

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to climate change and rampant urbanization in developing countries, increased attention needs to be paid to environmental sustainability concerns, helping to shape cities for the future. Environmental sustainability repeatedly focuses on optimizing energy, waste management, and water, often ignoring district specific needs in terms of the natural environment. Therefore, environmental sustainability indicators should also incorporate targets rooted in the biophysical properties of the district. By monitoring conditions and problems, indicators are an effective way of capturing important information about changing urban environments. Instead of offering a “blueprint”, the EcoDistrict framework recognizes that districts, neighbourhoods, and communities experience a range of differing circumstances and priorities, allowing for flexibility through the application of context specific indicators.

In applying the EcoDistrict framework, Toronto’s East Harbour EcoDistrict must take caution in terms of marketing and differentiate between a vague idealism and the creation of an effective and applicable approach to environmental sustainability. To do so, following a comprehensive analysis of the High Falls EcoDistrict, Seaholm EcoDistrict, and Lloyd EcoDistrict cases, this report provides the following recommendations for East Harbour EcoDistrict:

1. Comprehensive Plan and Roadmap

A comprehensive plan for the implementation of the EcoDistrict framework should be created through the development of the East Harbour EcoDistrict roadmap. As an essential step for certified EcoDistricts, the roadmap will create a performance-based action plan. The roadmap can provide key information pertaining to the EcoDistrict framework, application of the EcoDistrict within Toronto’s planning context, a funding strategy, and a timeline for project implementation. By setting performance targets for the priorities of Living Infrastructure and Resource Regeneration the roadmap will focus on context specific environmental sustainability issues and aspirations. The development of a directionally clear roadmap will provide East Harbour EcoDistrict with a solid foundation from which to address environmental sustainability.

2. Context Specific Indicators

East Harbour EcoDistrict's indicators should be context-specific, clear, workable and measurable. This will allow for the proper implementation of environmental sustainability through the provision of detailed goals and targets. Development of these indicators will help East Harbour to capture, monitor and assess the environmental conditions within the district. The EcoDistrict Protocol (2017b) provides guidelines and examples of indicators and indicator sets that can be used and expanded on to meet local conditions and goals. It is recommended that East Harbour EcoDistrict explores the resources provided by the EcoDistrict protocol to develop effective indicators from which to measure environmental sustainability.

3. Indicator Monitoring and Reporting

The creation of East Harbour EcoDistrict's roadmap and indicators will provide an assessment toolkit from which to measure and monitor environmental sustainability performance. The indicators laid out in the roadmap are meant to monitor progress towards district goals. The identification of baseline conditions will provide a starting point from which progress can be measured. Indicator monitoring should then be summarized into transparent public documents. This will increase public awareness and education, while also obligating East Harbour to be accountable for their progress and success of program implementation. Furthermore, as a brownfield redevelopment, East Harbour EcoDistrict should consider and measure the environmental impacts of the construction and development process.

This research has presented ideas of how EcoDistricts can go beyond the idea of marketing sustainability and will hopefully spark a conversation regarding how these next steps could benefit the application of Toronto's East Harbour EcoDistrict.