

ONTARIO Planning JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008, VOL. 23, NO. 5

More Than Meets The Eye

Can social
benefits outweigh
aesthetic value?

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*Alma College
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Strip Malls: More Than Meets the Eye

The link between community and retail is not well understood

Orly Linovski

“TENANTS
HAVE COME
AND GONE
AT THE STRIP

plaza on the northwest corner of Bathurst Street and Wilson Avenue, but one thing has stayed the same for at least two and a half decades: It looks like hell.”

As a reporter for the *National Post* wrote: strip malls look like hell. Not only do reporters think these areas are defined by their ugliness, but planners, councillors, and economic development staff have all echoed this sentiment. Strip malls have been described as “unkempt,” “rundown” and “undesirable” or dismissed as “junk.”

The City of Toronto has a vision for the strip malls that line many of our suburban arterials. Rather than surface parking and a jumble of signs, the Avenues Strategy promotes active pedestrian environments with mid-rise buildings lining the street. Although this is a seductive vision, no one seems to have considered the social costs associated with the loss of strip malls. After speaking with small business owners, I realized that strip malls play an important role in the city that is not acknowledged by current city policies.

Is the strip mall endangered?

Toronto’s Official Plan conceptualizes major streets as Avenues—arterials that can support substantial intensification. I conducted an in-depth study of the existing Avenues Studies and how they treat strip malls. Many of the guidelines seem to equate the success of a place with its built form. There is no acknowledgement that some suburban arterials may be more important as social spaces than the visually appealing areas valued by the City.

As stated in Section 2.2.3 of the Official Plan: “Some of the Avenues already serve as ‘main streets’ that are focal points for the community with attractive and bustling sidewalks . . . [These] will be a low priority for Avenue reurbanization studies . . . Avenues that are characterized by one or two storey commercial buildings, vacant and underutilized lands and large areas of surface



Totally Toronto

parking will be priorities for future Avenue Studies.”

This policy correlates the aesthetic quality of a place with its ability to serve as a focal point for community. Streets that may act as a community’s centre are dismissed because their built form does not fit the city’s vision. The implication that two-storey commercial buildings should have the same redevelopment potential as vacant lots disregards many of the social processes that take place in what are often considered unattractive places.

While the Avenues Studies are intended to provide site-specific guidelines for redevelopment, there is no analysis of important issues such as the economic viability of current uses and

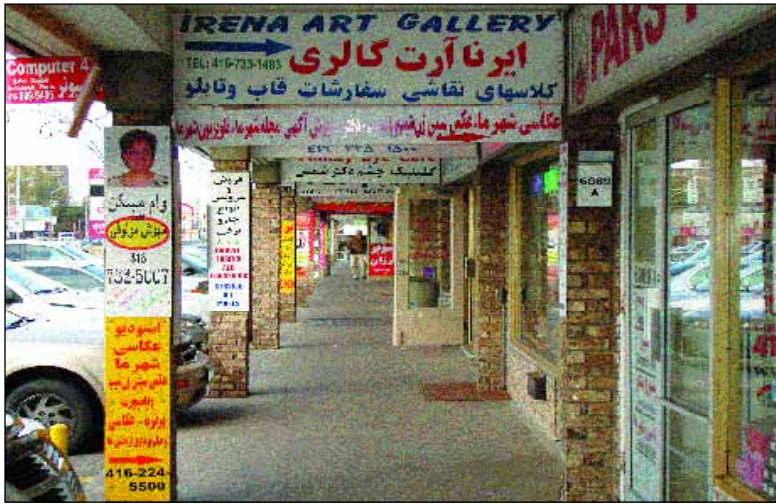
the social benefits of different types of space. It seems that the main indicator for redevelopment potential is parking lots in front of the buildings. A closer look at other factors may show that the advantages often found in unattractive buildings outweigh aesthetic considerations.

Are strip malls worth saving?

I examined three strip malls in different areas of Toronto and found that there are unique benefits to this type of built form not found elsewhere in the city. Despite the pressure to accommodate new residential development, the full social costs of encouraging the redevelopment of strip malls have not been thoroughly examined.

A strip mall on Wilson Avenue highlights some possible impacts. This 20-unit strip has a wide range of uses: inexpensive retail, food shops (Filipino, Jewish and European bakeries), hairdressers, and other specialty shops (plumbing supply, a glass/framing shop and a tailor). It also contains both religious and community uses—an Orthodox synagogue is located next to the Pizza Pizza franchise.

I asked the business owners and commercial tenants, “Why did you choose to locate here?” The responses were generally: “It was



Signage reflects ethnic focus of neighbourhood

the only one I could afford,” or “It was the only one that would rent to me” or “There was no other choice.” The two unit-owners I interviewed stated that they had originally bought their unit because it was affordable and they were able to own instead of rent. For the unit-owners in the strip, relocation is not an option. They were more likely to close their business than relocate.

For business owners, finding retail space is not just a matter of affordability. One tenant was unable to rent space in an enclosed mall because of the leasing policies of management firms, which are reluctant to lease space to small, independent businesses and are concerned with ensuring a certain retail mix. Furthermore, major chains are often able to dictate leasing policy in centrally managed retail environments. [Editor’s note: This explains why it is sometimes hard to determine which city you are in when you enter a “managed retail environment”: the mix of tenants and even the locations are often identical.]

Strip malls also allow for ethnic specialization. Although the Avenues Strategy promotes redevelopment, uses in certain ethnic-oriented strip malls, such as the one located on Yonge Street, south of Steeles Avenue, are remarkably stable. This strip mall acts a centre for the Persian community and is considered a desirable location for Persian businesses. One owner explained: “We didn’t consider any other location . . . we have to be in this location, because we are a Persian video store.” In this sense, this strip mall is more like ethnic shopping streets in Chinatown than it is like other “automobile-oriented uses.”

Strip malls cater to a sector of the retail market that may not be able to compete in other locations. Affordability, a unique management structure, and the ability to support very specialized

In Praise of Strip Malls

One journalist specializing in urban issues who has written in praise of strip malls is Toronto-based writer, John Lorinc. In addition to articles on the subject published in the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Life*, John contributed a chapter to the first edition of *UTOpia*, entitled “Stripping away stereotypes: Toronto’s retail plazas,” in which he argued that strip malls also perform an essential incubating function.



Vacant stores the most barren streetscape

businesses create an environment that allows independent businesses to flourish. Due to their somewhat marginal status, strip malls now contain a diversity of uses that add richness to the city.

Could strip mall uses move into mid-rise buildings?

Strip malls may be visually unappealing, but the space they provide for small and marginal businesses is difficult to replicate in other built forms. The zoning on Avenues may allow or even require ground-floor commercial units, yet these new spaces often have hidden barriers that keep certain businesses out. Whereas strip mall units developed in the 1960s and 1970s were often sold on a unit-

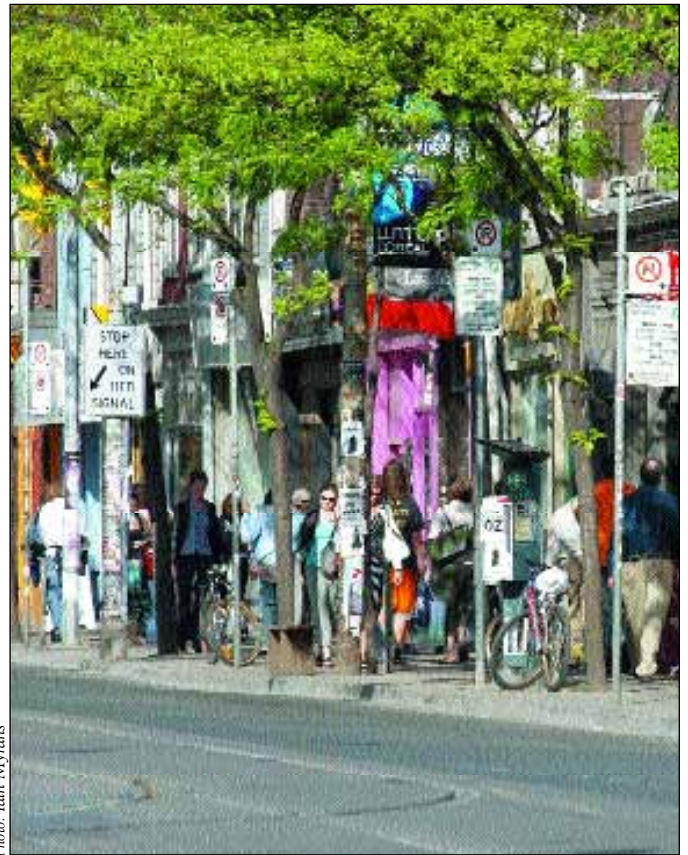
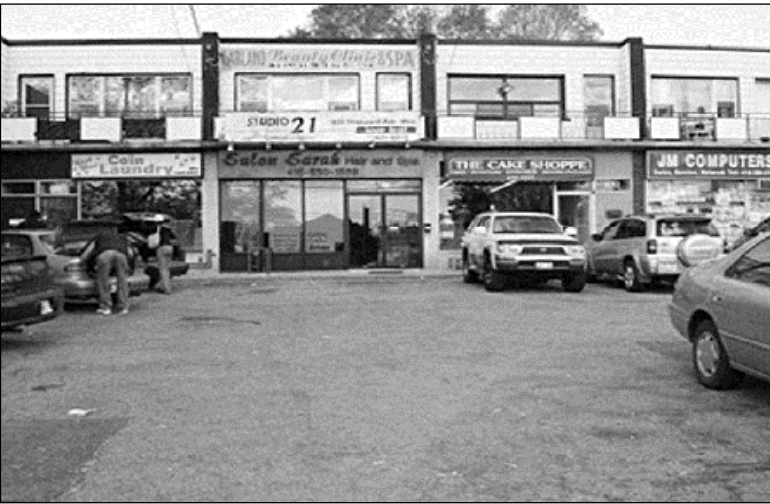


Photo: Iain Myrnes

Main street vs strip mall does not compare



Signage at Yonge and Steeles strip mall, Toronto



Strip mall at Bathurst and Wilson, Toronto

by-unit basis (ten-unit strip malls with ten different owners are common), the retail space in mid-rise buildings is not developed in the same manner. Even if commercial space becomes more affordable as the building ages, condominium units still require a significant investment that may be beyond the means of small retailers. In some cases, condo boards would rather leave retail space unoccupied than sell to potentially problematic uses, such as a restaurant. With tenant selection tightly controlled, the diversity of strip malls is not found in mid-rise Avenues buildings.

Creating a beautiful city is an admirable goal for urban planners and designers. Aesthetically pleasing places are often what

make a city memorable. However, we need to balance visual appeal and social equity. Policies should not be overly focused on aesthetics at the expense of allowing for diversity. It is necessary to get beyond the “strip-mall-as-eyesore” mentality to understand how strip malls operate and the crucial role that they play in the city. The protection of strip malls should be a priority for a city that prides itself on multiculturalism and equity.

Orly Linovski is a Research Assistant at the Welsh School of Architecture in Cardiff, currently working on urban scale modeling. She graduated from the planning program at the University of Toronto in 2007. She can be reached at linovskio@Cardiff.ac.uk.



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Alma College: What was lost, what was learned

Heritage cannot be created overnight

Susan M. Gardner



"I hope it's a lesson to all of us"

CATHERINE NASMITH'S ARTICLE in the May/June issue of the *Ontario Planning Journal* was a compelling call to action. "Who will save Alma College?" she asked. She referred to the fires, development pressures and weak municipal councils that continue to chip away at our stock of heritage buildings, despite strengthened legislation in the *Ontario Heritage Act* giving municipalities the power to stop demolition. In her closing, Nasmith warned that we may get the nightmare of watching Alma College reduced to rubble. These were chilling words—particularly chilling because that is indeed what happened.

In late May, as the OPJ was headed to press with Nasmith's article, and as pressure mounted for the intervention of the Minister of Culture to save the 130-year old building from demolition, Alma College was destroyed. In St. Thomas, the very morning that local MPP Steve Peters was meeting with staff in the Premier's office at Queen's Park to discuss the issue, and push for an 11th-hour intervention to save the building from demolition, Alma burned—a victim of arson. Within hours, the building was reduced to rubble. Stunned citizens and crusaders for the building looked on in disbelief.

Later that day, Peters would stand as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, to acknowledge the loss of Alma, and to thank the people who had worked so passionately to save the building. "I hope it's a lesson to all of us that our heritage is precious and that we need to collectively do what we can to ensure that we preserve our heritage for future generations. Once these buildings are gone, they're gone. You can't ever bring them back."

