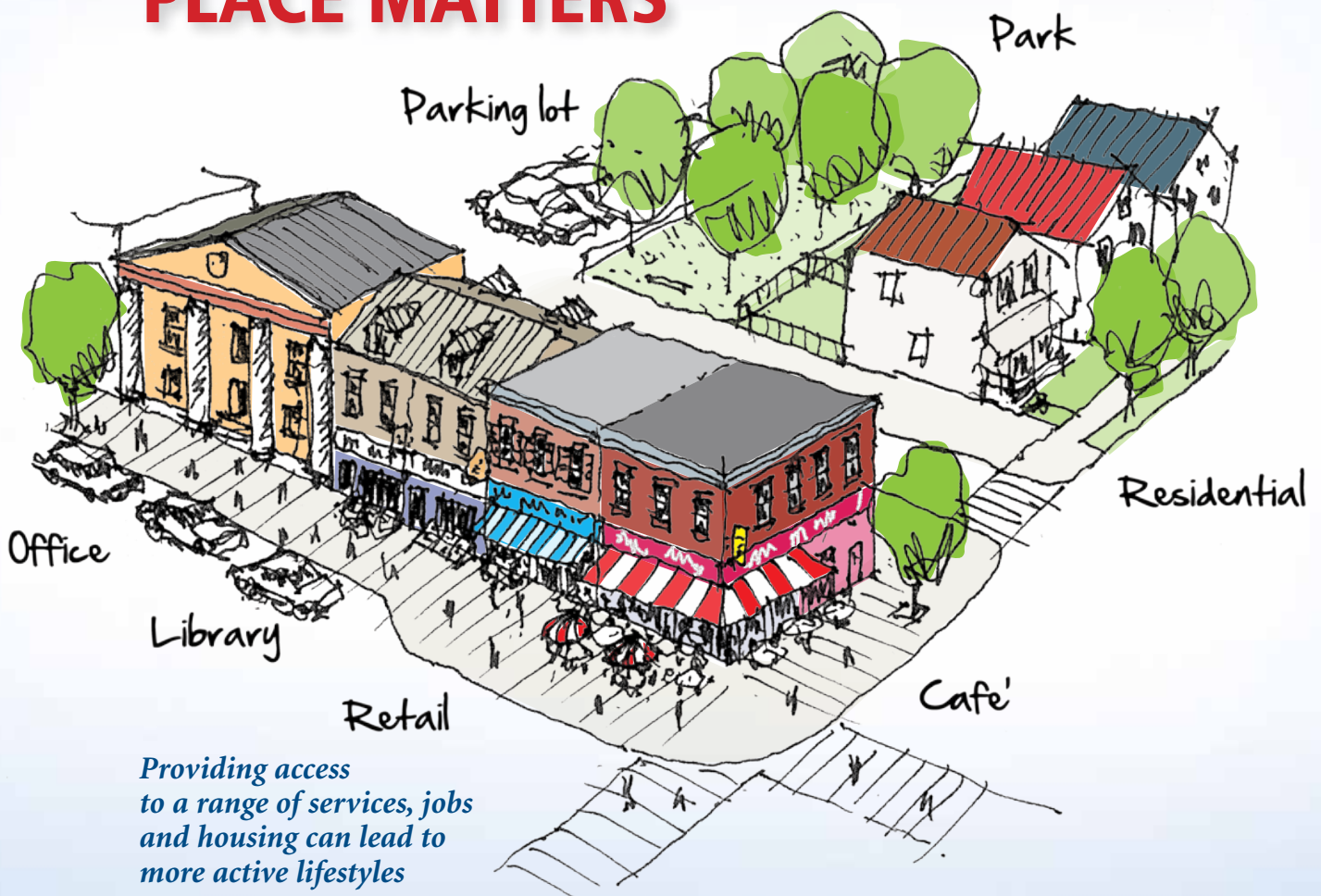


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MAY/JUNE 2011, VOL. 26, NO. 3

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CONTENTS

Features

Planning/health relationship 1
 Healthier built environments 4
 Full-day kindergarten 7
 Main street revitalization 9
 Human services planning 10
 Sudbury/Manitoulin CMHA 14
 Suburbia in Richmond Hill 16
 OPPI Call to Action 18

Districts & People

Lakeland 20

Toronto 20
 People 21

Commentary

Online distance education 21
 Letters to the editor 22

Departments

Legislation 23
 Heritage 24
 Urban design 26
 Province 27
 Membership outreach 28

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Rekindling the planning/health relationship

By Gayle Burse, James Dunn, Christine Gutmann, Daniel Leeming, Dr David Mowat, Bhavna Sivanand



The verdict is in: When it comes to health, place matters. In the fight to combat today's rising rates of diabetes and obesity, the auto-dependent "obesogenic" suburbs that typify many North American cities are the first opponents. Over the past two centuries, public health's focus on disease prevention and control has shifted from epidemics of infectious diseases to epidemics of chronic diseases. These chronic conditions are often labelled "diseases of the environment" because of the significant role played by the natural and built environments in spreading diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular and respiratory disorders, asthma and cancer. As such, combating the chronic diseases of the 21st Century requires non-traditional means of disease prevention. It requires a shift in traditional practices when dealing with our environment. It requires a collaboration of efforts across multiple sectors not typically associated with health. Specifically, it requires a joint vision and strong partnerships among people working in land-use planning, transportation and health.

The concept of a synergistic relationship between planning and health is not new, as public health and city planning have worked side-by-side in the past. In 19th Century North America transportation options were limited so people lived close to places of employment. The Industrial Revolution saw a boom of employment options and populations migrating to the urban cores, leading to noise, pollution and overcrowding. Infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid and yellow fever, spread by poor air and water quality and a lack of sanitation systems, were the major public health challenges, until the Sanitary Movement brought these diseases under control. Soon after, zoning was put into place to further protect the public

from exposure to the environmental toxins released from industrial production.

The creation of a department of public works that enabled expansion of development and a regulated separation of land uses led to the movement of people away from the city core and the development of suburbs as we know today. The availability of unlimited space on the outskirts of city centres and the surge of personal automobile use led to low-density develop-

ments comprising larger lot sizes, a separation of residential areas from commercial and retail spaces, and large distances between destinations. Over time, the partnership between public health and planning diminished, as the need to control the spread of infectious diseases in overcrowded city centres no longer existed. One of the unexpected consequences of this movement of people away from compact urban cores was a decrease in the ability to lead active lifestyles, presenting public health with a new challenge of chronic disease prevention.

In the traditional suburban development of today, many people work far away from their homes, children get bussed or driven to school, people use their personal vehicles to run daily errands, and neighbours have limited places for social interaction. These neighbourhoods under-support physical activity and over-support personal vehicle use: smaller



PHOTO: ASSOCIATION OF PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PROFESSIONALS (APBP)

Bicycle integration as part of active transportation network

Above: Only 12% of Canadian children meet Canada's physical activity guidelines (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010) of 90 minutes per day. More than 90% of kids begin watching TV before the age of 2, despite recommendations that screen time should be zero for children under 2 and limited to 1 hour for kids 2-5. (Active Healthy Kids Canada (AHKC) Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, 2010)

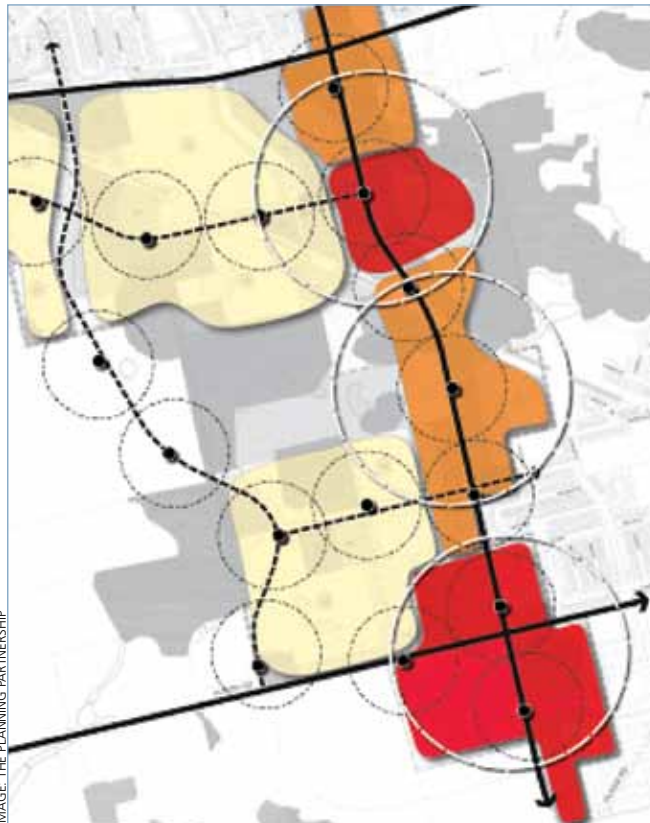
neighbourhood schools are often amalgamated into one larger distant school. This then decreases the walkable access for more and more children and denies them the use of a local schoolyard as a central recreational space. While contributing to physically inactive lifestyles, these neighbourhoods are also socially and physically isolating for some, such as seniors and new Canadians, who may be without driver's licences and may still be learning English.

Research has established a strong relationship between health and socio-economic status. Low socio-economic status is often associated with an increased risk of developing chronic diseases.^{1,2} Diseases of the environment may disproportionately affect those with lower socio-economic status, be it the downwind exposure to environmental toxins during the Industrial Revolution or the lack of access to healthy foods and healthcare services of today. Individuals with low socio-economic status may live in poorer communities that are more exposed to pollution from industrial sources. As well, individuals living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas may be at higher risk for morbidity and mortality resulting from chronic disease.^{3,4} Hence, the relationship between place and health involves a dimension of health equity, since many of the risk factors mediated by the built environment, such as access to healthy foods or healthcare services, interact with socio-economic variables.⁵ Reducing the issue of diabetes and obesity to simply a consequence of individual behaviour avoids addressing the more complex interactions of the environment, socio-economics, social norms and behavioural abilities. The impact of the physical environment

on health behaviour and ultimately health status often precludes or strongly influences individual choice, and this is particularly true for disadvantaged populations.

Already the leading causes of death in Canada and most developed nations, chronic diseases are also a rising burden on the healthcare system. Cardiovascular diseases are responsible for 32.1 per cent of deaths and are the leading cause of hospitalizations and drug costs in Canada.⁶ However, up to 80 per cent of cardiovascular diseases may be preventable through lifestyle changes. Diabetes alone is expected to cost Canadians \$12.2-billion dollars in 2010.⁷ Cancer is the leading cause of premature death in Canada, with an estimated 1 out of 4 Canadians expected to die from cancer.^{8,9} However, the proportion of cancers that are preventable is estimated at 50 per cent.⁸ Given the volume of disease, a focus on improving systems of treatment alone will not be sufficient to significantly reduce the burden of chronic diseases and so prevention must be the first priority. Effective disease prevention demands a shift in focus towards upstream causes of chronic disease, such as physical inactivity and unsupportive environments. Furthermore, interventions must take a systems approach, focusing on the interaction of multiple systems as determinants of health, with the goal of improving health on a population level.

