

BLACK CREEK SNAP NEIGHBOURHOOD

Transforming the San Romanoway Towers

A Partnership Model for the Revitalization of Aging Multi-Unit Residential Towers with Co-Benefits for Tower Owners, Tenants, the Surrounding Neighbourhood and the Environment



**Sustainable Neighbourhood
Action Program**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Mobilization on climate action and environmental sustainability is an urgent need, but also a great opportunity to address pressing housing issues and other socio-economic objectives. Through the successful San Romanoway Towers Revival Case Study, this report demonstrates how the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program's (SNAP) collaborative, neighbourhood-based model for tower revitalization effectively delivered on property owners' priorities and residents' needs, while benefiting the environment and society as a whole.

SNAP's Proven Model for Multi-unit Residential Revitalization

To address the complexities related to holistic revitalization of multi-unit residential towers, the SNAP program developed a collaborative model that effectively addresses property owners' priorities and tenants' needs, while considering the surrounding neighbourhood and achieving important environmental and socio-economic benefits.

Recognizing that tower communities are part of a system, the model analyzes the broader community context and identifies key neighbourhood issues and objectives that can be supported through interventions at a specific multi-unit residential property. It also looks at neighbourhood actions that will benefit the tower community.

Using innovative engagement techniques, the model adopts a bottom-up and top-down approach to identifying site-specific revitalization objectives and developing an action plan. It brings in partners and funding from multiple sectors, coordinated and led by a backbone organization, and develops a business case for the private property owner and other stakeholders to move implementation forward.

Quick-start projects are implemented during the action planning process, as a strategy to develop trusted working relationships, build motivation among residents, and allow for the identification of emerging community champions who will support deeper retrofits. This model also includes multi-year capacity building among residents, local organizations, and on-site property managers for ongoing project maintenance and long-term sustainability.

The San Romanoway Towers Revival Project: A Success Story

By following SNAP's model for multi-unit residential revitalization, the project was able to achieve impactful results.

Underutilized outdoor areas were transformed into vibrant community development hubs with ecological function that are mostly maintained by residents. Building retrofits and behaviour change programs significantly improved resiliency, energy and water efficiency, and waste management. Using a neighbourhood-based approach helped to connect the towers with the surrounding community, enabling them to benefit from opportunities beyond the property while contributing to the transformation of the overall neighbourhood.

Through the implementation of innovative public engagement techniques, hundreds of residents contributed enthusiastically to the project's design. A long-term relationship of trust and respect was developed between tenants and other project partners. Skills training and capacity building programs for residents transformed passive participants into active community leaders who work closely with property managers to continue to improve living conditions, coordinate volunteers, fundraise, and maintain momentum and project sustainability.

A socio-economic evaluation of the project showed a greater commitment among residents to remaining in the towers for the long term, as well as significant improvements in perception of safety, community connections, pride, and healthy living. Some residents even found jobs and income opportunities both within the neighbourhood and beyond, and a social enterprise was created as a result of the skills training programs.

Funding Model and Implementation Partnerships

By establishing diverse environmental and socio-economic objectives that benefited the surrounding neighbourhood, the Humber River watershed, and society as a whole, the project was able to secure dedicated in-kind staff time from the Property Owners, the City of Toronto, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and not-for-profit organizations, as well as to attract significant funding from private corporations and foundations that saw an opportunity to accomplish their vision.

The bulk cost of the project planning and implementation, including in-kind contributions was of approximately \$700,000 – not including the amount that could be attributed to resident volunteer hours. (If the latter were monetized, it would bring the project cost to over \$1.3 million.)

The contribution of in-kind staff time by TRCA and the City of Toronto enabled the San Romanoway Revival project to raise both significant grant funding and volunteer contributions from the community. This project represented a truly collaborative effort to have private money invested into private property to achieve environmental and socio-economic objectives that benefit the entire community.

Conclusions

There is great opportunity to achieve lasting, positive environmental and social change through the revitalization of aging privately owned multi-unit residential buildings. By partnering with a backbone organization to coordinate and lead an innovative collaborative approach with multi-disciplinary partners and members of the community, building owners can attract funding to their properties, improve tenant satisfaction and relationships, reduce turnover, fulfill Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) goals, and profile their corporate citizenship.

Key lessons learned include:

1. Sustainable revitalization and climate action projects in privately owned towers present opportunities to deliver multiple benefits not only for tenants and tower owners, but also for municipalities, private businesses, and the general public.
2. A trusted backbone organization is instrumental in partnership brokering and leading co-designed planning and implementation.
3. Privately owned towers can attract funding and resources for revitalization from non-traditional sources by establishing objectives that span environmental, resiliency, and socio-economic themes, and that will benefit society as a whole.
4. Investing sufficient time and resources to understand residents' priorities and needs, develop trust, and build community capacity is crucial to the success and long-term sustainability of the project.
5. Using a neighbourhood-based approach (as opposed to working on a tower-by-tower basis) helps to achieve efficiencies, open up opportunities for tenants, improve community life, and maximize sustainability and resiliency benefits both for the individual tower and for the broader neighbourhood.
6. Tracking progress and acknowledging those who contribute to the success of the project will advance fundraising efforts and help to maintain the momentum for long-term sustainability.



INTRODUCTION:

Mobilization on climate action and environmental sustainability is an urgent need, but also a great opportunity to address pressing housing issues and other socio-economic objectives. Through the successful San Romanoway Towers Revival Case Study, this report demonstrates how the SNAP's collaborative, neighbourhood-based model for tower revitalization effectively delivered on property owners' priorities and tenants' needs, while benefiting the environment and society as a whole. Valuable lessons learned and recommendations have been documented in this report, to inspire the replication of the project and offer insights into the process of doing so.

The second largest concentration of post-war towers in North America is located in the City of Toronto, in Ontario, Canada, which contains approximately 1,200 such buildings. These aging towers were built to the 1960's era building code, and many of them are now in need of retrofitting to bring them up to today's standard. They are host to roughly 20% of the City's population and represent some of its more socially vulnerable demographics. Tenants often face social or economic barriers, experience higher rates of isolation or marginalization, and may find it difficult to create meaningful community connections. Furthermore, the underutilized, forgotten spaces surrounding these buildings are often underperforming in terms of their ecological and social functions, deepening the disconnection to nature for tenants. These buildings exist within the context of complex neighbourhood systems, but the built design of the era makes it difficult for tenants to connect to public parks, services, and other residents beyond the towers.

An increasing trend towards ESG awareness has highlighted how owners of these aging towers have a unique opportunity to profile their good corporate citizenship while addressing social and revitalization issues. By implementing strategies that keep their companies accountable in terms of sustainability and ethics, they can create positive environmental and social change, and potentially attract new investment opportunities in the process.

The City of Toronto and many other municipalities, along with the federal government, have identified the critical need to support privately owned towers in order to achieve housing priorities and protect the most vulnerable, as well as to achieve climate goals. Property owners themselves may be looking at ways to retrofit their aging towers, improve tenant satisfaction, and maintain high occupancy rates, while achieving ESG objectives.

However, effective tower revitalization is an extremely complex task that requires a holistic multi-disciplinary approach with expertise in various fields and innovative sources of funding. By applying its multi-unit residential revitalization model, TRCA's SNAP program brought together and coordinated San Romanoway Towers property owners and tenants with The City of Toronto, not-for-profits, and businesses to collaboratively achieve impactful results across multiple environmental, resiliency, and socio-economic fields, while addressing owners' and tenants' priorities. Underutilized outdoor areas were transformed into vibrant community development hubs with ecological function that are mostly maintained by residents. Building retrofits and behaviour change programs significantly improved resiliency, energy and water efficiency, and waste management. Through this neighbourhood-based approach, the towers connected with the surrounding community, and benefited from opportunities beyond the property, while contributing to the transformation of the neighbourhood overall.

Through the implementation of innovative public engagement techniques, hundreds of residents contributed enthusiastically to the project's design, and a long-term relationship of trust and respect was developed between tenants and other project partners. Skills training and capacity building programs for residents transformed passive participants into active community leaders. These leaders worked closely with property managers to continue improving living conditions, coordinate volunteers, fundraise, and maintain project momentum and sustainability. A socio-economic evaluation of the project demonstrated improved resident intention to stay in the towers longer-term, as well as significant improvements in perception of safety, community connections, pride, and healthy living (including nutrition, active living, contact with nature, and improved mental health). Many residents benefited from income opportunities provided by the project, and some even found jobs in the neighbourhood and beyond. In addition, a social enterprise was created as a result of the skills training programs.

