



# INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES:

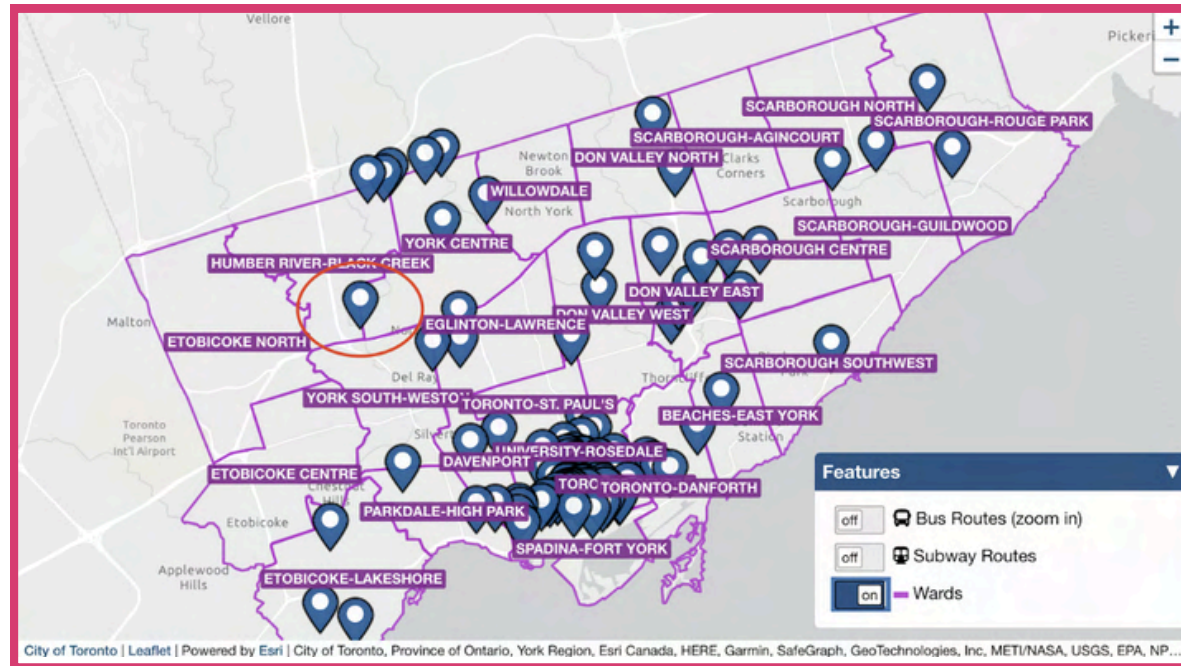
Innovation Hub Feasibility Study



Funded by:  
Federal Economic Development  
Agency for Southern Ontario

# UNEVEN GEOGRAPHY OF INNOVATION

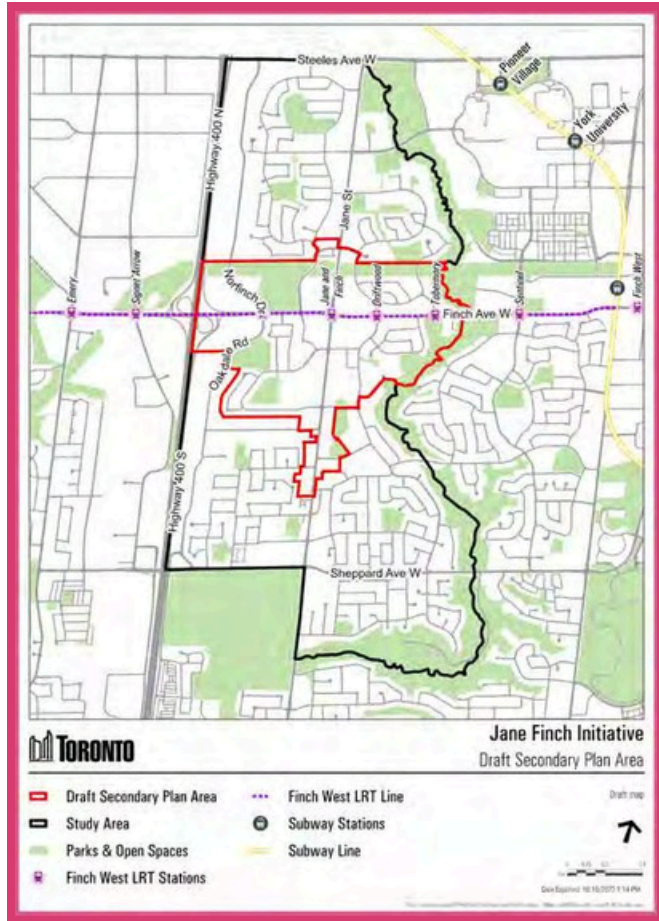
There is a noticeable concentration of innovation infrastructure in the downtown core, leaving the northwestern suburbs, including Jane-Finch, underserved.



