

# SIDEWALKS TO SKYLINES



**A 10-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR  
TORONTO'S ECONOMY (2025-2035)**

# Land Acknowledgement

The City of Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The City also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

# African Ancestral Acknowledgement




The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.



Toronto Sign wrap artwork *Rekindle*,  
by Joseph Sagaj

# Contents

<b>Mayor's Message</b>	<b><u>1</u></b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b><u>7</u></b>
<b>Toronto Today: Strengths &amp; Challenges</b>	<b><u>13</u></b>
Strengths	<u>14</u>
Challenges	<u>20</u>
Other Key Considerations	<u>28</u>
<b>Drivers, Actions &amp; Success Indicators</b>	<b><u>29</u></b>
Getting the Basics Right	<u>31</u>
Strong Main Streets	<u>38</u>
Quality Jobs	<u>42</u>
Global Competitiveness	<u>45</u>
<b>Implementation</b>	<b><u>51</u></b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b><u>66</u></b>
Appendix A: Definitions of Terms	<u>67</u>
Appendix B: Glossary of City Divisions Agencies	<u>68</u>

   @BusinessTO

[toronto.ca/economic-development-culture](https://toronto.ca/economic-development-culture)

# MAYOR'S MESSAGE



2024 Annual Toronto Region Board  
of Trade Lunch: Mayor Olivia Chow  
on Building Tomorrow

# Mayor Olivia Chow

*Sidewalks to Skyline - An Action Plan for Toronto's Economy* is bold and ambitious with aspirational targets to cement the City's position as a globally competitive economy. It is bold, because it needs to be. It sets out a vision to both get the basics right and an aspirational agenda to drive Toronto's economy forward, confronting its challenges and leveraging its many strengths.

Toronto cannot rest on its laurels. The city is now at a crossroads. Prosperity and wealth creation have not been equitably distributed, with significant disparities emerging. Threats to our world-leading standard of livability could undermine our ability to attract talent and investment. Should these issues be left unaddressed, we risk losing our global position as the best place to live and invest.

We must build a stronger foundation to Get the Basics Right: housing affordability, public safety, efficient roads and transit. Tackle congestion head on. We must get back on track.

Building on these fundamentals, there are three areas where the governments of Toronto, Ontario and Canada must work together, along with business and community leaders, to deliver a vision for Toronto from the sidewalks to the skylines:

> **Strong Main Streets**

Ensuring Toronto's unique small business neighbourhoods are vital anchors for vibrant, prosperous communities city-wide

> **Quality Jobs**

Investing in an inclusive economy that adds good jobs and leverages the diverse talent, networks, and expertise of people who live here.

> **Global Competitiveness**

Supporting Toronto's high-value and innovative businesses and brand to attract new investment, leading talent and major international events.

It is our ultimate aspirational goal that, taking all these actions together, Toronto will be on a path to double its GDP in 25 years. We will see economic growth, and put Toronto on the path to a more inclusive, prosperous economy. We will know when we get there by the thriving small businesses in our neighbourhoods, the rise of Toronto up the global ranking of our key high value sectors, and the expansion of good jobs in all parts of this city creating an entry onto the middle class for more Torontonians.

Join us in this journey to a Toronto that works for all.



**Mayor Olivia Chow**

City of Toronto

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Ossington Avenue

# Executive Summary

After decades of rapid growth and changes to business dynamics accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is time to approach economic development differently in Toronto. This Action Plan for Toronto's Economy lights the way, calling for a more collaborative and holistic effort to guide the city's economy through 2035. The overarching focus is a more liveable Toronto, supporting broad-based and sustainable prosperity – an economy that works for all residents and that safeguards and leverages a high quality of life to drive long-term economic success and growth.

## A Call to Action

This Action Plan is the City's, but the City cannot do it alone. Now the City calls on all orders of government as well as business and civil society to share in urgently needed reinvestment to safeguard Toronto's economic strength over the long term. Together, we can secure Toronto's capacity for broad-based, sustainable prosperity and growth and position the city to step into economic leadership globally.

Toronto's current quality-of-life challenges demand a plan that starts with the basics: housing affordability, public safety, efficient roads and transit. We must solidify and preserve what we have, then move onto creating the enabling conditions for growth and change, so Toronto is equipped to keep up with global trends and to lead in sectors where we have the potential for competitive advantage.

This Action Plan is titled Sidewalks to Skylines to make explicit we need ground-up and top-down alignment, that policies work for Main Street and Bay Street in bringing together the corporate and community sectors. We need an all-hands-on-deck strategy to engage everyone in building their economy.

This Action Plan lays out a comprehensive roadmap and signals an integrated approach that aligns the City's priorities to ensure equitable opportunity and climate resilience alongside economic prosperity. This is no longer a case of either/or, but rather both/and.

The Action Plan is informed by significant public consultation and engagement with over 1,000 stakeholders, research on key trends in the local, regional and global economies, as well as an analysis of the best practices taken by other jurisdictions in effectively responding to such trends.

Throughout this report, the use of "City" refers to the Corporation of the City of Toronto, while the use of "city" refers to Toronto.

## Vision

The Action Plan for Toronto's Economy envisions broad-based, sustainable prosperity through 2035 and beyond by calling on all orders of government, business and civil society to reinvest in high standards of liveability that drive the city's success and outsize economic contribution to the region and the nation.

## Strengths

The key advantages for Toronto's economy have included its proximity to United States markets, a highly skilled workforce attracted by a high quality of life, and world-leading universities, colleges and public institutions. These conditions have led to a diversified economy with multiple high-value globally competitive sectors, specifically financial services, technology, life sciences, food and beverage, manufacturing and the creative industry. In addition, over decades the City has supported a network of community-based settlement services, which has equipped hundreds of thousands of newcomers to integrate both economically and socially, and built a diverse and robust small and midsize enterprise, or SME, sector.

In addition to fueling economic opportunities, the diversity of Toronto's workforce and independent business sector has led to vibrant neighbourhoods and varied cultural offerings that not only sustain locals but drive a visitor economy which generates additional revenue.

Public sector services and employment further diversify Toronto's economy, providing stable, well-paying jobs as well as core government services such as education and healthcare which are key workforce attractions and supports.

## Challenges

This Action Plan outlines actions the City will take to address declining affordability and threats to our quality of life that are affecting Toronto's capacity to attract and retain a diverse and highly skilled workforce. Canada is facing a crisis in productivity and its impact on global competitiveness. These actions address greater infrastructure investment, particularly that which supports building new housing, creating complete communities and expanding our public transit system.

## Actions

This Action Plan starts from the bottom, building a foundation to Get the Basics Right, and then proposes three areas for priority action:

- > **Strong Main Streets**  
Ensuring Toronto's unique small businesses districts are vital anchors for community activity, from commerce to civic engagement.
- > **Quality Jobs**  
Investing in an inclusive economy that adds good jobs and leverages the diverse talent, networks, and expertise of people who live here.
- > **Global Competitiveness**  
Supporting Toronto's high-value, innovative and specialized sectors and reputation, by providing excellent resources and advocacy to ensure these enterprises and events can locate, expand and thrive in the city.



Taking all these actions together, from addressing quality of life and supporting small businesses to accelerating Toronto's high-value sectors, Toronto will be on a path to double its GDP in 25 years, with an estimated 50% increase in GDP per capita. The city will also be on the path to having a more inclusive economy that works for all its residents.

### Outcomes

This Action Plan targets key outcomes: increasing and stabilizing the City's long-term financial capacity; strengthening partnerships between orders of government to invest in housing, transit and other infrastructure that supports economic competitiveness; adding quality jobs that leverage a diverse work force; and cultivating resilient, dynamic main street economies that foster equitable opportunity, rich cultural experiences and community safety.

Progress will be monitored and regularly reported to City Council and the broader public on an annual basis.

This Action Plan provides a roadmap for the City to confront major challenges, maximize Toronto's strongest advantages and drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth over the next 10 years.



Humber Bay Arch Bridge  
for pedestrians and cyclists  
© Destination Toronto

# INTRODUCTION



# Introduction

It is time to approach economic development differently in Toronto, and this Action Plan for Toronto's Economy sets out a clear path, calling for a more collaborative and holistic effort to guide the city's economy through 2035. The overarching focus is a more liveable Toronto, supporting broad-based, inclusive economic development and sustainable prosperity – an economy that works for all residents and that safeguards and leverages a high quality of life to drive long-term economic success and growth.

This Action Plan is the City's, but the City cannot do it alone. Toronto shares the benefits of its powerful economy with its region and the nation – generating over 20% of Canada's GDP and 53% of Ontario's GDP. Toronto shares the benefits of its powerful economy with its region and the nation – generating over 20% of Canada's GDP and 52% of Ontario's GDP. Together, we can secure Toronto's capacity for broad-based, sustainable prosperity and growth and position the city to step into economic leadership globally.

It has been over 10 years since the launch of the City of Toronto's last economic development plan, Collaborating for Competitiveness: A Strategic Plan to Accelerate Economic Growth and Job Creation in Toronto. In the decade that has followed, Toronto has continued to grow its population – by over 35% – and diversify its economic base to drive the region and the country. With that rapid growth and the COVID-19 pandemic have come myriad

challenges: housing supply and affordability; to labour supply; vacancies in commercial office districts, integrating increasing numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers; maintaining aging infrastructure including roads, bridges and transit; economic opportunities for equity-deserving populations chronically excluded; and mental health supports and public spaces both straining under increased homelessness, substance use and addiction.

The City of Toronto cannot possibly meet the needs of its current – and future – residents without a robust, diversified economy to generate the tax revenues needed to fund essential services. Those services are needed to provide a reliable quality of life, one that attracts and retains businesses, investors, workers, residents and visitors. The City must specifically prioritize measures that make the Toronto economy attractive to investors and workers alike.

Since the turn of this century, Toronto has steadily solidified its position as the economic engine of Canada. It is a leading centre of commerce and creativity, and one of most significant regional centres for research and innovation in North America. As political and economic events affect our most important trading partner to the south, and global wars affect energy and commodity markets, the strength and diversity of the Toronto economy is becoming more and more crucial.

## SIDEWALKS TO SKYLINES

For Toronto's growth to be sustainable, we need a plan to tackle the basics – housing affordability, public safety, efficient roads and transit. We need to get our own house in order and harness our assets in order to then make the case to all our partners – governments, businesses, institutions, community organizations and labour – to invest with us in building a strong Toronto economy that serves everyone.

We also need this Action Plan to invest in the future – to solidify and preserve what we have, but also to create the enabling conditions for growth and change, so Toronto is equipped to keep up with global trends and to lead in sectors where we have the potential for a competitive advantage.

Across North America, large urban centres are reinventing themselves through partnerships and shared investment across governments and the private sector. These initiatives are transforming regional economies from east to west. Accordingly, this Action Plan calls on all sectors to double down on collaborative strategies and investment to make Toronto work for those who live, work and visit here, now and in the future.

This Action Plan is titled Sidewalks to Skylines to make explicit we need ground-up and top-down alignment, policies that work for Main Street and Bay Street, and to bring together the corporate and community sectors. We need an all-hands-on-deck strategy to engage everyone in building their economy.

This Action Plan lays out a comprehensive roadmap and signals an integrated approach that aligns the City's priorities to ensure equitable economic opportunity and climate resilience. This is no longer a case of either/or, but rather both/and.

Ensuring Toronto remains well positioned to continue its recent trajectory of economic expansion is an important goal of this Action Plan. While this Action Plan is concerned with GDP and job growth, it seeks to also address increasingly urgent issues of shared prosperity and sustainability. This reflects a necessary evolution in how the City approaches economic development, rising to the challenges of our time by considering how broadly and how equitably economic prosperity is shared across geography and demographics, and placing value on environmental sustainability to increase local resilience to climate change.

In taking this integrated view of economic success, this Action Plan aligns the City's economic development efforts more closely with other essential goals and priorities of the City, and the values and aspirations of its residents. In this sense, the Action Plan aims to amplify existing City strategies promoting inclusion, sustainability, and prosperity.



Underpass Park  
© Destination Toronto

## Engagement Process

To craft the Action Plan which effectively serves the needs of all businesses, workers and residents, the City conducted extensive public consultations and research. Altogether, the City and its consultation partners engaged more than 1,000 stakeholders. This included the Economic Advisory Panel which helped guide this work, engagement led by the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI), City-led engagement tables, and engagement with Advisory Bodies to Toronto City Council. Their combined perspectives, gathered through surveys, interviews, consultation sessions, and focus groups, directly informed the development of the Action Plan for Toronto's Economy.

As part of its direct consultations, the City's Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) formed an Economic Advisory Panel co-chaired by Councillor Shelley Carroll and Zabeen Hirji, former Chief Human Resources Officer at Royal Bank of Canada. The Economic Advisory Panel is made up of business, labour, community and academic leaders from across the city, representing a variety of sectors and industries that informed the City on major trends and provided considerations for the Action Plan. The City also collaborated with dozens of organizations to gather input from their diverse constituencies during numerous additional consultation sessions.

