



# Strengthening Diversity and Inclusivity in the Hamilton Community Land Trust: Recommendations from Interviews and the Literature

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By

Umair Majid  
Manisha Pahwa  
Shannon Killip  
Puja Bagri  
Shaila Jamal

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# Executive Summary

The Hamilton Community Land Trust (HCLT) is a non-profit organization that is focused on securing land for providing low-income families and groups with housing in Hamilton. The HCLT approached the Office of Community Engagement at McMaster University with an interest in learning how their organization can be more representative and inclusive of the communities that they serve.

The primary objective of this research was to identify and suggest strategies to improve diversity and inclusion of HCLT's board of directors. As the HCLT currently does not have a general membership, a secondary objective was to explore strategies for creating a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable general membership.

We conducted a literature review of published academic and grey literature. We combined this strategy with interviews with five key informants from the HCLT and other Hamilton-based organizations. Our findings are divided into five sections: (1) diversity policies, (2) diversity practices, (3) inclusion practices, (4) participation in HCLT activities, and (5) community partnerships.

In the first section (diversity policies), we discuss the role of diversity policies in strengthening board diversity. However, policy development is not enough to ensure diversity. In the second section (diversity practices), we describe a trade-off the HCLT faces when recruiting board members between meeting technical skill requirements and being representative of the communities they serve. We explain how mandatory term limits may be conducive for ensuring representation and relevance of HCLT activities to various communities. In the third section (inclusion practices), we discuss the concept of functional inclusion of marginalized and minority communities as a strategy to strengthen legitimacy of organizational activities and advance the interests of communities. Initial and ongoing diversity training for board members can enable the board to continually meet the needs of communities. In the fourth section (participation in HCLT activities), we describe the barriers for board and general members to participate in HCLT activities, such as time commitment, competing demands, and community awareness. We also discuss how the HCLT can introduce flexibility in the board and general member responsibilities as a way to ensure long-term participation. In the final section (community partnerships), we identify how expanding networks by building community partnerships can further strengthen diversity and inclusivity. Developing a formal partnership strategy and forming an advisory council that exclusively dedicates time to partnership development are evidence-based strategies for strengthening diversity and inclusivity.

Based on these findings, we suggest seven priority recommendations for the HCLT to consider as an initial step towards strengthening diversity, inclusivity, and equity in their organization:

- (1) Co-create and publish a diversity and inclusion policy statement
- (2) Use established toolkits to develop a more diverse and inclusive governance structure

- (3) Develop a “portfolio of engagement” to address the diverse needs and engagement preferences of communities and individuals
- (4) Develop a flexible board member recruitment strategy
- (5) Diversify the HCLT network by increasing board size, creating a general membership, and strengthening community partnerships
- (6) Increase the accessibility of information about the HCLT in order to improve the legitimacy of HCLT activities in Hamilton
- (7) Conduct annual evaluations of HCLT diversity and inclusivity to ensure that community needs and preferences are being met

## Introduction

Overview: At the request of the Hamilton Community Land Trust (HCLT), this report has been prepared by Research Associates from the McMaster Research Shop. The goal of this report was to suggest practical approaches and strategies for enhancing diversity and inclusivity in the HCLT. The research question was:

What features of a community-driven governance model might be appropriate for the HCLT that will ensure:

- A. Diverse and inclusive management (i.e., board membership)?
- B. A diverse, inclusive, and sustainable membership base (i.e., general membership)?

Scope: This report is informed by academic (i.e. peer reviewed) and grey (i.e. non-peer reviewed) literature and interviews with key informants with experiences in addressing inclusivity and diversity in Hamilton-based non-profit organizations. We developed our recommendations based on the key informant interviews supplemented with findings from the literature review, which either addressed gaps in the interviews or provided additional supporting evidence.

Terms: Diversity and inclusivity are overlapping but distinct concepts. To help delineate between these concepts in our research, we used the following definitions:

- Inclusive behaviors: “actions of board members that enable members from minority and marginalized communities to feel respected and engaged in the organization’s governance” (Buse, Bernstein, and Bilimoria, 2016, p. 180).
- Diverse policies and practices: “practices and procedures that are commonly believed to enhance diversity and improve the experience for minority group members, such as diversity statements, policies, committees or taskforces dedicated to diversity and inclusion, diversity training for board members, and integration of diversity into the core mission and values” (Bernstein and Bilimoria, 2013, p. 641)

In addition, we also use “engagement” and “involvement” interchangeably to indicate strategies for supporting general member participation in non-profit activities in Hamilton. We use “community volunteers” and “general members” to indicate individuals involved in organizational activities who are not board members of the

organization. When we use “members” we refer to those who are elected to serve on non-profit board of directors.

Organization: The report is organized in the following way:

- **Background**: This section provides an overview of community land trusts, and the HCLT in particular; reviews the demographic context of Hamilton; and summarizes the Parkdale Neighborhood Community Land Trust report on inclusive and diverse governance.
- **Methodology and Limitations**: This section describes the methods we used to gather our data to inform the findings and recommendations.
- **Findings**: This section integrates findings from the literature and interviews for each of the following five themes:
  - **Diversity Policies**: We discuss the role of diversity policies in strengthening board diversity.
  - **Diversity Practices**: We describe the trade-off between technical skill requirements and representation of various communities, and how mandatory term limits can address this trade-off.
  - **Inclusion Practices**: We discuss the concept of functional inclusion as a way to engage marginalized and minority groups to strengthen community legitimacy and advance the diverse interests of communities. Initial and ongoing diversity training for board members may be a useful practice for achieving inclusivity.
  - **Participation in HCLT Activities**: We describe the barriers for board and general members to participate in HCLT activities, such as time commitment, competing demands, and community awareness.
  - **Community Partnerships**: We identify how expanding networks by building community partnerships can further strengthen diversity and inclusivity.
- **Discussion and Recommendations**: In this section, we examine the most relevant findings to develop practical recommendations for the HCLT to develop a community-driven governance model for the unique demographic context of Hamilton.
- **Appendix**: We provide our data collection instruments as well as additional articles we retrieved through our searching that are relevant to inclusivity and diversity that we could not fully analyze for this report.

## Background

### Community Land Trusts, and the Hamilton Community Land Trust

Community land trusts (CLTs) are non-profit organizations that acquire land to be used in ways that benefit their surrounding community (Moore & McKee, 2012). CLTs are self-governed by a board of directors and a group of members representing the community. These members work together to choose how the land that they acquire will

be used (Bunce, 2015). The land can be used to create community spaces such as green spaces, community gardens and community centers (Davis, 2010). Another common use for the land is the creation of affordable housing units that can either be leased or rented to low-income families (Bunce, 2015). Housing units built on CLT land are much more affordable than commercial housing because the land ownership is kept separate from the housing unit ownership (Meehan, 2014). The CLT remains the owner of the land on which the housing units are built, even when the houses are owned by other families (Thompson, 2015). CLTs are also unique in that they can keep housing units affordable over many years, unlike commercial houses, which are subject to inflation and fluctuation in the real estate market (Meehan, 2014). Because the value of the housing unit stays relatively consistent over time, when it is leased or rented to a new family, the costs can also be kept the same (West, 2011). Furthermore, legal agreements ensure that rent increases and resale profits are restricted or prohibited (Angotti & Jagu, 2007).

Although CLT organizations date back to 1969, they started becoming more common in the mid-1990s in order to combat rising housing prices (Davis, 2014). There are more than 260 CLTs in the United States. CLTs also exist in other countries such as Australia, Belgium, and England (Davis, 2014). More recently, CLTs for low income housing have formed across Canada. The Vancouver CLT began construction of their 358 rental housing units in 2015 (Patten, 2015) and currently have more than 2,600 affordable homes across 12 neighbourhoods in British Columbia (Community Land Trust, 2019). Although the housing units are highly concentrated in Metro Vancouver to accommodate a higher population density, units also exist in neighbourhoods surrounding downtown Vancouver and in areas much further from Vancouver such as Vancouver Island, Abbotsford and Kelowna. The Vancouver CLT's ongoing goal is to provide low to moderate income families with quality homes that are reasonably priced (Community Land Trust, 2019) in response to rising housing prices in Vancouver (Patten, 2015). Similarly, a CLT in Parkdale, Toronto was created to provide affordable housing to an inner-city community that was experiencing gentrification (Bath et al., 2012).

The Hamilton CLT (HCLT) is also working towards creating affordable housing units for low income families across many diverse communities within the city of Hamilton, Ontario. The HCLT received their first property in the Landsdale Neighbourhood in 2017. The property now houses a family living in a free-hold home constructed in partnership with Habitat for Humanity (Hamilton CLT, 2019). Because 62% of residents in the Landsdale Neighbourhood rent houses, and 57% of these renters live in unaffordable housing (Mayo, Klassen, & Bahkt, 2012), the Hamilton CLT completed this project in order to help revitalize the neighbourhood (Maxted, 2017). The completion of the Landsdale housing unit is only the first of many projects to come as the Hamilton CLT hopes to acquire more land in order to build more affordable housing units across the Hamilton Community (Maxted, 2017).

