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JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2018 VOL. 33, NO. 1

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The Journal is published six times a year by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute. ISSN 0840-786X

Subscription and advertising rates can be found at www.ontarioplanners.ca. Go to the "Knowledge Centre" tab and click on the Ontario Planning Journal page.

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Cities, Resiliency and New Mobility

By Daniel Haufschild, RPP & Kitty Chiu

Are we at the beginning of the next major transformation of our cities? Technology and new business models are disrupting transportation through mobile apps, shared services such as Uber, and autonomous vehicles. But is this disruption simply a fad limited to transportation, or will it have wider impacts on our cities and the economy as whole?

Two things are clear: mobility as we know it is changing, and this change is part of a wider shift to a digital economy. Just as the arrival of the personal automobile fundamentally restructured cities in the 1900s, the emergence of new technologies and business models will shape the future of our cities in ways we have yet to fully grasp.

Massive capital has been invested in autonomous vehicles. And it's not just the car manufacturers, tech companies such as Google, Apple, and Uber are also pushing forward their own AVs. The clear implication is not whether this technology will be viable, but when. Perhaps more important than the vehicles themselves, are the

underpinning business models. Case in point, Daimler, maker of Mercedes-Benz cars, has an automated car and freight vehicle. But what is more interesting, is that it operates Car2GO, one of the leading carshare services; and has investments in ridesourcing services HailO and MyTaxi, as well as Moovel, a leading mobility as a service (MaaS) offer. Daimler clearly sees its future as being beyond the personal vehicle.

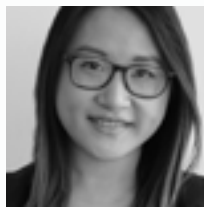
So while it is clear that major change is coming to our cities, what is not clear is when, what it will look like, and perhaps more importantly, how to prepare. In response, Metrolinx, the regional transportation authority for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, has been proactively engaged in important discussions about the new mobility landscape and its impact on the GTHA.

New mobility is best understood through the convergence of four key elements:

Transformative technologies—this includes mobile apps for traveller information and shared services, AVs and electric vehicles, as well as



Daniel Haufschild



Kitty Chiu

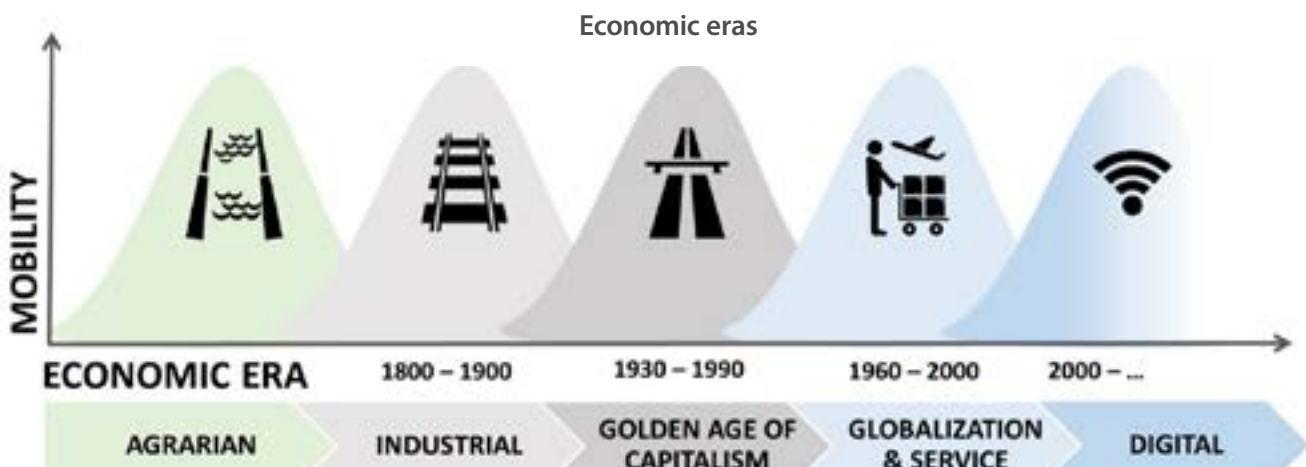


IMAGE COURTESY OF THE AUTHORS

automation in industry and advanced robotics.

New government roles—the line between public and private is shifting as the private sector re-enters the public transport space. New business models are also emerging as automobile and technology companies are entering new markets.

Urban form and built environment—responses to transformative technologies, business models and customer expectations differ depending on the context of their urban and built environments.

Changing customer expectations—technological advancements and shifting cultural norms are also reshaping user needs and desires. As people in the region change the way they move about the region, they also change their relationship with the built environment that surrounds them.

The [new mobility background paper](#), commissioned by Metrolinx, presents a series of strategic directions under six themes, and provides pragmatic guidance to governments in the region on how to think about their place within the mobility landscape and to prepare for disruption.

The theme Government Re-Imagined highlights the need for government to take action and to “pick a lane” by having a policy position and strategy for how to approach new mobility, even if it does not have all the answers. Government also needs to be able to “experiment with confidence” in this new space, and be given permission to succeed or fail, and to learn from failure or implement success.

The theme Driving the Cities we Want speaks to the need to proactively plan for these changes and make the most of the opportunities they present. While the allure of emerging technologies and services may

Four areas of impact



appear to be silver-bullet solutions for transportation efficiency, governments must continue to make city-building the primary goal and protect the public interest. AVs, for example, hold promise for optimizing use of space, and could free-up parking for other uses, but they could also have the opposite effect, creating more, not less, congestion. This means rethinking our approach to managing the road rights-of-way and the public realm, and finding the right balance between a constantly evolving set of

New Mobility: Six key themes to guide action

- 

Theme 1:
Government Re-Imagined
- 

Theme 2:
New Mobility is the New Transit
- 

Theme 3:
The User is King
- 

Theme 4:
Driving the Cities We Want
- 

Theme 5:
All About the Data
- 

Theme 6:
Plan for the "Known Unknowns"



transportation modes and public expectation.

Government will also be challenged to work in new ways, both internally and externally. Partnerships will be particularly relevant in an increasingly information-driven world, where access to quality data will be critical to success.

Lastly, government must be prepared for global economic, political, and environmental uncertainties that are outside of its control. Planning for resiliency in Metrolinx's Regional Transportation Plan update will be key to keeping the region moving regardless of what the future brings.

WSP Canada / Metrolinx shares the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for research and new directions with Civicplan.

Daniel Haufschild, RPP, is a member of OPPI and leads WSP's national urban mobility practice. He was project manager for the new mobility background paper.

Kitty Chiu, B.E.S. is a Candidate member of OPPI and a transportation planner in the transit and urban mobility team at WSP, specializing in new mobility and future-proofing cities.



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PlanLocal: safe streets

By Paul Shaker, RPP & Sonja Macdonald

How would you prioritize spending \$1-million on community infrastructure? That was the question facing Hamilton's downtown Ward 2 councillor. He approached Civicplan for a solution: help him engage his residents to identify and prioritize where the funds should be spent, with a particular focus on safe streets. The challenge was how to effectively and broadly engage residents while identifying concrete and doable infrastructure projects that could be implemented in a short timeframe. This led to the design and implementation of PlanLocal: Safe Streets.

PlanLocal was a three-step process. The first step involved a broad-based outreach initiative to engage the community, asking residents to identify unsafe locations in their neighbourhoods, as well as propose solutions to solve the problem. The outreach included multiple avenues of engagement, from public meetings and pop-up events to the use of interactive online tools, and social media. Further, the range of residents engaged was intentionally broad and included business owners and all people living in the ward, including school-age children, who brought an invaluable dimension to the discussion.

Once all ideas were submitted, they were reviewed against established, publicly available criteria, and then vetted to ensure the ideas were consistent with, or helped achieve, the goals of existing neighbourhood planning policy. Hundreds of ideas were submitted in

the first stage, leading to an eventual shortlist of ideas representing projects in each of the six neighbourhoods in the ward.

