



/// The First Four Years of the Centre for Cities DECEMBER 2023

Windsor is not just any mid-sized city. Being situated right across the river from Detroit gives us a viewpoint on one of the most significant laboratories of modern urban transformation.

#### // Land Acknowledgement

"The University of Windsor sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. We respect the longstanding relationships with First Nations people in this place in the 100-mile Windsor-Essex peninsula and the straits - les détroits - of Detroit."

## // Note from the Director

It is our pleasure to present this report on the first four years of the Centre for Cities (C4C) at Windsor Law.

Several paths led to the creation of C4C in late 2019, and these also have framed our growth through the early years. We launched amid a growing recognition of the importance of cities and municipal governance to addressing the most critical issues of our time. Housed in a law faculty, we also saw our unique potential to bring a law and policy voice to city building and urban studies collaborations, at both local and national levels. With a faculty membership that is diverse in both lived experience and expertise, we bring a wide variety of legal lenses to our work. We sought to bring together the threads of research, teaching, and community engagement on cities that many of us were already doing at Windsor Law and UWindsor, and to look at them through the dual lenses of sustainability and inclusion.

There also emerged an understanding that the Windsor-Essex region lacked sufficient opportunities for engaged and data-based dialogue and collaboration on the most foundational citybuilding challenges. We saw that being a university-based centre offered the potential to develop a distinct and important role in the wider community on such issues of public importance - not only as a site of "traditional" academic research and teaching about cities, but also in facilitating important conversations, building partnerships, and creating pathways to real community impact and innovation.

There is more that makes us unique. Most Canadian citybuilding research and advocacy still happens in the larger centres - Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver. Yet many of the most interesting things are happening in mid-sized and smaller cities. Being located in Windsor, a city of approximately 220,000, C4C is perfectly placed to focus on research and community engagement that is directly relevant to more modestly-sized cities.

And Windsor is not just any mid-sized city. Being situated right across the river from Detroit gives us a viewpoint on one of the most significant laboratories of modern urban transformation. It also means we sit at the connecting point between Canada and the US. In many ways, Windsor's character shares as much with the US rust-belt "legacy cities" as it does with its Canadian neighbours. Crossborder collaboration is there for the building, and this plays an increasingly important role in our work. Bringing US-based experts and expertise into our work is natural for us and that fluidity makes us unique in Canada.

Lastly, the way we approach issues and opportunities on a day-to-day basis distinguishes us. For a lot of the "wicked problems" of our age, status quo responses are not working. C4C's first years have been an opportunity to try new approaches, to innovate, to build new and unusual partnerships. Most of our collaborations have included partners from disciplines other than law, as they seek to understand the legal and policy implications and requirements of their work. We've attracted significant external research funding for our work as well, another indication of our thriving and successful partnerships.

In this report, we are proud to showcase examples of some of the successes of our first four years, and to signal some of the directions in which we're heading. As always, we are happy to hear from you - our community partners, colleagues, students, and supporters.



# // Who We Are

Based in the Faculty of Law at the University of Windsor, the Centre for Cities (C4C) supports research, teaching and public engagement on the legal and policy tools of good city-building. Under the leadership of founding Director Dr. Anneke Smit and with a team of affiliated faculty members, practitioners, visiting fellows, and students, C4C situates itself at the nexus of research and practice with a focus on making real impact. C4C's mandate is to facilitate and lead innovative work on inclusive and sustainable municipal governance, through collaborations with academia, municipal governments, community organizations, local institutions and industry.