## The Demographic Context of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

The city of Hamilton is a port city, located at the west end of Lake Ontario. The demographic information highlighted in this report is summarized from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census of Population, which is currently the most reliable source of detailed demographic information at the neighbourhood (dissemination area) level. The city has a population of 536,917 with a land area of 1,117.29 square kilometres and a population density of 480.6 per square kilometres. Among the population age groups, in 2016, 21.6% of the population belonged to the 50-64 years age group (21.6% nationally) and 17.3% were seniors (16.9% nationally). Overall, between 2001 and 2016, child and youth (under 19 years) population has decreased and the number of adults over 50 years has increased significantly in Hamilton, similar to the overall population in Canada (Figure 1).

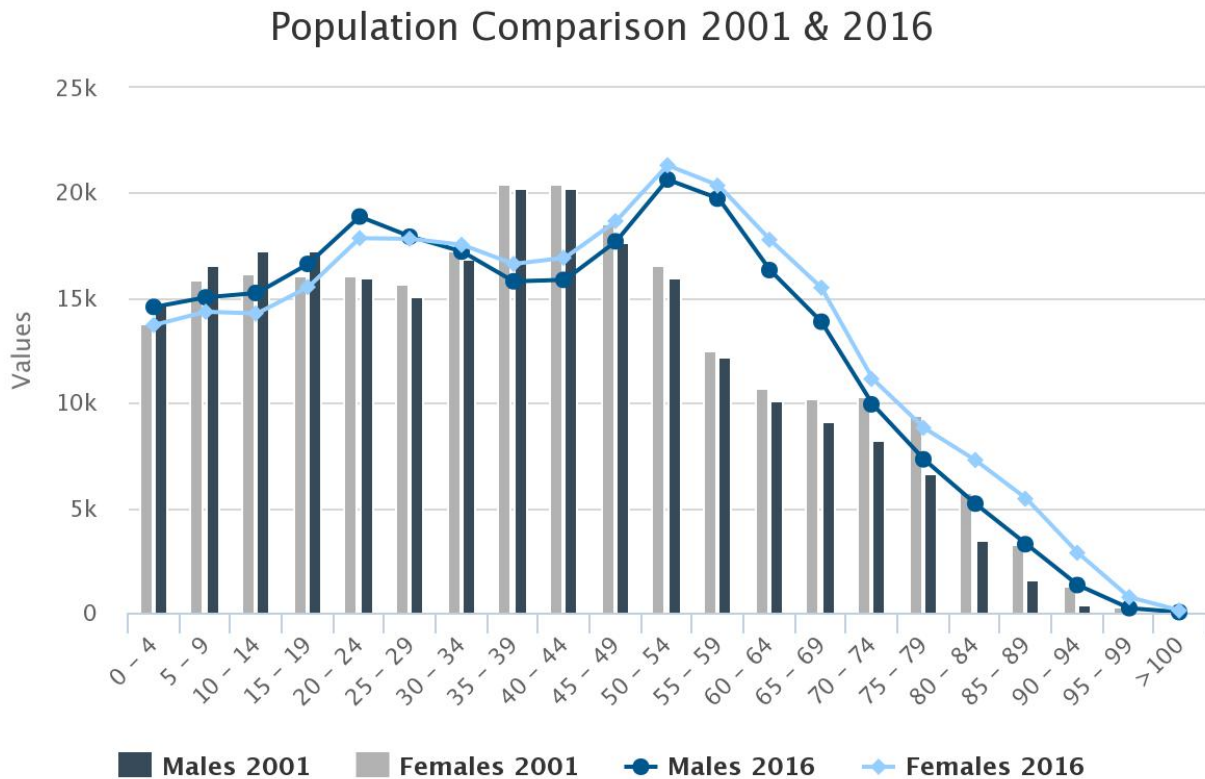


Figure 1: Population comparison of the City of Hamilton between 2001 and 2016. Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001 and Census 2016. Chart downloaded from The City of Hamilton (<https://www.hamilton.ca/>)

The average household size is 2.5 and 19.2% of the private households are lone-parent families. The proportion of the immigrant population is also higher in Hamilton compared



to Canada. One in every 4 Hamiltonians is an immigrant compared to 1 in every 5 in Canada. Almost half of the immigrant population (48.6%) came from European origin and one-third of (32.2%) are from Asian origin. Thirteen percent of immigrants are from American origin and 5.7% are from African origin. Thirty percent of immigrants who landed between 1980 -2016 were refugee claimants. Almost 12000 people in Hamilton identify as Aboriginal. In addition, 1 in every 5 individuals is a visible minority. Among them, 22% are from South Asia, 20.2% are from African origin, 10% are from Chinese origin and 10% are from Arab origin.

In terms of income and employment, average household income after tax in 2015 was CAD 73,524. Twenty-one percent of children, 14.5% of adults, and 11.6% of seniors in Hamilton are facing poverty, defined as spending 20% or more than the national average of after-tax income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing. At the same time, 13.3% of the population was relying on government transfers as a source of income in 2015. The unemployment rate in Hamilton is 7%, whereas the provincial and national rate is 7.4% and 7.7%, respectively.

Regarding housing status, 67.6% of the private households in Hamilton are owned and 32.4% are rented. In terms of housing costs, 16.8% of owner households and 45.4% of the tenant households spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs. The average monthly shelter cost for an owned dwelling is CAD 1350 and for rented dwelling is CAD 947.

## Summary of the Parkdale Neighborhood Land Trust Report

Parkdale is a highly diverse inner-city community in west Toronto. The demographic is comprised of many low-income and marginalized people, as well as recent immigrants and individuals working through mental health or addiction issues. Additionally, many community members live below the poverty line; thus, any increase in costs related to day-to-day living expenses can greatly affect residents. Due to the increasing pressure for Parkdale to gentrify, a growing issue is food availability and the need for affordable food sources. As such, in 2010 community members suggested that a CLT focused on food availability be developed for Parkdale.

The primary focus of the Parkdale neighborhood land trust (PNLT) was to help mitigate issues of food insecurity by providing dedicated space for community members to grow their own produce. Several local organizations were involved in this endeavour, including the Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre (PARC). One critical aspect of the PNLT and PARC was the development of a governance structure that “fairly represents and balances the diverse yet unequal interests in Parkdale.” Therefore, the Parkdale Report was commissioned to do the following: 1) identify governance challenges that the PNLT may encounter, as well as potential strategies used by other CLTs to combat these difficulties; and 2) to recommend a governance model customized to meet the needs of the PNLT and reflect its mandate of equity, while also maintaining efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and practical feasibility.

To address these objectives, a literature review was conducted by a team of researchers from McMaster University. The literature review focused on governance and public participation, as well as examining other North American CLTs and analyzing the challenges and strategies associated with their governance structures. In addition, researchers conducted key informant interviews with other CLT practitioners, Parkdale community members and a diverse range of stakeholders (i.e. senior staff in social services organizations, marginalized residents, and highly involved members of the Parkdale community). The research focused on the question, “what would a sustainable, equitable, feasible and effective board look like?” Based on the research conducted, the authors suggested that the composition of the board of directors follow the traditional tripartite membership model, which is classically used in CLTs. The authors of the report felt it would be best to adapt this traditional model to uniquely fit the needs of the PNLT and Parkdale communities.

The tripartite model is comprised of board members voted in by members of the CLT. Membership in the CLT falls under three different categories: 1) PNLT users, 2) general members of the Parkdale community and 3) public members. These members, particularly those who fall in the third category, are selected based on the skills, experiences and connections they bring that can help achieve the goals of the PNLT. Additionally, the report states that all board members should adhere to pre-established rights and responsibilities, while working within an anti-oppressive framework. According to the PNLT, an anti-oppressive framework consists of a system that operates to promote advocacy and create transformative change, while minimizing or eliminating oppressive systems. The authors recommended that the PNLT should adopt an anti-oppressive practice for its work by continuously critiquing its values, mandate and practices to ensure the organization is constantly operating in a manner that is advancing social justice and keeping equity at the forefront. Many other organizations in Parkdale also work within an anti-oppressive framework, including PARC.

To further contribute to equitable governance, authors of the report suggested that board members participate in consensus decision-making practices. The primary recommended strategy was to use a consensus decision-making model, and then to use a modified model (supermajority of two-thirds consent) if common consensus cannot be met. The consensus model was recommended for decision-making at the board level and is a process that ensures that the entire group comes to an agreement, while the supermajority model, recommended for decision-making at the general member level, requires that two thirds of the members agree with the decision being made. According to the authors, this strategy aligns with key goals of PNLT that includes promoting equity and inclusion. Ultimately, consensus decision-making allows differing opinions to be shared and incorporated into unified decisions regarding the PNLT.

