



IDEAS AT THE CROSSROADS OF INSPIRED COMMUNITIES



THIS ISSUE:

## HOUSING

Whether it is described as affordable, accessible, or attainable, housing is one of the most important issues we are facing as a province and as a country. **6**

Perhaps, it is time to consider a different status symbol.

# Behind every great community you'll find the work of many planners.

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# INSPIRE



## THE UNIGNORABLE TOWER

Last fall, social media was abuzz thanks to an augmented reality phone app that placed a condo building 2.5 times the height of the CN Tower in the space normally occupied by Brookfield Place in downtown Toronto.

The massive structure, called Unignorable Tower, was at the heart of a United Way Greater Toronto campaign aimed at raising awareness of the 116,317 individuals and families struggling to put a roof over their heads in the GTA. Numbers like that reveal a sad reality: with one out of seven residents struggling to make ends meet, Toronto has earned the title of the Poverty Capital of Canada. The campaign slogan: “The tower isn’t real. But the problem it represents is.”

At the lowest end of the poverty scale are the homeless. According to the Toronto Foundation’s annual report, *Toronto’s Vital Signs 2019/20*, 8,137 people used city shelters in 2018. That is up by 69 per cent from 2013.

The Toronto Foundation report also indicates that the average condo now rents for \$2,235 per month, up from just under \$1,483 in 2008. To afford rent payments for a one-bedroom apartment in the city, an individual needs \$69,520 in annual income. Half the households in Toronto make less than the median of \$65,829 per year. And yet, based on the low-income measure, a person is considered to be living in poverty if the annual income is less than \$23,513.

The Unignorable Tower might be shocking and even sensational, but its purpose is to inspire awareness and motivate action to address an enormous problem that isn’t going to go away on its own.

## “Perhaps, it is time to consider a different status symbol.”

At its core, housing is simply shelter – four walls and a roof – but we all know that it is really so much more.

Our homes are directly linked with our identity, how we see ourselves and our fit within our communities. They are the frames through which we see the world, the backgrounds to our lives, and the foundations for our dreams. They are our starting points and directly influence who we interact with, how we get around, and our physical and mental health.

Sure, housing is about shelter, security, clean water, basic health. We know that decent and affordable housing is essential to our well-being as individuals and families, and that access to adequate housing should be a basic human right.

So why, in a country as prosperous as Canada, where we can measure the impacts of poor health, do we still have people living on the streets? Perhaps, part of the reason is how we look at housing.

Historically, housing defined class and worth. I recently visited New Orleans and now reflect on the stark contrast between the elaborate plantation homes – built almost 200 years ago – and the slave quarters at the back. Many of these have not withstood the test of time, but those that still stand symbolize how we treated each other and the extreme inequalities in life.

Still today, we use our homes as status symbols. According to a consumer expenditure survey referenced in a CBC Radio program,<sup>1</sup> New York's elite buys luxury watches, while Boston demonstrates status

through tuition to private schools. In San Francisco, status is about club memberships, while Washington has its encyclopedias and reference books. In Toronto, we demonstrate status through expensive homes. This influences the overall market.

The GTA has been struggling with housing affordability for some time, and in October 2019, we saw the average selling price climb to over \$850,000.<sup>2</sup> As planners, we know homes represent so much more than just shelter, and in addition to affordability, we must consider the type of housing we are building and how it facilitates healthy, sustainable living for all stages of life. But as a society, perhaps, it is time to consider a different status symbol. Imagine the world we would live in if we measured ourselves based on how we treat the most vulnerable in our society?



**Justine Giancola, RPP**  
President  
Ontario Professional Planners Institute

<sup>1</sup> Live & Let Buy: Where you Live Dictates what you Purchase (March 10, 2016; updated November 27, 2018), CBC Radio, Under the Influence.

<sup>2</sup> Toronto Real Estate Board, October 2019.

# Affordable Housing and Planning



Whether it is described as affordable, accessible, or attainable, housing is one of the most important issues we are facing as a province and as a country. While home prices continue to climb, making ownership an impossible dream for a growing segment of the population, the situation is just as bad for people seeking suitable rentals.

In this issue of *Y Magazine*, we focus on how RPPs are grappling with housing for a population that is growing unevenly. To introduce this issue's theme, we offer perspectives from two planners, one large city and one smaller city: Gregg Lintern, RPP, chief planner at the City of Toronto, and Michelle Banfield, RPP, director of planning at the City of Barrie.

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# Affordable housing in an age of uneven growth

BY GREGG LINTERN, RPP

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Step off the subway at Victoria Park station in the not-too-distant future, and you'll find a prime example of inclusive development rising between the existing mid-century apartment towers, low-rise neighbourhoods, and open spaces of Toronto's east end. Soon, almost 200 city-owned surface parking spaces will give way to new homes and community spaces: a tower and a mid-rise building with 508 residential units, at least half of which are affordable rentals, along with retail and community agency space, a childcare centre, and a transit plaza on Victoria Park Avenue.

Being considered by City Council later this month, 777 Victoria Park Avenue will be

**“One in four renter households are spending more than 50 per cent of their income on rent.”**

the first project to advance under Housing Now, a City of Toronto initiative aimed at accelerating affordable housing development by building complete, mixed-income, mixed-use communities on city-owned properties across Toronto. At this site, and on more to come, we're adding density and affordable housing right next to transit and building the community infrastructure needed to support this growth. Toronto is putting up city assets – and retaining ownership of public land – to make direct progress on our

significant challenges of affordability and uneven development.

Housing access and affordability are central themes of Toronto's growth story. Market housing is being supplied in large numbers, but seemingly not enough to supply us to affordability. One in four renter households are spending more than 50 per cent of their income on rent. In just five years, from 2014 to 2018, the average condo resale price increased by 52 per cent. Some areas of the city saw increases of over 78 per cent. To sustain public trust in the face of such rapid change, what's a city to do?

## A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

Given the complexity of the housing system, a multi-faceted approach will be required, ideally supported by all levels of government. At the municipal level, there are legislative and financial limits to what can be achieved. But we cannot allow the magnitude of the problem to prevent us from adapting our toolbox and doing more with the assets that we have today.

Toronto is pushing forward on a range of policy initiatives to broaden and safeguard our housing supply, from gentle changes inside neighbourhoods that now permit secondary suites and laneway suites, to advancing inclusionary zoning and protecting dwelling rooms threatened with redevelopment. At the same time, as we ask new private developments to do more on affordability, we are bringing land to the table, demonstrating how to meet intersecting city-building goals of strengthening our housing system,

supporting transit use, providing community infrastructure, and adding new homes to an existing neighbourhood with compatible urban design.

**“To sustain public trust in the face of such rapid change, what's a city to do?”**

On Victoria Park Avenue, we are demonstrating how to advance change and meet local needs, embrace the city we are becoming, and amplify our ability to enhance equity and access to opportunity for all residents, regardless of means. If we aren't actively pursuing better outcomes for people in their times of greatest need, as local government and as city-builders, what are we here for? The pace and unevenness of growth calls for dynamic planning and development initiatives that are responsive to Toronto's changing needs. Right now, there is no greater need than the availability and affordability of housing, which is about how and where we choose to accommodate people now and for the future. 



**Gregg Lintern, RPP**, is a member of OPPI and the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning at the City of Toronto.

# Barrie at the start of the decade: Looking into 2020 and beyond

BY MICHELLE BANFIELD, RPP



**A**s we enter into 2020, the City of Barrie has a population of 148,136, with an expected additional 50,000 people before the calendar tips into 2030. While many elements in our society seem to change at a rapid pace, the basic elements of community building do not, so the city started planning for our new residents decades ago.

The City of Barrie's approach to accommodating future population growth crosses the entire organization, with especially close connections between planning, engineering, and finance. Integrating these disciplines truly brings projects to life in a way that some planning departments don't always get to experience. This approach to growth takes vacant land and turns it into a community filled with residents and businesses as we consider development proposals through the lens of the entire corporation.

All aspects of community growth are literally changing the face of Barrie. The skyline along our Lake Simcoe waterfront and our downtown is altering, our streets and trails are adapting to provide more travel options, and, as we welcome new residents, we see our cultures and interests diversifying.

**“Many municipalities are poised to accommodate further residential and employment growth.”**

## POISED FOR GROWTH

Growth isn't simply about providing housing. We employ an approach of community development by ensuring a mix of land uses are available within a short walk from new homes. While we encourage mixed-use developments, we don't expect applicants to mix all those uses on one property. Providing they can accommodate a couple of different types of land uses on their site, the mix of uses can also be created by what is already across the street or next door.

Housing availability is one aspect of managing growth, while housing affordability is quite another. For many years, simply changing the built form to a townhouse or low-rise apartment provided a range of options with price points that tended to be lower than single detached homes. But that appears to be changing. Over the years, our neighbourhoods have shifted from predominately single detached homes to a broad range of unit types and mixes, and we expect that to continue.

Unit type mix is only one way to tackle affordability, and we often find ourselves qualifying the term “affordable” by adding “more” in front of it. So in addition to this unit type and mix shift, Barrie is focused on providing housing across the CMHC continuum. We are also seeing property owners partnering with our community organizations to find unique ways to provide housing options along the continuum. This continuum recognizes the many stages between homelessness and at-market home ownership. While the city tries to encourage

this with financial incentives through a Community Improvement Plan, we are also seeing developers wanting to respond to this community need and coming up with housing ideas as part of their development applications.

Many municipalities are poised to accommodate further residential and employment growth. What is working well in Barrie is the provision of consistent messaging surrounding topics associated with growth and development. We have hosted community conversations on growth and intensification. We have initiated amendments to our planning documents and focused on enhanced community engagement, including a digital engagement platform, neighbourhood meetings, and open houses. Building relationships with our existing residents will shape the development projects that will house our future residents. This can only happen if we work collaboratively with our technical staff, our residents and businesses, and the development industry.