CUI's consultations included nearly 500 individuals and organizations, representing a cross-section of sectors and communities, who shared insights in roundtables, interviews, and through online surveys. CUI kicked off their

### THE NEXT TORONTO



Economic Advisory Panel Report



**A PLAN FOR GROWTH  
AND SHARED PROSPERITY IN  
TORONTO FOR THE NEXT DECADE**

consultation sessions with a *CityTalk* webinar, followed by 14 focus groups, 34 interviews, and an online survey that received 222 responses. Focus groups were structured to include eight key sectors in Toronto. Four focus groups were designed to engage small businesses based on community council boundaries, and two sessions focused on community-serving non-profit organizations.

The city's businesses, local associations, and community representatives seized the opportunity to share their views. The dialogues focused on how the city can build on its strengths to become more competitive, foster inclusive economic development, and encourage sustainable practices to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Additional Indigenous interviews were completed by Mokwateh, an Indigenous led consultancy committed to shared prosperity.

The City heard from various community leaders through dedicated sessions, including organizations that represent the collective interests of accessibility groups, union workers, young people, local businesses and employers, educators, human resource and creative industry professionals, as well as Indigenous, nonprofit and corporate leaders.

Beyond extensive consultation with individuals and organizations to help determine the Action Plan priorities, the City also partnered with experts to conduct specialized research. Work commissioned by the City and conducted by PwC in 2022, which outlined post-COVID

economic trends, was incorporated into the Action Plan, along with an examination of current trends. Additionally, through the CivicLabTO program, the City partnered with the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) to identify a set of indicators of economic inclusion to better understand the degree to which prosperity is shared across Toronto’s labour force and households. These indicators of economic inclusion are embedded in this Action Plan.

A detailed catalogue of all that consultations that informed the development of the Action Plan can be found at [toronto.ca/economic-development-culture](https://toronto.ca/economic-development-culture).

**FIGURE 1**

Engagement by the Numbers



**1000+**  
stakeholders



**222** survey  
responses



**34** interviews



**14** focus groups



**12** City-led  
engagement tables

# TORONTO TODAY: STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES





# Strengths

## A Success Story

Canada's largest city is among the most economically successful places in the world, with a population and GDP that have grown rapidly for decades. Figure 2 shows Toronto's dominance as the engine of Canada's economy. Toronto CMA accounts for 20% of the national economic output as well as 52% of Ontario's. Since 2009, Toronto's GDP has increased by 2.2%<sup>1</sup> annually, more than the national average of 1.8% over the same period. Toronto's economy has also shown remarkable resilience, withstanding both the 2008 Great Recession and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic. Employment in Toronto has bounced back and more, peaking in summer 2023<sup>2</sup> above pre-pandemic levels seen in February 2020.

## A Diversified Economy

Benefiting from a highly diversified local economy supported by an incredible talent developed locally and attracted from abroad – as well as proximity to the United States markets and world-class universities, colleges and public institutions – Toronto is competitive in nearly every sector. The city has notably strong financial services, technology, life sciences, food and beverage, manufacturing and creative industries. Toronto's financial services sector is the second largest in North America, with the

fastest job growth rate on the continent and the fifth-fastest in the world. Its tech sector saw the largest gains of any North American market over the last five years adding nearly 96,000 jobs, and its film and music industry rank third in North America behind only New York City and Los Angeles.<sup>3,4</sup> The city's economy is competitive, diverse and growing.



Collision 2024  
© Destination Toronto

1 GDP outlook – average of three sources – the Conference Board of Canada, Moody's, and Oxford Economics.

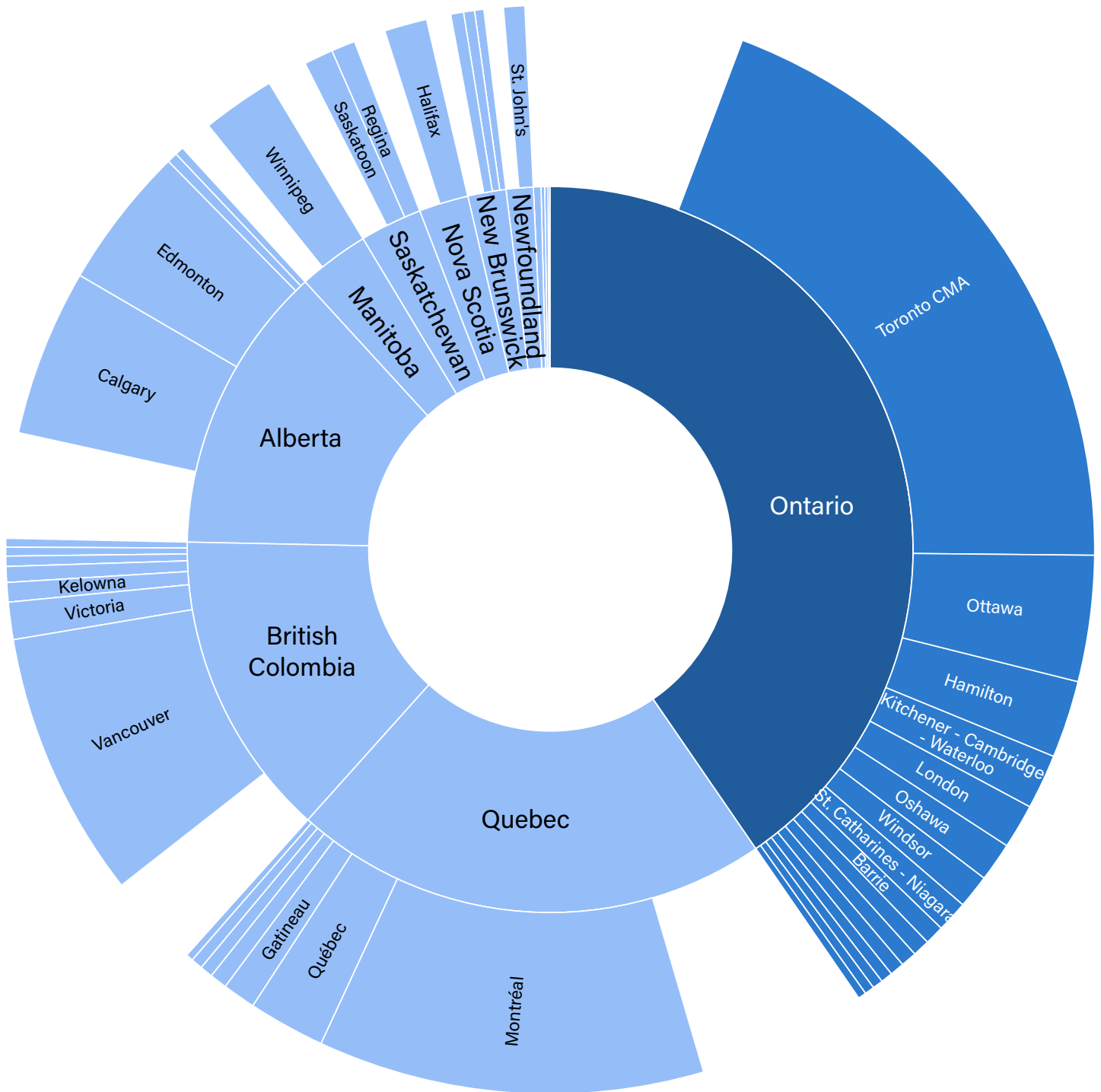
2 Statistics Canada, City of Toronto, EDC Estimates.

3 The Impact of Toronto's Financial Sector, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/in-fact/the-impact-of-torontos-financial-sector/>

4 CBRE, Toronto Ranks 4th in North American Tech Talent, 2024.

FIGURE 2

Toronto's GDP Compared to Other Canadian Cities and Provinces



**FIGURE 3**

Local, Public & Global Economy Traded Sectors

**Local economy sectors**

Local economy sectors include many small and midsize enterprises (SME) that fill Toronto’s main streets and meet the everyday needs of residents close to home. Toronto’s local economy sectors make the city a convenient, vibrant and desirable place to live, helping to attract talent, visitors, and investment. Local economy jobs tend to be accessible, with modest pay and security.

**43% of the city’s jobs**

- Key industries:** Retail, construction, transportation, food and hotels
- Average salary:** \$45,000

**21% of the city’s jobs**

- Key services:** Education and health care
- Average salary:** \$62,000

**Public sector**

Public sector organizations deliver core services from all levels of government that influence conditions for living and doing business in the city, from the investment environment to the street environment. These services are important magnets and supports for the whole workforce, while providing well-paying, secure jobs. The public sector represents an especially important employer for women.

**Global economy traded sectors**

Global economy traded sectors are the engines of Toronto’s long-term economic growth, competing internationally, serving external markets, and bringing in capital. Employment in global economy sectors tends to have obstacles to access, with jobs that are high-paying and secure.

**36% of the city’s jobs**

- Key industries:** Professional services, manufacturing, finance and insurance, information technology, culture, and real estate.
- Average salary:** \$86,000

Source: Statistics Canada, 2023.

**FIGURE 4**  
Global, Local and Public Sector Employment



Source: Statistics Canada, 2023

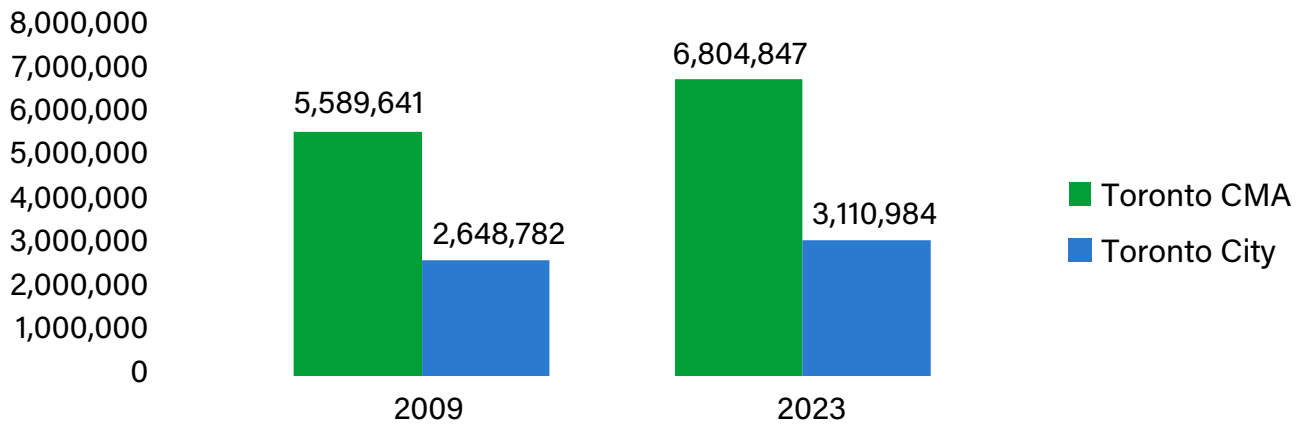
## Strong Global, Local and Public Sector Economies

Toronto's economy is diverse and therefore resilient, helping to limit the impact of shocks to specific industries. This enabling the business environment, the City and residents to recover more quickly and fully after adversity.

Toronto's economic diversity can be viewed as three major sector and employment types, which can be broadly divided into the global economy sectors, the local economy or main street sectors, and the public sector.

**FIGURE 5**

Toronto and Region Population Growth



### Rapid Population Growth

Toronto’s economic growth is closely linked to its rapid population growth. Over the last 20 years, the Toronto region has grown 35%, while the population of Canada as a whole has grown 30% (Source: Statistics Canada, 2023). The city of Toronto hit a milestone population of three million people in 2023, years earlier than Ontario’s growth plan projected (see Figure 5). On average, the city has added net 32,280 people every year for the last 15 years, for a total of nearly half a million additional residents. During the same period, the Toronto region has added an average of 86,785 residents every year, for a total population gain of more than 1.3 million.

The City’s steep and sustained population growth is largely due to immigration. Toronto continues to attract talent from around the world. In 2023, Toronto welcomed approximately

180,000 new arrivals. This has marked a strong comeback from the net decline of -28,000 in 2021<sup>5</sup> with the pandemic and its accompanying border restrictions which had led to a dramatic decline in immigration to Canada, and some urban residents decamping to smaller communities. The City has for decades supported newcomers with a variety of community-based resettlement services, supporting Toronto’s strong capacity to effectively integrate, both socially and economically, large numbers of newcomers year after year. The skills, diversity and global connectedness of Toronto’s workforce are major factors in the city’s economic success.

### A High Quality of Life

As part of a virtuous economic cycle, maintaining Toronto’s position as a primary destination for highly skilled immigrants depends on the availability of good jobs and a

5 Statistics Canada, Tables 17-10-0140-01 and 17-0136-01

## SIDEWALKS TO SKYLINES

high quality of life that these workers want and expect. Quality of life issues are also essential to retaining Toronto's existing talent base and population and encouraging economic activity. A high quality of life has historically been a strong asset to the city, although in recent years, this asset has been increasingly at risk. Addressing the challenges that follow will help safeguard this important element of the city's economic success.