The recommended governance structure also emphasized the need for effectiveness, sustainability, and feasibility. The authors suggested that the board of directors be composed of a diverse group of community members, outside of just the usual members (i.e. non-profit agencies, outspoken residents, and gentrifiers). Instead, it

should aim to also include people from all socio-economic and ethno-cultural groups in Parkdale (i.e. the working poor, business owners, homeowners, individuals receiving social assistance, politicians, urban planners, those with mental health or addiction issues, people with disabilities, and newcomers to Canada). Not only does this increase diversity, but engaging as many different groups as possible can also help sustain participation long-term. Likewise, it was suggested that this strategy can lead to the establishment of partnerships with different organizations and people with resources that can bring both short- and long-term benefits to the PNLT. Overall, the authors recommended that the board should have members who can represent the interests of the different groups within Parkdale, while concurrently pursuing the set goals of the PNLT.

The recommendations provided by the Parkdale Report highlighted the importance of building a governance model that: 1) displays broad-based community representation and inclusivity, while still being able to meet the need for specific skill-sets, 2) ensures that principles and values important to the CLT such as equity, social justice, and democratic decision-making are being upheld, while maintaining efficacy, feasibility and viability of the board, and 3) is sustainable long-term, while allowing for flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances (e.g., food security).

## Methodology and Limitations

### Methodology

#### Literature Review

In order to identify strategies that could foster diversity and inclusivity at the HCLT, we conducted a literature review of studies on non-profit organization and management and qualitative interviews with key informants who have developed initiatives to improve diversity and inclusion in Hamilton-based non-profit organizations. We searched for studies on strategies for facilitating diversity and inclusivity in non-profit boards of directors or engagement of general members in non-profit organizational activities. We included all types of studies but excluded those on corporate or for-profit boards of directors, and studies outside of the North American or European context.

We used a three-pronged search to identify literature from academic journals and non-academic reports. We conducted the first search in seven academic databases on October 27, 2019 without any restrictions on the publication year or language. We used combinations of search terms including “non-profit”, “inclusive”, “diverse”, “equitable”, “representative”, “governance”, and “land trust”. One database, Web of Science, provided the greatest number of relevant results. For this reason, we only considered literature found from Web of Science. We supplemented this search by looking for other relevant documents through Google.com and Google Scholar, including reports, policy recommendations, and briefing notes. We conducted a third search by identifying any

additional literature from the reference lists of literature selected from the previous two search strategies.

## Interviews

In order to learn about the facilitators and barriers to creating diverse, inclusive and sustainable membership for the HCLT, we conducted semi-structured interviews using the qualitative description study method. This method involves developing simple summaries of participant data using their own words (Sandelowski, 2000). To find the right individuals to interview, we used a purposive sampling strategy by identifying and reaching out to key informants who could provide insight on the topic. We selected participants that were current HCLT board members, key informants in other Hamilton-based non-profit organization, members of neighborhood associations in Hamilton, and general members of non-profit organizations. In total, we conducted eight semi-structured interviews with key informants.

We recruited key informants through the HCLT's liaison to the McMaster Research Shop. The research team lead contacted potential key informants by sending an invitation email that explained the purpose of the study and the interview process [Appendix A] and asked to read and return a signed consent form [Appendix B]. Participants and research associates decided on a time and location for the interview. Before the start of each interview, we also obtained verbal consent from participants.

Five research associates conducted semi-structured interviews lasting between 30 to 60-minutes. Each research associate transcribed the interviews they conducted using voice recording and automated transcription applications. The research team lead anonymized the transcribed interviews and stored them on a shared Google Drive folder that could only be accessed by the research team. After the completion of the study, the research team lead destroyed the transcribed interviews and the associated audio recordings. All names identified in this report are pseudonyms; no real names have been used.

Based on the interview guides used to produce parts of the Parkdale report, we modified these interview guides and prepared three interview guides for participant groups: HCLT Board Members, General Members, and Key Informants [Appendix C for key informant interview guide]. For HCLT Board Members and Key Informants, we asked about their organizational context, the mechanisms in their organization to ensure inclusivity and diversity in the governance structure and decision-making processes, and strategies for attaining a meaningfully engaged general membership that is representative of Hamilton's diversity. For general members, we asked about the barriers and facilitators of engaging in non-profit organizations in the long-term, and what strategies non-profit organizations can implement to address challenges. To anchor our discussions, we used the definitions of inclusivity and diversity mentioned previously in this report (Buse, Bernstein, and Bilimoria, 2016; Bernstein and Bilimoria, 2013).

We performed qualitative content analysis using the Microsoft Word comment feature to summarize the meaning and relevance of participant responses (Sandelowski, 2000). Our first step was to code<sup>1</sup> participant interviews. Our coding focused on the most meaningful and frequently mentioned codes that were relevant to the research questions. After we coded all interviews, we reviewed all codes and memos and finalized a list of themes that would be captured in the report. Each research associate composed a narrative summary for one of the four themes, and the research team lead collated all summaries. We used the findings from the literature review to either corroborate or address the gaps in the interview data; we found this approach to be most appropriate for ensuring coherence between findings from the interviews and literature review, as well as maintaining high relevance to the broader HCLT research questions.

## Limitations

There are a number of limitations for the work conducted in this report that should be taken into account when reflecting on the findings. First, diversity and inclusivity are two similar but distinct concepts that guided our interviews and the literature review. However, we acknowledge the lack of clarity on the differences between these concepts in both the academic literature and how interview participants understood them. Although we used two definitions from the literature this may have narrowed our view of diversity and inclusivity practices in non-profit organizations.

Second, we were unable to locate peer-reviewed literature from the Canadian or Hamilton context on inclusivity and diversity in CLTs, which may be an important opportunity for the HCLT to contribute to the scholarship in collaboration with researchers. In addition, although we found a considerable amount of CLT-specific grey literature, there was limited published research on how to improve diversity and inclusivity in CLTs. For these reasons, we expanded our scope to look at inclusivity and diversity in non-profit organizations, particularly at the level of the board of directors. Our approach was to identify the relevance of findings from the non-profit literature to strengthening governance in community land trusts. Where possible, we integrated grey literature relevant to improving diversity or inclusivity. Other literature that may be relevant to the HCLT is included in Appendix D.

Third, Hamilton has a unique demographic context with a considerable number of immigrants, newcomers, and minorities, who are arguably most affected by strategies that aim to strengthen diversity and inclusivity. However, we were unable to locate literature that included diverse populations and communities as participants. We

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<sup>1</sup> Coding refers to identifying themes as they emerge from reading interview transcripts. Initially, we conducted pilot coding of one transcript, and each research associate developed a memo that captured salient themes and concepts. As a group, we compared the coding memos to create a preliminary coding schema that we used as an anchor to guide analysis of the remaining transcripts. At least two research associates reviewed each transcript and met individually to compare the key insights. As the research team coded other transcripts, we modified the themes captured in the preliminary coding schema as appropriate to expand existing ideas or integrate similar ideas into one theme.

attempted to address this by incorporating diverse participants in our interviews as much as possible. Notwithstanding, we are unable to adequately comment on the effectiveness of our proposed recommendations and strategies from the perspective of vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. There is a need to investigate the perspectives of diverse groups including immigrants, newcomers, and minorities on the engagement strategies and diversity practices of non-profit organizations.

Fourth, our aim was to conduct more than half of our key informant interviews with representatives of Hamilton-based non-profit organizations. However, due to logistical issues, we were only able to secure two interview participants from non-profit organizations. Therefore, our interview findings do not comprehensively capture the breadth of strategies that may improve diversity and inclusivity of Hamilton-based non-profits. Instead, our integrated findings provide recommendations tailored to the unique circumstances and goals of the HCLT to improve its diversity and inclusivity approaches. In addition, we used the experiences of board members from other non-profits in Hamilton to inform the development of strategies that may work for the HCLT.

## Findings: Strategies for Inclusive, Diverse, and Sustainable Board and General Membership

In this section, we present the findings from the interviews and literature review by discussing seven major themes. First, we discuss how to increase board diversity by formalizing diversity policies. Next, we describe how board practices, such as setting term limits and performing formal diversity training, can improve board diversity and inclusion. We then explore different barriers to participation such as competing demands, and how flexibility in participation can promote sustainable membership. Lastly, we explain how creating awareness and developing community partnerships can help legitimize the HCLT's projects and advance their mission.

### Diversity Policies

Bradshaw and Fredette (2013) found that non-profit organizations aiming to increase diversity (i.e. ethnic, racial and gender) representation on their boards must do so by formalizing and publicizing diversity-related policies and practices. Having formal policies in place can embed concepts related to diversity and inclusivity in core board practices. As indicated by Bradshaw and Fredette (2013), policies become routine when they are “just the way we do things around here” (pg. 1127). Making these policies routine ensures that they continue in the long-term and enable individuals to be on the same page with the meaning and implications of policies and practices. This can “reduce the tendency to introduce personal bias and idiosyncratic approaches to boardroom processes” (Bradshaw and Fredette 2013, pg. 1127). The formalization of these processes reflects the organization's commitment to its constituents and ensuring that they are represented in board-level decision-making and activities (Brown, 2002). Indeed, the institutionalization of diversity policies has been found to increase the range of visible minority representation on non-profit boards (Bradshaw and Fredette, 2013).

