



Founded in 2022

History



2019

In November 2019, after years of community organizing and advocacy, residents in Toronto's west end [won a historic \\$17 million community benefits settlement](#) with the developers of the public school lands at the southwest corner of Bloor Street and Dufferin Street. Led by the volunteer community group [Build A Better Bloor Dufferin](#) (BBBD) with support from two affordable housing nonprofits, local elected officials, countless community members, and several local organizations, the settlement provides funds for creating and preserving both affordable housing and community and cultural spaces in [Davenport - Ward 9 in the City of Toronto](#).

2022

The settlement was used to form two trusts, with \$2 million of these funds directed specifically to preserve spaces used by local community, cultural, and arts organizations in Ward 9. In 2022 two members of BBBD co-founded and incorporated the Community & Cultural Spaces Trust to steward these funds. The housing funds are managed by a separate trust called [Community Affordable Housing Solutions](#).

2025

CCST acquired the [first properties for an arts or culture purpose by a land trust in Canada](#) through a special project with the Inspirit Foundation and the City of Toronto. We also received the final installment of our settlement and began preparing for our Ward 9 property search.

Mandate



We create and facilitate sustainable processes for acquiring and maintaining real property for use by community, cultural and arts organizations in the Bloor Dufferin neighbourhood.

We work to fulfill this mandate by:

Convening Ward 9 arts, cultural and community organizations and groups who are threatened by displacement.

Supporting the community in Ward 9 to obtain or retain commercial and light industrial spaces for community, cultural and arts uses.

Sustaining our initial asset of \$2 million - we will not deteriorate our assets.

Serving as a resource for Ward 9 arts, cultural and community organizations and groups, helping where we can with research, legal agreements, government relations, advocacy, partnerships and community connections.

Principles & Values



CCST exists as a result of years of community organizing for equitable and inclusive development.

CCST's founding principles honour this legacy. We are committed to:

- Leveraging collective power and expertise
- Community governance
- Equity-based investing
- Affordability
- An anti-displacement approach
- A pro-density stance
- Working with affordable housing allies
- Maximal and sustainable use of funds
- Partnerships that serve our mandate

Strategic Priorities



Objective #1

Establish acquisition and operation models

Establish property assessment, acquisition due diligence, and business modelling processes

Objective #2

Deepen our understanding of community

Build an engaged network of members and prospective partners that confirms space needs in the community

Objective #3

Build capacity and governance practices

Complete all required policies, define community governance model and maintain representation goals

