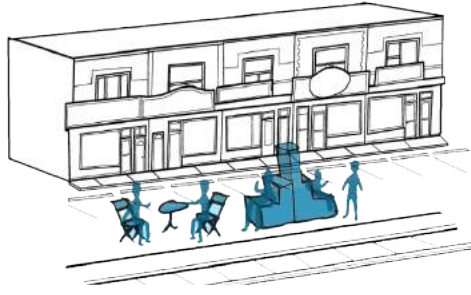


# PARADISE IN A PARKING LOT

WexPOPS Summary Report

November 2020





## plazaPOPS

*A high impact, low cost, and replicable demonstration of the potential of 'pop up' community gathering places within the privately-owned public spaces (POPS) of Toronto's emblematic inner-suburban strip mall plazas.*

plazaPOPS.ca • @plaza\_POPS

plazaPOPS is funded by the Public Space Incubator, a program of Park People supported by Ken and Eti Greenberg and the Balsam Foundation, as well as the City of Toronto's BIA Kickstarter Fund and the University of Guelph's School of Environmental Design and Rural Development (SEDRD).

plazaPOPS would not have been possible without the vision, encouragement, and generosity of all of our funders, partners and sponsors.

A heartfelt thank you to all!

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## Partners



## Sponsors



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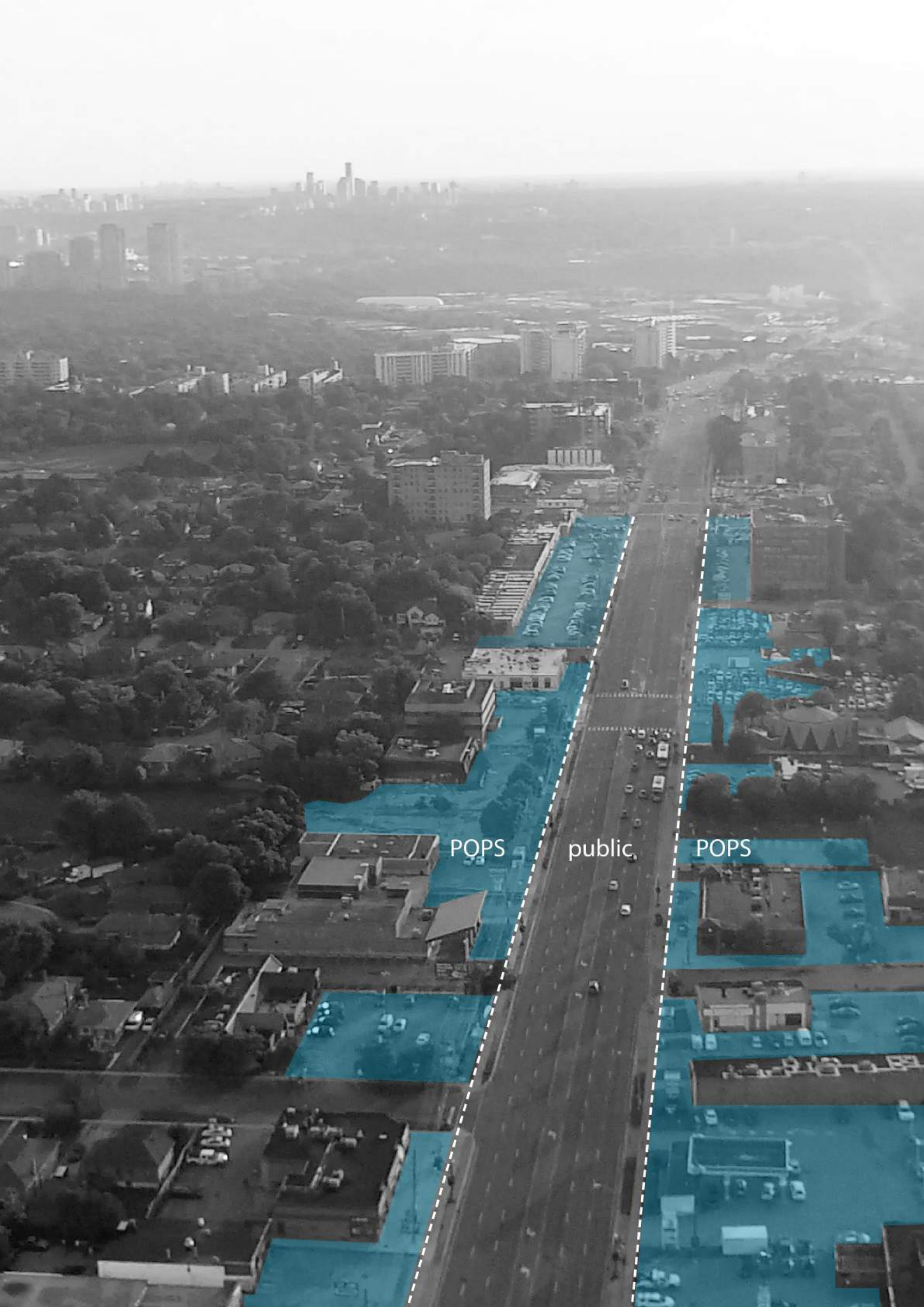
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## WHAT IS plazaPOPS?

*An approach to enhancing the public realm along suburban main streets*

**plazaPOPS is a community-driven approach that transforms strip mall parking lots – privately-owned public space – into accessible and vibrant gathering spaces, enhancing the streetscape and supporting small businesses.**

**There is no cost to enter and everyone is welcome.**



POPS

public

POPS

# WHY plazaPOPS?

## *Creating social infrastructure and economic development where it is needed most*

Strip malls are found throughout Toronto's inner suburbs and in post-war neighbourhoods all over Ontario and Canada. In many cases, especially in Toronto, the retail is vibrant and local, creating important settings for community life, and featuring numerous restaurants and shops serving food and offering goods from all over the world.

City-building professionals have long been concerned about the adverse psychological, social, public health, environmental and economic challenges associated with the physical conditions of suburbia – the sprawling, car-oriented city created in the post-war period.

Sociologist Eric Klinenberg's recent work highlights the urgent need to build 'social infrastructure' back into our communities. He asks us to think about

the types of places that foster connections and relationships between people and that build strong communities (e.g., libraries), not as 'nice to have' but as essential infrastructure for a healthy democracy. He argues that social infrastructure will become increasingly critical as communities are forced to adapt to the challenges associated with climate change.

plazaPOPS is a tool to enhance strip malls – already vibrant gathering places – with social infrastructure that provide economic and environmental benefits in less well served parts of cities, (i.e. suburban main streets). It builds on the methods of tactical urbanism, an approach to prototyping low-cost and temporary interventions that can be evaluated and refined over time.







U-HAUL

The Meadoway  
COMMUNITY POWER

The Meadoway  
COMMUNITY POWER

Hemear



## HOW ARE plazaPOPS CREATED?

### *A tool for suburban BIAs, created through collaboration with local communities*

plazaPOPS is envisioned as a community and economic development tool tailored to the environment of suburban main streets that could be initiated by business improvement areas (BIAs) in partnership with surrounding communities.

WexPOPS, the plazaPOPS pilot, was grant funded as a proof of concept. To realize benefits across many communities, a sustainable funding and partnership model that recognizes both public and commercial interests needs to be created in a way that BIAs see value and choose to participate.

WexPOPS was guided by a community working group comprised of local residents, business owners, and organizations, and was the result of more than a year of community engagement.

The pilot also involved collaborations with graduate students from the University of Guelph's Landscape Architecture program, the University of Toronto's Planning and Business departments, and OCADU's Strategic Foresight and Innovation program.

WexPOPS, was funded by Ken and Eti Greenberg and the Balsam Foundation through Park People's Public Space Incubator grant and the City of Toronto's BIA Kickstarter Fund, with additional support from the University of Guelph's School of Environmental Design and Rural Development.

## plazaPOPS & COVID-19

As we continue to understand best practices for limiting the transmission of COVID-19, it is clear that plazaPOPS is well suited to respond to the guidance of local public health authorities that recommend outdoor, physically distant gatherings as safe. Future plazaPOPS installations can be designed to accommodate physically distant seating, facilitate contact tracing, and be scheduled with regular cleanings.

In response to the economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, small businesses along main streets require support to ensure they continue to be vibrant community hubs providing essential services to their neighbourhoods. Through its focus on local economic development, plazaPOPS is well positioned to support the economic recovery required to reinvigorate Toronto's main streets by creating attractive, safe gathering places adjacent to strip-mall businesses to encourage residents to patronize local businesses while visiting neighbourhoods across the city.

During the summer of 2020, many parking lots and parking spaces were converted to outdoor gathering places – often patios associated with adjacent restaurants. plazaPOPS is aligned with the enthusiastic conversion of parking spaces into people spaces, however it distinguishes itself as being publicly accessible with no fee for entry or use.

Image of Gerrard East Market patio from  
blogTO: <https://media.blogto.com/Videos/>



# WexPOPS

## OVERVIEW

*WexPOPS, the pilot plazaPOPS, popped up from July 5 - August 17, 2019 at the iconic Wexford Plaza in Scarborough, in partnership with the Wexford Heights BIA. WexPOPS, proposed a big idea: to test the viability of exchanging parking spots for a community gathering space on private commercial property*

The project was assembled on-site in two days, and was active for six weeks. Throughout that time, WexPOPS invited the public to spend time in a parking lot the way they might in a traditional public

space: to linger and people watch, to smell the flowers and admire a butterfly, to meet a friend for a coffee or watch a concert, or to rest comfortably for a few minutes while waiting for the bus.



## PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The project used a participatory and co-creative community engagement process to work with the local community and design an intervention that reflected local culture. This included the creation of a working group (see page 11) whose members spanned local residents, community organizations, local business owners, political representatives, and city staff.

Master's of Landscape Architecture (MLA) students from the University of Guelph and graduate business and planning students from the University of Toronto's Rotman CityLAB fellowship program attended working group meetings and contributed to the planning and design of the project.

