

Presentation to Tamarack Institute
Belonging and Social Connection in Climate Work
June 04, 2025

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**COMMUNITY EXTREME
RESILIENCE TO WEATHER**

A project of  **MakeWay**

CREW was formed in 2014 to raise awareness of local climate change impacts and to help equip residents of low-income, high-rise apartments in downtown Toronto to cope with climate related emergencies.

CREW joined the MakeWay Charitable Society's Shared Platform in 2019.



**COMMUNITY EXTREME
RESILIENCE to WEATHER**

A project of  **MakeWay**

In 2016, CREW developed a Neighbours Helping Neighbours program led by low-income seniors from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds.

Over a period of eight months the seniors guide workshops and focus groups to create a toolkit of materials that they used to outreach to their neighbours.

They called themselves Extreme Weather Volunteers. Since then, Crew has focused its work on low-income, high-rise neighbourhoods, where we invite everyone to join us.



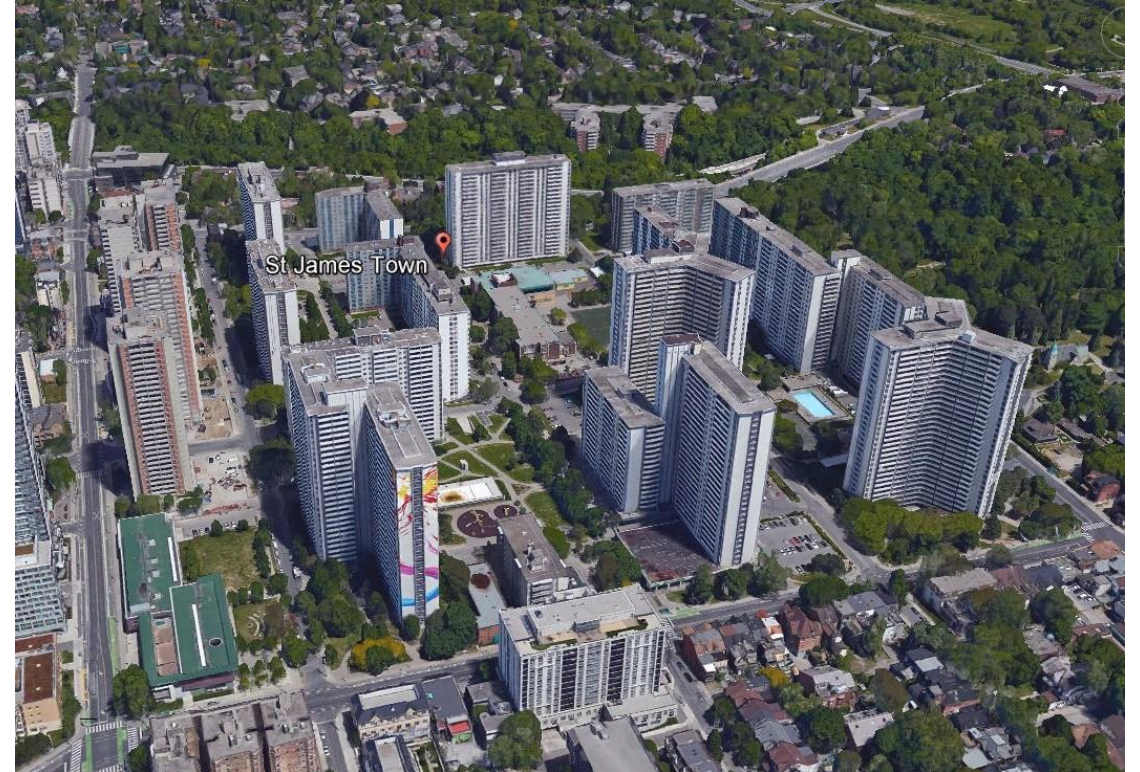
All CREW activities are designed to promote the cross-generational, cross-cultural, social networking that is central to community resilience:

- Emergency preparedness: Training leaders, neighbours helping neighbours, games, emergency kits & plans
- Green discovery walks: Training volunteer walk guides, walks are welcoming, fun and make exploring easy. They empower a sense of belonging to the city
- Seniors' gatherings: alleviating isolation and loneliness. Creating leadership, cooking and eating, gardening, walking
- Heat Wave Protocol: Training, tools and materials for implementing the protocol in new communities
- Finding and facilitating the local meeting spaces that can become resilience hubs in a community
- Supporting and empowering trained volunteer leaders to make presentations to community groups, university classrooms and city hall



