

# Annual Report 2020



reThink  
green



# Contents

Letter From the Director	4
Organizational Updates	5
COVID-19 Impact	6
Theory of Change	7
Rebranding	8
Funding Summary	9
Program Updates	10
Green Economy North	11
Smart Green Communities	13
Regional Energy & Emissions Plans (REEPs)	14
Plastic-Free Greater Sudbury Shared Platform	15
Low Carbon Retrofit Project	18
Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council	21
Events	22



# Letter From the Director

**Dear reThink Green Community,**

The past year has been a challenging one, to say the least. Like many organizations, reThink Green was subject to all of the changes that the Covid-19 pandemic brought. We had to quickly adapt and reimagine our services, while keeping the health and safety of our staff top priority.

I'm so proud of the versatility and dedication of our staff team. Everyone took the neverending changes in stride, and we were able to quickly transition from in-person work and service delivery to operating entirely remotely. We permanently closed our office space on Larch Street and set up home offices. When it was safe to do so, we met outside, or utilized public spaces to collaborate and create.

Through the use of technology, we continued conversations internally and externally, and never missed a beat with our online delivery of events, networking opportunities, and social gatherings.

Although it was tough to power through, we've kept reThink Green pushing forward and continued to connect with members, stakeholders, and community leaders. We were able to meet deadlines and focus on what could come next for our organization. It's been my pleasure to lead reThink Green through this unprecedented year. Thank you to the staff, Board of Directors, and Sudbury community for believing in the work that reThink Green does. You've been an inspirational group to work with, and I'm excited to see what's next for the organization.

Leigha Benford



Interim Executive Director  
April 2020-2021





# Organizational Updates

## 2020/2021 Staff Team

**Rebecca Danard**  
Executive Director

**Leigha Benford**  
Interim Executive Director  
(April 2020 – 2021)

**Simon Blakeley**  
Program Director

**David St. Georges**  
Communications Director

**Maureen Strickland**  
Program Coordinator, Smart  
Green Communities

**Michaela Penwarden-Watson**  
Program Coordinator, Plastic-  
Free Greater Sudbury

**Erica Lagios**  
Program Director, Greater  
Sudbury Food Policy Council

**Laura Fylyshtan**  
Program Director, Low  
Carbon Retrofit Project

**Dean Grant**  
Energy Auditor

**Angela Jiang**  
Program Officer

**Emily Larochelle**  
Program Officer

**Feras Obeid**  
Program Officer

**Alison Dawson**  
Communications Officer

**Marc Maisonneuve**  
Communications Officer

**Megan Tran**  
Summer Student

## 2020/2021 Board of Directors

**Kyle McCall**  
Chair of the Board

**Emily Trottier**  
Treasurer

**Kristen Kulmala**  
Secretary

**Bill Crumplin**  
Elected Director

**Grant Kellet**  
Elected Director

**Darla Stoddart**  
Appointed Director

**Jordan Duplessis**  
Appointed Director

**Leslie Kunto**  
Appointed Director

**Ryan Mariotti**  
Appointed Director

**Kevin Fitzgerald**  
Appointed Director

# COVID-19 Impact



The COVID-19 pandemic had significant impacts on reThink Green in 2020. With the help of our Board of Directors, we decided to permanently close our long-time office space on Larch Street. This closure included the Forge co-working space, and the Green Room community space. All reThink Green staff transitioned to remote work from home office spaces, and we were able to utilize existing technologies to ensure our workflow was not interrupted.

We intend to continue working remotely until end of 2021 and will base our return to office space on many factors, including pandemic resolution, strategic planning, and office space viability.

# Theory of Change



The Theory of Change project was undertaken to help our organization develop strategic clarity and establish a Theory of Change statement that could help guide our decisions and plans going forward. Three senior staff members met with consultants from Social Impact every second week for several months to peel back the layers of reThink Green.

## The final Theory of Change statement is:

By 2030 reThink Green will have built an engaged network of champions that are advancing environmental sustainability within 500 communities and organizations across northern Ontario.