While we can't see into the future, we can catch a glimpse, and we think it's going to be great. 🍷



**Michelle Banfield, RPP**, is a member of OPPI and the Director of Planning at the City of Barrie.



# Facing the challenges of the housing crisis

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The housing crisis is a complex issue affecting every community across the country to greater or lesser degrees, depending on a variety of other issues that influence the affordability or availability of a home. Here we talk to three experts about different aspects of the housing crisis: Arlene Etchen, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Knowledge Transfer Consultant in Ontario; Tony Irwin, President and CEO, Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario; and Blair Scorgie, RPP, MCIP, Business Development Director, Senior Planner, and Urban Designer at SvN Architects + Planners Inc.

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# Addressing the rental supply gap

BY CAROLYN CAMILLERI

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The widespread consensus that more housing is needed at a cost people can afford includes personal rentals.

“We have historic low vacancy rates and an all-time high demand,” says Tony Irwin, president and CEO of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario (FRPO). “With all of the population growth we are seeing and expect to continue to see over the next decade, we simply don’t have enough housing for people.”

**“The report indicates that between 70,000 and 100,000 rental units will be needed to meet demand over the next decade.”**

Research and market analysis firm Urbanation recently updated an FRPO report on the rental property supply gap. The report indicates that between 70,000 and 100,000 rental units will be needed to meet demand over the next decade. That’s 7,000 to 10,000 units every year. Even in choosing the more conservative numbers, the question remains as to how to achieve that.

“That’s an important number for the conversation, because, really, what we want to be doing in working with the government – and certainly we’re very encouraged by the actions this government’s taken so far with Bill 108 – is to have a common understanding of what the problem is and what the challenges are.”

FRPO has again engaged Urbanation to

study the current landscape and the market drivers of demand and supply conditions, as well as to assess changes to the estimated supply gap and the rental supply that has been delivered over the last few years.

“On the personal rental side, it’s been very small – there have not been a lot of new units built,” says Irwin. “Obviously, the condo market is a different story.”

The study aims to compile a database of current rental property proposals and the jurisdictions they are located in to get a ground-level handle on what is happening and how progress can be made. The study will also assess where there could be some intensification, specifically “unicorn sites.”

“What that signifies are sites where currently there’s an apartment building – perhaps it was built in the 60s or 70s when land use was much different than it is today, and so there may well be a lot of excess land around the building that could, now, given

**“We think there should be some kind of fast-track approval process to get those kinds of projects going more quickly.”**

our realities of today and our real need for more housing, be utilized to build a second or even third tower depending on the site.”

The infrastructure for an additional building is already there and building another tower would not be contrary to

whatever already exists. FRPO members know there are many such sites in the province.

“In our view, those are no-brainer sites,” he says. “In those kinds of circumstances, we think there should be some kind of fast-track approval process to get those kinds of projects going more quickly.”

**“We’re seeing a real surge in demand for purposeful rental... Rental is becoming increasingly important and it’s a choice people increasingly want to make.”**

While FRPO has been working very closely with the government to provide more homes and more choice, the conversation is ongoing.

“The housing topic and need for more supply is not going to be solved quickly. It requires a lot of thought and a lot of discussion,” he says. “We want to continue to bring ideas forward and work with government on what can we do collaboratively to try to get more rental built.”

“We’re seeing a real surge in demand for purposeful rental,” says Irwin. “Rental is becoming increasingly important, and it’s a choice people increasingly want to make. We need to provide it for them in the manner in which they want to receive it, and that’s really what we’re trying to work towards.” 

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# CMHC: Helping Canadians access housing that meets their needs

Arlene Etchen is Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) knowledge transfer consultant in Ontario. She has been working in the urban planning and energy sectors for more than 15 years, engaging with professionals in the housing industry, academics, and provincial and municipal governments to ensure access to the latest and most relevant housing information from CMHC.

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## **What are some of the key elements contributing to the housing crisis?**

Housing need is multi-faceted. Housing needs range from first-time homebuyers to seniors looking for affordable housing. Their needs are different and any policy response would have to address these differences. In major urban centres, the cost of housing has risen due to increasing demand and slow lagging supply. Housing affordability is top of mind for Canadians and all levels of government.

To help increase supply and support affordability, the federal National Housing Strategy<sup>1</sup> (launched in November 2017) will deliver up to 100,000 new housing units and repair another 300,000 units through various new funding initiatives. It will also reduce or eliminate housing need for 530,000 households and reduce chronic homelessness by 50 per cent by 2028.

From a market perspective, the most recent Housing Market Assessment (Q4 2019),<sup>2</sup> states that imbalances between home

prices and housing market fundamentals are easing. With respect to specific markets, Toronto and Hamilton saw a change in their overall degree of vulnerability from high to moderate, bringing these markets in line with Canada's overall moderate vulnerability rating.

## **How different is today's housing situation compared to, for example, 10 or 20 or 30 years ago?**

It would be misleading to attempt to characterize the entirety of the housing market at a point in time. The housing market is complex, consisting of many interrelated submarkets that have evolved in complex ways to changes in Canada's socio-demographic and economic conditions, changes in consumer preferences and in technology, among other factors.

Nonetheless, over the last 30 years, a major trend that has been observed has been a steady increase in home ownership. According to Statistics Canada's Census,

since 1971 to 2011, the home ownership rate increased from 60.3 per cent to 69.0 per cent, declining slightly to 67.8 per cent in 2016 (the latest available data). Another major change that has been observed in recent decades has been the increase in the supply of rental units represented by rented condominium apartments.

CMHC president Evan Siddall says that, "Over time, housing construction in Canada has diverted away from purpose-built rental housing. Yet, core housing need – a measure of housing affordability that asserts that having to spend more than 30 per cent of your pre-tax income to access adequate, suitable local housing is onerous – among renters sits at 26.4 per cent compared to 6.5 per cent for owners.

## **Are we a society fixated on the idea of owning our homes?**

In a recent interview, CMHC's president Evan Siddall said, "Canadians need to change their perceptions around home ownership as a savings vehicle. Home

ownership has long been glorified in Canada, but experts say sky-high prices in some of the country's most popular cities should force prospective buyers to shift their thinking. In places like Paris, and Sydney, and Hong Kong, Buenos Aires, and New York, people rent. Whereas here, we glorify home ownership. And we think it's the only vehicle for savings. Well, that's looking at the last 100 years. And, unfortunately, savings are in the future, not in the past. 'Rent or own, a home is a home.'"

**Do you have a message for planners who are addressing these challenges in their communities?**

By 2030, we want everyone in Canada to have a home that they can afford and that meets their needs. But we can't reach this ambitious goal alone. Partnerships must be at the heart of everything we do. They need to be nurtured, developed,

and, often, re-examined. That's why we're looking at ways we can further cultivate collaboration. Planners play a key role in facilitating the development of affordable housing and communicating the importance of affordable housing in the mix of housing in their communities. (W)

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*Later this year, the interview with Arlene Etchen will be posted in its entirety on the Planning Exchange Blog at ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange. The full interview includes some of the ways CMHC is addressing or easing the challenges people are facing in finding suitable homes.*

**References**

- 1 National Housing Strategy: <https://www.placetocallhome.ca>
- 2 Housing Market Assessments: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/publications-and-reports/housing-market-assessment>

# The case for density transition zones

BY CAROLYN CAMILLERI

In 2019, Blair Scorgie, RPP, business development director, senior planner, and urban designer at SvN Architects + Planners Inc., co-authored with Sean Hertel, RPP, a report called *The Case for Density Transition Zones: Part of a Broader Solution to the Housing Affordability Crisis*.

The concept of density transition zones has been put forth as a way to help ease the housing crisis, and, at the same time, counter the problem of neighbourhoods that are declining while growth areas are intensifying beyond capacity.

"In part, the intent of the technical brief was to say there are certain things that are outside of our control," says Scorgie. "But one of the things we do have the power to influence is our regulatory controls at the municipal level and at the provincial level, too, for that matter."

**"... to allow for some growth and intensification at the edges, while maintaining the stability of the neighbourhood."**



Simply put, density transition zones are an expansion upon the existing approach municipalities use to govern growth and density, in that the avenues or corridors are expanded just a little farther into the edges of the neighbourhoods to allow for a transition with low-rise missing middle buildings. It might be one or two blocks or 100 or 150 metres that extend into the neighbourhood to allow for some growth and intensification at the edges, while maintaining the stability of the neighbourhood.

**“This is an opportunity to bridge that gap quite literally and allow that transition and heightened massing and use to occur over a slightly greater distance.”**

“I see it as the low hanging fruit. It doesn’t require a complete rewrite of the way our policies are structured. It’s more like another layer or a modest amendment to our existing policies,” he says. “I see it as kind of an easy win, when you compare it to other potential solutions, and maybe also less controversial.”

Less controversial in terms of diverging priorities: protecting neighbourhood character on the one hand with the need to accommodate more growth and intensification on the other.

“This is an opportunity to bridge that gap quite literally and allow that transition and heightened massing and use to occur over a slightly greater distance and allow for a greater diversity of housing supply and choices in that area, while maintaining and protecting the stability of the rest of the neighbourhood.”

Those two reasons – expanding an existing, rational process to city building and policy and maintaining neighbourhood stability while allowing for growth – make it an easier political win.

A third reason: the edges. In addition to creating a physical transition in use and form, the edges are important because of their proximity to main street retail, district

parks, neighbourhood amenities, community centres, transit, etc.

