

A Jurisdictional Scan of Community Benefits Frameworks Across Canada

Prepared for
Hamilton Community Benefits Network &
City of Hamilton

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction.....	5
Hamilton’s Context for CBAs	6
Methodology	8
Findings	8
Federal and Provincial Context	9
Municipal Contexts.....	10
Recommendations for Hamilton.....	11
1. Development: Engaging with Community.....	11
2. Implementation of Community Benefits	13
3. Evaluation.....	15
Conclusion	16
Bibliography.....	17
Appendix A: British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits (BCIB)	23
Appendix B: Community Benefits in Indigenous Communities.....	25
Introduction.....	25
Recommendations for Working with Indigenous Communities.....	28
Impact Benefit Agreements (IBA).....	30
Background.....	30
Fiscal Instruments	31
IBA Process.....	31
Appendix C: York Region.....	32
Appendix D: Case Studies of Community Benefits Projects Across Canada	33
Eglinton-Crosstown LRT (Toronto).....	33
Downsview (Toronto)	37
Regent Park (Toronto)	42
City of Toronto Housing Policy Framework (Housing Now)	44
St. Paul’s Hospital (Vancouver)	46
Gordie-Howe Bridge (Windsor).....	48
Manor Park (Ottawa)	49

Heron Gate Redevelopment (Ottawa)	50
Odenak Multifaith Housing Initiative (Ottawa).....	51
Cogswell District Redevelopment Project (Halifax).....	54
Appendix E: Best Practices for Community Benefits Projects	57

Executive Summary

This report was prepared by the McMaster Research Shop to support the Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) and the City of Hamilton in developing a Community Benefits Framework for public infrastructure projects within Hamilton. The goal is to identify best practices for the development, implementation, and evaluation of Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs), with a specific focus on how these practices can be applied in Hamilton's context.

CBAs are generally understood to be legally binding project specific agreements or contractual requirements of construction, infrastructure, and/or development projects negotiated between communities and public or private developers. CBAs ensure that large-scale infrastructure and development projects deliver tangible, lasting benefits to local communities. As the CBF process evolves, the Public Realm & Community Supports pillar currently acts as a catch-all for neighborhood improvements to public and private spaces. These benefits, occasionally outside formal CBAs, are shaped through community consultation and may include environmental improvements, social infrastructure and affordable housing and retail/commercial space.

This jurisdictional scan explored the use of community benefits across Canada—including Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, Brampton, York Region, and Halifax—to identify best practices for both Community Benefits Frameworks, as well as project-specific agreements for community benefits. The following recommendations for each stage of the project process were identified for consideration in Hamilton's context:

Development (Community Engagement)

1. Acknowledge historical impacts of infrastructure projects in Hamilton to understand community perspectives and build trust
2. Conduct equitable and accessible engagement early with the most impacted and underrepresented groups. Focus on impacts, not just gaining support
3. Co-develop a city-wide definition of “equity-deserving groups” with community
4. Establish an advisory group with decision-making influence
 - a. Establish a policy for smaller infrastructure projects for public realm and community improvements that centers community voices.

Implementing Community Benefits

5. Ensure sufficient resourcing
6. Strengthen local and social hiring pathways
7. Build mechanisms for adaptive agreements
8. Align CBAs with existing municipal policies and goals
9. Make CBAs legally binding with third-party oversight

Evaluation

10. Involve community organizations in monitoring
11. Set hard, quantifiable targets
12. Measure long-term outcomes, not just outputs
13. Share evaluation processes and data with relevant stakeholders

Introduction

CBAs are a strategic tool in building community wealth. They are being increasingly used in infrastructure projects across the country to encourage inclusive economic development and mitigate some of the potential negative impacts of projects on local communities. CBAs involve engaging communities through transparent and inclusive processes, with signatories typically including local government, contracting firms, and a coalition of organizations that advocate on behalf of the community. (1)

CBAs can secure benefits including but not limited to:

- Social procurement
- Employment benefits (e.g., work and training opportunities)
- Neighbourhood improvements and amenities
- Commitments to minimize economic loss to local businesses or displacement of residents, such as by protecting or introducing affordable housing and affordable retail/commercial space for essential amenities such as grocery stores, laundromats, and medical facilities
 - Affordable housing can be created by giving developers additional building density in exchange for meeting affordability targets, by using surplus public land for housing or by building housing into existing capital projects
- Environmental commitments
- Preservation of cultural or historic sites

In most cases, CBAs aim to reflect the interests of those who are not already benefiting from economic growth, such as low-income communities, youth, women and gender diverse folks, veterans, and racialized communities, and ensure their inclusion in the benefits of the project. (1)

CBAs originated in the 1990s through urban redevelopment projects in the United States. Los Angeles is considered the origin of the CBA, where community concerns regarding the construction of a Staples Centre would have exacerbated the housing crisis and traffic congestion. (2) The Figueroa Coalition formed to represent over 30 community groups that negotiated an agreement with Staples that included living-wage requirements and the inclusion of affordable housing units and recreation investments in the neighborhood, among other things. (2)

Since this initial success, the use of CBAs has spread across the United States and Canada. In 2010, a tripartite CBA was negotiated between federal, provincial, and municipal governments to govern the construction of the Vancouver Olympic village. In Ontario, CBAs were negotiated for the redevelopment of Toronto's Regent Park neighborhood, the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit, the Great Canadian Casino Resort Toronto (formerly known as Casino Woodbine), and several other projects highlighted further in this report. In some municipalities, such as Toronto and Brampton,

formal community benefits frameworks guide the use of community benefits for development projects.

Hamilton's Context for CBAs

Community Benefits align with the City of Hamilton's Strategic Priorities (2021-2025), such as *Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development and Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods*. They emphasize inclusive local procurement, job creation and the development of environmentally conscious public spaces. (3) CBAs have been of interest to the City of Hamilton since 2018, when council approved a motion to establish a Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee supported by the Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN). (4)

Community Benefits exploration began with social procurement. In June 2018, with the support of the General Managers of Public Works, Healthy and Safe Communities, and Corporate Services, the Procurement team engaged an external consultant— Sandra Hamilton, Strategic Procurement Advisor & Canada's First Social MBA —to advise on implementing social value criteria as a means of promoting social procurement within Hamilton. (4)

Sandra Hamilton engaged with both internal departments and local organizations—such as workforce planning, employment organizations, as well as trade and labour associations—to identify community needs and desires for social procurement in the City, as well as identify examples of best practices from across Canada. (5) Following this, a series of procurement projects that included social value criteria in their Request for Proposals (RFPs) were piloted. (4–6)

The work of staff, Sandra Hamilton, and community participants in the research identified social procurement as a key tool to address poverty. It also identified best practices and key needs for expanding social procurement at the City, including (4,5):

- Allocating sufficient resources, including staff to run values-based procurement programming
- Working with vendors, local organizations and internal departments responsible for employment supports, to identify residents for training opportunities, and ensure they are employment-ready in accordance with project timelines and requirements
- Considering self-esteem, childcare, and transportation as barriers to be addressed when aiming to employ low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups
- Ensure the language and goals of social procurement are understood by key internal and external stakeholders through education

Following this work, Terms of Reference for the Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee meeting were established in 2019 and approved by Council in 2022. The first

meeting held in September 2023. The Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference indicate the following goals (7):

- To develop a protocol for the use and prioritization of Community Benefits Agreements in the City of Hamilton.
- To consider opportunities to include Social Procurement within publicly funded tenders.
- To create a venue to inform, connect and encourage Community Benefits Agreements within the city.

Staff from Healthy and Safe Communities began to research community benefits and social procurement and connect with key stakeholders to share a recommendation report with the Sub-Committee on proposed next steps. This process culminated in the preparation of a recommendation report for the Sub-Committee outlining proposed directions for Hamilton's Community Benefits Framework. (7)

Community partners have also been critical in advancing community benefits within the city. The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) was established in 2017 in response to emerging discussions around the equitable development of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) project. (8) Since then, HCBN has partnered with organizations such as Metrolinx, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, Art Gallery of Hamilton and Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion (HCCI), ACORN Hamilton, Environment Hamilton, and others to engage underrepresented communities and promote inclusive development the LRT project. (8)

The HCBN has previously partnered with the Research Shop at McMaster University to put forward several reports to advance community benefits in Hamilton, including:

- *The Successes of Community Benefits Agreements (2019)* (9)
- *Community Benefits for Hamilton LRT (2022)* (10)
- *Municipal Social Procurement Policies in Canada: An Environmental Scan and Recommendations for Hamilton (2024)* (11)

In 2024, key findings from *Municipal Social Procurement Policies in Canada: An Environmental Scan and Recommendations for Hamilton* (11) were presented to the Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee. Over the following months, staff conducted an analysis of the 16 recommendations contained in the report. The analysis resulted in agreement with all recommendations put forward, recognition of work already being undertaken, and plans for implementing new key actions in advancing social procurement. (12)

This collective work resulted in the following approval by the General Issues Committee: "That up to \$75 K from the Tax Stabilization Reserve (110046) be allocated to fund the development of the Community Benefits Protocol or Social Value Framework and that the consideration of

a pilot Social Value Procurement be deferred pending completion of the Community Benefits Protocol or Social Value Framework.” (13)

As demonstrated, significant work has already been completed by City staff in advancing community benefits. From here, a Community Benefits Framework could help to create a guiding vision to operationalize social procurement and community benefits goals

In May 2025, the Research Shop partnered with the Hamilton Community Benefits Network and the City of Hamilton to perform an updated jurisdictional scan of CBAs across Canada. This research asks: *What are best practices in Community Benefits Agreement development, implementation, and evaluation?* The findings from this review aim to inform a consistent Hamilton Community Benefits Framework that ensures future infrastructure and redevelopment projects deliver equitable, measurable community outcomes.

Methodology

Our team conducted a jurisdictional scan of existing CBAs in Canada and a review of grey literature published by coalitions driving, and organizations experienced with, the CBA process. The goal was to identify best practices for development, implementation and evaluation of the CBAs that could inform a Hamilton context.

The research included both a broad online search and a targeted review of documents published by major community benefits organizations across Canada, such as the Hamilton Community Benefits Network and the Toronto Community Benefits Network. Key Google search terms included “Community Benefits Agreement,” “Impact Benefit Agreement,” “community benefits,” “infrastructure projects,” “community advocacy,” “social procurement,” and “workforce development.” We also reviewed relevant municipal policies, project reports, and evaluation frameworks.

Data extraction and analysis focused on three core benefit categories: community employment benefits, social procurement, and public realm and community supports. Additionally, we extracted information relating to the procedural stages of CBA development, implementation, and evaluation.

Findings

This report begins with an overview of how different provinces have approached community benefits frameworks and project-specific community benefits agreements. Case studies of specific projects explored in the research are available in Appendix D. For each case, we then analyze the social procurement, employment benefits and other community benefits that were utilized. We used these findings to inform a series of best

practices that could be relevant and transferable to the Hamilton context, presented further in the report below.

Federal and Provincial Context

In 2018, the Government of Canada introduced the Community Employment Benefits Framework. This framework sets out requirements for federally funded infrastructure projects to set targets and report on employment of at least three underrepresented groups (such as women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, veterans, and youth). (14)

Beyond this, some provinces have their own legislation related to community benefits.

British Colombia

At a provincial level, British Columbia and Ontario have legislation relating to community benefits. In British Columbia, the provincial government announced in 2018 that major infrastructure projects would be built under a new CBA protocol (15). This framework mandates quotas for apprentices, preferential hiring of women and Indigenous workers, and unionized employment. It established the British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits to manage hiring, payroll, and coordination with the Allied Infrastructure and Related Construction Council of British Columbia, which represents 19 major building trades unions. (15)

The purpose of the new Crown corporation, British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits (BCIB) is to hire construction workers, work with unions and contractors to dispatch labour, and manage payroll and benefits. (15) While the approach has increased Indigenous participation in construction, it has faced criticism for insufficient early engagement with Indigenous communities and for focusing too narrowly on employment at the expense of other priorities. (15) The model demonstrates the value of a consistent policy applied across projects, but also the importance of meaningful engagement and attention to barriers beyond employment. Further information about the success of BCIB is available in Appendix A.

British Columbia has also explored community benefits within Indigenous communities through BCIBs and Impact Benefits Agreements. Further information on best practices for working with Indigenous communities is available in Appendix B.

Ontario

In 2014, Ontario announced plans to tie Community Benefits Agreements to major public infrastructure investments, especially transit (Metrolinx projects). A year later, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act (IIPA), 2015 was passed, and explicitly required infrastructure planning and investment to promote “community benefits” such as apprenticeships, employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and other social/environmental goals. (16) This made Ontario the first province in Canada to legislate community benefits into infrastructure law. (16) Between 2014 and 2018, projects such as the Eglinton-Crosstown LRT began including community benefits. Later, the Progressive Conservative government elected in 2018

shifted CBA requirements to a more flexible community benefits framework approach, emphasizing voluntary or flexible commitments rather than mandatory targets. (16)

While other provinces across Canada do not have CBA-specific legislation, many such as Manitoba, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada have seen CBA-like initiatives driven by community advocacy, or legislation/frameworks related to labour and social procurement. (17)

Municipal Contexts

While provincial legislation has formally recognized community benefits in British Columbia and Ontario, policies and frameworks on a municipal level have been essential to driving progress across Canada.

City of Vancouver

Vancouver has adopted a city-wide CBA policy that applies to major infrastructure projects, setting specific benefit targets such as at least ten per cent of total project hours be performed by local apprentices or equity-deserving (e.g., low/moderate income) individuals, and at least ten per cent of procurement spending directed toward social enterprises or diverse-owned businesses. (18) The policy is embedded in development agreements and procurement processes. The New St. Paul's Hospital redevelopment was the first project to implement this approach, exceeding targets within two years through strong pre-development engagement and ongoing monitoring. (19) Vancouver's model highlights the advantages of setting consistent city-wide standards, while allowing for adaptation to specific project contexts.