A shift in an entire population's health cannot be brought about by simply changing individual behaviour on a case-by-case basis, but instead requires a change in the environments that contribute to the disease. In addition, population health approaches (and systems approaches in general) require a balance between individual choices and the collective good. In



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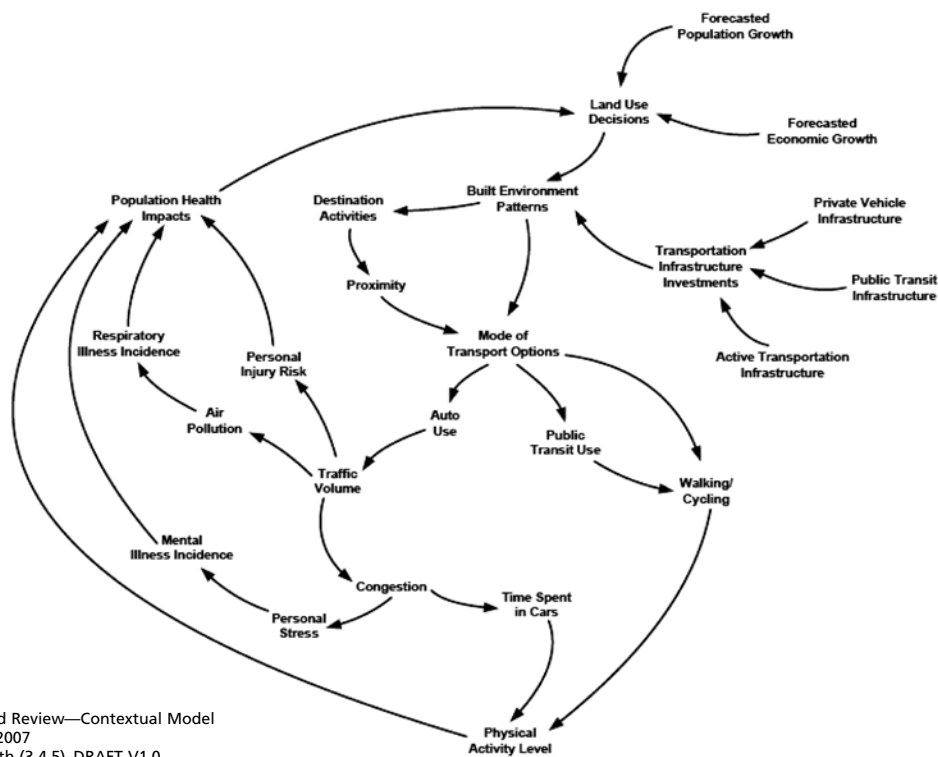
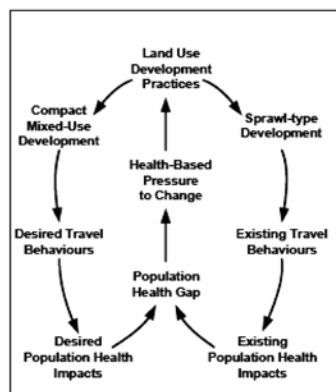
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Conceptual Model – Example



First Draft of Evidence and Best Practices Based Review—Contextual Model
Lawrence Frank and Company, December 21, 2007
Layer – From Built Environment to Public Health (3,4,5)—DRAFT V1.0

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29 January, 2008

suburban environments of today, residents and homeowners have very limited choice of neighbourhoods that would provide a range of services. These services include adequate transit, shops, local parks and community facilities that can be walked or biked to in 10 minutes or less. While people may still choose to live in an older, traditional suburban neighbourhood, they need to have the choice of affordable alternatives where they can lead active lifestyles through every phase of their lives.

Understanding the grave consequences of maintaining the status quo, the Region of Peel is endeavouring to provide some healthier lifestyle options for its residents. [See article this issue: *Peel Region, Healthier Built Environments.*]

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Since 2006, OPPI's healthy communities initiative has been the institute's leading public policy focus. For more information go to www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/content/Publications/innovativepolicyapers.aspx.

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Healthier Built Environments

By Gayle Bursey, James Dunn, Christine Gutmann, Daniel Leeming, Dr David Mowat, Bhavna Sivanand

The Region of Peel is one of Canada’s largest municipalities, with 1.2-million people calling Peel home. It is also one of Ontario’s fastest-growing regions, adding about 20,000 new residents each year supported by significant land development on the urban periphery. The region comprises the City of Mississauga, the City of Brampton and the Town of Caledon. Each municipality presents a unique land development challenge: predominantly infill development in Mississauga, a combination of infill and greenfield development in Brampton, and a combination of greenfield and rural development in Caledon.

In 2005, the Peel Region departments of Public Health and Planning presented a joint report to council entitled, *Overweight, Obesity and Related Health Consequences in Adults*, which highlighted the impact of the built environment on Peel residents’ health. In response, council directed Peel Public Health and planning staff to work together to research and make recommendations for planning policies and processes that provide greater opportunity for active living. In addition, council directed Peel Public Health to comment on development applications circulated within the region to improve the health-promoting potential of Peel neighbourhoods. As a result, Peel Public Health undertook several initiatives to foster healthier land use development patterns, including:

- Literature review on health and the built environment;
- Creation of an active transportation steering committee to study the active transportation infrastructure in Peel;
- Creation of a land-use planning and health steering committee;
- Development of a conceptual model depicting relationships between health and the built environment;
- Engaging municipal planners to provide health-related comments on municipal secondary and block plans, as well as other applications as deemed appropriate.

A thorough review of the literature on the relationship between health and the built environment identified the built environment as a strong determinant of health, but quickly exposed a dearth of best practice guidelines to support specific changes to built environments to mitigate health impacts. As a consequence, initial efforts to provide municipalities with input on their development proposals consisted of mostly narrative, qualitative comments, which failed to effect change.

To further understand the complex interaction between health and planning, Peel Public Health commissioned a systems analyst to develop a set of conceptual models

Official Plan Policy Development

Document	Policy #	Intent
Peel Regional Official Plan Amendment 24	7.9.2.9	The region will prepare an <u>assessment tool to evaluate the public health impacts of development</u> , jointly with the area municipalities
	7.9.2.10	The region will work jointly with the area municipalities to <u>raise public awareness of the health impacts</u> related to planning through public and private partnerships
Peel Regional Official Plan Amendment 25	7.3.6.2.2	The region <u>may require health impact studies</u> as part of a complete development application to amend the regional official plan
Caledon Official Plan Amendment 226	7.9.2.3	The region may <u>develop public health indicators</u> to analyze the effectiveness of Official Plan policies and serve as a basis for policy adjustments
	4.1.10.3.2	The town will participate jointly with the Region of Peel and area municipalities in the <u>preparation of an assessment tool for evaluating the public health impacts of development proposals</u>
	4.1.10.3.3	The town will work jointly with the Region of Peel and area municipalities to <u>raise awareness of public health issues related to planning</u>
Mississauga draft Official Plan	19.3.5	The city may require <u>health impact studies</u> as part of a complete development application
	19.3.7	The city requires all development applications to <u>have regard for public health</u>

that visually depict the effects of urban form on the health of populations. Along with the literature review, these conceptual models provide further strength that specific attributes of the built environment (e.g., density, street connectivity, land use mix, proximity and neighbourhood design) contribute to poor health outcomes.

The conceptual models, stakeholder consultations, municipal response to health-related comments on development proposals, and review of planning policies and processes revealed two key next steps: (1) a need to strengthen the effect of health comments through more specific quantifiable assessments and recommendations, and (2) a need to create and strengthen policy at all levels of the planning policy hierarchy to support implementation of quantifiable health assessments and recommendations. With further direction from regional council to develop policies on the relationship between health and the built environment for the regional official plan, Peel Public Health worked with municipal planners to integrate health language into the regional and local official plans.

Consequently, Peel Public Health recognized the need for consistent health-based rationale to guide planning decisions and partnered with leading researchers in the field of health and urban planning to develop the Peel Healthy Development Index. The index is a set of development standards for evaluating land development applications with a health focus. It uses quantifiable benchmarks for each land use element that affects health, based on relationships documented in the literature. Researchers at the Centre for Research on Inner City Health at St. Michael's Hospital developed the index to conform to existing provincial standards and meet local targets, but also to go above and beyond those targets where possible to shift development practices into healthier patterns. Made up of two parts designed to be used in tandem—evaluation tool and scorecard—the index can be used to evaluate proposed communities at all stages of the planning process. The Healthy Development Index is now being pilot tested against Peel's existing context, to create an implementation plan that can fit the unique needs of each of the three municipalities within the region.

As a result of the Healthy Development Index and policy development efforts, Peel has experienced a number of successes:

- Peel Region and the local municipalities have incorporated policies into the regional and local official plans to encourage health-promoting land use and transportation planning;
- In collaboration with the Planning Department, Peel Public Health has provided input to the *Provincial Policy Statement*

to explicitly identify the relationship between planning and health throughout the document and thereby set the framework for considering the health impacts of planning at the local level;

- In collaboration with the Planning Department, Peel Public Health has provided input to the Ministry of Transportation's Transit Supportive Guidelines to explicitly cite health as a strong rationale for transit-supportive planning and for creating increased opportunities for active transportation;
- Peel Region is currently developing an active transportation plan which provides for multi-purpose pathways, bicycle lanes and integration of trail networks to provide increased opportunities for an active lifestyle;
- Peel Public Health has provided input on right-of-way discussions for regional roads to ensure opportunities for

pedestrian-friendly environments such as land width/buffer zone reduction and off-road bicycle lanes;

- Peel Public Health has joined forces with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Urban Public Health Network, Canadian Institute of Planners and five other health units within three provinces to develop tools for measuring the health impacts of planning and advance policies



PHOTO: THE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

Enhanced walkability through streetscape design

that encourage health-promoting land use development;

- Peel Planning Department and Public Health have formalized their relationship and regularly engage with each other through roundtable discussions on relevant development proposals.

Throughout the process of developing policy and health assessment tools, Peel Region has engaged extensively with key stakeholders such as the development industry, local municipalities, conservation authorities and school boards. Through consultations with these stakeholders, Peel Public Health and Planning Department learned that for any quantifiable health assessment to be well-integrated into the planning process, it must be applied at different stages of the approval process. Currently, municipalities require land developers to conduct background studies to identify the positive and negative impacts to communities created by proposed developments. However, no background study requirement exists to assess the broader impacts to health beyond safety (such as physical activity). As an additional method to identify opportunities to increase the health-promoting potential of proposed developments, Peel Public Health is currently developing the framework and content for a health background study with the assistance of the Planning Partnership. Building on the evidence-

based standards set by the Healthy Development Index, the background study is intended to be implemented at an early stage of the planning process.

A shift in planning practices that have become the norm over the past century requires a clear vision, a strong commitment and an understanding that change will take quite a long time. Peel Region recognizes the need for environmental changes and a shift in cultural norms to stop the spread of the chronic disease epidemic, and plans to stay committed to the cause. Through the index and background study, the forging of new partnerships, and the development of tailored policies, Peel Region is paving the way for major strides in improving community design to enhance the way we live and the places we call home.

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Planning challenges

By Lindsay Ford

Ontario's education sector is undergoing a significant change. By 2015, every school in the province will offer a full-day every day kindergarten program, as well as a before and after school program for four and five year olds. School buildings and sites will undergo considerable changes to accommodate these programs. As a result municipalities and school boards will have to work together through site plan and building code issues to implement the programs in a successful and timely manner.

The program

In June 2009, Dr. Charles Pascal submitted a report to Premier Dalton McGuinty entitled "With Our Best Future in Mind," based on a consultative process involving parents and members of the education, child care and municipal sectors across Ontario. The report presents a comprehensive strategy regarding early learning and contains recommendations on how to implement full-day kindergarten, improve supports for young families and improve education for children up to age 12.

The full-day kindergarten program comprises two components: the regular school day and the extended day. The regular school day falls generally between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., while the extended day is generally between 7:30 and 9:00 a.m. and between 3:30 and 6:00 p.m.

The curriculum for the regular school day component is based on existing kindergarten and early learning programs. It is an integration of instruction and play-based learning and is taught jointly by a certified teacher and a registered early childhood educator.

The extended day program is a fee-based before and after school program lead by a registered early childhood educator. This is an optional program meant to provide quality learning as an extension of the regular classroom curriculum in an environment familiar to the students.

October 27, 2009 marked the official beginning of the program when Premier McGuinty announced Ontario would proceed with implementation of full-day kindergarten over the next five years. In less than a year, school boards had to implement the program for 20 per cent of the kindergarten children, which translated to nearly 600 schools province-wide. Year two (September 2011) will provide access to another 5 per cent of kindergarten children at 200 additional schools. By Year three, almost half of the elementary schools across Ontario will be offering full-day kindergarten.

Impacts on school facilities and sites

Historically, junior and senior kindergarten students have been considered half time students because they attended school

either half day every day or full day every other day. This meant that one kindergarten classroom could house two kindergarten classes. With full-day kindergarten each class requires its own room meaning the number of required kindergarten classrooms will effectively double.

For the first two years of implementation, the province encouraged school boards to implement full-day kindergarten at sites with available space and according to community need. Therefore, with a significant number of schools at the remaining sites requiring additions to implement the program, the majority of capital projects will be completed over the next few years.

Many of these additions will likely be tied to other capital projects.

Confirmation of Year three sites is expected to be announced in spring 2011 and municipalities could be faced with an influx of site plan applications following that announcement.

Although the anticipated project completion dates would be September 2012, construction is complicated by the school year. Ideally, school boards would undertake construction during the summer months rather than risk student safety or interfere with the learning environment.

Planning challenges

Over the past number of years, many school boards and municipalities seem to be on different pages when it comes to school site development. The origin of these differences likely stems from increasing financial constraints and a general lack of understanding of each other's roles.

Many school boards believe there is a misconception that education development charges will cover any and all expenses incurred by school boards. However, education development charges can only be collected for schools required as a direct result of residential growth. This means that school boards have no funding mechanism to pay for site improvements that may be requested through the site plan



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process for any infill or existing school. Any shortfall in capital funding comes out of the operating budget that directly impacts supports in the classroom.

School boards do not have control over capital funding for new school construction and often funding is provided by the Ministry of Education at the eleventh hour. Short turnarounds times between the confirmation of funding and the time the school or addition needs to open does not allow for an elongated site plan process. When issues or conflicts are not resolved in a timely manner, the opening of a new school or addition is delayed.

The full day kindergarten program will generate the need to construct additions at existing schools that may have pre-dated the site plan process. This, in turn, may trigger the need to undergo a full site plan review. Unfortunately, many of these schools will not meet current standards and potential site plan issues may arise such as deficiencies in parking and traffic circulation, heritage impact, urban design, road widening, zoning compliance and parkland dedication. Building code and *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* compliance issues may also arise. These issues could ultimately lead to delays in the site plan process which may impede the ability to open new additions and implement the full-day kindergarten program as scheduled.

Moving forward

Schools are arguably one of the most important community facilities. Public policy frameworks recognize them as a fundamental component of a complete community and planners

across all sectors have a vested interest in building communities.

The provision of education is an essential service that is engrained in our constitution. The school facility itself not only provides the space needed to prepare our youngest population for the future but also provides facilities such as sports fields and gymnasiums that are accessible to the broader community. The provision of school sites and buildings should be viewed as an extension of the essential services provided by municipalities. School boards and municipalities need to work together to ensure that schools are provided in the best manner possible.

School boards may be given a short turnaround time to design the additions required to implement full-day kindergarten, go through the site plan process and open the facility. A joint effort between school boards and municipalities will be necessary to ensure that changes to school buildings and sites progress in an effective, efficient and timely manner. Creative solutions will help planners balance competing interests but compromises will be required.

The Ontario school system is undergoing significant change to enable children to develop to their greatest potential. Taking into consideration the broader public interest and understanding the bigger picture has never been more important.

Lindsay Ford, MCIP, RPP, is the property/planning officer with the Waterloo Catholic District School Board.

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Main Street Revitalization

Rural survey

By Charlie Toman



For decades, in an effort to break a cycle of decline and decay, municipalities across North America have struggled to implement new programs and strategies that effectively revitalize downtown and main street areas.

Community Improvement Plans are (CIPs) powerful tools for municipalities to revitalize downtown and main street areas. They empower local governments to act proactively by providing financial incentives to the private sector, thus undertaking public improvement initiatives and leveraging funding from upper levels of government.

The use of CIPs as a municipal revitalization tool has evolved over the past 40 years. Originally adopted by municipalities to access funds from provincial and federal governments for urban renewal projects, it was not until the 1990s that municipalities began to use CIPs as a way to provide financial incentives directly to property owners who undertake improvements consistent with the plan.

I wanted to examine the downtown and main street revitalization efforts occurring in Ontario's smaller, rural communities.

Specifically, I researched how municipalities with a population less than 100,000 were implementing CIPs as a revitalization tool. For those that have adopted CIPs, the types of financial incentive programs provided and the dollar amounts available to property owners were explored.

The scope of the research was limited to examining the extent to which CIPs have been implemented, not their effectiveness in revitalizing downtown and main street areas. To determine which municipalities have adopted downtown and main street CIPs, a systematic and thorough search of rural municipal websites in Ontario was completed.

The results of the survey are highlighted below:

- Of the 321 municipalities surveyed, only 53 (17%) had implemented a downtown or main street CIP; however, with several rural communities in the process of developing new CIPs, this percentage appears to be rising.
- With 27% of 59 municipalities surveyed, Central Ontario had the highest percentage of downtown and main street CIPs in place. Eastern Ontario had the lowest percentage with just 9% of the 91 municipalities surveyed.
- There is a strong correlation between a municipality's population

and its likelihood of having a downtown and main street CIP in place. CIPs were in place in 78% of municipalities surveyed with a population over 50,000; the percentage drops to 35% for municipalities with 20,000 to 49,000 people; 19% for municipalities between 10,000 to 19,999 people; 16% for municipalities between 5,000 to 9,999 people; and only 2% for municipalities with less than 5,000 people.

- The most prevalent financial incentives identified were façade improvement grants/loans (83%), tax increment equivalent grants (72%) and signage improvement grants (39%). Less utilized programs included affordable housing grants/loans (2%), infill development grants/loan (2%) and café/patio improvement grants/loans (4%).

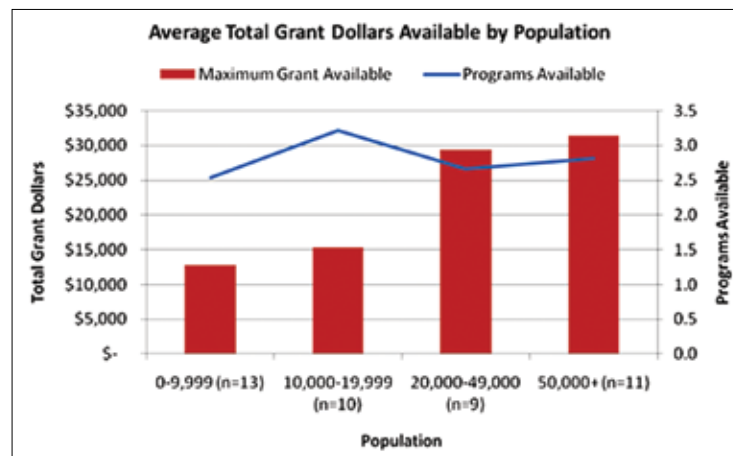
The survey also found the population of a municipality influences the amount of direct assistance provided to individual property owners. On average, each surveyed municipality with a CIP had approximately three programs offering grants directly to

property owners, regardless of its population. However, the total dollars available to individual property owners through these programs increased from about \$12,500 for municipalities with less than 10,000 people to approximately \$30,000 for municipalities with a population over 50,000. Larger municipalities provided greater dollar amounts per financial incentive than smaller municipalities.

The low percentage of smaller, rural municipalities implementing downtown and main street CIPs is not

surprising, as generally the smaller the population, the smaller the size of the downtown and the lesser pressure from suburban development. In addition, small municipalities have a reduced tax base and, as a result, fewer discretionary dollars that could be allocated to implementing financial incentive programs.

With the wide array of issues facing smaller, rural communities today, downtown and main street revitalization may not be a top priority. Recently the Ontario Rural Council, in partnership with the University of Guelph School of Environmental Design and Rural Development and the Monieson Centre at Queen's University, engaged community and organizational



Toman, C (2010). *Downtown and Main Street Community Improvement Plans in Ontario Communities: A Survey*. University of Guelph, Guelph, ON

Above: Photographed in 2008, these buildings in Wallaceburg have since been torn down because they were not structurally sound (Charlie Toman)

representatives from across rural Ontario to identify research needs. Downtown and main street improvements was ranked 27th of the 30 top priorities identified.

However, the buildings and structures that make up the downtown and main street areas have immense social, contextual and architectural significance to a community. This makes the trend between population size and available grant dollars particularly worrisome for those smaller municipalities that seek main street revitalization. An individual building that is deteriorating will require the same amount of financial investment, regardless of the

size of the municipality in which it is located. Smaller communities are more likely to have a greater portion of original (and historic) buildings intact, yet are less likely to have developers interested in renovating and reusing them, creating the need for a Community Improvement Plan.

Charlie Toman, MPlan, is a development planner with the Town of Halton Hills and recent graduate from the University of Guelph's Rural Planning and Development Program. He can be contacted at charliet@haltonhills.ca.

Rethinking Human Services Planning

Hamilton's Playbook

By Christina Gallimore

Ontario's population is older and more ethnically diverse than ever before. Cities continue to experience pressure to provide affordable housing opportunities, food security, adequate income and greater access to healthcare, education, recreation and other human services. Changing demographics, shifts in local economies and strain on municipal infrastructure are top of mind for planners as they grapple with how these issues will shape the foreseeable future of their communities.

Given these increasingly complex issues, a more purposeful approach to planning for quality human services has never been so critical to building healthy, vibrant communities. In response to these challenges, municipalities across Ontario have begun to think more deliberately about how to plan for, deliver and invest in human services.

This article discusses the importance of human services planning, provides an overview of Hamilton's recent human services planning efforts and shares some lessons learned.

Defining human services planning

Human service issues arise out of the economic, social and health needs of a community. A complex set of interdependent government, non-profit and private sector organizations respond to these issues through the provision of supports and services.