A Community Grieving

In the days after Alma's final destruction, it became clear that Alma College was much more than simply a stunning piece of architecture in the community. To those who were schooled there, taught there, or were married there, the connections to Alma ran deep. Like so many heritage buildings, Alma was a significant touch-point for important experiences in the community—and for personal histories. That bond was no doubt strengthened by the beauty of the place, and the grand, gothic structure, unique in Canada, which became a symbol of the community's rich past.

Until she received the call that Alma was

on fire, St. Thomas Alderman Heather Jackson-Chapman, who sits on the city's municipal heritage committee, says she still had hope that the building could be saved. "There were a lot of people fighting to see her remain a part of our community. There were a lot of challenges, but it was a solid building and with the right plan, and money to make it happen, Alma College could have remained a part of St. Thomas' past and been a part of our future."

The loss sent shockwaves through the local community—and through the Canadian heritage community, as well. Designated by the city under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, bearing a plaque from the Ontario Heritage Trust, and identified by the Heritage Canada Foundation as being among the top endangered heritage buildings in the country, Alma was a well-known architectural gem. For the great many people with personal connections to the building, though, it was much more. It was part of the collective identity and shared community experience.

On the request of a resident, Jackson-Chapman arranged for an online memory book on the city's website, as well as a book in the mayor's office, to facilitate that sharing of memories about Alma. "It was clear to me, by the number of people who visited Alma College during and after the fire, shared their memories, or contacted me via email or phone calls to express their feelings—Alma College was important to St. Thomas."

What should have been done differently?

Under private ownership since 1996, following the closure of the school in 1994, the building suffered years of neglect. Certainly, since its opening in 1881, the school had been beleaguered by challenges many times before. This final chapter was different, though. Jackson-Chapman says the first step in Alma's downward spiral was when the heating system was removed from the building, nearly 10 years ago. Windows were the next thing to go, with the building stripped

to the bare walls, and left open to the elements.

Jackson-Chapman notes that the municipal heritage committee had recommended to city council in April 2004 that property standards be enforced at the building, and that it be secured to protect it from further deterioration and vandalism. However, the recommendation was not acted upon and the building was left unsecured—with missing eavestroughs and downspouts, open windows, and no heating system.

In August 2006, the city acted on the changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act*, amending the property standards by-law to include minimum maintenance standards for heritage properties. That by-law was ultimately quashed by the courts, however, and when a revised by-law was brought back to council in 2007, it did not receive the support of council. The building was left exposed and unsecured, to suffer a fate of demolition by neglect. When the OMB issued its decision in January 2008 to permit the final demolition of the building, it noted that the fundamental justification for issuing the demolition permit for the site was “its deplorable state of repair and the impossibility—both practical and financial—of restoration . . . adaptive reuse of a large, purpose-built structure like Alma College is unlikely.”

Jackson-Chapman says the agreement between the city and the property owners prior to the OMB hearing in the fall of 2007 was likely the final blow for Alma. “The agreement gave the property owners a demolition permit with certain conditions, including photometric documentation of the front façade so that it could be replicated and reproduced when redevelopment of the site took place, as well as retaining the front entrance of the building.” Consistent with the OMB order, photometric documentation was carried out after the fire, in the brief hours before the remains of the building were leveled. Under the order, the requirement for replication of the façade may be registered on the title to the property, so that it will continue to apply in the event the current owners sell it. This “silver lining” offers some hope that an Alma-like structure may once again grace the city.

However, the order established no timelines for replicating the façade, so it is unclear how long the property will sit empty.

In any event, the true value of such efforts to replicate the past may be questionable. Says Catherine Nasmith, “What you end up with is a pale version of what was. It’s also very costly—it truly would have been less expensive to restore and preserve the existing building than to take this route. The investment is enormous. And it is always better to keep the original, because it’s never the same.”



What could have made a difference?

Wendell Graves, City Clerk for the City of St. Thomas, says the demise of Alma is in part reflective of the fact that there is no national mechanism to provide meaningful financial resources for the preservation of significant heritage assets. Graves says the ownership model is an issue in situations such as Alma.

Indeed, it may be the key factor in predicting how successful heritage preservation efforts will be on any particular property—and the extent to which governments can

participate. “It’s difficult for governments to come to the table with funds to invest in privately owned properties,” he said. “It’s much easier in the case where the building is publicly owned, or even owned by a not-for-profit. Those ownership models open the door for a much broader spectrum of financing and investment opportunities.”

“Ideally, a national registry of significant buildings, with some mechanism for either governments or not-for-profits to acquire those properties when they become available on the market may be beneficial,” says Graves. He points to the fact that private owners have rights—and heritage properties can present them with enormous challenges and few incentives to attract funding assistance. “For buildings that remain privately owned, there needs to be some way to support private champions without writing a blank cheque from the public purse.” This might include initiatives such as the equivalent of federally funded tax holidays, or interest-free loans—something to help bridge the financial gap between such projects being viable, or not.

Pat Coles, an architect who was familiar with the building, says the retention of heritage buildings like Alma is dependent upon support that crosses party lines and alliances, as well as public support within the community—but the most important factor is the determination of the property owners. “From all levels, there would be a requirement for financial commitment to retain any heritage building for a defined period of time, let alone retention in perpetuity.”

Reflecting on Alma after the fire, Nasmith agrees that financial support and incentives for

private owners are essential—and most countries that are progressive about their heritage have these mechanisms in place. However, she disagrees about the rights of private owners, particularly if they are neglecting their responsibilities for the stewardship of heritage assets—what Nasmith calls “bad citizenship.” In Europe, she says, the government would just come in and take over the building, do what needs to be done to rehabilitate it, put it back on the market, and then ensure it is protected and looked after. “They do what needs to be



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done to protect the resource,” she says. “In the case of Alma College, it was vandalism, it was just out-and-out cultural vandalism. It was like someone went in and took a knife to a painting in an art gallery.”

Alma Was Not Inevitable

If the Minister of Culture had intervened, says Nasmith, the outcome would have been very different. “There would have been time to create a partnership that would have saved the building. And all of these things were in motion. It was lack of commitment and failure to take action that cost this building.”

In her experience, the important thing with such properties is to keep things in play. “You just never give up, or you lose. And the Minister of Culture gave up. The same can be said for the city.”

Nasmith says we need to apply the same kind of thinking to heritage that we do for environmental issues. “We don’t hesitate to interfere in a private owner’s business when there is environmental damage. Culture heritage is the same thing—it has huge environmental impacts when we lose it. Buildings contain unbelievable amounts of energy—cultural energy and environmental resources. Recycling these things is really important in all kinds of ways. We just haven’t made the intellectual connection to the huge destruction to the environment involved in just throwing such buildings in the dump.”

“We have such a huge job to do at the municipal level. I think the province is foolish to think that they can leave this kind of work to the municipalities. The municipalities just don’t have the resources, and so often, do not have the will and the commitment to their heritage.”

What Was Learned?

“The number one lesson I hope we have learned from this tragedy is that we need to find an active use for every heritage property in our community,” says Jackson-Chapman. “Heritage preservation needs to be a cooperative effort between all levels of government. And municipalities cannot save heritage alone.”

Municipalities need the support of the provincial and federal governments, she says. With municipalities facing the massive repair of crumbling infrastructure for roads, sewers and water, the choice to spend tax dollars on private property instead does not come easily—even if it is what is required to protect the community’s heritage.

For the City of St. Thomas, the heritage dilemma does not end with Alma. Other buildings, including the Court House, built in 1853 (also now under private ownership, and

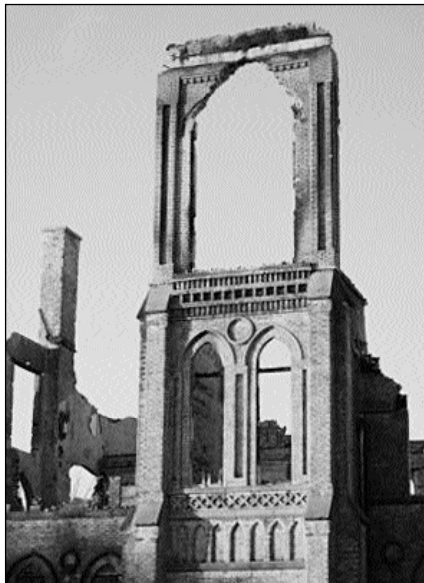
its tenancy under threat of abandonment by the province), are at risk as well.

“We are losing our heritage at an alarming rate in the Province of Ontario,” says Jackson-Chapman. “We have to work together to save it so that future generations understand what makes their community unique . . . We need to save what heritage we have left before it is gone, too.”

A Similar Building, a Different Fate

About the time St. Thomas was reeling in the aftermath of the Alma College fire, an interesting parallel story was playing out in another city. In early May, San Antonio, Texas, endured a four-alarm fire—the city’s largest in almost 10 years—in the main building at Our Lady of the Lake University. The 113-year old gothic structure was designed by renowned Texan architect James Wahrenberger and, like Alma, was constructed with a purpose of higher learning. For OLLU, that purpose has not faltered, however, and the building remains a centre of learning today.

The accidental fire destroyed the roof, attic and fourth floor of the building, while water and smoke completely damaged floors one through three. Following the fire, the interior of the fourth floor was completely removed, and the saturated walls of the lower floors were removed down to the studs. Fortunately, the four walls of the building



and the four floors remained intact.

And, though it will be costly, talk of rebuilding began the day after the fire. OLLU has insurance for the structure and its contents, as well as a policy for business interruption, but they are aware that there will be a significant gap between what the insurance will cover to replace the building and the cost to rebuild the inside as a contemporary learning environment for students in the future. To make up the difference, the school is raising private dollars from corporations, foundations, and individuals, with approximately \$2 million raised already. It will take an estimated three years to rebuild the structure.

What role has the municipality played? Dan Yoxall, vice president of the marketing and communications at the school, explains that in 2006, city council established the Westside Development Corporation to create economic growth in the area, which is among the oldest neighbourhoods in the city. “Among the first organizations we heard from after the fire, WDC immediately stepped up with a resolution supporting rebuilding and made a grant toward planning the effort. Also, WDC has committed the full

support of its political, economic and civic network to assist us in getting the job done.”

OLLU president Dr. Tessa Martinez Pollack underscores the importance of the building to the community, and why the decision to rebuild was an easy one: “For

more than 113 years, Main Building has served the students, faculty and staff at Our Lady of the Lake University. It is the heart of our community and represents the vision of our founders . . . Rebuilding is the only choice we have.”

Pictures of the OLLU building and fire are online at: www.woai.com/Photo.aspx?content_id=ed44bec4-2472-4f90-8db8-92df0ac08bba

Susan M. Gardner is Executive Editor of Municipal World magazine, where she researches, writes and speaks on sustainability issues for the municipal sector. She holds a Master of Public Administration in Local Government from the University of Western Ontario. Susan was married at Alma College. The offices of Municipal World are in St Thomas. sgardner@municipalworld.com

SUSTAINABILITY SERIES

The third in a series of articles on sustainability by Dan Leeming and Diane Riley will be appear in the November/December issue.

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Eastern

On the Winds of Change: Town and Rural Planning Workshop

Colleen Sauriol

The OPPI Eastern District Executive hosted the third annual Workshop on Town and Rural Planning in late May in Gananoque. More than 100 delegates attended this workshop, with the first session focused on Gananoque's Lower Town Study. The Town's Planning Approvals Coordinator, Brenda Guy, the Economic Development Coordinator, Kent Fitzhugh and Bruce Cudmore of EDA Collaborative Inc., explained how the area of this study was once the industrial hub of the Town of Gananoque. The area is changing and the Town plans to develop these lands with consideration for downtown renewal, a marina expansion, historical museum and open space with

public access to the waterfront.

Don Morse, City of Ottawa planner, Susan Millar, planner with Parks Canada, and Mike Hendren, Masters of Planning candidate, Queen's University, presented a slide show on the visual character of Eastern Ontario. The presentation illustrated different locations in Eastern Ontario with an eye to the characteristics that make Eastern Ontario unique.

The Development Permit System proved to be an interesting topic and generated much discussion from the audience. Lisa Young, Director of Planning and Development for the Town of Carleton Place, as well as Pierre Mercier of Stantec, described how the development permit system will replace some of the tools and administrative procedures currently used by the municipality to implement its official plan, zoning by-law, site plan control process and minor variance approvals.

The final topic of the day was presented by Bob Clark of Clark Consulting Services. "Planning for Turbines: the Wolfe Island

Experience" was presented from the perspective of a consultant working on behalf of the Township Council. The discussion revolved around the relationship between the Environmental Assessment process and municipal approvals, in particular with respect to public consultation and involvement.

The workshop was an opportunity to network with planners and to learn from the experience of other Ontario towns and communities. Based on the success of this workshop, the OPPI Eastern District Executive is hoping to host another workshop next year.