Objective #4

Ensure strategic alignment between our values and operational requirements

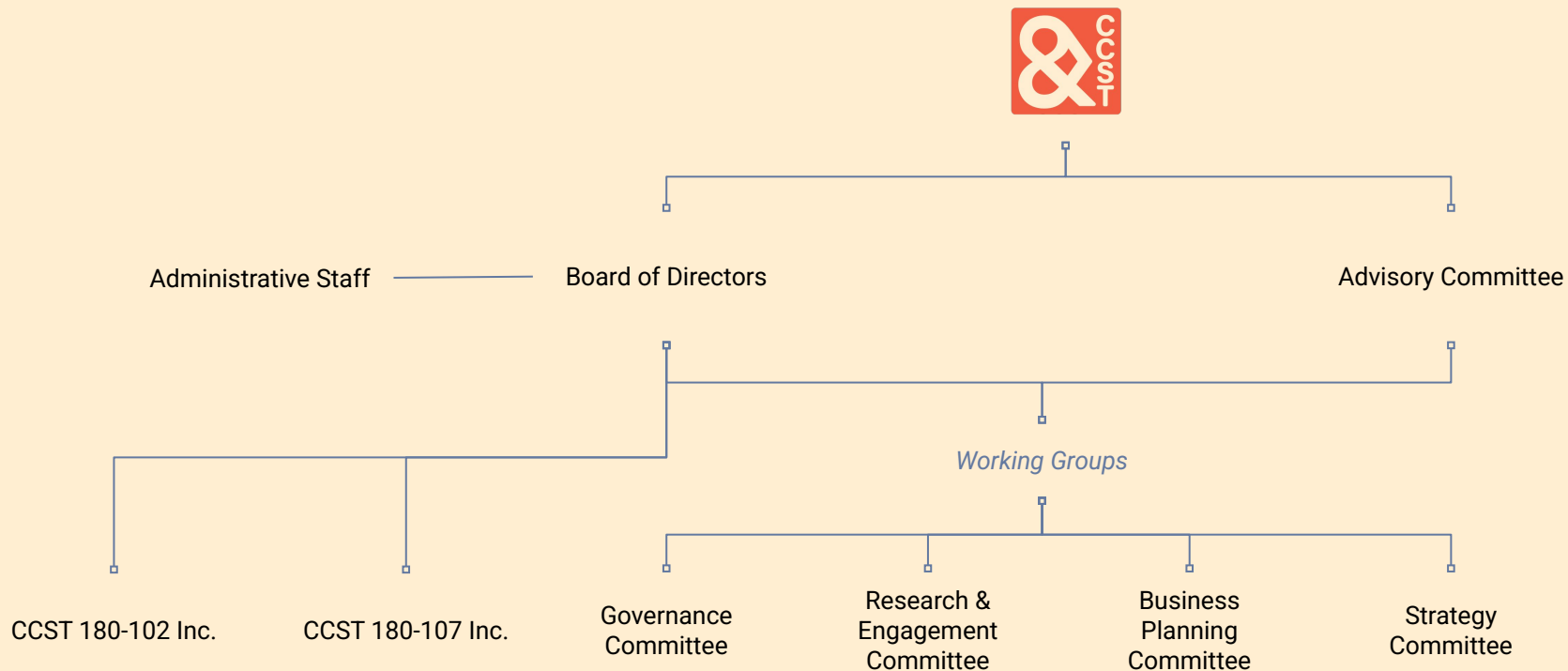
Further develop and refine our operational structure



Goal: Acquire our Ward 9 property

Fulfill our core mission to preserve and sustain arts and culture space in Ward 9

Organization Structure



Board of Directors



	Name	Role	Current Term	First Election Date
1	Hannah Fleisher	Chair	2025-2027	April 18 2022
2	Maggie Hutcheson	Vice Chair	2025-2027	April 18 2022
3	Liz Hysen	Secretary	2026-2028	June 18 2024
4	James Roy	Treasurer	2025-2027	May 21 2025
5	Julia Culpeper	Director	2026-2028	June 18 2024
7	Danielle Singer	Director	2025-2027	May 21 2025
8	Chris Wilson	Director	2025-2027	May 21 2025
9	Erella Ganon	Director	2025-2027	April 18 2022

Board Composition



CCST's Board must include:

- More Ward 9 community members than non-community members (by at least 1 member). We define “community member” as someone who works, volunteers, lives or is otherwise actively involved in Ward 9.
- A minimum of 2 board members who are artists/arts workers from equity-deserving groups
- At least 1 board member who has lived experience of displacement from their studio or rehearsal space
- At least 1 youth-identified board member (under age 30)
- A minimum of 2 board members who work at or regularly volunteer with a community-based or equity-focused organization in Ward 9

Hannah Fleisher, Chair & Founding Director



Terms Served: 2022-2023, 2023-2025, 2025-2027

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/hannah-fleisher-a9a46b76/>

Hannah is the Chair of CCST and has served on the Board since 2022. She is an urban planner with experience in community development and strategic planning for local non-profit/charitable organizations, as well as real estate development and commercial transactions in the public sector. She is deeply motivated by CCST's priority to preserve arts and culture space for the local community and seeks to create permanently affordable access to these assets for less resourced and equity seeking communities. Outside of these pursuits, Hannah is an avid cyclist and dedicated gardener.



