

New Housing Can Compliment Heritage...

... and good design policy is the key.

Heritage districts are an important part of communities' historic character. Protecting that character is a key focus for planners. Strong design policy is the key to bridging heritage protection with new, affordable development that respects the area around it.

Ontario is growing steadily, and that leaves community planners with a challenge as new neighbourhoods and main streets begin to branch out from the heritage neighbourhoods that have long defined many municipalities.

As the province's population grows, the Greater Toronto Area's growth is steadily being driven to smaller communities further out from the Golden Horseshoe's epicentre. This presents planners with the challenge of ensuring that development built up around existing heritage areas respects the look and feel of the community.

"Look around nature and the transition is always organic," says Anthony Wong, policy planner for the Town of Milton. The same should be true for heritage districts and surrounding urban zones, he says.

Making those transitions is a challenge many communities will face. Heritage consultancy ASI estimates that there are more than 130 Heritage Conservation Districts in 40 communities across Ontario. These districts collectively cover more than 22,000 buildings.

"(Policy) choices related to materiality and fabric for additions can be powerful when introduced in, and surrounding, these kinds of places," according to ASI contributors Kristina Martens, Rebecca Sciarra, Meredith Stewart and Laura Wickett. "If done sensitively, they can seem to blend or ease points of transition, and can present opportunities to accommodate change."

Successfully integrating a modern building in or near a heritage district means being conscientious of scale, massing and material. Without respecting the surrounding context, the new building can



stand out like a sore thumb.

A vital aspect of that compatibility is materiality. As ASI notes, "contemporary construction may use modern brick as part of an infill project with the intent of 'matching' materials. However, often the objective is to find compatible solutions rather than matching."

For instance, while adding modern brick to a 1920s bungalow clad in tapestry brick may seem logical, the effect is actually not good conservation building. Modern brick is smooth, while tapestry brick is highly textured. The compatibility is not the same, and the effect becomes jarring.

Communities have had success around the world by building in ways which use contemporary materials to match traditional styles. For instance, in Riga, Latvia, a 2015 residential building built in a historic city square was constructed with textured brick patterning along the façade, evoking the texture and roof colours of neighbouring heritage structures.

When it comes to exercising this type of influence over how new builds integrate with heritage architecture, many planners have found their tool of choice: Urban Design Guidelines and similar policies.

"Many architectural and urban design guidelines can be found on how to integrate new infill construction within heritage districts," says Wong. "Most address the need to understand the context in order to come up with the appropriate design solution that is sympathetic to the historical context. The same sensitivity to the fit, scale, rhythm, form, materials and colour, just to name a few that are important."

A key part of these policies is materiality – policies addressing the exterior materials of new buildings. More than anything, exterior

building materials define the character of a structure.

Many Ontario communities are built around traditional red-brick downtowns. The bulk of Ontario's surviving heritage buildings are built with masonry. The material's timelessness is well-recognized, including by the Milton team.

"We only need to look at ancient buildings and we quickly realize that the rubble of the ruins are mostly masonry," says Wong.

Urban Design tools give planners an important say in their communities. Engagement and consultation on the development application may contribute to the design as public concerns and input can ensure the ultimate density, massing and architecture attributes of the new development are established in cooperation with community needs and concerns. Strong policies can even help to revitalize a border area where the quality of architecture is derelict, weak or in decline.

The tools exist to make these policies work. For Wong, will and vision are key to putting them to use.

"Have a clear vision, listen to the community and adopt time-tested formulas that already exist," Wong says.

"One need only to ask what the most memorable and exciting places (citizens) like to visit when traveling to arrive at the most desired place when making principles they should include in their guidelines – all carefully chosen to reflect the appropriate context."



BUILD IT RIGHT, NOW

News From Ontario's Masonry Professionals

March 2022

Housing Affordability Edition

A Response to Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force

Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force and Your Community

A Look at the Task Force's Proposal to Roll Back Local Control



The recommendations Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force bring troubling prospects for municipalities: The loss of local control over design and community character, at the expense of communities and residents.

