Conditions worsened in the community throughout the first half of the 1900s, eventually resulting in Toronto city council establishing a commission to examine what were then being referred to as “slums”. The Bruce Report, published in 1934, proclaimed the district northwest of Queen and River Streets “unsuitable as a residential district” and advocated for planned decentralization and slum clearance as a solution. Although the report rallied significant support at the outset, priorities shifted in the years leading up the Second World War, and ultimately no action was taken until the late 1940s.

In 1947, the issue of whether to clear the southern part of Cabbagetown to make way for a new affordable housing development was put to the voters, and ultimately approved. The 69 acre plan for what was to be called Regent Park was intended to replicate Garden City planning principles pioneered in the UK, advocating a largely self-contained community with housing turned away from the city, and connected by paths and green space instead of streets. The design for the new Regent Park community was based primarily on residential uses, with relatively few plans for retail, institutional, or employment space.

In 1948, the Housing Authority of Toronto bulldozed Cabbagetown south and began construction on what would become Regent Park North (bounded by Dundas, Gerrard, River and Parliament), building a total of 1289 units of affordable housing primarily in low rise, three to six storey walk up apartments and townhouses. Construction continued through 1957, and was primarily funded by City tax revenue and debenture funding, with minimum support from the federal or provincial governments.

Regent Park South (bounded by Shuter, Dundas, Regent and River) was built between 1957 and 1959 as part of a federal, provincial, and municipal housing agreement, funded primarily through the federal government under the National Housing Act. It included two-story townhouses built around five high-rise towers designed by Peter Dickenson of Page and Steele architects, adding another 253 row housing units and an additional 479 high rise units. Regent Park south was awarded the Massey Medal for Architecture and was cited for its innovation.
In 1995, a group of residents organized a meeting bringing together Regent Park residents, Metro Toronto Housing Authority, and the provincial Ministry of Housing. This meeting was the beginning of a long process of engagement and activism that would eventually lead to one of the largest urban revitalization plans in Canada.

In 2004, council endorsed a revitalization plan that called for mixed-income development, including a mix of townhomes, mid and high-rise apartment buildings, and was to also include private housing to be sold at market rates. According to the Regent Park Revitalization Study (2002), the desire was to reintegrate the neighbourhood with the rest of Toronto by re-introducing streets and creating new spaces for recreational, cultural, educational, retail, and employment uses.

The mix of private ownership and affordable rental would allow Toronto Community Housing (TCH) to offset the cost of replacing rental units with a share of the profits from market unit sales. Through a Request for Qualifications and then a Request for Proposals, TCH sought a developer to form a public private partnership and take the development forward.

In 1960, Regent Park was home to approximately 10,000 people. It did not take long for the community’s infrastructure to fall into disrepair. Announced as a success on the eve of the 1960s and attributed to successful public action, Regent Park was declared a “failure” by the Toronto Star in 1968. In 1969, a federal task force on housing and urban development published a report decrying the state of public housing in Canada.

Initial reports indicated that the health and morale of the neighbourhood were better, but by the late 1960s, Toronto’s first big experiment in public housing started to show signs of stress...The entire area became a place where many passed by but few ventured through. It became apparent that a community of all low-income tenants encouraged economic marginalization.”

–REGENT PARK: A STORY OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT, P.8

Contributing to the challenges faced by Regent Park residents, the responsibility for social housing was passed completely from federal to provincial governments in the early 1990s. In 1998, Ontario further downloaded social housing administration to local municipalities.

Despite its challenges, Regent Park has always enjoyed a strong sense of community, and by the mid-1970s residents were exploring ways to improve conditions. Shortly after the federal report was published, residents formed the Regent Park Community Improvement Association, which spearheaded advocacy in the neighbourhood and was ultimately successful in achieving new landscaping, ice rinks and the Jody Phillips Pool.


Daniels Corporation based their submission on an unconventional public private partnership model; one where partners would work shoulder-to-shoulder to share the risk and build value together over the long term. The proposal included “the opportunity to build capacity in the community by creating jobs and career opportunities for residents” (Mitch Cohen, Regent Park: a story of collective impact). Daniels was awarded a contract for phase 1, with a right of first opportunity for Phase 2.

The zoning by-law governing redevelopment of the site was approved by council in early 2005. Demolition began in February of 2006, and construction on phase 1 began later that year. The first families that returned to the new Regent Park moved into 246 Sackville Street in May of 2010. When construction of all 5 phases is complete, the previous 2,083 rent-geared to income (RGI) units will have increased to 2,083 RGI units, more than 3,000 market condominiums, and 700 new affordable rental units.

