



**Centre for Urban Research
& Land Development**

**2013-2014
ANNUAL
REPORT**

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thank you to our Founding Donors	1.
Message from the Director	2.
Message from the Senior Research Fellow	3.
Advisory Committtee	5.
Our People	7.
CUR Mission	9.
Launch	10.
Research Projects	11.
Annual Objectives	12.
Moving Forward	13.
Contact Information	14.

THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDING DONORS



Message from the Director, David Amborski:



We are pleased to announce the establishment of the Center for Urban Research and Land Development (CUR) to address the mandate of Ryerson University to undertake applied policy-based urban economic research that supports the University's City Building Mission.

The intent of CUR is to focus on the economic impacts and aspects of urban issues and policy alternatives in an effort to have economic analysis be central to the formulation of urban policy decisions within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Our feeling is that this component is often not fully analyzed and/or considered in urban policy decisions. By undertaking research and holding seminars on these topics, we hope to help inform

decision makers and the public regarding the importance of these issues.

We are also very excited about the educational benefits of the Centre to our students who will not only gain from the research reports and seminars provided, but also from the opportunity to participate in the research undertaken in a manner that allows them to learn about the issues and to hone their research and policy skills for their professional careers.

Economic consultant, Dr. Frank Clayton, alumnus Patrick O'Hanlon (SURP 1983), and myself spent almost two years talking with planners, government officials, and industry representatives to identify the mission for the Centre, and to seek donors to support it. It has now become a reality and we look forward to carrying out the mission and activities of the Centre with the advice of our high profile and experienced advisory committee.

David Amborski

Director, Centre for Urban Research and Land Development

Message from Senior Research Fellow, Frank A. Clayton:



Recent events reinforce the need for the type of independent economic analysis that falls under CUR's mandate. An obvious issue relates to the current round of development charge increases. The underlying premise of development charges in Ontario is that growth through real estate development incurs only infrastructure costs and does not generate benefits. A more appropriate foundation for development charges would be to take into account the benefits from growth (jobs, incomes, tax revenues, user charges) and societal implications, such as housing affordability, as well as infrastructure costs in determining the share of infrastructure costs to be encompassed in development charges.

Other potential urban issues suitable for the rigour of economic analysis include:

- Increasing the supply of family-type housing in the City of Toronto – is requiring developers to build 3-bedroom units in high-rise apartment towers the way to go? Or is the conversion of obsolete industrial land, like what is happening in the Warden Woods Secondary Planning District of former Scarborough, a model to be replicated?
- The future of Waterfront Toronto which has almost exhausted the \$1.5 billion of seed money provided by the three levels of government – should its request to be allowed to borrow money to fund future activities be granted or should it be restructured into a profit-oriented development company which produces profits for its government owners?
- Enhancing the effectiveness and economic efficiency of municipal governance in the GTA – is it time to contemplate the creation of an upper tier government whose boundaries correspond with those of the Toronto economic region with only a few lower tier municipalities?

- Improving the revenue productivity of the property tax in the GTA – while the property tax is well suited as the mainstay of municipal revenue is it time to make it more responsive to economic growth by reintroducing annual market value assessment throughout the GTA (and Ontario) combined with automatic annual increases in the tax rate equivalent to the inflation rate to make it more comparable to income and sales taxes?
- Ensuring continued economic growth and rising productivity and incomes in the GTA – what initiatives are required to make this happen?

We welcome reaction to these research ideas and would appreciate receiving readers' ideas of economic-related economic analyses that could help improve the economic well-being of GTA residents and businesses.

Frank A. Clayton

Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Urban Research and Land Development

Advisory Committee:

CHAIR	
	<p>Usha George, Ph.D. Dean Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University</p>
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	TITLE/ORGANIZATION
	<p>David Amborski Director Centre for Urban Research and Land Development, Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University</p>
	<p>Patricia Arsenault Executive Vice President Altus Group</p>
	<p>Michael Brooks CEO REALpac</p>
	<p>Derek Burleton Vice President and Deputy Chief Economist TD Bank Financial Group</p>
	<p>Mark Conway Senior Partner N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited</p>

CUR 2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT

	<p>Chris De Sousa Director, School of Urban and Regional Planning Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University</p>
	<p>Richard Lyall President RESCON</p>
	<p>Patrick O'Hanlon President Kylemore Communities</p>
	<p>Edward Sorbara Principal The Sorbara Group</p>
	<p>Bryan Tuckey President & CEO Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD)</p>
	<p>Michael Turner Senior Vice President, Real Estate Management Oxford Properties Group Inc.</p>
	<p>Carol Wilding President & CEO Toronto Region Board of Trade</p>

OUR PEOPLE:

DIRECTOR	
	David Amborski Centre for Urban Research and Land Development Faculty of Community Services
SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW	
	Frank A. Clayton, Ph.D. Centre for Urban Research and Land Development Faculty of Community Services
RESEARCH ASSOCIATES	
	Chris De Sousa, Ph.D. Director, Associate Professor School of Urban and Regional Planning
	Steven Webber, Ph.D. Associate Professor School of Urban and Regional Planning
	Raktim Mitra, Ph.D. Assistant Professor School of Urban and Regional Planning

