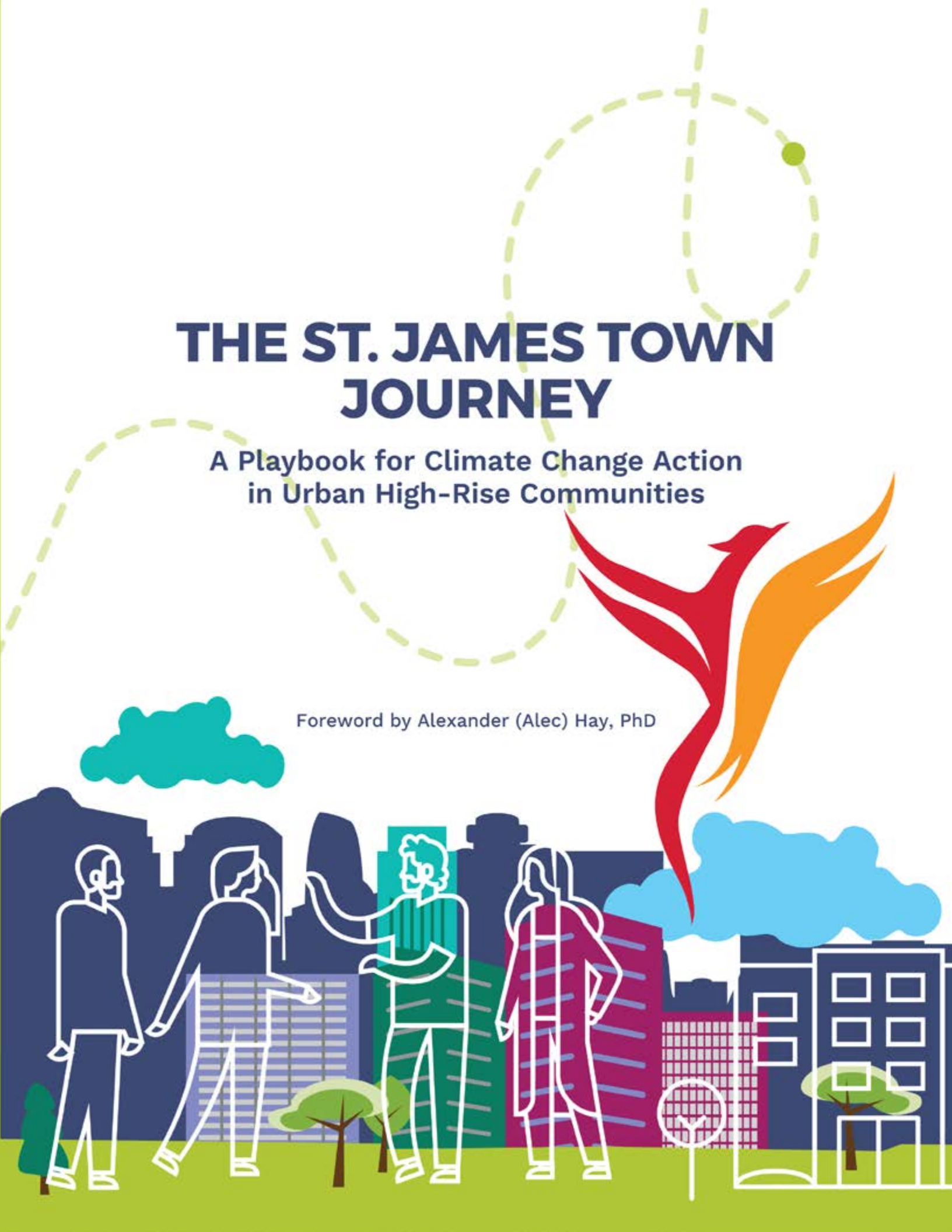


# THE ST. JAMES TOWN JOURNEY

A Playbook for Climate Change Action  
in Urban High-Rise Communities

Foreword by Alexander (Alec) Hay, PhD





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Published by  
Rethink Sustainability Initiatives Inc.



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*We must consider the disproportionate number of resources devoted to finding innovative post disaster solutions, against those used to prevent them. Minimizing people's vulnerabilities through measures that favor social justice requires less money than rebuilding after disasters.*

**Gonzalo Lizarralde,  
Unnatural Disasters: Why Most Responses to Risk  
and Climate Change Fail But Some Succeed**



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# FOREWORD

Alexander (Alec) Hay, PhD

I have spent much of my professional life studying and practising infrastructure development. Irrespective of whether we were looking at gas pipelines across the Canadian Prairies, community housing in Copenhagen or post-conflict rehabilitation of utilities in Gaza, I would always come to the same question, how does the built environment adapt to change? The question of adaptation is always there. It's also an uncommonly difficult question to answer.

In my experience, at least, this question of adaptability is most starkly represented at the community level. After all, it is where individual and collective human experiences and behaviours are most intimately bound with the built environment. The question ceases to be about architecture or engineering. Instead, it becomes genuinely multidisciplinary where perception is as important as considering the evidence and science. As we worked through these challenges, how we developed the built environment became at least as important as what was delivered. You see, communities are complex adaptive systems that don't lend themselves easily to fixed models and frameworks. They are messy. Community members adapt to their surroundings and adjust behaviours to fit their convenience, not always how planners and developers might wish.

The design and condition of the built surroundings influence the community's behaviour and sense of belonging and ownership of the area. Those socially isolated or new to the country and culture will identify less with the community, reducing communication, trust, and cohesion. This relationship between the community and its environment is in constant flux with economic and demographic changes. Each stakeholder in the community will have a unique perspective and interest, and it is often challenging to find real alignment or harmony.



Image 1: Alexander (Alec) Hay

Building generalized models and concepts for the various community functions was far easier. These models proved reliable over time and formed the basis for development financing, municipal services planning, and retail investments. In effect, there was an implicit alignment even if there was no shared understanding or even communication. However, the world began to change significantly, and the models' assumptions were no longer valid. Community development demands a new shared model based on communication and understanding. It also demands a shared vision of what the community will be and how its infrastructure must adapt to a new and unpredictable future.

Where these issues would typically be contextual to a development project or municipal service study, they are at the centre of the St. James Town project. In that respect, the project was a unique undertaking and has substantively enhanced our understanding of community rehabilitation and sustainable development as we transition to a low-carbon emissions economy.

This Community Climate Action Playbook describes a journey of discovery by real people and organizations, each with their different perspectives and interests in the community. Its' strength and value lay in that shared discovery, and through it, practicable solutions that can be used here and elsewhere. This was not a journey to a predetermined solution; the journey itself was the goal. It was about informing, inclusive engagement and capacity building. We can see the success in the increased community climate awareness and adaptability of the stakeholder group. Amid these global shifts in climate, economy, and society, we cannot predict the future or what it holds for the next generation. So they have found examples of success elsewhere, adapted them to their situation for collective benefit, and demonstrated what can be achieved. This makes it more than a solution or product. It is about realizing future capability, sustainability, survivability, and vitality; it was a discovery of their future value. In other words, not simply what we must adapt to but to what end.

The project was conceived by Rethink Sustainability Initiatives (RSI), an organization dedicated to looking at climate change, resiliency, and sustainability in new ways, with new approaches and new ideas. It delivered the project during one of the most challenging periods of this century—the COVID-19 pandemic.

• • • •

*This question of adaptability is most starkly represented at the community level. After all, it is where individual and collective human experiences and behaviours are most intimately bound with the built environment.*

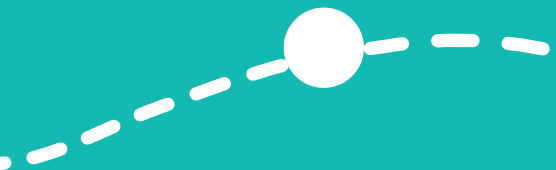
*The question ceases to be about architecture or engineering. Instead, it becomes genuinely multidisciplinary where perception is as important as considering the evidence and science.*

**Alexander (Alec) Hay**

• • • •

I particularly like how RSI brought all of the community stakeholders together to design the roadmap for this journey of discovery. They gave a voice to all stakeholders, enabling each and discovering hidden talent in the community. Together and as a community, they built a diverse and inclusive partnership that helped redefine relationships and foster genuine dialogue and curiosity. Like any journey of discovery, there were dead-ends and detours and exploring related concepts and practices in other disciplines. The RSI team drew on Abraham Maslow's ideas around what motivates people, using his "hierarchy of needs" to provide markers on their roadmap. It allowed them to chart progress against community members' physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization needs.

I hope this Playbook inspires you and that other high-rise communities in Toronto and across Canada may draw on the experiences of the St. James Town community to mobilize its residents and other stakeholders in Climate Action.



PART 1

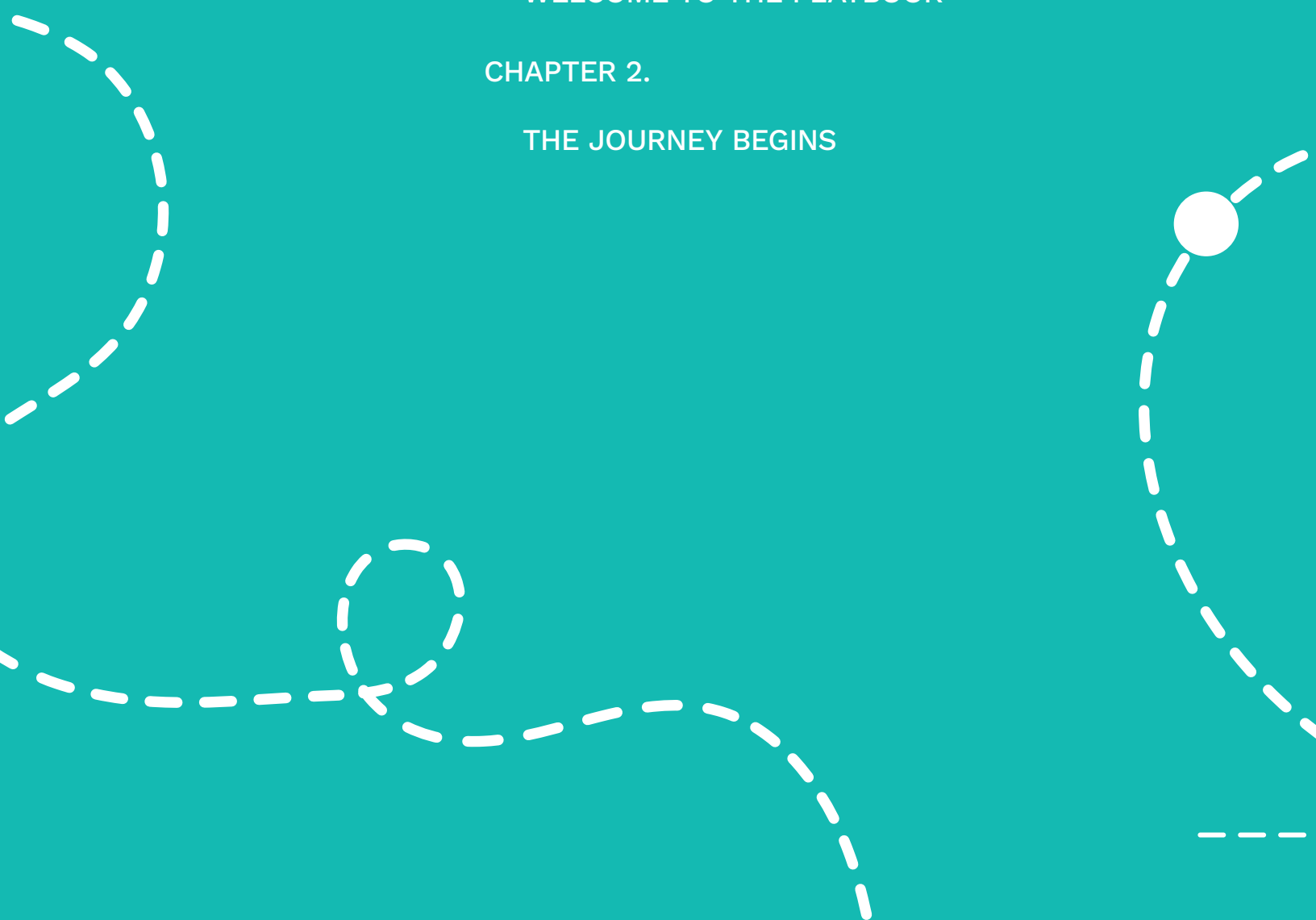
# INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1.

WELCOME TO THE PLAYBOOK

CHAPTER 2.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS



## WELCOME TO THE PLAYBOOK

The challenges posed by a rapidly changing climate are serious and they're growing at alarming speed. It's both a global problem and a local one, and there are few places where the need to act is more apparent than in urban high-rise communities like St. James Town, a neighbourhood in downtown Toronto.

The initial audience for this Playbook is the St. James Town (SJT) community. It's also a useful guide for other multi-residential urban communities just like it within the city and across the country.

St. James Town is at the heart of the city. It defines itself as "a world within a block."<sup>[1]</sup> It's the landing pad for many newcomers and therefore a high turnover community. It is also one of the most densely populated, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual neighbourhoods in Canada, and has been identified as economically deprived.<sup>[2]</sup>

Though the statistics change as people come and go, on average, more than 35 per cent of St. James Town's approximately 20,000 residents live at or below the poverty line (low-income households are defined as either one person earning less than \$25,000 CDN, or two or more people earning between \$25,000 and \$50,000 combined).<sup>[3]</sup> At the same time, St. James Town has a higher proportion of residents with advanced degrees than the average for Toronto.<sup>[4]</sup>

### St. James Town Top 10 Facts

- 1 Began in the 1870s as Victorian homes for the upper middle class
- 2 Consists of 19 high-rise towers in one square block
- 3 Identified as the only economically-deprived neighbourhood in downtown Toronto
- 4 Each high-rise tower is named after a major Canadian city
- 5 Most densely-populated neighbourhood in Canada with 25000+ residents
- 6 67% of residents born outside of Canada
- 7 The most common languages other than English are Tagalog, Tamil, Mandarin, and Cantonese
- 8 Has a larger proportion of university degrees than the general population
- 9 Home to the world's tallest mural—Phoenix Rising
- 10 Known as "A World Within A Block"



[Click here for link to video](#)  
Top 10 St. James Town Facts



## Rethink Sustainability Initiatives (RSI) —

Rethink Sustainability Initiatives (RSI), is a not-for-profit organization, launched in 2011. RSI engages, advises, and partners with thought leaders, innovators, and organizations to advance the sustainability and resiliency of businesses, institutions and communities so they can thrive. We provide access to progressive leaders and actionable insights through formal and informal discussions, community projects, action learning accelerators, research, publications and education.



## How RSI developed this project —

In 2021, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) awarded RSI a Climate Action Fund (CAF) grant for a climate action project in support of St. James Town (SJT). The objective was to enable St. James Town to become the most-informed and best-prepared high-rise community on climate change impacts in the city and the country.

The Climate Action Fund (CAF) supports climate related programs in communities across the country. The objective of projects funded under the program are to raise awareness of climate change and help participants increase actions that contribute to Canada's clean growth and overall climate change plan. This fund prioritizes community-based climate action aimed at achieving a net-zero emissions economy by 2050, through youth awareness on climate issues, advancing climate research, and development in science and technology.

In keeping with our inclusive, asset-based approach to working with the community, RSI partnered with Trinity Life/The New Common in St. James Town and collaborated with community members — residents, volunteers, workers, and public building owners. Thus began a journey of discovery, the result of which is this Playbook.

## Project mandate —

Our mandate was to inform, engage, and educate St. James Town members and stakeholders in the discovery of climate action solutions that can be scaled and adapted for use in urban multi-residential high-rise communities like theirs and similar communities in Canada. The project was titled Climate Change Action in St. James Town (CCA-SJT).

## Playbook Purpose - Connecting the Dots through a Journey of Discovery

This Playbook describes the CCA-SJT journey of discovery about how a high-rise community can empower itself to become part of the solution through its own actions to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s climate emergency.

The Playbook shows how different individuals and groups, who might not be connected at first, can move out of their silos to form partnerships and achieve solutions. These types of community partnerships often come not from the top down, but from the bottom up. They connect the inside of a community with the outside — forming a doughnut of community stakeholders who shape, maintain, and evolve what happens.

The people who we elect to be our municipal councillors and senior government representatives can help too. The point of the Playbook is community empowerment. When a community like St. James Town is empowered, it inspires everyone to do more.

This Playbook documents climate impacts and opportunities for adaptation and mitigation that residents, organizations and building owners of other similar neighbourhoods in Canada can deploy too.

## St. James Town - The Community

St. James Town is a neighbourhood in downtown Toronto consisting of 19 high-rise buildings. With approximately 20,000 people, St. James Town is the most densely populated neighbourhood in the downtown core. The neighbourhood has a high presence of children under 15 years old and both the most lone-parent households and couples with children in the city. It has the highest number of persons living below the low-income measure after tax;<sup>[5]</sup> unemployment is the second highest in the downtown core, and nearly a quarter of those who are employed have only part-time work. This is one of the most diverse neighbourhoods, with the highest presence of immigrants, most recently from the Philippines, Nepal, and India.

• • • •

*DRIVEN by the vision of a more inclusive, healthy, and resilient multi-residential community, the CCA-SJT project was designed to provide a broad platform for residents, building owners and other people in the St. James Town community to voice their thoughts and discover solutions to some of the critical impacts of climate change (social, economic, and environmental).*

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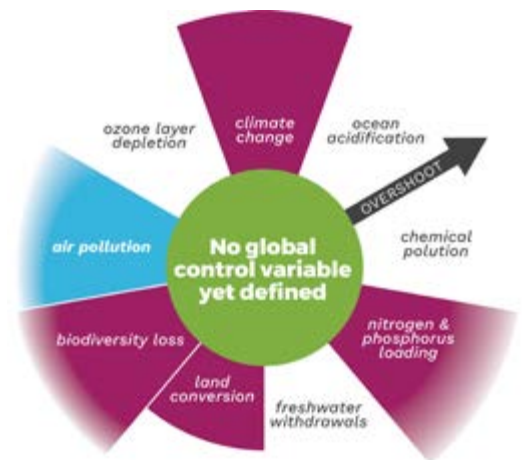


Image 2: **The Doughnut is visual framework used for sustainable development, combining the concept of planetary boundaries with the complementary concept of social boundaries**

## Local Challenges of Global Climate Change facing St. James Town

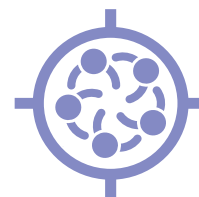
Densely populated high-rise communities like St. James Town, are particularly prone to the ravages of extreme climate. The high-rise buildings are baking hot in the summer and in winter the heating systems cannot withstand extreme cold that leads to burst pipes, and subsequent flooding leading to electrical failure. Heavy rainstorms cause water to penetrate the building, compromising the electrical system, leading to fierce fires that force people out of their homes.

In August 2018, such an event led to a six-alarm fire that ripped through 650 Parliament St. displacing some 1,500 tenants. They lived in hotels and other temporary quarters until moving back in March 2020 — just when the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic began.

The pandemic has compounded the burdens and challenges of climate that envelop a densely populated urban high-rise community like St. James Town.

Around 30 per cent of St. James Town residents work in service industries. Many lost their jobs when the pandemic hit. Living in a high-rise setting made social distancing difficult. Impacts of the pandemic on low income, racialized communities such as St. James Town are documented in the Toronto Foundation's "Fallout Report"<sup>[6]</sup> and include:

- People earning less than \$30,000 annually were 5.3 times more likely to be affected by COVID-19 than those with annual incomes above \$150,000.
- While COVID-19 rates were similar across neighbourhoods at the end of March 2020, by the end of May 2020, the most racialized parts of the city had 10 times more cases than the least racialized parts of the city.
- The pandemic has led to increasing rates of food insecurity, and supportive non-profits are struggling to keep up with demand.



*The psychological impact of the pandemic for those who are vulnerable in high-rise communities is immeasurable. There are many tangible ways, such as food and employment insecurity, that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated for the residents of St. James Town. My observation is that there is an underlying intangible—the negative emotional and mental impact from the isolation and loneliness that the pandemic has wrought in high-rise communities. We helped run a food delivery service to vulnerable residents and for some of them, we were the only people they saw each week. The lack of technology even prevented them from seeing people virtually.*

**Michael Seaman, PhD., Trinity  
Life/The New Common,  
St. James Town**



## OVERALL APPROACH



Image 3: Climate action is a dynamic concept that is incorporates many many disciplines and activities

### Community Empowerment

To empower St. James Town members, we used an inclusive and asset-based community development approach, looking for solutions that work as a system. We sought to engage and collaborate with a self-selected group of St. James Town members and key community stakeholders.

- Asset-based Community Development's premise is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing but often unrecognized assets. This is a way to respond directly to challenges and create local social improvement and economic development. Part 2, Chapter 1, *St. James Town and The Tools Required for Climate Change Action* provides more details.
- Systems thinking is a way of making sense of complex situations by looking in terms of whole, larger relationships rather than splitting issues into parts. Systems thinking is explained further in Part 2, Chapter 2, *Widening the Lens, Inside and outside St. James Town*.

## Building Stakeholders

The built environment plays a key role in establishing community climate resiliency. So, it was essential that building owners participate in climate action solutions too. Starting early in this project, we met with the owner of four government owned St. James Town buildings – The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC).

However, we were unable to engage any of the private building owners inside St. James Town. Instead, we collaborated with a cohort of building and energy related organizations and advisors.

## Engaged External Stakeholders

We also engaged external stakeholders connected to and outside the community. They shared best practice solutions for advancing the readiness of St. James Town and similar urban communities in Canada to be climate resilient. Participants included representatives from the City of Toronto, building and energy associations, corporations, social entrepreneurs, academic institutions, and private citizens.

## Connected to Essential Needs - Maslow's Hierarchy

Early into the process, we recognized that our climate action initiative must be relevant to the lives of individuals in the community. To ensure this, we shaped our recommendations around a social science theory known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. We applied this to both climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. As a result, three climate solution discoveries emerged as climate action projects: an emergency preparedness hub, a food security project, and mentoring circles for job readiness.

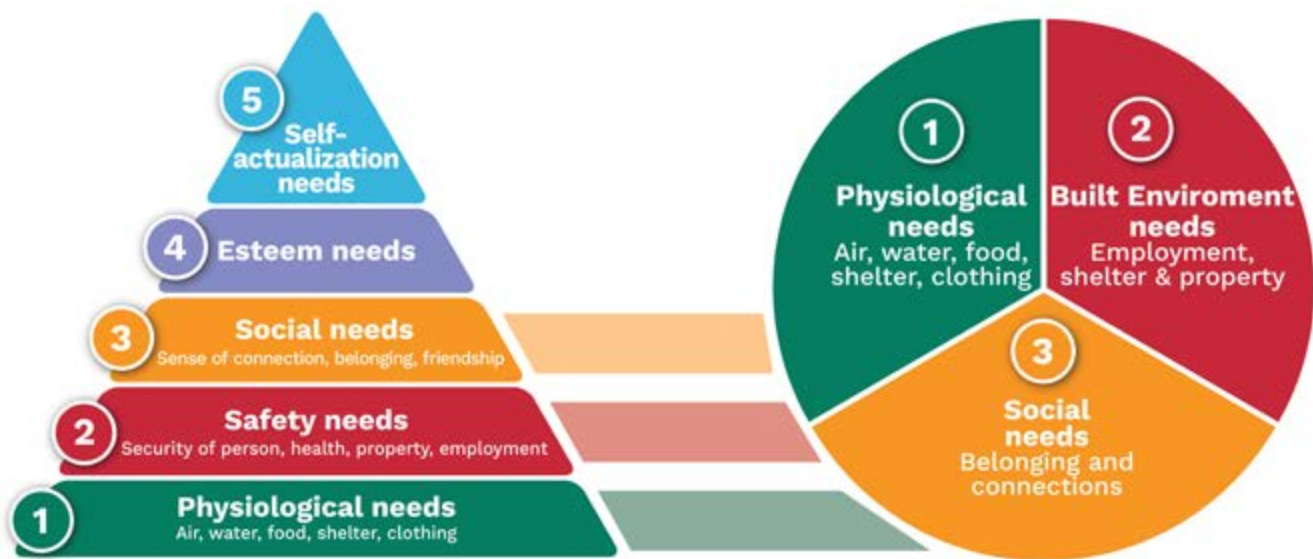


Image 4: The RSI team applied the theory of Maslow's Hierarchy as a fundamental lens for its climate action journey with St. James Town

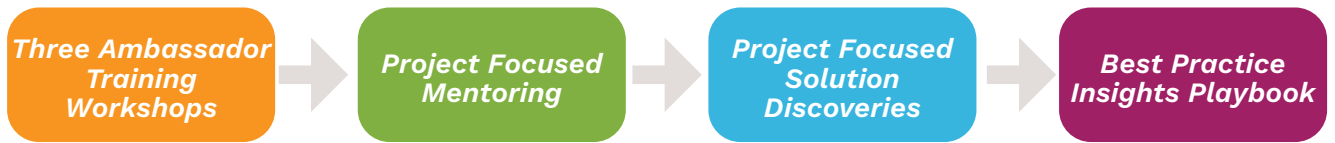
## Futurist Lens - Reimagine What's Possible

An important aspect of our methodology was to rethink and then imagine what's possible in the future. Part 6, Chapter 1, *Reimagination Required*, provides more details.

## Action Learning and Capacity Building

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, we used an approach called community focused action learning for deliverables: Ambassador training, project-focused mentoring, and solution discovery proposals by and with St. James Town members.

Action Learning involves small groups working on real problems, learning, and acting as individuals, a team and as an organization or community. This approach helps develop creative, flexible, and successful strategies to pressing problems and speeds up the design and discovery of actionable solutions.



- Skills and Capacity Building
- Strategy and Adaptation
- Outcomes: Certificate and Learning Badge, Defined Project and Best Practice Chapter

- Mentor - Mentee Match
- Project Teams/1:1
- Outcome: Work scope for development and implementation

- Virtual/ In-Person Facilitated
- Outcome: Project Communication & Activation Plans, Stakeholder Presentations

Scalable solutions and opportunities for advancing project goals and vision - by and with St. James Town stakeholders, etc.

We used this approach to shape the design, development, delivery, and integration of the different stages of the CCA - SJT initiative and to reimagine possible solutions for today and tomorrow.

# THE CCA JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY: MILESTONES

## Communication. Engagement. Collaboration. Capacity Building.

Each of these communication and capacity building milestones are described in more detail throughout the Playbook.



Image 5: The CCA-SJT Journey of Discovery passed several key milestones



## SUMMARY

Climate action at the community level is at an early point in development. This project has reinforced the importance of working with community members and anchoring outreach, communication, and training using an integrated, systems-level and asset-based approach that connects with the everyday essential needs of people who live and work in the community. As a project team, we learned much along the way. The influence of the residents of St. James Town cannot be overstated.

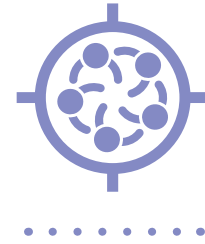
The CCA-SJT project also demonstrated that the participation of private building owners is critical. Without them, it will be difficult to achieve the scale, scope and speed of transformation required for building a more resilient, healthy, energy-efficient and accessible environment. Government incentives are also key. To reimagine how, our *Reimagination Required* chapter tells the story of a possible way forward.

Working with external players can enrich a community's knowledge and planning. Although every community is unique and any climate action approach must be tailored to the specific characteristics of the community, we trust that our St. James Town experience can add to the emerging body of knowledge and best practices to address climate impacts.

We welcome the opportunity to explore how the insights gleaned from this collaborative CCA-SJT project can apply in other areas of the city of Toronto and high-rise neighbourhoods in the rest of Canada.

On behalf of everyone who has touched this project through its development, thank you for joining us on this journey. All of us at RSI hope you enjoy the result – both this Playbook and the new projects that will be part of its future.

The climate change action journey will never end, it will only evolve.



*Working to envision the future of the community needs to include the residents and workers of these communities who are living these realities.*

**Malkeet Sandhu,  
David Suzuki Foundation**



## THE JOURNEY BEGINS

### CLIMATE CHANGE, ST. JAMES TOWN, AND URBAN HIGH-RISE COMMUNITIES

The indisputable evidence of climate change on residential communities across Canada is growing fast and dramatically. Climate change affects communities across the country. We focused on how it affects St. James Town (SJT) and what the community and those who work with people in the neighbourhood can do. Our hope is that what we learned may be applied elsewhere, to similar communities.

In Toronto, the weather is becoming “hotter, wetter and wilder”. This means higher maximum temperatures, more heat waves and less frequent but more severe rains. In a high-emission scenario, more than 60 days with over 30°C temperatures and around 1,000 millimetres of total rainfall are expected by 2050. More than half (52 per cent) of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions came from buildings, especially from residential ones, due to the energy required to heat and cool indoor spaces and water. While COVID-19 has led to GHG reductions due to less commuting and air travel and cutbacks in many industries, it is clear that this is temporary.

Across Canada, average temperatures have increased due to emissions released into the atmosphere, and consequently, precipitation has increased on average. Under a high-emission scenario (RCP8.5), it is expected that the annual average temperature will increase by 6°C, and total precipitation is projected to rise 24 percent by the end of the century. In southern Ontario, warmer winter temperatures might increase the probability of more freezing rain between December and February. Freshwater availability is changing in some southern areas of Canada and may lead to increased water shortages in summer. The Arctic and Atlantic Oceans have experienced more prolonged "sea-ice-free conditions" and increased coastal flooding from high tides is expected due to local sea-level rise.



*The climate emergency... leads to significant and interrelated economic and social impacts- energy shortages, damaged infrastructure, service disruptions, increasing losses to industries, heat-related mortality and illness, food insecurity and water scarcity.*



Our communities live in a changing world in which social and economic systems are evolving and technology is transforming everything. In order to adapt to the climate, it is time to rethink the way we live and become more sustainable. The severity of climate change impacts will depend on physical changes in the local climate, but also on the capability of people to take action in limiting their exposure and vulnerability and to strengthen their ability to adapt and recover from those changes.

This first chapter in the CCA-SJT Playbook seeks a deeper, clearer understanding of climate change, the risks it brings and why it's critical to take action for the future sustainability and resiliency of urban communities — especially high-rise, densely populated communities. It offers a strategic framework for dealing with climate change.

## Understanding Climate Change

Climate change is a long-term change in global or regional climate patterns, including average conditions and variances in temperature, precipitation, and wind patterns. These changes are linked with harmful weather events, including hurricanes, snowstorms, heat waves, severe droughts and rainfalls, and other dramatic impacts.<sup>[7]</sup>

Climate is not the same as weather. Weather is about temporary or short-term atmospheric conditions, while climate is an average of weather that describes the weather behaviour over an area and over long time periods (10 years or more).

The research is conclusive - human activities contribute directly or indirectly to climate change by generating GHG emissions. GHGs include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) accumulated in the atmosphere, absorbing infrared radiation, trapping heat and consequently producing global warming. Global warming increases the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events — it is one effect, but not the only one, of climate change. The climate is changing faster than in the previous century, provoking systemic adverse effects.

## Climate Change Facts

- 1 *Climate change is a global and dynamic issue*
- 2 *Human activities are responsible for global warming*
- 3 *Earth temperature is expected to rise more than 1.5°C thresholds by the end of this century if current GHG emission patterns continue, exacerbating the frequency and severity of natural disasters*
- 4 *Climate change affects most vulnerable communities and exacerbates inequality*
- 5 *Climate change affects our physical and mental health*
- 6 *Food security is at risk due to climate change*
- 7 *1.2 billion jobs depend directly on a healthy and sustainable environment*
- 8 *It may cost cities worldwide \$314 billion each year to recover from natural disasters*

The earth's average surface temperature was 1.09°C higher in 2011-2021 than it was between 1850 and 1900, and it will continue to rise due to the high concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, produced mainly by human activities.

Nine of the top ten warmest years on record for global temperature have been recorded in the last decade, with the top five warmest years all having occurred since 2015. The years 2016 and 2020 have been the warmest years on record, generating a cascade effect of melting ice sheets and glaciers, contributing to the rise of sea levels. Significant rainfalls lead to flooding that puts critical infrastructure services and systems at risk, and heat waves exceed the threshold for a healthy person to survive.

In high-rise communities such as St James Town, heat waves boost energy and water demand while at the same time they diminish the quality of life. Impacts include decreased labour productivity and the operability of systems, diminished residents' comfort levels and increased likelihood of heat emergencies that may lead to deaths. Toronto Public Health (TPH) has estimated that heat waves contribute to approximately 120 premature deaths each year, and that this rate may double by 2050. Hotter weather is also expanding the geographic range of insects that carry diseases, such as the ticks that can carry Lyme disease, which has spread to some wooded areas of Toronto. A warmer Lake Ontario may also allow new waterborne pathogens.

Heavy rainfalls and extreme cold can mean flooded basements and damage to property. Intense storms disrupt critical infrastructure services such as transportation, including electricity-dependent vehicles such as subways, streetcars and electric cars and trucks, as well as power systems. Storms that cause power outages also make it more difficult to distribute food and protect the safety of drinking water.

If these dire climate scenarios worsen, it is inevitable that the economy and social systems will deteriorate. Cities and communities will face a huge financial burden. Climate change is also a threat to mental health, when the worry about severe weather, property damage and the future of the next generation triggers stress-related disorders that may affect individuals and communities. Damage to the economy and our social systems can spread from one neighbourhood through cities and across the country. This is no exaggeration. For example, flooding could put the food supply system at risk, including dairy



*The climate is changing faster than in the previous century, provoking systemic adverse effects.*



processing, warehouses, food terminals, grocers, and markets along with the power systems, roads and rails that they rely on. This is why many jurisdictions, including Toronto, have declared climate emergencies — it can put at risk the entire well-being of communities.

### Climate Risk

Climate risk is the combination of climate hazard exposure, vulnerability to impact and adaptability of communities, environmental and economic systems, and physical infrastructure.

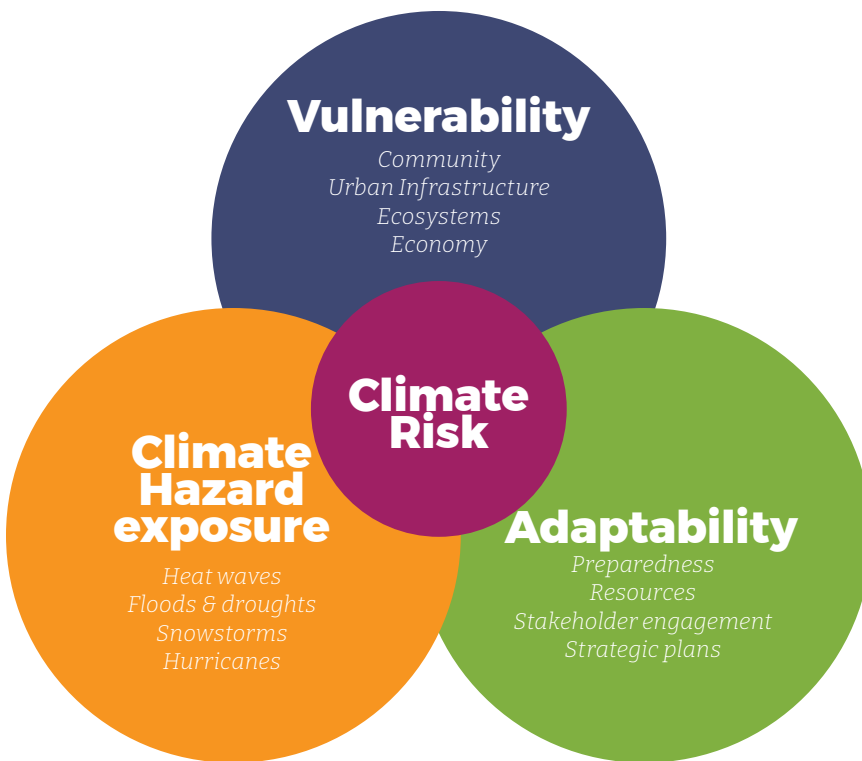
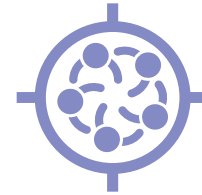


Image 6: Climate Risk Model



*The real problem is that even if you do have an economic development initiative in a community, for instance, in St. James Town, you can't plan for the future. It's similar in other communities.*

*It requires a complete restructuring of how we think about the relationship between economics and the idea of thinking and acting locally versus globally.*

**Cameron Murray,  
Social Anthropologist**





Climate change impacts everyone, everywhere, without exception. However, not all people will experience the effects equally. Some neighbourhoods are more climate vulnerable.

High-rise communities such as St. James Town are densely populated, surrounded by pavement and concrete, and often low-income, without extra funds or resources. In communities with a high population of newcomers, people may not have relatives to provide temporary shelter in an emergency. These factors contribute to increased climate vulnerability. Without an adaptation or mitigation strategy, the future sustainability of our communities is at peril.

## WHY IS CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION SO IMPORTANT?

Climate change has triggered adverse effects on every system within our communities, and it is happening more quickly than before.

It is a complex global issue. The uncertainties in predicting climate change — its timing, magnitude, and regional weather patterns — are causing shock to infrastructure and critical concerns for individuals and communities. With little evidence of changes in emissions and with some governments actively ignoring the signs, Non-governmental organizations and citizens have pressured governments to declare Climate Emergencies. This was the case for the City of Toronto in 2019 when the City declared a Climate Emergency after 15,000 people rallied in the downtown.

In this century, climate change will cause profound and long-lasting impacts on everyone's lives — socially, economically, and environmentally. Increased air pollution and heat waves have direct effects on illness and death. Climate change has caused more than 150,000 deaths worldwide each year, including premature deaths in Toronto. The deaths registered worldwide result from exposure to extreme weather, transmission of diseases due to changes in temperature or precipitation and malnutrition that results from limited resources to produce food. Deaths in Toronto related to climate change come primarily from heat waves and air pollution. The effects are more severe in communities with no protection and limited access to information about climate change and what can be done.



### **What are the three key pains that St. James Town residents experience from the combined effects of the pandemic and climate change?**

*The first one is income. St. James Town residents have modest incomes to begin with and in recent times everything has become more expensive. The neighbourhood's residents had to make hard decisions during the lockdown about what they can afford. Health is another pain point. People have less time and money to spend on healthy living and less access to healthcare. The third one is food security. People cut back on food quality, just trying to save money and survive.*

**Julia,  
St. James Town resident**



Climate change is not only related to physical health. It is also linked to "mental wellness, emotional resilience and psychological wellbeing." Extreme events are stressing communities, causing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression, among other effects. The COVID-19 pandemic has also put further stress on people's food security, health, and wellness.

Due to the aging infrastructure and structural damages caused by different hazards, high-rise residential communities will experience more challenges and impacts from climate change than many other communities. Energy demands to cool buildings are expected to triple by 2050 if the heat waves produced from global warming persist. There's also potential for disruption to and failure of electrical and water systems from heat and storms, something which happened in St James Town in 2019.

Maintenance costs will also rise if more damage occurs to the built infrastructure. As St. James Town buildings deteriorate, there is concern for the health and safety of its community, and climate change impacts can also increase social inequity, business and job disruption in the area, as well as loss of heritage and limits on recreational opportunities.



Image 7: St. James Town's density exacerbates the negative impacts of climate change



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**Given the age of the St. James Town's buildings and surrounding infrastructure, what are the top three climate impacts that should most concern the building owners, managers, investors and residents?**

*BUILDINGS — St. James Town's older buildings are in extremely poor shape. Over time there won't be demand among investors for climate-threatened buildings. Owners will be paying higher insurance premiums, they will have bigger capital expenditures associated with apartment repairs, and the value of their buildings will go down. Building owners will have reputational issues, revenue/valuation issues, and higher capital expenditure costs. Residents will suffer because windows aren't properly shielded, and no work has been done to provide air conditioning. Buildings lack resilience measures, which will cause more frequent extreme weather shutdowns. These climate change public health issues also affect remote worker productivity, and overall family quality of life.*

*WORK — Climate change will create opportunities for residents with local retrofit, green jobs and transition programs in design, construction, engagement and training. For building owners, the employment cost for regulatory compliance and environmental, social and governance (ESG) will continue to increase. FOOD — Because of climate change, in St. James Town and Toronto at large food prices have already gone up and they'll keep going up. People need support from food security and urban agriculture programs.*

**Kirk Johnson,**  
Agile Program Design & Delivery

*In high-rise communities, climate change creates unique challenges as extreme events can cause impacts on a greater number of people than in many other locations around the country. Extreme heat, precipitation, wind and snow can cause impacts to all aspects of daily life that cause residents to seek alternative shelter within the community. Focusing on community resilience through initiatives focused on adaptation to climate change, moving to greener energy sources and improving the owner-tenant relationships are pivotal for communities such as St. James Town.*

**Norman Shippee PhD,**  
Senior Climate Scientist

*For owners and investors, the greatest impacts are economic and operational — higher costs for energy, water, waste, maintenance, security and resilience. There's also going to be the requirement for public disclosure of carbon emissions and carbon penalties.*

*There's also the diminishing value of their buildings compared with competing assets that are more cost efficient, and pressure on property managers, who must keep buildings operational and liveable.*

*Residents face increasing day-to-day physical and mental health challenges from climate change. Tension has been sharpened by the pandemic and there are socio-economic issues in this dense, highly urbanized community.*

*Residents also face potential emergencies, such as the having to evacuate buildings that become uninhabitable, along with physical and mental health issues associated with discomfort from extreme temperatures and social isolation.*

**Jiri Skopek,**  
Architect, Planner for Smart Green Buildings  
and Sustainable Communities

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## Climate Risks for Densely Populated Urban Communities

Climate action is inspired by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These 17 goals seek to diminish the factors contributing to the intensification of climate change and look to strengthen resilience to face the impacts through concrete plans and strategies that involve common efforts at all levels.

