

## 3.8 Avenue Road

### 3.8.1 The Historical Development of Avenue Road

*Avenue Road was first known as "the road to the avenue" meaning the road to College Avenue as the present University Avenue was known.*

In 1868 the Rector of St. James authorized the plan of subdivision that created Avenue Road through the centre of lot 22. The impact on Yorkville was considerable, as it was, ultimately, on the development of Toronto. Through access and transportation, Avenue Road encouraged more traffic and business on the western edge of the village; it also attracted an expanding population and enabled the development of the West Annex.

The subdivision created twenty lots between Bloor and present St. Clair, which were initially leased from the church. Even before the plan of subdivision, a few dozen tradespeople lived on the lands, including numerous gardeners, labourers, butchers, a botanist, and a brickmaker.<sup>63</sup> The street underwent urban subdivision in concert with the setting out of the east-west streets in the study area. Developers acquired a Glebe lot or part thereof, and with very little artistry plotted out a series of rectangles.

The nature of development of the east side of the road was quite different, and larger park estates occurred, many of them surviving well into the present century. Accordingly, the avenue emerged with a character of quality that is unrecognizable today. By the end of the nineteenth century, Avenue Road was a heavily treed, very respectable residential neighbourhood, and the few non-residential uses were in keeping with that character.

The first commercial uses appeared in 1895, with a corner drug dispensary at Boswell, although medical offices had already taken hold with James Baldwin's establishment in 1890 at 44/46. The Home for Incurable Children also appeared in 1895 at 138, but these, like the funeral parlours, dental and medical offices, and early physiotherapist's clinic all in place by 1915, were relatively compatible with the domestic environment. By 1920 the medical practitioners numbered eight out of forty-six occupied addresses (excluding apartments). The introduction of commercial uses on the street has led to the replacement of many of the earlier residences and the substantial alteration of those residences which remain.

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<sup>63</sup> Village of Yorkville Assessment Roll, 1862. Avenue Road.

The character of the street was greatly altered when the sidewalk trees were cut in the 1950s. The south end of the street had already been altered in scale and density by the construction of the high-rise Park Plaza Hotel, originally called the Queen's Park Hotel, and in 1955 was affected by the construction of its addition, the Park Plaza Annex. Large scale development occurred also with the construction of the condominium at 66 Avenue Road and additional large scale development is proposed for the block between Prince Arthur and Lowther, known as the Matthews property.

### **3.8.2 Precinct Description**

Avenue Road is a major traffic route through the City of Toronto and it provides a distinct eastern boundary to the District. The only building on the east side of Avenue Road which contributes to the historic and architectural character of the East Annex Heritage Conservation District is St. Paul's United Church, the tower of which creates a visual terminus for Tranby Avenue. The church is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The buildings on the west side form two precincts, divided north and south of Elgin.

As discussed elsewhere in this study the precinct south of Elgin is not recommended for inclusion in the proposed District. It includes the condominium at 66 Avenue Road and the development site known as the Matthews property.

The proposed development of the Matthews property on Avenue Road between Prince Arthur and Lowther Avenues has been the subject of an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment application. The Department of Planning and Development has held extensive discussion with the present applicants and in September 1990 an Avenue Road Project Working Committee was formed to study and report on the project to the City of Toronto Planning Advisory Committee. The position of the Toronto Historical Board has been that the listed properties at 5 and 7 Lowther and at 4 Prince Arthur should be retained. These properties form part of the east-west streets and the incursion of large scale form and the loss of heritage fabric should be resisted on these streets.

North of Elgin there is a mixture of buildings of various ages and conditions which represent both the early residential character of Avenue Road and the introduction of early commercial uses. While their primary orientation is to Avenue Road, many of the buildings function as corner buildings and as entries into the east-west streets of the study area. These corner properties tend to have deep lots and broad frontages on the side streets with the potential for considerable impact on the character of those streets. This overlapping quality of these corner buildings integrates this section of Avenue Road into the rest of the proposed District.

On Avenue Road north of Davenport there are a number of small isolated groupings of older commercial and residential buildings, but they are removed from this precinct by the major traffic separation created by Davenport.