# Challenges

## Pressures of Growth and Change

Ranked as one of the most livable cities in 2023 by the Economist,<sup>6</sup> Toronto cannot rest on its laurels. The city is now at a crossroads. While Toronto underwent a historic economic expansion over the last 20 years, prosperity and wealth creation were not equitably distributed with significant disparities emerging along both geographic and racial lines. Mounting pressures from its rapid growth over the past several decades, as well as factors linked to global economic trends and the COVID-19 pandemic, threaten its continued economic strength. Most critical among these challenges are the erosion of affordability and quality of life for Toronto's residents.

Other challenges are intertwined with these overarching ones: the pressing need for major infrastructure investments, relatively low productivity, including in the creation of new housing, and persistent inequality. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated trends and precipitated long-term changes in how residents relate to their city, with significant economic and quality of life implications for the Downtown and Centres: Etobicoke Centre, North York Centre, Scarborough Centre and Yonge-Eglinton. With rapid growth, traffic congestion has become an additional challenge that intersects with many

others, reflecting overburdened infrastructure and contributing to reduced productivity, affordability, and quality of life. While generational investments in transit expansion are currently underway, traffic congestion requires immediate tactical solutions to alleviate its burden on the economy.

## A Housing Affordability Crisis

Toronto's workforce is an essential factor in the city's economic growth, but it is increasingly stressed by rising housing costs. The average cost of a home in Toronto in 2023 was more than \$1.1 million. To qualify for a mortgage of that size, a household needs annual income of nearly \$220,000 plus a down payment of \$200,000.<sup>7</sup> The average income in Toronto for workers age 15+ across all occupations was \$49,000 in 2021.<sup>8</sup> The median household income is \$84,000.<sup>9</sup> While some segments of the residential property market are expected to depreciate slightly, overall home prices are anticipated to continue to rise.

Almost half of Toronto residents rent their homes, and as of Spring 2021, 40% of them were considered rent-burdened, meaning they spent more than 30% of their pre-tax income on rent. Home ownership feels increasingly out of reach for many, up from 11% points from last year.<sup>10</sup>

6 [Economist Most Liveable Cities 2023 Ranking: Western Europe, Australia Top List](#) - Bloomberg

7 TREB, Realnet (Altus), Urbanation Market Data, and CMHC Rental Market Survey Data, 2020.

8 City of Toronto, Statistics Canada, 2021 Census.

9 City of Toronto, Statistics Canada, 2021 Census.

10 Ipsos, 2024.

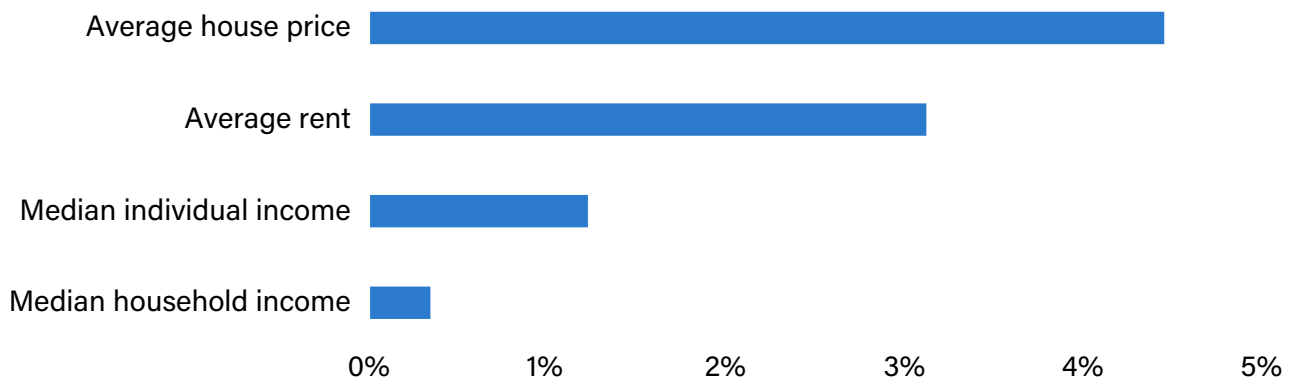
Indeed, even moving on from an existing tenancy to a new one can plunge renters into financial distress, since that means abandoning rent protection for the latest market prices, which are on a steep incline. As a result of deterioration in affordability and higher inflation, more renters are struggling to pay rent. The share of rental units in arrears increased 53% from 12.8% in 2022 to 19.6% in 2023.<sup>11</sup> Toronto’s consistently tight rental market makes it challenging for newcomers to find an affordable place to live that suits their ability to live, work, and play in Toronto.

To illustrate this, Figure 6 presents an analysis of annual rate of growth of income relative to shelter from 2006-2021 show shelter cost including home ownership and rent, far exceeding that of median incomes of households and individuals.

The housing affordability crisis has also contributed to the rise in homelessness in Toronto. The city has roughly 10,000 homeless people. Unhoused people experience a relatively lower quality of life, and frequently must rely on public spaces in the city to meet basic needs. Addressing growing homelessness in Toronto is critical for overall quality of life and economic prosperity. Toronto has substantially invested in developing new shelters, increasing its stock to 10,600 beds from 7,000 in 2019.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the high cost of housing causes psychological, logistical as well as financial stress to increasing numbers of residents and is a major factor in growing concern of quality of life in the city overall. Taking strong action on housing that serves low- and middle-income households and addresses the inter-related challenges of addictions and mental health is critical to maintaining Toronto’s primary economic competitive advantage: quality of life.

**FIGURE 6**

Toronto Compound Annual Growth Rates: Home Prices, Rents, and Incomes (2006 - 2021)



Source: 2021 Census (Income related), CMHC (Average Rent); TRREB (Average House Price).

<sup>11</sup> CMHC Rental Market Report, January 2024

<sup>12</sup> City of Toronto, SSHA.



Building more housing requires strong action from all orders of government. The City of Toronto has recently led the country in adopting policy responses to the crisis, including eliminating parking minimums for new developments and adopting the HousingTO Action Plan; allowing multiplexes (i.e. two, three or four units in a single building) to be built in all residential areas, permitting and better regulating multi-tenant houses (i.e. rooming houses) across the city; leveraging its own lands for affordable housing development, and adopting updated planning frameworks to guide housing intensification and the building of complete communities in growth areas. All of these measures encourage greater housing density throughout the city or directly deliver housing units in Toronto, and paving the way for developers to increase the number of homes dramatically. The City of Toronto has also increased the speed it takes to approve development applications. Yet despite such measures, significant relief from the housing affordability crisis for the majority of residents and remains a critical challenge.

### Inadequate Funding Tools

The City of Toronto currently delivers services, initiatives and projects that far exceed the traditional role of municipal government, and which substantially benefit the region and other orders of government. In short, given the human and economic costs of issues such as irregular migration, the City of Toronto has had little choice but to assume services historically the responsibility of other orders of government. In addition, the City is faced with growing demands for services and infrastructure, for which the City is not able to capture the benefits of growth.

A 2024 study of Canada's infrastructure needs by the Canadian Urban Institute estimates that about \$104,000 of new investment is required for each additional housing unit, with the figure ranging from \$78,000 per high-density residence to \$130,000 per single-family home. To put this in perspective, Toronto's 2024 Corporate Asset Management Plan notes a large gap between the funding required to maintain Toronto's existing \$73 billion in infrastructure at current levels of service (\$4 billion per year) and the amount allotted for this purpose in the City's 2024 budget (\$1.4 billion). The City has doubled its investment in maintaining infrastructure in a state of good repair in its latest 10 Year Capital Budget and Plan, which commits 52% of those funds to the purpose, or \$26 billion. In 2023, the New Deal between Toronto and Ontario provided substantial relief to Toronto's capital budget pressures, reflecting the type of continued cooperation needed to sustain a growing city. As a result, the City was able to increase its investment of \$1.6 billion in 2024 to keep some of its infrastructure in a state of good repair.

Meeting Toronto's infrastructure needs requires new revenue tools that grow with the economy, and long-term and sustained investment from the provincial and federal government. Despite hopeful signs of cooperation, Toronto does not currently have the tools it needs to both sustain infrastructure and expand to welcome new growth. Delivering the necessary infrastructure to facilitate new homes requires greater investment than the property tax base alone can bear. Providing Toronto with a sustainable long-term inter-governmental funding deal will enhance quality of life and ensure that Toronto's economy remains competitive globally by having the minimum offerings needed to draw talent, investment, and visitors.

## Low Productivity

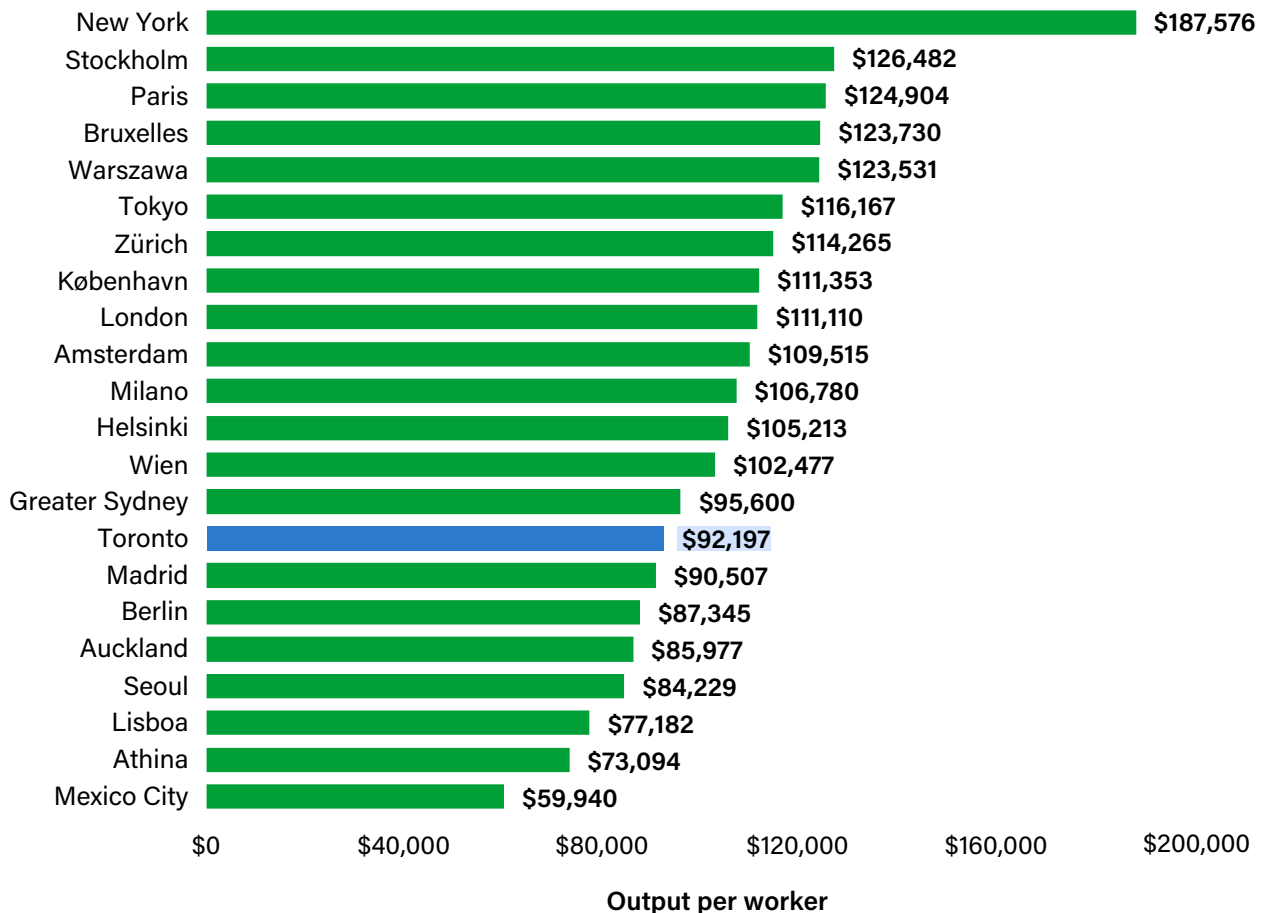
Canadian cities trail other cities internationally in productivity rankings, with recent evidence that the gap is growing. Several factors impact productivity. Among them are access to capital, access to labour and workforce training to ensure new businesses have the talent they need to succeed; mobility, both in terms of goods movement and individual travel, and cost of living. Toronto reflects that challenge, with an economic output per worker less than half of that for New York. Figure 7 presents recent analysis that shows the value of Toronto's output

per worker at just over \$90,000, far behind New York (almost \$190,000), as well as Paris (\$125,000), Tokyo (\$115,000), London (\$110,000) and Greater Sydney (\$95,000).

Globally competitive sectors tend to be sensitive to macro-economic factors and take into account a wide array of investment conditions when they decide to locate or grow in any market. These sectors – like professional services, finance, food and beverage, manufacturing, IT, creative industries and real estate, as mentioned above – tend to create higher-productivity jobs.

