



# Centre for Urban Research and Land Development

Year in Review  
2016-2017



**Ryerson  
University**

**Centre for Urban Research  
& Land Development**  
Faculty of Community Services



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## About Us

Housed within the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University, the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development (CUR) is an expert led research centre, dedicated to formulating policies and solutions to address the challenges confronting urban growth and change within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) as well as to educating students to take leadership roles in these pursuits. Its orientation is founded on uniting economics and market analysis with the understanding of social and environmental considerations.

## Vision

To be a first-rate applied research centre which undertakes research to provide analysis and recommendations to help urban policy makers' make the best possible decisions.

## Mission

- To conduct research on land use and urban policy issues in an effort to improve policy outcomes.
- To enhance the experiential learning opportunities of our students in order to better prepare them for research and professional practice.
- To organize seminars and research lectures to inform and educate urban public policy professionals and decision-makers throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

# Thank you to our donors



# Message from the Director



It is our pleasure to once again submit our annual report after our fourth successful year of operation of the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development (CUR) at the Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University. During the past year, the Centre has continued to make progress in meeting its Mission by funding research projects, publishing research reports and policy reports, delivering seminars, undertaking partnerships and hiring Ryerson students and graduates to participate in the activities of the Centre.

CUR continues to fund faculty research that is consistent with the Mission of the Centre. We have funded 4 research projects by faculty members over the past year, and we will put out another funding call this fall.

The Centre has produced thirty-five research documents this year which includes a range of products such as research reports, policy reports, blog entries, economic commentaries focused on short-term economic trends in the GGH, a residential land adequacy series which assesses the short-term land supply for individual municipalities, and data briefs which offer a snapshot of demographics within the GTHA and GGH.

We have undertaken or partnered in five seminars over the past year. This has included “Economics and Land Use Planning in the Greater Toronto Area” for which we brought in an internationally recognized scholar, Dr. Paul Cheshire from the London School of Economics to participate in the event. Another seminar, “Land Use Planning in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area: Let’s Get It Right,” featured former Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion who was appointed as liaison officer between Premier Wynne and GTHA municipalities. Ms. McCallion presented key findings from a report written and submitted to the Province based on deliberations at the Summit of Mayors and Chairs in September 2016. The Mayors of Markham and Caledon commented on the report and the proposed new Growth Plan for the Toronto Region.

Once again, CUR has had a very interesting and successful year in partnering with other organizations in terms of both our research and seminars. Two partners with whom we have had a continuing relationship are the Evergreen Foundation and The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON). In our joint research with Evergreen, we have completed our GIS Public Lands Mapping project in which we have mapped publicly owned lands in the GTA and Hamilton. Lands included in this database are Federal, Provincial, local governments, and agency boards and commissions land holdings. There has been much interest in this database which includes information about the properties. The map is accessible on our website along with a recording of a webinar we hosted which demonstrates how to access the information provided. There has been much interest in this initiative including a request from the Province to obtain the entire database. With respect to our research with RESCON, we have recently released a report on improving the building permit process in Ontario entitled “Modernizing Building Approvals in Ontario: Catching Up with Advanced Jurisdictions.”

We have also partnered with RESCON and the GTA Housing Action Lab on joint seminars. With RESCON we held a conference, “Understanding Ontario’s Housing Affordability Challenge: A Big Data Evaluation,” in which findings from a recent report by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis were presented. This conference not only provided an overview of the report but also provided commentary on the issue, and a panel discussion by the mayors of Mississauga, Brampton, Barrie and Ajax. With the GTA Housing Action Lab, we partnered with the City of Toronto Affordable Housing Office and Options for Homes on a Pecha Kucha style seminar on affordable housing.

Both CUR’s Senior Research Fellow, Dr. Frank Clayton and I have been invited to comment in the media, sit on panels and make presentations at events over the past year. Research from the centre has also been presented at International conferences including United Nations Habitat III (Quito), the European Regional Science Association (Vienna), the Property Law and Property Rights Conference (Hong Kong), and Changing Cities 3 Conference (Greece).

CUR has also established a good working relationship with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, as we were invited to participate in the consultations held in Ottawa regarding the National Housing Strategy. We have also participated in several local invitation only policy roundtables, and we undertook a peer review of an internal research paper on Canadian housing markets.

