Our City, Our Spaces

Adaptive Reuse for Community Benefit
Civicplan was retained by Evergreen to undertake a case study analysis of the transformation of selected community spaces in mid-sized cities in Ontario.

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The views expressed in this publication are the views of Evergreen and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario.
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With shifting economic foundations and changing demographics, many communities in Ontario have been experimenting with approaches to reanimating spaces, reinvigorating neighbourhoods, and encouraging innovation. From technology incubators to affordable housing, there are many new models where community leaders work to create new solutions to old problems. This study aims to better understand some of the current efforts by mid-size cities in Ontario to leverage existing assets to promote redevelopment and innovation.

Ontario's mid-sized cities face a number of common challenges. These cities are all attempting to achieve economic growth and diversification, downtown renewal, community mobilization, and sustainable affordable housing. These are difficult, complex problems, and the means to address them are not necessarily clear. Mid-size cities often lack the revenue tools or large-scale commercial/institutional sectors that can help them address these challenges. They also do not receive as much attention from researchers and senior levels of government as do large cities. It is therefore important that further research is conducted into the innovative ways that these mid-size cities address their on-going challenges.
Specifically, the report analyzes:

**Brantford**
Downtown renewal stemming from Wilfrid Laurier University’s expansion to the city

**Peterborough**
Affordable housing and community programming offered by The Mount Community Centre

**Kitchener**
Economic diversification promoted by the renewal of the Lang Tannery and activities of the Communitech Hub

**Hamilton**
Community mobilization infrastructure created at Evergreen’s Community Storefront Hub at 294 James Street North

This report provides background research and analysis on four efforts in Ontario mid-sized cities to make real, lasting, and positive transformations in their communities.¹

The case studies examined here are rooted in the built environment. As these cities have worked to move forward, they have done so with an eye to preserving the past, where possible. This desire to meld place and function, heritage and ambition, history and the needs of the present, define all the case studies and provide insights into how communities can evolve to meet new needs and challenges.

This report offers direction to other mid-sized cities and their communities on how to address community challenges through transforming space. In its four case studies, the report presents concrete examples and lessons for other communities in Ontario and beyond on how to achieve success in transforming spaces for community benefit.

> Report Methodology and Structure

The four case studies discussed in this report were selected in consultation with Evergreen, who commissioned this study. The focus was to highlight examples that offer a diversity of solutions to a variety of urban challenges. Once the four case studies were confirmed, primary and secondary research was conducted to develop an understanding of each initiative. Interviews were conducted with representatives of each initiative to gather more detail and frame the context for each example.

This report presents the findings of the study research. It begins with a detailed discussion of each of the four case studies. This is followed by a case study comparison that highlights key shared factors from the four examples.
Brantford’s Laurier Campus: Downtown Renewal

"Our Brantford campus is rooted in the downtown core, offering students a unique campus life experience. The campus is home to over 3,000 students and is one of the fastest-growing university campuses in Ontario."

– Wilfrid Laurier University
1.1 Overview

Since 2000, downtown Brantford has undergone a remarkable transformation. From a low point in the mid-1990s, it is increasingly becoming a thriving residential, commercial, and business hub within the city. Central to this revitalization is the growing footprint of post-secondary institutions in the core. Today, downtown Brantford is home to programs from Wilfrid Laurier University, Nipissing University, Conestoga College, and Medix College of Healthcare. Laurier alone has 21 buildings in the core providing classrooms, student residences, and administrative functions.

> Context

For decades, Brantford had been an important manufacturing hub in south-western Ontario. Dubbed the “Telephone City,” it also manufactured bicycles, machinery for saw mills, and, most significantly, farm equipment. Brantford’s downtown started taking shape in the early 1800s, with the city serving as a shipping and industrial hub for the region. At one point it was the third largest industrial centre in Canada, a fact reflected in its rich collection of pre-Confederation and pre-First World War buildings.²

The city’s manufacturing sector underwent a significant decline in the 1980s.³ The shuttering of farm equipment manufacturing firm Massey Ferguson, alone, eliminated almost 2,500 jobs.⁴ The decline in manufacturing contributed heavily to a local economic downturn in the 1980s and 1990s that saw unemployment reach 24 percent.⁵
Downtown Brantford became a shell of its former self. Businesses and residents left the area, poverty and crime were high, and much of the building stock was vacant and boarded up. It was in this context that then mayor, Chris Friel, said in the mid-1990s that the city had, "the worst downtown in Canada."  

Leo Groarke, who would lead Laurier’s expansion into Brantford, would later say, "When I went to Brantford, the urban blight on Colborne Street was a shock to see."  

This situation of urban decline inspired leaders from both within and outside the city to begin looking for potential solutions to spur economic development and reinvigorate the downtown.

> Leadership

The idea to bring a post-secondary institution to downtown Brantford was pursued by a number of leaders during the mid-1990s.

The original idea for a downtown Brantford post-secondary campus came from a group of professors out of Waterloo who formed the City College Project Group-Brant in 1996. They advocated for the creation of a college in downtown Brantford in the Carnegie Library, which they believed was “the best and most appropriate building which may be available for use.”

The City Group’s proposal was not successful, but it laid the ground work for a new effort by the Brantford Development Board, called the Grand Valley Education Society (GVES). At the same time as the GVES was working to bring a post-secondary institution to Brantford, the Downtown Renewal Group, a group of concerned citizens, was trying to attract Mohawk College to the vacant downtown mall.

Brantford City Council, under Mayor Chris Friel, were strong supporters of a post-secondary campus. According to Friel, Council “knew it would make a difference to our downtown.” Council approached Wilfrid Laurier University, which was looking for opportunities to expand its footprint beyond Waterloo, about opening a campus in Brantford. The idea of a Brantford campus had support from key stakeholders in Laurier, including members of the GVES and University President Bob Rosehart. However, the school was not interested initially in building downtown. Council had to work to bring Laurier downtown, Friel recounted in a 2013 interview: “we kept bringing them back to the Carnegie Building because we knew it would make a difference to our downtown.”
1.2 Reinvigorating Space

Figure 1: Laurier’s Brantford Campus Map

Brantford Campus

Academic/Support Buildings
1. 97 Dalhousie St.
2. Aboriginal Student Centre
3. Carnegie Building
4. Dalhousie Centre
5. Grand River Hall
6. Library
7. Market Darling Centre
8. Market Place
9. Nipissing Education Centre
10. Odeon Building
11. Research and Academic Centre
12. SC Johnson Building
13. Service Laurier
14. St. Andrew’s
15. Student Centre
16. Williams Fresh Café

Residence Buildings
5. Grand River Hall Residence
17. Expositor Place Residence
18. Lucy Marco Place Residence
19. Post House Residence
20. Wilkes House Residence

Athletics
21. Wilkes House Gym
22. Future Site of the Laurier-YMCA facility

Parking
Market Centre Parkade
Public Parking

Transit
23. GO Bus
24. Brantford Transit Terminal
According to an interview with Laurier’s Antonio Araujo, Assistant Vice-President, Campus Administration & Special Constable Service and Gary Nower, Assistant Vice-President Physical Resources, this leadership from the City has been on-going. Representatives of the City and the GVES have provided continuing support to the school, having worked to understand Laurier’s business goals and to help the school achieve them.

