

Let's TransformTO! Brainstorming Session in Ward 19

Monday, June 6th 2016

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Contents:

- Introduction
- TransformTO Presentation
- Exercise: Imagine Your City in 2050
- Brainstorming Session: Six Topics
- Brainstorming Session: Group Discussions
- Appendix A: “Dotmocracy” Interactive Results

Introduction

The City of Toronto has set goals to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020, and 80% by 2050, from 1990 levels. Many of the City’s earlier emissions reductions targets, the “low-hanging fruit”, had already been set, and have been met. Now, through the TransformTO process, the City is seeking ideas for the next set of strategies for major emissions reductions. In order to hear from residents across the city, the TransformTO Project Team created a community conversation kit, and invited local organizations to host brainstorming sessions and share ideas. The ideas will be collected and then modelled to determine what the most actionable strategies are, which will shape new policy development.

On Monday, June 6th, residents from Ward 19 and its surroundings joined Green 19, TransformTO, and Councillor Mike Layton at Harbord Collegiate Institute to brainstorm ideas for how the City could achieve this goal by 2050. Councillor Layton introduced the topic of climate change, and its importance, as its effects are already having impacts on northern Canadian communities. Throughout the event, participants discussed ideas which are shared in this report.

TransformTO Presentation

Mark Bekkering from the Environment and Energy Division of the City of Toronto presented information regarding the TransformTO process. His main points included:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions have to be done in a way that will make the City a better place for all residents, increasing prosperity, equity, and health

- Forecasted consequences that the City could face if greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced, for example: the City will experience fewer rainstorms, but with much heavier rainfall, which means that the City will experience more flooding
- Cities play a big role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and Toronto has been relatively successful in reducing emissions to date
- Two big investments that have been done that have had a big impact on reducing emissions: 1) introduction of Methane use in landfills; and 2) the Province has eliminated its use of coal
- In the next 34 years, the City will have to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 15 million tonnes. In order to do this, the City will have to make significant changes
- It is an ongoing process, where the City will have to work with the community to reach its long term goals

Exercise: Imagine Your City in 2050

Paul Antze, Green Neighbours 21 Organizer and Past Chair of Toronto Climate Action Network, facilitated a visioning exercise that allowed participants to begin thinking about how Toronto would look in 2050. He began by asking participants to close their eyes and imagine the decades passing by: 2020, 2030, 2040... And... We are now in Toronto in 2050, and the City has reached its goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 80%. The City is prosperous, it is healthy, and it is equitable. Participants are then asked questions, including: What is there? How do we get around? What do streets look like? What does going to work look like?

Once participants had time to think about these questions, they were asked to open their eyes, and share the first thing they thought about during the exercise with their neighbour.

After this discussion, participants were asked to share a few of the visions they had, which included:

1. Lots of greenspaces in every neighbourhood
 2. Everything would be recycled, there would be zero waste
 3. Frequent / convenient public transit
 4. Every school in the City would have solar panels
 5. There would be expanded transit systems (more trains and express trains)
- All kitchen and toilet waste would be collected and used

Brainstorming Session: Discussion Topics

After participants were asked to share remarks from the Imagine your city exercise, they were asked to express topics that they would like to further discuss. Six different topics were put forward by participants, they are:

1. Motivation for Recycling / Zero Waste
2. Urban Agriculture in the City
3. Community-Led Urban Design for Future Development
4. Community Energy Generation and Storage / District Energy
5. Carbon Reduction Initiatives
6. Park System Connection (Garrison Creek Park)

Brainstorming Session: Group Discussions

Each facilitator chose one topic that would be further discussed among participants at roundtables. Participants were invited to choose which table they would like to participate at. They were also invited to change tables throughout the event, in order to hear and share ideas for different topics. Below are pictures of the group discussions.



