

My Hub, My Community

**Synergism in
Action**

Rexdale
Community
Hub

2023-2024





ALBION NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

STROLLER PARK

GYM

STAFF LOUNGE

MAKER SPACE

DELTA FAMILY RESOURCE

RWC DROP-IN

WASHROOM

REXDALE COMMUNITY HEALTH

PEACE ROOM

FREI SPACE

TORONTO EMPLOYMENT

HEALTH WELLNESS

REXDALE LEGAL CLINIC

REXDALE WOMEN'S CENTRE

111 Toronto/Rexdale Community Hub
21 Panorama Court

Directory	
1st Floor Agencies	
Delta Family Resource Centre	111
MicroSkills Proftech Media Centre	112
RWC Drop In Centre	113
Albion Neighbourhood Services	114
Sick Room	1004
Community Kitchen	1006
Community Room B, 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B	1007
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto	1020/1040
Shipping & Receiving	1041
Staff Lounge	1049
Hub Director	1064
Community Stage	1067
Community Gym	1068
Mult Faith Prayer Room	1070
Community Room A, 1A, 2A	1081/1082
Community Stroller Park	1083
2nd Floor Agencies	
Toronto Employment & Social Services	21
Rexdale Employment Services	
Community MicroSkills Development Centre	22
Action for Neighbourhood Change	23
Rexdale Women's Centre	24
Rexdale Community Legal Clinic/Legal Aid Ontario	25
Rexdale Community Health Centre	
George Hill Centre for Children and Families	25
Preschool Speech & Language Services	2012
Community Room D	2013
Staff Kitchen	2014
Community Room E	2015
Community Room C	2016
Community Room F	2016

**2023-2024
Total Hub Visits:
201,404**



Executive Director's Message for AGM 2024

Welcome to our 2024 Annual General Meeting! As we gather to reflect on our journey, growth, and impact over the past year, I am reminded of the power of **synergy**—the core of our collective work and the theme guiding our reflections this year.

Synergy is the driving force behind the Rexdale Community Hub. It captures the spirit of our community coming together, where every individual, group, and organization plays a vital role in cultivating a collaborative and thriving environment for all. Imagine our community as a well-equipped toolbox, where each of us brings unique skills, perspectives, and energy to build an inclusive and resilient foundation. Just as every tool has a distinct purpose, every member of our Hub community is invaluable, contributing to our shared goals in their own special way.

Synergy!



Our Year in Review: Collaborative Impact, United Goals, Diverse Strengths, and Community Building

This year, our nine collaborative events like Black History Month, International Women's Day, Asian Heritage Month, and National Indigenous History Month, demonstrated how coming together builds a community of care and compassion. **These nine community events brought together over 5,000 residents** of all ages, featuring drumming, dance, spoken word, and cultural exhibits. Additionally, our annual Back to School event provided **1,438 backpacks and school supplies** to elementary, middle, and high school students. A special thanks to **Sky's the Limit Youth Organization for donating ten laptops**, which have greatly enhanced our STEM Club's weekly sessions. Additionally, **as part of the Hub's Collaborative Food Program, we delivered 6,790 meals to children and youth**, addressing a critical need in our community. We are also grateful to **Leggat Auto Group, Bags Without Borders, and the North Etobicoke Resident Council** for their support in making our Back to School event a success. These efforts went beyond simple outreach—they were moments of unity where our collective strengths truly shone.

Addressing food insecurity in North Etobicoke has been a central focus of our efforts. In the second year of our three-year initiative supported by **United Way Greater Toronto**, we partnered with local food retailers, a small-scale farm network, researchers from Toronto Metropolitan University, and other key



stakeholders. Together, we conducted a feasibility study, hosted focus groups, and developed a prototype model for a community grocery market. **Over 50 stakeholders participated in four Food Action and Advisory Collaborative (FAAC) events**, where we explored innovative solutions for providing healthy, culturally appropriate food to low-income families.

Additionally, **we hired three community researchers who engaged 60 Rexdale residents** in meaningful discussions and gathered valuable insights from suppliers, growers, and procurement experts. Feedback from potential customers revealed a strong demand for the market, **confirming its potential to offer significant value in terms of affordability, quality, and its location at the Rexdale Hub**. These findings have culminated in a draft feasibility study, completed with a proposed financial model, positioning us for the next phase of this transformative initiative. This collaborative effort marks a significant step toward our shared goal of creating local community- and system-level interventions for a food-secure North Etobicoke.

At the Hub, diversity is key to synergy, and **our Makerspace and STEM initiatives** continue to empower youth through innovation. This year, over 100 young people participated in **30+ STEM Club activities, learning new skills, exploring technology, and building community**. **Our Makerspace initiative, developed in collaboration with 20 youth**, partners and other stakeholders, became a catalyst for creativity and leadership, enabling the rapid building of a competition robot for the FIRST Robotics Competition in just five weeks. These programs have shown that when we invest

in our youth, we build the next generation of community leaders. A heartfelt thanks to **United Way Greater Toronto and the Honda Canada Foundation grant** for supporting our Makerspace initiative, helping us inspire creativity and innovation among our youth.

We are incredibly proud of young leaders like **Aiman Malhi, Nihar Sheth, Thenukka Logeswaran, Atputha Gajendiran, Oluwalanami Peace Dada, and Saheed Quadri**, who have emerged from our STEM Club and Makerspace initiatives as powerful voices for change and innovation. Aiman's journey, from a STEM participant to Community Animator during the pandemic and Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator, to now a Policy Development Intern in the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, exemplifies the transformative power of nurturing talent and leadership. Nihar, Thenukka, Peace and Atputha, as STEM Coordinators, have demonstrated a strong commitment to community-building through robotics workshops, inspiring many other young people to pursue their passion for technology. Saheed's leadership in reviving the STEM program post-pandemic, along with his advocacy for social justice initiatives like the Rexdale Timbank, highlights the strength of youth in shaping a better future.



These young leaders truly embody the spirit of Rexdale Hub—using their talents, skills, and voices to empower others, build a stronger, more connected community, and create synergies that are now driving their success at renowned educational institutions and in system change work.

