

Master of Planning Graduate Showcase

Ryerson University School of Urban & Regional Planning

September 2021



Source: Sam Casola & Saniel Chand

Preface

A Letter from SURP Faculty

Welcome to the MRP Showcase 2021!

In what has been a most unusual and challenging year, the School of Urban and Regional Planning is especially proud to celebrate and congratulate the MPL Class of 2021. We are delighted to share and showcase their culminating projects. Their work reveals an excellent range of creative, intelligent, timely and innovative Masters' Research Papers and Projects (MRPs) in Urban Development. Of particular note, this cohort has worked extra-hard with their supervising faculty to complete their Masters' degree in these capstone works, often through usual means and novel methods, working entirely remotely and virtually. As planners, we shape, make, build and create the spaces and places of city life; but during an unprecedented global pandemic, our work must pivot rapidly into new praxes, policies and programs that provide leadership on urgent matters of adaption, health and equity for our cities and citizens. In this showcase of work, it's clear that the future is good hands -- our cities will be improved, and made more equitable, healthy, liveable, sustainable and resilient through our graduates' work!

Congratulations to our new MPLs, Class of 2021!

On behalf of all of us at SURP,
Prof. Nina-Marie Lister, MCIP, RPP, Hon. ASLA
Professor and Graduate Program Director

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Supervisor: Lyndsey Rolheiser

Circular Solutions

for Construction, Renovation and Demolition Waste in Toronto

Summary

Author:

Haley Anderson

Supervisor:

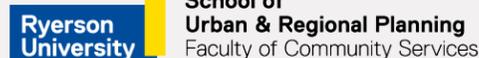
Nina-Marie Lister

Project Type:

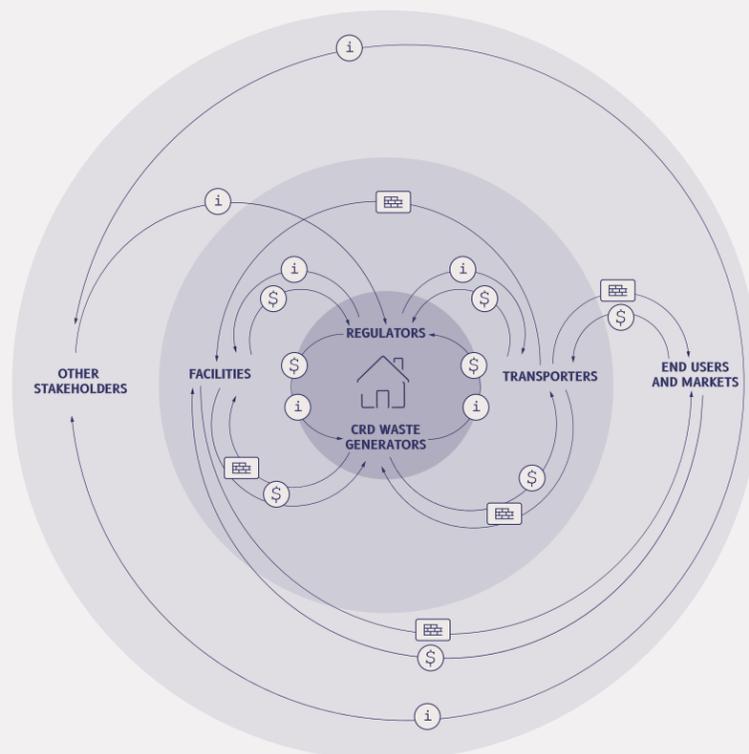
Policy Analysis and Systems Thinking

Acknowledgements:

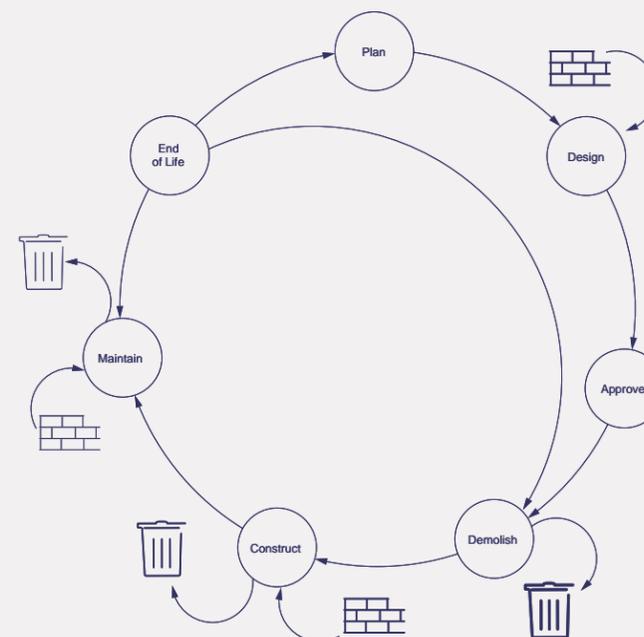
Second Reader: Lisa King, City of Toronto
 SURP Alumni: Nadia Dowhaniuk,
 Ross Edwards and Vickey Simovic
 Emily Alfred, Toronto Environmental Alliance



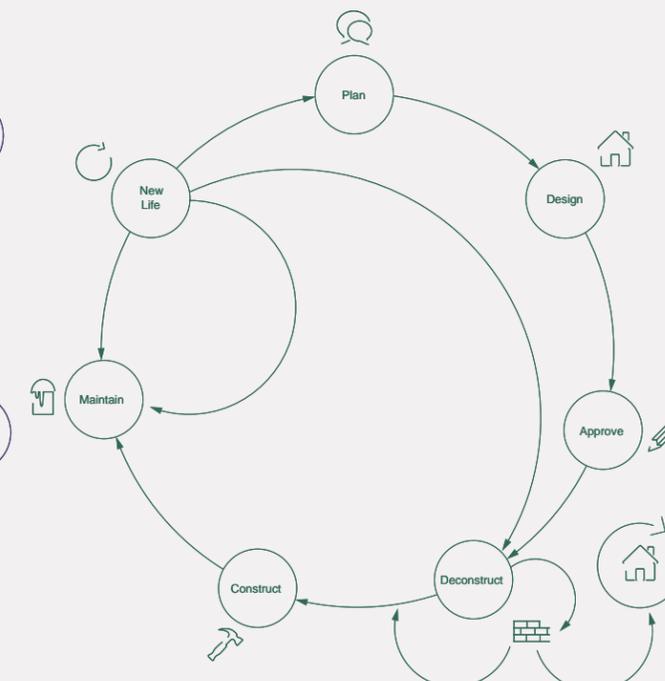
Stakeholder Map*



Waste In, Waste Out Process Map



Circular Process Map



Construction, Renovation, and Demolition Waste (CRD) in the city of Toronto goes largely unmonitored and unregulated. As the city rapidly continues growing and changing more as the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted the way people use and need space, there will certainly be no slowing of the amount of CRD waste produced. With a changing market, population, and changing individual needs, many opt to renovate or demolish and start new, all the while creating waste. This waste is often overlooked in conversations of green building and sustainable growth. In an effort to understand the problem, this project examines the current policy framework that Toronto's CRD waste system sits within, from federal to municipal. Throughout the project, visuals such as graphs, charts, infographics, maps, and diagrams are used to clearly communicate and quickly show complex concepts to bring an understanding of the system, problems, and solutions to a broader audience. This project emphasizes mapping and other visualization techniques to clearly identify, illuminate and explore existing barriers in the current system, possible future solutions, and identify leverage points for creating change and moving towards a circular economy for construction, renovation, and demolition waste in Toronto. Graphic analysis and information design curates and communicates a large body of research from across the world.

Stakeholder Map: high-level actors involved in CRD are mapped based on their hierarchy of power and ability to impact the system or generate waste; those that hold the most power are in the centre. Inter-related arrows show the relationships between each actor and what is exchanged in the relationship. There is a flow of information, money, and materials.

Process Flow Maps: a visualization tool showing the high-level sequence of events. Seeing when and where phases connect with one another helps to emphasize the fact that each phase is interrelated and builds on the last. At every step in the life cycle of a building, decisions are made to bring new materials in or push waste out from the building site.

*Source: Graphics by Haley Anderson, information analyzed from (Guide for Identifying, Evaluating and Selecting Policies for Influencing Construction, Renovation and Demolition Waste Management, 2019; Rau et al., 2020; Ali Akhtar, Ajit K. Sarmah, 2018, Foster 2019)

Notable circular changes to the process include re-thinking 'the demolition' phase as a 'deconstruction' phase and 'end of life' as 'new life'.

Towards Safe, Sustainable and Equitable E-scooter Policy in Canada

Summary

Author:

Paul Arkilander

Supervisor:

Dr. Raktim Mitra

Project Type:

Major Research Paper

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to my supervisor, second reader, friends, and family for your support throughout this project. This MRP was funded through a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship - Master's Program award.



Experiences with e-scooters across Canada & the U.S. provide important lessons for municipal planners in Canada

Dockless shared electric scooter (e-scooter) systems have spread rapidly to cities across the world since 2017. They are poised to expand to additional cities in Canada with the potential to complement existing transit, reduce car-dependency, and support climate and social equity goals.

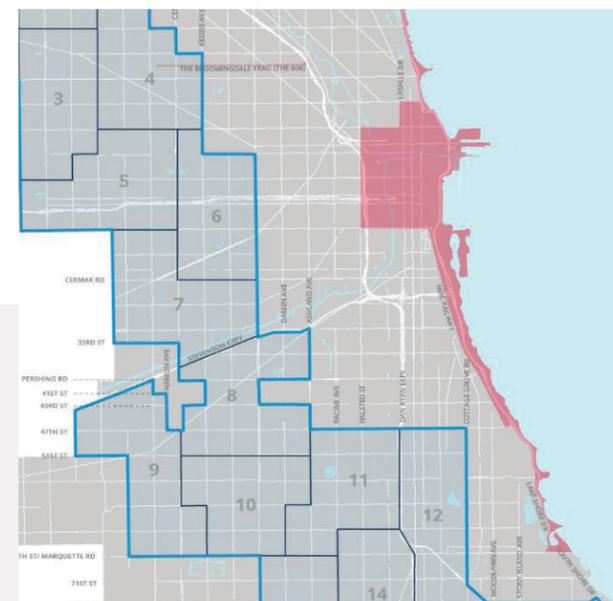


Pictured: E-scooters are expected to contribute to multimodal transportation by addressing the first and last mile/kilometre issue and expanding the reach of transit to neighbourhoods that have historically been underserved.

Source: © skyNext / Adobe Stock

This research project surveyed current e-scooter policy in cities in the Canada and the U.S. to identify patterns in regulation under five key themes:

- (1) economic sustainability,
- (2) environmental sustainability and resilience,
- (3) transportation integration,
- (4) social equity, and
- (5) public health and safety.



Pictured: A portion of Chicago's 2020 pilot map shows priority areas (outlined) and exclusion areas (shaded) established to promote equitable e-scooter distribution.

Source: City of Chicago. (2020). First Amendment to Terms.

Results & Recommendations

The survey revealed that regulations vary greatly across jurisdictions and depend heavily on local conditions. Many cities are attempting to address safety, sustainability, and equity through regulation, however, current policies are failing to adequately address the aspirational goals of e-scooter programs. While safety and accessibility targets are being met, evidence from previous pilots has shown that policies that aim to improve social equity and transit integration are falling short of expectations. Leaders in e-scooter policy that could be looked to for examples include Chicago, IL, Los Angeles, CA, Portland, OR, San Francisco, CA, and Washington, D.C.

Based on the literature review and policy scan conducted for this research, a series of recommendations are outlined in the full report for each of the five overarching themes of policy that were examined. These recommendations are provided to aid municipal planners in developing local e-scooter policies in Canada.

Further Research

This research provides a starting point for analyzing the most common practices and issues in e-scooter policy but has foregone detailed focus on specific issues in the interest of a more holistic assessment of current practice. Further research should focus more narrowly on specific aspects of e-scooter policy. Furthermore, as more pilot projects are undertaken in Canada and e-scooter technology continues to evolve, it will be important to analyze performance measures, trip data, user characteristics and survey data to make evidence-based decisions on e-scooter policy and micromobility investment.



Source: Veoride, Inc. (21 Aug. 2019). SFMTA Proposal.

Pictured: As e-scooter features and technology improve, as highlighted in these Veoride devices, lifecycle emissions may fall and position e-scooters as a more sustainable form of transportation.

Ontario's Planning Appeal System and the Outcome for Downtown Planning in Toronto

Summary

Author:

Caroline Bucksbaum

Supervisor:

Christopher De Sousa

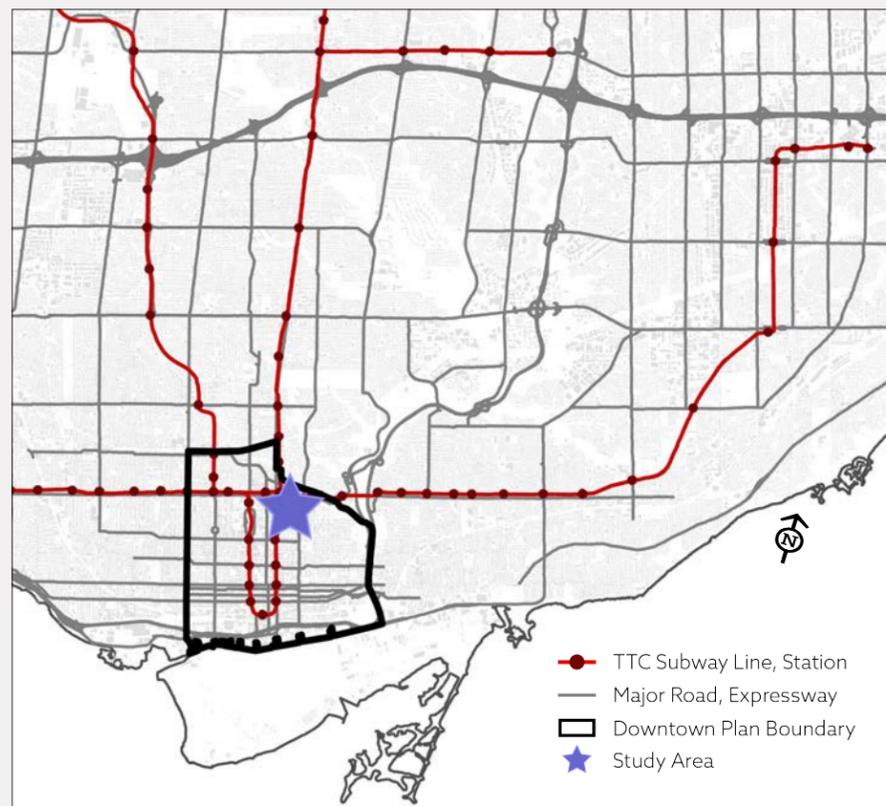
Project Type:

Major Research Paper

Acknowledgements:

Christopher De Sousa, David Amborski, City Planning staff at the City of Toronto (provided initial data), Coffee and Writing, my parents, Ivan

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Faculty of Community Services

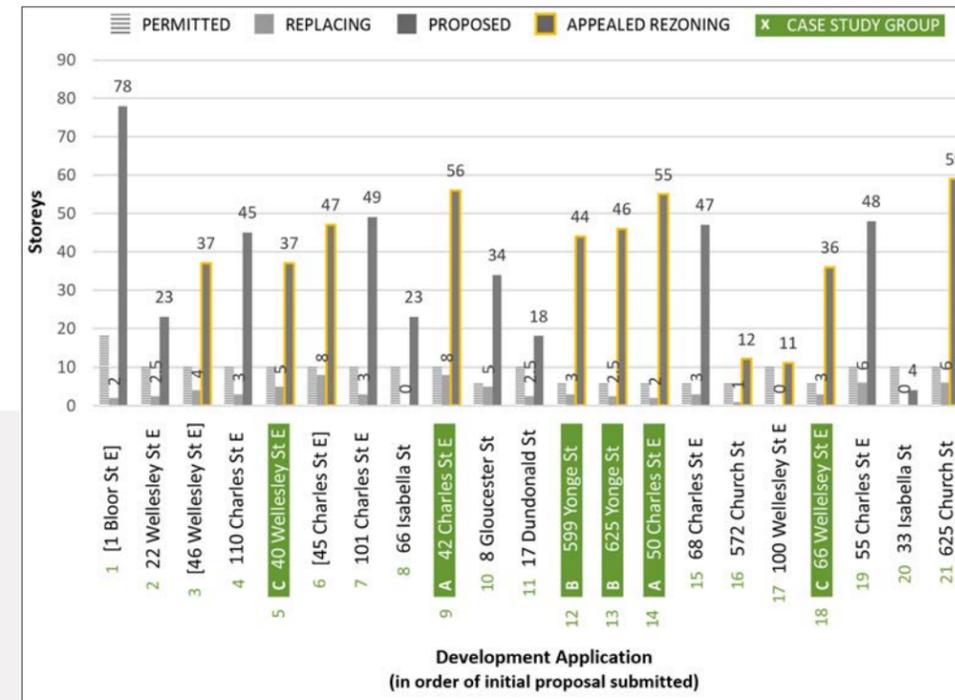


City of Toronto Key Map, created with ArcGIS for Desktop Advanced, Version 10.7.1 and Adobe Illustrator, Version 2020.

(Bucksbaum, April 2021. Data layers: Toronto Open Data: 3DMassing_2018_WGS84_topo_edge_of_road_wgs84_toronto-boundary-wgs84; ttc-subway-shapefile-wgs84; Scholars GeoPortal: TTC Rapid Transit Station 2004)



(left) Cluster of towers on Charles Street East, expanding towards low-rise neighbourhood with missing middle housing options (facing west) (right) Bar chart showing rezoning applications: permitted, replacing, proposed



(Bucksbaum, April 2021)

Key Findings

- Heights exceed permitted by 385% on average
- 21 rezoning applications: over half were appealed to the OMB/LPAT (13; 11 for rezoning)
- 90% of rezoning appeals were for no decision
- Most common appeal scenario was settlement (7 of the 8 cases decided by the Tribunal)
- Application turnaround shorter for non-appeals (16 months v. 20 months)
- In early 2000s, developers appealed approval of adjacent proposal (setback issues); recently, it appears developers leverage nearby proposals to get increased heights and reduced setbacks
- Recently more OPA proposals, rental demolition

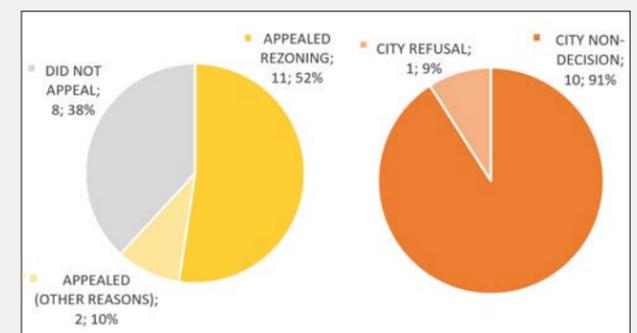
Significance to Planning

Proposed and approved development is more frequently, and to an increasing degree, deviating from built form policies that are meant to provide safe, comfortable, and high quality urban spaces. The dynamics of the appeal system have led the City to become more cautious in negotiations. If development trends continue, with less strict adherence to contextual compatibility requirements, it will be more challenging to realize a cohesively planned downtown. Findings suggest an increasingly homogeneous landscape of tall towers, contrary to policies that promote variety and well-designed built form. This research provides a timely gauge of whether Toronto is on track to achieve its vision.

Are developments in downtown Toronto adhering to local policies that reinforce the province's interest in well-designed built form?

Planning in downtown Toronto requires a balance between sometimes conflicting policy objectives: accommodating growth through intensification, and promoting well-designed built form. This research involves a two-part analysis of rezoning applications that were active between 2006-2020. The focus is on how the City and a provincial

appeal tribunal weigh local policies when approving development. I explore: (1) the interplay between policies that promote increased density (which translates to height in the downtown core), and those that encourage contextually appropriate massing and transition in scale, and (2) how the Tribunal directly and indirectly affects development patterns. First is an analysis of overall trends: what is proposed, appealed, and approved. Second, a case study explores different appeal scenarios in three development clusters.



Historic low-rise areas with increasingly more high-rises nearby on Charles Street East (Isabella Street, facing west)

(Bucksbaum, April 2021)

Meaningful and Inclusive Engagement: Are We There Yet?

A Case Study of Scarborough Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) Participatory Processes

Summary

Author:

Kiana Côté

Supervisor:

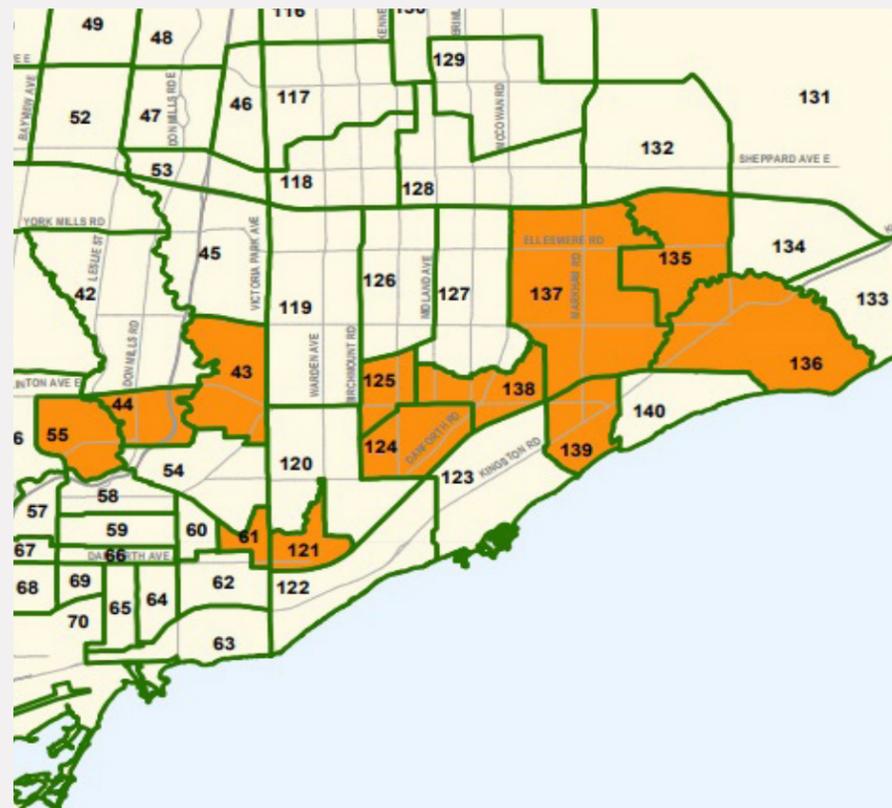
Dr. Zhixi Zhuang

Project Type:

Major Research Paper

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Zhixi Zhuang (supervisor) | Dr. Anna Triandafyllidou (second reader) | My interviewees | CERC in Migration and Integration and the SSHRC (founders)



Pictured: Scarborough Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs).

Source: City of Toronto. (2014). The Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs).

Key Words: Citizen participation | Meaningful public engagement | Citizen empowerment | Ethnic communities | The City of Toronto participatory framework

While Western planning shows an awareness about the importance of citizen participation, it is acknowledged that the conventional public meeting approach fails to truly engage with the public. Moreover, studies reveal this approach's limitations particularly impact. The scarcity of information on how to concretely achieve meaningful and inclusive engagement not only limits the achievement of societal equity objectives, but also the unlocking of the full potential of neighbourhoods and cities to innovate and foster sustainable initiatives.

Research Question

This research explored if the current municipal participatory approach is effective in meaningfully engaging citizens. It also investigated the inclusivity of this approach. The research question was: How do ethnically diverse citizens participate and are engaged with the municipal participatory framework and to what extent their needs are fulfilled with this approach?

Methodology

This research was performed through a case study of the multicultural enclave of Scarborough in Toronto and more precisely of its Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). It used (1) a literature review about meaningful and inclusive engagement, (2) a policy review of the NIAs' processes, and (3) interviews with representatives of the Scarborough community, local neighbourhood agencies, and the City,

Key Findings

Meaningful and inclusive engagement is not achieved in Scarborough. The NIAs initiatives in Scarborough appear like a tokenistic process that lacks accountability and transparency. The interviews also revealed a top-down approach with an exclusive system to provide support to residents. While residents that engage with NIAs initiatives are ethnically diverse, there are recurring and missing voices at the participatory activities (such as youth and Indigenous people). As a whole, most resident interviewees do not find the process meaningful. If they are asked for their feedback through the NIAs processes, the engagement framework and support provided do not offer real opportunities for them to affect the process nor implement sustainable changes.

