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In practical terms smart growth can be divided into two principle areas of interest, functional planning and placemaking. The activity of placemaking can be described as a design process that strives to create livable communities, providing an identifiable character, sense of place and a high quality of life. Placemaking not only represents a response to smart growth and the desire to make better communities but also embodies a range of methodologies for the design process. In general these goals can be obtained through an integrated approach to community design that recognizes that design contributes of both public and private lands drawing on an understanding of the interrelationship of:

- Physical Context
- Natural Environment
- Land Uses
- Transportation
- Architecture
- Engineering
- Landscape Design
- Economics

This publication is based on the outcomes of the placemaking workshops, working sessions and meetings and has been prepared to identify, classify and explain the elements and stages of placemaking and is intended to act as a starting point for the design and development of smart growth supportive neighbourhoods in the City of London. The reader of this publication will soon see that a number of themes and points reappear and are repeated in various sections. This occasional repetition is a reflection of the interdependence of and physical and conceptual elements in placemaking and community design. Although at first glance it may appear the placemaking principles presented here are intended for large scale greenfields development, the general themes of placemaking should always be considered in the design and development of smaller scale infill or brownfields development sites. To this end this publication has been organized into the following sections:

- Community Vision
- Understanding Physical Context
- Concept Plan
- Sense of Place
- Designing the Public Realm
- Mixing and Blending
- Pedestrian Environments
Every potential site for community development whether it is a brownfield or greenfield site has an existing physical context that should be considered in the design of a community. Greenfields sites commonly either contain existing natural heritage features of one type or another or are adjacent to existing natural heritage features. These natural features often provide an opportunity to establish and promote an attractive image for a community when used as visual focal points.

Visually integrate natural features, such as slopes, trees, and water courses into the community design as visual and physical focal points.

*Design the fabric of communities and their street patterns to visually reveal natural features in the landscape.*

*Avoid a consistent pattern of backing onto natural features.*

*Incorporate significant natural features to enhance the community as visual or passive recreational amenities where appropriate.*

*Where possible design street patterns to use natural features as visual terminuses for views and streetscapes.*

*Avoid removing physical features which contribute to the identity and character of the landscape.*

*Upgrade the architectural quality of houses, buildings and structures that face or back onto public open spaces and parks.*
Every successful community needs to start with a vision for its design. A clear and distinct community vision not only guides every aspect of the community’s design but also, in later stages of the project, assists in its marketing and promotion. Within the history of Ontario there are numerous examples of successful communities based on clearly articulated community visions dating back to the turn of the Twentieth Century. The vision for a community should be detailed and specific providing a greater level of detail than has been conventionally provided through the community planning process. There should be the clear understanding that the community vision will be directly implemented through the draft plan process and that there will be a close level of agreement between the community vision and the applications that will in the general course of events implement it. The vision for the community should directly inform its more detailed concept design. Often it is helpful if the community vision is articulated and compiled as an urban design brief. The following are key points in the development of a community vision:

The community vision should build on the site’s physical context, the landscape and other relevant features that currently exist on and around the site.

The community vision should provide examples of “typologies” of land uses, buildings, architectural elements and infrastructure that express the desired features that will define this community.

Where appropriate, establish a more detailed vision for various components of the community.

A vision statement should be prepared that articulates the vision for the community and provides the framework for the conceptual design of the community while articulating comprehensive goals and objectives that fulfill the vision statement.
The development of a comprehensive concept plan for a community provides the opportunity to see how built form can be used to implement the community vision by integrating the design and placement of all the elements of the community. In the development of the concept plan there are conceptually three areas of principal concern:

Integration of community elements

Design for recognizable relationships between the elements of the community

Integrate public infrastructure

Community Elements

Integrate The Elements Of The Community

In order to maximize the opportunities provided by the site and to effectively implement the vision for the community, the Concept Plan should integrate all of the elements of the community in terms of their individual designs and locations. The concept plan should respond to the following:

Establish key social, pedestrian and public transit connections between new development and the existing fabric of the city.