In undertaking all the above activities we have engaged students and recent graduates to participate mostly in the capacity of research assistants. These activities provide

students with experience and knowledge to support their careers in planning and urban policy practice. Over the past year CUR has employed ten Ryerson students or recent grads.

Overall the year has been very successful in contributing to the public policy debate by bringing a focus on a number of issues through an economic perspective, funding a number of faculty research projects related to our mission, and hiring students to learn and gain experience researching a number of policy issues from an economic perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David P. Amborski".

David Amborski, MCIP, RPP  
Director  
Centre for Urban Research and Land Development  
Ryerson University

# Four years of progress



## **2013 - 2014**

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Ryerson University announces the creation of CUR with support from 15 founding donor organizations. CUR opens its doors at 111 Gerrard Street East for the first time. Professor David Amborski is appointed Director and Dr. Frank Clayton is appointed Senior Research Fellow of CUR. CUR gives out 7 research grants to Ryerson faculty members spanning various departments and schools.

## **2014 - 2015**

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CUR strengthens its research network, establishing partnerships with the Evergreen Foundation, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, National Executive Forum on Public Property and the Canadian Brownfields Network. CUR establishes the Michael Wilson/CUR Major Research Project Award generously donated by Patrick O'Hanlon and Kylemore Communities.

## **2015 - 2016**

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CUR expands its research outputs to include blog entries, working papers and 905 vs. 416 charts. CUR partners with the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario on Housing Affordability Conference featuring the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

## **2016 - 2017**

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CUR launches the Greater Toronto/Hamilton Area Government-Owned Public Lands Inventory Web Map. John Clinkard, former Chief Economist for Deutsche Bank Canada, joins CUR as Research Fellow. CUR establishes itself as a go-to resource for media, demonstrating CUR's important voice of rationality in urban policy-making decisions affecting the GGH. CUR report about rising housing prices is featured on the front page of *The Globe and Mail*.



# By the numbers

## Priorities

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Research



Education



Policy decision-making

## Focus areas:

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Land and housing markets / Land use and housing policy / Affordable housing / Fiscal tools and taxes / Municipal budgeting issues / Economic development / Employment lands / Infrastructure finance and tools / Transportation and land use / Brownfield development / Public-private partnerships

## Research projects

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**25**

Total

**14**

Completed

**11**

In progress

## Events and outreach

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**4**

Policy seminars



**1**

Conference hosted



**8**

Speaking engagements



**1**

Student award

# Advisory Committee



**Patricia Arsenault**  
Executive VP  
Altus Group



**Michael Brooks**  
CEO  
REALpac



**Derek Burleton**  
VP & Deputy Chief Economist  
TD Bank Financial Group



**Mark Conway**  
Senior Partner  
N. Barry Lyon Consulting Ltd.



**Douglas Goold**  
VP, Policy, Public Affairs &  
Communications  
Toronto Region Board of  
Trade



**Richard Joy**  
Executive Director  
Urban Land Institute



**Richard Lyall**  
President  
RESCON



**Patrick O'Hanlon**  
President  
Kylemore Communities



**Edward Sorbara**  
Principal  
The Sorbara Group



**Heather Tremain**  
CEO  
Options for Homes



**Bryan Tuckey**  
President & CEO  
BILD

# People

## Staff and Management

**David Amborski**  
Director  
CUR

**Frank Clayton**  
Senior Research Fellow  
CUR

**Chris De Sousa**  
Director  
School of Urban and Regional  
Planning

**Laura Greflund**  
Administrative Assistant  
CUR

**John Clinkard**  
Research Fellow  
CUR

**Lisa Barnoff**  
Dean  
Faculty of Community Services

## Principal Investigators

**Umberto Berardi**  
Assistant Professor  
Building Science

**Murtaza Haider**  
Associate Dean of Research and  
Graduate Programs  
Ted Rogers School of Management

**Matthias Sweet**  
Assistant Professor  
School of Urban and Regional  
Planning

**Carolyn Johns**  
Associate Professor  
Department of Politics and Public  
Administration

**Darko Joksimovic**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Civil Engineering

**George Kapelos**  
Associate Professor  
Department of Architectural  
Science

**Yuanshun Li**  
Associate Professor of Finance  
School of Accounting and Finance

**Raktim Mitra**  
Assistant Professor  
School of Urban and Regional  
Planning

**Steve Webber**  
Assistant Professor  
School of Urban and Regional  
Planning

## Research Assistants

**Lynn Duong**

**Andrew Sgro**

**Kelly Irish**

**Cameron Macdonald**

**Michael Bennett**

**Matthew Taylor U E**

**Justin Shin**

**Benjamin Pister**

**Nicola Sharp**

**Jodee Ng**

# Research highlights



## Research/Policy Reports

### Modernizing building approvals in Ontario: Catching up with advanced jurisdictions

**Released: July 5, 2017**

**By: Lynn Duong and David Amborski**

New-home buyers are impacted by Ontario's arduous wait on building and occupancy permits, which ultimately delays and reduces the supply of new houses and condos from entering the market.

