



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 Finding ways to thoughtfully stitch outdated sites back into their urban fabric, restoring both physical and functional connections that address community needs and solve existing and future problems.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)




The Planning Partnership


Landscape Architecture
Communications
Urban Design
Planning

1255 Bay Street, Suite 500
Toronto, Ontario M5R 2A9
416.975.1556
info@planpart.ca
www.planpart.ca

Laird in Focus



West Don Lands Public Realm





SGL
planning & design inc.

1547 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario M6P 1A5
416.923.6630
info@sgplanning.ca
www.sgplanning.ca

Policy Planning
Urban Design
Approvals
Expert Witness

land use planning consultants

Macaulay Shiomi Howson Ltd



MSH

Toronto
416.487.4101

Aurora
905.503.3440

www.mshplan.ca

BOUNDLESS INGENUITY