Action and Engagement for Green Communities in Ontario, 2014–2017
Evergreen is a non-profit organization dedicated to making cities flourish.

Since 1991, we've been hard at work, transforming spaces into great places so that communities can thrive. We collaborate, convene and catalyze action by connecting people, natural and built worlds to enable Canadians to do great things that will shape our cities for the better. This is evident in our work from designing school grounds and community programs, to collaborating on transportation, housing, and water issues, to imagining and developing the Evergreen Brick Works social enterprise.
When spaces become great places, we all thrive.
Our Programs

Action and Engagement for Green Communities in Ontario was a three-year program that supported five core programs:

1. **Mid-Sized Cities (MSC):** Evergreen’s Mid-Sized Cities Program is focused on helping Ontario’s mid-sized cities (MSCs) thrive. Alongside our partners in Hamilton, London, Peterborough and Greater Sudbury, we have been building new knowledge and increasing capacity of MSCs to implement place-based approaches and solutions to their unique needs, challenges, and opportunities.

2. **GTA Housing Action Lab (HAL):** The GTA Housing Action Lab is a multi-sectoral collaborative established to generate alignment and collaboration among housing stakeholders. Over the past three years, HAL has helped advance research, policy solutions and pilot initiatives in support of a more complete and sustainable regional housing system.

3. **Mobility Labs:** Move the GTHA and the Hamilton Mobility Lab are strengthening collective action on sustainable transportation, and increasing sector capacity to work effectively with Metrolinx, the province and municipalities to build public support for investment in public transportation infrastructure.

4. **Tower Renewal Partnership (TRP):** The Tower Renewal Partnership is a multi-sectoral collaboration working to transform Southern Ontario’s remarkable stock of postwar apartment towers into more complete communities by supporting public and private stakeholder collaboration, conducting applied research, and engaging in demonstration projects.

5. **Public Engagement on Intensification:** We are increasing public awareness around the benefits of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, intensification and complete communities through a suite of communications tools and public engagement platforms.
Shifting Landscapes

At the outset of this program, we identified a series of urban challenges requiring collective action. Together with a larger constellation of city-building organizations and cross-sectoral programs and initiatives, we have supported and informed development of new policies, investments, strategies, programs, initiatives and networks in support of strong, sustainable and resilient communities for all Ontarians.

2014

- Limited investment in transportation infrastructure
- Fragmented housing system
- Increasing pressures and backlog of repairs in apartment towers and social housing
- Gaps in mid-sized cities research and policy development
- Disengaged public

2017

- Increased infrastructure investment supported by all levels of government
- Ontario pilot program for a portable housing benefit implemented
- Quantified publically owned lands in the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- Creation of the National Housing Collaborative
- New housing policies and programs: Updated Long-term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS), Fair Housing Act, Inclusionary Zoning, National Housing Strategy (NHS), Toronto Open Doors, Mississauga Building the Middle, York Region Make Rental Happen
- Tower Renewal strategies and programs developed: Tower Renewal adopted as a strategic framework in Mississauga, City of Toronto enacts Residential Apartment Commercial (RAC) zoning to support community resilience, CityHousing Hamilton Corporation embarks on a ground-breaking low-carbon tower retrofit
- Robust mid-sized cities network developed
- Empowered communities

Programs: 5
Organizational partners: 88
Workshops: 350
Research reports: 18
Stakeholders engaged: 530
Residents engaged: 174,840
Residents informed: Over 1m
Media reach: Over 72m
Our Approach: Collaborative Action

BACKBONE SUPPORT
Bringing the right people to the table, mobilizing resources, and creating alignment within existing programs, research agendas, communications and community outreach and engagement efforts.

ACTION LABS
Convening multi-sectoral working groups to build awareness, produce research and explore creative and collaborative solutions to key priorities.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
Producing research co-created and shaped by members of our labs and collaboratives to support decision makers to develop and/or innovate their approaches to policy and program development.

PLACE-BASED ACTION PLANNING
Fostering deep community engagement by assembling key local players to identify a community’s unique assets, challenges and opportunities for collective impact.