The OHATF makes several recommendations to try and speed an increase in Ontario's housing supply. Many of these goals are worthy of discussion, particularly given that the housing crisis shows no sign of slowing down. Entry and upward mobility in the Ontario housing market has become near impossible for many Ontarians. It is well documented in the OHATF report that the housing crisis does not affect all Ontarians equally. In particular, young people, New Canadians, racialized, marginalized and Indigenous communities are increasingly faced with the reality that home ownership in the province is not realistic. The masonry industry supports the ongoing efforts by government to begin addressing the housing crisis and many of the recommendations of the OHATF report provide good concrete steps to do just that.

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TOP 3 ISSUES PLANNERS COMMENT ON DURING APPROVALS



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Housing Affordability Task Force's report, released early in February, has been at the centre of a lot of discussion since it became public. Its goals are ambitious: Building 1.5 million new homes over the next ten years.

The scope of the problem is serious and needs imminent attention. Since 2011, the average housing price in Ontario has nearly tripled, from \$329,000 to \$923,000. This disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable Canadians, like young people, New Canadians and Indigenous communities. It's clear that something needs to be done – but the moves Ontario makes must be the right moves, not moves made for the sake of moving, yet that ultimately achieve no gains while actively making things worse.

It's imperative that local communities and leaders make their voices heard. If implemented in full, the OHATF's recommendations would represent the most significant rollback of local planning authority seen in generations. It would nearly remove local municipalities from the planning process, particularly in terms of community design.

The report is prone to dismissing community comment as "NIMBYism" or "BANANAs," but local impact is vital when it comes to planning our communities. Ontarians deserve to have input into how their neighbourhoods are planned and designed. New homeowners, especially those from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, deserve to live in homes that are both affordable and well-designed. And residents are more likely to support new developments if they are well-designed and built with high-quality local building materials.

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LET'S BUILD TOMORROW'S HERITAGE NEIGHBOURHOODS, TODAY.



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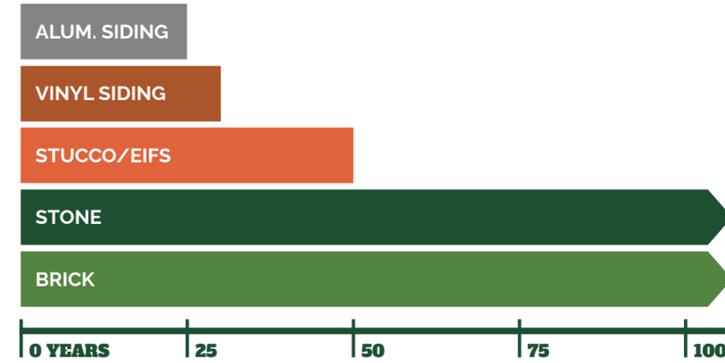
Communities should also be concerned by recommendations to eliminate development charges for projects with fewer than 10 housing units. This would make development more affordable for developers, but not for homeowners. Homes need to be serviced, and if that cost is not paid through development charges, it will end up on the shoulders of the property taxpayer – undercutting affordability by raising the tax burden.

Many of the report's objectives and proposals are laudable. But those concerning local control of design should be cause for concern. The more corners we cut today, the more we kick the can down the road leave today's homebuyers with hidden costs to bear.

That's why we're calling on communities to share their opinions with the Province on this matter. Make your voices heard and let them know these changes would do nothing to improve the housing situation, while leading to worse neighbourhoods and worse communities overall.

Andrew Payne
Executive Director

HOW LONG WILL MY HOME CLADDING LAST?



International Association of Certified Home Inspectors. InterNACHI's Standard Estimated Life Expectancy Chart for Homes. <https://www.nachi.org/life-expectancy.htm>

Masonry Works Council of Ontario, the association representing this province's brick, stone and block sector, views this recommendation with grave concern. Any municipality should.

Ontarians deserve to have input into how their neighbourhoods are planned and designed. New homeowners, especially those from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, deserve to live in homes that are both affordable and well-designed. Removing local control over urban design from communities is a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach – one whose negative impacts will be felt by municipalities generally and homebuyers specifically.

Sustainable housing affordability is benchmarked at housing costs of 30% or less of household income. This can be achieved with attention to exterior design for sustainability and durability over the long term, particularly in the face of climate

change. As severe weather events increase, short-lived and fragile cladding systems may be damaged and require repair or replacement, increasing cost of living down the road. Further, in jurisdictions where lower-performance cladding is in widespread use, such as some communities in Alberta, building envelope failure has been widely documented. These failures can drive costs of upwards of \$50,000 per wall face for replacement, plus costs to the community from building inspections and court cases.

