

Spotlight Report

REGENT PARK

The Building Blocks of Inclusive Communities





A Brief History of the Regent Park Revitalization

Built by the federal government in the late 1940s and 1950s, the Regent Park neighbourhood originally consisted of 2,083 social housing homes on 69 acres in Toronto's Downtown East. The community was predominantly residential apart from a school, a handful of churches, and limited retail and community spaces.

The design was based on a 'garden city' planning rationale, and while the neighbourhood boasted large tracts of green space, they were surrounded by inward-facing homes and buildings, and winding paths. Most public streets had been removed, cutting the community off from the rest of the city.

As a result of funding cuts to federal social housing programs, the homes in the community were left to deteriorate within a short period of time. Successive downloading of responsibility for social housing, first from the federal to the provincial government, and subsequently from the Province of Ontario to the City of Toronto, made matters worse.

Beginning in the 1970s, as Canada welcomed newcomers from around the world, Regent Park quickly became one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in the country. However, the lack of investment in social supports and economic opportunity, coupled with the physical deterioration and isolation of the neighbourhood, meant that the community faced significant challenges.



Over the last few decades of the 20th century, Regent Park was seen by people outside of the community as a place best to avoid; a highly stigmatized neighbourhood in which drugs, guns, gangs, and violence were the experience of everyday life.

Despite its reputation, compounded by the media stereotyping and over-policing that came along with it, Regent Park was a vibrant and close-knit community. Advocacy has always been a part of the community's culture, and residents lobbied successive governments at all levels in hopes of addressing the social and economic challenges facing the neighbourhood.

When ownership and control of the city's social housing stock (that included Regent Park) was downloaded to the City of Toronto then eventually amalgamated under its new housing agency, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) in 2002, Regent Park residents seized the opportunity to work with the agency and the City of Toronto to launch a community revitalization process.

Unlike many attempts at inner city revitalization across North America, the transformation of Regent Park evolved from the ground up, rather than from the top down. Local voices have been at the centre of the conversation from the outset. In fact, a consultative framework championed by TCHC, and the active role that residents and grassroots community organizations have played throughout the process, are significant hallmarks of the Regent Park revitalization story.

Given the scale and complexity of the large-scale revitalization, the plan was based on a phased approach to accommodate the relocation of residents, demolition of existing buildings, and new construction including roads and servicing.

In 2006, after a lengthy public procurement process, TCHC selected The Daniels Corporation (Daniels) as their development partner to initiate the revitalization of Regent Park. Unfolding over course of the last 16 years, the first three phases of the revitalization have covered 53

of 69 acres and prioritized both physical redevelopment as well as social development. Importantly, throughout this process, Daniels has worked hand-in-hand with Regent Park residents and TCHC to realize a shared vision of an inclusive, mixed-income, socially cohesive and complete community.

Over the last 16 years, the original street grid has been reinstated, re-connecting the community to the broader city. Many of the deteriorating, costly to operate, older buildings have been demolished with new social housing and market housing being built side-by-side within an integrated streetscape, indistinguishable from each other by virtue of consistently high-quality design standards.

Training and employment programs have created pathways to economic opportunity and livelihood stabilisation for local residents. Community amenities such as a six-acre central park called Regent Park, the Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre, Daniels Spectrum, and the Regent Park Athletic Grounds have given residents spaces to exercise, play and connect.

Long-time TCHC tenants and new condominium owners and residents have come together through grassroots initiatives, and also formed the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA), working collaboratively to advocate for the future of their community.


While there have also been many challenges and lessons learned, there are successes that have created significant impact. Over the past 16 years, Regent Park has been reconnected to the city and a thriving mixed-use, mixed-income, multi-generational community is gaining strength and momentum.

Introduction

Today, the Regent Park revitalization is looked at around the world as the gold standard by which a highly stigmatized urban neighbourhood can be re-imagined as a resilient and inclusive, mixed-income community.

Inclusive communities are built with intentionality. As our work on Phase 3 continues, we are eager to share the building blocks we've utilized, utilized to create an inclusive community in the revitalized Regent Park. These building blocks demonstrate how the development industry can contribute meaningfully to the fabric of our communities – in Canada and beyond.

In 2022, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), the Urban Economy Forum, and Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC) came together with Daniels to launch the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park - Powered by Daniels, a knowledge exchange hub to share best practices, innovation and research in urban development and revitalization from around the world. There are several examples of best practices at work in the Regent Park revitalization that can be adapted to cities internationally.

 [Click here](#) to learn more about World Urban Pavilion

Regent Park Revitalization Phasing Plan



Building Blocks of Inclusive Communities

We are immensely proud of our work in Regent Park, including the buildings we have constructed and the relationships we have built. In fact, it's the partnerships we have cultivated over the last 16 years – with the City, TCHC, community members, not-for-profit organizations, employment service agencies, trades and consultants in the construction industry, commercial and other private sector partners – that have allowed us to push the envelope and build a truly inclusive community.

We have pioneered new pathways to affordable living, to local economic development and social procurement, strengthened community capacity and delivered well beyond our contractual obligations.

Although the scale of the transformation in Regent Park is unique, it is our fundamental belief that the building blocks of inclusive communities are the same no matter how large or small the parcel of land, whether urban, suburban, stigmatized or otherwise.

In this Spotlight Report, we share our six key building blocks for creating inclusive communities based on 39 years of experience as a developer and builder in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in addition to the last 16 years working in Regent Park, which provided the opportunity to implement and refine each one of them.

Community development and revitalization are long, slow, and complicated processes. There are many challenges and complexities that have been part of our journey in Regent Park, which are not addressed in this document. It is not our intention to gloss over these and paint a rosy picture but rather to focus on sharing our approach to developing inclusive communities.

Our experience in Regent Park and beyond has demonstrated that inclusive communities are built when we take a 'whole of community' approach, prioritize the development of mixed-use and community spaces, and invest in affordable housing, community engagement, and local economic development.

