

GETTING GROWTH ON TRACK:

Aligning transit investment and growth planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe



Getting Growth on Track

In an effort to support the Province of Ontario's 10-year co-ordinated land use planning review, the Ryerson City Building Institute convened subject matter experts to address the most serious planning issue in Ontario: how we plan for growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The outcomes of our workshop were first submitted to the Province's Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review Advisory Panel, chaired by David Crombie, tasked by the Province with making recommendations to on how to improve planning legislation. The panel's report is expected this fall.

We are now presenting the outcomes of our workshop in this public paper, which is intended to help professionals, policy makers, and the public prepare for the release of the Advisory Panel Report and evaluate its recommendations.

GETTING GROWTH ON TRACK

What's at stake

The Greater Golden Horseshoe is one of the most populous and economically diverse regions of Canada. Currently, nine million people live in the region, one-quarter of Canada's population. The area is expected to continue to experience significant population and economic growth. How we manage this growth is paramount to the sustainability and economic prosperity of our region. We must invest strategically in transit infrastructure, address growing traffic congestion and plan for complete communities.

The Province is poised to spend over \$30 billion on transportation and transit infrastructure over the next ten years. These investments must be co-ordinated and aligned with the Government's stated growth management outcomes of creating more complete, compact communities and protecting the long-term prosperity of the region. However, at this time, Ontario does not employ specific tools or legislation to require the alignment of growth management and transportation investment decisions.

The Province's three key growth management frameworks – the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan, and the Big Move – are intended to manage this growth. The first two of these three plans are currently under review through the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review process. While co-ordination is happening at the staff level, Metrolinx's review of the Big Move rests outside of the coordinated review process that is currently underway.

Top Priorities

The group of experts at our workshop agreed that Ontario's key planning frameworks must be reviewed together and aligned: the Greenbelt Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and the Big Move regional transportation plan. While no attempt was made to achieve full consensus, participants did agree on the following five priorities:

1. Strong regional governance is needed to effectively align growth management and transportation investment.
 - One option proposed is a new Secretariat at Queen's Park empowered to coordinate implementation and enforcement of plans for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
2. Effective implementation of the plans requires better enforcement, and more transparency and accountability. Clear criteria to prioritize transit funding decisions and making full business cases public are imperative.
3. Municipalities should be required to commit to transit-supportive land uses and densities to be eligible for transit infrastructure funding.
4. Predictable, stable, and long-term infrastructure funding is required to achieve integrated transit investment and growth management.
 - A broader range of funding options at the provincial and municipal levels should be explored.
5. The next generation of these three provincial plans must be fully integrated and must clearly articulate focused policies and targets.

THE WORKSHOP

In July 2015, the Ryerson City Building Institute hosted a workshop to find policy solutions, tools, and approaches to support the coordination of transportation infrastructure investments and growth management policies.

Participants comprised leading actors from the professions of planning, law, civil service, transportation planning, development, academia, finance, and elected office. Prior to the workshop, participants were interviewed and asked to identify: the obstacles to aligning infrastructure investment with growth planning; what improvements could be made to the four plans currently under review¹; and what the Province could do to better ensure growth planning aligns with and mutually supports transportation investments (and vice versa).

In the course of the workshop we heard many ideas for strengthening the links between transportation investments and planning. The participants were also interested in discussing the challenges associated with regional governance, how to get the most out of existing policies, and strategies for improving transparency and implementation.

Gathering practitioners, policy-makers, critics and analysts together to consider a particular policy question generated healthy debate. The diverse viewpoints of the participants allowed for a robust array of policy recommendations and suggestions. The participants drew on their own expertise to build on the suggestions of others, resulting in a richly informed collection of ideas. These are offered here for consideration by the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review Advisory Panel and other decision makers.

¹ The plans under review include: the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan, The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.



The midrise development along VIVA rapid busway in Markham is a good example of transit supportive density²

Many people volunteered their time and expertise to contribute to the discussion before and during the workshop. In order to support candid disclosure and dialogue, the participants themselves have not been named. The Ryerson City Building Institute is grateful for their participation and thanks them for their contributions to this endeavour.