Removing design controls would invite problems like these while doing nothing to improve development approval turnarounds. Matters of design are not a major cause of development delays or cost escalations. Nearly 60% of slowdowns come from administrative delays, like time lost circulating proposals between departments.

Many of the Task Force's recommendations will help all Ontarians by delivering needed intensification and streamlining approvals,

while cutting down on misuse of the appeals process to stall developments. The masonry industry wholly supports many of these recommendations that would increase both density and supply. However, it is important that affordable housing remains affordable for generations to come.

There is substantial room to reduce the regulatory burden on homebuilders while still building beautiful neighbourhoods. But Ontario will not solve the housing crisis by sacrificing good design and sustainable communities. Ontarians deserve to live in well-designed, beautiful communities, not homes built to standards low enough that hidden costs will be inevitable just down the road.



Twelve Storey Wood and Ontario Communities

The OHAFT's recommendation to permit twelve-storey wood-frame construction across Ontario deserves significant scrutiny. The economic considerations of picking favourites may present dangers both to homebuyers and Ontario businesses.

Over the full life cycle of a building, concrete and masonry materials require less maintenance interventions. This means that, over time, these materials actually cost less and have less environmental impact.

On average, 121,000 hectares of forest are harvested every year in Ontario, producing 13 million cubic metres of wood. In 2019, 130,837 hectares were harvested – about 1,308 square kilometres. That's an area larger than New York City. It's enough forest to cover all of Toronto, Mississauga, Oakville and Burlington combined (approx. 1,247 km²), with enough trees left over to cover most of the town of Ajax (+67 km²).

By contrast, the entire area taken up by Ontario's quarries – including quarries not used for making brick, stone and concrete, but excluding gravel pits – stands at 383.52 square kilometers. Not all of that land is being actively quarried at one time: It covers the area approved by the Province for work, but some of it will be set aside for future excavation. Even if every square kilometer of quarry in Ontario were being worked at the same time, however, they would have a footprint just three and a half times smaller than the area of Ontario forest chopped down for wood products in one year.

Further, the masonry industry in Ontario plays an important role in helping the Government bring quality affordable housing to market. A policy which favours wood frame construction over other materials would have significant impacts on a long-standing Ontario industry which employs more than 14,000 people and contributes \$1.3 billion to the province's economy.

Masonry is an important industry in Ontario. While the vast majority of Ontario brick is

produced by manufacturers in Brampton and Burlington, brick, stone and block are produced in quarries and communities across the province. Much of this masonry is produced in or around the fastest-growing parts of the province – southern and eastern Ontario.

By contrast, nearly 80% of Canada's wood comes from British Columbia and Alberta, with Ontario representing less than 10% of the market share for this sector. Wood is largely harvested in the north, and must be trucked long distances to reach a construction site.

Emissions from trucking are a major source of a product's carbon footprint. The longer and farther a product travels, the more emissions it puts out. That's why local materials are better for the environment.

Ontario is fortunate to have significant deposits of Queenston Shale brickmaking clay running through some of our fastest-growing communities. It is close enough to boom areas of the Greater Toronto Area that it can be at the job site in very little time and at very little distance. That's the local sustainability advantage – and it's one communities should seek to protect.

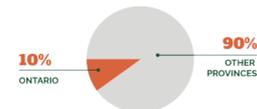
QUARRIES VS FORESTRY

HOW MUCH LAND DO QUARRIES AND FORESTRY TAKE UP OVER A 10-YEAR SPAN?

QUARRIES
383.52 KM²
SAME PLACE EVERY YEAR

FORESTRY
12,100 KM²
+ 1,210KM² EVERY YEAR

ONTARIO FORESTERS CHOP DOWN A
NEW YORK CITY'S WORTH OF FOREST
EVERY YEAR



YET THE FORESTRY INDUSTRY IN ONTARIO ONLY MAKES UP LESS THAN 10% OF ALL FORESTRY IN CANADA

TOP 3 CAUSES OF APPROVAL DELAYS

1 TIME LOST
CIRCULATING SUBMISSIONS BETWEEN CITY DEPARTMENTS

2 SLOW MUNICIPAL RESPONSE TIMES

3 DISAGREEMENTS
BETWEEN DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES