

UPDATE

from the Ministry of Municipal
Affairs and Housing



April 2007

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MESSAGE FROM MINISTER JOHN GERRETSEN

Welcome to the second issue of UPDATE, our ministry's e-newsletter that keeps you up-to-date on news and progress in the municipal and housing sectors. There is a lot to report this month as we continue to move forward. [Read the full story.](#)



BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT SUCCESS

Brownfields are vacant or underutilized properties that may be contaminated, yet have the potential for redevelopment into residential, commercial and mixed-use facilities. [Read the full story.](#)



BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES WITH PLANNING ACT REFORMS

As of January 1, 2007, rules governing the province's land use planning system were changed to give municipalities and members of the public more tools and opportunities to shape how their communities grow and evolve over time. [Read the full story.](#)



NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES IN PROVINCIAL BUDGET

Three new housing initiatives were announced in the recent provincial budget, building on the government's successful Affordable Housing Strategy. [Read the full story.](#)



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Message from Minister John Gerretsen



Welcome to the second issue of **UPDATE**, our ministry's e-newsletter that keeps you up-to-date on news and progress in the municipal and housing sectors. There is a lot to report this month as we continue to move forward.

My cabinet colleague, Finance Minister Greg Sorbara, tabled our government's 2007 Ontario Budget in March. As he stated, this budget expands the opportunities for children and their families who are working hard to succeed.

Few things are more important to working families than access to affordable housing. In the words of one housing advocate: "It all begins with an address."

The Budget included proposals for creating more housing supports, along with new housing units and additional funding for those eligible for housing allowances.

The environment was also a key part of the Budget. We announced a comprehensive reform package that would, if passed, address the regulatory and liability barriers to the redevelopment of brownfields across Ontario.

More information about these initiatives is included in this issue, along with information on how our recent planning reforms will strengthen Ontario communities for years to come.

If **UPDATE** has been forwarded to you from a colleague, and you would like to continue receiving it, please take the time to [subscribe](#). As always, we encourage your [feedback](#).

John Gerretsen
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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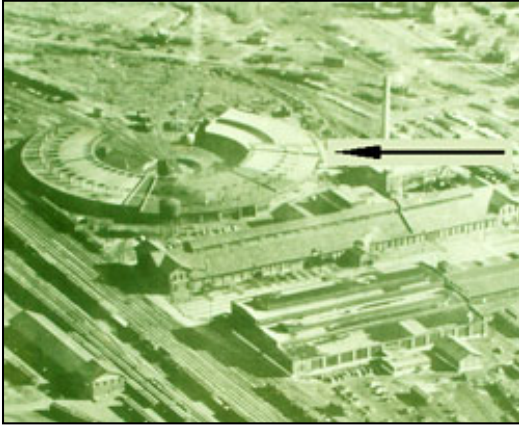
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Brownfield Redevelopment Success

Brownfields are vacant or underutilized properties that may be contaminated, yet have the potential for redevelopment into residential, commercial and mixed-use facilities.



Eight years ago the City of St. Thomas identified the need for a new recreational facility. A privately-owned brownfield site was selected within abandoned former railway corridor lands just east of downtown.

Through a cooperative approach, the site was remediated and transformed into the \$12-million St. Thomas Timken Community Centre, which opened in the fall of 2005, receiving a Canadian Urban Institute Brownie Award for Implementation and Process the following year.

Putting brownfields like this into productive use is the objective of a comprehensive [reform package](#) recently introduced in the recent Ontario budget that would, if passed, address liability and regulatory barriers to brownfield redevelopment. The government is also providing a total of \$11 million in brownfield-related funding to five Ontario communities. A brochure entitled "[Taking Action on Brownfields](#)" describes the proposed reforms.

What are brownfields?



There are an estimated 30,000 to 100,000 brownfield sites across Canada. They include former service stations, railway yards, dry cleaners, factories, foundries and mills.

Cleaning up brownfield properties has both environmental and social benefits and is important to the economic vitality and growth of Ontario's communities.

More information about brownfield financing, environmental protection and land use planning are available on the [Brownfields Ontario website](#).

Related Links

- [Brownfields Ontario website](#)
- [Taking Action on Brownfields](#) (brochure)
- [Investments in Brownfields](#)
- [Expanding Opportunities for a Greener Ontario](#) (Ontario Budget backgrounder)

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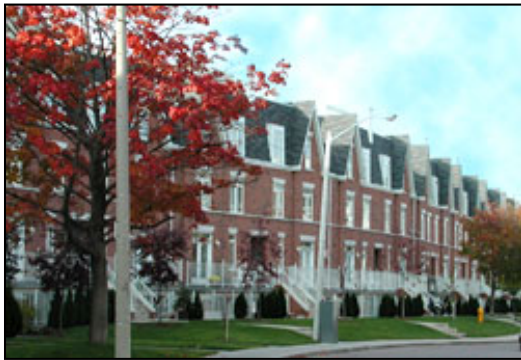
Building better communities with Planning Act reforms

As of January 1, 2007, [rules governing the province's land use planning system were changed](#) to give municipalities and members of the public more tools and opportunities to shape how their communities grow and evolve over time.

