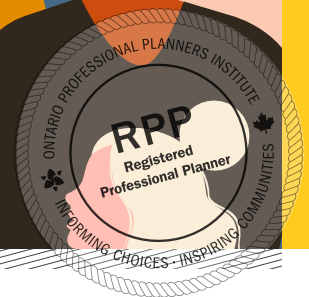




IDEAS AT THE CROSSROADS OF INSPIRED COMMUNITIES



THIS ISSUE:

As planners, our role is to meet the needs of the people who live in the cities, towns, and communities we plan. 05

The changing premise of urban planning. 06



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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INSPIRE



OPPI STRATEGIC PLAN 2025

Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) has recently released a new three-year strategic plan to guide the Institute's activities and apply to all of 2022, 2023, and 2024. The plan is an update of the previous strategic plan and is a recommitment to OPPI's vision, mission, and values.

VISION

With foresight, leadership, and professionalism, Registered Professional Planners create and manage change in the built, natural, and social environments for the common good.

MISSION

The mission of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute is to leverage knowledge, resources, and relationships to facilitate excellence in planning by professional planners.

VALUES



Professional – Protecting the integrity of the practice and its obligation to serve the common good



Accountable – Meeting our commitments with openness and transparency



Future-driven – Looking forward and being agile and innovative in response to opportunities and challenges



Collaborative – Sharing our knowledge and working with others to achieve excellence



Equitable – Embodying diversity of all kinds within the profession and the communities we serve

Learn more about INSPIRE: OPPI Strategic Plan 2025 at ontarioplanners.ca/oppi/inspire-oppi.

“Planners have a role to play in ensuring our interactions with the public and our community plans and designs respect all people...”

When I was a student planner, my parents asked me, “What does a planner do?” I offered the explanation that many young planners offer – we plan cities, towns, and communities.

But as we all have learned, it is far more complex than that. Or is it? Cities, towns, and communities are creatures of people. They serve as the vehicle to provide people with housing, jobs, mobility, and the means of socialization. As planners, our role is to meet the needs of the people who live in the cities, towns, and communities we plan. Those needs are diverse and changing. COVID-19 has focused on particularly important needs of people, including both physical and mental health. Key to those aspects is the ability to recreate and to socialize – both of which we have found new and innovative ways to accomplish during the pandemic.

Equally important in terms of the needs of people is respect – respect for each of us as equals no matter our age, sex, gender, ethnicity, or cultural affiliation. Planners have a role to play in ensuring our interactions with the public and our community plans and designs respect all people, including those who have been disadvantaged in the past.

The theme of this issue of *Y Magazine* is essentially about people and how planners meet the needs of people. In the introductory article, “The changing premise of urban planning,” Dave Hardy, RPP, encourages us to have deeper conversations about changes that are happening right now and in the near future. Leela Viswanathan, RPP, asks us to consider ways to embed human rights and the principle of “Do No Harm” into planning practice.

Within these pages, you'll also read about planners who are working within their communities, whether it's to build a community hub and housing, connect residents through culture, or support economic development opportunities for farmers – and that's just to name a few articles in this packed issue of *Y Magazine*.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Lowes'.

Paul Lowes, MES, MCIP, RPP
President
Ontario Professional Planners Institute



The changing premise of urban planning

BY DAVE HARDY, RPP

What planners do is important to Canadians. Families love where they live because of the quality of their home and neighbourhoods, nearby schools, natural areas, enjoyable parks and playgrounds. They benefit from access to roads and transit and nearness of homes to shops and work. Each community attribute is guided, developed, or approved by an urban, rural, or environmental planner.

“As professionals, we need to engage in a deeper conversation.”

Planners are trained to think 25 to 40 years into the future. It takes that long for the approval and construction of housing, infrastructure, roads, power plants, parks, schools, and hospitals. We look at social, environmental, economic, and cultural trends and envision what land uses need to be in place to deliver a high quality of life. We are guided by data and draw conclusions that set the premises for land-use decision making.

For the most part, urban and regional planning works. We enjoy a strong economy where people prosper and enjoy good health. But, in my opinion, basic premises of planning are changing due to 1) the Organic Evolution, 2) the COVID Push, and 3) the Technology Pull. And as professionals, we need to engage in a deeper conversation.

ORGANIC EVOLUTION

Cities constantly change. There are changes in housing preferences, the economy, building technology, aging neighbourhoods, immigration, and lifecycles (people get older). These are organic changes and planners need to pay close attention.

For example, the City of Toronto has evolved into a city divided by income, race, and health. Wealthier residents live in the core and the poorest residents live in the suburbs. Up to 70 per cent of suburban populations are visibly majorities compared to a mostly white population in the core. The health disparity is evidenced in places like Scarborough, that became a COVID-19 hot spot. This health issue was complicated by overcrowded emergency rooms, significantly higher incidences of chronic disease (kidney disease), and higher transit dependency. A clear case of a land use planning issue being a social justice issue.

A long-term premise has been, if we invest in the core and attract the young, creative class to downtown condos, the rest of the city would benefit. But, as organic evolution occurred, this demographic started family formation and having children. With condo kids experiencing minimal park areas, playgrounds, day care centres, recreation programs, the single-family suburban house has become a desirable form of housing.

This premise, among other organic changes, needs to be revisited so that we can do a better job in delivering quality of life to all of our citizens.

Forget the 15-minute city – with at-home work, we now have the one-minute city.”

THE COVID PUSH

COVID is a stress test for cities. Not only for our health system but for our economy, society, and environment.

Our communities were pushed into a digital world – and more than this, residents became proficient rapidly. Most of the world’s white-collar workers are online. Forget the 15-minute city – with at-home work,

we now have the one-minute city. This has significant implications for core-area employment centres as preferred places of work.

Work-play-live intensified as families were and continue to be pushed together. For the first time in generations, children spend more time with parents who do not commute. As Joel Kotkin advocates in *The Human City*, planners should look at creating cities for families. Suburbs should be rethought of as the “desirable middle.”

COVID is pushing us to rethink what it means to be a healthy community, especially in racialized, low-income, and newcomer communities. While walkability and bike-ability are desirable, these planning objectives significantly underestimate what land uses are required to achieve a healthy community. Citizens experienced serious negative health outcomes, in part, based on the design of homes and communities and the requirement to interact with others at the workplace and on public transit. These are land-use planning issues.

COVID is pushing us to consider how urban and regional planning can contribute to fixing our physical health system. What is the contribution that planners can make to fixing long-standing health issues centred on nursing homes, seniors’ homes, and other forms of congregate settings? Do new hospitals need lands to be set aside for testing and vaccinations? Should new homes be designed to detect viruses? What types of future communities will best deliver fresh air, exercise, and opportunities for socially/physically distant socializing? Will these be low-density areas?

THE TECHNOLOGY PULL

The science fiction of 25 years ago is here today. Planners need to pay attention to five changes.

First, the store comes to me. Technology supporting the future of online shopping continues to shake bricks and mortar retail. This raises significant questions for planning. Will local and regional malls survive? Will financial technology replace local banks that have been important retail anchors? In addition to the growing presence of delivery vehicles, technology has influenced travel and delivery patterns. What are the implications for road and transit use?

Second, my food is grown in a building. Led by the success of Canada’s most lucrative and profitable agricultural crop – marijuana – our food is increasingly grown in a building. Local food is becoming more local. New technology mashed with modern farming promises to produce crops indoors at a lower long-term cost with less wastage. Should future industrial land policies include lands set aside for indoor farming? Should

planners then ease up on restrictions on agricultural land i.e., to accommodate housing? Will changes in how we feed ourselves indirectly create more housing supply and help achieve housing affordability?

Third, my car no longer pollutes. Within 10 to 15 years, much of the world will be driving non-CO2 vehicles and hybrids. Today, most of the world’s automobile manufacturers are retooling to produce vehicles that don’t emit CO2. Vehicle batteries may contribute to solving the energy storage challenge and be a better energy solution than solar and wind generation. Think of the cars in the shopping mall parking lot powering the mall. Further, Uber and artificial intelligence firms already make the business case that urban and rural residents don’t need a car. Rent it, share it, or have it come to you when needed. These are significant implications for how we plan urban and regional areas. Does a 15-minute city designed to avoid automobile emissions continue to be a viable planning concept? Is sprawl still an issue? Do cities need to be as dense, or will less dense cities improve our quality of life and climate?