The process allowed us to reflect on our operations; where we have excelled, and where we have failed. We established that we had much work to do to increase our professionalism and public profile in order to lead a network of champions. Immediately following this project, we undertook a brand refresh for our organization, which has gained positive attention and given us a new face for the future.

We identified story telling as a main path to build champions in the community. We recognize now that this does not have a direct ROI that can be measured nor does it generate revenue for our organization. Financial stability became our most important organizational goal, and we realized that this was not discussed or reflected in any of the work that we had done through this process.

We do intend to use our Theory of Change statement to guide deeper strategic planning that we will be undertaking internally summer 2021.



# Rebranding



During summer 2021, reThink Green undertook an internal initiative to refresh the brand and website. The old brand had been in existence for several years, and through our Theory of Change work we discovered that it did not reflect the current state of the programs within the organization, or the future direction.

The new brand is cleaner, and will be much more versatile as the organization changes. We have updated all program logos to reflect the new branding, and plan to only use one logo and one look going forward instead of a new brand for each new program.

**Being an organization that works in and with northern Ontario communities the logo needed to reflect that.**

The logomark and logo concept heavily lean into the northern Ontario vibe; known for its lakes, water falls, nature paths, and trees. This logo says you are a part of that community. Both logomark and colours chosen reflect this ideology.



# Funding Summary



- Green Economy North Program
- Green Economy North Intern



- Digital Skills for Youth Internship
- Science Horizons Internships



- Smart Green Communities Intern
- Digital Communications Intern



- Smart Green Communities Program



- Low Carbon Retrofit Program



- Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council Shared Platform

Ontario  
Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium  
de l'Ontario

- Plastic-Free Greater Sudbury Shared Platform







# Program Updates



# Green Economy North

Green Economy North (GEN) is a sustainability program for businesses. Green Economy North members have access to a wide variety of support, tools, and expert guidance. Services range from technical workshops to one-on-one coaching. Our members' achievements are celebrated by the community through media coverage, special publications, and events. Simon Blakeley joined reThink Green in April 2020 in the role of Program Director. This role encompasses both Green Economy North and Smart Green Communities.

Our GEN membership, which is mainly composed of small to medium-sized businesses, was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through initial outreach work in spring 2020, it became clear that many members had to close their doors, both temporarily and permanently. Most were scrambling to pivot their operations, and some stated serious concerns for the future.

At the time, GEN members confirmed their immediate priorities included:

**securing access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), introducing social distancing requirements, and implementing more digital practices (including home-based working).**

Broader operational changes related to supply chain management, product manufacturing, service delivery, online sales, curbside pickup protocols, employee, customer, and congregational health and well-being, plus several other factors.

Members stated that gaining access to funding to replace lost revenues was a key priority for them. The GEN team set about producing a series of monthly newsletters including detailed analysis of potential funding and/or rebate opportunities. We also continued to produce and circulate energy walkthrough reports to guide

future decision-making. As the year progressed, the team delivered a series of webinars and completed supplementary research on topics and issues brought forward by our members.

By the end of the summer, the decision was taken to revitalize GEN so the program may have a fresher look and include a greater flexibility of options to meet our existing and prospective member needs. The opportunity was also taken to modify and upgrade our membership agreements and introduce new terms of reference, plus a standardized billing cycle (per fiscal year).

**Our annual core membership fees are now calculated based upon an equitable framework which accounts for both the Total Floor Space Area (Sq Ft.) of assets owned/operated, and the Total Number of Employees.**

## GEN core member services still include:

- Baseline energy walk throughs
- Target setting & action planning
- Coaching and support
- Access to technical workshops and educational forums
- Green team development
- Networking
- Knowledge sharing
- Celebrations of achievements

Additional fee-per-service options have also been added, including the preparation of detailed business and sector specific energy, waste and water audits, green team management, action plan development, technical guides and manuals, plus hands-on support writing grants, rebates, and other incentives. We are also equipped to provide business planning, media, marketing, and communication-led works from an environmental lens.

Through our work, we are shifting the emphasis 'from awareness to action' and producing the evidence base needed to support project delivery - including access to potential funding streams. Throughout the year, GEN received dozens of direct inquiries and has conducted further outreach among businesses and stakeholders in communities throughout northeastern Ontario. Several exciting projects are

now actively being discussed together with our funders, partners, members, and clients. Together, we are preparing for a world beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and laying the foundations for our green recovery.

