

NIKO CASUNCAD Planner

Niko Casuncad is a Planner passionate about improving the quality of life in cities by utilizing urban planning and community development tools and processes. He has experience in program management and delivery, research and policy analysis, written and visual communications, and stakeholder engagement in the social impact sector. Niko's planning practice is informed by intersectional and anti-racism lenses to collaborate with communities and support beneficial social, economic, and environmental change and growth in cities.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Planner

Gladki Planning Associates
February 2023 - Present

Program Coordinator, Affordable Housing

Evergreen
2022 - 2023

Programs Associate

Metcalf Foundation
2020 - 2022

Associate Researcher

ArtsPond
2020

Graduate Research & Teaching Assistant

Toronto Metropolitan University
2019 - 2020

Project Assistant

8 80 Cities
2019

EDUCATION

Master of Planning

Toronto Metropolitan University,
2020

Bachelor of Arts (Urban Studies) and Certificate (Sustainability Studies)

University of Calgary, 2018

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Candidate Member

Ontario Professional Planners
Institute

Candidate Member

Canadian Institute of Planners

SELECT PROJECTS - GLADKI PLANNING ASSOCIATES

Bloor-Yorkville Secondary Plan Public and Stakeholder Consultation

City of Toronto, 2022 - Ongoing

To support the update and review of the Bloor-Yorkville Secondary Plan, this project will design and deliver creative and interactive consultation activities, including community meetings and stakeholder workshops, Indigenous engagement, and asynchronous online engagement. Niko is supporting the coordination and facilitation of engagement activities.

Ontario Place Public and Stakeholder Consultation

City of Toronto, 2022 - Ongoing

This project will lead the public consultation and stakeholder engagement aspects of the development-review process for the revitalization of Ontario Place. Niko is supporting the coordination of the City-initiated Stakeholder Advisory Committee and community meetings required for the site-specific Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law amendments.

Review and Update of Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan

City of Vaughan, 2020 - Ongoing

Envisioned as the City of Vaughan's downtown, the VMC will be dense, amenity-rich, and well connected with an intimate public realm and pedestrian-friendly urban environment. Extensive consultation is taking place with landowners, City staff, the public, and other stakeholders through meetings, workshops, online platforms, and surveys. Niko is providing public engagement and research support in preparation of the revised secondary plan for VMC.

Markham Centre Secondary Plan Update

City of Markham, 2019 - Ongoing

Gladki Planning Associates is leading the update of the secondary plan to achieve Markham's aspirations for its downtown as a regional focal point, smart city testbed, transit hub, and a vibrant mixed use community. Niko is supporting the community and stakeholder engagement component of this project.

SELECT PROJECTS - OTHER

Housing Supply Challenge Support Program

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2022 - 2023

Led by Evergreen, the Support Program supports applicants and funding recipients of CMHC's Housing Supply Challenge by providing guidance, mentorship, and resources to develop and improve their projects that break down the barriers that limit new housing supply. Niko led the technical design and delivery for a 3-day virtual national Affordable Housing Conference including nine sessions for 500 attendees on Zoom Events. Additionally, he coordinated the program management and delivery, stakeholder engagement, issued newsletters, and supported outreach communications.

PUBLICATIONS

A Changing Demographic and the Potential of Urban Planning: Indigenous and Newcomer Communities in Toronto
Y Magazine, OPPI, 2020

Exploring Indigenous-Newcomer Relations in the City of Toronto
Toronto Metropolitan Centre for Immigration and Settlement Working Paper Series, 2020

VOLUNTEER

Mobilizing Justice Community and Equity Advisory Table Member, University of Toronto
2022 - Present

Ontario Community Changemakers Advisory Committee Member, 8 80 Cities
2020 - Present

AWARDS

Graduate Student Award of Merit, Toronto Metropolitan Planning Alumni Association
2020

Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration Graduate Student Scholarship
2020

Aditya Jha Community Development Award, Toronto Metropolitan University
2019

Graduate Fellowship, Toronto Metropolitan University
2018 - 2020

Top 30 Under 30, Alberta Council for Global Cooperation
2018

Groundtrust: Primer on Community and Cultural Land Trusts

ArtsPond, 2020

Groundtrust is a social innovation project promoting awareness of affordable social purpose real estate solutions in the arts in Ontario. Niko facilitated youth focus group interviews and researched pre-pandemic concepts and examples of social purpose real estate solutions to gentrification and spatial precarity for equity-seeking groups. He prepared a primer that serves as an introductory guide to creative and cultural land trusts for Black, Indigenous, and other racialized youth in arts and culture.

Our Dene Land, Our Dene Home: A Housing Strategy for the Yellowknives Dene First Nation

Together Design Lab and Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN), 2020

To assist the YKDFN with creating a Housing Strategy for their communities in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, this graduate client project focused on researching existing land use/policy frameworks; cataloguing existing traditional knowledge mappings and Elder interviews into appropriate GIS/online formats; reviewing housing program provision; and creating a toolkit for integrating a land based understanding in housing and land use planning work. He also supported research, writing and design of the reports and toolkits, and facilitated site visit meetings with government stakeholders.

Exploring an Interactive Tree Story Map for the Carrying Place Trail, Humber Watershed Toronto

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), 2019

This graduate client project explored how an interpretative story map might be created to engage audiences with heritage trees and surrounding green spaces and foster environmental stewardship focused on the Carrying Place Trail, an Indigenous trail and portaging route following the Humber River. The project developed recommendations for TRCA regarding developing the interpretative tree story map, including policy change, design guidelines, and Indigenous engagement. Niko coordinated stakeholder engagement, research, and report design and writing.