



IDEAS AT THE CROSSROADS OF INSPIRED COMMUNITIES



THIS ISSUE:

RESILIENCY AND RECOVERY FROM COVID-19:

Exploring some of the ways in which planners are working through the changes imposed by the pandemic. **06**

Incredible opportunities exist for innovative practices that can make our cities and towns more resilient, sustainable, and equitable. **05**

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Publisher, OPPI

Susan Wiggins
Robert Fraser
Rob Kirsic

Editor

Carolyn Camilleri

Design

Tenzing Communications Inc.

Print Production

14forty

Digital Production

Seventyeight Digital Inc.

For advertising inquiries:

finance@ontarioplanners.ca

For feedback and story ideas:

editor@ontarioplanners.ca

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Ontario Professional Planners Institute
201-234 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5

T: 416-483-1873 or 1-800-668-1448

E: info@ontarioplanners.ca

W: ontarioplanners.ca

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917,000

As of September 12, the total global death count from COVID-19 exceeded 917,000, with more than 28.5 million confirmed cases worldwide.

Here in Canada, our overall COVID-19 mortality rate has been relatively low compared with the rates in other countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Until you consider the elderly in care homes.

According to a report released by the Canadian Institute of Health Information, by May 25, more than 840 COVID-19 outbreaks had been reported in long-term care facilities and retirement homes in Canada and accounted for more than 80 per cent of all deaths nationwide. Canada had the highest proportion of deaths occurring in long-term care compared with other OECD countries, ranging from less than 10 per cent in Slovenia and Hungary to 66 per cent in Spain.

Then, in July, data released by Toronto Public Health revealed that COVID-19 hit racialized and lower-income groups harder than the rest of the population. As reported in *The Star* on July 30, 21 per cent of COVID-19 patients identified as Black, yet represent just nine per cent of Toronto's population. Contrast that to white Torontonians: 17 per cent of cases in 48 per cent of the population. People identifying as East Asian, which includes Chinese, the population stigmatized for being virus carriers, represent 13 per cent of the population and just four per cent of total cases.

With respect to income, people with \$0 to \$29,999 saw 27 per cent of all cases but represent just 14 per cent of the population. The next income bracket – \$30,000 to 49,999 – followed closely behind: 26 per cent of all

cases and just 15 per cent of the population. Contrast that to the \$150,000-plus income bracket: six per cent of cases and 21 per cent of the population.

The Star article quotes Dr. Kwame McKenzie, CEO of the Wellesley Institute, speaking at a city hall press conference.

“We all know now that COVID is not a great equalizer. COVID-19 discriminates. It exacerbates existing social and economic differences.”

Planners have the tools and skills to help address these inequities.

Template: COVID-19 pandemic data. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:COVID-19_pandemic_data

Pandemic Experience in the Long-Term Care Sector: How Does Canada Compare With Other Countries? Canadian Institute for Health Information. https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/covid-19-rapid-response-long-term-care-snapshot-en.pdf?emktg_lang=en&emktg_order=1

New Toronto data reveals COVID-19's disproportionate toll on racialized and low-income groups. Jennifer Pagiaro. *The Star*. July 30, 2020. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/07/30/new-toronto-data-reveals-covid-19s-disproportionate-toll-on-racialized-low-income-groups.html>

“We know we are in a time of profound change and that the change will be lasting.”

Since writing my previous message back in March for the spring/summer issue of *Y Magazine*, there are some things we now know – and a lot yet to be determined. We know we are in a time of profound change and that the change will be lasting. We know that a pandemic can disrupt nearly every aspect of our lives and make us question how we do things.

COVID-19 has highlighted our strengths and our inadequacies. It has shown us that we are stronger and more adaptable than we imagined, and that six feet of distance can't keep us apart. It has also brought to light some very upsetting inadequacies that exist in our society, whether it's the way we treat our elderly, the disproportionate access to health care, or the structural inequities that exist for marginalized communities and how they have been exacerbated during this challenging time.

We don't know how long this virus will be in the front of everyone's mind, becoming as common as talking about the weather. We don't know how long it will be before we can shake hands again, before public displays of affection are not met with judgment, before we can hug a friend without feeling uncomfortable.

It's a weird feeling knowing that we are living history, and that this moment will be studied for generations to come. How we act now will determine if we are on the right side of history. We need to listen, learn, and lead. Incredible opportunities exist for innovative practices that can make our cities and towns more resilient, sustainable, and equitable. Planners have the skills and the tools to lead, so let's rise to the challenge.

In a sentiment borrowed from Winston Churchill, let's not waste a good crisis. This time of accelerated change is a perfect time to learn from our mistakes, make new discoveries, and set a new path forward.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Giancola'.

Justine Giancola, RPP
President
Ontario Professional Planners Institute

Resiliency and recovery from COVID-19

When the World Health Organization characterized COVID-19 as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, everything about daily life began to change in ways unimaginable for most people. In the weeks and months that followed, planners – some on the frontline and many from home offices – kicked into high gear to find ways to help our communities safely adapt by facilitating meaningful discussions and finding solutions to challenging situations. Planners work in the public interest and seek ways to build and support sustainable, resilient communities. The COVID-19 crisis

continues to unfold as we contemplate the effects of a second wave, as well as future coronaviruses.

In this issue of *Y Magazine*, we explore some of the ways in which planners are working through the changes imposed by COVID-19. To set the tone for our theme, here is Brad Bradford, Toronto City Councillor for Ward 19, Beaches–East York, offering insight into the ways good planning makes our cities stronger and more resilient.



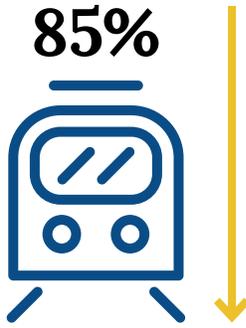


Our “new normal” will be a doubling down on good planning

BY BRAD BRADFORD, TORONTO CITY COUNCILLOR,
WARD 19 - BEACHES-EAST YORK

For planners, the “new normal” will probably feel less like a paradigm shift and be more of a doubling down on a worldview that many of us have been advancing throughout our careers. A resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will be synonymous with good planning.





Toronto's response to the pandemic is a prime example of this. With everything from transit ridership falling 85 per cent to almost half of small businesses across Canada seeing their revenue drop by over 70 per cent at the worst point of the pandemic, governments – especially cities – had to start thinking differently about main streets and mobility.

In June, Toronto City Council voted to install over 40 kilometres of cycling infrastructure across the city, including a

is critical for sustainability and resilience since before the pandemic. This importance has only heightened as physical distancing requirements limit capacity on our mass transit system, providing a relief valve for transit riders.

“...we can implement a more resilient and sustainable city if we are united behind one goal...”

The measures the City has layered around cycling infrastructure – like the CafeTO program which expands patio space into curb lanes in many cases, putting people before cars – speaks to the good city-building and place-making principles we already know. The pandemic has simply given us the permission and imperative we needed to make these things a priority to support our main streets and local business through this crisis.

that attitude forward, and our focus needs to be on making our cities and neighbourhoods more livable for everyone.

Looking at the COVID-19 case map simply reinforces the patterns we've been seeing in urban areas for decades. Generally, the highest case counts are in the most marginalized communities – the most transit dependent. These are just different symptoms of the same underlying conditions in our urban fabric. If we can advance measures like bus-priority lanes to our transit-dependent communities as we have in this pandemic, we will be tackling our urban challenges at the cause.

“Not only do we need to prepare together for a potential second wave but also for what comes after.”



40km of cycling infrastructure across the city

connected east-west corridor across Bloor and Danforth, arguably the most significant east-west spine of the city. We also closed major streets across the city through the ActiveTO program to encourage people to get outside while keeping physically distant. This is the most significant single-year installation in Toronto's history and is a game changer in providing folks space to physically distance while getting around. Planners have known active transportation

“The pandemic has simply given us the permission and imperative we needed to make these things a priority to support our main streets and local business through this crisis.”

While the pandemic is showing us the strength of good planning lessons, the past five months have been a real learning experience in one important way: implementation. It would have been a pipedream in January 2020 to have a complete street pilot on Danforth

“Generally, the highest case counts are in the most marginalized communities – the most transit dependent.”

installed by mid-summer – but here we are. What this shows is that we can implement a more resilient and sustainable city if we are united behind one goal as we have been during this pandemic.

For the most part, the COVID-19 response has shown the kind of responsive and agile government people expect. We need to carry

Now, more than ever, we are all being asked to think and act differently to support the greater good. This is exactly what planning is about. It's also about moving us thoughtfully from the status-quo to a better model of collective life. Not only do we need to prepare together for a potential second wave – but also for what comes after. We have to continue making our cities livable for everyone through a resilient recovery. 🧠

COVID-19: The wake-up call to do better

BY LEITH MOORE

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the Ontario economy and impacted the short-term livelihood of millions of families. The immediate recovery imperative will be to fast track projects. It is hard to argue that getting Ontarians back to work should not be a government priority. Getting the cranes moving again on already approved projects is a positive step; construction is a leading employer in our province, and it will be a significant leader in job recovery.



