curb

MAGAZINE

PLACEMAKING

PLACEMAKING IN PRACTICE: HALIFAX STREET PAINTING AND TORONTO'S WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION

INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER KEESMAAT, CHIEF PLANNER, CITY OF TORONTO

CONNECTING THE PLAN TO THE COMMUNITY: WHERE THE PLANNING PROCESS BREAKS DOWN *AND MORE...*

curb PLACEMAKING

TOPICS

FEATURES

Cover Image: Toronto's Simcoe WaveDeck, courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to Curb Magazine!

Curb Magazine showcases practical innovations, successes and best practices in Canadian planning. Direct from the City-Region Studies Centre in Edmonton, Alberta, Curb is part of a research unit that is almost unique in North America in its focus on city-regions and its broad-based interest in participatory approaches to community futures that are socially equitable, innovative, sustainable and economically successful for their inhabitants.

Drawing on our research and community of practice in the West and North, we now offer Curb as a forum for debate and dissemination across the country and the border-states. We have chosen the magazine format as a highly visual medium, something that can kick around a municipal office and go from hand to hand over several years.

Curb deals with cities, city-regions and rural municipalities that face changing seasons, populations and pressures, and that are grappling with the need for sustainability and resilience through new partnerships and new approaches. We are looking for your interventions in key debates and needs. Whether it is walkability, density or socially-mixed housing, waste treatment or drainage, or municipal governance and property law, many planners and administrators face similar challenges of pushing innovation, new visions and sustainable practices in risk-averse times.

We are looking for your stories – 500 words on a key idea anchored with a compelling image, a high-res map or diagram that gets your point across to fellow practitioners.

Give us a shout, follow the City-Region Studies Centre on Facebook and pass Curb around.

Rob Shields
Publisher

CURB APPEAL

PLACEMAKING AND PLACE-IMAGES

ROB SHIELDS

The essence of placemaking is nurturing the unique qualities of a given site and the things one can do there. It's all about how a location adds something special to activities and interaction. Placemaking is thus social and economic: it builds something extra onto raw geography. By casting a place as a place-for-this or a place-for-that, these capacities and qualities of a region or site can be highlighted and advertised. However, the actual identity of a place comes out in activity. An "identity" is an abstraction, a story, a belief that must be actualized, put into practice and performed.

Too often, placemaking is understood too simplistically. It is either understood too abstractly as a matter of stories and pictures, or too concretely as a matter of sidewalk pavers and colour schemes. Placemaking is as much about liveability as branding, marketing and real estate. Emotional ties as well as natural advantages such as proximity to a market or a resource anchor the identity of places to actual locations.

Placemaking and the identity of places are important as they are part of the popular geopolitics and the public diplomacy of cities.

Place-identities are the trading cards of public diplomacy and industrial location decisions. The power of place-images can be so strong as to render non-conforming activities absurd – it's hard not to "love" New York, or to explain that you fell "out of love" with Paris.

Yet most placemaking is a scam or an effort to jump on a bandwagon. Consultants imply that the reputations of cities and municipalities can be created, changed and marketed. Advertising produces pretty pictures, but placemaking is anchored in the actual experiences people have. It is human-driven, not media-driven. It often remains in the realm of collecting and retelling stories or publishing images, but the performative nature of place-identity means that it has to be continually re-enacted. Place is related to activity, interaction and experience first; images and stories are secondary. When the activities of a place change, the place-identity changes to follow suit.

Placemaking is relational. We understand the identity of places in comparison and in contrast to other places. This is not just a matter of nearness and distance, but of image and identity. Working with and developing the identity of a place is about identifying how it fits into a spatial network: bigger and smaller places, places-for-this and places-for-that. Every culture places activities in the locations that seem appropriate; the low is separated from the high, the sacred from the profane, the dirty from the clean. For this reason, different groups struggle over the spatialization of activities. It is not only a question of religious sites but, at its worst, those moments of disgust when one encounters a truly foreign culture. Understand that beautiful and beloved places almost spawn ugly and denigrated places.

For this reason, marketing places and regions internationally to foreign cultures is a tricky business: dangerous and forbidding mountains may seem sublime to us, but another culture may prize more settled foothills exhibiting the traces of human activity. What may seem like an ugly gorge to us may be a prized site of archeological remains or dinosaur bones that offer unique and novel experiences. Placemaking thus has a general rather than specific audience: you can't please everyone.

If you are engaged in a placemaking exercise, ask yourself: What can I do there? Who will I meet and what sort of interaction will we have? What activities go on? What experiences can I have there? This advice applies whether one is dealing with a street, a business development area, a neighbourhood, a region or a country. Make a virtue of these qualities that together turn simple GPS coordinates into meaningful places that people have deep emotional connections to. Societies, communities and even sub-cultures embed their history and values in a landscape through these activities. They anchor and pass on values by building them into landscapes that tutor the bodies of the generations to come.

Placemaking necessarily involves integrated approaches to planning public spaces. This is because successful places enable social vitality and interaction. Achieving this vivacity is, in part, facilitated by design aesthetics and spatial planning, but equally important is the capacity to support and integrate with community. It is not by accident that in this issue of Curb Magazine, articles on placemaking are supported by contributions on housing, governance and participatory planning.

Despite its cultural and emotional qualities, the outcomes of placemaking are very real and tangible over the long term. As placemaking expert Katherine Loflin puts it, "loved places do better," both in terms of hard economic outcomes and resilience as well as attracting talent. The success of placemaking exercises, however, depends upon resisting the temptation to oversimplify and recognizing that the identity of places are as complex and dynamic as the people who shape them.

Rob Shields is Henry Marshall Tory Endowed Research Chair at the City-Region Studies Centre, University of Alberta and Visiting Scholar at Université de Paris V La Sorbonne. He has over 30 years of experience with placemaking. His book Places on the Margin *is one of the foundations for understanding place-images and for marketing place.*

What to do if your region or community is tagged as a "hell on earth" or "no man's land" that no one wants to visit:

• It is generally futile to simply publish images showing that the place is not really like that or to offer up contrasts. Global public opinion cannot be rebutted, but it can be developed

• Make a virtue of the potential experiences by offering a tour

• Find an every worse place and leverage the local image against that

• Be aware that other places are also engaged in casting your region or community as having a particular identity, for better or worse

• Bring the place into a closer relationship with other places so that it becomes part of networks of meaningful activity. Strong opportunities exist to link placemaking to regional development

UNAFFORDABLE CITY IN THE COUNTRY

SCOTT VARGA

Harmony Housing demonstrates a successful effort to address Abbotsford's housing issues by driving policy change while creating affordable ownership options

HOUSING CO-OPS: WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT

VALARY HOWARD

There is trouble in the Valley. That problem is the availability of affordable housing in Abbotsford, British Columbia, the "City in the Country" located in B.C.'s Fraser Valley. An agricultural hotbed since 1892, Abbotsford has seen immense population growth over the past three decades, and with it, a steep increase in the cost of housing. Homelessness has become an increasingly visible problem for Abbotsford along with other associated social deficiencies.

Zoning plays a major role in affordable housing in Abbotsford. 71% (266km²) of the city's land base is zoned for agricultural use, with 16% (60km²) allocated for residential. The agricultural land is protected by a policy that is rare to Canada called the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which works to prioritize agricultural activities on designated lands. Although there has been a weakening of the ALR, specifically in the Fraser Valley, as economic development initiatives work to extract valuable land from ALR-zoned lands, the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission in charge of the ALR does require local and regional governments to plan according to ALR policy.

According to B.C. Stats, Abbotsford's current population is 141,000. While the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) states that Abbotsford's average price for a new house is $625,078, a steady increase of demand while racing to keep up the supply has driven housing costs to be nearly unbearable.

A successful development and planning initiative in Abbotsford that looked to create an affordable housing option while driving policy change is Harmony Housing. Completed in June 2010, Harmony Housing was developed to target below-median income earners while creating affordable housing for 22 households. The project consists of 11 townhouse units, each 3 stories containing full, ground floor suites that provide rental income for the homeowner. This design increases accessibility-convenience options for elderly or disabled individuals while expanding the possibility of retiring-in-place. The concept of "flex housing," according to CMHC, is a housing concept that incorporates, at the design and construction stage, the ability to make future changes easily and with minimum expense while meeting the evolving needs of its occupants. The project was initiated by a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between CMHC and the City of Abbotsford as development policy and design guidelines for the proposed flex housing site were created.

Amendments to the official community plan (OCP) and zoning policy were required to secure the flex housing concept and to support Abbotsford's affordable housing policy on future projects that encourage a broad range of housing options. CMHC provided $40,000 in seed funding to the private sector developer, and Harmony Housing homeowners benefited from CMHC

mortgage loan insurance flexibilities. Policy stipulations, such as the Resale Control Agreement, set specific covenants between the developer and the Provincial Rental Housing Corporation (PRHC) to ensure Harmony Housing maintains its affordability. This restrictive covenant states that re-sales of units must be at 20% below fair market value (FMV) based on real estate appraisal and creates an option for PRHC to purchase an affordable unit if it is sold, rented or used in breach of the covenant. Additionally, the owner cannot own other property, and the owner must live and work in Abbotsford. Similar policy mechanisms have been enacted in such places as Whistler, B.C.

Harmony Housing demonstrates a successful effort to address Abbotsford's housing issues by driving policy change while creating affordable ownership options for previous long-term renters. The success of Harmony Housing is apparent not only by the fact it fills a dire need in the Fraser Valley, but also its recognition as a Finalist for the 2011 Real Estate Foundation Awards by industry peers. Most importantly, the Harmony project demonstrates how vital collaboration between government at multiple levels and private sector is in developing affordable housing projects and successful cities.

Scott Varga's professional and academic experience is rooted in architecture, design, urban planning and visual communications. He is currently pursuing his MA at the University of Alberta.

Housing cooperatives across Canada exist to offer democratic control by members in an environment of affordable housing. At the Calgary AGM of the Co-op Housing Federation of Canada (CHF), Deputy Mayor Jian-Carlo Curra greeted the audience by noting that housing co-ops are the "neighbourhood within the neighbourhood," a key component of community-building. Co-ops can provide opportunities for aging-in-place and many are supportive of environmentally sustainable initiatives, such as solar heating.

"WE NEED TO DECIDE AS A COMMUNITY HOW WE ARE GOING TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THOSE WHO NEED IT"

My own co-op is in a much-desired location in the river valley near the centre of Edmonton. When the co-op was formed and built over 30 years ago, the location was less desirable and people weren't inclined to buy homes unless they didn't have much money, or had a historical tie. Now it is common to have new condos selling for around $1,000,000. Lots are so expensive that even modest homes sell for

$300,000 more than in other areas of the city. Taxes have increased greatly and our co-op duplexes now require substantial renovations to remain in good condition.