WHAT WE HEARD

1 Strong regional governance is needed to effectively align growth management and transportation investment.

- One option proposed is a new Secretariat at Queen's Park empowered to coordinate implementation and enforcement of plans for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

A major theme that emerged from the group's discussion was the importance of effective regional governance. The interviews with participants before the workshop, and the discussion during the workshop, revealed a profound concern that the governance of the Greater Golden Horseshoe as a region is fragmented and must be improved if the vision of integrated regional plans is to be achieved.

Different models for regional governance were discussed and some of the best practices outlined in the next section of this paper also informed the discussion. While some suggested that a new regional governance model is required, most participants agreed that by default it is up to Queen's Park to provide planning leadership, and the Province should embrace this role.

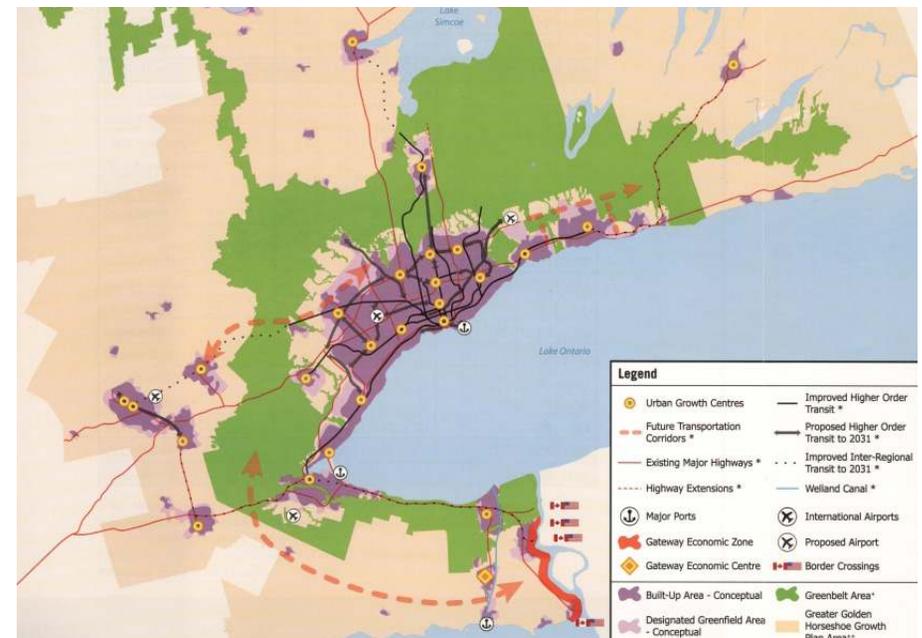
The Province needs to accept greater responsibility for implementing the Growth Plan, the Greenbelt-related plans, and the Big Move.

The Province must champion the plans and proactively push implementation timelines. With an eye on the final vision of the plans, the Province should issue specific direction on the role of agencies and municipalities and be clear about roles and functions. Participants also noted the importance of respect for the autonomy of municipalities to make decisions impacting local residents.

As the Province is the de facto regional government, it should undertake some internal restructuring to embrace this role.

One option would be to create a Regional Governance Secretariat that is empowered to coordinate and move forward all matters relating to approvals, implementation, and enforcement of the plans.

With decision-making and enforcement coordinated by one Provincial-level body, **municipalities would need to demonstrate that they meet certain transparent criteria in order to be eligible for infrastructure funding.**



The urban structure of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.³

3 Digital Image. Places to Grow Concept, Schedule 2, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. 2006.

WHAT WE HEARD

2 Effective implementation of the plans requires better enforcement, and more transparency and accountability. Clear criteria to prioritize transit funding decisions and making full business cases public are imperative.

Workshop participants shared considerable admiration for the plans themselves. However, most were very concerned that the plans are not being enforced, nor is there accountability when policies are breached.

With respect to enforcement, several participants noted that the Province does not always show up at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) to provide evidence as to whether a proposed development or a proposed settlement area boundary expansion conforms to the provincial plans. It is often left to private developers or municipalities to interpret the provincial policies before the OMB.

There was support for the Province to be more actively involved in interpreting and defending the plans and the Provincial Policy Statement at the OMB, whenever necessary.

Participants felt that it was important for the Province to demonstrate its policy intentions as a party at the OMB and by providing clarity on matters so that they were not subject to OMB interpretation.

The issue of uneven implementation was also discussed. While many municipalities have brought all of their local plans and regulations into conformity with the provincial plans, others have not. Regional-level analyses are hampered by a lack of consistent data from municipalities throughout the region.