It is recommended that the buildings on the west side of Avenue Road on the four blocks between Elgin and Davenport be included in the District. Those properties are 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 92 1/2, 94, 96, 100, 102, 106, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116, 120, 124, 126, 128, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140, and 142 Avenue Road.

### **3.8.3 The Buildings on Avenue Road**

#### *Overview*

On Avenue Road north of Elgin, thirteen buildings are included on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties. Although many are substantially altered the majority of the buildings in these blocks pre-date the turn of the century. A grouping of somewhat later commercial buildings with apartments above dominate the block between Bernard and Davenport, but they provide an appropriate scale and transition for the edge of the District.

Notables living on the west side of Avenue Road in 1895 included four reverends, among them Nathaniel Burwash of Victoria College and George Wrong; James Baldwin, a fourth-generation member of the influential political family; local painter George Booth; and one of Canada's outstanding design architects, Frank Darling, who lived at 102 from 1895 until 1905. The Booth house is one of the more distinguished designs in the study area, and boasts a porch from the hand of Frank Darling.

Subdivision of buildings occurred early. The most famous is the joint residence of John Trick and J. Currelly at 40 (demolished). By 1915 the Rotherwood Apartments were built at 72-76 (also demolished). Commercial construction concentrated in the 130's block south of Davenport, with new fronts and several entirely new buildings being constructed in the late 1920s.

The characteristics and trends evident in the study area were exaggerated and accelerated on Avenue Road. The number of buildings doubled between 1885 and 1890, from twenty-one to forty-one, with numerous professionals, largely self-employed, in residence. The place of employment was typically around Wellington or Toronto Street.

A dramatic change in the economic order is represented in the historical shift from independent businesses to large chains. Between 1925 and 1940, private grocers and druggists were displaced by Dominion Stores, Loblaws Groceries, the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, and Tamblyn Drugs Ltd. Most of the 'Establishment' residents had abandoned the core for greener suburbs or exurban retreats, but some stayed on. Among them: Elsie Clark, possibly the widow of J. Mortimer Clark, son of the former Lieutenant-Governor Sir William Mortimer Clark (resident 1915 until after 1940). At #60, Mrs Harriet Torrance, a descendant by marriage of Mrs. M. E. Torrance who began uninterrupted Torrance occupancy in the house in 1885. At #108, Dr. Samuel Johnston, who had practised medicine with his wife Dr. Margaret since 1915, and who was working next door to a funeral director after 1925. At #110, the north corner of Tranby, dentist F. N. Badgley, was resident since 1910, as was Thomas Tweddle, the masseur at #116 who became a physiotherapist by 1940.

*Issue of Density*

Clearly the zoning of the land on Avenue Road south of Elgin has led to the removal of the earlier historic building fabric in that portion of the street. North of Elgin the properties tend to be significantly under the permissible density, and they may not be being developed more fully because of other reasons related to site constraints and commercial use; for example the requirements for parking.<sup>64</sup>

The proposed designation will however create a concern regarding a potential exemption of density and this will be noticed most directly at the corner properties, particularly at 2 Elgin.

It is recommended that the Department of Planning and Development report on changes to the zoning by-law which would bring the permitted density into closer conformity with existing developed densities on the section of Avenue Road north of Elgin.

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<sup>64</sup> In other municipalities variances in parking requirements are used as an incentive to encourage the retention and restoration of historic buildings and this incentive may be of assistance on Avenue Road. We cannot fully recommend pursuing this incentive however because during the course of the study none of the commercial property owners identified this type of incentive as necessary. A polling of commercial property owners on Avenue Road has not been taken.

*Interpreting the Guidelines for  
Buildings on Avenue Road*

The general guidelines for the District (page 8) are appropriate for Avenue Road with the following comments:

Commercial usage need not detract from the quality and significance of the buildings, but it is recognized that the buildings on Avenue Road require modifications to adapt to their commercial uses.

*90 Avenue Road  
constructed prior to 1884  
first resident:  
Richard Harper, insurance  
agent.*



Where possible the early buildings on Avenue Road should be maintained as carefully as possible, to act as a buffer for the residential buildings on the east-west streets.

