



IDEAS AT THE CROSSROADS OF INSPIRED COMMUNITIES



THIS ISSUE:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Planners have a role in guiding decisions towards building sustainable communities with stronger economies. **06**

This is a time for creative new solutions and partnerships. **05**

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

Healthy, sustainable communities don't just happen – they are planned that way. From population growth and increasing density to access to public transit and services like hospitals, schools, and libraries. From demographics and housing affordability to environmental sustainability and urban resiliency. Green spaces and rural development to the impact of technology. These are just a few of the many issues planners think about in their day-to-day work informing the thousands of decisions that go into every aspect our lives.

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A planner is a trained professional who acts in the public interest to improve the health and sustainability of communities by anticipating the consequences of current trends and activities 5, 10, 20, and 50 years into the future.

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INSPIRE



INDEPENDENT BUSINESS

“Canada’s main streets are iconic symbols of urban life and belonging and indicators of the health of our cities and towns. Main streets are where we go to work and shop, meet friends and participate in civic life.”¹

FACTS AND FIGURES FROM THE TORONTO RETAIL MAIN STREETS STUDY²

Independent businesses contribute to community and are passionate about their businesses.

- 76% of the independent businesses surveyed are motivated by a desire to contribute to community.
- 60% said they want to enrich others’ lives.
- 75% are motivated by “doing what I love.”

Main street businesses focus on serving the local neighbourhood.

- On average, 30% of main street customers live within a 10-minute walk (800 metres).

- 85% of Toronto residents think it’s important to be able to walk or bike to shopping districts.
- Toronto residents prefer to shop in local independent businesses for many types of goods and services.
- While chain stores and big box outlets are preferred locations when purchasing electronics and telecom, sporting goods, and financial services, over 90% of residents prefer independent businesses for specialty food, personal services, restaurants, and bars.
- 45% of residents are doing more shopping in local independent businesses than two years ago. 69% are doing less shopping at malls.

Independent businesses are major players in Toronto’s retail and consumer service sector

- Independent businesses account for 74% of Toronto’s non-automotive retail establishments and 32% of employment.

¹Canadian Urban Institute’s Action Report. <https://bringbackmainstreet.ca/action-report>, P. 7.

²From the Toronto Retail Main Streets Study. <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/public-consultations/retail-main-streets-study/>.

All information and comments provided by Judy Morgan, RPP. Read more in her article “Nurturing independent business success on main streets” on page 13.

We are living in a complex environment with competing needs. COVID-19 has affected our mental health and well-being, our sense of community and togetherness. Job loss and the need for economic recovery have created a strong desire for short-term solutions.

At the same time, there is increased urgency around climate change mitigation and adaptation and for setting new behaviours to support future generations. Our local retailers and restaurants have been disproportionately affected, especially those required to close down while big box outlets remained open selling competing products. At the forefront is the need to address inequalities exacerbated during the pandemic.

Economic development strategies need to identify new ways to support central business districts. As planners, we have some existing tools at our disposal. For example, Community Improvement Plans can be used to allow municipalities to provide grants or loans to support businesses. It is a good time to revisit outdated, overly prescriptive zoning by-laws and look for opportunities to improve flexibility to support business retention and reinvestment (e.g. pre-zoning lands to permit a range of future uses versus restricting permissions to existing uses). These tools may help us better address community objectives, including the need for long-term care facilities or intensification around transit investment.

A community planning permit system is another tool available to municipalities to manage land use that can be used to support economic development. It combines zoning by-law amendments, site plan approvals, and minor variances (as well as tree removal and site alteration permits) into a single development approval process. Not only does this reduce process requirements and approval timelines from 90+ days to 45 days, but it gives municipalities the ability to clearly define development requirements (including community benefits, urban design, and climate change) and can improve clarity in implementation.

It is also a good time to revisit municipal delegation by-laws to optimize the delegation of *Planning Act* approvals to staff, which can result in significant timeline reductions and fewer resource needs. OPPI's December 17, 2020 letter to Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the Province of Ontario, outlines the benefits of staff delegation and opportunities for enhanced delegations.¹

This is a time for creative new solutions and partnerships. The pandemic has reinforced the need for sustainable 15-minute neighbourhoods, solutions that improve outcomes for equity-seeking groups, active

transportation infrastructure, pedestrian-focused design, flexibility in building uses, affordable housing, and public open spaces, parks, and patios.

In the following pages, you'll read about some of the creative solutions planners are working on. Belleville's affordable rental housing CIP (page 7), how equity can be addressed through CIPs (page 12), ways to help independent business succeed (page 13), and a look at parking strategies (page 34), to name just a few of many articles in this packed issue of *Y Magazine*.

The work RPPs do is more important than ever as we seek solutions that balance the short-term need for economic recovery with long-term sustainability. We have a unique understanding of the planning system and ways to improve it. We need to be solutions-oriented and lead the change.

As vaccines roll out and the weather improves, there is reason to be optimistic about the future. We need to make sure recovery efforts are focussed on the areas most impacted and those most in need. Although we like to say we are all in this together, those most vulnerable before the pandemic have been the hardest hit. Equity is not about treating everyone the same; it's about distributing resources based on need.

¹ Policy Corner (December 17, 2020). Enhancing delegations to achieve a more efficient municipal planning approval process. www.ontarioplanners.ca/Policy/Submissions



Justine Giancola, RPP
President
Ontario Professional Planners Institute



Economic development and sustainability

BY LIDY ROMANUK

Planning and economic development are intrinsically connected. Too often, I hear that the two do not appreciate or fully understand the importance of how interconnected our two disciplines are. A misconception exists that these two roles sit opposite one another when truly we are part of the same team striving to achieve the same results. It is when we take the time to fully appreciate one another's roles and perspective that we can make an impact to the communities we serve.

So how does this relate to economic development and sustainability? Both economic development and planning professionals are focussed on building strong communities, ensuring access to stable employment and food security, and creating safe community spaces for recreation and social interaction. However, we do come to the table from often different perspectives.

The planning profession requires one to apply applicable policy to a proposed development or opportunity. Alternatively, the economic development professional often has an appreciation and general understanding of the development and planning process and works at ground level directly with the business or new entrepreneur trying to find a way forward to support the new idea to realization.

The municipality I am employed with is currently in the process of completing a review and update of our Official Plan. Planning staff in consultation with economic development staff are engaging our community to consider what growth and development will look like for the next 30 years and how we should plan for this. At the best of times, this is a difficult exercise to complete.

Looking back one year ago, who would have predicted we would be enduring the third wave of a pandemic and facing continued employment loss, closures of business both temporary and permanent, and a seismic shift in

how we work, shop, and interact with one another in our everyday lives. Within the span of a year, our lives have been turned upside down and our day to day has had an abrupt shift. Many of us are performing our jobs remotely where before it was unthinkable, classes at all levels of education are taking place online, and online shopping has increased exponentially. There has never been a greater need for access to reliable high-speed internet, and we continue to see businesses look for creative and different ways to offer their services. To accomplish our goals, we must look beyond past experience and envision the world as it will be – and as it could be – if we channel efforts and ideas in constructive, innovative, and productive directions.

Today's planners and economic development professionals face a radically transforming economy. The changes that have been made in necessity due to the pandemic re-emphasize the importance of approaching policy development with flexibility and adaptability to ensure the future sustainability of our communities. The changing nature of local economies is coupled with the impact of technological advancement and the increasing importance of innovation, development, and entrepreneurship as a platform for growth. It is more important now than ever for the economic development and planning disciplines to work together, to listen to one another and our community stakeholders to ensure that our approach to policy development prioritizes local needs, is transformational in our thinking, and ensures the survival of our communities, businesses, and institutions.

Lidy Romanuk is the Manager of Economic Development and Tourism for Haldimand County and the 2021 President of the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO). Learn more at www.edco.on.ca.



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Fast-tracking to sustainable rental housing: Belleville's new affordable rental housing CIP

BY STEPHEN ASHTON, RPP, RORY BAKSH, RPP,
MONICA BELLIVEAU, RPP, AND DESTA MCADAM, RPP

01 Targeting purpose-builders: With incentives targeted to specialized affordable housing developers, they are able to move more quickly from their initial development to their next housing development.

At the March 2019 Belleville Housing Summit, held by the City of Belleville in partnership with the Quinte Home Builders Association and All Together Housing Corporation, affordable rental housing came into the spotlight.

With a goal from the summit of 1,000 approved rental units by 2025, City of Belleville staff were directed by Council to create a solution that would fast-track the creation of affordable rental housing. City staff responded to this challenge by launching a new and strategically focussed Affordable Rental Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP) that allows the City to offer financial incentives to stimulate the creation of affordable rental housing units.

SHIFTING THE FOCUS FROM UNITS

The breakthrough for this work was the shift away from analyzing units; rather, the planning team of City of Belleville staff and Dillon Consulting directed their attention to who builds affordable rental housing units and why. By defining these “builders” and their needs, a tailored suite of financial incentives was designed.

This proved highly effective at understanding different behaviours and needs, and how to target and “right-size” each financial incentive, for example:

- The builder of a market-based rental apartment has cash flow and investment objectives that conflict with a requirement for the entire development to be affordable, so certain incentives can be pro-rated for a building if it includes a mix of market-based and affordable rental units;
- A niche affordable housing developer already knows what is feasible and how to access funding through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the development, so the incentives are designed to enhance the feasibility of an affordable housing project;
- A new home builder is not interested in building a second unit in a new construction home but will construct a second unit if requested by the prospective purchaser, so the financial incentive actually targets the new home purchaser rather than the home builder;
- An existing homeowner adding a second unit needs to be guided toward the building permitting process to ensure legal units are being added to the housing stock, so incentives facilitating this process are paired together;
- Requiring an existing homeowner to register an agreement on title with affordability stipulations would be too onerous and cause the program to fail, so there will be guidelines on the maximum gross floor area for different types of second units (e.g., one bedroom, two bedroom, etc.) eligible for the incentives; and,
- A restriction in the CIP is designed to curtail the potential of new second units becoming short-term accommodation and clearly identifies the City's recourse against the property owner if that occurs.

Additional focussed consultation with landlords, housing agencies, community groups, and Belleville's Planning Advisory Committee also helped shape the plan and how it would be operationalized (for example, understanding the calculation of average market rent, the definition of 'affordable' in Belleville's context, affordable housing building typologies, having a coordinator that assists with making applications, etc.).

A SUITE OF NOVEL INCENTIVES

Most notable in Belleville's Affordable Rental Housing CIP are the novel incentives. These include: the Second Units in New Construction incentive; the paired incentives for second units in existing housing (architectural plans, construction costs); and a

critically important Accessibility Top-Up Rebate for new affordable rental housing units that incorporate accessible design features. Other familiar financial incentive structures – such as a 100 per cent municipal-portion tax increment equivalent rebate which is targeted to larger affordable rental housing projects – offer a very generous incentive for a municipality of Belleville's size, demonstrating a deep commitment to solving the affordable rental housing problem.

“...when rent is not competing for a family's food budget or other discretionary spending, then they can be more active participants in the local economy.”

The CIP's ultimate outcome will be more affordable housing that supports quality of life improvement and economic sustainability. Affordable housing has been an ongoing and pernicious problem, with a growing group of citizens continually priced out of the market. Those facing affordability challenges either live in substandard accommodation, overspend on rent, or both. The rapid creation of affordable housing in Belleville through financial incentives will finally turn the tide – new housing of good quality becomes available for those in need, and when rent is not competing for a family's food budget or other discretionary spending, then they can be more active participants in the local economy.

