

09  
16

LAND  
ECONOMICS  
WEEKEND  
TORONTO  
LAI.ORG

44°N  
79°W



# DAY 1

---

September 22 – 24 Lambda Alpha International’s Simcoe Chapter played host to the Spring 2016 Land Economics Weekend. And Toronto did not disappoint. Members congregated from chapters across the globe, with representation from the US (including Hawaii), Canada, Madrid, London, and Abu Dhabi to learn and experience what the rapidly changing landscape of Toronto – aka Hollywood North – Hogtown – the 6ix – the Centre of the Universe – has to offer.

Guests began arriving at Le Germain Hotel, located on the cusp of Toronto’s booming Financial District and evolving Entertainment District early Thursday afternoon. The weekend kicked off with the Presidents’ Reception, at the buzzing 53rd floor of the TD Bank Tower, hosted by McCarthy Tétrault LLP. The International Style TD Bank Tower was completed in 1967, Canada’s centennial year, by famed German-born architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. A seductive 50-foot long table with an assortment of cheese, breads, salty cold cuts and fresh vegetables accompanied drinks. With views of the Toronto Islands, the Inner Harbour and the Financial District, it was the perfect opening venue to start the weekend’s activities.

At 6:30, Simcoe Chapter’s President Bronwyn Krog, shared opening remarks by thanking Co-Chairs Russell Matthew and Leslie Yager, as well as LEW Organizing Committee members Adrian Litavski, David McKay and Kevin Harper. Following a welcome by Stephen Gragg, LAI’s President, members mingled and enjoyed the stunning view of the city they would explore in-depth over the next two days.



# DAY 2

---

LAI members gathered at 8 a.m. sharp Friday morning for a series of Toronto-related presentations. Russell Matthew, Partner at Toronto-based firm, Hemson Consulting, shared opening remarks. Russell is widely known across the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) for his economic and demographic growth forecasting, namely, his work on the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, a Provincial Plan that aims to:

- Revitalize downtowns to become vibrant and convenient centres,
- Create complete communities that offer more options for living, working, learning, shopping and playing,
- Provide housing options to meet the needs of people at any age,
- Curb sprawl and protect farmland and green spaces, and
- Reduce traffic gridlock by improving access to a greater range of transportation options.

## Presentation 1: “Results of Our Experiment”

*Russell Matthew, Partner, Hemson Consulting*

Toronto is growing rapidly and is currently ranked the 7th largest metropolitan area in North America and the 4th fastest growing, with approximately 100,000 people a year coming into the city. This growth pattern is directly tied to a traditional Toronto catalyst for population growth: immigration. From the Loyalists to the Underground Railroad, Canada (and Toronto) has historically welcomed immigrants with open arms (for the most part).



***“Toronto is a grand experiment in large scale immigration.”***

*- Russell Matthew*

Canada’s immigration policy hasn’t changed since the mid 1980’s. Currently, 60% of immigrants settle in the suburbs, where the cost of living is cheaper and many have family and social connections. This is evidently creating a “whiter” Downtown core. The Federal Government is expected to announce higher immigration targets in the new 5-year plan and the 100,000 yearly immigrant pool is expected to continue indefinitely. The majority of these immigrants settle in Canada’s largest, most multicultural cities: Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Ideally, the Canadian Government wants to see these populations spread to other cities to divvy out the economic stimulus they eventually provide. An example of this can be seen in Winnipeg which has experienced a large influx of Filipino immigrants in recent years.

## Presentation 2: “Toronto: The Accidental Metropolis”

*Joe Berridge, Partner, Urban Strategies*

Joe is a founding Partner at Toronto-based consulting firm, Urban Strategies and immigrated to Toronto in 1969, to a city he described as “dull and boring”. But times have changed - just take a look at these statistics on the 2016 version of Toronto:

- 4th – City of Opportunity
- 7th – Ranking of Rankings

Elements driving these numbers (world rankings):

- 31st – Most Active Airport
- 17th – Universities
- 9th – Innovation
- 11th – Financial Services
- 4th – Culture
- 6th – Public Education

Toronto's leapfrogging in these rankings is in part an accident. Massive exoduses of refugees from war-torn/turmoil-afflicted countries immigrated here and stimulated the economy, i.e. Vietnam, Hungary, Somalia, Yugoslavia, and most recently, Syria. In regards to Toronto's growth – one question remains:

*“Can Toronto cope with being a Global City?”*

The largest hurdle the City will have to overcome to achieve global city status is infrastructure. Slowly, but surely, improvements are being made. At this rate, many experts predict Toronto will surpass Chicago as North America's main central continental city.

## Presentation 3: “What's Driving the Condominium Market?”

*Mark Conway, Partner, NBLC*

Toronto's Condo market is hot. Folks who haven't been to Toronto since 2005 would hardly recognize the Downtown if it weren't for the CN Tower. The condo market is transforming the built form in the City. To put things into context, here are some numbers for projects currently in sale across North America:



**Vancouver: 161**

**Los Angeles: 105**

**Chicago: 81**

**New York: 165**

**Toronto: 431**

Part of what's driving this surge of condos, particularly in the Downtown is the limited supply of land due to provincial legislation and shifting consumer trends, especially among millennials – the Downtown's largest population cohort. They're saying NO to traffic, long commutes, car-oriented isolated communities and YES to transit, walkable, eclectic, inclusive, low maintenance communities. Taken from the words of a Downtown millennial in a condo:

“We don't see the value of moving...we have friends with large homes and they are constantly working on it, and we're like 'bye, we're going to the ROM (Royal Ontario Museum).' That's what we try to remember when it gets cramped and crazy in here.”

Employers are chasing these young, talented millennials, and are setting up shop in the Downtown as a result, i.e. Google and Coca Cola. But this transforming market has its challenges. Over the past 40 years, Toronto has built almost no new rental housing. However, the purpose-built rental market is experiencing some growth, and has a pulse, after being on life support for 40 years.

