

GROW TOGETHER OR SPRAWL APART

How professional planners perceive regional growth management strategies in the Alberta Capital Region, Metro Vancouver, and the Greater Toronto Area.



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The research is part of the broader Coordinating Land Use Plans in the Context of Multiple Plans (henceforth, Coordinating Multiple Plans) research in partnership with the Canadian Institute of Planners and Dalhousie Transportation Collaboratory (DalTRAC). The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) provided funding for the project.

Dalhousie University researchers are led by Dr. Jill Grant, with support from Dr. Eric Rapaport, Dr. Ahsan Habib, and Dr. Patricia Manuel, and research assistants including Amanda Taylor, Nathan Hall, Christina Wheeler, and Andrew Burns. Dr. Pierre Filion, and research assistant Tanya Markvart, contribute from the University of Waterloo.

SUMMARY

Canada is urban; 80 percent of the country's population lived in an urban area in 2014 (KFF, 2014). Issues of growth and growth management are examples of *wicked problems*, and as with all wicked problems, "there are no 'solutions' in the sense of definitive and objective answers" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, 155). Nonetheless, planners continue to attempt to manage growth through plans and policy.

This report sought to answer the following question: how are issues of growth and growth management coordination perceived by planning professionals in the Greater Toronto Area, Metro Vancouver, and the Alberta Capital Region? The study examined practicing planners' perceptions of growth management and analyzes the experiences they describe, with the intent of identifying common concerns and factors supporting or hindering successful growth management. The analysis of planner's responses suggested that there are three factors that influence regional growth management:

- 1. Restraints to growth, either physical, such as oceans, mountains and rivers, or legislative, such as BC's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) or Ontario's Greenbelt Act;**
- 2. Inter-governmental coordination and cooperation among member municipalities, and vertically through levels of government; and**
- 3. Culture of planning that represents an acceptance of plans, goals and visions among planners, politicians and residents.**

The three study region experience and apply each factor differently and with varying success. The regions' history, politics, culture, and physical context all influence how planners perceived the process and results of growth management.

Further analysis of respondents' perspectives suggests that the growth management strategy of Metro Vancouver may be the most successful, in that it has constrained the growth of the built urban environment to just four percent over the last decade despite 16% population growth (Burchfield, et al., 2015). Despite apparent successes, Metro Vancouver still struggles with several common planning issues, such as balancing the perspectives of planners and politicians from 22 incorporated municipalities. Further, constrained growth in the region has led to pressure to convert industrial and agricultural land to residential uses.

Planners in the Alberta Capital Region expressed concern about conflicting perspectives and a lack of consensus among municipalities. Further, respondents noted the lack of consistent application of policies. For example, the City of Edmonton's policies support infill development, but City Council consistently rejects infill development in favour of status-quo low-density housing. The Alberta Capital Region lacks significant physical or legislative constraints to growth, which has allowed it to sprawl over the largest land area with the lowest population density of the three study regions.

Growth management in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is affected by its jurisdictional complexity. The GTA itself has no political boundaries; rather it is comprised of five regional municipalities with no supra-regional body to facilitate inter-governmental coordination. In the GTA, the greatest barrier to regional growth management identified by respondents was a poor relationship with the Provincial ministries, specifically the Ministry of Transportation. Responding planners stated that the ministries operate with little accountability, and their actions often undermine the goals and objectives of the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Nonetheless, the implementation of the provincial Growth Plan has succeeded in slowing peripheral growth in the region (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2013b).

In all three study regions, respondent planners emphasized the importance of growth management, and identified coordination as a top-priority for their departments. Unfortunately, the planners also admitted that growth management and regional coordination are usually ineffective, citing only a few examples of success in each region. Of the three regions studied, Vancouver had the highest level of perceived success in both coordination and growth management. In Canada, "relatively little is known about how... municipalities develop, coordinate, and implement contemporary planning policies, standards, and regulations" (Grant, et al., 2013, 2); this study has analyzed responses from practicing planners who actively develop, coordinate and implement growth management policies and programs. The resulting "factors of growth management" synthesized from planners' responses apply across the three study regions. The research contributes a case study to the academic literature. Future research could further refine the growth management factors and assess their applicability to other city-regions in Canada and abroad.

INTRODUCTION



1. METRO VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

2. CAPITAL REGION OF EDMONTON, ALBERTA

3. GREATER TORONTO AREA, ONTARIO

Canada is increasingly urban. Much of the country's population live in city-regions – large urban areas developed around a central city with surrounding suburban municipalities (Burchfield, Kramer & Taylor, 2014). As the population continues to grow, municipalities, regional governments and provinces will experience increased pressure to effectively plan for, manage and coordinate growth.

Growth has many benefits for municipalities, and is often considered critical to economic vitality; however, growth can also bring traffic

congestion, sprawling development and decentralized services. Issues associated with growth prove to be *wicked problems* (Rittel & Webber, 1973). As with all wicked problems, “there are no ‘solutions’ in the sense of definitive and objective answers” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, 155). Nonetheless, planners attempt to address these wicked problems through policy.

Managing growth can be valuable for governments: “good planning can ensure that growth occurs where it is both appropriate and needed”

(Hansell, Jr. in Degrove & Metzger, 1991, i). Furthermore, the economic, social, and environmental benefits of increasingly compact cities are well documented (Blais, 2010; Duany et al., 2010; Owen, 2010; Jacobs, 1993).

To recognize the benefits of growth, municipalities, regions, and provinces across Canada have implemented growth management policies. “Growth management at its best...is a calculated effort by a local government, region, or [province] to achieve a balance between natural systems--land, air,

and water--and residential, commercial, and industrial development” (Degrove in Degrove & Metzger, 1991, xiii). Planning professionals often develop and coordinate the implementation of growth management policies.

This study investigates how planning professionals perceive issues of growth and growth management coordination. In 2014, planners were interviewed in three of Canada’s largest city-regions: Metro Vancouver, British Columbia; Alberta Capital Region, Alberta; and the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario. In 2011, these three city-regions accommodated a population of 9,690,205 (Statistics Canada, 2011). The population share contained in these regions will increase over the next several decades; “growth requires further adaptations of planning and governing strategies in order to deal with larger and much more complex urbanizing regions” (Hodge & Robinson, 2001, 15).

Each region and province has a different approach to growth management, influenced by factors such as the social, political, economic and historical context. For example, in Canada, “in constitutional terms, only the provincial and federal governments have the jurisdiction to make decisions about matters affecting their designated territories” (Hodge & Robinson, 2001, 17); therefore, provincial legislation influences each region’s approach to growth management. The “study regions” section discusses the context that has influenced the development of inter-municipal and regional growth management strategies in each of the regions.

Odor Masters, LLC, 2015



Nicholas, 2015



Tyee Solutions, n.d.



Wali, 2015



PROJECT CONTEXT

The Coordinating Multiple Plans research project began in 2013; the Coordination of Growth Management Strategies in the Greater Toronto Area, Metro Vancouver, and Alberta Capital Region research began in May, 2015 and was completed in December, 2015. The three study regions (Alberta Capital Region, Metro Vancouver, and Greater Toronto Area) contain 29% of Canada's population and continue to grow rapidly; since 2006, the regions' combined population has grown by more than 1.425 million people, or 17.25% (Statistics Canada, 2006). Each region takes a different approach to growth management, including award-winning provincial policies in Ontario (Ontario Municipal Affairs, 2013a). The three present interesting case studies into how planning professionals perceive differing approaches.

“Relatively little is known about how Canadian municipalities develop, coordinate, and implement contemporary planning policies, standards, and regulations” (Grant, et al., 2013, 2); professional planners work with planning policies, standards, and regulations in municipalities, and can provide relevant first-hand perspectives on the many processes that impact effective land-use planning. Planners in each study region identified factors that they believe support or frustrate efforts to coordinate growth and growth management strategies in each region and province. This report presents and compares those factors to identify how professional planners perceive issues of growth management in some of Canada's most significant urban areas. As Canada continues to urbanize, an improved understanding of regional growth management will become increasingly important; this report's findings contribute to an understanding of the Canadian context.

METHODS

Between June and September, 2014, the Coordinating Multiple Plans research team conducted in-person interviews to investigate the perspectives of practicing planners in Canada. Three graduate research assistants—Amanda Taylor and Nathan Hall from Dalhousie University and Tanya Markvart from the University of Waterloo—interviewed municipal, provincial, regional, and consultant planners in five metropolitan areas: St. John's, Newfoundland; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Ontario; Edmonton, Alberta; and Vancouver, British Columbia. The dataset included a total of 92 respondents in 82 interviews across the regions; approximately 66 percent were municipal planners, with another 23% equally shared between provincial, regional and consultant planners. This research only analyzes data from the GTA, Metro Vancouver, and Edmonton, using a dataset of 64 respondents. Tables describing the composition of the dataset are in the appendix.

After the interviews were transcribed, Harper and Wheeler applied a thematic analysis through a coding framework to systematically identify the thematic responses. (An example of the coding framework and the list of interview questions are in the appendix). The researchers dedicated more than 70 hours to developing the coding framework; researchers coded independently, then met to compare how the coding framework was applied. The framework was then altered and re-applied; to ensure accuracy,

inter-coder reliability, and replicability, the review process continued until the results were consistent.

After applying the coding framework, Harper compiled two data-banks that identified respondents' perspectives on the municipal or regional relationship with the province, and any discussions regarding growth or growth management. Next, a qualitative discourse and thematic analysis of the data-banks identified the intra- and inter-regional relationships between perspectives, such as common themes, philosophical differences, and political influences. Finally, a discourse analysis of the relationship between emergent themes identified planners' perceptions that address the research questions. Crowe, Inder and Porter (2015) identify examples of the types of questions that supported the study, including “what do these findings mean (in relation to the research question)?...[and] what contextual factors (... social, cultural, historical) have impacted the findings and their meaning?” (618).

This report is organized into two major sections. The first section examines the population statistics of the regions as they compare to each other, then the policy mechanisms that control growth in each region, and finally explores the history and characteristics of each region independently. The second section explores the how respondent planners perceive issues of growth and regional growth management.



THE STUDY REGIONS



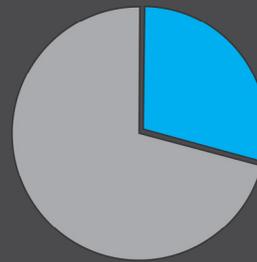
POPULATION

All three study regions had rates of growth significantly higher than the Canadian average of 5.9% between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011); the Alberta Capital Region grew fastest with a rate of 12.1 percent (Statistics Canada, 2011). Growth is expected to continue in all three regions. Each takes a different approach to managing that growth. While the Greater Toronto Area is the largest in terms of population and urbanized area, the Alberta Capital Region has the largest total land area (and the smallest population). The figure below illustrates how each region compares with each other and the rest of Canada.



POPULATION

REST OF CANADA
(33,476,688)
71 %



STUDY REGIONS
(9,690,205)
29 %

GREATER TORONTO AREA

POPULATION (2011): 6.05 MILLION
POPULATION GROWTH (2006-2011): 9.2 %
LAND AREA: 7,124 SQ KM

**MORE THAN 60 % OF
THE STUDY REGIONS'
POPULATION IS
LOCATED IN THE GTA**

METRO VANCOUVER

POPULATION (2011): 2.48 MILLION
POPULATION GROWTH (2006-2011): 9.3 %
LAND AREA: 2,877 SQ KM

ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION

POPULATION (2011): 1.16 MILLION
POPULATION GROWTH (2006-2011): 12.1 %
LAND AREA: 11,933 SQ KM

POLICY MECHANISMS

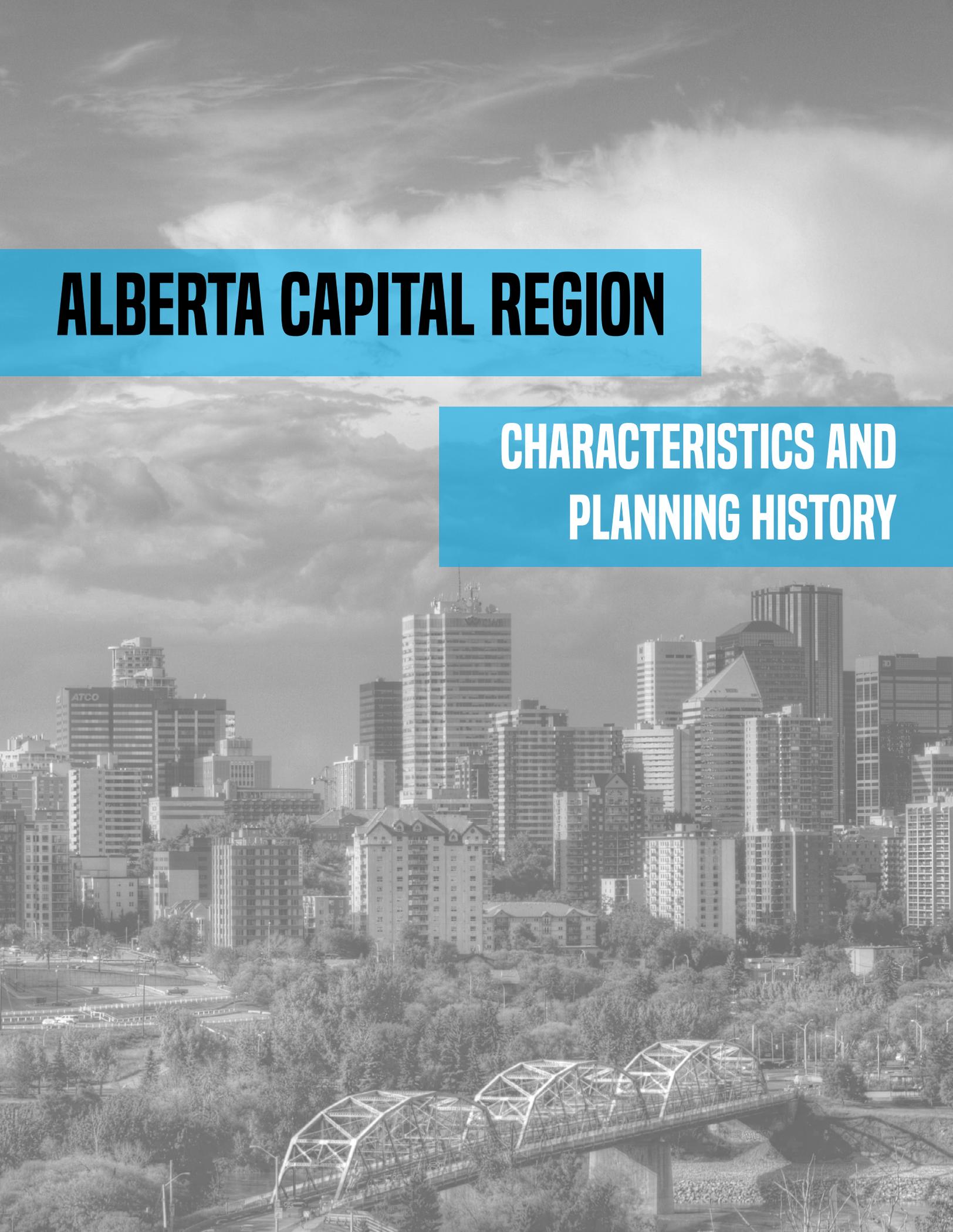
Each province, city and region offers a different constellation of policies that affect land-use planning. An understanding of the complex system of policies that affect planners’ ability to achieve particular land use objectives is important. “Governing regional development policy is a complex task. The environment is characterized by vertical inter-dependencies between levels of government, horizontal relationships among stakeholders in multiple sectors, and a need for partnership between public and private actors” (OECD, 2009, 11). A research goal of the Coordinating Multiple Plans research is to “learn more about the specific contexts in which governments develop policy, adopt particular strategies, and encounter challenges that affect the ability to coordinate planning objectives amidst diverse plans prepared by various actors and agencies” (Grant, et al., 2013, 2).

Table 1, an adaptation of a similar table in Burchfield & Kramer’s report “Growing Pains” (2015, 33), lists policies in each of the study regions that affect regional growth management. In Ontario, many regional and local land-use policies are legislated by the province; in Metro Vancouver and the Alberta Capital Region, the policy is more frequently led by the municipalities or regions. The policies listed in the table are not exhaustive, but rather represent the policies that most influence growth management at a regional scale. The urban containment, intensification and transportation policies of individual municipalities are not listed, with some exceptions: policies from major central cities, such as the City of Edmonton or the City of Vancouver, are included in the table if they appear to have regional influence.

TABLE 1: GROWTH MANAGEMENT POLICIES	POLICY MECHANISMS		
	GREATER TORONTO AREA	METRO VANCOUVER	ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION
ENABLING LEGISLATION (PROVINCIAL)	ONTARIO PLANNING ACT (1990) ONTARIO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT (1994) OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ CONSERVATION ACT (2001) GREENBELT ACT (2005) PLACES TO GROW ACT (2006)	LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (1996) AGRICULTURAL LAND COMMISSION ACT (2002)	ALBERTA LAND STEWARDSHIP ACT (2009) MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2000)
PLANNING GOAL: URBAN CONTAINMENT	GREENBELT PLAN (2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUILD STRONG HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WISE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE (2006): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MUNICIPALITIES DETERMINE DESIGNATED URBAN SETTLEMENT AREA TO 2031. 	AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE (1973) LIVABLE REGION STRATEGIC PLAN (1996): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BY 2021, 70% OF THE CITY-REGION’S POPULATION TO BE LOCATED IN THE GROWTH CONCENTRATION AREA. INTRODUCTION OF GREEN ZONE METRO 2040: SHAPING OUR FUTURE, REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY (2011): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BY 2041, 99% OF NEW GROWTH TO BE IN THE URBAN CONTAINMENT BOUNDARY 	GROWING FORWARD (2009), CAPITAL REGION GROWTH PLAN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CONCENTRATE NEW GROWTH WITHIN PRIORITY GROWTH AREAS PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES EACH MUNICIPALITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PLANNING AND DEVELOPING THEIR OWN LANDS (UNDER THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT). THE WAY WE GROW (2010), MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 STRATEGIC GOALS, INCLUDING: SUSTAINABLE URBAN FORM; INTEGRATED LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION; COMPLETE, HEALTHY AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES; AND EFFECTIVELY MANAGED LAND AND RESOURCES. BY 2018, ENCOURAGE A MINIMUM OF 25% HOUSING GROWTH IN DOWNTOWN AND MATURE NEIGHBOURHOODS

<p>PLANNING GOAL: INTENSIFICATION</p>	<p>PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT (1996, 2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUILD STRONG AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLANNING AUTHORITIES SHALL PLAN FOR, PROTECT AND PRESERVE EMPLOYMENT AREAS FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE USES AND ENSURE THAT THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE IS PROVIDED TO SUPPORT CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS <p>GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE (2006):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TARGET: 40% OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TO BE IN BUILT-UP AREAS OF UPPER- AND SINGLE-TIER MUNICIPALITIES BY 2015 URBAN GROWTH CENTRES: MINIMUM DENSITY OF 150–400 PEOPLE PLUS JOBS PER HECTARE BY 2031 GROWTH ENCOURAGED IN INTENSIFICATION CORRIDORS AND MAJOR TRANSIT STATION AREAS 	<p>LIVABLE REGION STRATEGIC PLAN (1996):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BY 2021, 70% OF THE CITY-REGION'S POPULATION ARE LOCATED IN THE GROWTH CONCENTRATION AREA • REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES (1996) METRO 2040: SHAPING OUR FUTURE, A REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY (2011) BY 2041, 99% OF NEW GROWTH IS IN THE URBAN CONTAINMENT BOUNDARY URBAN CENTRES HIERARCHY (2011) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 40% OF DWELLINGS BY 2041 » 50% EMPLOYMENT BY 2041 FREQUENT TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT AREAS (2011) » 28% OF NEW DWELLINGS BY 2041 » 27% EMPLOYMENT BY 2041 	<p>THE WAY WE GROW (2010), MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROMOTE THE DOWNTOWN AS THE PRIME FOCUS OF EDMONTON'S CENTRAL GROWTH. SUPPORT REDEVELOPMENT AND RESIDENTIAL INFILL IN ESTABLISHED AND MATURE NEIGHBOURHOODS <p>THE WAY WE MOVE (2009), TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDMONTON WILL INTEGRATE LAND USE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS TO CREATE A COMPACT AND EFFICIENT URBAN FORM
<p>PLANNING GOAL: INTEGRATION OF REGIONAL LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION PLANNING</p>	<p>METROLINK (2006):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROVINCIAL AGENCY WITH LIMITED RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSIT PLANNING (I.E., TRANSIT EXPANSION IN THE GTHA) AND FOR OPERATIONS IN TRANSIT NETWORKS IN THE REGION (GO TRANSIT ONLY) ROLE INCLUDES REGIONAL COORDINATION WITH MULTIPLE LOCAL TRANSIT AGENCIES, INCLUDING FARE AND SERVICE INTEGRATION <p>THE BIG MOVE (2008): REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN</p>	<p>GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL DISTRICT (1967)/METRO VANCOUVER (2007)*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MANAGE WATER, WASTEWATER, AND SOLID WASTE. MANAGE REGIONAL LAND USE PLANS, AIR QUALITY, REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING. GOVERNED BY BOARD MADE UP OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL MUNICIPALITIES IN THE REGION <p>TRANSPORT 2021: LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR GREATER VANCOUVER (1993):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JOINT DISTRICT-PROVINCIAL PLAN TO SHIFT MODAL SPLIT AWAY FROM PRIVATE AUTOMOBILE 	<p>THE WAY WE GROW (2010), MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROMOTE MEDIUM AND HIGHER DENSITY RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AROUND TRANSITY CENTRES PREPARE TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLANS AROUND EXISTING AND FUTURE LRT NODES <p>THE WAY WE MOVE (2009), TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDMONTON WILL INTEGRATE LAND USE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS TO CREATE A COMPACT AND EFFICIENT URBAN FORM
		<p>TRANSLINK (1998):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROVINCIAL AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PLANNING AND MANAGING OPERATIONS OF ENTIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT NETWORK <p>TRANSPORT 2040: A TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY FOR METRO VANCOUVER NOW AND IN THE FUTURE (2008)</p>	<p>THE TMP AND MDP WERE DEVELOPED CONCURRENTLY IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION ARE INHERENTLY LINKED</p>
<p>PLANNING GOAL: IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS</p>	<p>GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 YEARS INTO IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING FORECASTS EXTENDED TO 2041 (AMENDMENT 2, 2013) MONITORING: TOWARDS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR THE GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE (2014) DUE FOR REVIEW IN 2016 	<p>LIVABLE REGION STRATEGIC PLAN/METRO 2040: SHAPING OUR FUTURE, A REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 YEARS INTO IMPLEMENTATION OF 1996 PLAN REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY (2011): REVISION OF LIVABLE REGION STRATEGIC PLAN WITH TIME HORIZON OF 2041. MONITORING: PROGRESS TOWARD SHAPING OUR FUTURE: BASELINE ANNUAL REPORT (2014) PLAN DUE FOR REVIEW IN 2016 	<p>THE WAY WE GROW (2010), MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 YEARS INTO IMPLEMENTATION MONITOR POPULATION GROWTH IN DEVELOPING NEIGHBOURHOODS TO INFORM DECISIONS ON FUTURE RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AND EXPANSION THE WAY WE MOVE OUTLINES STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR DEVELOPING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

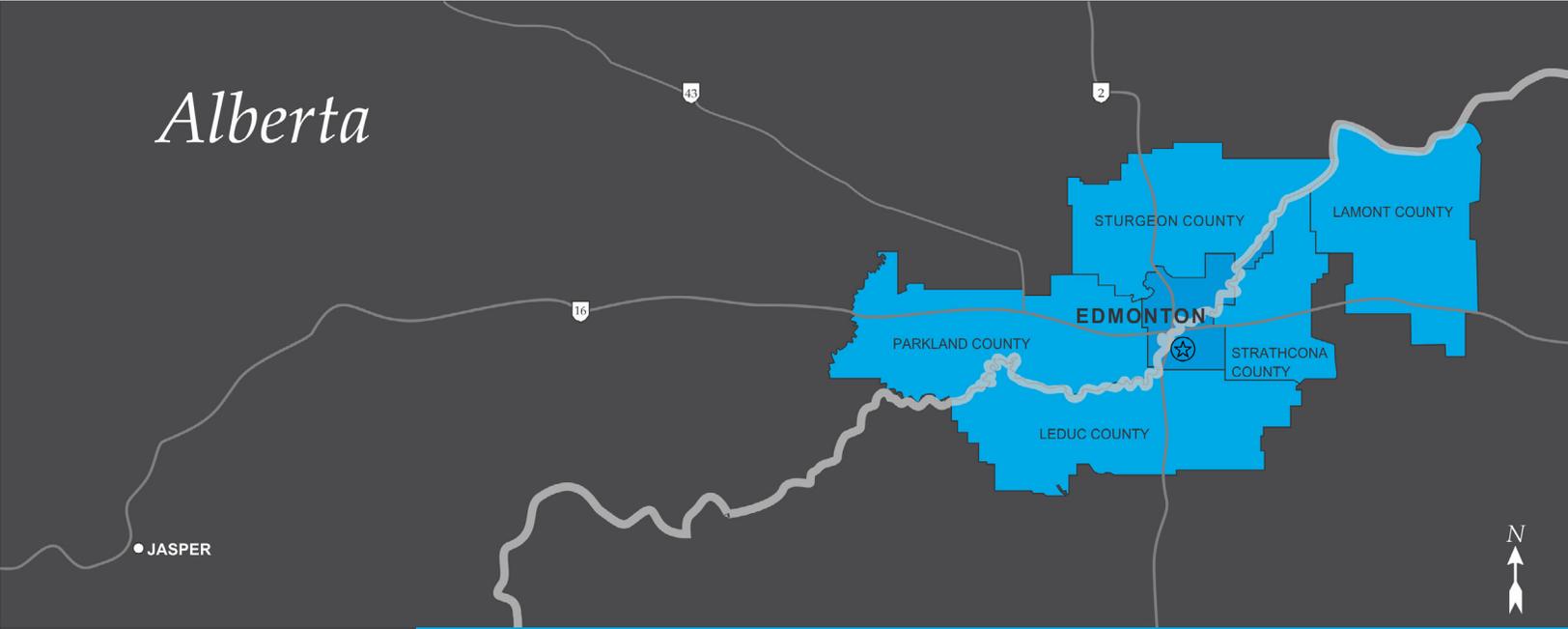
* Metro Vancouver was renamed in 2007. It was originally formed by the Province of British Columbia as the Greater Vancouver Regional District in 1967 (Taylor and Burchfield 2010).

A black and white photograph of a city skyline, likely Edmonton, Alberta. The foreground features a large, multi-arched steel truss bridge spanning a river or valley. The middle ground is filled with a dense urban landscape of various high-rise buildings, including a prominent one with 'ATCO' signage. The background shows a hazy, overcast sky with soft, diffused light. A bright blue banner is overlaid on the top left, and a white banner is overlaid on the right side, both containing text.

ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION

CHARACTERISTICS AND PLANNING HISTORY

Alberta



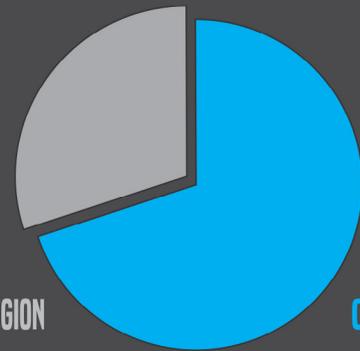
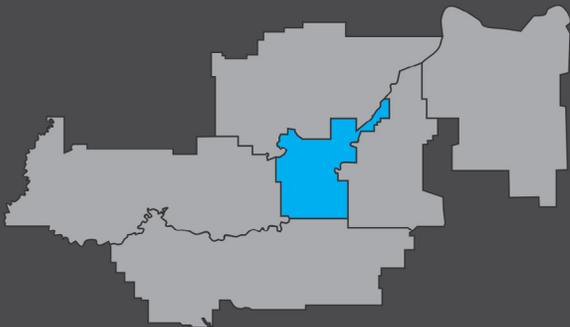
ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION

A BUSTLING NORTHERN METROPOLIS

EDMONTON DRAFTED ITS MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN TOGETHER, IN RECOGNITION OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION.

POPULATION

CENTRAL CITY VS. REST OF REGION



POPULATION DENSITY

ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION: **97 PERSONS/KM²**
CITY OF EDMONTON: **1,187 PERSONS/KM²**

TOTAL LAND AREA
11,993 SQ KM

THE ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION HAS FEW CONSTRAINTS ON GROWTH, WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO ITS COMPARATIVELY LOW POPULATION DENSITIES.

TIMELINE OF MAJOR PLANNING EVENTS

1800

In 1788, Peter Pond of the Northwest Company “built Fort Chipewyan along the Clearwater River and, in 1795, the Hudson’s Bay Company built Edmonton House along the North Saskatchewan River. ...Trade became so extensive that, by 1821, the Hudson’s Bay Company purchased the Northwest Company and their two respective forts in the Edmonton area were joined” (Heritage Community Foundation, 2008). By the late 1800s, Edmonton transitioned from a fur-trading outpost to a coal town, and became a desirable settlement for newcomers.

1900

In the early 1900s, Edmonton expanded with the development of the Canadian National Railway that connected the farmlands and small villages into the central city (Heritage Community Foundation, 2008).

1950

The discovery of oil in Leduc County and the post-war housing shortage led to rapid growth in the region. Post-war Edmonton emerged as a series of satellite and low-density suburbs surrounding the central core. In 1950, the Edmonton District Planning Commission formed as a “voluntary planning commission with rural and urban municipal membership” (Capital Region Board, 2015a). Six years later, the Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Development of Calgary and Edmonton (also known as the McNally Commission) identified issues caused by the rapid sprawling growth and recommended mandatory metropolitan planning.

1960

In 1963, the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission (ERPC) formed as a mandatory regional planning body, as suggested by the McNally Commission (Capital Region Board, 2015a).

1980

In 1981, in an attempt to facilitate better planning in the region, the province split the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission into two: the Yellowhead Regional Planning Commission addressed regional planning matters to the west of the Capital Region and the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission (EMRPC) addressed planning issues in the Edmonton area (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2007, 9). The EMRPC prepared a regional plan, adopted by the City in 1983.

