Summary of Advice from the Toronto Planning Review Panel Meeting held December 8, 2018

Executive Summary

The Planning Review Panel is a representative group of 32 randomly selected Torontonians that help the City Planning Division guide growth and change in Toronto. They have been asked by the Chief Planner to work together over the course of two years to provide City Planning with informed public input on major planning initiatives. Members are tasked, in particular, with helping to ensure that these initiatives are aligned with the values and priorities of all Torontonians.

TransformTO: Panelist Reflections and Recommendations

The Panel was visited by the project team for TransformTO, Toronto's climate change strategy. Toronto has set a long-term goal to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) by 80% by 2050. The project team is developing an implementation plan for the years 2020-2023, which will be presented to Council in 2019. The implementation plan proposes to focus on five key action areas: buildings, energy, transportation, waste, and engagement. They will select and promote actions in these areas that both reduce GHGs and provide one or more of four priority community benefits: health, equity, economic prosperity, and resilience.

The TransformTO team asked for the Panel's input on how to select actions for the 2020-2023 implementation plan that both fight climate change and address community benefits that are most valued by all Torontonians.

- Panelists did not feel strongly that any of the four community benefits was significantly more important than the others to focus on during the 2020-2023 Implementation Plan. Health received a slightly higher weighting out of the four because many Panelists felt that health is a determinant of other benefits. However, several other Panelists felt that all four benefits were equally interconnected and therefore important to focus on in a balanced way.

- Most Panelists suggested that, of the five action areas, Engagement was the most important action area for the 2020-2023 Implementation Plan. Panelists observed that meeting the Toronto GHG reduction targets is too big a challenge for the government to tackle alone, and that while the City can provide significant leadership and resources, there must be deep collaboration with companies, non-profits, and residents in order to meet the 2050 GHG reduction goal. They felt that a sufficiently strong foundation of collaborative relationships has yet to be built, and thus engagement was likely the most effective area to focus on in the 2020-2023 Implementation Plan. Engagement would then lead to more effective action within the other four action areas (buildings, energy, transportation, waste).

- Some Panelists also suggested that focusing, between 2020-2023, on improving the quality and sustainability of buildings, as Toronto's biggest generator of GHG emissions, would have positive impacts on health and equity in particular, and address the affordability of quality housing - a key challenge for many Torontonians.

- Panelists brainstormed additional ideas for how actions in each of the five action areas could advance the four community benefits while also reducing GHGs in Toronto. A full list of ideas is captured in the Appendix at the end of the report.

Detailed Discussion

The Panel heard presentations from Sarah Gingrich, Project Lead for Transform TO, and Linda Swanston, Program Manager, Policy & Research in the Environment and Energy Division. Sarah and Linda introduced the Panel to TransformTO's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, as well as other related long-term goals that the City will need to meet to achieve this overarching goal. The TransformTO team must create an implementation plan for the years 2020-2023 that sets out the specific actions that will move the City along a path to eventually reaching the 2050 goal.

The project team intends to select actions for the plan that both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve other community benefits. They are proposing to focus on actions that fall into one of five categories: buildings, transportation, waste, energy, and engagement. These actions should also provide at least one of four priority community benefits: health, equity, economic prosperity, and resilience.

The TransformTO team asked for the Panel's input on how to select actions for the implementation plan that both fight climate change and address the community benefits that are most valued by all Torontonians.

The Panel began by considering the relative importance of the four potential ancillary community benefits of climate action for Torontonians between 2020 - 2023. They weighted each one individually on a worksheet using percentages, and provided a short rationale for their weighting underneath.

The Panel's average weightings for each benefit were as follows:

Health	36%
Equity	20.5%
Economic Prosperity	25.5%
Resilience	18%

While the Panelists did not strongly identify any one of the benefits as unimportant, many felt that health was more important than the others because it was seen as a 'root cause' that influences equity, prosperity, and resilience. However, a few other Panelists felt that economic prosperity or equity are more of a determinant of health than the other way around, leading them to weight that benefit more highly.

