



# REPORT: A BLACK BUSINESS CONVERSATION

*ON PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF BLACK BUSINESSES  
AND RESIDENTS ON EGLINTON AVE W.*



**BLACK  
URBANISM  
TORONTO**



**ACC**  
OPEN ARCHITECTURE COLLABORATIVE  
C A N A D A

# 0.1 Acknowledgments

This report is a product of a collaboration between Black Urbanism Toronto, Studio of Contemporary Architecture, (SOCA), the Open Architecture Collaborative Canada (OACC), and allied community members and activists. The list of report authors and contributors appears below.

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## 0.2 Foreword

### Message from BUTO

Black communities have been particularly vulnerable to displacement and erasure<sup>1</sup> due to manifestations of anti-Black racism, which have ensured that the interests of others have always outweighed our own. Eglinton West is one of those communities. It is no wonder then, that despite being heavily influenced by successive waves of Black immigrants, to the extent that the neighbourhood has become synonymous with Black commerce, people, and culture, there has been reluctance and even opposition to our people laying any claim to the area.

On the topic of Eglinton West, affectionately but unofficially called “Little Jamaica”, many articles have been written, many accounts have been given, and in most recent years, many documentaries have been filmed to capture the story of this neighbourhood before it disappears.

The construction of the Crosstown LRT and the repercussions of COVID-19 have dramatically impacted Little Jamaica. These damages, in combination with the implications of the Eglinton Connects Planning Study, have raised many concerns about what the neighbourhood will look like in the future. Since the start of the Crosstown LRT construction, dozens of Black-owned businesses from Marlee Avenue to Keele Street have closed, and storefronts remain vacant.

It is essential for those responsible for developing and implementing planning studies such as Eglinton Connects, and transit infrastructure projects like the Crosstown LRT, to acknowledge and understand that the pattern of displacing Black communities will not end unless Black people are intentionally and meaningfully engaged.

As part of the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit (CABR)'s “Growing in Place”

initiative, Black Urbanism TO partnered with Open Architecture Collaborative Canada (OACC), Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA), Studio of Contemporary Architecture (SOCA), and the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT), to co-host a two-part Black Business Conversations consultation series on February 10 and 12, 2020. In these sessions Black business owners in the Eglinton West neighbourhood were engaged in discussion on the path that they want to take into the future. We believe that this Black-led engagement approach demonstrates that members of the community are well able and equipped to plan and implement culturally safe engagement forums to not only identify issues but to also present solutions. This sets the standard for how Black communities living in other parts of the City such as Jane and Finch can participate meaningfully in city building.

BUTO considers it a duty to ensure that the Black business owners along Eglinton West have the ability to engage in and influence the policies and plans that directly impact their livelihoods. We thank each of them from Keele Street to Marlee Avenue for their time and for sharing their ideas and concerns with us.

As we draw nearer to the close of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), we remind the City of its commitment to the “Decade's themes of recognition, justice and development for People of African descent”<sup>2</sup>. Our hope is that this report, and the recommendations found herein, will prompt decisive and intentional action from the City to chart a future that is sure. We hope that the next documentary that is made about “Little Jamaica” captures the story of its resurgence.



**Image 1-1:**  
Photo of session

## Message from OACC

OACC's mission revolves around not only the physical design of communities, but also the process of design - that is, who is involved and has the power to shape our physical environment - and the effects of design on people's socio-economic well-being, the environment, and daily life.

In Little Jamaica, we see once again that those most impacted by planning and design are those most left out of the conversation. And yet, we were humbled to see in the two sessions we helped facilitate, that in spite of this and other compounding challenges, many business owners and residents are still willing to take time out of their busy days to come together and envision a better, more equitable future for their community. We are honoured to contribute our skills as designers in helping BUTO and allied organizations to plan and document the conversations necessary for realizing a better future Little Jamaica.

In this unprecedented time, we hope that City staff will take time to reflect on how we can recover and rebuild more equitable, inclusive, and resilient neighbourhoods. We hope you will read this report, and learn and sincerely listen, as we did, to the needs, challenges, and many hopeful ideas that Black business owners have for making Little Jamaica a vibrant community again.

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## 0.3 Executive Summary

This report details the compounding issues faced by Little Jamaica businesses due to ongoing construction, future development, and the current COVID-19 pandemic, as well as selected recommendations to address them. The issues and recommendations are outlined below.

### BIA relationships

BIAs in Little Jamaica have a history of not being accountable and responsive to the Black business owners they represent.

To address the erosion of trust, the Eglinton Hill BIA, Fairbank Village BIA and York-Eglinton BIA should begin working towards rebranding the area to better reflect the neighbourhood's Black communities, and providing support for streetscape improvements.

In addition, the City needs to provide more oversight of BIA governance to ensure that local BIAs operate transparently and democratically, and provide more pathways for Black business owners to participate in BIA leadership. As redress for cases where the current BIA funding model perpetuates systemic barriers towards ethno-cultural businesses, the City should make alternative sources of funding directly available to the affected businesses and organizations.

### LRT construction

LRT construction has caused physical and economic disruptions which have forced numerous businesses in Little Jamaica to close. To prevent even more businesses closing, the City and provincial governments need to follow up with immediate actions including financial compensations, moratorium on commercial evictions, and relaxations on parking.

### COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the pre-existing challenges faced by Black-owned businesses in Little Jamaica.

COVID-19 adaptation and recovery policies need to account for the systemic challenges Black-owned businesses face and include a focus on building long-term economic sustainability for Black-owned businesses.

### Eglinton Connects

Business owners are concerned about the challenges of further gentrification, cultural erasure, and disruptive construction because of future development under the recommendations of the Eglinton Connects study. The study, in its broad strokes, fails to acknowledge the unique strengths and challenges of communities like Little Jamaica.

The Economic Development Study and Planning Framework Study chapters provide recommendations for addressing the gaps and oversights in the Eglinton Connects study in a holistic manner.

The City of Toronto's City Planning and Economic Development and Culture Divisions should collaborate on these studies to ensure that public consultations are jointly delivered and that the subsequent studies complement each other.

## Economic Development Study

Little Jamaica requires a sustainable economic development strategy to be implemented in parallel with the anticipated revitalization outlined in Eglinton Connects.

The strategy must intentionally address the economic needs and assets unique to Little Jamaica, and identify opportunities to ensure the long-term economic resiliency, especially in the context of future development.

## Cultural Events

The lack of support from BIAs, combined with the impacts of LRT construction have prevented revenue-generating and community-strengthening cultural events from being held in Little Jamaica.

The City and Metrolinx should make more resources available to support the organization of revenue-generating cultural events and programs post COVID, as well as the development of cultural rebranding efforts led by Black-owned businesses and organizations.

## Planning Framework Study

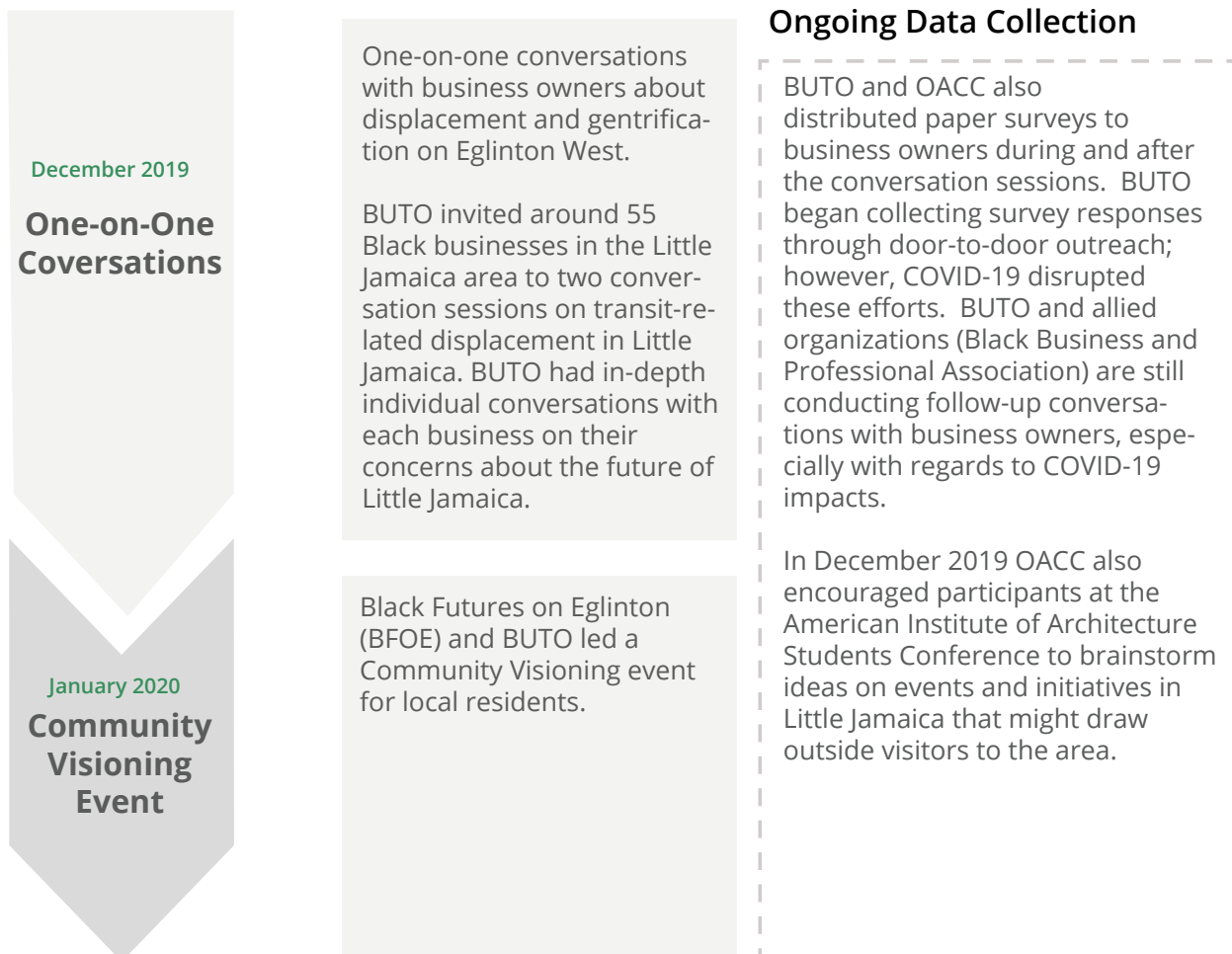
The Eglinton Connects study has failed to address the unique challenges and strengths facing Little Jamaica businesses.

A Planning Framework Study specific to the area colloquially referred to as Little Jamaica should guide the future development of the neighbourhood in a holistic manner, with full consideration of Little Jamaica's economic and cultural needs. It should include guidelines for preserving and constructing affordable commercial spaces, incremental densification and preservation of culturally-significant spaces, affordable housing, design of public spaces that celebrate Caribbean and broader African culture, and pedestrian-centred infrastructure.

## 0.4 Report Methodology

This report, and the recommendations within, has been developed through numerous conversations with Black business owners, discussions and events organized with allied groups, as well as through research of secondary sources (policy recommendations and reports, academic literature). Below is a summary of the process of this report's development.

Data collection, especially pertaining to COVID-19, is still on-going.



February 2020

## Conversation Sessions and Allied Events

### Conversation Session 1

33 attendees representing local businesses and allies including Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, and the Black Business and Professional Association, Toronto Community Benefits Network and Councillor Josh Matlow attended the initial session at Sankofa Lounge, which became an open-ended conversation on both the gaps within the Eglinton Connects study and the urgent issues facing Black business owners in Little Jamaica.

### Conversation Session 2

BUTO and OACC led the businesses and allied organizations in drafting a list of actions and demands on the issues identified in the first sessions.

### Allied Events

BFOE organized a Reggae Night involving music and storytelling about the future of Black art and culture on Eglinton West. As well, BFOE, staff at Maria A. Shchuka Library and Jelani 'J Wyze' Nias worked with 10 Black youth on Afro-futuristic short stories about Eglinton Ave West which encompassed concerns of displacement but also optimistic on what the area could become.

The Caribbean Solidarity Network hosted a discussion at A Different Booklist (with BFOE, Jane Finch Action Against Poverty) on space, race and belonging in Caribbean Toronto.

## Report Draft

### Research and Synthesis

BUTO, OACC, and SOCA summarized the primary research gathered from the conversations sessions, and conducted further research into the issues facing Little Jamaica and potential solutions to these issues. The authors consulted secondary sources such as news reports, academic literature, reports, economic scans, and policy recommendations by similar organizations. BUTO has also synthesized and incorporated the valuable recommendations of allied organizations, namely BFOE, the Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA), the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC), and the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC), into this report.

June 2020

## Preliminary Draft Release

A preliminary draft was shared with select stakeholders for feedback before formal publication, and their feedback has been incorporated into this revision of the report.

## 0.5 Overview and Historical Context



**Image 1-2:**  
One of many barbershops in Little Jamaica that also serve as spaces of informal gathering and community bonding

### History and Context

For the purposes of this report and to support continued documentation of the Black neighbourhood centred along Eglinton Avenue West, the neighbourhood will be referred to as “Little Jamaica”. The area is primarily defined by the commercial businesses clustered along Eglinton Avenue West between Marlee and Oakwood Avenues. Though this strip may be considered the heart of Little Jamaica, there are no distinct boundaries as many of the Black-owned businesses continue south on Oakwood Avenue and west towards Keele Street.

Colloquially known as, ‘Eglinton’ within Toronto’s Black community, the neighbourhood has been a distinct ethnic and cultural hub for Caribbean and African immigrants for well over 40 years.

An excellent reference for further reading on the history of Little Jamaica is “The Erasure of Little Jamaica: Exploring the Role of Design in the Gentrification of Toronto’s Eglinton Avenue West”, a master’s thesis by York University graduate Debbie Gordon . Much of the information in this section references that work.

The area around current-day Little Jamaica was largely agricultural land until after the first World War when Toronto’s population grew rapidly around streetcar suburbs. Gordon writes that “between 1924 and 1946 the area around Dufferin Street, Oakwood Avenue and Vaughan Road began to add schools, libraries, parks, and other community features”<sup>3</sup> . By the 1960’s Canada began to make changes to its discriminatory immigration policy that had previously favoured White immigrants

while discouraging all others<sup>4</sup>. These changes led to an increase in immigration from British Commonwealth countries and gave rise to new Caribbean communities throughout Toronto. Early Jamaican enclaves included Kensington Market and a cluster of businesses along the north-west corner of Bathurst and Bloor Streets. This was followed by areas along Eglinton West (Little Jamaica) and later Rexdale, Jane and Finch, and many pockets of Scarborough. By the 1970's Little Jamaica had become not only the main Jamaican expatriate community in Toronto but one of the largest around the world; rivaling cities like London and New York.

Like many immigrant communities, Little Jamaica was filled with the scenes and spirit of the island homeland. Caribbean barbershops, hair salons, grocers, and restaurants made the area a destination, at a time when mainstream retailers and grocery stores in Toronto didn't sell Black hair care products or have an ethnic food aisle that catered to Caribbean cuisine. Beyond facilitating the everyday consumer needs of Caribbean immigrants, Little Jamaica became a musical hotspot in the 70's and 80's at a time when Reggae and later Dancehall were in their prime. Many of the world's most renowned Reggae stars recorded and performed in the neighbourhood, while others passed through when they had shows in Toronto. They included Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Jackie Mittoo, Gregory Isaacs, Beres Hammond, and Leroy Sibbles among many others.