The operating agreements between housing co-operatives and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) will end for many co-ops in 2017. This means we will not receive subsidy from the government to support those unable to pay full housing charge. Mixed-income is one of the benefits of the co-op and supports members who need full or partial subsidy, or abatement. Those who are able pay full charge, well below market rate, and those struggling financially pay less. This arrangement has benefited single parents, graduate students, those with mental and other illnesses, young families and those recently separated. However, the crunch is coming when we may not be able to maintain the range of incomes we now have. In the past, housing charges were low and families with two incomes were happy to support subsidy; it was a condition of our mortgage. Now, however, we need to decide as a community how we are going to continue supporting those who need it.

Recently in Vancouver, mayors of Canada's largest municipalities urged provincial and federal governments to meet to address the issue of expiring

rental support agreements. As CHF Canada's David Spackman points out, "municipalities can take direct action on local homelessness issues, long-term affordable housing for low-income families, seniors on fixed income and others marginalized in the commercial housing market," and he cites the need for support from a much wider tax base. Federal and provincial negotiations must begin shortly as housing subsidies have expired in some co-ops already and an increasing number will do so within the next three years.

Such cities as Edmonton have important and ambitious policies to end homelessness. Although Edmonton has made progress in relation to its homelessness initiative, there is a sector of the population whose need will be made plain when their mortgages are paid out.

We are going to have to talk about it.

Valary Howard works in community development and has lived in housing co-ops across Canada.

CREATIVE CITIES, CREATIVE SPACES AND REGULATIONS

KERRI ARTHURS

One of the most iconic varieties of cultural spaces in Canada are artist-run centres. Characterized as flexible spaces created, curated and operated by artists devoted to producing new and experimental art forms, artist-run centres emerged in many Canadian cities in the 1970s and offered opportunities for creative expression among artistic producers of all disciplines. Today, they continue to provide unique opportunities for artists to experiment and master new techniques, find encouragement among peers and mentors, and connect with audiences by means of exhibitions and live performances. Artist-run centres have also become catalysts in the development of cultural districts in the inner city, including Cité Multimedia in Montreal's redeveloping industrial waterfront district and the Liberty Hall complex in Toronto, both of which became natural incubators for small enterprises initiated by artists and designers following the closure of former factories and industrial warehouses[1].

Today, municipal policies and planning initiatives shape the context in which artist-run centres develop and continue to operate. In Vancouver, British Columbia, the *Central Area Plan* (approved in 1991) reallocated land resources through comprehensive rezoning to transform an obsolescent industrial landscape into a high-amenity and high-density public realm, attracting entrepreneurs, creative service workers and knowledge industry specialists to a variety of housing, recreational and leisure amenities in the downtown core. Vancouver has since pursued innovative and collaborative approaches to cultural planning, approving the *Creative City: Culture Plan for Vancouver 2008-2018* and *Cultural Facilities Priorities Plan 2008-2023*.

Regulations also play an influential role in creative community development, providing the context for cultural planning and the development of cultural infrastructure, as well the policy framework within which local governments realize their social, cultural and economic development objectives. In Canada, regulations are mandated at the provincial and municipal levels and include the civic policies, bylaws, guidelines and other requirements regulating the uses and activities of cultural spaces. At the local level, these regulations are often fragmented between various departments, including Cultural Services, Fire and Rescue, Police, Development Services, Licensing and Inspections, Planning, Engineering and the Park Board.

Recent research in Vancouver revealed that the number of outdated and onerous regulations, the complexity of regulatory applications and approvals processes, and the time and monetary costs associated with their completion often impact artists' abilities to achieve bylaw and regulatory compliance. These outcomes can be compounded for the artists who manage artist-run centres and may have limited experience with the key regulatory attributes required to operate such spaces, or whose cultural activities may not necessary reflect what is permitted or prescribed by land uses and regulatory policies. In some cases, venues have been forced underground - operating outside of the regulatory system - or have been driven into inappropriate neighbourhoods, if not out of the city altogether.

In light of these challenges, artists and arts administrators use several strategies to ensure the continued operation of their spaces. Some draw upon information and support from other non-profit gallery operators to understand regulatory requirements and application processes. Others are changing the nature of collaboration and collectivity within artist-run culture by expanding their programming and operations models to include full-time directors and curators who have the professional experience to manage the complexity of the regulatory compliance.

Support from local governments can help artists and arts administrators navigate the regulatory approvals process and requirements for operating cultural facilities. In the City of Vancouver, this is reflected in the programs and planning work of municipal Cultural Services staff, who provide a comprehensive range of supports to strengthen the ability of the cultural community to deliver cultural programming to residents and visitors. An assessment of the by-laws and regulatory processes impacting Vancouver's creative sectors also led to the launch of the *Regulatory Review on Live Performance Venues* in 2009. The purpose of the *Review* was to enable the sustainable creation and operation of live performance venues by improving the City's regulatory systems[2].

As cities and regions become cultural and creative destinations, local governments must recognize the influence of civic regulations in shaping the context in which the talent, diversity and creativity of the cultural community can thrive. This may require that planners and policymakers acquire a better understanding of how regulations impact creative community development in their jurisdictions, as well as the strategies that artists and arts administrators employ to sustain their operations in a challenging policy context. This insight will help to ensure that communities can retain the strength and diversity of their cultural assets and that civic regulations are not barriers to the development of culturally vibrant, sustainable and creative cities.

Kerri Arthurs is currently Assistant Program Leader at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Centre for Cultural Planning and Development. Her research and professional work experience address cultural planning and cultural facilities development across North America and internationally.

[1] For more on this, see Evans, G.L. (2009). From cultural quarters to creative clusters: Creative spaces in the new city economy. In M. Ledger (Ed.), *The sustainability and development of cultural quarters: International perspective* (pp. 32-59). Stockholm: Institute of Urban History.

[2] For more information on the City of Vancouver Regulatory Review for Live Performance Venues, see: http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/LivePerformanceRegulatoryReviewOverview_-2011.pdf.

Images: Grunt Gallery, (right) Henri Robideau

CONNECTING THE PLAN TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE PLANNING PROCESS

CAROLYN G. LOH

1 Visioning Process

Master Plan Goals

Preferences of Community at large

The Four Potential Disconnects in the Planning Process
Each dashed arrow represents a point where the planning process could break down.

2 Plan Writing

Master Plan Implementation Steps

3 Local Government Actions

Zoning and Other Ordinances

4 Ordinance Enforcement

Development

Adapted from author's original image in: Loh, Carolyn G. (2012). Four Potential Disconnects in the Community Planning Process. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 32(1), 33-47.

During the years I worked at a planning consulting firm, providing planning services to suburban and rural communities in southeast Michigan, I saw a lot of dismayed planning commissioners. They would be presented with a proposed project that didn't seem to fit well with existing development patterns, only to realize that their comprehensive plan allowed, and even encouraged, such development. Not wanting to risk a lawsuit, they would reluctantly approve the development.

Why was this happening? Why didn't the plans represent the community vision, as they were supposed to, and why were the planning commissioners stuck recommending approval for developments that seemed to go against what they had intended?

In studying planning processes in detail in four communities with varying levels of planning capacity and growth pressure, I found that there are a few identifiable places where the planning process is more likely to break down, resulting in a failure to translate the community's vision into actual development. I call these places the four potential "disconnects"[1]. Each time there is a "handoff" in the planning process, either between bodies or individuals in charge of a part of the process or between documents, there is the potential for the baton of implementation to get dropped. If planners and

officials don't move the implementation process forward, development outcomes are much less likely to reflect the original vision.

In North America, the planning process usually works as follows: planning commissioners or planning staff organize some sort of community input process, such as a visioning session, a charrette, a series of public meetings or even a survey, through which they can gather the ideas and values of stakeholders. Planning staff then translate this feedback into a series of goals and objectives.

> "there are a few identifiable places where the planning process is more likely to break down, resulting in a failure to translate the community's vision into actual development"

Planning staff and planning commissioners write a plan to guide future government action. After appointed and elected officials approve the plan, they implement it, both by making land use decisions that conform to the goals and future land use map and by amending the zoning ordinance

text to include language recommended in the plan. Finally, officials enforce the zoning ordinance through the site plan approval process and monitoring and enforcement efforts.

Within such a complex process involving so many actors, there are four main opportunities for things to go awry. First, the goals and objectives may fail to accurately reflect what people want. The locality might not have conducted a visioning process, due to a lack of funds or interest. The public turnout at events might have reflected only certain portions of the population or favoured elites. Sometimes, community division over vital issues would ensure that any one version of a plan would anger a large portion of the community.

Next, the plan itself may not be up to the task of guiding future land use decisions to help create the vision of that community. The goals and objectives may do a good job of reflecting community preferences, but the plan writers might fail to include any detailed implementation steps to move the process forward. Alternatively, perhaps the plan includes implementation steps, but, if followed, they would not produce the desired outcomes.

Even if the implementation steps are well-constructed, in many places, plan documents are advisory only. For certain planning goals to be
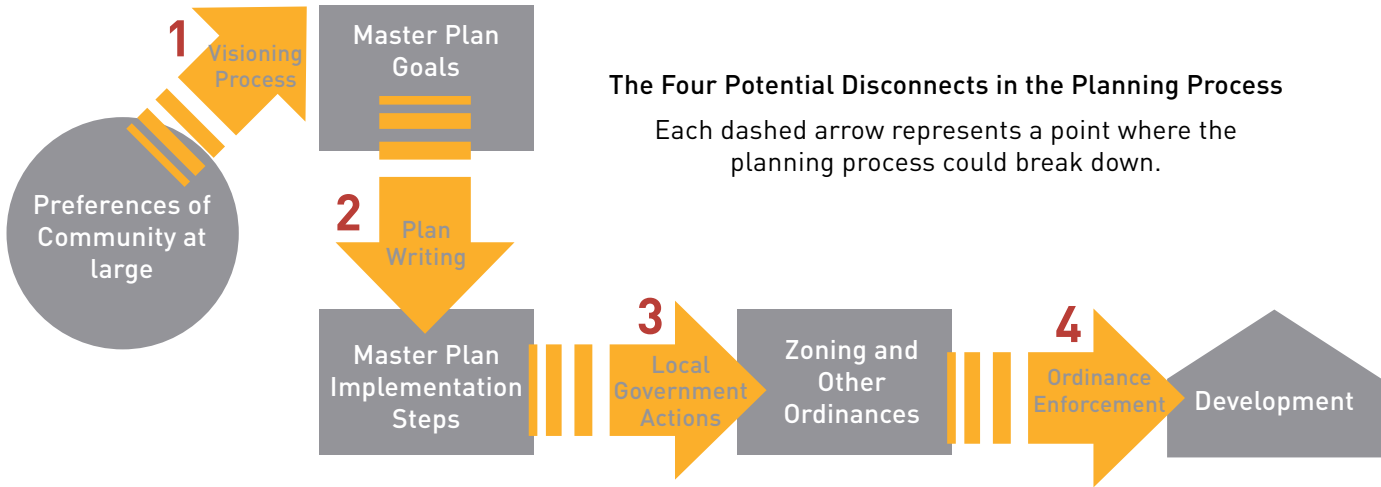
achieved, the zoning ordinance itself must be amended to reflect what is called for in the plan. Often, this does not happen due to a lack of awareness of what exactly needs to be done, poor communication between appointed and elected officials and, sometimes, a lack of political will to actually change the law.

