

# Tower Renewal

## Accomplishments 2011-2013





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# Foreward

*Humber Property Management has worked with the City of Toronto and other Tower Renewal partners to make a range of improvements to our apartment buildings. This collaboration has included retrofits to improve the physical condition of the buildings, notably with the operation of our elevators. The energy efficiency of the buildings has also been greatly improved. A new children's play area, including playground equipment and seating, has been provided for the benefit of the many families with children living in our buildings. Most importantly, residents are feeling better about their homes. There is a new sense of community and pride and I see that every day.*

*The approach that Tower Renewal takes in addressing the physical requirements of the buildings and the quality of life needs of residents has been very successful. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in collaboration with the City. Tower Renewal has been an important guiding light essential to the realization of many important projects. I look forward to continuing to plan for future improvements and building on our progress in partnership with the City of Toronto and the Tower Renewal Project.*

*Roslyn Brown  
Humber Property Management*

# Introduction

Tower Renewal is a program to drive broad environmental, social, economic and cultural change by improving Toronto's concrete apartment towers and the neighbourhoods that surround them.

**This document reports on the progress made on:**

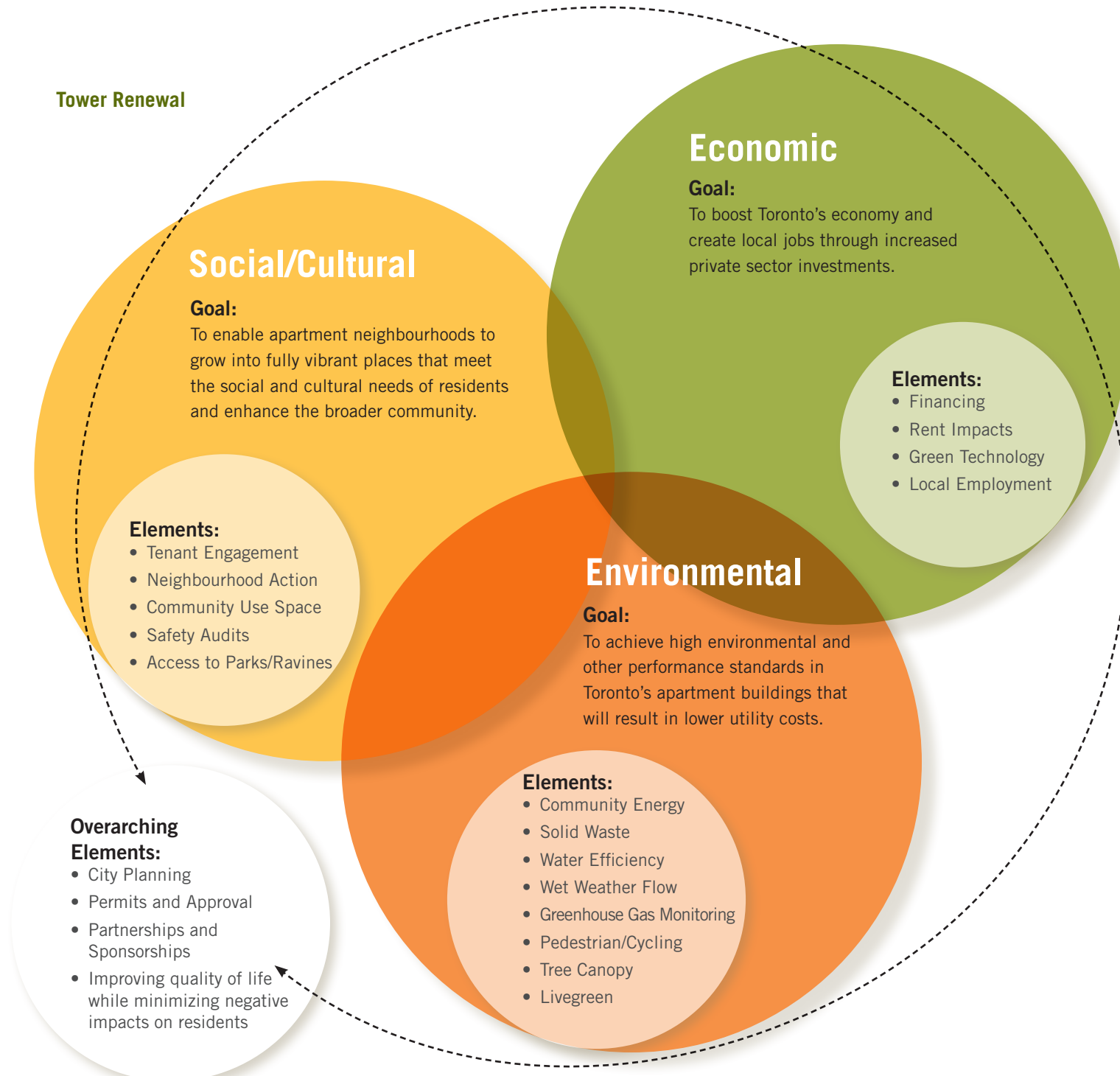
- **Expanding Tower Renewal's reach**
- **Instigating continuous improvements**
- **Supporting action through financing options**
- **Revitalizing communities**
- **Creating an enabling regulatory environment**
- **Supporting economic development**
- **Collaborating to achieve positive change**

