



**Community  
Climate Action**  
ST. JAMES TOWN



# Kickoff Climate Action Forum

Round Up Summary  
May 2021

# Preamble

This is a summary of key messages from our May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Climate Action Forum.

It includes information about the Mobilizing Climate Action in St James Town project, key insights from the speaker presentations and responses to participant questions during the forum.

The forum was opened by **RSI Chair, Darla Campbell**, who thanked everyone for accepting our invitation to learn about the Community Climate Action Initiative for St James Town, which is partially funded by the Government of Canada, Environment Canada Climate Change. And to consider getting involved in some of the ways described in this Round up summary.



## **Climate, especially into today's covid impact world, affects everything!**

All of us – regardless of where we live and work – are being called to work together to find ways of adapting to this new world – and more immediately – unlocking existing resources to build back better – one neighbourhood at a time.

That is the purpose of the Community Climate Action (CCA) project we are launching with and by St James Town.

## **Yasmin Glanville, RSI Founder and CCA-SJT Project Leader**

In response to the search for solutions to the escalating impacts of climate change on hi-rise communities in Canada, our Community Climate Action (CCA) project, centred in St James Town, Toronto is being shaped with and by people who live, work and are connected to SJT. The overarching goal is to help SJT to become the most informed and best prepared high-rise community on climate change impacts in the city.

**The project is being shaped to help St James Town to become the most informed and best prepared high-rise community on climate change impacts in the city.**

This includes the vision of a more inclusive, healthy, and resilient multi-residential community, and providing a broad platform for residents, landlords and other people inside and outside of the SJT community to voice their thoughts, unlock and mobilize new and existing solutions to some of the key social, economic, and environmental impacts of climate.

To act on our commitments, RSI has engaged a stellar team of respected leaders and experts connected to St James Town who share this vision too.

## CCA –SJT Project Team



**Yasmin Glanville**  
Project Lead , Strategy &  
Communications



**Paul Dowsett**  
Project Manager,  
& Education



**Michael Seaman**  
Facilitator , Community  
Outreach & Education



**Kirk Johnson**  
Climate Ambassador  
Education



**Jennifer Yim**  
Branding and Design



**Yatsa Smajovic**  
Web & Social  
Digital Marketing



**Madelyn Webb**  
Knowledge Hub,  
Communication & Education



**Nicola Moore**  
Finance and Admin



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We have also formalized a strategic partnership with Trinity Life and The New Common with a focus on community outreach, education, and facilitation.

Having worked in St James Town for seven years, Trinity Life's focus has always been to empower others through social change.

We do this by looking at what assets St James Town already has available, and then engaging the community - both through local partners and directly with residents - to use these existing assets.

As we continue to work with St James Town residents and local community partners in the area, we look forward to continuing to update and engage with residents on methods for sustainable change in the area." \_ Michael Seaman, PhD

**Yannick Beaudoin, PhD, Guest Speaker**

**Sr Economist, Director General for Ontario, and Northern Canada The David Suzuki Foundation**

Yannick provided a dynamic presentation about how climate impacts urban communities and a new way of taking positive action, and why now.



## Equity, justice and climate change

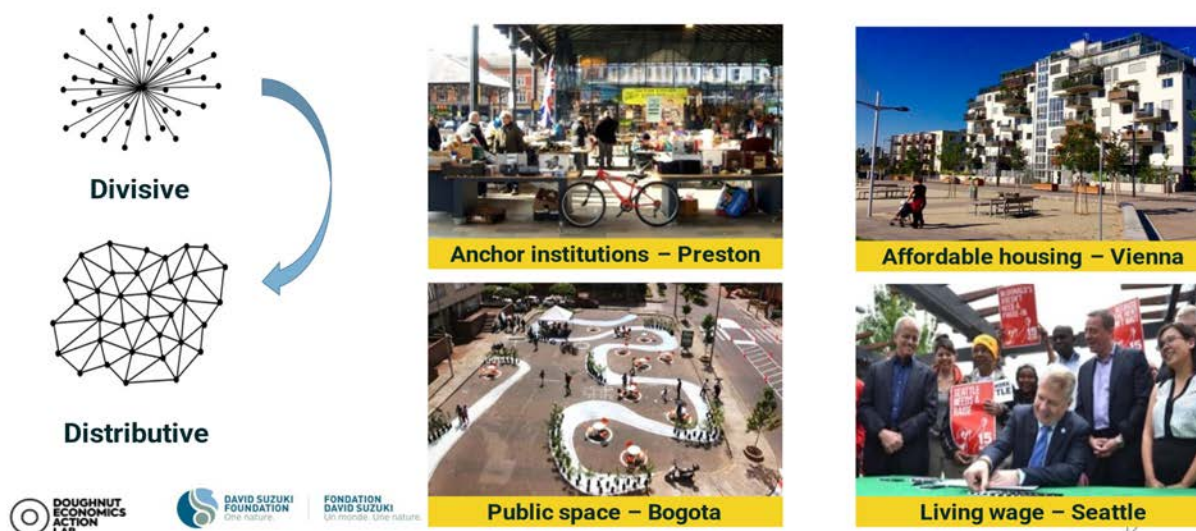
Yannick Beaudoin, PhD; Senior economist, Director General for Ontario and Northern Canada