Finally, assuming the ordinances are now such that they would allow the kinds of decisions that would implement the community vision, planners, planning commissioners and legislators must enforce them through zoning decisions, the site plan review process and monitoring for compliance. If they do not, all the previous work will have been wasted.

At every step of the way, it takes real effort to move the process forward. The easiest course is to do nothing, the result often being a built environment that fails to resemble the community vision on which stakeholders, commissioners and staff worked hard to agree.

To avoid dropping the baton and to keep the process going, it helps to be aware of the potential for problems at each stage. I suggest that each

community identify one staff person who is in charge of guiding the plan through the entire implementation process. This person should keep track of where the plan is in the process, who is responsible for each implementation task, which tasks have been completed and whether the end result seems to be what was intended (if not, the plan should be amended). This implementation officer could make regular reports to the planning commission on the plan's progress. Attention to connecting the four potential disconnects can ensure that all of the effort of stakeholders, officials and staff to create a document that will guide development decisions does in fact help to produce a community of which they can be proud.

Carolyn G. Loh is Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

[1] See Loh, Carolyn G. (2012). Four Potential Disconnects in the Community Planning Process. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 32(1), 33-47.

Images: CRSC

AN INTRODUCTION TO PLACEMAKING:
FINDING INSPIRATION FOR SPACES FROM THE PEOPLE WHO USE THEM

MICHEAL E. WILLIAMSON

WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to planning and design that capitalizes on a community's assets, ideas, knowledge and abilities. By bringing these factors together, this approach can create public spaces that encourage healthy living and a stronger sense of community. The most important element of the placemaking approach is to involve the people who use - or want to use - the space. Placemaking helps people create memories of events and later cherish those memories as they recall them with future generations.

While the term "placemaking" has become en vogue in recent years to explain how spaces emerge, it is not an entirely new concept. Back in the 1960s when the automobile was taking over city planning principles, designers like Jane Jacobs expressed concerns and ideas about how cities should be designed for people - that "there must be eyes upon the street" and "sidewalks must have users." To achieve Jacobs' (and many other visionaries') aim of creating great public places, it is essential to embrace the collective knowledge of those who live, work and play there. By doing so, placemaking gives the community ownership of the space, making them safer, better maintained and more frequently used.

HOW DOES PLACEMAKING WORK?

The multi-faceted placemaking approach involves identifying issues, framing questions and genuinely listening to the people who use the space. This includes not only those who live and work in a place, but those who play, shop and socialize there (or want to) as well. The goal is to discover the needs and dreams of all stakeholders. At the risk of over-simplifying, this process is a tricky one. Stakeholder engagement is inherently imperfect; radically different visions may exist for the site, political interests may limit the range of options deemed possible or acceptable for the site, and certain stakeholders, such as youths, transients or homeless people, may not come to the table, nor even be invited. Being flexible in the range of stakeholders included and then finding common ground is key for these different needs and dreams to be consolidated and presented in a cohesive vision for the space - one that helps the community prioritize how to achieve both large and small improvements.

These prioritization lists often begin simply, evolving from the positive traits of a community. Stakeholders can draw upon these traits to inspire enhancements to underused spaces or to better understand the need for new ones. When a community comes together to ask for something they're missing – say, a new greenspace or a basketball court - they may not understand what their desire represents. In other words, they might not understand the larger need they are lacking but know some sort of change is needed. These bigger-picture needs might be places for people to socialize, to sit, to engage, to appreciate art, to play... and so much more. Once the dialogue starts, it is truly inspiring for these groups to imagine the possibilities for the places they inhabit. They begin envisioning sites throughout the city in a new and beautiful light. They see new uses for underutilized spaces. They imagine businesses, developments, gatherings and meeting neighbours. The phrase "be the change you wish to see in the world" takes on a new meaning.

WHAT IS THE DESIGNER'S ROLE?

When it comes to interpreting community desires and prioritization lists, we often fall upon our prior design experience or technical education. However, the most important thing to remember is that these spaces are for people - not only the people who use them today, but also those who might do so in the future. Designers can work with the community to:

PROMOTE SOCIABILITY The places where you meet your friends when you're on a walk, or the places that come to mind when you want to give a community tour. Like all successful public spaces, these offer a variety of experiences and allow for many different user groups to inhabit a space at the same time.

HAVE LOTS OF THINGS TO DO
As simple as this sounds, it is surprising how often highly-designed spaces do not follow this rule. Good spaces do not just have benches or function solely on one day of the week. They offer a variety of opportunities ranging from sitting or viewing art to shopping, eating, gardening and more. Activities will attract people to a space, and a variety of activities will attract them more often.

BE COMFORTABLE AND ATTRACTIVE
Designers often get this one right. We all enjoy aesthetically-pleasing spaces, but also include comfortable places to sit and enjoy such places, with proper lighting and ensuring safety. These will not only attract people to the space, but allow them to stay longer.

BE ACCESSIBLE Public spaces need to be easily accessible by everyone. If the public is unaware that a space is for them, it is highly unlikely that they will hunt it out and the space will go neglected.

Most importantly, we must remember that good spaces are inspired by the people who use them. This is the key to the entire placemaking process. We need to design spaces that are created by the people, not dictated to them.

Achieving this requires patience, and often small-scale improvements, experimentation and listening to a variety of (potentially conflicting) viewpoints. Keeping the focus on how the public will engage with a space may also mean slowing down the design process and allowing places to evolve into spaces that speak to the people who inhabit them.

Micheal E. Williamson is a Design Consultant with Stantec Consulting Ltd. in Calgary, Alberta, where he is engaged in creating spaces that articulate the needs of everyday users.

Image: The LIVINGbridge in downtown Edmonton is turning an abandoned rail bridge into an urban public garden and green space. Inspired by urban designers to beautify the city, the bridge is intended to become a destination for relaxation, to provide sightlines of downtown, to engage citizens through collaborative garden maintenance and to support local food production. Courtesy of the LIVINGbridge team.

GRAPPLING WITH GENTRIFICATION

ANNE STEVENSON

Within every successful revitalization project lies the potential for gentrification. Yet while this fact is well-known to planners, the tools at our disposal to address this predictable pattern are relatively few.

Gentrification describes the displacement of lower-income residents with more affluent households. A typical pattern of gentrification has been observed in cities across the world. It often begins when artists move into a distressed area in order to take advantage of the lower rents offered. Their cultural contributions lead to an uplift in the area, and young professionals begin to move in during the second wave of gentrification. The last step in the process is the arrival of investors, who purchase still-affordable land with the expectation of its value increasing further in time. While this dynamic can occur without any external interference, city policies and investment in large-scale public works, such as LRT expansion or infrastructure upgrades, can play into the land value equations that can lead to gentrification.

Currently, the most common approach to ensuring affordability in revitalizing areas is the provision of affordable housing. This can be done through a variety of mechanisms, including direct developer contributions or special purpose housing associations. While this approach can be successful, it does not necessarily address the problem of existing owners

on fixed incomes who may be unable to support rising property taxes as the value of their property increases, or protect the supply of affordable market rental units.

Housing costs are not the only thing that can make a neighbourhood inaccessible. Many distressed areas are characterized by low-rent commercial streets that often do not meet the needs of the local population. A typical example would be a street with heavy concentrations of pawn shops but no grocery stores. An initial uplift in local retail can be beneficial in providing more diverse and vibrant shopping streets, but it can just as quickly fall to the other extreme where boutique shops fail to serve daily needs or are out of the price range for many.

Addressing gentrification can seem daunting as it often appears to be an inevitable outcome of our social and economic system. At the most extreme, there are those who suggest that until there is social equity, gentrification is inevitable. Yet incremental innovations could be made to existing tools that would provide greater balance between the benefits and downsides of revitalization without requiring large-scale social reorganization.

A first step would be to articulate the practical ramifications of gentrification that undermine a city's bottom line. If vulnerable populations are consis-

tently pushed out of areas that have the best access to services and public transportation, municipalities will have to work harder and spend more to reach these populations. The local economy also suffers if businesses are unable to attract workers due to high housing costs, or if local shops are unable to remain viable in the face of rising rents.

An additional approach would be to consider the tools we already use around housing affordability and apply them more holistically. For example, the practice of providing affordable housing could potentially be expanded to consider the concept of affordable retail, focusing on small-scale commercial space that would allow local businesses to thrive.

Many of these tools require direct economic and political interventions that are often outside the scope of planners alone. Yet it is important to remember that, at base, gentrification is a product of high quality urban spaces being overvalued for their rarity. In that sense, planners have a fundamental role to play in averting gentrification by ensuring that great placemaking becomes the rule, rather than the exception.

Anne Stevenson is an urban planner who lives and works in Edmonton.

Image: Iwona Faferek

TAKING BACK THE PARK

MICHAEL GRANZOW

Image: Michael Granzow

Every city has them: the rough neighbourhoods, sketchy street corners or dangerous parks – places waiting to be "revitalized." In my home city of Lethbridge, Alberta, the most infamous of these places was Galt Gardens, a downtown public park with a bad reputation. The park was known as a regular hangout for homeless people and, in particular, Aboriginal homeless people. Even as a child, before ever having set foot in Galt Gardens, the park held a meaningful place in my imagination as troublesome, threatening and, significantly, as "the Indian park."

As with many placemaking initiatives, the ostensible goal of the Galt Gardens revitalization was to bring more people to the park. As one Lethbridge Herald article reported, "increased use of the park by city residents is predicted, and with 24-hour security and regular police patrols via foot and cycle officers, the public will be able to take back the park."[1] But from whom must the public reclaim their rightful park? Undertaking a research project on how the park was re-imagined and re-made through discourse, it became increasingly clear over the course of my study that the "negative users" (a term employed by interviewees to describe visitors deemed problematic) that were preventing "our" enjoyment of Galt Gardens were, by and large, homeless people. This was made clearer in another Herald article, this one published shortly after the completion of the park's revitalization: "Long a popular hangout for the city's street population and largely avoided by the public, Galt Gardens is quickly becom-

ing a popular destination, thanks to the new water feature."[2] In representations such as this, "street" people were produced as illegitimate, as other than "the public." They were portrayed as barriers to placemaking and objects of a cleansing strategy.

"FROM WHOM MUST THE PUBLIC RECLAIM THEIR RIGHTFUL PARK?"

The revitalization of Galt Gardens involved a number of changes to the design of the park; like the discursive constructions, these too delineated particular kinds of users and uses. For example, the revitalization coincided with the removal of a number of nearby public benches. These benches, some of the busiest in the downtown, were removed to discourage "negative users" from loitering. Meanwhile, as benches were being removed across the street from the park, new ones were being installed within its borders. Significantly narrower than their predecessors, these new benches made sitting for long periods of time uncomfortable and lying down for a nap impossible.

The new park benches effectively enforce the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate uses of public space. Exclusion of a group by force (removing them physically) becomes exclusion of affordances in the realm of urban design. There is, in the end, little difference: both communicate illegitimate ways of using the park,

and describe the people who engage in these activities (in this case, homeless people) as illegitimate park users.

In short, a revitalized Galt Gardens was produced, both discursively and materially, as a space for only a narrowly-defined public, one that excludes the city's most impoverished residents, who, according to scholars such as Jeremy Waldron, are the very people who need public spaces the most. Despite the fact that Galt Gardens continued to be a public space, its revitalization was marked by exclusionary practices and discourses that defined certain people as outside of "the public" for whom the park was ostensibly made in the first place.

Born from the ashes of the large-scale and abstract modernist planning of the 19th and 20th centuries, placemaking has come to emphasize inclusive, grassroots planning initiatives intended to make public spaces more "people friendly." However, despite the lip service so often given to the goal of inclusivity, parks and other urban public spaces continue to be produced in ways that often exclude homeless people and other marginalized citizens. In the case of Galt Gardens, the discursive and material transformation of the park from a place of vagrants to a place filled with recreational middle-class users was, in a sense, the loss of the park itself.

Michael Granzow is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Alberta.

[1] From the *Lethbridge Herald* (June 21, 2007)
[2] From the *Lethbridge Herald* (July 9, 2008)

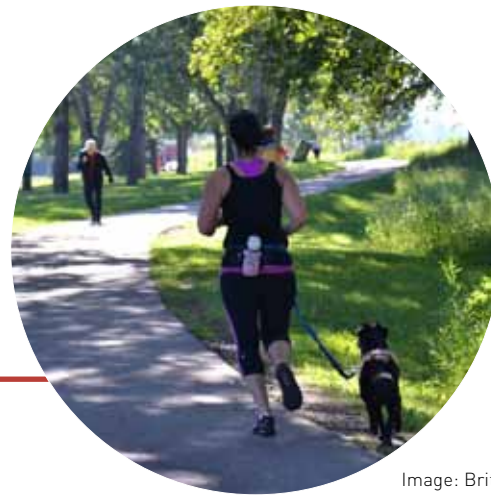# LESSONS FROM PETS IN THE PLACEMAKING PROCESS

BRITTANY STARES

Image: Brittany Stares

I recently attended a talk in Calgary on placemaking, where a young woman shared her story with the crowd. After moving from Ontario only months before to accept her dream job in Calgary, she was leaving the city. The reason? She couldn't find housing close enough to downtown that accommodated her dog.

Placemaking consultant Katherine Loflin reports a growing trend of young people choosing place before jobs.[1] This means that a strong economic profile may no longer be enough to attract or retain new talent. As man's best friend, pets play a vital if not understated role in cultivating place attachment. Pet ownership provides psychological benefits that can underpin the development of positive emotional ties to place. Dog parks in particular engage users in public spaces and contribute to a sense of community. These benefits have not gone unrecognized by urban planners; indeed, the City of Calgary boasts "the largest number of off-leash areas and combined amount of off-leash space in North America," and has engaged in extensive public consultation to expand or improve these areas.[2]

But while planners have supported pet-friendly spaces in the public realm, these efforts are undermined by a lack of such spaces in the private realm. The shortage of pet-friendly housing is reflected not only in the anecdotal experiences such as that mentioned above, but also in the numbers: the Calgary Humane Society reports that nearly a quarter of its surrenders in recent years were the result of owners being unable to find housing that

permitted pets,[3] a trend mirrored across North America.

The lack of pet-friendly housing in Calgary – at the same time as the City has invested in pet-friendly public spaces and committed to attracting newcomers – speaks to a broader occurrence that is all too common in "placemaking." Frequently, placemaking projects employ incremental (and marketable) strategies with such aims as making a community more beautiful, walkable or usable, but overlook the foundations of corresponding housing forms or accessibility. At heart, placemaking is about liveability. As a lack of affordable housing can turn a community stagnate or drive out the low-income or creative residents who made it attractive in the first place, a shortage of pet-friendly housing limits the ability of people to engage in urban spaces with their pets, and for some users, to engage in them at all. Without adequate attention paid to the availability of appropriate housing forms (be it pet-friendly, family-friendly and so forth), the success of any placemaking projects that would reach these populations is limited.

Successful placemaking not only requires a more holistic approach, but also expanding the range of actors recognized as *placemakers.* As city officials work with developers in revitalizing sites to achieve placemaking aims, property management and rental companies, as well as individual landlords, of existing residential sites can be similarly engaged. In the case of pet-friendly housing, pets are often

refused due to noise, smell or potential for damage. However, studies suggest that tenants stay longer in pet-friendly residences (46 months as opposed to 18 months) and are willing to pay 20-30% more to accommodate their pets.[4] Additionally, pets can increase a building's security and subsequent desirability. Articulating these benefits, while couching them in placemaking discussion, could be useful for all parties involved.

A quick search of Calgary downtown apartment buildings confirmed the difficulty this young Ontario woman would have had finding pet-friendly housing close to work. Ironically, downtown Calgary otherwise offers some of the city's best amenities for pet-owners: it is the hub of one of the most pet-friendly public transit systems in Canada and borders an extensive river pathway and parks system.

As city officials turn to placemaking to achieve economic objectives, we must remember that the presence of great public spaces alone is not enough to create – nor derive the benefits of – a strong sense of place. For placemaking projects to reach their full potential, the constant impact of private spaces on the use of and experience in public spaces must be considered. This is a lesson all aspiring placemakers can draw from.

Brittany Stares is the Managing Editor of Curb Magazine.

[1] Calgary Soul of the City speakers series, Sept 26, 2012
[2] http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Parks/Pages/Locations/Dog-off-leash-areas-in-parks.aspx
[3] http://www.calgaryhumane.ca/document.doc?id=128
[4] Ibid

DESIGNING CITIES FOR CYCLING: ROUTE DESIGNS TO MOTIVATE CYCLING AND REDUCE INJURIES

KAY TESCHKE, MEGHAN WINTERS and ANNE HARRIS

North Americans love going to Europe – we come back with memories of cafés, small shops, people in the streets. Danish architect and urban design expert Jan Gehl calls these "people places," and says transportation modes are vital to create the atmosphere. The best places invite people to walk and cycle.

In Canada and the United States, the walking mode share is about half of that in Europe (~10% of trips versus ~ 20%). The difference in cycling mode share is even greater. In North America, cycling is a sub-culture dominated by young men, and 1-2% of trips are made by bike. In northern European countries such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, people of all ages and abilities cycle, and 10-40% of trips are by bike despite winters that are similar to those in most of North America. Importantly, cycling is also safer in these European countries, with fatality rates one-half to one-fifth of those in North America.

We wanted to understand these differences and see whether they might be related to the transportation infrastructure. In North America, cities tend to provide off-street paths for recreational cycling. Elsewhere, along the roads to commuting destinations, there is often no cycling infrastructure at all. Meanwhile, in countries like Denmark and the Netherlands, extensive bike facilities (especially "cycle tracks," also known

as separated or protected bike lanes) are provided along busy city streets, serving destinations such as offices, shops and schools.

We conducted two studies as part of our Cycling in Cities research program in Canada. One asked the opinions of 1400 current and potential cyclists about what motivated or deterred cycling and what kinds of routes (illustrated with pictures) they would like to cycle on. The second study looked at almost 700 injured cyclists and determined which of 15 route types increased or decreased injury risks.

What we found is great news for transportation planners:

• On average, all types of cyclists (regular, occasional and potential) prefer the same kinds of routes: bike-specific facilities, including cycle tracks, bike routes on residential streets and off-street bike paths. These routes are preferred by men and women, young and old. This means that if cities build these bike facilities, they will appeal to existing cyclists and encourage new ones.

• The routes that people want to cycle on are also safer, so building routes that motivate cycling will also reduce injury risk. Safety concerns are a major deterrent to cycling and cycling is safer when more people do it, so building safe infrastructure is a great way to start a positive feedback loop.

Three types of bike facilities that best motivate cycling and reduce injuries:

Install cycle tracks alongside busy or high-speed streets.

Make residential streets quiet with traffic diversion and speed limits ≤ 30 km/h.

Off street, provide paved paths for bikes only and keep them obstacle-free with clear sightlines.

Our research points to three types of bike facilities to best motivate cycling and reduce injuries (see previous page). Building a consistent network of these facilities will promote travel to destinations in busy city centres, to neighbourhood shops and schools, and through parks and scenic areas. This is exactly the approach that northern European cycling countries have taken over the last four decades.

Luckily, cities across North America are starting to change. The "complete streets" philosophy is influencing planners to provide safe and efficient transportation space for all road users. Some of the largest cities in the United States, including New York and Chicago, have set aggressive targets for increased cycling and, to meet them, have launched programs to construct extensive networks of cycle tracks. Canadian cities are also changing. Examples include Montreal with a system of cycle tracks throughout its downtown core and Victoria with old railway lines converted to off-street bike trails that lead from the suburbs to the city centre.

Cycling presents a huge opportunity for planners to enhance the vitality of cities; manage traffic congestion; reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases; increase the physical activity and health of citizens; and, of course, make wonderful "people places" where people interact, do business and enjoy the outdoors. Improved routes are the key to change.

For more information, including an overview of our research and links to brochures and scientific papers, please visit: http://cycling-incities.spph.ubc.ca

Kay Teschke is Professor at the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. Meghan Winters is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. Anne Harris is Assistant Professor in the School of Occupational and Public Health at Ryerson University. All are part of the Cycling in Cities research team.