By establishing diverse environmental and socio-economic objectives that benefited the surrounding Black Creek neighbourhood, the Humber River watershed, and society as a whole, the project was able to secure dedicated in-kind staff time from the City of Toronto, TRCA, and not-for-profit organizations, and succeeded in attracting significant funding from private corporations and foundations that saw an opportunity to realize their vision through the project.

SNAP - AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD TRANSFORMATION:

TRCA's SNAP is a neighbourhood model for sustainable urban renewal and climate action. It brings efficiencies, draws strong community support, and builds trusted implementation partnerships.

As one of 36 conservation authorities in Ontario partnering with municipalities on a watershed jurisdiction, TRCA has a mission to protect, conserve and restore natural resources and develop resilient communities. TRCA launched SNAP in 2009 to help municipalities and other partners overcome the challenges of retrofitting older urban communities and to achieve community support and shared objectives.

In response to these challenges, SNAP action plans aim to use multi-objective, collaborative projects and programs to accelerate sustainability in existing urban communities. Both collaborations with local networks and multi-objective approaches are critical elements of the SNAP model (Figure 1). By engaging with all neighbourhood interests and being open to addressing a broad range of sustainability objectives, SNAP action plans are able to advance projects across the public and private realms. Environmental initiatives are reframed to deliver impactful social and economic benefits, garnering greater support and efficiencies for implementation. Developed in collaboration with local stakeholders, (Figure 2) SNAP action plans focus on four main action areas: **home retrofits; infrastructure renewal; multi-unit residential, commercial and institutional revitalization; and community well-being, resilience, and leadership capacity.**

Figure 1: Critical Elements of SNAP

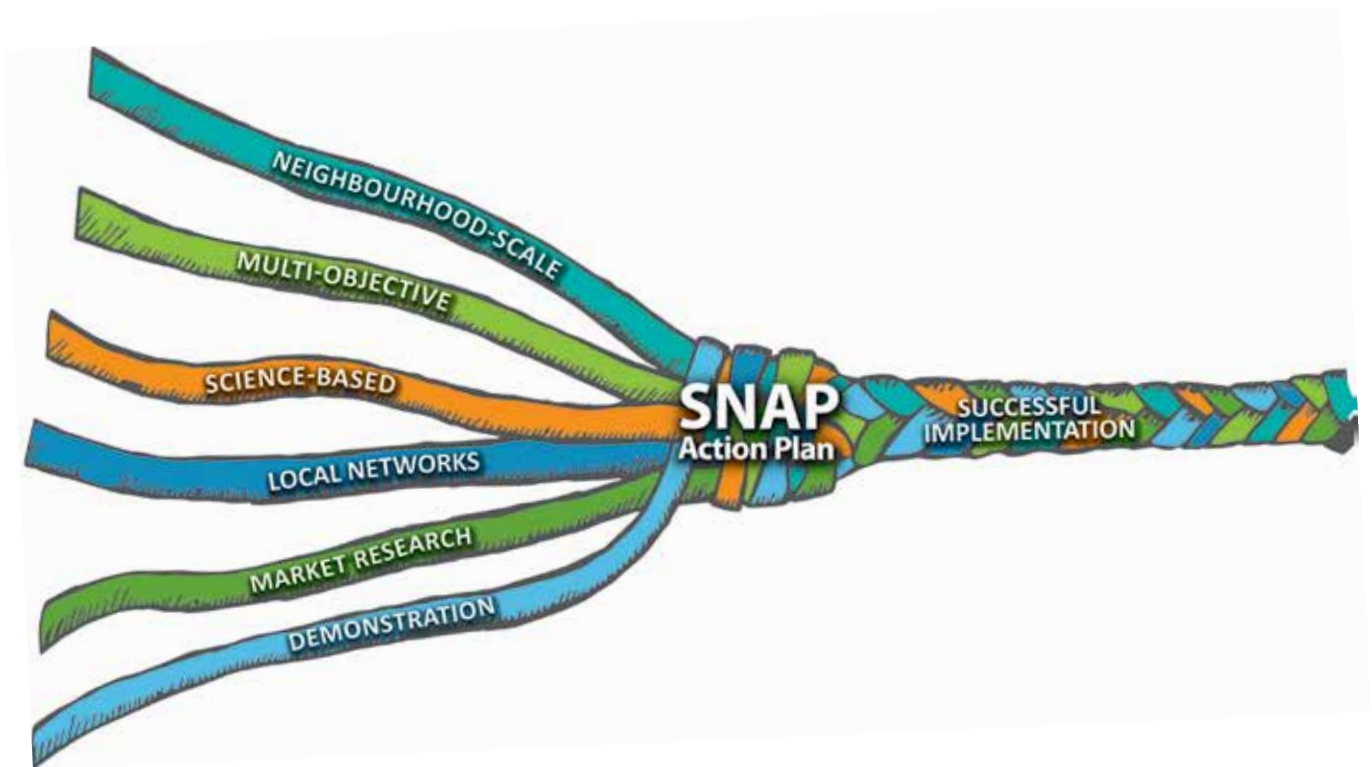


Figure 2: SNAP Sustainability Themes



SNAP'S PROVEN MODEL FOR MULTI-UNIT RESIDENTIAL REVITALIZATION: Delivering on Owners' and Tenants' Priorities, While Benefiting Society as a Whole

To navigate the complex nature of holistic revitalization of multi-unit residential towers, the SNAP program developed a collaborative model that effectively addresses property owners' priorities and tenants' needs, while considering the surrounding neighbourhood and achieving important environmental and socio-economic benefits (Figure 3).

Figure 3: SNAP Multi-Unit Residential Revitalization Model



Recognizing that tower communities are part of a system, the model analyzes the broader community context and identifies key neighbourhood issues and objectives that can be supported through interventions at a specific multi-unit residential property. It also looks at neighbourhood actions that will benefit the tower community.

Using innovative engagement techniques, the model adopts a bottom-up and top-down approach to identifying site-specific revitalization objectives and developing an action plan. It brings in partners and funding from multiple sectors, which are coordinated and led by a backbone organization, and develops a business case for the private property owner and other stakeholders to move implementation forward.

Quick-start projects are implemented during the action planning process, as a strategy to develop trusted work relationships, build motivation among residents, and allow for the identification of emerging community champions who will support deeper retrofits. Moreover, the model includes multi-year capacity building of residents, local organizations, and on-site property managers for ongoing project maintenance and long-term sustainability.

THE SAN ROMANOWAY TOWERS REVIVAL PROJECT: A Success Story

The San Romanoway Towers Revival project is one of various interconnected initiatives identified in the Black Creek Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan developed by TRCA in 2012.

Applying the SNAP model for the revitalization of multi-unit residential properties, the project, led by TRCA as a backbone organization, forged innovative implementation partnerships to achieve impactful results that benefited tenants and property owners significantly, while achieving environmental and socio-economic benefits for the neighbourhood and the city.

This success story will describe how the San Romanoway Revival project action plan was developed and implemented, and the impressive results achieved. It will describe how quick-start projects and other engagement strategies were fundamental in the identification and development of emerging leaders, and in securing community support. It will reveal how underutilized outdoor spaces were converted into vibrant hubs for community development with added ecological function, how the buildings were retrofitted for resiliency and efficiency, and how the capacity of residents was developed through skills training programs to produce active community leaders.

This section will also show how the towers were connected with the surrounding community and were able to benefit from opportunities beyond the property lines, while contributing to the transformation of the overall neighbourhood.

1) The Project Site and the Neighbourhood Context

The environmental baseline conditions of the neighbourhood, established between 2010 and 2012 as part of the Black Creek SNAP neighbourhood action planning process, showed poor urban forest cover, poor health of the Black Creek which flows through the neighbourhood, and high energy and water consumption relative to municipal standards. A disparity of access to fresh local produce and plantable space was noted between residents living in single family homes versus tower residents, as well as social disconnection between these two groups.

The San Romanoway site at the high-profile Jane Street and Finch Avenue intersection in Toronto, Ontario, was selected because it had 3 hectares of underutilized, underperforming space, both in terms of ecological and social function, which provided a great opportunity to achieve broad project objectives. All three towers at this site had a track record of being run by progressive companies with great interest in implementing innovations. When approached by TRCA to take part, all three towers were keen to participate.

