



Toronto Nonprofit Network Priorities Survey Key Findings

FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2020

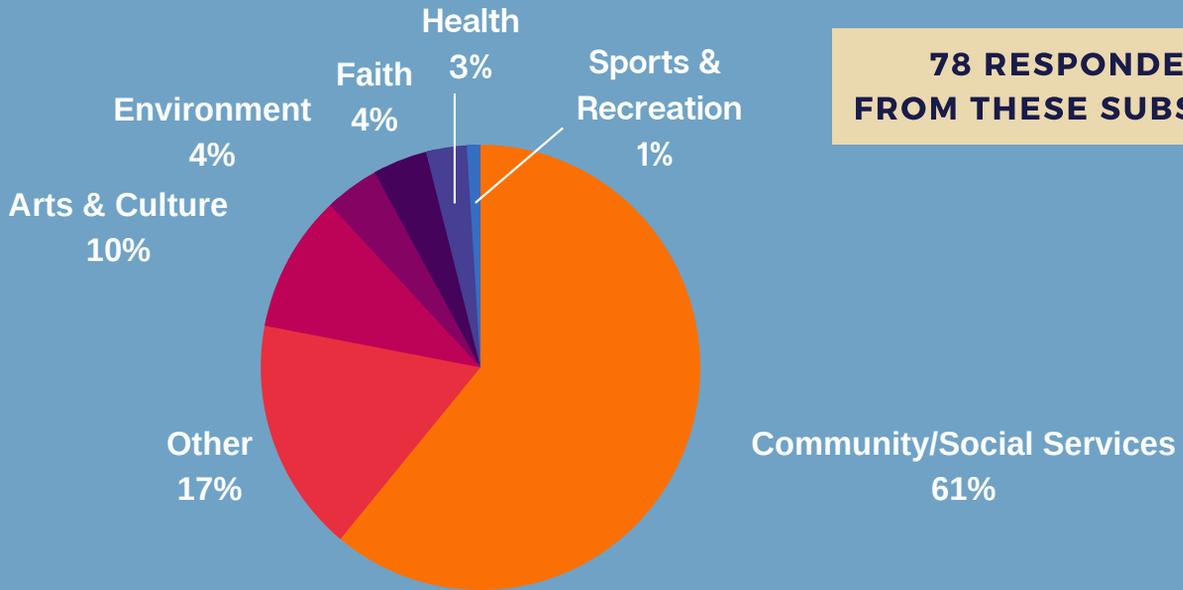
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PRIORITIES SURVEY SUMMARY

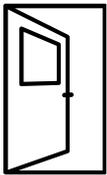
FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2020



**78 RESPONDENTS
FROM THESE SUBSECTORS**



SPACE-RELATED PRIORITIES

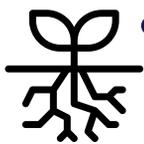
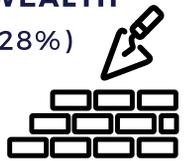


A: COMMUNITY ACCESS TO PUBLICLY OWNED & NONPROFIT OWNED SPACE

22 organizations are interested in joining or leading this working group (33%)
37 organizations are interested in following this work (56%)

B: LEVERAGING & BUILDING SOCIAL PURPOSE REAL ESTATE & COMMUNITY WEALTH

15 organizations are interested in joining or leading this working group (28%)
23 organizations are interested in following this work (43%)



C: AFFORDABILITY & LONG-TERM SECURITY OF TENURE FOR THE SECTOR

21 organizations are interested in joining or leading this working group (42%)
24 organizations are interested in following this work (48%)

OTHER PRESSING ISSUES

affecting respondents, which they felt we should tackle as a sector

**Building capacity & supports
for community-led groups**

21 organizations (49%)



Value of the nonprofit sector

15 organizations (35%)



Provincial funding cuts

11 organizations (26%)



Affordable housing & homelessness

10 organizations (23%)



Space Challenges and Visions

The following contains a summary of key themes that emerged from the short answers provided by survey respondents, related to the three space-related priority areas.