Colleen Sauriol, MCIP, RPP, is the Manager of Planning and Building in Pembroke. Kate Whitfield, MCIP, RPP, EIT LEED Accredited Professional, is with J.L. Richards & Associates Limited in Ottawa. She can be reached at kwhitfield@jrichards.ca.

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Jung Returns to Waterloo Roots

John Jung is joining Canada's Technology Triangle (CTT), located in the Waterloo Region, as the CTT's new chief executive officer. Jung makes this move from the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance (GTMA), where he has been since 1998, most recently as president and COO. The GTMA is the key point of contact for prospective international investors looking to expand or locate their business in the Toronto area.

John Jung is also the co-founder and chairman of the global think-tank, "Intelligent Community Forum" (ICF), headquartered in New York. He is an award-winning registered urban planner, urban designer, economic developer, and global speaker on planning, development, urban design and economic development related issues, including "intelligent communities." Jung won the Hans Blumenfeld Communications Award from OPPI some time ago for a series



John Jung

of articles in the *Ontario Planning Journal* on intelligent communities. Prior to working for the GTMA, Jung was president and CEO of the Calgary Economic Development Authority. He graduated from the University of Waterloo's School of Urban and Regional Planning and has a Masters in Urban Design from the School of Architecture at the University of Manchester.

Frequent contributor and district editor,

Damian Szybalski, has been appointed as the Town of Halton Hills' first Sustainability Coordinator. Following adoption of a recent staff report on environmental health, the Town renamed the planning department the Planning, Development and Sustainability Department. The reorganization also entailed the creation of an Office of Sustainability, which has a mandate to develop, promote, coordinate and administer

a broad range of municipal and community sustainability initiatives. A policy planner with the Town of Halton Hills for the past two years, Szybalski is a graduate of the University of Toronto's planning program.

Kyle Benham has moved from the City of Toronto's Economic Development division to the City of Burlington's economic devel-

opment corporation, where he will be in charge of business development. A graduate of the University of Toronto, Benham's tenure with Toronto ended on a high note with the adoption of tax increment financing grants as part of the city's prosperity agenda. Ian Cameron also made the transition from Toronto to Burlington.

Bryan MacKell has been named the new Director of Planning and Development for the County of Simcoe. Also joining the team are **Bruce Hoppe**, Manager of Development, and **Kathy Suggitt**, Manager of Policy. **Wes Crown** has been named Director of Planning and Development for the Town of Midland while **Andrea Leigh** is the new Director of Planning and Development for the Township of Oro-Medonte. **Helma Geerts**, who led Halton Region's participation in the Greater Toronto Agricultural Action Committee, has taken a job with the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Affairs, where she will be able to shape provincial policy "from above."

Two of the country's largest transportation planning firms have merged: McCormick Rankin Corporation (MRC) and MMM Group (MMM). Ecoplans will also be operating as part of the MMM Group.

Honours

Marni Cappe Elected As CIP President

Winnipeg will always mean something special for **Marni Cappe** in years to come, having won the presidency of CIP there in July, overcoming strong challenges from two Ontario colleagues, Dennis Jacobs and Ron Glen, and colleagues from other provinces. Marni will take over from B.C. planner Blake Hudema at next year's joint OPPI/CIP conference in Niagara. For the next year, Marni's title is President-Elect. Marni is a consultant based in Ottawa, and is actively involved in CIP-related projects as well as maintaining her planning practice.



Marni Cappe

Former Queen's Director Receives President's Award

Former director of Queen's School of Urban and Regional Planning, **Gerald Hodge**, received the President's Award at the Winnipeg conference.

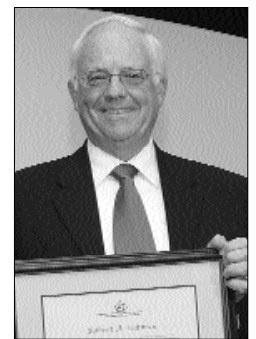
Author of four books, including a new volume focused on "the geography of aging," Hodge received his doctorate from MIT and taught at Simon Fraser and the University of Toronto before taking on the directorship at Queen's (1973-1986).

His book on Canadian planning has been issued in four editions, most recently in collaboration with David Gordon. Look for a review of Hodge's book on "preparing communities for the surge in seniors" in an upcoming issue of the *Ontario Planning Journal*.

New Fellows, Including Two From Ontario

Bob Lehman, founding partner in four consulting firms, and **Nick Tunnacliffe**, executive director of Environment, Transportation and Planning Services for the Region of Peel, were joined by **Michael Geller**, **Jill Grant**, **Linda McFadyen** and **Jay Wollenberg**, at the induction ceremony in Winnipeg.

After a stint with the City of Toronto and IBI in the early 1970s, Lehman launched Lehman and Associates in 1979, the Planning Partnership in 1995 (with several others), Meridian Planning in 2001 and Metropolitan Knowledge International in



Bob Lehman



Nick Tunnacliffe

2002. In addition to his award-winning policy work, Lehman created a major resource on zoning practice. He is currently Planner in Residence at the University of Waterloo. He earned his master's degree in Environmental Studies at York University.

Nick Tunnacliffe was one of many UK-trained planners who helped establish Ontario's planning culture in the 1960s. Following a long and successful tenure at the Region of Ottawa-Carleton, Tunnacliffe journeyed to Peel following amalgamation. An advocate of long-range planning, with a deep commitment to integrating transportation and land use planning, he was active with the Regional Planning Commissioners and played a key role in chairing major Institute planning conferences.

More information, including biographies of the other new Fellows, can be found on the CIP website.

Obituary

Glen Barker, MCIP, RPP, "A Planner's Planner"

The Niagara area has lost a great planner. Glen Barker passed away in early July following a brief battle with pancreatic cancer. Glen was a partner with Tom Smart in

BLS Planning Associates and provided professional planning services to both municipal and private clients throughout Niagara.

Glen can only be described as a "Planner's planner"—dedicated, hardworking and always professional. He was proud of his membership in OPPI and his work demonstrated the integrity and quality that he believed was necessary—be it a secondary plan for Port Robinson or a small severance.



Glen Barker

While Glen started his career in municipal planning—first with Port Colborne and then Niagara Falls—he went into consulting so that he could serve a wide range of clients and further the need for planning consulting excellence in Niagara. Glen became the "go-to guy" that everyone went to for planning advice. His knowledge, expertise, integrity and workmanship were recognized by his colleagues as well as the public.

Glen, who lost his father when he was 11, worked long hours but made time for family. He would often go into the office at 6 a.m. so that he could attend either a sports event for his son Jordan or daughter Tayler in the afternoon. Glen and his wife Ene have an extended family of 26 who on all occasions were part of their home and the family cottage. There was always a project under way at home or at the cottage to help with the stress that came with his professional responsibilities.

Arrangements are being finalized for the main arterial in the new Thorold Community of Neighbourhoods of Rolling Meadows to be named Barker Parkway in recognition of Glen's efforts from the project's inception.

Planners in the Niagara area believe Glen made a major contribution to planning and we are all wondering how the void in our hearts and the profession will be filled.

This tribute was written jointly by Tom Smart, Judy Pihach, Adele Arbour, Chris Millar and Don May.

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Editorial

Remember the Urban Agenda?

Glenn Miller

THE CURRENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN is about many things, but the health, wealth and economic competitiveness of cities is not one of them. Spirited debates about the “urban agenda,” led by passionate advocates for recognition that cities are the economic engines that keep the country moving forward, almost seem as if they took place in another lifetime.

One issue that promises to have an impact beyond the formation of the next government, however, is a series of announced cuts to federal funding that will take effect at the end of March next year. Together with the cessation of funding for other federal programs that have been known about for some time, the cuts could cause a devastating ripple effect through local economies. Although the impacts will vary for each of the affected organizations, in many cases, withdrawal of federal contributions will upset the delicate balance of jointly funded activities, potentially resulting in structural failure of the carefully constructed web of funding sources that keep the programs in place.

One of the recent announcements causing a stir is the \$42 million to be cut from cultural funding. At an international meeting held in Calgary in early September, managers of downtown and business improvement areas from across Canada shared their concerns about

the devastating impact these cuts will have on the institutions and non-profit organizations that form the cultural glue of downtown Canada. Their point is that these organizations do not operate in a vacuum. They have physical locations, and their activities and initiatives contribute to the economies of their locale.

Other programs facing cuts are funding for childcare and homelessness initiatives. In Ontario, daycare programs in newly developing suburban communities depend on contributions from all orders of government in order to provide services at affordable rates. The daycare programs are just one of the complex support systems that allow young couples to juggle paying the mortgage and raising a family; without them, the result could be “incomplete communities.” The withdrawal of funding for homelessness comes at a particularly bad time, undermining recently introduced outreach programs but creating a budgeting nightmare for municipalities with large homeless populations. After a sustained period of economic growth, this is an unfortunate prospect.

Glenn Miller, FCIP, RPP, is editor of the Ontario Planning Journal and director of education and research with the Canadian Urban Institute in Toronto. He can be reached at editor@ontarioplanning.com.

Letters

Timing is everything!

AS I AM AIRBORNE FROM FRANKFURT, Germany to Stockholm, Sweden, I am reading the July/August 2008 edition of the *Ontario Planning Journal*, more specifically, the article by Glenn Miller regarding the brownfield redevelopment site known as Hammarby Sjostad located on the edge of downtown Stockholm, Sweden’s capital city.

Prior to my urban design excursion through St. Petersburg, Russia and Helinski, Finland, I am inspired by the article to undertake my own ground proof of the site. Thanks, Glenn.

On a sunny August day in 2008, I visited the site. I can confirm that the project does illustrate “the integration of planning on a brownfield redevelopment site inspired by the Swedish natural program in sustainability.”

—Paul F. Puopolo,
MA, MCIP, RPP, OALA,
General Manager, IBI Group
(formerly operating as PEIL, Kitchener)

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Send letters to
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Formatting do’s and don’ts:
Do name your files (“OPPI article” *doesn’t* help) and *do* include biographical information.
Don’t send us PDFs.
Don’t embed graphics with text, or text in text boxes.



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Homelessness Initiative— Action from the Ground Up

FEDERAL PROGRAMS TO HELP HOMELESS and marginally housed people in Canada are set to expire on March 31, 2009. There has been no word about continuation of this critical funding, so the community agencies and local governments that have been receiving this funding are facing the need to wind these programs down in the next few months. Thousands of vulnerable clients across the country will be affected. In Toronto alone, more than 21,000 clients are directly served by programs funded through Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) and delivered by community agencies that that will now have to look at closure plans for these services.

Under the umbrella of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, local communities have been empowered to identify priorities and help deliver programming that puts in place the structures and supports to help homeless and at-risk people build a better and stron-

ger future. The Strategy has developed transitional and supportive housing and the support programs—including skills training and health care—that help homeless people become self-sufficient. Here are the specific programs that need to be continued:

- Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI): \$135 million nationwide annually. This community-based plan is the cornerstone of the strategy, and it is designed to help prevent and reduce homelessness across the country. Provides funding for hundreds of programs and services in 61 communities across the country. These will be forced to wind down by March 31, 2009. Federal funding is critical to the provision of services for homeless people in Toronto. In 2008 it accounts for almost 60% of the \$44 million that is being spent in Toronto on homeless support services. Furthermore, a number of afford-

able rental housing projects, providing about 70 units, have been undertaken in 2008 with assistance of HPI funding.

- Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP): \$128 million annually. Tens of thousands of low-and modest-income households receive funds for housing repairs and modifications to accommodate disabled residents. Program ends March 31, 2009.
- In addition to the pending demise of HPI and RRAP, the \$1.4 billion in affordable housing investments authorized by Parliament in 2005 (Bill C-48) has been fully allocated and no new affordable investments are scheduled.
- Aboriginal focus. The plan also addresses the disproportionate number of homeless people who are Aboriginal by assigning 20% of the funds to programs for Aboriginal people.

The Minister responsible for the strategy is Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. He says the program is one that works. “It is the emphasis on community planning and partnerships with other levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and community and volunteer organizations that makes it a program whose success belongs to everyone involved.”

The Minister’s comments are contained in an excellent publication, *The Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Partnerships that Work*, which celebrates the impact on vulnerable people of some of the many HPI-funded initiatives from across Canada. These success stories range from an emergency shelter and supportive housing facility for people living with HIV/AIDS in St. John’s, to a soup kitchen in Nunavut that also offers life skills counselling to people wanting to transition from homelessness. You can download the publication at www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/corporate/success_stories/homelessness/2008/hps/brochure.pdf

This information was presented at the IDA conference in Calgary in early September by James L. Robinson, Executive Director of the Downtown Yonge BIA. He can be reached at jamesr@downtownyonge.com.