Participants argued for legislation to require that municipalities report on implementation progress, using measures consistent across the

region. They also noted that funding for infrastructure ought to be tied to achieving implementation goals.

Improved transparency and accountability are paramount; a clear decision-making framework to focus and prioritize transit investment decisions – now lacking – is required. Decisions about transit investments in particular are not transparent and are not driven by the regional plans.

Workshop participants expressed enthusiastic support for the creation of such a framework to assess municipalities' eligibility for funding and to prioritize transit projects.

With such a framework in place, managed by the Province or its designated Secretariat, investment decisions could be weighted for certain criteria – such as increasing transit equity, saving money, or reducing congestion – in a transparent manner.

The City of Toronto's evaluation framework was shared as a good example for determining which projects may warrant serious consideration (see Appendix A).

Further, participants agreed the business cases⁴ that result in transit funding decisions must be made public. This would help to depoliticize debate and curtail political wrangling that can result in funding decisions that do not meet transportation planning or growth planning goals.

⁴ A robust project analysis starts as an initial business case. If it has merit, a full business case is developed. A full business case considers social factors, economic factors, and operational factors to arrive at a decision of which projects will proceed. The initial and full business cases should be made public.

WHAT WE HEARD

3 Municipalities should be required to commit to transit-supportive land uses and densities to be eligible for transit infrastructure funding.

There was general agreement on the need to better align growth-planning policies and transit investment to ensure strong ridership levels match the transit dollars that have been committed.

Many argued that funding decisions should require municipalities to demonstrate a commitment to transit-supportive densities and land uses along proposed routes in order to be eligible for funding.

4 Predictable, stable, and long-term infrastructure funding is required to achieve integrated transit investment and growth management. A broader range of funding options at the provincial and municipal levels should be explored.

Without stable and secure funding for transportation and other infrastructure, growth-planning policies can do little to shape the region. Participants discussed funding mechanisms and agreed that many options are available but building public support for increased and sustained funding is crucial. They called on the Province to address this issue through ongoing outreach and education.

Participants also discussed the importance of exploring the full range of funding options at the provincial and municipal levels. They argued that infrastructure funding ought to be maximized at the provincial level where those who make decisions, those who benefit, and those who pay are all aligned. **Therefore, the group argued for extracting more public infrastructure dollars through property taxes, the gas tax, and restructured development charges.**

The Province and municipalities have financing and funding tools at their disposal that can both generate money to pay for transit and, when used correctly, encourage development in particular places. Smart pricing such as road tolls, congestion charges and parking levies are also helpful to raise money to pay for transit.⁵

Many participants emphasized that development charges are not being optimized as a financing tool. They called on the Province to amend the Development Charges Act to provide for reductions or credits for development within a certain radius (possibly 500 metres) of a transit station.

Participants also noted that a review of the Development Charges Act provides an opportunity to use the fees to better reflect the true costs of development, removing the subsidy on low-density development. Participants stated that an amended Development Charges Act should allow for the forecasting of costs rather than focusing on historical data.

Tying together the issue of transparency with the issue of funding, participants called on the Province to set priority projects through a decision-making framework (noted in point two), and then target spending on those priority projects rather than spreading infrastructure funding thinly all over the region.

5 Metrolinx's 2013 report, *Investing in our Region*, and the Ontario Transit Investment Strategy Advisory Panel's 2013 report, *Making the Move: Choices and Consequences*, provide detailed recommendations for how the Province can use new and existing financial tools to support the Big Move.

WHAT WE HEARD

5 The next generation of these three provincial plans must be fully integrated and must clearly articulate focused policies and targets.

The participants all shared admiration for what the provincial growth management plans have accomplished. While some argued that not enough has changed, there was general acknowledgement that growth management is in a better state today than it would have been in absence of the Growth Plan, the Big Move and Greenbelt-related plans.

For the second generation of the plans, participants urged the Province to make the policies more specific and more detailed.

Some specific opportunities identified include:

- **Intensification of mobility hubs.** Now that transit dollars have been committed, the Province should prioritize some areas for intensification over others, directing development more pointedly to the hubs and appropriate sections of corridors with funded transit.
- **Setting higher density targets for specific mobility hubs** and strengthening policy language to ensure stated targets are achieved.
- **Increasing high-density employment uses around mobility hubs.** Municipal representatives argued the plans should give special consideration for development around mobility hubs, particularly on employment land conversions.