But planning is about the long view. COVID-19 has highlighted serious shortcomings in our planning for resiliency. In a few short months, we have seen a tragic lack of options for seniors' housing, limited solutions to the ability of families to shelter together, homes and apartments unable to properly accommodate work-from-home requirements, sidewalks not wide enough for distance separation requirements for pedestrians, too few parks and accessible open spaces to allow everyone to get outside and be safe.

The pandemic wake-up call should equally speak to us about the urgent need to address an even deeper systemic problem – climate change.

“More of the same does not bring us closer to the better we urgently need.”

Restarting the cranes will serve a key role in our short-term economic needs. But the cranes also remind us that building more of what we usually build is not in itself a solution to the long-term sustainability challenges. More of the same does not bring us closer to the better we urgently need.

We must look to improving the planning outcomes for pipeline projects. COVID-19 should provide the context for a broad planning response to build better. If not now – when?

It will be said that better takes more time and that it costs more. But we can make what we want, and where we want it, easier and faster to achieve. Create an opportunity for pattern approvals, and planners can let the simple go and focus on complex problems where their skills are most needed. Time is money – pre-zoning mid-density brings its proforma profile into line with typical returns. Curb the parking ratio – mid-rise on transit arteries will not have to dig disproportionately. Insert zoning for secondary suites – lane homes and coach homes – everywhere. We can literally create a garden industry for property owners that will be the cheapest of all housing – no land costs.

It will be said that planning policies rely too heavily on intensification and mid-rise and that those forms have proven uneconomic when compared with our typical building options: single-family homes, town homes, and high rises. This may have been true in the past, but it need not be true in the future. If we start to look at whole building life cycle OpX (ongoing operating costs)

as much as we focus on CapX (initial capital creation costs) – and climate imperatives require we do so – then the proforma results tell a different story.

Most significantly, there is an emergent opportunity to harness increasing capabilities in offsite design for manufacturing fabrication with onsite assembly. Reduced costs are generated by faster and more efficient material use. Panelized solutions can be used to build where large crane-based logistics are not feasible. Repeatable BIM/Revit manufacturing solutions can employ offsets in financing and fabrication costs to ensure higher quality thermal envelopes and incorporate active and passive house principles.

It is an understatement to say COVID has been a wake-up call. But we have short memories, and the pressure to just do more of the same – faster – will come with the impetus to push economic recovery.

We need to do better. 



Leith Moore is Principal and Co-Founder of R-Hauz Solution Inc. and President of Waverley Projects Inc.

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Planning in an age of overwhelm

BY LEELA VISWANATHAN, RPP

Resilience is defined as an “ability to cope with stresses, shocks, and change.”¹ A resilient system – human-made, ecological, or a human being – is able to withstand uncertainty and volatility. A sense of overwhelm emerges when one’s resilience is tested and becomes fragile, and in turn, calls for a new way of measuring both functionality and success.² As a global pandemic that has infiltrated so much of how we live and connect with each other, COVID-19 has shed a light on what had not been working in society, testing long-standing personal and familial beliefs and systems, and pushing people into a state of overwhelm.

“... a human-centred approach to planning and design is needed – one that is grounded in a critical assessment of the impacts of long-standing histories of exclusion, racism, and struggle.”

If we as planners are going to be part of the fight for a future that serves and honours diverse and vulnerable publics, then we need to foster resilience in ourselves and in others.

As Ontario undertakes a regional approach to economic recovery, “risk habituation” can become a real problem for everyone, not just for those whose privilege can feed both ignorance and a false sense of personal infallibility about the realities of a deadly pandemic. Risk habituation affects everyone, as it is a “necessary aspect of our brain maintaining its survival focus.”³ Risk habituation manifests over time, when the human brain, faced with multiple stressors, cannot sustain the protective flight or fight alert response system indefinitely. Consequently, the human brain, in order to focus on everyday needs and to sustain its energy, gradually reduces its alert responsiveness to previous, and in some cases, never (or not as yet) realized threats, such as those associated with COVID-19.

“...COVID-19 has shed a light on what had not been working in society...”

For example, people who are getting tired of social isolation and physical distancing stop these effective practices even though the actual danger of contracting COVID-19 has not changed; this creates problems in overall risk management in our communities. The potential for risk

habituation associated with COVID-19 is especially a cause for concern in communities that have relatively fewer recorded cases of the virus and zero deaths (which at the time of writing this article, included Kingston, Ontario, where I live).

Many people of colour, Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+ persons, and especially those with compromised immune systems, remain hyper-aware of what makes their communities and their own bodies safe or unsafe and secure or insecure, and this remains especially true in this time of COVID-19. Any attempt to sustain such a level of hyper-awareness of COVID-19 threats among many other threats, including societal, race-based, and domestic violence, is physically, psychologically, and emotionally damaging to individuals and to communities. Maintaining an awareness of risk habituation and being honest about one’s vulnerability requires self-awareness and courage, especially when among those who don’t share the same feelings or parameters of risk.

In order to create spaces that are inclusive, and that offer sanctuary to those living in everyday situations that feed their hyper-awareness, if not overwhelm, a human-centred approach to planning and design is needed – one that is grounded in a critical assessment of the impacts of long-standing histories of exclusion, racism, and struggle. With empathy as its starting point, human-centred planning and design invites meeting people where they are at,

personally, contextually, emotionally, and even spiritually.

Planning in the midst of and after the COVID-19 pandemic requires planners to rethink how planning is practiced, digging more deeply into our humanity, and ultimately, building resilience in ourselves, supporting resilience being fostered in others, and managing the ebb and flow of collective feelings of overwhelm. Realistically, this also requires serious reflection upon present and past planning practices, as well as priorities, and a willingness to design system changes. ♻️

¹ No More Normal. Editorial. *The Lancet*, Vol. 396, July 18, 2020. Accessed July 20, 2020: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31591-9.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(20)31591-9.pdf)

² van Dernoort Lipsky, Laura. 2018. *The Age of Overwhelm: Strategies for the Long Haul*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

³ Bosch, Donald S. n.d. Risk Habituation: The Next COVID-19 Danger. Headington Institute. https://headington-institute.org/files/aa--risk-habituation_31645.pdf



Leela Viswanathan, PhD, RPP, MCIP, is a Member of OPPI and the Founder and Principal of Viswali Consulting.



COVID-19: A First Nation's Response

01

BY COLETTE ISAAC AND DAVID J. STINSON, RPP

The Coronavirus 2019 would not hit North America until well into 2020. But by March, it was obvious we would not be spared the devastation that had swept Asia. The geography of this disease has been fascinating but should have been no surprise. Seventy years ago, a film-noir public health official warned us that in the era of air travel, an infectious disease could spread across the globe in 48 hours.¹ According to script, deaths in major cities with international airports began to rise as human vectors returned from overseas.

- 01** Moose Deer Point First Nation established a checkpoint to stop unauthorized traffic. Both staff and volunteers manned it around the clock.
- 02** Ontario Provincial Police assisted with monitoring the checkpoint to prevent tourist traffic.

“The First Nation community of Moose Deer Point took action early on.”

But was this strictly an urban phenomenon and how quickly would it spread to more remote areas? For Ontario's First Nations, this was the question. The issue was muddled by officials such as the Governor of New York,² who failed to take Jane Jacobs' 60-year-old distinction between density and overcrowding seriously.³ The answer arrived shortly thereafter, when rural Bobcaygeon announced an outbreak in the overcrowded conditions of a nursing home.

By early April, Eabametoong First Nations in isolated northwest Ontario was struck, followed by a death at Six Nations in less remote southwest Ontario. Clearly, the virus would strike anywhere.

“Despite provincial directives to stay home, cottagers had begun to filter into the area back in March.”

MOOSE DEER POINT'S RESPONSE

The First Nation community of Moose Deer Point took action early on. It declared a state of emergency and shuttered all its offices, facilities, and businesses to ensure physical

distancing. However, to preserve social connections and facilitate communication, the community secured internet service for all households and upgraded technology for those that needed it. To reduce the need to go to town, bulk food shipments were ordered and community members took on the task of distribution. In a bold move, the First Nation established a checkpoint to stop unauthorized traffic. Both staff and volunteers manned it around the clock.

The region's tourism usually begins with the Victoria Day weekend, but the community resisted increasing pressure to open its marinas until early June. Despite provincial directives to stay home, cottagers had begun to filter into the area back in March. Not surprisingly, local emergency rooms started to fill up, not with COVID cases, but with injuries resulting from boat launchings and dock installations. Yet the community remained steadfast in the restriction of traffic through its land. In solidarity and recognition of the severity of the situation, official co-operation from both the OPP and the neighbouring municipalities has been exemplary.