We continued our collaboration with the **North Etobicoke Resident Council (NERC)**. We provided resources to engage over 50 NERC members from seven neighbourhoods in North Etobicoke, championing causes like **food insecurity, community safety, housing issues, employment and community grant opportunities**. We also maintained our post-pandemic efforts through the **North Etobicoke Cluster**, working with **35 community service partners** to address critical local issues. Through community consultations and information tables, we reached more than **2,500 residents**. This year, we continued focusing on enhancing civic engagement and community involvement. In the lead-up to the mayoral elections, we hosted a Mayoral Election Debate Watch Party and supported All Candidates Debate in collaboration with partners. **Over 70 residents participated**, discussing critical issues affecting Toronto and learning about voter engagement. Following the elections, we hosted **City Budget Consultations** to ensure community voices were heard. These efforts, coupled with continuous outreach by our staff and volunteers, reinforced the importance of civic engagement and strengthened our neighbourhood engagement work.

The Hub saw a **total of 201,404 visits** this year, with **89,467 visits** for programs hosted by grassroots organizations, community groups, and residents and **111,937 visits** for services and programs provided by Hub partners. Additionally, there were **3,920 community space bookings** facilitated by **7 Hub partners, 56 community groups, grassroots organizations, and North Etobicoke residents**. Together, with the support of our partner agencies, local businesses, and **over 250 dedicated volunteers**, we created inclusive spaces where residents felt seen, heard, and valued. My deepest gratitude to the **Hub staff** for their commitment, compassion, and genuine love for the work you do. You are the heart and soul behind the beautiful synergy that runs through the Hub, and none of this would be possible without you!

Looking Ahead: A Call to Action

This year came with its challenges, but our shared commitment to building a healthy, equitable, and vibrant community carried us through. In facing these challenges, we uncovered new opportunities to deepen our impact on the community.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you—our Board of Directors, led by our incredible Board Chair, Safia Ahmed, our Hub and community partners, volunteers, funders, local businesses, supporters, and the residents of North Etobicoke. Your continued support, collaboration, and belief in the power of community synergy have made all of this possible. Together, we have created spaces that are vibrant, innovative, resilient, safe, and forward-thinking.

As we look ahead, let us continue to harness the power of synergy. Let us see ourselves as part of a larger community toolbox, where every action, no matter how small, helps build something greater than ourselves. Our call to action is simple yet powerful: let's stay committed to our Hub's community vision and mission and to the shared values that unite us.

Thank you for being an integral part of this journey. Let's embrace the coming year with the same spirit of synergistic collaboration, innovation, love, and unity that has brought us this far!

Sincerely,

Amra Munawar
*Executive Director,
Rexdale Community Hub*



Synergy, Mystery, and Call-to-Action

By: Russ Mitchell



The investigation started with the discovery of 75 items in a small box. Each form had been dried, individually wrapped in packets,

placed in a red paper tube, and secured with red satin threads. Once full of life, these forms had embodied a fragile beauty and vitality—a blend of elements that thrived on synergy. A slip of paper with printed text accompanied each packet. Could words revive their synergy? Unfortunately, they could not.

Just as bees pursue their nectar and flowers get pollinated, life thrives on interconnectedness. It's all about synergy—a powerful motivator for action. Just thinking about the loss of such synergy, where mutual benefit was once shared, is striking.

So, what was in the box? Good question. It's part of an international crime and when US authorities received the box, they too were puzzled and consulted a forensic scientist. Upon arrival at the lab, the mystery deepened.

Engagement and Collaboration: The Hub's Focus

Wow! Synergy, mystery, and a call-to-action all wrapped up as one! Seems just like what inspired the Rexdale Hub to pursue engagement, creativity, and problem-solving over the course of this year. And the reward for doing so? A journey marked by collaborative impact, unified goals, diverse strengths, and community building. So come on, let's delve into this year's 'Hub box', and along the way uncover clues to solve the mystery.

1. Collaborative Impact

As is our practise, the Hub collaborated with our partner agencies via the Event Planning Committee. This year we streamlined our planning processes, explored four alternative models for delivering events, introduced a new Terms of Reference, created a New Member Orientation Package, and welcomed a new youth from the community onto the committee. In this new post-pandemic environment, we also saw a need for a *Post-Pandemic Visioning Session*. In late September committee members spent the morning re-visiting our mission and vision, and in addition reminded ourselves of the value and impact of our work. We also share robust discussion around the things that hinder our progress, out of which we created our desired collective goal: *To be a strength based (highlighting agency collaboration and sharing of available resources), committed (core work vs. just an add on), communicative committee, that is adequately funded.*

Through the work of the committee, a variety of collaborative events took place, including International Women's Day, the Asian Heritage Event, and the Canada Day Celebration. Additionally, in partnership with the Albion/Islington Square BIA and other stakeholders, we hosted the annual Harvest Event, Festival of Lights, and Winter Festival. Other highlights from the year include:

- A very successful Black History Month celebration in February, which attracted over 600 residents of all ages. This year's event featured drumming, dance, spoken word, a marketplace, exhibits, cultural food, and more!
- An amazing Canada Day Celebration attended by over 1,000 residents, which included a visit from Ward 1 Councillor Vincent Crisanti. Despite extreme heat and variable weather conditions, the event began indoors but quickly moved outside as more residents arrived. Hub staff worked tirelessly to secure funding and in-kind donations, made possible through the support of many individuals and organizations, including Woodbine Entertainment, Toronto Regional Conservation Authority, Catch the Fire Church, Scott Mission, Al Mezaan's Grocery and Butchery, DJ Flex, North Etobicoke Resident Council, and Arts Etobicoke, among others. Special thanks to the amazing volunteers and cross-agency staff who helped make the day a success.
- Committee members planned a TOGETHER event for cross-agency staff. This *National Truth and Reconciliation Day* Event, held in September, was attended by approximately 60 cross-agency staff and featured special guest speaker Amanda Carlsen, a Social Service Worker at Anishnawbe Health Toronto. Amanda shared historical truths about what happened to Indigenous nations and its continuing impacts, as well as the importance of reconciliation, including calls to action around treaty justice and fostering good relationships with Indigenous nations. The event was well received, as evidenced by table discussions, questions, and feedback. We hope to build on this event in the coming years to further enhance knowledge, reflection, practice, and action.



