

SCHOOL OF CITIES

Annual Review
2020 - 2021



GLOBAL - MULTIDISCIPLINARY - COMMUNITY-ENGAGED - TRANSLATIONAL



Land Acknowledgment

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As you peruse through the activities that we have undertaken over the last year as a part of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and to the people that have been most affected by the oppression of colonialism, we invite you to reflect on how your research and practice gives voice to the communities that have historically been marginalized and silenced.

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Director's Note

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and accelerated intersecting crises of public health, climate change, systemic racism and inequality that have deeply effected cities and their residents.

This moment has called for an urgent approach to urban scholarship that is interdisciplinary, collaborative, global and deeply engaged within and beyond the university. The School of Cities' mission throughout this time has been a clear focus on the most pressing urban issues, which require not just a deeper understanding of their roots but also interdisciplinary problem-solving. This was operationalized through facilitation of collaborative research, expansive scholarship, innovative educational programs, and unfettered dialog around what could be done, not just to survive this and subsequent crises, but also to support communities that inequitably bear the maximum burden of such disasters due to discriminatory and systemic issues.

Through a range of programs, such as the Urban Challenge grants, Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy, Multidisciplinary Urban Capstone Projects, the Anti-Black Racism/Black Lives-Anti-Indigenous Racism/Indigenous Lives Fund, the Global Urban Network seminar series and the Leading Social Justice Fellowship, the School sought to bring together people from all backgrounds and fields in a dialogue around equitable and sustainable recovery and change. Through the tireless engagement from many contributors and collaborators, the School of Cities is well on track to fulfill its mandate of becoming a global convener of critical and timely discourse around urban regions.

Having concluded my term as the Interim Director of the School of Cities, I would like to share my overwhelming gratitude to the entire team of associate directors, staff and faculty that supported the building of an institution I am proud to have piloted in its nascent years. We have built up the School of Cities together. I am excited for what the future holds for the School of Cities under the leadership of Director Karen Chapple.

Matti Siemiatycki

Professor, Geography and Planning
University of Toronto



Cities are at the frontlines of tackling the biggest challenges of our era.

At the moment, cities occupy less than 3% of the Earth's land, consume 60% to 80% of the world's energy consumption and account for more than 70% of global CO2 emissions.

70% of the world's population - or over 5 billion people - are projected to live in cities by 2050.

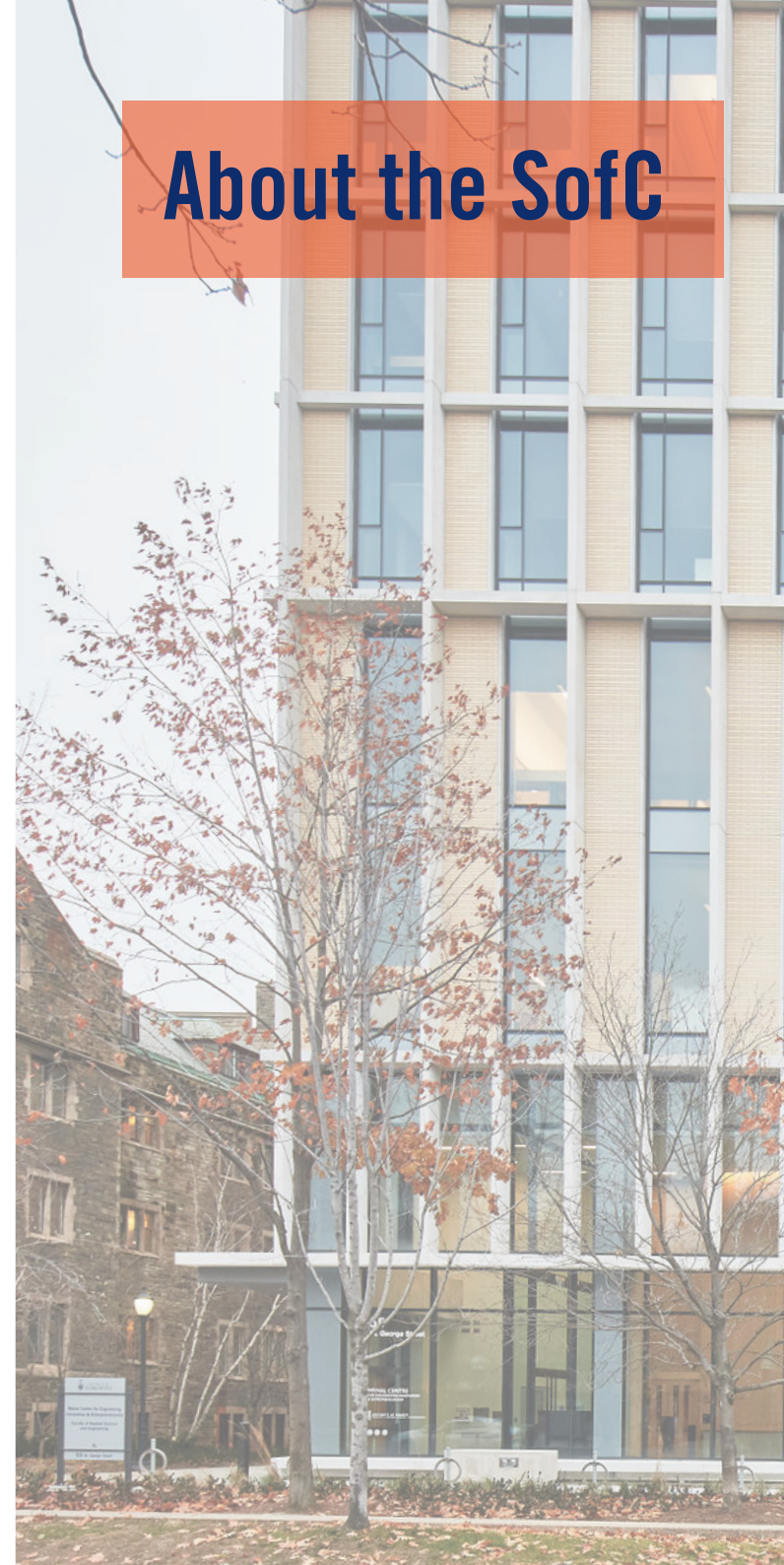
95% of urban expansion over the next few decades will be situated in the developing world.*

The School of Cities seeks to be a platform that convenes our extraordinary community of urbanists, urban-oriented researchers, educators, students and public players across disciplines and perspectives to explore interdisciplinary solutions for pressing urban issues and work towards more **equitable, sustainable, prosperous, inclusive** and **just cities and urban regions**.

With the goal of becoming a world-leading centre for innovative interdisciplinary urban research, education and engagement, the School of Cities brings diverse communities together to spark new insights and design creative ways for cities and their residents to thrive.

*<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>

About the SofC



Anti-Black Racism /Black Lives and Anti-Indigenous Racism/Indigenous Lives Funding Initiative

The School of Cities supported 13 projects as part of the inaugural Anti-Black Racism/Black Lives and Anti-Indigenous Racism/Indigenous Lives Funding Initiative.

This initiative was created to support anti-racism education, outreach and engaged praxis and policy-oriented research projects and initiatives undertaken by faculty and student associations across the tri-campus of the University of Toronto and in the wider community.

The funded projects demonstrate **prior engagement and substantive new work on the broader scope of Anti-Black Racism & Black Lives and Anti-Indigenous Racism & Indigenous Lives interventions**. The projects were chosen with the help of an **Award Committee comprised of faculty and student members from the Black and Indigenous communities** at the University of Toronto.

In memoriam: The School of Cities joins the University and wider community in remembering and celebrating the life and unique contributions of late Lee Maracle, a cherished member of the Advisory Committee

Funded Projects

Askaakamigokwewigamig Repair and Revitalization

Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous Dialogue Series

Black Liberatory Physical Education: Freedom Movement through Freedom School – Toronto

Black Medical Students' Association Community Outreach

Water Gathering with the Credit River: Decolonizing Municipal and Provincial Understandings of Land, Parks, Rivers

Black Studies Summer Seminar Intensive

Combating Commercial Displacement of Black-Owned Businesses in Little Jamaica

Family Group Conferencing (FGC)-African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) Families

Journal of Integrative Anti-Racism Studies

Market Credit Program at Scarborough Co-op Market

Mashkiki gitigaanan (Medicine gardens)

Pullingtogether Collaborative

Example of a Funded Project

Practicing Indigenization: changing the arts sector to center Indigenous Artists' wellbeing

Team members:

Prof. Danielle Kwan-Lafond, Randa Omar, Rajpreet Sidhu, Yi Li and Tianyi Wang, Department of Sociology, UTSC

Curated by the team members under the guidance of Prof. Danielle Kwan-Lafond, this roundtable sought to engage with Indigenous ways of knowing, with indigenization and decolonization in the context of fair work in the art world.

Consisting of four Indigenous panelists - **Lindsey Lickers**, **Shannon Winterstein**, **Nyle Miigizi Johnston** and **Annie Beach** - ranging from art administrators to visual artists, and community advocates who addressed the needs of Indigenous artists when working with non-Indigenous organizations, this discussion covered creating supportive working environments, compensation, the impact of COVID-19, as well as the effects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the arts sector.