Approximately 70% of the condo market is investment – a trend that has been subject to a recent public backlash. It's these rental units in condos that serve Toronto's tenants with newly-built units. Granted, some of these units are foreign-investment, but not to the degree of Vancouver, who just initiated a 15% foreign-investment tax on new units.

## Presentation 4: “Bloor Street Transformation Project”

*Briar De Lange, Executive Director, Bloor Street & Yorkville BIA (Business Improvement Area)*

Business Improvement Areas are community-based organizations comprised of local business owners who pay an annual fee for local business improvements such as maintenance, streetscape upgrades, planters, community events and holiday lighting. Toronto’s first BIA was created in Bloor West Village in 1970. The need for these organizations was spurred from a decline in main street retail due to urban sprawl and subways. There are currently 82 BIAs spread across the city.

Bloor Street in Yorkville, a 1-kilometre stretch from Avenue Rd to Church St, is nicknamed the Mink Mile and is one of the top ten shopping streets in the world. It all started in 1998 when construction on the strip began in order to replace water mains. The BIA recognized this unique opportunity to revamp its streetscape. The \$20-30 million dollar project (some of it Government funding) successfully removed on-street parking, planted new trees and plants, and smaller curbs making the Mink Mile a destination street for retailers, residents and tourists. Part of the economic benefit for local businesses is evident in the numbers, going from \$200/sq.ft. pre-project to the current \$300/sq.ft. post-project.

## Presentation 5: “Growth in A Liveable Future”

*Jennifer Keesmaat, Chief Planner, City of Toronto*

Jennifer Keesmaat has become somewhat of a household name in Toronto. She has been rated the 9th most important person in Toronto and the 41st most important person in Canada! She has spearheaded a movement of putting Urban Planning in the forefront at City Hall and may be the most recognized name in the field since Jane Jacobs.



The urban intensification in Toronto is a direct result of planning policy and the improvement and expansion of these policies over time. The Downtown is the City’s economic driver; just check out these stats:

Toronto = 613km<sup>2</sup> (237mi<sup>2</sup>); Downtown = 17km<sup>2</sup> (6.5mi<sup>2</sup>);  
resulting in the Downtown representing 3% of city lands, but contributes:

- o 51% GDP
- o 35% of jobs
- o 25% tax base

The Downtown’s population alone may exceed 475,000 by 2041. With that population increase, comes the following challenges:

1. Balanced growth and infrastructure
2. Demographically inclusive communities
3. Local mobility and regional connectivity
4. Resilient nature and energy systems
5. Healthy office, institutional and retail sectors
6. Abundant quality parks and public spaces

As the Downtown continues to grow, the City identified the need for a new plan to guide its development. The TO Core plan is the first comprehensive plan at the scale of the Downtown for nearly 40 years. The Plan is being implemented on the basis of the following seven strategies:

1. Buildings and Neighbourhoods;
2. Parks and Public Spaces;
3. Mobility;
4. Community Facilities;
5. Economy;
6. Water; and
7. Energy

With a population growth rate of 18% between 2006 and 2011, the Downtown is growing at four times the rate of Toronto as a whole! In this five-year period, the rate of housing completions in the Downtown increased by nearly 40% over the previous five-year-period. Toronto's City Planning Department has been working feverishly to keep up with the velocity of dense, high-rise planning applications in the Downtown. Strong collaboration and good working relationships with city planners and the private sector are integral to moving the city forward.

## TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX TOUR

### *(Toronto International Film Festival)*

LAI members ventured down the street in a slight drizzle to the intersection of King and John streets – home to the famous Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). The Festival, established in 1976, is widely regarded by film aficionados as one of the best in the world, neck and neck with the Cannes Film Festival. TIFF attracts over 500,000 people annually, and in the words of our tour guide, ***“movies here in Toronto are a big deal, and people here love going to movies.”***

The building took three years to build and was opened to the public in 2010. The parcel was originally owned by the Reitman family. To anyone who is a Ghostbusters fan, Ivan Reitman directed the original film, starring Bill Murray and Ontario-born Dan Akroyd. The lands were used over the years by the Reitmans for a laundromat, car-wash and parking lot until the base building was generously donated to TIFF for exhibition space, a shop, state of the art screening rooms and TIFF offices, with a condominium tower above.



Members were split into groups to tour the facility, which acts as TIFF's headquarters. The 6-floor, 9-storey building, designed by Bruce Kuwabara (KPMB Architects), is open-concept with ample natural light. Many walls are painted 'Yves Klein' blue, created by the French artist of the same name. Enclosed is office space for TIFF staff, a Film Reference Library, a member's lounge and 5 public theatres. It's pretty safe to say that if you watch a film at one of the theatres, it will be an experience you won't soon forget:

- All films are put to the exact volume that the Director intended it to be (TIFF staff acknowledge that when experiencing a film, the acoustics are just as important as the visuals).
- Certain theatres/certain films are not allowed snacks.
- Snacks are provided in "quiet packaging".
- Staff did a "seat test" to decide on the most comfortable seat. The winner was the "Quinette", the same seats used at the Cannes Film Festival and widely regarded as the comfiest movie theatre seat in the world.



*Members Lounge*



*The Quinette*



*Yves Klein Blue*



*Cinema 2*

The tour led LAI members to Cinema 2. And let me tell you, the experience...was surreal. The exterior sound-proofing is so complete and the interior acoustics so good that when I was scratching my beard, I felt like the entire cinema could hear. I almost stopped taking notes because flipping the paper in my notebook felt like somewhat of a noise nuisance. Cinema 2 is located at the south-end of the building, adjacent to one of Downtown Toronto's busiest streets, King St, packed with non-stop traffic and streetcar service. When placing your ear up against the wall, you can't hear a thing.