The cornerstone of the revitalization plan was the Regent Park Social Development Plan, which was the first neighbourhood-based plan of its kind in the City of Toronto and involved extensive community consultation.

Released by Toronto Community Housing in 2007, this document established the principles and strategies for transition and community building in the new Regent Park. The document put “planning for people” at the heart of the process of redevelopment and revitalization and named achieving social inclusion as a critical priority.

The revitalization was designed to facilitate the densification of the neighborhood and its reintegration with the east downtown and city as a whole. When the revitalization process is complete, Regent Park will have grown from approximately 7,500 residents to more than 12,500, a 40% increase.

An overview of the Regent Park Revitalization:
- Regent Park Revitalization will be done in five phases over 12 years with an expected investment of about $1 billion.
- More than 2,000 residents and community stakeholders have been consulted in revitalization planning.
- The revitalization will replace all existing 2083 units of social housing and will contribute at least 700 additional affordable housing units, some of which will be off-site in the surrounding community.
- Toronto Community Housing has targeted building 300 affordable ownership homes over the five phases, of which up to 150 of those homes could be available to Regent Park residents.
THE SPACE

While the Regent Park community had identified the aspiration and the need for a dedicated cultural space in the revitalization plans, there was no clear idea where this project might be located within the new Regent Park. The development of Daniels Spectrum was a classic example of a project in search of a space.

Toronto Community Housing and The Daniels Corporation recognized the significant contribution an arts and cultural centre could make to developing a socially inclusive, open and culturally rich neighbourhood. As a result, both organizations took the bold step of identifying a prime potential site within Phase II of the revitalization as the preferred location for a new arts and cultural centre.

Located on Dundas Street East between Sumach Street and Sackville Street, the 30,000 square foot site was owned by Toronto Community Housing. While previously home to two-story townhouses, it was earmarked for a condominium developed within Phase II of the revitalization. With Phase II already well underway, there was a short window of opportunity for the preferred site to be held for development as an arts and cultural centre.

The site was ideal for the development of a community asset, with direct public transit access via the Dundas Street streetcar and a location opposite both a major new city park and the new Regent Park Aquatic Centre at the corner of Dundas and Sumach streets. The co-location of these three world-class facilities has created critical mass and a new focus for arts and culture, leisure, recreation and sport at the heart of the new Regent Park. In addition, they are also accessible to the wider east downtown, including the emerging residential districts in the East Donlands and the East Bayfront. This has reconnected Regent Park with the rest of the city, breaking down historical barriers that have separated this neighbourhood for generations.

Regent Park Revitalization: Map of Social Infrastructure.
The site is also close to some of the city’s most important cultural, community and entertainment assets. Daniels Spectrum is situated in close proximity to established areas such as Cabbagetown, Riverdale, Corktown, and the Distillery District, as well as the west Donlands development, scheduled to be completed for the Pan Am Games in 2014.

THE SITUATION
The revitalization of Regent Park had its beginnings in 2002, when the Regent Park Community and Toronto Community Housing began to shape a vision of opportunity and inclusion for the residents of Regent Park. The process of planning the new community took a great deal of time, effort and resources. It is regarded as having been successful to date because of a key guiding principle: community participation in all aspects of planning and implementation.

During the planning stages of the revitalization, locally-based arts and community cultural organizations within Regent Park pointed to high levels of demand, particularly for participatory arts activities, education and training for children and young people. This was set out in detail in Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI)’s report Embracing a Changing Landscape, based on extensive community consultation, which identified the need for a dedicated facility that could address multiple space requirements through mixed use and purpose built space.

In 2007, RPNI received funding from Heritage Canada to commission a feasibility study for an arts and cultural centre for Regent Park. A steering committee comprising the Executive Director, RPNI, the City of Toronto’s Senior
While considerable community engagement, needs analysis, case study research and impact assessment had been completed, the feasibility process did not identify a clear, sustainable model for a cultural centre in Regent Park, nor did it reveal clear leadership in the community with the capacity to take forward a project of this scale.

With the narrow window of opportunity closing to determine the viability of an arts and cultural centre in Phase II of the redevelopment, Toronto Community Housing and Daniels commissioned Artscape in June 2008 to undertake ‘Phase II – Implementation Strategy’ of the feasibility study.

