

THE LAND DIGEST

Toronto Changing the Planning Process

Economic Indicators:

Real GDP Growth	
Q3 2014	+2.8%
Toronto Employment Growth	
Oct 2014	-1.2%
Toronto Unemployment Rate	
Oct 2014	7.9%
Inflation	
Oct 2014	+2.4%
Bank of Canada Overnight Rate	
Nov 2014	1.0%
Prime Rate	
Nov 2014	3.0%
5 Year Mortgage Rate Fixed	
Nov 2014	4.79%

Toronto's current planning process can be confusing for residents eager to know how their neighbourhoods will be developed. The bylaws governing zoning, height and other standards are routinely amended in order to permit a proposed development that would not have met these criteria, which promotes deviation from supposedly accepted rules. Ever since the introduction of the Province of Ontario's Places To Grow Act in 2005, the height and density restrictions in Toronto's zoning bylaws have been rendered somewhat obsolete by the Act's requirement that cities intensify. City officials now spend months negotiating with developers and engaging in public consultation to establish just how much intensification will be allowed for each application. The patchwork of rules and amendments results in uncertainty and long timelines for everyone involved.

This is why the City of Toronto is considering a complete overhaul of the rules and regulations that now guide the planning process. The adoption of Ontario Regulation 608/06 in 2007 under the Planning Act gives municipalities the power to implement a Development Permit System (DPS). The DPS eliminates the need for

separate zoning, site plan and minor variance processes, combining them all into one application and approval process. The DPS is, in essence, an alternative to the current use of zoning as a means of implementing the Official Plan. It is designed to reflect the needs and desires of local communities. As such, it is applied neighbourhood by neighbourhood, with residents providing their vision and objectives to guide development in the area.

Ryerson University's Centre for Urban Research and Land Development held a discussion on Monday about the impacts and issues related to implementing a DPS in Toronto.

Before a DPS can be implemented, the Official Plan needs to contain detailed policies. It must include the area where a DP bylaw could be enacted, goals, objectives and policies of the DPS, the criteria for evaluating the proposed development, types of conditions that may be imposed, and opportunities for delegation. The policies may also include requirements for section 37 community benefits.

Once a DP bylaw is enacted, all developments must conform to the standards and policies set within. That means that if

there is a specified maximum building height of 100 metres, no development can exceed that limit. The bylaw could however specify ranges in building heights and other standards, leading to more flexibility. Section 37 benefits would be given in exchange for the "specified height" or maximum height listed in the DPS. A DP bylaw could include a specified amount of money the applicant must pay per building storey for example, up to the maximum. In terms of building use, the bylaw would set out which uses are permitted, but can also include "discretionary uses" that would be permitted. The bylaw may also include a variety of measures designed to protect public health and the environment by imposing conditions on the development.

The DP bylaw would essentially include all the standards and rules that a development would have to meet in order to be approved. If an application meets the standards outlined in the bylaw, it would be approved quickly. Any development that does not conform to these standards will be rejected.

New HEIGHTS for Residential Towers

Tall commercial towers are nothing new, but the last few years have seen an exceptional crop of super-slim residential buildings sprouting up in cities all over the world. From Manhattan to Mumbai, tall towers are as fashionable as they are effectual given advancements in engineering and the sophistication of modern building materials.

Another reason for the sudden surge skywards is the lack of urban land parcels—and the price tags that go along with them. Given most city skylines are so tightly developed, it's no surprise that the only direction left to build is up.

According to Richard Witt, Principal at Quadrangle Architects and Canadian Chair of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH), an international body in the field of tall buildings and sustainable urban design, more than 100 residential skyscrapers are currently under construction across the globe, the tallest being World One, in Mumbai, India, which is set to rise a staggering 442 metres.

Also under construction is the Diamond Tower in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, at 432 metres, and 432 Park Avenue in New York City at 425 metres.

“Of the world's top 10 tallest residential buildings, eight are located in United Arab Emirates,” says Witt, pointing out that one is in Australia and the other is in China. “The Princess

Tower in Dubai (pictured above) is 413 metres tall, making it the tallest residential tower currently in the world.”

Canada's soon-to-be-tallest residential tower is no slouch either. Coming in at an impressive 272 metres, Aura, a condominium located at Yonge and Gerrard in Toronto, will be the city's fourth tallest building and fifth tallest structure, soaring above everything but The CN Tower, First Canadian Place, Trump Tower and Scotia Tower. Construction began in January of 2010 and the last occupants are scheduled to begin moving in this December.

Condominiums are climbing to impressive heights, but apartment towers of unusual form are also on the rise. According to Witt, The Cayan in Dubai, which sits at a respectable 306 metres, is far from the tallest building in the world, but it has a striking helical shape turning 90 degrees over the course of its height.

New York is currently awaiting the realization of several new ultra-slim residential towers, including 125 Greenwich Street, which will soar 413 metres at a pencil-like width making it the second tallest building in Manhattan's downtown core.

“In Canada, we have nothing over 250 metres in the residential department yet except for Aura,” Witt says, “but it won't be long

before this changes. One Yonge Tower and 50 Bloor West are both under construction and slated to be 293 metres and 277 metres respectively.”

Impressive height is one thing; striking architecture is another. While historically residential buildings have been on the dull side of design compared to their office building counterparts, Witt suggests that this may no longer be the case. In addition to The Cayan in Dubai (mentioned above), Eight Spruce in New York City, designed by Frank Gehry, is something Witt cites as quite remarkable.

“Toronto developer Cityzen has also made some great forms with Absolute World (commonly referred to as the Marilyn Monroe Towers) in Mississauga, and their nearly completed L-Tower in downtown Toronto,” Witt says. Designed by architect Daniel Libeskind, the 58-storey L-shaped residence is already making its mark on the skyline and will be ready for move in next summer.

**Source: Erin Ruddy
Canadian Apartment
Magazine, REMI**

Some of OUR Sales 2014

Address/City	City	Price	Notes
223-225 Redpath Ave.	Toronto	\$1,925,000	Infill residential development
40 Harris Ave.	Richmond Hill	\$4,500,000	Townhouse development site
358 Reynolds Rd.	Oakville	\$3,500,000	Future mid-rise residential development
75 The Espalande	Toronto	\$23,800,000	High rise residential development site
2 Wilket Road	North York	\$3,000,000	Infill townhouse site

Source: CFAS and RealTrack

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