In the final step, residents were asked to vote on the shortlist of ideas. The process was open to residents of all ages, with voting online or at physical locations across the community. Using a variety of methods, the PlanLocal process reached every home and business in the ward. Additionally, Civicplan monitored voting data in real time to adapt locations and methods in order to target underrepresented communities.

The process resulted in a concrete list of actionable, publicly supported projects that were incorporated into the municipal budget. Implementation is on-going; some smaller projects have been completed, and planning for larger projects is underway.

Building consensus in neighbourhood planning

Through focused and targeted engagement, PlanLocal created an on-going civic dialogue around the issue of safe streets on two levels. First, by allowing individuals to have their say on unsafe street locations and solutions. Second, by aggregating results to show where hotspot areas of consensus around the ward were located. A clear shortlist was assembled with the top locations and solutions rising to the top of the list, built on resident consensus of priority areas.



Paul Shaker



Sonja Macdonald



Residents can see the results of their engagement on the ground



"PlanLocal - Ward 2 S @PlanLocalWard2 • May 10
Ward 2! This is your brain on PlanLocal. 6 days left to submit
#safestreet hotspots planlocal.ca/ward2/identify/ #hamont"

Creating responsive public engagement

PlanLocal created responsive public engagement through the use of data analytics that resulted in increased participation. Data were gathered and used throughout the process, from pinpointing citizens' unsafe street locations, to monitoring levels of input from various neighbourhoods, which allowed the PlanLocal outreach efforts to adapt in real time to boost engagement in areas that were less responsive.

Involving residents in the implementation

PlanLocal encouraged residents to participate in the implementation of neighbourhood plans by including them in the prioritization of local infrastructure investment. A key part of the robust vetting process ensured that community priorities were consistent with, and achieved the goals of planning policy. While these two functions may at times conflict, the PlanLocal process used this as an opportunity for further education on how secondary plans shape local neighbourhoods. Ideas and solutions that were consistent with planning policy made their way



PlanLocal Charette

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through the PlanLocal process and, if publicly supported, were implemented in fairly short order.

PlanLocal successes

PlanLocal achieved several important successes, such as directly making the community a safer place for all Hamilton residents. In total, 19 projects were selected for funding from the \$1-million budget, including new pedestrian crossovers near schools and seniors' centres, an improved cycling route, a new three-phase traffic light, and a paved pathway that helped connect a community.

A less measurable, but equally important impact was the shifting of resident attitudes towards local government related to neighbourhood concerns. When residents can see the results of their engagement on the ground, in their neighbourhoods, on a daily basis, it reinforces the positive role local government can play in their lives.

Civicplan shares the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for research and new directions with WSP Canada / Metrolinx.

Paul Shaker, RPP, is a member of OPPI and a principal and co-founder of Civicplan. Sonja Macdonald, MA is a Principal and co-founder of Civicplan. Sonja has over 15 years of experience in community development combining public engagement, strategic planning and civic analytics to inform more effective decision making to build stronger communities.

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RAC Zone

By Graeme Stewart, RPP

RAC Zoning: Creating new ways to live, work, and play in apartment tower neighbourhoods
ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL ROTZTAIN

Toronto is unique, it contains over 2,000 high-rise apartment towers built in the post-war boom. Unlike any other city in North America, these towers are found in nearly every community, from city centre to outer suburbs, and are home to more than one million people. These towers and the neighbourhoods they form are at the core of Toronto's diversity, its urban form, and its future potential.

Planned in the 1960s with the ambition of creating the suburban communities of the future, these 'tower in the park' neighbourhoods provided views and natural green space a convenient driving distance from local suburban amenities. Today, as outlined in the United Way report Vertical Poverty, these communities face challenges. Blocked by chain-linked fences and restricted by single-use zoning regulations, which largely inhibit community facilities, shops, grocery stores, small business, markets, local entrepreneurs and social innovators, many of these communities are not meeting the needs or aspirations of their diverse and dynamic resident communities.

Toronto's tower residents are not typically drivers or

car owners: they rely on walking and transit to get around. That means that the neighbourhood destinations of the '60s which were designed with drivers in mind are no longer within reasonable reach, and many neighbourhoods find themselves isolated, lacking the needed shops, services, local opportunities, and other ingredients of healthy neighborhoods.



Yet Toronto's apartment neighbourhoods have incredible potential. Large tower neighbourhoods are home to tens of thousands of residents. The open spaces between buildings have ample room to host markets, festivals and community gathering spaces, the base of buildings can host shops

and community facilities; and towers can be retrofitted as models of low-carbon living. With new rapid transit planned, some of these communities can host new mixed-use housing, and be connected to the city at large through new paths, cycle networks, and transit. As has been demonstrated the world over, tower neighbourhoods can be the foundation for vibrant, connected, and low-carbon community hubs for a more dynamic city, and a more prosperous and sustainable region.

The project team and community partners have been working to remove zoning barriers and enable tower neighbourhoods to reach their full potential as vibrant, thriving, and sustainable communities. We imagine a Toronto in which every community thrives.

Through research, advocacy, and collaboration, a new zoning framework was developed—the Residential Apartment Commercial zone—and is poised for implementation in hundreds of Toronto’s vertical neighbourhoods.

This new zone will remove barriers for a range of exciting small-scale businesses and community services. With a new framework that aligns better with residents’ needs, Toronto’s tower neighbourhoods can begin the process of incremental change toward more complete, economically diverse, and more convenient communities for the hundreds of thousands of Torontonians that call these neighbourhoods home.

From pop-up markets, to new retail spaces, to specialized community services, the aim of the new zoning is to allow services in and to let people experiment—to open new opportunities never before possible.

“This is a change that in 10-15 years from now we will look back and say this transformed Toronto,” commented former Planning and Growth Management Committee chair then-councillor Peter Milczyn.

But changing the rules is just the start. The next phase of the project will be to work with residents,

community organizations, and other stakeholders to realize the RAC zone’s potential on the ground. This will include: continued coordination among the city, property owners, and residents; helping already established businesses and programs become legitimate; providing information, support, and resources to tower owners and entrepreneurs working to start businesses and programs; and working towards connecting available space with people and ideas.

Implementation of RAC zoning will be an incremental process that prioritizes equity, community ownership, and outcomes that result in maximum community benefit.

ERA Architects, Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, United Way Toronto, City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health share the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for municipal statutory planning studies / reports with the City of London.

Graeme Stewart, OAA MRAIC RPP MCIP CAHP, is a registered architect, member of OPPI, a principal at ERA Architects. Graeme was a key initiator of the Tower Renewal Project, a modern heritage and community reinvestment initiative that examines the future of Toronto’s remarkable stock of modern tower neighbourhoods in collaboration with the United Way, City of Toronto, Province of Ontario, University of Toronto, and other partners.

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Kitchener Neighbourhood Strategy

By Michelle Drake, RPP

The planning profession is evolving. It is increasingly recognized that building and maintaining complete communities requires investment in social infrastructure. To be effective this means using non-conventional planning tools, such as enhanced community engagement processes that help to identify the public interest and encourage meaningful engagement beyond standard consultations.

The City of Kitchener’s neighbourhood strategy—Love My Hood: Kitchener’s guide to great neighbourhoods—was developed using an innovative community engagement process. The first of its kind in the city, the process started with a resident-led team and one simple, yet innovative principle: residents take the lead, and the city supports them along the way.

The early stages involved identifying residents, community partners, and city staff from across the municipality who were passionate about placemaking and neighbourhoods. A resident-led team emerged, with volunteers contributing nearly 1,000 hours of their time. They were empowered to make significant project decisions, including how to engage community members, what to ask, and how to respond to what the community wanted. Based on community input, the team—with residents and staff collaborating—formulated the 18-action strategy.

The resident-led team developed a comprehensive communications and engagement plan. It researched demographics and identified barriers to participation. Team members brainstormed communication and engagement techniques to reach as many people across the city as possible, while also hearing from those not typically engaged in municipal consultations.

In addition to traditional communication techniques, such as focus groups and online surveys, the team also used a variety of new tactics (see infographic). In total, 5,561 residents (three people for every street in Kitchener) provided 3,942 hours (160 days) of input.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Residents have different communication preferences and lifestyles, and using a variety of techniques helps to reach a range of different audiences. This project confirmed that traditional communication and engagement techniques need to continue to evolve to ensure inclusive and meaningful community engagement.

Consultations are more inclusive when staff go to where people are, use plain language, offer language interpretation, provide childcare, or supply bus tickets. Also consideration needs to be given to the location and atmosphere of the meeting space. Meaningful, two-way conversations are best achieved when everyone feels comfortable, allowing residents to share freely and staff

to actively listen. At the same time, when residents are given support and guidance to share their own knowledge and expertise, strong collective decisions in the public interest can be made, which are rooted in resilient relationships between the city and its residents.

It’s no wonder that #lovemyhood caught on so quickly once residents felt empowered to contribute to the future of their neighbourhood.

Residents take the lead and the city supports them along the way. These supports include funding for grants, action plans, and placemaking; a new municipal Neighbourhood Development Office responsible for implementation over three years; and cross-departmental staff teams to transform the culture at city hall and support implementation.

Ongoing monitoring and reporting back to the community helps to measure how the strategy is supporting neighbourhoods that are safe, connected, engaged, accessible, inclusive and diverse.

Love My Hood was built by neighbours, for neighbours.

Thanks to an innovative community engagement process, we are confident that more and more people will be positively

engaged in the planning and development of their neighbourhoods for years to come.

The City of Kitchener shares the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for communications and public education with the City of London.

Michelle Drake, MAES, MCIP, RPP, has fond memories of her childhood neighbourhood in Kitchener. A member of OPPI, Michelle was the project manager for the neighbourhood strategy and is a senior heritage and policy planner in the planning division. Thanks to Darren Kropf, Helena Foulds, and Brandon Sloan for their advice and edits on earlier drafts of this article.



Residents providing input while enjoying local beer and adult colouring IMAGE COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



great places | connected people | working together

How the community got involved

- 5,651 members of our community provided input into #lovemyhood. That's three people for every street in Kitchener!
- We talked to people for 3,942 hours. That's like talking about neighbourhoods for 160 days straight!

We heard from many different community groups, such as neighbourhood associations, schools, faith communities, cultural clubs, sports teams, youth and seniors groups, to name a few. And we talked to people at parks, pools, splash pads, bus stations, soccer games, events and shopping centres across the city.



“It was a critical goal of our team to offer all people an opportunity to be involved and influence the direction of #lovemyhood in ways that were fun, informative and accessible. We are all connected to one another and this process has highlighted for me how committed my neighbours are to building an inclusive community.”
 — Andrew Tutty, Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee and Laurentian Hills resident



#lovemyhood lovemyhood.ca

Zibi Master Plan

By Paul Black, RPP

Zibi is a sustainable community and redevelopment project that offers residents an unique and balanced lifestyle combining the best of urbanity and healthy-living principles on a vibrant waterfront in Canada's National Capital region. When built, the multi-phase development will transform former industrial lands into a blend of residential housing, commercial and office spaces, waterfront plazas, outdoor squares, and recreational and cultural facilities.

The Zibi Master Plan is premised on the One Planet Living Framework, which seeks to create a future where it is easy and affordable for people to lead happy and healthy lives using a fair share of the earth's resources. The framework has 10 guiding principles as to help develop appropriate solutions to sustainability challenges. These include being transit oriented, walkable and socially engaging. The One Planet Action Plan provides goals and key performance indicators for each of the 10 principles.

The master planning process involved engaging stakeholder groups and community members. This resulted in the creation of eight development principles, within the local context, to guide achievement of the vision. These principles included celebrating the long heritage of the site, providing connections to and through the site to the rest of the Capital region, encouraging healthy living, creating a vibrant waterfront, incubating innovation, prioritizing ecological systems, creating a complete community, and creating and enhancing views.

Eight unique districts are delineated in the master plan, creating variety across the master plan area in both built form and social activities. Each district defines the physical and social identity of the neighbourhood and are organized around services, amenities and gathering places that support an urban, pedestrian-focused lifestyle.

The Zibi Master Plan strives to create a walkable community, minimize the need for off-site travel. It features a mix of housing types and tenures, including condominiums, apartments, and townhouses. Mixed-use buildings feature a range of commercial space options, coupled with outdoor spaces and cultural spaces these are intended to offer residents options to work and play in proximity to their homes. Affordable housing units are mixed with market rental and condominium units to create an accessible community for all.

An extensive network of open spaces capitalizes on the opportunity to create new public spaces within an extraordinary landscape. Internalized spaces are envisioned as having a more urban character while perimeter spaces are more naturalized, restoring the ecology of site edges where feasible. The master plan links the various spaces by a continuous network of pathways integrated with the street network, and the surrounding open space system along the Ottawa River.

The preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings on the site is another important component of the Zibi Master Plan. Though few buildings are officially designated, several of the industrial structures have stood on the site for many years.

The intent is to reuse and adapt as many structures as possible through the redevelopment, utilizing the spaces for commercial, office, community or cultural uses where possible. Design guidelines for adaptive reuse and new construction ensure varied and visually attractive building designs throughout.

The Zibi Master Plan lays the framework for a neighbourhood where people will want to live, work, and visit for many years to come. This major city-building project is intended to offer a model for future sustainable urban renewal projects.



Windmill Development Group, Dream Unlimited, Perkins + Will and Fotenn Planning + Design were recognized with the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for urban and community design. The team shares the healthy communities award with the City of London.

Paul Black, RPP is a member of OPPI and CIP and a senior planner at Fotenn Planning + Design in Ottawa. Paul has been a member of the master planning team since 2013.



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ReThink London

By Sean Galloway, RPP & Heather McNeely

In 2012, Londoners were invited to participate in ReThink London, a community conversation to share hopes and ideas for the future of their city.

ReThink London, set the foundation for the City of London's official plan. Our challenge was to get the entire community talking about the kind of city do people want to live in 20 years from now. The initiative gained momentum to become one of the largest and most successful public consultation programs ever implemented for an official plan process in Canada.

From a public engagement standpoint, ReThink London achieved more than expected. There was a very tangible buzz in the community around London's future. Staff attended more than 100 events and spoke to more than 16,000 people about planning and city building, and engaged 240,000 people. The city's approach to engagement was predicated on the goal of reaching Londoners where they live, work and play—in their homes, at festivals, in community centres, social clubs, homeless shelters and offices.

To set the stage for the public engagement program, it was important to develop a brand that was recognizable, unique to the project and meaningful. In the spirit of doing things differently, we set out to give the engagement program a name. This new official plan represented a rethinking process, hence the brand ReThink London. To assist Londoners to frame their thoughts and ideas about how to shape our community for the next 20 years, we developed organizing elements around the themes of live, grow, green, move and prosper.

The public consultation and engagement toolbox included a variety of new and innovative approaches in an effort to make Londoners aware of the project and to engage them in ways they would want to get involved, and stay involved. We did not use planning jargon. For example, we self-imposed a ban on the use of the term official plan and even set up a swear jar in the office for any planners who uttered these words!