The instinct for community survival is strong and multi-faceted. In the wake of a pandemic, this has meant altering patterns

of personal behaviour and hygiene. However, as many planners are aware, it also means being mindful of the more structural aspects of health. In Canada, “Aboriginal Status” is identified as a social determinant of health. What planners are less likely to know is that self-determination helps to improve health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. The explicit reasons for a checkpoint were immediate and obvious; the implicit reasons were far more subtle. In some ways, it was an assertion of jurisdiction over the use of land. In some ways, it was a communal immune response. But at its core, it was a very tangible measure not meant to simply ensure that the community would survive – it was taken to help create a community that will thrive. 



Colette Isaac is the Administrator for Moose Deer Point First Nation. **David J. Stinson, RPP, MCIP, P.Ag.** is a Member of OPPI, a Partner with Incite Planning, and a Board Member of the Shared Path Consultation Initiative.



Passenger traffic at Canada's airports has decreased by over 90 per cent since the beginning of the pandemic. However, Ontario's airports have proven to be resilient and continue to support essential services every day.

Airport planning in a pandemic world

BY BEN CROOKS AND ANDREW MACDONALD

Amid COVID-19 travel restrictions, public health measures, and diminished consumer confidence, passenger traffic at Canada's airports has decreased by over 90 per cent since the beginning of the pandemic and negative impacts are expected to last for several years. In Ontario, a two-part story is emerging of short-term operational resiliency and longer-term recovery.

A RESILIENT RESPONSE

While airline routes were curtailed due to falling demand during the spread of COVID-19, airport operators remained obligated to maintain their facilities for several essential services. The Ontario Ministry of Transportation's network of 29 northern airports serving First Nation communities continued to facilitate the movement of cargo, essential workers, and health care professionals. Other facilities such as Kapuskasing Airport handled volunteer flights to move personal protective equipment to health centres, while air cargo hubs such as Hamilton International Airport supported the domestic and international supply chains.

The resiliency challenge is complicated by the financial implications of operating airports during COVID-19. As aircraft movements and activity decreased, sources of revenue such as landing and passenger fees also declined, while fixed operating costs of maintaining and staffing airports remained. This challenge was exemplified with Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, which is a key base for Ornge, Ontario's air ambulance provider. An emergency funding arrangement from the Province of Ontario was required to ensure the airport could continue to support Ornge after its revenues from Air Canada and Porter Airlines vanished. Despite these challenges, Ontario's airports have proven to be resilient and continue to support essential services every day.

“Reduced demand and revenues will require creative and cost-effective solutions by planners to maximize the use of existing infrastructure...”

A REIMAGINED RECOVERY

The recovery question to be asked by aviation professionals is not “When can we recover to the pre-COVID normal?” but rather “What should the new normal be?” COVID-19 will challenge traditional airport planning and extend to matters such as demand forecasting, terminal designs, and the choice of air travel among other modes.

The forecasting process that is the foundation for airport master plans may be subject to emergent factors such as reduced business travel with the increased adoption of digital solutions, weakened international and interprovincial passenger volumes due to travel restrictions, and falling demand due to public concerns surrounding the risk of onboard and in-airport disease transmission. The mindset of planning for sustained and perpetual growth becomes challenged as vulnerability in the air travel industry at a level more significant than that experienced after 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis is exposed. Reduced demand and revenues will require creative and cost-effective solutions by planners to maximize the use of existing infrastructure prior to the development of new facilities, which may be prohibitively expensive for years to come.

Planning for terminal buildings to accommodate physical distancing is a unique challenge. Current industry practices recommend that between 1 m² and 2 m² of floor area should be provided per waiting passenger. Assuming current public health guidelines remain, adherence to 2 m physical distancing practices would require over 3 m² per passenger. This may be accommodated at reduced passenger levels, but as the air travel market recovers,

current terminals may not have the capacity and space to support physical distancing. While expanding terminals to provide more floor area per passenger would allow for adequate physical distancing, this option may result in facilities that are prohibitively expensive; take too long to design, construct, and commission; and are overbuilt for future demand.

Alternatives to floorspace expansions can be considered. Staggering flight arrivals and departures would reduce peak period crowding; however, this practice requires unprecedented flexibility and cooperation from airlines in their flight scheduling. Technological solutions can also be deployed to limit health risks. Thermal imaging cameras, for example, can be used to monitor passenger temperatures while ultraviolet lights are now being used for the disinfection of high-touch surfaces. Facial recognition and self-boarding systems can assist in transitioning the passenger processing experience to become increasingly touchless and minimize person-to-person exposure.

“While these changes will challenge the viability of airports that have lost service, the environmental benefits of fewer short-haul flights cannot be discounted.”

Disruption from COVID-19 can also incentivize shifts to more sustainable transportation modes and help to accomplish social and environmental goals. The French government's €7B (\$10.6B) in COVID-related support to Air France was conditional on the carrier limiting its ticket sales in select domestic markets where flights compete with rail service. A similar funding arrangement between the Austrian government and Austrian Airlines resulted in the replacement of flights between Vienna and Salzburg with rail services. Air Canada's cancellation of over 30 regional routes across Canada has left some Ontarian communities with no scheduled air service, such as Sarnia and Kingston. However, this is an opportunity for travellers to consider alternatives such as VIA Rail and improve ridership. While these changes will challenge the viability of airports that have lost service, the environmental benefits of fewer short-haul flights cannot be discounted.

LESSONS LEARNED

Ultimately, airport planners should seek to use a critical lens as reflective practitioners to identify lessons learned from COVID-19. These lessons can be integrated in airport emergency plans, pandemic plans, and master plans to incrementally improve the resilience of Canada's aviation industry to future threats with each cycle of analysis and action. 



Ben Crooks is a Candidate Member of OPPI and an Aviation Planner at HM Aero. **Andrew Macdonald** is the Manager of Aviation Planning at HM Aero.

Public health and planning: Collaborating for resilient communities

BY CAROLYN CAMILLERI

At OPPI's Friday Forum on July 3, 2020, Sari Liem, RPP and Built Environment Specialist with York Region Public Health, discussed the ways public health works with planners to build more resilient, equitable, and healthier communities.

Planners and the public health sector have a long partnership in creating complete, mixed-use communities that encourage physical activity through walking and cycling. A key highlight in the Friday Forum discussion that supports this partnership was Liem's reference to a recent study authored by Dr. James Sallis. The study found that there is no association between high population density and per capita COVID-19 cases. Higher density communities that are walkable allow their residents to be active by walking or cycling to access goods and services in their neighbourhoods. In addition, higher density communities have better access to quality health care facilities.

"What the pandemic teaches us is that it is even more important to continue to create and advocate for compact development," says Liem. "Recent evidence has shown that the susceptibility and severity of COVID-19 is higher among people with underlying chronic conditions – e.g. diabetes, obesity, heart disease. When we create communities that are compact, with access to green space and with supports that make it easier for people to take transit, walk, or cycle, we are reducing chronic disease outcomes and creating communities that are more resilient to pandemics."

"Much of the work we do in public health considers the social determinants of health."

She adds that the pandemic highlights the important role that public health plays in land use planning, as well as infrastructure and services delivery.

"Much of the work we do in public health considers the social determinants of health," says Liem. "We think about the conditions in our physical environment that influence a person's ability to access resources and adopt healthy behaviours."

Equity and inclusion considerations include access to local services and amenities, provision of infrastructure to support walking and cycling, and access to greenspace for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes.

Liem further notes that public health uses evidence-based decision making to inform policy development, program planning, and service implementation.

"However, while public health has access to information about healthy living behaviour, data related to health outcomes and injuries may not always be available," she says, adding that public health is always looking for opportunities to access information that will help their partners, including collaborating with hospitals, universities, and provincial authorities.

Health units across Ontario have been working with planners and engineers through actions that centre on partnerships with regional and municipal stakeholders and others to advance the design and development of healthy complete communities. For example, in York Region, a Built Environment and Health Action Plan was developed by York Region Public Health in 2017 and included a

series of actions to enhance the health and well-being of residents.

Other jurisdictions, such as Peel Region and City of Ottawa, have long been recognized for collaboration between planning and public health. For example, just recently, the City of Ottawa's preliminary policy directions guiding development of the new Official Plan include deeply embedding healthy communities principles, such as the development of 15-Minute Neighbourhoods. This demonstrates the effectiveness of working in collaboration with public health authorities.

"While capacities vary by health unit, we are hopeful that this pandemic will allow us to acquire and access information to help our planning partners examine the effects of density at the neighbourhood level," says Liem. "The pandemic has created challenges in services delivery; however, we hope it will highlight the importance and need for strengthened partnerships with public health."

