

# **Our Needs, Our Communities, Let's Plan**



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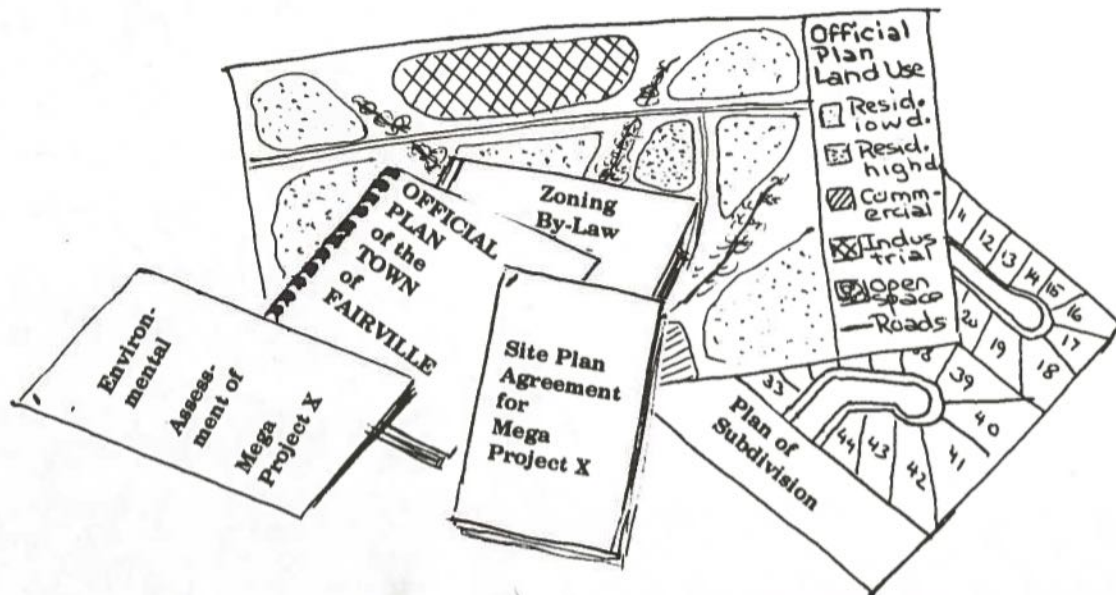
**A Community Planning Manual for  
Women in Metro Toronto and  
Ontario**

# What is Community Planning?

Community planning sets the process and rules for growth and change in our communities: where and how houses, apartments, offices, stores, factories, parks, schools, roads etc. are provided.

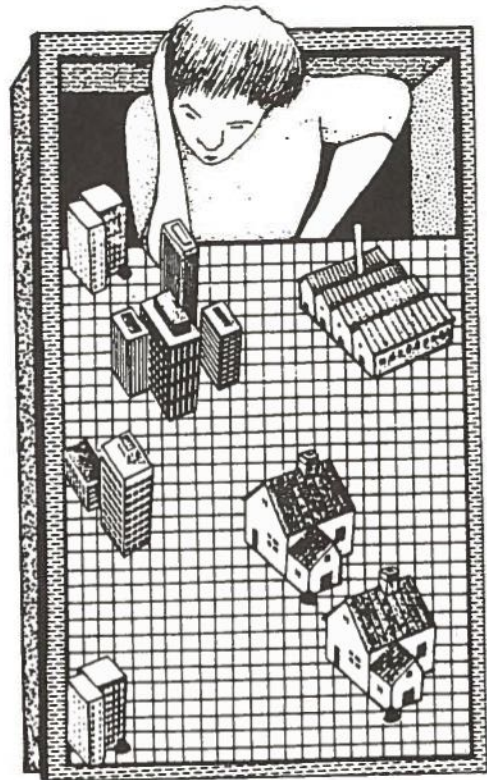
Until now planners, politicians, developers, architects, lawyers, business people and ratepayers have been in control of community planning. Community plans, have therefore tended to reflect their values and interests. So far, most of these people have been men.

But what about women? The way our communities work greatly affects us. Yet, rarely are women asked about their special needs. Women's needs have not been understood or considered in community planning.



# What Does Community Planning Have To Do With Me?

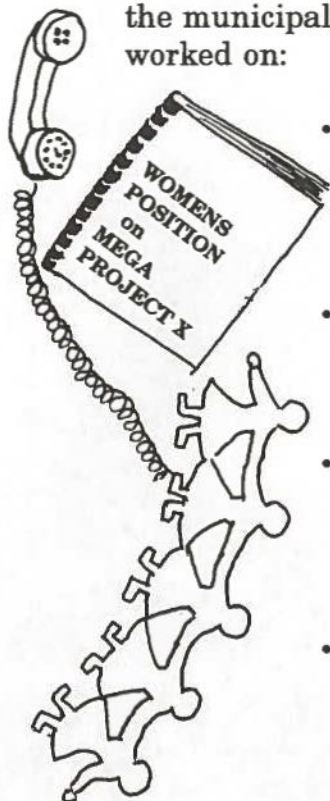
Women, in their many roles as mothers, homemakers, wage earners earning only 66% of the income of men and as victims of sexual and marital abuse, have needs which differ from those of men. Housing and transportation which is too expensive or poorly designed, jobs and services which are too far away or don't exist at all, harm women more than men. Except for the most lucky and privileged few, all women are affected. Community planning can help us create neighbourhoods where women will feel safer and find housing they can afford, close to daycare, shopping, work and transit.



# Why should I get involved?

We have been raised to believe experts know best. We forget that by living in a community we are as expert in this community as the professional behind a desk. Plans which are not based on the experiences of women will not meet our needs. Only when women speak up at city hall, can they bring about changes to improve women's lives. More women need to do it. **Women need you.**

Women Plan Toronto, a group concerned about women's needs at the city hall, or the municipal level of planning, came together in 1985. Since then we have worked on:



- **promoting women's safety in Metro Toronto.** We have supported the Safe City Committee of the City of Toronto, carried out safety audits, and supported neighbourhood Women's Action Committees.
- **legalizing basement apartments.** We explained that the tenants, mostly women, would end up on the street if those low-cost units were taken away.
- **Official Plans addressing women's needs.** We raised and supported issues such as safety, access and affordability of services in CityPlan 91 (City of Toronto), Etobicoke, Metro, and Thunder Bay.
- **stopping the Toronto Transit Commission (T.T.C.) from harassing women with strollers who used transit during rush hours.** We told the T.T.C. that many working women have no alternative. We offered to work with them to find ways to better accommodate women with strollers.
- **stopping cut-backs to night transit in Metro Toronto.** We explained to the T.T.C. how cutbacks would endanger the lives of women who work at night, but do not own cars.

**Remember that you pay for your local councillor and everything that goes on inside city hall. It is your right to get information you can understand.**

# How Can This Manual Help Me?

We produced this manual to support you and your group in the challenge of becoming actively involved in community planning. It addresses the following questions:

- What do women need in their communities?
- How can community planning meet the needs of women?
- How to get started?
- What are women up against?



BARBARA SANFORD

# How Do You Rate This Manual?

**Please, let us know what you think about this manual, what your experience with it is and what changes could make it more useful. Tear off the section below and return it to us. Thanks**

.....

Women Plan Toronto,  
736 Bathurst St.  
Toronto, Ont. M5S 2R4

Dear Sisters

We have read..., used..., the manual to

.....

(purpose, such as educational workshop, or specific planning issue)

The Manual is very ....., so so ....., not very **clear** ....., especially sections ....., ....., .....

The Manual was very....., so so...., not very **useful**.... for our needs.

We would like to make the following suggestion(s) for your next printing:

.....

.....

.....

Name of Person responding:

Name of Group:

Address:

Phone:

Date:

# How Can Community Planning Meet The Needs Of Women?

In their communities, people want:

- roads, sewers, water, schools, parks and other common services,
- protection for themselves,
- security for their property value,
- safeguards for their way of life.

Community planning provides process and guidelines for local government to meet these needs of the people. In recent years, our society has begun to realize that our protecting ourselves means protecting our environment. The environmental impact of all public and major private projects have now to be evaluated. Process and laws to do so are relatively new.

In return, citizens pay taxes and accept rules on what they can do and build. In a community where members share common goals, planning proceeds relatively smoothly. However, people, conditions, governments and values differ and change. This poses conflicting pressures for planning and makes it a complex, difficult and political process.

Women need to realize that most changes they want will take a long time and require a lot of hard work. They will often need joint efforts with other groups. In addition to working on specific planning issues, women's groups can also ask that:

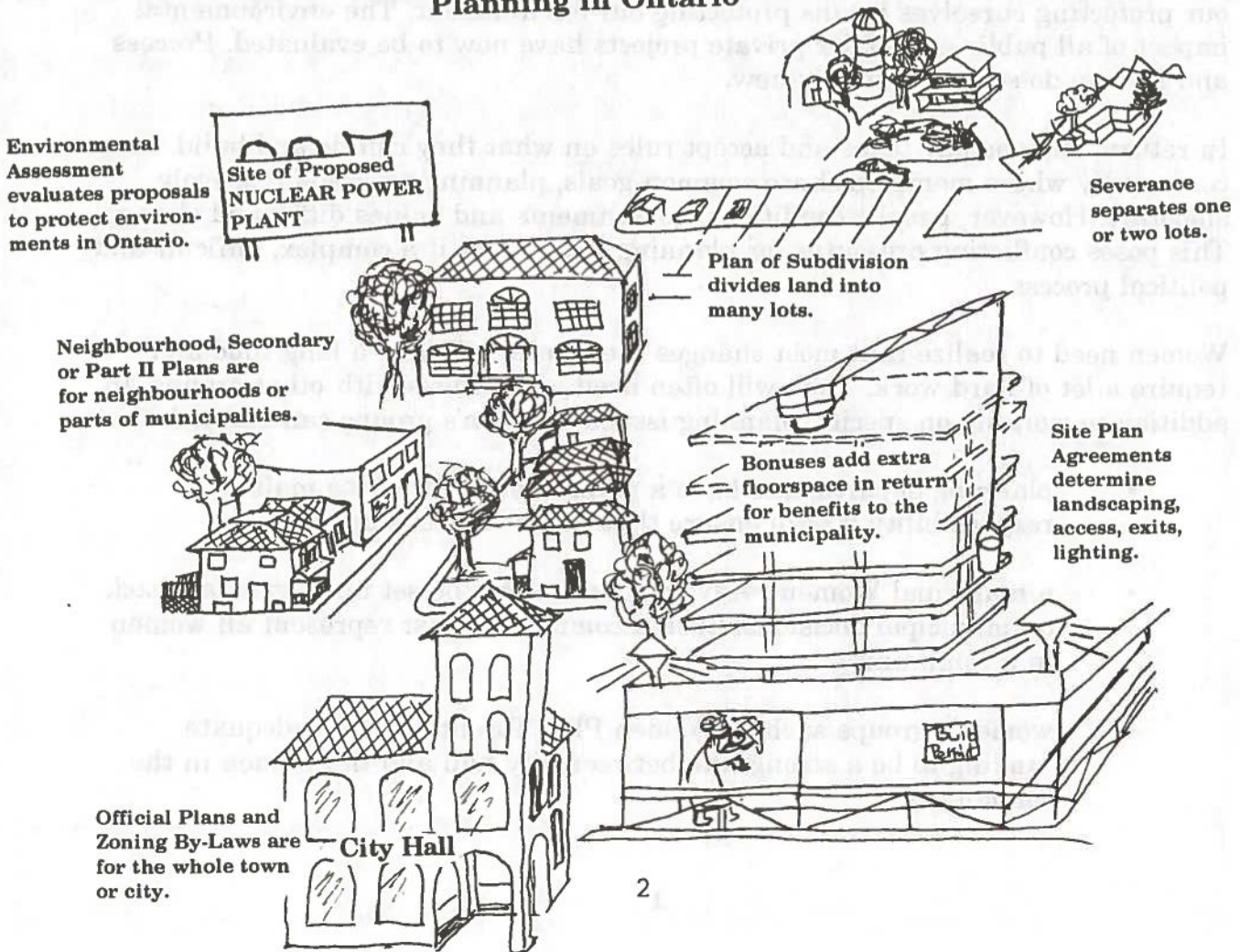
- planning departments have a planner on staff whose main responsibility it is to ensure that women's needs are met,
- a municipal Women's Advisory Committee be set up to give feedback on municipal decisions. Such a committee must represent all women in a community,
- women's groups such as Women Plan Toronto receive adequate funding to be a strong link between city hall and the women in the community.

# Overview

The Planning Act guides planning in Ontario. The Act outlines all the procedures in the following diagram. It also guides the Committee of Adjustment which allows minor exceptions to Zoning By-Laws, and the Ontario Municipal Board (O.M.B.) the highest level of appeal for planning decisions. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs administers and monitors community planning at the provincial level. Planning and development departments handle community planning matters at the local level. Both levels often hire consultants to do planning research, studies and reports. Many community functions -- traffic, health, education, building inspections, social welfare -- are not covered by the Planning Act.

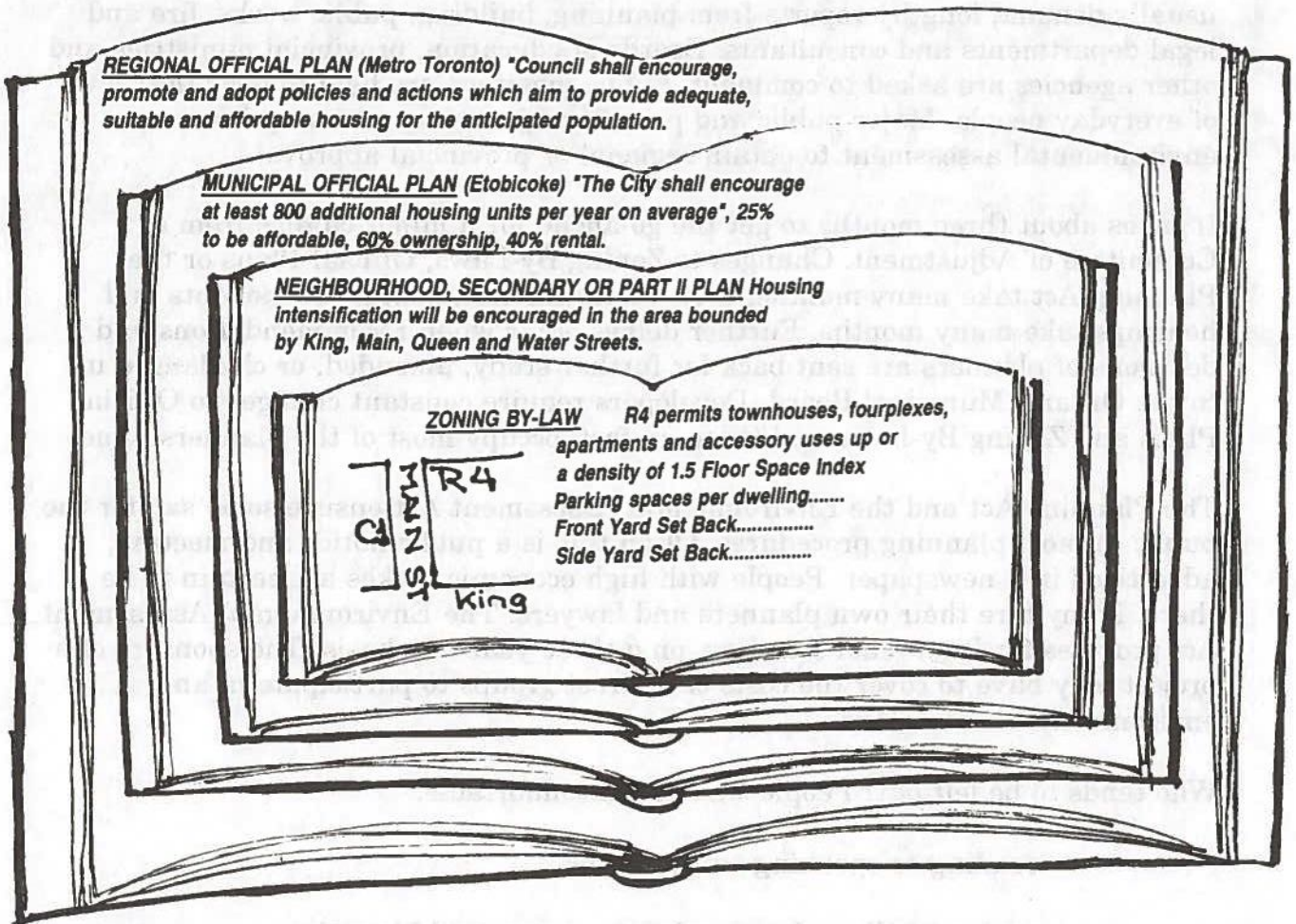
The Environmental Assessment Act defines its mandate and guides the process of evaluating proposed projects. The Act considers environment not only as the natural environment but also social, economic and cultural conditions, buildings, or other built devices. This complex, expensive and relatively young process will influence planning more and more. Women will find it an important tool to raise social and health concerns.

## Planning in Ontario





Planning procedures have ranks. They have to fit into each other like Russian dolls. The regional, e.g. Metro Official Plan is more powerful and general than the Official Plan of a town or city within the region, e.g. Scarborough. A municipal Official Plan, in turn, is more general and powerful than a Secondary, Neighbourhood or Part II Plan, which in turn is more general and powerful than the Zoning By-Law. All of them have to be consistent with each other.



## **Planning Process and Public Participation**

Planning procedures affect:

- the quality of life of future generations,
- millions of dollars in public and private investments.

Each municipality has its own set of committees, departments, and ways in which it handles planning. Councils may also set up task forces and special committees to deal with new issues, policies or projects. Several departments, agencies and even citizens may participate on such bodies. For major projects, municipalities usually demand lengthy reports from planning, building, public works, fire and legal departments and consultants. Boards of education, provincial ministries and other agencies are asked to comment. Public meetings are held to hear the views of everyday people. Major public and private projects may also require an environmental assessment to obtain regional or provincial approval.

It takes about three months to get the go-ahead for a minor change from a Committee of Adjustment. Changes to Zoning By-Laws, Official Plans or the Planning Act take many months, even years. Environmental assessments and hearings take many months. Further delays occur when recommendations and decisions of planners are sent back for further study, amended, or challenged up to the Ontario Municipal Board. Developers require constant changes to Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws and these, in fact, occupy most of the planners' time.

The Planning Act and the Environmental Assessment Act ensure some say for the public in most planning procedures. Often this is a public notice and meeting, advertised in a newspaper. People with high economic stakes are certain to be there. Many hire their own planners and lawyers. The Environmental Assessment Act provides for Intervenor Funding, on a three year test basis. The sponsors of a project may have to cover the costs of interest groups to participate in an environmental assessment.

Who tends to be left out? People who are uncomfortable:

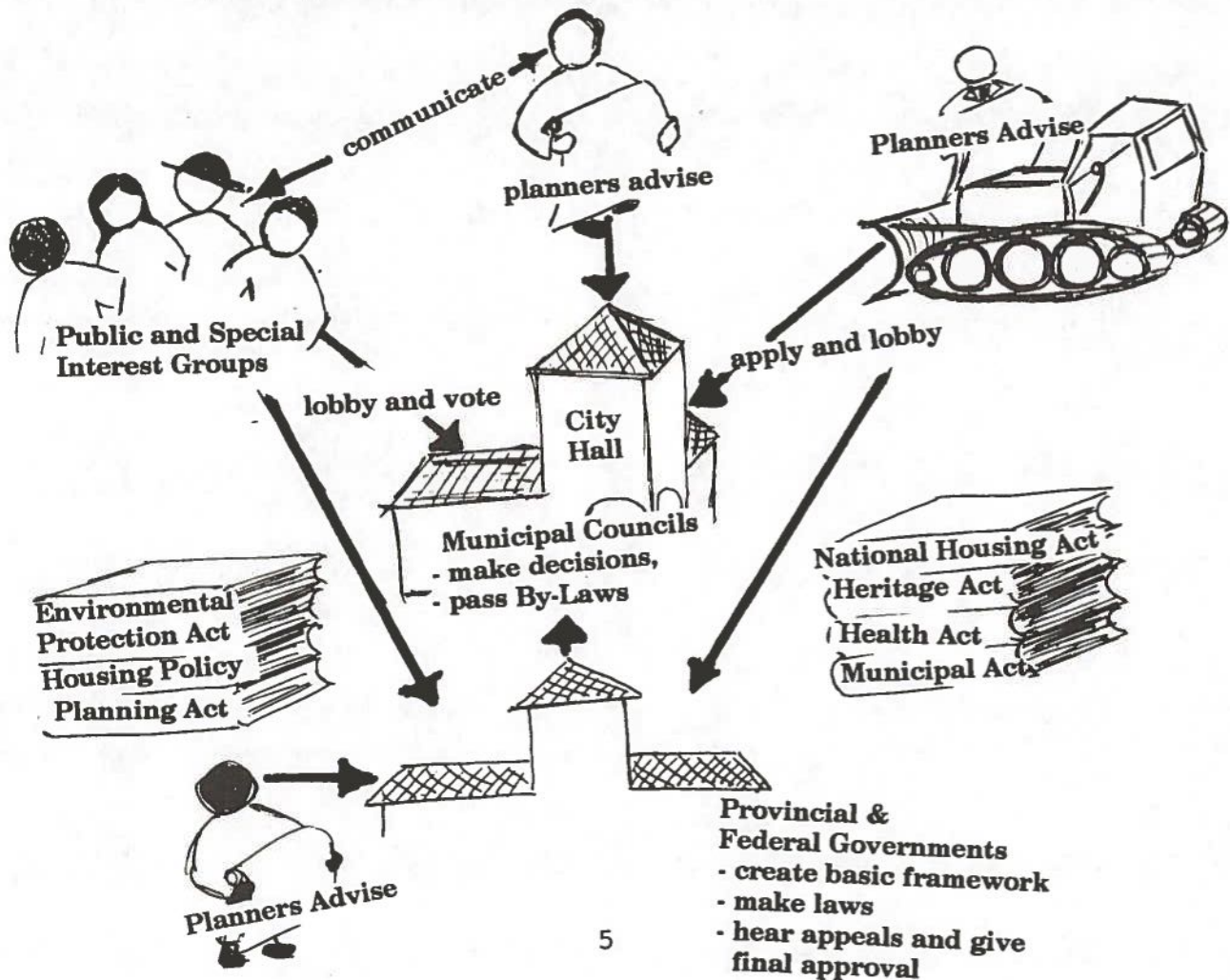
- reading or speaking out in public,
- understanding planning jargon, maps, and blueprints,
- speaking English.