"Doing it differently" became our mantra, starting with the community launch. Rather than the standard open house, a free public forum with CBC's Peter Mansbridge served as the kick-off event. At the launch, Mansbridge challenged Londoners to use this opportunity as a way to shape the future of the city. Other community-based events were held to coincide

with major milestones in developing the plan. Through presentations, visual displays, interactive maps, comment stations and ideas boards, Londoners not only discovered their city, but how they could shape their city. We learned that social media was most effective to create a buzz around major events, spreading the word about the project, and greatly expanding the range of people participating.



Sean Galloway



Heather McNeely

Based on the first round of engagement, ReThink London discussion papers were prepared for eight key directions that represented what we heard. Over a month long roll-out, these discussion papers were posted on the project website where visitors could respond to them and leave comments. More than 3500 persons visited the website. Through this process we said to the community, "This is what we heard. Did we capture it correctly?"

Using innovative means for connecting with the public, sharing input, and showing

how the public's input would shape the decisions that would be made through this process was a fundamental element of the process. Liz Nield and the Lura Consulting team were great partners in formulating our engagement playbook. The entire delivery was undertaken in-house by an incredible team of staff, and all the promotional products and background literature were created and prepared in-house by a talented team in Planning Services.

ReThink London accomplished its goal of moving the official plan process to a community-led process of city building. It offered an ideal forum for public participation and an opportunity to weave the connection of issues raised between each phase of the policy process to implementation.

The City of London shares the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for communications and public education with the City of Kitchener. The City of London shares the healthy communities award with Windmill Development Group, Dream Unlimited, Perkins + Will and Fotenn Planning + Design.

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Central Station Stop in downtown Kitchener

Kitchener's PARTS

By Tina Malone-Wright, RPP

Kitchener is the largest city in Waterloo Region, an area that has one of the most robust economies in Canada, and is a key urban centre in the emerging Toronto-to-Waterloo innovation corridor. By early 2018, the region's light rail transit system, ION, will be operational, and will connect the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo.

ION has the potential to be a major factor in the long-term growth and continued economic prosperity of Kitchener. With ION comes pressures for growth and the potential of continued change in areas close to ION stops. In anticipation of a changing urban environment in the transit corridor, and to ensure there is a proper framework in place to guide growth and stability in these locations, the City of Kitchener completed the first master planning exercise for the Central Stations Area of the region's rapid transit system in the spring of 2016. The plan provides direction for future development and stability within station areas, along with recommendations for capital projects to ensure that these

areas are developed in a way that is transit-supportive and improves the quality of life for those living within the station areas and for the greater community.

The PARTS—Planning Around Rapid Transit Stations—Central Plan was created by a multidisciplinary team which used innovative engagement techniques, such as real time 3D modelling and neighbourhood walks, to engage with stakeholders and the public over a year and a half. The PARTS Central Plan determined land use designations, identified streetscape



improvement and infrastructure requirements, and included a transportation plan to address pedestrian, bicycle, transit and road issues, as well as traffic in general, within a 10-minute walk of the six ION station stops in the Central Stations Area.

Conservation of stable neighbourhoods

While a primary objective of the station area plan is to increase densities to support and ensure the viability of the light rail transit, it is important to protect established



Corridor Wide PARTS Study Area Map



"Trace Your Route" Map from the May 26, 2015 Community Engagement Session

neighbourhoods and promote ridership by strengthening connections between neighbourhoods and station stops. The PARTS planning team engaged with local neighbourhoods to build relationships. This helped shape and influence the final plan and strengthened local support for appropriate change in the station area.

As part of our engagement, community members were asked to outline their walk, cycle and bus routes and to identify locations where they live, work, shop, study and/or play. This assisted in developing recommendations for improvements to the public realm and to connectivity.

Creation of innovation employment designation

Industrial employment has always been an important component of Kitchener's economy. In the station area industrial sites are evolving into new employment opportunities. As a result, the plan incorporates a new land use, not currently found in the official plan. The

Innovation Employment designation reflects a growing trend within employment lands for start-ups and makers, and the benefits of diversification. While recognizing the existing built form, the designation also recognizes the potential redevelopment opportunities.

3D technology to engage

The team developed a 3D model of the PARTS area and used Story Map, 3D renderings and real time review of development scenarios at public engagement sessions and on the city's website to convey what growth and change could look like in the PARTS Central Area.

The consultation allowed members of the community and stakeholders to visually explore what the redevelopment of a particular property could look like in relation to adjacent properties and within the context of the overall streetscape and neighbourhood. Where low intensity uses abutted high intensity uses, the



3D Rendering of Victoria Park Station Stop

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

process enabled staff and community members to ensure a compatible transition between the uses. GIS data was also used to determine real-world walkability from various sites to the stations.

Conclusion

The PARTS Central Plan, Kitchener’s first station area plan, is a strategic policy document that will be used to guide growth and development around the six ION station stops in the central area. It will guide infrastructure investment decisions and the intensification of appropriate areas with uses and densities that support higher order transit.

The City of Kitchener was recognized with the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for community planning and development studies / reports.

Tina Malone-Wright, RPP, a member of OPPI and CIP, is a long range and policy senior planner in the City of Kitchener Planning Division. She was the project manager for the Planning Around Rapid Transit Stations - Central Stations Area and the development of the PARTS Central Plan. Currently, she is the project manager for Kitchener’s Midtown and Rockway Station Area Plans. Special thanks to Dayna Edwards and Adam Clark for their assistance with this article and to the PARTS Central Project Team.

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The London Plan

By John Fleming, RPP

Those wanting a glimpse of where planning in Ontario could be headed in the future, may want to look at the City of London's new official plan. It's a different kind of plan that is full of new ideas and planning innovation. This innovation stems from a purposeful blend of good planning principles and information garnered through one of the largest engagement programs for an official plan in Canada – ReThink London.

One look at the plan and you know it's different. It's a high gloss document with large photographs that serve to illustrate concepts, but also to provide visual interest and an aesthetic that welcomes people into the document. We joked during the preparation of the plan that someone at the hair salon should look at *The London Plan* and *Vanity Fair* on the coffee table and reach for *The London Plan* as the more interesting looking document.

The text of the plan is also quite different from most

official plans. It's written in very plain language. Phrases like "including, but not limited to" ended up on the floor of the editing room. We used running policy numbers, rather than a nested numbering system, to avoid the crushingly bureaucratic feel of section references such as Policy 3.6.1.1. Finally, all those technical planning details that are necessary to make an official plan work are stuffed in the back under the title Our Tools.



Dig a little deeper and you'll find that *The London Plan* reads like a blend of official plan and strategic plan. It explains the challenges that London faces and then dives into how we, as a community, intend to take on those challenges. It also deals with non-traditional city-building matters. For example, there is a complete chapter on food systems, one on developing a smart city, one on creating a green and healthy city and another on the urban forest.

Supported by public engagement and council direction for a 45 per cent intensification rate, The



The London Plan was produced in-house by the city's talented urban design team IMAGE COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

London Plan emphasizes the need to grow inward and upward. But how can we truly achieve this?

The plan establishes a city structure that creates the bones for compact urban growth—the growth framework, the green framework, the mobility framework, the economic framework, and the community framework. Stemming from this city structure is a plan for rapid transit and corresponding planning permissions that allow for highly urban, mixed-use forms of development along RT corridors, transit stations, and transit villages at the end of those corridors. A Primary Transit Area is established which allows for greater heights and densities. In addition, all kinds of lighter forms of intensification are allowed within neighbourhoods, including secondary suites.

The more general strategies and policies of The London Plan are found up-front in the City Building Policies, for example, mobility, city design, environment, infrastructure, etc. The intention of planning policies like these often mystify the public, politicians and even practitioners. To address this, The London Plan includes an explanation within each chapter under the headers of “What are we trying to achieve?” “Why is it important?” and “How are we going to achieve this?”