A team of 250+ volunteers actively supported in community events planning and knowledge sharing



Mystery Box Clue#1: Instead of building relationships through collaboration, the box's contents rely solely on charm!

2. A United Goal

Addressing food insecurity in the communities served by the Hub is challenging. In Year 2 of a 3-year project, we collaborated with diverse stakeholders – local ethnocultural food retailers, a small-scale farm network developer, local growers, researchers from Toronto Metropolitan University’s Centre for Studies in Food Security, municipal health promoters leading the City of Toronto’s Food Strategy, a food bank and food distribution social enterprise, and local resident leadership – to find innovative solutions.

This year, our focus has been on completing a feasibility study, establishing assumptions for a workable grocery market model, and preparing to test a prototype. Our approach involved several key actions:

- a. **Leveraging Local Expertise:** First, to harness the knowledge and expertise in addressing local solutions around food security, we tapped into our Food Action and Advisory Collaborative (FAAC). To that end, approximately 50 stakeholders were invited to 4 FAAC events, where they shared invaluable expertise, knowledge, ideas and suggestions for advancing the project. Stakeholders were also able to build their own capacity in addressing food insecurity through participating in both a food security Advocacy 101 Workshop, and a Stakeholder Charter workshop.
- b. **Research and Consultation:** Secondly, we wanted to bring together consultants, researchers, and key stakeholders to carry out focus groups and key informant interviews for the feasibility report. We hired 3 community researchers who engaged approximately 60 residents from the Rexdale community. Their insights, along with six interviews with vendors and food industry experts, provided invaluable information that will influence our grocery market practices and provision of services. In hearing directly from potential customers, research revealed their overall interest in using the community grocery market, and

identified that it has the potential to provide value on price/affordability, quality, as well as where its location should be - at the Rexdale Hub. The findings culminated in a draft project feasibility study with a proposed financial model.

- c. **Skill Development:** An added bonus to the above work - thanks to one of our project partners, the Toronto Metropolitan University research team - the community researchers received personal skill development with training on how to: create interview guides, conduct focus groups and informant interviews, collect and analyze primary data, and how to present the findings.
- d. **Prototype Development:** And finally, we worked towards identifying a workable grocery store model prototype that could be tested live. To do this the Hub hosted numerous working meetings with our consultant team and selected key stakeholders, to consider potential grocery market concepts and operational models. Meeting between full FAAC meetings, an Ad Hoc group drilled down on feedback and questions received around our assumptions in considering potential operational/financial models, landing on a workable model that will be tested out in the next phase of the project.



Mystery Box Clue#2: The common goal of anyone who wears the box's contents around their neck is to find love!



3. Diverse Strengths

Synergy is often described as the collaborating of two or more entities to produce an effect that is greater than the sum of their individual parts. Now If that doesn't make sense to you, don't worry. Simply put, synergism is about a stronger outcome when individuals have contributed their unique skills/perspectives, rather than going it alone. It is also a call-to-action through continual growth and collaborative learning. At the Rexdale Hub this has happened in a few ways. First, through capacity building events: Mental Health First Aid Training; RCH 5 Day Challenge: Hybrid Modes of Work; and Change it Up Facilitation Training; all of which help to support the ongoing work that the Hub staff do.

Our call-to-action has also happened through knowledge sharing: For example, due to interest in our grocery market beyond the wider Hub community, staff participated in a food security panel discussion hosted by United Way, University of Toronto, and York Region Food Collaborative (YRFC). This lunch and learn titled, Building Collaboration into Food Security Projects: An Inter-regional Conversation, included panel members from FoodReach, Ecosouce, YRFC, and the Rexdale Hub. We were also involved in a various planning/strategy table, for example the North Etobicoke Cluster Coordination Table (and ad-hoc work groups: Food Security Table, Youth Leads Work Group, Website Development Work Group, Mental Health Work Group); contributed to Toronto Regional Conservation Authority's Urban Agriculture Strategy; participated in the Ad Hoc Resettlement Committee, and other tables. And finally, if you move from the regional area to right here in-house, Hub staff coordinated with tenant agencies to restart (post-COVID) agency open houses. This year both Toronto Employment and Social Services and Rexdale Community Legal Clinic hosted open houses and welcomed cross-agency staff to a morning of information, networking, and refreshments.



Mystery Box Clue#3: A recent study showed that the box's diverse colors are so vibrant they exceed human vision.

4. Community Building

Nothing beats having a sense of belonging and a shared purpose when it comes to synergy. There was plenty of it this year as the Hub and partners focused on both the mayoral elections and City Budget Consultations. In the lead-up to June's mayoral election, the Hub staff participated in a steering group led by One Ontario For All, which included key members such as Toronto Metropolitan University, United Way, and Social Planning Toronto. This group collaborated to provide election resources for Toronto's non-profit sector.

The Hub also coordinated with the North Etobicoke Residents Council, Rexdale Legal Clinic, and Rexdale Community Health Centre to host a local Mayoral Election Debate Watch Party. Livestreamed at the Hub, the event attracted around 70 residents who were keen to hear the candidates' views on Toronto's current issues. Attendees had the opportunity to collect information sheets provided by Social Planning Toronto on key areas of concern to the City, discuss the issues with fellow residents; read information about the candidates, and learn how to apply for election-related jobs.

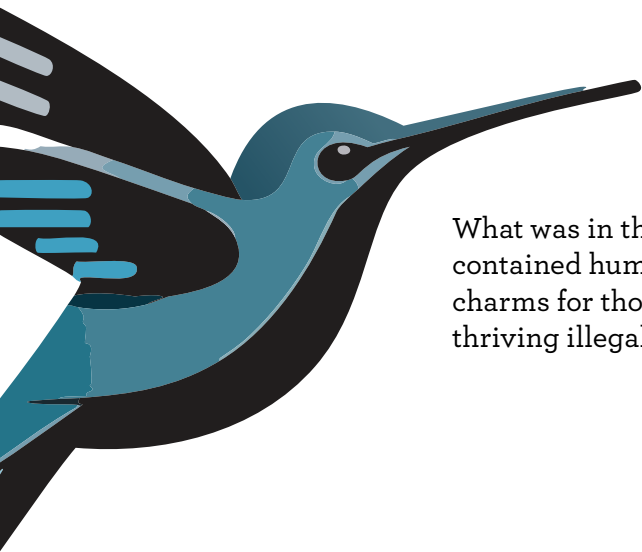


Additionally, the Hub's planning table partnered with BGKM Media of North York to organize a Mayoral Candidates Debate at the former Don Bosco High School. The Hub and its partners supported this event through outreach and by managing a voter education table. Election education continued at the Hub until the election, with cross agency staff and volunteers giving away information booklets and other resources in the lobby. The goal was not only to encourage residents to vote, but to also strengthen the community's civic engagement.

