

## Land Use Planning

### **Session 1 – 5 participants**

#### (1) Control over Zoning

- Toronto should have control over zoning within the city in order to ensure that land use plans are maximized for the good of its citizens
- A Toronto City Charter must be more than a one issue movement. It should not be an anti-Doug Ford campaign.

#### (2) Community

- Community level concerns should be paramount and take precedence over developers. People know what their neighbourhoods need
- Neighbourhoods are being buried by condo/high-rise development
- While density can be a positive from both a land-use and environmental impact perspective the concerns of residents and businesses are frequently discounted
- Developers often make 'commitments' to infrastructure requirements during planning which they then do not execute upon during construction/post-construction phases. Citizens pay the price (i.e. high-density developments on King St. West with subsequent negative impact on street-car commuters) while developers are not penalized for not honouring their commitments
- Properly executed street level development can support high density development and ensure that people's needs are met

#### (3) City Planning

- There should be an official, long-term, multi-decade city plan which is not subject to the vagaries of election cycles and political change
- The Official Plan should have weight and be developed through a vibrant process including Toronto citizens at the table

- Current relationship with province over land use planning often lets Toronto off the hook, in that the City can blame the province when bad decisions are made
- There needs to be a balanced mechanism in place between the City and the Province that empowers people to make better decisions and ensures an acceptable level of accountability
- Developers have too much power while average citizens have little power to oppose them due to lack of funding, time, legal training, and expertise. There is a real sense of apathy and fatalism on the part of Toronto citizens in the face of rampant development
- City Planning process is too onerous, has too much red-tape, and takes too long all of which increase the cost of development in the City and makes it difficult to ensure continuity of purpose. Citizens cannot devote the necessary time and resources to keeping a check on development

#### (4) Office of Communities

- The charter city model of LA is of interest with its 96 funded Neighbourhood Councils providing input into city council, ensuring grass root concerns percolate up to council level in a systematic way.
- A similar model could be considered for how the City communicates with the Province, a tiered process of communicating upwards.
- There could be a similar model to Business Improvement Areas (BIA) for community associations
- A center-led structure could provide staff and resources to community associations which would bolster learning/expertise, e.g. helping citizens oppose developments and ensuring them a place at the table for planning
- It could also provide a repository of historical knowledge for citizens to easily draw upon when needed

#### (5) Charter City

- If Toronto takes power over land use planning then Toronto needs to be able to pay for it
- There would need to be some sort of transparent arbitration process that is fair and equitable
- Land use planning must be based upon the Official Plan
- There would need to be some sort of provincial accountability/fail safe process

## **Session 2 – 3 to 4 participants**

### (1) City Expertise

- City has failed at land use and transit planning, yet the Province is no better or worse. It's hard to see how Charter City status would improve the situation
- Example: despite the opportunities available there has been little development along the Bloor/Danforth subway line, sparse development in Scarborough. The City of Vaughn has taken the initiative with development
- Where there could be vibrant development hubs opportunity has been squandered

### (2) OMB

- The OMB was supposed to be independent but acted as a tool of the province and developers. Interference and direct opposition to City Council was blatant and undemocratic
- 2018 rebranding as Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT). It is unclear whether the changes have improved the situation. Opacity re changes which does not seem to bode well for a difference in approach.
- Ontario Municipalities are more regulated by their province than those in other provinces, e.g. BC will arbitrate in land use disputes only when municipalities impinge upon each other

### (3) Provincially Owned Property

- Provincially Owned Property within Toronto can result in development decisions which negatively impact Torontonians: e.g. high-density development on Provincial Court property; Ontario Place development with the province having eminent domain and total control over development which is being exercised in an unreasonable way and ignores the desires of Torontonians who will be forced to live with whatever decisions are made.
- The Portland Projects are an example of how a tripartite arrangement could work

## **Really Critical Items**

- (1) Constructive, long-range land use plans which are not subject to arbitrary change
- (2) More control over funding

## **Actions to be Taken**

- (1) More effective planning process (more speed, less red tape)
- (2) Empowered local level committees feeding upward to City council in a systematic fashion