

Winter 2022  
GRADUATE COURSE OUTLINE

**COURSE CODE:** URD2015YS

**COURSE TITLE:** Little Jamaica Culture and Design - Urban Design Studio Thesis

**PREREQUISITE COURSES:** URD2013

**CLASSROOM LOCATION:**

Miro: <https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVOXI0OHQ=/>

Zoom: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/84420837636>

**CLASS HOURS:** M 9-12, 2-6; Th 2-6

**INSTRUCTOR NAME:** Michael Piper and Otto Ojo

**INSTRUCTOR EMAIL:** [Michael.Piper@daniels.utoronto.ca](mailto:Michael.Piper@daniels.utoronto.ca), [otto.ojo@utoronto.ca](mailto:otto.ojo@utoronto.ca)

**OFFICE HOURS:** Th 1-2

**OFFICE LOCATION:** Zoom: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/84420837636>

## Little Jamaica Culture and Design



## COURSE DESCRIPTION:

### Overview

The future of Toronto's Little Jamaica is uncertain. The elongated construction timeline of the Eglinton light rail and the stalling effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have caused store owners, vital to the neighborhood's culture, to close and some residents to move out. The city is currently considering Little Jamaica for Heritage Conservation status and it is also being considered as the city's first Cultural district but the definition and parameters of this still remain undefined and unclear. Indeed, the city's current planning and design document for the extents of Eglinton, Eglinton Connects, is a high-level report that largely disregards existing social and cultural landscapes

This lack of local understanding has been compounded by concerns of anti-Black racism. In a report titled *A Black Business Conversation: On Planning for the Future of Black Businesses and Residents on Eglinton Avenue West* (fn), the authors articulate the underrepresentation of Black business owners and residents in planning the future of the neighborhood. In addition to concerns of business closures since the LRT construction there are rising concerns of gentrification. While we, the course instructors, do not expect that the design projects from this studio will provide solutions to the effects of racism, we will visualize spaces and make designs that endeavor to mitigate the historic hostility towards Black residents and patrons as the interests of new residents are asserted.

The studio will explore the past and present of lived experience in Little Jamaica to see if it may be possible to apply lessons from the social/spatial practices of the neighborhood to future visions for its built form and space. Our goals are to envision public space for Little Jamaica that promotes safe, accessible shared spaces and that explore how local history and heritage can be produced and/or reproduced in public realms.

The authors of *A Black Business Conversation*, Black Urbanism Toronto (BUTO), will be a primary client for the studio. Following recommendations from their report we will explore four design projects. These projects include: the design of community hubs, Community Land Trusts (CLT) as a model of housing development, public space/retail design that preserves local history and culture, and built form/development/zoning strategies that work with existing conditions. For each project we will seek out project specific clients. For example, for the community hub project, the client will be: Toronto Calvary Cross Church. These four projects are further defined below.



### REPORT: A BLACK BUSINESS CONVERSATION ON PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF BLACK BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS ON EGLINTON AVE W.





SOCA – Design for Eglinton West (Little Jamaica) Toronto, from “A Black Business Conversation”

## **Four Projects**

Students are asked to select one of the four projects below. They will work in small groups to research these topics and then will make individual design projects that respond to or build on this collective body of research.

### **Community Hubs**

- Research:
  - o Assess spatial assets of Calvary Cross;
  - o Identify Social Service Programming to be incorporated into community site: youth outreach, cultural programming, etc;
  - o Identify other Black owned community sites: churches, youth organizations such FYI, arts centres such as NIA, to consider a network of community social service locations.
- Design Project:
  - o Design Calvary Cross as community hub with additional programming;
  - o Map network of potential community hub sites throughout Little Jamaica;
  - o Make community wide spatial/temporal schedule for social services as they relate to community hub sites;

### **Community Land Trust (CLT) / Housing**

- Client: Cheryl Case, an urban planner in Toronto is currently working on Community land trust strategies for Little Jamaica. The studio will explore different opportunities for this model of housing development in the context of development in Little Jamaica.
- Research:
  - o Research CLTs Organization – identify management organization, agents, funding mechanisms;
  - o Research CLT precedent: Parkdale, Kensington Market, and the TCHC transfer of single family homes.