As a partner, the public health sector has much to add to the discussion on density, urban form, and design and their impacts on pandemic spread. 

You will find a video recording of the entire Friday Forum presentation on the OPPI website at: ontarioplanners.ca/inspiring-knowledge/cpl/digital-learning



A rendering of Milton's Mobility Hub reshapes an area within a 10-minute walk from the Milton GO Station into a more people-focused neighbourhood.

Trauma due to COVID-19: How planners can support healing and recovery

BY NANCY REID, MES, RPP, MCIP,
SENIOR POLICY PLANNER, TOWN OF MILTON



“...a footprint of psychological trauma across the globe as a result of this pandemic.”

Since the start of the outbreak, COVID-19 has proven to be an unimaginable, worldwide health, economic, and social crisis, causing immeasurable human pain, suffering, and loss. COVID-19 has attacked our communities at the core and created an enormity of sudden and unexpected societal shifts. It is undeniable that there is, and will continue to be, a footprint of psychological trauma across the globe as a result of this pandemic.

The following is a brief overview of trauma and the concept of bringing a trauma-informed approach to organizations and groups that work for and serve people. As the pandemic recovery continues into our foreseeable future, community planners should consider how to implement a trauma-informed approach to support healing and recovery in our communities. Through a look at current planning projects underway at the Town of Milton, this article shares concrete ideas for how we can do so.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) indicates that major changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic response can be difficult to process, and this kind of experience can cause psychological trauma for some people.¹ Psychological trauma is described as “the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event.”²

“...a trauma-informed approach means to seek out conditions that will help people heal.”

While it may be some time before we know the full impact of COVID-19, experts indicate that Canadians are already reporting higher levels of grief as a result of the following distressing events, caused by the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Severe illness or injury
- Death of a loved one
- Loss of a job or source of income
- Isolation and separation
- Stress and uncertainty
- Domestic violence
- Substance abuse

According to CAMH, the effects of trauma can be significant. Traumatic events can “harm a person’s sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Long after the traumatic event occurs, people with trauma can often feel shame, helplessness, powerlessness, and intense fear.”³ Vulnerable communities and people who have suffered trauma in the past can also experience impacts more intensely.

HEALING AND RECOVERY

The Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute of Canada (CTRI) suggests that any organization or group that works for and

serves people can use a trauma-informed approach to facilitate healing and recovery during and following the pandemic response. According to CTRI, to implement a trauma-informed approach means to seek out conditions that will help people heal, and this can be done by applying three principles.⁴

Principle 1: Safety and trust

Central to the impact of trauma is the violation of safety and trust; therefore, central to the creation of any healing environment is the consideration of what can promote safety in a particular setting. How can we make people feel physically and psychologically safe?

Principle 2: Choice and voice

Traumatic experiences create the reality of something happening outside of one’s choice and control. How can we introduce a sense of choice into the environment? How can we shift from “power over” to “power with” the people?

Principle 3: Strengths and resilience

Trauma is inherently disconnecting. How can we bridge areas of difference and acknowledge the natural diversity and strengths of people? How can we move past stereotypes and biases? How can we promote connection and collaboration in order to build resilience?

HOW CAN PLANNERS PROVIDE SUPPORT?

Amidst the pandemic, Milton staff continue to advance a number of important municipal planning initiatives. The following is a look at some ongoing projects from the perspective of how community planners can use a trauma-informed approach based on the principles from CTRI to support healing and recovery.

“How can we bridge areas of difference and acknowledge the natural diversity and strengths of people?”

1 - Planners can create safe, healing environments

Milton’s Mobility Hub Study (completed in May 2020) focuses on the area within a 10-minute walk from the Milton GO Station and makes recommendations to reshape it as a more people-focused neighbourhood. The hub is a destination point and has potential for significant future development and enhancement but currently experiences the following challenges:

Barriers to pedestrian movement, including rail, busy roads, discontinuous or disrupted sidewalks, grade changes, and large areas of surface parking;

- A streetscape that lacks pedestrian lighting, street furniture, and sidewalk-related buildings;
- Large, irregular blocks designed for automobile-oriented retail and commercial uses; and
- Few publicly accessible open spaces.

The Mobility Hub Study provides a planning and development framework that includes the following recommendations, which will naturally transform the hub into a safer, more healing environment:

Urban greening and publicly accessible open spaces – The study identifies opportunities for more greenery in the hub, and nature/plants have a known therapeutic quality. As well, a network of publicly accessible open spaces (parks, POPS, plazas) is recommended, making up approximately 10 per cent of developable area. These flexible open spaces will accommodate temporary uses, programming, and unstructured activities, such as public art, play areas, gathering spaces, meditation, and movement (yoga, tai chi, boot camp, etc.), all of which influence the sympathetic nervous system and can reduce stress.

Streetscape and public realm improvements – Milton’s Mobility Hub Study also recommends establishing new streets to create a finer-grain block structure to better support the movement of pedestrians and cyclists, separate people from cars, and help make people feel safe. Improved streetscapes (widened sidewalks, active building frontages, adequate lighting, and

street furniture) will further promote the feeling of safety by making streets more active and welcoming.

Framing views – Milton’s Hub of Possibility has outstanding landmark views of the Niagara Escarpment, and other major parks. These views are extremely important – and healing – to residents and visitors in part because they provide a connection to nature and reduce stress. They also serve as a source of awe and inspiration.

“...some words can imply a certain age, gender, educational background, social class, and so much more...”

2 - Planners can strengthen voices

In 2019, Milton initiated a new official plan project (We Make Milton) that involves a meaningful and equitable conversation about our future and seeks input on new policies that will inform decision making over the planning horizon. We named the project We Make Milton,⁵ because we know that the new official plan must be crafted with input from the community.

We have also launched an innovative and unique engagement strategy that focuses on fictional characters (the Milton family and friends) to generate awareness, excitement, and interest and to make the new official plan project understandable and relatable. By doing so, we have tried to shift the conversation from “power over” to “power with” the people.

We Make Milton introduces a sense of choice and voice into the community conversation by:

Speaking practically – The Milton family and friends demonstrate that everyone has something to contribute, and our characters share some of the practical ways an official plan can impact day-to-day life.⁶ By providing relevant and relatable information through the Miltons, we are deepening people’s understanding of the planning process and making it easier to voice an opinion.

Avoiding technical language – We Make Milton aims to communicate inclusively. Our approach focuses on speaking in lay terms and avoiding jargon as much as possible (words like sustainable, mixed-use, and transit-oriented). The Miltons also know some words can imply a certain age, gender, educational background, social class, and so much more, and are careful about using them.

Speaking from “I” – Through the Miltons, our new official plan project is framed from a human perspective. When given the opportunity, people often enjoy the opportunity to share themselves, their values, and their stories, and our work program provides the opportunity to do so. The Miltons have made the new official plan project more authentic and has enabled real connections through meaningful conversation.

Research shows that arts and culture have the ability to engage people, connect people, and foster healing...

3 - Planners can bridge difference and build resilience

This summer, Milton launched a Culture Plan project that will establish an overall vision and roadmap for arts and culture. The process will be informed by diverse perspectives from across the community to connect goals and priorities in regard to arts and culture. Research shows that arts and culture have the ability to engage people, connect people, and foster healing, and Milton’s team of staff and consultants are considering the following as we embark on this exciting project:

Cultural expression – Culture provides a sense of who we are, where we come from, and where we belong. The process of creating a Culture Plan will connect people who share the same cultural identification and introduce others to new cultural perspectives. Reducing cultural isolation will create a greater sense of belonging in Milton and will help promote healing, particularly after a period of physical separation.

Reimagining places – Milton’s Culture Plan will help create a sense of place and identity by enhancing cultural experiences in civic spaces. Through public art and programming, supporting outdoor festivals and events, and animating neighbourhoods with cultural expression, Milton will reimagine our urban spaces and cultural landscape to create more equitable, inclusive, and diverse places to live, heal, and grow.

Local tourism and economic recovery

– COVID-19 has brought global tourism to a standstill and as we recover, people are seeking out local cultural and travel experiences. Milton has many urban and rural assets and the Culture Plan is an opportunity to consider how cultural tourism can strengthen economic recovery. It will take time for our economy to heal and the Culture Plan will help support local businesses and create resiliency by identifying ways to spark the economy through cultural tourism. ☺

¹ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2020). Loss, Grief, and Healing. Retrieved from <http://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/loss-grief-and-healing#trauma>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute of Canada (2019). Trauma-Informed Care: Building a Culture of Strength, page 16-17.

⁵ For project information see: <https://www.letstalkmilton.ca/wemakemilton>

⁶ To watch our video see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsJHlLdAqY>



Nancy Reid, MES, RPP, MCIP, is a Member of OPPI and the Senior Policy Planner for the Town of Milton.

