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KEY INSIGHTS TO

URBAN PLANNING
AS ATOOL TO
FIGHT
CLIMATE
CHANGE

1

Urban planning is an overlooked climate tool.

Urban planning is a powerful yet underutilized strategy to cut emissions. North America's car-centric development locks cities into high-energy consumption. Redesigning neighbourhoods into "complete communities"—where homes, jobs, and services are close together—can reduce emissions while making cities safer, more connected, and more accessible.



2

Reducing energy demand is essential for mitigating climate change.

Achieving climate targets requires more than transitioning to renewables. Without reducing overall energy consumption, decarbonization efforts will fall short. Building complete communities to reduce people's reliance on cars will be key to cutting excessive energy use.



4

What makes a community "complete"?

Complete communities bring essential services, housing, and jobs closer together, reducing emissions while improving quality of life. Key features include

- high-density, mixed-use neighbourhoods,
- environments that foster walking and cycling, and
- efficient public transportation.

3

Investing in complete communities delivers strong economic returns.

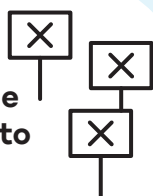
The International Institute for Sustainable Development's Sustainable Asset Valuation (SAVi) tool shows that shifting from car-oriented development to sustainable transport is the smarter economic choice. In Winnipeg, every dollar spent on better walking, cycling, and transit infrastructure promises over 5 dollars in benefits—for example, through higher revenues, fewer traffic accidents, and better air quality.

5

Urban planners face persistent barriers to creating complete communities.

Many city planners across North America are working hard to overcome car-centric development and urban sprawl but struggle with

- opposition from NIMBY groups opposing reforms,
- flawed municipal governance systems, and
- constrained public budgets due to the high costs of urban sprawl.



6

Winnipeg can build on lessons from other cities.

Cities such as Ottawa, Edmonton, Oulu, and Minneapolis demonstrate that bold urban planning strategies can successfully overcome these barriers and deliver transformative results.



7

Sustainable urban planning is also key for climate adaptation.

Green infrastructure, flood resilience, and better heat mitigation improve livability while protecting communities from climate impacts.



8

Urban planning needs to embrace Indigenous perspectives.

As Indigenous governments play a growing role in shaping cities like Winnipeg, urban planning must support decolonization by land-based governance, reconnect communities, and ensure development aligns with Indigenous priorities.



9

Building complete communities is a win-win solution.

Sustainable urban planning is both environmentally responsible and financially prudent, benefiting communities, the global climate, and municipal budgets alike.