Several Panelists also commented that all four benefits are highly interdependent, and that means that one cannot not be justifiably weighted above the others.

Following this exercise, the Panelists split into four groups based on the benefit that they gave the highest weight to. Within their groups, they began by reviewing the five action areas, and brainstorming types of actions that would both fight climate change and provide the benefit that they weighted most highly.

Following the brainstorm of actions, each group picked 1-2 action areas that they thought would provide the most benefit (for both GHG reductions and for their community benefit), and recorded a rationale and examples of types of action that could be taken in that area.

Group 1: Health & Greenhouse Gas Reductions

Recommended Action Areas to Focus on 2020-2023

Illustrative Examples

Buildings

Rationale: Where people live can have a huge impact on their health. Buildings are also major producers of greenhouse gas emissions. By focusing on retrofitting buildings, we can both reduce emissions and achieve multiple types of health benefits.

- Provide tax incentives and collaborate with landlords to modernize buildings, improve temperature regulation and ventilation/indoor air quality, and keep buildings up to code while reducing GHG emissions.

- Enforce building regulations for all housing, particularly around air quality and physical upkeep, with particular emphasis on improving public housing conditions, while reducing GHG emissions.

- Install electric vehicle chargers inside of new buildings and retrofit existing buildings for chargers to encourage electric car uptake and reduce air pollution.

Transportation

Rationale: Low-carbon forms of transportation reduce GHGs while improving local air quality and encouraging physical activity, which improves physical and mental health. Because of the health benefits, active transportation solutions should be safe and accessible to everyone regardless of ability.

- Build complete and safe streets with more separated cycling lanes to encourage more people to cycle.

- Place a premium on the use of internal combustion engine vehicles through taxes, and require all public vehicles and taxis to be electric, to reduce air pollution and reduce GHGs.

- Add more charging stations for electric vehicles to reduce air pollution and GHGs.

Group 2: Equity & Greenhouse Gas Reductions

Recommended Action Areas to Focus on 2020-2023

Illustrative Examples

Engagement

Rationale: Government can only set and enforce so much policy -- fighting climate change and ensuring that it produces real equity benefits will also take collaboration and mobilization with local communities.

- Scan the city's current engagement processes to better understand what community connections and collaborations already exist and can be used on equity-advancing GHG reduction initiatives.

- Implement a communications strategy to raise awareness of TransformTO and climate change mitigation actions that the public can take that also improve our communities.

Buildings

Rationale: Setting green building standards for new buildings is good, but retrofitting older buildings is an important way to improve quality of life and affordability for marginalized communities.

- Set regulations to prevent landlords from passing cost of retrofitting for energy efficiency on to renters.

- Use fines to enforce compliance with new energy efficiency standards for existing buildings as a way to bring down energy costs for residents and improve cost of living.

Group 3: Economic Prosperity & Greenhouse Gas Reductions

Recommended Action Areas to Focus on 2020-2023

Illustrative Examples

Engagement

Rationale: Responding to climate change is also an opportunity to create new jobs and sectors of the economy. But we can't build a strong green tech industry in Toronto without first building local capacity. This capacity-building will involve proactive engagement with communities, industry, different levels of government, and the education system to 'set the stage', so that we can grow a sector that promotes both economic prosperity and climate action.

- Have high school and community education campaigns about climate and job opportunities in the green sector.

- Attract green tech business to Toronto through pitch competitions, financial incentives, etc.

- Learn about, then build and support the necessary infrastructure to attract and manage a green tech industry, such as providing appropriate office space, transportation networks, etc.

Group 4: Resilience & Greenhouse Gas Reductions

Recommended Action Areas to Focus on 2020-2023

Illustrative Examples

Engagement

Rationale: Communities that are more engaged and have more knowledge and capacity will be better prepared to cope with shocks and stresses of climate change. This engagement and capacity-building also produces communities that can develop their own local solutions to climate change, which builds long-term resilience. They will also build capacity to advocate for climate action to the right levels of government.

