

Bring Community to Volunteerism



The Ralph Thornton Centre thrives because of its volunteers. Every year, over 200 volunteers bring our building to life! They run numerous meaningful programs for children, youth and adults that enhance and change lives.

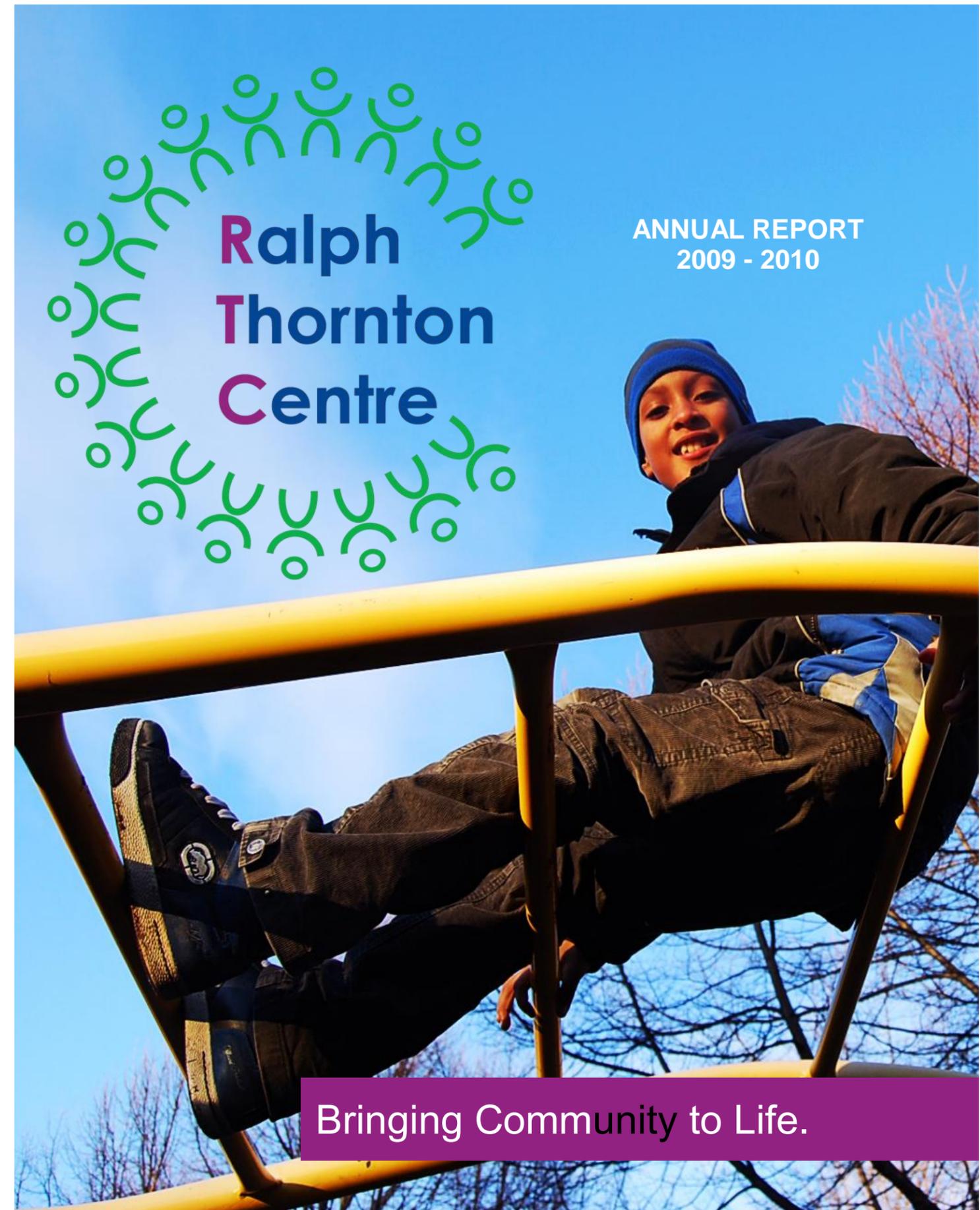
Our volunteers are leaders and partners who build community, optimism and confidence. Shouldn't you become a Ralph Thornton Centre Volunteer today?