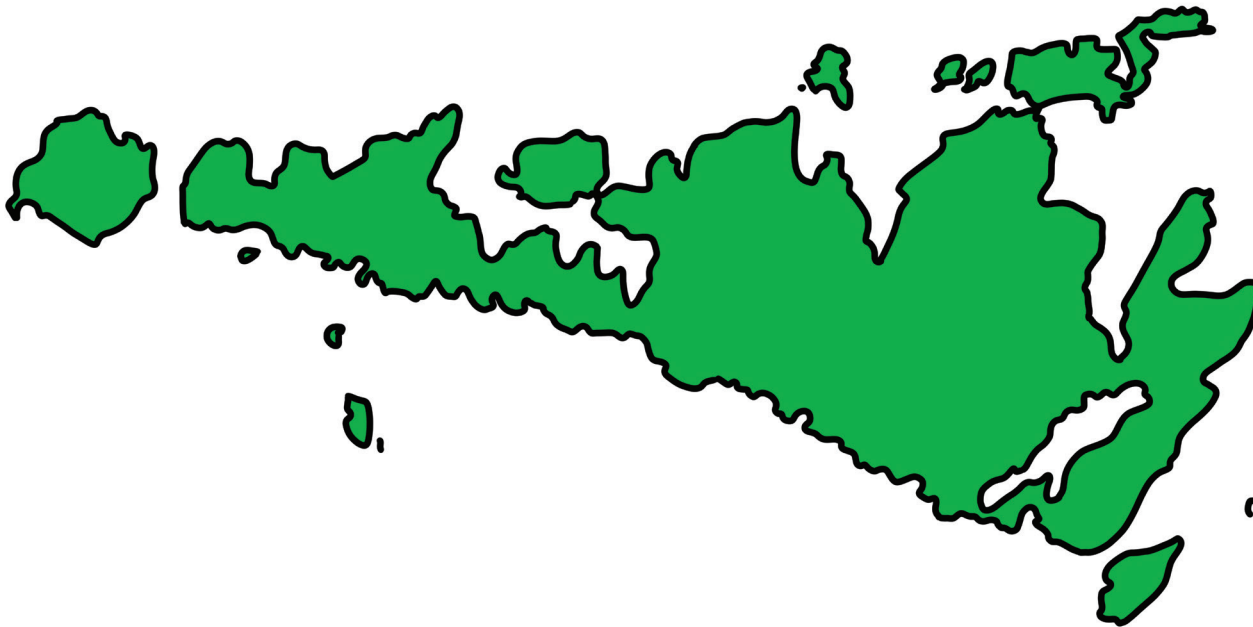


# Smart Green Communities

Smart Green Communities is a membership-based program for municipalities and First Nations in Northeastern Ontario, focused on developing strategies to reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Our program provides technical and interpretive support for municipalities undertaking processes of energy and emissions planning.

The program was first conceived in 2017, and reThink Green later secured funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) through its Transition 2050 program, and the Independent Energy Systems Operator (IESO) through its Education and Capacity Building (ECB) Program in 2018.

This initial funding was earmarked primarily towards a series of projects aimed at building capacity and enhancing knowledge-sharing among communities throughout northern Ontario. These included matters related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, the development of Community Energy Profiles (CEP), GHG inventories, and other climate-based policies, tools, and resources. Fixed-term funding for the program ended in January 2021, and Smart Green Communities Team continues to explore potential research and sustainable development-led opportunities alongside our members and partners across the region.





# Regional Energy & Emissions Plans (REEPs)

One major funded project of Smart Green Communities was the development of two (2) Regional Energy and Emissions Plans (REEPs) for Manitoulin Island and the North Shore. The REEPs sought to produce an estimated baseline of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions associated with 25 Municipalities, Townships, and First Nation Communities covering Manitoulin Island and the North Shore. A series of public and stakeholder meetings, conferences, webinars, and events were held throughout the past 2-3 years to bring awareness to the challenges of energy planning, and the risks posed by climate change.

