



Prepared by the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation
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Active Neighbourhoods Canada SUMMARY REPORT OF 4 ONTARIO PROJECTS



Sharing participatory methods in Ontario



Active Neighbourhoods Canada (ANC) is a national partnership of organizations bringing participatory planning to 12 communities in Alberta, Ontario and Québec. ANC works with local partners in each community towards changes in the built environment that encourage: **active transportation, active public spaces and active, engaged citizens.**

Between 2013 and 2017, the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) has worked in depth with 4 Ontario neighbourhoods to test and share participatory tools within a three phase framework (outlined on the right).

Blending expert & local knowledge

The ANC model rests on the strength of partnerships with organizations that have connections to the grassroots. By bringing together informal residents' groups with built environment professionals, we can develop a more holistic understanding of public space and help to determine planning priorities in a proactive way.



Phase 1:

Understanding

The goal of the first phase is to understand the current context of the neighbourhood in order to identify potential improvements and constraints related to mobility. Different data collection methods are used to create a 'Portrait'; including field surveys, review of existing documentation and consultation activities.

Phase 2: Exploring

The objective of Phase 2 is to establish a common vision, define priorities for action, and propose solutions that respect the local identity and practices of the neighbourhood. During this phase a Citizens' Forum and a Professional Workshop is held.

Phase 3: Building

Local partners collaborate on a Community Plan outlining goals and design solutions. The plan is used as a tool to strategize and partner with local municipal officials, transit authorities, other levels of government, as well as institutions, retailers and individuals towards the incremental implementation of these goals.

Highlights

4 PROJECTS

39 events/activities

1 Spin-off project

29 Interventions proposed

3 temporary pop-ups tested



TORONTO
2014/2015

Thorncliffe Park & Flemingdon Park

Thorncliffe and Flemingdon were planned communities, completed in the late 1960's. These inner suburbs are northeast of the Toronto core and they sit on either side of the Don Valley ravine. Most residents live in towers that overlook the greenery. Thorncliffe and Flemingdon are diverse neighbourhoods that serve as landing pads for new Canadians. Most residents have lower than average income and few have access to automobiles.

In Toronto we teamed up with the Flemingdon Health Centre and the STEPS youth program: Toronto Emerging Artists, as well as a series of ad-hoc partners in an effort to understand the experience of public space in these tower neighbourhoods. Based on the demographics of the neighbourhood we made an effort to reach out to **youth & new Canadians** as two typically underrepresented groups.

Linking local voices with federal spending

In Thorncliffe and Flemingdon we hosted **extensive engagement activities** to collect diverse opinions on travel patterns. We also convened a community mapping team who collected information on the experience of public space. The feedback was summarized in a portrait that was presented to local experts for design ideas. We hosted a series of citizen response kiosks to validate the ideas and created an active neighbourhood plan based on the dialogue.

Through establishing connections between residents and city staff, the neighbourhood was recognized as a key location for targeted **federal transportation spending**. We hosted a young urbanist summer camp and helped residents to **paint local murals** that highlighted important pedestrian connections to the Don Valley ravine. Finally we obtained additional funding to produce a **temporary 'Town Centre' pavilion** that was designed by community members through participatory workshops.



PETERBOROUGH
2014/2015

Stewart Street Neighbourhood

The Stewart Street Neighbourhood is located south of downtown in Peterborough. The historical grid-pattern with short blocks makes it very walkable, however the community struggles with negative perceptions of safety and has been actively trying to make public spaces feel more welcoming. Although many trips in Peterborough are made by car, many residents of Stewart street do not have auto access for a variety of reasons, primarily economic.

We teamed up with local environmental NGO GreenUp as well as convening a steering committee with representation from the City of Peterborough, Trent University, B!ke, Peterborough Health Unit and the Trent Community Research Centre. We engaged primarily **non-drivers & families with young children** to determine how streets and public spaces could better reflect their needs.

Building engagement into capital improvements

Our goal in this project was to connect an informal group of citizens with a planned capital project on Bethune Street, a collector running through the heart of the Stewart Street Neighbourhood. We held a series of events and carried out community mapping and surveying to determine priorities. Local professionals were gathered in a workshop to brainstorm ideas and then we teamed up with a **graduate studio** at Ryerson University to further develop the ideas and present them at a Citizens' Forum.

By producing effective materials and making key connections, we saw the proposals & community-based research **recognized in the City's official urban design process**. We also plan to **replicate** this work in other Peterborough neighbourhoods and contributed to the knowledge of participatory practice through a **master's thesis** at Trent University, completed by an active member of our committee.