RALPH THORNTON CENTRE
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www.ralphthornton.org



ANNUAL REPORT
2009 - 2010

**Ralph
Thornton
Centre**

Bringing Community to Life.

BRINGING COMMUNITY TO LIFE



Cover image: Jalen from Homework Club

OUR SUPPORTERS

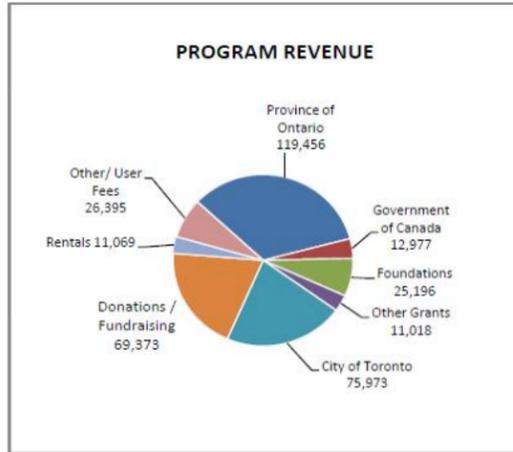
3P Computer
 A Little Show for Little People
 Ambiance Chocolat
 Bergstrom Originals
 Beyond the Pale
 Blaisedale Montessori
 Bonjour Brioche
 Brick Street Breads
 Broadview Beauty Salon
 Canadian Tire - Leslie & Lakeshore
 Common Sort Clothing Co.
 Costco - Scarborough
 Coyote Willie
 Dangerous Dan's Diner
 Dark Horse
 Disney Store
 District
 East End Home Schoolers
 Ed's Real Scoop
 Elbers Antiques & Refinish
 F'Coffee
 Green Park Market
 Hardware Interior

Headshots Rental
 Heather Widdington
 Here & Now
 Huaxia Chorus
 Joy Bistro
 Kalamkaar Furniture as Art
 Lady Marmalade
 Lancaster Flowers
 Little Peeps
 LOIC
 PK's Culinary
 Lucky Star Chinese Restaurant
 Mary MacLeod's Shortbread
 Merchants of Green Coffee
 Metro Grocery Store
 Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities
 Oma Chiropractic
 Ontario Folk Dance Association
 Pari Discount
 Pastry House
 Pet Shoppe
 Pic Nic Wine Bar

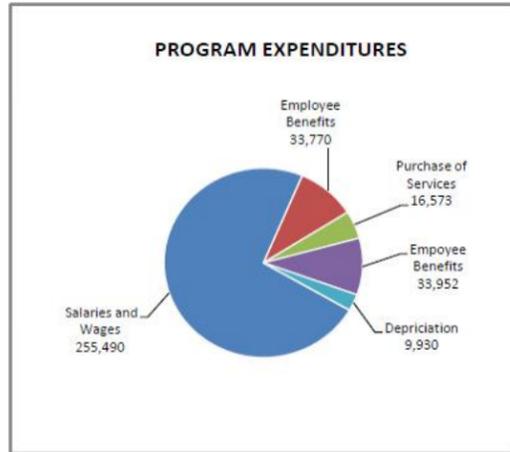
Printopolis
 Prohibition Gastrohouse
 Rabba Fine Foods
 Rasputin
 Regal Hardware
 Riverdale Share Community Association
 Rouge Concept
 Spectrum Health Care
 Roxanne Reads
 South Riverdale Community Health Centre
 St. Andrew's Club
 Starbucks
 State Farm Insurance
 Stephen Caras Inc.
 Stephanie Faubert
 Table 17
 Te Aro Rosatery and Café
 Tea Club for Seniors
 The Wokker
 Toronto Foundation for Student Success
 Wine Rack