The team released the final project report of their research, findings and recommendations, as part of their work to address anti-Indigenous racism in the arts sector through their MUCP project and their own scholarship and practice.

[Read the Report here](#)

[Watch the Roundtable event here](#)



[Click to explore the poster presentation](#)

CENTERING INDIGENOUS ARTISTS' WELL-BEING WITHIN THE ARTS INDUSTRY

Our project intends to develop recommendations for STPS Public Art to initiate and sustain meaningful, long-term relationships with Indigenous artist through the principles of intentionality, humility and reflexivity within the fast-paced grant economy.

Acknowledging the history of stolen land and the current context of power dynamics and the gig economy, we centre Indigenous and theoretical frameworks, reports as well as lived experiences, which we learned about through interviews and hosting a roundtable. Based on our research and conversations, our strategies and recommendations can be used by other public art and community based organizations.

Recommendations
Overarching Theme: **Building Intentional Relationships**

- 1. Onus on the Organization**
An organization should not expect that the artist they have a relationship with, and are working with also act as an educator and a healer.
- 2. Approaching Indigenous Artists:**
The organizations should approach artists with intentional plans, prepare intake forms, provide artists with adequate funds and utilize referrals.
- 3. Accessibility in Public Art Organizations:**
By integrating a more diversified approach, organizations can better support Indigenous artists.
- 4. Embedding Principles into Governance Structures**
Without ratified institutional bylaws, there is no way to ensure future directors or boards will uphold these principles.
- 5. Creating a Safe Environment**
There should be protocols to protect Indigenous artists with procedures and tools to correct mistakes, in order to prevent the perpetuation of trauma and ensure the environment is safe and supportive of Indigenous folks before they enter the organization.
- 6. Advocacy & Systemic Change**
Organizations should use their power and networks to advocate for systemic change at the municipal, provincial, and national levels, while changing their own operations.
- 7. Centering Indigenous Sovereignty**
This allows for Indigenous nations to rebuild traditional systems of governance and exist outside of the settler colonial governance structure.
- 8. New Forms of revenue to invest in Indigenous artists and their wellbeing**
The opportunity to include Indigenous artists as co-owners and revenue sharers within public art organizations operations, should be considered.
- 9. Adjusting Evaluation Metrics**
Non-Indigenous public art organizations should take into consideration that their typical evaluation criteria and Indigenous approaches do not come from the same framework.

Medicine Wheel

There are various forms of medicine wheels, spanning across the different Indigenous nations. All forms are sensible and center one value: people should learn, appreciate, respect, and practice interconnectedness and balance in all things. Four Directions Teaching, 2018. Institutions can use medicine wheels as a conceptual guide to identify their roles in supporting Indigenous communities, and to understand the gap they need to overcome to support Indigenous artists' interconnectedness.

"The Toronto area was covered by two fraudulent agreements: Treaty 13 and the William Treaty"

To align with Indigenous philosophy and ensure the viability of recommendations, this report is place-based, mainly focusing on the Indigenous history on the land of Toronto and opinion from artists who based in this area. With the original name of Tkaronto, Toronto is the traditional territory of the Anishnabeg, the Haudenosaunee, the Ojibwe, the Mississauga of the Credit and the Wendat peoples. Throughout this report, we embed the history, land and knowledge of the Anishnabeg and the Haudenosaunee.

30 Research Seminars held with
400+ Attendees

75+ Faculty engaged representing
20 Faculties and Departments
from U of T Tri-campus

\$150,000+ directed
to Student Research

4 SPRE Training Sessions held with
200+ Participants

75 Case Studies conducted
of Mixed-Use Initiatives

RESEARCH

The Research pillar facilitated exchange of the latest research, scholarship, ideas and opinions between experts, scholars and the general public across the world on urban challenges being faced by cities and communities in the face of the pandemic.

While the Building Resilience seminar series was a platform for sharing crucial insights around strengthening and optimization of health and food supply chains that serve millions of people - especially in remote communities - the webinars held around affordable housing created a safe space for urgent local conversations around homelessness in the times of crisis. Through the SPRE training series, non-profits across Toronto and the GTHA were provided with the tools to navigate a vastly inaccessible real estate market in their quest for placemaking. The trends and observations brought forth in these conversations are key for informing the research priorities and practices in a fast-changing reality.

“The sessions were excellent, thank you for organizing. In the future I’d like to learn more about developing affordable multigenerational housing for 20-30 people. Just a big thank you to the team who organized this and made it available at no cost. I really appreciate your time, information sharing and knowledge on the subjects explored. Thank you for this very helpful series.”

Social Purpose Real Estate Training Module attendee

“I so appreciate (that) you all have made this available for free! (It’s been) Very helpful so far. The sessions have been very informative. The case studies are FANTASTIC for learning. So glad you’ve shared so many.”

Social Purpose Real Estate Training Module attendee



Urban Challenge Research Projects

Science of Cities

Using a team-based approach that spans disciplines at the University of Toronto and involving partners from leading international institutions, the Urban Challenge Research Projects tackle the most vexing urban challenges by seeking to understand the fundamental components of a city and how they interact.

Urban Genome

Led by Dan Silver – Professor, Sociology – this working group is devoted to gathering interdisciplinary-minded scholars interested in collectively exploring what a science of cities for the 21st century could be, with a special focus on ecological and evolutionary concepts.

The project's website features some of the most recent research tools and findings being employed by the team members across their practice. Perhaps most importantly, the site is home to an interactive tool, "Piccard". This tool allows experts and non experts to examine long-term patterns of urban evolution and to identify detailed local processes for over forty regions in the USA and Canada between 1970 and 2010. The interface guides the user through the original data and is intended to provide the general public as well as local decision-makers with a tool to help situate their cities and neighborhoods in reference to their own past as well as other cities.

Building on their research repository and scholarship, the Urban Genome Project also published a series of papers:

Silver, D., Fox, M. S., & Adler, P. (2020). Towards a Model of Urban Evolution I: context. University of Toronto School of Cities Urban Genome Project Working Paper. <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/yubkr/>

Fox, M., Silver, D., & Adler, P. (2020). Towards a Model of Urban Evolution II: Formal Model. University of Toronto School of Cities Urban Genome Project Working Paper. <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/9pvq2/>

Silver, Daniel, Mark Fox, and Patrick Adler. "Towards a Model of Urban Evolution Part III: Variation, Selection, Retention." (2020). University of Toronto School of Cities Urban Genome Project Working Paper. <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/gtpfw/>

Olson, Alexander & Calderón-Figueroa, Fernando & Bidian, Olimpia & Silver, Daniel & Sanner, Scott. (2021). Reading the city through its neighbourhoods: Deep text embeddings of Yelp reviews as a basis for determining similarity and change. *Cities*. 110. 10.1016/j.cities.2020.103045.

Silver, Daniel & Adler, Patrick & Byrne, Ultan. (2021). Venues and segregation: A revised Schelling model. PLoS ONE. 16. 10.1371/journal.pone.0242611.

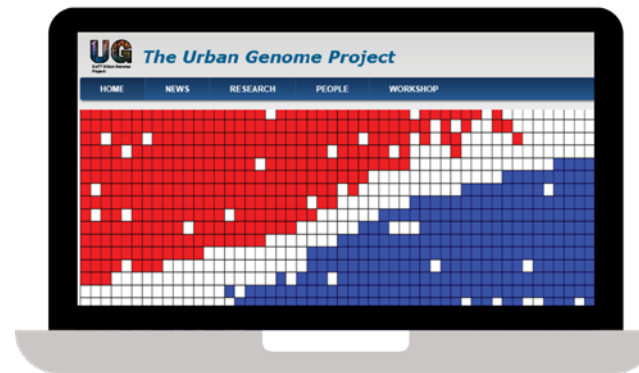
Silver D, Silva TH (2021) A Markov model of urban evolution: Neighbourhood change as a complex process. PLoS ONE 16(1): e0245357. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0245357>

Classification and Regression via Integer Optimization for Neighborhood Change (August 2020)
Olson, A.W., Zhang, K., Calderon-Figueroa, F., Yakubov, R., Sanner, S., Silver, D. and Arribas-Bel, D. (2021), Classification and Regression via Integer Optimization for Neighborhood Change. Geogr. Anal., 53: 192-212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gean.12252>

Doering, Jan & Silver, Daniel & Taylor, Zack. (2020). The Spatial Articulation of Urban Political Cleavages. Urban Affairs Review. 57. 107808742094078. 10.1177/1078087420940789.