Still others:

- work at the time of the meeting,
- can't get childcare,
- are afraid to go out at night,
- don't have transportation or need wheelchair access.

The needs of these people, many of them women, are therefore not understood and often overlooked in planning decisions. Even though it is hard, we must speak up if we want our needs to be met.

**FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING**  
adapted from: Introduction to Community Planning,  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Toronto, 1989



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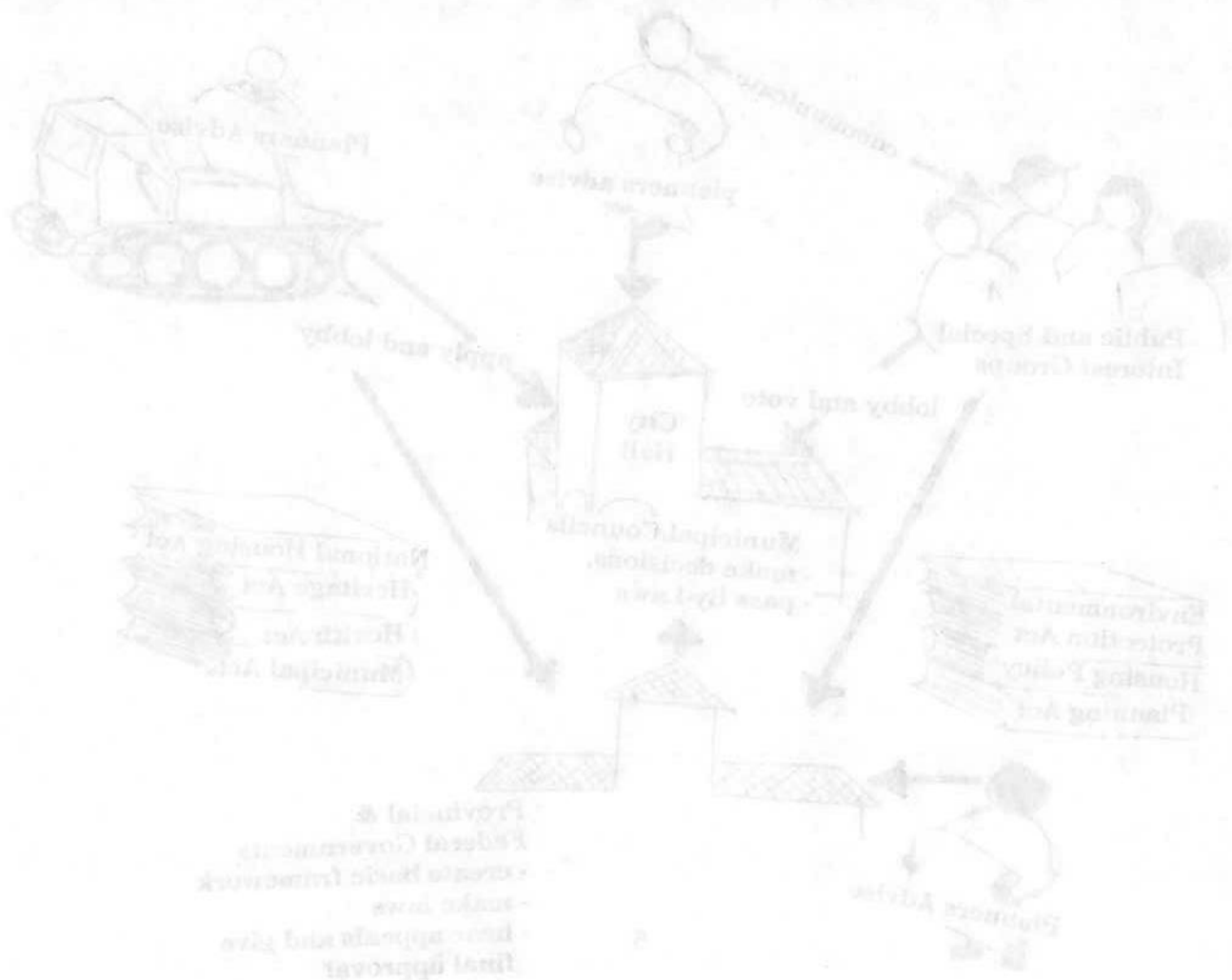
can't get children.

are afraid to go out at night.

don't have transportation or need wheelchair access.

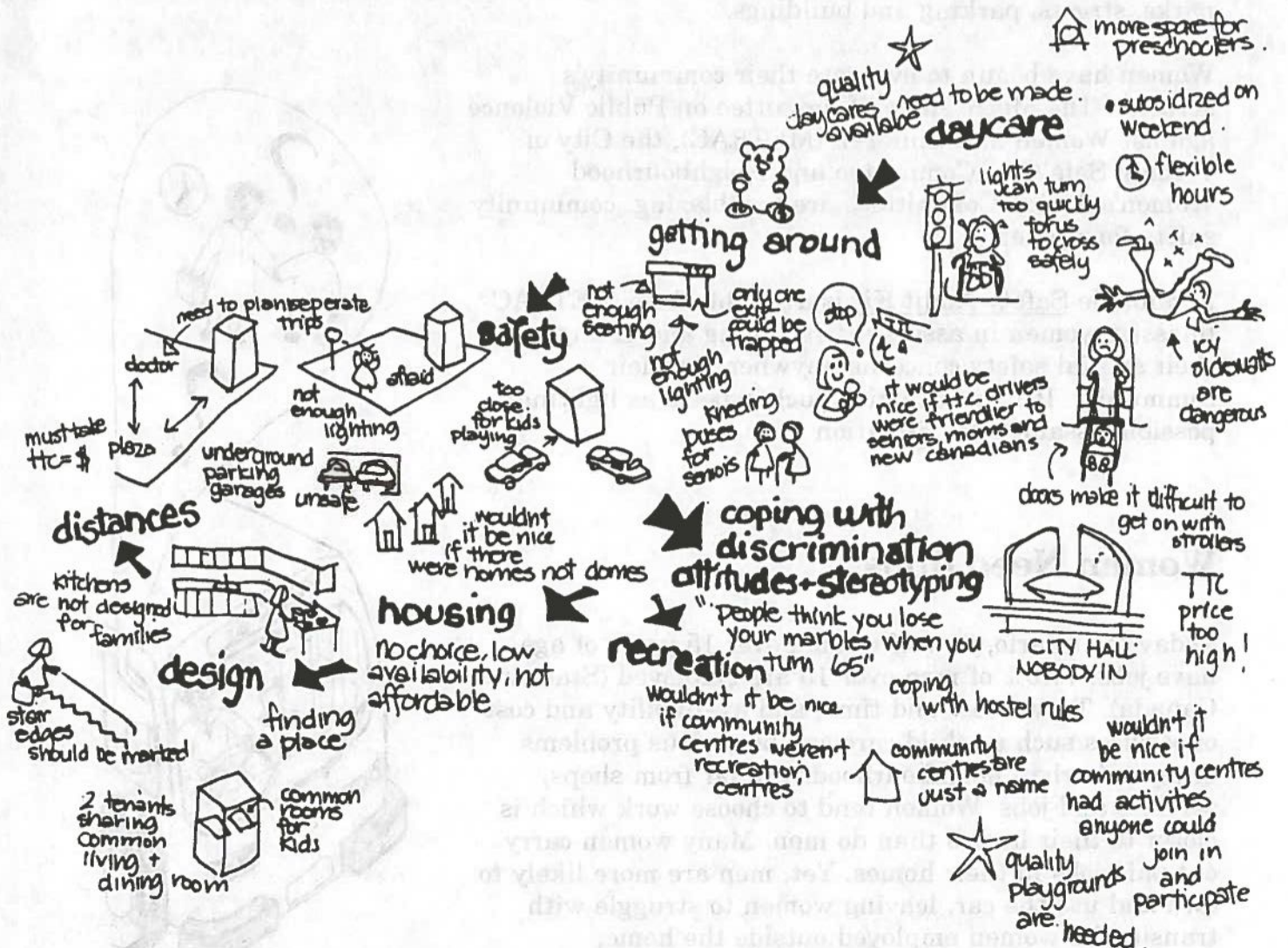
The need to raise people's awareness of their own and their neighbors' disabilities and often overlooked in planning factors. Even though it is hard, we must speak up if we want our needs to be met.

UNIVERSITY FOR PLANNING  
Center for Environmental & Community Planning  
University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, 1989



# What Do Women Need In Their Communities?

Women need many services in their communities. Housing, child care, safety and transportation are just some of them. In this manual our focus is on those needs which are or should be part of community planning. We think that if these needs were met, disabled, new Canadian, elderly and very young persons of **both genders** would be better off.



