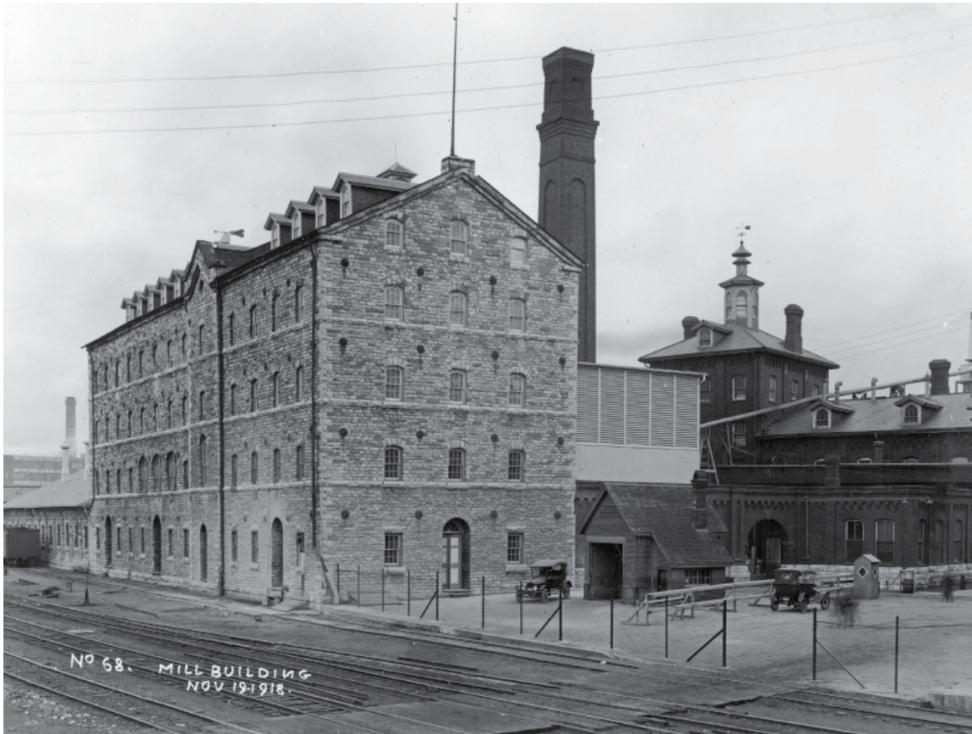


Building complete communities

Distillery District evolves into a lively community

Ontario Municipal Board mediation helped ensure the reinvention of the historic area



The Ontario Municipal Board was a key player in the revitalization of The Distillery District, pictured here in 1918. The tribunal ruled in favour of the project in accordance with provincial intensification goals and the city's community plan.

"The OMB is there to deal with the question of what is in the larger public good, and that often extends well beyond the local boundary."

STEVE DIAMOND,
TORONTO DEVELOPER

oper and lawyer who specializes in municipal law and planning. "It helps maintain integrity in the system."

"But even where the OMB is not involved," Diamond continues, "it acts as an important check on the system, because everyone involved is aware their actions could end up being reviewed by an independent tribunal, and that the decisions made by planners, ratepayers, developers and city council will be judged on the basis of what are good planning principles."

The OMB plays an especially vital role in ensuring that municipal development is carried out in accordance with provincial growth plans, says Bryan Tuckey, president and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development (BILD). "In adherence with Ontario's Places to Grow legislation in 2006, the GTA development industry has recalibrated its approach to intensify land use," he explains. "Yet municipalities like Toronto are operating with outdated planning and zoning bylaws that don't reflect the public interest principles of the province's Places to Grow plan."

"This disconnect creates costly delays with development applications," he adds. "It also pits developers against communities confused over necessary zoning changes and against local councillors who reject sound planning for political reasons."

"The OMB is there for when decisions are made that don't reflect much broader and larger policy directives," says Diamond. "It ensures that local ward councillors are not just dealing with decisions without looking at the broader picture. The OMB is there to deal with the question of what is in the larger public good, and that often extends well beyond the local boundary."

The Distillery District redevelopment was certainly in the public good. Just ask Ulla Jappinen, a salesperson for jewellery boutique Corktown Designs. "It's a small community — the people know each other and support one another," she says, standing in the doorway of the shop on a busy Saturday. "I also love that every building has a story. We don't have many places like this in the city."

Why do you come to the the Distillery District?



TALLY GREENBERG
PHOTOGRAPHER AND AREA RESIDENT

"I love it that I practically don't have to leave home to enjoy all the good things that are here."



GLENN TOWERS
BUSKER

"It's very relaxed. I think the old streets help that. It's not shiny and polished. People relate to the funkiness of it."



DEBBIE MILLER
ACCOUNT DIRECTOR, TORONTO TOURISM

"There are so many unique shops here. I love the shopping and food. This is Toronto's version Old Montreal."



BARBRA GUSTIS
VISITING FROM THE U.S. ON BUSINESS

"We're considering coming here for a conference. I like it that not everything here is modern. To have something like this is very important."

IF NOT FOR THE OMB...

Here are some other celebrated Toronto development projects that might not have come to fruition had it not been for the adjudication of the Ontario Municipal Board.



SEAN MARSHALL

Shops at Don Mills

Ontario's first "urban village," the Shops at Don Mills — located at Don Mills Rd. and Lawrence Ave. E. — comprises a central town square, a robotic water-and-light feature and a Douglas Coupland-designed clock tower surrounded by high-end shops, restaurants, offices and residences. The redevelopment plan saw

the retail added first, which was approved by the OMB. The second phase, which adds residential and commercial to the area, was long negotiated and city council approved a settlement just two months before the case was scheduled to be heard at the OMB.

shopsatdonmills.ca/en/centreinfo/Pages/RetailDevelopment.aspx

The Kings

The City of Toronto developed planning policies in the mid-1990s for the King-Parliament and King-Spadina districts stimulated substantial reinvestment in both areas, helping to transform and revitalize them. City council adopted the plans but residents and businesses appealed some parts to the OMB. Settlements later came back to council for approval. The Kings plan has guided the development of the thriving St. Lawrence and Corktown neighbourhoods in Toronto's east and the Entertainment and Fashion districts in the west. It also led to increased employment activity in both areas, helping lure younger residents downtown. Today King West and King East are among the city's places to see and be seen. toronto.ca/planning/pdf/kingsmonit.pdf

This is the second in a 4-part series sponsored by BILD. Look for the next one on Sat., November 2.



WORKING TOGETHER TOWARD A GREATER GTA

Building healthy, complete communities is a team effort. That's why BILD works closely with our partners in government to establish fair and effective policies that affect the land development, home building and professional renovation industry in the GTA. We are always at the table on behalf of the industry and new home buyers.

So why is advocating on your behalf so vital to us?



BECAUSE THE GTA IS OUR HOME TOO