	<p>Kyle Rae Distinguished Visiting Professor Faculty of Community Services</p>
	<p>Joseph Chow, Ph.D. Assistant Professor Department of Civil Engineering</p>
	<p>Murtaza Haider, Ph.D. Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programs Ted Rogers School of Management</p>
	<p>Carolyn Johns, Ph.D. Associate Professor Department of Politics and Public Administration</p>
	<p>Darko Joksimovic, Ph.D. Assistant Professor Department of Civil Engineering</p>

CUR MISSION

The mission of the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development is twofold: to conduct research on land use and urban policy issues in an effort to improve policy outcomes; and to enhance the experiential learning opportunities of our students in order to better prepare them for research and professional practice.

The intent of CUR is to focus on the economic impacts and aspects of urban issues and policy alternatives in an effort to have economic analysis be central to the formulation of urban policy decisions.

In addition to undertaking research and disseminating results, the Centre will organize seminars and research lectures to inform urban public policy decisions in Toronto and the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Consistent with the above the focus will be on the economic implications of land use and development issues and policies.

The mission is consistent with and supportive of both the City Building Mission of Ryerson University, and its focus on policy relevant applied research.

LAUNCH

On November 20th, 2013, Ryerson University announced the creation of the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development (CUR) at the Faculty of Community Services. Established by a trio of experts, David Amborski, Frank A. Clayton and Patrick O’Hanlon, CUR is a unique research centre dedicated to the studying the economic impact and aspects of urban policies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The launch was a great success and brought together members of the public and private sector, government officials, professional planners, alumni and members of the Ryerson community.



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research is the primary activity of the Centre. As specified in the Mission, it will be undertaken to inform local policy decisions regarding the economic aspects of current conditions, policy issues and policy choices. The research themes, topics, and projects will be determined and undertaken based on the advice of the Advisory Committee and under the direction of the Management Committee. CUR is presently funding seven research projects headed by multidisciplinary research teams spanning various faculties such as the Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science and the Ted Rogers School of Management as well as other departments within the University.

Principal Investigator	Title
Joseph Chow, Ph.D.	“Exploring urban freight policies in downtown parking”
Chris De Sousa, Ph.D.	“Removing Market Barriers to Brownfields Redevelopment in the GTHA – A private sector perspective”
Murtaza Haider, Ph.D.	“Housing seniors in a rapidly aging society: Challenges for Canada”
Carolyn Johns, Ph.D.	“Finance and Policy Tools to Support Green Infrastructure in the Greater Toronto Area”
Darko Joksimovic, Ph.D.	“Innovative Project Delivery for Low Impact Development (LID) Stormwater Management Practices”
Frank Clayton, Ph.D.	“Financing of Sewer and Water Infrastructure in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)”
David Amborski	“An Analysis of Section 37 Agreements in the City of Toronto”

ANNUAL OBJECTIVES

The annual objectives set out for CUR in its first year were to establish and meet with an Advisory Committee, fund multiple research projects, construct a website, host events and seek additional funding. To date, CUR has met most of these objectives and is working to achieve others in the near future.

CUR has established an Advisory Committee, consisting of thirteen representatives from the public and private sectors including homebuilders and land developers as well as members of the Ryerson community. The Advisory Committee has met twice since the launch of the Centre and has provided invaluable advice to the Centre regarding its work plan and budget.

Research is the primary activity of the Centre and is a top priority. CUR is presently funding seven research projects headed by multidisciplinary research teams spanning various faculties such as the Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science and the Ted Rogers School of Management.

CUR's website is live and has been met with positive feedback. The website provides important information about the Centre's initiatives to students, faculty, alumni, professional planners, government officials and the private sector. The website will showcase research projects, policy commentaries and CUR event information.

CUR anticipates a busy fall 2014 with various CUR-hosted events and policy commentaries. These events will include, policy seminars and research lectures. The Centre will also host policy roundtables for members of the public and private sector, once it has established itself further. CUR will produce policy commentaries, the first is slated for release by the end of summer, 2014. Further, CUR anticipates more student involvement through research assistant opportunities and a Major Research Project (MRP) funding award of \$1,000.

To date, CUR has secured funding from fifteen Founding Donor organizations who have committed a collective amount of 1.5 million dollars. The Centre continues to seek additional funding to ensure its longevity and sustainability.

MOVING FORWARD

Moving forward, CUR will continue to uphold its dedication to formulating policies and solutions to address the concerns confronting urban growth and change in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as well as educating students to take leadership roles in these pursuits.

CUR will work towards its goal of becoming a first-rate research centre through funding relevant and evidence-based research, hosting events and producing policy commentaries. The Centre will continue to seek additional funding to meet its fundraising goals.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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