Human services planning is a process through which solutions to issues are defined, negotiated and implemented. Planning for human services requires evidence-based strategic thinking about how issues are framed and how the resulting system of services and supports are managed, delivered and funded.

Re-thinking human services planning

There are a number of factors compelling municipalities to think about and plan differently for human services. A scan of major human services planning documents in Ontario reveals some of the common drivers among municipalities seeking new approaches to human services planning:



- Planning for human services is often done within program, organizational or sector boundaries reinforcing thinking in silos about what supports are needed to address community needs.
- Planning for urban growth requires communities to anticipate future human services needs whether growth occurs at the urban fringe or is the result of residential intensification.

- Human services such as schools, health care and recreation are often put in place after development, which can result in lost opportunities. A more holistic, proactive approach to human services planning and delivery would address human services needs during all stages of the planning process.
- Shifts in the demographic composition of a community such as an aging or diversifying population will also have an impact on the types of human services that will be required to meet increasingly complex needs and changing preferences and expectations of residents.
- Municipalities are closely tied to provincial policy frameworks, service delivery models and funding arrangements. Human services planning has recently received increased attention and credibility from the provincial government's perspective with the release of the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Services Delivery Review report entitled, "Facing the Future Together" (2008). The report included a recommendation for integrated community human services planning through the development of Community Human Services Plans.

Local governments are uniquely positioned to take on a leadership role in convening major stakeholders in the human services system.

Emergence of human services planning

Located at the geographic centre of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Hamilton is home to over 500,000 residents and

its population is expected to increase by 150,000 people by 2031. Population growth, residential intensification and a broadening demographic—age, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic characteristics—requires integrated planning to meet the diverse and expanding needs of Hamilton’s residents.

The need to formally plan for human services was identified during development of Hamilton’s Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS). The strategy set the direction for growth planning including a broad land-use structure, associated infrastructure and the potential financial implications for the next 30 years. A new dialogue emerged between land-use planners and social service administrators about the importance of aligning human services planning with land-use planning at all levels of policy development and implementation to ensure best use of limited municipal resources. As a result, the concept of human services planning has been incorporated into Hamilton’s new official plan.

Although human services planning in Hamilton found its origins in growth planning, it is not simply about the needs of a growing population.

The Playbook

Launched in February 2008, Hamilton’s human services planning initiative was designed to provide a process through which solutions and strategies could be developed and investment delivered. The initiative is community-driven and was established to strengthen integrated human services planning across diverse sectors using shared information. The goal of the initiative is to enhance the quality of life for all Hamilton citizens.

In 2009, a group of local decision-makers and innovators with the capacity to influence change was convened and charged with the task of developing a framework for human services planning in Hamilton. With a focus on quality service delivery, systemic thinking and community engagement, this multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral stakeholder group articulated a new way of planning for human services in Hamilton with the development of The Playbook.

Just as a playbook in the world of sports outlines the plays that a team will run during the game, The Playbook is intended to help

facilitate integrated human services planning by ensuring it is done in a more deliberate and consistent way. It does so by drawing on data to describe Hamilton’s demographic profile, community infrastructure and promising practices from other municipalities. A number of foundational concepts conveyed

in The Playbook are meant to generate dialogue about what ‘good’ human service planning is and to guide future planning efforts towards an integrated, collaborative approach. This approach is intended to inspire action that focuses on shaping practical solutions and strategies that make sense to the people who use the services.

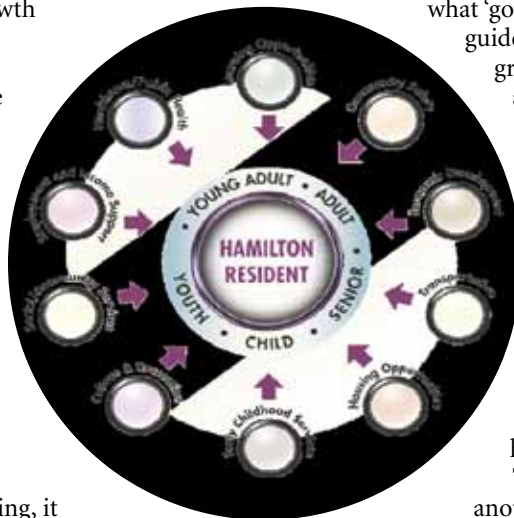
One of The Playbook’s basic tenets is that effective human services planning requires the city, community partners and citizens to plan together using the same information and a shared vision. Working in collaboration with the community is essential to successfully address the complexities of human services.

The concept of integrated planning is another core tenet found in The Playbook. Planning for human services has tended to occur in sector and/or organizational silos. Services designed in silos tend to reflect specific program objectives and boundaries, which have to be navigated by recipients of

those services. Conversely, integrated human services planning means service providers across various sectors work together to develop broadly defined outcomes and improve service delivery for the people who use the services. Eliminating silos, taking a more coordinated approach to service delivery and community development, and integrating input from community partners and citizens can lead to innovative solutions and improve overall quality of life for Hamiltonians.

Human services infrastructure

Local governments have a long tradition of planning for a community’s future physical infrastructure requirements such as roads, water and waste water, parks and utilities. It has become increasingly apparent, however, that planning for a community’s social or human infrastructure is equally as



Human Services Sectors in Hamilton
(Source: City of Hamilton.2010. The Playbook: A Framework for Human Services in Hamilton)



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important as planning for its physical infrastructure. As communities grow and change, it is vital to ensure that all citizens have access to the appropriate services.

An assessment of the current state of a community's human services infrastructure—the places, spaces and supports that sustain the delivery of human services—is an essential element of human services planning. This includes the facilities, services, and networks required to maintain a high quality of life for all residents.

Determining the state of a community's human service infrastructure is not only paramount to understanding the human service system, it is also one requirement of Ontario's *Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (2006). The growth plan directs communities to plan for investments in community infrastructure to keep pace with changing needs and to promote more complete communities; communities that meet peoples' daily needs throughout their lifetimes, such as jobs, housing and community services. Ensuring a community has adequate levels of service is vital to its economic prosperity and well-being.

Next steps

The development of The Playbook is just the beginning. Next, municipal staff, community partners and citizens need to be engaged in developing solutions and strategies to address emerging human services issues.

During the next two years, this initiative's focus will be three-fold. The first priority will be to facilitate dialogue about human services planning with municipal staff, community stakeholders and citizens to apply core elements of The Playbook. Second, building on work completed in the previous phases of the initiative, a Hamilton Human Services Infrastructure Study is underway. This work will determine service level standards, quantify service deficits and project future need. The third area of focus will be on developing and executing a planning process designed to build an action plan and strategies that address Hamilton's most pressing human services issues.

Lessons learned

Building collaborative partnerships and using an integrated approach to human services planning is not always without difficulties, but there are numerous benefits. It takes time and resources to ensure that a well-planned process is mapped out. Generating good information and communicating it to different audiences is essential to ensure everyone is on the same page. Human service planning is a process not an event.

Some of the benefits of a collaborative approach include the ability to develop strong municipal and community leadership, the capacity to deal with the tough issues and a commitment to a shared vision based on good information across departments and with other human services institutions and community organizations. For example, the City of Hamilton has developed an integrated approach to secondary planning whereby issues such as the location of recreation facilities, parks and schools are considered throughout the planning process. Building on this experience, the city is exploring other ways in which an integrated approach to neighbourhood planning can act as a catalyst to ensure human services issues are addressed in a proactive manner.

Hamilton's experience reflects an iterative approach, whereby each phase builds on the experiences and learning from the previous phase of the planning process, to ultimately improve the planning outcomes.

The risks of not planning effectively for human services are too big to ignore. It is time to be proactive to ensure human services issues are effectively integrated into areas of planning often done in isolation. Planners from all disciplines can be champions of human services planning working to ensure the best possible outcomes for healthy, vibrant communities.

Christina Gallimore, MCIP, RPP, is operations support supervisor in the City of Hamilton Public Works Department. Formerly, she was senior policy analyst in the Community Services Department responsible for the development of the Human Services Planning Initiative. For more information on Hamilton Human Services Planning Initiative please visit www.hamilton.ca/humanservicesplanning.



PHOTO: CHRISTINA GALLIMORE

HSPI engagement workshop with city staff and community partners (December, 2010)



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At the forefront of housing

By Jodi Ball and Johanna Hashim

For all of us, housing helps provide a meaningful place in the community and a safe place to call home. Housing has been identified as one of the most important factors in achieving and maintaining health. For many individuals with mental illness maintaining safe and affordable housing can be difficult. During periods of illness, many are unable to work and lose their income leading to difficulty paying for rent and potentially the loss of their housing. People with serious mental illness are at increased risk of living in core housing need and facing homelessness. In addition, there are increased risks of living in conditions of poverty, living in substandard housing, encountering severe barriers to employment, having lower than average incomes, and being in poorer health than the general population.

In 2009, an all-party committee was formed by the Ontario Legislature to examine ways to improve access to mental health and addiction services in Ontario. In August 2010, the Committee released its final report, "Navigating the Journey to Wellness: the Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians." The Select Committee shares within this report that the mental health and addictions system in Ontario is in crisis. The report puts forth many recommendations aimed at improving the system and ultimately the lives of persons impacted by mental illness and addictions. Canadian Mental Health Association - Sudbury/Manitoulin Branch participated in consultation activities conducted as part of this study.

CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin has been serving the City of Sudbury and surrounding areas for over twenty-five years through the provision of supports and housing to people sixteen years of age and over with a mental illness. The availability of appropriate forms of housing is extremely limited in Sudbury/Manitoulin and



Housing components which are critical when considering the development of housing for persons with mental illness

CMHA is experiencing an increasing number of clients in need of housing assistance. In light of this strong need, CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin engaged SHS Consulting to assist in further identify housing needs, and to pull together a practical housing development action plan.

"Having a place to call home is something we all desire. When you have a mental illness it is not always easy to find a place to live. As CMHA staff found it increasingly difficult to assist clients in securing housing, it was incumbent upon us to find solutions," CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin Branch CEO Marion Quigley.

The study found the number of individuals experiencing some form of mental illness within the area is significant; there is a need in the Greater Sudbury Area for approximately 1,922 housing units, of various types, to meet the needs of persons with mental illness. This includes three types of housing: independent, supportive and supported, and custodial.

Additional research pointed to a number of trends in housing for persons with mental illness: the majority of persons with mental illness live alone; incomes are dependent on the severity of symptoms; unemployment is more common than in the general population; living in core housing need is almost twice as likely; youth, seniors, and the homeless have a higher incidence of mental illness.

The study went on to recommend an action plan aimed at responding to the identified needs. The recommendations have been adopted by CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin and staff is moving forward with this initiative. The action plan identifies the different forms of housing and supports needed for persons with mental illness and sets out a series of actions to guide CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin and their housing partners in the development of housing and service delivery

Estimated Number of Housing Units Required for Persons with Mental Illness: City of Greater Sudbury and Districts of Sudbury-Manitoulin

Housing Type	Current Need	Current Supply	Difference
Independent (residents in their own homes with supports provided)	1,614	266	1,348
Supported & Supportive (co-operatives, shared living, rent supplements, group homes etc.)	383	32	351
Custodial Care (nursing care, assistance with activities of daily living & 24 hour care)	306	83	223

options that are appropriate for persons with mental illness.