Interview participants emphasized the importance of making the HCLT's existing diversity transparent to the public and having all board members communicate these policies to community members and organizations. And yet, one board member drew attention to the gap between policy and practice: "I think writing like strategies and you know policies to try to address diversity is one thing but it's another thing completely to try to practice it" (Ray).

## Diversity Practices

As reported by interviewees and in the literature reviewed, diversity is critical to board composition. Two themes emerged from this research: the need to balance technical skills with representation on non-profit boards, and imposing term limits.

### Balancing technical skills vs. representation

When it comes to board composition, one of the challenges expressed by interview participants was a *perceived* trade-off between the technical skills needed by a new and small organization, and the representation of various communities that the organization aims to serve. Interview participants highlighted the importance of having people with formal experiences in the field of real estate, law, management, communication, and non-profit development. Lester explained in his interview that it was difficult to find a balance between the technical skills required by the board and increasing board diversity:

"I mean, finding folks who have the diversity element and have the skill sets is oftentimes a challenge, right? The vast majority of applications we get, I would say, at least 60% are white males who are fully able and maybe that's just the group that... our positions are appealing to. So it's really challenging to get people to just come out and apply and show interest" (Lester).

This perceived trade-off appeared in some of the literature as well. The literature supports recruiting members with specific skills in finances or those who are respected in communities such as small business owners and employees of local universities (Silverman, 2009). Selecting board members based on technical skills and experiences may inadvertently limit the extent to which others who may be interested in volunteering but lack specific skills, can participate in non-profit activities (Silverman, 2009). Technical skills and diversity are not mutually exclusive, however. For instance, some research suggests that the perceived trade-off can be reduced by a broad board recruitment strategy and by increasing board size (Jaskyte et al., 2012). A wide search and greater board size may strengthen the ability to identify and recruit technically skilled and diverse/representative board members.

### Term limits

An interesting concept that arose through interviews with participants was how limiting the tenure of board members can increase diversity and inclusivity. Broadly, term limits

ensure that those involved with the board are actively engaged for the time they are there, while new board members can be cycled in to keep up with the changing needs and requirements of the group and constituents. One participant stated that the perceived trade-off between diversity and the need for a specific skill set can be ameliorated by mandatory a term limit policy: “we’ve had people step back from the board so that we could have a more diverse board member join the board. So it is something that we do informally, it’s just not formalized into our processes” (Sophia). In addition, setting term limits should be combined with developing short- and long-term goals for each board member that matches the unique needs of diverse communities. These goals should be reviewed regularly to ensure that organizational activities continue to be relevant to Hamilton communities.

## Inclusion practices

Our findings suggest that the ability of a non-profit board to increase diversity is largely based on its ability to exercise inclusion practices. For instance, one study attempted to disentangle diversity from inclusion and found that the impact of greater diversity on board performance and viability was mostly dependent on the board’s commitment to inclusion of cultural, ethnic, and philosophical differences on the board (Fredette et al., 2016). In a separate study by Brown and colleagues (2002), boards using more inclusive practices did not necessarily have diverse board member composition but were more likely to be sensitive to diversity issues and used evidence-based board recruitment practices. In this section, we outline the concept of functional inclusion and discuss diversity and inclusivity in decision-making processes in non-profit organizations. The literature and interviews suggest that this concept will enable the HCLT to create an organizational environment that is conducive for inclusivity and diversity.

## Functional Inclusion

As highlighted in the Parkdale report, it is critical for CLTs to operate with accessibility and inclusivity in mind as this ensures that the organization is effectively impacting the greatest number of people involved. Specifically, functional inclusion, i.e. “goal-driven and purposeful inclusion of individuals identified from diverse or traditionally marginalized communities,” should be practiced at the board level (Fredette et al., 2016,). More than just giving a member of a group a seat at the table, the board must “support a conscious and purposeful inclusion of people from diverse and traditionally marginalized communities for the benefit of the constituents served by the organization” (Fredette, Bradshaw & Krause, 2016). It is theorized that this approach will create greater legitimacy for different constituents, demonstrate that the board is forward-thinking, and, most importantly, enable diverse board members to engage in advocacy and advance the interests of their respective communities.

To achieve functional inclusion, board members should receive formal diversity training. This can be an ongoing process, where new board members are required to complete a training, and the board periodically reflects on current issues regarding inclusivity and



makes changes to board policies as needed to align with ongoing inclusivity discussions. Additionally, as recommended in the Parkdale report, to help evaluate whether activities being conducted by the board are accessible and inclusive, an accessibility checklist can be created and implemented (Appendix E). Factors such as language accessibility, community representation and accessibility during meetings should be reviewed by the board regularly.

Along with functional inclusion, there is evidence that supports the practice of social inclusion (e.g. team building exercises, team retreats) during board meetings build trust, rapport, and communication among board members (Vermeiren et al., 2019; Fredette et al., 2016). Social inclusion has been shown to support improved decision-making and reduced board turnover between board election cycles (Fredette et al., 2016). Social inclusion is all the more important when recruiting, onboarding, and building relationships with board members from marginalized and minority communities (Fredette et al., 2016).

## Decision-making

Decision-making refers to the policies and practices of making executive decisions for an organization. When it comes to strategies to increase diversity and inclusiveness in decision-making, one non-profit organization leader succinctly questioned, “how do we make the best decision to serve the people who need our help the most?” (Lester). This participant acknowledged that diversity elements do not often appear in decision-making.

Interviews with HCLT board members revealed that the HCLT has a diverse foundation that needs to be leveraged to strengthen diversity. As one HCLT board member stated, “we are operating under this plan that was developed through consultation with over 1000 community members and 30 partner organizations.” Participants also discussed their principled beliefs about the association between diversity and quality of decision-making: “so I think that [diversity] lends itself to better discussion and then decision making practice” (Charlie) and diversity and legitimacy: “board policy is the most influential when it comes to ensuring some sort of diversity around the table” (Ray). One HCLT board member expressed the potential need for facilitated board meetings in a way that ensures that all voices are heard and are reflected in inclusive decision-making. Another participant suggested that HCLT board members need to engage with current renters and formalize relationships with residents and tenants, and low-income families, and integrate their views into board decisions. This could include, for example, an explicit fiduciary commitment to make decisions on the board using processes and outcomes that are for the benefit of renters and low-income families in Hamilton, and also holding positions on the board for residents and tenants themselves.

## Participation in HCLT Activities

Requirements for participation, such as time and skill requirements, can be a barrier to enhancing diversity and inclusion. Two specific challenges found from our research are described below: time commitment and competing demands, and membership sustainability, and community awareness

### Time commitment and competing demands

Interviewees explained that people have competing demands such as work, family and other commitments, which limited their time to volunteer. This finding was also supported by Silverman (2009) who explored citizen participation in non-profit housing organizations in Buffalo, New York and found that it was hard to recruit low-income individuals to volunteer due to competing demands such as working multiple jobs that was not present in other groups. Silverman (2009) also found that there was a lack of socio-economic diversity in members of non-profit housing organizations in the city, as most recruited members were from middle-class working professionals who worked at banks, operated their businesses, or worked at local universities. Similarly, one participant stated that low-income individuals who are “struggling to make ends meet... don’t have time to volunteer their skills to a small board” (Ray). These findings suggest that strategies that address the competing priorities faced by different groups can serve as a mechanism to strengthen diversity in non-profit organizations, which may include compensation, reimbursement (i.e., monetarily or through indirect means such as childcare), or special recognitions and services (i.e., access to expertise and resources).

Participants recommended that the timing of activities (e.g. meetings, events) should be flexible, held when the majority are available and organized in a place that is accessible to them. The study by Silverman (2009) mentioned that marginalized communities (e.g. poor, renters, working class and other indigent groups) lacks representation on board and participation in community activities as they face additional constraints such as childcare, work schedule, and other competing responsibilities. According to participants, since general members are volunteering their time, special attention should be given to provide support to reduce barriers to engagement, such as childcare facilities and transportation subsidies for individuals from low-income neighborhoods in Hamilton. However, providing these services fully may not be within the financial capacity of new and small organizations. Since individuals have different needs, providing some support, even if it does not fully address members’ needs, will improve meaningful engagement. Overtime, the HCLT can build towards creating a more complete list of services that fully alleviate the barriers to participation for certain Hamilton communities.

### Membership sustainability

Interview findings highlighted the difficulties of sustaining long-term engagement of board and general members. In his interview, Charlie proposed greater flexibility in board member and general member participation requirements. This participant

explained that all members should be responsible for baseline roles and tasks, which could include attending monthly meetings, but also have the flexibility to take on more responsibility if they were interested in a project or if their skills related to a specific task. This strategy may allow members to increase their capacity when it is appropriate and return to their base level participation when they have to focus on other personal or professional commitments. Charlie gave an example to further explain the concept:

“It's kind of like hand raising and includes responsibility for what you want that allows you to self-select into things that either you're passionate about, you have a certain skill set in, and allows you to kind of like stay engaged, while your capacity changes ... You can say hey I want to [work] on this social media campaign, and then you're committed to that for a month. And then you're going to drop down to like a base level again and kind of like having that kind of like flexibility” (Charlie).

The participant suggested that allowing flexibility in responsibilities and commitment might be an effective strategy for the HCLT to keep both board and general members engaged in the long-term. Furthermore, having different board members volunteer for different tasks leads to progress on projects, increases overall inclusivity, and sustains organizational productivity.

Similarly, Lester, who has been a member of a non-profit organization for several years, explained that allowing volunteers to learn new skills, take on leadership roles, and feel as though they are part of a community were successful strategies to help maintain long-term volunteers. By giving the general members the opportunity for personal growth, the chance to take on more responsibility, and the feeling that their skills are invaluable to the board and the organization, flexibility may help promote a sustainable membership.

The results from the interviews were consistent with the literature review results. In one paper, the authors recommended a typology of roles of different members within public-non-profit networks to help promote diversity and inclusion (i.e. coordinator, steering committees, workgroups) (Vermeiren et al., 2019). In another study, the authors found that leadership was diffused and shared when individuals were able to pursue their interests on different committees (Ferguson et al., 2004).

## Community awareness

Participation of individuals from diverse communities requires greater awareness and interest in HCLT's projects and initiatives. One interview participant explained the importance of meeting volunteers' interests by stating “if you're not excited to do something, no one can force you to volunteer” (Ray). At the same time, Lester suggested that the lack of interest might be due to poor awareness of what the HCLT actually does: “every board [needs] to raise awareness that they're there... When was the last time you joined a club that you didn't know existed” (Lester)? Lester recommended that HCLT board members should raise awareness by sharing information on social media, websites, newsletters, by attending community events and

by word-of-mouth. The regular use of social media to engage diverse populations was specifically mentioned by participants. Currently, the HCLT has Facebook page with around 450 followers, and uses newsletters to keep their donors, former staff, and interested communities informed about their activities. However, all communications are made in English, which interview participants identified as a barrier to reaching people of diverse backgrounds. Interview participants recognized the need to communicate in other languages as well as using plain and engaging language to reach diverse populations in Hamilton. The literature review also found similar results with regards to raising awareness of non-profit projects, especially when looking to increase diversity. An article by Bradshaw (2013) recommended that non-profit organizations publish articles describing their work in highly circulated newspapers as well as ethnic and cultural publications in order to spread awareness across many diverse communities.

## Community partnerships

According to the participants, developing partnerships with external organizations plays an essential role in advancing the HCLT's mission. Brown (2002) suggested that representation should be pursued from all essential external constituents. According to the authors, an effective board should be aware of the needs of the community they serve and how its constituents can contribute to organizational activities. Partners from different organizations have the necessary resources and connections to engage in community-based work (Brown 2002). For the HCLT, interview participants identified government organizations, housing developers, neighborhood associations, social service agencies as well as grassroots non-profit organizations as potential partners.

Interview participants described multiple benefits from expanding their network through community partnerships. Working with partners will reduce the workload as well as cost as partners will bring necessary skills and knowledge to the table: "we hope to reduce costs by having directors that are in the industry and know how to keep those costs low" (Ray). Partners can also formally endorse HCLT's projects, which may increase community acceptance. Furthermore, partner organizations such as housing developers, neighborhood associations, settlement service providers can promote HCLT's services at the community-level by connecting their clients with HCLT and work as a linkage between the residents' needs and HCLT's services.

So far, the only partnership HCLT has is with Habitat for Humanity through which they built a house in their first project. According to the HCLT board member participants, however, the partnership with Habitat for Humanity is currently inactive because there is a lack of shared goals that support ongoing communication and collaboration. When this situation arises, participants suggested that securing a board position for a member of a key partner organization is an effective strategy for maintaining uniform involvement in HCLT activities. The interview participants also recommended dedicating some capacity to cultivating partnerships and creating a scope for representing important external organizations within the HCLT's board. One strategy is to create a formalized partnership strategy that is publicly available on the HCLT's website that outline procedures for building and sustaining ongoing collaborations with Hamilton-based non-

profit organizations. Though not mentioned in qualitative interviews, another strategy could be to develop an advisory council that exclusively focuses on forming partnerships and who have the needed knowledge, networks, and financial resources for the success of the organization (Brown 2002).

## Discussion and Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Co-create and publish a diversity and inclusion policy statement

This research suggests that a first step for the HCLT to be reflective of its constituents is for it to formalize its vision and commitment to diversity and inclusion. To improve organizational diversity, a policy statement could include a values statement about the organization's commitment to issues of diversity and equity, policies regarding diverse group representation, and an approach to incorporate issues of diversity in the board's work plans (Bradshaw & Fredette 2013). For instance, the HCLT may consider investigating their consensus decision-making approach to identify areas for improvement that further strengthen inclusivity. We suggest that policy statements or frameworks be developed through consultations with members of constituent communities and published on the HCLT website and posted or reiterated at the beginning of monthly board meetings. Some sample equity, diversity, and inclusion statements from non-profit organizations are available in the appendix [Appendices F and G]. The HCLT may consider looking at these examples and using them as a foundation to co-create their own tailored policy statement.

Formal printed and published materials detailing how the board operates, how new members are recruited, and how decisions are made should also be developed, along with descriptions of the responsibilities for key board positions as a part of formal diversity and inclusion policy statement. This information should be made publicly available to achieve transparency to diverse communities impacted by the HCLT's work. The board can also create a set of milestones they would like to achieve in terms of establishing greater diversity and have an accountability framework for achieving these goals. This process can include reviewing existing policies in place, identifying previously disadvantaged groups affected by these policies, and extending invitations to individuals from these groups to determine the most appropriate mechanisms to increase inclusivity within the organization. Ultimately, the goal of these policies is not to fill a quote, but to enhance the board's ability to reflect the diversity of its constituents and to accurately respond to their needs.

### Recommendation 2: Use established toolkits to develop a more diverse and inclusive governance structure.

There are some established toolkits that have been created by organizations that can be used as models for creating a more diverse and inclusive board. The Maytree Foundation, a private Canadian charitable foundation committed to reducing poverty and inequality in Canada has developed a toolkit called “Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Inclusion on Nonprofit Boards” (Decter et al., 2007). This toolkit outlines the need to establish board diversity policies, how to create diversity subcommittees, how to support diverse board members, and how to embed diversity in all board policies and practices. Likewise, the Pillar Nonprofit Network, an organization dedicated to supporting individuals, organizations and enterprises invested in positive community impact, has developed a thorough toolkit. Their toolkit, titled “Board Diversity Training: A Toolkit” provides a comprehensive background on the importance of diversity on non-profit boards and multiple strategies and tools that can be used to translate diversity policies and practices into action (Pillar Nonprofit Network, 2008).

Functional and social inclusion are critical points to attend to in the HCLT’s governance structure. Existing board members should provide necessary support and resources when onboarding new board members and authentically engage them in social aspects of the organization that builds strong relationships between board members. This could look like a board mentorship program, where new directors are paired with an experienced board member to assist them through the process (Fredette, Bradshaw & Krause, 2016). This strategy may increase the comfort level of new board members, increase morale, and encourage new members to be more actively involved in the decision-making process.

**Recommendation 3: Develop a “portfolio of engagement” to address the diverse needs and engagement preferences of communities and individuals**

The findings presented in this report suggest that there needs to be flexibility in the engagement opportunities that the HCLT creates for both board and volunteer members. We suggest working on a “portfolio of engagement” that includes a variety of opportunities with different responsibilities, requirements, and engagement levels. This portfolio should be shared with new board and volunteer members and allow them to choose opportunities that meet their engagement preferences. For example, a portfolio of engagement may include opportunities for administrative work (low level of engagement), focus groups and/or survey participation (low level of engagement), working group or committee member (medium level of engagement), or leading a task force (high level of engagement). The essential elements of these opportunities will require description on time commitment, specific responsibilities, and expectations. When recruiting new volunteer members for these opportunities, we suggest that board members make space for volunteer and board members to develop shared goals from the engagement, and the most appropriate ways to monitor progress towards the goals.

Having flexibility might also be relevant to the HCLT general membership once it is established. Flexibility would allow general members to become more involved with

projects that are relevant to them, such as a project in their neighbourhood or other projects that they are passionate about. It would also give the general members a chance to showcase their skill sets or give them the opportunity to learn new skills. By giving the general members the opportunity for personal growth, the chance to take on more responsibility, and the feeling that their skills are invaluable to the board and the organization, flexibility may help promote a sustainable membership. For instance, the board could establish smaller working groups or sub-committees to manage tasks based on board member interests so long as individuals have a choice of how they want to engage with the organization (e.g. on the board, a committee, or a working group). As tasks are completed, the requirement for certain skillsets can be reassessed, and the composition of the sub-committees can be distributed.