**FIGURE 7**

Toronto's Productivity Compared to Other Cities



## Economic Polarization

Despite Toronto’s success, the benefits of a high-performing economy have not been equally shared among Toronto residents, as Figure 8 shows. While certain sectors saw significant growth in wages, many did not, and trends such as the rise of the gig economy, de-unionization and greater precarity of employment place continued downward pressure on wages. In 2023, 1 in 10 people in Toronto relied on food banks, which was a 51% increase from just the prior year and a 230% increase over the last decade.<sup>13</sup>

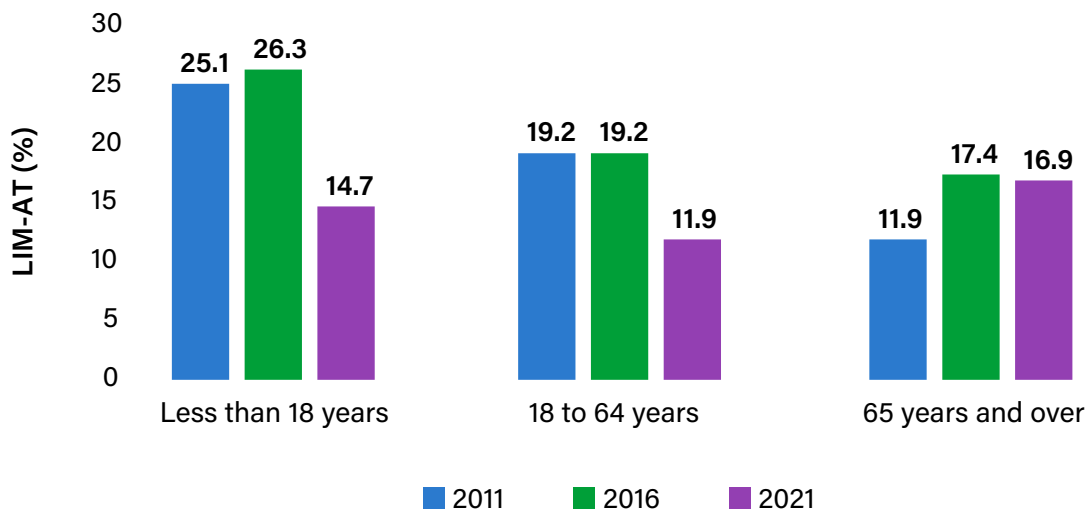
A recent study from TMU commissioned by the City through CivicLabTO<sup>14</sup> found that from 2011 to 2021, Toronto’s labor force saw a shift towards more part-time work, with the not-employed increasing from 34.7% to 37.2%, full-time

employment decreasing from 53.7% to 49.8%, and part-time roles rising from 11.6% to 13.0%, potentially signaling economic pressures and changing labour market conditions that affect job security and income stability. Additional analysis of the 2021 Census, prepared by City of Toronto’s Social Research and Information Management Unit, identified that Toronto continues to have a higher rate of low income than Canada (11.1%), Ontario (10.1%) and the rest of the regions in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (8.09%).

In Toronto, highest median incomes are found in north Toronto, roughly bounded by Bloor Street, the Don Valley, Wilson Avenue and Bathurst Street, as well as in the Royal York Road and Bloor Street West area. Lower median household incomes are scattered

**FIGURE 8**

Prevalence of Low Income Among Different Age Groups in Toronto



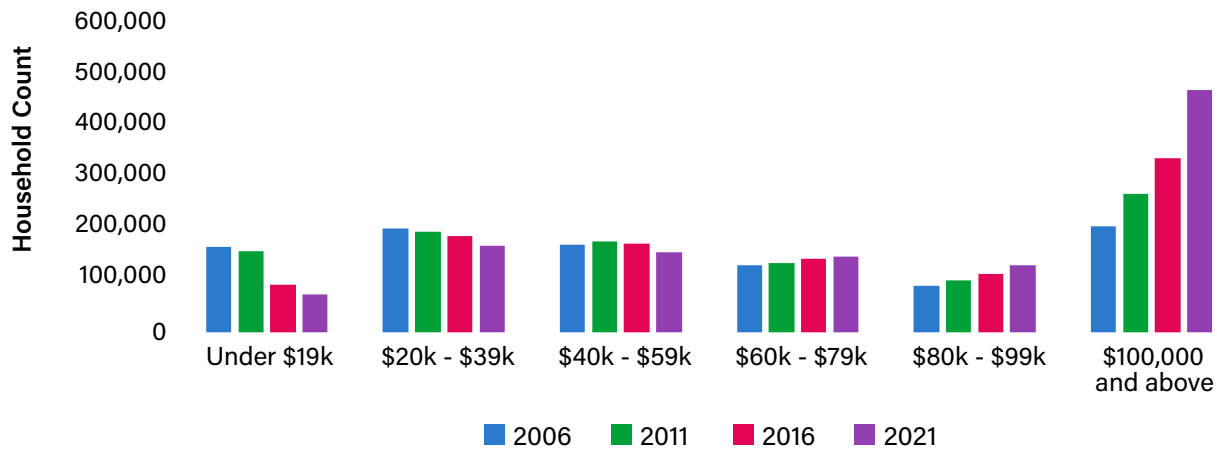
Source: Statistics Canada with analysis by Toronto Metropolitan University, 2024.

13 [Who’s Hungry Report](#), Daily Bread Food Bank, 2023.

14 [An Analysis of the City of Toronto’s High-Level Census Indicators](#). Diversity Institute, Civic LabTO. Supervisors Dr. Daniel Tut, Dr. Mo Guang

**FIGURE 9**

Income Per Household



Source: Statistics Canada with analysis by Toronto Metropolitan University, 2024.

through the city but are mostly concentrated near Weston-Mount Dennis, Jane Finch, York University Heights; and in the Downtown core, and in pockets across East York, and Central Scarborough. These findings highlight spatial disparities in economic prosperity across Toronto’s diverse neighbourhoods and its residents.

Further, Figure 9 shows that the number of Toronto households in the highest income category has steadily increased as measured over the last four Censuses. At the same time, the number of households in the lowest income category has declined. However, as Toronto continues to thrive in globally traded sectors, and more households have entered the highest income category with additional purchasing power, it will be critical to address persistent income inequality and continue to monitor the trend above. The foundation and priorities of this Action Plan are intended to support continued growth of household income and a continued

trend to a higher proportion of households and individuals in higher income categories.

Globally income and wealth inequality remain persistent. From 1820 to 1910 global income inequality more than doubled with the average income of the global top 10% increasing from 18 times higher than the average income to 41 times higher. Since 1910 there have been peaks and valleys, with decreases from 1980 to 2020. As of 2020, the global top 10% has an average income that is 38 times higher than average income of the bottom 50%.<sup>15</sup> Globally, this suggests that inequality is persistently high, and the trend is likely to continue. Through the COVID-19 pandemic it was clear which groups have historically been left out of economic growth. Inequality has both social and economic consequences that if left unaddressed will grow increasingly prevalent and disrupt economic growth.

15 [World Inequality Report, 2022.](#)

## Reduced Demand for Office Space

Toronto's office market has shown ongoing strength in some segments. Today, office-based companies continue to evaluate the merits of hybrid work arrangements and their need for space. As workers reassess their relationship with physical work environments in pursuit of greater work-life balance, Toronto's office market has softened, albeit with ongoing strength in higher-quality spaces. Post-COVID-19 pandemic, Toronto's office vacancy rate has continued to rise, and stood at 18.3% in the first quarter of 2024, surpassing rates in New York City and faring similarly to other cities such as Seattle, Boston, and Sydney.<sup>16</sup>

Aside from the office market itself, reduced activity in parts of the city with high concentrations of office buildings poses another challenge. These areas may feel less vibrant, attractive and safe, with reduced local business activity related to commuting office workers. Revitalizing vacant older office spaces is an important task for City government, with a focus on non-monetary incentives such as, targeted responsiveness to planning tools and concierge service to expedite high-value and particularly innovative projects with the potential to scale. While the scale of the issue in Toronto may not require interventions of the sort seen in jurisdictions like Calgary, this issue presents a great opportunity for the City to spur private sector innovation in reuse of space.

## Traffic Congestion

Toronto's commuters have the longest average travel times in North America.<sup>17</sup> As with the loss of disposable income with an affordability crisis, so too the loss of time to congested roads and underdeveloped transit represent interrelated threats to Toronto's ability to attract and retain talent and drive economic growth. The generational investments currently being made in public transit, including the expansion of the TTC's rapid transit network and improvements through GO Expansion and the SmartTrack Station Program, offer hope for improved mobility and congestion relief. A 2022 study found that the average driver in Toronto lost 118 hours due to congestion, costing the Toronto region an estimated \$11 billion annually in lost productivity and opportunity.<sup>18</sup>

All of the impacts Toronto commuters report on congestion surveys intersect with other major challenges affecting Toronto's economy and economic development prospects over the next decade, most notably liveability of life, affordability and productivity. Traffic congestion is also a reflection of strained City infrastructure as well as inequality, with less advantaged populations often experiencing longer commute times. While there are positive signs, including the New Deal reached with Ontario, long-term support from the provincial and federal governments are required to address structural issues of fiscal imbalance that drive the decline in Toronto's critical infrastructure.

<sup>16</sup> Cushman & Wakefield, 2024.

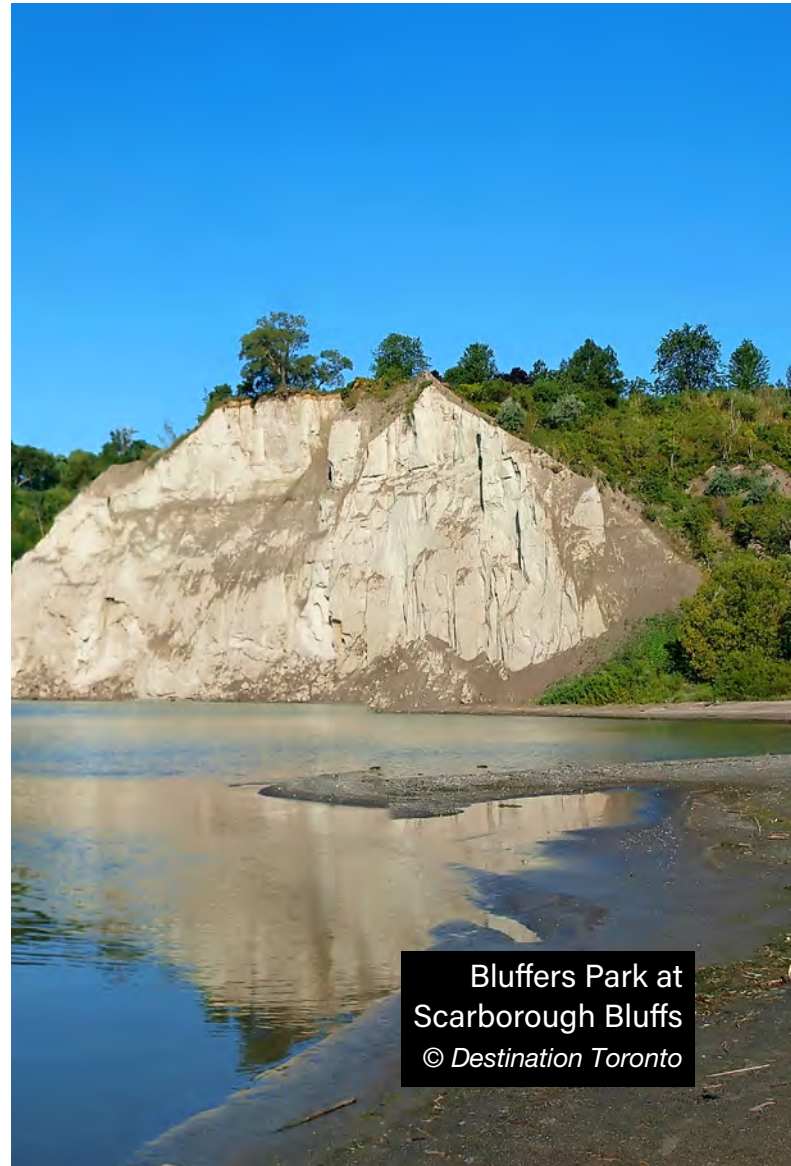
<sup>17</sup> Toronto Region Board of Trade, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> "Inrix 2022 Global Traffic Scorecard," Inrix, <https://inrix.com/scorecard/>

## Climate Change

Climate change is already impacting Toronto's economy and quality of life. Globally, climate change will impact Canada's economic mix and may lead to rising costs for households, further compounding efforts to better the quality of life of Toronto's residents. In 2023, Canadian wildfires affected all thirteen provinces and territories with smoke visible throughout Toronto. The health costs for the harmful air pollution from these fires have been estimated at \$1.28 billion in Ontario.<sup>19</sup> In 2024, flash floods brought the Don Valley Parkway to a standstill causing nearly \$1 billion in damages according to an initial estimate from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. As rising CO2 emissions lead to warming of global temperatures, governments are increasingly committing to net zero, which will require economic shifts Canada and the United States net zero target of 2050 presents an opportunity to leverage the commitment of the federal government to support the electrification of grids, optimization of buildings, and accelerate the transition to electric vehicles (EVs). However, in delivering these changes there is substantial competition with the United States for the talent, technology, and resources to deliver.