Issues raised by women, during 25 Women Plan Toronto workshops, Shared Experiences and Dreams, illustrated by Birgit Sterner

## Women And Children Need Safety From Abuse And Sexual Assault

Community planning needs to and can consider the special safety needs of women and children. Women and children are abused both in and outside of their homes. Over half (56%) of Canadian women living in cities feel unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. One in four women in Canada can expect to be sexually assaulted during her lifetime, half of these before they are 17. Each year, one million women in Canada are abused by their husbands or live-in lovers (Ontario Women's Directorate Fact Sheet on Sexual Assault). To change this reality, we have to rethink our values and relationships, as well as the design of parks, streets, parking and buildings.

Women have begun to evaluate their community's security. The Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children (METRAC), the City of Toronto Safe City Committee and Neighbourhood Women's Action Committees are trailblazing community safety for women.

A valuable Safety Audit Kit is available from METRAC to assist women in assessing, recording and acting on their special safety concerns anywhere in their community. It helps examine such aspects as lighting, possible assault sites, isolation.

## Women Need Jobs

Today in Ontario, 61% of women over 15 years of age have jobs. 77.6% of men over 15 are employed (Statistics Canada). Travel cost and time, and availability and cost of services such as child care can be serious problems. Many suburban neighbourhoods are far from shops, services and jobs. Women tend to choose work which is closer to their homes than do men. Many women carry out paid jobs in their homes. Yet, men are more likely to own and use the car, leaving women to struggle with transit. For women employed outside the home, community plans need to locate services such as child care and work opportunities closer to home. Residential design and zoning should allow for home occupations and



## Women Need To Get Around.

The average income of women is still over 30% lower than that of men. Because more of their money goes for food, clothing and shelter, many women cannot afford a car. They depend on public transit, walking, cycling and shared rides. Women are the majority of transit riders. Women need washrooms more frequently than do men.

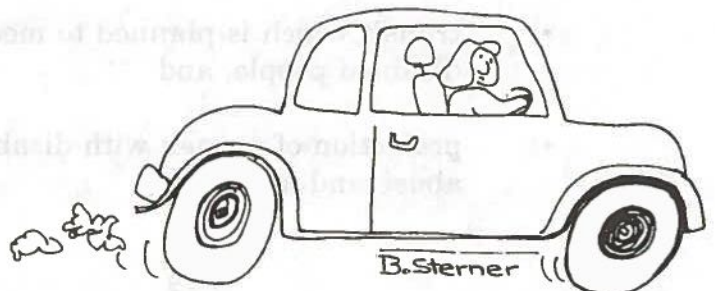


Community plans need to recommend well-maintained, well-lit, sidewalks on both sides of a street, curb cuts for wheelchairs, strollers and shopping buggies, safe bicycle routes, and a network of washrooms which are accessible to the public.

"Living" streets are becoming increasingly popular in Europe. These are neighbourhood streets where benches, plants, trees and play equipment discourage through-traffic and make cars yield to people.

Community planning does not set specific transit policies. The more compact or dense a community, the more viable and efficient transit becomes. Community planning determines densities for development.

To make specific transit changes happen, a committee should be set up which represents different groups of people who use transit. Such a committee could advise transit decision makers. A mother of young children, without access to a car, should be on the advisory or decision making body for transit. In this way transit may adjust their schedules and routing to the needs of women. Some helpful design changes include making space for parcels and strollers on vehicles, accessible washrooms and elevators in subway stations, and bus shelters where women don't feel trapped.

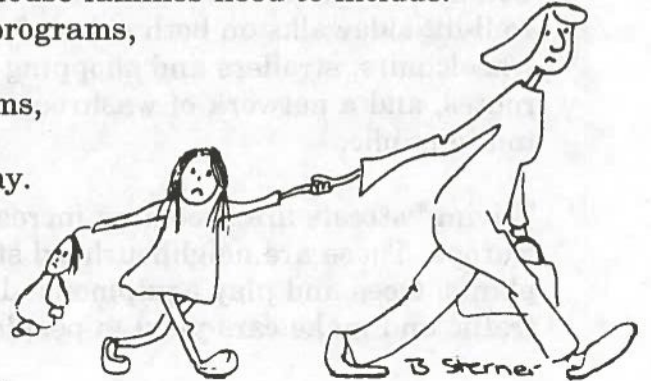


## Most Women Have Children

Children require constant nurturing and supervision. Stay-at-home parents, especially if they are sole support parents, need relief from this heavy demand. The typical suburb imposes severe isolation on such parents. Employed mothers and fathers need greater flexibility in their workplaces. They also need good, affordable, accessible child care. School-aged children require stimulating before and after-school programs close to home and school.

Community plans for areas or subdivisions which house families need to include:

- safe and creative indoor and outdoor programs,
- quality before and after-school programs,
- neighbourhoods which are lively all day.
- access to part-time nursery schools,
- flexible full-time child care,
- a place for care givers to meet and talk about parenting and personal questions.



## Some Women Have Disabilities

Women with disabilities can lead independent and fruitful lives if community plans call for:

- ramps over steps,
- signs in public spaces which can be understood even by people with hearing, seeing and reading disabilities,
- affordable, wheelchair accessible housing with attendant care,
- transit which is planned to meet the needs of disabled people, and
- protection of women with disabilities against abuse and assault.





## Women Get Old

Old age means increased dependence on health, economic, housing, mobility and physical supports. Already, most elderly people are women. As elderly people form a growing portion of our population, elderly women will become an even more significant sector in our communities.

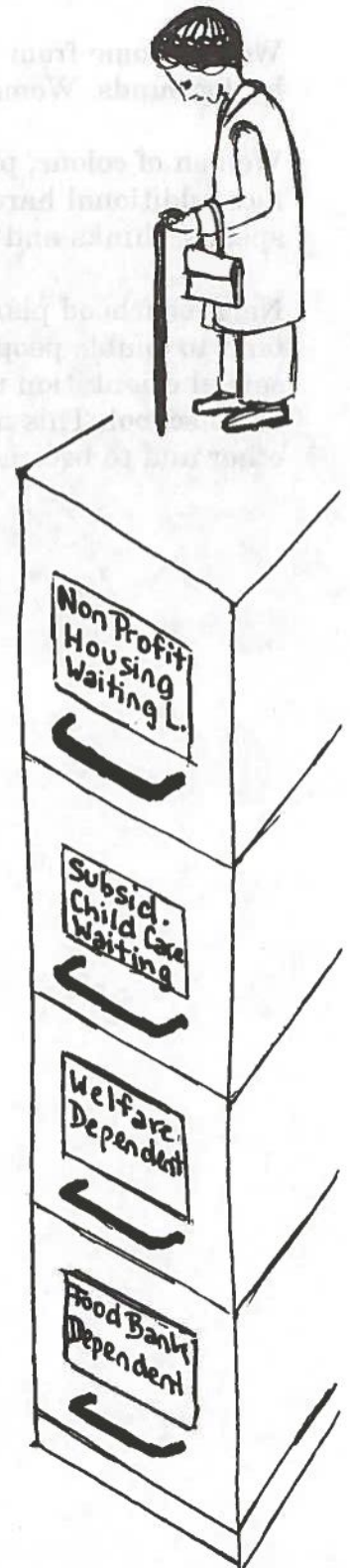
Community plans should ensure that appropriate and affordable housing for elderly is available in each neighbourhood. Then elderly people do not need to leave the community where they are most comfortable. Zoning should not prevent seniors from sharing, subdividing or subletting parts of their homes. Activities and services for elderly people need to become part of a planned community.

## Many Women Are Poor

Most poor people are women. They are poor because they are not paid when they look after their family and home and paid less than men when they are employed. For over 20 years this wage gap between men and women has remained above 30%. This greatly affects women's ability to find housing they can afford. Among poor women, single mothers are worst off. They need to raise children on their lower incomes. Children then suffer and start life with handicaps.

Both poor women and their children need well-planned and well located support services. The new Housing Policy in Ontario aims to provide more affordable housing through community planning. The policy falls short, however, of calling for the right to housing for everybody.

The Social Assistance Review Commission (S.A.R.C.) report also listed important steps to break the vicious circle of poverty. It proposed a gradual transition from dependence on social welfare until earnings are sufficient to ensure independence. Action is needed.

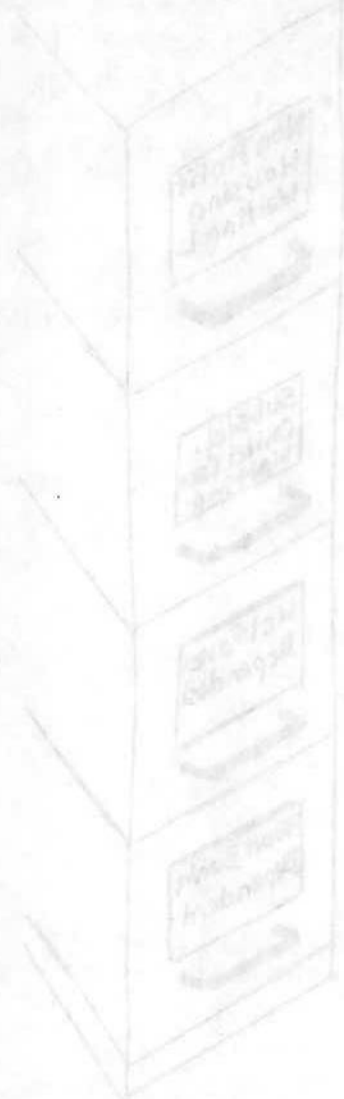


## Women Are Not All The Same

Women come from different cultural, racial and economic backgrounds. Women have different sexual orientations.

Women of colour, poor women, lesbians, and their dependents face additional hardships because they live in a society which speaks, thinks and acts in a different, often prejudiced way.

Neighbourhood plans which include a great variety of housing tend to enable people from different races, incomes, ages, and sexual orientation to live together. Their children go to the same school. This makes it easier for people get to know each other and to become less ignorant and prejudiced.