The Belleville CIP was adopted unanimously and came into effect in January 2021. While the affordable housing aspects and financial incentives are brand new, the CIP also integrates the pre-existing brownfield and downtown façade programs into a singular plan with many stackable incentives. The CIP can be accessed at: <https://www.belleville.ca/en/city-hall/community-improvement-plans.aspx>

REBALANCING HOUSING EQUITY

Overall, the new and innovative financial incentives rebalance the housing equity equation in Belleville and will unlock the potential for fast-tracked, new affordable rental housing units. Housing for many in Belleville is not sustainable and expediting the creation of new units helps Belleville increase its supply of sustainable housing. This is a remarkable achievement for a medium-sized city that is taking a leadership position on one of the most critically important planning issues of today – sustainable affordable rental housing. ♻️



Stephen Ashton, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the City of Belleville's Director of Engineering and Development Services and launched the work for the new CIP. **Rory Baksh, RPP**, is a Member of OPPI and a Partner at Dillon Consulting in Ottawa and was the consulting team's project director for the new CIP. **Monica Belliveau, RPP**, is a Member of OPPI and an Associate at Dillon Consulting Limited in Ottawa and was the consulting team's project manager for the new CIP. **Desta McAdam, RPP**, is a Member of OPPI and the City of Belleville's Manager of Policy Planning who is leading the CIP's implementation.

Fluxing: Ontario on-farm diversification during COVID-19

BY PAM DUESLING, RPP

The word flux can be defined as “a state of continuous change.” Extending to an action, “fluxing” is exactly what many on-farm diversified entrepreneurs in Ontario have continued to do during the COVID-19 pandemic.





“A growing number of family farms have expanded beyond the traditional growing of crops and raising livestock...”

© Flux Brewing Company

A growing number of family farms have expanded beyond the traditional growing of crops and raising livestock to include new undertakings that are agriculturally and non-agriculturally related.^{1,2} On-farm diversification is the development of non-traditional farm enterprises, and it covers a multitude of activities which can be adequately defined as “doing different.”³ In Ontario, on-farm diversification needs to be secondary to the farming use on the property, which maintains the principal function of the family farm, and references a physical space limitation in terms of farm area that can be utilized.⁴

Here are three local on-farm diversified enterprises that know exactly what it means to flux during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The brewery was sold out every weekend in the summer and fall of 2020.”

FLUX BREWING COMPANY

Jeremy Hansen owns a 12-acre hobby farm in Scotland, Ontario, where, together with his business partner Brandon Cronmiller, he has recently opened Flux Brewing Company. Hansen retrofitted a former horse barn into a beautiful brewery and taproom that opened in August 2020.

“Opening during the pandemic was challenging as our business was constantly pivoting and making daily changes to meet the health and safety requirements of the Province,” says Hansen. “We just had to do things differently.”

The brewery was sold out every weekend in the summer and fall of 2020. The local County of Brant community has been incredibly supportive. Approximately 85 per cent of sales at the brewery

business is local, as neighbouring rural residents look for somewhere to visit during the pandemic, and they feel safe and comfortable in a country setting. Socially distanced tables are booked for 90 minutes at a time and masks are required. A tent was set up in the fall to accommodate more guests.

“The hardest thing is turning away business during the pandemic like small weddings, birthday parties, and company Christmas gatherings due to the limitation on social gatherings,” says Hansen.

Flux Brewing Company looks forward to the coming years, when they can offer more services to their patient patrons.

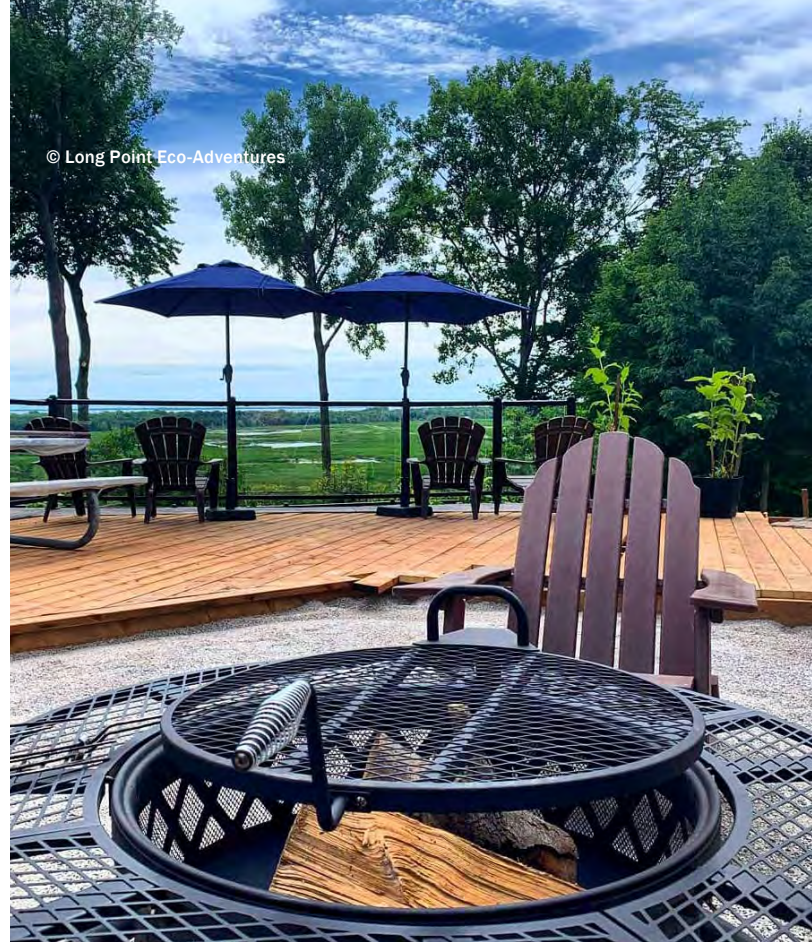
BURNING KILN WINERY

More established on-farm diversification enterprises have also had to flux their businesses because of COVID-19. The Burning Kiln Winery in neighbouring Norfolk County opened in 2011 – a former tobacco farm repurposed as an appassimento-style winery. The winery is regularly known for hosting weddings and concerts and caters to a large number of out-of-country guests who visit the tourist area of Lake Erie every year.

In 2020, Burning Kiln Winery had to cancel 22 weddings due to the social-gathering restrictions of COVID-19 and could only hold two concerts in the vineyard – Jim Cuddy and Chantal Kreviazuk – with a maximum of 100 people attending. However, Burning Kiln Winery’s online orders rapidly expanded, and retail sales were on par for 2020. In fact, the month of September saw a 38 per cent increase in sales from 2019.

“Every time the Toronto area shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw an influx of on-site reservations,” says Karen Mathews, General Manager of Burning Kiln Winery.

The winery staff created new socially responsible tourist



© Long Point Eco-Adventures

promotions, such as a fall harvest hike where wine stations with pairings were offered. Online Christmas baskets were also offered, connecting the winery to other local businesses in the area that were also feeling the financial effects of COVID-19. While the people at Burning Kiln Winery are not sure what changes will come next with COVID-19, they are ready for the challenge and are determined to prosper.

“Tourists felt safe being outdoors paddling a kayak or riding a mountain bike...”

LONG POINT ECO-ADVENTURES

Directly across the road from Burning Kiln Winery is Long Point Eco-Adventures, another more established on-farm diversification that has fluxed because of COVID-19.

Long Point Eco-Adventures normally offers activities such as zip lining, kayaking, mountain biking, star gazing, and glamping. The Hometown Brew Company is also located on site, as is the Marsh View Restaurant. Long Point Eco-Adventures was not able to open their zip lines or star gazing studio this past summer due to COVID-19. Despite that, they did report being at full lodging capacity from August to October, because their glamping pods are not connected to each other in the way rooms are in the hotel. The operation focussed efforts on advertising – “Come Isolate With Us” – and doubled the size of their patio for the restaurant and brewery.

“Tourists felt safe being outdoors paddling a kayak or riding a mountain bike and our Canadian visitors filled up our accommodations,” says Tommy Devos, co-owner of Hometown Brew Company and General Manager at Long Point Eco-Adventures. “We

focussed our efforts on new opportunities, like kid’s educational programs and family vacations, and staff made our repeat customers feel comfortable.”

Ontario on-farm diversification entrepreneurs are no strangers to pivoting and taking small steps to increase their value of core production.⁵ However, the COVID-19 pandemic has added a whole new level of continuous change. Fluxing has become an inevitable venture for on-farm diversification during the COVID-19 pandemic. (V)

¹Bagi Singh, F & Reeder J., R. (2012 August). Factors affecting farmer participation in agri-tourism. *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*, Vol. 41(2), 189-199.

²Beshiri, R. (2005). A visit to Canada’s countryside: rural tourism. *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, Vol 6(5), 1-22.

³Ilbery, I. (1991). Farm diversification in the West Midlands. *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol 7, 207-218.

⁴Ministry of Municipal Affairs Housing. (2014). *Ontario Provincial Policy Statement*.

⁵Van Camp, M. (2014). *County Guide. The Challenge of Diversification*. <http://www.country-guide.ca/guide-business/management/the-challenge-of-the-farm-diversification/>.



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Addressing equity through community improvement plans

BY REBECCA CONDON, RPP, AND DAVID FITZPATRICK, RPP

Community improvement plans (CIPs) are one of the most effective tools available to Ontario municipalities for directly supporting local economic development and community revitalization. Enabled by Section 28 of the *Planning Act*, a municipality can designate a CIP area for any “environmental, social or community economic development reason.”

In practice, this definition has been broadly interpreted and used to develop programs that target a broad range of local priorities and leverage investments. To enact a CIP, a municipal council must adopt enabling official plan policies that specify the rationale and intent of CIPs and a by-law that establishes the boundaries for a community improvement project area. Once this framework is in place, a CIP can be prepared and adopted.

“As municipalities respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity to expand the use of CIPs to more explicitly address equity issues.”

A CIP can provide grants or loans to property owners to cover eligible rehabilitation, remediation, and development costs. Grants can be provided as direct payments or in the form of rebating charges and fees.

Initially, CIPs implemented in Ontario generally focussed on economic development, physical improvements, and environmental considerations. More recently, multiple municipalities have

adopted programs that focus on delivering affordable housing.

As municipalities respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity to expand the use of CIPs to more explicitly address equity issues. The economic fallout of the pandemic has not been equally distributed in Ontario, with certain groups and employment sectors suffering disproportionately higher impacts.

THE IMIT PROGRAM PILOT


A pilot project that was initiated in Toronto in 2019 as part of the Imagination, Manufacturing, Innovation and Technology (IMIT) Property Tax Incentive Program could help provide a model for other municipalities that aim to prioritize equity issues through CIPs. This pilot created a new points-based system in which grant recipients and property users develop local employment plans in partnership with city-endorsed employment service providers. The points-based system provides a guideline for expected levels of activity from companies based on the construction value of the eligible development.

Examples of activities that are eligible include:

- Employing equity-seeking groups during initial construction;
- Implementing a social procurement policy to acquire goods and services from diverse suppliers;
- Instituting an equitable hiring and living wage policy; and
- Collaborating with local employment and training programs.

The IMIT program provides annual grants over a 10- to 12-year period during which the recipient is required to demonstrate ongoing compliance, including local employment plans. This long-term relationship between the municipality and recipient increases the likelihood of sustained positive local benefits.

“This planning tool has grown in popularity in recent years as many municipalities have recognized the potential for achieving specific community objectives.”

In considering the future of CIPs, we believe there is an opportunity for municipalities to more explicitly address equity issues. This planning tool has grown in popularity in recent years as many municipalities have recognized the potential for achieving specific community objectives. For municipalities seeking to address local equity through targeted actions, CIPs may provide an effective approach to achieve this. 