Climate change will come at a cost to cities and residents. In extreme weather events, for every \$1 of insured losses, Canadians pay an addition \$3-4 on uninsured losses such as disruptions from work, loss in property value, and environmental cleanup.<sup>20</sup> Toronto is



well positioned to deliver on its TransformTO plan, leveraging support from other orders of government. However, long-term commitment on infrastructure investment and participation from the private sector in upgrading aging buildings are critical to achieving Toronto's 2040 net-zero target.

<sup>19</sup> [With Canada's forest fires, the health costs hit home](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Toronto's Climate Change Readiness: Updates on commitments and a refreshed mandate for coordinating resilience activities](#)

# Other Key Considerations

## The Rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI and the shift to a digital economy have a substantial impact on the types of skills that employers are looking for. A number of studies completed in 2023 suggests that AI makes workers more productive and leads to higher quality work. A meta-review by Microsoft aggregated studies comparing the performance of workers showing that users of its AI tool completed tasks in 26% to 73% less time than counterparts without AI.<sup>21</sup>

Some cities are also leading in leveraging AI and digital tools to transform services. In Buenos Aires, an AI enabled chatbot was launched to help residents navigate services. In New York City, an AI Action Plan was developed to leverage data, establish governance, and identify areas to enhance city services; in Boston, their Department of Innovation & Technology published guidelines to inform City divisions on how to use AI.<sup>22,23,24</sup>

## Evolving Trade Dynamics

In 2026, the United States, Mexico, and Canada Agreement (USMCA) will be due for a review. This pivotal document has both unlocked investment in Canada, making it easier to trade amongst North American partners, but also presents fierce competition for manufacturing

resources. The rise of protectionism and nearshoring to counter resilience concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to continue. Since the USMCA came into effect in 2020, total North American trade has soared by 47% reflecting both the magnitude of the agreement and the desire for greater regional resilience.<sup>25</sup> While the trend of nearshoring has unlocked investment, Canada is also competing for critical manufacturing resources to be hosted in Canada such as EV battery plants and biotech facilities.

## The Ongoing Demographic Shift

The world's population is expected to increase by 2 billion people in 2050 before reaching a peak of nearly 11 billion people by the end of the century. The Toronto region is expected to continue its growth in this time, adding 3.3 million residents in the region by 2046, and with it there will be challenges in addressing the needs of shifting demographics and population growth. Issues of intergenerational fairness, as with climate change and infrastructure investment, are emerging across many policy fronts, as the economic prospects for Generation Z and beyond appear more limited than the generations which preceded them. This calls for a "youth lens" to be increasingly applied to economic policy development.

21 <https://aiindex.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HAI-AI-Index-Report-2024.pdf>

22 [How 4 global cities are innovating with generative AI](#). World Economic Forum.

23 [Artificial Intelligence in Action for NYC](#)

24 [Generative AI is here. This is how 5 cities plan to manage its use](#). Smart Cities Dive.

25 <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/USMCA-Forward-2024.pdf>

# DRIVERS, ACTIONS & SUCCESS INDICATORS



Dundas Street West



# Drivers, Actions & Success Indicators

It's clear that Toronto must address key challenges to seize opportunities over the coming decade to create a more liveable, inclusive, and prosperous city. This section presents actions that build Toronto up from its strengths and recognizes that the City will not be able to achieve this vision alone. By prioritizing these actions, the City will strengthen Toronto in partnership with Ontario, Canada, the private sector, and civil society. Here are the key challenges we must address—"drivers" demanding change—and the actions required to overcome them.

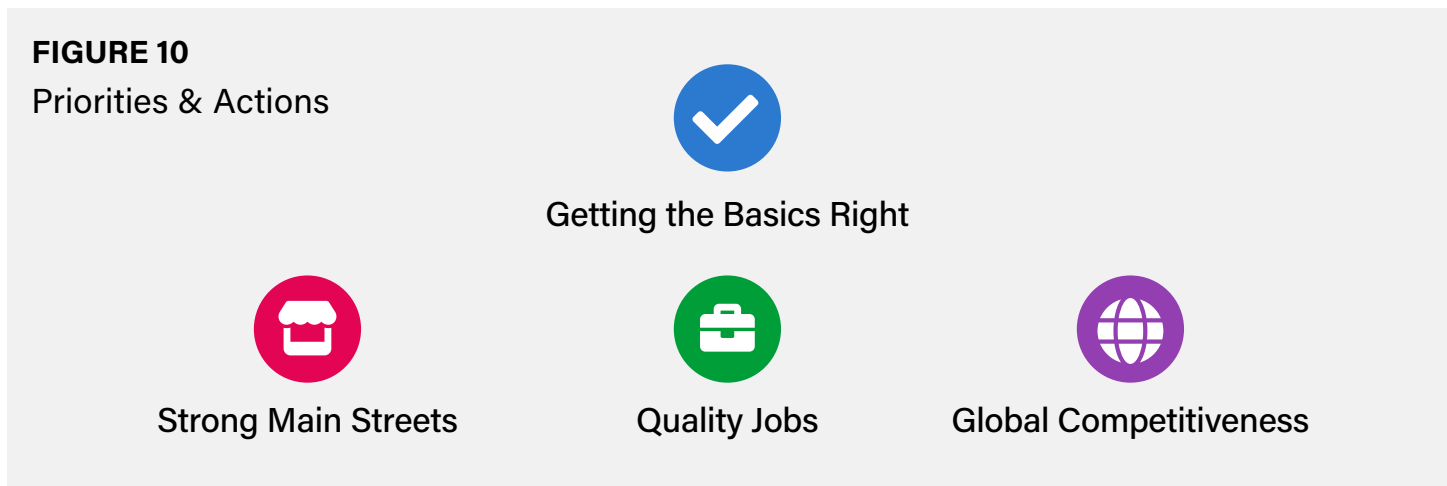
Although many continue to recover from the lasting impacts of the pandemic, Torontonians are ready to turn the page and expect the City to lead and support a clear path toward building a robust and resilient future. The actions prioritize what the City can do and what it needs: "Getting the Basics Right," making direct investments to improve quality of life, and create a business environment to achieve broader economic ambitions.

Delivering the actions set out in this plan keeps Toronto's engine firing on all cylinders. By achieving these actions this plan puts the city on a path to double its GDP in 25 years.

Building on the basics there are three areas (outlined in Figure 10) where the City, province, and country will work together to build a vision for Toronto from the sidewalks to the skylines:

- > Strong Main Streets;
- > Quality Jobs; and
- > Global Competitiveness.

In the first five years of delivering this Action Plan, Toronto will prioritize these actions while advancing a 5-year work plan (see Implementation) to achieve a vision of a liveable, inclusive, and prosperous Toronto.





## Getting the Basics Right

By 2035, Toronto will have the best quality of life and high performing municipal services essential to providing a competitive environment to attract and retain businesses and new residents, and provide economic opportunities for a diverse population.

Over the past 20 years, Toronto has experienced remarkable growth, growing its population by 35% since 2001.<sup>26</sup> This vibrant city serves as the economic powerhouse of Ontario, contributing a staggering 53% to the province's economy and 20% to Canada's overall economy. Yet, despite its economic significance, the City receives only 10% of the tax revenue generated within its borders, even as it has been forced to assume costs in housing, transit and refugee settlement historically within the purview and control of the provincial and federal governments. Harnessing Toronto's assets and maintaining Toronto's economic competitiveness is not only good for Toronto, but good for Canada too.

In the next 10 years, Toronto will embark on a historic era of investment, marked by new transit infrastructure and the building of new homes within mixed-use communities in the Port Lands and Downsview. While these developments promise a brighter future, they coexist with the

decline of essential services such as roads, sidewalks, and public transit. Investing in critical infrastructure to support the building of new homes, complete communities and an expanded transit system is essential to ensuring a high quality of life that attracts talented workers and investors.

Additionally, Toronto faces increasing pressure in its quest to attract and retain talent. Rising housing costs are a significant concern, with home prices soaring by 20% since 2019, while the median annual income has stagnated at a mere 0.4% growth rate.<sup>27</sup> This disparity threatens to undermine Toronto's appeal as a destination for skilled workers.

Moreover, not all neighborhoods have shared in Toronto's success over the last two decades, highlighting a need for more equitable growth. However, the city is also entering an exciting phase of renewal, with new homes and transit systems being constructed and

<sup>26</sup> Statistics Canada, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> City of Toronto, 2024.

## SIDEWALKS TO SKYLINES

vibrant neighborhoods emerging. To navigate this transformation effectively, Toronto must proactively plan for the disruptions that come with major construction projects—investments that are crucial for enhancing livability and prosperity in the long term, despite their short-term impact on economic activity.

In this dynamic landscape Toronto stands ready to harness its strengths, address the pressing challenges that lie ahead and call for all orders of government to join in building a strong Toronto and a strong Canada.





## ACTION 1

### DRIVER:

The current fiscal imbalance between governments, and the way the City must seek funding from the provincial and federal governments is inadequate to provide long-term, stable support for growth.

### ACTION:

#### Achieve a new long-term intergovernmental funding deal for Toronto

Build the case publicly for a long-term funding agreement with Ontario and Canada, to commit to a predictable funding formula for infrastructure and housing investment that includes capital and operating funds, to equip the City and region with the resources they need for continued growth (i.e. transit, port, broadband).

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Long-term funding agreement in place by 2030.
- > Enhanced business and resident confidence affecting investment decision-making.



## ACTION 2

### DRIVER:

Toronto's standing as a centre of global business activity is on the ascent. City policy choices can help push Toronto toward a secure position of leadership as a global business hub.

### ACTION:

#### Build on Toronto's world-leading talent to create the most competitive business environment in North America

Reduce the commercial-residential property tax ratio to 50% less than residential levy increases in any given year, until the provincial ratio is met. Replace the existing Imagination, Manufacturing, Innovation & Technology (IMIT) program with an incentive program to support targeted employment uses, increase high-quality jobs, stimulate investment across the city, drive broader city-building goals, and enhance Toronto's competitive edge.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Continue increasing the annual commercial property tax rate at 50% of the residential rate in any given year, until the provincial ratio is met.
- > Implement IMIT Incentive program successor by end of 2025.

 **ACTION 3**

**DRIVERS:**

Residents require assurance of public safety when using public spaces and services throughout the City.

**ACTION:**

**Urgently address street homelessness, mental health and addiction**

The City will work with provincial ministries, agencies, and across City government to coordinate person-centred interventions that ensure mental health support and Housing First programs succeed.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

- > Reduction in incident reports.
- > Funding and service alignment of mental health programs between City and province.
- > Increased number of individuals with high acuity care needs placed in permanent housing through the Coordinated Access program.

 **ACTION 4**

**DRIVER:**

Too many residents' talents and skills are going untapped because of barriers to their participation in Toronto's economy.

**ACTION:**

**Collaborate with external partners to reduce barriers to economic inclusion**

With key stakeholders, create a Working Table for Inclusive Economic Development to remove barriers and identify programs and partnerships to ensure economic opportunities for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities (e.g. community benefits), and develop an Inclusive Economic Development (IED) Framework for adoption by the City and other institutional employers with outcomes tracked by post-secondary partners.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

- > Council-approved IED definition and guiding principles by Q4 2025.
- > Targeted property tax relief for anchor institutions driving inclusive economic development in Toronto.
- > EDC-led IED research agenda and key targets including those related to household income growing relative to cost of living across all income quintiles.

 **ACTION 5**

**DRIVER:**

Through Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan, the City has committed to improving Indigenous economic development outcomes, acknowledging the specificity of experiences and particular needs of Indigenous Peoples.

**ACTION:**

**Advance Indigenous Economic Development**

Co-develop an Indigenous Economic Strategy with key stakeholders, leveraging partners in the Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, to identify and address the unique needs of Indigenous communities, organizations, and businesses to thrive in Toronto.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

- > Open Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship – largest in the world – to be launched 2025.
- > Host a Toronto Indigenous Economic Summit in 2025.
- > Launch Indigenous Economic Development Advisory Panel in 2025.
- > Launch Indigenous Economic Strategy by 2026.

 **ACTION 6**

**DRIVER:**

Too many residents are burdened by the high cost of housing and these costs are driving people to leave Toronto.

**ACTION:**

**Get more affordable housing built faster**

Advance the HousingTO Action Plan by implementing incentive programs for affordable home development and increasing densities like those near major transit station areas to enable a mix of housing by tenure, typology, size, and affordability that provides Toronto's talented workforce with affordable homes near employment opportunities.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

- > Achieve Council's Municipal Housing Pledge target of 285,000 new homes by 2031, while the Province offsets the fiscal impacts of Bill 23 to the City.
- > Achieve housing targets of the Housing Action Plan of 6,500 rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units, 41,000 affordable rental units and 17,500 rent-controlled units.

 **ACTION 7**

**DRIVER:**

Residents spend too much time stuck in traffic, experiencing long and unpredictable travel times which deters investment and diminishes economic activity.