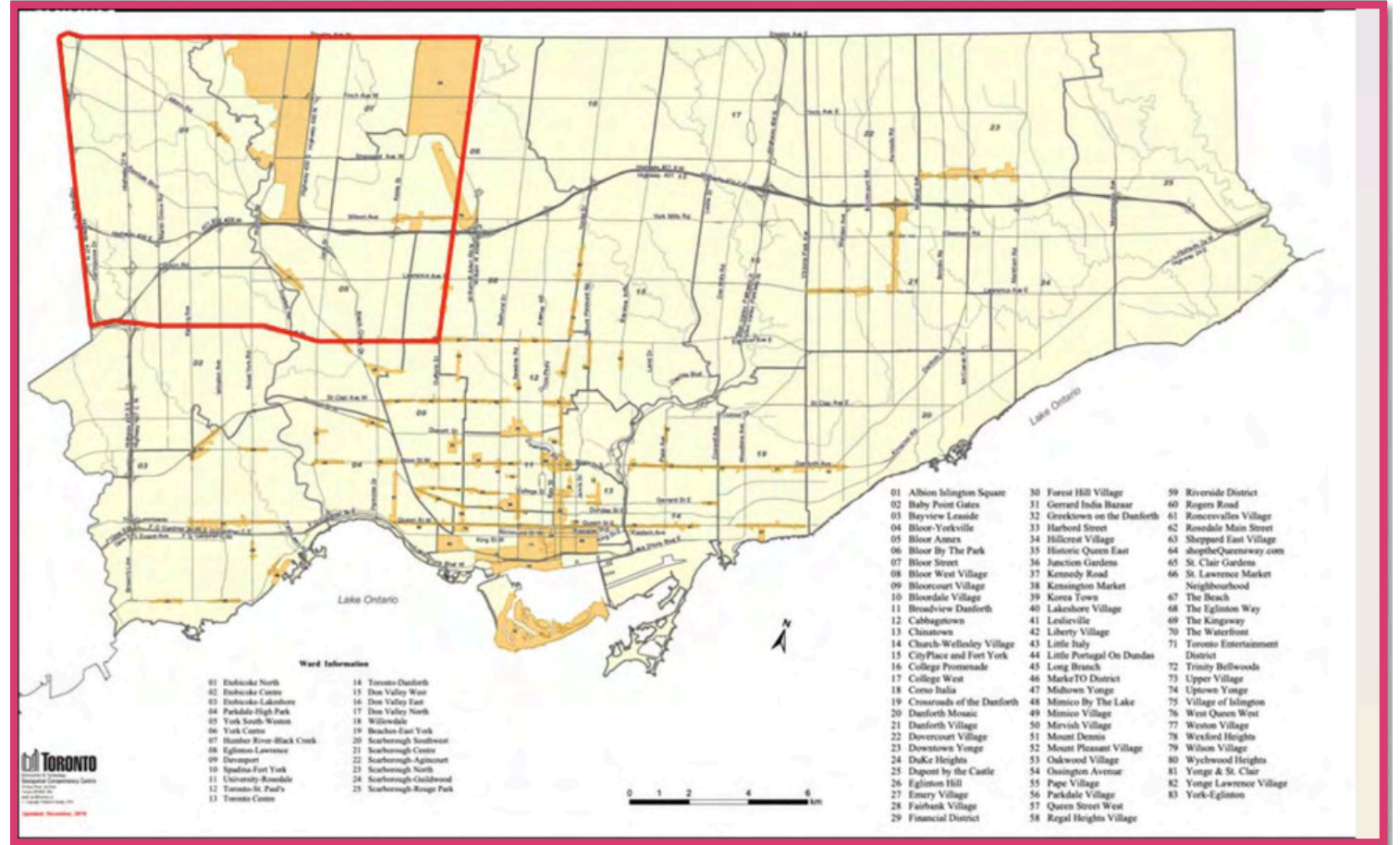
Accelerators, Incubators, and Co-Working Spaces within the City of Toronto (BEA Circled in Red)



