

2020 Climate Change Resiliency Project Transition Report

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This transition report contains information on the continuity of our work on Hamilton Public Works' Climate Resiliency Strategy, going forward beyond the semester. The report will contain essential information that can be used by others to continue working on this project after the Semester In Residence term. This transition report comprises the following sections: **context, goals, deliverables, progress, lessons learned, future plans, and next steps**. The information under each section will be a condensed version of all the hard work that was put into the Climate Change Resiliency project.

Context

Public Works' Climate Resiliency Program is set to launch in 2021 and was developed in response to a climate emergency declared by the City in 2019. The program aims to unify Hamilton's sustainability efforts across all community, organizational, and city initiatives, to collaboratively build a climate-resilient future for all Hamiltonians. As part of the program, a Resiliency Strategy will be adopted which sets specific targets and identifies tangible actions to achieve these goals. This strategy will allow for the prioritization of funding and agreement on the city's most pressing sustainability issues. The stakeholders involved include leaders of environmental organizations in Hamilton, the general public, and the Public Works staff who can provide perspective on Hamilton's sustainability assets and needs. Tried-and-true methods from other successful cities as well as creative new directions must be incorporated into a Resiliency Strategy that will push the needle for Hamilton. As climate change is equally a social justice issue, consideration must also be given to public engagement in such a way that ensures that all Hamiltonians are represented.

Goals

- ❑ **Learn about different cities'** regarding their sustainability projects, indicators, goals, and engagement strategies
- ❑ **Literature review and speaking with leaders** globally and in Hamilton
- ❑ **Gain knowledge** on current climate action/issues/opportunities in Hamilton
- ❑ **Disseminate important findings**; provide recommendations on sustainability projects and ongoing community engagement strategies for Hamilton Public Works' Climate Strategy
- ❑ **Build relationships** amongst community members and city leaders (In Hamilton and beyond), as well as with each other

Deliverables

- ❑ **City recommendations report:** containing suggested solutions and best practices tailored to Hamilton
- ❑ **Creation of a podcast series:** featuring local Hamilton sustainability experts as well as climate plan experts from other cities
- ❑ **Website:** serve as an online sustainability hub where individuals can share their ideas and feedback on future Hamilton sustainability initiatives, as well as create a unified online eco-community where people can share and learn about sustainability
- ❑ **Project showcase:** individuals learned about the project through the 3-minute video and infographic that was created to demonstrate project goals and findings

What Was Done

The following section provides more detail about the above deliverables:

Progress

Research Strategy & City Report

Prior to scheduling podcast recording sessions with experts, we researched sustainability in Hamilton and eight other cities that have aspirational or successful climate plans, or have environmental and political similarities to Hamilton. We looked into four Canadian cities (Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary) and four international cities (Copenhagen, Stockholm, Barcelona, and Portland) for information on their targets, strategies, and engagement philosophies. In Hamilton, we examined the city's sustainability needs, opportunities, and current climate plans. Key areas of inquiry include greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, water conservation (stormwater management, water efficiency), green buildings, canopy cover and greenspace, alternative transportation (public transportation, cycling, pedestrian safety), waste management, and public engagement. Through this research, we were able to identify opportunities for improvement in Hamilton as well as global city initiatives that would be most appropriate for the City of Hamilton to implement. We compiled this research into a recommendations report for the City of Hamilton.

Podcast sessions

Throughout the semester, we contacted national and international climate experts who work on important sustainability projects in leading green cities around the world. We also contacted local Hamilton environmental organizations to receive their input on what change they would like to see in Hamilton. We reached out to two representatives per city, one who would be able to speak to the overarching climate plan with the other representative speaking to the on-site work/public engagement aspect of a specific project, either as a member of a non-profit organization or a project manager on a smaller aspect of the overall climate plan (e.g. flood resilience). We interviewed Jillian Curley, Heather Galbraith, and Tanya Laing from Calgary, Doug Smith from Vancouver, and Danielle Koleyak from Edmonton. Concerning Hamilton organizations, we had the opportunity to speak with Chris McLaughlin from the Bay Area Restoration Council, Jon Davey from the North End Neighbourhood Association, as well as Beatrice Ekoko and Deepak Palanichami from Environment Hamilton. A full list of people contacted and interviewed are in Appendix F and G of our final report. We are in the process of developing edited podcasts from these recordings to go up on CityCAST, with the help of Randy Kay.