Aging in place through COVID-19

BY ALICE HUTTEN, RPP

For the last decade, Ottawa West Community Support (OWCS) – in partnership with Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), the Champlain LHIN, and Ottawa Public Health – has run Aging in Place (AIP), a program that provides targeted services and coordinated care for low-income seniors in 11 high-rise buildings across the city. The intention of AIP is to reduce repeat emergency room visits and support seniors within their homes and communities. AIP successfully combines both the physical elements of planning (high-rise apartment buildings) with the social elements of planning (utilization of open spaces for social programming and connecting with other services) to successfully build community.



ENTER COVID-19

On a cold and blustery March 11, 2020, AIP received news that OCH was closing lounges in their apartment buildings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lounges are the quasi-public spaces many of the seniors have the easiest access to for AIP's social and health-related activities. Under normal circumstances, these are essential spaces to combat isolation and loneliness with an older low-income population.

Over the next two weeks, housing, health, and social service organizations responded to a rapidly evolving environment of escalating shut-downs, physical distancing guidelines, and screening/personal protection directions. AIP and its partner organizations struggled to identify how to provide essential services safely and respond to the needs of the seniors. OWCS watched with trepidation as the number of long-term care facilities with outbreaks in Ottawa and across the province grew, then with horror as the death toll within these settings were reported. Were these 11 seniors' apartment buildings with common spaces and many residents living with complex medical needs on the same trajectory as the long-term care facilities?

Fortunately, partnerships and relationships at the core of the AIP program allowed coordinators and outside partners to pivot the service model to respond to the pandemic. Quick use of the demographic data of the buildings permitted staff to be deployed strategically based on language skills to check in with tenants. As seniors sheltered in place, emerging needs became apparent, especially around food security and social well-being.

“Virtual connectivity through a phone platform was more successful as many of the most isolated seniors did not have access to the internet.”

ADDRESSING IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Food security has been a core priority of the AIP program. All the AIP buildings are located in dense urban areas as many of



Care Package delivery at 616 Kirkwood, an AIP building in Ottawa.

the residents do not have access to a car and rely primarily on public transit. Self-isolation made getting to a grocery store and getting essential supplies even more challenging for many.

AIP had been involved with providing access to monthly produce through group “food chops” but this was no longer possible. Many businesses and charities responded to seniors' food security issues by offering “door-step” delivery; however, for a senior in an apartment building, “door-step” often translated into deliveries being left in the lobby of the buildings. AIP staff worked with tenants and partners to identify strategies to secure food safety, which often meant coordinating delivery of grocery hampers directly to the senior's apartment door.

Prior to COVID-19, AIP worked closely with community organizations and faith groups to deliver programming that reduced isolation. While social distancing and sheltering in place was successfully keeping outbreaks of COVID-19 at bay, this same social distancing was also detrimental to the mental well-being of seniors as they became increasingly isolated. Again, AIP worked with partners to bring virtual connections to seniors to compensate for losing face-to-face interaction. This included groups connecting through the internet (i.e. Zoom) or phone (i.e. Mercuri). Virtual connectivity through a phone platform was more successful as many of the most isolated seniors did not have access to the internet. Various faith communities also stepped up and provided “Cheer Bags” that included information on community resources, activities, and a plan.

Some seniors within the building were experiencing COVID-19 symptoms; however, access to testing sites was initially a barrier. In Ottawa, testing sites were not easily accessible by public transit or within a walkable distance from any of the AIP Buildings. Rapidly developed planning groups formed to identify and articulate these needs and were able to develop interim solutions and, fortunately, by the end of May, community health providers were able to provide mobile testing. This rapid community planning and response was successful in part due to existing relationships and trust developed through various community and health-planning processes in place prior to the pandemic.

PLANNING FOR RESILIENCY

Resiliency in the age of a pandemic is supported by the careful planning and development of strong partnerships during regular times. As we move into planning for a world where outbreaks and pandemics are a reality, ensuring our communities can be resilient is essential. The concept of “Aging in Place” with both appropriate design elements, partnerships, and social/health service provision can help support the resiliency and health outcomes of our communities and our senior populations. ♿



Alice Hutton, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and Senior Manager, In Home Services and Aging in Place, for Ottawa West Community Support.

WAINFLEET: SOCIAL DISTANCING SINCE 1850

Post-COVID-19 adaptation may strain good, balanced planning

BY PATRICK ROBSON, RPP, MCIP

The discipline of professional land use planning has, as one of its key underpinnings, public and community health. The need to combine the two disciplines was spurred by the Industrial Revolution, primarily in the UK. Providing orderly urban development, with piped water and sanitary services, was the preventative answer to avoiding things like epidemics – a prime example being cholera. And, it worked. So closely connected are the land use and public health professions that, as a planning student at Ryerson, several of our courses were taken alongside students in the public health inspector program.

More recently, planning has evolved to consider land use policy and implementation decision making through the sustainability lens, balancing the economic, environmental, and social interests via the “triple bottom line.”¹ What may get lost in this is that population health is part of the “social” pillar. Not that the concern for health is diminished in sustainability discourse; rather, it is not as overtly referenced as perhaps it should be.

The following summarizes this well:

“Twenty-five years after it entered the mainstream of global development discourse, “sustainable” remains a vague concept. Adopted by the powerful and the powerless, the term has been used to describe everything from consumer products to entire economic systems. Meanwhile, conciliatory democratic politics have suffered under a heavily money-influenced political process... Ultimately, even the most useful concept in sustainable development discourse – the “three-legged stool” of social, ecological, and economic concerns – remains inadequate. The failure to implement the three-legged stool in practice indicates that contradictions between desired outcomes in each leg are an inherent and perpetual problem for society. Modern sustainability discourse, in its focus on ideal outcomes, fails to provide guidance for what to do when these contradictions occur.”²

As planners, committing to integrating the triple-bottom line means moving from discourse and theory to tangible action. As

households, businesses, and governments begin creating a “new normal” post-COVID-19, these contradictions are already becoming evident. Depending on where you live, the implications of new normal topics like social distancing and isolation will shape how we see ourselves interacting in our communities. The implications of a new normal will undoubtedly put significant pressure on how we sustainably balance the urban/rural divide, potentially resulting in a perfect storm of land use conflict.

SOCIAL DISTANCING, BUILT RIGHT IN

I live in Niagara’s most rural community, the Township of Wainfleet. During the pandemic, we have been semi-joking that we should have a new motto – “Wainfleet: Social Distancing Since 1850.”³ Wainfleet typifies many rural communities, dominated by agriculture, low-density⁴ residential development, provincially significant natural amenities, and seasonal development along Lake Erie. But jocularly aside, this bucolic setting, with social distancing built right in, starts getting looked at in a new light.

“This bunker mentality is as natural as wanting to move away from global food systems to domestic food reliance.”

To explain, the importance of domestic food production means that we need to have even greater protections and policy tools to support our ability to feed ourselves, as matters of food security, population health security, and even national security. At the same time, we can reasonably expect some level of demand for rural development, in that the human/mental health impacts from COVID-19 lockdowns appear more pronounced in more urban, higher density settings (as may be the percentage of cases contracted). That means there will be coincidental pressure to open up rural areas for residential development that has social distancing built right in (witness people flocking to cottages to get away from the GTA, and most every other large urban centre,⁵ to minimize their exposure to COVID-19). The implications

for things like the balance of political influence (i.e. less for urban, more for rural), redistribution of wealth (especially social welfare), and natural systems protection and enhancement are formidable.

“...the public participation component is being squelched in the name of removing red tape.”

This scenario also assumes, with good reason, that COVID-19 is not an isolated situation – rather, that there will be more viruses in future that are possibly more frequent, deadly, and volatile. Therefore, those who can afford a shift to rural settings, will look to do so not just for temporary periods (like cottagers now), but more permanently. And this is not mere speculation – it is already happening. A July 2, 2020 article in the *Toronto Star* notes a recent surge in buyers flocking to the cottage market.⁶ The real concern for planners is what happens when the availability of existing lots and properties effectively dries up. And, if you are a developer or land speculator, you may already be competing for acquisition of this limited land base.

This bunker mentality is as natural as wanting to move away from global food systems to domestic food reliance. If we assume that agricultural lands are going to be valued more, and thus protected, the other option for rural development concerns encroaching into natural areas, where biodiversity acts as a bulwark to things like pandemics.⁷ We already see governments “relaxing” environmental protection measures during COVID, rationalized as opening up the economy.⁸ So this is a real concern, for, among other reasons, it is code language for economic opportunism and not good planning. Along with these platitudes about opening up the economy, curiously in many instances by investing in public infrastructure works paid for by the public purse, the public participation component is being squelched in the name of removing red tape.⁹ Doing so results in an unbalancing of the three-legged stool of sustainable communities.