It describes the 3 keys to future success that will form the basis for achieving the goals of Tower Renewal on a 10 year horizon:

1. Site-based attention, information and guidance for continuous improvements;
2. Enabling change to allow improved performance to be achieved
3. Collaboration to maximize impacts

The Tower Renewal Implementation Book ([http://www.toronto.ca/city\\_manager/pdf/tr\\_implementation\\_book.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/city_manager/pdf/tr_implementation_book.pdf)) provides more details on the background and approaches used in the Tower Renewal Program.

## Tower Renewal









# How Tower Renewal Supports the City's Success

Apartment communities are important to the city. Over 500,000 people live in Toronto's 1200 older, high-rise apartment buildings. Often, when people first move to Toronto, one of these buildings is their first home. It is also a frequent choice of home for seniors.

Toronto will face increased pressure on these issues over the next decade. Due to demographics and community characteristics, many of these pressures will be most strongly felt in Toronto's older apartment neighbourhoods.

## Population Growth

Toronto grew by 110,000 people between 2006 and 2011<sup>1</sup>. Toronto is expected to grow by up to 468,000 more people by 2031<sup>2</sup>. Every year, Toronto welcomes almost 100,000 newcomers to Canada<sup>3</sup>.

**Many apartment properties have under-used land where new buildings could be built.<sup>4</sup> This can create new homes for people moving to Toronto, in many cases without needing to build expensive infrastructure like new water pipes, sewers and electricity transmission lines.**

## Good Jobs

Toronto will need over 143,000 more jobs<sup>5</sup> to meet the needs of its current and future residents.

**Retrofitting apartment buildings will generate 30,000 person years of employment.<sup>6</sup> Job training and readiness programs can help all Torontonians access those jobs.**

## Affordable Housing

More people will need places to live that they can afford. 36% of Toronto households pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs.<sup>7</sup>

**Saving money on utilities, like electricity, gas, water and waste, means lower building operating costs. In turn, these savings mean that there is more money to spend on building maintenance and upgrades and less pressure to increase rents.**

## Healthy Communities

Many Torontonians have health concerns, such as having a chronic disease like diabetes (9.9%) or being obese or overweight (46.1%).<sup>8</sup> Living in a neighbourhood where people can get where they need to go on foot, by bus or by bike helps keep people healthy.

**Many people living in apartment neighbourhoods don't have cars, and travel mostly on foot, by bus or bike. It's important for them to feel comfortable and be safe doing so. Having services and stores nearby promotes healthy active transportation.<sup>9</sup>**

## Environment and Energy

Everyone can feel it when Toronto has smog days, but small children, the elderly and those with problems breathing can become very ill. Air pollution in Toronto sends about 6,000 people to hospital each year. Another 1,700 people die prematurely due to bad air quality.<sup>10</sup>

**Energy efficiency and conservation means less energy use overall – reducing the strain on Toronto's electricity grid and avoiding power outages due to grid overload. Using less electricity and gas is also a good way to reduce air pollution.**







# Apartment Sector Characteristics

More than 25% of all homes in Toronto are in apartment buildings constructed between 1945 and 1984.<sup>11</sup>

Tower Renewal focuses on older high-rise apartment buildings which are 8 storeys or taller. These 1200 buildings are home to about 500,000 residents.