This three-building complex is a 1960s-built, private, affordable high-rise housing complex that is home to approximately 4,500 residents. It is made up of two privately owned rental towers and one condominium. One of the rental towers is owned by Greenwin Corp. and the other by RPMS Property Management Services Inc., while the condominium is a corporation owned by individual suite owners and governed by an elected board of directors consisting of volunteer suite owners.

2) Translating Partners', Tenants', and TRCA's Priorities into Overall Project Objectives

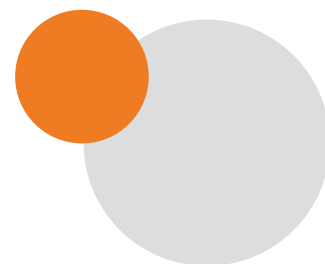
Key priorities for the property owners included reducing tenant turnover by improving the quality of life in the buildings, as well as improving relationships with on-site property managers. They were also interested in showcasing the achievement of ESG impacts.

More specifically, the property owners' objectives were to:

- Improve safety
- Improve tenant experience
- Renovate the building
- Be recognized for supporting environmental and socio-economic objectives
- Better the environment

The San Romanoway residents' key objectives, identified through public engagement, were:

- Beautification of the property
- Job/skills training
- Access to spaces and supports to grow food



The project also provided an opportunity for TRCA to achieve some of its own strategic directions, specifically creating complete communities that integrate nature and the built environment, by encouraging community retrofits that benefit community members and reduce environmental impacts.

Key objectives that TRCA hoped to achieve on site included:

- Contributing to the broader neighbourhood sustainability targets outlined by the Black Creek SNAP Action Plan
- Helping to build community resiliency
- Achieving watershed objectives through interventions on the site

TRCA works in collaboration with municipalities. For this project, the Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization Unit of the City of Toronto was a key partner.

Its objectives were:

- To make building improvements
- To revitalize the surrounding community

Overall Project Objectives

The San Romanoway Revival project objectives were derived by incorporating the priorities and objectives of the property owners and tenants, as well as TRCA and the City of Toronto.

The overall objectives were to:

- Increase the tree canopy and improve urban habitat
- Reduce stormwater runoff
- Reduce energy and water consumption and improve buildings' resiliency
- Improve tenant satisfaction
- Address food security issues by providing opportunities to grow food on-site, supported with rainwater harvesting
- Beautify the outdoor areas and develop spaces and programming that encourage community-building, collaboration, and a sense of belonging
- Provide capacity building as well as green job skills training and income opportunities for community members to advance both socio-economic and environmental objectives
- Build stronger community connections to the wider neighbourhood

3) Governance Model: Backbone Organization, Project Management Team, and Partner Roles

It is difficult for one resident, housing provider, or agency to have all the skill and expertise needed to carry out a multi-unit residential renewal strategy alone. Acknowledging that there is power in diversity, TRCA built a project management team that included property owners and the City of Toronto, as well as community groups and residents, to guide the San Romanoway Revival project. Each played a key role in planning, implementation, programming, and ongoing maintenance.

The inclusion of diverse partners infuses innovation into a project and allows for a variety of interests to converge on-site. It also allows for responsibilities and resources to be shared, so that more can be accomplished. However, brokering these non-traditional partnerships between private/public/non-profit sectors and integrating diverse objectives into a cohesive, feasible project plan can be a complex task. Which is why an experienced backbone organization (in this case TRCA) is needed to coordinate and lead. Having such a backbone organization at the core of a revitalization project ensures that partnerships can be brokered, tenants can be meaningfully engaged, funds can be assembled, grants secured, contractors retained, and professional expertise provided. Figure 4 below shows the governance model and the project management team (PMT) members.

Figure 4: San Romanoway Revival Project: Governance Model and initial Project Management Team



4) Project Timeline:



5) A New Style of Public Engagement: Understanding Residents’ Needs, Identifying Emerging Community Leaders, Developing Trust and Excitement

Following dozens of previous consultations for planning initiatives that rarely led to action, the diverse members of the PMT worked hard throughout 2012 and 2013 to signal a new kind of project and to ensure that deep and meaningful engagement would be undertaken throughout the planning process. At the outset, focus groups, resident surveys, and interviews were conducted to understand resident motivators and concerns.

a. Pop-up Park

A large Pop-up Park event that incorporated some of these ideas was hosted outdoors on-site on a lovely summer evening in 2013, bringing the community together to experience their home landscape in fun, new ways. More than 400 residents attended and were encouraged to share their dreams for the transformation of the property.



Engagement strategies to help ensure attendance by residents included:

- Free food was provided via meal tickets that were distributed once residents shared input on the project.
- The event showcased the talent of young local artists, including local musicians who were hired to provide live entertainment.
- The timing of the event was considered carefully, aligning with the schedules of parents picking up their kids from on-site childcare, and spanning into the evening to catch people coming home from work.

To be clear, residents were not presented with a planned project or even a concept design to comment on. The community engagement started from scratch, at the idea-generation phase, and became a platform for residents to express their feelings, ideas, and desires. Residents were given the confidence that their voices would be heard and their ideas used to create a truly community-inspired project.

This was accomplished by posting large aerial photos of the property around the event space and inviting residents to choose sticker icons from a variety of categories and place them wherever they thought best.

Categories included:

- Infrastructure: seating, covered gathering spaces, lighting, outdoor art installations
- Greening: shade trees, fruit trees, gardens (both flower and vegetable)
- Programming/Activities: outdoor theatre, music, playgrounds, basketball courts, games tables

Markers were also provided for residents to write down other components they would like to see included.

As a result of all the community engagement, some key themes were identified, including job security, food security, a desire to grow food on-site, and site beautification and safety.

b. *Focus Groups*

Once it became clear that urban agriculture would be a key theme, TRCA reached out to explore collaboration with FoodShare, a local NGO with expertise in food security. FoodShare was looking for an opportunity to work in this high-needs neighbourhood and was eager to lend their expertise to the project. They were invited to join the PMT to guide the urban agriculture component of the project. Together with TRCA staff, they conducted focus group workshops with residents on what plantable areas at San Romanoway could be like.

c. *Resident Tours to Other Projects Throughout the City*

Innovative and inspiring approaches were applied, such as bringing resident delegates from San Romanoway to tour the sites of other interesting projects across the City. This offered residents a source of inspiration and a chance for them to consider what components would be a good fit to incorporate into the project at San Romanoway.

Recommendations from residents for what a thriving community garden and orchard would include on-site at San Romanoway was collected after the tour and was combined with TRCA's technical analysis, and FoodShare's agricultural expertise. Equipped with this insight, the project was able to move forward.

d. Quick-Start Projects as Engagement Technique

The key themes gathered during community engagement endeavours informed the initiation of a few quick-start projects. A strategic SNAP approach is to develop such projects as a way to build trust and demonstrate project action early in the action planning process. This gets project momentum going and sets the tone for the collaborative approach to implementation that critical to the success of SNAP projects. The first activity, in fall of 2013, was a series of workshops on introductory carpentry; the second was a balcony gardening initiative in spring.

• *Sustainable Carpentry*

The introductory carpentry initiative was delivered through a partnership with JVS Employment Services and ContractHer. The initiative addressed residents' interest in job skills training and the need for more outdoor furniture. There was also a need for increased seating during the Pop-up Park event, so the quick-start carpentry project was integrated into the planning of that event, allowing residents to play a role in hosting, and providing a creative solution to the need for more outdoor furniture.



The carpentry initiative targeted local at-risk youth, allowing them to receive job skills training and participate in community projects. The youth learned basic carpentry skills as they created planter boxes, picnic tables, and benches, not only for use at the Pop-up Park event, but also as a leave-behind to build trust and demonstrate project action. Pictures of the carpenters were posted on the furniture, to celebrate their work and show that the Pop-up Park wasn't just a community consultation but the start of a truly collaborative community project.



• *Edible Balconies*

Edible Balconies initiative responded to residents' desire to plant and grow food and was delivered in partnership with FoodShare in spring 2014. The program offered workshops and materials for container balcony gardening and provided the first opportunity for keen residents to sign up as peer mentors and take a leadership role by supporting their neighbours' success in balcony gardening. This initiative was also the first paid opportunity for emerging leaders. It helped to develop trust, while setting the tone for residents to become fully integrated in leading on-site initiatives. In all, 60 balcony gardens were implemented, and eight resident champions hired as mentors. This implementation of this project also represented a monitoring strategy, as residents were expected to be more likely to report on their harvest and experience to peers. Residents reported growing, collectively, 881 servings of food during that first season.