After the tour, members split up to have lunch on their own on King St before meeting up at Le Germain Hotel to load the buses for the afternoon portion of Day 2.

## Thorncliffe Park Bus Tour

The Thorncliffe Park Bus Tour was presented on two buses. Adrian Litavski, Partner at Johnston Litavski Ltd. Planning Consultants introduced the community and the guest speakers leading the tour. Thorncliffe Park (TP) is a 1960's privately-owned rental community (several companies) made up of multiple high-rise dwellings which has always accommodated a large immigrant population. The guest speakers: Doug Sanders of The Globe and Mail; Ahmed Hussein, Executive Director of Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and Graeme Stewart of ERA Architects.

As the bus driver meandered through the concrete jungle of TP, Doug and Ahmed worked in tandem to illustrate the mosaic of the community. TP is the perfect example of the 21st Century immigration district, where people have self-selected to live by language and cultural similarities.

Toronto's lax zoning regulations of the 1970's helped shape many immigrant communities by providing opportunities for at-grade retail/commercial uses in residential units, and cheap housing in areas with high foot traffic such as Little Italy, Greektown and Chinatown. TP is unique in this sense as there are no ground-related residential uses – it's all high-rise – all privately owned – all rented. It was built on an old horse race track, hence its circular street network. The immigrant populations over time have changed dramatically, given that it is a "stepping stone community" where residents will typically stay 6-7 years until they save up enough money for a down payment on a home. Poverty experienced is transitional for new immigrants, not generational. Current immigrant populations are predominantly Pakistani, Afghan with a recent influx of Filipinos.

The neighbourhood was built to house 10,000 people and is currently bursting at the seams, housing an astonishing 30,000 due to large families! In addition, it boasts a 10% higher ratio of children than any other neighbourhood in the City, with an enrollment of 700 kindergarteners in *one* of the surrounding schools. A well-served public transit system and walkable neighbourhood, where all the essentials are easily reached, create a "self-contained" feel where residents shop, play and learn in the immediate area.

The Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office (TNO) provides essential services, catering to TP's high-volume immigrant population, providing links to education, language support, health, employment and housing needs. Surprisingly, despite the community's low-income characteristics, the crime rate is low. This phenomenon, according to Ahmed, is attributed to each representative culture competing for who is "the best citizen" – in other words, none of the demographic groups in TP want to be labelled as trouble-makers, so they constantly try to act accordingly. Large families and tight-knit social/cultural groups contribute to this family-oriented, safe, community feel.



We then switched gears to focus more on the future of TP as the speakers changed bus groups around 3 pm to listen to Graeme Stewart from ERA Architects amid a bustling street filled with parents collecting children and teens just getting out of school. A few curious children even peeped into our circle to get the scoop on Graeme's presentation on Tower Neighbourhood Renewal (TNR).

TP was originally built as a middle-class neighbourhood. From 1960-1980, for every detached home built in Toronto, two apartment units were built. The City experienced soaring construction of bulky, concrete high-rise apartment buildings (however, not to the extent currently being experienced) but by the 1980's, this built form became less desirable, and are now truly showing their age.

Believe it or not, these buildings are the new "historical". Their built form represents a time in Toronto's history. The question Graeme has worked on is: how do we reinvest in this housing which so clearly serves a critical need? What's working and what's not working? Residents enjoy living here, like their neighbours, consider it a good location, and it's affordable – but they don't like the fact that the elevators frequently break down, or the state of the interiors and aging piped services. ERA Architects is working with the City to incent the owners to retrofit the buildings rather than tear them down and build new ones; and brainstorming ways to diversify the land uses, especially in the vacant lands between the towers. The underlying question remains: where will they get the money? TNR is working with the City to map out possible reinvestment strategies. Until then, Thorncliffe Park will continue to thrive as a multi-cultural neighbourhood.

## Aga Khan Museum

LAI members toured the new and beautiful Aga Khan Museum. The Aga Khan is the Imam (spiritual leader) of the Nizari Ismaili religion. There have been 49 Aga Khans, the most recent being Shah Karim, from 1957 to present day. Initially, the Museum was slated to be located at King's Cross in London, but the site fell through, which refocused the Foundation on an underutilized Toronto parcel in the Don Valley with the opportunity of a lifetime. The Aga Khan's choice of Toronto as the location for the Museum can be attributed to the Canadian Government's response to the Aga Khan's appeal for help by admitting about 6,000 Ismaili Muslim refugees who were expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972. The first wave of refugees established an abiding relationship between Toronto and the Ismaili community, and a second wave of Ethiopian Ismailis were later welcomed in the 1990's.



The Museum was designed by renowned Japanese Architect Fumihiko Maki, winner of the Pritzker Prize in 1993 for his work, which often explores pioneering uses of new materials and fuses the cultures of east and west. Maki took direction from the Aga Khan while designing to "embrace light". Both the building's facade and interior are prime examples of traditional Islamic architecture: simple exterior, detailed interior, an outdoor courtyard surrounded by rooms so as to feel like you're outside, ample light, acute geometry, and the underlying theme throughout the Museum: the Mashrabiya design.