Community-led Climate Resilience in St James Town

- On May 2022, the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) and Community Resilience to Extreme Weather (CREW), in collaboration with residents and volunteers in St James Town began the neighbourhood heatwave response project funded by CEC – EJ4Climate
- St James Town is one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in Canada, with 19 high-rise rental buildings
- High-rise residents can experience challenges and risks during a heatwave; power outage, air quality, food insecurity, eco anxiety among other emergencies
- Through this new initiative, we showed how impacted high-rise communities can lead climate resilience



Creating the Heat Wave Protocol

We collaborated with:

- a diverse group of local volunteers,
- community organizations
- service-providers, and
- the City of Toronto,

to co-create a community-led emergency preparedness and response model for vertical communities.

THE HEAT WAVE PROTOCOL

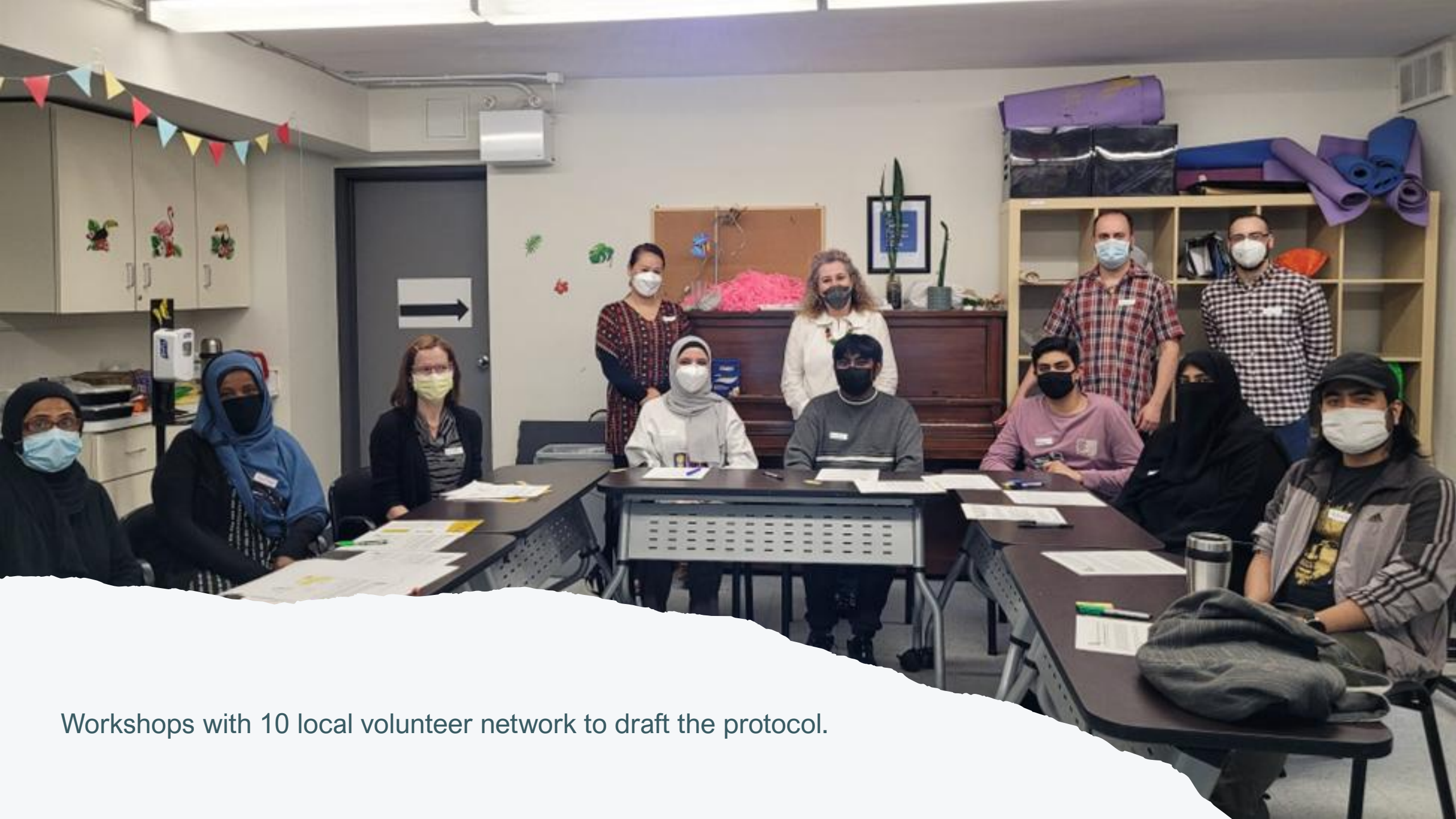
Plans and actions for high-rise community emergency response during heat wave events