The action plan puts forward six priority areas for CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin to work on with its housing partners over the next five years.

1. Develop supportive housing for seniors with mental illness.
2. Develop transitional housing for persons in need (i.e. persons leaving correctional facilities and/or hospital, youth, persons who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, persons with concurrent disorders).
3. Investigate opportunities to work with community partners in developing additional housing options for persons with mental illness.
4. Achieve greater coordination among community partners in the provision of housing and supports to persons with mental illness.
5. Advocate for increases to income and rent assistance programs in the City of Sudbury.
6. Enhance in-home supports for persons with mental illness who are able to live independently.

One of the first major initiatives arising from the action plan began this fall when CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin was awarded \$452,378 under the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy for a new six-bed transitional housing project for the chronically homeless who are experiencing mental health and concurrent disorders in the City of Greater Sudbury. Called Transition House, the project will provide temporary housing for up-to-eight months and support services for homeless people who have mental health and concurrent disorders in a group living setting. The project is administered by the Canadian Mental Health Association – Sudbury/Manitoulin Branch.

Building on the completion of the action plan and the momentum of Transition House, CMHA is moving forward to implement the recommended actions. Through this work CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin is looking for new and innovative partnerships and creating greater awareness of mental illness. As new housing opportunities arise, CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin is hoping to be at the forefront of housing development for persons with mental illness in the Sudbury and Manitoulin districts.

“From the board’s perspective, we feel that housing is a fundamental piece in the rehabilitation process and the services

A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability, and affordability standards OR if its housing does not meet one or more of these standards but it has sufficient income to obtain alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three standards).

Adequate housing is housing that does not require any major repairs. Affordable housing is housing that costs less than 30 per cent of total before-tax household income. Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard requirements.

CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin offers its clients. Our Board is diligently seeking new housing projects and initiatives for our clients,” CMHA Sudbury Manitoulin President Richard Malette.

Jodi Ball MCIP, RPP, is a senior consultant with SHS Consulting. Johanna Hashim is a senior research and policy analyst with SHS Consulting. Visit www.shs-inc.ca.

SHS has been working closely with CMHA Sudbury/Manitoulin in the development of the Action Plan and continues to assist in the implementation process and in the completion of Transition House. For more information please visit www.cmha.sm.ca.

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Transforming Suburbia in Richmond Hill

By Brian De Freitas, Michelle Dobbie, Maria Flores, Paul Freeman

How does a municipality articulate conformity to the Growth Plan while maintaining its own unique character and feel? It is a question that challenges municipalities around the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as cities and towns both large and small and at different stages of maturity must conform to the same provincial plans and policies.

Adopted by council July 2010, Richmond Hill's new official plan responds by setting out a long-term vision for "building a new kind of urban," one that will see the town transform suburbia in its own unique way. Richmond Hill's new official plan articulates conformity through a balanced approach to growth and development that fits the local context. Beginning with an extensive public consultation and engagement process called People Plan Richmond Hill, the town used a top-down, bottom-up approach to developing its official plan by combining provincial and regional policy directions with community input.

Background

Over the past century, Richmond Hill has become one of the fastest growing municipalities in Ontario. Once a small village, the Town of Richmond Hill has transformed into a rapidly growing suburb that is now set to become a central hub for transit in the Greater Toronto Area. Almost built out to its urban boundary, Richmond Hill will need to accommodate future growth through a more compact, urban form that is both pedestrian and transit-oriented. Prompted by the province's shift towards growth management and faced with an out-dated official plan from 1982, the town needed to develop a vision of what it would look like in the next 20-25 years. To develop this vision, the town embarked on an exercise that went beyond planning by numbers in order to meet conformity. Instead, it focused on developing a land use planning and design framework from a city building and place making perspective. The result is an official plan that reflects the community's vision and leads Richmond Hill into the 21st century.

People Plan Richmond Hill

The People Plan Richmond Hill approach to engaging the community and the top down, bottom-up approach to developing a new official plan provided an ideal opportunity for residents, businesses, politicians and staff to reflect on what Richmond Hill is and what they aspire it to be. Based on appreciative inquiry, the town focused on visioning with the community to provide key directions for its corporate strategic plan and official plan. Public consultation was

extensive, ranging from blue sky questions—What kind of community do you want to see in Richmond Hill in 25 years?—to guiding principles on core topics such as employment and the environment.

Throughout the three-year process, a variety of consultation and engagement activities took place. These included community meetings, roundtables, on-line surveys, on-line social media, discussion forums, discussion papers, workshops, open houses, public information centres, a People Plan Summit and an Official Plan Summit including guest speakers and interactive visual and mapping exercises.

The ongoing dialogue with the community played an important role in the town's approach, which evolved to become both an iterative and integrated process. Prior to drafting the policies, consultation was organized around building the key components of the official plan vision (guiding principles, urban structure and major policy directions) by combining technical expertise from staff and consultants, background research and analysis, and practical knowledge and input from the general public, stakeholders and council. This process also involved the integration of multiple disciplines as the town's urban structure and major policy directions emerged.

The town adapted its approach to urban structure to examine the spatial dimensions of its natural and built landscape and review these against policy themes or layers being explored through background studies and consultation. Knowledge from the studies and Richmond Hill residents and businesses was integral to determining the network of centres and corridors where the majority of growth would be concentrated.

A major accomplishment of the process is that it reflected the community's vision for and willingness to accept intensification, provided growth is located in the right place and is sensitive to the existing local context and environment. The public recognized the significance of Richmond Hill's central location and the need to create more compact, pedestrian-friendly areas to support transit initiatives. Staff and consultants worked with the public to demonstrate potential built form and design on actual sites to show that intensification does not have to mean only high-rise point towers—that it can take many forms. Having the public understand the importance of good design and the benefits of intensification in the appropriate location—transit, environmental conservation, accessibility and sustainability—was critical to gaining acceptance for a new urban form. Comments from the community indicating "we could hear our voices" in the principles and policies of the new official plan were testament to the success of the town's approach.

Above: Village district transformation
(Source: Town of Richmond Hill)

New official plan

The result of Richmond Hill's approach is an official plan that is forward thinking and innovative. It is a visionary yet pragmatic document that reflects a balanced approach to growth and development suited to the local context. Inherent in the new policies are key themes that demonstrate what a new kind of urban means to Richmond Hill: environment first and sustainability, city building and place making.

The policies aim to provide leadership by fostering innovation in sustainable design through new development and redevelopment opportunities. The manner in which the town has chosen to implement growth management is tailored to Richmond Hill's local context and the public's vision for what city building means in Richmond Hill. In accordance with the Growth Plan's direction for intensification, the official plan identifies intensification areas through transit-supported centres and corridors, but also identifies the appropriate types and scale of development for these areas. The result is an official plan that recognizes the importance of place making and excellence in design—whether it be through sustainable technologies, walkable communities or human-scaled structures and streetscapes.

In addition to the key themes, the new official plan illustrates the vision of "building a new kind of urban" by determining not only where the town should grow but how it should grow. Besides identifying the types of land uses permitted within the town's urban structure, the plan sets out design parameters such as minimum and maximum heights and densities, integration of uses on the same site or building, and transition policies between higher density forms of development and adjacent, low-rise areas.

Like many other municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Richmond Hill is experiencing pressure to use the Growth Plan and direction for intensification to justify greater heights and densities anywhere and anyplace. Richmond Hill's plan addresses this issue by clearly identifying where such growth is appropriate and to what extent more intense forms of development are acceptable.

A new kind of urban

While the new Richmond Hill Official Plan indicates the town is undergoing a transformation, it acknowledges it will not transform overnight. Instead the policies seek to guide that transformation by balancing it with the community's desire for managed growth at an appropriate scale and intensity that reflects the local context. In addition to articulating where and how the town should grow and identifying areas that should be protected and enhanced, the new official plan recognizes unique and valued places that define Richmond Hill today. It challenges the public, developers and practitioners to design and create new places that will continue to enhance its local character.

By making a choice to raise its own standards and identify locations and thresholds by which this new urban form is acceptable, Richmond Hill is attempting to transform its own part of suburbia by redefining what it means to be urban.

The authors all work for the Town of Richmond Hill: Brian De Freitas, MCIP, RPP, as policy planner II; Michelle Dobbie, MCIP, RPP, as policy planner II; Maria Flores, MCIP, RPP, as senior planner; and Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP, as policy manager. They can be reached at planning@richmondhill.ca.

Recognizing Contributions to Heritage Conservation

The Ontario Heritage Trust's annual Young Heritage Leaders, Heritage Community Recognition and Community Leadership programs – as well as the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Awards – celebrate achievements in preserving, protecting and promoting heritage.

To learn more about how to nominate an individual, group or community, visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca or email reception@heritagetrust.on.ca.

The annual nomination deadline is June 30.



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Photo: Susie Kockerscheid/The Era-Banner



Photo: Messer J. Buchan

Planning for a sustainable GTA

By Drew Semple and Loretta Ryan

To achieve healthy communities and a sustainable city region there needs to be a balance between nature and human development.

Built environments—buildings, public realms, transport networks, green spaces, natural systems and all the other spaces that make up a community—greatly affect us. A truly functional, sustainable, liveable and healthy city region integrates and complements the natural environment. This reduces the environmental impact while also helping to promote physical activity, psychological well-being and healthier outcomes for all community members.

To achieve a healthy and liveable city region, the following must be priorities:

Urbanizing suburbia (land use, transportation and urban form)—A large percentage of the Greater Toronto Area's built environment was constructed after the Second World War. Most of this development is suburban, car-oriented, uninviting to pedestrians, wasteful of energy and a producer of large amounts of greenhouse gases. What is more, its densities and forms can barely support transit or active transportation. Some sources indicate that this type of development represents 80 per cent of the built environment in the GTA.

Although some new developments are incorporating green development initiatives, this alone cannot significantly address issues such as climate change, peak oil and public health. Urbanizing suburban built forms and making them more sustainable should be a key priority in all city regions in Ontario. Some major areas of work include:

- Strengthening existing and new urban centres;
- Converting car-oriented malls and strip retail into transit-supportive centres and corridors;
- Promoting infill and intensification in underused and brownfield sites;
- Retrofitting, where appropriate, existing commercial, employment and residential areas to increase densities, introduce a mix of uses, improve walkability and provide viable transit;
- Encouraging sustainable cluster development and healthy urban extensions.

As infrastructure is renewed and repaired, care must be taken to recycle and reuse construction material.

Levelling the playfield (economics and process)—In 2006, the provincial government introduced the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Among the policies are clear requirements for infill and intensification: by 2015, 40 per cent of residential development must take place in areas that are already built up. Despite some recent progress, infill and intensification still faces significant challenges compared to greenfield development. A combination of adjustments to regulation, incentives, guidance and strong leadership could create the impetus needed to achieve the

provincial target. It is key that infill and intensification is as economically feasible as greenfield development if this is to work.

The provincial greenbelt and growth plans have had a positive effect on development within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Nevertheless, significant challenges exist, such as:

- Limited suitable development types (e.g., mid-rise buildings);
- Outdated, car-oriented, suburban standards (e.g., road design, amenities);
- Limited investment in transit and active transportation from senior levels of government;
- Cost of land;
- Public opposition;
- Lengthy approval processes.

