

Creative Climate Cities Profile
TORONTO



GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

630 sq. km



POPULATION

2,929,886



GDP

US \$156,108
(PPP) million

CITY STRATEGY LINKS

Toronto Climate Action Strategy

Economic Development & Culture Divisional Strategy 2018-22

Toronto's reports for Culture and the Creative Economy

Welcome to Toronto



Culture Fact

Toronto is Canada's leading production centre for film and television, the third largest in North America¹. Productions reached \$1.96B in 2018, providing over 30,000 jobs for Torontonians (and growing)².



Climate Fact

As of 2016, Toronto has reduced its emissions 6% since 2015 and 33% since 1990, surpassing the city's 2020 target ahead of schedule³. However, its "serious" climate risks include: heat waves, extreme cold days and winter days and flash flooding⁴.

Introduction

The land on which Toronto sits has been home to Indigenous peoples for 11,000 years and today is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto's name is derived from 'TKaronto', a Mohawk word meaning 'where there are trees standing in the water', referring to a channel of water through which Lake Simcoe discharges into Lake Couchiching where First Nations peoples had planted trees in the narrows between the lakes to act as a weir to catch fish⁵. Toronto is known for its diversity - with nearly half the population born abroad - and open and welcoming attitude towards newcomers.

Following the 20th century expansion of commerce and industry that proceeded colonial rule, Toronto has been redefining its identity alongside a flourishing of new cultural organisations telling contemporary Canadian stories. Toronto is home to 93% more artists than any other Canadian city, with arts and culture contributing \$11.3 billion annually to the city's GDP⁷. Arts and culture play a critical role in civic discourse, social cohesion and integrating the past with the present. The priorities of the City's Economic Development and Culture Division are: equity and inclusion, affordable space and access to space, and talent and innovation; Toronto's cultural policies reflect this mission, addressing economic and cultural inequalities across the city and providing opportunities to access city programmes.

Environmental Ambition

Toronto has 157 kilometers of Lake Ontario shoreline – the 14th largest lake in the world by surface area and home to many ecologically significant and rare ecosystems and important species. These include the endangered

¹World Cities Culture Forum. <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/cities/toronto>

²Toronto's On-Screen Industry 2018 - The Year In Review. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-131536.pdf>

³The Atmospheric Fund. <https://taf.ca/publications/torontos-greenhouse-gas-emissions-inventory-feb-2019/>

⁴C40. <http://www.c40.org/cities/toronto>

⁵Ramara Historical Society. <http://ramarahistoricalsociety.ca/how-toronto-got-its-name/>

⁶World Cities Culture Forum. <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/cities/toronto>

⁷Toronto Arts Facts. <https://torontoartscouncil.org/news/toronto-arts-facts>

shorebird, the Piping Plover, and Canada's largest freshwater fish, the Lake Sturgeon⁸. As a result of the city's large population, there is a requirement to manage substantial volumes of waste as well as hotspots of water and air pollution – however the City of Toronto is committed to reducing the environmental footprint of City operations and realise the vision of Toronto as a 'clean, green and sustainable' city. TransformTO is the Council-endorsed city-wide climate change action plan and is the overarching policy framework informing all environmental initiatives in the City of Toronto. Arts and culture play a crucial role in civic engagement and building social capital; Toronto has the opportunity to ensure its social and environmental strategies are mutually-reinforcing, empowering its cultural community to lead on sustainable development.

Connecting Creative & Climate Action in Toronto

1. Creative Programmes & Campaigns

Creative content and activities that engage audiences on themes of climate and the environment

- The City of Toronto's public art program has commissioned several works that address environmental themes, including the highly-acclaimed **Elevated Wetlands**, a set of sculptures by artist Noel Harding. The concept was to create a functioning sculpture that uses waste plastic as a soil substitute to mechanically filter water from the polluted Don River, performing the role of a wetland environment.

- The City's Museum and Heritage Services delivers a programme of environmental education events and activities within the ten municipal owned and operated museums, including:
 - **Harvest Festivals** which comprise **eco-summer camps** for children and weekly markets that sell organic fruits and vegetables, organic wine, cheese, bread etc.
 - Clean Toronto Together, an initiative for which volunteers join the annual city-wide clean-up of public spaces including cultural spaces, e.g. the **Fort York National Historic Site** (a 43 acre heritage property). Volunteers receive free admission to the museum as an incentive.
 - The annual **Jane's Walk** festival, which the City's heritage staff provide guidance, promotion and deliver content for, is a free, citizen-led walking conversations inspired by journalist, author and activist Jane Jacobs. It encourages people to share stories about their neighbourhoods and discover unseen aspects of their communities, using walking as a way to connect with their neighbours.
 - City Cider, an annual all-ages cider celebration, organized by Museum and Heritage Services and presented in partnership with **Not Far From The Tree**, a Toronto-based fruit picking project inspired by sharing, community, and environmentally sustainable living.
 - The **Indigenous Arts Festival** is an annual celebration of traditional and contemporary Indigenous music, dance, theatre, storytelling, film, crafts and food. Traditional Pow Wows – sacred gathering of Indigenous peoples to honour the past, renew friendships and celebrate through culture – are held during the Summer Solstice.

