.

Facility planning and operating agreements are strengthened by dedicated programming streams for these populations, supported by partnerships with community organizations or service providers that can help reduce barriers to access, strengthen trust, and improve long-term participation and responsiveness.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.3:** Strengthen food security through a continuum of supports that address immediate access, dignity, and long-term food resilience.

Food security emerged as a cross-cutting concern across multiple engagement streams. Participants emphasized that food security is not only about emergency access, but also affordability, cultural appropriateness, dignity, and opportunities for community connection, economic participation, and self-determination.

Food security is best approached as a continuum—from immediate access to long-term resilience—rather than solely through emergency food provision. This means pairing immediate food access with longer-term supports that build dignity, food skills, community connection, and opportunities for residents to participate in local food systems and food-based economic activity. Delivery can be strengthened through co-design with local food organizations, existing food banks, and First Nations to ensure programming fills genuine gaps, builds on existing assets, and avoids duplication.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.4:** Expand harm reduction and crisis response services within the Precinct.

Engagement findings documented significant gaps in harm reduction services, with residents and service providers identifying increased public drug use and heightened safety risks for unhoused individuals (*see Sections 4.1 and 4.6*). Limited public awareness of available supports and overdose response practices was also identified as a barrier to safety and timely intervention. Service providers highlighted the opportunity to approach harm reduction as both a service and a public safety response, including, expanding access to supervised consumption services, mobile outreach, overdose prevention programming, and public education on overdose response and naloxone use. Increasing awareness can reduce stigma, improve emergency response times, and strengthen community capacity to respond to crises.

These supports can be integrated into facility planning for the community hub, with extended hours that reflect the realities of need beyond standard business hours (*see Section 6.3.1*).

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.5:** Maintain ongoing community engagement and transparent public access to Precinct information throughout implementation.

The engagement process built significant trust, participation, and coordination among residents, youth, service providers, and community organizations, and these should continue beyond this report. Subsequent phases stemming from the Real Estate Strategy can build on this momentum through consistent opportunities for residents, service users, and local organizations to remain involved in design, implementation, and operational planning. Maintaining this continuity supports stronger coordination across organizations, reduces service duplication, improves service providers' ability to plan accordingly, and strengthens community trust.

Targeted engagement approaches can be tailored to different populations and leverage trusted frontline organizations and service providers to help reach communities that may otherwise be excluded. This can build on approaches such as the GASP stakeholder group, which provided a strong foundation and reference point for continued collaborative, multi-sector engagement, and reflects interest among service providers in maintaining similar coordination approaches moving forward. At the same time, clear reporting mechanisms provide timely updates and transparency throughout implementation (*see Sections 6.2.8 and 6.4.1*).

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.6:** Embed Indigenous engagement as a sustained, relationship-based process in all subsequent phases.

Indigenous participants called for early, ongoing, and deep engagement with Indigenous communities as a relationship-based process that honours the pace and relational nature of Indigenous decision-making. Subsequent phases should include dedicated engagement protocols, Indigenous facilitators, and formalized relationships with First Nations, all of which should be maintained throughout the design, procurement, and implementation phases.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.7:** Invest in capacity-building for smaller organizations and Indigenous-led service providers.

Smaller organizations and Indigenous-led services face compounding capacity constraints that limit their ability to expand programming, respond to crises, and support residents navigating complex systems of care. Many frontline organizations serve as the first point of contact for equity-deserving communities but are not always equipped with the training, staffing, or referral pathways needed to respond effectively.

The City can support information and capacity-building resources to help organizations adapt programming to emerging needs, access new funding streams, navigate compliance requirements, and adopt best practices for trauma-informed, culturally responsive service delivery.

For Indigenous organizations, capacity-building can also address the administrative burden of navigating multiple government funding streams and be delivered in partnership with Indigenous-led capacity-building organizations.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.8:** Develop and maintain a public-facing Precinct information platform.

Participants and service providers identified significant barriers to accessing up-to-date information about available services, facility hours, programming, and ongoing planning processes. Many residents described learning about services accidentally or through

A dedicated public-facing platform—such as a Precinct website, project dashboard, multilingual updates, and physical community notice boards—can improve transparency and accountability throughout implementation.

This can include regular updates on project milestones, facility changes, and programming schedules, as well as incorporating community input over time. Its use can be strengthened through analog wayfinding infrastructure to support those without digital access.

Longer-Term Programming Directions

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.9:** Explore Harrison Pool as a satellite hub for health and wellness services.

Harrison Pool's open, barrier-free access makes it a strategic location for expanded health and wellness programming serving a wide range of Precinct residents. Any enhancements can build on and complement the facility's existing recreational and community functions, ensuring continued access for current users. Operational planning can explore co-locating mobile or satellite supports, including harm reduction outreach, mental health services, dental care, and other primary health services, serving seniors, unhoused residents, and the broader Precinct population. This aligns with engagement findings (*Section 4.6*), which identified opportunities to reposition Harrison Pool as a more integrated service access point.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.10:** Strengthen integrated, wraparound service delivery and continuity of care within Precinct facilities.