Climate action must be developed with a holistic approach. While the effects vary locally, it is a global issue; mitigation, and adaptation will require international, national, city and community collaboration.



Community leaders must see climate change as a tipping point — to redesign and rebuild green and to transform the community toward sustainability and wellness. Community climate actions should consider the community’s capacity to address daily priorities and needs and link them to climate change. It’s a full circle.

**Addressing Climate Change Action:  
Where should we begin?**



Image 8: The CCA-SJT Stakeholder Engagement Model

The strategic framework for climate change action follows a concrete and long-term vision that inspires the entire community. This framework focuses on people and identifies core objectives that will benefit them. It can be linked with the city's climate initiatives. The vision and goals also relate to the local context and address the community’s priorities to improve daily living conditions and stimulate the ownership of



**Will taking action  
make infrastructure/  
community better or  
safer now, or will it  
only make a difference  
to future generations?**

*The investments that we make in climate action now on the built environment are for future generations, but positive change must start now. The impacts of climate change are coming in a lot faster and a lot more severe than anyone expected.*

**Nigel Etherington,  
Principal Founder,  
Planet & Company**

*Building owners, and investors make far more money over time by investing in these remedial measures up front, than they would if they have to keep on just responding and reacting. The community is enabled and supported when essential services are reliable, helping each individual in the community.*

**Alexander (Alec) Hay, PhD,  
Risk, Resiliency  
and Security Advisor**



responses to climate change. It is crucial to deal with specific urban vulnerabilities such as poverty, health, diversity, socio-economic inequalities, available resources, and services within the community; and finally, to factor in the uncertainty caused by climate change.

Robust stakeholder engagement is necessary. Community leaders, building owners, academics, scientists, policymakers, and experts must collaborate to identify social, environmental, and economic vulnerabilities, risks, costs, and opportunities for different climate scenarios. These actions must involve technical considerations to allocate resources wisely and strengthen the community's resilience. Measures should include continuous education and a community network to support residents in improving their quality of life.

Community climate actions must be built in a way to monitor and evaluate their impact and benefits to track adaptation. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will inform leaders about the progress and success of the actions, and key risk indicators (KRIs) will make leaders aware and alert the community, and experts about potential natural threats. This approach will increase the sense of ownership and the community's resilience capacity to face and deal with the climate risk successfully.



Image 9: Article 26 mural in St. James Town



### How do you envision St. James Town in the next 10 years?

*I want to see the neighbourhood getting everything that other places around us get, just like Cabbagetown and Rosedale.*

*I'm talking about basics here – proper garbage separation, organics collection and so on.*

*St. James Town can be an innovation sandbox. Being geographically small, with so many different cultures and demographics, it's a great place to have innovative pilots for environmental and other programs, with the help of amazing, skilled and diverse people in the neighbourhood.*

**Julia,  
St. James Town resident**





**What are the incentives for building owners, managers, investors, and residents to take action?**

*Health impacts and mortality are going to be one indicator. Secondly, the rehabilitation costs when we have extreme weather. Remedial costs are going to go up and they're going to continue to rise. The third incentive will be a shift in liability. It's going to become increasingly difficult to justify ignoring foreseeable risks. If we know what the impact is going to be and we choose to do nothing about it, I'm not sure there are going to be many insurers who are willing to underwrite our liability. And I think there will also be civil action in the courts.*

**Alexander (Alec) Hay, PhD,  
Risk, Resiliency and Security  
Advisor**

*For building owners, the incentives are to achieve savings and return on investment (ROI) and to protect the value of their assets – for example, energy management; energy efficiency controls; efficiency of the building envelope; water efficiency management and features; and optimized labour and operations costs.*

*Property managers have two incentives: to achieve operational efficiency and savings for the building owners and investors and to ensure that the buildings have a safe, secure and healthy environment.*

*For Residents, the incentives are to improve quality of life by establishing strong social cohesiveness with community projects; lobbying local governments to increase access to green spaces and lobbying the building owners to strengthen the resilience of the building in extreme weather.*

**Simone Skopek,  
Energy and Sustainability Writer**







PART 2

## THE COMMUNITY

CHAPTER 1.

ST. JAMES TOWN AND THE TOOLS REQUIRED  
FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

CHAPTER 2.

WIDENING THE LENS, INSIDE AND  
OUTSIDE ST. JAMES TOWN



## ST. JAMES TOWN AND THE TOOLS REQUIRED FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

THE CCA-SJT PROJECT RELIED HEAVILY ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE OF ST. JAMES TOWN MEMBERS, AS WELL AS THEIR KEEN DESIRE FOR CHANGE

**T** rue engagement occurs through collaboration. Systemic change will only take place when there is ownership and partnership on all levels. Too often, plans for tackling climate change crises come from the top-down, imposed on individuals and communities who provide little input. We tend to privilege those with perceived power and expertise over the needs, challenges, and experiences of the public.

Through this project we hope to reimagine the relationship between expertise and lived experience, as recommended by the Joseph Roundtree Foundation's 2014 Report, *Climate Change and Social Justice: An Evidence Review*.

"At present climate change policy and policy seeking to tackle social vulnerability, poverty and disadvantage are largely developed and conducted separately... Changes to both governance and the policy design process are needed so that those most impacted by climate change and climate change policy have a greater influence in decision-making. This will require new procedures and tools for engaging communities and capturing their voices in more collaborative planning processes."

Meeting climate change head on requires a richer, sometimes messier, model of community collaboration that takes seriously the unique assets of everyone. Therefore, through collaboration, this project can begin to lay the groundwork for systemic change.

Weaving the threads of a community's social fabric is vital to creating opportunities for novel and meaningful initiatives and actions. Think about how much intentional, focused care is taken to compose a tapestry that is as useful as it is beautiful.



*When it comes to climate change, transience is a big issue in St. James Town... management and the municipality need to collaborate with us if long term change is going to happen.*

**Vicky,  
St. James Town resident**



The people, physical resources, and intangible assets of a community are all threads that need to be weaved together. Doing this will form a durable social fabric that begins to create a new culture of advocacy and empowerment in a community.

There are three community-building tools that help create a culture of cohesion and change. These tools working together are powerful agents of community engagement that can lay the foundation for future success in various initiatives:

### 1. Terminology

This project seeks to provide shared terminology that creates a shared narrative. When the same words are used to refer to the same things and equivocation is reduced as much as possible, collaboration can begin to succeed. As this happens, a shared narrative can catalyze the weaving of the social fabric as it pertains to climate change.

### 2. Purpose

Shared terminology and a shared narrative are vital for a shared purpose because clear communication will dispense of assumptions. Only then can shared purpose be made explicit. Building something together with the same purpose is often the starting point in which a community can become a breeding ground for change.

### 3. Celebration

This project aims to champion and empower those in the community who desire systemic change. One of the easiest and best ways to do this is by celebrating them and supporting them by coming alongside their efforts. It is important to respect the experts and academics who provide research, but it is just as important to celebrate the many small wins achieved by ordinary people working together. People in the community are the agents of change as their action becomes the change. Margaret Mead, a cultural anthropologist, declares, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

## FROM DEFICIT-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Communities thrive when we can recognize and utilize strengths, passions, and skills. Traditionally, a deficit-based approach has been used which highlights a community's lack and need. In a sense, deficit-based looks at the community as a glass being half empty. This approach focuses on a community's or individual's deficits and draws in external resources to fix them. In doing so, this approach perpetuates ideas that marginalized communities have something wrong with them. This can marginalize communities even more, making them more dependent on outsiders. Focusing on a community's assets serves to challenge these dominant narratives and further integrates marginalized communities into a vibrant part of society.

Therefore, rather than focusing our efforts on merely filling in gaps, asset-based highlights a community's assets, skills, passions, and talents to collaborate with and empower individuals, agencies, and organizations in creating solutions and affecting systemic change. In a sense, asset-based views the community's glass as half full. It looks at the community as having the means to solve their social issues. This approach seeks to empower decision-making and solution ideation among community members based on their strengths which focuses on creating opportunities to solve social issues.

Even though a holistic deficit-based approach rarely produces systemic change in a community in and of itself, that does not mean that deficit-based and its activities are obsolete and always detrimental. When asset-based becomes the framework for change in a community, deficit-based activities can be utilized beneficially to serve the immediate needs of a community while simultaneously creating potential for long-term change.

For our specific purposes, a further link between climate change and social justice is that economically-deprived neighbourhoods are at a greater risk of being detrimentally affected by climate change and its associated policies. Unfortunately, lower income groups are often neglected when it comes to participation in decision-making.

*As with all emergencies - global or local - it is the marginalized populations that carry the majority of the repercussions. This is especially true for climate change impacts on society. A simple example is the rising cost of energy along with climate change's impact on warming summers that dramatically scorches densely populated high-rise apartments. Residents of low-income neighbourhoods such as St. James Town must decide between expensive air-conditioners and electricity bills or saving money against rising grocery costs. These are ongoing tensions to decide between paying for expensive cooling from the sweltering heat indoors, paying for rising food costs, or paying for other daily necessities. All existing global problems, such as food insecurity/warming/rising cost, are simply exacerbated for neighbourhoods such as ours.*

**Isaiah,  
St. James Town resident**



So although economically-deprived neighbourhoods are disproportionately affected by climate change and its policies, they are also disproportionately neglected by climate change and its opportunities.

An asset-based approach allows for the space to rectify this negligence. As a result, ownership, collaboration, consensus, invitation, and empowerment of local residents in partnership with experts and officials is vital for creating procedures that support social justice. The key to change is education and equipping which the asset-based approach champions.

Here are three key shifts that are necessary to move from an approach that is deficit-based to one that is asset-based.

### From What's Wrong to What's Strong

Deficit-based focuses on community need. This focus may seem like a good starting point, but it often leads to a perceived lack that further hinders sustainability in a community. The focus on deficits can perpetuate a fixing-mentality that creates a cycle of merely filling in gaps. Unfortunately, grants and funds that desire immediate gratification and easy-to-see results bolster this mentality. At times, quick fixes are needed. But they are often solely celebrated and championed, rather than the diligent efforts of creating long-term solutions that could lead to systemic change.

The goal is to weave a social fabric that builds a sustainable community, then it is a necessity to move from the question about what is wrong in the community to what is strong. This shift lays the groundwork for all parties involved to begin to recognize their assets. The process begins with the community members and stakeholders who desire to help. It is essential that they know what they can give. A firm assessment on how they can utilize their gifts, talents, jobs, skills, and passions will be vital to building a relationship built on transparency and trust. A well-rounded asset-based approach, makes use of the community developer as a facilitator who helps people identify and highlight these assets for the edification of the entire community. When people know what they have, they can learn what to do and the next shift can take place.



*It is much harder to make an eco-friendly choice in communities like St. James Town. We don't have as many options available to us. Choices that are normally simple and accessible, like recycling, are choices that require extra effort and sacrifice for residents. Newer apartment buildings in the city have recycling built into their chutes, while our older buildings do not.*

**Chelsea,  
St. James Town resident**





## From Working in the Community To Working with the Community —

A deficit-based approach often engages a community through a project-based lens that is working *for* the community. In order for an asset-based approach to take place, it is necessary to shift engagement to working *with* the community. This shift is so important because it creates space for collaboration from the very beginning.

With a deficit-based approach, technical experts can provide short-term results that appear beneficial for a time. But through asset-based, the expertise of the community can pair with the expertise from outside of the community in a way that creates the foundation for systemic change and long-lasting results. When all involved come to the table in a spirit of collaboration, creative ideas can emerge leading to a sense of ownership and responsibility that can ensure genuine impact. The result is a community with both stronger internal and external connections based upon mutual credibility and humility that allows each party to learn from the other.

This simple prepositional shift lays the groundwork for an intentional path of action rather than a reactive mode of service. Instead of recognizing issues after they become problems, it is possible to get ahead of the curve and preemptively collaborate for shared vision and innovation. When this occurs, the third key shift becomes a natural overflow of engagement.

## From Programs to People —

Both deficit-based and asset-based are concerned with people. However, it is easier to lose focus on people when engagement is to or for someone rather than with someone. Collaboration is key and since programs are often the result of a deficit-based approach, people can be neglected along the way. The shift from programs to people does not mean that programs are obsolete or ineffective or detrimental. It simply means prioritizing people over programs and creating healthier metrics along the way.

This shift is more difficult than it may appear at first glance because most funding, most awards, most agencies, and most goals are centred around programs, numerical metrics, and immediate tangible results. Asset-based is a long-term

investment in a community. It intricately weaves a social fabric whose results are best seen over time as it contributes to the tapestry of the city. Therefore, it is essential to discard the saving mentality that can be encouraged through a deficit-based approach and to embody a serving mentality that is indicative of an asset-based approach. In doing so, humility, respect, transparency, and honour can lead the way.

Each of these key shifts that facilitate the transition from deficit-based towards asset-based is founded upon empowerment. Rather than merely filling in gaps or simply supplying a need or just achieving immediate results, asset-based opens the possibilities for a community to discover who they are and what they can do to alter the trajectory of their community’s future and influence the city as a whole.



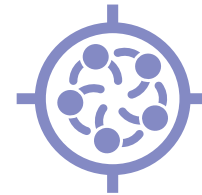
Image 10: **Moving from Deficit-Based Community Development to Asset-Based Community Development**  
Based on Cormac Russell Nurture Development

## The Impact of Domain Engagement

Society is composed of individuals and groups of people who live, work and play across and between private and public domains, areas for themselves and areas shared with others. These public and private domains organize how people interact and collaborate. Those working and living within these domains meet the basic needs of society and keep it functioning.

Domains form the grid of society where work not only takes place, but also life pursuits and passions. Impacting society for the common good can become clearer and more beneficial once the domains a community operates in are identified through jobs, skills, talents, and hobbies. The domains of society include, but are not limited to, health, education, governance, science/technology, communication, agriculture, economics, and social work. Each of these domains has subdomains that further serve to organize and classify the assets of a community.

The domains of society become crucial in the transformation of a city. Those who assume leadership in these spheres of influence have the potential to completely reshape their community and their city by reshaping its values, priorities, and practices. They represent the fabric of society and allow for collaboration and diversity to flourish. Asset-based community development paired with domain engagement nurtures a space for a new social fabric to be created for the common good.



*A community is healthy when relationships are felt deeply, when there are histories of trust, a shared sense of mutual belonging, norms of mutual commitment, habits of mutual assistance, and real affection from one heart and soul to another.*

**David Brooks,**  
New York Times columnist





Image 11: A domain map used by The New Common to engage in St. James Town. It is just one example of a domain map that can be used to enable asset-based and community collaboration

## Values

Community health and social service organizations have long called for "values-based" models of care and service delivery. Though admirable, many organizations fail to appreciate the time it takes to build meaningful relationships shaped by values rather than transactions of money and resources.

St. James Town presents unique challenges, given its density and cultural, political, and economic diversity. As a result, there is no one set of values in St. James Town, and values shaping experiences today are ever evolving. This requires a flexible model of partnership and service delivery that embraces uncertainty at every level.

Social and cultural anthropologists have long recognized the complex relationship between engagement, empowerment, and empathy when it comes to building healthy, robust communities. Political leaders, business leaders, and social service organizations can only truly engage and empower the public if they are transparent about their own goals, challenges, and desires.

In the context of climate change, this is incredibly difficult. There is no shortage of ulterior motives shaping why, how, and under what circumstances particular policies or community initiatives are put forward. Those in power often pay lip service for wanting to have greater empathy for the people they serve. But what would happen if governments, corporations, and service organizations were more transparent about their own anxieties, challenges and vulnerabilities? What does community collaboration look like when residents are invited to feel genuine empathy for governments, businesses, and service organizations?

With the following values, it is our hope that collaboration can thrive in a community:

### Relationship

Relationships help define people. It is through relationships that people discover their identity so they can learn and grow. Therefore, relationships are central to change. A community should be a place for people to form, strengthen, and repair relationships.

### Diversity

A community should be a place where diversity is celebrated. Communities benefit from diversity. True diversity is more than the superficial. Diversity in stories, experiences, skills, and knowledge as well as diversity in ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomics make a community flourish. Integrating these elements into community development approaches will promote ownership and increase the chances for long-lasting change.



*The 650-fire helped me understand the reality of my community and I realized that environ-mental issues touch everything. I realized that if there was community support, I wouldn't be in the situation I was in.*

**Selvajayan,  
St. James Town resident**



## Creativity

People are creative beings. Whether people are artists, lawyers, carpenters, teachers, or one of the numerous other professions, they are all involved in the process of creating something. A community should be a place where people can use their imagination and creativity to have a positive impact.

## Empowerment

Empowerment happens when people have a choice and when they are invited into the decision-making process. A community should be a place where people can choose how they want to be involved to benefit others through using or developing skills, talents, and passions. It should also be a learning environment where people benefit from the experience of others.

## An Ethnographic Overview of St. James Town

St. James Town is dense in both people and high-rise buildings. Over 20,000 residents live, work, and play in this incredibly small neighbourhood. It is a population that spans every age, cultural and religious background, and level of socioeconomic privilege. It is also a population with a notable lack of access to green spaces, whether publicly available or integrated into private properties. Combined, these factors generate several unique challenges for those dedicated to healthcare, social welfare, newcomer integration, and environmental action.

Recent ethnographic research has highlighted that community health and social service organizations, and the residents they serve in St. James Town, are fully embracing the challenges brought by this density and diversity. Residents, staff, and volunteers are committing themselves to the messiness of serving such a richly diverse community. They lean into the complexity of shifting needs and experiences, and appreciate the elusiveness of perfection. Imperfection is baked into the models of service delivery that drive St. James Town and are especially critical to organizations hoping to help the community better engage with local climate change initiatives.

St. James Town has been shaped by a humble appreciation that urban life exists on unstable foundations. With an ever-changing population, the neighbourhood is unsurprised by the constant need for adaptation—a quality that will serve the community well. More than anything, this is a neighbourhood that provides



*Due to low socio-economic instability to obtain affordable nutritious food, coupled with poor building conditions, there are a variety of health issues among St. James Town residents. And an asset-based approach can help address some of these issues.*

**Jennifer Bugera,  
Primary Healthcare Worker  
experience with St. James  
Town residents**



a world-class example of what happens when we stop building communities from the top-down and when we stop privileging expertise over residents' actual experiences.

## Brief History of St. James Town

St. James Town developed an identity of its own during the 19th century. Back then, St. James Town was on the outskirts of Toronto's city limits. It was a semi-suburban neighbourhood made up most prominently of a population of white, middle-class families of European descent. They lived in Victorian-style detached family homes, and were able to access all food, service, and entertainment requirements in St. James Town or adjacent neighbourhoods, especially Cabbagetown.

By the mid-20th century, Toronto's continued growth upward and outward led to a movement to demolish St. James Town's single-family homes in favour of a dense array of high-rise towers. Inspired by the work of Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier, particularly his "towers in the park" style, the buildings were initially populated by a similar array of white, middle, and professional class families. As the 20th century rolled on, Toronto, and Canada as a whole, increased its embrace of immigrants, refugees, and newcomers of all kinds. St. James Town became an ideal location for people to settle. The area saw a relatively rapid and impressive growth in cultural, social, political, and socio-economic diversity, a trend that continues.

At the same time, those high-rise buildings began to fall into disrepair, and many have become embedded in Toronto's community housing initiatives. As the neighbourhood became more culturally diverse, it also became much more challenging, as language and cultural barriers rubbed up against problems of poverty, social isolation, homelessness, crime, and addiction.

This was not *because* a more diverse population moved to the neighbourhood. Instead, systemic racism and neglect exacerbated the challenges of a growing and increasingly complex neighbourhood. All this masks the fact that the people of St. James Town are just as easily described as creative, passionate, ambitious, and resilient. They want to change the narrative for themselves, for their neighbours and for the community at large, and they want to be empowered to become agents of change in the climate crisis at local and global scales.

## Community

In St. James Town, organizations are learning to better articulate not just their values but their vulnerabilities. This allows them to be earnest and direct in articulating the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual challenges they want to overcome. Asset-based is not a one size fits all approach. It is best utilized as a lens within a spectrum of engagement methods that can include doing things to, with, for, and by a community. Here are three St. James Town organizations that are moving forward with an asset-based focus:

### St. James Town Service Providers Network (SJTSPN)

The SJTSPN is a network of 35+ agencies whose goal is to work collaboratively for community engagement and integrated service coordination. Their vision and mission centre around empowerment and inclusion to create a space for equitable social and economic development initiatives. The SJTSPN hosts a Leadership Forum, organizes the St. James Town Festival, and hosts an annual event designed to promote community collaboration.



Increasingly, the SJTSPN is embracing a partnership model that recognizes no difference between residents, service providers, or service organizations. At every level, partnership is a long-term process, where collaboration comes out of a shared sense of mutual values, vulnerabilities and accountabilities that are constantly evolving.

### The St. James Town Community Corner (The Corner)

In many ways, The Corner is the cornerstone of the St. James Town community. In 2011, The Corner at 200 Wellesley opened their doors as a collaboration space. They bring together a unique mix of residents, service providers, and public and private funders who are committed to improving access for St. James Town residents to strengthen the social fabric of the neighbourhood. The Corner is service provider supported, but the volunteer residents are the heart and soul of The Corner's grassroots efforts.



The Corner's success has laid the foundation for many new initiatives. One of these is The Corner's own new initiative—The Corner@240. Like The Corner@200, this is a small, shared space at the bottom of a community housing high-rise. The Corner@240 is an extension of The Corner's overarching model

of community building. It represents a unique bridge to the future where global health and environment challenges are met at the local level. Individuals are empowered to see skills in action as part of a global fight for a sustainable future.

The Corner@240 is a catalyst for environmental sustainability at the local level through its Library of Tools and Things, where people can borrow what they need to repair and reuse materials and objects. The Corner@240 also holds repair workshops for everything from clothes and toasters to bicycles and computers, and a range of other grassroots programs. It is a catalyst for another kind of sustainability.

The Corner@240's programs are designed to make everyone, regardless of where they are from, or their income and professional status, feel part of the solution. It brings people together in unexpected collaborations. It reinforces the unique ways in which St. James Town has come together as a community by allowing people who might not otherwise meet, to work together on mutually beneficial projects. It has also created jobs, thus changing the economy of the community.

### The New Common

The New Common opened its doors in 2018. It is a community space that was borne out of years of asset-based focused engagement in St. James Town. The New Common was started by a group of volunteers from outside of St. James Town in partnership with residents and the consultation of service providers within St. James Town. It is a uniquely equipped space to benefit the community and provide relief to agencies and organizations who struggle with resources. Each time The New Common is used, collaboration and partnership ensue because it is a prerequisite for using the space. In fact, the name was chosen to best communicate what the space was designed for—people working together for the common good of everyone in the community.

The New Common is noteworthy because its vision is to empower other individuals and organizations in their mission, rather than focus on its own mission. Many service providers have been working diligently for years and struggle with a lack of volunteer resources, financial resources, and creative resources. The New Common is positioned to help in each of these ways. Rather than follow a separate agenda, it empowers them to persevere in their own community development efforts.



Image 12: **St. James Town**  
**Phoenix Mural located**  
**on the Community Corner's building**



As a result, The New Common has partnered with community arts organizations, food security initiatives, filmmaking organizations, religious organizations, entrepreneurial efforts, employment agencies, health services, local businesses, grassroots organizations, and many more.

For this project, The New Common's efforts in sustainability have created a partnership for community climate action with RSI. The New Common has been a gateway for this project to the St. James Town community and organizations like The Corner and the SJTSPN that represent the beauty of "A World Within a Block." A sustainable future is bright for St. James Town and through this project other high-rise communities will benefit as well.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1** *Community building needs to include culture building by celebrating positive impact through shared terminology and purpose.*
- 2** *Moving from deficit-based community development to asset-based community development is vital for long term systemic change.*
- 3** *Domain engagement cultivates collaboration through using the grid of society to empower societal transformation.*
- 4** *St. James Town is a community that has assets, values, and agencies to combat climate change if its leaders, owners, stakeholders, and residents are all involved.*

## WIDENING THE LENS, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE ST. JAMES TOWN

### BUILDING THE FOUNDATION TO MOBILIZE COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION

From the outset, the project team realized that our journey needed to be different than those that had come before us. Several people in the SJT neighbourhood had told us that their previous experience with outsiders who'd introduced projects had not always been positive. Many community members perceived the outsiders as people telling them what to do without asking them, studying them, and then leaving without providing any value to the community.

We also heard that there were other priorities in St. James Town that might take precedence over climate change awareness and engagement – basic needs such as newcomer settlement, food security, adequately maintained shelter, and employment.

The challenge for us was, therefore, to consider this history and these circumstances while putting together a climate action strategy and program with the community.

We had to start out on the right footing or this journey was not going to be successful. So, we began conversations with many of St. James Town's respected leaders, including staff and volunteers of St. James Town Community Corner, and the Corner@240 (a tool lending library and bicycle repair facility), the St. James Town Community Cooperative (with a focus on food for the neighbourhood), The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO-Toronto), as well as several residents and their friends.

Our Community Climate Action project partner, The New Common, a community space available to a wide range of programs, introduced us to youth, adults, and seniors in the St. James Town Community.

Our conversations revealed several strengths, as well as relevant essential needs and everyday challenges experienced by the community that our project would have to address.



*The challenge for us was, therefore, to consider this history and these circumstances while putting together a climate action strategy and program with the community.*



## COVID-19 Changed Everything

The arrival of the pandemic in March 2020 caused further hardships to people's lives, especially to those most vulnerable.

We found that broaching climate change and community action was virtually impossible unless it directly connected with solving peoples' immediate everyday needs. We therefore put essential needs at the centre of climate change and community action, including food security, shelter, inclusion, and jobs.

When we presented our proposed strategy and rationale to Environment and Climate Change Canada, they agreed. Given that the impacts of COVID-19 were ubiquitous and extreme, this direction made sense. It also provided a more tangible and relevant language and context for understanding the connections between climate change and everyday living and survival – now and in the future.

As the project developed, we also learned that St. James Town is no stranger to the effects of climate change. Our survey, summarized below, indicated a broad understanding and high awareness of climate change.

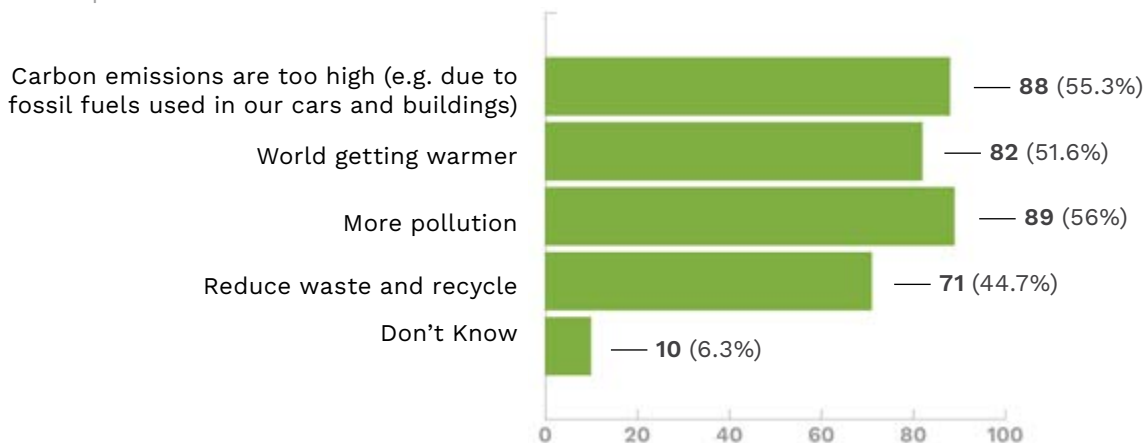
St. James Town has a high proportion of people with university degrees and a disproportionately high number of occupants affected by the negative impacts of climate change — heat waves, rising food prices, and electricity costs.

### Survey Summary

The following charts reflect the responses of St. James Town residents to CCA-SJT survey. The interviews were conducted primarily in September 2021.

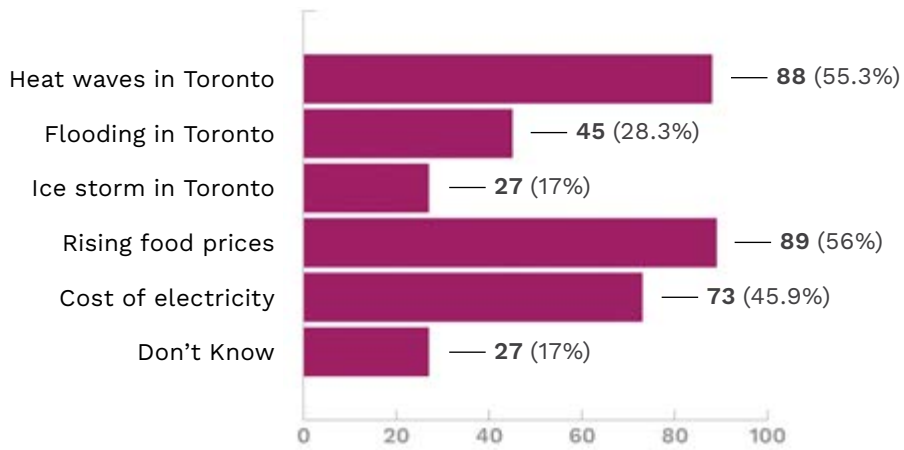
#### What comes to your mind first when you think about climate change? Check One.

159 responses



**In what ways do you think St. James Town has been affected by climate change?  
Check all that apply.**

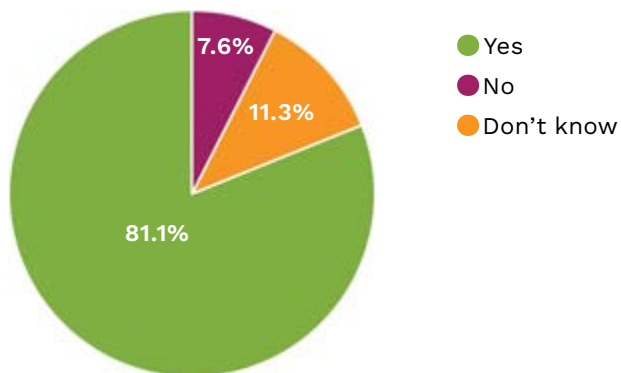
159 responses



This chart shows the extent of desire in SJT to address climate change issues

**Would you like to help CCA identify actions that help to address the impacts of climate change on residents' health, safety, and well-being? Check one.**

159 responses



## Widening the Lens

By early summer of 2021, we began to see how RSI's external network could be brought in to advance the capacity of the broader community. We called it *Widening the Lens* to engage volunteer experts and to ensure the integration of mentors to further thinking around climate actions.

### A Wider Perspective, also Demanded a Futurist Lens and Systems Approach

We identified, engaged and tapped into the collective climate action wisdom of a diversity of existing and potential internal and external St. James Town community stakeholders – including municipal and private organizations, energy, building, urban planners, climate scientists and futurists.

## A Key Stakeholder Gap

With the exception of city-owned social housing group, Toronto Community Housing Corporation or TCHC, we were unable to engage a key stakeholder group — private building owners and managers — in the dialogue around the impact of climate on high-rise buildings.

We heard about and encountered hostility between building owners and tenants. The 19 residential high-rise buildings (14 to 32 stories) in St. James Town were built in the 1960s. The buildings in question are in a poor state of repair and regular emergencies are caused by power failures, flooding, and fires, putting residents in jeopardy. These unfortunate events further stressed members of the community and interrupted peoples' lives. This in turn exacerbated the divisiveness between owners and residents to the point where a productive dialogue seems almost impossible with the owners.

### Bridging the Gap

To start on this part of the journey, we invited several forward thinking building and energy thought leaders with insights into climate resiliency in the built environment of St. James Town and other urban multi-residential communities to participate in our two building workshops. This was an important segment of our work.

These participants included the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), and its climate readiness actions, BOMA Canada, and Jones Lang LaSalle Real Estate Services (JLL). We engaged them to show the possibilities and examples of what may be achieved. We also included Dr. Kevin Smith, Technical University of Denmark to talk about energy efficient buildings and communities that could inspire Canadians and others.

### Capacity Building and Collaboration From Inside St. James Town

Capacity building began with a focused assessment of core needs, strengths, and priorities of the St. James Town community. This information was fundamental to the design of community climate action centered programs and activities.

This is the basic premise for Asset-Based Community Development that we discuss in this Playbook. It is seeing the community for the positives – the greatest of which is the people and their skills, knowledge, experience, and energy that they bring to their day-to-day interactions and community service.

We were fortunate to be able to recruit 21 highly talented and community-involved individuals to our Climate Ambassador training program. Along with others, many of the Ambassador graduates also participated in RSI’s solution-focused mentoring workshops. They brought energy, experience, and eagerness to learn to the process, which ultimately resulted in the three solution project concepts. Each concept was developed with both futurist and systems-design approaches to address specific essential needs of the community. These proposals are in Part 3, Chapter 5, *Training + Mentoring = Community Innovation*.

This widening the lens approach provided a more integrated, objective, inclusive and system-wide perspective on our goal: fostering climate action at a community level. It also formed bridges between St. James Town and trusted experts and organizations who are stepping up to climate change action.



Image 13: An image of buildings in St. James Town



*The climate action education included Ambassador Training Program for 21 St. James Town community members, in June and July 2021, followed by individual and group mentoring for their roles with the community to ensure that our approach would be with and by the community – not to them or for them.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Lessons learned for St. James Town and other Urban Communities

- 1** *Identify and meet with key community members, from start to finish - engage those who already are acting and want to collaborate on the shared mission.*
- 2** *Widen the Lens. Discover what others are doing to address climate and other disruptions in the context of Community Climate Action and resiliency.*
- 3** *Connect the dots with other related large scale change drivers - social, technological, economic, environmental, and political - impacting communities too.*
- 4** *Narrow the Focus – After widening the lens to see the big picture, make it real. Assess how to optimize this broader understanding to tailor a Community Climate Action plan, education, and solutions.*



PART 3

## INSPIRING ACTION - THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

CHAPTER 1.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 2.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

CHAPTER 3.

FROM STAKEHOLDERS TO CLIMATE  
CHANGE ACTION AMBASSADORS

CHAPTER 4.

THE INSPIRATIONAL ROLE OF MENTORS

CHAPTER 5.

TRAINING + MENTORING =  
COMMUNITY INNOVATION

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### FINDING THE PATHWAY: CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION SUCCESS REQUIRES A VISION AND METHODOLOGY THAT REFLECTS THE REALITIES OF COMMUNITY

There are two primary drivers of potential climate change action in St. James Town — and other multi-residential high rise urban communities. Those drivers are the people who live in them and the built environment itself. The latter, of course, is also driven by people — the building owners and operators of the urban infrastructure.

This Part 3 of the CCA-SJT Playbook focuses on how we identified and engaged stakeholders from both inside and outside St. James Town and the methods the project team used to build the capacity of those within the community. Part 4 focuses on the built environment and the people who influence its design, development, repair and operational management.

For our engagement with the people who live in SJT, it has been a journey of discovery at most points of contact. The process became much more dynamic than we expected — as community stakeholders first challenged our assumptions and then embraced the climate action training and tools we offered.

To mobilize climate action that built on the strengths, motivations and talents of the community while addressing its everyday essential needs, we designed and implemented a series of action learning programs and activities. They centered around two learning methods, each described in this section of the Playbook.

- Capacity Building Powered by Climate Ambassador Training
- Capacity Building Powered by Mentoring for Individuals and Teams





## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD CAPACITY TO ACT AT THE GRASSROOTS IN URBAN HIGH-RISE COMMUNITIES?

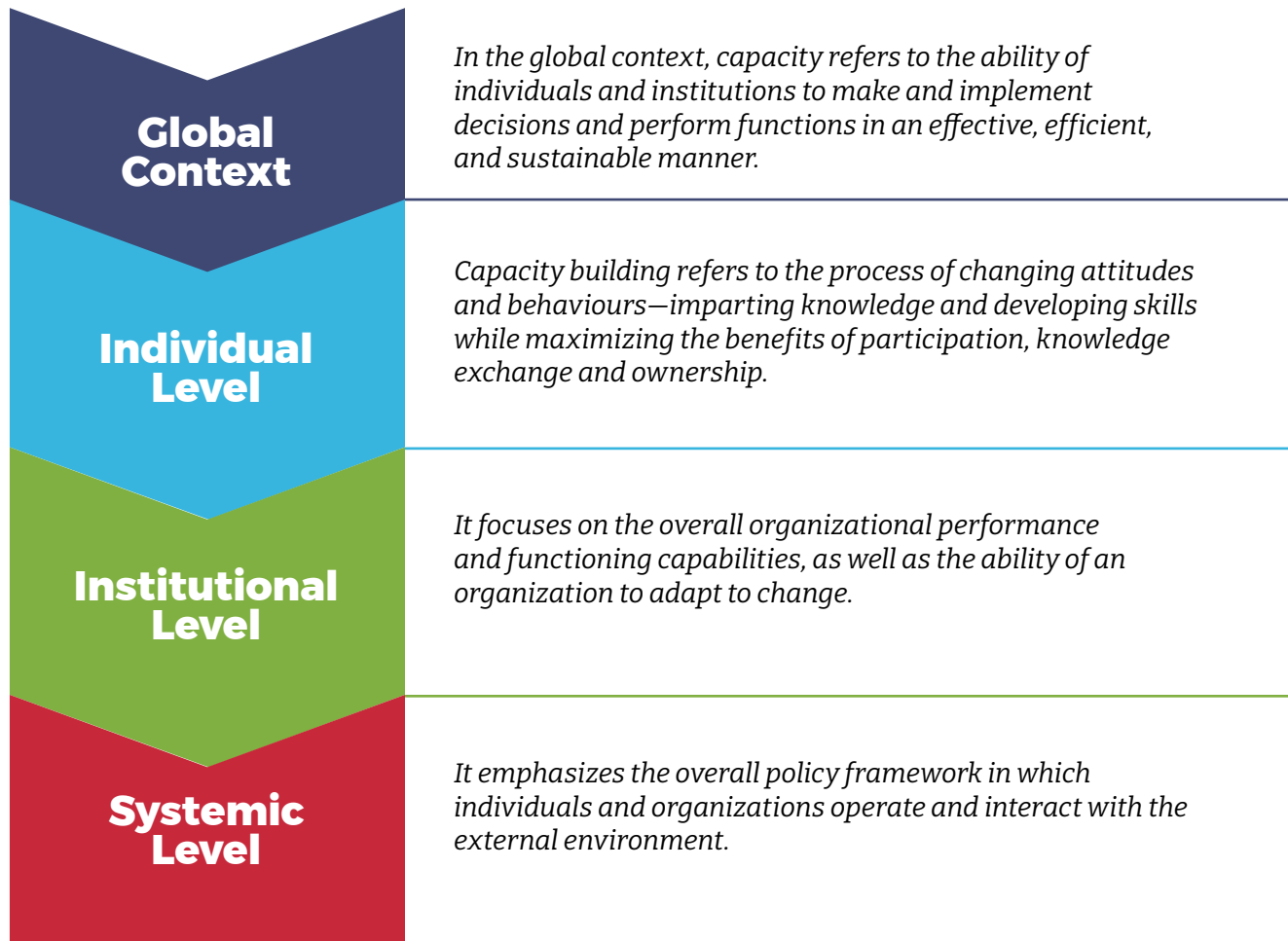
Climate action is a relatively new aspect of community development, so it was important for a one-year program like this to be focused and to yield results. While energy conservation in low rise, occupant-owned residential areas has been the subject of government and non-governmental organization (NGO) projects since the 1970s, this type of work in rental high rises has often been viewed by many policymakers and officials as too difficult or requiring too many additional resources.

This Playbook addresses the perception that the challenges of working on climate change action in high-rise communities are too many to overcome. As buildings age, maintenance may have been neglected over time and the structure of these types of buildings make renovations and climate preparedness and adaptation improvements difficult and expensive.

More people recognize the seriousness of this situation as communities confront emergencies, COVID and the like. But along with this awareness, more people are also exploring and applying solutions. For example, there's more recognition of the importance of building social capital as a hedge against worsening calamities and there's greater understanding of the role of technology to reduce buildings' carbon footprints.

The term capacity building sounds bureaucratic, and indeed, it's often associated with the idea of individual or internal programs such as staff training. However, capacity building is a broader concept that should be considered from a systemic perspective. Capacity building can involve not just individuals, but also whole organizations, institutions, and society.