Fourth, I don’t commute to earn a living, because I can work remotely. My technology allows me to work anywhere in the world. Should planners rethink what’s allowed for home occupations and businesses? What do we do about policies promoting new core area employment and office buildings? Should new office towers and employment centres be in suburban areas – close to where people live? Should existing core area towers be new sources of affordable housing?

Fifth, I do commute to earn a living, because I have a job that cannot be done remotely. For some of us, the transit will come to me. Trials of autonomous transit vehicles are already occurring in the east end of the Greater Toronto and the Hamilton area. How do planners adjust to changes in the work/live/transit connection?

The basic premise of urban and regional planning has changed. How we plan our urban, suburban, and rural areas in the future will be very exciting.

Dave Hardy, RPP, is a Member of OPPI, the President of Hardy Stevenson and Associates Limited, and Executive Director of the Institute for New Suburbanism.



Embedding the principle of “Do No Harm” into planning practice

BY LEELA VISWANATHAN, RPP

The principle of “Do No Harm” emerged from the fields of medicine and international development as a way of mitigating the harmful effects of providing medical or humanitarian aid.

“Both Do No Harm and harm reduction principles, when applied to practice, intend to engage in proactive efforts toward social inclusion...”

Debates ensue about the applicability of the principle to other professional fields, including urban planning, and the extent to which the impact of eliminating harm is achievable. Minimizing harm or “harm reduction” is also applied to the realm of urban development.

Both Do No Harm and harm reduction principles, when applied to practice, intend to engage in proactive efforts toward social inclusion, rather than engaging in urban planning processes that depend solely, if not reactively, upon conflict resolution and mediation processes.

“The principle of Do No Harm is founded on implementing human rights to planning practices.”

Harm reduction is predominately considered in practices of urban health, community safety, and drug policy in the framework of “right to the city.” By contrast, the principle of Do No Harm is founded on implementing human rights to planning practices. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes “the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” Dr. Sandeep Agrawal has also made the case for a broader application of human rights to solving complex urban problems and recommends its inclusion in planning education.

Applying human rights in the development of inclusive planning policy in Ontario will test the principle of Do No Harm in practice. For example, following the *National Housing Strategy Act* in June 2019 which brought human rights into its declaration, the City of Toronto’s municipal housing and homelessness plan and the City of Kitchener’s *Housing for All* strategic plan are founded on human rights. Furthermore, inclusionary zoning policy in Toronto, passed in November 2021, also put forward human rights as foundational to accessible and affordable housing.

The principle of Do No Harm should also be considered by those who work on and communicate visually with data, because systemic discrimination is perpetuated by the use and misuse of data. The US-based Urban Institute’s *Do No Harm Guide* recommends mitigating discriminatory practices in data visualization by actively implementing equity through practices, including using “people first language” in data labels; ordering responses purposefully, rather than according to historical biases (i.e., reinforcing whiteness as the norm); and carefully considering colours, icons, and shapes associated with stereotypes.

For the principle of Do No Harm and human rights to not be relegated to a trend, planners need to actively learn them, engage with them, teach them, and embed them into practice. ♿



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→ LEARN MORE

Further reading

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The value of qualitative research and community engagement in planning

BY IZABELA MOLENDOWSKI, RPP

Qualitative research is often overlooked and dismissed as too anecdotal and lacking in objectivity, even though it is a highly important and valuable component of informing planning processes and decisions.

“...planners find themselves grappling with how to plan for towns and cities especially after the pandemic has brought existing systemic inequality to light.”

Released in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Toronto Foundation's *2020 Fallout Report* documented the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on marginalized populations as the first wave hit the city. The *Fallout Report* provides a stark contrast between how Toronto's working-class and racialized communities have been impacted by the pandemic compared to the city's



wealthiest and whitest neighbourhoods. As we head into a phase of the pandemic with cautious optimism due to vaccine availability, planners find themselves grappling with how to plan for towns and cities especially after the pandemic has brought existing systemic inequality to light.

There are many lessons to be learned from the report's qualitative research, as well as the data provided by Toronto Public Health. Most importantly, the qualitative research presented in the Fallout Report underscores previously overlooked impacts of the pandemic on many communities in the city and highlights specific areas of concern, such as unequal access to reliable public transportation and food insecurity.

Over the course of this pandemic, Toronto Public Health has released its quantitative research on which communities have experienced the highest rates of COVID-19 cases and indicated that the demographic groups within these communities are predominantly working-class and racialized. Once vaccines were widely available in mid-2021, data was also released on which communities in Toronto were experiencing the lowest vaccine uptake, which signaled where many communities were struggling with direct access to vaccine supply.

The Fallout Report's research validated what community leaders working directly within these marginalized neighbourhoods have been raising awareness about years before the pandemic, magnifying the lived experiences of residents impacted by the uneven distribution of resources in Toronto. It further strengthened the existing data with a more detailed narrative about inequality in Canada's largest city. It also presents a good example of how important qualitative research is for informing planners,

policymakers, and community leaders about the significant areas of concern in a community.

"...research validated what community leaders working directly within these marginalized neighbourhoods have been raising awareness about years before the pandemic..."

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNERS

Within the planning profession, qualitative research should be valued as highly as quantitative data to build an understanding of the planning context in a specific area. Planners should strive to obtain an understanding of residents' lived experiences before working towards revitalizing their communities, as it clearly informs planners about the current needs and concerns of the community. Qualitative research is also able to expand on quantitative data and fills gaps in research that quantitative data is not able to answer by exposing the nuances that shape how different communities function. It is also able to provide indications of why the social issues reflected in statistics are occurring and suggests to planners and decision makers what measures may be taken to resolve these issues.

APPROACHES TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Ideally, obtaining an understanding of lived experiences should be gathered through direct communication with residents, such as by organizing public consultations and community meetings. Although qualitative reports and studies informed by grassroots community

leaders are highly valuable, they may be further strengthened by gathering direct testimonials from community members themselves rather than solely obtaining this information through the non-profit organizations working within the communities.

Similar reports detailing income and racial inequity should strive to obtain testimonies from residents directly impacted by socioeconomic and spatial inequality, as an effort to elevate their voices and provide them with a platform to share their lived experiences.

“...qualitative research should be valued as highly as quantitative data to build an understanding of the planning context in a specific area.”

THE VALUE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND ANECDOTAL EXPERIENCE

It is important to acknowledge that there is bias in data collection and social science research against qualitative findings which highlight people’s lived experiences. Qualitative research is dismissed for being “too biased” and “anecdotal,” often when the voices of racialized and low-income individuals are being brought to the forefront. In reality, the actual bias in social science and planning research is the internalized bias against the voices of marginalized groups – especially Indigenous and Black folks – which has manifested from the systemic racism and classism embedded in Western colonial governance structures and planning systems.

Planners should be aware of these biases and actively work toward decolonizing the planning process. City-builders can strive to emphasize the importance of obtaining qualitative information about the communities they are trying to help by listening to the folks sharing their lived experiences. Collaborating with grassroots community organizations and non-profits directly serving the communities is a good way to obtain qualitative data, as these groups have formed a trusting relationship with local community members.

“...emphasizing the importance of organizing public consultation and community meetings where local residents are able to directly express their needs and interests is a crucial component of planning...”

It’s also important to remember that a “one-size-fits-all” approach should not be applied to community engagement, since different communities will have varying needs. Low-income and marginalized communities are not a monolith, and even though they may form a part of the same town or city, they should not be approached in the same manner simply due to the fact that the demographic data shows they have populations with similar socioeconomics and other indicators of class differences. Working with grassroots community

organizations at the forefront of engagement helps provide an understanding of the specific concerns that need to be addressed in a particular community which may differ from those of another community with similar demographics.

Urban Strategies has collaborated with grassroots organizations working within communities for several engagement-oriented projects, such as the Eglinton East Planning Study that was led in partnership with the East Scarborough Storefront. Projects where engagement involved direct collaboration and dialogue with community members include the Galleria Mall Redevelopment, the Alexandria Park Revitalization, and the Waterloo Community Building Strategy for the ION LRT. A large part of the success behind these projects was driven by the considerable amount of qualitative information provided directly by community members, which helped strengthen the vision, plans, and outcomes for long-term planning strategies in their communities.