The contrasts on this section of Avenue Road are remarkable. The quality of the earlier buildings is significant however and requires greater care and attention.

*118-120 Avenue Road  
118 rebuilt in 1969  
120 constructed in 1890  
first resident:  
Leon Marklen.*



### 3.8.4 Streetscape Character

#### *Description*

Avenue Road is the widest commercial street in the district, with four lanes of traffic and public transit. There is meter parking during restricted hours on the west side. The transition from residential to commercial is complete through this area. The streetscape on the west side from Lowther to Davenport is characterized by an irregular concrete sidewalk, varying in width from 1.5 metres to several metres. The street allowance falls within the control of Metro Toronto Roads and Traffic. There are only eight trees over these four blocks, of small size and contained in planters. The large trees flanking Avenue Road were long ago lost during road widening. Lighting is the typical cobra type light standard found throughout the city. Instead of major trees animating the street environment, this section has shopfront window displays. Unlike other sections of Avenue Road on the east side, the primary store entrances open directly onto the street.

A most significant visual streetscape element found in this section is the view down each the east-west streets of the East Annex from Avenue Road. These streets do not continue on the other side of Avenue Road and the breaks in the pattern of buildings on the west side form distinct entry portals to the district. The street trees of the boulevard streets and the narrow, urban character of the other streets stand out in dramatic contrast to the starkness and width of Avenue Road.

#### *Street Guidelines*

It is the intent of the Urban Design Department of the City that the Streetscape initiative for Bloor Street and the East side of Avenue Road area be extended to include this west side as well. While the style of architecture of this section of Avenue Road is distinctly different from the remainder of the street, it does form part of the continuum and containment of Avenue Road. The commercial nature of this portion of the district makes the streetscape environment more a part of the Avenue Road fabric than the East Annex District. For these reasons, it is an appropriate step to extend the Bloor Yorkville streetscape to this portion, as well.

That pattern is a 1.5 metre wide border of Huron Rose granite, broken by street tree planting. The Honeylocust tree is the species used on Avenue Road. It should be noted that any change to the public portion of the street requires approval of Metro Roads and Traffic, all the utility companies, in addition to the City of Toronto, Street Allowance Central Branch.

The following pages illustrate the locations for existing and proposed street trees in addition to the age and evaluation of heritage buildings for Avenue Road.