2009 SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL INFORMATION
For the year ended December 31st, 2009

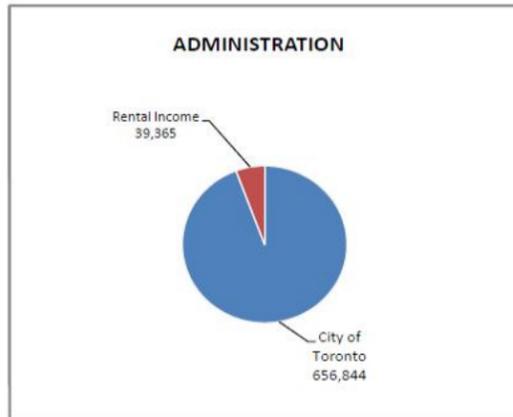


Province of Ontario	119,456
Government of Canada	12,977
Foundations	25,196
Other Grants	11,018
City of Toronto	75,973
Donations & Fundraising	69,373
Rentals	11,069
Other / User Fees	26,395
Total	\$ 351,457

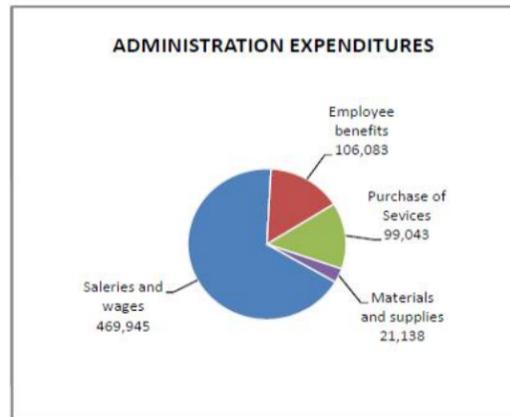


Salaries and wages	255,490
Employee benefits	33,770
Purchase of services	16,573
Materials and supplies	33,952
Depreciation	9,930
Total	\$ 349,715

Programs include; Strong Voices, Strong Communities (Rivertowne), Computer Resource Centre, Community Strokes for Change, Community Murals for Change, Summer Day Camp, Mentor Programs, Riverdale Community Development Institute, Children and Youth Programs, Volunteer Development and Community Animation



City of Toronto	656,844
Rental Income - Toronto Public	39,365
Total	696,209



Salaries and wages	469,945
Employee benefits	106,083
Purchase of services	99,043
Materials and supplies	21,138
Depreciation	1,206
Amortization- deferred capital contributions	(1,206)
Total	696,209

Administration includes administrative salaries and costs associated with the operation of the building, including heating and maintenance.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Amy Cheng
Beth Long
Chai Vuong
Henry Wai
Henry Wong

Joy Connelly
Kenny Uzoma
Margaret Joshi
Margaret Panter
Men Juo Kuo Lee

Michael Whang
Moir Rosser
Norah L'Esperance
Peter Tabuns

DEAR FRIENDS...

One of the challenges of a neighbourhood centre such as the Ralph Thornton Centre is to meet the needs of a rapidly changing community. How can RTC respond to evolving needs in the local community without excluding people or diluting services and its commitment to the vulnerable? And how can RTC play a role in creating systemic change for the good of all residents?



In 2009/2010, the Board of RTC, staff, and volunteers wrestled with these questions and developed a clearer vision of our work and our place as a "connector" and facilitator of change in South Riverdale. With several lively new members our Board of Directors also developed an active committee structure. Our marketing group helped us create a new "brand" and an exciting new website. "Bringing Community to Life" is our new tagline

that nicely captures what we do.



While continuing to provide services and space for wide variety of residents RTC expanded into new areas. In late 2009, RTC was chosen to be featured on the Neighbourhood Arts Network as one of five exemplary community engaged hubs in Toronto from which others can learn. RTC is profiled on the Network's online resource for other arts groups: www.neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org

Food – growing it, procuring it locally, preparing and sharing it – is another new focus that emerged strongly in the past year. At a broader level the most ambitious project we started recently is the Rivertowne community development project in the former Don Mount Court. Unique in Canada this two-year project is creating the conditions and structures for homeowners, TCHC tenants, and condo owners to create a healthy mixed income community.

We want to thank our energetic and committed staff and volunteers and the new donors and community members who have made the past year an exciting and visionary one. As you turn the pages of this report you will come to know more about the many efforts and great successes of our staff, volunteers and supporters. They – and you – are the people who are *BRINGING COMMUNITY TO LIFE* in South Riverdale.