Mashrabiya's are a staple in Islamic/Arabic architecture used since the Middle Ages. Mostly used on the street side of buildings to enhance natural light and provide privacy, their continuous shape symbolizes togetherness and connectivity. Maki was sure to include Mashrabiya's in every possible nook and cranny in the Museum:



*...on the floors and walls in the courtyard...*



*...on staircases...*



*...on the walls and floors of the auditorium...*



*...Mashrabiya's on ceilings/skylights...*



*...and at virtually every wall adjacent to natural light...*

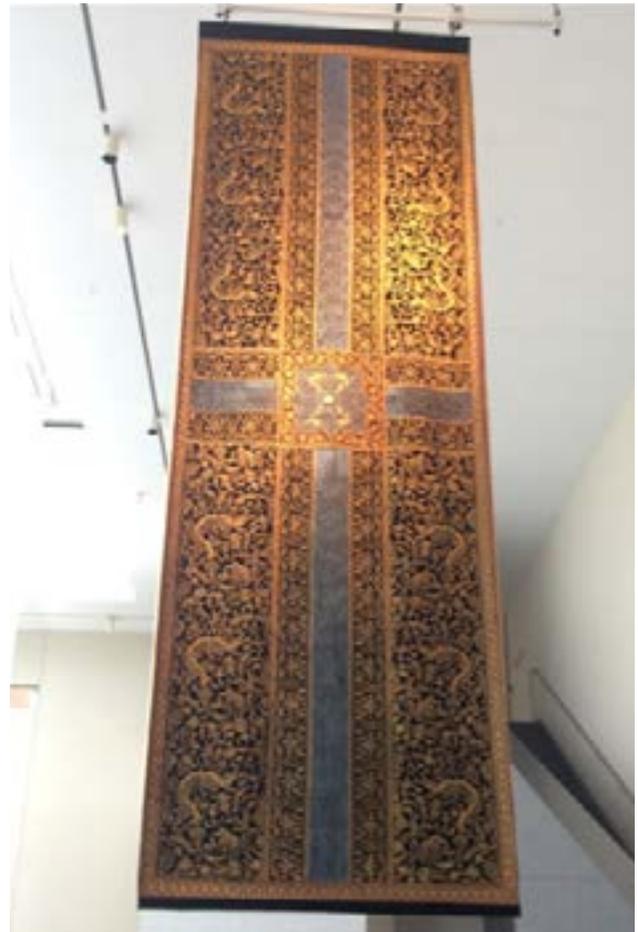
FYI: The auditorium is lined with Indonesian Teak with the heating system located under the seats, and originally designed to be mic-less. Unfortunately, mics are required. Also, it was at this juncture that our Tour Guide, Nisreen, advised me not to take notes with my pen (which could explode or fall and damage/deface the priceless artifacts). I used a pencil instead.

Engrained in the middle of this 10th Century plate is the Museum's Mashrabiya-inspired logo – an interconnected shape meant to symbolize connectivity and togetherness. On the outer rim of the logo, it reads "generosity is the disposition of those in paradise." (right)

The Tapestry (below) is one of the most interesting and thought-provoking pieces in the Museum. When approached, the red side is first visible. Nisreen advised a slow and steady approach. At first it's difficult to interpret what exactly you're looking at – it's not a carpet – it's not a rug. It's actually 1.2 million gold and stainless steel pins pushed through on the red side to create the stunning image on the other side. The design is made to symbolize an Islamic garden with four watercourses meeting in the centre. Fittingly, the Tapestry's name is:



***"Your Way Begins on the Other Side"***



Nisreen then led us to the Museum's Permanent Collection in a three-storey room with an L-shaped floor plan filled with hundreds of Islamic artifacts and treasures:



The tour ended at the Patron Lounge – a large room surrounded by windows adjacent to the Don Valley Parkway. The walls are well insulated to preserve the quiet atmosphere, despite proximity to a major thoroughfare. This is a great vantage point for the Museum’s inside-out Islamic gardens. Typically, these gardens are made up of four water features with landscaping on the inside. This one, as seen below, contrasts this design by turning it inside-out:



Finally, after a long day, LAI members gathered at the stunning Diwan Restaurant, located on the main floor of the Aga Khan Museum to enjoy an array of middle eastern cuisine and a few well-deserved beverages, as the sun set over the gardens and pools of water.



# DAY 3

Simcoe Chapter's Leslie Yager shared opening remarks at 8:45 a.m. in rhyming fashion to welcome and introduce the day's speakers.

## Presentation 1: "The University is Expanding"

*Elizabeth Strobeck & Nic de Salaberry, Ryerson University*

Ryerson University is located in the heart of Downtown Toronto. As an Alumni of the School's Urban and Regional Planning Program, I myself can attest to how far the University has grown in recent years. Due to their unique urban landscape and finite land resources, Ryerson adapted to cultivate innovative land uses in order to expand within the city. Here's a glimpse of just how much they've grown:

- Students enrolled in 1990's: 21,000
- Students enrolled in 2000's: 30,000
- Students currently enrolled: 40,000 +

Ryerson's 2008 Master Plan outlined some of the key objectives moving forward:

### **Goal 1: Urban Intensification**

Ryerson U has 1/16th of the land of the two largest Toronto-based institutions York University and the University of Toronto. One example of how Ryerson has implemented the principles of Urban Intensification is the Daphne Cockwell Health Sciences Complex (completion in 2018), which combines student housing, academic uses, retail, and pedestrian connections, resulting in the transformation of an underutilized lot into a vertical campus.

### **Goal 2: People First – Pedestrianization of the Urban Environment**

In 2012, an ambitious student-driven initiative redefined public life on campus by successfully closing a segment of Gould St (main east-west street cutting through the heart of the campus) to vehicle traffic. As a student myself at that time – this was a BIG deal. This new pedestrianized area created a natural relationship with the active ground floor of the Image Arts Building. Gould St also boasts a farmers market once a week and a skating rink in the winter months. Ryerson intends to proceed with further efforts to enhance the pedestrian experience on Gould St and other key areas of the public realm.

### **Goal 3: Commitment to Design Excellence**

The Student Learning Centre marks Ryerson's gateway to Yonge St with a design that prioritizes the needs of students while openly engaging with its surroundings. Flexible study areas create inspiring spaces for a variety of needs, earning the building a host of international awards. The repurposing of historic Maple Leaf Gardens (former home of the most famous hockey team on the planet – the Toronto Maple Leafs) into the mixed-use Mattamy Athletic Centre demonstrates a sensitivity to cultural history and underscores the connection between Ryerson and the surrounding context.