# STUDY AREA



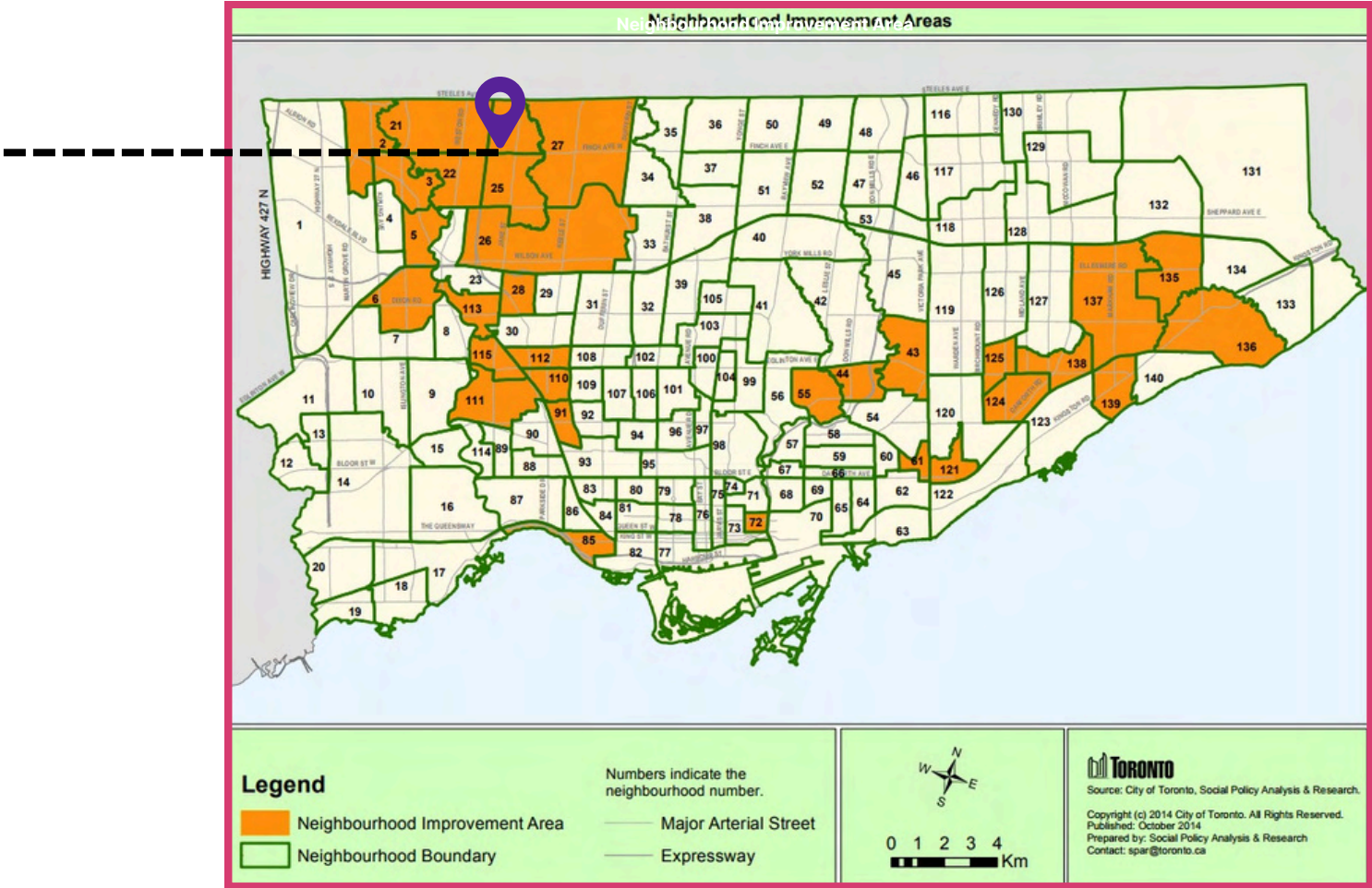
Jane & Finch Area Map | Source: City Of Toronto October 2022



The northwestern corner of Toronto is defined as a cluster of communities between Dufferin St. & Highway 27 to the west, running south from Steeles Ave. to Eglinton Ave.