Maggie Hutcheson, Co-Founder & Vice Chair



Terms Served: 2022-2023, 2023-2025, 2025-2027

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/maggiehutcheson/>

Maggie was the co-Chair of Build A Better Bloor Dufferin from 2017-2020, co-founded the Community and Cultural Spaces Trust in 2022 (with Yolanda Ferrato) and currently serves on the CCST Board as Vice-Chair. She is a community-based artist, curator, programmer and educator who is passionate about fostering and sustaining inclusive spaces where culture and community can thrive.. In 2023, she joined the University of Toronto as an Assistant Professor of Museum Studies. Maggie can often be found walking in Dovercourt Park or chatting with neighbours. She especially cherishes community events like Clay and Paper Theatre's *Night of Dread*.



Erella Ganon, Founding Director



Terms Served: 2022-2023, 2023-2025, 2025-2027

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/erella-ganon-226149/>

Erella is one of the founding Board Members of CCST, serving since 2022. She is an artist, publisher, connector and community activist in Ward 9 of Toronto for over 45 years. She was the producer of Canada's first AIDS benefit, was a radio personality, journalist, new media designer, helped start Word on The Street with a team, moderates friends of Dufferin Park group and is an active member of the Queen street arts community.



Julia Culpeper, Director



Terms Served: 2024-2026

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/julia-culpeper-92b6aa164/>

Julia joined CCST in 2023 as an Advisory Committee member and was elected to the Board in 2024. She is a project and program manager and learning strategist specializing in helping arts organizations and startups upskill and thrive. She is an active resident of Ward 9 and is inspired by the CCST mandate to prevent displacement and promote community governance approaches to solving complex issues. When not working or volunteering, she enjoys making music, reading, and gardening.



Liz Hysen, Secretary



Terms Served: 2024-2026

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/liz-hysen-41a24b15/>

Liz joined the CCST Advisory Committee in 2023, and was elected as a General Director in 2024, serving as the Secretary. Based in Ward 9, she has worked for over 25 years as a public librarian, archival appraiser, and touring musician. Her interests focus on the changing public landscapes of urban areas and how access to space and resources can be improved for both emerging and established artists. She sees CCST as a vital platform for exploring solutions to Toronto's uneven cultural infrastructure and for advancing sustainable artistic spaces for future generations.



Chris Wilson, Director



Terms Served: 2025-2027

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/christopher-wilson-6a1a0a4a/>

Chris joined the Community & Cultural Spaces Trust (CCST) Board in 2025 as a General Director, bringing a wealth of experience from the arts & culture and non profit sectors. With a Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation, he works at the intersection of futures thinking, community development, and cultural infrastructure. His background includes leading inclusive cultural programming, research, and futures design projects that centre equity and collective imagination. Chris serves on the Board to support CCST's mission of sustaining accessible, community-led cultural spaces, especially for Black, Indigenous, and equity-deserving communities. He is also the co-lead of It's OK* Studios, a multidisciplinary creative hub supporting Black artists and arts workers. Outside of his professional work, Chris is an avid music curator and DJ who finds joy in building community through sound and storytelling.



Danielle Singer, Director



Terms Served: 2025-2027

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/danielle-singer-016b731a1/>

Danielle joined the Board in 2025 as a General Director. She has a diverse background in law, real estate, and recruitment. She began her career as a real estate lawyer before joining a real estate asset management and development company, where she gained extensive experience in development, property management, and commercial leasing. Now focused on creating opportunities for refugees, Danielle currently works at TalentLift where she creates opportunities for refugees through business development, advocacy, policy and building strategic partnerships. An avid traveler who has visited 44 countries, she enjoys exploring Ontario's hiking trails with her dog, Barley and husband.



James Roy, Treasurer



Terms Served: 2025-2027

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jamesroy1/>

James joined the CCST Board in 2025. He has had an extensive career serving as Artistic Director of several professional theatres, including as the founding Artistic Director of the Blyth Festival, as well as serving on the Boards of two professional theatres. During this he has become acutely aware of the rising crisis of supporting and preserving artists and their workspaces in urban centres. The CCST is a crucial opportunity to provide a solution and retain artists and their art as a dynamic part of our city life. When not volunteering, James may be working on his project to record the stories of the founders of Canadian theatres from the 70's and 80's - or gardening.