You won't find land use designations in The London Plan. Recognizing that the city is really a mosaic of places, The London Plan uses place types instead. For each place type, the plan describes what kind of place we are collectively trying to achieve and then lays out policies relating to use, intensity of use, and form. The range of uses permitted in each place type is broad, recognizing the many problems that have been created by the planning profession's obsession with separating land uses in the past. And don't look for hard-and-fast residential density limits in this plan. We recognized that unit per hectare density limits aren't a great tool for understanding planning impact and fit. Consider the many different forms 75 units per hectare can take.

Another major pillar of The London Plan is the essential link between the way we plan our streets and plan for development. Street design and form plays a large role in creating a place. So, streets are classified with labels that refer to the type of place they will support and connect. For example civic boulevards, not

arterial roads; neighbourhood connectors, not primary and secondary collector roads. High-order design criteria is established for each street classification—don't bother to look for traffic volumes—with reference to a Complete Streets Manual that will take it to the next level of detail. In many cases, the place type permissions relate directly to the type of street that a property fronts and whether it is at an intersection.

There is a lot more innovation to be found in The London Plan, such as two-tiered bonus zoning, provision for a community planning permit system, a high-density overlay that transitions from our last official plan, a connectivity ratio for designing streets in new neighbourhoods, policies set to repurpose failing commercial areas, and the list goes on.

One last point of innovation that surprises many people is that The London Plan was not prepared by consultants. It was conceived, written and produced entirely in-house. We did engage consulting services to help to work through various difficult issues and strategies—including Hemson Consulting, Urban Strategies. and TODERIAN UrbanWorks. However, city staff did the vast majority of the heavy lifting and the work of creating the plan. And, this was purposefully not limited to planning staff. Every part of the corporation participated in developing, editing and writing The London Plan. Those non-planning departments take proud ownership of the parts of the plan they created. The London Plan is not a planning document, it is a corporate document.

The City of London shares the 2017 OPPI Excellence in Planning award for municipal statutory planning studies / reports with ERA Architects, Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, United Way Toronto, City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health. The City of London shares the healthy communities award with Windmill Development Group, Dream Unlimited, Perkins + Will and Fotenn Planning + Design.

John Fleming, RPP, is a member of OPPI and the managing director of Planning for the City of London. John would like to recognize the leadership group for the London Plan including Sean Galloway, Gregg Barrett and Heather McNeely.



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LAKELAND DISTRICT

Designing Public Spaces

By Kelly Henderson, Stephanie Lacey-Avon & Jason Wepler

Lakeland District planners and the Grey Bruce Public Health Unit joined forces to organize an afternoon seminar about how public space design intersects with individual and community health. One objective of the seminar was to help bridge the gap between local planning and public health professions.

Presentations included—Pierre Chauvin (MHBC Planning) provided an overview of parkland dedication changes made to the *Planning Act*, and stressed the importance of municipalities completing parks plans to help provide evidence-based rationale for considering alternative parkland dedication rates. Paul Young (HC Link) spoke about the importance of parks and open spaces to mental



Kelly Henderson



Stephanie Lacey-Avon



Jason Wepler

and physical health, and social connectivity and personal well-being. Kerry Jarvis informed participants about the Butterfly Gardens of Saugeen Shores, which includes food source plants for monarchs and other pollinators. Thomas Dean and Teresa Pearson (Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce) spoke about the role of nature in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Adam Parson (City of Owen Sound Parks and Open Space manager) led a walking tour of Harrison Park, the city's biggest park spanning more than 40 hectares along the Sydenham River.

Lakeland District and the Grey Bruce Public Health Unit want to thank all participants and look forward to future joint events. Lakeland District planners were pleased to donate all excess funds to the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Scholarship Fund.

Kelly Henderson, MSc, is a Candidate member of OPPI and a planner with the County of Grey. Stephanie Lacey-Avon, MA, is a Candidate member of OPPI and a planner for Grey County. Jason Wepler, BSc, is a health promoter with the Grey Bruce Health Unit in Owen Sound.

PEOPLE & DISTRICTS

Students Challenge Net Zero Carbon Emissions

By Kaitlin Carroll

How will communities tackle the challenge of carbon emissions to reach a net zero carbon future? How can our public buildings contribute to our planet's future? These

questions are what students and young professionals set out to solve at the Greater Toronto Emerging Green Professionals Hackathon on September 16, 2017.

In a charrette style, interdisciplinary teams were given one day to create a net zero carbon emissions retrofit design solution for a three-storey elementary school. This was not only challenging, but also meaningful in the local context, as Toronto moves towards their goal of reducing GHG emissions to 80% by 2050 (City of Toronto, 2011). Moreover, the Toronto Catholic District School Board is currently



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investigating ways to make its schools more sustainable, making it the perfect community partner for this undertaking.

After nine intense hours, all seven teams produced amazingly innovative and inspiring projects. Their solutions were presented as five-minute pitches to a panel including David MacMillan (City of Toronto, Energy & Environment Division), Holly Jordan (B+H Architects), and Vera Straka (Ryerson University). Ideas were assessed based on five criteria: energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable materials, cost, and creativity, as well as effectiveness of the team's pitch.

The winning design was prepared by Deva Veylan (Ryerson University), Daniel Carey (Ryerson University), and Yazan Zafar (Carleton University), who proposed a strategy based on environmental justice, wellness, and resiliency. Their ideas were greatly influenced by existing building certification programs such as the Living Building Challenge (International Living Future Institute, 2016).

The team's goal was to reduce existing loads, lowering the overall energy needed for daily tasks. Simple building envelope upgrades were introduced to increase the overall R-value of the walls and roof to R-50, keeping more heat in in the winter, and out in the summer. Lighting retrofits and demand-controlled ventilation were another key component of the load

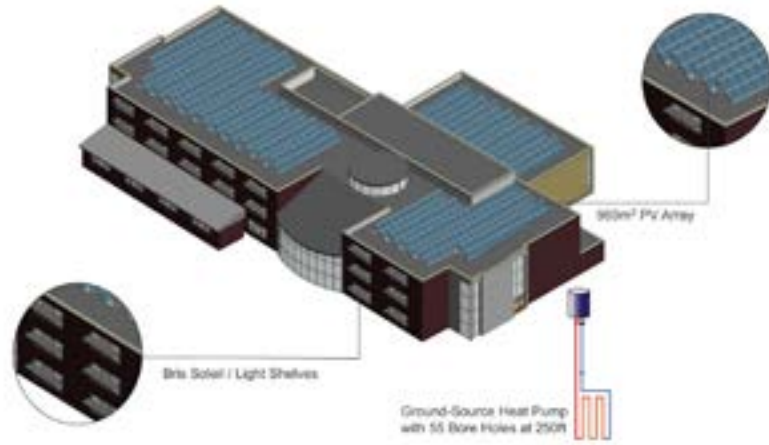


Diagram of proposed retrofits
IMAGE COURTESY OF DANIEL CAREY, YAZAN ZAFAR AND DEVA VEYLAN

reduction strategy, ensuring energy was only used when it needed to be, and from the most efficiency technology.

Renewable technologies were the highlight of the winning design, including both an extensive roof-mounted solar PV array, as well as a 192kW ground-source heat pump system. Solar thermal water heating was proposed to handle the building's hot water needs. These solutions reveal how integral renewable energy technologies will be in reaching any future emission targets. Moreover, multiple renewable energy systems will need to function in tandem to create a holistic solution to a building's energy requirements, which includes making use of available thermal energy sources.

In addition, the proposed design employs a DC microgrid, which will improve on-site electricity

generation by 10 per cent. One of the benefits of choosing a DC microgrid system is the ability to provide stored energy from the solar PV system back to the school during peak hours, thereby reducing the grid impact of the building. In order to build more resilient cities, microgrid systems are increasingly considered to be reliable solutions to the existing overburdened power infrastructure. The system will also allow the school to feed excess electricity back to the grid. The team calculated the proposed payback for the system is 15 years, before consideration of available government programs and funding.