# UNEVEN GEOGRAPHY OF OPPORTUNITY

Jane-Finch



Map of City of Toronto Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) (City of Toronto, 2014)



# STUDY AREA : OPPORTUNITIES



**Jane-Finch Community Hub & Centre for the Arts**  
(Urban Toronto, 2021)

## Inclusive Employment Opportunities

This is one of 12 booklets that summarizes the Jane Finch Initiative Ideas Report. Booklet topics:

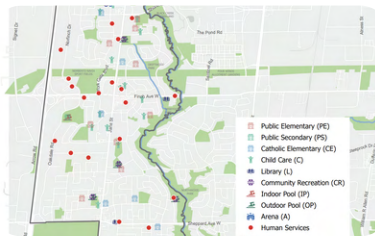


- Arts & Culture
- Climate action
- Community Service Facilities
- Heritage
- Housing
- Inclusive employment opportunities
- Inclusive entrepreneurship opportunities

**Jane Finch Initiative**  
(City of Toronto, 2022)



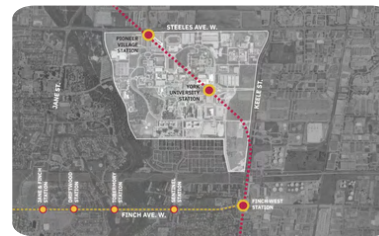
**Corner Commons**  
(The Local, 2023)



**Community services and facilities in Jane-Finch**  
(City of Toronto, 2021)



**Jane-Finch Mall Redevelopment**  
(JFM+, n.d.)



**York University Keele Campus Revitalization Vision**  
(York University, 2021)



**Id8 Downsview**  
(Urban Toronto, 2024)



# WHY AN INNOVATION HUB ?

“An important component of the startup ecosystem is the innovation infrastructure that supports new business formation and growth, in particular business incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces.”

— From *Concept to Commercialization: A Startup Ecosystem Strategy for the City of Toronto, 2015*

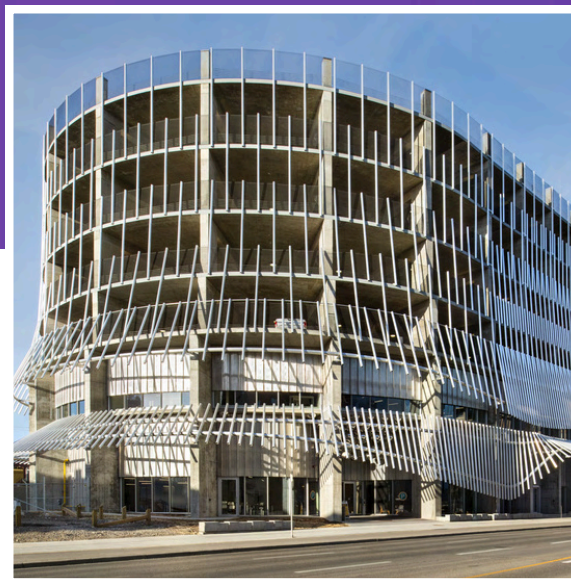


# WHY AN INNOVATION HUB ?

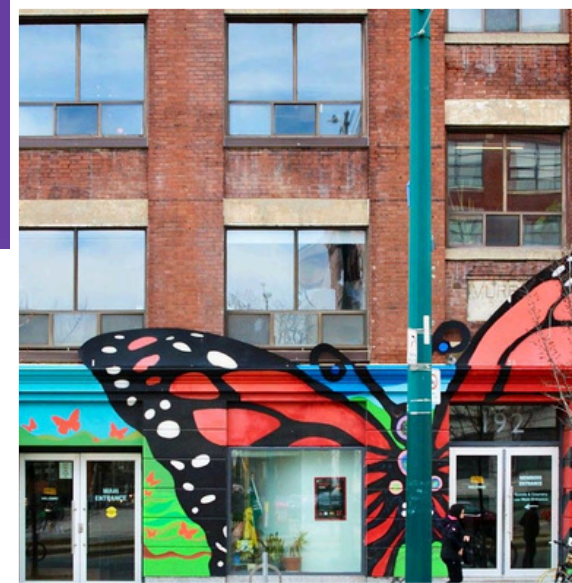
“This type of infrastructure can advance business formation, create and retain jobs, commercialize technologies, and accelerate the delivery of new products and services to the marketplace.” (City of Toronto, 2015).



