

## African Canadian Cultural Community Center

DEPUTATION TO THE CITY OF VAUGHAN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
 MAY 2, 2017

PRESENTED BY: SHERNETT MARTIN, VAUGHAN AFRICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION

## City of Vaughan – Vision 20/20

- We are building a great city that is renowned for its first-class administration, its transparency, its accountability and its respect for the taxpayers' dollars.
- The vision for the future of Vaughan is clear – a **vibrant, multicultural community that is inclusive** and progressive; a city that is environmentally responsible and sustainable; a strong, healthy and prosperous community where diversity, innovation and opportunity are encouraged for all citizens.

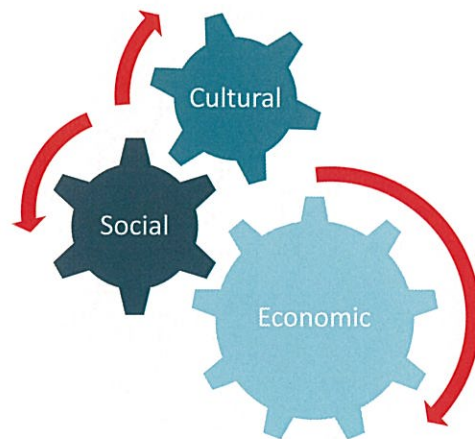
## DEMOGRAPHICS – CITY OF VAUGHAN

TOTAL POPULATION IN PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS BY VISIBLE MINORITY	TOTAL COUNT	% OF VISIBLE MINORITY POPULATION	% OF TOTAL POPULATION
Total Visible Minority Population	89,975	100.0%	31.4%
South Asian	27,725	30.8%	9.7%
Chinese	13,475	15.0%	4.7%
Filipino	8,585	9.5%	3.0%
Black	7,765	8.6%	2.7%
Southeast Asian	7,735	8.6%	2.7%
West Asian	6,215	6.9%	2.2%
Latin American	6,055	6.7%	2.1%
Korean	4,300	4.8%	1.5%
Multiple Visible Minorities	2,865	3.2%	1.0%
Arab	2,785	3.1%	1.0%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2013. National Household Survey Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released May 8 2013.

## THE CASE FOR AN AFRICAN-CANADIAN CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY CENTER

- One does not exist
- Influx of families moving to Vaughan
- Black community is underserved in every social/economic indicator
- Least likely to graduate high school
- Most likely to be stopped/searched and jailed for non-violent crimes
- Most likely to be in Foster care and CAS
- Least likely to be adopted out of Foster Care
- Most likely to face racism





## A SUCCESS STORY – THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

- The Joseph & Wolf Lebovic Center:
- The City of Vaughan celebrates diversity by supporting a myriad of ethnic, religious and cultural groups. One such group is the Jewish community. March 14, 2011, Former Vaughan MP, Julian Fantino announced a 15-million donation under the Major Infrastructure Component of the Building Canada Fund and the Government of Canada's Action Plan. He announced that families across Vaughan would benefit from a multi-functional, recreational, cultural, health, education, and social services community center with a joint commitment from the Government of Canada and the UJA Federation. The 50-acre facility includes Jewish elementary and secondary schools, an ambulatory care centre for Mount Sinai, a recreation centre with a gymnasium and three swimming pools, a community organic garden, a skating rink, family services facilities, a theatre, conference centres, an urban square, long-term care facilities, homes for the physically and mentally challenged, a conference centre and an immigrant welcome centre. A Private Members Bill was passed on May 12, 2008 (Item 17 Report No. 24) to provide tax exemption through the City of Vaughan.
- At the press event with Minister Fantino, Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua stated: *"Today, we not only celebrate community building, not only do we celebrate the great achievements of the Jewish community here in the city of Vaughan and beyond, but I do believe that today is a day when we truly celebrate nation building."*

"We are building a great city that is renowned for its first-class administration, its transparency, its accountability and its respect for the taxpayers' dollars. The vision for the future of Vaughan is clear – a vibrant, multicultural community that is inclusive and progressive; a city that is environmentally responsible and sustainable; a strong, healthy and prosperous community where diversity, innovation and opportunity are encouraged for all citizens."

Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua

## A SUCCESS STORY – THE AHMADAIYA COMMUNITY

- The Peace Village surrounds the B'aitul Islam Mosque with 500 homes and townhomes, a community center with a gym for basketball and Friday prayer, a community park, with a public school nearby. The streets surrounding the Mosque have cultural significant names like Mahmood crescent, Ahmadiaya Avenue and Noor-Ud-Din Court
- VACA has partnered with the Ahmadiaya community by providing a March Break basketball at the B'aitul Islam community center. The center is proudly decorated with historical posters, and information about Islam and their library and bookstore proudly displays and sells memorabilia, mats, books, posters and inspirational media that teaches visitors about Islam.
- The center is a wonderful example of how communities thrive when they are able to provide communal infrastructure that propels community to succeed.
- The Ahmadiaya community bought land and built a religious and cultural community to serve their community, which is very similar to the Vellore Woods community which was built with a Catholic Church in its center and street names like Saint Andrew and Saint Stephen surrounding the Church.
- These two communities serve as a reminder of the generosity of the City of Vaughan in supporting ethnic and religious groups to build communities to promote their cultural heritage.
- It is a standard of communal infrastructure that makes me very proud to live in this City, and why we believe that it is time to lend that same level of support to the African-Canadian community

## AFRICAN CANADIAN CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY CENTER





## AFRICAN CANADIAN COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL CENTER

### CULTURAL CENTER

- 4 meeting rooms
- Reception area/desk
- Commons area
- Washrooms
- Full service classrooms
- kitchen
- 2 Formal event space
- Tech studio
- Youth space
- Children's space
- Office space

### BASKETBALL FACILITY

- 4 basketball court
- 3 courts 84ft x 50ft wide
- 1 NBA regulated court 94ft x 50ft wide
- Building structure:
- Bleacher seating for 500 people
- Hardwood floors
- Shot clocks
- Home/away boards
- Change rooms, washrooms
- Reception desk
- 2 meeting rooms



## Our request

- That our report be read and received by the Mayor and Members of Council and all departments that are directly involved with this request.
- To be included in the Vaughan Master Plan
- To be included in the new Multi-Plex facility being built (Teston/Major McKenzie)
- To be included in new plans for the City
- To be invited to discuss future development of outdoor basketball facilities and an indoor basketball facilities
- To receive the same level of partnership and communication in building a community center that other groups have received
- To be told of any land, space, City property or Warehouse that could be used or converted to build the community center and basketball facility
- To work in partnership with corporate sponsors that may be interested in supporting our vision
- To receive a report regarding this request and be included in all communications related to this request

Thank you.

[vaca@rogers.com](mailto:vaca@rogers.com)  
[www.vacaorg.com](http://www.vacaorg.com)

Mayor Bevilacqua, City of Vaughan  
Members of Vaughan Council  
Vaughan City Hall  
2141 Major MacKenzie Drive  
Vaughan, Ontario  
L6A 1T1

May 2, 2017

Dear Mayor Bevilacqua and members of Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today during the Committee of the Whole meeting. As the Co-founder and Executive Director of the Vaughan African Canadian Association, it gives me great pleasure to bring forth a deputation from the members of our organization, young people from the City of Vaughan, our supporters, partners, and every day citizens from Vaughan and around York Region who support the building of an African-Canadian Community and Cultural Center (ACCCC) equipped with an indoor basketball facility to serve the needs of the community.

### **Mission**

The ACCCC will assist individuals and families in reaching their full potential to become positive and influential contributors to society by providing social and wellness services and programs with a cultural significance.

### **Vision**

From inception, The ACCCC will be a space for African-Canadians to share their cultural and historical heritage with the wider community and support the diversity and multiculturalism mandate of the City.

### **History**

Our organization was formed in 2003 by teachers and administrators who began a Saturday morning tutoring program for youths and programs geared at providing support to the influx of black families moving into the City in 2003. We currently run programs and services aimed at providing support to black families and four years ago started our basketball program called "Ballers' Paradise" which provides camps, clinics, showcases and training to basketball players.