Across engagement streams, residents and service providers identified fragmented service delivery as a major barrier to both accessing and providing it. This highlights the need for stronger continuity of care. Future facility planning can support this through integrated service models that enable shared intake, coordinated referrals, trusted relationships, and long-term follow-up. Within the integrated community hub, co-locating social supports can reduce burden on users, improve coordination among providers, and strengthen the Precinct's broader community service network (*see Section 6.4.2*).

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.2.11:** Develop a coordinated cross-divisional strategy for Indigenous community development, in partnership with Indigenous organizations and First Nations.

The needs identified through Indigenous engagement — housing, health, economic participation, and cultural infrastructure — span multiple City mandates and cannot be addressed through the Real Estate Strategy alone. A coordinated approach across relevant City divisions, developed in partnership with Indigenous organizations and First Nations, would ensure that in subsequent phases of the Real Estate Strategy, any Indigenous-related directions are implemented as part of a broader, sustained commitment to Reconciliation (as outlined in the City's 2022 - 2032 Reconciliation Action Plan) and self-determination rather than as isolated interventions.

6.3 Design Principles

The following recommendations focus on how facilities and the broader public realm should be designed to support safety, flexibility, accessibility, cultural inclusion, and long-term community use. These principles apply to both new development and the renewal of existing Precinct assets, ensuring that physical infrastructure investments translate into more equitable and functional outcomes for residents.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.3.1:** Design all new and renovated facilities to support extended hours and 24/7 access to essential services.

Across the Precinct, restricted operating hours emerged as a primary barrier to access for unhoused individuals, shift workers, caregivers, and other populations whose daily rhythms do not conform to 9-to-5 business hours (*Sections 4.1 and 4.2*). Building design can consider zoned access arrangements, allowing essential amenities (e.g., washrooms, showers, drop-in spaces, and harm reduction services) to remain accessible outside of standard programming hours without requiring full facility operation.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.3.2:** Incorporate modular, multi-use spaces that support changing needs across time of day and season.

Engagement findings showed that many facilities are expected to support multiple programs and user groups within limited space, creating competition for access and reducing overall service delivery capacity (*Section 4.6*). Facility design should support flexible use across time of day and season. For example, a seniors' lounge during daytime hours could shift to a youth drop-in in the evening, and a commercial kitchen could serve food bank operations, social enterprise catering, and community cooking classes across different time blocks. Modular, multi-use design reduces the overall footprint required while maximizing programming capacity and long-term adaptability.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.3.3:** Ensure all facilities incorporate dignity-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally safe design principles

Participants emphasized that the physical environment often determines whether people feel safe accessing services at all (*Sections 4.1 and 5.4*). Facility design influences privacy, dignity, and trust, shaping whether spaces feel welcoming, safe, and appropriate for everyday use. Facilities should feel welcoming and designed to support privacy, comfort, and cultural safety, rather than replicating institutional environments that create stigma or discomfort. This can include intentionally using materials, aesthetics, and design elements that reflect the identities, cultures, and lived realities of the communities they serve.

Indigenous engagement and service provider input emphasized that cultural safety extends beyond aesthetics, requiring spaces that reflect living histories, cultural presence, and Indigenous ways of gathering, healing, ceremony, and relationship-building. This includes considerations such as direct connections between indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, access to gardens or natural elements, and spaces that can safely support cultural

practices such as smudging, alongside the use of natural materials and design approaches that foster a sense of belonging within the Precinct.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.3.4:** Develop a Precinct-wide public realm strategy that connects Precinct sites into a cohesive, culturally animated destination.

Service providers and community members alike identified the Precinct as a collection of disconnected sites rather than a cohesive neighbourhood. The lack of physical connections, clear wayfinding (*see Section 6.4.1*), and coordinated public realm design among community facilities, parks, and cultural institutions limits residents' ability to move between services and experience the Precinct as a cohesive neighbourhood. The Grange Precinct sits within the *Grange–John Street–Roundhouse Park District* identified in the *Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (2018)*, which envisions a connected network of parks, streets, and open spaces anchored by Grange Park. The arrival of the Ontario Line at Queen-Spadina and Osgoode stations presents a significant opportunity to strengthen pedestrian movement through the Precinct and increase foot traffic to its community assets (*see Section 2.5 for other planned projects in and around the Precinct*).

A Precinct-wide public realm strategy could build on this momentum — improving connections among Grange Park, St. Patrick's Square, Harrison Pool, and University Settlement, activating laneways and streetscapes, and leveraging the area's cultural programming and creative institutions to animate the public realm year-round. This work can be developed in alignment with the City's *John Street Cultural Corridor Improvements* and the *West Chinatown Cultural Districts Study*.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.3.5:** Adopt layered approaches to safety and accessibility across the Precinct public realm.

Safety emerged as one of the most frequently cited concerns across all engagement streams and was a barrier to accessing services and public spaces. However, the findings show that safety is experienced differently across populations. These divergent experiences and needs indicate that the Real Estate Strategy cannot rely on a single design response, but must instead adopt a range of physical, informational, temporal, and cultural approaches to safety and accessibility. This includes improving lighting, visibility, and dignified public amenities (*see Sections 6.1.9 and 6.1.10*) while ensuring that spaces feel safe, welcoming, and accessible to diverse populations, without relying on exclusionary or enforcement-based approaches.