The following is a draft protocol (or framework) for community-led heat wave preparedness and response, which was co-created by CREW and TEA in collaboration with the St James Town Climate Action Crew, and in consultation with other local stakeholders. The aim is to

continue to test and adapt this protocol with residents in different high-rise buildings, foster continuous preparedness practice, and activate the protocol when the St James Town community experiences heat waves, and other extreme weather events and emergencies.



THIS PROTOCOL HAS 5 FOCUS AREAS TO HELP SUPPORT RESIDENTS DURING A HEATWAVE.



Workshops with 10 local volunteer network to draft the protocol.



20 stakeholders were invited to participate and provide feedback on the Heat Wave Protocol Response created by a team of Local Volunteers Leaders supported by CREW and TEA.



Community consultations on how to customize the protocol to different buildings and neighbourhoods.

This heat wave protocol was developed and tested by TEA, CREW, and a team of volunteers in James Town.

Currently, we are testing and training residents to become familiar with the plans and actions for neighbourhood emergency response during a heat wave in five focus areas.

THE HEATWAVE PROTOCOL

Plans and actions for high-rise community emergency response during heat wave events.

THIS PROTOCOL HAS 5 FOCUS AREAS TO HELP SUPPORT RESIDENTS DURING A HEATWAVE.

COMMUNICATIONS

All residents receive advance notification of the heat wave.

HOMES

Residents' homes are kept as cool as possible.

COOL AREAS AND COOLING STATIONS

Residents are supported to reach these if their home is too hot.

CONTACT SYSTEM

Vulnerable residents receive a check-in and support.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Residents are immediately able to access local support services

Growing a Heat Emergency Program for Tenants in High-Rise Buildings

In this phase of work, from October 2024 through February 2025, we held multiple workshops to gather insights and recommendations from the community on how to better withstand extreme weather events, particularly heatwaves and power outages, and to strengthen the protocol.

Residents shared firsthand experiences, identified gaps in current emergency support, and proposed solutions tailored to the unique challenges of high-rise living in St. James Town. Volunteers led discussions on how the protocol is working and identified gaps and challenges that need further support.



Funded by the City of Toronto





Supporting and empowering trained volunteer leaders to make presentations to community groups, university classrooms and city hall

Volunteers meeting a City Councillor and learning how to make deputations.



Policy action at City Hall

Advocating for a maximum 26°C temperature in rental units.