Artscape’s mandate was to:
- Develop a compelling vision for the project
- Construct a business and governance model for the project
- Manage process to elicit expressions of interest from prospective tenants and users of the facility
- Prepare a building program that identified the size and usage of space
- Articulate a case for support suitable for attracting public and private donors
- Provide third party analysis of the viability of the project
- Draft a report that encompassed all of the above

Artscape worked with a Steering Group comprising a number of stakeholders from the City of Toronto, The Daniels Corporation, Toronto Community Housing, and the Regent Park community, including: Liz Root, Project Director Regent Park Revitalization, Toronto Community Housing; Mitchell Cohen, President, The Daniels Corporation; Catherine Goulet, Executive Director, Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative; Lori Martin, City of Toronto, Cultural Services; and Kate Stark, Executive Director, Dixon Hall.

Artscape engaged organizations within the Regent Park community to ensure their continued input and engagement with the project, including ArtHeart Community Arts Centre, Cabbagetown Regent Park Museum, Coleman Lemieux & Compagnie, Regent Park...
CASE STUDY: DANIELS SPECTRUM

Building on the detailed needs assessment and early stage vision conceptualization undertaken by Lord Cultural Resources and the RPNI’s Community Plan, a Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI) was released in October 2008.

The objective of the REOI was to stimulate and assess interest in the new arts and cultural centre’s potential development and programming from a broad range of Toronto’s arts and cultural community. The document set out the different types of opportunities available and respondents were asked to consider how they might fulfill various roles within the project.

An expert advisory committee was recruited to assess responses to the REOI. Members were recruited to include representatives from the local Regent Park arts community; the broader Toronto cultural community; representatives from the Regent Park community as a whole and arts facilities technical advisors.

Based on a review of the submissions, the Advisory Committee drafted a set of parameters for the vision, building program and business model development for the new arts and cultural centre. For more information on the feasibility study or the REOI, please see the Case for Support.

THE VISION

Regent Park has always had a vibrant and diverse cultural community – a “soft infrastructure” of significant size and scope. As an ethnically diverse neighbourhood, this has been expressed by different communities’ desire to celebrate and sustain their cultural traditions both for each other and the larger community.

Many important not-for profit arts and cultural organizations are rooted within or adjacent to Regent Park, and a number have been active for many years in developing and providing arts and cultural programs which explicitly serve – and reflect – the local community. At the time of the revitalization’s planning, however, there was no “hard infrastructure” within which to focus this large body of work and to create the milieu within which collaboration and cross-pollination naturally happen.

From the outset, key studies, strategic plans and extensive community engagement processes undertaken by Toronto Community Housing, the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI) and others identified significant community desire to see the arts and culture play a central role in the new Regent Park and a lack of secure, stable and affordable facilities for arts and cultural organizations and activities.

The vision for the Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre evolved over a period of years from the identification of community aspiration to becoming a key component of the revitalization.

The Case for Support set out the mission, vision and mandate for the project, and today, Daniels Spectrum’s vision has not strayed far from that initial statement. It is:

WHAT IS DANIELS SPECTRUM?

Daniels Spectrum (formerly Regent Park Arts & Cultural Centre) is a platform for cultural exchange and collaboration, with programming rooted in Regent Park. It is a place where people come to be inspired, to learn, to share, to create. It showcases artistic talent, acts as an incubator for creativity and a workshop for social and cultural innovation.

WHAT HAPPENS AT DANIELS SPECTRUM?

The centre fosters performances, celebrations, public and community events. It supports the creation and production of a wide range of artistic endeavours, with a focus on visual and performing arts. Youth will find a place where they can learn and develop skills. Community groups and organizations will find a place for collaboration, exchange and dialogue.

A COMMITMENT TO SHARED VALUES

We are guided by a set of shared values that inform our
our model to mixed income communities. The fact that it was Artscape inviting us to partner made the opportunity all the more enticing. Once we spent a little bit of time in Regent Park, we were inspired and engaged by the vibrancy of the local community and it became incredibly clear that this was a deeply exciting opportunity that we wanted to be a part of. We are already learning so much through our Regent Park location, which has benefited our operations as a whole.”

–TONYA SURMAN, TITLE

The project had a pressing timetable. Artscape was seeking funding from all three tiers of government as well as significant philanthropic support to complete the $38M project. Prompted by the global recession, a $4B Infrastructure Stimulus Fund was announcement by the federal government in July of 2009. The program stipulated that federal and provincial governments would match municipal contributions towards infrastructure projects on an equal basis. There was a limited window to access the fund, which was allocated for “shovel ready” projects across Ontario; in order to be eligible; projects had to be completed by March of 2011.

Artscape worked closely with the City of Toronto and the wider cultural community to lobby for Cultural Sector infrastructure priorities. The City of Toronto, supported by Toronto Community Housing and the Daniels Corporation, applied for the stimulus fund using the Case for Support developed by Artscape as the basis of their application. The project was awarded a total of $24M; $12M each from both the federal and provincial governments. In addition, the Artscape Foundation embarked on a major capital campaign, setting a goal of $10M to raise the rest of the required capital investment for the project. This goal was met in the fall of 2012.

