

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Life-long learning

**L**earning. It is what we do as students. Successful learning at an accredited planning program is a key step in the journey to becoming an RPP. However, professional learning is not something that can be completed on one day or over the course of just one year. Continuous learning is a cornerstone of being a professional. It is a lifelong endeavour. It is important to our credibility with the public and decision-makers. Learning is part of the OPPI culture and is embedded in our legislation and our Standards of Practice.

The Registered Professional Planners Act, 2017, if passed, will raise further awareness about the importance of planning and the role of the planning profession in creating and fostering healthy communities—putting the public interest first.

To protect the public interest, the bill sets out a process for regulating professional practice through membership, investigation of complaints, discipline and fitness to practice hearings. The accreditation process for the university planning programs and the certification process for Candidate Members is not affected by the proposed legislation.

As the future of the profession, I urge students to continue to assert our position with respect to the value of professional planning in shaping our communities and environment. Recognition of the profession is not a given. Staff and OPPI members worked hard to have the original *Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994* passed and we are on the cusp of new public legislation being enacted.

We must keep up the momentum so that planners of the future are recognized as the skilled professionals they are.

Great plans need great planners.

~ Andrea Bourrie

## URBAN DESIGN

# The next big disruption is here

By David Dixon & Harold Madi, RPP, contributing editor

**T**he autonomous mobility revolution is about to give a big boost to walkable urban places in cities and suburbs. Virtually all of the projects we are debating, planning and designing today will open their doors at the dawn of a new mobility era.

Congested suburban arteries and the lack of transit access have long complicated efforts to accommodate, and build community support for denser suburban developments. The arrival of autonomous vehicles (AVs) over the next five years will begin to dramatically shift this equation.

While some observers have predicted that AVs would encourage a new generation of suburban sprawl, it is more likely that the primary impact for at least a decade will be precisely the opposite. The real disruption will come from “autonomous transit” in the form of shared autonomous vehicles (SAVs)—six-to-12-passenger electric vehicles that run on-schedule or on-demand (ordered up by smartphone). Not having a human driver, it will cost half of what shared services cost today—and offer the added advantage of almost never needing to park (or pay for parking).

SAVs will not be equal-opportunity disruptors. Built not to speed along highways but instead to navigate dense urban environments, they will spread rapidly in urban areas where a critical mass of people and varied activities combine to generate lots of trips. SAVs will not replace rail or bus rapid transit but instead connect urban centres to these transit networks. Urban areas will increasingly signify places where vehicles are shared, not owned. In lower-density suburbs, privately owned and operated—and far more expensive—AVs will make more sense, but will phase in slowly.

Today cities provide as many as eight times more parking spaces than they have cars. All of which take up scarce urban land and push up costs—adding \$50-100,000 or more to the development cost of a condominium unit or 1,000 square feet of office space. Replacing a significant share of owned with shared vehicles will reduce costs and free up parking spaces to support new development. In turn, as SAVs reduce parking demand, they will facilitate increased densities. Citywide, surface parking lots will offer new opportunities to build affordable housing, schools, health centres and other building blocks of livability.

Public transit authorities are already looking at SAV services to provide critical “last mile” access, connecting people who live more



David Dixon



Harold Madi



Olli on a test run in DC

IMAGE COURTESY OF STEVE WOLF, STANTEC

than a 10-minute walk to the nearest transit station. These services will make transit more convenient, and enable more distant sites to command the value premiums that transit-oriented development brings.

Within a decade, SAVs will unlock unimagined opportunities to green our cities. Redeveloping acres of impermeable parking lots will reduce ground water pollution. Shared trips will mean fewer trips, and reduced emissions. Automated vehicles—shared or not—can travel within inches of each other, requiring far less pavement than traditional vehicles. The resulting opportunity to repurpose one-third to one-half of our existing street pavement will enable municipalities to redefine and optimize their public amenity space. Instead of a car in every garage, imagine that every street can host a rain garden. Major boulevards can become continuous ribbons of urban trees coursing through the city.