- Research CLT built form – draw and qualify CLT buildings in Toronto;
- Identify potential development partners, such as city agencies, non-profits etc;
- Design Project:
  - Map potential parcels that are appropriate for CLT development;
  - Design housing building types for these sites;

### **Built Form / Zoning**

- Research:
  - Map current and pipeline projects;
  - Map property ownership;
  - Cross reference with Black-owned businesses;
  - Evaluate mid-rise guidelines / Eglinton Connects.
- Design Project -- Design a physical model for engagement:
  - Map a series of potential parcel sizes;
  - Abstract parcels in Little Jamaica into standardize sizes;
  - Create a typology of massing scenarios that can plug into abstracted parcels;
  - Make lots of models of these massing scenarios;
  - Hold community meeting where people can test different massing scenarios.

### **Public Space/Retail**

- Research:
  - Research current and past uses of public space in Little Jamaica: including barbershops, caribbean festivals, kiddy Caribana, farmers market at Reggae Lane;
  - Retail: map Black owned retail spaces, see BUTO report and update;
  - Research Market 707 Scaddingcourt pop-up retail;
  - Identify public site to sponsor either events programming or pop-up retail.
- Design Project -- Design a physical model for engagement:
  - Map potential public spaces for retail or events activities;
  - Design public spaces for hybrid events – pop-up retail, events storage, etc;
  - Design infrastructure and modules for events/retail programming.

### **Engagement and Urban Planning**

Students will learn methods of community engagement to inform their research. Lorne Cappe, who instructs a course on topic is co-teaching the studio and will provide instruction on these methods. This studio will run in parallel with an urban design studio in the Department of Urban Planning taught by Paul Hess. The planning students will conduct more in-depth policy research to parallel this studio's built-form analysis. In addition to these in-course instruction, we have arranged engagement meetings with the following individuals and organizations:

- Black Urbanism Toronto (BUTO) will partner with the studio, acting in the capacity of client for the design projects. BUTO has completed a research project about Eglinton West, also known as Little Jamaica, which will serve as a primary reference for the class.
- Discussions with prominent cultural figures. King Culture, a proprietor of a Reggae record store that bears his name will meet with the class to discuss his experiences and past.
- Discussion with prospective clients such as Toronto Calvary Cross Church will provide locally driven ideas for design projects.



- Discussion with high school students at George Harvey Collegiate Institute, with whom we are coordinating an engagement and art project about the neighborhood, will provide context of youth experience in the present day.
- Attendance of community meetings and/or watching archive video footage of previous community meetings will provide context of local residents' interests.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Students are asked to develop design methods that respond to conditions of social/spatial inequality. Methodologically, the course seeks to develop relationships between methods of engagement and design and to learn how physical/spatial and design can compliment policy and planning research.

### **EXERCISES:**

#### ***Exercise 1 - Research***

For this exercise students will be asked to research 1 of 4 pre-determined research topics.

- **Exercise 1a:** For this first part of the exercise students will research their topic identifying, policies, narratives, and systems associated with this topic within the context of LJ and larger context of the city of Toronto. What were the goals and objectives vs real world lived experiences and consequences? What are the social, equity, political, economic paradigms associated with the topic? Students should use engagement, news articles, policy reports, blog discussions, as a launching point for their research. *Deliverable: 10 MIN on screen presentation of narratives, policies, systems, and framework at play/associated with each topic, presented individually in a group session, uploaded to Miro and uploaded to FTP.*
- **Exercise 1b:** For this part of the exercise students will research their topic, identifying & analysing local and international precedents & case studies. In Parallel students will create a *Photo Essay* illustrating aspects of their topic present in LJ, and identifying constraints and opportunities. *Deliverable: 15 min presentation of Case study analysis and site observations via Photo Essay of Little Jamaica and base map of Little Jamaica indexing & identifying opportunities and constraints associated with each topic, uploaded to Miro and upload to FTP.*

**Due: Jan 24**

#### ***Exercise 2 - Identify Project and Define Site***

For this exercise students will be asked to select one research topic as their major focal topic with an additional topic as a minor. The combination of these topics will inform and be the basis of pursuit for their thesis.