1990

An amendment to the Municipal Government Act in 1995 eliminated planning commissions and mandatory regional planning in Alberta. However, the EMRPC survived as a voluntary inter-municipal agency renamed the Capital Region Forum. The forum established several priorities for coordination. Many of those priorities are similar to issues facing the Alberta Capital Region today: “facilitating cooperation on environmental matters concerning the North Saskatchewan River, grappling with “fringe” area issues, identifying regional information and electronic communications needs, and developing a transportation inventory “ (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2007, 9). The Forum was short-lived; “by 1997, the Forum began to lose members and there was growing discontent” (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2007, 9). The face of regional planning in Edmonton once again changed, and the Forum transitioned to the Alberta Capital Region Alliance (ACRA). The focus shifted towards improved inter-municipal communication and a unified regional vision, rather than growth management or transportation. The new ACRA introduced governance that afforded one vote per municipality, replacing the weighted-voting system that had previously governed the regional planning commissions.

POPULATION AND GROWTH

Edmonton is the smallest and youngest of the three regions; the Capital Region housed 1.16 million residents in 2011. That population, however, is projected to nearly double to 2.05 million by 2044, while the region is expected to add another 860,000 jobs (Capital Region Board, 2015). In addition, the ACR grew the fastest among the study regions, at a rate of 12% between 2006 and 2011. Unlike the other two study regions, the population of the Capital Region is heavily concentrated in one central municipal boundary—the City of Edmonton—which houses 812,000 residents (2011), or approximately 70 per cent of the population of the region. By contrast, the City of Vancouver houses just 26 per cent of the population of Metro Vancouver.

ALBERTA LAND STEWARDSHIP ACT

In 2009, the Alberta provincial government enacted the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA), which introduced sweeping changes to the land-use planning powers of the provincial government. In 2011, Roth and Howie wrote an analysis of the ALSA identifying the Act as a unique document that

integrates social, economic and environmental planning into a scheme of land-development policy and practice. No such overall land-use framework exists anywhere else in Canada or, apparently, in any other jurisdiction in the English-speaking world. The ALSA gives the provincial government broad and extensive powers over development activities on both public and private lands. These powers are exercised through the creation of regional plans and regulations... (Roth & Howie, 2011, 472).

Division one of the ALSA empowers the Lieutenant Governor in Council to create regional planning districts for the purpose of creating regional plans and regulations, with a legislated requirement for public engagement and consultation. While the ALSA gives the Province “extensive powers over development” (Roth & Howie, 2011, 472), it is not immediately evident that the ALSA has, yet, increased provincial oversight in the Alberta Capital Region.

CAPITAL REGION BOARD

The Capital Region Board (CRB), which consists of mayors and Reeves from all 24 municipalities in the region, oversees current regional planning. The CRB formed in 2008 through the Municipal Government Act, making it the youngest regional planning body in the three study areas. “The board’s priority is to create a long-range plan

on regional land use and infrastructure such as roads and transit” (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2015). The board makes decisions through a majority vote that requires at least 17 of the 25 members, or 75 per cent, to agree before decisions are passed; therefore, the City of Edmonton requires 16 neighbouring communities to support projects of ‘regional importance’ before they are implemented, despite the municipality containing 70 per cent of the population (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2015).

The board’s regional plan identifies four primary goals, comprised of regional land use planning (such as protected areas, roads, rail, pipelines and utilities), inter-municipal transit, geographic information services (GIS), and affordable housing (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2015). The board also identifies secondary priorities that “include planning and monitoring of water and waste management, policing, emergency services, social services, recreation and economic development” (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2015). The board’s six guiding principles are intended to “support regional decision-making in the priority areas” (Capital Region Board, 2015b). These principles include the following:

- 1) Protect the environment and resources;
- 2) Minimize the regional footprint;
- 3) Strengthen communities;
- 4) Increase transportation choice;
- 5) Ensure efficient provision of services; and
- 6) Support regional economic development.

Christopher Shear, the interim chair of the Capital Region Board, noted that “the Capital Region is comprised of twenty-five municipalities, populated by well over a million people. We are different, but we have shared goals. ... We live on farms, on ranches, in suburbs, in downtown towers and in small municipalities, but we all feel the same deep attachment to our Region” (2007, 5). Shear’s statement acknowledged the wide variety of interests and perspectives that influence the Growth Plan. A brief review will show that Edmonton’s regional planning history is peppered by controversy regarding representation and the re-organization and re-naming of various planning commissions to appease conflicting perspectives.

Municipal support for the CRB’s plan appears somewhat limited, however, and many planners defer to the Municipal Development Plan of Edmonton instead (EDM11m). Conflicting perspectives and a lack of consistency is also evident in the comparison of the Edmonton city council’s apparent perspective on infill and that of the Mayor. Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, in a recent blog post, discussed the need for a re-invigoration of infill policies in the region by stating that he has “been consistent about why infill is important to [Edmonton]....

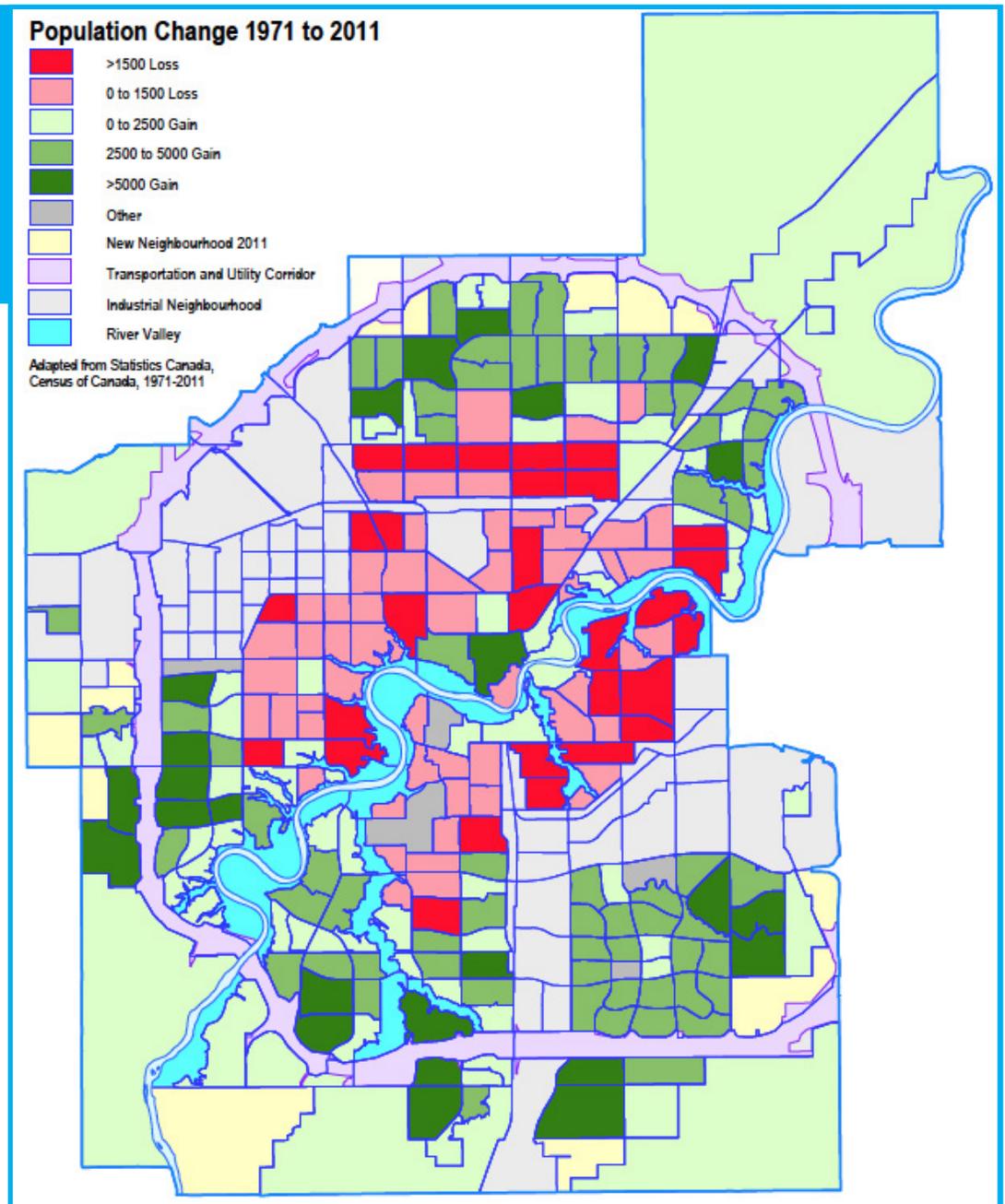
Our mature neighbourhoods have lost 73,000 people in the last 40 years and more...families with children are living in suburban neighbourhoods rather than in our core ones. This has put pressure not only on the health of schools in our mature neighbourhoods but on the small-scale retail that adds so much to community vibrancy” (Iveson, 2015, Online). Figure 1 illustrates how the population of the City has increasingly fled to the surrounding suburbs.

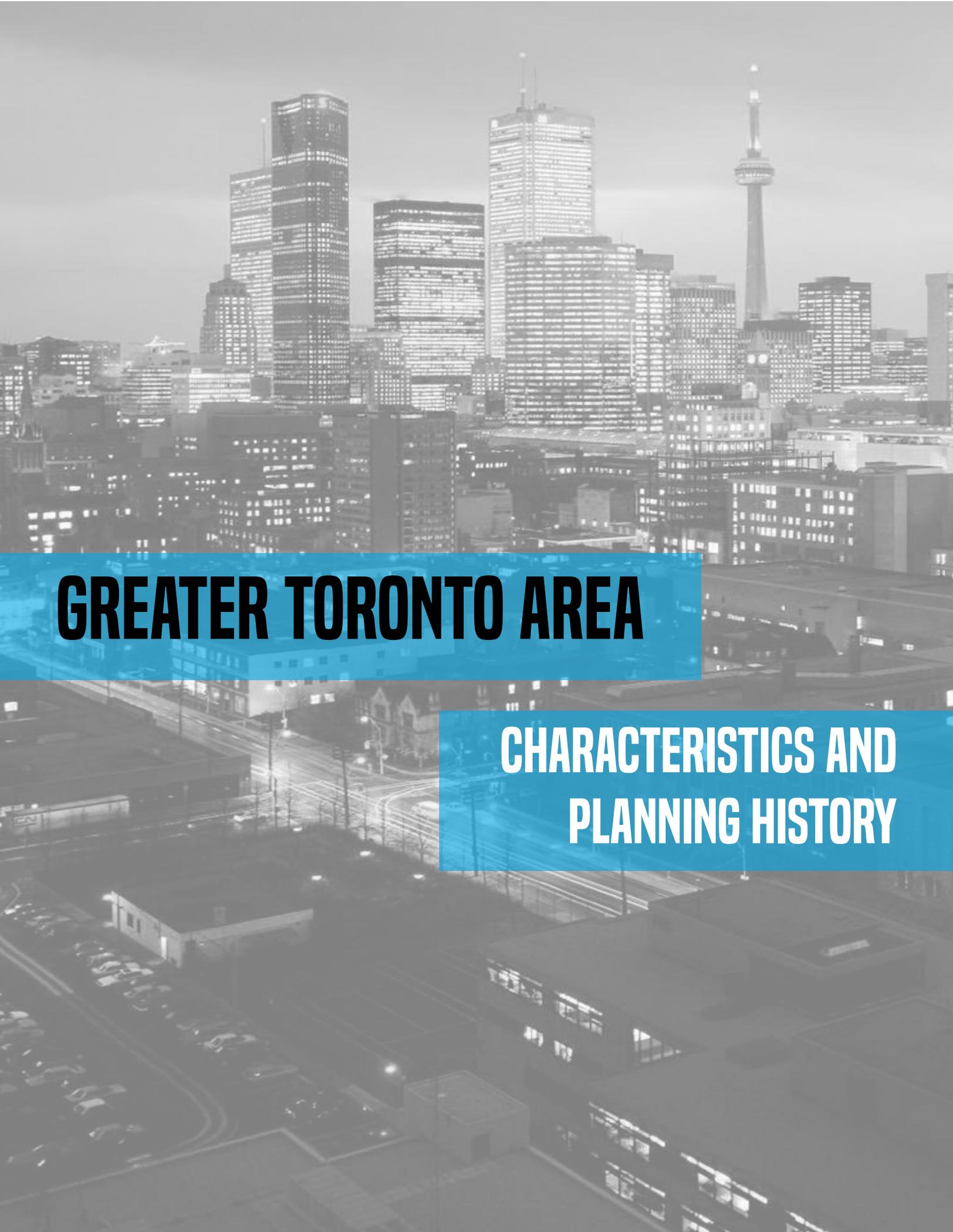
The Capital Region Growth Plan illustrates the lack of enthusiasm towards intensification efforts around the Capital Region; projections in the Growth Plan state that “there could be some intensification and redevelopment of existing built areas in the City of Edmonton and other urban locations; [however], development across the Capital Region would generally continue ‘out,’ not ‘up’ to higher densities” (2009, 36). As of 2011, the City of Edmonton’s housing stock offers 58.6% single-family detached homes, 13.2% semi-detached or town homes, and 24.5% apartments (Statistics Canada, 2011). Nearby, the City of St. Albert’s housing stock is 74% single-family detached homes (City of St. Albert, 2012). The Alberta average share of single-family detached homes is approximately 64% (Statistics Canada, 2011). Both cities in Alberta offer the lowest housing diversity of the study regions, with Metro Vancouver offering just 34% single-family detached, and the GTA offering 44% (Burchfield & Kramer, 2015). The lack of housing diversity and density in the Capital Region’s cities are amplified in suburban and rural areas, where the single-family detached home dominates the market.