#### Recommendation 4: Develop a flexible board member recruitment strategy

To help mitigate the perceived trade-off between skills and diversity, a flexible board member recruitment strategy could be developed. A systematic board recruitment strategy could include, for example, liaising with neighbourhood associations and fellow community organizations to identify board members that bring skills, diversity elements, or both (Bradshaw et al., 2013). For transparency, this strategy should be developed in consultation with members from diverse communities and made public on organizational websites. At the same time, interview participants found that recruitment through the networks of board members was also a successful strategy.

Board members can be interviewed through a standardized assessment form that attributes an equal numerical value to technical skills and diversity elements. This strategy will ensure that diversity and technical skills are given an equal priority in board member recruitment. It is also important to consider other technical skills and experiences that individuals might have rather than focusing on filling a specific need on the board. A strategy to increase the pool of potential volunteers might be to consider advertising vacant board positions more generally (i.e. information about time commitment and general skills needed). The board could then select the most qualified person based on a formal application process.

Once board members are selected, we suggest setting short- and long-term goals for each board member within a specified period of time. These goals can be revisited frequently to ensure relevancy, and at the end of the agreed upon timeline, the board should assess if the goals are being met. New board members can be included routinely into membership to replace those who have completed their term through elections where board and volunteer members vote for a list of candidates for vacant board positions. This strategy can be combined with a larger board size where approximately half of the members meet the technical and legal skills requirements, and the other half represents the communities the organization serves.

## Recommendation 5: Diversify the HCLT network by increasing board size, creating a general membership, and strengthening community partnerships

Findings from the interviews and the literature review suggest that the HCLT may consider expanding their networks in the communities they serve. Increasing board size was a strategy identified by the literature that improved board inclusivity and diversity. Increasing the number of board members and the diversity of their professional connections will expand the HCLT's broader network, which may also contribute to recruitment of diverse individuals. If the HCLT identifies that the voice of an important community is missing, then a larger board size will allow the recruitment of a member from that community. Another way for the HCLT to expand their network is to create partnerships with other community organizations, which the literature and interviews corroborated. Partnerships with ethnic and cultural and neighbourhood associations, for example, can help the HCLT identify skilled and knowledgeable volunteers from a range of backgrounds. Community partnerships can also lead to the sharing of resources and a larger pool of general members or volunteers, leading to the creation of a general member electorate and greater capacity to sustain organizational activities.

Attracting and keeping committed volunteers and board members is a challenging management problem for all organizations. In addition to partnering with a greater number of community organizations, sponsoring events in collaboration with these organizations is an effective way to attract members, as face-to-face interactions are key in establishing trust and legitimacy amongst the public. Community events are also a great venue to communicate the purpose and importance of the HCLT. Events can also be used to gauge participation and diversity by conducting surveys, focus groups and holding public meetings (recommendation 7).

## Recommendation 6: Increase the accessibility of information about the HCLT in order to improve the legitimacy of HCLT activities in Hamilton.

An important aspect of effective engagement is to ensure clear communication with constituents and the public. Effective communication entails several different factors including using clear and easy to understand language, as well as producing material in a variety of languages. The authors of the Parkdale Report suggested that there is a lack of understanding of CLTs and its challenges in communities. As such, the HCLT website can be updated to include more thorough background documents or brochures that provide information about CLTs. Providing this information may clarify the HCLT's diversity and inclusivity vision (recommendation 1), thereby adding legitimacy to the organization's activities.

Interview participants expressed a need for the HCLT to communicate legitimacy to communities to mobilize their passion and interest in participation. Without the potential for contributing to tangible impact, members interested in volunteering their time will be more reluctant to participate in HCLT's activities. Along with clear communication, it is important to be in constant communication with communities, and to share the



successes including “small wins” regularly. We recommend that the HCLT share tangible examples of how it has been beneficial to Hamilton communities by sharing stories from, for example, previous homeowners who have benefited, or community volunteers who have experienced engaging in HCLT’s activities. We also suggest sharing these stories via multiple communication channels such as the website, local media, social media, and annual reports, to reach a wider range of individuals, and “meet where people meet.” By utilizing the different mediums of communication, the HCLT board will be able to share their message to diverse communities by leveraging their communication preferences. The HCLT may consider including raising awareness and communicating with different groups as a component of each board member’s responsibilities.

**Recommendation 7: Conduct annual evaluations of HCLT diversity and inclusivity to ensure that community needs and preferences are being met.**

The needs and preferences of communities will continue to evolve overtime. For non-profit organizations such as the HCLT working in a vastly diverse city like Hamilton, there is a need to evolve activities with the needs and preferences of communities. The strategy we suggest for achieving this goal is to conduct annual evaluations of diversity and inclusivity practices. The board may consider developing a formal protocol for this evaluation; we suggest evaluating both at the board and volunteer member level. Collecting demographic information from all of its members is the first step to identify opportunities for improvement. On the other hand, the HCLT can also use the accessibility checklist described in this report [Appendix E]. We recommend conducting surveys of all board and volunteer members, combined with qualitative interviews. Both survey and interviews should be informed by the accessibility checklist and an equal number of participants should be recruited from different projects, tasks, and demographic characteristics. It is important to note that the evaluation protocol may itself need to evolve with the changing needs and preferences of communities. The HCLT board should also describe how they will assess the appropriateness of their annual evaluation protocol before they implement it each year.

## Conclusion

In sum, the findings from the interviews and literature converged on articulating a range of benefits, and also some important challenges, for enhancing diversity and inclusion on non-profit boards. We separated our findings into five themes: diversity policies, diversity practices, inclusion practices, participation in HCLT activities, and community awareness. Based on these findings, we identified seven priority recommendations for the HCLT to consider as a starting point to strengthen their practices to be more diverse and inclusive of Hamilton communities. As the HCLT contemplates the results and recommendations in this report, it may be important to reflect upon why diversity and inclusion are important to both the HCLT and the communities it aims to serve.

Brown (2002) described a diverse and inclusive board as one that “demonstrates awareness of the community and constituents who benefit from and contribute to the services of the organization, seeks information from multiple sources, and establishes policies and structures to foster stakeholder involvement” (pg. 370). Studies show that diversity in groups not only promotes creativity and innovation (Jaskyte, 2012), but also support decisions to better reflect the values and preferences of diverse communities, especially about services geared towards minority constituents (Harris, 2014). Additionally, non-profit organizations with more diverse board members are associated with better financial performance (Bradshaw and Fredette 2013), organizational effectiveness (Harris 2014; Ali, Ng, & Kulik 2014; Bradshaw and Fredette 2013), and better outcomes in terms of commitment to community needs and preferences (Fredette et al., 2016). Effectiveness in this case also included the ability of the board to safeguard and fulfill the organization’s mission, the constituents’ views of the board’s overall effectiveness, and the likelihood of board members to remain with the organization in the long-term.

Currently, the board of directors of the HCLT and other organizations hope to improve their practices to be more diverse and inclusive, which the literature suggests can improve long-term organizational performance. However, there are significant challenges in achieving these goals. One interview participant stated that “if the board doesn't look like the people we serve...that's a big gap. How can we connect with the people we serve if we don't have, you know, some sort of representation?” (Lester). Although increasing diversity can be quite difficult, the outcomes are worth the potentially slow-moving process. Fredette and Bernstein (2019) emphasized that although moving towards a more racially or ethnically diverse board might be difficult and may initially result in performance decline due to “slowing of governing processes or extending debate and decision-making activities,” boards that formalize diversity and inclusion in participatory decision-making processes will ultimately reach a tipping point that leads to improved fiduciary performance, and therefore greater sustainability.

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# Appendix

## A: Invitation Email

Hello: <firstname>

My name is [name] and I'm a Research Associate with the McMaster Research Shop – a volunteer-based program that helps community organizations with research. We're working with the Hamilton Community Land Trust to explore models for inclusive, diverse, and community-driven governance for the organization. As part of this research we're interviewing [category of participant, e.g. HCLT Board members; community organizations with a broad membership; HCLT users] to gather their perspective on the issue.

We're wondering if you'd be willing to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 40-minutes. In this interview, we will ask you about your experiences engaging the Hamilton community in your organization's activities. We will also ask for your perspective on how to create an inclusive and diverse governance structure for an organization in Hamilton.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and the interview can be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient to you. If you're interested in participating, please read the invitation letter and review, sign and return the consent form attached to me at [majidua@mcmaster.ca](mailto:majidua@mcmaster.ca). Alternatively, we can bring a copy of the consent form that you can sign in-person. In addition, please respond to this email which days during and after the November 11 week you are available to have the interview.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,  
Umair Majid  
Team Lead  
McMaster Research Shop Coordinator  
Office of Community Engagement  
McMaster University  
[majidua@mcmaster.ca](mailto:majidua@mcmaster.ca)

c/o

Evan Greely  
McMaster Research Shop Coordinator  
Office of Community Engagement  
McMaster University  
[rshop@mcmaster.ca](mailto:rshop@mcmaster.ca)

## B: Consent Form

Developing a Community-driven Governance Model to Ensure Equitable and Sustainable Engagement of Hamilton Residents in the Hamilton Community Land Trust

McMaster Research Shop at the Office of Community Engagement, McMaster University. Team Lead: Umair Majid ([majidua@mcmaster.ca](mailto:majidua@mcmaster.ca)).