This report focuses on routine and technical components of the regulatory process, excluding rezoning and other regulatory processes that are more political and often require public consultation. The study identifies where delays in the building permit process occur, some of the costs associated with these delays, and what can be done to modernize the approval process.

The report suggests that the building permit approval process should be modernized to ensure it is more transparent, predictable, and less time-consuming. Three improvements are recommended:

- Speeding up site plan control and other upstream approvals through a better and more transparent process;
- Enhancing the role of professionals in design compliance to speed up building innovation; and
- Accelerating municipal use of use of online e-permitting to speed up reviews, inter-agency communication, and reduce paperwork.

These recommendations are supported by responses from focus groups and surveys conducted with industry professionals. Starting later this year, Phase 2 of the study will develop more detailed best practices.

## **Why are there not more townhouses being built in the Greater Toronto Area and what is the outlook?**

**Released: May 30, 2017**

**By: Frank Clayton and Cameron Macdonald**

The fundamental question in this report is why have the construction of townhouses been lower and not increasing across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) since the first half of the 2000s? With the sharply reduced affordability of single-detached homes and the Province's planning interventions favouring townhouses and other denser forms of housing over single-detached houses, the expectation would have been for townhouse starts to increase, not to decline.

The number of townhouse starts in the GTA declined from an average of about 6,800 units per year in 2001-2005 to about 5,000 units in 2006-2016, a drop of about 25 percent. Sharp declines were recorded in both the 905 area and the City of Toronto. A scarcity of serviced sites is identified as a primary cause of the decline in townhouse construction.

The report concludes that there is a pressing need for the Province to recognize the challenge of augmenting the supply of new townhouses in the GTA and to require municipalities in the 905 area and the City of Toronto to significantly increase the supply of serviced sites for townhouses within their boundaries – the former on greenfield sites and the latter on lower-priority employment (industrial) lands.

## **Countering myths about rising ground-related housing prices in the GTA: New supply really matters**

**Released: April 25, 2017**

**By: David Amborski and Frank Clayton**

According to this report, a robust requirement for new ground-related homes in the GTA was predicted as far back as 1993 so it is a fallacy to blame an unexpected surge in underlying demand for the rising prices. The blame falls largely on the Provincial Government and municipalities for failing to respond effectively to the expected demand. The root cause of the rising price phenomenon since 2006 is that the housing mix envisaged in the Growth Plan (skewed to apartments) and the mix demanded in the marketplace (skewed to ground-related housing) is far apart.

The authors argue there is a need to attack this fundamental supply shortfall of serviced sites for the construction of ground-related housing independent of short-term measures designed to curtail short-term speculative-type demand. By necessity, this largely will take place in the 905 regions through expediting the approval and servicing of these designated lands for ground-related housing. The City of Toronto can contribute by

redeveloping obsolete or low-priority industrial (employment) lands into new ground-related housing communities (like it did with the Warden Woods community in former Scarborough).

This report discusses the myths inherent in much of the current discussion of the rising housing price problem which are not supported by objective and comprehensive data-based research and presents the market realities.

## **City of Toronto road toll vs. regional congestion charges**

**Released: February 1, 2017**

**By: David Amborski**

In this policy report, economic analysis provides insights into the choice between two different approaches and levels of government undertaking pricing policies to address the external costs resulting from congestion in the Toronto Region. In applying an analysis using economic concepts, the use of regional congestion charges are superior to a City of Toronto-imposed road toll both in terms of economic efficiency, addressing the social congestion costs in the region, and in terms of the equity of, having the benefits of transit expenditures from the charges/tolls flow to those who make the payment. This is consistent with the thinking that regional problems require regional solutions or policies to be effective.