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Recognition Committee Update

Cathy Saunders

As many members will know by now, the launch of the Healthy Communities, Sustainable Communities paper last November was a great success. A press conference was held at Queen's Park and the report was covered in more than a dozen publications across the province and on many radio stations. The report was picked up by Canadian Press (CP) which resulted in it being covered by many Ontario radio stations and newspapers across the province. In addition, there was an interview with subsequent news clips on CBC radio and a feature article in the *Toronto Star*. Mention of the report was also included on many websites.



Cathy Saunders

OPPI spokespeople included: Wayne Caldwell, Sue Cumming, and the key authors of the paper—George McKibbin, Alex Taranu, Lesley Pavan, Melanie Horton and Dan Leeming. The Policy Development and Recognition Committees have prepared a PowerPoint presentation to help local districts hold sessions of their own to raise awareness, engage members and key stakeholders. Brochures are also available from OPPI.

There have already been a number of events

held throughout the province. But you as individual planners can also do your part, by bringing the paper to the attention of your Council's, clients and community. We have created a template that is available on the website that we ask you to use to report any events.

Healthy Communities Toolkit—Partnering with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Representatives of OPPI and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing have met to discuss developing a joint MMAH/OPPI Healthy Communities Toolkit. This is an exciting opportunity for both organizations. A terms of reference has been drafted which is currently under review. This document details the objective, scope, status, approach, responsibilities, membership and work plan.

MMAH staff are currently working on a table of contents for this Toolkit.



OPPI position paper

World Town Planning Day

It is the time of year to begin to organize World Town Planning Day Events. World Town Planning Day will fall on Saturday, November 8, 2008, but events can be held any time around that date.

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We ask that you link this year's events to the Healthy Communities initiative. The OPPI website has available a PowerPoint presentation that may be used during these events. We again ask that you report any events that are to be held so that we may advertise them on the website and in the e-newsletter. The template for reporting events is also available on the OPPI website.

OPPI Award's Program

The Recognition Committee was requested to review the goals, systems and procedures and desired outcomes of OPPI's award program. Leo DeLoyde led the review process and has submitted a draft report of recommendations for Council review and direction.

The report recommends several changes to the awards program to better align it with OPPI's new Strategic Plan, and emerging practice streams in the planning profession, reflect current practices, reduce or eliminate recurring ambiguities in the rules, better recognize the volunteers who make OPPI such a successful organization and celebrate those outside the planning profession who contribute to making great communities.

We anticipate adoption of this amended awards program to occur in the near future.

New Joint Excellence in Planning Award 2008

We are pleased to announce that a new Joint Excellence in Planning Award was presented at this year's Symposium, held in North Bay, September 18 and 19, 2008. This joint award was presented on behalf of the Ontario Heart and Stroke Foundation and OPPI to a recipient who has met the criteria established for the Excellence in Planning Award, but has also promoted Healthy Communities. We are honoured to participate with the Heart and Stroke Foundation in this important initiative.

I would like to acknowledge the following members who participated in the Recognition Committee activities: Charlotte O'Hara-Griffin, Colleen Sauriol, David Amborski, David Aston, Leo DeLoyde, Mark Simeoni, Matthew Pearson, Meghan Keelan, Paul Richardson, and Sharon Mittmann.

Please contact your District Recognition Committee Representative if you wish to get involved.

Cathy Saunders, MCIP, RPP, is Director of Recognition. She can be reached at saunders@middlesexcentre.on.ca.

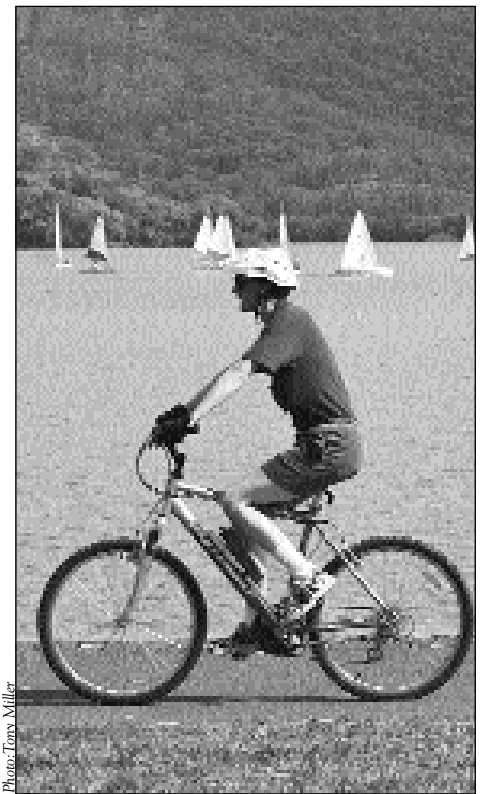


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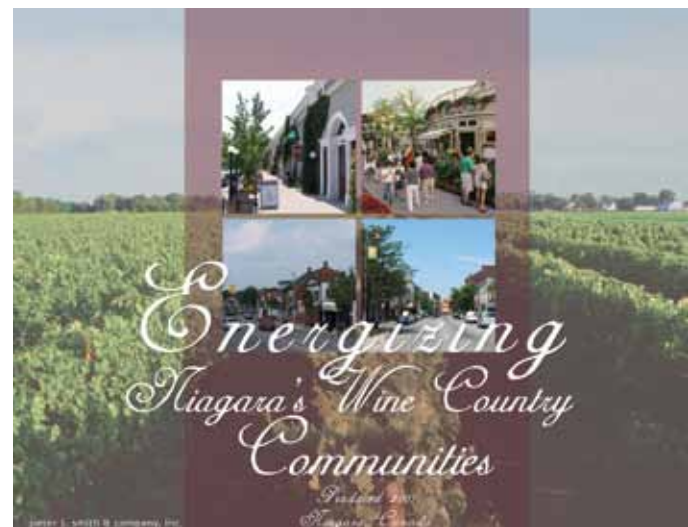
Incineration and Waste Processing: Transfer and Disposal Study

The field of waste management is contentious, but new techniques for recycling, disposal, and generating energy from waste are emerging every year. Municipalities need to regulate current uses while remaining open to future technologies that may make current methods obsolete. In this study, MMM Group and the City of Brampton were the first to develop leading-edge planning policies to guide waste management and address matters of public interest, including public health and safety, and the regulation of land uses associated with waste management. The resulting policies, and the zoning by-law and Official Plan amendments associated with them, were widely accepted by the public and the waste management industry, and passed without appeal in October 2007. The process is already being used as a model by other municipalities.

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Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities

The Niagara Region is home to 70 wineries, with 6,500 hectares of land cultivated as vineyards. The success of the wine industry has generated an equally successful tourism industry. The Niagara Economic Development Corporation, with the help of local municipalities, the province, the region, and wine industry representatives, carried out a study to develop a long-term strategy for tourism. The strategy includes promoting cultural and heritage tourism in addition to culinary tourism; developing key destinations for tourists; creating customer service hubs in the urbanized areas; and enhancing the travel experience through design, wayfinding, and the integration of cultural attractions with the Wine Route. The strategy was completed in 2007 and is now being implemented.





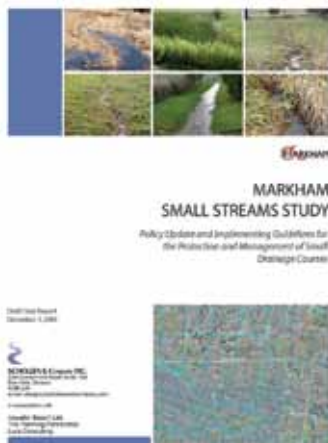
City of Ottawa

Urban Design Guidelines for the Development Review Process

Urban design guidelines are only as good as their implementation. To help translate its high-level urban design principles into brief, easy-to-remember directions, the City of Ottawa carried out extensive consultations that resulted in a short, illustrated guide to design for all parts of the city. The guidelines cover regional roads, development along arterial mainstreets and traditional mainstreets, greenfield developments, transit-oriented developments, infill housing, environmental noise control, right-of-way lighting, outdoor patios, drive-through facilities, gas stations, and large-format retail. The guidelines have proved popular and easy to use, and other municipalities have drawn on Ottawa's work in developing their own guidelines.



Research/New Directions



Town of Markham

Markham Small Streams Study

The landscape on which Markham sits consists of largely flat formerly agricultural lands, crossed by small streams that are not regulated under regular conservation authority rules. In 2002, the Town began a study to classify these small streams and develop guidelines to protect and manage them — a study that was the first of its kind for a local municipality in Canada. The work involved extensive consultation with stakeholders, and the resulting guidelines have been acknowledged and supported in the Rouge Watershed by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority. The results include an inventory of the streams, a classification matrix for the management of stream features, a review of stormwater engineering practices for the streams, and a landowner education and stewardship program that is currently being implemented.

OPPI Excellence

in Planning Awards 2008

Communications/Public Education

City of Toronto

Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines

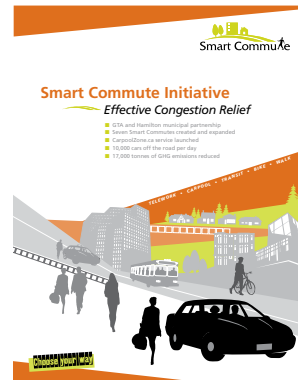
Environmentalists and bird watchers have long been concerned about the fate of migratory birds in Toronto. The birds become disoriented by the light pollution and reflective surfaces in the downtown area, and crash into high-rise office and apartment buildings, falling to the pavement below. To reduce the incidence of these collisions, the City set up a committee of staff members

and community partners to identify bird-friendly development options to be used by architects, planners, urban designers, building owners and managers, tenants and homeowners. The extensively illustrated guidelines identify hazards and appropriate alternatives in building exteriors, lighting techniques, and building management methods. The City has also launched a public awareness campaign to reduce light pollution, and has long maintained a program of rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured birds.



Regions of York, Halton, Durham, and Peel; Cities of Toronto, Hamilton, and Mississauga

Smart Commute Initiative, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area



Traffic congestion, climate change, and smog are connected problems, and finding alternative options for commuters has become a priority in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton. Smart Commute is a regional initiative to encourage carpooling, transit, cycling, walking, and telework for employees of local

workplaces and postsecondary institutions. Through media blitzes, brochures, and public events, as well as an online system for matching potential carpooling participants, the coalition of municipalities and regions involved in Smart Commute has helped take 10,000 cars off the road each day and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17,000 tonnes since the inception of the program in 2004. The program is now being used in other Ontario municipalities.

Healthy Communities Award



Smart Commute Initiative, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

The Healthy Communities Award, established jointly by OPPI and the Heart & Stroke Foundation, Ontario, has been created to recognize excellence in creating healthy communities. The Smart Commute Initiative of Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area is this year's recipient, as this project exemplifies the importance of active transportation in healthy communities.

Honorary Member



Rocco Rossi

Honorary membership recognizes the work of non-planners who contribute to OPPI's goals and objectives.

An Honorary member is someone who has shown extraordinary interest and concern for the planning profession, but who does not hold membership in the CIP or the OPPI and who would not qualify to be a full member of the OPPI.

By recognizing the efforts of others who advance the cause of planning, we acknowledge the valuable contribution of people outside the profession and promote the

importance of planning to the future of our communities. Our new member is Rocco Rossi.

Rocco Rossi has been the CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario since November 2004. He is a tireless fundraiser for the Foundation and a passionate spokesperson for healthy lifestyles. To draw attention to both, he has kayaked 490 km from Toronto to Ottawa, cycled the 1900-km length of Yonge Street from Rainy River to Toronto, and climbed the stairs of the seven tallest office towers in Toronto enough times to equal the height of Mount Everest. His position at the Foundation was preceded by a career in the private sector with senior roles at Advanced Material Resources, The Boston Consulting Group, The Toronto Star, Labatt/Interbrew, and MGI Software. He has been a member of private, public and charitable boards, including AMR, the Ivey Foundation, the Empire Club of Canada, the Internet Advertising Bureau of Canada, and the United Way of Greater Toronto. He was born in Toronto, and earned his B.A. from McGill University and his M.A. from Princeton University.

OPPI welcomes its newest member!



Member Service Award

2008 RECIPIENTS



Robert Armstrong, MCIP, RPP

Robert Armstrong has been a member of the Institute since 1993. His contributions over these years include serving on the Lakelands Executive Committee, serving as Membership Outreach Representative for Lakelands District, and planning events for the Blue Mountains/West

Lakelands Social Committee. Robert chaired the Conference Committee for the very successful 2007 Blue Skies Planning OPPI Conference in the Town of the Blue Mountains. He is known for his professionalism and dedication to the Institute, and the enthusiasm he shows in serving as a volunteer.



