COMPARING THE POTENTIAL FOR CREATIVE CLUSTERS FOR URBAN REGENERATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The transition from industrial to post-industrial economies has left many cities' port and industrial areas, like the Port Lands, derelict and underutilized. This research investigates how creative clusters can be used as a strategy for regenerating these urban areas. It investigates and evaluates how elements of built environments, creative activities, and plans can help foster the conditions to develop and sustain creative clusters. Toronto's Port Lands potential for a creative cluster was compared to King-Spadina and the Distillery District. The research question asked is: **What changes can be made to the Toronto Port Lands to support a creative cluster?**

Guided by this question, this research used an evaluative criteria framework of necessary conditions and success factors to assess the three aforementioned case studies. The criteria and sub-criteria were primarily drawn from John Montgomery (2003; 2004) and supplemented by Bahar Durmaz (2015) and Matthew Wansborough and Andrea Mageean (2000). The evaluative criteria were used to assess the respective areas' built environments (see Table Exec-1), plans (see Table Exec-2), and creative activities (see Table Exec-3) to provide a better understanding of the characteristics that exist and those that may need improvement.

The methods that were used to conduct the qualitative case study research were built environment analysis, document review analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Methods for evaluating the built environment were adapted from Ewing and Clemente's (2013), *Scoring Sheet Measuring Urban Design Qualities* since it related to relevant criteria that contribute to making a "good" creative cluster. The same criteria were then modified to assess how effectively the plans encourage these qualities. Montgomery's (2004), *Cultural Quarters as*

Table Exec-1: Built Environment Evaluation Criteria Matrix

Criteria	Sub-criteria		Measurement	Rank
BUILT FORM AND URBAN DESIGN	*Diversity*	Mixture of uses	Mix of compatible uses and activities stimulate one another.	
		Mixture of buildings	Types; ages; sizes; and conditions.	
	Adaptability	Presence of old warehouses and light industrial buildings	Are former/current warehouses and light industrial buildings being reused?	
	Street Life	Transparency	Are streets edges where private and public realms meet well-defined? Are storefronts transparent?	
		Active edges	Is there a fine horizontal grain of narrow commercial units at ground level? Is there activity in front of storefronts?	
	Human Scale	Height	Provide an average estimate of building height. Assess building details, orientation of buildings, and depth of setback on tall buildings.	
		Visual interest	Pieces of street furniture and other street items, such as small planters, pavement texture, street trees, presence of parked cars.	
MEANING	*Public and semi-public spaces*		Are there spaces for public events and gatherings? Identify accessible courtyards, plazas, parks, and gardens Are there semi public spaces (public squares, street vendors, shop frontages, patios)?	
	Heritage preservation		Is architectural heritage preserved?	
	Buildings with identifiers (signs)		Assess quality of commercial signage.	
	Presence of outdoor dining		Are there venues which provide outdoor dining space?	
	Distinct sense of place		Do physical elements such as buildings, banners and public art reference local traditions/history and a create distinctive sense of place?	
	Building form and composition		Do new developments respond to existing patterns of development and building forms in terms of architectural style and detailing, massing, setbacks, arterials, colour palettes and textures?	

| | Comfort and impression | Does the space make a good first impression? Is it aesthetically pleasing? Does it appear as if the area is well maintained (is the litter in the public areas; are buildings in good condition; does the built forms use high quality materials)? Are there places to sit in public? | |

Table Exec-2: Plan Evaluation Criteria Matrix.

Criteria	Sub-criteria		Measurement	Rank
CLEAR PLAN	*Clear physical plan*		Structure: Assess clear organization/layout.	
			Style: How is it written?	
			Content: What is written and how well is it written?	
	Plan follows design guidelines		Design guidelines are indicated in the plan.	
BUILT FORM AND URBAN DESIGN	*Diversity*	Mixture of uses	Assess range of permitted land uses .	
		Mixture of buildings	Assess range of permitted building uses (i.e. residential/commercial/institutional mix).	
	Adaptability	Adaptive reuse	Assess policy relating to the restoration and or adaptive reuse of old or heritage buildings (warehouses and light industrial buildings).	
	Street Life	Transparency	Assess policy on streets edges. Evaluate policies that guide areas where private and public realms meet.	
		Active edges	Assess policy related to activity at street level. Does policy encourage ground level uses?	
	Human Scale	Height and scale	Assess policies regarding building height and scale.	
		Visual interest	Assess street furniture, lighting, signage, street trees and open space requirements.	
MEANING	*Public and semi-public spaces*		Assess policy quality on the accessible courtyards, plazas, parks, and gardens.	
	Heritage preservation		Assess policy on heritage preservation.	
	Buildings with identifiers (signs)		Assess policy on commercial signage.	
	Presence of outdoor dining		Assess policy that encourages the use of outdoor space for outdoor dining.	

