

CITY FORMATION Inc. (CFI)

Anthony C. Coombes is founding principal of City Formation Inc., a Canadian company that provides strategic advice on the redevelopment of new cities – usually on entirely new lands – to respond to fundamental societal challenges. Part of the central mandate has always been the formation of compact, energy-efficient habitation. His mode of work has been to work with governments and development companies to formulate the basic ambitions and foundations of such enterprises, and to follow through to the point where the critical first phase of development is established. That role has involved associations with, and retention of, eminent specialists in all design services. His central role on these enterprises has extended from conceptual development to coordinating the project's implementation among the project's planning, design construction, financing, marketing, leasing, and retail faculties. In particular, he has provided the interface with government agencies. He is therefore able to bring a broad perspective to this enterprise of new urban formation.

CFI Educated in Architecture (Sydney University) and Urban Design (Columbia University), Anthony Coombes became Chief Planner in central Toronto in the mid-1970s, leading a wholesale restructuring of the City's development ambitions, policies, plans and programs—**The Central Area Plan**. The Plan has ensured a thriving mixed-use core for the metropolitan region.

In 1980, Mr. Coombes associated with the Toronto development company, Olympia and York (then the world's largest commercial space developer and owner) as Senior Director in the development of **The World Financial Center**, Battery Park, New York. He managed the formulation and design of the 800,000 sq. metre project, through to the completion and occupation of the project—a five-year period. The strategic purpose of the enterprise, built on landfill in the Hudson River was to revitalize the development market in Manhattan after a period of near bankruptcy in New York City.

From 1987 to 1992, Mr. Coombes was Senior Vice President of Olympia and York in the conception and development of **Canary Wharf**, London. The ambition of the British Government was to ensure the continued preeminence of London (rather than Frankfurt) as the primary European financial centre, through the development of a modern financial district. Again, the new district was built upon fallow ground, with no existing infrastructure. The first phase was completed and occupied in about five years, during which Mr. Coombes performed the central coordination function.

During the 1990s, Anthony Coombes worked in a "Cooperative Joint Venture" with the government of the new economic zone at Tianjin, China (**TEDA**). As in most nations, Chinese cities were built historically on the best arable land, which land diminished dangerously with urban expansion. This enterprise was a visionary decision to convert vast areas of salt paddies, hostile to any form of

life, into a key economic district. The project was to build a city centre for the new region. (It is now the most successful new economic zone in China, contributing a half of the province of Tianjin's gross domestic product.) With the TEDA government, Mr. Coombes established detailed ambitions and principles by which the city centre was developed in complete, compact phases. The first phase included comprehensive civic assets—government centre, hospital, schools, university, and so on, around public space systems.

For a period in the late 1990s Mr. Coombes worked for Solidere in a consortium of consultants in developing sector plans (the Hotel and “J” districts) for **central Beirut**.

From 2000, Anthony Coombes led an expert team to develop the new plan for the **Toronto Central Waterfront**, then largely abandoned. The plan, now being developed, is an integrated design/finance/management strategy of phased precinct development.

Mr. Coombes is now contracted as Executive Director of the **Neptis Foundation**. Neptis is a Canadian foundation that conducts and funds research on aspects of the design of urban regions—their use of land, mobility and environment. The work has stimulated a broad renaissance in regional growth management in the Toronto region. A significant element of the work is based on geomatics and the use of remote sensing. (www.neptis.org)

Mr. Coombes is a co-founder of **InferUrban**, a Canadian company that is developing new technologies for regional definition and analysis.