With the new mayor in office, we were invited to be one of the hosting venues for a TO City Budget Consultation event, as well as to facilitate focus groups to gather feedback from residents. It was an honour to support this City event by welcoming community members and ensuring their voices were heard.



Mystery Box Clue#4: When alive, the items in the box had rapid heartbeats, high energy, and specialized plumage, creating quite a buzz.



What was in the mystery box? Sadly, it contained hummingbirds turned into charms for those seeking love, part of a thriving illegal trade.

Synergy!



Celebrating Community Collaboration

Someone once said that 'a hummingbird's presence is a reminder of the magic that surrounds us, waiting to be discovered.' As for this year's workings of the Hub, there is no mystery about the magic that surrounds us. It's our local residents, volunteers, community and faith groups, organizations, businesses, funders, levels of government, and institutions of higher education that have linked arms with us, to advance engagement, creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. Thank you so much, we couldn't have done it without you!

Finally, please know that our collaborative relationships don't 'work like a charm', but are steadily built on mutual respect, trust, and open communication, and provide the lift and thrust to love our neighbours and serve the needs of residents. Like the hummingbird's heartbeat that supports its synchronized wing beats, true love for the community is at the core of why we do, and what we do. That's because real love looks like something. So, what should be your call to action? Guess you can either celebrate this year's nectar with us, or you can just conserve your energy and try hanging upside down temporarily like the Hummingbirds do! Now there is a less than charming mystery ...



A Toolbox of Life Skills Gathered Along the Way

By: Nihar Sheth



I am currently pursuing Mechatronics Engineering at the University of Waterloo. Since September 2022, I've been actively involved in the Hub's STEM program and the Makerspace initiative, both of which have been transformative experiences that accelerated my personal and professional growth.

My journey began when I volunteered with the North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI) robotics team at a summer back-to-school event. I learned about the STEM planning committee and soon became a regular member, collaborating with Aiman to envision the future of the Makerspace, determine its requirements, and gather data on how best to impact the community. This experience taught me the importance of centering community engagement in planning. Although the Makerspace was open to all residents, it particularly targeted Rexdale youth. By involving them in the planning committee, we ensured the necessary support was in place for the community's needs. Additionally, discussions with Amra and Aiman during STEM sessions expanded my critical thinking and introduced me to new ideas, such as exploring time-bank systems as alternatives to monetary rewards.

My connection with the Rexdale Hub and the STEM Club was instrumental in my acceptance into SHAD, a nationwide STEM and entrepreneurship program where high school students live on a university campus for a month. While I had been accepted, the program's \$6,000 cost was a significant barrier. However, after discussing the situation with Amra, she helped organize opportunities for me to contribute to community events, which provided the financial support I needed. This made my participation in SHAD possible, and it was one of the pivotal experiences that solidified my dream of attending the University of Waterloo. Reflecting on this, I realize that none of it would have been possible without the STEM Club, which opened doors I hadn't even imagined.

After returning from SHAD, I had the incredible opportunity to lead a three-day robot-building workshop. Taking on leadership and sharing my passion for robotics with others showed me how much I enjoy giving back to the community. This experience was followed by an offer to serve as STEM Coordinator for the planning committee, where I further developed my leadership skills and community engagement. Each week, my colleagues and I created





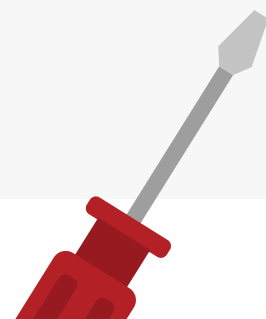
Special thanks to Sky's the Limit Youth Organization for donating 10 laptops to STEM Club for weekly workshop sessions!

engaging workshops for students, and watching their growth and learning was immensely rewarding. I also had the privilege of connecting with inspiring individuals who volunteered their time to lead STEM sessions, further enriching the students' experiences. Together, we organized 30+ STEM sessions, ranging from bridge building and Python coding to creative workshops like Q-tip art and paper roller coasters. Hands-on projects, such as Repair Café workshops and catapult-building, further enriched their experiences. These initiatives strengthened both personal growth and a strong sense of collaboration.

As I became more involved, I shifted my focus to completing an operational Makerspace. I sought guidance from Alex, Dave, and Sukhman—mentors from my robotics program—on the best tools to equip the Makerspace. By combining their expertise with the data we had gathered, we developed a phased purchasing plan. Once the tools arrived, we had a fully functional Makerspace. It was amazing to see students return week after week, excited to learn how to use the equipment. In fact, the Makerspace played a key role in building a competition robot for the FIRST Robotics Competition in just five weeks, a testament to the rapid learning it enabled.