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Nurturing independent business success on main streets

BY JUDY MORGAN, RPP



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The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified awareness about the value that main streets contribute to our communities. The media and our personal conversations have focussed on boarded-up storefronts and the loss of our favourite eating places and stores. The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) launched a major “Bring Back Main Streets” initiative early on in the pandemic and published a report in October 2020.¹ Why do we care so much? To quote from the CUI Action Report, “Canada’s main streets are iconic symbols of urban life and belonging and indicators of the health of our cities and towns. Main streets are where we go to work and shop, meet friends and participate in civic life.”²

A team led by 360 Collective had just completed a major study of retail main streets for the City of Toronto when the pandemic hit. The study was then updated to consider the early impact of the pandemic (as of June 2020) on the findings and recommendations.³ The research affirmed and provided empirical data about the value Toronto residents place in their local main streets and the important role that independent retail⁴ businesses play in the economy and in the community.

INTERDEPENDENCY BETWEEN MAIN STREETS AND INDEPENDENT BUSINESS

Independent businesses accounted for 75-80 per cent of businesses in most of the study’s case studies.⁵ This relationship is explored in more detail in the book *Small Business and the City*.⁶ The conclusions include that: “Affordable, easily accessible, well-designed and appropriately sized spaces that provide for anybody and almost any use are the lifeblood of dynamic and interesting cities and the places where independent business thrives.”⁷

The study explored the challenges facing small independent businesses and their requirements for success. While a range of issues surfaced, there were three major drivers:

1. Independent businesses don’t have extensive administrative or professional staff resources. Business owners are focussed on

the front line and don’t have the time or expertise to navigate regulations and processes, lease agreements, applications, etc.

2. Independent businesses have less access to conventional financing. This makes them especially vulnerable to sharp revenue decreases and cost increases.
3. The digital transformation of the global marketplace. While countless digital innovations have been created by independent entrepreneurs, many small business owners find it intimidating and expensive to embrace the digital world.

Businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), women, and newcomers experience issues associated with the first two drivers to an above average extent.⁸

COVID-19 has greatly exacerbated the impact of the first two drivers and accelerated the adoption of online shopping.⁹ However, physical stores play an important role and are expected to continue to do so in the future.¹⁰ They will thrive by offering convenience, social connections, and value-added experiences.

BUILDING BACK STRONGER

As we look towards recovery, we have the opportunity to nurture stronger, more sustainable main streets that will contribute to our communities’ economies and quality of life. We can do so by remembering that strong main streets need strong independent businesses and focussing on three fundamental strategies:

1. Enabling small businesses to succeed by addressing the drawbacks of being small;
2. Amping up the experience factor; and
3. Supporting adaptation to e-commerce.

The following table summarizes some tools that can be used. More detail is available in the references provided in the end notes.

Strategy	Independent Businesses	Main Streets
Enable small to succeed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify regulations and processes. • Help individuals navigate processes end to end. • Communicate broadly and deeply. • Facilitate access to experts. • Facilitate access to financing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate business incubation on main streets. • Facilitate property leasing to independents.
Amp up the experience factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile small business owners and their stories. • Launch/support “Shop Local” programs. • Permit broad mix of uses in zoning bylaws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage retailer-friendly design of ground floors. • Avoid vacancy by planning for balance between retail space and population. • Animate streetscapes and support walkability. • Replace parking in front of stores. • Use surplus parking for patios, pop-up vending, seating, etc. (temporary or permanent). • Support festivals, community events, cultural experiences, etc. on main streets. • Animate vacant storefronts.
Support adaptation to e-commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide one-on-one support to small businesses for implementing digital plans (e.g. Digital Main Street). • Facilitate access to online “shopping centres” (e.g. Shopify, district online marketplaces). • Reduce costs of digital marketplace (e.g. order processing, delivery, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term parking and loading zones for pick-up and delivery.

Some studies are indicating that businesses owned by BIPOC, newcomer, and other equity seeking groups lag in taking advantage of support programs.¹¹ Targeted attention is needed to break down barriers. Best practices include building relationships with key members of the community when designing and delivering programs to ensure culturally specific needs and barriers are addressed and knowledge and connections leveraged.

Strong main streets build strong communities and need strong independent businesses. Building back stronger needs teamwork among planners, economic developers, and representative community businesses and attention to retail business and placemaking fundamentals. (Y)

¹<https://bringbackmainstreet.ca/>.

²<https://bringbackmainstreet.ca/action-report>, P. 7.

³ <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/public-consultations/retail-main-streets-study/>. Our study included both traditional inner-city main streets and the post-war commercial strips in the suburbs. Core characteristics included linear form, visibility from the street, and decentralized property management (versus corporate property management, tenant curation, marketing, etc.).

⁴ Retail was broadly defined to include non-automotive retail stores plus service businesses, entertainment, and leisure establishments that typically serve households and often locate in shopping districts. Independent businesses were defined as businesses with one to three outlets in the same industry class under the same legal ownership in Canada. In this paper, independent and small business are used as synonyms.

⁵ The only outlier was one of the four suburban commercial strips included where independent businesses accounted for about 60 per cent of total establishments. This area included several strip plazas.

⁶ Rafael Gomez, Andre Isakov & Matt Semansky. *Small Business and the City*. University of Toronto Press, 2015.

⁷ Ibid, p. 242.

⁸ Examples of studies documenting this include “Immigrant Entrepreneurship: Barriers and Facilitators to Growth, 2017, https://www.ryerson.ca/diversity/reports/immigrant_entrepreneurship/; “Black-led Businesses in Toronto” 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/8ff2-EDC-Black-led-Businesses-Toronto.pdf>; “The State of Women’s Entrepreneurship in Canada,” 2020, <https://wek.ca/research/the-state-of-womens-entrepreneurship-in-canada/>.

⁹ See Statistics Canada data at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=2010006501> and analysis at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2016101-eng.htm>. Store lock-downs accelerated the rate of e-commerce adoption from 4.1% of total retail sales in 2019 to 6.2% in 2020. The volume of e-commerce sales increased 70.5% year over year.

¹⁰ See, for example, “Brick-and-Mortar will Continue to be Critical for Retail in Canada Post-Pandemic” by Sean Tarry, <https://www.retail-insider.com/retail-insider/2021/02/brick-and-mortar-will-continue-to-be-critical-for-retail-in-canada-post-pandemic-claude-sirois/>.

¹¹ See, for example, “Building Black Business in Canada,” February 2021, https://www.blackchamber.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Building-Black-Businesses-in-Canada-_Feb-27-2021.pdf.



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Assessing rural municipal climate change planning in Ontario

BY DAVE GUYADEEN, RPP

Rural communities experience unique vulnerabilities to climate change. The effects of climate change, particularly in the form of extreme temperatures, severe droughts and flooding, and delayed seasonal changes, threaten the viability of rural communities. Municipalities can respond to the threat of climate change through a continuum of approaches, from developing standalone climate change plans, to mainstreaming climate change objectives in official planning documents.

This article presents a high-level analysis of climate change plans (and other plans where climate change is a central organizing theme) from 108 rural municipalities in Ontario. I also highlight the extent to which climate change objectives are mainstreamed in rural municipal official plans. This article is a shortened version of a more detailed study on rural municipal climate change planning.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Climate change plans were content analyzed using a plan quality evaluation framework consisting of 61 indicators based on eight plan quality characteristics. These included:

1. **fact base** – the empirical foundation of a plan;
2. **goals** – ambition statements about desired future conditions;
3. **policies** – action-oriented mechanisms to guide decision making;
4. **implementation** – a commitment to follow through on a plan;
5. **monitoring and evaluation** – a systematic framework for assessing plan progress and outcomes;
6. **coordination** – connections to other plans and strategies;
7. **participation** – a focus on how the public and other stakeholders were engaged in plan making; and
8. **plan organization and presentation** – communicative aspects of a plan.

RURAL MUNICIPAL CLIMATE CHANGE PLANNING IN ONTARIO IS IN ITS INFANCY

Table 1 summarizes the results from the plan quality evaluation. The mean score ranged from 0 to 1 with a score closer to 1 indicating a stronger plan quality characteristic (i.e., a climate change plan). A higher standard deviation indicated greater variation among climate change plans.

Plan Quality Characteristics	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Communication	0.76	0.29
Organization and Presentation	0.45	0.32
Implementation	0.41	0.31
Monitoring and Evaluation	0.32	0.27
Goals	0.31	0.20
Participation	0.30	0.41
Fact Base	0.25	0.21
Policies	0.21	0.20

Table 1: Results from Plan Quality Evaluation

The analysis suggests rural municipal climate change planning in Ontario is in its infancy and largely underdeveloped...

Keep reading and learn more about the results of Dave Guyadeen's study on rural municipal climate change planning on OPPI's Planning Exchange blog. <https://ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange>



Dave Guyadeen, PhD, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and an Assistant Professor in the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the University of Guelph. He conducts research-related evaluation in planning including assessing the quality of plans such as official plans and climate change plans.

Line of sight: Asset management planning

BY AIYSHA SYED-ALI

Asset management planning is by no means a new practice. In late 2017, the Province of Ontario introduced O Reg 588/17 under the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act (2015).¹ The Province has made it mandatory for all municipalities to prepare and publicly report on the holistic state of all the infrastructure owned by that municipality. The requirements under the regulation are very prescriptive in its expectations of what a municipality should consider as it develops its asset management plan.

“To plan for proposed levels of service over the next 10 years requires that a synergy be created between growth and strategic planning and operational planning.”

One of the requirements is that municipalities start to consider their capacity to support future growth and increased demand for services by projecting their proposed levels of service and their capability to meet these demands over the next 10 years.² To plan for proposed levels of service over 10 years requires a synergy between growth and strategic planning and operational planning.

BRIDGING STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Currently, there is a huge disconnect in many municipal organizations between future growth and development planning and understanding whether or not an organization even has the capacity to support those visions from an operational standpoint.

Planners are thinking about the bigger, often more strategic picture, and engineers and accountants are focussed on the current operational needs.

Asset management planning is a defined and methodical practice to bridge these two areas of strategic and operational planning together to support one another. This alignment is intended to distill the strategic objectives of an organization through each stage of planning within that organization. In asset management, we call this alignment “line of sight.”³ This concept is becoming increasingly important because, historically, asset management planning has been an exercise to report on the physical and financial health of an organization’s asset portfolio, as well as to determine which infrastructure projects need to be prioritized, often on a “worst first” basis. However, as cities are maturing and growing into their own identities, it is important to balance these current needs while supporting future visions.

Asset management plans need to take into consideration the aspirations of strategic plans, and strategic plans need to take into consideration the operational limitations laid out in asset management plans. These planning considerations on both sides share a symbiotic relationship yet are overlooked by one another during their respective planning processes. This is where the role of asset management best practices becomes essential.

BEST PRACTICES FOR FUTURE VISIONS

Asset management best practices enable the development of an organizational framework that prioritizes current needs in a pragmatic way while aligning operational planning to embody future direction and strategic objectives. Practitioners are

“... prioritizes current needs in a pragmatic way while aligning operational planning to embody future direction and strategic objectives.”

encouraged to consider future operational constraints by asking questions such as how will these assets be sustained over their lifecycle? How much will it cost to replace them in the future? And how will that cost be funded?

With the new regulation requirements, municipalities will need to ensure they are taking future operational planning considerations into account for the next 10 years and not just leaving them to be sorted out when problems arise down the road. Therefore, it is important to include asset management planning strategies during the strategic planning process, so we aim to achieve our future visions in a sustainable way that considers the needs of future generations. ☺

¹ Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act (2015) S.O 2015, c.15.

² Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure, O Reg 588/17, s.6.