Images: Bike Portland, Cycling in Cities Research Program and Paul Krueger

"BUILDING A CONSISTENT NETWORK OF THESE FACILITIES WILL PROMOTE TRAVEL TO DESTINATIONS IN BUSY CITY CENTRES, TO NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS AND SCHOOLS, AND THROUGH PARKS AND SCENIC AREAS"

Some municipalities worry that building cycle tracks is more expensive than painted bike lanes. A few simple changes in approach can provide the much safer and preferred facilities for low cost.

Put bike lanes between the sidewalk and parked cars instead of between parked and moving cars.

Install plastic bollards along painted bike lanes to make it clear that cars are not allowed in the cycling lane.

A SPIRITUAL SPACE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

MIRETTE KHORSHED, OMAR ETMAN, AHMAD ABOU HENDIA, RANIA JOSEPH, KARIM ANWAR and HOSSAM EL-MASRY

Spiritual spaces can create place attachment and cultivate individual well-being, as well as often provide a base for programs and services that support community stability. In an increasingly fast and stressing world, our connection to these spaces can erode, and scarce empty land plots in busy downtown cores limit the potential to bring new spiritual spaces to where people are spending much of their time.

Challenged by anonymous.d's Spiritual.d architectural competition to redefine and reinterpret the meaning of a spiritual space in today's contemporary world, we - a team of graduates from three universities in Egypt - set about to develop an alternative approach to designing spiritual spaces that overcame constraints of busy lifestyles and limited land while projecting the concepts of unity and understanding between religions. The approach we developed was two-pronged: first, creating spiritual spaces vertically over a small footprint of land instead of a traditionally large area, and second, creating a space that could respectfully accommodate multiple religious practices.

To demonstrate the prospects for this, we analyzed the similarities and differences between spiritual practices that would need to be considered for a multi-faith space. Each spiritual practice, whether religious or meditative, has its own set of needs; some faiths require a specific prayer orientation or larger spaces for congregations, while for purely meditative purposes, the main challenge is creating a peaceful environment that de-contextualizes its users from the hustle and noise of its surroundings.

Initially envisioned for a specific site in Cairo but applicable to virtually any city in the world, our shortlisted design accommodated the three main religions in Egypt – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – within a vertical tower. The final morphology of the building is the result of three cores of prayer spaces - representing the three religions - wrapping together and interconnecting through bridges and platforms to create a single tower with a single unified purpose: spiritual connectivity. These cores distribute users onto platforms throughout the tower, where they may access individual prayer spaces. These individual spaces are of different size, growing smaller and scarcer as their elevation increases. The ground level provides a main gathering space for congregation and prayers, while the topmost levels provide users with a serene area that is more open and connected to the sky.

Realizing that the faiths practiced change from city to city, or even district to district, this design is adaptable to other contexts. The speed of city life, building regulations and existing municipal plans are other factors that would have to be taken into account. As with any project, working alongside city planners would allow for the coherent, synchronized inclusion of spiritual spaces at locations where they would be most accessible and needed.

By creating spaces that emphasize the common ground between people instead of the points of difference, opportunities exist to not only overcome challenges of limited space, but also to nurture emotional ties to place for users attracted by the site's projected concepts of unity and peace. In a time where the diversity of a city's inhabitants has increased – and with that, the diversity of religions practiced – the need for accessible spiritual spaces in today's modern city goes hand in hand with the need to create spaces that promote understanding and tolerance.

For more information about the project, including project design, please visit: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=45480451120 8686&set=pb.166168636738943.-2207520000.1375173476.&type=3&theater.

The project team consists of recent graduates from the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime, the Higher Technological Institute at 10th of Ramadan City and the American University in Cairo. They now continue to explore their varying interests professionally, in research or through academic work in fields ranging from design sustainability and computational design to construction management.

Image: Omar Etman, Ahmad Abou Hendia and Karim Anwar

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:
PLACEMAKING BY STORY-TELLING

CAROLINE ANDREW

The "new" City of Ottawa has existed since 2001, when provincially-imposed amalgamation created a geographically huge municipality, combining the urbanized, the urbanizing and the rural. There are some missed opportunities during this process that could have led to citizen-led placemaking, such as: an effort prior to amalgamation to design a locally-driven governance plan for the region; efforts at the end of the transition year to introduce youth and diversity representation; and a summit just after amalgamation that promised a vision of place. These efforts, however, were effectively "squashed" or marginalized by the provincially-imposed amalgamation, a transition process dominated by Harris nominees and provincial down-loading. Since then, the City of Ottawa exists but there is little sense of a shared

space or a shared past to form a base for a shared future and a greater capacity for collective action in the present. Could we have done better?

I think so and I have argued that story-telling might have been the way to go[1]. Story-telling has rules or norms; there is a past, a present and a future in good stories. There are also multiple and diverse voices, and therefore, the potential for different/conflicting/contradictory stories that co-exist. There is, for example, the story of the rivers: the Ottawa River and the Gatineau River, and the period of the lumber industry with the logs coming down the Gatineau to E.B. Eddy and the saw mills on the Ontario side. This is a place not divided by the Ottawa River but united by it. There were bosses and workers (the Shiners' wars), but there was a shared physical space around a shared economic and social project, and a shared sense that decisions would be better if made locally.

Then there is another story about water and the building of the Rideau Canal. Here again, there are different stories and/or images; standing above the beginning of the canal is a triumphant statue of Colonel By (not evoking his troubles with the British government), and close by but almost hidden, a touching yet modest memorial to the workers who died during the construction of the canal. But there are also triumphs – we did build an enduring monument that now unites

Construction of Parliament, Library and Archives Canada / Samuel McLaughlin / C-018353 (centre left)

Lumber on the river, CSTM Domtar Eddy Booth Collection

the community for skating in winter and boating in summer. The irony is that we built it to protect ourselves from the Americans and it now serves to encourage Americans to boat up to Ottawa in the summer.

The designation of Ottawa as the National Capital is not always a story that creates a sense of place. But imagine a different story-telling; what if the British representatives who explained to Queen Victoria the choice she was to make had described Ottawa as a place of beauty and opportunity, rather than talking about "its wild position, and relative inferiority to the other cities named?"[2] Perhaps the difficult relationship between the federal and the local government would not have developed if the federal government had not taken on the mantle of the British and entitled the first federal

agency relating to the region the "Ottawa Improvement Commission." What if their story and the name of the agency had been "Planning Ottawa Together" or "Our Common Future?" Perhaps municipal Ottawa would have reacted more warmly to seeing itself as the Capital.

Another story that can link the past to the present and to the future is the story of the Aboriginal presence. Rather than a single sentence evoking the Aboriginal presence situated in the past, what about a story of the Aboriginal presence in the city today through the enduring image/theme of elders passing on the knowledge and stories of the past to future generations of knowledge-seekers? This theme could draw on the Museum of Civilization, the Wabano Health Centre (also designed by Douglas Cardinal and concerned with passing on traditional Aboriginal health knowledge) and also the Aboriginal Centre at Algonquin College, the building under construction at Carleton University, and the programmatic presence across all the post-secondary institutions.

And then there is a story of equity and inclusion with a subtitle of "hearts and heads." It is the story of building institutions that help to widen the circle, such as the early Francophone presence with Elisabeth Bruyère creating the hospital to Marion Dewar inviting the community to welcome the Vietnamese boat people. This theme

also includes many other stories - those of the Community Resource and Health Centres providing place-based services and a sense of community to neighbours; those of the settlement sector providing innovative services to generations of immigrants; the story of the City for All Women Initiative co-creating with the City an "Equity and Inclusion Lens" to make Ottawa more inclusive; and finally, to all of the above working together through the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership to build a welcoming community. Ottawa has had diversity throughout its history and here is an ongoing story of efforts to use our hearts and our heads to be equitable and inclusive. These efforts cut across the entire city form, rural to suburban to urban, and are placemaking: we have done it together and we can do it again.
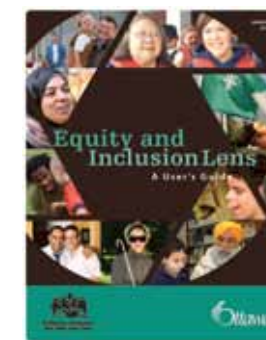
Equity and Inclusion Lens

There are many other stories and many other story-tellers. The stories described above could have told a story about placemaking for Ottawa that

creates multiple possibilities of place. There is a shared environmental story (the waters that bring us together); an economic story (lumber as building a shared physical and social space); a political story (town and Crown living together in collaboration); a cultural story (the Aboriginal elder as the transmitter of knowledge/wisdom and sense of place); and a social story (creating an inclusive and welcoming community). Wouldn't that have been a better way to go?

Caroline Andrew is the Director of the Centre on Governance at the University of Ottawa.

[1] See Andrew, Caroline. (forthcoming). Ottawa: Would "telling its story" be the right way to go? In K.E. Jones, A. Lord and R. Shields (eds.), *City-Regions in Prospect? Exploring the meeting points between place and practice.* Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

[2] W. Eggleston (1961). *The Queens' Choice*, Ottawa: Queen's Printer, p.103.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE PLACE BRANDING AND THE "ATLAS" PROCESS

MIHALIS KAVARATZIS

Developing an appealing place brand is a task that has seized the imagination of planners, municipal officials and place authorities across the world. It often goes uncontested that the place brand is formed through colorful logos, catchy slogans and exciting advertising campaigns. Treating place branding this way, however, implies that the place brand is constructed in newspapers, billboards and TV commercials and that it can be created in City Hall meeting rooms behind closed doors. This is an unfortunate misunderstanding, or even a dangerous simplification. Place brands are rather created in peoples' minds as they encounter all aspects of a place. That means that the place brand has many co-creators who co-construct it through a process that can only be conceptualized as a dialogue. Through the exchange of ideas, experiences, emotions, opinions and messages, these co-creators constantly re-create the place brand. We - both local authorities and consultants - are simply equal participants in this process. When the place brand is treated as a promotional tool, it is called to simplify the place and attach to it an easily defined identity that will appeal to everyone. Places, however, do not subject themselves to such simplifications. Places do not have a single identity neither a single image; they are rather incoherent and "messy" entities — fortunately for all of us as citizens, but unfortunately for

those of us who deal with place branding application. Thankfully, we now have the know-how of effective and sustainable place branding, and this only vaguely resembles the branding process as this is applied in the commercial world.