KEY FIGURES
from the Regent Park Revitalization



CONSTRUCTED BY DANIELS IN PHASES 1, 2 AND 3

3,063 market condominium homes completed,
and 631 under construction

346 market rental
homes completed

1,261 rent-geared-to-income
TCHC replacement
homes completed, and
189 under construction

332 seniors' rental
homes completed

403 new TCHC affordable
rental homes completed
and 24 under construction

53 of 69 acres
of Regent Park

219K of commercial and retail
space with retail and
SQFT office formats



Image: Demolition in Regent Park, Phase 3

A "Whole of Community" Approach



A "Whole of Community" Approach

To build inclusive, resilient communities where everyone belongs, real estate development must go beyond buildings. Complete communities are more than the sum of their parts.

Builders and developers have a unique opportunity to advance inclusion and resilience, build equity and community wealth, create affordable and accessible homes and spaces, and prioritize sustainability and local economic development. Physical construction alone cannot achieve our collective city building objectives.

Daniels' intentional approach to development invests in social, cultural and economic infrastructure to ensure these essential parts of our communities will be as strong as the bricks and mortar we build. In this way, our development approach considers the whole of communities.

In practice, this means taking a broad, deep and long-term view of the communities we build, mindful of the existing and sometimes complex relationships that exist between residents, whether existing or new, public spaces, and local businesses. This approach allows us to be both responsive to community-identified priorities, and to iterate and innovate to achieve broader city-building objectives through our work.

In Regent Park, we didn't just think about the revitalization by phase, or block-by-block; we worked hand-in-hand with TCHC and local residents to holistically conceptualize the whole 69 acres of the community. In applying a "whole of community" approach to parks, recreational space, community hubs and emerging opportunities such as office space, our team has been working hard to bring the vision for an inclusive and thriving neighbourhood to life.

“The Regent Park revitalization has clearly demonstrated the power of collaboration and partnership, of a multisector, 'whole of community' approach to creating inclusive and resilient communities.”

– Mitchell Cohen

President and CEO, The Daniels Corporation

Six-Acre Park

Although the original zoning by-law identified land for a six-acre park in the heart of the neighbourhood, the initial phasing plan prescribed that the park would only be built in Phase 5 of the revitalization.

Given that social cohesion was a key revitalization goal identified by both TCHC and local residents, and subsequently articulated in the Social Development Plan (SDP), it was clear to our team at Daniels that waiting years until the park's construction would be a missed opportunity.

Parks are crucial to building social fabric. In a revitalization, the community-building potential of a park is further amplified.

We believed that community spaces where TCHC tenants and residents of new condominium buildings could meet, play, experience events and get to know one another had to be built early on if Regent Park was to succeed as an inclusive, mixed-income community.

As a result, our team worked with the local City Councillor, Pam McConnell and her team, and our partners at TCHC to amend the phasing plan through a re-zoning process and move up the construction of the park to Phase 2. This decision had an enormous impact on social cohesion and inclusion in the neighbourhood.

Today, the six-acre park is a hub for community activity, with playgrounds, a bake oven, a greenhouse, community gardens, an off-leash dog area, splash pads and central gathering spaces. Grassroots groups comprised primarily of local residents host annual community events like Summer Jam and Sunday in the Park there. Local not-for-profits Fred Victor (formerly the Christian Resource Centre), and Regent Park Film Festival also hold free annual events in the park including, [Taste of Regent Park](#), and [Under the Stars](#) for the whole community to enjoy.



A “Whole of Community” Approach

Regent Park Athletic Grounds

There were many competing ideas on what the six-acre park should include, such as spaces dedicated to urban agriculture, food related programming, playgrounds, sports fields and more. Although the final design ultimately implemented a significant number of these ideas, the consultation process also demonstrated significant demand for formal sports fields which were too large to be incorporated.

As a result, Daniels worked with TCHC, the City and community residents to further amend the zoning by-law and designate land for the creation of the Regent Park Athletic Grounds within Phase 3 of the revitalization.

The City of Toronto and TCHC worked through a land transfer to facilitate the creation of the city-wide amenity, and Daniels enlisted Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Foundation as the primary funding partner.

The Athletic Grounds, which opened in June 2016, features a refurbished hockey rink, a new basketball court, a running track, and a new full size soccer pitch which can be converted to accommodate informal cricket practice and matches.

Although the facility is operated by the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department, a commitment to substantial local use and programming has been provided to the Regent Park community focused primarily on youth.

The Regent Park Athletic Grounds has already become a place where residents of all ages come together to walk, jog, shoot hops, play soccer, cricket, hockey, or exercise, chat, and celebrate. It is a welcoming and inclusive space where everyone can share in the fun and excitement of recreation.



Mixed-Use Development



Mixed-Use Development

The character of our cities is shaped by real estate development. Just as the diversity of communities fosters vitality and resilience, mixed-use development, where people can live, work, shop, as well as learn and play, creates vibrant neighbourhoods where everyone comes together.

Local businesses, banks, cultural amenities, educational and medical institutions provide crucial services to our communities, and they also create avenues for employment, capacity building and community development.

Our mixed-use approach also features a spectrum of housing opportunities. In Regent Park this has included replacement of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing, affordable rental housing, market condominiums, purpose-built seniors housing, purpose-built market rental housing as well as live-work units with ground floor-artist studios.

Harnessing the power of mixed-use development is a priority for Daniels because it is fundamental to building inclusive communities. In Regent Park, adding a mix of commercial, institutional and community spaces to the spectrum of housing opportunities was also integral to the success of the revitalization.

KEY
FIGURES

COMMERCIAL & RETAIL

219K
SQFT

of commercial
and retail space

250+
RETAIL JOBS

created for
Regent Park
residents

4

work-live
artist
studios

Image: Regent Park, view from Dundas, looking West

Our Approach to Commercial in Regent Park

At the time of the 2006 revitalization, there were no significant retail businesses operating in Regent Park. Except for a handful of local churches, a school, and not-for-profit organizations, the community was made up primarily of residential townhomes and apartment complexes.