“There’s a certain logic to intensifying within proximity to those sorts of uses,” he says. “The edges allow us to not only maintain the stability of the neighbourhoods, and to establish this transition and height massing, but also to target the types of things we want, like creating more people walking on the main streets, using local shops, helping the mom and pop businesses stay open.”

It goes beyond density transitions zones. “Missing middle housing allows us to solve many different things,” says Scorgie.

“It’s not just about housing affordability. It’s not just about housing diversity. It’s not just about making better use of infrastructure and services. It’s not just about providing a greater critical mass of people within proximity to main street retail. And it’s not just about optimizing transit usage. It’s about all those things. And it’s also about ecological and environmental sustainability, urban resiliency. It’s about getting cars off the road. It’s about creating more party wall

**“Missing middle housing allows us to solve many different things.”**

conditions, where we have people building more energy-efficient buildings, where we have fewer exterior walls. You can solve a lot of different things by focusing on this issue.”

Scorgie concludes by saying that for density transition zones to work properly, the approach needs to be implemented on a citywide basis, not just in pockets, which would run the risk of increasing land value in those areas.

“It needs to just be the starting point to some broader intensification exercise.”

## → IN DEPTH



### READ THE FULL REPORT

The full, technical version of *The Case for Density Transition Zones: Part of a Broader Solution to the Housing Affordability Crisis* by Blair Scorgie, RPP, and Sean Hertel, RPP, is available at [transitionzones.com](http://transitionzones.com).

The content is also the subject of ongoing research by the Pembina Institute on behalf of the Toronto Real Estate Board, as well as ongoing research by the Ryerson City Building Institute.

A plain-language version of *The Case for Density Transition Zones* was published as a contributing chapter to *House Divided: How the Missing Middle will Solve Toronto's Affordability Crisis* (Coach House Books, June 2019).

# There's something missing: Addressing the attainable housing challenge

BY ROBERT VOIGT, RPP, MCIP

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The future success for Ontario's towns and cities is inextricably connected to their ability to provide missing middle housing for their communities. It touches on economic development, community health, aging in place, and resiliency. Now is the time to act with strategies and tactics that will drive them towards a prosperous future, or the ever-growing challenges to providing adequate, let alone appropriate, housing for peoples' needs will be exacerbated.



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**T**he “missing middle” is an expression that has recently come into regular usage by planners and urban designers. It describes forms of housing seldom being constructed and now increasingly missing from the built environments of most communities across North America. These are forms of housing with density greater than single family homes, but lower than typical residential mid-rise buildings, that were historically found throughout our communities. They include semi-detached, row and townhouses, courtyard apartments, bungalow courts, live/work, and cottage courts, etc. As awareness grows, this terminology, and understanding of what it represents in terms of built form, is becoming more prevalent, entering the vernacular of others associated with community building.

Additional clarity can be gained when envisioning housing needs and options, not as a linear continuum based on the density of the built form, but as an interwoven ecosystem that corresponds to people’s varying needs and desires across their lifespan. Depending on life’s trajectory, people move through different housing needs at different times, each having influence on the other by creating redevelopment opportunities, increasing vacancies, and supporting or facilitating diversity in housing stock. As such, the missing middle relates to tenure as well. For example, in terms of ownership, the missing middle includes co-housing, life lease, and land lease. A diversity of different forms and tenure models combine to create this ecosystem our communities need.

**“As RPPs, our influence on housing availability is dramatic and broad reaching.”**

**WHERE DID IT GO?**

The missing middle has been to a great extent created by decades of policy and regulatory frameworks and public processes that generally favour built form monotony,

stifle traditional use and density mix, and restrict the evolution of neighbourhoods. This continues today, for example, with the increasing adoption of official plan policies and zoning provisions centred on concepts of “stable neighbourhoods.” In areas defined as such, the current built form condition is safeguarded and historical patterns of evolution are highly restricted, particularly against infill or redevelopment with higher density housing. These types of land use regulations create inappropriate burdens on delivering much-needed housing throughout our communities. They also arguably exacerbate faulty perceptions of negative impacts and the appropriateness of intensification, concentrating development of new housing into ever smaller districts.

As RPPs, our influence on housing availability is dramatic and broad reaching. The following are examples of where our professional influence is actively restricting the ability to develop missing middle housing:

- Urban design guidelines that create unrealistic and unnecessary parameters for infill housing options, such as those often seen with laneway housing;
- Over-ambitious capital improvement plans that seek funding for infrastructure that cannot be sustained by the community and the resultant development charges that impact housing costs and mortgage obligations of residents;
- Zoning bylaws that are not aligned with official plan policies, creating the need for unnecessary rezoning applications, thereby extending the timeline to create housing;
- Systems that codify misconstrued concepts of sameness with contextual fit;
- Overly restrictive zoning bylaws that force unnecessary amendments just to support traditional forms of missing middle housing; and
- Processes that skew towards unfounded public perceptions that missing middle housing will overburden infrastructure and / or reduce neighbouring property values.

Small urban centres and rural communities are also suffering the consequences of their own missing middle. In some ways, this has greater impact on these communities than their larger more urban cousins, because they generally have less robust tax bases to support infrastructure, smaller scale local development industries, and less access to investment capital.

**“The magnitude and complexity of Ontario’s housing challenges require responses to be acted on expeditiously, collaboratively, and with sustained effort”**

#### HOMEWARD

In response to the missing middle attainable housing crisis in Ontario’s rural and small urban communities, Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc., the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), and the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) collaborated to develop a series of attainable housing forums. This resulted in the *Homeward: Building the Missing Middle* forums launched in November 2019, with support from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CHMC).

With the Homeward forums, these three organizations were able to amplify their expertise and reach a more diverse audience of participants than they could have independently. The forums included guest speakers from various backgrounds, such as local and regional governments, development industry, CHMC, economic development, housing task forces, and tourism industry, and were designed to:

- Present and learn information about the current housing challenges facing communities from a variety of scales and perspectives;
- Showcase local champions and highlight calls to action;

- Facilitate dialog amongst diverse groups associated with housing; and
- Identify and share examples of best proven practices.

The Touchstone report documenting the findings from the Homeward workshop series is currently in production and will be made available to the public upon completion.

#### STEP FORWARD

Planning, land development, and building housing of any meaningful scale and quality to address the shortages in our towns and cities is a complex process that takes significant time, expertise, and capital investment. There is no “silver bullet” solution to the problems associated with developing a healthy housing ecosystem in Ontario. Suggestions of such nature are overly simplistic, not taking into account the complex interrelationships between the different elements that come together to develop new housing.

The magnitude and complexity of Ontario’s housing challenges require responses to be acted on expeditiously, collaboratively, and with sustained effort to reduce the negative impacts on our communities. RPPs play incredibly important roles in helping to solve these challenges. We need to learn to act in more progressive and dynamic ways to support the development of missing middle attainable housing. It is in the public’s interest, and it is our obligation. 



**Robert Voigt, RPP, MCIP**, is a member of OPPI and Director of Planning at Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities.

# The role of land use planning in the sharing economy: Airbnb and other future disruptors

BY CAROLINE SAMUEL, RPP, MCIP

The term “sharing economy” can be a bit of a misnomer as it’s not always about sharing and sometimes includes services where a fee is exchanged for financial profit. Generally, it’s a digital marketplace where you can use online platforms (e.g. mobile apps) to rent or share property, goods, or services. These types of sharing-economy platforms can become disruptors by altering the way we obtain or exchange goods and services, and they can challenge the types of land uses we envision for a city.

Take, for example, Rover Parking, which enables people to rent out their parking space while they are not using it. At what

point does this type of use transition from an ancillary use, naturally and normally subordinate to the principal residential use, to a distinct principal commercial use? Another example is Feastly, which connects chefs with hungry guests in the chef's home. At what point does this use cross the threshold of an ancillary use to a dwelling unit to a distinct commercial use, such as an eating establishment?

**“Short-term rentals (STRs) have been the largest sharing-economy platform to challenge and disrupt land use planning in the City of Toronto.”**

#### A FRAMEWORK FOR HOME SHARING

Airbnb is the most well-known example of a “home sharing” platform that lets people rent out their properties or spare rooms to guests. Short-term rentals (STRs) have been the largest sharing-economy platform to challenge and disrupt land use planning in the City of Toronto. Through a council motion in 2016, staff across the City of Toronto began working to develop a framework to permit and regulate STRs. In 2017, staff consulted on six guiding principles:

1. Permit people to rent their homes for short periods;
2. Minimize negative impacts on housing availability and affordability;
3. Permit a greater diversity of tourism accommodations;
4. Maintain community stability, including in vertical communities;
5. Minimize nuisance issues; and
6. Create regulations that are fair and easy to follow.

Through a cross-divisional project, the city undertook extensive consultation and research to recommend a three-pronged

approach to Toronto City Council: zoning bylaw amendments to permit the new land use; a licensing and registration bylaw to regulate the activity; and a municipal accommodation tax.

On December 7, 2017 and January 31, 2018, Toronto City Council adopted regulations for STRs. The new rules require companies to obtain a licence and operators to register with the city and pay a municipal accommodation tax of four per cent. The city's zoning bylaw amendments to permit STRs as a new land use were appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT). The nine-day LPAT hearing on STRs concluded on October 15, 2019. On November 18, the outcome of the LPAT hearing was announced: the appeals were dismissed and the City of Toronto's STR bylaws were upheld.

#### THE BYLAW AMENDMENT

The zoning bylaw amendment defines an STR as “all or part of a dwelling unit that (A) is used to provide sleeping accommodation for any rental period that is less than 28 consecutive days; and (B) is the principal residence of the short-term rental operator.” The zoning bylaw would permit STRs citywide in any residential zone and the residential component of a mixed-used zone. Within their principal residence, people would be able to rent up to three rooms, an entire home, and a secondary suite if it is exclusively and separately occupied as a principal residence (i.e. only the tenant of the secondary suite could use it as an STR).