CREW work in the community

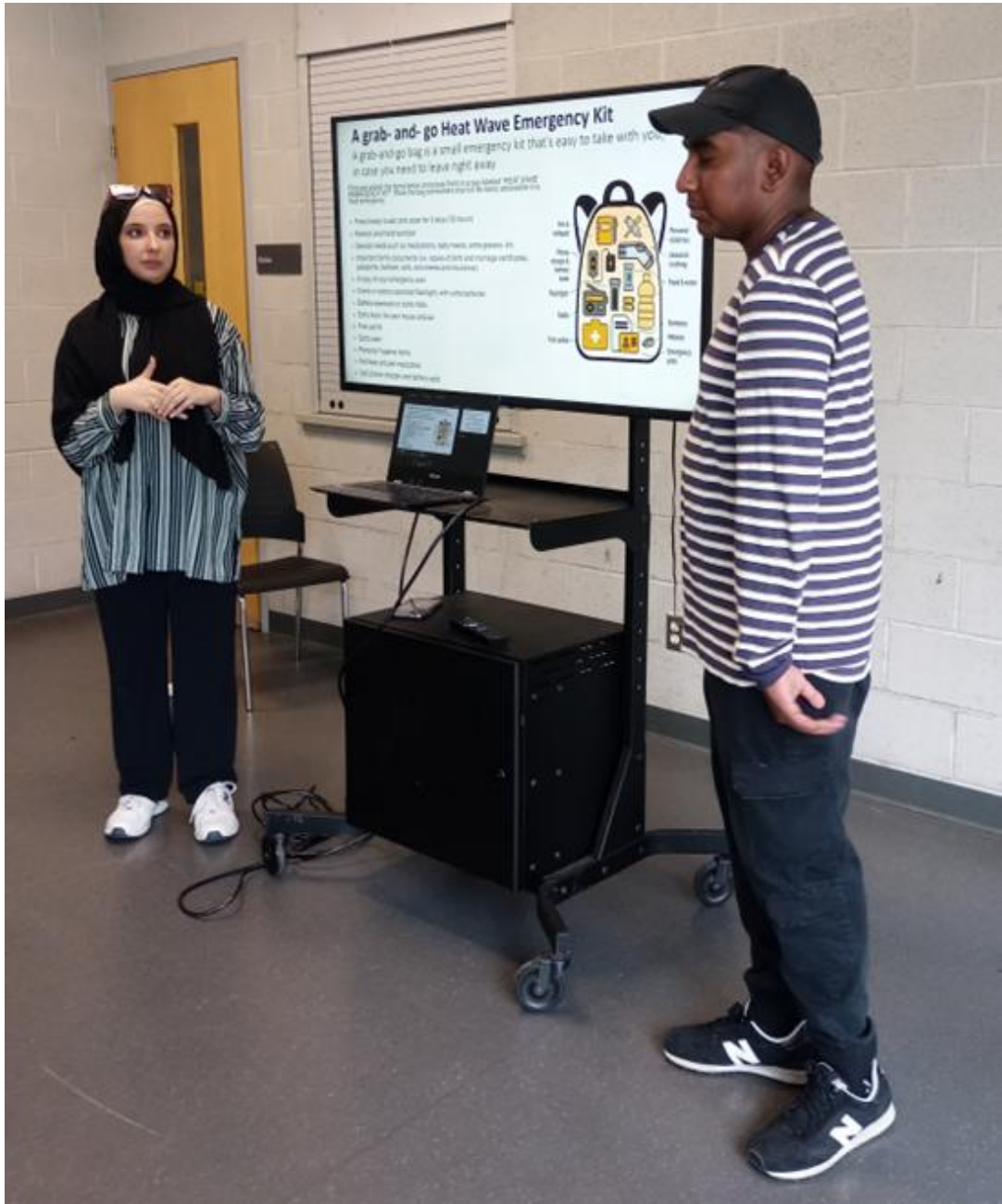
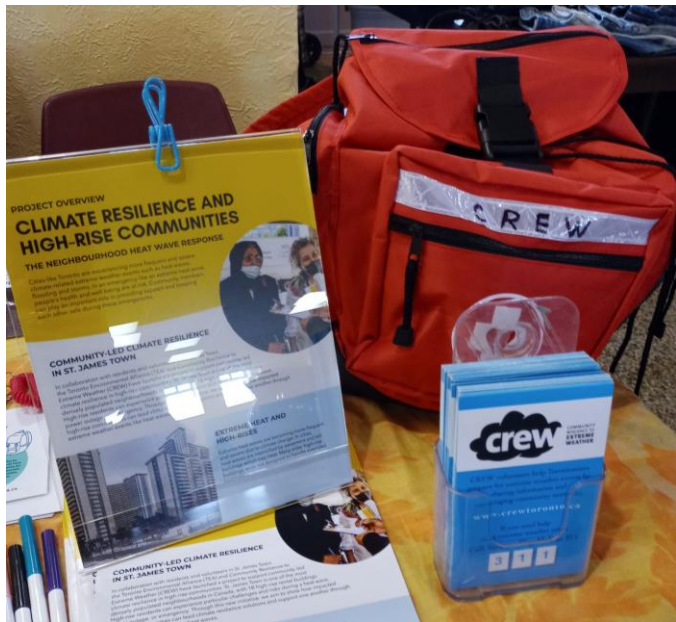
Emergency preparedness:

Community outreach, training leaders, neighbours helping neighbours, games, emergency kits & plans.

- Understanding climate threats and hazards of extreme weather impacts, including health risks related to heat
- Practical actions around emergency preparedness that includes possession of 72-hour emergency kits and plans
- Increase support for climate action



Training community leaders





Climate hazards and emergency preparedness that include possession of 72-hour emergency kits and plans.