"Reforming Ontario's land-use planning system is a cornerstone of our government's commitment to build strong, healthy and livable communities," said John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "It is crucial to our plan to reduce urban sprawl, to preserve greenspace and protect our natural resources."

These reforms support sustainable growth across the province by giving municipalities the tools they need to ensure good development in their communities.

Why Planning Reform Was Necessary



The recent Census numbers made it clear that many Ontario municipalities are experiencing unprecedented population growth.

With an additional four million people expected to make Ontario home over the next 25 years, municipalities are faced with tough decisions about how to accommodate that growth and maintain a high quality of life for residents.

Municipalities must, for instance, consider appropriate densities for new neighbourhoods, the locations of schools, stores and parks, as well as transit corridors and other infrastructure needs.

Some mature communities, meanwhile, are seeing their populations decline. They face their own planning challenges in attempting to maintain vibrant and healthy communities.

With these reforms, information, participation, consultation and decision-making are at the front end of the planning process. This means that area residents are actively involved in the municipality's process of developing its official plan, including providing input to how development will reflect the "look and feel" of their neighborhood.

In areas of the province that are not experiencing growth pressures, the new Planning Act offers municipalities new tools to make better planning decisions for their communities. In fact some of the new tools, including enhanced community improvement plans, help promote growth and redevelopment.

Other highlights of the reforms include:

- Complete application requirements that make all relevant information available to municipal council during its decision-making process
- Requirements related to up-to-date municipal planning documents that provide developers with greater certainty and clarity
- A requirement for the Ontario Municipal Board to "have regard to" municipal decisions which further emphasizes local decision-making.

Related Links

- [Building Better Communities: Highlights of what's new in the Planning Act \(Brochure\)](#)
- [Ontario Municipal Board/Planning Reform](#)
- [Your guide to Planning Reform Changes](#)

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New Affordable Housing Initiatives in Provincial Budget

Three new housing initiatives were announced in the recent provincial budget, building on the government's successful Affordable Housing Strategy:

- [Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters](#) provides a one-time grant of \$127 million to build on the success of municipal delivery of housing for low-income households. The investment builds on the 15,000 units of affordable rental and homeownership housing being developed under the Affordable Housing Program, bringing the program on track to deliver 20,000 new units of affordable housing.



- The government is investing \$185 million in the Rental Opportunity for Ontario Families housing allowance program. More than 27,000 low-income working families struggling with housing affordability will receive \$100 every month to assist them in paying their rent, bringing the total number of households assisted through new housing allowance programs to 35,000. Minister John Gerretsen will announce program details later this spring.
- The government is allocating \$80 million in housing initiatives to benefit off-reserve Aboriginal households, and will consult with Aboriginal peoples to determine the most effective way to distribute this funding.

Affordable Housing Strategy: A Success Story



The Affordable Housing Program provided \$452,000 in funding to complete Spadina Woods, an attractive new development in the Region of Waterloo. Spadina Woods consists of a mix of stacked townhouses and apartments. Families and singles have now moved into the 52 affordable housing units.

More on Ontario's Affordable Housing Strategy

The [Affordable Housing](#) Strategy, to assist more than 70,000 households in the province, includes the [Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program](#), which involves an investment of more than \$734 million by the three levels of government, with the federal and provincial governments each investing \$301 million.

The result will be:

- Creation of 15,000 new units of affordable housing for low-income households, victims of domestic violence, and people with mental illness.





- \$80 million in funding for housing allowances for some 5,000 lower income families in Ontario.
- Long-term funding commitment of \$50 million per year for 20 years to municipalities for rent supplements across the province under the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program. Currently, the program provides rent supplements for more than 6,600 units. This includes more than 1,300 supportive units for some of the most vulnerable Ontarians – victims of domestic violence, persons with mental illnesses, those with developmental disabilities, and long-term care client groups.

Rent Bank Program

To date, the [Ontario Rent Bank Program](#) has prevented some 8,000 low-income households from being evicted due to a missed rent payment. Ontario has provided municipalities with more than \$18 million in funding for their local rent banks.

Related Links

- [Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program \(AHP\)](#)
- [Looking for affordable housing in your community](#)

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