A true restoration economy will restore nature and habitat, as well as structures and heritage; revolve around retrofit and incremental growth instead of sprawl; and be based on local existing resources and social balance.

Commitment is required from all levels of government to invest in and optimize the use of infrastructure, including hospitals, universities and colleges, schools, roads, transit, piped services and energy systems.

Integrated movement (walking, biking, transit, trucking and automobiles)—In Canada, changing demographics have had a profound effect on household composition. Yet the post-war dream of a suburban house with a two-car garage remains at the core of the current development system in the region. Although some families with children are choosing smaller residences and reliance on public amenities typical of urban living, their numbers have to increase dramatically.

The lifestyle associated with suburbia, particularly the necessity to drive everywhere because homes, jobs, shopping and other amenities are sprawled over vast distances, consumes significant resources and

has a huge impact on the environment. It also creates serious health problems and is endangering our future. The real costs associated with traditional suburban development are simply not sustainable.

All critical modes of transportation need to be accommodated. Yet when it comes to transportation planning, the motor vehicle still dominates. This is beginning to change as more viable alternatives to the automobile become mainstream. A piecemeal approach, however, is not enough; reducing dependency on personal vehicles will require an integrated approach that considers transportation from door to door. The degree to which residents can move easily and economically from point A to point B is essential.

Active transportation is a core requirement. Any human-powered mode of travel such as walking, cycling or in-line

*Ontario Professional Planners Institute and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing jointly released the report, **Planning by Design: a healthy communities handbook**, in the fall of 2009. The purpose of the initiative is to share and generate ideas on how places can be planned and designed more sustainably for healthy, active living and to retain and attract residents, investors and visitors. The response from OPPI members, stakeholders and the public has been overwhelmingly positive. Copies of **Healthy Communities: planning by design** can be downloaded at www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/content/Publications/innovativepolicy papers.aspx.*

skating reduces road congestion, is environmentally friendly and economical, and contributes to healthy living. If, for instance, the average commuter walked for 15 minutes to transit and then travelled for 45 minutes, his or her commute would be comparable to current driving times, plus the person would get 30 minutes of exercise each work day. In a society that needs to address obesity and other lifestyle-related health issues, active transportation is one means of promoting physical activity.

The built form of neighbourhoods, along with the scale and design of sidewalks and roads and how these are managed for various uses has a considerable impact on the pedestrian environment. People will not walk unless the experience is positive. Currently, however, providing for pedestrian access and mobility is often an afterthought.

Enhancing the appeal of urban living (marketing, outreach and communication)—Making urban living attractive and desirable with all that represents has many challenges if communities are to reduce the impact on the environment. It is also a prerequisite for reducing and stopping sprawl; saving, protecting and restoring natural areas; protecting agricultural lands; and for increasingly sustainable, healthy and liveable city regions.

Throughout Ontario there is an explosion of activity connected to urban agriculture and a growing interest in access to healthy and local food. The role of planners in planning for food has never been more important. There are many opportunities to integrate urban design and food production. There is also a need to ensure access to fresh food in all urban areas through planning and incentives to retain supermarkets and encourage farmers' markets. Addressing these challenges and opportunities is key to making our urban environments desirable places to live.

OPPI calls upon planners, public decision makers and private sector organizations to make healthy community planning a priority. Numerous tools are available that can be adapted to support strong, liveable and healthy communities, which enhance social well-being and are economically sound. These tools need to be better utilized and in more creative and innovative ways.

Drew Semple, MCIP, RPP, is OPPI policy development committee chair and Loretta Ryan, MCIP, RPP, is OPPI public affairs director. Other contributors include Sue Cumming, MCIP, RPP; Nick Poulos, MCIP, RPP; Steven Rowe, MCIP, RPP; Alex Taranu, MCIP, RPP; George McKibbin, MCIP, RPP. This article has been edited from its original form. The full call to action can be found at www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/content/Publications/innovativepolicypapers.aspx.

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Districts & People

LAKELAND

Diverse Planning Challenges

Update

By Robert Armstrong

Lakeland District represents a relatively large area, with very diverse planning issues. Although there are similarities with rural and small-to-medium urban areas, each has some distinct areas affected by different provincial policy initiatives. In addition, distances can be a challenge when coordinating district-wide events. As a result multiple events are often held on the same topic such as Planning for the Future meetings. Fortunately we have the benefit of three separate program groups—Peterborough area, central (Dufferin, Simcoe, Muskoka counties) area and Grey County—offering events. These groups are looking forward to hosting events to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of OPPI.



Robert Armstrong

Peterborough

In the fall, the Peterborough area planners met at the Victoria Inn in Gore's Landing to discuss the historical development of the current Oak Ridges Moraine policies. Participants heard from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation and its work to protect sensitive areas. Discussions around implementation strategies, issues and challenges with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan were of particular interest as the 2015 review of the related policies approaches.

Central Area

Simcoe County planners have been focussing much of their time on the recent draft amendment to the Places to Grow legislation. Among other

matters, the proposed amendment has assigned population and employment targets for all 16 constituent local municipalities, as well as the two separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. This is the first time the province has elected to manage growth to such detail at the local level. Moreover, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has formally requested it receive all planning notices concerning official plans and amendments, as well as plans of subdivision and any municipally-initiated planning processes for the next year.

While there is some optimism, there remain concerns about some of the implementation challenges: introduction of Interim Settlement Area Boundaries, potential for costly OMB appeals as a result of deferring growth on designated land, and the applicability of transitional regulations that have not yet been released. The population and employment numbers have been adjusted and are fairly close to the original figures assigned by county council in 2008. In addition to the five urban nodes recommended in the discussion paper, a sixth urban node in Midland/Penetanguishene has also been included in the proposed amendment.

Meanwhile the 16 local municipalities are awaiting provincial action on the county plan to complete their conformity exercises. Day-to-day planning considerations on specific development files are ongoing, and staff has been dealing with the changing policy framework on a case-by-case basis as many landowners and developers attempt to assess their specific impacts. To say this has been a challenging time would be an understatement; however the parties are attempting to move forward.

Central area planners in the central area are looking forward to an upcoming Healthy Communities workshop in partnership with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Based on a similar session last year in Owen Sound,

this event provides an excellent opportunity for collaboration on healthy community initiatives.

Grey County

Moving west to Grey County, hopefully by the time this article is published, the county will have received provincial approval of its five-year review and, subject to any comprehensive appeals, the local municipalities will be able to proceed with finalizing their official plan reviews.

District-wide news

We were also pleased to have a 2010 Excellence in Planning Award winner in our District. Randy French of French Planning Services in Bracebridge won the award for the "Lake Planning Handbook for Community Groups" in the communications/public education category. Congratulations Randy.

Robert Armstrong, MCIP, RPP, is the planning and building services director with the Municipality of Meaford. Robert is also the Lakeland District representative on OPPI council. Anyone with questions or who wishes to volunteer in the district please contact Robert at rarmstrong@meaford.ca.

Lakelands District planners collaborated with OPPI's policy development committee to prepare the submission on the Proposed Amendment 1 – Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which can be found at www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/content/Publications/watchingbriefs.aspx.

TORONTO

2011 Toronto Urban Design Awards

Celebrating excellence

By Allison Reid

Every other year the City of Toronto holds Urban Design Awards to recognize achievements in urban design, architecture and landscape architecture. Good design creates a city that is both

functional and attractive for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors alike. Celebrating excellence in urban design promotes higher standards for the built environment and quality of public places in the city.

Submission categories include: elements, private buildings in context, public buildings in context, small open spaces, large places or neighbourhood designs, visions and master plans, and student projects.

The 2011 entries will be adjudicated by a panel of independent design professionals—Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg partner Greg Smallenberg;

Giannone Petricone Associates Inc. Architects principal Ralph Giannone; MBTW Watchorn principal Christine Abe; Town of Markham architect and Urban Design lead Ronji Borooah; Toronto journalist and urban affairs writer John Lorinc.

Designers, developers, project owners, community groups, design students and others are invited to enter eligible projects no later than 4 pm on May 19, 2011.

Winners will be announced at a ceremony September 19, 2011.

To learn more about the awards and how to enter visit www.toronto.ca/tuda.

Allison Reid, MCIP, RPP, is an urban designer with City Planning at the City of Toronto.

PEOPLE

Tunnock Consulting Ltd president **Glenn Tunnock**, MCIP, RPP, and senior planner **David Welwood** are pleased to announce their relocation back to beautiful Northern Ontario. The firm looks forward to contributing to Northern District events and activities over the coming years from its base in North Bay.

Commentary

Demystifying Online Distance Education

My Experience at Lund University

By Inês Ribeiro

After graduating from McGill University with an Honour's B.A. in Environment and Development last March, I was faced with a major decision. I wanted to dedicate myself to urban environmental issues through my graduate studies, but how? I could take the conventional route and accept my offer for a Master's in Urban Planning at the University of Toronto, or I could opt for the somewhat riskier Master's in Environmental Management and Policy at Lund University in Sweden.

I was captivated by the interdisciplinary program with a global focus at Lund, but I was hesitant about it because the first year would be online. I was concerned this would undermine the legitimacy of my degree. Now that I am enrolled in the program and have completed my first course, I know that I am in good hands. My positive impression of the online distance education setup has been further strengthened since the program was one of two Lund programs to be given the first excellence label in university distance education from the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities.

Admittedly, the process took some getting used to. Although I will be meeting classmates and professors in person during second year, interacting with them virtually in the interim is no substitute for face-to-face contact. Nuances in meaning are sometimes lost in online chats, which make the process all the more challenging for students whose first language is not English. Time zone differences also make it difficult to coordinate meetings and conferences with colleagues as far away as the Seychelles and China.

However, the numerous benefits of online distance education far outweigh the disadvantages. It is undoubtedly one of the most flexible and affordable ways for students and professionals to upgrade a

skill, or complete a degree or certificate: students can learn at a university anywhere in the world without having to relocate or change work schedules. Many of my fellow colleagues are participating in the program while working part-time or even full-time, thanks to the course format. Each course is divided into modules, which require twenty hours of work a week. Unlike the formal university setting where students must attend classes at particular times, here students are responsible for allocating their own study time. For online meetings, many time slots are made available and students sign up for those that are most convenient. This is essential for a group of students across the globe with varying schedules. There is a break between courses, which also serves as a "catch-up period" for students who have been unable to finish the assignments within the allocated time.

Our work is a mixture of individual and group assignments, textbook readings and online reference material. Students must earn "activity points" to pass each module by completing their work, and by participating in the online forums. The group moderator (either a professor or teaching assistant) selects a discussion topic and students must meet a quota of postings in which they express their viewpoints regarding the course material. These online forums have been the highlight of my experience so far; I have learned a great deal from my classmates' fresh perspectives and individual areas of expertise, which range from political science and law to business administration and ecology.

This online program has continually improved since its inception, thanks to the use of student feedback by course coordinators to further develop the program. Of course, not all online courses are created equal and, at present, it is difficult for potential students to discern which ones are credible. The burgeon-

ing accreditation process should begin to help with this process.