In many ways the spirit of Eglinton was a reflection of the colourful street life in Jamaican cities like Kingston where patrons and residents would purchase their daily needs while others would leisurely gather over the smells of jerk chicken on open grills, and the soothing sounds of the latest reggae hit or dancehall riddim blasting from outdoor speakers. This spirit continued from the 1970's through to the early 2000's evidenced by the Junior Carnival Parade (also known as Kiddies Caribana) and the street celebrations during Jamaica's entry into the 1998 FIFA World Cup. However, recent decades have seen the community face the challenges of demographic change and gentrification, which has been exacerbated by the construction of

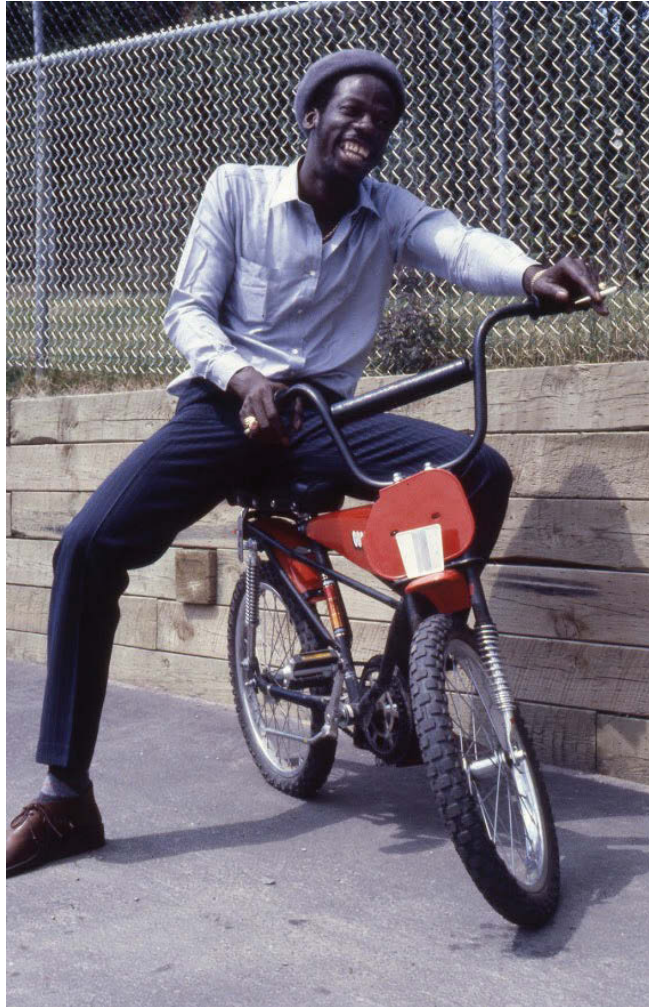
the new LRT line and the COVID-19 pandemic

Multiple forces are threatening Little Jamaica's

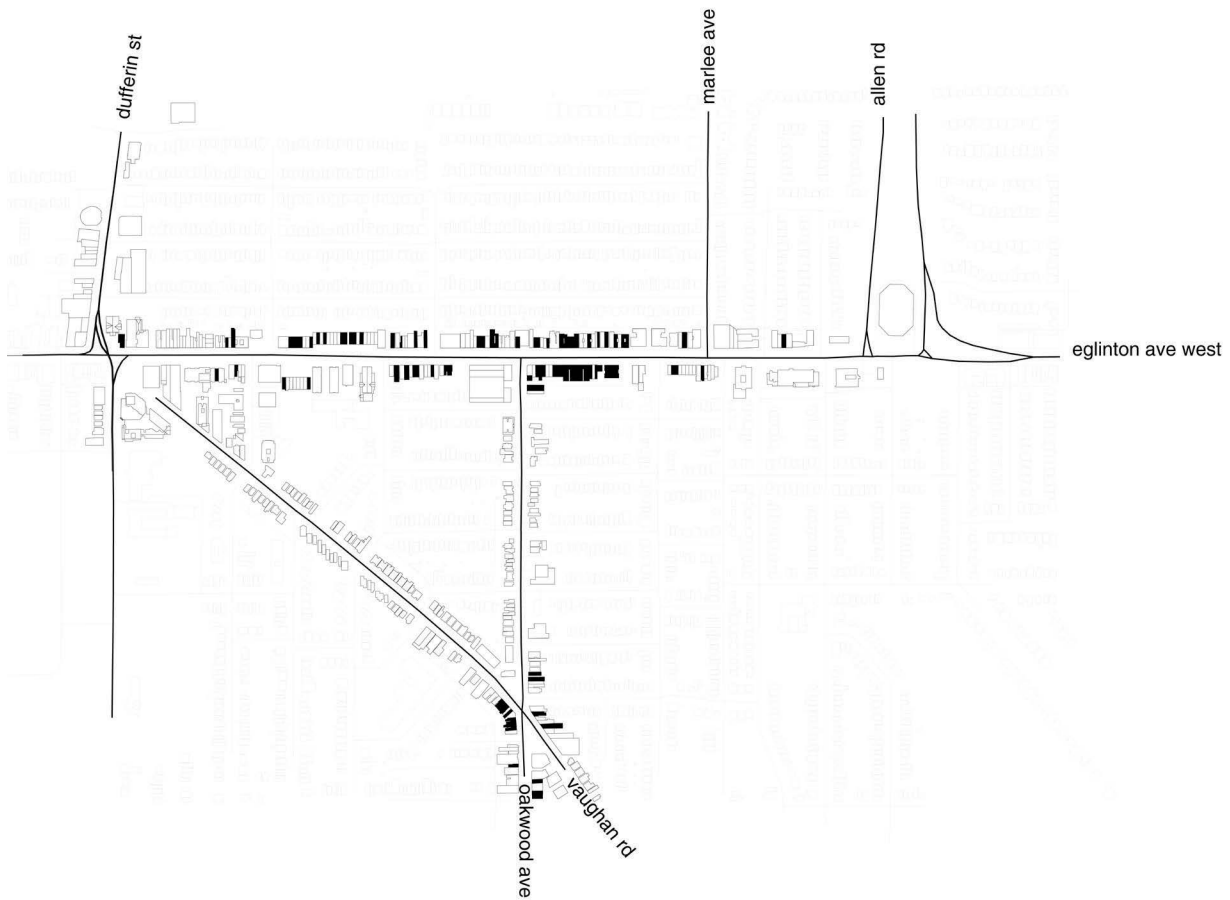
## Black Displacement

survival as a "transnational ethnic enclave; a space for new immigrants and successive generations of the Caribbean diaspora to connect with home."<sup>5</sup> Even before the repercussions of COVID-19 on local businesses, the disruption associated with LRT construction – now likely delayed until "well into 2022"<sup>6</sup> – combined with the lack of government or agency programming, led to the permanent closure of many Black-owned businesses in the neighbourhood (images 1-4 and 1-5). Further, streetscape transformations recommended by the Eglinton Connects plan will rip up sidewalks and disrupt foot traffic long after the current phase of construction. Recent zoning and planning changes have opened the door to gentrification and Black displacement without creating policy or bylaws to sustain and support the growth of Black-owned businesses. If nothing is done to mitigate these powerful forces, Little Jamaica will disappear.

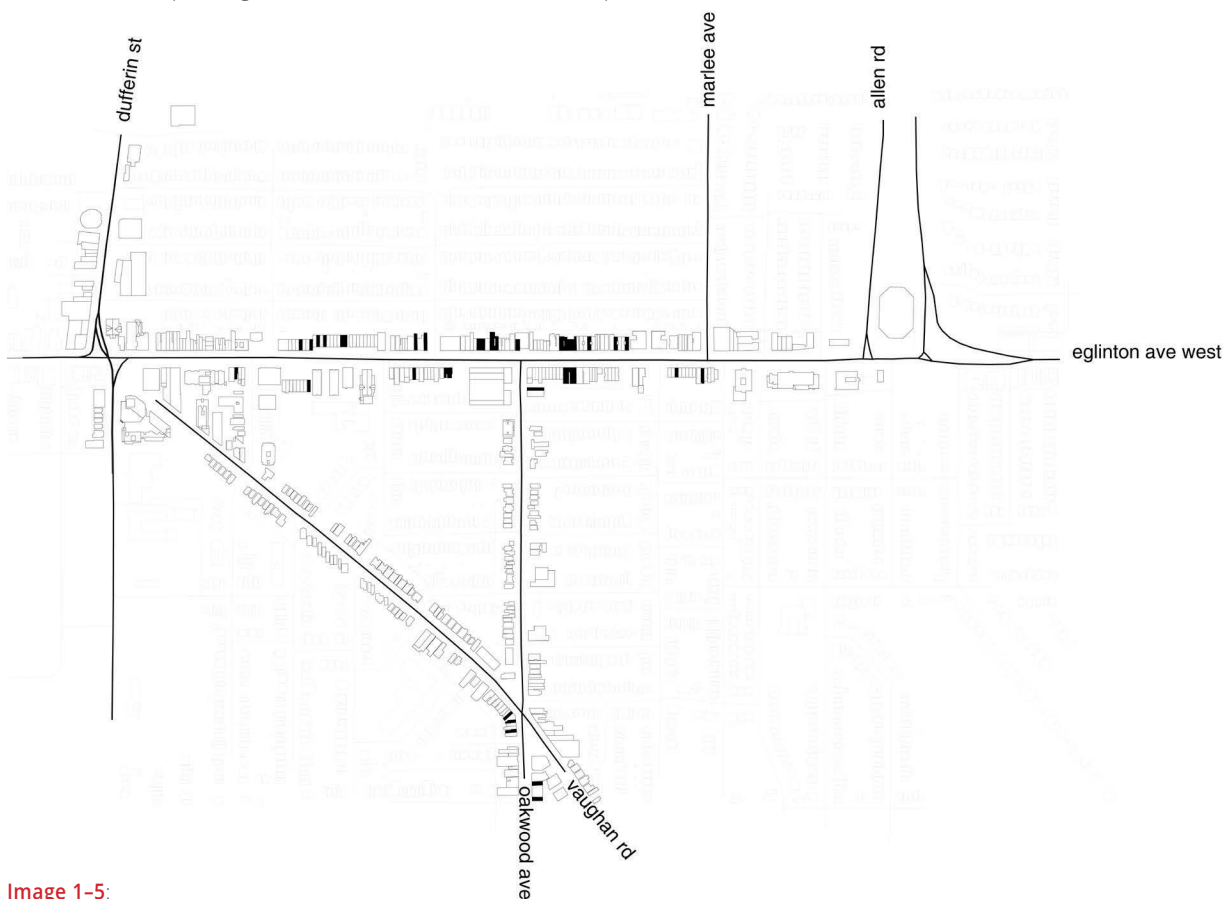
The Eglinton Connects study envisions a transformed Eglinton that will "attract a new population looking for a high quality of life that is contemporary in its urban vision."<sup>7</sup> However, the study ignores what happens to the existing population when this new one arrives. Gentrification, or "the reinvestment of urban space for the use of a more affluent clientele,"<sup>8</sup> results in rising rents, displacement of housing and businesses, and conflict in the community. Gentrification does not happen on its own; it is facilitated by city policy, including documents like Eglinton Connects. Researchers have found that "proximity to rail transit", like the Eglinton Crosstown, "and to other gentrifying census tracts, have a statistically significant effect on gentrification"<sup>9</sup> in large Canadian cities. Over the three-year period that the Eglinton Connects study was conducted, gentrification and the impact on existing communities was not given adequate consideration, and therefore neither was the value of Black culture or Black lives.



**Image 1-3:**  
Photo of Reggae musician Leroy Sibbles in Toronto, ~1980



**Image 1-4:**  
Businesses in the planning framework area under Black ownership in ~2010



**Image 1-5:**  
Businesses in the planning framework area under Black ownership in early 2020. More closures may occur due to COVID-19

As an example of gentrification patterns, The Downtown Brooklyn Plan of 2004 involved similar zoning changes to those along Eglinton West. Its intent was to encourage the development of new office space, thus creating jobs in the area, as well as mixed-use residential and retail. The Plan lacked policy specific to ensuring affordable retail or housing.<sup>10</sup> A community study published several years later reported that significant development had occurred, but the projected increase in office uses had not materialized. High-end residential buildings became the predominant type of development, and few new jobs were created, while 1,700 jobs and 100 existing businesses were displaced.<sup>11</sup>

The loss of these downtown Brooklyn businesses means that, as a result, people of African-American and Caribbean descent who account for a large portion of the area's daily shoppers also experience the effects of economic gentrification when the stores at which they could once afford to shop are displaced.<sup>12</sup>

A similar process is taking place on Eglinton West, as once again the Black/Caribbean community and other marginalized groups, bear the brunt of political inaction to address gentrification and displacement. Displacement can be either direct, as in the case of popular grocery store Gus' Tropical Foods, which was closed to make way for the new Oakwood LRT Station, or indirect, as with People's Choice Grocery Store, which closed because the business could not afford the rising commercial rent.<sup>13</sup>

This is by no means the first time a Black community in Canada has been faced down by inadequate action and the forces of city policy and development. Debbie Gordon cites examples of other Black neighbourhoods in Canada which experienced "neglect or purposeful erasure,"<sup>14</sup> including Amber Valley in Alberta, and the Grange neighbourhood in Toronto. Author Katherine McKittrick lists other examples, such as "the demolition of Africville in Nova Scotia and Hogan's Alley in Vancouver".<sup>15</sup> In addition to physical displacement, Gordon

explains that cultural erasure "is about having your historical presence in a space, your stories and claim of belonging . . . purposefully ignored and forgotten."<sup>16</sup>

For Little Jamaica businesses, that erasure is expressed in the lack of recognition of African and Caribbean culture in City planning documents, how the local BIAs promote the neighbourhood, and the removal of cultural events like the Junior Carnival Parade. In interviewing local Black-owned businesses owners in Little Jamaica, Debbie Gordon found that they "primarily saw the space as a cultural one; as a set of relationships. . ." If city policies on historic preservation only set value on bricks and mortar, these places of cultural relationship will be erased.

Little Jamaica is in danger of disappearing. There are powerful forces putting pressure on the community from all sides. But right now, if the City listens to the voices of the people in this neighbourhood, there is an opportunity to shift the trajectory. If Toronto wants to remain a city that is a "cultural mosaic", then it must dedicate the material resources and adopt the equity-focused approaches necessary to ensure that Little Jamaica and other culturally distinct neighbourhoods are protected against gentrification and development pressures.

Based on conversations with local business owners, in addition to research into tools for addressing gentrification in similar contexts in North America, this report outlines examples of actions necessary to realize the survival, and hopefully, the future prosperity of Little Jamaica.

# 1 Ongoing Issues and Recommendations

## 1.1 BIA Relationships

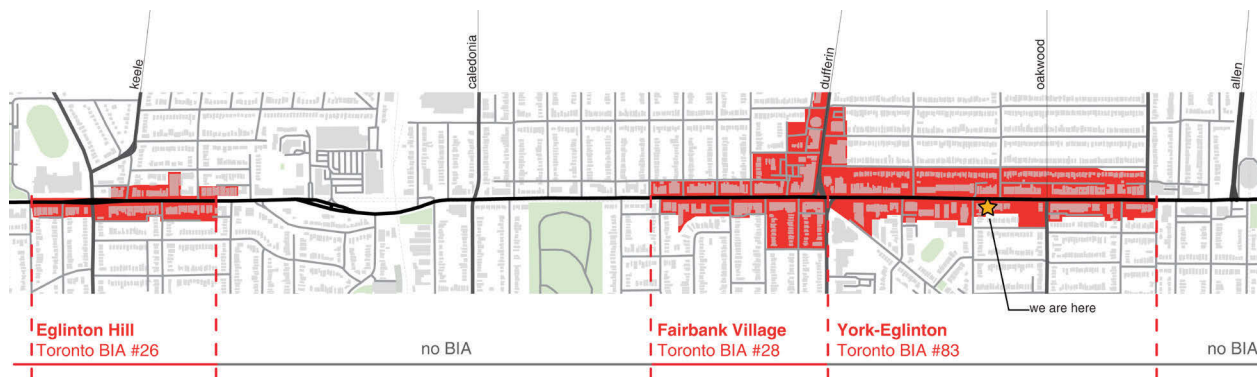


Image 1-6:  
BIAs along Eglinton West

Business Improvement Areas (BIA) and neighbourhood associations use geographically demarcated boundaries to determine and represent their members. Both aim to shape planning decisions and the public realm. The image above shows the locations of the BIAs in Little Jamaica on Eglinton West Avenue from Marlee to Keele.