Interviewees' Recommendations

Accessibility
Increase the accessibility of funding opportunities to all grassroots groups | Have a more direct and transparent process to provide resources to residents | Provide residents meaningful compensation

Transparency

Have a clear purpose when hosting participatory meetings | Be transparent in regard to the level of participation involved | Be transparent in regard to what will happen with the feedback

Accountability

Have metrics to track the progress of participatory initiatives | Have metrics to track the progress of City and agency staff | Follow-up with residents after having carried out an initiative | Have metrics to assess which residents or grassroots groups typically receive the funding

Empowerment

Include the residents to have a meaningful say in the participatory events' agenda | Aim for a level of participation that fosters collaboration and partnerships rather than being informative or consultative processes

Inclusivity

Review how NIAs are selected so all underserved communities are considered | Provide cultural competency facilitation training | Have facilitation materials that are tailored to the unique local needs | Have volunteers and facilitators that are from the community | Increase efforts to engage with youth and Indigenous people | Prioritize equity seeking groups in the support provided

Sustainability

Be mindful that building trust and relationship takes time, therefore allocate enough resources to enable such process | Be aware that sustainability will not be achieved without transparency, accountability, accessibility, empowerment, and inclusivity

COVID-19 Related Inputs

Give a particular attention to address technological barriers | Provide mental health support | When designing a participatory process, be particularly mindful of new schedule barriers and mitigate those barriers | Continue to support the work of grassroots groups to sustain resident leadership momentum | Have resident participants at the Covid-19 tables

The Rebirth of Purpose-Built Rental in Toronto

An Exploration of Causes and Consequences

Summary

Author:

Julian Del Bel Belluz

Supervisor:

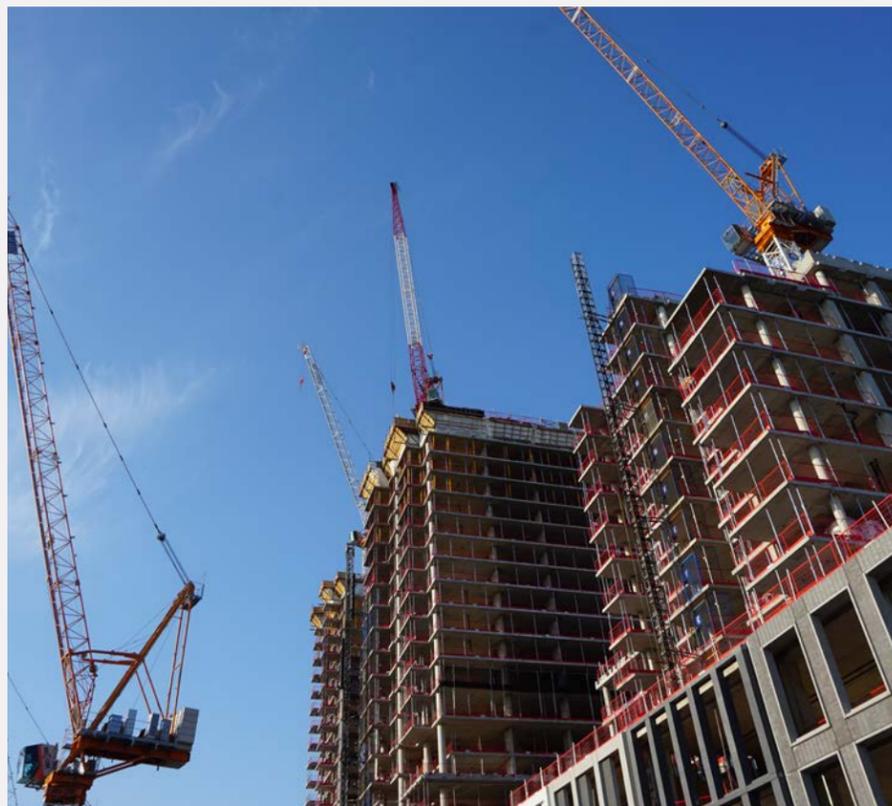
Lyndsey Rolheiser

Project Type:

Major Research Paper

Acknowledgements:

Tim Smith — Second Reader



Source: Author photo

Pictured: Mirvish Village, from Westbank, will open in 2022 and provide both market and affordable purpose-built rental housing.

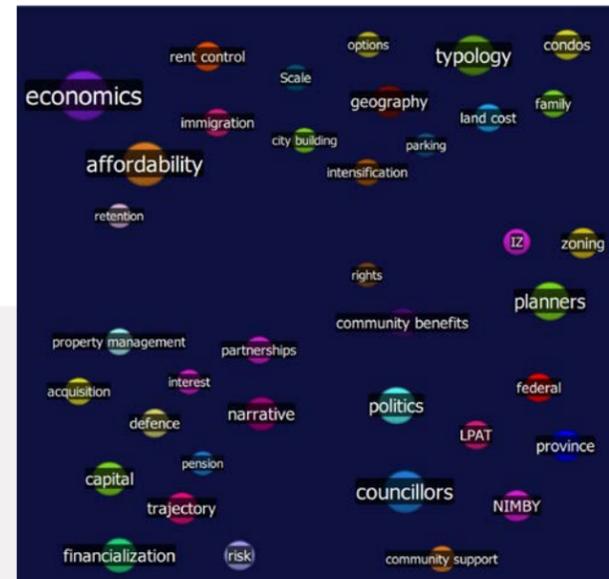


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Faculty of Community Services

Research Questions

1. What are the factors that encourage or discourage the development of purpose-built rental housing in Toronto?
2. Which of these factors are behind the recent increase in PBR starts, and what does this mean for the future of PBR in Toronto?
3. What forms of PBR can we expect to be developed, and what forms of PBR would be most beneficial for those seeking adequate, suitable, affordable rental housing?

Purpose-built rental (PBR) is an integral part of Canada's housing system. After two decades of extremely low activity in the sector, Toronto is seeing a marked increase in PBR construction. The analysis reveals that today's rental construction is driven by different actors than in the past, namely large-scale institutional investors. These investors represent a novel type of landlord that has not been well studied in the literature, and as such, common assumptions may no longer hold.



Source: Quirkos 2.4.1

Pictured: An example coding space within the qualitative data analysis software used for the project.

Methods

This exploratory study uses expert interviews to identify possible factors influencing the current trend in PBR. The research framework for the interviews was based on a literature review. The point of the interviews was not to discover trends in representative samples. Rather, it was to triangulate between different views. Interviewees included two developers, one urban planner, one investment specialist, and one Toronto city councillor.

Findings

Interviewees suggested that institutional investors are a major driving force behind PBR construction. PBR developments are attractive to these investors because they offer stable, long-term returns—as opposed to the high, short-term profits sought by traditional developers. Many of the criticisms aimed at institutional landlords can be addressed with further regulation (especially of property management practices), and any resulting profit losses are unlikely to cause

institutional investors to leave PBR development because of their prioritization of reliability over short-term gains. Differing motivations for being in the PBR space lead to different behaviours within it. The investment specialist indicated that the strategic response to rents being set upon first occupancy has been to continuously build more rental buildings so that newly occupied units can be priced at the most current market rents possible. It cannot be overstated how contrary this is to what is commonly assumed about developer reactions to rent control. Interviewees were agreed that large-scale developers, either traditional or institutional, have no interest in missing middle developments. If the city wishes to see these housing typologies, policy makers will need to consider who will be doing the building.

Recommendations

1. Enact rent control
2. Further regulate and enforce property management practices
3. Fund and support tenant organizations
4. Introduce a rental retention vendor tax credit
5. Leverage government land to provide affordable PBR
6. Level the playing field with tax reforms
7. Create a new zoning class specifically for PBR
8. Use low- or no-cost incentives to create desirable PBR forms
9. Expand municipal and federal incentive programs
10. Support missing middle PBR development by reforming zoning and the planning process

Reinventing the Corner Store

A Case for Small-Scale Neighbourhood Retail

Summary

Author:

Ely DeSandoli

Supervisor:

Lyndsey Rolheiser

Project Type:

Major Research Project

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to my supervisor, Lyndsey, and my second reader, Howard, for your insight and guidance. And to my parents for your comfort and support.



