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IDEAS AT THE CROSSROADS OF INSPIRED COMMUNITIES

THIS ISSUE:

Technology is a powerful tool. It can distract us from what is important in life, or it can help us address society's most complex and urgent issues. 05

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Who helped you on your career path to becoming an RPP?

As an RPP, you know how important it is for planning students and new graduates to gain experience through internships, co-ops, and entry-level positions. Think back to who supported you and how much that first job influenced your career and helped you get your start.

The pandemic has created a shortage of employment opportunities for students and new graduates on the pathway to becoming RPPs. It is a serious concern for the planning profession.

What the pandemic has not affected is the enthusiasm and dedication of the students. If anything, COVID-19 has increased their desire to gain the experience they need to have a role in building a better future.

Internships can be virtual, which means planning firms and departments outside the normal reach of Ontario planning programs can now more easily host a student. Planning students have already pivoted to virtual planning education, and they are capable and ready to do the same to gain their work experience if needed.

Many supports are already in place to help employers, including wage subsidies, free job postings, and career fairs.

Whether you work in a planning department, firm, think tank, or not-for-profit organization, consider creating a new position for a planning student or new graduate.

The future needs planners, and future planners need your help.

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TECH CENTRAL: THE WATERLOO REGION

The Waterloo Region is renowned as a start-up ecosystem and an innovation hub that actively encourages and supports the growth of technology companies and the people who work in the tech industry.

It's home to Communitech, Canada's top innovation hub; The Accelerator Centre, Canada's #1 private business accelerator; and Velocity, Canada's most productive incubator. In 2020, the Waterloo Region topped the CBRE list of North American emerging tech talent markets, indicating a 51 per cent growth in tech jobs over the previous five years.

Then there is the Toronto Waterloo Innovation Corridor, Canada's version of the Silicon Valley. It's the second largest technology cluster in North America with an estimated 9,700 tech companies and 17 post-secondary institutions along a stretch of 112 kilometres. That's about six million people and about 150 languages – truly a global tech hub.

This issue of Y *Magazine* features several articles from RPPs in Kitchener-Waterloo, including Garret Stevenson, RPP, and Margaret Love from the City of Kitchener (page 06); Michelle Drake, RPP, from the City of Kitchener (page 11); Kate

Hagerman, RPP, and Kate Daley from the Region of Waterloo (page 17); and Ryan Mounsey, this issue's RPP Profile, from the Region of Waterloo (page 36).

Waterloo Region Economic Development https://www.waterlooedc.ca/en/industries/information-and-communications-technology.aspx

Toronto Waterloo Innovation Corridor https://thecorridor.ca

"… technology is a powerful tool. It can distract us from what is important in life, or it can help us address society's most complex and urgent issues."

When I was a young adult, I had a healthy fear of credit cards. Having heard stories about people getting themselves into significant debt and the negative impacts on relationships, I was reluctant to get my first credit card. I believe it was my dad who finally said to me that credit cards are a tool – neither good nor bad – and that they can be extremely valuable if managed properly.

My feelings about technology are similar. I've always been a little wary of technology, reluctantly embracing many of the conveniences it provides, while still holding on tight to my paper books and avoiding social media whenever I can.

For a long time, I have contemplated whether each technological advancement is good or bad, whether it is improving our level of happiness as a society or distracting us from what really matters. I think about how we spend our time, and how even with smart houses and laundry that pretty much does itself, we still struggle to find time to do the things that bring us joy or spend time with the people we love. And then there was COVID-19.

As difficult as the last year and a half has been, I do acknowledge that if this pandemic had happened before advancements in technology, it would have been so much more difficult to get by. I am certainly zoomed out, like I am sure others are feeling, but I have appreciated the ability to stay connected virtually, the convenience of e-commerce, the adoption of our health-care system to virtual care, and the technological advancements that helped us get to a vaccine so quickly. It gets me thinking about where we go from here. As physical limitations are being removed and we can be together in person again, which elements of technology will stick? How can we leverage technology to deal with our current mega issues, such as climate change and inequity?

Like credit cards, technology is a powerful tool. It can distract us from what is important in life, or it can help us address society's most complex and urgent issues. As a

tool, it does not have morals, and in applying the tool, we set the values to guide its use. In this issue of Y *Magazine*, you will learn about examples of Registered Professional Planners leveraging technology to support long-term community needs.

This is my final Y *Magazine* President's Message. It has been a crazy two years, and not the term I expected. Priorities have had to evolve, but I have learned so much and really appreciate the experience. I have seen first-hand the integrity, dedication, and passion that Registered Professional Planners demonstrate every day towards improving communities for existing and future generations. These values will be essential as we address the issues of today and tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Justine Giancola, RPP
President
Ontario Professional Planners Institute

Photo courtesy of Adam Clark, Senior Urban Designer (Architecture and Urban Form), City of Kitchener.

Building a city for everyone:
Kitchener's approach to breaking down barriers through technology

BY GARETT STEVENSON, RPP, MCIP, AND MARGARET LOVE

K itchener is changing, growing, and adapting at a record rate. According to a 2021 report released by Statistics Canada, Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo is tied for the second fastest growing city in Canada. In just a few short years, 18 projects worth almost $1 billion will more than double the core's population and radically transform the community's skyline. This has required staff to meet and sustain a higher-than-normal level of demand in terms of development approvals. While generally a positive, development pressures can also bring a number of challenges, including workload pressures, deterioration of customer service, and increased opposition to new developments in existing communities.

Leaders at the City of Kitchener responded by looking at how the City's development functions interact and making improvements, resulting in clearer accountability, stronger collaboration, and, ultimately, a better customer experience. Grounded in a shared vision of "a city for everyone" and a mission of working together, growing thoughtfully, and building community, a multi-year review using Lean methodologies positions the City of Kitchener as a leader in streamlined and value-added development review processes. It has also achieved tangible, sustainable results for

> "...development pressures can also bring a number of challenges, including workload pressures, deterioration of customer service, and increased opposition to new developments in existing communities."

Google Canada Kitchener-Waterloo office buildings

the organization and community, including better understanding of customers' experiences, reducing barriers to engagement, digitally transforming plan review, and reducing site plan approval time.

Two objectives of the review were to communicate clearly and effectively with our development community and public stakeholders and enhance team building, collaboration, and creative problem solving with our internal and external stakeholders.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY IN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND FILE MANAGEMENT

Significantly, over half of the review was completed in the midst of constant change due to the global pandemic. Team members were required to work from home, and a number of services migrated to digital by necessity.

Bluebeam Revu software was introduced as an outcome of the review, which allowed for a smooth transition to new work circumstances for staff, while transforming application submission, circulation, review, and feedback process for the development community. This improvement equipped staff for resilient service delivery during the pandemic, and staff were well positioned for accelerated implementation to all development review commenting parties across the corporation. Fifty-six staff were trained via virtual live sessions and recorded tutorials and are now using Bluebeam Revu software, and subject matter experts are seeing comments being added in real time via the cloud. This has improved the quality of reviews, due to live collaboration and communication between reviewers. Staff use Bluebeam Studio, a cloud-based collaboration tool, which enables them to view the comments of other reviewers in real time.

Comments for each subject matter expert are colour-coded and there is accountability for staff to proactively review and resolve conflicting comments. Both staff and the development community are reaping the benefits of this digital improvement in a 50 per cent time savings to complete red-line review and a 60 per cent reduction in site plan review from pre-submission consultation to approval in principle. Applicants and their consultants no longer need to make physical trips for plan drop-off/pick-up, and there is a new process for digital submission and circulation. Building off of this improvement, staff are now streamlining the field inspection process using iPads.

AMANDA data is also being leveraged to report on key performance indicators through a new GIS-based dashboard for development applications as well as to provide on-demand application status reports for applicants. The dashboard allows both management and staff to see the lead time for key process milestones, set targets, and review files that are exceeding the set targets.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Citizens are seeing improvements in City-led public engagement for development applications. The community is excited about a new user-friendly approach to access information on development applications using an intuitive and visual map-based interface: Kitchener's Planning Applications Map. Moreover, the Planning Applications Map creates transparency and goes above and beyond *Planning Act* requirements by providing access to all studies, reports, and engagement opportunities related to planning applications in one location.

All planning notices now include a direct link to the Planning Applications Map, which not only lists all current applications but also highlights applications with recent public activity. This application leverages data already stored in AMANDA and pushes it to the map interface daily, without any additional steps required by the development review team. Since launching the application in late April 2021, we have seen an increase in people accessing the map, especially immediately after a development application is circulated.

Public engagement is a key part of municipal decision making around development, yet municipalities often struggle to engage effectively and beyond the vocal few. By identifying gaps in public engagement processes and implementing improvements to remove barriers, cities can move to more equity-informed citizen engagement opportunities.

Standardized, visually appealing, and easy-to-read postcards, property signs, and newspaper notifications have replaced technical, text-based formats for public planning notices, which were difficult to understand and created a barrier to engagement and understanding. Planning staff received Photoshop training and use a suite of templates to prepare their notices, which has resulted in a time saving for staff.

Our GIS team leverages information brought into the corporate database from our financial and AMANDA staff to create spatial connections using OnPoint software, resulting in a mailing list for occupants and owners. Notices are now circulated using a radius of two times the legislated requirement.

Staff developed an interactive Planning 101 Workshop to help citizens develop a general understanding of key planning topics and principles. Originally planned for in-person delivery, staff pivoted during the pandemic to facilitate virtual content, which is now accessible on the City's YouTube channel.

Using VoiceMap©, digital walking tours were also created with the goal of providing opportunities for citizens to engage with the urban landscape at their own pace while learning about how their city has grown and will continue to grow. Launched in February 2021, new content will be added on an ongoing basis. Beginning with Victoria Park & Heritage Conservation District and the historical Civic Centre District, which have already launched, a Downtown Kitchener Architectural tour and Chicopee: Bridges, Trails and Landscapes tour are currently in development and will be added shortly.

Since launching these (and more!) process improvements, Kitchener has received customer satisfaction ratings between 80 per cent and 90 per cent and developed a culture of continuous improvement that has permeated all levels of the organization. Kitchener is at the forefront of innovation in municipal development services, with a continuous improvement culture to sustain gains. Ⓦ

Garett Stevenson, RPP, MCIP, is a Member of OPPI and Manager of Development Review, Planning Division, for the City of Kitchener. **Margaret Love** is Manager of Service Coordination and Improvement, Development Services, for the City of Kitchener.

Using technology to boost participatory planning

BY SONJA MACDONALD AND PAUL SHAKER, RPP

The use of technology to help with public engagement in the planning process has seen a big boost during the COVID pandemic. While physical distancing requirements have limited traditional models of engagement, such as PICs or open houses, it has also exposed how, in many ways, these methods are no longer the best and only ways to effectively engage residents in shaping the future of their communities.

Effective use of engagement tech is about more than doing the same in a digital space. If the best we can do is hold a video chat in lieu of an in-person meeting or post a PowerPoint presentation on a website, we are not seizing the full potential of technology. At its best, engagement tech can be used to reshape the planning process, not just how we engage. There are examples of how technology can take engagement to another level and, in some cases, flip the script on the traditional planner-citizen dynamic. Engagement tech is giving citizens a whole host of new ways to not only participate in traditional planning processes, but to help shape and initiate those processes themselves. Here are two examples from our experience.

PLANLOCAL STREET SPACE

One positive outcome of the pandemic is that people are making better use of public spaces, including streets, trails, or bike paths, than they were before. Even with staged re-openings, a new expectation has emerged around designing more people-friendly streets to anticipate a new normal over the coming months or years.

In a departure from the top-down approach to planning, growing grassroots engagement is helping identify the needs for better streets on the ground to help inform decision makers. This bottom-up approach is being made possible by the work of professional planners combined with new digital engagement tools. In our work, we have partnered with a variety of local organizations to help advance this important discussion in several cities across Canada, using a custom online engagement tool to gather spatial information about the locations and types of interventions needed around cities.

The tool was put in the hands of local organizations in a variety of communities including Guelph, Ottawa, Regina, and Saskatoon, which then promoted it through their networks. What results is a live, real-time discussion on a crowd-map of areas of concern. The data is then organized and provided in an open-source format to residents and decision makers for use in future planning, whether next week, next month, or in the years to come.

> **"One positive outcome of the pandemic is that people are making better use of public spaces..."**

THE DAILY SCHOOL ROUTE

In another context, we are using technology to help increase the walk-to-school rates among elementary-aged children in Hamilton through an initiative called The Daily School Route. Partnering with the local schools themselves, engagement tech is being used to understand existing travel patterns and barriers through mapping,

PlanLocal Street Space interactive crowd mapping tool for collecting ideas on how to make streets better in a Covid environment.

engagement, and analysis. The outputs are being used to create an alternative transportation system for kids with the data feeding into secondary planning, transportation planning, and neighbourhood smart commute initiatives. Equally as important, the results are made available to parents, kids, and school communities, which provide helpful feedback and tools they can use to plan their walk to school on a day-to-day basis. Technology has made this possible though user-friendly and cost-effective data collection that can be aggregated year over year to track trends.

In the end, engagement tech is effective when it is designed to meet people where they are at. As national statistics suggest, this is more and more online. According to Statistics Canada, 88 per cent of Canadians own a smartphone, while 91 per cent of residents 15 years and older use the internet. Where previously age was believed to be a barrier to access, we have found

The Daily School Route
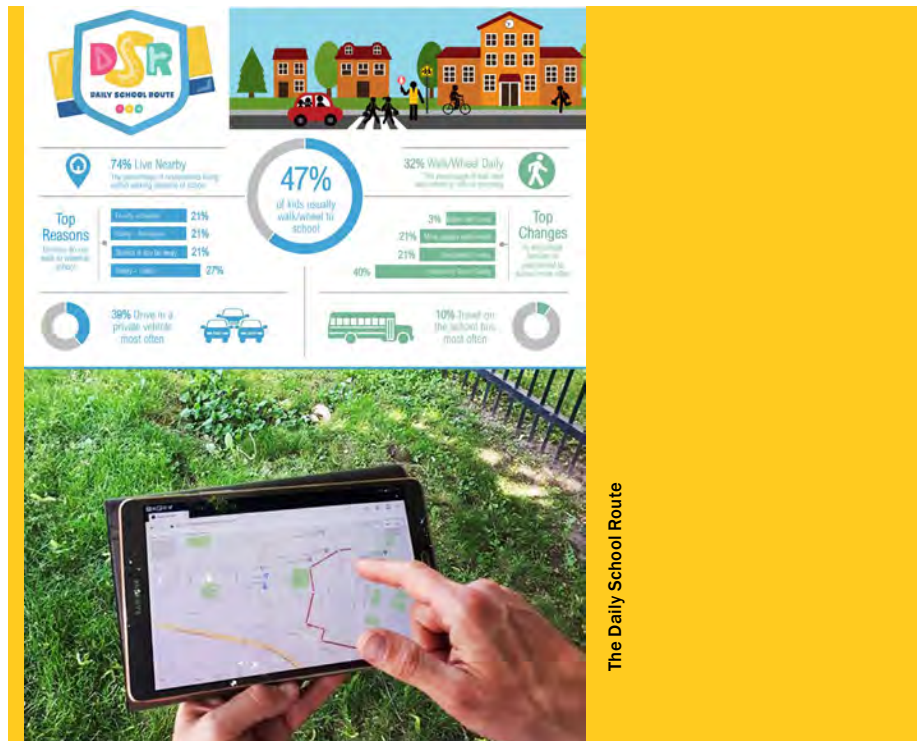
that digital engagement now reaches across demographics. National statistics indicate that 71 per cent of seniors in Canada reported internet use in 2018, which marked a 23 per cent increase over a six-year period.

COVID did not initiate these trends, it merely accelerated it. Moving forward, professional planners need to do more than just meet the minimum standard of public engagement. There is a real opportunity now to use engagement tech to bring more people into the process with participatory planning. This means much more than building a static webpage – it means thoughtfully designed digital engagement that provides residents with a meaningful role in shaping their communities. Ⓦ

Sonja Macdonald is a Principal with Civicplan. **Paul Shaker, MCIP, RPP,** is a Member of OPPI and a Principal with Civicplan. Civicplan is a firm specializing in participatory planning and digital engagement. For more information, visit civicplan.ca.

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Technology helps define neighbourhood character: Kitchener's comprehensive neighbourhood planning approach

BY MICHELLE DRAKE, RPP

Neighbourhoods are the roots of our cities and as they grow, they develop their own unique identity. One aspect of identity is cultural heritage. Municipalities are required to have regard for matters of provincial interest such as the conservation of features of significant cultural interest. The Provincial Policy Statement (2020) expands on these interests to encourage comprehensive planning approaches, long-term economic prosperity by conserving features that help define character, and more specifically, the conservation of significant cultural heritage landscapes (CHLs). Policies in the Region of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener Official Plans provide further direction. Kitchener identified 55 significant CHLs between 2012 and 2015 to develop an inventory – Kitchener's Cultural Heritage Landscape (CHL) Study.

"Kitchener identified 55 significant CHLs between 2012 and 2015 to develop an inventory – Kitchener's Cultural Heritage Landscape (CHL) Study."