1. Motivation for Recycling / Zero Waste (Facilitator: Rose Kudlac)

Identified problems:

- Need to motivate residents to recycle
- Need to address waste

Proposed solutions:

- Education – K12
- District Waste Treatment
- Consumer Waste
- City Procurement Policy
- Food waste avoidance
- Re-use by-products e.g. of food production

Related brainstorming & suggestions to City of Toronto:

- **G6-12 funding/requirements for facilities recycling;** Demonstrations like at the Kortright Centre, in Toronto schools
- **District sewage treatment & co-generation:** Treat sewage, grey-water locally at neighbourhood or multi-residential building scale, use bio-digester for energy generation, use nutrients
- **Neighbourhood drop-off centres:** For disposal / to divert from disposal at public/park bins
 - also provides opportunities for re-use other than curb
- **Require biodegradables:** Fast-food packaging, cigarette butts, to be bio-degradable
- **Packaging reduction strategies:** Use less; send back to vendor; one jurisdiction charges producers for packaging waste (like Extended Producer Responsibility)
- **Waste reduction incentives:** provide incentives/enforcement for residents
- **Waste streams public education:** Better communication on how to separate at home and public facilities at point of disposal (now very confusing, website inadequate)
- **Sharing economy:** Promote trading, tool and other lending libraries locally
- **Personal waste avoidance:** Strategies like re-using bags
- **Plastic bag fee:** What happened to plastic bag fee?
- **City Procurement: policy to use asset tracking:** To re-use internal goods, purchase used (e.g. <https://ca.getwarpit.com/>), repaired, or cradle-to-cradle (C2C) goods; reclaimed materials
- **Reference:** See Global food loss+waste protocol <http://flwprotocol.org/>
- **Bring Back Cooking:** The more people cook from local, seasonal, whole food ingredients, the less packaging will be involved in food transportation & storage.

Participants of group 1: Leslie, Harry, Paula

2. Urban Agriculture in the City (Facilitator: Tamara Tukhareli)

Identified problems:

- Lack of agricultural land → need to use urban space for agriculture (lower our carbon footprint and geographic footprint)
- Need to address access to healthy food, and food security → reliance on imported foods raises our overall carbon footprint especially pertaining to the high environmental cost of shipping these goods, many of which items can be grown within the city.
- Need to promote access to local, green jobs
- Our city needs to be economically resilient, self-sufficient and sustainable
- Need to conserve water → according to [one study](#), emissions resulting from treating and pumping water for cities contributes 2-3% of global emissions.
- Urban heat island effect → will worsen as the city grows, and can be mitigated by planting more developing urban agriculture (e.g. green roofs) in the city.

Proposed solution:

- Dedicating City resources to help start and support people on their path to local food production, agriculture and gardening

Related brainstorming:

- **Composting:** Needs to be mandatory and we need to promote better access to backyard composting and vermicomposting
- **Waste from Kitchen's and Toilets** could be gathered into digester tanks with methane gas used for electric power and the remaining digestate used as a fertilizer
- Community could benefit from stronger urban networks around gardening and agriculture
- **Urban agriculture:** Could be a significant source of local jobs (and jobs for youth)
- **Locally grown, healthy food:** Needs to be available everywhere (subway stations, local stores, schools (no more vending machines))
- **Plant native species:** Commercial and privately owned spaces should be encouraged to have more native plants, gardens etc., not just lawns
- **Education:** There needs to be better education about gardening (in school in particular)
 - Toronto Public Library can host gardening and local food info sessions and workshops to help educate community members
 - Schools can all have gardens or rooftop gardens
- **Water Conservation:** The group briefly discussed the idea of water conservation in the context of urban agriculture and the role the City of Toronto can play in encouraging, promoting and educating residents on money saving/water conservation with the use of native plant species instead of grass, because native plants tend to require less water and are more resilient in our climate. Traditional lawns (i.e. grass) tend to consume more water than native plants and ground cover.
 - If the City is able to educate and encourage residents to move toward less water intensive lawns it could help reduce our overall greenhouse gases.