*Gould St - Ryerson University Campus*



*Student Learning Centre, entrance to Yonge St*

Further to these 3 goals, Ryerson has made considerable strides in innovative partnerships and new buildings. Ryerson entered into a long-term deal with AMC Theatres resulting in Ryerson using cinemas for classrooms in the mornings when the cinema is closed. Having had a few classes in those cinemas myself, let me say, it is quite a unique and comfortable experience learning about Municipal Finance or Planning Policy in the same place you watched *The Gladiator*.

## Presentation 2: “Planning the Waterfront for a Liveable City”

*John Campbell, Former CEO of Waterfront Toronto*

The development and redevelopment of Toronto’s vast waterfront is an extensively debated and meaningful topic among residents, politicians, planners and businesspeople alike. The Waterfront is comprised of over 2,000 acres with a capacity to provide 40,000 jobs and 40,000 residential units. The project requires \$6 billion of public infrastructure, funded by taxes and the development. A well-organized public engagement strategy has been a cornerstone, with over 300 public consultations from 2006-2011. As you can imagine, a project of this magnitude doesn’t come without its fair share of hurdles, including:

- Public cynicism
- Stop and start
- Complex projects
- Global competition
- Limited resources

John stresses the Waterfront’s underlying goal to:

*“Build a quality of life that attracts the best talent and keep it.”*

Part of achieving this goal is Waterfront Toronto’s vision of creating livable neighbourhoods with themed public art projects, 25% affordable housing and 30% open space, creating an urban environment for all family types and long-term residents. But as we know, redevelopment and rezoning of lands is a delicate process. Many industrial lands historically and currently occupy the Waterfront, with companies like Redpath and Lafarge continuing their industrial operations with no plans to cease. These uses are part of what makes the Waterfront unique, and ensuring a compatibility and mix of uses surrounding and enhancing what is existing, enriches the area’s character by recognizing its past.

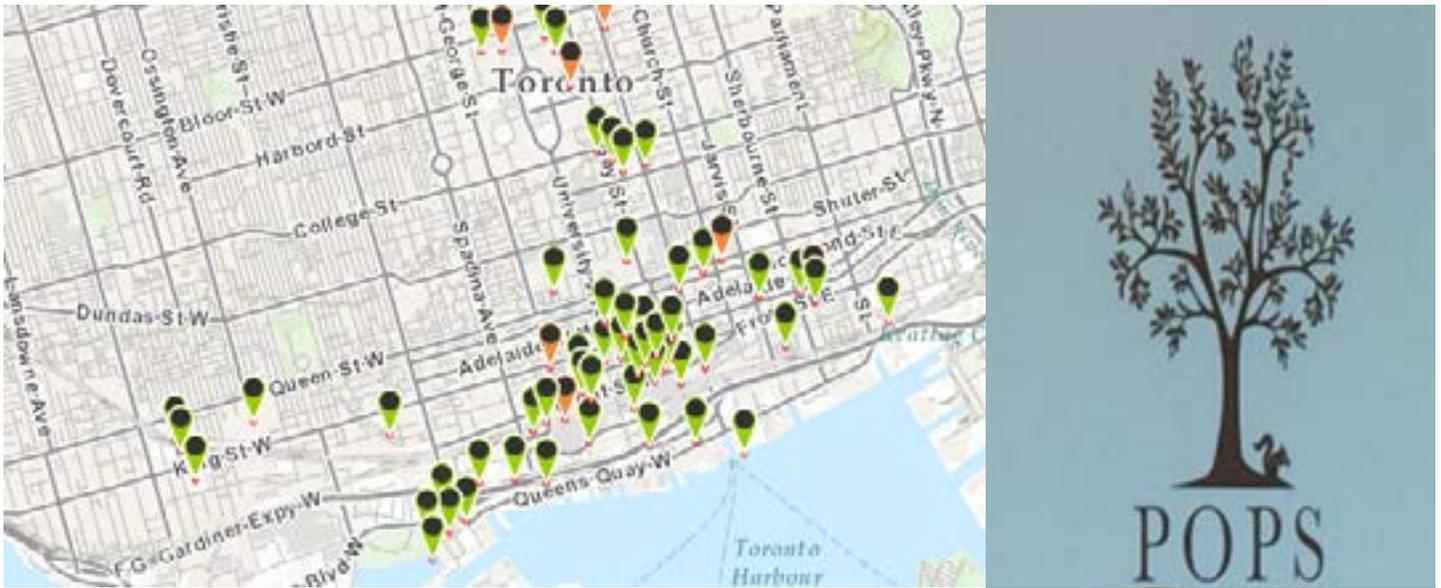


## Presentation 3: “Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces – POPS”

*James Parakh, Urban Design Manager, City of Toronto*

POPS are best described as small spaces, unusual spaces, unused spaces and old spaces that create pedestrian connections in the dense Downtown urban landscape, that often are designed in sequence so as to connect multiple POPS with each other. The City of Toronto has made great efforts to create places to engage the public and create green spaces that increase the quality of life.

Ensuring these POPS stay publicly-accessible is executed through the Site Plan Agreement between the Developer and City. For Toronto, a city with such intense pressures on urban development, it is crucial these POPS continue to grow and play a vital role in the Downtown's livability.



POPS Location Map (Downtown only)

## Presentation 4: "Office Moves"

*Christopher White, Urban Metrics*

The Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) office space demand between 2011 to 2041 is estimated at 102.4 million square feet. Over the same period, demand within the City of Toronto is expected to exceed 45.5 million square feet.

### **Are we on track to meet this 45.5 million sq. ft. demand?**

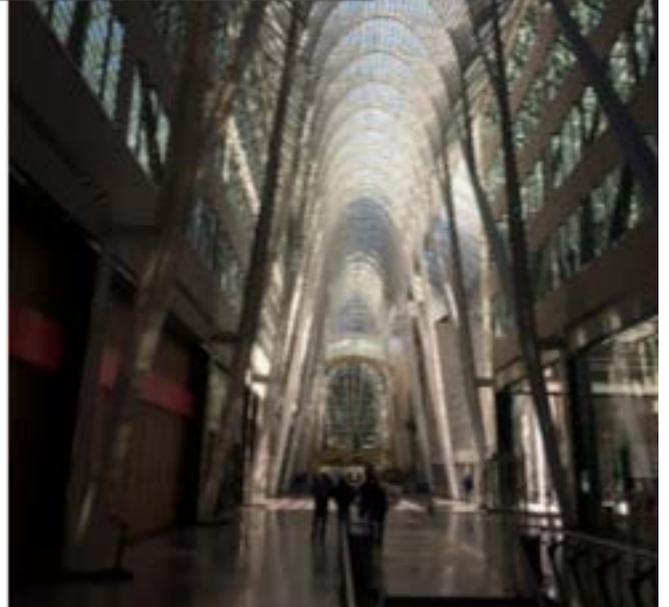
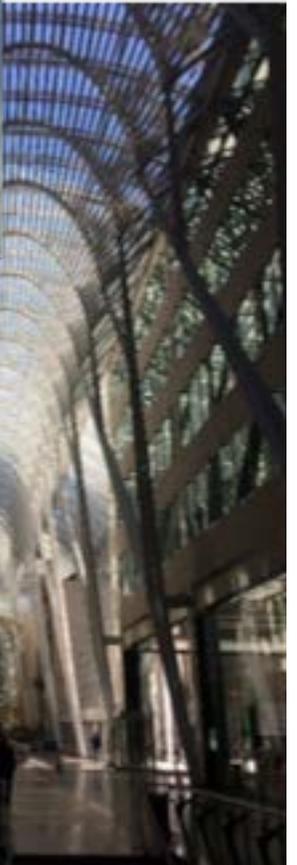
- 3.4 million sq ft already constructed (2011-2014)
- 4.4 million sq. ft. under construction (2015)
- 4.8 million sq. ft. proposed (2015-2041)
- 13.9 million sq. ft. planned in long-term projects (2021+)
- 19 million sq. ft. demand remaining

Toronto continues to grow and emerge as a global business centre. Considering Toronto's massive amount of residential development, where will the employment uses go? Currently, 50% of office employment is in the Downtown. Vacancy rates continue to decline, just recently hitting 2%! Here are some contributing factors:

1. Shift from manufacturing to service based economy
2. Increase in traffic and decrease in car ownership
3. Residential construction boom
4. Young, eager and educated workforce
5. Companies moving from suburbs back to the city

## Walking Tour & St Lawrence Market

At 10:45am LAI members embarked on a walking tour through Toronto's Downtown led by Simcoe Chapter members entrusted in navigating their groups to our destination: St Lawrence Market. Here are some of the highlights from the walking tour:



As you can see from the photos, we were lucky enough to have good weather, making for a great walking tour. After a brief walk-through of St. Lawrence Market, LAI members met the buses and travelled north to Regent Park to attend two presentations, and of course, eat lunch. And no Toronto lunch can be more 'local' than Peameal Bacon sandwiches. For those of you who are foreign to this treat – peameal bacon is a popular dish in Canada and specifically, Southern Ontario. It is cured and cooked boneless pork loin that's been rolled in cornmeal. Sandwiches were served with your choice of mustards and a horseradish so hot that it literally has my taste buds tingling as I write; and so intense that one LAI member described it as similar to a brain freeze. The meal was topped off with two more Canadian food icons: Glory Hole doughnuts and Tim Horton's coffee.

St. Lawrence Market historian and all-around entertaining speaker Bruce Bell took us through a brief history of the market.

Before Toronto was Toronto, it was the Town of York, in relation to the City's colonial past. The Town of York was actually established at St. Lawrence Market and opened for business in 1803 (before Canada became a country, which happened with Confederation in 1867). The population was a mere 500 and the first item "sold" in the market was a carrot. I say "sold" because it was actually traded for a potato...

When the Erie Canal opened in 1826, a mass explosion of goods and immigration from the USA occurred in Toronto. The market required more space. In 1831, it expanded. Three years later in 1834, Toronto's population increased to 15,000. The third expansion of the market occurred soon after the major fire of 1849 (not to get confused with Toronto's other major fire of 1904), which devastated large portions of the city. Soon after, Toronto had 50,000 people, predominantly English Protestants, until an immense influx of 30,000 Irish immigrants escaping the harsh potato famine in the 1850's. By 1900 Toronto had grown to 500,000 in population and in 1904, the market we see today was built (two thirds of it was torn down in the 1960's).

St. Lawrence Market is older than the city itself. Its growth will forever be tied to the increasing needs of the city's residents. Today, it is enjoyed by locals and tourists alike and although it has changed throughout the years, it still has the number-one peameal bacon sandwich in Canada.



# Toronto Community Housing Corporation: Regent Park Revitalization

TCHC is Canada's largest public housing owner and provider with close to 60,000 units. Ninety percent of tenants qualify for RGI (rent-geared-to-income). Over half of their buildings are 50+ years old and are showing their age. Renovations will cost TCHC an estimated \$2.6 billion dollars.

In 1947, Toronto voters approved the plan for a 28-hectare public housing project in the East Downtown. The three-story walk-up apartments didn't utilize the traditional street grid and were designed for open lawns, with the hope of a bright, airy neighbourhood laced with walkways. However, no street grid meant poor public transit, no street life, and little retail or commercial activity, and encouraged poverty and crime. By the mid-2000's, TCHC implemented a 20-year, \$1 billion plan to redevelop Regent Park into an intensified, mixed-use, mixed-ownership community in partnership with a private developer. The redevelopment is currently in Phase 3 of 5.