Proposed CHL boundary and heritage attributes

COMPREHENSIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Acknowledging the importance of comprehensive neighbourhood planning, Kitchener initiated the Neighbourhood Planning Review (NPR) project in 2018 to review outdated secondary plans and develop new policies, by-laws, and guidelines to support growth while balancing multiple interests. One such interest was the conservation of cultural heritage resources (CHRs) by encouraging development that is respectful of CHRs and contributes to neighbourhood character. Kitchener's CHL Study identified 12 established neighbourhoods worthy of conservation, including the Cedar Hill Neighbourhood CHL. Heritage Planning and Urban Design staff acknowledged the relationship between their disciplines and sought input from residents regarding neighbourhood character.

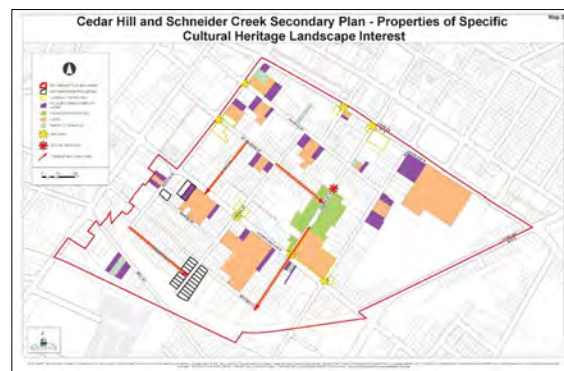## TECHNOLOGY ASSISTS WITH BALANCING GROWTH AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

As part of the review of the Cedar Hill Neighbourhood Secondary Plan, planners used technology to inform opportunities to balance growth and CHL conservation. Traditional fieldwork was enhanced with GIS data, 3D

3D model of Cedar Hill Neighbourhood CHL

modelling, and LiDAR imagery. Map 1 (above) shows both the proposed secondary plan and CHL boundary along with heritage attributes.

During fieldwork, planners documented current conditions using an evaluation form that referenced the CHL values and attributes from Kitchener's CHL Study. Examples include topography, narrow streetscapes, consistent street edge, and significant views and vistas. Planners also reviewed various GIS datasets such as existing zoning, existing CHRs, ground elevations, street right-of-way widths, Grand River Conservation Area regulation limits, building age, and aerial photography. For the first time in Kitchener, planners used LiDAR technology to better understand the existing tree canopy and how it contributes to the CHL.

Properties of specific CHL interest

Fieldwork, GIS datasets, and LiDAR imagery were reviewed, together with the preliminary land use designations for individual properties, to assist in identifying where proposed land use and associated zoning may conflict with CHL conservation interests. One particular interest was the topography of the area,

which creates distant views along streets towards the southwest and beyond. The long view atop Cedar Hill at the crest of Cedar Street South was identified as a heritage attribute worthy of conservation by planning staff as well as most respondents who provided comments regarding neighbourhood character. The evaluation of this view was completed with the use of photographs, 3D modelling (page 12), and LiDAR imagery to help appreciate the width and distance of the view and how best to regulate the lands within the area to protect the viewshed.

Planning tools such as land use (low-rise residential), zoning (specific regulations to control building heights, setbacks and built form), and area-specific guidelines (design for changes in elevation between neighbouring sites, public spaces, views and vistas, and the street) have been identified to regulate development and protect the viewshed. Twenty-one properties within the viewshed have specific

> **"Undertaking a comprehensive neighbourhood planning approach enabled planners to collaborate and share common objectives geared at balancing multiple interests."**

CHL interest and development on these lands will be regulated (e.g., zoning, Heritage Impact Assessment requirement). Map 2 (page 12) identifies properties of significant cultural heritage interest. Implementation of this work is not final due to recent changes in the Provincial Growth Plan and the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan. It is anticipated that Kitchener's NPR will be considered by Council in early 2023.

LESSONS LEARNED

Undertaking a comprehensive neighbourhood planning approach enabled planners to collaborate and share common objectives geared at balancing multiple interests. Planners realized the importance of plain language by recognizing that terms such as "urban design" and "cultural heritage" may not be fully understood or may generate misconceptions from the public. The key concern to residents was neighbourhood character – e.g., What do they like or not like? What makes their neighbourhood unique? What contributes to their neighbourhood identity? Various traditional and technological tools were critical in understanding the current context and how changes in land use, zoning, and urban design guidelines may support development that respects neighbourhood character. ⓨ

Michelle Drake, MAES, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and a Heritage Planner with the City of Kitchener leading the work to protect cultural heritage landscapes.

Mapping for collaboration and data-driven policy

BY KARA NAKLICKI, RPP, PHILIP PARKER, AND BILL WARREN

T he City of Toronto's City Planning Division is currently exploring ways to increase low-rise housing options in residential neighbourhoods. Amidst continued growth and demand for housing, and particular interest in options like garden suites and multiplexes, this project asks big questions: what types of buildings are appropriate to allow, and where? How many new housing units might result, and where in Toronto could they be built? To answer these questions, the project team turned to geospatial technology to inform policy options.

"What types of buildings are appropriate to allow, and where?"

A PLATFORM FOR VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

The team used ArcGIS Portal to tackle two challenges with the project: sharing information internally with over 40 planners working remotely and creating new spatial data collaboratively.

One of the project's challenges is that it requires analysis at both municipal and lot-specific scales, which is difficult to present using static maps. ArcGIS Portal solved this problem by allowing the team

to create a dynamic web map with over 30 data layers, allowing the user to zoom and toggle layers for custom views. Using Portal, large-scale features like Toronto's transit network could be shown on the same map as individual street trees, rather than the time-consuming task of creating several versions of static maps with different symbology. The exploratory nature of web mapping also allowed the users to answer different questions using one map product.

> "Using Portal, large-scale features like Toronto's transit network could be shown on the same map as individual street trees..."

After the initial research phase, the team needed to work together to identify potential sites for expanding housing options. Previous versions of this type of work involved printing large-format paper maps and marking them up around a conference room table, with the results digitized by staff with geospatial expertise. Applying technology to enable this work in a digital environment, the team extended editing permissions to a small group of planners, giving them the ability to identify potential sites and add data to the map. The identified sites were viewable instantly by the larger team and allowed work to happen across the division in different locations by multiple people at the same time, leading to a faster finished product.

ENABLING DATA-DRIVEN POLICY

To create meaningful draft regulations for garden suites in Toronto, planners needed to understand the current landscape: what sizes and types of residential lots are typical, and can they accommodate garden suites? How are the feasibility and size of potential garden suites impacted by adjusting draft setback and rear yard coverage requirements?

> "Deriving spatial information for individual parcels gave the team the ability to refine project analysis further by incorporating data into a lot-feasibility calculator."

Answering these questions required more comprehensive information about municipal parcels than is typically available. Previous data collection methods of manually measuring parcels lot by lot were labour-intensive and not feasible for analyzing thousands of lots in a matter of weeks. With the need for a large and diverse dataset to analyze, and a tight timeline, the team employed scripting and geospatial techniques to design a tool that would automatically calculate spatial attributes of municipal parcels.

The resulting "Lot Study" tool combines the Python programming language, geometry, and ArcGIS Pro tools to create an interactive environment for producing customized data. For garden suite analysis, staff ran the automated tool to calculate lot dimensions, including frontage, structural setbacks, and rear yard statistics.

The tool works by identifying parcel lot line types (front, rear, sides) based on their surrounding spatial context and infrastructure. It combines this data with building footprints to measure and generate lot dimensions and attributes. Other tool capabilities include automatically generating study area maps, statistical summaries, and tabular data including information drawn from zoning, Committee of Adjustment decisions, and building permits.

Deriving spatial information for individual parcels gave the team the ability to refine project analysis further by incorporating data into a lot-feasibility calculator. The feasibility calculator includes draft zoning requirements as adjustable variables and allows the calculation of potential building footprints for garden suites across thousands of actual Toronto parcels. This allowed staff

> "... the result is policy and regulation informed by reality."

to flexibly test many different options within the context of the existing zoning by-law, as one of many inputs to further review by-law design to achieve good planning and more housing options.

The findings will inform ongoing public consultation on expanding housing options and the garden suite initiative and City Planning's eventual recommendations for garden suite permissions. Call it data-driven policy, ground-truthing, or evidence-based planning – the result is policy and regulation informed by reality. Ⓨ

Kara Naklicki, RPP, is a Member of OPPI, Planner with the City of Toronto's Planning Research and Analytics team, and member of the City Planning team studying garden suites. **Philip Parker** is a Senior Planner with the City of Toronto's Planning Research and Analytics team and co-lead of the City Planning team studying multiplexes. **Bill Warren** is a Senior Planner with the City of Toronto's Planning Research and Analytics team, and resident GIS and Python expert.