About 25% of these buildings are in Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.<sup>12</sup>

Nearly 40% of families living in all high-rise buildings in Toronto have low incomes, with a higher proportion living in Toronto's inner suburbs.<sup>13</sup>

Based on a 2011 survey by United Way Toronto<sup>14</sup>, people living in older high-rise buildings in Toronto's inner suburbs\* are more likely to:

- **Have low incomes** – Over a third (35.6%) of households had incomes under \$19,999 and more than half (54.9%) had incomes under \$29,999
- **Have children** – More than half of households were families with children (56.7%)
- **Be recent immigrants** – 24.7% immigrated to Canada in last 5 years

- **Be seniors** – 18% were aged 60 or more
- **Be visible minorities** – 67.2% of residents were visible minorities

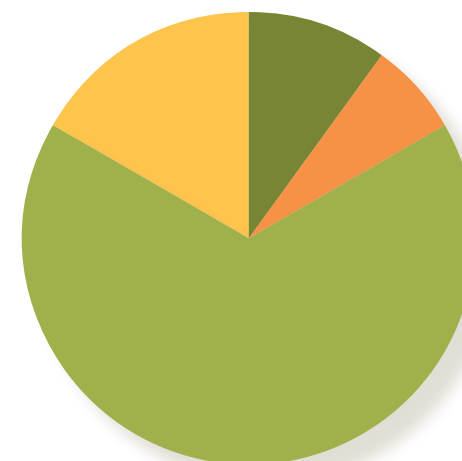
Some of these factors – having low incomes, or being very young or very old – make residents of older high-rise buildings more vulnerable to poor health.<sup>15</sup>

The City of Toronto, through the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), is the largest landlord in the city (over 58,000 units). About half of TCHC's units are in high-rise apartment buildings.

About 2/3 of Toronto's 1,200 apartment buildings are for-profit, privately-owned rentals, with approximately 600 owned by 80 companies.

\* Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Scarborough.

**Number of Apartment Buildings by Type of Ownership**



- TCHC\*\*
- Non-profit (not TCHC)
- Private Rental Buildings\*\*\*
- Condominiums

\*\* Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), owned by the City of Toronto, has 134 older high-rise buildings

\*\*\* Private rental building owners include REITs, pension funds, privately held companies and individuals but do not include non-profits.

## Tower Renewal Means a Better City for Everyone

All stakeholders – residents, property owners and the City – have a role to play in identifying improvement opportunities and taking action.

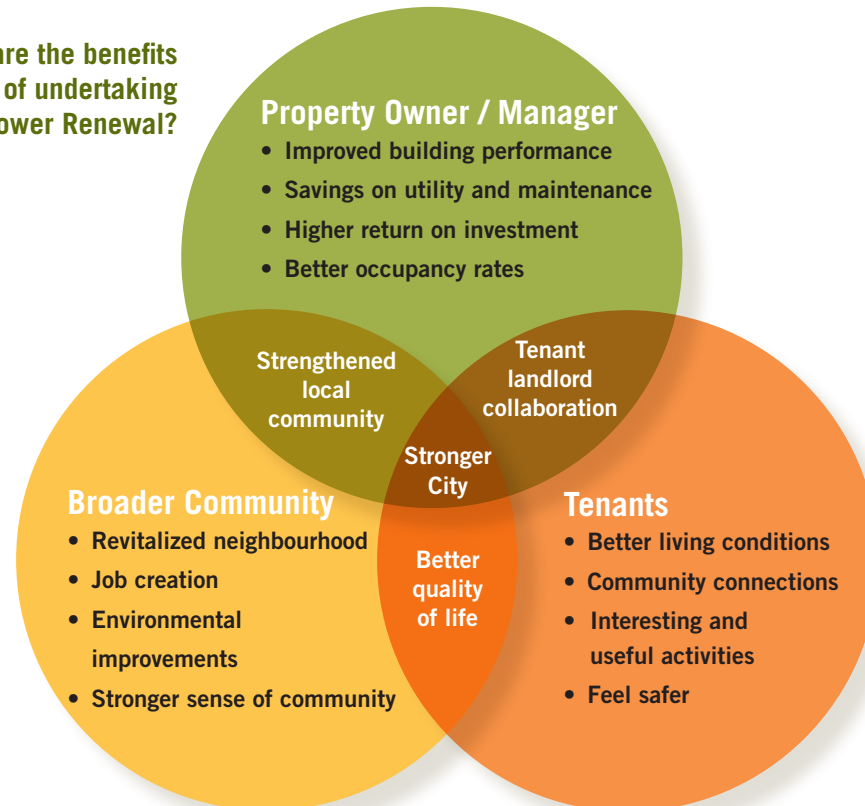
Benefits will flow to building residents, property owners, surrounding neighbourhoods and the city as a whole.