Part of the redevelopment involves opening up the neighbourhood to the city by connecting streets to the grid and providing opportunities for increased foot traffic and at-grade commercial/retail uses. Taller, denser buildings are located on the arterial roads: Oak St, Dundas St, River St and Parliament St.



TCHC also implemented a Social Development Plan, focusing on public outreach, community engagement and consultation, tenant update meetings and workshops for residents to take part in unit layout design and amenity spaces. Incorporating residents in the process was integral to the success of this project. TCHC employs a team of relocation workers, helping residents who are temporarily relocated to another TCHC unit in the city as their new home is being constructed.

The waiting list in Toronto for TCHC units has over 75,000 people on it. It is not uncommon for a family or person to be on the waiting list for over 10 years. Public Housing is a highly debated and discussed issue in the city. Inclusionary zoning has been discussed but has not developed any real steam at Council. Until other legislation or zoning requirements are instituted, TCHC continues to renovate existing buildings as funds are available from the City and Province, or a Federal Housing Grant is made, and to redevelop neighbourhoods like Regent Park on the assets in its portfolio in order to renew, intensify and improve their housing stock. After the presentation, we went on a walking tour of the neighbourhood led by volunteer community animators:





*Regent Park's former community swimming pool*

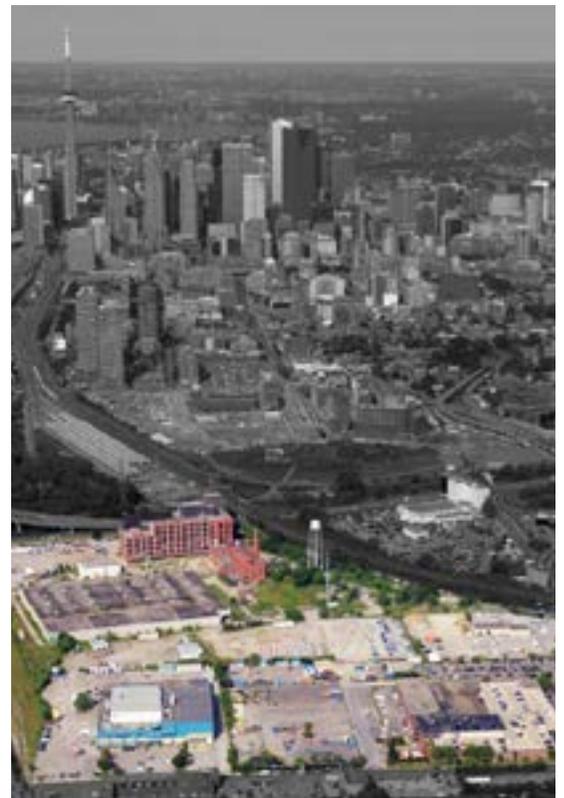
*Regent Park's new community swimming pool*

## Corktown Commons / Unilever Site Redevelopment

*Derek Goring, VP of Development,  
First Gulf Development*

From Regent Park, LAI members boarded the buses and headed south to Corktown Commons to visit the new park for the Canary District (built to house the athletes' village for the Pan Am Games in 2015 and now condominiums) and to overlook the Unilever lands for a presentation by First Gulf's VP of Development, Derek Goring. First Gulf Development has proposed a 60-acre Master Plan to create what's being dubbed as Toronto's 'second Downtown'. The lands are zoned employment, and are currently occupied by various industrial uses.

The Plan is highlighted by a proposed 12 million sq. ft. of high-rise employment and at-grade retail uses, with the capacity to employ approximately 50,000 workers. The lands are adjacent to two commuter railways and what will be the extension of the Broadview streetcar line and the future Downtown Relief Line Subway but are located in the Don River floodplain. They can't be redeveloped until the Don River is re-naturalized (a plan currently in progress). The ownership structure is 60% First Gulf and 40% City of Toronto.





Lands have been fenced off for 100 years and have no public roads and minimal services. Naturally, the two parties are in negotiations for funding allocations. Timeline for the full build-out is 20-25 years. Both Federal and Provincial Governments are integral parties in the project, having made investments in infrastructure that helped make the redevelopment possible.

*Unilever Site in the background (left)*

## Waterfront Toronto: West Don Lands

*Amanda Santo, Director of Development Approvals, Waterfront Toronto*

Amanda Santo opened her on-site presentation by acknowledging her mother, a Planner and member of LAI, who always referred to LAI Simcoe as her “secret society” (her mother was later a Vice Chair of the Ontario Municipal Board followed by a consulting planning practice with a large firm).

The West Don Lands is a 32-hectare (80 acre) site being transformed from former industrial lands into a sustainable, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, riverside community. It includes 6,000 new residential units, ample employment and commercial space, a new YMCA, at least one elementary school, and two child-care centres, all surrounded by nearly 9.3 hectares (23 acres) of parks and public spaces. The neighbourhood also boasts 20% of all units are affordable housing, 700 new trees and shrubs, a Master Public Art Plan and all buildings are a minimum of LEED Gold. A key catalyst for development was the 2015 Toronto Pan-Am Games, when the buildings were used as the Athletes Village.

The West Don Lands occupy a unique site at the original mouth of the Don River. The area was a challenging brown-field site in the floodplain of the Don River that required remediation and flood protection before any redevelopment could occur. Construction of a massive flood protection landform unlocked the area’s development potential, creating the raised promontory for Corktown Commons and from which the group viewed the Canary District and the future Great Gulf and City’s redevelopment lands. The earthwork also provides flood protection to 209.6 hectares (518 acres) of Toronto’s Financial District and eastern downtown.