**ACTION:**

**Tackle congestion head on**

Through an updated Congestion Management Plan, support people with disabilities by improving the information about construction projects; increasing enforcement of bylaw infractions that slow traffic; recovering and/or offsetting the costs of congestion through fees and levies; and exploring new technologies and strategies to facilitate traffic mitigation measures and improve spot congestion.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

- > Updated Congestion Management Plan adopted and executed.

 **ACTION 8**

**DRIVER:**

Toronto continues to experience disruptions due to construction activities related to increased growth and development, expansion of transit infrastructure, and the renewal and upgrades of aging infrastructure.

**ACTION:**

**Fortify capital coordination processes**

Through the recently created Strategic Capital Coordination Office, lead the capital coordination between all internal and external partners that have a role in infrastructure construction that would impact the City rights-of-ways; apply a more strategic longer-term portfolio-wide lens to capital coordination that will maximize project bundling and sequencing opportunities; and enhance coordination of changes to the capital program; all of which will ultimately reduce construction disruption to communities and foster public trust.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

- > Increase in capital construction adherence to planned construction schedules.
- > Decrease in violation of moratorium.
- > Decrease in project change requests.

 **ACTION 9**

**DRIVER:**

The Indigenous economy is strong and growing, and the City of Toronto requires stronger business relationships with Indigenous suppliers to pursue meaningful, equitable economic opportunities.

**ACTION:**

**Increase City business with Indigenous suppliers**

Co-develop an Indigenous procurement policy with Indigenous businesses and partners to guide how the City does business with First Nations, Inuit and Métis suppliers.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

> Indigenous procurement policy co-developed by 2028.

 **ACTION 10**

**DRIVER:**

Climate change will continue to stress infrastructure and impede economic activity. Forward looking measures are required to enhance climate resilience and reduce emissions.

**ACTION :**

**Advance climate action**

Advance the TransformTO net zero strategy by implementing programs for green infrastructure development and increasing sustainability measures for commercial and industrial developments.

**SUCCESS INDICATORS:**

- > 100% of new buildings are designed and built to be near zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
- > 25% of commercial and industrial floor area is connected to low carbon thermal energy sources by 2030.





## Strong Main Streets

By 2035, Toronto's unique main streets across the entire city will be animated and beautiful, acting as commercial, cultural, and civic anchors for their neighbourhoods.

In the Toronto region, an impressive 98% of residents live within just one kilometer of a main street, underscoring the vital role these thoroughfares play in everyday life. Each of Toronto's main streets offers a unique character, from the vibrant strip plazas of Scarborough to the eclectic street markets of Kensington and Ossington. These areas serve as incubators for small to medium-sized businesses, many of which are locally owned and dedicated to serving their communities. They are not just retail spaces; they are essential contributors to Toronto's economic vitality.

Main streets across the region are home to over 33,000 businesses, employing approximately 290,000 people and generating more than \$41 billion in revenue with Toronto's restaurant sector alone generating more than \$1.5 billion alone.<sup>28</sup> However, these vital hubs face significant challenges. Development pressures are increasingly displacing small businesses, leading to a loss of local resources and diminishing the diverse job opportunities that these establishments provide.

Navigating City services can be particularly daunting for small business owners, who often struggle to access the support, services, and problem-solving assistance they need to thrive. While Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) are foundational to promoting and retaining businesses, and providing essential expertise and guidance, they are not evenly distributed across the city. This inconsistency means that many areas lack the vital support that could help them flourish.

As Toronto continues to grow and evolve, it is crucial to recognize and protect the unique fabric of its main streets, ensuring that they remain vibrant, diverse, and accessible to all. Supporting small businesses is not just an economic imperative; it's essential for preserving the community character that makes Toronto a dynamic, desirable, and inclusive city.

28 Canadian Urban Institute, *Measuring Main Streets*, 2024.



## ACTION 11

### DRIVER:

Small and local businesses are displaced and heavily impacted by construction and development projects.

### ACTION:

#### Keep small businesses open and thriving

Create a Main Street Resiliency fund to offset impacts of infrastructure construction and establish a commercial replacement policy to protect independent businesses impacted by real estate development.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Main Street Resiliency fund established by 2027.
- > Ground-floor commercial replacement policy for main streets developed by 2027.



## ACTION 12

### DRIVER:

Commercial rent increases and taxes are threatening the sustainability of independent businesses and the diversity of commercial districts.

### ACTION:

#### Protect small businesses from rising costs

Advocate to the provincial government to enhance protections for small businesses, such as commercial rent control, and review the Small Business Property Tax Sub-Class eligibility criteria from an equity perspective.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Commercial rent control established by 2030.
- > Increase the number of eligible properties that can benefit from the Small Business Property Tax Sub-Class by 15%.



## ACTION 13

### DRIVER:

City processes are an impediment to startups and new independent businesses.

### ACTION:

#### Create a one-stop-shop for small businesses

Create a Small Business One-Stop-Shop to provide Toronto's business community personalized and direct support when accessing City services, such as licensing and zoning.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Small Business Solutions Office established by 2025.
- > Reduced response times and enhanced service offering to small businesses.



## ACTION 14

### DRIVER:

Small and independent businesses lack access to peer support, advocacy, and collective capacity to work with the City and fully-engage with small business programs.

### ACTION:

#### Increase the number of businesses served by BIAs

Develop a BIA Growth Management Strategy that addresses the unique needs of business communities outside of the core and create new BIAs to serve these businesses.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > 125 BIAs by 2035.



## ACTION 15



### DRIVER:

Post-COVID-19 pandemic Toronto residents depend on accessible and active spaces to connect with local businesses, and enjoy cultural experiences.



### ACTION:

#### Elevate public spaces into the cultural anchors of their neighbourhoods

Increase investments in public spaces delivered by BIAs, expand opportunities for local animation and innovative business models, and increase participation in CaféTO.



### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

> Double public realm investments delivered by BIAs by 2030.



## Quality Jobs

By 2035, Toronto will be an inclusive economy that adds quality jobs and leverages the diverse talent, networks, and expertise of all the people who live here.

In Toronto, not all neighborhoods have shared equally in the city's growth over the past 20 years, leaving many residents behind. Ontario is grappling with significant economic challenges, particularly among those earning less than \$10,000 annually. Across Canada over the last decade, the bottom income quintile has seen their wages increase at a rate that lags behind inflation, highlighting a troubling trend.

The city's unemployment rate remains elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels, underscoring ongoing struggles in the labor market. Nearly a quarter of Toronto's workforce is engaged in part-time employment, while precarious work continues to rise, adding to the uncertainty faced by many. Alarming, the youth unemployment rate has reached its highest point in a decade at 16.8%, signaling a pressing need for targeted interventions.

Compounding these issues is a shortage of skilled workers, particularly in sectors like manufacturing which are growing and provide well-paying jobs. To address this gap and support the city's expanding industries, there is an urgent need for greater capacity building and improved coordination among workforce

development providers and businesses. Planning for the future skills required by major employers is essential to ensure that Toronto can meet the demands of its economy and provide stable, well-paying jobs for its residents.

As the city confronts these challenges, a collaborative approach will be vital in fostering an inclusive economy that benefits all Torontonians, particularly those who have yet to see the rewards of the city's economic success.



## ACTION 16

### DRIVER:

Toronto's youth unemployment rate is the highest it has been in a decade, at 16.8%, a signal of an emerging crisis in unemployment and underemployment among young residents.

### ACTION:

#### Build opportunity for Toronto's youth

With local partners and the private sector, including the Employment Services System Manager, develop greater employment and professional development opportunities for Toronto's youth with a focus on Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > With partners, ensure that there are 10,000 summer jobs for young people by 2026.



## ACTION 17

### DRIVER:

Cross-sectoral partnerships between businesses, governments, and post-secondary institutions are driving innovation, and Toronto is lagging.

### ACTION:

#### Foster industry-academia partnerships

Create, promote and reinvigorate formal partnerships between local industries and academic institutions to ensure that academic programs are closely aligned with industry needs. These partnerships should include joint research initiatives, internship placements, and curriculum development.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Develop 10 new industry-academia partnerships by 2030, directly aligning educational outcomes with job market needs.



## ACTION 18

### DRIVER:

Rising costs have created a barrier to small business formation.

### ACTION:

#### Create space for inclusive entrepreneurship

Provide low-cost space for business startups, including and partnering with small business incubators, to create an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports underrepresented groups, focusing on expanding opportunities for women-led start-ups.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Boost the number of startups by women founders by 25% and double the amount of venture funding received by women-led start-ups by 2028.



## ACTION 19

### DRIVER:

Over 70% of Canadians work in the small business sector which is critical to newcomer settlement and the innovation ecosystem.

### ACTION:

#### Build community wealth and local employment opportunities

Leverage City assets and develop enabling approaches to create opportunities for new, independent businesses and retention of local serving businesses through enabling and growing Toronto's first generation commercial land trust sector in partnership with businesses and local community organizations.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > City of Toronto enables a minimum of three commercial land trusts by 2028.



# Global Competitiveness

By 2035, Toronto will rank Top 10 in North America in its specialized and globally competitive sectors.

Toronto's economic landscape is defined by its globally competitive sectors, which drive productivity and account for 36% of the city's jobs, and are the main driver of its GDP.<sup>29</sup>

Among these sectors, specialized fields are flourishing, such as life sciences, which has seen an impressive 43% growth over the past five years. Toronto's green industries account for 51,000 jobs and more than \$5 billion of Toronto's GDP.<sup>30</sup> However, to fully capture market share and enhance international profile, globally competitive sectors require targeted support and investment. Even before provincial changes that have accelerated the loss of employment lands, Toronto saw a loss of 7% of its employment lands.

In the realm of technology, Toronto has emerged as a leader, boasting the highest job gains in tech across North America over the last five years adding 95,900 jobs from 2018 to 2023 representing a 44% growth rate.<sup>31</sup> This surge has been largely fueled by the increasing demand for AI skills, positioning the city at the forefront of innovation.

A critical asset for business growth and expansion in Toronto is its employment lands, which is home to 27% of all of Toronto's employment and 87% of the city's over 220,000 manufacturing jobs.<sup>32</sup> Recent changes to provincial regulations and evolving market dynamics pose a threat to the protections of these essential lands, jeopardizing the high-quality jobs they support.

Additionally, Toronto's visitor economy plays a vital role, sustaining 67,000 jobs and attracting 27.5 million visitors annually.<sup>33</sup> Yet, since the pandemic, the growth of international visitors has slowed, challenging the city to adapt and revitalize its tourism appeal.

As Toronto navigates these complexities, the potential for growth remains vast, driven by its globally competitive sectors, thriving technology landscape, and rich employment resources. With the right support and action, the city can continue to foster innovation and grow its position as a global economic leader.

29 Canadian Urban Institute, 2024.

30 City of Toronto, 2024.

31 CBRE, 2024.

32 City of Toronto, 2024.

33 Destination Toronto, 2024.





## ACTION 20

### DRIVER:

Downtowns and central business districts are being transformed across North America and need concerted leadership to transform.

### ACTION:

#### Unite interests in the future of Downtown

Create a downtown stewardship organization to coordinate, catalyze investment, and speak with a unified voice on the needs of Toronto's downtown.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

> Stewardship organization created by 2026.



## ACTION 21

### DRIVER:

Older office buildings are experiencing high vacancy rates, which are reducing the vibrancy of certain areas and threatening to decrease revenues to the City.

### ACTION:

#### Incentivize a more diverse mix of non-residential uses in Downtown and the Centres

Prioritize adaptive reuse of older vacant office space by recommending incentives for the conversion of Class B and C office buildings into adaptive, compatible non-residential and mixed uses, including potential land use policy changes.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Land use policy changes and/or incentives to facilitate adaptive reuse of vacant office space, unlocking new economic opportunities.
- > A net positive absorption rate for Class B office space in all City districts, sustained over four quarters, by 2030. Class B and C office space returns to a healthy vacancy rate of 7.5% by 2034. City supports prioritize conversion of high value use for key sectors of the economy identified in this plan (e.g. wet labs, VFX, etc.).



## ACTION 22

### DRIVER:

Toronto has growing high-value sectors with the potential to raise productivity, create good jobs and strengthen the city's international reputation.

### ACTION:

#### Grow Toronto's global competitiveness in key anchor and high growth sectors

Lead and invest in specific strategies that provide resources, services, and sector specific branding to drive growth in the manufacturing, life sciences, food and beverage, green, creative industries and tech sectors.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Toronto ranks Top 5 nationally (Canada) in 2030 and Top 10 in North America in each sector identified by 2035.



## ACTION 23

### DRIVER:

International competition for talent in urban centres across North America is putting increasing pressure on Toronto's technology labour market.

### ACTION:

#### Champion technology and innovation

Strengthen the City's support for Toronto's start-up and technology ecosystem through the creation of an Office for the Tech and Innovation Sector.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Launch an Office for the Tech and Innovation Sector (OTIS) in 2025.
- > Increased private investment in tech and innovation.
- > Launch major new tech and innovation event with global reach by 2026.



## ACTION 24

### DRIVER:

Lands designated Employment Areas are facing conversion pressures that could impact their vitality and purpose, such as conversion to mixed use or retail or the introduction of sensitive land uses such as community services, which could force industries to relocate.