Suggestions to City of Toronto:

- City needs to provide and support better access to resources and infrastructure needed for urban agriculture:
 - Education and community networks
 - Support local distribution of food
 - Create more community gardens, plant fruit trees and native fruit bearing plants
 - Access to knowledgeable and supportive City staff
 - Access to soil testing and other technical information
 - Change by-laws to allow chickens and other animals
 - Ban leaf-blowers

Next steps for this group:

- Community members can...
 - Practice urban agriculture and encourage friends and neighbors to participate
 - Promote successful examples of urban agriculture to help motivate others
 - Share skills, time, rolls and even space (maybe sharing access to a private garden)
 - Buy local and support farmers markets

Participants of group 2: Ann, Melissa, David, Dara

3. Community-Led Urban Design (Facilitator: Kathryn Tait)

Identified problems:

- City of Toronto will need to develop in substantial ways to meet our emissions reductions targets of 30% by 2020 and 80% of 1990 levels by 2050.
- Members of our discussion group observed that we see major changes (primarily large-scale multi-story residential developments) happening in our neighbourhoods that we don't feel we've been consulted about. Participants also noted that the OMB's ability to overrule land use and development plans in the City is not democratic.
- How do we manage development in a way that is equitable for everyone, and ensure that communities (including residents, owners and tenants, and business owners) get to have input and participate in the design and development process?
- How do we ensure that community members who might be working or responsible for child care, at the times when development consultations are held, get to have input?
- How to ensure that development will contribute to equitable, emission reduced, economically positive communities? We want to participate so we can hold developers and other stakeholders can be held accountable.

Proposed solution:

- We understand that higher urban densities in the city can be beneficial from an emissions reduction perspective (especially if there are jobs in the city close to where we live), but we want citizens to have earlier, more accessible input into the planning and development of neighbourhoods especially if it leads to jobs and future conveniences in the city close to where we live. However, every neighbourhood has different needs, which makes neighbourhoods unique and vibrant, and therefore we want citizens to be able to have their say about the development that occurs in their own neighbourhoods.

Related brainstorming & Suggestions to City of Toronto:

- **Earlier public consultation:** we propose that planners engage early with communities (possibly taking the form of long-term planning design charrettes) to plan strategic growth and determine what kinds of development make sense in that community - before developers even apply for development rights) – take a long view to 2050 and start planning now
- **More accessible public consultation:** ensure that development plans and ability to comment are made available through various platforms, online and over the phone, so that community members who work different hours, are responsible for child care, or have mobility challenges have a reasonable window for input, and a variety of means for input
- **Developer accountability:** create a mandatory section of the City’s new development proposal application wherein developers must explain how their development proposal addresses climate change mitigation and adaptation, (and make that information available to the public)
- **Buyer input:** require that when developers post their new building developments for pre-sale (residential and commercial spaces), that they include a mandatory survey to their future tenants including questions about what emissions reductions means the designers should incorporate (and make answers visible) questions like:
 - Do you want the building to be LEED certified
 - Do you want water-consumption reduction methods
 - Do you want a green roof?
 - Do you want building-integrated PV?
 - Do you want motion-sensor LED lighting in common areas
- **Revamp politics:** Reduce the influence of developers.
- **Community mandate:** pre-arranged demands and restrictions would be decided by the community, and would apply to any development in their purview.
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Participants of group 3: Nikolas, Amanda, Sophie and Leslie.

4. Community Energy Generation and Storage / District Energy (Facilitator: Lynsey Kissane)

Identified Problems:

- Need for energy storage that is community based
- Need to reduce reliance on existing non-renewable energy

Proposed solution:

- Community based energy generation and storage

Related brainstorming:

- Pilot projects to demonstrate effectiveness and visibility
- Incentives for renters vs. owners
- Invest in new technologies

Suggestions to City of Toronto:

- **Look to best practices from other cities:** Who else has done community-based generation & storage? How did they do it?
- **Identify success stories:** look at case studies to determine viability in Ward 19 (& other wards)
- **Technology Demonstration:** Template for pilot for the steps people need to accomplish pilots
- **Grow support:** What events could be used to cultivate interest and support? (ex: Doors Open, Jane's walks -- popular city events that draw a lot of people who are interested in the city.
- **Incentives:** Property tax breaks
- **Make use of existing infrastructure:** Storage units on hydro poles
- **Use existing knowledge base:** City Hall in Planning Department to provide examples of what has worked – best practices to be presented
- **Large-scale action:** Family members can only do so much at the individual level; need City wide / large scale efforts
- **Education:** Demystifying what would be required to implement some of these ideas that address potential NIMBYism
- **Cost of emissions reduction:** How to manage / reduce increasing cost burdened by present generation to decrease cost for future generations
- **Requirements for new construction:** Make infrastructure that reduces emissions a requirement for new building construction; especially large buildings. Builders must provide green space, make emission reductions efforts and other types of community contributions Ex: Honest Ed's redevelopment should use solar panels, thermal, etc.
- Examples: green bins, bike lanes, transit (electric cars, TTC), insulation on pipes / shower head

Participants of group 4: Denis, Ghislain, Anne, Jodie, Susan, Shelly and Claude.