## Faculty of Law Steering Committee 2019-2023



Patricia Galvao-Ferreira Assistant Professor



Shanthi Elizabeth Senthe **Assistant Professor** 



**Danardo Jones** Assistant Professor



**Gemma Smyth** Associate Professor



**Margaret Liddle** Assistant Professor

#### **Affiliated Scholars**

Pascale Chapdelaine Bev Jacobs Laverne Jacobs Jasminka Kalajdzic Tess Sheldon David Tanovich Vasanthi Venkatesh Valarie Waboose Chris Waters

# // Research: Traditional & Unconventional

In its first years, the Centre for Cities (C4C) has focussed research activities on the most pressing issues facing municipalities at this moment - among them housing, climate action, land use, transportation policy, equitable placemaking, and participatory governance. The lenses of inclusion and sustainability guide all of this work. C4C has established a unique perspective and approach, and has quickly built both a local and national reputation, pursuing projects with wide impact while staying centred in the realities of mid-sized cities and the Windsor-Essex region whenever possible.

Through its public-facing publications and communityfocussed research, C4C has created a platform for a diverse array of stakeholders - experts, community leaders, and policymakers from a variety of backgrounds - to work together towards finding solutions for complex local problems. While our researchers are all also engaged in more "traditional" forms of academic writing - articles, books, and conference papers, for example - our strength as a Centre has been in finding ways to make that research accessible and impactful to the wider community.

#### **Campus Partners**



Through policy papers, blog posts, and (local and national) public events, C4C is fertilizing public discourse and contributing to real policy change on major urban issues. The values of C4C are manifested through our active engagement with the community, resulting in unique opportunities for impactful research collaboration. Our network of C4C faculty member affiliates provides community leadership by supporting institutional partnerships as well as grassroots initiatives and advocacy - all with the goal of promoting inclusive and sustainable citybuilding. C4C faculty and students have also established themselves as reputable voices in public discourse on citybuilding in both local and national media channels, on the most important local issues from housing to police oversight to transportation policy.

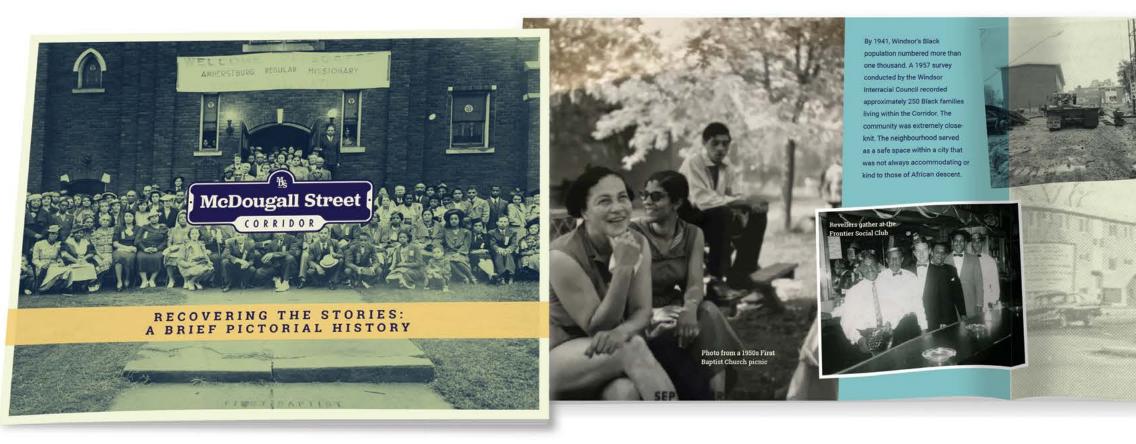
**City Building //** The First Four Years of the Centre for Cities

Beginning in the mid-1800s, the McDougall Street Corridor in central Windsor was home to a vibrant Black community, largely made up of Underground Railroad descendents. In the early 1960s a redevelopment project supported by both federal and municipal governments destroyed most of the buildings in the Corridor in the name of "urban renewal". In 2021, the Essex County Black Historical Research Society (ECBHRS) and the Leddy Library in collaboration with UWindsor History Masters student Willow Key, and funded by an Anti-Black Racism Student Leadership Experience Grant (ABRSLEG) from the University of Windsor, began the process of uncovering the forgotten stories of this neighbourhood and its destruction.