FIGURE 1

HOW THE CITY OF EDMONTON'S POPULATION HAS DE-CENTRALIZED

Source: Iveson, 2015, Online





GREATER TORONTO AREA

CHARACTERISTICS AND PLANNING HISTORY

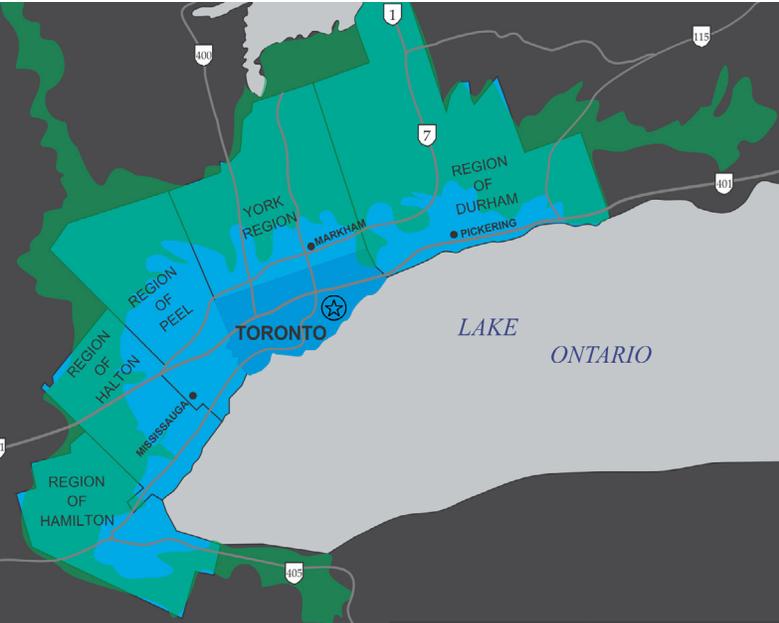
Ontario

LAKE HURON

LAKE ONTARIO

WATERLOO •

LONDON •



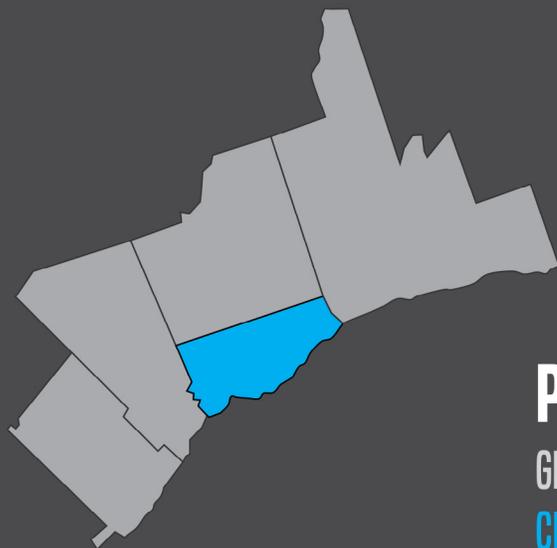
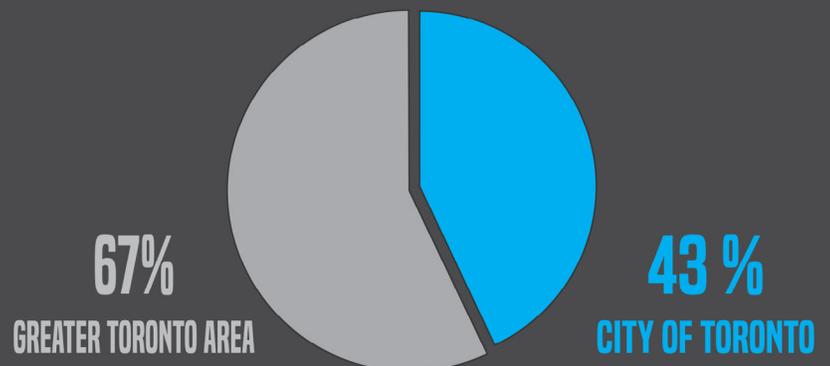
GREATER TORONTO AREA CANADA'S MOST POPULOUS URBAN REGION



ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, THE CITY OF TORONTO HAS THE **SECOND HIGHEST SHARE OF FOREIGN BORN RESIDENTS OF ANY CITY IN THE WORLD**. IMMIGRATION HELPS TO DRIVE GROWTH IN THE REGION.

Source: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/265/hdr_2004_complete.pdf

POPULATION CENTRAL CITY VS. REST OF REGION



TOTAL LAND AREA
7,124 SQ KM

POPULATION DENSITY

GREATER TORONTO AREA: **850 PERSONS/KM²**
CITY OF TORONTO: **4,150 PERSONS/KM²**

THE CITY OF TORONTO IS RANKED THE **FOURTH MOST LIVABLE CITY IN THE WORLD** ACCORDING TO *THE ECONOMIST* GLOBAL LIVABILITY RANKING 2015.

Source: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/08/daily-chart-5>

TIMELINE OF MAJOR PLANNING EVENTS

1940

Richard White (2007) conducted an extensive history of growth management strategies. He found that “the [Toronto] region may well have a record of planning, but...it also has a record of non-planning” (4). The planning board released the first master plan for the Toronto region in 1943, supported by a war-facilitated public acceptance of government intervention and economic expansion; however, the 1943 plan served as a symbolic arrival of ‘international planning ideas, such as the...’neighbourhood unit’ and the expressway network” (2007, 10), rather than a policy that left a distinctive mark on the region. The citizen-led planning board that drafted the plan had little authority to implement any policy and few initiatives ever followed.

1950

Filion (2007) noted that planners in the 1950s promoted the addition of tall mixed-use buildings into the primarily low density residential landscape to facilitate convenient shopping, often accompanied by surface parking lots and wide automobile-oriented avenues. Development in 1950s Toronto took the form of planned communities, such as Don Mills and Meadowvale, “structured around focal points, ranging in a hierarchy from convenience shopping at the local level to large (sometimes regional) malls surrounded with office space and high-density residential developments” (Filion, 2007, 6-9).

The Metro Toronto Planning Board (MTPB) introduced a policy in the 1950s that helped constrain the expansion of the urban area by identifying a need to “provide alternative servicing throughout the defined metropolitan urban area” (White, 2007, 17). Planners identified a lake-based supply system as the most safe and efficient method for providing essential servicing to the region. “The link between this key engineering principle and the chosen regional form was direct and explicitly stated: if the region was to be serviced by a centralized lake-based system, the most appropriate regional form was a large, single urbanized area” (White, 2007, 17).

1960

In 1966, the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Transportation Study (MTARTS) sub-committee reinforced the lake-based servicing strategy when they released the “Choices for a Growing Region” report, which suggested that lake-side confinement of the urban development would offer the greatest benefit to the region (White, 2007, 20). The late 1960s also marked the start of inter-regional transit in the GTA: In 1967, Government of Ontario (GO) Transit formed as an inter-regional bus system and a single-rail line to connect the Toronto and Hamilton Regions (GO Transit, 2014)

1970

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the provincial government restructured the municipal governments, creating a two-tier system with the five regional municipalities that now make up the Greater Toronto Area (White, 2007, 35). The other affected municipalities remained as ‘lower-tier’ municipalities, with control over local issues but did not receive provincial funding. Each of the ‘upper-tier’ regional municipalities became ‘planning areas,’ with their own plans to govern them. In 1973, the Province also established the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, to provide unique controls over the environmentally sensitive and important Niagara Escarpment lands. Cullingworth (2015) argues that the Act provided a unique discretionary planning control to planners in the region, because “traditional zoning instruments could not provide the control needed in a large, varied and environmentally sensitive area such as the Niagara Escarpment” (87); these discretionary tools, however, are only applicable in the Escarpment sub-area of the GTA.

TIMELINE OF MAJOR PLANNING EVENTS

Despite the planning activity of the previous decades, “from the mid-1970s to the introduction of Places to Grow in 2004, the Toronto metropolitan region had no regional planning body and no regional plan” to control growth (White, 2007, 32). The five regional municipalities of the GTA continued to plan relatively independently throughout the 1980s—a period that saw a high “rate of suburban sprawl [and]...years of feverish housing growth” (White, 2007, 36).

1980

In 1994, NDP premier Bob Rae asked Anne Golden, head of the United Way at the time, to chair a task force (often called the Golden Commission) to determine how best to manage growth across the GTA. The commission suggested creating a single Greater Toronto Council to plan and oversee regional services such as transportation, waste management, and economic development (Lorinc, 2011). In 1995, however, the new Conservative Harris government dismissed the commission’s suggestions. As a result, “Toronto lacks a local-government institution that covers all or most of the GTA. ...The establishment of such an institution...was the main recommendation of the [Golden Commission],... to this day...the most...comprehensive analysis of governance issues in Canada’s largest metropolitan area” (Sancton, 2004, 26).

1990

During its term in the mid-1990s, the Harris government promoted low-density suburban development. “In 1996, the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) was re-written and previous policies aimed at curbing urban sprawl, protecting agricultural areas, and promoting public transportation were removed” (MacDonald & Keil, 2012, 132). White (2007) argues that regional planning in the GTA remained relatively unaffected by the Harris government changes because the absence of planning since the 1970s resulted from a lack of municipal acceptance of Provincial interference and a lack of political will at the Provincial level to intervene in municipal planning—not due to policy change.

The next wave of significant planning began in the early stages of the millennium. In 2003, the Liberal Party took office after pledging to create a greenbelt around the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In December of that year, the Liberals passed the Greenbelt Protection Act to create a moratorium on development in the new Greenbelt surrounding the GTA, while they established a Greenbelt Task Force to consult with the public on how to make plans for the conservation area (MacDonald & Keil, 2012). Following consultation, in 2005 the *Greenbelt Act* passed, and subsequently the Greenbelt Plan made the Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt a permanently protected area “spanning approximately 1.2 million hectares, [and containing] the areas already protected under the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. The Greenbelt [protects] against the loss of agricultural land, natural heritage systems, and water resource systems and to support the economic and social activities associated with rural communities” (MacDonald & Keil, 2012, 126).

2000

POPULATION, GROWTH AND GOVERNANCE

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is among the fastest growing, most populous, and most urbanized regions in North America. “It is the country’s leading economic and financial hub and is considered by many the most multiculturally mixed city on the planet” (Keil & Boudreau, 2005, p. 9). The GTA comprises five regional municipalities (Halton, Peel, York, Toronto, and Durham) in Southern Ontario, and spans a total land area of 8,309 km² (Taylor, 2010, p. 8); increasingly, the Hamilton region’s addition to the other five regional municipalities, comprises the GTHA with a population of more than 6.5 million residents in 2011.

Defining municipal and regional boundaries is a key challenge to planning in the Toronto area. Taylor (2010, 6) notes that “the public discourse in any given place will contain multiple concepts of what constitutes the ‘region’. In Toronto...media often refer to the Greater Toronto Area...although it has never corresponded to a governing body.” Many other terms define the region, including the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), Metropolitan Toronto, Metro, and simply Toronto. Further complicating the issue, census boundaries, used for deriving statistical data, do not always align with other regions. For example, the census metropolitan area (CMA) and the area defined as the GTA differ significantly, with almost all of the Regional Municipality of Durham excluded from the CMA.

The GTA is one of the fastest growing regions in Canada, and is already the most populous. While the City of Toronto contains more than 2.65 million residents (or approximately 41% of the population of the GTA), forecasts suggest the surrounding will grow rapidly, adding

almost 1.9 million people to the suburban GTA. Peel alone is projected to see its population increase by 630,000 over 2012–36. Halton is projected to be the fastest-growing census division in Ontario over the projection period, with growth of 67.2 per cent to 2036 (Government of Ontario, 2013).

The GTA provides one of the most complex growth management scenarios; the most recent population projections forecast adding more than the entire population of Metro Vancouver to the already populous GTA, bringing the population to more than 10.1 million by 2041 (Hemson Consulting Ltd., 2013). Complicating the regional growth management efforts, “the GTA, despite common perceptions, is not a unit of government. It is instead an amalgam of distinctly separate municipalities: the City of Toronto and the four two-tier regional

governments...surrounding the city. In effect, there is no overall regional government...encompassing the entire GTA” (Bourne et al., 2011, 241). The lack of a regional authority makes effective implementation of regional growth management strategies difficult.

In an area as large, prominent and important as the GTA, planning and urban issues are scrutinized outside of the academic environment as well. According to his article in *The Walrus*, “How Toronto Lost Its Groove,” John Lorinc states that the GTA

finds itself increasingly crippled by some of North America’s nastiest gridlock, congestion so bad it costs the region at least \$6 billion a year in lost productivity. Sprawl, gridlock’s malign twin, continues virtually unchecked, consuming farmland, stressing commuters, and ratcheting up the cost of municipal services (Lorinc, 2011, Online).

Another critical element in understanding planning in the GTA is governance. Lorinc’s observations of governance illustrates its complexity:

municipal government across the GTA is a cumbersome, expensive, balkanized embarrassment, the legacy of ill-considered decisions by successive Ontario governments. ... Despite Harris’ ambition to reduce government, the GTA remains staggeringly over-governed, with 244 municipal office holders, including twenty-five mayors (2011, Online).

The complexity of twenty-five incorporated municipalities, each with mayors, interests, and policy, makes coordination imperative to ensure the successful implementation of the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan. To mitigate conflicts, provincial legislation in Ontario provides a hierarchy of plans (where lower-tier plans must conform to those of upper-tier government), yet “day-to-day planning and development control is largely implemented by municipal governments”, which often results in planning fragmentation (Taylor, 2010, 56).

THE GREENBELT AND GROWTH PLANS

In response to growth pressures in the hinterlands of the region, the Government of Ontario enacted the Places to Grow Act in 2005. From this act, the Province released the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (henceforth, the Growth Plan) in 2006 to direct future growth and development in the GGH in conjunction with the Greenbelt Plan (Environmental Defense, 2013). The ambitious growth management policy was awarded the Burnham Award by the American Planning Association. “Borrowing largely from principles of ‘smart growth,’ the Growth Plan can be boiled down to one word:

‘intensification’” (Harbell, 2007, 5). The Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) pair in discourse to indicate where the Province does not want to grow and where it does, respectively.

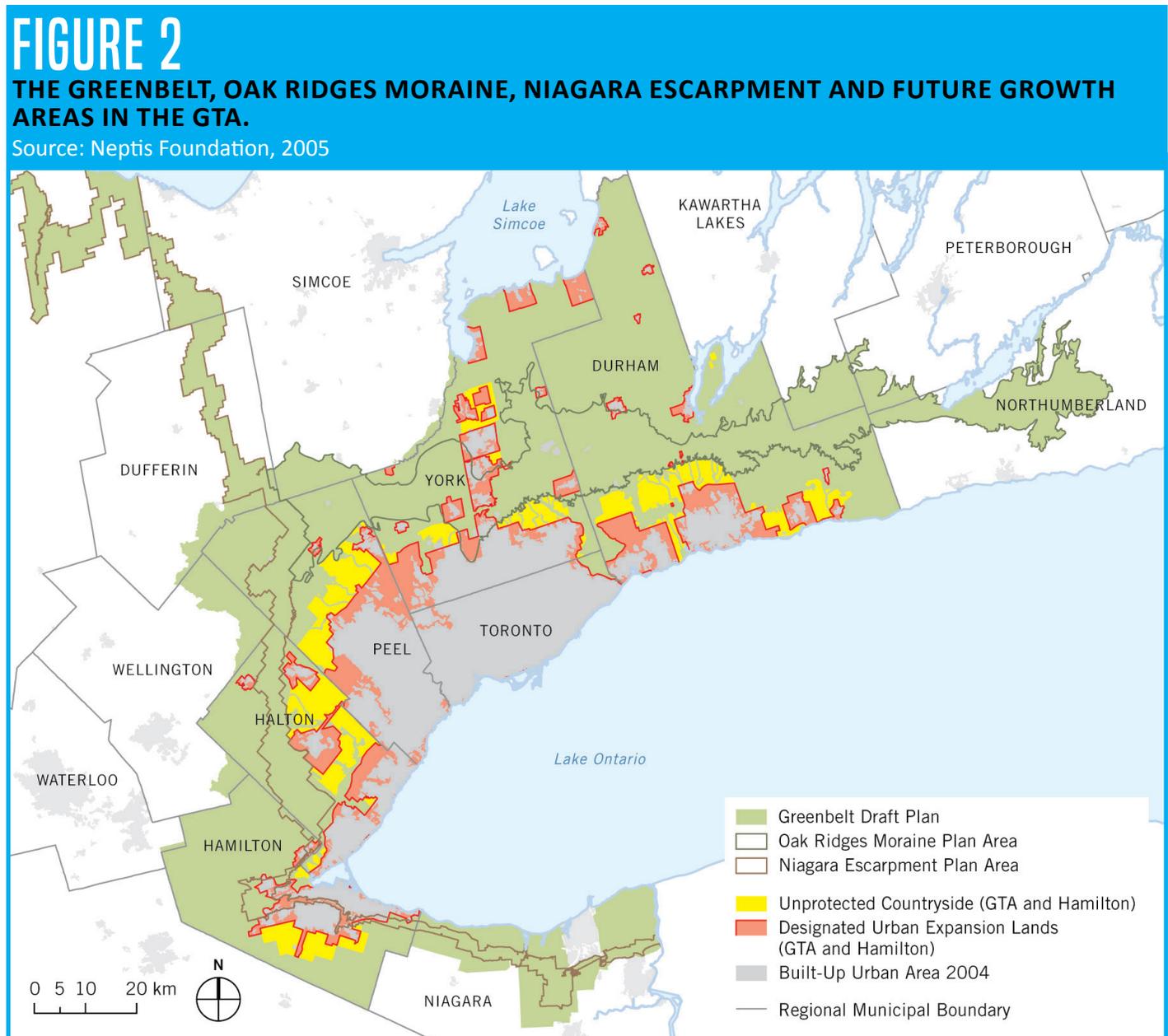
According to the Province, the 25-year Growth Plan

aims to revitalize downtowns...; create complete communities...; curb sprawl and protect farmland and green spaces; and reduce traffic gridlock by improving access to a greater range of transportation options (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2013).