**Capacity Building defined:  
(United Nations Development Programme)**



Capacity building initiatives are needed at each level. These initiatives can take different approaches:

**Individual** — training programs, business development activities, workshops on specific topics, conferences.

**Institutional** — development of internal policies, organizational and procedural restructuring.

**Systemic** — advocacy initiatives, consultations, open dialogue, reforms.

The effects of each capacity building strategy differ according to each organization, as well as from individual to individual. They can also vary depending on people's and groups' historical, economic and social backgrounds. To make capacity building more effective for any program, capacity assessment is key.

## Different Learning Paths and Activities

Working with the St. James Town community, we focused on individual capacity building, discovering solutions and project planning. We created participatory learning programs, mentoring and workshops applied to lived experiences of the community. The goals for these activities were to encourage discussion, unlock existing talents, help develop new skills and knowledge and accelerate the discovery of solutions to real life needs.



### The Action Learning Method

As the names implies, this learning method engages participants in the learning process as much as possible, focusing on understanding the problems the community experiences (including climate and economic issues) and how to act on planning, discovering, implementing, and evaluating possible solutions.

The following image by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) illustrates the different parts of a general action learning process.

*I've lived in many locations in Toronto, but nothing like St. James Town in terms of what it offers, in terms of its problems, and at the same time, in terms of opportunity and the level of engagement that the community provides.*

**Selvajayan,  
St. James Town resident**

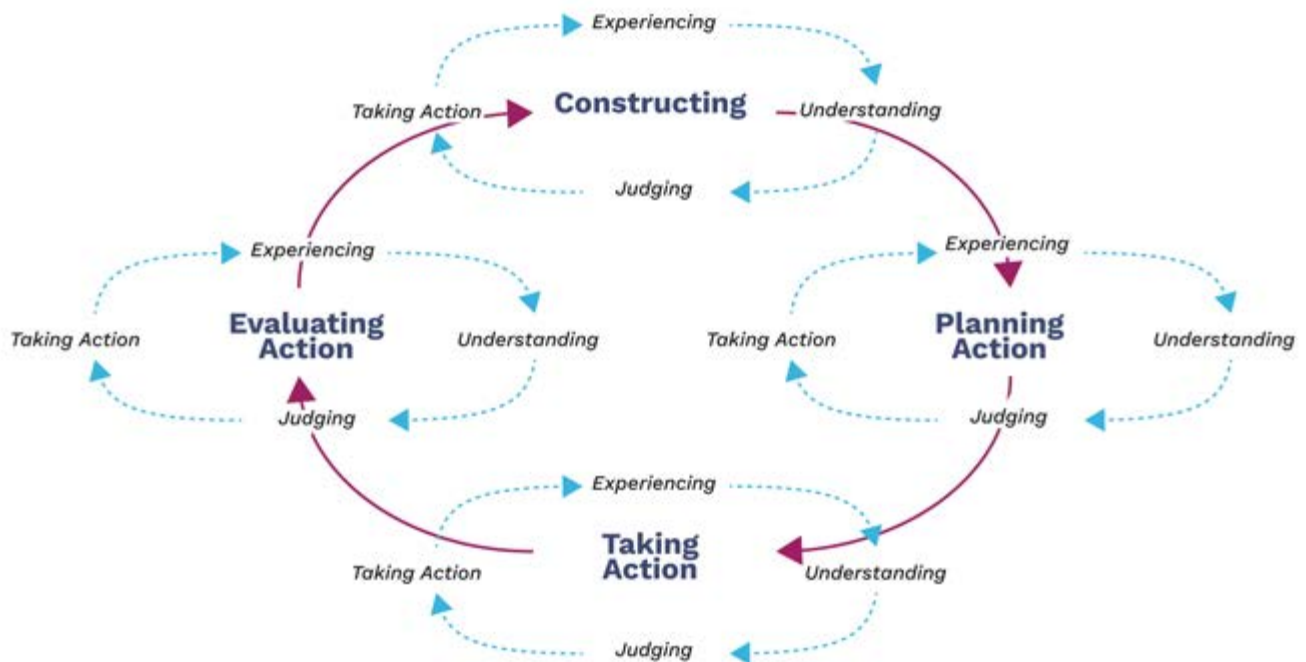


Image 14: Action Research Method Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2014: 30) [8]

### RSI’s fundamental approach to the project could be distilled as:

To discover actionable solutions to the escalating impacts from climate on urban high-rise communities, we collaborated with people who hold the key to better answers — those affected by the problem themselves.

The head of Trinity Life/The New Common, Dr. Michael Seaman, pressed the reality of this situation upon us. He told us, "Too often, plans for tackling climate change crises come from the top down, imposed on individuals and communities who provide little input. True engagement occurs through collaboration."

Our solution was to not just talk with St. James Town members. We brought them directly onto our team. Collaboration is not about bringing us and them together but integrating the project team with the community as much as possible.

This meant building inclusive and sustainable stakeholder relationships versus traditional engagement models that rely on one-off consultations. Our methodology became more iterative, non-linear, and focused on the goal of not only discovering the needs of St. James Town community members, but also earning their respect and trust.

### THE SOLUTION DISCOVERY JOURNEY

To support the quest for on the ground solutions, we ran an integrated action-based learning strategy and training program. The program included climate Ambassador training, mentoring, problem scoping, solution design, proposal writing and presentation and online relationship building events with renowned speakers, experts and St. James Town community members and partners.



*Do a lot of networking, learn the different people’s opinions on what they are looking for, what they feel is lacking, etc. And then, try to figure out how to lobby through pressure we can put on the building owners, property owners, and the government.*

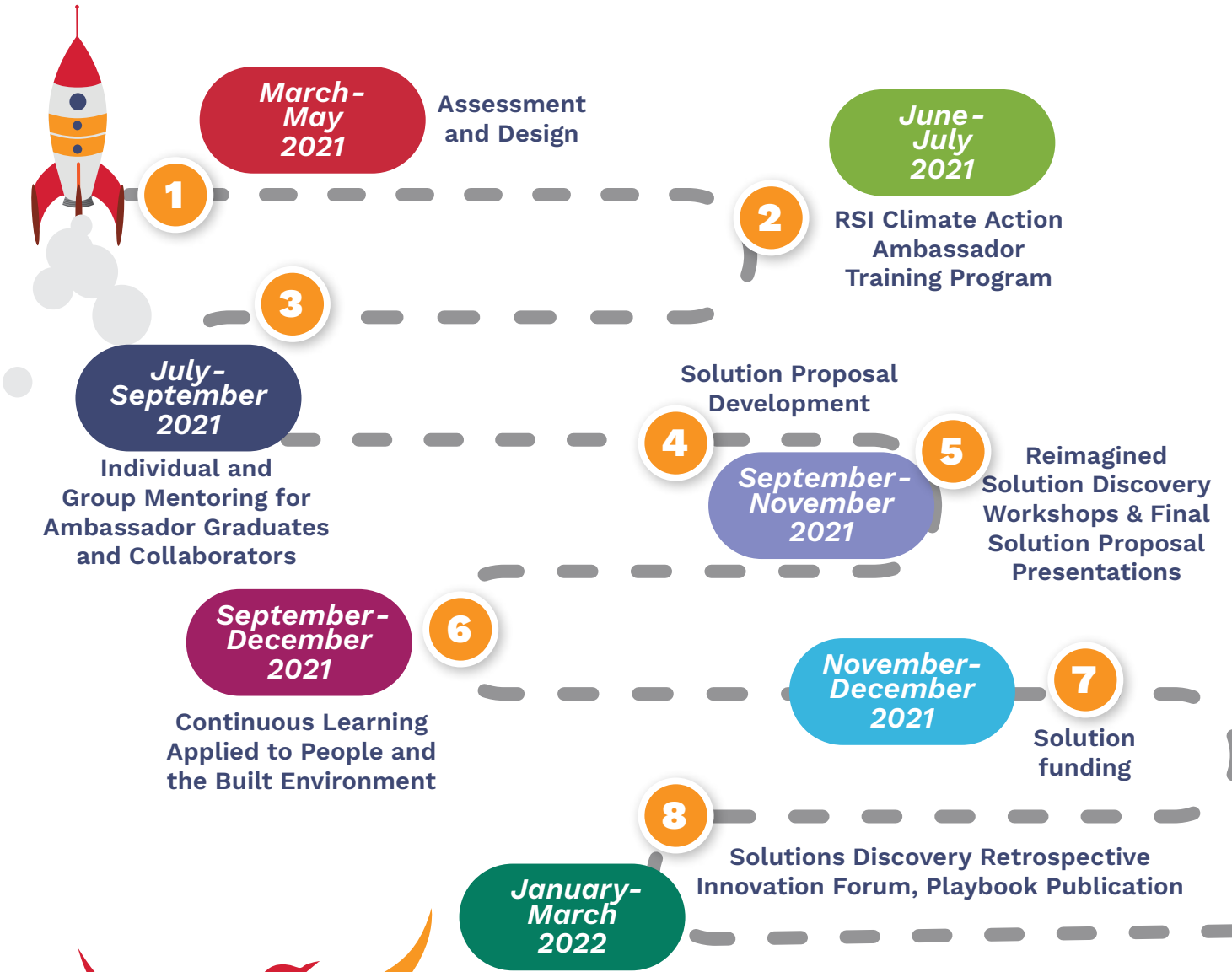
**Alan,  
St. James Town resident**



*In action-based learning, participants deal with complex questions in small focus groups. They listen, design and test solutions to problems from a theoretical perspective in a risk-free environment. Then they further refine after receiving feedback from prospective solution sponsors/clients. This iterative method speeds up solution discovery, supports critical thinking, communication and how to look at challenges from different perspectives.*



# Climate Action Education Roadmap





- |          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| <b>1</b> | <i>Assessment and Design</i>  | In Collaboration with St. James Town Members  |
| <b>2</b> | <i>RSI Climate Action Ambassador Training Program</i>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Change/Impacts</li> <li>• VUCA World Reset</li> <li>• Agile Project Management</li> </ul>  |
| <b>3</b> | <i>Individual and Group Mentoring for Ambassador Graduates and Collaborators</i>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to mentor</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Government Relations</li> </ul>   |
| <b>4</b> | <i>Solution Proposal Development</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert Guides: cleantech, food systems, energy, emergency preparedness and workforce development</li> <li>• Design thinking</li> </ul>   |
| <b>5</b> | <i>Reimagined Solution Discovery Workshops, Final Solution Proposal Presentations</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Foresight, Future Mapping, a well-being Economy, inclusive Community Development</li> <li>• Climate Impacts on Energy and Proven solutions for portable, emission-free power</li> <li>• Workforce Development</li> </ul> |
| <b>6</b> | <i>Continuous Learning Applied to People and the Built Environment</i>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected and Resilient Multi Residential Buildings and Communities</li> </ul>   |
| <b>7</b> | <i>Solution funding</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to get decision makers' support</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> </ul>   |
| <b>8</b> | <i>Solutions Discovery, Retrospective, Innovation Forum, Playbook Publication</i>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking Back Future Forward</li> </ul>   |

## Connecting the Dots

Climate change out of context can be overwhelming. It is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. There's an acronym for this: VUCA.



Thus, we began the discovery journey by reframing VUCA as an advantage to connect the dots with the here and now. And we provided a supportive space for reimagining and shaping a more positive and balanced future.

## VUCA Reframed as an Advantage

We started our discovery journey with VUCA. Looking at climate change through a VUCA perspective makes it easier to connect the dots: the problem, the current situation and the possible and even likely solutions. It's a systems-based approach to reimagine a more positive and balanced future.



## Closing the Gaps – Connecting Solutions for the Benefit of Many vs. Few

Our original focus was finding scalable solutions for mobilizing Community Climate Action. To enhance engagement and advance a more inclusive, healthy and resilient world, we broadened our outlook. We pivoted from climate-only to inclusive solutions related to the essential needs of people who live, work and own properties in St. James Town and other urban communities within and outside of the city.



Image 15: The needs of Maslow's Hierarchy guided the project's development

To build bridges, we collaborated with community stakeholders and partners. Together, we created a connected ecosystem of community decision makers, influencers, and supporters — all centred on the common goal of mobilizing action.



Image 16: Another founding principle was breaking down silos to connect community thinking

## Harnessing the Power of Imagination: Foresight Thinking

We also applied a futurist lens to harness the power of imagination. We used principles of foresight thinking and expert presentations by two acclaimed futurists: Minsoo Pak and Joe Tankersley (included in the *Appendices*). They talked about what can be done to open the moment of opportunity and create a new story with new actions to build a future that works for us all.

### What is Foresight Thinking?

Foresight thinking is a way of looking at what is going on today and what these events and signs can tell us about the future. This way of thinking uses a range of methodologies, such as scanning the horizon for emerging changes, analyzing mega-trends and developing multiple scenarios to reveal and discuss useful ideas about the future. With the support of solution experts and peer mentors, we looked at how climate change and the pandemic affect the community's essential needs. This helped to narrow down choices to what is possible, what is plausible and what is probable.

The results — integrated ideas for solutions to climate and essential needs and structured pilot proposals for and by the St. James Town community and its partners. These are detailed at the end of this section and represent a sizeable achievement — stakeholders evolving into full-fledged actors for change.

### Ground it in the Here-and-Now

This project focused on applying a grassroots and inclusive approach that empowers communities to co-create a future that is just, sustainable and prosperous for everyone.

In most social change models, outside experts and leaders talk about community and regional solutions based on top-down strategies rather than a bottom-up approach that addresses real needs in partnership with people who experience the problem.



We are seeing this gap begin to close, especially when the voices of BIPOC, low-income and newcomer communities that are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and climate crisis are heard in mainstream media and by champions like community organizer Malkeet Sandhu of the David Suzuki Foundation, and others.



## CLIMATE, HEALTH AND THE ECONOMY

Here are two on-the-ground solutions presented by Sandhu, created with grassroots members for enhancing on the ground climate, health and community empowerment.

### Public Transit

#### The Problem:

Many youths, seniors, people living in poverty or with disabilities and newcomers do not have access to cars. For many, public transit is unaffordable, unsafe and inaccessible. More often, they have to walk or cycle long distances in all kinds of weather.

#### Potential Solutions:

Fare-free public transit. Expanded routes, bus-only lanes, increased frequency of transit.



### Green Space

#### The Problem:

Marginalized communities have less access to green space (cleans air, removes carbon, improves mental and physical health). Community parks and paths more likely to fall into disrepair.

#### Potential Solutions:

Convert surface level parking and space for commuter cars into green spaces.



## MOBILE POWER FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

Energy and emergency preparedness are core elements of community resilience. A reliable energy source is critical. Communities are faced with climate and other emergency events such as power failures, ice storms, fires, floods. In the climate era, to be responsive and resilient, energy needs to be agile, mobile and clean.

Mark Rabin, a cleantech entrepreneur, and founder of Portable Electric, works with local communities in more than 14 countries to design and install mobile, emission-free power for remote and urban uses — including emergency responses to extreme weather and health-related catastrophes.

More mobile power solution applications are captured in the Oct 26, 2021 Reimagined Future Solution Discoveries.

## INSIDE OUTSIDE. OUTSIDE INSIDE.

**Discover. Design. Test. Refine. Pitch.** Integrated Solution Discoveries — by and with St. James Town residents, community stakeholders and mentors.



Image 17: **A systems approach fostered holistic solutions**

Our solution teams generated ideas that we tested together. To do this, we facilitated two Reimagined Future Solution Discovery workshops.<sup>(a),(b)</sup> These featured keynote speakers and facilitators — futurists, community organizers, energy, technology and social entrepreneurs. The workshops also included community stakeholders from the Greater Toronto Area — policymakers, educators, peer and expert mentors, local government representatives, non-governmental organizations and purpose-driven businesses.

Our teams combined several connected solutions into three integrated solution proposals for development and funding.

(a) <https://communityclimateaction.org/2021/10/19/reimagine-the-future-climate-solutions-discovery-workshop/>

(b) <https://communityclimateaction.org/2021/11/03/reimagined-future-climate-solutions-discovery-workshop/>

## Three Solution Finalists

Solutions by and with the community, for the community



**Community &  
Infrastructure  
Resilience**

---



**Local Food**

---



**Workforce  
Development**

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 *Climate action has to connect to the needs of people affected by the problem — those who live, work and own properties in the residential community.*
- 2 *Since climate change can be overwhelming, VUCA needs to be reframed as an advantage.*
- 3 *Solutions should connect to what's taking place here and now, and what will benefit many vs. only a few. Build bridges with key community decision makers, stakeholders and partners in discovery exploration and knowledge sharing. Centre on one common vision and action goals.*
- 4 *Harness the Power of Imagination. Apply Foresight Thinking for reimagining and shaping a more positive and balanced future.*
- 5 *Visualize the story. Avoid jargon.*
- 6 *Involve people affected by the problem in the solutions and support them with peer and expert mentors from inside and outside the community.*

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

## TALKING WITH THE COMMUNITY, NOT AT IT

The project goal was to inform, engage and encourage community stakeholders to participate in scalable climate mitigation and adaptation solutions and practices. These goals were to be realized for SJT residents and organizations and to improve the built environment of high-rise communities – today and in the future.

### Who needs to be engaged for community initiatives?

We first identified the stakeholders who would be impacted by any solutions and those that could contribute to their development. These included: community members, collaborators, partners, change champions, influencers and other stakeholders with mandates that aligned with one or more of the verified needs, project purpose and the call for action.

The three primary stakeholder groups we engaged were:

1. **Community members.** Residents and building owners who have experienced the impact of climate change, the socio-economic disruptions that come from it, and are motivated to do something about it.
2. **Community collaborators and partners.** Government and private sector leaders and organizations with climate and resiliency related mandates and the means to support the discovery and implementation of solutions.
3. **Local and global change champions and influencers.** Best practice leaders from Canada and around the world who have successfully tackled similar issues and are willing to share their insights and promote our initiative too.

## Amplify the why and what's-in-it-for-me? —

The rationale for the project — the "why" — needs to be front and centre, easy to understand, emotionally engaging, visually compelling, and balanced with facts. We communicated the project purpose to all key stakeholder groups repeatedly and clearly. We honed and adapted the messaging to speak directly to people's self-interest — the benefits to them in participating in the collaborative discovery process and its proposed solutions.

For example, for the Climate Ambassador Training Program, we communicated with 21 St. James Town members to understand and build on their existing climate action knowledge and activities, essential everyday needs of the community and strengths. We engaged and assessed what each of these 21 participants wanted to get out of the training program — their, "what's-in-it-for-me" rationale for being involved.

With insights from these conversations, we designed and delivered three 5.5-hour solution-focused Ambassador Training workshops, interspersed with homework, coaching, mentoring and recognition of the Ambassador graduates.

We conducted a post-training session (A Retrospective) to better understand what worked best for the participants and to discover how to adapt for other stakeholders in St. James Town and other urban communities.

All stakeholder communication and collaboration supported this iterative process of informing, engaging and building capacity for discovering scalable climate action solutions for St. James Town.



*I want to see the neighbourhood getting everything that other places around us get, people that live in Cabbagetown and in Rosedale. I'm talking about basics here, access to proper garbage separation, access to organics collection on site, decent winter insulation, even pavement and so on.*

**Julia,  
St. James Town resident**



## Core Values: Practice of Stakeholder Participation

- 1 Stakeholders should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives or essential environment for life.
- 2 Stakeholder participation includes the promise that the stakeholder's contribution will influence the decision.
- 3 Stakeholder participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.
- 4 Stakeholder participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5 Stakeholder participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6 Stakeholder participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7 Stakeholder participation communicates to participants how their input will/has affected the decision.



The difficult part is always about outreach, providing and giving necessary information to the residents to make them involved. It's more like a process where you try to understand the community better. That's how I view it. So, the more I talked to residents the more I know what their priorities are, and the more that I'm able to amend my proposed project to align with the actual community needs. In other words, I always see it as a way to get to know the problem better by talking to residents.

**Selvajayan,**  
St. James Town resident



## Six Key Principles of Stakeholder Engagement: at a Glance

**Who needs to be engaged and how?**

**Remember we are only human.** Assess if there is a **better way** to work together to maintain a productive relationship.

Develop relationships based on **shared values and beliefs** to build trust.

**First seek to understand** the people **you will be collaborating with/working with/selling to.**

**Plan it** – Careful planning before engaging stakeholders can bring significant benefits.

**Consult early and often** – Regular consultations ensure that requirements are agreed to, and a delivery solution is acceptable to the majority.



## FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS

### Discovered and Verified Essential Needs

The journey of discovery began with a preliminary assessment of essential needs, requirements for meeting those needs and a realistic time-bound, solution-focused plan of action for stakeholder engagement, collaboration, capacity building and communications.

The key solutions proposed by community members centre around:

- Emergency preparedness for responding to extreme weather and other catastrophes.
- Sustainable, accessible and affordable food supply.
- Workforce development for securing jobs and starting social enterprises.
- Building bridges between St. James Town residents and outside stakeholders who share the vision for more resilient and connected communities.

The details of these proposals are summarized later in this section of the Playbook.



Image 18: The proposed solutions touched most every stakeholder and their needs



*One of the techniques for saving money on food is buying seasonal and locally grown crops, at the same time it is better for the environment to eat locally grown because of GHG emissions during transportation. Same for getting your proteins from beans and other vegetables, it's cheaper and more sustainable. We can find such techniques everywhere: saving electricity, reusing items, borrowing items, repurposing all, helping to survive on modest income and reducing personal impact on the environment.*

**Julia,**  
St. James Town resident

*I found people want to focus on today or tomorrow only and any other technologies that can help to reduce the problem that they are having now. So, in that, we have to develop such projects or any activities where the outcome is visible and the people can see the changes.*

**Vicky,**  
St. James Town resident



## Putting these stakeholder engagement principles into practice for the CCA- SJT PROJECT

We applied these principles throughout the project to identify, communicate with and invite priority stakeholders to support the discovery, development and implementation of scalable solutions to climate impacts on high-rise communities in Canada.

### CCA Project Roadmap – or Journey (April to December 2021)

- Community Climate Action Awareness and engagement forums and campaigns.
- Ambassador Training Workshops, Coaching, Mentoring and Retrospectives.
- Solution, skills and knowledge building mentoring for individuals and groups by and with St. James Town members and topic related global-local mentors.
- Multidisciplinary Solution Discovery Workshops for St. James Town members and stakeholders global and local guest speakers, where mentored solution teams presented and received feedback on their respective community proposals.
- Resilient and Connected Communities: Looking Back. Moving Forward. More information on this topic can be found in Part 4, Inspiring Action - The Built Environment.
- Solution Proposals Marketing and Fundraising Workshop.

This focused, collaborative community communication and engagement approach led to more and more people and organizations stepping up to the climate action and supporting some of the identified SJT resiliency building needs.

In fact, the process created a whole new breed of engaged stakeholders — now known to the St. James Town community as Climate Change Action Ambassadors.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 *Stakeholders must have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives and their environment.*
- 2 *Community level solutions get adopted more when key stakeholders who can affect and are affected by the proposed solutions are engaged.*
- 3 *To achieve systemic change, seek out and facilitate community members and stakeholders on all levels affected by or interested in the project purpose.*
- 4 *Stakeholder participation includes the promise that the stakeholder's contribution will influence the decision and recognizes the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers and options for how to get involved.*
- 5 *Building key stakeholder relations is an iterative, non-linear, and ongoing process for developing relationships of mutual respect. It is not a one-off consultation.*
- 6 *Stakeholder participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.*
- 7 *Effective stakeholder communication also needs to be adapted for the audience. Not every individual or group communicates the same way or uses the same methods to get their points across. Look at what works for each community and what works for different ones.*
- 8 *Show and tell, be visual. Use graphics, charts, and multimedia materials to engage people.*
- 9 *Check in and evaluate. Are your methods working? What needs to change? Continue to assess, review and adapt.*

## FROM STAKEHOLDERS TO CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AMBASSADORS

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY,  
NOT FOR THE COMMUNITY, AND ENSURING THAT  
PROJECTS ARE BY THE COMMUNITY

### How Climate Action Leads to Climate Awareness

**T**raining climate Ambassadors in neighbourhoods is a new idea in community development. It has been embraced by environmental educators and institutions, including the City of Toronto, Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) and others.

We recruited 21 individuals for our Climate Ambassador training program, supplemented with individual and group mentoring. As an added incentive, we provided every participant with a modest honorarium – and the graduates received a certificate of completion plus a "Climate Action Ambassador" badge to share across their social media platforms.

The result is that the Ambassador program made a positive impact. Within a few months of outreach and training, catalyzed by our action focused online workshops, we saw increasingly larger numbers of St. James Town members and the broader community of stakeholders became engaged. And awareness of the solution initiatives by St. James Town, as well as the broader impacts of climate change on the local community, became better known.

Over 10 months, we were able to demonstrate how climate action and awareness can evolve and grow and make a positive difference.

Rather than just talk, people got involved. Due to COVID-19 we pivoted from in-person to virtual. This also had a positive side – attendees could see who else was "in the room" online. Over time, the participants began to interact online more easily.



## How Ambassador Training Can Help a Community —

1. Provides a sense of urgency by accelerating the development of projects.
2. Addresses essential needs — food insecurity, shelter/state of buildings/jobs for trained newcomers to Canada.
3. Builds relationships among individuals in the program and strengthens networks within the community.
4. Builds on specific skills of participants, many of whom were trained professionals from beyond Toronto and outside of Canada before coming here.

The Climate Ambassador Training Program became the central focus for the CCA-SJT program in the first half of 2021. It consisted of an initial formal training of three 5.5 hour sessions during June and July during which participants also developed climate action projects based on community needs. They were recruited from a pool of applicants who responded to our outreach. A total of 21 took the training; 19 graduated as Ambassadors. Following the formal Ambassador training program, we continued to engage the broader community and outside volunteers in mentoring the graduates with a focus on solution projects through a series of online workshops. The workshops quickly gained in popularity and attendance over the seven months and brought attention and awareness to both the climate action solution projects and the impact of climate change on St. James Town and other multi-residential urban communities in general.

The Community Climate Action Ambassador training program was an experiential action learning program designed on an initial scan of the community. The program considered the backgrounds and knowledge level of the participants and emphasized a project management methodology. The Ambassadors identified five project areas that were later refined to three.

### The Ambassador Program Objectives

The decision to train a relatively small group of residents using a project management approach ensured that resident-generated actions would remain at the forefront of the CCA-SJT program. As the Ambassadors graduated and their proposed solutions became known, they were better positioned to influence and lead climate action in their communities.

## We wanted the training program to create these outcomes

- Identify and inform key stakeholders and influencers about the local effects of climate change and their role in mitigating and/or adapting to it.
- Provide scalable actions and solutions about what community members can do now to address the impacts of climate change.
- Provide trained climate Ambassadors with insights, resources and skills to support or become Climate Action Leaders on projects that address challenges and opportunities relating to:
  - Urban High-Rise Towers
  - Energy Poverty
  - Emergency Preparedness/ Resiliency
  - GHG Reduction
  - Climate Adaptation/ Mitigation
  - Strategies and Communication
  - Health/Food Security
  - Skills and Workforce Development

## Recruiting Ambassadors

We heard from stakeholders that climate impacts are taken seriously by the St. James Town community and that it was likely that we would be able to find individuals willing to devote time and talent toward the training — St. James Town had recently published information on its strategy for the future, placing sustainability at its core.

## We reached out to the community through various communication channels:

- Personal networks. Referrals from leaders of St. James Town Community Cooperative, The Corner at 200 Wellesley Street East, The Corner at 240, Trinity Life and The New Common and local councillors.
- Advertising on the Community Climate Action website.
- Promo postings on two university co-op program websites: University of Toronto and Ryerson University.
- The electronic newsletter of the local municipal councillor
- English as a Second Language (ESL) services organizations for recruiting for specific skills (e.g., engineers from an ESL program).
- Social Media platforms.

We received applications and accepted twenty-one people into the program (our maximum number was twenty-four). Our criteria for participating in the program included:

- Currently active in St. James Town community or a commitment to community development for climate action.
- Credentials e.g., Engineering.
- Leaders from the BIPOC community, women, and minority groups.

We attracted individuals from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities and we had equal numbers of men and women participate who were representative of three generations.

### Making Ambassador Training Relevant to Residents and Adapted to COVID-19 Restrictions

In a neighbourhood as neglected and underfunded as St. James Town, and in the face of the issues facing residents before and during the daunting effects of COVID-19, we were challenged to make the Community Climate Action as relevant as possible to residents' needs. It was challenging to promote this project and recruit Ambassador candidates in a community beset by job losses and poverty among its multi-ethnic, well-educated population, with lockdowns occurring at the same time. Part of the challenge was conducting all interactions, including the training, remotely.

### Ambassador Training for Accelerated Capacity Building

To ensure that the training would result in scalable community climate actions, we designed an accelerated Ambassador training program, delivered in June and July 2021 in three 5.5-hour workshop sessions.

The 21 participants learned about project design and management. The training covered climate impacts and solutions in relation to social, economic, and environmental issues facing St. James Town, with input from experts in the topic areas. Through additional workshops/webinars and mentoring, open to the broader community, they learned about people-led solutions and technical innovations for high-rise communities. This meant that the projects initiated during the intensive training were refined over time to the point where three project proposals have been finalized and are funding-ready for the future.

**Gender**  
23 responses

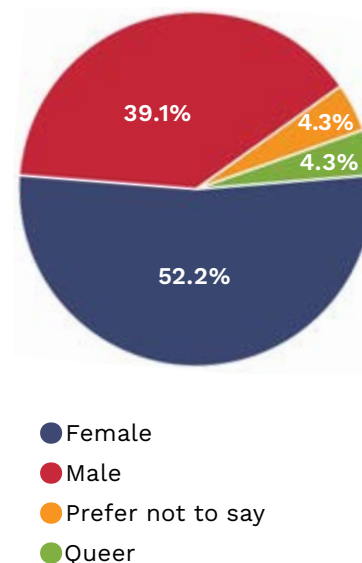


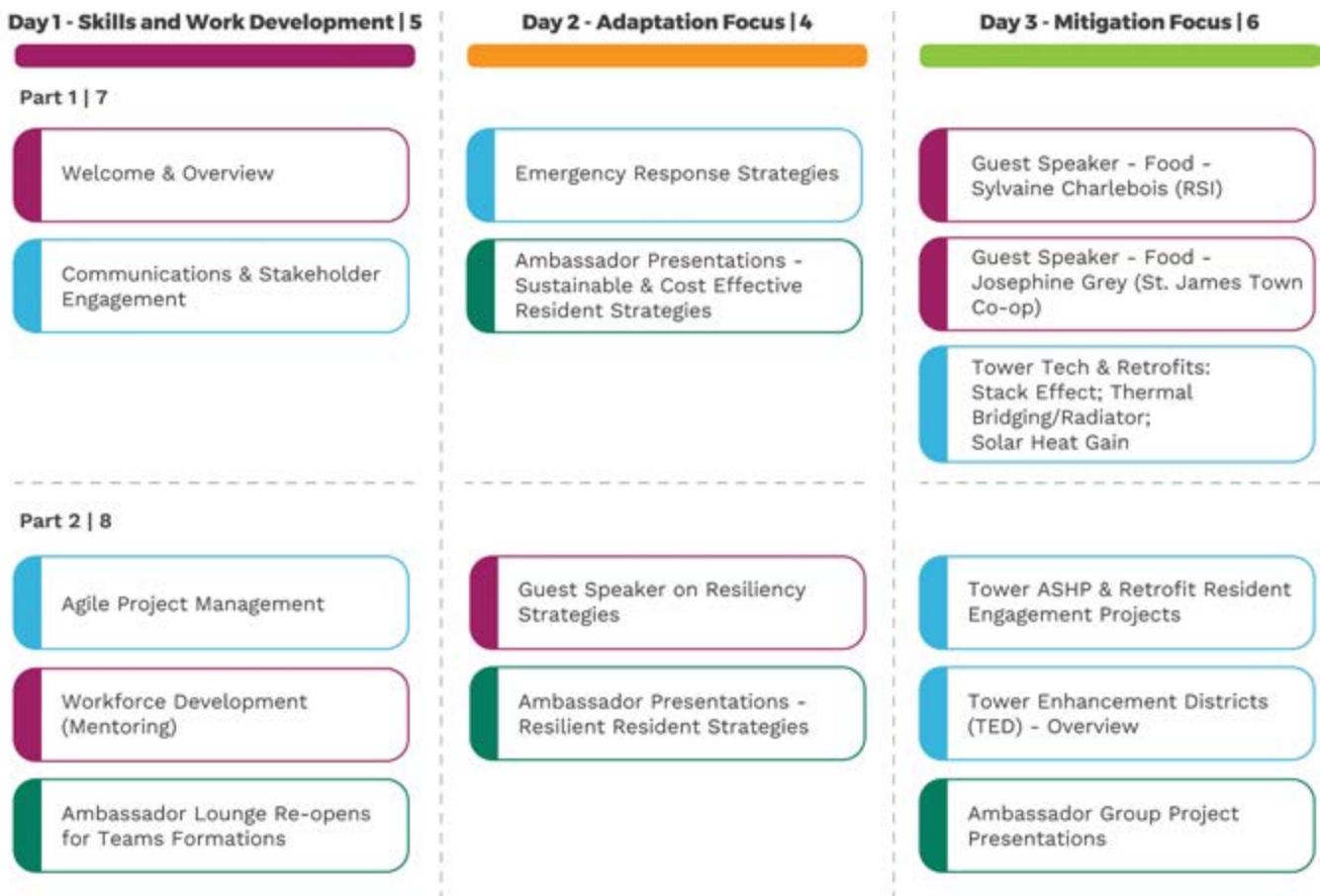
Image 19: **Climate Action Ambassador Program - Application Form Gender Response**

Our team took multiple steps to develop and deliver the training to the community. Here are some of them:

1. Assessment of the climate change readiness, survey the community.
2. Discover if the residents are interested in attending the training, provide an incentive for participation (a graduation honorarium in our case).
3. Customize the training based on the needs of the participants.
4. Offer a continuum. Graduates were offered personal and group mentorship, participation in workshops, networking opportunities, support in developing their projects, feedback from industry leaders and more.

## CCA Ambassador Training Highlights and Program Summary

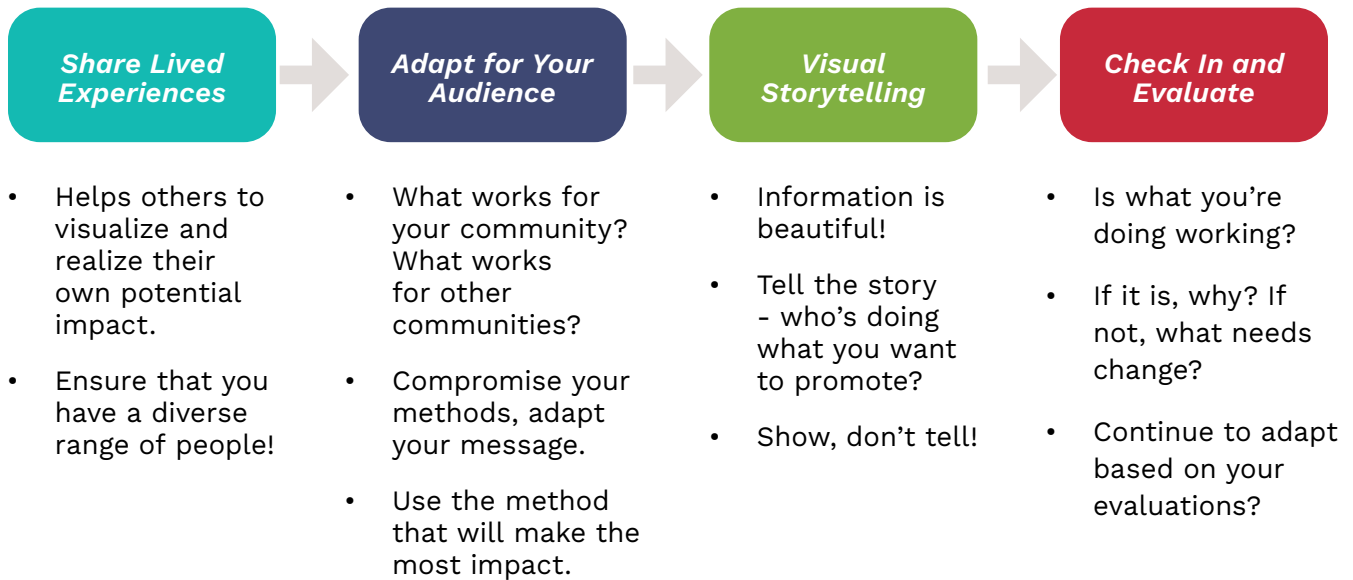
### 3-Day Training Program Overview



## Day 1

The first training day took place on June 8th, where the Ambassadors were introduced to several topics including:

- Communications and Outreach – their role in the broader community.



- Project management methods for ensuring that community projects are planned and tracked using appropriate software and the outlook for jobs in environmental, energy and other related fields. The Ambassadors formed teams and focused on developing a topic to work on.

## Day 2

Tricia Clarke, Public Engagement Officer, introduced the City of Toronto's Green Champions, a complementary energy conservation resident engagement initiative aimed toward residents of high-rise buildings. Deborah Cohen developed the program that has been piloted in some apartment buildings to spread the word on how day-to-day energy conservation helps when adopted by significant numbers of residents in an apartment building.

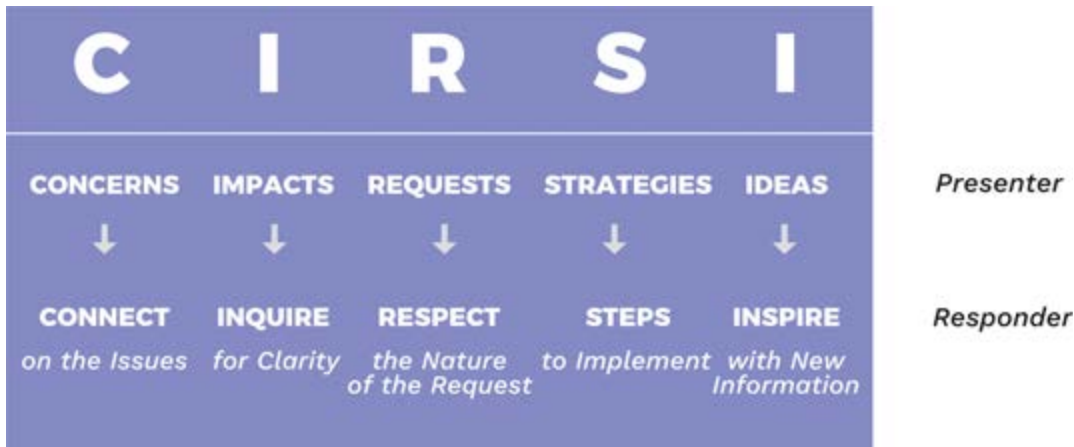
Later in the afternoon, Madelyn Webb presented on Emergency Preparedness, the steps we all need to take to be prepared BEFORE the emergency happens. Madelyn emphasized having a 72-hour emergency kit for your family, and what it should contain.



Image 20, 21: **The Emergency Backpack and its contents that was distributed by RSI to the program participants**

In two Interactive sessions, the Climate Ambassadors shared insights that informed their team projects with guidance from Kirk Johnson, Co-lead, Ambassador Training. Following the CIRSI interaction model, resident Concerns, Impacts, Requests, Strategies, and Ideas about minimizing Resident Energy Use, Costs, and GHG Emissions in St. James Town were researched and considered.

**CIRSI Interaction Guide**



Agile tools and strategies were applied to create personas — composite profiles of residents — and to compile User Stories describing solution-set elements and benefits. The four Team projects cover Heatwave Adaptation Solutions, Emergency/ Resiliency Hubs, Tower Energy Retrofits and Food Security, and Workforce Development Training.