Website

The website is supplementary to our report and podcast series. The goal for it is to become a public engagement platform and a centralized citizen online hub for sustainability in Hamilton. City staff conservation authorities and anyone in the community can share updates, new project ideas, and request feedback. It will be a place for the public to learn more about climate issues, as well as where and how to get involved in Hamilton. The site will also serve as a tool for the City to learn about public concerns, community assets, and potential projects to fund/partner with/scale-up. We have developed a prototype for this website on Wix, with pages dedicated to explaining our project context, research, as well as an interactive page where the public can submit their feedback/ideas for projects that they would like to see implemented in the city. While we created a visual representation of what the public engagement forum section would look like after development, it will need to be further developed for functionality. Login information to edit the website can be found in Appendix A.

Outcomes

The following is an outline of the outcomes achieved during this project:

- ❑ **Fostering new relationships** between Hamilton and other cities
- ❑ **Knowledge sharing** on sustainability projects and engagement strategies that lead to success in other cities, but also those led by NPOs on the ground in Hamilton
- ❑ **Recommendations for the prioritization of climate change initiatives** that the City of Hamilton could implement
- ❑ **Learning how citizens can join the climate movement**

As a result of our project, connections were made between the City of Hamilton and sustainability teams from cities around the world. In our follow-up after each interview, we connected our global guests to Arlen Leeming, Senior Project Manager (Sustainability) for Hamilton Public Works. Some of the city representatives referred us to networks and resources that Hamilton may be able to use going forward in establishing its climate plan. We hope that the bridges we made will allow for further collaboration in the future, such as potentially inviting them to speak at climate panels and workshops in Hamilton.

We have also created a comprehensive set of recommendations regarding sustainability projects for the City of Hamilton to consider implementing over the next couple of years. We have identified which projects should take priority, informed by input from representatives of Hamilton conservation authorities.

Learning objectives

The following are the learning objectives outlined in the project agreement the student group wrote at the beginning of the semester. In this section, we describe how each objective was met.

- ❑ **Learn about what the City of Hamilton, residents, and environmental organizations are doing to address climate change:**
 - ❑ This was achieved mostly through interviews with Hamilton conservation authorities. We learned about internal city operations, such as city council debates about stormwater fees, lane conversions, and area ratings for public transportation funding. We also learned about the programs that NPOs are doing such as BARC's Stream of Dreams program and Environment Hamilton's Friendly Streets project.
- ❑ **Learn about what other cities are doing to address climate change:**
 - ❑ This was achieved through interviews with municipal experts as well as through reading about their climate action plans.
- ❑ **Develop a deeper understanding of the process by which the City of Hamilton's green initiatives are implemented:**
 - ❑ This was achieved through reading news articles about the years of debate in city council that usually occur before changes are made, as well as through speaking with Arlen Leeming and Hamilton conservation authorities.
- ❑ **Learn to work in interdisciplinary groups:**
 - ❑ We feel that we were able to leverage our strengths well, and each member found a suitable role in the group. All members provided feedback to all pieces of the project, and all opinions were respected.
- ❑ **Practise effective dialogue among group members, supervisors, and community stakeholders:**
 - ❑ **Group members:** During disagreements, we were frequently able to find common ground and work together to discover a new option that we were all excited about.

- ❑ **Supervisors:** We learned to plan meetings through Google calendar, create agendas, and facilitate discussions effectively to get the feedback we needed.
- ❑ **Community stakeholders:** We learned to send professional emails, be flexible, provide the necessary context, do research to come to discussions well-informed, and facilitate discussions that are respectful of their time and perspectives that feel mutually beneficial.
- ❑ **Learn how to find and use existing best practices to inform projects:**
 - ❑ We practised conducting literature reviews by reading strategically while perusing the literature, many being jargon-filled city reports. We learned to start with the easy-to-read newspaper articles first for context before diving into the long city reports. We also learned that many cities have well-integrated official websites, which we learned how to navigate for relevant information.