Waterloo Region shows that solving climate change is a winning economic development approach

BY KATE HAGERMAN, RPP, AND KATE DALEY

Why should you live here when you can live anywhere? Communities with a compelling answer to this question will be the ones that thrive and build strong local economies in the coming decades. They will also be the ones that are transforming their communities to solve climate change.

The economic development implications of "being a great place to be" are clear. COVID has brought unprecedented change in how people live and work. While our economic development efforts have often focused on attracting businesses, we are recognizing that white-collar workers will increasingly work remotely. For our communities to grow and thrive, we will need to attract highly

"For our communities to grow and thrive, we will need to attract highly mobile workers who can choose to live anywhere in the world."

Photo Credit: Communitech & Sara Jalali

mobile workers who can choose to live anywhere in the world. City building for individual talent attraction and retention is becoming an increasingly important economic development imperative.

"We know from science that we need to meet aggressive 2030 and 2050 GHG reduction targets — and we can't do it by tinkering around the edges."

At the same time, communities in Ontario and across the world are coming to terms with the urgency of climate change. It's a global problem. Fortunately, it has local causes and local solutions. Solving climate change is essential to maintaining a high quality of life, both at home and in the international context in which we live.

It's tempting to try to meet our GHG reduction goals by changing as few things about our lives as possible. Buy an EV instead of a gasoline car. Change your fuel source at home so you're not using propane or natural gas.

But these small changes aren't enough. We know from science that we need to meet aggressive 2030 and 2050 GHG reduction targets – and we can't do it by tinkering around the edges. The communities we have built in the 20th century are overwhelmingly energy inefficient. Suburban-style development means long travel distances in high-energy personal vehicles, and a lot of energy and money used to build and maintain vehicle infrastructure. Existing buildings allow heated and cooled air to escape through walls and windows. Our food and goods come from all over the world. Many goods are created and transported across continents, used for a short time, and then transported again to be thrown away.

Responding to climate change will require substantially transforming our communities to be energy efficient and low carbon, over the next decade and beyond. These changes are necessary but are also opportunities to enhance the places we live.

We are in the midst of a global energy transition that will define the 21st century. What does this transition mean for our local economic development? We can create local jobs by retrofitting our buildings and our infrastructure to transition off fossil fuels. We can create even more by incubating and attracting clean energy companies that will lead the world through the energy transition. But the biggest economic development opportunity is building highly

desirable, energy efficient communities where people can lead fulfilling, robust lives while meeting their daily needs close to home by walking, cycling, or rolling.

So, our communities are facing two concurrent challenges: COVID economic recovery and a global energy transition. These challenges give our communities an opportunity to go beyond "Building Back Better" as we plan our economic recovery.

"The biggest economic development opportunity is building highly desirable, energy efficient communities where people can lead fulfilling, robust lives while meeting their daily needs close to home..."

TransformWR

Waterloo Region is leading the way on transformative climate action. Over the last two years, the Region of Waterloo has joined with the three cities and four townships in the region to collaboratively develop and endorse the TransformWR community climate action strategy, through the innovative ClimateActionWR collaborative led by two local environment non-profits. In the spring of 2021, all eight municipalities endorsed TransformWR as their official climate change mitigation strategy to achieve an 80 per cent reduction in community emissions by 2050.

TransformWR is about much more than reducing emissions – it outlines a path for everyone in the community, including municipalities, to help transform Waterloo Region into an equitable, prosperous, resilient low-carbon community.

To do this, TransformWR focuses on long-term strategies and short-term actions to achieve these Six Transformative Changes by 2050:

1. Most trips are taken using active transportation, with the support of a robust public transit system.

2. Remaining personal and commercial vehicles are zero emissions vehicles.

3. Businesses and homes no longer use fossil fuels for space heating and cooling and water heating.

4. Waterloo Region uses less, wastes less, and no longer disposes organic matter in landfills.

5. Waterloo Region has a thriving local food system built on local farming and food processing that feeds much of our community.

6. Waterloo Region has leveraged GHG reductions to increase equity, prosperity, and resiliency for all.

These transformative changes will significantly reduce energy usage in Waterloo Region and enable the use of clean and renewable energy to power our homes, businesses, and remaining vehicles. But they will do much more than that. They will help us rebuild our community to be a place where people can live, work, and move from

"Waterloo Region is leading the way on transformative climate action."

place to place without using much energy and with higher quality of life. In short, these changes will be key to making Waterloo Region the place where people want to live when they can live anywhere.

As communities across Ontario and across the world prepare for the energy transition, their economic development needs will be best served by thinking big and transforming their energy use by transforming their communities – for the better.

Kate Hagerman, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and Manager of Environmental Planning and Sustainability, Region of Waterloo. **Kate Daley** is Environmental Sustainability Specialist, Region of Waterloo.
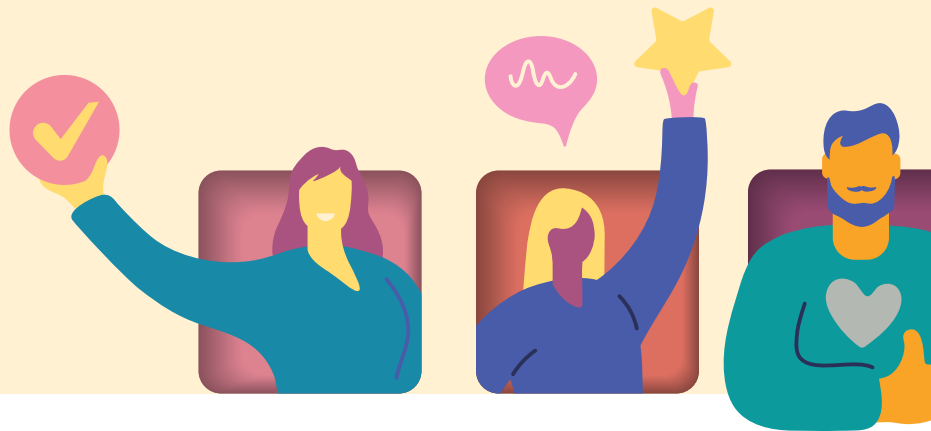
Online community consultations:
Revisiting the challenges experienced and the opportunities embraced during the pandemic

BY REKA SIVARAJAH

As we plan for a new kind of post-pandemic normalcy, "hybrid" is a popular word that we keep using and hearing. For many of us, this refers to our future working environments. In the community consultation realm, this refers to how we may be conducting consultation programs.

> "...a hybrid approach to community consultation — an approach that incorporates in-person and online meetings."

Ways to conduct community consultations during the pandemic have been much discussed in the recent past. Whether a municipal staff, a developer, or a community engagement practitioner, many agreed that there are pros and cons to online stakeholder or community meetings and foresee a hybrid approach to community consultation — an approach that incorporates in-person and online meetings.

Over the last 1.5 years or so, city builders convened online to engage in the development application review process. Online stakeholder and community meetings were reasonably novel to everyone involved, including community members, municipal staff, consultants, developers, and elected officials. It took effort and time, but we adapted. Let's revisit the challenges experienced and opportunities embraced when planning and implementing online meetings for development applications.

CHALLENGES

Plethora of platform options: During the pandemic, we have been exposed to several digital communication platforms like Zoom, Google Hangout, WebEx, GoToMeeting, Livestorm, and so forth. The platforms have different capabilities and, therefore, provide different meeting experiences. To effectively find the best platform, develop a list of criteria important to the engagement program and/ or individual meetings. Questions to consider: What is the purpose of the program or meeting? Who makes up the key stakeholders and the broader community? At what point in the project are we engaging the stakeholders and the community?

> "The community's participation experience has and always will be the utmost priority for community engagement practitioners."

Varying levels of technology comfort: We have to assume that the presenters and attendees have different levels of comfort with technology. To align everyone's comfort, assign a technical navigator. Having at least one technologically savvy person is important to running smooth online meetings with little to no technical issues. This person would be responsible for researching platforms, running tests, and documenting tips for the audience. Overall, the technical navigator would make sure everyone using the platform knows enough about the platform to fulfill their meeting role as a presenter or an attendee.

> "Individuals can be anonymous at meetings as they voice their opinions — particularly important for vulnerable and marginalized community members, and those who may be providing comments that are not aligned with a more vocal majority."

Community's changing expectations: Given the pandemic, convening online has been the only option to safely host community consultation meetings. Some stakeholder groups have concerns about their efficacy and accessibility; others appreciate that the format enables their participation when they never would have been able to attend in person. When the public health and safety restrictions are lifted, there will be expectations to shift to a hybrid approach (i.e., in-person and online). Collaborating with key stakeholders to design consultation programs on a case-by-case basis will help community engagement practitioners better understand and adapt to the specific needs of the community.