Pictured: Arbutus Coffee in Vancouver, BC, is a modern-day example of neighbourhood small-scale retail that can encourage active modes of travel for daily trips

Source: Ely DeSandoli

Local corner stores don't have to remain as relics of the past. They can play a large part in building healthy and active communities.

In fact, there is mounting evidence that this type of small-scale retail, embedded in residential neighbourhoods, could be a benefit to the social and physical health of our communities. This major research project argues for the development of more small-scale neighbourhood retail spaces in and amongst residential areas. Using a mix of

historical analysis, literature review, transportation observations, and interviews, I argue that, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased proliferation of these types of retail sites can facilitate social cohesion and active modes of travel within a neighbourhood, similar to the trending planning concept of the 15 Minute City.



Source: City of Toronto Archives

Pictured: Patoff Grocery and Smyth Variety Store at 389-391 Brock Ave, c.1950's

Old Streets Built for Pedestrians

Neighbourhood retail sites were predominant during the time when walking, cycling, and transit were the dominant forms of transportation. We see this built form in older neighbourhoods built before the dominance of the car. As such, these retail sites were designed with human-centered travel in mind. A dense diversity of uses throughout residential neighbourhoods can encourage more frequent trips made by foot or by bike by way of increased convenience and proximity to one's home.

Social Benefits and Placemaking

As "third places", these sites play an important role in maintaining a community's social vitality. Neutral public gathering places act as the heart of communities' social vitality, as they "make possible far more informal, even intimate, relations among people than could be entertained in the home." (Oldenburg, 1989). Being in close proximity to people's homes also facilitates a sense of place and attachment with one's immediate surroundings.

The Role of Policy

Municipal governments have a large role to play in maintaining the future of small-scale neighbourhood retail. Vancouver has recently committed to enabling the retention and creation of new neighbourhood retail spaces through potential amendments to zoning and development by-laws to allow for site-specific "neighbourhood-friendly" rezonings (Vancouver City Council, 2020). Hamilton has already created a unique zoning class for commercial uses within residential areas, recognizing the importance of this built form in serving a social and economic purpose and allowing residents to complete their daily errands by walking or cycling.



Source: Domus Home Group

Pictured: A proposed retrofitted use for a historical neighbourhood retail site, complete with housing.

Understanding Neighbourhood Space Use By Canadian Children and Youth During COVID-19

Summary

Author:

Meredith Gillespie

Supervisor:

Dr. Raktim Mitra

Project Type:

Major Research Paper

Acknowledgements:

The unwavering support of Dr. Raktim Mitra, my Second Reader Hannah Miller, and friends and family.



Girls should be encouraged to take part in outdoor play more to improve their physical activity

Source: Unsplash

Canadian children and youth are less physically active and are using outdoor space differently during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how Canadian children and youth can be physically active. This research examines where children are spending time outdoors during the pandemic and finds evidence that the use of these outdoor spaces is associated with their physical activity outcomes. Further analysis using regression and

latent class analysis identifies that children and youth who are male and have better access to parks nearby were more likely to be using neighbourhood outdoor spaces, as opposed to residential outdoor spaces. The findings can inform policy generated by planners and health officials to support physical activity during and after the pandemic. Critical to this is understanding the multiple and intersecting factors which contribute to how children and youth use their neighbourhoods for physical activity.



Source: Unsplash

Children and youth with access to parks were more likely to use their neighbourhood for physical activity

Boys use neighbourhood space more than girls

Two latent classes emerged from the data: neighbourhood space users, who use parks and trails within walkable distance more than residential space users, who use yards, driveways, and sometimes neighbourhood streets more than parks and trails. Being a male child or youth was associated with neighbourhood space use. Efforts should be made to support female children and youth's use of parks and trails so that they are more physically active, particularly since physical activity has declined during the pandemic.

Access to parks is associated with neighbourhood space use

Children and youth who have access to a park nearby were more likely to use their neighbourhood for physical activity. Planners should prioritize providing parks close to new residential development. Parks are an important space for physical activity, especially for children and youth living in apartments. This research found that living in an apartment was associated with neighbourhood space use, meaning urban environments in particular should have parks.

Children's health is impacted by social determinants

Canadians do not have equal access to health care, education, and work. During COVID-19, we have seen how these social determinants of health have meant some people have been impacted more severely by the virus than others. Often one factor is compounded by others, like being a child of an essential worker who lives in a neighbourhood where there is more limited access to health care. The findings from this paper can be part of the solution. Better neighbourhood design be implemented in all neighbourhoods and thus can benefit children and youth everywhere. This will allow more children to be more physically active regardless of where they live.



Source: Unsplash

Better neighbourhood design can support all children and youth's physical activity irrespective of where they live

Supplying Social Housing and Preserving Inexpensive Rental Units

A Comparative Case Study of the Right of First Refusal in Montréal and Berlin

Summary

Author:

Frances Grout-Brown

Supervisor:

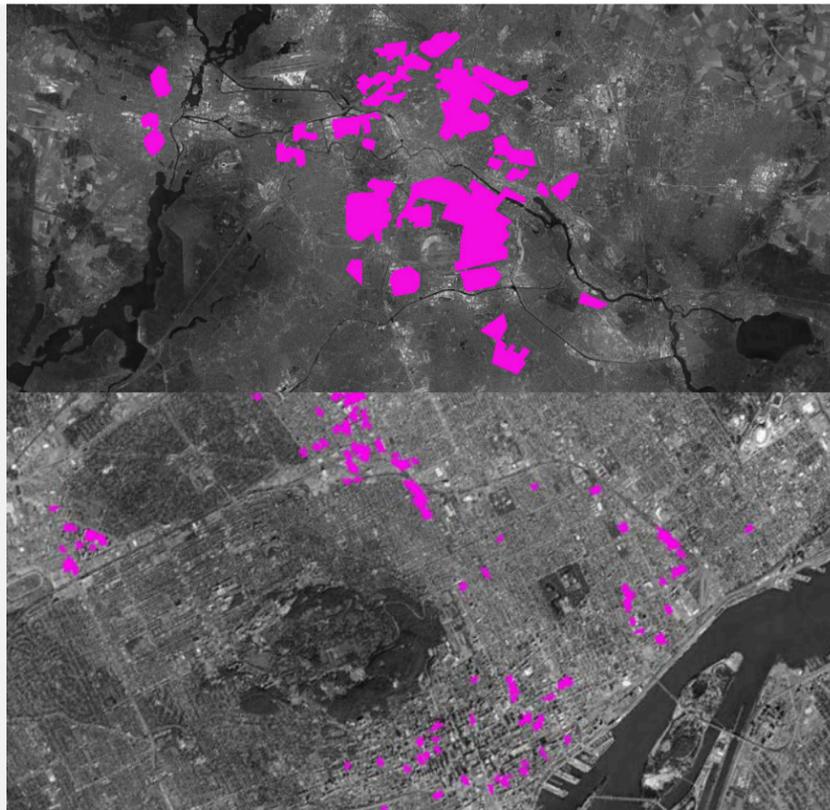
Dr. Lyndsey Rolheiser

Project Type:

Case Study

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Nik Luka (Second Reader)
Daniel Legault



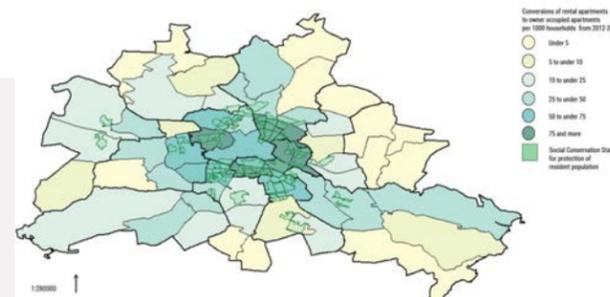
Pictured: “Social Conservation Areas” in Berlin where right of first refusal can be used (top - pink) and designated properties for the use of the pre-emptive right for social housing in Montréal (bottom - pink).