Building on this work, in early 2022 C4C partnered with the ECBHRS and Leddy Library and several other community partners, and was awarded \$250,000 from the FedDev My Main Street Community Activator Program, administered by the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI), for a placemaking and policy development project in the McDougall Street Corridor. The deliverables of the project include a walking tour and digital app that enable people to explore the corridor and listen to the oral histories of the residents in the historic area; an online digital archive of the historical materials collected related to the Corridor; and a report exploring the policy tools available to protect such neighbourhoods from dispossession in the future.

This project exemplifies the Centre's unconventional and outward-facing work. Moreover, it brought together multiple university departments and external organizations. Collaboration with the ECBHRS, the Leddy Library, the Department of History, the School of Creative Arts, private sector partner Parallel 42 Systems, the Office of the VP of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and other entities has resulted in one of the most unique and culturally relevant projects in Windsor in recent years, and one that was avidly anticipated by many in the community and beyond.

The project not only acknowledges the area's important Black history, including the role of law in that story, but also helps to lay a path for better municipal supports for this important community in the future.









#### Irhan Renewal

1957, the City took the first steps to cane, forgotten by almost everyone but the Black of

# // Focus on Students

The Centre for Cities' activities provide significant and unique opportunities for Windsor Law students. Working as Student Research Associates or in the Centre's varied experiential learning offerings for course credit, students benefit from working directly with C4C and its collaborators on issues of high relevance to municipalities and other local institutions. Partnership with municipalities and community organizations focused on municipal issues makes it possible for C4C's work to be innovative and responsive in real time. Teaching and learning strategies aim to ensure students are actively engaged in almost every aspect of the work.

In addition to C4C's flagship Cities and Climate Action Policy Clinic, experiential learning opportunities to date have included a pop-up collaboration with C4C Visiting Fellow Jay Pitter on anti-Black racism and equitable placemaking, a collaboration with the City of Windsor on best practices in Indigenous-municipal relations, a commissioned project investigating best practices in community engagement around tech innovation corridors, and research and communications support for the downtown Windsor safety and security roundtable.

This hands-on approach is helping many Windsor Law graduates secure employment and carve out career paths with municipalities, law firm municipal law departments, provincial and federal ministries, and in other related law, policy, and advocacy roles.

Moreover, C4C provides students with an outlet to publish their unique research on its website and to disseminate their work through media outlets such as the C4C/Dan McDonald Show's weekly citybuilding radio segment. Supervising and sitting on graduate student committees both in Law and in other disciplines - on topics ranging from land use to housing to consumption and treatment sites - C4C affiliated faculty are helping to train the next generation of citybuilders.





#### // Student Experiential Learning Profile: **Cities + Climate Action Policy Clinic**

Launched in 2019 with a Government of Canada Climate Action Fund grant, the Cities & Climate Action Policy Clinic is C4C's flagship clinic with participating students selected through a competitive process. It supports law reform and policy creation helping municipalities and other local institutions to lead on meaningful climate action. The clinic understands municipal climate action to be a responsibility that overlaps significantly with addressing the housing crisis, sustainable land use and transportation policies, and questions of public health, equity, and environmental justice. As municipalities are responsible for over 60% of greenhouse gas emissions, they must be an integral part of the solution to the climate crisis. The clinic was the first of its kind in Canada with such a focus on local climate policy.

The clinic focuses its activities around a three-fold mission: promoting public engagement on climate change and the imperative for municipalities to act, building capacity for collaborative and coordinated climate mitigation action at the local level, and providing direct research-based legal and policy support to municipalities and other local institutions. One early and notable example of clinic work was the organizing and advocacy that led to both the City of Windsor and the County of Essex declaring climate emergencies in November 2019. Other significant events led by the Clinic have included co-organizing (with Osgoode Law's Environmental Law and Justice Clinic) a national Law School Research-a-Thon on Local Climate Action, and the three-day Youth Workshop on Local Climate Action in March 2020, which brought over 100 high school students from across the province to Windsor to learn about municipal governance, successful advocacy and communication strategies, municipal climate policy and more. In February 2021, Clinic students were instrumental in organizing Climate Week at UWindsor, comprising three workshops over three days focussing on institutional, municipal, and cross-border/international climate action and research. An interactive tool launched by clinic students in 2021 maps municipalities using climate language in their official plans and zoning bylaws and has been accessed thousands of times online.