Develop an overall concept plan which clearly identifies the relationship between land uses, built form and natural features within the community.

Develop the concept plan with specific built form types and requirements in mind while allowing for future flexibility.

Develop a circulation plan identifying where linkages will be established to support pedestrian, automobile, cycling movements throughout the community.

Identify key open spaces and illustrate how these are related to the community in terms of access and connectivity.

Identify the types and massing of built forms proposed for key locations such as priority lots and lots that form the visual terminus of view corridors.

Identify key streetscapes and coordinate the conceptual design and location of landscaping and built forms.

Establish areas in the public realm that will define the community and provide a sense of civic presence.

Identify, create and integrate views and vistas, capitalizing upon these opportunities by offering pedestrian, bicycle and automobile access to these points.
Recognizable Relationships

Design For Recognizable Relationships Amongst Community Elements

Over time neighbourhoods in Ontario towns and cities have evolved recognizable forms and patterns. These forms and patterns are composed of predictable arrangements of public spaces, residential uses and commercials uses in a series of complementary built forms. Utilizing these recognizable arrangements of space and architecture makes it easier for residents orientate themselves in their environments. The concept plan should respond to the following:

Communities and neighbourhoods should be designed with a clear structure of streets and pedestrian paths that support safe and easy access to public transportation.

The design and scale of streetscapes and their cross sections should visually and physically support the types of activities that are expected to occur and should visually and physically complement the scale of buildings sited along them.

The design and siting of houses should respect the traditional visual and functional relationship between the house and the streetscape.

Design nonresidential buildings to include design elements such as clearly visible entry areas, canopies, large windows for display and wider sidewalks to accommodate pedestrian traffic.

Design and site commercial and institutional uses in a manner that communicates their functions within a neighbourhood, supporting the character its streetscapes.

Areas on private lands that are intended for public uses such as courtyards in front of office buildings should be designed to be inviting to reduce public apprehension and encourage their passive use.

Parks and parkettes should be sited to maximize their visual and social contribution to the overall design of the community helping to create and enhance views and vistas.

Building designs and massing should be used to visually support and provide a context for public spaces.
Public Infrastructure

Integrate Public Infrastructure During The Design Process

Although not always immediately visible, public infrastructure is an ever present and powerful factor in the function and appearance of communities. Looking past the basic requirements of servicing, public infrastructure can be used as a design element in the same way as architecture and landscaping. In order for communities to be comprehensively planned, the design, placement and coordination of public infrastructure should include as part of the iterative community design process:

A range of alternative design standards for road sections and utility placements will allow for streetscape designs that promote attractive and functional neighbourhoods.

The placement of needed infrastructural elements in streetscapes such as fire hydrants, lamp posts and others should be considered in conjunction with landscaping and building setbacks to complement the community vision.

Hydro transformers, telephone boxes and cable television infrastructure should be located in areas where they do not needlessly detract from the aesthetic qualities of the neighbourhood.

Transit planning options, access points to public transportation and the location of transit shelters should be considered in the design of the concept plan.
Direct Address
(Houses fronting directly onto existing streets and neighbourhoods)

Major Streets

Rear Laneway

Local Streets

Window Streets
(Housing facing onto existing roads and neighbourhoods)
The idea that individual communities or neighbourhoods are created with, or evolve over time, distinctive qualities and characteristics is a central theme in placemaking. The development of geographic identities helps to reduce the blandly generic visual and physical qualities that are so easily identified with sprawl. The development of community identity is dependent on more than a name. The following sections outline issues and ideas that have been identified as playing a role in successful placemaking.

### Community Boundaries

**Establish Identifiable Community Boundaries**

In the design of communities there is a balance that must be found between the assertions of individual identities for communities and their successful integration into the urban fabric of the city as a whole. New communities should be visually and physically integrated into the fabric of the city while presenting a sense of identity and place. In the design of new communities the points of entry to the community often provide a starting point for the establishment of an identity.