Sincerely,

Trish Hunt, Board Chair

Sincerely,

Shawn Conway, Executive Director

BRINGING COMMUNITY TO CHILDREN

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The Ralph Thornton Centre runs safe, unique and engaging after-school programs which serve surrounding lower-income communities, newcomer children and students from 6 public schools in South Riverdale. Using trained volunteers, we run inclusive homework help sessions and cultural adaptation programs on a daily basis through the Mentorship Program and the Homework Club.

The Mentorship Program assists elementary school children from the immigrant Chinese community in cultural adaptation and in developing their English language skills. Students learn new skills and build new friendships. Parents are regularly invited to participate through informational workshops

In our daily work with children we also inject themes related to the environment, the local community, personal identity and nutrition. Activities such as sports, art and cooking enable children to learn and grow, to have fun, and to develop their imaginations and a sense of wonder.

Our mission is to engage children in peer support and healthy choices to cultivate self-confidence in their studies and social lives. Our students eventually go on to become vital members of this community and community leaders themselves.



RIVERDALE ACTION CENTRE SUMMER CAMP

RAC Camp is an 8-week recreational program in the summer for children ages 3 to 12. Co-sponsored with Jimmie Simpson Recreation Centre and Woodgreen, the camp is free and is in high demand. Activities include arts and crafts, sports, recreational games, field trips, swim time.

BRINGING COMMUNITY TO A SPACE

RIVERDALE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

RCDI is our unique model that annually links post-secondary placement students with community development initiatives in South Riverdale. Students come from a range of disciplines including Social Work, Community Work, Nursing and Environmental Studies. Students contributed over 3000 hours of work in the past year. Here's what they've accomplished:

- Developed and implemented a survey on food access
- Supported food and environmental education activities and events, including Earth Day, cooking on a budget workshops, community kitchen programs
- Began a weekly Hub Café drop-in that brought socially isolated community members together
- Helped lead annual door-to-door community survey
- Brought environmental and health promotion activities to our mentor children 's program.
- Rolled out the RTC Green Plan to make us more eco-friendly in our office practices
- Organized a community survey and a series of child and youth activities, community BBQ's and sports events in the newly revitalized Rivertowne TCH development

LEWIS PEARSALL COMPUTER RESOURCE CENTRE

In 2009 – 2010, the LPCRC continued to help support unemployed and underemployed participants gain job search skills, access community resources and obtain jobs. Supported by Employment Ontario the Centre served over 400 new participants to better the quality of their lives.

"The Ralph Thornton Centre is a very supportive environment. It's worth taking the bus or walking here to know that I will be treated with dignity and respect."

- CRC Participant



SPACE RENTAL

The Ralph Thornton Centre was established by Toronto City Council in 1980 as a "multi-purpose community facility" within the former Postal Station G. This building is here for you and our neighbours to use and enjoy in various ways - from belly dancing to yoga to community meetings to community organizing to special celebrations. We make space available so that the community can be more self-sufficient. People do not need to rely on RTC to develop a program; community members can simply use our space to host the activities that are most meaningful to them. We believe this empowers our neighbours and builds a strong, vibrant and active community.

As our Mission states, RTC is a place where neighbours meet, enjoy programs, exchange support and celebrate special events.

BRINGING COMMUNITY TO THE ARTS

The Ralph Thornton Centre has been designated as a community arts hub in Toronto. We use art to grow individuals, build community and beautify our neighbourhood. Art allows people to tap into their emotions and express themselves in ways that day-to-day communication often does not. Projects such as Photovoice and the mural project introduce people to advocacy and help participants learn how to effect change.



By working together on large scale projects like murals we are teaching youth about team work and collaboration, not just with each other but with their community as they need to consider their fellow neighbours when creating art for all to appreciate.

We find art to be a crucial educational tool that can teach anything from what is community development to how to mentor children to fill a blank space.



No matter the lesson, the end result is community members who have something they can take pride in.

BRINGING COMMUNITY TO THE TABLE

Food is a staple of life. Some of our community members don't always have the resources to bring healthy and nutritious food into their lives. In 2009 we surveyed over 60 community members regarding their challenges with food access.