The purpose of BIAs is to help oversee the improvement, beautification, and maintenance of municipally owned land, buildings, and structures beyond City standard levels; streetscaping; business promotion; graffiti removal; safety and security measures; strategic planning; and advocating on behalf of the interests of the businesses.<sup>17</sup> In addition, a BIA operates to revitalize and maintain a dynamic local neighbourhood and to promote the area as a business or shopping destination.

A major goal of revitalization and retention is to encourage both local residents and others to spend their shopping dollars within the local commercial district.

### What We Heard

In our conversations with the business owners, many of the owners voiced their concern with the BIAs within Little Jamaica and the lack of support provided by the BIA boards of management of three main areas: Eglinton Hill, Fairbank Village and York-Eglinton. The BIAs in this area have a high concentration of Black-owned businesses along Eglinton West but have little to no representation of Black people on their BIA boards. The history of bias towards the Black community, lack of care or responsiveness to the needs of Black businesses to succeed, and resistance

to promote Eglinton West as Little Jamaica by the Eglinton Hill and York-Eglinton BIAs have eroded the relationship and trust of the Black businesses in the area.

Some of the concerns business owners raised with the BIA include board meetings held without notice being provided to business owners, decisions being made without meeting quorum, only opening specific board positions for elections, and events being held without input from or notice given to business owners. The business owners throughout the sessions raised concerns on the number of terms a BIA chair can serve in the position continuously. The owners believe the lack of change in leadership is anti-democratic and plays a major role in the lack of growth along Eglinton West.

Most notably there are concerns raised with the Chair of York-Eglinton BIA and the time he has served in the position. While it is common for the BIA Chairs to hold these positions for a lengthy period, the business owners feel it creates a lack of accountability in representing the voices of the Black community. The business owners expressed that the BIAs have the ability to influence local decision-making but neglect to collect input from the Black business owners. For instance, the creation of Reggae lane which runs east from Oakwood Avenue, behind a strip of buildings south side of Eglinton West in Little Jamaica, was seen by many in the community as an unsuccessful project. A cultural mural tucked out of sight by an alleyway with a high concentration of drug use was not something that business owners saw as a positive representation of Caribbean culture.

Local business owners believe that the revenue they have brought into the community and have paid through BIA levies for decades should be used to help with beautification and improvement of the business areas. While the purpose of the BIA is to guide improvements with street beautification and promote urban business areas, the BIAs have neglected making the streetscape more appealing. They have made no genuine effort to promote the cultural assets and identity of the Caribbean community to attract revenue

for local businesses. As an example, the York-Eglinton BIA has made the decision to save their reserved funds for development of the streetscape and beautification of Little Jamaica post LRT construction. In the meantime, Black businesses that have been paying levies and have contributed to the success of the area for decades are now facing hardship without any advocacy or support from the BIA.

It was apparent in the discussions that the Black business owners could not point to any tangible initiatives that the BIAs throughout Eglinton West have undertaken to help improve Black businesses in the area.

## Recommendations:

The following are a list of recommendations to address the gaps in BIA governance and improving outcomes for the Black business community:

- 1.1.1** Amend the York-Eglinton BIA Strategic Plan to ensure the support of Black businesses is highlighted as a key priority;
- 1.1.2** Intervention and greater oversight from the City of Toronto to ensure proper governance until trust is restored. Limit the length a BIA Chair can serve in the position continuously and create pathways for business owners to apply for leadership positions;
- 1.1.3** Eglinton Hill, Fairbank Village and York-Eglinton are to consult with Black businesses and provide statements detailing how Black businesses are to be involved in the decision and implementation processes;
- 1.1.4** Toronto City Councillor Josh Matlow is to clarify the ownership and stewardship of Reggae Lane and any future plans of the space.
- 1.1.5** The Economic Development and Culture Division should look to create a Black business sub-committee on the Eglinton Hill, Fairbank Village York-Eglinton BIA boards to represent and speak to the

needs of the Black business owners in Little Jamaica;

- 1.1.6** The General Manager, Division Head of the Economic Development and Culture Division should implement an outreach and recruitment strategy to increase participation of Black business owners on both BIA boards, in tandem with board governance training;
- 1.1.7** Revisit the Board of Management Procedures and release the York-Eglinton BIA four-year strategic plan with identified implementable action item;
- 1.1.8** Rebrand and officially rename the area of Eglinton Ave West from Marlee Ave to Keele St from the currently named "International Market" to "Little Jamaica";
- 1.1.9** The Eglinton Hill, Fairbank Village and York-Eglinton BIA should undertake a number of streetscape beautification projects to highlight Little Jamaica's heritage, add Afro-Caribbean cultural public art, and maintain a neat and tidy appearance where possible during construction;
- 1.1.10** Create a Little Jamaica website that would provide visibility and marketplace for business owners in Little-jamaica, have information on Black businesses that operate in Little Jamaica and an opportunity to promote local Black-owned business growth and long-term sustainability;
- 1.1.11** Make municipal funding directly available to local Black business groups to recognize that the current funding model perpetuates systemic barriers.

## 1.2 LRT Construction



**Image 1-1:**  
Construction along Eglinton West

Toronto is well aware of the impacts of LRT construction on Little Jamaica businesses. Since the start of construction, 140 businesses have closed along Eglinton West<sup>18</sup>, and it is inevitable that, without drastic action, more Black-owned businesses will shutter as a result of delayed construction, the compounding effects of COVID-19, and an overall lack of programming support from government and local BIAs.

LRT construction has physically disrupted the ability of customers across Toronto to visit Little Jamaica businesses, which largely rely on foot traffic for revenue. Construction waste and hoarding have blocked the visibility of storefronts and created a hostile pedestrian and driving experience. In addition, speculation has led commercial landlords to raise commercial rents, making it impossible for many businesses to continue operating in Little Jamaica.

Government agencies neglected to involve Little Jamaica businesses when drafting early environmental impact reports<sup>19</sup>, and since then

the pattern of disengagement has continued. Token gestures of assistance (such as assisting with digital marketing or signage<sup>20</sup>) have failed to address the fundamental problem of impacts to foot traffic, driver safety, and accessibility, and failed to account for the specific systemic barriers faced by Black-owned businesses, such as eligibility for financing and access to technology (see chapters on COVID-19 and BIAs). The lack of meaningful compensation and local policy initiatives have exacerbated Little Jamaica's decline.

## Recommendations:

We have heard again and again from Black business owners and allied organizations, during the sessions and in prior and subsequent conversations, of the necessity for immediate action to preserve Little Jamaica. Recommended actions include:

- 1.2.1** Financial compensation paid directly to businesses for construction impacts. The level of compensation should be equity-based, and take into account any effects of systemic anti-Black racism faced by Black-owned businesses;
- 1.2.2** Opening the LRT in phases to mitigate construction delay, and clean-up of construction waste and equipment from sidewalks. City Council's decision to engage with the provincial government on these recommendations is commendable, however, further follow-through is required<sup>21</sup>;
- 1.2.3** More logistical support in terms of temporary parking locations and/or relaxations on parking enforcement;
- 1.2.4** Rental assistance, and a moratorium on commercial evictions extended for the duration of construction;
- 1.2.5** Ensuring that loans and financial supports are available to all struggling businesses, including those who may be unable to pay taxes; and
- 1.2.6** Developing policies aiming to retain existing tenants when commercial properties are sold, namely first right of refusal.



**Image 1-2:**

Construction staging areas blocking retail spaces. There has been little change on the ground despite City Council's adoption of a plan to start cleaning up construction waste.

## 1.3 COVID-19



**Image 1-3:**

As a result of structural inequities compounded with years of disruption to business caused by LRT construction, Black businesses in Little Jamaica have been especially severely affected by the pandemic. Many have shuttered.

The global COVID-19 health pandemic has been detrimental for businesses nationwide and the City of Toronto has seen numerous small to medium sized businesses shutter their doors. However, businesses along Eglinton West, in particular the Black-owned businesses, have been in a state of precarity well before the pandemic began.

The Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC) made it clear in their advocacy to government officials that there must be special consideration given to Black-owned businesses to address the historical inequities that Black business owners have faced. This speaks directly to Black business owners in Little Jamaica who have been struggling through the Crosstown LRT construction project.

Other organizations, namely the Black business and Professional Association (BBPA), and the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC) have also been acting as

government liaisons, representing the interests of Black businesses and the broader Black community, and advocating for both funding and policy responses to the needs that have arisen due to the pandemic.

As part of our efforts to provide comprehensive recommendations related to COVID-19, these organizations were engaged to gather insights from what they have observed through their interactions with government and Black business owners, to identify what could be applied to the Little Jamaica context.

## What We Heard

Some of the needs that were observed included:

- Direct funding to the businesses that would be a mixture of both grants and loans;
- Training for entrepreneurs to have the tools to take their businesses online;
- Deferring property taxes;
- Procurement provisions that would allow Black-owned businesses to be given a percentage of procurement contracts;
- Waiving fees for business registration;
- General awareness of the access to internet and/or computers and general online tools for business owners to promote their business and reach clients;
- Ensuring that collaboration at the community level is the order of the day to break silos and maximize the efforts in the COVID-19 response;
- Sustainable financial infrastructure for the Black community to address the deep rooted issues resulting from systemic anti-Black racism;
- Focus on a sustainable Black ecosystem (sustainable funding sources and emphasis on collaboration across sectors to drive long-term systems change) ; and
- Connecting the well established evidence in priority areas to policy outcomes (e.g. poverty reduction, education, health care, employment, housing).

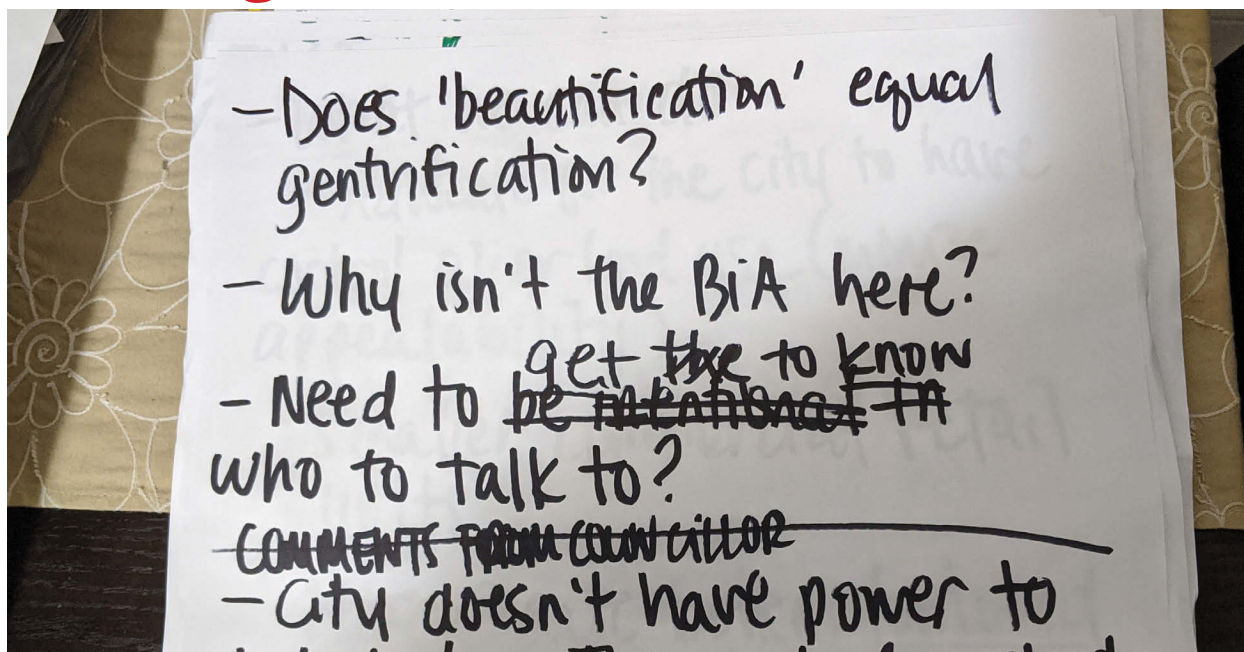
## Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1.3.1** The City of Toronto apply a systems approach to its COVID-19 recovery and efforts to address systemic anti-Black racism, by focusing on the development of a sustainable Black ecosystem and Little Jamaica's potential role in the said ecosystem;
- 1.3.2** All efforts related to the COVID-19 recovery and anti-Black racism be tied to measurable policy outcomes; and as it relates to anti-Black racism - proposed solutions should be embedded in the policy framework of the City;
- 1.3.3** An anti-Black racism analysis be applied to review the current socio-economic state of Little Jamaica, including for matters relating to COVID-19 impacts, BIA governance and the impact of the Crosstown LRT construction relative to other impacted areas; and
- 1.3.4** The City of Toronto and intergovernmental partners support Black serving organizations to provide culturally appropriate training to:
  1. help transition business operations online, including the provision of the necessary hardware and internet resources; and
  2. ensure business readiness for procurement and other funding opportunities.

## 2 Long-Term Issues and Recommendations

### 2.1 Eglinton Connects



**Image 2-1:**  
Participant concerns about Eglinton Connects recorded at the first conversation session

In addition to the impacts of ongoing LRT construction and the disruptions brought on by COVID-19, the Eglinton Connects study, and future development resulting from its implementation also pose challenges for the resiliency of Little Jamaica businesses and the wider community.

#### What We Heard

At the first conversation session held by BUTO and OACC, Black business owners expressed that they had been largely left out of the consultation process. They were not aware that its recommendations are currently being implemented. Business owners described experiencing basically no engagement with the city, except in sessions involving the BiA, which few businesses had been informed of.

Purportedly, the Eglinton Connects study involved over 60 consultation sessions, and

engaged over 5000 people<sup>22</sup>. However, by neglecting to apply an equity-based lens to the study, opportunities to meaningfully engage Black residents and businesses were not considered, or at best overlooked. Consequently, the study perpetuated a history of systemic anti-Black racism and inequity in Canadian planning practice.<sup>23,24,25</sup> Despite being largely excluded from the process thus far, business owners were eager to find out how they could influence the implementation of the study's recommendations moving forward.

Below is a summary of concerns about the study that Black business owners raised at the conversation session. The concerns were grouped into three major themes: gentrification, cultural erasure, and infrastructure. Recommendations to address these concerns are laid out in the following chapters.

### **Gentrification**

Business owners responded positively to the enhanced design and beautification of Eglinton West depicted in the Eglinton Connects study renders but were concerned about the potential impacts of gentrification. They noted that rising rents, combined with disruptions from current LRT construction had already forced many businesses to close. They also stressed the need for immediate actions to address current construction impacts, to ensure that businesses can remain in Little Jamaica long enough to benefit from the improvements under Eglinton Connects. Further, session participants were concerned that the Eglinton Connects Study did not include enough provisions to address displacement of existing residents due to gentrification. They noted that Eglinton Connects did not include provisions for affordable, accessible housing (an issue given top priority by 60% of local respondents in a separate survey conducted by Black Futures on Eglinton). Thus, there was much concern that with the implementation of Eglinton Connects, Black-owned businesses and residents would experience even more displacement.

### **Cultural Erasure**

Business owners also expressed concerns about cultural erasure. Some of these concerns included that once the components of Eglinton Connects are in place, there would be “no more Little Jamaica”, due to gentrification and the disruptive impacts of future construction, combined with a history of disinvestment in the cultural strengths of the Little Jamaica neighbourhood (ex. the relocation of the Junior Carnival Parade, and lack of BIA support for cultural festivals and Black-led branding efforts, etc ).

