

EAST SCARBOROUGH STOREFRONT PLAYBOOK

2024-2026

EAST SCARBOROUGH
STOREFRONT

A project of  MakeWay





LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For thousands of years what is now known as East Scarborough has been the traditional land of Indigenous peoples, including the Huron-Wendat, Anishinabek (Ojibway) Mashkegowick, (Cree), Hodeenashoone (Mohawk confederacy) and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. East Scarborough is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island; we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and gather on this land.

As we think about our role and work in this place, it is important to reflect on its history, and especially on the Indigenous people who, for generations, walked this land and celebrated their identities and histories; people who, long before our arrival, knew what it meant to be a part of a connected community through their spirituality, respect for nature and respect for each other.

As we think about our work, we reflect on the experiences of people who, in our current context, know what it is like to fight to build an authentic community whilst healing from a violent and dark past. We honour the fact that the people we work with have their own stories of resilience and survival.

We as a global community living and working within the boundaries of East Scarborough are connected in diverse ways. Like those who lived on this land for thousands of years before us, and today live with us and amongst us, let us create and plan in the same spirit of stewardship, respect, celebration and community.

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OUR PURPOSE

We do what we do so that...

The aspirations of people in East Scarborough are supported by a community ecosystem that grows stronger over time

IMPACT

When a strong community ecosystem exists, people have greater:

1. Sense of belonging and community
2. Ease of access to opportunities
3. Capacity to develop skills
4. Capacity to share knowledge and work together
5. Sense of agency and ability to influence systems (both local and broad)

WHAT WE DO

We realize our mission by:

1. Fostering a sense of welcome, belonging and inclusion
2. Connecting people to knowledge and opportunities
3. Helping people to support one another and work better together
4. Creating pathways and platforms to support individuals and groups to better achieve their goals
5. Leveraging assets and resources for the benefit of the community
6. Elevating and celebrating East Scarborough community builders
7. Weaving networks that strengthen the community ecosystem

Our projects emerge over time (based on connecting community momentum with appropriate opportunities).



OUR APPROACH

We approach our work with these values...



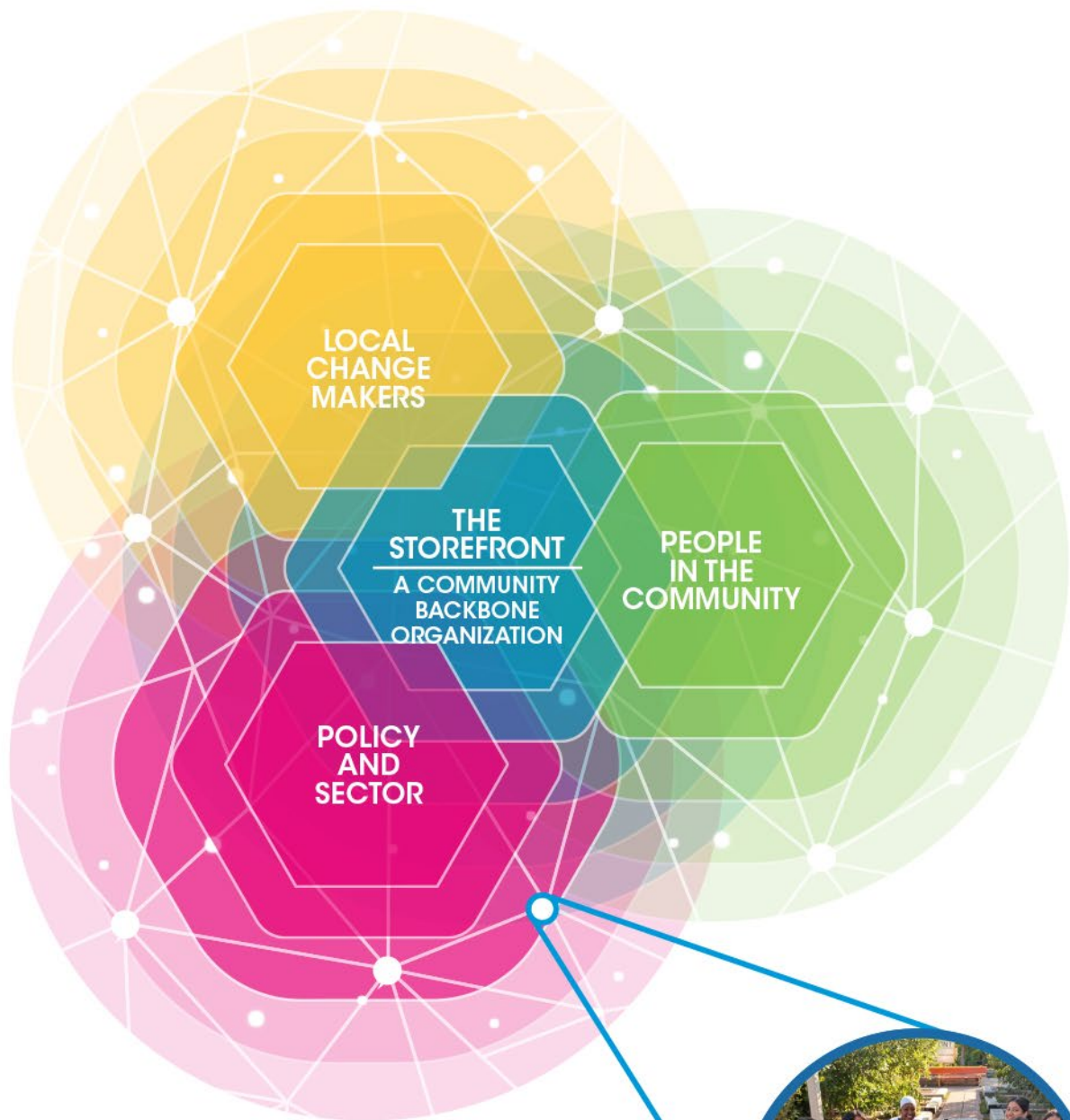
When we make decisions, we are guided by **OUR ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

