

Toronto Rejects High-Tech 'Smart City' for Something More Livable on Its Waterfront

The last place I'd expect to see a feature about Toronto rejecting a "smart city" proposal in favor of a green oasis would be MIT's *Technology Review*, but there it is in the July/August 2022 issue of the magazine. It's a fascinating study of how technology lost out to human scale sustainable development on prime real estate in Canada's largest city.

The original 2017 proposal for the 12-acre plot between an expressway and Lake Ontario was for it to become a hub for an optimized urban experience featuring robo-taxis, heated sidewalks, autonomous garbage collection, and an extensive digital layer to monitor everything from street crossings to park bench usage," according to the article. The proposal, appropriately, came from a sister company of Google, Sidewalk Labs, which is the urban innovation arm of Alphabet.

The idea was that this develop-

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By **JIM SMITH, Realtor®**

ment would be a "proof of concept, establishing a new development model for cities everywhere. It could have demonstrated that the sensor-laden smart city model embraced in China and the Persian Gulf has a place in more democratic societies."

After a 2½-year effort to sell the concept to Toronto's citizenry, Sidewalk Labs abandoned the idea, blaming it on Covid-19, but citizen blowback was the reason.

Personally, I like the idea of a "smart city," especially when it comes to traffic control. For example, I like traffic lights to respond to traffic and minimize wait times. But some of the "smart city" concepts, such as robo-taxis, sound more like the product of "geeks gone wild," rather than a development to improve city life.

The rendering of Toronto's replacement plan, adopted in February 2022, warms my heart. The plan is



delightfully low tech, yet it incorporates a design that is "zero carbon," or what we call "net zero energy."

This quote says it all: "*The real problem is that with their emphasis on the optimization of everything, smart cities seem designed to eradicate the very thing that makes cities wonderful.*"

Interestingly, *Technology Review* had cited the original Toronto proposal in its 2018 article about "10 breakthrough technologies," writing that "Sidewalk Labs could reshape how we live, work, and play in urban neighborhoods." The architectural critic for the *Toronto Globe and Mail* chimed in, praising the 2017 concept as an exciting approach to urban development.

Renderings such as the one above "show trees and greenery sprouting from every possible balcony and outcropping, with nary an auton-

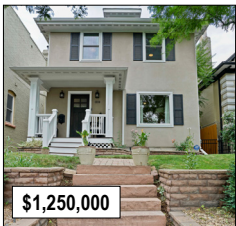
omous vehicle or drone in sight. The project's highly accomplished design team... all speak of this new corner of Canada's largest city not as a technoutopia but as a bucolic retreat." The new project design, according to the article, is "a con-

spicuous disavowal not only of the 2017 proposal but of the smart city concept itself."

One of the city planners summed it up: "If you look at what we're doing now on that site, it's classic city building with a 21st-century twist, which means it's a carbon-neutral community. It's a totally electrified community. It's a community that prioritizes affordable housing.... It's a community that has a strong emphasis on green space and urban agriculture and urban farming."

A comment by one of the developers caught my attention. "*In the U.S. it's life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.... In Canada it's peace, order, and good government. Canadians don't expect the private sector to come in and save us from government, because we have high trust in government.*"

Just Listed: Modern Denver Square on Capitol Hill



This home at **1250 Downing Street** (built in 2006) is faithful to the Denver Square architectural tradition, but with modern touches, from the 9' basement ceiling to the walk-in closets and walk-in pantry. You'll see what I mean when you watch the video tour at www.DenverSquare.online. Since buying the home in 2018, the seller added new carpet in the basement, a 6-burner Thermador gas range, 6-foot-wide refrigerator/freezer, gas fireplace with custom cabinetry and mantel. The kitchen is fabulous! The oversized detached garage on the alley has a space with French doors that is partially finished and would make a great home office or studio. The home has over 3,100 square feet, 4 bedrooms and 4 baths. It has acacia hardwood on the main floor and an open floor plan. Upstairs you'll find bamboo flooring and a wonderful master suite with a spa-like master bath & custom walk-in closet, plus two generous sized guest bedrooms and full bath. The finished basement has a family/media room, a 4th bedroom and 3/4 bath, plus a wet bar and wine cellar under the stairway. **Listed by Chuck Brown, 303-885-7855, who will hold it open this Saturday, July 9, 11 to 1.**

Just Listed: Ranch in Arvada's Scenic Heights

This home at **8785 W. 67th Place** is located on a corner lot in that quiet neighborhood known as Scenic Heights, west of Wadsworth and south of 72nd Avenue, close to the Arvada Center for the Arts. Also nearby are the Indian Tree Golf Course and Majestic View Park, as well as Old Towne Arvada with its light rail station. The seller is only the 2nd owner of this 1961 brick ranch, having lived here since 1987. It has a 4th bedroom and bath in the fully finished basement. There are hardwood floors throughout, although there is carpet over the hardwood in two bedrooms. The landscaped yard with large shade trees, peach tree, blueberry bushes and roses is served by an irrigation system installed in 2019. The furnace and water heater were installed in 2017, and central air conditioning in 2020. The interior was painted in 2017 and the exterior was painted in 2020. Take a video tour at www.ArvidaHome.info, then call for your agent or Jim Smith for a showing. **Open Sat., July 9, 11 to 1.**



\$685,000

Just Listed: Skyestone Ranch on Premium Lot

This home at **12377 W. Big Horn Ct.** is north of Standley Lake, and you might think it's in Westminster, but it's in Broomfield. The home, which is the desirable Flatirons model by Taylor Morrison, overlooks a park (see the view from this home's deck below), and is adjacent to the 420-acre Westminster Hills dog park. The walk-out basement is beautifully finished, including a 4th bedroom with Brazilian Ash hardwood flooring. The many improvements are spelled out room-by-room in the MLS listing, and a narrated video tour can be found at www.SkvestoneHome.online. Its location within this 55+ community is incomparable, at the end of a cul-de-sac, adjacent to a trail that leads to the dog park as well as to the park below. Call your agent or Jim Smith at **303-525-1851** to arrange a private showing.



\$1,100,000



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