Prince Edward County

Prince Edward County (PEC) launched its Community Benefits Framework in June 2025, helping to pave the path for community benefits in rural settings. (20) The development of the framework was led by Thrive PEC, an alliance of individuals, businesses, organizations, and community stakeholders, which brought together nearly 400 residents. (20) Key goals of the framework, as well as examples of community benefits developers are asked to consider are outlined below (20):

- **Equitable processes:** work with key stakeholders in conducting accessible consultations and addressing barriers to engagement (e.g., childcare and transportation) and develop community impact reports; avoid development on agricultural land and preserve natural resources such as forests
- **Affordable housing:** rental apartments should adhere to targets outlined in the framework (e.g., 25% affordable rental units, 5% at rent geared to income, 50% affordable housing if units are built on publicly owned land); design building units, amenities, and rental/ownership structures catered to low-income individuals, youth, families and seniors

- **Economic diversity:** affordable commercial spaces for businesses and non-profits; offer spaces for local entrepreneurs and programming (e.g., pop-ups, farmer's markets, art exhibitions and events); local hiring and social procurement
- **Decent work:** living wage; hire 40%+ from local population; create apprenticeship pathways; develop hiring practices to ensure train-to-career pathways exist
- **Climate protection:** build green (e.g., install heat pumps and geothermal technology), minimize carbon fuel and fossil gas, construct wastewater ponds and focus on water conservation, create low-impact travel infrastructure (e.g., EV charging stations)
- **Arts and cultural heritage:** incorporate public art into developments, explore use of public art and placemaking (streets, parks, etc.); invest in arts and culture sector such as by contributing to municipal PEC Arts Fund
- **Community assets:** create recreational spaces, day cares, community hubs for centralized community services; consider how developments influence engagement, safety, and accessibility

City of Brampton

The City of Brampton adopted a Community Benefits Policy in 2024, focused on using the City's procurement power to create inclusive training and employment opportunities for low/moderate income and other equity-deserving residents (21). The policy aligns itself with the City's Sustainable Procurement Strategy and applies to defined types of construction projects (e.g., electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling systems, roads, sidewalks, bridges, sewers, watermains, other utility installations, transit stops, new construction parks) (21). As part of the policy, vendors must submit a community benefits plan (CBP) when putting forward a bid including (21):

- An outreach plan for recruiting low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups into employment/training
- Recruitment targets
- The nature of employment/training opportunities
- Partnerships for training/outreach activities (policy contains list of organizations that can assist vendors with reach Brampton residents, including Indigenous communities)

The policy also requires vendors to report on commitments set out in the CBP at pre-determined time points (e.g., number and names of people who have been offered training/employment).

City of Toronto

The City of Toronto has embedded community benefits into municipal processes through its Social Procurement Program and Community Benefits Framework. (22) Large-scale

City-led infrastructure projects must include measurable targets for local hiring and apprenticeship opportunities, particularly for low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups, and prioritize procurement from diverse-owned businesses, social enterprises, and local suppliers. (22) Project-specific Community Benefits Plans set clear deliverables, monitoring processes, and public reporting. This framework has been implemented in projects such as the Eglinton-Crosstown LRT and Finch West LRT, facilitated in partnership with the Toronto Community Benefits Network. Toronto's model shows how municipalities can integrate CBA requirements into procurement processes and align benefits with broader city strategies in housing, workforce development, and poverty reduction. (23)

York Region

York is an example of a regional municipality that does not yet possess a specific community benefits framework or policy. Instead, it has embedded social procurement and workforce development objectives, two types of community benefits, into its broader procurement policy framework. This includes encouraging the hiring of individuals from low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups, sourcing from social enterprises and diverse suppliers, and fostering apprenticeship and training opportunities. These commitments are framed not as optional add-ons, but as part of the Region's standard value-for-money criteria in tender evaluations. (24)

Both Hamilton and York Region have made initial progress on community benefits via social procurement. For this reason, it may be helpful to see how York Region's approach to community benefits evolves over the coming years. More information on York Region's Corporate Procurement Policy is available in Appendix C.

This report explored the following infrastructure projects that have incorporated community benefits from across Canada:

- Eglinton-Crosstown LRT (Toronto)
- Downsview Redevelopment (Toronto)
- Regent Park (Toronto)
- Housing Now (Toronto)
- St. Paul's Hospital (Vancouver)
- Gordie Howe Bridge (Windsor)
- Manor Park (Ottawa)
- Heron Gate (Ottawa)
- Odenak Multifaith Housing Initiative (Ottawa)
- Cogswell District Redevelopment (Halifax)

Best practices from these projects were used to inform recommendations made in this report. Detailed summaries of these projects, community benefits, and project strengths are available in Appendix D. The first table below provides examples of some of the community benefits explored in each of these projects.

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
Eglinton-Crosstown LRT (Toronto)	Maximize purchasing and procurement opportunities from local businesses, social enterprises.	Support apprenticeship training and workforce development opportunities for residents, especially low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups. This includes an aspirational target of 10% of all trades and craft working hours to be performed by apprentices from these groups.	Public realm improvements through investing in and incorporating features such as pedestrian friendly spaces, multimodal transportation options, green features and accessibility features for people living with disabilities.
Downsview (Toronto)	A minimum of 20% of local and social procurement target by purchasing goods and/or services from local businesses, social enterprises and businesses, especially one's Indigenous-owned, Black owned and/or diverse-owned Create affordable commercial spaces and	A minimum of 10% of apprenticeships trade and/or craft working hours on a trade-by-trade basis performed by apprentices from historically disadvantaged and equity deserving groups (e.g., low/moderate income residents) A minimum of 50% target for equity hiring and a minimum of 25% of new professional, administrative, technical, operations and maintenance roles to be local hires.	A minimum of 30% should be affordable housing and/or affordable ownership, with 50% of that being deeply affordable or Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) for a minimum of 99 years. Create access to affordable below the market rate commercial and micro retail space opportunities for social enterprises and Black, Indigenous or other racialized businesses throughout all development phases.

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
	business development	Ensure employment opportunities that can pay a living wage throughout the construction and development phases. Local hiring with a focus on Neighborhood Improvement Areas Coordinating equitable pathways into skilled trades and apprenticeships through a dedicated training center.	Ensure environmental sustainability through various initiatives such as creating green building designs and materials and preserving public parks for community-led initiatives. Ensure accountability and transparency through a commitment to measurable targets, ongoing monitoring, tracking, public reporting and community oversight. Development public community centers, recreation spaces, libraries, childcare centers, schools and public parks should be prioritized.
Regent Park (Toronto)		All packages allocate funds toward wages for local jobs and employment which	Educational: Up to \$3.8 million is designated for scholarships for TCHC tenants pursuing post-

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
		ensures direct economic benefits to Regent Park residents Some packages emphasize development of skills and local business support for increase in employability and economic participation within the community The CBA prioritizes employment and training opportunities for residents for integrating social equity goals	secondary education, providing about 700+ scholarships for part-time and full-time students One package focuses on creating new community spaces to support social connection and local initiatives All packages include funding/investment for community-led initiatives, supporting programs that enhance local wellbeing and participation Contributes \$26.8 million toward community development, promoting long-term economic stability through the Regent Park Social Development Plan."
St. Paul's Hospital (Vancouver)	A minimum of 10% local procurement of materials and services from a third party certified social impact or equity-deserving owned businesses, prioritizing	10% of new employees should voluntarily self-identify as a member of an equity-deserving (e.g., low/moderate income) group	Provide a minimum of two childcare centers to meet projected demand for employees and the surrounding communities. Provide spaces for various community uses onsite which can include offices for non-profit

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
	Vancouver business including non-profits and social enterprises. A minimum of 10% of materials, goods and services locally, prioritizing Vancouver companies first, followed by Metro Vancouver and British Columbia		organizations, meetings rooms and multi-purpose spaces
Gordie Howe Bridge (Windsor & Detroit)		At least \$250 million of the work done during the design and construction phase in Canada will be done by or contracted to workers and contractors local to the City of Windsor, Essex County, or within 100 km of Windsor. Engage and hire Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous-owned businesses in Windsor, Essex County, and Walpole Island, Ontario. 290 co-op students and 770 apprentices were assigned to this project.	For Canadian Indigenous peoples: Implement Canadian Indigenous Peoples Relations Policy and require all subcontractors to do same Contribute to childcare costs (up to total cost of \$25000) to allow employed and unemployed individuals to attend project workshops (within established criteria) Commission local artists to create historical, ecological, or cultural

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
			artwork related to the project Encourage high school students to explore careers in construction industry by asking Canadian Indigenous Peoples working on the project to speak to them annually on options available
Manor Park (Ottawa)			540 of 654 units designated Secured Affordable Housing with rents at or below market average. Voluntary collaboration with community and stakeholders to develop a CBA. Including commitments to work with the Ottawa Community Benefits Network to convene a working group. Commitment to avoid displacement of existing residents and a three-year advance notice of each construction phase.
Heron Gate (Ottawa)		Launched a Young Resident Summer Employment Program,	Invested \$1 million towards the public park fund and maintains a

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
		hiring neighbourhood youth for painting, cleaning, and light maintenance work Operates an on-site community hub that provides free programming and youth engagement activities, promoting workforce participation	large community garden, showing efforts towards neighborhoods' livability and green spaces Guarantees delivering 1,020 affordable housing units (half newly constructed and half in existing buildings) over the next 15-20 years—approximately 10% of new units in each phase of redevelopment are designated as affordable. To ensure housing diversity, family-sized and accessible units are included.
Odenak Multifaith Housing Initiative (Ottawa)	The project committed 15% of the overall contract value to vendors that are at least 50% owned or managed by equity-deserving groups- the website defined these groups as “communities who have faced significant collective challenges in participating in	Requires 20% of on-site employment hours be completed by workers from equity-deserving groups	100% of all art commissioned to equity-deserving groups Co-design of spaces with Indigenous architects to include culturally relevant spaces (such as circular gathering spaces for the Odenak community and the terraces designed for native planting) Creation of inclusive amenities: retail, health services, daycare, bicycle maintenance,

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
	society.” From the 15%, 5% should be for Algonquin and other Indigenous businesses. 50% of the contracts will go to vendors based in the National Capital Region, with a 5% share reserved for Indigenous businesses		and a community hub for various needs 31% of the 600+ units will be accessible and barrier-free. Integration of LEED Gold Standards for energy efficiency and sustainability \$150,000 annually for 20 years pledged from the Dream Community Foundation to support community programming such as tutoring and related scholarships for tenant children, breakfast club/after-school programming, and fitness classes for eligible tenants
Cogswell District Redevelopment (Halifax)	Development of a Supplier Diversity Plan with a targeted aim of achieving 10% of all subcontracts for goods and services going to businesses owned, managed and controlled by low/moderate	Development of a Workforce Development Plan with a targeted aim of achieving 10% of all apprenticeships and 20% of all labor provided by low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups within the construction workforce.	Appointing a community liaison to work with the contractor, the Halifax regional municipality and the community to develop and implement the aforementioned plans. Establish an Advisory committee made of members from the

Examples of community benefits secured in projects across Canada

Project (Location)	Social Procurement	Employment Benefits	Other Community Benefits
	income or other equity-deserving group members.		African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities and other equity deserving groups to work with the staff and contractor to ensure project development and implementation oversight.

Best Practices

Across the Canadian and international examples reviewed, a set of common principles emerged that define successful Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs). This can be organized into four stages: development, implementation, evaluation, and integration. A more detailed breakdown of best practices identified in infrastructure projects across Canada is available in Appendix E, as well as project case studies in Appendix D.

Development

The development stage ensures that transparent, inclusive, and enforceable community benefits clauses are incorporated into contract language before project initiation. This stage focuses on collaboratively defining priorities with the community, identifying who could benefit, and ensuring that commitments are legally and structurally supported. Conducting thorough and early engagement ensures that CBAs respond to real community needs and equity priorities rather than delivering generic or symbolic benefits. When equity-deserving groups (e.g., low/moderate income residents) are identified and consulted from the outset, agreements are more likely to achieve meaningful and measurable outcomes.

Examples:

- **Early Engagement:** The *Toronto Community Benefits Network* held consultations before the commitments for the Eglinton Crosstown CBA were finalized, ensuring employment targets reflected local workforce demographics. (25)
- **Identifying Equity-Deserving Groups:** *BC's CBA Protocol* mandates hiring quotas for women, Indigenous peoples, and apprentices, embedding equity from the beginning. (15)
- **Co-Design:** In the *Ottawa LRT Stage 2 project*, stakeholders co-developed training programs that aligned with the project's construction schedule. (26) Key stakeholders included Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Fire Services, Ottawa Paramedics, as well as diesel rail operators and controllers. (27)
- **Legal Enforceability:** *Impact Benefit Agreements* with Indigenous communities often include legally binding clauses, offering a model for enforceable municipal CBAs. (28)

Implementation

The implementation stage translates commitments into operational structures with adequate capacity, resources, oversight, and partnerships to deliver the promised benefits. Without the proper staffing, monitoring, and funding, CBA commitments risk remaining symbolic or aspirational.

Examples:

- **Staffing & Partnerships:** The *Vancouver Social Procurement Framework* assigns dedicated staff liaisons to contractors to support community benefit delivery. (29)
- **Monitoring Structures:** The *Halifax Cogswell District Redevelopment* project includes a community benefits clause to appoint a community liaison and establish an advisory committee to ensure project oversight by the residents. (30)
- **Flexible Funding:** The *Gordie Howe International Bridge CBA* in Windsor-Detroit included a contingency fund to support emerging community needs. (24)

Evaluation

The evaluation stage measures and reports on progress toward CBA commitments with active involvement. Public accountability and continuous improvement depend on tracking measurable outcomes over time. Evaluation not only verifies whether commitments have been met but also identifies opportunities to strengthen future agreements

Examples:

- **Measurable Targets:** *Toronto's Social Procurement Policy* requires contractors to report on supplier diversity and workforce participation rates. (31)
- **Long-Term Impact Tracking:** Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs) often include baseline assessments of the environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural conditions. Continuing to measure these long-term metrics to track community impact in not just the short and medium term, but also over the long term. (26)
- **Public Transparency:** *BC Infrastructure Benefits* regularly publish progress reports online, allowing the public to see performance against targets. (32)

Integration

The integration stage ensures CBAs are embedded within existing municipal policies so they are sustained beyond individual projects. When linked to broader City priorities, such as housing, workforce development, and environmental sustainability, CBAs become more consistent, scalable, and effective over the long term.