In Winter 2023 the clinic focussed part of its work internally, providing research and engagement support for the new UWindsor Sustainability Directorate. Clinic students have advised on policy approaches to specific issues including single use plastic elimination, active transportation, and sustainable procurement, as well as generalized university sustainability policies, as the University builds out its own policy framework. 2023 clinic students also provided preliminary advisory opinions to Parks Canada's National Urban Parks team, and drafted policy briefs for C4C's housing team.

## **// Student Research Profile: Community Land Trust Blog Series**

Equity deserving communities have been hit particularly hard by the housing crisis, as they often face discrimination and inequitable access to affordable housing. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are emerging as one potential solution to this problem.

A CLT is a non-profit corporation that obtains land, housing, and/or commercial buildings for the benefit of the community in which it exists. The land is held in trust to preserve its affordability and the CLT is governed by an elected board of directors that can include lease-holders, renters, community members, public servants, governments, and/or non-profit organizations. CLTs are rooted in the Black civil rights movement and have a human rights-based approach to housing. There are a few CLTs currently functioning in Canada, including Hogan's Valley Community Society in Vancouver, the Parkdale Neighborhood Land Trust in Toronto, and Communauté Milton Parc in Montreal. These CLTs are working to protect land and housing for the benefit of their communities and combat gentrification and unaffordability.

Princess Doe was one of C4C's first Student Research Associates. In 2021 she published a three-part blog series called "Exploring the Potential of Community Land Trusts", which has been accessed almost 700 times online. This studentinitiated and -conducted research also helped lay the groundwork for a session on CLTs at the March 2022 C4C Housing Systems and Innovation Summit. Other student blog posts have focussed on topics including municipal ethics oversight, climate policy, environmental racism, and housing policy.



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# // Community Facing - Events & Initiatives

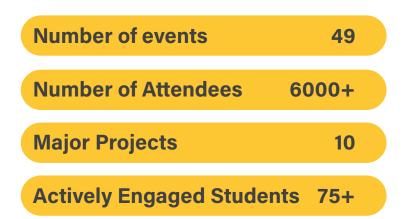
From the beginning, engaging with communities outside the Faculty of Law and the University, as well as with organizations relevant to the municipal landscape, has been a priority for the Centre for Cities (C4C). C4C offerings have included events focused on climate, housing, public participation, and active transportation policy, to name a few. By placing a strong emphasis on being community-facing in all of its work, C4C's programming has evolved to also provide professional development opportunities for those working in municipal government, private industry, and the broader community.

C4C was the lead local organizational partner for the Canadian Urban Institute's (CUI) three-day local event, CUIxWindsor, in June 2021, engaging community groups, government, and stakeholder organizations in 17 public and private meetings on citybuilding issues from sustainable land use planning, to the arts and placemaking, to affordable housing. C4C collaborated with CUI on the final report, Windsor Blooms, which summarized key findings included both successes and challenges in citybuilding in Windsor. In 2022 C4C held virtual fora for local candidates in both Provincial and Federal elections, focussing on city-related issues and providing a non-partisan forum for people in both Windsor West and Windsor-Tecumseh ridings to discuss and debate issues.

C4C has also begun a partnership with the University of Windsor's Environmental Energy Institute to lead capacity-building (eventually fee-for-service) workshops for local industry partners on climate policy and environmental and social governance (ESG), with the first training event launching in June 2022. A series of occasional C4C public legal education workshops also launched in 2022 with a workshop on Police Boards and Police Service oversight led by C4C affiliate and Windsor Law Professor, Danardo Jones. Virtual events in 2022 in partnership with Windsor-based, the City of Windsor's CAO, and 5 municipal councillors, helped to improve public awareness of the City of Windsor's budgeting process and consider best practices in community engagement.

