

Integrating Cultural Planning and Urban Planning: the Challenges of Implementation

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Résumé

Au cours des dernières décennies, les villes canadiennes ont adopté le concept de la ville culturelle et développé des plans culturels afin de créer des endroits vibrants. Cependant, plusieurs difficultés demeurent quant à l'implantation de la planification culturelle et son intégration à la planification urbaine et aux plans pour le développement économique. Ces difficultés sont reliées à des facteurs structurels tels que la réglementation sur l'aménagement du territoire en vigueur et la structure organisationnelle qui caractérise les gouvernements municipaux. Cette recherche porte sur le triangle West Queen West de Toronto, un quartier dans lequel des projets de développement ont été disputés par la communauté dans le but de protéger les ressources culturelles locales. L'étude révèle l'émergence de nouvelles façons pour la communauté de prendre part au processus de planification. De surcroît, elle documente l'utilisation d'une approche interdépartementale à l'intégration de la planification culturelle.

Mots clés: planification culturelle, planification urbaine, ville créative, Toronto, Canada, Triangle West Queen West, politique urbaine, implantation des politiques, développement urbain.

Canadian Journal of Urban Research, Volume 20, Issue 1, Supplement pages 27-51.
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ISSN: 1188-3774

Abstract

In recent decades, Canadian cities have embraced the creative city paradigm and developed cultural plans as a strategy for building vibrant cities. Although the emphasis has been on the need for integration of cultural planning, urban planning and economic development, the literature highlights the difficulties in implementing cultural planning and the practical limitations of a fuller integration. This is attributed to such factors as existing land use planning regulatory frameworks and the organizational structures prevalent in municipal government. This paper examines a case study in the West Queen West Triangle of Toronto where contestations over development applications were based on support for local cultural resources. The study reveals the difficulties and opportunities for integrating cultural planning and land use planning. It documents the emergence of new models for working with communities and across municipal departments in implementing cultural planning within Canadian cities.

Key words: cultural planning, urban planning, creative city, Toronto, Canada, West Queen West Triangle, policy implementation, community activism, urban policy, urban development

Cultural resources are the raw materials of the city and its value base; its assets replacing coal, steel or gold. Creativity is the method of exploiting these resources and helping them grow. The task of urban planners is to recognize, manage and exploit these resources responsibly. An appreciation of culture should shape the technicalities of urban planning and development rather than being seen as a marginal add-on to be considered once the important planning questions like housing, transport and land-use have been dealt with. So a culturally informed perspective should condition how planning as well as economic development or social affairs should be addressed. (Landry, 2005)

Cultural Planning and the Creative City

As the above quote from Charles Landry (2005) argues, cultural resources are increasingly framed not just as symbolic goods but as a city's essential economic resources that have to be nurtured and planned for (Dowler, 2004). Yet many cities have found it difficult to integrate planning for culture with urban planning policy and practice. Large Canadian cities like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal have highly visible culture departments or agencies that seek to develop projects

that not only attract tourists but also utilize cultural resources and amenities to attract educated knowledge workers (Jenkins, 2005). Smaller cities, towns and rural areas have placed their hopes in cultural plans that might allow them to reap economic benefits from leveraging unique aspects of heritage, culture and place (Kovacs, 2010; Bray, 2011). Large cities and smaller cities and towns are encouraged to develop cultural plans, as demonstrated by Hume's (2009) how-to book directed at Canadian municipalities.

The City of Toronto was one of the first Canadian cities to develop culture policies. In the mid-eighties, a report by the Toronto Arts Council (Hendry, 1985) recommended the establishment of an arts and culture department as a single administrative unit to provide oversight of the City's involvement in cultural programs. This was implemented in 1998 when the City of Toronto amalgamated with its post-war suburbs. The expansion of cultural institutions has continued, and is framed as contributing to the city's growth, as demonstrated by the labeling of Toronto's building boom in the past few years of eight major cultural construction projects as a "cultural renaissance" (Jenkins, 2005).

This paper analyzes recent attempts to better integrate cultural planning and urban planning and the challenges this poses. We examine the opportunities and constraints that arose when the City of Toronto attempted to integrate cultural planning perspectives in redevelopment projects in an area identified with the arts and artists. Reflecting on this case study, the paper examines the regulatory and organizational barriers to the closer integration of cultural planning and urban planning. The analysis of planning in practice highlights the conditions under which land use planning and cultural approaches are able to work together to create new models of city building.

The creative city discourse was introduced by Charles Landry and his contemporaries (Bianchini & Centre for Local Economic Strategies, 1991; Grogan & Mercer, 1995; Landry, 1990) and popularized by Richard Florida (Florida, 2002; Florida, 2005b). These authors argue that the post-industrial economy has shifted away from manufacturing and toward a knowledge-based approach. According to Landry (2005), dealing with these changes requires a re-assessment of the way cities operate in response to the emergence of neoliberalism and the emphasis on government downsizing and challenges to arts funding. In the 1980s, the arts communities in the United States, UK and Australia began to justify their economic worth by claiming that the arts provided economic and lifestyle benefits that improved the overall vitality of cities (Evans, 2001; Landry, 2005). Evans (2001), for example, argued that a unified urban agenda that incorporated cultural planning would achieve a range of social, economic and urban goals. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, cities in the north of Britain developed cultural industries strategies as part of their economic regeneration goals. These strategies began

to create the discursive link between the arts and urban regeneration. Landry's (2000) *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* popularized the concept.

