

# Inviting Kids to the Climate Conversation:

## A REVIEW OF “CITY STREETS ARE FOR PEOPLE”

by **ELISSA BARNARD** /// EAC Volunteer

When Toronto author Andrea Curtis talks to kids about the climate crisis she hears fear, worry, and despair.

“The way out is to provide tangible ways a person can make change,” she says.

Her newest book for kids aged eight to 12, *City Streets Are for People*, features two pages on what environmental actions kids can do themselves, with their families, communities, and cities.



Andrea Curtis wrote *City Streets Are for People*.  
PHOTO: Joanna Haughton

“The whole focus of the book is to give kids a sense of their potential to make change in the world and to provide pathways to effect change.”

*City Streets Are for People*, to be released May 1, 2022 by Greenwood Books Ltd., is a clear, insightful and inspiring story about urban transportation, climate change, and what cities around the world are doing to create sustainable transportation that will make cities more vibrant, healthy, and safe.

Curtis started work in the heart of the COVID-19 lockdown in her Toronto home. At the time public transportation was barely being used. “Nobody wanted to get on a bus, let alone a subway.”

Because of this, she and Greenwood wondered if they should keep on with the project, the third in Greenwood’s ThinkCities series, inspired by the urgency for new approaches to sustainable urban life.

“We felt pretty strongly that it was important,” says Curtis. “And that’s been borne out.”

The pandemic only served to heighten issues around urban living and the climate crisis. People were forced to re-imagine how they live in cities, where 55 per cent of the globe’s population dwells.

Of the 180 new segregated bike lanes in Paris, half were installed during the pandemic, explains Curtis, a city cyclist for 25 years.

“Now in Toronto and elsewhere people are on streetcars and the subways again but they are increasingly using bikes. People are walking, walking, walking. I think it’s pretty exciting.”

During the pandemic, people started to really explore their cities on foot. Even Curtis found places she’d never been.

“I decided I wanted to walk the length of the Don River on weekends and it’s surprisingly long!”

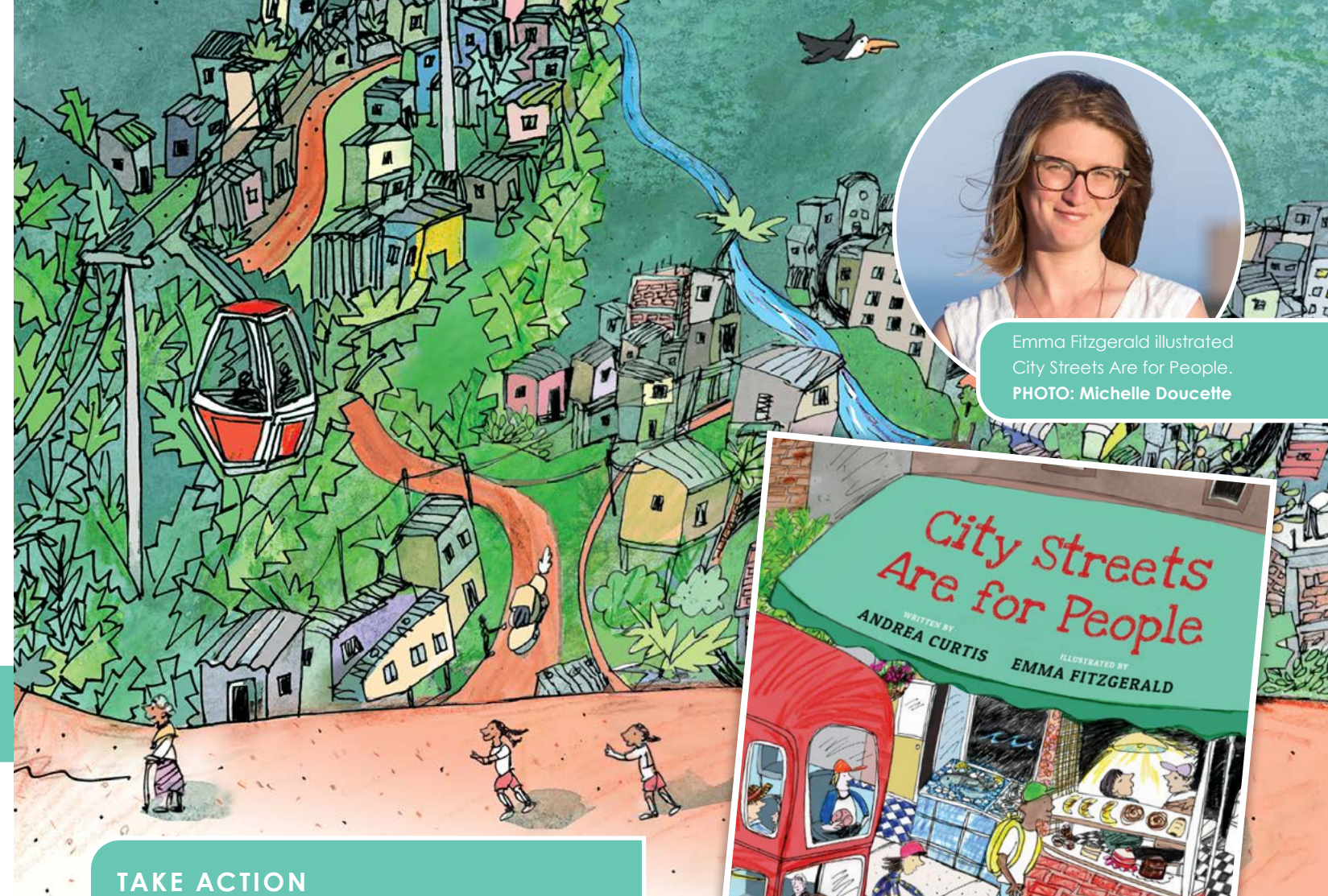
*City Streets Are for People* is delightfully international in scope, taking readers from an old Russian subway station with chandeliers to a Medellin electric-powered cable car, from mediaeval narrow streets to the super-fast Shanghai Maglev running via magnetic levitation.

