



CIRCULAR TORONTO

A 10-YEAR CIRCULAR ECONOMY ROAD MAP

2026 – 2035

Toronto's residents and businesses generate an enormous amount of landfill waste. More than **two million tonnes** every year.

That's enough to fill **eight NBA arenas.**



For decades, Torontonians have been passionate about the three “Rs” — reduce, reuse and recycle — diverting the majority of our residential waste from landfills. We can all be proud of that.

But Toronto is also North America’s fastest-growing city. At our current pace, the total amount of waste generated in Toronto will increase by another 20% in only five years, and municipal landfill capacity is expected to run out by 2035.

To address this challenge, we need to think differently. Major global cities like London, Paris and New York are embracing innovative circular economy approaches to help solve this problem.

What is the circular economy?

It’s the foundation for the “re-” in reduce, reuse and recycle. It refers to an economic system where used products are not seen as garbage but as a source of valuable materials to be recovered, refurbished, repaired, remanufactured or repurposed.

A circular economy pushes us to rethink how everything from clothes, buildings — even cities — are designed and used from the beginning. A circular approach asks: How can we make things in

in a way that extends their life for as long as possible, whether it be electronics, clothing, bicycles or homes? The benefits go well beyond less waste. Cities are using the circular economy to create jobs, fight climate change, connect communities and spark innovation.

Our call to action

Circular Toronto is our homegrown 10-year strategy to harness the potential of this transformational way of thinking. It includes practical steps to help residents and businesses see waste differently.

Every choice matters. For residents, embracing circularity can mean finding ways to repair or repurpose rather than replace.

For businesses, it can mean designing durable products and increasing the use of recycled materials. Toronto is already home to many innovative circular businesses, and this plan celebrates many of those success stories.

The City is committed to leading this transformation. We invite you to help us realize Toronto’s circular potential.

Land acknowledgement

The City of Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

The City also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Acknowledgement of African ancestry

The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty peoples — including those who came here as settlers — as migrants either in this generation or in generations past — and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery.

We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.



Toronto Sign at Nathan Phillips Square
© Destination Toronto

Contents

Mayor’s message	1
A vision for a circular Toronto	2
Our 10-year Road Map	3
How we got here	4
Respecting Indigenous knowledge, leadership and values	5
The Road Map	7
Invite everyone to participate in Toronto’s transition to a circular economy	7
Accelerate the growth of circular businesses in Toronto	13
Demonstrate the benefits of circularity through City operations	19
Advance circular opportunities in every neighbourhood in Toronto	25
Collaborate with other levels of government to accelerate circularity	31
Where next?	37
The journey ahead	39
Directing the approach	40
Advancing our goals through circularity	41
Our shared roles	42

The Road Map touches everyone who lives, works and plays in Toronto. This document uses “Toronto”, “city” or “we” to refer to the broader community and uses “the City” to refer to Toronto’s municipal government and its agencies.

Mayor's message

In the face of urgent economic and environmental challenges, Toronto's Circular Economy Road Map offers an inspiring path forward for residents, businesses and municipal government to create a more prosperous future together.

For years, Toronto has been one of the fastest growing cities in North America — but that growth has come at a cost. Affordability, housing precarity, and economic inequality has put pressure on our communities, just as our growing consumption continues to put pressure on our environment. Ontario is facing a landfill crisis and at the same time, Torontonians cannot afford to continue spending their hard-earned money on things that are designed to become junk.

Toronto's Circular Economy Road Map shows us that there is a smarter way forward, one that offers more value and less waste.

The circular economy is a society-wide approach to production and consumption that maximizes our existing resources through reuse, repair, and regeneration. It's a system where everything we use, from clothing and food, to our homes and modes of transportation, are designed to never become waste. In a circular economy, we support local businesses and create good jobs. We strengthen domestic supply chains, attract new investment and spark innovation.

Toronto's transition to a circular economy invites us all to think boldly and creatively about the kind of city we want to live in — and the kind of impact we want our city to have on Canada. This is an ambitious journey that relies on all of us. Whether you're repairing instead of replacing, sharing and lending resources with your neighbour, or leading innovative reuse in your industry, your actions matter.

Join us in building a stronger, more resilient economy that serves people and the planet.



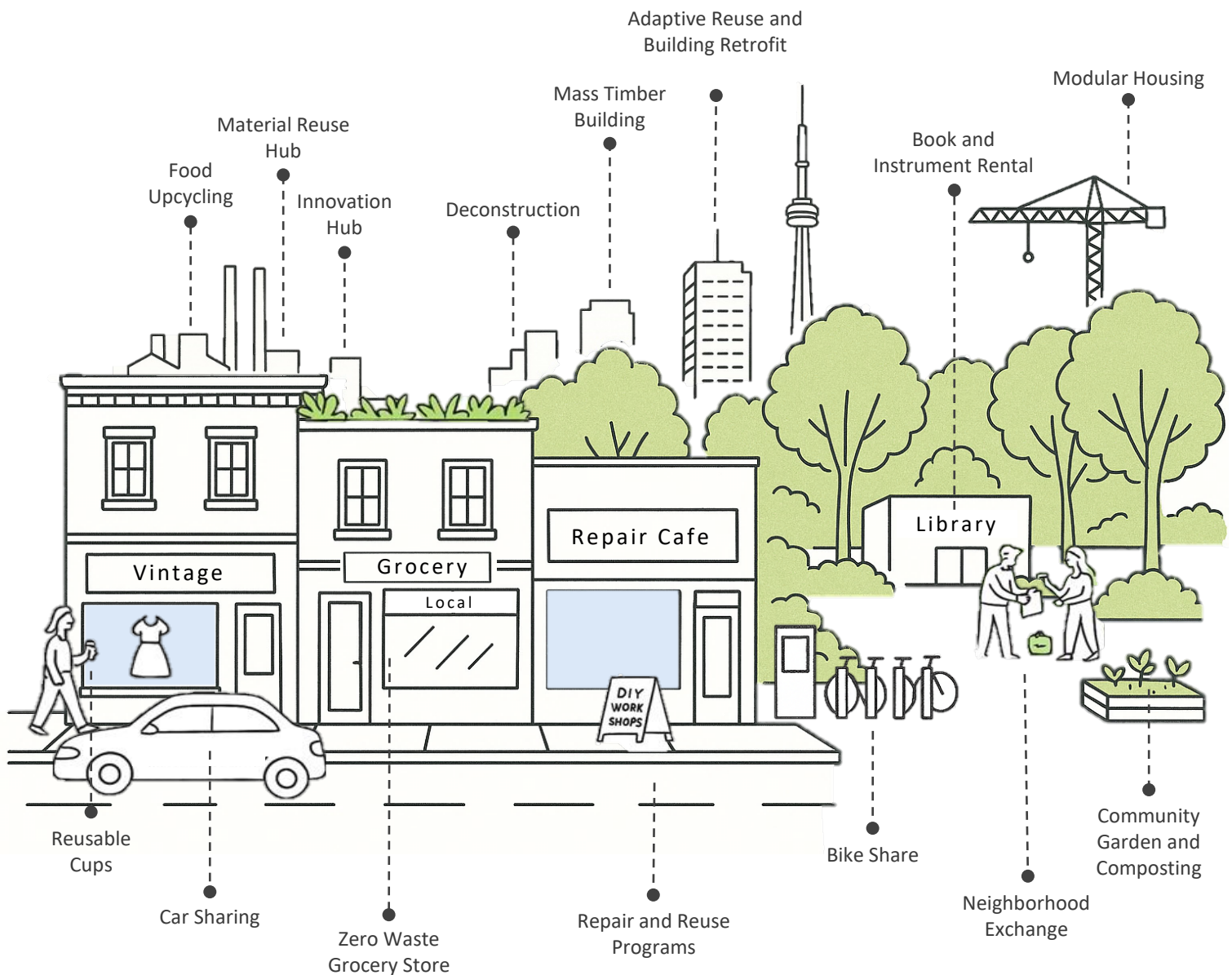
A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Olivia Chow".

Mayor Olivia Chow

City of Toronto

A vision for a circular Toronto

Together, we can imagine a future where Toronto thrives by designing out waste and keeping materials in use — a city shaped by reuse, repair, redesign and recovery. By rethinking how we produce, consume and reuse, we all have a role to play in building a more resilient, connected and climate-friendly Toronto. The circular economy isn't just about less waste — it's about more opportunity for everyone.



The rest of this Road Map describes the numerous ways the City will bring this vision to life — designing a circular Toronto that is supportive of our communities, jobs and economy, and ensuring everyone in Toronto has the opportunity to participate.

Our 10-year Road Map

Vision: our destination

Toronto is Ontario's first truly circular city. Residents, businesses and visitors are empowered to minimize waste and maximize resources. A vibrant ecosystem of repair, reuse and donation keeps value in our communities, sparks economic growth and supports collaboration with our neighbours.

Principles: our compass

These guiding principles inform the Road Map's planning and implementation:

Systems thinking, environmental stewardship, value creation, culture and capacity, equity and inclusion, and accountability.