Location

The Laurier campus is located in the heart of downtown Brantford, centred at the intersection of Market and Darling Streets. Laurier’s initial campus building, the Carnegie Library, faces on to Victoria Park, which is the centre of the Victoria Park Square Heritage Conservation District. As of today, Laurier has 21 buildings in the area dedicated to classes, administration, and residences; Nipissing University also has a building located in the downtown.

Why this Space was Chosen

The Carnegie Library is a heritage building originally financed by American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. It was built between 1902 and 1904, and “is considered to be one of the few remaining Carnegie libraries of such size and expense in Canada.” With its Beaux Arts style, Ionic columns, grand entrance facing on to Victoria Park, and its domed ceiling featuring stained glass mosaics, the Carnegie Library was one of Brantford’s most prominent historical buildings. Although designated as a heritage building in 1978, it had been vacant since the early 1990s, when the public library moved to a new facility. There was strong support in the community and from City Council for redeveloping the building because of its heritage value and its location, which is central to downtown and fronting on Victoria Park.

How the Space was Transformed

The renovation of the Carnegie Library aimed both to update it to meet the needs of a modern university campus and to “recapture the architectural glory of the original library.” The building was updated with a wired lecture hall and classrooms, a computer lab, administration offices, and other amenities.

While this upgrade meant a significant reworking of the existing space, many of the defining features of the space were preserved. This preservation included Romanesque, Islamic, and neoclassical features, such as arched entrances, high ceilings, and elaborate mouldings.

In the years since the Carnegie building’s reopening in 1999, a number of other buildings in the downtown have been redeveloped to become part of the university campus. As of today, a total of 23 buildings are dedicated to higher learning in the downtown, with 21 of them connected to Laurier. Like the Carnegie building, their interiors have been redesigned for the needs of a modern university, while their exteriors and architectural accents have been restored. Where new buildings have been planned or built, as in the case of the new Laurier-YMCA building, they have been designed to be sympathetic to the existing infrastructure.

Funding Model for the Redevelopment

The City of Brantford financed the original redevelopment of the Carnegie Library with a $1.4 million investment. The funds came from selling the local Icomm building, which was vacant, to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation for a casino. According to Mayor Friel, the “money received from OLG for hosting the casino gave Brantford the flexibility it needed to accommodate and help post-secondary school institutions grow.” The city then sold the building to Laurier for one dollar.

Redevelopment Partners

The primary force behind the redevelopment was the City, which provided all of the financing for the project. Supporting this effort were community groups and Laurier, which had agreed to take over the building once the renovations were complete.
1.3 Operations

> Programming

Wilfrid Laurier’s Brantford campus currently offers a range of programming for its students. This includes the faculties of Liberal Arts, Human and Social Sciences, and Social Work, the School of Business and Economics, as well as graduate programs in Social Justice and Community Engagement, and Criminology.23 3,157 students were attending the Brantford campus as of 2016.24

> Business Model

The Laurier campus itself is a multimillion dollar operation. As of 2012, Laurier had invested $78 million in the Brantford campus. Campus operations include parking, administration, and residences, as well as the academic buildings. Revenue for the University’s operations are generated from student tuition, as well as grants from upper levels of government.

Investments by all three levels of government have contributed to the growth of the campus over the last 18 years. As of 2014, the City had invested approximately $22 million into the downtown campus. That investment was paid for through revenue from the local casino.25 Additionally, the federal and provincial governments have made investments in the campus, including $26 million ($13 million each) for the Laurier Brantford Research and Academic Centre in 2011.26
2.1 Overview

Since 2000, downtown Brantford has undergone a remarkable transformation. From a low point in the mid-1990s, it is increasingly becoming a thriving residential, commercial, and business hub within the city. Central to this revitalization is the growing footprint of post-secondary institutions in the core. Today, downtown Brantford is home to programs from Wilfrid Laurier University, Nipissing College, Conestoga College, and Medix College of Healthcare. Laurier alone has 21 buildings in the core providing classrooms, student residences, and administrative functions.

Figure 2: Carnegie Building – Main Floor Plan

Image Credit: Wilfrid Laurier University
1.4 Effects in the Community

A 2012 study by the City of Brantford found that the economic impact of post-secondary institutions in the city was significant. It estimated that each student spent an average of $6,033 annually on items such as accommodation, transportation, food, clothing, and entertainment. This amounts to approximately $26.8 million spent locally each year. Additionally, the study estimated that income resulting from construction and renovations would total approximately $110.2 million over the following five years, which would mean an average of 227 jobs per year. The study also estimated that people visiting the campus added another $586,000 to the local economy annually.

From the initial investment of $1.4 million in the redevelopment of the Carnegie building, originally home to only 39 students, the campus has grown significantly. Laurier’s Brantford Campus is one of the province’s fastest growing campuses, with its current 3,157 students expected to increase to 8–10,000 over the next 5–10 years. It employs 270 people directly in Brantford, with approximately 10–15 staff in the Carnegie Building, plus faculty. Laurier is the largest property owner in the downtown core, with 489,000 sq. ft. in operation, 118,000 under construction, and the recent acquisition of the 360,000 sq. ft. downtown mall. The downtown is now also home to Nipissing University, Conestoga College, and Medix College of Healthcare. Brantford estimates the economic impact of this campus-driven revitalization at $216–$292 million in the five years leading up to 2012.

Other ancillary investments resulting from the Laurier campus include spaces like the Laurier YMCA athletics and recreation centre. This 118,000 sq. ft. facility is slated to open in 2018 and will serve both the campus and the surrounding community, with programs for all ages. It represents an investment of $67.7 million by Laurier, the YMCA, and all three levels of government.
Economic impact of post-secondary institutions in the city

$6,033 = $26.8 M
Average spent annually by student on items such as accommodation, transportation, food, clothing, and entertainment

Laurier’s Brantford Campus is one of the province’s fastest growing campuses, with its current 3,157 students expected to increase to 8–10,000 over the next 5–10 years.

Brantford estimates the economic impact of this campus-driven revitalization at $216–$292 million in the five years leading up to 2012.
The impact of the Laurier campus, however, goes beyond dollars and cents. You cannot quantify optimism. The impact of new energy in the downtown, the growing feeling of security, and the injection of dynamism into the heart of the city cannot be underestimated. "In my first year, it was kind of scary to walk home by yourself, to be honest. But it’s totally changed now," Brittany Hodgson, a coordinator with the student union, told the Waterloo Region Record in 2014. "It’s comfortable being here now. It feels like home." What was once a drawback of the downtown location has become a selling feature, as students report being “part of a downtown community” is one of the appeals of attending Laurier Brantford. Students are part of a neighbourhood where they have regular interactions with local people, including public school students.

Today, downtown Brantford is home to festivals and other arts and cultural events, as well as a free public ice rink, splash pad, and stage. These events and amenities, combined with the student presence, have gradually returned pedestrian traffic to the core.

While the growth of post-secondary institutions in the downtown is a significant boon to the city, there remain challenges. One of the key issues is economic diversification. Stakeholders in the area have noted the need for more businesses and residents in the area that are independent of the campus, as students are seasonal and it is a challenge for businesses reliant on sales to this group to survive over the summer months.