The zoning bylaw amendment prohibits the use of residential properties as STRs where the operator is not the principal resident, as this is considered a commercial use akin to a hotel. These types of STRs create a potential for land use conflicts between these short-term commercial uses and surrounding residential uses, because of the constant turn-over of people and the difficulty in controlling noise and other nuisances (e.g. garbage, conflicts between users). Restricting the use to the operator's

principal residence can provide increased property oversight, but more importantly, it keeps the principal use as residential in conformity with the Official Plan and provincial policy.

**“This, in turn, contributes to providing and maintaining a full range of housing for current and future residents.”**

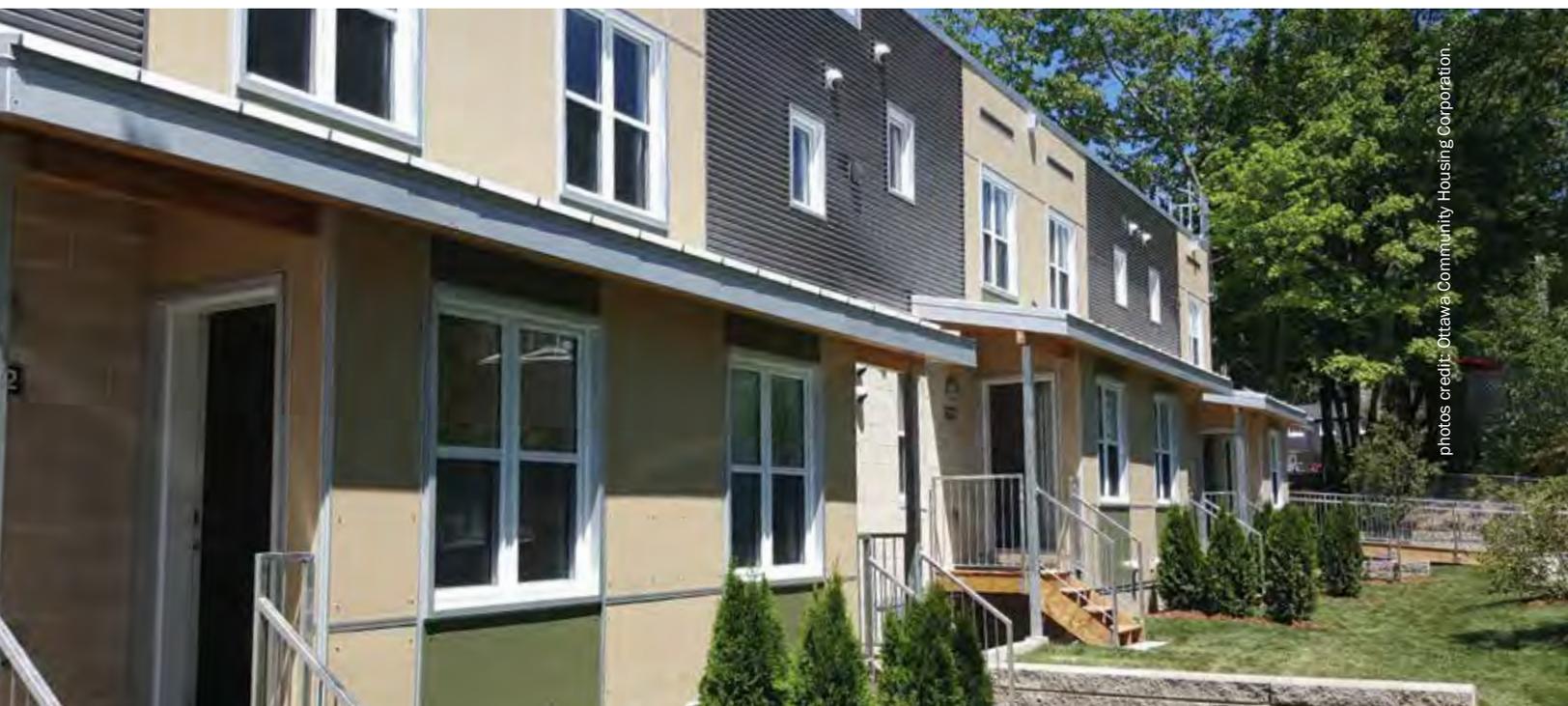
The principal residence requirement also helps to maintain the city's housing supply by helping to ensure dwelling units and secondary suites are available to provide living accommodation to city residents, which contributes to minimizing negative impacts on housing affordability and availability. This, in turn, contributes to providing and maintaining a full range of housing for current and future residents and meeting the city's population forecasts.

Lastly, this new land use opens up more tourist accommodation across the city than currently permitted by hotels and tourist homes.

The STR bylaws strike a balance and implement the six guiding principles derived from several years of public consultation and research in accordance with provincial and city policies. 



**Caroline Samuel, RPP, MCIP**, is a member of OPPI and a Senior Planner in the Zoning Section of City Planning at the City of Toronto. She was also the Vice Chair of the Toronto District Committee of OPPI.



photos credit: Ottawa Community Housing Corporation.

01

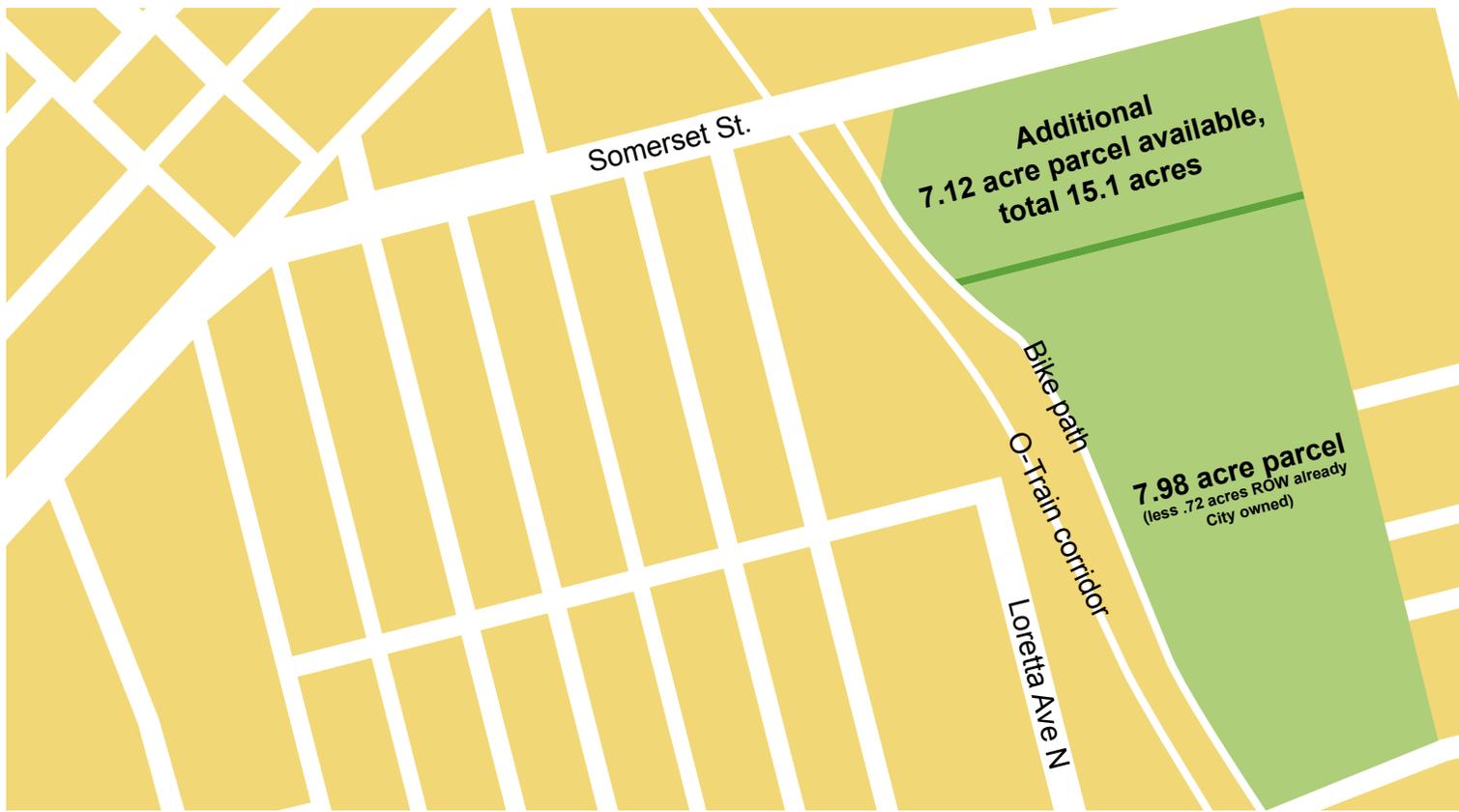
## Building stronger communities: Evolution of the social housing provider

BY FERENAZ RAHEEM, RPP, MCIP

**M**any Ontario cities have, as part of their agreements with developers, the responsibility to designate a portion of housing units “affordable,” thus promoting mixed-income residential development. Unfortunately, as more developers build on the outskirts of the urban core, transit options are limited, if at all existent, thereby lessening the “affordability” factor of the build.

Recognizing the need for transit-oriented development as it relates to new affordable housing has been largely ignored. The model of “public consultation” in suburban developments prioritizes residents, business owners, agencies, Indigenous governments and organizations, and elected officials as key stakeholders in the process. Often, public consultation notices are published in newspapers, flyers, on-site signage, or mailed to property owners. Unfortunately, these outreach initiatives rarely make it to tenants, who, often enough, would benefit most from those services. The quality of the intakes when transit and transportation priorities are addressed in public consultation are thereby affected.