Game: Emergency plans and kits - what are the essentials?



Lobby info sessions – Outdoor informal meetings
with table information – Door knocking –
WhatsApp chat groups





Finding and facilitating the local meeting spaces that can become resilience hubs in a community

375 Bleecker Street community room – scheduled weekly meetings with the residents.





Mayor's office visit, and new city relationships

Socially Connected and Resilient St. James Town Seniors

- Designed to promote active and healthy aging in St. James Town
- It engages a diversity seniors for outdoor outings that foster connection to local and nearby green spaces
- Promote adaptation to local climate impacts through emergency preparedness
- and teach wellbeing and safety strategies during heatwaves
- Provide opportunity for inter-generational conversations

This year from June 2025, we have regular and dependable weekly sessions in a TCHC lobby room. Previous year we were hosting seniors' meetings at the local church.



Seniors and non-seniors weekly conversations

Make friends, meet your neighbours, set up support networks. Help those who are struggling – connecting isolated neighbours.

Learn how to adapt to local climate impacts and prepare for emergencies.

Engage a minimum of 20 diverse, racialized residents in a series of guided conversations that explore racial discrimination and inequality through a process that promotes diversity and inclusion.

Making crafts, potluck in a nearby park or/and group discovery walks.



We meet every Tuesday in the local Anglican Church.
The church provides free space for CREW in return for help with the church gardens.





Creating welcoming spaces for inter-generational collaborative projects and friendships

Building Social Networks



Outreach pop-up events in collaboration with the St. James Town Service Providers Network

Building Social Capital



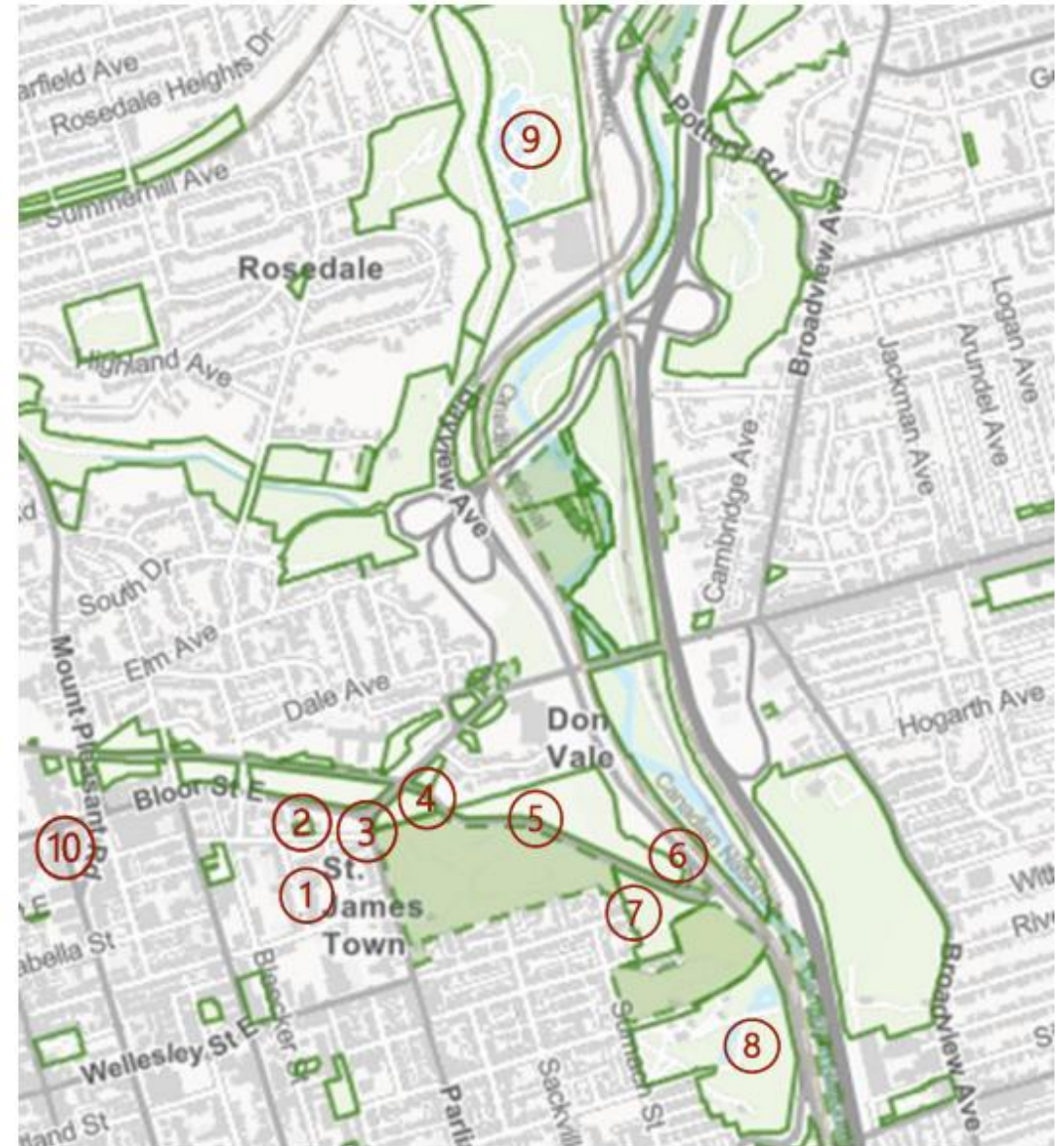
- Community members gardening at the local Anglican church – making interfaith connections
- Learning new skills - gardening