Image 22: An example of a composite persona created by the Emergency Preparedness team

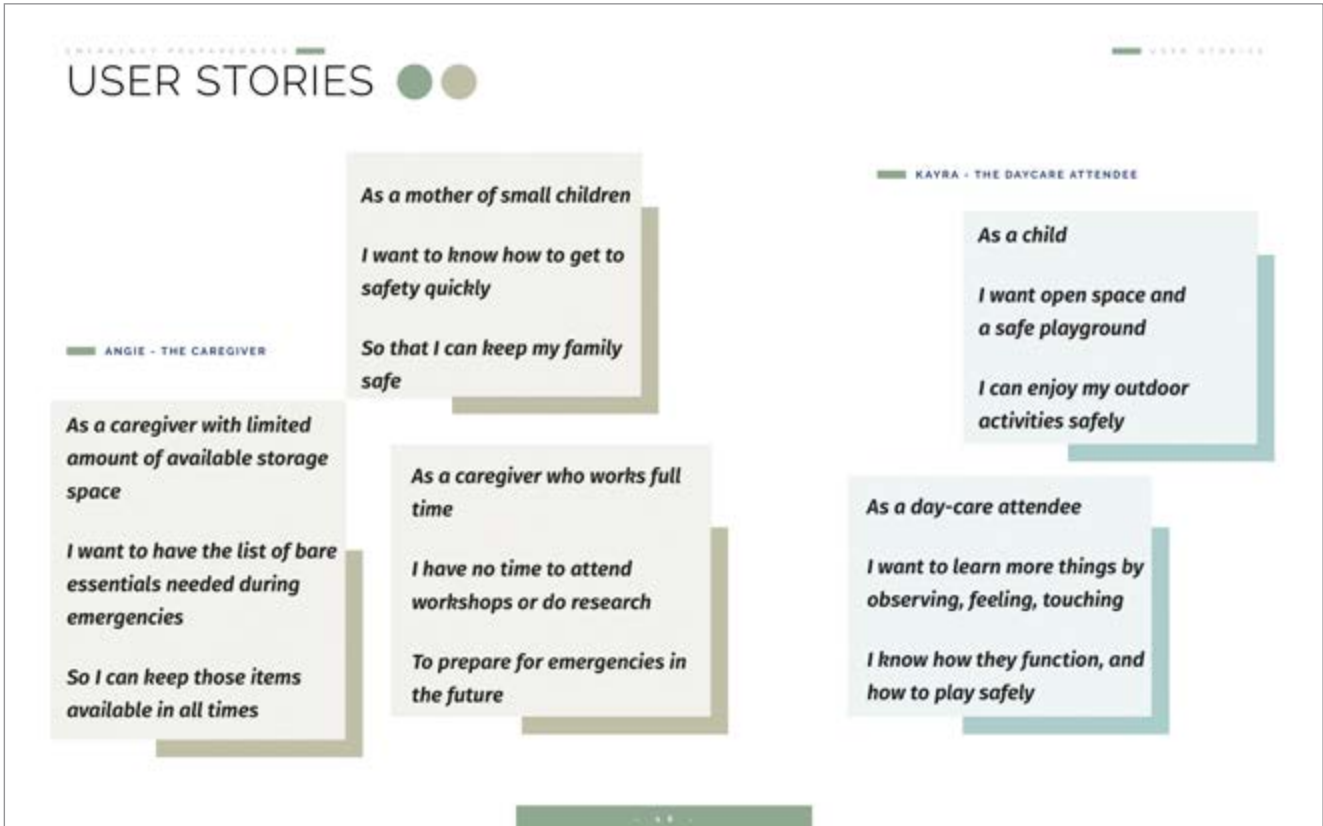


Image 23: An example of user stories created by the Emergency Preparedness team

### Day 3

The first session focused on Urban Food Security, with guest speakers Josephine Grey, Co-founder of the St. James Town Co-op/OASIS Food Hub, and Dr. Rod McCrae, Professor, York University. Dr. McCrae highlighted how COVID-19 has impacted food provision infrastructure on a national level and exposed the ever-present inequalities in both our food and public health systems. Josephine Grey spoke about local initiatives that include the proposal for the OASIS Food Hub, based on a self-sustaining food production ecosystem, their successes in raising awareness about local food security in national media and the challenges they have been facing with food security both before and throughout COVID-19.

### Food system map:

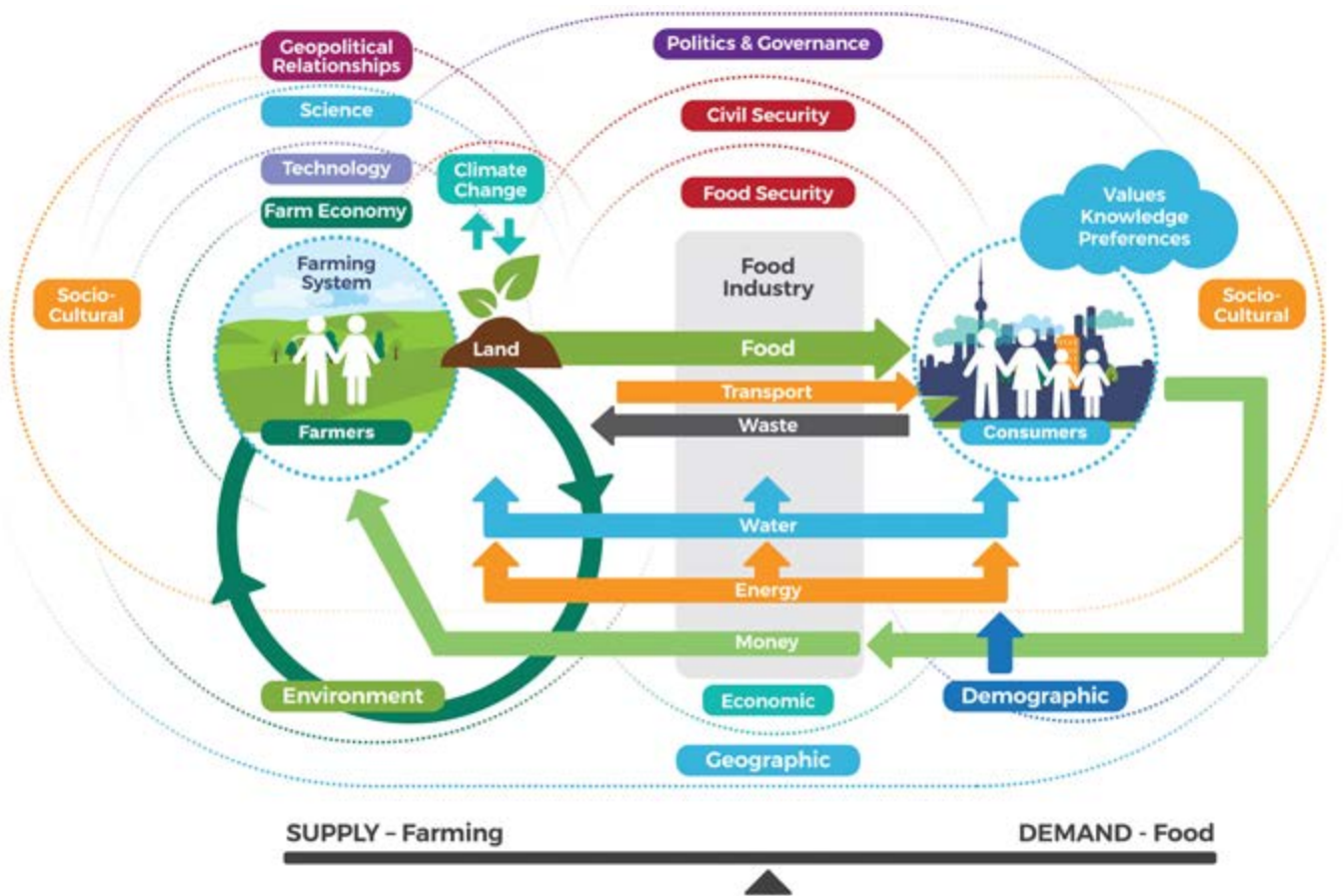


Image 24: Data based on the Future of Food and Farming project, UK Government Office for Science (2011)

Next up were Graeme Stewart and Ya'el Santopinto from ERA Architects, both recently appointed Fellows of the Royal Architectural Society. They spoke about multiple recently completed and ongoing retrofits, key elements for a new generation of Tower Renewal, best practices for resident engagement in occupied buildings, and they addressed concerns about affordability.

The final speakers, Keith Burrows and Kaitlin Carroll from The Atmospheric Fund (TAF), spoke about heat pump retrofits in older buildings — especially those that use electrical heating — engagement practices with building residents, and about apartment heat pump retrofit projects that TAF has recently completed.

Of course, the focus for this training day was our Ambassadors, who were graduating from the program. They self organized into solution action focused groups, gave a presentation on their work outlining their key focus, methodology, real-world applications and potential funding sources.

The last part of the workshop showcased a future-focused model for project development, as well as reviewing the roadmap for the projects going forward. Each Ambassador received a certificate of completion for the course, as well as a "Climate Action Ambassador" badge to share across their social media platforms.



Image 25: **Community Climate Ambassador digital badge**

## **What made this program different from others?** —

- The project management training that required participants to move out of their comfort zone, quickly learn and apply new skills and perspectives to real needs.
- Working with the community, not for the community, and ensuring that projects are led by the community.
- Continuous support and lasting connections.
- Hands-on experience.

## CCA AMBASSADORS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT'S LENS

Every participant of the program had their own journey. Let's take a deeper look into one of them. Julia Baranovsky is a resident of St. James Town and a professional graphic designer. She immigrated to Canada from Israel in 2015.

"When the first COVID-19 lockdown hit Toronto, my clients stopped needing graphic design services. No one wanted to promote a business that sells wedding gowns at the time when people are not allowed to gather, and I didn't have the ability to make new connections.

I wasn't looking to become involved in climate change action. I didn't know RSI or the work they were doing. What I was looking for was human connections during the unprecedented time of uncertainty. I found that participating in events and volunteering in my own community of St. James Town was the path I needed to follow. I had no sense that the next few months would change my life in such a meaningful way.

I try to live sustainably and I'm aware of climate change, so when one of the workers at The Community Corner told me about a program that provided some training on climate change, I wanted to know more. After investigating further (and a lot of questions), I signed on.

During the first training session I discovered the program to be much more than I'd anticipated. The program was designed to take you as far as you are willing to go with it.

It started with three days of hands-on intensive training on climate change and specific skills. This led to a Climate Action project from developing your ideas and Project Management tools and techniques to supply chain facts and heat pump technology. Later, when my team and I already started working on a project that is meant to tackle Emergency Preparedness issues in the neighborhood based on our past experiences, we were offered a series of workshops that helped us to get started with approaching government officials, writing proposals and other topics we needed help with.

I've met many amazing people in the community, and I realized that with some guidance we can create something big and make a meaningful change in people's lives. It definitely changed mine. I was even offered an employment opportunity with RSI.

Designing this Playbook and getting to work within even more people has extended my personal journey much further than I could have imagined.

The Ambassador training program was impressive. Despite the heavy workload, participants rose to the challenge. We were asked to move out of our comfort zone, and a few of us were reluctant at first. By the end of the program, we realized just how much we had progressed.

The experts who came into our community expanded our horizons as to what is possible, and I got the feeling that we expanded theirs.

They learned that there was a lot of talent in our marginalized community. I am confident that they'll take that learning to the other communities they may work with ... whether they are dense urban environments like ours, or perhaps isolated Indigenous communities. Moving from climate action to community engagement and engagement beyond the direct community was a unique feature of this project. It should be transferable and scalable."

## Next steps for the Ambassadors

The Ambassadors were further supported with individual and group mentoring—detailed in the next two chapters.

- RSI workshops were also open to the public to increase awareness and support the Ambassadors in implementing their projects. Examples of workshops: More Than a Meeting: How to get decision makers to support your issue; Leadership Frame of Mind; The Path of an Entrepreneur; Marketing and Fundraising for Social and Environmental Projects.
- The Ambassadors were also invited to participate in Reimagined Solutions Discovery workshops, that were formatted as social innovation labs, and receive feedback from industry leaders.

# THE INSPIRATIONAL ROLE OF MENTORS

## UNLOCKING THE UNTAPPED TALENT OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS TO SUPPORT CLIMATE ACTION AND BUILD A MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITY

**E**ducating people on climate action is more effective when the people involved are motivated by their own experience with climate-related difficulties and helps cultivate a sense of community. Because experience and involvement can also help achieve stronger results, the CCA-SJT team designed our programs and activities to welcome involvement from everyone in and around the community.

We relied a lot on the talent and dedication of external mentors who have achieved success with similar projects.

Our approach provided a means for knowledge sharing and discovery of solutions. Participants engaged with peers (i.e., learning from and with each other), mentors and practitioners experienced in climate and building resiliency, social and economic impact, and essential community needs.

### What is Mentoring?

Mentorship is a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. It is a learning and development partnership between someone with deep experience and someone who wants to learn.



MENTORING is NOT

- Teaching
- Coaching
- Doing things for you
- Getting you a job

### What is the difference between a teacher, a coach, and a mentor? <sup>[9]</sup>

<p><b>Teacher</b></p>	<p>The traditional focus of teaching is to impart knowledge and information through instruction and explanation. The goal for the student was usually to pass a test. The teacher-learner relationship is a one-way flow often referred to as "the empty vessel" model of learning. The closeness of the relationship between teacher and student is often low. Please note: Modern teaching has changed a lot since this basic, old-fashioned definition was the norm.</p>
<p><b>Coach</b></p>	<p>Coaching is usually focused on improving a specific task or performance. The role of a skills or performance coach is to give feedback on observed performance. The coach often sets or suggests goals for the learner, measuring performance over time as the learner develops new skills. The learner and the coach need a good working relationship.</p>
<p><b>Mentor</b></p>	<p>The role of the mentor is to build capability. S/he helps the learner discover their own wisdom and encourage them to work towards career goals or develop self-reliance. The mentor-mentee relationship usually remains a professional one as the mentor does not have authority over the mentee (the person being mentored)— and centres on the learner's goals.</p>

## Stepping up the Climate Action Challenge

### Mentoring to connect solutions

#### Challenge One: Motivating

One of our first challenges was motivating residents to step forward and work on a longer-term solution as a project (rather than a one-off) that could help not only their families but also their fellow residents.

#### Challenge Two: Assessing Mentee Interests

We interviewed applicants to our inaugural Climate Ambassador Training Program who live or work in St. James Town, to determine their individual needs and aspirations. In addition to climate related interests, the needs people expressed most relate to finding a job or becoming an entrepreneur. We customized the workshops and mentoring to reflect this and to make sure that the programs would be open to anyone.

#### Challenge Three: Mentor-Mentee Matching

Building on the action ideas developed prior to and during the Climate Ambassador Training program, we engaged a group of volunteer mentors to coach and advise the self-organized discovery teams (Ambassador graduates and friends), tasked on how to find and create ideas, and prepare solution project proposals for presentation at two RSI Solution Discovery workshops.

## OUTSIDE-IN: RECRUITING AND TRAINING MENTORS

Inside volunteer mentors were recruited from St. James Town, the RSI Community Climate Action Steering Committee, and the Project Team. In addition, we called on outside mentors with experience working with newcomers and different generations, including:

#### **Katerina Salto, Mentorship Coordinator, WoodGreen Settlement Services**

She provided mentorship training with an emphasis on what to expect when mentoring newcomers to Canada.

#### **Paola Ruiz. Founder and CEO of Strategy Advisory Solutions Inc.**

Originally from Colombia, an entrepreneur, and Indigenous rights advocate. Paola provided group and individual mentoring related to entrepreneurship and how to develop ideas for funding pitches.



### From a CCA Mentoring Participant ... What I learned

*From the Leadership mentoring workshop, I learned that everyone has the capacity to be a leader with a leadership mindset. This applies to every aspect of my life: as a mother, community volunteer, and in my professional work.*

*From the Path of the Entrepreneur workshop. I loved the inspirational and practical knowledge shared by the four, Purpose Focused Entrepreneurs - from Colombia, China, and Canada: Patrick, Paola, Wen, and Yasmin. For instance, I learned that instead of waiting for an opportunity to knock, another option is starting a business.*

*My self-confidence is now higher than ever – balanced with a healthy dose of humility and active learning.*

**Michelle Clarke**



## The Mentoring Roadmap

There are different paths for unlocking untapped talent of community members and supporting climate action solution projects.

### The Essentials: The Mentor/Mentee Relationship

Matching mentees with the right mentors first requires understanding the mentees' learning goals and how mentors apply their mentoring skills.

### The Job Search Path

When people are constantly living with uncertainty about food, shelter and economic opportunities, it's hard for them to act on major challenges like climate change, especially at a community level. People looking for jobs need to plan and network, and they need time. Connecting the jobs they're searching for to climate action and engagement helps sharpen the focus of their search.

### The Leadership Path and Leaders' Frame of Mind

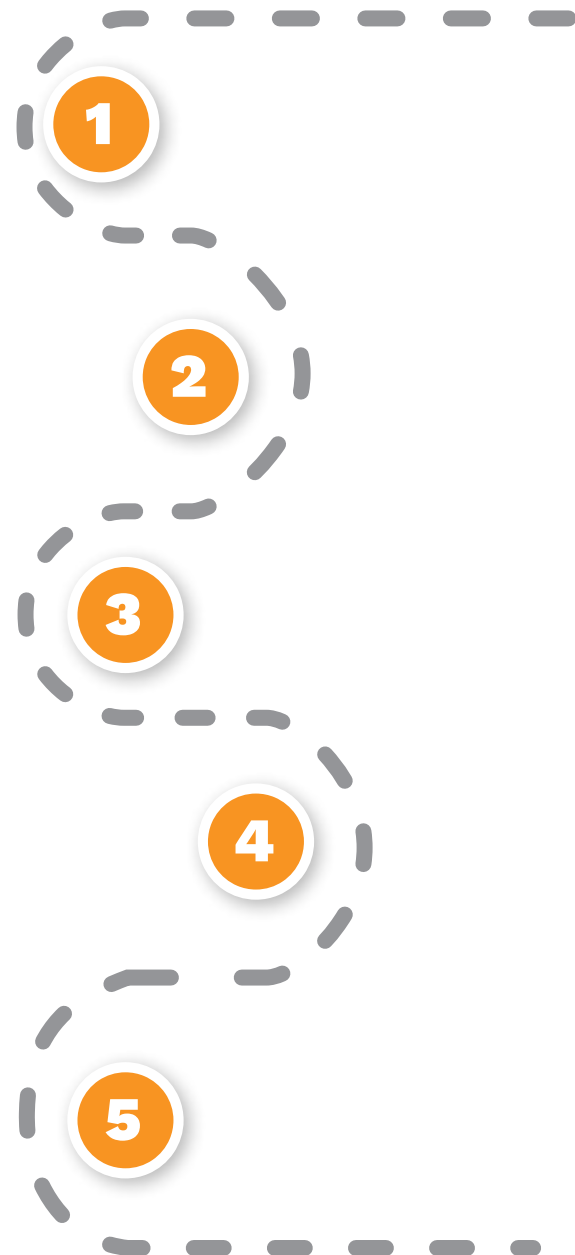
Anyone can be a leader, regardless of their career path or role. Leadership simply means taking the initiative and being accountable.

### Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs who are driven by a purpose operate beyond just the bottom line. People on this work path get support from experienced entrepreneurs to realize their dreams.

### Bringing it all together - Solutions Discovered

Supported by their matched mentors, the discovery teams created solution proposals and pitches for presentation at the October 14th and 26th Climate Solutions Discovery Workshops. Several solutions were explored. The three final solution proposals — centered on Food Security, Workforce Development and Emergency Preparedness — each of these are detailed in Part 3, Chapter 5, *Training + Mentoring = Community Innovation*.



## The Essentials: How To Be a Mentor and Mentee —

Katerina Salto, Mentorship Coordinator at WoodGreen, volunteered her services as a speaker at one of the Ambassador training workshops and facilitated a Mentoring Workshop. WoodGreen is one of the largest social service agencies in Toronto, delivering integrated programs from physical health, mental health and disability services to affordable housing and pathways to employment. She focused on:

- What it means to be a mentor
- Mentee and Mentor Matching
- Connecting with the essential needs of the mentee

According to Katerina, studies show that, with a mentor, job seekers have a much higher success rate in finding a job.<sup>[10]</sup>

At WoodGreen, skilled newcomers are paired with established Canadian mentors from similar professions to assist with transitioning and succeeding in the workplace.

In this Woodgreen video, Community Connections mentor Darrell and newcomer Rahul share their stories and experience with the program.



*I am new to Environmental Science and to climate change action. One-to-one and group mentoring helped form and translate my project into a scalable and fundable idea. Mentoring gave me space to see things objectively and to connect the project to a large, community need and to stakeholders. This provided me with the right language and skills to engage, talk and explain things to others in ways they understand. I also learned the importance of being agile, flexible, and using existing infrastructure to explore different channels to achieve the end game our project sought. Now I know: Set a goal. Work on your short-, medium-, and long-term vision. Track. Continuously improve – and don't give up.*

**Selvajayan,  
St. James Town resident and  
Community Climate Action  
Ambassador**



## A MENTOR SCENARIO BY MADELYN WEBB

Imagine being a newcomer to Toronto. You have great credentials from your home country — but how will you be able to get a job in Toronto? Statistics show that most people get their jobs through networks — friends and relatives who connect them into the job market. What if you have no family and friends in Toronto? It can be daunting and discouraging. Enter the mentor.

I have been mentoring through my career and have been a mentor to newcomers for the past five years through a settlement agency. In my experience, breaking into the job market takes luck, but there are also some approaches that help.

One newcomer I worked with had credentials from his home country and wanted to work in the "water and wastewater" area. He was discouraged when I met him, having sent out many resumés and received no offers. He and his wife had even thought of returning home. They had low-paying "survival" jobs, and lived in a roach-filled apartment with their baby. They needed a break.



Image 26: **The mentoring process is valuable for all involved**

My job was to assess his credentials, provide feedback and to keep his morale up. I didn't do a lot, but I think I helped. My mentee was enterprising. He noticed that the company website where he had applied included an area where employees could comment on their work experience. He noticed a comment, and the person had left his contact information. My mentee called the contact, who was a person from the same country as he came from. That person said: "Send your resumé right away, I will make sure you get the job."

Within days, he had an offer. His pay was low, at the same time his wife got a promotion and a raise at her job. Within two weeks they went from poverty into the middle class!

The story gets better. Fast forward three years and I got a message through LinkedIn that he has news. He has changed jobs and is now a manager. He gives me credit, but really, what did I do? I had faith in him and showed that I cared about his future.

That's really all there is to mentoring — believing in someone and helping them move forward. The mentor's job is to encourage and assist, introducing the mentee to the ins and outs of the system. Mentors help newcomers navigate professional associations and remind them that Canada actually needs their energy and skills as much as they need a good job. Compared with the newcomers' efforts, the mentor's job is easy — being positive, professional and believe in the person you're working with."



There will be more indirect environmental jobs as well as jobs with a direct connection to climate action such as resource management, environmental monitoring and climate mitigation and adaptation.

Canada also faces a looming skills shortage as older skilled workers reach retirement age. Retirements are already leading to the opening of new opportunities and will lead to new job openings at a level not seen for generations.<sup>[11]</sup>

## THE LEADERSHIP PATH AND FRAME OF MIND<sup>[13]</sup>

A leadership frame of mind is important. To be a leader, one must think like a leader — what responsibilities does it involve and what are others looking for from you? A leadership frame of mind is basic — it's the driving component of everything effective leaders do to connect with individuals, increase engagement, retention and build loyalty and commitment.

With a focus on leadership, this workshop supported the goal of unlocking the untapped talent of the St. James Town neighbourhood, where many residents are foreign-trained professionals and newcomers. In consultation with St. James Town members, the workshop was designed and facilitated by Darla Campbell.

### What It Takes to Be a Leader

With a leadership frame of mind, everyone has the capacity to be a leader in different aspects of life: work, family, community and more. Even when we encounter major or everyday challenges, a leadership frame of mind helps overcome these challenges in an incredibly diverse community like St. James Town.

### Leading In Today's Changing Climate

This changing climate and surrounding issues such as coping with the pandemic and the push for equality through movements such as Black Lives Matter points to one thing: the need to do things differently.

We gravitate towards like-minded people and ideas. But by deliberately cultivating inclusive leadership (vs. top-down command control), we hope to build more diverse and sustainable organizations. Creating a sense of belonging allows people and organizations to perform better.<sup>[12]</sup> Even if you're not officially a leader, you can still let differences shine and lead by example.



*One thing that excites me about Rethinking Sustainability is how we have helped identify climate, resilience, and sustainability as important both for individuals and the organizations they're involved in and that represent them. We were early adopters in bringing different people and groups together. When you look at any problem through different lenses and perspectives, you bring more than the usual suspects to the table. Our mission statement talks about leaders. By this we mean leaders at all levels, within and beyond the community.*

**Darla Campbell,  
Rethink Sustainability Initiatives  
(RSI) Chair**



## THE PATH OF PURPOSE DRIVEN ENTREPRENEURS<sup>[14]</sup>

Another option is creating your own opportunities.

To learn from leaders on this type of career path, we hosted a mentoring workshop for individuals from both inside and outside St. James Town who aspire to be an entrepreneur. Facilitated by RSI Founder and CCA-SJT project Lead, Yasmin Glanville, it featured entrepreneurs and founders of CleanTech, Sustainability/Youth Education, Professional Services and Social Impact organizations.



### The Purpose Driven Entrepreneur Panelists:

#### Wen Jie Li, M.Eng., Co-founder, Sustained

Consultant in green buildings and decarbonization, small business owner, social entrepreneur empowering youth climate action.

#### Patrick Gossage, MBA, Co-founder, Good Energy Partners

Entrepreneur focused on the transition to a low carbon future in North America and South Africa.

#### Paola Ruiz, PMP, CBPP, Founder & CEO, Strategy Advisory Solutions Inc.

Senior advisor and fractional strategist to purpose-driven Latino businesses. Serial entrepreneur and Indigenous rights advocate.



*This was a big "Aha!"  
that I can be a leader with  
the right frame of mind.*

**Ali Kasiri,  
Community Climate  
Action Ambassador**



## What is an Entrepreneur Frame of Mind?

- **Entrepreneurs** find value in things that personally inspire and motivate them. They have different definitions of success as well.
- **Employees** look outside to others for motivation, direction and validation. They may measure success in more traditional ways: compensation, title, influence, etc.

**Entrepreneurs think differently.** They are driven by a purpose-focused vision. Instead of waiting for opportunities to find them, they go out and create them. Even entrepreneurs can't succeed alone; they need mentoring on how to realize their dreams as business owners.

## Why be an entrepreneur instead of working for someone else?

### Entrepreneurs ...

- Like to do things their own way to achieve something they are passionate about.
- See an unmet need as an opportunity to do something better and faster.
- Often start by looking for alternate ways to do what they do "on the side" and then discover they enjoy building a business and delivering what they're passionate about full time.

**A big challenge for entrepreneurs** — sustaining the confidence that they could succeed. Friends, family, and mentors provide needed encouragement.

**Definition of Success** — "Looking back, the number one thing the workshop entrepreneurs say they would do differently? To have started sooner."

## Solutions Discovered

Supported by their mentors, the discovery teams of St. James Town residents and community stakeholders created solution proposals and pitches. The solutions centered on food, emergency preparedness, energy and buildings and workforce development. They were presented at the October 2021 Climate Solutions Discovery Workshops and are profiled in this Playbook.



### My advice to entrepreneurs starting out

*Overcome FEAR — "False Evidence Appearing Real."  
When you have an idea,  
do your homework.*

*Research all the elements you will need to be successful: what is your market and how can you adapt to fit their needs, what is your competition, what geographical areas will be suitable for your product, and how will you structure your business?*

*Should you wish to turn a pastime into a business, be sure that you can make a living from your work. You will constantly be on the lookout for efficiencies, ways to reduce waste and work smarter.*

**Paola Ruiz, Founder-CEO  
Strategy Advisory Solutions**



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 *To mentor people for community climate action, identify the challenge and improvement goals first.*
- 2 *Mentors need to understand the culture, competency and talents of mentees and build on these.*
- 3 *Mentors should be sought from among professionals from the broader community.*
- 4 *Leadership training has a deep impact both personally and professionally.*
- 5 *Hearing from entrepreneurs with experience boosts confidence in taking this approach to a career.*
- 6 *A well-organized job search or entrepreneurial path involves planning and can yield more reasonable expectations.*
- 7 *The community should also hear more about the benefits and availability of mentoring for newcomers to Canada and different generations.*

## TRAINING + MENTORING = COMMUNITY INNOVATION

ONE OF THE UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES WAS THE  
LEVEL OF PROGRAM INNOVATION THAT COULD  
OCCUR THROUGH THE PROCESS

The CCA-SJT Project was never envisioned in the abstract. RSI is a think tank that does produce thought leadership and best practice papers in the hope of inspiring innovative, scalable sustainability and resiliency solutions. However, our organization is also heavily invested in action. We describe ourselves as a think-and-do organization and the journey we initiated in St. James Town soon demonstrated results that reflected this philosophy.

As described in the previous chapters, we collaborated with engaged stakeholders, first to train them on the mechanics of climate change action and its implementation. Then we added a mentoring program to not only inspire but also foster self-confidence and innovation.

The participants in the mentoring program were divided into three teams — to create their own ideas for climate change action and develop proposals that would be grant-ready to implement.

### **The Collaborative Solutions Discovery Focus and Work teams**

#### **Community Infrastructure & Resilience**

Mentors: Wen Li, Kirk Johnson and Daniela Bodden

Peer Leaders: Julia Baranovsky, Justin Hung, Ali Kasiri, Alaa Hammoudi

#### **Local Food**

Mentors: Patrick Gossage and Paola Ruiz

Peer Mentors: Selvajayan Vijayarangan, Vicky Koirala and Ashish Panji

#### **Workforce Development**

Mentors: Raymond Holganza, Madelyn Webb and Katerina Salto

Peer Mentors: Michelle Clarke and Habib Rahman

Here are their proposals.

# TEAM 1 - EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESILIENCE

## Project Overview

Our project brings together community and resident leaders to mobilize an emergency preparedness and infrastructure resilience strategy in St. James Town. We propose:

1. Bring Tower Renewal's Green Champion and RSI Climate Ambassador training to SJT, popularize the City of Toronto's Floor Captains initiative, and run emergency preparedness and low-carbon workforce/volunteer training for St. James Town residents.
2. Analyze how St. James Town building owners are now positioned on sustainability and emergency preparedness. Discuss plans to upgrade building infrastructure and meet RentSafeTO guidelines, funding, and potential for strategic partnerships to achieve low-carbon and climate/emergency readiness goals.
3. Pilot of Resiliency Rooms in St. James Town high-rises which will provide residents with emergency preparedness resources, programming and services, allowing access to indoor space to develop building plans.

We aim to deliver our project by the summer of 2023.

## Problem and Solutions

### Infrastructure and Building Owners Dialogue

Residents of St. James Town's 19 high-rise towers are particularly vulnerable to climate change because most of these buildings were built in the 1960s and 70s and are aging rapidly. The buildings have poor insulation, and aging heating, water and electrical systems, with only minimum maintenance. The buildings do not have active cooling and with summers getting hotter, residents face health and comfort issues. It is not readily apparent how building owners are willing to invest in community resiliency and future climate readiness.

Our proposal to develop Resiliency Rooms in St. James Town will create spaces for emergency preparedness in high-rise buildings, with emergency food, water, first aid, heating and cooling stations, electricity and telecommunications.



These rooms will also provide space for community groups and residents to gather, run educational programming and prepare emergency services. We hope to pilot one or more Resiliency Rooms by the summer of 2023, and to work with each building ownership group in St. James Town to create Resiliency Rooms for their residents based on the pilot project.

The City of Toronto's RentSafeTO Building Evaluations indicates that many St. James Town high-rises need building system upgrades. Understanding how building owners would like to address these issues will help us find resources and form mutually beneficial partnerships to explore new low-carbon and climate-ready opportunities.

As we work towards collaboration, the Tower Renewal "Field Guide to Retrofits in Occupied Buildings" will serve as an excellent resource to assist building owners, the construction industry and apartment residents on effective retrofitting.

### **Social Capital**

As the danger of climate change events increases, most residents lack the resources and opportunities to prepare and act. Some St. James Town community groups have organized environmental and emergency preparedness activities in recent years, helping to lay the groundwork for this project. It's necessary to have a critical mass of residents ready, willing and able to act.

Residents trained as Green Champions can engage their neighbours in energy efficiency, water conservation and waste diversion actions through workshops, activities and information booths. These programs encourage tenants to engage and work with property managers that will continue after the training.

The City of Toronto's Floor Captains initiative for Emergency Preparedness will help residents and building managers as the initiative encourages tenants to participate in building safety measures.

We look to run specialized emergency preparedness training for St. James Town residents and have seen that a diverse set of community groups have a history of doing this. The St. James Town Community Co-op has distributed hundreds of brochures and supplies provided by the City of Toronto's Office of Emergency Management and engaged residents in dialogue. Community Resilience to Extreme Weather (CREW)

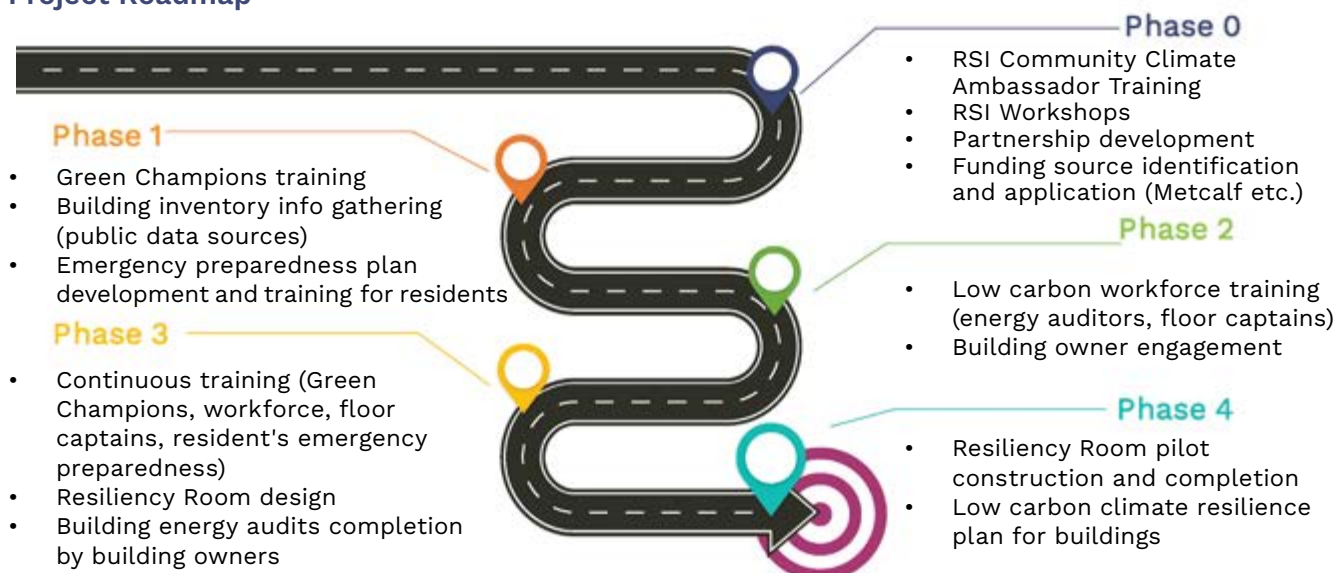
has organized emergency preparedness workshops and Floor Captain training at 77 Howard Street and 650 Parliament Street. And the St. James Town Community Corner has run several emergency preparedness workshops. For our proposed Emergency Preparedness project, we look to collaborate with these groups and others like Wellesley Community Centre, The New Common and Sherbourne Health.

## Benefits and Impact

Succeeding with this project would be a win-win for the St. James Town community, building owners and the City of Toronto. This project should set a good example of a community-based strategy for climate resilience and to achieve the following goals:

- Residents will be empowered through training and team building to address climate issues, actions, emergency plans and response strategies. They will gain trust in a community more able to support their well-being. They will have access to emergency resources and spaces to gather and organize in case of an emergency.
- Community groups will be able to dialogue and collaborate with other stakeholders to build the emergency preparedness and infrastructure resilience needed in the community.
- Building owners will benefit from having plans and tenant engagement for meeting GHG reduction goals and upgrading their buildings to be future-ready.
- The City of Toronto and other levels of government will be better connected, informed and able to support the development and execution of emergency preparedness and low-carbon resilient infrastructure strategies.

## Project Roadmap



## TEAM 2: LOCAL FOOD FOR ST. JAMES TOWN PILOT PROJECT

This is an Initiative to research, and promote accessible, affordable and locally grown food for the St. James Town community — powered by Knowledge and Partnerships.

### Project Description

Local Food for St. James Town Pilot Project will enable the residents to improve their access to proper nutrition through the application of research-based solutions aimed to increase local food availability.

#### Research Phase 1 — St. James Town Residents

A study on the SJT community's dense, diverse multilingual population will bring in many elements that serve as key indicators for food preferences in the community. The market research will determine the potential for locally grown food in St. James Town and allow us greater insights on the challenges residents face in accessing locally grown food.

#### Research Phase 2 — St. James Town Supply Chain

Connect with small and marginal local farmers and research the impediments they face in getting their products direct to market.

#### Research Phase 3 — Solution Design

Based on the above research, develop a case study report and research-based solution through partnering with retailers and local farmers, and develop a plan to provide a sustainable system where the farm produce is accessible and available all year round in retail stores.

### The problems this addresses

- St. James Town is a densely populated neighborhood with more than 20,000 residents in various income brackets, where the majority do not have access to locally farmed foods as a choice for good nutrition.
- Limited retail stores in St. James Town with reduced healthy lifestyle choices for residents.
- St. James Town does not host weekend local markets or farm market festivals.



## Solutions

- **Case Study and research-based solution:** Evidence-based understanding of why there is no access to locally farmed foods, and a delineated pilot project with residents and retail partnerships for scaled implementation.
- **Resident connection:** Research to understand the impediments faced by residents and how to create awareness of the impacts of access to locally farmed foods.
- **Farmers' connection:** Research focused on understanding profit-potentials and impediments faced by small and marginal farmers to provide farmed/local foods to residents.

## Goals

1. Increase the choice and access for the St. James Town community's locally farm-grown foods that are affordable and sustainable.
2. Improve the market scope of small and marginal farmers.
3. Develop a research-based solution by partnering with key stakeholders such as; retailers, consumers and farmers.

## Long-Term Objectives

1. Provide St. James Town community affordable and accessible nutrition choices for people of all financial levels.
2. Educate the St. James Town community on the importance of locally grown foods and create a healthy demand for this market so all the stakeholders can benefit.
3. Work to create job markets for the residents by promoting and marketing home-grown foods, increase the market size for small and marginal local farmers and ensure food security by easing the pressure on food imports and promote a sustainable and healthy lifestyle.
4. Align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being; Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; Goal 13: Climate Action; and Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal.
5. Help save our soils. To take individual responsibility to save the soils of Ontario.

## TEAM 3: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Problem

Despite the high rate of postsecondary education in St. James Town, the poverty rate is between 40 and 50 per cent. Foreign trained professionals have difficulty accessing jobs at an appropriate level and salary. This is often because of the complexity of settlement challenges in Toronto. For example, insufficient settlement services, transportation issues, childcare costs, etc. Older workers who have not been able to find jobs in their chosen field will also be eligible for the program.

### Solution

Mentoring Circles are a proven method for peers to help one another in settlement and job search. Mentoring Circles in St. James Town will bring together individuals who are job seekers in various areas of science, technology, sustainability, IT and related fields, whose expertise will be valuable in the exploding job market in Ontario and across Canada in the environmental field. The Mentoring Circles will be facilitated, and the group(s) will self-identify the areas for augmenting knowledge and/or skills. The facilitator will arrange for speakers and mentoring in the areas identified. For example, inviting entrepreneurs and employers to the sessions will introduce our job seekers to opportunities, assistance with soft skills and workplace norms will boost confidence, and help for those seeking work in second or third careers — for example older workers — will smooth the path to their redeployment.

Potential funding sources have been identified, both private and government. Between \$100,000 and \$200,000 will be sought to implement the circles.

Potential partners include: WoodGreen Settlement Services, Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada - e.g. Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC), Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), and other umbrella settlement services for newcomers, along with private foundations.



## Connection to Climate

According to EcoCanada, environmental jobs will explode in Ontario and across Canada over the next 10 years. This is due not only to the climate crisis where, in the future, almost every job will need some understanding of climate issues either directly or indirectly. For example, accountant will report on GHGs; manager will work on reducing the carbon footprint from day-to-day operations. Jobs with a direct connection to climate such as resource management and environmental monitoring will increase. In addition, retirements will see the opening up of jobs at a level not seen for generations.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Benefits and Impacts

The Mentoring Circles acknowledge and help overcome the barriers of newcomers and those who may have been out of the workforce for a time. By having the groups identify their own needs, the activities, including guest speakers and mentoring will be tailored directly to the needs of the group/individuals. The direct benefits to St. James Town residents will be to gain a better understanding of the opportunities in the workplace and help address issues of confidence. Should a job result, the benefits to the individuals and their families will be significant.





PART 4

## **INSPIRING ACTION - THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

CHAPTER 1.

THE JOURNEY TO NET ZERO

CHAPTER 2.

OUR APPROACH AND ITS RESULTS



## THE JOURNEY TO NET-ZERO

The built environment of St. James Town has had a significant impact on the release of carbon emissions in our atmosphere. Without significant changes these emissions will not only continue; they will increase. The impact of built environments such as SJT, around the world, is responsible for nearly 40 per cent of annual global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>[16]</sup> Nearly two-thirds of the buildings that exist today — both residential and non-residential — will be operating in 2040, so greenhouse gas limiting measure must focus on this critically important area.