The governance model for the Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre was designed to balance public interest, community engagement, risk and responsibility. Placing trust in the hands of an independent Facility Operator helped ensure that the facility would be managed professionally without being overly institutional or bureaucratic.

Daniels Spectrum is owned by the Regent Park Arts Non-Profit Development Corporation (RPAD). RPAD is a joint venture between subsidiary corporations of Toronto Community Housing, The Daniels Corporation, and

programming and underpin the way we work together and with the community. We are committed to excellence in artistic creation, inclusivity and participation, celebrating our diverse community, collaboration and social engagement, and a healthy and sustainable sense of community.

A QUADRUPLE BOTTOM LINE
Working with our partners and tenants, we are committed to creating a diverse and dynamic cultural sphere, a richer and more inclusive social fabric, a stronger local economy and a cleaner and greener environment.

THE PLAN
Based on the outcomes of the REOI, Artscape developed a Case for Support which set out the vision, mission and mandate of the proposed Arts and Cultural Centre, as well as a building program and a range of possible tenants and uses. The Case for Support proposed that an RFP be issued for a facility operator to manage the project.

In June of 2009, Toronto Community Housing and the Daniels Corporation issued a Request for Proposals for Facility Operator at the Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre. Artscape responded to the RFP, supported by partnerships with the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) and Creative Trust. Artscape was selected as the preferred proponent in the summer of 2009.

With CSI’s interest grounded in catalyzing social innovation, when we began to explore the possibility of expanding to Regent Park, it was clear that there was an incredible opportunity to explore the adaptability of

Woman cooking at Blockorama.
and Artscape. RPAD is governed by a Board of Directors that includes representation from Artscape, The Daniels Corporation, Toronto Community Housing, the Daniels Spectrum tenants and the Regent Park community at large. RPAD developed and owns Daniels Spectrum, and has leased the cultural hub to Artscape, as Facilities Operator, for a 50 year period.

In 2010, Artscape issued a Call for Proposals for tenants. In their response, potential tenants were asked to talk about how their organization’s work fit with the vision of the new centre. Many of the organizations that responded to the Call for Proposals were those that had been identified through the REOI process, and were longstanding members of the Regent Park community.

DESIGN/BUILD

The inspiration for the design of this building really began in the community. We were really looking for that community and trying to design a building that was welcoming, that was accessible, that wasn’t intimidating.”

–DON SCHMITT, DIAMOND SCHMITT ARCHITECTS

Daniels Spectrum was Artscape’s first new build. Because the timeline was short, the Daniels Corporation engaged an architectural firm to commence initial design studies before the RFP for Facility Operator was completed. The timeline was aggressive to meet the original completion date of March 2011 set by the federal government. This date was later revised to fall 2012.

In April of 2010, Artscape hired a Project Manager to liaise with the Daniel’s team and to manage all components of the design/build. The Community Steering Committee guided and advised the partnership throughout the process.

“We had an extremely fast construction schedule so we were designing as we were constructing. There were a lot of parties and a lot of people that pulled together to make this happen.”

–JUDY JOSEFOWICZ, PROJECT MANAGER FOR DANIELS SPECTRUM, ARTSCAPE

The ambitious vision for Daniels Spectrum was to be delivered within an iconic three story 60,000 square foot purpose built arts and cultural centre, to be integrated with the adjoining Paintbox condominium tower on Dundas Street West.

In total, Daniels Spectrum is home to seven organizational tenants. The building was designed so that each of the three floors represents a theme: Experience, Learning, and Innovation.

FIRST FLOOR: EXPERIENCE

The first floor represents experience, and is home to a public café and lounge as well as several event and performance spaces. Two studio operators have space on the ground floor: COBA and Native Earth Performing Arts (NEPA).

SECOND FLOOR: LEARNING

The second floor is dedicated to learning, and is home to Artscape’s offices as well as 5 organizational tenants focused on learning and educational programming:

- Regent Park School of Music
- ArtHeart
- Regent Park Film Festival
- Pathways to Education
- In addition to the Aki Studio theatre, NEPA’s administrative offices are also located on the second floor

THIRD FLOOR: COLLABORATION

The third floor is dedicated to collaboration, and is home to Artscape’s offices as well as 5 organizational tenants focused on learning and educational programming:

- The Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) Regent Park

For more information on Daniels Spectrum tenants or event spaces, please visit www.danielsspectrum.ca

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The building was designed to target Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification. Environmental and energy-efficient features include:

- Green roof with native plant species
- Bicycle parking and showers for staff who cycle to work
- Car-share vehicle available in the commercial parking lot
- Fuel-efficient hybrid car-share vehicle
- Storm water treatment system to reduce pollutants
- Low-maintenance landscape and low-flow fixtures to reduce water use
- High-efficiency HVAC system that contains no hydrofluorocarbons
- Recycled construction materials, including reclaimed wood from Regent Park
- Low-VOC paint, carpeting and cabinetry used
CASE STUDY: DANIELS SPECTRUM

A healthy, sustainable community

A tenant transition fund, made possible through a gift from the Daniels Corporation, was created to reduce rental costs for tenants for the first five years of occupancy to enable them to grow organizationally and be sustainable in the long term. In addition, Artscape is committed to ensuring affordable access to the performance/events space and outdoor performance court for local arts and community organizations. This affordable access is achieved through donations raised to offset operating expenses and/or cross-subsidies from other rentals.

COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

It’s the first time that I’ve seen a building in this city that’s housed this diversity of artists, art forms, and has a link to the community in the way that it does.”

–RAVI JAIN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, WHY NOT THEATRE, MEMBER OF PROGRAMMING ADVISORY COMMITTEE, PROGRAMMING PARTNER

The tenants and users of Daniels Spectrum played an important role in its design, operations, and the policies that govern it. The mechanisms to ensure community engagement and stewardship evolved as the project progressed from design and construction to operations.

In order to ensure the Regent Park community retained a voice in policies and management practices for the centre, a community stewardship plan was developed jointly by the project partners. The community stewardship plan focuses on two main strategies for retaining community ownership over the operations of Daniels Spectrum: engaging community stakeholders in Artscape, and the oversight role of RPAD.

Strategies to engage Regent Park community stakeholders include:

- Electing and maintaining two members of Artscape’s board that are drawn from the Regent Park community
- Engaging sub-tenants of Daniels Spectrum in a Tenant Liaison Committee
- Engaging at least three members of the Regent Park Community on Daniels Spectrum’s Program Advisory Committee. This committee is charged with recommending programming policy to Artscape and assisting Artscape staff with the solicitation, review and selection of programming for the performance/event space and outdoor...

OPERATE

TRANSFER TO OPERATIONS

Daniels Spectrum officially opened its doors to the public with a ribbon-cutting, naming announcement and opening night celebration on Thursday September 20th, 2012. Project partners, community members, funders, staff, and tenants gathered in the newly named Ada Slaight hall to celebrate. In the months following its opening, people from across Toronto visited the building for art exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, dance and poetry festivals, fundraisers, meetings, speaker series, conferences, and private events.

ARTSCAPE AS PROGRAMMER

As Artscape’s mandate has shifted from a traditional artist studio space provider to one of city builder, Artscape’s newer generation of projects look quite different from those developed in the eighties and nineties. Daniels Spectrum is a newer project of the community cultural hub model, designed to be a gathering place for artists, community, and others. As our project model has evolved, Artscape has become more actively involved in programming our spaces.

Daniel Spectrum has an on-site staff of roughly 30-35 dedicated to bringing the event spaces within and outside the building to life. Programming at Daniels Spectrum is guided by the following values:

- Excellence in artistic creation
- Inclusivity, participation and learning
- Celebrating and serving our diverse community
- Collaboration, dialogue and social engagement

Throughout the building
- Controllable lights and thermostats

We wanted to bring some of these rich colours onto the building so immediately it expresses that there is something going on that is different than a normal office building.”

–UDO SHLIE Hamm, PRINCIPAL CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ENTRO G+A SIGNAGE, WAYFINDING AND DONOR RECOGNITION CONSULTANT

A community outreach position was created by Artscape to support the project manager and engage the Regent Park community in the development process for the project. A full year before opening, the inaugural Managing Director for the project was brought on board to build programming, engage local residents and particularly youth in the life of the building.
performance court

- Engaging members of the Regent Park Community on ad hoc committees established to assist with the management and operation of Daniels Spectrum
- Establishing a Youth Arts Subcommittee

Policies to ensure Daniels Spectrum is governed responsibly include, among other things, the monitoring of Artscape’s performance of Artscape as building operator under the terms of its lease. This review, completed by RPAD, will occur quarterly during the first full year of operations, semi-annually in years two and three and annually thereafter.

The review will determine a) the level of effectiveness of Artscape’s management of Daniels Spectrum in accordance with the operating covenants listed below and b) what measures are recommended by RPAD to improve Artscape’s performance.

LESSONS
COPY TO COME?

AWARDS
Winner: Best New Venue in Canada, BizBash

OTHER RESOURCES