OPPORTUNITIES

More participation: The range of demographics and the number of community members that can participate have expanded during the pandemic. A wide range of interests and needs is represented. Reasons for this shift may include the following: (1) participants can join meetings from anywhere they have an internet connection; (2) easy to fit meetings into schedules because of saved travel time and flexibility to multitask during meetings; and (3) individuals can be anonymous at meetings as they voice their opinions – particularly important for vulnerable and marginalized community members, and those who may be providing comments that are not aligned with a more vocal majority.

"This is a major shift we need to seize going forward."

"Go to where people are:" One of the best practices in community engagement is to go to where the audiences are when sharing information and seeking input. Online meetings allow community engagement practitioners to do just that. Having dedicated project websites in tandem with online meetings enhances the public's engagement experience. Project websites reach a wide network of communities; this tool gives people easy access to project information and the project team (through online comment forms) from where they are.

Centring the community's participation experience: The community's participation experience has and always will be the utmost priority for community engagement practitioners. During the pandemic, this goal became more of a shared priority among project teams. All key consultants (e.g., architects, transportation consultants, and civil engineers) invested more time preparing and organizing for seamless online stakeholder or community

meetings. This augmented preparation and organization helps everyone focus on the project information and community feedback on the day of the meeting (rather than technical/logistical distractions). The importance of a robust community engagement program resonates with a wider range of consultants now more than ever before.

Pre-pandemic, online consultation was seen by many as an unconventional method of consultation. Now, the pandemic has forced it to be a conventional method – this is a major shift we need to seize going forward. The challenges and opportunities encountered during the pandemic will ease us into a hybrid approach to community consultation programs. As always, community engagement practitioners will be prepared to adapt to new realities and the needs of the communities we work with. ⓨ

Reka Sivarajah, MES, is a Senior Project Manager within the Community Engagement Practice at Bousfields Inc. A big thanks to Jocelyn Deeks, **RPP, MCIP,** who is a Member of OPPI and a Partner and Community Engagement Lead at Bousfields Inc., for reviewing this article.
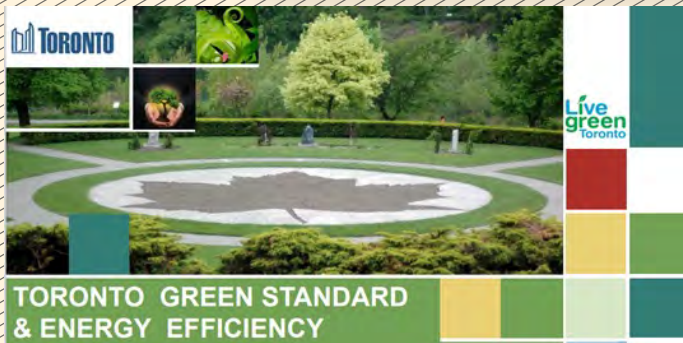
Clockwise from the top: Thinking Green Development Standards, East Gwillimbury; Green Development Standards Information Guide, Halton Hills; Toronto Green Standard & Energy Efficiency, City of Toronto.

Green development standards

BY ROB RAPPOLT, CHRISTINA SCHWANTES, AND ANDRIA SALLESE, RPP

Ontario municipalities are increasingly seeking opportunities to implement proactive approaches to climate change adaptation, resilience, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction (i.e., mitigation). While provincial policies provide high-level guidance on climate resilience and mitigation, municipalities and regional partnerships have demonstrated leadership in advancing climate-related policies and standards through official plans, zoning by-laws, and other tools.

Green Development Standards (GDS) are one of various tools used by municipalities to guide land use and infrastructure planning towards more sustainable and climate resilient communities. However, the level of detail and stringency of GDS varies across communities. Some standards are voluntary, while others are embedded in the site plan control process. As more municipalities develop, update, or implement GDS, it is important to reflect on what works, what doesn't, and what municipalities should consider to ensure GDS achieve their intended objectives.

WHY ARE GREEN DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS APPEALING?

GDS cover a range of themes, including sustainable land use and green building requirements, recommendations for efficient energy and water use, waste diversion, active transportation, green/natural infrastructure, stormwater management, environmental protection, and more. Many municipalities throughout Ontario and across Canada have adopted GDS, often implemented through land use planning applications and approvals. Typically, applicants need to score a minimum number of points or meet certain criteria, demonstrating how the standards have been applied to obtain approval.

The benefits to municipalities in implementing GDS include:

Formalizing targets for sustainability, emissions reduction, and climate resilience within the design of communities, buildings, and infrastructure.

Enhancing the performance and resilience of transportation systems, infrastructure, and buildings.

Managing the environmental and emissions impacts of development projects.

Supporting developers in adopting sustainable practices that reduce long-term costs, enhance operations and maintenance, and render a more attractive development.

Achieving existing green building standards, such as CAGBC Zero Carbon Standard or Living Building Challenge, or certifications, such as LEED, EnerGuide, and more.

Attracting potential home buyers and new community members, many of whom are interested in sustainable and resilient design features.

Diversifying the local economy through the creation of new opportunities for trades and services, renewable energy partnerships, cost savings on green buildings, and more.
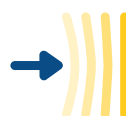
Improving community resilience, livability, and self-sufficiency through enhanced energy systems, reduced climate risks, local food and transportation systems, and more.

Implementing GDS requires a thoughtful and tailored approach that should be driven by local context. Municipalities should give careful consideration to a robust implementation framework, including, as an example, implementing policies through an official plan and ensuring that GDS metrics are well defined, measurable, and clear. We have identified five broad categories for consideration when developing GDS (see Implementation Consideration page 25). Although these considerations are noted separately, it should be understood that they are inter-related and contribute to the ongoing success of GDS.

"... regular monitoring of GDS, and the relevance of those metrics, can assist a municipality in achieving its sustainability goals over the long term."

KEEPING GDS RELEVANT

While GDS can help a municipality successfully achieve its official plan objectives for environmentally sustainable design, regular monitoring of GDS, and the relevance of those metrics, can assist a municipality in achieving its sustainability goals over the long term. Keeping GDS relevant means metrics should be regularly reviewed by evaluating what is working (e.g., stormwater management metrics mitigating sources of solid waste; trees being preserved and/or replaced with new development) and what is not (e.g., is biodiversity being enhanced?) and by appraising the industry appetite for certain criteria. Municipalities should consider continuous monitoring and user feedback using online forms and regular reporting. Based on evaluation, feedback, and data, municipalities can refine GDS metrics, thereby encouraging uptake and performance, and update its official plan policies, as necessary.

This article has offered some key considerations to implementing effective GDS. With these in mind, municipalities are well prepared to meaningfully and proactively respond to climate change and sustainability through GDS. Ⓨ

Cipriani, V. & Behan, K. "Towards Low Carbon Communities: Creating Municipal Green Development Standards. An Implementation Tool for Municipal Staff." Clean Air Partnership.
GDS-toolkit.pdf (cleanairpartnership.org)

Rob Rappolt is a Candidate Member of OPPI and a Project Planner at WSP.
Christina Schwantes is a Climate Change and Resilience Specialist at WSP.
Andria Sallese, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and a Senior Planner, Project Manager, at WSP.

⊙ IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

Complexity: Impact categories and associated metrics must be reasonable, measurable, and realistic. Metrics that are complex or difficult to measure will ultimately lead to administrative and interpretation challenges.

Administration: GDS may require changes to internal processes and protocols for municipal staff. For example, GDS may impact application-review timelines, require heightened inter-department coordination, and will require ongoing management of GDS.

Education: Municipal staff reviewing development applications should understand the purpose of GDS, its importance, and how it aligns with a municipality's strategic priorities. Provide regular updates to the buildings sector on mandatory standards and what tools and incentives may be available to help them meet higher standards.

Support: Long-term success of GDS necessarily requires broad support and buy-in from Council, municipal staff, industry, key stakeholders, and the community at large. A robust public-engagement program and ongoing education are key considerations in this regard.

Planning Act **considerations:** What types of *Planning Act* applications will trigger GDS? Will GDS be mandatory or discretionary? If discretionary, what are the incentives? Lastly, GDS require a robust monitoring, evaluation, and updating framework to remain relevant and applicable.

OPPI NEWEST RPPS

Each year, OPPI is pleased to welcome new Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) as Full members. Our newest RPPs have completed the certification process administered by the Professional Standards Board for the Planning Profession in Canada (PSB) which allows them to practice in the province of Ontario and use the RPP designation.