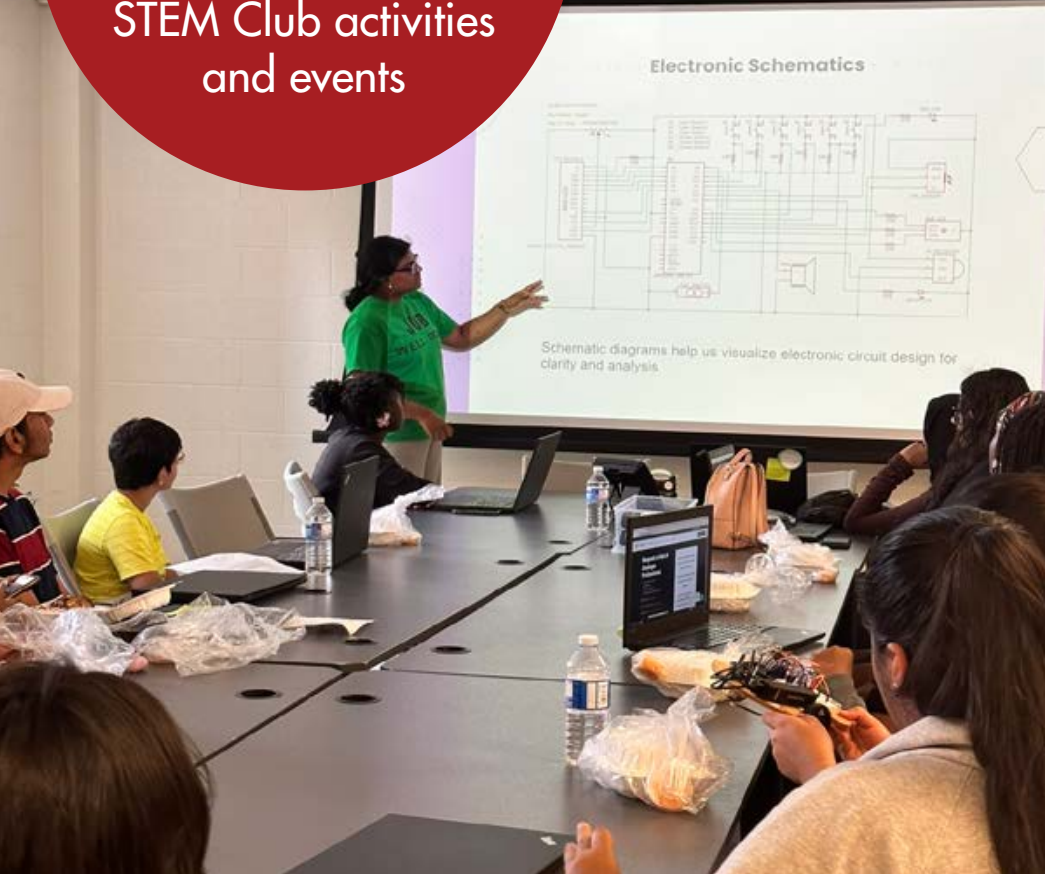
This experience taught me invaluable lessons in organization and planning — skills I know will serve me well in both my personal and professional life. The STEM and Makerspace initiatives have been central to my life over the past few years, showing me the profound impact of working in an environment focused on community empowerment. They have provided me with invaluable work experience, allowed me to collaborate with remarkable people, and equipped me with the tools to help others succeed. These initiatives offer incredible opportunities for Rexdale youth to shine and grow into future leaders. I truly believe that investing in youth is the most rewarding investment one can make.

Even now, as a busy engineering student, I look for ways to continue supporting the Rexdale Hub. I'm committed to contributing remotely and, whenever I'm in the city, in person. My goal is to help others access the same transformative opportunities I was fortunate enough to receive.





2023-2024
Enhanced the learning experience of 100+ youth by engaging them in STEM Club activities and events



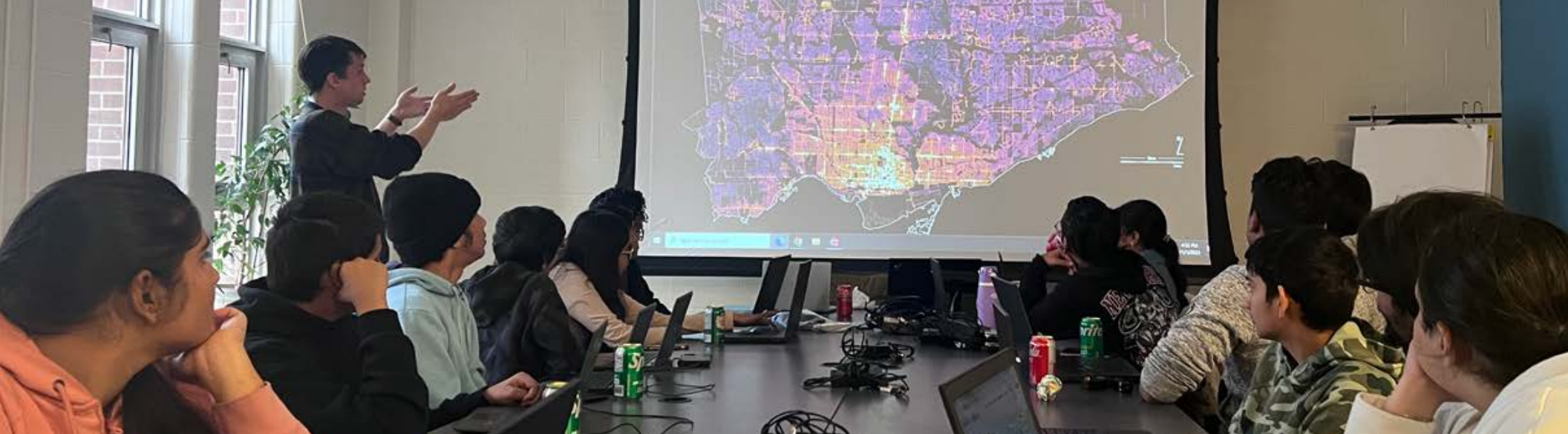
20 youth participated in planning and designing the Innovative Makerspace in North Etobicoke

Synergy in the Making: The Collaborative Blueprint for a “Digital Place-Based Makerspace”

By: Aputha Gajendiran & Thenukka Logeswaran

This year the Youth Program Planning Committee (YPPC) made a collective effort in designing an innovative “Digital Place-Based Makerspace” in Rexdale Community Hub, by focusing on three main areas of development:

1. Purposeful planning: Engaging stakeholders with diverse skills and viewpoints, to better understand their unique visions for the Makerspace.
2. Being equipped with the right tools and skills: The combined input of stakeholders and residents through more than 10 consultations allowed the Committee to create a “Makerspace Equipment Wishlist” – an inventory of the tools and equipment necessary to inspire creativity and foster a sense of belonging.
3. Optimizing workflow and functionality of the space: The YPPC collaboratively developed a detailed floor plan of the Makerspace - putting intention into the placement of each tool/machine and the design of each room, ensuring that it is welcoming for visitors of the Makerspace.