- **Exercise 2:** For this exercise students, through analysis, curation and refinement of data provided in exercise 1 student will put together the framework that begins to construct the narrative of their thesis project and identifies through analysis a specific intervention site in the Little Jamaica neighborhood. *Deliverable: 10 MIN on screen presentation of thesis direction, site Identification + analysis presented individually in a group session, uploaded to Miro and uploaded to FTP.*

## Due Feb 14 - Mid Review

### **Exercise 3 - Design**

Students are expected to envision an urban project based on the data and research collated on their major and minor topic in the first half of the semester.

Projects should be conceived as critiques of the status quo, and while being cognisant of constraints propose opportunities that illustrate alternative perspective for development. Projects address the social, economic, political and sustainable consequences in intimate context of LJ and Larger context of the city.

### **Deliverables:**

Final student work will be included as part of a report co-authored by the studio client BUTO. Deliverables necessary to articulate the concept are subject to the student's discretion, but as a minimum should include:

1. Focus site Axonometric (1:1000)
2. Sectional Axos (1: 500 or 1:200)
3. Site plan (1:500)
4. Aerial Perspectives and Eye level perspectives
5. Metrics & Diagrams

**Due: April 11 for final review session**

## SCHEDULE:

### Schedule

**Exercise 1a: Research, Due**

**Exercise 1b: Case Studies, Due Feb 17**

**Exercise 2: Design, Due TBD, April 11-22**

### **Week 1 – Jan 10-14**

Monday – Course Introduction

- Co-introduction with Urban Planning students;
- Project 1 Assigned, students select one of four project topics;
- Site visit.\*\*

Thursday – Desk Crit of research

### **Week 2 – Jan 17-21**

Monday –Desk Crits

Thursday – Desk Crit of research

### **Week 3 – Jan 24-28**

Monday – **Review Exercise 1**, Outreach Lecture by Lorne Capppe

Thursday – Review of Research

- Assign site selection preliminary design

**Week 4 – Jan 31 - Feb 4**

Monday – Desk Crits Site Visit

- Site visit and photography;
- Meet King Culture and George Harvey CI students at Toronto Calvary Cross Church;\*\*

Thursday – Desk Crit of research, site selection;

**Week 5 – Feb 7-11**

Monday – Desk Crits Site Visit

- Site visit and photography;\*\*
- (Alt. date) Meet King Culture and George Harvey CI students at Toronto Calvary Cross Church\*\*

Thursday – Desk Crit of research, site selection;

**Week 6 – Feb 14-18**

Monday – Exercise 1 Mid Review

- Research, site selection, and preliminary design;

Thursday – No Class

**Reading Week – Feb 21-25****Week 7 – Feb 28 - March 4**

Monday – Exercise 2 Lecture

- With Urban Planning Studio;

Thursday – Desk Crit

**Week 8 – March 7-11**

Monday – Desk Crit

Thursday – Desk Crit

**Week 9 – March 14-18**

Monday – Desk Crit

Thursday – Desk Crit

**Week 10 – March 21-25**

Monday – Review of Design Proposal

Thursday – Desk Crit

**Week 11 – March 29 - April 1**

Monday – Desk Crit

Thursday – Desk Crit

**Week 12 – April 4-8**

Monday – Desk Crit

Thursday – Penultimate

**Final Review TBD April 11-22**