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RICHMOND HILL CEEP GUIDES SHIFT TO LOW-CARBON CITY

ROADMAP FOR RESILIENCE

Marc Mitanis

The City of Richmond Hill has released a [draft Community Energy and Emissions Plan](#) (CEEP) which provides a roadmap and outlines specific actions the city can undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to conserve energy, and to reach its target of net zero emissions by 2050. If implemented, the proposed actions would catalyze a major shift in the way people move around the city.

Initiated under the Resilient Richmond Hill program, the CEEP builds on existing city actions, plans, and partnerships with the goals of mitigating climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change by planning for extreme weather events. The draft CEEP was completed by the City of Richmond Hill and **Sustainability Solutions Group**, and was received by Richmond Hill city council on March 24.

"The CEEP is a

comprehensive study and action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and explore related economic opportunities," Richmond Hill climate change and sustainable development project manager **Julius Lindsay** told *NRU*. "This plan is not just for the corporation, but includes actions that require participation from residents, businesses and other levels of government."

Lindsay said the CEEP is required to implement current policies within the Official Plan, to update and inform other corporate initiatives, and to ensure the city's eligibility for grant funding for greenhouse gas emissions reduction projects.

For Richmond Hill to reach its target of net-zero emissions by 2050—meaning a state at which the city emits less greenhouse gas than it offsets—the CEEP champions a low-carbon vision with 29 area-specific sub-targets. The CEEP expresses its vision for the future

of a more environmentally sustainable Richmond Hill as follows:

"In 2050, the vision for a low-carbon city includes rooftop gardens and bioretention gardens/Low Impact Developments across the city and more trees everywhere. The air is cleaner and everyone is

healthier. Those who own a car have an electric one that doesn't emit any pollution. On many days, people don't use their cars at all. All essentials are a short walk away, there's more bike paths than ever, and the subway shuttles residents downtown within minutes. Everything—

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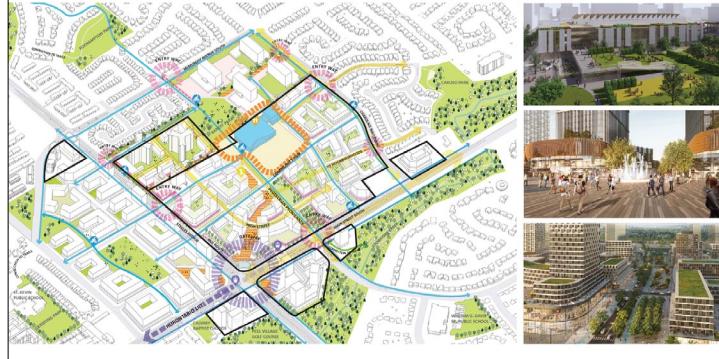
Cover image from Uptown Brampton Transit-Oriented Communities Toolkit. The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA) recognized the Toolkit with a 2021 CLSA Award of Excellence in the category of Planning and Analysis. See *In Brief*, page 12.

SOURCE: CANADIAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Uptown Brampton Transit-Oriented Communities Toolkit

Unlocking Value through Collaboration, Alignment and Empowerment

Implementing "20-min Walkable Neighbourhood with Community Hub" as the New Growth Model for Transit-Oriented Communities



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the lights, heating and air conditioning, computers, public buses—is powered by electricity generated from renewable sources like hydro, wind, and solar."

Environmental group **Blue Dot Movement York Region** was invited to participate in stakeholder meetings to provide feedback to the city during the formation of the CEEP. Blue Dot volunteer **Cheryl Lewandowski** said a resilient and low-carbon Richmond Hill will have quieter roads, improved air quality, and reduced toxins and petrochemicals in stormwater runoff.

