Planning Canada
A Case Study Approach

EDITED BY Ren Thomas
Community and regional planning is a discipline rooted in concerns about cities. From their physical forms and environmental conditions to their economic development and socio-cultural networks, there are few aspects of living in human settlements that planners have not attempted to improve. Policies and programs designed to improve quality of life, regulate growth, and minimize the negative consequences of development are commonplace in our municipalities and provinces. Yet many Canadians do not know how their neighbourhood parks are designed, how their transportation networks are funded, or which responsibilities rest with their local government. This book introduces the reader to the discipline of community and regional planning through real cases, which illustrate the multidisciplinary and participatory approach that planners use in the development of policies, plans, and programs.

Case studies, with their in-depth exploration of planning decisions, stakeholder relationships, and political realities, are often used to help develop policy solutions to the complex problems planners face in their own jurisdictions. They have been used to understand how plans were developed, the challenges encountered, and different implementation outcomes from one municipality to another—often telling a compelling story in the process. Case study as a research approach is also well used in planning, because it allows incorporation of multiple research methods to develop a deep understanding of a topic. Completed case studies can be also used in meta-analysis and cross-case analysis to develop a broader understanding of a key issue.

Because case studies are so established in the planning discipline, Planning Canada: A Case Study Approach uses them to introduce readers to the diversity of community and regional planning research and practice across Canada. I hope that the book reaches planners in both practice and research and that it will be used to introduce students to the fascinating discipline of planning. The cases are compelling enough to interest readers from any field in the complex issues facing our cities and regions, including climate change, equity, urban sprawl, and redevelopment.

A Case Study Approach for Planning Students

One application of Planning Canada: A Case Study Approach would be as a textbook in introductory planning courses. Canadian students in urban planning are required to take an introduction to planning history and theory course as part of their degree programs. Students in urban studies, geography, real estate development, landscape
architecture, and sociology often take an introductory course in planning. The reading lists for these courses are usually a mix of book chapters, online articles, and government publications—rarely do instructors use a single textbook. Reading lists typically draw upon American authors, but major differences in planning law, history, and governance mean that these theories and analyses can have limited applications for those intending to pursue planning careers in Canada. My intent was to present cases developed within students' own political, cultural, and governance frameworks to allow them to easily see how the plans or policies could be implemented in their own cities and regions.

The format of the book, divided into nine sections, is intended to introduce students to the planning “sub-disciplines” by presenting three to five cases of policy development, plan implementation, or in-depth research in each area. Each of the cases works as a standalone reading, which allows them to be used in elective courses such as transportation planning or community development: for example, Jason Thorne's chapter on the Province of Ontario Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe could be integrated into a course on regional planning. Many of the chapters cross sub-disciplines, illustrating the inter-disciplinarity of planning, so they can be used in multiple ways. Gerry Couture's case study of Winnipeg's CentrePlan addresses public participation, urban regeneration, and community development; Tim Shah's case of climate change adaptation in Elkford, BC, could be used in courses on ecological planning, planning methods, or disaster and risk management. The length of the cases, a maximum of 4500 words each, allows an individual case to be combined with two or three in-depth articles on a key topic in an elective course.

The authors have each illustrated the ways in which planners were involved in the development of plans and policies, how planners dealt with challenges, and their reflections on the outcomes of the planning processes. In this way, students learn how typical challenges encountered in practice could be addressed. Planning theories highlighted within each case study help students to understand the intersection of theory and practice. The list of further readings at the end of the book will be useful in developing these specialized topic reading lists.

**A Text for Planning Researchers**

Another way to use the case studies would be in planning research. The authors have outlined the methods they used in the development of each case study, including interviews, focus groups, design charrettes, GIS, meta-analysis, policy analysis, and participant observation. Some, such as Laura Johnson in her case on Regent Park, go into considerable detail on their research methods and could be used in a masters research methods class or PhD colloquium on research design. Advanced discussion of the case study method can be found in the introduction and in Kyle Whitfield's case on health initiatives in Alberta, which illustrates the use of case studies in cross-case comparison to aid in analytic generalization. The case studies could also be used as qualitative data: the four cases on housing presented in Section 5 could be used in a policy analysis of the development of affordable housing in Canada; the five cases on participatory processes could be used in a meta-analysis of public participation in planning. Many of the cases discuss decision-making and public participation processes, which are often of interest to planning researchers.
Presenting Compelling Stories and Developing a Shared Vision

Although planners have their own set of skills and expertise, many decisions on planning policies, programs, and plans rest with elected officials, members of the public, developers, non-profit organizations, Aboriginal governments, and other stakeholders. It is good practice to exchange knowledge of planning goals, aspirations, and values with those involved in planning processes. Discussions of increased density in communities, implementation of cycling lanes, or redevelopment of former industrial spaces can then occur with common goals and understandings. Some municipalities, regional planning authorities, and non-profit organizations have been instrumental in distributing information on planning processes, developing new ways for getting involved in shaping the city, and developing online participation tools to decrease distance in rural areas. Increased knowledge of planning issues contributes to an understanding of the “common good” or the development of a future vision for a town or region. Those who participate in a plan’s development share its ownership and assist in its implementation.

With this goal in mind, I hope to introduce readers from all age groups, all disciplines, and all regions to planners’ unique skills and expertise, the challenges that they face in implementation, and the fundamental governance frameworks that shape planning decisions in Canada. These critical components of theory and practice ground the case studies in the daily realities of decision-making in municipalities, regions, and provinces.

Acknowledgments

This book first developed through a chance meeting between myself, Caroline Starr, acquisitions editor at Oxford University Press Canada, and Silvia Vilches, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Victoria. It was astonishing to see how quickly the idea of “a case study book in Canadian planning” attracted support from academic and practising planners across the country. Because most of the work took place during my two-year research posting at the University of Amsterdam, the authors became somewhat of a virtual community in the process of developing the book.

Special thanks must go not only to Caroline at OUP Canada but also to Jodi Lewchuk, Peter Chambers, and Dorothy Turnbull, who took the book through its developmental stages to publication. Gordon Price and Shawn Micallef spread the word on the call for papers and were undoubtedly the main reasons that I received so many high-quality case study proposals. Thanks to Penny Gurstein, Luca Bertolini, and Leonie Janssen-Jansen, models of excellent researchers and teachers. To Nick Doniere, everlasting gratitude for all your support. Finally, this book is dedicated to the staff, faculty, students, and alumni of the University of British Columbia School of Community and Regional Planning—without you, there would be no Planning Canada.

To all of those who have supported the authors in the development of their cases, thank you for helping us to develop a volume that we feel will introduce students, practitioners, urban enthusiasts, community activists, and many others to community and regional planning policies, plans, and programs in Canada.
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Planning Canada: A Case Study Approach is a unique look at innovative planning practice and research across the country. Published by an academic press, it is expected that the book will be adopted as a textbook for introductory planning courses in undergraduate degrees in planning, geography, and urban studies. However, as a unique combination of research and practice, it is hoped that the book will reach audiences interested in urban issues such as housing affordability, climate change adaptation, and transportation planning. The editor of Planning Canada, Ren Thomas, has a long-term interest in making planning issues understandable to the public through her blog, www.renthomas.ca.

The book was published by Oxford University Press on February 1, 2016, and has 457 pages and 41 contributing authors. The book features an introduction to Canadian planning history and planning theory, followed by eight sections with three to five case studies each: community development and social planning, urban form and public health, natural resource management, housing, participatory processes, urban design, urban redevelopment, transportation and infrastructure.

The decision to use case studies to introduce readers to planning in Canada was purposeful; case studies are widely used in both practice and research and facilitate policy learning at different levels, from undergraduate student to policy maker. They provide the opportunity for the reader to consider whether a certain plan, program, or policy could be implemented in their own jurisdiction—and if not, why not. They prompt discussions about planning jurisdictions and levels of responsibility among governmental and non-governmental agencies. Ren felt that learning from case studies produced in their own cultural, legal, and planning context would help Canadian students and practitioners apply the policy concepts in the communities where they live.

The authors use a wide range of methodologies in their work, from the rational scientific approach to dialogic and experiential learning. Some of the methods applied in the case studies include: literature review, policy review, interviews, descriptive data analysis, surveys, focus groups, community meetings, plan analysis, design charrettes, storytelling, GIS mapping, kitchen table meetings, and crowdsourcing. The methods are explained in everyday language so that a reader with no background knowledge in the discipline can understand them.

The format of the case studies was specifically designed to facilitate learning, with a brief summary and outline beginning each case, plentiful maps and images, and inset boxes highlighting planning theory and key issues. Authors were urged to include information on the policies that framed their work, such as the British North America Act and the Vancouver Charter. Most of the case studies also include context maps specifically designed for readers with little understanding of Canadian geography or urban areas. In this way, even those new to the country or living outside of it are able to locate the case study cities and understand their physical contexts. Since Ren has taught planning in Canada, The Netherlands, and the United States, she recognized that readers may not understand the political structure, governance, cultural background, or legal framework that shapes the planning agenda in Canada.
In each case, Ren urged the authors to discuss any challenges in stakeholder consultation, development and implementation and how they were overcome. For example, Lisa Brideau and Amanda Mitchell (Case Study 6.3) discuss some of the difficulties encountered in the crowdsourcing method used for the City of Vancouver’s Greenest City Action Plan and how these should be considered if the same approach were adopted in another city. Pamela Robinson and Michael DeRuyter (Case Study 6.5) assess the use of Web 2.0 tools in participatory processes across 17 Canadian municipalities and discuss reasons why many municipalities have not yet embraced these tools for meaningful public engagement. In each case study the authors discuss the costs of participation, advantages and disadvantages of the methods, and how other jurisdictions could adopt the same approaches.

*Planning Canada* addresses many controversial issues, such as social vulnerability to climate change, Aboriginal reconciliation through joint management of natural resources, and the challenges of providing appropriate social policies to support low-income families. The book is not limited to successful case studies; several depict less desirable results such as ignoring the environmental impact of a proposed parkway, favouring higher-rent redevelopment over lower-rent existing uses, and persistent environmental and cultural conflicts between a First Nation and territorial government.

The book’s initial run of 5,000 copies was printed in February 2016, and it is selling well. An e-book was developed for rental for students to facilitate its use in the classroom setting; this is the version that the CIP Awards for Planning Excellence jurors will use in their consideration of the book. Reviews of the book indicate that the cases are carefully chosen and the introduction to Canadian planning history and theory is accessible and interesting to readers with no background knowledge in the subject. Reviewers have highlighted the value of the cases to academics and practitioners, its clear and accessible language, and intuitive case formatting.

The editor, publisher, and authors of *Planning Canada: A Case Study Approach* have heavily invested in the creation and distribution of a collection of case studies that exemplify the best in Canadian planning. They feel that the book will contribute to excellence in future planners and strengthen planning practice through policy learning and policy transfer to other jurisdictions across the country.