

# Summary Report: Ward 13 Brainstorm for a Sustainable City

Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016 | West Toronto Baptist Church

Report summary by Stephen G. Robinson



## Contents:

1. Context
2. Presentation: City of Toronto Environment & Energy Office
3. Open space "visioning" session
4. Brainstorming Phase 1: key ideas
5. Brainstorming Phase 2: participatory group discussions
  - a. Sustainable Community Hubs
  - b. Rethinking Food
  - c. Sharing Economy
  - d. Infrastructure Pricing
  - e. Bike Infrastructure
  - f. Buildings & Energy
6. **Appendix A:** Other participant ideas
7. **Appendix B:** "Dotmocracy" interactive exhibit results
8. **Appendix C:** Selected feedback from participant survey
- 9.

### **1. Context:**

The City of Toronto has set a greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 80% by 2050, and is currently seeking community input for its climate action plan through [Transform TO](#) community conversations. In recognition of Toronto's goal to include health, equity and prosperity in its climate action plan, [Green 13](#) and [Project Neutral](#) brought together community members from Ward 13 to generate additional ideas to



feed into the city's plan. The brainstorming session was hosted on Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016, at the West Toronto Baptist Church (3049 Dundas Street). The outputs of these discussions are summarized here for the benefit of city planners and all those supporting to the TransformTO initiative.



## 2. City of Toronto Opening Presentation

Ward 13 Councilor Sarah Doucette opened the event by introducing the City of Toronto's TransformTO initiative and Linda Swanston (Project Lead, Environment and Energy Office, City of Toronto). Ms. Swanston gave a brief presentation on overarching goals of TransformTO. The presentation underlined key activities that are now taking place, and also detailed how the initiative came about, and how it relates back to the larger issue of climate change and Toronto's carbon emissions. Ms. Swanston:

- Emphasized the vital need for public input and large-scale community engagement
- Clarified the city's current leadership agenda; Toronto needs to keep up with other leading municipalities, and progress in the direction of social, cultural, and environmental sustainability.



## 3. Open Space "Visioning" Exercise

Paul Antze (event facilitator and [Green Neighbours 21](#) Organizer) asked participants to close their eyes and envision what Toronto will look like in 2050. Among other things, participants were asked: how will we move around? What will our food systems look like? What kinds of jobs will be available? Will our economy look the same?

Community members were then invited to verbally articulate how they envisioned Toronto in the future, and what their impressions were.

Communities were imagined as:

- More vibrant, healthy, and lush
- More tightly knit and densely populated
- More localized and more cooperative; more strongly flourishing neighborhoods that are better integrated with one another
- More friendly toward and encouraging of pedestrian traffic
- Better equipped in terms of public transportation and transportation infrastructure
- More socially and economically inclusive; still affordable to low income residents
- More green in their appearance; more gardens and outdoor green spaces
- Less driven by consumerism and less wasteful; better at recycling and sharing
- More vibrant local industry; goods and services produced and consumed on a more local scale



#### **4. Key Themes/Ideas**

Participants were asked to reflect and deliberate on the vision that was put forth, and to then consider how the City might undertake to make that envisioned future scenario a reality. Six idea categories were introduced:

- Create Sustainability Hubs/visibly promote sustainability leadership
- Rethinking food/food production
- Rethinking our economy and modes of consumption/production; transitioning to a 'sharing economy'
- Infrastructure pricing
- Energy
- Strengthening cyclist networks and infrastructure

#### **5. Breakout/Group Discussions**

Group discussions were led by appointed facilitators. Following a World Café model, participants were free to join any one/number of groups, and encouraged to contribute their ideas. The six breakout

groups were encouraged to: (i) explore the topic further with more detailed discussion; and (ii) produce viable recommendations for the City to consider going forward. Using an assigned template, facilitators recorded these discussions, and then the results were pooled together for the sake of later being documented in this report.