The winning team was awarded the EGP Hackathon Award at the Canada Green Building Council - Greater Toronto Chapter Gala and Awards on October 12th. Team members also received time in Ryerson University's Clean Energy Zone, a business incubator and research hub for clean technology.

Kaitlin Carroll is pursuing her Masters of Building Science degree at Ryerson University, and is a member of the Emerging Green Professionals Committee. She is passionate about creating low-impact, resilient, and beautiful cities.

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Winning team prepares their idea. L-R Daniel Carey, Yazan Zafar, Deva Veylan
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Celebrating success

This past November, I had the pleasure of joining professional planners from across Ontario and MPP Ted McMeekin to participate in our annual celebration of [Excellence in Planning Award](#) winners. It was a great day, capped off by news that sponsorship of Bill 122, the Registered Professional Planners Act, was transferred to MPP McMeekin.

As professional planners, it is important that we celebrate our successes. The Excellence in Planning Awards give us an opportunity to pause every year and recognize the great work that our colleagues are doing to [inform choice](#) and create inspiring communities across the province. The projects recognized this year are truly impressive, as are the professional planners leading them.



“Planners are the glue that holds everything together,” McMeekin told the award winners.

It is great to see how professional planners are building capacity, innovating and delivering positive change in their communities. The winning projects (and planning leaders) are profiled in this issue of *OPJ*. Learn more about these successful practices and the various leadership roles that planners play in community building.

It was exciting to see Bill 122 take another important step towards Third Reading and Royal Assent later that day. I am grateful to the original sponsor of the bill, Minister Peter Milczyn for his leadership, but he has transferred it into good hands. This is a transformative initiative for the planning profession and the general public. OPPI continues to meet with decision-makers to navigate Bill 122 through the legislative process and I will continue to update you as we take these steps.

As I write this article, OPPI Council is preparing for its first two-day meeting at which we will strengthen our governance competencies, discuss member value and the future of the public policy portfolio, establish our 2018 priorities and allocate resources to achieve those priorities. Council is committed to continue to advancing our strategic plan—INSPIRE OPPI—and through it the planning profession in Ontario.

I look forward to working with Council over the next two years to ensure that OPPI remains a strong, sustainable organization that delivers value to you, its members.

We are RPPs!

Jason Ferrigan, RPP

SOCIAL MEDIA

Technology's City Building Laboratory

By Rob Voigt, RPP, contributing editor

Some of the questions I am currently wrestling with on the next evolution of city building driven by technology and mega corporations include: How will our relationship with the public realm change? Who maintains ownership of personal data and metadata generated by the activities of our lives in a built environment “wired” to measure our physical location, interactions, and activities? What are the relationships and responsibilities between government, and mega corporations in a city district that is a living laboratory? What levels of experimentation relating to the public realm, information, and influence on people's behaviour will be executed and acceptable?

Digital technology advances are influencing planning across the spectrum of our professional activities. Environmental analysis is being transformed with the deployment of drones packed with sensors and imaging equipment. Mobile devices and smart phones are ubiquitous in citizen engagement programs, and digital 3D visualization platforms and viewers are being used at all stages of urban design to improve understanding of the built environment. Digital technology is also responsible for many accelerated and profound societal shifts. For example, how artificial intelligence and robotics are disrupting the workplace across all sectors, and how autonomous vehicles are creating a new set of infrastructure demands on communities, as long-held paradigms about transportation are being reshaped. In no way is it an exaggeration to suggest that these technological influences on



city building are unavoidable. Digital technology is now part of every aspect of the planning process, and ingrained in communities' major physical and organizational systems, as well as individual lives.

Regardless of the surprising speed with which digital technologies have permeated all aspects of our private and professional lives, I suggest that at this point we have become so accustomed to the resulting changes that we are not questioning the true value and underlying weaknesses or vulnerabilities that are the result of our unfettered adoption of new technology at such a rapid rate. Beyond some occasional and tangential discussions about accessibility and privacy concerns, the planning profession is generally not being very inquisitive or exploring the ethical and disruptive capacity of technology.

An announcement that was widely covered in news reports on October 17, 2017 about how digital technology was entering an entirely new and extraordinary level of influence may have been the point in time when our attention was captivated. On that day the general public was informed that the New York-based Sidewalk Labs, a sister company of Google, was going to partner with the City of Toronto to help design and build a district on the city's waterfront. The company that has given us far more than just internet search horsepower, was now getting directly into the business of designing and building the very cities we live in.

While the details are still unclear, what seems to be expected of this district is the physical realization of the concept of the "internet of things." It will be taking cutting edge technology beyond just self-driving vehicles and transit, smart buildings and infrastructure systems, and hyper-efficient buildings. Sidewalk Labs is also looking to create innovations in housing construction. We are on the threshold of creating an environment that will be able to monitor, measure, evaluate and adapt to the people using it. Its systems and features on many levels could be personalized, based on the individual and metadata that is generated by people in the environment.

This is where our questions need to begin, because with data/information there is power and influence on people's lives. In this case we are dealing with influence over the public realm, people's homes, and neighbourhoods. These are areas where we haven't yet identified or assessed possible impacts. Our relationships as citizens and planners with the public realm is about to shift. A corporate entity whose principle business is leveraging data for profit is going to be directly involved in designing and building the places people call home, and we haven't spent enough time considering the implications, good or otherwise. But that is our role as planners. To collaboratively help design, build and steward our communities for the benefit of all, for now, and into the future.

One month after the initial Google announcement, on November 13th, TVO's The Agenda with Steve Paikin presented an interesting discussion of the Sidewalk Lab Project: [Building Smarter Cities](#). The 34-minute panel discussion covers a lot of ground relevant to planning, and is well worth watching. It should help generate ideas and questions about how we plan for this kind of scenario. Even if you are not involved with planning for Toronto, or the

Sidewalk Labs project, this is relevant to you. Have no doubt that the community building techniques and tools that are created in Toronto's living lab will spread rapidly to other towns and cities. It isn't unreasonable to see the possibility of these new ideas about city building going viral much in the same way pop culture information spreads across social media. Communities, businesses, and developers are going to scramble to stay up-to-date and not lose ground to others when they see the potential for these technological advances.

One statement on the TVO program by panelist Bianca Wylie (lecturer and speaker on open government, civic technology, and public consultation), really sums up the challenges we are facing with our perspectives of technology as an integral part of city building. It makes it crystal clear in my mind how we need to reflect on technology's role in planning.

"Technology is a tool, it is not a way."

As you use the new technologies that will come out of this experiment, ask yourself if you are adapting to them just so they will work in your context, or expertly wielding them to create what the community needs and wants.

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PROVINCIAL NEWS

Growing the Greenbelt

By Kevin Eby, RPP, contributing editor

One of the more interesting provincial initiatives to manage growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is expected to play out before the provincial election in the form of expansions to the Greenbelt. While there appears to be little appetite for the wholesale expansions envisioned through the "bluebelt" proposal in 2015, there is currently speculation that the province is considering moving ahead with more modest expansions in several areas experiencing significant growth, including Simcoe County and the Region of Waterloo.

Even these modest proposals, however, have their detractors. Some councillors, while extolling the virtues of protecting natural heritage systems, appear to be opposed to the expansion of the Greenbelt as they feel existing official plan policy frameworks already provide sufficient safeguards against development pressures. In Waterloo, an additional argument is that by expanding the Greenbelt the province would actually weaken existing protection for some natural heritage features originally designated as Environmentally



Sensitive Policy Areas over 40 years ago. The affected areas mainly consist of significant meadow/grasslands habitat. These features are protected from aggregate extraction by the regional official plan, but are not similarly protected under the provisions of the *Greenbelt Plan*, which would prevail in such circumstances. The official plan policies protecting these areas resulted from extensive negotiations with the province and the aggregate industry as part of the approval processes associated with both the 1995 and 2009 regional official plans.

