

Shift happens

Sharing a vision for a new city

What happens when your neighbourhood has development potential?

Many GTA residents may not know that they have the power to help shape new developments in their neighbourhoods.

Whether it's for a proposed transit line or redevelopment of pockets ripe for revitalization, there are opportunities to get involved in the planning process.

In fact, becoming informed about the process of planning is key, says the City of Toronto's chief planner, Jennifer Keesmaat.

"There needs to be room for movement...[and] room for change, and the planning process can facilitate those conversations."

For every development application, the provincial Planning Act sets out rules for holding public meetings to discuss the proposed vision. BILD's president and CEO, Bryan Tuckey, says the public meetings to discuss proposed developments are beneficial when participants "come with an open mind to listen and learn."

"Developers and builders bring their teams of experts to explain the vision so that the local councillor and the local residents understand how it came to be," he explains.

Municipalities, of course, also play a big role in the planning process. They are required by the Province of Ontario to direct a minimum of 40 per cent of their projected population and employment growth to areas that are already developed.

This means that established communities like Mississauga City Centre, the village of Unionville and areas along the Yonge St. corridor, to name just a few, are mandated for change.

This requirement, among others, including promoting transit-oriented and balancing jobs and housing, are then incorporated into regional and municipal official plans and zoning bylaws. With these documents it is clear when, where and how development takes place.

Developers like Martin Blake, vice-president of Toronto-based The Daniels Corp., recognize the importance of having the intensification rules in place, clearly and consistently established, so that everyone can move forward in a positive way.

"I believe that consistency helps



Harry Eaglesham, who lives in Markham, has been working with the city's planners and developers: "I'm doing my share to deliver the dream for others."

A man with a plan

Big change in neighbourhood 'not necessarily for the worse,' says Unionville resident

Markham resident Harry Eaglesham jokingly describes himself as "Mr. Suburbia": he became involved in local planning issues about 20 years ago. That was when the Town of Markham (now a city) began consulting with residents on proposed plans to build new communities that would be more compact, mixed-use and transit-oriented. It was an unconventional suburban development approach at the time — and long before Ontario's Places to Grow initiative was introduced in 2006.

Eaglesham, a 64-year-old retired IT professional, lives in a century home on historic Main Street, in the heart of Markham's idyllic village of Unionville. He's also on the board and a past president of the influential Unionville Ratepayers Association.

Growth in the area is increasingly being redirected, notes Eaglesham, from farmland and toward Markham's existing communities. "The character of existing neighbourhoods is changing dramatically," he says, "and not necessarily for the worse." A large part of that urban intensification is apparent just south of Unionville and across Highway 7, within Markham Centre — the

city's purpose-built "downtown," conceived in the mid-1990s by American architect and planner Andrés Duany.

"There are widely held concerns that bringing lower-priced condos into the community will have a negative impact on property values and negative societal impacts," says Eaglesham. "Of course, history has shown that property values are going up."

His biggest concern about intensification is the gap between development approvals and the construction of the infrastructure required to support it. "Here we are in Markham, where intensification is going gangbusters," he says, "and infrastructure, specifically transportation, is going at glacial speed."

"I would love to move to the Markham Centre of the vision of 20 years ago, but it's not available to me. It's not built yet." The "work-play" options that accompany "live," he explains, have not yet arrived.

For now, he's staying put but will continue working with the city's planners and developers through his involvement with the local ratepayers group. Says Eaglesham, "I'm doing my share to deliver the dream for others."



This is the second in an 8-part series sponsored by BILD. Look for the next one on Sat., Nov. 10.



41,292

NEW HOUSING STARTS

A key to economic growth in communities all around the GTA!

193,300

JOBS CREATED IN 2011

The new home construction and residential renovation industry is one of the largest employers in the region!

\$10.1

BILLION IN WAGES

These wages show up as purchases all over the GTA, contributing to the overall economy!

\$24.6

BILLION IN INVESTMENT VALUE



New home construction and residential renovation is the largest single wealth-builder for many GTA families!

BUILDING A GREATER GTA

one home at a time

The residential construction industry is essential to the economic foundation, job creation and long-term prosperity of the Greater Toronto Area!

For details, visit [bildgta.ca](#) or [renomark.ca](#)



STAR CONTENT STUDIOS Content created by [starcontentstudios.com](#)