6) Action Plan: Integrated Design

Innovative technology and cutting-edge approaches can be used to pique interest from multiple groups, to create a buzz and get residents excited about upcoming projects. This is why, for master plan development in early 2014, TRCA launched an international crowdsourced design competition through the online platform Projexity. The key themes and findings from community engagement became criteria for online submissions of innovative design concepts. 12 entries were received from around the globe. To attract submissions, a cash prize was awarded for the best design. The top submissions were printed out on large posters and hung in the lobby of each tower at San Romanoway. Residents were able to “vote” in a “dot-mocracy” by placing a dot sticker on their favorite design. 800 members of the public voted.

Once the winner was chosen, TRCA’s landscape architect grounded the content in a technically sound master plan and design. Finalized in 2015, this master plan incorporated wider neighbourhood objectives from the Black Creek Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan, such as urban forest enhancement and stormwater management. From there, on behalf of the project partners, TRCA led partnerships and contracts with experts to bring many of the master-planned elements to fruition on-site at San Romanoway.



7) San Romanoway Revival Action Areas:

a. Outdoor Revitalization: Transforming Underutilized Spaces into Vibrant Community Development Hubs with Ecological Function

Many of the planned revitalization components were installed at San Romanoway between 2015 and 2017 through various implementation partnerships, all guided by the SNAP team, which acted as a backbone to ensure smooth coordination and execution.



• *Implementation Highlights*

A community vegetable garden with 72 spaces, supported with rainwater harvesting, was installed. Between 2016 and 2019, an average of 66 households have participated annually, each contributing around 80 hours of time in the garden each season. FoodShare provided mentoring to residents to ensure good gardening practices in the early years and offered urban agriculture skills training workshops each year on-site. In 2018, the transition to autonomy began for the garden group. Resident gardeners created their very own San Romanoway Sunshine Garden and Orchard Club. The club is made up of garden plot holders and volunteer leaders. A Garden Committee is voted in each year to plan, organize, and provide leadership over the group's activities and finances.

Orchard People.com, a Toronto-based company that provides fruit tree care consulting and education, partnered to bring expertise and oversight to the installation of a 24-tree on-site orchard. Residents decided which variety of fruit trees should be planted, using guidelines on suitable species, and were offered a ten-week fruit tree care certification program to learn how to continue to care for the trees once they were grown. After running the certification program for a few seasons, some residents became inspired to develop a social enterprise by taking their newly acquired tree care skills and offering them to homeowners within the wider community. Some residents even used this training as a steppingstone to pursue further education and full-time employment in green jobs, and were hired locally at both Black Creek Community Farm and the Downsview Park Orchard.



Hundreds of native trees, shrubs, and pollinator gardens have been planted by residents and corporate volunteers. These landscaped areas not only beautify the San Romanoway site, but help to increase the neighbourhood's tree canopy cover and provide needed habitat for native species. These areas are also used to train residents in horticulture skills. TRCA's head gardener and staff from the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division have offered natural landscaping sessions for both volunteers and interns to participate in the upkeep of the landscaped areas. Residents continue to maintain these areas with the skills they have acquired through the program, which supports long-term sustainability and takes extra maintenance pressures off the property managers.



Public amenities such as shade structures, sitting areas, trails, and educational signage were built to support the enjoyment of the outdoors and prepare for heat waves and other extreme climate events.

Local artists and youth were engaged in nature-based installations that featured an educational component and incorporated outdoor art into the landscape.

The San Romanoway Revival project has incorporated green infrastructure into the transformation of three underutilized hectares of low-permeability land to create vibrant community space with ecological function.

“I got involved in the garden to be involved in a greater sense of community, see people work together, and expand circle of friends.”

- Resident Survey #162

“[The garden] ... renews image of Jane and Finch. Beautifies and draws people in ...”

- Resident Survey #101



b. Building Efficiency and Resiliency: Implementing Energy, Water, and Waste Management Actions, While Developing Residents’ Pride and Leadership

While partnering with TRCA on outdoor revitalization, the owners of the San Romanoway Towers also took on some impressive projects to improve building resiliency and energy and water efficiency, as well as to manage waste output.

- STEP Assessment and Physical Retrofits

RPMS Property Management Services Inc. received an assessment from the City of Toronto’s Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization unit’s Sustainable Towers Engaging People (STEP) Program for their building at 10 San Romanoway. The STEP Program helps property owners access programs and receive support to work on indoor retrofits.

RPMS's project achievements and energy retrofits include:

- **Project Enlighten:** Nearly 7,500 LED bulbs were installed in-suite to replace less energy-efficient bulbs.
- **Combine Heat and Power (CHP):** RPMS successfully implemented its first CHP project at 10 San Romanoway. The 260kW system is expected to reduce annual utility costs by 25% while generating approximately 60% of the electricity used by the building. On the emergency power side, CHP not only increased back-up power capacity, providing tenants with more services during an outage, but also improved resilience through the modular power plant design.
- **Garbage Compactor Technology Upgrade:** A new garbage compactor with a fullness indicator display was installed to optimize the scheduling of bin pickups.
- **Common Area LED Lighting:** All common area lighting fixtures were replaced to reduce energy usage and improve lighting conditions throughout the building.
- **Garage Carbon Monoxide Monitoring System:** Carbon monoxide sensors, exhaust fan controls, and fresh air louvers were installed to reduce exhaust fan operation and maintain space comfort.
- **Water Fixture Replacement Program:** New water fixtures were installed in all suites. This equipment includes ultra-high efficiency toilets, shower heads, and aerators.
 - *Green Champion: Tenant Behaviour Change Project*

One collaborative initiative, the Green Champion program, incorporates community-building and social development, and can be a good way to achieve ESG objectives. It specifically connects tenant behaviour change around the adoption of energy, water, and waste management practices, through pledge signing, with tangible building performance results.

In 2018, the Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization team from the City of Toronto approached TRCA's Black Creek SNAP team to assist in developing, implementing, and evaluating the Tower Renewal Green Champions Program, supported by Enbridge Gas, within three apartment towers in the Black Creek neighbourhood. Given the large amount of prior engagement at 5, 10 and 25 San Romanoway, these towers were chosen as prime locations to pilot-test the Green Champion initiative.

The SNAP team recruited a diverse group of 11 local residents to receive training as Green Champions. The resident champions were coached and supported by project staff to engage fellow tenants through booths and events, as well as through neighbour-to-neighbour interactions. The champions collected 359 surveys and sustainability pledges for energy and water conservation and waste management actions.

Although definitive results could not be analyzed at 5 San Romanoway due to the lack of a pre-program assessment (to determine a baseline), or at 10 San Romanoway due to the concurrent installation of the cogeneration system (which skewed results), efforts at 25 San Romanoway did show promising results.

Using their STEP benchmarking assessment, the Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization team analyzed Greenwin's building at 25 San Romanoway before and after the Green Champion initiative and found the following results:

- 59% of units signed a pledge to action in either energy, water, or waste conservation
- Electricity consumption was reduced by 2.9%
- Natural gas use was reduced by 10%
- Water use was reduced by 5.6%
- Total waste output was reduced by 14.1%
- Composting increased by 2%

The invaluable contribution of the resident leaders in the Green Champion program was emphasized and celebrated. It was just one instance that demonstrated to residents how their participation in and ownership of initiatives could increase the impact of on-site projects.

Based on the enthusiastic resident participation and the volume of engagement through surveys and pledges, as well as the positive results from 25 San Romanoway, it is clear that the Green Champion program met its objective of training local champions to educate their neighbours on improving and adopting conservation habits, and its goal of driving conservation awareness in apartment tower communities.

“The information gathered through the Green Champion Program has helped us better understand the average consumption habits of our residents. Good information is good for business; the more knowledge we have the better”

- Kris Boyce, CEO Greenwin Corp.

c. Community Empowerment and the Participant to Leader Model

The San Romanoway Revival project applied a model created by the SNAP program to actively engage community members and foster community leadership among project participants. The SNAP program’s Participant to Leader model (Figure 5) guides the process of transforming participants into empowered leaders.