Are there benefits to expanding the Greenbelt?

One argument for expanding the Greenbelt into areas experiencing increased development pressures is that the affected municipalities would no longer be responsible for the significant outlay of resources required every time a challenge is posed to local or regional policies protecting natural heritage systems. The Region of Waterloo spent several million dollars in its almost five-year battle at the Ontario Municipal Board securing the regional equivalent of a greenbelt in the form of Regional Recharge Area, Protected Countryside and Countryside Line designations. Combined, these designations establish not only where future settlement expansions are prohibited, but where future growth should occur. These designations are fundamental to the implementation of the region's proposed long-term urban structure anchored on a light rail transit system.

While the vast majority of the Regional Recharge Area, Protected Countryside and Countryside Line designations are now in force in Waterloo, they are simply official plan policy, and as a result remain open to challenge through *Planning Act* processes. This exposure may be mitigated to some extent by anticipated changes to the OMB appeal and *Planning Act* processes, however, currently, official plan policies governing such areas may be amended through applications filed by the private sector. While there is some protection against private sector submission of amendments specifically proposing settlement area expansions, there is no protection against challenges to the underlying designations that would influence/guide decisions relating to settlement area expansions through future municipal comprehensive review processes. In the absence of provincial level protection for such areas, municipalities are left to potentially re-litigate the same issues over and over again.

What a Greenbelt designation provides is certainty. While proximity to the Greenbelt may somewhat reduce available options for accommodating future growth, the certainty provided by such a designation potentially benefits municipalities, the development industry and the agricultural community alike.

A Greenbelt designation permits municipalities to proceed with planning based on long-term certainty as to where growth will and will not occur. This allows municipalities to focus development, more accurately plan for infrastructure, reduce unnecessary over-sizing to provide for future urban expansions in all directions, thus reduce capital spending and development charge expenditures. In addition, once the threat of challenges to the natural heritage system is eliminated, resources that would otherwise be required to establish and defend such designations can be diverted to other important planning initiatives.

The certainty created by a Greenbelt designation helps inform private sector investment decisions, thereby providing greater certainty in returns on investments made in raw land. Better long-term infrastructure planning can also reduce both up-front costs and development charges, while focused development activity potentially would lead to more timely recovery of front-ending expenditures.

Certainty is also good for the farming community, as a reduction in land speculation keeps farm land prices lower, and allows investments in farm infrastructure and proper soil maintenance programs knowing that such expenditures won't have been wasted in just a couple years.

On the downside, farmers within Greenbelt expansion areas close to urban boundaries lose out on future speculative land value, some existing land speculators will lose out on planned increases in the value of land already purchased, and municipalities, particularly those entirely surrounded by Greenbelt, face reduced options of where and how to grow and, in some cases, less development-related revenues and assessment growth. In some instances, there may be an impact on the cost of housing, however, sufficient land already exists in many municipalities to accommodate growth to 2041 under the targets contained in the Growth Plan, 2017 and can be further mitigated by providing some limited expansion options as appropriate.

On balance, it is my opinion that there is merit to giving serious consideration to expansion of the Greenbelt into areas experiencing significant growth in order to protect natural heritage systems, with two caveats:

1. Existing approved official policies that provide a greater level of protection for the environment than the corresponding policies in the Growth Plan (as in the Region of Waterloo example) should be grandfathered though changes to the *Greenbelt Act*.
2. In establishing the boundaries of any Greenbelt expansion consideration should be given, where appropriate, to excluding land adjacent to settlement areas to provide some limited opportunity for future expansion similar in concept to the Countryside Line designation in the Region of Waterloo.

Kevin Eby, B.Sc, MA, RPP is a member of OPPI, the OPJ provincial news contributing editor and the former director of community planning with the Region of Waterloo. He previously worked on secondment to the province to help with the formulation of the original Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

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Enriching Suburbia

By Harold Madi, RPP, contributing editor

Nearly two decades into the 21st century, most growing North American cities are witnessing an extraordinary shift to urban regeneration as means of accommodating growth. Indeed, in some of the larger metropolitan centres, intensified infill forms of development are making significant gains on, if not far surpassing, suburban expansion with respect to the rate of housing unit starts or total commercial gross floor area.

Thus far, the vast majority of this urban regeneration has occurred in and around downtown areas and major urban centres. The last decade was like a perfect storm for the centres of cities, where aligning shifts in planning policies, demographics, labour markets, and consumer choices spurred an astonishing amount of growth and development.

With billions in private sector investments and an ever expanding but concentrated living and working population base, this growth has reaped great benefits for city centres. Their renaissance is characterized by revitalized shopping streets, spawning of new and diversified stores and restaurants, infilled surface parking lots and underutilized sites, restored heritage resources, new and enhanced open spaces and streetscapes, new public art installations and cultural venues, and an undeniably vibrant and exciting street life.

While city centres thrived, the same was not true for most suburban areas on their periphery, especially the maturing established areas built in the post war era. Regardless of land uses, in most cases these areas have remained static, and many are in decline. Furthermore, as these areas were oriented to the automobile, they are vast in scale in contrast to the relatively modest geographic area that comprise the high growth walkable areas—for example, most downtown areas occupy only 1-3 per cent of a city's total land area. Consequently, arriving at a sustainable means of ensuring the health and success of suburban areas, no doubt, will be the next frontier and preoccupation of planners for generations to come.

Suburban conundrum

As thriving urban centres rapidly build out, issues of gentrification and affordability become more prevalent, and pressure on suburban areas to do their part in accommodating intensified growth increases. However, the existing form, function and experience of the suburban context is not what appeals to the current market, and there are inherent design challenges to significantly altering these places to accommodate growth and appeal to the marketplace.

Therein lies the suburban conundrum: Suburban areas, in large part, have been designed to be static auto-oriented places. However, for their sustained health and livability, and certainly if they are to thrive, they must evolve into more complete communities with a critical mass of housing, services and amenities. To do so, they must be well served by public transit, walkable in design and scale, inclusive of a diversity of housing, recreational and shopping choices. In short, suburban areas must evolve into a more urban pattern—the antithesis of their original purpose.



Priorities for unlocking latent opportunities

There are a number of challenges particular to the contemporary suburban development eras—typically built from the 1990s to present day, these were more modestly scaled subdivisions built side by side as a consequence of increasing land costs. As the most ad hoc, discontinuous and segregated pattern of development, these areas may be most challenging to alter.

Market trends suggest the following five priorities are likely to successfully lead to change.

Enhance mobility choices—Giving people viable alternative choices to get about is essential, and they need to prioritize active transportation and pedestrian/cycling safety. This will likely be initially disruptive as it will have to happen at the expense of unnecessary single-occupancy drivers.

Focus on centres, districts & corridors—Creating walkable places with mixed uses at transit supportive densities will have to be immersive and significant. The path of least resistance naturally leads to current non-residential areas, such as commercial centres and strips. Orchestrated, these places can be linked and within reasonable reach of significant swaths of suburban residential areas.

Hip heritage & placemaking—As a key counter point to the generic suburban environment, heritage retention and repurposing, as well as other prominent placemaking opportunities that can give distinguishing cache to areas will go a long way to responding to buyers seeking an authentic sense of place. Getting the scale and quality right is paramount.

Gently evolve neighbourhoods—Permit modest variations, including accessory units and other forms of invisible or gentle intensification. This can be done uniformly or transitionally within a given neighbourhood. This will greatly help to introduce change in subtle ways while responding to the needs of shifting demographics.

Resilient and low-impact—The excessive wastefulness and inefficiency proliferated by suburban standards must be stopped. In this era of climate change and resulting catastrophic weather events, suburban areas more than anywhere else should be the focus for innovation.

The gap between the inherent challenges and the priorities for unlocking may seem daunting but it is time for change and here are five strategies that can help.