Some participants suggested the Province amend the plans so that municipalities can convert employment uses around mobility hubs to high-density transit-oriented uses without a full comprehensive review. In addition, they argued that they need the ability to put conditional zoning on lands near mobility hubs; this would allow municipalities to ensure that the employment-related part of a development is built before permissions for residential are secured.

Throughout the workshop, participants noted that the region is very diverse in its built form and its development potential. When it comes to regional policies, therefore, one size doesn't fit all. While a firm regional vision must be articulated and pursued, striking a balance between regional goals and local autonomy will take effort.

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

The Ryerson City Building Institute undertook a best practice analysis of ten jurisdictions around the world to explore innovative and successful measures to align transportation and growth planning.

The analysis reveals that effective integration requires coordination across a wide array of stakeholders with incentives and controls in place to implement long-term regional thinking.

Several strategies that have proven successful in other city regions are worthy of consideration in the context of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Strong Regional Governance

A regional governance structure that aligns with the geographic area it serves and is empowered to plan, finance, and develop projects is considered a best practice model for integration.

An effective regional government has the ability to direct both land use and transportation decisions, and investment.

- In Portland, Oregon, Metro Council was the first elected regional government in the USA. It has the capacity to allocate federal funding toward transportation infrastructure investment.
- The Greater London Authority is made up of the Mayor and the London Assembly, a group of 25-elected members who represent the interests of Londoners on a multitude of issues, including housing and transportation.

Best practices for policy and implementation include a strategy document that addresses the same geography governed by the regional council. It sets out the long-term strategy for both the land use plan and transportation network.

- Metro Vancouver, in its Metro 2040 growth strategy and Transport 2040 transit strategy, aligns land use planning and transportation infrastructure to ensure zoning and development rights are appropriately located. While some view Metro 2040 as a step back from the earlier *Livable Region Strategic Plan*, the performance targets described in the plan add incentive for delivery.
- Blueprint Denver provides a comprehensive review of existing land use regulation and makes recommendations to provide an integrated land use and transportation solution. The document establishes areas of change and areas of stability and focuses on improving the function of streets through these areas.

Strong political leadership is needed to push the transit agenda over the long term and to educate and engage with key stakeholders to build public acceptance and trust.

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Connecting Employment Nodes

Measuring transportation investment on its ability to connect people with where they work will ground transportation decisions in the patterns of urban life.

Effective regional transportation networks build connections between employment nodes.

- Denver addressed its predominantly low-density, suburban population and dispersed employment base by focusing transportation investment around specific network improvements to link residential areas and employment nodes.

Examining movement patterns within a node allows for rational connections that increase ridership.

- In London, UK, an estimated 84% of employees within the Canary Wharf employment district use public transport or walk. Through a focus on multi-modal transportation options, the City was able to provide for parking for 3,000 vehicles, while ensuring that functional movement in and around the area relies on both bus rapid transit and light rail systems, with further connection into the city centre by the London Underground. This is a strong example of how planning for multi-modal transit alternatives within an employment node increases transit ridership and reduces congestion.



Canary Wharf, UK⁶



LRT - Denver, US⁷

Understanding the commute to work is a critical component of integration.⁸

- The Regional Plan Association in New York uses the lens of “access”, and specifically job access, to assess the New York subway system. They suggest that access to jobs and services should be part of how we plan for and evaluate transit systems in the future.

⁶ [View of Canary Wharf](#) cc George Rex [CC-SA-BY-2.0](#)

⁷ [Denver LRT](#) cc David Wilson [CC-BY-2.0](#)

⁸ This issue has been overlooked in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area where auto-centric office development along 400-series highways has left workers stranded without transit options.

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

III Regulatory Controls

Effective alignment of transportation infrastructure with land use planning requires regulations that direct mixed-use development to transit corridors and aligns appropriate densities of land use with the service provided.

A strong policy framework outlines specific as opposed to average density targets for specific areas.

- Vancouver outlines “Frequent Transit Network” typologies in its regional transit strategy, which tailor land use to transit service depending on mode choice, frequency of stops, and access to service. In 2011 the Regional Growth Strategy, Metro 2040, was amended to reflect these areas as “Frequent Transit Development Areas.” Performance targets described in the plan add incentive for delivery.