Residents looking to visit a bank, buy groceries or grab a cup of coffee had no choice but to trek outside of their neighbourhood. Those looking for a job in the vicinity of their home had to search outside the 69-acre neighbourhood for employment as well.

Understanding the creation of new commercial spaces and community facilities is a key tenet of the revitalization. Daniels worked with TCHC to develop a commercial and retail strategy that would simultaneously provide crucial services to the community and create local employment opportunities.

In selecting commercial retailers to welcome into the neighbourhood, we intentionally chose national brand retailers demonstrating that large, well-known commercial operators were prepared to invest in the revitalization. It was also vital that we considered price point. As a mixed-income community, it is our goal to provide something for everyone in Regent Park.

As part of Phase 1, Regent Park welcomed its first grocery store, bank, coffee shop, and telecommunications operator – FreshCo by Sobeys, Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), Tim Hortons and Rogers Communications – all national brand retailers who brought both their businesses and passion for community.

Eager to participate in local employment initiatives, FreshCo, RBC, and Tim Hortons worked with Daniels and Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) to host hiring fairs, creating 156 jobs for local residents between 2010 and 2014.

With Rogers Communications, which had a smaller, boutique service shop with only a few retail employees, we facilitated a now long-standing relationship between Rogers and [Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts](#),

a local organization that had grown from a grassroots group to an important community agency focused on youth programming.

Rogers committed to an annual financial donation in support of Regent Park Focus and supplied donations of equipment as well. Leveraging their expertise, Rogers worked with the team and youth at Focus to create a closed-circuit television station with locally produced, recorded and edited content.

Other commercial operators, including Shoppers Drug Mart, and the social enterprise restaurant Paintbox Bistro, followed suit, hiring 92 local residents at opening – and dozens more over the course of their tenures.

Most recently, Daniels and TCHC welcomed Gusto54 Restaurant Group, and their new concept 'Café Zuzu' to Regent Park. Demonstrating their commitment to community from the get-go, Café Zuzu worked with Daniels, TCHC, Dixon Hall Employment Services and George Brown College, to launch a training and employment initiative that has led to five local hires already.

As a result of community feedback and the desire to support small businesses and local community organizations that offer a diverse range of products and services within Regent Park, Daniels also launched a Social Impact Commercial Program.

In offering commercial space at subsidized lease rates to local entrepreneurs and organizations, the program aims to cultivate a spirit of entrepreneurship, support community groups, and create economic development opportunities for local residents.

Two local organizations are set to open their shared space in 2023. A social enterprise security firm, and a mental health agency supporting Black and racialized youth will move into a new office space at DuEast Condominium in Regent Park, next door to Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council and the World Urban Pavilion – Powered by Daniels.



Work-Live with BlackNorth Initiative

Arts and cultural infrastructure are integral to building an inclusive community. Over the past 16 years, Regent Park has welcomed a community cultural hub, public art and placemaking installations, and grassroots artisan markets, all of which have added to the vitality of the community.

In 2022, in an effort to expand opportunities for local artists to live and work in the community, Daniels launched a work-live program in partnership with the BlackNorth Initiative (BNI).

This program seeks to celebrate the existing arts community in Toronto and provide a unique opportunity for Black artists and creatives to develop their practice, showcase their work and build relationships in the community while working and living there.

Located on the Living Lane, at the base of DuEast Condominium and Artworks Condominium, the work-live studios were offered at a 50% reduction in lease rates through Daniels' Social Impact Exchange. This program encourages eligible commercial tenants to participate in community engagement and social impact work within Daniels communities in exchange for value, such as subsidized lease rates or a larger tenant inducement.

Based on the concept of energy exchange, the program provides tangible value for commercial tenants, while creating significant impact on the communities through social cohesion, animation of public spaces, social cohesion, animation of public spaces, participation, and local economic development.

“This initiative offers emerging artists and changemakers from the Black community a unique opportunity to work and live in a creative and culturally vibrant community at reduced rental rates. The BlackNorth Initiative is proud to support and partner where both access and inclusion are priorities.”

– **Dahabo Ahmed-Omer**
Executive Director, BlackNorth Initiative

Affordable Housing



Affordable Housing

Although the federal government has enshrined affordable housing as a fundamental human right, there are enormous financial barriers separating individuals and families from a safe and affordable place to call home.

As builders and developers, we understand that city-building is a shared responsibility, and that affordable housing is part of the fundamental infrastructure of a resilient city. This includes transitional and supportive housing to address homelessness, deeply affordable homes for individual and families on social assistance, and affordable homes that allow people to walk to work.

As a result, removing barriers to housing, whether financial or physical, has been one of Daniels' primary impact goals since our inception. For a community to be truly inclusive, people of a range of socio-economic backgrounds and income levels must feel and be welcomed.

In partnership with government and the not-for-profit sector, or sometimes on our own, we actively seek out opportunities to integrate affordable housing in our communities. We build affordable housing because we want to, not because we have to by virtue of land use approvals.

Mixed-income communities do not just happen. It takes intentionality and resources to successfully deliver inclusive communities.

In Regent Park, restoring the quality of social housing was a key goal of the revitalization, and we have worked with TCHC to deliver 1,261 rent-geared-to-income replacement homes, and 403 new affordable rental homes to the highest quality standard.

We have also found creative ways to integrate additional opportunities for affordable housing through partnerships, innovation and financial assistance programs.



Affordable Homeownership Programs in Regent Park – Foundation, Boost, and the Partnership for Affordable Homeownership

Affordable homeownership is one of the most powerful tools for breaking the cycle of poverty and building wealth. Over the last 16 years, Daniels has implemented three core shared-equity mortgage programs that have created direct pathways into homeownership in Regent Park.

The Foundation and First Home BOOST (BOOST) programs were implemented early in the revitalization and provided down payment assistance to first-time buyers with government funding and were administered by the Affordable Housing Office of the City of Toronto.

Daniels played a leadership role in the creation of the programs which were modeled after a similar down payment assistance program we created in partnership with government at our Lakeshore Village development.