Objectives: our signposts

- Toronto reduces its overall material consumption
- Toronto is a leader in attracting and supporting businesses that contribute to the circular economy
- Toronto sustains a robust ecosystem of reuse, repair and donation

Strategic directions: how we get there

1. **Invite everyone to participate in Toronto's transition to a circular economy:** This is a whole-of-city initiative that requires increased awareness and opportunities for equitable participation.
2. **Accelerate the growth of circular businesses in Toronto:** Local businesses will drive this transformation. The City will remove barriers, provide incentives and prioritize opportunities in construction, food systems and waste.
3. **Demonstrate the benefits of circularity through City operations:** As Canada's largest city, the City must lead by example in its own services, programs and infrastructure.
4. **Advance circular opportunities in every neighbourhood in Toronto:** A circular economy creates social and economic benefits for everyone.
5. **Collaborate with other levels of government to accelerate circularity:** Many necessary actions fall beyond the City's direct authority. The City will collaborate with federal, provincial, regional and global governments.



Riverdale Park East
© Destination Toronto

How we got here

We have a strong legacy of circular leadership in Toronto. For some residents, this means separating waste into organic waste, recyclables and garbage. For others, it means avoiding single-use plastics, shopping at secondhand markets, using the library or taking public transit.

But transitioning to a *fully* circular city requires much more. Residents, employers, community leaders and the City itself all have a role to play to make circularity the societal and economic norm.

- **1971:** One of Canada's first curbside recycling pilots is established in Toronto. These efforts helped to kickstart recycling programs across the country.
- **1988:** The City introduces its Blue Box Program.
- **2002:** The City implements its Green Bin program. By 2006, it covers all single-family homes. This is one of the first curbside organics collection programs in North America.
- **2018:** Toronto becomes one of the first cities in North America with a dedicated circular economy unit after City Council endorsed the goal of becoming a circular city and adopted the Long-term Waste Management Strategy in 2016.
- **2018:** The City and its agencies launch five Community Reduce and Reuse Programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these programs help people develop skills, connect with neighbours and learn how to repair their belongings when supply chains are disrupted.
- **2022:** The City publishes a baselining study to map how resources move through our economy. The study identified three priority sectors to advance circularity: **construction, food systems and waste.**
- **2024:** The City begins broad-based consultation on the Circular Economy Road Map and Long-term Waste Management Strategy.

Priority sectors



Construction



Food systems



Waste diversion and materials recovery

This 10-year Road Map outlines a vision for Toronto to become Ontario's first circular city, where all neighbourhoods and industry sectors adopt circular practices. It prioritizes Toronto's most significant sources of waste, such as demolition and construction activities, the immense food supply needed to feed the city, and the various businesses and services involved in responsibly managing used products and materials. While these areas are a starting point, the Road Map highlights numerous opportunities to advance circularity across every part of Toronto.

Respecting Indigenous knowledge, leadership and values

The City is on a journey of reconciliation:

The City's goal has always been to make a circular economy strategy fit for Toronto's communities; this involves acknowledging that circularity is not a Western innovation.

The circular economy is a pathway to preserve lands and waters, restore the health of ecosystems, support local, and create regenerative systems for all living things. It includes cultivating communities through acts of sharing, care and mutual aid, and embracing our collective responsibility to protect the future for generations to come. The City acknowledges that these are values that have been practiced by Indigenous people since time immemorial. Additionally, we acknowledge and affirm that Indigenous climate action is led by Indigenous Knowledge Holders, water protectors, land defenders, and food security advocates from across Turtle Island.

The City's approach to circularity is not only about adopting new practices; it also involves acknowledging the importance of ancestral knowledge, Indigenous values and securing the

ability for Indigenous peoples to practice traditions and conserve cultural heritage. This work must be done with respect and reciprocity. We must protect Indigenous knowledge from over-exposure and appropriation and ensure that this work does not perpetuate colonial harms by extracting knowledge from those who keep it.

Decolonizing current systems and respecting Indigenous values, leadership, and practice is a necessary step in cultivating a more circular future – a future that honours the interconnectedness of all living things.

The City is grateful for the time and insight offered by Indigenous people in the development of this strategy. We are committed to continuing to learn and work towards reconciliation and encourage residents and businesses to also apply a lens of reconciliation to our collective efforts to develop a circular economy.

In this section, 'we' refers to the municipal government of the City of Toronto.



Toronto Sign in Nathan Phillips Square
© Destination Toronto

Establishing genuine, ongoing collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and communities:

Across all strategic directions outlined in this 10-year Road Map, there is an opportunity for circular initiatives to support reconciliation. However, we recognize that realizing this opportunity requires a collaborative approach that is respectful and begins with establishing genuine, meaningful relationships with interested Indigenous peoples and communities on the circular economy.

There is more work to be done to build a circular economy approach that resonates with and is co-created by Indigenous communities, businesses, entrepreneurs, youth and Knowledge Holders. Throughout the duration of this Road Map, new actions, programs and initiatives will be developed and implemented based on relationship building and engagement.

The City is committed to taking a step-by-step approach to building these relationships, ensuring they are built upon trust, reciprocity, care, patience and respect for Indigenous knowledge, values and practices.

Grounded and directed by these relationships, the City will seek to:

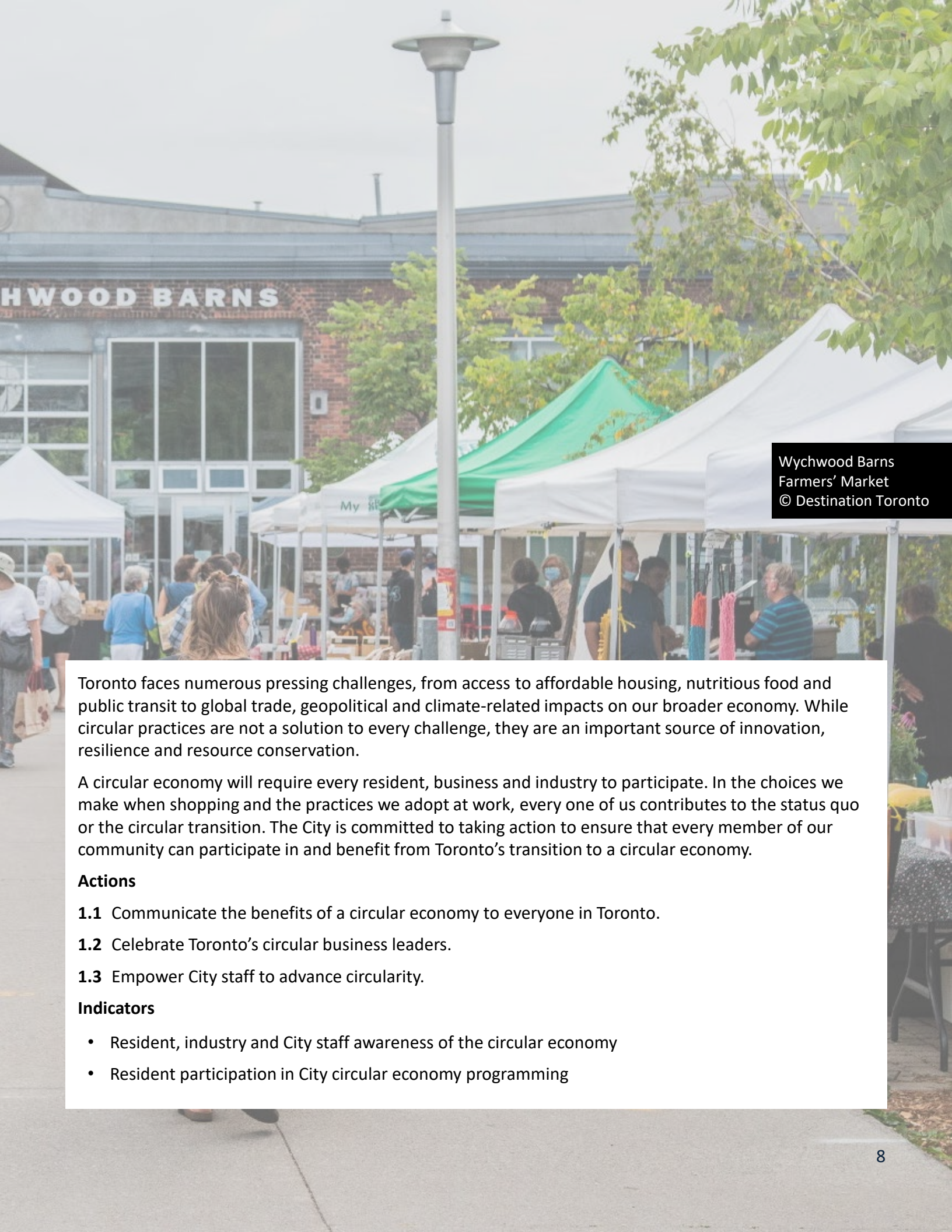
- Dismantle systemic barriers that prevent Indigenous peoples — especially youth, business owners and entrepreneurs — from experiencing the benefits of a circular economy.
- Build relationships with Indigenous organizations and networks.
- Identify appropriate paths for collaboration and co-creation of new circular economy actions.
- Centre Indigenous leadership by supporting existing Indigenous-led projects, businesses and community-driven models.
- Incorporate place-based knowledge and Indigenous principles into circular policies and programs.
- Establish ongoing communication with Indigenous communities, residents, organizations, entrepreneurs and businesses through messaging and tools that resonate with Toronto's diverse Indigenous population.