Some of the many barriers identified included low-income issues, inaccessibility, non-existent venues for fresh food, illness and a lack of knowledge of healthy cooking.

As a result we began to incorporate a food focus in several areas of RTC work. Here's what was cookin' at RTC in 2009-2010:

THE RIVERDALE FOOD WORKING GROUP is a collaboration of community members and local community organizations, including RTC. The group provided:

- Food education workshops on "eating on a budget," container gardening and canning
- Local fruit tree picking sessions with *Not Far From the Tree*
- A seedling giveaway on Earth Day
- Food vouchers to about 40 low-income families to use at the local Withrow Farmers' Market

THE TALKING SPOON PROGRAM, in partnership with Toronto Employment and Social Services, brings single parents on Social Assistance together to:

- Learn how to prepare healthy, affordable meals with a local chef
- Connect with community resources, food related employment and training opportunities



At the monthly **COMMUNITY KITCHEN HUB PROGRAM**, community members meet to:

- Prepare and share a healthy meal on a budget
- Learn new cooking skills and meet new people

BRINGING COMMUNITY TOGETHER IN RIVERTOWNE

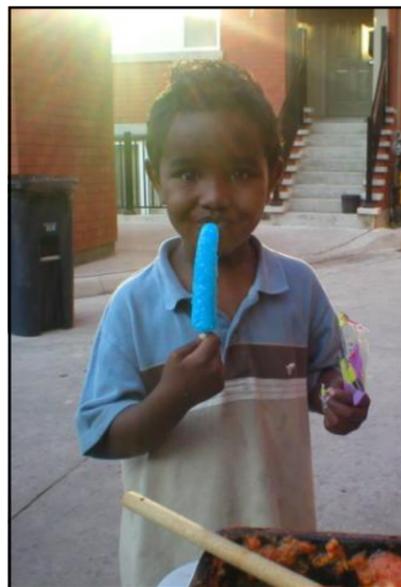
THE RIVERTOWNE PROJECT

RTC's "Rivertowne Community Development Project" poses an important question: Can community development be successful and sustainable in a complex, mixed-income setting, where the public housing tenants have a history of struggles and barriers? So far, the answer appears to be yes... *if* relationship building, creativity, inclusivity and tenant-led social infrastructure development are at the core of the community development approach.

RTC took on this exciting challenge in 2009 and, over the next two years, will focus considerable energy into Rivertowne on the site of the former Don Mount Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) complex, one of the city's oldest downtown communities.

In collaboration with a broad base of Rivertowne residents, the following took place:

- A needs assessment with over 60 rivertowne residents
- A planning retreat resulting in indicators of success, a steering committee called The Navigators and several action teams (Environment, Safety & Crime Prevention, Seniors, Youth and Jobs/Training)
- A song-writing workshop with professional composer James Gordon, resulting in the collaborative creation of "The Rivertowne Song"
- Skills and relationship building programs such as graphic design, dance, music and cooking
- A community cleanup, with participation from tenants, home owners and condo owners
- The birth of a newsletter for Rivertowne, edited by a TCHC tenant
- A chocolate Fountain Welcoming party for new condo owners
- A partnership with TCHC and the city to develop a community consultation process regarding the design of the new Joel Weeks Park



Funding was received from TCHC's Social Investment Fund and the Metcalf Foundation and a community development specialist, Dale Hamilton, was hired in October 2009 as coordinator. Dale is working in collaboration with the Riverdale Community Development Institute's Joanne Fisher and a number of university placement and summer students.

Today, Rivertowne is a vibrant, ever-changing community-in-the-making, with phased move-in dates for TCHC tenants and condo owners. The concept is one of a neighbourhood where social housing is melded with market-rate privately owned condominiums.

The Rivertowne Project has taken on a high profile across the city and beyond and it is recognized as the first time in Canada that a mixed-income neighbourhood has been deliberately created and consciously supported.

Consequently, it has captured the imagination of the media, politicians and academics, and is being seen as a model for new approaches to diverse mixed socio-economic urban living.