

APPENDIX C: POLICY OVERVIEW

Policy Review – Supporting Strong Neighbourhoods And Complete Communities

The following is an overview of the overarching policies intended to ensure that all of the city's neighbourhoods, including apartment neighbourhoods, are healthy, vibrant and prosperous.

The following reference section identifies several of these key land-use policies and initiatives at the provincial, regional and municipal levels:

Ontario Planning Act

The Ontario Planning Act lists issues of provincial interest that both the province and municipalities "shall have regard for" in establishing land-use planning policy, including Official Plans and zoning by-laws. Section 2 of the planning act outlines the following related to complete, healthy and sustainable communities:

- (h) The orderly development of safe and healthy communities.
- (h.1) The accessibility for persons with disabilities to all facilities, services and matters to which this Act applies.
- (o) The protection of public health and safety.
- (l) The adequate provision and distribution of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities.
- (j) The adequate provision of a full range of housing, including affordable housing.
- (q) The promotion of development that is designed to be sustainable, to support public transit and to be oriented to pedestrians.

The Ontario Public Policy Statement 2005

The Ontario Public Policy Statement, 2005 (PPS) identifies the establishment of liveable and healthy communities as a core objective of building strong communities. Policy 1 of the PPS affirms the view that good planning practices and public health are correlated:

Ontario's long-term prosperity, environmental health and social well-being depend on wisely managing change and promoting efficient land use and development patterns. Efficient land use and development patterns support strong, liveable and healthy communities, protect the environment and public health and safety, and facilitate economic growth.

Policy 1.1.3.4 highlights the importance of public health in promoting development standards:

Appropriate development standards should be promoted, which facilitate intensification, redevelopment and compact form, while maintaining appropriate levels of public health and safety.

Growth Plan For The Greater Golden Horseshoe: Complete Communities

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, prepared under the Places to Grow Act, 2005, is a framework for planning communities in the region around Toronto. A guiding principle of the Plan is the realization of compact, vibrant and complete communities. Complete communities are defined by the Plan, as those that:

Meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing, and community infrastructure including affordable housing, schools, recreation and open space for their residents. Convenient access to public transportation and options for safe, non-motorized travel is also provided.

The Growth Plan identifies several dozen growth centres throughout the region, that, tied together with the Metrolinx regional rapid transit plan and local municipal plans, are the framework for growth for the next 25 years. Many of the region's apartment towers are within these growth areas, and may be considered as areas for potential infill and mixed-use intensification.

A key aspect of the realization of this plan is the creation of "mobility hubs". These are multi-modal transit nodes where significant mixed-use intensification is encouraged. Mobility hubs are viewed as key centres of residential and employment growth, largely through reinvestment and intensification in existing areas. Many of the region's apartment towers are within mobility hubs, and may be considered as areas for potential infill and mixed-use intensification.

Metrolinx And The Big Move

The Big Move regional transportation plan, developed by the Province of Ontario through the agency Metrolinx, sets out a 25-year vision for travel in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area. The plan aims to reduce the distance that people drive daily and increase transit-based commuting and walking. The plan aims to accommodate significant growth in the region while increasing transit ridership by 50% and reducing congestion and improving satisfaction with transit services. In pursuit of this vision, Metrolinx is now overseeing the development of a comprehensive transit network for the GTA and Hamilton region.

City Of Toronto Official Plan

The following provides a brief outline of the Official Plan to illustrate how the document relates to vibrant, prosperous and “complete” communities”. This by no means addresses all such aspects included in the plan. Further, vibrant neighbourhoods are addressed in both individual policies and through the cumulative effects of policies in the plan.

City of Toronto Official Plan: Vision and Decision Making

The City of Toronto Official Plan (OP) is a tool for making choices about growing the city. The Plan advocates decision making that balances a range of considerations and builds a consensus around change by painting a picture of the City’s future (page 1-1).

The picture envisaged in the plan is of “creating an attractive and safe city that evokes pride, passion and a sense of belonging - a city where people of all ages and abilities can enjoy a good quality of life.”(1-2) The plan indicates that such a city is to include, among other elements (1-2):

- a. Vibrant neighbourhoods that are part of complete communities.
- b. Affordable housing choices that meet the needs of everyone throughout their life.
- c. Attractive, tree-lined streets with shops and housing that are made for walking.
- d. A comprehensive and high quality affordable transit system that lets people move around the City quickly and conveniently;
- e. Clean air, land and water.
- f. Green spaces of all sizes and public squares that bring people together.
- g. Green spaces of all sizes and public squares that bring people together.
- h. A wealth of recreational opportunities that promote health and wellness.
- i. A spectacular waterfront that is healthy, diverse, public and beautiful.

Policy For Enhancing Our Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods, according to the Official Plan, are to remain “physically stable”. However, the OP recognizes that improvements are needed in some neighbourhoods, including specific policies to make those neighbourhoods healthier places. As shown below, the plan-specific strategies for change may be required in priority neighbourhoods, to improve amenities and foster investment and partnerships aimed at neighbourhood revitalization.

In emphasizing the richness of uses and activities in designated “Neighbourhoods” and “Apartment Neighbourhoods”, the OP emphasizes that:

When we think of our neighbourhood we think of more than our homes. Our trees, parks, schools, libraries, community centres, child care centres, places of worship and local stores are all important parts of our daily lives (pg.2-21).