The Road Map

1. Invite everyone to participate in Toronto's transition to a circular economy





Wychwood Barns
Farmers' Market
© Destination Toronto

Toronto faces numerous pressing challenges, from access to affordable housing, nutritious food and public transit to global trade, geopolitical and climate-related impacts on our broader economy. While circular practices are not a solution to every challenge, they are an important source of innovation, resilience and resource conservation.

A circular economy will require every resident, business and industry to participate. In the choices we make when shopping and the practices we adopt at work, every one of us contributes to the status quo or the circular transition. The City is committed to taking action to ensure that every member of our community can participate in and benefit from Toronto's transition to a circular economy.

Actions

- 1.1** Communicate the benefits of a circular economy to everyone in Toronto.
- 1.2** Celebrate Toronto's circular business leaders.
- 1.3** Empower City staff to advance circularity.

Indicators

- Resident, industry and City staff awareness of the circular economy
- Resident participation in City circular economy programming

Actions

1.1 Communicate the benefits of a circular economy to everyone in Toronto.

The Road Map is a whole-of-city endeavor that requires increased awareness of the circular economy and how to participate. Circular practices — including mending clothing, repairing appliances, car sharing and renting tools — benefit residents and our communities. These practices can reduce costs, improve public health, engage neighbourhoods and address the root causes of climate change.

Raising awareness encompasses both the consumer behaviours that lead to avoidable waste and ways to identify economic opportunities. As individuals become more informed about circular practices and the essential role everyone can play, they will be better equipped to adopt circular principles in their daily lives.

Sub-actions

- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy to enhance awareness of circularity among the general public while recognizing the unique considerations of Toronto's diverse communities.
- Increase consumer education campaigns that communicate the benefits of responsible consumption and how to reduce avoidable waste.
- Leverage existing relationships to establish new communication channels for youth to inspire behavioural change.
- Update the City's market research to include an ongoing measure of public awareness of circular terminology, programming and ways to participate.



1.2 Celebrate Toronto's circular business leaders.

In many ways, entrepreneurs, investors and business leaders will lead the transition to a circular economy, and Toronto is already home to innovative enterprises that apply circular strategies. Trade tensions and the necessity of resilient supply chains reinforce the need for circular thinking. As the fourth largest city in North America, we must recognize our local, made-in-Toronto businesses that advance circularity. Showcasing homegrown circular leadership will unlock innovation, create opportunities, increase access to capital and position Toronto as a hub for circular businesses.

Sub-actions

- Expand existing award and recognition programs to recognize circular business leaders.
- Encourage data and knowledge sharing among businesses.
- Establish a communications strategy to raise awareness of homegrown circular innovations and job creation.
- Celebrate circular businesses in all 25 wards.



Love Local campaign at
Public Markets
© marketcityTO

1.3 Empower City staff to advance circularity.

There are numerous opportunities to enable City staff participation through significantly more internal knowledge sharing and capacity building. Many at the City already have deep subject matter expertise in circularity and experience with reuse programs, building repair and other circular practices. Others will benefit from a better understanding of the circular economy and their role in bringing it to life. To support Toronto's circular transition, all City staff will need to recognize and pursue circular opportunities in their day-to-day work.

Sub-actions

- Update the City's internal circular economy knowledge hub to increase the resources available to City staff.
- Support interdivisional collaboration to enable coordinated action.
- Develop toolkits to guide City staff's implementation of circular practices.
- Celebrate circular success stories from within the City's operations.



Building on our foundation

What we've achieved so far

The City has already taken several steps to engage community members, businesses and City staff in its circularity efforts, through various programs and awareness building campaigns. There are additional opportunities to expand and enhance these initiatives to continue to drive forward circularity.

Supporting and connecting Toronto's businesses through **Women4Climate**



The Women4ClimateTO initiative supports women entrepreneurs who are developing bold and innovative climate solutions, including circular products and services. Through mentorship, training, networking and community-building opportunities, the program helps participants grow their projects, expand their networks, and connect with Toronto's broader climate community. The 2025 pitch competition winner and runner ups were all circular and regenerative businesses.

Educating Torontonians to reduce waste through **Love Food Hate Waste**

The City is collaborating with FoodMesh and other Canadian cities on a national food waste campaign, Love Food Hate Waste Canada. The campaign works to educate Toronto residents about the value of food, the impact of food waste and provides practical steps to reduce and prevent waste. It's estimated that avoidable food waste costs the average Canadian household over \$1,300 per year.



What we can learn from others

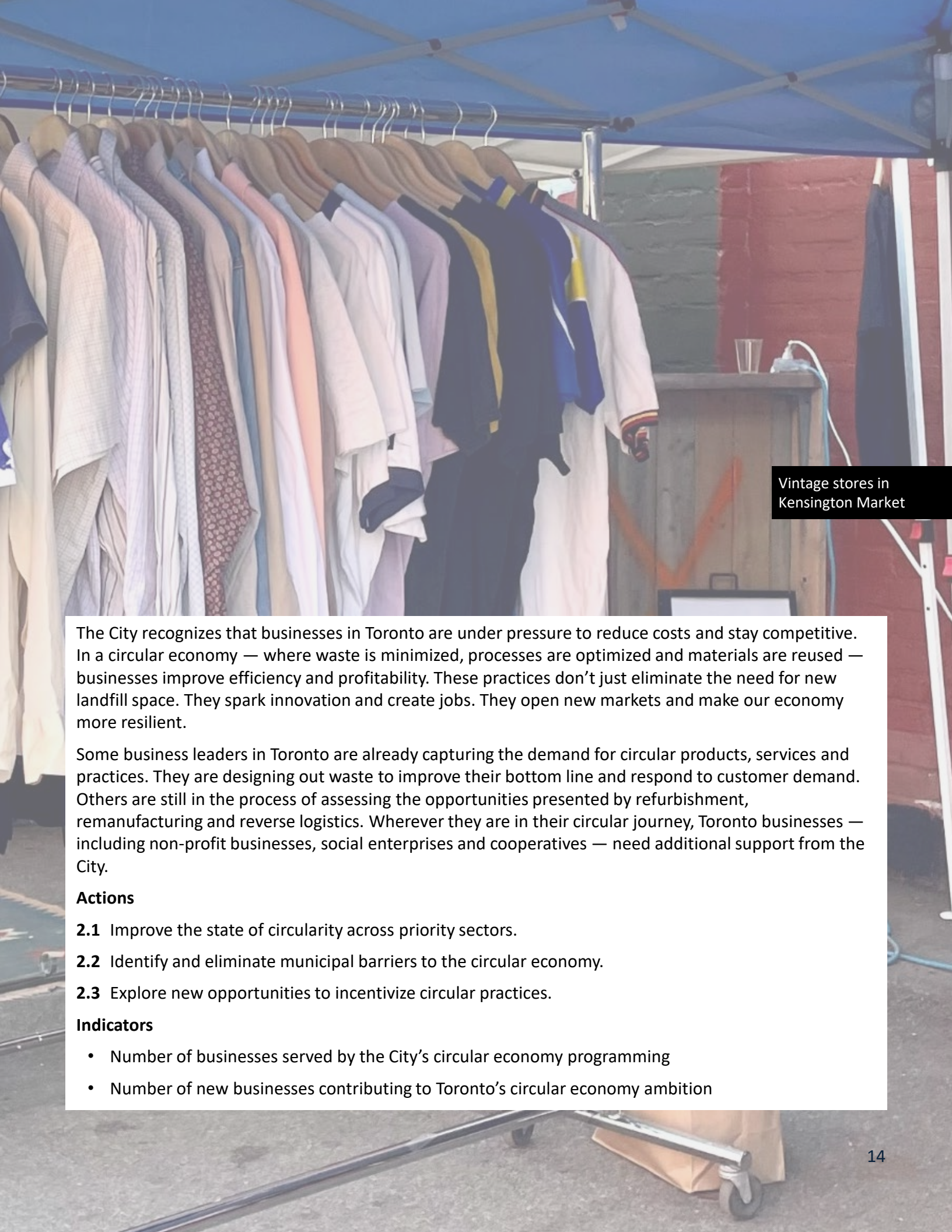
Enhancing education for community members, looking to **Richmond, BC**



Richmond, a city outside of Vancouver, has established a Circular Learning Hub that provides residents and businesses with educational materials on the circular economy, including local success stories, free webinars and City research on circular procurement and construction. The Circular Learning Hub includes Richmond's Circular Economy Strategy and corresponding informative videos outlining its key strategic directions.

2. Accelerate the growth of circular businesses in Toronto





Vintage stores in
Kensington Market

The City recognizes that businesses in Toronto are under pressure to reduce costs and stay competitive. In a circular economy — where waste is minimized, processes are optimized and materials are reused — businesses improve efficiency and profitability. These practices don't just eliminate the need for new landfill space. They spark innovation and create jobs. They open new markets and make our economy more resilient.

Some business leaders in Toronto are already capturing the demand for circular products, services and practices. They are designing out waste to improve their bottom line and respond to customer demand. Others are still in the process of assessing the opportunities presented by refurbishment, remanufacturing and reverse logistics. Wherever they are in their circular journey, Toronto businesses — including non-profit businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives — need additional support from the City.