Welcome and congratulations to 109 new RPPs! We applaud your achievement, dedication, and commitment. RPPs are the professionals specifically educated, trained, and ethically committed to guiding decision makers, the public, and stakeholders in all sectors to help inform choices and inspire communities.

Learn more at www.ontarioplanners.ca/Newest-RPPs.

OPPI MEMBER SERVICE AWARDS

OPPI Member Service Awards acknowledge the extraordinary service and significant contribution of OPPI volunteers. The awards recognize volunteers who have raised awareness for the planning profession, mentored students or nurtured relationships, been involved with a special project or program, and more.

Congratulations to this year's Member Service Award recipients and thank you for your dedication to OPPI:

George McKibbon, RPP

David Stinson, RPP

Mark Dorfman, RPP

Kristy Kilbourne, RPP

Learn more at www.ontarioplanners.ca/Member-Service-Awards.

OPPI STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

OPPI understands that today's planning students are the Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) of tomorrow and provides student members with scholarship opportunities that award excellence and community contributions.

Congratulations to this year's student scholarship recipients:

DAVID PAU, RONALD M. KEEBLE UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP
David is an undergraduate student at University of Waterloo, B.E.S. (Planning) co-op program. He was also a member of OPPI's Student Liaison Committee.

LINDSEY SOON, GERALD CARROTHERS GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP
Lindsey is a graduate student at University of Waterloo, M.A. (Planning) program. She was also a member of OPPI's Student Liaison Committee and is currently on OPPI's Anti-Black Racism Task Force.

Learn more at www.ontarioplanners.ca/Scholarships.

OPPI STUDENT DELEGATE

Student planners are the future of the planning profession and OPPI encourages students to get involved early in their careers. Each year, one student member becomes the Student Delegate and chair of the OPPI Student Liaison Committee (SLC).

OPPI is pleased to welcome our Student Delegate for a second one-year term: **Regan Zink, Student Delegate, SLC**

Regan is a Candidate member of OPPI, recently completed her Master of Science in rural planning and development at the University of Guelph and is currently pursuing her PhD in rural studies.

The Student Delegate is the chair of the SLC, which is made up of OPPI student members from each of Ontario's accredited planning programs. This leadership network links planning students to OPPI, represents the interests of planning students across Ontario, and meets throughout the school year to promote student awareness and membership in OPPI, as well as events and programs targeted specifically to students.

Thank you for your volunteer service over the past year and we look forward to working with you and the SLC again this year!

Learn more at www.ontarioplanners.ca/Student-Liaison-Committee.

OPPI STRATEGIC PLAN

OPPI is in the midst of updating our strategic plan. We started the process by gathering member feedback and, at the same time, interviewing staff, OPPI Council members, District leaders, and small groups of other members and stakeholders for additional input. Thank you to all members who provided their insight!

The results of our member survey and interviews have been reviewed as part of our strategic planning process and the key findings were used to set strategic directions for OPPI over the next three years. We will continue to share updates on our strategic plan as they become available, and the final strategic plan will be released at our Annual General Meeting.

OPPI CONFERENCE '21
NOW.WHAT.

Moving forward in economic development and sustainability, technology and healing.

OPPI NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND AGENDA

The 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) will take place on Wednesday, October 6, 2021 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 2022 Council
- Proposed By-Law Changes
- Announcement of OPPI Strategic Plan

Notification of the call for nominations of Directors was sent to all members 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.

A request for submission of substantive motions for the AGM was sent to all members and posted on the OPPI website. No motions were received by the deadline. Motions concerning substantive issues that were not provided in writing will not be considered at the AGM.

Voting members (Full and Candidate practicing and retired) who cannot attend the meeting are asked to complete the online proxy form.

Learn more at www.ontarioplanners.ca.

OPPI MEMBERS RESIGNED OR REMOVED FROM THE REGISTRY

The following Full members have resigned in good standing from OPPI for the 2021 membership year:

Leon Bensason	Jacqueline Tschekalin	Brian Hudson
Ronald Watkin	Don May	Carl Brawley
Thomas Gettinby	Salvatore Aiello	Erika Brown
Lloyd Phillips	Brian Putman	Lindsay Ford
Linda Pim	Laura Atkins	Neil Cresswell
April Souwand	Shawn Callon	Julie Sarazin
Robert Trotter	Mark Rogers	Katherine Hatoum
Peter Homenuck	Kevin Curtis	Sharon Hill
Glen Easton	Glenn Scheels	Marion Denney
Louise Sweet	Maria Smith	Junghoon Oh
Jason Scott	Bruce Finlay	Rose Di Felice
Richard Scott	Ilda Cordeiro	Thomas Hardacre
E. Ross Pym	Pooja Kumar	Teresa Kerr
Lucy Hives	Rosalind Minaji	Erik Dickson

No Full members were removed from the register for non-payment of membership fees for 2021.

The following Full members have been removed from the register for non-compliance with OPPI's Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) requirement:

Leslie Cosburn	Christopher James	Jessica Wiley
Jeff Fielding	Caroline Kirkpatrick	Nathan Farrell
Mark Greenbaum	Luigino Moretto	
Anthony Greenberg	Mara Samardzic	

To raise questions or concerns, contact membership@ontarioplanners.ca.
Note: These names are accurate at time of printing.

OPPI PLANNERS CONNECT MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

OPPI is thrilled to launch a new member spotlight series on Planners Connect, our member-only community forum. Get to know your fellow OPPI members, share career insights, and build connections on our exclusive online community that connects planners from across Ontario to inform choices, inspire communities, and advance planning practices.

Log into Planners Connect at www.ontarioplanners.ca/Planners-Connect.

To nominate our next Member Spotlight, contact communications@ontarioplanners.ca.

Developing a pedestrian simulation model to estimate a vaccine centre capacity

BY REGAN GERL, ALYSSA MAE PORCIONCULA, AHMAD MOHAMMADI,
TANVIR CHOWDHURY, PETER PARK, TAVIA CHOW, RPP
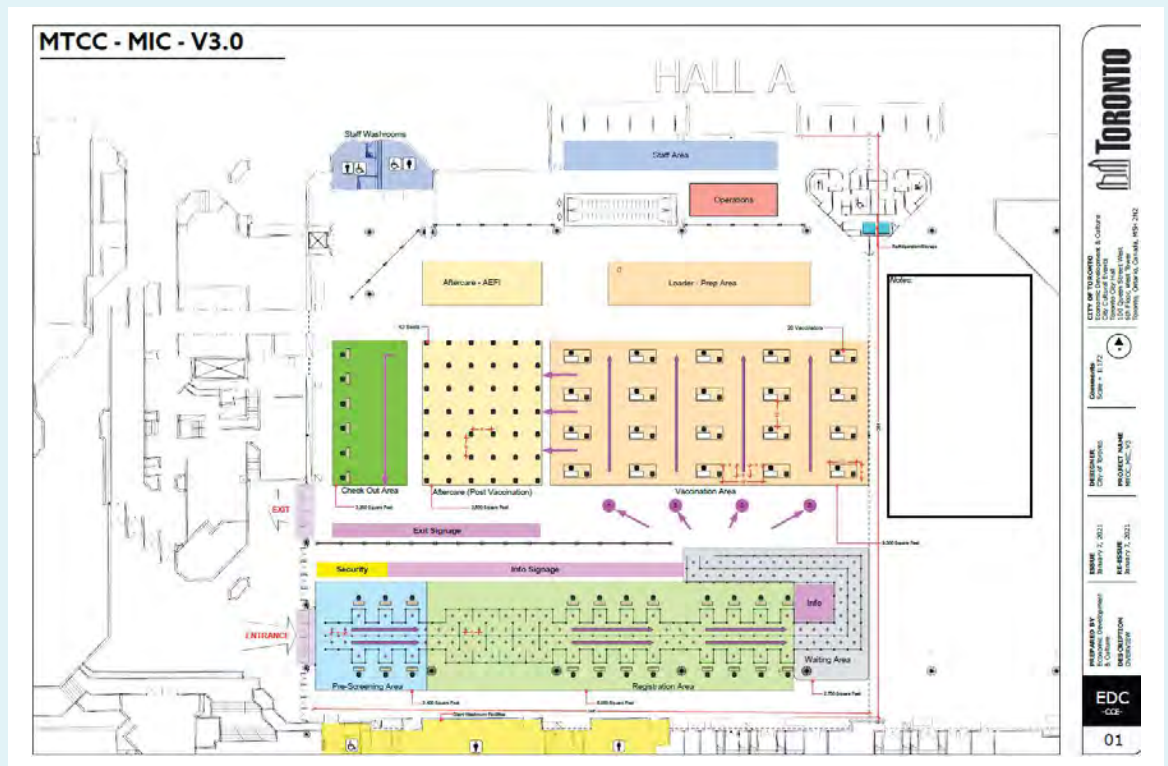
Figure 1: Overview of City of Toronto Vaccination Centre

Figure 2: City of Toronto's Vaccination Centre Simulation (shown here in six queueing areas).