### **Background**

The Hamilton Community Land Trust (HCLT) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that works with residents and community partners to identify and facilitate real estate projects that are sustainable, affordable, and meet the Hamilton community's needs. The HCLT is governed by a Board of Directors. The HCLT is looking for ways to be more inclusive of the diverse Hamilton population and various needs for housing. This means making equitable housing decisions keeping in mind differences in age, gender, ethnicity, income, abilities, and social and economic needs of Hamiltonians. The HCLT is currently partnering with researchers at McMaster University's Office of Community Engagement to study how the HCLT Board of Directors can be more inclusive, equitable, and diverse.

### **Procedures**

Participation involves a single in-person interview of approximately 40-minutes scheduled at a time and location you prefer. During the interview, we will ask your experiences engaging the Hamilton community in your organization's activities. We will also ask for your perspective on how to create an inclusive and diverse governance structure for an organization in Hamilton. The interview will be audio-recorded and converted to text with your permission. The audio recordings will be stored securely on Google Drive until we publish the final report, after which recordings will be deleted. We will also be taking notes throughout the discussion. Only the McMaster Research Shop team will have access to the audio recordings. The findings will be used to generate a report with recommendations for developing community-driven governance model for the HCLT that is representative of the diverse needs of the Hamilton community.

### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no direct benefits of this research, other than contributing to an understanding of the factors that contribute to inclusive, diverse, and community-driven governance in non-profit organizations. There are no direct risks of this research, other than taking the time to participate in the interview.

### **Costs and Reimbursements**

The interviews will be conducted in-person at a time and location convenient to you; no costs will be incurred by you. Also, your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and will not be reimbursed.

### **Confidentiality**

Your responses will remain confidential. An anonymous research code will be used to identify your responses, and you will not be named in any report or presentation that may arise from the study. Keep in mind that we can be identified through the stories we tell when deciding what to share with me. All data will be stored securely on Google Drive folder. Only the McMaster Research Shop team will have access to the original data, and all data will be destroyed after the publication of the report. Personal Information: For this study, we will collect your name, and email and/or telephone number so that we can communicate with you to schedule the interview.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate, or you may withdraw at any time without any repercussions on yourself. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to and can stop participating at any time.

**Conflict of Interest**

The researchers are commissioned to conduct this work for the Hamilton Community Land Trust, who has provided overall guidance in terms of the design and conduct of this study. Their interests should not influence your decision to participate in this study.

**Questions**

If you have any questions, concerns or would like to speak to the study team for any reason please contact the team lead Umair Majid [email: [majidua@mcmaster.ca](mailto:majidua@mcmaster.ca)]. Please note that communication via e-mail is not absolutely secure. Thus, please do not communicate personal sensitive information via e-mail.

**Consent**

This study has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I know that I may leave the study at any time. I agree to take part in this study.

_____	_____	_____
<b>Your Name (please print)</b>	<b>Your Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

***You will be given a signed copy of this consent form***

My signature means that I explained the study to the above-named participant and answered all questions.

_____	_____	_____
<b>Name of Person Obtaining Consent</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

## C: Interview Guide

### Backgrounder for non-HCLT Interviewees

The Hamilton Community Land Trust (HCLT) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that works with residents and community partners to identify and facilitate real estate projects that are sustainable, affordable, and meet the Hamilton community's needs. The HCLT is governed by a Board of Directors.

The HCLT is looking for ways to be more inclusive of the diverse Hamilton population and various needs for housing. This means making equitable housing decisions keeping in mind differences in age, gender, ethnicity, income, abilities, and social and economic needs of Hamiltonians. The HCLT is currently partnering with researchers at McMaster University's Office of Community Engagement to study how the HCLT Board of Directors can be more inclusive, equitable, and diverse.

The purpose of this interview is to ask you about the governance structure at your organization, the decision-making process, and interactions in general/volunteer members. To help the HCLT governance be more inclusive, we would like to know what factors have helped and hindered inclusive, diverse, and sustainable engagement at your organization. We would also like to know the strategies that your organization implements to be more inclusive of the range of values represented in Hamilton.

As a note, the research question for this study is:

- What features of a community-driven governance model might be appropriate for the Hamilton Community Land Trust (HCLT) that will ensure:
  - Equitable, inclusive, and diverse management (i.e., board membership)?
  - An engaged, diverse, and sustainable membership base (i.e., general membership)?

### Definitions

Background definitions for interviewers (from Buse K, Bernstein RS, Bilimoria D. The influence of board diversity, board diversity policies and practices, and board inclusion behaviors on nonprofit governance practices. SIAS Faculty Publications. 2014. 644.)

We will be talking about inclusivity and diversity in your organization. Because these concepts are very similar, it is important to differentiate them:

- Inclusive behaviors: "Actions of board members that enable members from minority and marginalized communities to feel respected and engaged in the organization's governance" (quote from Buse et al. 2014, who cite Fredette and Bradshaw, 2010). These behaviours include "the intragroup communication, influence and power interactions that the dominant members of small groups engage in consciously or unconsciously which signal the authentic inclusion of diversity" (Bernstein and Bilimoria, 2013, p. 640).
- Diverse policies and practices: "Practices and procedures that are commonly believed to enhance diversity and improve the experience for minority group members, such as diversity statements, policies, committees or taskforces dedicated

to diversity and inclusion, diversity training for board members, and integration of diversity into the core mission and values” (Bernstein and Bilimoria, 2013, p. 641)

### Organizational Context

1. Can you briefly tell us about your organization? [skip for HCLT board members]
  - a) What is your mission and vision?
  - b) What is the general profile of your membership base?
  - c) What population(s) does your organization serve?
2. What is your role in this organization?
  - a) How long have you been in this role?

### Governance Structure

3. Can you describe the governance structure of your organization?
  - a) Are there representatives of minority or marginalized or low-income communities on your board/team?
4. What criteria are used to select board/team members?
  - a) How have you made your approach to board/team member selection more inclusive of people with diverse needs, preferences, and abilities?
  - b) What problems have you encountered in creating a diverse board/team membership?
  - c) What strategies have you used to address the problems with creating a diverse board/team membership?
  - d) Have these strategies achieved their intended goals? Why or why not?

### Decision-Making

5. How are inclusivity and diversity incorporated into the decision-making processes of your board/team?
  - a) What strategies have you used to ensure that board/team decisions are inclusive of the various needs, preferences, and goals of members?
  - b) What strategies have you used to ensure that board members from minority, marginalized, or low-income communities feel respected and engaged in the decision-making process?

### General Membership and Representation

6. How have you made your organization accessible and inclusive to the diverse population in Hamilton?
  - a) How do you identify and recruit general/volunteer members for your organization?
  - b) What challenges have you encountered with recruiting certain groups in Hamilton as general members?
  - c) What strategies have you used to address these challenges?
  - d) Were these strategies effective?
    1. If yes, what made them effective?
    2. If no, why were they not effective?



7. What challenges have you encountered in maintaining long-term commitment from general/volunteer members?
  - a) What challenges have you encountered with maintaining long-term commitment for general/volunteer members who identify with a minority or marginalized or low-income community?
  - b) What strategies has your organization developed and/or implemented to address challenges with maintaining long-term commitment from general/volunteer members?
  - c) What strategies have you used to increase a sense of ownership and accountability in general/volunteer members?

### Conclusion

That is the end of the interview questions. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for your time, your input will help the research team complete the report for the Hamilton CLT Board members. Would you be interested in receiving a copy of the report when it is available?

## D: Other Relevant Articles

Corbett A, Mackay JM, Cross PL. (2013). Guide to Good Governance: Not-For-Profit and Charitable Organizations. Governance Centre of Excellence. Retrieved from: [https://www.gbachc.ca/BoD/orientation\\_manual/2.1%20-%20GuidetoGoodGovernance.pdf](https://www.gbachc.ca/BoD/orientation_manual/2.1%20-%20GuidetoGoodGovernance.pdf)

Davidson C. (2014). Chapter 1: Board Roles and Responsibilities (p. 1-12). Board Governance: Resource Guide. Community Literacy of Ontario. Retrieved from: <http://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Board-Governance-Manual-June-2014.pdf>

Housing Strategies Inc. (2005). Critical Success Factors for Community Land Trusts in Canada. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Retrieved from: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/publications-and-reports/?lang=en&cat=44&itm=21#>

Taylor D. (2014). Governance for Not-For-Profit Organizations: Questions for Directors to Ask. Chartered Professional Accountants Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=11&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiQgLrDrc7IAhWHY98KHSXhB-wQFjAKegQIAxAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cpacanada.ca%2F-%2Fmedia%2Fsite%2Fr2-docs%2Fgovernance-for-not-for-profit-organizations-questions-for-directors-to-ask.pdf%3Fla%3Den%26hash%3D920B2A21AB508F73C03B46F3EDF85C52EBEB0685&usq=AOvVaw0suNMI2IXTPY8sP4inBjp>