Actions

- 2.1** Improve the state of circularity across priority sectors.
- 2.2** Identify and eliminate municipal barriers to the circular economy.
- 2.3** Explore new opportunities to incentivize circular practices.

Indicators

- Number of businesses served by the City's circular economy programming
- Number of new businesses contributing to Toronto's circular economy ambition

Actions

2.1 Improve the state of circularity across priority sectors.

In *Baselining for a Circular Toronto*, the City identified three priority industry sectors: construction, food systems and waste. Given the scale of Toronto's economy, these three sectors present the greatest potential return on investment for circular interventions.

Business leaders in each sector face unique challenges. For example, the construction sector lacks enough local space to store salvaged materials in between jobs. Restaurants, grocery stores and food processors are concerned they will be held liable for food they donate. A core challenge for the waste haulers is insufficient demand for secondary materials. These are only illustrative examples of the many specific challenges facing Toronto's economy.

The City will engage directly with businesses in these sectors to develop tailored approaches to advance circularity.

Sub-actions

- Establish a dedicated forum for each priority sector (construction, food systems and waste) to identify financial, regulatory and technical barriers and opportunities.
- Develop tailored guidance for each sector to help drive their circular transitions.
- Collaborate with other levels of government and industry associations to unlock large-scale investment and funding opportunities that stimulate market growth for circular businesses.
- Leverage City assets and resources to support the growth of secondary markets and material recovery in Toronto.
- Expand the number of priority sectors based on circular potential and local economic impact.



Use of reusable takeout containers in local restaurants in Toronto

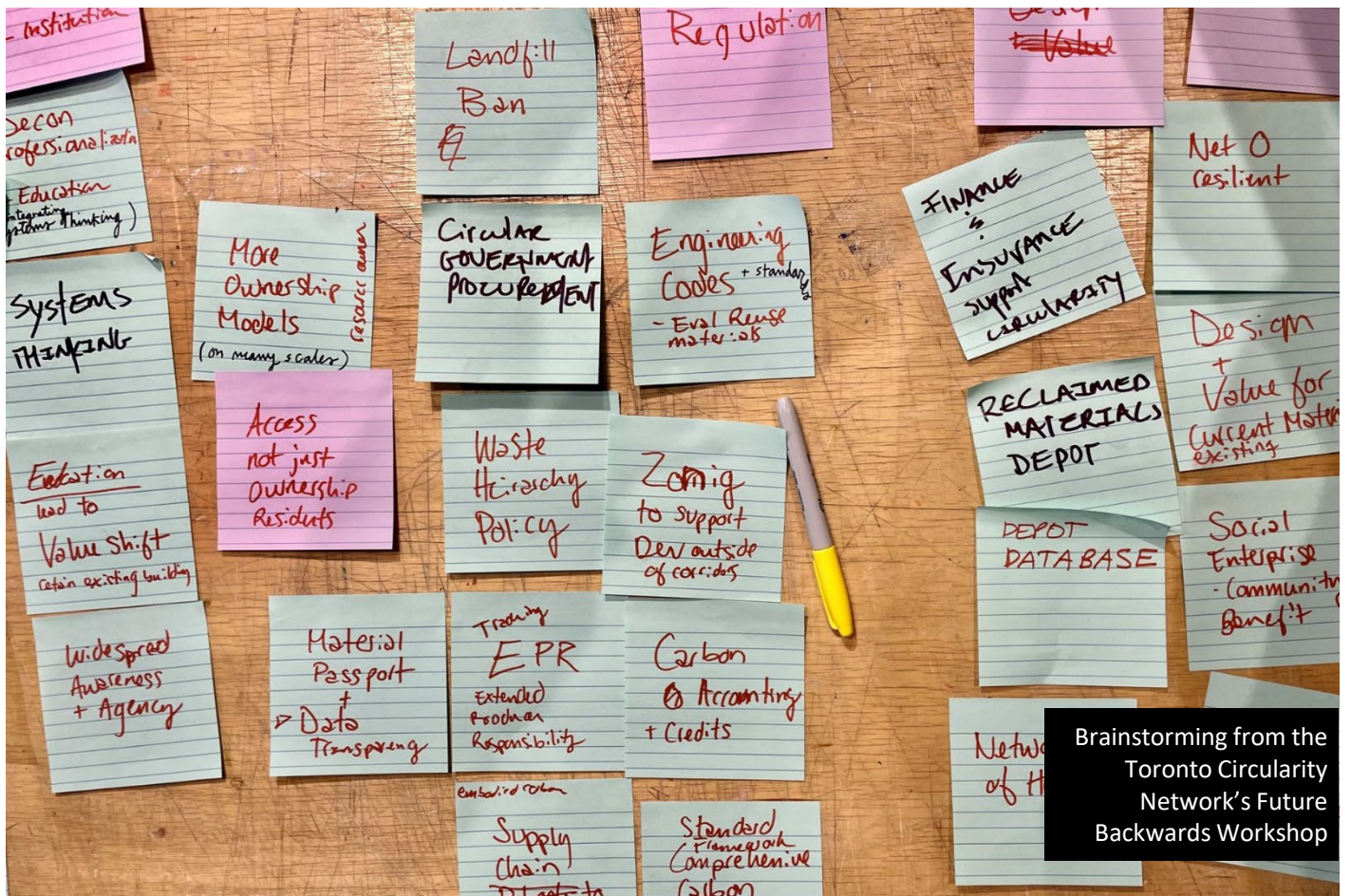
2.2 Identify and eliminate municipal barriers to the circular economy.

Avoiding landfill waste requires each of us to reflect on how our current actions contribute to unsustainable outcomes. This includes the City itself, too. As the City works to serve the needs of current and future populations, sometimes unintentional barriers to circularity are introduced.

In collaboration with businesses, small enterprises and large corporates, the City will identify and remove these barriers that inadvertently prevent the adoption of the circular economy. The City will evaluate its existing policies, standards and processes to ensure that it creates an enabling environment for circular businesses.

Sub-actions

- Engage industry to identify where City processes, policies and standards unintentionally add cost, time and risk to circular business innovation.
- Dismantle barriers to circular practices to enhance local business competitiveness, while serving the needs of current and future populations.



2.3 Explore new opportunities to incentivize circular practices.

Financial barriers are often a primary challenge for widespread adoption of circular business practices. Incentives, whether financial or in-kind, may address this challenge and stimulate broader uptake. Incentives could resemble lower-cost space, targeted funding programs or business support services.

These incentives can help reduce risks and offset upfront costs associated with implementing circular practices, particularly for small- and medium-sized businesses. They can also demonstrate clear cost-benefit advantages for circular approaches. Given ongoing economic pressures on local businesses, these tools are essential to promote participation in the circular economy, reduce waste and encourage investment.

Sub-actions

- Identify and mobilize City-owned or City-accessible assets to de-risk and accelerate adoption of circular practices for businesses, positioning Toronto as a leading hub for circular business innovation.
- Expand existing programs and incentives that support local businesses implementing circular practices.
- Establish additional targeted incentive programs to support start-ups and small- and medium-sized businesses, with a focus on grants, mentorship and incubation activities.



Sunday Variety at
St. Lawrence Market
© marketcityTO

Building on our foundation

What we've achieved so far

The City has a number of existing programs designed to support businesses within green sectors, including those that advance Toronto's circular economy. All of these programs represent an opportunity to continue great work that is already being done with an enhanced focus on circularity.

Using City assets to support business in the **Green Market Acceleration Program**



The program provides in-kind support for demonstration projects to accelerate the commercialization of made-in-Toronto green technologies, including those that advance the circular economy. This support includes access to City infrastructure, assets and staff knowledge, promoting innovation, accelerating job growth and attracting investment.

Grants for Toronto organizations through the **Circular Food Innovators Fund**

The fund supports local small businesses and organizations that are working to implement reuse systems. Through this program, over \$250,000 has been awarded to nine local organizations — both for-profit and not-for-profit — to replace single-use takeaway items with reusable foodservice ware that is collected and redistributed for further use.



What we can learn from others

Circular construction design through regulation in **London, U.K.**



London now requires all major developments to submit a statement outlining how the projects will design out waste, keep materials in use and minimize environmental impacts throughout a building's lifecycle. The purpose is to ensure circular principles are included in new buildings. As of 2023, 76% of planning applications in London contained a Circular Economy Statement.

Developing a material reuse hub, as seen in **Vancouver, B.C.**

The City of Vancouver has begun incorporating recycling and deconstruction requirements into its demolition permitting process. It has also partnered with Habitat for Humanity to create The Rebuild Hub. This initiative offers Vancouver businesses and residents a physical place to donate and purchase salvaged construction materials.



3. Demonstrate the benefits of circularity through City operations



Residents, businesses and other municipalities already look to the City for leadership. Our municipal government is the largest property owner in Toronto and one of the largest public-sector buyers of goods and services in Canada. The City has a unique responsibility to demonstrate what circularity looks like in a tangible, real-world setting. It can show that circularity is not only feasible but creates enormous value.