Equitable access to green spaces

- It is an urgent need for accessible, safe and attractive green spaces in and near St. James Town
- Many residents are unaware that prime green spaces such as the adjacent ravine exist
- CREW uses its local social networks to engage and motivate residents to walk or bike along the paths, and to gather in the green spaces.
- CREW uses all appropriate opportunities to facilitate community discussions about the use of local green spaces, especially as cooling locations during extreme heat waves

Linking Green Paths - St. James Town

This walk highlights the places where community members can access cool spaces and introduces the places where CREW, along with other stakeholders, is advocating for infrastructure to help cope with extreme heat. These include misting stations, water fountains, increased tree canopy and shade structures



Walking in groups is fun!

Anxieties about entering a wooded area or venturing into a culturally unfamiliar neighbourhood are alleviated by group walking.

- CREW's volunteers are trained to become green walk guides, and they represent a wide range of ethno-cultural backgrounds and are inclusive, welcoming and engaging. Volunteers range in age from 14 to 70
- A walk to the adjacent ravine takes about 8 minutes. We provide residents with a map of the ravine system showing exit points
- Walks to Riverdale Farm & Riverdale Park take around 20 minutes
- The Brickworks can be reached in around 30 minutes, either on public transit or by foot. CREW provides walk / transit guides to each destination



Green discovery walks: Walks are welcoming, fun and make exploring easy. They empower a sense of belonging to the city.



**Rosedale
Ravine**

Discovering your St. James Town ravine

TFN President and CREW are inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting:

Topic: Discover Toronto's Ravines for CREW and St. James Town 1

Time: Aug 28, 2021 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://uso6web.zoom.us/j/82224920912?](https://uso6web.zoom.us/j/82224920912?pwd=YodTdkc3VEkwUjRNZ2NBdFJWRkdvdz09)

[pwd=YodTdkc3VEkwUjRNZ2NBdFJWRkdvdz09](https://uso6web.zoom.us/j/82224920912?pwd=YodTdkc3VEkwUjRNZ2NBdFJWRkdvdz09)

Meeting ID: 822 2492 0912

Passcode: 570172

Find your local number: <https://uso6web.zoom.us/j/kRPAaFzQg>

Everyone is welcome to attend!

CREW invites you to the **Rosedale Ravine Community Walk**

A discovery walk with friends

August 28 walk starts SHARP at 1:30 pm
and finishes by 2:30pm.

Meet at Ontario Street at 1:00 pm
(at the front of Rose Avenue Public School)

Free refreshments after walk.