So far, about 25% of the apartment sites in Toronto, over 100,000 residents, have been connected to Tower Renewal. Some places have seen major improvements, but many more have just scraped the surface of what is possible.

Continued efforts will build on early improvements for even greater benefits to residents.

Acting now will ensure that these buildings provide sound housing for decades to come, not just for the people who live there today but for generations to come.

**What are the benefits of undertaking Tower Renewal?**



# Tower Renewal Progress – 2011-2013

## Progress: Tower Renewal's Reach

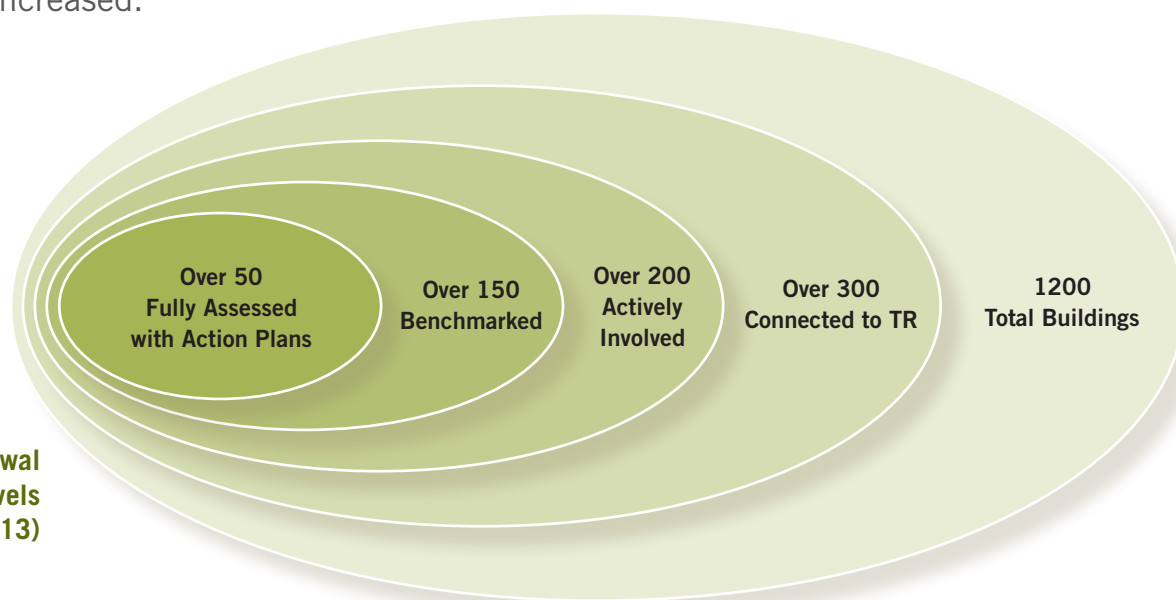
City-wide roll out of Tower Renewal started in 2011. Since that time, the number of buildings in the program at different levels has steadily increased.

This was achieved by:

- working on improvement plans at the pilot sites, and
- working with more buildings to find out how they could also be improved.

Buildings connected with Tower Renewal are shown on a map on page 19.

### Tower Renewal Participation Levels (Summer 2013)



**Fully Assessed with Action Plans** – These buildings have been assessed for environmental performance (energy, water and waste) and quality of life (community, safety and operations) in the STEP program.

**Benchmarked** – These buildings have been benchmarked against similar buildings in Toronto for environmental performance, including energy, water and waste. Benchmarking compares each building's performance to the performance of a group of similar buildings.

**Actively Involved** – These building owners are actively involved with Tower Renewal in some way. This includes buildings that have participated in various projects ranging from waste diversion field tests to community revitalization projects.

**Connected** – These buildings include the above as well as other buildings within portfolios held by owners with whom Tower Renewal is engaged and buildings located within community revitalization initiative areas.



## Progress: Instigating Continuous Improvement

At about 300 sites, building owners or operators are engaged with some aspect of Tower Renewal.