### ACTION:

#### Leverage and protect Toronto's Employment Areas

Protect lands in designated Employment Areas so that they remain strategic places attracting new business investment and startups, and enter into partnerships with key organizations to advance their long-term productive use.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Preservation through 2035 of the current amount of land in designated Employment Areas.
- > 5% increase in jobs located in designated Employment Areas by 2030.



## ACTION 25

### DRIVER:

Solutions are needed to offset the impacts of climate change and severe weather on the built environment globally, presenting economic development opportunities for Toronto talent, investors and businesses.

### ACTION:

#### Drive the adoption of green technologies

Create a Green Innovation Challenge to test and pilot initiatives, programs, and sustainable technologies using City assets (buildings, workspaces, technology).

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Pilot 10 initiatives by 2030.
- > By 2030, at least three firms supported by GIC commercialize new technologies and increase their market value ten-fold.



## ACTION 26

### DRIVER:

International access and goods mobility is critical to the city, region, and national economy.

### ACTION:

#### Optimize the use of Toronto's gateways

Enter into partnerships with agencies managing Toronto's points of entry to create place-based economic, mobility and workforce development plans with a focus on growing Toronto's globally competitive sectors including manufacturing.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Partnerships established by 2026.
- > Strengthen governance, transparency and investment in the Port of Toronto to secure a larger share of marine shipping.
- > Improve efficiency and output of the Port of Toronto with a target of 5% increase in annual cargo volume handled by 2035.



## ACTION 27

### DRIVER:

Toronto's unique, local, and diverse dining experiences drive global tourism, local economic development and talent attraction.

### ACTION:

#### Grow the food and dining scene

Promote Toronto's rising culinary scene through programming, branding and communications to drive investment, tourism and local economic development.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- > Toronto is recognized as Canada's top food city and top five globally.
- > Strengthen local hospitality workforce and training centres.
- > City programs in support of restaurants and hospitality have city-wide reach.



## ACTION 28

### DRIVER:

The international event market is highly competitive recovering from the global pandemic.

### ACTION:

#### Attract major international events and audiences

Working with Destination Toronto, develop a major event bidding and hosting strategy in partnership with other orders of government, the private sector and the hospitality industry.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

> Council-approved bidding and hosting strategy by 2027, informed by Toronto's experience with the FIFA World Cup, with success thereafter tracked by increase in investment in major conferences and special events hosted in Toronto.



## ACTION 29

### DRIVER:

Toronto's specialized sectors need opportunities for global amplification.

### ACTION:

#### Incubate home-grown conferences

Attract, support and scale home-grown conferences in key growth sectors that build Toronto's brand, such as the global tech sector and life sciences.

### SUCCESS INDICATORS:

> Three new financially-sustainable flagship events with international reach promoting key sectors by 2030.

# IMPLEMENTATION



Nathan Philips Square

# Implementation

The Action Plan will be implemented with partners across City divisions, communities, geographies, with the private sector and other orders of government. Implementation starts with the following five-year work plan. A progress update will be prepared for Council's consideration on an annual basis. At the five-year mark City staff will take stock of progress on the 73 actions contained in the work plan, and the associated success indicators, and report to Council with a second five-year work plan to continue the vision the Action Plan for Toronto's Economy has set out. Success indicators for the 29 leading actions can be found in the body of the report.

The hierarchy for 'Sidewalks to Skylines: an Action Plan for Toronto's Economy' has three priorities: Strong Main Streets, Quality Jobs, and Global Competitiveness, anchored by a foundational priority, "Getting the Basics Right", which is composed of key City levers focusing on improving quality of life and on enabling a business environment to achieve broader economic ambitions.

The five-year work plan contains both short-term and medium-term actions. Short-term actions refer to actions that will start in 2025 and/or 2026. Medium-term refers to actions that will start in 2027, 2028 and/or 2029. Please see the Glossary of City Divisions and Agencies in Appendix B to identify abbreviations listed under the City Partners column of work plan.



**TABLE 1**  
Five-Year Work Plan: 29 Leading Actions

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
<b>Getting the Basics Right</b>				
Ensure Toronto has necessary business-input essentials to sustain growth	1	<p><b>Achieve a new long-term intergovernmental funding deal for Toronto.</b></p> <p>Build the case publicly for a long-term funding agreement with Ontario and Canada, to commit to a predictable funding formula for infrastructure and housing investment that includes capital and operating funds, to equip the City and region with the resources they need for continued growth (i.e. transit, port, broadband).</p>	DCM-IS, DCM-DGS, DCM-CS, CMO	Short-term
Maintain a competitive mix of taxes, development incentives, and grants for commercial and industrial activity	2	<p><b>Build on Toronto’s world-leading talent to create the most competitive business environment in North America.</b></p> <p>Reduce the commercial-residential property tax ratio to 50% less than residential levy increases in any given year, until the provincial ratio is met. Replace the existing Imagination, Manufacturing, Innovation &amp; Technology (IMIT) program with an incentive program to support targeted employment uses, increase high-quality jobs, stimulate investment across the city, drive broader city-building goals, and enhance Toronto’s competitive edge.</p>	CFO&T, EDC, CP	Ongoing – Short-term
Increase and advocate for public safety & supports	3	<p><b>Urgently address street homelessness, mental health and addiction.</b></p> <p>The City will work with provincial ministries, agencies, and across City government to coordinate person-centred interventions that ensure mental health support and Housing First programs succeed.</p>	SDFA, TPH	Short-term



Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Embed inclusivity into Toronto's future economic development work	4	<p><b>Collaborate with external partners to reduce barriers to economic inclusion.</b></p> <p>With key stakeholders, create a Working Table for Inclusive Economic Development to remove barriers and identify programs and partnerships to ensure economic opportunities for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities (e.g. community benefits), and develop an Inclusive Economic Development (IED) Framework for adoption by the City and other institutional employers with outcomes tracked by post-secondary partners.</p>	EDC, SDFA, TESS	Short-term
	5	<p><b>Advance Indigenous Economic Development.</b></p> <p>Co-develop an Indigenous Economic Strategy with key stakeholders, leveraging partners in the Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, to identify and address the unique needs of Indigenous communities, organizations, and businesses to thrive in Toronto.</p>	EDC, IAO	Short-term
Expand quality and affordability of housing to enable employment growth	6	<p><b>Get more affordable housing built faster.</b></p> <p>Advance the HousingTO Action Plan by implementing incentive programs for affordable home development and increasing densities like those near major transit station areas to enable a mix of housing by tenure, typology, size, and affordability that provides Toronto's talented workforce with affordable homes near employment opportunities.</p>	HS, DR, CP	Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Amplify efforts that address traffic congestion	7	<b>Tackle congestion head on.</b> Through an updated Congestion Management Plan, support people with disabilities by improving the information about construction projects; increasing enforcement of bylaw infractions that slow traffic; recovering and/or offsetting the costs of congestion through fees and levies; and exploring new technologies and strategies to facilitate traffic mitigation measures and improve spot congestion.	DCM-IS, TS, TTC	Ongoing – Short-term
	8	<b>Fortify capital coordination processes.</b> Through the recently created Strategic Capital Coordination Office, lead the capital coordination between all internal and external partners that have a role in infrastructure construction that would impact the City rights-of-ways; apply a more strategic longer-term portfolio-wide lens to capital coordination that will maximize project bundling and sequencing opportunities; and enhance coordination of changes to the capital program; all of which will ultimately reduce construction disruption to communities and foster public trust.	SCCO	Medium-term
Promote equitable, inclusive and socially responsible procurement practices	9	<b>Increase City business with Indigenous suppliers.</b> Co-develop an Indigenous procurement policy with Indigenous businesses and partners to guide how the City does business with First Nations, Inuit and Métis suppliers.	PMMD	Medium-term
Support the creation of vibrant, resilient, and complete communities	10	<b>Advance climate action.</b> Advance the TransformTO net zero strategy by implementing programs for green infrastructure development and increasing sustainability measures for commercial and industrial developments.	EDC, CP, E&C	Medium-term
<b>Strong Main Streets</b>				
Boost main street resilience	11	<b>Keep small businesses open and thriving.</b> Create a Main Street Resiliency fund to offset impacts of infrastructure construction and establish a commercial replacement policy to protect independent businesses impacted by real estate development.	EDC, SDFA	Short-term
	12	<b>Protect small businesses from rising costs.</b> Advocate to the provincial government to enhance protections for small businesses, such as commercial rent control, and review the Small Business Property Tax Sub-Class eligibility criteria from an equity perspective.	EDC, CMO	Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Support small business and entrepreneurs	13	<b>Create a one-stop-shop for small businesses.</b> Create a Small Business One-Stop-Shop to provide Toronto's business community personalized and direct support when accessing City services, such as licensing and zoning.	EDC, TSD, MLS, TB, CP, PFR	Medium-term
Maintain Toronto's position as a world leader in the growth, support, and management of BIAs	14	<b>Increase the number of businesses served by BIAs.</b> Develop a BIA Growth Management Strategy that addresses the unique needs of business communities outside of the core and create new BIAs to serve these businesses.	EDC	Short-term
Support thriving local commerce by investing in public realm	15	<b>Elevate public spaces into the cultural anchors of their neighbourhoods.</b> Increase investments in public spaces delivered by BIAs, expand opportunities for local animation and innovative business models, and increase participation in CaféTO.	EDC, TS	Short-term
<b>Quality Jobs</b>				
Advance local workforce development	16	<b>Build opportunity for Toronto's youth.</b> With local partners and the private sector, including the Employment Services System Manager, develop greater employment and professional development opportunities for Toronto's youth with a focus on Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups.	EDC, TESS, PFR, SDFA, P&E	Short-term
	17	<b>Foster industry-academia partnerships.</b> Create, promote and reinvigorate formal partnerships between local industries and academic institutions to ensure that academic programs are closely aligned with industry needs. These partnerships should include joint research initiatives, internship placements, and curriculum development.	EDC	Short-term
Advance local workforce development	18	<b>Create space for inclusive entrepreneurship.</b> Provide low-cost space for business startups, including and partnering with small business incubators, to create an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports underrepresented groups, focusing on expanding opportunities for women-led start-ups.	EDC	Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Expanding existing and exploring new community wealth building tools	19	<p><b>Build community wealth and local employment opportunities.</b></p> <p>Leverage City assets and develop enabling approaches to create opportunities for new, independent businesses and retention of local serving businesses through enabling and growing Toronto's first generation commercial land trust sector in partnership with businesses and local community organizations.</p>	EDC, CP, SDFA, CreateTO	Short-term
<b>Global Competitiveness</b>				
Drive growth and revitalization in Downtown Toronto	20	<p><b>Unite Interests in the Future of Downtown.</b></p> <p>Create a downtown stewardship organization to coordinate, catalyze investment, and speak with a unified voice on the needs of Toronto's downtown.</p>	EDC	Short-term
	21	<p><b>Incentivize a more diverse mix of non-residential uses in Downtown and the Centres.</b></p> <p>Prioritize adaptive reuse of older vacant office space by recommending incentives for the conversion of Class B and C office buildings into adaptive, compatible non-residential and mixed uses, including potential land use policy changes.</p>	CP, EDC, SDFA	Medium-term
Strengthen and grow high-value industry sectors that will enhance Toronto's position globally to drive productivity	22	<p><b>Grow Toronto's global competitiveness in key anchor and high growth sectors.</b></p> <p>Lead and invest in specific strategies that provide resources, services, and sector specific branding to drive growth in the manufacturing, life sciences, food and beverage, green, creative industries and tech sectors.</p>	EDC	Medium-term
Promote the innovation ecosystem	23	<p><b>Champion technology and innovation.</b></p> <p>Strengthen the City's support for Toronto's start up and technology ecosystem through the creation of an Office for the Tech and Innovation Sector.</p>	EDC	Short-term
Safeguard lands for growth of industrial and manufacturing uses.	24	<p><b>Leverage and protect Toronto's Employment Areas.</b></p> <p>Protect lands in designated Employment Areas so that they remain strategic places attracting new business investment and startups, and enter into partnerships with key organizations to advance their long-term productive use.</p>	CP, EDC, DR	Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Grow green industries and the net-zero decarbonized economy	25	<b>Drive the adoption of green technologies.</b> Create a Green Innovation Challenge to test and pilot initiatives, programs, and sustainable technologies using City assets (buildings, workspaces, technology).	DCM-CS, EDC, TSD, E&C	Medium-term
	26	<b>Optimize the use of Toronto’s gateways.</b> Enter into partnerships with agencies managing Toronto’s points of entry to create place-based economic, mobility and workforce development plans with a focus on growing Toronto’s globally competitive sectors including manufacturing.	CP, CMO	Short-term
Strengthen Toronto’s partnerships and capacity to attract visitors and investment	27	<b>Grow the Food and Dining Scene.</b> Promote Toronto’s rising culinary scene through programming, branding and communications to drive investment, tourism and local economic development	EDC	Short-term
Enhance Toronto’s capacity to host and incubate international events	28	<b>Attract major international events and audiences.</b> Working with Destination Toronto, develop a major event bidding and hosting strategy in partnership with other orders of government, the private sector and the hospitality industry.	EDC	Short-term
	29	<b>Incubate home-grown conferences.</b> Attract, support and scale home-grown conferences in key growth sectors that build Toronto’s brand, such as the global tech sector and life sciences.	EDC	Short-term