Lewandowski said that the costs associated with climate change are increasing and need to be dealt with. "A significant dent in the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions will be the result of cumulative small steps and bold, broad-scale measures," Lewandowski told NRU. "Richmond Hill recognizes the need to work with other levels of government, agencies, the community, businesses and stakeholders to do our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Richmond Hill ward 4 councillor **David West** said that heating homes, food waste, and transportation are three of the main contributors to

greenhouse gas emissions, and that all three of those sources live in municipalities,

"I think we have a moral imperative and we really can't turn a blind eye to the effects of climate change, and we're seeing them in Richmond Hill," West told NRU. "And everybody's actions everywhere affect everybody else. If it's not a disadvantageous or overly onerous thing for a community to do—and in fact, it may even be good for you economically—and it helps the planet, then it's a win-win situation."

The CEEP outlines seven program areas with specific

sub-targets to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050: transportation transformation; energy-efficient buildings; smart, renewable energy; significant progress towards the goal of zero waste; planning for more compact communities; municipal leadership in sustainability; and protection of natural heritage.

The sub-targets are expected to be met through a combination of advocacy and work with other agencies and levels of government, and the facilitation and incentivization of actions through the city's policy and regulatory framework.

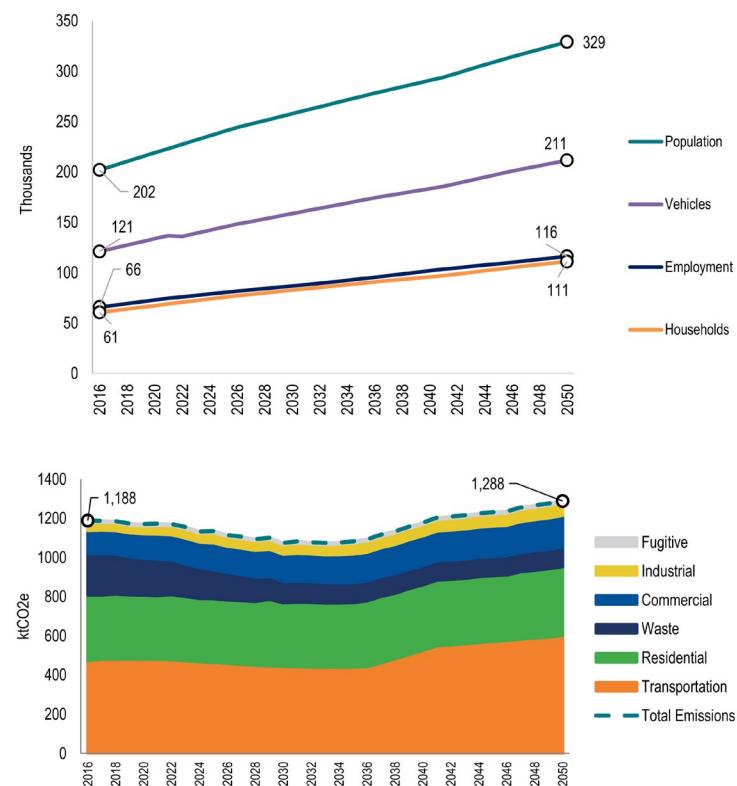
It is estimated that by 2050, a plurality of greenhouse gas emissions reductions—40 per cent—would be achieved by shifting transportation modes in the city. The CEEP sets a

target of having 65 per cent active transportation mode share of all trips completed by transit, walking, and cycling by 2050—or 65 per cent.

Lindsay said that actions expected to contribute to this major modal shift include the completion of the Yonge North Subway Extension and the development of levels-of-service standards for active transportation users in Major Transit Station Areas. The development of an electric vehicle charging network and a bikeshare system are also identified as major implementation actions in the CEEP.

Richmond Hill is also currently undertaking an

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Graph showing the projected growth in population, number of vehicles, number of jobs, and number of households in Richmond Hill to 2050. With its population projected to increase 63 per cent over the next 30 years, the City of Richmond Hill has released a draft Community Energy and Emissions Plan to increase the energy efficiency of buildings and decrease greenhouse gas emissions throughout the city.