**Many thanks to all of the volunteers who helped organize the event and facilitate the breakout discussions!**



## Summary of Group Discussions:

### **A. Create Sustainability Hubs/Visibly Promote Sustainability Leadership**



**Group Facilitator:** Helen Vassilakos

#### Identified problem:

- Mobilizing interest and support on a large scale
- Engaging historically uninvolved members of the population
- Promoting a culture of positive politics and sustainability → we need a 'constituency for change' that emboldens political leadership to take real initiative

#### Objective:

- To deeply embed sustainability within our communities and our everyday lives and mindsets

#### Brainstorming Ideas:

- Promote a culture of sustainability and environmental leadership by transforming community centers into multi-purpose green/sustainability "hubs"

- Create and promote sites of independent sustainability leadership throughout the city → encourage sustainability teaching and learning, and increase the everyday visibility of sustainability leadership
- Improve community programming to support sustainability platforms and agendas
- Make community centres 'living laboratories' of sustainability and sustainable design

### Suggestions for City of Toronto:

N/A

### Other considerations:

N/A

## **B. Rethinking Food/Food Production**

**Group Facilitator:** Kathryn Tait



### Identified Problem:

Our relationship with food (i.e. how we produce, consume, and distribute it on a large scale) is highly unsustainable. The abundance of meat in our diet has many unhealthy environmental impacts. We need to rethink how we relate to food/the food industry to minimize waste and environmental degradation.

### Objective:

- Make how we produce, consume, and distribute food more sustainable
- Recycle more and produce less unnecessary waste
- Think about food and its production more holistically

### Suggestions for the City:

- Improve the extent and quality of food education among adults and school children
- Promote healthier dietary choices, and an broader understanding of how our dietary choices impact ecosystems/the environment
- Introduce legal requirements for food labelling in stores and restaurants; encourage more accurate accounting of the true total costs of different food products—the cost of food should include some consideration of the non-economic environmental costs associated with its growth/manufacture

- Design and widely distribute a City of Toronto Food Guide
- Promote awareness with a city marketing campaign; emphasize the financial and health benefits of a less meat centric diet
- Create an app that tracks the carbon footprint of your diet, and that ranks you alongside other people in your community

**Other considerations:**

N/A

## C. Rethinking Our Economy – Developing Our Local Sharing Economy



Created by Baruch Moskovits  
from Noun Project

**Group Facilitator:** Paul Mero

**Identified problem:**

Our current economy is wasteful and survives on highly unsustainable MODES of production and consumption. It prioritizes spending and consumerism and discourages responsible forms of household planning. We need to reverse this trend, and start encouraging healthier, more sustainable patterns of behavior. Communities and neighbourhoods should be brought closer together and more deeply integrated, and holistic planning should be prioritized to minimize unnecessary waste, and environmental threats.

- How can the City of Toronto support the sharing economy to reduce carbon emissions?
- How can the City of Toronto support community banking to build a more environmental sustainable local economy?

**Objective:**

- To transition away from wasteful consumerism toward a philosophy of collectivism, conscious consumption, and sharing
- Shifting our economic paradigm, and promoting a more sustainable economic mindset

**Brainstorming:**

- There are many resources that can be shared within communities, below is a list of some of the resources that can/should be shared.

- Tools, cars, bikes, energy (district based systems – electrical production and storage, and heating and cooling).
- Communities can fund, build and operate aspects of the sharing economy if the policy framework us there to support them.
- The City has property resources that can support the sharing economy and they should be made available; can include community centres, libraries and other properties in local neighbourhoods.
- Food co-op where people can sell produce grown in their yards.

### Suggestions for City of Toronto:

- Support the idea of a sharing economy by providing space, access to capital, and expertise
- Help identify and remove legislative and non-legislative barriers
- Consider establishing a City owned bank to support the local economy

### Other thoughts/considerations:

- Organize an event to educate, promote and discuss sharing economies in Ward 13.
- Identify places within Ward 13 where people can organize aspects of the sharing economy.
- Identify web tools that support local sharing.
- Promote associations such as Green 13, Project Neutral, etc...