Emphasizing the importance of organizing public consultation and community meetings where local residents are able to directly express their needs and interests is a crucial component of planning. Yet, it is often dismissed as simply checking off a box on a list of things to do before submitting a development application. The community-specific information presented in the Fallout Report also demonstrates how impactful qualitative research is for informing planners, policymakers, and leaders about the particular needs of different communities and has effectively contributed a detailed narrative to the existing quantitative data presenting inequality in Toronto.

While political will is needed to secure support for improving low-income areas, raising awareness about pressing issues with local leaders and politicians is a component of planning which will require further consideration into the future. This is especially the case if we are striving to plan for more equitable towns and cities in response to the drastic inequalities that have come to light during the COVID-19 pandemic. (P)



Izabela Molendowski, MCIP, RPP is a Member of OPPI and an Urban Planner with Urban Strategies Inc.

What is good planning? If the public consistently disagrees, have planners failed?

BY GLENN MILLER, RPP
AND GORDON HARRIS, RPP

Toronto's response to increasing demand for more housing holds lessons for all cities in Canada.

One of the threads in Toronto's urban fabric showing signs of wear is the relationship that residents have with the quality of planning and development in their city. When things are going well, the mood can be buoyant. These days, the court of public opinion is just as likely to express deep concerns about the scale of massive new developments, particularly in neighbourhoods blessed with sidewalks, attractive amenities, and good public transit. "We understand the value and need for intensification," residents seem to be saying, "but when is enough, enough?"

"These days, the court of public opinion is just as likely to express deep concerns about the scale of massive new developments..."





Walking the streets of the “old City of Toronto,” it is easy to understand the origins for this unease. Just about everywhere, it seems, there are notice boards that proclaim “A Change is Proposed for This Site.” On one hand, the notices are a positive sign that the appetite for reinvestment in the city is alive and thriving. But some view the blue and white posters as harbingers of over-development, brought on by unrealistic expectations and more than a few bad precedents.

“The goal should be to balance return on investment with respect for how the impact of a development proposal affects the quality of life in a neighbourhood.”

Few would dispute that the time is right for intensification through good quality infill or that the city has a duty to encourage the better use of hundreds of large former industrial and commercial brownfield sites that are ripe for redevelopment. All these sites can benefit from existing or newly built public transit. And there is certainly no shortage of well-crafted policies in the City’s official plan that make the case for more jobs, housing, a mix of uses, and support for attractive, walkable development, all of which is in sync with provincial policies and can lead to enhanced urban livability.

The problem is context. This is where planners advising developers have to show their worth. Making the case for high-density redevelopment in places served by subways, streetcars and buses is pretty straightforward. Paying attention to the depth and breadth and the context of a site is the challenge. This is also where consultants should focus on providing professional advice to their

clients rather than relying on high-level planning policy language in reports. The goal should be to balance return on investment with respect for how the impact of a development proposal affects the quality of life in a neighbourhood.

The City’s planning department often finds itself in a difficult spot. The first problem they face is dealing with precedents established by provincial land tribunals (the latest iteration being the Ontario Land Tribunal) that allow larger projects than supported by Council. Resident associations are all too familiar with the phrase in OLT decisions that substitute the findings of city planning staff with those of the tribunal: “And in our opinion this project represents good planning.”

The second problem is that while the solid principles that underscore “good planning” may make sense in the abstract, the reality is that the impact of policy is extraordinarily sensitive to location. The intricacies of lot size, breadth, depth, and topography are harder to foresee at the scale of the official plan. What makes sense along high-capacity arterial roads works less well on the narrow streets and cul-du-sacs that sit in behind these major roads. What works well on the expansive frontages of former industrial and commercial sites in post-war suburbs can create problems on commercial arteries, featuring tight-knit properties with shallow frontages abutting mature neighbourhoods.

“What is missing is an understanding of context – of what happens when you apply well-crafted land use policies on the ground.”



What is missing is an understanding of context – of what happens when you apply well-crafted land use policies on the ground. It goes without saying that ticking all the boxes for amenities and access to transit merits higher density. Developers and their planners may appear to justify enormous projects without much thought for the setting.

“Members have a primary responsibility to define and serve the interests of the public.”

CART BEFORE THE HORSE?

Perhaps the problem is that the imprimatur of “good planning” is applied in the wrong section of the planning report. Before settling on an appropriate density that reflects the high-level goals of official plan policy, should density level negotiations instead focus on what is reasonably possible on the site? Should the humble site plan application play a larger role?

How else to explain, for instance, a recent proposal in Forest Hill Village, Toronto, that attempts to squeeze more than 600 suites onto a tiny infill site that is barely one acre in size on a narrow one-block-long dead-end street? Or a proposal in Midtown Toronto to – in the words of a tenant’s association newsletter – “glue” two new towers of 11 and 15 storeys on to the face of an existing 32-storey high-rise tower, which would require the demolition of nine townhouses and dozens of mature trees?

A third challenge facing the City’s planners is that, in 2019, the Province of Ontario replaced Toronto’s plans to restrict building heights and density in fast-developing “growth centres” to avoid

“Paying attention to the depth and breadth and the context of a site is the challenge.”

overloading hard and soft infrastructure (buildings need sewers and children need schools, after all) while also allowing developers to build much bigger and taller towers.

According to the City’s own reporting, large developments in areas “designated for growth” are getting larger. Some of that trend is due to the pressing need to make the best possible use of publicly funded infrastructure and other resources. But individuals acting as consultants should look no further than the first line of OPPI’s *Professional Code of Practice*, which states that “Members have a primary responsibility to define and serve the interests of the public.” The challenge is to balance this against the requirement to “provide diligent, creative, independent, and competent performance of work in pursuit of the client’s or employer’s interest.” Balance is the operative word.

As the number of large development projects increases around Toronto – and elsewhere – it is worth asking, what is good planning? Who decides, and on what basis? If planners lose credibility in the minds of the public, no one wins. We know we need to make better use of urban land, and we need to make sure that what is being planned and built fits in and is livable. 



Glenn Miller FCIP, RPP, and **Gordon Harris**, FCIP, RPP, are both Members of OPPI and Fellows of CIP, based in Toronto.



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Event barns: Good or bad for the Golden Horseshoe?

BY PAM DUESLING, RPP

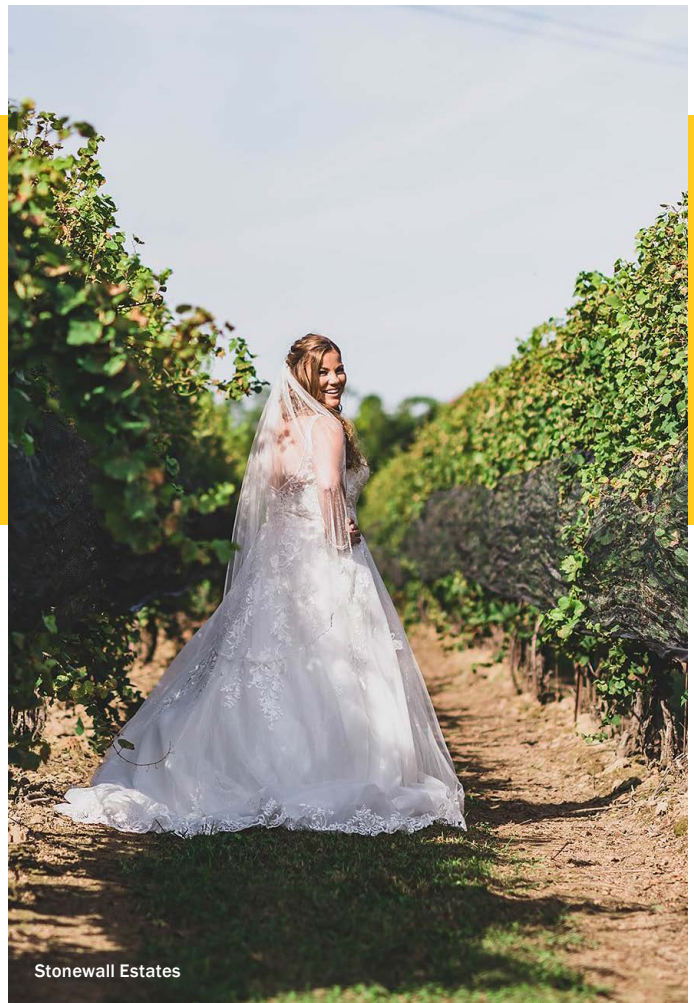
With a growing population of more than seven million people, the Golden Horseshoe region in Ontario is the most densely populated and industrialized area in Canada. The Golden Horseshoe is also home to some of Ontario's best prime agricultural lands with more than 2,494,500 acres in agricultural production.



