Not North York or Manhattan, but something else: a new vision for the landscapes of suburbia at Toronto gallery show

The curators, Daniels professors Michael Piper and Richard Sommer, present an incisive analysis of what's happening across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and offer solutions – some utopian and some very practical – for the next century.

This is how municipal planners imagine the Toronto surrounding area in the future: a long mural within an exhibition at the University of Toronto called Housing Multitudes, a long mural within an exhibition at the University of Toronto called Housing Multitudes.

Take a neighbourhood of 1970s detached houses on curvy streets. It's surrounded by a grid of major roads lined by fences and a strip of green space. In Mr. Sommer and Mr. Piper's imagined future, government acquires some houses around the borders of the area and cuts through the blocks to create straight, green, pedestrian-friendly pathways. Presto: the area houses hundreds more people of different incomes and abilities. And the public transit and autonomous vehicles make driving less necessary.

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Does that really make sense?"So often, the understanding of what the region can be is based on an understanding of what it isn't," said Mr. Sommer. "Our goal was to look at how they could evolve, like anything else."

The show intersects with an evolution in the discourse of planning. Various critics have said the government has moved to legalize three units on each lot, making the citizen-developer the bookend to the developer. The developers" to work independently, or form alliances, to create different forms of housing.

In other words, its buildings are generally the first things ever constructed on a property. But the last section of the show provides immediate solutions: designs developed by LGA Builders for the Toronto subway system. They're not for the subway, but they could work. The goal is to empower "citizen developers" to work independently, or form alliances, to create different forms of housing.

"We need to think about not just the next wave of development," Mr. Piper says. "It's something else."

Thinking with this long-term perspective, Mr. Piper and Mr. Sommer uncover some surprising insights.

For half a century the planning sector in Ontario sorted out people and building into different zones. Houses for middle-class families over there; industry in its own corner; roads for trucks here; and so on. These points may seem obvious. But in the upside-down world of urban planning, they are not.

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