The Tower Renewal Office offers a successful outreach initiative, called the STEP program. This involves assessing each building for environmental impacts related to energy, water and waste, and quality of life related to community, safety and operations. The STEP program builds a culture of continuous improvement and establishes a foundation of shared understanding between apartment building owners and Tower Renewal.

At about 50 sites, a complete STEP analysis has been done, and action plans for improvement developed for property owners to initiate action.

At five sites, Tower Renewal has been able to direct resources to working on an on-going basis with property owners and residents to implement their action plans. In these cases, we are able to track what is being done to improve the buildings and monitor the impacts from these actions.



## Progress: Supporting Action through Financing

A major barrier to comprehensive building retrofits is the lack of access to a source of financing that:

- does not compete with alternate investment options and
- does not reduce owner equity.

To address the financing challenge of whole building renewal, the Tower Renewal Office is leading the multi-residential stream of a pilot financing program, called the Residential Energy Retrofit Pilot Program. It will use a financing tool, called a Local Improvement Charge (LIC), to provide funding for energy and water efficiency retrofits.

Benefits of this new Residential Energy Retrofit Pilot Program are:

- Property owners can avoid large upfront costs by paying for energy efficiency and water conservation improvements over time;
- Because the LIC is attached to the property, and not the owner, the benefits and costs of the LIC are assumed by a new owner, if the property is sold;
- Competitive interest rates and longer repayment terms in comparison to traditional financing options like lines of credit; and
- Property owners can offset the LIC payments with savings from lower utility bills, although the City makes no guarantees of savings.

The LIC financing option is a great start. Over the next few years, \$10,000,000 in financing will be made available by the City for comprehensive environmental retrofit projects in apartment buildings.

In addition, the City continues to pursue changes to Ontario Regulation 594/06 that would allow the City to set up an arm's length corporation which uses priority lien status to secure investments. With this change, private sector organizations seeking long-term investments, such as pension funds, could invest in environmental retrofits in apartment buildings. The increased availability of financing would result in accelerated improvements to more buildings.

## Progress: Revitalizing Communities

Just as Toronto's older high-rise apartment buildings require reinvestment, so too do many of the apartment neighbourhoods in which they are located.

Tower Renewal Office has been working with City Divisions as well as numerous donors and philanthropic foundations to bring about positive changes in specific tower neighbourhoods. Toronto Community Foundation's Recipe for Community program has brought significant benefits to two apartment neighbourhoods: St James Town (2010-2012) and Weston (2012-2013).

In 2012, the City and its partners began the Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy to improve the economic, social and physical landscape in the Weston community. The Weston Recipe for Community program has been one of the signature initiatives to support this revitalization strategy. In Weston, \$330,000 has been leveraged from grant funding and in-kind donations (Toronto Community Foundation \$100,000, additional funding of \$50,000 and in-kind \$180,000).

Examples of revitalization projects in Weston have included:

- Employment training
- Beautification projects
- Resident community building
- Community food projects.

Over 1,200 people and 15 organizations have been involved in Recipe for Community – Weston / Mount Dennis.



## Progress: Creating an Enabling Regulatory Environment

Tower Renewal has influenced changes in a number of regulations to improve Toronto's apartment communities. One of these is creating a more enabling zoning environment.

Toronto's Apartment Neighbourhoods are described in the Official Plan as being primarily residential areas supported by a mix of small-scale retail and service uses as well as community services for local residents. However, zoning bylaws in most of Toronto's older apartment neighbourhoods prohibit all but daycares and small convenience stores from being located on most residential apartment sites.

The Tower Renewal Office worked with City Planning, Toronto Public Health and United Way Toronto to make the case that the existing zoning regulations were a significant barrier to apartment neighbourhoods evolving to better suit local residents' needs and becoming healthier neighbourhoods with stronger local economies. As a result, the City is pro-actively re-aligning the City's zoning bylaws with the vision for apartment neighbourhoods in the Official Plan.

So far, a new zone, called "Residential Apartment Commercial" (RAC), has been created, which will allow for small-scale commercial and community uses at grade.

On-going work is being done by the City Planning Division to determine which properties will benefit from the new RAC zoning.

Once the RAC zoning is in place, the next steps will include encouraging property owners, small businesses and community agencies to work together to bring retail, services and community programs closer to apartment residents.