The Foundation Program was geared specifically to tenants of TCHC living in Regent Park with up to 40% down payment assistance, whereas the BOOST Program was open to first-time buyers looking to transition from renting to owning with 10% down payment assistance.

The down payment assistance was provided in the form of interest-free, monthly payment-free registered second mortgages which were payable upon lease or sale of the home. In addition, the repayment terms include a percentage of capital appreciation to be paid, ensuring the affordable housing fund is revolving and will support additional families and individuals with loans in the future.

The Foundation Program enabled 17 families living in TCHC to become first-time homeowners within Regent Park. Through the BOOST Program, 211 individuals and families have become first-time homeowners.

Although the programs have demonstrated success, it has become increasingly difficult to qualify for the Foundation and BOOST Program loans over time. As home prices across the GTA have soared, the gap between the qualifying incomes set by government for the programs and incomes required to carry a mortgage widened. As a result, few TCHC residents were able to bridge this gap and the program parameters made it challenging to deploy the funds.

Our experience implementing Foundation and BOOST in Regent Park provided important learnings. To remain consistently available throughout the revitalization process, funding streams for down payment assistance programs need to be identified early and be adaptable to changing market conditions.

With this in mind, Daniels stepped up to fund, create and launch the Partnership for Affordable Homeownership (PAH) in 2022. With an investment of up to \$5 million, the program is completely funded by Daniels and provides down payment assistance for up to 50% of the purchase price of a new home at our Daniels on Parliament condominium in Regent Park, in the form of a second mortgage loan for up to 20 years that is both interest and monthly payment-free.



The program is specifically tailored to current and past residents of TCHC who have lived in Regent Park for at least two years since the beginning of the revitalization in 2006. To support the building of a strong, inclusive community, these purchasers are also required to commit a minimum of 100 volunteer hours, to be fulfilled prior to occupancy of their new homes. To date, nine individuals and families have become homeowners at the Daniels on Parliament condominium through the PAH program.

Another significant lesson learned is that the transition to homeownership does not happen overnight, but rather through a process of learning and engagement.

To that end, 'Homeownership 101' seminars have been created and implemented by our team. Daniels' sales team has worked closely with bank mortgage specialists to educate prospective homebuyers in Regent Park on the requirements, processes, and responsibilities associated with owning a home. In fact, we made this informative session a required step in qualifying for the PAH program.

Yet, the most important lesson learned through our experience implementing affordable homeownership programs in Regent Park is that these programs can be replicated in communities across the city and beyond. With a reliable source of down payment assistance support from public, private and/or philanthropic funding, both individuals and families can be provided with opportunities to achieve homeownership.

Affordable Rental in Regent Park - Evolv Rental Residence

As the Regent Park revitalization unfolded there was considerable discussion about whether new social housing units could be integrated within new condominium buildings. Integration was implemented on a street-by-street basis, rather than within buildings themselves.

With this approach, social housing units were built side-by-side and across the street from new condominiums. High-quality architecture and consistent landscape design made social housing indistinguishable from market condominiums, but true integration was not achieved. The challenges to the integration included the financial structure of condominiums as well as the funding model for social housing in the City of Toronto.

Seeking to push the envelope with respect to social integration, Daniels worked with partners in Phase 3 to pioneer a new approach: the Partnership for Affordable Living (PAL).

This model was applied at Evolv, the only purpose-built market rental residence in Regent Park to date. Along with our partner Sun Life, a Canadian insurance company, Daniels entered into a public-private partnership agreement with WoodGreen Community Services (WoodGreen), an established social service agency, and the City of Toronto to integrate long-term, affordable, rental living for mother-led families through WoodGreen's Homeward Bound Program.

Homeward Bound is an award-winning, four-year program that helps homeless or inadequately housed single mothers achieve lasting economic self-sufficiency.

The City of Toronto contributed \$5.1 million of its federal/provincial funding allocation under the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) to WoodGreen, who is responsible for leasing and managing the building's affordable housing units through a head-lease. An additional \$720,847 in Open Door Program incentives from the City of Toronto was provided in the form of waived property taxes for 40 years.

The Sun Life-Daniels partnership understood the program could have an impact on financial returns, but believed in the positive social impact it would deliver.

By design, the affordable homes, primarily 2- and 3-bedroom units were seamlessly integrated throughout the building to foster inclusion and the ability for people of different socio-economic backgrounds and incomes to live together, not only within the same community, but within the same building. As part of this initiative, a total of 34 affordable rental homes were integrated throughout the 29-storey building.

“Over the past 16 years in Regent Park, Daniels has successfully created and implemented various affordable housing programs. We continue to find ways to truly to be a 'people-first' developer and expand affordable housing opportunities that will play an instrumental role in fostering social cohesion and inclusion in the community.”

– Heela Omarkhail

Vice President, Social Impact, The Daniels Corporation



Community Engagement

Community Engagement

Public engagement is a critical part of real estate development. Consultations, community meetings, and working groups are all important ways that developers solicit feedback from local residents and stakeholders within the statutory planning process.

While these approaches offer some insight into how community members are thinking about specific development proposals, we understand that building truly inclusive communities requires engagement that goes beyond what is required by statutory processes.

At Daniels, our approach to community engagement is intentional. We put community at the centre. We invest time listening to and learning from local residents and stakeholders. We work hard to build trust and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Our approach is also ongoing; our community engagement doesn't start or end with construction. Rather than passively waiting for community to share feedback on development proposals, our team seeks out community input by embarking on what we have come to call 'Listen and Learn' tours in the early stages of the development process.

We meet with local residents, grassroots groups, social service agencies, not-for-profits, educational institutions, and businesses to learn more about their work, and to understand their needs and their vision for their community on a much deeper level. Over the course of our development and construction work, we revisit these community connections, and cultivate powerful partnerships that help build social, cultural and economic infrastructure.

'Listen and Learn' tours are a foundational practice of community engagement work and have played a critical role in our journey in Regent Park.