5. Carbon Reduction Initiatives (Facilitator: Emily Greenleaf)

Identified problem:

- Make environmental issues personally valuable and visible

Proposed solution:

- Incentives for individuals and landlords / management
- Focus not on punishment but on rewards with a strong focus on visibility and education through incentives that bring people together (for example: the City does a summer promotion that provides ice cream to people who take the TTC; landlords who green their buildings receive a certificate or digital badge for display)

Relating brainstorming:

All main sources of emissions, including:

- Buildings – individual units/ homes / larger buildings (e.g.: condos)
- Transport – encouraging higher transit use, walking and cycling
- Waste – community and building collection and use of compost; waste reduction

Suggestions to City of Toronto:

- **Education for owners, tenants and landlords:** about the opportunities to make homes and buildings greener (e.g. passive heating, green/white roofs, etc.) and the cost and social benefits of these changes
- **Reward tenants and building owners :** for changes through recognition that can build positive momentum and shift expectations (e.g. allow buildings or streets to earn a “green street/apartment” certification that can be displayed)
- **Platforms to share ideas:** and celebrate success at city and local (ward) levels/ This could include, for example, websites by Ward, or the use of social media (e.g. a Twitter hashtag)
- **Tax incentives:** for landlords or developers to green their buildings or make other improvements (e.g. to indoor air quality by banning smoking)
- Support / planning for **vertical neighbourhoods** so that people in larger buildings can act locally and collectively.

Next steps for this group:

- Community discussions are a great start. It might also be possible to bring community associations together to share ideas and successes.

Other considerations:

- Ultimately, positive outcomes for owners, tenants and landlords are their own incentives. However, these outcomes aren't always immediately or individually tangible. The incentives above can be a way of making more distant outcomes immediate and visible, and will simultaneously serve as an educational tool.

Participants of group 5: Allie, Manuel, Nicolas

6. Park System Connection (Garrison Creek Park) (Facilitator: John Paul Morgan)

Identified problem:

- Not enough park space downtown and in Ward 19, too many cars

Proposed solution:

- Connect the parks along Garrison Creek (Christie Pits, Bickford Park, Fred Hamilton Park, Roxton Parkette, Trinity Bellwoods Park, Stanley Park, & Fort York) with continuous walking paths and bike paths

Related brainstorming:

- How does this impact climate change? In a multitude of ways:
 - They keep surrounding areas cool (transpiration)
 - They encourage cycling/walking instead of driving
 - They can be made to absorb water during storms and avoid flooding
 - The trees trap carbon
- In addition, the parks can be used for urban farming and community agriculture
- Parks help mental health through picnics, community events, and sports
- “PARKS INSTEAD OF PARKING, GARDENS INSTEAD OF THE GARDNER!”

Suggestions to City of Toronto:

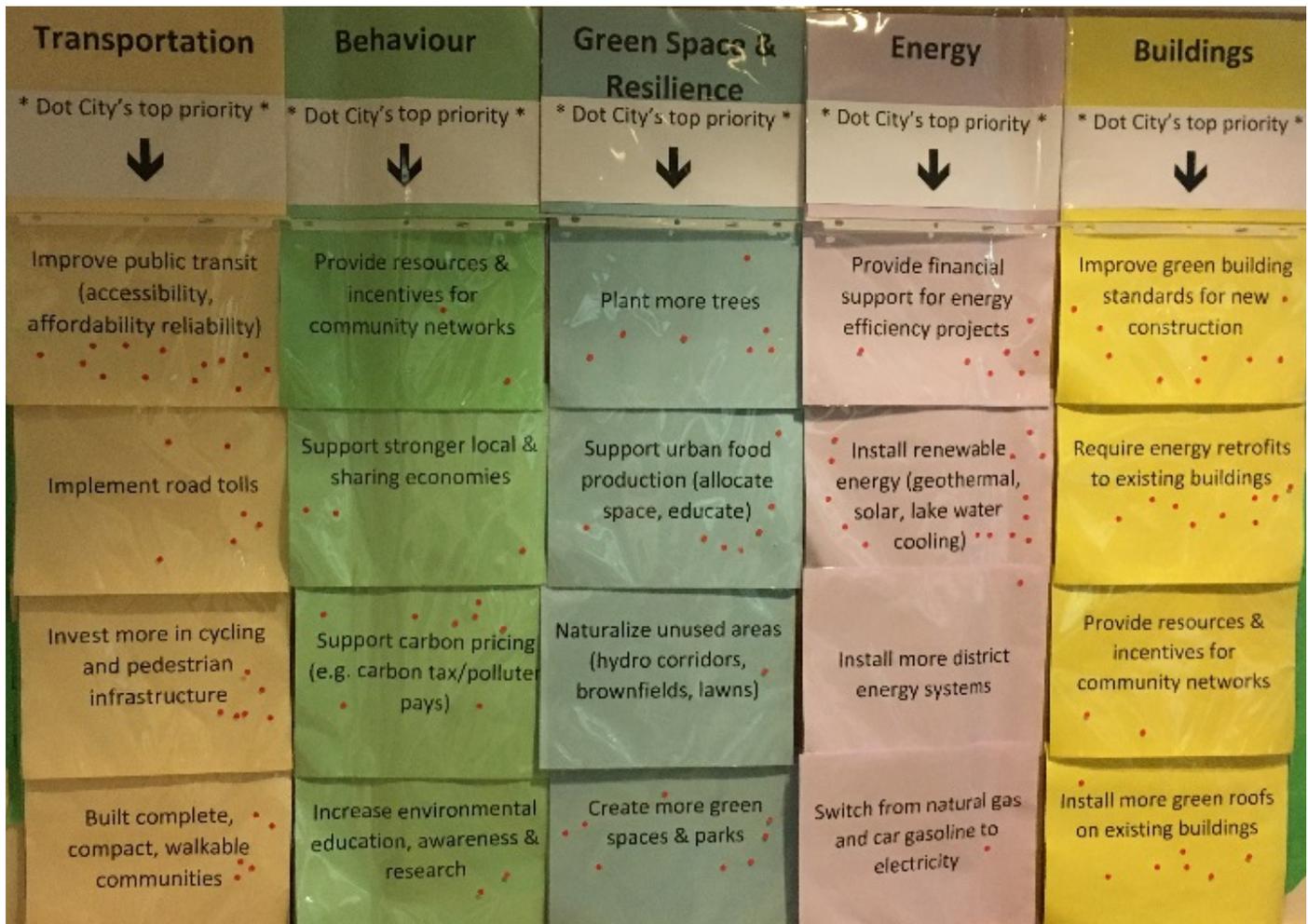
- **Linked green spaces:** Link the green-spaces along Garrison Creek
- **Cross-city park:** Link this new Garrison Creek mega park to the Bentway park under the Gardner and to the Green Line park running under the Hydro right of way near St. Clair
- **Reduce parking spaces:** Take away some car parking to achieve this
- **Pedestrian / cycling streets:** Close some roads to cars
- **Walking / cycling network:** Create continuous bike and walking paths to the lake shore
- **Make TTC free:** encourage use of public transit
- **Green spaces:** Make parking lots have trees and plants

Next steps for this group:

- Write letter to Mayor and Council

Participants of group 6: Elizabeth, Bernd, Jill, Jean, Zac, Frank and Claude.