Stonewall Estates



Maple Meadows



Stonewall Estates

In 2016, the Province of Ontario created the *Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas* (OMAFRA Guidelines) to help local municipalities, decision makers, and farmers interpret on-farm diversified use policies in the Provincial Policy Statement. The Guidelines are an important step within the Ontario land use planning policy regime to address and balance prime agricultural land preservation with economic development opportunities for farmers. These permissions apply to event barns, a popular growing trend in the Golden Horseshoe.

“...event barns are expensive, take time to create for the average family farmer, and should be an appropriate size and scale...”

The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) recently published a position paper on event barns, identifying relevant development policies, regulations and processes, case studies, and recommendations for creating event barns appropriately in the Golden Horseshoe. The following three examples exemplify lessons to be learned by the planning profession in permitting on-farm diversified uses.

MAPLE MEADOWS FARM AND EVENT CENTRE

Maple Meadows Farm and Event Centre in Port Colborne, Niagara Region, is a 26-hectare (65-acre) farm that rents their land to an organic farmer and operates a three-hectare (seven-acre) unlimited event space. Maple Meadows Farm includes a gorgeous post-and-beam barn, where they host approximately 200 guests per wedding and organize upwards of 52 weddings annually between May and October. The event barn was approved and established on approximately two hectares (six acres) of land more than the OMAFRA Guidelines recommend.

CAMBIUM FARMS

Cambium Farms in Caledon, Peel Region, is a 20-hectare (50-acre) rented cash crop farm, landscaping business, and event barn hosting approximately 120 events per year and 450 guests on site. Cambium Farms has continued to grow its business with planning applications in 2015, 2017, and 2018. The main floor of the beautiful barn operates seasonally from May to September and the lower-level Byre operates year-round. According to the OMAFRA Guidelines, two per cent of this property would be 0.4 hectares (one acre) and the event barn would equal 800 square metres (8,610 square feet). No limited area provisions were included in the zoning by-law for the event barn, but the site plan identifies eight hectares (20 acres) for the event barn use. With approvals at 1,365 square metres (14,692 square feet), the

event barn and amenity space at Cambium Farms are too large in size and scale according to the OMAFRA Guidelines.


STONEWALL ESTATES

Stonewall Estates in Lincoln, Niagara Region, is a breathtaking 40-hectare (120-acre) vineyard and orchard that hosts approximately 30 weddings per year with 200 guests each. The Stonewall Estates winery is opening in 2022. At a much smaller size and scale, the event barn is only 235 square metres (2,530 square feet) with an estimated 0.8 hectares (two acres) used for amenity space and parking for the event barn and is appropriate according to the OMAFRA Guidelines.

“...the planning profession can learn and grow from these examples and adopt a ‘farm first mindset’ going forward.”

These three case studies illustrate that event barns may be appropriate on large farms where the land use ratio is larger and can accommodate amenity space and parking. Each of these event barns spent between \$200,000 to \$2 million on planning approvals, building permits, and development charges to create their on-farm diversified uses. The position paper identifies that event barns are expensive, take time to create for the average family farmer, and should be an appropriate size and scale (two per cent to a maximum of one hectare / 2.5 acres as recommended in the OMAFRA Guidelines) to preserve prime agricultural lands. While already established, the planning profession can learn and grow from these examples and adopt a “farm first mindset” going forward.

In conclusion, event barns should only be permitted if they can meet all the current government requirements and meet the criteria in the OMAFRA Guidelines. Based on these outlined examples, many proposals for event barns may not be able to meet these requirements today.

For further information on event barns, including recommendations and best practices for planners when working with family farm entrepreneurs to establish such uses, please visit the GHFFA website at www.foodandfarming.ca or contact Executive Director Janet Horner at janet@whitfieldfarms.com. 



Pam Duesling, MAES, MCIP, RPP, Ec D., CMM3, is a Member of OPPI, a Director on OPPI Council, and the General Manager of Development Services in the County of Brant. She is currently a Candidate for her PhD in Rural Studies at the University of Guelph and is working with Dr. Wayne Caldwell on agricultural land preservation and on-farm diversification projects.

→ LEARN MORE

OMAFRA Guidelines – Section 2.3 On-Farm Diversified Uses:

- 1 Must be located on a farm;
- 2 Must be secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property;
- 3 Must be limited in area;
- 4 Must include, but not be limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products;
- 5 Shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations.



Building a community hub: From concept plan to implementation

BY SONJA MACDONALD AND PAUL SHAKER, RPP

YWCA Hamilton recently opened the doors of the Putman Family YWCA, a renewal of their location at 51 Ottawa Street North in Hamilton. The new facility is a dynamic community hub combining affordable housing, economic development infrastructure, and state-of-the-art green building technology. As is the case with many successful projects, planning was key right from the beginning. The challenge with this project was understanding the local context in order to facilitate the development of a community hub from concept to implementation.

The redevelopment site is located at the south end of an important commercial district in the east end of the lower city of Hamilton and is surrounded by a number of established neighbourhoods. The site is accessible from around the city, as it is in close proximity to a number of arterial roads, as well as a planned light rail transit line.



“The fact this new facility would become a multi-dimensional community hub addressing a variety of issues, including affordable housing, training, and entrepreneurship, was of particular interest to Federal Economic Development Canada.”

Community engagement and strategic planning shaped the type of space, as well as determined how the development would fit into the surrounding neighbourhood.

THE CONCEPT PLAN

In 2017, YWCA Hamilton commissioned Civicplan to develop a concept plan for renewal. Two key components were part of the redevelopment, specifically that the new building would be increasing density to five storeys, including 50 purpose-built affordable housing units for women and their families. Second, YWCA Hamilton wanted to develop a community hub, providing its core services, as well as expanded services related to women’s economic development.

“As is the case with many successful projects, planning was key right from the beginning.”

The concept plan was focused on developing the community hub and was guided by three important themes:


1. Who would it serve? Understand the needs of the local community and stakeholders through engagement to establish a vision for the community hub.
2. How will it integrate with the neighbourhood? Understand how the physical building is situated within an existing and transforming neighbourhood and business district, as well as how it fit within existing and future municipal plans and policies.
3. How will it advance important social and economic development goals? Identify opportunities for partnerships and funding to make the plan a reality.

What emerged from this work were two clear directions: first to create flexible space for core services, such as supporting seniors and childcare; and second, to develop a centre of innovation

supporting women’s entrepreneurship, employment, and training. The centre was proposed as key for building future partnerships with surrounding businesses and community leaders in education and industry, as well as being a draw for women in the Hamilton/Halton regions, more generally.

IMPLEMENTATION

The concept plan provided a basis to pursue partnerships and funding, including from the Government of Canada. The fact this new facility would become a multi-dimensional community hub addressing a variety of issues, including affordable housing, training, and entrepreneurship, was of particular interest to Federal Economic Development Canada.

Despite bumps along the way due to the COVID pandemic, the new Putman Family YWCA on Ottawa Street, designed by Kearns Mancini Architects, has opened its doors. This active community hub will house women and their families, and it will serve seniors and provide needed childcare for those in the surrounding neighbourhoods. The centre of innovation is a leader in Ontario, providing training and supports for women’s economic development both in Hamilton and beyond. 



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

Musician Jules McCools of the Canadian Musicians Coop.
Credit: Karen Giuliatti

A photograph of a man with long hair and a beard, wearing a red t-shirt and a black cap, playing an acoustic guitar. He is standing on a paved waterfront promenade with a metal railing. In the background, there is a body of water and trees. To the left of the musician, there is a black amplifier, a guitar case, and some cardboard boxes. The text "Cultural planning in the everyday" is overlaid in white on the image.

Cultural planning in the everyday

BY CHRISTY CHRUS, RPP

How do you connect with culture in your community? It may be through public art, walking trails, a museum, restaurants, socializing with friends, reading a book, listening to music – it can take so many different forms.

Since the pandemic, many communities are developing strategies and putting forward ideas and, in some cases, things are just emerging organically to connect people with culture. Cultural planning and

cultural activities are a way for us to feel a sense of community and engage with others, whether it be in person or from afar.