Mayor Friel, who had such a low opinion of the downtown in the mid-1990s, now says, "We have the most dynamic downtown in Canada." With $120 million invested as of 2013, and tens of millions since, Friel has argued, "We are so far ahead of the curve on how you revitalize a downtown, it’s going to take a long time for other communities to catch up to us."
1.5 Lessons Learned

Interviews with senior staff from Laurier Brantford provided insights into some of the challenges they faced in building the Brantford campus. Setting up the campus in an established downtown presented some unique challenges. From these challenges arise recommendations that other post-secondary institutions or cities pursuing similar projects should take into account.

- It was necessary to renovate and repurpose buildings for the university in a way that was respectful of the existing community and existing streetscape. Even when building something new, as in the case of the new Laurier-YMCA building, the architects designed it in a way that will incorporate some of the previous elements so it works with the streetscape.

- The City of Brantford’s support for Laurier has been an essential factor in the success of the downtown campus. While the financial elements are important, this support is about more than money. Brantford has made a significant and on-going effort to understand the business and the goals of the University, and has worked to help it achieve them locally. For example, the partners have worked together on a Downton Campus Plan. The GVES has been central to this process. Together, Brantford and Laurier have become partners on many projects and work closely together to make the campus successful. Other cities looking to take on a similar project can learn from this success story.
Our Brantford campus is rooted in the downtown core, offering students a unique campus life experience. The campus is home to over 3,000 students and is one of the fastest-growing university campuses in Ontario.

-Wilfrid Laurier University, wlu.ca

The Mount Community Centre aims not just to become a landlord, but to build a community where a mix of uses enriches the lives of the people who come to work, live or play at The Mount.

-Andi van Koeverden, Director of Strategic Advancement, The Mount Community Centre
Peterborough’s The Mount: Affordable Housing

“The Mount Community Centre aims not just to become a landlord, but to build a community where a mix of uses enriches the lives of the people who come to work, live or play at The Mount.”

– Andi van Koeverden
  Director of Strategic Advancement,
  The Mount Community Centre
2.1 Overview

Peterborough’s The Mount Community Centre (TMCC) is an innovative approach to addressing affordable housing needs. Initiated by community members, this project aims to reanimate and reimagine an historic location in the city. Its goal is to provide affordable housing in the community through a model that is unique in North America and includes a variety of community-based programming and private investment. While still in its early phases, this model for affordable housing includes a number of innovative and sustainable ideas that may be useful to guide other mid-sized cities.
> Context

Like many Ontario communities, Peterborough is suffering an affordable housing crisis. Increase in the cost of housing has outpaced income growth and many people cannot afford at-market rents. In 2014, the City and County’s Affordable Housing Action Committee (AHAC) reported that over half of renter households in the city could not afford the median cost of rent, $850/month, and approximately 60 percent could not afford the $915/month cost of a two-bedroom apartment. As of 2016, 925 households in Peterborough earned less than $20,388 and rented a two-bedroom apartment. They spent, on average, 76 percent of before tax household income on rent and utilities.

In addition to the on-going need for affordable housing, the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network (PPRN) recognized in its 2011 strategic planning process the need for a “hub for affordable housing and food” in the city that would help families and individuals live in greater dignity.

The Mount is the realization of that strategic vision. It brings together affordable housing, food security, and community services to fight poverty in a holistic and sustainable fashion.

> Leadership

The idea of turning The Mount into the PPRN’s community asset originated in 2011, when the property came up for sale. The PPRN, working with a variety of community leaders and six partner organizations, investigated the viability of the site for its community hub in the months that followed. The five community partners included Peterborough City-County Health Unit, United Way of Peterborough and District, Kawartha Participation Projects, Habitat for Humanity, Peterborough Housing Corporation, and the Canadian Mental Health Association - Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge.

The PPRN and its partners decided to incorporate a new non-profit corporation with a separate board of directors in 2013. The Mount Community Centre (TMCC) would be responsible for the purchase, redevelopment, and management of the property. Board Chair Steve Kylie attracted a group of volunteers to sit on the Board that included people with a wide variety of skillsets. These volunteers represented a number of communities, including the PPRN and the Sisters of St. Joseph, and were essential to the successful creation of The Mount.
2.2 Reinvigorating Space

> Location

The Mount is located in the north-west area of the city, just under 2km from downtown. It is on a public transit line and connected to the downtown via a bicycle lane and paved trail.47

> Why this Space was Chosen

Mount St. Joseph was originally built in 1865 as a farm house. It was later purchased and renovated by the Sisters of St. Joseph, opening in 1895 to provide a venue for their activities in the community. After over a century in service to the Sisters, the Mount location had become too big for their needs and they moved to a smaller location nearby in 2009.48

In the same year, the City of Peterborough gave the property heritage designation, citing its prominent location, corner domed tower, rare Classical Revival porch, and Gothic Revival stained glass windows, among other features.49

A developer purchased the property in 2009 with plans to build a large retirement home. However, the developer chose not to proceed with the intended development and put the property back on the market. The PPRN purchased the property in August of 2013.
The PPRN chose The Mount for a number of reasons. It has the space and facilities necessary for the types of programming envisioned at the community hub. As a former convent, there were many existing residential spaces that could be converted into apartments and a number of other facilities that could be adapted for office space, the commercial kitchen, and event space. It also sits on a 10 acre piece of land, where it will be possible to establish community gardens.

The Sisters of St. Joseph, while not directly involved in the initial project, were also strong supporters. They were very pleased when the PPRN and partners proposed the redevelopment, according to Sister Joan Driscoll, as the project “has so much in common with what the sisters do.”

Among their duties, the Sisters, work to provide shelter and housing for the poor, the aged, women in need, and refugees, as well as healthcare facilities and education on ecological issues. Mount Strategic Advancement Director Andi van Koeverden told the Peterborough Examiner, “We are trying to carry on that legacy as well of service to society.”

> How the Space was Transformed

The Mount is a 132,000 sq. ft. facility. To date, 43 housing units have been built and rented, with 38 under construction as part of Phase Two for a total of 81 units. Of these, 65 will be below market rate. Some of the walls were removed between the small, original rooms used by the nuns to make new apartments, with significant features like the original wooden wardrobes cleaned up and reinstalled. The heritage features of the building, including the chapel, French radiators, tin ceilings, staircases, and other features, have been restored and recognized by the Peterborough Historical Society with the Martha Ann Kidd Heritage Award in 2016.

Modern upgrades have also been installed in the space, including dedicated e-bike storage and recharging stations, and super-efficient Viessmann water boilers. The plans for the site include a commercial-grade kitchen, community spaces, and rental venues for events, weddings, and concerts.
In August 2013, the PPRN acquired the property, which was appraised at the time at $5.2 million, and transferred ownership to the newly created TMCC shortly thereafter in December 2013. The TMCC Board established a capital budget to move forward with Phase 1 of the redevelopment, which included constructing premises for the Victorian Order of Nurses for its Adult Day Program and creating 43 apartment units. The capital included a $1 million contribution from the City of Peterborough, a low interest $1.7 million loan from the County of Peterborough and $2 million in social investment bonds issued by TMCC to between 50 and 60 local investors.