Source: Adapted from Google Earth; Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen Berlin, 2019; Ministère de l'Énergie et des Ressources naturelles, 2021.

The municipal right of first refusal presents an emerging intervention to study as it rethinks the forces that shape access to low-cost housing.

This paper compares the right of first refusal as a tool to supply social housing in Montréal and as a tool to prevent speculation and displacement in Berlin. Literature on public rights of first refusal highlights the need to compare across subject areas and elaborate on how the right operates. To gain an understanding of this little known right, this paper

analyzes these two distinct uses to show a range in which the right of first refusal can be exercised at the municipal level in the area of housing. Further, the context surrounding each case's adoption, intended impact, and selection of areas for the use of this tool is explored in depth. Overall, this contextual analysis provides relevant information for evaluation and offers new information for municipalities looking to address deeper housing affordability for low to moderate income renter households in active real estate markets.



Pictured: Social Conservation Areas (green) vs. conversion of rental units into owner-occupied units, Berlin

Source: Adapted from Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen Berlin, 2018

What is it in both contexts

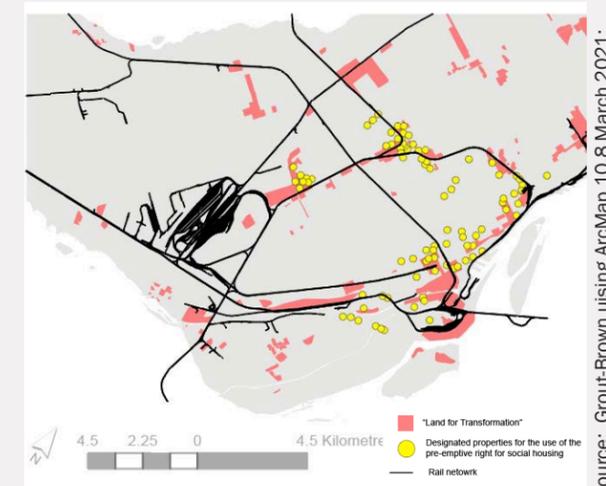
The pre-emptive right for the purpose of social housing in Montreal is used to to acquire land in strategic areas where there is significant pressure on the market, where there is a need for social housing, and where it is difficult to apply other instruments. In Berlin, the right of first refusal for social conservation is used for the preservation of inexpensive living space to counteract the displacement of low to modest income populations for urban planning reasons.

Analysis

These distinct cases show a range of considerations in relation to the concept of social mix in areas undergoing transformation, devolution of authority, and involvement of mission-oriented housing organizations. The tool's implementation is grounded in its intended impact, the types of market pressures being observed, and the property typologies that are characteristic of targeted areas. As well, the legal statutes within which the tools' use is permitted, and the interaction with other housing policies and instruments.

Looking to the future

It is too early to assess whether the right of first refusal in both of these cases in Montréal and Berlin is effective in achieving their intended impact. However, it is important to understand why they exist in the first place and the contextual factors that drive how they are implemented. The case of Montréal presents important considerations relative to land scarcity and the tactical nature of accessing existing property typologies in areas of social housing need. In the case of Berlin, the use of the tool raises considerations around speculation and displacement and the relationship between housing and infrastructure. Lastly, given the little scholarly attention being paid to this tool, there exists significant areas for further research.



Pictured: Post-industrial space: designated properties (yellow) in the Ville de Montréal vs. rail network and “Lands to Transform” (red)

Source: Grout-Brown using ArcMap 10.8 March 2021; Ministère de l'Énergie et des Ressources naturelles, 2021; Partenariat Données Québec, 2017; Partenariat Données Québec.

Stories of Resilience

How Immigrant Small Business Owners have Adapted in the Face of Toronto's COVID-19 Pandemic

Summary

Author:

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Supervisor:

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Project Type:

Major Research Paper

Acknowledgements:

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Faculty of Community Services



Pictured: Clustering of ethnic businesses in the Sheppard East Village BIA (top row) and the Willowdale BIA (bottom row).

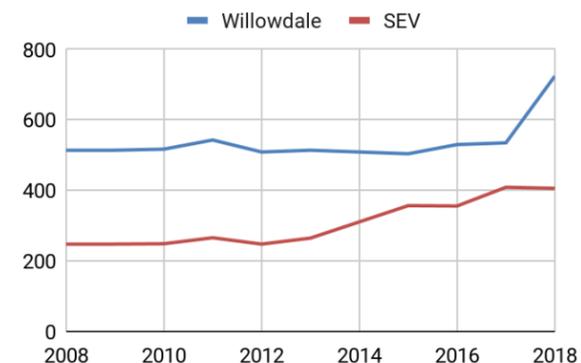
Source: Taken by Researcher

Small businesses are hubs of local entrepreneurship that promote economic vibrancy and social interaction at a neighbourhood level.

However, immigrant small business owners face greater barriers to market entry over their non-immigrant counterparts, and are one of the most vulnerable, at-risk sectors of the economy (Battisti and Deakins, 2012; Ingirige et al., 2008; Murdie & Ghosh 2010; Pendakur and Pendakur, 1998; Portes and Jensen, 1989; Waldinger,

2003; Waldinger et al., 2000). With the COVID-19 pandemic, barriers facing immigrant small business owners are thus two-fold, as they not only face existing barriers experienced by small businesses, but also barriers faced specifically by immigrant entrepreneurs. In response, this paper investigates the effects of COVID-19 on small immigrant businesses in the inner-suburbs of Toronto by asking: How are small immigrant business owners adapting during the COVID-19 pandemic? What strategies have they been using?

Total # of Businesses



Total number of businesses in the Willowdale BIA and the Sheppard East Village BIA from 2008 to 2018.

Source: Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity

Methods

In order to gain an understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on small immigrant business owners from multiple perspectives, this study adopts a mixed research method using Ward census data, business survey data from the Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity at Ryerson University, key information interviews, and windshield surveys. This research is further informed by existing scholarship on ethnic entrepreneurship, the mixed-embeddedness model, and place-making.

Findings

The extent to which an immigrant small business owner was able to adapt their business to the pandemic environment and overcome barriers largely depended on (1) the extent to which they used existing co-ethnic, family and professional networks in their community; (2) the ethnic strategies used, which was largely influenced by the opportunity structures in which a business owner was embedded within; and, (3) the formal and informal place-making methods use by immigrant business owners for community building.

Discussion

The confusion and frustration felt by immigrant small business owners during the pandemic, albeit the strategies they used to survive, exemplifies how institutional context greatly influences the autonomy an individual business owner can have over the success of their business. This supports the ideas presented in the model of mixed embeddedness, which suggests that opportunity structures across different scales must be considered when studying immigrant entrepreneurship connectivity to networks. Moving from an individual scale to a BIA-wide scale, theories around the extent of structural embeddedness that an immigrant small business experienced was found to apply to the Willowdale BIA and Sheppard East Village BIA. The higher density built form of the Willowdale BIA facilitated much more structural embeddedness and building of social capital than the lower density built form of the Sheppard East Village BIA. This aligns with the findings from the literature which suggest that structural embeddedness is more difficult to establish in suburban areas than in urban areas. Lastly, theories of place-making propose that place-making is a result of successful clustering of immigrant businesses in a neighbourhood. Similar to Liu et al (2014)'s study, this study found that ethnic business owners went beyond simple economic interests by finding ways to contribute to overall community cohesion, and increase a neighbourhood's social capital. Formal methods, such as participation in a BIA or other community association, and informal methods, such as forming networking and communication groups on social platforms, were used by immigrant business owners in both study areas as coping strategies throughout the pandemic.

The Common Ground

Informal Growing & Stewardship on Public Land

Summary

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Supervisor:

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Project Type:

Community Land Stewardship and Gardening, Public Green Space

Acknowledgments

Victor Perez-Amado, Sheila Boudreau (second reader), amazing interview participants, friends and family.



Pictured: Dragon Alley Community Garden, Toronto - An informal garden that developed in a Green P parking lot, and eventually led to an agreement that allowed the community to continue growing in the space.