**01** Michele Heights - OCHC Expansion development  
**02** map of Gladstone area project.



**AN UNSUSTAINABLE MODEL**

Recent pressures have pushed the federal government to create Canada’s first National Housing Strategy (2017) and further provisions for future funding. The Ontario government’s 2019 budget included a provision for supportive housing as part of their \$3.8 billion investment into mental health and addictions.<sup>1</sup> Overall, stand-alone funding sources for creating new social housing has diminished.

Funding programs have been restructured to manage recognized social problems, of which basic housing is only one component. According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), much of Canada’s social housing was built between 1946 and 1993.<sup>2</sup> From a planning perspective, however, these social housing units were built in mass, segregated from other communities, which resulted in neighbourhoods with diminished value. They also did not provide adequate support for the social adjustment for tenants coming from homelessness, mental health, job finding, volunteer programs, after-school programs, and other services.

Since then, planners have promoted mixed-use, mixed-income neighbourhoods to help strengthen the notion of community,

public-private partnership, and Jane Jacobs’ “eyes on the street.” These elements self-propel the implementation of public safety, improved access to goods and basic services where transit plays a vital role, and improved quality of life, where families and friends can convene, walk, shop, play, and cycle.

The complex problem of providing safe, affordable housing to Canada’s most vulnerable populations is an ongoing challenge. The responsibility of managing the affordable housing market through social housing providers is led by municipalities, which have to navigate through applications to funding programs. While it is said that billions are invested annually,<sup>3</sup> much of the funding is allocated to keep the inherited aging infrastructure in good condition.

On the opposite spectrum, affordable units built by private developers are not protected by legislation in most cities and could allow subsequent owners to sell units at far less affordable rates.

**INNOVATING TO ACHIEVE  
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

In seeking strategic solutions, Ottawa Community Housing Corporation (OCHC) has begun investing in communities where



they may build new housing to replace or increase their stock, create mixed-use, mixed-density and mixed-income housing, and supply the organization with secondary funding sources. OCHC is the second-largest social housing provider in Ontario and provides approximately 15,000 homes to over 32,000 tenants, including seniors, parents, children, couples, singles, and persons with special needs.<sup>4</sup>

With approximately 10,000 families waiting for affordable housing, OCHC took a proactive stance in its 10-year *Strategic Plan (2016-2025)*<sup>5</sup> to envision a future with better control over provisions for safe and affordable homes. In May 2017, OCHC purchased 7.26 acres of land in Ottawa's Little Italy neighbourhood for the city's first planned mixed-income, mixed-use, and mixed-density community. Anchored by the Gladstone LRT station and a French-language public elementary school, this high-density development proposal includes both market and below-market rental units, retail/office space, room for private commercial development purchase and land leases, a school, high performing energy buildings, and multi-use pathways.<sup>6</sup> With this new model and support from city council, 250

new affordable homes were approved in 2019.

OCHC's achievements in 2019 include the construction of 42 affordable homes for seniors in partnership with the Carlington Community Health Centre. The structure was built to passive house and WELL standards, the highest possible construction standards for sustainability and wellness.<sup>7</sup>

At Rochester Heights, another OCHC community, 26 townhomes were removed and construction began for 140 mid- and low-rise units supportive of families, seniors, couples, and persons with special needs. When complete, it will be Canada's largest passive house residential project and will feature over 100kW of rooftop solar panels.<sup>8</sup>

OCHC also partnered with Enbridge Gas to reduce their carbon footprint and provide savings on utility costs with the provision of 1,200 smart thermostats. The program estimated \$78,000 in utility cost savings and reduced CO2 emissions by 488 tonnes, equivalent to the emissions for 94 vehicles in one year.<sup>9</sup>

The evolution of social housing providers in Canada began as a necessity due to changing funding models. OCHC's track-record for success brings renewed hope in the face of our nation's housing crisis. (V)

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**Ferenaz Raheem, RPP, MCIP**, is a member of OPPI and an Environmental Planner at Morrison Hershfield, providing Environmental Assessment, Planning and Public Consultation services. She is also a Member of the Board of Directors for Ottawa Community Housing Corporation.



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# Building homes on First Nations reserves: A reality check

INTERVIEW WITH JUSTIN GEE, RPP, BY CAROLYN CAMILLERI



When Justin Gee, RPP, MCIP, P.Eng., hears people talking about how long it takes to get approvals for conventional development projects, he just kind of laughs inside.

“They just don’t realize the difference in frustrations,” he says.

Gee works with First Nations Engineering Services Ltd (FNESL), a 100 per cent Aboriginal-owned engineering firm with a professional staff of 40. Most staff are Indigenous, including the engineers, technologists, and planners. Since it was established in 1995, FNESL has designed and overseen the construction of over \$350 million of infrastructure on First Nations across Canada, and they have worked with 50 per cent of First Nations in Ontario.

At OPPI19: Beyond 25, Gee presented *Planning for First Nation Communities: The Driving Forces Behind Uneven Growth* to provide insight on how and why community planning for First Nations is different.

## POPULATION GROWTH

FNESL has completed numerous population projections for First Nations across Ontario and Canada.

“Population growth in First Nations is significantly higher than in their neighbouring off-reserve communities and it’s not isolated,” says Gee. “It’s pretty consistent across the board and way above provincial average.”

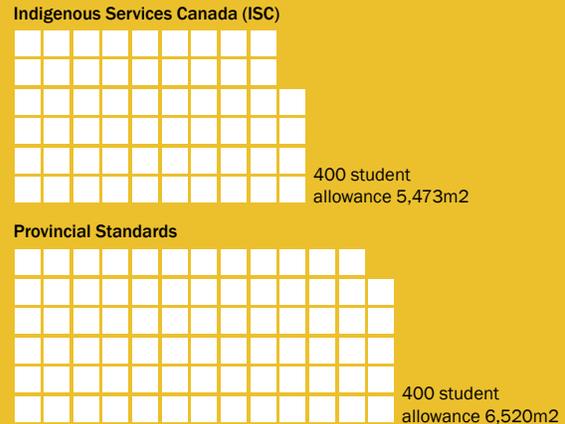
The larger southern First Nation communities tend to have growth rates in the 2.5 per cent range, which is twice the provincial average, while northern First Nations communities tend to approach 3.2 per cent or triple the provincial average.

The obvious problem is that many First Nation communities don’t have the infrastructure to support current populations, let alone population growth. The reason it is such a challenge was revealed in Gee’s overview of the process for developing on-reserve housing.

## A STARK DIFFERENCE WITH FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) School Space Accommodation Standards (SSAS) prescribes space by “basic allowance” calculated according to number of students, cafeteria allowance, gym allowance, etc. Despite growing First Nations populations, design can only be for the fifth year of occupation. For a high school with 400 students, the allowance is 5,473m<sup>2</sup>.

Contrast that to provincial standards, which calculates space by instructional areas, operational areas, circulation, etc. For a high school with 400 students, the allowance is 6,520m<sup>2</sup>. This difference in ratio is not unique to Ontario.



## HOUSING, OFF RESERVE AND ON RESERVE

Off reserve, typical residential subdivisions are completed from plan to construction by developers motivated by the projected profit from their investment. Developers typically plan the subdivision and sell the homes to buyers who typically obtain mortgages. The price point is dictated by the look and feel of the development.

On reserve, the main steps are the same – obtain funds for the development, plan the development, sell the homes – but the economics are very different. The First Nation is typically required to be the developer, and while some communities have their own funds, the vast majority of First Nations are reliant on Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) for funding. Project approval through ISC is lengthy, often subject to years of delay, and is reliant on capital funding cycles and proposal-based funding. Inadequate operations and maintenance funding lead to premature recapitalization needs. Moreover, ISC dictates the level of service standards and costs per connection of servicing.

“It’s a little disturbing that every residential First Nation subdivision is absolutely recognizable because of the standards they’re all forced to follow,” says Gee, adding that the problem is consistent across the country.

Mortgages for homes on reserve are limited and very difficult to obtain, and CMHC mortgages must be fully guaranteed by the First Nation.

“The loans are generally backed by the First Nation at the bank because they can’t foreclose – they can’t come and take the house,” says Gee.

In other words, getting a home is almost impossible.

“The waiting lists are tremendous, and housing densities are way off the charts,” he says. “We see a lot of times that there are multiple families and multiple generations all living in a small little home.”

It isn’t just housing that goes through this process: it’s everything that gets built on reserve.

“I’ve worked on two water treatment plants in particular that from the time we’ve had ISC on board with the need – and they agreed

a thousand per cent, yes, this was the need – it was 14 years by the time one plant was built and the other was 13 years.”

## A CHOICE FOR PLANNERS

Gee offered a short list of ways to improve the situation, topped by advocacy for improved ISC capital funding models and for ISC to fully embrace First Nation uniqueness and traditions.

“ISC is set up with a cookie-cutter mentality. It’s one standard, and there are approvals upon approvals,” he says. “It’s very short-sighted. It doesn’t make sense in this day and age.”

If a project doesn’t meet ISC standards, it doesn’t get approved and cannot proceed. Internally, ISC has layer upon layer of approvals for funding, and each layer removes the ISC person further from the First Nation.

“The people halfway up the ladder who are making a decision on whether to go or no-go are looking at a form and have never been to a reserve and have no idea of the real impacts of the project and what it’s going to do to the First Nation,” says Gee. “So there’s something systemic with this that I would like to change.”

The information Gee presented is not common knowledge, and he is generous in his explanation of why that seems to be the case. “I would say the vast majority of people I talk to don’t know this. It doesn’t really seem logical the way it’s done on reserve. Maybe that’s why.”