The REEPs also include modelling of the predicted effects of climate change in the Year 2050 should a 'Business as Usual' Scenario continue. A further output of the REEPs was to research and explain a series of potential options including progressive policy-based approaches, the uptake of energy efficiency measures, renewable technologies, Low Impact Development (LiD) solutions, and other

best practice examples are:

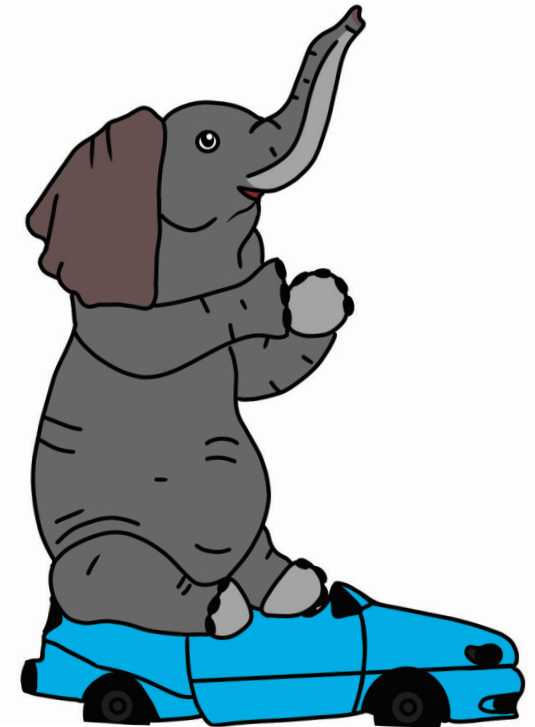
**alterations to physical assets and infrastructure in ways that support community-wide adaptation and mitigation.**

The final REEPs were published as part of virtual media conference and webinar held on 25 January 2021 entitled: 'Setting the tone for 2021: Creating Energy Solutions Together'.

The REEP launch event included presentations on behalf of Schneider Electric and Ontario Power Generation, who provided expert guidance on projects involving Microgrids, Smart Technologies, Electric Vehicles, and network-based EV Charging Infrastructure.

The FCM MCIP Transition 2050 grant is complete, and the SGC team has shifted focus to a membership and/or fee-per-service based model, like Green Economy North, but including additional macro-level support and assistance to guide municipalities, townships, and First Nation communities.

Annual core membership fees are calculated based upon an equitable framework which accounts for both the Total Floor Space Area (Sq Ft.) of assets owned/operated, and the Total Number of Employees. Fee-per-service options are also available. Several exciting projects are now actively being discussed together with our funders, partners, members, and clients.



# Plastic-Free Greater Sudbury Shared Platform

## PLASTIC-FREE GREATER SUDBURY



**Michaela Penwarden-Watson**  
Program Coordinator

Plastic-Free Greater Sudbury (PFGS) started as a community campaign in June 2018. The goal was to help businesses, organizations, and schools reduce single-use plastics, and it quickly became clear that more

capacity was needed. PFGS partnered with reThink Green under a shared platform to apply for an Ontario Trillium Foundation SEED grant.

The objective of the grant was to get 30 hospitality-based businesses (mainly restaurants and cafes) to 'take the pledge'. **'Taking the pledge' means reviewing the amounts of single-use plastics being offered by the establishments, and finding ways to reduce/eliminate them.** We hoped to change the local hospitality industry standards through education and commitment to providing Sudburians with more sustainable choices and a better environment.

The project presented several key findings:

1. Businesses can simply stop offering unnecessary single-use plastics.

**In some situations, businesses can just stop offering single-use plastic to customers.** Plastic straws were the most common item to stop offering, and that's likely due to the increased awareness of the environmental harm that plastic straws cause, and in most situations, straws are not needed. For businesses who were unsure or had accessibility concerns, we suggested keeping a small stock pile of straws available for customers who ask.

**Plastic cutlery was another common item that businesses could phase out.**

We recommended that businesses either ask their customers if they required cutlery or only provide it if the customer asked. A few businesses made the switch to bamboo cutlery and charged a small fee (\$0.10 to \$0.25). Before asking if the customer needed cutlery, they would tell them how much it cost. This switch was two-fold, it allowed the business to cover the cost of the more expensive alternative and made customers stop to think if they did need the cutlery.

