



August 5, 2022

General Issues Committee
City of Hamilton
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4Y5
clerk@hamilton.ca

Dear General Issues Committee:

Subject: Submission – General Issues Committee Meeting (Aug. 8, 2022) – 8.1 Hamilton’s Climate Action Strategy

I am writing on behalf of the National Trust for Canada – a national charity dedicated to protecting and revitalizing Canada’s heritage places – to encourage the City of Hamilton to firmly integrate the reuse and upgrading of existing/heritage building into *Hamilton’s Climate Action Strategy*.

Heritage conservation, at its core, is about reusing and upgrading existing buildings, but this practice is not mainstream. Owners, developers, planners and advocates face many barriers in their work to reuse older buildings, and their insights and expertise is an untapped resource for those leading climate action. As a result, Canada’s landfills receive an estimated 2,752,000 tonnes of wood as construction, renovation and demolition (CR&D) waste each year, much of it precious old-growth lumber or other valuable materials from demolished older/heritage buildings.

The barriers to reuse take many forms, including:

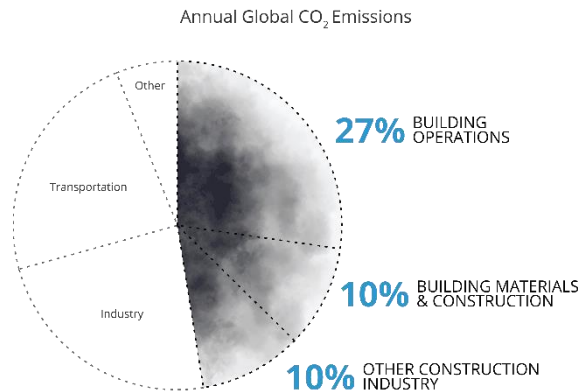
- Availability of labour skilled in understanding and adapting older buildings typologies;
- Cultural barriers - demolition and new construction industry practice, and the consumer culture of obsolescence, are both deeply engrained; and
- Economic barriers – from tax treatment that disincentivizes reuse, the new construction bias of financiers, and disconnect between building reuse (material retention) and carbon pricing.

Hamilton’s Climate Action Strategy should lay out measures to address these current gaps, and commit to working with Provincial-Territorial and Federal partners towards pan-Canadian solutions.

Reusing and upgrading existing buildings – as opposed to their demolition and replacement with new buildings, even energy efficient “green” ones – would have a substantial immediate and long-term impact in achieving carbon emission reduction targets that are an essential response to the climate crisis. Construction and building operation is widely understood to be the world’s largest single source of energy use and emissions – 47 percent of the carbon footprint worldwide – and therefore offers the opportunity for dramatic decarbonization returns. While current carbon mitigation efforts primarily

focus on reducing emissions from building operations (27% of emissions), new building materials and new construction represents 20% of embodied emissions

The greatest GHG and environmental impact reductions can be achieved by reusing buildings in situ – “the greenest building is the one that already exists” – and by working with building systems and prioritizing minimal intervention to ensure maximum impacts. Rewards would not only include carbon emission savings, but also the avoided impact of resource extraction on natural heritage and Indigenous cultural landscapes. Hamilton, and Canada as a whole, have a vast carbon sink of older or heritage buildings to maintain and capitalize upon in the fight against climate change. In contrast, studies have established that it takes up to 80 years for a new “green” building to overcome the carbon impacts of its construction.



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Data Sources: Global ABC Global Status Report 2021, EIA

Capitalizing on the embodied energy of existing buildings and avoiding the carbon emissions and other environmental impacts arising from the material fabrication and construction of new buildings should be the norm and a key component of *Hamilton's Climate Action Plan*. In addition, reusing existing buildings also holds great potential for rapidly creating new affordable housing in older buildings, mitigating displacement of marginalized communities, creating skilled jobs, and fostering a more efficient and resilient economy.

Sincere thanks for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me for further background.

Yours sincerely,

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About the National Trust for Canada

Founded in 1973, the National Trust for Canada (formerly the Heritage Canada Foundation) is a registered charity that empowers Canadians to save and renew heritage places and older buildings as the foundation for a sustainable future. Every year thousands of Canadians access regeneration strategies and expertise through our free webinars and annual conference and hundreds more find youth employment in heritage through our partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage. In the last several years, we have delivered \$1.4 million in bricks and mortar funding to help renew and adapt 89 great places for new uses, and provided over \$132,000 worth of essential expertise to 44 heritage places through our donor-funded Launch Pad coaching grants. We lead the nation in celebrating heritage places with Canada Historic Places Days – reaching 2 million+ people annually with a national event delivered in partnership with the Parks Canada Agency