³ Asset Management – an Anatomy (2015) The Institute of Asset Management p.12 https://theiam.org/media/1781/iam_anatomy_ver3_web.pdf



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Sustainability for foresight

BY LISA PRIME, RPP, AND NADIA DOWHANIUK

We have long been planning communities with a sustainability lens. As we build in the expectations of climate change, resiliency, and equity, we start to see a future that takes sustainability to a more circular and systems-based approach.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out a transformative plan for people and the planet to promote shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and inclusive sustainable development. This lens is increasingly applied to municipal actions and updating of official plan policy as a framework for organizing and pursuing sustainability initiatives.

Municipalities in Ontario are faced with numerous competing challenges in large categories – including infrastructure investment, economic development and meeting service needs, such as solid waste management for growing communities – all while operating on constrained budgets. In this article, we explore how municipalities can leverage policy to support the integrated needs of communities and, ultimately, a transition to a circular economy, supporting SDG objectives.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY APPROACH

An approach to policy with greater integration and circular thinking can provide implementation mechanisms for advancing several SDGs, including benefits to protecting the environment, meeting service and infrastructure needs, as well as supporting a low-carbon future.

The competing challenges that municipal governments see, experience, and manage are often the negative consequences of the current “take-make-waste” linear economy. We can advance the future of sustainability and climate action using a circular economy applied to both the built and the natural environment, as well as to advance economic development. Priorities for local food and low-carbon strategies are met with the increasing problem of landfill space in Ontario.

In recent years, some Ontario-based municipalities have taken bold steps to transition towards a circular economy. In 2020, PRIME Strategy and Planning (PRIME) worked with the City of Barrie to address several challenges, including the impact of limited landfill capacity in a fast-growing city. Spurred by the urgent need to divert waste away from Barrie’s landfill, we developed a circular economy framework to explore how the City might continue to divert waste while also supporting its sustainable development strategy.



PRIME's approach to the circular economy focusses on four thematic policy opportunities.

TRANSITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

We approach the circular economy through four main pillars: reuse, recycle, consume, and recover. These pillars reflect the core values of an urban circular economy, which are to keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from resources, and recover and regenerate materials from waste.

Implementation through objectives, goals, and priority areas of action that make sense for a local municipality can help to transition communities away from a linear economy towards a circular culture that also directly or indirectly benefits SDGs. Fiscal responsibility and economic opportunities can be derived from this approach as well.

PROCUREMENT

One policy option available to municipalities is through a public procurement policy. A municipality can use its purchasing power to create a market for circular economy opportunities by entrenching any number of requirements into procurement law or guidelines. This might include a list of preferred suppliers that consider end-of-life management or reuse and refurbishing goods where possible.

For example, in 1998, New York State passed a remanufacturing law mandating that purchase requests from state agencies consider remanufactured goods first when procuring durable equipment. The law places restrictions on the purchase of goods from places that restrict remanufacturing. This example demonstrates how sustainability can be taken a step further to integrate circular solutions into the public procurement process, stimulating a market for circular opportunities.

Procurement and tendering through performance-based approaches for materials that cities need can support low-carbon solutions. We can grow the use of materials with embodied carbon, for example, and advance economic growth in innovation to meet climate change objectives.

BUSINESS

Local businesses are in an excellent position to facilitate a circular economy transition, because they can provide input and perspective on barriers and opportunities to economic development from a community perspective. As communities navigate the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses and organizations that support the circular economy can be supported to realize their full potential in contributing to social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

Local businesses can grow the circular economy, increase social prosperity, and reduce environmental impacts by promoting sharing and repairing activities, increasing access to reused, repaired, and sustainably sourced goods, and growing people's capacity to advance the circular economy themselves.

There are many existing examples of local businesses that foster circular values. Repair Café Toronto is a grassroots organization that offers free repair events in libraries, community centres, art galleries, and other community spaces across the City of Toronto. The Repair Café challenges the 'take-make-waste' mindset and promotes a circular economy by providing free repair services and helping people to learn about how to repair their own items. Fostering businesses that see waste as a resource can help sustain the circular economy.

CHANGE WASTE BEHAVIOUR

Public procurement policies and local businesses that promote sharing and repairing can help to change the mindset of our throwaway society and encourage people to practice circular initiatives when possible. Part of our approach to transitioning towards a circular economy involves opportunities to make this behaviour change easier for people.


Public spaces have their own unique issues when it comes to managing waste. Waste items are often incorrectly placed in recycling bins, contaminating recycling materials, making it difficult for the municipality to properly recycle the item.

The Continuous Improvement Fund identifies several better practices related to public space recycling that a municipality can implement to make it easier for people to recycle. The research is based on more than 20 projects across Ontario municipalities that tested various aspects of public space recycling. The research highlights common reasons municipalities encounter the problem of improper recycling and four simple solutions to improve the rate and quality of recycling in public spaces including: clear signage, bin twinning, and choosing the appropriate type and location of bins.

PLANNING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

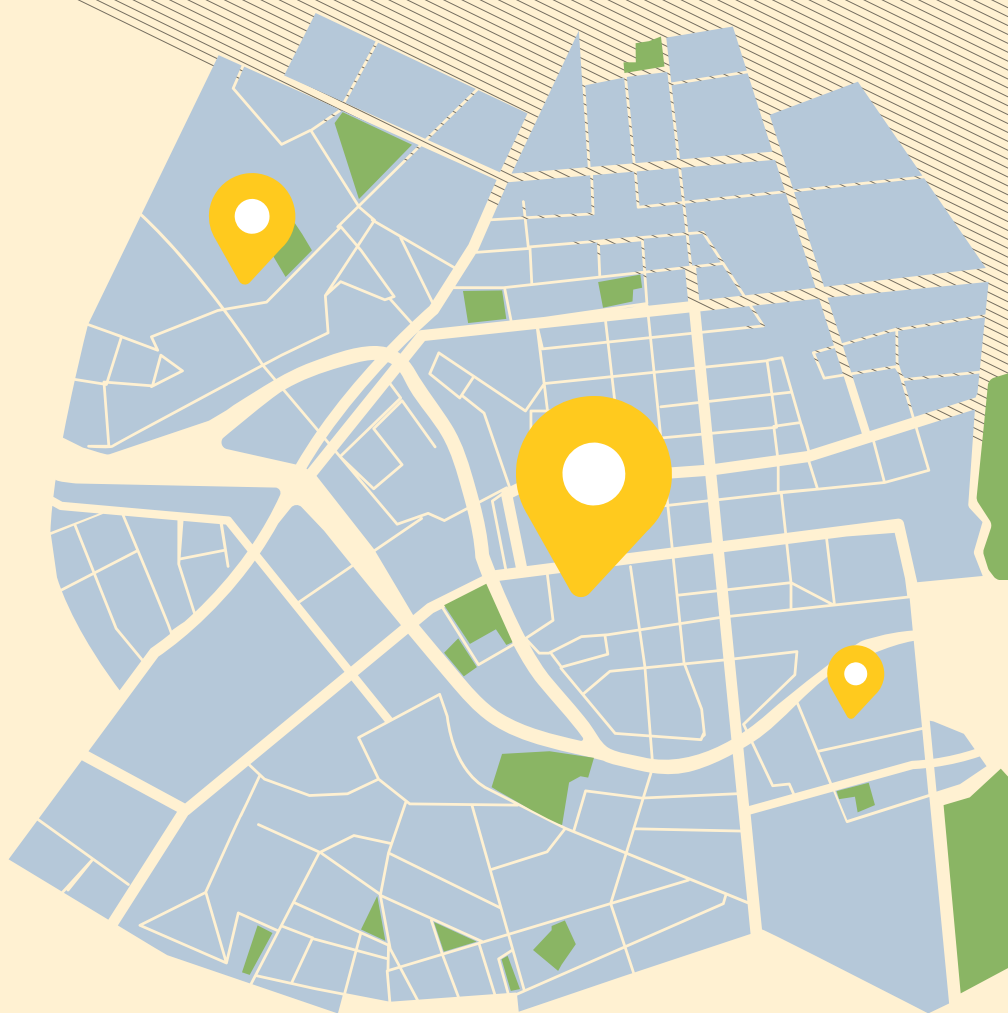
Sustainability continues to play an important role in the development of municipal plans and policies that seek to integrate environmental, economic, and social considerations. For municipalities to take serious action towards progressive and circular systems, policy levers that enable a transition away from the harmful linear economy towards circular practices can help to support the integrated needs of communities in the face of economic uncertainty, social inequities, and climate change.

Policy opportunities include direction for circular water and energy solutions and ensuring mixed use expectations support local community needs. Green Development Standards and Parks Design also present opportunities to set the expectations for circular benefits.

Actionable policy is essential to a climate-ready future. 



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Getting land use compatibility right

BY CHAD B. JOHN-BAPTISTE, RPP, ANDRIA SALLESE, RPP,
AND STEPHANIE CLARKE

During the 19th century, industrialization in larger European and North American cities resulted in rapid population growth. As the number of people drawn to urban areas in search of employment increased, so too did the threat of disease, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions.

As the effects of placing residential areas near industry became clearer, addressing these adverse effects slowly became a priority for city officials. Significant undertakings in urban renewal and civic works, such as Georges-Eugène Haussmann's tree-lined

boulevards in Paris, which hid the sewers built beneath them, were not only meant to beautify cities but also mitigate outbreaks of disease. The need for healthier living conditions and the separation of industrial and residential uses thus became the historic catalysts for modern-day planning.

“... changes to the employment areas policies in the PPS signal the Province’s interest in safeguarding the long-term economic viability of certain employment areas.”

UNDERSTANDING POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Today, land use compatibility not only focusses on the well-being of residents but the viability of businesses as well. While provincial policy has successfully prioritized directing residential intensification to urban areas to curb sprawl, this intensification, coupled with land scarcity in cities, has placed pressures on existing employment areas, which is evidenced by a growing number of conversion requests introducing sensitive uses near employment or in employment areas.

Where once provincial policy focussed solely on mitigation, changes to the employment area policies in the PPS signal the Province’s interest in safeguarding the long-term economic viability of certain employment areas. As an example, the new test in the PPS for planning authorities reviewing applications which propose sensitive uses adjacent to major facilities is three-fold (PPS, 2020, 1.2.6.1 and 1.2.6.2):

- Major facilities and sensitive land uses shall be planned to avoid each other.
- If avoidance is not possible, adverse effect will be minimized to reduce the risk to public health and safety and to ensure the long-term operation and economic viability of the facility.
- If avoidance is not possible it must be demonstrated that:
 - There is a need for the sensitive land use;
 - Alternative locations have been evaluated and no reasonable alternative exists;

- Adverse impacts to the sensitive land use are minimized; and
- Potential impacts to businesses are minimized and mitigated.

Understanding the likelihood of adverse impacts on existing industrial facilities can help ensure their operations are not affected by new sensitive land uses through operational changes or costly mitigation required to meet stricter limits for air and noise emissions.

Industrial facilities with operations that may discharge contaminants into the natural environment are required to apply for an environmental compliance approval (ECA) under the *Environmental Protection Act* (EPA) for provincially regulated land uses. These approvals require updating when an industrial process or equipment is added, removed, or modified to determine the potential air quality, noise, and vibration impacts of these operations on the surrounding environment. As such, it is important for planners to understand that the industrial use that exists today, may have different adverse effects tomorrow.

For lands which are primarily industrial in use, impacts to surrounding sensitive receptors are often negligible since minimum separation distances, as outlined in the D-Series Guidelines by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), are met. Once sensitive land uses encroach onto these existing industrial lands, the potential for adverse impacts increases, particularly when complaints are issued by the public or if industrial facilities require their ECA to be updated due to land use changes in the area. This could result in compliance issues for industrial facilities, as well as operational and financial burdens when the onus is put on these industries to achieve compliance. In addition to the financial burdens on the industry in question, the encroachment of sensitive land uses can reduce the economic competitiveness of the lands.

PROTECTING EMPLOYMENT AREAS

The burdens faced by industries are often overlooked or are not fully understood during the land use planning process. Some of the new policy tests in the PPS are currently undefined. For example: How is need determined? What is a reasonable alternative?