Dr. David Gordon, MCIP, RPP

Dr. David Gordon has been involved in OPPI matters for more than two decades. His many contributions to the Institute include sitting on the OPPI Central District Executive and Program Committee, serving as an OPPI planning awards juror, volunteering as an OPPI membership

examiner, and serving on the Continuing Education Program Committee, the 1995 APA/CIP/OPPI Conference Program Committee, and the 1998 OPPI Conference Committee. He was also Program Committee co-chair for the 2001 OPPI/CIP Joint Conference in Ottawa. Professor Gordon has provided ongoing support for OPPI's Urban Design, Healthy Communities and World Town Planning Day initiatives and encourages his students from Queen's University to attend OPPI events. He has been a contributor to the *Ontario Planning Journal* and a speaker in the Eastern Ontario District's Ottawa Urban Forum, and helped coordinate the successful implementation of the Eastern District planning workshops.



Matt Pearson, MCIP, RPP

Matt Pearson has been a member of OPPI since 1990, and has been involved with Southwest District Executive for several years, most recently as chair of the District for two terms, ending November 2007. During his terms on OPPI Council, he served as Treasurer for two years.

He currently serves as District Representative on the Recognition Committee. He has helped organize two OPPI conferences – the 2007 conference in the Town of the Blue Mountains and the 2002 conference in London. As a member of the Southwest District Executive, he has promoted OPPI initiatives in the Southwest, helped organize World Town Planning Day activities, and been involved in student panel discussions. Matt has been an Exam A examiner for Southwest district for many years and a mentor for many planners in the District.



Mary Lou Tanner, MCIP, RPP

Mary Lou Tanner has been a full member of OPPI since 1991. She served as the Central District representative from 2003 to 2007; during this time, she was the co-chair of the 2005 OPPI Conference Committee in Hamilton-Burlington. During the restructuring of the

Central District and the implementation of the new Western Lake Ontario District (WLO), she formed a local "council" to develop an identity for the new district. This initiative helped form the basis of an executive in the WLO District. Mary Lou continues to represent WLO District on the executive as well as on the OPPI Membership Committee, and is the co-chair for programs for the 2009 joint OPPI/CIP conference to be held in Niagara Falls. Mary Lou has received three Awards of Excellence for Planning from OPPI.

Scholarships

GERALD CARROTHERS Graduate Scholarship



Nigel Selig

Nigel Selig began the master's program in planning at the University of Waterloo in 2007, after graduating from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. While at Mount Allison, Nigel worked as a student research assistant in the dendrochronology lab, using tree-rings to identify paleoclimates and date historic

wooden structures. As president of the Association of Graduate Planners at the University of Waterloo, he organized academic, sporting, and social events, as well as promoting professional development and networking activities. Nigel has also been an active participant in several OPPI events throughout the Southwestern District. His interests in planning include creating resilient and sustainable communities in the face of climate change.

Undergraduate Scholarship



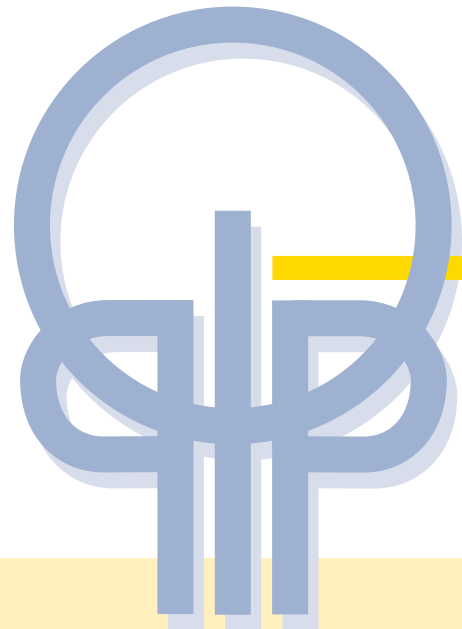
Tom Schwerdtfeger

Tom Schwerdtfeger graduated in 2008 from the planning program at Ryerson University. He has also studied geography at York University and commerce at the University of British Columbia. At Ryerson, he served as student representative on the Ryerson University Senate and on the Planning Director Search Committee, as well as administrative

chair for the Ryerson Association of Planning Students. He was an active participant in the Canadian Association of Planning Students conference when it was held at Ryerson in 2008. He has worked as a consultant to Toronto Councillor Adam Vaughan, creating an interactive series of web-based community maps of Ward 20 to promote community planning. In May, Tom accepted a two-year planning internship through Alberta Municipal Affairs. He is now working south of Edmonton in Leduc County. Tom eventually plans to round out his planning education by completing the Master of Urban Development degree.

NEW Scholarship for 2009

OPPI has worked with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to offer a new scholarship to recognize outstanding student research on planning for aging communities. The first winner will be announced at the 2009 conference. Watch for more information coming soon.



Thank You

Juries

OPPI would like to thank all those who served on the juries of the 2008 Excellence in Planning Awards.

Kim Beckman, BA, LLB, Davies Howe Partners (external jury member)

Nadia De Santi, MCIP, RPP, Fotenn Consultants Inc.

Alan Drozd, MCIP, RPP, City of Oshawa

John Fior, MCIP, RPP, The Township of East Ferris

Karen Hammond, MCIP, RPP, University of Waterloo

Bill Janssen, MCIP, RPP, City of Hamilton

Jeff Leunissen, MCIP, RPP, City of London

John McHugh, Edelman Canada (external jury member)

Geoff McKnight, MCIP, RPP, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury

Lynn Morrow, MCIP, RPP, Lynn Morrow Consulting

Kevin Stolarick, PhD, The Martin Prosperity Institute, Joseph L. Rotman School of Management (external jury member)

Gary Switzer, B.Arch, OAA, Great Gulf Group of Companies (external jury member)

South West District: Trees and More

Steve Jefferson

The South West District stretches from Windsor to Tobermory to Port Dover, and includes London, Sarnia, Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge and Guelph. We are facing economic challenges with sectors that are strong and growing, sectors that have problems, and some sectors going both ways at once. Waterloo Region is the home of the Blackberry and many other tech firms, and agricultural commodity prices are the highest they have been in a long time (as long as it stops raining long enough to harvest the crops). Tourism in areas such as Stratford and the Great Lakes shoreline are facing a strong Canadian dollar and high fuel costs. The big three auto firms and related parts firms are hanging on, while Woodstock is preparing for the opening of the new Toyota assembly plant; related employment and residential investments are rippling up and down the 401 corridor.



Steve Jefferson

Planners in our District are dealing with these economic issues, in addition to the tasks we all face implementing recent provincial planning initiatives. For the Institute, the number of members in Southwest is growing. From 2004 to 2008, the District has grown from 530 to 572 members. I wish to recognize the efforts of volunteers in our District who have worked to recruit new members and to support and mentor provisional members through the membership process. We also benefit from the students and faculty at planning schools in Waterloo and Guelph, and the opportunity to share our time on campus with the planners of tomorrow.

The annual Ayr curling bonspiel was held in February in support of our scholarship Foundation, and a dinner event was held in Ingersoll in May. We are partnering with area Health Units and Trails organizations to present a one-day session in Fergus on October 9 titled "Creating Healthy Communities: From Design to Practice." It is another chance to discuss the Healthy Communities paper with interested non-planners. The keynote speakers from Boulder, Colorado, will share their experience building an integrated transportation network with less reliance on personal autos. Thanks to our District executive (and the many members who serve on Provincial

Committees) for all the work they do to profile the important role of planning and planners in South West District.

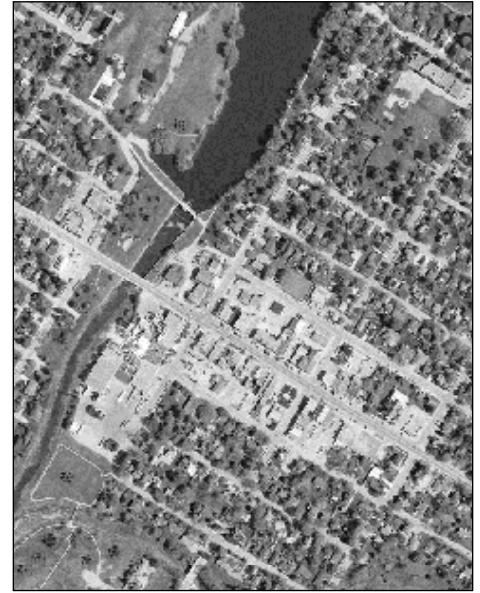
The following story about the NeighbourWoods tree inventory in Mitchell is another example of how people are willing to donate their time and expertise for their community. My Dad, who passed away this Spring, was one of the local volunteers who shared his knowledge and love of trees. The end result is a Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan that will help the community take care of all 13,572 trees for the next generation.

NeighbourWoods in the Municipality of West Perth

An increasing number of municipalities in Ontario are creating tree inventories through the NeighbourWoods protocol developed by Dr. Andy Kenney and Daniela Putic-Mladenovic at the University of Toronto.

Neighbourhood-scale inventories have been completed, ranging from Sarnia (1,136 trees documented) and Hamilton (5 areas of 1,000 trees each) to the Toronto area. These include the East Don (376 trees) and Harbord Village (approx. 2,000 trees). The Municipality of West Perth recently completed a four-year inventory of the entire Mitchell Ward and documented a total of 13,572 trees.

The NeighbourWoods protocol was developed to allow local volunteers to create not only an urban tree database of species and size, but to also complete a consistent assessment of the tree condition based on 16 factors. Entry into a database then allows Dr.




Inventory helps in preparing for invasive species



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Kenney and his team to issue a report that can be used to create a long-term urban forest management plan. A typical Inventory Report will describe the composition of the forest, tree conditions, trees in conflict, candidate heritage trees, and a tree valuation.

West Perth is an amalgamated municipality in South West District that includes three rural townships and the former Town of Mitchell, within the County of Perth. With the assistance of Ken Maronets of MNR (Stewardship Co-ordinator with the Perth Stewardship Network), the local Council and staff supported the launch of the NeighbourWoods project. Data in the Mitchell Ward was collected over the summer months from 2003 to 2006. Volunteers worked more than 1,000 hours over the four years to complete the inventory. A core group of seven volunteers (including my Dad, Norm Jefferson) were supported by more than a dozen other volunteers, Quebec exchange students, and Ontario Stewardship Ranger crews. Also recognized are all the landowners who permitted the volunteers access onto their property for completion of the inventory.

Four U ofT students then prepared "Protecting Our Common Roots: A Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan for the Citizens of Mitchell, Ontario" (December,



Caution, activists at work

2006) in consultation with Dr. Kenney. The formal NeighbourWoods Tree Inventory Report was issued in February 2007. The Inventory and Management Plan was presented at a public meeting in June. At that time, the municipality launched a new Forest sub-committee, which will report to the Energy and Environment Committee.

Section 2 of the PPS states that natural heritage features must be protected for their economic, environmental and social benefits. The importance of connectivity and diversity are also discussed. Now that West Perth has an inventory of the trees within the Mitchell Ward and a Management Plan, residents, staff and Council can make better-informed

decisions about the trees on both public and private lands. Other benefits of the protocol include bringing together residents with a shared concern and increasing overall public awareness of local urban forestry issues. For example, at the June public meeting a presentation was made regarding the advance of the Emerald Ash Borer in Ontario. Knowing the location of all 600 ash trees will help the residents prepare as the invasive species advances into the area.

Steve Jefferson, MCIP, RPP, is a partner at K. Smart Associates Ltd. in Kitchener, and is the Southwest District Representative. He can be reached at steve@ksmart.on.ca

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Around the World in 18 Days: A Tale of Four Cities

Paul J. Bedford

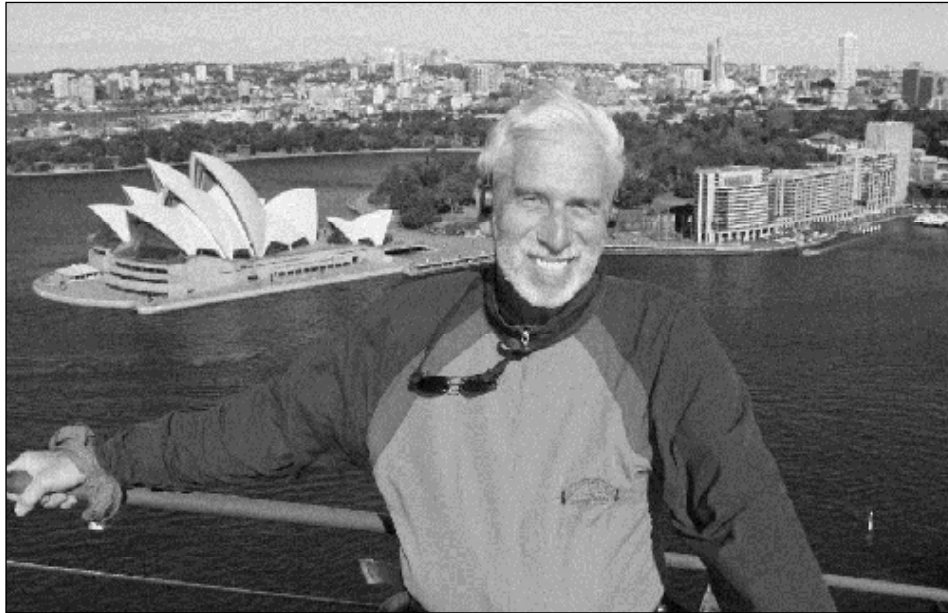
THIS SUMMER I MANAGED TO ACHIEVE A LIFE-LONG DREAM to circle the globe. It was the chance of a lifetime that took me to Hong Kong, Auckland, Sydney and London in the span of 18 days. It was an amazing learning and growing experience that combined six days of intensive work in Auckland along with a variety of meetings with key transit officials and city planners in all cities.