DAVID SUZUKI  
FOUNDATION  
One nature.

FONDATION  
DAVID SUZUKI  
Un monde. Une nature.

## Taking it local: well-being leading the way



## Working generatively to remove barriers



Let's already happening in the community...



What else needs to change?



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## Key Messages – Related to Community Climate Action, St James Town

The David Suzuki Foundation believes that climate change solutions must not be a burden on the communities which bear the least responsibility for its causes.

We aim to find sustainable solutions by including lived experiences, and actively listening and including other worldviews. We especially want to include voices that have been previously left out of climate change conversations - especially those most affected by it because of inequitable and unjust systems.

We aim to work directly with the St James Town community, co-creating local economies that are focused on the real needs and aspirations of SJT residents, with positive and sustainable outcomes as a co-benefit.

Doing this involves collaboration on sustainability in the area, and we aim to work directly to engage residents and make them aware of what they can do to be more sustainable with what they already have.



# Community Climate Action Project – Connecting the Dots in St James Town

Paul Dowsett, Project Manager & Education

## Why

### Project Purpose/ Objectives

**Support SJT become the best prepared & most informed high rise community on climate change in the city**

- Encourage residents to participate in climate change action activities
- Enhance future risk preparedness of residents, particularly in the post-COVID19 world that is further exacerbated by the climate crisis.
- Support and contribute to green and just recovery that address the COVID19-induced economic and social crisis sustainably.



## Key Messages

You may ask, why is this project happening, and why in St James Town?

St James Town is often overlooked, and yet, there are many climate-adaptation and mitigation strategies already happening in the area.

Not only should the rest of our city – even the world – know about these initiatives, but we should also build upon these successes to help all of St James own to be better prepared for, and more resilient to, the effects of climate change – to be warmer in winter and cooler in summer.



We should connect the dots - connecting climate to food, jobs, and shelter - with an eye to future readiness. Together we can find ways for St James Town to not only survive, but to thrive - by working with the resources that already exist.

We will include workshops - to better understand the buildings and how they operate - and what can be done, both by residents and landlords, so that residents can live more comfortably, more productively, and with better health.

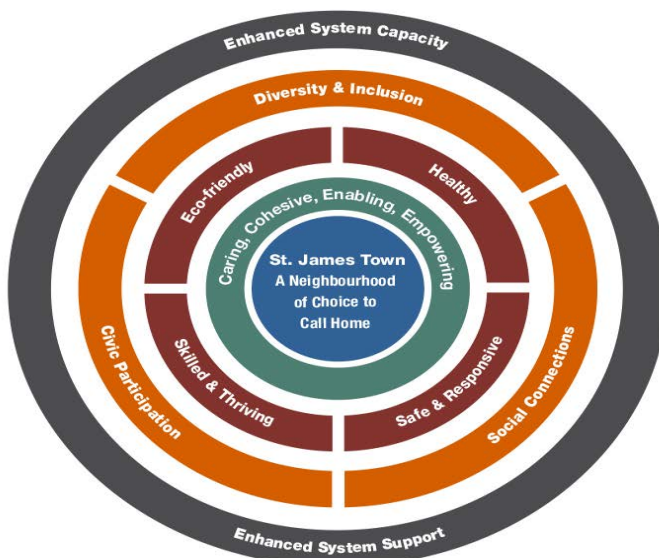
St James Town can be the best-prepared and most-informed high-rise community on climate change in Canada. Contact us to explore opportunities for collaboration.



Cindy Tse

## Manager, Partnership, Community and Stakeholder Engagement St James Town, Community

St. James Town **Social Charter**



### PRINCIPLES

#### DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We value our diversity and differences as a strength, and acknowledge the importance of mutual trust and reciprocity within the community.