Successful place branding is based on four pillars: Analysis, Strategy, Participation and Creativity. *Analysis* is perhaps the most significant of those. Extensive research is necessary before any implementation of the project in order to clarify the elements that constitute the particular place's identity and image. A brand cannot be developed if we don't know what the place means for people and what it could mean. *Strategy* is simultaneously a precondition for and a result of the branding process. Isolated and fragmented individual measures might bring temporary results, but are likely to prove inefficient in the long-run if they are not part of a wider strategic framework. In other words, without such framework, even the most creative and seemingly effective measure can only reach a target that has never been set. *Participation* is the most fragile of the four pillars in today's political and communication environment. The need for participation stems from the very nature of the place brand itself, which is multifaceted, dynamic and participatory. A place brand that has been "constructed" without the participation of multiple

stakeholders is very unlikely to be sustainable, as it is precisely these various groups of stakeholders that give meaning to the place brand. It is unfortunate that most place branding measures in contemporary practice are, in reality, attempts to force on the place (from above or from the

> **"Place brands are created in peoples' minds as they encounter all aspects of a place. That means that the place brand has many co-creators who co-construct it through a process that can only be conceptualized as a dialogue."**

outside) meanings that have little to do with the reality of the place as is lived by the place's residents. The necessary feeling of "ownership" of the place brand by the people who are supposed to benefit from it is a major precondition for success, and it is what lacks when the participatory nature of place branding is ignored. Finally, place branding is based on *creativity*. This is obviously useful for the so-

Adapted from Kavaratzis (2008)

called creative parts of the branding process, such as the design of logos and slogans, advertising or the development of integrated communication campaigns. However, the need for creativity extends to the remaining parts of the process: creative vision, creative tools and methods of research and analysis, and, above all, creativity in the seeking of synergies and in participation. Creativity is also crucial in brand leadership, which, in place branding, means active initiation and exemplary participation in the dialogue that constructs the place brand.

What does all this mean in practice? To put it simply, effective place branding implementation consists of the five interrelated and overlapping stages of the A.T.L.A.S. process (Figure 1). The first is the stage of *research* (ASK), which includes extensive investigation of the place's resources and the current and potential perceptions (image or reputation) of the place by internal and external audiences, utilizing quantitative and qualitative techniques that help reveal the

essence of the place. The second stage is the stage of *deliberation* (THINK), in which the core group of stakeholders responsible for the place branding process (local authorities, tourism offices, directly involved sectors, consultants and experts) discuss and draft a proposition for a strategic vision of the future. The third stage is that of *consultation* (LISTEN), which consists of extensive discussions with local communities in order to refine the vision and strategy, as well as the seeking of synergies and partnerships with other places that might be mutually beneficial. The fourth is the stage of *action* (ACT), which consists of measures improving the place's infrastructure, regeneration initiatives and the place's behaviour or the opportunities it offers to all audiences for residence, leisure, work, education, investment and quality of life. The final stage is that of *communication* (SPEAK), which wraps up all of the above and aims at making all interventions, place features and opportunities known to the wider public. It is important to note that the

vision for the place needs to be re-visited at regular intervals in order to accommodate changes in the external environment and to account for the effects of the branding process itself, as these will demonstrate themselves in the physical and social mosaic of the place.

If the four pillars of place branding are considered, and if the sustainable place branding process is followed, there is a lot that place branding can do to help places realize their potential for development. If place branding continues to be treated merely as a promotional tool, then there is very little it can do.

Dr. Mihalis Kavaratzis is Lecturer at the University of Leicester and has published extensively on branding places and tourism destinations, including co-editing (with Prof. G.J. Ashworth) Towards Effective Place Brand Management: Branding European Cities and Regions. *He also acts as an adviser on place branding and tourism development.*

Images: Halifax Regional Municipality

HALIFAX:
HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

KATE MACLENNAN

Opportunities to help, dream and build root us in our community. In a culture of self-sufficiency, how do we foster a sense of collective participation, generosity and neighbourhood-driven identity?

In 2011, a group of community members approached the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), requesting to paint a mural on the surface of their neighbourhood street intersection. The neighbours were inspired by the success of the City Repair project in Portland, Oregon, which successfully supported intersection painting projects in partnership with the municipality for over fifteen years. The HRM's Community Arts Program had a history of working with community members and outside partners to support and design unique community-building programs, using the arts as a catalyst. It was through the Community Arts Facilitator that the neighbourhood saw the opportunity to host a City Repair-like project in hopes that their success could open doors for similar placemaking projects in the region.

For the project to be sustainable and effective, three elements needed to be in place: the format needed to take a community-development approach; artists needed to be in the core team; and potential safety concerns had to be satisfied. It was the role of the Community Arts Facilitator to bridge the gap between the municipal departments and community members to find a framework that would satisfy all parties.

"Streets claim the greatest square footage of any asset a municipality owns, so co-purposing their function is extremely accessible, not to mention low cost"

You might imagine traffic engineers quickly slamming their doors on the idea of co-purposing car-centric city streets. After all, municipalities are more well-versed at expanding the functional definition of buildings through mixed-use developments, or creating diverse uses for sidewalks with tools such as street furniture. Our creativity rarely jumps the curb to see with fresh eyes how streets can offer a venue for culture, recreation, education, health or enterprise. Yet streets claim the greatest square footage of any asset a municipality

owns, so co-purposing their function is extremely accessible, not to mention low cost, creating high impact per dollar spent.

Despite a lack of history with street co-purposing, the interdepartmental conversations were not as conflicted as you might expect. Were there safety concerns from HRM's Traffic & Right of Way and Risk & Insurance departments? You bet. However, their willingness to sit at the table and explicitly list their concerns meant that each element could be thoughtfully researched and planned for. Among other things, the painting design needed to incorporate unpainted elements, paint friction had to be measured and silica sand was required between layers of paint. With safety checks in place, the pilot placemaking project could begin.

Next came designing a process that would make a lasting impression on the collective identity of the neighbourhood. Multiple points of access and participation were key to ensuring the widest audience and impact. From making invitations and sharing neighbourhood stories and dreams to sketching designs or helping paint the final piece, there needed to be many roles so people could give their time in ways that suited their interests and skills. This visible collective effort

reinforces to residents that their neighbourhood is not just a collection of people, but a network of helping hands.

The involvement of professional artists was crucial to give the community pride in the final product. An experienced Community Artist can facilitate meaningful discussion, create an inclusive environment to get residents brainstorming and pull key concepts together visually for community feedback and approval.

After months of inspiring discussion, debate and design, the streets were closed and the neighbourhood gathered to put paint on pavement. Artists and volunteers chalked the design on the road in the morning. Their roles then converted into hosts in the afternoon, inviting all neighbours to fill in the paint-by-numbers-like design that their community had created. The evening concluded with music, ceremony and sparklers, followed by dancing in the street.

It was more than just a painting. It was more than just a street party. What was built was a place - a place where people want to live because they are connected to the story of their neighbourhood. By helping to write that story, they are more aware than ever that they have the agency to write what comes next.

The Placemaking Program is now an ongoing program in HRM. Neighbourhoods can apply to paint their street and are coached through the planning process and painting execution. Not only are neighbourhoods becoming more colourful, but more importantly, they're becoming more generous, more impassioned and more connected.

For more information on the original pilot project and current initiatives: placemakinghalifax.wordpress.com/

For videos from painting day: www.halifax.ca/Culture/CommunityArts/Placemaking.html (interviews with project leads)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gcAHlaft-c (timelapse video of event)

Kate MacLennan is the Community Arts Facilitator for the Halifax Regional Municipality.

CITY-BUILDING:
BRINGING TORONTO'S WATERFRONT TO LIFE

Like many working port cities, Toronto's waterfront sat underutilized and uninviting for decades. It wasn't until Waterfront Toronto was formally created in 2001 that serious and committed action was taken to transform large tracks of former industrial land into sustainable new communities and an inviting waterfront destination.

The project is one of the largest infrastructure projects in North America and one of the largest waterfront redevelopment initiatives ever undertaken in the world. However, it is not just the sheer scale of the project that makes it unique; Waterfront Toronto is delivering a leading-edge city-building model that seeks to place Toronto at the forefront of global cities in the 21st century.

Waterfront Toronto is the public advocate and steward of waterfront revitalization. Created by the City of Toronto, the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada in 2001, Waterfront Toronto was given a 20-year mandate and $1.5 billion of seed capital to transform 800 hectares of brownfield lands into a beautiful, sustainable and revitalized waterfront.

Waterfront Toronto's approach from the very beginning has been to revitalize – not simply redevelop – the waterfront. As such, Waterfront Toronto's priorities are simple: put people first and reconnect them with the waterfront. The organization brings together sustainable development, excellence in urban design and leading technology infrastructure while delivering on important public policy objectives such as job creation and affordable housing options in new waterfront communities. Much has been accomplished in the corporation's first ten years. Today, the first two new waterfront communities – East Bayfront and West Don Lands – are well underway and over twenty new or improved parks and public spaces have been opened.

A key part of Waterfront Toronto's approach to revitalization efforts is the development of great parks and public spaces, which are critical to creating a sense of place and identity in new neighbourhoods and helping to demonstrate the area's potential to private sector investors, developers and future residents. Waterfront Toronto's signature parks - Canada's Sugar Beach, Sherbourne Common, the WaveDecks, Underpass Park and Corktown Common - have all opened to acclaim and have become must-see landmarks that draw residents, visitors and investment to these emerging new neighbourhoods.

Close to the city's downtown core, East Bayfront is one of the first communities being built as part of the waterfront's renewal. The 55-acre parcel will be home to 6,000 new residences and millions of square feet of employment space at the water's edge. The neighbourhood is being built according to an award-winning precinct plan, with 25 percent of the community devoted to public spaces and parks. The area's two signature parks – Sherbourne Common and Canada's Sugar Beach – are already the heart of the neighbourhood and have been recognized for their beauty, innovation and sustainability.

Sherbourne Common is a stunning waterfront park that sits on a former industrial site. It is the first park in Canada to integrate a neighbourhood-wide stormwater treatment facility into its design and features greenspace, a skating rink that doubles as a splash pad in the summer, a zinc-clad Pavilion and a stunning water channel with dramatic art sculptures. Similarly, Canada's Sugar Beach has transformed a surface parking lot in a former industrial area into Toronto's second urban beach, distinct for its brightly-coloured beach umbrellas and iconic candy-striped rock outcroppings that welcome visitors.

The West Don Lands, a 32 hectare (80 acre) former brownfield site in the flood plain of the Don River, is another emerging waterfront community. A Stage 1 LEED ND GOLD neighbourhood under the pilot program established by the U.S. Green Building Council, the area is being transformed from former industrial lands into a sustainable, mixed-use riverside community. It will feature approximately 6,000 new market and affordable residential units, employment and commercial space, schools, child-care centres and new transit, surrounded by nearly 9.3 hectares (23 acres) of parks and public space.