## D. Infrastructure Pricing

**Group Facilitator:** Natasa Zupancic

Created by Vineet Kumar Thakur  
from the Noun Project

### Identified problem:

Inefficient, inadequate, inequitable pricing / incentives for usage of infrastructure

### Objective:

- User-based rate infrastructure fees
- Pricing of infrastructure should be consumption- or usage-based, which would lead to more efficient infrastructure usage, revenue generation, and stimulation of low carbon choices

## **Brainstorming:**

- Those riding their bike to work daily shouldn't be paying the same taxes for roads as a single driver in an SUV
- Developers building large parking space that creates huge amounts of storm water should be charged accordingly for sewage

Main issues / vehicles for achieving a better system:

- Taxes
  - Need for transparency – breakdown of property tax
  - Tax consumer
- Road tolls – should be differential
- Education
  - current system
    - City's infrastructure budget
    - Policies already in place / recently introduced – e.g. City's new Storm Water Charge
  - best practices – examples from other cities
    - Zone-based pricing in transportation
    - Singapore's congestion pricing (and/or Tax Structure for Cars?)
    - Free early morning rides and other Travel Smart incentives / rewards on public transport in Singapore
    - Another city mentioned: Stockholm
  - Proper messaging to ensure buy-in for the new models
- Embedded Costs

Challenges / barriers to adoption

- complexity of the issue / specifics and details
- general change resentment
- fairness
- communication / messaging

## **Suggestions for City of Toronto:**

- Collect more and better data
- Experiment with hypothetical modelling
- Look at best practices and new policies from other jurisdictions
- Look for solutions from hackathons, tech companies
- Start a small scale pilot program possibly for city employees

## **Other considerations:**

- Understanding the role of province in creating new policies and regulations



## E. Enhance Infrastructure for Bikes and Thereby Increase Cycling as a Choice in Zero Carbon Transit



**Group Facilitator:** Rita Bijons

### Identified problem:

Need to reduce reliance on cars by encouraging more active transportation and zero carbon transportation. "Toronto's Official Plan mandates to reduce auto dependency, improve air quality, and provide an integrated, accessible transportation system for all users." ( p. 24, Toronto Environmental Progress Report 2015)

- Many people do not feel safe biking on city streets. We need to improve the safety of bike network and hope thereby to increase ridership.
- Need to improve security for cyclists.
- Need to expand the access to bike sharing.

**Objective:** to enable green responses (i.e. a shift towards low carbon transportation) and generate revenue; need to be conscious of health, environmental and social equity elements to avoid disproportionately affecting low-income groups

**Brainstorming:** what will transportation look like in the short term and long term (2050)? Group focused on the present, while recognizing that strategies will need to be scaled up over time as low carbon transportation management is integrated into regional planning efforts.

- Discussed issue of construction and industrial vehicles inhibiting public transit frequency and access, ways to reduce physical obstruction and ease transportation flow.

### Suggestions for City of Toronto:

We need to consider the cultural context. We know that other cities bike in a big way – Copenhagen for instance. Our effort to boost cycling among Torontonians will benefit from a public education campaign highlighting the benefits of cycling - better health, lower GHGs, cleaner air, more economical than a car, faster in many circumstances... Our open space group recommends that the City develop Public Service Announcements that highlight and celebrate the benefits of cycling.

Improve the *safety* of our bike network

- Study examples of parts of the city such as Sherbourne St., Richmond St. - stanchions that separate the cycling lane from car traffic; blue paint to identify where cyclists need to be particularly vigilant of pedestrians (e.g. at Queen's Quay); Hoskin St. model of sidewalk, bike lane, parking, car lane

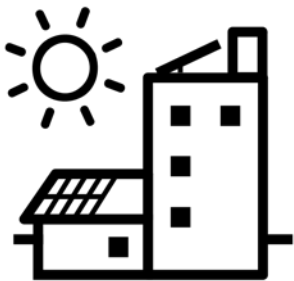
- Study the solutions worked out in other jurisdictions such as Vancouver, Ottawa, Montreal and adopt those that make sense here
- Enhanced education of cyclists, pedestrians, car drivers
- Accommodate the emergence of recumbent bikes, PodRide style bikes, e-bikes and trikes.
- Increase the presence of community tool kits, bicycle pumps (e.g. as exist presently at Keele station, Old Mill station)