This is going to be a daunting challenge, one that planners are well positioned to

help problem solve: to assure we focus on outcomes that balance economic health interests with social health imperatives and environmental health protections, with each accorded equal importance. ☺

¹Policy and implementation decision making through the sustainability lens, balancing the economic, environmental, and social interests via the accounting principle ‘triple bottom line’ which considers people, planet, and prosperity with equal weight as opposed to just the singular bottom line of profit.

²See Roman – Alcalá, Antonio, in *Reconsidering Sustainable Development: Urbanization, Political-Economy, and Deliberative Democracy*.

³The Township of Wainfleet was incorporated in 1850.

⁴There are approximately 29 people per square km dwelling in Wainfleet, as opposed to the 232 people per square km in the Niagara Region – Canada, Government of Canada, Statistics. “Statistics Canada: 2011 Census Profile”. www12.statcan.gc.ca. Retrieved 2016-02-09.

⁵As recently reported in the *New York Times* by Dana Rubenstein in *Why Rich New Yorkers are Causing Big Problems for the Census – If residents who fled the virus for second homes aren’t counted, the city could lose out on federal money – and congressional seats*. (P. A4, July 13/20).

⁶See <https://www.thestar.com/business/2020/07/02/covid-brings-surging-interest-in-cottage-real-estate.html>

⁷For very recent references, see <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/speech/it-time-nature-world-environment-day-2020>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/07/06/888077232/u-n-predicts-rise-in-diseases-that-jump-from-animals-to-humans>

<https://ipbes.net/covid19stimulus>

⁸See <https://environmentaldefence.ca/2020/07/08/statement-environmental-defences-program-director-keith-brooks-response-introduction-ontarios-covid-19-economic-recovery-act/>

<https://ontarionature.good.do/sayno/Email/>
<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/07/10/the-end-of-environmental-assessments-for-clear-cut-logging-has-grassy-narrows-first-nation-fearing-more-mercury-poisoning.html>

⁹The current Government of Ontario has several proposed changes to planning and environmental assessment laws and regulations intended to make it easier to get projects approved.



Patrick Robson, RPP, MCIP, is a Member of OPPI and a Professor in the Environmental Management and Assessment post-grad program at Niagara College.

Boulevard of dreams: Rethinking suburban corridors

01

BY TIM SMITH, RPP

Is there a more vexing challenge for planners and urban designers than the suburban arterial corridor of six or seven lanes? There on full display is everything we perceive to be wrong about the suburbs: the total dominance of private vehicles; the sharp separation among land uses; the uninspired architecture; the residential rear-lotting; and all that pavement, with little room for trees. Our early attempts to give these arterial roads the semblance of a “main street” didn’t work out so well. One-storey commercial buildings made to look like two-storeys, with false or rarely used doors on the street, haven’t fooled anyone.

We are a persistent bunch though, and for a few municipalities, it has begun to pay off. For the past two decades, we have been calling many of our major arterial roads “intensification corridors” and adopting policies to encourage the shift in real estate trends toward higher-density, mixed-use developments in Ontario’s growing cities. The results to date have been sporadic. The strong demand for apartment buildings in Markham and Richmond Hill, for example, in addition to the VIVA bus rapid transit line, has helped to urbanize stretches of Highway 7 through York Region. The Queensway in

- 01** An example of a well-designed “node” in Port Moody, BC.
- 02** Arterial street section.

“...it’s time to reconsider our visions and urban design strategies for suburban corridors.”

Keeping the space in public spaces

BY NATALIE BOODRAM, RPP, AND TÜNDE PACZAI

For millennia, public spaces have been where we come together to celebrate, commiserate, parade, protest, and generally connect with our community. Most of us viewed our shared space as welcoming and healthy, until COVID-19 caused us to question the way we design public spaces in the urban environment. While function, beauty, and accessibility are still at the core of our design principles, safety and minimizing risk of illness are now at the forefront of our design thought.

The expert consensus is that we are at the beginning of a paradigm shift. As society recovers from the pandemic, we are reconsidering the lens through which we design our open spaces and our public realm. At WSP, we monitor current trends and are well informed of anticipated changes to our world. Our Future Ready® approach provides this lens, helping us design to future trends in climate, society, technology, and resources to create communities that are resilient amidst an ever-changing future.

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- 01 Toronto, Canada - May 31, 2020: Locals walk and relax in the Trinity-Bellwoods park of Toronto on a weekend during coronavirus pandemic in Ontario, Canada.
 - 02 Canmore, Alberta, Canada - August 10, 2020: Colorful chairs and a red umbrella in front of a store in the street in Canmore Town on a sunny afternoon during Covid-19 Pandemic. Canmore is located in the Bow Valley near Banff National Park surrounded by mountains.

CREATING SAFER SPACE

Being confined to our homes and immediate neighbourhoods has given most of us a new appreciation for access to outdoor spaces, plazas, and parks or even a backyard. Fresh air, light, and space have become highly valued assets. Most of us also have a new understanding of what it means to safeguard our health within public spaces. It is likely that the public perception of personal space being critical for health will remain.

“...creativity can be fuelled by constraints...”

As assembly restrictions lift, preventative measures for future outbreaks should be considered based on lessons learned. So how do we retrofit existing public spaces and improve our approach for building new ones? Can we design a new public realm that enables physical distancing and complies with new health and safety regulations but remains exciting, engaging, and attractive for people of all ages and abilities? Designers all around the world have shown us that creativity can be fuelled by constraints, that our human need to remain connected prevails and keeps us humble and adaptable to the new reality.

“Remaining flexible and agile and continuing best practices to re-focus on human-centric design is within our toolkits.”

NEW MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Are our parks and open spaces adequately sized for the population density of the communities they serve? Are they adequately spaced and walkable destinations from within our neighbourhoods?

Not that long ago, as planners and urban designers, we measured success in the public realm in terms of the intensity of activity on the streets, bustling markets, busy playgrounds, sold-out attractions, and overall well-programmed, thriving gathering spaces. The more the merrier.

In a pandemic scenario, those metrics no longer apply. What is the new optimal ratio of open space to users as we seek the

right balance between physical and mental health? We predict that the factors behind such an optimal ratio will be well debated in our communities.

is also a case for increasing development charges to fund physical-distancing markers in new, growth-related public parks and open spaces. We expect there will be new



Our instinct tells us that adaptability will prevail. We will learn to plan better for balanced, equitable distribution of our public spaces. Remaining flexible and agile and continuing best practices to re-focus on human-centric design is within our toolkits.

In response to past trends that changed our urban context, we retrofitted and converted conventional streets into shared streets. We widened sidewalks, reduced traffic lanes, promoted tree planting and low-impact development measures, re-prioritized vehicular lanes, installed bike lanes, and prioritized public transit. These techniques have already been implemented successfully within Ontario municipalities, resulting in positive outcomes. We should build on these practices and encourage municipalities and developers to use creative, flexible strategies for implementing physical distancing in our public realm and open spaces – strategies that will continue to evolve as the future unfolds.

OVERCOMING NEW CHALLENGES

We anticipate challenges related to financing physical-distancing design changes in our public spaces. If more space is needed for wider sidewalks and open spaces, developers will likely need to allocate more land for public use. There

standards for publicly accessible private spaces, such as building entrances, common areas, employee break areas, restaurant/café patios, etc., which will also affect building and site design. We foresee the provincial government leading such requirements, and that, as planners, architects, urban designers, and landscape architects, we will steer and experience implementation through new policies, zoning by-law provisions, municipal by-law requirements, and urban design guidelines.

Public space will remain the place where we come together to celebrate, commiserate, parade, or protest. We will design it to be welcoming, inclusive, and healthy, as long as we adapt now with flexibility, in consideration of future trends, and with human interest at heart. ♻️



Natalie Boodram, BURPL, MES, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the Senior Planner within the Planning, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design group at WSP. **Tünde Paczai, BArch**, is the Urban Design Lead within the Planning, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design Group at WSP.



WELCOME TO SUSAN WIGGINS, OPPI'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) is pleased to welcome Susan Wiggins as its new Executive Director. Susan brings a wealth of experience in association management, most recently as Senior Strategic Advisor/COO for the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). Susan officially began her role with OPPI on June 15, 2020.

Learn more about Susan at www.ontarioplanners.ca. She can be reached by email at executivedirector@ontarioplanners.ca.

OPPI AGM: NOTICE OF MEETING AND AGENDA

The 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) will take place using Chime Live Virtual Platform on Wednesday, October 7, 2020 and will include:

- Reports of the Treasurer and President
- Items for Membership consideration:
 - Appointment of auditor
 - Approval of actions of Council
 - Motions submitted by members
 - Election results and introduction of the 2020-2021 Council

Notification of the call for nominations of Directors was sent out to all Members in the OPPI e-newsletter in February and March 2020 and posted on the OPPI website. Nominations for the election of Directors at the AGM are received in accordance with Section 4 of the OPPI General By-Law.