In addition to its donation, the City of Peterborough approved The Mount’s Community Improvement Plan, which provided further incentives to TMCC to develop an affordable housing project, including waiving development charges and building permit fees as well as a realty tax reduction. The social finance plan was developed by the TMCC Board to provide enough capital to complete Phase 1 of the redevelopment.

In addition to the Phase 1 capital budget, The Mount also received funding from other sources like the Aviva Community Fund and the Federal Government’s Enabling Accessibility Fund, which contributed $100,000 and $50,000 respectively towards the modernization of an existing elevator.

The Mount is now working on a capital plan including donations for moving forward with the remaining redevelopment of the existing building.
> Redevelopment Partners

A number of organizations, including all levels of government, have contributed to the redevelopment of The Mount.

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**Initial Partners:**
- Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network
- United Way of Peterborough and District
- Habitat for Humanity
- Peterborough Housing Corporation
- Peterborough City-County Health Unit
- Kawartha Participation Projects – paid to make seven units fully accessible and committed to renting them
- Canadian Mental Health Association: Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge – committed to renting five units

**Other Contributing Partners:**
- City of Peterborough
- County of Peterborough
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Government of Canada
- Aviva Community Fund
- Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough
- Community Futures Peterborough
- Greenbelt Fund
- artbox

The Ontario Trillium Foundation covered the salary and office expenses of The Mount’s Strategic Advancement Director for a four year term during the setting up and renovation of the facility. The Mancal Group, which had originally purchased the property from the Sisters of St. Joseph, also helped. They supplied the TMCC with all the engineering, structural, and site reports they had performed for free following the TMCC’s purchase of the site.
2.3 Operations

Figure 4: The Mount Floor Plan
Programming

The Mount will provide both affordable and market rate housing (65 and 18 units, respectively), with 43 units of affordable housing currently completed. The founders of The Mount, especially Board Chair Steven Kylie, believe that the, “best communities are diverse communities.” The plan for the site thus aims to include a diverse range of incomes.

The Mount also has a variety of planned and existing programming under its Centre for Social Innovation. This programming focuses on The Mount’s four priority areas: housing, food, art and culture, and health and social services.

Its facilities include:

- Office spaces and a social services hub;
- A commercial kitchen and food program;
- A concert and event venue;
- 5,000 sq. ft. of its land will be dedicated to 100 community garden plots, with Mount residents having first access to the plots.

The Mount also currently hosts or is the subject of a variety of research activities by the local post-secondary institutions, including Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College. Other academic institutions working with The Mount include:

- Trent Community Research Centre
- Trent University
- Sir Sanford Fleming College, Peterborough
- Sir Sanford Fleming College, Lindsay

These relationships have multiple benefits for The Mount: they bring in some revenue, help the TMCC with information for its grant applications, and help it achieve its objectives as a social and community hub.

Business Model

Revenue from Programming

The Mount has already established revenue streams, as well as other planned sources that will come online as the renovations are completed. The funding goal for the complex is to be able to subsidize the cost of the affordable unit rent with revenue from at market units and various other programming offers. The diverse sources of programming revenue, combined with the asset value of the property, have made The Mount financially self-sustaining. Or, to put it in the words of Andi van Koeverden, Director of Strategic Advancement, “the boat floats.”

Current revenue sources:

- Rent from current stock of 43 apartment units (A-Wing. See Figure 4);
- Rental of social office space, with current tenants:
  - Victorian Order of Nurses - Canada
  - Adult Day Program
  - Assisted Living Services Program
  - Kawartha Land Trust
  - The Dennis Group, Inc.
  - Water’s Edge
- The Food Business Innovation Centre will provide commercial kitchen space for entrepreneurs;
- Rentals of the event spaces, with the Kawartha Youth Orchestra, Junior Kawartha Youth Orchestra, Peterborough Children’s Choir, Accademia Musica, and Greg Magwood Martial Arts renting the space;
- Television and movie filming, including Murdoch Mysteries;
- Occasional rentals such as weddings, receptions, meeting and conference space and more.
Planned revenue sources:

- New rental units (38 more planned or currently under construction – B & C-Wing);
- Rentals for weddings, concerts, and other events;
- A catering service based out of the Community Food and Food Business Innovation Centre;
- Creation of a 4,000 square foot Banquet and Conference Centre;
- The Mount occupies 10 acres of prime, city-centre land, each year growing in value.
- The tree canopy on the property may also provide a revenue source, as students from the Forest Management Course at Fleming College and from Trent University are starting to use the site for research.69

Financing Future Development

The existing revenue streams, combined with the building as an asset, have also made The Mount a viable candidate for commercial loans, which it has accessed through the Kawartha Credit Union to finance further renovations.70 As a valuable piece of city-centre land, The Mount is only likely to grow in value.

In an effort to leverage the property as a physical asset, the Mount Community Centre is issuing a pooled mortgage investment in the property. This takes the form of a mortgage backed bond, which provides a 3 per cent return, compounded annually with a five-year term, on a minimum investment of $5,000. The bonds are backed up by The Mount property, which is valued at $5.2 million.71

While financially self-sustaining, The Mount does receive property tax relief based upon the percentage of affordable housing units it has.72
As the first tenants only moved into The Mount in mid-November 2016 and much of the programming has yet to come fully online, the long-term effects of the redevelopment cannot be assessed yet. That said, there are a number of positive developments coming out of the renewed building.

Once the renovations are complete, the city will have 65 more affordable spaces, which makes a direct difference in the lives of those who now live there. These units will also make a significant contribution to the City’s goal of 500 new affordable housing units.73

The Mount will serve as a hub for a variety of positive community activities in Peterborough, helping promote food security and entrepreneurship, providing offices for healthcare and other non-profit organizations, adding new performance space for the arts and local community groups, and creating a venue where community members can come together over a wide range of other issues.

The redevelopment of The Mount has preserved an iconic heritage building with a long legacy of positive work in the community. Where this building had faced decline and the real possibility of ruin, it has now been reinvigorated to once again serve the community. As Sister Joan Driscoll told My Kawartha in an interview shortly after she moved into one of the apartments, “I’ve seen the Mount be ravaged by weather and vandalism. And now it has become the place I remember. It’s a very welcoming place and everything has been done by volunteers. There is a spirit here that is so pronounced and it’s all for the good of others.”74
2.5 Lessons Learned

Interviews with senior staff from The Mount provided insights into some of the challenges they faced in building this hub for community resources and affordable housing. A heritage building like The Mount is iconic and a draw for the community, but it also presents challenges. From these challenges arise recommendations that other community organizations or cities pursuing similar projects should take into account.

- When redeveloping properties expect to come across unforeseen building issues which may affected the cost of the project. It is important to be aware of the potential for these issues: when working with an old building, plan for the unexpected.
- Make sure adequate funding is available to address problems that may arise. It is crucial to ensure that all necessary financing is in place for each phase of the project before you begin it.
- Be ready to have multiple sources of revenue to ensure that the project is financially sustainable. A strong diversified finance model could include a mixture of programming and space rental income.
Our City, Our Spaces

“Our Brantford campus is rooted in the downtown core, offering students a unique campus life experience. The campus is home to over 3,000 students and is one of the fastest-growing university campuses in Ontario.”