Improve *security* for cyclists

- More and secure parking for bikes; CCTV monitoring
- Expand the access to bike sharing
- Expand the network of bike sharing
- Not everyone has a credit card; develop a new type of card that gives access to those who do not have a credit card→ somehow be linked to a Presto card.
- Reduce use of cars

### Other considerations:

N/A



Created by silvio rebelo  
from Noun Project

## F. Buildings & Energy

**Group Facilitator:** Katie Harper

### Identified problem:

- Many of Toronto's buildings are highly inefficient
- Replacing or altogether rebuilding these buildings is economically unviable, and also itself wasteful
- Buildings must be retrofitted to meet current building codes and standards

### Objective:

To improve building performance all across Toronto and beyond

To minimize building emissions, and improve monitoring/reporting of building emissions

### Suggestions for City of Toronto:

Drive retrofits to improve building performance – with particular focus on building envelope – through:

### **1. Incentive programs**

- Should be performance-based (vs. prescriptive) to drive holistic improvements to the building as a system
- Requires pre/post audit, incentive \$ based on energy savings
- Needs to be flexible – recognize that solid masonry (e.g. double brick) buildings make up much of the older building stock, and efforts to re-clad these buildings (e.g. towards passive house standards) result in additional red tape. Find ways to approve these projects without requiring Committee of Adjustment.
- Additional benefits of incentive program: drive education/awareness of solutions (e.g. air-to-air heat exchangers) that are not yet commonly installed in Toronto

### **2. Energy benchmarking**

- Mandatory disclosure of energy score at time of sale (and for rentals!!!)
- Benefits:
  - Helps integrate energy performance (and operating cost) into market value of home
  - Builds awareness of energy performance and costs with a broader population
  - Creates new social norms because energy scores are visible and shared

### **3. Training for Trades & Building Inspectors**

- Many contractors upcharge for this work as they need to invest time to learn about new (to them) technology and solutions; better training reduces liability to contractors when they take on this work
- Building inspectors must be trained as a part of larger efforts to reduce red tape for energy performance retrofits

### **4. Financing**

- Expand HELP program to reflect typical costs of renovations (\$25K limit is too low, barely covers typical kitchen renovation vs. whole home retrofit)
- Link financing with (performance-based) incentives to increase accessibility
- See Guelph's proposed GEERS (Guelph Energy Efficiency Retrofit Strategy) as model for end-to-end solution (which includes guidance to homeowners on process for undertaking energy efficiency retrofits)

### **Other considerations:**

- Need Red List for bad contractors
- Improve building codes for new builds as well (not the focus of this conversation, but similarly important)
- Remove barriers to importing and implementing European technology

