

Overview of Community Climate Actions



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Note to Reader

This supporting document (Community Climate Actions) was developed to highlight some of the actions and leaders in the community that have been advancing climate action and sustainability. Readers are encouraged to visit the websites for further details on the projects listed in this document along with many other projects. In most cases, community groups are in need of additional volunteers and/or individuals to assist with specific project work.

Identification and evaluation of which actions to include in the Climate Emergency Action Plan that can support climate action by community groups and leaders requires an understanding of what has already occurred and is occurring in London.

The details in this document will be of interest to:

- Individuals and community groups
- Businesses and business groups
- Institutions and networks
- Academia
- Energy stakeholders and service providers
- Government staff at all levels

Climate action requires efforts from all corners of society and this document identifies some of the strong actions and leadership that can be found in London's community. This document is connected with other supporting documents such as:

- the foundational strategies and plans affecting climate change that have already been taken to date by the City of London (supporting document #6, titled "Overview of City Plans and Strategies that Support Climate Action");
- the highlights of actions taken by local London businesses with respect to climate change and environmental sustainability (supporting document #7, title "Overview – Business and Employers Climate Actions"); and



- the roles and responsibilities of the Provincial and Federal governments (supporting document #9, titled “Provincial Government – Climate Change Information, Roles and Responsibilities” and supporting document #10, titled “Federal Government – Climate Change Information, Roles and Responsibilities”).

The review and summary of climate change related actions, roles and responsibilities of the various levels of government, community organizations and businesses are important for creating a solid foundation upon which to plan and implement the CEAP. City staff will continue to engage, support where possible and collaborate with stakeholders and partners pursuing climate action and continue to identify and evaluate potential opportunities to collaborate on mutually beneficial initiatives.

This document does not include a list of City specific projects dealing with climate change mitigation and adaptation. These have been documented in other reports such as Update – Development of the Climate Emergency Action plan (report to the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, April 27, 2021) and the 2020 Corporate Energy Consumption and Activities Report.



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this background report is to describe and document some of the many community climate actions already taking place. Some of these are independent of actions by the City of London and some are influenced by City activities. The following descriptions contain actions focused both on energy conservation and greenhouse gas emission reductions and on resilience actions and assisting London and Londoners adapt to the new reality of a changing climate.

The City of London does not have direct control over how much energy is used in London, but it does have influence through aspects such as land use planning and transportation planning. The control over energy use in London rests primarily with residents, visitors, employers, and employees. Individual and collective action by the community with respect to sustainable energy use, energy management, and energy conservation - supported by appropriate City policies, programs and plans - is critical for future success

There are several City-influenced (and sometimes City-supported) community climate actions and equally important community (and business) driven actions that are currently underway as the Climate Emergency Action Plan is in development. A number of these initiatives are ongoing and more are being captured during the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

- 1) Home energy retrofits remain a priority. City staff are supporting the work of the Ontario Consortium, a partnership involving the Clean Air Partnership, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute to explore the development of a third-party delivery model for a home energy retrofit Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) style program for Ontario municipalities.
- 2) Sustainable mobility is another major priority. Additional cycling infrastructure is being installed. Actions are underway to potentially bring micromobility services, both bikes and e-scooters, for later in 2022. A pilot project is also underway for secure bike parking in downtown London. The upcoming Mobility Master Plan (formerly the Transportation Master Plan) is being scoped from a multi-modal, climate change perspective and represents a significant opportunity to reduce private vehicle emissions in London.
- 3) Climate adaptation measures continued to be taken with projects that were actively occurring or being planned over the past 12 months. Many of these relate to stormwater management improvements ranging from culvert replacements under railway tracks (e.g., Mud Creek) to the increased use of Low Impact Development (LID) options related to raingardens and bioswales. These measures are being taken to more effectively address surface water flows to

decrease flooding in addition to creating more natural channels and improve both vegetated riverbanks and wildlife habitat.

- 4) It is important to recognize the local growth in Green Economy London, one of several national hubs as part of Green Economy Canada. London is the fastest growing hub in Canada, with a membership now of over 45 businesses and institutions focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing waste, improving water efficiency, and enhancing corporate environmental leadership.
- 5) There are also several community climate actions that are currently underway on aspects such as climate change education and awareness sessions, home energy retrofits, use of electric vehicles, urban agriculture, local food promotions, buy local, the promotion of the benefits of cycling along with safety and access to bikes.
- 6) Other visible signs of a transition to a greener economy include about a 23 percent increase in the purchase of electric vehicles locally between 2019 and 2020, with over 1,100 electric vehicles now registered in London. Growth in charging stations occurred with 44 locations, with 126 charging ports, that provide publicly accessible charging 24/7 as of October 2021. Several of these stations are at City Hall.