“Cultural planning and cultural activities are a way for us to feel a sense of community and engage with others...”

The Town of Whitby approved its first culture plan in 2021 – *Culture Connects Whitby* – and has been implementing a number of cultural activities, many of which are in partnership with key stakeholders and groups within the community. Here is a quick snapshot of ideas for your future cultural connections.

STORYWALK™

In partnership with the Whitby Public Library, the StoryWalk initiative is a fun, educational activity that places children’s picture book pages along a popular walking route in a community to immerse people in the story. This idea was first developed in the United States and has grown to over 13 countries in the world. In Whitby, two books by Indigenous authors were chosen by the library and became popular destinations for many residents using the neighbourhood trails where StoryWalk was installed.

ARTS TRAIL

With the adoption of the culture plan, it was time to discover Whitby’s public art. The new Arts Trail uses GIS software to create a friendly map-based program accessible on a smart phone or device, making it a valuable tool while out cycling or walking around town. Clicking on the map icon brings up a photo of the public art, the artist’s name, and information about the art piece. It is not only a great way to showcase sculptures and murals, but it also includes local artists, artisans, crafters, and maker spaces as well.

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

In 2020, the Town of Whitby was approached by the Canadian Musicians Co-operative, a non-profit music services organization, to create meaningful opportunities for musicians and cultural opportunities in the Whitby community. Hence, the partnership developed to create the Community Performance Program that provides musicians a chance to play 15-minute pop-up performances

“...it was so nice to hear live music again in the community.”

at three dedicated zones in the municipality. The pilot program was a huge success, with many people noting that it was so nice to hear live music again in the community. Plans to extend the program into 2022 are underway.

→ LEARN MORE

Cultural connections in the Town of Whitby

Cultural Connects Whitby: <https://www.whitby.ca/en/town-hall/resources/Plans-Reports-and-Studies/Culture-Plan-Final.pdf>

StoryWalk: <https://www.whitbylibrary.ca/StoryWalk>

Arts Trail: <https://www.whitby.ca/en/play/arts-and-culture.aspx#Start-Your-Arts-Trail-Experience>


Canadian Musicians Co-operative: <https://www.canadianmusicians.coop>

Sound Tracks: <https://www.whitby.ca/en/play/sound-tracks.aspx>

DOWNTOWN PLACEMAKING

Creating more opportunities for people to enjoy outdoor spaces and provide for physical distancing through placemaking was the goal of a collaborative project between the Town of Whitby and the Downtown Whitby Business Improvement Area (BIA). A vacant and underutilized lot at the southeast corner of Dundas and Byron Streets in Downtown Whitby was transformed into an urban parkette. The parkette was completely developed in house from the concept design to the construction works and provides a resting area within steps of shops and restaurants. The BIA donated Adirondack chairs and a “Love Lock” art piece. Plans to further live up the space for next summer are underway with planters, a chess/checkerboard table, and space for musicians to perform.

SOUND TRACKS

With more people accessing the local trails and pathways in Whitby, the Town decided to amp up their hiking experiences by creating the Sound Tracks program, featuring the work of local musicians. Three trails now include Sound Tracks signage, which allows residents to scan a QR code, put on their headphones, and listen to music while enjoying the outdoors. 



Christy Chrus, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the Manager of Creative Communities at the Town of Whitby, overseeing the downtown, culture, tourism, and event portfolios. chrusc@whitby.ca

The future is not the past: Challenging the use of historical propensities to determine future housing mix

BY KEVIN EBY, RPP

Housing-by-type forecasts are key inputs into the land needs assessment process used to determine justification for urban area expansions. These forecasts are typically prepared using a market-demand based methodology, where historic age-specific propensities to occupy various types of dwelling units are extrapolated forward onto future populations to determine how many single-/semi-detached, townhouse, accessory, and apartment units are required to accommodate forecasted growth. The Province formalized this methodology in 1995 through the release of the *Projection Methodology Guideline* and its continued use is provided for in the current Land Needs Assessment Methodology (LNA Methodology) for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

“Historical market-demand based assumptions are reflective of decisions made, in some cases, decades ago and fail to consider many of the changing factors that affect future housing choices.”

THE CHALLENGE

Historical market-demand based assumptions are reflective of decisions made, in some cases, decades ago and fail to consider many of the changing factors that affect future housing choices. The result is a forecast that mirrors the past, rather than reflecting the future.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) was established to create/facilitate change in urban form as a means

Residential Unit Type	Developer Group Market-Demand Housing Forecast June 16, 2006 to 2031	Units Constructed June 16, 2006 to June 30, 2021	Units Constructed Jan 1, 2011 to June 30, 2021	Units Constructed Jan 1, 2016 to June 30, 2021	Units Constructed Jan 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021
Single-/Semi Detached	60.9%	34.4%	28.6%	25.1%	18.5%
Townhouse	17.9%	17.6%	17.8%	18.4%	18%
Apartment	21.2%	48.1%	53.7%	56.5%	63.5%

Figure 1 – 2012 Region of Waterloo Phase 1 (Land Budget) OMB Hearing - Developer Group Market-Demand Housing Forecast (June 16, 2006 to 2031) Versus Actual Construction (Various Time Periods)

Figure 1 Source: Witness statement of Jeannette Gillezeau, Altus Group Economic Consulting (June 15, 2012) - Figure 5 and annual ROW growth monitoring reports

of addressing the negative outcomes associated with decades of construction that resulted in low-density single-detached dominated suburbs. Key objectives of the Growth Plan include significantly increasing intensification in the Built-Up Area (BUA), creation of a broader mix of housing types in the Designated Growth Areas (DGA), creation of transit supportive communities, and promotion of active transportation. Creating a future that mirrors the past is the antithesis of what the Growth Plan was intended to achieve.

In a rapidly changing world, the use of an historical market-

“Creating a future that mirrors the past is the antithesis of what the Growth Plan was intended to achieve.”

demand based methodology can be expected to result in increasingly inaccurate forecasts. As a result, the more successful the Growth Plan is at creating change, the less accurate historical market-demand based assumptions become.

REGION OF WATERLOO

The Region of Waterloo is unquestionably the furthest along of any municipality in implementing the Growth Plan. This has resulted in rapid increases in intensification rates (from an estimated 15 per cent in 2002 to 73 per cent in 2019 – the last year before the pandemic) and a corresponding decline in the percentage of single-detached units constructed annually (from 72 per cent in 2002 to 13 per cent in 2019). This decline did not occur because of a shortage of single-detached lots (there has not been one). It has occurred because a facilitated change in the marketplace has provided residents with an

evolving range of housing, transportation, and lifestyle options.

The Region of Waterloo has accomplished precisely what the Growth Plan was intended to do.

This rapid change is predictably reflected in the failure of recent forecasts using propensities derived from how people acted in the past to predict future housing-by-type construction in the Region of Waterloo. One such forecast, prepared for the 2012 Region of Waterloo Phase 1 (land budget) Ontario Municipal Board hearing, is presented in Figure 1.

Building permits issued for apartments in the Region of Waterloo from June 16, 2006 to June 30, 2021 (26,930 units) significantly exceeded the total apartment units the Altus market-demand forecast predicted would be built by 2031 (22,260).

CHANGING REALITIES

The background reports for the 2013 and 2020 Growth Plan growth forecasts illustrate well that it is not only in the Region of Waterloo where such forecasts no longer reflect changing realities (see Figure 2). Despite future/changing conditions expected to reduce construction of single-/semi-detached dwellings (lifestyle, economic, transportation, affordability, sustainability, the recycling of Baby Boomer single-detached units and planning policy), the

“By projecting a future that mirrors the past, historical market-demand based forecasts represent a significant threat to achievement of the goals and objectives of the Growth Plan.”

	Forecast Percentage of Single-/Semi-Detached Units 2011 to 2021		Forecast Percentage of Single-/Semi-Detached Units 2021 to 2051
	2013 Growth Plan Growth Forecast	2020 Growth Plan Growth Forecast	2020 Growth Plan Growth Forecast
GGH	46.6%	33.4%	44.9%
GTHA	39.5%	27.7%	39.5%
Outer Ring	66%	50.6%	58%
Region of Waterloo	52.5%	34.7%	43.6%

Figure 2 – 2013 and 2020 Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Forecasts

Figure 2 Source: Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Forecasts to 2041, Hemson Consulting Ltd. (June 2013) - Appendix B - Section 4, Greater Golden Horseshoe: Growth Forecasts to 2051, Hemson Consulting Ltd. (August 2020) - Appendix B - Detailed Forecast Results

historical market-demand based Growth Plan housing forecasts project significantly more singles/semis over the next 30 years in the GGH (44.9 per cent) than occurred in the past 10 years (33.4 per cent).