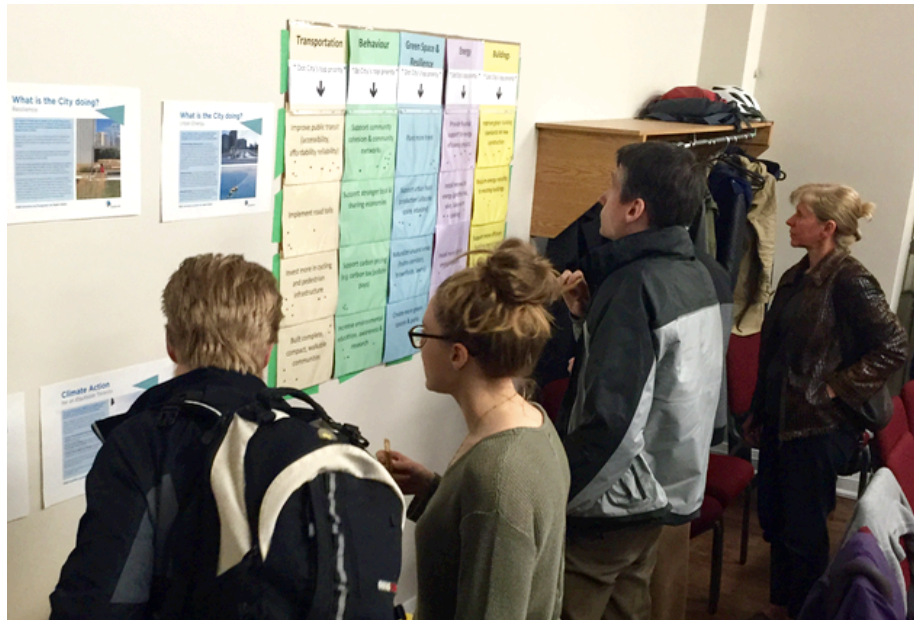
## Appendix A: Other Participant Ideas

1. Include **train and airplane emissions** in Toronto's GHG accounting/reporting. The volume of train (freight, passenger) and plane (freight, passenger) in Toronto is high, and generates both particulate and GHG emissions in quantities that endanger human health, the health of our ecosystems, and weaken our professed ambition to reduce GHGs. Monitoring devices need to be set up in a rigorous manner that provides real time data accessible to the public.
  - The City could demand electrification of all passenger and freight traffic traveling in/through Toronto
  - Could also impose a fee on all passenger trips and all freight movement – impose a "pollution levy".
2. Establish a network of **electric charging stations** so as to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles. Collaborate with all other entities (e.g. provincial government, federal government, plugdrive, communities, parking lots... to bring this about rapidly.
3. Encourage the adoption of **ground-source geothermal** in both retrofits (for individual owners, and for community power projects) and new builds (condos, apartment buildings, long term care facilities, hospitals, etc.)
4. **Eliminate two stroke engines** from the city fleet, and prohibit their public use in home and garden equipment