The trip had its origin several months ago when I was invited by the City of Auckland, New Zealand, to speak at a week-long series of public conversations sponsored by the Mayor of Auckland on such topics as a new citywide plan, governance, transit, waterfront development and amalgamation. The logistics associated with such a trip were complex. While all New Zealand expenses were paid for by Auckland, I soon discovered that a One World business class fare would actually be cheaper than a return business class ticket from Toronto to Auckland. As such, I had the unique experience of enjoying flat bed luxury on Cathay Pacific, Qantas and British Airways all around the world. I am now clearly spoiled for life but it certainly made the long flights between destinations quite enjoyable.

Now that I am back, some questions are inevitable to ask. How does Toronto and our region compare? What stands out in each city? What thoughts did I take away about the planning profession?

Hong Kong

First impressions of Hong Kong are powerful and lasting. What hits you immediately is



On top at the bottom of the world

the energy of the city, the intensity of development and the amazing transit network. Hong Kong has a population of seven million in an area of about 1,000 square kilometres. Perhaps the best way to visualize this is to imagine the current Greater Golden Horseshoe population within an area roughly one and a half times the area of the City of Toronto. Given that about 80 percent of Hong Kong is actually open space and mountains, the actual built density of the city is enormous. Clusters of 40-50+ storey towers extend throughout the city and suburbs. It is New York City on steroids.

With my Metrolinx Board of Directors hat on, I had an excellent meeting with Malcolm Gibson of the Metropolitan Transit Railway (MTR) to learn how the MTR was structured, funded and how it utilizes the value-capture mechanism associated with new development. The MTR network consists of ten different subway and railway lines that carry 3.4 million people per day with an on-time record of 99.9 percent! The bus, streetcar and extensive ferry system that feed the network are all privately operated. What is amazing is that the MTR makes a substan-

tial profit every year. It is jointly owned by the government and by private shareholders, with a ratio of 77 percent public to 23 percent private. It is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange.

MTR makes a profit for a number of reasons.

First, it is a fabulous network that provides excellent, seamless service. Second, the density of development is so high that it virtually guarantees high ridership with approximately 90 percent of all trips in Hong Kong made by transit. Car owner-

ship is not common due to cost and the simple reality of very few parking spaces. Third, MTR aggressively embraces a value-capture mechanism where private-sector developers compete for the right to develop residential, retail and office uses adjacent to existing and new transit stations with MTR capturing 30-50 percent of the increased land value. Land is leased for periods of 50+ years with renewal options. Since all land in Hong Kong is government-owned, this is very lucrative for MTR. This approach actually accounts for about 15-20 percent of annual MTR revenues. The scale of development is almost always highrise, with typical buildings of 30-40 storeys and prime downtown sites over the Central Station of 80+ storeys. At present, it has 71,851 units and 756,556 square metres of commercial development in its portfolio.

All planners should make it a point to visit Hong Kong. You can't help but be blown away by the experience and it will stick with you forever. I left the heat and humidity of Hong Kong both exhausted but totally exhilarated and headed south into winter.

Auckland

In contrast to Hong Kong, Auckland is a relatively small city-region of 1.2 million people in a country of only four million. What is most notable is the overwhelming beauty of the natural environment. The stunning dual harbours facing the Tasman Sea and the Pacific, former volcanoes within the city proper, extensive shorelines, islands and a pleasant climate all make Auckland very special. It is ironic, but I believe living in such a beautiful natural environment has resulted in a reduced level of attention being paid to good city-building practices. Auckland has a mixed track record of waterfront development, mediocre architecture, and a weak public transit system, and is dominated by a car-culture mindset.

I spent a lot of time with Robert Lipka, a senior urban designer with the City of Waitakere who used to work for the City of Toronto; Ludo Campbell-Reid, the Auckland Manager of Urban Design; and Penny Pirrit, the Auckland City Planning Manager, and their respective staff. They are embarking on a new urban design-based citywide plan, which is a departure from traditional policy approaches.

The City is currently debating the pros and cons of amalgamation and the central government has appointed a Royal Commission to study the matter in depth. The Commission will be coming to Toronto in October to meet with various officials



Auckland's natural beauty

here to learn from our experience. My candid remarks on Toronto's experience attracted large public- and private-sector audiences and generated a lot of attention in the media with a prominent article in the *New Zealand Herald*.

My advice to Aucklanders on amalgamation was to tell it like it is and to be careful what they wish for. I described how the Ontario government imposed amalgamation on Toronto despite a strong "no" vote in a

non-binding referendum and how the downloading of financial responsibilities for social housing, transit and some social services made the past ten years extremely difficult. I also talked about the ongoing need to establish better governance models of citizen engagement, the expansion of additional powers and financial tools in addition to the lack of cost savings associated with amalgamation.

However, I was at pains to point out that anything can work if the will is there to make it succeed. At present, two basic models are being contemplated. The first is a single larger city, similar to the Toronto experience, while the second is four stronger cities with an upper-tier regional level. I encouraged the Royal Commission to do its homework and be very sure about what it wants to achieve before proceeding. The Commission is due to report by the end of this year to central government, with a New Zealand election expected in late fall, so 2009 will definitely see a decision on whether or not to proceed with amalgamation.

I also spent a fair amount of time talking about the 2002 official plan adopted by Toronto Council and how this new plan differed from the former seven official plans in existence prior to amalgamation. The situation in Auckland is similar except that their current citywide plans also incorporate the equivalent of the zoning by-law into the plan, making for an extremely large, complex and detailed document. The good news is that everything is in one document, but the size and cumbersome nature of the document make it unworkable. They are now



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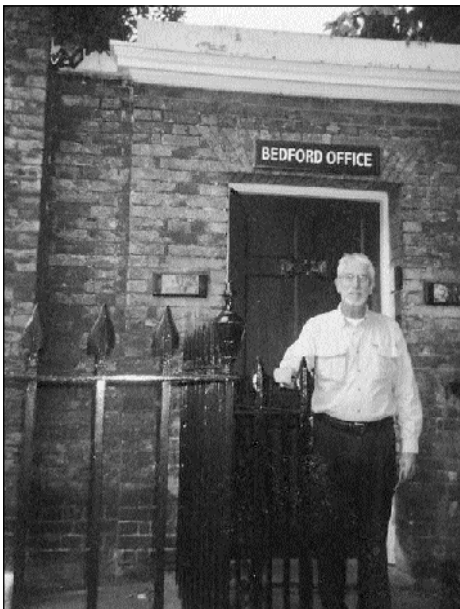
embarking on a new approach with urban design-based policies to be the foundation of a new plan. While my time in Auckland was very intensive, it was most rewarding. I would love to return at some point to see how things are evolving.

Sydney

My four-day experience in Sydney was full of adventure. The Sydney region has a population of about four million, which is slightly smaller than the GTA. Sydney is located on the most spectacular harbour in the world with an extensive ferry system that links the downtown with a series of wonderful neighbourhoods that seem to outdo each other for their physical setting and amenities. Of course, the famous Opera House and the Harbour Bridge remain the signature landmarks for tourists and locals alike. My four-hour climb up and down the Sydney Harbour Bridge was truly amazing and made me feel I was on top of the world.

I was privileged to stay with friends and to spend time with Sue Holliday, the former Director of Planning for New South Wales, and Bob Meyer, a local architect who has spent his working life in Sydney in both the public and private sector. Extensive walks with Sue revealed a dynamic mixed-use waterfront, vibrant neighbourhoods and a very impressive diversity of new housing typologies on the waterfront and inner city that are medium scale in height.

Inclusionary zoning is the norm in Sydney, which ensures a healthy presence of affordable family housing within new buildings. The average cost of new condominiums in downtown neighbourhoods was



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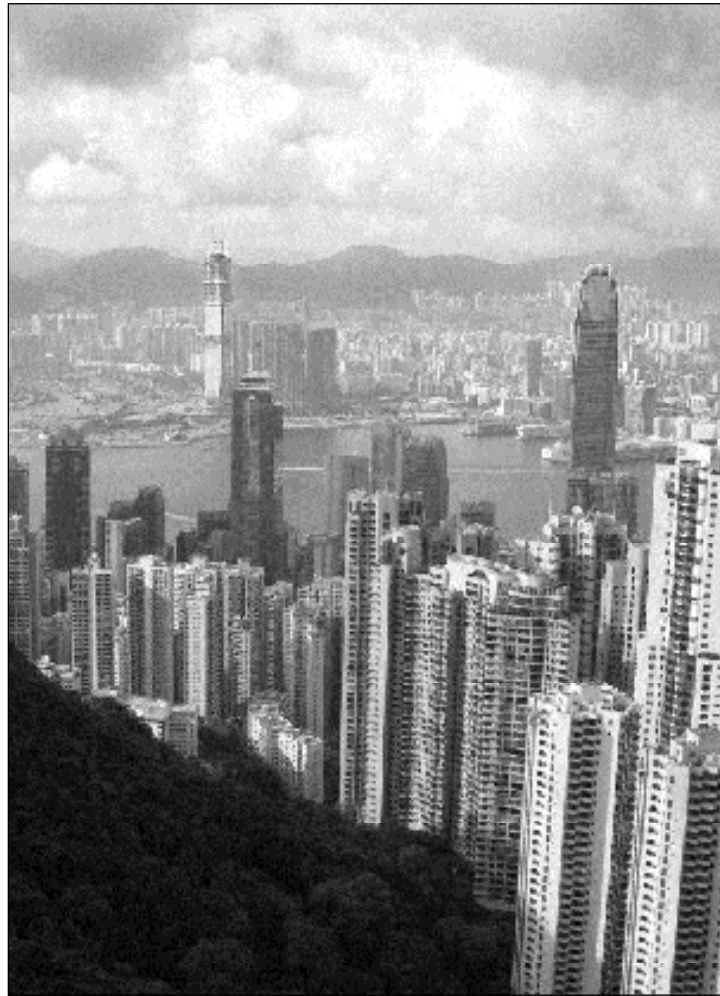
roughly double that of Toronto. The elevated expressway system that parallels the inner harbour and nearby Darling harbour was not pleasant, but it did not feel as intrusive as the Gardiner in Toronto. It is amazing how palm trees, extensive vegetation and year-round pleasant weather can help to mask the highway.

Perhaps the most notable observation was the general absence of surface parking and or vacant lots. I discovered that this was probably a result of Land Value Taxation, which basically taxes land rather than buildings. Only the value of the land is used as the basis for determining the assessed value of the property for taxation purposes. The value of buildings or other improvements to the property are not included. As a result, there is a natural market incentive at work to encourage development, as it simply does not make much economic sense to keep property vacant (or undeveloped). Principal residences are exempt from the tax.

New South Wales also levies a parking tax in certain areas and the revenue is used to help fund the regional transportation system. New South Wales permits local municipalities to charge a land value tax as well as a variety of user fees and other charges. Sydney raises over half of its revenue from the land tax and other charges with about one-third from user fees with the balance from such sources as developer fees and fines. It left a lasting impression on how the right financial tools can help make planning far more effective.

London

Leaving Sydney behind was hard but my final stop in London was only 17,200 kilometres away! After a fuelling stop in Bangkok and a 23-hour flight, I touched down at Heathrow on a glorious summer day. Having seen all the tourist highlights on many previous visits, I concentrated my three days almost entirely on the South Bank of the Thames,



Hong Kong

walking, talking and exploring the wonders of a major world city going about its business. I visited the South Borough market, East market and Elephant and Castle market. What I enjoyed most was talking to local folks over a beer about issues in their own communities such as transit, housing and politics. I also found the best hotel deal ever—right on the Thames at the Lambeth bridge within sight of Westminster for 80 pounds a night. Being over 60 qualified me for this amazing rate, so I was quite happy to show my passport to verify my age! The well-known expression that “if you are tired of London, you are tired of life” was never more true.