Many others supported the initiative, including the City of Toronto's Public Realm Unit, Scarborough

Arts, the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and a number of local businesses who donated in-kind contributions. The Kiriakou family, owners of the Wexford Restaurant and the plaza, generously hosted the project.

To encourage public participation and community engagement, the plazaPOPS team hosted open houses at key community organizations, including a local seniors' home and a community hub for newcomers. After hosting an open house at the nearby Arab Community Centre of Toronto's youth drop-in program, twelve local youth were hired as site stewards, visiting the site daily to water plants, manage waste, and set up and take down umbrellas (see pg 23, Engage Local Youth).



## DESIGN

WexPOPS was assembled on site in two days, and launched as part of the annual Taste of Lawrence festival. The project was active for six weeks and, throughout that time, was regularly programmed with events and concerts.

With modular planters, benches, tables and umbrellas, all clad in marine plywood and trimmed in cedar, WexPOPS featured over 500 plants, which were planted in colour-coded pots: red denoting native perennial wildflowers and grasses, orange for annuals, and yellow for edibles. (See page 47, Enhance Local Ecology)

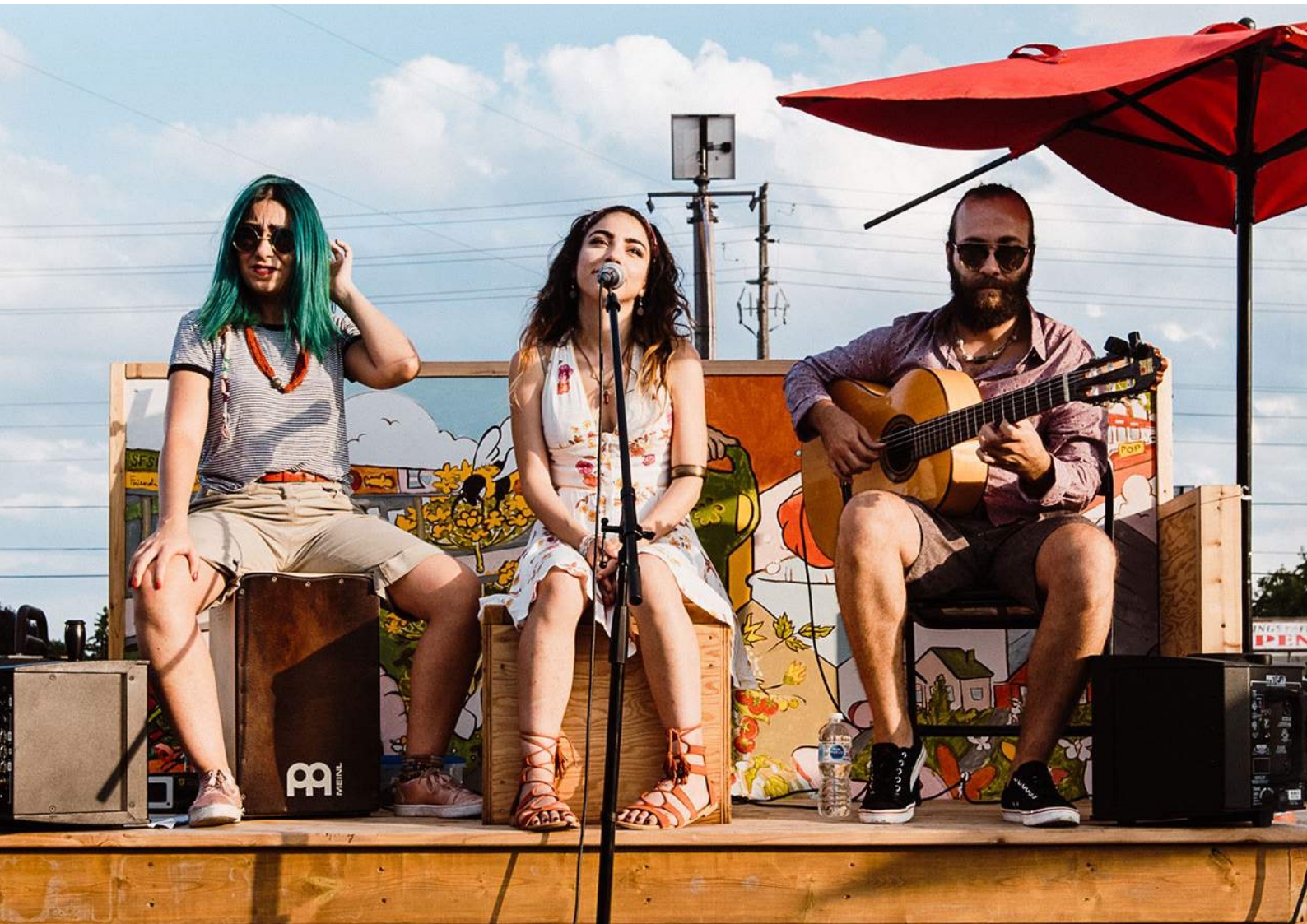
At night, LED lighting within the benches created a welcoming atmosphere and the iconic illuminated strip mall signage of Wexford Plaza created a dynamic backdrop. Occupying ten parking spaces, the installation created a comfortable and sheltered 'room' in the middle of the parking lot, framing dynamic views of the strip mall behind.

All of the components were designed as modules that could be re-configured into different arrangements to suit various future site conditions, and also to flat-pack for easy assembly and storage.

## PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

During several evenings over the duration of the installation, the WexPOPS stage offered music and dance performances by local artists, co-curated

by Scarborough Arts, as well as urban ecology workshops lead by the TRCA (See page 27, Reflect Local Culture).





## ENGAGING LOCAL BUSINESSES

WexPOPS was designed as a hub of social activity for the local community, but also to attract visitors from beyond – a desire articulated by our working group, whose members wanted to “put Wexford on the map” – and support local businesses (see page 39, Create Opportunities for Local Businesses”

The space featured a neighbourhood business directory which encouraged people to patronize the local restaurants and businesses (and eat takeout in the space), as well as a ‘dot map,’ which prompted visitors to place a sticker on a map showing where they live.

## IMPACT & NEXT STEPS

WexPOPS popped down on August 18, 2019, but the proof of concept has already inspired many to reconsider the potential of privately-owned strip mall parking lots as community gathering places, including, perhaps most importantly, the Kiriakou family – the property owners and our project hosts who have invited WexPOPS back.

To more concretely determine the project’s impact, the plazaPOPS team conducted a series of

impact assessments using Social, Economic, and Environmental drivers (see pg 18). Our findings, outlined in this report, highlight the potential for applying the plazaPOPS concept beyond Wexford Heights, understanding the value of creating space to support the social life of communities in strip malls across Toronto, Ontario, and Canada.



## WexPOPS PROCESS

*The plazaPOPS approach is grounded in a thorough community-led design process creating projects that reflect local culture, encourage local stewardship, and create a legacy of stronger networks in a community. For the WexPOPS pilot, the process was guided by a community working group comprised of local residents, community organizations, local business owners and city staff, who determined the project's charter, overall design, and programming through a series of meetings.*





*I felt everyone's opinion was heard, and moreover, I felt that everyone's opinion was valued.*

*I definitely took ownership of WexPOPS. I was a part of it, I felt I had contributed.*

-WexPOPS Working Group members

## WexPOPS Working Group Meeting Structure

- #1** Define the project charter, including its principles, goals, objectives, and measurements of success
- #2** Identify place-making themes and programming opportunities
- #3** Present several design options based on combinations of themes/programming
- #4** Present final design incorporating feedback from Meeting 3. Refine design, choose name, colour scheme, and final placemaking elements
- #5** Celebrate your accomplishments with a reunion at the installation!

## plazaPOPS Working Group Tips and Tricks

- Provide working group members with honoraria / TTC fare / Childcare options
- Cater meetings with different local restaurants, highlighting tastes of the neighbourhood
- Begin each meeting with social time so the group can get to know each other, contributing to lasting community connections as a legacy of the project
- At the beginning of each meeting, hold a "what we heard from the last meeting" to clarify that everything was included
- Throughout meetings, ensure different methods of feedback are facilitated (group discussion, post-it notes, forms, email)
- After the final group meeting, with the permission of the members, send working group a contact list with members' emails and organizational affiliations

# WexPOPS

# CHARTER

*The WexPOPS Project Charter was generated by the community working group who outlined the overall principles guiding the project, goals that the project would accomplish, objectives outlining specific actions to obtain those goals, and measurements of success to determine project performance*

## PRINCIPLES

*WexPOPS is about...*



## GOALS

*WexPOPS will...*















# OBJECTIVES

*by...*

 <p>Be bright and iconic</p>	 <p>Incorporating greenery</p>	 <p>Being modular and flexible</p>	 <p>Incorporating an indigenous land recognition</p>
 <p>Offering comfortable seating</p>	 <p>Having accessible surfaces and furnishings</p>	 <p>Providing a venue for local art and music</p>	 <p>Programming for diverse ages and cultural groups</p>
 <p>Creating business opportunities for BIA members</p>	 <p>Providing washrooms</p>	 <p>Providing shuttle services</p>	 <p>Having good lighting</p>
 <p>First aid plan</p>	 <p>Creating volunteer and employment opportunities for youth</p>	 <p>Promotion through traditional and social media</p>	 <p>Offering community services (e.g. library, child care)</p>
 <p>Creating opportunities for experiencing culturally &amp; financially accessible food</p>	 <p>Minimizing waste</p>	 <p>Being cost effective</p>	 <p>Facilitating a robust community engagement with opportunity for feedback</p>
 <p>Creating a "toolkit" to facilitate replicability</p>	 <p>Publish project results for academics and popular audiences</p>	 <p>Designed with easy maintenance in mind</p>	 <p>Using vandal proof materials</p>