Examples:

- **Municipal Policy Alignment:** The City of Brampton adopted their own CB policy focusing on workforce development, leveraging large infrastructure projects to increase training/employment opportunities for equity-deserving groups. (21)
The policy aligns with the City of Brampton's Sustainable Procurement Strategy and applies to specific types of construction projects. (21)

Recommendations for Hamilton

1. Development: Engaging with Community

Recommendation 1: Acknowledge historical impacts of infrastructure projects.

Traditionally, large projects are viewed on a city-wide benefit scale, and the impacts on neighbourhoods, residents, particularly those of low/moderate income, Indigenous communities, and other marginalized groups can be overlooked. (33)

- **What:** Recognize and address any legacy of displacement, exclusion, and mistrust created by past development projects in the city that caused neighbourhood disruption and/or displacement.
- **Why:** Building trust requires acknowledging harms, approaching negotiations with cultural sensitivity, and committing to transparent, long-term relationships.
- **Example:** *Manor Park (Ottawa):* Concerns over displacement were shaped in part due to a previous development project, Heron Gate.(34) The City of Ottawa and Manor Park Management addressed these fears by committing to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that ensured non-displacement and early notification before construction phases. (35) The agreement also outlined tenant communication protocols, emphasizing transparency and proactive engagement throughout redevelopment. It was essential to recognize how history shaped concerns around the project. (35) The Heron Gate experience had left lasting distrust among residents and advocacy groups, underscoring the need for stronger safeguards. (34) By openly acknowledging past harms and committing to reduce harm to communities, the City of Ottawa demonstrated an effort to rebuilt trust and embed equity considerations into future planning processes.

Recommendation 2: Conduct equitable and accessible engagement early with the most impacted and underrepresented groups. Focus on impacts, not just gaining support.

- **What:** Involve low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups at the earliest stages, centring dialogue on mitigating negative impacts and co-developing solutions, rather than solely seeking approval for the project. Recognize that participating in community engagement is harder for equity-deserving groups (e.g., online engagement can pose barriers for those facing the digital divide, while in-person consultation can be hard to attend for those without funds for childcare and transportation). Ensure engagement is accessible for these groups to ensure that those most impacted are truly heard.
- **Why:** Early engagement helps surface local priorities, avoid tokenistic consultation, and create CBAs that reflect community needs.
- **Example:** *Gordie Howe Bridge:* Between 2015-2019, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority and City of Windsor conducted a two-phase consultation with communities, Canadian Indigenous Peoples, businesses, and other stakeholders in both Windsor and Detroit. (36) This resulted in \$20 million being invested through the Neighbourhood Infrastructure Strategy, which focused on areas most affected by the project such as Sandwich/West Windsor (36). The consultations identified community priorities (like

local partnerships and community safety which resulted in concrete measures like the eco-passage (bridge) between Black Oak Heritage Park and Ojibway Park. (36) This approach shows how early and sustained engagement can transform community concerns into measurable benefits.

Recommendation 3: Co-define “equity-deserving groups” with the community

- **What:** Develop a clear, locally relevant definition of *equity-deserving groups* through community consultation. This definition could apply to targeted hiring, training, and procurement, across the entire city (beyond just community benefits).
- **Why:** Clear definitions ensure programs reach intended beneficiaries and reflect intersectional realities.
- **Example:** Casino-Woodbine has been one of the first Canadian infrastructure projects to employ community benefits. Within the context of this project terminology used in definition of equity-deserving groups was changed from “equity-seeking” to “equity-deserving.” The following groups are included within the definition: Indigenous peoples, Black communities, persons with disabilities, racialized communities, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit communities (LBGTQ2S), undocumented individuals, newcomers, immigrants and refugees, and persons with low income and youth. With respect to hiring obligations in this Agreement, Equity-deserving Groups do not include any person not legally entitled to work in Canada. (37)

Recommendation 4: Establish an advisory group with decision-making influence

- **What:** In addition to gathering broader community input where possible, the Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee could be re-shaped to serve as an advisory group that has an oversight role for long-term implementation, and to provide flexible and project-specific guidance, moving beyond just CBAs. Guidelines based on project size or cost could be introduced to decide when advisory group input or a CBA for the project is needed.
- **Why:** The current composition of the Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee includes both City and community representation. Therefore, it creates a streamlined approach for engagement, especially for larger projects, improving efficiency. Other processes for community engagement can be developed for smaller projects (see recommendation 4.1 below).
- **Example:** The City of Toronto has a Community Benefits Advisory Group comprised of both community and City representatives that meets regularly to provide guidance on challenges related to implementing the City’s Community Benefits framework with priority areas including: outreach and recruitment; community benefits hiring in coordination with skilled trade union dispatch processes; tracking and monitoring compliance; processes for project assessment and target setting; community engagement; and system coordination. (38)

Recommendation 4.1: Establish a policy for smaller infrastructure projects for public realm and community improvements that centers community voices.

- **What:** Smaller infrastructure projects may not require engagement as extensive as larger projects. However, ensuring community voices shape projects will still be important. A policy could be developed around engagement for smaller infrastructure projects, with specific protocols and processes for gathering and using community input.
- **Why:** Establishing a clear policy helps residents identify and understand opportunities for engagement, while ensuring that the City can ensure efficiency in engagement processes for smaller projects.
- **Example:** In the past, the City of Hamilton has used participatory budgeting in Ward 2 and 3, allowing residents a voice in shaping their community. (39) The Regent Park project also allowed residents to vote on one of three community benefits packages that would most meet their needs. (40) Such methods could be employed for input on smaller-scale projects, while being mindful of who is often not represented within such engagement (e.g., residents facing the digital divide if voting is done online). (40)

2. Implementation of Community Benefits

Recommendation 5: Ensure sufficient resourcing

- **What:** Providing staffing from both the contractor and the governments involved is required for coordinators to manage CBA delivery, connect residents to opportunities, and coordinate between City departments, developers, and community partners. Additionally, ensure that sufficient funds are allocated to advancing community benefits.
- **Why:** Dedicated staff ensure benefits are implemented, tracked, and communicated effectively across all stakeholders.
- **Example:** *Gordie Howe Bridge:* In Canada, workforce development agencies partnered with the City of Windsor – Employment and Training Services, while in the US the primary partner was the Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation. (36) By partnering with these organizations, the Gordie Howe Bridge’s workforce development and participation plan aims to increase community awareness for employment opportunities, specifically by hiring Community Benefits Coordinators in both countries to oversee local hiring targets, manage job postings, and act as a liaison with community organizations.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen local and social hiring pathways

- **What:** Build structured pathways into CBAs that connect low/moderate income and other equity-deserving residents with sustainable jobs in both trades and professional/technical roles. As the city of Hamilton currently does not have an employment services division, local partnership with Employment Ontario service providers, employment service providers, building trades and other groups tasked with creating job ready residents. These groups can help service the need for employees for a CBA and provide key supports. These partnerships need to begin well before hiring needs arise to ensure residents are trained and ready when opportunities open.
- **Why:** Without clear pipelines, job targets risk being met through short-term or precarious work.

- **Example:** Workforce pathways programs in York Region like Construction Connections show how these pathways can be built. The Construction Connections program initiative, developed by Toronto Employment & Social Services, the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education & Skills Development, and Metrolinx, connects newcomers, NEET youth, people with disabilities, and foreign-trained professionals to construction jobs through partnerships with workforce development agencies and community organisations. (24)

Recommendation 7: Build mechanisms for adaptive agreements

- **What:** Include clauses to review and adjust CBA commitments based on community feedback during implementation.
- **Why:** Ensures CBAs remain responsive to changing economic, social, or environmental conditions.
- **Example:** While Vancouver has a city-wide CBA framework providing centralized guidance for community benefits, CBAs can be tailored to the needs of each project and community. (19)

Recommendation 8: Align CBAs with existing municipal policies

- **What:** Link CBA objectives to pre-existing municipal frameworks like workforce development, housing, food justice, or sustainability plans.
- **Why:** Integration prevents duplication, increases policy coherence, and amplifies systemic change.
- **Example:** *Downsview Redevelopment:* Downsview's community vision report highlighted the importance of using existing frameworks and programs such as the City of Toronto's Housing Action Plan. (41) This plan aims to produce affordable housing through market, non-market and mixed income housing. (41) By forming a coalition with the City of Toronto in advancing the plans and targets outlined in their action plan, stakeholders of the project can advance the benefits for the local community while benefitting larger city goals and ensuring accountability and policy coherence. This also enables an existing housing framework to guide the project while also being adaptable to the community, effectively reducing time and resources needed to start the planning process from scratch.

Recommendation 9: Make CBAs legally binding with third-party oversight

- **What:** Draft CBAs as enforceable contracts with independent monitoring for compliance.
- **Why:** Prevents loopholes, strengthens accountability, and ensures promised benefits are delivered.
- **Example:** *Eglinton-Crosstown LRT* required public reporting and independent reviews by Metrolinx to verify compliance. (42)

3. Evaluation

Recommendation 10: Involve community organizations in monitoring

- **What:** Partner with local groups to track progress, provide feedback, and identify implementation challenges in real time.
- **Why:** Community-led monitoring builds trust and ensures evaluation reflects lived experience.
- **Example:** The Community Benefits Advisory Group is comprised of representatives from community organizations, employment service providers, skilled trade unions, developers, contractors, and City of Toronto divisions. The CBAG will define criteria for applying equity targets to smaller-scale Toronto Builds projects. (38)

Recommendation 11: Set hard, quantifiable targets

- **What:** Establish measurable commitments rather than aspirational goals, with clear baselines and timelines.
- **Why:** Hard targets enable objective performance evaluation and reduce ambiguity.
- **Example:** In the Downsview project, stakeholders set a very specific and measurable target for equitable hiring: a minimum of 50% target for equity hiring and a minimum of 25% of new professional, administrative, technical, operations and maintenance roles should be local hires. (43)

Recommendation 12: Measure long-term outcomes, not just outputs

- **What:** Track indicators such as economic resilience, housing stability, and environmental impact over time.
- **Why:** Only reporting short-term metrics (e.g., jobs created) may not reflect whether benefits are sustainable or transformative.
- **Example:** *Impact Benefit Agreements (various):* Some agreements include multi-year monitoring commitments tied to lasting community change. (28)

Recommendation 13: Share evaluation processes and data with relevant stakeholders

- **What:** Provide stakeholders, such as developers, with clear information about how the project will be evaluated. They should have guidelines on what data they are responsible for collecting and how it will be reported. Sharing outcome data with community is also important for accountability and transparency.
- **Why:** Transparent processes improve data quality, reduce reporting burdens, and build mutual accountability.
- **Example:** The St. Paul's Hospital (Vancouver) project *mandated* contractor reporting on local procurement, workforce diversity, and equity hiring targets, with data shared publicly. (19)

Conclusion

The case studies and jurisdictional scan presented in this report highlight the significant potential of Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) to shape equitable, inclusive, and sustainable infrastructure development. This report has outlined best practices for the development, implementation, and evaluation of CBAs, drawing from a range of North American case study examples. For Hamilton, CBAs represent an opportunity to harness infrastructure investments as a tool for advancing local economic inclusion, improving social equity, and strengthening community resilience.

From a broader infrastructure perspective, embedding CBAs into Hamilton's development process could help address long-standing challenges in local employment, affordable housing, and neighbourhood revitalization. As the City continues to grow, through projects like transit expansion, public facility upgrades, and mixed-use redevelopment, CBAs could ensure that economic gains are distributed more evenly and that vulnerable communities see tangible improvements.

The design and implementation of CBAs in Hamilton must also be responsive to the City's economic realities. Hamilton's labour market faces both opportunities and constraints: the presence of skilled trades and manufacturing capacity offers a strong base for local hiring initiatives, while pockets of underemployment, youth unemployment, and barriers faced by low/moderate and other equity-deserving groups highlight the need for targeted workforce strategies. At the same time, development pressures such as gentrification and rising housing costs underscore the importance of integrating affordability and anti-displacement measures into CBAs.

Successfully adopting CBAs will require a collaborative effort. City staff, the Hamilton Community Benefits Network, community partners, developers and residents must work together to design agreements that reflect local priorities and are backed by clear targets, accountability mechanisms and transparent reporting.

There is also an opportunity for Hamilton to consider pilot projects or phased implementation of a Community Benefits Framework. This would provide a consistent framework for applying CBAs across projects, ensuring that benefits are both measurable and equitable. Pilot projects, tied to upcoming capital investments or redevelopment initiatives, could test community engagement methods, procurement approaches, and monitoring tools before scaling them city-wide. A phased approach would allow for refinement over time, helping build trust among stakeholders while ensuring processes remain feasible for city staff and developers.

By aligning CBA implementation with existing municipal priorities, such as the City's Strategic Plan, Workforce Development Strategy, and Climate Action Plan, Hamilton could maximize the long-term value of its infrastructure investments, while setting a precedent for collaborative and equitable development among mid-sized cities.