We have worked with the following organizations on numerous programs and projects since our inception:

- \* The City of Vaughan
- \* The Township of Oro-Medonte
- \* York Catholic District School Board
- \* National Council of Canadian Muslims
- \* Ahmadiya Peace Village (Basketball camp)
- \* Michael Tibollo (Festival of Lights)
- \* Humanity First
- \* Rogers TV
  
- \* PowerStream



- \*Caribbean Queen JerkDrum
- \*Human Endeavour
- \*EPIC Marketplace
- \*Metroland Media/Vaughan Citizen Newspaper
- \* York Region District School Board's Race Relations Advisory Committee
- \*Toronto Catholic District School Board
- \* York Region Newspaper Group's Community Link Committee
- \* Jamaican Canadian Association
- \* Markham African-Canadian Association
- \* YAACE basketball organization
- \* York Regional Police
- \* The Consulate General of Grenada
- \* University of Toronto
- \* Together for Maple
- \* YRP Community and Cultural Resources
- \* Black Youths Taking Action
- \* Ryerson University
- \* York University
- \* Ebony Village
- \* Legacy for Youth
- \*Black Foundation for Community Networks (BFCN)
- \* A Stroke of Art
- \* The Act Out Project
- \* Caribbean Cook-up Productions
- \* Rogers Television
- \* Thornhill African Caribbean Association
- \* Visions of Science
- \* ArtsBlast
- \* Ebony Wood Theatre Group
- \* Muthadi Drum Fest
- \* ItalVillage
- \* Tractors for our Daily Bread
- \* Grassroots Canada
- \* Toronto Academic Preparatory School
- \* Spelling Bee of Canada
- \* World Vision Canada

Some of our recent projects include working with the Township of Oro-Medonte to restore the African-Methodist Church in the Township that was built by freed slaves who fought in the War of 1812. The church stood dilapidated for over four decades. We submitted a joint grant to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and received \$90,000 earmarked for the restoration of the church. The project was a labour of love and we were excited to have a Grand re-opening ceremony August, 2016 with descendants of the families who built the church back in 1847. Descendants from United Kingdom, across Canada, the Caribbean and the United States attended the Grand re-opening as well as political leaders, community leaders and our MC Michael "Pinball" Clemons. This project was the most important work we have done to date.



Another important issue that we are extremely proud of is our work with the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM). We have partnered with the Muslim community, Chinese, Jewish, Sri-Lankan, Vaughan and York Region residents to bring the issue of Islamophobia and anti-black racism within the York Region District School Board to the forefront. The partnership of these organizations has seen a reorganization of the Board of Trustees at the YRDSB, the resignation of a Trustee who used a derogatory racial slur when describing a black parent, the firing of the former Director and a comprehensive review of the YRDSB ordered by the Minister of Education.

VACA has long been an organization that believes in social justice and equity for all. We believe in working together with other community organizations to provide programs and services that will uplift our children and families.

#### Community Cultural Centers in Vaughan/York Region:

We are privileged to live in a City that has publicly stated how diverse our City. We know that our diversity is our strength. We see all around us communities that are thriving because our City has provided support through donations, sponsorships, office space, land, grants, and partnerships. VACA has received support from the Mayor's Gala the first year of our CariVaughan Caribbean festival which is now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year, and is being organized by the newly formed Carifestival Organization headed by Sandi Folkes. We have also received support for our basketball March break camp last year which enabled us to provide subsidies for players.

#### The Joseph & Wolf Lebovic Center:

The City of Vaughan celebrates diversity by supporting a myriad of ethnic, religious and cultural groups. One such group is the Jewish community. March 14, 2011, Former Vaughan MP, Julian Fantino announced a 15-million donation under the Major Infrastructure Component of the Building Canada Fund and the Government of Canada's Action Plan. He announced that families across Vaughan would benefit from a multi-functional, recreational, cultural, health, education, and social services community center with a joint commitment from the Government of Canada and the UJA Federation. The 50 acre facility includes Jewish elementary and secondary schools, an ambulatory care centre for Mount Sinai, a recreation centre with a gymnasium and three swimming pools, a community organic garden, a skating rink, family services facilities, a theatre, conference centres, an urban square, long-term care facilities, homes for the physically and mentally challenged, a conference centre and an immigrant welcome centre. A Private Members Bill was passed on May 12, 2008 (Item 17 Report No. 24) to provide tax exemption through the City of Vaughan.

At the press event with Minister Fantino, Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua stated:

*"Today, we not only celebrate community building, not only do we celebrate the great achievements of the Jewish community here in the city of Vaughan and beyond, but I do believe that today is a day when we truly celebrate nation building."*

Since the opening of the Joseph & Wolf Lebovic Center, the Jewish community has enjoyed the facilities and have invited residents and visitors to the Center. The JWLC joins numerous other Jewish facilities such as the the Shwartz-Reisman Jewish Community Center and many Jewish Community Centers (JCC) around the City and Country.