The City will harness its resources to showcase what can be done now, demonstrate success and share lessons learned. Embedding circularity within City operations further supports a number of its long-term priorities: fiscal responsibility, affordability and economic development.

Actions

- 3.1** Integrate circularity in City purchasing.
- 3.2** Facilitate circular practices in City planning, construction and infrastructure.
- 3.3** Instill circular principles in City policies, processes and services.

Indicators

- Amount of City procurement that incorporates circular economy principles
- Amount of construction and demolition waste recovered from City-owned assets

Actions

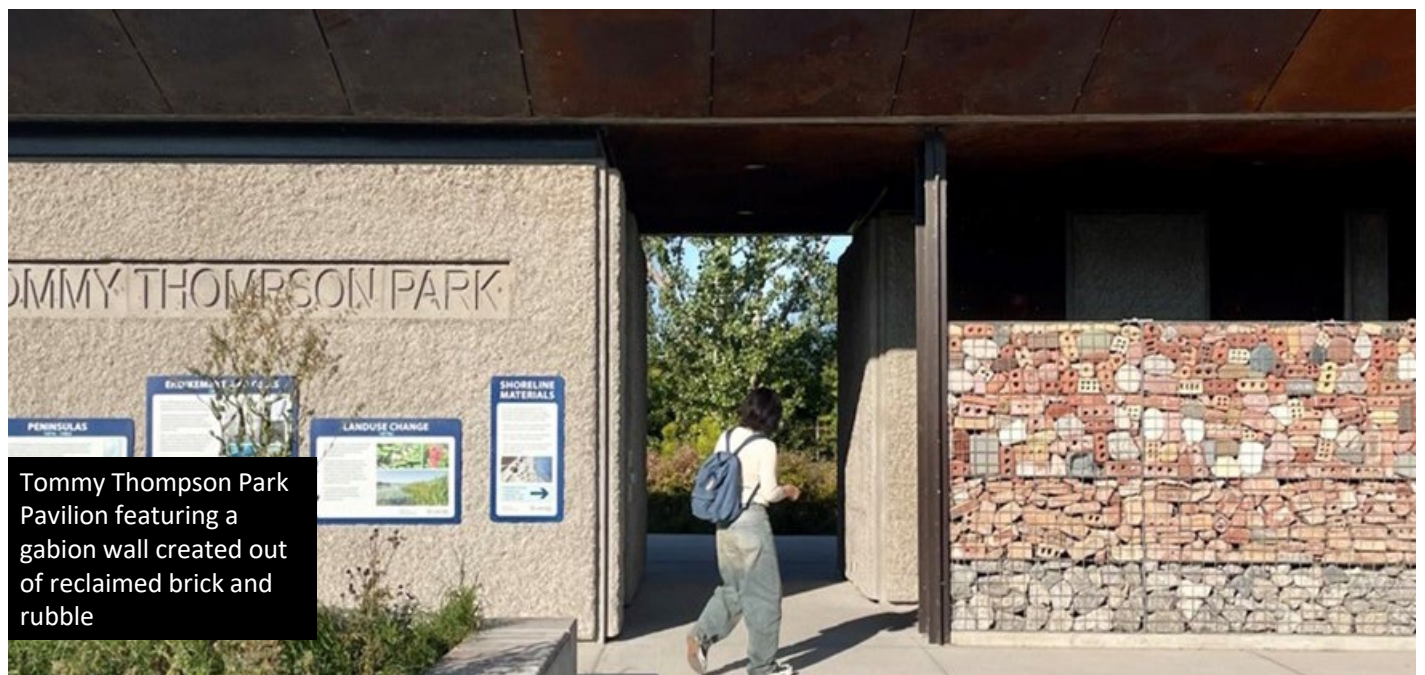
3.1 Integrate circularity in City purchasing.

The City purchases nearly \$3 billion in goods and services annually. This immense buying power can be used to drive the adoption of circular economy practices across industries — locally and beyond. By prioritizing high-quality, low-waste approaches, the City can help deliver better value for taxpayers and stimulate local circular businesses and entrepreneurs. This raises awareness and encourages more businesses to adopt circular practices.

In 2018, the City established the Circular Procurement Framework. Through the Framework, the City has used several contracts to pilot the incorporation of circular criteria in procurement. Over the next 10 years, the City will expand this approach, testing new models and learning from what works. Through its leadership, the City aims to set a clear example and open new opportunities for businesses committed to innovation.

Sub-actions

- Enhance the Circular Procurement Framework to enable the scaling of successful pilot projects.
- Incorporate circularity into ongoing market engagement work to understand industry's ability to deliver on circular procurement requirements and identify how the City can incentivize suppliers.
- Identify high-priority areas for further integrating circularity into City purchasing, with close consideration of procurement value and the potential applicability of circular principles.
- Develop a circular procurement toolkit that incorporates global leading practice, such as internationally recognized standards or certifications. Align this work with the City's ongoing development of its sustainable procurement approach.



Tommy Thompson Park Pavilion featuring a gabion wall created out of reclaimed brick and rubble

3.2 Facilitate circular practices in City planning, construction and infrastructure.

The City plays a critical role in designing our “built environment,” the human-made places where people live, work and move. In 2023 alone, the City of Toronto invested more than \$1 billion in roads, community centres, parks and similar assets. This scale of investment represents a significant opportunity to shape the market for circular construction practices.

The City is already beginning to incorporate circularity in construction and infrastructure, from heritage conservation projects to deconstruction as an alternative to demolition. Adaptive reuse, design for disassembly and other innovative circular techniques can be piloted and incorporated across urban planning, construction and development projects. This work will lower the environmental impact of the City’s own projects and improve affordability by making better use of existing resources.

Sub-actions

- Reduce the amount of construction and demolition waste from City-owned assets through the integration of circular principles.
- Extend the lifespan of existing City assets through adaptive reuse, repair and retrofits.
- Identify opportunities to scale existing circular initiatives within the City’s construction, planning and infrastructure work.
- Implement additional demonstration projects in high impact areas.

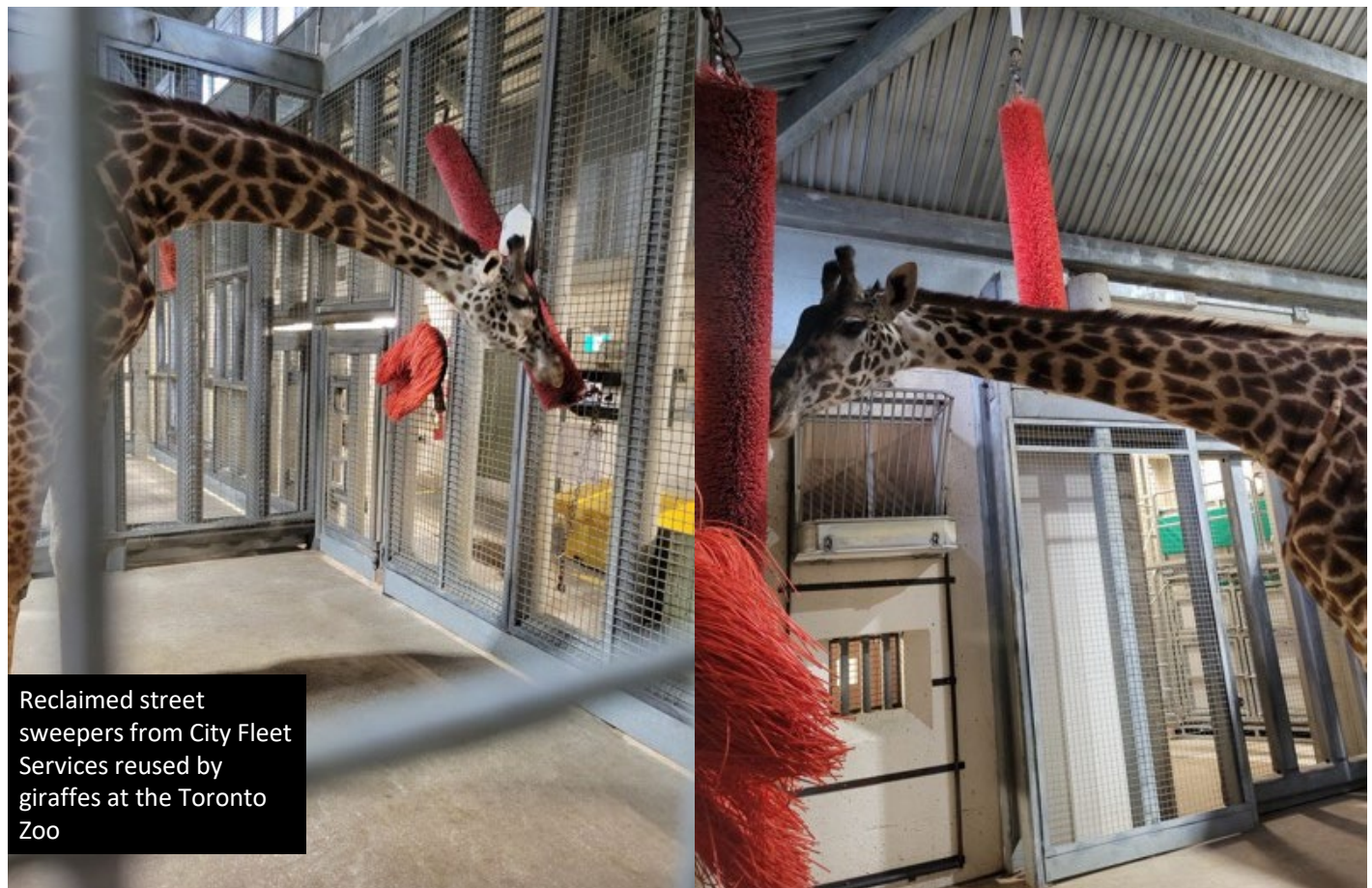


3.3 Instill circular principles in City policies, processes and services.

The City provides critical services to residents every day — from daycares and community centres, to public transit and roads. To deliver these services, the City must manage a significant amount of equipment and resources. The City will embed the circular economy into its operational processes and service delivery frameworks to extend the use of materials and improve resource coordination among Divisions. Informally, City staff already share resources when possible. Formalizing a circular flow of materials throughout the City, and providing clarity regarding circular operating procedures, will allow City staff to get the greatest value out of materials, saving costs and promoting innovation.