# MEASUREMENTS

*We will measure success by...*

 <p>Conducting pre and post occupancy evaluation</p>	 <p>Measuring impacts on businesses (# of new/ repeat customers)</p>	 <p>Document #/value of project participants &amp; partners</p>	 <p>Conducting a public life study</p>
 <p>Collecting data on visitor postal codes</p>	 <p>Measuring impacts on parking/traffic</p>	 <p>Evaluating projects' "cool" factor</p>	 <p>Evaluation/feedback from working group members</p>
 <p>Using interactive and playful feedback methods</p>	 <p>Conducting a media analysis: # of likes, # of hashtags, coverage</p>	 <p>Evaluate design to replicate project or make permanent</p>	 <p>Smiles on business owners' face</p>

# WexPOPS TIMELINE



## AUG 2018

- Funding received from Park People, University of Guelph, and the City of Toronto's BIA Office



## DEC 2018 - APR 2019

- Community working group meetings; University of Guelph MLA students attended meetings, responding to community members' input to create design concepts
- MLA students hired as research assistants
- Through the University of Toronto's CityLab program, Masters of Urban Planning and Masters of Business Administration students created a tool kit for measuring success and impact

FUND

ENGAGE

DEVELOP

## SEPT - NOV 2018

- Partnerships created with the Wexford Heights BIA and local community organizations
- Site found
- Community working group recruitment process





### JUL 2019

- Modular installation was built off site, then assembled on site in two days. A number of working group members and volunteers from the community were involved with the installation process.
- WexPOPS launched at the Taste of Lawrence Festival

### SEP 2019 - PRESENT

- Data analyzed
- Researcher from OCADU integrates WexPOPS impact assessment into thesis
- PlazaPOPS team receives SSHRC Partnership Engage grant

## FEEDBACK

## INSTALL

## MEASURE

## REPORT

### APR - JUN 2019

- Open Houses: Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT), a local seniors' home, and the Victoria Park Hub
- Online design survey
- Youth "Site Stewards" hired
- Design approved by working group, landowner

### JUL - AUG 2019

- Installed for 6 weeks, WexPOPS was programmed throughout the summer with events, concerts and community programs (see page 19)
- Researchers engage in Public Life Study, interviews with attendees and nearby businesses



# IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The benefits of WexPOPS for the Wexford Heights neighbourhood and business owners were immediately clear: a shady oasis created the opportunity for the neighbourhood's diverse residents to meet while visitors from all over Toronto came to check out WexPOPS and patronize local businesses along the way. Not long after the project launched, Monarch butterflies flocked to the potted plants—an unusual sight in a strip mall parking lot.

WexPOPS was designed with documentation and evaluation in mind to inform a scaled-out plazaPOPS program that can be implemented throughout the city. WexPOPS used a number of methods to collect data including a Public Life Study (see page 51), interviews with visitors and nearby business owners, and interactive onsite installations. See Appendix A, page 57, for details on data collection methods.

## MEASURING WexPOPS

### SOCIAL IMPACT GOALS

*Creating a neighbourhood gathering place and a process to strengthen neighbourhood resilience*

### ECONOMIC IMPACT GOALS

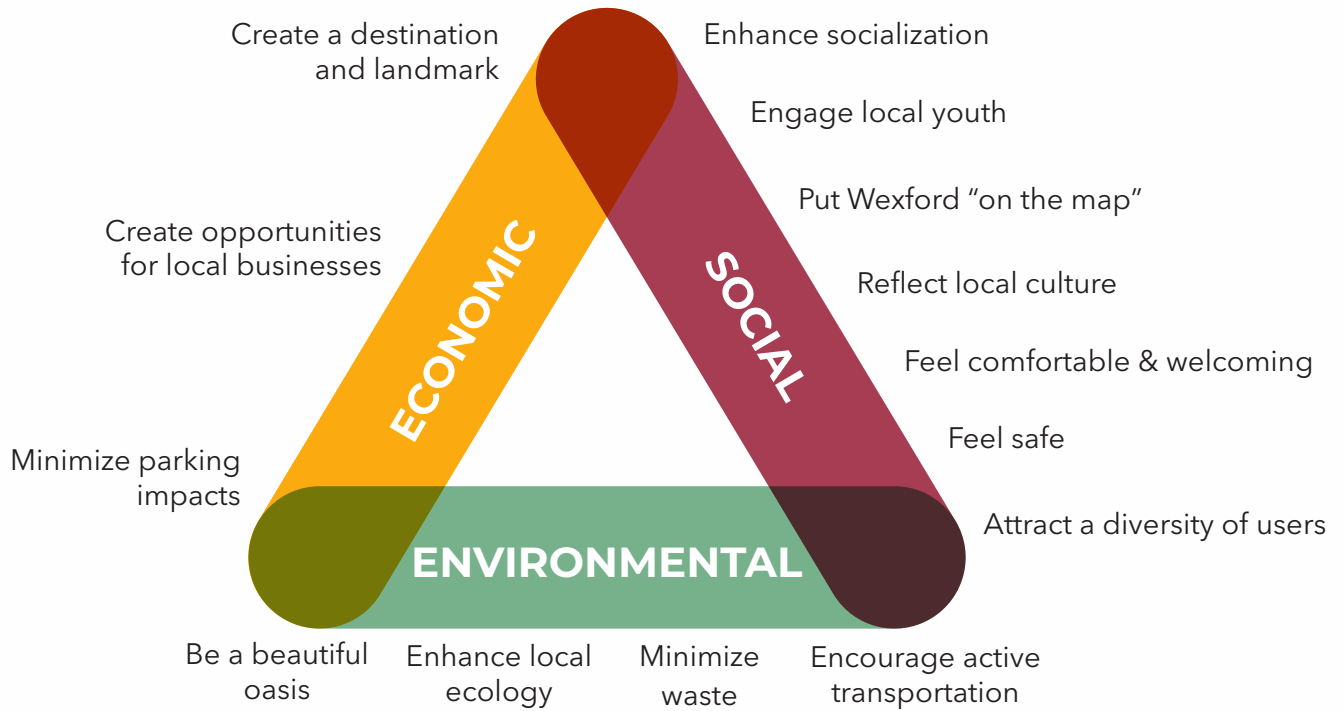
*Enhancing the local economy with a project that is good for business*

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT GOALS

*Enhancing neighbourhood environmental resilience*

*Created by the working group, WexPOPS' goals have been categorized into overarching impact drivers – social, environmental, economic – a triple bottom line that should be considered with every future plazaPOPS project.*





*Each overarching driver is supported by project goals, as identified in the charter. Using a range of research methods, data was collected, evaluated, and synthesized.*





# SOCIAL DRIVER

## **Create a neighbourhood gathering place**

As a process and a product, WexPOPS created an opportunity for the diverse residents of the Wexford Heights community to meet, connect and celebrate their local culture through the creation of a neighbourhood gathering place.





## **SOCIAL GOALS**

1. Enhance socialization
2. Engage local youth
3. Put Wexford Heights on the map
4. Reflect local culture
5. Feel comfortable and welcoming
6. Feel safe
7. Attract a diversity of users

**SOCIAL  
GOAL  
1**

# ENHANCE SOCIALIZATION

*WexPOPS facilitated socialization and community connections through the engagement and design process, and the through the product, the site itself*

## PROCESS: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Socialization was facilitated through a participatory, government and business partnerships, leaving community engagement process, including a a lasting legacy of community connections and community working group, and robust community, enhanced neighbourhood capacity.

**4** WORKING  
GROUP  
MEETINGS

**15** WORKING  
GROUP  
MEMBERS

**21** PARTNER  
ORGANIZATIONS

*It was a great experience that brought me closer to the city builders in the area. I felt a sense of community and innovation while learning from other people's opinions and experiences.*

*I was included in my community, which doesn't happen often in Scarborough.*

- WORKING GROUP MEMBERS



## PRODUCT : CREATE A NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB

Socialization was facilitated through the design and activation of the WexPOPS site, including accessible design that facilitated comfortable gathering, and a series of programmed events that brought the diverse community together.

WexPOPS was designed to be a neighbourhood hub, where strangers, friends, residents and visitors alike could come together. To encourage this social goal, the design of the installation was built with conversation and community in mind. Along with its "passive state", 7 events were held at WexPOPS, including concerts, talks, and exhibitions (see page 28).



The events hosted at WexPOPS created opportunities for residents and visitors to connect. Of the visitors interviewed, 69% said that they had met someone new and, of these 69%, 63% said that they had met two or more people.

## PARTNERS

WEXFORD HEIGHTS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH: SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF TORONTO: BIA OFFICE

CITY OF TORONTO: NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT UNIT, TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

PARK PEOPLE

CENTRE FOR URBAN GROWTH AND RENEWAL

ERA ARCHITECTS

SCARBOROUGH ARTS

MURAL ROUTES

ARAB COMMUNITY CENTRE OF TORONTO

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO: ROTMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, CITYLAB

FRIENDS OF EDGE PARK

FRIENDS OF WEXFORD PARK

FRIENDS OF CEDARBRAE AND THOMSON MEMORIAL PARKS

FOR YOU TELECARE FAMILY SERVICES

MARYVALE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

WORKING WOMEN COMMUNITY CENTRE

SHWASTI

SCARBOROUGH FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVE

SCARBOROUGH CYCLES

THINK FRESH GROUP

# THE WEXFORD WISH TREE

Initiated by our working group, The 'Wexford Wish Tree,' posed a different question every two weeks, inviting visitors to write their answers on a horticultural tag and tie them to the tree for others to read. Prompts were designed to provide insight into attendee's views of the Wexford neighbourhood generally and WexPOPS specifically.

Responses to the Wish Tree demonstrated WexPOPS role as a community hub.



The 3 prompts were:

- I love Wexford because...
- I love WexPOPS because...
- WexPOPS would be even better if...





A word cloud of the most frequent words and responses submitted to the Wish Tree, colour coded based on the prompts



**SOCIAL  
GOAL  
2**

# ENGAGE LOCAL YOUTH

*WexPOPS aimed to engage a broad and diverse cross-section of the community*

Engaging local youth was a social goal articulated by the working group, recognizing WexPOPS as an opportunity to connect local youth to city-building projects while giving them job and skills development opportunities. Through a partnership with nearby Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT) and its youth program, WexPOPS provided employment opportunities and supported training, skill development and resume-writing. The project hired 12 youth and trained 30 youth volunteers.