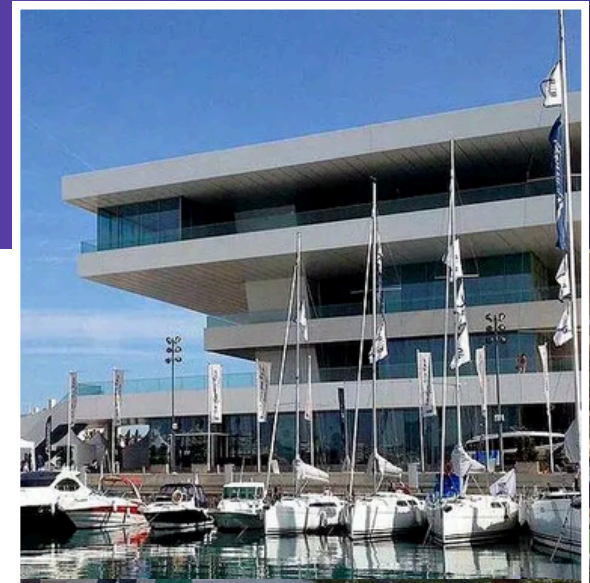
Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC)'s  
Bristol Living Lab  
Bristol, UK  
(Knowle West Media Centre, n.d.)



Platform Calgary  
Calgary, Alberta  
(Platform Calgary, n.d.)



Centre for Social Innovation  
Toronto, Ontario  
(Centre for Social Innovation, n.d.)



València Living Lab  
València, Spain  
(You Valencia Press, 2018)

# ABOUT THE STUDY



“How can the BEA and key partners build an innovation hub that fosters a culture of innovation and education and equips underrepresented groups within marginalized communities with the tools to successfully navigate the entrepreneurial and talent ecosystem?”

— Main Question



# RESEARCH RESULTS

May - November 2023



## Case Studies

Drawing from six global innovation spaces, our hub's development prioritizes programs enhancing individual and community capabilities through funding, civic engagement, and workforce initiatives, promoting multi-sectoral collaboration and community-wealth building.



## Stakeholder Engagement

Insights from 23 stakeholders stress the importance of community partnerships, trust-building, and high-quality programming for sustainable outcomes. Our approach emphasizes inclusivity, community-driven strategies, and strategic planning for success.



## Survey

Based on 190 participants, including Jane-Finch residents, our survey identifies crucial resources, amenities, and programming preferences for an inclusive hub. It emphasizes community engagement and essential entrepreneurial and workforce skills.

# VISION - MAKING INNOVATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Developing a state-of-the-art, mixed-used innovation hub  
that supports:



An early entry  
point to innovation  
for youth, women,  
and racialized  
groups



Generating a future-ready,  
diverse workforce for  
emerging labour needs  
through forward-looking  
skill-based education.



Accelerate Black  
and BIPOC-led  
startup companies,  
social ventures and  
founders.