6.4 Service Coordination

The following recommendations address how people find, access, and move between services — and how providers can better work together within existing constraints.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.4.1:** Develop a Precinct-wide wayfinding and service navigation system for the public.

The engagement documented significant barriers to service awareness and navigation, particularly for newcomers, seniors, and people with limited digital literacy (*Section 4.2*). The Real Estate Strategy should incorporate a coordinated wayfinding and service access approach that integrates physical, informational, and staffed supports across the Precinct. This can include a consistent design language and multilingual signage (*see Section 6.2.8*) displaying current programming at all Precinct facilities, alongside low-barrier access tools such as public phones. Considerations should be made to be inclusive of Indigenous language and design perspectives of Indigenous community members, integrating these through the involvement and engagement of First Nations and Indigenous people in the city.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.4.2:** Strengthen coordination networks and shared capacity among Precinct service providers.

The Precinct's service ecosystem is strong but fragmented, with coordination remaining informal and relationship-dependent — a structural vulnerability when responding to complex community needs. Service providers described a funding landscape that increasingly requires scale, administrative capacity, and geographic reach, placing smaller organizations at a structural disadvantage. While individual facilities can support integrated service delivery, (*see Section 6.2.10*) broader coordination across the Precinct is also needed to reduce duplication, align responses, and strengthen collective advocacy. Creating opportunities for regular collaboration among service providers, strengthening networks such as GASP, and enabling shared planning around emerging needs and service gaps would reduce duplication and strengthen collective advocacy. Shared operational infrastructure—such as reception areas, meeting rooms, administrative support, and flexible program space—can further reduce overhead for smaller organizations and improve access to resources typically available only to larger institutions, helping them remain embedded within the local service ecosystem (*see Section 6.1.1*).

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.4.3:** Establish structured partnerships with local anchor institutions, including OCAD University and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Engagement findings identified opportunities to leverage the presence of major institutions in and around the Precinct (*Section 4.3*). Partnerships could support sustained community programming, public realm activation, shared facility use, and employment pathways. The engagement also identified the University of Toronto as an institution whose presence could be better leveraged to strengthen the surrounding community, moving beyond concerns about encroachment toward a more intentional and mutually beneficial relationship.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6.4.4:** Protect and expand cultural infrastructure through dedicated tenancy protections and non-commercial space allocation.

Cultural organizations in and around the Precinct, including those across the broader Kensington-Chinatown and Downtown West areas, such as Chinatown community groups, Black-led community spaces, and Indigenous organizations, depend on precarious, relationship-based space access. These spaces function as more than cultural amenities—they are trusted entry points, informal system navigators, and gateways to broader health, housing, settlement, and social supports for many vulnerable and equity-deserving communities. Protecting and stabilizing these spaces strengthens cultural continuity, affordability, and the broader Precinct service ecosystem.

Considerations for below-market tenancy for cultural anchor organizations, dedicated non-commercial space within new and renovated facilities, and zoning or by-law mechanisms that enable cultural and social service delivery in City-owned buildings can be explored in subsequent phases, which build on the Real Estate Strategy (*see Recommendations 6.1.4 and 6.1.5*).

Implementation Framework

These recommendations operate across three scales and three systems. No single intervention is sufficient. Impact depends on their coordination.

Table 7. *Recommendations Overview*

Scale	Space (Physical/Built Interventions)	Program (Services / Use / Activation)	Operations (Governance / Access / Coordination)
Precinct	• Develop an integrated mixed-use community hub that co-locates services and facilities • Introduce significant net-new programmable space to meet future demand	• Deliver integrated, one-stop service models to reduce navigation barriers • Expand flexible and extended-hours programming across facilities • Provide dedicated programming for populations with distinct access needs • Strengthen food security through integrated supports and social enterprise	• Develop phasing strategies to ensure service continuity during redevelopment • Explore alternative ownership and governance models to support affordability
Site	• Expand and renew University Settlement as the primary community hub • Redevelop St. Patrick's Market as a social enterprise and food hub • Renew Harrison Pool as an accessible wellness and recreation facility • Activate St. Patrick's Square as a safe, programmed public space • Enhance Grange Park edges with active uses, lighting, and amenities	• Introduce community kitchen, food incubator, and vendor spaces at St. Patrick's Market • Expand health, wellness, and recreation programming at Harrison Pool	• Improve operating hours, accessibility, and safety management across facilities
System	• Design facilities to support extended and 24-hour access to essential services • Implement modular, multi-use spatial systems that adapt over time	• Establish long-term integrated service delivery models across the Precinct • Develop distributed and satellite service delivery strategies	• Implement a coordinated wayfinding and service navigation system • Strengthen coordination networks and shared capacity among service providers • Build structured partnerships with local institutions • Protect and expand cultural and community-serving infrastructure • Prioritize sustainable operating funding and state-of-good-repair investment