⁸Great Lakes Guide. <https://greatlakes.guide/watersheds/ontario>

- In July 2013, a storm brought down an aged silver maple tree in Toronto's Leslieville neighbourhood. This famed maple tree was the inspiration for the song "Maple Leaf Forever" by Alexander Muir. The City of Toronto continues to preserve the historic legacy of this maple tree by working with Toronto's artisans, designers, and woodcraft workers to turn the salvaged wood into community art and cultural pieces that will be distributed to public, cultural and historic institutions across Canada.
- The City of Toronto's events team annually produces **Nuit Blanche**, an all-night contemporary art exhibition. In its 12-year history, the curators have often selected environmental themes for the curatorial vision. In partnership with the **Ontario Science Centre**, Nuit Blanche Toronto 2019 will feature Director X's 'Life of the Earth', exploring environmental destruction and climate change; the piece follows on from his 2016 Nuit Blanche monumental project 'Death of the Sun'.
- Supported by the City of Toronto, the **2019 Toronto Biennial of Art** asks the question 'What does it mean to be in relation?' Grounded in Indigenous, immigrant and settler histories that have shaped Toronto, the inaugural Biennial asks audiences to re-examine the past to project alternative futures, contemplating "relations" (communion and ecosystems), as well as consider the ways in which we are out of relation.

2. Resources & Support

Investment, training and materials that support environmental knowledge and practical action

- The City's Economic Development and Culture (EDC) Division has initiated an Urban Wood Initiative, Neighbourhood Wood, to encourage and support homeowners and commercial enterprises to salvage and reuse Toronto's valued local trees. A directory links homeowners and commercial enterprises to the companies that can provide services and make products from the urban wood.
- EDC is set to collaborate with the City's Solid Waste Management Services and the Environment and Energy Division on joint environmental initiatives to encourage waste reduction in the film and television industry.
- Sustainable Media Production Canada is creating a Green Resources Guide to list vendors in the Greater Toronto Area and Ontario who provide sustainable services to productions.

3. Partnerships & Innovation

Diverse disciplines and communities sharing and co-developing ideas and resources that accelerate environmental action

- Together with EDC's Film and Entertainment Industries section, various members of the Toronto film and television industry are working on collecting best practices in greening the industry.

They are working with Creative BC (a government economic development program in Vancouver) on intelligence gathering and meeting with local producers on how best to incorporate green initiatives that have proven positive in that Province⁹.

- **Fashion Takes Action** (FTA), Canada's only not for profit fashion industry organization focused on sustainability, works with EDC as a member of the City's Fashion Industry Advisory Panel. The City partners on FTA's annual World Ethical Apparel Roundtable (WEAR) Conference. In addition, the City works together with FTA and other non-profit organizations to collaborate in diverting textile waste from industry and consumers with the goal to shift behaviour towards more positive social and environmental impacts.
- While still controversial, the work of Google's **Sidewalk Labs** on Toronto's waterfront aims to combine forward-thinking urban design, new digital technology and sustainability to create a people-centred neighbourhood that promotes affordability, mobility, and economic opportunity.
- **Design Exchange** (DX) is a cultural institution that champions creative thinking, inspires problem solving, and celebrates innovative talent in Canada and around the world. In 2017, in partnership with the United Nations Development Program, DX presented the inaugural EDIT: Expo for Design, Innovation & Technology. The ten-day international festival, co-sponsored by the City of Toronto, presented an array of curated exhibits, workshops and installations for 35,000 visitors on how design thinking can help achieve sustainable development goals. Returning in 2020, EDIT will again challenge visitors and participants to consider how they can participate in designing the future.