Sub-actions

- Map divisional material flows, including existing exchange of materials between Divisions, and identify opportunities to incorporate circular practices.
- Establish a central platform for internal asset sharing across the City, reducing costs and extending resource life.
- Update internal material and disposal policies and procedures to remove guidelines that reinforce linear practices.
- Establish Division-specific plans to incorporate circularity into operational activities.



Building on our foundation

What we've achieved so far

City Divisions and agencies have already begun implementing circularity as a tool to reduce costs, preserve historical value and reduce their impact on the environment. This Road Map will continue to identify these initiatives across City services and find the best way to standardize these efforts across programs.

Incorporating circularity in the **City's Fleet Services**



Circular practices can already be found throughout the City of Toronto's Fleet Services: the life of vehicle tires are extended by retreading; when vehicles are no longer cost-effective to maintain, they are sold through public auctions; mechanics wear standardized uniforms that are professionally cleaned and reused; and street sweeper brushes are repurposed and donated to the Toronto Zoo, where they serve as scratching posts for rhinos, tigers and giraffes.

Recovering and reusing construction materials through **deconstruction pilots**

1113 Dundas St W is the City of Toronto's pilot deconstruction project. The existing building on site was planned for demolition. The City collaborated with CreateTO and Ouroboros Deconstruction to deconstruct it instead. The salvaged materials included brick, lumber, windows, doors, trim and much more. In this process, the City has reduced waste going to the landfill, avoided associated carbon emissions, and supported local businesses and trades. *Image credit: CreateTO*



What we can learn from others

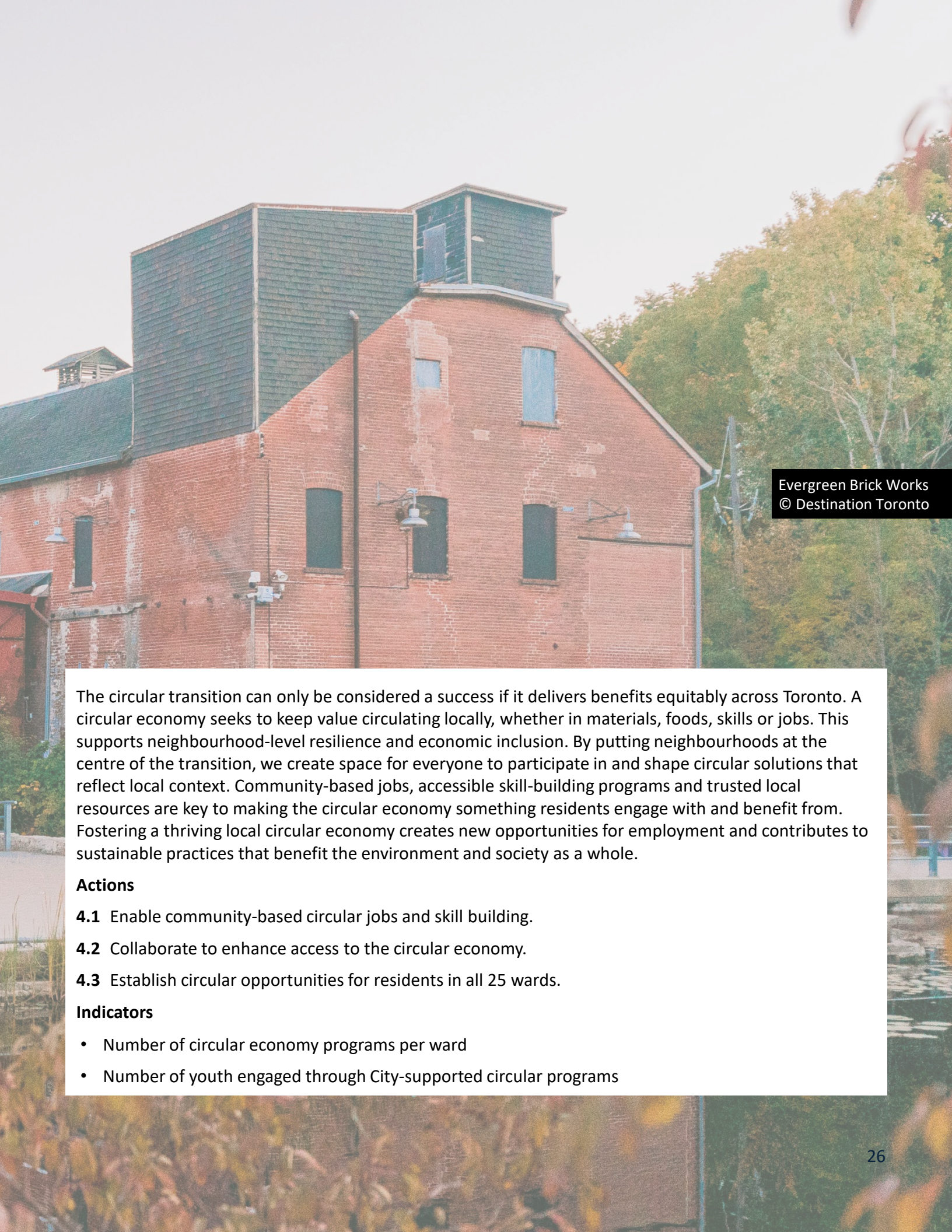
Circularity in asset ownership, like **municipalities across the Netherlands**



Several Dutch municipalities, including Amsterdam and Rotterdam, have piloted a circular "Lighting as a service" model for public lighting. In this model, instead of purchasing lighting equipment, cities contract companies to maintain lighting systems. These companies retain ownership of the materials and are responsible for disposal. This approach reduces the cities' material waste, lowers operational costs and extends product lifecycles.

4. Advance circular opportunities in every neighbourhood in Toronto





Evergreen Brick Works
© Destination Toronto

The circular transition can only be considered a success if it delivers benefits equitably across Toronto. A circular economy seeks to keep value circulating locally, whether in materials, foods, skills or jobs. This supports neighbourhood-level resilience and economic inclusion. By putting neighbourhoods at the centre of the transition, we create space for everyone to participate in and shape circular solutions that reflect local context. Community-based jobs, accessible skill-building programs and trusted local resources are key to making the circular economy something residents engage with and benefit from. Fostering a thriving local circular economy creates new opportunities for employment and contributes to sustainable practices that benefit the environment and society as a whole.

Actions

- 4.1** Enable community-based circular jobs and skill building.
- 4.2** Collaborate to enhance access to the circular economy.
- 4.3** Establish circular opportunities for residents in all 25 wards.

Indicators

- Number of circular economy programs per ward
- Number of youth engaged through City-supported circular programs

Actions

4.1 Enable community-based circular jobs and skill building.

Toronto's workforce must be prepared to meet the demands of the twenty-first century economy. As the city shifts towards systems that prioritize reuse, repair, remanufacturing and recycling, there is a growing need for workers with the skills to support these activities.

To ensure all residents and communities benefit from the circular transition, it is critical for the City to enable capacity building and support coordination across industry and academia. This work is most successful when it is grounded in meaningful community engagement and informed by an understanding of the skills required by employers. Through these efforts, the City can support sustainable job creation and address economic insecurity.

Sub-actions

- Expand the City's green sector research to plan for labour market needs across priority sectors.
- Collaborate with industry organizations, businesses, professional accrediting bodies and educational institutions to align educational outcomes with industry needs through circular internships, job training and research.
- Enhance awareness of circular economy training and job opportunities across priority sectors.
- Support the development of circular economy skill building, mentorship and professional development opportunities for youth in Toronto, with a focus on Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups.



City of Toronto
Employment Expo

4.2 Collaborate to enhance access to the circular economy.

Toronto is home to a vibrant network of community organizations, advocacy groups, non-profits and educational institutions. These organizations possess deep local knowledge, existing relationships and invaluable expertise in circular programming.

The City has a role to play in supporting these organizations to amplify circular economy work already in place across Toronto. Strong relationships help to align efforts, promote equitable access and ensure solutions are rooted in local needs and opportunities. Through these relationships, the City strengthens the resilience of the circular economy ecosystem and empowers communities to co-create sustainable and inclusive growth. The City will be specific and strategic in defining roles and responsibilities, and how to work collectively to achieve results.