“ We walked all of the streets within that neighbourhood and talked with residents about their hopes and their dreams for the revitalization. We also talked to all the social service agencies about their challenges, about the competition for scarce resources to support the basic health and wellbeing of local residents. Through this listen and learning tour, we came to understand the need for a collaborative approach that would bring all sectors together under the umbrella of a shared and powerful vision.”

– Mitchell Cohen
President and CEO, The Daniels Corporation



Implementing the Regent Park Social Development Plan

Unlike many attempts at inner city revitalization across North America, the transformation of Regent Park evolved from the ground up, rather than from the top down. Local voices have been at the centre of the conversation from the outset.

In the planning stages of the revitalization, TCHC and City of Toronto staff worked with local residents and social services agencies to put forward the community's vision in the form of a Social Development Plan (SDP). The document, published in 2007, outlined over 75 recommendations on how to build social cohesion and healthy social infrastructure within the revitalized Regent Park.

Distilling those 75 recommendations into a practical implementation plan, however, was a major challenge facing the TCHC/Daniels development partnership.

Although the SDP did not align with the zoning by-law in several areas, we recognized the importance of the two documents being consistent to realize the vision for the revitalization. Delivering on the SDP became a core part of our understanding of our responsibilities to the community, and a key part of our development approach in Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the revitalization.

With that in mind, our team set out to meet as many local stakeholders as possible. Our President and CEO, Mitchell Cohen, and Partner in charge of the revitalization,

Martin Blake, embarked on countless 'Listen and Learn' tours to hear from and understand the diverse perspectives of community members and local social service agencies in respect to the revitalization.

What places and programs would bring people of diverse cultural backgrounds and economic means together? How could those initiatives be financed? How could the stigma associated with Regent Park be overcome, and the psychological barriers between Regent Park and neighbouring communities be torn down? How could residents share their history and lived experiences with the rest of the city? How could the revitalization be leveraged as a platform for local economic development?

Feedback from these early conversations was extremely valuable and enabled our team to work with the community to chart a course with respect to the most important social infrastructure investments. The relationships we built during that time also allowed us to create feedback loops that have helped us respond to emergent community needs, iterate, and innovate with community partners.

Over the last 16 years, we have actively contributed to the development of an inclusive community in Regent Park by supporting community events and grassroots initiatives, creating local employment opportunities, building arts, cultural and recreation spaces, and mobilizing funding from corporate, philanthropic and government sources.

“We in Regent Park have learned and know to be true, that participatory decision making with community members is essential to the success of revitalization and that it requires a willingness of those in power to share that power with residents with lived experience. There is a critical difference between being offered the empty ritual of participation and residents having real power to affect the changes happening in their own community.”

– Marlene DeGenova
Co-Chair, Regent Park Neighbourhood Association

KEY
FIGURES

SOCIAL INVESTMENTS

\$3.5M + contributed by Daniels to community initiatives and programming

\$7M in stewarded contributions from Daniels' private sector partners and philanthropic donors to support community initiatives and programming

A Few Examples of Daniels' Investments in the SDP

Social Cohesion	Recommendation 1: Stakeholders in Regent Park should place high priority on social inclusion as an objective in all aspects of the work of revitalization.	<i>Daniels has supported a number of community events and initiatives that create opportunities for social cohesion, including Taste of Regent Park, Regent Park Summer Jam, and Sunday in the Park. Whether community activities foster social cohesion is an important factor in our decision-making around community funding requests.</i>
Food and Urban Agriculture	Recommendation 6: Stakeholders will work with Regent Park tenants at a local level to create opportunities, where possible, for gardening and food production in new buildings.	<i>Daniels has created spaces for gardening and food production in new buildings in Regent Park, incorporating gardening opportunities in every new market building. Community garden spaces have also been built into new TCHC buildings. In addition, we have provided funding support directly and through our network to community-wide gardening and urban agriculture programs, and food security initiatives.</i>
Arts and Culture	Recommendation 7: Stakeholders will investigate, wherever possible, opportunities for creating space that can support the integrating role of cultural communities.	<i>Although the initial zoning by-law for the revitalization of Regent Park did not include the creation of space that would bring together cultural communities, Daniels worked with TCHC, Artscape, and the Regent Park community to conceive of and bring to life Daniels Spectrum, a 60,000 square foot community cultural hub, which opened in 2012 and recently celebrated 10 years.</i>
Community Safety	Recommendation 14: Stakeholders will work to ensure that Regent Park looks and feels integrated and provides safe, pedestrian-friendly environments, including spaces for cultural and recreational interaction, and will continue to treat social inclusion as one of the key objectives of physical design.	<i>Working with our partners at TCHC, the Design Review Panel and building architects, we prioritized architectural diversity and safety through urban design. The new TCHC buildings, market condominiums, and rental buildings have been designed to be indistinguishable. In addition, community safety features included putting front doors on the street and enhanced street-level lighting. In addition, there has been a focus on creating public spaces, streets and laneways for animation and activation with Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street" concept in mind.</i>
Local Employment	Recommendation 66: Stakeholders must ensure that residents/service users receive maximum benefit from the revitalization through a continued commitment to local hiring/participation for the employment and training opportunities made available; and a commitment to support local businesses and social enterprises through actions such as preferred vendor bidding when applicable.	<i>Consultant, construction and commercial contracts signed by Daniels included provisions for local hiring. Local employment has been augmented by a range of training, capacity building, and social procurement programs initiated by Daniels.</i>
Capacity Building	Recommendation 9: Stakeholders will work with and support tenant-driven grassroots projects, with the goal of making a positive contribution to the overall improvement of community health	<i>Daniels has invested over \$3 million in direct funding to support community grassroots groups and community agency initiatives and programs.</i>

The table above highlights just a few examples of Daniels' social investments in Regent Park and how they are directly linked to SDP recommendations outlined in the 2007 report.



Image: Dan Bergeron, 'Faces of Regent Park' art installation



Social Impact Investment Fund

Although the SDP was created through thoughtful community engagement, it lacked both a chain of responsibility for implementation and a specific funding formula. In fact, while Toronto City Council and the TCHC Board of Directors endorsed the SDP, the residents, grassroots groups and local social service agencies working on the ground were often self-funded, volunteer-run, or reliant on government grants, corporate donations, and philanthropic support.