## Progress: Economic Development

Tower Renewal has supported economic development by:

- Creating the Green Directory of Products and Services to strengthen the local green products and services industry;
- Encouraging investments in retrofits, particularly in aligning with efficiency incentive programs offered by utilities;
- Convening workshops and forums for property managers and owners to provide practical information and opportunities for sharing of best practices; and
- Providing practical skills training for residents of apartment communities, including training in food handling, bicycle repair and carpentry.





## Progress: Collaborating to achieve positive change

Tower Renewal, with a range of partners, has identified ways to improve apartment communities. Here are some of the initiatives:

- Co-organized and hosted with the University of Toronto's Neighbourhood Change Partnership, this initiative brought together over 50 researchers to share their Tower Renewal-related knowledge and findings on a range of subjects, including:
  - the settlement experience of Tibetan refugees,
  - energy audits with resident engagement surveys,
  - undertaking design of a community hub, and
  - innovative food retail hub application.
- Assisting in the delivery of the United Way Toronto's 3-year commitment and \$800,000 in funding to bring community engagement and project development to four tower neighbourhood revitalization communities. This will address needs for amenities and facilitate local economic development coupled with innovative energy retrofit incentives provided by Toronto Hydro and Enbridge.
- Arranged the participation of Engineers Canada in developing a protocol for assessing climate change impacts and adaptation needs for apartment structures in cooperation with Toronto Community Housing. It identified particular vulnerability from extreme heat and potential increased electricity disruption.
- Secured funding and project managed a Waste Diversion Ontario funded field test of a range of waste diversion approaches and tactics that determined that higher recycling rates are possible particularly where there are consistent efforts to inform and engage residents.



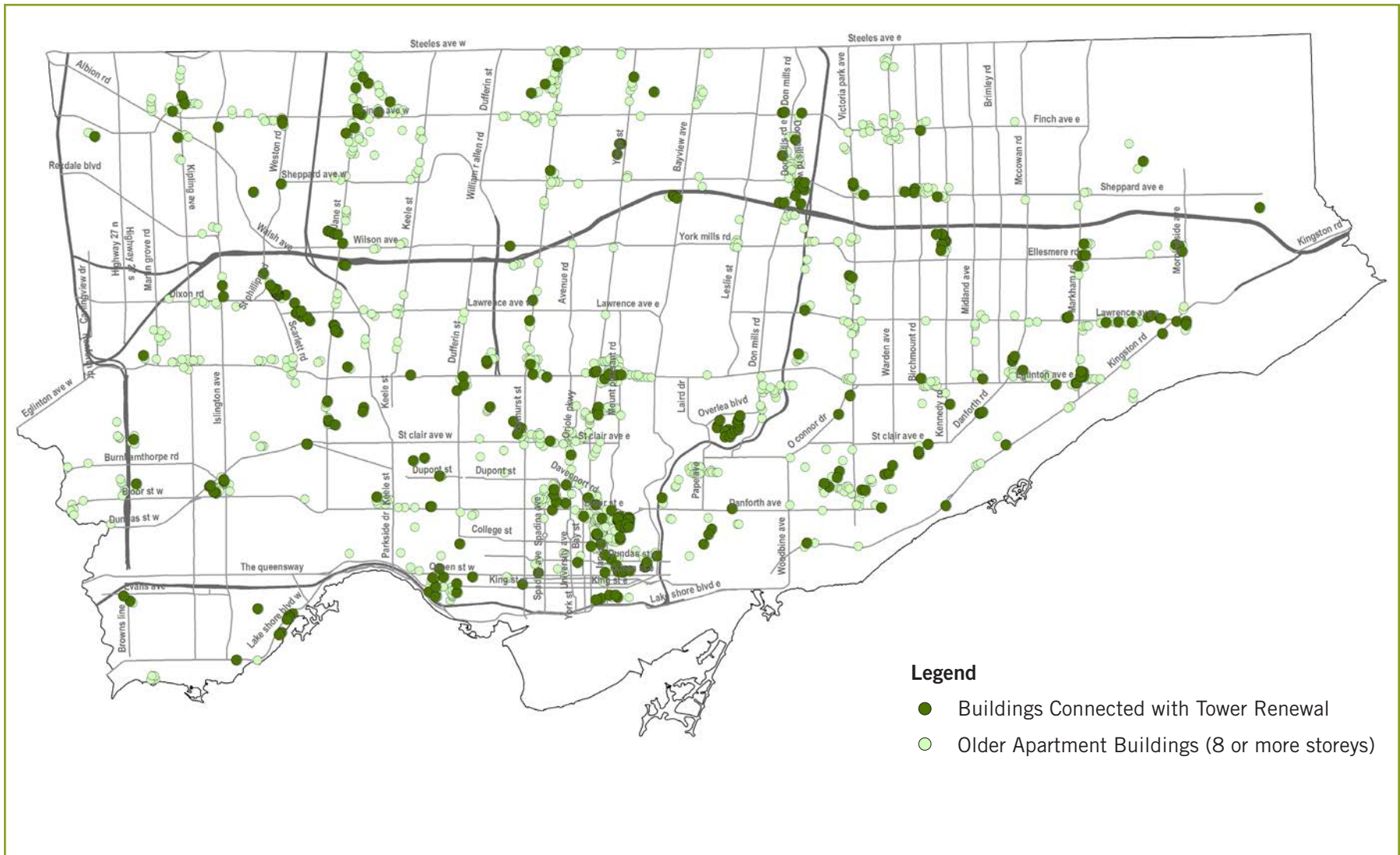
## Progress: City Involvement in Tower Renewal