SUPPORTING PROTOTYPE SOLUTIONS
Identifying barriers to change and potential solutions, innovating and testing new ideas, recording and disseminating the lessons learned, and attracting resources to scale up successful solutions.
**MID-SIZED CITIES PROGRAM**

**Key Milestones**

- **2014**
  - First meeting with stakeholders in Hamilton

- **2015**
  - Launch of Community Storefront Hub at 294 James Street North, Hamilton

- **2016**
  - Initial Peterborough consultations to identify focus of MSC Program work
  - Received endorsement of green economy and sustainable community direction from Peterborough City and County Councils
  - 100in1Day Hamilton

- **2017**
  - West Harbour Engagement recommendations adopted by City of Hamilton Council

- **2018**
  - Mid-sized cities conference and forum
  - Release of Leveraging Ontario’s Urban Potential research series
  - First-ever meeting of Sudbury anchor institutions co-hosted with Greater Sudbury Mayor’s Office
  - 100in1Day London and Hamilton

- **2019**
  - Wrap-up meeting with Sudbury anchor institutions and preparation of action plan

- **2020**
  - Mid-sized cities conference and forum

- **2021**
  - Mid-sized cities conference and forum

- **2022**
  - Mid-sized cities conference and forum

- **2023**
  - Mid-sized cities conference and forum

- **2024**
  - Mid-sized cities conference and forum
THE NETWORK

310 stakeholders engaged in four mid-sized cities
14 core organizational partners from the academic, private, public and civic sectors
20 MSC Research Collaborative members representing
12 institutions 8 policy areas

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

540 volunteers engaged
300+ public workshops, panels, and community events to engage the public in city-building and planning initiatives
50,000+ residents engaged in city-building and planning initiatives

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

35+ face-to-face meetings
15 pieces of research into important areas of policy solutions for MSC leaders
12 adaptive reuse case studies

PROJECTS AND PROTOTYPING

562 public space urban interventions
12 creative engagement approaches tested (shared space creation, conversation couches, design charrettes, pop-up activities, asset-mapping exercises, etc.)

MID-SIZED CITIES PROGRAM

Key Impacts & Outcomes

As a result of the MSC program, we have seen specific impacts at the local level, including:

- Greater confidence and capacity within municipalities to conduct effective community engagement, with new engagement tools, approaches and strategies being incorporated
- Creation of a replicable model for community involvement in transformation of under-utilized civic assets, with Hamilton's Community Storefront Hub serving as a model
- Resident networks mobilized to help implement city plans, pilot new ideas and initiatives, and carry out neighbourhood enhancement projects
- Newly empowered residents and organizations taking leadership in creating the change they want to see in their communities
- Productive spin-off collaborations in municipalities, including one leading to Greater Sudbury's response to the Innovation Superclusters Initiative
- Greater collaboration among mid-sized cities, increased momentum around MSCs and their role in the province, and greater awareness of opportunities to advance MSCs among city leaders
GTA HOUSING ACTION LAB

Key Milestones

2015
- Release of *Make Way for Mid-Rise* report
- GTA Housing Action Lab Retreat to Wasan Island

2016
- City of Toronto announces the Open Doors Program
- Release of *Make Way for Laneway* report
- Government of Ontario updates the Long Term Housing Strategy that included key recommendations from the GTA Housing Action Lab including a pilot program for a portable housing benefit

2017
- Held Maximizing the Moment Forum on Affordable Housing with keynote speaker Councillor Ana Bailão
- Hosted Coming Home, a National Housing Day PechaKucha in partnership with the City of Toronto Affordable Housing Office
- Toronto East York Community Council adopted a motion to study a laneway suite implementation strategy for the city
- Release of *Toward a Brighter Future: Opportunities to Reduce Affordable Need and Homelessness in the GTHA*
- Release of *Building New Affordable Housing through Leveraging in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area: Challenges and Opportunities*
THE NETWORK

26 organizational partners in 6 sectors

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

13 research papers released 2 tools created

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

12 public workshops, panels, and community events to engage the public on housing initiatives

145 stakeholders engaged

60 face-to-face meetings 200+ conference calls

31,206 residents engaged

“I’ve found common ground under one tent with so many who come at it from different angles … a collective voice.”

– GTA Housing Action Lab member

GTA HOUSING ACTION LAB

Key Impacts & Outcomes

• Increased collaboration in the housing sector
• Elevated and improved the quality of the housing conversation in the GTHA, keeping affordable housing on the agenda
• Influenced the Government of Ontario’s updated Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (January 2016) and Fair Housing Plan (May 2017)
• Catalyzed action on the City of Toronto’s Open Doors incentive program to promote the building of new affordable housing in Toronto
• Guided development of Ontario’s pilot Portable Housing Benefit program to help survivors of domestic violence
• Created the environment necessary to move the needle on housing policy

Laneway suites consultation, November 2016
Photo by Jamie McMillan
MOBILITY LABS

Key Milestones

- **2015**
  - TrafficJam Hackathon

- **2016**
  - Release of *Are We There Yet?* report

- **2017**
  - Launch of the Hamilton Mobility Lab

- **2018**
  - Release of *Getting on Board: learning from planning and engagement around rapid transit projects in Ontario* report

- **2019**
  - Bay Area Transportation Forum

- **2020**
  - Co-hosted webinar with Pembina Institute presenting findings of the *Getting on Board: Best practices in stakeholder engagement and land use planning for rapid transit projects* report
MOBILITY LABS

Key Impacts & Outcomes

• Created common ground for the diversity of civic groups interested in the benefits of better transit and active transportation systems (e.g. environmental, health, poverty reduction) and provided an opportunity for these groups to share resources and ideas, strategize and develop a common voice.

