

Project Summary.

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**CITY**  
Projects

# SCADDING COURT COMMUNITY CENTRE

Photo: Wendy Gold



**Scadding Court is a community centre** in downtown Toronto. The simple, low-rise building has traditional amenities you would expect at any community centre including indoor and outdoor public pools, meeting spaces and a gymnasium. The bland, concrete exterior went largely unnoticed until a pop-up style market, installed at the front of the centre, became a permanent draw. Brightly coloured shipping containers stand out along the street, attracting the people passing by. The retrofitted containers house vendors selling a diverse range of cultural foods, crafts and services. They are all part of Market 707 which has helped to create awareness for the robust programming available to people of all ages and cultural backgrounds at the community centre.

Scadding Court has a prime location, at the corner of Bathurst and Dundas Street, making it easily accessible by streetcar along two major public transportation routes. Just three years ago, the space was desolate with a lot of graffiti and garbage on the street. Kevin Lee, the centre's Executive Director, has engaged in an ongoing dialogue with local residents to improve the space. The revitalized space draws people in from the adjacent social housing complex where 60% of the population was born outside of the country, with the majority coming from Vietnam, China, Portugal and Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> It also taps into busy pedestrians spots, just steps away in Kensington Market and Chinatown. Diversity, inclusion, social interaction and community participation are at the heart of the centre's mission and core values.

The market's colour and location, on a major street, make it clearly visible to people walking and driving by. Vendors keep an eye on sidewalk activity so visitors feel safe. The tree-lined market and seating give people shaded spots to stop and sit.

The relaxed, open environment makes people feel comfortable spending time at the market regardless of whether they are buying anything. The close proximity of the containers connects the independent vendors to each other, and they invest in relationships with the community, creating a spirit of partnership.

Moveable seating lets people configure the sidewalk cafe and choose how they spend time there. Communal tables give people an opportunity to sit together and facilitate connections between friends and strangers.

“The booths are all next to each other so we are all in one place from different backgrounds and we talk to each other.”

— Valentino, Market Vendor



Photo: Wendy Gold

<sup>1</sup> Census, 1996

“Once people can get connected there is a lot more room for communication, discussion and understanding.”

— Kevin Lee, Executive Director



Photos: Wendy Gold

The range of cultural foods available is a huge draw and reflects the diversity of the visitors. A Latin American stall sells chalupas and churros next to a Korean food vendor and Middle Eastern shawarma is available next door. The diverse food choices allow visitors to try something new or familiar. Independent vendors are residents, from all over the city, who can start their own business in this prime downtown location for affordable daily rent. A portion of all the profits is pooled together to purchase additional stalls and further improve the market experience.

The space comes to life, inside and out, with unique programs that make the centre a platform for people to engage with each other. Outdoors there are urban gardening programs, farmers markets, community dinners and festivals. Events, such as a TED Talk on immigration, are themed to generate a dialogue around issues that are relevant to local residents.

**The Gone Fishing Program** is just one excellent example of activities that draw people of different cultural backgrounds and ages. Every year in June, the indoor pool is filled with live, freshwater trout. For four dollars, anyone can catch a fish, have it cleaned and take it home or have it cooked by one of the vendors at the market. Gone Fishing brings nature into the city, making the Canadian outdoor experience more accessible.

Nashifa brought her 3-year-old son Nuzhan to the program and considered it a rare opportunity. “How many people in the city get to go fishing at all?” She joked that her son is going to think that fish come from a pool.

Scadding Court has been transformed into a neighbourhood in and of itself. It’s a buzzing hub of activity with active participants and community pride.

# TAKEAWAYS

When combined, the following design elements can help inform Design for Diversity:

## Access

*Provide safe entry to the space*

The centre is easily accessible by public transportation and visible from the street. Affordable food, services and programs make it easier for people to participate.

## Broad Appeal

*Ensure broad appeal so people feel comfortable and enjoy using the space*

Small-scale retail stalls along the sidewalk create an intimate setting. Public furniture, trees and shade make it comfortable to sit whether or not people choose to buy. A range of creative programs attract and delight visitors.

## Welcome

*Create an inclusive experience so people feel that they belong*

Diverse food and vendors, from different cultural backgrounds, create a sense of belonging for visitors.

## Interaction

*Promote understanding between people through connection*

Kitchen table-style furniture brings people together. Creative programs, like fishing at the indoor pool, promote interaction between people and shared experiences.

## Participation

*Enable people to take agency and feel a sense of ownership of place*

At the market, entrepreneurs build relationships with visitors and each other. Local resident and organizers work hand-in-hand to adapt and improve the space to meet the needs of this diverse community.

## About Us.

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Founded in 2006, **OpenCity** is a creative lab that explores the design of cities. We've spent more than a decade learning about what motivates people from different cultures to spend time in public spaces and connect with others. Our goal is to inspire city-builders and provide them with tools to Design for Diversity.