## **Toronto has plenty of room for increasing residential property taxes**

**Released: February 13, 2017**

**By: Frank Clayton**

This report utilizes a comparative approach of 26 municipalities within the Greater Toronto Area to reach conclusions about the capacity for the City of Toronto to increase residential property taxes to finance its infrastructure requirements and ongoing services without resorting to new tax sources.

The bottom line is the City of Toronto has the capacity to increase its average property tax levied on homeowners by 17 percent to 23 percent if the taxes paid by homeowners in the median-ranked GTA municipality excluding Toronto is applied as a benchmark. In fact, it is likely the capacity exists to raise taxes even more than this conservative benchmark as long as Toronto taxpayers are aware of and support the services funded by the additional taxes.

## **The need to make housing affordability a primary goal in regional planning for the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

**Released: November 3, 2016**

**By: David Amborski and Frank Clayton**

According to this report, the land-use planning system in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is a mounting contributor to the rising prices of ground-related housing. Any consideration of economic costs are absent from both the current and the proposed Growth Plan. The economic costs with the greatest negative impact which will worsen as the years pass comes from the deliberate intent of the plan to suppress the supply of new ground-related houses (singles, semis and townhouses) while encouraging apartments. Given the strength of the underlying preferences for ground-related forms of housing, the end result is higher and higher prices of ground-related houses (both existing and new). This continued deterioration in affordability has serious negative implications for economic and productivity growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Instead of constricting the supply of new ground-related housing even more, as proposed, the authors recommend the Ontario Government launch a research initiative to follow New Zealand's path and to examine ways the land use planning system in the GGH is affecting housing costs and look at ways to reform the system to reduce the prices of all types of housing by making it more flexible and reception to market demands.

## **Affordable housing and land supply Issues in the Greater Toronto Area: What the academic literature tells us**

**Released: November 4, 2016**

**By: David Amborski**

This policy report summarizes academic literature from the economics and planning fields to help understand a number of policy issues related to the land and housing market in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The literature review provides a cautionary tale that we need to guard against over land-use regulation, and ensure that we need to examine not only the benefits, but also the costs, especially economic costs, of our regulatory policies, like the Growth Plan, prior to approving them.

With respect to the issue of the impact of land supply on recent increases in the price of ground-related housing units, it is concluded the relevant supply to be considered is land that is not only designated but also approved and serviced for development. There is no doubt that deficiencies in the supply of these lands are contributing to rising house prices in the GTA.

The literature also demonstrates that both containment policies and land-use regulation have impacts on land/housing prices and housing affordability in the U.S., Britain, Europe and New Zealand.

Finally, the report identifies recent research reporting on empirical studies which indicate high house prices and diminished affordability resulting from land use regulation have adverse impacts on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced by urban regions, and the disparity between high and low income households which persists and is growing in some regions.

## **What municipal employment surveys tell us about recent employment growth in the Greater Toronto Area**

**Released: October 3, 2016**

**By: Justin Shin**

Ongoing information on employment trends and patterns at the municipal, and even sub-municipal level is required by municipal land-use planners, economic development personnel, economists, and others interested in urban economic performance.

The purpose of this report is to determine how useful the employment surveys conducted by the municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) are in portraying accurate employment and businesses trends for the entire GTA and its individual municipalities.

The review of the municipal surveys conducted between 2011 and 2015 revealed that the available data does not provide an accurate portrayal of total employment, total businesses and annual changes in employment/businesses for the entire GTA. The analysis of the employment and business data raised doubts about the reliability of the annual results published by some of the municipalities. Changes to the municipal surveys are needed in order to provide annual data that accurately represents employment and business trends by individual municipality as well as for the entire GTA.

Four options were evaluated for the collection of more reliable and complete employment and business establishment data for the GTA, or indeed, the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe. The option having the potential to be the most cost effective and providing the most accurate employment and business establishment information for individual municipalities and for the GTA as a whole is the option of having Statistics Canada provide the information based on its current Canadian Business Patterns (CBP) database expanded to include exact employment counts for businesses rather than ranges of employment as at present.



## Will GTA homebuyers really give up ground-related homes for apartments?

**Released: August 15, 2016**

**By: Frank Clayton**

The willingness of GTA residents to forgo ground-related homes for apartments in location-efficient communities is an important issue for determining the impacts of land use plans that restrict the supply of serviced land for ground-related housing on housing affordability. This holds even if the plans proactively encourage the creation of more sites for apartments.