#### CIVIC PARTICIPATION

We value the importance of our community getting involved in addressing local issues and advocating for changes through both formal (eg. voting and participation in democratic processes) and informal means (volunteering, faith or cultural groups, grassroots initiatives or organizations)

#### SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

We value close contact with friends, family and neighbours, strong social networks, social gatherings and activities and that the community feels a sense of belonging.

### DOMAINS / ACTION AREAS

#### Safe & Responsive

Connect neighbours and local groups to support one another  
Raise awareness about safety measures and practices  
Work with public and private systems in improving and maintaining safe and secure building standards and neighbourhood infrastructure

#### Healthy

Reduce social isolation to improve our mental and physical well being  
Raise awareness on health and wellbeing  
Support seniors to age at home in a safe environment  
Support youth in reaching their potential  
Connect communities to health care and preventative services

#### Skilled & Thriving

Create skill building opportunities that support employment  
Develop opportunities that promote social entrepreneurship  
Work with businesses and organisations to promote local hiring

#### Eco-friendly

Create a culture of Reduce, Repair, Reuse and Recycle  
Develop Green initiatives, like gardening  
Champion access to green, accessible and livable spaces  
Advocate to and hold public and private systems accountable

## Key Messages

The St. James Town Community Corner (“The Corner”) is part of a strong history of collaboration between residents, service providers, and stakeholders to take collective action towards community development, advancing neighbourhood priorities, solving neighbourhood challenges and crises, and addressing system barriers.

Ambassador programs such as the CCA project that engages community members to take collective action are innovative models that reflect the St James Town Social Charter’s principles and action areas.

# Opportunities for Involvement

**Kirk Johnson**

**Climate Ambassador Education**



- Three Climate Action Ambassador Training Workshops
  - June 8, June 22, and July 6, 2021
- Mentorship Training Workshops and Coaching
  - July and August 2021
- Project Focused, Collaborative Climate Solution Discovery Workshops:
  - Sept & October 2021
- Building Assessment Workshops:
  - July 20, 2021, and January 2022
- Ongoing Communication Activities & Knowledge Sharing
- And more....

## Key Messages

Both climate change and COVID-19 have had a massive impact on the St James Town community. As one example, St James Town and the surrounding GTA has and will experience a significant increase in high-temperature days. This summer over 20+ days of 30°C is expected, rising to 30 days by 2050. The CCA project provides SJT - from residents, landlords, and local authorities - with a platform where the community itself can drive climate action in the most diverse neighborhood of the world's most diverse city. Working with residents, we plan to leverage local expertise and insights, expand their skills and workforce development opportunities, and empower local sustainability solutions.



As part of this, we are recruiting Climate Action Ambassadors from within St James Town itself. These Ambassadors will be trained to create and support community leaders on climate action - helping residents of St James Town be more sustainable, and providing them with tools/knowledge to advance job-creating, resilient & sustainable projects.

They will be trained in project management, leadership, sustainability strategies, and other valuable skills to empower them to help their own community work together on issues around climate change. We will do this via the Ambassador Training workshop series in June/July. It will be followed by a one-on-one mentoring program, so Ambassadors can cement their skills and build new ones that help in their careers and with St. James Town climate action.

The CCA team will also be working with building owners in St James Town, hosting Building Assessment Workshops. Taking place in July through January, the building workshops will review sustainability and resiliency innovations in high-rise apartment buildings. The objective is to uncover and prioritize climate action solutions for their buildings and find tangible ways to support climate action initiatives by St. James Town residents and community.

The end goal is that our work will amplify existing and initiate new projects that make important contributions in St. James Town bringing resilient, sustainable change to this vibrant, diverse, highly educated, and hard-working community.

If you would like more information on any of our current projects, contact us at:

[communications@rethinksustainability.ca](mailto:communications@rethinksustainability.ca)

## Q&A

### **Is it possible to include goals that can help St James Town reduce climate change drivers, reduce impacts on ecosystems and perhaps even support/provide ecosystem services?**

Yes. These goals will be set by residents, depending on the priorities. Examples could include reducing car traffic, tree planting and encouraging more permeable surfaces for rainwater to be absorbed to reduce flooding.

### **How will residents be engaged in finalizing the outcomes/deliverables?**

Residents and organizations connected to SJT who participate in the ambassador training and mentoring will be invited to join the Social Innovation Labs (Discovery Sessions). By design, these are output focused, collaborative climate action solution discovery, design and planning workshops that will take place in the Fall of this year.