Only in Toronto (6 per cent), York (47.4 per cent), Guelph (30.9 per cent), and Waterloo (43.6 per cent) do the 2020 Growth Plan growth forecasts project less than 50 per cent single-/semi-detached units will be built from 2021 to 2051. In the remaining 17 upper- and single-tier GGH municipalities, the projected number of single-/semi-detached units from 2021 to 2051 exceeds the total number of new dwelling units that will be built in the respective municipality's DGA if conformity with the intensification targets of Growth Plan Policy 2.2.2.1 is achieved. These housing forecasts, which form the basis for distribution of the overall GGH population to upper- and single-tier municipalities, do not conform with the Growth Plan.

“...the option for municipalities to move away from the use of historical ‘propensities’ and instead forecast propensities that include consideration of evolving conditions...”

By projecting a future that mirrors the past, historical market-demand based forecasts represent a significant threat to achievement of the goals and objectives of the Growth Plan. Thankfully, the LNA Methodology does not specifically define “propensities” or how they are to be determined. This leaves open the option for municipalities to move away from the use of historical propensities and instead forecast propensities that include consideration of evolving conditions, conditions which have only recently arisen, and predictable conditions that may not yet exist. Municipalities need to exercise this option. (Y)



Kevin Eby, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the former Director of Community Planning with the Region of Waterloo. He is now in private practice with Eby Growth Management Planning Services.



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As a non-profit organization, OPPI's activities and progress are overseen by a group of volunteers who are accountable for all its activities and accomplishments: OPPI Council.

OPPI's Governance and Nominating Committee is calling for nominations from Full Members who wish to join Council as Directors for two-year terms. Directors may be re-elected for a second two-year term. Elected Members assume office at the adjournment of the 2022 Annual General Meeting.

The call for nominations opens February 1 and closes April 1, 2022. Find more information at ontarioplanners.ca.

OPPI STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

OPPI recognizes today's planning students are the Registered Professional Planners of tomorrow and provides Student Members with scholarship opportunities, awarding excellence and community contributions.

The **Ronald M. Keeble Undergraduate Scholarship** assists in furthering planning education of Student Members who are making a contribution to their communities. Applicants must be enrolled full-time in an accredited undergraduate planning program in Ontario. Deadline to apply is March 1, 2022.

The **Gerald Carrothers Graduate Scholarship** assists in furthering planning education of Student Members who are making a contribution to their communities. Applicants must be enrolled full-time in an accredited graduate planning program in Ontario. Deadline to apply is March 1, 2022.

The **Justine Giancola President's Scholarship** is offered in recognition of Justine's service and leadership as OPPI President. This scholarship will be awarded to a Student Member who has demonstrated leadership in the area of racial equality as it relates to planning for communities. Deadline to apply is March 1, 2022.

The **Southwest Ontario District Planning Student Scholarships** are intended to promote excellence in relevant planning education, community service, and personal achievement by Student Members of OPPI's Southwest District who are enrolled full-time in an accredited undergraduate or graduate university planning program. Deadline to apply is November 1, 2022.

Find more details on scholarship opportunities, including application requirements, at ontarioplanners.ca.

OPPI21: RECAP ON A FANTASTIC CONFERENCE

On October 6, 13, and 20, we came together for OPPI21, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute's annual conference, to explore what it really means to move forward in economic development and sustainability, technology and healing. OPPI21, our second fully virtual conference, was a huge success with 1,300 attendees, up from 2020 when we broke a record at 1,200.

We would like to thank keynote speakers Nicholas Thompson, Janelle Lapointe, and Rachel Hodgdon, who each discussed meaningful topics relevant to the planning profession. A big thank you also goes to all of our session leaders for delivering timely presentations that helped redefine the role of professional planners in these unprecedented times. And much appreciation goes to our generous sponsors and association partners, without whom OPPI21 would not have been possible.

Discussions and planning for OPPI22 are already underway! Stay tuned!



INSPIRE: OPPI STRATEGIC PLAN 2025

OPPI is pleased to share a new, three-year strategic plan that will guide the Institute's activities and apply to all of 2022, 2023, and 2024.

The intention of INSPIRE: OPPI Strategic Plan 2025 is to look ahead to what planning will/might/should look like in 2025, and how OPPI can advance the profession by setting professional planners up with the right tools to create robust, responsive, and actionable post-pandemic solutions.

Get your downloadable PDF copy of INSPIRE: OPPI Strategic Plan 2025 at ontarioplanners.ca/oppi/inspire-oppi.



ACADEMIC

Bumpy ride ahead: Challenges for public transit agencies

BY AJAY AGARWAL, RPP, AND ELLEN MCGOWAN

The ongoing pandemic has impacted public transit operations profoundly. The early days of the pandemic brought forward a wide range of operational challenges. These included enforcing physical distancing requirements on board and at stops, ensuring health and safety of vehicle operators, and maintaining required levels of cleanliness on board, e.g., sanitizing frequently touched surfaces.



Some short-term changes created long-term challenges. For example, rear-door boarding to ensure driver safety resulted in nil onboard fare collection, which compounded revenue shortfalls. Perhaps the biggest challenge was to maintain an optimal service supply in view of the dramatically – and frequently – changing demand. Public transit agencies had to strike a balance between providing enough service to fulfill remaining patrons' travel needs, while also paring losses due to extremely low ridership.

“Since the initial months of the pandemic, planning for service delivery has remained the trickiest part of public transit operations.”

There is a strong likelihood that the ongoing pandemic will convert to an endemic, and numerous public health safety measures, such as face coverings, are likely to persist well into the future. In this article, we describe some of the key challenges created by the pandemic for public transit agencies. The article is informed by our discussion with personnel at transit agencies in Ontario including Grand River Transit (GRT) of Waterloo Region and Kingston Transit, Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA), and literature review.

SERVICE DELIVERY

A natural response to decreased ridership is to scale back service, including reducing frequency and/or eliminating service on select routes. This is an immensely complex task because of the following.

“Interlining,” or switching from one route to another at a shared transfer point, is a common practice in the transit industry. It eliminates the need to transfer passengers who would have done that at the transfer point. This results in greater convenience for such passengers and more efficient use of transit vehicles and the operators. For example, Route A is a 60-minute loop, and Route B is a 30-minute loop, and both routes operate with a 30-minute headway. Routes A and B intersect at X, which is also their origin/termination point. Route A could be interlined with Route B at X, i.e., the Route A vehicle will convert to Route B vehicle at

the end of former route. This allows the two routes to be served using only two vehicles and two operators. Without interlining, the same service would require three vehicles and three operators.

Clearly, achieving optimal interlining in a transit network with many routes requires sophisticated scheduling. Even a minor change to the schedule can make interlining sub-optimum from both convenience and efficiency perspectives. Hence, service cuts could make the entire operation highly inefficient. Indeed, it could be a double whammy: agencies lose revenue because of falling ridership and spend more money because of inefficient operation.

While sweeping provincial lockdowns are not expected in the future, there remains a potential for local or regional lockdowns. Public transit ridership will certainly drop substantially if a lockdown were to happen in the future. Hence, there remains the challenge of deciding where to cut back service without compromising too much on a system's efficiency and continue to provide essential mobility options to those who need it.

PLANNING IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

Since the initial months of the pandemic, planning for service delivery has remained the trickiest part of public transit operations. The entire process of analyzing data, using the results to prepare a plan, then converting the

“As public transit agencies struggled with planning for service delivery, OPTA facilitated discussion among the Ontario agencies about many common issues...”

plan into an operational schedule takes several months under normal circumstances. During the pandemic, transit agencies were revising their service schedules frequently, sometimes on a weekly basis, and quite rapidly. To illustrate, GRT planners were having to make decisions based on daily ridership numbers instead of the more customary monthly numbers.