According to this report, the view that many households in the GTA would willingly give up single-detached houses to move into higher density housing in location-efficient communities is wrong. Urban policies which try to force this by constraining the supply of new ground-related housing will lead to even higher house prices, sub-optimal location choices, and huge capital gain windfalls for the lucky owners of existing houses and vacant lands on which new ground-related homes could be built.

## Demographic update: Millennials in the Greater Golden Horseshoe in mid-2015

**Released July 6, 2016**

**By: Frank Clayton**

This report updates previous population tables from *Population Dynamics in the Greater Golden Horseshoe - Millennials vs. Baby Boomers* for 2006-2014 using population estimates from Statistics Canada for 2015. While the earlier study found that millennials were flocking to the city of Toronto, the latest population data for the 12 months ending July 1, 2015 show otherwise:

The city of Toronto recorded a smaller growth in its millennial population between 2014 and 2015 than the suburban regions of Peel and York - 2,200 persons vs. 5,300 and 3,900 persons, respectively.

Could this much slower growth in the city of Toronto millennials along with the more rapid growth in Peel and York regions indicate millennials are making a move to more suburban communities in search of more single-detached houses?

For now, it is too early to say, as these population data are only estimates by Statistics Canada which are subject to major revisions. Once the 2016 Census of Canada population counts are released in 2017, we will be able to get a clearer picture of demographic changes that have occurred in the GGH since last Census in 2011.

# Other Research Outputs

## Navigating the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Government-Owned Public Lands Web Map

CUR partnered with Evergreen CityWorks to develop an inventory of publicly owned land in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. The inventory in the form of a web map, identifies publicly owned properties from the Federal, Provincial, and local Municipal governments as well as their local agency boards and commissions.

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, CUR hosted a [webinar](#) to demonstrate how to navigate the web map.

## Economic Commentaries

This year, CUR launched a new research series entitled Economic Commentaries. These quarterly commentaries, authored by CUR Research Fellow, John Clinkard, focus on short-term trends in the Greater Golden Horseshoe compared to the rest of the province and within the GGH by census metropolitan area. Areas of focus include: employment trends, resale housing market trends, new housing market trends and non-residential construction trends.

# Media coverage



The research undertaken by CUR has been sourced and actively sought out by various media outlets such as *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *National Post* and *CBC*. This reinforces the importance of CUR's voice of rationality in urban policy-making decisions affecting the GGH. The following list details recent instances where CUR experts, Professor David Amborski and Dr. Frank Clayton, have been interviewed and quoted in the media. This list also details media references to CUR reports and seminars.

May 8, 2017

*The Globe and Mail* quotes Frank Clayton

**"Thousands of sites for homes sit shovel-ready in Toronto Area"**

By: Jeff Gray

May 3, 2017

CUR seminar referenced in *newinhomes.com* article

**"5 factors preventing new housing supply from meeting demand"**

May 3, 2017

*The Globe and Mail* quotes David Amborski

**"Defanging the housing price monster"**

By: John Lorinc

April 28, 2017

CUR report referenced in *National Post* article

**"The monster that ate Ontario"**

By: Terence Corcoran

April 27, 2017

David Amborski interviewed on *Scott Thompson Hamilton Radio Show* about the myths about rising ground-related housing prices in the GTA.

April 26, 2017

CUR report referenced in *Mortgage Broker News* article

**"University weighs in on supply issues"**

By: Justin da Rosa

April 26, 2017

David Amborski interviewed on *CTV News at 6* about the re-development of government-owned parking lots at Toronto's Donlands neighbourhood.

April 25, 2017

CUR report referenced in *Toronto Sun* article

**"Obsolete land the solution to GTA housing woes: Report"**

By: Joe Warmington

April 25, 2017

CUR report referenced in *Huffington Post Canada* article

**"Toronto Housing Crisis Caused by Government-Induced Land Shortage"**

By: Daniel Tencer

April 25, 2017

Frank Clayton interviewed on *CBC's On the Money with Peter Armstrong* re: CUR report;

**"Countering Myths about Rising Ground-Related Housing Prices in the GTA: New Supply Really Matters."**

April 25, 2017

*The Globe and Mail* (front page) quotes Frank Clayton

**"Report blames Ontario's 2006 growth plan for soaring house prices"**

By: Janet McFarland

# Blog entries



July 17, 2017

**Let's Give Homebuyers the Choice of Buying New Single-Detached Houses and Still Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