Professionals may also find that online distance education is an ideal way to engage in continuing education while gaining work experience. Many programs are offered in English, the lingua franca of the virtual world. Such programs offer a cost-effective and time-efficient way to learn from other experts in related fields. As the number of online programs continues to increase, so, too, will the opportunities for a flexible, cross-cultural learning experience.

Inês Ribeiro is a Master's candidate, in the Environmental Management and Policy program at the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics, Lund University, Sweden. She is a former intern at the Canadian Urban Institute.

ERRATUM

The Township of Lake of Bays development permit system pilot project, referenced in a recent article by Joe Netherly, titled "Ontario's Development Permit System, Hypothesizing its Absence," was successfully completed and implemented. Any inference to the contrary was unintended. The Journal regrets the error.

Letter to the editor

To OPPI Journal:

Further to the article on the OPPI submission on Transit Supportive Guidelines reported in the March/April 2011 issue of the *Journal*, the Minister of Energy was also a sponsor of the 1992 guidelines along with the ministries of Transportation and Municipal Affairs and Housing. The guidelines followed on the oil shock of 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait and the price of oil doubled per barrel.

The guidelines remain an important tool in supporting energy efficient transportation options for the residents of Ontario's towns and cities but as the *Journal* notes, we are "still car crazy" after all these years.

Mary Ellen Warren, MCIP (RET.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Send letters about content in the *Journal* to the editor (editor@ontarioplanners.on.ca). Direct comments or questions about Institute activities to executivedirector@ontarioplanners.on.ca

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Ben Puzanov

Renewable Energy Approval Regulation

Challenge dismissed

By Ben Puzanov, contributing editor

The legal challenge mounted by Prince Edward County resident Ian Hanna against a Ministry of the Environment setback for industrial wind turbines from neighbouring dwellings was dismissed by the Ontario Divisional Court in a decision released on March 3, 2011. Hanna has since filed for leave to appeal the Divisional Court's decision.

In its challenge of Ontario's *Renewable Energy Approval Regulation (O. Reg. 359/09)*, Hanna's team pointed to the fact the *Environmental Bill of Rights* requires the Ministry of the Environment to make best efforts to ensure its Statement of Environmental Values is taken into account when making decisions that may considerably impact the environment. Further, it was noted the statement includes a provision that the precautionary principle should be used in making decisions that may impact the environment and human health.

Hanna advanced evidence of three physicians who indicated the Minister of the Environment did not have sufficient technical evidence to support a 550-metre setback for industrial wind turbines from neighbouring dwellings. The three experts indicated there is sufficient uncertainty in the field of medicine regarding the impact of industrial wind turbines on human health that it should be resolved prior to implementing hard and fast setbacks.

In its decision the court wrote that the Statement of Environmental Values is made up of ten doctrines, one of which is the precautionary principle. It explained that the *Environmental Bill of Rights* requires the minister to find a balance among all ten principles in making his or her decision. While the court specifically referred to the tenet placing priority on pollution prevention, there are other principles that may also apply.

The court wrote it was satisfied that individuals who may be negatively impacted by industrial wind turbines have a mechanism through which to express their concerns; referring specifically to the Environmental Review Tribunal. The tribunal has jurisdiction to determine whether a specific project would cause serious harm to human health, and thus could overrule any setback specified by the minister.

The court further noted that its role is not to question the minister's decision, but rather to review whether the minister followed the process outlined by the *Environmental Bill of Rights* in making the decision. In issuing its decision the court stated it was satisfied the minister complied with the protocol outlined in the bill of rights, specifically as it relates to *Section 11* and the requirement to consider the Statement of Environmental Values in reaching a decision.

The court determined that in establishing setback requirements for industrial wind turbines from dwellings, the

ministry conducted a full public consultation and took into account evidence based on scientific research. It concluded that Hanna's team failed to provide any evidence that would lead to the conclusion that a 550-metre setback is insufficient. As such, and because of the appeal mechanism that is available through the Environmental Review Tribunal for individual renewable energy projects, the court dismissed the challenge.

Ben Puzanov, MCIP, RPP, is a planner with the Municipality of Middlesex Centre. He may be reached at puzanov@middlesexcentre.on.ca.

Principles of Ministry of the Environment Statement of Environmental Values

1. The ministry adopts an ecosystem approach to environmental protection and resource management. This approach views the ecosystem as composed of air, land, water and living organisms, including humans and the interactions among them.
2. The ministry considers the cumulative effects on the environment; the interdependence of air, land, water and living organisms; and the relationships among the environment, the economy and society.
3. The ministry considers the effects of its decisions on current and future generations, consistent with sustainable development principles.
4. The ministry uses a precautionary, science-based approach in its decision-making to protect human health and the environment.
5. The ministry's environmental protection strategy will place priority on preventing pollution and minimizing the creation of pollutants that can adversely affect the environment.
6. The ministry endeavours to have the perpetrator of pollution pay for the cost of cleanup and rehabilitation consistent with the polluter pays principle.
7. In the event that significant environmental harm is caused, the ministry will work to ensure that the environment is rehabilitated to the extent feasible.
8. Planning and management for environmental protection should strive for continuous improvement and effectiveness through adaptive management.
9. The ministry supports and promotes a range of tools that encourage environmental protection and sustainability (e.g. stewardship, outreach, education).
10. The ministry will encourage increased transparency, timely reporting and enhanced ongoing engagement with the public as part of environmental decision making.

Source: Environmental Registry at www.ebr.gov.on.ca

Heritage Paint Colours

Regulation and freedom of expression

By Michael Seaman, contributing editor

Colours and heritage buildings are like chocolate and peanut butter. They go very well together. When you talk to most people about their favourite heritage building, more often than not, the ones that they remember most vividly are those that are colourful. Just think of what the townscape of places like Lunenburg, Nova Scotia or St. John's Newfoundland would look like if everything was painted white and grey. Would we remember them as fondly? Fortunately, these days at least, they are not. As buildings and streetscapes have been restored, so too have the colours, with beautiful and vibrant façades, enhanced by architectural details picked out in compatible contrast. When one walks along the streets of these towns today, the beauty of colour is all around and heritage buildings stand out to be noticed.



Michael Seaman

Despite their many redeeming qualities, paint colours are often a cause of debate in the world of heritage conservation. Some feel they should be regulated for designated properties and districts to ensure that historically appropriate colours are used, for others it is just too intrusive a regulation to consider.

For those not familiar with heritage conservation one of the urban myths about the field that often comes up when a designation or heritage conservation district study is considered is that many perceive that paint colour changes (including interior) require a heritage permit before work can begin. "You mean to say that you're going to tell me what colour to paint my house?" is a common refrain. The truth is that paint colours are regulated in only a limited number of communities. A key consideration is that paint colours are reversible. While there are some benefits to coordination of colour, if it's necessary to remove this restriction to convince a heritage property owner to support the designation of their home or neighbourhood it's something that a municipality can easily give in on.

This was the case in Aurora, when the northeast quadrant of the old town was proposed for designation. The perception that there would be paint colour regulation was a concern expressed by some as a reason not to support designation. Instead I turned it into an advantage, to demonstrate just how flexible heritage conservation districts could be. The area was designated but paint colour was not included in the list of works requiring heritage permits; however, there was no objection to historic paint colours education so a whole section about it was included in the district plan. The best way to encourage the use of historical colours is for people to see just how good it looks on their neighbour's



PHOTO: MICHAEL SEAMAN

Colourful houses in St. John's Newfoundland

property rather than encouragement by a municipal heritage committee member or staff person.

The history of authentic paint colours can be a very interesting subject. People can see what historical colours were popular when their house was built, or even better, learn the necessary techniques of how to uncover layer upon layer of historic paint from years gone by. The homeowners may find the inspiration to create a virtual colour photograph from the 19th century out of their home.

One of the most interesting heritage paint colour research projects that I worked on was for the Toronto and Nippissing Railway Station in Markham, Ontario, which was undergoing restoration in 2000. I recruited George Duncan, one of Ontario's foremost experts on historical colours to assist with the project. A major challenge in determining the historical colours was that the historical siding had all been removed. George suggested, however, that if there were any fragments of historic exterior wood trim remaining we might still find the clues we needed. There was still some historical trim remaining around the conductor's bay, and sure enough, as predicted, hidden in corners between pieces of wood, under more than 100 years of paint were the historical colours of deep red for trim, along with a cream on the upper main walls and dark sage green on the lower main walls. After decades of being clad in drab insulbric, when the historical siding was installed and colours were applied to the restored station, the result was stunning and was a definite advertisement for the use of historical colours.



PHOTO: MICHAEL SEAMAN

Markham Village Train Station



PHOTO: MICHAEL SEAMAN

Colours in the Grimsby Beach community

At the Markham Station we were fortunate to find the remnants of historic paint; but, if none exists, it's still possible to approximate an historical paint colour scheme for a heritage home. There is a considerable amount written on the subject in Andrew Jackson Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses*, published in 1850, *A Century of Colour: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings, 1820-1920*, by Roger W. Moss Jr., published in 1981. Closer to home *Well-Preserved: The Ontario Heritage Foundation's Manual of Principles and Practice For Architectural Conservation* by Mark Fram covers the subject of heritage colours from an Ontario perspective. There are also many local guides and palettes of historical paint colours, such as the Thornhill Village palette, which provide useful educational guides to exterior colours for heritage property owners.

Another factor to remember when considering historic colours is that different house styles have different requirements for colour schemes—Arts & Crafts Bungalows, for example, should look different from Victorian Houses, and different from 1920s houses.



PHOTO: MICHAEL SEAMAN

The plethora of colour is a sign of a vibrant and creative community that is passionate about its heritage

One of the most progressive heritage paint colour programs in Canada is in Vancouver, which in 2003 launched the True Colours Palette, based on research data gathered by the scraping and colour matching on over 50 Vancouver Homes. The Vancouver Heritage Foundation has teamed up with paint manufacturer Benjamin Moore to promote its program and offers a \$1,500 cash grant and free paint for people proposing to paint their homes in historical colours.

After 20 years of working with heritage properties, I thought I knew quite a bit about best practices for historical paint colours. Then this past summer when I began working for the Town of Grimsby, and for the first time came across the unique and beautiful Victorian cottage community of Grimsby Beach.

Grimsby Beach was founded as a Methodist campground in the 19th Century, drawing many visitors each year from around the Golden Horseshoe. It later evolved into an amusement park in the early 20th Century. Although there have been many changes over the years, the architecture of the Grimsby Beach cottages with their steeply pitched roofs and elaborate gingerbread trim remains a defining feature of this cultural heritage landscape. The architecture is beautiful, but what most people notice when they visit Grimsby Beach for the first time is the abundance of colour. All the colours of the rainbow and more can be seen in Grimsby Beach including purple, turquoise, canary yellow, blue and pink. I am sure there are few more colourful communities in Canada. What is interesting, however, is that although the paint colours of Grimsby Beach were historically vibrant, the ultra vibrancy that is seen today is actually a relatively recent phenomenon that has evolved out of the unique, unpretentious and eclectic environment that is Grimsby Beach, and which inspires creativity among its residents. While some might wish the colours were more historical, for others, me included, the plethora of colour, is a sign of a vibrant and creative community that is passionate about its heritage. A century from now perhaps the colours of today in Grimsby Beach will be considered historical colours themselves, or more likely, the colours will be different but just as vibrant and dazzling as they are today. The passion for colour—all colour—its vibrancy and seemingly constant change is a living part of the community character in Grimsby Beach.