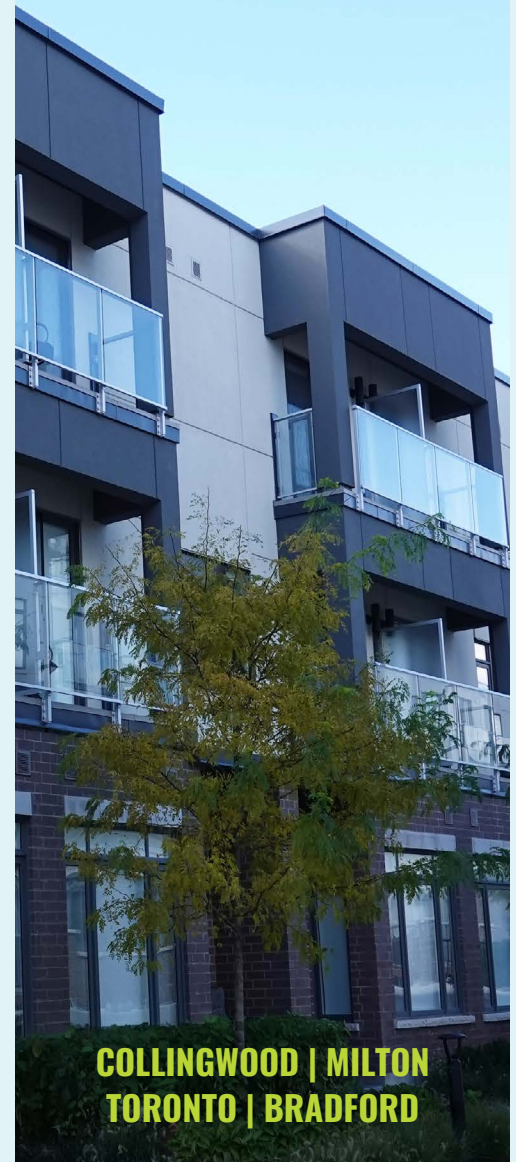
Planning for service delivery was, and remains, the most potent challenge for all public transit agencies. A large part of the challenge is to be able to predict



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future travel demand – both short-term and long-term – with any certainty. Since normally used transportation planning models are not set up for such an unprecedented situation, transit agencies such as GRT have had to resort to “scenario planning.”

Scenario planning allows for simulation of different demands and corresponding required service levels, estimation of the number of vehicles and operators needed for each scenario, and evaluation of the budgetary impact of proposed scheduling. Since there is no previous pandemic data to draw lessons from, transit agencies have had to create scenarios somewhat arbitrarily, e.g., 55 per cent of 65 per cent of pre-pandemic ridership during the same month, and plan service delivery for such scenarios. As public transit agencies struggled with planning for service delivery, OPTA facilitated discussion among the Ontario agencies about many common issues e.g., which scenarios to plan for. This opened up opportunities for much greater coordination and cooperation among transit agencies than ever before. Hopefully, this will continue into the future.

Going forward, the challenge of planning for unpredictable ridership would continue to loom because the virus continues to mutate and create unexpected disruptions.

“Public transit ridership had plummeted in early days of the pandemic and has remained quite low even as provinces reopened for in-person business.”

REBUILDING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC TRANSIT SAFETY

Prolonged public health messaging regarding maintaining safe social/physical distance has created general averseness towards coming within two metres distance of strangers, something unavoidable while using public transit. There is also a general averseness towards using shared services, such as public transit, among a substantially large part of the Canadian population.

Public transit ridership had plummeted in early days of the pandemic and has remained quite low even as provinces reopened for in-person business. Public health messaging continues to be about avoiding crowds and maintaining two metres distance from strangers. Large COVID outbreaks continue to occur.

In view of all this, to rebuild public confidence in public transit safety is a formidable challenge and will require persistent and very creative information campaigns. Unless the public begins to trust public transit as a safe travel mode in terms of health, years of progress made in building public transit ridership will be lost. (W)



Ajay Agarwal, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and an associate professor of planning at School of Urban and Regional Planning (SURP), Queen’s University. His research interests include urban transportation policy, public transit, and evolution of urban spatial structure. **Ellen McGowan** is a pre-candidate member of OPPI and recently earned a Master of Planning from SURP. She is working as a Development Project Coordinator at Cahdco & CCOC in Ottawa.



© Chris Drew

ACADEMIC

Students explore Toronto by bike through a planner's lens

BY ANNE BENAROYA AND JULIA BEVACQUA

More than 40 planning graduate students from Ryerson University* and members of the planning community took part in a bike tour of downtown Toronto in September 2021.

The group explored the city while also meeting other planners in the field and listening to guest speakers talk about some of Toronto's most exciting projects. Each of the guest speakers was generous with their time on a Saturday, offered networking advice and opportunities, and answered questions and heard feedback from students. The bike tour was also an opportunity for students to visit places in Toronto they had never been to before.

Led by Ryerson alumni and Ryerson Planning Alumni Association volunteer Chris Drew** and organized by the Ryerson Planning Graduate Student Association (RPGSA), the 2021 bike tour used the hashtag #PlannersOnBikes. Students began the day at the School of Urban and Regional Planning on campus, meeting each other off-screen for one of the first times and getting bikes and bike shares ready to go.

Read more and see more photos at OPPI's Planning Exchange blog: <https://ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange>



Anne Benaroya is a second year Master of Planning candidate at Ryerson University and Finance Officer for RPGSA. **Julia Bevacqua** is a second year Master of Planning candidate at Ryerson University and Vice President for RPGSA.

**Renaming in progress: In August 2021, the university announced that it would begin a renaming process to address the legacy of Egerton Ryerson for a more inclusive future.*

***Chris Drew is a Candidate Member of OPPI.*



ACADEMIC

Insights on youth engagement in the planning process

BY FEDERICO PALACIOS

This past summer, I had the opportunity to conduct meaningful research on urban youth engagement with Urban Minds. Urban Minds centres its work around the core belief that youth perspectives in city building are highly valuable. As city dwellers, youth have unique perspectives on urban spaces. Our take is that youth perspectives should inform how spaces and communities are planned. My research work at Urban Minds recognized the need to engage diverse communities and to plan for multi-generational outcomes. I sought to understand what contemporary youth engagement looked like in practice in the urban planning realm.

Throughout the summer, I interviewed 11 professionals, from a diverse range of fields, who shed some light on what youth engagement looks like on the ground.

“..youth perspectives should inform how spaces and communities are planned.”

Firstly, we heard that youth engagement is challenging. Educational barriers limit who is most able to engage in the planning process, and oftentimes youth don't make the cut. What's more, youth are a diverse bunch, with diverse backgrounds and needs. Our engagement with them must reflect this reality; youth engagement should be as dynamic as youth communities.

Thankfully, our work this summer uncovered some good news: getting started on youth engagement is relatively easy. Planners and engagement specialists can leverage existing skills to bring youth into the conversation. We can work to support youth and adults as they build their capacity to understand urban systems. The key to successful intergenerational interventions is in this capacity. As planning professionals, we have the ability to leverage


our rich networks and interdisciplinary partnerships – partnerships which, when fully leveraged, can support youth communities in urban spaces.

Our work also explored the intricacies of digital engagement, of importance now more than ever throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth have high standards for digital communications and expect graphically rich and highly curated campaigns. Planners must contemplate what digital engagement should look like in order to meet the needs of a generation of youth who grew up tapping, swiping, and liking.

“There truly is no shortage of ways to bring youth into the conversation.”


Even better news is the fact that there is no shortage of experience or know-how among planners and allied professionals. Our summer research project focused on creating a centralized repository of tools and strategies being deployed by professionals to engage youth. Our research is unique as we asked our respondents to elaborate on the youth-engagement tools they have leveraged throughout their careers. Each respondent presented their perspectives on how to engage youth in city building, each informed by their professional and personal experiences. The tools we

collected from participants are wide ranging, with interventions ranging from collaborative to arts-based, intersectional, and youth-led approaches. There truly is no shortage of ways to bring youth into the conversation.

These interviews inform Urban Mind’s soon-to-be released *Cities For Youth: Toolkit for Youth Engagement in Planning*. Our goal of creating this highly deployable toolkit for urban planners is to have a lasting impact on youth engagement in Ontario and beyond. Download a free digital copy at www.urbanminds.co. 



Federico Palacios is a Student Member of OPPI and a M.Pl. in Urban Development candidate at Ryerson University.