In providing programming that brings academics and research-based programming into close contact with the wider community, C4C's work aligns with the values in the University of Windsor's new Aspire Plan to be an outward-facing institution that is deeply engaged with the wider community. It also corresponds with Windsor Law's values of being people-centred, community-engaged, justice-seeking, dynamic, and inclusive.

C4C has demonstrated its commitment to working towards deep collaboration and co-creation with equitydeserving groups in all of its public-facing programming. While this work is a journey, placing relationship-building at the core of its approach has helped C4C to develop into a trusted partner both locally and nationally on issues of municipal importance. This is exemplified by the volume and breadth of partners that worked with C4C in its first years delivering our unique roster of programming.

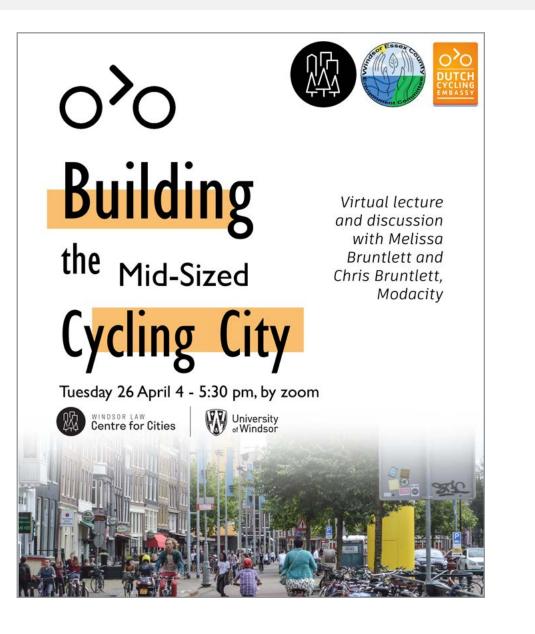


# **// Event Profile:** Building the Mid-Sized Cycling City

Following a significant shift away from automobile reliance, Dutch cities have successfully integrated walking, cycling, and public transit into their transportation systems for nearly 50 years. Now, cities worldwide including mid-sized cities - are recognizing that such transformations are key to safety, inclusivity, and resilience. In the Spring of 2022, the Centre for Cities hosted two virtual events with Melissa and Chris Bruntlett of the Dutch-based mobility consultancy Modacity, and support of the Dutch Cycling Embassy.

A public virtual lecture attended by over 300 attendees from around the world was followed by a workshop for approximately 30 City of Windsor and County of Essex employees. With events such as this, along with research publications, community collaborations and advocacy to support policy change on campus, at the municipal level, and beyond, C4C has positioned itself at the forefront of active transportation policy and implementation.

# In the Spring of 2022, the Centre for Cities hosted two virtual events with Melissa and **Chris Bruntlett** of the Dutchbased mobility consultancy Modacity, and support of the **Dutch Cycling** Embassy. The event had over 300 attendees.



# **// Partnership and Collaborations**



#### // Partnership Profile: C4C/AM800 Citybuilding Radio Segment

Since June 2021, C4C has facilitated a weekly radio segment on AM800 Radio in Windsor-Essex with popular host Dan MacDonald. The segment focuses on exploring the challenges and opportunities of citybuilding. Every Wednesday at 10:10 am, Dan engages in discussions with experts and practitioners who are working to making cities - and Windsor in particular better for everyone. The segment covers a range of topics, including public spaces, equitable citybuilding, active transportation, housing, events, main streets, sustainability, the arts, innovation, and more.