Section 2.3 of the OP, titled Stable But Not Static: Enhancing Our Neighbourhoods and Green Spaces, includes subsection 2.3.1 Healthy Neighbourhoods. The set of policies under this subsection is summarized below.

Policy 1 articulates the objectives of healthy neighbourhood stewardship:

Neighbourhoods and Apartment Neighbourhoods are considered to be physically stable areas. Development within Neighbourhoods and Apartment Neighbourhoods will be consistent with this objective and will respect and reinforce the existing physical character of buildings, streetscapes and open space patterns in these areas.

Policy 2 and **3** address new development on lands adjacent to Neighbourhoods.

Policy 4 identifies various means of improving neighbourhoods:

The functioning of the local network of streets in Neighbourhoods and Apartment Neighbourhoods will be improved by:

- a. Maintaining roads and sidewalks in a state of good repair.
- b. Investing in the improvement of bus and streetcar services for neighbourhood residents.
- c. Minimizing through traffic on local streets.
- d. Discouraging parking on local streets for non-residential purposes.

Policy 5 outlines approaches to improve environmental sustainability in neighbourhoods by focusing on naturalizing landscape and conserving water and energy.

Policy 6 addresses the enhancement of neighbourhood amenities where needed by:

- a. Improving and expanding existing parks, recreation facilities, libraries, local institutions, local bus and streetcar services and other community services.
- b. Creating new community facilities and local institutions and adapting existing services to changes in the social, health and recreational needs of the neighbourhood.

Policy 7 lists approaches to revitalization strategies specific to priority neighbourhoods:

- a. Improving local parks, transit, community services and facilities.
- b. Improving the public realm, streets and sidewalks.
- c. Identifying opportunities to improve the quality of the existing stock of housing, or building a range of new housing.
- d. Identifying priorities for capital and operational funding needed to support the strategy.
- e. Identifying potential partnerships and mechanisms for stimulating investment in the neighbourhood and supporting the revitalization strategy.

Additional Municipal Policy

Since the OP was drafted in 2000 and largely approved in 2006, a significant body of policy development and new research has emerged connecting healthy and strong neighbourhoods to land use. City Council has furthermore issued statements in support of a healthy urban landscape. These include The Toronto Bicycle Plan, the Toronto Walkability Strategy, and Toronto's Food Charter, among others.

A further rundown of relevant policies and initiatives is as follows:

Encouraging Complete Communities

To make the Official Plan conform to the Places to Grow plan, the City is now reviewing the identification and protection designated employment lands, areas dedicated to business and economic activity. This process is occurring concurrently with the Official Plan Five Year Review.

Walking, Physical Activity And Transit Use

To encourage walking and physical activity the City of Toronto established a Pedestrian Charter in 2002 and subsequently implemented its Walking Strategy (2009). Complementing pedestrian mobility, the Big Move Regional Transportation Plan, published by the Province of Ontario in 2005 established an action plan for improving access to regional transit. This transit system now being built had been outlined in only general terms in the OP (see Policy 2.1.1 (a) and Map 1).

Access To Nutritious Food

The importance of greater and more equitable access to nutritious food has been affirmed by City Council in the Toronto Food Charter (Toronto, 2001), which included a commitment to income, employment, housing, and transportation policies that support secure and dignified access to the food people need. Food security and food deserts have been further addressed in Toronto Public Health's Healthy Toronto By Design (2011).

Greater Affordable Housing Choices

A number of recently completed reports have enhanced our understanding about affordable housing choices. The importance of apartment towers in providing affordable housing options was identified in Ontario's Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Report (Ontario, 2010) and Toronto's Tower Renewal Implementation Book (Toronto, 2011).

The City has developed further strategies to expand housing options, such as promoting housing in mixed-use developments along avenues and highlighting specific neighbourhoods for priority investment and social support.

Likewise, strategies to realize affordable housing have been developed by the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and by community coalitions. Such initiatives illustrate the potential of reinvesting in and enriching neighbourhoods that feature affordable housing choices.

Healthy Environment

New policies have emerged since the Official Plan was drafted to promote a healthy environment and address climate change. These include standards for energy-efficient building design, such as Building Code standards introduced in 2011 making new homes 35% more efficient compared with those built prior to 2006; zoning by-laws to allow small-scale renewable energy generation, such as solar and wind, on private properties (Toronto consolidated zoning by-law, 2011 pending revision and approval), and the Toronto Green Standards (2010).

Further initiatives to promote a healthy environment include Toronto Parks and Recreation Plan (in preparation), and the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Article III, 'Private Tree Protection' (2004).

Recognizing The Relationship Between Health and The Built Environment

Since the Official Plan was drafted and approved, further studies have been completed showing how health is interconnected with living conditions and location. Key reports include the United Way's *Poverty by Postal Code* (2004) and *Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty* (2011). St. Michael's Hospital's Keenan Research Centre is carrying out the Neighbourhood Effects on Health and Well-Being (NEHW) study, a large-scale survey to describe neighbourhood factors affecting mental health. Likewise, a 2007 study by the Clinical Evaluative Sciences found a relationship between neighbourhood form, specifically neighbourhood walkability, and rates of diabetes.

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