Public/Private Thresholds (August 2020)

Explore the Urban Genome Project Website Here



UrbEnNet: Urban Environmental Network

Lead by Marc Johnson - Professor, Biology, Director, Centre for Urban Environments, CRC-II – this working group aims to address these knowledge gaps. Together, the team seeks to answer the question: How does urbanization shape the physical and living environment of cities at local, regional and global scales? Research conducted by UrbEnNet will also include detailed experiments and analyses that complement and validate real-time environmental data, advancing our understanding of how urban environmental change affects the physiology, behaviour, ecology and evolution of all life. **Learn more**



Cities by Design

Building and Governing Climate Resilient Cities

Stage 2: Towers in the Park: A Prospective for Equitable Resilience in Toronto

Cities are on the front lines of climate change, both in developing policy to respond to climate change and experiencing the impacts of a changing climate. Led by Fadi Masoud - Assistant Professor, Landscape Architecture and Urbanism - this working group explores the interdisciplinary and evolving field of urban climate resilience in order to identify shared, achievable, and policy-relevant research questions going forward. [Learn more](#)

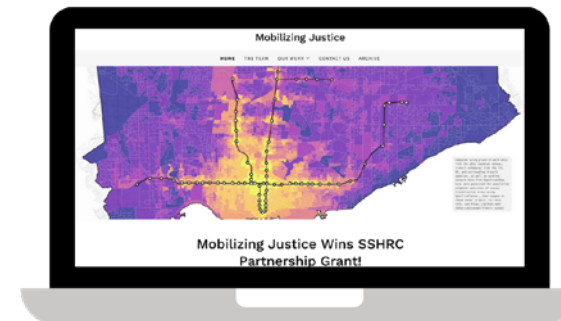
Explore Towers in the Park Website Here



Preparing Society for 21st Century Mobility

Led by Steven Farber - Associate Professor, Human Geography – this working group aims at conducting evidence-based research to guide transportation policy to achieve the many positive promises of emerging technologies, while ameliorating the inherent risks in technology-induced disruption. This group has evolved into the Mobilizing Justice network. [Learn more.](#)

Explore the Mobilizing Justice Website Here



Smart Communities and Villages

At the time that it started, the Smart Villages project was a novel approach to economic development and sustainable development goals. Although there is a consensus about the need to focus on villages, this group argues that reducing inequality drives the transformation to a smart community. Thus its original contribution to contemporary research and scholarship around smart villages globally is defining a smart community as a model of social organization that minimizes static social inequality. [Learn more.](#)

Building Resilience in Food and Health Supply Chains seminar series

Supply chains are the primary societal infrastructure for the production, delivery, and recycling of goods and services. While much of the effort in supply chains over the past 50 years has been to make them agile, fast, and cheap, there is a growing realization that supply chains must be able to adapt to disruptions from local events such as the inability for a plane to land due to factors ranging from weather to global changes such as the closing of the US-Canada border due to COVID-19.

Watch the Seminar Series Playlist Here



Led by Christopher Beck - Professor, Mechanical & Industrial Engineering, Tracey Galloway – Associate Professor, Anthropology, Ryan Isakson – Associate Professor, Geography and Planning, Laura Rosella – Associate Professor, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, and Michael Widener, Associate Professor, Geography and Planning, this working group convened **21 experts** and over **400 participants** in **21 seminars** focusing on various facets of health and supply chain resilience, the

increasing need for which has been brought to the forefront by the pandemic. The Building Resilience in Food and Health Supply Chains seminar series explored in-field and on-ground research centred around informal and formal supply chains and systems, the challenges they face and how they can be optimized to make cities and communities they serve better prepared for, and resilient in the face of, future crises. **Learn More**

City Foods- Liveliness and Livelihood in Sustainable Cities

This project focuses on the capacity of cities to restore modes of food provisioning in the immediate and medium-term aftermath of crisis and in the face of chronic stress. Led by Daniel Bender - Director, Culnaria Research Centre and Professor, Culnaria/Historical and Cultural Studies – the work done by the team, emphasizing how local communities develop creative solutions to stresses and failures within urban culinary infrastructure, has proven remarkably timely.

In the midst of the pandemic, raising questions about local responses and solutions to crises within urban culinary infrastructure. Members of this research team, led especially by Prof. Jayeeta Sharma, have launched an allied project documenting the immediate impact of and response to COVID on Toronto's culinary infrastructure. Members of the City Food research team, including its PIs and connected postdoctoral fellows (Dr. Jaclyn Rohel and Dr. Bryan Dale), have participated in that research. Explore the project at www.feedingcity.org.

Learn More

Urban Sustainability



Cities of Opportunity

Affordable Housing

Led by Susannah Bunce - Associate Professor, Human Geography - Alan Walks - Professor, Geography and Planning - and David Hulchanski - Professor, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work - this working group envisions a city where everyone can find housing options that best meet their needs in an affordable way, with a series of different housing arrangements, models, and tenures that provide real choice; a city in which housing is a key ingredient in making people feel like they belong.

[Read here about Affordable Housing group's support to the Kensington Market Land Trust in receiving a \\$3Million grant.](#)

In 2020, the team produced informative content to engage the general population, policymakers and non-profits in a dialogue around the parallel-pandemic of homelessness and the looming housing crisis fueled by the unaffordability and lack of access to housing support. They also released statements on local developments in this respect.

Statements issued:

A Note on COVID-19

Statement on emergency tiny shelters housing solutions

Working papers:

Distinct solutions for a distinct population: A community-based approach to affordable housing for young people experiencing homelessness in Toronto

Sustainability and Affordable Housing: Harnessing the Potential of the Sustainable Development Agenda

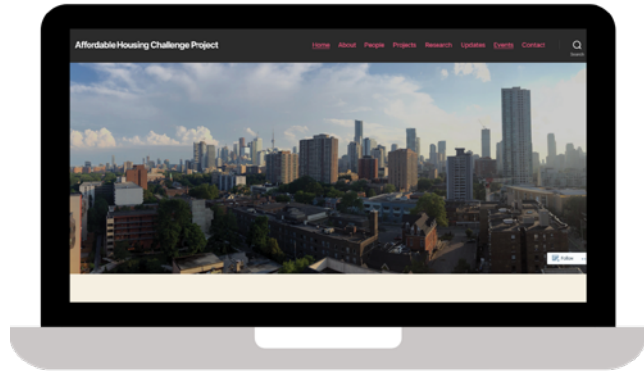
Blog posts:

Staying Home in Public

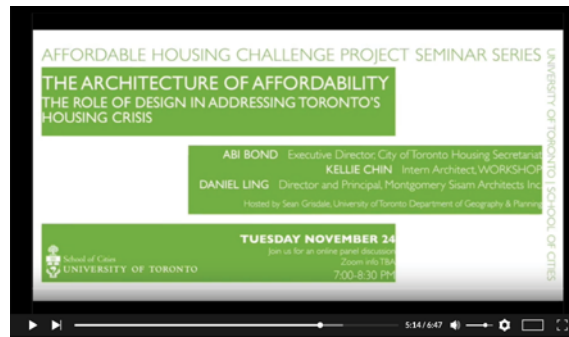
Towards an anti-racist housing agenda: Some thoughts on white supremacy and policing in housing

Renting in the Time of COVID, or The Meaning of Home in This Time

Explore Affordable Housing Challenge Project Website (ACHP) Here



Watch the ACHP Seminar Playlist here



Follow ACHP on Twitter and Instagram





Creative Mixed-Use

Creative mixed-use buildings bring together public and private uses in creative ways, locating unexpected partners in the same facility. Launched in 2019 with the aim to bring together partners who may not realize they share similar development and service provision objectives, over the past year the mixed-use initiative at the SofC has made considerable progress, especially in addressing challenges brought to light by COVID-19 in GTA communities. Over 70 mixed-used case studies have been documented detailing the partnership framework along with the complexity, costs, and risks for each project.

2020 Highlights include:

~ **Advising the City of Brampton** on its groundbreaking Urban Community Hubs model, which seeks to bring together a new school, library, recreation centre and entrepreneurship incubator at the heart of a major urban redevelopment project. This new hub model changes the way that suburbs are designed by promoting the 20-minute neighbourhood, delivering key services that are at the centre of a thriving affordable community. This project was recently awarded the 2021 Awards of Excellence for the 2021 Canadian Society of Landscape Architects.

~ **Working with City of Toronto agency CreateTO** on best practices to co-locate fire stations and paramedic stations in buildings with affordable housing. This has proven to be a way to unlock public and private land to deliver critical public services and more affordable units.

~ **Serving as the Secretariat for the Toronto Social Purpose Real Estate Reference Group**, a group of 40 social service, faith-based groups, and non-profit agencies with an interest in social purpose real estate. Our unique model harnesses a collaborative advantage - the sharing of resources, expertise, and social capital to realize projects, This approach helps create path-breaking projects that accelerate the formation of public-private-non-profit partnerships to deliver innovative, mixed-use projects.

Learn more.

Creative Mixed-Use In The News

When all the parts come together it's magic: Condo developer and city offer refuge to Red Door shelter | The Toronto Star

Active open spaces, homes near work, walkable neighbourhoods- has COVID-19 changed the way the suburbs will look in the future? | The Toronto Star

Transit-Oriented Communities: Uptown Hurontario-Steeles Virtual Townhall

The Future Belongs to Collaborative Infrastructure Building | The Hill Times

The Reinvention of Uptown Brampton | NRU Greater Toronto & Hamilton Area

Parcel

The School of Cities has developed **Parcel**, a **matchmaking platform** that allows organizations to share building and long-term lease opportunities. This matchmaking platform was built to inspire developments that meet the needs of diverse communities, targeting real estate developers, non-profits, investors and funders, faith-based groups, and government agencies to connect with potential building partners. Over 57 key stakeholders tested the platform in 2020, citing value in the platform to find creative ways to use existing land assets, aligning with partners with similar values, and integrating affordable housing and community space.