The Tools of Empowerment in STEM

By: Saheed Quadri,

Mechatronics / Robotics Engineering Student at UWaterloo



I joined the Rexdale STEM Club in grade 11 during the 2022 Summer of Innovation event, which has provided me with a pathway to excel in engineering and connect with the community! When I joined, I was a

student at North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI). Through the robotics team, I learned about the exciting STEM program offered at the Rexdale Hub, open to students from the entire community. A group of us quickly became the revival of the program, which had been thriving before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over time, I grew into the role of secretary as a STEM coordinator, allowing me to expand my involvement in realizing the mission of the STEM Club: to make a positive educational impact on the community by fostering practical interactions with science and technology. Collaborating with the incredible STEM team and the Rexdale Hub staff was the highlight of my experience. We held weekly meetings to plan and develop the details, space, and resources for our STEM nights, events, and Makerspace. It was fascinating to see how we strengthened and expanded the existing relationship between NACI Robotics and the Rexdale Hub. I often reflect on how we coordinated the procurement of 20 custom minibots designed to be enriching for everyone at different levels of experience with technology. Minibots have now become an invaluable resource for the STEM Club, facilitating the introduction of robotics and demonstrating exciting career possibilities in STEM.

The Rexdale STEM Club has been an invaluable aid and inspiration for some of my most significant achievements, including my projects, two summer internships as a Research Engineer at Sunnybrook Research Institute, receiving the Merit Awards Leader of Tomorrow (LoT) award, and being accepted into and excelling in the Mechatronics Engineering program at the University of Waterloo.



I also had the opportunity to explore beyond my technological comfort zone. In 2023, we embarked on a project for social good as a cohort in the Leading Social Justice program at the University of Toronto's School of Cities. Our proposal aimed to address the community's food and job security crisis through the implementation of a time-based reciprocity system—the Rexdale Timebank. This initiative is set to create a lasting positive impact on how we value each other's unique talents.

The exposure to resources and a space for creation that the STEM Club provides has been life-changing. The experiences I gained in STEM were pivotal in getting me to where I am now and have unlocked new opportunities for me. The STEM Club has shown me how essential access to tools, mentors, and friends can be for an individual's continued growth and understanding of technology, as well as their ability to make an impact. Having graduated from high school, my goal is to act as a mentor for upcoming students in Rexdale, helping them make the most of the opportunities that present themselves and fostering innovation in our community and beyond.

Looking back at the initial projects I worked on and where I am now, I truly recognize and sincerely appreciate the level of growth and support the Rexdale STEM Club has provided me.



Home Sweet Home!

By: **Aiman Malhi**



Home. For some, home is simply a physical space—a roof, four walls, and a functional living area. For others, it's where family gathers and shares laughs. For me, however, home has not been tied to a specific house or place—my home has been the Hub. It's a safe space where I've grown, shared laughter, recognized my capabilities, challenged myself, reached my potential, and built a sense of belonging. If you had told 14-year-old Aiman that she would one day work for the provincial government, she wouldn't have believed it. But let me share a snapshot of my journey.

Discovering the Hub

As a first-generation woman, my journey was neither short nor easy. In 2013, I stepped into the Hub as part of the first STEM Camp, feeling shy, nervous, and reluctant. I remember feeling unsure of myself, where even the thought of speaking up made me anxious. However, it wasn't long before I began to feel a sense of belonging. The excitement of seeing familiar faces and the warm, supportive interactions made me feel at home. Participating in interactive STEM nights, field trips to IBM, and interactions with professionals from around the world supported me academically and provided me with essential technical and social skills.



I was initially reluctant to embrace change due to the fear of adapting to new circumstances and losing the comfort of familiarity. But this was the first time I felt comfortable with change, recognizing it as an opportunity for growth. As the oldest immigrant child, finding guidance and a sense of belonging was a unique challenge. The supportive presence, warmth, and commitment Amra provided for the STEM students created an environment where I felt encouraged, empowered, and included.

This experience opened many doors. I spent the following summers volunteering as a Program Assistant in the seniors and youth departments at the Rexdale Women's Centre, supporting intergenerational activities, English and financial literacy classes, and newcomer workshops to help welcome and settle families affected by the Syrian refugee crisis. Shortly after, I volunteered as a Community Ambassador at the Hub, helping distribute meals to address food insecurity in North Etobicoke as part of the Collaborative Pandemic Emergency Food Access Project funded by the United Way. Subsequently, I worked with the Hub as a Neighbourhood Engagement Animator, supporting the mapping of community space assets in Northwest Toronto to identify strengths and gaps in neighborhood infrastructure as part of the United Way's Building Strong Neighborhoods Strategy 2.0 project.

When the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted various sectors of society, I observed the profound and unequal health risks faced by racial and ethnic minorities, who were disproportionately affected. This experience highlighted the existing gaps and health inequities in our healthcare systems, despite claims of progress. I recognized the importance of cross-sectoral collaborations and client-centered approaches.

Simultaneously, I was engaged as a Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator, participating in the North Etobicoke Cluster Coordination table to develop centralized distribution systems and respond to the emerging needs of vulnerable groups.

Leading projects such as the Growing Healthy Towers project in partnership with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and plazaPOPs with the University of Guelph Humber deepened my awareness of community challenges. I saw the importance of implementing programs and services to address healthy equity and social determinants of health in built environments through innovative solutions.

A pivotal moment in my career was participating in the Leading Social Justice Collaborative Fellowship facilitated by United Way Greater Toronto in partnership with the University of Toronto. This experience, along with mentorship from the Hub, emphasized the need for policy development and system-level change to meet the needs of underserved communities. Direct practice provides essential insights for informed policy-making, but ensuring representation from racial and ethnic minorities is crucial for evidence-based, client-centered decision-making and systemic change. This fellowship also highlighted the importance of co-creation to ensure that policies are responsive to the needs of the groups we serve, advancing racial equity, inclusion, and diversity.



**50+ NERC members
championed causes
such as food insecurity,
community safety,
housing issues, job
prospects.**

To further enhance my skills, I completed a Master of Social Work with a Public Health Policy specialization at the University of Toronto, focusing on social determinants of health and food policy. I led policy debates with an equity-focused lens, proposed sustainable and culturally relevant solutions for food insecurity, and co-delivered oral submissions in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to advocate for financial autonomy for seniors. Participating in these policy discussions helped me recognize gaps in current systems and the need for evidence-informed, equitable policies to prevent the replication of oppressive power dynamics.