Source: Interview Participant (2010)

While the environmental, social, and health benefits (Middle et al., 2014; Soga et al., 2017; Twiss et al., 2003) of community-led growing and stewardship activities (e.g. gardening, planting native species, invasive species management) are recognized by planners, the presence of people who grow on or steward public land informally (illegally) indicates that needs are not being met by existing programs. This research investigates how the goals of informal growers/stewards and public landowners align, and what barriers would need to be overcome to form mutually beneficial agreements that leverage the passion and interest of these

action-oriented citizens. Based on twelve interviews with people involved in informal growing or stewardship activity in the City of Toronto (either as growers/stewards, public landowners, or other professionals), three cases of existing, potential, and emerging agreements were studied for how they might meet the needs of each party and create benefits for all.



Source: Interview Participant (2020)

Pictured: An Earth Worker growing sage and other native species informally on public land in Toronto.

Three Case Studies

From the interviews, three distinct case studies emerged. Dragon Alley Community Garden in a Green P parking lot, an earth worker with Indigenous ways of understanding the land, and the Toronto Nature Stewards who are advocating for the City of Toronto to create a community stewardship with less supervision required. Each of these cases provided valuable insight into the motivations and activities of growers and stewards, and the potential for agreement with public landowners.

Major Barriers & Considerations

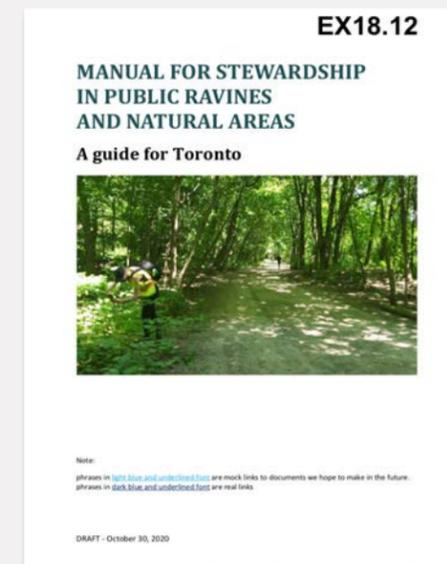
From an analysis of emerging themes, four major barriers to informal growers/stewards working with public landowners were identified. Barriers include: 1) Safety of Informal Growers and Stewards & Liability, 2) Conflicting Uses, 3) Communication & Coordination, and 4) Harm to the Environment. A table of practical considerations to address when creating a growing/stewardship agreement was developed, including the location, choice of activities, monitoring, and knowledge creation/sharing.

Recommendations

Final recommendations included:

- Improving Cross-Departmental Sharing & Public Transparency of Plans for Public Land
- Increasing Resources for Community-Led Stewardship Programs & City-Led Restoration Projects
- Exploring the Use of a Community Stewardship Portal
- Encouraging Consistent Land Use Goals & Vocabulary Across ABCs
- Offering Flexible Agreements that Work for Different Approaches to Stewardship

An Agreement Development Tool was created to assist with the final recommendation. All recommendations support better care for public land, opportunities for communities to connect with nature, and communication between community members and public landowners.



Pictured: Toronto Nature Stewards' Draft Manual for Stewardship in Public Ravines and Natural Areas

Source: www.daniels.toronto.ca/outreach/toronto-nature-stewards

Sowing Support

The Importance of Land Use Policy in Planning for Small-Scale Agriculture in Ontario

Summary

Author:

Marina Smirnova

Supervisor:

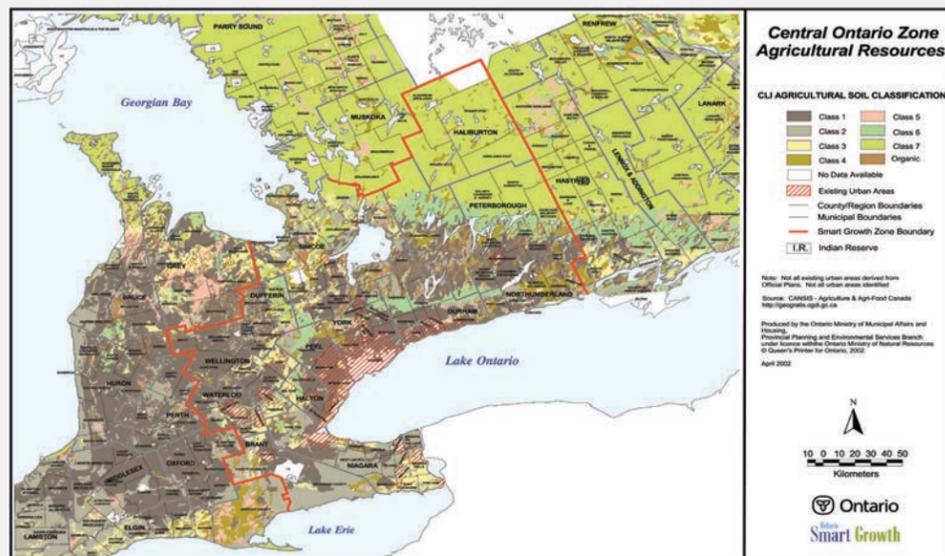
Dr. Nina-Marie Lister

Project Type:

Rural Planning / Land Use; Agriculture

Acknowledgements:

Supervisor Nina-Marie Lister; Second reader Wayne Caldwell; friends and family; internship supervisor Debra Marshall and the farmers of Prince Edward County



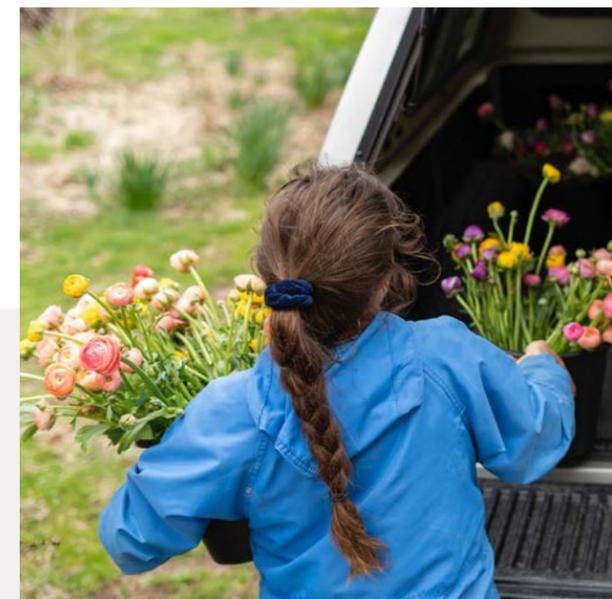
Source: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Only 5% of Canada is suitable for agriculture, most of it concentrated in BC's Okanagan Valley and southern Ontario. For instance, the Greater Golden Horseshoe comprises only 3.5% of the province but has 42% of its Class 1 (best and most productive) agricultural land. It is also the area facing the greater pressure from development.

Agriculture is changing in Canada. Since its peak in 1941, the number of agricultural operations nationwide has seen sustained decreases while the size of the average farm has continued to grow...

The trends towards farm consolidation and industrialization put smaller farms at greater risk of disappearing. Nevertheless, Ontario's small-scale farms continue to be an important facet of rural communities, with many positive social, economic, and environmental impacts. The recognition of these benefits, as well as the desire to protect productive farmland in the province,

date back to the 1970s. However, agriculture is only just beginning to emerge as a major focus of land use planning, despite its inherent nature as a land-based activity relying on the availability of healthy lands. Unlike provinces like Quebec and British Columbia, which passed legislation in the latter half of the 20th century specifically to protect agriculture, Ontario largely on existing land use policies and plans to support the agricultural sector. This Major Research Paper (MRP) focuses on land use challenges and supports for agriculture within Ontario's existing planning framework.



Source: Zoe Schaeffer (Unsplash)

Small-scale farms in the three regions surveyed produce a diverse range of crops, ranging from flowers and wine to root vegetables and greenhouse produce.

Defining "Small"

Two metrics are used most often to differentiate small from large-scale agriculture: 1) gross farm income and 2) farm size. However, there is no consistent definition of "small-scale" across studies. This MRP uses spatial scale as the preferred criteria (the upper limit is 130 hectares, or 52.6 acres), though it acknowledges that this is not definitive and may vary depending on context. What is more important is the recognition that municipal policies with respect to agriculture may have unequal impacts depending on farm size, potentially placing small-scale farms at a disadvantage.