**12** YOUTH HIRED

**30** YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

**45** YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



Twelve local newcomer youth were hired from the ACCT as “Site Stewards”, responsible for setting up WexPOPS each morning, watering plants, monitoring and cleaning the site, and taking down umbrellas in the evening. Forty-five youth participated in job readiness training, including CV and cover letter workshops, and interview

training. Youth who were not hired were offered opportunities to volunteer for WexPOPS, and 30 youth participated by volunteering. Youth also participated in a PATTY-O event, organized by the Working Women Community Centre.

## MOVING FORWARD

- Ensure youth voices are represented early in the working group process
- Create relationships with local youth organizations who can facilitate this relationship
- Host open houses presenting potential designs at youth organizations as an early way of engaging youth
- High school students are the ideal age for the Site Steward position, which only requires a few hours a day per shift during their summer holiday.
- Plan events in partnership with youth organizations
- Explore opportunities for formalized volunteering tied to OSSD requirements
- Explore opportunities for partnerships with local high schools to engage youth in design process as part of curriculum for class credit

## ONE YOUTH'S STORY

Ife\*, a local 17 year old high school student, spent her summer in 2019 learning about landscape architecture, plants, and public space activation. Employed by WexPOPS via the Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT), she was one of 12 youths hired to be "Site Stewards" of the installation. Twice a day, a group of 2 students help set up and take down the moveable parts of the space, such as the umbrellas, as well as water the plants and remove garbage and recycling.

Ife was inspired to apply after the WexPOPS team came to the ACCT to host an open house. The ACCT worked with youth to develop their resume and prep them for the interview with the WexPOPS team.

Ife said she often spent extra time at WexPOPS after her duties were done, engaging with residents and speaking with passersby. She has developed an interest in plants because of the installation and even continues her research at home. "We get to feel closer to nature and learn lots about the plants," she said.

Even though she is heading off to complete her bachelor's degree in economics at the University of Toronto next year, Ife said WexPOPS is something "she would like to see every summer." She said this project "is a great initiative that brings people together."

*\*Name has been changed*



**SOCIAL  
GOAL  
3**

# PUT WEXFORD ON THE MAP

*WexPOPS' community working group was motivated to distinguish Wexford Heights from the rest of Scarborough*

Scarborough neighbourhoods are often lumped together in media, and there is a strong desire for finer grained local pride. Wexford residents wanted to highlight the neighbourhood's vibrant diversity as part of "putting Wexford on the map". The WexPOPS placemaking and communications strategy emphasized specifically naming Wexford Heights throughout project communications.

**69**

MENTIONS OF **"WEXFORD"**  
ON TWITTER & INSTAGRAM  
DURING INSTALLATION PERIOD

**77**

MENTIONS OF **"WexPOPS"**  
ON TWITTER & INSTAGRAM  
DURING INSTALLATION PERIOD

**192**

USES OF **#WexPOPS** ON  
TWITTER & INSTAGRAM  
DURING INSTALLATION PERIOD





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## plazaPOPS Converts Unused Parking Into Lively Public Space

City Tamra Mok Posted on July 05, 2019

## Toronto stripmalls are about to get more interesting



toronto.com

NEWS ▾ EVENTS ▾ THINGS TO DO ▾ OPINION ▾ LIFE ▾ MARKETPLACE

## WexPOPS, a Scarborough 'oasis,' aims to prove what plaza spaces can be

Experimental enclosure with 300 planters stays until Aug. 18

NEWS - JUL 10, 2019 | BY MIKE ADLER | TORONTO.COM

#CBCLISTEN Live Radio On Demand CBC Podcasts CBC Music Playlists

## Here and Now Toronto with Gill Deacon

plazaPOPS wants you to help transform a Scarborough strip mall

TY LIVING □ SEARCH

GuelphMercuryTribune.com

LOCAL NEWS THINGS TO DO OPINION LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS MARKETPLACE

## Pop-up garden in Toronto has deep roots in Guelph

Guelphites are trying to make Canada's strip malls a little more palatable

COMMUNITY Jul 09, 2019 by Jonathan Duncan Guelph Mercury

# SOCIAL GOAL 4

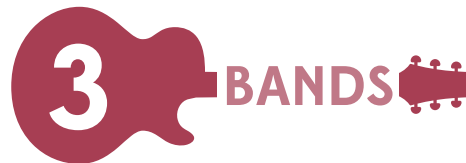
## REFLECT LOCAL CULTURE

*Showcasing local culture was a central approach for WexPOPS' placemaking strategy.*

The community working group helped define the thematic approach to the WexPOPS design, favouring concepts that celebrated local ecologies and the area's Middle Eastern communities. Throughout the 6-week installation, the WexPOPS

stage (with a mural designed by a local artist and painted by community volunteers) offered music and dance performances by local artists, co-curated by Scarborough Arts, as well as urban ecology workshops lead by the TRCA.

### LOCAL ARTISTS SHOWCASED



### MOVING FORWARD

The two events that plazaPOPS programmed at WexPOPS on July 28 and August 17 could have attracted larger audiences. Co-curated by Scarborough Arts, a "variety show" approach was chosen to programming artists, in an attempt to represent the multiple voices and cultures of this corner of Scarborough. However, this mixed approach meant that these events had to create their own audiences, as opposed to a built-in audience that may come with an event programmed by an established organization.

The most successful event was the August 1 PATTY-O, programmed by Working Women Community Centre. Though it was only planned a week prior, this event had the biggest number of attendees. Programmed events at future plazaPOPS should treat the installation as a free venue available to partner organizations.



## WexPOPS ORGANIZED EVENTS

## PARTNER ORGANIZED EVENTS

JULY  
5  
2019

**WexPOPS LAUNCH**

⋮

JULY  
20  
2019

**STUDENT EXHIBIT**

*Organized by For You  
Telehealth Initiative*

⋮

JULY  
28  
2019

**WexPOPS SHOWCASE**

⋮

AUGUST  
1  
2019

**PATTY-O PRE-CARIBANA  
EVENT**

*Hosted by Working Women  
Community Centre*

⋮

AUGUST  
3  
2019

**HOWARD TAM'S  
SCARBOROUGH  
FOOD TOUR**

⋮

AUGUST  
13  
2019

**SCARBOROUGH CYCLES  
GROUP RIDE**

⋮

AUGUST  
17  
2019

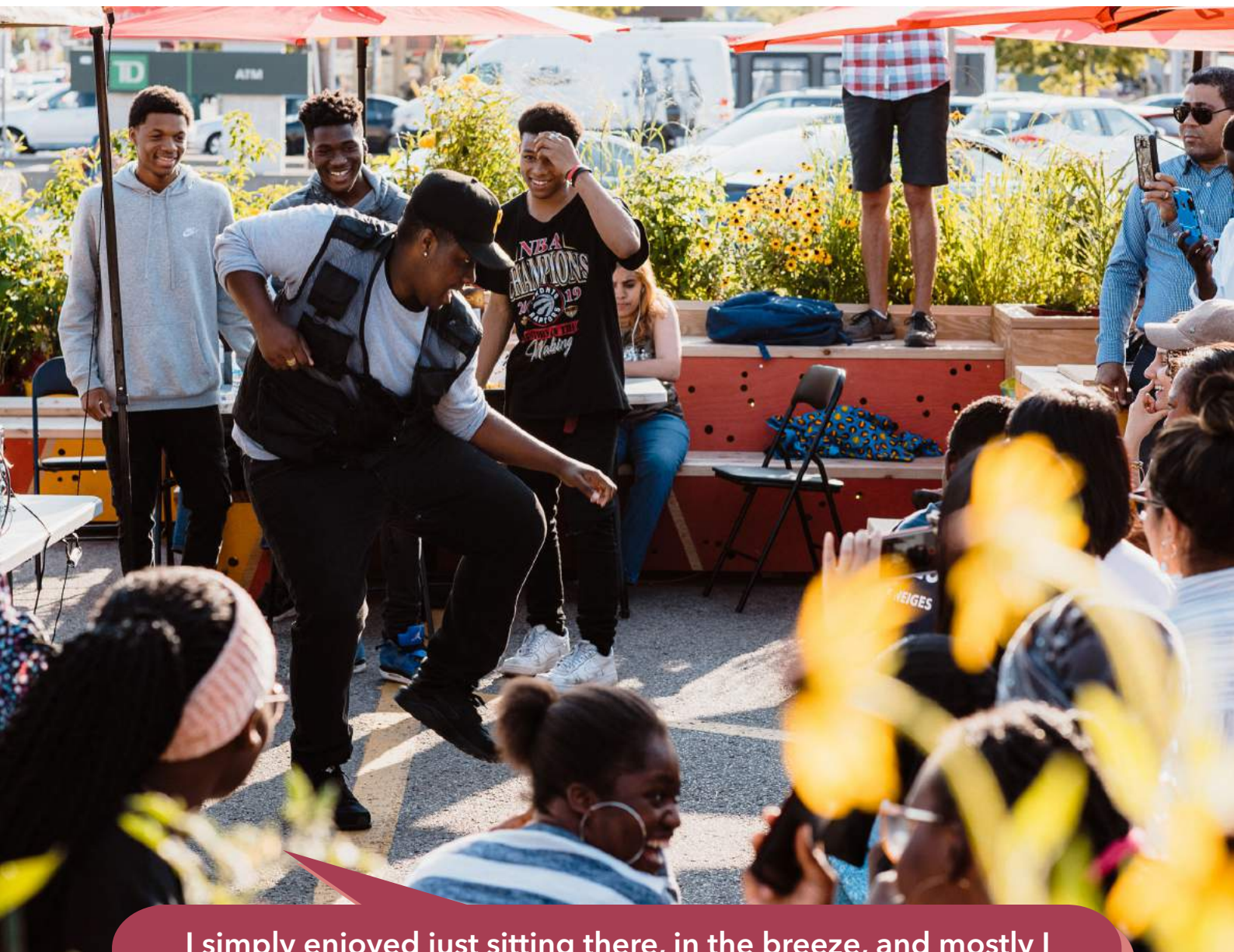
**TAKE OUT TALENT  
NIGHT**

**SOCIAL  
GOAL  
5**

# FEEL COMFORTABLE & WELCOMING

WexPOPS was designed to include physically comfortable shady spaces to accommodate a variety of users throughout the day. Lighting created a sense of safety at night. WexPOPS was designed

to be enclosed to protect from passing cars, but also welcoming, with large entrances. Programming at WexPOPS welcomed a diversity of users and activities throughout the day.