Historic paint colours are one of the most interesting aspects of heritage conservation. They provide a unique sense of how people in the past saw the world around them in a way that we simply can't get from historical black and white photos. Properly coordinated, and implemented, as it is in heritage districts like historic Thornhill or Old Oakville, an historical colour theme can be a thing of beauty, but if paint colour regulation stands between community support for the conservation of heritage buildings and significant architectural features, then it's something that heritage advocates can give in on with minimal consequence, and through proper marketing the use of heritage colours can still be achieved through education rather than regulation.

The paint colours that adorn the unique architecture of Grimsby Beach is a must see for all heritage enthusiasts. A good time to do so is during the upcoming Doors Open Grimsby festival, which is being held September 24 and 25, 2011. For more information Follow Doors Open Grimsby on Facebook and Twitter or look up the website www.town.grimsby.on.ca.

Michael Seaman, MCIP, RPP, is director of planning with the Town of Grimsby and serves as Vice Chair and Ontario Governor for the Heritage Canada Foundation.

A municipal perspective

By Alex Taranu, contributing editor

When the Urban Design Working Group was created in 1999 there was a lot of interest among planners but not a lot was happening in the field other than in a few larger communities—Toronto was being reorganized, Markham and Oakville were starting their forays in New Urbanism and there were only a handful of urban design positions in a few municipalities. The province had little involvement in planning in general and the term urban design was conspicuously absent from provincial as well as local policies.

The turning point for urban design came in 2006–2007 with the return of the province to planning with a strong focus on sustainable development, complete communities, urban form and urban design. The new *Planning Act* in 2007 enshrined urban design as part of the planning process at the discretion of each municipality and lifted the restrictions on urban design review in *Section 41*.

When the province brought forward the greenbelt and Places to



PHOTO: ALEX TARANU

Introduction of rapid transit in conjunction with intensification along Queen Street corridor in Brampton's central area



PHOTOS: ALEX TARANU

Downtown Brampton revitalization mixes heritage preservation with new contextual development and public space

Grow legislation, urban design became one of the key tools to respond to the provincial policy provisions for complete, compact communities. The requirements to respond and reflect policies for intensification, compact, walkable communities and transit supportive development were strengthened in official plans and other documents. Urban Design tools such as tertiary plans, urban design guidelines, urban design briefs, urban design review, have spread throughout the province. New urban design positions appeared and entire groups or sections were formed while planners and other professionals become aware and interested in urban form and design issues. A few Ontario Municipal Board battles reinforced urban design as a valid concern while urban design policies and guidelines were accepted as legitimate planning tools.

Around the same time the agenda for sustainability and public health came to the forefront of professional and public interest. It was the medical profession who acknowledged that unsustainable, car-oriented, suburban type of development was detrimental to health—and planners and urban designers responded.



Alex Taranu

Following a very successful urban design charrette at the 2006 OPPI Symposium in Alliston, the issue of the link between public health and the way the built environment is planned and designed became an OPPI priority. The public launch of the OPPI's Sustainable Communities, Healthy Communities call to action stirred a lot of interest across the province and reinforced the importance of urban design in addressing the issues of sustainable and healthy development. When the Ministry of Housing took the initiative to work with OPPI and issue the Sustainable and Healthy Communities Handbook, urban design was prominently featured with the Urban Design Working Group's contribution. The publication was not only an expression of provincial policy but a great resource to municipalities across the province. It sent a very clear message about the importance of urban form and urban design to planning.

More recently a number of policies were developed for the GTA/GGH area but with impact throughout the province such as Metrolinx's regional transportation plan. Urban design again came to the forefront through key concepts such as urban structure, transit supportive and oriented development, mobility hubs, major transit corridors and complete streets, as well as a number of major studies for higher order transit.

Subsequently, OPPI responded with significant contribution from the Urban Design Working Group to the opportunity



Toronto's King/Parliament area mixes heritage preservation and intense contextual redevelopment with sensitive urban insertions

- Commitment by the province to work with partners to undertake labour market planning;
- Strategies and programs to increase access to educational opportunities and health care services;
- Preparation of regional economic plans;
- Outstanding Aboriginal land claims, supporting economic development in Aboriginal communities and developing the Aboriginal workforce.

The first three priorities for implementation announced by the province also reinforce the economic development focus of the Northern Ontario growth plan. At its launch, the two lead ministries—Ministry of Northern Development Mines and Forestry and Ministry of Infrastructure—announced the government's intention to establish a Northern Policy institute, host a Regional Economic Planning Summit and prepare a Northern Ontario Multi-Modal Transportation Strategy.

While to southern Ontario planners this may all seem like strange policy ground for a growth plan, planners in the north have long-recognized the close relationship between the social and economic issues and more traditional land use planning. The different contexts that growth plans will need to address across the province is anticipated in the *Places To Grow Act*, which includes as its first purpose, enabling decisions about growth to be made in ways that sustain a robust economy, build strong communities and promote a healthy environment and a culture of conservation.



MAP: PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

With a focus on economic development, the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario was three years and 180 meetings in the making

offered by the update of the *Provincial Policy Statement*.

Planners' interest in urban design was reflected in responses to an OPPI's survey where 40 per cent of planners requested more urban design education. OPPI was prompt to respond and a group led by the Urban Design Working Group is currently providing the popular and well attended Urban Design Course for Planners where municipal planners represent the largest number of participants.

This article is a part of a series on urban design provided by the Urban Design Working Group. Alex Taranu, MCIP, RPP, OAA, CanU, is founding member and past chair of the OPPI Urban Design Working Group and founding member and director of the Council for Canadian Urbanism. An urbanist with 30 years experience, Alex serves as urban design manager for the City of Brampton.

Province

Northern Ontario

Province plans for growth



Jason Thorne

By Jason Thorne, contributing editor

March 4, the province released the much-anticipated Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. First announced in May 2007, the plan follows over three years of consultation that included 180 meetings and workshops in 45 urban, rural and First Nation communities.

For those familiar with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), the most striking difference in the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is its strong emphasis on economic development. While the GGH growth plan targets growth management, the Northern Ontario plan places far more attention on growth attraction and promotion. This is exemplified by policy areas in the new plan that are absent in the GGH plan such as:

- Identification of existing and emerging priority economic sectors, and a series of strategies aimed at developing them;

Another unique feature of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is that its policies are predominantly directed at the province itself, rather than at municipalities, as was the case with the GGH Growth Plan. There is also much more common use of “should” and “encouragement” policies compared to the GGH Growth Plan. These differences are attributable to the economic development focus of the plan, which lends itself less to the more directive “shall” policies that were directed at municipalities in the GGH plan.

The Northern Ontario growth plan is not just about economic development. Growth is occurring in the north, particularly in the “big-5” cities—Greater Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay and Timmins—which are home to 56 per cent of Northern Ontario residents. The growth plan brings to these areas many of the same growth management themes present in the GGH plan, albeit with a distinct northern Ontario perspective. It recognizes that shaping growth to create great places is no less important in Timmins than it is in Toronto or Mississauga. While the plan does not establish intensification targets or density requirements, it does include a number of policies that should have an impact on the way planners do business in the north.

Despite the fact that many northern municipalities still do not have official plans, the growth plan stops short of requiring them. However, it does encourage all municipalities to prepare long-term community strategies that address issues such as economic, social and environmental sustainability, optimization of infrastructure, and creation of welcoming and high quality places.

In echoes of the urban growth centres of the GGH, the plan indicates the infrastructure minister will be identifying “economic and service hubs.” These hubs will be planned to accommodate a significant portion of future population and employment growth in the north, and to function as regional service centres. They will also be focal areas for infrastructure investment. Municipalities identified as hubs will be required to maintain updated official plans, and to accommodate a significant amount of their growth in downtown areas, intensification corridors and brownfield sites.

The closest the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario comes to the intensification and density requirements of the GGH plan is with respect to “strategic core areas.” These are defined as downtowns and other key nodes and corridors within the big-5 cities, which are encouraged to plan their strategic core areas for higher densities and a mix of land uses. The plan also encourages these cities to prepare revitalization strategies for their strategic core areas that include, among other elements, minimum targets for intensification. For those municipalities that prepare such strategies, the growth plan offers an important benefit—they will be preferred locations for major capital investments in postsecondary education, regional hospitals, major cultural institutions, entertainment facilities, public transportation systems and more.

One important difference that could spawn some envious glances northward from planners in GGH municipalities is the conformity provisions in the Northern Ontario growth plan. In the GGH, all municipal official plans must be brought into conformity within three years. In northern Ontario, the infrastructure minister has exercised his ability to prescribe an alternative timeline, granting municipalities five years to complete conformity exercises.

While it does set out a number of new policy directions planners will need to understand, from a purely land use planning perspective, the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is likely to be less transformational than its sister plan for the GGH. There are no minimum density requirements or other mandatory standards for planners to deal with and there are no provincially-defined growth

allocations. But the lack of these traditional growth management tools is not surprising, given the growth context of the north. The growth plan’s most lasting impacts will likely be its effectiveness in creating partnerships to deliver on its economic and social goals, as well as in coordinating and prioritizing the actions of the province itself to support growth and development in the north.

Over the coming months, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry will be leading various outreach activities to inform planners, elected officials and others in Northern Ontario about the policies of the newly released growth plan.

Jason Thorne is a principal with planningAlliance, an urban planning and design consulting practice based in Toronto. He served as a policy consultant to the province on the development of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

Membership Outreach

Attracting the brightest and best

By Pam Whyte

One of OPPI’s strategic goals is to “grow the planning profession by continuing to attract the brightest and best”.

This is achieved by supporting the growth of planning schools in the province and participating with CIP and other affiliates to conduct membership recruitment campaigns. The Membership Outreach Committee continues to focus considerable effort on networking and providing membership support to student planners. This is accomplished through ongoing dialogue with planning schools, fall outreach visits to each of the schools and the important connections made among the schools through the Student Liaison Committee.


March 1st each year marks the deadline for student scholarship submissions. The Student Liaison Committee worked hard to spread the word and we have received a good number of applications for this year’s provincial graduate and undergraduate scholarships. Applications are being reviewed by the outreach committee and the winners will be announced in the Journal soon.

At each meeting of the outreach committee we review outreach and networking events taking place in each of the districts. Most of these events are highly successful and provide other districts with ideas for events in their areas. An emerging theme is outreach to high school students and other colleges and universities with programs related to planning. Events have included introductions to the field of planning and also land use planning exercises or competitions. As planning becomes more and more apparent, the opportunities to inspire the next generation of planners becomes all that more important. The earlier the better.

Pamela Whyte, MCIP, RPP, is a senior planner with Delcan Corporation in Ottawa. She is OPPI Membership Outreach Committee director and a member of Council.



Pam Whyte



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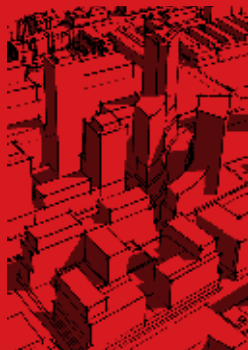
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