- Raise awareness of the concept of climate resilience so residents understand why it is important and different from other shocks and stresses that may occur in Toronto. Myth-bust about climate change.

- Tell stories about ways community members are reducing GHG emissions and building resiliency.

- Promote and create incentives for communities to build resilience in the natural environment, such as trees for windbreaks, making use of natural land features like ravines to help with drainage.

- Use social and community connections to facilitate problem solving during emergencies.

Following the small group discussion, the Panel discussed the results in plenary. As seen above, many groups concluded that, of the five action areas, engagement was the most important action area for the 2020-2023 Implementation Plan. Panelists observed that the meeting the Toronto GHG reduction targets is too big a challenge for the government to tackle alone, and that while the City can provide significant leadership and resources, there must be deep collaboration with companies, non-profits, and residents in order to meet the 2050 GHG reduction goal. They felt that a sufficiently strong foundation of collaborative relationships has yet to be built, and thus engagement was likely the most effective area to focus on in the 2020-2023 Implementation Plan. Engagement would then lead to more effective action within the other four action areas (buildings, energy, transportation, waste).

Panelists also acknowledged that focusing, between 2020-2023, on improving the quality and sustainability of buildings was not only a valuable way to address GHG emissions but also a way to address the affordability of quality housing - a key challenge for many Torontonians.

Appendix: Additional Implementation Actions

Additional ideas: Health

Buildings	Transportation	Waste	Energy	Engagement
Implement more strict regulations for public housing to ensure clean air. Enforce the building code to promote safety and reduce health hazards	Provide more cycling lanes and sidewalk space for walking, cycling, and public transportation. This would lead to less pollution, more exercise, less asthma, etc.	Build more gardens for healthy food production	Reduce over-heating and over-air conditioning to reduce energy consumption and promote personal health and comfort	Provide more information about recycling, active transportation, and retrofitting incentives, which, if taken up, would improve health
Increase Municipal Licensing and Standards enforcement around LEED certifications to promote health	Design streets for safe cycling from a human centered perspective	Eliminate plastic packaging and bags in stores, and reduce use in restaurants to reduce negative health impacts from plastics		
Retrofit buildings to improve indoor air quality and reduce mold	Accommodate people with disabilities when considering health transportation options			

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Additional ideas: Economic Prosperity

Buildings	Transportation	Waste	Energy	Engagement
Install more green roofs on buildings to create jobs and help address food insecurity and affordability	Promote remote working -- both to reduce GHG emissions and reduce cost of commuting	Promote recycling or upcycling and re-selling of old electronics to reduce waste, create jobs, and provide cheaper products to consumers	Install more solar panels on buildings to create jobs and reduce cost of energy to consumers	
	Promote adoption of electric vehicles to reduce GHG emissions, save consumers the cost of gas, and encourage local opportunities to build, sell, and service these vehicles	Produce education campaigns to change mindset around consumption (discouraging people from constant consumption of newest products every few years).	Provide more shared office spaces to make more efficient use of energy and also promote collaboration and innovation	
		Retrofit and upgrade waste management facilities to be more efficient. Retrofitting processes also create jobs		

Additional ideas: Resilience

Buildings	Transportation	Waste	Energy	Engagement
Design and require buildings to be self-sufficient in terms of energy management	Mix asphalts with other materials to reduce heat absorption	Provide better communication to help people sort and store waste more accurately and efficiently, as a way to prepare in the event of interruptions to waste pick-up services	Promote energy independence and local energy production. Create decentralized energy systems to avoid single points of failure that cause massive outages.	

Additional ideas: Equity

Buildings	Transportation	Waste	Energy	Engagement
	Make low carbon forms of shared mobility (like bike and car shares) accessible regardless of income			