I simply enjoyed just sitting there, in the breeze, and mostly I liked it at sunset. I didn't feel like I was in a parking lot at all

-WexPOPS VISITOR



of visitors felt welcome at WexPOPS



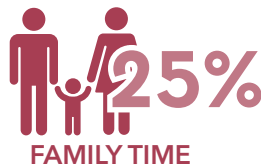
of visitors felt positive about the design of WexPOPS



of visitors felt physically comfortable

## WHAT DO VISITORS USE THE SPACE FOR?

There was a broad cross section of activities and uses of space employed throughout the six weeks of the installation, demonstrating that a diverse array of users felt comfortable accessing the space. Time spent at the installation ranged from two minutes to two hours.



## MOVING FORWARD

Creating a safe, accessible and comfortable public gathering space in the middle of a busy parking lot is a novel design challenge. WexPOPS was designed to balance a sense of enclosure –creating a physical barrier between the interior and cars navigating its exterior – and openness, featuring three clear points of entry and exit. This resulted in the creation of an inner ‘room’. The inward focus of the design may also have contributed to the perception that WexPOPS was not publicly accessible, but this remains a necessary design strategy from a safety and comfort perspective.

Once curious visitors ventured into WexPOPS, the space worked quite well, but it became clear

that there was some confusion about whether the space was publicly accessible. Many assumed it was a private space associated with one of the restaurants with a cost of admission or a nursery business selling plants. The novel nature of the project appears may have also contributed: visitors had never seen anything like WexPOPS and didn’t know what to make of it.

To counteract this perception, future plazaPOPS should include large and easy-to-read signage surrounding its exterior to ensure there is no confusion about free access. Designers should not be shy, and take inspiration from the vernacular strip mall signage that is as bright and visible as possible!

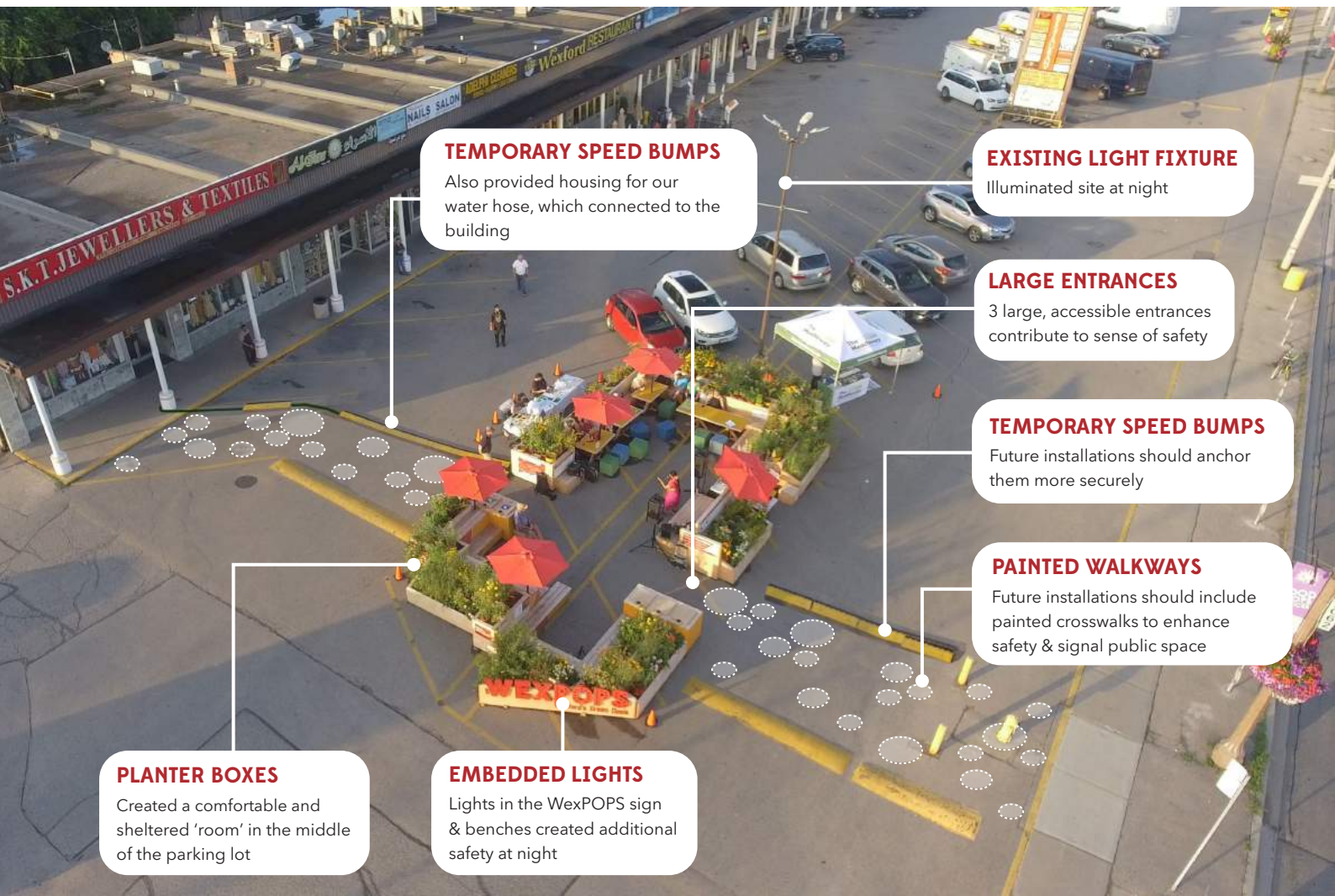
# SOCIAL GOAL 6

# FEEL SAFE

*All of the local business owners felt that WexPOPS was a safe space (total 5 interviews)*

Over the course of the six weeks, only one act of graffiti was recorded, though the installation was left open at all times. The community engagement process may have led to a greater level of community

stewardship, which encouraged local businesses and community members to take care of the space.



### TEMPORARY SPEED BUMPS

Also provided housing for our water hose, which connected to the building

### EXISTING LIGHT FIXTURE

Illuminated site at night

### LARGE ENTRANCES

3 large, accessible entrances contribute to sense of safety

### TEMPORARY SPEED BUMPS

Future installations should anchor them more securely

### PAINTED WALKWAYS

Future installations should include painted crosswalks to enhance safety & signal public space

### PLANTER BOXES

Created a comfortable and sheltered 'room' in the middle of the parking lot

### EMBEDDED LIGHTS

Lights in the WexPOPS sign & benches created additional safety at night

*WexPOPS safety features*



Occupying ten parking spaces, the design of WexPOPS created a comfortable and sheltered 'room' in the middle of the parking lot, to ensure the feeling of safety for visitors. The installation was surrounded by planter boxes and seating to create this feeling of enclosure. Alongside the enclosed design, speed bumps were placed on both sides of the installation, accompanied by 'drive slowly' signage to slow down the speed of passing cars.

Before WexPOPS was installed, many cars used the Wexford Plaza as a "cut through", circumventing the Lawrence and Warden intersection. As a result, speed bumps were included in the design of WexPOPS to slow down traffic. Once WexPOPS was installed, there were less "cut throughs", part of what may be called "sticky streets", the pattern of cars slowing down if there is more activity on a street.

*It was right in the middle of a parking lot, but I felt totally safe*

-WexPOPS VISITOR

## MOVING FORWARD

Despite being in the middle of a parking lot, the design of WexPOPS created a defined room, leading most visitors to feel safe gathering there. Though contemplated in the initial design, the team didn't install painted crosswalks leading pedestrians from the sidewalk to WexPOPS

safely. This omission may have also contributed to the confusion about public access to WexPOPS. Future plazaPOPS could include painted crosswalks for both safety and as a welcoming gesture.

SOCIAL  
GOAL  
7

## ATTRACT A DIVERSITY OF USERS

*WexPOPS was designed to attract a diversity of users everyday, along with programmed events to welcome even more users. Events were programmed by the plazaPOPS team and local community organization. plazaPOPS events featured local food, artists and musicians while community organizations hosted interactive talks, tour stops and community events*





# HOW DID VISITORS USE THE SPACE?

*(Observed from the Public Life Study)*

SITTING

READING/DRINKING

EATING

LARGE GROUP HANG OUTS

1-ON-1 CONVERSATIONS

WORKING (ON LAPTOP)

WATCHING THE PLANTS

WAITING FOR FRIENDS

WAITING FOR THE BUS

SOCIALIZING IN/FROM CARS

DANCING

PRINT MAKING

ARTS AND CRAFTS

INSTRUMENT PLAYING

ART EXHIBIT

BICYCLE TRIP PIT STOP

SURVEY TAKING/GIVING

ECOLOGICAL WALKS AND  
LEARNING

KIDS CLIMBING

LISTENING TO TALKS

APPLYING HENNA





# ECONOMIC

## DRIVER

### **Enhance local economy & be good for business**

WexPOPS was designed to be “good for business”, demonstrating that the goals of city-building and small businesses are aligned, while acknowledging that small businesses are central to the health of a community.

To be the most effective, the plazaPOPS model requires a local partner organization to be most effective. BIAs are an ideal partner, and plazaPOPS could evolve into a new BIA program much like a street festival or streetscape improvement program, but a program tailored to the suburban Main Street condition.