These experiences shaped my learning. While advancing my academic skills during my Master's program, my lived experience and direct work with diverse groups provided me with a holistic understanding of complex social issues faced by equity-deserving communities. Engaging directly with individuals allowed me to witness the nuanced challenges, cultural dynamics, and contextual factors influencing policy success or failure. It was unfortunate that these groups continue to be overlooked and underrepresented in decision-making platforms, perpetuating inequalities and systemic barriers. As I begin my journey as a Policy Development Intern in the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, Health and Social Policy stream, I hope to apply these essential learnings to develop policies and programs that are not only evidence-based but also people-centered, ensuring that critical voices are included and that our policies reflect the diverse needs of underserved communities.

Embracing the Journey

As I wrap up, one quote always stays with me: “Today is the first day of the rest of your life”—the quote at the entrance of the Hub. My journey started at the Hub, where my village of support helped me embrace new challenges and recognize my potential. Here, I have challenged myself, learned, pushed beyond my limits, and experienced significant personal growth. I am thankful for the unwavering support from my village at the Hub, and I am excited for what's to come.

Expanding the Community Toolbox

By: Khadija Ahmed

My involvement in the North Etobicoke Resident Council (NERC) was meaningful to me, as we continued addressing local issues in our community – particularly community safety, food insecurity, job prospects, and community grant opportunities. In facilitating our monthly leadership and NERC meetings representing residents from seven neighbourhoods in North Etobicoke (including Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown, Thistletown-Beaumont Heights, Humber Summit, Humbermede, Elms-Old Rexdale, Kingsview Village-The Westway, and West Humber-Claireville), we recognized the importance of including youth voices about community issues. We recognized the importance of reaching out to youth-led groups such as RCH STEM Club, BGC Albion Club, and the North Etobicoke Youth Leads Work Group. By actively seeking out and encouraging youth participation, we strive to create a more inclusive NERC membership where ideas and perspectives from all age groups can thrive.



For the period April 1, 2023- March 31, 2024, RCH distributed 6,790 hot meals

A message from Ahmed Khater, Director of Afghan Cuisine in North Etobicoke:

"...Rexdale Community Hub has been a valued customer of our restaurant, Afghan Kebob Cuisine. And more importantly, we as a business value their contribution and work in the community over the years. On a personal note, the Hub has supported us as a small business during the tough period of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of support from community organizations like this one, we were able to continue serving our customers. We value the partnership between us and the Rexdale Community Hub. We in return will do our best to continue supporting the Hub in their efforts to continue contributing to the community, particularly the RCH food program that provides hot meals to children and youths attending programs at the hub. We strongly believe that the presence of such organizations is imperative to help with the social welfare and safety of our community in North Etobicoke."

"...Love the long term relationship with RCH as a member of the community, everyone is kind and has a passion for the work we are doing. Vicki does an amazing job of responding to emails and is very detailed."

"...very satisfied with the process and the space for our weekly activities..."

"Our sincere gratitude to all for ensuring the Rexdale Hub is clean and easily accessible. It is a welcoming space for the Delta Families. The families are greatly benefitting from these services. Word of mouth, shared experiences, teamwork has resulted in programs being executed to full capacity."

Preeti and Yolanda,
Delta Family Resource Centre

Connected with 5000+ local residents in 9 collaborative events and activities.

63 community groups and organizations that used the Hub's welcoming spaces.

Active participation in the North Etobicoke Cluster along with 35+ community service partners, joint-led by United Way and City of Toronto. With a focus on initiatives that target food insecurity, digital literacy, and community engagement.

50+ NERC members that championed causes such as food insecurity, community safety, housing issues, job prospects.

6,790 meals were distributed to children and youth as part of the Hub's Collaborative Food Program.

Enhanced the learning experience of 100+ youth by engaging them in STEM Club activities and events.

3,920 community space bookings by 7 Hub partners, 56 community groups, grassroots organizations, and residents of North Etobicoke.

TOTAL HUB VISITS IN 2023-2024

201,404

89,467 community space visits for programs hosted by grassroots organizations, community groups and residents.

111,937 Hub partner organizations service and program visits.

20 youth participated in planning and designing the Innovative Makerspace in North Etobicoke.

A team of 250+ volunteers actively supported in community events planning and knowledge sharing

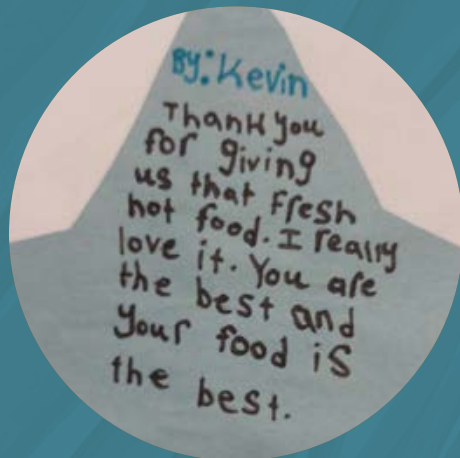
50+ stakeholders shared their expertise in addressing local solutions around food insecurity by participating in 4 Food Action and Advisory Collaborative (FAAC) events.

50+ organizations, local entrepreneurs, and businesses participated in collaborative community events and showcased their local talent.

Supported children and youth families by distributing 750+ backpacks, 688 school supplies, and 400 travel/hygiene kits at the annual Back to School Celebration in collaboration with Leggat Auto Group, Bags Without Barriers, Toronto (North) Christadelphians, North Etobicoke Resident Council (NERC), and 7 Hub partner agencies.

More than 2,500 residents were reached through community consultations and information tables.

Special thanks to Sky's the Limit Youth Organization for donating 10 laptops to STEM Club for weekly workshop sessions!





Board Chair's Message

Reflecting on this past year, we have witnessed remarkable growth and resilience within our community. While post-pandemic challenges remain, I am inspired by the progress we have made in coming together to address North Etobicoke's most pressing needs.

The Rexdale Community Hub has once again served as a pillar of support, nurturing a collaborative culture and providing a welcoming, safe, innovative infrastructure for our residents. Through strong partnerships with Hub partners, local organizations, businesses, and volunteers, we have tackled key issues such as food insecurity, youth empowerment, and community engagement.

