



Take City of Peterborough online survey about growth to 2041.

By MICHELLE COLLINS, Reimagine Peterborough
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A recently installed sign welcomes drivers and visitors to Peterborough on Thursday March 30, 2017 at the intersection of Crawford Dr. and The Parkway in Peterborough, Ont. Clifford Skarstedt/Peterborough Examiner file photo

\$2.7 Billion. It's a simple but enormous price tag that signified the turning point in the ReThink London official plan review process in 2014: this number rattled the local business community and those concerned about city budgets and property taxes.

As its population grew, London had sprawled a lot beyond its former 1971 city boundary. To continue growing in the same spread-out pattern, London would need to consume another 6,500 hectares of land - equal in size to the entire City of Waterloo.

As part of its ReThink London process, the city calculated that the costs of another 50 years under the same spread-out pattern of growth would cost \$2.7 billion more in public infrastructure and about \$70 million more per year in operating costs as compared to growth in a more compact form. To figure this out, London compared three different growth scenarios, all using the exact same number of additional people, jobs, and homes.

"We can't afford 'dumb' growth," London's planners [concluded](#), saying this style of growth disrespects the local environment and natural heritage, is disconnected from active transportation and community, and hurts a city's economic opportunities in the long term.

While we don't have the same models and calculations for Peterborough, London's and other studies from across Canada show that by prioritizing "smart," or compact, growth over sprawl, cities will save hundreds of millions, in some cases billions, in capital and operating costs (i.e. property taxes) and can save each household \$11,000 in expenditures.

Growth is not paying for growth: development charges only cover about 80 per cent of the costs of growth-related capital, according to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. What's more, Ontario is experiencing an "alarming decline" in the number of farms and loss of agricultural lands, according to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. As a result, the farming organization now says cities should only be allowed to expand out onto farm fields after exhausting redevelopment of its underused or vacant areas - something Peterborough has ample opportunity for.

How we plan for growth will affect our city's entire daily function and our financial, environmental, and human health, and our ability to withstand natural disasters. So, [with growth looming in Peterborough](#), how do we protect our local environment and financial future?

A survey on growth in Peterborough is online now until 4 p.m. Jan. 18. Citizens are invited to tell the city what pattern, style and priorities you prefer for how Peterborough will grow to the year 2041!

As former CBC news anchor Peter Mansbridge remarked at the launch of ReThink London, the opportunity to shape the future of one's own city is a true privilege not

offered in many parts of the world - this is a historic opportunity for all citizens of Peterborough.

Reimagine Peterborough encourages you to fill out the City's growth survey and to put emphasis (i.e. choose the double-arrows in the survey) on choices that promote sustainable intensification, as well as mixed and diversified housing types that promote accessibility, affordability, and active and complete communities. These recommended choices reflect newer land use planning approaches, [shift the current and unsustainable patterns of development](#), provide more options for housing and community health, save on taxes and protect more green space.

We also encourage you to write comments, and think about how Peterborough can embark on a more ambitious, creative, and 21st-century-ready trajectory of planning and urban place-making.

Reimagine Peterborough believes our city can avoid the pitfalls of "dumb" growth, embrace and implement sustainable "smart" growth, and truly achieve "ambitious" growth for Peterborough - a city we all know is a unique treasure.

Fill out the city's survey by Jan. 18 and sign up for City of Peterborough Official Plan Review updates [here](#).

This is the 11th in a series of columns from Reimagine Peterborough, a citizen-led movement that sees better urban planning and public engagement as essential to our social, cultural, democratic, and quality of life needs. For updates, follow Reimagine Peterborough on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), at reimagineptbo.ca, and [join our mailing list](#).