Voting members (Full and Candidate Practicing and Retired) who cannot attend the meeting are asked to complete the online proxy form by Thursday October 1, 2020 at 4 p.m. EDT.

Please visit www.ontarioplanners.ca for more information.

MEMBER PROPOSED MOTIONS

A request for submission of substantive motions for the 2020 Annual General Meeting was sent to all Members in the OPPI e-newsletter in June and July 2020 and posted on the OPPI website. No motions were received by the Registrar by the deadline of July 15, 2020. Motions concerning substantive issues that were not provided in writing by the above date will not be considered at the AGM.

NEW STUDENT DELEGATE

OPPI is pleased to welcome Regan Zink as our 2020-2021 Student Delegate, succeeding Catherine Tran for a one-year term. Regan is a Candidate Member of OPPI, an Arrell Food Institute Scholar, and an MSc Candidate in the University of Guelph's Rural Planning and Development program.



As OPPI's Student Delegate, Regan will chair OPPI's Student Liaison Committee (SLC), which serves as a leadership network linking students across the six accredited planning schools to OPPI. The SLC meets throughout the school year and works to promote the benefits of membership in OPPI and events and programs for students: OPPI's student scholarships, the annual Student Case Competition, and nominations for student representatives and our next Student Delegate.

Please join us in thanking Catherine Tran for her volunteer service over the past year and welcoming Regan onboard as OPPI's Student Delegate. We look forward to working with Regan and the SLC this year.



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Image courtesy of WZMH Architects

2020 MEMBER SERVICE AWARD WINNERS

OPPI Member Service Awards recognize the extraordinary service and significant contribution to the Institute from OPPI's volunteer leadership. Awards can be given to Members to honour their accumulated service over a long period of time, performance in key or integral role with a special project or program, or representation of OPPI and the planning profession in a provincial or national forum.

OPPI's District Leadership Teams were asked to submit candidates for nomination. With the nomination period now closed, we are pleased to announce OPPI's 2020 Member Service Award winners:

- Brian Bridgeman, RPP, Oak Ridges District
- Liz Buckton, RPP, Lakeland District
- Scott Taylor, RPP, Lakeland District
- Stephen Alexander, RPP, Eastern District

For more information on our winners and their contributions to the Institute, please visit our Member Service Award webpage at www.ontarioplanners.ca.

WELCOME TO THE NEWEST RPPS

Every year, OPPI is pleased to welcome new Registered Professional Planners (RPPs). Only Full Members of OPPI are authorized to use the RPP designation, which signifies completion of the certificate process administered by the Professional Standards Board and allows them to practice as RPPs in Ontario.

Congratulations to the new RPPs. We applaud your achievement, dedication, and commitment to informing choices and guiding Ontario's public decision makers and stakeholders in creating inspired communities.

Learn more about our newest RPPs at www.ontarioplanners.ca.

MEMBERS RESIGNED OR REMOVED FROM THE REGISTRY

The following Full Members have resigned in good standing from OPPI for the 2020 membership year:

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Kathy Ash | Elizabeth Halpenny | Kenneth Petersen |
| Jamie Bennett | Colleen Healey | Marion Plaunt |
| Beverley Booth | Laura Johnson | Cameron Rapp |
| Kristen Boulard | William King | Velvet Ross |
| Helen Break | Mitchell Kosny | Gary Sellars |
| Heather Brooks | Glen Letman | Mark Smith |
| Annamarie Burgess | Hans Madan | James Sullivan |
| Danielle Bury | Sarah Marchionda | Michael Szilagyi |
| Tom Cadman | Grant Mcgregor | Thomas Villella |
| Gemma Connolly | Susan Mcgregor | William Winegard |
| Ellen Cramm | Gary Murphy | John Wright |
| Angela Dietrich | Kendra Murphy | |
| K. Neal Grady | Anna Palamarchuk | |

The following Full Members have been removed from the register for non-payment of membership fees for 2020:

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Lorne Berg | Sue Flaman | Jeffrey Humble |
| Betsy Donald | Natalie Seniuk | Scott Slack |
| Mark Chlon | Frances Dietrich- | Beau Wansbrough |
| Mausam Duggal | O'Connor | |
| Fuad Malkawi | Sue Harrison | |

The following Full Members have been removed from the register for non-compliance with OPPI's Continuous Professional Learning requirement for 2018:

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Craig Cal | Trevor Hesselink | Edward Starr |
| Stephen Cunliffe | Michael Higgins | Louise Sweet |
| John Fitzgibbon | Pamela Hubbard | Catherine Talbot |
| John Ghent | Daniel Kennaley | Rei Tasaka |
| Gregory Gilbert | Attilio Lio | Lance Thurston |

Note: This notice is accurate at press time. For questions, email Rupendra Pant at membership@ontarioplanners.ca.



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An aerial photograph of a vast green agricultural field, likely corn, with a road running diagonally across the lower right portion. Long shadows are cast across the field, suggesting a low sun position. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

ACADEMIC

Food systems resilience: Reaffirming the role of planning beyond COVID-19

BY ELISE GESCHIERE, REGAN ZINK, AND WAYNE CALDWELL, RPP

Since March, it seems there has been a new agri-food-related issue every week.¹ COVID-19 heightened and exposed many of the shortfalls of our food systems in a relatively short period of time. Whether it be migrant workers' rights, shortage of specialized agricultural workers, food accessibility and affordability, disrupted food service businesses and jobs, food waste, or reliance on globalized systems, these issues are not new, but their effects are uncomfortably close to home for many Canadians.

Ontario is home to some of the best farmland in Canada, and agriculture contributes \$15.3 billion to Ontario's annual GDP.^{2,3} The agri-food sector is essential for our health and well-being, but it is also important to our economy, the management of our lands, and the creation of communities. Rural and agricultural communities are an essential part of our food systems, and it is critical that they receive the support they need to maintain and improve the services and resources they provide. Good things really do grow in Ontario; however, our food systems and the framework in which the agri-food sector operates are far from perfect, and the planning profession has an important role to play.

© Unsplash
Ontario is home to some of the best farmland in
Canada and agriculture contributes \$15.3 billion to
Ontario's annual GDP.

THE ROLE OF PLANNING

You might be thinking, so what now? What is our responsibility in all of this? As influencers, advisors, and enablers of communities and land-use change in Ontario, what can we do?

Researchers and practitioners have suggested a variety of changes to food systems, most notably, the need to ensure resiliency and security at the local and regional level.^{4,5} Bolstering the agri-food sector in Ontario has a number of benefits beyond safeguarding our food supply in the face of future pandemics. Local and regional agri-food operations are closer to home and are less likely to be disrupted by global events; this is in addition to reducing the time and environmental impact associated with shipping and distributing food, connecting consumers to the food they eat and how it grows, and strengthening local and regional economies.

“The lived experience of farmers is valid, and their knowledge often spans generations.”

Planners are fundamentally concerned with all of these things (well-being and resilience of communities, stewardship of the land, and economic sustainability) and are increasingly involved in ongoing conversations about food-related issues, policies, and programs.⁶ Like many other social, economic, and environmental issues, food systems require planners to balance competing priorities and act in the best interest of the public.⁷ Planners are involved in a variety of community-building initiatives, such as strategic planning, zoning, and public consultation, that intersect with food security and agricultural preservation. The planning profession is ideally situated to leverage these issues and determine solutions.⁸

INTEGRATING POLICY

Similar to many other items in the planning portfolio, how rural and agricultural issues are prioritized and addressed is largely guided by provincial interests through policies and plans. The 2014 PPS provides a baseline protection of prime agricultural lands and, in turn, the agri-food sector. The 2020 update extends this protection to agri-food networks and recognizes that the agri-food sector is a system that encompasses many components, including farms, processing facilities, distributors, cold storage, and retail outlets,

and that the continuity between these components and actors is essential.⁹ Farmland protection is only a starting point for a healthy agri-food sector; additional initiatives such as agricultural strategies, food and farm educational opportunities, environmental stewardship programs, climate change strategies, water quality programs, and relationship building with agri-food communities are necessary to support a thriving agri-food sector.

As we work to integrate provincial policy in a way that is best for our communities, we are provided space for interpretation and the opportunity to act as advocates and leaders. Planning must reflect local, regional, and national concerns, both now and in the future, necessitating the creation of programs, policies, and plans that support the agri-food sector. 

¹Fraser, E. (2020). 100 days of coronavirus has sent shockwaves through the food system.

²Caldwell, W., Epp, S. (2018). Measuring Farmland Loss: Lessons from Ontario Canada.

³Statistics Canada. (2019). Agriculture and Agri-Food Economic Account, 2015.