Community feedback identified that achieving the goals of the SDP required additional resourcing. As a result, Daniels, working closely with local agencies, began exploring opportunities to engage with funders to support interagency coordination work on the SDP.

Daniels, along with a coalition of community agencies and residents, approached United Way GTA about raising funds that could be allocated through a locally-led participatory grant-making process to support activities aimed at achieving the goals of the SDP.

The timing, it turned out, was ideal. City staff, along with TCHC and community members had just completed a process of refreshing the SDP. Like the original SDP, the Refreshed SDP prioritized community input and brought together Regent Park residents, grassroots groups, and

representatives from local social service agencies through workshops and meetings. The result was a more focused Plan, organized thematically into four key areas of work:

- Employment and Economic Development
- Community Building
- Communication
- Community Safety

With new energy behind the SDP, the United Way clearly recognized an important opportunity to work with the community to think innovatively about funding neighbourhood level work. In 2018, they announced a \$1 million Social Impact Investment Fund (SIIF) for Regent Park that would be locally led and locally invested.

The fund provided much-needed resources to support the goals of the SDP, and it also represented a new paradigm for local stewardship of community investments. Eager to see the fund come to life, Daniels contributed \$250,000 in seed funding, which encouraged other businesses and organizations to contribute the additional \$750,000.

A total of 11 resident-led projects have been funded through the SIIF, along with three large-scale, multi-year social service agency collaboration projects.

“ You can attribute the rise of grassroots leadership to Daniels.”

– Ismail Afrah
Co-Chair, Regent Park Neighbourhood Association

Spaces that Build Social Fabric

Spaces that Build Social Fabric

The built environment has an enormous impact on how communities come together. Parks, public plazas, gardens, community centres and recreation spaces are all gathering places where neighbours connect, and communities thrive.

As city builders, we see an important role for real estate developers in investing in physical infrastructure that builds social fabric. Inclusive communities are built through intentional design.

That's why we design and build innovative amenities within our condominium and rental communities and incorporate arts, cultural and community spaces in the areas surrounding them. We recognize the role that a sense of connection plays when it comes to overall well-being and social cohesion.

Over the course of the Regent Park revitalization, Daniels has invested in, designed, and built spaces that have strengthened the social fabric of the neighbourhood. We've also supported community residents, grassroots groups and local organizations to program and animate these spaces. From community gardens to public plazas, to the Regent Park Athletic Grounds and Daniels Spectrum, these spaces, and the programming they support have helped realize the vision of a truly inclusive community.



COMMUNITY SPACES

\$4M contributed by
**Daniels and The John
and Myrna Daniels
Charitable Foundation**
for Daniels Spectrum
capital campaign



Image: Daniels Spectrum, "Rooted in Regent Park, Connected to the World" artwork

Daniels Spectrum

Although the need for an arts and cultural centre was clearly documented in the SDP, the initial zoning by-law for the revitalization of Regent Park did not initially allocate land for this use and neither did the business plan.

Daniels recognized this fundamental flaw and believed that the space envisioned by local residents was an essential addition to the neighbourhood and the broader city. Furthermore, a space dedicated to the integrating role of cultural communities and the arts would be a catalyst for building social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

Based on our experience in Toronto's Entertainment District with the development and construction of the Toronto International Film Festival's (TIFF) Bell Lightbox, we had seen the power of arts and cultural destinations catalyzing the transformation of a neighbourhood.

The zoning by-law was amended to make land available for a 60,000 square foot arts and cultural centre within Phase 2. TCHC agreed to leverage its land asset through a fifty-year lease agreement at a nominal fee. This initial step kick-started the creation of Daniels Spectrum.

With 'land' as the City of Toronto's contribution through TCHC, the balance of funding for the building came from the federal and provincial governments' Infrastructure Stimulus Fund totaling \$24 million and a capital campaign for \$10 million led by Toronto Artscape Foundation with Daniels playing a lead role.

Operated by Toronto Artscape Inc., Daniels Spectrum is innovative in that it is a community owned asset. A new community-based not-for-profit, Regent Park Arts Development, was created to develop and own the building. Its Board of Directors includes representation from the Regent Park community, broader arts organizations, as well as Artscape, TCHC and Daniels.

'Rooted in Regent Park and Open to the World', Daniels Spectrum is the artistic and cultural heart of Regent Park. The vision for Daniels Spectrum, articulated through lengthy consultation with the local community, was simple - one place, under one roof, where the diverse cultures of Regent Park and Toronto come together to share their art, music, storytelling, dance, and more.

Daniels Spectrum has been an incredible success from its opening day in 2012, bringing people together from within the community while breaking down barriers and reconnecting Regent Park the rest of the city and to the world beyond.

The hub has also provided access to below-market office and programming spaces for community organizations and agencies, many of which have been serving the neighbourhood since before the revitalization. These organizations, including Regent Park Film Festival, Regent Park School of Music, ArtHeart, Native Earth Performing Arts, Pathways to Education, and Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts have engaged thousands of residents. Over the last 10 years, Daniels Spectrum has hosted hundreds of performances and events.

In addition to a capital investment of \$4 million by Daniels and The John and Myrna Daniels Charitable Foundation, we have continued to support the long-term sustainability of Daniels Spectrum through The Journey Musical, a fundraising theatrical production that has raised close to \$5 million over the past nine years.

Ongoing support is essential to the success of community spaces like Daniels Spectrum. The sustainability and continuity of the space cannot be taken for granted. Sponsorship of The Journey has directly supported youth arts programming, operations and capital improvements at Daniels Spectrum to the benefit of the broader community.



The Living Lane

The Living Lane, located within Phase 3, and winner of the Award of Merit at the Toronto Urban Design Awards in 2017, was conceived of based on feedback from Regent Park community members around the safety of laneways. Typically, laneway spaces are dimly lit service corridors that provide little to no opportunity for animation. In Regent Park, laneways have also historically posed a challenge to community safety.