The Tower Renewal initiative is a partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors. Tower Renewal involves multiple stakeholders, including, but not limited to, private sector firms, non-government organizations and other levels of government.

A broad network of City Divisions, agencies, boards and commissions are participating in Tower Renewal:

- Affordable Housing Office
- Children's Services
- City Planning
- Finance
- Economic Development & Culture
- Emergency Medical Services
- Employment and Social Services
- Fire Services
- Municipal Licensing & Standards
- Office of Emergency Management
- Office of Partnerships
- Parks, Forestry & Recreation
- Public Health
- Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
- Social Development, Finance & Administration
- Solid Waste Management
- Toronto Building
- Energy and Environment Office
- Toronto Water
- Transportation Services
- Toronto Public Health
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Police Service

# Current Reach of Tower Renewal





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# 10 Year Horizon

By 2023, Tower Renewal's goal is to be a force for change to ensure that Toronto has:

- Comfortable and affordable housing
- Healthy communities
- Strong industries and businesses

By:

- Providing site-based attention, information and guidance for continuous improvements
- Enabling change to achieve improved performance
- Collaborating with City and external stakeholder programs and services to maximize impacts





## Looking Forward: Providing site-based attention, information and guidance for continuous improvements

The Tower Renewal STEP Program will continue to expand its reach to more buildings.

The STEP Program is a tool for action planning to instigate continuous improvements in apartment buildings.

It works by:

- providing data on a building's performance to assess what is possible;
- engaging stakeholders to spur action on the part of owners, property managers, and residents; and
- reflecting best practices and providing tools and resources to support achievements.

The information derived from benchmarking buildings generates interest in how to become a top performer that in turn drives learning and actions.

The framework can be complemented with supports such as workshops and forums, and site consultations that help people get the information and supports they need to act.





## Looking forward: Enabling change to achieve improved performance

Although improving apartment buildings makes sense, there are reasons that the improvements don't happen. There has been significant advancement in several areas such as zoning permissions and financing. More challenges lie ahead.

Some areas needing attention:

- Our current LIC financing approach will be challenging to scale up to the level needed to support financing of hundreds of buildings. We need to explore scalable financing mechanisms.
- There is a lack of investor interest in many areas of the city where there are tower clusters. In many areas generating greater interest would spur neighbourhood design improvements and retrofitting of existing buildings. We need to find ways that the City can act to support these investments.
- Potential building residents have limited access to information on which to base their housing choices. Ways that the City can act to help provide this information should be explored.
- With our changing climate, apartment buildings have some particularly vulnerable situations. Extreme heat and electricity disruption are two areas that need more attention to ensure, in particular that vulnerable populations, are appropriately served by their housing.