It all begins with listening to and responding to local interest and acknowledging that local perspectives are expert perspectives. The next step is to create innovative experiences to engage members of the public who have not yet been fully engaged. After that, the aim is to entice regular participation around topics of interest to residents, and to inspire community connections to form among peers. The plan is to then profile community champions to positively reinforce participant behaviour. Finally, once a group of new champions emerges, project staff begin to build their capacity and provide opportunities for them to act as empowered leaders.

Figure 5: The SNAP Participant to Leader Model

SNAP ensured that this model was applied to all elements of the San Romanoway project. After listening and responding to the residents’ interest in urban agriculture and job skills training, SNAP organized a variety of training sessions at San Romanoway, including:

- Garden management and urban agriculture training
- Certification for residents in orchard management, fruit tree care, and horticulture
- Internship opportunities in natural landscaping and tree care
- Carpentry skills to contribute to on-site outdoor furniture
- Leadership and community organizing
- Fundraising



“For me, through this project we have become a thriving, transformed, enthusiastic and involved community – people of all ages, and all walks of life working and living together side-by-side.”

- Phyllis Brown, San Romanoway Resident

These sessions attracted participants from many different backgrounds and provided ample mentorship time as well as opportunities to connect with neighbours and nature (engagement strategies that enticed regular participation and connections).

In the later years of the project, the Green Champion program and other leadership initiatives were implemented to profile key community member as capable and valued. These have empowered various community members to become leaders on-site. There are now resident leaders overseeing the pollinator garden and orchard, and the gardeners have established a Garden Committee. They elect their own leaders from among the group, fundraise together, and have confidence to seek support from property managers when needed. Some residents have even gone on to find employment and pursue a career in green jobs as a result of the program, a further indicator that the emphasis on job skills training has been successful in creating engagement and empowerment.

Having homegrown on-site community leadership is a powerful asset for project longevity, and a great bridge to open and honest communication between tenants and building management.

“Through TRCA SNAP they gave us the guideline of how to form committees, we have board members and they taught us everything about the garden. We learned to gather rainwater, we have 120 residents involved, basically everyone working together to make the garden run well.”

- Paul McLean, San Romanoway Resident Leader



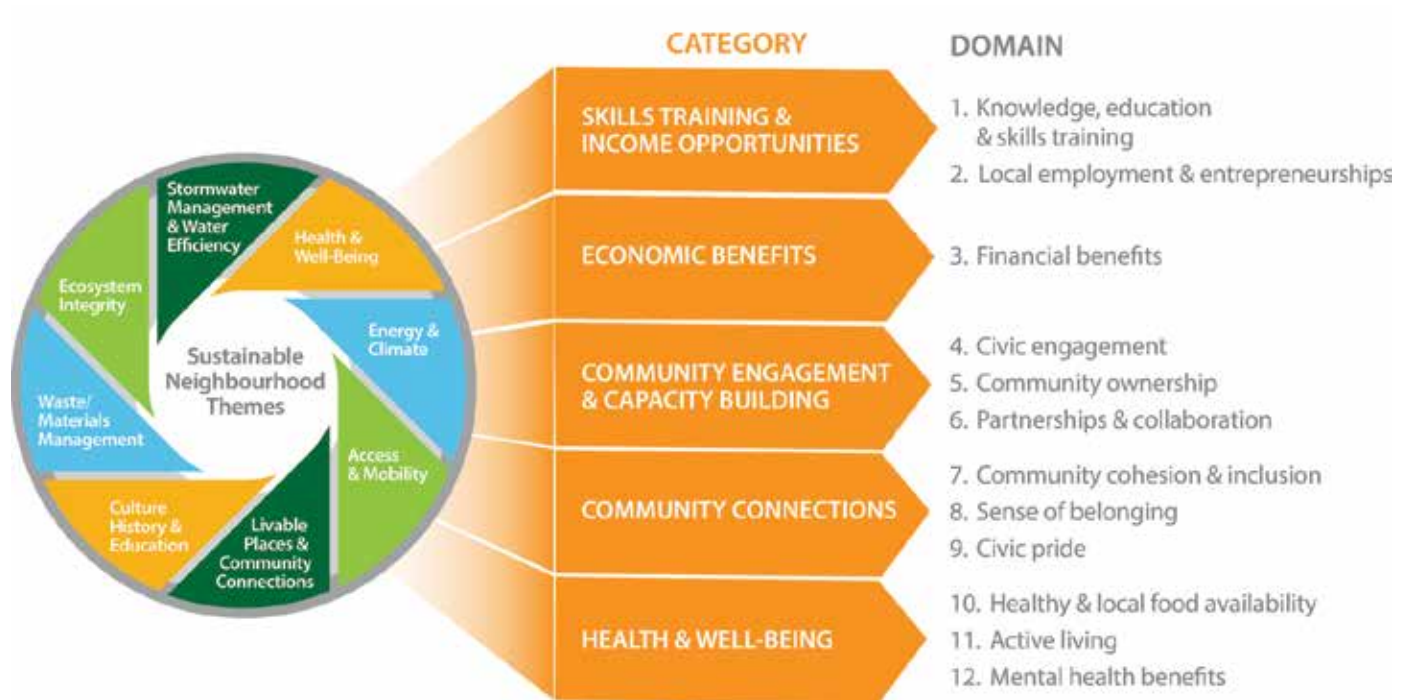
8) Socio-economic Impact Analysis: Highlights of Overall Results

Consistent with overall SNAP objectives, each San Romanoway implementation project was designed to deliver social as well as ecological benefits. While it can be simple to track numbers such as energy savings, trees planted, canopy cover, number of participants, and hours of learning, it often is more challenging to track some of the “softer”, qualitative outcomes of the SNAP program. Is the program creating a sense of community or of belonging among participants? Are people experiencing mental health benefits? Has it helped residents to become more employable, or created financial benefits for participants? To answer these questions, a research undertaking was required.

In 2019, TRCA set out to better understand the socio-economic impacts of the project at San Romanoway. In collaboration with the project partners and with assistance from United Way, a 22-question survey was developed for gardener participants (categorized as Program Participants: PPs). An eight-question survey was also developed for the wider tenant community (categorized as Non-Participating Residents: NPRs). Six questions overlapped both surveys, for comparison purposes.

The questions on these surveys reflected the 12 domains of the SNAP program’s existing socio-economic metric framework. These domains fall into five categories: **Skills Training and Income Opportunities; Economic Benefits; Community Engagement and Capacity Building; Community Connections; and Health and Well-being.** They measure such indicators as community ownership, civic pride, sense of belonging, civic engagement, mental health benefits, and active living. (See Figure 6.) The results of the project’s socio-economic impact were distilled from 192 completed surveys, as well as data quantitatively tracked through program implementation, and participant feedback gathered over the seven years of project implementation (2013-2019).

Figure 6: The SNAP Socio-Economic Framework



Highlights of Overall Results:

From 2013 to 2019, a total of 2,236 hours of programming has been offered to the community. The community has returned 42,796 hours of participation from 2,708 participants. This means that every hour of programming offered at San Romanoway has returned 19 hours of community participation (1:19). The project has clearly fostered a highly engaged community.

A selection of results from each socio-economic category in the SNAP framework is highlighted below. A complete summary of the findings and a compilation of resident feedback will be made available on the SNAP program website.

a. Skills Training and Income Opportunities:

More than 70% of PPs say they have acquired four or more new skills by participating in project activities. 68% of PPs are considering adding these skills to their resumé, and 63% feel that their job prospects have improved. This is a significant response, considering there are quite a few senior participants who would be out of the age group of job searchers. It is clear that the SNAP programs have instilled job confidence in participants belonging to the job-seeking age group.

In fact, of the initial 28 graduates of the Fruit Tree Care Certification Course taught on-site by OrchardPeople.com, four went on to find full-time employment in urban agriculture projects in Toronto, and four more launched a social enterprise to care for local fruit trees in the Black Creek neighbourhood.

"It surprises me how much I've learned." - Paul McLean, San Romanoway Resident Leader



• *Transformed by Training: Testimonial*

Meet Lisa Forsyth. As a tenant of 25 San Romanoway, Lisa had the opportunity to participate in the allotment garden and sign up for on-site skills training in urban agriculture and fruit tree care. Lisa, who worked in an office as a bookkeeper, was drawn to the training as a way to spend more time outdoors and meet new people.