While residential developers may have deep pockets to lobby government officials or have resources in-house who understand the land use planning process, some businesses may not be as sophisticated, knowledgeable, or have the same resources to fully understand the impacts of any changes to the existing policy framework which could, with the introduction of sensitive uses, potentially put those businesses out of compliance and/or limit the growth potential for that business tomorrow.

“The burdens faced by industries are often overlooked or are not fully understood during the land use planning process.”

Land use planners need to get land use compatibility right. While some cities are struggling to meet employment targets, shifts in the employment sector mean that employment areas need to be dynamic and flexible enough to meet those changing needs. Municipalities, through their official plan policies, should provide assurances to potential new businesses that they are not at risk of potential operational and financial burdens. Simply stated, municipalities need to prioritize protecting their employment areas today and in the future. (Y)

Subsequent to the submission of this article, on May 4, 2021, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks released a proposed update to the Land Use Compatibility Guideline that is available on the Environmental Registry of Ontario for public consultation until July 3, 2021.



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The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre: Creating a new downtown

BY CHRISTINA BRUCE, RPP

The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) is an emerging downtown envisioned to be the cultural, innovation, and financial centre of Vaughan. Over a decade ago, the City of Vaughan was poised with the opportunity to transform a commercial and light-industrial landscape into a new downtown. In the decade since, this vision has been championed and advanced by Vaughan Council, staff, and stakeholders alike. It has been an exciting experience as the City traverses an opportunity of a lifetime with the vision for realizing a world-class downtown.

Located on a 179-hectare (442 acre) site, the emerging downtown was initially proposed to include 12,000 residential units, approximately 25,000 new residents, 11,500 jobs, 1.5 million square feet of office space, and 750,000 square feet of retail space by 2031. In setting these targets, the VMC has been characterized as the largest and most ambitious development project in the City's history – and it continues to transform.

This exhilarating community of the future seeks to provide local residents with a high-standard urban lifestyle through the coordinated development of multi-use workplace towers, luxurious residential buildings, urban parks and connected green spaces, animated squares, hotels, restaurants, street-level retail areas, unique cultural spaces, entertainment venues, and pedestrian links. Key to the City's success story in the making is the important ways by which planners are influencing and guiding decision makers to build this downtown with a stronger economy.

A NEW DOWNTOWN ON THE RISE

In 1991, the newly created City of Vaughan embraced the opportunity to define a new heart. The vision was a people-centred downtown core with a distinct character to unite the amalgamated communities in its transformation from a sprawling suburban community into a city with a true urban centre. A vision for change, great urban design aspirations, and collaborative partnerships have been at the forefront of this success.

“... the largest and most ambitious development project in the City's history...”

In 2006, the Province of Ontario enacted a plan to direct long-term growth and development and identified the VMC area as a strategic focal point for intensification with plans to be served by a subway – the historic first expansion outside of Toronto. This was followed by an approved capital plan for the construction of the Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transitway and Regional Bus Terminal in 2008 in alignment with the Regional Transportation Plan.

The area around the converging transit services was designated as an anchor mobility hub at the core of a new urban growth centre, where regional and local transportation systems would intersect and connect into the broader parks and open-space network.

Implementation of the VMC Mobility Hub and developments to date have been guided by the vision that public-realm spaces will be multi-functional and high performance, incorporating sustainable design innovation and green infrastructure. This includes the natural, social, and economic environments. Equal integration of each of these components establish the complete community and desired vision for the developments.

PLANNING FRAMEWORKS IN SUPPORT OF A STRONGER ECONOMY

As part of the Vaughan Official Plan review in 2010, the City identified transit-supportive residential and employment-density targets to achieve the critical mass of a downtown. The City also aligned municipal infrastructure investments to support the forthcoming rapid transit catalysts, including the construction of new roads and public spaces.

Following the development of the initial Secondary Plan that set the policy framework for the area, the City embarked on completing the foundational planning and engineering master plans and environmental assessments. This was followed by public-realm and open-space plans, urban-design guidelines, and public art and cultural plans to guide development in the downtown. These plans and studies provide a vision for transformation of the downtown into a vibrant, transit-oriented, and sustainable centre.

The plans build on each other to provide a framework for growth, implementation, and activation of the VMC to achieve the desired vision. Developing these plans early in the process created the strong foundation to support the success of this journey. Key to developing these initial documents were engagement with all key stakeholders and balancing the input for guiding documents that are well positioned for implementation.

RECALIBRATING AND REFOCUSING ON THE VISION

Critical to the success of the developing downtown is ensuring the City keeps pace with development by bringing forward the necessary social infrastructure. Strong partners and collaboration will help ensure that the supporting infrastructure (e.g. schools and parks) are built at the same time residents and business are arriving.

The City's project team is focussed on advancing critical hard and soft infrastructure improvements in step with development to support the transitioning downtown. Implementation of these key infrastructure projects will continue to leverage partnerships with stakeholders and ongoing support for early placemaking strategies for the downtown. Given the complexity of the infrastructure projects in the capital program, seamless design coordination and timing of constructed works has been critical to ensuring high-quality implementation.

Residential development currently represents more than 64,100 residents in 32,379 units moving into the

VMC, achieving 270 per cent of residential unit and 256 per cent of population targets identified for the 2031 planning horizon far earlier than expected. These numbers are based on units in all levels of council approval, including: 3,269 units that are occupied; 3,251 units under construction; 7,536 units approved by Council; and 18,323 units submitted as part of complete development applications or identified in proposed projects.


With rapid growth, increased interest in residential developments, an expanding workforce, and growing visitor and commuter numbers, the City has initiated an update to the existing VMC Secondary Plan. This plan defines all the elements needed for successful development within the VMC and the surrounding space, such as new roads, transportation routes, parks and more.

“A vision for change, great urban design aspirations, and collaborative partnerships have been at the forefront of this success.”

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Typically, a downtown is a city's most valuable land, most economically productive area, and most important social and cultural environment. Staff continue to support required construction that is well underway for a number of ambitious commercial and residential projects. When complete, these new developments will create a world-class skyline that stands tall and proud and embodies Vaughan's promising future.

By clarifying expectations and setting clear design objectives, Vaughan has created and will continue to create a placemaking framework that will result in a compelling public realm, while simultaneously changing the habits of a traditionally car-oriented culture. Streets, parks, open spaces, and mixed-use development will, to a great extent, define the character and identity of the VMC and are the common ground where people travel, meet, and do business daily.

The City staff and planners continue to ensure projects are carefully integrated into the planning framework to create a comfortable and memorable destination that is not only for travellers passing through but also an exciting hub for daily urban life and in which special events can take place. 



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MZOs – A caution for planners

BY BRIAN BRIDGEMAN, RPP

For many professional planners in Ontario, it has been astonishing to see how frequently the current provincial government has enacted Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs).*

Historically, the MZO tool seems to have been regarded as extraordinary planning power to be used in extraordinary circumstances, sparingly. Under this provincial government, MZOs are being enacted far more liberally. No less than 40 MZOs for a variety of purposes have been enacted by the current Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing since his provincial government came to power in June 2018. This frequency far exceeds the number of MZOs enacted by previous governments over the past decade.

“Registered Professional Planners serve the public interest and have an obligation to facilitate debate and discussion on planning matters.”

Under Section 47 of the *Planning Act*, MZOs may be enacted by the Minister with no public notice, no opportunity for public input, no consultation, no studies upon which to assess the impacts of the proposed development, no right of appeal, a complete circumventing of the prescribed *Planning Act* process. Except in the Greenbelt, zoning permissions can be established through an MZO for just about any purpose regardless of the underlying regional or local official plan designation. While we, as land use planners, may question the frequency and appropriateness of some or all of these 40 MZOs for their lack of due process and good planning, our handwringing has been for naught.

One thing this government is doing as a matter of practice, which is different than under previous governments, is to have the host municipality specifically request an MZO by way of a Council resolution before the MZO is enacted. The Minister is not obligated to obtain this municipal support, but he has been doing so thus far (at least with single and lower-tier municipalities; less so with upper-tier municipalities).

It is this step, however, that has the potential to cause professional planners to run afoul of our

Professional Code of Practice. The purpose of this article is to offer a caution to planners who may be inclined to recommend an MZO to enable a particular development proposal to proceed.

PROFESSIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE

Under Section 1 of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute's Professional Code of Practice, “Members have a primary responsibility to define and serve the interests of the public. This requires the use of theories and techniques of planning **that inform and structure debate, facilitate communication, and foster understanding.** Accordingly, a Member shall:

- 1.1 practice in a manner that respects the diversity, needs, values and aspirations of the public and **encourages discussion on these matters;**
- 1.2 **provide full, clear and accurate information on planning matters to decision makers and members of the public,** while recognizing both the client's right to confidentiality and the importance of timely recommendations;
- 1.3 **acknowledge the inter-related nature of planning decisions and their consequences for individuals, the natural and built environment, and the broader public interest; and**
- 1.4 **identify and promote opportunities for meaningful participation in the planning process to all interested parties.”**

Registered Professional Planners serve the public interest and have an obligation to facilitate debate and discussion on planning matters. MZOs do not provide that opportunity; hence, the need for caution among professional planners when dealing with them.

The essence of our land use planning system is a process that enables a thoughtful review of the issues by all stakeholders, a careful examination of potential impacts, and informed decision making that achieves good planning outcomes in the public interest. An open, transparent planning process is the cornerstone of land use planning in Ontario, and the approvals process should not be labelled as “red tape” getting in the way

*The views expressed in this article are Brian Bridgeman's as a professional planner and not the views of his employer, the Region of Durham.

of these otherwise worthy projects. We appreciate the broad need for projects that deliver affordable housing, long-term care facilities, and jobs. There is a public interest in all those types of matters.

Are there any types of MZO that planners can support? We could be less concerned about an MZO that implements a previous council planning decision. Where, for example, an official plan permits a long-term care facility on a parcel, but the zoning has not yet been brought into conformity, an MZO might be an expedient way to achieve a worthwhile social objective.

On the other hand, MZOs that permit development in places where the proposed form of development has not been contemplated in an official plan in the first instance are more troubling for planners, because at no point has there been an opportunity to assess or review the proposal for compatibility or through any meaningful participation by the public. Again, the Minister is free to use the MZO tool whenever and just about however he wants whether we like it or not, but from a planning standpoint, these latter types of MZOs represent a piecemeal approach to planning; planners should be cautious if asked to provide a recommendation on these proposals to Council. When dealing with matters of land use policy, public input and recommendations from planning experts is especially critical.

In the summer of 2020, changes were made to the *Planning Act* that permits an MZO to require the landowner to enter into an agreement with the relevant municipality in relation to specified matters related to the development. The legislation also

allows the Minister to give direction on agreements within the municipality, either before or after they have been entered into by the parties.

While an MZO agreement may be an effective way to ensure certain requirements are fulfilled prior to development taking place, without a public process there is still the potential for important issues and concerns to be missed or for mistakes to be made. In cases where it has become evident after the MZO horse is out of the barn that important issues have been overlooked, it puts stakeholders in the difficult position of having to take a far more active role in bringing the planning conflict to the government's attention. If I tried to explain the MZO tool to my grandmother, she would likely remind me that haste makes waste.

CAUTIOUS CONSIDERATION

To avoid any potential issue with OPPI's Professional Code of Practice, Registered Professional Planners would be wise to cautiously consider any request to report on projects where an MZO has been requested by a proponent or by a host municipal council. This is not to say MZOs may not be appropriate in some circumstances, but RPPs have an obligation to identify and promote opportunities for meaningful participation in the planning process to interested parties and to provide full clear and accurate information to decision makers and members of the public. By design, MZOs do not provide for a level of engagement expected by the public, therefore requiring extra caution for planners who may participate in an MZO process. (Y)

→ OPPI AND MZOs

As the recognized voice of the planning profession in Ontario, OPPI has submitted a letter to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing and the Environmental Registry of Ontario on the topic of MZOs.