⁴Clapp, J. (2020). Spoiled Milk, Rotten Vegetables, and a Very Broken Food System.

⁵Yasmeen, G., Alexander, S., Paskal, A. (2020). Cracks in the Global Food System More Apparent with COVID-19.

⁶Raja, S., Hall, E., Morgan, K. (2017). Planning for Equitable Urban and Regional Food Systems.

⁷Lang, K. (2014). Integrating Food System Resiliency into the Regional Planning Processes.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. (2020). Agricultural Systems for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.



Wayne Caldwell, RPP, FCIIP, is a Member of OPPI and a Professor in Rural Planning and Development at the University of Guelph. **Elise Geschiere** is a Student Member of OPPI, CIP Student Representative, and MSc Candidate in the University of Guelph's Rural Planning and Development program. **Regan Zink** is a Candidate Member of OPPI, OPPI Student Delegate, Arrell Food Institute Scholar, and MSc Candidate in the University of Guelph's Rural Planning and Development program.



THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INTENDED FOR PLANNERS SEEKING TO ENHANCE AND STRENGTHEN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR BEYOND COVID-19.

We have a role to play. Opportunities exist for planners to work closely with the agri-food sector. Working with other departments, such as economic development, can lead to more holistic program development.

Consider your capacity (staff resourcing, expertise, funding). The agri-food activities you undertake should be carefully selected based on existing community, staff, and council capacity and interest. There are a number of resources available to learn more about the agri-food sector, including OMAFRA, Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, the Greenbelt Foundation, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and conservation authorities.

Farmers are experts. The lived experience of farmers is valid, and their knowledge often spans generations. Consider meeting them where they are and circle back to share how their input informed planning decisions.



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SINCE 1973



After 32 years working for small and large municipalities as both a development and policy planner, Lesley Pavan, RPP, retired this past spring from the position of Director of Development and Design with the City of Mississauga.

Registered Professional Planner

PROFILE

NAME:
Lesley Pavan, RPP

LOCATION:
Mississauga

POSITION:
Director of Development and Design with City of Mississauga (retired spring 2020)

In addition to development application processing, Pavan worked on a wide range of projects over the course of her career: community master plans, housing, heritage, brownfield policies, environmental planning, movement plans, and process improvements, including Mississauga’s e-plans implementation. In the role of Director, she led a team of over 50 professionals, overseeing all aspects of development approvals, zoning bylaws, and urban design. A true leader within the profession, Pavan has also been a mentor to a number of planners seeking their RPP designation.

Looking back on your career, what aspects of being a planner brought you the greatest satisfaction?

I really enjoyed problem solving. Planning projects offer lots of challenges. If an idea or proposal is sound and in the public interest, I never gave up because the direct path was blocked. I found it exciting researching an issue, unpacking it, looking at it from various viewpoints, working through the problem with others, then selling the idea. Nothing equals the joy of resolving an issue or promoting an idea; seeing it implemented and celebrating with the people who made it happen.

Do you have any favourite moments you consider “wins” for yourself as an RPP?

I could cite milestones, like delivering the City of Mississauga’s first Natural Areas Survey, convincing city leaders to acquire and preserve a provincially significant wetland that was being threatened by a landowner or approving the first site plan through e-plans. But honestly, my favourite moments would come after a difficult community consultation process, whether it be on a development application or a new policy, and residents who were initially opposed then approach you in a store, call or stop by the planning counter just to chat. It is a nice feeling that, once a project is done, people from the community feel they have a friend at city hall. To me, making those connections are the wins.

I have heard that you once referred to yourself as part of a “missing generation” in planning? What does that mean? Have things changed?

When I graduated in 1988, I found a job relatively easily with the help of one of my professors. A year later, the housing market crashed and took seven years to recover. Planning jobs in both the public and private sectors dried up. Years later, when looking at the age cohorts of RPPs, there was a significant dip reflecting the recession of the early 1990s. In the first half of my career, I knew or recognized most planners when I went to large meetings or the OPPI conference. As the market picked up, the profession started to grow. It is astounding that we now fill huge ballrooms for the OPPI conference.

You were a planner during some significant times in Ontario (“Rae Days,” the 2008 recession, various downturns): what stands out for you with some of these “phases”? How do these past upheavals compare to what is happening now with COVID-19?

When I started my career, affordable housing was a critical issue until the housing crash. Then, with the crash, came the need for fiscal austerity. At that time, the protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine and wetlands were also planning priorities. The handover of Hong Kong to the Chinese government resulted in new investment opportunities in our major urban centres and shaped many of our communities. Social, economic, political change are constants.

COVID-19 has the potential to impact our communities more than anything I have seen. Fiscal austerity will be top of mind for all municipal governments due to the loss of revenues. There will be pressure to cut “red tape” and provide financial relief to the business and development community. Similar to putting an oxygen mask on yourself before children, governments at all levels will need to ensure they are saving themselves first so they can help others. Decisions will need to be measured, not knee-jerk. I think back to the Walkerton tragedy of 20 years ago, when there was a rush to reduce regulations.

However, I am optimistic. Through this pandemic, we have witnessed the power of all three levels of government working together on the same goal. If rebuilding our communities is done with the same cooperation, we will be successful.

What do you see as priorities for planners in recovering from COVID-19 and building resiliency in Ontario communities?

COVID-19 is bringing our social inequities to the forefront. The need to address the needs of people living in vulnerable circumstances should be our number one priority as planners.

The difficulty will be setting priorities within this overarching theme. Housing, health care, food security, domestic violence, communication with diverse communities, ensuring inclusivity are all equally valid issues.

Resiliency and rebuilding communities will look different for every community. In rural farming areas, it might be safe housing for the migrant workforce or providing better broadband connectivity. In cities, it might be the need to address active transportation options if people do not feel comfortable riding public transit.

Finally, planners will need to work with our business partners to help them recover, whether it be streamlining our processes, or utilizing the tools at our disposal to bring in enabling regulations so business can do what it needs to do.

Do you have a message for your fellow RPPs and future RPPs?

My message is always to try something new and take the difficult path. If a project looks difficult, ask to take it on. The challenge will energize you, your network will expand, your learning will increase, and the satisfaction will be greater. 



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PREVIEW



NEXT ISSUE PREVIEW: WINTER 2021 TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Indigenous Peoples have been present on the lands we know as Canada for more than 15,000 years. When European settlers arrived roughly 400 years ago, Indigenous Peoples had been governing the land with planning, architecture, and environmental design tenets that had been established for millennia. Based on a belief that only Christians could own land, Europeans dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of their land and devastated their cultures and traditions.

Canada is undergoing renewal and change with respect to its relationship with Indigenous Peoples and communities across the country. Ontario's Indigenous population is the largest in Canada and represents one of the fastest-growing demographics in the country.

Land and the disposition and management of land are central to the planning profession – and to the process of reconciliation. To quote novelist, broadcaster, and member of the Order of Canada, Thomas King, from his book *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*: “Land. If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians in North America, you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land.”

In June 2019, OPPI released the *Report of the Indigenous Planning Perspectives Task Force*, which included recommendations to move the profession forward in understanding Indigenous perspectives in planning and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

But reconciliation is a multi-generational process, and in order to begin that process, hard truths must be exposed, discussed, and acknowledged. The Winter 2021 issue of *Y Magazine* will explore these truths and the role planners have in working alongside Indigenous Peoples and communities to begin walking down the path of reconciliation together.

Onshweken, Ontario, Canada - July 24, 2016:
Six Nations of the Grand River Pow Wow.
Turtle Island. Grass dancers and Fancy Feather dancers in their traditional regalia.



Be ready for the future: Get a Registered Professional Planner on your team

Major issues such as climate change, aging populations, and the implementation of artificial intelligence show no signs of stopping – and they affect every sector. The only way to be ready for inevitable change is with sound planning. Hiring a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) is a pivotal step in building actionable plans in preparation for the future.

Ontario's RPPs gather and analyze information from every side of an issue and provide the critical unbiased perspective and expertise necessary to help guide the crucial decision making that will shape the future of our communities. The more than 4,000 members of OPPI work in government, private practice, universities, and not-for-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, community design, environmental

planning, transportation, health, social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development.

RPPs are the only professionals with the experience and specialized skill set required to fill the very specific role and title of Planner. RPPs who are certified by OPPI have met rigorous entry-to-practice standards and follow the Professional Code of Practice.

Find the RPP who meets your exact needs in OPPI's Consultant Directory at ontarioplanners.ca/hire-an-rpp.

What if half of everything you did changed?

Mobility, technology, equity and inclusion, climate change, uneven population growth, density, COVID-19... Ontario's communities are facing rapid evolution by comparison with generations past. How well we cope with change depends on how Registered Professional Planners are leading change now by informing sustainable, resilient choices and inspiring communities.



RPPs Plan On It:
ontarioplanners.ca/planonit