## Looking forward: Collaborating with City and external stakeholder programs and services to maximize impacts

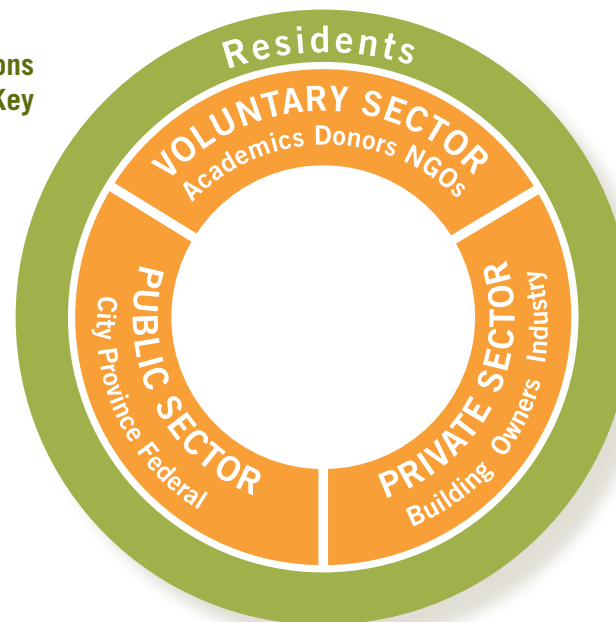
Tower Renewal collaborates with city and external stakeholders to assist in applying City strategies and external stakeholder programs and services effectively to meet the needs of people living in Toronto's apartment communities.

There are many opportunities to draw out and apply the range of City strategies and objectives, as set out in:

- Toronto Newcomer Strategy
- Toronto Seniors Strategy
- Housing Opportunities Toronto
- Collaboration for Competitiveness
- Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan
- Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020
- Toronto Official Plan
- Food Strategy

Building on past successes and seeking out and developing new collaborations is key to realizing improvements.

**Collaborations  
are Key**





# References

<sup>1</sup> Population growth data between 2006 and 2011 is from “City of Toronto Backgrounder: 2011 Census: Population and Dwelling Counts”.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates based on high growth scenario in “Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Forecasts to 2041”, Hemson Consulting, June 2013.  
<[https://www.placestogrow.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=318&Itemid=14](https://www.placestogrow.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=318&Itemid=14)>

<sup>3</sup> Immigration data is from 2013 Citizenship and Immigration Canada Research Data Mart.

<sup>4</sup> The report “Infill on Apartment Sites in Toronto: A Ten Year Review” (revised May 7 2012) by the City of Toronto (Tower Renewal Office) reviews the lot coverage of sites where applications were approved for infill development on sites with existing rental apartment buildings on pages 29-30.

<sup>5</sup> Based on employment increase in “Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Forecasts to 2041”, Hemson Consulting, June 2013.  
[https://www.placestogrow.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=318&Itemid=14](https://www.placestogrow.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=318&Itemid=14)

<sup>6</sup> The report “Tower Renewal Workforce Challenges and Opportunities” (dated May 3 2010) by Dr. Ted Kesik, P.Eng, contains a projection of 30,441 person years of employment in the architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) sector related to Tower Renewal, on page 8.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada 2006 data.

<sup>8</sup> Health data for Toronto residents is from “Toronto Public Health Annual Report 2012”, released in 2012, page 30.

<sup>9</sup> Health information is from Toronto Public Health report “A Healthy Toronto by Design Report: Toward Healthier Apartment Neighbourhoods”, released September 2012, page 3.

<sup>10</sup> Figures for hospitalizations and deaths due to poor air quality provided by City of Toronto report “Change is in the Air: Toronto’s Commitment to an Environmentally Sustainable Future: Moving from a Framework to Action: The Climate Change and Clean Air Action Plan, Phase I; Staff Background Report”, dated June 13, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada 2006 Census data.

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada 2006 Census data.

<sup>13</sup> Income information for households living in high-rises in Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Scarborough is from United Way Toronto’s report “Vertical Poverty: Poverty by Postal Code II: Declining Income, Housing Quality and Community Life in Toronto’s Inner Suburban High-rise Apartments”, dated January 2011, based on Statistics Canada data from the 2006 long-form census, page 26.

<sup>14</sup> Demographic information is from United Way Toronto’s report “Vertical Poverty: Poverty by Postal Code II: Declining Income, Housing Quality and Community Life in Toronto’s Inner Suburban High-rise Apartments”, dated January 2011, based on a survey of 2,803 tenants living in older high-rises in Toronto’s inner suburbs (Etobicoke, North York, East York, York and Scarborough). Information is from pages 191-194.

<sup>15</sup> Information about the vulnerability of residents to negative health outcomes is contained in the report: “A Healthy Toronto By Design Report: Toward Healthier Apartment Neighbourhoods” (dated Sept 2012) by Toronto Public Health on page 3.