4. Policy & Strategy

Guiding policy and strategy frameworks that drive climate and environmental action, investment and accountability

- The City Council has directed that all City Divisions support the implementation of the City's climate action strategy: **TransformTO**, for which EDC has been a consultation partner.
- EDC has identified the following action as part of the 2018-22 **Divisional Strategy** (within "Talent and Innovation" focus area): 'Champion business and culture's efforts to contribute to environmental sustainability and develop a green economy'.
- EDC regularly collaborates with the Environment and Energy Division on cultural building management and maintenance (e.g. surveys and audits), and has started the process for contributing to the City's five-year energy demand and consumption plan.
- All cultural events that take place on municipal streets or on Nathan Phillips Square immediately in front of Toronto City Hall are required to provide a **waste management plan** that aligns with the City of Toronto's target to divert **70% of its waste**. In recognition of the landfill waste produced by plastic water bottles, a program was implemented in 2012 which prohibits the sale and distribution of **bottled water** at all City facilities and civic squares, including City owned cultural sites and festivals.

⁹This was recommended within '**Spotlight on Toronto**', the Council-approved strategic action plan for the film, television and digital media industry.

Highlights

1

Creative Programmes & Campaigns

The City of Toronto's events team annually produces Nuit Blanche, an all-night contemporary art exhibition. In partnership with the Ontario Science Centre, Nuit Blanche Toronto 2019 will feature Director X's 'Life of the Earth', exploring environmental destruction and climate change.

2

Resources & Support

In 2019, the City of Toronto is producing a new economic development strategy looking at Mount Dennis, a neighbourhood earmarked as an eco-neighbourhood, investing in renewable technology as well as public transit and green jobs.

3

Partnerships & Innovation

Fashion Takes Action (FTA), Canada's only not for profit fashion industry organization focused on sustainability, works with Economic Development and Culture as a member of the City's Fashion Industry Advisory Panel. The City partners on FTA's annual World Ethical Apparel Roundtable (WEAR) Conference and other engagement activities.

4

Policy & Strategy

The City Council has directed that all City Divisions support the implementation of the City's climate action strategy: TransformTO. Economic Development and Culture has committed to: 'Champion business and culture's efforts to contribute to environmental sustainability and develop a green economy'.

Where Next?

Spotlight

EVERGREEN BRICK WORKS

Adaptive reuse of industrial heritage properties/precincts such as the **Evergreen Brick Works**, give new life to old buildings but offer programming that connects arts and culture with the environment. For example the TD Future Cities Centre at Evergreen Brick Works showcases and celebrates ideas and solutions on thriving and sustainable cities from across Canada and the world.

The project is also a national hub for Future Cities Canada, an initiative that brings together people, platforms and innovations from across sectors to find new ways to address the challenges facing cities. Since its redevelopment, **public art** has been integral to Evergreen Brick Works, including hosting an artist-in-residence programme. Evergreen has also collaborated with Don River Valley Park Public Art Program on a series of temporary public artworks along the Lower Don Trail, considering the land from ecological, cultural, industrial and Indigenous perspectives.

A number of opportunities have been identified:

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1. **Share good practice**

Research creative and cultural initiatives across the city which engage with environmental themes and practices, making them publicly available through an online resource. This will encourage new collaborations and good practice exchange and help build environmental knowledge, awareness and inspiration within the sector. It would also recognise traditional ecological, indigenous and local knowledge and encourage citizens and practitioners to appreciate local culture, ethics and skills.

2. **Collaborate**

Continue to work with the Environment and Energy Division, focusing on implementing the City's climate action strategy TransformTO within the city's cultural infrastructure, considering opportunities to provide support, training and resources to cultural buildings and events (particularly city-owned or supported) to reduce their environmental impacts.

3. **Connect social, environmental and cultural strategy**

The Economic Development & Culture Divisional Strategy (2018-2022) has four focus areas: equity and inclusion; affordable space and access to space; talent and innovation, and; operational excellence. Connecting Toronto's emphasis on social justice with environmental issues will deliver co-benefits to citizens and stakeholders, demonstrating the city's commitment to sustainable development.

4. **Build the business case**

Work with the 10 city-owned and operated museums and various galleries to collect data and invest in environmental improvements, developing the business case for investing in cultural buildings and events to reduce their environmental impacts. This could include carbon and cost-saving projects such as building upgrades, low-carbon technologies and staff training, etc.

5. **Provide public support to artists**

Embed environmental sustainability in public art frameworks, not just in terms of encouraging creative programming and practical guidelines relating to the environmental impact of materials, sourcing, construction and transportation.

With special thanks to:

Lori Martin (Senior Cultural Affairs Officer), Sally Han (Manager, Cultural Partnerships), Cheryl Blackman (Director, Museums and Heritage Services), and Ben Macintosh (Policy Development Officer, Economic Development & Culture) – from the City of Toronto



Julie's Bicycle
SUSTAINING CREATIVITY

—
BOP
Consulting