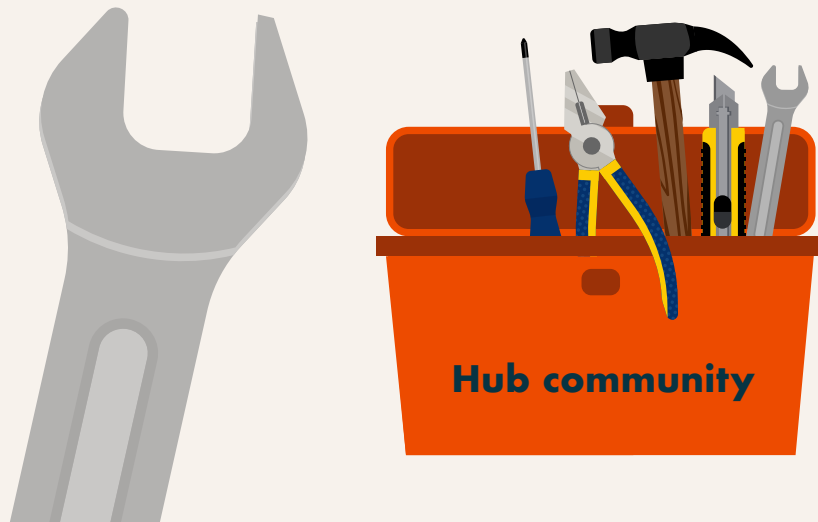
This year's successes would not have been possible without the tireless dedication of our staff, volunteers, and Hub partners. I offer my deepest gratitude to our Executive Director, Amra Munawar, and the entire Rexdale Hub team. Your commitment has been the driving force behind the Hub's continued impact. To our donors and funders, thank you for your invaluable support, which allows us to keep making a difference.

I would also like to congratulate our Board of Directors for another successful year of strong governance. A special mention goes to our departing board member, Fatima Filippi, who will be stepping down in October/November this year after serving as Treasurer for over 11 years. Fatima's dedication and insights have significantly shaped our work, and we are deeply grateful for her many years of service to the Hub.

As we look ahead, let us continue to build on the momentum and strength we have cultivated at the Rexdale Community Hub. Together, we have laid a foundation of unity, innovation, and resilience that will guide us into the future. Let's harness this strength as we look ahead with hope, determination, and a shared commitment to a brighter future for our communities in North Etobicoke.

Sincerely,

Safia Ahmed
Board Chair



Our Hub Partners, Board & Staff Members, Funders, Community Supporters

Hub Partners

Albion Neighbourhood Services
Delta Family Resource Centre
Rexdale Community Health Centre
Rexdale Community Legal Clinic
Rexdale Women's Centre
Toronto Employment and Social Services

Board Members

Abraham Abbey
Costanza Allevato
Desree Prince
Fatima Filippi
Hamzah Siddiqui
Natique Ahmed
Safia Ahmed
Yodit Edemariam

Funders

City of Toronto
United Way Greater Toronto

Supporters

Afghan Kebab Cuisine
Albion Islington Square Business
Improvement Area
Al-Meezan Grocery and Halal Meat
Al-Meezan Spicy Grill
Authentic Jamaican Jerk
Bags Without Borders
Bell Canada
BMO Financial Group
Bird Studies
Caribbean Cuisine

Catch the Fire Church
Toronto Department of Geography and Planning,
University of Toronto
Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto
FoodShare Toronto
Google Kitchener, Waterloo
GrowFitness
Honda Canada Foundation
IBM Canada Ltd.
Leggat Auto Group
Mushkaki Restaurants Inc.
Parks Canada
Park People
PepsiCo Canada
Physics and Astronomy, York University
plazaPOPS
Repair Café Toronto
Roti Roti Family Restaurant
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Royal Bank of Canada
Seva Food Bank
Sheriff's No Frills
Sky's the Limit Youth Organization
Sprout Community
Subway #11321
Telus
The Salvation Army (Etobicoke Temple)
The STEPS Initiative
Toronto Community Benefits Network
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
(TRCA)
Toronto Metropolitan University (Department
of Geography and Environmental Studies)
Woodbine Entertainment - Community Cares
Investment Program
Xawaash

RCH Staff Members

Aiman Malhi
Amra Munawar
Atputha Gajendiran
Damanjit Azimal
Ghulam Virk
Harry Persaud
Hassan Bokhari
Jacqueline Ambris
Khadija Ahmed
Kizzy Price
Layth Jato
Leeda Popalzai
Lester Smith
Mohammad Javed
Nafisa Omar
Nihar Sheth
Ofure Emma Esekhile
Oluwalanami Peace Dada
Russel Mitchell
Saima Jawid
Sukhman Bhatti
Thenukka Logeswaran
Tishauna Senior
Vicki Crystal
Warda Sharmeen

Mural Credits

The Art of Wong Inc.

Our Vision

A healthy and sustainable community where residents are empowered and engaged.

Our Mission

Rexdale Community Hub's mission is to provide accessible, welcoming space with collaborative, integrated services and programs to enrich every aspect of the community's life.

Our Values

Accessibility – We are committed to ensuring that access to appropriate and acceptable services and resources within the Hub is promoted and ensure that inequities in health and well-being are addressed.

Accountability – We are accountable to the community for the actions and services of the Hub. We will ensure program and services reflect identified community needs, integrate community resources and as partners, we will effectively dedicate our collective resources to this end.

Community Engagement – We are committed to provide stakeholders in the community opportunities to participate in decision-making through processes designed to identify, understand, and address community needs on an ongoing basis.

Diversity – We are committed to inclusion and value and respect the differences found in our community. We demonstrate this understanding through sensitivity, culturally competent and inclusive practices and policies that include individuals from diverse groups in our decision making, information sharing, access to services, governance and employment.

Equity – We are committed to ensuring that all people reach their full potential and are not disadvantaged from attaining it because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, social class, socio-economic status, or other socially determined circumstance.

Excellence – We strive to provide the best and most appropriate programs and services to the community. We listen carefully to the needs of the community, seek the resources to respond to these needs, and implement programs and services with the highest standards.

Sustainability – We will measure, improve, and be accountable for our environmental, financial, social, health and well-being results.



Serving the Community is Our Business

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Toronto, ON M9V 4E3**

**Phone: (416) 741-3000
Fax: (416) 741-3011**