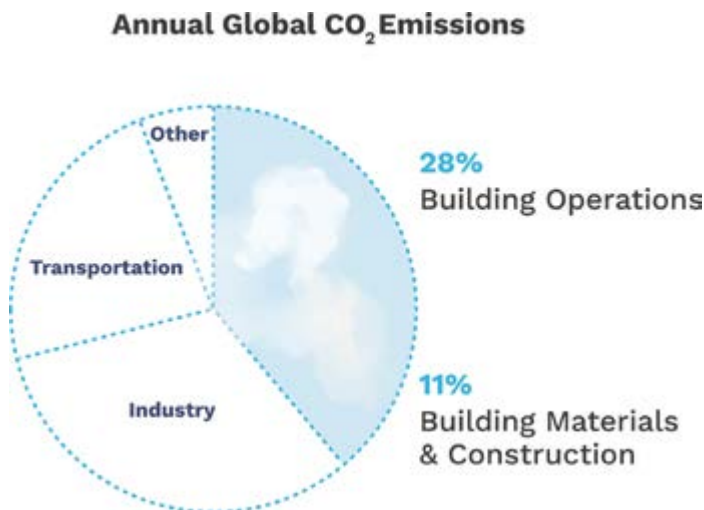


Image 27: ©Architecture 2030. All Rights Reserved. Data Sources: Global ABC Global Status Report 2018, EIA

GHG-limiting measures will require changes in building technology and designs for maintaining the comfort of people, including heating, cooling, water, and wastewater infrastructure, as well as electricity. The primary goal needs to be reducing overall demand for energy. Doing this also involves improving energy efficiency, repairing leaking buildings, mold, flooded basements and so on. Over the next three decades, there will need to be substantial investment in net-zero energy efficiency. Typically, these investments are best made at critical points in a building's lifecycle (such as during renovations, change of ownership and capital improvement cycles).



*It is essential for tenants, owners, investors and governments to improve physical and social resilience proactively, constructively and systematically before future shocks and stressors make rebounding difficult to impossible.*

**Philippe Bernier,**  
A Senior Real Estate Sector  
Sustainability Leader



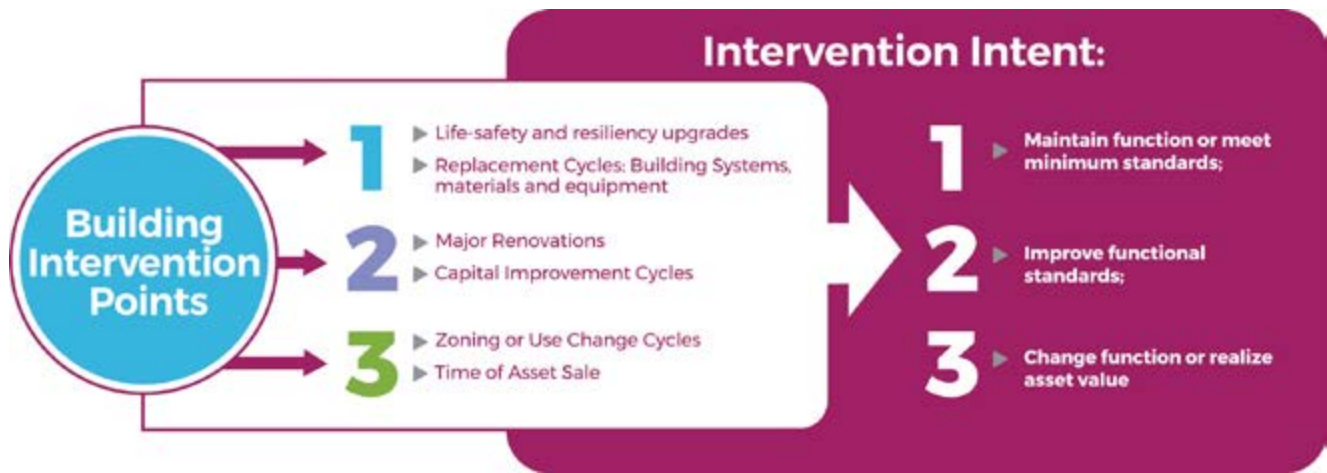


Image 28: **The most critical points at which climate change action intervention can occur**  
 Source: Planet & Company report

In St. James Town, for example, many of the buildings have original heating equipment and most have no cooling. These buildings are prime candidates for building envelope and window upgrades. Such upgrades will reduce heat losses and improve energy efficiency. Natural gas use should be eliminated through electrification and replacing natural gas boilers with ground source heat pumps. This could be accomplished on a per-unit or per-building basis or as part of a larger district energy system.

The chart below, shown on page 126, details the installation dates of the heating equipment in each of the St. James Town buildings, some as long ago as 1964. Also, only one building has air conditioning.

General Building Info							
No.	Street #	Site Address	Heating Equipment Status	Heating Equip. Instal. Year	Heating Type	Air Conditioning Type	Cooling Room
1	375	BLEECKER ST	ORIGINAL	1969	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
2	325	BLEECKER ST	ORIGINAL	1969	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
3	275	BLEECKER ST	ORIGINAL	1969	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
4	99	HOWARD ST	REPLACED	1964	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
5	77	HOWARD ST	ORIGINAL	1969	ELECTRIC	NONE	NO
6	730	ONTARIO ST	ORIGINAL	1967	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
7	700	ONTARIO ST	ORIGINAL	1965	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
8	666	ONTARIO ST	REPLACED	2016	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
9	650	PARLIAMENT ST	ORIGINAL	1969	ELECTRIC	NONE	NO
10	670	PARLIAMENT ST	REPLACED	2013	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
11	135	ROSE AVE	ORIGINAL	1964	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
12	565	SHERBOURNE ST	ORIGINAL	1978	HOT WATER	NONE	YES
13	561	SHERBOURNE ST	ORIGINAL	2017	HOT WATER	CENTRAL AIR	YES
14	555	SHERBOURNE ST	ORIGINAL	1978	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
15	545	SHERBOURNE ST	ORIGINAL	1977	HOT WATER	NONE	NO
16	280	WELLESLEY ST E	ORIGINAL	1969	ELECTRIC	NONE	NO
17	260	WELLESLEY ST E	ORIGINAL	1968	ELECTRIC	NONE	NO
18	240	WELLESLEY ST E	ORIGINAL	1968	ELECTRIC	NONE	NO
19	200	WELLESLEY ST E	ORIGINAL	1970	HOT WATER	NONE	NO

Image 29: **St. James Town Buildings Heating and Cooling information**

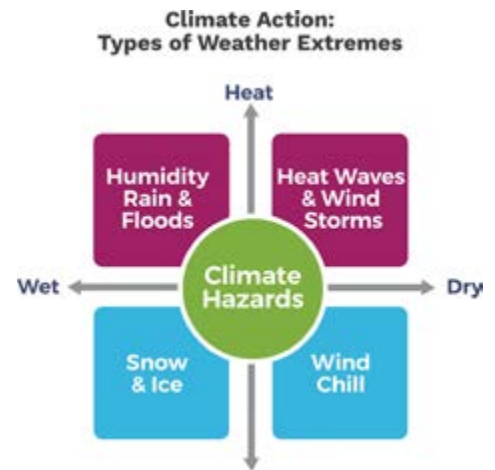
Source: June 2021, City of Toronto Apartment Building Registration Data. <https://open.toronto.ca/dataset/apartment-building-registration/>

## CLIMATE IMPACT ON SAFETY IN BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

Existing buildings also require adaptations to improve their level of safety. Climate change has a direct impact on safety in built environments. Our interviews with St. James Town residents (documented in the next chapter) demonstrated the harmful and sometimes devastating effects of weather extremes on personal safety and quality of life that climate change has imposed.

Climate change is increasing the frequency of these hazards, with extreme weather events creating cascading effects in the built environment and infrastructure.

This cascading effect on municipal infrastructure can be seen in the impacts from ice storms and snow, not only in St. James Town but all urban high-rise communities in Canada.

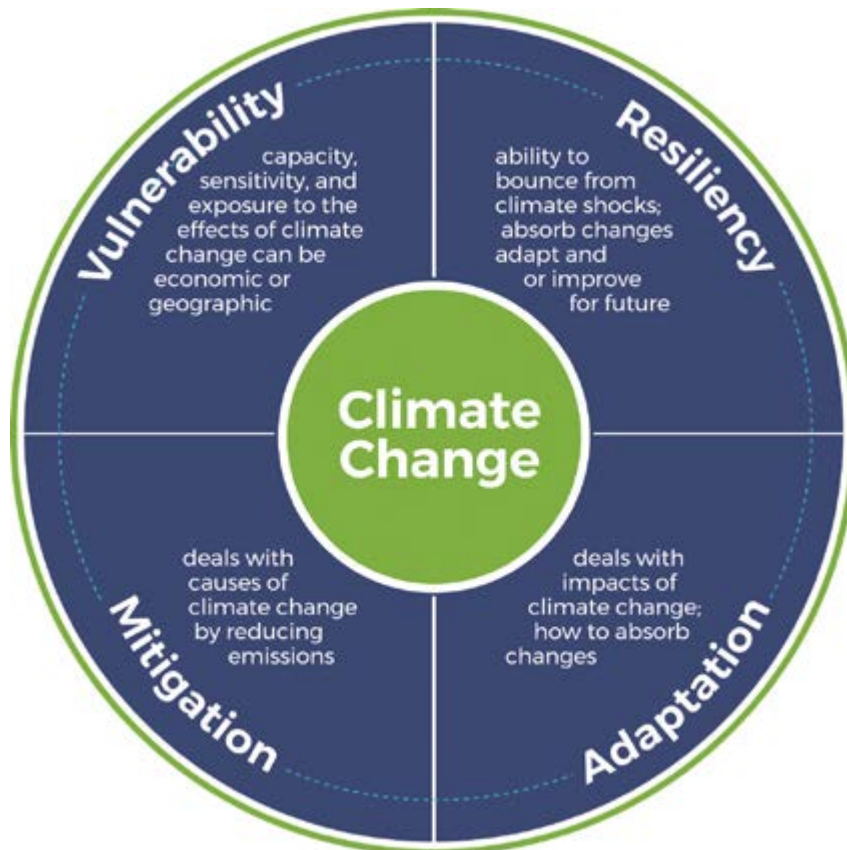




At the other end of the scale, heat waves create unsatisfactory conditions for residents and the buildings themselves. Such conditions cause public health crises that risk hospitalization and possible death.



Communities cannot address the extremes of climate hazards alone. The goal must be to foster community resilience. Climate change action must include mitigation and adaptation in the built environment, as illustrated below.



**Mitigation** and **adaptation** are both important, but they are different things. Mitigation means reducing climate change by reducing the carbon emissions that cause it. It's an important part of making the community less vulnerable.

**Adaptation** is also important to reduce individuals' and communities' vulnerability. It means adjusting to the climate change impacts that have already arrived. Mitigation and adaptation are both important — we need to mitigate so the effects of climate change don't get worse, and we need to adapt to what we're living with now.

Another important concept is resilience — think of it as a key station on the journey to sustainability.

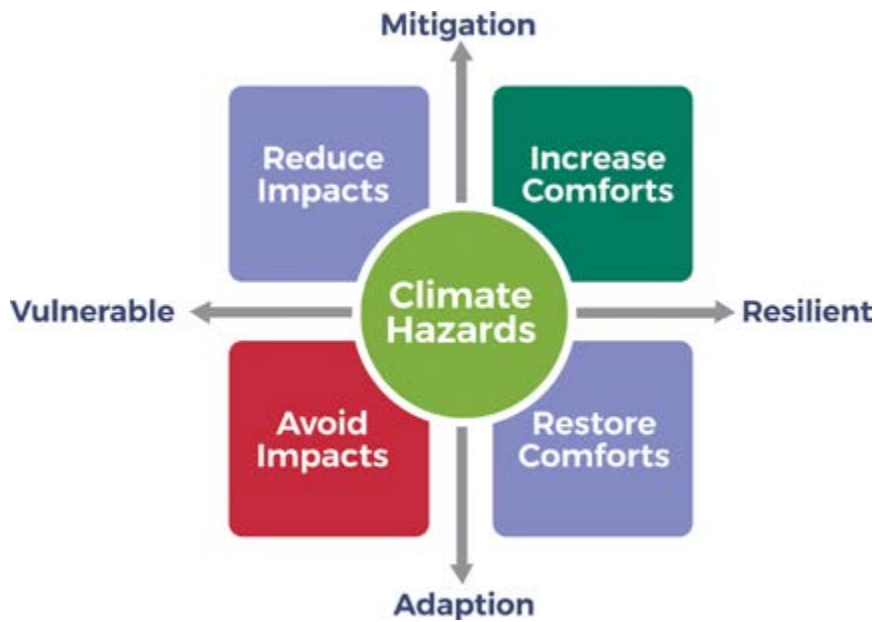
There are at least two types of resilience — passive and reactive.

**Passive resilience** is not entirely passive — it means preparing for climate change impacts before they happen, for example, by reinforcing infrastructure such as roads, bridges or sewers. If the work is done beforehand, it's easier for a community to be “passive” and stand by when a severe weather event caused by climate change rears its head.

**Reactive resilience** is more straightforward. It means adapting or repairing buildings and systems to make them “normal” again after climate change has wreaked havoc.

Planning for climate change begins with understanding climate hazards in a local context. Adaptation and mitigation can reduce the impacts of climate induced stresses such as gradual warming and changing precipitation patterns, as well as shocks such as floods, heat waves and storms. Having an idea of what kinds of stresses and shocks might hit a particular community makes it easier to plan mitigation and adaptation strategies, easing the journey to resilience.

### Climate Hazards in St. James Town



The climate hazards in St. James Town are serious, yet they’re not hard to determine. Impacts can be grouped into categories everyone understands — hot, cold, wet, dry and windy. We worked with people in St. James Town to assess the impacts of these hazards on buildings, and also on the amenities and the surrounding area that impacts residents’ quality of life. Grouping impacts of climate hazards in this way makes it easier to understand the cause-and-effect relationships.

That makes the journey toward resilience clearer.

## OUR APPROACH AND ITS RESULTS

Determining what the St. James Town community perceives as climate risks will promote buy-in and increase the likelihood of action — both mitigation and adaptation — to improve resilience.

To understand perceptions of risk within the St. James Town community, we conducted interviews, focusing on how the built environment — the St. James Town buildings and adjacent areas — had been impacted by extreme weather events.

We spoke to six experts from non-profits, government and private consulting with expertise in buildings, planning, sustainability and climate resilience. The experts interviewed were City of Toronto staff, discipline experts and other building and community stakeholders. We also interviewed the public sector owners of four of St. James Town's 19 residential buildings, Toronto Community Housing. In an ideal setting, the private building owners and operators would be interviewed as well. Unfortunately, this project was not able to interview these St. James Town building owners. For reasons that we are unaware of, they did not respond to our invitations.

Interviews were structured loosely. This approach allowed for natural conversations and a broader understanding of both issues facing high-rise communities in general and site-specific issues facing the St. James Town community.

The interviews focused on infrastructure themes and were summarized for later elaboration and discussion during the climate impact workshops. There were common themes which included both positives and negatives.

We heard about major issues:

- Aging electrical infrastructure
- Inadequate cooling and heating
- Challenges accessing buildings and upper floors, as well as vulnerable tenants
- Flooding and damage to properties
- Power outages
- Disconnected communities

We also heard about positive efforts, such as the development of community groups, and several embryonic opportunities related to grassroots actions already taking place in St. James Town:

- STEP – Sustainable Towers Engaging People
- City of Toronto Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization Unit
- Green Champions Network

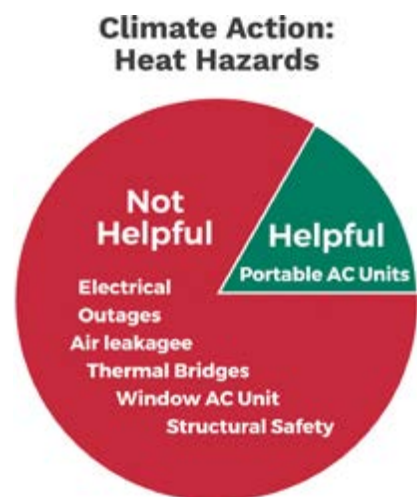
### What did the interviewees say?

Interviewees did not view extreme weather events in St. James Town as a risk. They said that extreme events have not yet had a significant impact on buildings, although some said that more extreme events could pose problems in the future. Resilience issues surrounding chronic heating and cooling are of greatest concern to the community. These concerns about vulnerability to future climate hazards such as heat waves, extreme heat and long-term warming were evident in what interviewees said about baseline building conditions. People were concerned especially about the potential for interconnected or cascading effects:

- **Electrical systems** for many of the St. James Town buildings are reaching their end of life, concern for heat (and flood) events tripping the systems
- **AC units** are expensive for tenants to run, and sometimes installed inefficiently with no guidance from landlords
- AC “window shakers” affect the structural integrity of windows
- Window ACs create large **air leakage** in winter, increasing heating load

These problems have led to two different reactions or responses.

- Private **building owners** are banning AC units due to safety concerns, no metered electricity and damage to windows.
- Meanwhile, Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) — owners of four of St. James Town buildings — has replaced 20,000 window AC units with **portable AC units** across their portfolio. TCHC continues to talk with vendors about energy-efficient models, and with the Ontario’s Independent Electricity Systems Operator on providing incentives for portables.



Experts' opinions solicited during the interviews indicated that the consequences of these divergent responses pose the risk that future hazards will increase.



*We do a post-assessment on how buildings are functioning with water, energy, and waste and create a picture of whether there's [improvement] or change that can be made. Then we talk to building owners and say, "Hey! There's an opportunity here not only to engage residents but to improve the overall landscape of how your building functions." We create opportunities for residents to connect with building managers and staff, as well.*

**Tricia Clarke**  
**Community Development Officer, Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization, City of Toronto**



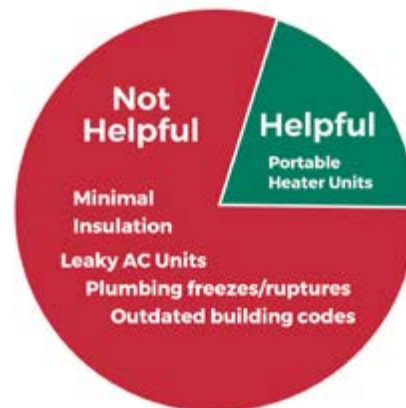
Similarly, concerns were voiced about snow, winter storms, extreme cold and alternating freeze-thaw cycles:

- Older **building codes** with minimal insulation
- **Freezing of the plumbing lines** leading to flooding and impacts on electrical system
- **Fire and flooding** in buildings

Concerns associated with intense rainfall, prolonged rainfall, overland flooding and thunderstorms:

- Roof **leaks** and **flooding** of basements
- **Envelope issues** with water ingress, leaks and mold
- **Access issues** — elevator and suite access issues during flooding and power outages
- **Mental health** — in-suite **isolation** due to natural disasters/hotter summers and not having common spaces and amenities for social or leisure activities

**Climate Action:  
Cold Hazards**



**Climate Action:  
Wet Hazards**



Interviewees highlighted several passive resilience measures that could be taken to counteract potential future issues related to heat and cold:

- Improving building envelopes (e.g., insulation and repairs)
- Increasing building efficiency
- Upgrading the power system
- Developing of cooling centres for extreme heat and other methods of cooling that do not require air conditioning window units

Increasing outdoor temperatures will ultimately lead to higher energy consumption during the summer months, unless passive forms of resilience are used (for example, external shading, façade improvements).

Our interviews outlined a common theme for the St. James Town community: energy consumption and efficiency are top priorities.

Future heat waves and cold snaps will clearly impact the community by increasing energy consumption and potentially inducing power failures. These issues will undoubtedly be exacerbated by the aging electrical system in some buildings, which likely will need to be replaced.



*Neighbourhoods rely on transit – mobility during extreme [weather] events is affected. Residents can suffer heat exhaustion waiting for buses or not be mobile during major storms.*

**Lauralyn Johnston,  
Project Manager, Tower and  
Neighbourhood Revitalization,  
City of Toronto**

*Upgrading windows or boilers and things like that can hopefully, at the end of the day ... creates a better place for residents to stay, they're happy, and they're not transitioning out.*

**Tricia Clarke,  
Community Development  
Officer, Tower and  
Neighbourhood Revitalization**



## CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS WORKSHOP

Following discussion and interviews with local experts and community members on climate change impacts and risks for St. James Town, a virtual workshop was held to discuss different climate hazards and how they will impact the built environment.

We organized the built environment into four separate categories to describe how the different climate hazards (hot, cold, wet, dry, and wind) may impact them:

- **Building** refers to the building's envelope, shell or roof as well as the interior, structure, mechanical systems (e.g., HVAC), plumbing, fire, electrical and other specialty services.
- **Amenities** refers to green spaces around the community as well as stores and shops for services.
- **Surrounding Area** refers to any geographic area within St. James Town, or immediately adjacent, that is not covered under buildings and amenities.
- **Quality of Life** refers to health and safety within St. James Town, ranging from accessibility issues to general comfort.

The climate impacts workshop engaged attendees and speakers in a dynamic exchange of sharing and discovery. Attendees included a broad cross-section of stakeholders from the community, public sector, non-profit sector and consulting industry. Professionals included planners, engineers, sustainability consultants, researchers, social policy staff and architects.

Dr. Alec Hay described in his presentation “Our World is Changing” the key characteristics of communities that have proved to be resilient. Changes in society and technology coming at the same time are amplifying the impact of a changing climate. These changes are showing up in deteriorating health and education among the most vulnerable people and steep rises in both insured and uninsured losses.

Hay suggests that stakeholders band together in an association of partners to enable substantive and sustainable change. Such an association should include representatives from among residents, building owners, municipal staff and all community amenities. A community that becomes stable and cohesively grows in social value. This can lead to rising incomes, commercial activity, and higher land values. All stakeholders benefit.

### Climate Impact Workshops

- 1 *Sept 2021*  
**Climate Impacts Workshop – Building Stakeholders workshop**  
*Facilitated by Climate consultant Shane O'Hanlon, featuring Dr. Alexander (Alec) Hay.*
- 2 *Nov 2022*  
**Resilient and Connected Communities: Looking Back. Moving Forward**  
*Facilitated by Senior Climate Scientist, Dr. Norman Shippee, and the CCA-SJT Project Lead and RSI Founder, Yasmin Glanville, this workshop focused on climate adaptation and resiliency building strategies and practices for high-rise communities. Featured a diverse group of speakers from Canada and Denmark.*

The metric of effective change is beneficial capability, where all residents have access to the amenities they require and are capable of benefiting from them. The relationship between these broad partnerships and improvements is reflected across several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The following image illustrates key stakeholder relationships that are required for building resilient and sustainable communities.



## Common characteristics of resilient communities:

- 1 *Community Focus where all can interact*
- 2 *Community Identity*
- 3 *Infrastructure that is in balance with the needs of the community*
- 4 *An inclusive and cooperative relationship with neighbouring communities and stakeholder groups*
- 5 *Confidence in leadership*

Hazard/ Impact	Hazard/ Impact	Cold	Wet	Windy	Dry
Building	Electrical overload during heat waves	Heating system susceptible to failure from cold temperatures  Condensation issues	Electrical systems in building basements exposed to water ingress  Wind—driven rain can damage masonry and slab edges also resulting in interior mold/ damage.	Rooftop items not sufficiently tied down.  Wind tunnels cause issues for doors opening  O&M report work is restricted during wind events.  Draft from elevator, etc cause issues opening unit doors.	
Amenities and Surrounding Area	Little green space offers limited shade and higher heat island effect		Limited green space to impede stormwater		Green roofs may pose fire hazard during droughts

Image 30: **Identified climate hazards and risks for St. James Town from the climate impacts workshop**

As in the interview process, the workshop revealed that many in the St. James Town community are concerned with buildings' electrical systems. People reported that heat or cold as well as rainfall caused problems and exacerbated vulnerabilities within the buildings and their electricals. Wind also causes building-related issues, driving rain toward and into buildings, letting water in and creating drafts that prevent residents from opening doors both for their units and for entry to the building.



When the topic of amenities came up, green spaces were mentioned often. The areas around buildings matter to people and affect their quality of life. In a world with changing and more extreme climate, green spaces are important. During hot summer days they provide shade, and during rainstorms they help to impede stormwater.

Green spaces also provide social and health benefits. At the same time, some residents in St. James Town said that they are concerned about green roofs; people worried that these roofs could potentially catch fire during hot, dry summers. In addition to being concerned about heat, residents said that wind poses an immediate risk for units with balconies, as unsecured items could be disturbed and pose a hazard to pedestrians below.

## ADAPTATION WORKSHOP

To transform the climate change impacts heard in the first workshop into action, we conducted a second workshop focused on climate change adaptation actions.

In a typical setting, this workshop would focus on actions that building owners and operators could address to improve the resilience of their assets and increase return on investment. However, building owners and operators did not participate. The focus of the adaptation workshop therefore changed to help empower attendees, including community leaders, to develop solutions to improve the community resilience of St. James Town. The workshop included four presentations and a panel discussion about moving toward climate adaptation.

Climate Scientist, Dr. Shippee says climate change is simple, serious, and solvable.

## Future Climate Projections

### Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Scenarios:

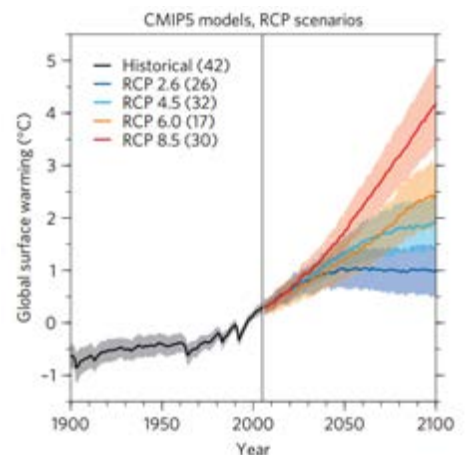
Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP) 8.5

- **"Business-as-usual"** emissions scenario
- Temperature Change: **3.7°C (2.6°C to 4.8°C)**
- **Time Horizons – Align with Design Life of Key Components**



*There are a lot of complex issues around climate change, but the concept of what's causing it is really quite simple: burning fossil fuels puts more CO2 into the atmosphere, causing the temperature to rise. The effects of which are exacerbated by human activity. There is absolutely no doubt that humans are the cause of climate change.*

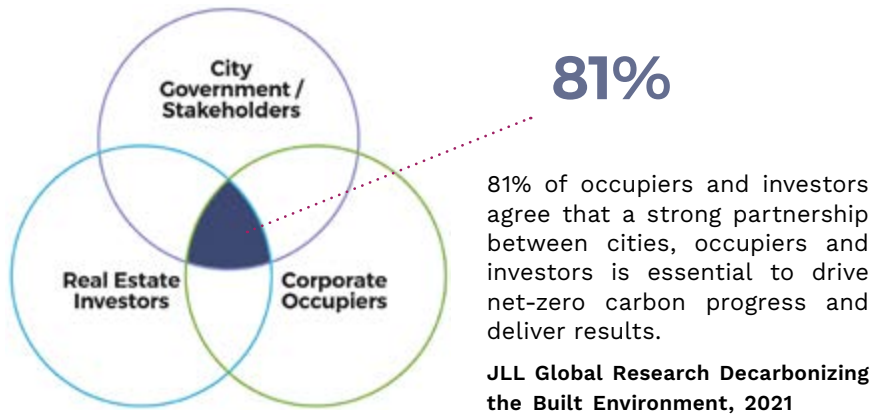
**Dr. Norman Shippee,  
Climate Scientist**



The adaptation workshop provided an opportunity to discuss ways forward in St. James Town to address the most prevalent climate risk and impacts. The key theme that arose is best summarized by the second keynote presentation, which stated: “No single private or public actor has the resources or capabilities to achieve decarbonization, resilience, and wider sustainability goals in isolation.”

The purpose of the adaptation workshop was to move solutions into adaptation projects and processes. Projects are associated with changes to the built environment; processes are more about behaviours. Some solutions – such as establishing cooling centres – are both. These processes, while necessary, will not be sufficient except to mitigate the effects of extreme weather events. Resilience will require substantive changes to the built environment and changes in the political process (such as partnering) to attract the significant capital and the change required.

**Ecosystems of Partnership is Essential in the Race to Net-Zero**



**Collective action** and **collaboration** will be key for St. James Town and other communities to become more resilient to climate change through adaptation and mitigation.

One of the primary concerns noted is the ability to provide cooling (through air conditioning and community cooling centres) under climate change. As temperatures continue to increase and heat waves become more frequent, there will be greater demand for cooling in individual residences, buildings and the whole community.



*With a systems view, the importance of partnerships, pathways, and progress for creating and sustaining a better-built world is essential; especially for multi-residential, densely populated buildings like those in SJT. No single private or public sector actor can solve problems in isolation, making partnerships a must. All in all, building developers and investors need to be encouraged and reassured that sustainability will ultimately have a positive effect on rates of return.*

**Philippe Bernier,**  
A Senior Real Estate sector  
Sustainability Leader



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1** *Higher energy demands will result in more power failures in aging systems, which inevitably will need to be replaced.*
- 2** *Typical tenant actions to relieve heat stress issues have been to self-install window AC units, which may cause cascading and self-defeating impacts including power outages from overloading the electrical system.*
- 3** *Window AC units are not efficient and can increase energy demand through leakage.*
- 4** *There are effective adaptation and mitigation measures that could benefit the St. James Town community but require collaboration between building owners, residents and government officials. These include:*
  - Heat pump retrofits to support better energy efficiency and unit-level comfort*
  - Building envelope improvements to improve energy efficiency and operating cost*
  - Extending district heating/cooling systems in the Greater Toronto Area to St. James Town*
  - Back-up power supply in case of electrical systems failure*

Changes to buildings that were discussed include updating aging electrical systems and improving building envelopes to be more efficient. Combined, these building-level changes will create more resilient buildings during heat waves and cold snaps, which were the most prevalent concerns from residents. These changes will prevent cascading climate impacts.

At the community level, several themes arose related to social and built environment climate impacts and adaptation strategies. Foremost in the mind of residents and experts were extreme or prolonged heat and a general lack of community solutions in the St. James Town area.

Extreme heat can isolate vulnerable members of the community and disrupt and overload the power supply. Recent construction of community cooling centres has helped alleviate some of these concerns. However, there is still limited access to water and shade in green spaces throughout the community.

Energy in the community was also a theme through interviews and workshops. The aging electrical systems in some buildings need to be upgraded. Residents are using inefficient window AC units which may result in power outages. There is a need for a local backup power supply in case of outages during extreme weather events. Older building envelopes are not energy efficient.

Clear steps are needed to create a more resilient St. James Town community through climate adaptation and mitigation measures. Many actions being taken now are either not helpful or won't be enough to address increasing climate hazards. Public and private actors are often working at cross purposes or in silos — addressing climate needs to be systematic in terms of both policies and the technical details needed to make a difference. This requires collaboration among all members of the community, as well as building owners and operators.

The lack of desire from building owners to participate in our process is concerning. Incentives for their participation and action are critical for the success of this journey. Overcoming this barrier is the most significant next step.

### **The financial challenges are significant, but can be overcome**

The financial challenges of mitigating climate change in high-rise urban areas can be overwhelming. Not only are significant capital funds required, but the regulatory models of the Ontario energy system also prevent utilities such as Toronto Hydro from the lengthy amortization and return on investment schedules these investments require (as do the financial models that landlords must operate under). As well, there are conflicting cost structures that, if the tenant population is required to wholly bear the energy costs – the much lower cost of natural gas over the delivered cost of electricity (approximately 2.5 cents per kilowatt hour versus 15.0 cents per kilowatt hour) – means that the net cost to the tenants would be unsustainable.

Unfortunately, cutting greenhouse gases costs money. Financing for this to become cost effective must be re-engineered.

But it is possible.

## What's possible? Look to Hamilton, Ontario

As an example of Canada leading in large scale net-zero retrofits, the 18-storey, 146-unit Ken Soble Tower in Hamilton has achieved a 94 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a 91 per cent reduction in heating energy demand. At its peak, the total energy required to heat and cool a unit would be equivalent to the energy needed to power three incandescent light bulbs.

Building performance was achieved through an ultra-high performance building envelope, with exterior and interior insulation that meet stringent airtightness requirements, triple-glazed windows, and heat recovery in all building penetrations. Obsolete and unhygienic HVAC systems were modernized to provide fresh air to each suite. The retrofit also included a reconfiguration of all indoor and outdoor spaces to accommodate aging-in-place. Over 20 per cent of apartment suites now meet barrier-free standards, with expanded community facilities that support seniors' programming.

Using 2050 temperature projections as a guiding foundation for the design, the Ken Soble Tower is climate resilient, supporting indoor health and comfort during both extreme heat and cold climate events anticipated in coming decades.

Tower is a true model for addressing the growing climate and housing crises of our time.

As the oldest high-rise multi-residential building in CityHousing Hamilton's (CHH) portfolio, Ken Soble Tower at 500 MacNab Street North has stood proud in Hamilton's West Harbour neighbourhood since 1967. The building was fully occupied until 2014 when a mix of aging infrastructure and increasing capital costs led it to fall into disrepair.

Following several studies and consultations with residents and community members to explore the future of the building, including renovation, sale or replacement, a decision was made to retrofit the tower in 2016. The project was funded, in part by the Government of Canada's National Housing Strategy, a federal initiative to ensure the modernization and decarbonization of Canada's affordable housing.

CHH, in partnership with the University of Toronto, ERA and PCL, will study and measure the impacts of the building on its residents and surrounding environment, including building



Image 31: **One of the first of its kind in North America, the 18-storey affordable seniors tower serves as a model for low-carbon, resilient future**

performance, resident health and safety, and economic impacts, among others.

Canada's Ken Soble Tower certified as world's largest residential Passive House EnerPHit retrofit | ERA Architects.

As the Globe and Mail reported in February 2022, the University of Toronto is building Canada's largest urban geo-exchange system underneath its St. George Campus to heat and cool several of its 200-year-old buildings in downtown Toronto. The ground source heat pump system will reduce the school's annual greenhouse gas emissions by 15,000 tonnes (when it becomes operational in 2024). The initiative is part of the university's Landmark Project, which aims to revitalize and reduce the environmental footprint of the pre-Victorian era buildings, among the oldest in the city – much as this climate change action project hopes to do for St. James Town.

The social economic differences between one of Canada's oldest and most venerable academic institutions and St. James Town could not be more different. The University of Toronto raised \$15 million dollars for the capital upgrades from more than 3,800 donors.

Even having raised that much capital from donors, the University does not expect a financial payback for at least 15 years. In St. James Town and any other urban high-rise community facing the critical need to act on climate change – donated funds at the level the University of Toronto raised is highly unlikely, if not impossible. However, that project – which includes the building and operation of 200 kilometres of underground geothermal heating and cooling – demonstrates that there is significant public appetite for such projects. Indeed, the leadership of the university program commented, “Never have we had a project that has had that breadth and depth of donations.”

The challenge will be in creating incentives and financial structures that reward investment by all parties in the climate action transaction – including, building owners, tenants, energy suppliers, and all levels of government.

For more information about this and other funding options, see Part 5, Chapter 3, *Funding the Journey to Net-Zero*.



**Image 32: The University of Toronto is proving that major climate change action investments are possible**





PART 5

## THOUGHT LEADERS' INSIGHTS

CHAPTER 1.

CLIMATE, HEALTH AND  
THE ECONOMY

CHAPTER 2.

GETTING THE ATTENTION  
OF GOVERNMENTS

CHAPTER 3.

FUNDING THE JOURNEY  
TO NET ZERO

CHAPTER 4.

CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW



## CLIMATE, HEALTH AND THE ECONOMY

Even when bad things happen, sometimes good things emerge. In our time, few challenges seem as bad as the climate emergency and COVID-19. The earth is changing, and not necessarily for the better, and the pandemic has altered most peoples' lives, affecting those in marginalized communities the most, including communities like St. James Town.

Yet out of these twin storms there is potential. There's a saying, sometimes attributed to Winston Churchill, that we should "never let a good crisis go to waste." Rahm Emmanuel, who was mayor of Chicago and also U.S. President Barack Obama's chief of staff explained it this way: "It's an opportunity for you to do things that you think you could not do before."

That's why now is a great opportunity for St. James Town. It's a great time for positive change and solutions, based on the experience and insights of both global experts and people in and connected to the community.

### TURNING BAD TO GOOD

Climate action is the goal. To get there requires critical thinking. In the era of climate emergency and the pandemic, we're all required to boost our critical thinking skills. One thing many people have come to understand is how climate and the pandemic are not entirely different problems.

In fact they're part of the same problem — pervasive threats to peoples' health, our air and water and our general well-being in the 21st century. Climate, health and all the wider environmental issues are all so intertwined, and ultimately, all of them working against us can damage our economic well-being too.

Turn this around though. If they're all connected and it's all one problem, then taking action on different aspects of the problem can help other areas at the same time. These days it's hard to say where one issue begins and the next one picks up anyway. So while it may appear sometimes that there's a long list of problems, understanding how everything is connected is actually the key to finding solutions.



*It's a great time for positive change and solutions, based on the experience and insights of both global experts and people in and connected to the community.*



*So while it may appear sometimes that there's a long list of problems, understanding how everything is connected is actually the key to finding solutions.*



## How close are the connections?

In December 2020, the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet*<sup>[17]</sup> said that COVID-19 and climate are more or less joined at the hip. “In fact the causes of both crises share commonalities, and their effects are converging.” The climate emergency and COVID-19 “are both borne of human activity that has led to environmental degradation.” Neither crisis was a surprise, the journal added.

Both have led to the preventable loss of lives through actions that are delayed, insufficient, or mistaken. However, aligning responses presents an opportunity to improve public health, create a sustainable economic future, and better protect the planet's remaining natural resources and biodiversity.

The *Lancet* began monitoring the health effects of climate change in the middle of the last decade. Its *Countdown on Health and Climate* changed, monitored, and reported more than 40 indicators that measure how climate affects health. Its 2020 report, the most recent, looked at indicators that touch communities all around the world, including St. James Town. These indicators include “heat-related mortality, migration and population displacement, urban green spaces, low-carbon diets, and the economic costs of labour capacity loss due to extreme heat.”

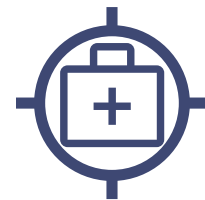
Environmental problems show up in communities as health effects “leading to asthma, challenges to global food security and reduced crop yield potentially leading to poor diets, limited access to green space increasing risk factors for mental health conditions, and vulnerability to heat in people older than 65 years. Treating these resultant health conditions effectively depends on health systems' capacity, which is in turn dependent on the resilience of health services that are increasingly stretched in response to the two crises.”

As long as both crises continue unchecked, “No country is immune to avoidable loss of lives arising from widening inequalities,” *The Lancet* says. People in St. James Town will recognize this.

The solutions are challenging, yet they're not that complicated. Climate, the pandemic, other environmental and health problems all have to be addressed at the same time — in some cases with the same solutions. As Dr. Samantha Green puts it: “We need to address the social and structural determinants of health.”



*Aligning responses presents an opportunity to improve public health, create a sustainable economic future, and better protect the planet's remaining natural resources and biodiversity.*



*We need to address the social and structural determinants of health.*

**Dr. Samantha Green Family Physician, St. Michael's Hospital  
Sumac Creek Health Centre**



## Connecting the dots

Learning for a Sustainable Future, a national not-for-profit educational organization, publishes a guide for teachers on sustainability called *Connecting the Dots*.<sup>[18]</sup> It offers strategies for teachers to help learn how everything is connected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century — the environment, health and the economy. Learning about issues from this all-round perspective makes it easier to apply critical thinking to the complicated climate challenges we all face. It’s a way of organizing ideas — the “how to” of learning.

Any of us tackling climate, health and the economy can benefit from this how-to approach. One of the more useful written tools aimed at tackling climate change in this holistic way is a project called Drawdown<sup>[19]</sup>, which offers programs, online courses, a book and a wide menu of solutions. The project’s book editor, Paul Hawken, writes that he began asking experts way back in 2001 a simple question: Do we know what we need to do in order to arrest and reverse global warming? “I thought they could provide a shopping list,” he said.

It takes years to create such a list, and it’s a work in progress. But by 2017, Project Drawdown was able to publish a list of the most promising substantive solutions to the climate emergency, based on the leading science and research from around the world. Importantly, the solutions include predictive statements about their impact, as well as the total net cost of each idea and the operational savings the solution will bring. In other words, these are climate solutions that connect the dots between a cleaner, safer environment, healthier people and a stronger, more sustainable economy.



*Substantive climate solutions that connect the dots between a cleaner, safer environment, healthier people and a stronger, more sustainable economy.*



Image 33: **The 100 most substantive solutions to reverse global warming by leading scientists and policymakers around the world**



## MADE IN ST. JAMES TOWN SOLUTIONS

Dr. Yannick Beaudoin is an economist and Director-General, Ontario and Northern Canada for the David Suzuki Foundation. He offers a clear and straightforward insight into the connections between the environment, health and the economy in St. James Town. “One thing can lead to another from climate change,” he says.

On the negative side, there’s hardship of course. For example, when there are wild weather swings elsewhere in the world, the local health and economic well-being of people right in St. James Town can be affected. Crop yields are poor, food prices go up, the cost of living goes up and there’s climate migration into urban areas, particularly high-rise communities. As the housing supply gets scarce, real estate prices go up and the already-marginalized residents get pushed out of neighbourhoods. This is how climate; health and the economy are all connected in negative ways.