Once you do know, it’s hard not to see it for what it is: evidence that colonialism is not history.

“Not even close,” he says. “I wish it was.”

He has a message for planners.

“If you want to advocate for the First Nation, it’s going to be a fight with ISC. You have to be prepared for that. If you just want to get the job done, follow exactly what ISC wants you to do, and you’ll have a smoother path,” says Gee. “At our engineering firm, we know who our client is and we want to help our clients. For FNESL, it’s more important that it’s done right and the First Nations get what they want. They deserve it.”

# Addressing the affordable housing crisis and coordinating with city-building objectives

BY TRAVIS MACBETH, RPP, MCIP

Part of what makes London, Ontario, an attractive community is that it's an inexpensive place to live. It is a cheap place to live, right? Well, that's only partly true.

While the affordability of London has been part of the city's economic development and real estate marketing for years, it is only affordable in relative terms compared to major metro centres like the GTA and Greater Vancouver. In recent years, London has become less and less affordable to Londoners. Like elsewhere across the province, the local job market and local wages are not increasing nearly as fast as market rents and home prices.



The CMHC's definition of "affordable" is housing costs that are less than 30 per cent of pre-tax income (of low-to-moderate income households). When we apply this definition of "affordable" to London's renter households, we see that:

- Over 40 per cent of London's renter households cannot afford the average market rent for a bachelor unit; and
- Over 50 per cent of renter households cannot afford the average market rent of a one-bedroom unit.

In the news, we generally hear of these issues in large cities, but mid-sized cities like London are facing a housing crisis across the housing spectrum from homelessness to market prices.

**"mid-sized cities like London are facing a housing crisis across the housing spectrum from homelessness to market prices."**

### SO, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The City of London has established a staff team to coordinate efforts on the spectrum of housing issues. This includes staff from city planning, finance, housing and homeless services, as well as from agencies like London Middlesex Community Housing and the Housing Development Corporation.

The City of London has also identified a broad toolkit of planning and related tools that can encourage or compel the development of affordable housing units, while also implementing London's Housing Stability Plan (HSP) and the affordable housing policies of *The London Plan* (the city's official plan). The toolkit includes existing policies, such as secondary dwelling unit policies, and a council policy for acquisition of closed school sites and other surplus sites. The toolkit also identifies future planning studies staff will need to undertake, including things like a rental conversion policy (or a rental replacement policy for demolitions) and inclusionary zoning.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is one tool within the toolkit that is currently being prepared. The Affordable Housing CIP is a priority because the CIP's incentive programs will be considered as the city's contribution for the purposes of affordable housing "co-investment." Under the National Housing Strategy, municipalities are required to contribute to an affordable housing project if federal funding is being sought for the project (known as "co-investment"). As such, the city's contribution through CIP incentive programs can be used to access funding from other levels of government.

As a mid-sized city, London is also looking at how to be strategic in allocating Affordable Housing CIP incentives so the programs can address multiple city-building goals at the same time. That is why the draft CIP programs recommend multiple levels of incentive. The levels of incentive address not only the level of affordability in the new units (relative to average market rent), but also support redevelopment in areas identified for intensification by *The London Plan*.

The approach to incentives encourages the development of

new affordable housing citywide, but also aligns with broader city-building objectives, like growing inward and upward and developing the city structure around rapid transit. The CIP provides additional financial encouragement in areas where the greatest level of intensification and infill is permitted through policies of *The London Plan* and where residents will have access to a planned rapid transit network. This approach intends to reduce the residents' overall cost of living by reducing the need for private automobile commuting to access employment nodes and services.

The Affordable Housing CIP is also being considered in terms of the climate emergency which council declared in April 2019. By also reducing the need for personal automobiles, the intent of the draft Affordable Housing CIP programs is to recognize the link between land use, transportation options, and fossil fuel usage contributing to climate change. Thus, the incentive programs intend to address the climate emergency in addition to our housing affordability crisis.

City Council's approval of the final Affordable Housing CIP is anticipated in early 2020, and funding will be identified through London's multi-year budget discussions, also in early 2020. ♻️



**Travis Macbeth, RPP, MCIP**, is a member of OPPI and a policy planner with the City of London.



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Take a look at the long list of projects Cyndi Rottenberg-Walker, RPP, has on her CV, and you quickly see why she is known for her skill in motivating diverse groups towards a common purpose and for her understanding of the many factors that contribute to healthy urban environments.

Registered Professional Planner

**PROFILE**

NAME:

**Cyndi Rottenberg-Walker,**  
RPP, FCIP

LOCATION:

**GTA**

POSITION:

**Partner, Urban Strategies Inc.**

She has been with Urban Strategies Inc. since 1989 and a partner since 2002. Her projects range broadly from campus master plans for universities across North America, including Princeton’s award-winning 2026 Campus Plan, Campus Plan Sustainability Framework, and Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan, to Saint John New Brunswick’s Growth Management Strategy and Municipal Plan, which curbed decades of unsustainable sprawl by directing future growth and investment into already serviced areas.

The 4.3 million-square-foot mixed-use Union Park complex on Toronto’s Front Street West includes a two-acre public space above a rail corridor that will extend Rail Deck Park. The comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment of the 28-acre former Mr. Christie Plant delivers a much-needed new GO Transit Station, among other community assets, to the heart of Humber Bay Shores. The redeveloped 70-acre former Imperial Oil refinery in West Port Credit Village provides 3,000 new homes, a comprehensive parks network, and a waterfront innovation campus. And the revitalization plan for the Alexandra Park neighbourhood secures the replacement of more than 800 social housing units within a new income-integrated community centred around parks, a new community centre, and spaces for childcare and social enterprise. Then there’s the transformation of Humbertown Shopping Centre into a fully integrated mixed retail-commercial-residential community.

These are big projects that invigorate communities and bring positive change to underused urban areas.

**You are especially noted for your work in redeveloping and revitalizing already served areas: what inspires you to do that work?**

Giving unused or underutilized land new purpose. Finding ways to thoughtfully stitch outdated sites back into their urban fabric, restoring both physical and functional connections that address community needs and solve existing and future problems. Our project at 2150 Lake Shore Boulevard West – a former Christie Cookie factory – will create the vibrant heart the existing Humber Bay Shores community has been missing, while solving major transit and traffic issues. Our Port Credit West Village project is remediating the highly contaminated former Imperial Oil site – which sat fenced off for decades – to enable a beautiful new waterfront community with a full mix of market and affordable housing types and commercial and institutional uses. The Union Park project will create an exciting new two-acre public space over the rail corridor, literally stitching the city back together and extending Toronto’s vision for Rail Deck Park.

**What are some of the key factors that contribute to a healthy urban environment?**

Strong public realm and open spaces that draw people to them and are flexible enough to support a wide and changeable range of community-building activities. Great urban design that creates identity and a sense of place that people want to be a part of. A level of development intensity and mix of uses capable of creating urban

vitality, while being appropriate for its physical context.

**Are there any factors you feel don't get enough emphasis but should?**

Future proofing. We need more adaptable built form where unit and building configurations can evolve over time in keeping with changing household, community, and economic needs – because we really have no idea what the future will bring! Planning proactively for automation of automobiles to ensure we intentionally prioritize the public benefits of this massive change and have intentions about how spaces currently dedicated to cars can be taken back for people.

**How do inclusivity and diversity factor into your projects? Is affordability part of this?**

Affordability is one of the primary urban issues of our time, for housing but also for small business. It's essential that we work to address the polarizing impact of successful urban areas, where diversity

gets priced out the urban ecosystem, segmenting our population based on cost, and curtailing innovation and entrepreneurialism. Inclusivity and diversity are part of every project I'm working on. One great component of this is how quickly our clients have embraced the City of Toronto's focus on creating family-friendly vertical communities through the Growing Up Guidelines.

**What are some of the goals for the Alexandra Park project? What has feedback been like from the community?**

The revitalization of the Alexandra Park community was initiated by its residents, and they have proactively driven the process every step of the way. In fact, community endorsement was a pre-requisite – nothing could happen if residents weren't onside. The final plan introduces a north-south spine defined by new streets, parks, a local enterprise space for residents, and micro-commercial units for budding businesses; replaces or renovates all social housing units; introduces significant new market-

rate housing; provides for additional affordable housing if funds can be found; and provides a new community centre more than twice the size of the existing one.

**Tell us about the project with Sidewalk Labs: What excites you about the that project?**

I'm excited to be starting work with Sidewalk Labs on the Quayside development, which is going to tackle all the pressing urban issues: affordability, adaptability, resilience, resource efficiency, people over cars, meaningful mixed use, civic and community life, and, of course, the role technology can play in supporting the kinds of communities we want and need.

**Do you have a message for your fellow RPPs?**

Embrace the complexity of planning and engage with the tough issues. Foster honest conversations with stakeholders and decision makers to establish priorities for your projects and enable balanced and well considered trades offs to be made. (V)



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ACADEMIC

# The beauty of the brownfield

BY CAROLYN DELOYDE, RPP, MARK OUSELEY AND WARREN MABEE

01 Some brownfield projects, such as LeBreton Flats, have recently suffered setbacks in terms of re-development.

A brownfield is previously developed land which suffers from actual or perceived contamination due to past uses. The City of Ottawa, like many of Canada's municipalities, is faced with a significant inventory of brownfields. As the legacy of industrial activities in earlier times, these sites have become an environmental threat, blight to the community, and economic loss for their owners and the city.

Unlike many of Ontario's more highly industrialized municipalities, Ottawa has a less industrialized history and, as the nation's capital, faces unique brownfield challenges and development climate, requiring a policy



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Buildings can be sited and designed to take advantage of the natural landscape – to collect passive solar energy, for example, or capture wind. Infrastructure to support district heating can also be integrated into brownfield sites before streets are laid and buildings erected. New developments by Zibi at Chaudière Island will incorporate district heating and cooling – an example of how planners can play a role in facilitating municipal RE generation partnerships.