HALIBURTON
2015/2016

County Road 21/Highland Street

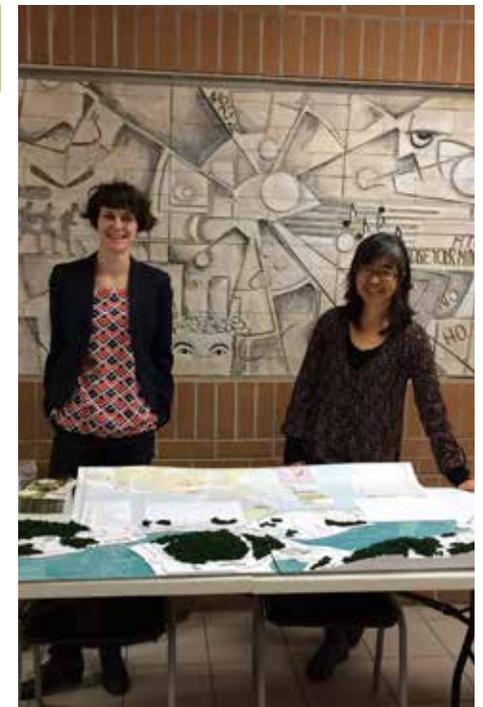
County Road 21/Highland Street is a road that connects the Village of Haliburton in the municipality of Dysart et al. to nearby towns and recreation destinations. Haliburton is a small town in central Ontario frequented by cottagers and tourists. It has a year-round population of ~17,000 which swells to ~45,000 in the summer.

Our partner, Communities in Action (CIA) is a local group working towards a more pedestrian and cycling friendly region. As a county road that moves through a town, CR21/Highland Street has the challenge of accommodating traffic moving through town and also creating a safe and comfortable environment for people using slower modes within town. We engaged primarily **people with reduced mobility & high school students** to determine how streets and public spaces could better reflect their needs.

Envisioning active transportation in a rural setting

Our goal in Haliburton was to create a **Complete Streets Vision** for a 2.5 km study area in Haliburton Village. The main village area currently has a historic, walkable character, however a new area of development has emerged with no accommodations for pedestrians or cyclists. We wanted to develop a plan to connect these two commercial zones and also to **strengthen relationships between county and village** jurisdictions in the process.

We held a series of focus groups in the town, **connecting with people in their homes, at their schools and at a local cafe.** We produced a multi-stakeholder vision that was validated by community members at the local farmers' market. We designed a **pop-up street intervention** which was installed by our local partners to temporarily reconfigure and study a problematic intersection. The vision will be presented at the local Council and will provide a reference for long-term planning in the Village.



The Donovan Neighbourhood

The Donovan is a neighbourhood northeast of the downtown core in the City of Greater Sudbury. There is a general consensus that the Kathleen Street commercial area constitutes the 'heart' of the community, as it is home to popular commercial destinations and a series of cultural halls for groups that have settled in the Donovan over the years. The small lots and narrow lanes in the Donovan give the neighbourhood an intimate, village-like feeling, while also providing the **foundation for an extremely walkable neighbourhood**.

In Sudbury our lead partner was EarthCare Sudbury, a program of the City of Greater Sudbury. We also had members on our steering committee from the DEWCAN residents' organization, the Social Planning Council and the Growth and Development Department at the City. We aimed to engage a **broad range of citizens** within this diverse neighbourhood.

Diverse voices in community improvement planning

In Sudbury we conceived our engagement and design work to feed into the creation of an official Community Improvement Plan that the City is planning to undertake in the near future. We undertook a series of **community mapping** exercises and carried out **extensive surveys** to understand the barriers to walking and cycling in the neighbourhood. We also taught **school workshops** to get kids in the neighbourhood thinking about the future they want to see in their neighbourhood.

Our professional workshop convened a wide range of local expertise. Beyond culminating in a vision of targeted design interventions, the process also spurred a number of **potential partnerships for creative programming** in the neighbourhood. We look forward to seeing the future **uptake of this vision**.





Indicators of Success

Local Knowledge

Our approach integrates evidence on health, active transportation and the built environment, with local data on how people travel, how they would like to travel and what they value in local public spaces. This weaves the rich detail of resident experience into a portrait of the community that **builds the case for change.**

Professional Engagement

Urban design professionals are valuable partners who **contribute skills and expertise** to help residents build the community they want to see. By creating links to professional communities we ensure resident experiences can be applied in current practice. These opportunities also help us **build the profile of participatory planning** while sharing the local knowledge produced in each community.

Agency & Ownership

Long-term success depends on the capacity that we help to create within communities. By approaching activities as opportunities to learn together, we develop collective knowledge. Our goal is **to empower residents** by providing tools and resources that help them have meaningful impact on the built environment of their neighbourhoods.

Uptake

The local knowledge contained within each Neighbourhood Plan we produced is intended for active use. How these documents become referenced, endorsed or applied in the local municipal context will enable our work **to achieve impact** through context-sensitive opportunities.



Next Steps

We are already starting to see that the Active Neighbourhoods visions are gaining traction and creating positive changes. In Toronto, the Thorncliffe and Flemingdon neighbourhoods have been identified as sites to allocate federal infrastructure funds for cycling improvements. In Peterborough, our local partners have adapted the ANC methodology and have been awarded funding to replicate the project in three new neighbourhoods. The recent presentation of the ANC vision to council in Haliburton Village (Dysart et al) was met with a positive response. We hope to see continued uptake of these visions in the future to guide community improvements and infrastructure.



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