

divert: impact stories

MABELLEarts

LOCATION

Toronto, Ontario

INDUSTRY

Community based non-profit organization

PROGRAM FEATURED

Divert



the challenge:

Strengthening an underserved community on a limited budget

MABELLEarts is a charitable, community-based organization that brings people together across real and perceived differences to make a positive impact on each other and the neighbourhood. Located in Mabelle Park in the west end of Toronto, the organization is re-defining the role of the arts and community engagement in low-income communities. When MABELLEarts was looking to expand their services to the community, they needed to create a space that would support a variety of uses while ensuring their funding stretched as far as possible.





the solution:

A mix of new product and used furniture from the Divert Program ensures their space looks as good as it functions without breaking the bank

MABELLEarts serves as a hub for a local, underserved community of newcomers to Canada, families, and seniors living in a collection of low-income apartment buildings run and subsidized by Toronto Community Housing. Historically, the organization's initiatives focused on art programming, however, once the pandemic hit, they recognized a need to expand beyond their initial mandate to meet the neighborhoods critical needs. Starting with grocery runs for a handful of isolated seniors, they extended their programming to include a foodbank serving approximately 300 households. But it didn't stop there. Very quickly, they realized that the pandemic was as much about access to technology as it was about food security. Explains Leah Houston, Executive Director of MABELLEarts, "Our City Councillor brought forward the need to bring technology to the residents of this community. Students needed technology to continue learning and seniors needed to stay connected and so we quickly set our sights on creating a physical space that could house a computer lab and a local community room to bring everyone together. However, we are not architects or interior designers. We needed help

to turn our vision into reality and make every dollar of our budget count." It was at this point that Teknion stepped in and was able to provide a mix of new and used furniture through their Divert Program, as well as share design expertise and knowledge to ensure the space would function as beautifully as it looks.

Tim Baxter, Regional Vice President Corporate Accounts and Executive Sponsor, Divert Program Canada adds, "Teknion and MABELLEarts share similar values. We are both design-driven organizations that share an appreciation for art, beauty and accessibility. Not only do they benefit from the furniture donation, we give our furniture a second life and keep it out of landfill. A win-win for everyone." In addition to the repurposed furniture, Teknion worked with their dealer partner, The Collective, to provide design and specification services to optimize the space they have, and the functions it needs to support. This includes the computer lab as well as meeting space for tenants of the building and for Toronto Community Housing to hold public meetings. The Collective also provided installation services for all the furniture. Says Leah, "Teknion believes that good quality design shouldn't just be available to those with the deepest pockets. Thanks to the partnership between our organizations we developed a first-class design that can continue to grow and evolve as we do."

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