SOURCE: CITY OF RICHMOND HILL

Graph showing the greenhouse gas emissions—measured in kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent—of main sources in Richmond Hill projected to 2050 under a 'business as planned' scenario, which would result in an increase of greenhouse gas emissions of the city by eight per cent. The City of Richmond Hill has released a draft Community Energy and Emissions Plan to avoid this scenario. The plan seeks to increase the energy efficiency of buildings and decrease greenhouse gas emissions throughout the city.

SOURCE: CITY OF RICHMOND HILL

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update to its Transportation Master Plan that will establish direction for the future of the city's road, walking, and cycling networks through to 2041.

"The Transportation Master Plan Update will incorporate pedestrian and cycling recommendations befitting of an urbanizing community, and [will] consider emerging services and technologies expected to play major roles in how people travel in the mid-to long-term," Lindsay told *NRU*.

Lindsay added that the city's in-progress Parking and Transportation Demand Management Strategy focuses on deeper integration of transportation demand management principles—which promote sustainable modes of transportation—with the city's development review process.

West said cycling hasn't yet caught on in suburban communities like Richmond Hill, partly because there need to be accessible destinations for people to cycle to, and cycling infrastructure on the road and on trails needs to be improved. He added that economic development and employment lands play an important role in creating compact communities and limiting urban sprawl. West said it's a bad idea to convert land solely

for residential uses without thinking of opportunities for people to work in the vicinity.

"If you live and work in Richmond Hill, and there are bike lanes from your house to your work, and it's not very far, you're probably low-hanging fruit to take your bike," West told *NRU*. "But if you have to work in Mississauga because you can't get a job in Richmond Hill because there are insufficient spaces for employment, then that's a problem. If you're able to work closer to home and

spend less time in any form of transportation, that's good for you mentally, and it's good for your family life."

Progress in the 'compact community' program area of the CEEP would produce five per cent of total anticipated greenhouse gas reductions for Richmond Hill by 2050. The CEEP includes a sub-target to direct 90 per cent of new land use development to sites along Yonge Street, along Highway 7, and within selected infill areas. Lindsay said the city's key intensification areas are along Yonge Street and Highway 7, which is served by the VIVA bus rapid transit system.

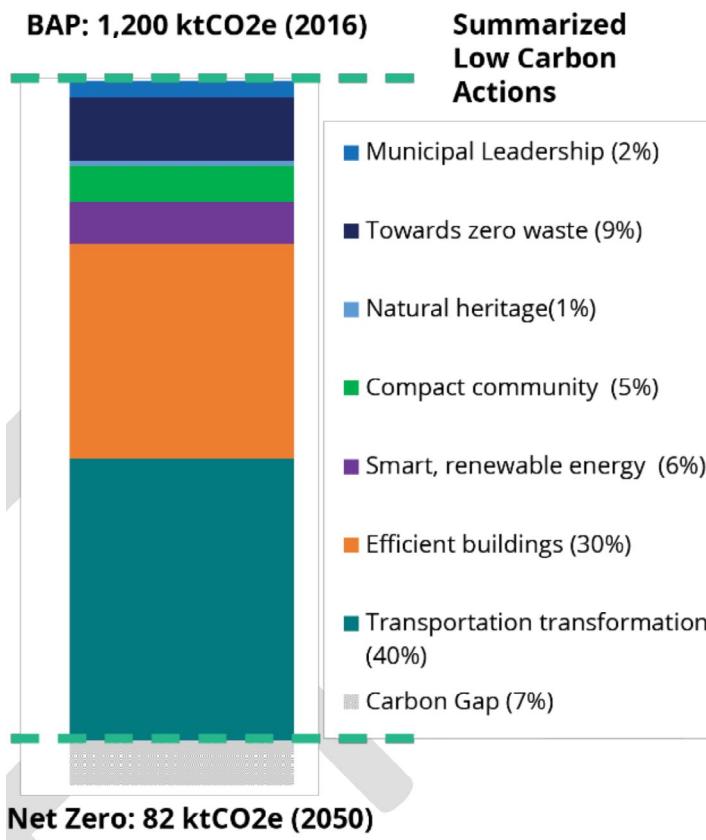
"Directing the majority of new development to places along Yonge Street, Highway 7, and infill areas is in line

with the city's current urban structure," Lindsay told *NRU*. "There is opportunity for infill development in various neighbourhoods within our current settlement area, where there are large lots that are either sitting vacant or have the ability to be subdivided."