*Entry points to neighbourhoods and communities should be framed by buildings and architecture to establish focal points and views.*

*Design entries into neighbourhoods to show enhanced views of the neighbourhood. Where possible allow for multiple views into the neighbourhood from surrounding major roads.*

*Buildings should be located close to the street and should be architecturally articulated to provide an appropriate level of detail that will visually animate the streetscape.*

*Use identifiable features such as decorative pavement treatments, intense landscaping features, widened sidewalks to promote the character of a neighbourhood.*

*Avoid placing unattractive and uninviting features, blank building walls, low quality fencing, noise walls and infrastructure such as pumphouses at the entries to neighbourhoods.*

*Where commercial uses are located at entry points to a neighbourhood, parking lots, outside storage spaces, garbage and loading bays should be sited and arranged to reduce their visual impact on the image of the community.*
Create Focal Points And Features That Are Part Of The Community

A neighbourhood or community that promotes a sense of identity should be designed to create physical and visual focal points.

Park spaces, outdoor commons areas, natural areas should be promoted as visual and/or physical focal points.

Landmarks such as heritage buildings and structures should be retained and integrated into the community design as focal points.

Design convenient pedestrian linkages to focal points and public transit.

Design for small scale sitting areas and respites within the community at or adjacent to focal points.

Design and position commercial uses such that they provide formal and informal focal points within walking distance of residents.

Plan institutional uses so that their building forms complement the streetscape and contribute to the design concept.

Use architectural forms such as public art, fountains, street furniture, gazebo’s or landscaping to animate focal points.

Use activity generators such as small splash pads, impromptu vending areas, chess/checkers and other seating areas to help support focal points within the community.

Utilize paving and landscaping treatments in the design of visual focal points.

Where appropriate, design for roundabouts with high quality landscaping.

Use the massing of buildings and/or trees to create a sense of enclosure around focal points such as commons areas.

Combine architectural structures with “community mailboxes” to provide for a space that supports community interaction.
Streetscape Design

Establish A Common Design Connection Between All Elements Of The Community Through Architectural And Landscape Design

The design and development of attractive and functional streetscapes is a key component of placemaking. Streetscapes are visually and structurally a combination of elements including the dimensions of the right-of-way, the design and placement of architecture, landscape elements, street furniture, lighting, and signage. To assist in unifying the visual image and character of the community an overall design approach should be established for all principal outdoor elements of the community.

In the design of streetscapes, utilize common design features on street lighting, street furniture, street signage, public fencing, bicycle racks, garbage receptacles, community-mailboxes, roundabout landscaping, planters, intersection pavement treatments, decorative walls to contribute to the overall design concept.

In the design of parks and public spaces, plan and select park features such as furniture, garbage receptacles, lighting, sidewalk treatments, architectural structures, railings, play structures, planters and gardens, fountains to support the design concept.

Pay specific attention to architecture and landscaping at visually prominent locations such as corner lots, “T” junctions and lots facing or backing onto public spaces and gateway streets throughout the community. The design and landscaping of these highly visible locations should promote the image of the community by providing an appropriate level of detail.

Use specific urban design guidelines to assist in creating a special feeling for strategic locations in the community on streets adjacent to commercial areas, schools and parks.
Consistent Approach to Design

Identify A Consistent Approach To Architectural Design To Support The Character Of The Community

To secure the development of a distinct character for a neighbourhood or community a consistent approach to architectural and landscape design should be identified and adopted. This approach should encourage variety while ensuring that all architectural and landscape elements in the community work together in a visually complementary fashion.

Design buildings to be individually and collectively supportive of the overall design concept.

In the design of a community or a neighbourhood, preselect a range of complementary architectural styles and identify the desired range of architectural characteristics that will be used to express each style.

Employ exterior building materials and colours that are stylistically appropriate.

Avoid architectural designs that are ubiquitous and non-descript because they do not contribute to a sense of place.

Avoid excessive repetition and monotony, or widespread “sameness” throughout the community by providing a complementary variety of building forms, heights, building materials and colours.

Seek out design elements that support the design theme, the use of architectural styles that are authentic to the London area is encouraged.