-Wilfrid Laurier University, wlu.ca

Image Credit: rosecorp.com
Kitchener’s The Tannery and Communitech: Economic Diversification

“The old tannery is home to Google, Desire2Learn, a growing list of high-tech startups and Communitech, the association representing the region’s technology companies.”

– TheRecord.com
3.1 Overview

In Kitchener, local leaders, from both the public and private sector, have driven a start-up boom in the city. Working with senior levels of government, these leaders have helped foster an exciting and dynamic local technology economy. At the centre of this economic revitalization are the Tannery and the Communitech Hub. These are key tenants in the city’s Innovation District, which is encouraging economic growth and diversification, and revitalizing the downtown. This case study provides insights for other mid-sized cities interested in spurring growth and economic diversification.

> Context

The trajectories of Kitchener and Waterloo, considered the “Twin Cities,” began to diverge sharply in the 1980s. Increasingly, Waterloo was becoming Canada’s high-tech engine, spurred on by the University of Waterloo and major private sector firms like Research In Motion (RIM). At the same time, Kitchener struggled with the manufacturing downturn of the 1980s and 1990s, as it shed thousands of jobs from the closing of companies like Electrohome, Uniroyal, Budd, and B.F. Goodrich.76 As Ken McLaughlin, the region’s leading historian, said: “One of the twins went to university and developed in his teenage years into a leading professional and the other twin went to trade school and chose a trade that once had been respected, but that has gone out of style.”77 By the mid-2000s, it was clear to the City of Kitchener’s leadership that the city needed to diversify away from manufacturing and capture some of the region’s high tech energy for itself.

> Leadership

There are a number of leaders behind the creation of the Communitech Hub in the Tannery. This was not as linear a process as some of the other case studies examined in this report, as Communitech, the Tannery, and the Innovation District are each separate, although closely related, initiatives. Communitech dates back to 1997, when a group of 43 tech entrepreneurs, including RIM’s Jim Balsillie, founded it “to raise the profile of the Waterloo Region tech community.”78 As noted by Avvey Peters, Communitech’s Vice President, Partnerships, and Managing Director of the Canadian Digital Media Network, a key goal of the Communitech digital strategy was to encourage diversification in technology companies calling the Waterloo Region home. At the time, RIM was the main technology company in the region.79 Since 2010, the Hub has been the place for programming and support to help tech start-ups and small enterprises build and grow their companies.
The Tannery is a high-tech office space redeveloped by Cadan Inc., a private real estate development company based out of Toronto. It invested $40 million in the redevelopment of the Tannery building. The City of Kitchener provided leadership through its vision for a high-tech sector in its downtown, which eventually grew into the idea of the Innovation District.

The redevelopment of the Tannery as a centre for economic diversification was the result of leadership from all three of these organizations, the University of Waterloo, and others. As Rod Regier, Executive Director of the City’s economic development team said, the process really took off in 2007 when, “we held a meeting of half-a-dozen tech, university and Communitech leaders, here at City Hall, to ask what was the future? How could we leverage the assets of our creative industries?”

3.2 Reinvigorating Space

Figure 5: Kitchener Innovation District

> Location

The Laurier campus is located in the heart of downtown Brantford, centred at the intersection of Market and Darling Streets. Laurier’s initial campus building, the Carnegie Library, faces on to Victoria Park, which is the centre of the Victoria Park Square Heritage Conservation District.

As of today, Laurier has 21 buildings in the area dedicated to classes, administration, and residences; Nipissing College also has a building located in the downtown.
Why this Space was Chosen

The Tannery was a promising site for a new tech hub in Kitchener. At one time the largest tannery in the British Empire, the Lang Tannery is a 450,000 sq. ft. facility. Its large space, combined with proximity to transit, new university buildings, and other downtown amenities, made it an attractive space for a large office development.

The heritage components of the building are appealing to the types of tech businesses the site hoped to attract, as Kevin Tuer, Vice-President of digital media for Communitech, noted in 2012. “We are not the first to prove it, but there is this affinity for high-tech to align with the old architecture in the older buildings.”

The need for a large space was also indicated by an informal agreement between Cadan and Communitech. Cadan helped Communitech with the proposal for federal funding for its digital strategy, according to Avvey Peters, Communitech’s Vice President, Partnerships, with the understanding that Communitech would locate there if the proposal was successful. While the Tannery was not formally designated to be the home of the 30,000 sq. ft. Communitech Digital Media Convergence Centre (now call the Communitech Hub), Lana Sherman, Managing Director of Cadan Inc. noted at the time of renovation that, “It’s kind of been understood that we have space for them and it’s understood that they will move toward us.”

Funding Model for the Redevelopment

The initial redevelopment of the Tannery included financing from a variety of sources.

- Cadan spent $10 million to purchase the property in 2007 and an additional $30 million to renovate it
- The City of Kitchener and the Region of Waterloo will reimburse Cadan with $891,000 over a 10-year period, starting in 2013, under a brownfields incentive program. The reimbursement pays for itself through

How the Space was Transformed

Following an environmental cleanup, the redevelopment of the Tannery updated the building to the highest standards for technology companies, while maintaining many of the original features. Walls were removed to provide a more open design while the stone and brick features were maintained. Large windows and views on to the landscaped interior courtyards provide lots of natural light. Features for the high-tech tenant include a robust power supply for the computer servers, personal showers, and bike racks.

The renovated building, which is actually a series of buildings stitched together, includes ground floor retail and restaurant space, Class A offices, medical offices, and the Communitech Hub. The original design of the digital media hub included a number of high tech features for digital media companies, such as a virtual reality projection room, a video conferencing room, a state-of-the-art presentation screen, and various other equipment. The Canadian Urban Institute recognized the transformation of the former industrial site in 2011 with the ‘Brownie’ award for best overall brownfield redevelopment.

The physical space of the Tannery has had an essential role in Communitech’s success. According to Avvey Peters, they had no idea just how much demand there would be for this space once it was opened up. Local tech companies and professionals love the clubhouse atmosphere. It has even become a destination for leaders from other cities looking to understand how a tech ecosystem works, with approximately 15,000 people visiting the Tannery each year.
Figure 6: The Tannery Floor Plan

Image Credit: CBRE Limited, Real Estate Brokerage
increased property tax revenues from the new activity on the site. “It’s a good compromise,” the City’s brownfield co-ordinator Terry Boutilier told the Globe and Mail. “The private sector gets help with costs of cleanup, and the public sector gets a cleaned-up property and an increased revenue stream.”

- The provincial government invested $26 million in the Communitech Hub over 5 years.
- The private sector also contributed, with $136.8 million committed by local companies in the form of cash, equipment, and services for the new facilities’ “research and commercialization work” over 5 years.
- Aside from the Tannery itself, the City made significant investments in the district around the building that likely helped create greater demand for office space. For example, the City provided $30 million to encourage the University of Waterloo to locate its new School of Pharmacy on a former industrial site across from the Tannery, and another $6.5 million to bring Wilfrid Laurier’s School of Social Work into the area. Kitchener was able to finance these investments from a pool of $110 million it gained via a special 1.25 percent/year property tax it implemented in 2004 to fund economic development.
3.3 Operations

> Programming

While the Tannery is the venue, Communitech provides the programming to encourage high tech business growth and economic diversification. According to the City of Kitchener, the Communitech Hub is, “the focal point of knowledge creation within this rising sector - serving as a clubhouse of innovation for digital media companies and entrepreneurs, and driving the creation of new companies and jobs locally, across Waterloo Region and throughout Ontario.”