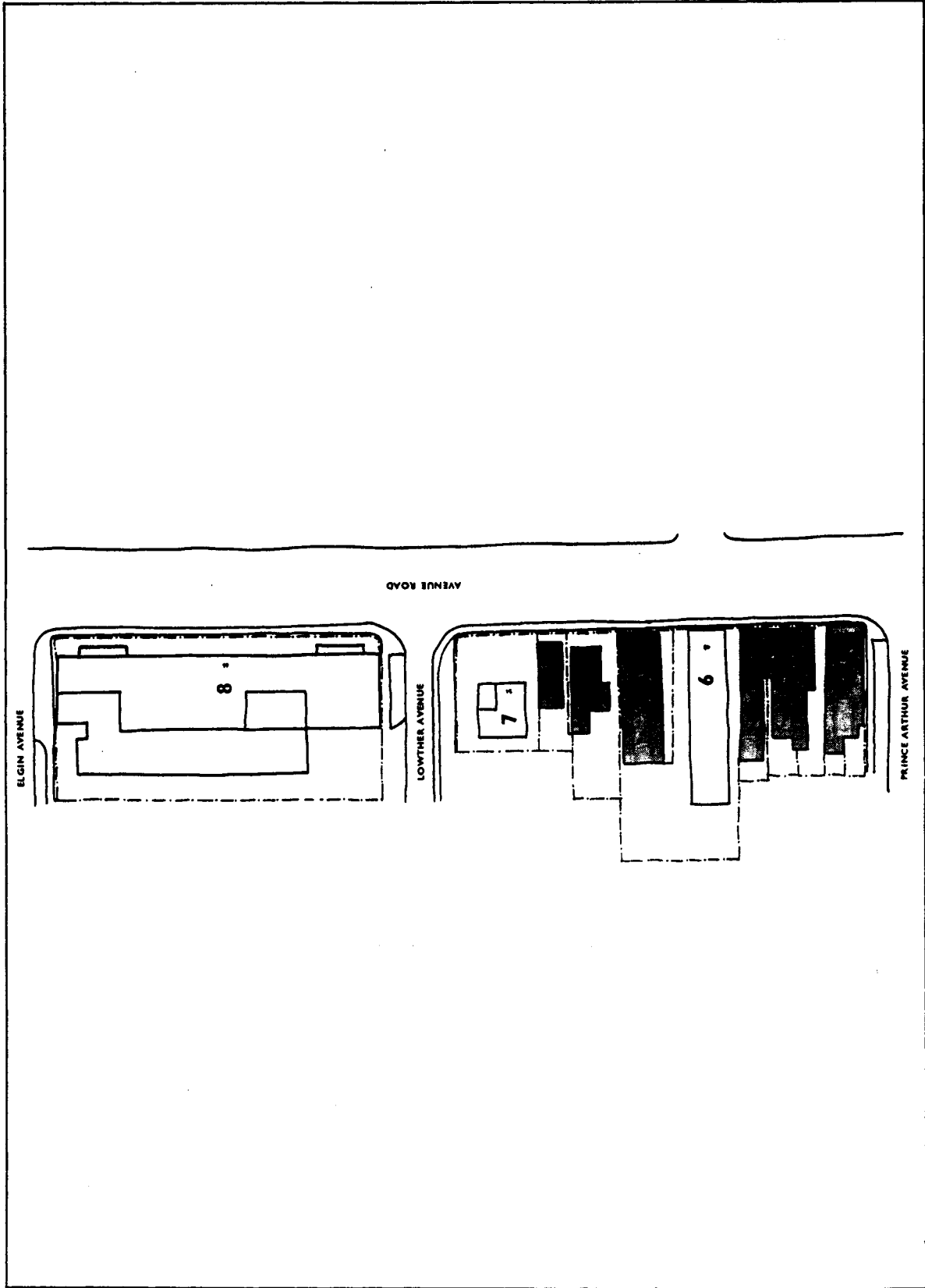
**AVENUE ROAD**  
South of Elgin

**AGE OF BUILDINGS**

NO.	PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTION
	PRE 1883
	1884 TO 1889
	1890 TO 1899
4	1900 TO 1909
5	1910 TO 1919
6	1920 TO 1939
7	1940 TO 1959
8	1960 -