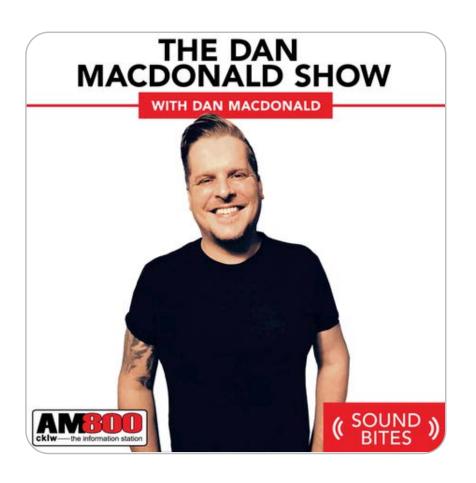
#### Dan McDonald's show reaches

# 42,900 Adults

#### Monday-Friday 9am-12pm

Source: Numeris Spring 2023

**18 Years +** in Windsor/ Essex per week.



The Centre for Cities/AM800 citybuilding segment aims to highlight efforts to create inclusive, equitable, and sustainable cities. These segments help community members share ideas, inspire action, and promote the importance of collaboration in the citybuilding process. By bringing together a diverse group of experts and thought leaders and disseminating ideas and conversations outside of traditional audiences, the segment is helping to develop a more informed and engaged community of city builders across the Windsor-Essex region.

# **// Event Profile:** Housing Systems and Innovations Summit

Canada is facing a significant housing crisis, with insufficient housing being built to meet the needs of its growing population. The country is facing a range of related challenges, including slow regulatory approvals processes, a lack of affordable housing options, and a need to address pressing issues related to climate change, public health, income gaps, and growing inequality of access to housing.

In the lead-up to provincial and municipal elections in 2022, the issue of housing affordability was at the forefront of voters' concerns, with most approaches to the crisis little more than band aid solutions. C4C hosted the virtual Housing Systems and Innovations Summit in March 2022 to address the crisis and gaps in housing delivery from a systemic perspective in Ontario.

The Summit brought together a range of experts, including practitioners, planners, entrepreneurs, politicians, scholars, and lawyers, to discuss innovative solutions for ensuring affordable housing options for all Ontarians. The event focused on the importance of a holistic systems approach to housing supply that addresses intersections with climate, equity, and municipal financial stability. The summit emphasized the need for technical expertise, regulatory reform, and an open environment for innovation in order to get the right housing built quickly.

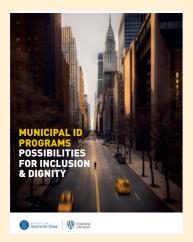
The Summit was followed by a series of three workshops in June of 2022 expanding upon the ideas discussed in the original summit. The workshop series was well-attended by local community members and by planning and municipal professionals across the province, leading to ongoing relationships with municipalities in dealing with issues such as climate change and housing.

# **//** Centre for Cities Policy Paper Profile

#### **Municipal ID Programs: Possibilities for Inclusion & Dignity**

A Municipal ID is a city-issued card for identification and access to municipal services, businesses, and discounts. It helps overcome barriers for marginalized populations such as the homeless, transgendered, older adults, and those without ID or immigration status. Municipal ID programs promote inclusion, harm reduction, and safety. The report examines these programs in various US cities and Montreal, including New Haven, NY, Detroit, Montreal, and Greensboro. The paper builds on an early C4C report on Access Without Fear by Professor Gemma Smyth and several students. Check out the full report by Professor Smyth and Windsor Law student Andrew Pace here: https://windsorlawcities.ca/municipal-id-programs-possibilitiesfor-inclusion-dignity/





# // Funding

Like other Centres within Windsor Law, C4C has received a modest amount of core annual funding to support its work, as well as research assistant funding through a block grant from the Law Foundation of Ontario. To further support its growing work plan, C4C has built a strong and improving record of success in securing external research and project funding in its first years, both as lead agency and supporting partner. This funding has come from federal government research agencies, tri-council agencies, and private donations.