The effectiveness of the Greenbelt and Growth Plans in constraining growth and protecting environmentally sensitive areas is still in question. Since the Greenbelt’s establishment, “the expansion of commercial and

residential development in the Golden Horseshoe has continued. Massive infrastructure projects, the lingering prospect of an airport in Pickering and the transfer of contaminated soil into the region remain real threats to the ecologically fragile Greenbelt lands” (Reeves, 2014).

The Greenbelt Plan (and the Growth Plan) is scheduled for review in 2015. According to Susan Swail, coordinator of Ontario’s Greenbelt Alliance, “the 2015 review is an opportunity to close...loopholes and make the plan stronger so that it does what” it was intended to do (Reeves, 2014). Figure 2 illustrates that the designated urban expansion land and the unprotected countryside (where growth may occur) may lead to increased pressure to develop and expand into the Greenbelt.



An aerial photograph of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The image shows the city's dense urban core, including the Vancouver Convention Centre and the Vancouver SkyTrain. The city is situated on a peninsula, with the Burrard Inlet to the north and the False Creek to the south. In the background, the snow-capped mountains of the Coast Range are visible under a clear sky. A blue horizontal band is overlaid on the image, containing the text 'METRO VANCOUVER' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

METRO VANCOUVER

An aerial photograph of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The image shows the city's dense urban core, including the Vancouver Convention Centre and the Vancouver SkyTrain. The city is situated on a peninsula, with the Burrard Inlet to the north and the False Creek to the south. In the background, the snow-capped mountains of the Coast Range are visible under a clear sky. A blue horizontal band is overlaid on the image, containing the text 'CHARACTERISTICS AND PLANNING HISTORY' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

CHARACTERISTICS AND PLANNING HISTORY



METRO VANCOUVER

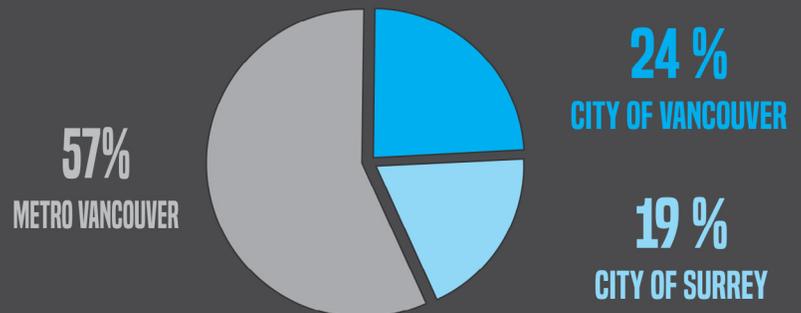
WESTERN CANADA'S LARGEST URBAN REGION



THE 1976 LIVABLE REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN AIMED TO CREATE 'REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES' CONNECTED BY 'A GOOD TRANSIT SYSTEM.'
 THE CITY OF VANCOUVER AND THE CITY OF SURREY HAVE EMERGED AS THE TWO LARGEST TOWN CENTRES, CONNECTED BY THE SKYTRAIN SYSTEM.

POPULATION

REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES VS. REST OF REGION



TOTAL LAND AREA
 2,877 SQ KM

POPULATION DENSITY

METRO VANCOUVER: 861 PERSONS/KM2
 CITY OF VANCOUVER: 5249 PERSONS/KM2
 CITY OF SURREY: 1607 PERSONS/KM2

THE CITY OF VANCOUVER IS RANKED THE THIRD MOST LIVABLE CITY IN THE WORLD ACCORDING TO *THE ECONOMIST* GLOBAL LIVABILITY RANKING 2015.

Source: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/08/daily-chart-5>

TIMELINE OF MAJOR PLANNING EVENTS

1940

In 1949, the Province of British Columbia established the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB) “on the conviction that each community and each individual through [their] Council has a stake in the growth and development of the Region as a whole” (LMRPB, 1966, ii). The LMRPB covered an area spanning from Vancouver to Hope, covering more of the Fraser Valley than the present day Metro Vancouver board.

1950

In 1953, the City of Vancouver received its own charter (under the *Vancouver Enabling Act 1949*), allowing the City to “supersede and replace...*the Vancouver Incorporation Act 1921*” (Vancouver Charter, 1953, 1) and plan outside of the Local Government Act. In the late 1950s, Vancouver developed plans for an extensive freeway system leading out of the downtown core, cutting through several ‘slum’ neighbourhoods, specifically the ethnic neighbourhoods of Hogan’s Alley, Strathcona and Chinatown (Villagomez, 2011).

Regional planning changed in the Vancouver in the 1960s. In 1966, the LMRPB published the Official Regional Plan for the Lower Mainland Planning Area. It was to serve as a policy framework to form local policies in, provide “guidelines for private actions, and [act] as a vehicle for coordinating the activities of the senior governments and their Agencies within the Region, but it [was] not a rigid blueprint” (LMRPB, 1966, 2).

1960

The Official Regional Plan adopted by the LMRPB caused friction with the Province

because it could be used to criticize provincial land use and infrastructure investment decisions... With almost half the provincial population residing within the Board’s jurisdiction, the provincial government decided that a decentralized administrative and planning system would be more desirable from a political point of view. The Board was dissolved in 1968 by the province and its functions were taken over by the four regional districts (Tomalty, 2002, 6).

The Greater Vancouver Regional Board (GVRD) eventually formed as one of the four regional districts.

The public release of the freeway plan in 1967 caused protests across the city, concentrating on the more than 600 homes scheduled for demolition in Strathcona (Villagomez, 2011). However, Vancouver continued with its plans, and “began the leveling of the Hogan’s Alley neighbourhood as well as parts of Chinatown. For several decades Hogan’s Alley had been the centre of Vancouver’s black community” (Roy, 2011). Public opposition to the projects halted development, and a year later in 1968 the freeway proposal collapsed; “however, by that time, 15 blocks of Strathcona had already been purchased and cleared for urban redevelopment... [including]...the construction of the current Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts—the only two pieces of the freeway system to be constructed” (Villagomez, 2011).

TIMELINE OF MAJOR PLANNING EVENTS

In 1973, the New Democratic Party (NDP) implemented one of the most significant and enduring growth management strategies—the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Prior to the ALR, “it was estimated that 6000 hectares of farmland per year was being lost to urbanization and non-farm uses in BC” (Runka, 2006, 1). To halt the loss, in 1972 the government imposed a ‘freeze’ on farmland development, then “in early 1973, the Land Commission Act and regulations were passed and an arms-length, independent Land Commission (LC) was appointed to establish and administer the zone that was to be called the [ALR]” with the primary purpose to “preserve agricultural land for farm use; and to encourage the establishment and maintenance of family farms” (Runka, 2006, 2). Combined with the physical constraints, such as oceans and mountains, the ALR has constrained growth in Metro Vancouver.

1970

In 1976, after two years of public engagement and consultations, the GVRD released another influential policy in the 1976 Livable Region strategy.

The 1980s saw intense struggle over proposed redevelopment of agriculture land protected by the young ALR. “In Delta, for instance, a proposed development on the Spetifore Lands produced intense conflict ... after the area was approved for withdrawal from the Agricultural Land Reserve by the provincial government. In Richmond, a bitter and protracted struggle was waged between the Save Richmond Farmland Society and the municipal council over development of the Terra Nova farmlands” (Tomalty, 2002, 5).

1980

In 1983, the provincial government stripped planning powers from regional districts, indicating that planning was municipal jurisdiction. The GVRD survived as a small division that provided data but made no plans. The Livable Region Plan survived as an advisory document only, without statutory authority (Tomalty, 2002, 7).

In 1989, the GVRD initiated a lengthy process to update the Livable Region Plan. The district lacked authority to plan regionally, so “the district had evolved a new approach to regional coordination based on public education and consensus building” (Tomalty, 2002, 7). Development of the new plan took more than five years and involved extensive public consultation and media campaigns. After publishing its findings, “the regional district turned its attention to building a consensus among member municipalities on how to flesh out the vision in terms of urban structure, protected areas, housing targets, and population and employment distribution. The resulting Livable Region Strategic Plan was approved in principle by the GVRD in December 1994 and finally adopted in January 1996” (Tomalty, 2002, 7). In 1995, the newly elected NDP government introduced the *Growth Strategies Act* (since added to the *Local Government Act*) to return regional planning powers to the regional districts.

1990

In 2011, all member municipalities of Metro Vancouver, TransLink, and surrounding regional districts passed “Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping Our Future”; the strategy “represents the collective vision for how [the] region is going to accommodate the 1 million people and over 500,000 jobs that are expected to come to the region in the next 25 years. ... It contains strategies to advance five goals related to urban development, the regional economy, the environment and climate change, housing and community amenities, and integrating land use and transportation” (Metro Vancouver, Online, 2015).

2010

POPULATION, GROWTH AND GEOGRAPHY

Home to a population of 2,476,145 (Statistics Canada, 2011), Metro Vancouver is the undisputed metropolitan centre of Canada’s west coast and the third largest in Canada. Vancouver provides the major west coast port for Canada, connecting it to foreign markets, while the city-region remains an attractive destination for foreign immigration.

The region comprises 21 municipalities, one treaty first nation, and one electoral area. Unlike the GTA, the political boundaries of Metro Vancouver align perfectly with the CMA as defined by Statistics Canada. The Pacific Ocean to the west, the North Mountain Range to the north, the Fraser Valley to the east, and the United States border to the south bound the 2,822 square kilometer region; these natural barriers have helped to control the region’s growth since the establishment of Fort Langley, a Hudson’s Bay Company trading post, in 1827 (Parks Canada, 2008). The physical setting of Vancouver has also shaped the mindset of its planners and residents (Bourne, et al., 2011); the 1976 Livable Region strategy identified Vancouver as “an enjoyable place to live. No other Canadian metropolitan region is so close to mountains and water, farmlands and forests, yet so cosmopolitan in its variety of culture, educational opportunities and business activities” (GVRD, 1975, iv).

“The Vancouver Region is widely recognized as one North American jurisdiction where strong growth management plans and policies have been put in place in order to control urban sprawl” (Tomalty, 2002, 2); between 2001 and 2011, the population grew by 16%, whereas the urbanized area expanded by 4% (Burchfield, Kramer, and Taylor, 2014). From the implementation of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in 1973, to the Livable Region Strategy (1976/96), to Metro 2040 (2011), the region has a long history of growth management efforts.

LIVABLE REGION STRATEGY

In 1976, after two years of public engagement and consultations, the GVRD released the 1976 Livable Region strategy (LRS). The elaborate growth management strategy included

- a vision of a more compact urban region based on improved transit and reduced car use;
- population growth targets for each municipality in the region with growth concentrated in metropolitan core and constrained up the Fraser Valley;
- job growth directed to regional town centres second-

order municipal town centres connected by high quality transit; and

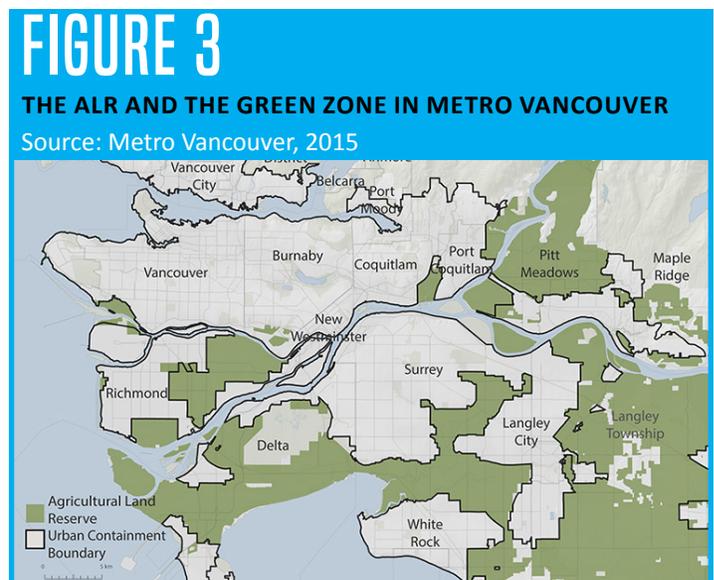
- a regional green system made up of recreational lands and environmentally valuable lands (Tomalty, 2002, 6).

The ‘regional green system’ became the Green Zone (Figure 3), “designed to protect areas with great economic, environmental, recreational and ecological value...[including] the farmland in the agricultural land reserve” (Hodge & Robinson, 2001, 341). The short-lived greenbelting policy in the *Land Commission Act* enabled the Green Zone.

The 1976 LRS identified ‘attitudes to growth’ – how issues of growth were perceived in the region, including “several contradictory notions:

- Growth is the root of urban ills, such as crowding and pollution;
- Growth is the cause of urban prosperity;
- Growth must be limited because... land resources are fixed;
- Growth produces economies of scale which permit greater diversity of jobs and other economic and cultural opportunities;
- The rate and kind of growth or change and its unpredictability are more upsetting than the actual quantity of growth” (GVRD, 1975, 5).

The LRSP remains one of the most influential documents for regional development in Vancouver. Figure 3 illustrates the combination of natural barriers and legislative barriers to growth that have contributed to the successful constraint of urban area growth in the region.



PERCEPTIONS OF GROWTH

The planning profession in Canada is diverse; “planners’ activities include designating land use, designing social and community services, managing cultural and heritage resources, creating economic capacity in local communities and addressing transportation and infrastructure...” among many others (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2015). Planners may work in the public sector for municipalities, regions or provinces, or in the private sector as consultants or with developers. Regardless of the role a professional planner takes, growth affects their professional activities; planners are often involved in the development, coordination, and implementation of growth management policies.

In many cases, growth is considered good for cities and municipalities. It brings increased revenue to the region and supports local businesses and services. However, respondents acknowledge that “growth is a double-edged sword” (VAN01m), that brings increased pressure on municipalities. Academics believe that “good planning can ensure that growth occurs where it is both appropriate and needed” (Hansell, Jr. in Degrove & Metzger, 1991, i); planners express a similar perspective that they should “bring about some certainty through planning to show where growth is appropriate, where it isn’t, and how it should happen” (VAN01m).

While every province, region and municipality takes a different approach to regional planning, planners widely acknowledge the role that effective coordination plays in the profession and growth management. Coordination, one respondent explained, “is a definite priority ... [among] departments...interdepartmentally, as well as with the region” (GTA18f). Scholars find that “vertical and horizontal coordination are critical for successful growth management but are often inadequate or lacking” (Bengston, et al., 2004, 271).

Despite the academic and professional acknowledgment of the benefits of growth management and the coordination of planning efforts, significant challenges remain. Growth management requires a complex balance of protectionist policies for natural space and farmland (and industrial and employment lands) and development policies for residential, commercial and industrial growth. The challenges caused by growth management are perceived differently by planners throughout the study regions. Some identify successes in management, while others express frustration with the planning process or lack of

coordination.

Through a thematic and discourse analysis of planners’ responses during interviews in 2014, three factors that influence growth management were identified. The factors were synthesized from many varying perspectives expressed by respondents. For example, in Metro Vancouver respondents discussed the influence of natural physical barriers and legislated growth constraints on how the region has grown. In contrast, respondents from the Alberta Capital Region discussed how the lack of physical barriers to growth resulted in a lack of growth management. For respondents in the Greater Toronto Area, the Greenbelt and the Growth Plan were acknowledged for their success in slowing peripheral growth. The perspectives expressed in each region were synthesized into factor one: restraints to growth.

The factors of growth management resulting from analysis of the interviews were the following:

1. **Restraints to growth, either physical or legislative;**
2. **Inter-governmental coordination and cooperation among member municipalities, and vertically through government levels; and**
3. **Culture of planning that represents an acceptance of plans, goals and visions among planners, politicians and residents.**

The study regions struggle to coordinate growth management policies. Even planners in those regions that have been critically lauded for their growth management strategies, such as Metro Vancouver, still express concern.

In 2004, Boyle et al. (24) identified common challenges that occur in regional growth management planning:

1. The tension between ingrained municipal autonomy and regional scale planning needs;
2. The appropriate role of planning leadership and the extent of public engagement; and
3. The distinction between goals to preserve local quality of life versus those to promote sustainability regionally.

Respondents identify similar challenges to those identified by Boyle et al.; in the Alberta Capital Region, for example, the biggest challenge to successful growth

management planning is the tension between the varying perspectives of rural villages, small towns and big city municipalities. While Boyle et al. succeed in identifying some challenges, other barriers are not identified in their analysis. For example, in the GTA one of the biggest challenges identified is poor vertical coordination with the province. The Government of Ontario introduced growth management and greenbelt legislation in 2003 and 2004, yet respondents frequently identify interactions with provincial ministries, such as the Ministry of Transportation, as major barriers to effective coordination and implementation of the provincial policies at the municipal level. A more complete version of Boyle et al.'s list of barriers to regional growth management coordination would at least include the lack of consistent application of growth management strategies vertically through government levels as a barrier.

Boyle, et al.'s obstacles to regional planning are identified by respondents in each study region. None of the barriers, however, have a simple solution; actions needed to overcome these barriers will vary among the regions and their particular planning contexts.

RESTRAINTS TO GROWTH

The first element planners identified that may contribute to effective growth management are restraints to growth. These restraints may be natural and physical, such as large mountain ranges or oceans, or policy driven, such as Provincial legislation. Each of the study regions possesses a different constellation of physical and legislative restraints, and each region's growth pattern reflects the effects of these restraints (or lack thereof). Figure 4, adapted from the 2014 Neptis Foundation brief *Rethinking Sprawl*, illustrates how the urban area of each region has grown since 2001; Metro Vancouver remains a reasonably contiguous and constrained urban system, which contrasts with the Alberta Capital Region that features the large City of Edmonton and dozens of detached satellite towns. The GTA is a mix of the two, with a large contiguous urban area, separated from satellite towns by the Greenbelt. The white area in Figure 4 represents growth between 1991 and 2001; in the GTA, that decade of growth illustrates the pressures on the periphery of the urban area that led to the establishment of the Greenbelt in 2003.

Even though the representation of the Alberta Capital Region in Figure 4 does not contain Lamont County to the northeast, the contrast between urban area and undeveloped land is dramatic. The large, central City of Edmonton with 70 percent of the population is easily identified as separate from the much smaller surrounding communities and expanse of rural land (represented

in black). The Capital Region stands out as the only study region with no significant physical or legislative restrictions on growth; it lacks the mountains or oceans of Vancouver or the strict provincial legislation of Ontario and the GTA. After decades of relatively unconstrained growth, the Alberta Capital Region now spans 11,993 km² with a population density of 97 persons per square kilometer (Capital Region Board, 2015). In contrast, Metro Vancouver covers just 2,877 km² and supports 860 persons per square kilometer, with a density of 5249 persons per square kilometer in the City of Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2011). The City of Edmonton houses 70% of the population of the ACR on just under 6% of the land suggesting successful constraint; nonetheless, the population density of Edmonton remains comparatively low at 1,187 persons per square kilometer.

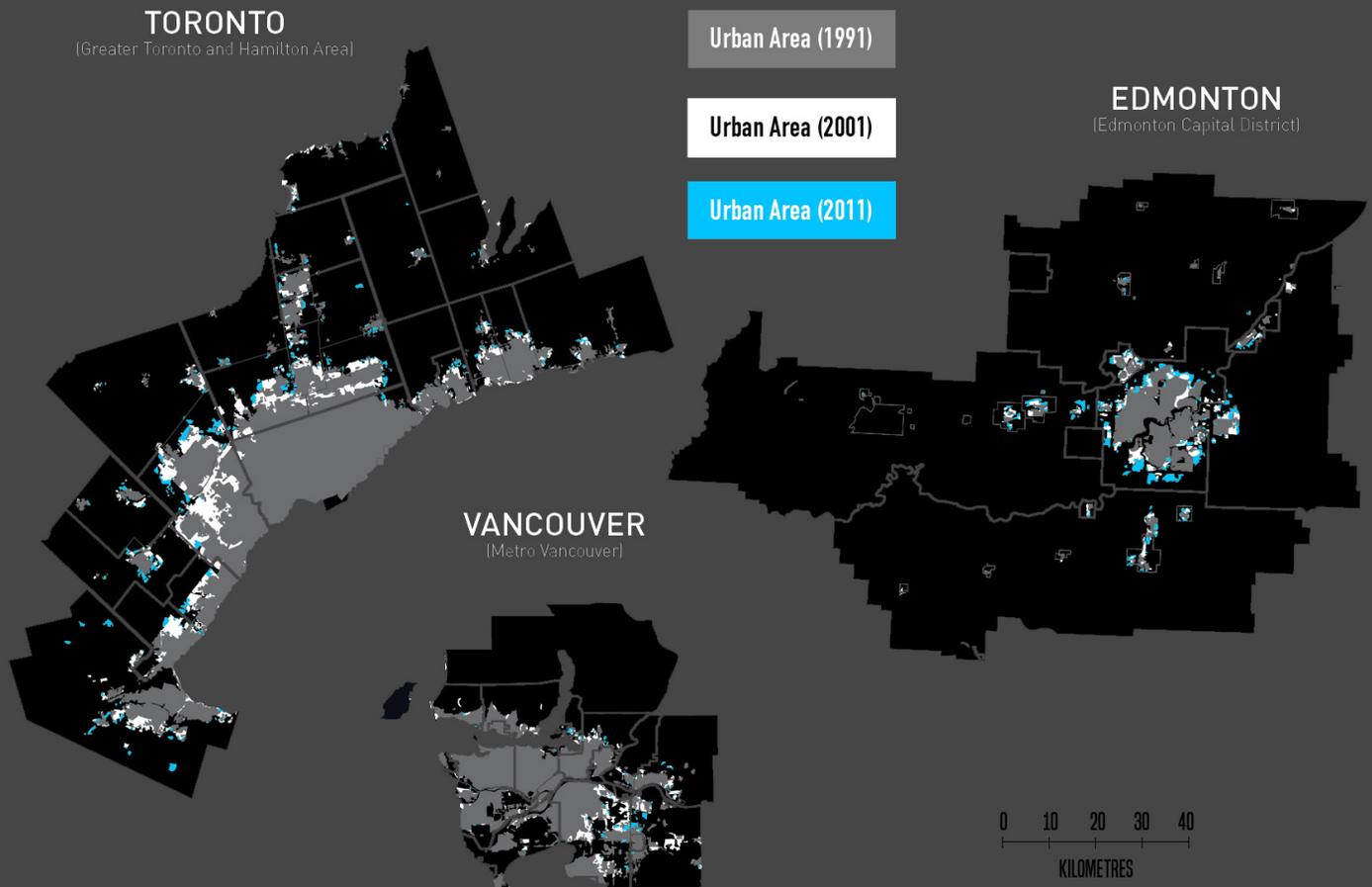
Despite the low population density throughout the Alberta Capital Region, respondents suggested that, while Edmonton has an interest in infill development, they "also have growth that is real [and] that [they] cannot accommodate with infill" (EDM09m); the statement illustrates the approach to planning in the Alberta Capital Region. The successes of other Canadian metropolitan regions and cities would suggest that if the region desired infill and increased density, it would be possible, given the population density under 100 persons per square kilometer in the Capital Region; however, the respondent noted "10,000 dwelling units...[were] approved in the City of Edmonton in 2013. Eighty percent of those [were] not in infill situations, they [were] in greenfield situations. That's why we have to expand horizontally as well."

The Greater Toronto Area's restraints on growth are both physical and legislative. The great lakes and United States border serve as physical restraints, while the Provincial Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan provide legislative restraints. While the plans have been heralded internationally, they are met with mixed perceptions by planners in the GTA. Planners in York Region indicated that "there are good things about the province and the Growth Plan. [They have] put us back in front of...big planning exercises; rather than responding to where the industry wants to go, we are in the driver's seat" (GTA27f). Planners with the City of Markham believe that the Provincial plans "have been really effective, [but] there has been unintended consequences. [The two plans] have had the effect of driving up the cost of low-density housing" (GTA11m). The latter concern is particularly troubling for Markham, where planners indicate low-density housing has driven the market.

The constraints on growth are particularly evident in the smaller communities that border the Greenbelt.

FIGURE 4

HOW THE STUDY REGIONS HAVE GROWN



ADAPTED FROM: NEPTIS FOUNDATION, 2014

http://www.neptis.org/sites/default/files/gc_briefgraphic2b-01.png

For example, three quarters of Caledon's land is within the Greenbelt, Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine (GTA01m), yet it is designated for growth under the Growth Plan. One planner with Caledon summarized his frustration as "we have 600 square kilometers of land, and yet we don't have the ability to have that land available for investors that [come and want] to build within our community for industrial or commercial.... [So], how are we to meet allocations of growth for jobs, if, for various reasons, we do not have the ability to complete the plans to develop the land for job allocation?" (GTA01m). Another planner noted that "with the [Growth Plan]...one of the bigger challenges for us is going to be that nobody knows where this intensification is going to happen" (GTA25m). The uncertainty surrounding how to implement the Growth Plan presents a challenge in the GTA.

In Metro Vancouver, mountains, oceans, an international border, and the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve constrain growth. In the 1970s, the British Columbia government established the ALR to protect the limited agricultural land in the province. In Vancouver, the formation of the ALR, combined with the introduction of the 1976 Livable Region Strategy, led to a new vision for the region; one planner identified that planners in the regional district "all believed in the livable region plan. We believed in the idea of town centres. We believed in the idea of a strong downtown. We believed in the idea of mixed-use densification. We believed in rapid transit, alternates for the car. On all fronts, we were kind of in accord" (VAN13m). His response paints a rosy picture, and the evidence suggests that to some extent the growth management objectives of the plan were

successful. The 'town centres' have developed into the major centres of the City of Vancouver and the City of Surrey, and the smaller municipal town centres of Richmond, New Westminster, Maple Ridge, Coquitlum and Langley. Further, the town centres are connected by bus routes and the SkyTrain system. The system employed by Metro Vancouver has managed to disperse growth and development more evenly throughout the region than in some other regions while constraining the physical growth of the region to just 4 percent over the last decade.

The outlook of respondent VAN13m, however, is not consistently optimistic. He also discusses contradictions and challenges in the region:

Inner cities, because they have huge demands on their land...[have] an inclination...to convert industrial land, with the thought that at a regional level, industry goes to the next level out in the ring. Suburban municipalities sometimes don't want that. They have other uses for their lands, or they think industry should just be more integrated in principle. [So there is a] difference of opinion that expresses itself in plans, and there's almost no mechanism, at least here in Vancouver or in BC, to resolve those things. The regional district... in Vancouver is a weak federation: it's not a strong regional government. And in that weak federation, they will try to identify issues but often have very little power...to get what they're concerned about fixed (VAN13m).

The contradictions in approaches to industrial and agricultural land conversion, as well as how inner versus outer cities perceive growth is also an issue of inter-governmental coordination.

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

The second factor identified by planners is inter-governmental coordination of growth and growth management strategies; this coordination must occur both among local and regional municipalities and vertically through government levels. Nearly every respondent identified coordination as a priority for their department and organization; however, frequently respondents were unable to provide examples of effective inter-governmental coordination (or in some cases, intra-governmental coordination).

The Alberta Capital Region's inter-governmental coordination struggles with conflicting perspectives between the large central city and its surrounding towns and villages; in some cases, respondents perceive these challenges as cultural. One respondent discussed the development of an Area Structure Plan (ASP), stating that "we really struggled to bring local and political

interest into that ASP, recognize adjacent interest from Spruce Grove and the City of Edmonton, environmental interests and transportation interests from the Province. Trying to...align and appease, all those various groups and agencies in a local land use planning document...was really tough" (EDM06f). Challenges of inter-governmental coordination are not new in the Alberta Capital Region; the CRB acknowledges that regional planning commissions have struggled to find an appropriate inter-municipal representation model for decades. EDM11m also identified conflicting perspectives as a challenge:

At the moment in the regional plan, the challenge ... is that we are dealing with very different perspectives. ...Simply put, we have a county perspective, a village perspective, a town perspective, a city perspective, and a big city perspective (EDM11m).

Conflicting perspectives is not a challenge unique to the Alberta Capital Region; Geuras and Garofalo (2011) acknowledge "frequent conflicting perspectives between individual administrators, their colleagues, and the organization as a whole" (150) in most public administration fields.

The context of each of the three study regions differs by province, political system, population, and natural and legal constraints to growth. For example, the Regional Municipality of York in the GTA covers a land area of 1,762 km² and has a population of 1.033 million (2011)--approaching the population size of the Alberta Capital Region, and a land area of more than half of Metro Vancouver. Respondents often referred to York Region as "a leader in Ontario in planning" that "has done a really good job of coordinating their plans. [The Region] has a really strong planning department and they have a really strong new regional official plan" (GTA12f). Despite York Region's success, however, the lack of a supra-regional governing body, akin to the Metro Board in Vancouver or Capital Region Board in Edmonton, means that the GTA lacks inter-regional municipality collaboration and planning. The GTA does make use of the provincial Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) as a mediating body for regional planning issues. Respondents in the GTA, however, often perceive the OMB as a barrier to effective planning and coordination, as well as a factor of plan proliferation in the region. A respondent from the Regional Municipality of York believes that the OMB "does play a lot in what we do in terms of our policies and plans, because more often than not we are being challenged to go to the board" (GTA09m).

The Greater Toronto Area is extensively studied for its economic importance, cultural diversity, and many

challenges, and is both heralded and critiqued for its aggressive provincial legislation. What is striking about the responses from planners in the GTA is that despite provincial legislation governing where to grow (*Places to Grow Act*, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe) and where not to grow (*Greenbelt Act*, the Greenbelt Plan), the provincial ministries appear to pose a significant barrier to the successful implementation of the policies by the regions and municipalities; many respondents specifically critique the Ministry of Transportation. For example, a respondent from Markham noted that the municipality has

been told we need to...intensify, but when we go to intensity policies,...we're not getting cooperation with some of [ministries]. Hydro is another one, or else the Ministry of Natural Resources. Our biggest issues are more with the provincial agencies (GTA15m).

After providing another practice example of conflict, he reiterates that what "seems to be the biggest issue [in the GTA is] the disconnect between provincial agencies. Each one has their little kingdom" (GTA15m).