The West Don Lands will also be home to the Athletes' Village for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games, with George Brown College's first student residence, the Canary District condominiums and the two affordable rental housing buildings providing accommodations and the new YMCA serving as a training facility. Hosting the games offered an opportunity to transform the area years earlier than originally planned.

Parks and public spaces also feature prominently in the West Don Lands. The centrepiece of this new community is the newly opened Corktown Common. At 7.3 hectares (18 acres), it is the largest park in the area and has turned an abandoned post-industrial site into a dynamic, year-round, re-naturalized public space, animated by a wide variety of programming. Innovatively positioned atop the area's flood protection landform, Corktown Common is another example of Waterfront Toronto's approach to city-building. The park capitalizes on the unique landscape to offer stunning views of Toronto skyline and the Don River, leveraging essential public infrastructure to deliver a magnificent public amenity.

Just north of Corktown Common, Underpass Park utilizes the awkward and uninviting space beneath a series of overpasses to create an unexpected community asset. It is the most extensive park ever built under an overpass in Canada and the first of its kind in Toronto.

By leveraging the infrastructure project to deliver key economic and social benefits, waterfront revitalization will not only create a sense of place and connection for visitors and residents, but will also enable Toronto to compete with other top-tier global cities for investment, jobs and people. With progress evident, Toronto's waterfront is starting to be recognized locally and internationally as a premier environment within which to live, work and play.

Waterfront Toronto is the public advocate and steward of waterfront revitalization, leading the renewal of Toronto's waterfront. Public accessibility, design excellence, sustainable development, economic development and fiscal sustainability are the key drivers of waterfront revitalization.

Images: (top) The uniquely urban Underpass Park, (right) "Light Showers" art sculptures at Sherbourne Common North, courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

> "WATERFRONT TORONTO'S APPROACH FROM THE VERY BEGINNING HAS BEEN TO REVITALIZE –NOT SIMPLY REDEVELOP– THE WATERFRONT"

PLACEMAKING IN PERI-URBAN AREAS OF EUROPE:
THE PURE HUBS PROJECT

ANDREAS SCHULZE BÄING and ALEX LORD

Placemaking has often been understood within the community of urban and regional planners and designers to be important within cities, particularly in the city centre and inner city areas. This is especially the case in Europe, where the ideal of the compact and high-density city centre is held high. Hence, placemaking strategies tend to concentrate on iconic architecture and developing liveable inner-urban neighbourhoods. This spatial focus, however, has often been criticized. The German architect and planner Thomas Sieverts argued in his seminal book "Zwischenstadt" (Cities without Cities)[1] that the areas outside of the urban core also deserve the attention of planners and architects. Placemaking is as essential in these areas located between city and countryside as elsewhere, areas which have often been fundamentally transformed by processes of urban sprawl and suburbanization, leading to a mix of transport/utilities infrastructure, intensive agriculture, housing, strip mall shopping centres and business parks.

Sprawl, often associated with North American cities, is a major and frequently ignored challenge in Europe, as studies by the European Environment Agency have shown[2]. The extent and pattern of sprawl, and the extent to which it is controlled, varies significantly between different countries. The patterns of urbanization observed in the Netherlands, for instance, focus on medium- to larger-scale settlements, while Belgium is characterized by a dense pattern of ribbon housing development on individual plots along rural roads. The variations between these two neighbouring countries reveal differences of approach as to how planning might control such development and contain the growth of urban settlements. In more restrictive settings, such as the Netherlands, land use planning tools such as green belts, urban growth boundaries and/or farmland protection policies prevail. In other, more liberal contexts, such as Belgium, planning might simply seek to accommodate growth by zoning land and granting development permissions on greenfield land. We argue that planning should go beyond this restrictive/liberal binary, and should develop placemaking strategies for these suburban and peri-urban areas as well.

Our argument emerges from our work on behalf of the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Liverpool with a European project working on such peri-urban placemaking strategies. The PURE Hubs project is an £8.6 million project covering the U.K., Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. It is designed to investigate the range of activities that take place in peri-urban spaces across these four national contexts and find strategies to promote them while considering the inter-related issues of the urban fringe as a location for markets, social and cultural interaction (including the creative arts), agriculture, farm diversification, social care and energy provision.

The project includes partners from local and regional government and three universities (Liverpool, Wageningen and Den Bosch). It focuses on a range of case studies, or "Hubs." These Hubs cover a wide range of themes relevant to peri-urban areas and the rural-urban fringe, including building strategies for regional marketing of agricultural products, leisure and art development and the construction of a village community centre, along with strategies for community-based agriculture and urban community gardening, supported by farming institutions.

All of these initiatives represent placemaking strategies. For example, the community gardens developed in the deprived urban neighbourhood of Luchtbal in Antwerp, Belgium are supported by the farmers' association, and create an opportunity for social interaction/integration in a "receptor" neighbourhood that is popular with new immigrants to the country. Another example is Bold Forest Park, located in St Helens between Liverpool and Manchester, which is transforming ex-mining land into a space for recreation and leisure around a landmark piece of public art called "The Dream." A third example is the Stadsborderij in Turnhout, Belgium, where a derelict farm in the urban fringe is being transformed into a city farm that will serve as a community centre for nearby urban areas. This particular project supports rural entrepreneurs, and could, in the future, become a node for community-supported agriculture.

These examples give a brief overview of the project and the real-world effects of a particularly "European" approach to thinking about what does, or should, happen in peri-urban locations. The task of assembling disparate activities into a coherent whole, and, by extension, developing a sense of place is perhaps the core challenge at the heart of planning, wherever it is practiced. However, encouraging planners to turn their attention from the bright lights of downtown to the perhaps less glamorous but no less complex settings offered by the peri-urban landscape remains a challenge. The PURE Hubs project represents a start in north-western Europe to thinking strategically about placemaking in the urban fringe; we hope its work will spark similar interest in other contexts.

For more information, please visit:
http://www.purehubs.eu/.

"PLACEMAKING IS AS ESSENTIAL IN THESE AREAS LOCATED BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE AS ELSEWHERE, AREAS WHICH HAVE OFTEN BEEN SHAPED BY PROCESSES OF URBAN SPRAWL AND SUBURBANIZATION"

Images: (top) "The Dream" in St Helens, UK; (bottom) Community gardens in Luchtbal, Belgium, both courtesy of Andreas Schulze Bäing

Dr. Andreas Schulze Bäing is a spatial planner and Research Associate. Dr. Alex Lord is Senior Lecturer. Both work in the discipline of Civic Design at the Department of Geography and Planning, University of Liverpool.

[1] Sieverts, T. (2003). *Cities without cities: an interpretation of the Zwischenstadt.* London: Spon Press.

[2] Uhel, R. (2006). *Urban sprawl in Europe – the ignored challenge.* Copenhagen: European Environment Agency.

DIALOGUE AROUND THE MID-RISE:
INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER KEESMAAT

In January 2013 in Edmonton, Curb Magazine's Managing Editor Brittany Stares sat down with Jennifer Keesmaat, Chief Planner of the City of Toronto. Their discussion ranged from land use planning and innovation to citizen consultation and reurbanization. Here, we share some of Jennifer's thoughts on the role of mid-rises in creating great cities – and the placemaking challenges that come with them.

Q Let's talk about mid-rise developments. I know this is something you've been particularly vocal about. What are your thoughts on their importance to sustainable planning?

A I think one of the most exciting things about mid-rise developments is that they build out a street. You can create a neighbourhood with mid-rise developments in a way that you can't with a tower. We tend to shove a lot of density onto one site, when really, if you took that density — if you took that tower and you just tipped it over on its side — suddenly, you have a streetscape. You have a neighbourhood. You have somewhere to walk. It creates a very different kind of feel. I'm very fond of mid-rise cities – I love Washington, D.C., I love Paris. I think that our land economics have often driven us to a built form that might not be in our long-term interest. One of the challenges is that it can be more expensive to build mid-rise, so we need to find policies and incentives that are effective at encouraging mid-rise development. I would like nothing more than to see a national movement on mid-rise, a collaboration of planning directors across the country to identify, strategically,

what needs to be done in order to promote more mid-rise in our cities. They're very liveable forms.

Q You mentioned some of the challenges associated with building mid-rise developments. Can you go into this a little more?

A There are a couple of challenges. One is cost. The other is that we tend to have very permissive planning frameworks in Canada, and as a result, developers who own one little plot of land like to squeeze as much density on it as they possibly can. So, what this speaks to is the importance of strong regulatory frameworks that can conform to a clearly articulated vision.

Q I was reading in Toronto about some of the opposition to mid-rise developments from citizen associations. Is that an indicator of a lack of sufficient dialogue between citizens and the City?

A No, there's a lot of dialogue going on. Dialogue isn't the challenge. I think we are experiencing astronomical growth, and it's a reflection of growth happening very quickly and people having to come to terms with it.

Q Do you think that, with that opposition, placemaking for some comes at a cost for others?

A It shouldn't. If it's done well, it shouldn't. And if there's a perception that it's coming at a cost, then that's when we need more dialogue, because we need to clearly articulate the benefits of mid-rise growth. The challenge is when we don't have enough room or enough space or time for those dialogues. And a challenge is when there is misinformation. We have a planning framework in the City of Toronto that's been very clear for over a decade that we are a growing city. We are going to grow. We protect 75% of the urban fabric. That means it does not change – our ravines, our parks, our stable neighbourhoods are no-growth zones. So, that means the other 25%, where we will be accommodating growth, becomes quite contested. And it's important for us all to understand that driving mid-rise growth through our avenues, and driving other growth through our centres, is all part of protecting other areas of the city where we don't want growth. Those two things go hand in hand.

"NO AMOUNT OF BANNERS OR FLOWERPOTS ON A STREETSCAPE CAN OVERCOME [NOT HAVING] ENOUGH PEOPLE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF A MAIN STREET"

Q Have you found new actors emerging that cities or planning departments need to be aware of and to include increasingly in dialogue?

A Absolutely... I would say [there is] a group of people that I put in the category of... I call them "influencers." They're people who have a voice, whether it's through Twitter or media, journalists, whatever. And they are very capable of shaping public policy and the public agenda through the way they influence.

Image: (right) Artistic rendering of mid-rise developments from the Toronto Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study, courtesy of Brook McIlroy. The study identified policies and processes that could catalyze the reurbanization of the City of Toronto's Avenues through the development of well-designed mid-rise buildings. For more information, see http://brookmcilroy.com/projects_project.php?pid=39.