SPRE Training Modules

The **Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE) Training Modules**, hosted this winter, were intended to meet these needs, demonstrating creative city-building approaches that integrate non-profits and critical social services. The modules were designed to enhance the capacity of non-profit and mission-based organizations, preparing them for real development partnerships. This training focused on collaboration through partnerships, real estate development and financing 101, and key considerations for long-lasting operations and maintenance, with **over 220 organizations registered**.

Watch the training sessions here



**34 Urban Leadership Fellows,
39 Student Members and
13 Peer Mentors representing
59 Faculty and Departments
from U of T Tri-campus**

**13 Student Project Websites
Supported**

**4 Student-led Podcast Series
Supported**

**43 Student Capstone Projects Facilitated with
8 Supervisors from
4 Departments and Faculties
from UTSC and UTSG**

**16 Clients Engaged across
9 Projects**

4 For Profit organizations

8 Non-Profit organizations

4 Public organizations

EDUCATION

Since the School's inception in 2018, the Education Pillar has served as both connective hub and intellectual community, dedicated to students and supportive of broader constituencies. It has initiated, supported, and generated a range of academic and co-curricular initiatives aimed at addressing critical urban challenges and fostering student engagement, leadership in city-building, and urban scholarship.

In the face of unprecedented pandemic challenges, 2021 reaffirmed our ethos and *raison d'être*, inspiring us to transcend the current predicament. The Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy inspired creative, innovative adaptations to meaning-making and knowledge production, deeply appreciated by students. To quote from the Spotlight Series:

"Being a part of the School of Cities Urban Leadership Fellowship Program has been a fantastic opportunity to meet like-minded students and discuss various urban and city topics. I believe in the need for multisectoral thinking and policy action and this program is a great way to gain exposure to other disciplines, schools of thought, and approaches to research. I suspect my engagement in this program will not be over with the final symposium, but rather, that this network and friendships will be sustained in the long term."

Michelle Amri
PhD in Social and Behavioural Health Sciences

"As an undergraduate student in the Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Program, I benefited tremendously by attending group meetings and hearing about the research processes of other scholars. The diversity of topics and methodologies opened my eyes to the amount of liberty that original research enables. The experience also pushed me to think about the 'after-life' of academic work - how current projects may usher in new directions for academic pursuits and career navigation."

Amy Chen
Bachelor of Arts in Contemporary Asian Studies, Diaspora & Transnational Studies, and Political Science

"I have learned to apply my theoretical background to ongoing digital governance initiatives within Canada and developed a newfound appreciation for the hard work being done on the frontlines of urban development. Working as an Urban Leadership Fellow has empowered me to take early steps towards becoming more engaged in these frontline conversations and to think more critically about the ways in which my work might eventually be translated into more equitable proposals for the future of digital governance."

Nathan Olmstead
PhD student, Department of Political Science

2021 Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Program

In 2021, anchored in the flagship School of Cities' Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Program, an interdisciplinary tri-campus platform and student-led community and intellectual hub inciting collaborative learning, critical intervention, civic engagement, and engaged research and praxis, the program fostered a talented, diverse, and resilient cohort of 69 undergraduate and graduate students—34 fellows and 35 academy members—whose research projects showcased innovation and impact.

In its virtual incarnation during the pandemic, the Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy epitomized students' resilience, commitment, solidarity, and creative reimagining of the program. Undeterred, we co-created supportive online spaces and community for students' **collaborative and mutual learning**, facilitated valuable exchanges on students' unique research projects, and organized **peer mentorship sessions**. Fellows and Academy members also benefited from **one-on-one mentoring** by Prof. Marieme Lo, who designed and led the program from its inception through 2021.

The program provided 1) **direction and mentoring to help students** develop and implement their wide-ranging urban-focused projects from ideation to implementation; 2) **valuable professional development and CCR opportunities**; 3) **exposure to diverse research and scholarship trends**, methodological approaches, and sites of engaged praxis in city-building and urban scholarship; and 4) **a unique forum** for the co-creation of social impact and creative projects and knowledge dissemination. The latter took the shape of the **Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Virtual Research Festival**, which showcased and celebrated the 2021 cohort and the outgoing 2020 cohort.

The year culminated in the **2021 School of Cities Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Virtual Research Symposium**, a three-day **student-led webinar series** showcasing students' research projects.

Students generated and presented **51 original thematic projects** to a diverse and engaged virtual audience. While projects varied greatly in thematic focus, they converged to provide new insights and address some of the greatest challenges faced by cities across the world—ones often exacerbated by the pandemic.

Many projects focused on **climate change and its alarming impact on urban ecosystems**. **Global Warming TO** curated a visual storytelling and macro-scale art virtual exhibit to raise awareness and incite climate action. Another project investigated **Urban Residents' Knowledge and Engagement of Green Infrastructure**, while a further one explored various aspects of **Procedural and Distributional Justice pertaining to the installation of Equitable Green Infrastructure in Toronto**. **A Bird's Nest Fungus Becomes Exciting** mapped the connection between a community's level of environmental awareness and pro-environmental practices, thereby suggesting a potentially sustainable measure to address future ecological change. **Building on Tradition** uncovered Indigenous ways of knowing and sustainable traditional practices for a greener future. The projects **SDG Communities, Future-Proof**, and **Mass Timber Presence: The Relation of Present to Net-Zero-Carbon Future** explored SDG's digital twin modeling framework for progress tracking, as well as innovative design strategies to help create a more sustainable future.

A cluster of projects spanned the **Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA)** through multifaceted research lenses. **Food Justice in Toronto** and **Fruitful Cities** addressed equitable access to food and green spaces in underprivileged communities. **Women's Perception of Space on Public Transit in Toronto** uncovered the lived experiences of female public transit riders in two low-income Toronto neighborhoods. **How is COVID-19 Affecting Bike Sharing in Toronto?** documented the surge of spatial and temporal patterns of bikeshare during the pandemic, as well as its infrastructural implications, formulating robust policy recommendations for the expansion of the city's cycling network and transport equity as a result. **Mapping Toronto's Runnability** indexed streets' conduciveness to running—and the implications for building a healthier city.

Resilience of the Unsung COVID Warriors, an ode to essential workers, shed light on the plight and resilience of essential workers. **Surviving the Pandemic** illuminated adaptive operational strategies devised by coffee retailers in response to COVID-19.

The Spatiality of Trust in Canadian Metropolises mapped social trust in the city's communities amid social distancing. **Revisiting the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020** conveyed a policy analysis of the plan, its pandemic implications, and lessons learned for municipal governments' social programming and economic development in the GTHA.

Some projects **addressed the urgency of inclusive urbanism, design, and planning from an equity, inclusion and access lens**. **Disability, the Pandemic and Parenting** highlighted unique challenges faced by disabled parents in the public and private spheres related to accommodation, access, mobility, and caregiving during the pandemic. **Building INCLUSIVE Age-Friendly Cities** assessed the need for ethno-cultural support of aging immigrant and BIPOC seniors in urban long-term care homes. **Necropolitics: Spatiality, and Defensive (Hostile) Architecture in a Time of COVID-19** shed light on the impacts and consequences of defensive architecture on homeless people's access to public spaces during a health crisis in cities. **Disability in the City: Inclusive Public Toilets as a Humanizing Feature of the Urban Realm** sought to create space for engagement and policy advocacy to meet this basic human need in people with disabilities and to uphold inclusive/universal design.

Projects also engendered critical conversations and analyses on identity, placemaking, urban citizenship, and representation. **Indigenous and Muslim Youth Belonging in Toronto, Canada** explored how youth from “othered” marginalized communities navigate urban citizenship and the right to the city. **The Impact of COVID-19 on Black Youth in Toronto** documented the needs of Black students experiencing the pandemic in Toronto. **Chasing Chinatown** examined the history and future of downtown Toronto neighbourhoods as a contested space for cultural placemaking. **Supporting Diversity among Youth in Scarborough Village** addressed access, equity, and diversity through the State of Diversity podcast series, online workshops with Youth Link Scarborough, and a virtual youth career fair (featuring astronaut Chris Hadfield as a guest) to foster BIPOC students' interest and representation in science. **Afro-Turf** documented community-led initiatives by the Toronto Black Farmers' and Growers' Collective to counter food insecurity. **Embodied Resilience: Cartographies of Virtual Resilience** unveiled artists' aesthetic labor, precarity, and sites of resilience during the pandemic. **Self-Portraits of South Asian Women** documented the power of creative digital storytelling in creating community and solidarity among immigrant women across Canada during the pandemic.