Yet there can be a positive side. Beaudoin points to the rise in many areas of urban farming, spearheaded by people in marginalized communities. It happened in Detroit as that city crumbled; now it’s rising again as a cultural magnet dotted with food growing right downtown. “In South Africa, some marginalized communities have become clean energy producers, putting in solar panels and selling electricity to more privileged neighbourhoods. In ways like this, the climate crisis leads to solutions — and action.

“When you're forced into a certain situation, you imagine all kinds of possibilities to get yourself out,” Beaudoin says. “That doesn't mean that it all turns into something good. Often there's pushback from that system. To tap in, you have to get politicians and the system to listen to peoples’ actual, lived experiences.”

To get people to listen, it’s up to the people in St. James Town to speak. Community members are the real experts — they live the experience of climate when the concrete heats up or the furnace breaks or the power goes out and when food prices grow out of reach.

“There’s an opportunity in St. James Town to teach some humility to the system,” Beaudoin says.



*To tap in, you have to get politicians and the system to listen to peoples’ actual, lived experiences.*

**Yannick Beaudoin, PhD  
Economist and  
Director-General,  
David Suzuki Foundation**



## The hidden power of communities like St. James Town is its diversity.

“The hidden power of communities like St. James Town is its diversity. The world is here. Its cultural experiences, the different contexts in which different people live, means that people can imagine a new economic model that integrates the environment. Here, you can link the global and the local. Toronto could be an economic laboratory for new ideas, and the entire world could benefit.

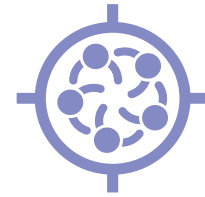
### Getting to Action

For everyone in the St. James Town community, the goal is to learn about the connections between the different problems—climate, COVID-19, jobs and the economy and the like — and then connect the dots.

The Playbook’s tools can help, showing how to make connections that build solutions, how to network and work with decision-makers, how to measure what’s working best.

The organizations that work with high-rise communities like St. James Town can learn as well. “Slow down and listen. Organizations should take the time to build relationships with the community,” Beaudoin says.

“At some point, trust builds up and the people in a community and the organizations will share ideas about how to approach a problem. Climate change is a long-term problem, so organizations should take time to listen and build bridges.”



*At some point, trust builds up and the people in a community and the organizations will share ideas about how to approach a problem. Climate change is a long-term problem, so organizations should take time to listen and build bridges.*

**Yannick Beaudoin, PhD**



## GETTING THE ATTENTION OF GOVERNMENTS

Anyone who wants to take action to address the climate emergency in a community such as St. James Town will, in most instances, need the support of government. That may be the federal government (which is the most active on climate action issues), the provincial government or, of course the municipal government – as in the City of Toronto. To achieve the support you need – whether that be access to funding programs, support from technical experts, and even changes such things building codes, you need a government relations plan.

This may sound intimidating and complicated, and indeed, sometimes government relations does rely on finesse and subtle diplomacy. At its heart though, government relations, or GR, is simply what the words mean. It's the way individuals and communities relate to the elected officials and civil servants who make up governments.

The goal of GR is straightforward too. People want something to be done and governments are supposed to be there to do what the people expect. Government officials help fund, enact, and enforce the rules to get things done. However, dealing with government is rarely transactional (like getting a drivers license or a parking permit). You have to find out who to talk to – and that can be difficult, for there are likely several people working in the area you may be interested in, and they may be in different departments (or ministries).

In short, governments do not tend to have a “Help Desk” where you can take your problem to and be guided on how to solve it. This is where government relations professionals fill the gap. The word “lobbyist” may have negative connotations to you – but a good government relations professional can be essential for navigating the complicated structure of the organizations that manage legislation, by-laws, and regulations; especially if you want any of those to change.

But there are many things you can do on your own if you have the time and patience to do it.



*At its heart though, government relations, or GR, is simply what the words mean. It's the way individuals and communities relate to the elected officials and civil servants who make up governments.*

**Aidan Grove-White, MsC  
Director, StrategyCorp,  
and RSI Board Director**





#HestCity2015

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Rather than just asking for action out of the blue, a government relations plan lets people prepare and be clear about what they're asking governments to do. It's an important step, because with good GR, those who call for action can be clear about what they expect, and the governments that can make it happen will know what they're being asked to do.

That's where the complexities begin.

A community's problems are seldom simple. The solutions often require action from many different levels of government. Governments themselves are complex too. They're made up of elected officials, committees, departments and staff members who work at different tasks at different levels.

In Toronto there are many levels of government too — community councils, City Council, the provincial and federal government, agencies and boards that oversee aspects of healthcare, schools, public safety, traffic and law enforcement. GR means knowing who to talk to about what, and when.

It's even more complex when a dense and diverse community such as St. James Town seeks solutions to an all-encompassing issue such as climate. The 21st century climate emergency needs to be addressed from many angles.

Climate now affects everything, from ensuring that peoples' homes and workplaces are heated and cooled adequately to whether residents can afford their electricity and heating bills, to whether the buildings and public spaces are resilient enough to withstand extreme weather to whether there's enough greenspace for people to be healthy. It's a lot.

"At the most basic level, government relations is about the idea that you want a decision-maker to make a decision in a certain way," says Aidan Grove-White, Director, Municipal Services at Strategy Corp., a government relations firm.

"There's a whole profession built up around the idea that different people bring different types of expertise to achieving this idea. Some people rely on the force of their personality to persuade decision-makers; others work to put the best objective case forward. Most people do a combination of the two," he says.

You may want to engage or take advice from a GR professional to get governments to do what you want, but you don't have to



*Rather than just asking for action out of the blue, a government relations plan lets people prepare and be clear about what they're asking governments to do. It's an important step, because with good GR, those who call for action can be clear about what they expect, and the governments that can make it happen will know what they're being asked to do.*



*There's a whole profession built up around the idea that different people bring different types of expertise to achieving this idea. Some people rely on the force of their personality to persuade decision-makers; others work to put the best objective case forward. Most people do a combination of the two.*



start this way. Nevertheless, the best way to pursue GR is the same regardless of whether you're a consultant or a resident of St. James Town who wants something done.

The first step is to be clear about what you want. The second step is to know which person or department you should ask. Third, you have to ask for what you want to be done. And finally, you have to recognize whether what resulted is what you expected.

## FINDING THE RIGHT PERSON

“Say you want something to be done in St. James Town about food security, for example,” Grove-White says.

“A way to start would be to go online to the City of Toronto website and put in key words such as ‘food security’ or ‘nutrition’. You should be able to identify the department and people whose work comes closest to what you’re looking for,” he says.

“If you search a bit more you might find some presentations or videos by people on the subject — that will help you identify the best person to contact. The more you determine who the right person is to talk to, the better chance you have of getting a good result.

### Action, not just cause

Another key piece of advice Grove-White offers is to use GR to pursue specific action rather than a broad cause. If you go to a government official and say you want them to “stop climate change now,” you might get a sympathetic hearing, but chances are the official can’t do much to help you.

If you go to the public health department and bring evidence that apartment units are so unbearably hot during the summer that people are passing out, and you ask if there’s a way this can be corrected, you might trigger action. Perhaps it might lead to setting up emergency cooling centres, or a program to fund repairs that improve a building’s cooling system.

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*What is it that they do in their job that you want them to do? Do you want them to keep doing something or do you want them to do it differently?*

• • • •

The point is to focus on asking for things that need action and will likely lead to action. This kind of government relations might take time and many meetings, but it also can get the right people to do the right things.

## Elected vs. Assistants

In a democracy, people should be comfortable contacting their elected City Councillors, Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP) and federal Members of Parliament (MP) to ask for specific action. Sometimes, though, the more effective way to reach these people is through their staff members, especially their senior assistants.

Every politician has a budget to hire a staff member whose job is to hear from voters about issues that need solutions. The staff member is supposed to listen and help guide the person who called toward the right people and places to solve the problem.

Sometimes this means getting the elected official to act, either by making a few calls or by proposing changes in the law. Staff members are good at knowing who to contact in the system.

## Where to go

With so many levels of government and levels within these levels in Canada, how do you know which government official to approach? The answer is that you don't necessarily know right away. For example, cities are responsible for public health and safety, but the province runs the health care system and the federal government provides the money for the province to do this.

With that in mind, it's okay to go to whatever level of government is easiest for you to approach. Your MP's office may be within walking distance, for example, or you may have met your city councillor's assistant at a meeting and feel more comfortable starting with them. You should expect whoever you do approach to lead you to the right person — make sure they help you do this rather than just passing the buck. For example, ask if they can make a call to introduce you or set up an appointment with the right person.

At the same time, it's a good idea to know what aspects of life in a community like St. James Town are within the city's control — parks, public space, fire and safety to name a few — and which ones are the responsibilities of the province (such as health) or Ottawa (immigration, for example).

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*Knowing which level of government to approach can be a barrier for some people, especially for newcomers to Canada who don't know the system well. Don't be afraid to ask and don't be afraid to be wrong. The people in government are supposed to be there for you and they can steer you to the right person. Not knowing where to go is no excuse — you have to start somewhere.*

• • • •

For many of the issues that affect life in a community like St. James Town — including climate issues — Grove-White suggests that a good place for a resident to start with government relations is by approaching staff members who work for city councillors. Every councillor has one or more people on staff whose job it is to hear about issues from residents and then determine what can be done to help, whether it's help from the councillor, from a department at City Hall or from another level of government. "It's the assistant's job to look into these things — they're good at it and it's something they take pride in doing," he says.

### Preparing your case

Rather than just going to a government official to ask for something such as a community cooling centre or a climate emergency plan for your building, it's helpful to provide some research. This can be a short background paper — even one page helps — a PowerPoint presentation or a briefing book. This kind of background gives the decision-maker information about exactly what you want and whether it can be done.

It's also a good to have some idea about how much what you're asking for will cost. Governments have to answer to taxpayers at election time for the money they spend.

In 2022, St. James Town residents who are eligible will vote in both a provincial and a municipal election. Keep in mind that elected officials want your vote. Don't expect politicians to jump just because it's election time, though, Grove-White says. "Most of them understand that they're in office to serve the public not just at election time, but all the time," he says.

If decisions aren't going your way, assess why and see if there's another way to approach a solution. Finding new approaches will be particularly important for mobilizing community climate change action.

Be polite — even if your request does not seem to be getting anywhere. Never be abusive to government officials and don't ever offer them money or gifts. It's either dangerous or illegal and it certainly won't work to achieve the goals you seek to make St. James Town or other urban high-rise communities more resilient and ready for the climate crisis.



*A good place for a resident to start with government relations is by approaching staff members who work for city councillors.*



*Finding new approaches will be particularly important for mobilizing community climate change action.*



## Government Relations (GR) firms

Businesses and influential people often hire professional government relations specialists to pursue their interests and get governments to pass particular laws or rules. You may feel that this kind of lobbying means only the rich and powerful can be heard — but that’s not entirely true.

First of all, the officials who work in City Hall, at Queen’s Park or in Ottawa are professionals who are honour-bound by professional ethics. In their book called "How Government Really Works",<sup>[20]</sup> authors Jane Allt and Angela Poirier note that bureaucrats are “guardians of the public good” who follow three important principles: they are non-partisan (not aligned to any political party); they are expected to provide advice to politicians and other decision-makers based on facts and evidence, not whether someone is angry or looking for a favour and they are expected to follow the rules of fair play and what the law allows.

It’s also worth noting that sometimes a not-for-profit group or community cause can get help from professional government relations specialists for free. Many government relations firms do a portion of their work pro bono (without charge for the public good) as a way of giving back to the community.

Some firms choose a cause each year and devote staff and resources as they would to a paying client. It never hurts to approach professionals and ask if they are open to helping. Chances are good that if you ask a professional a reasonable question, you’ll get a professional answer.

It’s important to remember that you need a strategy for government relations. You need to plan your moves. As you plan, ask the following:

- What do you want to happen?
- Do you know who in government might be able to help and where they are?
- How much will what you’re asking for cost?
- Who will pay for it?
- What happens if the government people you approach say No? What is your plan B?
- If you can get government to do what you ask, who will benefit?
- Who can you give credit to?
- Can you go back to the government later and show measurable results?



*While members of the public are quick to criticize civil servants, they have likely relied on a bureaucrat and will continue to do so throughout their lives.”*

**Jane Allt and Angela Poirier,  
How Government Really Works**



Finally, all governments grant money to support programs delivered by organizations other than themselves. Many of our tax dollars are managed this way. In these cases, grants are provided to registered charities. If this is your case, please read the next chapter, which provides details on how to improve your chances of having your grant applications approved.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1** *Decide what you want and where government fits in.*
- 2** *Which government can help? Do your research.*
- 3** *Identify the right people who may help — councillors' assistants are a good place to start.*
- 4** *Be clear, with a strategy — paint a picture of what you're asking for.*
- 5** *See if you can get professionals to help you for free.*
- 6** *Know how much what you're asking for will cost and who would pay.*
- 7** *Be able to explain what the outcomes you seek will do, and for whom.*

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Other useful information - video highlights of our 2021 Government Relations workshops moderated by Aidan Grove-White "More than a Meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXdzc4kpJA4>

## FUNDING THE JOURNEY TO NET-ZERO

The road to taking action on advancing more resilient communities and buildings is paved with funding. Whether the money required comes from one's own pocket, from a charitable grant, government funding or corporate investors, few, if any, climate resiliency initiatives are — unfortunately — low cost. This chapter summarizes some of the available funding options (which are many) some easier to acquire than others. And, depending on the focus and scope of one's project, some are better suited than others.

### Project Funding

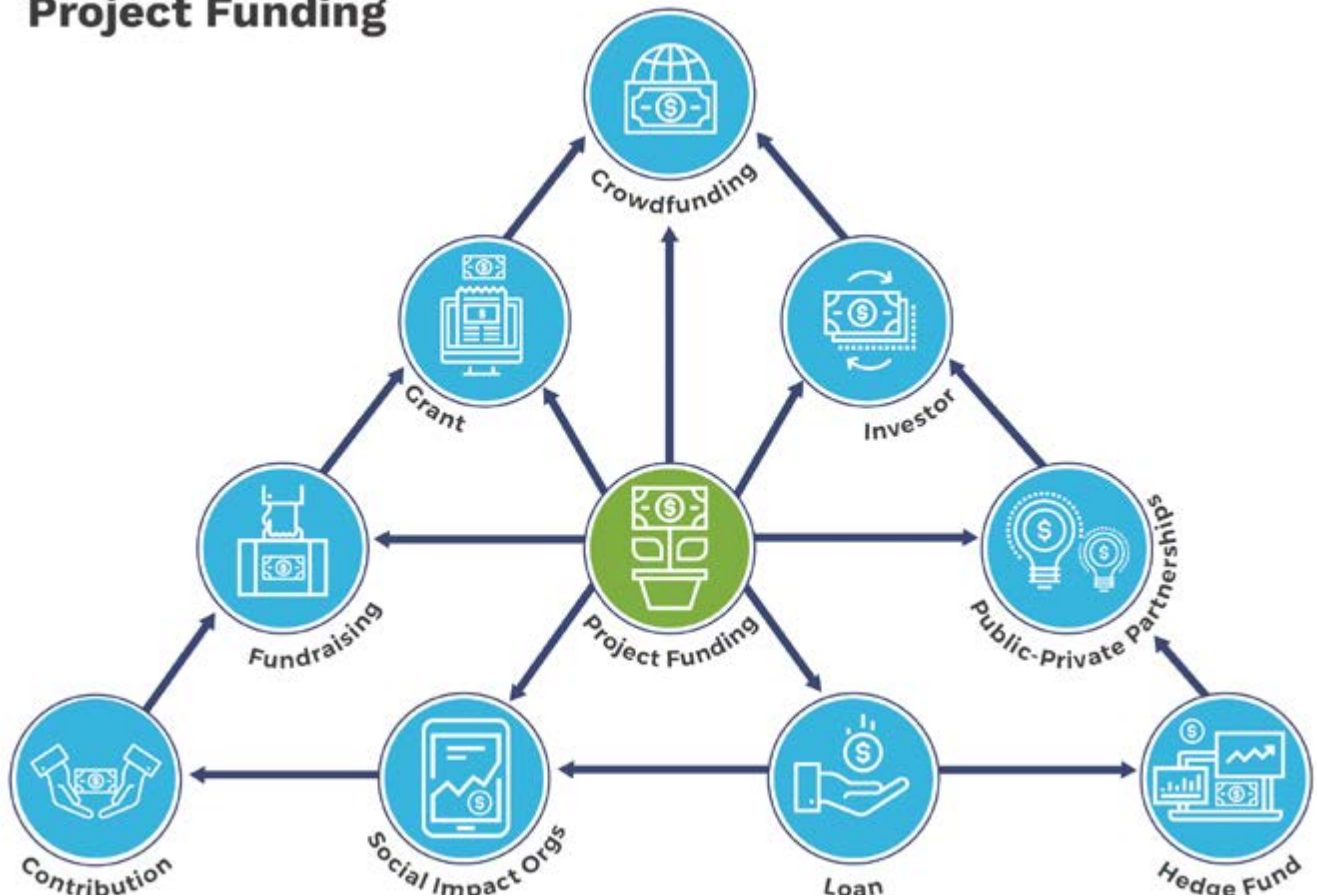


Image 34: A partial list of project funding streams<sup>[21]</sup>

The first steps are to create a clearly defined plan – including the vision, purpose and unique value of the proposed project solution(s), resource requirements, and potential Return on Investment (ROI) and recognition for funders and partners. And to research and communicate with a few best-fit funding and investor organizations that align with your project purpose, focus, and stakeholders.

## GRANTS FOR FUNDING PROJECTS

Rohit Mehta is the president of DoGood Fundraising, a Toronto-based consultancy that advises charitable organizations on grant application strategies. He advises his clients to look wide and deep for possible funders: “It’s all about fit between the applicant and the funder.”

Funders need to hear an engaging story about the prospective project. “They need to understand the vision,” Mehta says. “Which means the applicant has to know how to communicate their vision.”

Capturing the vision of the project upfront is important, but this also needs to be backed-up with a solid plan. According to Mehta, the plan must include a clear sense of the project’s budget, objectives, timelines and expected outcomes. Once a grant applicant can articulate this plan, the search for prospective donors can begin.

For Community Climate Action and related solution projects, Mehta recommends the federal government and private foundations. While provincial governments do have some programs that may fit some climate action initiatives, in Mehta’s experience, the federal government is the real leader in this area. Municipal governments are also beginning to expand their reach into these kinds of programs.

“You need to remember that governments are wholly responsible to taxpayers and nowhere is that clearer than in how they distribute grant money. Governments are looking to leverage more value out of their contributions, so they expect to see other funders to step up as well,” Mehta says.

This includes the applicant. Rarely will any funder — government or private — put up 100 per cent of the funds.

“Both government and corporate funders will be looking for recognition. You need a plan to publicize the gifts,” says Mehta.



*Funders need to hear an engaging story about the prospective project for funding... the vision backed up with a solid project plan and expected outcomes.*

**Rohit Mehta**  
**Founder, DoGood Fundraising**



*Both government and corporate funders will be looking for recognition. You need a plan to publicize the gifts*



This is not necessarily the case with wholly private funders, such as family foundations. These granting bodies tend to want a lower profile.

Whether you are applying to government, corporations, or family foundations, developing a relationship is key, before, during and after your project is completed. “Funders tend to talk to each other. The success of your next grant application will be much greater if you’ve been successful in the past,” Mehta says.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

RSI Founder Yasmin Glanville, has some specific advice for environmental and social impact organizations and programs, based on her decades of experience in the field (including acquisition of the funding for the CCA-SJT project).

The first steps can be the most difficult; especially for newly formed project groups or smaller organizations, she advises. To enhance the probability of success, she suggests collaborating with other not-for-profit organizations that have a shared or similar mission and complementary capabilities, instead of going it alone.

For start-up funding, Glanville recommends family foundations as well as corporations and social impact investors - especially those that have a core business-mandated and or a strong social impact or corporate social responsibility mission.

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*Broadly speaking, social impact companies are organizations that prioritize doing work that consciously, systemically, and sustainably serves or attempts to solve a local or global community need. The goal of social impact companies differs from the typical corporate social responsibility approach in that making or supporting positive social change is prioritized in all of a social impact company's work, while CSR tends to be a secondary organizational value.*

**Yasmin Glanville**

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## Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Investment

A relatively new and increasingly important investment review policy is known as ESG – which stands for environment, social and governance criteria. It is set of financial and policy indicators that global investors use to screen their investment decisions.



# ESG

## Environmental:

- Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)
- Energy Use and Efficiency
- Air Pollutants
- Water Use
- Waste Management – Water, Solid, and Hazardous
- Use of Ecosystems – Impact and Dependence
- Innovations in Environment-Friendly Products and Services

## Social:

- Workforce
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Customer Health and Safety
- Diversity and Equal Opportunity
- Poverty and Community Impact
- Supply Chain Management
- Training and Education
- Customer Privacy

## Governance:

- Code of Conduct and Business Principles
- Accountability
- Transparency and Disclosure
- Executive Pay
- Board Diversity and Structure
- Bribery and Corruption
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Shareholder Rights

Early incarnations of ESG were vague and subjective, enabling companies and investors to say they were following these policies without giving too much detail. That has changed — partly because of the seriousness of the climate crisis. Investors, banks and other lenders and insurance companies now look at specific measurements showing ESG performance. Progressive companies seek to measure up well. Therefore, a good source of potential funders are companies that promote their ESG criteria, especially if it reflects the nature of your project.

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## Get Published - Tell your story

Glanville also recommends publicity. “Get your work published and promote it,” she says. “It will dramatically increase not only the awareness of your organization but also its credibility.”

The CCA-SJT initiative, including this Playbook, is one example of how an organization such as RSI was able to apply successfully for a significant grant from the federal government. In our case, RSI submitted a proposal to Environment and Climate Change Canada in response to its request for proposals for funding under the Climate Action Fund (CAF).

The Climate Action Fund (CAF) supports climate actions in communities across the country. The objective of projects funded under the program is to raise awareness of climate change and build capacity to increase climate actions that contribute to Canada's clean growth and climate change plan. Working toward the vision of building a net-zero emissions economy by 2050, this fund prioritizes community-based climate action, youth awareness on climate issues and advancing climate research and science and technology.

### What differentiated our Proposal

Given the community focus and that RSI is a volunteer-led not-for-profit organization, we added development and delivery capacity, and tailored our proposal to align with the CAF mandate in these ways:

- Engaged Trinity Life/New Common (a commercial tenant in St. James Town Community) as a project partner. They have been successfully working in St. James Town for more than seven years with community organizations and youth. They provided a trusted gateway for RSI into St. James Town.
- Engaged Madelyn Webb who at the time of writing our proposal, was a volunteer educator delivering emergency preparedness training in a few buildings in St. James Town.
- Interviewed several St. James Town community members.
- Interviewed City of Toronto representatives who were working with the St. James Town community.
- Interviewed private sector and not-for-profit organizations related to architecture, energy, food security, emergency preparedness, climate science, community development and all RSI board members.
- We also connected the discovery of climate action solutions with everyday essential needs of community residents and organizations.

We customized our proposal to align with four perspectives:

1. St. James Town — to provide an inside-out point of view with community organizations and residents.
2. External organizations familiar with St. James Town — to provide an engaged outsider’s point of view.
3. The Environment and Climate Change Canada’s (ECCC) mandate.
4. The mission of our organization.

**We centered our proposed around the goal of:**

Supporting St. James Town to become the **most-informed and best-prepared high-rise community on climate change impacts in the city and the country**, as well as supporting the discovery of potential climate actions solutions that could be used in St. James Town and adapted and used by similar profile communities in the city and nationwide.

The results of our fundraising strategy speak for themselves, as this Playbook now lives.

**The Next Step Will Be the Development, Promotion and Funding of Priority Community Climate Actions**

These include the social and economic solutions discovered and proposed by, with and for St. James Town members and stakeholders – such as enterprises and programs related to enhancing food security, employment, affordable housing, and emergency preparedness. Funding for these type of projects can come from local private and public organizations.

**Built Environment Solution funding.**

A top all-encompassing priority and challenge to St. James Town’s resiliency, is securing of the significant capital expenditures that will be needed to address climate impacts on the built environment and infrastructure. The scale of these investments is massive, and the funding approach for the buildings and the energy systems must incorporate grants, return on investment and regulatory changes.

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*The scale of these investments is massive, and the funding approach for the buildings and the energy systems must incorporate grants, return on investment and regulatory changes.*

## Re-engineering for climate action will require re-engineered financing.

The three most effective climate action and life-supporting upgrades are improving the building envelope, replacing all windows, and installing a district-wide heat pump system. These will require massive capital investment. Building owners cannot be expected to bear the entire cost of these upgrades; especially given the investment returns available under current legislation regulating and limiting rent increases. Even if these costs could be passed through to tenants, the increased rent would be beyond the means of most. The traditional investment model for upgrading rental properties needs to be changed to reflect the critical need to take climate action in large urban centres.

One funding option is based on the long horizon required for investment returns to pay for themselves. Climate action upgrades cannot be expected to return their money to their investors for 30 or 40 years. While the climate action benefits are immediate, financial benefits are not.

For a project such as St. James Town, one of our recommendations is to consider a district energy model that includes the capital investment required for climate action. Possibly as a public-private-partnership (P3 or PPP) between building owners, the province of Ontario, Toronto Hydro Electric Company (wholly owned by the City of Toronto) and pension fund investors with 30-to-40-year horizons. This partnership could also be supported by mortgages of similar length. In this way, the cost of the tenants would be amortized over many decades and allow for the P3 to finance and operate climate action/energy services at a profit.

RSI board member, Nigel Etherington, says the process is similar to bistronomics.

“It’s like getting together for dinner with a large group of friends,” he says. “Some are vegan, some don’t want appetizers, some had wine, others not. Everyone was at the table but had different needs met. How do you split the bill equitably?”

As climate change action projects are founded on energy selection and efficiency, energy regulators also need to be involved — including a re-examination of their mandates.

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*It’s like getting together for dinner with a large group of friends. Some are vegan, some don’t want appetizers, some had wine, others not. Everyone was at the table but had different needs met. How do you split the bill equitably?*

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Just as a systems lens is used to create large capital projects for climate action, the same approach, combined with asset-based development, needs to be used for financing. It won't be a one-size-fits-all approach, just as the cost of that friendly dinner can't be just divided equally. For more complex and large-scale community climate action projects founded on retrofitting buildings, energy selection and efficiency, energy regulators also need to be involved — including a re-examination of their mandates.

The regulatory mandate of the Ontario Energy Board is to “protect the interests of consumers by setting the rates and prices that utilities can charge.”<sup>[22]</sup> In the case of community climate action investments, the cost of energy to customers will likely rise. The regulator will need direction from the government of Ontario about how its price-protection policies will impact the need to integrate the cost of climate change investments. Investors will not come to the table unless their investments can make competitive returns. Electricity utilities such as Toronto Hydro (wholly owned by the City of Toronto) are important dividend producers for their investors. But today, the cost of climate inaction is not factored into energy investments, nor regulated on the minimum basis of doing no harm to climate, and at a maximum being a net benefit to carbon reduction.

One of the mandatory needs for capital intensive projects such as St. James Town will be to develop credible business plans that detail their rationale, capital needs, potential sources of such capital (as well as grants and loans), revenue generation and budgets. This would best be accomplished by business advisory firms with experience in the subject matter. Such business plans are also costly; however, government grants may be available to fund them.

So the funding process comes full circle. Whether the project is small, medium, large — or in the case of St. James Town, massive — getting started comes down to some fundraising. And promoting your solution story and proposal to qualified mission-aligned funders and collaborators.



*One of the mandatory needs for capital intensive projects such as St. James Town will be to develop credible business plans that detail their rationale, capital needs, potential sources of such capital (as well as grants and loans), revenue generation and budgets.*



## Part 5 - THOUGHT LEADERS' INSIGHTS

## Chapter 4

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

What is environmental law? We hear this phrase so often nowadays that most of us believe we know what it means. In fact, environmental law is not a fixed, established set of rules. There is no big book full of all the environmental laws. In fact, in Canada, it's not always clear who is responsible for creating environmental laws and enforcing them.

More than anything, environmental law is really an idea. It's a framework for looking at the land, water, air and in the 21st century, the climate and climate change. The concept of having laws to look after these was thought up when people became concerned about what was happening to the environment as industry flourished and pollution began to spread.

This idea that laws, usually designed to govern peoples' behaviour in society, should also apply to how they treat their surroundings is relatively new. Before the 1970s there were no environment ministries; smokestacks spewed toxic gases so dirty that the skies over cities were dark in daytime, factories poured raw chemicals into lakes, rivers and streams. And hardly anyone except a few scientists studied climate change; even fewer people understood how serious it would become in the 21st century.

Some areas of law have been developed over centuries, based on precedents; that's not the case for environmental law, an area in which legal thinking is more recent. Environmental law is still evolving. That's important to know — it means there's opportunity to rethink the law as it grows and to work for change.

Debate about what kinds of environmental laws we should have lead to intense debate, and sometimes angry reaction. We live with the consequences of climate change and other environmental impacts, but the idea that someone is responsible for activities such as carbon emissions and should pay is tough for some people to understand, for others to even accept.



*Environmental law is really an idea. It's a framework for looking at the land, water, air and in the 21st century, the climate and climate change.*



Environmental laws are being debated and drafted to govern who needs to do what about climate change and when to do it. But governments and international agencies are still working the details. There is now overwhelming acceptance that the world’s climate is in an emergency, but there’s no consensus about the next steps.

New ideas also mean opportunity though.

That’s why environmental law is important to high-rise communities like St. James Town. Unlike with other areas of law that are well established, the community can be involved — now — in what kinds of law we need to protect the planet.

## WHO’S RESPONSIBLE?

In 2005, Alberta environmentalist Jason Unger summed up<sup>[23]</sup> how bewildering environmental law in Canada can be. Canadians “are left to wander a maze of legislative and non-legislative instruments ... to determine whether standards for a particular substance exists, what the standards are, whether they are being met and whether they can take legal action to enforce them,” he said.

The framework for law in Canada is the *Constitution of Canada*.<sup>[24]</sup> Even this is not a single document. The first part of the Constitution is a law called the *British North America Act* that was passed by the British Parliament and took effect on July 1, 1867 (the first Canada Day, then known as Dominion Day). It set up many of the rules for governing Canada, for example which areas the provinces would be responsible for and which were to be under the authority of the federal government in Ottawa.

When this first part of the Constitution came into effect, Canada became a self-governing British colony. Over the years, this meant that Canada acted more and more like an independent country, but the under the *British North America Act* any major changes to the Constitution could only be made by the British Parliament. In 1982, Canada patriated its Constitution with the *Constitution Act*. Patriation meant bringing home the power of Canadians to make their own laws in Canada, by Canadians.

That’s the simple part.

• • • • •  
*Canadians face a maze of laws and regulations to determine how to protect the environment.*

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## Three Branches of Government in Canada

### *Executive*

The Queen has the executive power in Canada, but in our democratic society the Queen's powers are exercised by constitutional convention on the advice of Ministers who enjoy the confidence of the House of Commons. Together, the Prime Minister and other Ministers form the cabinet, which is responsible to Parliament for government business. Ministers are also responsible for government departments, such as the Department of Finance and the Department of Justice. When we say, "the government," we are usually referring to the executive branch.

### *Legislative*

Parliament is the legislative branch of the federal government. Parliament consists of the Queen (who is usually represented by the Governor General), the Senate and the House of Commons. Bills are debated and passed by the Senate and the House of Commons. The Governor General must also give royal assent to a bill in order for it to become a law. By constitutional convention, royal assent is always given to bills passed by the Senate and the House of Commons.

### *Judicial*

Our Constitution also includes provisions relating to the judicial branch of government, composed of judges. The judiciary must interpret and apply the law and the Constitution, and give impartial judgments in all cases, whether they involve public law, such as a criminal case, or private law, such as a dispute over a contract. The Constitution only provides for federally-appointed judges. Provincial judges are appointed under provincial laws.

## BRANCHES

The Constitution we have enjoyed since 1982 sets up how laws are made, who makes them and when it's not clear exactly what the law allows, who decides what the law means.

There are three branches of government — executive, legislative and judicial.

Executive is what we think of as "the government" — the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

The legislative branch is Parliament — the House of Commons, whose members are elected, and the Senate, which is made up of appointed members.

The judicial branch is made up of judges, who in Canada are appointed. They interpret the laws that the executive branch has proposed and the legislative branch has passed. Judges look at the wording of laws, consider arguments for and against interpreting rules in different ways; they also look at what has

been done in the past and whether these past practices should apply now or in the future. These precedents — what people did before in different situations — are what is known as common law.

These three branches have a nearly equal balance of power, with one exception. If the government doesn't like what the judges have decided about a law, they ask the legislators to pass a new law. In extreme situations, they can even pass laws that the judges said are unconstitutional. In these extremes they can apply a rule called the "notwithstanding" rule.

## RIGHTS

Canadians have basic rights under a part of our Constitution known as the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.<sup>[25]</sup> The Constitution does not include any explicit rights to environmental protection or protection from the impacts of climate change.

Federal, Provincial or Municipal?

The branches and rights apply to everyone in Canada. The Constitution also sets out the roles of provinces and municipal governments. Provinces have responsibilities in some areas, the federal government in others. For example, the federal government oversees criminal law and the federal Criminal Code says what is a crime; the provincial governments run their own courts and administer the criminal law.

Municipal governments are different — they are "creatures" of the provinces where they are located. This means that any laws a town or city passes must be ratified by the province where the community is located. This is true even for Canada's largest city, Toronto — its bylaws must be approved by the provincial government and legislature at Queen's Park.

Municipal governments nevertheless can have a large impact on climate change. They set and enforce rules that affect people's daily lives — for example, making sure heating, cooling, electricity and plumbing are working in buildings, running recycling and waste collection programs, ensuring that storm and sanitary sewers are in good repair and cleaning up after storms.

Municipal councillors and officials are also often the easiest for people to reach — they work for you, so residents should be able to call or email them with concerns or ideas about climate change and building a sustainable community.

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*Canadians have basic rights  
 under a part of our Constitution  
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## THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

The challenge for people in Canada and high-rise communities like St. James Town is: who exactly is responsible for the environment? The quick answer is, everyone and no one. That is, no one level of government has sole responsibility for clean air or water, land use or coping with climate. Lawyers call this “shared jurisdiction”. It means that all governments have the ability to take some environmental steps — or they can avoid doing anything and wait for another level of government to step in.

Shared jurisdiction is what enables both Ottawa and the provinces to have their own environment ministers and to pass their own environmental laws. This can sometimes lead to cooperation — different federal governments worked with Ontario and Quebec to negotiate with the United States on acid rain in the 1980s, and our lakes and streams are cleaner now.

Sometimes it can lead to conflicts and stalemate though. This has happened on climate change. The federal government decided to phase in a carbon tax to help curb greenhouse gas emissions — Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick took Ottawa to court to try and stop this.

The provinces lost, but it took several years and millions of dollars to decide this — time and money that could have been spent on actually doing something about climate change.

This is the challenge for people in a high-rise community like St. James Town.

It comes down to three questions:

1. Who is responsible for dealing with the growing climate emergency?
2. What do we need to get done?
3. What can I do?

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*The challenge for people  
in Canada and high-  
rise communities  
like St. James Town is:  
who exactly is responsible for  
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The quick answer is,  
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• • • • •

### Who is responsible?

Since the environment comes under split jurisdiction in Canada, one way to look at this question is to simply decide that everyone is responsible.

That means your federal Member of Parliament has a role, whether he, she, or they are in the government or the opposition. The same goes for the provincial government and legislature, and the city and your city councillor.

### What to do?

Ask your elected officials what their plan is for climate. In the big picture, do they have targets for lowering greenhouse gas emissions? Are they national targets, provincewide, local? Are there targets for lower carbon emissions in a community like St. James Town?

If they have targets, how do they plan to meet them? Have they drawn up laws or regulations they want to pass? Are they realistic? Will it cost money? Who will pay — the polluters? If so, does that mean everyone who drives a gas-powered car, or does it mean big companies, or both? Or does it mean everything is going to cost more?

Ask the people who make the laws — the MPs, MPPs and councillors — if they have specific ideas for St. James Town and similar urban high-rise communities. These communities are training climate Ambassadors — so what's the best way to deploy this talent? Is there a program to match community members with green jobs of the future? Are there training programs?

And importantly, what are the plans to deal with the aging and often climate-unfriendly infrastructure in many of the high-rise buildings? Is there a budget and schedule for upgrading and retrofitting heating and cooling systems so they meet the challenges of 21st century climate?

### What can you do?

When it comes to law, people in a community can do a lot, actually. First, don't be intimidated by the idea of law and lawyers — the law is a framework and it's full of tools.

Second, don't think of environmental law as just one thing — it's a whole area of thought with a range of ideas.



*Ask your elected officials what their plan is for climate. In the big picture, do they have targets for lowering greenhouse gas emissions? Are they national targets, provincewide, local? Are there targets for lower carbon emissions in a community like St. James Town?*



*When it comes to law, people in a community can do a lot, actually. First, don't be intimidated by the idea of law and lawyers — the law is a framework and it's full of tools.*



For example:

- Using the law to get building repairs and retrofitting is an environmental move that can be achieved through landlord and tenant law.
- Getting more local produce into stores can be helped along through municipal incentive programs and regulations that give preferred space in markets to local food producers.
- Encouraging new rules for immigrants and newcomers that make it easier for them to enter professions they trained for in their original countries — that's using immigration law to build a better, more sustainable community.

## Building Codes

It's also important to understand building codes. These codes are the rules-setting standards for buildings — safety, proper heating and cooling, insulation, electricity and wiring, plumbing, sewage, drainage and even the materials that can be used in construction. These codes are created by provincial governments (and for some buildings, the federal government) but municipal governments are responsible for making sure that building owners and managers follow them.

Residents in high-rise communities should know at least three things about building codes:

1. They are not suggestions — they are rules. Owners and managers have to follow them. If the furnace or air conditioners don't work or the plumbing is backed up, you can go to City Hall and ask for action.
2. You don't need to be a lawyer to get the building codes enforced. Sometimes it helps to get a lawyer to help though, and it doesn't necessarily cost money — a good place to start is your local community legal clinic. There are many of these in Toronto and other communities.
3. Building codes are changing, and a lot of this change is because of climate. Architects, engineers and designers are applying what we're learning about the impacts of climate change to update and improve building codes to make buildings more resilient and climate-ready.



This last point is important — it's opportunity for residents and communities to get involved. Codes, rules and laws are formed when people come up with ideas about what is needed. And there's no better place to find ideas than from the people and the community that will benefit.

One way to get involved is to contact or join an environmental group. There are lots of environmental groups to join. They range from academic think tanks to grassroots groups that clean up public areas, plant gardens and develop and administer local recycling and reuse programs. Our Constitution guarantees freedom of assembly — so join a group. And if you can't find a group that fits exactly with the way you want to Rethink Sustainability — start your own.





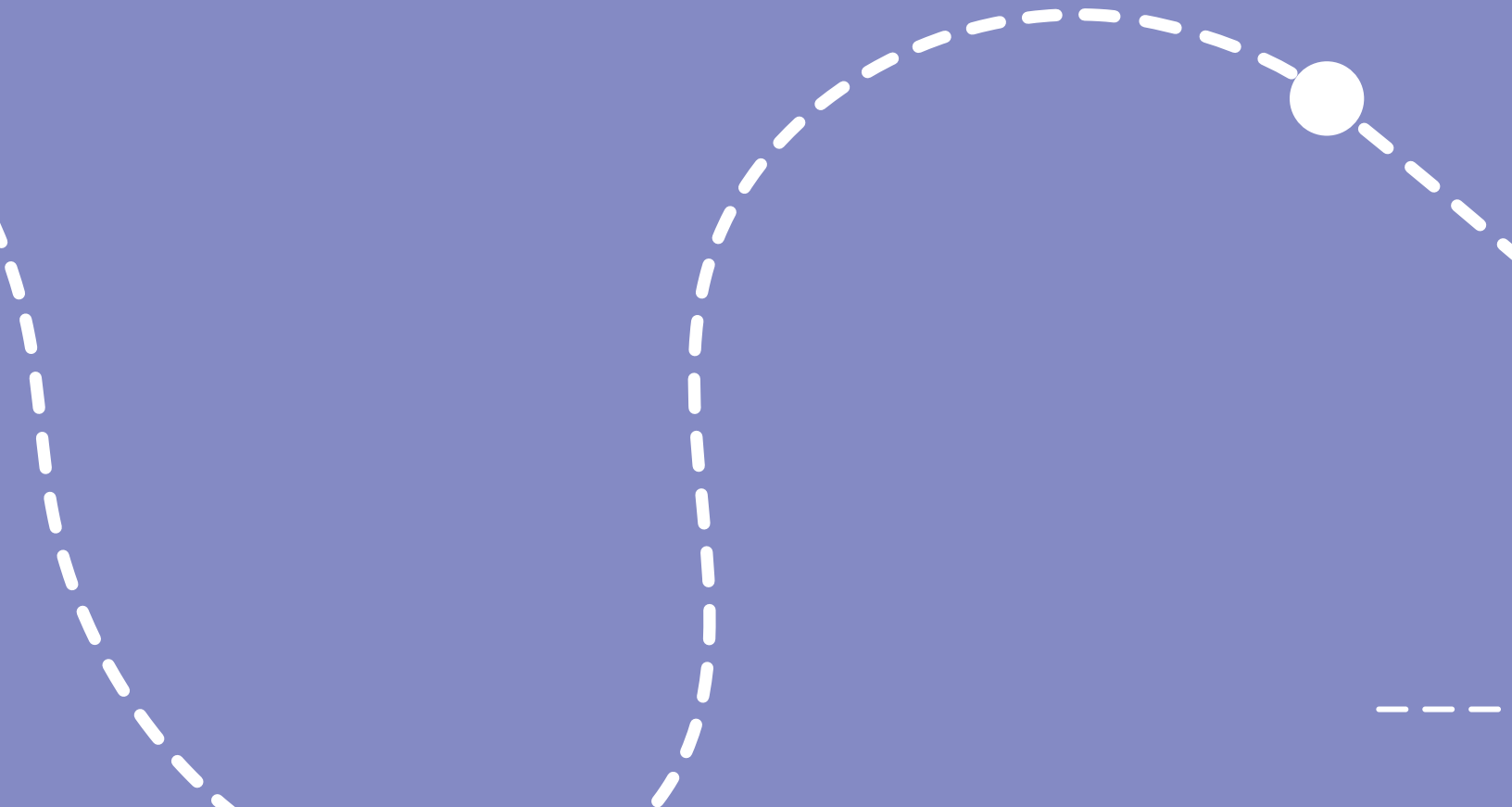
PART 6

## REIMAGINING THE FUTURE

CHAPTER 1.