With street names like Chabad Gate, Torah Gate and Israel Zibar Drive surrounding the Center, the community has ensured that the legacy and history of the Jewish people will forever be honoured and remembered. Isaodre Sharp, the founder of Four Seasons Hotel and a major donor for the Center said it best “We have a major Jewish community here. We should be doing things to further their education, and further their well-being” (*excerpt from speech given at the Grand-opening of the Joseph & Wolf Lebovic Center*).

#### Some Cultural, Ethnic and Faith groups in Vaughan

- Italian Cultural Institute
- Filipino Canadian Association
- Human Endeavour
- Joseph and Wolf Lebovic Center
- Jafari Community Center
- Portuguese Cultural Center of Vaughan
- Fuerza Latina
- Vaughan African Canadian Canadian Association
- Carifestival
- BFCN (Black Families & Community Networks)

#### Across the GTA

- Noor Cultural Center
- Japanese Canadian Cultural Center
- Native Canadian Center of Toronto
- Sanatan Mandir Cultural Center
- John Paul II Polish Cultural Center
- National Congress of Italian Canadians
- Columbus Center
- Jamaican Canadian Association
- Tropicana Community Center

#### A Thriving Community – Filipino Community

##### Filipino Association in Vaughan - Backgrounder

The Filipino-Canadian Association of Vaughan’s (FCCAV) objective is to build a Recreation Hall or Community Centre to be used by its members, various associations, and the public. The Community Centre will serve as a venue for line dancing, ballroom dancing, heritage classes, workshops, seminars, sport events such as basketball and gymnastics, meeting room, banquet facilities, cultural and social activities.

The association held a fundraising event with Vaughan Councillors, MP, MPP, and a School Trustee. Proceeds raised went towards the acquisition of their Community Centre.

On their website, the Filipino community states ***“The Community Centre, when realized, will be all ours - a place that we call it our own. It will be the pride of all Filipinos and Filipino-Canadians in Vaughan.”***



### A Thriving Community -The Ahmadiaya Community

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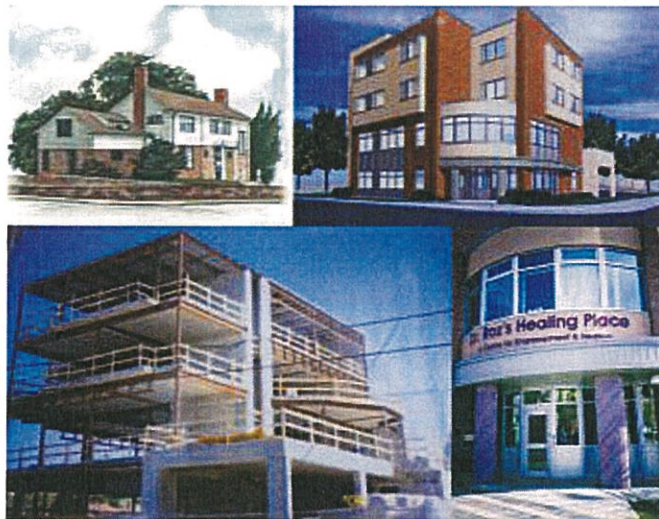
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It is a standard of communal infrastructure that makes me very proud to live in this City, and why we believe that it is time to lend that same level of support to the African-Canadian community.

### An example of City partnership and donation: City of Markham and Dr. Roz's Healing Place:

Dr. Roz Roach is a black woman and Physician. She is the first black woman to build a space for abused women and children. The City of Markham has donated land and the structure on the land to Dr. Roz who is raising the funds to build a community hub called the "Changa House." Dr. Roz is currently fundraising, and supports the efforts of VACA to build our community center



# African-Canadian Cultural & Community Center (ACCCC)

Vaughan, ON

*"We are building a great city that is renowned for its first-class administration, its transparency, its accountability and its respect for the taxpayers' dollars. The vision for the future of Vaughan is clear – a vibrant, multicultural community that is inclusive and progressive; a city that is environmentally responsible and sustainable; a strong, healthy and prosperous community where diversity, innovation and opportunity are encouraged for all citizens."* Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua



## Ballers Paradise Indoor Basketball Facility



*"This will be the first African-Canadian Community Cultural Center equipped with a regulation sized NBA basketball court, with the space to deliver programs and services to meet the diverse needs of the black community throughout the Country. We are committed and dedicated to seeing this center built and look forward to the partnerships of corporations and governments to make this a reality."*

*Shernett Martin, Executive Director, Vaughan African Canadian Association*



Imagine a Community Cultural Center that celebrates the historical and cultural contribution of the African-Canadian community. A place where music can be heard from the African drumming studio, and the kids rapping in the hip-hop sound booth, where dancing can be seen as students learn traditional African, modern and classical dance. **Imagine a place where Saturday mornings, black youths have a place to go that teaches them about their history and languages that were theirs but they have never heard of before, like Yoruba, Edo, Ashanti, Kiswahili and Ahmaraic.** A place where newcomers and refugees can find support, housing, employment assistance and friendship. **A place fully equipped with a state-of-the-art basketball court for youth basketball teams and International events,** a kitchen fully equipped to offer Caribbean and African cooking classes, a place where residents interested in learning culinary skills can obtain certification in culinary arts. The Center would be fully equipped with a retail shop that would sell clothing, heritage items and branded items. **It would have technologically advanced meeting spaces for groups, and a commons hall with a stage for presentations, awards shows, formal meetings and ceremonies. It would create jobs and offer volunteer opportunities.** No matter what time of day or day of the week, the Center will be bustling with **programs and services that will be culturally relevant and promote entrepreneurship, education, sports, good health, well-being, success and personal growth.** That place is the African Canadian Cultural & Community Center.



Mayor Bevilacqua, City of Vaughan  
Members of Vaughan Council  
Vaughan City Hall  
2141 Major MacKenzie Drive  
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L6A 1T1

April 4, 2017

Dear Mayor Bevilacqua and Members of Council:

This letter is in support of the Vaughan African Canadian Association's (VACA) deputation request on April 4, 2017 to have a community and cultural center built in the City of Vaughan to serve the African Canadian community specifically and the wider community in general.

As individuals, community leaders, heads of organizations and residents we understand the importance of communal infrastructure in community building. Having a space creates a sense of pride amongst generations of people. This is seen in many communities across the City. We have seen ethnic and religious groups navigate funding, and raise funds in their communities to build community centers, schools, housing, seniors homes, and cultural centers. These infrastructures have positively contributed to the health and well-being of many Canadians.

The African-Canadian community has contributed immensely to the fabric of Canada. They have shared their culture and heritage with Canadians. They have immersed themselves into the way of life of every community where they live. As other groups thrive and build, the African-Canadian community seems to be left behind without the needed infrastructure to meet the needs of their community. Most recently, the Province has created an anti-racist secretariat to address the needs of communities who face racism, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism. Minister Michael Couteau also saw a need to address the inadequate services and programs for the black community and has allotted 47 million for the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan (OBYAP).

The Black community has paved the way for many immigrant communities by being at the frontlines fighting for housing rights, immigrant rights, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination. This community has been vocal in their fight for social justice and equity for all. Yet, the black community is lacking in basic infrastructure to provide much needed services.

We, the undersigned support VACA in their bid to have an African-Canadian Cultural Community Center built in the City of Vaughan in order to provide communal infrastructure to provide social services, programs, a basketball facility and arts-based programs to serve the needs of the African-Canadian community. We feel it is important for all groups to feel a sense of belonging and receive equitable treatment from all levels of government in order for their communities to thrive.

Sincerely,

*Lee Miler*  
*Alliance of York Region African-Canadian Organizations*  
*National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)*  
*Bernie Farber*  
*The Mosaic Group*  
*Suleuman Ahmed*  
*Jacqui Testoni*



*Shaun Testoni  
Cheryl Yarde  
Fitz-Roy Gordon  
Beverley Samuels  
Wayne Samuels  
York University Black Students Association  
Naomi Jules  
Jules Foundation  
Caribbean Student Alliance  
Abid Mirza (Peace Village)  
Charline Grant  
Garth Grant  
YRDSB Kids Need Help (Twitter Group)  
Khadija Cajee  
Syed Ahmad  
Mohammed Hasin  
Flavio Volpe*

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