Urban policy, planning, and governance-focused projects conveyed different scales of analysis, policy-making arenas, and urban innovation sites. **Transit Governance and Political Institutions** sought to understand policy change by applying a “political market” framework to Ontario transit. **Examining Canadian Municipal Police Budgets** demonstrated the implications of defunding the police and of municipal resource allocation. **Reimagining Urban Governance** introduced a more decentralized concept of socially driven open governance. **Stop Labelling Cities** encouraged a discursive paradigm shift and a more human-centric approach to designing cities. **Integrating Migrants through Inclusive Planning and Local Decision-Making Practice** provided a progressive model for political inclusivity in urban governance and policy-making.

Projects also reflected a global urban moment and global urbanism in the wide scope of their research and geographical foci. **Bridging the GAP** addressed the climate crisis in Malaysia. **Originary Technicity and the Myth of the Real-Time City: Lessons from Paris** unpacked the concept of the 15-minute city and its analytics. **Becoming a Global City in the Balkans** unveiled the urban transformations of Tirana, Albania. **The Disappearing Face of Compassion** addressed Jakarta's legacy of forced evictions in riverbank slums. **Understanding Health Outcome Measures** provided a comparative study that captured global matrixes and frameworks on outcome-driven healthcare. **The World Health Organization's (WHO) Urban HEART Initiative** evaluated the WHO's health equity response measuring tool called Equity. **Resiliency and Equitable Development** explored alternative equitable and people-centred models for urban development and planning in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States. **Curated Realities** redefined and reimagined travel and tourism during the pandemic and global lockdown.

As these projects exemplify, the **2021 Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy cohort** contributed immensely and in unique ways to the School of Cities, propelling exploration of new directions in research, praxis and career options.

Explore Student Projects Here

2021 School of Cities Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Virtual Research Symposium

2021 School of Cities Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Virtual Research Symposium

View Edit Reviews

2021 School of Cities Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Symposium

A Student-led 3-day Webinar Series of Engaged Research, Virtual Simulations, Social and Creative Projects

Day 1 Sessions Thursday, June 24

- 9:30am-11:00am
- 11:30am-1:10pm
- 2:00pm-3:30pm

Day 2 Sessions Friday, June 25

- 9:30am-11:10am
- 11:30am-1:10pm
- 2:00pm-3:30pm
- 4:00pm-5:30pm

Day 3 Sessions Saturday, June 26

- 9:30am-11:10am
- 11:30am-1:10pm
- 2:00pm-3:40pm
- 3:45pm-5:00pm

Overview

Student fellows and academy members presented original and interdisciplinary research projects and the impact they have made through their research, social interventions and practice in the Student Virtual Research Symposium, from June 24, 2021 to June 26, 2021.

The School of Cities Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy is a tri-campus interdisciplinary academic platform to foster student academic and civic engagement and leadership in city-building and urban scholarship. The Fellowship program and The Academy, structured around thematic working groups on critical urban challenges based on students' interest and research focus, provide an opportunity for ethical research, compelling conversations and interventions on critical urban challenges and issues, and in different fora of civic and social engagements. Our students are current U of T students with strong interest in and passion for cities and urban critical challenges, who have led an innovative and impactful project in 2020/2021.

Convener: Prof. Marlene La, Associate Director, Education, education.sci@utoronto.ca

Click to explore the projects:

Thursday, June 24, 2021

Presenter	Presentation Title
Aad Alan	Fixed Justice in Toronto
Nathan Clelland	Originary Technicity and the Myth of the Real-Time City: Lessons from Les Champs Élysées
Hongyu Xie — Urban Governance, Law and Justice	Transit Governance and Political Institutions: Public-private Partnerships in Toronto
Andrew Thomas	Intentional, Feasible, and Defensive (In)Architecture in a Time of COVID-19

Presenter	Presentation Title
Yusuf Aygün	Equitable Green Infrastructure for Climate Change Adaptation: Procedural and Distributional Justice in the City of Toronto?
Amy Chen — Global Urbanism	Authenticity Revisited: An Alternative Guide to Shanghai's Shikumen Living
Rhonda Tolman	Disability in the City: Inclusive Public Toilets as a Humanizing Feature of the Urban Realm
Joseph Chelso	Youth-Led Civic Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Case Study of the Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC)
Gregoire Benoit	CYBERLACE: Rebuilding the Imaginary Space of Urban Technologies?

Presenter	Presentation Title
Shervin Ghahmighami	Engaging Migrants through Inclusive Planning and Local Decision-Making Practice
Rebecca Green — Ecology, Health and	Understanding Health Outcome Measures: Global Perspectives and Top

2020 Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Program

The 2020 Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy, likewise challenged by the onset of a global pandemic, offered further proof of students' commitment and resilience when we creatively re-imagined the annual symposium by turning it into the Virtual Research Festival, a weekly webinar series between September 24 and October 30, 2020.

Unfolding over nine 90-minute sessions held on six days over a five-week period, the Virtual Research Festival provided the 2020 cohort an interactive platform to share their work with a virtual but no less engaged audience. The webinar series welcomed as special guests Prof. Shauna Brail and Tapfuma Musewe, the founder and CEO of Eschaton. Students introduced a rich repertoire of original and interdisciplinary projects including exploratory research, op-eds, policy briefs, podcast series, simulations, and creative and social impact projects. Endeavours ranged from those documenting the intersecting impacts of COVID-19 on varied communities to ones emphasizing the challenges of global urbanism.

Between These Walls asked, "How has the collapsed spatiality of COVID-19 created a new and gendered experience of 'Home'?" while **Sexual and Gender Minority Health Vulnerabilities** uncovered the compounding impacts of the COVID-19 health crisis on SGMs. **Get with the Post-Pandemic Program** proposed de-siloing graduate education in planning, public health, and architecture in response to COVID-19. **Accessing Toronto in Shutdown** unveiled transit, mobility and accessibility inequities between two neighbourhoods, while **Urban Disaster Risk & the Covid-19 Pandemic**, **The Impact of COVID-19 on Immigrant-Owned Food Businesses** examined just that in Toronto's suburbs, and **Black Mother's Community Research Project** centred on the challenges and predicaments the pandemic posed for life in Toronto at varying scales, and from the perspectives of multiple vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized communities.

Responding to pressing global urban challenges were the following projects with names indicative of their focus: **The Labour Dilemma in China's Digital Industrialization**; **Women's Everyday Struggles for Water Access in Dhaka**; **Understanding Urban Informality through Urban Food Systems and Water in Lima**. **Compassion & Empathy** explored community care using Tibetan Buddhist philosophies. **Missing Links** investigated the effects of **homelessness and unemployment on youth in Nigeria**. **Sustainable Urbanization in Africa** analyzed urbanization challenges and policy options, while **Privatization of Diagnostic Laboratories in Kenya and South Africa** mapped COVID-19 testing capacity and provided insightful analyses of the health systems' challenges, and policy recommendations.

Toronto, as a living urban laboratory, informed students' engagement. **Solutions to the Small Business Affordability Crisis** provided digital marketing strategies for small businesses. **Rebuilding Toronto's Gig Economy: Reimagining Social Policy for Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Workers** assessed the pandemic impacts on the gig economy and precarious workers, making timely policy recommendations. **Toronto's Smart City Future Post-Sidewalk Labs** and **Surveillance Cities** probed the pros and cons of Toronto 'smart city' project, and the impacts of surveillance technologies on citizens.

Simulating Autonomous Vehicle Fleets in Toronto and The True Cost of Sharing: A Detour Penalty Analysis between UberPool and UberX Trips in Toronto simulated and measured supply and demand, the costing of ride-sharing travel, and mobility options in Toronto. **Beyond Bike Lanes: Cycling Exclusive Infrastructure for Safer, More Sustainable Cities, Alternative Concrete, and Cup Collective TO** made innovative recommendations for environmentally sound practices and strategies to render cities more sustainable and eco-conscious. **Place Identity: Urban Water and the Anthropocene** also revisited normative frameworks to support more climate-resilient urban ecosystems.

A few projects, premised on co-creation and collaborations with Toronto-based urbanists, community activists, and local artists, generated substantive multimedia research sources and creative pedagogical tools with cross-cutting projects such as **Cities Unmasked; City & Crumpets; Creative Activism; A Multiplicity of Stories; and The Alternative Maps Project: How Artists Can Help Us Imagine Livelier and Greener Toronto** after COVID-19. **Community Organizing: Leading through Change** documented community-led activism on climate justice and Indigenous youth. **From the Outside In: Sim George: Toronto from Home** simulated U of T's St. George campus in a distant future as a background for an interactive 8-bit game campus in a futurist and ecological reimagining.

The scholarship and projects generated by the 2020 fellows and Academy members proved multifaceted, extensive, and reflective of diverse identities, spaces, and communities—shaping SofC's present and future.

The 2020 and 2021 cohort proudly followed the path of the program since its inception, dedicated to the pursuit of critical and ethical analyses of complex urban challenges in the GTA, Canada, and globally while reflecting an inclusive sense of place and novel sites of cross-disciplinary thinking and praxis. And conversely, these cohorts, too, shaped the School of Cities with incisive novel and impactful interventions and contributions.

