

Creative Construct: Building for Culture and Creativity

Note-taking guide for session rapporteurs

METADATA

Session title: The Creative Convergence Project

Presenter: Geoff Cape (Evergreen Canada, Toronto), Ross Wallace (MaRS Discovery District, Toronto), Tim Jones (Artspace, Toronto)

Day: Wed. April 30

Time: 10:30 AM

NOTES

1. Short overview/summary of presentation

- Imagine a Toronto: Strategies for a Creative City (2006) – report adopted by mayor David Miller (who has indicated a mandate for increased creative vitality)
- Toronto's Cultural Renaissance – framed around major cultural projects – the Revitalization of the ROM, the Canadian Opera House, the Redesign of the AGO, the construction of the OCAD 'stilt building', Evergreen's remaking of Brickworks, Festival Centre (TIFF), etc.
- Cultural tiers (expressive value): 1) Core Arts (i.e. visual artists), 2) Cultural Industries (i.e. Film distributor), 3) Creative Services (i.e. ad agencies), 4) the rest of the economy
- The Cultural Convergence Project used these tiers for creating surveys of Toronto's cultural demographics – found that Toronto is comprised of cultural districts ('Habitats' for creativity)
- Creative production ecology (what do artists need to thrive?): space and place (mixed living/working spaces), networks and sense of community, entrepreneurial support, artists are drawn to neighbourhoods with distinctive/authentic features

MaRS (Medical and Related Sciences)

- MaRS is a vertical science park and incubator located in downtown Toronto (in the heart of the Discovery District, built from the old General Hospital – innovative architectural negotiation with heritage space)
- attracts over \$1 billion a year in research spending - MaRS connects researchers, investors, and entrepreneurs working to create a new generation of global companies – create an 'ecosystem' of ideas
- extends out from its Toronto location to encompass companies, universities and hospitals across Ontario
- genesis came from the private sector – concerned that Canada was losing ground, a group of 12 business leaders - led by Dr. John Evans and working with academic and government partners - founded MaRS in 2000
- prime pieces of land purchased in downtown Toronto – early and ongoing support from all levels of government - \$18 million was raised from 14 individual investors and corporate enterprises
- home to over 65 organizations: leading researchers, technology transfer groups, SMEs, multinationals, service providers, venture capitalists
- need business, science, and capital to converge at all times – Convergence Project is attempting to create partnerships with institutions like OCAD, MaRS, Evergreen, TIFF

Evergreen

- "Urban sprawl is a disaster" – static monocultures of public space
- Evergreen attempts to soften these urban spaces by bringing nature, colour, and drama into cities
- Evergreen Brick Works – a centre of experiencing the relationship between nature, culture, and community – the original Brickworks was a massive industrial centre that 'built Toronto, quite literally'
- the project will maintain the vast majority of the original industrial buildings
- "New ideas must use old buildings" – Jane Jacobs
- critical relationship between nature and urban ecology (i.e. indoor skating rinks, gardens, children's play-spaces, etc)
- Created a charter for their tenants that lay out environmental conduct while inhabiting space – tenants include

YMCA, Outward Bound, camps for disadvantage youth and immigrants, etc.

- the farmers market is a dominant theme in the project – the ‘slow movement’ – artisans and local economies
- socially, financially, and environmentally sustainable – operating revenue is \$5 million per annum – space rental, admissions, events, sponsorship and parking

Artscape

- Green Arts Barns
- Artscape dedicated to creating multi-tenant art centres
- an old rail-yard – Artscape has been working on this project since 1991 – ongoing public subsidy – art centre, community centre, environment centre
- a ‘main street’ unites the barns – creates communal public space that focuses traffic through the centre
- partnered with a food bank – commercial kitchen, community bake over, communal gardens, camps for children/families
- all powered by sustainable, renewable energy (geo-thermal energy from holes bored in the garden)

- Artscape HQ in Liberty Village (IDEA Project)
- artists revitalized former industrial district into bohemian centre - wasn’t threatened by gentrification the same way as on Queen St. because of zoning differences – but attracted many creative businesses and created the same sort of artist displacement – still has one of the greatest concentrations of cultural workers in North American (6,000 workers a day)
- IDEA Project – includes fashion incubator, art centres, and retail
- a resource for creative entrepreneurship, a generator of employment, collaboration among sectors (new ideas), production (work studios, designer-maker gallery), showcasing (launch pad for new products and services), community (social heart of Liberty Village)

Conclusions

- importance of working/living arts space, networks, and creative entrepreneurship
- convergence centres are crucial to a cultural economy
- engage citizens in the act of city building
- the notion of a ‘creative spaces enabling network’
- inclusive zoning to minimize the displacement of artists and low-income families
- cannot ‘blueprint’ one project from another – cross-pollination of ideas can occur but it is important to tailor each project to the specific location in question
- universal need for more ‘entrepreneurial thinking’ in creating convergent spaces