**Plastic bags were another easy switch for businesses.**

Paper bags are relatively inexpensive and are becoming the norm. Business owners didn't seem to mind the increase cost of paper because for a few reasons, reducing their environmental impact, keeping up with demand from customers, and maintaining a good environmental "image".

2. Compostable and biodegradable options are not appropriate alternatives to single-use plastics, yet.

The City of Greater Sudbury only accepts two types of certified compostable products, which are paper-based. This includes waxed cardboard, paper, untreated cardboard, parchment and butcher paper. Many alternatives to single-use plastics are made out of Polylactic acid, corn starch, (more) which all have similar compounds to plastic. While they are made out of plant fibres, they are made into similar compounds and act like plastics. The City of Sudbury compost is an outdoor pit that relies on manual aeration, and therefore waste services cannot process them properly.

3. Baselines are hard to determine

Determining a baseline of single-use plastics for individual businesses was difficult to capture. Businesses were very keen to 'take the pledge' and

start reducing the easy single-use plastics (straws, cutlery, and bags), but were difficult to reach after that. We explained what was needed of them to capture a baseline and they were agreeable but when it came time to follow up (usually via email) we wouldn't get a reply. Upon further reflection, business owners in the hospitality industry operate best in face-to-face meetings. We shifted to ensure we could still gain some data, in a face-to-face meeting with simply asked if they were using more or less of each single-use plastic. This was much more realistic and we were still able to gain an understanding of the difference in plastic use.

4. COVID-19 had an impact on single-use plastic use

The COVID-19 pandemic created an increase in single-use plastics. This was mainly due to the fact that all restaurants had to transition to a take-out-based model. In-person dining (with reusable dishes/cutlery) was not offered.



**Before the pandemic, many businesses who ‘took the pledge’ made the switch to paper bags and reduced the number of plastic bags they were giving out.** Businesses noticed that many orders were quite large and it was much more convenient to pack everything into a plastic bag with the assurance that it wouldn’t rip, unlike a paper bag. This is an unfortunate consequence of the pandemic, however with less dine-in services many businesses are seeing a decrease in straws. Businesses were not offering drinks on their takeout menu and were not using nearly as many straws.

Cafes that were offering a discount for customers who brought in a reusable mug could no longer because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Large coffee shops were the first businesses to stop allowing reusable mugs, and everyone followed after that. The research now shows that there are safe ways to use reusables during a pandemic with

countless campaigns all over the world educating businesses to do just that. Unfortunately, we were unable to get any cafes in Sudbury to do this.

**Skip the Dishes has become very common for many of our participating businesses. There is an opt-in option that businesses can turn on to only provide cutlery upon request, this made it very easy for businesses to continue this reduction.**

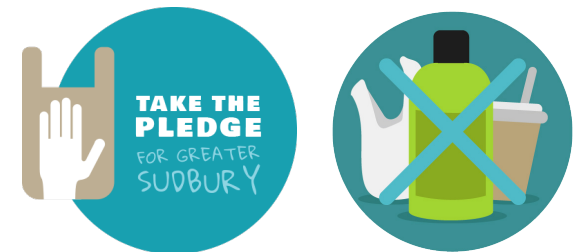
5. Waste management can be expensive

One business in our study was paying for a private company for recycling and composting. They had to stop this service because the costs were too high. This was a difficult decision because they had been using this service for a long time, but with less sales due to COVID-19 they could not afford it anymore. This emphasizes the need for a municipality funded commercial recycling and composting

service. Currently, the city has a composting program for businesses but it is not robust enough to take all of the compost waste a business produces.

## Recommendations

1. To decrease single-use plastics in the hospitality industry in Greater Sudbury, we recommend that businesses focus on the items identified as easiest to reduce/eliminate: straws, cutlery, and bags.
2. There is opportunity with the proposed federal single-use plastic ban to continue to educate business owners on the opportunities and alternatives available.