10 20 40M





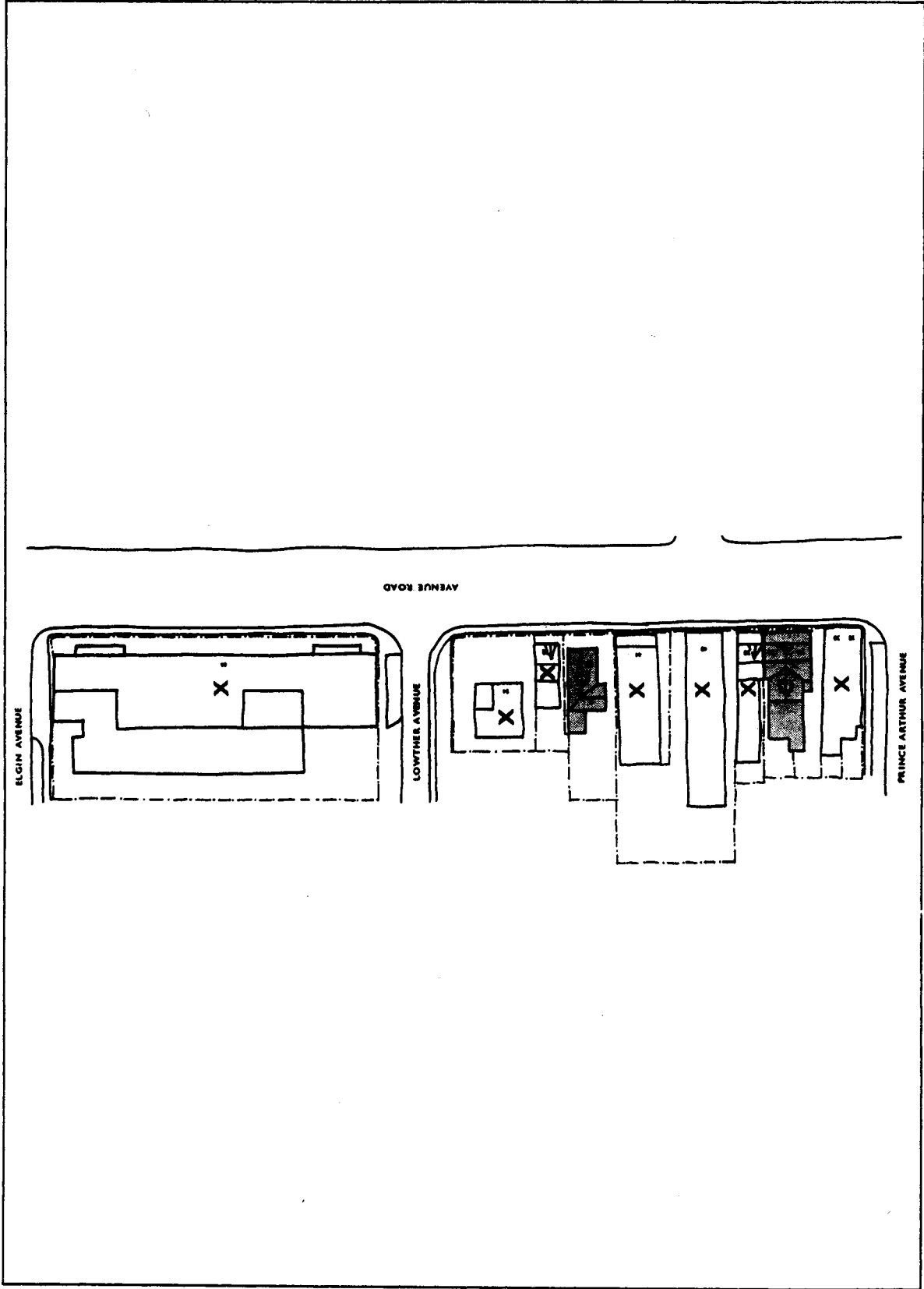
**AVENUE ROAD**  
South of Elgin

**EVALUATION  
OF HERITAGE  
BUILDINGS**

KEY	DESCRIPTION
	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE INDIVIDUALLY OUTSTANDING AND HAVE NATIONAL OR PROVINCIAL SIGNIFICANCE
B	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE NOTWORTHY FOR THEIR OVERALL QUALITY AND HAVE CITY WIDE IMPORTANCE.
C	PROPERTIES WHICH RETAIN MUCH OF THEIR ORIGINAL CHARACTER AND ARE VITAL REMINDERS OF A COMMUNITY'S PAST.
X	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE NOT IN THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER.
/L	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE LISTED BY THE TORONTO HISTORICAL BOARD ON THE INVENTORY OF HERITAGE PROPERTIES.