I did cross the Thames to visit the newly restored St. Pancras Station, home of the Eurostar train to Paris and Brussels. St. Pancras is a jewel in the crown of London's eight major train stations and is what Toronto's Union Station should be. The soaring glass canopy over the station platform and the stunning architecture await the traveller for the two-hour, 15-minute trip to Gare du Nord station in Paris. While I did not have time to make the trip, I learned that it is quite common for many Londoners to go on day trips to feast on the gastronomic delights of Paris for lunch and be back home in London for dinner.

My last day was devoted to personal family business, learning more about my own family history in Tunbridge Wells—a 50-minute train ride south from Waterloo East Station through the rolling green countryside of Kent. After a lunch at the Bedford Pub on the main street called Mount Pleasant Road, I strolled the town to discover my roots and mingle with the locals. A taxi ride to the neighbouring villages of Brenchley and Matfield was worth the effort, with a walk through the church cemetery revealing several family graves from as far back as the 1700s. It was actually

quite moving and a wonderful way to spend the last day of my trip.

Final Thoughts

After so much travelling in such a short period of time the flight back to Toronto felt very short, but it still gave me time to collect my thoughts on cities and the urban planning profession. Watching the world go by at 38,000 feet makes it all seem quite small at times, but it is still a very big place. Total flying time to circle the globe added up to 59 hours.

Even though I spent time in only four cities, I was struck by the commonality of planning issues in each. Governance, transit, housing, economic growth, public realm investment, environment, waterfront regeneration, urban design and civic engagement are on everyone's agenda, but tackled differently. Another observation was about the role of urban and regional planners in their efforts to advance good city-building with varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, talented planners have sometimes become casualties, being relieved of their duties as new political leaders are swept into power.

In general, it seems that the planning profession places too much emphasis on trying to achieve planning goals primarily through regulatory mechanisms. In many cities, the efforts of other municipal departments can often run counter to the goals of the planning department. This seems especially true in places where economic development and finance department policies unintentionally end up undermining the goals of city-building. A much greater alignment of municipal planning policies and financial tools would produce far better results on the ground and would work with the natural market forces to achieve public planning objectives. I couldn't help but wonder how the intensification objectives of the provincial growth plan would be accelerated if a land value system of taxation was in place in Ontario. The existence of stable long-term funding sources for transit in Hong Kong, Sydney and London also make a huge difference in helping to achieve regional planning goals.

Where the tools exist, great things happen. Where they don't, city-regions tread water. These are the very issues that contin-

ue to confront the Toronto city-region as the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan and Investment Strategy are debated this fall. Time will tell if the region can rise to the occasion to make the tough choices needed to achieve the vision of a sustainable future.

I was very fortunate that the only mishap of the trip was a stolen Canadian flag luggage tag between Auckland and Sydney. Given the similarity of the Australian and New Zealand flags, perhaps the clarity of the maple leaf was irresistible. As a proud Canadian, it made me smile to know that our flag was such a coveted and recognizable symbol far from home. It was the trip of a lifetime that I shall never forget.

Paul Bedford, FCIP, RPP, is contributing editor for Planning Futures. He teaches at the universities of Ryerson and Toronto and is on the Board of Metrolinx, the National Capital Commission Planning Advisory Committee and Toronto's Waterfront Design Review Panel. He is also a senior associate with the Canadian Urban Institute.

Climate Change

Degree by Degree

Beate Bowron

FLOODS IN BANGLADESH, DROUGHTS IN AFRICA AND AUSTRALIA, ever-increasing numbers of "100-year" hurricanes in the Caribbean, an ice-free Northwest Passage—not a day goes by when climate change is not in the news. Most climate models show that the earth's global mean temperatures will rise between 2 and 5 degrees Celsius by as early as 2030. The fourth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has put an end to the fighting among scientists as to whether climate change is happening and to what extent.

Climate change has been sneaking up on everyone—degree by degree. In the face of seemingly overwhelming problems, where should planners committed to safeguarding the future of their communities begin—sustainability, mitigation, or perhaps adaptation? Surely, efforts are needed in all areas. However, it is clear that, even if the whole global community stopped emitting greenhouse gases today, current climate change impacts would still be with us for the next 100 years.

The Canadian Institute of Planners'

(CIP) draft Climate Change policy commits every member of the Institute to include cli-

mate change implications in reporting out on planning projects or policies and to direct their recommendations towards mitigation and/or adaptation. At the same time, the Institute has made a strong commitment



Photo: Tony Miller

Severe drought devastates the landscape



Photo: Tony Miller

Fire wreaks havoc and demands different responses from the public

to provide access to relevant and timely information, which will enable its members to adhere to this ground-breaking policy. The draft policy is currently being circulated among Affiliates for comment and is on the CIP website.

CIP's activities in the climate change field do not end there. During 2007/08 CIP's cooperation with the Climate Change Adaptation branch of Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN), the Institute was able to award eight scholarships to graduate planning students working in the field for a total of \$40,000. At the same time, two teams of volunteer CIP planners worked to produce climate change adaptation plans with the pilot communities of Hall Beach and Clyde River on Baffin Island in Nunavut (on CIP's website). I want to take this opportunity to recognize again the commitment and creativity of Christine Callihoo, then with Hemmera, and Dan Ohlson, Compass Resource Management, both from Vancouver, and Brian Render, Render Planning Services, Yellowknife, and Rory Baksh, Dillon, from Ontario.

As well, CIP has developed climate-change workshops to be delivered to its members across the country. One of these is approximately two to three hours in length and suitable for an Affiliate program meeting as an introductory professional development seminar. The other is meant to last two days and is directed at planners with a specialty in sustainability or environmental planning.

Also in the pipeline is an introductory module on climate change intended to become a part of basic planning courses in

our planning schools. The Institute is in the process of firming up further projects with NRCAN and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) for the next two years. But more about that in future columns.

The future—what should a column on

climate change for the Ontario Planning Journal look like? This column will, of course, not be an exhaustive monitor of the state of climate change planning in Ontario and elsewhere. Instead, I hope to feature climate change initiatives and projects that will help others to tackle the planning challenges in their communities. To this end I will need the help of readers of the Journal. Let me know how climate change is affecting your communities, about new and innovative ways in which you are dealing with the issues, about the obstacles you are facing, perhaps about a lack of awareness that you have to overcome. I invite your comments!

Beate Bowron, FCIP, RPP, is the Ontario Planning Journal's contributing editor for Climate Change. As president of Beate Bowron Etcetera she is busy with an eclectic portfolio of planning projects in Canada and abroad. With Gary Davidson she is completing the Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the Government of Nunavut. Beate is also a Senior Associate with the Canadian Urban Institute. Beate can be contacted through the Journal or e-mail at beatebowron@sympatico.ca.

Transportation

Addressing NBIMFYism in Transit Planning (No Bus In My Front Yard)

Dennis Kar

THE TORONTO STAR RECENTLY REPORTED an interesting case of NIMBYism for transit planners. The story "Route Change Request Sparks Bus War" tells a story of a local resident in Ajax who is petitioning Durham Region Transit (DRT) to remove an existing bus service from her street.

The Ajax resident has a custom-built home along the shores of Lake Ontario and claims she cannot open her windows because of the "smell and noise" of the bus "roaring down the road." This also interferes with her ability to "hear the TV when the bus goes by." So far, 75 residents have signed a petition started by this homeowner to reroute the bus from the street (whether the 75 residents live on the street adjacent to the route is not clear). The homeowner has

also hinted that she and her husband have some degree of influence with local political decision makers; a tool she is trying to capitalize on to achieve her objective.

On the opposite side of this "bus war," many local residents have stated that they rely on the bus for work or other activities. Rerouting the bus would increase their walking distance to the closest bus stop to an "unreasonable" distance; this is also a journey that may be difficult for a number of seniors in the community, particularly during inclement weather conditions.

Therefore, a situation has been created with two clearly opposing outcomes: reroute the bus to improve the enjoyment of a neighbourhood for some residents, or maintain the bus route to ensure good accessibility for residents as a whole. While the issues

and outcomes seem clear, the answer is not always that simple.

At first glance, this situation presents a clear case of NIMBYism or NBIMFY (No Bus in My Front Yard). Reducing accessibility for some residents simply to allow others to better enjoy their favourite weekly Reality TV show seems to go against good planning principles. But what if only a small number of residents on this street used this bus service, and moving the bus would increase their walk by only a few minutes? In transit, requests are frequently made to move bus stops closer to a person's residence to minimize walking distance or allow them to wait for a bus in the comfort of their home. Is this request any more individualistic than requesting a bus route to be moved? How do transit planners objectively determine the overall impact of these decisions on the effectiveness of the service and the ability of transit to meet its overall goals and objectives? How do we distinguish NIMBYism or NBIMFYism from valid resident concerns?

The answer is having an objective decision-making process that is grounded through a public process that looks to balance the interests of several stakeholder groups. The answer is having a sound, publicly documented and council-approved service standards process in place.

What are Service Standards?

Service standards are defined as a policy document that provides "an objective rationale for allocating a transit system's limited resources in such a way as to strike a balance between the interests of different parties¹." The document serves a similar purpose to an official plan and subsequent zoning by-laws in the area of land use planning and development.

The provision of transit services needs to balance competing interests that have an influence over how service is planned, funded and delivered. Two of these main interest groups are transit users and non-users. Transit users want to be able to get to their destination without hassle, in short order, in relative comfort, safely and securely. This also means having a bus within a reasonable walking distance of an origin or destination (typically less than a 5-minute walk). The non-users want a service that is efficient, does not rely too heavily on municipal subsidies, and does not interfere with their quality of life.

A service standards document will attempt to provide a balance between these different groups on the effectiveness and efficiency of the service (that is, ensuring



Bus routes not always popular with neighbours

taxpayer resources are being spent wisely) and a minimum standard of service for the user (that is, I will never have to wait more than 30 minutes for the next bus).

More importantly, a service standards document provides an overall framework of system policies, design guidelines, and performance measures that are tied to achieving overall community goals and objectives. Therefore, if a community goal is to improve accessibility, access to employment opportunities, and reduce congestion, transit service standards will document what type of service needs to be in place to help meet this overall objective. Thus, every decision that a transit planner makes is based on one overarching question: will this decision advance or hinder the overall goals of the community?

Solving the "Bus War" Through Service Standards

In the case of DRT, two standards have been set that are relevant to the Ajax "Bus War." First is a standard to ensure that the service is properly utilized (the route is achieving its intended purpose of delivering passengers

cost effectively). In this case, DRT has set a minimum utilization target between 7 to 28 passengers per hour of revenue service. The route in question is averaging well above this target at 34 rides per hour. To properly assess the impact, DRT will need to determine whether the portion of the route proposed to be removed will cause the overall performance of the entire route to fall below this target.

DRT also has a design standard to ensure a minimum level of accessibility for transit users. This standard ensures enough residences are close enough to a transit route to be willing and able to use the service. After all, if transit is not accessible, how will overall community-wide goals such as congestion reduction and employment access be achieved?

The design standard is based on ensuring a certain percentage of residences in the Region are within 400 metres (roughly a 5-minute walk) of a transit stop. Therefore, to properly assess the impact of this route modification, DRT will need to determine whether the removal of bus from the street will impact this standard in a negative way.

An advertisement for Montelth + Brown planning consultants. The background is dark with a large, stylized 'mbpc' logo in white. The text 'Montelth + Brown' is in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'planning consultants' underneath it. Below that, the tagline 'Vision, Depth and Commitment' is written in a script font. At the bottom, it says 'An Award Winning Firm Established in 1977'. On the right side, there is a list of services under the heading 'Specializing in:'.

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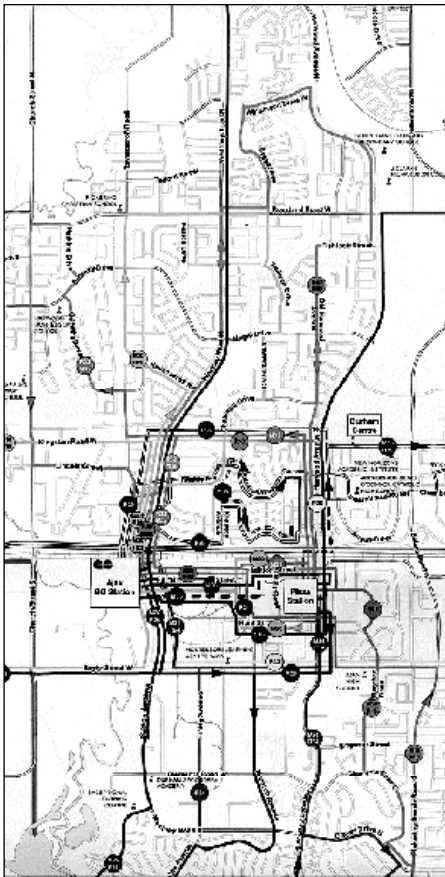
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Summary

The outcome of this debate will be decided by DRT. Whatever the decision, DRT's existing service standards policy will help identify whether it is in the community's best interest to modify the route. Given the sensitivity of this decision and the perceived influence of politicians reported in the *Toronto Star*, the use of a publicly documented service standards process will help combat the perception that a transit system is favouring any one stakeholder group over the other. This results in a transparent decision-making process that, while not satisfying the individual interests of all groups, will allow DRT to maintain its credibility and make a decision that benefits the community as a whole.