Please RSVP to reserve your spot by texting at 4166023275

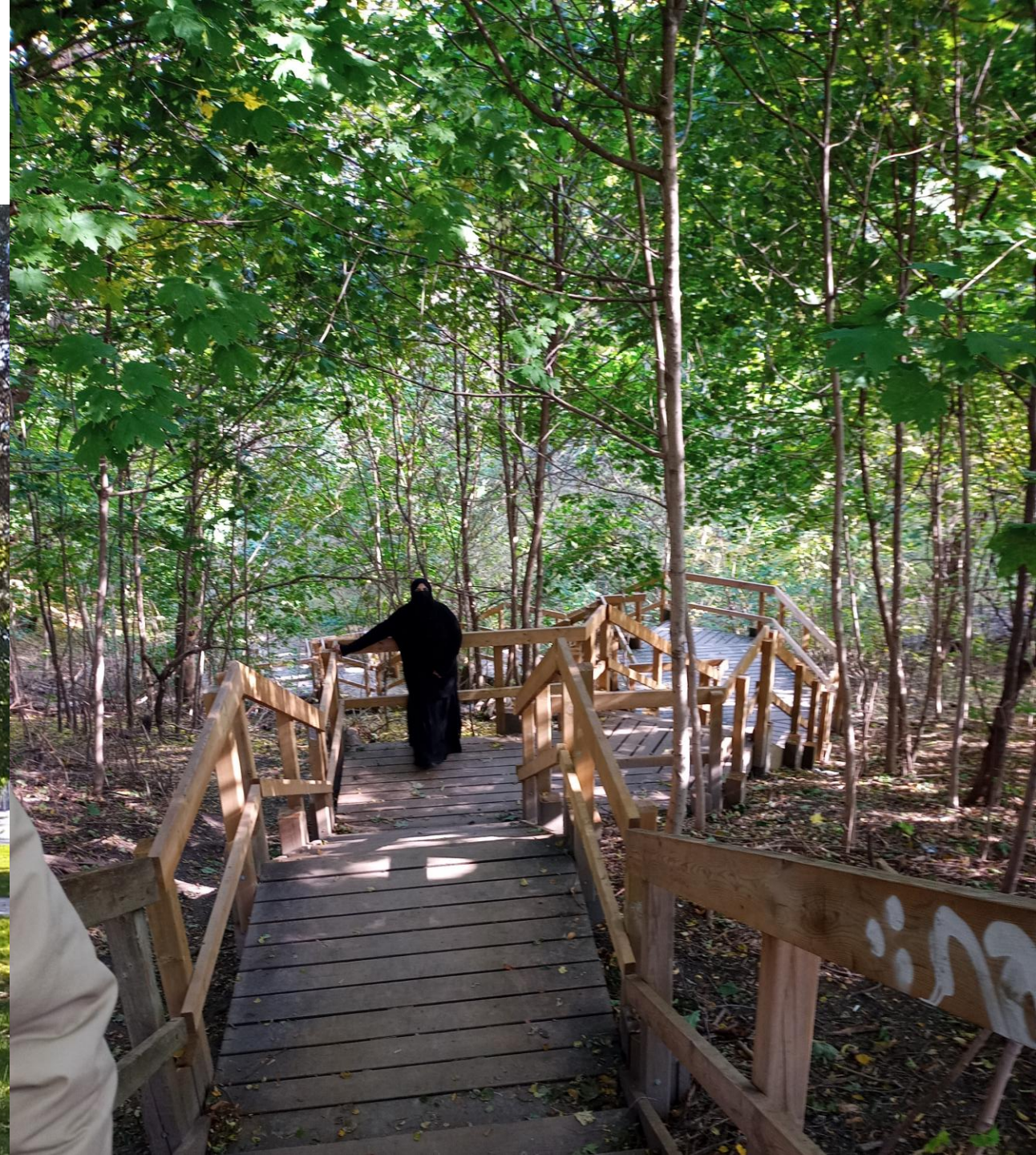
The walk is limited to 20 residents and we will follow
COVID-19 protocols.





**Cherry
blossoms @
High Park**

Green discovery walk to Wellesley Park



Green Discovery Walk to Riverdale Park & Farm





**Creating a sense of belonging
through group discovery walks**

Evergreen Brickworks



Mitigating Social isolation

A community potluck – getting to know each other



Green discovery walk to Toronto Island





TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE
itea

2023

Greener City





CANADIAN YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION AWARD

Presented to:

St James Town Climate Action Crew

In recognition of your inspiring
efforts leading to positive impacts
in your local community in the
fight against climate change.