**TABLE 2**  
Five-Year Work Plan: Additional Actions

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
<b>Getting the Basics Right: 5-Year Work Plan</b>				
Enhance Toronto’s economic competitiveness through improved and more accessible data-informed decision-making	30	Optimize internal and public availability of economic data in alignment with the objectives of the Action Plan for Toronto’s Economy in order to support and enable data-driven City of Toronto and partners’ policies and programs.	EDC	Short-term
	31	Allow for more diverse uses for restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues by simplifying regulations identified through the Night Economy Review.	MLS, CP	Short-term
		32	Enable small retail, service and commercial spaces, such as convenience stores, coffee shops, medical and personal services and home-based businesses on properties zoned Residential in Neighbourhoods city-wide to support locally serving small businesses and walkable and complete communities.	CP, DR
	33	Address the climate and biodiversity crisis by encouraging developments to achieve the highest performance levels of the Toronto Green Standard in effect at the time of application, incentivized through the Development Charge Refund program.	CP, CFO&T, DR	Short-term
Provide greater certainty to businesses	34	Better facilitate high impact non-residential development and expansion with strong potential to grow Toronto’s economy and create good jobs through the creation of an improved, client-focused concierge service, building on EDC’s Gold Star Program.	EDC, DR	Short-term
	35	In partnership with Toronto City Councillors, convene local economy roundtables to advance key actions for the Downtown and the Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke and Midtown Centres.	EDC, CP	Short-term
36		In the development of major precincts, integrate local economic considerations so that the people who live there have jobs close to where they live.	EDC, CP	Ongoing
Ensure Toronto has necessary business-input essentials to sustain growth				

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Embed inclusivity into Toronto's future economic development work	37	Monitor the progress of inclusive economic growth in Toronto's economy through the development and addition of inclusive economic development indicators to the City of Toronto Economic Dashboard.	EDC, SDFA	Short-term
	38	Review small business services, programs and initiatives for opportunities to incentivize integrating accessibility requirements and needs as a condition of funding.	EDC	Short-term
Expand quality and affordability of housing to enable employment growth	39	Advocate to the provincial and federal governments for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enhanced skills training, increased apprenticeship slots, and modernized training practices to support good jobs that build houses.</li> <li>▪ Inclusive housing policies that consider the diverse needs of job seekers, including access to help create a supportive housing environment conducive to employment success.</li> <li>▪ Leveraging their lands to create mixed-use and mixed-income developments including Transit Oriented Communities.</li> </ul>	CMO-IA, CP, TE, HS, TESS	Short-term
	40	Leverage existing and identify new opportunities for using City land to build additional housing, mixed-income, mixed-use, and complete communities.	HS, CREM, CP, DR, CreateTO	Medium-term
Strengthen mobility within and across neighbourhoods	41	Address the transportation needs of all users of the street, including pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and business by continuing to invest and implement opportunities to manage mobility and transportation needs across Toronto.	TS, CP	Ongoing
	42	Advocate to the provincial and federal governments for long-term, sustainable operational funding for transit services.	CMO, TTC	Short-term
Amplify efforts that address traffic congestion	43	Maximize the efficiency and economic potential of curbside space through tailored programs and initiatives.	TS, EDC	Ongoing – Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Increase and advocate for public safety & supports	44	Provide businesses and residents the confidence they need to operate in and enjoy their neighbourhoods by coordinating programming and investment in data-driven measures that address public safety, security, and cleanliness in the public realm.	SDFA, EDC	Short-term
	45	<p>Advance SafeTO, the City’s Community Safety &amp; Wellbeing Plan, by exploring partnerships on the delivery of SafeTO including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ piloting initiatives to improve public realm and placemaking.</li> <li>▪ deliver capacity building and training to reduce violence and vulnerability.</li> <li>▪ support community engagement.</li> </ul> <p>Develop communication strategies and toolkits and identify funding opportunities to enable these activations and initiatives.</p>	SDFA	Short-term
Support the creation of vibrant, resilient, and complete communities	46	Enhance the availability of newcomer resources available at residents’ libraries, community centres, community hubs, and other municipal facilities.	SDFA, SPEC	Short-term
	47	Recognize and enable the significant economic contribution of culture and the creative industries by supporting the implementation of Culture Connects: an Action Plan for Culture in Toronto (2025-2035).	EDC	Short-term



Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Promote equitable, inclusive and socially responsible procurement practices	48	Explore the feasibility of establishing local procurement approaches that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are compliant with all applicable trade agreements and align with Ontario’s Building Ontario Businesses Initiative;</li> <li>▪ Incorporate an equity lens, including leveraging the Social Procurement Policy and Program and Community Benefits Framework;</li> <li>▪ Include social businesses such as social enterprises and employee-owned trust models; and</li> <li>▪ Can be shared with the City’s agencies and the broader public sector in Toronto through applicable procurement tables, including AnchorTO.</li> </ul>	PMMD	Medium-term
	49	Conduct an accessibility audit of the procurement process to identify opportunities to improve access to procurement opportunities for businesses owned by people with disabilities.	PMMD	Medium-term
	50	Continue to enhance the Social Procurement Policy and Program, including engaging community and suppliers to review the definition of diverse supplier and investigating the feasibility of collecting disaggregated business ownership data for City suppliers.	PMMD	Medium-term
<b>Strong Main Streets: 5-Year Work Plan</b>				
Boost main street resilience	51	Mitigate the impacts of transit project construction by advocating to the provincial and federal governments for dedicated supports and funding to reduce disruption to businesses and BIAs from the provincial and federal governments.	EDC, TE	Short-term
	52	Enhance and improve City street designs and other public realm improvements during the construction of major capital and transit projects.	TS, TE	Ongoing
Maintain Toronto’s position as a world leader in the growth, support, and management of BIAs.	53	Improve BIA performance through the provision of critical business intelligence that monitors and reports on the economic vitality of Toronto’s main streets.	EDC	Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Support thriving local commerce by investing in public realm	54	Create Outdoor Dining and Public Markets Guidelines to guide infrastructure development in the public realm.	TS, EDC, PFR	Short-term
	55	Expand Toronto's public markets by developing dedicated supports for small scale food entrepreneurs, particularly in Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.	PFR, EDC	Short-term
	56	Enable a City-wide comprehensive and internally aligned parking policy that supports a multitude of City-building objectives, including affordability, climate resilience, GHG reduction, economic prosperity and the efficient movement of people and goods.	TS	Short-term
Support small business and entrepreneurs	57	Deliver more nimble supports to small business and community resources in Toronto by leveraging municipally owned assets including Toronto Public Library branches, museums, office lobbies, and community spaces.	EDC, CreateTO, SDFA	Short-term
<b>Quality Jobs: 5-Year Work Plan</b>				
Advance local workforce development	58	Sustain a productive and growing economy by advocating to the provincial and federal government to provide the resources necessary to align workforce development programming with the "skill gap" needs of key growth sectors in Toronto.	EDC, TESS	Short-term
	59	Implement targeted workforce development initiatives to support scaling of key high growth sectors in Toronto.	EDC, TESS	Medium-term
	60	Improve access to training, hiring and social procurement opportunities for Indigenous, Black and Equity-deserving communities by leading a case study project with a developer in Downsview to develop a voluntary community benefits plan that includes measurable community benefits targets that reach Indigenous, Black and Equity-deserving communities.	SDFA	Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
<b>Global Competitiveness: 5-Year Work Plan</b>				
<b>Promote the Innovation Ecosystem</b>	61	Develop an Artificial Intelligence (AI) assessment framework and supporting documentation for City Divisions, while ensuring safe, secure, ethical and legally compliant use of AI for the City	TSD	Medium-term
	62	Review and optimize the City's processes for procuring innovative technology, including green technologies.	PMMD, TSD	Medium-term
	63	Better support Toronto's incubators and accelerators that drive and nurture entrepreneurship, innovation, business development and inclusive economic growth by enhancing the Business Incubation and Commercialization (BIC) Grant Program.	EDC	Short-term
	64	Ensure success of the Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ICIE) by collaborating with the operator to create pathways for Indigenous entrepreneurs to access grants and financing, showcase their innovations and successes, form strategic partnerships, which will measure the impact of the ICIE.	EDC	Short-term
<b>Strengthen Toronto's partnerships and capacity to attract visitors and investment</b>	65	Enhance Toronto's international brand as a globally recognized destination to visit and attract investment by executing coordinated campaigns.	EDC	Medium-term
	66	Support Toronto Global as the region's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) agency by advocating for sustained long-term financial commitments from the provincial and federal government.	EDC	Short-term

Objective	Action No.	Action	City Partners	Timeline
Enhance Toronto's capacity to host and incubate international events	67	Enhance the City's ability to support the visitor economy, special events, and invest in city building infrastructure and cultural services through the City's Municipal Accommodation Tax.	CFO&T, EDC	Short-term
	68	Position Toronto to lead in city-to-city partnerships and projects to effectively support a range of international business development, municipal knowledge-sharing and cultural exchange activities that strengthen Toronto's global standing and reputation.	SPER, CMO, EDC	Medium-term
	69	Enhance the ability for business and events to be hosted on City streets by reviewing and implementing targeted solutions to expedite and streamline permitting processes, improving coordination of events and strengthening funding supports.	TS, EDC	Short-term
Grow green industries and the net-zero decarbonized economy	70	Drive competitiveness of local green sectors with new Green Industry Cluster Alliance.	EDC, E&C	Short-term
	71	Partner with colleges and universities to assess green workforce development needs and develop strategies to address these needs.	EDC, E&C	Short-term
	72	Develop green sector and green industry indicators to monitor the progress of transforming the economy.	EDC, E&C	Short-term
	73	Grow green sectors by leveraging existing opportunities to share best practices on supporting businesses in transitioning to more sustainable, net-zero, decarbonized operations and recommend actions through TransformTO.	E&C, EDC	Short-term

# APPENDICES



Bellwoods Brewery

# Appendix A: Definitions of Terms

**“Affordable housing”** refers to Toronto’s official affordable rental and affordable ownership definitions.

**“Community Wealth Building”** refers to place-based approaches to economic development that uses existing strengths, talents, and assets to enhance local ownership and control of economic wellbeing.

**“Complete Communities”** are places that contain all the necessary ingredients for people to live, work, shop and access services. Complete communities generally feature a diverse mix of land uses including residential and employment uses, with convenient access to local shops and services. They provide a range of housing options, including affordable housing, to accommodate all household sizes of all incomes at all stages of life. Complete communities also provide convenient access to transportation options, parks and open space, and community service facilities while including the physical and natural infrastructure to support it all.

**“Inclusive Economic Development”** at this time, refers to an approach that will deliver improved economic opportunities and outcomes across Toronto’s population and neighbourhoods – with an intentional focus on Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities – in parallel to the overall growth of the city and regional economy. A new definition, being developed in partnership with community organizations, may replace this definition.

**“Main Streets”** are commercial streets that serve as the primary shopping and commercial destinations within a neighbourhood or district, often characterized by a high concentration of at-grade retail, restaurants, services and community facilities, with residential and commercial uses above. Generally located along surface transit routes, Main Streets are typically vibrant, dynamic and pedestrian-oriented, and are often the heart of a community’s community and social activity.

**“Major Transit Station Areas”** means the area including and around any existing or planned higher order transit station or stop within a settlement area; or the area including and around a major bus depot in an urban core. Major transit station areas generally are defined as the area within an approximate 500 to 800-metre radius of a transit station.

**“Private sector-led (voluntary) community benefits (PSCB)”** encourage developers to voluntarily create community benefits plans for private developments and are intended to create meaningful social and inclusive economic impact across communities. Private sector-led community benefits align with environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles by contributing to the advancement of social impact, equity, and inclusive city building.

# Appendix B: Glossary of City Divisions and Agencies

Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer – CFO&T

City Manager's Office – CMO

City Manager's Office, Intergovernmental and Agency Relations – CMO-IAR

City Planning – CP

Corporate Real Estate Management – CREM

CreateTO – CreateTO

Deputy City Manager's Office – Corporate Services – DCM-CS

Deputy City Manager's Office – Infrastructure Services – DCM-IS

Development Review – DR

Economic Development & Culture – EDC

Employment & Social Services – TESS

Environment & Climate – E&C

Housing Secretariat – HS

Indigenous Affairs Office – IAO

Municipal Licensing & Standards – MLS

Parks, Forestry & Recreation – PFR

People & Equity – P&E

Purchasing & Materials Management – PMMD

Strategic Capital Coordination Office (within the Deputy City Manager's Office – Infrastructure Services) – SCCO

Social Development, Finance & Administration – SDFA

Strategic Public & Employee Communications – SPEC

Strategic Protocol and External Relations – SPER

Technology Services – TSD

Transit Expansion – TE

Transportation Services – TS

Toronto Transit Commission – TTC

Toronto Public Health – TPH

Toronto Building – TB