Up-to-date zoning by-laws allow for as-of-right development that aligns policy with key transportation corridors.

- In Vancouver, the policies in Metro 2040 describing “Frequent Transit Areas” are implemented through development rights and zoning that allow for specific appropriate densities at critical transit nodes.
- The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in DC used articulated zoning and financial incentives along the Rosslyn-Ballston and Jefferson Davis corridors in Arlington County to deliver one of the best examples of transit-oriented development in the USA to date.

IV Stable and Appropriate Funding

Federal and provincial engagement and funding are critical components of major transit infrastructure investment. This funding can and should be leveraged to enhance efforts in emissions reduction and environmental stewardship in all new development.

Consistent and guaranteed funding allow for long range planning to occur and the vision to be realized.

- In the United States, federally funded TIGER grants (Department of Transportation) have allowed for continued investment in surface transportation infrastructure in city regions across the country.
- In London, UK, sustained federal investment in transportation systems is making the rail network the fastest growing in Europe, with a plan to invest more than £70 billion across all forms of transport by 2021.

Tying funding to the achievement of targets or indicators ensures that the regional plan’s vision is achieved.

- In Switzerland, the Canton of Zurich (a provincial equivalent) requires transit fares and schedules for the 50 different transit operators across eight regions to be coordinated prior to the release of any regional rail funding. The Canton agreed to fund the major investment only if a new agency was created to bring about regional coordination.

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

V Strong Municipal Partnerships

Effective, responsive, and reciprocal municipal partnerships ensure the implementation of regional strategies on the ground.

Area-specific plans are needed to respond to local issues and align regional and local growth patterns.

- Calgary, Alberta implemented Station Area Redevelopment Plans which respond to local needs and link the Calgary Municipal Plan with the Regional Transit Plan.
- In Denver, the focus on transit-oriented planning has resulted in Station Area Plans and corridor-wide design workshops that determine the functionality and phasing of each station precinct and how each station in the corridor relates to the others.

Proactive land acquisition helps to create public awareness and control development costs.

- Calgary's C-Train development has been one of the most cost efficient light rail constructions in North America. Cost efficiencies were created through the early protection of right of ways, the use of existing public rail corridors, and early purchase of needed private lands.
- In London, UK, the office of the Mayor of London, along with other local councils and the London Assembly, works with town planners to implement "safeguarding" zones, which delineate the future path of new transportation infrastructure and secure it from future development.

Transportation Demand Management can shift current and established transportation patterns.

- In New York, the Metropolitan Transit Authority's collaboration with the City of New York resulted in some well-known examples of design-led transportation demand management through innovative streetscape and transportation programs. These include the select bus service to all five boroughs, the Citibike Bicycle Sharing program, and pedestrianizing Times Square.
- In 2003, London, UK implemented a Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) tax in its central business core during business hours. Since then, vehicle traffic speeds have improved, bus ridership has increased, and accidents and air pollution have declined in the city center. In addition, millions of dollars of toll revenues have been invested in improved transit service.
- Washington DC offers innovative transportation demand management through pilot parking districts, which use performance based parking metre rates to charge higher prices at peak periods, and variable parking fines. A portion of the revenue from the parking meters then goes toward future pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure initiatives.

VI Innovative Public-Private Partnerships

The influence and innovation of the private market must be recognized and harnessed through public-private partnerships. Development can be encouraged through targeted incentives in transit priority areas.

When the transit agency owns the land, appropriate developments can be secured through joint development rights.

- Denver's Joint Development Program outlines the planning, design, and construction of a development project on transit agency-owned land with a private-sector partner. These projects may require sale to the private sector, but otherwise include sale of air rights above a transit facility, or development on a long-term lease.
- In Washington, DC the Metropolitan Area Transit Authority started early and brought real estate knowledge in-house to initiate their first public-private partnership on the Rosslyn (Virginia) Metro Center in 1973. By 2003, there were 52 joint development projects with a market value of \$4 billion, which delivered some \$6 million in annual revenues to the transit agency. In addition, these new developments have generated an estimated 50,000 new transit riders and over 25,000 jobs.

The public agency responsible for transit planning must take steps to understand real estate market forces.⁹

- The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority undertakes real estate assessments of available station sites and categorizes them in terms of development potential and public and private sector risks.
- In Hong Kong, rail infrastructure and transit service are linked through the privatization of rail operations. MTR Corporation Limited is the private operator of the Hong Kong MTR metro system and is involved in major rail and property projects along transit lines making it one of the most profitable systems in the world.