Individual regions and municipalities are legislatively required to conform with the provincial Growth and Greenbelt Plans, but the provincial ministries, such as the Ministry of Transportation, are exempt from that obligation. As a result, respondents suggest that the ministries often act in ways that directly conflict with the efforts of the lower-level governments. Perhaps this conflict is best illustrated by a planner with the Town of Caledon:

The largest challenge for us is working with senior levels of government, [such as] the Ministry of Transportation.... [For example,] ... It took quite a bit of time working with the Ministry of Transportation for them to finalize where that bypass would happen for [our] village along the 410 extension. ...They ended up doing a bypass on one side of the village as opposed to the other. Now, here we are 10 years later, [and] ...they want to put it back to the other side so they can get the number of lanes that they require for future needs. The problem is that ... it directly impacts our 300 acre industrial park [that] we are at the point of doing site plan approvals. ...We had [up to] 4 million square feet of industrial space lined up, which is huge for Caledon and our needs for infrastructure development charges. ...This was a large US developer [that] invested...millions of dollars..., and it just got frozen by Ministry of Transportation (GTA01m).

The planner stressed that the development freeze caused by the Ministry of Transportation prevented Caledon from meeting employment targets set by the Province in the Growth Plan.

The relationship with the ministries is further strained

by delays; a respondent went so far as to suggest that the province "shuts down when three or four people go on holiday," ultimately arguing that the province has no accountability in planning (GTA21m). Responses were not entirely negative, however; in Pickering, a respondent stated that the Seaton Area Structure Plan was a successful case and an example of "very good coordination with the provincial government, the Ministry of Transportation, the local municipalities like Pickering and Ajax, and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority" (GTA19m). Such responses of effective vertical coordination are not offered frequently in the interviews; more often, respondents believe that the upper-level government ignores policies or plans when they do not align with current political objectives (GTA22f). In the GTA, the responsibility of implementing the objectives of the Growth Plan falls to the regional and local municipalities. As one planner indicated, "frankly, getting agreement on an approach with a province and a regional and a local municipality is not [simple]. ... We all have different priorities that we're dealing with.... Our concern is to implement the provincial plans in the local context, but in a manner that is most advantageous for our [local] land use planning objectives" (GTA29m).

Another concern raised by respondents in the GTA is conflicting or overlapping time lines for review of policies for compliance with upper-level strategies, such as the Growth Plan or the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). One respondent from Pickering said that

there are so many multiple plans: the Growth Plan, Oak Ridges [Moraine] Plan, source water protection plans, Metrolinx [Big Move] Plan, [et cetera]. And we planners are just running behind, just making compliance to these different plans.... By the time we update the PPS 2005 policy, we have the 2020 PPS already. We are not even done our exercise for the 2005 PPS policy so far (GTA19m).

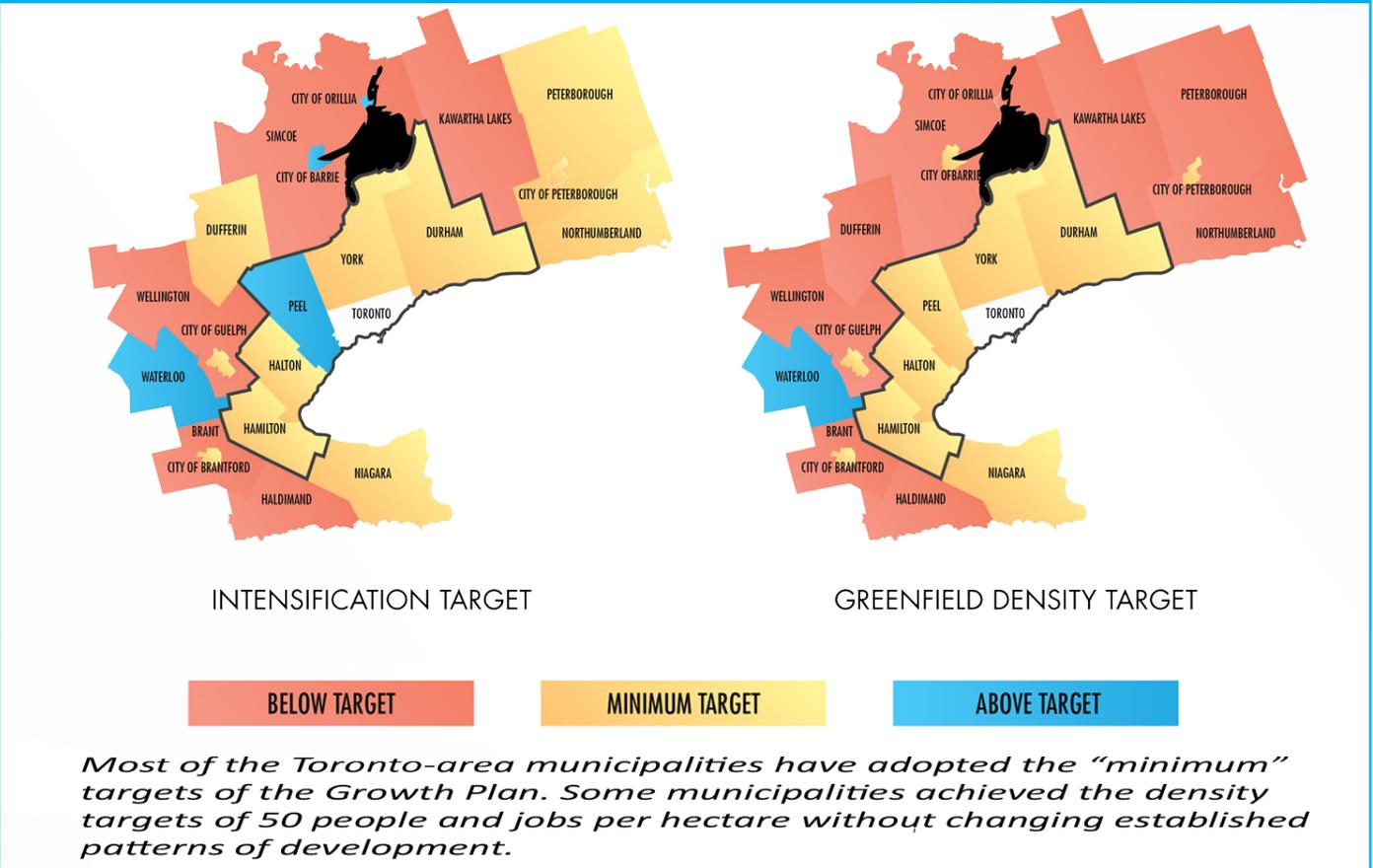
Another respondent from the Town of Oakville noted that coordination exercises with the *Planning Act*, the Growth Plan, and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), all of which have different review periods, cause municipalities to be stuck in "this continuous [review] cycle" for plans and policies (GTA18f). Some respondents believed that there was too much involved in the review process to adhere to the 5-year review time line; it is more often 15 or 20 years (GTA09m). The process leaves planners in the GTA feeling like "a hamster in a wheel....It is a huge challenge to keep everything up to date" (GTA27f). Another planner indicated that "we have to implement the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan, but their reviews and changes to them are not coordinated to make sense for us to do that" (GTA29m).

The combination of endless reviews, conflicting time lines,

FIGURE 5

MINIMUM AS MAXIMUM: HOW GTA MUNICIPALITIES ARE MEETING TARGETS

Source: Burchfield & Kramer, 2015



and uncoordinated provincial policies and initiatives mean that, in many municipalities, there was little real progress towards implementation of the Growth Plan policies. According to one respondent, “when the growth plan came out, and [the Province] drew a line in the sand saying everything has to conform to the Growth Plan by this date, I think two, maybe three municipalities in the Growth Plan in Greater Toronto actually did it” (GTA18f). An unintended consequence of the challenges is that municipalities in the GTA have little to no incentive or capability to implement policies that exceed minimum targets set by the province (Figure 5).

While the GTA possesses both physical (Great Lakes) and legislative constraints on growth, respondent identify a lack of vertical coordination and cooperation in the region. Without effective inter-governmental coordination, planners struggle to effectively implement the Growth Plan. The Region of Peel is the only region in the GTA that exceeds minimum intensification targets; the Regional Municipality of York is identified as a leader in planning, while conforming to minimum standards. The statistics of growth in the GTA suggest that the provincial legislation

has had the effect of slowing peripheral growth in the region; the population grew by 18 percent between 2001 and 2011, while the land area grew by just 10 percent, which represents a marked improvement over the 26 percent land area growth over the previous decade (Burchfield & Kramer, 2015). Respondents opine that improved coordination between governments in the GTA could further improve the implementation of the Growth Plan policies.

Of the three study regions, Metro Vancouver presents the best case for successful inter-governmental coordination. Respondents from the region expressed the least frustration with the planning process of any of the study areas. Metro Vancouver is not without its issues, however. As in the Alberta Capital Region, some Vancouver area respondents expressed concern about the inter-municipal tensions identified by Boyle, et al.: one planner noted that “there is an inclination by both politicians and planners to feel responsible for the area where they are officially designated to have responsibility. So municipal planners and politicians might feel a strong need to coordinate in their municipality, but not across municipalities, and they

might not feel [inclined] to coordinate with the regional government” (VAN13m). He continued by arguing that conflicting interests across municipal borders resulted in differing outcomes that conflict with the regional plan. He offered the example of business parks:

if you were to ask the regional planners, they would say it is important to locate jobs near transit [and]...the municipal planners in Vancouver... would agree. If you asked planners in suburban municipalities, they would say, “Well, often the office park...converts out of the industrial park and [we] cannot really help it.” And, by the way, it brings jobs to their municipality, which their government wants. So that [creates] demand to use cars rather than transit, which doesn’t really help us all, and that is...an overt contradiction”[with our plans].

VAN13m was not the only planner to identify conflicting interests as an issue. A planner from the regional planning department, noted that

our biggest challenge is that we are looking at 22 different municipalities.... So, from a governance perspective, you have the City of Vancouver that is primarily developed and looking at infill; a totally different universe from the Township of Langley out on the fringe of our region where they are really feeling pressure to convert agricultural land, industrial land, and so on. So it’s different kinds of pressures.... That makes it difficult to collectively agree on a set of planning policies (VAN03f).

However difficult it is to collectively agree on planning policies, planners in Metro Vancouver appear to have found a way, as evidenced by VAN13m’s response that “the issue of a lack of coordination was [never] a very big issue for [Vancouver], ...because we were philosophically on the same wavelength. We all believed in the...[Livable Region] Plan.” Another respondent highlights that the regional growth strategy is “an example of an amazing level of achievement to get 22 local governments together to do a regional plan...having to reach 100 percent agreement in order to have it pass. That...is an example that would stand up anywhere in the world as [a] very high level of coordination” (VAN10m). Other respondents believe that success in Metro Vancouver results from “the governance ...that is really actually quite good in BC. The Regional Context Statement legislation or the Official Community Plans [that must] be consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy,...is pretty strong” (VAN04m1).

CULTURE OF PLANNING

The third factor identified by planners that may affect regional growth management strategies relates to the local and regional culture of planning: the extent to which planners, politicians, and residents agree on an approach

to development and growth management. The “culture of planning” is related to the challenges identified by respondents as conflicting perspectives; however, the cultural element indicates that planners, politicians and residents share a common vision for the future of a region, and act in a manner that supports that vision consistently.

The Alberta Capital Region appears to struggle with a consistent vision for growth; for example, a planner with the City of Edmonton recounted instances where

we want to encourage smart growth. And that is in our strategic plan [that]...has been approved by council. But whenever we bring a higher density residential to council, they always reject it. And so even though they have smart growth in their strategic plan, they’re continuously rejecting having a variety of housing types. ... What they’re trying to accomplish is these big lots and these big houses, and that is what people want. That is what they feel is the market, and people are buying them up like crazy. But it’s also making it so that it’s not affordable for the residents, because if it was higher density then there would be more taxes and more people to be able to share in that taxes. So, I think there has to be a balance there, and [Council has] to stand behind what they put in the strategic plan. ...That can be a challenge” (EDM01m).

Even if planners in Edmonton share a consistent vision for smart growth, the politicians or the residents of the region do not seem to share the vision; conflicting perspectives make implementation of policies difficult. Balancing the different interests in the Alberta Capital Region to implement smart growth strategies may be particularly difficult when, politically, “in Alberta, environmental and climate change planning is approached very differently [from elsewhere in Canada] and is frankly discussed a whole lot less in Alberta; it’s almost a taboo topic” (EDM04f). Further, “the counties don’t believe in general that people’s lives and properties should be interfered with. And it’s just an underlying perspective” (EDM11m). The varying approaches and perspectives identified by planners illustrate a different planning culture than what may exist in the other study regions; there appears to be little motivation to constrain growth in the Alberta Capital Region. For example, one planner identified cultural inertia: “in a city like Edmonton, where we have been focused on car-oriented suburban development and the market supports that very strongly, the tendency is to just keep creating that [type of development] instead of doing anything different” (EDM05f).

In the GTA, provincial pressure constrains growth in the region; however, achieving a consistent approach to planning is difficult. The GTA operates in a two-tier government system that has twenty-five incorporated

municipalities and mayors, with five regional municipalities, nearly 250 other politicians and countless staff members. The two-tier system, combined with the lack of a supra-regional government (like the one suggested by the Golden Commission), creates an environment that supports more than twenty-five different visions and approaches to planning that are poorly coordinated across municipal boundaries. The provincial Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement provide a planning framework and targets, but the visioning process falls to the lower-tier municipalities, which are not always in favour of implementation. In one instance, a planner of a lower-tier municipality went so far as to say that “we have really tried to, I suppose you might say, evade the implementation of what is coming down from the Province” (GTA29m). Nonetheless, the lower-tier municipalities are taking steps to, at the very least, implement the minimum requirements of the Growth Plan. It is unclear from the interview respondents to what extent politicians and residents support those actions across the GTA.

Unlike the Alberta Capital Region or GTA, Metro Vancouver’s approach to regional planning is “consensus building, as opposed to the control and command or issuing policy statements from higher levels of government, whether it’s provincial or regional like in Ontario” (VAN03f). The general satisfaction with the planning process expressed by respondents in Vancouver contrasts the other two regions, and suggests that the consensus building approach may be a more effective approach to regional growth approach than the top-down approach applied elsewhere. A planner with TransLink summed up well: “without good plans, [Vancouver] wouldn’t have happened [this way]. If we had just willy-nilly [developed] this whole 2,300 square kilometer region, it would have looked...quite different” (VAN04m1). The shared vision of a constrained region extends beyond planners in Vancouver to the community; “there are a lot of synergies between what the development community wants to do here and what the public aspiration are” for the region (VAN06m). Further, “there [are] lots of people in the community that are very engaged.Planning is almost a hobby [in Vancouver]. It is [very] common that there’s some sort of planning-related article in the news every day” (VAN01m). It is that high level of public engagement, inter-municipal coordination, and multi-disciplinary synergy that has helped to create a ‘culture of planning’ in Metro Vancouver that typically supports regional growth management.

The successful control of growth in Metro Vancouver, however, has had unintended consequences; one respondent referred to the “industrial land crunch in the region” (VAN03f). Industrial lands provide employment

for a growing population, and there is a “real push to utilize agricultural land as a result....[So the challenge is] how do we accommodate legitimate land uses on a really constrained land base?” (VAN03f). Another respondent also acknowledges that “the industrial lands are crucial to [Vancouver’s] future, and we protected them...regionally through our new Regional Growth Strategy” (VAN01m). There is increasing pressure to convert both industrial and agricultural lands to other uses, typically residential; for that reason, regional coordination and effective implementation of the RGS is increasingly important.