Use design guidelines to establish a framework for attractive building forms that are in keeping with the community concept.
In physical terms, the public realm is composed of all those areas that the public has unrestricted physical access. In some circumstances this notion of the public realm can arguably be extended to all areas that the public has unrestricted visual access to such as buildings in a streetscape or views and vistas of nature features. The process of placemaking relies heavily on the creation of a public realm that is functional, attractive and well integrated into the vision for the community. Ideally the public realm works in conjunction with architecture and landscaping on private property to provide the common elements that bind a community together visually and physically.

Make it a priority to design and develop a high quality public realm composed of public spaces such as parks, squares, sitting areas, streets and buildings that reflect the desired image of the community.

Attention should also be given to the design and selection of highly visible public infrastructural elements such as street lights and signage.

Design public spaces at a variety of scales to encourage formal and informal community gatherings and social interaction.

Design and locate stormwater management ponds to act as visual amenities in the public realm.

Where possible integrate such elements as super-mail boxes into the designs of park edges and structures.

Existing views and vistas should be preserved and enhanced along with the deliberate creation of new views and vistas through the arrangement of streets, buildings and landscaping.
Placemaking and urban design work most effectively when there are a range of different physical and social elements to design with. A mix of uses, scales and densities provide not only opportunities for social and economic activity, but help to create physical and visual texture in the urban landscape. The mixing of compatible land uses can prove to be mutually economically supportive. As a starting point the urban landscape benefits best from the mix of:

Land Uses
Densities
Scale
Building Types
Architectural Designs
Housing Opportunities

**Provide for a Mix of Land Uses**

**Provide A Mix Of Compatible Land Uses**

Designing with a compatible mix of land uses, helps to keep visual and physical homogeneity from accruing in communities and neighbourhoods. Each specific land use brings with it a series of alternatives in building typology, scale and form. The mix of compatible land uses support the principles of smart growth and ideally helps to increase the sustainability of our communities.

Where possible, design and develop communities to include mixed use buildings or complexes.

Mix small scale commercial uses with residential uses where mutual viability is possible.

Where feasible, use the presence and arrangement of commercial and/or institutional uses to support outdoor public spaces such as parks, squares or parkettes that will act as a focal point with in a community.
Mix Residential Densities

Provide A Mix Of Complementary Residential Densities

The mixing of residential densities provides not only opportunities to vary building typologies, scales and massing but also provides opportunities for the mixing of different and complementary demographic sectors that may enrich the community. A mix in the demographics of a community helps to enliven streets and public spaces by extending and varying hours and types of uses that streetscapes and public space can expect. Mixing of residential densities can not only provide for a range of economic opportunities but also effectively increase the life cycle opportunities of a community contributing to its long term sustainability. In community terms life cycle opportunities allow for the future needs of neighbours, letting them meet their needs without moving from the community.

Larger communities and neighbourhoods should offer low, medium and high density residential housing that produces the critical mass needed to support local amenities. This mix of housing types also ensures a community can adapt to new trends in community development.

Avoid large or unnecessary set-backs which prevent higher density uses from being successfully integrating into streetscapes.

Avoid large tracts of low density housing that can create a homogeneous landscape.

Where appropriate design for the mutually compatible integration of low, medium and high density residential uses through the effective use of:

Site Planning
Building Massing and Orientation
Architectural and Landscape Design
Visual impact Analysis

Complimentary Building Scales

Provide A Variety Of Complementary Building Scales

Creating an appropriate and compatible mix of building scales aids in the development of visually interesting streetscapes and public spaces as well as providing opportunities for a more varied approach to architectural and landscape design. Changes in the scale of buildings provide visual and physical texture to the urban fabric of communities and neighbourhoods.

Within the various residential densities there should also be a variety of compatible building scales.

Use cornice lines, step-backs, and other architectural design techniques to effectively integrate large buildings into the streetscape and community.
Complimentary Building Types

Provide A Mix Of Complementary Building Types

Within each category of residential densities there are a range of lot types, site designs and building types that may be used to achieve the desired unit densities. Mixing building types promotes visual variety and reinforces the other design aspects of mixing that have been identified.

