Building Transit-friendly Suburbs Through the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

October 30, 2009
Ontario Growth Secretariat
Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure
Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure

• Plan for future growth in a sustainable manner.
• Meet Ontario’s energy needs.
• Modernize Ontario’s public infrastructure.
• Ontario Growth Secretariat is a division of the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure.
• Secretariat responsible for implementing the Places to Grow initiative.
Ontario’s Greater Golden Horseshoe

- One of the fastest growing urban regions in North America.
- Over 8.4 million residents (2006).
- Generates 67% of Ontario's GDP.
- Covers 12,000 square miles.
- Comprises 110 municipalities.
- Forecast to grow by 3.7 million people and 1.8 million jobs by 2031.
The Greater Golden Horseshoe

A Highly Diverse Region:
• Heavily urbanized Greater Toronto Area.
• Dozens of mid-sized cities and small towns.
• Some of the best agricultural lands and natural areas in Canada
  • (eg. Niagara Escarpment - UN World Biosphere)
High International Migration

% Foreign Born

New York

Toronto
Strong Housing Starts in the GTA

GTA Housing Starts

US Housing Starts

Source: CMHC

Source: HUD

MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Increasing Gridlock & Congestion

Typical GTA Urban Freeway Congestion
Highway 401, East of Keele

Hourly Traffic Volume (2-way)

Hour Ending

1998
1990
1980
1970
The Need for Growth Management

- By 2031, business as usual growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe would lead to:
  - 45% longer commute times due to gridlock.
  - Increase of 42% in CO$_2$ emitted by vehicles.
  - 20% higher infrastructure costs.
  - More than 386 sq. miles of lost agricultural and rural land.
  - Increased number of smog days.
Land Use Planning in Ontario

I. Provincial Rules and Policies

II. Area Specific Plans

III. Municipal Rules and Policies
Places to Grow Act, 2005

• Ontario Legislature passed *Places To Grow Act* in 2005.

• Province-wide in scope.

• Enables the creation of area specific growth plans.

• Flexible list of growth plan elements.

• Contains local planning “conform to” standards.

• 3 year window for local official plan conformity.
Growth Plan

- 25 year vision for the region.
- Sets framework for regional and local planning.
- Objectives:
  - Create complete communities.
  - Revitalize downtowns
  - Reduce traffic gridlock.
  - Provide greater choice in housing types.
  - Curb urban sprawl and protect farmlands and natural areas.
Growth Plan Policies

- Clear targets for intensification and density.
- Coordinated growth forecasts.
- Tests and criteria for future urban boundary expansions.
- Infrastructure investment to support growth.
- Planning and design standards to support transportation.
- Transit-supported land use.
- Protecting natural areas and agricultural lands.
Building Better Suburbs… rethinking the model

- Reinvigorate existing suburbs.
- Encourage new style suburbs.
- Objectives of better suburban communities:
  - Reduce car dependency.
  - Use land efficiently.
  - Increase densities.
  - Mixed-use developments.
  - Increase transportation and housing options.
  - Walkable communities.
  - Viable public transit.
  - Reduce live – play - work distance.
Building Better Suburbs... urban growth centres

- Focus growth in suburban growth centres.
- Retrofit existing suburban spaces as more urban centres.
  - Mixed use.
  - Higher densities.
  - Transit-oriented development.
- Regional focal points for jobs, housing, institutions, transit and public services.
- Initial success with Midtown Oakville and Richmond Hill/Langstaff plans.
Building Better Suburbs... greenfield areas

- Greenfield area policies get a new standard.
- Increased densities, land use mixes and street configurations will support transit investment.
  - Minimum of 50 people + jobs per hectare (20 P + J/acre).
  - Minimum density for viable frequent bus service.
  - Density target applied regionally, not project by project.
- Clear urban boundaries established.
  - Strict tests and criteria required to expand urban boundary.
Building Better Suburbs... urban form

- Encourage new types of urban form in suburban communities.
- Reduce dominance of single family detached homes.
- More mixed-used developments.
- Greater mix of housing options.
- Better mix of uses (retail, commercial, housing, institutional, recreational, etc).
Building Better Suburbs... employment

- Protect key employment uses along goods movement corridors to preserve and create local jobs.
- Protect employment areas with large footprints for uses that cannot be located elsewhere (e.g., Office and large format retail).
- Locate major office and institutional uses where they are served by transit.
- Proactively plan for retail.
Building Better Suburbs... corridor intensification

Increase residential and employment densities along major suburban corridors.
Building Better Suburbs... corridor intensification
Growth Plan Implementation Update

- By the end of 2009, all regions will have submitted their official plans for growth plan conformity.
- By the end of 2010, all lower-tier municipalities will have submitted their official plans for growth plan conformity.
- Staff currently working on additional technical analysis, research and data collection:
  - Additional mapping
  - Update employment forecasts.
- Expanded consultation and outreach.
Success Stories

Before

Guelph Community Energy Plan

Before
Success Stories

Before

Proposed Waterloo Region LRT

After

Guelph Community Energy Plan

Proposed Waterloo Region LRT
Public Outreach

Planning with the future

Suburban teens have innovative ideas for improving their cities. **By Emma Feltes**

When planning Gatineau, Quebec’s suburban municipality, the place “grew up”, the idea of involving youth in the planning process took root, and in 2005, the youth were introduced to the idea of participatory democracy. The GTA’s Youth Climate campaign in 2007 helped to promote youth involvement in the decision-making process and has resulted in the creation of youth forums and the establishment of youth councils.

The youth are being heard, and their ideas are being incorporated into various stages of the project. During the recent round of consultations, the youth were invited to participate in a sense-making activity, and their ideas were translated into design concepts. As a result, the youth have become active participants in the planning process.

The place to grow club is an initiative of the City of Gatineau. The club is open to all youth aged 12-24 who are interested in participating in the planning process. The club has a mandate to promote youth involvement in the planning process and to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas. The club is run by a group of youth volunteers who are passionate about community development.

The club meets on a regular basis and has organized various activities, such as workshops, discussions, and events. The club has also established partnerships with other organizations, such as the City of Gatineau, the Gatineau Youth Council, and the Gatineau Chamber of Commerce.

There are many ways for young people to get involved in the planning process, and the club is open to all interested youth. The club has a platform for the exchange of ideas and provides a space for youth to voice their opinions and concerns. The club also provides a support network for youth who are interested in participating in the planning process.

The club is an initiative of the City of Gatineau, and it is supported by the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure. The club is an important step in the development of a participatory democracy in Gatineau. The club is a platform for the exchange of ideas and provides a space for youth to voice their opinions and concerns. The club also provides a support network for youth who are interested in participating in the planning process.

Public and stakeholder outreach tools.

• Visualizations.

• Public forums.

• Educational materials.


• Youth Engagement Project, 2007-2009.