OPPI recognizes that MZOs are an existing *Planning Act* tool that, when used appropriately, can assist with economic recovery projects of provincial significance. We support the view that they should be used only when absolutely necessary, and that they should be backed by a planning justification report that demonstrates their consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement and provincial plans.

OPPI has been monitoring *Planning Act* changes related to MZOs and has issued recommendations to MMAH in two separate letters, December 3, 2020 and April 1, 2021.

To learn more, visit ontarioplanners.ca/Policy/Submissions



Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, is a Member of OPPI and the Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development for the Regional Municipality of Durham and a Vice Chair of the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario. He is also the former Chair of OPPI's Discipline Committee and was the inaugural Chair of OPPI's Complaints Committee.

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Thank you and congratulations

ROBERT FRASER, OPPI'S DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION, HAS RETIRED.

After 27 years of service to OPPI, Robert Fraser, OPPI's Director of Finance and Administration, retired on April 30. He also has the distinction of being OPPI's longest-serving employee and has had an integral part in OPPI's growth and the maturation of the profession.

"When I joined OPPI in 1994, there were about 2,500 planners," says Robert. "After 27 years of seeing the association grow, it still blows my mind that there are now twice that many members with a minimal complement of staff. I am very proud to be part of the professional team of staff, volunteers, and members at OPPI."

On behalf of the OPPI membership, past and current Council and Committee members, and OPPI staff, thank you, Robert, for your many years of dedicated service.



Glenn Scheels
MCIP, RPP
Principal Planner
& Co-founder
GSP Group

GLENN SCHEELS RETIRES. GSP Group is announcing the retirement of Glenn Scheels, MCIP, RPP, Principal Planner, and co-founder of GSP Group, following a long and successful career. With a passion for redevelopment and design-based work, Glenn contributed over 35 years of planning expertise, in which he undertook a wide range of planning and urban design projects across Southern Ontario for the development and building industry, governments, and not-for-profit groups. "Glenn lived and breathed his passion for excellence in land use planning, and urban and landscape design. Whether he was immersed in a particularly exciting development or streetscape design or was on vacation touring some of the wonders of urbanization, Glenn always brought his keen sense of design to his experiences to mentor the public, approval authorities and GSP's planners, urban designers and landscape architects," says Chris Pidgeon, President at GSP Group. GSP Group wishes Glenn an enjoyable retirement, and all the best in the next chapter.



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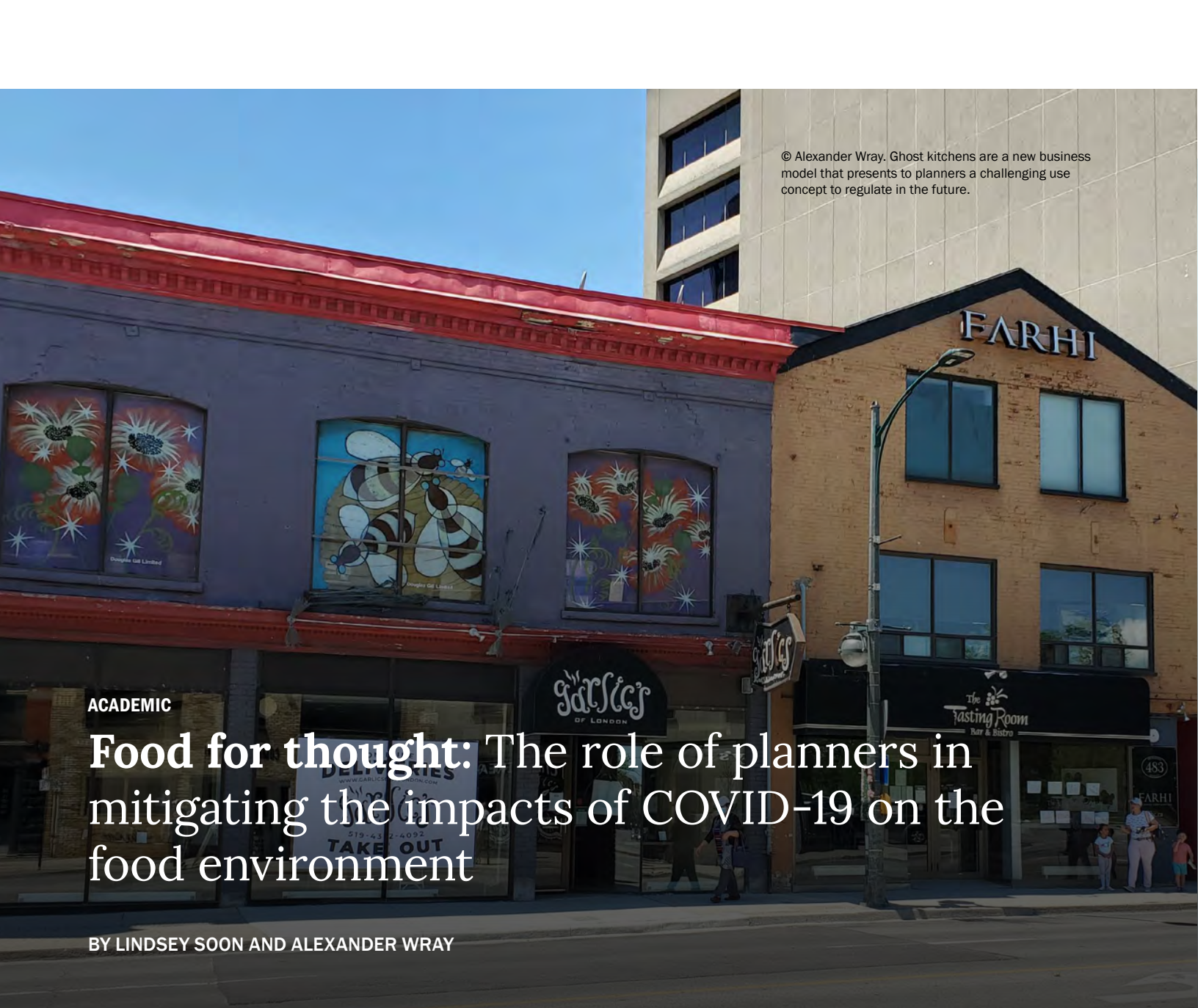
Urban Strategies is proud to be working with First Capital Realty (FCR) and a multi-disciplinary consultant team to guide the master plan and development approvals strategy for this 27-acre former industrial site. The Master Plan introduces over 700,000 m2 of commercial and residential development served by an integrated transit hub that includes a new GO station; a robust network of open public spaces anchored by squares, a ravine, large community parks; exciting new retail centered in a year-round covered Galleria; and a wealth of new community facilities.

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© Alexander Wray. Ghost kitchens are a new business model that presents to planners a challenging use concept to regulate in the future.

ACADEMIC

Food for thought: The role of planners in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on the food environment

BY LINDSEY SOON AND ALEXANDER WRAY

In Canada, food services are the country's fourth largest private-sector employer, creating a wide-range of skilled jobs for seven per cent of the overall Canadian workforce. This industry is estimated to contribute \$90 billion in economic activity annually.¹ Restaurants, cafés, bars, pubs, and other food-based hospitality businesses provide meaningful skilled work, contribute to cultural capital, and are a fundamental component in placemaking. In short, these businesses are foundational to the health, success, and vibrancy of Ontario's communities.

The Food Retail Environment Study on Health and Economic Resiliency (FRESHER) has been tracking the effects of COVID-19 on restaurants, fast food outlets, grocery stores, cafés, bars, and retail alcohol stores across Ontario. Over the past year, the FRESHER team has surveyed more than 400 and interviewed more than 100 employees, employers, and allied industry professionals. In addition, the study has tracked the operating conditions of over 26,000 businesses across the province.

Restaurants and other hospitality businesses are in serious trouble. A perfect storm of shifting consumer preferences, technological change, inconsistent and fluctuating public health restrictions, and increased business costs are placing immense pressure on the sector. Looking post-pandemic, the industry has already fundamentally changed in many ways. Planners will need to undertake conscious actions to ensure these vital building blocks remain in the foundation of Ontario communities.

"...the study has tracked the operating conditions of over 26,000 businesses across the province."

GHOST KITCHENS

Ghost kitchens are restaurants that prepare meals solely for the delivery market, with no public-facing physical location. They operate almost exclusively on third-party delivery platforms, like UberEats, Skip the Dishes, and Doordash. The restriction on in-person dining and fluctuating public health standards for restaurants over the past year has incentivized many corporate and independent brands to pivot towards this model. Many businesses and allied professionals report this model saves on real estate and personnel costs, as delivery service costs are externalized to third parties and no indoor dining room is required to operate.

Ghost kitchens have the potential to cultivate the quality and density of local and experimental businesses that may not be in the financial position to maintain pricey main street locations. However, significant planning concerns are associated with this business model given many zoning bylaw regimes do not have a good classification for these types of operations.

Are they restaurants that belong in traditional retail zones, or are they food production facilities better suited for a light industrial area?

Given the reliance on car-based delivery, operation times that mimic traditional restaurant hours late into the evening, and a lack of public-facing street presence, this new business model presents to planners a challenging use concept to regulate in the future. How should they be regulated and impacts mitigated?

OUTDOOR PATIOS

Outdoor patios had a renaissance this past summer in Ontario. Many municipalities established “dining districts” in core areas, closed lanes for more patio space, and allowed, for the first time, flexible conversions of parking lots and underused spaces.

Warmer months are clearly the most popular time for patios, but many businesses have reported successful experiments with patios in the wintertime. It would appear that many communities are warming up to outdoor dining and drinking year-round.

Moreover, municipalities of all sizes are discussing outdoor dining programs as being permanent seasonal, and even year-round, fixtures of main streets and core areas. Others have proceeded with zoning bylaw amendments that will permit the conversion of parking lots and other areas into seasonal patio spaces. The sidewalk, a notoriously crowded and highly competitive space, must be courageously expanded in existing urban areas, while new minimums should be established for sidewalk widths in all core areas to provide even more flexible patio space.

Patios are a simple, cheap, and highly effective placemaking strategy that would support the recovery of many businesses in the sector. How can planners support outdoor patios for these businesses?

BIAS AND CIPS

Business Improvement Areas (BIA) and Community Improvement Plans (CIP) are useful policy tools to implement COVID-19 pandemic supports and recovery programs.

BIA organizations have been channels through which business owners receive information regarding public health restrictions. Others have provided additional targeted financial supports to fill

gaps in federal and provincial programs. Many are promoting small independent businesses through custom aggregative shopping platforms and incentivizing residents to shop and eat local.

Municipalities, BIA organizations, and local business owners have a unique opportunity to create vibrant and resilient communities through collaboration on CIP policies and programs. What can be implemented through CIPs to aid in the recovery of main streets and retail areas?

“Restaurants and other hospitality businesses are in serious trouble.”

ACCESS TO HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE FOOD

Access to healthy, affordable food within residential areas has been a component of official plan policy for many Ontario communities. However, as the pandemic situation rapidly alters the private-sector calculus for grocery and convenience products, these smaller format stores within neighbourhoods are likely to disappear as major brands centralize their operations. Online grocery pickup and delivery is likely to continue beyond the pandemic as a popular shopping method, requiring new warehouses and larger format retail stores.


How can planners mitigate the impacts of these uses, while still incentivizing and allowing access to healthy and affordable food within communities?

CHANGING ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Changing alcohol consumption rules in Ontario has meant greater access to beer, wine, and spirits through delivery, restaurant takeout, and convenience stores. Other provinces have been experimenting with permitting alcohol consumption within public spaces.

