

Tower Renewal Project Series

REINVESTMENT REQUIRED

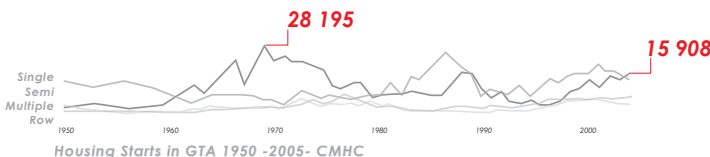
A City of Towers

Michael McClelland and Graeme Stewart

While today's condo boom is the largest in North America, with 18,000 built last year across the GTA, it is dwarfed by the 1960's post-war apartment boom. In 1968 alone 30,000-apartment units came on the market.

Contrary to common wisdom, the most significant legacy of modern suburbanization in Toronto is not the single-family home, but multiple-unit high-density dwellings. After the war, city planners and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation actively encouraged the development of modern apartment towers in the expanding region based on the tower-in-the-park typology. By the mid 1960s, at the peak of Toronto's first mass housing boom, nearly 40 per cent of the city's housing stock and 77 per cent of housing starts were apartments of this type. By the end of this boom, new "multiples" outpaced new single-detached and semi-detached housing by a ratio of 2:1.

The Post War housing boom by type



CMHC data compiled by E.R.A. Architects and the University of Toronto

As a consequence, Toronto currently contains the second highest number of high rises in North America (defined as buildings of 12 storeys and higher, Emporis 2006), the majority of these residential towers of the post-war boom. Toronto has double the high rise stock than third place Chicago. And while Chicago's towers are overwhelmingly along the water's edge and for the most part deal with a specific high-end demographic, Toronto's towers spread north, south, east and west, as far as 30 kilometres from the city centre, housing a considerable portion of Toronto's varied population. Undeniably, Toronto is a high-rise city, yet the distribution and age of the majority of our high-rise buildings gives Toronto a distinct character. We are fundamentally a different kind of city than our North American cousins.

We are much more than a city of quaint downtown neighbourhoods. Toronto is a city of towers, many of whom are approaching their fifth decade. This vast array of

apartment towers and their associated communities are a legacy worthy of further study and thoughtful reinvestment.

Michael McClelland is a principal and Graeme Stewart is the project architect for Tower Renewal with E.R.A. Architects. The Tower Renewal Project, spearheaded by the mayor, is being developed in collaboration with E.R.A. Architects and an interdepartmental municipal staff working group with collaboration from Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the University of Toronto, CMHC, Toronto Atmospheric Fund and the Clinton Foundation, among others. **NRU**

High-rise Metro Region comparison - the Toronto Region in a global context

World		North America	
Hong Kong	7 494	New York	5 568
New York	5 568	Toronto	2,047
Soa Paulo	4 615	Chicago	1 076
Singapore	3 523	Vancouver	614
Seoul	2 839	Miami	535
Tokyo	2 765	Los Angeles	457
Rio de Janeiro	2 234	San Francisco	436
Istanbul	2 112	Honolulu	425
Toronto	2,047	Montreal	413
Moscow	1 751	Philadelphia	336
Buenos Aires	1 560	Houston	331
Kyiv	1 473	Ottawa	280
London	1 301	Washington D.C.	272
Madrid	1 170	Boston	245
Caracas	1 118	Dallas	241
Chicago	1 076	Edmonton	230
Shanghai	959		
Santiago	954		
Sydney	823		
Beijing	864		
Minsk	772		
Mexico City	747		
Osaka	740		

Data from (2006), compiled by E.R.A. Architects and the University of Toronto

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