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Appendix A: British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits (BCIB)

Previously, British Columbia struggled with retaining its skilled construction workforce. Many apprentices left the industry due to the work's uncertain nature and toxic work culture, with workers who were Indigenous, racialized and women, most impacted. In 2018, the BCIB, a crown corporation, was created to form a training and employment strategy that combatted many of the aforementioned issues by prioritizing local jobs, apprenticeships, and employment equity. The government requires its contracts to source trades labour from this new corporation. The government also negotiated a Community Benefits Agreement with the Allied Infrastructure and Related Construction Council (AIRCC), representing 19 constructions unions. This CBA sets guidelines on who can get hired, how much they're paid, equity goals and training and protections. Under this CBA, BCIB is the employer and therefore all workers hired by the BCIB are unionized. The CBA prioritizes local hiring, training, apprenticeships and recruitment of Indigenous workers, women, racialized workers and people with disabilities. (32)

Precedent in Vancouver

In Vancouver, the NDP government established a publicly owned corporation called the Highway Constructors Limited (HCL) to employ the construction workforce for a major Vancouver Island highway. HCL made an agreement with 13 highway construction trades unions to ensure their cooperation in supplying workers required for the project while maintain equity, training and apprenticeship programs. The agreement, similar to BCIB's CBA, allowed HCL to locally hire and train residents and members of equity deserving groups, with all workers unionized. The initiative started with a major training program for the aforementioned groups, followed by advertisements on Vancouver Island to recruit individuals to the training program and possibly work on the project. Economic analysis showed that this significantly increased employment of targeted equity groups and local residents and many workers achieved different qualifications. However, a new government overthrew this structure by dismantling HCL, undermining unions and eliminated trades' certification requirements for most construction work. This undermined apprenticeship since there was little to no benefit in obtaining a trades' qualification or designation and projects prioritized low cost contracts rather than equity and local employment. (32)

What is BCIB's role?

In British Columbia, contractors who obtain work for provincial projects are required to use BCIB dispatched unionized workers. The contractors play merely supervisory function while BCIB is the employer that dispatches their choice of workers based on the rank order set in the CBA. BCIB supports the government's broad goal to train for the entire industry for long-term workforce needs and not just for one project. (32)

The major roles of BCIB in an infrastructure project include:

- Manage labor relations and find qualified workers
- Manage payroll to reduce administrative burden on contractors
- Carry out targeted research on labor requirements and infrastructure projects
- Promote employment continuity through rehiring and focus on local hiring
- Address toxic worksite environments through a two-day respectful onsite initiative (ROI) which addresses racism, sexism, anti-LGBTQ+ behaviour, climate change and many other issues that contribute to a negative workplace culture.
- Ensure workers complete safety training and worksites comply with Worksafe BC's accident prevention guidelines. (32)

Workforce Success Outcomes

Long term training and development

One of the significant problems that BCIB addresses is the skills and worker shortage and lack of long-term training as projects are short-term. To mitigate this, BCIB has specific apprenticeship targets it needs to meet, including training goals and ratios of apprentices to journey workers who could train them. Every BCIB project has specific targets depending on the type of work and apprenticeship opportunities which is tracked by BCIB's employment data tracking system. BCIB can ensure long-term training by coordinating training of individuals across multiple projects to create stability in apprenticeship training. Therefore, one of BCIB's CBA strength is its focus on building capacity through measurable and specific targets to develop local skill and workforce for long term benefits. (32)

Attrition

Another issue in the industry is that apprentices and trainees drop out from construction with almost 60% of apprentices never finishing. This issue could be due to uncertainty of employment, low and insecure income, better opportunities in other sectors, lack of training and workplace culture among others. By dispatching the same workers to different contractors, BCIB can mitigate attrition ensuring longevity of work. This structure has allowed 21% of BCIB apprentices to be placed on multiple projects with different contractors, showing the continued employment of apprentices in the sector. (32)

Mitigating 'Boom and Bust': Supporting Local Workforce and Economy

Within the construction sector there is a cyclical pattern of employment with a surge in opportunities when a project initiates and a fall in local employment during busts. Local communities are impacted negatively as there is an influx of workers demanding housing and public services without corresponding tax revenues. Contractors also often bring their own workers, ignoring the local labor force. The BCIB's CBA gives residents living within 100km of worksites employment, training and apprenticeships priority, thereby supporting local workers and the local economy. (32)

How BCIB Evaluates Success

BCIC uses a sophisticated data system through its payroll system that identifies equity group membership (voluntarily) integrated with payroll data. This data system tracks employment, residency, training, apprenticeship, classification, qualification, hours worked on projects, contractor(s) they were assigned to, union, and workplace grievances and safety incidents. This ensures that BCIB delivers its CBA mandate, and they don't have periodic surveys, or union estimates of target. It allows BCIB to provide high-quality and real-time data on how it is achieving its targets, allowing for timely interventions. This data also allows BCIB to share verifiable information with government and equity-deserving group organizations, ensuring transparency as well. It is also an objective and independent measure that can be subject to public audit, furthering transparency and accountability. (32)

Appendix B: Community Benefits in Indigenous Communities

Introduction

Indigenous communities are a historically marginalized group who still face significant economic hardships in Canada as they are economically and socially marginalized leading to lower quality of life, life-expectancy, education and higher unemployment rates. This historic and ongoing disadvantage highlights the need to put them at the center of CBAs to mitigate these negative effects and promote economic justice for Indigenous Peoples. Workforce development policies and impact benefit agreements can aid this goal of advancing economic justice through employment opportunities and providing other economic benefits that offset the impacts of a development project. An article published in the International Indigenous Policy Journal identified barriers and opportunities for a provincial scale CBA in British Columbia can promote economic justice through workforce development. (15)

In 2018, the provincial government made a province-wide community benefits agreement with 19 prominent unions. Impact Benefit Agreements and similar agreements have existed with Indigenous groups for individual projects however, this province-wide agreement broadly covers infrastructure projects across the province that develops mainly service urban areas and requires the Allied Infrastructure and Related Construction Council of British Columbia (AIRCC). In public statements surrounding the agreement, the government invoked various prominent government movements to advance Indigenous rights and justice, including Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (15)

Community Benefits Agreement

Current Structure of CBAs

After the BC government established the CBA framework, the BC Infrastructure Benefits was created for hiring construction workers, managing payroll, and working with unions and contractors for supplying projects under the CBA. Additionally, the Allied Infrastructure and Related Construction Council was created to represent BC's 19 major building trades unions. These coalitions ensure that the hiring process for CBA projects are collaborative, and workers can come from three main pools: the BCIB lists, AIRCC members and those working for the contractor. BC's CBA framework was signed between the BCIB and AIRCC in 2018. While anyone can bid on a public infrastructure project, workers are required to join on of the AIRCC unions. (15)

Additionally, BCIB has been working to create employment opportunities by connecting applicants to employment service partners and by engaging with local Indigenous communities. It's worth noting that while the majority of BC residents favor this framework, public debates raised concerns of these increasing costs for public projects and the requirement to join an AIRCC union. Although this case was taken to the BC Supreme Court arguing that it violates contractors and building associations' right to freedom of association, it was rejected. (15)

Success of the CBA

Indigenous workers accounted for a sizeable number of hours of the work. However, it's important to note that it's difficult to evaluate the significance without the baseline numbers before the CBA. Therefore, lack of transparency and public reporting of data and numbers both before and after a CBA is critical for monitoring progress and impact. (15)

Additionally, primarily union representative interviewed for the study tended to have a larger positive outlook on the opportunities of the CBA while other consultants and Indigenous group representatives were doubtful or partly optimistic. Supportive interviewees indicated that the CBA would help build a career in addition to the immediate apprenticeships and jobs for Indigenous Peoples. Participants doubtfully indicated that this may not provide long-term employment opportunities and that enforcement of the agreement may be hard. (15)

Intangible positive impacts include changing the discourse and dialogue around Indigenous involvement in the construction trades, building trust, increasing Indigenous youth in the workforce and change the values of the infrastructure construction process (15).

Barriers of the CBA

Lack of engagement

A major issue identified surrounding the CBA was that Indigenous communities were not included as the main stakeholders in the agreement, but the agreement itself was between the BCIB and the AIRCC. There was a clear lack of evidence of engagement with the Indigenous groups in the policy. Many interview participants indicated that Indigenous groups were left out from discussions and were included only after the CBA was established. This also resulted in an assumption that the main need for Indigenous groups is increasing employment opportunities. However, many participants stated that the lack of employment opportunities was overstated. Therefore, the primary focus of the CBA to increase employment opportunities was not necessarily relevant to Indigenous groups and would thereby do very little to advance economic justice if needs lie elsewhere. Moreover, participants have stated that when engagement did occur, it was done so in a way that held the possibility of jobs in exchange for their approval. This highlights the need to provide Indigenous groups the space to make their own informed decisions without coercion masked as meaningful engagement. It's evident that a lack of engagement and consultation prior to the CBA being created, led to a CBA that is not reflective of all the Indigenous needs or interests. (15)

Communication

Participants also indicated that the BC government primarily communicates with the Chief and Council thereby acting as a barrier to information being filtered down to community members. A participant highlighted this to be a colonized process where the system has been shaped by colonial powers and thereby fail to recognize Indigenous ways of governance or decision making. Most Indigenous participants indicated improving the CBA through a holistic and culturally appropriate communication with Indigenous groups so they can influence decision-making. (15)

Unaddressed barriers

Another factor identified in the study was the unaddressed barriers for Indigenous communities to participate in construction trades and other employment opportunities. Participants indicated many barriers such as transportation or housing in urban areas. While the CBA addresses some barriers to some extent, the study found that there were barriers that prevented Indigenous Peoples from taking advantage of benefits offered by the agreement. For example, while the agreement statements state that workers can obtain travel allowance if using their own vehicle, obtaining a driver's license is challenge for Indigenous workers. It also fails to account for the issue that public transportation serving Indigenous communities outside urban areas are lacking. This is compounded by the neglect that the agreement has on Indigenous values such as the challenge of spending months away from tight knit Indigenous communities. (15)

Overlooked alternatives to advancing economic justice

The participants highlighted that the CBA overlooks Indigenous People's abilities to own their own enterprises or means of production to support infrastructure project by assuming Indigenous Peoples are in a place of economic dependency and therefore primarily require employment opportunities. The job opportunities provided by the CBA is dependent on hiring practices outside the Indigenous communities and are one-off opportunities, so there's little room for long-term growth and reach upward economic mobility. Indigenous participants highlighted the growth opportunity that Indigenous ownership of construction firms and supportive businesses (ex. Security, landscaping, janitorial, etc....) can provide. However, as a participant highlighted, the CBA actively excludes Indigenous-owned businesses because of the agreement mandatory AIRCC union affiliations. This is a barrier since many Indigenous businesses may not want to join an AIRCC union due to historically poor relationships trade union have with Indigenous groups. (15)

This issue in the CBA potentially reinforces economic dependence of Indigenous Peoples on non-Indigenous businesses, preventing economic autonomy.

Indigenous Marginalization within Construction Trades

Participants highlighted concerns regarding the challenges of Indigenous workers attending trade school and the historical lack of membership with unions. Interviewees highlighted that the Indigenous workers roles highlighted in the CBA is low quality, low in wage and unskilled labor that offers no diversity in jobs or upward mobility. Many positions exist in construction, but entry level jobs are the primary point of opportunity with little or no mention of promotion to safety officers, engineers or opportunities for higher learning. It's important to note one factor affecting this is a short timeline for hiring workers where most Indigenous workers don't have enough time to obtain trainings or work hours to develop their skills so they often end up in low paying, unskilled labor. (15)

Indigenous participants also stated that the CBA potentially narrowed opportunities. One reason is because the agreement is between BCIB and AIRCC which include unions that historically marginalized Indigenous workers, females and workers of color. Due to the requirement of all workers hired for CBA projects to join one of the AIRCC unions, the historical tensions reduce employment opportunities for Indigenous workers as they may wish not to join the unions. (15)

Participants also highlighted concerns surrounding enforcing and evaluating the outcomes of the CBA as a lack of monitoring for equitable job distribution has been an issue in past similar projects. (15)

Recommendations for Working with Indigenous Communities

1. Engagement

a. Comprehensive and Indigenous Community Centered Engagement

A major barrier identified in the article was the lack of engagement with the Indigenous communities that led to unaddressed barriers, needs, irrelevant or narrow benefits made based on assumptions(15). (15) This highlights the need for engagement that is comprehensive, holistic, collaborative and influenced primarily by Indigenous knowledge to ensure tailored and relevant benefits. To do this, the engagement process needs to identify several important factors including: (15)

- The current needs of Indigenous groups
- Barriers that prevent Indigenous groups from fully participating and obtaining the proposed benefits and supports that would mitigate these barriers

b. Non-Coercive Engagement – Community Led Co-Design Approach

As participants highlighted, when engagement did occur, it was done by holding the possibility of jobs over Indigenous groups in exchange for their project approval. This can be coercive and prevent Indigenous groups from making autonomous and informed decision, thus preventing meaningful and effective engagement. To prevent this, a co-design approach can be valuable that allows for “designing with” Indigenous groups rather than “designing for” stakeholders. (44) For example, this can look like a meeting with relevant Indigenous stakeholders to provide an overview of the project and what its risks entails and *asking* Indigenous community members what their suggestions are on opportunities they would like to see rather than offering employment opportunities only as the solution. Adding to this, Indigenous groups should serve as direct signatories of the CBA and benefits should be accordingly tailored and relevant to their needs. This also shows the value in a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach where a general CBA is put in place for all projects.

c. Open and Ongoing Communication

The article indicates that the government communicating only with the Chief and Council acts as a barrier for information reaching community members. (15) As the article suggests, it's important to consider how colonial structures embedded in CBA development can threaten Indigenous knowledge inclusion. (15) This suggests the importance of promoting ongoing engagement through culturally appropriate communication.

2. Alternative Ways to Advance Economic Justice Beyond Employment Opportunities

a. Diverse Job Opportunities

Contributing to economic justice only through construction jobs is very narrow and doesn't provide many benefits or allow Indigenous communities to build wealth on their own. (15) Additionally, this can confine workers to low quality, low wage and entry level jobs for the sake of offering employment opportunities, which may not even be a relevant concern.