Metro Vancouver has both physical and legislative restraints on growth; combined with Metro Vancouver’s consensus building approach to planning, respondents perceived generally effective horizontal and vertical cooperation in the region. Respondents believed that planners, politicians, and residents were generally “on the same wavelength,” which resulted in a cultural acceptance of planning objectives in the region. While Metro Vancouver does not perfectly accomplish each of the three elements discussed, it is the best example of the case studies in terms of planners perceptions and the physical constraint of growth. The region has its problems, many of which, such as affordability and transportation, could not feasibly be addressed in this research. Nonetheless, planners in the region expressed the most satisfaction with the profession, the effectiveness of the plans, and coordination. The limited physical growth of the region despite high population growth supports planners’ perspectives that Metro Vancouver successfully implemented the regional growth management strategies.

CONCLUSION

This report sought to answer the following question: How are issues of growth and growth management coordination perceived by planning professionals in the Greater Toronto Area, Metro Vancouver, and the Alberta Capital Region? Analysis of planner's responses suggested that three factors influence regional growth management approaches:

- 1. Restraints to growth, either physical, such as oceans, mountains and rivers, or legislative, such as BC's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) or Ontario's Greenbelt Act;**
- 2. Inter-governmental coordination and cooperation among member municipalities, and vertically through government levels; and**
- 3. Culture of planning that represents an acceptance of plans, goals and visions among planners, politicians and residents.**

Each region experiences and applies each factor differently. The region's history, governance system, relationship with the province, and physical context all influence how the planners perceived growth management.

Respondent's perspectives suggest that Metro Vancouver's growth management strategy is the most successful. Respondents identified two factors from the 1970s that positively influenced the coordination of regional growth management: (1) the introduction of the ALR, which combined with natural barriers, provided constraints to growth, and (2) the 1976 Livable Region Growth Strategy, which introduced voluntary regional planning through the development of a shared vision and the use of the mediating Metro Board.

The Vancouver region, however, still struggles with several planning issues; for example, balancing the perspectives of planners and politicians from 22 incorporated municipalities is a challenge. Further, the successful constraint of growth in the region has led to pressure to convert industrial and agricultural land to residential uses, particularly in the peripheral communities.

Respondents in the Alberta Capital Region express varied concerns. Primarily, conflicting perspectives and a lack of consensus among municipalities concern Edmonton area planners. Respondents also expressed concern about a lack of consistent application of policies; for example, the

City of Edmonton's policies support infill development, but (according to respondents) council consistently rejects infill development in favour of peripheral low-density housing. Further, the Alberta Capital Region lacks significant physical or legislative constraints to growth, which has allowed it to sprawl out over the largest land area with the lowest population density of the three study regions.

The Greater Toronto Area presented one of the most complicated case studies. The GTA itself is not a political entity; rather it is comprised of five regional municipalities with no supra-regional body to facilitate inter-governmental coordination. Because the study had a larger number of respondents from the GTA, the responses proved more varied. The most common barrier to regional growth management identified by respondents in the Toronto area was a poor relationship with the Provincial ministries--specifically the Ministry of Transportation. In general, respondents believe that the ministries operate with little accountability, and often in contradiction to the goals and objectives of the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

In the three study regions, planners indicate that coordination is a top-priority for their departments. Respondents also frequently believe that growth management is important, but concede that growth management and regional coordination is often ineffective, citing only a few examples of success in each region. Of the three regions, Metro Vancouver had the highest level of perceived success in both coordination and growth management. A summary of respondents' perspectives can be found in Table 2.

There are several limitations to these findings. First, while every attempt was made to objectively analyse the data, as with any qualitative analysis, the personal bias of the researcher could influence the findings. Secondly, the interview questions asked of respondents focused on the coordination of plans, not specifically on growth management. Several respondents discussed growth management, growth and related issues, nonetheless, but the context of the responses influence the findings.

No respondents in any of the three regions were provincial planners, which represents a gap in perspectives. The lack of provincial perspectives is particularly evident in the GTA, where the primary barrier to effective regional growth management identified was a poor relationship with the

provincial ministries.

Finally, the findings of this research are case studies intended to contribute to theory. Further research would be required to test whether factors identified by respondents in the study regions are valid in other regions before they can be applied to practice. There are many opportunities for future research. Other challenges to effective regional growth management and coordination were noted by respondents beyond what were addressed in this study. For example, respondents discussed the impact of transportation on growth management. Nearly every respondent identified the role that high-order, high-quality transit plays in effective growth management. Future studies could address how planners perceive the impact of transportation on regional growth management.

Additionally, respondents acknowledged the unintended consequences of effective growth constraint on affordability; Metro Vancouver and the Greater Toronto Area are two of the least affordable regions in Canada and North America. Future studies could investigate how planners perceive the relationship between growth management and affordability, as well as approaches to growth management that do not negatively impact housing affordability.

As a final avenue for future studies, this research has identified three factors that respondents believe impact effective regional growth management and coordination in the three study regions. The growth management factors could be refined and assessed for their applicability to other city-regions in Canada and abroad.

In the face of rapid urbanization, loss of agricultural and industrial land, and increasingly evident side-effects of automobile dependence, effective growth management and coordination will be a priority for Canadian cities. The evidence presented in this research suggests that the independent application of the factors identified is insufficient to effectively control growth. Instead, cities and regions must apply all three factors concurrently to coordinate regional growth.

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES IN THE STUDY REGIONS.

METRO VANCOUVER	ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION	GREATER TORONTO AREA
Long history of Collaboration	Comfortable with Growth	Frustration with Lack of Vertical Coordination
Significant physical constraints on growth	Challenges with Decision Making Model at Regional Level	Lack of Mechanism to Coordinate Across Regions
Pressure to Convert Agricultural and Industrial Land	Few Pressures to Constrain Growth	Challenge to Keep Documents Up to Date with Current Review Cycle
VOLUNTARY PRACTICE	NO PRESSURE TO ACT	FORCED BY PROVINCE

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APPENDIX

A copy of the amended coding framework as it appeared after all interviews had been coded.

Strategy									
Practice Example	Partner	Meeting	Leader	Communication	Policy	Culture	Theory	(How) Approach	Plan Type/Name
Success Story	*link to Stakeholder	In-person	Steering Group	Social Media	Mandate	Openness	Transit Oriented Development	[Plan] Development	ICSP
Failure	Team	Conference	Oversight Group	Email	Plan hierarchy	Efficiency	Smart Growth	[Plan] Coordination [Plan] Review	Master Plan
Best practice	"the right people"	Workshop	Working Group	Phone	Context Statement	Collaborative	Active Transportation	[Plan] Implementation	Preliminary Plan
Place Name	Consensus	Interactive	Champion	Verbal	Vision	Transparent	Mixed-Use	[Plan] Monitoring	Implementation Plan
Hypothetical	Interdepartmental	Informal	Director	Video	Priority	Discretion	Walkability	Reactionary	Official Plan
Change	Combination	Focus Group	Manager	Knowledge sharing	Requirement (Prov. or Fed.)	Trust	New Urbanism	"Keeping Up"	Regional Plan
Case Study	Compromise	Length (long/short)	Facilitator	Awareness	Budget	Mindset	Downtown Development	Accommodate dev. applications	Municipal Plan
	Intradepartmental	Frequency	Named Leader	Circulation	Goal	Respect	Density	Address pressing need	Transportation Plan
	International	Regular	Coordinator	Software	Work Plan	Height	Plan amendment	"Other" named plan	
	Inter-municipal	Periodic	Point Person	Survey	Direction	Innovative	Nodes/corridors	Pro-active	Sub-plan (secondary)
		Rare		Discussion	Renew Plan	Terrestrial	Thinker (Jane Jacobs, Richard Florida, etc.)	Future-oriented	Vision Plan
		Infrequent		Educate	Business Plan		Community focused	"Before"	The Way We Grow
		Frequent		Inform			Complete street	Preliminary Plan	Bike Plan
				Public engagement			Transportation & Land Use	"Get ahead"	Sidewalk Plan
				Relationship			Sustainable development	Visionary	Strategic Plan
				Present			Bike planning	Transitive	Watershed plan
			Mass Media			Urbanization	Flexible as		
			Visual			Infill	Prescriptive		
			Online			Age Friendly	Scope (about as long, big, common)		

Context														
Government Level	Institutional Arrangement		Demographics	Economic				Development	Resource				Stakeholder	(Who) Responsibility
Federal	Spatial	Department	Population size	Growth or Decline	Tax	Specialization	Pressure	Consistency	Staff	Time	Finance	Data	Need	Do it up Making plans
Provincial	Open/closed offices	Hierarchy/bureaucracy	Age	Development permit	High/low	Farming	*link to stakeholder	Fast/slow	Too Many Number	Deadline	Taxes	Low quality	Council	Implementing Plans
Regional	Distance between offices	Reorganization	Immigration	Consistency		Industrial	Funding source	Planned	Too Few	"Too Busy"	Government Source	Inconsistent	Department	Amending Plans
Municipal	Isolation	Amalgamation	First Nations	Investment		Military	land consumption	Urban/rural	Hiring system	Delay	Expenditure	Quantity	Politician	Liability
Other	Silo	Process	Visible Minorities	Employment		Tourism	Market	Fragmented	High turnover	Term (long, short)	Capital Budget	Age	Developer	Managing Plans
Policy (context only)	Separate	Relationship	Land area/size	Stable		Oil		(De)Centralized	Lack awareness	Frequency	Funding		Planner	Authority
			History					Opportunity	Experience	Out-dated			Resident	Enforce
			Land use					Sprawl	Enthusiasm	Timeline			City	Appeal
								Infrastructure	Effort				N.G.O	
								Growth Form	"know how"				Interest Group	
								Land Use	Qualification				Engineer	
									Varying background				Health Care Professional	
									Expert				Insurer	
									Position				Business Group	
									Task				Media	
									Personality				Administrator	
									Skill				Future Generations	
									Training				Community Consultant	
													Academic	

Interpretation and Values			
Why is coordination important?	Personal Perspective	Interpretation of Planning Concepts	
Contain sprawl	Opinion	*link to Strategy->Theory	
Efficiency	Personal Philosophy	"What is a plan?"	
Improve service	Plans are important	Level or Detail of Direction	
Reduce confusion	Environmental Determinism	Understand	
Less effort needed	Perception of Power	Realize interconnectedness	
Harmony			

Factors of Plan Proliferation
Change in population
Change in funding
New development
Changing trends
Energy production
Changing roles (ex: council)
Changing planning approaches
Out-dated plans
Change in institutional structure
Changing city (general)
Community pressure
Continuous change
Municipal control
Current issue
Promotion
Political

Challenge Modifiers
too many
too few
no time
conflict
not enough
poor
competing
resist
inadequate
redundant
unclear

Planner Virtues
ex: perseverance
patience
easy-going
creative
humble

Planner Role a

Emotions	Planning Outcomes	
Fear of discouraging interviewer	*Implications for planning in general	
Fear of frankness	Benefit	Consequences
Frustration		
Excitement		
Happiness		
Cynicism		
Optimism		
Resistant to change		
Pessimism		
Positive		
Negative		



Interview Questions

1. Describe your role and responsibilities.
2. How long have you been working for local government in these kinds of roles?
3. Can I ask you about your education and training for the job: Where and what did you study? When did you graduate?
4. To what extent is policy and plan coordination a priority here in [city name]?
5. We have found that many cities have a large number of plans. What factors explain the number of plans that Canadian communities are producing?
Examples of factors [these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.]
 - Good planning practice has led to new kinds of plans.
 - Political pressure leads to particular kinds of plans.
 - Community expectations can drive the planning process.
 - Developer pressures can drive the planning process.
 - Strategic priorities of agencies or departments may lead to plans.
 - Responding to local risks generates plans.
 - Funding programs may require certain plans or policies.
6. [Show the participant a list of possible types of plans and ask them to indicate which of these they have in their city, and who is responsible for them]
7. What do you see as some of the challenges to coordinating multiple plans and policies?
Examples of challenges [these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.]
 - Too many plans.
 - Insufficient staff time.
 - Competing interests among departments.
 - Insufficient staff expertise.
 - Professional rivalries affect outcomes.
 - Depends on political priorities.
 - Difficult to change past practices.
 - Depends on market conditions.
 - No established hierarchy of priorities.
 - Reflects changing needs in the community.
 - Plans don't apply to outside agencies.
 - Insufficient data availability.
 - Depends on legislative requirements.
8. Could you describe an example of the challenges of coordinating different plans and policies you have experienced in your own work?
9. What strategies do you use to identify conflicting policies or approaches in plans?
10. What are some strategies communities may use to coordinate plans? What strategies are used in your community?

Examples of strategies [these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.]

- Communities set a clear organizational hierarchy that facilitates choices.
- Legal frameworks set out in planning acts guide decision making.
- Policies are coordinated when the comprehensive plan is revised.
- Collaborating, sharing data, and consulting with others facilitate consensus based decisions when policies may conflict.
- Interdepartmental meetings provide opportunities to coordinate priorities.
- Budgets provide mechanisms for communities to set policy priorities.
- Communities allow plans to lapse because priorities and conditions change.
- Processes or organizations are created to deal with particular coordination challenges.
- Champions are appointed to facilitate coordination around critical issues.
- Planning is inherently political, so plans have to be flexible.

11. What success stories do you have in [name of city] in coordinating plans?

12. What factors influence interdepartmental policy/plan coordination?

Examples of factors [these can be used as prompts, but should not be listed off. May be asked later if there is time.]

- Budgetary concerns
- Links with external interest groups
- Political leadership
- Departmental hierarchies
- Timing

13. Is there anything about coordinating plans and policies that you would like to add before we finish?

DATASET COMPOSITION

The “Other” category in Table A includes those in planning roles for transit agencies, development officers, and planning technicians. “Regional” planners are those that work with more than one municipality or with regional entities but not at the provincial level, such as the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Those working for private companies are considered “Consultant” planners.

TABLE A RESPONDENTS' ROLES	MUNICIPAL PLANNERS	PROVINCIAL PLANNERS	REGIONAL PLANNERS	CONSULTANT PLANNERS	OTHER	TOTAL
ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION	16	0	1	0	1	18
GREATER TORONTO AREA	26	0	0	0	5	31
METRO VANCOUVER	7	0	4	2	2	15
TOTAL	49	0	5	2	8	64
PERCENTAGE	76.56%	0.00%	7.81%	3.13%	12.50%	100%

Respondents were more frequently men than women in this dataset; however, in the Alberta Capital Region, there were more female respondents than males. The distribution of genders by region can be seen in Table B.

TABLE B RESPONDENTS' GENDERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION	8	10	18
GREATER TORONTO AREA	20	11	31
METRO VANCOUVER	12	3	15
TOTAL	40	24	64
PERCENTAGE	62.50%	37.50%	100%

All respondents reported some form of post-secondary education. Common educational backgrounds other than planning included engineering, urban design, geography, and environmental science. Not all respondents with planning education had formal, Canadian Institute of Planners-accredited planning degrees; other sources included planning technician diplomas, certificates, or non-accredited planning programs. The distribution of educational backgrounds is displayed in Table C.

TABLE C EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	PLANNING	NON-PLANNING	TOTAL
ALBERTA CAPITAL REGION	12	6	18
GREATER TORONTO AREA	14	17	31
METRO VANCOUVER	11	4	15
TOTAL	37	27	64
PERCENTAGE	57.81%	42.19%	100%