

PLACES TO GROW

BETTER CHOICES. BRIGHTER FUTURE.

Youth Engagement Project

2008

The Places to Grow Youth Engagement Project is an exciting new program where young people aged 16 to 18 re-design their cities and learn about planning, urban design and smart growth.



Reaching out to young people

Young people have exciting new ideas and can play a role in creating the cities of the future. They are tomorrow's community leaders, decision makers and planners. Our cities are growing fast. The Places to Grow Youth Engagement Project gets young people thinking about the challenges our cities face, and provides hands-on tools to apply their ideas.

Inspiring the Leaders of Tomorrow

Getting young people thinking about their cities is exciting and important work. Some participants may be inspired to pursue careers in planning and community development. They'll also think differently — or get their parents thinking differently — about the impact of their decisions as homeowners and commuters. Whatever they choose for their future, the youth who participate in this project will be better prepared to take up their responsibilities as informed citizens of tomorrow.

Teen town planners

MISSISSAUGA BY SQUARE ONE

OSHAWA DOWNTOWN

MARKHAM CITY CENTRE

LIKED: Almost everything, including the Square One shopping mall, the HSCA, and many more.

DIDN'T LIKE: Didn't like the proposed changes to the city's layout and the way it would affect the city's appearance.

WOULD CHANGE: 1. Add a university or college building in the area. 2. Add a park or green space. 3. Add a library or community center.

LIKED: The overall look of the city, the mix of buildings, and the way the city is laid out.

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Reaching out to Young People



Stimulating Live Sessions

Participants gather at the outset of the project to learn about city planning, urban design and smart growth from leaders in the field. They then explore their own downtowns and begin to consider improvements that could be made.



Thought-provoking Online Exercises

Over three months, participants continue to explore their ideas through a safe, secure, moderated online platform. Live chats with local professionals let the participants get feedback on their ideas. Topics include transportation, street design, built form, and public space.



Inspirational Design Charrettes

The project wraps up with a final design workshop where participants create a future vision for their downtowns with photo collages and scale models. They are then given the opportunity to showcase their designs to local elected officials, business leaders and others.



Inspiring the Leaders of Tomorrow

Project Origins

The Places to Grow Youth Engagement Project was launched in 2007 with 50 young people from a range of Greater Golden Horseshoe cities. The participants were very enthusiastic about making a difference in their communities and shared an optimism about the potential for their downtowns. “It’s kind of exciting to think that you can make a difference in your own downtown,” said one Oshawa participant. In their final 30-year visions for their downtowns, the participants expressed the concepts they learned over the course of the three-month project including the need for:

- attractive public spaces like parks and libraries
- better use of “wasted space” like underused parking lots
- re-use or replacement of vacant buildings,
- more pedestrian- and cycling-friendly streets
- good public transit

Expansion in 2008

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal is pleased to be expanding the Youth Engagement Project for 2008. This year up to 80 youth will take part from cities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The scope of the project is also being expanded to include events in municipalities outside of Toronto.



“...the future is of an attractive, modern place filled with new people and a mix of new uses and activities... an improved positive image... a progressive ‘city in motion’ where people are proud to live.”
Oshawa team on their vision for downtown



Places to Grow: Better Choices. Brighter Future.

The Ontario Growth Secretariat at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal is responsible for the Places to Grow initiative — Ontario’s vision for building strong, prosperous, healthy, and diverse communities.

The Government is committed to developing complete and liveable communities where people want to live and employers want to invest — from revitalized downtowns to complete suburbs that offer options for living, working, shopping, and playing. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was released on June 16, 2006.

What Youth are Saying



About the Program:

"It's been very inspiring...[these are] very intelligent, very observant young people who don't often necessarily think about this, but have some really key ideas...I think it's an important input for us to hear as we move forward to understanding growth over the next thirty years."

Melanie Hare, a Partner at Urban Strategies and facilitator for the 2007 and 2008 program



"We want to reinvent the city and make it lively. A new and exciting place for all the new people that are going to come."

Orsi, 2007 participant from Barrie



"We have to consider building new schools, new community centres, because you need places for little kids to enjoy themselves."

Anastasia, 2007 participant from Toronto



"Because urban sprawl is never a good thing."

Sean, 2007 participant from Mississauga



"We want to add in some more public transportation, have it easier for people, residents, to come into the downtown area without having to bring their cars and having a really congested downtown."

Catharine, 2007 participant from Markham



"We want to restore the heritage buildings so we have that heritage feel."

Adrienne, 2007 participant from St Catharines

For more information:

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