# Low Carbon Retrofit Project



**Laura Fylyshtan**

Green Building Research Coordinator

In June 2020, reThink Green received funding through the Community Foundations of Canada and the Investment Readiness Program to conduct a preliminary feasibility study exploring the potential of doing a deep environmental retrofit on an office space in Greater Sudbury.

## **The primary objectives of the preliminary feasibility study were:**

1. To determine whether the market could support a project of this kind,
2. To create a methodology for identifying and evaluating potential properties for a deep retrofit, and:
3. To assess reThink Green's suitability for a project of this scope.

**As imagined by reThink Green, the Low Carbon Retrofit Project would create a space where sustainability champions can gather, share, and explore ideas to move Greater Sudbury towards a low carbon future.**

A thriving community hub, centrally located in an office building in downtown Sudbury, it would serve as a one stop shop for anyone interested in pursuing an environmental initiative or business.

To carry out the study, reThink Green established a project team composed of a project coordinator, business consultants, and a technical advisory group. Together the project team carried out research, community consultations, and a preliminary financial and technical analysis. The findings of these analyses have been used to inform this preliminary feasibility study and its companion document, Green Buildings in Greater Sudbury.

To determine the feasibility of this project concept, the project team evaluated it against conditions for success that pertain to: Strategic Alignment, Operational Capabilities, Market Demand, Financial Viability, and Social Feasibility.

**Overall, the project team found that a deep environmental retrofit corresponds with reThink Green's core values and mission and has the potential to advance our social goals of reducing local greenhouse gas emissions through increasing the number of low carbon buildings in the community.**

Between July 2020 and March 2021, the project team carried out research and community consultations and conducted a preliminary technical and financial analysis. The subsequent sections of this report will explain the findings of these analyses in detail.

### Key findings from the study include:

1. The project team struggled to engage new members of the public beyond the green groups we typically interact with. It is unclear whether this is due to a lack of interest in the project or the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Estimated spacing requirements for the project indicate reThink Green will require a space of approximately 5,000 sq. ft. for the project.
3. The feasibility analysis found that a deep environmental retrofit corresponds with reThink Green's core values and mission and has the potential to advance our social goals of reducing local greenhouse gas emissions through increasing the number of low carbon buildings in the community.
4. The project will require a high level of dedication from reThink Green's staff and, in the short-term, may detract from efforts to strengthen other areas of the organization and our core programs.
5. There is limited support for retrofitting an office space as the commercial office market is currently saturated. Although the preliminary financial model shows a positive net cash flow, the results may be very different depending on the exact property we decide to pursue.

#### Phase 1: Feasibility Study Timeline





**The four main recommendations of the project team are:**

1. Reassess the project's priority level in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Consider retrofitting a property outside the downtown core, ideally a newer space that would require fewer updates in order to be brought up to code and made accessible.
3. Consider retrofitting a different property type, such as a residential building.
4. Continue to explore potential partnerships while developing a project budget and capital raising plan. Should the project move forward, next steps will be to commit to a budget and certification standard and to decide which of the identified project pathways to pursue.





# Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council



**Erica Lagios**  
Program Director

*Courtesy of: CBC*

The Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council OJCP grant completed in October 2020. Erica Lagios was hired as the Project Coordinator. The project centered around the GSFPC and implementing the Greater Sudbury Food Strategy.

Erica worked with several stakeholders to create opportunities for Sudbury residents to connect with both the council and the strategy and learn more about food production and consumption in our area.



**GSFPC • CPAGS**



# Events

All 2020/2021 reThink Green and program events were held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Greater Sudbury Earth Festival
  - ◊ June 26 & 27, 2020
- Smart Green Communities Draft REEP Public Consultation
  - ◊ August 11, 2020
- 2020 Sustainability Awards
  - ◊ November 3 & 4, 2020
- The Low Carbon Retrofit Project: reThinking our Office and Community Spaces
  - ◊ November 30, 2020
- Smart Green Communities REEP Launch
  - ◊ January 25, 2021
- Nurturing the Grassroots Movement
  - ◊ March 11, 2021
- Plastic-Free Greater Sudbury Wrap Up: Waste Erased
  - ◊ March 25, 2021
- Green Economy North Regional Business Forum
  - ◊ April 14 & 15, 2021