Advisory Committee



[Read the Committee's full bios here!](#)

	Name	Term	Appointment Date	Area of Focus
1	Darren Leu	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate
2	Debbie Chin	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Real Estate, Finance or Legal Expert
3	Ebony Davitt	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Mission-driven Enthusiast
4	Faizaan Khan	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Mission-driven Enthusiast
5	Grihalakshmi (Lakshmi) Soundarapandian	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate
6	Izzy Mink	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate
7	Joanna Delos Reyes	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate
8	John F.K. Smith	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Real Estate, Finance or Legal Expert
9	Julian Sleath	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate
10	Kristine White	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate
11	Margaux Weinrib	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate
12	Wesley Reibeling	2025-2027	Nov 1 2025	Community or Cultural Sector Advocate

Funding & Finances

1. Cash Holdings

- \$2,000,000 fund from 2019 community benefits settlement
- Use completely restricted to acquisition and operation of real estate in Ward 9

2. Income

- Projected investment income for 2026 of ~\$30,000
- Can be used for operations and non-Ward 9 specific projects

3. Assets

- Two commercial condominiums at 180 Shaw Street acquired in 2025

4. Reporting and Due Diligence

- Full financial audits completed annually from 2022 to 2025
- 2026 approved budget projecting operating surplus

Our Property



180 Shaw Unit 102

Sale Value: \$140,403

Acquired: Feb 2025

Model: Affordable Rental

Current Use: Papermaking studio

Tenant: [Paperhouse Studio](#)



180 Shaw Unit 107

Sale Value: \$315,905

Acquired: Feb 2025

Model: Affordable Rental

Current Use: Pottery studio

Tenant: [Toronto Potters](#)

Media & Public Engagement



Press Releases

[Purchase of Units at Youngplace Building Preserves Arts and Cultural Spaces](#), Inspirit Foundation & Community and Cultural Spaces Trust, 2/2025

Articles

[Inside the movement keeping Toronto rent cheap for locals](#), Toronto Today, 10/2025

[Music for Good: CCST secures first community space acquisition by a cultural land trust in Canada](#), SOCAN Magazine, 4/2025.

[Protecting Arts, Culture, and Community Space at Youngplace](#), Toronto City Councillor Ausma Malik, 2/2025

[Canada's first cultural land trust purchase saves beloved arts spaces](#), Future of Good, 2/2025

[Establishing affordable creative spaces, Spacing, 10/2024](#)

[Cultural Land Trusts as an Emerging Solution to the Arts Space Crisis. The Routledge Handbook of Urban Cultural Planning, 2024](#)

[Land Trusts: There are a myriad of challenges to acquiring property for the arts](#), Spacing Magazine Issue 68, 2024

Panels & Talks

[Ride & Learn: Community Land Trusts](#), Cycle Toronto, 9/2025

[Creative Land Trust Summit](#), Kenneth Rainin Foundation & World Culture Cities Forum, 5/2025

[SPRE 103: Exploring Cultural Land Trusts](#), Arts Build Ontario, 4/2025

[ARTISTS IN FLUX: Community, Space, Gentrification, Parkdale Residents Association Town Hall, 11/2024](#)

[The State of Preservation and Loss in the Arts and Cultural Sector. Canadian Network of Community Land Trust Annual Conference, 10/2024](#)

[Cultural Spaces in Practice: Re-thinking Policy & Imagining Future Uses](#), Cultural Policy Hub, 5/2024

[Cultural Land Trusts for Affordable Arts and Cultural Space, Canadian Network of Community Land Trust Annual Conference, 10/2023](#)

Uriwangyuhs Conversations: Affordability Crisis and Art Spaces. The Creative School, Toronto Metropolitan University, 06/2023

Resources



[An Introduction to Commercial Leasing for Community Land Trusts](#), Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts, 2026

[Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide](#), World Cities Culture Forum, 6/2025

[Donating Property to a Community Land Trust](#), Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts, 1/2025

[Community Land Trusts 101](#), Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts, 2024

Get Involved



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