• Expanded and deepened the networks of organizations involved in the mobility conversation, helping them to transmit their messages to a broader and more varied audience, and giving newer players the benefit of exposure to more seasoned ones.

• Added new insights to elevate the level of conversation and advance action on mobility and transit investment in the region, with more individuals and organizations empowered to be part of the solution.

• Improved access to and communications among and between decision-makers and civil society.

• Increased organizational capacity to collaborate in other contexts.

TrafficJam Hackathon at Evergreen Brick Works, October 2015
# TOWER RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP

## Key Milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>University Research Network established, harnessing applied graduate student research on Tower Renewal at five academic institutions across Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thorncliffe Action Group’s pop-up market opens, testing RAC Zoning principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding the Tower Landscape published, analyzing the characteristics of tower sites in the Greater Golden Horseshoe for their suitability for growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Feasibility study completed on 500 MacNab, an aging tower owned by CityHousing Hamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial and Federal governments engage TRP in developments of green financial/funding tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toronto Public Health integrates Tower Renewal Thermal Comfort recommendations into report to Board of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mississauga officially adopts Tower Renewal as a strategic framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German Retrofit Financing published, examining a model for the integration of industry stimulation, performance-based incentives, and regulatory support which has successfully catalyzed national-scale change in Germany over the past three decades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RAC Zone launched, providing tower residents and landlords with accessible and user-friendly information on new economic opportunities in their neighbourhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City of Toronto RAC Zone bylaw enacted to liberalize zoning in tower neighbourhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Housing Strategy adopts the maintenance of existing affordable housing as key focus area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ridgeway Community Courts open, transforming an underused parking lot into a multi-sport court on a tower site in Mississauga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RAC Zone launched, providing tower residents and landlords with accessible and user-friendly information on new economic opportunities in their neighbourhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toronto Public Health integrates Tower Renewal Thermal Comfort recommendations into report to Board of Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The key milestones are extracted from the document provided.*
TOWER RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP

Key Impacts & Outcomes

- Development of showcase projects that provide a local evidence base for social, economic and environmental benefits of Tower Renewal while also showcasing the viability and opportunities to implement comprehensive renewal across the region and the province
- Development of green financing/funding models to support deep energy retrofits of apartment towers
- Development of strategies for maintaining healthy indoor environments pre- and post-retrofits
- Encouraging mixed-use neighbourhood transformation and growth by exploring municipal mechanisms to support smart growth on tower sites
- Increased awareness and identified opportunities and challenges related to tower neighbourhoods in municipalities across Ontario
- Initiated path toward Provincial Tower Renewal Framework
- National Housing Strategy consultations and advocacy resulted in inclusion of maintenance of existing affordable housing within NHS, and the allocation of targeted funds to aging multi-residential rental housing has been confirmed
- 500 tower neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto re-zoned, removing barriers to Complete Community objectives being met on tower sites through institutional or commercial uses
Release of Growing Pains documentary

Release of TRCA Living City Report Card 2016, which includes an article co-written by Evergreen’s Robert Plitt exploring a regional alliance for collective action for the GGH

100in1Day Toronto workshops engaging communities in conversation about smart growth, intensification and the role for underutilized civic assets

Launch of online Complete Communities exhibit

2016 2017

Key Milestones

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON INTENSIFICATION

Key Impacts & Outcomes

- Increased public awareness and understanding of the growth challenges facing the GGH and innovative solutions to meet those challenges, including the Growth Plan for the GGH and related land use plans for the region
- Developed new tools to support conversations and initiatives led by planners, municipal and provincial staff, corporate stakeholders, non-profits and the public around growth planning and regional sustainability
- Developed a network of organizations on the frontline of urban sustainability innovation in housing, mobility, greenspace protection, local agriculture and place-making

6 public and private screenings of Growing Pains documentary

10 organizations profiled as part of Complete Communities exhibit

64,464 people reached through in-person and on-line communications around the Growth Plan and the province’s growth challenges and opportunities
Evergreen would like to thank our partners for their funding of these projects. The views expressed in these projects are the views of Evergreen and do not necessarily reflect those of our partners.