The Role of Planning

Agriculture has not traditionally been a part of the planning portfolio in Canada but has an important role to play. In Ontario, legislation passed at the provincial level over the past 50 years either mandated or enabled policies for farmland preservation at the local level, ultimately serving as a directive to regions and municipalities. Currently, municipal Official Plans (OPs), and the zoning by-laws that implement OP policies and objectives, are the most effective means of promoting agriculture by controlling the spatial distribution and characteristics of uses.

Best Practices in Land Use Policy

This MRP looks at the OPs of three upper-tier municipalities: Niagara Region, Simcoe County, and Waterloo Region, as well as their constituent lower-tier municipalities (eighteen OPs in total). The focus is on five key policy areas: OP policy language, land use designations and permitted uses, minimum farm size and lot creation, minimum distance separation formulae (MDS), and the promotion of on-farm diversified uses. Since land use policy alone is only one tool used to support small-scale agriculture, this MRP also briefly looks at other supportive actions that municipalities should consider, including amending the farm property tax and building capacity through Agricultural Advisory Committees (AAC).



Source: Quinta do Conde

Smaller farms rely on human capital more often than larger-scale farms, which are often more industrialized.

All Under One Roof

Understanding the Benefits and Barriers of Small-scale Housing Co-ownership

Summary

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Supervisor:

Dr. Lyndsey Rolheiser

Project Type:

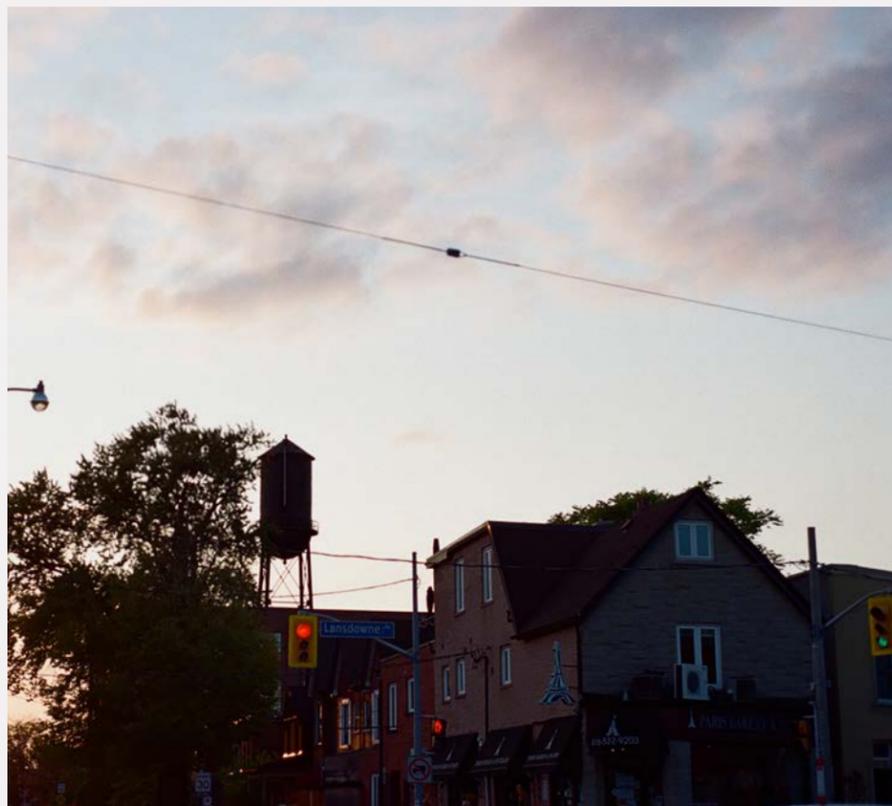
Major Research Paper

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Thank you to my second reader, Randy Hodge, and the research contributors, Lesley Tenaglia, Mortgage Agent With Fuse Mortgage Inc. in Toronto, Jason Davenport, Branch Manager at Meridian Credit Union, Parimal Gosai, Real Estate Salesperson and Partner, GoCo Solutions, Lesli Gaynor, Sales Representative at Forest Hill Real Estate and Owner of GoCo Solutions, and Ryan Martin, Founding Partner, Aura LLP.

Ryerson University

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In a landscape of increasing unaffordability, Toronto and Ontario need to see many solutions to increase the accessibility of housing.

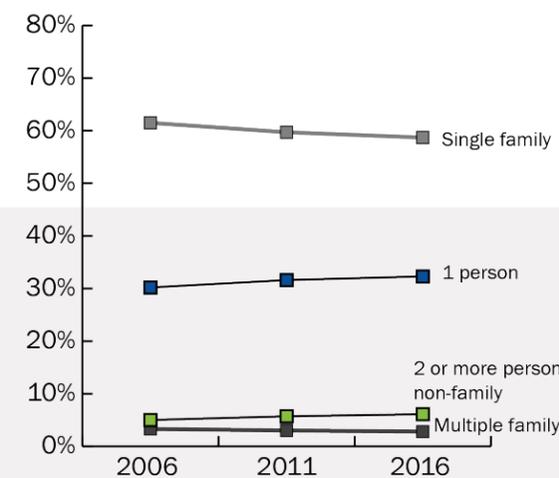
Source: Alexa Volkov

Co-ownership has emerged as one creative solution among many to the varied challenges current or would-be homeowners are facing.

Small-scale housing co-ownership is a form of shared ownership, often between friends or unrelated parties, which is gaining interest. This paper draws on recent news articles, demographic trends, and literature in urban economics, housing and co-housing, to speculate on the growth and impacts of this trend. Qualitative interviews

with industry stakeholders provide further insights on possible benefits, barriers, and solutions. Overall, the findings of this exploratory analysis suggest co-ownership may have broader market benefits for housing affordability, as well as individual benefits for housing accessibility, equity building, cost of living, and health and wellbeing. Barriers appear to exist, however, particularly around mortgage accessibility, and this report concludes with recommendations for future research and collaborative responses.

Proportion of households by household type, Toronto



Data Source: City of Toronto. (2017). 2016 census: Families, households and marital status; language.

Households that may be particularly suited to co-ownership, including non-family and single person households, are growing.

A Growing Trend?

A recent surge of news reports, coupled with growth in the proportion of non family households and unmarried individuals suggests increasing relevance of this housing arrangement in Toronto. To the extent that this trend increases household size and addresses a pattern of overhousing in Ontario, it may promote affordability, in line with goals for gentle densification. Current commentary and research from co-housing also suggest benefits for quality of life, such as reduced isolation.

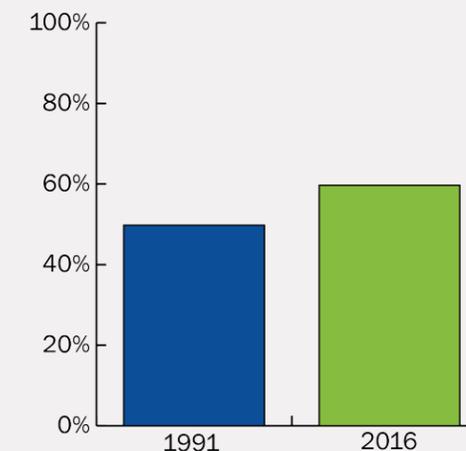
Barriers Still Present

Stakeholder interviews revealed concerns around mortgage suitability, particularly as mortgages are non-severable, presenting challenges for uneven equity and exit provisions. Cost of entry is still high, and while specialized services can be a great support, they are in limited supply. In light of this, those involved in co-ownership have crafted creative solutions, particularly with co-ownership agreements, much in the way co-ownership itself is a creative response to housing inaccessibility.

Moving Forward

In light of the limitations of this exploratory study's small, purposive sample of service providers, this paper proposes future research with co-owners, financial institutions and other stakeholders with varied experiences. Many of the participants shared recommendations and hopes for the future, including more suitable financial products, and growing awareness and understanding of co-ownership's relevance. While co-ownership may be growing, interventions may be necessary to support these goals. The importance of multi-stakeholder, collaborative approaches are emphasized, including roles for all three levels of government.

Proportion of owner households with a mortgage, Canada



Data Source: Genesey, T. (2019). Homeownership in Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Mortgages are increasingly necessary for homeownership, and their accessibility is important to consider.