Before we finish painting this picture of urban renaissance, we need to hit pause and ask: Are we planning a next generation of urban development that will be outmoded from day one? Will SAVs exacerbate gentrification as they enhance urban amenity and mobility, reinforcing trends that according to the Brookings Institution have seen a more than 60 per cent increase in suburban poverty since 2000? Should SAV services be operated by private companies or as extensions of public transit, with corresponding public accountability? To remain proactive, we would need to start planning now to ensure that policies are in place anticipating both the implications and the opportunities.

*David Dixon FAIA and Harold Madi, RPP, lead Stantec's Urban Places Group, an interdisciplinary practice focused on creating more livable, healthy, competitive, and resilient communities.*

## PROVINCIAL NEWS

# Legislative update

By Kevin Eby, RPP, contributing editor

It has been very busy over the past month at the province with the recent announcements relating to results of the Ontario Municipal Board review and the release of the 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan).

## Ontario Municipal Board Review

On May 16, 2017, the Province released the results of the review of the OMB and has proposed sweeping changes to the rules governing how appeals to *Planning Act* applications are to be addressed.

Planning is a complex process, made even more difficult by the reality that there is often more than one technically correct answer to many planning questions. The changes proposed by the province are significant and will take time for all of those involved to digest and fully understand. Will the appeals process run smoother and more efficiently? Given the nature of the procedural changes proposed, the answer is likely yes.

Will the changes ultimately make for better planned and more prosperous communities? It certainly appears that the pendulum has swung back in the direction of giving municipal councils far greater authority to pick which of the right answers to planning questions they feel is best for their communities. For many, this alone will be defined as success. However, in the complex world that is land use planning, success is dependent on decisions made by both the public and private sectors. The changes proposed by the province represent a significant shift in the decision-making paradigm.



Until we better understand how councils exercise this new authority and whether the changes significantly impact private sector investment decisions, I think it is safest to say; only time will tell.

## Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017)

On May 18, 2017, the province released the amended *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. This, along with changes to the *Greenbelt Plan*, the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan* and the *Niagara Escarpment Plan*, represent the culmination of the two-year co-ordinated review of the four plans by the province.

The new Growth Plan, which comes into effect on July 1, 2017, represents a significant change from the 2006 Growth Plan. Similar to the amendments proposed to the OMB, the changes to the Growth Plan will take time to digest and fully understand.

The new Growth Plan appears to remain generally consistent with the goals and objectives of the revised policy framework originally proposed and released for consultation purposes in May 2016. However, the process to achieve these goals and objectives has changed.

The new Growth Plan provides for a relatively complex transition processes associated with how and when the new density and intensification targets are to be established and brought into effect (with some flexibility as to the nature of such targets throughout the GGH being provided through negotiation with the province). In addition, key to understanding the impact of the changing targets on the land use planning process will be the land needs assessment methodology to be prepared by the province in accordance with Policy 2.2.1.5. This methodology has yet to be released. These issues, along with other policy changes proposed in the new Growth Plan will be addressed in greater detail in the next issue.

Fundamental to the successful implementation of the new Growth Plan will be the development of supporting materials by the province. The lack of such supporting materials was clearly a weakness in the implementation process associated with the original Growth Plan. To date, the province appears committed to rectifying that problem through a number of means, including some relatively innovative ones such as the establishment of the Places to Grow Implementation Fund. (A description of the fund and sample illustrative projects will be detail in an upcoming OPJ.)

*Kevin Eby, B.Sc, MA., RPP is a member of OPPI, the OPJ provincial news contributing editor and the former director of Community Planning with the Region of Waterloo. He previously worked on secondment to the province to help with the formulation of the original Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.*

## ELTO

# OMB evolution

By Ian Flett, contributing editor

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, the province released a broad outline of its proposed reforms to Ontario's land use planning regime administered by the Ontario Municipal Board. First and foremost, the province proposes a fresh start for planning appeals by no longer sending them to the Ontario Municipal Board. Instead, they will go to a new body to be called the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

There are interesting ideas in the package of reforms, some were expected, some were not. Here are some items that might be a cause for concern for those who appear frequently before the OMB.

The government is proposing procedural changes and it has not