July 12, 2017

**Hey Toronto Media - Time to get with it: The "City of Toronto" is not the "Greater Toronto Area"**

March 3, 2017

**Population Growth in the 905 Portion of the Toronto Economic Region Continues to Outshine the City of Toronto in 2011-2016**

February 6, 2017

**GTA Combined New and Resale Home Sales in 2016: Apartments Surge, New Single-Detached House Sales Shrink**

December 13, 2016

**Time for Toronto Councillors to Stop Being Skittish About Raising Property Taxes**

November 28, 2016

**How Does Population Density in the GTHA Compare with Other Larger Urban Regions?**

October, 2016

**Economics and Land Use Planning: Insights from Britain**

September 23, 2016

**Study Ranks 23 GGH Municipalities According to the Restrictiveness of Their Residential Land-Use Regulation**

August 19, 2016

**Surge in Ground-Related Lot Values Reflects a Shortage of Supply in the GTA**

August 8, 2016

**A Statistical Mystery: Diminishing Expansion of the GTA's Built-Up Area at a Time of Surging Construction of Single-Detached Houses**

July 15, 2016

**How a Shrinking Supply of Serviced Sites is Stoking House Price Increases in the Greater Toronto Area**

# Events



## Understanding Ontario's Housing Affordability Challenge: A Big Data Evaluation

On May 23rd, 2017, the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development (CUR) in partnership with RESCON, CANCEA, OCS, OAA and RCCAO, held a conference which brought together thought leaders in Canada's housing sector to discuss the findings from the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis' phase-two housing affordability research.

The Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) has examined the complex demand and supply factors affecting housing affordability in Ontario. Led by Paul Smetanin, the CANCEA team's ground-breaking "big data" housing analysis examines the multiple forces working together to influence the housing market. Their agent-based research framework more broadly identifies and connects the high-profile and the lesser known factors affecting housing availability.

### Affordability Panel:

**Ana Bailao**, City Councillor & Chair  
Toronto's Affordable Housing Committee

**Jan De Silva**, President and CEO  
Toronto Region Board of Trade (moderator)

**Jim Murphy**, President & CEO  
Federation of Rental-Housing Providers of Ontario

**Diana Petramala**, Economist, Real Estate  
TD Economics

**Sean Speer**, Munk Senior Fellow  
Macdonald-Laurier Institute

### GTHA Mayors Panel on Housing Affordability:

**Mayor Bonnie Crombie** (Mississauga)

**Mayor Linda Jeffrey** (Brampton)

**Mayor Jeff Lehman** (Barrie)

**Mayor Steve Parish** (Ajax)

**Dwight Drummond**, CBC News Toronto  
(moderator)



## Land-Use Planning in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area: Let's Get It Right

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Hazel McCallion, the former Mayor of Mississauga, along with panelists Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson and Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti gathered at Ryerson University for a seminar organized by the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development entitled “Land-Use Planning in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) – Let's Get It Right.”

Ms. McCallion, Mayor Thompson and Mayor Scarpitti discussed their concerns regarding the proposed draft Growth Plan and the economic impact on municipalities and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area as a whole. Ms. McCallion spoke about the contributions of the individual municipality to the vibrancy of the GTHA, a region that she describes as the economic engine of Canada.

A report was written and submitted to the Province based on the deliberations at the Summit of Mayors and Chairs held in September 2016. Ms. McCallion presented five key findings from the report:

- There needs to be more discussion and consultation between the Province and the municipalities;
- Do not impose the intensity targets and intensification minimums;
- Consider the financial capacity to support the proposed plan and the resulting economic impacts;
- Implement transition measures from the current Growth Plan to the new Growth Plan;
- Implement a clear and transparent process for Greenbelt adjustments, refinements, removals, and additions to boundaries and designations.

Presentations by Mayor Thompson and Mayor Scarpitti addressed specific concerns stemming from their respective municipalities. Their comments were representative of many of the Mayors from the Summit (the majority signed support for the report).

The report concludes that the draft amendments to the Growth Plan go beyond the recommendations found in the Crombie Panel, the draft amendments are of an unachievable “one-size-fits-all” nature and ultimately if the proposed Growth Plan is adopted,



it will negatively impact the affordability and livability of the GTHA.

Ms. McCallion stated, "It'd be much better for [the Province] to not rush it and to get it right...it is our opportunity to get it right and to realize there's nothing wrong with density in the right location with the necessary services to support it.