A: Community access to publicly owned and nonprofit-owned space

Key challenges for nonprofit organizations and the sector

- Lack of free and affordable spaces for community use and programming
- Shifts and decreases in funding have impacted organizational budgets and the ability for nonprofits to book, rent, own, and/or access spaces; as a result, community access to these spaces also becomes limited
- Limited organizational capacity (time, staff, budget) to work on joint solutions to this issue
- Rules and regulations: zoning, permits, insurance, changes to rental/lease policies, liability concerns
- Accessibility of location (e.g., finding space downtown vs. suburbs)
- Displacement due to development pressures (e.g., facilities closing or changes to space, such as TDSB schools and faith buildings)
- Limited usability of space (not all spaces fit groups' needs, e.g., physical accessibility, safety)
- Lack of education on how to access resources on financing, government subsidies, and loans
- Nonprofits struggling for space can unintentionally find themselves competing with grassroots groups for space

What should this working group realistically aim to change by early 2022?

- Develop tools such as inventories, systems maps of available spaces, guidelines, and toolkits to support space-related initiatives, planning, and advocacy
- Long-term planning for sustainable space: collaborate with partners to develop guiding principles and plans that lead to the development of more community-owned spaces for community use
- Meaningful resident engagement to understand barriers to community access, especially in the inner suburbs
- Policy and regulatory changes (e.g., access for nonprofits to surplus lands)
- Increase education for nonprofits to carry out operations and programming in publicly owned space
- Identify public funding opportunities that aim to address this issue
- Create opportunities for community groups to co-design nonprofit/publicly owned spaces
- Explore models of co-ownership and space sharing

B: Leveraging and/or building social purpose real estate and community wealth

Key challenges for nonprofit organizations and the sector

- Access to capital, lack of funding, and financial resources for nonprofits
- High cost of real estate (land, buildings, spaces)
- Negotiating and building relationships with powerful developers, finding socially conscious developer partners
- Limited organizational capacity to focus on this issue
- Knowledge gaps / need for sharing best practices, lack of understanding around the benefits and risks of nonprofit-owned social purpose real estate
- Limited political leadership in this area
- Conflicting funder rules on mortgage payments

- Property taxes and land transfer taxes on nonprofits

What should this working group realistically aim to change by early 2022?

- Cultivate partnerships with multiple stakeholders (private, public, nonprofit) to push for policy change
- Increase funding for social purpose real estate development
- Improve policies to increase community benefits
- Share knowledge and best practices, foster ongoing dialogue, and collaborate with one another
- Make information available for nonprofits on renting and buying property
- Build on the momentum of community benefit frameworks / agreements
- Understand trends related to the privatization of public land
- Increase awareness about the impacts of Bill 108 (provincial changes to community benefits)
- Explore sustainable models for nonprofits to develop social purpose real estate at lower costs

C: Affordability and long-term security of tenure for the nonprofit sector

Key challenges for nonprofit organizations and the sector

- Lack of long-term, operating, and sustainable funding (hard to plan for the long-term without long-term security of tenure)
- Understanding how to collaborate with private sector, including donors and private foundations
- Delayed movement on policy changes to support nonprofits in being able to afford space
- Increasing value of land, property taxes, and incentives to redevelop spaces
- Data collection and reporting on long-term leases and trends related to nonprofit-owned lands under threat of development
- Lack of skills and expertise in the sector to make a valuable contribution to this area
- Rapidly growing neighborhoods with lack of planning for community services
- Making this issue an advocacy priority for Executive Directors of nonprofits
- Affordable spaces are in inaccessible locations

What should this working group realistically aim to change by early 2022?

- Secure funding to support affordability and long-term security of tenure for nonprofits
- Sector collaboration and partnerships
- Policy changes to support the sector and acquire spaces in new developments
- Minimize duplication and increase collaboration in this area amongst interested stakeholders
- Increase education in real estate financing to understand the factors contributing to rising costs of real estate

Priorities Survey Background

The Toronto Nonprofit Network

Toronto's nonprofits have had limited opportunities to cooperate or interact with one another as a sector. Social Planning Toronto (SPT) is currently working with several organizational partners to develop a city-wide network of nonprofits known as the Toronto Nonprofit Network (TNN). We hope to bring the diverse voices of the city's nonprofit sector to government, funders, and business to create and influence systemic change. To date, over 400 nonprofit organizations, representing a wide range of sectors including social services, arts and culture, health, education, and sports and recreation, have joined the TNN mailing list.