"I found I really enjoyed gardening, and was surprised by how many other people really enjoyed volunteering too!" - Lisa Forsyth

The tree care training was delivered in local backyards and at the Downsview Park Orchard by Susan Poizner of OrchardPeople.com. In this way students, were able to practice their skills on mature trees while their young orchard trees grew on-site at San Romanoway. Through the SNAP training, Lisa's passion for trees and agriculture grew. Equipped with new skills and new connections, she branched out to pursue a career in horticulture, and in 2017 was hired as orchard manager at Downsview Park.

"I enjoyed the landscaping and tree courses (offered by Black Creek SNAP). It gave me the opportunity to work in the agri/landscaping industry. My employer has sponsored me as a horticulture apprentice through the Horticulture Program at Humber College. I graduated in March 2019!" - Lisa Forsyth

Lisa has expressed her deep gratitude for the skills training and introduction to green jobs that she received as a participant in the San Romanoway Revival project. She was able to find a career she is passionate about, and continues to give back to the community through her dedicated volunteer position as the San Romanoway Community Orchard Leader.

b. *Economic Benefits*

91% of participants reported saving money on groceries by participating in the garden. In fact, a majority of gardeners reported savings of between \$15 and \$50 every month, per plot, for an average annual saving of as much as \$143 per plot holder.

"I always felt bad when I look back and see that our community is suffering in terms of not being able to afford to buy healthy food, and instead buying junk food. Many people wonder: How do you save money? It is by getting your fruits from your own backyard with no cost."

- Charity Fejokwu, Resident Leader

Community Engagement and Capacity Building

The mark of a truly engaged community is how many participants step up to become volunteers. In the San Romanoway Revival project, a total of 780 volunteer roles have been filled by members of the local community, accounting for more than 35,000 hours of volunteer time. When we add corporate or partnership volunteers (coming for planting days or to lend a hand in the orchard) the total increases to 963 volunteer roles and nearly 36,575 hours of total volunteer time over the duration of the project. In all, residents themselves have contributed 96% of all volunteer hours on the project. San Romanoway residents have stepped up to support the initiatives and have been the “glue” keeping the whole project together.

When allotment garden members were asked if they would be willing to participate in the program in the long term, 81% said yes – an indication that the project has secured a large local base for sustainability into the future.

For capacity building, partnering with experts to deliver skills training has made a positive difference. It would be untrue to present these results as one group’s achievement alone. A wide variety of partners (from NGO to private sector) played important roles throughout the project, with many contributing in-kind services to the collaboration. Local employment agencies, food security and urban agriculture NGOs, private local businesses, community centres, and government organizations, as well as the housing providers themselves, all made meaningful contributions to the project. In fact, TRCA brokered more than 20 different partnerships and collaborations to make this project a success.

Project Partners and Collaborators:

- JVS Employment
- ContractHer
- Black Creek Community Farm
- FoodShare
- Orchardpeople.com
- Fiskars
- Dante’s No Frills
- The Spot out of the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre
- Green Change Centre out of the Jane Finch Community and Family Centre
- Second Harvest
- Urban Harvest Toronto
- Garden Club of Toronto
- Lowe’s
- San Romanoway Revitalization Association
- Everdale Farm
- RPMS Property Management Services Inc
- Greenwin Corp.
- City of Toronto, Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization
- City of Toronto, Toronto Employment and Social Services
- City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- City of Toronto, Toronto Water
- Downsview Park
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (Project lead and backbone organization)

In terms of civic engagement, votership is often used as a marker for an engaged population performing their civic duty. However, in a demographic that includes many newcomers to Canada, high rates of English language learners, or lower income populations, votership may not be the best indicator. United Way advised TRCA to consider other indicators for gauging civic engagement, such as being inspired to fundraise for a community cause, or being led to address community matters.

Among participants of the San Romanoway Revival project, 69% reported being inspired to fundraise, and 85% said the project led them to address community matters. These findings represent a strong sign of civic engagement within a historically hard-to-engage population!

“People communicate. Garden brings people together as family.” - Resident Survey #43

*“Brings challenges as you know people [are both] good and bad, but you get to know people.”
[I like to] grow my own veggies and be more natural.”*

- Resident Survey #161

d. Community Connections

SNAP program activities contribute opportunities for improved inclusion. This has been demonstrated throughout the San Romanoway Revival project, through programming and outdoor revitalization activities that encourage interactions among people of diverse backgrounds (including ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, religious, and age). These interactions can create a sense of community cohesion and inclusion within all segments of a community, allowing residents to recognize and celebrate diversity and appreciate it as something that adds value to their lives.

100% of Program Participants (PPs) reported that being part of the San Romanoway Garden group has made them feel more connected.

88% of all residents surveyed agree that people are developing new friendships through the San Romanoway Revival project, and 86% agree that people are now more willing to help their neighbours. These perceptions are indicative of the positive impact the project is having in the domain of community cohesion and inclusion.

People are coming together to address community matters and are feeling an overall sense of pride in their community because of this project. In addition to increased perceptions of friendliness and helpfulness among neighbours, almost 70% of NPRs feel an improved sense of safety, an average of 89% of responders say that San Romanoway is now a better place to live, and an average of 51% of residents (69% of PPs and 47% of NPRs) say that, as a result of the SNAP project, they are less likely to move to another community. 45% of PPs also said their perceptions of their landlord improved due to the project. This suggests that projects like the San Romanoway Revival could help improve relations between tenants and management, and reduce tenant turnover by as much as half the previous rate – particularly among those who become engaged and involved in project initiatives.

“You get to know people and they help you take care of your plot and share produce. Makes people more giving.” - Resident Survey #169

“We feel more like home. Like you have a backyard, less like an apartment.” - Resident Survey #106

e. Health and Well-being

There have been clear health and well-being results reported throughout the San Romanoway Revival project. 94% of PPs say their intake of fresh vegetables has increased. This is quite believable, given that each plantable space in the allotment garden is estimated to produce 15 to 19 lbs. of produce per month during the growing season.

Over the seven years of the project, residents have contributed 39,990 hours of participation in active living activities. Active living hours have consisted of activities such as vegetable gardening, tree stewardship, horticulture programming, landscaping, and other skills-building workshops such as carpentry. This was one of the most prominent domains tracked, with 93.5% of total program hours spent in active living initiatives and, in the case of Black Creek SNAP, all active living activities taking place outside, resulting in even greater mental health benefits.

The results show tremendous positive mental health outcomes. 100% of PPs feel that the programming activities and revitalized outdoor spaces have positively affected their mood. This sentiment is echoed even among NPRs, of whom 85% acknowledge a positive impact on mood. 92% of NPRs surveyed claim that the green infrastructure (including naturalization plantings, sitting stones, community gardens, and the orchard) has motivated them to spend time outdoors. In other words, even residents who are not participating directly in capacity building or voluntary programming are still spending more time outdoors.

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing describes the health benefits of a connected community:

Research shows that a strong sense of community is linked to high levels of social participation and social engagement, stronger feelings of safety and security, and better health overall (Canadian Index of Wellbeing: <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/what-we-do/domains-and-indicators/percentage-population-reports-very-or-somewhat-strong-sense/>; accessed Oct. 23, 2017) .

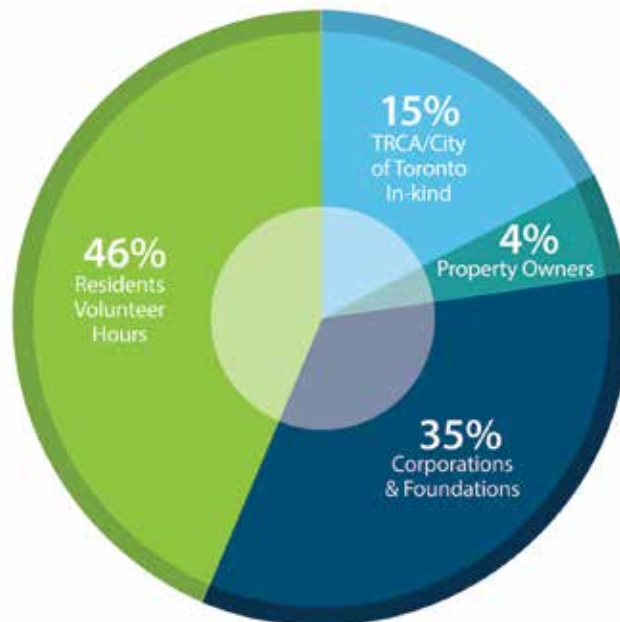
The socio-economic analysis completed at San Romanoway shows that robust multi-objective programming can have significant socio-economic impacts that go beyond quantitative environmental goals. The benefits can be felt by the wider community of residents who use a space. Such impacts, including enhanced mood, better living environment, and greater feelings of connection, belonging and friendship, can permeate a community when programs like the San Romanoway Revival project are implemented on multi-unit residential properties. This suggests that the positive impacts of both qualitative and social outcomes can be extend across a community, through the interactions of residents, and can create much better outcomes than initially anticipated. In short, everyone benefits.