My City—My Story: One City, One Word

“My City—My Story: One City, One Word,” a collective and participative visioning and naming exercise, was first organized by Prof. Marieme Lo in 2019 to bring together diverse communities and mark and reflect on the symbolism and meaning of World Cities Day, launched by the UN in 2014. Celebrated on October 31, it has become a global call to action on the Sustainable Development Goal 11: “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”

In 2020, World Cities Day converged with the closing of our Virtual Research Festival, creating a symbiotic moment of collective learning, reflection, and celebration. The participatory event brought students together with the general public to allow for generative dialogue on the most pressing urban challenges in Canada and further afield, including **Toronto, Accra, Baresat, Havana, Dubai, Marrakech, Paris, Manila, Napoli, Taipei, Dhaka, and Genoa**. A graphic recorder, **Kathryn Maxfield**, captured the varied insights with a compelling visual map. Guest artists **Denardo Hepburn**, a Toronto-based storyteller, and **Marieme Diop**, a singer and songwriter from Los Angeles, bookended the event with their thoughtful and exhilarating performances.



Professional Development & CCR Opportunities

Through the Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy Program, the School has offered value-added Co-Curricular Record (CCR) opportunities to 92 undergraduate and graduate students in six competencies: communication; project management; community and civic engagement; critical thinking; investigation and synthesis; knowledge creation and innovation.

Students also received valuable and strategic digital media support to amplify their scholarship while enhancing their professional profiles and networking opportunities.

“How to Put Your Best Foot Forward Virtually,” a virtual social media networking workshop facilitated by Rotman alumnus Adam Rodricks, an international award-winning media strategist, provided to 100 students tools and advice to set up an all-star status profile on LinkedIn and build a strong social feed from a job-seeking perspective.

Students in the Spotlights Interview Series

“Students in the Spotlight,” a conversation series, engaged the fellows and Academy members in a dialogue around their scholarship and practice, especially against the background of a global pandemic permeating all aspects of life. The series, reflecting the ethos of the **Urban Leadership Fellowship and Academy**, conveyed the breadth of students’ scholarship, as well as their academic journeys and engagement, through text or video diaries. Students also bridged multiple publics and shared their thoughts on the pandemic and its possible aftermath.

[Watch Student in the Spotlight interviews Here](#)



Post-Doctoral Fellowship

Dr. Mary-Kay Bachour received the **Faculty of Arts and Science Post-doctoral Fellowship 2021–2023**. Dr. Bachour’s project, “The intersectional politics of housing (in)access among racialized refugee claimant women in Toronto,” investigates the housing and shelter experiences of racialized refugee women in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). She completed her master's degree at U of T’s Women and Gender Studies Institute, where she unpacked the impacts of the civil war on the Lebanese diaspora in Toronto. Dr. Bachour earned her PhD from the Department of Geography and Planning at U of T. Her dissertation focused on housing access among government-assisted refugees. She has also worked on several research projects, including “Urban Mobilities and Spatialities” at the Asian Pathways Research Lab, and the “Independent Refugee Youth Project” with a team of principal researchers at U of T. Dr. Bachour’s post-doctoral fellowship supervised by Prof. Marieme Lo, is held jointly between the Women and Gender Studies Institute and the School of Cities.



Multidisciplinary Urban Capstone Project

Multidisciplinary Urban Capstone Project is a unique, full academic year capstone design course that brings together interdisciplinary teams of fourth-year undergraduate U of T students to design solutions for complex local urban issues with guidance from matched faculty members. 43 students from eight faculties and departments worked on nine projects representing a range of organizations, from governments to non-profits in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Highlights include:

~ Students worked closely with **The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO)** to re-envision the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood as a complete community by contemporary standards by identifying gaps in social and physical infrastructure and proposing a program of solutions. The student team presented their research findings to City Council, an MPP, and an MP.

~ MUCP students A.J. Bimm, Ariana Fernández Chesquín, Chang Xu, Eclipse Atencio-Malixi and Katarina Oliveira developed a guidebook - "**The City Builder's Guide to Building the Missing Middle**" - as a part of their MUCP project for the Kehilla Residential Group. While addressing the housing supply gap in Toronto, this guidebook envisions potential "**Missing Middle**" housing through drawings, case studies, and relevant policy information.

[Click here to explore "The City Builder's Guide to Building the Missing Middle"](#)

~ MUCP students Yi Li, Randa Omar, Rajpreet Sidhu, Tianyi Wang, and Professor Danielle Kwan-Lafond organized a **roundtable with Indigenous Artists**, focusing on changing the arts sector to center Indigenous Artists' wellbeing. This event was supported by the School of Cities Anti-Black Racism/Black Lives and Anti-Indigenous Racism/Indigenous Lives Funding Initiative.

Explore the Projects undertaken by the 2020-2021 cohort

WSP: Underutilized Open Spaces

WSP, an international management and services consultancy engaged students to develop a creative, evidence-based Master Plan overlay for Downtown Toronto's underutilized open spaces, keeping in mind the challenge of inequitable access to public amenities that is pervasive in the area.

The STEPS Public Art: Advancing Truth and Reconciliation within the Arts Sector

STEPS Public Art engaged a diverse and multidisciplinary group of U of T students to understand how to sustain meaningful and equitable working relations between non-Indigenous organizations and Indigenous artists.

The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO): Thorncliffe Park and the Ontario Line

The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO) engaged students to re-envision and realize the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood as a complete community by contemporary standards, respecting both its current and future residents, by identifying gaps in social and physical infrastructure and proposing a program of solutions.

Go Green Youth Centre (GGYC): Masterplan for Go Green Cricket & Sports Field

Go Green Youth Center engaged a diverse and multidisciplinary group of U of T students to envision a future site masterplan for the Go Green Cricket & Sports Field at Valley Park Middle School, using a Personal Assets

Framework approach and emphasizing on and developing the community's strengths.

Kehilla: Filling in the Missing Middle – Design, Numbers, Policy

Kehilla Residential Programme and Smart Density engaged U of T students to tackle Toronto's Missing Middle problem. Through a collaborative effort between the student team and Kehilla Residential Programme, the students are developing "The City Builder's guidebook to Building the Missing Middle" which provides professional and practical insights into Missing Middle Housing.

City of Toronto: First Parliament Site

The City of Toronto engaged students to aid in the development of a Master Plan for the First Parliament site.

City of Toronto: Nightlife Action Plan

The City of Toronto and Arup engaged students to identify priorities for nighttime economic development outside Toronto's downtown core.

Key Community: Measuring and Enhancing Community Vitality

Key Living engaged students to design and develop researched-informed concepts and prototypes for bringing Key residents together in community ecosystems using technology, and to identify important metrics for success in developing a sense of community among potential owner-residents.

Stone Soup Network: Building Community, One Neighbour at a Time

The Stone Soup Network (SSN) engaged students to see how a non-profit organization can successfully expand its outreach and operations to its new ward following the expansion of Ward 4 in 2018.



**Digital Audience Members spanning
162 countries**

**15 Expert presenters from the
Global Urban Network convened for
5 Panel Discussions with
250+ Attendees from
40 countries across
6 continents**

**39,900+ Twitter impressions
for #Urban 2021**

**51 Leading Social Justice Fellows from
27 Private, Public and Non-Profit
organizations brought together in
17 teams of 3, with
12 Industry Experts
engaged as Mentors**

OUTREACH

The Outreach and Partnerships pillar continued to facilitate digital knowledge-exchange among researchers, experts, students and community members through a range of stimulating interdisciplinary virtual initiatives. Through the Global Urban Network 2021 Seminar Series, the SofC partnered with global institutions to provide a platform for featuring 24 urban experts from 16 institutions on substantive topics facing cities including climate resilience, inequality, sustainability, governance, and pandemic response. A bold new leadership development initiative co-designed with partner United Way Greater Toronto and community leaders, the Leading Social Justice Fellowship engaged 51 fellows from across the corporate, public and non-profit sectors. In an intensive 5-month program, the Fellows engaged in personal and professional development through advancing systemic solutions to social justice challenges across sectors and in communities.

“Last month I completed the Leading Social Justice Fellowship with my amazing colleagues Lena Phillips and Benjamin Bongolan, MES Pl.. We would like to thank School of Cities, University of Toronto and the United Way Greater Toronto for the opportunity to collaborate and engage with inspiring thought leaders and innovators across several different industries.”

Elijah M. Bawuah
Urban Planner at Urban Strategies Inc.
2021 Leading Social Justice Fellow

*“I have a dream that one day mental health conversations will be a norm at the dinner table and that seeking help and resources will be accessible to all!
I want to thank the entire team at the University of Toronto School of Cities our amazing professor Nouman Ashraf (He/Him/His) and the United Way of Great Toronto’s Nation Cheong and his team!”*

Amran Abdi
Founder at The Yellow Room
2021 Leading Social Justice Fellow



Global Urban Network 2021 Seminar Series

The Global Urban Network Seminar series brought global academic audiences together to discuss substantive topics facing cities from multiple geographies and perspectives. Speakers from participating institutes in the Global Urban Network presented analysis and highlights of compelling research either underway or recently

completed in areas of shared interest and importance to urban institutes around the world.