Lessons Learned

In addition to the learning objectives outlined above, the student group learned many other lessons throughout the semester. These include theory as well as soft skills. Some of these lessons are described below:

Creating and maintaining relationships:

- ❑ Communication and collaboration between all levels of government and with stakeholders (especially those that disagree) is crucial, as everyone must share a common goal to create change in the right direction
- ❑ Collaboration between the environmental department and other city departments is crucial; ideally the climate lens should be integrated into policy in all other city departments. A climate department should not exist in isolation; climate change should be considered when the City creates any policy regarding transportation, industry, social services, etc.
- ❑ Collaboration between cities is also important to creating global change. You can be the greenest city in the world but if you do not share your knowledge, assets, and methods with other governments, your city will still experience the consequences of climate change as the global temperature goes up. It is therefore very important for municipalities to support each other in climate action.
- ❑ **How to create and maintain relationships:**
 - ❑ **Trusting others' by** respecting differences in opinion and their experience
 - ❑ **Respecting others' time** by setting agendas and being on time
 - ❑ **Reciprocity** by communicating a willingness to help others in return and keeping that promise
 - ❑ **Continuity** by following up, passing along contact information, and keeping others informed about new developments in the project, keeping promises about future plans

The power of citizens to change policy and the importance of civic action/public engagement:

We wished to highlight the importance of the public's role in creating climate change within our report, and thus the importance of public engagement. This is because we can't write a report without acknowledging that our work builds on the existing initiatives that Hamilton's environment leaders and citizen advocates have been pushing for and working on for years. We found that many of our recommendations that would have the biggest effect on climate resiliency in Hamilton are not particularly new (such as improving the intuitiveness of using the cycling network, expansion of the bus fleet, and a new stormwater fee) - citizen groups have been fighting for them for a long time. We hope to amplify their voices.

Another important lesson we learned in conducting these interviews was the importance of community engagement and collaboration with all stakeholders (different levels of government, conservation authorities, industry, and residents) as well as with the global community. Cities around the world must continue to share best practices with one another because climate change impacts everyone globally. Cities must also engage

residents to create a cultural shift because city council decisions are limited to the council's perception of what constituents want, and so a bottom-up approach to creating policy change is likely the most effective.

Climate change is a social justice issue, and equity in public engagement is very important:

Another significant piece of public engagement is the need for equity in climate action. Climate change is a social justice issue; it disproportionately affects the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Thus, it's important to properly engage with and listen to these communities when making policy decisions. When implementing any public engagement strategy, the city must prioritize these groups by actively seeking them out and accommodating any needs barring their participation, to ensure they are not excluded from community dialogues. Safe spaces must be created to ensure everyone feels comfortable to share. We include these considerations in our final report.

Future plans and Next Steps

This section outlines what needs to be done going forward with the findings and deliverables of this project. This is important not just to ensure that our recommendations are eventually translated into action by the City, but also to honour our commitments to the people who attended our dialogue interviews.

Immediate (December 9-16)

- Present recommendations to City Staff member Arlen Leeming
- All major documents set in one folder that would be passed on to City Staff members and individuals who will be continuing on with the future of this project
- Complete the editing of all podcasts (e.g. Calgary, BARC, NENa)
- Send each edited recording to the interview guest for review before submission to Randy Kay for uploading to the CityCAST podcast
- Set up a time to speak with Allison Maxted, from the Bay Area Climate Change Council, as introduced by Beatrice Ekoko from Environment Hamilton for a podcast interview

Short-Term (Present - May 2021)

Students

- Speak with Allison Brooks (Bay Area Restoration Council, executive director)
- Ensure that the podcasts have been posted on CityCAST
- Send podcast to City staff
- Send the link to guest speakers when posted with a thank you note
- Ask about potential development of the website

City Staff (potentially with the help of students)

- Analyze the best strategies and recommendations that the City of Hamilton could implement as soon as possible
- Assess the feasibility of some of the recommendations and rank recommendations by priority
- Cost-benefit analyses of priority initiatives
- Set realistic targets and begin to set concrete action plans according to the previously determined ranking of priorities
- Further develop the forum page of the website

Long-Term (May 2021-onwards)

- Further establish and maintain connections made with experts in the national and international cities
- Extend an invitation to the connections made to speak at an annual Public Works conference
- Save their contact information, reach out to them for assistance if necessary
- Plan an annual Public Works conference, that can act as a place for knowledge-building and sharing
- Begin implementing action plans and public engagement strategies
- Create transition reports for the next incoming government to carry on Hamilton's climate plan