“When we can look at Copenhagen, where there are more bikes than people and kids are taught how to be responsible cyclists, then maybe that can happen here.”

Lunenburg-based artist Emma Fitzgerald’s busy, cheerful illustrations for the book depict the liveliness of urban life and the beauty of green spaces. But they also show the effects of gas fumes, traffic, and the pandemic.

Curtis, who loves book illustration by Richard Scarry, John Beringer and Quentin Blake, knew Fitzgerald’s work from Hand Drawn Halifax and Hand Drawn Vancouver.

Images courtesy of Greenwood Books



Emma Fitzgerald illustrated *City Streets Are for People*.  
PHOTO: Michelle Doucette

### TAKE ACTION

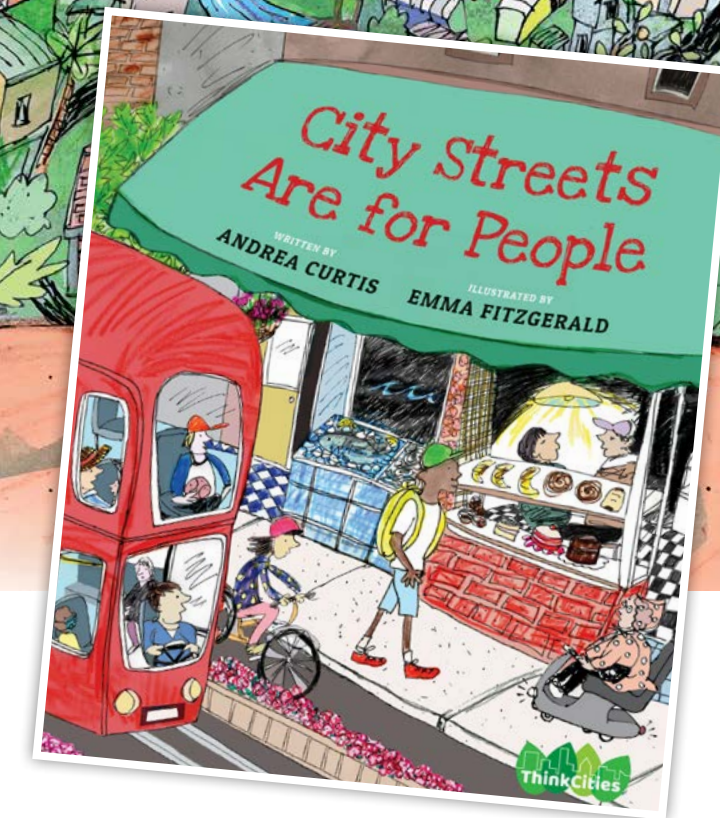
Interested in checking out the book? *City Streets Are for People*, the third book by Curtis in the ThinkCities series, will be available on May 1, 2022 through Amazon, Chapters/Indigo and independent bookstores or directly from the publisher, Greenwood Books.

“I love her style. There is a sense of fun I love. She’s so careful and also so quirky.”

This project had a wonderful synchronicity for Fitzgerald. She was living in Victoria and cycling on the Galloping Goose Trail when she opened her email to see Greenwood’s proposal.

“I’d embraced being an urban cyclist with all the bike lanes in Victoria. I was going to come to the project with a lived experience.”

The international quality also appealed to Fitzgerald, who drew on memories of travel to Brazil, Ecuador and Africa as well as working from photos and other reference material sent by Curtis. Accuracy was important to her as well as conveying the liveliness and excitement of a city.



“As a kid when I started using the bus it was an adventure and I’m suggesting the positive aspects of technological advance.”

Both Curtis and Fitzgerald love communicating with kids aged eight to 12. “They’re beginning to see themselves as agents in the world,” says Curtis. “They have all the creativity and fun of younger kids, yet they want to take action. It’s a sweet spot for getting kids engaged in important issues.”

Fitzgerald puts lots of kids aged eight to 12 in these drawings, which she partly created with colour pencils, a popular kids’ medium.

“Eight to 12 is a powerful time for making an impression on kids and providing hope and a framework for working through what they hear on the news.”

Curtis, a fiction and non-fiction writer of children’s, young adult and adult books, is looking forward to the book’s release. “I’m excited to see how kids respond!”