Therefore, it's important to offer a diverse array of jobs including adequate and diverse training (e.g. Engineers, administrative jobs, project management jobs, etc....). This can offer opportunities to move up positions or provide higher learning opportunities, promoting agency, upward economic mobility and long-term sustainability of Indigenous communities and individuals.

b. Promoting Economic Independence via Indigenous Business or Joint Venture Opportunities

It's evident that not all Indigenous stakeholders are looking for job opportunities as many have their own firms and companies. The research article highlights the widely held misbelief by governments that Indigenous groups are in a position of economic dependence. (15) This can reinforce their dependence, marginalization and prevent upward economic mobilization. A key method for CBAs to move away from this assumption and advance economic justice and independence is to shift focus from employment opportunities and create opportunities for Indigenous communities to build their own businesses. (15) This can include giving them space and resources to establish joint ventures with companies (ex. Security company or janitorial company).

The Government of Canada's Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) is a proven working strategy that could be referred to for this. Key aspects of this strategy include a policy that mandates the federal government and agencies award at least 5% of their total contracts' value to Indigenous businesses every year. (45)

3. Support Systems to Realize Full Potential of Benefits

Although construction jobs may not be desirable by all Indigenous people, it still offers economic benefits. However, it is critical to include support systems to help Indigenous groups realize these economic benefits to overcome barriers that are often overlooked, such as transportation or housing issues. These supports could include longer term training programs, transportation access and leave allowances based on cultural considerations.

Furthermore, it's important to extend training timeline for construction jobs to allow adequate time to obtain the necessary skills and prevent last minute hiring that downgrades Indigenous workers to unskilled, low-quality jobs.

Impact Benefit Agreements (IBA)

Background

IBAs are contracts signed between project developers, private project components or government, and a community that can potentially be affected by the project. IBAs are

essentially a tool to make sure both the project developer and the affected community agree – a win-win scenario for both. Thus, IBAs became legally mandated in many countries. IBAs are historically and primarily used for Indigenous communities in Canada, especially in the context of resource development projects on traditional Indigenous territories. Despite the growing popularity, the success of IBAs isn't guaranteed with it being majorly dependent on legal rights and the community's negotiating power. In the context of Indigenous IBAs, it is paramount to acknowledge that such agreements must be grounded in nation-to-nation conversations between Indigenous Peoples and the Crown — which, according to The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) includes their free, prior, and informed consent. (28)

Fiscal Instruments

Fiscal instruments are key revenue generating tools – an important part of IBAs used to determine how economic benefits are transferred to communities. These instruments can be structured in combination to form a fiscal regime. Fiscal instruments can be used to offset adverse impacts (environmental, economic, social, etc.) that are not fully addressed by other IBA provisions and to ensure that the resource owners (public, indigenous community etc.) receive fair share of the project's profits. (28)

IBA Process

IBA process has 4 stages (28):

1. The first stage is called Pre-negotiation and focuses on building relationships with developers and the community.
2. The second stage is called Negotiation which focuses on establishing monetary and non-monetary benefits, finishing and approving IBA.
3. The third step is called Implementation – collect agreed benefits from resource projects and address negative impacts, monitor IBA performance, and make adjustments to IBA if needed.
4. The fourth and last step involves ensuring long-term IBA benefits and evaluating IBA's performance to guide improvements in future agreements.

Project Strengths Following best practices are recommended according to the handbook (28):

- Identifying clear community objectives and outcomes such as revenue and stability – determining if the project should be supported or rejected
- Developing a balanced fiscal regime based on community priorities – no single fiscal instrument satisfies all objectives

- Negotiate frameworks early which includes funding for community evaluations and a financial evaluations of potential fiscal instruments
- Ensure fixed payments are set for multiple stages of project development to protect against project cancellations
- Develop a financial model of the proposed project to explore different fiscal options and benefits like local hiring, local contracting, and environmental projects relative to community goals and project developer returns. Break down the cost and benefits from each side and identify the provisions with the highest benefits
- Use the results of the model and choose a mix of fiscal tools that best meet the community's needs. The mix will most likely include fixed payments made throughout the project, profit-based royalty, and volumetric or ad valorem royalty. Together, the rate of the royalties and other benefit provisions should aim to capture most of the project's economic value for the community
- Include clauses to address transfer pricing, ensure transparency, and require independent audits
- Include monitoring mechanism to evaluate the performance of the fiscal regime and other benefit mechanisms for dispute resolution, and amendment to ensure ongoing alignment with community objectives
- Ensure that all aspects of the IBA and fiscal provisions are legally enforceable and reviewed by qualified legal counsel

Appendix C: York Region

York Region has taken a strategic, policy-driven approach to integrating community benefits into its procurement and capital planning processes. Rather than adopting CBAs on a purely project-by-project basis, the Region has embedded social procurement and workforce development objectives into its broader procurement policy framework. This approach aims to create consistent expectations for suppliers and developers while aligning investments with community priorities. (24)

The Region's Corporate Procurement Policy includes provisions for social procurement, enabling the integration of requirements that promote local economic development, equity, and inclusion. This includes encouraging the hiring of individuals from low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups, sourcing from social enterprises and diverse suppliers, and fostering apprenticeship and training opportunities. These commitments are framed not as optional add-ons, but as part of the Region's standard value-for-money criteria in tender evaluations. (24)

A notable feature of York Region's approach is its emphasis on cross-departmental collaboration. Staff from procurement, economic development, and human services work together to identify opportunities for community benefits within planned capital projects, such as transit expansions, facility upgrades, and affordable housing developments. The

Region also engages with external partners, including workforce development agencies, chambers of commerce, and local non-profits, to understand community needs and connect suppliers with qualified local talent and vendors. (24)

Monitoring and evaluation are built into the framework. York Region tracks supplier performance on community benefits commitments and reports back to Council on outcomes. This reporting is intended to ensure accountability, highlight successes, and identify areas for improvement. While the Region has yet to formalize a single “Community Benefits Agreement” template for all major projects, its policy integration creates a consistent baseline for benefits delivery and a foundation for expanding to more formalized CBAs in the future. (24)

By embedding social procurement into existing procurement policies and fostering cross-sector partnerships, the Region ensures that benefits are not limited to one-off agreements but are instead integrated into the core business of local government. (24)

Appendix D: Case Studies of Community Benefits Projects Across Canada

Eglinton-Crosstown LRT (Toronto)

Background and History

The Eglinton-Crosstown LRT, in Toronto, is a 19-km transit passage running along Eglinton Avenue. (46) The plan for Eglinton-Crosstown LRT began in 2007, and construction officially began in 2011. (47) The work is still ongoing. The stated purpose of this project is to offer a new reliable transit system for residents and manage congestion and overcrowding by providing an alternative transport option. (46)

Project plans were originally set forth in 1985, by Metro Council and Toronto Transit Commission, and later cancelled in 1995 by a subsequent premier. Between 2007 and 2010, the project was reinstated and cancelled again, before finally being reinstated in 2012. Tunnel work began in 2013, and steady progress was made on underground stations and infrastructure throughout late 2010s. Despite delays announced in 2019, the project reached significant milestones by 2021, with over 90% of rail installed. The Eglinton-Crosstown LRT was expected to be completed and opened in 2022. (48)

Urban Intensification and Gentrifications Along the Eglinton Crosstown Corridor

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) promotes the intensification of land around key transit sites which has led to what is called “condo-ism”. According to Rosen and Walks (2013), the rise of condominiums has reshaped property ownership patterns alongside emerging as a tool of urban governance that advances neoliberal urban policies. Generally, this rapid growth of condominium sector in cities like Toronto have transformed the urban economy, and with it increasing the growing power of condominium developers. This rapid surge in modern condo construction has led to rising property values and gentrification which often displaces long-term residents. (49)

Community Benefits Agreement

In 2013, the Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) approached Metrolinx when work started in the Weston Mt. Dennis community. Previously, construction at Kodak Mount Dennis Campus in this area resulted in businesses closing and significant financial impacts affecting the community. TCBN met with senior staff of Metrolinx and after the initial draft of the CBA, negotiations resulted in the Metrolinx Community Benefits Framework in April 2014. (42)

The two major plans were negotiated between TCBN and Metrolinx: the Apprenticeship Plan and Program, and the Community Benefits and Liaison Plan.

Apprenticeship Plan & Program

Within six months after financial close, the contractor (“Project Co”) was required to submit an apprenticeship plan covering (50):

- Trade-by-trade objectives and opportunities.
- Registration of apprentices with relevant provincial bodies.
- Strategies to recruit sufficient apprentices.
- Support for completing apprenticeships during or after the project.
- A focus on youth-at-risk and historically disadvantaged groups (e.g., low-income, racialized communities, immigrants, veterans).

Community Benefits & Liaison Plan

Crosslinx was required to create and implement a plan to (50):

- Meaningfully engage with local communities impacted by the project through a community liaison.
- Promote community awareness of job and business opportunities on the project by planning, organizing, and hosting events.
- Work with community agencies to connect residents with training and employment.

The purpose of Metrolinx's Community Benefits program is to primarily provide opportunities for historically disadvantaged populations and equity-deserving (e.g., low/moderate income) groups and benefits for local residents. (25)

Moreover, between October 2014 and July 2015, TCBN organized 9 resident engagement sessions along the Eglinton line area, specially partnering with ethnic groups, faith organization and neighbourhood agencies/associations serving specific populations like women or youth. (25) Tactics like distributing flyers, blast emails, community radio stations and outreach were used to recruit participants. Additionally, TCBN partnered with different community groups to identify barriers faced by target populations to enter and stay in the labour market. The success of these sessions was largely due to partnerships created with community institutions, ongoing communication and leveraging community solidarity and leaders, among others. (25)

To implement and reach the CBA targets, Crosslinx is working closely with Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario through Community Benefits Working Group meetings, briefings and conference calls, public meetings and events and supporting the development of joint initiatives, community engagement materials. Additionally, they will constantly track, monitor and report on the community benefits and its progress, including providing annual public reports. (51) Additionally, Crosslinx is working closely with TCBN, the United Way of Toronto and York Region and other stakeholders to identify and map employment, youth and newcomer services as well as hiring through local workforce agencies. (52) Crosslinx will partner with local organizations along the areas of construction for employment, training and workforce development initiatives. CTS also works with United Way's Social Purchasing Project to identify and connect with social enterprise suppliers.

The primary community benefits agreed upon are (53):

1. Social procurement

- Commitment to maximize procurement and supplier opportunities from local businesses and social enterprises.
- Commitment to outreach to diverse owned businesses opportunities for local businesses and social enterprises.

2. Community employment benefits

- Support apprenticeship training and workforce development opportunities for local residents, especially equity-deserving (e.g., low/moderate income) and historically disadvantaged groups. This includes an aspirational target of 10% of all trades and craft working hours to be performed by apprentices from these groups.
- Professional, administrative and technical positions created, especially for historically disadvantaged groups in the community.

3. Other community benefits (community improvements and environmental benefits)

- Provide environmental protections.
- preservation of historical Kodak Building.
- Revitalize Eglinton Avenue through pedestrian friendly spaces allowing multimodal transportation options along with green features in a pilot project.

Notable progress as of 2022 (54):

- \$8.8 million spent on local businesses
- \$1.25 spent on social enterprises
- 30, 166 paid hours of street cleaning on Eglinton Avenue in partnership with Building Up
- 561 community members hired into union and non-union positions including apprentices, journeypersons, professional, administrative and technical roles
- 941,235 hours worked by apprentices and journeypersons

Project Strengths

Several prominent themes emerged from the environmental scan of the Eglinton-Crosstown LRT project that contributed to its success in creating the progress mentioned above.

1. Targeted outreach in partnership with local organizations

Primarily, community engagement and targeted outreach by partnering with local services and organizations, such as those that work/support underrepresented individuals was key to building awareness and recruitment. Creating such partnerships not only provided an avenue of opportunities for residents but also built trust between Crosslinx and the local communities by connecting with organizations that already supported marginalized or disadvantaged groups. (52,25) This emphasizes the need for a continuous two-way dialogue with the communities affected by a large-scale construction project like Eglinton LRT, which is most successful when partnerships are created with community organizations or leaders that residents already trust and have a positive relation with.

2. Continuous open communication with stakeholders

Additionally, such engagement activities including conducting information sessions and participating in general community events, should be ongoing from planning to the end of the project. This can ensure that trust and transparency is maintained between the community stakeholders and upper-level project team. This can also ensure that needs of the community are being met, and any issues are resolved in a timely manner.

3. Regular and consistent monitoring and compliance check

The Community Benefits Working Group meets quarterly to monitor and check on the benefits outcomes. This Working Group effectively ensures there's representation from all stakeholders including the TCBN, Metrolinx community, labor, government and Crosslinx. (53) As we did not find any mention of community representation in this working group, we recommend that community members should be included with a governance system/structure to ensure accountability and transparency of the project.