TNN is focused on issues that are:

- relevant across the nonprofit sector
- particularly relevant to Toronto

TNN is not an independent "agency" that can carry activities on behalf of the sector. It is a coordinating body to help sector leaders work together. Member organizations, working together in flexible and timebound ways, will advance the work of TNN.

The Survey

An invitation to fill out the TNN Priorities Survey was sent to the network's mailing list. After the initial survey period (from late February to mid-March, 2020), the survey was sent out to an additional 20 grassroots community groups. In total, there were 78 responses (including incomplete and complete surveys). A majority of the respondents held senior leadership positions at their organizations (Executive Directors, Program Directors, and Managers, etc.). It is important to note that the COVID-19 crisis had been gradually escalating during the survey period, leading up to the declaration of the Emergency Order in Ontario on March 15.

The purpose of the survey was to test whether nonprofit organizations would be interested in engaging in the priorities identified by the TNN Steering Committee, and to better understand how they would like to engage in this work. It was also intended to explore whether there are other areas of interest — beyond space — that Toronto's nonprofit organizations are interested in working on. This survey served to support TNN in narrowing down its areas of focus, and as a vehicle to engage organizations in relevant working groups or "constellations."

Rationale for Focus on Space

The TNN Steering Committee, representing 19 diverse nonprofit organizations, identified space as a foundational issue for the Network. Space—access to space, its affordability, development, maintenance, and retention—is an area that affects nonprofits across multiple sectors in the city. In this context, the term "space" can refer to community/recreation centres, faith buildings, parks, community gardens and other outdoor spaces, arts/performance spaces, private spaces made available to the public, public housing spaces, school board spaces, library spaces, community-owned spaces, other City-owned property (e.g., civic centres), agencies, transitional/pop-up spaces, and vacant spaces.

Operating in the fastest-growing city in North America and facing rising real estate values and heightened development and displacement pressures, Toronto's nonprofit sector is confronting unique challenges related to accessing, developing, and retaining spaces for community purposes and programming.

TNN's focus on space is aligned with existing public priorities. The City of Toronto's For Public Benefit Framework "commits to developing policies and partnerships that improve the community-based not-for-profit sector's access to decent, affordable facilities and spaces to provide community services and programming. This includes helping to build capacity in the sector to acquire and leverage real estate assets for community use. The City recognizes the public benefits that are generated through community-operated and community-owned space in Toronto."

Challenges surrounding nonprofit use, access, and development of space have both advocacy and service implications that are actionable within the city. By focusing on space as a foundational issue, the TNN Steering Committee aims to work together in three working groups ("constellations") to learn about, address, and explore challenges and opportunities around access, development, and retention of space for Toronto's nonprofit sector.

Adopting "space" as an overarching issue, the three working groups will work on the following areas:

A: Community access to publicly owned and nonprofit-owned space

B: Leveraging and/or building social purpose real estate and community wealth

C: Affordability and long-term security of tenure for the nonprofit sector

Conclusion and Next Steps

The TNN Priorities Survey results indicate there is a sufficient interest in working on space-related priorities amongst organizations in the nonprofit sector who filled out the survey. The network will follow up with organizations who expressed their interest in joining the space-related working groups to decide how they would like to proceed with the work. Organizations who filled out the survey also provided a wealth of suggestions regarding existing space-related initiatives, experts, and organizations that the network should engage with. There is a need to connect with the suggested experts and explore potential collaboration, information sharing, and learning opportunities where our priorities and capacities align.

The TNN Steering Committee has recognized that further outreach is required to engage subsectors outside of community/social services in the network. Building capacity and supports for community-led groups and highlighting the value of the nonprofit sector were the two top areas outside of space that network organizations would also like to work on. These two areas may intersect with space-related priorities, as well as the network's leadership on planning and celebrating Toronto Not-For-Profit Recognition Day. The network has yet to explore how to address these priorities in further depth with interested network organizations. Due to the unprecedented context of COVID-19, which hit immediately after the survey closed, the network may have to re-evaluate and reframe its approach to working on space-related issues.

The TNN Steering Committee thanks everyone who took the time to fill out the Priorities Survey. It has offered a fruitful starting point to begin exploring sector priorities within the working groups.