	Distinct sense of place	Assess policy quality on physical elements such as buildings, banners, and public art. Does it promote local traditions and create distinctive sense of place?	
	Building form and composition	Does policy encourage new buildings to respond to existing pattern of development and building form (setbacks, massing, colour palettes and textures, architectural style and detailing).	

Table   Exec-3: Creative Activity Evaluation Criteria Matrix.

	Criteria	**Measurement**	**Rank**
CREATIVE ACTIVITY	*Venues, festivals and events*	What kind of cultural venues exist in the area? What kind of festivals and events take place?	
	Workspaces	Are there workspaces for artists and low-cost cultural producers available? Are there managed workspaces for office and studio users? Is there a focus on small-firm economic development in the creative sectors?	
	Day and evening uses	Is there a daytime and evening economy (such as: cafe culture, pubs, clubs, etc)?	
	Creative production and consumption businesses?	Identify creative production businesses (making objects, goods, products, and providing services) and creative consumption businesses (people going to shows, visiting venues and galleries).	
	Arts development	Are there any identifiable arts development initiatives? Identify any arts and media businesses, organizations, and vocational training and education facilities.	
	Art in the environment	Is there public art on display? Are there art exhibitions or performances in public space?	

Mechanisms for Urban Regeneration Part 2 was used as a guide for collecting information on creative activities and assessing their quality.

The Distillery District's and King-Spadina's built environments, plans, and creative activities do a very good job of displaying the majority of conditions that lead to developing and sustaining a creative cluster. Both case studies' diverse, pedestrian friendly and distinct built environments offered a variety of opportunities for creative production and consumption. They did an excellent job of preserving and adaptively reusing the heritage industrial buildings to house a range of retail and service businesses, creative workspaces, galleries, and entertainment venues. The *King-Parliament Secondary Plan*, which puts forward policy that guides the planning and development of the Distillery District, was evaluated as the best plan. It did an exemplary job of providing built form, design guidelines, and creative activity related policies that closely aligned with the criteria of "good" creative clusters.

In comparison to the Distillery District and King-Spadina, this research showed that the Port Lands demonstrated few of the necessary conditions and success factors of a "good" creative cluster. The Port Lands built environment was void of many of the characteristic criteria. The *Central Waterfront Secondary Plan* also shared of many of the same deficiencies. In terms of creative activity, although the case study contained several major firms in the film sector, it lacked smaller firms and actors that provided opportunities to produce and consume creative goods and services. The Port Lands was observed to lack creative workspaces, galleries, arts development initiatives and organizations.

This report concludes by putting forward three recommendations to guide current and future planning and development initiatives that may make the Port Lands more supportive of a creative cluster. The following is a summary of the recommendations that were ascertained by site visits, existing literature, and interviews with informants.

Recommendation #1: Promote a high quality built environment that is diverse, to human scale and designed to support vibrant street life.

Future planning and development in the Port Lands should adopt policies that support a diverse built form that contains a mix of land uses, building types, and unit sizes so that businesses can evolve as the surrounding neighbourhood transforms. It is also important to have a diverse mix of ground level uses that not only stimulate one another but also animate the public realm at all hours of the day. The *Central Waterfront Secondary Plan* should be modified to include a series of general built form policies, similar to the *King-Parliament Secondary Plan* and *King-Spadina Secondary Plan* that outline the built form's relationship with the public realm.

Recommendation #2: Adapt former industrial buildings for creative purposes with the intention of attracting a greater diversity of creative production and consumption businesses, arts development agencies and organizations.

Use Section 37 obligations of the Municipal Planning Act to secure below market workspaces in exchange for height/density bonuses. This may encourage arts development organizations, similar to Artscape, to adapt industrial and warehouse buildings to provide affordable work and retail spaces for the creative sector.

Recommendation #3: It is important that plans and policies support creating visually distinct areas by identifying, preserving, and building on existing qualities that make an area unique.

Local planners, designers, historians, architects, sociologists, and demographers to create a

customized and site specific guideline similar to the Distillery District's *Landscape History, Inventory and Guidelines* of the *Heritage Masterplan.* This document should help articulate the cultural landscape characteristics that contribute to Port Land's special atmosphere. It should also provide urban design guidelines to help maintain, integrate, and enhance old and new elements into the future development plan.