Where possible integrate semi-detached with single detached housing along a given streetscape.

Utilize row housing and low rise apartment buildings to create a sense of enclosure along corridors and around commons areas.

Mix lot sizes in support of mixing building types to create visual variety and interest and to help avoid the perception of “sameness”.

Where appropriate strategically, employ lot and unit types that are accessed with rear laneways to promote driveway-free pedestrian corridors along key streetscapes.

Ensure that the design of the concept plan is based on an organizing structure that supports a range of lot types in strategic locations to integrate a mix building types into the form of the community.

Use different lot configurations, such as wide-shallow, long narrow, rear-lane access, etc.

Housing Choices and Opportunities

Promote A Range Of Housing Opportunities And Choices

In order to achieve livable and sustainable communities that support the aims of smart growth and placemaking a range of housing opportunities and tenures should always be considered where appropriate.

Providing a range of housing opportunities through an integrated approach to community design can increases the economic opportunities for the residents of a community or neighbourhood as well as for the developer.

A mix of housing opportunities can accommodate the changing lifestyles of an aging population while allowing neighbours to continue to live in the community.
The creation of attractive, inviting and functional pedestrian environments is of key importance in the design and development of sustainable communities and is a cornerstone in the process of placemaking. In general terms the principle aspects for the creation of high quality pedestrian environments can be organized as:

### Pleasant Walking Environments

- **Convenient Pedestrian Access to Services and Facilities**
- **A Range of Pedestrian Services and Facilities in a Community**
- **Quality Pedestrian Corridors and Connections**

**Design For Pleasant Walking Environments**

Walkable environments tie a community together on visual, physical and social levels, enhancing the image of the community while promoting healthy lifestyles. Like so many other aspects of placemaking, the creation of walkable communities requires the integration and close coordination of elements of both the public and private domains.

**Use landscaping strategically to enhance the pedestrian environment.**

**Encourage a variety of building forms, architectural styles, public infrastructure, street furniture and lighting.**

**Design pedestrian corridors to take advantage of vistas and views.**

**Design pedestrian environments that provide a sense of safety and separation from automobile traffic.**

**Design roadways so that they calm traffic and keep car speeds to a minimum.**

**Orient buildings, their massing, architectural elements and habitable areas so that they promote an eyes-on-the-street approach to streetscapes and public spaces.**

**Use public infrastructure to enhance the aesthetic of the community.**

**Use architectural and landscape design to enhance visually prominent locations.**

**Design pedestrian environments to visually and physically interface with natural heritage features and parks.**

**Design buildings and spaces to encourage social interaction.**

**Narrow streets to calm traffic and provide for a sense of enclosure.**

**Improve the pedestrians perception of the streetscape by reducing the visual impact of garages through the elimination of garage projections.**
Pedestrian On-Street Walkway
(Sidewalks)

Pedestrian Streetscape
(No Driveways)

Pedestrian Green Corridor
(Off Street)

Pedestrian Walking Trails
(Off Street)
Services and Facilities

Provide For A Range Of Services And Facilities Within The Community

Without a range of services and facilities within a community pedestrian destinations are greatly limited and the volume of pedestrian traffic can be expected to be low. Without pedestrian traffic, the quality and safety of public spaces diminishes, and the character of neighbourhoods and streetscapes suffer.

Design commercial spaces to provide for a range of services that serve the neighbourhood.

Integrate public and institutional facilities within the neighbourhoods that they serve.

Use care in the integration of regional scale facilities and services within neighbourhoods.

Convenient Pedestrian Access

Design For Convenient Pedestrian Access To Services And Facilities

For pedestrian environments to function on a more that purely recreational or visual level they must form a key component of the structure of a community and be supported by the other elements of the community.

Design road network and block configurations to facilitate direct and easy pedestrian access between residential areas, schools, parks, commercial uses and public transit within a five-minute walk.

Include walkway and bike path connections throughout the neighbourhood.