

# Andrew Whittemore named city's top planner

*Priorities include waterfront redevelopment, Cooksville and transit-oriented community building*

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Mississauga has found its new chief planner at city hall.

Andrew Whittemore has been named the city's commissioner of planning and building. This announcement follows the recent retirement of commissioner Ed Sajecki.

"It is wonderful to welcome Andrew on to the city's leadership team," said city manager and chief administrative officer Janice Baker. "He is a strategist and partnership builder who is passionate about creating a great city."

Whittemore started his career in development planning at the City of Halifax, helping the municipality draft its first Regional Planning Strategy. He joined the City of Mississauga in 2012 and has served in the city's culture division, policy planning, as well as planning and building.

Whittemore was involved in the drafting and implementation of the city's affordable housing strategy, Making Room for the Middle. The transformative document offers over 40 actions to increase the supply of affordable housing for Mississauga's middle class.

With experience in both community development and policy planning, Whittemore said he is well-prepared to join the city's senior leadership team.



City of Mississauga photo

**Andrew Whittemore** has been named the City of Mississauga's commissioner of planning and building.

"I think with planning, some people think it's just about approving a building, but it's so much more sophisticated than that. A planner is also thinking about, do we have a range of affordability? Is it appropriate for this context? Is there parkland next to it? So you're really building that inclusive, complete community and that's our aim," he said.

With Mississauga in the process of transforming from a suburb of Toronto to its own urban city, Whittemore has identified four priority areas: building a transit-oriented city, land-use planning around Major Transit Station Areas as identified by the province, reimagining Cooksville and the waterfront reclamation project.

"It starts with trying to develop a strong vision, so it's engaging the public, understanding what opportunities exist, what barriers exist and then you analyze those and come up with the land use planning piece," he said.

Whittemore acknowledged the challenges of balancing the decisions of council, the opportunism of the development community and the concerns of residents.

Citing his predecessor, Whittemore said the key is to make sure it is all about "evidence-based planning."

"It's really about the integrity of the process and acting on behalf of the public," he noted.

Whittemore is taking over at a time of massive overhaul in the province's planning legislation, including a new provincial growth plan and a revamping of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Changes proposed in the OMB reform bill will give municipalities greater authority over planning matters, thereby reducing the ability of the quasi-judicial board to overrule municipal council decisions in favour of developers.

"We need to make sure the public understands all of this because there's been so much change," said Whittemore. "This new approach to planning that the provincial government has adopted really has a central role for the community to play, so engagement will be more important than ever."

Whittemore is also committed to taking a holistic approach to the city's Official Plan to see how pockets of the city - downtown, the airport, the waterfront - can function as a whole.

"It's taking a step back a little bit and really trying to understand our city," he said.

Mayor Bonnie Crombie said Whittemore was the "right choice at the right time" for Mississauga.

"You are thoughtful but you bring passion and compassion and you're an out of the box thinker and I think that's what we need today," she noted.

Whittemore will start his new position on April 16, 2018.

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