The Communitech Hub has expanded from its initial footprint in the Tannery to now occupy 80,000 sq. ft. in the building, having occupied Google’s former offices in summer 2016.

> Business Model

The Tannery is a for profit building that receives rents from tenants, which have included Communitech, Google, Desire2Learn, retailers, artisans, the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre, and many others. Its largest tenant is Communitech, which currently occupies 80,000 sq. ft. and pays market rent for its space.

Communitech’s revenue in 2016 included approximately $5.5 million from the private sector and $12 million from the public sector. The Digital Media Hub receives funding from all three levels of government and is a partnership between Communitech, Google Canada, the University of Waterloo, the City of Kitchener and the province.

The Communitech Hub includes:

- Space dedicated to enabling hundreds of technology entrepreneurs to incubate ideas in close proximity to tools and services they need to succeed.
- Space allocated to corporate innovation partner labs such as GM, Google, Thomson Reuters, Deloitte, TD Bank, Manulife RED Labs, Canadian Tire, Fairfax, Canon, the Province of Ontario and many more.
- Adjacent space to the University of Waterloo’s Velocity, a leading entrepreneurship program at the University, and at 37,000 square feet and 120 startups, is now the largest free startup incubator in the world.
- A large versatile, immersive community event environment with reconfigurable projection and display systems.
- A suite of expert resources including entrepreneurs in residence, project manager support, marketing and branding expertise.
3.4 Effects in the Community

The effects of the Tannery, Communitech, and the Innovation District as a whole have been significant, both in terms of dollars generated and in terms of a cultural sea change in the city.

The effort to diversify the economy, encourage entrepreneurship, and promote innovation has paid large dividends. “When we got down here [in 2008], there were no start-ups,” Google Inc.’s site director in Kitchener-Waterloo, Steven Woods, told the Globe and Mail in 2015. “There must be 500 start-ups within a couple of kilometres of here now. And at least 100 within two blocks.” In just the past five years, 1,845 new technology start-ups have formed in the area raising at least $650 million in investment. The Communitech 2016 Annual Report estimates a private and public sector client economic impact of $1.7 billion. Communitech estimates that each dollar of public investment has generated $13 in local economic activity.

The local economic impact of the Communitech Hub has significantly outperformed their initial objectives (see Table 1).

The Innovation District has grown rapidly since the Tannery first opened, with large companies and post-secondary institutions moving in or expanding their existing footprints. The University of Waterloo’s School of Pharmacy, Laurier’s School of Social Work, McMaster’s Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, Waterloo Regional Campus, new condos, and many other investments have created dramatic change in the core. As a sign of the on-going momentum, a new “massive” 475,000 sq. ft. innovation complex, called Catalyst 137, is scheduled to open in the District in summer 2017. This redeveloped former factory will provide office spaces for firms focused on hardware design.

Table 1: Communitech Company and Job Creation

<table>
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<th>Metric</th>
<th>2009 Objectives</th>
<th>Total as of Dec. 31, 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Startup Jobs</td>
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<td>4,577</td>
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<tr>
<td>Company Creation</td>
<td>1,300</td>
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<td>New Jobs at Existing Companies</td>
<td>800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Investment Capital</td>
<td>$400 million in equity investments</td>
<td>$1.176 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our City, Our Spaces
3.5 Lessons Learned

Interviews with senior staff from Communitech provided insights into some of the challenges they faced in growing the Hub.\footnote{105} From these challenges arise recommendations that other business groups or cities pursuing similar projects should take into account.

- It is important to build relationships with the community and to help them understand what the redevelopment project is all about. Communitech worked to increase awareness around the activities of the Hub within the broader community through a strong outreach and communications policy, as well as activities like Doors Open. They wanted community members to be involved and consider the Hub part of their community.

- It is essential that a business and market demand exist for what you are trying to build. The various leaders behind the Hub made a point of reaching out to the tech community to find out what they wanted to see in a new facility. This outreach also means flexibility, as the programming has changed over time to reflect the needs of the tenants and community.\footnote{106}

- Build partnerships with multiple stakeholders, especially upper levels of government and the private sector, and be ready for the compromise and horse-trading that comes with them.

- Physical space design is an important consideration. The large physical space and clubhouse factor has been essential to Communitech’s success, creating a strong sense of community and spurring entrepreneurial energy.
“We believe that transformative change can happen when a diversity of residents and stakeholders are engaged around new ideas, in ways that are relevant to them”

– Geoff Cape, CEO, Evergreen
4.1 Overview

In Hamilton, Evergreen, working with various partners, has helped local groups mobilize to improve their communities. Evergreen is dedicated to making cities flourish and its Hamilton initiative does so by building community capacity to actively shape the city’s future. Evergreen Hamilton is the anchor of Evergreen’s Mid-Sized Cities Program, which works to understand and respond to the specific challenges and opportunities facing mid-sized cities in Ontario. The following analysis provides a review of the activities of Evergreen Hamilton, specifically the Community Storefront Hub, and what can be learned from this example for other mid-sized cities working to build community mobilization infrastructure.

> Context

Hamilton is undergoing urban revitalization: new residents and businesses are moving to the downtown; McMaster University is expanding its footprint; large-scale developments are planned in areas including the city’s waterfront; the local economy is growing and diversifying and many heritage buildings are being redeveloped.

While these are positive changes after decades of economic decline, they also present challenges for the people who already call this area home and for the city at large. Gentrification has put financial pressure on many residents. New developments and population growth are changing neighbourhoods.

Evergreen and its partners launched the Evergreen Hamilton project in 2014, “To help accelerate the dynamic urban revitalization and cultural renaissance that is underway” in the city.

Evergreen established its Community Storefront Hub to serve as the centre of this initiative. While the initial focus was primarily on public engagement around the West Harbour revitalization, Evergreen had a broader mission to engage the local community in redefining their neighbourhoods. The goal was to improve communications and coordination among the community, local government, and non-profit groups to address the broader challenges faced by the city.
Leadership

The initial idea for Evergreen Hamilton was proposed by David Young, of Hamilton’s prominent Young family, who had existing ties with the Evergreen Brick Works in Toronto. Evergreen also worked closely with the Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) and with the City of Hamilton to develop the project. Leadership from the HCF President and CEO, and the City’s General Manager of Planning and Economic Development was crucial to getting the project off the ground.

From the beginning, however, this was a project that worked not just to build connections with the community, but also to build community leadership capacity.

When beginning the project, Evergreen staff “conducted a series of meetings with non-profit organizations, community groups, academic institutions, City staff, residents, and the business community” to better understand what the conditions and needs were in Hamilton. The conclusion of this wide-ranging outreach was recognition of an, “overwhelming consensus across the city to focus on tangible actions and specific urban interventions.”