REIMAGINATION REQUIRED

“WHAT IF” STORIES FOR ST. JAMES TOWN  
AND BEYOND



## REIMAGINATION REQUIRED

### THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

Much of this Playbook has identified the actions required to mitigate climate change in the short term. Some may argue that it will be challenging enough to take these steps. But just as human activities have taken centuries to put our planet into the perilous position that climate change has brought, the most effective solutions to address it will be created, developed, and sustained over centuries to come. We are at the beginning of this journey. And just as RSI's journey with St. James Town took our organization to new places with new ideas and new ways to make them a reality, the long-term climate change action journey demands we continually ask ourselves, "What if?"

The journey from here to successful climate change begins in our own heads, with imagination. Indeed, with the many institutional barriers to climate change action, for example, funding, short-term investment horizons, politics and fear of change, imagining a future that no longer requires climate change action because we have succeeded may be the most significant barrier to overcome. Failing to imagine that solutions can be had is a form of limited thinking.

COVID-19 has taught us, among other hard lessons, that we can change our thinking if the challenge we face is a clear and present danger. Our definition of "normal" had to change as we experienced massive pressures on people's physical and mental health — and on local economies, ecosystems, social systems, global and national supply chains, and geopolitical systems. In less than two years, decision makers and front-line workers in virtually every sector stepped up to the challenge to regain a sense of normalcy. It is tragic that millions of lives were lost and disconcerting that the pandemic is not totally behind us. But we live going forward and will likely be changed forever. We have learned that business and society can quickly pivot and adapt for the long term.

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*Imagination is the beginning  
of creation. You imagine what  
you desire, you will what  
you imagine, and at last,  
you create what you will.*

**George Bernard Shaw**  
**Playwright, Critic, Polemicist  
and Political Activist**

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The difficult to predict second-order and third-order effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have reminded us how uncertain the future is — both in the long and short term.

Equally daunting is the severe damage to local economies, ecosystems, and social systems from recent extreme weather, including floods, storms, droughts, heat waves, and wildfires.



Let's reimagine. Let's picture a world where climate change is more broadly redefined as part of a system of interconnected disruptions instead of treating it as a single, isolated issue. Let's reimagine that climate change is not something that just gets lip service, but instead is a top strategic priority of governments, business, NGOs, communities, and investors.

### Reimagining the Future

This chapter will help guide the crafting and mapping of your reimagined future — with a focus on possible solutions to some of the challenges facing community residents, building owners, and external stakeholders.

It will also provide some illustrative scenarios and stories that support the goal of climate action, interconnected with other essential needs and disruptors identified with St. James Town members and external stakeholders. We want to spark dialogue, challenge assumptions, and tap into your imagination to co-create the best likely scenarios that you can bring to life.

It is also an invitation for everyone to tap into our individual and collective imaginations to create what is possible, plausible, and to act. And to be ever vigilant, look for signals of change and interconnections, to expect the unexpected and to apply the lessons of this pandemic and extreme weather to the future.



*Let's picture a world where climate change is more broadly redefined as part of a system of interconnected disruptions instead of treating it as a single, isolated issue.*



## A FUTURIST PRIMER

Let's begin with a brief primer by renowned futurists Minsoo Pak and Joe Tankersley. A more detailed description of their insights is included in the Appendices.

### Reimagining and creating what the future can be.

Most of us would like to predict the future, but as the famous management consultant Peter Drucker said, you can't. What you can do is actually better, though. You can create it. This is what futurists try to do. They are not fortune tellers. Rather, they try to help people create a better future by reimagining what the future can be.

Futurists are people who have learned how to deconstruct what happens and project component parts into what could possibly happen next. This allows us to think about how we bring those things to bear, how you can make things happen. When you do this, you are already reimagining the future. Futurists apply this kind of thinking and reimagining to businesses, corporations, and communities, but a lot of what futurists do also works just as well for individuals.

### Why bother looking into the future at all? Because to not look would be worse.

We're in a world of unprecedented disruption and challenge in a highly volatile, uncertain, complicated and ambiguous environment. Looking ahead helps us manage this uncertainty and look for things to help us find our way forward. By being aware of the past, grounded in the present and looking to the future, we can tune into society's undisclosed motives, aspirations, and preferences. We can imagine to figure out how to take advantage of whatever is coming.

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*Most of us would like to predict the future, but... you can't. What you can do is actually better, though. You can create it. This is what futurists try to do. They are not fortune tellers. Rather, they try to help people create a better future by reimagining what the future can be.*

**Peter Drucker**  
Management Consultant

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## The Four Ps

Futurists picture this thinking in something we call a futures cone. It's based on what we call the four Ps of the future.

### Why Futures?

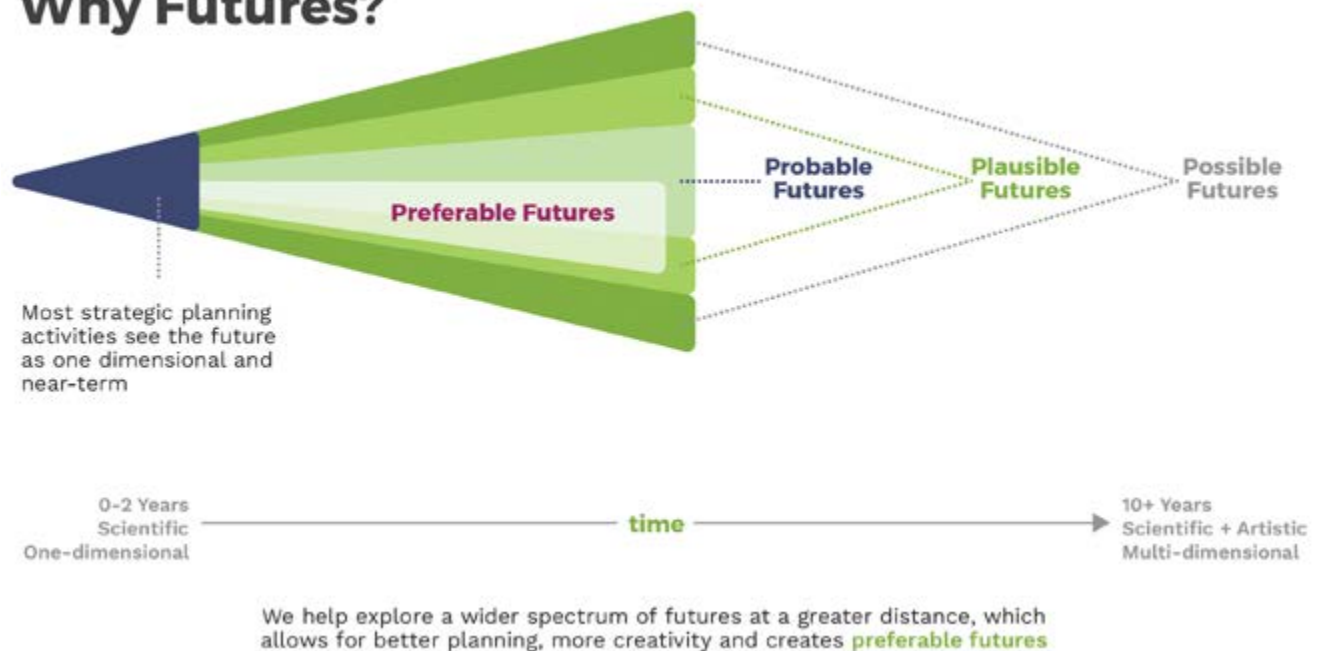


Image 35: Minsoo Pak demonstrate the power of the 4 Ps

Image source: Minsoo Pak, 2021

At the widest part of the cone, there's what's **possible**. All of us have seen things that were previously considered impossible, but later turn out not only to be possible but even taken for granted. Who knew we could get billions of people vaccinated in less than a year? No one knew ... yet a futurist could look at the work underway to get this done and imagine how it would happen. There's a limit to thinking about what's possible though.

So, we must move up the cone into the narrower part, to what's **plausible**. The best way to describe what is plausible is to picture when someone tells you something, and you'll furrow your brow and say, hmm, I never really thought about it like that. At this point, the ideas are there, but they're not well formed. They are relationships between facts, projections, and outcomes that are only now getting established.

Now you can move narrower, to what's **probable**. This is where we can see the trends. When there's a trend, it's probable as well that other people and start-up companies are already either working on setting this trend or following it.

This can be dangerous because things are moving faster these days than ever. So, when we're in the zone of what's probable, we must move to the peak of the cone, the fourth P. That is, what is **preferable**.

What do you want to happen? What's in your best interest? Determining what's preferable is important. You need to define and articulate what that means, otherwise how on earth would you know if you got there? You reach the point where you can see what your preferable future looks like by building it on the base of those other three Ps — what's possible, plausible, and probable.

Then you're ready to build your reimagined future.

### What's Reimagining the Future?

Your goal is go into the future and lead with purpose and confidence to build something that is actually going to work. Something that's actually going to change the nature of your relationship to the world. Make it better. That's reimagining the future.

The future is not something just happens to us. It's something that we do. And there's no singular future. Think about scenarios.

Remember, there is no singular future. And as futurists know, you can't predict the future — you can create it and build it.

### Crafting Strategic Narratives: Foresight combined with storytelling

Before we can build our better tomorrow, we must be able to imagine it.

Foresight combined with storytelling can give voice to those eager to build better tomorrows. Together, these tools can inform, inspire, and empower. Foresight helps us identify the driving forces that will shape the future. These insights are critical for uncovering hidden challenges and unexpected opportunities. Insight is the first critical step toward your preferred future. But without inspiration and empowerment, insights are useless. Fortunately, storytelling's unique power is its ability to help us translate new ideas into actionable strategies.



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**Minsoo Pak, EY Partner, Transformation Lead and Futurist**



*Remember, there is no singular future. And as futurists know, you can't predict the future — you can create it and build it.*

**Minsoo Pak**



All good stories are about someone or some group trying to reach a goal. Maybe it's to prepare your community to be more resilient in the face of climate chaos. Clearly and courageously stating your goal is the next step in crafting your strategic narrative. Achieving your goal, whatever it might be, requires identifying the who and the how.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we often cast major institutions as our heroes. The Digital Age has removed many of the traditional gatekeepers in commerce, education and even governing. New technologies make it easier for small independent groups to be change superheroes. Tomorrow will be shaped increasingly from the bottom up and outside in. As you define your protagonist, don't be afraid to cast yourself in the role of hero.

The hero's goal is to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of the preferred future. This is where the fruits of your foresight efforts inform your strategic narrative.

## Reaching the Goal

Not all emerging trends will be in your favour. Some will create new obstacles. For example, what impact will climate chaos have on your efforts to reach your desired tomorrow? As you explore the world of possibilities unearthed by your foresight, make sure to identify both new opportunities and potential challenges.

As you go through this process, many different possible storylines will emerge. Some will seem more likely than others. Some will end in failure. That's okay. Simply return to the page and reshuffle the opportunities and challenges until you find the right combination that suggests a path forward.

The purpose of your strategic narrative is to make the future, a world that does not yet exist, accessible. Your story will help highlight the possible shape of tomorrow. The real power in these narratives is their ability to spark dialogue and challenge assumptions.

Walt Disney, in addition to being the genius of animation and filmmaking, was also one of the most prolific futurists of the 20th century. His Tomorrowland stories in the 1960s envisioned many of the technological advances that define our world. He's often quoted as having said, "If we can dream it, we can do it." You can too. Strategic narratives can help you dream better tomorrows and show you how to build them.



*The hero's goal is to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of the preferred future.*

*This is where the fruits of your foresight efforts inform your strategic narrative.*

**Joe Tankersley,  
Futurist Writer, Former Walt  
Disney Imagineers Lead**



## “WHAT IF” STORIES FOR ST. JAMES TOWN AND BEYOND

### Possible. Plausible. Probable. Preferred.

Though different in content, writing style, perspective, and preferred solutions, each of the following 8 scenarios and stories were crafted to support one strategic goal: advancing the readiness of a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous future for St. James Town and other urban communities in Canada – powered by strategic foresight and future storytelling.

They were crafted, based on insights gleaned during the CCA journey with members and alliances of St. James Town, educators, capacity building guest speakers, advisors, and participants from Canada, USA, Europe, Central America, and Asia.

**WHAT IF...** *People who live in St. James Town chose to stay there because they really wanted to?*

**Michael Seaman , Founder, and leader of Trinity Life Church and The New Common**

**WHAT IF...** *Governments, NGO and business and community decision-makers, change-makers, tenant associations truly collaborated to bring climate change action to St. James Town?*

**Ahmed Hussein , Chief Executive Officer, TNO-Toronto**

**WHAT IF...** *There was a detailed plan to retrofit the buildings such that climate change action and quality of life were both addressed?*

**Yasmin Glanville, RSI Founder & Strategist, and Vivian Patel, Urban Planner**

**WHAT IF...** *There was a dedicated group in St. James Town focused wholly on climate change action and quality of life?*

**Peter Love, Professor Yorkville University**

**WHAT IF...** *The carbon trading market was as well organized and managed as the global financial markets?*

**Fiona Oliver-Glasford, President, ClearBlue Markets**

**WHAT IF...** *Power could be generated, distributed, stored, and accessible whenever and wherever it's needed?*

**Mark Rabin, Founder & Chief Visionary Officer and Meryl D'Souza, Marketing Manager, Portable Electric**

**WHAT IF...** *The ownership model of residences and businesses was changed to reflect the social needs of the community?*

**Alexander (Alec) Hay, PhD., Founding Principal, Southern Harbour**

**WHAT IF...** *Climate change action became a driving force in our economy, with new businesses, jobs, and opportunities?*

**Katerina Salto, Intergenerational Mentor and Yasmin Glanville**

## WHAT IF ... PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN ST. JAMES TOWN CHOSE TO STAY THERE BECAUSE THEY REALLY WANTED TO?

**By Michael Seaman**  
**Founder, and leader of Trinity Life Church and The New Common in downtown Toronto**

If we can empower the youth of St. James Town, Rosedale, Cabbagetown and Regent Park to work together, a social fabric of assets, talents, passions and skills will create connectivity, unity and wholeness between neighbourhoods that dissolve their invisible and visible boundaries. This sort of cooperation can lead to integration which can become a model for other disparate neighbourhoods.

### Goal

The goal is to create and apply a scalable model for urban high-rise communities, starting with St. James Town and neighbourhoods with similar profiles.

Right now, St. James Town is a neighbourhood that people live in because they feel like they must – to make ends meet, feed their families and have a foothold in this city. As a result, many residents have one foot out of the door, aspiring to live more comfortably elsewhere, dreaming about providing nicer things for their families, striving to rise out of poverty.

### Reimagined

Let's look ahead to the year 2042 — imagine St. James Town as a thriving, sought-after home to thousands of people from Canada and abroad who have chosen to live in this diversified, affordable, and highly desirable vibrant neighbourhood.

### Current Assumptions, Problems, and Issues

Often, external factors determine a neighbourhood of choice — walking distances, property maintenance, safety, property value, amenities, demographics. The common thought is, if we change the externals, then we can change the internals. This outlook is often chosen because it leads to immediate results. The problem is it also leads to displacement and gentrification, which just disperses the issues into other neighbourhoods. The community is changed, but only because it is replaced with a different community.



*If we can empower the youth of St. James Town, Rosedale, Cabbagetown and Regent Park to work together, a social fabric of assets, talents, passions and skills will create connectivity, unity and wholeness between neighbourhoods that dissolve their invisible and visible boundaries. This sort of cooperation can lead to integration which can become a model for other disparate neighbourhoods.*



### Becoming a neighbourhood of choice

So then, how does St. James Town become a neighbourhood of choice from the inside out so that genuine, long-term, economically viable, environmentally friendly systemic change takes place?

The power is in the residents of St. James Town. More specifically, it is in the youth of St. James Town today. The year 2042 is just two decades away and it will take the youth of our community to lead the way.

St. James Town residents are aware of what is needed externally to transform their community into a neighbourhood of choice. They have a surplus of creative ideas and innovative projects. However, a major obstacle is the perceived scarcity of resources and perceived lack of authority to bring about change. For this reason, many residents feel stuck and are just waiting to leave the neighbourhood.

By contrast, many St. James Town residents feel a sense of ownership and accountability for their neighbourhood that gives them the propensity to stay. Since one of the major problems in St. James Town is the transience of the residents, this propensity needs to be encouraged, to make St. James Town a neighbourhood of choice. Current residents need to see their neighbourhood as desirable if those outside of St. James Town are going to see it as desirable.

### Need to persevere and look ahead

There is a problem of transience among organizations in St. James Town. Funding is normally tied to producing immediate results. These results look good at first but fail to produce lasting change. This tension can derail an organization’s mission. They may feel the need to shift their goals because of their need for funding. Often, this results in employing a deficit-based approach which superficially changes things, but systemically does not. Perseverance, diligence and foresight are necessary for organizations to thrive in St. James Town.

### Voices together

Some key stakeholders have been able to successfully navigate the tension between immediate results and long-term vision while simultaneously working to unite the community. The Service Providers’ Network brings the voice of agencies and residents together to cooperate for the benefit of St. James Town.

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*The year 2042 is just two decades away and it will take the youth of our community to lead the way.*  
....



The Corner pairs services and residents together. And The New Common serves to bring the community together with a focus on asset-based community development and the next generation. If these organizations, among other faithful ones, remain diligent in their long-term goals, then our vision of 2042 can become a reality.

For much of this project, we've gathered youth in St. James Town to help them empower their voice for change. We've heard of their struggles living in an underserved high-rise community. We've heard of their personal experience with climate change. We've heard of their desire to positively impact their community. We've also learned that even though many outsiders view St. James Town as a less than desirable neighbourhood, many youths inside of St. James Town value the diversity, collaboration and relationships that make up St. James Town's social fabric. So, where many might see problems, the youth of St. James Town see opportunities.

One of the most beautiful things about St. James Town is that it is indeed a world within a block. But what does cooperation and integration look like with the surrounding neighbourhoods? The block just north of St. James Town is the south end of Rosedale — one of the most expensive neighbourhoods in Canada. The block just to the east of St. James Town is the west end of Cabbagetown — one of the most desirable neighbourhoods in Toronto. And just to the south of St. James Town is the northern end of Regent Park — one of the city's latest revitalization projects.

A future of systemic change in St. James Town must involve bringing together the youth of each of these neighbourhoods. If youth could be empowered to work with other youth in their own city just a block away, it would lay the foundation for change to emerge from within the community rather than without the community.

This is where asset-based community development is vital to systemic change. Often, when change is enacted, it is done without the community. To be sure, there may be community meetings or forums that residents can attend, but often what is communicated are the decisions already made by those outside the community regarding what they think is best. Projects, proposals and preferences are imposed on the community and done to the community, not with the community.



*How can we imagine a future for St. James Town where living in this city for newcomers and for the underprivileged is both economically viable and societally desirable?*



How can we reimagine a future for St. James Town where living in this city for newcomers and for the underprivileged is both economically viable and societally desirable? How can we see climate action, building resiliency, increased safety and additional amenities that do not inevitably lead to a market-priced neighbourhood where these youth and their families can no longer afford to live in a place they have helped change for the better?

**If we can empower the youth of St. James Town, Rosedale, Cabbagetown, and Regent Park** to work together, a social fabric of assets, talents, passions and skills will create connectivity, unity and wholeness between neighbourhoods that dissolve their invisible and visible boundaries. This sort of cooperation can lead to integration, which can become a model for other disparate neighbourhoods.

Discovering and developing the assets of the community in the people of the community is part of the answer to a better future. Changing our motivations to focus on what is sustainable not merely financial is also part of the answer. And convincing those who are currently the decision-makers to act in accordance with the next generation can bring these two things together. If politicians, business owners and property owners join the organizations already doing this, a future of empowered youth empowering their community could become a reality.

What will it mean for today's generation of youth and everyone else over the next 10 to 20 years?

If we were to truly empower this generation of youth over the next 10 years, we would start to see a new St. James Town community emerge over the next 20 years that would create lasting systemic positive change from the inside out. Our Community Climate Action — St. James Town project has started to do this. Our goal is to bring others along with us.



## WHAT IF... GOVERNMENT, NGO AND BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY DECISION-MAKERS, CHANGE-MAKERS, AND TENANT ASSOCIATIONS TRULY COLLABORATED TO BRING CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION TO ST. JAMES TOWN?

By Ahmed Hussein, Chief Executive Officer, TNO-Toronto

### Goal and Focus

A future scenario that addresses the affordable housing crisis and enhances quality of life for residents — and embeds climate resiliency solutions into the reimagined blueprint.

Set in 2032, a cohort of key government, NGO, and business and community decision-makers, change-makers, and tenant associations collaboratively develop and implement a scalable blueprint for action. It centres on creating and sustaining more affordable, healthy and life enhancing housing for low-income individuals and families within socio-economically integrated communities — rather than siloed ghettos.

In this future scenario, all three levels of government provide building owners/developers with tax incentives, grants, and recognition to bring incentives and rewards for bringing this affordable, integrated housing vision to life.

Community representatives — residents and tenant organizations — also helped shape the future based on essential living needs — affordable, secure, healthy, and comfortable housing.

For building retrofits, building owners would adhere to strict rent control, so that tenants would not lose their living space or see increased rent prices once they return. As well, to maintain the stock of affordable housing, a percentage of rental units in every building would be integrated into the mix and be available to low-income residents.

Due to the enhanced quality of these living quarters, more affluent families would naturally want to move into these buildings. This would help establish economic diversity, so different people could congregate, leading to more open-mindedness and inclusivity as a whole.

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*Due to the enhanced quality of these living quarters, more affluent families would naturally want to move into these buildings.*

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**What would this reimagined future mean for today’s low-income residents and everyone in their circle, over the next 10 to 20 years?**

It would motivate building developers and owners to adopt a more inclusive approach to retrofitting and managing their rental properties. One that takes into consideration the immediate and longer-term needs, talents, aspirations, and dignity of tenants and residents — especially people struggling to find and stay in affordable housing accommodations. It would include partnering with all levels of government and community members to bring it to life.



## WHAT IF ... THERE WAS A DETAILED PLAN TO RETROFIT THE BUILDINGS TO ADDRESS BOTH CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AND QUALITY OF LIFE?

**By Yasmin Glanville, RSI Founder & Strategist,  
and Vivian Patel, Urban Planner**

*It was getting hotter. Mary got off her yoga matt and walked across the floor to look out the window. It was 7 am. The air was smoky and a ringing sound from somewhere outside pierced her ears.*

*Windows open. Windows closed. Didn't matter. It was just as hot and sticky outside as inside. Maybe more. At least the cooling fans blowing air over her body provided some relief...when they worked. Lately, the frequent power interruptions removed even that modest comfort during the increasingly longer periods of hot summer weather.*

*Making the problem worse, she did not know anyone outside of the building and had nowhere else to go to cool off except for an expensive hotel. As a single mother new to Canada and living on a tight budget, that wasn't an option.*

*So, like most of her neighbours, despite the extremely hot temperatures, Mary accepted this as a normal way of living and got on with her day as best she could.*

*This was becoming an increasingly common reality for many tenants living in her community, especially challenging for elders and newcomers to Toronto.*

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### **Let's reimagine a different experience for Mary and thousands of other residents of urban high-rise rental buildings.**

Ten years from now – 2032. All four city-owned buildings and two of the privately-owned buildings in the community where Mary lives have been retrofitted to increase climate comfort for the residents, improve the resiliency and lifetime of aging infrastructure, reduce the carbon footprint and operating costs, and enhance quality of life for community residents and organizations. Food security, affordability, meaningful work, and connections are all better than they were.



Healthy buildings are a gateway to healthier communities. Improved climatic conditions have better air quality and are more resilient with benefits to human health and wellbeing. Investments in this infrastructure by all levels of government and corporate partners accelerate development with residual benefits to all parties.

In this reimagined 2032 community, state of the art, efficient hybrid cooling/warming hubs are installed onsite. These hubs are stocked with emergency kits, food, water, medical supplies, blankets, and fully charged emission-free mobile power generators.

Using an inclusive, systems-based and asset-based development strategy, the residential buildings and the community hubs were collaboratively designed. The designers comprised of building residents (including youth), owners, and property managers are guided by a professional team of project managers, government and corporate funders, urban planners, building and social architects, climate scientists, cleantech investors, engineers, and educators.

For continuity and to cultivate inclusion, many of the participants like Mary were recruited and trained for different roles: to manage the hubs and buildings and maintain relationships with community members and city officials.

Kickstarted in 2022, this reimagined future scenario becomes a reality in 2031 through phased-in stages. It evolves, enhanced by a diverse cohort of community, governmental, and private partners and alliances who are all committed to shape, develop, and build climate resilient and comfortable buildings and facilities for all occupants.

## Looking Back From the Future

### Barriers/Obstacles/Challenges

- ✘ Engaging key funding and building stakeholders and partnerships.
- ✘ Securing government grants and tax incentives for community-led initiatives and building developer/owner groups.
- ✘ Relocating tenants during construction.
- ✘ Retrofitting without increasing rents.
- ✘ Maintaining affordable housing stock and varying unit sizes and types.
- ✘ Deeply rooted systemic issues — neglecting specific neighbourhoods or population groups through lack of quality housing supply.

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### Alternative Strategies

- ✓ For Building Owners: Retrofit tax incentives and grants from all three levels of government.
- ✓ For Tenants: Collaborators vs. commodities (talk to versus at).
- ✓ Engage influential organizations and individuals who are trusted by building owners and tenant associations (e.g., investors/practitioners/supporters/leaders) beyond the immediate neighbourhood to participate in different stages and aspects of this reimagined 2032 mission.

### Opportunities

- ✓ A new, inclusive, asset-based community development process applied to retrofitting MURBs vs. historically divisive, top-down approaches.
- ✓ A positive and inclusive means for motivating and engaging building owners in solution focused dialogue with property managers, residents, and government.
- ✓ A multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary cohort of decision-making leaders and supporters who actively participate in the planning and implementation of a time-bound, systems-level retrofit project. Creating an innovative, action-focused model that can be used by other climate challenged communities.

### Key success enablers

- ✓ Engagement of diverse representation of local, national, and international public including private stakeholders, residents living within the buildings, and former residents to international climate change, public health, sustainability experts and more. This intentional involvement at all levels provided a macro and micro lens and accelerated the visioning and manifestation of the reimagined 2032 for the community.

## Result and Impact

- ✓ Demonstrated how to quickly translate a possible future idea into a reality with tangible benefits for the participating stakeholders.
- ✓ Provided an iterative outcome focused, innovative, and collaborative approach to overcoming financial and policy barriers to developing people-centred, inclusive, climate resilient buildings.
- ✓ Created another landmark for the City of Toronto and building owners led by and with people who live and work in the community.
- ✓ Unlocked and amplified the talent and innovative leadership of the St. James Town community.
- ✓ Created scalable spin-off solutions for other communities in and outside of the city:
  - Hybrid hubs.
  - Mobile power and emergency response “stations”.

... a living model of what can be accomplished with and by key decision-making stakeholders who believe in the vision and have the means to quickly translate it into a reality.



## WHAT IF ... THERE WAS A GROUP IN ST. JAMES TOWN DEDICATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AND QUALITY OF LIFE?

By Peter Love, Professor Yorkville University

It was shortly after the publication of the St. James Town Community Climate Action report that a few community leaders joined with others in the community to create a new St. James Town Community Neighbourhood Association (SJTNA). Their goal was to put into practice the recommendations of the report.

One of the first acts of this association was to develop a strategic plan. They based this on a review of what other similar communities had done and were planning to do. Two of the main objectives coming out of this plan were to set a target of reducing the carbon footprint of the community by more than any other existing high-rise community in North America by 2032 and to have as many of the residents of St. James Town employed in the required retrofits as possible.

The next step was to develop an operational plan, which included a major initiative to attract funding from all three levels of government as well as foundations and corporations. This successful initiative was modelled on the success of the Habitat for Humanity program in attracting broad support.

The operational plan included the following three features which were based on best practices that had been observed and studied:

- **Training of Residents to Undertake Retrofits** — This was identified as the highest priority for this project. An example that inspired this commitment was based on a similar commitment that was made by the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, an Indigenous community near Belleville, Ontario. Under the leadership of Chris Maracle, community members were trained in the skills required to build award winning energy efficient new homes over several years.

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*This successful initiative was modelled on the success of the Habitat for Humanity program in attracting broad support.*

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- **No Displacement of Residents During Construction** – Another priority was to ensure that residents would not have to be relocated during the major retrofits that were undertaken. The model for this practice was the 55 healthcare facilities, including many large hospital complexes across Canada, that have undergone major energy efficiency retrofits over the last 15 years using guaranteed energy service performance contracts. A local example well known to the St. James Community was Sunnybrook Hospital.
- **Friendly Competition Between Public and Private Building Owners** — Friendly but fierce competition that developed between Toronto Community Housing, who own four of the buildings, and the private companies that own the other St. James Town buildings. This competition was strongly encouraged by the St. James Town Neighbourhood Association (SJTNA) which held large annual celebrations before, during and after construction to present awards for leadership by both groups.

The crowning glory of this 10-year journey was when the St. James Town community was publicly recognized for its leadership in having reduced the carbon footprint of the community by more than any other similar development at numerous events.



## WHAT IF... THE CARBON TRADING MARKET WAS AS WELL ORGANIZED AND MANAGED AS THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL MARKETS?

By Fiona Oliver-Glasford, President, ClearBlue Markets

Today, the value of our environment and natural resources is increasingly recognized. This has been aided by the scientific community's overwhelming consensus that climate change is real and is driven by human impact. This reality cannot be solved with one solution alone and requires a host of policy, education, and market-based tools. Countries that have been undeveloped and underdeveloped that are looking to increase their standard of living can follow a path that is more sustainable through revenues to encourage cleaner growth and conservation of natural resources.

### Today

A large part of the world's economy is developing a price on carbon or an emissions-trading scheme such as the cap-and-trade programs used in jurisdictions including California and Quebec. This activity has been happening at the same time as companies that don't have any legally enforceable targets have been announcing emission reduction goals, including in some cases a net zero objective. These two trends have underpinned a robust and growing market for carbon credits and offsets. Carbon credits and offsets create revenues that are in large part used to reinvest in cleaner and greener activities with social co-benefits.

Imagine a future where the value on carbon helps ensure we decrease the level of deforestation, increase renewable energy projects and ensure better land-use management among other initiatives.

Offset credits are created via projects that reduce carbon reductions somewhere in the world utilizing the principle of additionality. In other words, the project needs to reduce emissions beyond business as usual. This means that countries that have been undeveloped and underdeveloped that are looking to increase their standard of living can follow a path that is more sustainable can be enabled through revenues to encourage cleaner growth and to conserve natural resources. The reputable projects adhere to formal standards and have an independent auditor sign off on the carbon savings — and thus the carbon credits produced.

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*Countries that have been undeveloped and underdeveloped that are looking to increase their standard of living can follow a path that is more sustainable through revenues to encourage cleaner growth and conservation of natural resources.*

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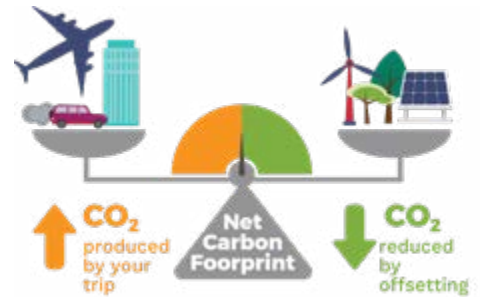
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*Imagine a future where the value on carbon helps ensure we decrease the level of deforestation, increase renewable energy projects and ensure better land-use management among other initiatives.*

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## Future

It is critical to have a price on carbon to encourage development of the right kinds of activities. And it is equally important that those carbon markets have the utmost integrity. A future that has weeded out shady players who don't have the health and resiliency of our beautiful earth at their core of their intentions will require many people pushing in the same direction. We need strong verification agencies such as Verra and Gold Standard. We need companies to educate themselves about offsets and how to ensure they are buying high quality offsets from reputable sources. We need a strong pipeline of talent to meet the growing need for project review, implementation, and verification. The aim is that all of this together will help to ensure money goes towards initiatives that create local resiliency and health.



## Looking Back From the Future

### Barriers/obstacles/challenges

- ✘ Lack of understanding around carbon markets and offsets.
- ✘ Lack of standard rules for how to establish value of offsets.
- ✘ New, inexperienced people entering the market because it is growing who may or may not have integrity of the offset credits at the forefront of their priorities.
- ✘ Ensuring government rules keep up with the evolution of needs in our aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- ✘ This is a complicated area where every project needs to be understood and reviewed for its own merits.
- ✘ Deeply rooted systemic issues that cannot be addressed by funding and/or conservation alone and require multi-pronged efforts.

### Opportunities

- ✓ For all players in society: Get educated on carbon markets and environmental finance as a tool to aid green development and/or conservation of nature solutions that are carbon sinks.
- ✓ For Educators: Give students the opportunity to gain skills in this growing area such that there is enough skilled capacity to get projects moving forward as quickly as possible for a less than 2-degree celsius temperature rise future.

### Key success enablers

- ✓ Engagement of diverse representation as carbon markets is best facilitated through the marriage of finance, engineering, project management, education, marketing, legal, accounting and environmental professionals.

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*We need companies to educate themselves about offsets and how to ensure they are buying high quality offsets from reputable sources.*

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## WHAT IF ... POWER COULD BE GENERATED, DISTRIBUTED, STORED AND ACCESSIBLE WHENEVER AND WHEREVER IT'S NEEDED?

**By Mark Rabin, Founder & Chief Visionary Officer and Meryl D'Souza, Marketing Manager, Portable Electric**

Imagine a time when no longer are the medically vulnerable in St. James Town and those across the world scared of the dark. No longer do they live their lives in fear of what might happen if the lights go out because not only do they have backup power, but they're also able to help others in case of an emergency in a matter of minutes.

Like many others living in and around the San Francisco Bay Area and across California, David Kuntz woke up to an eerie scene of darkened, orange-hued skies and ash raining down as historic wildfires raged across the state one Wednesday morning in April 2020. As people created apocalypse memes and complained on Twitter, only one thought consumed David the safety of his 11-year-old son, Tekoa.

A heart patient who had to undergo three open-heart surgeries at the ages of one week, seven months and three years, Tekoa was high risk in the event of a power outage. "He has a compromised immune system," David tells us. "Even something like the flu could be a huge problem. Most can go to a local hospital but in my son's case, if he gets ill, we must go to Ohio (approx. 2,200 kilometres away) where his surgeon is based. Being able to have backup power in case of a power outage was essential for us."

In anticipation, David applied for a Tesla Powerwall as a backup power source. He would wait for the better part of five months before being told his application for the battery pack was declined because he lived one mile outside the boundary to qualify. His quest for a solution made him aware of Portable Electric's partnership with Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) — to support the medically vulnerable in California during power outages caused by the then unprecedented wildfires. Within a month of his application, a VOLTstack® 5k was powering everything he needed to ensure his child was safe.

.....  
*Imagine a time when no longer are the medically vulnerable in St. James Town and those across the world scared of the dark. No longer do they live their lives in fear of what might happen if the lights go out because not only do they have backup power, but they're also able to help others in case of an emergency in a matter of minutes.*

**Mark Rabin**



Unfortunately, during wildfire season across North America, David's ordeal isn't the exception, it is the norm. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average American home endured more than eight hours without power in 2020 – more than double the outage time five years ago. While the 2021 numbers haven't been crunched yet, it's safe to assume that it's going to be one for the record books.

In February last year, severe winter storms caused a power failure in Texas, leaving millions of homes in the dark, sometimes for days, and at least 200 dead. In June and July, heat waves in Oregon melted power cables and triggered blackouts, contributing to many of the more than 95 heat-related deaths in the state. Around the same time, heat waves in British Columbia claimed nearly 600 lives. A couple of months later, Hurricane Ida knocked out power for at least 1.2 million homes and businesses across eight states, killing at least 12 Louisianans. A mid-November storm that dumped a month's worth of rain on British Columbia led to \$7.5 billion in damage and 15,000 people having to flee their homes. And finally, by December, a total of 8,835 fires burned more than 2.5 million acres of Californian land. All this is just North America.

Across North America, utilities are scrambling to keep up with a barrage of extreme weather stemming from a rapidly, and erratically changing climate. There are no signs of improvement for 2022. What makes the grid especially vulnerable now is a combination of two problems:

- **Climate change:** The wild and unpredictable weather linked to global warming will very likely push North American grids beyond their limits.
- **Aging infrastructure:** Most power lines that we use today were constructed between the 1950s and 1970s with a life expectancy of 50 years. They've done their job and need to be upgraded or retired.

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*Across North America, utilities are scrambling to keep up with a barrage of extreme weather stemming from a rapidly, and erratically changing climate.*

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## We Need to Be Proactive and Not Reactive

There is a growing need to improve infrastructure resiliency in the utility industry. The demand for secure, affordable, and environmentally sustainable energy is growing. These demands place a strain on energy infrastructure, resources, and financing — especially now when energy policies and technologies are in flux. We are in an energy transition with renewables like solar or wind coming online. The problem is they are intermittent — the sun doesn't shine at night and the wind will not always blow. We need a grid that is at once greener, more reliable and more resilient, and we need to do this as fast and as economically feasible as possible.

To the uninitiated, that would sound like a daunting task. However, for those of us familiar with the power industry, the path is clear and the solution lies in integrating microgrids, distributed generation, and energy storage. This still doesn't solve the challenge of moving electrons around in the event of a catastrophic power outage. What happens when critical backup power is required when the grid is down? Or even in off-grid situations, where the grid simply does not extend? In the old days, an oil truck would show up and pour diesel into the fossil-fueled generators ... fortunately those were outlawed years ago. The answer is regenerative mobile power infrastructure.

Think of St. James Town as a microcosm for the global community. The frequent power outages and the plethora of repercussions that come with it that the medically vulnerable in this community suffer is happening simultaneously around the globe.

## Regenerative Mobile Infrastructure Solutions

Let's now step into the not-so-distant future. Our world is already banishing gas and diesel generators and all other forms of energy that pollute the environment. This includes fossil fuel generators that many businesses, communities, and individuals depend on during power outages. We envision small, portable energy storage systems for apartments to keep the lights on when the grid inevitably shuts down due to extreme weather events. It doesn't stop there. These nimble power stations are supplemented with medium-sized energy systems creating distributed charging nodes on the ground, which are boosted by large mobile microgrids that provide live-saving backup power to these high-rise communities and support their operations. They create decentralized, sustainable, mobile power plants.

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*We need a grid that is at once greener, more reliable and more resilient, and we need to do this as fast and as economically feasible as possible.*

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These decentralized, sustainable, mobile power plants will be built and mobilized in partnership with utilities, municipalities, building owners, stakeholders, insurance companies, and local communities with self-organized response teams. All of this works together as one smart, fully integrated mobile microgrid. We long for a network of these types of microgrids that is scalable, modular and inter-operable. Not only is this vision more secure and sustainable, it's also more efficient. This does not eliminate the need for traditional utilities. It's actually a complementary solution that mingles with the existing grid infrastructure and can, at the same time, break away autonomously to support critical power needs where and when these are needed. This increases resiliency many times over.