⁹ This has been a challenge in the GTHA as the Big Move did not factor in leveraging market forces. Development has happened where the market dictated and has been driven by land cost not by transit investment (e.g.: Yonge and Eglinton in Toronto cannot attract employment due to land costs).

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

VII Diverse Revenue Tools

Embracing diverse revenue generation tools provides a more stable platform for continued infrastructure investment in line with growth. Tools such as land value capture, development air rights, tax financing, and public-private partnerships have the capacity to provide significant financing for new projects and ongoing maintenance.

Capturing the increase in land value following transit investment allows increases in value to be retained for public benefit. One method for doing this is long term land leasing to developers.

- Denver's Joint Development Program allows the transit agency to retain interest and ownership of the land surrounding new transportation corridors, and generate revenue to fund new infrastructure as a result of its development.

Tax Increment Financing is another tool to stimulate development in line with transit-oriented development principles.

- In Calgary, Alberta a Tax Increment Financing zone was used to stimulate development of the eastern portion of the downtown, increasing ridership and delivering on the density goals of their plan. The Community Revitalization Levy is a permitted tool under Alberta legislation and has been applied in Edmonton as well as Calgary.



LRT - Calgary, A¹⁰



East Portion of Downtown Calgary¹¹

¹⁰ [Calgary Transit cc Stephen Rees CC-BY-NC-ND-2.0](#)

¹¹ [Calgary heading down to East village cc Dave Bloggs CC-BY-2.0](#)

APPENDIX A

City of Toronto's Feeling Congested Rapid Transit Decision-making Framework

Preliminary Primary Technical Evaluation without SmartTrack

	Relief Line East (subway)	Yonge North Subway Extension	Durham-Scarborough BRT	Dundas Street BRT	Don Mills LRT	Eglinton LRT West Extension	Finch West LRT Extension (West)	Finch West LRT Extension (East)	Highway 427 BRT (South)	Highway 427 BRT (North)	Jane LRT	McCowan Road BRT	Malvern LRT	Scarborough Malvern LRT	Sheppard East LRT Extension	Steeles LRT/BRT West	Steeles LRT/BRT East	Waterfront West LRT	Bloor-Danforth Subway West Extension	Kingston Road BRT	Sheppard Corridor (Yonge to Dufferin)	Waterfront East LRT	Relief Line Extension (Danforth to Eglinton)	St. Clair Streetcar/LRT Extension
Criteria	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Choice	●	◐	◑	◒	●	◐	◑	◒	○	○	●	◐	◑	◒	○	◐	◑	●	◐	◑	◒	●	○	
Experience	●	◐	◑	◒	●	●	◐	◑	○	○	◐	◑	○	●	◐	◑	◒	●	◐	◑	○	◐	◑	◒
Social Equity	◐	○	◑	○	●	●	◐	◑	◒	○	●	◐	◑	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	○	◑	◒	◐	◑	◒
Shaping the City	●	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	○	◑	○	○	◐	◑	◒	●	◐	◑	○	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	◑	◒
Healthy Neighbourhoods	◐	○	◑	●	●	◐	◑	○	○	○	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	◑	◒	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	◑	◒
Public Health and Environment	◐	◐	◑	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	○	◐	◑	○	◐	◑	○	◐	◑	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	◑	◒
Affordability	◐	◐	●	◐	●	◐	○	◐	○	○	◐	◑	●	◐	◑	◒	●	◐	◑	◒	○	◐	◑	◒
Supports Growth	●	◐	◑	◒	●	◐	◑	◒	◐	◑	●	○	○	◐	○	◐	◑	●	◐	◑	○	●	◐	◑

● High Score ○ Low Score



About the Ryerson City Building Institute

The Ryerson City Building Institute is a multidisciplinary centre focused on understanding and finding solutions to the complex urban challenges facing our city regions nationally and globally. The Institute brings together political leadership, policy ideas, and people from diverse backgrounds to address critical urban problems. The Institute works with partners across faculties and outside the university to deliver high-quality teaching, research, and public engagement on urban issues. The Ryerson City Building Institute builds on Ryerson University's demonstrated expertise in collaborative city building.

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