# How To Get Started, Where To Get Help?

## 1. Finding Out As Much As Possible About An Issue

*Anne heard that a group home planned to locate a few doors from her. Some of her neighbours worried about the safety of their children, others about their property values. They passed a petition against the project.*

*Anne called her member of council and found out that the group home was really a non-profit residence for abused women and their children. Anne felt this was a good cause. She prepared a few sentences of support and got her friends to sign too. She presented her statement at a Committee of Adjustment meeting and helped win secure homes for many desperate women and their children.*



- Reach out to other women you think might share your concern. Trust your gut feelings. If one woman feels a certain way, chances are a lot of other women feel that way too. Women are often isolated from one another and think they are alone in their experiences and reactions.
- Keep your eyes on the local section of the newspapers or read your community newspaper, if you have one. Your local library and often city departments keep clippings and files on many issues and projects.
- Get on mailing lists of women's groups, the committee which deals with planning at city hall, and your member on council.
- Talk to your neighbours, friends and enemies.
- Call your councillor or one you trust, his or her assistant, or the local planner. The main switchboard at city hall or the blue pages of the telephone book, will give you the numbers you need. Often there are already planning reports available on your issue or project. As concerned citizen you are entitled to read these or obtain copies.

## 2. How To Start

It's always wise to start by going through established channels and to be co-operative and constructive.

Most officials and politicians have never thought that their decisions could affect women differently from the rest of the community. Some of these officials and politicians may then be open to women's issues if presented with the facts and without. Increasingly, more of these persons are women who may also be sympathetic.

Note everything down, including dates, sources, names and phone numbers. When you phone, remember that in large organizations your call will be transferred several times until you get to the right person. Keep the full details of your concern until you get the right person.

It helps to write down a list of questions before calling or meeting with someone. This gets your own thoughts clear, keeps the discussion on track, helps you get all the answers you need, and lets people know you are serious.

Is there a meeting, politician or office inviting your response? Who sponsors the meeting, when and where? Do they require prior notice to place you on a speakers' or deputants' list? The municipal clerk or member of council will be able to tell you.

**Remember that you pay for your local councillor and everything that goes on inside city hall.**

**It is your right to get information you can understand.**

## 3. Taking Stock

Use this manual as a frame of reference for your concerns. Do you see patterns emerging amongst different groups and individuals concerned with the issue? Are the women whose views you respect with you?

What are the chances your views will get respect, support or ridicule? Are your views too far ahead of accepted thinking? Be realistic. Assess how much effort the issue requires and how much effort you can afford to contribute. Maybe there is already a group reflecting your views and you can join it. As you do your research, you will get a feel of this. Decide if and how you want to get involved. Publicly, behind the scenes or not at all?

#### 4. Rallying Strength



Different issues require different efforts. Some, like Anne's, may be a relatively brief, one-time event. Others like safety, contain many aspects, are complex and as old as humankind.

Talk to various women's groups. If you don't know any, ask your friends or call your nearest women's centre. Women Plan Toronto can also help. They can help you find out if:

- they agree with your gut feelings,
- there is already a group fighting your issue,
- there are experts on your issue, if you need one,
- they are interested in supporting you and in what way.

Join a group, if one already exists around your concern. Avoid duplication. If you need to build your own group stay in close touch with sympathetic individuals and groups. They may help you with space, photocopiers, money?

For extended efforts apply for funding from a government, foundation or other source. Existing groups or Women Plan Toronto can give you information or refer you to those who know about this.

The bigger your power base the more likely you are to win. The number of supporters is important to politicians and bureaucrats because all of you can vote.

- a coalition of several groups joining together on a specific issue or issues have the strongest voice.
- a sub-committee of a larger group is next strongest.
- if nothing else, work as a committee or single issue group. Even with one friend you can call yourself "a committee for..." and appear organized and powerful.
- try to avoid working alone. A single voice is weakest.

## 5. Presenting The Women's Side

Different issues require different and often several responses. You can:

- make a presentation to a committee of council,
- hire lawyers, get experts and academics to assist with research, background and testimony,
- organize other groups to support your group,
- send out press releases, hold public meetings and rallies to publicize the views of your groups.

If you make a presentation, write it down. Make sure every point you make relates to your issue, start with the most important one and be brief. This will help make your position clear to officials, politicians, the press and your group. Hand out or mail copies to all these people including the secretary of the meeting. Supportive councillors may even help you get your deputation typed and duplicated. When you write up your concerns, be brief, to the point and recommend a solution YOU would like to see. This is constructive and most helpful for staff, decision-makers, the media and, of course women.

Offer to work on the issue. This shows your good will and puts the responsibility on officials to consult or involve you in finding a better solution. In the process you will get to know city hall from the inside. You will find out that there are trade-offs for most gains. For example, what you win in visibility and safety in an urban park you tend to lose in wilderness and seclusion. You may need to check back with your group to make sure they understand and share the position you intend to take.



Presenting a deputation to council or a committee of council, is an important skill for women to learn. Most issues are not resolved with one appearance. Every time you do it, you strengthen the voice of all women. You'll also be surprised how much easier it gets the second time round. You may even end up liking it and run for office yourself. You may ask supportive politicians at and other influential people to speak out in support of your concern.

Frequently your first deputation or letter will get your concern acknowledged. The decision which you did not want may be referred back. This means staff in one of the departments, often planning, will study your concern and come back with a new recommendation.

## 6. Follow-Up

After every step take a break and discuss with your group and supporters what was learned and gained or lost. Don't forget to thank those to whom thanks are due.

**Regardless of the outcome of your struggle, every ounce of energy you have spent, has helped make your community more aware and caring.**



## Resource Section



This section lists numbers, names and information to assist women in the Metro Toronto area. For other areas of Ontario, look in both the blue and white pages in your telephone book. Toronto women's groups can also help you to find their sister groups around Ontario.

### Regional Level:

#### **Metropolitan Toronto**

390 Bay St., Toronto M5H 2Y2  
Switchboard and Councillors' Numbers  
Clerk's Department  
Planning Department

392-8000  
392-3016  
392-8101

### Local or Area Municipalities

#### **City of Toronto**

100 Queen St. W., Toronto, M5H 2N2  
Switchboard and Councillors' numbers  
Clerk's Department  
Planning Department  
After hours: emergencies, roads, sewers, water

392-9111  
392-7020  
392-7182  
392-7737

#### **City of East York**

550 Mortimer Ave, East York, M4J 2H2  
Switchboard, Councillors, all departments  
and emergencies

778-2000

#### **City of Etobicoke**

1 Civic Centre, Etobicoke, M9C 2Y2  
Switchboard  
Councillors' Offices  
Clerks Department  
Planning Department  
After Hours: emergencies, roads, sewers, water

394-8000  
394-8643  
394-8101  
394-8222  
394-8615



### **City of North York**

5100 Yonge St., North York, M2N 5V7

Switchboard and Councillors' Numbers

224-6411

Clerks Department

224-6073

Planning Department

224-6122

After Hours: emergencies, roads, sewers, water

224-6433

### **City of Scarborough**

150 Borough Dr. Scarborough, M1P 4N7

Switchboard

396-7111

Councillors' Offices

396-7275

Clerk's Department

396-7001

Planning Department

396-7334

After Hours: emergencies, roads, sewers, water

396-4808

### **City of York**

2700 Eglinton Ave W., City of York, M6M, 1V1

Switchboard

394-7200

Councillors' Offices

394-2408

Clerk's Department

394-2507

Planning Department

394-2607

After Hours: emergencies, roads, sewers, water

394-2630

### **Provincial Agencies on Women's Issues**

Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues

965-5824

Ontario Women's Directorate

597-4500

New Democrat Cabinet Minister in Charge of Women's Issues\*

597-4542

Conservative Party Caucus\*

965-8601

Liberal Party Caucus\*

965-2337

Ontario Women's Action Committee

324-9080

\* M.P.P.'s for women's issues change after elections and cabinet shuffles.

## Women's Groups and Support Agencies

### **General**

North York Women's Centre	781-0479
Rexdale (Etobicoke) Women's Centre	745-0062
Scarborough Women's Centre	431-1138
Y. W. C. A.	961-8100
National Action Committee on the Status of Women	922-3246
York University Women's Centre	736-2100 x 3484
University of Toronto Women's Centre	978-8201
Ryerson Women's Centre	598-9838
O.I.S.E. Centre for Women's Studies in Education	923-6641 x 2368
L.E.A.F. (Women's Legal, Educational and Action Fund)	963-9654
Older Women's Network	483-3234
Native Women's Resource Centre	963-9963
Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre	465-6021
Disabled Women's Network (D.A.W.N.)	368-1331
Women Plan Toronto/Metro Coalition	588-9751

### **Women's Safety**

M.E.T.R.A.C., Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children	392-3135
Safe City Committee (City of Toronto)	392-0403
Assaulted Women's Helpline	863-0511
Emergency Community Services (Metro) including abuse of women, children, elderly, substances	392-0505
Rape Crisis Centre	597-8808
Women's Referral, Education and Counselling Centre	534-7501
Wen-Do, Women's Self Defence Courses	977-7127

### **Housing**

Housing Taskforce, Ministry of Housing	585-4239
Affordable Housing Action Group (province wide lobby group)	961-9831
Housing Action Committee (City of Toronto)	392-7022
National Action Committee Housing Committee	922-3246

## Written Information

An Introduction to Community Planning, Min. of Municipal Affairs, and the Planning Act, avail. at Ont. Government book store, 880 Bay St. Toronto, M7A 1N8.

Citizens Guides to: Official Plans and Amendments, Zoning By-Laws and Minor Variances, Building Permits, the Planning Act, Subdivisions, Land Severances, Northern Ontario, the Ontario Municipal Board, Program Services Branch, Min. of Municipal Affairs, Projects, 13th Floor, 777 Bay St., Toronto.

Evaluation of Property Value Impacts: Non Profit Housing, prepared for the Ministry of Housing by Ecos Research Associates Inc. 1989.

Gerda R. Wekerle, Women's Housing Projects in Eight Canadian Cities, C.M.H.C., Ottawa, 1988; this is "how to" based but specific to housing.

Safe City Report, City of Toronto, Toronto, 1988.

Women and Environments, international quarterly on women's and their concerns with the natural, social and built environments, \$20/yr, 736 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ont. M5S 2R4

Women Plan Toronto, Shared Experiences and Dreams, Women Plan Toronto, Toronto 1985, (available from W.P.T., 736 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ont. M5S 2R4), \$6.00

Women's Safety Kit, Metro Action Committee On Public Violence Against Women and Children (Metrac), Toronto, 1989;

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# What Are We Up Against?