West said that Richmond Hill is naturally predisposed to a tighter and more compact urban form as a result of development constraints on the Oak Ridges Moraine, which stretches across the northern half of the city.

"Most of the development applications that we see that are anywhere in the big ballpark are already happening along Yonge Street, and our Official Plan directs that anyway," West told *NRU*. "We're not tempted to do a lot of urban sprawl."

Lindsay said the shift from traditional greenfield subdivision development to more urban development has been underway since city council's adoption of Richmond Hill's Official Plan in 2010. The



Graph showing the impact of targeted low-carbon actions—grouped by their program areas—on City of Richmond Hill's greenhouse gas emissions identified in the city's draft Community Energy and Emissions Plan. Under a net-zero scenario—meaning a state in which the city would be emitting fewer greenhouse gas emissions than it is offsetting—greenhouse gas emissions in Richmond Hill would be 93 per cent below the estimated 2050 greenhouse gas emissions if the city continues under a 'business as planned' scenario.

SOURCE: CITY OF RICHMOND HILL

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city is currently in the process of updating the Official Plan, and Lindsay said the update will consider other ways in which the CEEP's 90 per cent intensification target can be achieved.

Investing in a low-carbon economy is expected to cost the city \$8.1 billion from 2020-2050, or approximately \$250 million per year. The city notes that from 2032 onward, annual savings and revenue begin to increase as energy improvements turn

into savings. By 2050, the cumulative net benefits to the city reach \$12.3 billion.

Lewandowski warned of the political realities that could hamper the implementation of CEEP, adding that decisions by regional councillors and other levels of government are outside of the city's control, and that the high upfront costs of implementing the proposed actions in CEEP may have negative impacts on the realization of the plan. "Even though the costs are projected

to be recouped over time, they may cause consternation politically and publicly," Lewandowski told *NRU*.

Lewandowski added that the "inability for some to grasp the extent of the climate crisis and [to] incorporate adequate policies to address urgent concerns" will be a challenge.

Richmond Hill residents were invited to submit feedback on the draft CEEP until April 12. The submissions will inform the finalized plan, which is expected to be brought to city council in the second quarter of 2021.

"Though we can't be certain what the city will look like in 2050, Richmond Hill will strive to achieve major modal shift changes by continuing

to integrate land use and transportation planning efforts with a focus on building a complete community, will remain open and responsive to major transportation trends and technologies, and will advance the emerging transit-oriented development-friendly vision of key plans across the city," Lindsay told *NRU*. 

IN BRIEF

Brampton Toolkit recognized with a CSLA 2021 Award of Excellence

The **Canadian Society of Landscape Architects** (CSLA) 2021 recognized the Uptown Brampton Transit-Oriented Communities Toolkit with an Award of Excellence last week.

Toolkit co-creators **Yvonne Yeung (City of Brampton), Ken Greenberg (Greenberg Consultants)** and **Matti Siemiatycki (University of Toronto)**

were recognized for their work on behalf of the City of Brampton and **Urban Land Institute Toronto District Council** in the category of Planning and Analysis.

Through an integrated design-based strategic framework, the project explores a model for enabling effective collaboration among public sector, private sector, non-profit and community stakeholders in support of expanding healthy, convenient, high-quality

communities along transit networks.

A copy of the Toolkit is available online [here](#).

The Toolkit was one of fourteen projects across from across Canada to be recognized for excellence in landscape architecture from among 72 submissions.

The chair of the CSLA 2021 jury, **Bernard St. Denis** noted that the winning projects "highlight new approaches and illustrate the levels of

expertise being mobilized to address current social, cultural and environmental challenges."

For more information about these projects and those of all of this year's CSLA award recipients, please visit the CSLA [website](#). 