UPCOMING DATES

JUNE

14 Toronto Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

15-16 City Council, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

20 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

CreateTO, 3:00 p.m., (video conference)

23 Design Review Panel, 1:10 p.m., (video conference)

TTC Board, 10:00 a.m. (video conference)

24 Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

City Council (Special), 1:00 p.m., (video conference)

27 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

28 North York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

29 Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

30 Scarborough Community Council, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m. (video conference)

JULY

4 General Government & Licensing Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

5 Planning & Housing Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

6 Economic & Community Development Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

7 Infrastructure & Environment Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

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CO2 REDUCTION INITIATIVES WOULD BE MOST POWERFUL UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF CITY'S OFFICIAL PLAN

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

Matt Durnan

Industry leaders, planning experts and politicians are working collaboratively to foster dialogue on the need to take a hard look at planning policies, sustainable development guidelines and environmental legislation through a post-carbon lens. But while some admirable initiatives have been and continue to be crafted in pursuit of net-zero carbon emissions, until such policies are formalized and integrated under the umbrella of the city's official plan, their impact will be scattershot and limited, according to some land use planning experts.

Earlier this month, **SvN Architects and Planners** launched a speaker series in response to the **City of Toronto's** review of the Official Plan (OP 51). The series will highlight opportunities, challenges and offer recommendations to inform the ongoing municipal comprehensive review process in an effort to help steer the city's Official Plan from having a predominantly land-use focus to incorporating critical elements of a zero-carbon focus.

When it comes to making the push toward net-zero, the City of Toronto has been going above and beyond the minimum requirements for priorities such as climate resiliency and sustainable development that are set out in the Provincial Policy Statement, according to SvN associate, urban planning and design, **Blair Scorgie**.

"The City of Toronto has a lot of tools in their toolkit that they're using related to climate change specifically, and things that are adjacent to climate change," Scorgie said.

"They put together a climate change action strategy in 2017 that sort of set the groundwork for a massive reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030—we're looking at a 65 per cent reduction by 2030, with a target of net-zero by 2050 or sooner—now it's 2040, and that was the first TransformTO strategy."

The strategy serves as the city's blueprint for how they're going to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040, outlining a number of different pieces of the

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> The City of Toronto has these incredible programs and strategies, but they operate in different silos, different buckets. There's an opportunity to bring them all together seamlessly to ensure they're all implementable and ensure they're implemented. There's different tools; there's zoning, site plan approval, there's different tools at our disposal, but there should be a central repository of all these big policy ideas embedded into the Official Plan that should be guiding the process.
>
> - Blair Scorgie

NRU PUBLISHING STAFF

Ian A.R. Graham, Publisher
iang@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 222

Irena Kohn, Editor
irenak@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 223

Matt Durnan, Senior Reporter
mattd@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 225

Rahul Gupta
Senior Planning Reporter
rahulg@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 226

Paul Simoneau
Planning Researcher
pauls@nrupublishing.com

Jeff Payette
Design/Layout
jeffp@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 228

Samantha Lum
Sales and Circulation
samanthal@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 224

NRU PUBLISHING INC

SALES/SUBSCRIPTIONS
circ@nrupublishing.com

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Corporate Office
1200 Bay Street, Suite 1101
Toronto, ON M5R 2A5
Tel: 416.260.1304
Fax: 416.979.2707

Billings Department
NRU Publishing Inc.
PO Box 19595 Manulife PO,
Toronto, ON M4W 3T9

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puzzle that will need to come together in order for the city to meet its goal.

But while the TransformTO strategy has been effective in identifying the puzzle pieces that must be put in place, Scorgie says that it has fallen short on the 'how to' side of things.

"We're trying to build and augment and complement this work and sort of create a bit of a roadmap for how they can go about implementing these things," Scorgie said.

One of the most valuable tools in the city's toolkit is the Toronto Green Standard (TGS), the city's sustainable design and performance requirements for new private and city-owned developments. The fourth version of the TGS came into force in May of this year (*see "Going Greener: Toronto Green Standard Version 4 Now in Effect", NRU Toronto, Friday, May 6, 2022*).

"We're seeing what were previously voluntary measures becoming mandatory and they are increasingly stringent," said Scorgie.

"Every time the TGS is updated, those requirements become more stringent, and now the city is also trying to lead by example by taking new voluntary standards that had been introduced [in the city's green standard] and applying them to municipally-owned properties to demonstrate how these things can be achieved, to show the development community and the business community how to do these things."

While the City of Toronto has done an admirable job in setting out green standards for new development, difficulties arise when it comes to existing builds, and it's the city's existing residential sector that is one of the biggest culprits when it comes to carbon emissions.

The breakdown of carbon emissions' sources in Toronto is split nearly down the middle between low-rise residential and multi-use buildings. These two building types actually contribute a larger portion to the city's net emissions than commercial buildings do.

"Our greatest area of impact is in the residential sector; it's a lot of existing buildings, existing low-rise, and we don't really have any policy at the moment that is addressing this on a large scale," SvN director of regenerative practice, **Aaron Budd** told *NRU*.

"The TGS will address new buildings—which is fantastic—and it's an excellent tool, and it's working hard to bring [emissions] down."