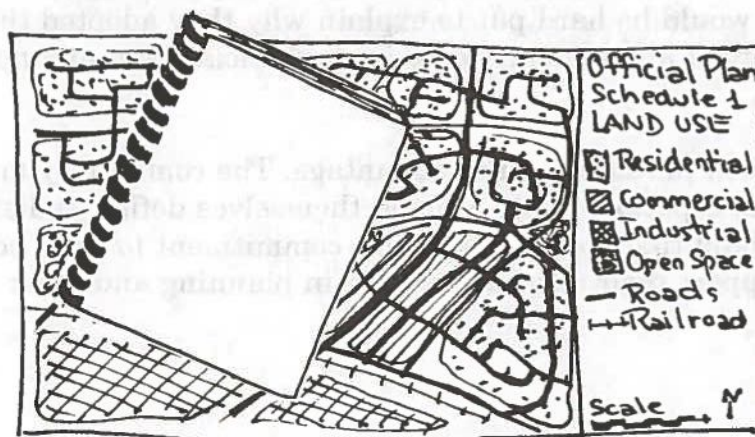
## A Women's Perspective On Planning Procedures

In the following pages, we will explain planning procedures which relate to women and their needs. We'll look at:

- Official Plans
- Housing Policy Statement
- Zoning By-Laws
- Site Plan Agreements and Bonuses
- Subdivision and Consent to Sever Land
- Procedures for Change and Reactions to Change
  - Committee of Adjustment
  - Ontario Municipal Board
  - NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)
- Environmental Assessment

### Official Plans

Official Plans are policy documents which guide physical growth and change of a community (Sections 16 to 27 of the Planning Act). Official Plans are important. That is why so much space is given to them in this manual. In addition to text, most Official Plans contain maps of proposed land uses, roads and sewers. A land use map shows which urban functions are planned where. A typical text consists of a few very broad general goals and objectives, followed by specific policies for residential, commercial, open space, industrial, institutional uses and transportation.



**These policies and maps determine how far we must travel to buy groceries, find child care, go to school, or play grounds, get to our job and if there is transit on our streets.**

Official Plans may have regard to relevant social, economic and environmental matters, (Section 1,(h) Planning Act). Few plans address all these matters in a balanced way. **Women would gain from plans which do this.**

## **OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEWS**

Every five years, municipal councils have to vote whether or not to review their entire Official Plan. Reviews are needed to keep Official Plans in tune with changing times. Almost all municipalities have Official Plans, which they frequently change with specific amendments. Before deciding on a full review, councils must give the public a say. Reviews, are a good opportunity for women to raise their concerns. If women wish a full review, they can make a deputation to council and lobby council members to support their position. In 1989 Ontario adopted a Housing Policy. It requires that each municipality develop a housing statement to become part of the Official Plan. In the light of this policy, many Ontario municipalities are reviewing their Plans now.

## **SECTIONS IN AN OFFICIAL PLAN**

### **1. Purpose, Goals and Objectives of an Official Plan**

Many goals and objectives of Official Plans appear to be "motherhood" statements e.g. "ensuring the wellbeing of all residents". People can use these "motherhood" statements to make their case for the public good in planning or other policy disputes. Council would be hard put to explain why they adopted the goal of "wellbeing or safety of all residents" only in the Official Plan and not as a general public policy.

Women can use such phrases to their advantage. The community must meet women's needs too, especially when women themselves define and state their needs. Women should therefore use council's commitment to such positive goals and policies to support their aspirations both in planning and other municipal matters.

Planning policies can also address needs of groups such as the elderly, children, persons with disabilities or women when these relate to physical aspects of the community such as housing or mobility.

The citizens' taskforce assisting Toronto's Official Plan review, Cityplan 91, has raised the concept of rights for those living in the city. An Official Plan which states such rights as to a safe city, housing, public participation, healthy environment or mobility will require serious commitments from councillors. Goals, objectives and policies of Official Plans are important when issues go to the Ontario Municipal Board, the highest level of appeal in planning disputes. Goals and objectives form the broad planning context for each issue. It is in this section that economic, social and environmental goals may be found. To lead to action, however, specific policies are required.

## 2. Residential policies deal mostly with housing

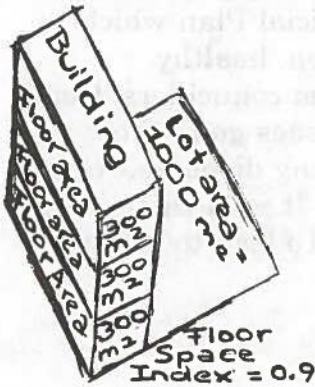
An Official Plan can state that housing policies have to meet the needs of all residents, in terms of cost and size. People's housing needs can differ or change because of:

- marital breakdown,
- children,
- dependent relatives, or friends,
- empty nesting, aging,
- disabilities,
- economic downturns, need for subletting,
- women and children needing shelter from abuse or violence.



An Official Plan policy can recommend that residential design consider women's needs. Site Plan Agreements are important tools to reflect safety needs of women and children. All residential areas should allow child care centres.

Official Plans can propose development densities in broad terms, numbers, and even values such as "human scale" (i.e. not dwarfing people) or "livability" (i.e. attractive street scape, no wind tunnels). Zoning By-Laws will specify exact dimensions, numbers, and locations.



Density is often expressed in units per hectare (or acre) or in the ratio of floor area or floor space to lot size or F.S.I. (floor space index). Density largely determines the value of land; it makes or breaks the economic viability of most developments, both non-profit and for-profit. When an owner sells a property, he or she can ask a higher price if planning allows 20 storeys than if it allowed only one storey. Development with more than 75 units per hectare or a Floor Space Index (F.S.I.) of over two almost always ends up in high rise form. A diversity of densities and housing types within a neighbourhood can allow families with children as well as seniors and young adults to live together.

### 3. Parks and Open Space policies affect recreation

Official Plans outline the amount, location, general policies and standards for parks. The policies can recommend that parks meet the needs of all groups in the community, such as women of different ages, backgrounds and abilities. These needs include safety as well as programming and equipment.

Parks and recreation departments are responsible for carrying out these policies in public parks and recreation centres. In some communities there is a citizens' advisory council where women can raise their needs. Once planning policies are in place, women need to go after these departments to deliver the goods.

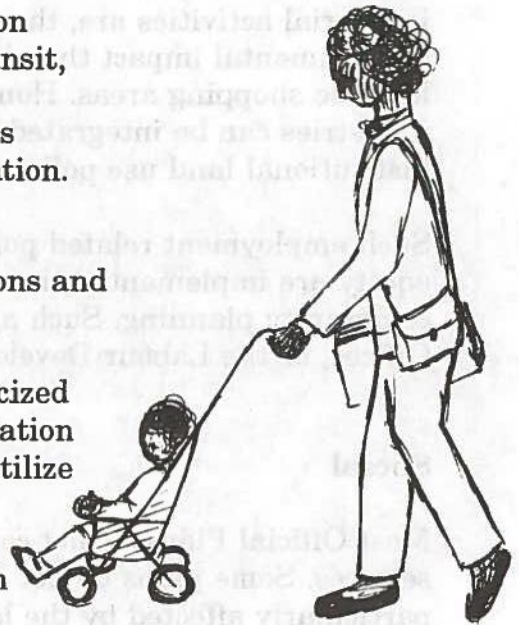




#### 4. Roads and Transportation policies affect mobility

Official Plan goals and policies can outline transportation priorities for different modes of transportation - car, transit, bicycle, wheelchair or pedestrian. They can also outline standards for the road network. Policies of Official Plans usually call for safe, convenient and efficient transportation. Women should insist that this means:

- safe walkways in terms of physical conditions and sexual assault prevention,
- a network of publicly accessible, well publicized washrooms in major activity and transportation areas. Agreements with businesses could utilize existing washrooms.
- an extensive network of bike paths for both commuting and recreational cycling.



More women than men use and depend on public transit. Official Plans which recommend a greater commitment to public transit will benefit women. In Toronto, the Metro Official Plan guides transit. Women will need to address transit concerns to the Metro level and the Toronto Transit Commission. Support from local Official Plans and councils is important too.

Women need a public transit system which is safe, accessible, efficient and affordable for all women. This includes women who are disabled, elderly, frail, illiterate, newcomers, poor or those travelling with strollers.

#### 5. Commercial, Industrial, Institutional or Office land use policies determine employment and services

The policies for these land uses should reflect the economic, social and environmental goals, stated at the beginning of the Plans. They rarely do. Partly this is because the Planning Act does not go beyond physical planning procedures. Largely it is because the environmental, economic and social implications of these physical planning procedures have never been developed. This is one of the challenges for women.

## **Economic**

Jobs which are close to housing, shopping, services such as child care, and transit benefit women. The more integrated residential, commercial and even some industrial activities are, the more accessible they become. Scale, design, social and environmental impact then become deciding factors. Housing can be built above low-rise shopping areas. Home occupations should be legal. Clean or compatible industries can be integrated throughout the urban fabric. Commercial, industrial, institutional land use policies are the place for such ideas.

Such employment related policies as affirmative action and pay equity are implemented through other municipal agencies rather than community planning. Such agencies include Equal Opportunity Offices, or the Labour Development Unit, in the City of Toronto.



## **Social**

Most Official Plans do not contain policies addressing social issues or social services. Some plans do not even permit child care in all areas. Women are particularly affected by the lack of planned social services.

A network of social services includes child care, senior citizens centres, health, recreation, counselling and education services. Such services should be accessible and affordable. They should not depend on case by case trade-offs for increased densities, so called bonuses (section 36 of the Planning Act). Official Plans can state a goal or objective of providing a full network of social services. This would empower municipalities to:

- start studying costs and delivery of a social service network, and develop courses of action to make this goal a reality,
- state location and space requirement policies in the Official or Neighbourhood Plans. Different guidelines are needed for neighbourhood, city or region wide services, and to job or home related services;
- obtain the necessary budgets for land, building and operation. Costs for such programs could be raised through space dedications from developers, levies, additional taxation or bonuses required to reach existing densities.
- request additional powers from the Province, or a change in the Planning Act to require planning for social services.

Child care or other community services can now be negotiated on a case-by-case basis in return for an increase in density or a "bonus" (Section 36 of the Planning Act). Often, pre-bonus densities are already so high that adding a bonus makes a bad situation worse. This approach can bring about some benefits to the community, not, however, a well planned network of necessary social services.



## Environmental

Women have always cared for the health of their families and communities. Today many women are involved in the environmental movement. Without a healthy environment there cannot be healthy people. Official Plans should have a healthy environment as a goal. This could include:

- land use policies and densities which prohibit and phase out uses and practices which harm the environment. For example, land use and policies which reduce the dependence on private cars help protect the environment.
- transportation policies which support transit, walking and cycling.
- reduction of waste and energy consumption by the community. Industrial, commercial, as well as residential land use policies can reflect such concerns. Women must guard against having the environmental clean up placed only on their shoulders.
- commitment to environmental assessments for all major projects - private and public.
- support for "sustainable" development, development which does not harm the environment.