In the United States, Richard Florida's (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class* used language similar to Landry's but proposed a different relationship between creativity and cities. Florida highlighted the importance of attracting a creative class, including not only artists, but highly educated workers from fields such as information technology and architecture, who would contribute to the relative competitiveness and prosperity of cities. His creative class theory posits that the economic success of a city depends predominantly on the high proportion of knowledge-based professionals located there (Florida, 2005a). Members of the creative class seek livable, entertaining places to live which offer a concentration of cultural activities and institutions. Today, Florida is the most recognizable face of what has been labeled the creative city movement. However, as Jenkins (2005) points out, attempts to utilize cultural institutions as an economic development strategy have been highly contentious and have had mixed results.

In contrast to Florida's creative class thesis, in European cities, Landry's initial vision of a cultural planning approach has gained some resonance. Landry encouraged cities to challenge existing organizational structures and traditional ways of doing things by implementing greater flexibility in governance. According to Landry (2005), conditions needed to be created around which people could think, plan and act with creativity and imagination to address urban problems. Landry (2005) describes the creative city as a place where innovative and adaptive solutions are used to combat the problems of silo-like structure and governance. For Landry (2005), creativity entailed thinking more holistically about city making and creating new organizational structures to make this happen. Creativity, he says:

Means overcoming some more deeply entrenched obstacles many of which are in the mind and mindset, including thinking and operating within silos and operating hierarchically in departmental ghettos or preferring to think in reductionist ways that break opportunities and problems into fragments rather than seeing the holistic more interconnected picture. A pre-condition for good city-making, the creativity of the creative city is about lateral and horizontal thinking, the capacity to see parts and the whole simultaneously as well as the woods and the trees at once (Landry, 2005: 13).

For policymakers, embracing Richard Florida's notions of the creative city meant developing policies to attract certain kinds of knowledge industries and knowledge workers, including the cultural institutions that they valued. Adopting Charles Landry's vision of the creative city required attention to structures of governance

and decision-making that would encourage holistic solutions to urban problems. In this paper, we draw upon Landry's analyses to understand cultural planning in practice in Toronto.

Cultural Planning and Cities

Since the early 1990s, cities, particularly in North America, Europe and Australia, have embraced cultural planning as a process that involves leveraging cultural assets to support city building goals (Mercer, 1991; Evans, 2001). Cultural planning was defined as the strategic use of cultural resources in urban and community development (Mercer, 1991). A goal was to integrate culture across all aspects of municipal planning. In practice, culture and arts policies are often dispersed and fragmented across various city departments, making it difficult to implement cultural plans. Various authors have conducted detailed studies to assess creative city policies in practice (cf Kovacs, 2010 for Canadian examples). However, the successful integration of creative city ideas into existing planning systems has proven to be elusive. In US cities, Markusen claims that "despite the fact that the creative city rubric has the potential to tie urban planning, economic development and arts and cultural policy efforts together, this has for the most part not happened" (2006: 1). She goes on to explain:

In larger cities, arts and cultural policy is the domain of one set of bureaucracies which vary widely in their resources and discretionary powers, economic development is the domain of yet another set of actors, with important tools for cultural development but poor understanding of this sector, and city planning, with its key regulatory powers and potential for creating an integrated spatial vision of cultural development, but few direct resources to bring to bear (Markusen, 2006: 3).

The location of culture within the municipal structure often reveals a city's strategic objectives. A survey conducted by Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris (2007: 356) demonstrated that many cities reported having subsumed cultural planning under economic development functions. This move is a clear signal that cultural planning, and culture in general, is viewed as a tool to enhance and improve communities and cities by creating economic returns. Furthermore, Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris (2007) discovered that, in most cities, there is no overarching body charged with implementing a cultural strategy.

Markusen (2006), Markusen and Gadwa (2010) and others have provided detailed organizational studies of how cultural plans are actually implemented to illuminate the opportunities and limitations of cultural planning for urban revitalization schemes. Municipal structures can work to either hinder or im-

prove cultural planning goals. According to Markusen (2006: 15), a “major challenge at the local level is the fragmentation of responsibilities for cultural and arts policy and planning across three distinct agencies.” The regulatory tools that enable or hinder artistic space are located within planning departments and run by people with city planning degrees, who may or may not have expertise or experience in urban design or cultural policy. Markusen and Gadwa (2010: 384) note that the control of the creation and management of cultural space is housed in economic development departments, and the policy required to sustain these is housed in culture departments, which have little interaction with either of the other two.

Several authors claim that the lack of communication across departments contributes most to the weak implementation of cultural planning in relation to this separation of powers (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010; Kovacs, 2010; Landry, 2005). Each agency or department operates under a specific mandate, using unique tools and operating with a limited scope. The fragmentation of cultural and arts policy across distinct agencies or departments is problematic for a unified vision of cultural planning. It is difficult in such a system to integrate creative city ideas and policies into the existing planning framework.

Cultural Plans in Ontario

Cities and towns in Ontario have embraced the concept of cultural plans. However, there has been relatively little research on the effectiveness of municipal cultural planning in Ontario (Kovacs, 2010; Stevenson, 1998, 2004; Gibson, 2004). Research by Kovacs (2010: 219) indicates that while municipal cultural plans are achieving a variety of outcomes within municipal government and within the community, there is a “huge disconnect” between implementation and “the very high-flying rhetoric on what culture can do.” Much of the research points toward problems with the implementation of cultural plans. These difficulties include a disjuncture between vision and practice, the position of cultural planning responsibilities within a municipality, minimal interaction among municipal departments and a lack of legislation that supports cultural planning efforts.

Kovacs (2010) found that cultural planning depended on municipal structures and which department was responsible for executing the practice. For many politicians, according to Kovacs (2010), cultural planning does not gain voter attention. Therefore, cultural planners may strategically seek to entrench cultural planning within the planning department as this is where decisions are made about large ticket projects, thereby ensuring greater attention and support for culture initiatives. Similarly, Runnals’ (2007) interviews with members of the Creative City Network of Canada found that cultural practitioners often feel that their work is viewed as unimportant when they are positioned in depart-

ments such as parks and recreation or community services. Runnals (2007: 78) concludes that “Culture, imbedded in these departments, holds a marginalized position of power, is typically under-resourced compared to other functions within the infrastructure and is overlooked as an important dimension of community development, planning and governance.”

In Canada as a whole, there is a lack of formal mechanisms at all levels of government to coordinate and collaborate on joint issues on an ongoing basis (Gattinger, 2008). This lack of policy coordination is especially challenging for municipalities, where the under-developed nature of multi-level governance is “particularly acute in the cultural infrastructure domain” (Gattinger, 2008: B2). Research on policy silos and horizontal management reiterates the importance of cooperation between lateral government groups to enhance effectiveness and minimize overlap and competing objectives. Vincent Ostrom (1989) argues that public policies that are more non-hierarchical or polycentric are more likely to produce reliable, adaptable and efficient policies than policies associated with single hierarchical arrangements. Dutch scholars Klijn et al. (1995) developed a theory of co-governance “where managers attempt to promote cooperation among network actors through tactics such as arranging interaction, facilitating interaction, brokerage and mediation.” According to Sproule-Jones (2000) a mutual exchange relationship among units of government creates an interdependency in policymaking. These theories of policymaking emphasize the importance of horizontal linkages among policy actors in order to effect maximum interaction and cooperation.

Cultural Planning in Toronto: A Case Study of the West Queen West Triangle

This paper analyzes the ways in which planning practice in Toronto is consistent with the creative city rhetoric and policies of the City of Toronto, and identifies the opportunities and constraints in linking cultural planning and urban planning. We examine the relationship between municipal policies to pursue a creative city agenda and the responses of cultural staff and city planners at the City of Toronto, as demonstrated by the process and outcomes of three development applications in the West Queen West Triangle (WQWT) area. Tracing the implementation of cultural policies as these relate to actual applications for redevelopment and the ensuing planning process is a relatively understudied area of municipal policy and may be of interest to urban scholars and cultural policy specialists, as well as other municipalities.

The experience of Toronto echoes many of the findings from across the globe. The disconnect that others have described between the vision of the creative city and its practical application is present in Toronto as well. The City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario have supported the creative city movement as evidenced

by policies such as Toronto's *Culture Plan for the Creative City* (City of Toronto 2003), Mayor David Miller's *Agenda for Prosperity* (City of Toronto, 2006c), and the provincial government's Creative Communities Prosperity Fund.¹

According to Dowler (2004), the City of Toronto's *Culture Plan* (City of Toronto, 2003) followed Florida's (2005a) assumptions that attracting the creative class would meet economic objectives and enhance the city's global competitiveness. Gertler et al. (2006: 14) argue that:

Strategically linking creative activity to wider economic and social goals is a relatively new phenomenon for most Canadian cities. Unlike Europe, Canadian economic development policies from various orders of government have only recently begun to act upon this concept by providing a new range of policies, special initiatives and programs that target the social and economic value associated with creativity.

The City and province clearly recognize the need for increased collaboration and interaction among various departments, divisions and sections. According to the City's website: "A core message has been that no one agency can achieve the outcomes we all desire. Success demands new shared governance systems and partnership models built around a common vision and understanding of the planning issues and opportunities" (City of Toronto, 2007b). Toronto's Culture Division was initially successful in inserting some language about culture into Toronto's Official Plan (Urban Development Services, 2002). Despite this articulation by the City, implementation remains the dominant challenge.

Although many Canadian municipalities now have cultural plans in place, Toronto was among the first cities in Canada to develop its own cultural plan. Adopted in 2003, Toronto's *Culture Plan* has two key goals: to position Toronto as an international cultural capital and to define culture's role at the centre of economic and social development of the city. This document contains high-level visions, including the first principle that City Council recognize that culture plays an essential role in building and sustaining a diverse urban community that is socially and economically healthy. The *Culture Plan* made sixty-three strategic recommendations directed to multiple city departments, the private sector and the public. Recommendation #52, directed at the Planning Department, sought to encourage consideration of culture in negotiating development agreements with developers: "the Culture Division will work with Urban Development Services (now City Planning) to realize community cultural benefits under Section 37² of the Planning Act" (City of Toronto, 2003: 43). However, there is no mechanism or regulation that ensures that this recommendation is put into action.

The strategic document *Creative City Planning Framework* (AuthentiCity, 2008) outlines the trajectory of the integration of culture into the economic direction of the city. The *Framework* makes a case for cultural planning and argues that the process offers a different set of planning ideas and tools. It proposes using cultural planning to assist in the economic development of the City of Toronto. As Mayor Miller says in the document: “We must put creativity at the heart of Toronto’s economic development strategy” (AuthentiCity, 2008: 2). Although it can be said that the City of Toronto is making strides toward the integration of cultural planning across all departments, the cases examined here illustrate that this has been a bumpy road. Attempts to break down silos and improve cooperation are starting to happen and a shift is beginning.

Methodology

This paper is based on an examination of the City of Toronto’s various culture and planning documents supplemented by a case study of three simultaneous development applications in the West Queen West Triangle area. Research took place in the winter and spring of 2009, with seven interviews conducted in person and one over the phone. The interviewees were primarily City of Toronto planners and cultural affairs officers who worked on the applications described. Others interviewed included economic development staff, a cultural policy academic, consultants working in Toronto and a community member representing Active 18, the citizen organization that opposed these developments.

The questions that guided these interviews attempted to probe the working relationship and extent of interaction between culture and planning staff at the City of Toronto. City staff were asked questions about their role throughout the course of the development application process, what lessons they learned from the experience, whether they were aware of the cultural documents and policies at the City and the extent to which they could implement them through their work.

The Case of the West Queen West Triangle

The outcomes of three development applications that unfolded simultaneously in one Toronto neighbourhood, the West Queen West Triangle, illustrate the current disconnect between cultural planning and land use planning and the ways in which this might be bridged. The case study is the story of a neighbourhood in flux. The main arterial bisecting the neighborhood, Queen Street West, has faced successive waves of gentrification that have moved inexorably west from the area around City Hall in the center of the city. The case reveals the contradictions of the creative city discourse and planning activity in Toronto. It demonstrates that although the ideas around the creative city resonate at a visionary level, there is not a strong enough policy framework in place to encourage development that

supports the city's cultural goals. The case study highlights the importance of inter-departmental cooperation, flexible and creative governments and community influence on development applications to realize creative city goals.

The West Queen West Triangle area is located in the midst of one of the most vital and significant cultural clusters in the City. The area consists of former railway-related industrial lands. Most, but not all, of the manufacturing and warehousing activities have left the area, and there is a mix of industrial-style warehouse buildings on large tracts of land, some dating from the 19th Century (Gladki, 2006). A variety of businesses and residents have moved in over the last 20 years, including a number of arts-related employment activities. Many artists live and work in the area (City of Toronto, 2006b).

In recent years, the neighborhood has transformed from vacant storefronts to a vibrant mixed-use community that functions both day and night. Restaurants and bars have reinvigorated the area and helped to convert old warehouses into galleries and studios. The revitalization of the neighbourhood has increased speculative pressures, land values and demands for additional residential developments (City of Toronto, 2006b).

In the course of one year (2005-2006), the West Queen West Triangle area was the subject of three development applications for tall residential buildings. At the time these development applications were introduced, the area was within the top one percentile of census tracts with a concentration of artist residents when compared to all Toronto Census Metropolitan Area census tracts (City of Toronto, 2006b), and the M6J postal code that encompasses the area was home to the 5th highest concentration of artists in all of Canada (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2005).

Development Applications and Existing Regulatory Framework

Application #1

A proposal to develop three residential buildings, including live-work units and affordable rental housing, as well as condominium units, was submitted in August 2005 as a revision of an earlier proposal submitted in 1999. The proposal was to build a 25-storey residential building with live-work units facing a private lane, a 19-storey affordable rental housing building and a three-storey live/work building (City of Toronto, 2005a). The existing use at the time of the application was a three-storey brick building containing a lamp showroom, light industrial use, live/work units and residential units. These last two uses were not permitted by the zoning by-law at the time.

The heights and density proposed in this application far exceeded those permitted by the zoning by-law. The proposed density of four times coverage, was double the density (two times coverage) allowed by the in-force Official Plan.

The heights proposed exceeded the permitted height by 58 meters, and were not compatible with the surrounding area. The tower portions were 6-9 times taller than the existing building heights (City of Toronto, 2005a).

Application #2

In May 2005, the initial proposal for redevelopment of this site was submitted to the City. The proposal called for the redevelopment of two residential buildings to build a ten storey mixed-use building with retail at grade and residential uses above, with a 26-storey residential tower behind it. The existing use of the site consisted of a one-storey brick warehouse with a small two-storey office space and some parking at-grade. The density proposed was approximately 3.64 coverage. Both the height and density exceeded what is permitted by the in-force Official Plan, which allowed heights of 2-5 storeys and density at a maximum of 2.5 for residential, and an overall maximum of 3.0 (City of Toronto, 2005b).

Application #3

This proposed development, submitted in November 2005, consisted of a sixteen-storey residential building and three rows of five and a half-storey residential buildings in a stacked townhouse form, for a total of 434 residential units. At the time of the proposal, the site was vacant. This was one of many applications on the site. In 2000, City Council approved a site-specific by-law, allowing four storey townhouses on the site, and in the second quarter of 2005, the Committee of Adjustment approved a minor variance to permit 5 and a half-storey townhouses on site. The 16-storey building was not compatible with the existing or planned heights in the area. The tower was five times taller than the prevailing building heights.

Community Consultation, Cultural Resources and the Planning Process

The three development applications did not acknowledge or address the ways in which the West Queen West Triangle area and its built form contributed to the city's cultural resources. This lack of awareness precipitated a concerted community campaign to oppose the three development proposals on cultural grounds. All of the development applications were greatly at odds with the existing planning framework in Toronto, including the Official Plan, the Secondary Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement. Overall, the proposals conflicted with existing zoning in terms of heights and densities, but also failed to adequately address issues around the extension of the local street network, the provision of new parks, community services and facilities and improvements to hard infrastructure (City of Toronto, 2005c). For the existing community of residents, small business owners and cultural workers, the proposals were significant in terms of more than just height and density. A number of members of the community group Active 18

commented that their primary concerns were not tall buildings being introduced into the area, but rather that the aspects unique to the area would disappear, including cultural employment space and opportunities, existing personal and economic networks and the mix of uses thriving in the area (Active 18, 2009). These concerns quickly mobilized the community of West Queen West and their efforts contributed significantly to the outcomes of the approved development applications.

As evidence of the lack of connection between land use issues and the socio-cultural issues, the community consultation process facilitated by the City initially failed to address anything beyond the technical planning questions. From a planning perspective, the three applications in question did not adhere to the guidelines and policies set out by both the in-force Official Plan and the new Official Plan³. The primary concerns for planners were the heights and densities requested that were far beyond the scope of what was in place in the area and what had been contemplated in the area for the future. Throughout the early community consultations held by the City from June to November 2005, these were the primary issues addressed. The early reports written by the Planning Division did not include the cultural issues in the area. They dealt exclusively with technical planning details found in the Official Plan. There are no policies cited in the reports that relate to the *Culture Plan for the Creative City* or any other cultural policies (City of Toronto, 2005a; City of Toronto, 2005b; City of Toronto 2006a). City planners did not adequately address the issue of artist housing and work space, even though the area was home to a significant number of artists, many of whom were working in one of the buildings slated for redevelopment.

Initially, planners did not seem to be aware of the potential impacts of development proposals in an area that had attracted a range of artists and cultural industries. In the case of the West Queen West Triangle, it was the inquiries from developers that led planning staff to realize the extraordinary development potential for the area and the dramatic impact such development could have. (Personal interview, Planner 1, April 8, 2009). There was eventually an awareness that planners would have to consider more than just what existed within the property boundaries. According to the area planner at the time, “We knew we had to think of every site being in play” (Personal interview Planner 1, April 8, 2009).

This awareness was a start, but the tools to implement such a comprehensive process did not yet exist. Planners needed a new method by which to look at multiple sites simultaneously and engage the community accordingly. They also needed to get the Planning Division on board for such a process. The West Queen West Triangle case required an examination of factors beyond planning’s mandate and as such it was difficult to get the department to support such comprehensive analysis. As one planner observed, “The reaction I got internally was, ‘We don’t

deal with that, we'll let economic development deal with that. We're going to do built form and density because that's what we always focus on" (Personal interview Planner 1, April 8, 2009).

Active 18, a citizens, residents and business-owners association of Ward 18 was formed with the goal of informing and focusing citizen participation on future development in their neighbourhood (Active 18 Association, 2009). The group was concerned that the planners and other City staff were missing opportunities for development that would have a positive impact on their community. Active 18 has said that they were never against new development in the Triangle, but that they were insistent on good design and good planning principles. As one member described their position: "We know other cities that are smart and do really beautiful urban planning that is human-friendly. Aren't we sophisticated enough to have that as well and [to] want that?" (Personal interview, Active 18 member, April 28, 2009). Citing disappointment with the City's direction in the area, Active 18 held a one-day charrette which brought together experts in planning and design to consider the redevelopment of the West Queen West Triangle from the community's perspective. Some key ideas that emerged from the charrette were: development that respects the scale and nature of Queen Street; establishing effective mixed use zoning criteria; establishing a pattern of streets and blocks; and providing a pedestrian and cycle link across the railway tracks (Gladki, 2006).

The City subsequently established a Working Group which included City staff, members of the resident community, the councilor of Ward 18, Adam Giambrone, members of the arts community and the developers to receive feedback on the development of the Triangle. With information from the Active 18 charrette and community members as part of this Working Group, the list of topics discussed at meetings expanded to include parkland, built form, pedestrian and cycling connections, maintenance of non-residential space in the Triangle, affordable housing, culture, economic development, and heritage.

The community and Active 18 very much felt that City planning was "broken, stuck in a command and control mentality of a regulator instead of a partner and facilitator" (Personal interview Cultural Consultant 2, May 6, 2009). Planners involved in the case admit that if the community had not been motivated and had not applied significant pressure, the City never would have done research necessary for the case. A planner on the file said "I didn't totally understand the importance of that neighbourhood or even that it was a cultural cluster until I had meetings with the community. If we had never done the research, we never would have recognized [the cultural cluster]" (Personal interview Planner 1, April 8, 2009). This statement emphasizes the significance of community activism around planning and development, especially when cultural resources are involved.

In the West Queen West Triangle controversy, Artscape, an arts NGO with considerable expertise in developing artists' housing and cultural facilities, played a mediating role. Sensing that the three development proposals were not going to yield what the community or the City wanted, Artscape CEO Tim Jones attempted, fairly early on in the community consultation phase, to find a creative solution to the conflicting needs of the developers, community and City. With experience in culture-led regeneration, Artscape had helped to redevelop many of Toronto's most vibrant arts-based communities, including Liberty Village, the Distillery District (Miles, 2005) and the Wychwood Barns. With expertise in property management, project development and affordable artist housing, Artscape had the ability to come up with an innovative solution and saw great potential in this area. Despite Jones's efforts early on, the developers were not willing to make concessions in their proposals. After 180 days without a response from the City, all three developers appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board, as allowed under provincial planning law.

The *Planning Act* allows developers to resort to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) if they disagree with a municipality's decision or if an application is not completely processed within 180 days. The Ontario Municipal Board is an independent administrative board, appointed by the province, which operates as an adjudicative tribunal. It hears applications and appeals on municipal and planning disputes, including appeals under the *Planning Act* related to matters such as zoning, subdivision plans, official plans and variances.

All three applications were appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board, and three identical decisions were rendered where the developers were awarded most of what they requested in their proposals. The City argued against the proposals at the OMB and appealed the decisions. The evening before the Divisional Court case was to start, the City decided to settle with two of the developers. The third application was granted leave to appeal, but was also settled out of court.

Settlements: Negotiating Culture

The settlements negotiated illustrate the limitations of the City's cultural plans and policies and constraints on citizens' attempts to protect cultural resources in the city in the context of the existing planning regulatory system. These examples reveal that when development applications come before the Ontario Municipal Board or result in settlements, they do not address the cultural planning goals of either the City or area residents. A different process and the inclusion of other stakeholders are required for cultural goals to be adequately addressed.

Applications #1 and #2

In a last minute decision, the City of Toronto settled with two of the three de-

velopers on July 18, 2007, just hours before the appeal of the OMB decisions at Ontario Divisional Court. The City managed to get a minor increase in commercial space, some public green space, an increase in setbacks and five per cent of the land value of the two sites toward the purchase of developer-owned park space (Foad, 2007). Section 37 agreements meant that one developer offered six of its nine artist workshops along the Mews at below market rates and another gave the City \$500,000 toward the purchase of artist workshops and community arts infrastructure within the Triangle.

These two settlements resulted in several issues that were important to Active 18 not being addressed, specifically heights and densities in keeping with the character and scale of the area, parkland and protection of one of the buildings (Foad, 2007). Artscape CEO Tim Jones was quoted in *Now Magazine* as saying: “Had people sat down a year ago and pulled the developers, community, artists, etc. into a room and figured out how to make this work for everyone, we’d have a much better development. At the end of the day, the City settled with no leverage” (Foad, 2007). An Active 18 member noted: “What the City settled for, it’s cruel, it’s cynical. It’s shockingly bad urban design. They didn’t consult with us, “they told us what they were settling for” (Foad, 2007).

Application #3: Setting a New Precedent

The last of the three settlements brokered was by far the most successful for all parties involved. This partnership between a developer and Artscape sought significant input from Active 18 and final approval by the City. It pioneered a new self-financing model for an affordable artist live/work development (Artscape, 2007). Artscape worked throughout the protracted OMB hearings to come up with creative partnerships and approaches. Tim Jones invited the president of the development company to meet with members of Active 18 to discuss a better compromise. In the weeks following this initial meeting, a proposal was written with assistance from Mayor David Miller, Councillor Giambrone and City staff from the Legal, Planning and Culture Divisions. The agreement was approved by City Council on October 30, 2007.

The deal was arranged as follows: Artscape agreed to purchase 56,000 square feet of the development at \$150 per square foot. This price includes only construction costs, but not soft costs. The City granted bonus density to the developer through Section 37 to accommodate Artscape’s units. This deal meant that Artscape purchased a \$19 million asset for \$8.4 million. Artscape will have a separate entrance to their 70 units and its residents will not be required to pay condominium fees as they will not have the services of a concierge or fitness centre provided for the other market units. When the project is complete, Artscape plans to offer rents at 80% of the market rate for Toronto, or about \$725 per month for a one bedroom live/work unit. In order to achieve this, about 20

units will be sold at below-market rates to artists under an affordable ownership scheme. The money from these sales will then be used to reduce the remaining mortgage on the property so that rents will be in the target range. Provisions will also be written into sales agreements to ensure that these units will be preserved for artists over the long term. The developer will also be required to contribute \$1.25 million under a Section 37 agreement of which \$250,000 will be used for relocating Toronto Public Health to the new building and the rest can be used for renovating a former library into a performing arts hub and other local arts and community infrastructure (City of Toronto, 2007a). Artscape has made this deal without requiring government grants (Artscape, 2007).

These three examples reveal the difficulties encountered by both City staff and community activists when existing urban cultural resources are threatened by redevelopment proposals. Despite the City's commitment to a cultural plan, these projects demonstrate that policies are not enough if the City's organizational structures and existing planning regulatory frameworks do not support them. The community consultations initially conducted by the City neglected the importance of the neighbourhood's cultural facilities because they did not fall under land use planning's purview. With much community input and advocacy, the Planning Division came to understand that cultural issues were important to these three applications. Although preservation of cultural resources has been a growing and increasingly dominant issue in Toronto (both in terms of policy and rhetoric), cultural considerations were not part of the development review process, nor were they issues that could be considered at the Ontario Municipal Board.

The Challenges of Cultural Planning in Toronto

The planning regulatory system sharply delimits the contributions urban planners can make to creative city initiatives. When they are asked to address creative city priorities, planners have limited tools at their disposal. According to a former economic development officer for the City of Toronto, the gulf between planning in Ontario and the creative city discourse is related to the fact that planning is a very limited activity focused primarily on land use planning and its tools- the zoning by-law, site plan control, and official plan.

The way that planning has evolved here over the years has [put] a real focus on straightforward land use activities. And while the horizon and discussion is a bit broader ...at the end of the day it comes down to land use planning and the tools that you have at your disposal. That gives you a very limited set of tools to work with if you're trying to have an influence on human or economic behaviour. (Personal interview, Economic Development Officer, April 14, 2009)

Planners echo this sentiment and concede that they cannot be too prescriptive when looking at applications.

We don't have the power to say we want this to be a creative area and we want these specific things. Sometimes we are really hemmed in in terms of what we are allowed to talk about, what we are allowed to do because of property rights under the Planning Act. (Personal interview, Planner 2, April 17, 2009)

One cultural planner argued that legislation was a real problem for implementation, claiming: "There's a lack of provincial legislation that allows municipalities to say we need to plan for [culture]. I think that would be something that could move everything forward. It doesn't need to be prescriptive, saying how to do it, rather, just owning up to the fact that it is a municipality's responsibility to make sure that some of these things are [taking place, would be helpful]" (Kovacs, 2010: 221). The City of Toronto's *Creative City Planning Framework* (AuthentiCity, 2008) acknowledges the command and control mentality that existed in the past and has continued within planning spheres today:

The primary focus was on the administration of land and the efficient delivery of municipal service. If cultural assets were acknowledged by planners, they were narrowly defined, most often in terms of facilities and spaces...these traditions still have a strong hold on planning departments in many cities. (AuthentiCity, 2008: 22)

Ann Markusen claims that "city planners have a tendency to divide urban space into distinctive use patterns, because zoning and subdivision regulations are among their strongest tools, aggravated by economic developers' site-specific approach to redevelopment" (Markusen, 2006: 19). This tendency makes it very difficult for planners and planning departments to think beyond the specific site in question and act with consideration for a larger vision. According to planners working for the City of Toronto, the process of planning is by its very nature site-specific.

The typical process unfolds as follows. An application is delivered to the City and is reviewed by the area planner in isolation as it is received, and is generally evaluated based on that specific application in relation to policies but not in relation to broader development goals or city visions. "One site, one building coming in to get a certain height and density" is how one planner described the process (Personal interview, Planner 2, April 17, 2009). The difficulty with such site-specific planning is that the task of integrating larger priorities of the City into a specific project on a given site is nearly impossible.

I think on a site by site basis you can't really have a plan about anything, including culture, because you're just dealing with one thing. It has to be on a sizeable area, but individual land-owners have a lot of rights and a lot of ability to apply for what they want on their land so it's difficult to say outside the context of a defined area that you have to provide [something specific]-it's just too prescriptive. But it is difficult to think about all of those broad scale things on a site by site basis because we do get focused in on our specific sites. (Personal interview, Planner 2, April 17, 2009).

In addition to regulatory constraints, existing organizational structures of municipal government present barriers to the effective implementation of cultural planning. Municipal culture divisions have tended to be identified more with economic development or tourism than planning. Yet planning comes to the fore when specific culturally vibrant sites or arts districts are threatened by development. Planning also plays a central role in designating arts districts in master plans, in establishing specific designations for arts-related uses- e.g. for live/work areas- or in establishing density bonusing schemes for community benefits that include arts amenities. Despite these connections, cultural affairs officers and planners often have little contact, as they speak different languages and utilize different tools to effect change in cities. This lack of interaction between City departments and the roles carried out by planners and cultural affairs officers have contributed to a fundamental disconnect between cultural planning and land use planning in many municipalities.

Municipalities in Ontario and the Province of Ontario are emphasizing the important role culture plays in the creation of vibrant, livable towns and cities. This suggests that planners need to work much more closely with cultural and economic development officers in order to achieve cities that are culturally, socially and economically vibrant. The lack of communication among different City departments occurs because divisions operate under different mandates and often with competing goals. There are no requirements or policies that mandate that these divisions come together on a regular or routine basis. Kovacs's (2010) study of cultural plan implementation and outcomes in Ontario highlights the importance of having a dedicated culture department and the need to involve senior management to obtain collaboration across City departments in the implementation of cultural plan goals.

Markusen's (2006: 13) research on cultural planning in US cities found similar patterns. "Although artists cross over these sectoral divides all the time, the organizations at the helm of each sector rarely work together on common problems or policy agendas." Often these operational differences seem to make

interaction and especially integration nearly impossible. As a result, cities are unable to make cultural goals and ideas a priority in reality. As Markusen notes, “Few cities have the expertise to bridge current balkanized bureaucratic structure, and few know how to work with multiple constituencies for cultural policy to develop an agenda that works” (2006: 18).

Given their experience with public consultation and mediation processes, planners are in a key position to make connections among different city departments and interests. In the City of Toronto, the Planning Division “always” consults with such divisions as engineering, traffic, parks, forestry and servicing, but the Culture Section is not deemed to be a necessary consultant on development applications (Personal interview, Planner 2, April 17, 2009). In the case of the West Queen West Triangle, Planning took the initiative to consult with Culture and Economic Development. As the planners are the party that receives the application, it is at the planner’s discretion whom to include in ongoing discussions or actions (Personal interview, Planner 1, April 8, 2009). An Active 18 member revealed that the community group had never met alone with Culture or Economic Development and that it was at their meetings with Planning that these parties had been brought in (Personal interview, Active 18 member, April 28, 2009). According to the Culture staff on the West Queen West Triangle case, it was really the first time the three groups came together.

Commenting on the difficulties of achieving an integrated approach to cultural planning, a cultural policy academic noted that:

The objective is to have that kind of integrated approach. The reality is that’s very difficult to achieve even in small communities. Even though groups work on that premise, they’re working on consultations. Unless you have regular meetings and discussions of objectives, it’s very difficult to have collaborative work across different departments. (Personal interview, Cultural Policy academic, May 14, 2009)

This sentiment was echoed by several of the individuals interviewed for this research: that each of these three divisions of the city- culture, planning and economic development- operates in a different sphere with different skills, objectives and tools. Many of the key actors interviewed discussed a fundamental disconnect between the three divisions and related this to the often conflicting mandates of the sections, as well as staff with skills and backgrounds very specific to their section’s purpose. Interviewees argued for the need for mutual learning across city departments and fields of expertise. Cultural planners felt that attempting to implement ideas from the *Agenda for Prosperity* or the *Culture Plan* was futile if the planning department is not aware of policies or attuned to cultural issues. An economic development officer pointed out that:

Sometimes the pieces just don't come together and they're not a natural fit and that's because everyone's coming at it from a different background and everyone's got core functions they need to perform and they have core functions they need to get done. (Personal interview, Economic Development Officer, April 14, 2009)

Conversely, there were comments by planners that the Culture Division at the City of Toronto must learn to understand the ways that planning works, and develop ways of communicating in terms with which planners are familiar.