The Toronto Green Standard contains specific benchmarks and standards for buildings like low-rise residential, mid to high-rise residential and non-residential, as well as city agency and corporate and division-owned facilities.

"When you look at the statistics, as far as percentage of uptake [of developers] going above and beyond just the minimum [Toronto Green Standard] target, it's fairly small compared to the number of buildings that are being built," said Budd.

"The city has a tiered approach that gets phased in every four years, that the minimum target increases [in four-year increments] with the goal of by 2030, basically being net-zero type of buildings."

When it comes to existing buildings, Budd says that the city has the opportunity to lead by example in looking at ways to retrofit the buildings it owns and operates, such as government buildings and affordable housing developments.

Widening the lens beyond [city-owned and privately-owned] buildings themselves, land use and city planning have an important role to play when it comes to a city's ability to reduce emissions.

While seeking newer, more efficient technologies for heating and cooling buildings more sustainably, along with incentivizing the use of building materials without the embodied carbon of concrete are important initiatives to pursue, the province's largest emitting sector for greenhouse gases is still transportation.

"A huge share of those emissions are a direct result of post-war development that just doesn't have anywhere near the density or the mix of uses that are required to support transit and active transportation and getting people out of their car," **Environmental Defence** Ontario environment program manager **Phil Pothen** told *NRU*.

The City of Toronto has a great deal of responsibility when it comes to keeping the GTHA within its share of global carbon budgets, and Pothen believes that there are two key things from a planning standpoint that the city can do.

"Firstly, Toronto must work aggressively to meet as much as possible of the overall housing demand in the Greater Golden Horseshoe within its own boundaries. That means planning to at least maintain their share of the region's population by growing and housing roughly 1.5 million people by 2051," Pothen said.

"If Toronto only accommodates the 700,000 people assigned to it under the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* by the provincial government, that will be a disaster for the climate. The overall population number is very important."

The second key element is transforming low-density, car-dependent neighbourhoods into walkable, complete communities that are close to transit and include amenities like grocery stores, restaurants and schools

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BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

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within walking distance.

"Rather than restricting major change and population growth to the few slivers of land in major transit station areas, Toronto has got to bring all of its neighbourhoods up to the densities of roughly 90 to 100 [people] per hectare," Pothen said.

"We've got to densify ground-related housing, we've got to densify those yellowbelt single-detached neighbourhoods. We have seen some good from council—we've seen them legalize garden suites, we've seen them eliminate parking minimums, which were a huge factor standing in the way of adding more homes, because of the way they squander land and space. The biggest barrier to adding more [housing] units [to a development project] has often been the fact that there's more parking required, and that isn't an obstacle anymore."

The elimination of parking minimums was also touched on by Scorgie, the benefits of which are two-fold: both creating more space for the development of residential units and cutting down on the embodied carbon associated with constructing below-grade parking spaces.

"It doesn't mean a wholesale elimination of parking, but it means less parking than previously. There's a lot of energy that goes into producing reinforced concrete and building out the foundations of these buildings," Scorgie said.

"The deeper you go, the more excavation required, then the higher embodied carbon of that development."

At the end of the day, planning experts believe that the City of Toronto has the pieces in place to progress towards its net-zero targets, but it's a matter of finding a way to make the pieces fit together.

"The City of Toronto has these incredible programs and strategies, but they operate in different silos, different buckets," said Scorgie.

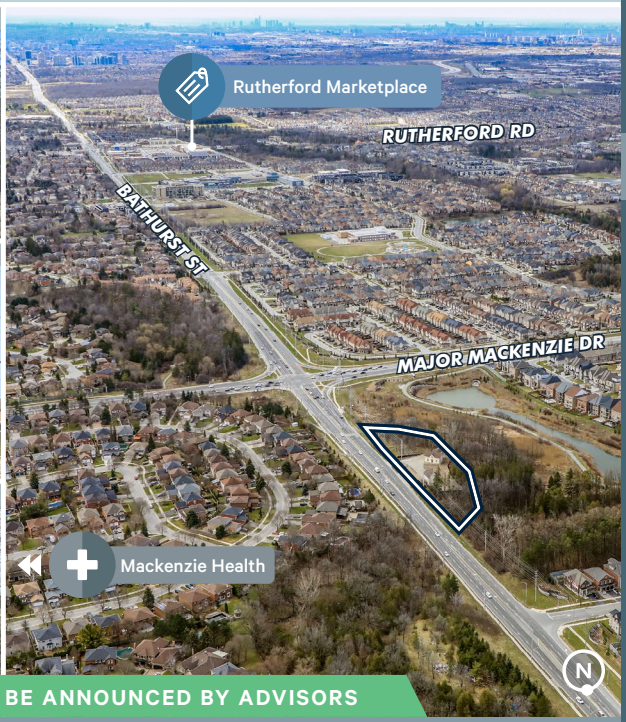
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OFFER SUBMISSION DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED BY ADVISORS

Mike Czestochowski**
Vice Chairman
+1 416 495 6257
mike.czestochowski@cbre.com

Lauren White*
Executive Vice President
+ 1 416 495 6223
lauren.white@cbre.com

Evan Stewart
Sales Representative
+1 416 495 6205
evan.stewart@cbre.com

Emelie Rowe
Sales Representative
+1 416 495 6306
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