

Case Study

RESILIENCE HUB COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VISIONING

Dufferin County



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About the Project

Background

In Dufferin County's 2023 Climate Adaptation Strategy, the exploration of neighbourhood hubs was identified as a key action to enhance social resilience. The concept of Resilience Hubs is not new—the City of Victoria's "Neighbour-Hubs" and the "Parks in Action" project by research team from the University of Toronto and Toronto Metropolitan University provide outdoor spaces for community use, while the Urban Sustainability Directors Network promotes indoor community hubs and networks. These models integrate emergency preparedness with social justice and community-building efforts, strengthening neighborhoods and building climate resilience through place-based infrastructure and programming.

Project Description

Dufferin County's Emergency Preparedness and Climate & Energy divisions are collaborating on a multi-year pilot project to enhance community resilience by installing an outdoor "resilience hub" structure. This hub is envisioned as a community space that supports everyday needs while enhancing community resilience during times of disruption and recovery. This multi-phase project will unfold over several years, progressing from feasibility assessment and community engagement – where ORCCA has provided support – to design, installation, maintenance, and activation. The first phase undertaken with ORCCA focused on mapping key milestones and gathering input from residents and community leaders to better understand their needs and priorities.

Objectives

- To create an accessible, and dynamic community hub that enhances resilience, fosters social connections, and strengthens emergency preparedness; and
- To establish a process and design, based on community feedback through this pilot, that can be replicated across the county.

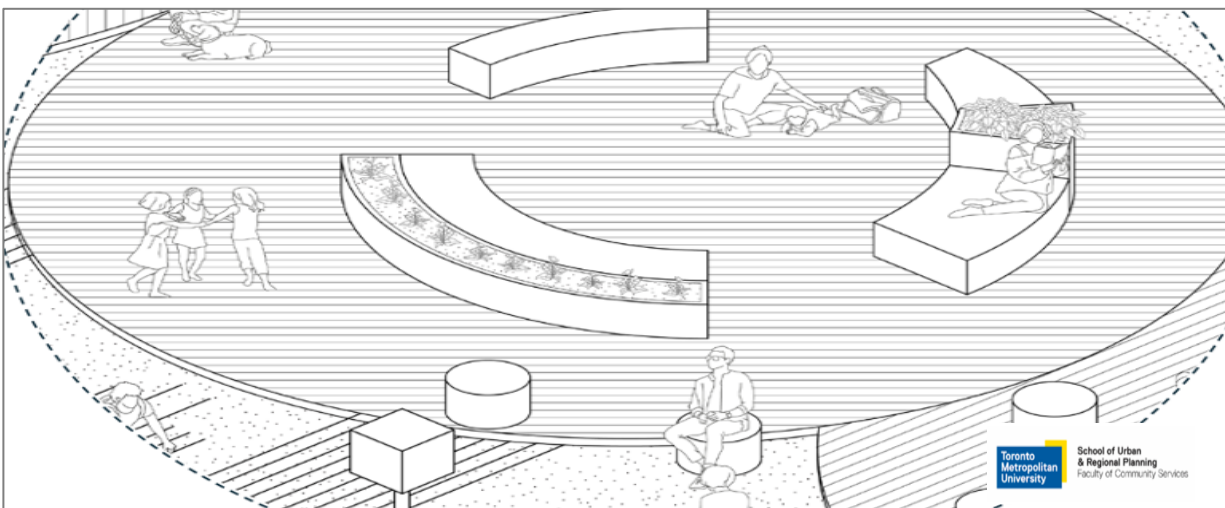
Work Completed

Summary of Activities

In collaboration with ORCCA, the first project phase developed an engagement and project plan for the Resilience Hub pilot. A Community Advisory Group was formed as well as Accessibility and DEI Committees. Three stakeholder workshops were held, along with a dedicated session for municipal library staff. Public input was gathered through event pop-ups and a community survey, with findings summarized in a report. Additionally, a foundational report was drafted to further support the project. This report outlined climate risks, financial impacts of climate change, the cost of inaction, four hub case studies, and a literature review of 20 resources and resilience hub frameworks.

Challenges

- **Language and Communication:** Engagement revealed that terms like ‘climate’ or ‘resilience’ hub didn’t resonate with some residents. Adjusting language to reflect community perspectives—such as using ‘neighborhood hub’—improved communication and connection.
- **Site Selection:** The initial site, behind a community garden near a transit terminal, was chosen for accessibility and community autonomy. However, an on-site engagement session revealed concerns about visibility and safety at dusk, prompting a key shift in the pilot hub’s location. This unexpected shift resulted in delays, ultimately pushing the timeline of subsequent project phases.



Design mock-up of pilot hub. Photo credit: Dufferin County

Impact & Key Learnings

Positive Outcomes & Impacts

Through extensive outreach, this stage of the project engaged 26 organizations and committees and connected with 250 community members, gathering diverse perspectives to inform the hub's development. Additionally, 64 survey responses provided valuable insights, and a review of 20 resources will help integrate proven strategies into the design process and generate buy-in from decision-makers. ORCCA has connected the County with a design team that is already proving that these efforts elevated local voices and laid the foundation for a hub that will enhance resilience and well-being.

Key Learnings

- **Flexibility & Responsiveness:** Maintaining flexible timelines and incorporating regular reflection checkpoints ensures the project stays aligned with community needs, allowing for adjustments when necessary to enhance relevance.
- **Effective Community Engagement:** Creative engagement methods like visualization exercises actively involve the community in decision-making, ensuring the project reflects their real experiences and priorities.
- **Iterative Planning:** Safety concerns identified through visualization led to site relocation, and adapting the hub design into a municipal building improved the project. These changes highlight the value of iterative planning and the importance of having contingencies in place to maintain momentum in the face of unexpected shifts.

Looking Ahead

In the next phase, the County will collaborate with a design team from Toronto Metropolitan University to transform insights from the initial engagement and research into community-driven concepts. This phase will refine design options based on additional community feedback, ensuring the hub aligns with local needs and paving the way for construction and activation. Additionally, the project will produce a comprehensive guidebook to support the creation of resilience hubs across Dufferin County in municipal offices, libraries, and community centers.

Learn More

To follow Dufferin County's progress and learn more about resilience hubs, visit [Join Dufferin](#) or contact climate@dufferincounty.ca.



Community Engagement at the design pilot site. Photo Credit: Dufferin County