## A Blueprint for the Future

We've told you about David Kuntz and touched upon how we believe St. James Town to be a microcosm for the global community. Indulge us one last time and travel with us to the not-too-distant future.

It's 2032 and humankind has somehow managed to mitigate the effects of global warming. Climate change still exists and extreme weather events still happen, but we're more prepared to tackle them efficiently. No longer are the medically vulnerable in St. James Town and those across the world scared of the dark. No longer do they live their lives in fear of what might happen if the lights go out, because not only do they have backup power, but they're also able to help others in an emergency in a matter of minutes.

Regenerative mobile infrastructure solutions rely on partnerships at the private, public, and community levels. We need to work together to make this happen. It's easy to look at these extreme weather events and the havoc they cause as a bane, but they also provide a unique opportunity. We see St. James Town as a platform for innovation in the clean mobile infrastructure space complete with community collaboration and self-organized response teams. Moreover, this mobile power plant ecosystem solution can be a replicable model for other communities, and disaster/aid relief globally. It also sets the stage for new and innovative business models — such as Power as a Service — for financing and deploying infrastructure. As we make our way towards a zero-emissions future, the possibilities are infinite. We just have to decide if we're brave enough to take the leap forward. Doing nothing simply isn't an option.

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*These decentralized, sustainable, mobile power plants will be built and mobilized in partnership with utilities, municipalities, building owners, stakeholders, insurance companies, and local communities with self-organized response teams.*

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## WHAT IF ... THE OWNERSHIP MODEL OF RESIDENCES AND BUSINESSES WAS CHANGED TO REFLECT THE SOCIAL NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY?

By Alexander (Alec) Hay, PhD, C.Eng., FICCE, Founding Principal, Southern Harbour

Naz waved to a couple further along the gallery and turned to unlock her office door. A modestly sized office, originally a one-bedroom apartment, it was bright and clean with two desks. No one had ever claimed the other desk and she'd filled the space with a variety of houseplants. To one side, two chairs faced each other across a low round brown table. This office was the first tangible action to arise from the first community stakeholder meeting. It represented the local outreach by five of the eight property owners/landlords in the community. Her office was five floors down from her apartment and represented the easiest commute of all. The office had proved particularly good for community relations in a way that the usual rent and tenant offices couldn't be. Her main responsibility was to improve the resilience of the community — residents, services, and properties.

Born and raised in Iran, Naz had arrived at Toronto's Pearson Airport with her older sister five years ago, just after her 25th birthday. Not particularly wealthy, their family had paid for their flights and provided some money to get started. A family friend had helped them find their apartment and enroll at Ryerson University. Naz studied building science by day and cleaned a supermarket at night to make ends meet. She was asked to take this job at one of the community meetings, and she hoped to become a citizen by the end of the year. She considered herself uniquely fortunate as she met other immigrants in the community. Many were highly qualified but arrived with nothing and could not afford to requalify in Ontario. Her parents' sacrifice of their savings so that she could get Canadian qualifications and a clean start meant all the more to her now.

The community still had a steady turnover, being a landing spot for immigrants to establish themselves in Toronto. It wasn't always that way. The community was fractured, and the buildings dilapidated. Immigrants arrived here because it was the only place available. It all changed with a winter ice storm during her first winter in Toronto.

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*Their ward neighbours may not wish to acknowledge it, but that is what made the shift to a through-life valuation of the properties possible.*

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It hit early in the new year and brought down the power lines to the city. Seen as one of the lowest priorities, their neighbourhood was one of the last to be reconnected. When it was, they discovered how many vulnerable people had suffered and died with no one aware — neither neighbours nor property managers. Some residents referred to it as the great indifference. Property owners, residents, the city, all the community stakeholders had been indifferent to the plight of the old and vulnerable. Then came their stark realization and that mix of shame and shock at their own inhumanity. Their collective vilification on social media amplified the sentiment. Universally chastened, they had gathered in the elementary school gymnasium, sitting on the floor and for the first time actually spoke to each other, councillor, landlord and resident, desperate to salve their souls and avoid any chance of a reoccurrence. That was the meeting that created her job.

She was making slow steady progress with the estate. Each tangible change, however small, excited the community and gave impetus to the next steps, accelerating the pace of change and steadily removing the barriers to expenditure. The one barrier that remained was municipal zoning laws. This was a high-density residential area and so it was going to stay. No amount of petitioning and scholarly evidence was going to change it to mixed use. This was because the remainder of the ward liked it all just as it was. They feared a social contagion would reduce their property values. In fact, as the community assumed its own identity and began to take ownership of their situation and surroundings, property values across the ward were increasing. Their ward neighbours may not wish to acknowledge it, but that is what made the shift to a through-life valuation of the properties possible.



## The Change Making Idea/Catalyst

A new way to value property — separating equity from operating revenue and expenditures.

The return on equity for a property can be realized at defined milestones and at the end of the defined investment period. A couple of the property owners had invested in a couple of upgrades to their properties, as part of a broader community development scheme and were now selling off shares in specific apartments to the tenants. They recouped their upgrade investment and were now examining how to reinvest the same amount in further upgrade works. Meanwhile, the steady elevation in community value was pushing up land value and the real property value of their buildings. The return on equity was impressive while the affordable rents remained unchanged. It hadn't been easy to let go of the familiar investment models, but international experience and the pressing need to change had been the impetus and now that faith was showing real benefit.

Naz's first task had been to address access issues for people's basic needs in the community. She had agreed on a trial run with grocers to provide a mobile fresh food service that supplemented the small corner shop. It was an instant success and soon included post office and pharmacy services. The renewed community focus stimulated interest in a small community garden, and she found an adjacent space for them to use. This expanded to include two hanging green walls, which also shield their buildings from the intense heat of the summer sun. Her proudest success had been the containerized vertical farm that was donated by a clean technology start-up from Guelph that had developed a controlled light and closed water hydroponics system for use in desert regions. This promised to produce a steady flow of green salads and vegetables with a near-zero energy footprint. She still had to recruit three residents to operate it, but she was confident in the talent pool she had available. It seemed ironic that the market version of this prototype was destined for her family's neck of the woods, the desert. Digitized portal offices brought municipal, provincial, and federal services to the community and she would need to find a better location than the lobby of the building opposite hers.

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*The return on equity for a property can be realized at defined milestones and at the end of the defined investment period.*

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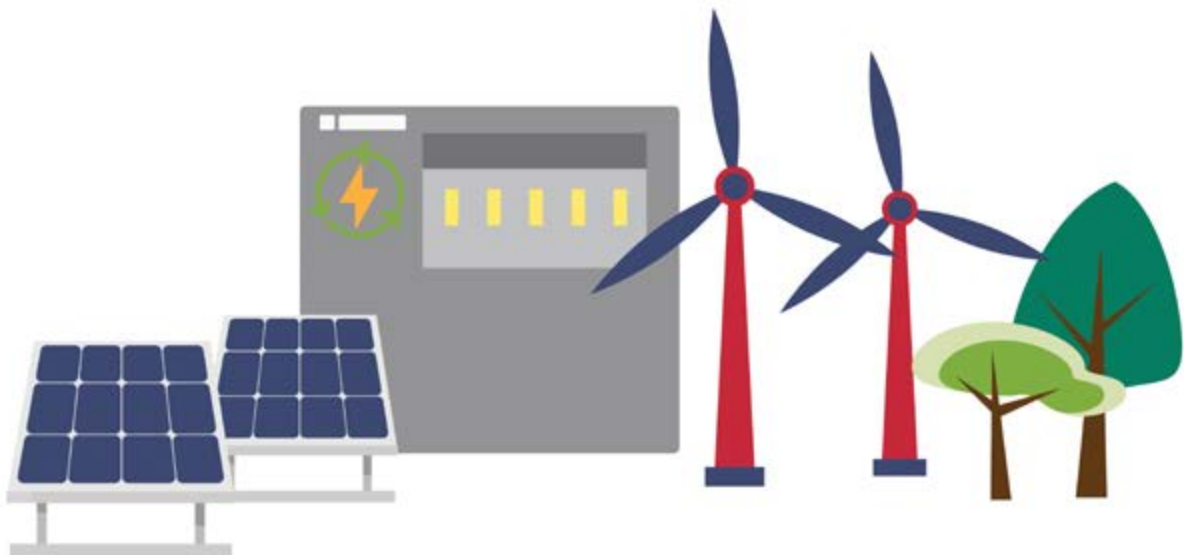
**These successes aside, her focus remains fixed on the challenge of resilience. How do we ensure a prolonged winter power outage doesn't cause such suffering again?**

On the face of it, the community was more cohesive now and more likely to be aware of their neighbours' situation and to help as needed. What's more, the joint property owners were willing to pool resources. Perhaps others would join. She had begun with the normal demand and dependency management approach. Some energy demand efficiencies had been possible, but until there was a substantive change in insulation, heating and ventilation, the demand profiles would remain just out of reach of diversification and other (renewable energy) dependency management tools.

She was now looking at clustering.

A cluster is a group of consumers with a shared interest or need. If she could link the electrical systems of four high-rise buildings and the unofficial community hub, she could share the electricity burden of each according to what was essential for each (one elevator, water pumps, minimum HVAC, etc.) and what was a sustainable supply for each (enough to power the services that would allow life to continue indefinitely, if not quite normal). This meant she had three levels of electricity demand: routine, sustainable, and essential.

It also meant that she could afford shared energy storage and a smart energy management system. Instead of losing everything when the power supply fails, she estimated that she could keep essential services running for 10 days or sustainable levels of service for 3 days. It's not enough, but it's a start. Now, if only she could get the demand profile down.



## WHAT IF ... CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION BECAME A DRIVING FORCE IN OUR ECONOMY, WITH NEW BUSINESSES, JOBS, AND OPPORTUNITIES?

By Katerina Salto, Intergenerational Mentor and Yasmin Glanville

In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic forced all types and sizes of organizations to overhaul their day-to-day operations with little notice or preparation. This included a major shift from in-person to remote, online work and learning. Technology played a key role in facilitating this change.

The rise of green jobs is clearly a major employment trend of the coming decade. The rebuilding of the world economy in the aftermath COVID-19 and building back greener is another.

Given the demographics of urban communities like St. James Town, this also meant that a lot of residents lost their jobs — especially newcomers, single parents, and those employed in the food, hospitality, and other in-person dependent service sectors. For many, the added stress of finding paid work, getting retrained, taking care of everyday essential needs was extremely challenging. It was a tough time for a lot of people.

Just a few years on, new and more optimistic perspectives have evolved. The way organizations function and ask their employees to work has changed even faster than anticipated. Many organizations have the same long-term goals today as they did pre-pandemic, but with a new perspective on the future of work, influenced by changes in our society and culture, advances in technology, and the global quest for climate change action.

### Extreme weather, climate change, and work

- The increase in extreme weather events is already beginning to alter everyday life, including daily commutes as well as how, when, and where we work.
- Certain companies are beginning to recognize the risks that climate change poses to their operations; in one report, companies disclosed \$1 trillion in potential climate impacts in the near future.
- Coca-Cola, IKEA, and Walmart are among major companies that have committed to 100 per cent renewable energy.<sup>[26]</sup>



*The rise of green jobs is clearly a major employment trend of the coming decade. The rebuilding of the world economy in the aftermath COVID-19 and building back greener is another.*



*Given the environmental movement, and the race to improve the sustainability and resiliency of business, society, and the built environment, green careers will be in demand and likely thrive in a greener world.*



When we think of climate change, most of us think of environmental consequences like rising sea levels, extreme temperatures, wildfires, and melting glaciers. Other consequences often get overlooked — such as what it means for your job and work environment.

As climate change transforms the planet, the increase in extreme weather events will inevitably alter everyday life, including daily commutes as well as how, when, and where we work. Most businesses will operate as agile, collaborative, inclusive, hybrid remote and in-person work organizations powered by technology and constant learning for everyone.

People will be recruited for different deliverables that fit their skills and experience from virtually anywhere rather than being hired for a job title. To promote one's professional and personal brand and values, in 2030 it will be a routine best practice for most individuals to be constantly learning new skills and knowledge to keep up to date on the fast-evolving landscape of work and the environment.

The workforce of the future will increasingly include both human employees and intelligent machines. Learning will come from a diversity of sources vs traditional academic paths. As an added value, most of the formal certificate courses will be free or subsidized by government or the employer.



- ✓ Professional learning and certification courses (e.g., ESG Reporting, Project Management, Software programming, AI)
- ✓ On the job and external mentors
- ✓ Community mentoring circles
- ✓ Expert coaches
- ✓ Internships at all career stages
- ✓ Project-focused learning bootcamps
- ✓ Community service
- ✓ Volunteerism
- ✓ Accelerated learning labs
- ✓ Green job banks/networks

In 2030, organizations will employ technology-savvy staff and contractors, familiar with key technologies and tools — intelligent automation, cloud-based solutions, and artificial intelligence (AI) — that help them meet the immediate demands and needs of their customers.

Given the environmental movement, and the race to improve the sustainability and resiliency of business, society, and the built environment, green careers will be in demand and likely thrive in a greener world.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Green Industries and Jobs

Green industries are already major global employers: a 2020 report by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) found that there are now 11.5 million jobs in the renewable energy sector; while a 2019 study estimated that there were 10 times more jobs in the U.S. green economy than the country's entire fossil fuel industry – a remarkable turnaround. According to the ILO, the future looks even brighter (and greener): it predicts that the greening of the global economy will create 24 million additional jobs by 2030, a net increase of 18 million.<sup>[28]</sup>

Green jobs are decent (i.e. fair and dignified) jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment by incorporating one or more of the following aspects: improving energy and raw materials efficiency, limiting greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing waste and pollution, protecting and restoring ecosystems, and supporting adaptation to the effects of climate change. As sustainable industries power an ever-increasing share of the global economy, here are five green careers likely to play a pivotal role:

### 1. Urban farmer

Urban or vertical farming uses a combination of innovative architecture and the latest agricultural technology, sometimes including AI, to grow crops in cities. Urban farming, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO), is already practiced by more than 800 million people worldwide.

### 2. Eco-builder

While inside the buildings of tomorrow, smart technology will help people use heat, light, and other resources more efficiently. Building the greener homes and offices of the future (and retrofitting old ones to meet modern standards) is a huge undertaking requiring hundreds of specialist roles. The International Labour Organization (ILO), predicts that there will be 6.5 million jobs in sustainable construction by 2030, making it the second-fastest growth sector behind green energy.



Image 36: **The future of farming may be vertical**

### 3. Renewable energy engineer

Traditional energy companies built around oil, gas, coal, and other fossil fuels have always employed skilled technicians and engineers. Fortunately, greener versions of those same jobs are now increasingly on offer in the renewable energy sector, where companies specializing in everything from hydroelectric power and biofuels to wind turbines and clean transport (including electric cars) are thriving.

### 4. Recycler in the new ‘circular economy’

According to Kate Raworth, an economist at the University of Oxford’s Environmental Change Institute: “Our future economy will thrive on reusing, repairing, refurbishing, remaking and repurposing – this transformation will create new kinds of creative and purposeful jobs.” This includes both conventional recycling, which reuses raw materials, and more creative careers in upcycling, such as sustainable fashion and furniture designers who make new products from rubbish and other waste. This greater emphasis on “recycling, reuse, and repair” will create around 6 million jobs worldwide.

### 5. Sustainability expert

It’s important to bear in mind that the green jobs of the future will not only be found in sustainable sectors. All companies and communities have a role to play in greening the economy. Step forward the sustainability officer and consultant which includes transforming business models, reducing a company’s energy and water use, emissions and waste, plus investigating its supply chains to ensure the goods and services it uses are sourced in a sustainable way.

Employees, too, are pushing for change.

As Zurich’s Linda Freiner says: “Sustainability is a global issue in which every 21st-century business – however big or small – has an urgent and meaningful role to play.” All in all, the future of work and learning in 2030 will present more job and upskilling opportunities for people at all stages of life – regardless of where they live, what their ethnicity is, or what their previous work titles are. From that future vantage point, one thing is clear. we can no longer delay our reimagining and restructuring of the way we do work.

The future has no end, nor does the imagination required to create it. These were only eight of the possible scenarios that could address climate change action in St. James Town and similar urban environments worldwide.

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*Imagination is everything.  
It is the preview of life's  
coming attractions.*

**Albert Einstein**

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PART 7

## TAKING ACTION

SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES,  
METHODS AND TOOLS



## TAKING ACTION

**K**ey insights from our journey of discovery on climate change action in densely populated urban communities are summarized below. These learnings include scalable solution focused strategies, best practices and tools for engaging and motivating an ecosystem of key stake-holders, collaborations and partners to actively participate in building climate resilient communities – starting today!

### Setting the Groundwork

#### Part 1 and Part 2

Start from a place of empowerment and a shared vision of what's possible and how to bring it to life.

- Use an inclusive and asset-based community development approach to look for solutions that work as a system vs. individual parts.
- Identify and meet with key community members, from start to finish.
- Engage and collaborate with those who are already acting and want to collaborate on a shared mission: residents, building owners, managers, building and energy associations, local government.
- Widen the Lens. Discover what others are doing to address climate and other disruptions in the context of community climate action and resiliency.
- Shape and implement climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and actions as pro-jects that enhance the quality of everyday life for individuals in the community: food, shelter, jobs, health and well-being, and a sense of belonging.
- Connect the dots with other related large scale change drivers—social, technological, economic, environmental, and political—also impacting communities.
- Narrow the Focus. After widening the lens to see the big picture, make it real. Assess how to optimize this broader understanding to tailor a community climate action plan, education, and solutions.

## Incentives For Action

Understand what motivates key stakeholders to act.

- For Building Owners: to achieve savings and return on investment (ROI) and to protect the value of their assets.
- For Property Managers: to achieve operational efficiency and savings for the building owners and investors and to ensure that the buildings have a safe, secure, and healthy environment.
- For Residents: to improve quality of life by establishing strong social cohesiveness with community projects, lobbying local governments to increase access to green spaces, and lobbying the building owners to strengthen the resilience of the building in extreme weather.

## Building Capacity for Community Action

### Part 3

To build capacity for the community to take climate action, a few things are necessary.

- Climate action must connect to the needs of people affected by the problem. To achieve systemic change, seek out and facilitate community members and stakeholders on all levels affected or interested in the project purpose.
- Community level solutions get adopted more often when key stakeholders who can affect and are affected by the proposed solutions are engaged. Stakeholders must have a say in the decisions.
- While involving people affected by the problem in the solutions, support them with peer and expert mentors from within and outside the community.
- Mentors need to understand the culture, competency, and talents of mentees and build on these. To mentor people for community climate action, identify the challenge and improvement goals first.
- Solutions should connect to what is taking place here and now and what will benefit many vs. only a few. Build bridges with key community decision makers and stakeholders to partner in discovery exploration and knowledge sharing. Centre on one common vision and action goals.
- When creating solutions, harness the power of imagination. Apply foresight thinking for reimagining and shaping a more positive and balanced future.
- Remember that building key stakeholder relations is an iterative, non-linear, and ongoing process for developing relationships of mutual respect.

## Part 4

For community climate action to be successful we need to understand existing infrastructure and the potential for improvements.

- Higher energy demands will result in more power failures in aging systems, which inevitably will need to be replaced.
- Building owners and tenants need to be able to come together to understand what is needed and what it takes to take climate action.
- There are some tenant solutions, like A/C window units, that cause more problems and education is vital to community climate action in this regard.
- It is vital for the municipality to be involved to extend certain services to underserved areas and also offer incentives to improve buildings.
- There are effective adaptation and mitigation measures that could benefit the St. James Town community but require collaboration between building owners, residents and government officials. These include:
  - Heat pump retrofits to support better energy efficiency and unit-level comfort.
  - Building envelope improvements to improve energy efficiency and operating costs.
  - Back-up power supply in case of electrical system failure.

## Part 5

- The community's secret to success lies in its diversity. Out of this diversity of perspectives come creative solutions to address a problem that affects us all.
- The climate change issue is multifaceted and complex just as communities and governments are multifaceted and complex; therefore, there is not a single solution that remedies all problems.
- It's important to narrow the issue to something more specific so that you can connect with the specific part of the community and government that can help.
- When working with the government, it's important to figure out which level of government is best to work with and to identify the right people who may help. Councillors' assistants are a good place to start.
- When you speak with a government representative, come prepared, have a clear strategy, and have a concrete ask. Also, be able to explain what the outcomes you seek will do, and for whom.
- It's important to have an idea of how much your proposed solution(s) will cost and who will pay for it.
- When fundraising, search for financial help through grants, businesses, and foundations, but also consider in-kind services and pro bono work as part of your fundraising strategy.
- The law can be a guide and a tremendous help to community climate action rather than a detractor.
- The law allows for everybody to be responsible for climate action, but because of that, people can feel that nobody is responsible for climate action. However, with a little initiative and a little knowledge, community climate action can lead to systemic change.

## Part 6

- We have a tremendous opportunity to reimagine our future, but it must be done collaboratively with different levels of government, with various stakeholders, and with diverse ideas.
- Predicting the future is not the goal, creating the future is.
- We need to open the conversation in communities as to what is possible, plausible, probable, and preferable for the future.
- To reimagine the future, storytelling and scenarios are helpful to show people that a dream can become a reality.
- When reimagining the future, it's necessary to consider the opportunities, obstacles, focus, metrics, strategy, and alternative solutions that might be needed to accomplish our preferred future.
- With specific scenarios of a reimagined future, we can begin to take next steps to actualize our preferred future.

## Summary Takeaway

Climate change is a multi-faceted issue within a diverse environment with a significant number of players and numerous potential solutions. Engaging the community in climate change action, however, is a small first step and there is a multitude of ways to begin. It is possible to reimagine the future of high-rise communities and there is a preferred future that is attainable when we collaborate and cooperate and empower. Whether you are in a high-rise community, a suburban neighbourhood, or a rural community, climate change action is everyone's responsibility. It's time to take that first small step that can lead to positive, systemic change.



PART 8

## **APPENDICES**

FOR FURTHER READING

THE RSI – CCA KNOWLEDGE HUB

THE FUTURE – CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES

FOR BETTER TOMORROWS

PLAYBOOK GLOSSARY

REFERENCES

ENDNOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# THE RSI - CCA KNOWLEDGE HUB

Developed for RSI-CCA project in St. James Town

## AN EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH

Using a systems and evidence-based approach to the research of climate action solutions and essential needs of urban communities, we developed and catalogued a comprehensive library of available resources. Compiling the works, we did not restrict the contents strictly to the scientific literature, although understanding the science underlies all of our purpose. We included the range of disciplines that are touched by climate change — economic, social, technological, financial, engineering, legal and political. This approach speaks to the myriad stakeholders who find or will find themselves in the depths of the climate issue, from all professions, disciplines, and walks of life. We hope this research provides a starting point for developing your interest and informing your work.

As Alexander Hay writes in the Foreword to this book, communities are at the centre of climate adaptation. As such, best practices are drawn from the work of those who have been pioneers in the effort to upgrade infrastructure, prepare people for emergencies, cope with the aftermath of climate extremes and prepare for the future. Many of these practical efforts centre on cities.

The resource documents can be accessed in our online Community Climate Action Knowledge Hub — organized by nine themes:

1. **Community Resiliency - Toronto and Ontario specific.** This section covers writings about St. James Town — the vision, the organizations and some future plans; Includes case studies from Cities in Ontario and NGO work. The Toronto Foundation's Vital Signs and Toronto Fallout speak to broader issues.
2. **Community Resiliency – Canada, USA and Global.** References to how cities outside of Ontario including USA, are coping with climate impacts, including extreme heat and flooding.
3. **Education and Workforce Development.** Basic education materials on adaptation — primers suitable for use by educators; information about burgeoning green economy and jobs potential.
4. **Climate Justice.** Impacts of climate change on Indigenous, racialized and marginalized communities; examples drawn mainly from outside Canada.
5. **Emergency Preparedness.** Practical approaches for individual and community preparedness, including the role of volunteers.
6. **Risk Reduction and Adaptation Planning.** Examples of leading international and broad-based policies for risk assessment and adaptation planning; infrastructure and behaviour modifications to counter extreme heat.

7. **Technology and Solutions.** Books and reports that compile a variety of known solutions to climate challenges.
8. **General.** – Global initiatives; references to recent reports from COP 26, IPCC, and World Economic Forum.
9. **Case Studies.** Policy and practical approaches from national and local jurisdictions.

The Knowledge Hub is an asset that has come out of our working together. We hope it will help you in your work on Community Climate Action.

For further information, visit:

<https://communityclimateaction.org/knowledge-hub/>



# THE FUTURE – CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

**Minsoo Pak**  
EY Partner, Transformation Lead and Futurist

## What is a Futurist?

Most of us would like to predict the future, but as the famous management consultant Peter Drucker said, you can't. What you can do is actually better, though. You can create it.

This is what futurists try to do. We're not fortune tellers. Rather, we try to help people create a better future by reimagining what the future can be.

Futurists are people who have learned how to structurally deconstruct what happens and project components parts into what could possibly happen next. This allows you to actually think about how we bring those things to bear, how you can make things happen. When you do this, you are already reimagining the future.

Futurists apply this kind of thinking and reimagining to businesses and corporations, but a lot of what we do also works just as well for individuals.

Why bother looking into the future at all? Basically, because to not look would be worse. We're in a world of unprecedented disruption and challenge in a highly uncertain environment. Looking ahead helps us manage this uncertainty.

## The VUCA World

Futurists call our world the VUCA world:

- Volatile
- Uncertain
- Complicated
- Ambiguous

In this VUCA world, we need to look for things to help us find our way forward. This is different than what people often think consultants do, which is looking in the rearview mirror. Think of it like this: If you look back at when the sun is shining, you see a sunny day when you can stare at the sky; if you look forward, a sunny day is the perfect time to fix the roof. It might not be so sunny in the future.

What does this mean? All it means is that by being aware of the past, grounded in the present and looking to the future, we can tune into society's undisclosed motives, aspirations, and preferences. We can figure out what of whatever is coming is going to be for us and can we imagine how to take advantage.

## The Four Ps

Futurists picture this thinking in something we call a futures cone. It's based on what we call the four Ps of the future.

At the widest part of the cone, there's what's possible. All of us have seen things that were previously considered impossible but later turn out not only to be possible but even taken for granted. Who knew we could get billions of people vaccinated in less than a year? No one know ... yet a futurist could look at the work underway to get this done and imagine how it would happen. There's a limit to thinking about what's possible though, because the range of what's possible can be too wide to be useful. I could say something is possible and you could say something different and anything and everything might be possible. Then what?

We would not have the facts to back up whether something is or not going to happen. So we have to move up the cone into the narrower part, to what's plausible.

The best way to describe what is plausible, is to picture when someone tells you something, and you'll furrow your brow and say, hmm, I never really thought about it like that. I guess that could happen. At that point, you're thinking about what's plausible.

At this point, the ideas are there but they're are not well formed. They're relationships between facts, projections and outcomes are only now getting established.

Now you can move narrower, to what's probable. This is where we can see the trends. When there's a trend, something probable, it's probable as well that startup companies and multiple people are already either working on setting this trend or following it.

This can actually be dangerous, because things are moving faster these days ever. So when we're in the zone of what's probable, we have to move to the peak of the cone, the fourth P. That is, what is preferable.

What do you want to happen? What's in your best interest? Determining what's preferable is important. You need to define and articulate what that means, otherwise how on earth would you know if you got there? You reach the point where you can see what your preferable future looks like by building it on the base of those other three Ps — what's possible, plausible and probable. Then you're ready to build your reimagined future.

There are different ways to get to this point. One way is to ask yourself questions:

- How do I get there?
- What are the steps?
- How does it feel to do this?
- If I get there, what will it mean for me and everyone else.

## Scenarios and STEEP

Your goals is go into the future and lead with purpose and confidence to build something that is actually going to work. Something that's actually going to change the nature of your relationship to the world. Make it better. That's reimagining the future.

Remember: the future is not something just happens to us. It's something that we do. And there's no singular future. Think about scenarios.

There are different scenarios for all of us, and that includes you. There's one in which you're going to be fabulously successful. There's where you're going to struggle. Thinking about these scenarios in advance gives any of us some comfort in the ability to discover what we will do if those circumstances come about.

Picturing these scenarios is also highly strategic. It's a way to discover the richest, most effective way to take advantage of whatever is about to come. Reimagining the future is about provoking action, not just for yourself, but also for the key people who influence you and are who are around you. It's you crafting the narrative, building the story of what's to come, and the role that you're going to play in it too.

There's another acronym — STEEP. When you reimagine the future, think about what it involves in the way of:

- Society
- Technology
- Economy
- Environment
- Politics

If you can craft a narrative of the future across these variables you have something to work with, and something that will work.

Remember, there is no singular future. And as futurists know, you can't predict the future — you can create it and build it.

# STRATEGIC NARRATIVES FOR BETTER TOMORROWS

**Joe Tankersley**  
Futurist Writer, Former Walt Disney Imagineers Lead

## Imagining a Better Tomorrow

**B**efore we can build our better tomorrow, we must be able to imagine it. This can be a daunting task. So daunting that many people assume they have no power to create their future.

Foresight combined with storytelling can give voice to those eager to build better tomorrows. Together, these tools can inform, inspire, and empower.

Foresight helps us identify the driving forces that will shape the future. These insights are critical for uncovering hidden challenges and unexpected opportunities.

Insight is the first critical step toward your preferred future. But without inspiration and empowerment, insights are useless. Fortunately, storytelling's unique power is its ability to help us translate new ideas into actionable strategies.

## Stories — What's the Goal?

All good stories are about someone or some group trying to reach a goal. As an advocate for change, you have already identified your goal. Your goal might be addressing economic or racial inequality.

Maybe it's to prepare your community to be more resilient in the face of climate chaos. Or possibly you dream of a future where people and the planet can both thrive. Clearly and courageously stating your goal is the next step in crafting your strategic narrative.

Here's an example of a strategic narrative: "Fast Sammy, the Two Wheeled Grocer."

Achieving your goal, whatever it might be, requires identifying the who and the how. In the language of story, these become the protagonists and the plot.

In the 20th century, we often cast major institutions as our heroes. The Digital Age has removed many of the traditional gatekeepers in commerce, education, and even governing. New technologies make it easier for small independent groups to be change superheroes. Tomorrow will be shaped increasingly from the bottom up and outside in. As you define your protagonist, don't be afraid to cast yourself in the role of hero.

The hero's goal is to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of the preferred future. This is where the fruits of your foresight efforts inform your strategic narrative.

## Reaching the Goal

What emerging trends might offer our hero new weapons to overcome existing barriers? Will new technologies give our heroes superpowers? Can you anticipate social or cultural shifts that might create new opportunities?

Not all emerging trends will be in your favour. Some will create new obstacles. For example, what impact will climate chaos have on your efforts to reach your desired tomorrow?

As you explore the world of possibilities unearthed by your foresight work, make sure to identify both new opportunities and potential challenges.

As you go through this process, many different possible storylines will emerge. Some will seem more likely than others. Some will end in failure.

That's okay.

Simply return to the page and reshuffle the opportunities and challenges until you find the right combination that suggests a path forward.

The purpose of your strategic narrative is to make the future, a world that does not yet exist, accessible. Your story will help highlight the possible shape of tomorrow.

Use it to map your journey toward that future. But don't hold your story too tightly. Instead, invite others to offer their versions. Some will reinforce your path forward. Others will reveal potential weaknesses. The real power in these narratives is their ability to spark dialogue and challenge assumptions.

Walt Disney, in addition to being the genius of animation and filmmaking, was also one of the most prolific futurists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His Tomorrowland stories envisioned many of the technological advances that define our world. He's often quoted as having said, "If we can dream it, we can do it."

You can too. Strategic narratives can help you dream better tomorrows and show you how to build them.

# PLAYBOOK GLOSSARY

## **Action Learning**

A learning approach that involves small groups working on real problems, learning, and acting as individuals, a team and as an organization or community. This approach helps develop creative, flexible and successful strategies to pressing problems and speeds up the design and discovery of actionable solutions.

## **Action Learning Method**

This learning method engages participants in the learning process as much as possible, focusing on understanding the problems the community experiences (including climate and economic issues) and how to act on planning, discovering, implementing and evaluating possible solutions.

## **Asset-Based Community Development**

An approach to community development that highlights a community's assets, skills, passions and talents in order to empower and unite a community to work together.

## **Built Environment**

In urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture and civil engineering, the term refers to the human-made environment that provides the setting for human activity, including homes, buildings, zoning, streets, sidewalks, open spaces, transportation options, etc.

## **Capacity Assessment**

An analysis of desired capacities (what is hoped for) against existing capacities (what is there already) that generates an understanding the assets and needs, so an individual or group can create a response to a problem.

## **Capacity Building**

Capacity building is the improvement in an individual or organization's facility "to produce, perform or deploy." The terms capacity building and capacity development are sometimes used interchangeably.

## **Change Champions (Local and Global)**

People and groups who have demonstrated leadership and innovative ideas on climate action in similar situations to St. James Town and who are willing to share their insights and promote RSI-CCA initiatives too.

## **Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is part of the Constitution of Canada. The Charter sets out those rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society.

## **Climate Action**

Climate Action is the effort by individuals, communities or organizations to take active measures to address the climate emergency.

## **Climate Action Fund (CAF) and Climate Action Awareness Fund (CAAF)**

Organizational structure funded by the government of Canada that supports climate-related programs in communities across Canada.

The objective of projects funded under the program is to raise awareness of climate change and to build capacity in order to increase climate actions that contribute to Canada's clean growth and climate change plan. In September 2020, the new Climate Action and Awareness Fund (CAAF) was created with contributions from the existing Climate Action Fund (CAF), as well as a significant investment from the Environmental Damages Fund (EDF).

## **Climate Change**

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (for example, coal, oil and gas), which produces heat-trapping gases.

## **Climate Crisis/Climate Emergency**

By the beginning of 2022 around the world, 2,071 jurisdictions in 38 countries have declared a climate emergency. This means they consider climate change to be more than a long-term phenomenon; it's a crisis or emergency that needs immediate attention. Populations covered by jurisdictions that have declared a climate emergency amount to over 1 billion citizens.

## **Climate Risk**

The combination of climate hazard exposure, vulnerability to impact and adaptability of communities, environmental and economic systems and physical infrastructure.

## **Community Members**

In St. James Town and similar communities, residents and building owners who live and work in the community and are affected by climate change there.

## **Community Collaborators and Partners**

In St. James Town (and similar communities), government and private sector leaders and organizations with climate and resiliency related mandates and the means to support the discovery and implementation of solutions.

## **Connecting the Dots, Narrowing the Focus, Widening the Lens**

Connecting the Dots means discovering elements of a subject that go together to make a difference — for example, the ingredients in a community such as knowhow, resources and initiative. Narrowing the Focus is a way to look at how a particular might solve a particular

problem. Widening the Lens is looking at the bigger problem — for example, how climate change might affect a community's quality of life and resilience and might offer opportunities for new thinking, in addition to the specific problems it creates.

## **Constitution of Canada**

The Constitution of Canada is the supreme law in Canada. It outlines Canada's system of government and the civil and human rights of those who are citizens of Canada and non-citizens in Canada. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is part of the Constitution.

## **The Corner (St. James Town Community Corner)**

A collaboration space in St. James Town that brings together residents, service providers and public and private funders who are committed to improving access for SJT residents in order to weave the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

## **Deficit-based Community Development (DBCD)**

An approach to community development that focuses on a community's or individual's needs and draws in external resources to fulfill them.

## **Domain Engagement**

Domains form the grid of society. These include Health, Education, Governance, Science/Technology, Communication, Agriculture, Economics and Social Work. The domains of society become crucial in the transformation of a city as they represent the fabric of society. Engagement in these spheres allows for collaboration and diversity to flourish by empowering others in their gifts, talents, skills and passions.

## **Environmental Law**

The evolving body of law that governs the use, depletion, protection and restoration of land, water and air quality, including emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

## **Futurist**

Futurists are people whose specialty or interest is the attempt to systematically explore predictions and possibilities about the future and how they can emerge from the present, whether that of human society in particular or of life on Earth in general.

## **Government Relations (GR) Professional**

An individual or firm who advises and assists in liaison with elected government officials, their staff and civil servants to help develop policies. GR professionals can sometimes be engaged pro bono (for free) by not-for-profit organizations.

## **Food Security**

The measure of the availability of food and individuals' ability to access it. The United Nations' Committee on World Food Security defines food as meaning that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

## **Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)**

A greenhouse gas is a gas that absorbs and emits radiant energy within the thermal infrared range, causing the greenhouse effect. The primary greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere are water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and ozone. Scientists have determined that humans are producing greenhouse gases in such abundance (from industry, heating and cooling, transportation, agriculture, etc.) that the climate is changing dramatically.

## **Greenspace**

In land-use planning, urban green space is open-space areas reserved for parks and other "green spaces", including plant life, water features and other kinds of natural environment. Most urban open spaces are green spaces; some include other kinds of open areas such as fountains or public squares.

## **Maslow's Hierarchy**

An idea in psychology proposed by American Abraham Maslow in a 1943 academic paper. He created a classification system that reflected the universal needs of society and then proceeded to more acquired emotions — Maslow's hierarchy is often depicted as a pyramid.

## **Mentoring**

A relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person guides a less experienced or less knowledgeable person — learning and development partnership between someone with experience and someone who wants to learn.

## **The New Common (TNC)**

A physical space in St. James Town started by volunteers from outside the community in partnership with residents and service providers within SJT. TNC is a space to benefit the community and provide relief to agencies and organizations who struggle with resources. The name was chosen to best communicate what the space was designed for—people working together for the common good of everyone in the community.

## **Non-governmental organization (NGO)**

An organization that generally is formed independent from government (though some may receive funding from governments). They are typically non-profit entities; many are active in humanitarianism or the social sciences; they can also include clubs and associations that provide services to their members and others.

## **Resilience (Climate Resilience)**

The ability of a community, a city or country or a social or economic system to absorb stresses and function in the face of external stresses imposed by climate change and to adjust to make them less vulnerable.

**Rethink Sustainability Initiatives (RSI)**

A not-for-profit organization launched in 2011 that engages, advises and partners with thought leaders, innovators and organizations to advance the sustainability and resiliency of businesses, institutions and communities.

**St. James Town Service Providers' Network (SJTSPN)**

A network of more than 35 agencies in St. James Town whose goal is to collaborate for community engagement and to coordinate and integrate social services, to create a space for equitable social and economic development.

**Solution Discovery Journey**

An integrated action-based learning strategy and training program. In the Journey outlined in this Playbook, the program included climate Ambassador training, mentoring, problem scoping, solution design, proposal writing and presentation and online relationship-building events with guest speakers, experts and St. James Town community members and partners.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

A group of 17 goals developed by the United Nations that seeks to foster sustainability (see below), strengthen resilience and address other challenges posed by the intensifying climate emergency and the need to use resources sustainably. The UN SDG goals follow a path established in 1987 by the UN-created World Commission on the Environment and Development in its report, Our Common Future, which put forward the concept of sustainable development.

**Sustainability**

A broad policy concept that looks at how to protect life on the planet, including human activity, given finite resources and an ongoing and escalating global climate emergency. Sustainability is often considered from three perspectives — environmental, economic and social.

**Systems Thinking**

A way of analyzing complex situations by looking at these as a whole and understanding the larger issues such situations pose, rather than breaking such issues into parts.

**Values-Based Approach**

An approach to leadership and decision making that draws on the values and principles of an organization or a community and its individuals for direction and motivation — following principles that the group believes in rather than what they have been told by others they ought to believe.

**VUCA**

An acronym, often used by the military, to describe situations that are volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. VUCA analysis has taken root in emerging ideas for strategic leadership that apply to a wide range of organizations, including not-for-profit and community groups. A VUCA analysis can help people make decisions, plan forward, manage risks, foster change and solve problems.

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### **Land Acknowledgement**

*In Toronto we live in the “Dish with One Spoon Territory.”  
The Dish with One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe,  
Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share  
the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations  
and peoples, Europeans, and all newcomers, have been invited  
into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect.*



The Community Climate Action project in St. James Town provides an example of what can be possible for other communities when diversity is celebrated, collaboration is prioritized, and creativity is welcomed. Take a journey with Rethink Sustainability Initiatives' (RSI) multidisciplinary team who, together with Toronto's St. James Town (SJT), collaborated on a plan to act on climate change.

As Canada's most dense high-rise community, SJT is home to thousands of immigrants and economically challenged people who demonstrate how climate change action and meeting every day essential needs are not only complementary, but also inspire new solutions.

The task of climate change action is a global responsibility and can seem insurmountable. But as this Playbook shows, new solutions are possible at all scales; especially if the people affected by climate change day-to-day are engaged to help develop solutions and put them into action. This Playbook captures how SJT's residents intend to accomplish this, how outside experts and inside stakeholders can work together and inspire each other, and how to engage governments and funders through practical solutions.

It's a journey. The SJT journey is the beginning for one community. It is RSI's hope that this Playbook will inspire others to look at their own neighbourhoods as opportunities for climate change action too. Even though climate change is global, its best solutions are often local. So, let's begin to reimagine a preferred future together where community climate action can become the norm.

[rethinksustainability.ca](http://rethinksustainability.ca)  
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