Sub-actions

- Establish or strengthen relationships with non-profits, social enterprises and community organizations to expand circular economy programming in communities.
- Remove municipal barriers to grassroots circular economy initiatives.
- Identify City-owned data to support circular economy research efforts through collaboration with educational and research institutions.
- Recognize and celebrate leadership in non-profit organizations, cooperatives and social enterprises through awards, storytelling and City-supported platforms.



Lawrence-Orton Bicycle Repair Hub, a joint initiative of the City of Toronto, Toronto Community Housing and Access Alliance

4.3 Establish circular opportunities for residents in all 25 wards.

A number of barriers exist to resident participation in the circular economy. Primary among them is access to and awareness of the necessary services and infrastructure that support sustainable and circular habits. Local access points — such as repair hubs, tool libraries and community gardens — help embed circular practices in resident daily life.

There has already been significant progress on this work through the City's Community Environment Days and Community Reduce and Reuse Programs. By building on this work and ensuring every ward has tangible opportunities to engage, the City can foster a city-wide culture of circularity, while meeting the unique needs and strengths of each neighbourhood.

Sub-actions

- Ensure everyone in Toronto can access the City's circular economy programming equitably.
- Work with local ambassadors in each ward to connect residents to available circular economy programs or opportunities.
- Leverage City assets to provide additional spaces for City-led and community-based circular programming to enhance the frequency and scale of circular initiatives.



Building on our foundation

What we've achieved so far

The City has begun to support community-based circular economy programs. Across Toronto, we already see organizations creating opportunities for community members to interact tangibly with circularity. Through actions within this Road Map, the City will continue to champion these initiatives and expand its own circular programs.

Collaborating to deliver Toronto's **Community Reduce and Reuse Programs**



Working with community organizations, the City has implemented its Community Reduce and Reuse Programs. The five programs are Urban Harvest, Sewing Repair Hubs, Bicycle Repair Hubs, Share and Reuse Hubs, and Community Composting. These programs aim to educate residents about the importance of waste reduction and reuse, provide opportunities for sharing and repairing, offer skills training and create spaces for community members to gather.

Sharing in every neighbourhood through the **Toronto Public Library**

Toronto Public Library (TPL) is an excellent example of the circular economy in action, offering access to physical and digital resources through borrowing and sharing. On an average day at TPL, Torontonians borrow nearly 42,000 physical items, including musical instruments and tech kits and almost 34,000 electronic items, and make use of TPL's technology services nearly 24,000 times, including visits to a Digital Innovation Hub to print, scan, design and record.



What we can learn from others

Understanding and promoting circular job opportunities in **London, U.K.**



In 2022, ReLondon, the city's circular economy program, assessed the economy growth associated with the circular economy. It identified that meeting the city's circular economy goals could create 284,000 additional new circular jobs by 2030. The report also highlighted that by 2030, the circular economy could contribute £24.2 billion to London's economy. To accelerate circular job creation, London is supporting local circular businesses and partnering with universities.

5. Collaborate with other levels of government to accelerate circularity





Ontario Legislative
Building in Queen's Park
© Destination Toronto

The City is deeply connected to and influenced by other governments, including neighbouring municipalities and the Governments of Ontario and Canada. Toronto cannot achieve the transformational shift to a circular economy alone and must build our relationships with other governments on circularity in order to achieve the shared outcomes of our region, province and country.

To be most effective, the City must focus on identifying shared ambitions, making real progress towards achieving them and institute steady, focused leadership towards improving circularity in Toronto. Working with other governments to align efforts, share resources and learnings, and create enabling policies will be crucial to advancing circularity within and beyond our municipal borders.

Actions

- 5.1** Champion circularity at the federal and provincial level.
- 5.2** Collaborate on regional, circular solutions.
- 5.3** Learn from global best practice.

Indicators

- Total investments in Toronto municipal projects and business innovation related to the circular economy across levels of government
- Achievements from collaboration with other levels of government

Actions

5.1 Champion circularity at the federal and provincial level.

The federal and provincial governments have a profound impact on Toronto's waste generation, and access to the resources necessary to drive the circular economy. The City can work with these governments to align on policy ambition and transform funding and higher-order goals into tangible community-level action.

By championing circularity at these levels, Toronto can work to remove systemic barriers and catalyze broader change. The City has already mapped and identified the ways in which the federal and provincial governments directly and indirectly impact waste and material flows throughout Toronto. The City will build on this understanding to support the necessary change in initiatives, regulations and programs.

Sub-actions

- Work with federal and provincial governments to remove barriers to circularity in Toronto.
- Engage the federal and provincial governments to align circular goals and policies.
- Collaborate with the federal and provincial governments to unlock funding opportunities or in-kind support for municipal circular initiatives and business innovation.



5.2 Collaborate on regional, circular solutions.

Cities benefit from working with regional peers because many systems like supply chains, waste management and material reuse go well beyond city borders. By collaborating, cities can share successful ideas and develop common standards. Working together also helps influence provincial and national policies, attract investment and scale up innovation. Simply put, collaboration allows cities to go further, faster and with greater impact.

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is highly connected in many ways and that includes in its waste and material flows. The City will work closely with municipalities across the GTA to co-develop and align on circular economy solutions. These regional collaborations will promote consistency in policies, programs and messaging while enabling connected municipalities to share infrastructure, pool resources and amplify impact. By fostering regional relationships and uniting local government in a shared regional effort, the City can help create a more coherent and efficient circular economy across the GTA.

Sub-actions

- Continue to participate in Canadian circular networks to co-create and deliver circular economy awareness initiatives that impact Toronto.
- Work with neighbouring municipalities to establish the GTA as a hub for circular businesses and innovation.
- Identify opportunities to secure funding and investment for circular economy initiatives through collaboration with municipalities.
- Share learnings from circular programs with municipalities in the GTA to promote consistency in waste policy and circular initiatives.



5.3 Learn from global best practice.

Circular economy strategies are advancing quickly on a global scale, with many peer cities rapidly introducing their own circular goals and road maps. Although Toronto has a distinct cultural and political context, we nevertheless run the risk of reinventing the wheel or duplicating efforts. Other regions, both worldwide and within Canada, are successfully executing circular initiatives. Engaging these cities can reduce inefficiency and allow Toronto to benefit from their learned experiences.

Looking to global leaders allows us to identify proven solutions more quickly, which reduces the cost of experimentation and isolated efforts. Shared standards contribute to consistent markets for circular products and services, giving local businesses a competitive edge. Global best practice will strengthen Toronto's ability to attract international investment and position itself as a leader in the transition to a low-waste, sustainable future.

Sub-actions

- Participate in international circular working groups to understand best practice and showcase Canadian circular innovation.
- Support efforts to convene global thought-leaders.
- Collaborate with global standard setting organizations and circularity experts to identify opportunities for application within City operations.



St. Lawrence Market
North Redevelopment
Project

Building on our foundation

What we've achieved so far

The City and other organizations within Toronto engage other levels of government consistently to advance priority policies. Moreover, the City has begun to build relationships with national and regional cities to advance circularity. While there are many other opportunities to pursue, the relationships built so far will help us tremendously as we build our circular economy.

Working together to design, plan and develop **Ookwemin Minising**



Waterfront Toronto, CreateTO and the City of Toronto are developing Ookwemin Minising, a low-carbon, climate-ready neighbourhood built around efficient buildings, clean energy and low-carbon transportation. Resilience is built in through modern flood protection, green infrastructure and nature-based public spaces that create the conditions for all life to thrive. A key sustainability focus is circular design – prioritizing material reduction, reuse, repair and design for longevity.

Image credit: WaterfrontTO

Engaging Canadian municipalities in the **Circular Cities and Regions Initiative**

This initiative works to build circular economy knowledge and capacity in the Canadian local government sector, helping municipalities and regional governments further their understanding of circularity and build it into planning and operations. The network offers direct support, guidance and a peer-to-peer exchange which allows municipalities across the country to collaborate and share learnings as they navigate the circular transition. *Image credit: Circular Cities and Regions Initiative*



What we can learn from others

Transformative collaboration with the federal government in **Guelph-Wellington, ON**



In 2021, the City of Guelph secured a \$5 million investment from the federal government to establish the Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad. This initiative is built on the city's earlier success in the Federal Smart Cities Challenge, where Guelph won \$10 million to develop a circular food economy "living lab". Leveraging federal funding and its local network, Guelph has collaborated with grassroots organizations to validate circular technologies.

Where next?

This is a 10-year plan.

It reflects the collaboration of numerous engaged residents, City staff, business owners and community organizations.

Over the past two years, development of this Road Map has involved:

- 1000+ industry and public survey responses.
- A 25-person Community Advisory Committee.
- Interviews with Indigenous organization members.
- Nearly 100 businesses and other organizations.
- 15 City Divisions.
- 5 community pop-ups.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this Road Map. The feedback we received was instrumental in designing a made-in-Toronto strategy.

