

Section 3: Conclusion

3.0 Recommendations, Opportunities and Next Steps



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This report presents a strategic direction for achieving healthier apartment neighbourhoods and a series of specific strategies and design opportunities to inform investment into these communities moving forward. Realizing these opportunities requires the combination of enabling policies, and means of supporting individual and coordinated private, non-profit and public sectors investment towards these ends.

As with all areas of the city, Toronto's apartment neighbourhoods are complex and diverse. There is no panacea for achieving the opportunities outlined in this report. Rather, progress will be made through a series of incremental and related strategies for the short and long terms.

This report does however identify the relationship between the urban planning framework and proposed solutions, specifically with respect to the City's Official Plan and Zoning By-Law. While many policies are enabling, particularly those of the Official Plan, there are many regulatory barriers, both in the City's Zoning By-law and other municipal regulations. Identifying and removing the barriers in the urban planning framework is a first and crucial step in enabling the strategic direction outlined in this report.

In addition, the strategies outlined in this report recommend engaging in entrepreneurial, social enterprise and institutional ventures in areas of the city where these activities have formerly not flourished. Key to enabling and ensuring the success of these ventures is creating a clear framework with all stakeholders for engagement, and building skills, knowledge and capacity to kickstart ventures and ensure their success.

The following are recommendations and opportunities for moving forward:

Opportunities for building capacity and removing barriers:

- Remove identified regulatory and policy barriers and establish an enabling urban planning framework for the strategies outlined in this report as part of the Official Plan Review and Comprehensive Zoning process currently underway;
- Create a clear framework for engaging in the strategies outlined in this report through reducing the number of approval processes to which small initiatives are subject, such as streamlining licensing, allowing for small projects to proceed with as-of-right zoning permissions, and so on;
- Establish opportunities for partnerships, education and demonstrations to kickstart and create capacity for key stakeholders, from resident entrepreneurs and social innovators to land governors (landlords, building managers, public housing providers and other property stakeholders) to engage in the initiatives identified in this report;
- Create incentives and other levers to encourage and support private, non-profit and public sector investment in the strategies and opportunities outlined in this report.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

1. Support changes to the Toronto Official Plan and Comprehensive Zoning By-law and related municipal regulations to allow for broader use permissions and fewer restrictions and other changes in regulations to enable economic and community development in apartment communities;
2. Review the status of the Comprehensive Zoning By-law and changes applicable to properties in apartment communities (currently underway), when appropriate;
3. Review the status of the Toronto Official Plan review as it relates to apartment communities (currently underway), when appropriate;
4. Explore the concept of local organizations centred around key stakeholders in apartment communities, such as the proposed Apartment Improvement Areas (modelled after the BIAs), and the applicability of that and other models of engaging with key stakeholders to achieve healthy apartment communities;
5. Develop a workplan and identify resources needed to implement demonstration and education projects to bring the strategies outlined in this report to appropriate apartment communities;
6. Explore incentives which could direct growth, both economic and physical, to appropriate apartment communities in apartment communities, guided by the health, income and walkability mapping in this report.

Incrementally engaging in the initiatives outlined in this report will aid in fostering and enabling a more healthy and prosperous Toronto.

These changes won't happen over night, and won't have an immediate effect on individual health outcomes. Removing barriers and building capacity alone won't revitalize apartment neighbourhoods. A concerted effort by all stakeholders is required to implement positive changes in apartment communities across the City.

Yet removing the regulatory barriers to investment and economic development that exist in some apartment neighbourhoods will aid in unleashing the potential of individuals and the private and non-profit sectors in investing in these neighbourhoods. Through both expanded economic and social vitality, as well as patterns of built form and land use, apartment neighbourhoods can move toward becoming more "complete" and healthy places.

Achieving many of the strategies outlined in this report are relatively straightforward. Others are more complicated. Together, they will help to inform the evolution of these dynamic, diverse and vibrant communities throughout Toronto in the decades to come. As policies are strengthened and capacity builds, the number, sophistication and efficacy of initiatives can grow over time. It's time to get started.

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