Beyond the above concerns raised by business

owners at the session, it should also be noted that Eglinton Connects fails to recognize the cultural heritage of Little Jamaica. The report sees Eglinton as a “predominantly pass-through corridor”<sup>26</sup>, and focuses on attracting “new high-quality development to support places for living, employment, shopping, culture and recreation”.<sup>27</sup> While the study mentions preserving character areas and heritage buildings, it stops short in addressing how future urban design and policy could build upon the less tangible spatial practices and culture of Little Jamaica- evident in the distinct food, music and other cultural practices of the area, that have the potential to sustainably generate economic growth from within.



**Image 2-2:**

Eglinton Connects is a broad set of guidelines and illustrates a universal approach to urban design along Eglinton

### **Infrastructure and Roadwork:**

Future infrastructure construction proposed under Eglinton Connects does not account for the desires and concerns of existing Black-owned businesses, particularly related to impacts on foot traffic and accessibility.

Business owners were concerned that future infrastructure construction under Eglinton Connects would once again cause significant disruptions to foot traffic. One participant expressed frustration at the lack of phasing and co-ordination of the proposed work, wondering why the proposed burying of hydro lines wasn't already carried out in conjunction with current LRT construction. Others were worried about the impact of even more construction waste on pedestrian safety.

There were also worries about the effects of reduced bus service. One business owner noted that local residents, especially new

immigrants, currently rely on the buses as a convenient form of transportation, as the distance between stops are short and service is currently frequent. There was concern that moving transit underground would reduce visibility of existing businesses, and also reduce foot traffic to businesses located further from LRT stations

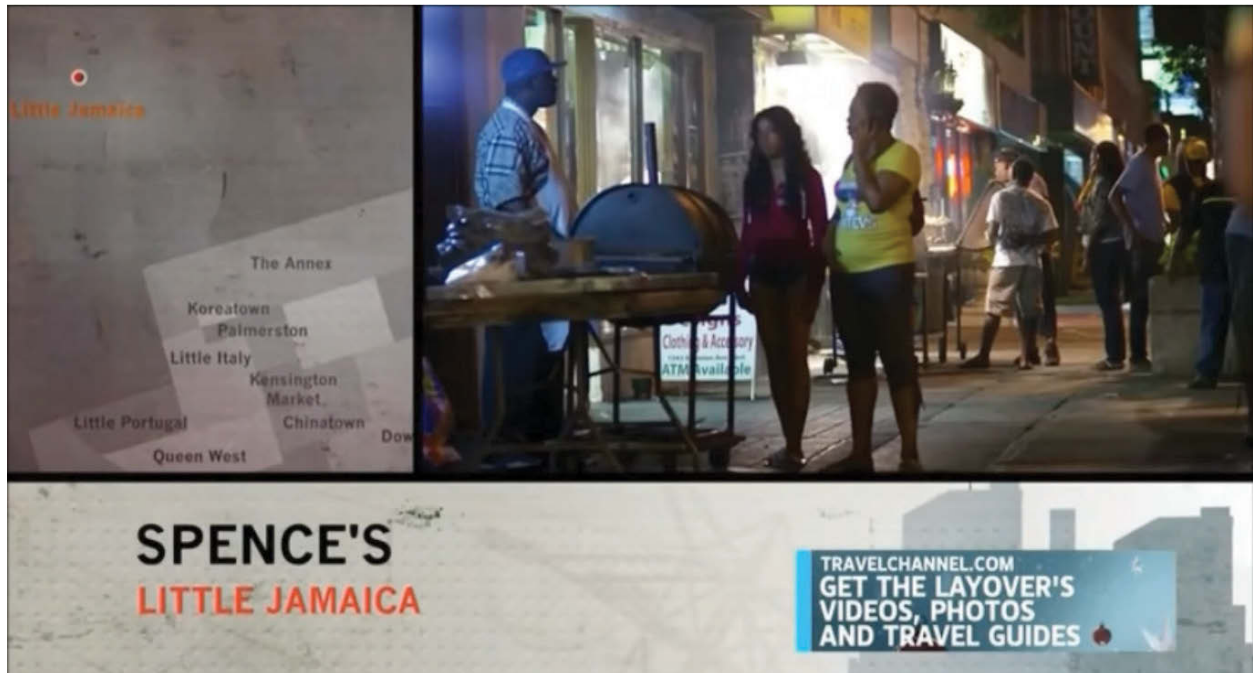
## Recommendations

In response to the concerns above, future planning for Little Jamaica needs to be holistic in nature, and carried out with the full involvement of Black business owners, to ensure that all can benefit from the improvements under the Eglinton Connects Study.

Recommendations for future planning (through a Planning Framework Study and Economic Development Study) can be found in the following chapters.

- 2.1.1** The City of Toronto's City Manager must direct the City Planning and Economic Development and Culture Divisions to collaborate on these studies, to ensure that public consultations are jointly delivered and that the subsequent studies are developed in tandem to complement each other. Development of the studies must include targets, timelines, and the allocation of necessary resources.

## 2.2 Economic Development Study



**Image 2-3:**

Little Jamaica is a centre for Caribbean cuisine, which animates the street and provides connection to culture for Toronto's Caribbean community, as well as for visitors (as seen in Anthony Bourdain's *The Layover*).

At the height of Little Jamaica's prominence from the 1970s well into the early 2000s, Caribbean businesses along Eglinton Avenue West constituted the majority<sup>28</sup> and even referred to as a Black business district. This is significant not only in the context of Toronto, with Little Jamaica having highest concentrations of Black-owned businesses in the City<sup>29</sup>, but undoubtedly also for Canada.

Now in 2020, we see that the future of Little Jamaica is increasingly becoming the landmark issue that could determine how the City approaches its future development. Through forums such as the Mayor's Roundtable, facilitated by the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit and the Economic Development and Culture Division, the City has demonstrated its willingness to listen. The interest and attentiveness are welcomed. However, these are not enough. In land use planning, which plays the most pivotal role in the neighbourhood's perpetuation or demise, there are many actors and interests at play.

In P.E. Moskowitz's book "How to Kill a City, Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighbourhood", he explores the interests of public intellectuals, politicians, planners and heads of corporations to demonstrate how "the policies that cause cities to gentrify are crafted in the offices of real estate moguls, and in the halls of city government."<sup>30</sup> He continues, "when a poor neighbourhood is viewed as having more potential for profit, politicians and industry work hard to change how that neighbourhood is used, [...] the process of exchange values trumping use values [is called] "highest and best use". It is evident

that there is, at present, no counterbalance to the “highest and best use” approach that led to the development of the Eglinton Connects Study. Recent provincial rulings related to development in Toronto’s midtown and downtown core<sup>31</sup> also demonstrate the extent to which this focus exclusively on unlocking the value of land is at odds with creating a city where citizens can thrive.

Debbie Gordon states pointedly in the conclusion of her study on the Little Jamaica, that “design’s role in the erasure of Little Jamaica has been to cater to interests and tastes that align with a larger neoliberal plan for Toronto. This is seen through the fact that the erasure of Little Jamaica has not been a passive event but instead the culmination of a deliberate set of actions and inactions”<sup>32</sup>. The question is, are there a set of actions that can be taken now to mitigate the erasure that has already begun?

In 2017, the City of Toronto commissioned an economic scan for the York-Eglinton BIA, as well as several other BIAs along the corridor, through the Economic Development and Culture Division. For the purposes of this report, the focus will be on two recommendations that provide a clear path forward that the City can immediately begin to support, not only for the vitality of Little Jamaica, but also for the continued success of the York-Eglinton BIA.

1. Consolidate and expand the Little Jamaica cluster, for example, by:

- Promoting Caribbean restaurants, street art, clothing, and developing a heritage map
- Developing events around Caribbean arts and culture

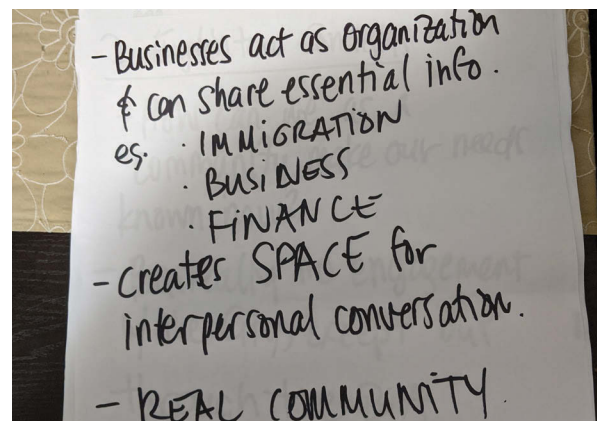
2. Prioritize hair services [as] a key cluster, not only from a retail perspective but [also] from the perspective of social or community gathering places.<sup>33</sup>

From an economic perspective, these recommendations acknowledge that in spite of the neighbourhood’s official name as the “International Market”, it is the “Caribbean” or

Black-owned businesses, and the culture and heritage that espouse them, that bring the true identity and marketability to the neighbourhood. Although the recommendations above were intended for the area covered by the York-Eglinton BIA, they are also applicable to the longstanding Black-owned businesses within the Fairbank Village and Eglinton Hill BIAs stretching west from Dufferin Street to Keele Street.

## What We Heard

During our two-part consultation series in February, attendees frequently referenced the unique role that businesses such as barbershops and salons play in Little Jamaica, which fulfill the need of community hubs that offer supportive interpersonal connections and spaces that enable the transmission of culture and the sharing of essential, often critical information.



**Image 2-4:**

Session participants noted that in addition to being places of commerce, businesses in Little Jamaica are also important spaces for community.

Business owners were particularly concerned about the power dynamic between tenants and landlords and their inability to be meaningfully involved in decision making at the BIA level. They were very much aware of the vulnerabilities of leasing their property, increasing rent, and the need for economic sustainability. The concerns around property ownership were supported by conversations around community ownership models, such as community land trusts.

It was also noted that official recognition by the City and giving the area an appropriate name to better reflect its identity are two tangible actions that are integral to the economic sustainability of the area in the face of an uncertain future. These suggestions were further reinforced by recommendations to establish a long-term economic vision for Little Jamaica, one that contemplates its current realities and aspirations for the future, post LRT construction.

Business owners acknowledged that in spite of the current economic hardship presented by the LRT, innovative approaches could and should be used to increase the marketability of the area. The majority of the businesses provide in-person services, primarily accessed through foot traffic. They acknowledged challenges such as the lack of parking and unrelenting law enforcement efforts to issue tickets despite the ongoing economic hardship, as well the disinvestment in the area that has raised concerns for safety and attractiveness for potential customers.

There was universal support for bringing various cultural events to the area, as it was acknowledged that other ethnic enclaves throughout the city are able to derive sufficient revenue from events such as annual street festivals. It was acknowledged that during LRT construction events based on the Reggae theme have been held by the York-Eglinton BIA but have had little to no economic benefit for the local businesses.

For the Eglinton Hill BIA, economic activity was reported to be ad-hoc with no clear vision in place. On occasion street events have been held without engagement or the awareness of business owners. As a result, these events have had limited success and have not provided any economic benefit for local businesses.

In order to establish a comprehensive plan for Little Jamaica an economic development strategy is required, in which the cultural, economic and historical assets unique to Little Jamaica, can be leveraged and driven by the Black community. We acknowledge that efforts to capitalize on opportunities derived from the LRT could also have negative consequences

related to economic exclusion<sup>34</sup> which could hasten gentrification and displacement. We therefore recommend that an anti-Black analysis be applied in concert with each of the recommendations below.

## Recommendations

The City of Toronto should, through the Economic Development and Culture Division conduct an Economic Development Study of the Little Jamaica neighbourhood covering the area spanning from Keele Street to Marlee Avenue and overlapping with the Eglinton Hill BIA, Fairbank Village BIA, and the York-Eglinton BIA to:

- 2.2.1** Assess the tangible and intangible cultural, economic, and historical assets brought to the area by the presence of the Black-owned businesses and how these can be leveraged to drive economic growth;
- 2.2.2** Create an inventory of land assets along Eglinton Ave West, including identification of public land;
- 2.2.3** Assess the financial contribution of Black-owned businesses to their respective BIAs relative to (1) money spent on promoting their goods and services, or (2) any other benefit received from the expenditure of BIA funds;
- 2.2.4** Explore the feasibility through a pilot project for implementing an economic development model which leverages business spaces, such as barbershops and salons, as extensions of the public realm (as contemplated by the recommendation in the 2017 York-Eglinton BIA Economic Scan);
- 2.2.5** Assess the opportunities to establish Little Jamaica as an economic, cultural, and social hub, including, but not limited to:
  - 1. An assessment of the economic impact for the local and broader Black community from establishing dedicated coworking and business

- incubation spaces to support local talent and skills development;
2. An assessment of the economic impact for the local and broader Black community from the establishment of cultural industries and events as an economic driver; and
  3. An assessment of the tourism and economic benefits associated with the brand "Little Jamaica";
- 2.2.6** Explore the feasibility of using a "legacy business designation" to mitigate the displacement of existing businesses due to rent increases;
- 2.2.7** Identify the barriers and opportunities to property ownership by Black business owners in Little Jamaica.
- 2.2.8** Assess the general economic impact of relocating existing annual African/ Caribbean cultural events held in Toronto, for all businesses in the geographic area referred to as Little Jamaica;
- 2.2.9** Implement a pilot project to test the findings of the Economic Development Study, including community-led initiatives to inform the development of a five-year economic development strategic plan;
- 2.2.10** Establish a five-year economic development strategic plan for Little Jamaica in consultation with local residents; BIAs; and community organizations; including targeted consultations for Black communities and Black serving organizations, including but not limited to: residents living in surrounding neighbourhood improvement areas; Black business owners and associations such as the local collective One People Many Businesses; the Black business and Professional Association; the Jamaican Canadian Association; the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce and the
- Network for the Advancement of Black Communities;
- 2.2.11** Explore options to mitigate the displacement of Black-owned businesses during any future construction, such as establishing temporary and/or long-term spaces akin to the Business out of the Box (BOB) initiative;
- 2.2.12** Ensure that the City of Toronto's community benefits framework is embedded in the economic development strategic plan to leverage future economic development opportunities for residents of equity seeking groups including for: job and opportunities; social procurement; neighbourhood and environmental improvements, and provisions for accountability, monitoring and reporting; and
- 2.2.13** Ensure that the economic development strategic plan aligns with the actions outlined in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, in particular:
- Action 7.** Improve the quality of recreation services for Black Torontonians;
- Action 15.** Support Black-owned businesses to better compete and thrive in Toronto;
- Action 20.** Make City spaces more accessible and welcoming to Black Torontonians;
- Action 21.** Invest in Black arts and culture.

Precedent: Scadding Court Business Out of the Box Initiative



**Image 2-5:** Market707 at Scadding Court Community Centre

The Business Out of the Box initiative is a social franchise model that provides entrepreneurs and non-profits with low-income with access to affordable, micro-scale business spaces in the form of retrofitted shipping containers. Market 707 by Scadding Court Community Centre is the first implementation of this model. In addition to providing affordable retail space for start-ups, the shipping containers also draws pedestrians and activity to the street. As of 2015, Market 707 is home to 18 businesses with over a hundred on the waiting list.

## 2.3 Cultural Events



**Image 2-6:**

Conversation session participants suggested bringing the Junior Carnival Parade, known as Kiddies Caribana, back on Eglinton West as a way of generating revenue for local businesses

After the threats posed by COVID-19 have abated, culturally-focused events and initiatives, organized by Black businesses and associations can be ways of bringing back foot traffic and revenue to Little Jamaica while strengthening local community relationships and preserving cultural heritage.

### What We Heard

Black business owners are eager to organize and take advantage of the cultural strengths of Little Jamaica for the purposes of economic improvement and community building. Here are a sample of ideas for revenue-generating cultural events gathered from the two business conversations, and input from allied activists:

- Food festivals, like Jerk Fest
- Week-long, annual Black History Month festival highlighting food, clothes, and salons
- Celebrating Black Girl Magic and promoting natural hair care and the many salons in the neighbourhood
- Bringing back Caribana to Little Jamaica, or organizing affiliated events
- Block parties associated with Caribana and other festivals
- Promoting area as destination for musical performances
- Walks and tours highlighting local history - like Jane's Walks, and story-telling events
- Night market opportunities

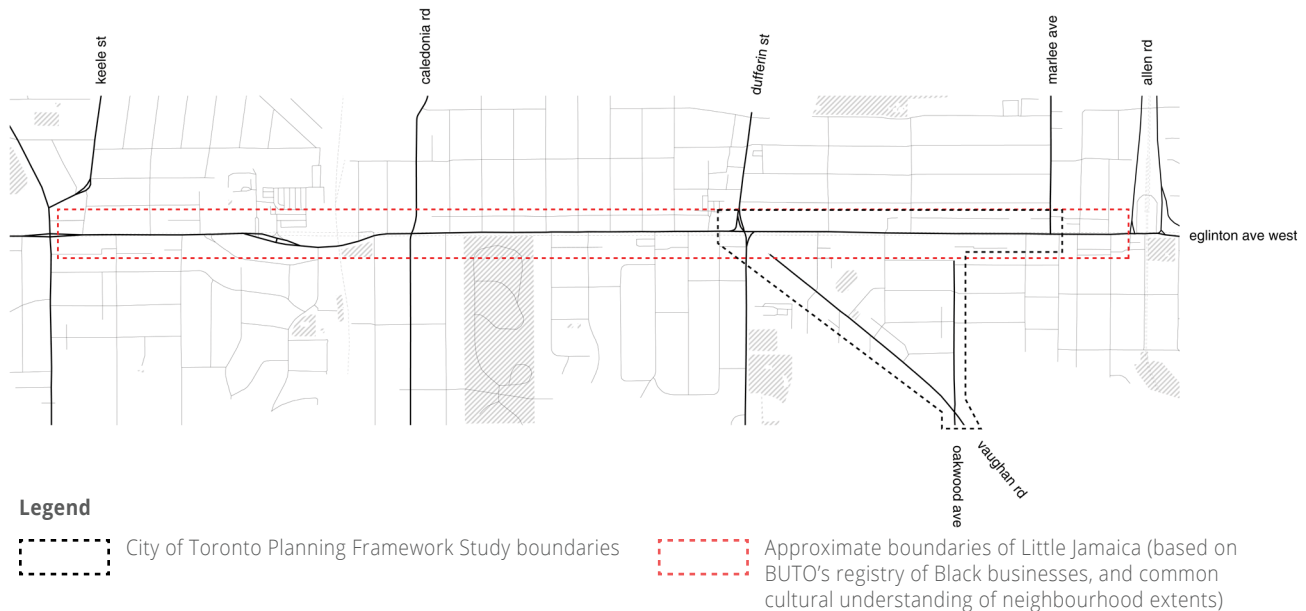
## Recommendations

### Addressing Cultural Erasure

The City of Toronto and Metrolinx should provide the following resources to support organization of the cultural events listed above:

- 2.3.1** Financing support (ex. grants, seed funding), and education on how to access financing;
- 2.3.2** Logistical support (ex. more relaxations on parking enforcement);
- 2.3.3** Improvements to neighbourhood cleanliness and safety during construction; and
- 2.3.4** Public communications that Eglinton West is a safe place for visitors.

## 2.4 Planning Framework Study



**Image 2-7:**

Boundary of the Planning Framework Study shown in comparison with boundaries of the area commonly understood to be “Little Jamaica”, where there is a concentration of Black-owned businesses (based on BUTO's outreach work).

The Planning Framework Study for Eglinton West around Vaughan Road must be developed in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including local residents, Black-owned businesses, and community groups, in order to successfully address gaps in previous planning initiatives (see “Eglinton Connects”). The study should centre the retention of Black residents and businesses as a key indicator for success.

### Boundary Discrepancies

From BUTO's registry of Black-owned businesses, we see a significant discrepancy between the boundary of the City of Toronto Planning Framework Study and the corridor commonly understood as Little Jamaica, where many Black-owned businesses are located. Given this discrepancy, the City should amend the Planning Framework Study boundaries to include all of Little Jamaica, from Keele Street to Allen Road.

### What We Heard

As noted in the “Eglinton Connects” chapter, we learned that merely improving the physical spaces of Little Jamaica is not enough if existing businesses will be displaced and therefore unable to enjoy these improved spaces. Thus, future planning for the area must be conducted in a holistic fashion, and address concerns regarding gentrification and displacement, cultural erasure, and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes.

## Recommendations

### Addressing Gentrification: Increasing Affordable Commercial Space

New at-grade commercial spaces should be affordable to the small businesses that have made Little Jamaica such a vibrant neighbourhood. It is recommended that:

- 2.4.1** Commercial spaces in new developments with usable areas over 500sq.m. dedicate at 20% of that space to be sold or leased below market rate, to ensure that small businesses, new businesses, and those serving low-income residents can remain in Little Jamaica (See Precedent: East New York Retail Preservation Program);
- 2.4.2** The City hold Metrolinx accountable to their 2015-2020 Sustainability Strategy, Goal # 5 to “Enhance Community Responsibility”. For example, Metrolinx should dedicate commercial space in LRT stations within the Planning Framework Study area for:
  - 1. Black-owned businesses;
  - 2. Businesses that require temporary or pop-up storefronts due to construction in the Planning Framework Area;
  - 3. Community-owned non-profit organizations. These commercial spaces are to be rented at below market rates, and with priority given to existing Black-owned businesses.
- 2.4.3** Priority be provided for existing businesses to relocate in commercial spaces within new developments;
- 2.4.4** Small-scale storefronts should be established at the green P lot at Reggae Lane, drawing reference from Market 707 at Scadding Court. These storefronts are to be reserved for businesses that need to temporarily relocate due to construction in the Planning Framework Area (See image 2-14); and

- 2.4.5** The area of new retail spaces should be restricted, so that the spaces can be affordable and accessible for existing small businesses and new start-ups.

#### Precedent: East New York Retail Preservation Program

In 2016, New York City piloted the East New York Neighborhood Retail Preservation program<sup>35</sup>, in the East New York rezoning area, requiring developers in sites receiving over \$2 million in city subsidies and including over 10,000 square feet of retail to set aside 20% of commercial space for local businesses to be leased at 30% below market rate. So far, the program has had success and the city plans on expanding the pilot.<sup>36</sup>

### Addressing Gentrification: Mid-rise Development that Retains Existing Commercial Spaces

The Eglinton Connects Study envisions future midrise development as a large, continuous form along Eglinton. This total reconstruction of the streetscape will result in the demolition and consolidation of many small commercial properties. These small buildings will be replaced by fewer, larger buildings, and many existing businesses, which act also as spaces for community, will be displaced in the process.

An entire street of mid rise buildings not only annexes adjacent commercial lots, but impacts the residential streets to the north and south. While Eglinton Connects illustrates strategies for Neighborhood Transition Areas to accommodate these larger buildings, the Planning Framework Study should look at alternative strategies to increase density.

New development must build upon the existing character of architecture and urban space in Little Jamaica, and enhance its vibrancy and resiliency. To that end, the Planning Framework Study should:

- 2.4.6** Include an analysis of the built fabric and urban space of Little Jamaica, that documents existing commercial places with cultural value. Appendix 4.2 is a preliminary study created by the report authors for this purpose, and should be expanded upon with further analysis and community input;
- 2.4.7** Recommend revisions to zoning bylaws and planning permissions to allow for increased density on streets adjacent to or intersecting Eglinton, and promote mid-rise development on larger lots and sites with less cultural and historical significance to the community. (Appendix 4.2 illustrates such an initial analysis, which should be expanded upon with future community input). For example, higher density allowances along Oakwood could relieve development pressure on Eglinton;
- 2.4.8** Recommend policies, guidelines and incentives that preserve existing retail storefronts by encouraging infill development and incremental additions (see image 4-19 in Appendix 4.2, and the included precedent examples of Vancouver and Toronto's Chinatown preservation efforts);
- 2.4.9** Suggest zoning and planning revisions to allow for less disruptive approaches that achieve the intended outcomes of the Neighbourhood Transition Areas put forth in Eglinton Connects, while taking into account local lot orientations and geometries. One suggested revision is illustrated in image 4-19 in Appendix 4.2.
- 2.4.10** Restrict the width of the frontage of new retail spaces to allow for an animated street wall that encourages pedestrian activity; and
- 2.4.11** Develop guidelines for how retail spaces can be better designed to accommodate physical distancing measures in the event of another pandemic, with the full input of local businesses. For example, minor revisions to

planning requirements for new retail developments may be desired, to encourage setbacks from the front lot line to accommodate queuing spaces, curb-side services, or outdoor seating with adequate separation (See image 2-14).

See Appendix 4.2 of this report for graphical illustrations of some of the recommendations above.

#### Precedent: Vancouver Chinatown Zoning Reversal

In 2018, the Vancouver City Council voted to revise zoning policies adopted in 2011, intended to encourage “revitalization” of its historic Chinatown through high density development<sup>37,38</sup>. The zoning revisions were implemented in response to gentrification concerns spurred by rapid increases in land value due to the 2011 policies. The revised zoning bylaw reduced the permitted widths and heights of new developments in hopes that new growth would be more in context with the scale of the existing neighbourhood, to minimize the large-scale displacement of existing businesses and residents.

#### Addressing Gentrification: Affordable Housing

Little Jamaica should continue to be a place where business owners and customers of all income levels can afford to live, in order to support a vibrant, resilient, pedestrian-oriented “main street” and public realm.

Moving forward, the City must commit to the equitable development of City-owned lands to achieve its affordable housing goals. The amended Planning Framework Study needs to directly address the preservation and future provision of affordable housing, through the following measures to start:

- 2.4.12** Implementing the city's inclusionary zoning (IZ) policy for all market-rate housing developments at more aggressive rates. We recommend

Precedent: "The Plan for the Preservation of Chinatown", 1969



**Image 2-8:** Incremental additions to a building near Kensington Market

Toronto has a history of preserving culturally significant neighbourhoods and allowing them to grow in place. When Chinatown businesses and residents were being displaced by the construction of Nathan Phillips Square and the proposed construction of high-rise office towers in the late 60's, activists successfully pressured the city to unanimously adopt the "The Plan for the Preservation of Chinatown"<sup>39</sup>, allowing Chinatown to grow into the vibrant neighbourhood it is today. Up until the present, Chinatown has densified gradually as businesses have added on to and expanded the area's original buildings.

However, while Chinatown has remained a predominantly Asian neighbourhood in the face of gentrification, there is not an analogous condition in Little Jamaica. While Toronto intervened to preserve the Chinese identity of Chinatown, there has not been the same action for historically Black communities in the city, not for the Grange, nor for Bathurst and Bloor, nor Regent Park, which have seen their Black residents and histories displaced in the course of the city's development.<sup>40,41</sup>

that at least 30% of units in new high-density development areas be priced below market rate permanently (at rates geared to the median household incomes of existing local residents). This figure considers feedback from the city's own public engagement efforts, and echoes the demands of other local housing advocacy organizations;<sup>42,43,44</sup>

- 2.4.13** In addition to implementing a more aggressive IZ policy, forming partnerships outside of the private sector to develop housing, for example, by building the capacities of local non-profit developers, housing co-ops, community land trusts, etc;
- 2.4.14** Prioritizing the use of public land (ex. Green P parking, Beer Store) for non-profit housing development, and maximizing opportunities for non-profit developers to build on these sites<sup>45,46,47</sup> (See "Precedent: Fraser Lands River District Affordable Housing, Vancouver");
- 2.4.15** Providing funds for the preservation and retrofitting of existing affordable rental stock, while enforcing policies to prevent renovations<sup>48</sup> and evictions due to COVID-19 impacts;
- 2.4.16** Developing initiatives to integrate new construction with career development programs in the trades (ex. Building Up);
- 2.4.17** Prioritizing Little Jamaica when securing or making use of funding for affordable housing development and retention obtained from provincial and federal levels of government (ex. funds from the National Housing Strategy); and
- 2.4.18** Expropriating privately-owned lands available for development, and developing non-profit housing or community spaces on those site (See Appendix 4.2 ,Large Low-Density Commercial Properties and Open Spaces).

**Precedent: Fraser Lands River District Affordable Housing, Vancouver**



**Image 2-9:**  
3245 Pierview Crescent, with 51 affordable rental units

The city of Vancouver, Community Land Trust (CLT), and the Vancouver Affordable Housing Agency (VAHA) have recently begun the construction of 140 units of housing affordable to families with incomes between \$41,500 and \$124,000, with funds from the city's new affordable housing endowment fund. The building also includes a number of accessible units, providing much needed housing for seniors and people of all abilities.<sup>49</sup>

**Addressing Cultural Erasure:**

The amended Planning Framework Study must address the preservation and expansion of culturally significant businesses, community programs, and public spaces, to support the area's economic development, through the following measures:

- 2.4.19** Creating an inventory and architectural study of buildings, urban spaces, and businesses of cultural importance to be preserved, in collaboration with local Caribbean businesses and members of Toronto's Caribbean community. We recommend retaining and enhancing these spaces, and prioritizing higher density development on sites without significant cultural value to the local community. (See Appendix 4.2);
- 2.4.20** Fully involving local residents in the creation of a holistic plan for the design

of culturally significant public spaces within the boundaries of the study. Public spaces, transit station interiors, streetscapes, furnishings, art, and signage etc throughout Little Jamaica should be designed according to one unified vision, in a manner sensitive to the existing Caribbean iconography and cultural history of the neighbourhood (See "Precedent: Seattle Midtown Activation" and "Precedent: West Oakland, Black Cultural Zones");

- 2.4.21** Expanding Reggae Lane, and the adjacent Green P parking space into a formalized public space, to better accommodate programming suggested in "Cultural events";
- 2.4.22** Designing the streetscape and other public spaces in the study area to accommodate programming and events that specifically celebrate the Caribbean community and generate revenue for local businesses (See "Cultural Events", Image 2-14); and
- 2.4.23** Leveraging funds from the future Community Benefits Charge to support culturally inspired improvements to parks and recreation spaces, and involve the Caribbean community in the visioning and creation of these spaces.

Precedent: Seattle Midtown Activation, Studio Zewde



**Image 2-10:**  
Intervention at E Union St and 23rd Ave



**Image 2-13:**  
Community dinner held at temporary plaza

Responding to gentrification at the heart of Black Seattle, the Africatown Community Land Trust and landscape architecture firm Studio Zewde created a temporary plaza that acted as an urban living room. The plaza served as a site for a series of design ciphers - community discussions on the future of the historically Black community in Seattle in the context of intense development pressures.

The interventions consisted of the painting of an existing parking lot and intersection, and permanent, concrete street furniture, the construction of which involved hundreds of local volunteers and youth<sup>50</sup>.

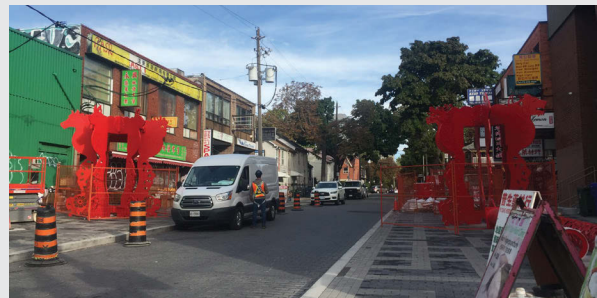
Precedent: West Oakland, Black Cultural Zones



**Image 2-11:**  
Block party to build support around the Black Cultural Zone

In the past decade, Oakland California has lost 30% of its Black residents<sup>51</sup>. Recently, faced with gentrification pressures from the construction of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, and from the tech boom across the Bay, residents and non-profit organizations in Oakland California have organized themselves to create a Black Cultural Zone. A central part of the Black Cultural Zone is the creation of a BCZ hub that would provide cultural programming, as well as economic, mental, and physical health supports for Oakland's Black community.<sup>52</sup>

Precedent: Huron St Public Space



**Image 2-12:**  
Huron Street Public Space under construction

Toronto's Chinatown BIA, with help from local councillor Joe Cressy and the City of Toronto, completed construction on a new public space at Huron and Dundas streets. The intervention consists of new culturally themed street furniture, designed by local architect Jyling Lee. New seating provide places for pedestrians to rest and new lighting improves safety at the intersection.

## Addressing Infrastructure and Roadwork

To improve the pedestrian experience along Eglinton West, the amended Planning Framework Study should:

- 2.4.24** Incentivize construction of seating and other street furniture along the sidewalk and boulevards where possible, to provide a comfortable pedestrian experience (See image 2-14);
- 2.4.25** Engage local businesses in discussions of how public sidewalks and streetscapes can be improved to better accommodate social distancing measures in the event of another pandemic like COVID-19;
- 2.4.26** Encourage provision of signage, maps, and directories of Caribbean businesses within LRT stations and the broader transit network to encourage foot traffic from stations to businesses along Eglinton;
- 2.4.27** Promote streetscape design that increases pedestrian safety. Streetscape design should consider lighting, separation from traffic, and sightlines for vehicles and pedestrians. Work closely with Black-owned businesses and community members to develop streetscape design; and
- 2.4.28** Provide guidelines to ensure visual prominence of public spaces and public art from LRT stations to draw foot traffic along the street.

## Future Implementation and Phasing:

We also demand that the city and provincial governments ensure future construction for Eglinton Connects results in as little disruption as possible to Little Jamaica businesses, by adhering to the following principles:

- 2.4.29** Duration of construction: In each neighbourhood on Eglinton West, the duration of construction should be kept to a minimum. Establish penalties for delayed construction, with proceeds going to businesses affected;

- 2.4.30** Phasing: Future construction to implement Eglinton Connects should be phased so that disruptions to foot traffic are local and temporary. The city should provide temporary parking locations or relaxations on parking enforcement. The city should also involve Little Jamaica business owners in discussions with regards to the duration and sequence of construction; and
- 2.4.31** Hoarding and management of construction waste: Contractors must be responsible for keeping sidewalks clean and safe for pedestrians, storing waste and equipment away from public spaces, and ensuring that hoarding as much as possible does not block storefronts. If obstructive hoarding is absolutely needed, then the hoarding should be used to promote public art and local culture.

## A Vision for Little Jamaica

On the following spread, the authors share our suggestion for a future vision for Little Jamaica. The proposed vision illustrates the recommendations listed in this chapter, including incremental development, streetscape elements celebrating Caribbean culture, street furniture and spaces that promote pedestrian traffic, and public spaces that enhance both the culture and economic livelihood of Little Jamaica.

### Image 2-14:

(Next spread) -A future vision for the design of Eglinton West, one that centres on the cultural strengths of Little Jamaica.



**NEW DEVELOPMENT**

New mid-rise developments to provide at least 50% affordable retail and at least 15% affordable residential units.

**COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Provide health, childcare and other social services needed in the neighbourhood.

**A NEW PARK**

Convert existing Green P parking lot into a community park that connects to Reggae Lane.

**VENDOR STALLS**

Provide affordable and pop-up retail space for events and businesses temporarily displaced by construction.

**SURROUNDING NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Preserving the built fabric of Little Jamaica requires spreading density to surrounding residential areas. Policy encouraging duplex, triplex and fourplex units is essential.

**REGGAE LANE**

Amend zoning to allow for commercial and live/work laneway suites to support the vibrancy of Reggae lane.

**STREET FURNITURE**

Designed by local artists.

**ARCHWAY**

Supporting banners, lighting, and sound systems.

**MURALS**

Painted by local artists

**CURB-SIDE PATIOS**

Allow for businesses to use the space in front of their storefronts as additional seating, and retail space.

**BLACK STAR WALK-OF-FAME**

A walk-of-fame commemorating the members of the Black and Caribbean-Canadian community

**CROSSWALK**

Existing commercial-residential buildings are indispensable and facilitate the majority of small and independent businesses in Little Jamaica. They must not be demolished for land assembly and new development.

**EXISTING BUILDINGS**

**NEW DENSITY**

In order to maintain affordability and cultural character, it is essential that new density is incremental and sensitive to the existing scale and build form.

# 3 Conclusions

Through the Black business Conversation consultation series, key stakeholders in Little Jamaica's future were provided the opportunity to not only learn about the plans that are in development for the area, but also provide their perspectives to shape them. The concerns shared and the recommendations provided demonstrate that community members such as the Black business owners, are indeed experts on the needs of their communities. We hope City staff sincerely engage with local residents on the issues laid out in this report, as well as the recommendations, which have the potential to make Little Jamaica a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous neighbourhood again.

In summary, the issues and recommendations are as follows:

## BIA Relationships:

BIAs on Eglinton West have a history of dis-engagement with Black-owned businesses. City staff must work to ensure greater accountability of BIA leadership to Black business owners and increase opportunities for Black business owners to serve in leadership positions within BIA boards.

In addition, the neighbourhood should be re-branded and officially re-named to reflect its Caribbean heritage. In support of this, BIAs in Little Jamaica should dedicate resources towards streetscape improvement and beautification efforts.

Lastly, where the current funding model of BIAs perpetuate systemic, racial barriers, the City should make funding directly available to local Black businesses and organizations.

## LRT Construction:

The city is well aware of the impacts of LRT construction on Little Jamaica and other communities along Eglinton. Municipal and provincial governments must act immediately to help Black-owned businesses stay open throughout construction, by assisting with financial compensation, support with regards to rent and eviction prevention, and logistical

support (ex. more relaxations on parking enforcement).

## COVID-19:

COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities affecting Black communities and businesses. Thus, government agencies should enact COVID-19 recovery policies that include an anti-Black racism lens, and include the goal of improving long-term economic sustainability for Black businesses. These policies should also be tied to measurable outcomes.

## Eglinton Connects:

As a broad-strokes document, Eglinton Connects fails to acknowledge the unique socio-economic needs and assets of Little Jamaica. The City should address these gaps by developing an Economic Development Study, and amending the current Planning Framework Study to more specifically address the needs of Little Jamaica businesses and residents.

## Economic Development Study:

Little Jamaica needs an economic development strategy to be implemented in parallel with the anticipated revitalization outlined in Eglinton Connects. The strategy must intentionally

address the economic needs and assets specific to Little Jamaica and Black-owned businesses, preserve, build upon Little Jamaica's Caribbean brand, and identify opportunities to build long-term economic resiliency and innovation in Little Jamaica, especially with consideration of the impacts of future development.

## **Cultural Events:**

To preserve Little Jamaica's cultural heritage, government agencies must provide more financial, logistical and human resources to support the organization of revenue-generating cultural events by Black-owned businesses and organizations.

## **Planning Framework Study:**

The City should amend the Planning Framework Study for Eglinton West around Vaughan Road to include enforceable guidelines that support the holistic development of Little Jamaica. The Study should address gentrification through guidelines that prioritize the retention of existing culturally- significant commercial spaces, encourage densification in an incremental fashion, and preserve and increase the supply of truly affordable housing. It should include a framework for the design of public spaces that support both revenue generating activities and the cultural needs of Little Jamaica. In addition, the Study should guide the construction of infrastructure that promotes foot traffic and pedestrian activity.

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# 4 Appendices

## 4.1 Eglinton Connects Summary

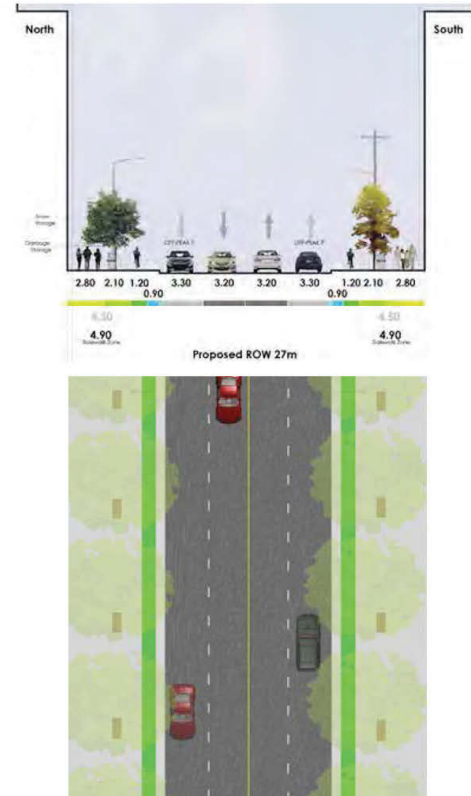
Eglinton Connects is a planning study which the City of Toronto adopted in 2014 to guide the transformation of Eglinton Avenue over time. The purpose of the study is to build on the changes set in motion by the construction of the new Eglinton Crosstown LRT. The study began in 2012 with a 2 year consultation process. With 21 recommendations in the categories of Traveling, Greening, and Building, the study envisions Eglinton as a city-spanning “main street”<sup>53</sup> corridor. The timeline for implementing these broad strokes recommendations ranges from short- to long-term. The City projects that Eglinton Avenue would densify to “accommodate 107,000 new people and jobs, including 31,000 new employees and 76,000 new residents”, due to development catalyzed by LRT construction<sup>54</sup>

The study’s recommendations would affect Little Jamaica through streetscape transformations, and zoning changes leading to higher density development. In terms of streetscape transformations, Eglinton Connects recommends creating “complete streets”<sup>55</sup> to provide space for walking, biking, transit, and cars. This entails widened sidewalks, hydro lines buried to allow for new street trees, protected cycling lanes, an extended network of rear service lanes, and adjustments to road space allocation for driving and parking. Specific streetscape typologies are envisioned for different areas; those that apply to Eglinton West are shown in images 5-1 and 5-2. The proposed timeline varies: some changes around LRT stations are already happening, while changes in most other areas would be incremental, paced with road work or development.<sup>56</sup>

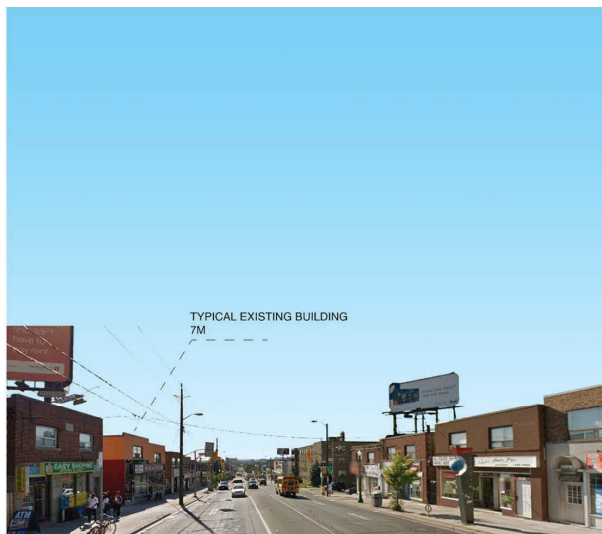
As part of adopting the recommendations of Eglinton Connects in 2014, the City of Toronto

adjusted zoning bylaws along Eglinton West to allow midrise development as-of-right.<sup>57</sup> While most existing street-facing buildings in the area are about 2 storeys, the new zoning allows for up to 24m in height, and the Eglinton Connects Plan recommends a 27m mid-rise building height.<sup>58</sup> The Commercial-Residential (CR) designation is also intended to promote ground floor retail uses. Meanwhile, the Residential-Multiple (RM) designation along Oakwood and streets adjacent to Eglinton restricts construction to 3 storeys.<sup>59</sup> In addition to encouraging midrise development, Eglinton Connects also proposes “focus areas” for high-rise development at Westside Mall and around the intersection of Eglinton and Dufferin.<sup>60</sup> Zoning changes to permit high-rise intensification do not appear to have been adopted yet.

The Eglinton Connects document concludes with a discussion of implementation strategies. In addition to zoning changes, it notes that Official Plan amendments at a finer grain will be required to adapt the broad strokes of the study to the character of unique neighbourhoods along the avenue.<sup>61</sup>



**Image 4-1:**  
Images from Eglinton Connects Study of proposed streetscape types at Eglinton West



**Image 4-2:**  
Diagrams showing recommendations from Eglinton Connects Study super-imposed onto existing streetscape

## 4.2 Built Environment and Programmatic Study

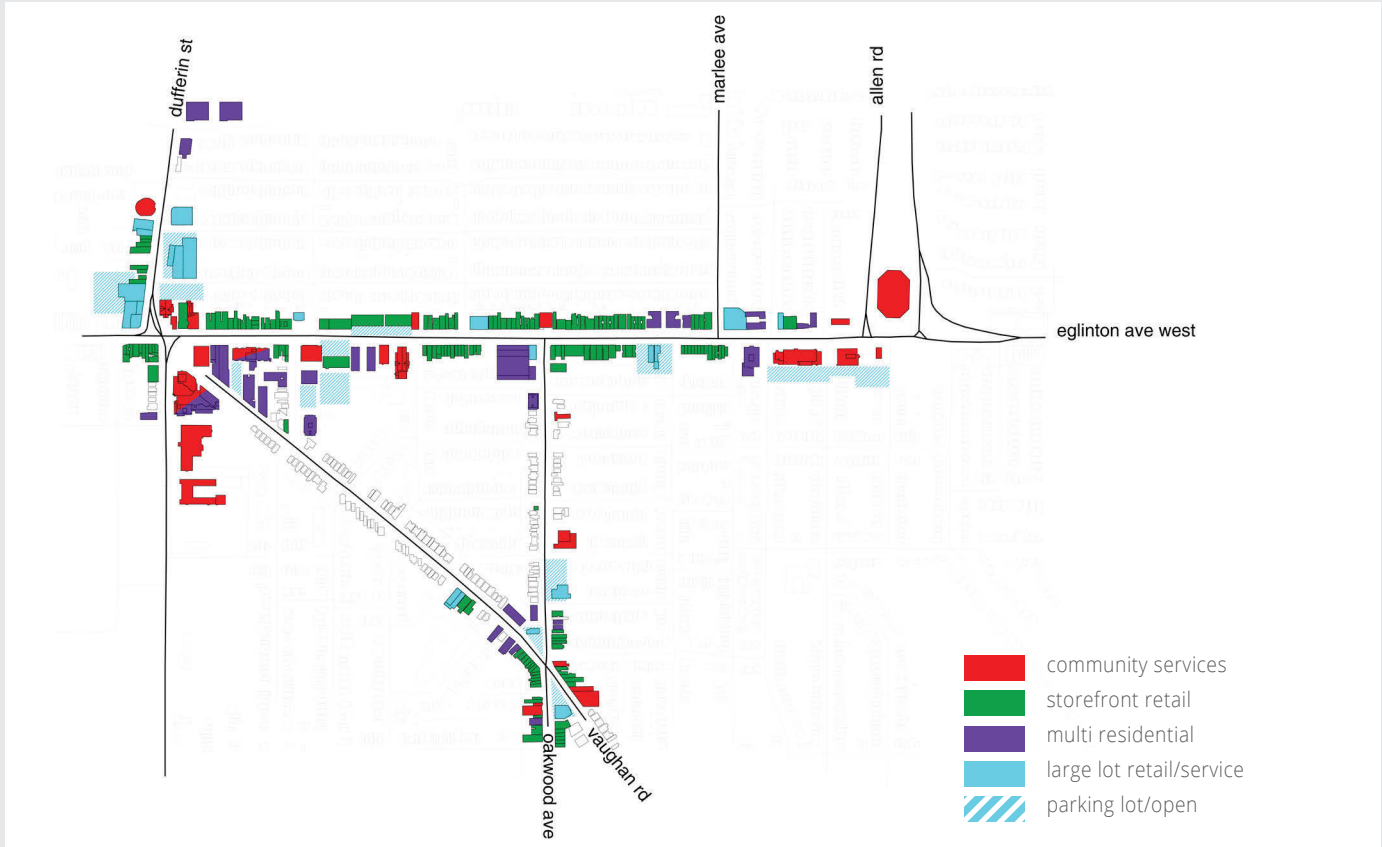


Image 4-3:

Building categories within the Planning Framework Study boundaries. Note: diagrams produced for this report illustrate an estimation of current and past building types, occupations, and ownership. Information was collected by a survey along Eglinton West, and also from Google Maps and Google Streetview images.

The Planning Framework Study has a potential to address development at a finer grain of detail than Eglinton Connects, which suggests a uniform approach to building form across Eglinton. Since the Planning Framework Study boundaries also extend south past Eglinton, there also potential opportunities for alternative means of densification, allowing more of the Little Jamaica strip to remain, or be developed more incrementally.

Development in the Planning Framework Study area requires consideration of:

- building ownership
- community history
- services provided
- architectural character
- lot sizes

For the purposes of this report, we have preliminarily analyzed properties by their preservation needs and development potential into the following categories: Community Services, Existing Residential, Storefront Retail, and Large Lot businesses. Some buildings appear in multiple categories.

These categories, and other factors informing the future growth of Eglinton, as listed above, must be further discussed with the local community in the development of the Planning Framework Study.

## Public Spaces and Community Programs



**Image 4-4:**  
Community programs and spaces within the Planning Framework Study boundaries

Public spaces and community programs (along with the buildings housing them should be preserved). If redeveloped, services must be relocated with adequate provisions.

The spaces these community programs are housed in do not share a common built form, nor do they have a common ownership structure. Rather, these spaces are evidence of the structural challenges faced by local residents, and the supports developed to address them.

Redevelopments should consider what additional community spaces should be put in place, and especially those that could specifically support the Toronto Caribbean community.



**Image 4-5:**  
The John Howard Society: criminal justice organization, reintegration services



**Image 4-6:**  
St Thomas Aquinas church and food bank



**Image 4-7:**  
Public space (infrastructural): proposed rendering of Fairbank LRT station



**Image 4-8:**  
Public space (infrastructural): Toronto Fire Station 341

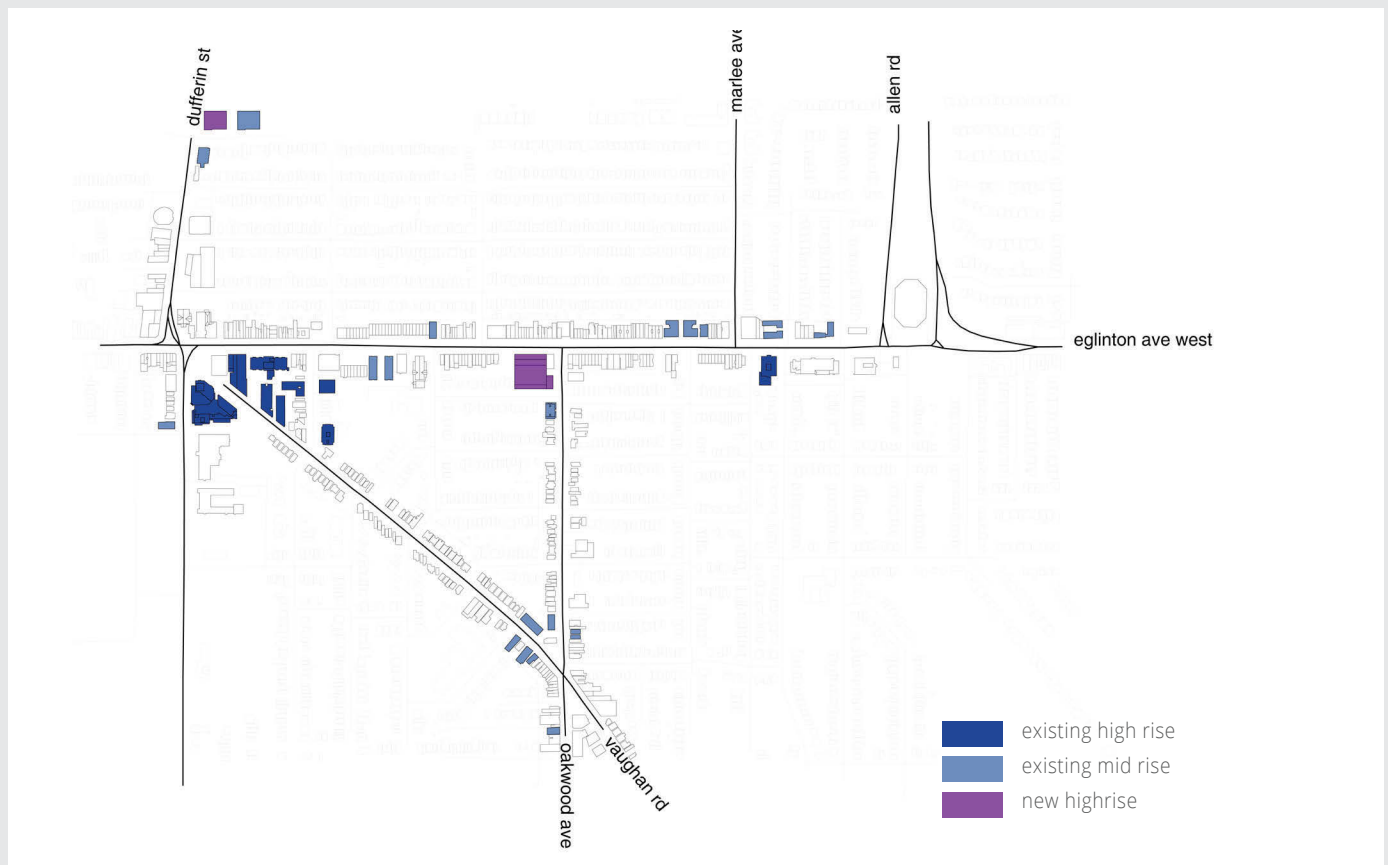


**Image 4-9:**  
Unison Community Health Center



**Image 4-10:**  
Regeneration House - High support housing with community services

## Existing Residential Buildings



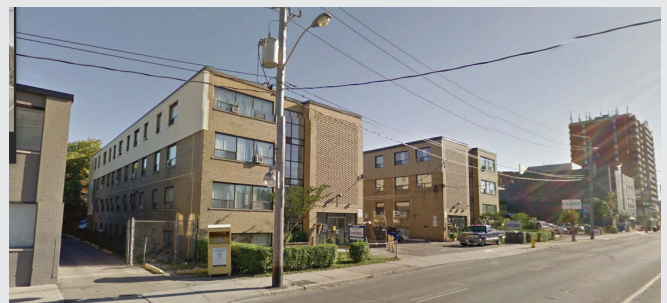
**Image 4-11:**  
Existing residential buildings

Existing residential types in the Planning Framework Study boundary include:

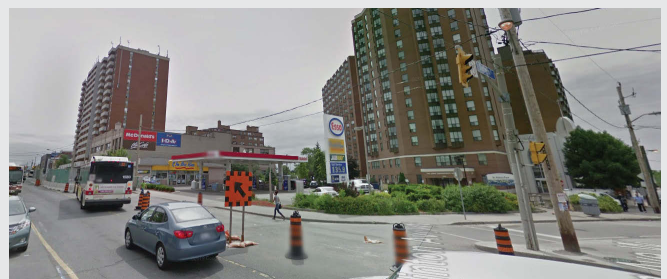
- older highrise apartment towers
- older midrise apartment blocks
- newer townhouse developments
- single family homes as the prevalent type between arterial roads (not shown in colour on the map)
- new and proposed condominium towers

There are also buildings that serve vulnerable sections of the community, including a rehabilitation housing centre, and four seniors' residence towers. These buildings, which combine residential and community service programs, should be retained.

There may be opportunities for gentle densification at existing single family homes, and we recommend a slight up-zoning in these areas.



**Image 4-12:**  
Existing mid rise block



**Image 4-13:**  
a TCHC seniors housing building on the left and the 3 towers of St Hilda's not-for-profit senior's housing on the right



**Image 4-14:**  
Newer townhouse development



**Image 4-16:**  
Single family residences between arterial roads

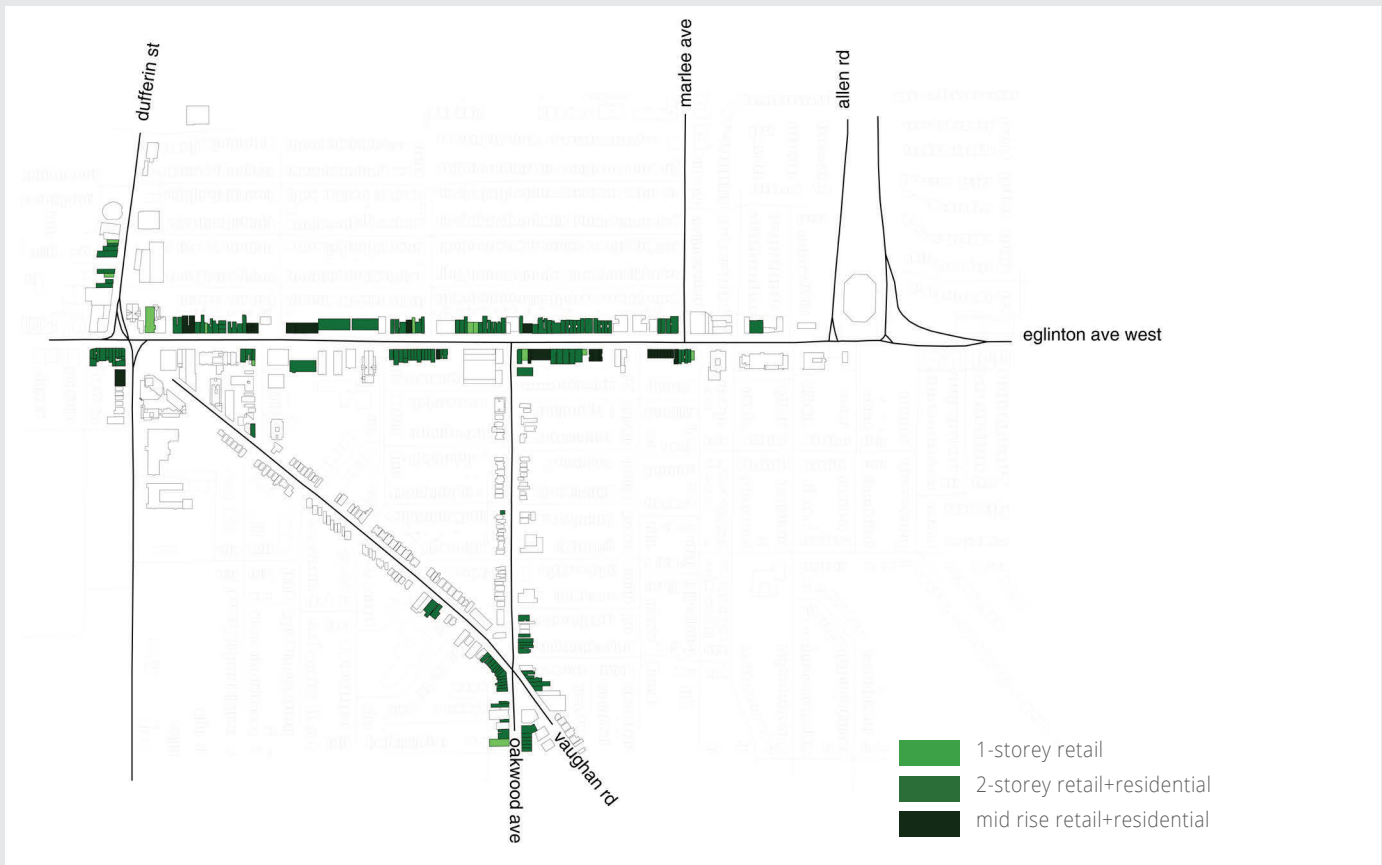


**Image 4-15:**  
Two housing developments on Eglinton West



**Image 4-17:**  
Condominium under construction at Oakwood and Eglinton

## Retail Storefront



**Image 4-18:**  
Types of retail uses and spaces in Planning Framework Study area

This is the predominant built form in the study area. It is the form that gives the area “character”; individual businesses and their storefronts are at an accessible scale for pedestrian interaction. Signage denotes the distinct character of each shop or business.

This building type can be characterized by a 20-30’ wide retail space at grade with two or three levels of walk-up residential apartments above. These buildings make up the majority of the buildings along Eglinton West between Marlee Avenue and Dufferin Street.

### Cultural Importance:

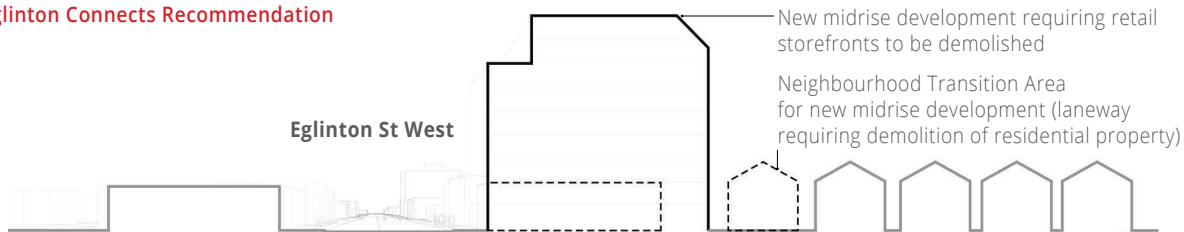
These buildings house the majority of Little Jamaica’s Black-owned businesses and are critical to the long-term affordability and success of the community. As such the removal of this building type should be discouraged.

### Growth Potential:

- 1-3 storey additions/rear additions

These buildings offer potential for sensitive approaches to additional density without severely impacting main street retail. With few exceptions, the lot depths of this type in this area are less than the 30m minimum recommended lot depth for new mid rise construction. This, in addition to the cultural significance of these shops, is another argument for less destructive redevelopment practices such as infill, additions, or renovations.

## Eglinton Connects Recommendation



## Recommendation for Incremental Densification



**Image 4-19:**  
Street sections comparing recommendations for densification



**Image 4-20:**  
Wailer's Connection was documented in 2014-2015 as a part of the area's Caribbean visual identity. The clothing store has since closed.