1. Start with why
2. Pay attention to context
3. Keep the core strong
4. Put people and process before product
5. Know each new interaction contributes to our evolution
6. Take learnings from our past to guide our future
7. Explore possibilities as they emerge
8. Seek out diversity of thought and experience



When we design strategies or projects, we use the
CONNECTED COMMUNITY APPROACH

(Appendix A).



BURSTS OF COLLABORATIVE ENERGY

People meet to develop new ideas and initiatives, supported by the guiding principles of the community backbone organization (The Storefront)



These keys help us to unlock the potential of the East Scarborough community to find local solutions to complex problems:

10 KEYS TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

1. Build on Everyone's Strengths

Instead of looking at what is wrong with a community and what needs fixing, ask the question: what is right with the community that can be built on, and who is doing great work that could be strengthened and connected for greater impact?

2. Facilitate Collaborative Processes

Collaborations don't just happen, they require expert facilitation to ensure a deep collective understanding, shared purpose and mutually reinforcing processes.

3. Create Connected Communities from the Inside Out

Healthy, nurturing organizations and groups are fundamental to a connected community. Investing in the wellbeing of the people doing the work will ultimately mean greater impact.

4. Learn Together

Learning feedback loops are what strengthens a community over time; intentional learning can help everyone (grassroots groups, institutions, organizations, funders etc.) learn how the community works, the impact of specific interventions, and what people care about, so that synergies can be found and decisions can be grounded in learning. In this way, initiatives and ideas build on each other over time.

5. Embrace the Messiness

Ideas, priorities, aspirations and enthusiasm in a community emerge in different places at different times which are impossible to predict. Facilitating processes in this kind of complexity requires a specific skill set that sees emergence as a strength and creates the nimbleness required to identify and build on local momentum.





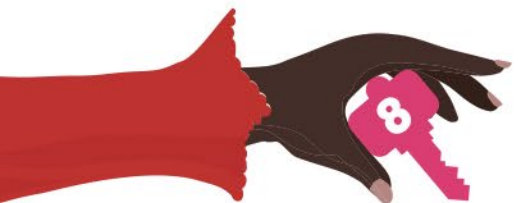
6. Prioritize Equity and Power Sharing

Power is a complex dynamic in all communities. In order to foster strong social fabric it is critical that the decision making power rests in numerous places throughout the community, and especially with grassroots groups that dedicate themselves to the wellbeing of their community. The kinds of power structures and dynamics that people are used to often have to be disrupted to achieve this.



7. Let Values Lead

When organizations or groups are trying to engage in activities that foster a connected community, their work is built on a foundation of values and principles. In this way, a group of people or organizations can authentically strengthen the work of others and not inadvertently slip into old paradigms and power roles.