### **Will the project include climate mitigation/adaptation methods that can be piloted with/by residents?**

Yes. Examples may include adaptation to heat and emergency preparedness, to be better prepared for, and more resilient to, the effects of climate change - to be warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

At the heart of the CCA project's aims is "connecting the dots" – connecting climate to food, jobs, and shelter – with an eye to future readiness.

We aim to look at other tower communities around the world who are already showcasing what we aim to do here in St James Town, and then tap into our own, local collective knowledge with St James Town. By doing this we can determine what can be done, both by residents and landlords, so that residents can live more comfortably, more productively, and with better health.

**Will the project include a connection between food and climate and health of people?**

We know that this is a priority for many residents. We will seek ways to build on this knowledge, taking direction from residents.

**Regenerative best practices: What are some of the new best practices that architects and engineers are planning for creating a regenerative future using safe, toxic free, repurposed materials for residential and surrounding? Will they be touched upon in this project and where?**

The architecture industry has long maintained that it is foolish to poison ourselves with toxic materials just to save a few dollars on energy. Today, we also know that we do not need to add greenhouse gas emissions, the cause of climate change, to the atmosphere by using embodied-carbon-intensive materials to build and retrofit our buildings – there are other no/low carbon choices that can be used – ideally in a circular, regenerative manner – such that the waste from one process becomes the feedstock for another – just like nature does.

**How does the Ambassador training align/build on existing SJT Climate work?**

It is our intention to build on what is already working and discover what is possible within St James Town related to advancing climate action. Food, Shelter, Employment, the physical spaces within and surrounding the community are some areas to be explored. To have meaning, the solutions need to resonate with the everyday lives of people – and where they live and work.

The residents who sign up for the climate action ambassador program will have the opportunity to showcase their other climate actions and projects for SJT too.

### **What is the relationship of RSI with the St James Town Corner?**

The St James Town Community Corner is advising on the Community Climate Action project with a focus alignment, inclusivity, and accessibility for St James Town residents.

### **Buildings, Land and Green Spaces and Underground Waterways**

The revolutionary era of the 1960s and 1970s brought numerous high-rise apartment blocks to Toronto. They were built to be state-of-the-art, modern places for modern people to live. Gone were the days of moving from your parent's home to your marital home. Now you could be a true individual, living the life of the swinging single in the heart of a bustling city - no matter who you were!

However, over time, newer buildings were put elsewhere. Better amenities were available, and better building materials were used, alongside individually controlled air conditioning and heating systems. As the buildings moved on, so did the people. These high-rises, that were so cutting edge in the 60s and 70s, became undesirable to the "swinging singles".

And as the people moved on, the impact was felt by those who stayed. Rents no longer covered required maintenance and upgrades, and so a lot of these high-rises have fallen into disrepair a mere 50+ years later.

They are in desperate need of upgrades and repairs, including more sustainable improvements such as air-sealing and insulation of their exterior walls, balconies, and windows; to their heating systems; electrical systems to allow for units to be air-conditioned, and shading systems - especially for the west-facing units.

Additionally, the grounds around the buildings need to be reconsidered to provide safe and healthy places for residents to socially-interact, to rest and play



outdoors, to grow food, to set up local markets – and other activities that the residents can imagine.

Within the timeframe of this project, we understand that we may only be able to establish a forum for discussing and documenting these ideas. In an ideal world, this will evolve from talk to action in collaboration with the building owners, influencers, and City policymakers beyond March 2022.

**For information about the Climate Ambassador Training**

Email: [Communications@rethinksustainability.ca](mailto:Communications@rethinksustainability.ca)

Call/Text Madelyn: 647-988-3244

**[APPLY ONLINE](#)**

**For more information about this project:**

Web: [communityclimateaction.org](http://communityclimateaction.org)

Email: [Communications@rethinksustainability.ca](mailto:Communications@rethinksustainability.ca)

**Rethink Sustainability Initiatives (RSI)** is Not-for-Profit “think and do” organization that engages, advises, and partners with thought leaders, innovators, and organizations to advance the sustainability and resiliency of businesses, institutions, and communities to thrive into the future. We provide access to progressive leaders and actionable insights for Canadians and our global partners through formal and informal discussions, community projects, action learning accelerators, digital and print publications, and education.

**Trinity Life** is a non-profit, faith-based organization serving Toronto to create healthy communities through collaboration. The New Common is an organization started through Trinity Life that seeks to empower communities in domain engagement through asset-based community development. Over the past eight years, Trinity Life has served to empower and push forward community development efforts in Regent Park and in St James Town.



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