Mass vaccination of the general public is recognized as essential for preventing the spread of COVID-19, but a mass vaccination program on the scale required has never been undertaken before. As many existing health-care sites (e.g., walk-in clinics) are not suitable for safely and efficiently providing service to large numbers of patients simultaneously, large unused facilities such as recreation centres and exhibition centres have been adapted. The adaptations raise various questions. What is the maximum capacity of the centre? Will physical distancing be maintained in the centre? What is the average wait time? What is the average service time?
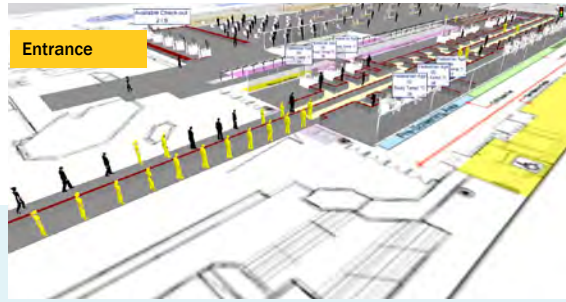
Entrance

Pre-screening

Registration

Vaccination

Aftercare

Check-out

Although collecting information in real-time would answer some of these questions, issues relating to the cost and complexity of data collection and the privacy of citizens make real-time data collection impractical. This study explores the use of simulation technology to examine the issues raised.

PTV VISWALK NOVEL SIMULATION

PTV Viswalk is a microscopic pedestrian traffic simulation tool with the ability to simulate pedestrian movement in an area (e.g., a vaccination centre).[1] In this study, PTV Viswalk was used to replicate a City of Toronto vaccination centre and interactions among pedestrians inside the centre. This simulation environment enables decision makers to define different scenarios and collect information for further analysis relating to physical distancing, capacity analysis, etc. Figure 1 shows an overview of the City of Toronto vaccination centre.[2]

VACCINATION CENTRE SIMULATION MODEL DESIGN

The vaccination centre was modelled with six queueing areas through which pedestrians were routed. These were:

Entrance: Patients queue outside the building before entering.

Pre-screening: This area consists of six booths, where the patient's age and body temperature are confirmed. As an example, the patient must be above a certain age (e.g., 12 or beyond), with a body temperature below 37 degrees Celsius. If the requirements are not met, the patient is routed out of the building using the designated exit.

Registration: This area consists of 16 booths, where the patient's appointment booking, personal information, and medical information in relation to the vaccine are confirmed.

Vaccination: This area consists of 20 booths. Once a booth is available, the patient will take a seat in the chair and expose their arm. The health-care professional will disinfect the vaccination area and deliver the vaccine to the patient.

"Although collecting information in real-time would answer some of these questions, issues relating to the cost and complexity of data collection and the privacy of citizens make real-time data collection impractical."

Aftercare: This area consists of 42 chairs, where patients will rest to ensure no adverse side effects of the vaccine occur.

Check-out: This area consists of six booths, where patients will receive a vaccine certificate and book an appointment for the second dose of the vaccine.

A video tour of the vaccination centre simulation model can be found using the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGysmC48Z64.

SIMULATION MODEL IMPLICATIONS

The first implication of the model is physical distancing. To imitate this, PTV Viswalk was programmed to maintain a distance of two metres between pedestrians as they queue or travel throughout the centre. If the distance between two pedestrians is greater than, equal to, or less than two metres, the pedestrians will appear grey, yellow, or red in colour, respectively. This colour scheme depicts frequencies of physical distancing violations. By increasing the pedestrian volume, decision makers can determine how often these violations occur. This will aid in determining the maximum capacity of the centre at which pedestrians can safely physical distance.
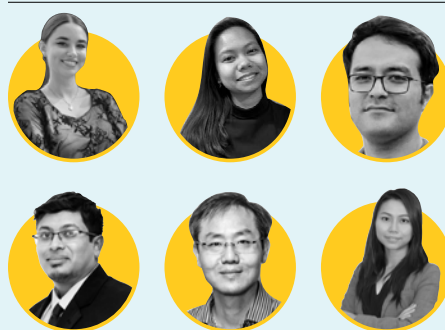
The second implications of the model are wait and service times. By increasing the pedestrian volume, the wait and service times can be observed. Therefore, decision makers can establish a maximum capacity for the centre that will not result in an extended queueing. Similarly, the wait and service times can be observed for varying numbers of available staff members in order to determine the number of staff members needed to prevent extended queueing.

FUTURE WORK

The study used a wide range of patient and staff volumes to estimate the maximum capacity of the vaccination centre and the resulting waiting and service times incurred when maintaining the required physical distancing to keep the risk of viral transmission as low as possible. The future work related to this study includes designing a website through which decision makers can immediately change a parameter and determine the result without using a simulation environment. Ⓨ

Regan Gerl is an Undergraduate Research Assistant at the Lassonde School of Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, York University. **Alyssa Mae Porcioncula** is an Undergraduate Research Assistant at the Lassonde School of Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, York University. **Ahmad Mohammadi** is a Graduate Research Assistant at the Lassonde School of Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, York University. **Tanvir Chowdhury** is a Graduate Research Assistant at the Lassonde School of Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, York University. **Peter Park** is an Associate Professor at the Lassonde School of Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, York University. **Tavia Chow**, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the Director of Planning at TraffMobility Engineering Inc., Toronto.

[1] PTV Viswalk, 2021. What is a Pedestrian Simulation? PTV Group. Available at: https://www.ptvgroup.com/en/solutions/products/ptv-viswalk/ [Accessed July 06, 2021].

[2] City of Toronto, 2021. Economic Development and Culture. Available at: https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/city-administration/staff-directory-divisions-and-customer-service/economic-development-culture/
[Accessed July 19, 2021].

BECOME AN RPP

Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) are people who move beyond simply dreaming of inspired, sustainable communities and choose to start building tangible, actionable plans to bring them to fruition. They visualize an outcome that will benefit our communities for generations to come and use their skills to bring diverse opinions together. The result is an informed, inspired Ontario.

The path to becoming an RPP starts by obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degree from one of Ontario's six university accredited planning programs:

University of Guelph

Ryerson University

University of Waterloo

Queen's University

University of Toronto

York University

Students in the planning programs at these schools can apply for student membership in OPPI.

TOP 10 REASONS
FOR STUDENTS TO JOIN OPPI

1. Job postings in the member portal

2. Graduate and undergraduate scholarships

3. Networking opportunities with other students and RPPs

4. Invitations to provincial planning conferences

5. Continuing education, often at reduced rates

6. Research project showcase at OPPI's annual event

7. Leadership opportunities with the student liaison committee

8. Monthly OPPI newsletters

9. Access to the member directory

10. Opportunities to get your work published and read by members

Find more information at ontarioplanners.ca

Ontario Professional Planners Institute

Ryan Mounsey, RPP, has a deep understanding of the local start-up ecosystem, the housing market, and the importance of talent attraction and economic diversification in the Region of Waterloo.

Registered Professional Planner

PROFILE

NAME:
Ryan Mounsey, RPP

LOCATION:
Kitchener, Ontario

POSITION:
Supervisor of Economic Development, Region of Waterloo

AS OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2021,
Manager of Affordable Housing Development, Region of Waterloo*

*Shortly after this interview was completed, Ryan Mounsey accepted a new position at the Region of Waterloo: Manager of Affordable Housing Development.
"Following a near decade run in economic development, I am focusing my attention on a very important issue impacting all."

With an undergraduate degree in urban planning from the University of Waterloo and a master's degree in urban design from the University of Toronto, Mounsey launched his career in planning and land development over 20 years ago, with experience gained in consulting and three municipal governments. During the past eight years, he has focused on economic development with an emphasis on investment attraction, quality of life, and the economic competitiveness of being located on the Toronto-Waterloo Innovation Corridor.

As Supervisor of Economic Development for the Region of Waterloo, a position he has held for the last two years, his key projects include the land disposition process for the former bus station site in downtown Kitchener, working on affordable housing land options, developing an aviation and aerospace strategy, managing a provincial job sites submission, and contributing to other regional initiatives with a data focus and the Moody's credit rating process.

Mounsey is also a former OPPI course instructor in urban design and is currently writing a book on city building and attraction.

What are some of the key factors that have contributed to the Region of Waterloo becoming a top start-up ecosystem?