## **Why is the supply of serviced land not responding to the market demand for housing in the GTHA?**

On May 2, 2017, Don Given had good news for households now living in low-density homes in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and bad news for households dreaming of a ground-related home with a front door and a small yard or patio. He stated that any relief on housing prices would require a significant change in Provincial Government land-use policies and, even then, would not provide relief to the low density market for many years. Given, President of multi-disciplinary Malone Given Parsons, was keynote speaker at the seminar organized by the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development entitled "Why is the Supply of Serviced Land Not Responding to the Market Demand for Housing in the GTHA." Malone Given Parsons has been at the forefront of measuring land supply availability and status throughout the GTHA for many years.

Given's presentation covered the factual realities of the land supply, the consequences of the Province's land-use policies embodied in the 2006 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the Growth Plan), and the faulty information and logic behind the proposed changes to the Growth Plan.

According to Given, the larger disparity between those who proclaim there is more than an ample supply of residential lands in the 905 Regions to accommodate low-density growth to 2031 and beyond and the current shortage of serviced sites on which to build new homes is the result of two factors: (1) Over stating the greenfield land supply by about 50% because the land is either built on or is close to occupancy; and (2) a multitude of constraints including cumbersome, unpredictable and lengthy approval processes, municipal phasing policies, municipal financial capacity to support growth and uncertainties created by the draft proposed Growth Plan.

The Province's proposal to raise the average density on greenfield land development from 50 persons/employment per hectare to 80 is especially damaging to the future supply of low density forms of housing especially single-detached and semi-detached houses, according to Given.

Panelists at the seminar included Michael Bissett, a partner at Bousfields Inc., Katarzyna Silwa, a partner at Dentons Canada LLP and Frank Clayton, Senior Research Fellow at Ryerson University's Centre for Urban Research and Land Development.



## Coming Home: National Housing Week Pecha Kucha

On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, CUR partnered with GTA Housing Action Lab and Options for Homes for a Pecha Kucha to mark National Housing Day. Ten experts were invited to share innovative, transformational ideas on the GTHA's housing future.

### **Speakers:**

**David Amborski**, CUR, Ryerson University

**Joe Berridge**, Urban Strategies

**Meg Davis**, Waterfront Toronto

**Markus Moos**, University of Waterloo

**John van Nostrand**, SvN

**Jay Pitter**, Author/Placemaker

**Sean Hertel**, Urban Planning Consultant

**Jessie Ma**, Ryerson University

**Steve Pomeroy**, Carleton University

**Carla Staresina**, CMHC

### **Emceed by:**

**Sean Gadon**, City of Toronto

**Heather Tremain**, Options for Homes

## Economics and Land Use Planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016, CUR held a seminar focused on land use planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Professor Paul Cheshire, London School of Economics, delivered a keynote presentation on planning impacts from a British perspective followed by presentations by Dr. Frank Clayton, Senior Research Fellow, CUR, and Michael Brooks, CEO, REALpac. Following these presentations there was an expert panel discussion.

### **Keynote Speaker:**

**Paul Cheshire**, Professor of Economic Geography, London School of Economics

### **Moderator:**

**David Amborski**, Director, CUR

### **Panelists:**

**Dr. Enid Slack**, Director, Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto

**Jeannette Gillezeau**, Senior Director, Economic Consulting, Research, Valuation & Advisory, Altus Group Limited

**Don Given**, President, Malone Given Parsons

# Student opportunities

At CUR, we recognize that students and graduates of the urban planning program at Ryerson University will be the ones to tackle the next generation of urban land development issues facing the Greater Golden Horseshoe. To help give students the tools and economic know-how, CUR offers research opportunities for Ryerson students and graduates. Since CUR began, we have hired 16 student/graduate researchers and have helped them kick-start their careers in the field.



"I am currently working for a development company and I know that my time at CUR made me competitive for the position. At CUR, I learned so much about the GTHA market and how the supply of land impacts housing affordability."

- Nicola Sharpe



"Working at CUR provided me the necessary skills and knowledge to help me move forward with my career. I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity and will continue to support the valuable work being done by the Centre."

- Cameron Macdonald



### **Visit us**

111 Gerrard Street East  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Room: GER 204  
Toronto, ON

### **Write to us**

350 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

### **Contact us**

416-979-5000 x 3348  
[cur@ryerson.ca](mailto:cur@ryerson.ca)  
[ryerson.ca/cur](http://ryerson.ca/cur)

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