Designed by Brook McIlroy, the Living Lane is envisioned to be an active, pedestrian-focused community space with artist work-live studios, public art installations and seating to encourage community use. The work-live studios will front onto the Living Lane, adding to the vibrancy of the space. Each laneway element is meant to encourage pedestrian use, bicycle activity and opportunities for social connection. Creating opportunities for animation and social connections inherently provides enhanced safety along the Lane.

To maximize the flexibility of the space for community programming and animation, Daniels will own and manage the Living Lane. This has been one of our lessons learned in terms of having a mix of publicly owned and privately owned public spaces as formal public spaces can sometimes inadvertently create barriers with notice periods, permit requirements and additional resources often lacked by grassroots and community groups.



Local Economic Development

Local Economic Development

As our cities continue to grow, millions of additional square feet of density for homes, commercial and institutional spaces will be built across the GTA. This investment represents an important opportunity that can be leveraged for community benefit.

Small businesses, diverse suppliers, and individuals looking for a chance to jumpstart their careers in the construction trades, as well as adjacent industries like engineering and landscape design, should have the opportunity to participate in this growth.

At Daniels, we believe that development must generate positive outcomes for all stakeholders, not just the development industry. Inclusive communities provide opportunities for everyone to reach their full potential.

We use our business as a positive force by creating opportunities for inclusive local economic development, prioritizing local hiring, training and capacity building, and social procurement.

We have honed this approach over the last 16 years working in Regent Park. Working with TCHC, local residents, community organizations and social service agencies, we have developed a robust local economic development strategy for Regent Park that includes local hiring, workforce development programs and social procurement.



LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

545 through Daniels, our trades, consultants and commercial tenants **jobs created**

55 directly by Daniels since 2007 with **\$7M+ in community economic development** created directly as a result of these employment opportunities **TCHC residents employed**

Local Employment

From the outset, residents of Regent Park looked at the revitalization as a platform for capacity building and local economic development. In recognition of this underlying principle, TCHC was intentional in naming local hiring as a key goal of the redevelopment, and Daniels has made it a top priority from the beginning.

Working with employment service agencies within Regent Park, Daniels implemented a 'first-source hiring' approach to reach candidates living in the neighbourhood. The economic impact of this approach has been significant. Since the beginning of the Regent Park revitalization in 2007, Daniels has directly employed 55 TCHC residents alone, with over \$7.2 million in economic value created through wages and salaries.

Understanding that our own internal workforce needs could not provide opportunities at a scale that would satisfy all job seekers in the neighbourhood, we also worked with our trade contractors, consultants, and commercial tenants to create additional local employment opportunities.

In fact, our contracts with trades and consultants working on revitalization projects included language that underscored the importance of local hiring, and asked contractors to participate in the Regent Park Employment Initiative. Our Social Impact team, in collaboration with the City of Toronto's Employment and Social Services (TESS) division, then worked with our trades and consultants to connect qualified candidates with these opportunities.

We took a similar approach with commercial tenants, facilitating job creation partnerships with George Brown College, FreshCo, Royal Bank of Canada, Shoppers Drug Mart, Tim Hortons, Paintbox Bistro, Café Zuzu and other new commercial tenants within the community.

To date, 490 residents have been employed directly as a result of these local hiring initiatives, such that many residents now live and work in their community.



Workforce Development Programs

Although largely successful, implementing local hiring initiatives in Regent Park was not without its challenges. While a significant number of community residents applying for job opportunities had the experience and qualifications required for these roles, many others faced a skills gap. For individuals facing barriers to employment, more support was needed to bridge into available jobs.

With this in mind, we made the decision to take a broader workforce development approach to local economic development. Instead of focusing solely on matching community residents with available jobs, we created opportunities for individuals to build capacity, close skills gaps and expand their professional networks.

Working with community organizations, employment agencies, training providers, educational institutions, and the public sector, Daniels has developed three core workforce development programs in Regent Park: Moving Towards Opportunity (MTO), CRAFT, and the Higher Learning Initiative.

“ Being a part of the MTO Program for me was really interesting; I was able to learn interesting techniques on how to improve my resume and cover letter, as well as, making connections with important people who I would have never met otherwise. I loved how we would get guests to come and talk to us and explain how they made their dream jobs come true, listening to their speeches gave me the motivation to work hard so that I could find my dream job.”

– MTO Program Participant

Moving Towards Opportunity Program

Workforce development programs often target individuals over the age of 18 who are not in education, employment or training. As a result, youth under 18 are often overlooked in local economic development initiatives.

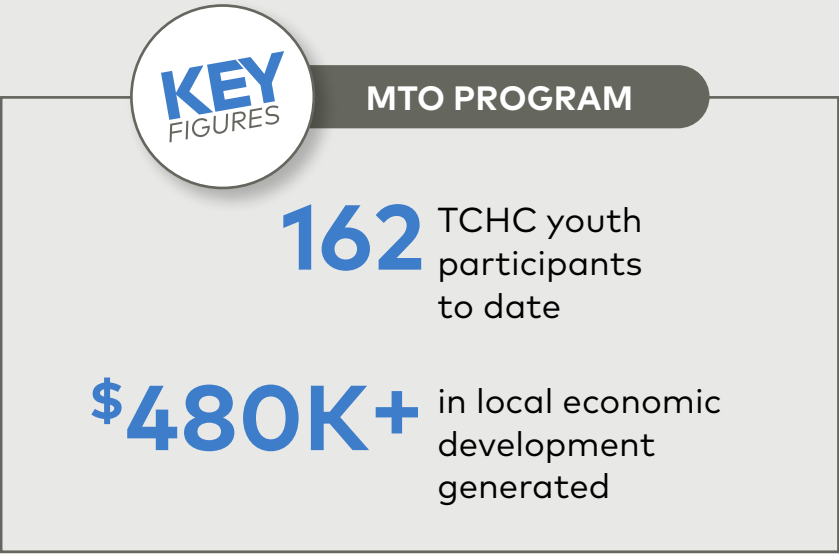
Given the revitalization was unfolding over an extended period, it was clear that high school students could benefit from a targeted program that would provide a runway to help jumpstart their careers.