## ECONOMIC GOALS

1. Create a destination and landmark
2. Create opportunities for local businesses
3. Minimize parking impacts

# ECONOMIC GOAL 1

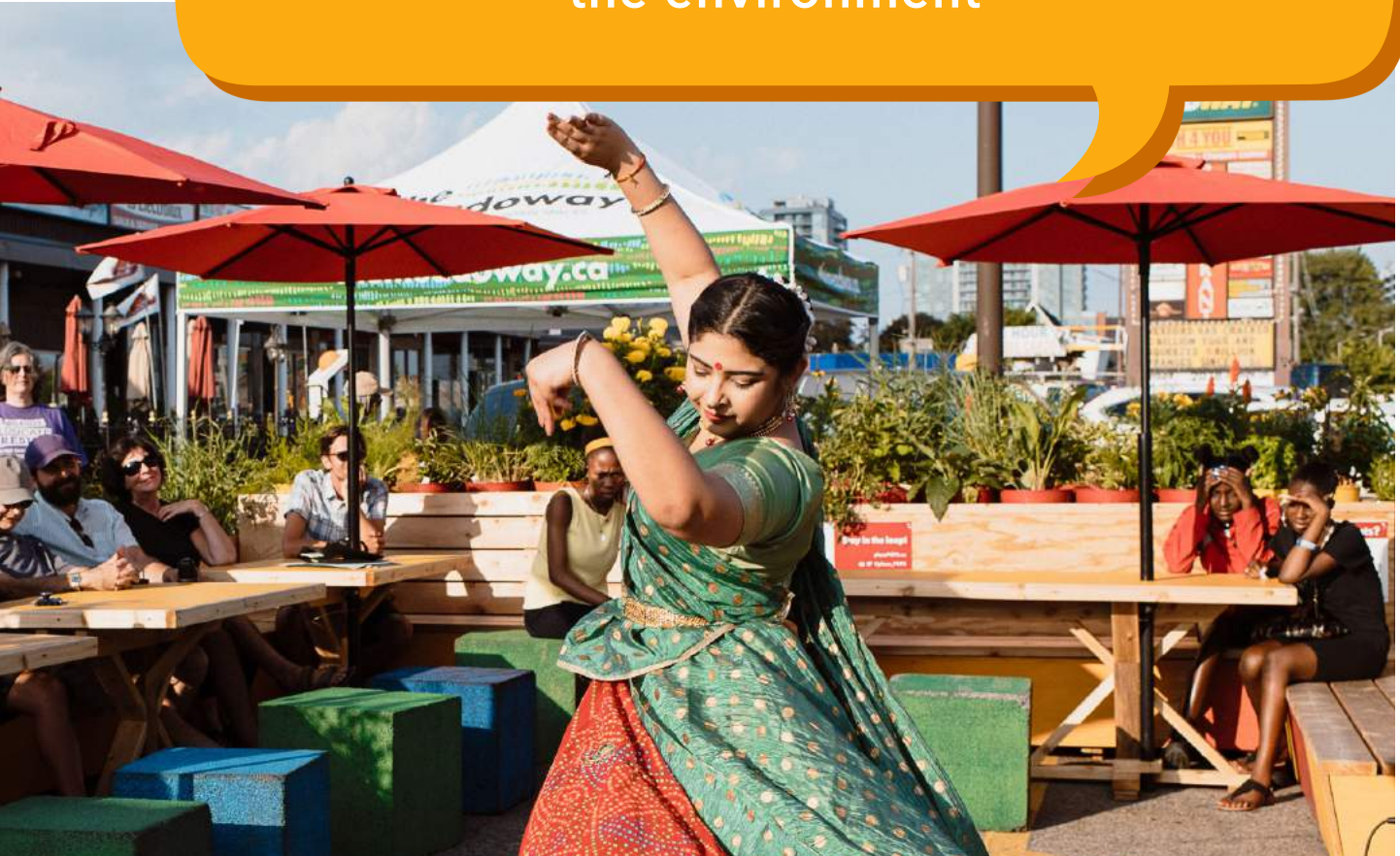
## CREATE A DESTINATION & LANDMARK

*WexPOPS was designed to be iconic, instantly recognizable, and visible from far and wide, attracting visitors from all over the city to patronize the businesses within the Wexford Heights BIA*

Visitors from the local neighbourhood and across the GTA visited WexPOPS, demonstrating that the installation served as a local gathering place and landmark.

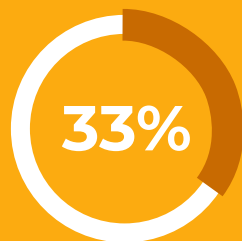


Landmarks have distinctive spatial features... and have the potential to help people to orientate or find their way in the environment<sup>1</sup>

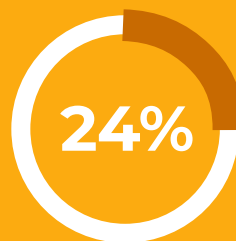


## DOT MAP RESPONSES

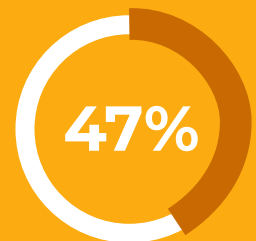
(194 TOTAL RESPONSES)



WEXFORD-  
MARYVALE AREA



SCARBOROUGH



TORONTO & GTA

*Note: Dot Map is meant to provide a snap shot of visitors and should not be interpreted as a full survey of visitors. Not everyone who came to WexPOPS participated in the dot map.*

1. Lynch, K. (1960). The Image of the City. Boston: MIT press.

# ECONOMIC GOAL 2

## CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

*The WexPOPS model was built on partnerships with the local BIA and business community. A core objective was finding opportunities to highlight, engage and promote the local business community*

Throughout the project, over 92 businesses were featured, either through formal partnerships or programming and events, including 61 restaurants featured in the Local Neighbourhood Restaurant directory. The owners of Wexford Heights Plaza, who hosted the installation, invited the project team

back for the summer 2020 season. Despite business owners not detecting an uptick in business during the installation of WexPOPS, they were all supportive of the project, understanding the holistic benefits of a community project.

### CONNECTIONS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

#### THE WEXFORD RESTAURANT

hosted the project, providing 10 parking spaces

#### AC WATERJET

donated CNC milling services to create the WexPOPS signs and the Wish Tree

#### CAS SIGNS CO

donated all the printing for WexPOPS signs.

#### ROSE'S KITCHEN

provided reduced cost food for the PATTY-O event.

#### PHOTO FAST

an employee from photo fast provided a DJ set

#### GRO BARK

donated mulch and soil

# 88%

*of business owners said  
WexPOPS created a  
welcoming environment*

# 100%

*of business owners would  
love to see WexPOPS again*



# LOCAL RESTAURANT DIRECTORY

Wexford Heights BIA is home to some of the most delicious and diverse restaurants and grocery stores in Toronto. Go ahead, get some take-out, and bring it back to enjoy at WexPOPS!



## MIDDLE EASTERN

1. Damos 1702 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Alwasla Halal Meat and Grocery 1702 Lawrence Ave. E.
3. Heyam's Kitchen 1718a Lawrence Ave. E.
4. Moulamouf Restaurant 1841 Lawrence Ave. E.
5. Farjeb Restaurant 1811 Lawrence Ave. E.
6. Kawafo's 1811 Lawrence Ave. E.
7. Pizzoz Land Halal 1811 Lawrence Ave. E. #101
8. Ghodr Fish Restaurant 1844 Lawrence Ave. E.
9. Ghodr Meat and Restaurant 1847 Lawrence Ave. E.
10. Shawarma Empire 1822 Lawrence Ave. E.
11. Al-Amir 1829 Lawrence Ave. E.

12. Haidi's 1827 Lawrence Ave. E.
13. Pafna Halal Meat 1811 Lawrence Ave. E.
14. Pafna's Kabob House 1822 Lawrence Ave. E.
15. Art Fine Foods 1907 Lawrence Ave. E.
16. Alexandria Cafe 1947 Lawrence Ave. E.
17. Nile Palace Cafe 1922 Lawrence Ave. E.
18. Aleppo Kabob 1942 Lawrence Ave. E.
19. Lotus Catering & Take Out 1922 Lawrence Ave. E.
20. M.A.A. Grocery - Halal Meat 1841 Lawrence Ave. E.
21. Ibrahim BSO Shawarma 1847 Lawrence Ave. E.
22. Haidi's 1908 Lawrence Ave. E.
23. Yusef's 2022 Lawrence Ave. E.
24. Alzahra 2022 Lawrence Ave. E.

## CARIBBEAN

1. Negri's Jack Hut 1702 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Alabon Urban 1837 Lawrence Ave. E.
3. Roy's Kitchen 1960 Lawrence Ave. E.
4. Uncle Sam Tropical Foods 1649 Lawrence Ave. E.
5. Spite in the 2179 Lawrence Ave. E.

## EAST ASIAN

1. Super Hakkis 1822 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Spring China House 1872 Lawrence Ave. E.
3. Mokkel Chen 1979 Lawrence Ave. E.
4. Pua/Banh Mi Hanoi 2009 Lawrence Ave. E.
5. PV Foods 2082 Lawrence Ave. E.
6. Coffee In 2100 Lawrence Ave. E.

## NORTH AMERICAN

1. 241 Pizzeria 1756 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Four C 1708 Lawrence Ave. E.
3. Top Gun Burger and Steak 1620 Lawrence Ave. E.
4. Mini Moo's Burgers 1704 Lawrence Ave. E.
5. Wexford Restaurant 2072 Lawrence Ave. E.
6. Chicken Kitchen 2072 Lawrence Ave. E.
7. M&Co Burgers 2184 Lawrence Ave. E.
8. Diane's Oyster Bar and Grill 2142 Lawrence Ave. E.

## SOUTH ASIAN

1. Parvati 1702 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Chowk Bazaar 1706 Lawrence Ave. E.
3. Pison and Kabob 1841 Lawrence Ave. E.
4. Luxury Cafe 1841 Lawrence Ave. E.

## EUROPEAN

1. Trinora 1817 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Nicos Greek Grill 1912 Lawrence Ave. E.
3. Cosmos Agora 1838 Lawrence Ave. E.