2. Community-Led Actions

There are also many actions that have been developed and led by community organizations in London including these examples:

- Climate Action London hosted two viewings of the film '2040', a film that looks at the effects of climate change over the next 20 years and what technologies that exist today can reverse the effects, in December 2020 with a community panel discussion following the film. A similar format was used in April 2021 for four additional sessions.
- Climate Action London is also leading an initiative to engage London's Faith community in climate change actions titled "Sacred Spaces."
- The London Environmental Network (LEN) has been seeking senior government and third-party funding support for the development of Greener Homes London, a home energy efficiency coaching program that would help Londoners understand the different options available for home energy efficiency renovations. This program could also play a supporting role in the proposed home energy retrofit program being developed by the Ontario Consortium. Currently a pilot project is underway to test various concepts in service delivery and identifying household needs.
- LEN has started to test new ways to engage Londoners through their new podcast called *London, ON: One of Canada's Greenest Cities?* This series looks at London's environmental and ecological health and discusses questions and answers regarding how green and resilient is the "Forest City".
- LEN's new Environmental Action Incubator program supports actions undertaken by their member community environmental organizations. Supports offered include administrative support (bookkeeping, tracking, etc.), communications support (promotions via our social media and e-newsletters), insurance to cover events, shared resources (access to tables, projectors, outreach materials), and up to \$1,000 towards the project implementation costs. This year, projects include: Antler River Rally river clean-ups and a creativity contest, an organic ancestral seed garden, community gypsy moth clean-ups, and a bike share program. These programs will help to reduce waste, enhance waterways, and reduce emissions.
- Green Economy London, with support from the City of London and Green Economy Canada, launched London's online Business Energy and Emissions Profile tool. Developed by Climate Smart, this is an interactive carbon mapping tool for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This tool helps London businesses visualize their impact and get practical recommendations for emissions and energy use reductions, which will save them money in the long-term.

- Green Economy London developed and launched an employee engagement program for Green Economy London members called Workplace Green Up. This program provides employees with simple, day-to-day sustainability activities and uses prize-based incentives for action wherever their workplace is – home or work.
- In 2020, Green Economy London, through their Green Project Grant, awarded 14 grants to support 17 different projects after having successfully fundraised a \$19,000 project stream with support from the City of London, London Community Foundation, Convertus, Partners in Project Green, and the Federal Government. Climate action projects being supported included:
 - LED lighting retrofit projects at five member businesses
 - Solar PV at Heeman's Nursery
 - EV chargers at the Reimagine Co. Zero Waste Store
 - Blue Roof feasibility studies for the Pillar Nonprofit Network and the London Food Bank buildings
- Urban Roots London, one of the largest community urban agriculture locations in London, officially purchased the land at 21 Norlan Ave (the current home of its farm) in March 2021, which was made possible with support from VERGE Capital, London Community Foundation, Libro Credit Union, Dianne and Marcus Plowright, and crowdfunding campaign donors. They also opened a new site at Siloam United Church in 2021 in northeast London. In 2020, Urban Roots London's Community Composting Program (supported by LEN and the City of London) diverted 1,450 kilograms of organic waste from the landfill.
- ReForest London hosted webinars with London Environmental Network members online through the Signal Boost Initiative, a variety of topics were covered including electric vehicles, native plants, and fruit and nut tree care.
- ReForest London offered curbside pick-up as part of the Neighbourhood Tree Depot Day at the Westminster Ponds Center in May. They are also part of the Native Plant Sale Fundraiser, along with Thames Talbot Land Trust, Pollinator Pathways Project, Nature London, Climate Action London and Embracing the Spirit of the United Church of Canada.
- Urban League of London has been coordinating actions with a number of its members with respect to Project Neutral, a household carbon calculator designed to help identify current impacts and identify actions reduce greenhouse gas generation.
- London Cycle Link has been involved in the consultation and development of bike lanes in the downtown core, and recently supported the City's request for millions of dollars from federal infrastructure funds for cycling infrastructure. They continue to offer access to their Squeaky Wheel Bike Co-op for folks to fix bikes at low cost.

- ALUS Middlesex established 90 new acres of restoration projects in 2020, including 10 acres along Thames River. Aimed at providing more habitat and ecosystems services, reducing phosphorus in Thames River, Lake St. Clair and ultimately Lake Erie. A wetland project is underway in the south end of London.
- Carolinian Canada Coalition, in collaboration with LEN and the City of London, developed the My Wild Green Home on-line experience that included climate change matters among many environmental sustainability initiatives. The on-line exhibition and event series had over 11,000 people (unique visitors).
- Reimagine Co (local London business) ran a successful crowdfunding campaign in late 2020 to open London's first package-free grocery store. With community support they raised over \$88,000. In December 2020, Reimagine Co opened its package-free grocery store at 206 Piccadilly St., with a focus on package-free, bulk, and "ugly" foods. Presently, Reimagine Co is partnering with Thames Region Ecological Association (TREA) to bring a Things Library to London, where people can borrow tools and items needed for projects instead of buying them similar to a library-style service.
- Thames Region Ecological Association has been running a number of "how to" workshops including composting, building raised beds, community gardens, emergency preparedness for climate change, solar and geothermal energy systems.
- Growing Chefs! Ontario opened a new programming space located at The Grove at The Western Fair District. The space will be used to run hands-on food education programs for youth (grades JK-12) and enable Growing Chefs! Ontario to reach over 10,000 students per year. Additionally, their virtual cooking classes and resources serve as an interactive alternative to in-person cooking programs during the pandemic.
- The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) Community Education Staff have created online programming for school use discussing Climate Change for school boards. The UTRCA has obtained federal funding to initiate flood plain updates focused on 3 waterways that flow mostly or partially within London, being Pottersburg, Medway and Stoney Creeks. They have also initiated a citizen scientist program for collecting and recording rainfall amounts across the watershed for input into their modelling.