In response to this need, Daniels partnered with Dixon Hall Employment Services, Pathways to Education Regent Park, the City of Toronto and TCHC to launch Moving Towards Opportunity (MTO).

First piloted in 2015, MTO is a youth employment initiative for 16 to 18-year-olds residing in Regent Park and surrounding neighbourhoods that seeks to equip youth with the employment skills necessary to successfully enter the labour market.

MTO provides program participants with a comprehensive 15-week employment readiness program facilitated by program partners followed by an 8-week, full-time, paid work placement with Daniels’ consultants, commercial and institutional partners.

Between 2015-2022, MTO has engaged 162 youth participants, placed with 51 unique employers in a myriad of industries, including financial services, healthcare, real estate, legal and social services. Over \$480,000 in local economic development has been generated through the course of the program.





CRAFT Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Even before shovels were in the ground, we understood that the revitalization could create enormous opportunity for individuals looking for jobs in the construction industry. Working with our trades, we connected dozens of community members to opportunities in just about every discipline, from shoring and excavation to formwork and plumbing. To further support community members in accessing these opportunities, we created the CRAFT Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

Launched in 2016, CRAFT is a 14-week workforce development program that provides participants with four weeks of paid training at the College of Carpenters and Allied Trades (CCAT) training centre, and a 10-week paid job placement with Daniels' trades on our construction sites. Upon completion, participants are eligible for apprenticeship agreements with the Carpenters' Local 27 Union.

Developed by Daniels in partnership with CCAT, Carpenters' Local 27, the YMCA of Greater Toronto, and TCHC, the program receives core funding from the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Program partners contribute additional funding to ensure participants receive wages for the in-class training.

The payment of wages for the training component of the program was a direct response to community feedback around the challenges of participating in training and missing weeks of income earning potential that is critical for most families.

Since 2016, CRAFT has generated over \$350,000 in community economic development during the course of the program. The generation of local economic opportunities is multiplied once the long-term career path of an individual is considered.



CRAFT PROGRAM

55 TCHC youth participants to date

\$350K+ in local economic development generated

Higher Learning Initiative

A significant number of Regent Park residents are immigrants and newcomers, many of whom face barriers to employment. Internationally trained and educated, these individuals are often underemployed, despite having the qualifications needed to succeed.

To support internationally educated professionals in Regent Park, Daniels created the Higher Learning Initiative (HLI). Developed in partnership with Toronto Employment and Social Services and the University of Toronto, HLI is an innovative program that assists skilled professionals educated abroad to realize their full potential, allowing them to gain traction in their chosen field and help bridge Canada’s talent gap.

The HLI grew out of early consultation with residents of Regent Park who were unable to utilize their internationally attained post-secondary credentials in Canada to find meaningful employment. The program provides on-going career and academic advising, a free credential assessment and fully funded education bursaries to use towards professional and academic upgrading courses at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies. Over the last 11 years, three rounds of \$50,000 bursaries have been funded by Daniels.

The program augments participants’ professional credentials and overall marketability to employers, while also enhancing workplace communications skills and Canadian cultural fluency.

Since its launch in 2011, 52 local residents have participated in the program with many notable successes.



HIGHER LEARNING INITIATIVE

52 internationally educated professionals provided with educational opportunities, training and academic upgrading support

Social Procurement

From catering contracts to move-in gifts to the art purchased for every condominium and rental building, social procurement is a pillar of high impact local economic development. Although full-time employment and training opportunities are also important, the reality is that not everyone is looking for a full-time job or career pathway. Individuals seeking alternative ways to participate in the local economy, like artists, entrepreneurs and part-time caterers are often left behind.

To create a broad range of opportunities for community residents to participate in local economic development, Daniels has developed a robust social procurement practice in the neighbourhood over the last 12 years.

Beginning with local art procurement in 2010, we developed a roster of emerging, mid-career and established artists based in Regent Park and the surrounding Downtown East area. Since that time, we’ve worked closely with interior designers to purchase or commission locally sourced art, finding a special home for locally commissioned artworks in main lobbies, corridors, common areas and amenity spaces throughout each new market condominium and rental building in the community.

We took a similar approach with move-in gifts – housewarming presents we gift to homeowners to

welcome them to their new condominium communities.

Our first socially procured move-in gift initiative was a partnership with Dixon Hall’s Mill Centre and Service Canada where youth from the neighbourhood were commissioned to craft 170 planter boxes and 285 balcony side tables for homeowners at One Park West and Paintbox Condominiums.

In the years that have followed, we have commissioned local artists and artisans to craft move-in gifts for each new Daniels condominium building in Regent Park, including 750 tote bags from a local women’s sewing group for homeowners at One Park Place Condominiums and most recently, 460 bookends from a local artist for purchasers at Artworks Tower Condominium.

This simple community-based approach to social procurement has simultaneously beautified our buildings, celebrated local story telling and heritage, and brought economic benefit and public exposure to local artists and artisans.

We continue to work with the community to find new ways to engage local suppliers – including local caterers, photographers, and even a neighbourhood-based social enterprise security firm.

“ For somebody who is passionate about the work that I do, you can have a dream, you can have a vision and you can put in all the work, but if there is no opportunity, there’s no doors open. Daniels has been my opportunity.”

– Murwan Khogali-Ali
Executive Director, InfiniGuard Security & Protections Inc., Regent Park Social Enterprise



Image: Sakina Sewing Circle in Regent Park

About Daniels

The Daniels Corporation (Daniels) is one of Canada's preeminent builder/developers that builds with a passion for creating vibrant communities in every sense of the word. Understanding that quality of life is created by much more than physical buildings, Daniels goes above and beyond to integrate building excellence with opportunities for social, cultural and economic well-being. In so doing, value is created for everyone. Over the course of its 38-year history, Daniels has built more than 35,000 award-winning homes and apartments, master-planned mixed-use communities, and commercial and retail spaces.



Daniels

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