How can planners lead this conversation to maintain spaces for everyone, while allowing for unique hospitality experiences to emerge within the public realm?

FRESHER

To learn more about the Food Retail Environment Study for Health & Economic Resiliency (FRESHER), visit fresher.theheal.ca. If you are a policy planner, economic development professional, or member of food and beverage industry, the study team wants to interview you! Email fresher@uwo.ca for more information. 

¹ Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410022001>



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© Dr. Brian Doucet
Region of Waterloo's ION LRT
and new condo development

ACADEMIC

Economic development and gentrification in the Region of Waterloo: The role of rapid transit

BY KAITLIN WEBBER AND EMMA MCDOUGALL

In June 2019, the Region of Waterloo became Ontario's first mid-sized municipality with light-rail transit following the launch of their "ION" system. The ION was developed to improve transit accessibility and encourage transit-supportive development in station areas through integrated transportation and land use planning. This integrated approach to transit planning has become increasingly prevalent across North America over the last two decades for its ability to reduce auto-mobility by intensifying land use and improving transit networks.¹

Additionally, through transit-supportive development, rapid transit systems are seen as having potential to revitalize station areas,^{2,3} which is attractive for cities facing disinvestment and/or looking to improve their economic competitiveness.^{4,5} As one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in Canada,⁶ the Region

is expected to reach almost one million residents by 2051,⁷ motivating the ION's implementation to accommodate future growth and attract new development to station areas.

“Since its approval in 2011, the ION corridor has seen more than \$2.5 billion in new construction value...”

OUTCOMES

Despite including goals related to both accessibility and redevelopment,⁸ the planning and development of the ION was ultimately guided by economic interests. This prioritization is reflected in the initial selection of light rail for its ability to attract investment and increase land values,⁹ the rezoning of the transit corridor to allow for higher densities, and the financial incentives implemented to entice developers.¹⁰


These tactics have paid off. Since its approval in 2011, the ION corridor has seen more than \$2.5 billion in new construction value, materializing primarily in the form of high-rise condominium towers. This redevelopment has attracted higher-income young professionals and empty nesters¹¹ who are driving demand, attracting new capital, and reshaping the community through the process of gentrification. This gentrification has been driven by the prioritization of economic development by planners and policymakers and, as a result, existing, lower-income residents, who often rely on transit, are facing displacement.¹²

While gentrification was not an explicit outcome, the ION and subsequent redevelopment of the transit corridor have undoubtedly accelerated unaffordability in core areas. Intended or not, the consequences of promoting seemingly uncontrolled growth in the Region is an important lesson for municipalities considering rapid transit to be proactive to preserve affordability from the outset of the project.

As seen in Waterloo, re-zoning station areas to accommodate higher densities and implementing incentive programs are extremely effective in attracting new development, but this has come at the cost of affordability, placing marginalized residents in precarious positions. In order to prevent gentrification and displacement along new transit lines, municipalities considering rapid transit should:

1. implement policies such as inclusionary zoning to ensure affordable units are included in new developments;
2. increase the stock of affordable housing near new transit by supporting non-market housing or using municipally owned land for affordable housing projects; and

3. adopt a monitoring program to track neighbourhood change and affordability rates.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, municipalities must engage with stakeholders who represent marginalized groups to ensure the benefits of new transit are experienced by all. 

¹Dawkins, C., & Moeckel, R. (2016). Transit-induced gentrification: Who will stay, and who will go? *Housing Policy Debate*, 26(4-5), 801-818.

²Higgins, C. D., & Kanaroglou, P. S. (2017). Rapid Transit, Transit-oriented Development, and the Contextual Sensitivity of Land Value Uplift in Toronto. *Urban Studies*, 55(10), 2197-2225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017712680>

³Kramer, A. (2018). The unaffordable city: Housing and transit in North American cities. *Cities*, 83, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2018.05.013>

⁴McLellan, A., & Collins, D. (2014). “If You’re Just a Bus Community... You’re Second Tier”: Motivations for Rapid Mass Transit (RMT) Development in Two Mid-sized Cities. *Urban Policy and Research*, 32(2), 203-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0811146.2014.882255>

⁵Padeiro, M., Louro, A., & da Costa, N. M. (2019). Transit-oriented development and gentrification: a systematic review. *Transport Reviews*, 39(6), 733-754.

⁶Statistics Canada. (2021, Jan. 14). Canada’s population estimates: Subprovincial areas, July 1, 2020. *The Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210114/dq210114a-eng.htm>

⁷Dillon Consulting Ltd., & Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. (2020, Dec.). Region of Waterloo Regional Official Plan Review: Long-Term Population and Housing Growth Analysis.

⁸Region of Waterloo. (2016). The ION Story. Retrieved from <http://rapidtransit.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/ION-Story-Fall-2016-access.pdf>

⁹Region of Waterloo. (2009, Sept. 24). Rapid Transit Initiative: Phase 2 Summary Report - Environmental Assessment Study. Retrieved from <http://rapidtransit.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/multimedialibrary/resources/rteaphase2summary.pdf>

¹⁰Region of Waterloo. (2021). Development Incentives. Retrieved from <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/doing-business/development-incentives.aspx>

¹¹Cook, J. (2018). Light Rail Transit in the Region of Waterloo: A qualitative examination of urban rail’s effects on real estate, development and urban identities. Master’s Thesis. University of Waterloo: Waterloo, ON.

¹²Doucet, B. (2019). Life Stories of Displacement. Social Development Centre Waterloo Region. Retrieved from: <http://www.waterlooregion.org/life-stories-of-displacement>



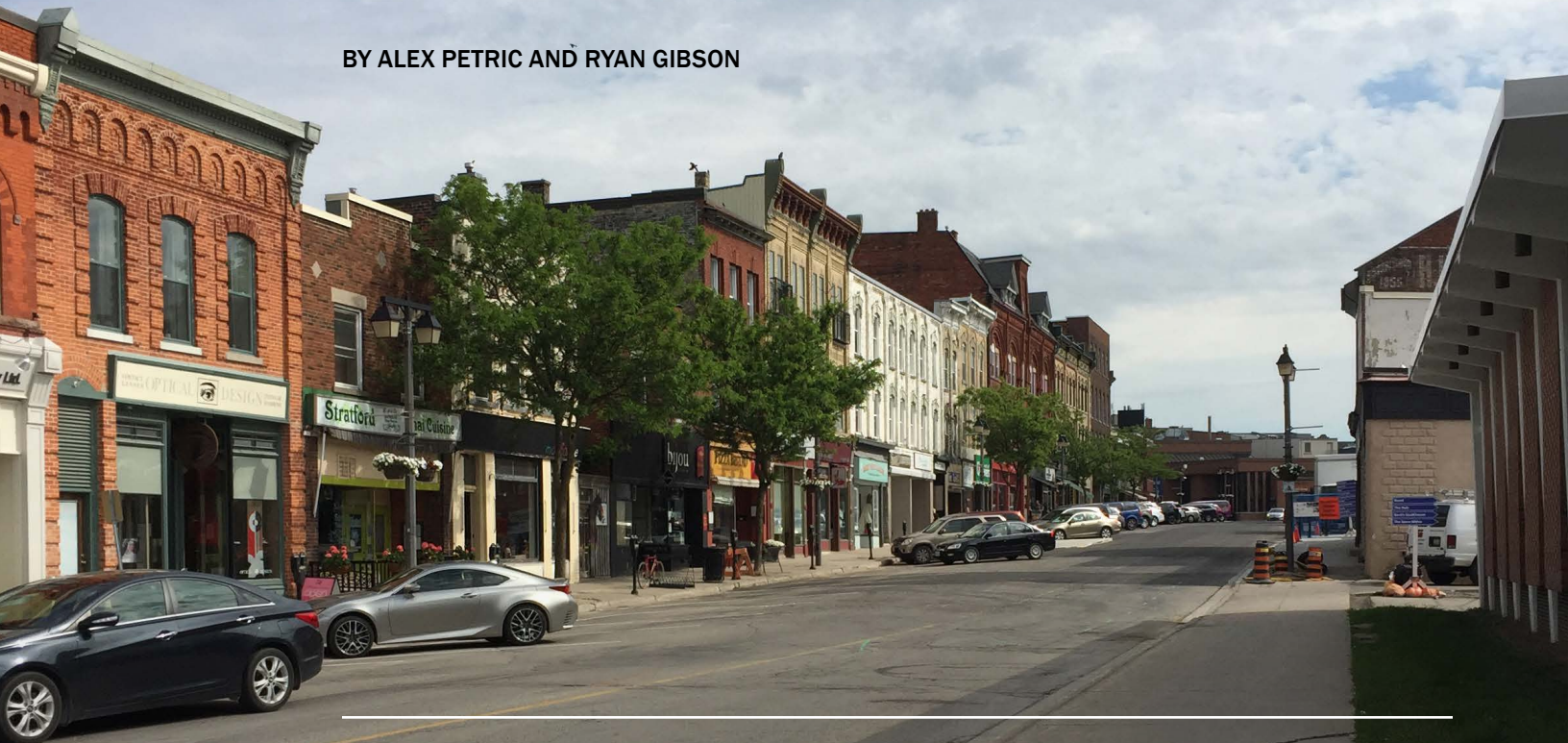
Kaitlin Webber is a Student Member of OPPI and an MA student in the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo, exploring the phenomenon of transit-induced commercial gentrification.

Emma McDougall is a PhD candidate in the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo, researching the interconnected relationship between different modes of transportation and neighbourhood change.

ACADEMIC

Facilitating rural economic development through place-based investments: Perspectives from across Canada

BY ALEX PETRIC AND RYAN GIBSON



As rural communities throughout Ontario build back stronger in a post-COVID-19 reality, increasing attention is required to facilitate access to financial capital and mobilize local and regional assets. Community investment fund programs from across Canada hold potential to advance rural economic planning.

We recently examined several provincial programs that grow business capital through community investment. These community investment fund programs, such as Nova Scotia's Community Economic Development Investment Fund (CEDIF)¹ and Manitoba's Community Enterprise Development tax credit,² offer perspectives on facilitating rural economic development.

Through these provincial programs, approved community organizations can sell equity shares to residents who then receive a tax benefit based on their

investment. This opens avenues for financial capital, which particularly helps in rural areas where business loans can be difficult to acquire.³

Six provinces have introduced community investment fund programs to drive economic planning. Nova Scotia has been very successful with over 75 companies raising at least \$103.1 million through CEDIFs since 1999. PEI's program generated \$14.3 million in investment in 2018 alone.⁴ Community investment fund programs offer an opportunity to use existing place-based financial assets to advance rural economic development.

THE NEED FOR A CLEAR PROGRAM VISION

The experiences across Canada illuminate the need for training and capacity building to facilitate this different approach to accessing financial capital in rural areas. Trained staff in Nova Scotia promoted and explained the program, policy requirements, and legal language which

Downtown Stratford, Ontario
© Ryan Gibson

have held other programs back. Nova Scotia later removed this staff position, and participation has since waned.


Cooperatives have been key agents for implementing some community investment fund programs. Many participants in Nova Scotia and PEI are cooperatives which used the program to great success. Alberta piloted a co-operative support program which later helped in designing a larger program. Assessing and working with these financial assets existing in a place can increase the chance of program success.

Laying out a clear, concrete program vision is necessary to guide decision making later. Programs seeking to be everything to everyone risk over-expanding and not making a strong impact. We frequently heard the need to begin with the end in mind and set attainable program goals.

Although Ontario does not have a formal community investment fund program, there are opportunities to identify and mobilize place-based financial assets. Rural economic development can be more sustainable when rooted in place. Rather than using one-size-fits-all approaches that often attract businesses from elsewhere, place-based development considers existing local assets and ways to support them.⁵

At the provincial level, this can be done through less centralized initiatives like the community investment fund programs which fund local ideas and interests. There is an opportunity to advocate for an Ontario community investment fund program to facilitate rural economic development.