Having a clear vision of what our (community) strength is and collaboration with others to support and deliver that vision. Our start-up ecosystem is based in our post-secondary institutions who deliver the talent – along with their own start-up and business programs – and are great community partners. As well, we have Communitech, a leading advocate for our tech community, and the role of complementary public sector initiatives that are focused on advancing a start-up city culture.

Our start-up city "movement" started over 10 years ago based on an entrepreneurial legacy and partnerships and has advanced into its own community that attracts talent and investment into our region. New ideas and incubator programs continue to grow with focus on solving global problems. Our region is well positioned to grow based on its location near a global city, investment in light rail transit (LRT) to enhance local quality of life and intensification, and a growing business community that values an urban-rural lifestyle. The start-up ecosystem is accelerating through the collaboration with the Toronto-Waterloo Innovation Corridor (thecorridor.ca) and proactive growth management strategies that promote greater housing choice and amenities within our community.

How do demographics fit into your region as a fast-growing start-up ecosystem? Who is living there / moving there and why?

Demographics is everything – this is your current market, your future market, and potentially, a declining market. Our region is young – younger than the provincial average – and has three post-secondary institutions and over 150 research institutes that help attract companies looking for talent. Our region was also very fortunate to have our ION LRT project overlap with a new era of intensification projects with a growing start-up economy. This synergy is what connects to the start-up ecosystem.

Good planning provides a foundation to attract business and talent to a community. The timing of new housing projects with new amenities and transit fit perfectly with the growing millennial and upcoming Z generations who can choose to live almost anywhere. Demographics is helping the start-up ecosystem grow, knowing new investments are being made in amenity spaces and transportation critical to attract talent. Our population growth is being enhanced by migration trends and a growing economy that requires thoughtful planning to accommodate our next phase of city building.

Tell us about transportation and the role the ION LRT has in supporting your region.

Significant transportation investment is critical in both enabling growth management policies and attracting investment opportunities. The ION LRT is confirmation that you can support reduced parking requirements for new development, as well as attract talent to your community who want to live near amenities of choice.

During the last three years, the region has been ranked as one of the fastest growing CMAs in Canada (1st or 2nd) and has generated over $1B construction values in 2019 ($1.7B) and 2020 ($1.6) with over 65 per cent of all housing units built within the urban built boundary (73 per cent in 2019 and 55 per cent in 2020). The Stage 1 ION LRT is proving to show positive results and provides a business case for the Stage 2 LRT extension. As cities grow, new transportation solutions will be required, including continuous investment in active transportation options, creative city-building projects, and perhaps, more work from home and "Future of Work" solutions.

How does technology and "being connected" fit in?

Moore's Law states technology doubles every 18 to 24 months. This helps explain the rise of start-up companies, as well as transformative changes in our retailing (distribution centres and 'AI' tools), transportation (with emerging last mile options), and social engagement, to name a few. Smart city technology solutions will become more important as we grow and as we all become more digitally connected. The bottom line is that technology is having a greater role in our life, and in turn, drives investment decisions on how quickly you respond. This is an area we are all learning and will have to deliver more quickly.

Where should planners who want to attract start-ups to their areas be focusing their attention?

A few ideas here. One, determine what your community strengths are and how you can leverage those. There must be a reason to have a start-up culture and a path to leverage this.

The next idea is intertwined: what can you do to attract or grow incubator programs and small companies (e.g., CIP program for small offices or partnerships)? What zoning is appropriate to attract new companies (lower parking requirements go a long way for start-ups, flexible zoning for diverse activities and amenities such as restaurants) and housing choices? Over time, cultural amenities, transportation, and housing will be important to retain and, more importantly, attract new companies and talent to your community. Housing options will remain a top issue.

Time is one of the most important lessons. Space will be needed now, not in 18 months. Recall that Moore's Law will accelerate a new breed (or set) of companies by then, or companies may be tripling their workforce by then. Having the ability to meet timelines will be critical in supporting company growth and housing demand.

What makes you most proud of being an RPP and, particularly, an RPP in your region?

The ability to make a difference. This profession is about change and having an ability to support positive change and, of course, being aware of your role in the process. I have been fortunate to be involved in some very large-scale and transformative projects in our region. These have included the School of Pharmacy project, the Centre for International Governance and Innovation, Barrel Yards and The Boardwalk. I am very happy about how they have turned out.

I have also been involved in a series of other projects, smaller and policy projects, such as Arrow Lofts, The 42 condo project, Sage projects, the pending sale of The ARC property, the Kitchener neighbourhood and mixed-use corridor guidelines, The City of Waterloo and Blackberry campus guidelines. These have opened some doors, introduced some new thinking, and allowed other planners to advance their ideas, such as new design guidelines.

The planning experience has proven itself very valuable in economic development, knowing both fields have similar goals but are delivered in a different context. Planning allows you to make a difference in a variety of fields. I am also a periodic OPPI publication and conference contributor, and I am proud of this work.

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

Urban planning is more important than ever, and there will be a role for you to make a difference, knowing that it may take some time. Have an idea of where you want to be and find where you can make the biggest difference. Know that, in turn, this may take you in a new direction(s). There will be some very interesting people, projects, and experiences along the journey! Ⓨ

Contributors

What are RPPs focused on today? What do they see as a priority going forward?
Here is what three contributors to this issue of Y *Magazine* have to say.

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Kitchener is one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada and is experiencing a development boom, with many new infill developments occurring within existing neighbourhoods. An increased focus on meaningful community engagement is a vital component of the planning process as neighbourhoods grow and change. Ensuring there are opportunities to have conversations about intensification is key as Kitchener's Urban Growth Centre and Major Transit Station Areas experience unprecedented growth.

Given the extraordinary demand for housing in our communities, I believe it is a priority to ensure that a variety of housing options are permitted in all neighbourhoods throughout the city to ensure housing needs can be met for all members of our community in all stages of their lives. Land use permissions that allow for a variety of housing types, including supportive housing, at different scales and forms would accommodate additional needed housing supply throughout the city.

My focus as a planner is on data: collecting, analyzing, and presenting data to support the work of planning colleagues and help answer questions about how to make the city a better and more equitable place. I want to increase data legibility and usefulness for all through tools, like interactive maps and dashboards, to support conversations about planning that are based on facts.

A continuing priority for planning in Ontario should be to use data to help drive change. In Toronto, point-of-sale data was used to track customer spending during the King Street pilot project and helped address concerns about the economic impact of street redesign on local businesses. Recently, the work of public health professionals in creating live dashboards to present COVID-19 trends has allowed individuals to understand and mitigate health risks and experts to recommend targeted vaccination strategies. One further step I would like to see is to make data a two-way street: to invite communities to contribute more broadly and to document and share local knowledge for the benefit of all.

My focus is on community engagement, primarily in the context of planning applications. I've worked in various planning roles over the years, and I think breaking down the jargon and decision-making process is key to getting meaningful input. It's been helpful for me to draw on my public and private sector experience as an RPP to find ways for community members to be a part of the change that is happening in the neighbourhoods.

The GTHA is experiencing dramatic growth and a shift in the way that people live, work, move around, and enjoy neighbourhoods. I think being nimble in developing an early understanding of what works, what needs to be improved, and how can we employ best practices from home and abroad is critical to understand how to support this growth. I think that we need to prioritize access to the consultation process for everyone – so that we can learn and share with people of all backgrounds, living circumstances, and age groups.

What's your vision for a better Ontario?

Neighbourhoods where everyone belongs. Rural development that protects natural habitats and increases food security. Healthy communities with equitable access to health care, housing, and education. Transportation systems that get people where they are going cleanly, safely, and actively. Cities where the goals of economic development are balanced with the needs of the people who live and work there.

Students aspiring to achieve their visions for the future get their start at Ontario's accredited planning schools. Six universities across Ontario offer accredited programs, where students gain the knowledge and skills they need to become leaders in the planning field.

- Queen's University's School of Urban and Regional Planning

- York University's Faculty of Environmental & Urban Change

- University of Waterloo's School of Planning

- University of Toronto's Department of Geography and Planning

- Ryerson University's School of Urban and Regional Planning

- University of Guelph's Rural Planning Program in the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development

These programs provide students with opportunities to engage in well-focused education across a broad spectrum of planning issues, including urban design, rural studies, community sustainability, transportation, housing, heritage, health care, and more. Students engage in teamwork, active learning, innovative research, and real-world projects led by exceptional professors with years of planning experience.

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Ontario's municipalities and the planning community have spent most of 2020 responding to the pandemic. Now. What.

At our annual conference, OPPI21, we will explore what it means to move forward in economic development and sustainability, technology, and healing – issues that are fundamental to life in 2021 and beyond.

October 6, 13, 20

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