0 50 100M



**AVENUE ROAD**

North of Elgin

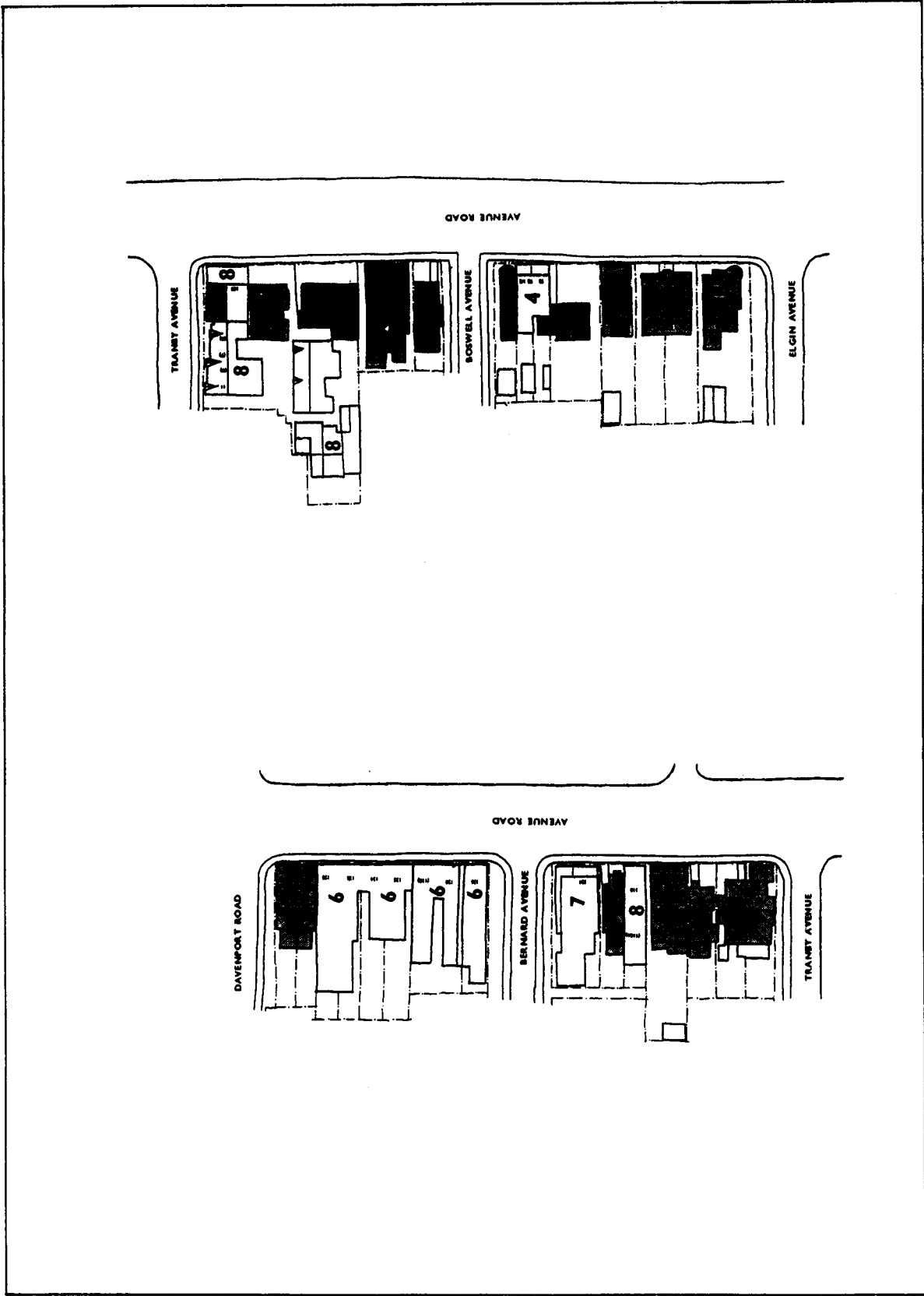
**AGE OF BUILDINGS**

NO.	PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTION
1	PRE 1883
2	1884 TO 1889
3	1890 TO 1899
4	1900 TO 1909
5	1910 TO 1919
6	1920 TO 1939
7	1940 TO 1959
8	1960 -