## Closing Reception and Awards Dinner

LEW Toronto 2016 wrapped up at the CN Tower's Horizons Restaurant, offering a spectacular 360-degree view of the city. The Goodyear blimp even made an appearance!

Before dinner was served, LAI members had the opportunity to enjoy the view, mingle with one another and reflect on the weekend's events. An arrival time of 6 pm was perfect for viewing the sunset and experiencing the daytime, dusk and evening skyline. Seeing the city from this unique viewpoint really puts into perspective just how far Toronto has come in recent decades and the potential it has to keep growing.





After Simcoe Chapter President Bronwyn Krog shared her opening remarks and thanks to the LEW Organizing Committee members Leslie Yager, Russell Matthew, David McKay, Kevin Harper and Adrian Litavski, Lambda Alpha International President Steven Gragg took the stage. Following a brief background of the rich 86-year history of LAI, Steven updated members on some LAI Chapters from across the globe: the NYC Chapter has had some challenges but has recently approved three new members; Tokyo Chapter is doing well despite hurdles in communication; London Chapter approved five new members and International is holding a series of events to energize the chapter and recruit a new group of qualified professionals; and the establishment of LAI's Global Chapter is well underway. Chapters are only as strong as their Membership.

In the awards part of the program, Steven said there is no honour more significant than becoming an International Fellow of LAI, which is given to: *"An active member whose efforts have significantly advanced the purposes, organization, or growth of LAMBDA ALPHA. Only the International Board of Governors shall confer fellowship and no more than two fellowships shall be conferred in each calendar year. The title of International Fellow is additive to any other category of membership except Honorary."* He said it was his pleasure and honour to award the International Fellow Membership to a long-time member whose dedication and work promoting and strengthening LAI is next to no other, Simcoe Chapter's Ian Lord. Ian has been providing Leadership to the Chapter for decades, highlighted by:

- LAI International President 2011-2013
- Simcoe Chapter President 2000-2002
- LAI International 1st Vice President
- LAI International Secretary
- LAI International Regional Vice President
- Chair, International By-Laws Committee
- Chair, Chapter Services Committee
- Chair, Strategic Plan Committee
- Chair, International Meetings Committee

His accomplishments:

- directed the development and approval of LAI's 2012-17 Strategic Plan; redefined the annual dues renewal process;
- initiated the ad-hoc Governance Committee which provided numerous recommendations to improve the governance of LAI;
- created the authorization for \$25,000 annual for Chapter Support Grants;
- advanced the process of LAI's dues increase which was an essential prerequisite to improving the service delivery capacity of LAI;
- started the Brand Enhancement Project which led to the rebranding of LAI;
- authorized the development of the Chapter Website Template in a partnership with the ELY Chapter.

Next up was the **Skyline Award**, which acknowledges a policy or project in outstanding land economics. This year the award was presented to Nic de Salaberry from Ryerson University for the work he has done for the University's comprehensive place-making, adaptive reuse, shrewd use of resources and outstanding architecture.

The International Member of the Year Award is given to the LAI member who has made a unique contribution to the society. Dr. Cheryl Soon from LAI's Aloha Chapter was this year's recipient. Cheryl has been Member since 1998, organized the Land Economics Weekend in Honolulu in 2012, Aloha Chapter President 2011-2012, LAI International Regional Vice President Asia/Pacific, LAI International Secretary 2015-2017, and is a Fellow at the American Institute of Certified Planners. Her many years of leadership and service at LAI have supported its growth and prestige, while her work in the areas of complete streets and smart growth movements, adaptation to climate change and disaster resiliency, contribute to the well-being of the citizens of Hawaii.

The Urban Affairs Award 2015 was presented belatedly to former Toronto Mayor and Ryerson University Chancellor Emeritus, David Crombie. David was to receive the award in 2015 but was unable to due to unforeseen circumstances. David's career is legendary in Ontario, and he has given more than 50 years of service to the betterment of Canada, Ontario and Toronto as a politician, educator and leader who has effectively advocated policies of connectedness, consensus seeking, community building, ecological sustainability, educational opportunity and volunteerism; thereby developing capacity, influencing outcomes and enabling a higher quality of life in the Greater Toronto Area.



*Ian Lord receiving International Fellow Membership*

David took the stage for his acceptance speech by explaining how he was never trained for any of his projects. He relied solely on the evidence provided to him from professionals and learnt from them - professionals like those in the room, he noted. David ended with, "thank you to you and your disciplines and for what they represent."

And with that, LEW Toronto 2016 came to an end and the ceremonial torch – a Canadian maple paddle embossed with "Tor. to Philly 399 miles. Keep Paddling", was passed over to Philadelphia who will be hosting the next LEW in Spring 2017.

It was said by Joe Berridge that according to research by Richard Florida, cities (and their regions) in the past decade are becoming 'spikier'. Meaning that of the ones currently in the top-ten second-tier global cities (below the leaders New York, London, Hong Kong), have been on growth spurts, many having advanced into the top-ten second-tier status from way behind the pack in the past decade and they seem to be continuing on the upward trajectory. His own research indicates that Toronto needs to grow up in terms of its political culture and should start taxing like a big city, in order to maintain that upward climb, like making significant infrastructure investments, growing the airport's capacity, founding a new university, building a new cultural institution, and continuous public transit improvements.

Reflecting on the weekend and understanding where Toronto is on a global scale, I think the main question coming out of this is, is Toronto a world-class city? Is it in the same category of New York, Paris, London and Tokyo? Maybe not at the moment. Maybe not ever. But part of the road to get there is recognizing what areas we are lacking in, dealing with challenges head-on and developing innovative ways of problem-solving and city-building. I feel confident to say that the Simcoe Chapter, with the strength of the LAI society behind them, will pave this road – and we will get there.

*Written by LEW Toronto Scribe: Alex Savanyu*