

# Resilient Toronto

## Part 2: Creating inclusive, climate resilient growth

*A summary of the second event of a three-part series designed to engage city-builders and citizens in the development of a robust Resilience Strategy for the City of Toronto. At this event, participants and attendees were invited to take part in a civic dialogue and share stories and ideas about what inclusive resilience can and should look like in Toronto.*



**+ PLACEMAKER**

# INTRODUCTION

On May 16th 2018 the [Canadian Urban Institute \(CUI\)](#), in partnership with the [City of Toronto \(ResilientTO\)](#), convened the second event in the three-part Resilient Toronto +PlakeMaker Event Series.

The event, “Creating Inclusive, Climate Resilient Growth”, was hosted by the [Toronto Public Library \(TPL\)](#) in the Toronto Reference Library’s Atrium as part of the TPL On Civil Society series. The event was moderated by journalist and producer Mary Wiens of CBC Radio. The core panelists included:

- Karen Restoule, Co-Founder of Bold Realities and Whose Land;
- Jay Pitter, Placemaker, City Builder and author and editor of Subdivided: City Building in the Age of Hyper-Diversity;
- James Dann, City of Toronto Waterfront Parks Manager; and,
- Graeme Stewart, Principle at ERA Architects and Founding Director of the Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal.

*This event brought together diverse perspectives to explore how communities, civic organizations, businesses, and government can work together to address the potential intersections of climate related shocks like extreme weather, and chronic stresses like income inequality, aging infrastructure, housing, and transit.*



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & RESILIENT TORONTO

The Resilient Toronto +PlaceMaker series was created to build understanding and awareness of resilience in Toronto. The series serves as a discussion platform that invites city builders, policymakers, neighbourhood actors, and municipal staff to participate in conversations that create new insights for the Toronto's Resilience Strategy.

The second Resilient Toronto +PlaceMaker event was designed to create a unique space and approach to civic discourse around the question of how to achieve inclusive climate resilient growth. As the official kickoff of the ResilientTO civic engagement work and strategy, the event was designed to create a space that thinned the divide between panelists and audience. Taking inspiration from the City's growing emphasis on prioritizing open civic dialogue on matters of policy, everyone in attendance was invited to attend as equal participants. On the stage where the core panelists sat, an empty chair was offered for attendees to occupy and contribute.

The event was held at the Toronto Reference Library in the Atrium because its design and function invite openness and inclusivity. All passersby and library goers were welcome to participate and all perspectives, thoughts, and ideas were welcome. The engagement was a strong reminder that shaping an inclusive Resilience Strategy requires rethinking what it means to be a 'city builder' and 'policy maker' by welcoming a broad cross section of residents into the Resilience Strategy creation process.

Several key themes emerged from the dialogue exploring the question of: *what inclusive climate resilient growth can and should look like in Toronto*. These themes will inform the core areas and values for the City's first Resilience Strategy. They are not attributed to one participant but reflect the insights that emerged from robust and lively conversation.



# THEMES FROM THE DIALOGUE:

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EQUITY ARE THE FOUNDATION**

Social capital is a pillar of resilience. It is about improved relationships between individuals, as well as collectively cultivating a city that champions equity and equitable relations between residents. The social capital needed to build and sustain resilience requires equitable access to services, resources and opportunities and acknowledgement of the diverse creativity and strengths of all that call Toronto home.

## **CONNECTIONS AND KINDNESS ARE NEEDED TOO**

The stories shared by participants highlighted the importance of coming together outside of crisis. True resilience requires deeper social connections and actively promoting kindness through civic discourse and collaboration. Participants discussed how the responses to the Toronto Island flood in 2017 demonstrated that communities that know and value each other fare better in emergencies. Prioritizing the building of strong and sustainable social connections across this city is essential to building a resilient city.

## **RESILIENCE REQUIRES RECONCILIATION AND BRIDGE BUILDING**

The Resilience Strategy is being developed within the broader context of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) process. The conversation highlighted that building bridges between First Nations, Indigenous, Metis, Inuit

peoples, industry and resilience infrastructure projects is a foundational part of the resilience building process. Participants discussed how bridges are built by entering into relationships of mutual respect and commitment to co-create new resilient futures for the city.

## **WE MAY NEED TO CHANGE THE RULES**

The built form of Toronto is circumscribed by by-laws, standards, and rules that enhance safety and promote functionality. Participants discussed how building Toronto's resilience will rely require innovation in the built form and urban planning. For example, they described ways that planning conventions and by-laws can limit the ability to make Toronto's high rise rental tower neighbourhoods more resilient. Increasing the capacity for built form innovation was identified as an important contribution to resilient growth.

## **RESILIENCE IS ABOUT MORE THAN SURVIVING**

While resilience building can help enhance the ability of people and neighbourhoods to survive, adapt, and thrive, the concept of resilience can also suggest that marginalized residents merely survive and adapt to inequitable circumstances. Resilience building needs to be about more than surviving and adapting. It needs to emphasize progress and forward movement on challenging issues like structural inequity, poverty, and lack of equitable access to necessary services and supports.

# CIVIC LESSONS & INSIGHTS

The second +PlaceMaker event was an experiment in civic dialogue with an intent to bring different actors and residents together to discuss ways we can ensure that Toronto is prioritizing inclusive resilient city building. The unpredictability of the event was a reminder of the opportunities to practice resilience in form and function. The pathway toward developing the City of Toronto’s first Resilience Strategy must also embrace resilience-building principles.

Complex and unpredictable civic discourse is one way of enhancing our civic connections. It builds our capacity to publicly disagree and to find common ground. It strengthens our ability to engage in substantive conversations with fellow Torontonians that rarely appear in our personal and professional circles. We can get better at travelling into the lives and experiences of neighbours and emerge more aware and enlightened about the City we live in and the futures we need to co-create. The event was a reminder that resilience building is not just a series of outcomes but a process that requires on-going civic discourse.



# NEXT STEPS

ResilientTO will launch a Resilient Stories Campaign and begin to stage a series of Resilient conversations across Toronto’s Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). Through their [www.resilienttoronto.ca](http://www.resilienttoronto.ca) engagement platform and partners like the Toronto Public Library (TPL) the City will keep this conversation going. The City aims to create a groundswell of resilience conversation and story telling that will lead into a fully inclusive Resilience Strategy development process. Follow us, walk beside us, and support our process in the following ways:

1. Share your [Resilience Story](#)
2. Follow us at [@ResilientTO](#)
3. Vote for [Toronto’s Story](#)

# EVENT PARTNERS



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