**THE BROWNFIELD CIP**

The City of Ottawa is guided by its Brownfield Community Improvement Plan, which features multiple grant programs and has proved to be successful in incentivizing the development of brownfield sites that otherwise would have remained idle. However, the creation and development of this policy was a challenging process, and the CIP could be reviewed in light of ongoing development applications.

Brownfield redevelopment as guided by the CIP has been successful in the City of Ottawa. Examples include Lansdowne Park, where significant commercial and residential redevelopment has occurred while respecting the historic fairgrounds on the site. Similarly, 300 West Hunt Club Road – formerly the site of a petroleum tank farm – is now home to a major commercial redevelopment. At this point, however, none of the brownfield redevelopments completed to date have incorporated significant RE implementation, and the only area with proposed district heating and cooling is Chaudière Island.

Challenges remain in supporting brownfield projects; some high-profile areas, like LeBreton Flats, have recently suffered setbacks in terms of redevelopment. Funding programs to support brownfield redevelopment may be perceived as handouts to developers; at the same time, developers are often frustrated by cleanup requirements and struggle

with liability requirements. There is little guidance to help developers incorporate RE into new brownfield development.

Avenues exist to accelerate and improve the brownfield development process:

1. Publicize the success of the Brownfield CIP and showcase successful and ongoing brownfield development projects.
2. Address public and city council concerns with regard to the nature of program grants for developers.
3. Investigate and adopt policies to limit liability and explore options to reduce the liability concerns of developers.
4. Foster a streamlined planning and approval process supportive of brownfield development.
5. Ensure public participation in redevelopment processes and development projects.
6. Incorporate RE in new brownfield redevelopment and link this to Ottawa’s Community Energy Planning efforts.

Large strides could be made if the city pursues those six objectives. (V)



**Mark Ouseley** is a PhD student at Queen’s University and member of the Renewable Energy Development and Implementation Lab. **Warren Mabee** is Associate Dean and Director of the School of Policy Studies at Queen’s University and Canada Research Chair in Renewable Energy and Development Implementation. **Carolyn DeLoyde**, RPP, MCIP, is a member of OPPI, a Ph.D Candidate, and member of the Renewable Energy Development and Implementation Lab at Queen’s University.

approach tailored to the Ottawa development market. Ottawa’s major brownfield sites are owned by different levels of governments and private firms, ranging from the National Capital Commission-owned LeBreton Flats to the City of Ottawa-owned Bayview Yards.

In addition, brownfield sites – while associated with historic industrial uses – often possess the appropriate zoning and designation to demonstrate new technologies, including renewable energy (RE) production. RE applications, such as biogas production, solar energy generation, and new-form wind power, can be integrated into new uses on brownfield sites.



#### ACADEMIC

## Beyond the greenbelt: Consideration of the leapfrog effect

BY EMMA DRAKE

In December 2004, the Ontario government introduced the 2005 Greenbelt Plan, protecting approximately one million acres of agricultural land across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Policies of the Greenbelt Plan provided enhanced protection to prime agricultural lands by specifying that such lands were not to be redesignated in municipal official plans, with certain exceptions provided. However, north and south of the Greenbelt Plan boundaries, prime agricultural lands were protected provincially by only the Provincial Policy Statement, which permitted the redesignation of these lands.

Upon implementation of the Greenbelt Plan, it was speculated that development would move outside of the Greenbelt Plan borders where fewer development restrictions were in place, specifically

“It was speculated that development would move outside of the Greenbelt Plan borders where fewer development restrictions were in place”

anticipating a jump to the countryside north of the Greenbelt Plan boundaries. This anticipated phenomenon is also known as the “leapfrog effect.”

We sought to analyze official plan amendments in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to investigate evidence of an anticipated leapfrog effect.

**METHODOLOGY**

We tracked official plan amendments which redesignated prime agricultural lands to non-agricultural designations across the Greater Golden Horseshoe from 2000 to 2017. Data was collected from 14 of the 15 municipalities identified with prime agricultural land designated in their official plans.

Relevant amendments were categorized by their application timeframe to recognize the prevailing policy regime. Each application period captured five years: before greenbelt implementation (2000-2004) and after (2005-2009; 2010-2014).

**RESULTS**

In total, 157 official plan amendments redesignated 18,005 hectares of prime agricultural land in the Greater Golden Horseshoe from 2000 to 2014. A summary of the area of prime agricultural land redesignated by location and application timeframe is presented below.

Hectares of Prime Agricultural Land Redesignated			
Application timeframe	Greenbelt-protected countryside	North of greenbelt	South of greenbelt (whitebelt)
2000-2004	891 ha	2,601 ha	1,069 ha
2005-2009	316 ha	1,432 ha	7,728 ha
2010-2014	0 ha	1,065 ha	2,904 ha

Prior to greenbelt implementation (2000-2004), most prime agricultural land redesignated was outside of what would become the greenbelt boundaries. Of the land redesignated beyond the greenbelt, the majority was in the countryside to the north, while a smaller area was redesignated to the south in an area known as the “whitebelt.”

In the five years following the

implementation of the Greenbelt Plan (2005-2009), two interesting changes occurred. First, a substantially larger area of prime agricultural land was redesignated beyond the greenbelt. The area of prime agricultural land redesignated through official plan amendments applied for during this time increased by nearly 150 per cent, affecting 9,159 hectares of land.

In addition, the spatial distribution of amendments outside of the greenbelt area also changed following implementation of the Greenbelt Plan. The majority of amendments were not to the north of the greenbelt, but rather in the southern whitebelt region. In the whitebelt, 7,728 hectares were applied and later approved for redesignation, representing a 620 per cent increase from the five years previous.

It should also be noted that, while seemingly contrary to greenbelt policy, the 316 hectares redesignated in the Greenbelt Plan-protected countryside during the time following implementation (2005-2009) were largely captured under permitted exceptions for settlement-area boundary expansions initiated, but not yet applied for, prior to implementation of the Greenbelt Plan.

In the last five years of the study (2010-2014), the amount of prime agricultural land redesignated decreased; however, the distribution remained similar. Again, most of the land redesignated outside of the

greenbelt was within the whitebelt, while a smaller area was redesignated north of the greenbelt. No prime agricultural land was redesignated in the greenbelt-protected countryside during this time.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the research indicate a trend to the contrary to what was expected.

While prime agricultural lands north of the greenbelt boundary were under more pressure in the years preceding Greenbelt Plan implementation, from 2005 to 2014, far more prime agricultural land was redesignated in the whitebelt region.

Rather than aggravating extended sprawl to the north through a leapfrog effect, the implementation of the Greenbelt Plan appears to correspond with a trend of intensification in the whitebelt. The results, perhaps, describe less of the impact of the Greenbelt Plan, and more so the impact of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which was implemented in 2006.

The implementation of these two plans together has led to success from a planning perspective. While the loss of prime agricultural land increased substantially following their implementation, next to no prime agricultural land has been lost in the greenbelt, and further, the loss of prime agricultural land has largely been contained to the whitebelt region, where intensification is to be promoted.

Nonetheless, monitoring available land supply in the whitebelt region will be of the utmost importance in years to come. While land is available in this area, it may continue to mitigate the anticipated leapfrog effect to the north. However, should this land supply become exhausted, impacts of a leapfrog effect and greater loss of prime agricultural land may come to fruition in the countryside north of the greenbelt boundaries. (Y)

For further information on this research, visit [waynecaldwell.ca](http://waynecaldwell.ca).



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ACADEMIC

# Density done right

BY CHERISE BURDA AND CLAIRE NELISCHER

As many Ontario municipalities face a housing affordability crisis, we are also confronted by the ever more urgent threat of climate change. Yet in policy and practice, comprehensive strategies to address climate and housing challenges together have so far been missing from the conversation.

For decades, growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) region has prioritized low-density sprawl, consuming valuable agricultural land, drinking water headlands, and natural ecosystems and producing car-dependent suburbs. Despite the introduction of the Greenbelt Act and Growth Plan in 2005 and 2006, low-density greenfield development still represents the majority of new housing,<sup>1</sup> paving over previously undeveloped land at a rate of approximately 1,000 ha per year.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, intensification is increasingly concentrated in small, high-growth areas, yielding mostly units in tall towers not suitable for a range of family sizes. In 2017, an estimated 84 per cent of the GTA's apartment and condo units in development were in buildings 12 storeys or higher.<sup>3</sup>

The players driving this “tall and sprawl” development pattern tend to dominate the housing affordability conversation, contending that supply writ large will improve affordability. But as we continue to build high up and out, we find ourselves in the midst

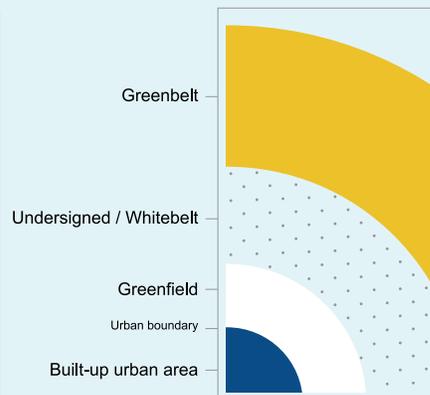
of a deepening affordability crisis.

Distributed density – adding low, medium, and high residential densities throughout urbanized areas rather than in concentrated nodes of high intensification – is the focus of the Ryerson City Building Institute's latest report, *Density Done Right*. It aims to equip residents and decision makers with an understanding of how distributed density can support neighbourhood livability and affordability while helping to achieve our climate and environmental goals.