## E: Accessibility Checklist

accessibility and inclusivity checklist
language
<p>1. Are documents available in the major non-English languages spoken in the community (e.g. Tamil, Hungarian and Tibetan)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When possible documents can be translated through machine translators (such as Google Translate) as an interim measure.</li> </ul> <p>2. Is it possible to conduct separate meetings with non-English speaking community members?</p> <p>3. Is literature available on the CLT website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This will allow for materials to be accessible for those unable to be at all meetings and will allow for community members to access literature in alternative formats.</li> </ul> <p>4. Are documents provided in MS Word format?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This format is the most accessible for screen-reading software and allows adjustment of fonts for readability</li> </ul> <p>5. Is literature available in printed format as is required by those without access to the Internet (Williams, personal communication, 2012)?</p> <p>6. Is literature written in a plain-language format (ibid)?</p> <p>7. Have alternative dissemination formats been considered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For example would audio, video, or web-based mediums be appropriate?</li> </ul>
community
<p>1. Have connections been made with community members and / or agencies that represent or are knowledgeable about different subset of the Parkdale community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have these groups advised the CLT on how activities might be conducted so as to maximize their involvement?</li> </ul>
community meetings
<p>1. Have community members been consulted to select a meeting time that will allow for the greatest attendance possible (Williams, personal communication, 2012)?</p> <p>2. Are meeting spaces physically accessible for all peoples (ibid)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can people with physical disabilities enter the meeting space (ibid)?</li> </ul> <p>3. Has a short check-in with community members been completed during a meeting to see if the meeting could be made more accessible for others in the future?</p> <p>4. Is child care available for meetings (ibid)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community members should be consulted to see if this accommodation is required and if volunteers from the community could be supportive in this accommodation (ibid)?</li> </ul> <p>5. Are board members compensated for expenses incurred in their duties (ibid)?</p> <p>6. Has food been provided in meetings (Partanen, personal communication, 2012)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food helps to both bring people together in meetings while also ensuring that marginalized peoples with less food security are able to participate (ibid).</li> </ul> <p>7. Are meetings conducted so as to maximize understanding and participation in meetings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In larger meeting settings are microphones available so as to ensure that people are heard properly?</li> <li>- This allows for community members to be heard and for maximum understanding.</li> </ul>
board members and meetings
<p>1. Is office space with access to a telephone, computers and the Internet available for board members to use as necessary (Williams, personal communication, 2012)?</p> <p>2. While physical presence is preferred, would it be possible for a person to attend a board meeting by a conference call?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Those who cannot attend board meetings should also be the opportunity to use a proxy vote.</li> </ul> <p>3. Is the chair of the board ensuring that all members have the opportunity to participate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An environment conducive to understanding and incorporation of board members' differing styles is necessary.</li> </ul> <p>4. Is training available for board members so that members can participate at similar levels (ibid)?</p>

# F: Example of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Policy Framework from the Parkdale Neighborhood Land Trust

<http://www.pnlt.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Purpose-Vision-Values.pdf>

## Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust

### PURPOSE

The Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) is a community-controlled charitable organization of residents and local agencies that seek to build a just, healthy, and inclusive neighbourhood. The PNLT will acquire and manage land under the unique community ownership model of a community Land Trust (CLT), promoting long-term community benefits, affordability, and enabling democratic local planning.

### VISION

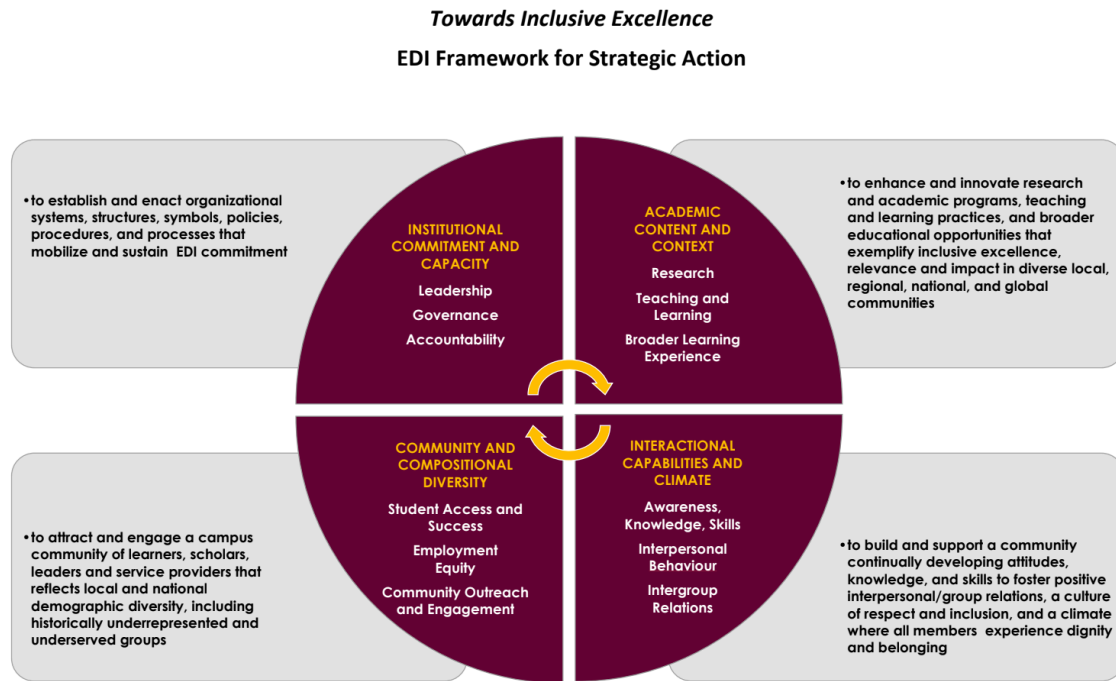
The Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust envisions a neighbourhood in which all members of our community:

1. Have the ability to shape the development and stewardship of the land in the neighbourhood where they live and work;
2. Benefit from development that does not displace community members and that enhances social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being;
3. Have equitable accesses to affordable and adequate housing, inclusive economic opportunities, healthy food, community programs and social services, and green spaces;
4. Have the opportunity to contribute democratically and in a meaningful way to local municipal planning efforts, including major plans, programs and policies, as well as guide neighbourhood change through community-led participatory planning;
5. Can trust that community assets will be preserved and held together under community control;
6. Inspire the growth of a strong community land trust movement in neighbourhoods across Toronto, helping to create a socially just, environmentally sustainable, and economically democratic city.

### VALUES

1. **Diversity:** We believe that socially, culturally, and economically diverse neighbourhoods offer a higher quality of life for everyone.
2. **Equitable development:** We believe that low-income and other marginalized people should benefit from neighbourhood growth and development.
3. **Land as a commons:** We believe that the land is a common asset and heritage of past, current, and future generations. Land is a source for building shared wealth and should thus be stewarded by the community.
4. **Collective action:** We believe that through collective action community members can mobilize diverse experiences, resources, knowledge, and skills to achieve common goals.
5. **Community engagement:** Local communities are best served by effectively engaging residents and key stakeholders in the decisions affecting their community.
6. **Community ownership of land:** We believe that community ownership of land empowers communities, and balances the interests of individual users with that of the community as a whole.
7. **Perpetual affordability:** We believe that access to affordable land ensures long-term housing security, inclusive economic opportunities, and vital community programs and services for current and future generations.
8. **Public education:** We believe that democracy is a practice; community members must be given opportunities to learn about local planning in order to enhance their capacity to participate.
9. **Transparent and representative governance:** We believe that democratic community representation can only be achieved through governance that truly represents the diverse voices, needs and perspectives of the community, and that are open and transparent about all decisions made.

## G: Example of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Framework from McMaster University



**Towards Inclusive Excellence**  
**EDI Guiding Principles**

Ongoing EDI planning, implementation and evaluation will be guided by the following five principles:

1. **Cultural relevance** in relation to Indigenous peoples and equity-seeking groups,  
By recognizing and valuing: the distinctiveness of Indigenous rights, entitlements and issues as separate from broader EDI work, and the importance of education, relationship-building, and reconciliation to advancing Indigenous priorities; and the unique lived experiences and barriers faced by different equity-seeking groups, and the importance of decision-making that uses and intersectional lens and is tailored to different equity-seeking group issues and needs
2. **Community ownership** in relation to achieving EDI success,  
By recognizing and valuing: transparency, consultation, and communication, and the importance of campus-wide community engagement
3. **Collective responsibility** in relation to achieving progress,  
By recognizing and valuing: capacity building, and the importance of both senior level accountability ("top-down") and distributed responsibility ("bottom-up") efforts
4. **Coordinated** de-centralization in relation to central and unit EDI activities,  
By recognizing and valuing: campus collaborations and synergistic partnerships, and the importance that we work towards "the whole being greater than the sum of its parts"
5. **Continuous improvement** in relation to EDI practice,  
By recognizing and valuing: data-informed decision-making and evidence-based practice, and the importance of rigorous evaluation, assessment and research to ensure efficient and effective efforts