Downsview (Toronto)

Background and History

Downsview is a large neighborhood situated in northern Toronto, Ontario. Originally, it was the traditional territory of Indigenous groups that lived in the area before European settlers arrived. In addition to its rich Indigenous history, Downsview also has a significant Black population. (41) What initially was farmland later became home to a military air base for the Royal Canadian Forces during WWII. After the war, the government recognized the importance of developing Downsview Lands due to its proximity to Toronto's infrastructure and industrial sites. Considering this potential and the fact that the lands with its rich history were underutilized, the military base closed and was transformed to an urban park to showcase environmental, social and economic sustainability. (55) This transformed area is now known as Downsview Park. The airport previously located in Downsview was used as a manufacturing and testing facility for Bombardier Aerospace until 2024. Downsview currently has plans for a 30+ year redevelopment project consisting of 15 districts. (41) The goal is to transform this area into a sustainable and transit-oriented community for its residents. (56)

Community Benefits Agreement

In July 2021, Northcrest and Canada lands conducted a Downsview Community Benefits Information session to provide key development information. Then in conjunction with Social Planning Toronto a Downsview Community Benefits Discussion was conducted to provide ongoing updates and discuss next steps. (41)

The Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) established the Downsview Community Benefits Committee, which is made up of local community members and organizations, TCBN organizations from the community, and labor and social enterprise sectors. (41) From February to June 2022, the committee met monthly to identify Community Benefits priorities for Downsview. This campaign engaged 1500+ local stakeholders, community members, community and grassroots organizations. (41)

Throughout the engagement process, the TCBN identified consistent themes/priorities outlined in their Downsview report (41):

1. Job opportunities and inclusive local economic development
2. Social procurement and inclusive business development
3. Neighborhood improvements and affordable housing
4. Environmental protection and sustainable development
5. Monitoring and accountability

Beyond the Downsview Community Benefits Committee engagement in October 2023, as part of TCBN's CBAforDownsview campaign, the TCBN conducted a petition campaign on affordable housing by knocking on 2500 doors, conversing with 900 people and engaging with 360. (41)

In September 2023, TCBN hosted a tour across locations in Downsview Park and the Downsview Airport Runway while addressing the changes that the redevelopment will bring. (41)

In 2024, the TCBN partnered with different organizations such as the Toronto Environmental Alliance, to host workshops on topics such as climate actions and housing to foster discussion surrounding these topics. The TCBN hosted a general meeting with participants to provide an update on the current status of the CBAforDownsview campaign and share the Community Benefits Vision Report. (41) The City of Toronto has a dedicated team to provide updates for the Downsview project called "The City of Toronto's Update Downsview Team". This team hosts meetings and events to engage with local communities and get their feedback. Up until June 2025, this engagement team has led public meetings including the Downsview West District Open House, the Downsview Major Streets Environmental Assessment Virtual Public Meeting, William Baker/Arbo District (Phase 1) Community Consultation Meeting #1, Taxiway West District Community Consultation Meeting #2 and #1. (57) In each of these meetings, the team takes community feedback on what they wish to see from the project and its associated CBA. Beyond that, within Downsview there are various districts that have been identified in a Secondary Plan of the project who are also specifically being consulted through these meetings. (58)

Although a community benefits network committee was formed and priorities were identified, the community benefits discussed below have only been proposed by TCBN in a letter to the North York Community Council. The proposed benefits include (43):

1. Community employment benefits

- A minimum of 10% of apprenticeships trade and/or craft working hours on a trade-by-trade basis performed by apprentices from historically disadvantaged and equity-deserving groups (e.g., low/moderate income residents).

- A minimum of 50% target for equity hiring and a minimum of 25% of new professional, administrative, technical, operations and maintenance roles to be local hires.
- Ensure employment opportunities that can pay a living wage throughout the construction and development phases.

2. Social procurement

- A minimum of 20% of local and social procurement target by purchasing goods and/or services from local businesses, social enterprises and businesses, especially one's Indigenous-owned, Black owned and/or diverse-owned.

3. Other community benefits:

a. Neighborhood Improvements

- In each development phase, a minimum of 30% should be affordable housing and/or affordable ownership, with 50% of that being deeply affordable or Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) for a minimum of 99 years.
- There should be access to affordable below the market rate commercial and micro retail space opportunities for social enterprises and Black, Indigenous or other racialized businesses throughout all development phases.

1. Environmental Sustainability:

- Ensure environmental sustainability to support a 'just transition' for jobs and careers, green building design and materials, sustainable micro mobility initiatives, preserves public parks and open spaces for culturally appropriate community-led initiatives. (43)

2. Accountability and Transparency:

- Each landowner should sign a Community Benefits Framework with TCBN to ensure a CBA for each phase of the project, which should commit to including measurable targets and commitment to ongoing monitoring, tracking, public reporting and community oversight. (43)

Additional benefits were proposed in the Downsview CBA campaign's vision report, however these were not confirmed to be accepted as part of a CBA yet. Despite this, these proposed benefits help understand where community needs and priorities lie. As such, included below are the additional benefits: from the Downsview report, which were include (41):(41)

- **Neighborhood Improvements:** Development of public community centers, recreation spaces, libraries, childcare centers, schools and public parks should be prioritized.
- **Local hiring:** 20% local hiring within a 7km radius of Downsview, targeting designated Neighborhood Improvement Areas – neighborhoods the City of Toronto

designated priority status for funding towards community development - and Emerging Neighborhoods.

- **Local hiring:** 50% City of Toronto hiring target with a focus on NIAs and Emerging Neighborhoods
- **Equitable hiring approach** to local construction sector pathways: TCBN empathizes creating partnerships and fostering collaboration with member organizations, community partners and service providers along with TCB-led programs. This can increase engagement with neighborhoods across Toronto and increase awareness of construction careers within the community, supporting individuals with career explorations, job readiness and meeting employer needs.

As part of coordinating equitable pathways into skilled trades and apprenticeships, TCBN is seeking about 20, 000 sq ft. of space at Downsview to support activities such as working with the government, labor and community partners to develop programs and initiatives to connect local community members with opportunities as well as create space for a skills trade training center in partnership with TCBN community and labor partners. (41) There is an emphasis on reducing barriers to participation through investments for training to lead into opportunities and pathways into well-paying jobs. Additionally, construction unions have organized solidarity actions with community groups and educational events with the TCBN to call out acts of hate, discrimination, racism and bigotry. (41) Ultimately, the community benefits plan should reflect the Declaration of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities signed by the City of Toronto, constructions unions and general contractors, or promote inclusive, equitable, safe and respectful workplaces.

Project Strengths

The Downsview project highlighted many practices that provide key insights into best practices other community benefits networks can follow.

1. Comprehensive community engagement and consultation

Primarily, given the large timeframe and capacity of the project, TCBN has conducted numerous community engagements and consultations to develop a comprehensive CBA plan. Primarily, the major themes and benefits recommendations arose from a comprehensive consultation that engaged local stakeholders, community members, community and grassroots organizations. Such a consultation is key to determining local needs prior to development planning to ensure the community benefits are well incorporated into the project during its early planning phase. Moreover, having a comprehensive and large-scale engagement process also caused issues such as Food Justice, Accessibility and Aging in Place as well as lack of primary-care access to arise which the Downsview report proposes for a CBA.

2. Nuanced and comprehensive plan to achieve targets

Additionally, through the engagement itself, the report highlights the importance of not just projecting numbers such as how many jobs will arise through the project, but also considering the types of jobs, the quality of jobs, whether a just transition approach will be incorporated among others. Examples of nuances to consider include creating and implementing a job quality standard and a reporting system to monitor, track and report on jobs.

3. Continual community engagement

Participants of the initial community engagement emphasized the need for continued community involvement and participation in the project during all phases. A key way to conduct this is to establish a working group and conduct regular meetings with stakeholders to promote ongoing discussion, as also suggested in the Downsview report.

4. Strategic coalitions and partnerships

A key feature identified through the Downsview Report was the numerous partnerships and coalitions with organizations from the City and Downsview to identify needs and advocate for community benefits to address those needs. Notable examples include:

- TCBN is working with Social Planning Toronto to determine local areas in Downsview to identify designated Neighborhood Improvement Areas under the Toronto Strong Neighborhoods to address current pressing issues facing those areas
- The TCBN highlighted The Toronto Black Farmers & Growers Collective, a local organization leading in food justice programs in Downsview, that should be partnered with to fight food injustice in the area through development processes.

5. Using existing policies/initiatives as a framework

Within many priority areas, the Downsview report highlights the importance of using existing City of Toronto plans or programs that address various needs within Toronto similar to those of Downsview

Examples include:

- The City of Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Plan
- The Toronto Action Plan to confront Anti-Black Racism
- The City of Toronto's Housing Action Plan

Such programs/plans outline objectives that closely align with the needs identified in Downsview. Therefore, integrating the needs of Downsview, the proposed benefits under the framework of existing city-wide plans present an opportunity to broaden the benefits of

a local development project by advancing city-wide goals which can additionally appeal to various stakeholders in an effort to push forward CBA targets

Regent Park (Toronto)

Background and History

Regent Park is a housing complex located East of Toronto's downtown area. The Regent Park revitalization project is a five-phase project which started in 2005. Phases 1-3 were completed by 2024 and phases 4 and 5 are currently underway. This project is transforming the housing complex into a mixed-income, mixed-use neighbourhood. This will mean that the project will have a mix of rent-geared-to-income units, affordable housing rentals and market condominiums. These homes will also be walking distance from retails and commercial spaces, facilities, parks and open spaces. The project will also revitalize the economic and social makeup of the community through the Regent Park Social Development Plan. (59)

Community Benefits Agreement

Tridel, the developer responsible for this project, invested \$26.8 million for the economic development of the community. To determine how the funds should be used, Tridel, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), and the Community Benefits Oversight Working group (CBOWG) worked with the Regent Park community since 2023 to hear their opinions about their needs and priorities. (59) The engagement process was co-designed and led by these three groups and supported by a consulting firm. The community engagement process was a phased process (60):

1. **Listening to the Community:** Surveys, door-to-door interviews and small group discussions were conducted with community members to understand their priorities. (61) 1064 people completed the survey, including Regent Park tenants and market residents.
2. **Creating the Community Benefits Packages:** resident feedback was analyzed with support from TCBN and led to the development of three community benefits packages
 - The feedback highlighted 6 priorities: employment, training, youth opportunities, educational scholarships, community spaces and economic opportunities
3. **Community Vote:** Regent Park residents 14+ are invited to vote on one of the three packages, where the package with the highest ranking with more than 50% of the votes will be announced.

There are three packages in total, each of which invest in the same core areas outlined below, but emphasize either community spaces, educational scholarships, or job skills training and local business development (40):

1. New community space(s)
2. Educational scholarships for TCHC tenants
3. Job skills training and local business development
4. Wages for jobs and employment supports
5. Funding for community initiatives

While each package invests the same amount of money as wages for jobs and employment supports and funding for community initiatives, the packages differ in how much money is invested in other areas. (40)

Project Strengths

1. Phased community consultation

In this project, community consultation was conducted in a phased manner allowing for a structured, comprehensive and efficient method of integrating community needs and priorities into the planning of Regent Park. Through each phase, community input is vital, therefore addressing issues early on and continuing that until a CBA is reached. By starting off the consultation with a general idea of community needs and distilling it down to the main needs and priorities, the benefits agreement will ensure that maximal outcomes are reached.

2. Community benefits packages

The Regent Park redevelopment differed from most community benefits projects, where the main stakeholders engaged to develop three Community Benefits Packages that met the specific needs of the community. While all the packages addressed the same 5 priorities, the weight of each priority differed. These packages will be voted on by community residents. This approach is highly beneficial in ensuring accountability and transparency. The packages highlight the priorities, how much funding would be allocated to each (depending on the package), and what the tangible outcome would be. For example, in package 2, the priority “Educational scholarships for TCHC tenants” states that \$3.8 million will be invested to provide scholarships for TCHC tenants in Regent Park for both part-time and full-time post-secondary studies. This will result in ~700+ scholarships. This here ensures that residents know the exact funding allocations for each priority, and the tangible results of that. This increases the transparency of the benefits agreements, especially since the community residents have a say in the final agreement by voting on a preferred one after reading all options beforehand. In the long-term, this will ensure that the community members are empowered, have trust in the developers of the project, increases community cooperation, and the community receives the most beneficial and desired outcomes from the project.

City of Toronto Housing Policy Framework (Housing Now)

The City of Toronto's Executive Committee recently adopted a public developer model under its Toronto Builds Policy Framework. This was led by the new Housing Development Office (HDO) which will now coordinate all City-led and supported housing developments. This will streamline the delivery of housing development projects via three models (62):

1. Direct builds
2. Partnerships for construction and operation
3. Development partnerships.

The HDO's adoption of a new model for housing development and the execution of service agreement will support the Toronto Builds Policy Framework. The HDO will apply community benefits best practices to Toronto Builds projects. Best practices outlined by the Deputy City Manager include, community engagement, setting measurable targets, identifying mechanisms for compliance and enforcement and having accountable monitoring and oversight structures in place. (63)

This plan is a shift toward rent-geared-to-income housing to ensure affordability by tying rent to 30% of household income. Additionally, CBAs are now required for large-scale developments, with a minimum 10% targets for local hiring and diverse procurement from low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups. Moreover, the HDO will also implement plans for monitoring and reporting. Additionally, for smaller-scale projects, HDO will define criteria for specific benefits and targets for equity-deserving groups, based on input from the Community benefits Advisory Group. This advisory group is made up of representatives from community organizations, employment service providers, skilled trade unions, developers, contractors and the City of Toronto divisions. Criteria that such small projects would need to be considered include the project's budget and duration, the potential for procurement and workforce development, community priorities in a specific region and the nature of the delivery partners such as non-profit or private sector organization. (63) This highlights the importance of ongoing and targeted communication with community stakeholders.

As part of this new housing project model a Housing Delivery Governance Framework was also launched in March to improve decision-making, accountability and coordination. This framework ensures that projects have leads and subject matter experts from the City Divisions to manage various projects to both advance the project and resolve any issues that may come up. To ensure this, there will be a weekly forum for the City, CreateTO and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's project leads/experts. Monthly meetings will also bring together Directors from all three organizations to manage housing development portfolios and resolve any conflicting directions or priorities that could not be done at the weekly forums. Additionally, a Steering Committee approves the portfolio strategy and housing development policy decisions. Finally, the senior level executive table will ensure that projects align with City and Corporate priorities and sign off on major

decisions and issues resolutions. The HDO oversees that these structures of the Governance Framework is intact and well-functioning. (63)

An additional note is that housing development sites are prioritized for pre-development activities via a rolling 3-year workplan established by the executive director of the HDO, which is updated each year. (63)

Project Strengths

1. Coupling both a city-wide mandate for required benefits targets with nuanced benefits and targets based on local needs

This shift in policy, coupled with various other projects discussed in this report highlights the benefits of having both a general mandated requirement for major development projects along with further refined requirements for smaller projects developed through active community engagement. Having a general mandate city-wide can streamline the process of developing CBAs and ensure basic requirements are met to ensure accountability and transparency. At the same time, different regions of city have various communities and needs. Therefore, while overarching benefit requirements are necessary, nuanced benefits are also vital to ensure trust and maximal benefits are achieved for the affected community.