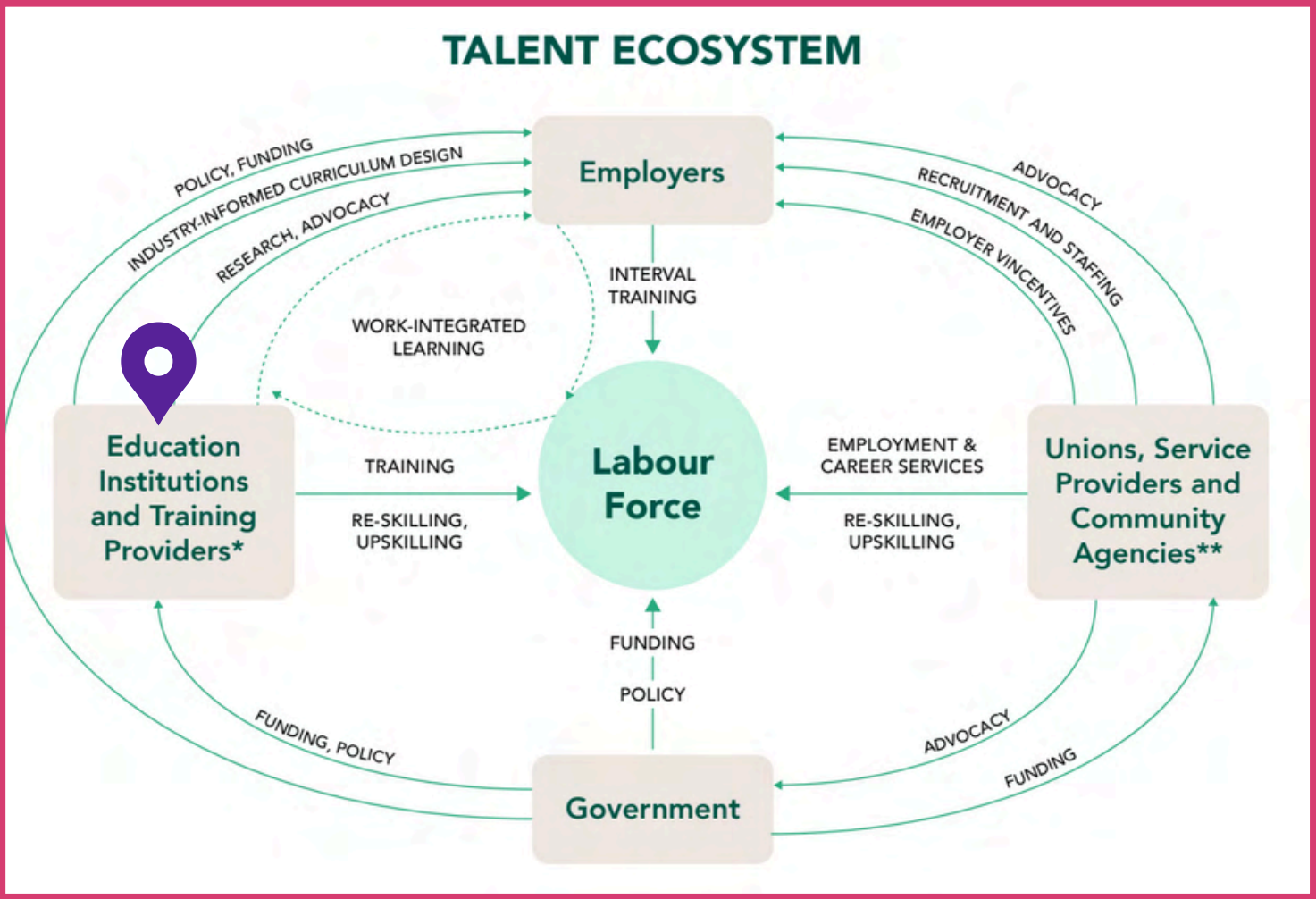


Exporting local innovation  
– A direct connector  
between the local  
community, academia,  
and the broader  
innovation network





# HUB ROLE: SUPPORTING A TALENT ECOSYSTEM



The Element Centre serves as an intermediary between local and broader economic development, seeking to bridge the gap between local economies and the resource-rich innovation ecosystem’s knowledge, networks, and investment opportunities.