#### **Core Annual Funding**



# **//** Centre for Cities Policy Paper Profile

States of Emergency: Decision-making and Participatory Governance in Canadian Municipalities during COVID-19

The report was authored by Professor Anneke Smit, Windsor Law students Hana Syed, Princess Doe, Aucha Stewart and Michael Fazzari, and alumnus Terra Duchene and released in late 2020. Many municipalities made major decisions with limited debate and consultation during the early stages of the pandemic. The report examines the impact of these.

It presents a scan of changes to municipal decision-making practices during COVID-19, including unilateral mayoral powers and canceled council and committee meetings. The report also identifies some positive developments, such as municipalities maintaining public consultation and new practices that can improve governance in the future. It concludes with recommendations for legislative reform and changes to municipal governance to better prepare for future emergencies. For more information and the full

report please visit: https://windsorlawcities.ca/states-of-emergency-decision-making-and-participatory-governance-incanadian-municipalities-during-covid-19/

# **C4C-Led Project Funding:**

#### **Environment and Climate Change Canada**

// Cities and Climate Action Policy Clinic Principal Investigators Anneke Smit and Patricia Galvao Ferreira, 2019

## FedDev Canada

// McDougall Street Corridor

**Parks Canada** // National Urban Park Hub Principal Investigators - Catherine Febria (HHL), Clint Jacobs (IKKT), Anneke Smit (C4C), 2023

## **C4C-Supported Project Funding:**

**CMHC //** Housing Data Challenge ADU project Family Services Windsor Essex, 2021 (C4C Supporting Organization)

**SSHRC //** Insight Development Grant Department of Social Work (PI Filipe Duarte), 2022 (co-applicant Anneke Smit)

**SSHRC //** Partnership Engage Grant School of Creative Arts (PI Kim Nelson), 2020 (collaborator Anneke Smit)

**SSHRC //** Insight Development Grant Toronto Metropolitan University (PI Christopher de Souza), 2023 (collaborator C4C Visiting Fellow James Tischler)

## **WE-SPARK Health Institute Ignite Grant**

Faculty of Engineering (PI Edwin Tam), 2020 (co-applicant Anneke Smit)

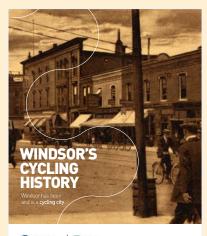


# **//** Communications

**Communications Success : Social Media** 



# **// Centre for Cities Policy Paper Profile**



Centre for Ditles

Windsor's Cycling History: Windsor Has Been and is a Cycling City

Professor Chris Waters recounts Windsor's century and a half of cycling history in this report, showing that the city has always been a cycling city despite its "Motor City" label. Despite several cycling plans being unambitiously implemented over the years, the city's cycling scenes have remained vibrant yet often ignored and marginalized. The report argues that Windsor has not fully realized the potential of its flat topography, mild winters, urban core, and natural and built heritage for cycling. With the growing recognition of the environmental, health, equity, and city-building benefits of cycling, the report highlights the past and present of Windsor's cycling and cycling policy. The report also laid the groundwork for an exhibit on Windsor's cycling history, co-curated by Dr. Waters at Museum Windsor and launched in March 2023. Check out the full report here: https://windsorlawcities.ca/c4c-report-windsorscycling-history/

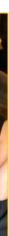
# // Conclusion

As this report goes to press, we have embarked on our 2-year, \$1.2 million contribution agreement with Parks Canada to establish the UWindsor National Urban Park Hub (UW-NUPH) with project partners the Healthy Headwaters Lab (HHL) and the new Faculty of Science Indigenous Knowledge Keepers Table. With the ongoing challenges facing cities, we're confident that our innovative and collaborative approach to community-engaged teaching and research is becoming more important than ever.

On a final note, while our work focusses on important and serious issues, we are all about the joy of citybuilding too. We're happy to share a few photos here of some of the people and events that have shaped our first years. We hope you will join us too!













Citybuilding /// The First Four Years of the Centre for Cities

windsorlawcities.ca