2. Hierarchal governance structure with a singular point of accountability and oversight

The Housing Delivery Governance Framework supports the best practices of ensuring accountability and ensuring compliance and enforcement. By providing a centralized and hierarchical structure, where various members and levels of staff across the City, CreateTO and TCHC meet to discuss priorities, issues and project management, it ensures that project issues and progress are continuously being monitored and addressed in a timely manner. Beyond that, having the HDO as an entity to oversee all these levels of governance can ensure there is a centralized point of accountability and oversight for all housing projects in the city. This can be applied to not just the housing sector but other areas where community benefit agreements are prominent. Such a governance and oversight structure can ensure these practices of accountability, enforcement and compliance are applied to CBAs.

3. Leveraging skills and expertise of partner organizations

Within this new housing development model, to ensure that housing delivery is timely and efficient, the city will leverage the expertise of Create TO and TCHC, directly engaging with the two organizations on a project-by-project basis, depending on each organization's expertise and best practices. This partnership is codified in a legal framework called the Master Services Agreement (MSA) which outlines the hiring rules and roles of the organizations in a project. (63) This can ensure that the agreements create a standard and future housing projects can advance quickly with existing resources and expertise that's

built on clear guidelines. It also ensures efficiency by allowing certain elements of a project development process (housing or otherwise) to be assigned to partner organizations with the relevant knowledge to expedite the project delivery.

St. Paul's Hospital (Vancouver)

The New St. Paul's hospital is a major redevelopment occurring currently in Vancouver and started in Spring 2021. (19)

This redevelopment project is the first project that initiated the City of Vancouver's city-wide CBA policy. (19) This overarching city-wide CBA policy requires the hospital project owner, general contractor and sub-contractors to report on three primary targets (specified below).

Community Benefits Agreement

As part of the community engagement process, eighteen guiding principles were identified, which were then shared at a public open house in 2016. Feedback for these guiding principles was gathered through an online and hardcopy questionnaire. Then, two development concept options were prepared based on the identified principles. These options were presented at two open houses and three stakeholder workshops, inviting public feedback. The project team synthesized the public feedback collected, along with input from other professional or technical stakeholders such as health care providers. This resulted in the development of a "Preferred Development Concept" and draft community benefits policy for the site. These policies and development concepts were shared with the public at two open houses in 2017 and feedback was once again obtained through a final questionnaire. (64)

The community benefits agreed to at the start of project include the following (29):

1. Social procurement:

- A minimum of 10% local procurement of materials and services from a third party certified social impact or equity-deserving owned businesses (e.g., those owned by low/moderate income residents), prioritizing Vancouver business including non-profits and social enterprises.
- A minimum of 10% of materials, goods and services procured locally, prioritizing Vancouver companies first, followed by Metro Vancouver and British Columbia.

2. Community employment benefits:

- 10% of new employees should voluntarily identify as a member of a low/moderate income or other equity-deserving group, with priority going to those that live locally.

3. Other community benefits (64):

- Provide a minimum of two childcare centers to meet projected demand for employees and the surrounding communities.
- Provide spaces for various community uses onsite which can include offices for non-profit organizations, meetings rooms and multi-purpose spaces.

As of January 2023, the project has exceeded the community benefits targets including (19):

- 48% of new employees identify as low/moderate income or belong to another equity-deserving group. Almost 19% of them live in surrounding neighborhoods.
- 30% of total spendings of the project was awarded or directly spent with Vancouver businesses.
- 16% of the total spendings was directed to social enterprises, social impact businesses and diverse or equity-deserving owned businesses.

Project Strengths

1. Comprehensive pre-development engagement and provision of alternatives

One of the strengths of the project was the extensive and comprehensive engagement the project design team conducted prior to the development of the project. The policies themselves, which would guide the project CBA, went through three phases of development. Rather than jumping into the project proposal, the project team first identified guiding principles, then provided concept 'options' which provided alternatives for the public, followed by the development concept and community benefits policy draft. Each phase was supported by a public forum such as workshops and open houses. This highlights the key importance of a comprehensive, extensive, and continuous engagement process with the public that would be affected by a project.

2. Process streamlining

The successes of this project may be attributed, in part, to the structure of Vancouver's CBA policy. While project-specific CBAs can be important to recognize the unique character of each project, a city-wide mandated approach can provide a consistent and centralized framework for integrating community benefits into large scale infrastructure projects. Additionally, the City's requirement to meet CBA targets likely prompted the measures taken by the project designers and resulted in exceeding targets within just 2 years. Therefore, we recommend that projects should have a more streamlined approach to the development of CBAs by having an overarching CBA policy for the city or region. This should be done by identifying the major needs and priorities of the larger region and defining general tangible benefits all major projects should strive to achieve. This can potentially be coupled with smaller benefits identified through additional community consultation for individual projects. A streamlined and centralized policy will ensure that major priorities or needs are still addressed and have a greater chance of compliance.

Gordie-Howe Bridge (Windsor)

Background and History

Gordie Howe bridge is a major infrastructure project that will connect Windsor, Ontario, Canada to Detroit, Michigan, USA, over the Detroit River. The project includes the construction of a six-lane bridge stretching 853 metres across the river, along with a Canadian port of entry in Windsor, a U.S. port of entry in Detroit, and the Michigan Interchange, which will connect the new crossing to the existing road network in Michigan. Construction officially began in 2018 (36).

Community Benefits Agreement

Between 2015 and 2019, the WDBA took a two-phased approach to community benefits agreement development. The first phase occurred between 2015 and 2018 and engaged Ontario and Michigan residents, Indigenous peoples, business owners and community leaders through public meetings, one-on-one meetings, focus groups, public surveys, social media and direct correspondence. This produced over 230 suggestions, falling under five categories. The second phase of engagement aimed to further specify these categories through targeted consultations. Over the course of six months, over 70 meetings were held to consult with more than 1000 stakeholders. The guiding principles that drove these meetings included openness and inclusivity, transparency, clarity, flexibility, and evaluation. (36)

The final community benefits agreement included two components: a workforce development and participation strategy, and a neighborhood infrastructure strategy. The workforce development and participation strategy had three priority actions (36):

- At least \$250 million of the work done during the design and construction phase in Canada will be done by or contracted to workers and contractors local to the City of Windsor, Essex County, or within 100 km of Windsor.
- Engage and hire Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous-owned businesses in Windsor, Essex County, and Walpole Island, Ontario.
- Engage with and hire Detroit Residents and Detroit-based and Detroit-headquartered businesses.

The neighbourhood infrastructure strategy on the Canadian side emphasized (36):

- Community safety and connections (ex. Bike racks, an observatory deck)
- Aesthetics and landscaping (ex. Sandwich Street enhancements, eco-passage)
- Community partnerships (ex. Grant to Walpole First Nation)
- Economic benefits (ex. Sandwich business development, culinary student training)

Community employment benefits include both countries having community benefits coordinators for job promotion opportunities, training programs, apprenticeship with a focus on supporting indigenous peoples and minorities. Partnerships with unions, workforce development agencies, and educational institutions help deliver these programs. (36)

Since the establishment of the Community Benefits Plan, several outcomes and initiatives have been completed in Windsor and Detroit. In Detroit, Delray Home Improvement Program was completed (January 2025) providing \$4 million in repairs to 106 homes with up to \$20000 given per home for rooms, HVAC systems, doors, and windows. Community programs like The Teen Life internship program (New City Kids) offered paid internships to high school students with 27 interns employed, and 34 college applications submitted. In Windsor, AWE Sandwich Visionaries program had more than 500 children participating where they learnt about local history and culture through art activities. Overall, this initiative delivered around 52 art-based youth programs. Moreover, in late 2024, capacity building summits were held in Windsor and Detroit that focused on leadership, planning strategically, and grant writing. (36)

Workforce Development efforts have led to 290 co-op students being placed and more than 770 pre-apprentices and apprentices assigned. More than 14000 individuals oriented to the project in US + Canada. As of December 2024, 42% business involved in the project are local and more than \$7.6 million has been spent on small-scale purchases from local businesses. (36)

Manor Park (Ottawa)

Manor Park is a housing project in Ottawa developed in the 1940s. It was acquired by Manor Park Management in the 1980s, which now wants to redevelop the project, citing changes in building code and achieving climate sustainability objectives. (65) Currently, the development contains 654 units across 35 acres, and the redevelopment plans to expand to 3872 units. When plans for redevelopment were first announced by the developer, there were significant community concerns around displacement of residents, especially with historical precedence of this. In 2018, Heron Gate, another Ottawa neighborhood that had undergone redevelopment saw the displacement of low-income residents. (34)

Manor Park Management plans to take a “development through phased approach strategy” in which successive phases of the project are constructed and used to inform the execution of the next phase. In 2022, the City of Ottawa and Manor Park Estates signed an MOU which amongst other things agreed to (35):

- Ensure that current Manor Park residents are not displaced

- That residents be informed of a construction phase at least three years before initiation
- That a proportion of housing be designated Secured Affordable Existing housing
- That Manor Park Estates will develop a Community Benefits Agreement with the Ward Councillor's office and Ottawa Community Benefits Network on a voluntary basis.

Since 2022, the Manor Park Estates Community Benefit Agreement Working Group has created a set of design principles to inform the CBA including housing typologies, distributed energy resource solutions and a natural occurring retirement community. This working group held an outreach event and community walk to inform residents about estate redevelopment and developed a community asset map for the north and south side of the property. A 2024 working group update specified that the goals for the upcoming year were to write a draft of the CBA, however a draft has yet to be made publicly available.

Heron Gate Redevelopment (Ottawa)

The Heron Gate redevelopment is a large-scale mixed-use project led by Hazelview Properties in Ottawa's south end. The project follows the controversial mass demolition of rental units that displaced hundreds of primarily racialized and immigrant families between 2016 and 2018. These evictions drew national attention and prompted intense criticism from housing advocates and community organizations regarding tenant rights and equitable redevelopment. In response to public pressure, the City of Ottawa and Hazelview Properties negotiated a *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* in 2021 that set out social and community benefit commitments to address affordability, tenant protection, and community reinvestment. The redevelopment plan includes the construction of new residential and mixed-use buildings of up to 25 storeys and allocates \$1 million toward the creation of a new public park. The project's goal is to create a more inclusive and sustainable community while rebuilding trust with former and current residents.

Community Benefits

The Heron Gate MOU outlines a series of commitments focused on affordability, non-displacement, and local community investment. The agreement guarantees that no further demolition of occupied units will occur unless affected tenants are offered relocation to newly constructed equivalent units at the same rent, or to renovated, similarly sized units in retained buildings. Hazelview is also committed to delivering 1,020 affordable housing units over the next 15–20 years, with half newly constructed and the remaining half secured in existing buildings. Approximately 10% of new units in each phase of redevelopment are designated as affordable.

To ensure housing diversity, the plan includes three- and four-bedroom family units and ground-floor accessible units to reflect the community's social fabric. The MOU also incorporates social enterprise and employment elements. Hazelview launched a *Young Resident Summer Employment Program*, which hires neighbourhood youth for painting, cleaning, and light maintenance work, and continues to operate an on-site *Community Hub* that provides free programming and youth engagement activities. Additionally, Hazelview maintains a large community garden and has contributed to the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa's new clubhouse in Ottawa South. Through these initiatives, the redevelopment integrates social value and local benefit into its broader economic plan.

Project Strengths

One of the key strengths of the Heron Gate redevelopment is its recognition of past harms and its commitment to preventing further displacement. By embedding non-displacement clauses and phased affordability commitments into the MOU, the project represents a more accountable approach to private redevelopment. The inclusion of family-sized, accessible units helps ensure a diverse and inclusive community, while social enterprise programs promote youth employment and local engagement.

Another notable strength is the integration of community infrastructure and public amenities into the project's design. Investments such as the \$1 million park fund and planned improvements to Sandalwood Park demonstrate a tangible effort to reinvest in the neighbourhood's livability and green spaces.

While the Heron Gate MOU has faced criticism for lacking enforceable mechanisms, it set an important precedent for future city-developer partnerships in Ottawa. The lessons learned from Heron Gate directly influenced the creation of the *Manor Park MOU*, which introduced stronger accountability and resident engagement measures. Overall, Heron Gate illustrates how redevelopment projects can evolve from conflict to collaboration through formalized community benefit commitments that prioritize housing security, social equity, and long-term neighbourhood resilience.

Odenak Multifaith Housing Initiative (Ottawa)

Background and History

The Odenak Multifaith Housing Initiative in Ottawa will build over 600 new residential rental units -- 250 of them affordable -- in two towers at 665 Albert Street, between Ottawa's future Ādisōke main public library and the Pimisi LRT Station. (66)

The Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI) is a coalition of faith groups that collaborates closely with local partners, government, private sector and local communities to strategize and plan the project. (67) It will also operate 133 of the affordable units, designating 30 for Indigenous households as part of its community to equality and reconciliation. (68) This project is a partnership with the Dream Group, a socially and environmentally focused real estate developer and manager. (69)

These units will serve the priority populations identified in Canada's National Housing Strategy, which include Algonquin and other Indigenous peoples, veterans, recent immigrants, women and children, and adults with cognitive disabilities. The two buildings, 30 and 35 storeys, will have a mix of affordable units and a gather circle located between them.

After its development, this residential area will be Canada's largest residential zero-carbon development, with wastewater and solar power-energy systems. The project therefore will incorporate LEED Gold Standards for energy efficiency and sustainability.