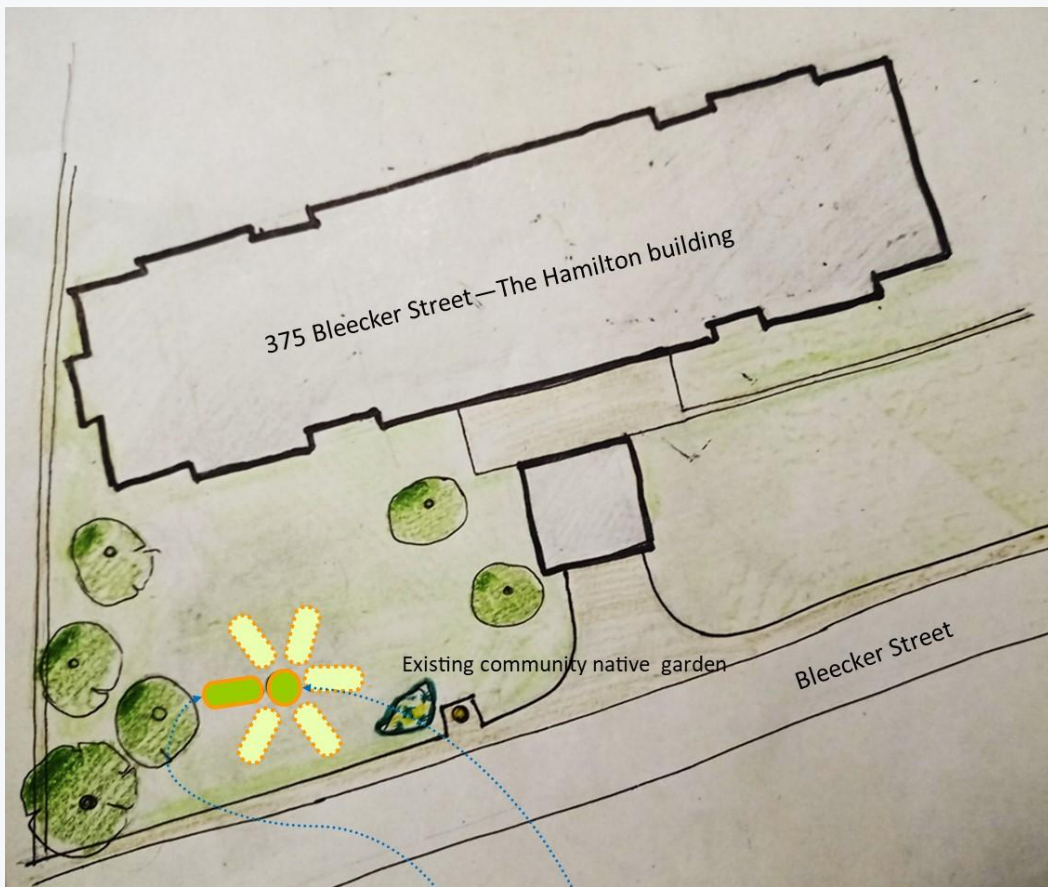
2024

St. James Town Climate Action Crew

CREW has been working with volunteers in this neighbourhood since 2017 to build community-led response plans to extreme weather in multiple buildings. This resident-led group, a spin-off from CREW, runs a community climate engagement project funded by the City of Toronto, and a community garden funded by the Toronto Community Housing.

CREW continues to provide mentorship to the group.





Approved garden site at 375 Bleecker Street



A community garden provides a space for residents who may be coping with loneliness and social isolation. The proposed garden is designed to be senior friendly.



Proposed garden site with tall
planters



Toronto
Community
Housing



Neighbourhood Asset Mapping



Players work with large format maps of their neighbourhood

Using local knowledge along with their online devices, participants are asked to map the resources, assets, people and organizations that could make up a community emergency response and contribute to resilience — BEFORE disaster strikes.

Resilientville Canada – Climate Simulation Role Playing Game



Resilientville Canada is a role-playing exercise that advances participant awareness of the short and long term benefits of problem solving at the neighbourhood level.

Players are asked to take off their professional hats and to adopt the profile of a neighbourhood stakeholder.

Community Workbook for Climate Resilient High-Rise Neighbourhoods



Focus group with key volunteers to discuss the workbook content and design

- CREW works with residents in ethnoculturally diverse, low-income, high-rise communities.
- This workbook shares the tools and strategies that will help prepare your communities for the impacts of climate change.
- You can select the tools and methods that are relevant to your neighbourhood.
- CREW will provide support for whatever approach you choose to implement.



What would you do?
... in a blackout
... in case of fire

Be better prepared
for the emergency.
Connect with your neighbours!

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crew COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE TO
EXTREME
WEATHER

DONATE

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