THE DENSITY FACTOR

"In the European context, there are some wonderful pedestrian-only streets. In every small or every mid-sized municipality in Canada that I've worked with, at some point, we've had the conversation about a pedestrian-only street. But the reality is pedestrian-only streets really only work when you have an astronomical amount of density that ensures they are peopled constantly, in a context without even remotely the kind of densities that exist in [Europe], like in Amsterdam or Barcelona. Those pedestrian-only streets are doomed to fail."

"If I was to make a sweeping generalization about smaller or mid-sized Canadian cities, one of their greatest constraints is that they're flattened out like a pancake. They're just too spread out, and so they don't have enough density to create critical mass. And no amount of banners or flowerpots on a streetscape can overcome [not having] enough people within walking distance of a main street. So, there's only one way to fix that, and it's through land use planning and infill and reurbanization."

STRIP APPEAL IN PRACTICE:
PETROLIA MALL

Images: CRSC

CONTEXT

Petrolia Mall, a 1960s-era strip mall located in south Edmonton, Alberta, once contained vital services that were supported at large by its three surrounding communities (Greenfield, Royal Gardens and Aspen Gardens). According to the 2009 census, the population of these three communities aggregated to be 9,024, and over time, Petrolia Mall added substantial annual economic activity to the region. It also once contributed to social sustainability by providing daycare services, dance studios and restaurants that helped connect people to their communities. Currently, however, Petrolia Mall has become derelict, falling into disrepair, bankruptcy and receivership.

The solution seems simple: redevelop the mall into a contemporary hub that meets the needs of the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, it is not that easy. The financial situation of Petrolia Mall is severely convoluted, as Ironwood Management, a local Edmonton company, owns the land, and has leased it and the mall to a company on a one hundred

year lease. The lender has foreclosed on the leaseholder and moved into receivership. If that was not enough, there is a second property owner on the contiguous property which contains the mall's convenience and liquor store that plays into the potential redevelopment.

THE FALLING APART OF PETROLIA

So why has Petrolia Mall slid downhill? A long-standing critical mass has supported the mall's stores since the 1960s and continues to desire amenities within the immediate area. The previous leaseholder intended to redevelop Petrolia Mall, but that vision never came to fruition; ultimately, the desired amenities never appeared and the community suffered because of it. Over time there has been a mismatch of businesses as well as a long-term land caveat that the previous anchor grocer, Safeway, had in place for many years. Once this was lifted, discount grocery retailers came and went in the decaying building. A vehicle service garage, a commercial indicator of the suburban context of the mall,

closed permanently and has neither been reimagined nor demolished. Two of the most successful contemporary businesses are a pizza restaurant, servicing mostly to-go orders, and a video rental business, which, taking into consideration the digitization of the entertainment rental industry, is living on borrowed time. These two businesses serve as inspiration to the community, which is demanding a rejuvenated retail and services shopping centre.

THE CHARRETTE

Recognizing both its vibrant past and its present decay, it was time to create a unified vision of the future Petrolia Mall. Many community members are long-time residents (often over thirty years), making the refurbishment of the shopping centre mandatory for the populace to have retire-in-place options in the neighbourhood where they have invested and developed roots. This call to action came in the form of the Petrolia Mall Design Party on February 2, 2013, hosted at Greenfield Community League's hall

and facilitated by the City-Region Studies Centre (CRSC). University of Alberta H.M. Tory Chair and CRSC Director Rob Shields led a team of facilitators and participants in a design charrette to discuss and record through graphical exercises the requirements of the surrounding communities for the site. The foundation for this work came in the form of the CRSC's "Strip Appeal," a resource for communities to reimagine and re-develop their local strip malls based on the winning submissions of the Centre's international ideas competition of the same name.

A design charrette is a highly interactive and socially engaging event that explores solutions to the issues at hand by visually describing and explaining the proposed possibilities in a collaborative setting. In the Petrolia Mall design charrette, approximately 70 attendees, with 8-10 participants at each table, were given an aerial map of the site, a building massing map of the area (Figure 1) and an axonometric of modeled, existing buildings for participants to redesign (Figure 2), providing spatial context of the area

in discussion. The diagrams allowed for participants to explain through writing and drawing what they desired to see either change or be retained at the Petrolia Mall site.

THE DESIGNS

Based on a synthesis of the collaborative designs, some major themes emerged. Socially sustainable and community-enhancing designs surfaced repeatedly as participants desired places like cafés to meet; food services to sustain their neighbourhoods locally; green space for recreation; and sites for food production and community-building. Inherent to this was a desire for local small businesses owned by (most likely) nearby

residents to bloom. From a design perspective, residents were interested in both renovating the existing structures and demolishing the current buildings in favour of new construction more specific to the proposed intended uses. Since the Petrolia Mall site is of medium size, it does allow for flexibility of land use; however, all participants agreed that increased density was required for economic viability. Mixed-use building programs were unanimously accepted, as residents wanted a vibrant community hub that is accessible to all demographics and makes the most out of the existing space.

- Scott Varga for the CRSC

STAY
have the capacity to retire-in-place through amenities and services in the neighbourhood

PLAY
create safe, open greenspace for all generations

CREATE
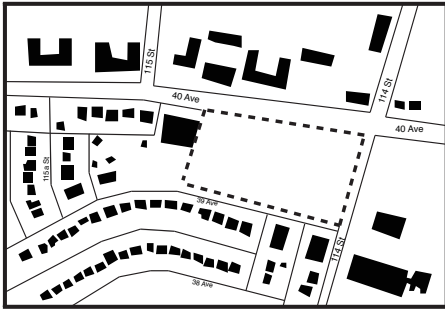construct space that allows for local small business to thrive

Figure 1. The Petrolia Mall Area Map was used to gather information about where participants desired to see buildings located, how the flow of traffic was to be organized, and where, if any, open space and public amenities should be situated.
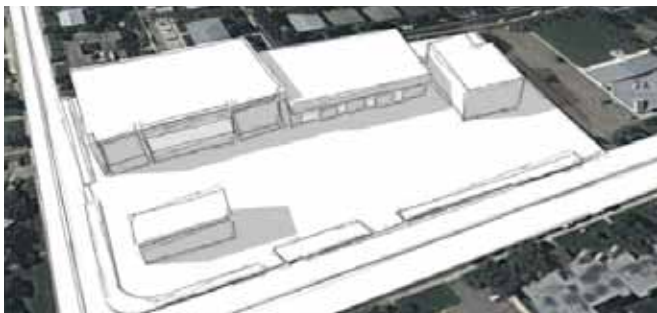

Figure 2. The Petrolia Mall Axonometric was used to display the existing physical elements of Petrolia Mall and provide an opportunity for participants to draw how and what should be changed from a spatial organizational perspective.

Comprised of winning and shortlisted entries from the CRSC's "Strip Appeal: Reinventing the Strip Mall" international ideas competition, the Strip Appeal catalogue showcases unique ideas and designs to make strip malls more vibrant, sustainable, economically viable and connected to the community. This catalogue is a must for any planner, designer or neighbourhood undertaking redevelopment of their local strip mall.

To purchase a copy of "Strip Appeal: Reinventing the Strip Mall" visit www.strip-appeal.com

ABOUT THE CRSC

The City-Region Studies Centre (CRSC) is a University of Alberta research unit that engages with communities to explore the nature of towns, cities and regions. As one of the only centres in North America to focus on regional research, our goal is to increase understanding of the cultural, political and economic interactions and interdependencies within these social spaces, and in doing so, to inform public policy and improve the well-being of citizens.

COMING SOON: 2013-2014 REGIONAL PLANNING SPEAKERS SERIES

The CRSC's Regional Planning Speakers Series (RPSS) is returning for the 2013-2014 academic year. This year-long program brings together stakeholders in regional planning for learning and networking opportunities in order to build capacity for regional thinking. The theme for the 2013-2014 series is Regional Planning and Energy, with lectures, panel discussions and workshops taking place on such topics as regional identities, disaster management, energy boomtowns, innovation and climate change. For more details, including information about podcasts, please visit: http://www.crsc.ualberta.ca/RegionalPlanningSpeakersSeries.aspx.

GET INVOLVED WITH curb

Curb Magazine reaches municipal offices, planning departments, architectural and design firms, and people interested in community development across Canada. We aim to deliver engaging, policy-relevant articles to a diverse audience to share best practices and new ideas.

CONTRIBUTE

Curb Magazine invites articles on architecture, design, governance, sustainability, transportation and housing, along with those on upcoming issue themes of innovation, energy boomtowns and regional planning. Articles should be 400-800 words, preferably with accompanying images. Please note articles are unpaid and may be edited to suit Curb's tone and subject matter.

ADVERTISE

Curb Magazine now offers extensive opportunities for promoting your business, product or event from coast to coast! Contact the City-Region Studies Centre for an advertising package today.

SPONSOR

Curb Magazine relies on sponsorships from government, industry and local communities to facilitate a nation-wide discussion. To help us continue our valuable work, please contact us about becoming an issue sponsor.

For these and other inquiries, please contact the City-Region Studies Centre at **crsc@ualberta.ca** or **(780) 492-9957**.

Image: With separate bike and pedestrian lanes, barrier-free access and a glazed roof permitting year-round use while maintaining natural light, the Calgary Peace Bridge showcases the importance of accessibility and usability in public spaces in addition to iconic architecture. Although opened to controversy, today the bridge serves over 6000 users a day and is one of the most distinct pedestrian bridges in Canada. Courtesy of Brittany Stares.

SUPPORT CURB MAGAZINE BY SUBSCRIBING TODAY

Curb Magazine aims to promote creativity, knowledge sharing and policy development through stories which communicate expertise and community experiences to municipalities, planners and citizens across Canada. The contributions of our readers are essential to help us meet these objectives. You can support Curb, and share your passion for planning, design and governance, by subscribing today. Thank you.

SUBSCRIBE

NAME _____   EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____   CREDIT CARD NO. _____

CITY _____   EXPIRY DATE _____

PROVINCE/STATE _____   NAME AS APPEARS ON CARD _____

POSTAL CODE/ZIP _____   SIGNATURE _____

COUNTRY _____   WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE CRSC NEWSLETTERS?   ☐ YES   ☐ NO, THANKS

☐ $22.⁰⁰ / 1 year subscription
   (includes GST and shipping)

☐ $65.⁰⁰ / 1 year subscription plus a
   copy of the Strip Appeal catalogue
   (includes GST and shipping)

* cheques can be made payable to the University of Alberta

Detach and mail to:
Curb c/o City-Region Studies Centre

2-184 Enterprise Square
10230 Jasper Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4P6