


Making density work for you

What is intensification?

Intensification is a key tool for creating more compact neighbourhoods with higher population densities. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe dictates that at least 40% of development must occur in built-up areas.


Intensification can take shape in a few different ways in existing areas. For example, density can be increased by redeveloping or converting existing properties, developing vacant or underused lots, or building infill development.

What are the benefits of intensification?



Intensification provides more choices

Homebuyers tend to prefer walkable neighbourhoods with transit and local amenities in the GTA, but an area that is already built up obviously has a limited supply of vacant homes, and these homes are more expensive because of the limited supply. Intensification can increase that supply. If all the urban growth centres in the GTA meet their density targets, their populations will grow by at least 50%. That would create **500,000 more opportunities for people to live and work in these desirable neighbourhoods.**




Intensification increases transportation options

Building homes in existing neighbourhoods, and making new neighbourhoods more compact with close access to amenities and employment opportunities, reduces the distance people have to travel, resulting in direct savings for drivers. This provides more residents with the opportunity to reduce their costs from driving. It's projected that in 30 years with the full roll-out of regional rapid transit projects, **80% of the GTHA population will live within two kilometres of rapid transit.**



Intensification reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution

Intensification provides more opportunities for households and employers to move to neighbourhoods with transit access and amenities within walking and cycling distance. Families moving from suburban neighbourhoods to complete communities may be able to reduce distance travelled by car because they are able to take more trips by walking, cycling or transit. Metrolinx's target for when the Big Move is completely implemented is to **reduce per-person greenhouse gas emissions from passenger transportation by almost one-third.**



Intensification reduces infrastructure costs

Homes that are built in existing neighbourhoods can make use of the infrastructure already in place, be it transit, roads, sewers, schools or community services. That saves taxpayers and developers money, since using or expanding existing infrastructure costs less than building from scratch. In fact, **infrastructure costs for location-efficient communities can be as much as 20-50% lower** than those for new low-density developments.

Guiding principles to success

The Pembina Institute's *Close to Home* report shows the benefits of density and the importance of building complete communities. Success takes collaboration and careful planning; here are a few key factors in getting there:



Strong leadership from cities

Good density starts with municipalities determining where population growth should be located and how it can maximize the use of existing infrastructure. Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe like Markham, Mississauga, Toronto and Kitchener have dictated in their official plans that new residents and jobs should be concentrated around major hubs and transit corridors.



Progressive developers

The most successful examples of greenfield developments or mixed use developments in established neighbourhoods come from developers that are willing to work closely with municipalities and the community. Progressive developers actively listen to community interests and concerns, while also adhering to municipal city-building visions to create new developments that are liveable and denser.



Coordinated transit

Density is best suited to areas where residents and commuters have a variety of transportation options. Planning developments around existing and future transit investments maximizes revenues of transit services and builds the necessary ridership to justify further transit investments.



Early consultation with stakeholders and the community

The community wants what is best for their neighbourhood, and early consultation with local residents and businesses will ensure that the community is engaged and contributing to the development plan. All stakeholders should be willing to work together, and have the common goal of improving the community.

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