8. Work at Multiple Scales

Facilitating a connected community means not only working to build strong local social fabric, but also connecting community led initiatives to larger systems, and movements to larger change efforts. Connecting community building to city building and to global change efforts supports scale that is truly grounded in community.



9. Make Community Building Visual

Communication is foundational to the Connected Community Approach. Communicating across languages, across literacy levels, and across values and priorities is a difficult task: using graphic design and photographs to illustrate ideas, concepts and intent accelerates shared understanding and momentum.



10. Build Creative Infrastructure

A connected community requires intentional structures to ensure that the community really does strengthen over time. Creative infrastructure includes: buildings, places and structures; communication media; structured events, groups and opportunities to engage and influence the systems that make up a community.

OUR EQUITY FRAMEWORK

With this Equity Framework, East Scarborough Storefront seeks to live into our organizational purpose, values, and aspirations by making our commitment to building equity and eradicating white supremacy culture explicit to the East Scarborough community we work alongside.

We know that due to systemic inequities, ensuring welcoming environments for the diverse community of East Scarborough means that we cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach. In order to be welcoming and respectful, we must break down barriers and inequities and strive for justice and equity.

OUR COMMITMENTS

We believe that East Scarborough Storefront's commitment to equity can and must be felt and experienced in real ways by anyone and everyone who engages with our organization.

Our commitment to **Everyone**:

- 1. We believe in the dignity of each and every person.** We will treat you in a considerate and equitable manner that recognizes, respects and celebrates the many identities, and experiences that you bring to the community.
- 2. We will put residents at the core of our community work.** Residents hold the wisdom, knowledge and lived experience to address the issues that impact their lives and our work will be informed by the needs and aspirations of the community.
- 3. We will intentionally look for and honour different approaches to learning and knowing such as storytelling, that challenge white supremacy.** The residents of East Scarborough know how to build community, through their life experiences and diverse ancestral traditions developed long before colonization. We will honour this knowledge and facilitate equitable ways of working with the community.
- 4. We recognize the historical and current injustices toward Indigenous communities** and we will learn from Indigenous partners, residents, knowledge keepers and Elders how to walk in a good way toward Reconciliation and support Indigenous sovereignty in our work and in the community.



5. **We recognize that colonization took place on many lands.** Many Black people and communities in Toronto and East Scarborough are here on Turtle Island because their ancestors were forcibly removed from their homes and enslaved through the slave trades. We will ensure that our staff understand the legacies of these actions are still present and felt today as context for our work.
6. **We will actively seek out Partners and Community Organizations who also demonstrate similar commitments** to values and principles that work toward equity outlined in this Framework.
7. **We will ensure that our hiring processes and practices are equitable.** We will hire and retain staff and volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community.
8. **We will provide easy access to clear information on what steps The Storefront is taking to strengthen equity in our work.** We will be honest about our limitations as a nonprofit organization working within a broader system that does not always emphasize and/or facilitate equitable outcomes.
9. **As we continue to learn, we will develop policies, practices, and initiatives that are intersectional.** We will work to undo oppressive networks and systems designed to systematically make life harder.

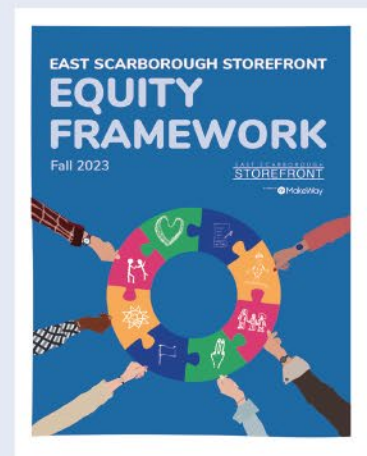


10. **Our staff team will actively seek out new ways to deepen our understanding of the realities of our community members and the communities we serve.** This will improve our approach to serve the community better.
11. **We will use approaches to safety and conflict resolution that put people first and seek techniques that minimize our reliance on police** in our both physical and virtual spaces.
12. **We will provide an easy and accessible way for everyone to provide feedback and hold The Storefront accountable** when your experiences with our organization do not reflect our commitments.

The Storefront has many other specific commitments to our partners, grassroots leaders and staff. These are embedded in various other documents, policies and procedures.