Capacity-building & nurturing a culture for change—A well-orchestrated and funded campaign is needed to educate, build capacity and shift perceptions among citizens and politicians. This must expose the true health and economic costs of the status quo, and the benefits of shifting to evidence-based decision-making.

Strategic retrofitting and interventions—The vast land area consumed by suburban areas and the scale of effort required renders comprehensive and extensive transformation utterly unaffordable, if not impossible. Change needs to be targeted, strategic and impactful. For example, introducing higher order transit must align with density and mixed use areas, intersect with interconnected and prioritized pedestrian and cycling-oriented circulation networks, complement a network of shared autonomous vehicles that can shuttle riders at major destinations and be implemented in conjunction with efforts to reduce unnecessary auto use by restricting or calming traffic movement, narrowing roadways, and raising the costs of parking.

Superb public realm and high quality high density—Aspiring for the highest possible quality associated with significant changes serves to ensure their functional success, as well as offering a strategic counterpoint to the dismal quality of the status quo. Improvements to the public realm in conjunction with

transit and other active transportation initiatives, and new high density developments must convey to the public a sense of progress, community benefit and civic pride.

Flexible and discretionary regulations—A regulatory framework that does not penalize or discourage mixed uses, variety and alternate designs is necessary to evolve the suburban context. Enabling complexity can drive creativity and new businesses, as well as generate investment interests.

Rethink governance and public service priorities—With many municipal services focused on reinforcing the status quo, bringing about necessary change won't be easy. Success will depend on a reorientation of corporate priorities, interdepartmental roles and coordination, budgeting processes, staff training, etc.

Inspiring case studies

Despite the inherent challenges, there are compelling case studies from across Ontario that demonstrate successful design, approval and alternative standards in suburban contexts. While none are perfect, in many cases they demonstrate battles won and groundbreaking ways to enriching suburban areas. Below are notable examples of these case studies that are either under way or proposed, plus four featured projects with more details.

Harold Madi, RPP, is a member of OPPI and Urban Places Canada lead at Stantec. He has two decades of planning and urban design experience leading numerous large-scale, multi-faceted and visionary projects across Canada and internationally.

Suburban projects or initiatives that are completed or well underway	Suburban projects and initiatives that are proposed and to look out for
	
<p>Shops at Don Mills, Toronto: Redevelopment of the mall into a street-oriented experience and eventually incorporating mixed-uses</p>	<p>ConsumersNEXT, Toronto: Reimagining the suburban office park with an array of amenities to attract and retain businesses in the area</p>
	
<p>Cornell, Markham: One of Canada's first and largest suburban greenfield communities designed according to New Urbanist principles</p>	<p>Port Credit West Village, Mississauga: Brownfield development of a walkable, mixed-use community with a continuous public waterfront</p>
	
<p>Lansdowne Park, Ottawa: High-density, mixed-use infill in conjunction with upgrades to the stadium, open spaces and historic exhibition buildings</p>	<p>Westwood Lands, Etobicoke: Reconfiguration of the six-point interchange into city blocks, with complete streets and home to a new civic centre</p>

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Featured suburban projects or initiatives that are completed or well underway



Project Name: Port Credit Village Phase 1
Proponent: FRAM Building Group
Municipality: Mississauga

Site Type & Context: Brownfield site adjacent to historic and walkable port settlement and mature low-density area, served by GO Train and bus
Land Uses: Mixed-uses, office, retail, mixed tenures in medium to high density housing types
Scale: 10.5-hectares (26-acres); 410 units; 5,100sm (55,000sf) non-residential

Significance: Developer-driven suburban brownfield development that introduces a mix of uses and higher densities in a form compatible with established context.

Urban Character & Features:

A fully planned TOD mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood that is a 'complete and life-long' community. Introduced vibrant uses and a high quality public realm that has revitalized Port Credit. Key features include:

- Port Credit GO station within a 5-minute walk
- Variety of open spaces, include a waterfront promenade, civic and market squares
- Variety of housing types and tenures ranging in heights from 3 to 6-stories
- Heritage retention and framed vistas lend to the distinct 'sense of place'
- Live-work units designed to complement and extend the 'main street' character
- Plaza framed by shops and mixed-use enhances and anchors the existing vibrant retail street



Waterfront Promenade



Civic Plaza



Live-Work



Views to Lake



Mid-Block Link



Market Square



Project Name: Downtown Markham
Proponent: Markham
Municipality: Markham

Site Type & Context: Greenfield infill site identified by the Town to create an urban downtown experience and an Urban Growth Centre served by planned major transit hub
Land Uses: Mixed-uses, office, retail, institutional, hotel, mixed tenures in medium to high density housing types
Scale: 400-hectares (988-acres); 20,000 units and 41,000 residents; 39,000 jobs

Significance: Town initiated fully planned community based on the principles of New Urbanism and Smart Growth, including balanced live/work opportunities, compact urban form, natural heritage protection, and transit supportive

Urban Character & Features:

- Vision and plan informed by public engagement
- Performance Measures generated to monitor and assess implementation of the vision
- Organized on a large 10-acre central urban park
- Human-scaled and walkable compact form
- Served by a District Energy system
- Strong civic presence including: municipal offices, performing arts centre, YMCA, 2 secondary schools, and 3 elementary schools
- New branch campus site for York University and Seneca College
- Corporate offices for large companies including IBM, Motorola and Honeywell
- Hosted aquatic competitions for the 2015 Games



Site Plan



Urban Plaza



Planned Built Character

Featured suburban projects and initiatives that are proposed and to look out for



Project Name: Humbertown
Proponent: First Capital Realty, Tridel
Municipality: Etobicoke – Toronto

Site Type & Context: Greyfield site that entails redeveloping a 1950s' shopping plaza in an established low-rise suburban context comprised mostly of low-density house forms and walk-up apartment buildings, served by bus transit

Land Uses: Mixed-uses, office, retail, townhouse and apartment housing types up to 21-storeys

Scale: 3.6-hectares (8.9-acres); 650 units in townhomes and mid-rise buildings up to 12-storeys; 21,800sm (235,000sf) non-residential

Significance:

Early demonstration of adding critical mass and amenity to suburban areas through mixed-use redevelopment of a typical suburban shopping plaza, similar to countless sites that dot suburban areas across Ontario

Urban Character & Features:

Aspires to be a liveable, mixed-use community with generous high-quality open spaces to enhance quality of life for existing and future residents. Design an outcome of a highly charged process with significant public engagement. Key features include:

- Retention and expansion of the existing retail uses supported by an enhanced public realm
- Variety of market condos and seniors residence
- High quality, animated and appealing pedestrian-oriented circulation that strengthen walkability
- 5-times the trees planted and green roofs
- LEED Gold sustainable buildings
- Surface parking lots moved below grade and transformed into public open spaces



Project Name: West Five Smart Community
Proponent: Sifton Properties Limited
Municipality: London

Site Type & Context: Greenfield site in conventional expanding low-density area, served by bus transit

Land Uses: Mixed-uses, office, retail, medium to high density housing types & mixed tenures

Scale: 28-hectares (70-acres); 2,000 units; 42,000sm (450,000sf) non-residential

Significance:

Developer-driven suburban greenfield development that aspires to be a progressive complete, life-long and sustainable community

Urban Character & Features:

A fully planned neighbourhood that will also serve as an urban amenity to the surrounding suburban communities. Key features include:

- A central urban format park with year-round events and activities
- Walkable and pedestrian-centric network
- Surface parking internal to the blocks - out of view
- Net-zero building
- Community gardens and roof gardens
- EV charging stations
- Solar powered buildings and streetlights
- Retirement living
- Interactive exhibit on sustainable community design



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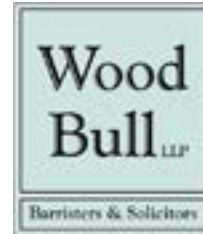
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