## DESSERT

1. Tuo Tuo Cafe 1827 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Crown Pastries 2048 Lawrence Ave. E.

## EAST AFRICAN

1. PE PE 1942 Lawrence Ave. E.
2. Sahen Restaurant 2072 Lawrence Ave. E.

We live in this neighbourhood and there's nowhere to sit anywhere! WexPOPS is a good place for people to sit, have a coffee. I saw lots of people doing that!

-LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER

## MOVING FORWARD

While WexPOPS included many opportunities for established local businesses, initial visions expressed by the working group included "market stands" for those local entrepreneurs and restaurateurs without bricks and mortar establishments. WexPOPS was sited on privately-owned property, and had to comply with the wishes of the landowner who did not want food or wares to be sold at the site.

Future plazaPOPS could attempt to position market stand functions as a priority when negotiating a relationship with project hosts. Initial conversations with Toronto's Municipal Licensing and Standards division were positive, and future plazaPOPS installations could easily comply with food handling standards.

ECONOMIC  
GOAL  
**3**

# MINIMIZE PARKING IMPACTS

*WexPOPS was hosted on a privately-owned public space – the Wexford Heights Plaza parking lot – transforming 10 parking spaces into a community gathering place*

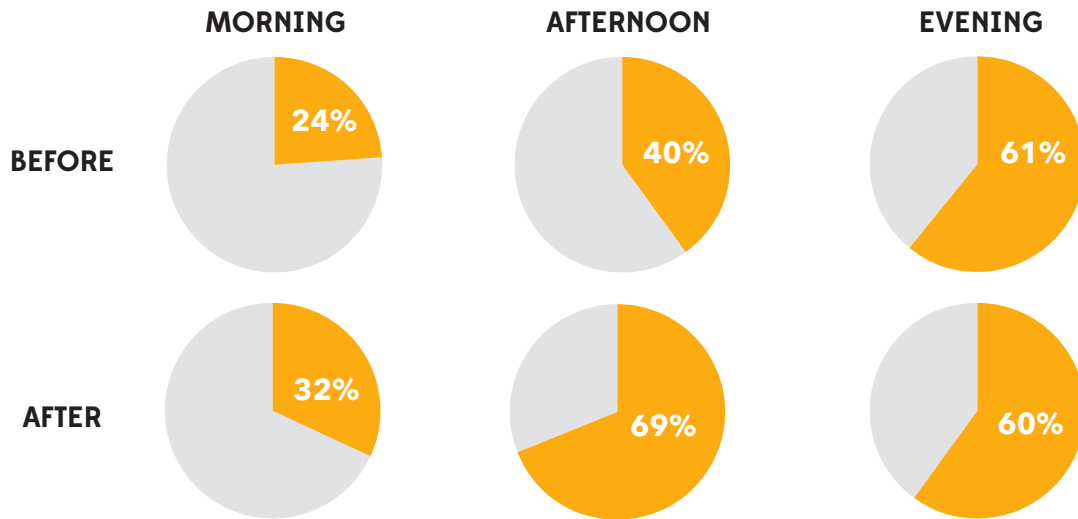
When selecting a site for WexPOPS, several plaza owners were concerned about parking impacts. Minimizing parking impacts is a key measure of success of the project, and also will help guide the selection of future sites.





# PARKING LOT OCCUPANCY RATES

(Before and After WexPOPS)



Of the business owners interviewed, 63% stated that there were no issues with the parking. A small increase in parking during the WexPOPS installation was recorded, but there was always parking availability.

## MOVING FORWARD

Parking considerations remain a top priority when selecting a site for plazaPOPS. An initial strip mall contender for the WexPOPS site was divided into several smaller properties, where some businesses were owner-occupied, while others belonged to property owners who hired third-party property managers. While the team reached an agreement with the owner of a restaurant/property to use a single parking space in front of his business, the property manager of the adjacent properties was opposed to the project due to a lack of parking capacity, and concerns over visitors safely navigating the lot. It is recommended that future plazaPOPS be installed in strip malls that are not divided into smaller properties, and avoid installing plazaPOPS in parking lots that usually operate at over-capacity.



# ENVIRONMENTAL

## DRIVER

### **Enhance neighbourhood environmental resilience**

WexPOPS was an ecologically robust installation that enhanced the biodiversity of the Wexford Heights community, attracting insects and wildlife while acting as a hub of environmental knowledge and resilience. Environmental goals address the creation of a beautiful oasis, while contributing to neighbourhood sustainability and resilience.

A study in Philadelphia by five doctors with the University of Pennsylvania found that greening vacant, derelict lots led to “significant decreases” in feelings of depression and worthlessness among those in low-income communities living near the lots.<sup>1</sup> The City of Toronto’s biodiversity strategy also cites WexPOPS as a model.

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1. <https://dirt.asla.org/2018/11/01/this-is-your-brain-on-green-access-to-nature-improves-our-health/>



## ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

1. Be a beautiful oasis
2. Enhance local ecology
3. Minimize waste
4. Encourage active transportation

ENVIRONMENTAL  
GOAL  
**1**

# BE A BEAUTIFUL OASIS

*One of the top priorities of the working group was to create a green design with lush planting. Adding greenery to a typically barren parking lot contributed to the goal of creating a “beautiful oasis”.*

Installed in an asphalt parking lot during the hottest 6 weeks of the summer, WexPOPS had to incorporate ample shade to create a comfortable setting for people to gather – “a beautiful oasis” as articulated by the working group. To ensure

replicability and to avoid the complexity of building permits, the design of WexPOPS did not include any tall shade structures. As a result, the final shade strategy involved six two-metre umbrellas.



**J6**  
UMBRELLAS

**12**  
SQUARE METRES  
OF SHADE

**672**  
PLANTS



## MOVING FORWARD

The public realm of suburban main streets tends to be highly exposed, with large swaths of parking surfaces that absorb and radiate heat, and few trees. While the umbrellas used at WexPOPS were a cost effective solution, they were difficult to securely install and maintain daily, and did not provide enough shade, especially during the heat of the day. Future installations need to consider more robust methods to install and operate umbrellas or explore other shade solutions such as engineered shade sails, connected to existing light poles. Shading strategies for future plazaPOPS will need to balance the need to preserve visibility of business signage, with cost, safety, and human comfort considerations. Misting may be a viable solution to create a more comfortable micro climate during the hottest times of the year.

I was in the parking lot in the middle of a hot day; it was amazing how cool it was under the umbrellas; I could look up and see butterflies, people walking by, and life around me. It was just 'wow'.

- WexPOPS VISITOR

ENVIRONMENTAL  
GOAL  
**2**

# ENHANCE LOCAL ECOLOGY

*WexPOPS featured over 500 plants, which were planted in colour-coded pots: red for native perennials and grasses, orange for annuals, and yellow for edibles*

The pots were created from salvaged recycling pails from the University of Guelph, and were painted and drilled for drainage. The annuals and edibles were grown in campus greenhouses and donated to the project. All of the native plants, grown by Native Plants in Claremont, were selected to be meadow species, with similar sun conditions to a parking lot. All the native plants were donated to the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, and planted in a local stretch of the Meadoway after the installation popped down.

The planting design required maintenance. In a hot parking lot, the plants needed to be watered

at least twice a day – which was accomplished by youth Site Stewards, creating a youth employment opportunity (see page 23). Fortunately, the owners of the Wexford Plaza provided us with access to their water spigot. Future plazaPOPS installations may require different water-sourcing strategies.

The integration of annual and native plants supported the enhancement of local ecology through the added benefits of green space, connecting to nature, gardening and ecological education and by providing a green space, in an otherwise grey concrete area, for plants, butterflies, bees and other species to flourish.





## PARTNERSHIP WITH TRCA

The native plants at WexPOPS were chosen with the guidance the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to be compatible with meadow ecologies. Once WexPOPS popped down, the native plants were transplanted to a nearby section of the Meadoway, a hydro corridor in Scarborough that is being transformed into a vibrant 16-kilometre stretch of urban greenspace and meadowlands. The TRCA also lead walks exploring the urban ecology of Wexford Heights as part of 3 programmed events at WexPOPS.



ENVIRONMENTAL  
GOAL  
**3**

# MINIMIZE WASTE

*WexPOPS was designed with a three-stream trash receptacle, with separate bins for garbage, recycling, and compost*

Since WexPOPS did not generate a large volume of waste, the project hosts allowed access to their waste management system. As part of their tasks,

youth Site Stewards further sorted the waste to ensure it was going into the correct stream.



## MOVING FORWARD

While part of the project's commitment to sustainability included the goal of minimizing waste, this came into conflict with other goals of supporting local business. Visitors were encouraged to bring their take-out to enjoy at WexPOPS with a LOCAL RESTAURANT DIRECTORY, which listed nearby eateries categorized by cuisine, and a map showing their proximity to WexPOPS.

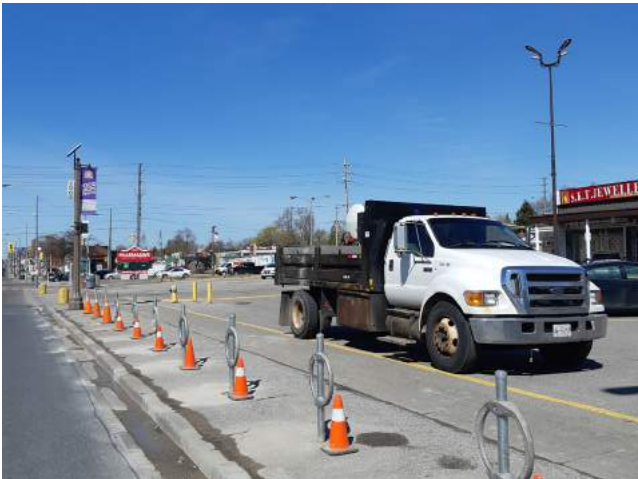
With the property owners' permission, future versions of plazaPOPS should include infrastructure to support on-site food distribution, so that the organizers have more control over minimizing waste, offering reusable plates and cups, while showcasing local food entrepreneurs who have not yet established a bricks and mortar business.