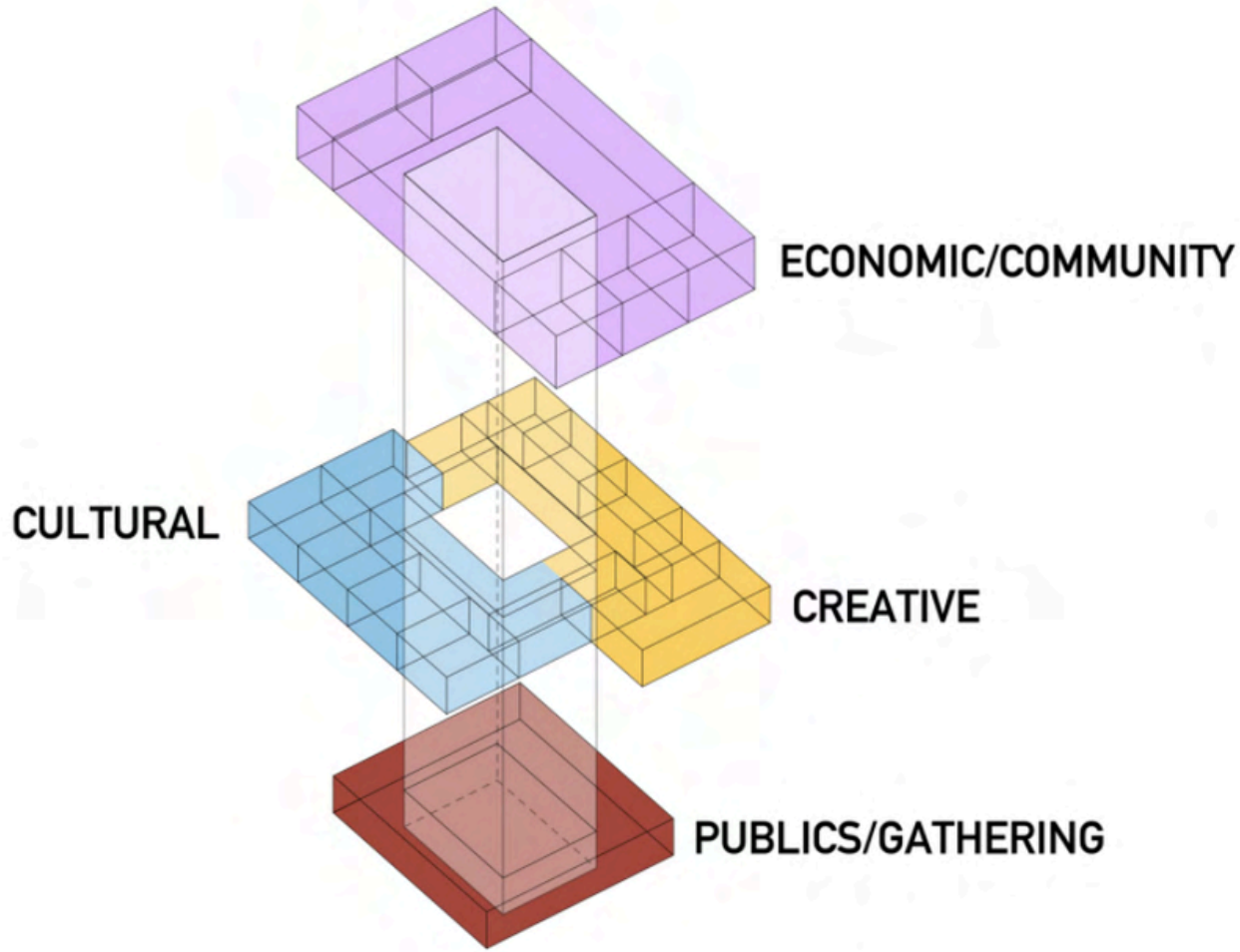




ELEMENT  
BLACK ENTERPRISE  
INNOVATION CENTRE

ELEMENT





**COMMUNITY**

**CONVERGENCE**

**CATALYSTS**

**PERSONAS**

**ELEMENTS**







# HUB PERSONAS



## **Future Innovators**

Youth interested in innovation, entrepreneurship, and tailored early-intervention learning.



## **Underrepresented Founders**

Entrepreneurs seeking to grow their ventures through the hub's programs and networks.



## **Underrepresented Professionals**

Those aiming to enter or transition to high-paying STEM careers, emerging sectors or advance to leadership roles.



## **Catalysts**

Connectors to the industry and resources, aiding others' capacity and growth.

# NEXT STEPS

Organizational  
Capacity Building

Housing  
Study

Pilot Space

Ongoing  
Engagement



# Black Entrepreneurship Alliance.

Study Supported by:



ySpace



YORK U-TD  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTRE



LP UNTITLED  
PLANNING

AK\_A/FLDWRK

Funded by:  
Federal Economic Development  
Agency for Southern Ontario  
Canada