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Eldon Theodore, RPP, is a Partner with MHBC, specializing in land use planning, urban design, and sustainability. He joined the firm in 2002, holding an Honours BA in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Waterloo and an MA in Urban Design Studies from the University of Toronto.

Registered Professional Planner

PROFILE

NAME:

Eldon Theodore, RPP

LOCATION:

Woodbridge, Ontario

POSITION:

Partner/Planner/Urban Designer at MHBC Planning, Urban Design & Landscape Architecture

Eldon's land use planning experience spans almost 20 years of obtaining development approvals (subdivisions, condominiums, site plans, official plan, and zoning by-law amendments, consents, and minor variances), project coordination and management, special studies and associated research, expert witness at the local planning appeal tribunal, and presentations to committees, council, and the general public.

He also specializes in providing design and sustainable development services to public and private sector clients across Ontario. His experience includes the application of urban design and sustainable initiatives through policy preparation, site design analysis, community visioning, design briefs, and community design guidelines. He is also trained in conducting intensive design charrettes to help establish places of distinction and create value in a community.

Eldon is a Full Member of CIP and OPPI, and he was on OPPI Council for four years and was co-Chair of the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force. He also serves as a Director on the Design Industry Advisory Committee of Toronto.

Tell us about the work you are doing now with MHBC. What excites you about the projects?

The work I do is quite diverse; it spans from small infills promoting incremental change, to expansive master-planned projects that introduce new environments. That work occurs in the most urban areas to the most rural or natural environments, primarily in all parts of Ontario, but also across Canada and sometimes the United States.

Wearing two hats as both planner and urban designer, my work often weaves between leading a project and supporting a project. I enjoy that aspect as well, because it allows me to observe different leadership styles and emulate those traits as part of my practice.

What aspects of planning do you enjoy the most? Is your answer now different than you thought it would be when you were a planning student?

What I enjoy the most is that my work involves a high level of problem-solving, creative thinking, and conflict resolution to reach success. There is a certain sense of achievement when you know that you've played a critical role in leading, collaborating, and consensus-building to find common ground on an approval. Walking by a successful project and being able to say that I helped make that happen is part of the reward for the hard work it took to make it a reality.

To be honest, I had no idea where life would take me as a planning student. I knew I wanted to play a role in placemaking, and I imagined it would involve designing spaces and seeing them get approved. As a student, I was more interested in walking through and experiencing the outcome of community building. As a professional, I find myself drawn to and appreciating the hard work and thoughtful process to make that experience a reality.

“...people need to understand that every Black person that is subject to anti-Black racism experiences and responds to it differently, and that is okay.”

Has the impact of the pandemic influenced your perspective on the role of planning in meeting the needs of people?

The pandemic has brought to bear many inequities that have been masked in our society. It has opened my eyes to what role planning has played in establishing and reinforcing those inequities. It has changed the way I look at regulation, policy, zoning, and guidelines and the intended and unintended consequences on communities, particularly those who have been historically and disproportionately marginalized. We need to recognize that planning's role is not to reward privilege but instead to find balance, promote access, and achieve greater pluralism when it comes to accommodating our diverse population.

Tell us about OPPI's Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force and the work that's underway now.

I had the pleasure of being a co-Chair of the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force on behalf of OPPI. The task force was made up of members within and outside of the profession and represented a diverse cross-section of people and a grassroots response to putting in place a framework to eradicate anti-Black racism in the profession.

Over the past year, the Task Force volunteered their time to explore and sometimes have uncomfortable conversations about systemic barriers, privilege and entitlement, disproportionate impacts, and the lack of representation in the profession. This work culminated in 14 recommendations for action organized under the following categories:

- The journey to becoming a professional planner
- Cultivating relationships with diverse Black organizations
- Equity-focused data, policy change, and evaluation
- Professional development

I encourage all OPPI members to read the September 24, 2021, *Report to OPPI Council with Final Recommendations of the Anti-Black Racism in Planning (ABRP) Task Force*.^{*} With this report released, the hard work of acting on these recommendations and bringing about incremental change over time must take place, and I look forward to seeing those actions by OPPI in 2022.

With respect to the work of the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force, do you have a message you want the planning profession to understand and take to heart?

In my opinion, people need to understand that every Black person that is subject to anti-Black racism experiences and responds to it differently, and that is okay. It can fuel outward advocacy to demand change and justice. It can be absorbed as an anticipated obstacle that requires personal perseverance to overcome. There is no right way to manage this type of incident. The important takeaway is that all planners should be continually promoting working environments, creating built environments, and transforming policy and regulation to eliminate actions that perpetuate anti-Black racism to persist.


I also take heart in the fact that every year our profession gets more and more diverse as young planners are entering the profession, who are educated and acting on the issue, giving hope that over time, we will see a diversity in leadership positions that can help accelerate the change we seek.

“...it is important to contribute to the advancement and improvement of the profession...”

You have been volunteering with OPPI in various capacities for some time — what makes this meaningful for you?

I started volunteering in the District Committees, then the Community Design Working Group, and finally OPPI Council. I really feel that it is important to contribute to the advancement and improvement of the profession and to help make a difference for those currently practising and those about to enter the profession. And while this was not a motivation initially when I first started volunteering, I recognize that having more diverse voices like mine helps to ensure that OPPI represents and responds to all of our members' needs and helps to inspire our future members to continue to promote diversity within our profession.

What is your message to new and aspiring planners about the future of planning and the role planning has in making Ontario a better place for everyone?

I encourage all aspiring planners to be part of the change; don't expect the profession to change simply because you are there, and don't expect planning to transform and respond to a changing society without having the courage to challenge the role you play and the actions you take as a professional. 

**Read the report here: <https://ontarioplanners.ca/inspiring-knowledge/anti-black-racism-in-planning-task-force>*

Contributors

What are RPPs focused on today? What do they see as priorities in meeting the needs of the people of Ontario? Here is what three contributors to this issue of *Y Magazine* have to say.



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Dave Hardy, MCIP, RPP
PRESIDENT OF HARDY STEVENSON AND ASSOCIATES LIMITED AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE FOR NEW SUBURBANISM

I'm fortunate to have great clients and wonderful staff whose support has allowed me to research and advocate on planning issues that need more attention. To this end, I've been able to explore the best examples of suburban planning and the role of suburbs in relation to urban core and rural areas through the Hardy Stevenson and Associates Limited supported Institute for New Suburbanism. My role as a planner includes the creation of human cities and helping local communities achieve and maintain quality of life. At times, this means advocating land-use and environmental policies that have a contrarian nature.

As my work occurs across Ontario, I've seen the need for planners to better contribute their skills to deliver equitable socioeconomic outcomes for all residents. Addressing the out migration of rural communities, delivering higher order transit to suburban racialized communities, and redefining what it means to be a healthy community are all priorities.



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Dr. Leela Viswanathan, FCIP, RPP
FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL OF VISWALI CONSULTING

As a planner, I draw from human-centred design practices and research to address the diverse needs of people in their various organizational, institutional, and everyday living environments, as we tackle complex issues together. For me, this means that equity, inclusion, education, and cross-cultural relationship building are foundational to all the services that I offer. I also offer career mentoring support to people in planning-related occupations and to academics.

I think it is important to meet people where they are at, and so a priority for planning should be to invest time to strengthen interpersonal relationships to build more inclusive, transparent, and ethical planning processes. It is crucial to reach out to people who have lost trust in the planning profession due to their communities' experiences of historical exclusion and systemic discrimination. Ultimately, relationship building needs to remain a priority for planners, long after a project or plan is completed.



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Izabela Molendowski, MCIP, RPP
URBAN PLANNER WITH URBAN STRATEGIES INC.

My focus as a planner revolves around securing long-term growth and developing communities through master planning, amendments to policy, and introducing a series of strategic initiatives and guiding principles into local planning frameworks that are informed by qualitative data. I'm interested in further exploring how developing progressive policy and influencing policy change could have significant long-term impacts on shaping inclusive and comprehensive communities, while actively incorporating the public interest.

A continuing priority for meeting the needs of people in Ontario should include ensuring that meaningful and progressive change is established at the policy level. Development of policies and master plans should be informed by community members and the leaders representing their interests. Existing demographics should be taken into consideration when proposing change in communities, and planners should ensure that representation from all demographic groups within the community is accounted for and incorporated into plans.



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