5. **Lower speed limits.** Follow the example of Paris, France. 30 km per hour.
6. Create better **online sustainability tools and resources** for the public
  - More proactively educate the public about existing sustainability initiatives and programs
  - Develop better means of distributing information, news, bulletins, etc...
  - Better document municipal and citizen leadership happening throughout the city
  - Ensure that information being provided is clear, succinct, and easy to understand
7. The public has very poor understanding of the amount of energy used to pump, purify etc. water, and there is a great deal of waste of water. The city should develop public service announcements to educate the public on water and other relevant issues.

- **Charge more for water use.** There should be a marked increase in the cost of cubic metres of water as more is consumed. Citizens and companies alike should pay the true price of water, and be accountable for wasteful water usage.
  - Equip public facilities with so that water only runs on an 'as need' basis
10. Encourage the emerging market for **e-bikes, e-trikes, covered bikes and trikes.**
  11. Encourage residents to **benchmark their personal carbon emissions** to spark awareness and climate action

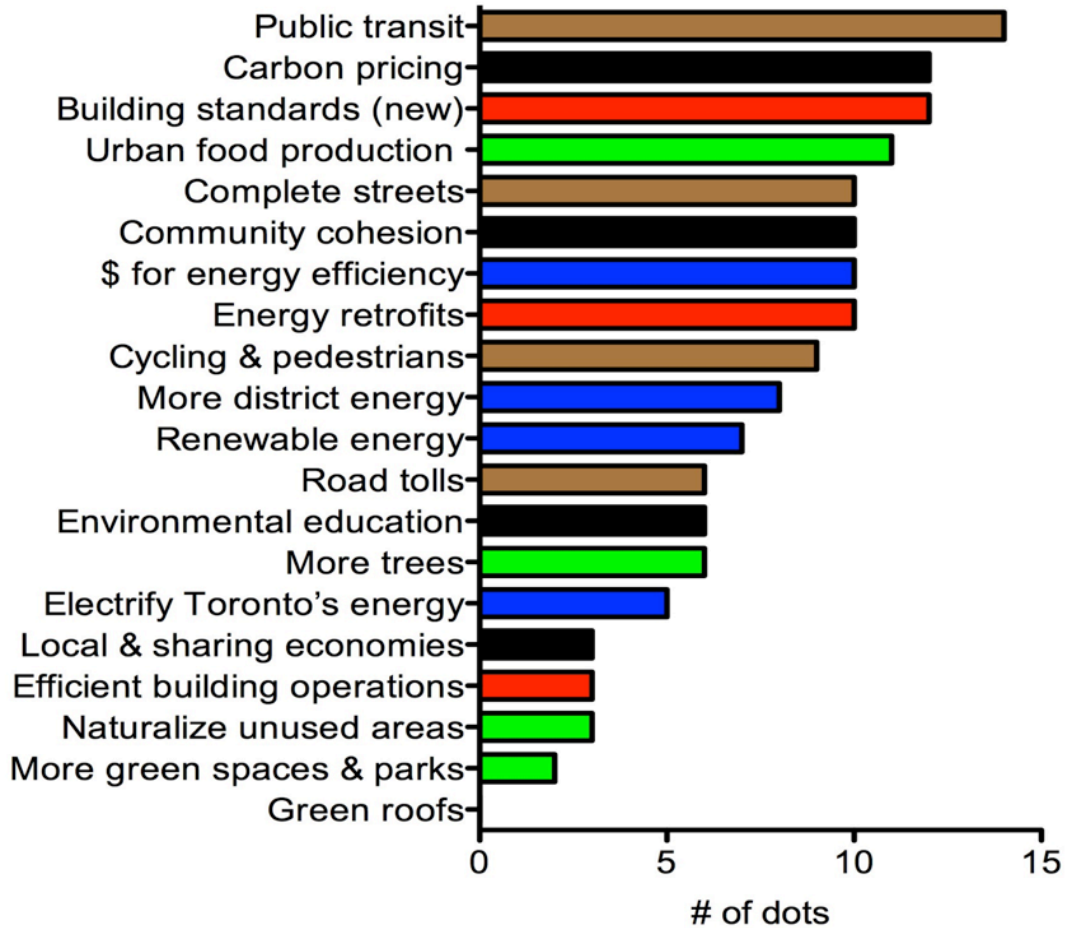
# Appendix B: “Dotmocracy” Polling Results