For details of the policies and practices The Storefront currently have in place that support our commitment to equity and anti-racism, as well as details of our anti-Black racism action plan currently underway, check out our anti-Black racism action plan overview.

Read our Equity Framework by scanning the QR code or visiting bit.ly/42jzEY3



WHO WE ENGAGE

PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

People who live, work or play in East Scarborough

We believe that if we use the Connected Community Approach with people in the community

Then people in the community will have greater:

- access to services
- access to opportunities
- skills and knowledge
- confidence
- sense of community and belonging
- civic participation

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

People inside and outside of organizations who intentionally work to make the community ecosystem stronger

We believe that if we use the Connected Community Approach with local community builders

Then local community builders will have increased:

- community connections
- willingness and ability for collective problem solving and action
- understanding about the people of East Scarborough
- awareness of and access to local assets
- sense of agency and ability to affect change

POLICY, FUNDER AND INSTITUTIONAL PLAYERS

Policy makers/funders/institutions whose strategies and actions affect the people of East Scarborough

We believe that if we use the Connected Community Approach with policy, funder and institutional players

Then policy, funder and institutional players will have greater:

- understanding of the East Scarborough context
- reach
- access to local community knowledge and solutions to inform overall strategies
- ability to achieve community-based outcomes





SPOTLIGHT ON OUR WORK WITH **COMMUNITY BUILDERS** Local Knowledge Informs Local Action

The purpose of a knowledge exchange is for community members and organizations/institutions to learn about each other's perspectives on a given subject and to develop the community's capacity to share knowledge and work together. It can be used to make sense of data, explore a topic together, or co-create a complex project. The key to a successful knowledge exchange is to surface understanding from multiple perspectives, and especially residents, all of which are honored with equal importance.

The East Scarborough Works Symposium, our first in-person event since the pandemic, was held on a beautiful day in May 2022 at the Guild Inn in a covered outdoor space. We met to collaborate and brainstorm ideas to:

- address systemic issues facing employers and job seekers
- discuss how to confront anti-Black racism
- identify pain points in the local employment ecosystem
- surface solutions to increase effectiveness and efficiency

The Symposium engaged 98 unique network players, including Anchor Institutions, Policymakers and Funders, Service Providers, Trainers, Employers, Unions, and Jobseekers. In attendance were 11 jobseekers, with 3 resident leaders playing a host and presenter roles. The Symposium allowed us to surface critical insights from our network that articulated successes and challenges, and captured concrete commitments from a range of network players to strengthen workforce development pathways in East Scarborough, with a focus on moving from an implicit equity lens to an explicitly anti-racist lens.



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR WORK WITH PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Taking the lead from Grassroots leaders: Food systems work

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when we had to close our physical spaces, The Storefront remained connected to the neighbourhood by holding weekly virtual community meetings. Through this process we heard from many resident leaders about widespread food insecurity and the impacts on hundreds of households in East Scarborough.

Resident leaders were cooking approximately 25 meals from their homes and sharing them with their isolated neighbours during the lockdowns. But this effort fell short of the needs within the neighbourhood, prompting resident leaders to seek additional space and resources to expand their support.

The Grassroots Leadership Strategies staff team presented this need for both space and staff support to The Storefront leadership, advocating for safe use of The Storefront's commercial kitchen to prepare meals. At The Storefront, we had to navigate the challenges of making this happen since we were closed to the public. We had to make specific policy changes and allocate staffing resources to support this initiative. We were able to achieve this because we knew the importance of

this issue to the community, because of our established trust and collaboration with the resident leaders who sought to use the space, and due to the dedication of our staff, who were willing to support this in-person activity during a time of limited physical contact.

Resident leaders possessed first hand insight into the issue, enabling them to perceive both the problem and the solutions clearly. Because we listened to residents, the food program operating from The Storefront provides barrier free, culturally appropriate and dignified access to food support. With a focus on food sovereignty, this initiative fosters a sense of belonging and community. There is no stigma, no requirement to prove need, and it is easy to access because residents collect their meals in the lobbies of their own building. The deliberate design of this support is attuned to the unique needs of our local community because resident leaders have direct knowledge and experience with their neighbours. We went from serving 25 meals a week to over 300 meals a week now.