Session 1: Urban Equitable Resilience: Power Structures, Spatial Justice, and Climate Action

The intersecting realities of climate change, public health challenges and structural inequality have intensified the risks and vulnerabilities faced by low-income residents in urban settings. How do deep power imbalances, and social and cultural inequalities connect to resilience planning and design?

Session 2: Building Sustainable Cities at the Neighbourhood Scale

How can studying the actions and impacts of neighbourhoods reveal insights about achieving urban sustainability on a global scale? Scholars discussed efforts underway around the world to quantify and accelerate the progress of urban development and sustainability focusing on the scale of the neighbourhood.

Session 3: Pandemic Responses and Beyond

As the COVID-19 pandemic progressed across the globe, scholars have sought to document and study its impact on urban life, undertaking important research and analysis in real-time. Scholars shared latest updates on urban networks, data sources and international collaborations that have helped to chart the impacts of the pandemic on cities and their paths to recovery.

Session 4: The Resilience and Sustainability of Global Systems of Cities: an Urban Science Perspective

The emerging and multidisciplinary field of urban science has undergone a tremendous increase in scope incorporating insights, perspectives and methods from sustainability science and complexity science to better understand urban systems and urbanization processes. The presenters discussed recent developments in urban science and how international collaborations can strengthen it scientifically and make it relevant for those working towards the transition to sustainable urban development.

Session 5: Governing Complex Urban Regions in the 21st Century

The COVID-19 pandemic, the growing urgency of the climate emergency and important social justice movements have led to momentum to re-examine and remake urban decision-making models that were once thought to be rigid and immutable. Scholars discussed the complexities inherent in this challenge and pathways towards more effective responses to change and uncertainty.

Featured Institutions



Watch the Seminar Series here



Leading Social Justice Fellowship

The Team behind the Fellowship:

Nouman Ashraf

Assistant Professor - Rotman School of Management, U of T

Nation Cheong

Vice President - Community Opportunities and Mobilization,
United Way Greater Toronto

Matti Siemiatycki

Professor - Department of Geography & Planning, U of T

Sophie Duncan

Instructional Team - School of Cities, U of T

Daniel Cowen

Instructional Team - School of Cities, U of T

Lara Muldoon

Senior Partnerships Engagement and Projects Officer - School of Cities, U of T

We are grateful to co-designers **Andrea Aramayo Balboa, Chris Brillinger, Debbie Douglas, Kandy Kennedy, Kwame McKenzie, Abigail Moriah, Naki Osutei, Anowa Quarcoo, Jennifer Sylvester, Leslie Woo** and many others for sharing their insights, expertise, feedback, and time.

Born out of a unique partnership between United Way Greater Toronto and the SofC, the Leading Social Justice Fellowship is a bold, new leadership development initiative brings together individuals from the public, private, and community sectors working in teams of three to apply intersectional, equity, and anti-racism lenses to social justice challenges they have identified in their organizations and communities.

The inaugural group of **51 Fellows – organized in 17 teams of three** - were mentored over a period of five months and offered theoretical and applied models informed by research within a peer-based setting, resources, and skills in the domains of organizational leadership, social innovation and inclusive design to help them build a **toolkit unique to their social justice challenge**. This included an action plan to be used as a starting point for larger systemic change, as well as a personal leadership portfolio that outlined their personal and professional development goals related to furthering equity and inclusion. The fellows met virtually for interactive biweekly live learning sessions on Zoom which included group work. Each session was led by cross-sectoral industry experts to engage the fellows in a sustained dialog from diverse perspectives. Teams also received direction on moving their projects forward and creating an accountability structures to help them inquire into assumptions and unknowns, while identifying opportunities and resources. The teams dealt with the following thematic areas:

Creating reference documentation and programming to help first responders better approach mental health crises that prioritize the wellbeing of the person in need.

Addressing Transphobia + White Supremacy in sports, beginning with a community soccer league.

Creating a network offering space, community and support for youth focused on food justice.

Collaborating with Black communities to ensure data is used to create positive changes in the lives of Black people, not as a weapon against Black lives.

Identifying interventions to make hiring and career pathways more inclusive for diverse candidates in the construction industry.

Addressing systemic racism in theatre and the arts, beginning with an organizational equity strategy.

Advocating for decent and just work conditions for personal support workers through building the Empower PSWs network.

Disrupting the way community consultations and public transit projects are developed and prioritized by giving voice and power to community.

Centralizing and increasing the ease in which Black entrepreneurs can identify, apply for and access funding.

Rethinking funding practices to build equitable, community-based approaches to funding grassroots and BIPOC-led organizations.

Challenging dominant narratives within our built environments through a public art and history initiative.

Organizing arts-based workshops to explore the impacts of COVID-19 on woman service providers in the immigrant and refugee serving sector.

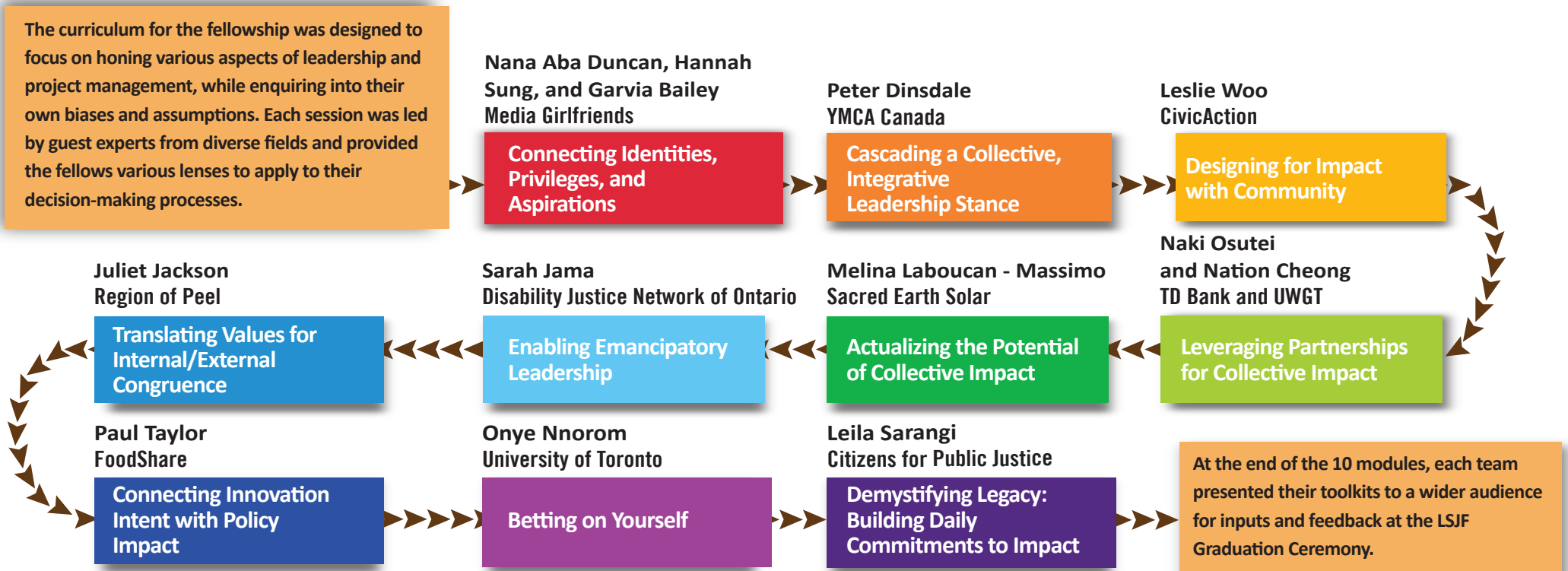
Addressing the inequity and lack of career support, programs and pathways for Black Youth.

Engaging community in storytelling about biking and walking in Scarborough to extend the benefits of active transportation equitably.

Developing an intersectional campaign to empower Latinx youth with leadership skills and aspirational career pathways through mentorship.

Bringing together diverse groups of youth and facilitating workshops and activities highlighting the specific issues they face.

Bringing together organizations who work with youth to create more inclusive spaces and programs for physical activity.

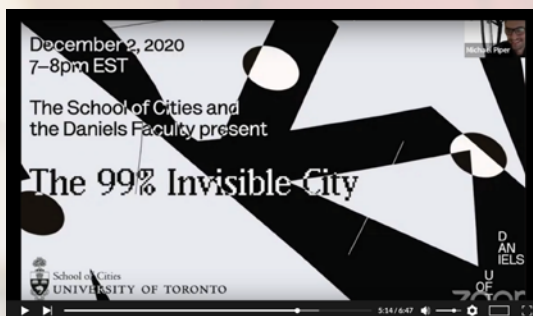


Public Events and Knowledge Translation

The 99% Invisible City

Organized in partnership with John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture Landscape and Design, this book launch event **brought together the co-authors, and co-hosts of the 99% Invisible Podcast, Roman Mars and coauthor Kurt Kohlstedt**, in a conversation about elements that make our cities work, looking into the history of ubiquitous aspects of the public realm, such power grids and fire escapes to drinking fountains and street signs.