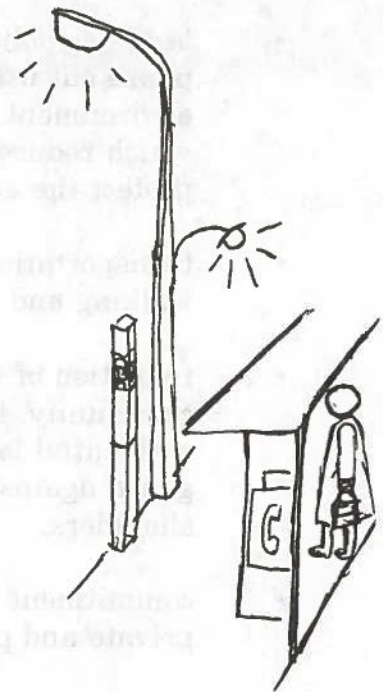


## 6. Women's Safety

A frequently stated goal of Official Plans is the safety of all residents. Yet the safety of women and children from abuse and sexual assault has so far not been expressed in Official Plan policies. It will be women who have to demand that the broad concept of safety also include the special safety needs of women.

Official Plan policies can recommend that special policies for women and children's safety be studied and then added to the Plan. This should involve the co-operation from rank and file community members, as well as several municipal agencies such as Boards of Education, Police, and Planning. Safety standards should address such aspects as lighting, visibility, surveillance, access to help, women's shelters. Safety planning policies apply to such areas as:

- streets, parking lots, garages, parks and open spaces, (in the transportation and open space sections),
- Site Plan Agreements which apply these standards to lobbies, common areas and landscaped spaces in private residential and commercial developments, (in urban design, residential, commercial or implementation sections),
- land use policies which encourage mingling of people and round-the-clock activity in public areas. People feel more secure in such areas (in the different land use sections).
- training for planners, police and public transit employees to meet the special safety needs of women and children in their day to day work.



The Safe City Committee in the City of Toronto is completing such a process and can be asked to share its findings. (Their phone number is 392-0403.)

## 7. Implementation and the Planning Process

Special sections on implementation state that Secondary Plans, Zoning By-Laws, Site Plan Agreements, and housing policies are tools to help turn Official Plan policies into reality. Official Plans which call for community participation need to ensure that women too can respond. This means policies to:

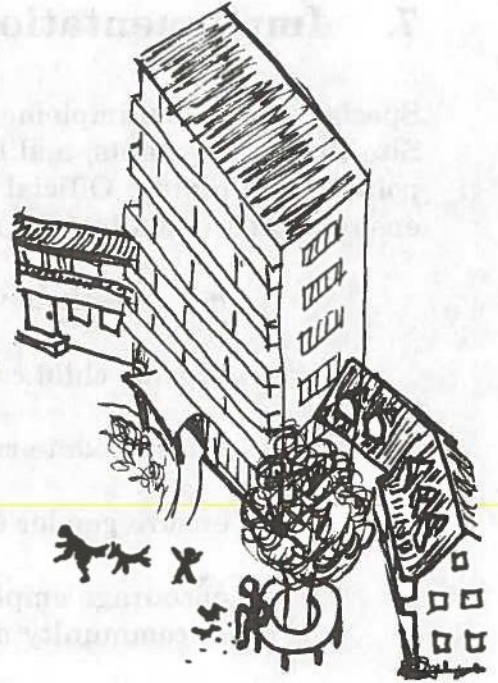
- hold meetings when child care, safety and employment don't conflict,
- provide child care at public meetings,
- accommodate cultural and language differences as well as disabilities,
- ensure gender equity on citizens' planning bodies,
- encourage employers to give time-off to staff who wish to participate in community meetings and taskforces which meet during day time.

## Housing Policy Statements

The 1989 Ontario Housing Policy requires that all Official Plans state how the municipality will ensure that 25% of new housing will be affordable for the 60% of the population who earn the lowest incomes. All Official Plans in Ontario will be amended in the coming years. Official Plan amendments require that the public be informed, usually through a newspaper announcement and at least one public meeting. This gives women a chance to express their concerns about affordable housing. Women should monitor and ask their municipal councillors and planners about the status of this Housing Policy Statement.

The policy leaves it open as to who of the 60% of lowest income earners will benefit from the affordable new housing. Housing for the top earners of this group will require far less public subsidy than housing for the poorest households. Housing policies should state that the needs of a community's most vulnerable households have to be met. This includes women-led, single parent, elderly, disabled, poor and immigrant households. Where an Official Plan states a right to housing, as a goal, the plan would have to include policies for ending homelessness.

Non-profit and co-operative housing developers are major producers of affordable housing. Co-operatives have many benefits for women. Besides affordable housing, co-ops also provide a supportive environment and opportunities for women to learn valuable leadership, management and non-traditional skills. The Affordable Housing Taskforce, Ministry of Housing and the Affordable Housing Action Group, Access to Permanent Housing Committees, co-operatives and other local groups can give further information and support.



# Zoning By-Laws

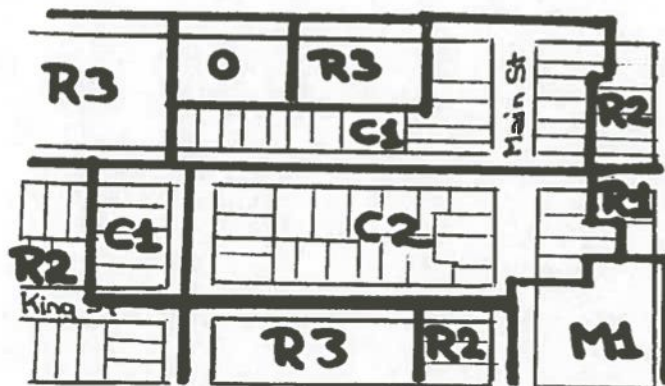
Zoning indicates exactly how many square meters of offices, stores, or housing can be built in a certain place. Zoning dictates how far back from the street buildings will be, how high they will be and how many parking spaces they need (Section 34 of the Planning Act). There are strict definitions for each activity or use: for example what is high, medium and low density housing, a service, a retail outlet, a warehouse etc.

The value of a property is directly affected by its zoning. This function of zoning has overshadowed most other aspects of zoning. Developers will often try to build more than currently permitted to use a site more efficiently and more profitably. Developers request frequent discussions and amendments of Zoning By-Laws. They often hire their own planners, lawyers and lobbyists.

Residential Zoning By-Laws often define a family or household. In this way they restrict who can live in certain residential zones. Zoning By-Laws can control the number of foster children or roomers and the relationship of the occupants in a dwelling. This can limit the living arrangements women may prefer or depend on. In many low density housing areas zoning does not permit adding, subdividing, or subletting a dwelling. This affects elderly women who may live in housing which has become too large and costly for them. It also affects women who can only afford shared housing. Residential zones frequently do not permit child care centres. In this way residential zoning regulations seem to relate more to social status than social equity or physical planning.

## ZONING MAP LEGEND\*

- C1 - Commercial Low Density
- C2 - Commercial High Density
- R1 - Residential Low Density
- R2 - Residential Medium Density
- R3 - Residential High Density
- O - Open Space
- M1 - Light Industrial



\*The Text of the Zoning By-Law will provide full definitions and regulations.

Zoning By-Laws define where and how home occupations are permitted. This restricts many women who want to start a business in their homes - including looking after other women's children. It also affects women who cannot afford or find child care and have to sew or work on computers in their homes.

Zoning can define mixed use areas such as how much commercial and residential space can be built on one property. Mixed residential and commercial areas benefit many women because they provide housing near services and employment. Businesses find built-in customers in mixed use zones. The more flexibility and variety zoning permits, the livelier an area will be. Mixing of uses extends the hours when people are in an area. Women feel safer when they know there are others nearby than when an area is deserted. In this way zoning can affect women's sense of safety.

Because Zoning By-Laws are so specific, complex and technical, they are often hard to understand. Each municipality has a different Zoning By-Law to reflect its needs and approach. Women, like developers, should ask planners to explain zoning until it is clear to them.





# Site Plan Agreements and Bonuses

## Site Plan Agreements

Municipalities have to have an Official Plan and declare that an area requires Site Plan Agreements before they can enter into such agreements (Section 40 of the Planning Act). These are negotiated separately for each development. The agreements can spell out in detail how a development has to provide loading, parking, walkways, lighting, landscaping, garbage storage, easements and effects on transportation. Site Plan Agreements need to be approved by council. Members of the public can see these agreements and talk to planners about them. Yet no public notification or meetings are needed.

Women are directly affected by several of these areas. Lighting, landscaping, access and exit routes affect women's safety. The design of the open space around a development determines if there are meaningful and safe outdoor play spaces for children. By relating their concern to planners and councillors, women may have input into such agreements, or at least raise planners' and politicians' awareness of women's needs. Planners, responsible for women's issues, can help ensure that Site Plan Agreements meet women's needs.

## Bonuses

Bonuses, (Section 36 of the Planning Act) allow extra density for a development in return for "facilities, services or matters" of public benefit to the community. Such trades can provide a benefit such as a small park, or a child care centre. A well planned network of social services should not, however, depend on such individually negotiated deals.

Often, densities are already very high. Adding extra floors can create unlivable environments with too many shadows, wind-tunnels and crowded side-walks. Like Site Plan Agreements, Bonuses are negotiated on a case by case basis. Unfortunately, there are no clear guidelines for these trades at this time. This leaves the field open for wheeling and dealing. Municipalities need to prepare explicit policies for these trades and women need to have input in developing these.



## Subdivision of Land and Consent to Sever Land

The nature and shape of a community is largely determined when the subdivision of land occurs. This is a heavily regulated process (Sections 49 to 56 of the Planning Act). It requires approval from many municipal, regional and provincial agencies. It has also the least public input because, in most cases, there is not yet a public, such as a neighbourhood who live there. Only if a subdivision plan requires an Official Plan or Zoning By-Law change is a public notice and meeting needed. Consent to sever one or two parcels of a farm or large lot can be granted by the Committee of Adjustment, at the municipal level. This needs far fewer official approvals, but allows neighbours within a radius of 120 meters are notified and invited to comment.