¹ Source: CUTA

Dennis Kar, MCIP, RPP, is the Ontario Planning Journal's contributing editor for Transportation. A graduate of the McGill School of Urban Planning, Dennis is an Associate with Dillon Consulting Limited. He also teaches a course in transportation planning at Ryerson's School of Urban and Regional Planning.



Durham's transit routes

Heritage

The Value of Celebrating and Educating about Local Heritage

Michael Seaman



Hillary House

WHEN DEVELOPING WORK PLANS AND OBJECTIVES for municipal heritage programs, policy development, incentive programs, designations and heritage district plans are usually the core components. Sometimes they contain objectives to celebrate and educate about local heritage, but in most cases these activities are not a high priority. Certainly the work required to manage the fundamental aspects of heritage conservation can be considerable, but it is also important not to overlook the value of promotional and educational activities in the creation of a successful municipal heritage program. By promoting and celebrating local heritage we can help the community to see it in a new light—a positive light—which can be useful when it comes time to making the tough decisions about saving heritage resources.

A few years ago, the Town of Aurora began a concerted effort to improve the performance of its municipal heritage conservation pro-

gram. Since that time it has achieved its first heritage district and is working on its second, tripled the number heritage designations, introduced numerous new policies and



Morrison House

initiatives, hired its first heritage planner and committed over a million dollars to the restoration and conversion of the Church Street School into the Aurora Heritage Centre. Aurora is achieving its goal to be a municipality that makes the conservation of its heritage a priority. A measure of this success is that in 2008, Aurora was nominated by the community for the Prince of Wales Prize, signifying national excellence in heritage conservation. This success did not happen overnight, but one of the key reasons for it has been the variety of efforts to promote, celebrate and educate the community on the heritage of Aurora and to make full use of all opportunities in this area.

One of the earliest of these initiatives is the Aurora Heritage Plaque program. Started in the 1980s, the program was developed simply as a means of commemorating the name and date of construction of heritage buildings in the Town. The attractive but inexpensive wooden plaques carry no legal status and are provided by municipality at no cost to the homeowner. Public participation in this program has been extensive and the plaques have served to reinforce awareness that older buildings have heritage significance and that Aurora is a heritage town.

Another important and unique contributor to the higher profile of heritage in the community has been the role of its local newspaper *The Auran*. Launched in 2000 by local bookshop owner and history enthusiast Ron Wallace, and delivered free to all Aurorans, *The Auran* has placed considerable emphasis on educating Aurorans about the Town's history and heritage as a way of achieving its stated goal of "Knitting the Aurora Community Together." Not an issue goes by without some feature about historic Aurora and sometimes as many of five or six features are included, often authored by members of the Municipal Heritage Committee and heritage planning staff. The publisher understood from the outset that people like to read about local history and heritage and that appreciation for a common local heritage is a key component of a healthy community.

Doors Open Aurora is the most recent addition to Aurora's program of celebrating and educating about local heritage. Administered by the Town's municipal heritage advisory committee on a modest budget, Doors Open has grown in the three years of its existence to become a



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in every single category. These awards provide an opportunity to recognize exemplary achievement in heritage conservation. Since the awards are presented through the Ontario Heritage Trust, they provide a useful sense of recognition from outside the community that it is doing good work in the field of heritage conservation.

The highest of the Provincial honours is the Lieutenant-Governor's Ontario Heritage Awards for Lifetime Achievement and Youth Achievement, which are presented by the Lieutenant-Governor each year at Queen's Park. Aurora has been fortunate to have winners in both the Lifetime and Youth awards in these categories. The impact in the local community at seeing such high-level recognition for local heritage volunteers has been outstanding. Considerable media coverage has been generated and it has helped to reinforce Aurora's sense of pride in being a community that cares for its heritage.

The Young Heritage Leaders award is particularly important. Young people are a significantly underrepresented constituency among heritage advocates. It's important to recognize that the young people of today are the stewards of heritage tomorrow. This provides a useful means of encouraging young people to be interested and involved in heritage conservation.

Education is a key component of any successful municipal heritage program. Youth engagement is very important and can be achieved through local support for initiatives like Historical Fairs at local schools.



Keepers House

The Town of Aurora engages in a variety of initiatives to educate about local heritage including brochures and walking tours. Its website is the most important clearinghouse for heritage information. Users can find information about listed and designated heritage properties, heritage news and Doors Open Aurora. For the recently designated Heritage Conservation District, the Town created a special go-to page for reference by property owners in the district which provides a useful one-stop source of information, including a downloadable edition of the district plan.

One of the most successful of The Town's education initiatives occurred in 2006, when the Town of Aurora worked with *Edifice* magazine to create a municipally subsidized "Old House Restoration Workshop." All owners of listed and designated properties were invited to attend the workshop, and the Town subsidized the workshop. A full house of over 150 people attended the seven-hour workshop. This event is seen as a watershed moment in the history of Aurora's heritage program, since it significantly raised awareness about heritage conservation in the community.



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In 2008, the Town of Aurora has taken the celebration of Heritage resources to a new level as the Town has declared 2008 to be the year of Arts, Heritage and Culture in Aurora. Events and activities associated with Arts, Heritage and Culture will be taking place throughout the year to highlight existing initiatives in these areas and inspire achievements in the future.

A successful heritage conservation program is a key component of a vibrant and healthy community that plays an important role defining a sense of place, history and identity. It inspires creative and innovative new development and investment by providing unique and desirable spaces to live and work. It is no secret that municipalities that are considered the most desirable places to live, work and visit also have outstanding records in the conservation of heritage resources.

While the use of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and *Planning Act* are fundamental components of any municipal heritage program, it's important not to forget the influence

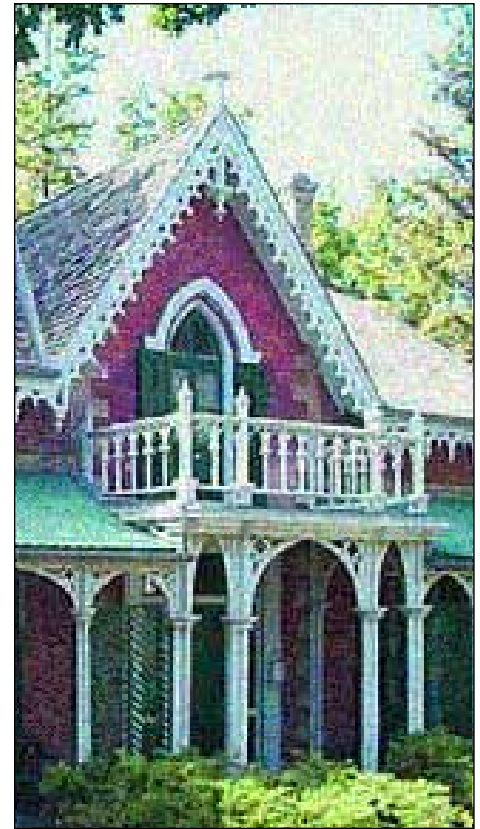


that efforts in the celebration and education about local heritage can have on achieving success on the physical conservation of heritage buildings and areas. The Town of

Aurora has used these initiatives to build a positive environment for heritage conservation and has successfully invigorated its heritage program to create successes in designation, heritage districts, policy development and heritage building conservation. Celebration and education are not the only components of a successful heritage program, but, unless heritage advocates can inspire councils and citizens

to enjoy local heritage, achieving its actual conservation will be far more difficult.

Michael Seaman, MCIP, RPP, is the Ontario Planning Journal's contributing editor for Heritage. Before moving to Oakville, he was a heritage planner with Aurora. A version of this article previously appeared in Municipal World.



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Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Planning

Philippa Campsie

Among the many thought-provoking insights afforded by the 2008 OPPI Symposium in North Bay, one from demographer and economist Dr. David Foot stood out. He cited a survey in which researchers found that people tend to imagine themselves to be younger than they really are—on average, 12 years younger. This mild delusion may simply mean that retirees fantasize about a sporty, active lifestyle when in fact they actually spend their lives bird-watching or puttering about in the garden. But it might have more serious consequences if they pursue the fantasy when making long-term decisions about where they live and the kind of community they choose.

Real estate professionals have known about these kinds of delusions for years. They watch people buy houses that reflect the lifestyle they aspire to, not the one they actually have. City workers buy into fantasies about small-town living, not realizing that the price is a brutal commute that leaves them too exhausted to participate in small-town life. Some homebuyers insist on restaurant-quality kitchens, when their only culinary skills involve reheating pizzas. Others demand houses with large backyards “for the children,” even though the children never play in the backyard because they are at the hockey arena, in after-school ballet classes, or riveted to computer games indoors.

Further popular delusions include those about saving time. Consider the Tim Horton’s drive-through. Those people idling in the long line-ups somehow fail to notice that other customers can park their cars, enter the premises on foot, and emerge with a double-double and a glazed cruller in the time it takes them to move forward three places in the line of twelve cars.

Advertisers love to exploit the human ability to hold two completely contradictory ideas in one’s mind at the same time. These are the people who bring you lines like, “The more you spend, the more you save.” And people still fall for it. Just the way they keep falling for the idea that BlackBerries will free them from the pressures of the office.

Planners are—or should be—well aware

of such delusions. For example, a study by Eric Miller and colleagues at the University of Toronto, published in 2004,* showed that many people believe they are saving money by buying a house in a suburb far from their urban workplaces. Although the purchase price may compare favourably with those of houses in the city, over time the transportation costs of commuting erase those savings, leaving them worse off. Even though gas prices are rising, the myth of the cheap house justifying a long commute persists.

I see all kinds of delusions in communications. Just as surveys have found that something like 80 percent of the people in any population consider themselves “above-average drivers,” I estimate that a similar proportion also consider themselves “above-average communicators.” Years ago, when I worked in a publishing company, I received a job application from someone who felt he would make an excellent editor, in part because he was very “detail oriented.” Yet in his covering letter, he not only misspelled my name, but the name of the company I worked for. He also mentioned his enthusiasm for an author we did not publish.

This sort of anecdotal evidence is borne out by research by psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger at Cornell University, which found that incompetent people tend to overestimate their abilities; and often fail to recognize incompetence—their own or anyone else’s.** (Such a

finding suggests both a justification for, and a barrier to, continuing professional learning—but I digress.) The point is that we have a tendency to think we are doing better than we are, therefore, why change?

The big question for planners is: how do we plan for a world in which people believe themselves to be younger, more energetic, and smarter than they really are, and in which they do not always act in their own best interests? Every time we have a debate over whether residential developers are giving consumers what they want, or what they think they ought to want, or what they wanted twenty years ago, or what developers want them to want, we are confronting this question in a modified form.

You can survey people until you are blue in the face, but if what people say they

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want does not really represent the way they actually live, then surveys are no help at all. Many products have failed miserably in the marketplace, although people in focus group after focus group swore up and down that a certain gizmo was just the thing they needed to make their lives complete.

And how do we promote healthy communities in a society blithely unaware of its weaknesses? Some people may think that their communities are perfectly healthy, because they have nice parks and large expanses of green lawn around every house. Never mind that residents have to drive everywhere, if it *looks* green, it must be green, right? Others think that exercise is what happens in health clubs or at home

using their own equipment, and would never dream of carrying our errands on foot or by bicycle. How do we convince these folks that individual health is not the same thing as community health?

One planner I know is frustrated in his efforts to promote healthier communities by stubborn and entrenched opposition (on the part of both residents and city councilors) to adding sidewalks in suburban areas, even though sidewalks increase the likelihood that children can and will walk to school. Others confront open hostility to bicycle paths and urban bicyclists in general. Even those who promote community gardens in public spaces have had to fight for their vision—and have sometimes lost.

As an Institute, we have developed a policy on healthy communities, and we are currently preparing a policy on planning for aging communities. What we have not yet done is to figure out how to sell such policies to people who do not want (or think they do not want) the kinds of communities we believe to be healthy and sustainable and who probably do not believe that they themselves will ever grow old. We are still preaching to the converted, and have not yet engaged the opposition. And some of that opposition takes the form of people who give lip-service to the idea of healthy, sustainable communities or aging in place, but whose actions suggest otherwise. This may be one of the Institute's biggest challenges ever.

* *Travel and Housing Costs in the Greater Toronto Area: 1986-1996*, Neptis Foundation, 2004.

** "Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 1999, 1121-34.

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