**Image 4-21:**  
1, 2, and 3-storey Caribbean-operated businesses



**Image 4-22:**  
Trea-Jah Isle Records



**Image 4-23:**  
Oakwood LRT being built where Gus' Tropical Foods once operated

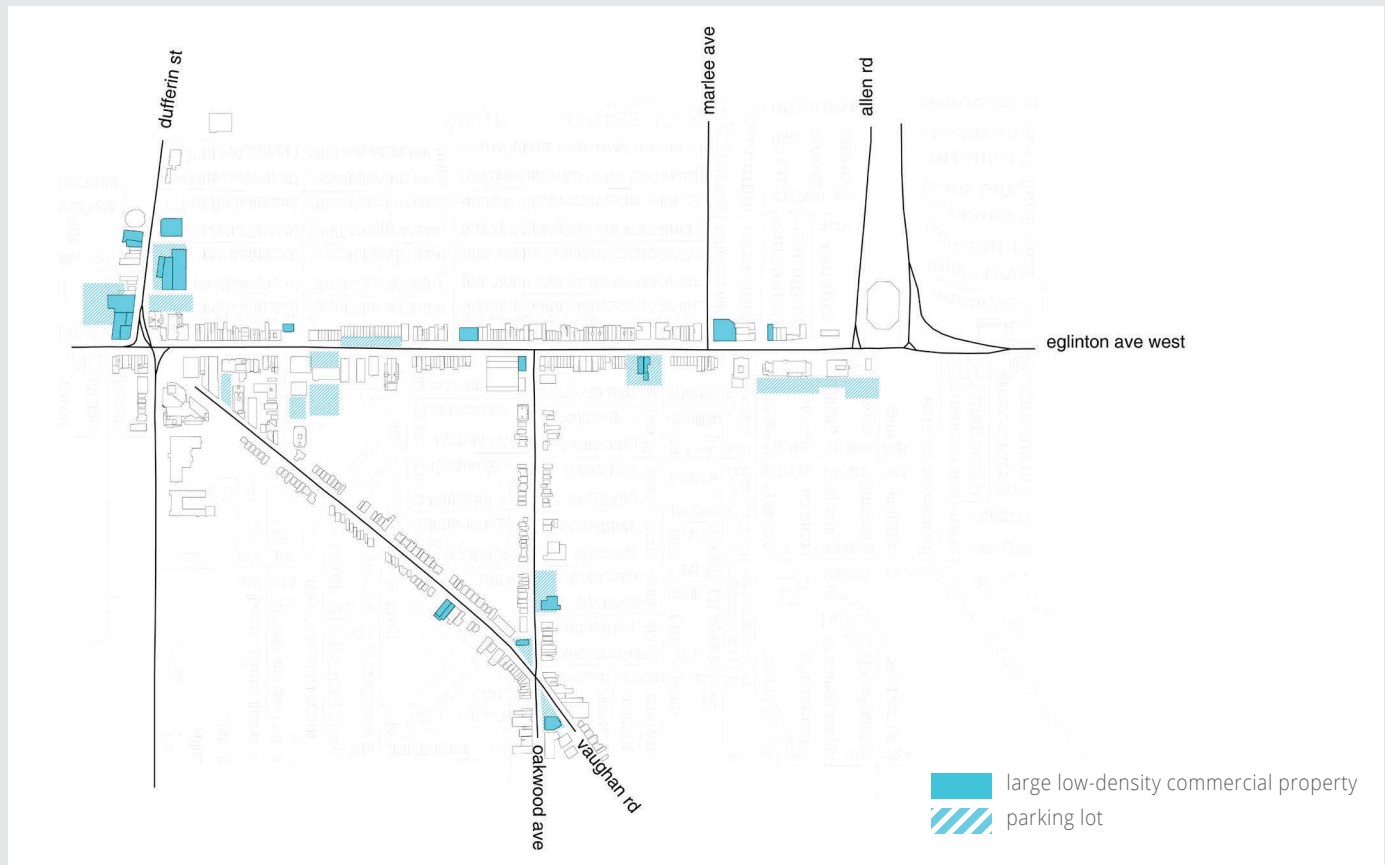


**Image 4-24:**  
A building shared by a Caribbean tailor and a payday loan company



**Image 4-25:**  
Another style of the retail-residential type. Storefront is set back creating a small parking lot between shops and the street

## Large Low-Density Commercial Properties and Open Spaces



**Image 4-26:**  
Map showing existing low-density commercial spaces and parking lots

### Large low-density commercial properties

These sites contain shops, services, and businesses, and have a lot depth that can accommodate mid-rise or even high rise development. Businesses on these sites are often corporately owned, rather than independently owned, though not universally.

This type can be characterized by 30' to 100' + wide lots with retail at grade and range between 1 and 2 storeys.

#### Cultural Importance:

The cultural importance of these buildings is low since they consist of non-Black owned corporate retail that can more easily relocate during a redevelopment process.

#### Growth Potential:

Mid-Rise to High-Rise, depending on the location: These buildings offer great potential to be redeveloped into mid-rise or high-rise buildings that promote the Eglinton Connects initiative of transit oriented density.

### Green P Parking lot(s), Expropriation of Existing Building Stock

#### Cultural Importance:

Publicly owned land is critical in maintaining accessibility and affordability for the residents of Little Jamaica.

#### Growth Potential:

The City of Toronto has increased capacity to leverage public land for more affordable housing and additional community services, such as parks, affordable retail, community centres, and seniors housing.

We also recommend that Green P Parking lots be designated for temporary retail uses during construction (see Image 2-14).



**Image 4-27:**  
Convenience store with a parking lot at Eglinton near Dufferin



**Image 4-28:**  
Car dealership and auto body shop



**Image 4-29:**  
The Beer Store on Oakwood



**Image 4-30:**  
Reggae Lane culminates in a Green P Parking lot



**Image 4-31:**  
The Eglinton streetscape features a few larger commercial buildings



**Image 4-32:**  
Streetside parking offers space for developments or greenery

## 4.3 List of All Recommendations

### BIA Relationships:

**1.1.1** Amend the York-Eglinton BIA Strategic Plan to ensure the support of Black businesses is highlighted as a key priority;

**1.1.2** Intervention and greater oversight from the City of Toronto to ensure proper governance until trust is restored. Limit the length a BIA Chair can serve in the position continuously and create pathways for business owners to apply for leadership positions;

**1.1.3** Eglinton Hill, Fairbank Village and York-Eglinton are to consult with Black businesses and provide statements detailing how Black businesses are to be involved in the decision and implementation processes;

**1.1.4** Toronto City Councillor Josh Matlow to clarify the ownership and stewardship of Reggae Lane and any future plans of the space.

**1.1.5** The Economic Development and Culture Division should look to create a Black business sub-committee on the Eglinton Hill, Fairbank Village York-Eglinton BIA boards to represent and speak to the needs of the Black business owners in Little Jamaica;

**1.1.6** The General Manager, Division Head of the Economic Development and Culture Division should implement an outreach and recruitment strategy to increase participation of Black business owners on both BIA boards, in tandem with board governance training;

**1.1.7** Revisit the Board of Management Procedures and release the York-Eglinton BIA four-year strategic plan with identified implementable action items;

**1.1.8** Rebrand and officially rename the area of Eglinton Ave West from Marlee Ave to Keele St from the currently named “International Market” to “Little Jamaica”;

**1.1.9** The Eglinton Hill, Fairbank Village and York-Eglinton BIA should undertake streetscape beautification projects to highlight Little Jamaica’s heritage, add Afro-Caribbean cultural public art, and maintain a neat and tidy appearance where possible during construction;

**1.1.10** Create a Little Jamaica website that would provide visibility and marketplace for business owners in Little-jamaica, have information on Black businesses that operate in Little Jamaica and an opportunity to promote local Black-owned business growth and long-term sustainability;

**1.1.11** Make municipal funding directly available to local Black business groups to recognize that the current funding model perpetuates systemic barriers.

### LRT Construction:

**1.2.1** Metrolinx must make financial compensation paid directly to businesses for construction impacts. The level of compensation should be equity-based, and take into account any effects of systemic anti-Black racism faced by Black business owners,

**1.2.2** Open the LRT in phases to mitigate construction delay, and clean up construction waste and equipment from sidewalks.

**1.2.3** More temporary parking locations and/or relaxations on parking enforcement.

**1.2.4** Rental assistance, and a moratorium on commercial evictions extended for the duration of construction; and

**1.2.5** Ensuring that loans and financial supports are available to all struggling businesses, including those who may be unable to pay taxes.

**1.2.6** Developing policies aiming to retain existing tenants when commercial properties are sold, namely first right of refusal.

## COVID-19:

**1.3.1** The City of Toronto apply a systems approach to its COVID-19 recovery and efforts to address systemic anti-Black racism, by focusing on the development of a sustainable Black ecosystem and Little Jamaica's potential role in the said ecosystem;

**1.3.2** All efforts related to addressing COVID-19 recovery and anti-Black racism be tied to measurable policy outcomes; and as it relates to anti-Black racism - proposed solutions should be embedded in the policy framework of the City;

**1.3.3** Review the current socio-economic state of Little Jamaica through an anti-Black racism analysis, for matters relating to COVID-19 impacts, BIA governance and the effects of the Crosstown LRT construction relative to other impacted areas;

**1.3.4** The City of Toronto and intergovernmental partners support Black serving organizations to provide culturally appropriate training to:

- help transition business operations online, including the provision of the necessary hardware and internet resources; and
- ensure business readiness for procurement and other funding opportunities.

## Eglinton Connects:

**2.1.1** The City of Toronto's City Manager must direct the City Planning and Economic Development and Culture Divisions to collaborate on these studies, to ensure that public consultations are jointly delivered and that the subsequent studies are developed in tandem to compliment each other. Development of the studies must include targets, timelines, and the allocation of necessary resources.

## Economic Development Study:

**2.2.1** Assess the tangible and intangible cultural, economic, and historical assets brought to the area by the presence of the Black-owned businesses and how these can be leveraged to drive economic growth;

**2.2.2** Create an inventory of land assets along Eglinton Ave West, including identification of public land;

**2.2.3** Assess the financial contribution of Black-owned businesses to their respective BIAs relative to (1) money spent on promoting their goods and services, or (2) any other benefit received from the expenditure of BIA funds;

**2.2.4** Explore the feasibility through a pilot project for implementing an economic development model which leverages business spaces, such as barbershops and salons, as extensions of the public realm (as contemplated by the recommendation in the 2017 York-Eglinton BIA Economic Scan);

**2.2.5** Assess the opportunities to establish Little Jamaica as an economic, cultural, and social hub, including, but not limited to:

- An assessment of the economic impact for the local and broader Black community from establishing dedicated coworking and business incubation spaces to support local talent and skills development;
- An assessment of the economic impact for the local and broader Black community from the establishment of cultural industries and events as an economic driver; and
- An assessment of the tourism and economic benefits associated with the brand "Little Jamaica";

**2.2.6** Explore the feasibility of using a "legacy business designation" to mitigate the displacement of existing businesses due to rent increases;

**2.2.7** Identify the barriers and opportunities to

property ownership by Black business owners in Little Jamaica;

**2.2.8** Assess the general economic impact of relocating existing annual African/Caribbean cultural events held in Toronto, for all businesses in the geographic area referred to as Little Jamaica;

**2.2.9** Implement a pilot project to test the findings of the Economic Development Study, including community-led initiatives to inform the development of a five-year economic development strategic plan;

**2.2.10** Establish a five-year economic development strategic plan for Little Jamaica in consultation with local residents; BIAs; and community organizations; including targeted consultations for Black communities and Black serving organizations;

**2.2.11** Explore options to mitigate the displacement of Black-owned businesses during any future construction, such as establishing temporary and/or long-term spaces akin to the Business out of the Box (BOB) initiative;

**2.2.12** Ensure that the City of Toronto's community benefits framework is embedded in the economic development strategic plan to leverage future economic development opportunities for residents of equity seeking groups including for: job and opportunities; social procurement; neighbourhood and environmental improvements, and provisions for accountability, monitoring and reporting; and

**2.2.13** Ensure that the economic development strategic plan aligns with the actions outlined in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, in particular:

- **Action 7.** Improve the quality of recreation services for Black Torontonians;
- **Action 15.** Support Black-owned businesses to better compete and thrive in Toronto;
- **Action 20.** Make City spaces more accessible and welcoming to Black Torontonians;

- **Action 21.** Invest in Black arts and culture.

## Cultural Events:

**2.3.1** Provide financing support

**2.3.2** Provide logistical support (ex. more relaxations on parking enforcement)

**2.3.3** Make improvements to neighbourhood cleanliness and safety during construction

**2.3.4** The City should provide public communications that Eglinton West is a safe place for visitors.

## Planning Framework Study:

### Addressing Gentrification: Increasing Affordable Commercial Space

**2.4.1** Commercial spaces in new developments with usable areas over 500sq.m. should include at 20% of that space to be sold or leased below market rate;

**2.4.2** The City should hold Metrolinx accountable to their 2015-2020 Sustainability Strategy, Goal # 5 to "Enhance Community Responsibility";

**2.4.3** Provide priority for existing businesses to relocate in commercial spaces within new developments;

**2.4.4** Small-scale storefronts should be established at the green P lot at Reggae Lane;

**2.4.5** The area of new retail spaces should be restricted, so that the spaces can be affordable and accessible for existing small businesses and new start-ups.

### Addressing Gentrification: Mid-rise Development that Retains Existing Commercial Spaces

**2.4.6** Include an analysis of the built fabric and urban space of Little Jamaica, that documents existing commercial places with cultural value;

**2.4.7** Recommend revisions to zoning bylaws and planning permissions to allow for increased density on streets adjacent to or intersecting Eglinton, and promote mid- rise development

on larger lots and sites with less cultural and historical significance to the community.

**2.4.8** Recommend policies, guidelines and incentives that preserve existing retail storefronts by encouraging infill development and incremental additions

**2.4.9** Suggest zoning and planning revisions to allow for less disruptive approaches that achieve the intended outcomes of the Neighbourhood Transition Areas put forth in Eglinton Connects, while taking into account local lot orientations and geometries.

**2.4.10** Restrict the width of the frontage of new retail spaces to allow for an animated street wall that encourages pedestrian activity; and

**2.4.11** Develop guidelines for how retail spaces can be better designed to accommodate physical distancing measures in the event of another pandemic, with the full input of local businesses.

#### **Addressing Gentrification: Affordable Housing**

**2.4.12** Implement the City's inclusionary zoning (IZ) policy for all market-rate housing developments so that at least 30% of units in new high-density development areas be priced below market rate permanently (at rates geared to the median household incomes of existing local residents);

**2.4.13** In addition to implementing a more aggressive IZ policy, forming partnerships outside of the private sector to develop housing;

**2.4.14** Prioritize the use of public land (ex. Green P parking, Beer Store) for non-profit housing development, and maximizing opportunities for non-profit developers to build on these sites;

**2.4.15** Provide funds for the preservation and retrofitting of existing affordable rental stock, while enforcing policies to prevent renovations and eviction due to COVID-19;

**2.4.16** Develop initiatives to integrate new construction with career development programs in the trades;

**2.4.17** Prioritize Little Jamaica when securing or making use of funding for affordable housing development and retention obtained from provincial and federal levels of government; and

**2.4.18** Expropriate privately-owned lands available for development, and developing non-profit housing or community spaces on those sites

#### **Addressing Cultural Erasure**

**2.4.19** Create an inventory and architectural study of buildings, urban spaces, and businesses of cultural importance to be preserved, in collaboration with local Caribbean businesses and members of Toronto's Caribbean community;

**2.4.20** Create a holistic plan for the design of culturally significant public spaces throughout the boundaries of the study, with the full involvement of local residents.

**2.4.21** Expand Reggae Lane, and the adjacent Green P parking space into a formalized public space, to better accommodate programming suggested in "Cultural Events";

**2.4.22** Design the streetscape and other public spaces in the study area to accommodate programming and events that specifically celebrate the Caribbean community and generate revenue for local businesses

**2.4.23** Leverage funds from the future Community Benefits Charge to support culturally inspired improvements to parks and recreation spaces, and involve the Caribbean community in the visioning and creation of these spaces.

#### **Addressing Infrastructure and Roadwork**

**2.4.24** Incentivize construction of seating and other street furniture along the sidewalks and boulevards where possible, to provide a comfortable pedestrian experience;

**2.4.25** Engage local businesses in discussions of how public sidewalks and streetscapes can be improved to better accommodate social distancing measures in the event of another pandemic like COVID-19;

**2.4.26** Encourage provision of signage, maps, and directories of Caribbean businesses within LRT stations and the broader transit network to encourage foot traffic from stations to businesses along Eglinton;

**2.4.27** Encourage streetscape design that increases pedestrian safety. Streetscape design should consider lighting, separation from traffic, and sightlines for vehicles and pedestrians. Work closely with Black-owned businesses and community members to develop streetscape design; and

**2.4.28** Provide guidelines to ensure visual prominence of public spaces and public art from LRT stations to draw foot traffic along the street.

### **Future Implementation and Phasing**

**2.4.29** Duration of construction: In each neighbourhood on Eglinton West, the duration of construction should be kept to a minimum. Establish penalties for delayed construction, with proceeds going to businesses affected.

**2.4.30** Phasing: Future construction to implement Eglinton Connects should be phased so that disruptions to foot traffic are local and temporary. The city should provide temporary parking locations or relaxations on parking enforcement. The city should also involve Little Jamaica business owners in discussions with regards to the duration and sequence of future construction.

**2.4.31** Hoarding and management of construction waste: Contractors must be responsible for keeping sidewalks clean and safe for pedestrians, storing waste and equipment away from public spaces, and ensuring that hoarding as much as possible does not block storefronts. If obstructive hoarding is absolutely needed, then the hoarding should be designed to promote public art and local culture.