The Future of Cultural Planning in Toronto

In their Toronto case study, Gertler et al. (2006: 52) argue that Toronto's creative economy is at a pivotal moment when the visions of cultural plans must be implemented and scaled up.

Toronto's creative economy is now at a critical juncture in its evolution. Competition is increasing, the city now faces the challenge of maintaining the strength and worldwide reputation of its successful industries. Meanwhile, much of its creative talent remains underutilized and underdeveloped. Also, rising property prices and increasing gentrification threatens the existence of creative activity. There is a pressing need to scale up the successful practices of Artscape, while developing other mechanisms to protect creative space from market forces.

The ideal state of affairs for cultural planning has been described by Landry (2005) as one where an appreciation of culture should shape land use planning and development, rather than being an afterthought. Despite its Culture Division, *Culture Plan for the Creative City*, and *Creative City Planning Framework*, Toronto has not managed to achieve this vision, although there is a sense of urgency on the part of cultural affairs staff at the City of Toronto. "Cultural planning is still in its infancy, but there is urgency. We're just getting going. But there is urgency. If we don't get going, we will be just like the other cities" (Personal interview, Cultural Affairs Officer, April 17, 2009). Planners are responding to this sense of urgency by trying to coordinate with people from various departments. "I think the City is really trying to break out of the silos and trying to work proactively and together on different issues" (Personal interview, Planner 2, April 17, 2009). City planning staff have also learned from the experience of the West Queen West Triangle. The first two applications that resulted in unfortunate settlements were clearly a failure for cultural planning and for the city as a whole. "Negotiations for the two appeals that were settled happened at a time when the City had little lever-

age and the results in terms of community benefits and design enhancements were predictably disappointing” (Artscape, 2007). Although Active 18 was not satisfied with the outcome of two of the three proposals and felt betrayed by the City’s settlement, there are positive precedents that have come out of this prolonged battle.

The third application resulted in a ground-breaking partnership which can be seen as much more of a success, creating a new self-financing model that can be replicated across the city and beyond. According to a cultural consultant in Toronto:

One of the things that the whole struggle around the Triangle generated was an enormous amount of social capital. While Active 18 were not successful on built form, they were successful on public realm, public art, park space, affordable housing. This case will have a hugely influential role, as well, on future developments. I actually think they’ve done great work. I think that the impacts from Active 18 will be felt in this new model that we’re doing that could be replicated. Hopefully it will be a real antidote to the displacement of artists. (Personal interview, Cultural Consultant 2, May 6, 2009)

According to a City of Toronto press release following the third settlement, this project is “a prime example of several City divisions working collaboratively with the arts community and developers to protect, maintain and nurture the creative industries” (City of Toronto, 2007a). The challenge still remains to implement cultural planning and establish new systems of governance to address the silo mentality that is ever-present in municipal government.

A cultural affairs officer for Toronto claims that much of the foundation for cultural planning has been achieved: “My position is a lot of the heavy lifting has been done and it’s been done on a site specific basis” (Personal interview, Cultural Affairs Officer, April 17, 2009). While the site-specific planning process has been cited as a major hurdle to successful cultural planning in Toronto, it has perhaps aided in producing incremental change throughout the city.

The challenge for planners when confronted with the demands of cultural plans is that planning has developed beyond its technocratic beginnings, but the planning regulatory system still only provides planners with limited tools for addressing the goals articulated in cultural plans. Increasingly, planners are called upon to understand, advocate for and communicate a bigger picture that addresses the social, economic and cultural forces that contribute to the competitiveness and vitality of cities and towns. Although cities and towns have embraced cultural plans that articulate new visions, these are often abstract and lacking in mechanisms for implementation, particularly the organizational changes that would coordinate policies across city departments. As this paper

demonstrates, new models for supporting cultural resources are emerging through negotiations between citizen groups, NGOs and developers rather than being initiated solely by municipal actors. While cultural planning in Toronto has largely followed Richard Florida's arguments for the achievement of primarily economic goals, the case study we have outlined in this paper suggests changes in communication among city departments are also underway. The defence and re-imagining of cultural assets and resources in cities also have the potential to engage wider communities in claims for democratic participation in urban planning and urban citizenship.

Notes

¹ The objectives of the fund are to:

- Help municipalities and Aboriginal communities develop culture as a key part of their community and economic development strategies, and integrate cultural planning with economic development, environmental responsibility, social equity and land use planning processes.
- Facilitate partnerships and collaboration between and among culture and other sectors (such as business, environment, social).
- Support the development of capacity building tools and initiatives that will strengthen the cultural sector's capacity to generate new opportunities for economic growth, employment and wealth creation across Ontario.

² Section 37 of the Planning Act allows zoning by-laws to be amended to allow more height and/or density than is usually permitted in return for community benefits. These may come in the form of facilities or services. Development involving increases in height and/or density must constitute good planning and be consistent with the objectives and development policies of the Official Plan (Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District 2006b). Community benefits are selected on the basis of community needs, the nature of the development application, and the strategic objectives and policies of the Secondary Plan and the Official Plan (Ontario & Canada Law Book Inc 1992; 2005).

³ The new Official Plan (adopted by City Council November 26, 2002, approved by the Ontario Municipal Board in 2007) was not in force at the time of this case. One particular difficulty at the time of these applications was the fact that there were two Official Plans that needed to be considered: the in-force Official Plan for the former City of Toronto, and the new Official Plan that was clearing approval at the Ontario Municipal Board. Each of these plans designated the area in question differently, and although only one Official Plan could be legally considered, the other was about to come into force, so has to be examined as well.

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