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR WORK WITH **POLICY AND FUNDERS**

Connecting Agendas - Residents Influencing City processes: Housing Now

In the fall of 2021, we received news that Toronto City Council had approved The Storefront's City-owned location at 4040 Lawrence Avenue East to be included in the City's Housing Now Initiative.

Through local Councillor Paul Ainslie, Toronto City Council adopted a motion that paved the way for collaboration between The Storefront, the City, and CreateTO to embark on a community engagement process focused on design and future workforce development efforts when construction begins.

Since then, we have been working in partnership with the City and CreateTO. The Storefront's role has been to translate and disseminate information to the community regarding the project, support residents to participate in design sessions, support the

City and CreateTO to work with residents, and advocate for resident voices beyond the design of the building on affordable housing matters.

Throughout this process, it is evident that the residents' knowledge of their community and their expertise has been valued, and that their voices have been heard on key issues, such as the importance of green and public recreational spaces and ensuring continued presence of The Storefront in the new development. Knowing that they can influence local systems has instilled in residents a sense of agency and has motivated them to continue being engaged.



Read our latest Snapshot Report by scanning the QR code or visiting bit.ly/4btiwtA





EAST SCARBOROUGH STOREFRONT
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
2024-2026

Future proofing The Storefront,
the community and the systems



1

DEVELOP RESILIENCE AND STRENGTHEN THE STOREFRONT

The nonprofit sector is facing unprecedented challenges: demand for services has grown, we are facing financial constraints, and we face an HR crisis which is driven by a lack of sustainable funding. Ensuring sustainable resources, both financial and people, is directly linked to our capacity to serve the East Scarborough community. Focusing on the following pillars will help us to address these challenges head on, and be proactive about imminent trends so that we can not only sustain the organization but lean into our strengths even further.

a. Develop stable and diversified funding

Broader economic uncertainty and austerity means declining donations and government funding. In order to continue to resource the Storefront, we have engaged a fundraiser and struck a financial sustainability committee to focus on how we can stabilize and diversify our funding.

b. Invest in financial, administrative and data systems

The Storefront relies heavily on having the right financial, administrative and data systems in place to be able to successfully meet the appropriate regulatory requirements and to be accountable to our funders and community. We will focus on strengthening these systems and putting in new systems where needed.

c. Build capacity through staff development and training

Our staff are one of our biggest assets, therefore it's important that we support them and help them grow. We will focus on building the capacity of our staff to meet anticipated goals and challenges, and deepen our anti-racism work.

d. Shine our light: Tell the story of our impact

Our work is important, it is easy to understand, and people want to support it. This is our new mindset. We will continue to tell our story, both past and present, so we can create the equitable future we want to see.



2

REBUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND RESILIENCE AFTER THE PANDEMIC'S IMPOSED DISCONNECT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we grappled with questions such as: how do we build a connected community during a time when we can't connect in person? How do we support our community who often don't have access to digital tools and/or skills? How do we nurture connections with our partners and people in the community when so many people are facing challenges to their physical and mental health? While the COVID-19 pandemic dampened our ability to connect with the community in the same ways we used to, we were able to maintain many of our connections and partnerships, and even develop new ones. We now need to focus on developing a connected community in our new reality.

a. Increase our physical presence in the community and engage residents and partners

While we will continue to engage in virtual formats, we agree with our community that there is no substitute for in-person presence. Additionally, we know that relationships are not static and they need to be nurtured, and so we will focus on renewing and deepening our partnerships, particularly those that help us to lean into our community development work.

b. Collectively work on future proofing the community

The pandemic opened everyone's eyes to how inequity plays out on the ground, where marginalized communities like East Scarborough were hardest hit by the pandemic and its impacts. Because of the spaces and networks we have built in this community, we were able to support residents, residents supported one another, and we have come out with lessons learned. One of these lessons is to focus on future proofing the community against any shocks stemming from global and local issues. Specifically we will develop climate resilience, enhance digital access and literacy, and support food security.



APPENDICES

Scan the QR codes or visit the listed URLs for digital versions of these documents.

Appendix A:

The Connected Community Approach:
How to unlock the potential of a community to
find local solutions to complex social issues

bit.ly/3SSLSKO



Appendix B:

Grappling with
Tensions and Paradoxes

bit.ly/3HTbjFv



Appendix C:

History of “place” and the
East Scarborough Storefront

bit.ly/42FfXkg





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