



2008 Excellence in Planning Awards

Healthy Communities Award

Backgrounder

The Excellence in Planning Award recognizes innovation, creativity, professionalism, problem-solving, and communications in four categories: urban and community design, planning studies or reports, research/new directions, and public education. This year's winners were chosen from approximately 30 entries.

On September 12, 2008, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) announced the 2008 winners of the Excellence in Planning award, as well as the Healthy Communities award.

Excellence in Planning Awards were given to:

- Regions of York, Halton, Peel and Durham and the cities of Toronto, Mississauga and Hamilton for the Smart Commute initiative
- Niagara Economic Development Department and peter j. smith for "Energizing Niagara's Wine Country"
- City of Ottawa for Urban Design Guidelines for the Development Review Process
- City of Toronto for Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines
- Town of Markham for Markham Small Streams Study
- City of Brampton and MMM Group for the Incineration and Waste Processing Transfer and Disposal Study

The Healthy Communities award was given to:

- Regions of York, Halton, Peel and Durham and the cities of Toronto, Mississauga and Hamilton for the Smart Commute initiative

The awards ceremony will take place on the evening of Thursday, September 18, 2008, Clarion Pinewood Park Resort in North Bay. The ceremony is part of the 2008 symposium of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, which will focus on the theme "The Grey Tsunami: Aging Communities and Planning."

This is the inaugural year of the Healthy Communities Award. Established jointly by OPPI and the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the award was created to recognize excellence in creating healthy communities.

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) is the recognized voice of the Province's planning profession. Its more than 3,000 members work in government, private practice, universities, and non-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, urban design, environmental planning, transportation, health and social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development.

Details on the winning projects follow.

Smart Commute Initiative, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

Regions of York, Halton, Durham, and Peel; Cities of Toronto, Hamilton, and Mississauga

Traffic congestion, climate change, and smog are connected problems, and finding alternative options for commuters has become a priority in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton. Smart Commute is a regional initiative to encourage carpooling, transit, cycling, walking, and telework for employees of local workplaces and postsecondary institutions. Through media blitzes, brochures, and public events, as well as an online system for matching potential carpooling participants, the coalition of municipalities and regions involved in Smart Commute has helped take 10,000 cars off the road each day and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17,000 tonnes since the inception of the program in 2004. The program is now being used in other Ontario municipalities.

Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities

Niagara Economic Development Corporation, peter j. smith & company inc.

The Niagara Region is home to 70 wineries, with 6,500 hectares of land cultivated as vineyards. The success of the wine industry has generated an equally successful tourism industry. The Niagara Economic Development Corporation, with the help of local municipalities, the province, the region, and wine industry representatives, carried out a study to develop a long-term strategy for tourism. The strategy includes promoting cultural and heritage tourism in addition to culinary tourism; developing key destinations for tourists; creating customer service hubs in the urbanized areas; and enhancing the travel experience through design, wayfinding, and the integration of cultural attractions with the Wine Route. The strategy was completed in 2007 and is now being implemented.

Urban Design Guidelines for the Development Review Process

City of Ottawa

Urban design guidelines are only as good as their implementation. To help translate its high-level urban design principles into brief, easy-to-remember directions, the City of Ottawa carried out extensive consultations that resulted in a short, illustrated guide to design for all parts of the city. The guidelines cover regional roads, development along arterial mainstreets and traditional mainstreets, greenfield developments, transit-oriented developments, infill housing, environmental noise control, right-of-way lighting, outdoor patios, drive-through facilities, gas stations, and large-format retail. The guidelines have proved popular and easy to use, and other municipalities have drawn on Ottawa's work in developing their own guidelines.

Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines

City of Toronto

Environmentalists and bird watchers have long been concerned about the fate of migratory birds in Toronto. The birds become disoriented by the light pollution and reflective surfaces in the downtown area, and crash into high-rise office and apartment buildings, falling to the pavement below. To reduce the incidence of these collisions, the City set up a committee of staff members and community partners to identify bird-friendly development options to be used by architects, planners, urban designers, building owners and managers, tenants and homeowners. The extensively illustrated guidelines identify hazards and appropriate alternatives in building exteriors, lighting techniques, and building management methods. The City has also launched a public awareness campaign to reduce light pollution, and has long maintained a program of rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured birds.

Markham Small Streams Study

Town of Markham

The landscape on which Markham sits consists of largely flat formerly agricultural lands, crossed by small streams that are not regulated under regular conservation authority rules. In 2002, the Town began a study to classify these small streams and develop guidelines to protect and manage them – a study that was the first of its kind for a local municipality in Canada. The work involved

extensive consultation with stakeholders, and the resulting guidelines have been acknowledged and supported in the Rouge Watershed by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority. The results include an inventory of the streams, a classification matrix for the management of stream features, a review of stormwater engineering practices for the streams, and a landowner education and stewardship program that is currently being implemented.

Incineration and Waste Processing: Transfer and Disposal Study

City of Brampton, MMM Group Limited

The field of waste management is contentious, but new techniques for recycling, disposal, and generating energy from waste are emerging every year. Municipalities need to regulate current uses while remaining open to future technologies that may make current methods obsolete. In this study, MMM Group and the City of Brampton were the first to develop leading-edge planning policies to guide waste management and address matters of public interest, including public health and safety, and the regulation of land uses associated with waste management. The resulting policies, and the zoning by-law and Official Plan amendments associated with them, were widely accepted by the public and the waste management industry, and passed without appeal in October 2007. The process is already being used as a model by other municipalities.

For more information, please contact:

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