“The garden creates a sort of love.” - Resident Survey #99

9) Funding Model and Implementation Partnerships

The funding model for the project can be seen in the San Romanoway Revival Project Contributions chart (Figure 7). With outdoor spaces that are open to the general public, and approximately 4,500 residents living at the San Romanoway Towers, the property’s open spaces can be regarded as “privately owned public space”. Although TRCA invested a small percentage of publicly supported (contributed by the City of Toronto) in-kind staff time, this budget was leveraged to raise additional funds from a variety of private sector sources. This approach ensured that the project delivered socio-economic outcomes benefiting society as a whole in this community. By achieving wide-ranging environmental and socio-economic objectives, the program was able to bring diverse funding sources and significant in-kind support to the table, allowing a multiplicity of partners and funders to see their own interests advanced by the project. The bulk cost of the project planning and implementation, including in kind contributions was of approximately \$700,000 (not including the amount that could be attributed to resident volunteer hours. If the latter were monetized, it would bring the project cost to over 1.3 Million).

Figure 7: San Romanoway Revival Project Contributions Chart



As shown in Figure 7, 54% of contributions can be attributed to foundations/corporations, property owners, or TRCA’s in-kind support. This almost matches the contribution by residents, at 46%, if their volunteer hours of support were monetized at rate of \$17/per hour (based on TRCA’s typical wage for the type of work provided by the volunteers). This chart makes clear that the investment of needed in-kind staff time by TRCA and the City of Toronto enabled the project to raise significant grant funding, as well as a large volunteer contribution from the community. This project represented a truly collaborative effort to have private money invested into private property to achieve environmental and socio-economic objectives that benefit everyone, community-wide.

10) Ongoing Maintenance and Project Sustainability

In the early years of the project, the goal was to have residents take charge of most ongoing maintenance of the landscaped areas. To achieve this goal, TRCA along with a team of local NGOs, guided maintenance while providing residents with opportunities to participate and receive maintenance training.

Over the years, keen residents have taken a leadership role in maintaining the outdoor areas. Property management has also worked hard to ensure that the unique needs of these areas are addressed and maintained to their quality standard. This balance between TRCA-fostered sustainable resident leadership and property owner oversight has ensured that these areas continued to thrive over the duration of the project.



BENEFITING FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD-BASED APPROACH

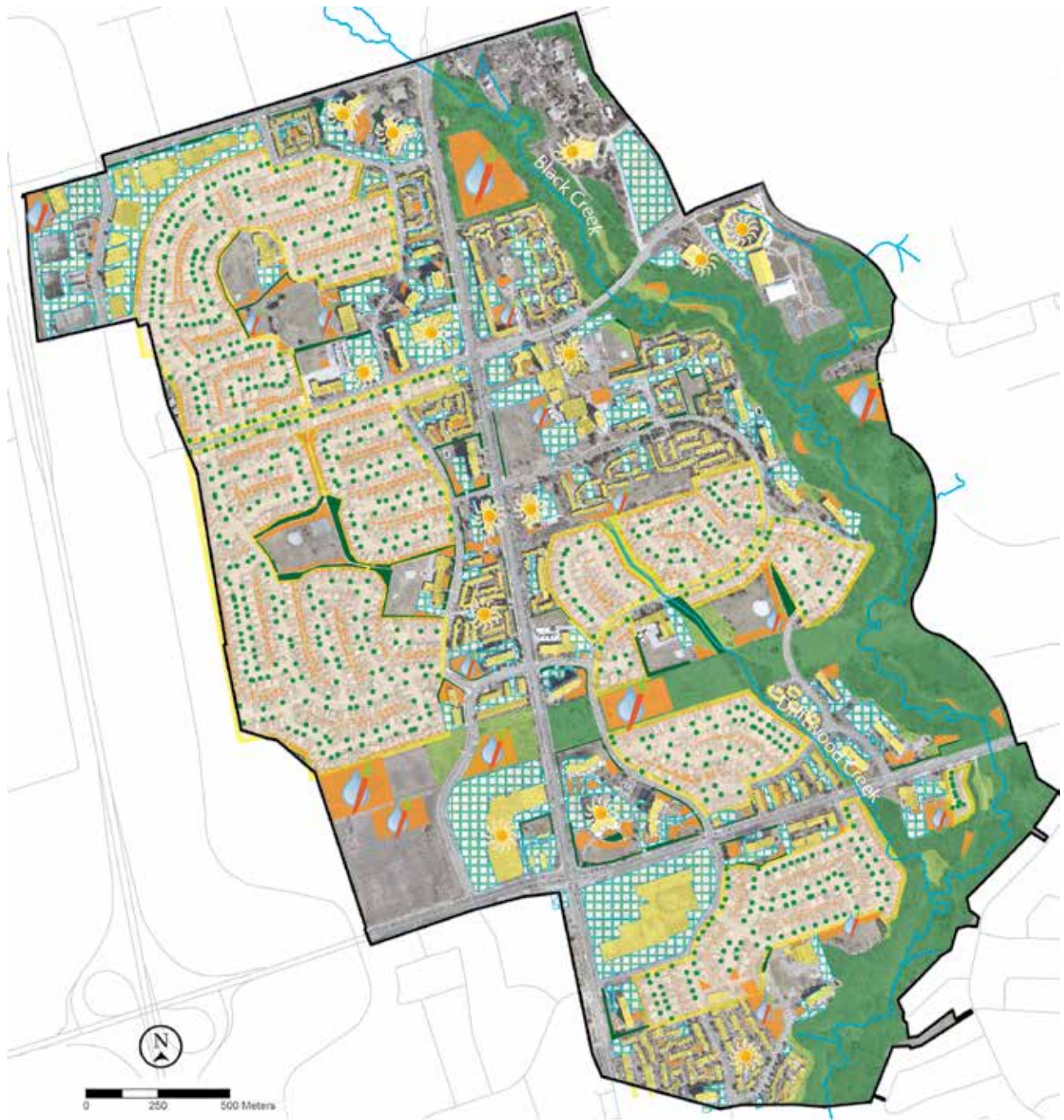
TRCA's SNAP program is a proven collaborative model for neighbourhood and tower revitalization. It starts with translating neighbourhood objectives and projecting them onto the multi-unit residential site. This serves to highlight these sites as important areas in which to achieve sustainable urban renewal and climate actions within a neighbourhood context. The revitalization of a tower site then feeds into a broader neighbourhood model and shows how environmental revitalization projects can be designed to deliver multiple benefits and greater impact.

This neighbourhood-based approach also carries benefits to the multi-unit residential properties being revitalized. Having a comprehensive neighbourhood lens ensures that the project can be customized and place-based, and that the property can benefit from City and agency staff being able to work on a site-specific basis when it feeds into, and is connected with, broader community initiatives. This also allows for more resources from community programming to be allocated to tower communities.

In addition, the property's interventions can help to achieve relevant neighbourhood objectives, by becoming part of the solution to issues specific to the neighbourhood. This can become an opportunity for tower owners to show good corporate citizenship and give back to the communities they serve, while providing relevant opportunities for residents beyond the property lines, which aids community development. A healthy, resilient neighbourhood means a healthy tower community.

The original concept plan for the Black Creek SNAP neighbourhood (Figure 8) shows many of the multi-unit residential sites as important places to achieve big impact.