Most developers have made a considerable financial investment when they ask for the approval of a Subdivision Plan. They look for the safest and most efficient way to get that approval. Developers, and their financiers, avoid risks with radical new ideas which do not guarantee returns. Yet, it is at the subdivision stage that provision for daycare, a women's shelter, street lighting or landscaping to ensure women's safety, and the integration of stores, services, employment opportunities should occur. Changing poorly planned environments is very costly and causes serious social stress. Meeting women's needs at the subdivision phase would be most cost effective. Present planning practice does not provide for this to happen. It is up to women to make sure that:

- the Official and Secondary, Neighbourhood, or Part II Plans contain goals and policies which meet women's needs,
- the Planning Department has made a planner on its staff responsible that women's needs are met,
- there is a municipal women's advisory committee monitoring all municipal decisions. Women Plan Toronto does this.

### Typical Plan of Subdivision



## **Procedures For And Reactions To Change**

Some of these changes can take years and many public meetings until they are fully completed. Before councils vote on a change, a committee of council usually discusses, listens to the public and votes on it. The manual explains first minor and then major changes.

### **Committee of Adjustment**

The Committee of Adjustment (Section 44 of the Planning Act) can grant minor changes, or variances to zoning and severances of parcels of land. Variances can include reduced set backs from the street, or extra floor area in a building. The Committee informs neighbours up to 120 meters from the site and invites their comments at a hearing. The planning department can submit a report for or against variances or severances. Appeals of Committee of Adjustment decisions go straight to the Ontario Municipal Board.

### **Amendments to the Zoning By-Law**

Amendments to the Zoning By-Law are needed for bigger changes, such as adding several extra floors to a building or changing an area from town houses to apartments. An amendment will require an announcement in the newspaper, a public meeting and notices to neighbours up to 120 meters away. The planning department prepares recommendations for each zoning change. One of the committees of council usually discuss, invite public comment and vote on the staff recommendation. Only then will Council vote.

### **Amendments to the Official Plan**

Amendments to the Official Plan are needed for major changes such as altering the use of an area from industrial to residential. To prevent conflicts between the Zoning By-Law and the Official Plan, both need to be amended. Notices to neighbours, a newspaper ad and a public meeting are required.

Planning staff prepare a report, often listen to the public and pass their recommendations to one of the committees of council. These committees discuss, are open to submissions from the community and vote on the recommendations before passing the issue to council for its vote.

## Official Plan Reviews

Official Plan reviews need to be considered every five years. Reviews ensure that a plan continues to reflect changing times, community values and needs. Councils must ask for public input in this decision. Most municipalities have Official Plans. Some municipalities set up a citizens committee to help guide the review process. It is important that women are represented on such bodies. Reviews provide women with the opportunity to raise their needs. Reviews may take several years. Staff and committees of council go through many reports, discussions and public meetings before council decide on Official Plan revisions.

## Ontario Municipal Board

The Ontario Municipal Board is the highest appeal court for planning disputes. If an owner, or a member of the public is not happy with the decision of the Committee of Adjustment, or Council she or he can appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board. Developers and municipalities usually hire lawyers and experts. This is not required. Concerned citizens or community groups often do not have legal counsel. Some groups pool resources to hire a lawyer, some apply to Legal Aid for help.

## Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY)

This is a reaction against certain changes. The value of property is extremely important for an owner. For many their property represents security for old age; for others it represents their social status. It is natural therefore that any change is weighed in terms of how it affects the values of nearby properties. When people fear that a change will hurt them, they organize and try to sway council against a proposal. Such campaigns have stopped waste dump sites as well as social housing projects. This protectionist response is often referred to as NIMBY, Not In My Backyard.

granny flats  
non-profit  
housing  
shelters for  
victims  
of abuse  
group homes



A recent study by the Ministry of Housing showed that land values were not affected either negatively or positively by near-by non-profit housing projects, .

(ECOS Research Assoc. Inc., Evaluation of Property Value Impacts: Non Profit Housing, Ontario Ministry of Housing, Toronto, 1989);

Women need to ask themselves if a proposed change helps or hurts women in general. Does the change propose a child care centre, a community service, a granny flat, housing for youngsters in need of help? Does it enable victims of abuse or aging neighbours to remain in their community?

## **Environmental Assessment Act**

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment Act is to protect, conserve and wisely manage Ontario's environment. The act establishes a legal process to evaluate the impact a proposed project or plan may have on its environments. It defines "environment" not only as the natural environment, but also as the social, economic and cultural conditions and any building or other human made device. The Environmental Assessment Board plays a quasi-judicial role under the Environmental Assessment Act which is similar to the Ontario Municipal Board under the Planning Act. In some cases these two boards hold joint or consolidated, hearings.

An environmental assessment must describe the proposal and its predicted impacts, as well as potential alternatives and their environmental impacts. When the assessment is completed, a hearing may be held. Hearings are called, if either the proponent (the agency or company who proposes a project) or a member of the interested public request it, and the Minister agrees with the need for the hearing.

Intervenors in hearings are now eligible for funding under a 3 years pilot project, established by the Intervenor Funding Project Act, 1988 (which came into force on April 1, 1989). Concerned members of the public may apply for funding from the proponent of a project, in order to participate more effectively in an environmental assessment hearing.

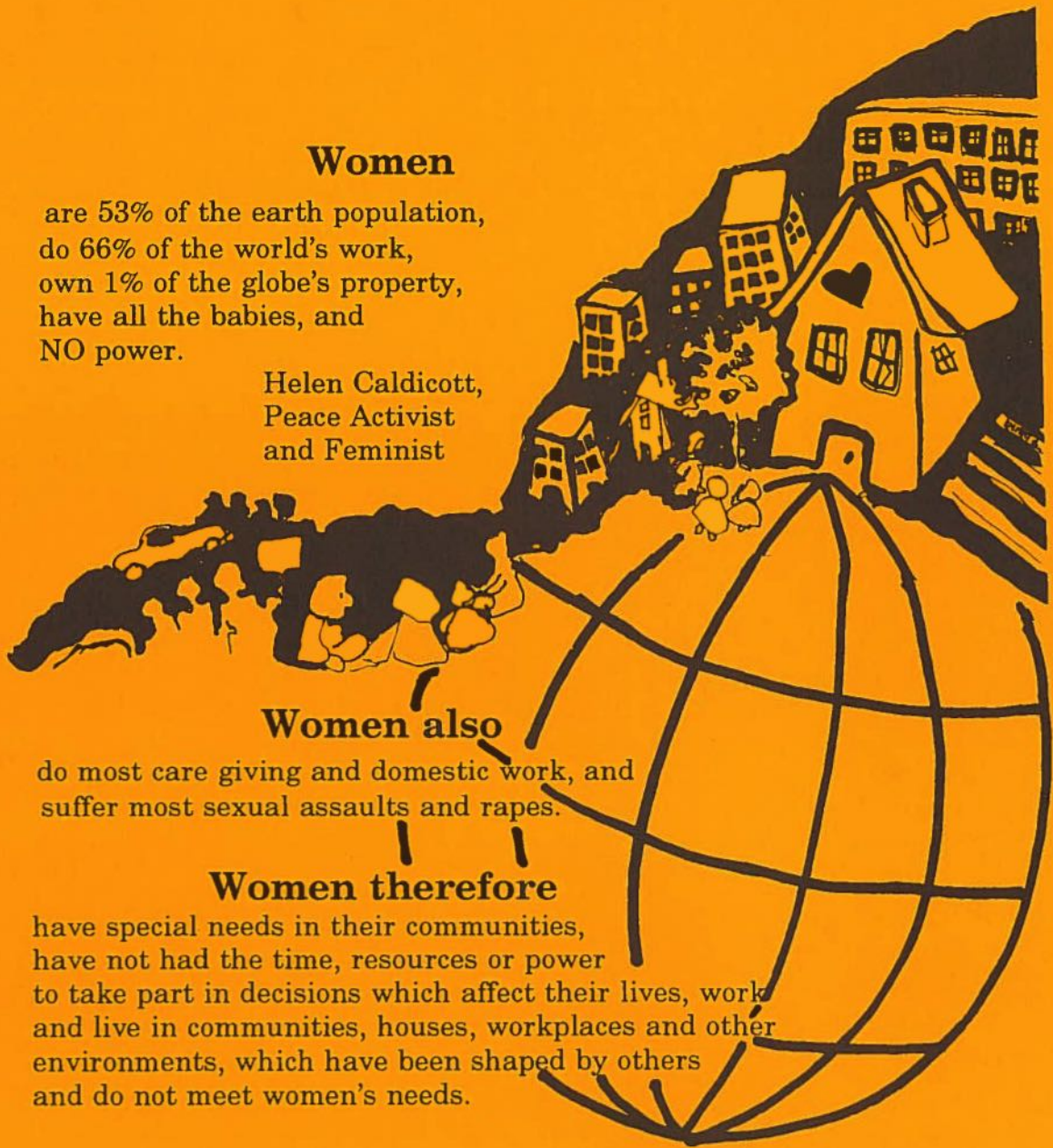
Provincial and municipal projects are subject to the Act. The Minister can grant exemptions or demand that environmental assessments be submitted for specific private projects, or for types of projects such as waste management facilities or incinerators. The protection of the environment will play an increasingly important role in the future and the environmental assessment process will influence planning more and more. Women can use this act to raise their environmental, social and health concerns about a proposed project.



## Women

are 53% of the earth population,  
do 66% of the world's work,  
own 1% of the globe's property,  
have all the babies, and  
NO power.

Helen Caldicott,  
Peace Activist  
and Feminist



## Women also

do most care giving and domestic work, and  
suffer most sexual assaults and rapes.

## Women therefore

have special needs in their communities,  
have not had the time, resources or power  
to take part in decisions which affect their lives, work  
and live in communities, houses, workplaces and other  
environments, which have been shaped by others  
and do not meet women's needs.

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**Published by:** Women Plan Toronto, 736 Bathurst St. Toronto, Ont.  
M5S 2R4, phone: 416-588-9751, 1990

**Assisted by:** a grant from the Ontario Women's Directorate  
Dawn Langtry (draft two and three of the ten drafts), Pierre  
Beeckmans, Mary Breen, Catherine Brown, John Gladki, Marnie  
Hayes, Debbie Hierlihy, Leslie Miller, Barbara Loevinger-Rahder,  
Mary VanOrder, Gerda Wekerle, Carolyn Whitzman (comments), Judy  
Kondrat (clear language), Nikos Evdemon (taming the computer),  
Regula Modlich, Barbara Loevinger-Rahder, Birgit Sterner, Rose  
Zgodzinski (illustrations)