Place-based investments offer opportunities to advance rural economic development and planning. By delineating a program

vision, considering local assets, and drawing on the experiences of other regions, effective up-front planning can bolster economic development efforts and build stronger and more sustainable communities as we move into a post-pandemic era. 

¹Nova Scotia Securities Commission. (2014). *Community economic-development investment funds (CEDIFs)*. Government of Nova Scotia. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3vvnIBG>

²Manitoba Economic Development and Jobs. (n.d.). *Tax credits and programs: Community enterprise development tax credit*. Government of Manitoba. <https://bit.ly/3bQmz6E>

³Ratner, S. & Markley, D. (2014). Rural wealth creation as a sustainable economic development strategy: introduction to the special issue. *Community Development*, 45(5), 435-442.

⁴PEI Department of Finance. (2021). *Community economic development business program*. Government of PEI. <https://bit.ly/3bLFhMy>

⁵Markey, S. (2010). *Primer on place-based development*. Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University. <https://bit.ly/35Qm73K>



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ACADEMIC

Parking in a post-COVID context

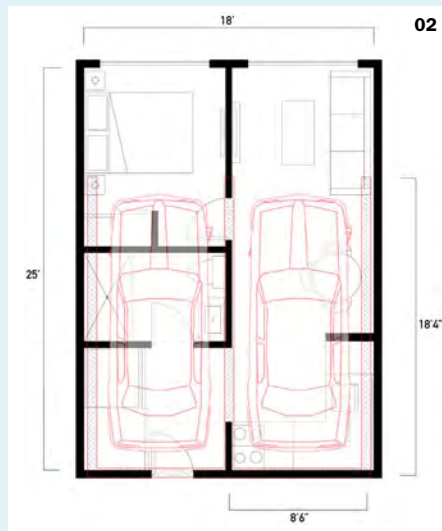
BY PAUL BERKUN-DREVNIG AND ISAAC TEVERSHAM

Cars and the infrastructure that supports them remain a contentious topic for various stakeholders, yet many are unaware of the cost and challenges of parking. Parking takes up considerable real estate that could be allocated to different land uses, like housing or public space. As our city, province, and world change, an opportunity to rethink parking has presented itself.

As per Chapter 200 of the City of Toronto Zoning By-law, even the smallest parking space must be over 150 ft².¹ Cumulatively, surface parking consumes approximately nine per cent of Toronto’s land mass.² As land becomes scarce, parking is being built below grade at a cost ranging from \$80,000 to \$100,000 per stall at select locations.³ On a per-square-foot basis, the price is consistent with that of living space in the GTA despite differences in use and finishes.⁴

A study by Ryerson Urban Analytics Institute states that Toronto has retained parking regulation from the mid-1980s.⁵ Consequently, the legal requirements reflect a very different city and era that predates contemporary innovations and trends.

After the immediate onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, public and private parking infrastructure was repositioned across Ontario. Parking spaces became outdoor dining areas, impromptu community spaces, and testing facilities, among other uses. Land previously



- 01 The versatility of parking has been realized before, for example, the curbside parkettes on King Street in downtown Toronto.
- 02 © Paul Berkun-Drevnig and Isaac Teversham. Illustration compares space required for a parking stall and for a small housing unit.

designated for parking became increasingly valuable as crucial outdoor gathering space and a means to reopen the economy.

The versatility of parking has been realized before. King Street West gained curbside parkettes in 2018 as part of the King Street Transit Priority Corridor project.⁶ Since then, Toronto has used that space to accommodate visually pleasing and bold public spaces from its annual design-build competitions.

CHANGING TRENDS


While astute planners have always known the value of public space, this notion has taken greater prominence since the pandemic began. Access to green space has long been associated with positive mental and physical health benefits;⁷ now it also provides a venue for social interaction with less risk of COVID-19 transmission.⁸

Pandemic-related restrictions have forced many employers to shift to a work-from-home model, leaving offices and their extensive parking lots barren. This trend is not set to revert as the pandemic concludes. Unliever, a British conglomerate, has already stated that employees will likely never return to their office for five-day work weeks.⁹ This workplace change will presumably be emulated by other employers.

As office work decreases, so does the need for daily commuting. This allows for the reconsideration of personal cars and their respective infrastructures. Increased bicycle use, transit ridership, and ridesharing services have made many Torontonians decide against car ownership. A 2016 survey by Transportation Tomorrow found that up to 28 per cent of Toronto households do not own a car, with that number approaching 55 per cent in some downtown wards.¹⁰ Autonomous vehicles could have additional impacts (i.e., enhancements to curbside management). These ongoing trends should prompt policy shifts at the municipal level. Progressive parking requirements could incentivize developers to reallocate cost-savings towards increasing affordable housing supply, social services, and public realm enhancements.

While parking obviously still has a place in Toronto and Ontario at large, its quantity and rigidity should change. A paradigmatic shift has occurred as a result of modal changes and the reduction of in-person office work. The specific implications of this are still unknown but cities are now contending with it.

Moving forward, parking should be flexible and considerate of our changing urban environment as it has been in response to the

demands of the pandemic. Chapter 200 the City of Toronto Zoning By-law should be updated. Evolving transportation technologies, shifts in work structure, and newfound emphasis on access to space have challenged the role parking plays in our everyday lives. 

As of January 2021, Toronto City Councilors have voted to review the parking minimums.

¹ https://www.toronto.ca/zoning/bylaw_amendments/ZBL_NewProvision_Chapter200.htm

² GIS Analysis conducted by Isaac Teversham.

³ https://www.thestar.com/life/homes/2011/07/05/this_toronto_parking_spot_costs_100000_a_year.html

⁴ <https://torontostoreys.com/gta-new-condo-sales-record-low-2020/>

⁵ <https://urbananalyticsinstitute.com/overhauling-torontos-outdated-parking-regulations-will-cut-housing-costs/>

⁶ <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/king-street-pilot/everyone-is-king-design-build-competition/>

⁷ https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/a-prescription-for-better-health-go-alfresco

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html>

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/13/unilever-workers-will-never-return-to-desks-full-time-says-boss>

¹⁰ <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/07/18/28-per-cent-of-toronto-households-dont-have-a-car-including-many-suburban-homes-heres-how-they-make-it-work.html>



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Pamela Duesling, RPP, is proud of her rural background. In 2009, she and her husband moved home to Norfolk County, Ontario, to take over the family farm. Their children are the seventh generation to grow up there.

Registered Professional Planner

PROFILE

NAME:

Pamela Duesling, RPP

LOCATION:

Paris, Ontario

POSITION:

**General Manager of
Development Services,
County of Brant**

Pamela Duesling, RPP, started her career in 2001 as a Development Planner and Economic Development Officer in Haldimand County. In 2007, she moved west to Northern British Columbia to take on her first senior leadership role as the Director of Community Development and Planning with the Town of Fort Nelson and the Northern Rockies Regional District.

When she returned to Ontario in 2009, she transitioned from Senior Planner to Director of Planning to General Manager of Development and Cultural Services in her home municipality of Norfolk County. A decade later, she moved to the County of Brant as the General Manager of Development Services to work with a progressive Council and dynamic Senior Leadership team in a fast-paced, growing rural municipality.

Duesling is a lifelong learner. She holds a BES in Urban and Regional Planning, an MAES in Local Economic Development from the University of Waterloo, a Diploma in Public Administration from Western University, and an MA Certificate in Municipal Leadership from Schulich Executive Education Centre at York University. She is currently a PhD Candidate in Rural Studies at the University of Guelph working with Dr. Wayne Caldwell.

Tell us about agricultural diversification and why you chose this topic for your PhD.

During my time working in Norfolk County, my colleagues and I experienced the shift of entrepreneurial farmers emerging out of the tobacco industry and looking to diversify into other crops and uses on their farms. My MAES thesis was devoted to the Norfolk County tobacco industry transition.

Almost 20 years later, the next generation of family farmers in rural Southern Ontario is continuing to seek opportunities to diversify. In 2016, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) created guidelines to assist planners in working with entrepreneurial farmers in prime agricultural areas. It is my desire to create a policy regime to assist rural planners in balancing farm preservation with entrepreneurial opportunities so that family farming may continue. "To preserve agriculture, it is not enough to preserve the land; society must also preserve the farmer."¹

A number of shifts are taking place in rural Ontario, at least partly spurred by the pandemic. What is the role and/or importance of diversification in economic development and sustainability, particularly as it applies to the County of Brant?

The County of Brant is a unique rural municipality in the fact that it is rooted in farming and agriculture but is also experiencing significant residential and industrial growth migrating from the GTA.

Rural municipalities in Southern Ontario which are on the ring of the Greater Golden Horseshoe can offer safe places to work with natural spaces to visit and recreate.

In 2020, the County of Brant experienced 713 new residential units of which 448 were single-family dwellings and approximately \$40 million dollars in industrial/commercial and institutional project growth. For a municipality of 37,000, this growth can have a significant change to local economic development and the sustainability of a rural community. Brant's Economic Development Strategy is focussed around growing a more diversified economy, driving investment to the County, building Brant's downtowns, and talking with a renewed focus on communication and engagement. Out of necessity, the transition to a new agriculture is also being developed.

You are also very involved with housing vulnerable populations. How has the pandemic influenced this significant issue? Where do you see areas for improvement?

I have a passion for developing attainable housing in rural communities. It is important that, as Planners, we create affordable and safe places for all our residents to call home. Too often, vulnerable rural populations are camouflaged, living in trailer parks or having to leave rural areas as there are limited housing options available. The pandemic has enhanced this issue, creating separation and social distancing requirements. I believe the opportunities are in creating partnerships with not-for-profit organizations and developers that specialize in attainable housing

with wraparound services. Building differently by creating unique housing typologies, such as additional residential units, or utilizing inclusionary zoning are possibilities not only for urban areas but also for rural communities.


What do you enjoy most about being a Planner?

The people! Being an RPP means that I get to work with a great industry of professionals and leaders. I have met some excellent colleagues in my career and am honoured to work alongside people who have a passion for building better communities and leaving this world a little better than we found it. I am most proud of my OPPI work with the Outreach Committee and the Student Liaison Committee. The planning profession is in good hands with brilliant and devoted future Planners.

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

If there is one thing that I have learned over the last year during COVID-19 is that life can change quickly, so be passionate about what you do and love what you do. I am a Rural Planner and proud of my agricultural roots. My passion is leadership in rural community development. (Y)

¹Walton, Margaret. (2003). Agriculture in the Central Ontario Zone. Neptis: The Architecture of Urban Regions. P. 31. https://neptis.org/sites/default/files/smart_growth_issue_papers_agriculture/agriculture_nipl.pdf




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PREVIEW



NEXT ISSUE PREVIEW: FALL 2021 TECHNOLOGY

Technology influences every aspect of modern life. In one sense, technology is changing how people work and use office space as they transition from tall skyscrapers to mobile or home offices.

But how does this affect transportation and how employment areas are planned and used? Towns and cities that were once declining have embraced tech companies as major employers in a public/private partnership, which, in turn, has led to a renaissance and resurgence that is defining the communities of tomorrow.

With data and analytics at their fingertips, planners can remake neighbourhoods, enhance services, and engage with residents more efficiently and accurately than ever before. At the same time, there are increasing concerns over data usage and privacy – including how information is collected, shared, and secured – and the policies that need to be in place.

Our fall issue of *Y Magazine* looks at some of the many ways technology has changed how we live and work and how planners use technology to redevelop communities to benefit the public interest.



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 summer 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.

Contact the Planning Program Directors for more information:

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'21

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

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

October

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