The day to day operation of the Evergreen Community Storefront Hub is led by two paid staff, supported by a larger management team based in Toronto. Working with them are approximately 20 volunteers from the community. The volunteer “storefront animators” take on a leadership role, where they can suggest ideas for use of the space and take a lead on projects or initiatives.
4.2 Reinvigorating Space

> Location

The Evergreen Community Storefront Hub is a leased storefront located at 294 James St. North. Formerly an underused commercial space, it is in central downtown and within walking distance to the West Harbourfront (Figure 7).

> Why this Space was Chosen

As an initial step in the Hamilton project, Evergreen conducted interviews and meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders as part of its Hamilton Engagement Strategy. The number one request by the community was the creation of a physical space that could function as a shared, neutral space for community dialogue with the City.\(^{115}\)

The space at 294 James St. North was chosen for its proximity to the downtown and to the West Harbour.\(^{116}\) In interviews, staff noted several benefits to this location, including easy transit access from anywhere in the city, a nearby bike share station, walk-in traffic from the street, and access from patrons of the monthly Art Crawl.\(^{117}\) Part of

Figure 7: Location of Community Storefront Hub, Hamilton

Source: Google Maps
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Evergreen’s experiment was to reanimate an urban location and make innovative use of a commercial storefront. In addition, the building has a supportive landlord who is philanthropically and community minded.

Organizers liked the location because it could be a neutral space for the community to host events and meetings, or pop in with questions or feedback about neighbourhood issues. While its initial role was to facilitate the City’s engagement with the public over the West Harbour redevelopment, it was important that the venue be seen as separate from official City property. “There’s a lot of concern in the community and a lot of different voices,” Hamilton Project Manager Jay Carter told the Hamilton Spectator in a 2015 interview. “Not everyone is comfortable going to a public meeting ... you need to go where people are, and stop expecting them to just come to you.”

> How the Space was Transformed

The Evergreen Community Storefront Hub did not go through as extensive a redevelopment as the other case studies included in this report. Basic interior improvements included painting and removing existing retail features to open up the space. The storefront is now a flexible, dynamic, and welcoming space for various community activities and events.

At approximately 3,300 square feet, the facility can house approximately 200 people for events, such as the initial West Harbour public meetings. Part of the vision for the space is its flexibility – with an open concept and temporary dividing walls, it can be transformed to fit a variety of purposes.

> Funding Model for the Storefront Space

The Evergreen Storefront Hub was originally financed via foundation and City funds. The Hamilton Community Foundation facilitated funding from the Young Fund, while the City of Hamilton also contributed. The funds were directed to the redesign of the Community Storefront Hub, supporting work related to the West Harbour engagement, as well as to other Evergreen Hamilton programming. Additional program-specific funding has been provided by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario and the City of Hamilton.

> Redevelopment Partners

The redevelopment partners were the City of Hamilton, the Hamilton Community Foundation and Evergreen.
4.3 Operations
> Programming

The initial focus of the Evergreen Storefront Hub was the West Harbour waterfront redevelopment. This is an on-going “multi-year initiative that works with the community in shaping the city’s future, connects plans and policies while also catalyzing on-the-ground results.” Evergreen Hamilton has hosted a number of meetings about the waterfront redevelopment, with some attended by as many as 200 people.

Overtime, the West Harbour has become less of a focus at the space, with the Storefront increasingly providing a venue for other groups and projects. Among these are:

- Next Generation City Builders – Imagine My Sustainable Hamilton (IMSH), which engaged students to reimagine the city
- 100in1Day Hamilton – a citywide festival of citizen engagement
- Training and capacity building workshops
- The events section of the Hamilton Tool Library, including a popcorn machine, tents, snow cone machine, and other events items
- Space is provided during the monthly Art Crawl for artists, individuals and organizations to showcase their work.
- Host to many social, cultural, environmental, and educational groups (see calendar for further details)
- City of Hamilton – public meetings or staff meetings

> Storefront Animators

Evergreen Hamilton is home to approximately 20 storefront animator volunteers, who help with a variety of activities, from planning and executing the communications strategy to providing input on operations and programming. They are often the face of the organization, liaising with community groups and supervising the space.

The animator program serves both to help Evergreen Hamilton operate effectively, but also as a skill building opportunity. Many animators are young people—students and recent graduates seeking opportunities to develop new skills and engage with their community. Increasingly, these individuals are taking on a leadership role as they can suggest uses for the space and lead initiatives.

> Business Model

The Evergreen Community Storefront Hub has limited programming revenue. As a free community space, it occasionally receives donations from those who use it. It has taken a percentage of ticket revenues from private events, but this revenue does not cover operating costs. Evergreen is currently working on developing a financial plan that includes social enterprise revenues to cover some costs associated with site operations. Evergreen does not anticipate the space will ever be fully funded through a social enterprise model and instead foresees a healthy revenue model that includes corporate, foundation and government support alongside social enterprise revenues.

The Community Storefront Hub receives operating support from the Evergreen operating budget, which is funded by a combination of government, foundation, philanthropic and social enterprise revenues. This funding includes salaries for two employees, programming expenses, rent and utilities.
4.4 Effects in the Community

Evergreen’s Community Storefront Hub provides a useful piece of community infrastructure for a city undergoing rapid change. By providing a venue where citizens can meet, discuss, learn, and organize, Evergreen provides an important service to the community.

Evergreen estimates 500–1000 people come through the storefront each month. This represents dozens of organizations and a wide range of issue areas. To date, the Storefront Hub has hosted over 250 events, meetings, workshops, etc., involving more than 200 community groups and organizations.126

A scan of the storefront’s bookings from its launch in August 2015 to July 2017 illustrates an overall increase in bookings for events over time (see Figure 8). In total, there were 286 bookings in year 1 and 349 bookings in year two.

The types of events and bookings hosted at the storefront ranged from 100in1Day Hamilton to a City meeting on the West Harbour to meetings of the Hamilton Neighbourhood Leadership Institute to “Think Tank Tuesdays,” a weekly public gathering of Hamilton artists.127
Most Regular Storefront User Groups:

- Think Tank Tuesday’s with Tracee (Artists network)
- City of Hamilton (Various departments)
- Neighbourhood Leadership Institute
- Hamilton Sustainability Professionals Network
- McMaster University
- Hamilton Tool Library
- Social Planning and Research Council
- Hamilton Community Land Trust
- Rising Star Affordable Housing Co-Op
- Cycle Hamilton
- Bach Elgar Choir
- Hamilton 350
- gritLIT Writers Group
- Hamilton Hive
- Artists and performers

Most Regular Storefront Uses:

- Meetings (public, board, multi-sectoral, etc.)
- Workshops
- Arts and exhibits (short- & long-term)
- Marketplaces
- Staff and volunteer retreats
- Public engagement activities
- Volunteer engagement

Figure 8: Storefront usage over time
4.5 Lessons Learned

Interviews with Evergreen Hamilton staff provided insights into some of the challenges faced in developing and running the Community Storefront Hub. From these challenges arise recommendations that other community organizations or cities pursuing similar projects should take into account.