## DISTRIBUTED DENSITY SUPPORTS LIVABILITY

We know a critical mass of residents is needed to make efficient use of municipal services, support schools, and transit and make local businesses and services viable. Yet as demographics change and homeowners age, the livability of many so-called “stable” neighbourhoods is threatened by stagnating or declining populations.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, in high-growth neighbourhoods, without appropriate investment, services and infrastructure are strained. For example, Toronto's downtown today has an average of 4.2 square metres of parkland per person, much less than the city-wide average of 28 square metres per person.<sup>5</sup> With the area's population set to double by 2041, this disparity is expected to grow.<sup>6</sup>



Adding population to existing neighbourhoods through gentle- and medium-density development could ease the “spikiness” of high-intensity growth areas, while creating more housing options and supporting neighbourhood vibrancy.

## DISTRIBUTED DENSITY SUPPORTS AFFORDABILITY

Restricting intensification to a small percentage of the urban landscape gives landowners leverage to extract high prices for their land, which can lead to higher housing costs for residents. Encouraging development spread throughout the urban footprint may temper land costs associated with scarcity, leading to lower costs for end users overall.

By allowing more lower-scale midrise housing as-of-right, adding gentle density

to detached neighbourhoods via triplex conversions, and supporting a range of scales and locations for purpose-built rental housing, distributed density could help to make housing more attainable for a range of incomes.

### DISTRIBUTED DENSITY SUPPORTS SUSTAINABILITY

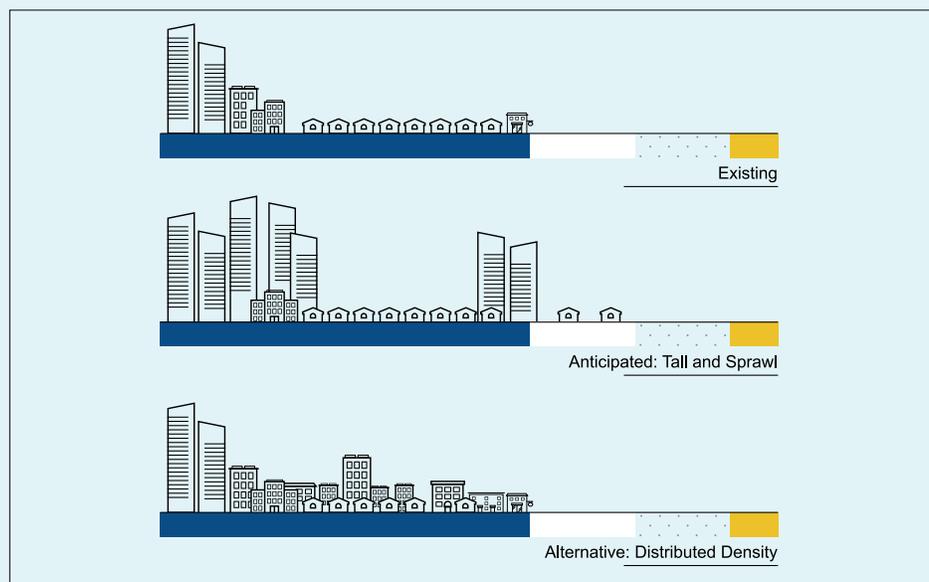
To meet climate commitments, we need to drive down vehicle emissions. Low-density, suburban development is associated with much higher emissions from automobile use,<sup>7</sup> and represents one of Ontario's leading sources of GHG emissions.<sup>8</sup>

and types – like Vancouver's Zero Emissions Building Plan – distributed density could further support climate goals while providing long-term energy savings for renters and homeowners.<sup>12</sup>

Other jurisdictions are already demonstrating leadership by tackling housing affordability through a climate lens. In 2019, New York City passed the Climate Mobilization Act, a sweeping set of bills to reduce GHG emissions from buildings by over 80 per cent by 2050.<sup>13</sup> Together with Housing New York Plan to build 300,000 affordable homes by 2026,<sup>14</sup> as well as incentives for energy efficient affordable housing

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Encouraging more location-efficient development over car-oriented sprawl can dramatically reduce auto-dependence and related emissions while also saving households an estimated \$8,000 to \$15,000 per year by eliminating the need for car ownership.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, built forms associated with middle- and gentle-density development can support both sustainability and affordability: energy-efficient modular fabrication, wood-frame construction, and reduced parking requirements have all been shown to yield considerable construction cost savings, which can be passed to homebuyers.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile gentle- and medium-density multi-unit housing are more energy-efficient than concrete and steel high-rises in terms of embodied energy and construction.<sup>11</sup>

In combination with strong energy efficiency requirements for all building sizes

construction,<sup>15</sup> New York City's policies are supporting energy-efficient and climate-resilient development while boosting the supply of affordable housing.

In Ontario, we are in a position to do the same, by leveraging climate action strategies, such as Toronto's TransformTO, in conjunction with provincial and municipal efforts to advance distributed density, such as the City of Toronto's recent efforts to expand missing middle housing options in the "yellowbelt."<sup>16</sup> Through municipal affordability programs, such as Toronto's HousingNow, we could apply energy efficiency goals to long-term leases on public land for affordable rental housing.

The policy tools and industry innovations needed to change our approach to growth for the better are in our reach – we need to put them to use. ♻️



**Claire Nelischer** is a Candidate Member of OPPI and a Project Manager at Ryerson City Building Institute. **Cherise Burda** is Executive Director at Ryerson City Building Institute.



## Design with Nature Now

With climate change posing imminent risks that range from rising seas to more extreme weather events, cities must work with ecology rather than against it to develop sustainably. That is the message in the book *Design with Nature Now*.

Timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of pioneering landscape architect Ian McHarg's influential manifesto *Design with Nature*, the new volume highlights 25 cutting-edge projects that address biodiversity loss, sea-level rise, water and air pollution, and urbanization, including a New York City park on the site of a landfill that once accepted 29,000 tons of refuse a day; a wetland in China constructed to filter pollution from a planned city of 50,000 people; a proposal for built landforms in coastal Norfolk, Virginia, that would absorb stormwater and tides; and an ambitious concept for a wind turbine farm in the North Sea.

*Design With Nature Now* is published by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design.



## Dr. Dianne Saxe: Saxe Facts

Last October, OPPI was honoured to conclude OPPI19: Beyond 25, our annual conference and AGM, with a presentation by Dr. Dianne Saxe, Strategic Advice and Presentations, Climate, Energy and Environment, and the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario from 2015 to 2019.

Dr. Saxe's presentation, *Urban Sprawl: Ontario's Oil Sands*, was a dire reality check about the impact we are having on the earth and the inevitable outcomes. Dr. Saxe encourages all OPPI members to take urgent action to reduce the impact urban sprawl is having on the environment and prepare for the effects of the climate emergency. The slides from her presentation to OPPI are available at [saxefacts.com/urban-sprawl-ontarios-oil-sands](http://saxefacts.com/urban-sprawl-ontarios-oil-sands). But while the message of her presentation was grim, we are not without hope.

In *10 Principles to Guide the Transition to a Green Economy*, her major thought piece for 2019, Dr. Saxe offers a roadmap for Canadians to overcome the political obstacles to dramatically reducing their dependence on fossil fuels. It is available at [www.opencanada.org/features/10-principles-to-guide-the-transition-to-a-green-economy/](http://www.opencanada.org/features/10-principles-to-guide-the-transition-to-a-green-economy/).

John Narvali



Leena Lamontagne-Dupuis (left), winner of the 2019 Gerald Carothers Graduate Scholarship, and Ellen McGowan (right), winner of the 2019 Ronald M. Keeble Undergraduate Scholarship

## OPPI Student Scholarships

OPPI provides its Student Members with scholarship opportunities to ensure they can continue to learn about planning and be the future of the planning profession in Ontario after graduation. OPPI has three scholarships available for Student Members.

### Ronald M Keeble Undergraduate

**Scholarship:** This \$2,000 scholarship supports undergraduate students studying planning. Applicants must be Student Members of OPPI at the time of application, and the recipient must be enrolled full time in an accredited undergraduate planning program in Ontario.

### Gerald Carothers Graduate Scholarship:

This \$2,500 scholarship assists in furthering planning education and recognizes student members who are making a contribution

to their communities. Applicants must be members of OPPI at the time of application and the recipient must be enrolled full time in an accredited graduate planning program in Ontario.

### T.P. Jason Ferrigan 2020 President's Scholarship:

This \$3,000 scholarship recognizes an OPPI Student Member who has demonstrated leadership in the field of climate change adaptation. Jason's main motivation to enter the planning profession was to address through sustainability the environmental wrongs committed by previous generations of decision makers. Today, climate change adaptation is the ultimate sustainability element.

The application deadline for all three scholarships is March 1. For more details, including application and eligibility criteria, please visit [ontarioplanners.ca](http://ontarioplanners.ca).



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## Empower Change:

### Join the OPPI Council

OPPI's Governance and Nominating Committee is calling for nominations from Full Members who wish to join the OPPI Council as Directors. The positions are for a two-year term. Directors may be re-elected for a second two-year term. Elected Members to OPPI Council will assume office at the adjournment of the 2020 Annual General Meeting. The call for nominations for opens February 1 and closes April 1.

The priority of Council is to guide the organization through policy decisions and strategic directions. It provides direct oversight in several core areas, including finance, quality control, risk management, and stakeholder relations. It empowers staff and volunteers to implement OPPI's Strategic Plan.

The governing body consists of nine to 11 motivated individuals drawn from diverse backgrounds, who work together effectively with professional acumen, foresight, and creativity.

For more information on OPPI's call for Council nominations, governance resources, and submission applications, please visit [ontarioplanners.ca](http://ontarioplanners.ca).



## 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

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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
- 

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