Watch the event here



'Solved: How the World's Great Cities are Fixing the Climate Crisis' by David Miller

David Miller joined School of Cities Interim Director **Matti Siemiatycki** and **Soukayna Remmal**, MGA/MPP dual degree graduate (UofT/Sciences Po) and School of Cities Fellow, for a wide-ranging discussion about his recently published book. Miller took viewers behind the scenes at the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen and at City Hall, during his mayoralty, offering a balanced and hopeful vision for global emissions reduction led by cities. This event was held in **partnership with the Environmental Governance Lab** at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy.

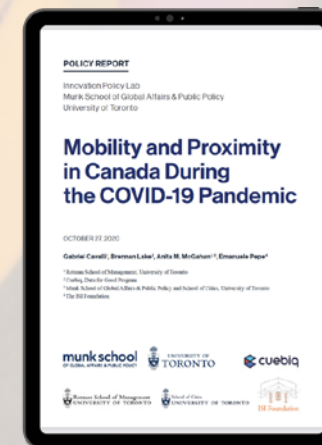
Watch the event here



Mobility and Proximity in Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the public realm and the manner in which people interacted with city spaces overnight. To inform future policy design and planning, **Gabriel Cavalli, Brennan Lake, SofC Faculty Affiliate Anita M. McGahan, and Emanuele Pepe**, collaborated to lead a six-month research study using anonymized cell phone data to record the changes in behaviour of the Canadian city-dwellers, in response to the federal social-distancing guidelines. In particular, the study was able to determine mobility and proximity of Canadians across the globe since the first COVID-19 restrictions took effect. Learn more

Read the report here



Small Grant Funds

Through this initiative, the School has supported a total of 16 projects from the Education Small Grant Funds, 14 from the Outreach & Engagement Small Grant Funds, and a few jointly funded projects between June 2020 and June 2021, with funding support of \$1,000 each.

The Small Grant Funds program has provided a channel for the School to encourage, support, and enhance inspired scholarship and conversations, urban-focused research and education, community engagement, curricular and pedagogical innovation initiatives, symposia, and public engagement initiatives led by staff, students, faculty across all three campuses.

The projects supported by the **Education Small Grant Funds** contributed to multifaceted initiatives led by diverse constituencies including equity-seeking student groups advancing inclusivity and access within the university and beyond. The **Black Student Association's High School Conference** supported youth empowerment and academic mentorship for higher education access. **Beyond Block-by-Block** at Toronto Ward Museum and **A&A: Art for Activism**, Storyteller's Symposium curated art practices for social change and creative placemaking to foster a more inclusive city. **The Matrix of Mobility Symposium**, the **Eighth Annual Wollesen Memorial Graduate Symposium**, and **Re:Locations Symposium 2020, "Resilience & Disaster: The Global South during COVID-19,"** facilitated knowledge exchanges and dissemination. **Vaccine Stories: Documenting the 2021 Mississauga Mass Vaccination** captured the historical moment of UTM as a vaccine site, rendering it a site of community convergence and

community education. **Youth Social Policy Case Competition, Renewable Energies for Sustainable Communities, City Resiliency Course, and Building Energy Analysis Software Support** enhanced students' social impact research, innovative thinking, and creative problem-solving skills on policy innovation and sustainability.

Hack the Globe 2021, a social impact hackathon, centred on four SDG themes: Global Health, Climate Change, Economic Empowerment, and Equitable Societies. It received in-kind support. This initiative was led by **Global Spark** and involved **240 student participants from 20 countries of origin and 40 universities**.

Outreach & Engagement Small Grant Funds supported a range of activities and initiatives aimed at enabling the online exchange of city-centric information and knowledge. Projects such as the virtual symposium **Making and Unmaking of the Speculative City: Urban Politics in South Korea** and **Accessing Art in the Virtual World: A Conversation about Access, Equity and Diversity** were led by staff and student leaders and sought to create virtual touchpoints that allowed for the sharing of crucial placemaking narratives. Projects such as the **Healthy Cities in the SDG Era** podcast, the **Safeguarding Ontario Place** campaign, and the **Regent Park**

Impact Report supported organizations in the documentation and preservation of their research, activism, and community-engagement efforts. The **Urban LeadershipXchange** constituted a unique certificate program in positive economic and social change through urban innovation.

Cross-cutting projects jointly supported by Education and Outreach and Engagement grants included the **Geo Health Network: Fall Professional Development Series** and the **Next Step conference**, both of which supported students' skill-building in environment and health data science, and professional development.

The Metropolitix summer writing program supported international graduate students' publishing and professional development. The **Mashkiki gitigaanan: Asemaa zine project** and the **Kiin Awiya Jiibaajwe: Everyone Is Cooking** activated virtual space and immersive and multisensory learning opportunities on Indigenous ways of knowing, foodways and futurity. The **Dishing Up Toronto 2020 Online Festival—Homemade Cooking through COVID-19** created a convivial space for conversations, newcomers' stories, and community care during the pandemic. **Housing Policy Research Project for Canadian Youth during COVID-19 and Beyond** drew attention to youth homelessness in Toronto, a reality exacerbated by the pandemic.

A Note of Gratitude

When we are building something, we rely on the support of those who, by way of collaboration, participation, engagement and ideation, support the realization of our objectives. They are the building blocks that are helping us create a more equitably prosperous, sustainably resilient and socially responsible world of tomorrow.

As we come to the conclusion of this narrative detailing our activities and initiatives over the past year, we would like to take this opportunity to share our gratitude for the contributions of experts, researchers, students and community members who dedicated their time, energy and knowledge to enhance the impact and reach of our initiatives. We believe that it is their belief in the merit of our vision that propels us to recommit every day to our equity-seeking goals and bestows us with opportunities of intentional learning, dynamic engagement and sustained fruitful collaborations.

We are grateful to our partner institutions in the Global Urban Network who shared their valuable insights and research priorities, enriching our understanding of the nuanced impact of the pandemic in various parts of the world. Our partners who shared their design problems for students to address through the Multidisciplinary Urban Capstone Project supported our mentoring goals and prepared the students for problem-solving in their respective fields. The faculty engaged in the Urban Challenge Research Projects, and the partners who support our Creative Mixed-Use innovations, are invaluable in their expert support and long-term investment in our conviction to find sustainable solutions to vexing urban issues. Last, but far from the least, we thank our fellows, student members and grantees across various initiatives for aligning their scholarship and social-justice focused research with our programming. Their energy and enthusiasm energize us, and their scholarly and social curiosity extends the reach of the SofC beyond geographical boundaries.

To the ones who make our work integral to the global narrative on cities...We salute you, but we are a long way still to equity, and we are just getting started.

Our sincere thanks to

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HOUSING IN TORONTO

WHAT YOU LIKE / WANT TO KEEP

WHAT YOU DON'T LIKE / WANT TO IMPROVE

BOAT HOUSES

NEEL

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HOUSING BEFORE COVID



THE ARE MANY DIFFERENT LIVING EXPERIENCES WITHIN THIS DEMOGRAPHIC

MANY VOICES EVERY YOUTH IS DIFFERENT

INDIGENOUS VS INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

HOMELESSNESS

YOUTH NEED SPACE CHALLENGING

SOCIAL-HOUSING CRISIS

AFFORDABILITY

- ROOM MATES
 - Still living with parents
 - HIGH LEVEL of STUDENT DEBT
- STUDENTS ARE BEING PUSHED OUT OF THE CITY

THERE IS A DISTINCT LACK OF HOUSING

-SCARCITY CAUSES RENTS TO RISE!

WAGES HAVE NOT KEPT UP!

WE NEED \$20-22 AN HOUR TO AFFORD TO LIVE HERE!

GENTRIFICATION OF REGENT PARK...

LACK OF CHOICE

SELF-ISOLATION WITH PARENTS MAKES OVER-CROWDING CONDITIONS WORSE

MASS LAY-OFFS

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT RATE 38%

YOUTH BECOMING POORER OVER TIME... WORSE THAN SENIOR DEMOGRAPHIC

CHEAPER RENT = LONG COMMUTES...

QUEER FOLK OFTEN END UP IN UNSAFE SITUATIONS

COVID HAS EXPOSED MANY SHORTFALLS

RENTERS ARE MOST VULNERABLE

COVID CASES ARE MUCH HIGHER IN HIGH DENSITY AREAS & RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST RACIALIZED & INDIGENOUS YOUTH!

WHO IS MAKING THE POLICIES?

YOUTH NEED A VOICE AT THE TABLE!

NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM IS HARD

WE NEED TO ADDRESS INEQUALITY & POVERTY

TAX REFORM REBATE

DREAM TORONTO

RENTAL HOUSING WORKING GROUP

WHERE EVERYONE CAN DREAM...

YOUTH HAVE NOT BEEN CENTRE FOCUS DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY ARE THE NEXT GEN OF CITY DWELLERS

HOUSE PRICES & AVERAGE RENT CONTINUES TO RISE

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HOUSING... AS AFFORDABLE HOUSING

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF THE MISSISSAUGAS OF THE CREDIT, THE ANISHNABEG, THE CHIPPEWA, THE HAUDENOSAUNEE & THE HURON WENDAT...