• Funding can be a significant and on-going challenge, as this type of initiative does not have an established commercial or institutional revenue stream. It is important to try to meet financial sustainability goals while not creating barriers to entry for people to use the space.
• Providing a wide range of programming while meeting codes and standards, e.g. parking, fire code, etc., can be difficult.
• Any attempt at building community infrastructure should begin with an engagement campaign to identify what the specific needs of that community are. This groundwork informs the decision-making process, builds relationships, and lays the foundation for long-term success.
• Engage a broad diversity of stakeholders – residents, institutions, developers, businesses – so that the broader community takes ownership of the project. Find champions in positions of influence who are willing to take risks to provide support for financing and program development.
Comparing Case Studies
The four case studies of adaptive reuse of urban spaces for community benefit selected for this study were chosen because of their diversity. They differ in the challenges each is working to address, in scale, and in size. Despite these differences, there are a number of important points of comparison that assist with guiding other projects in the future. Specifically, five factors provide a basis to illustrate similarities and differences among the models:

**Points of Comparison**

1. Community Context
2. Space
3. Champions
4. Initial Funding
5. Sustainability

**Cross case study references**
Points of Comparison

> Community Context

This factor deals with the context of the development. Does the project respond to a need articulated by the community? Does it help achieve municipal objectives, whether economic, planning, or social policy? In responding directly to a community or municipal need/goal, the project is then immediately relevant, making it easier to build support and bring partners with different interests into the planning and execution of the project.

> Space

This factor deals with the location and nature of the space. Is the space centrally located and accessible by multiple modes of transportation? Does the redevelopment involve a building of architectural or heritage significance? Is the land a brownfield and is the space vacant? These factors can provide reasons for a heightened interest around a particular property.

> Champions

Groups involved in the initiation of the project demonstrate the breadth of interest and support that were needed initially to make the project a reality. Champions are the groups that provided the initial “push” to get the project going, as well as to see it through the inevitable ups and downs of the development process. Groups could be government, not-for-profit, private sector, or community-based.

> Initial Funding

Getting the project off the ground from a financial perspective is always a challenge. Initial funding looks at the parties involved in assembling the required pool of money to make the project a reality. This includes public funding (grants and/or incentives), private and foundations support, and community contributions.

> Sustainability

On-going sustainability is required to ensure the project is able to continue after the initial funding runs out. This factor can involve tools for financial stability like grants and revenue tools as well as phasing the approach to development of a space to keep scale manageable.
Table 2 summarizes how each of the case studies compare based on these factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Brantford</th>
<th>Peterborough</th>
<th>Kitchener</th>
<th>Hamilton</th>
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<td><strong>Community Context</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Responded to Community Need</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aligned with Municipal Policy Priority</td>
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<td><strong>Space</strong></td>
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<td>Central and Accessible Location</td>
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<td>Heritage Building</td>
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Cross Case Study Analysis

> Community Context

Each of the case studies reviewed responded to at least one need articulated by the community. This could have included creating neutral space to host community discussions or the redevelopment/rehabilitation of particular buildings with community significance. In addition, the projects had a variety of policy considerations that made each development particularly relevant from a government perspective. Whether it was a focus on downtown renewal (Brantford), a strategy to expand affordable housing stock (Peterborough), the development of an innovation district (Kitchener) or redevelopment of the West Harbour neighbourhood (Hamilton), each development helped address an established need.

> Space

Most of the case studies exhibited a number of similar attributes when it comes to space. Three of the four were located in central downtown locations and the fourth (Peterborough) was located in walking distance of the core with good accessibility. Three of the four examples involved a historically significant building that was either a designated heritage structure to begin with or designated after renewal. One example (Kitchener) was an underutilized brownfield, and all examples involved either underused or vacant spaces before redevelopment took place.

> Champions

None of these initiatives would have come to fruition without the leadership of engaged individuals. Three of the four examples studied had at least two types of champions and the fourth (Peterborough) was championed by a network of community poverty advocates. These project champions arose from the community and took on the challenge of developing an innovative solution to their local problem.
> Initial Funding

The case studies tended to rely on the public sector for initial funding. All examples involved some sort of direct funding from at least one level of government. Some projects involved municipal incentives such as property tax rebates and development fee waivers. There was also some uniqueness in funding across the case studies. Peterborough used social bonds to help finance development, Kitchener had a private sector developer who owned the Tannery Building and in Hamilton, money from foundations help fund the project.

> Sustainability

Ongoing sustainability is a goal for all the developments studied. To achieve financial sustainability, all the initiatives receive some form of public grants either by the very nature of their structure (e.g. a university or tech incubator), or as part of a limited-term project agreement (Hamilton). In some cases (Kitchener) the entity that received grants was an anchor tenant in the larger development (The Tannery), which helped provide stability to attract other private sector tenants. In addition, three of the four initiatives studied generate revenue from a variety of sources such as space rentals and tuition. The fourth example (Hamilton) has begun to collect revenue in some circumstances and is working on a business plan to help achieve financial sustainability.

Finally, alongside financial sustainability, there is a sustainable approach to development and growth in all cases. Starting small and building is crucial for the long-term viability of all these projects. Either from a single building, in the Brantford example, or from a single purpose, in the Hamilton example, these projects have grown over time. Taking the time to establish an initial, sustainable footprint before pursuing a greater presence appears to be a useful strategy for successful long-term development. From one building initially, to 21 and growing today, Laurier Brantford followed this strategy, while Peterborough’s The Mount leveraged its first phase to help finance future development.
Conclusion

Studying adaptive reuse of urban spaces for community benefit in the context of Brantford, Peterborough, Kitchener, and Hamilton offers different approaches to challenges facing mid-sized cities in Ontario. Each of the initiatives studied here is an investment in a community. Whether they provide affordable housing, spur revitalization, provide support to citizen groups, or drive economic diversification, all exist in close relationship with their local environment. Leaders from the community are essential to their success, whether as the visionaries who started the initiative, or the individuals and groups that made it their own by engaging with it day in, day out.

None of these initiatives were the result of one actor. Multiple partners had to participate, whether directly or indirectly, to create the conditions for successful growth. Upper levels of government contributed money for new infrastructure and facilities. Local government provided incentives, financing, and vision. Building on this support, local civic leaders turned a problem into an opportunity and provided a vision for the transformation.

The location and particular spaces of these initiatives is a defining feature of the projects. Connections to transit systems, housing, and amenities have helped these operations grow and increased their impact. Additionally, reviving heritage buildings has significant benefits. It attracts support from the broader community, brings a new energy to creative enterprises, and helps establish the sense of a destination in the city.

The challenges facing mid-sized cities are complex, but there are common factors across communities. For example, the issues discussed in the report are not unique to one city. Many mid-sized cities are dealing with downtown renewal, the need for economic diversification, a lack of affordable housing, and the need for community-strengthening infrastructure. However, while the issues might be similar, the process of implementation is not one-size fits all and needs to meet the strengths and circumstances of each particular community.

These four studies provide inspiration for other mid-sized cities and their communities on how to address community challenges through transforming space. They are offered with the hope that other communities in Ontario and beyond will see themselves reflected in the opportunities for change. Moving forward, this report provides a stepping stone for other communities to begin a dialogue about what spaces can be transformed in their communities to meet their local challenges.
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