Figure 8: Black Creek SNAP Concept Plan



- | Urban Forest Enhancement | Stormwater Management | Veg. Gardens/Rainharvesting | Energy Conservation & Renewables |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Existing Natural Cover | Greening Paved Areas | Community Farming | Renewable Energy |
| SNAP Potential Natural Cover | LID-SWM and Basement Flooding Prevention | Residential Eco-edible Landscaping | Energy and Water Conservation |
| Trees in Single Family Lots | | | or Energy and Water Conservation |
| Trees in Other Lots | | | |

**Exact locations may vary and are subject to further analysis and refinement during the implementation process.*

There are many other public, industrial, commercial, and institutional properties as well as private single-family homes that are guided by the SNAP model. Other key initiatives that SNAP has piloted in the Black Creek neighbourhood include:

- *The Harvest the Rain home retrofit program, which promotes ways residents can make their homes and yards more sustainable*
- *Surplus Harvest Donation, in which produce collected from single detached homes is shared to local food programs in churches, towers, and fresh food banks in community centres*
- *The Tree Care Social Enterprise and Backyard Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing workshops, which have promoted skills sharing among single detached homeowners and apartment tower tenants*
- *Bike Hub and other waste diversion initiatives at the Black Creek Community Farm and neighbourhood towers*
- *Park revitalization and urban forest enhancement in parks, school grounds, and ravine areas*
- *Civic engagement: Tower residents are now participating more in neighbourhood groups and events, and volunteering with other organizations in the community, such as Green Change Centre and Black Creek Pioneer Village*
- *Scaling efforts: San Romanoway residents are giving tours to residents and managers from other towers, which has created interest in replicating the success of the San Romanoway Revival elsewhere*

Through the Harvest the Rain program (which was featured in the 2016 Cities 100 publication as one of 100 leading urban climate change solutions from around the world), TRCA and its partners are working to reduce flood risk by educating homeowners about stormwater management practices and do-it-yourself (DIY) actions.

Harvest the Rain also promotes urban forest enhancement on private properties by persuading homeowners to plant trees in front and back yards, and by encouraging the planting of more trees along boulevards. In addition, the program promotes fruit tree care and vegetable gardening as ways to get more trees in the ground and, at the same time, to combat food insecurity (through surplus harvest donation) and increase the amount of permeable/plantable spaces on residential lots.

Finally, Harvest the Rain fosters an increase in overall greenhouse gas reduction by educating homeowners about opportunities for energy retrofits both inside and outside the home.

Almost 20% of homes in the Black Creek neighbourhood have taken advantage of the Harvest the Rain program. The results include:

- 95% of participating homes implemented on-site stormwater management actions
- 50% of participating homes planted a tree
- 50% of participating homes implemented basement flooding prevention actions
- 30% of participating homes implemented significant energy retrofits



KEY LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SAN ROMANOWAY REVIVAL PROJECT

There is great opportunity to achieve lasting, positive environmental and social change through the revitalization of aging privately owned multi-unit residential buildings. By partnering with a backbone organization to coordinate and lead an innovative collaborative approach with multi-disciplinary partners and members of the community, building owners can attract funding to their properties, improve tenant satisfaction and relationships, reduce turnover, fulfill ESG goals, and profile their corporate citizenship.

Key lessons learned and recommendations include:

1. Sustainable revitalization and climate action projects in privately owned towers present opportunities to deliver multiple benefits not only for tenants and tower owners, but also for municipalities, private businesses, and the general public.

- The San Romanoway Revival project achieved the main objectives established by the property owners at the beginning of the project. These included: improved relationships between property managers and tenants, improved community pride and sense of safety, and an increased desire among highly engaged tenants to stay in the towers over the long term. The achievement of ESG objectives enhanced the profiles of RPMS and Greenwin. Energy and water efficiency resulted in economic savings as well.
- The San Romanoway Revival project delivered on key environmental benefits, including sustainable stormwater management, greenhouse gas reduction, ecological integrity, water conservation, and waste management. The project also achieved important resiliency objectives through the combined heat and power system, food production supported with rainwater harvesting, implementation of shaded areas for heat waves, and community development for emergency preparedness. Finally, the project delivered significant socio-economic benefits for the 4,300 vulnerable tenants living in the towers, across five categories: Skills Training and Income Opportunities; Economic Benefits; Community Engagement and Capacity Building; Community Connections; and Health and Well-being.
- Multiple private businesses, from fruit tree experts and facilitators to carpenters and energy technology companies, contributed to the project implementation.

2. A trusted backbone organization is instrumental in partnership brokering and leading co-designed planning and implementation.

- Collaboration between multiple interdisciplinary partners from the public, not-for profit, and private sectors, as well as from the local community, was a fundamental factor in the success of the San Romanoway Revival project. Each partner brought valuable expertise and resources to specific project elements. Community members shared important insights and contributed thousands of volunteer hours.
- TRCA played an essential role in bringing partners and residents together, coordinating roles, fundraising, and leading the development of a shared vision. Future tower revitalization projects should identify a backbone organization and allocate staff resources for this role. The backbone organization should have the trust of both the community and partners alike.
- A multi-year commitment on the part of the backbone organization is fundamental – especially in regards to partner coordination and capacity building among property managers and community members to ensure long-term project sustainability.

3. Privately owned towers can attract funding and resources for revitalization from non-traditional sources by establishing objectives that span environmental, resiliency, and socio-economic themes, and will benefit the society as a whole.

- Most capital investments for outdoor revitalization in the San Romanoway Project came from private corporations and foundations that had never before invested on private land but saw an opportunity to achieve their social/environmental mandate and objectives.

- Investment in community capacity building resulted in the contribution by residents of more than 40,000 hours of volunteer work. Each hour of formal programming resulted in 19 hours of volunteer work.
- Seed funding in the form of in-kind staff resources from TRCA, the City of Toronto, and the property owners proved fundamental in leveraging cash and in-kind investments from other sources.

4. Investing sufficient time and resources to understand tenants' priorities and needs, develop trust, and build community capacity is crucial to the success and long-term sustainability of the project

A key factor in the success of the San Romanoway Revival project has been the commitment of residents to keeping the project going and maintaining the outdoor areas. Residents have also played an important role in raising the profile of the project through their testimonials, tours, and presentations. This did not happen organically. It was the result of strategic efforts that included:

- Investing time and resources in understanding tenants' priorities and real needs, and in engaging them meaningfully during the design and implementation stage.
- Connecting with local networks already working at or near the site, to take advantage of existing community relationships of trust.
- Hiring local resident champions who have the respect of the community.
- Having dedicated community liaison staff in place for multiple years to build relationships and trust, and to empower and build the capacity of local champions to foster neighbour-to-neighbour engagement.

5. Using a neighbourhood-based approach (as opposed to working on a tower-by-tower basis) helps to achieve efficiencies, open up opportunities for tenants, improve community life, and maximize sustainability and resiliency benefits both for the individual tower and for the broader neighbourhood.

- By using a neighbourhood-based approach, TRCA, the City of Toronto, and various not-for-profit organizations could justify having dedicated staff working on the San Romanoway project, as these staff were also working towards broader Black Creek neighbourhood objectives.
- By using a neighbourhood lens, the SNAP program was able to identify income opportunities for San Romanoway residents beyond the towers and develop skills training programs to prepare them for these opportunities.
- The program was also able to connect San Romanoway residents with community members from single family homes and other towers in the vicinity, which resulted in a valuable exchange of skills, ideas, and overall community building.
- By using a neighbourhood lens, the SNAP program was able to secure contributions to San Romanoway from residents beyond the towers. For example, thousands of pounds of surplus harvest from single family homes was distributed into meal programs in the towers, not only addressing food security but diverting waste from landfill.
- The San Romanoway Revival project helped to achieve broader neighbourhood sustainability objectives (including urban forest cover, air quality, and stormwater management). It has also had a positive impact on the neighbourhood reputation. At the same time, a healthier neighbourhood means a healthier tower.

6. Tracking progress and acknowledging those who contribute to the success of the project will advance fundraising efforts and help to maintain the momentum for long-term sustainability.

- Establishing a monitoring framework early in the process to track program progress across various categories will help in developing reliable metrics to showcase program success, for profile and fundraising
- With multiple partners at the table, it is important to develop ground rules for presenting individual versus team achievements on collaborative initiatives. Being honest about roles and sharing the credit where due keeps collaborative partnerships healthy.

- It is essential to acknowledge the contributions that community leaders make and the value their input adds to the project, to encourage their continued participation. This can be accomplished by celebrating and providing incentives or recognition for both participants and leaders alike.

In Conclusion

There is a great opportunity for property owners to invest in multi-unit buildings and create lasting, positive environmental and social change by taking a multi-objective collaborative approach. By partnering with an established backbone organization and a diverse team, tower owners can profile their good corporate citizenship and commitment to fulfilling ESG goals. They may even attract new investment opportunities in the process, and discover creative solutions to increase tenant satisfaction and improve quality of life, while also achieving multiple sustainability objectives and generating needed socio-economic benefits.



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