Of note, an MHI Tenant Relations Committee will also be formed. This committee will have a primary mandate to contribute towards a positive life experience for the residents of the housing community and facilitate neighborhood interactions through initiatives like supporting immigration and settlement challenges or housing loss prevention (66).

Community Benefits Agreement

Innovation Seven (70) – an Indigenous owned consultation firm guided engagement efforts with the Indigenous community. (71)

As part of this project, the Dream Group has committed to social and workforce benefits as they aim to generate positive social and environmental impacts through their investment. These benefits include (66):

1. Social Procurement:

- 15% of the overall contract value going to vendors. These vendors must be at least 50% owned or managed by people from equity-deserving groups. The website defined these groups as "communities who have faced significant collective challenges in participating in society". The 15% should include 5% to Algonquin and other Indigenous businesses.
- 50% of contracts awarded to vendors should be at least 50% owned or managed in the National Capital Region, including 5% to Algonquin and other Indigenous businesses.

2. Community Employment Benefits:

- 20% of onsite employment hours should go to equity-deserving groups

3. Other Community Benefits:

- 100% of all art commissioned to equity-deserving groups
- Co-design of spaces with Indigenous architects to include culturally relevant spaces (circular gathering spaces for the Odenak community or the terraces designed for native planting)
- Housing community will also include retail space, health services as well as additional services such as daycare, bicycle maintenance shops and a community hub for various needs. The area will also include a large public outdoor space that is social inclusive and contain several parking spots for bikes (600 indoors). (66)
- 31% of the 600+ units will be accessible and barrier free
- Incorporate LEED Gold Standards for energy efficiency and sustainability
- Pledge \$150,000 annually over 20 years from the Dream Community Foundation to support community programming such as:
 - Tutoring and related scholarships for tenant children
 - Breakfast club/after-school programming such as those promoting healthy snacks or reading
 - Adult skills/free fitness classes for eligible tenants

Project Strengths

1. Regional and Equity-Based Procurement Centering Targeted Communities, such as Indigenous groups

This project takes place within Canada's National Capital Region, an area located on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Nation. (72) As a result, and given the history and impact of colonialism, this housing initiative identifies and centers Algonquin and other Indigenous groups in their benefit targets, thereby acknowledging past harms and working towards reparations. Within each target, a specific share of outcomes is preserved for Indigenous groups, ensuring that quantifiable and measurable outcomes target them and other equity-deserving groups – who themselves have a general quota.

2. Let equity-deserving groups drive the consultation and planning process

One notable feature of the consultation and engagement process of this project is its partnership with an Indigenous owned consultation firm "Innovation Seven." (70) Innovation Seven was responsible for Indigenous engagement in this project. This points to a key recommendation of partnering with Indigenous owned groups or other equity-deserving groups to take the lead in conducting community engagement. This may increase trust and transparency with the community, allowing for a more comprehensive and impactful process that provides the most tailored benefits.

In addition to the consultation process, the project also notably collaborated with Indigenous architects called "Two Row Architects" to design the project. (70) This ensured that the entirety of the process from planning to design and construction was co-designed

with impacted groups. Such partnerships not only acknowledge past harms but also strengthen steps towards reconciliation as the project recognizes the need to prioritize equity-deserving groups. Beyond that, this also ensured that Indigenous values are built into the project such as the integration of circular gathering spaces for the Odenak community or the terraces designed for native planting. (73) This can be extended further to other projects, where co-designing with equity-deserving group owned companies can integrate their cultural values into the project.

Cogswell District Redevelopment Project (Halifax)

The Halifax Cogswell District Redevelopment Project will redevelop 16 acres of land that's currently used for road infrastructure, into a mixed-used neighbourhood for over 2500 people to work, live and play. (74)

Initially, the Cogswell Interchange was part of a project called Harbour Drive, a multilane highway which planned to run along Halifax's waterfront. While the larger Harbour Drive project was not completed, the Cogswell Interchange was and left the North End community isolated from downtown and displaced residents. (74)

The Cogswell district redevelopment project will remove the Interchange to reconnect the north end and downtown areas of the district and provide development blocks to support residential and commercial environments. The redeveloped land will also have high quality dedicated cycling lanes, multi-use trails, new parks and open spaces, on-street transit hub and a central urban square, thereby reinstating an urban street grid. (75) The demolition and reconstruction began in 2021 and after almost 4 years, the district is expected to reach substantial completion by the end of this year. (76) An additional 5 to 10 years of development is expected to happen to change the cityscape of the downtown region. (75)

Community Benefits Agreement

A central part of developing the Cogswell District Project has been integration of thoughtful community input and feedback during each design stage as well as during construction.

The project planning and development started in 2013, and since its launch, the municipality has worked with residents and consultants to shape the project design. As part of it's 60% design process, the Cogswell team outreached to landowners, developers, utilities and the public regarding the redevelopment. The outreach and communications such as through social media, group meetings and town halls allowed the team to collect input from the stakeholders. Additionally, seven public engagement sessions in April 2018, an online survey and a facilitated discussion took place. (30) Particularly, in 2018, a public engagement program took place between August to October. This engagement program

saw focus group meetings, the use of the Shape Your City website, pop-up displays, a multi-day charrette and an expo. These engagement initiatives saw a total of 1500+ interactions across the district. These engagement initiatives primarily focused on two topics: public space design and urban design rules for new buildings. This resulted in about 98 comments and directions on designing public elements, 50 comments on building design and 25 ideas covering other topics including transportation, phasing, community needs, consideration when selling development sites and ongoing engagement. (77) These comments influenced 90% of the constructions design plan and nearly 80% of the comments/ideas were incorporated in part or fully. (77)

Beyond these initiatives to for the design process, as part of its Art and Commemoration Program for the District, the team help many informal meetings with low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups in the area, particularly the Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities in the Spring and Fall of 2019. These meetings aimed to determine ways to engage on public art and commemoration opportunities seeing that it was a common theme that arose in previous conversations. In fall 2020, the municipality staff engaged with African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw community groups, including the Black Business Initiative (BBI) Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office (MEBONS), 902ManUP, and the Mi'kmaw Friendship Center. They did so; to discuss opportunities for economic development through the redevelopment project and this shaped the contract requirements that would satisfy the provisions related to "Social Value" in the Halifax Regional Municipality's Procurement Policy. As the project continues, the public engagement process will continue, along with timely public updates through municipality owned and unpaid channels, creating a construction mobile app, regular meetings and conversations with key stakeholders and semi-annual information reports for the Regional Council. (30) Moreover, the public will also have opportunities to shape the rules and guidelines for building design and use through the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law amendment process led by the Municipality Planning and Development department. (30)

Through community engagement specifically with African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw community groups, the Cogswell project staff determined contract requirements to include in their tender to achieve social benefits. These requirements include (30):

1. Social procurement:

- Development of a Supplier Diversity Plan with a targeted aim of achieving 10% of all subcontracts for goods and services going to businesses owned, managed and controlled by low/moderate income or other equity-deserving group members.

2. Community employment benefits:

- Development of a Workforce Development Plan with a targeted aim of achieving 10% of all apprenticeships and 20% of all labor provided by low/moderate income and other equity-deserving groups within the construction workforce.

3. Other community benefits:

- Appointing a community liaison to work with the contractor, the Halifax regional municipality and the community to develop and implement the aforementioned plans.
- Establish an Advisory committee made of members from the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities and other equity deserving groups to work with the staff and contractor to ensure project development and implementation oversight.

Project Strengths

1. Early engagement

One of the major successes of this redevelopment project can be attributed to the community engagement initiatives. Community engagement began in the design phase of the project and public input formed the 60% and the 90% construction plan which received favourable public feedback. (30) Starting community engagement early in the design phase through meetings, social media and other communication media, allowed development of design details best tailored to the community in the area. An example of a novel design detail unique to this project was the Art and Commemoration program for the district that would be incorporated in the project. Early engagement with equity-deserving groups allowed the design team to understand and incorporate interests and values of the communities, which would have otherwise been overlooked. Therefore, early engagement can broaden the scope of possible community benefits, creating larger and community tailored benefits.

2. Transparency through continuous engagement through various means

In addition to early engagement, engagement is also continuous. From the design phase to the current construction phase, the project team maintains accountability and transparency by organizing different engagement sessions to meet with stakeholders and provide timely updates. A notable aspect of their communication strategy is using a variety of avenues to provide regular and real-time project updates, specifically through their website, public service announcements, social media, and even a mobile construction app developed specifically for this project.

3. Coalitions with equity-deserving groups

One notable feature of the Cogswell redevelopment project was the coalition they formed with equity-deserving groups. The project team specifically engaged with well-established community groups such as the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw community groups to co-create contract requirements in order to achieve specific social benefits. The engagement influenced up to 90% of the design plan of which 80% were incorporated in part or fully. This process ensures trust and a two-way dialogue during the process from design to finish, to ensure the cooperation and acceptance of the project by the communities that it affects. Not only that, in addition to general community benefits such as social procurement or employment benefits, these engagement sessions with equity-

deserving groups also established additional benefits such as appointing a community liaison and establishing an advisory community with members of the different community groups for project oversight. The initially formed coalitions were well established into the later stages of the project through specific contract requirements ensuring accountability and community members' oversight.

Appendix E: Best Practices for Community Benefits Projects

Best practices for community benefits development, implementation and evaluation

Project (Location)	Community Consultation	Drafting an Agreement	Implementing Benefits	Evaluation and Follow-up
Eglinton-Crosstown LRT (Toronto)	Community engagement and targeted outreach by partnering with local services and organizations, such as those that work/support underrepresented individuals, was key to building awareness and recruitment. Regular meetings of a Community Benefits Working Group with community partners like MTCU	Create and implement plan(s) that clearly outline objectives, strategies and opportunities that stakeholders will work towards to meet the community benefits. Place at-risk and historically equity-deserving groups (e.g., low/moderate income residents) at the center of drafting the benefits. ProjectCo must submit a Community Benefits Plan within 6 months of financial close Make agreement public for transparency purposes	Provision of employment, training, and procurement opportunities Coordination with MTCU and Employment Ontario to deliver training and connect candidates	Regular reporting on activities by ProjectCo Quarterly progress reports published by Metrolinx Ongoing improvement of the program based on feedback Metrolink monitoring and enforcing agreement terms

Project (Location)	Community Consultation	Drafting an Agreement	Implementing Benefits	Evaluation and Follow-up
Regent Park (Toronto)	Surveys, door-to-door interviews and small group discussion were conducted with community members to identify priorities 1064 people responded giving feedback community priorities such as employment, training, youth opportunities, economic opportunities, etc. Engagement was co- led by Tridel, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), and the Community Benefits Oversight Working group (CBOWG)	Based on feedback, three community benefits packages were co-developed - each package area invested in the same five priority areas with varying funding allocation Residents aged 14+ were empowered to vote for their preferred package	Community benefits packages guide implementation to ensure the investments align with community priorities - key areas include educational scholarships, job training, community spaces, and funding for local initiatives	
St. Paul's Hospital (Vancouver)	Comprehensive pre-development engagement by developing guidelines, project concept options, and policies, each through feedback from community stakeholders at public forums,	While there is benefit to a case-by-case, or project-based CBA, mandated province-wide CBAs can provide a centralized way to involve large-scale projects in CBAs. Additionally, it possibly due to the City's requirement to		

Project (Location)	Community Consultation	Drafting an Agreement	Implementing Benefits	Evaluation and Follow-up
	workshops or open houses.	meet the CBA targets that caused measures to be taken by the project designers and result in exceeding targets within just 2 years.		
Manor Park (Ottawa)	Group provides a forum for community members to raise concerns and exercise autonomy in the planning process. Regular meetings of the resident-lead group are facilitated by the Ottawa Community Benefits Network.	The draft CBA will consider the historical and contemporary context that may influence a community's willingness to embrace proposed adaptations. It will also address a broad range of community needs, providing safeguards to ensure residents share in benefits of major redevelopment. While there is benefit to a case-by-case, or project-based CBA, mandated province-wide CBAs can provide a centralized way to involve large-scale projects in CBAs. Additionally, it possibly due to the City's requirement to meet the CBA targets that caused measures to be taken by the project designers and result in exceeding		

Project (Location)	Community Consultation	Drafting an Agreement	Implementing Benefits	Evaluation and Follow-up
		targets within just 2 years.		
Heron Gate (Ottawa)	Consultation occurred in response to strong national criticism and intense criticism from housing advocates following mass tenant displacement. Feedback from affected residents informed the negotiations of the MOU, addressing affordability, tenant protection, and community reinvestment.	Establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Ottawa and Hazelview Properties with clear commitments of constructing new buildings, local reinvestments, and no further demolition of occupied units without relocation options	Involves phased delivery of affordable and family-sized units, operation of a Community Hub, youth employment programs, and ongoing community partnerships. The \$1 million park fund and local infrastructure improvements are tangible reinvestments into the neighbourhood.	Follow-up occurs through continuous city oversight and community monitoring. While critics note limited enforcement mechanisms, the MOU has influenced stronger accountability frameworks in future agreements (e.g., Manor Park).
Cogswell District Redevelopment (Halifax)	Comprehensive and early engagement with community and equity-deserving groups through public engagement sessions, Shape your City website, pop-up displays, town halls and social media apps. Engagement initiatives conducted to shape public	Community engagement with well-established equity deserving groups discussed opportunities for economic development which shaped contract requirements to satisfy provisions related to Halifax Regional Municipality's Procurement policy.	Community benefits contract also included clauses to appoint community liaison and establish an advisory committee to ensure project oversight by the residents and meet	While the project is ongoing, the project team ensures continuous evaluation and engagement through timely public updates through municipality owned challenges, a newly developed construction

Project (Location)	Community Consultation	Drafting an Agreement	Implementing Benefits	Evaluation and Follow-up
	space design and urban design rules for new buildings which saw over 98 comments and directions. 90% of the comments influenced the construction design plan with 80% incorporated fully or partly.		measurable targets.	mobile app, regular meetings, conversation with stakeholders and semi-annual information reports.