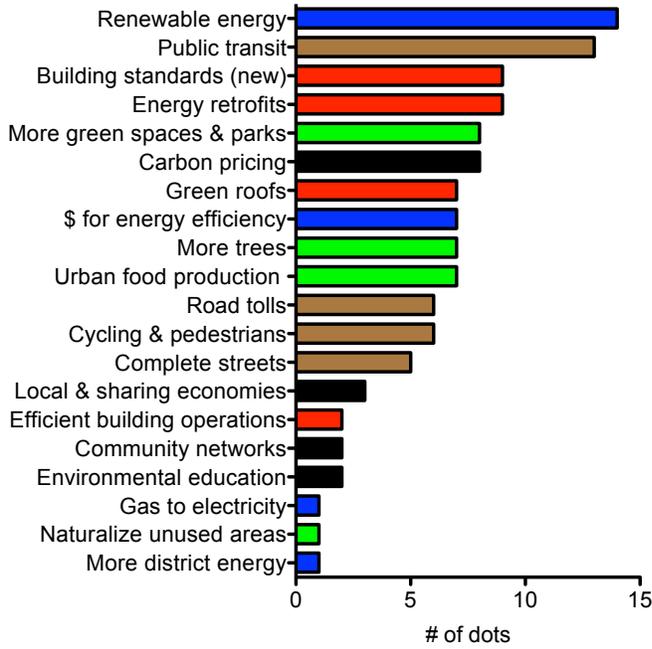
Appendix A: “Dotmocracy” Interactive Results



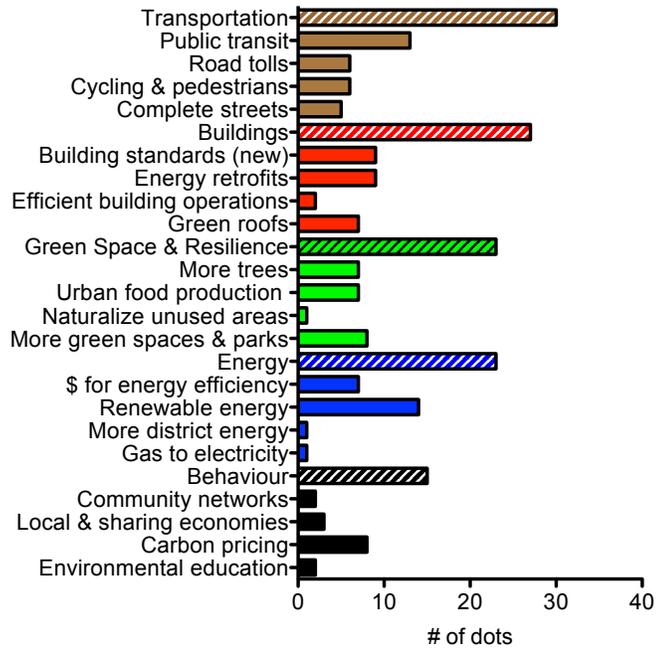
All participants were given 5 dot stickers to place on a sign showing suggestions the City has heard so far during the TransformTO consultation process. The distribution provides feedback on the top priorities for the Ward 19 community.

Participants identified ‘**Transportation**’ as their top priority category. Their top two action priorities were to ‘**Install renewable energy (geothermal, solar, lake water cooling)**’ and ‘**Improve public transit (accessibility, affordability, reliability)**’.

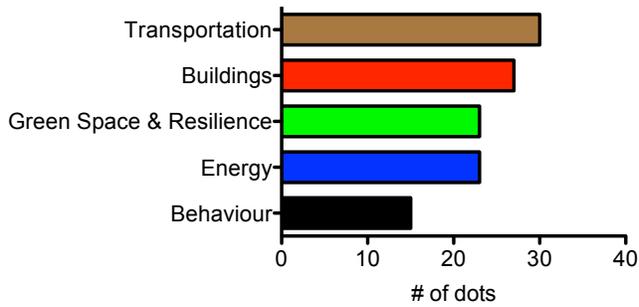
Ward 19's top priority for City (June-8-2016)



Ward 19 Dots for actions by category



Ward 19 Dots/category (June-6-2016)



Acknowledgements:

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Thanks to Mark Bekkering from the **City of Toronto Environment & Energy Division** for attending and presenting the TransformTO data, Linda Swanston for her support and coordination, and to Tamara Tukhareli for facilitating one of our discussion groups.

From **Green Neighbours 21**, we would like to thank Paul Antze for his skilled animation of our low-carbon Toronto 2050 visioning exercise, and Lee Adamson for the compilation of the Dotmocracy results (see page 13).

Finally, thanks to all the meeting attendees and facilitators who gave up their Tuesday evening to help envision the low-carbon Toronto of the future.

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Please email us at hello@green19.org if you have questions about this event, or would like to get involved.

See the City of Toronto [website](#) to learn more about TransformTO.