We'd like to thank our colleagues across the City for their time, expertise and perspective in the development of this Road Map. A particular thank you to the staff and leadership of our co-creating Divisions:

- Environment, Climate and Forestry
- Solid Waste Management Services
- Accounting Services
- City Planning
- Corporate Real Estate Management
- Economic Development and Culture
- Engineering & Construction Services
- Housing Secretariat
- Indigenous Affairs Office
- Parks and Recreation
- Purchasing & Materials Management Division
- Social Development
- Toronto Building
- Toronto Water
- Transportation Services



Toronto Bike Share
© Destination Toronto

The Road Map serves as a guide for accelerating our journey to becoming Ontario’s first circular city.

Throughout the implementation of this Road Map, the City will continue to build the relationships, understanding and empathy required to make space for Indigenous self-governance and leadership, and the ongoing exercise of traditional and ancestral knowledge and practices that respect the lands and waters of Tkaronto.

While every detail cannot be known from the outset, this document lays the foundation and momentum for meaningful change. As we advance circularity over the next 10 years, we will revisit and review the Road Map to ensure it continues to serve Toronto’s needs.

We’re proud of this work and look forward to realizing a more sustainable, dynamic future for our city.

James Nowlan

Executive Director

Environment, Climate
and Forestry



Matt Keliher

General Manager

Solid Waste
Management Services



The journey ahead

Becoming a fully circular city will require dedicated resources and significant effort. The City's implementation plan sequences the necessary phases of work that the City will pursue over the next 10 years to drive this transformation.

Building momentum (Years 1 to 3)

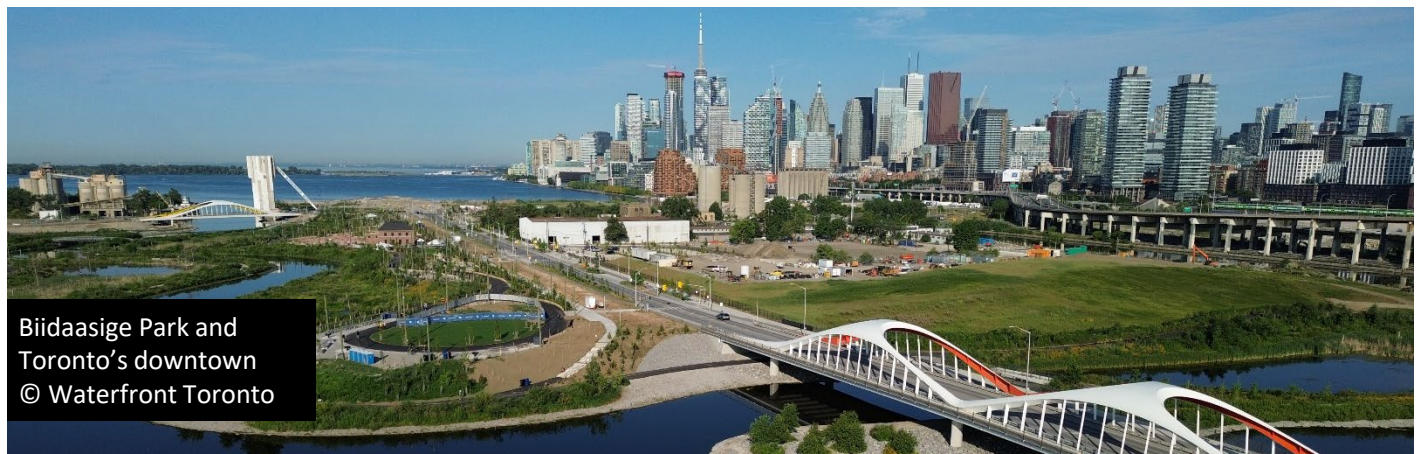
During the first three years, the City's focus will be on establishing the groundwork for the circular economy transition. This will include establishing city-wide communication and awareness campaigns, building and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders, leveraging existing City programs and exploring opportunities to develop new ones. Internally, the City will also build out staff capacity on this topic and start identifying areas where City resources can be leveraged to enable initiatives. Finally, the City will also create a framework to measure progress against the Road Map, which it will use to bring forward periodic public status updates.

Scaling & accelerating (Years 4 to 6)

With the foundational work complete, Years 4 to 6 mark the acceleration of Toronto's circular transformation. The City will shift from planning and piloting to deep integration — beginning to embed circular principles into policies, procurement, budgeting, operations and the built environment. The City will lead by example by pursuing fully circular buildings, expanding circular infrastructure, seeking to broaden community participation, and identifying local businesses and organizations who can help co-deliver programs. These years are about normalizing circularity, expanding access to its benefits and scaling up what works across the city.

Achieving circularity (Years 7 to 10)

In the final years of the Road Map, the focus will be on realizing the full vision of a circular city. With nearly a decade of data, experience and projects in place, a made-in-Toronto model of circularity will emerge. Successful and impactful initiatives will be fine-tuned and replicated across the city. Additional sectors of focus will be identified and pursued. The City will ensure circularity is not siloed, but instead broadly shared and deeply integrated into Toronto's identity and economy. By 2035, circularity will no longer be an experiment or niche, it will be the standard. The benefits will be tangible, measurable and city-wide.



Biidaasige Park and
Toronto's downtown
© Waterfront Toronto

Directing the approach

As the City works to advance circularity, it will be guided by six core principles. These principles set the course for the next 10 years and provide an important framework to consider as projects and programs are designed, approved and implemented.

- **Systems Thinking:** The City views circularity as a comprehensive, long-term endeavour that benefits from alignment across municipal, provincial and federal governments to enhance interconnected environmental, social and economic systems.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** The City will identify opportunities to minimize material consumption and maximize material value and recovery toward the goal of preserving and building the resilience of natural ecosystems.
- **Value Creation:** The City will collaborate with interested parties along the value chain to spur innovation, employment and value creation while proactively identifying opportunities to reduce costs and enhance affordability throughout the transition.
- **Culture & Capacity:** The City will build on the culture of circularity that already exists in Toronto to increase education, awareness and understanding of circular economy principles, spur a behavioural shift to more sustainable consumption practices, and build the capacity of interested parties to participate in circular initiatives.
- **Equity & Inclusion:** The City will work to ensure that every part of Toronto's diverse population has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the circular economy.
- **Accountability:** The City will establish mechanisms for performance measurement and feedback to drive accountability, continuous improvement and transparent public reporting on circular initiatives and strategies.



Trees Around the Branch
tour at Goldhawk Library

Advancing our goals through circularity

The City has many ambitious strategies that advance its key priorities. This Road Map is designed to align with and support key city strategies — from the Seniors Strategy to Congestion Management — ensuring this work complements and reinforces these priorities.



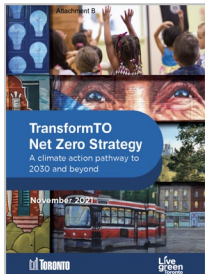
Corporate Strategy

Circularity contributes to affordable housing, accessible transportation, community investment and climate action.



Poverty Reduction

Circular activities can improve access to affordable food, clothes and shelter by preventing valuable resources from ending up in a landfill.



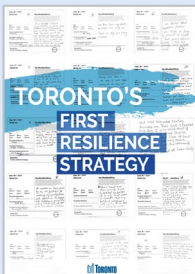
Net Zero

Emissions from waste are the third largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Toronto. The circular economy reduces emissions by minimizing waste and extending product life cycles.



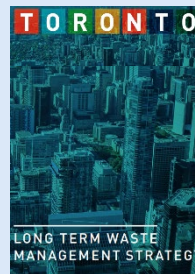
Economic Action

Green sectors advance Toronto's economic ambitions. The circular economy can create new markets, local jobs, and innovation, aligned with the Inclusive Economic Development Framework.



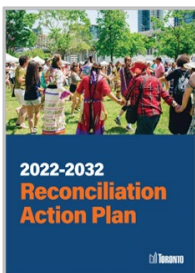
Resilience

Local material flows and reuse programs strengthen local supply chains and connect communities, making Toronto more adaptable to shocks.



Waste Strategy

The circular economy reduces landfill pressure by keeping materials in use and preventing waste at the source.



Reconciliation

Circular values reflect regenerative relationships with nature that Indigenous peoples have practiced since time immemorial. The City will create space for Indigenous leadership to honor these relationships.



Response to Tariffs

Circularity helps local businesses reuse resources and reduce dependency on volatile cross-border supply chains, creating resilient, homegrown production loops.

Our shared roles

Realizing our vision to become Ontario's first circular city depends on all of us. This strategy lays the groundwork, but its success will be shaped by the choices we all make every day. As the City moves from planning to action, everyone must find their place in this transformation.

- **Federal, provincial and local governments** can work together to create the enabling conditions for businesses, industry and communities to embark on a circular transition.
- **Large and small businesses** can unlock the potential of circular finance and business models, and prioritize innovative design and production, finding new ways to access, use and reuse materials.
- **Standards authorities** can establish national and international circular metrics and indicators to measure progress toward the circular economy.
- **Trade and labour unions** can represent the interests of workers and employers during the transition.
- **Education and research institutes** can drive knowledge creation, data analysis and innovation, as well as equip workers with the skills required for a just circular transition.
- **Community organizations** can support a more equitable transition through participation in decision-making.
- **Residents** can reduce overconsumption and drive demand for circular products and services.

Together, we can build a Toronto that is more resilient, more innovative and less wasteful.





Pride Tree Planting on
Toronto Island