All event attendees were given 5 dot stickers to place on a board of environmental areas identified by the city. The distribution provides insight to community’s priorities, and is the results are summarized below.

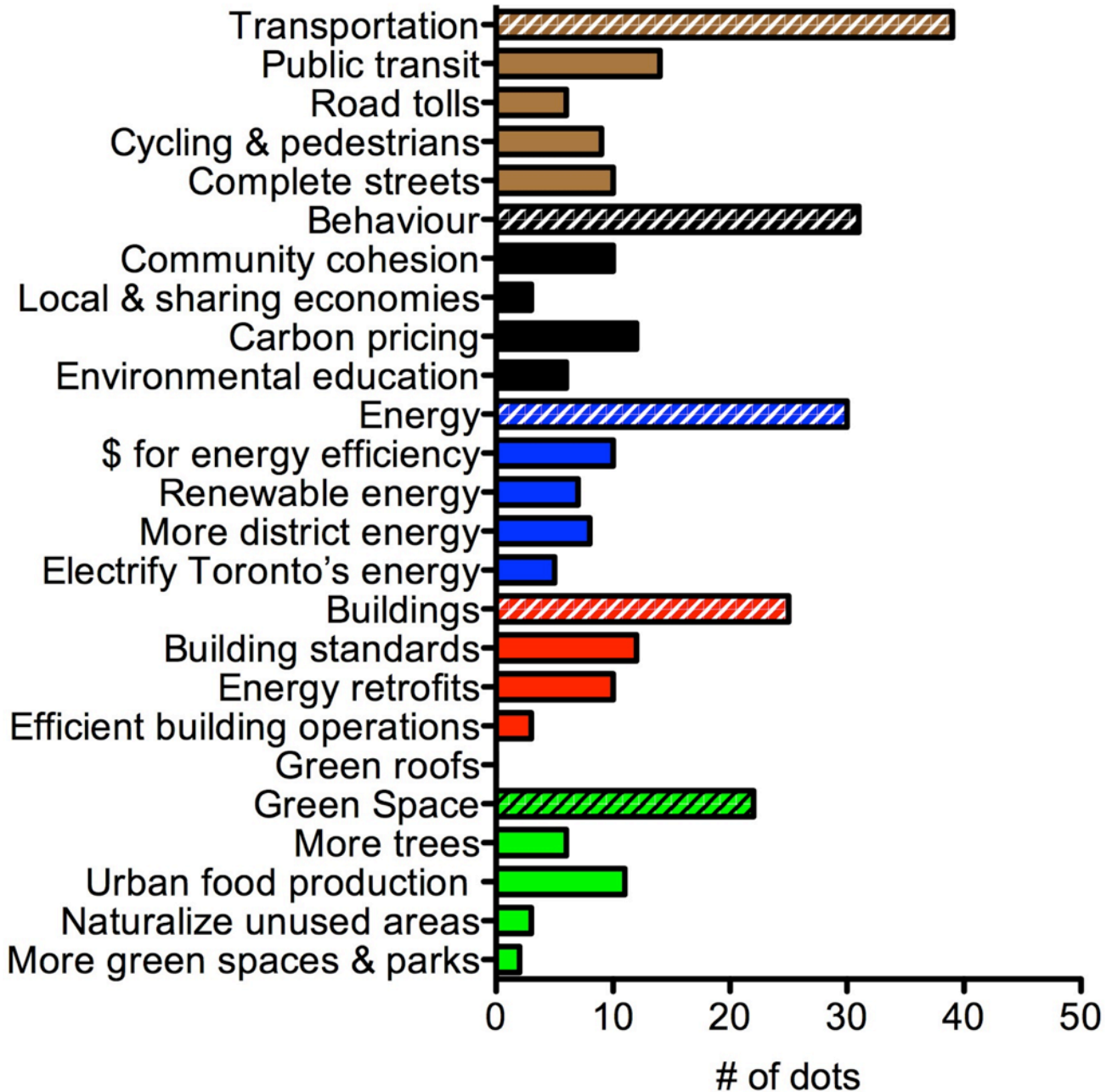


Transportation	Behaviour	Green Space & Resilience	Energy	Buildings
* Dot City's top priority *	* Dot City's top priority *	* Dot City's top priority *	* Dot City's top priority *	* Dot City's top priority *
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Improve public transit (accessibility, affordability, reliability)	Support community cohesion & community networks	Plant more trees	Provide financial support for energy efficiency projects	Improve green building standards for new construction
Implement road tolls	Support stronger local & sharing economies	Support urban food production (allocate space, educate)	Install renewable energy (geothermal, solar, lake water cooling)	Require energy retrofits to existing buildings
Invest more in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure	Support carbon pricing (e.g. carbon tax/polluter pays)	Naturalize unused areas (hydro corridors, brownfields, lawns)	Install more district energy systems	Support more efficient building operations
Built complete, compact, walkable communities	Increase environmental education, awareness & research	Create more green spaces & parks	Electrify Toronto's energy system	Install more green roofs on existing buildings

## Ward 13's top priority for City (May-17-2016)



## Dots for actions by category





# Appendix C: Feedback from Participant Survey

Selected excerpts from Post-Event Participant Survey:

***Why were you interested in participating in this event? What were you hoping to contribute or take away?***

I think that making more sustainable cities is important, and was **eager to connect** with local citizens and politicians working to furthering this goal.

I was hoping to be able to highlight that many solutions to our climate change crisis exist. I wanted to ensure that **the focus moves to organizing and planning to achieve goals based on implementing these solutions** while leaving open the capability of adjusting our implementation as new and better solutions continue to arise.

To create a **link to my community** and generate new and exciting ideas for growth.

***The City of Toronto is seeking community input for its climate action plan through Transform TO community conversations. How would you engage more people in this conversation?***

I think this effort can extend to **schools to engage the youth** in these discussions. It would also be good to **engage companies** whose Corporate Social Responsibility policies would welcome this initiative.

I would have **more representatives attend community and city events on behalf of TransformTO** and possibly even some light advertising where the city may have access

If **video clips of the working groups** could be put together to show how we are working together toward solutions, I think **more people would be interested in engaging in the constructive, time-effective process**. The public is afraid of wasting their very valuable time in the quagmire of politics.

It's a tough one. Most people in the room were already quite passionate about the topics. They are already onboard. Until the cost of "unsustainability " is felt by the rest of the city (the majority) there is little incentive to wake up to the necessary changes. We can't even get parents to stop driving their kids 2 blocks to school. **You engage people by showing them the true cost if their choices and making them pay.**