# ENVIRONMENTAL GOAL 4

## ENCOURAGE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

*WexPOPS encouraged visitors to take alternative forms of transportation to arrive at WexPOPS*



Working with the City of Toronto’s Neighbourhood Improvement Unit, several “ring and post” bike locks were installed, and bike parking counts were included in the Public Life Study.

Thanks to the installation of the WexPOPS cycling infrastructure, the number of bikes captured in the Wexford Heights Plaza increased exponentially, going from two bikes before the installation, to 72 bikes during the installation.

Facilitating multi-modal transportation can also be seen as an economic goal, inviting visitors from outside the neighbourhood to explore their city by bike and patronize local businesses.



### MOVING FORWARD

Future plazaPOPS installations should be sited as close as possible to TTC bus stops to serve those waiting for transit. While WexPOPS was only a few metres from the intersection of Lawrence Ave and Warden Ave, people waiting for the bus declined to use WexPOPS as a comfortable place to wait. If siting a plazaPOPS next to a bus stop is not possible, another option may be to install a “next bus” screen within the plazaPOPS, so that visitors can comfortably know when they should proceed to

# PUBLIC LIFE

# STUDY OBSERVATIONS

*The WexPOPS Public Life Study (PLS) included observations of public life within Wexford Plaza before WexPOPS was installed and during the 6 weeks that WexPOPS popped up*

Along with studying public life, the PLS documented the impact of WexPOPS on the availability of parking. The WexPOPS PLS was conducted by working group

members, Masters students from the University of Toronto and the University of Guelph, and volunteers from the neighbourhood and beyond.

## SUBURBAN SOCIALIZATION

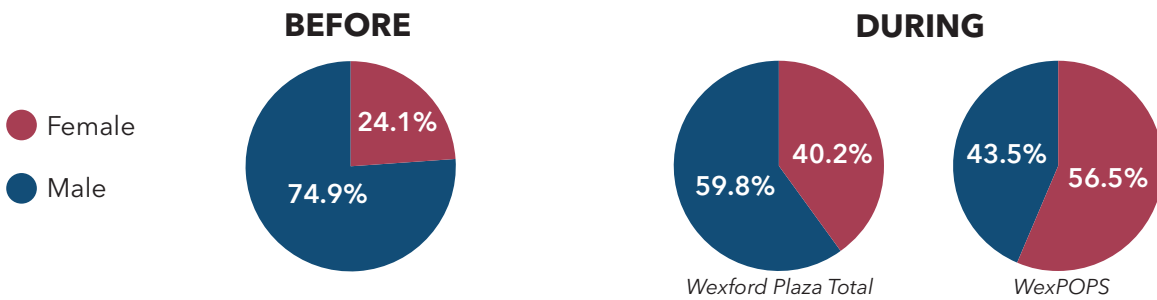
During the PLS, a very unique form of socialization in the inner suburbs was observed: People hanging out in their cars! On several occasions, researchers witnessed someone driving their car to WexPOPS and striking up a conversation with someone within the installation – without ever getting out of the car. Whether it was a group of people within one parked car, people socializing between several cars, or one person in a car socializing with a pedestrian, this form of socialization was frequent in Wexford Plaza before and during the WexPOPS installation. Future plazaPOPS should consider this unique form of suburban socialization and the design opportunities it presents.

Due to the lack of amenities, we also found many people improvising – creating seating out of the available infrastructure, including the Pharmasave sign at the corner of Lawrence and Warden. There's no lack of gathering in public spaces in the inner suburbs, but there is a lack of pedestrian infrastructure!



# GENDER

*The PLS found that users of the Wexford Plaza were more diverse in age and gender once WexPOPS was installed*



One of the goals of WexPOPS articulated by the community working group was to “attract a diversity of users”. During our PLS, volunteers recorded the approximate age and perceived gender of visitors to Wexford Plaza during the study period.

The PLS found that before WexPOPS was installed, only 24.1% of visitors to Wexford Plaza were female. Once WexPOPS was installed, that number grew to 41.2% female visitors, with more than half of users within WexPOPS itself recorded as female.

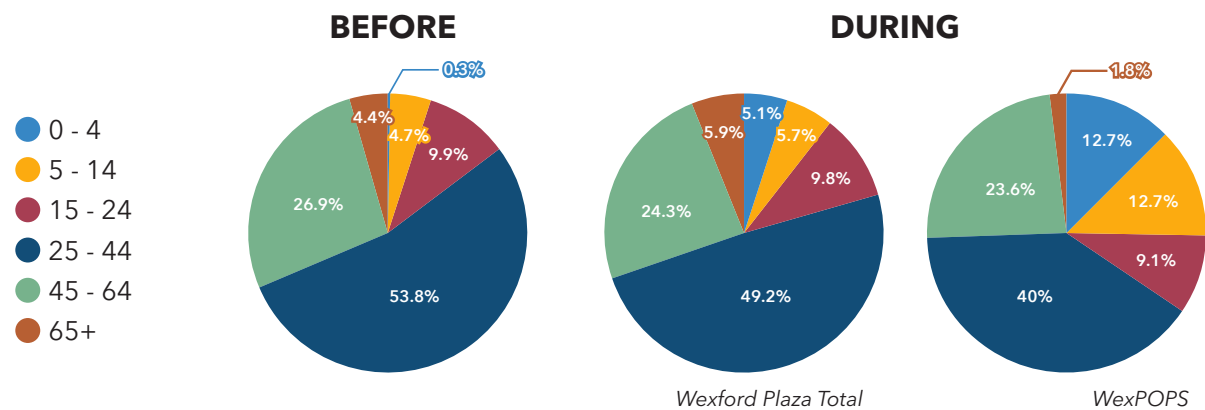
According to UN Women, women and girls experience more fear of navigating public spaces, “reducing women’s and girls’ freedom of

movement... ability to participate in school, work and public life,” and “their enjoyment of cultural and recreational opportunities. It also negatively impacts their health and well-being.”<sup>1</sup>

While privately-owned strip mall parking lots are already a site of public life, their users tend to be male and between the ages of 25 and 44. The PLS findings support this anecdotal observation, while demonstrating that outfitting strip mall parking lots with lighting, comfortable places to sit, clear sight lines, and multiple wide entrances enhances them while making them more inviting to female visitors.

# AGE

*While visitors aged 24 - 44 made up the majority of visitors to Wexford Plaza before and during WexPOPS, a greater diversity of ages was present once WexPOPS was installed*



While a greater percentage of visitors to WexPOPS itself were under 15 years old, a smaller percentage were 65 +. Future plazaPOPS installations need to be

even more accessible for seniors by including more robust shade structures, programming specifically for seniors, and enhanced safety features.

1. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces>

# NEXT STEPS

*WexPOPS popped down on August 18, 2019, but the proof of concept inspired many to reconsider the potential of privately-owned strip mall parking lots as community gathering places, including, perhaps most importantly, the Kiriakou family – the property owners and WexPOPS project hosts who have invited the project back to the Wexford Plaza for future summers*

WexPOPS' social, environmental and economic impact drivers were the result of both the community design process and the installation itself. These drivers were identified through the project charter, defined by the WexPOPS working group (see page 13). The social, economic, and environmental goals overlap and support each other, demonstrating that the goals of city-building and small business are interrelated in the creation of a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable city. As a community gathering place, WexPOPS is a catalyst for socialization, sustainability, and economic development.



*In partnership with the City of Toronto, plazaPOPS has received a Partnership Engage grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), to understand what a scaled-out, city-wide, and funded plazaPOPS program might look like*

The goal of the next phase of plazaPOPS is to develop and communicate a framework for the creation of a municipal plazaPOPS program by addressing three questions:

## WHAT

Looking back at WexPOPS and understanding the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the project

## WHERE

Establish criteria for siting, in general, and determine where future plazaPOPS should be located to maximize benefits

## HOW

Analyze relevant policy, tools and programs, and recommend how the City of Toronto, BIAs and other partners could support a plazaPOPS program



## APPENDIX A

# Data Collection Methods

The following methods were used to collect data to assess the impact of WexPOPS in relation to the principles, goals, objectives and measurements created by the WexPOPS working group (see pg 13)

### 1. Pre-and-Post Occupancy Evaluation

Public life studies, based on those conducted by Gehl Architects and Park People before and during the installation. A PLS thoroughly documents empirical evidence of urban quality of life, demonstrating the large impacts that public realm improvements have on quality of life in a city. A PLS also documents behaviour in public space – the various ways people use a site, which can inform future design choices to accommodate popular and unforeseen activities.

Parking counts were conducted before and during the installation to measure the project's impact on parking availability and cycling infrastructure occupancy.

### 2. Interviews with Business Owners

Interviews were conducted with businesses owners within and adjacent to the Wexford Heights plaza where WexPOPS was installed. Interview questions were designed to assess economic and social impact of WexPOPS, and the business owners' support for the project.

### 3. Interviews with Visitors

Interviews conducted with visitors spending time at WexPOPS during events and non-programmed days. These interviews included questions about the purpose of their visit to the Wexford Heights plaza, and if they patronized any of the nearby businesses.

### 4. Interviews and Evaluation with Working Group Members

Interviews with working group members were designed to evaluate their experiences with the community-design process, along with their impressions and experiences of the WexPOPS installation itself.

### 5. Interactive and Playful Feedback Methods

WexPOPS featured a 'dot map,' which prompted visitors to place a sticker on a map showing where they live.

The 'Wexford Wish Tree,' posed a different question every two weeks, inviting visitors to write their answers on a horticultural tag and tie them to the tree for others to read. Prompts were designed to provide insight into attendee's views of the Wexford neighbourhood generally and WexPOPS specifically. (See page 23 for more on the Wish Tree)

### 6. Social Media and Traditional Media analysis

Social media analysis included a survey of the use of #WexPOPS and #Wexford before, during and after the project's installation, along with specific mentions of WexPOPS and the Wexford community in traditional media.

### 7. Evaluate design

Many sources informed the evaluation of the design of WexPOPS, including interviews with visitors, local business owners, and working group members, along with prompts from the interactive "Wexford Wish Tree".