# altered 1955



10 20 40M



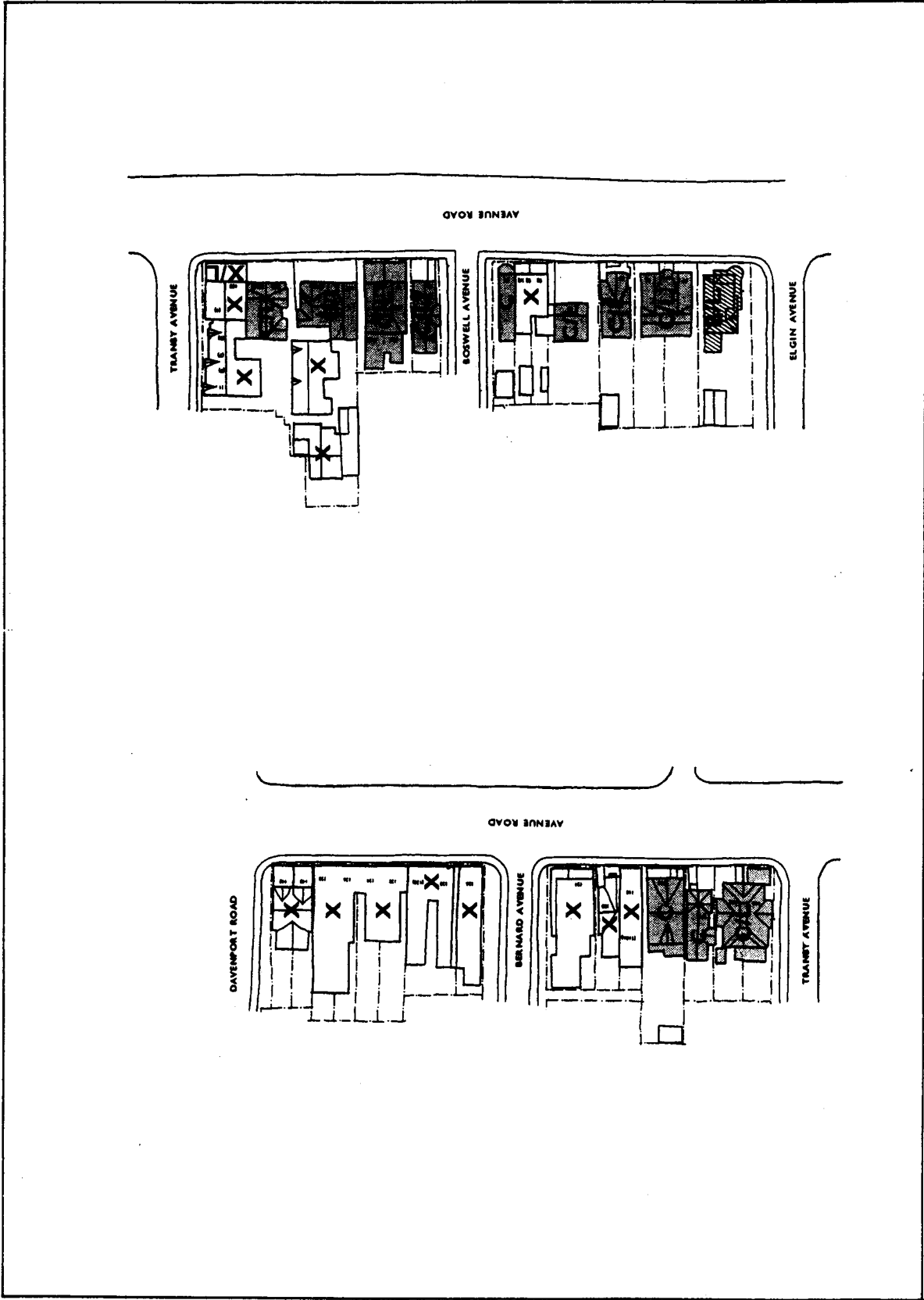
**AVENUE ROAD**  
North of Elgin

**EVALUATION  
OF HERITAGE  
BUILDINGS**

KEY	DESCRIPTION
(Solid black)	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE INDIVIDUALLY OUTSTANDING AND HAVE NATIONAL OR PROVINCIAL SIGNIFICANCE
(Diagonal hatching)	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE NOTWORTHY FOR THEIR OVERALL QUALITY AND HAVE CITY WIDE IMPORTANCE.
(Stippled)	PROPERTIES WHICH RETAIN MUCH OF THEIR ORIGINAL CHARACTER AND ARE VITAL REMINDERS OF A COMMUNITY'S PAST.
X	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE NOT IN THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER.
/L	PROPERTIES WHICH ARE LISTED BY THE TORONTO HISTORICAL BOARD ON THE INVENTORY OF HERITAGE PROPERTIES.



0 20 40M



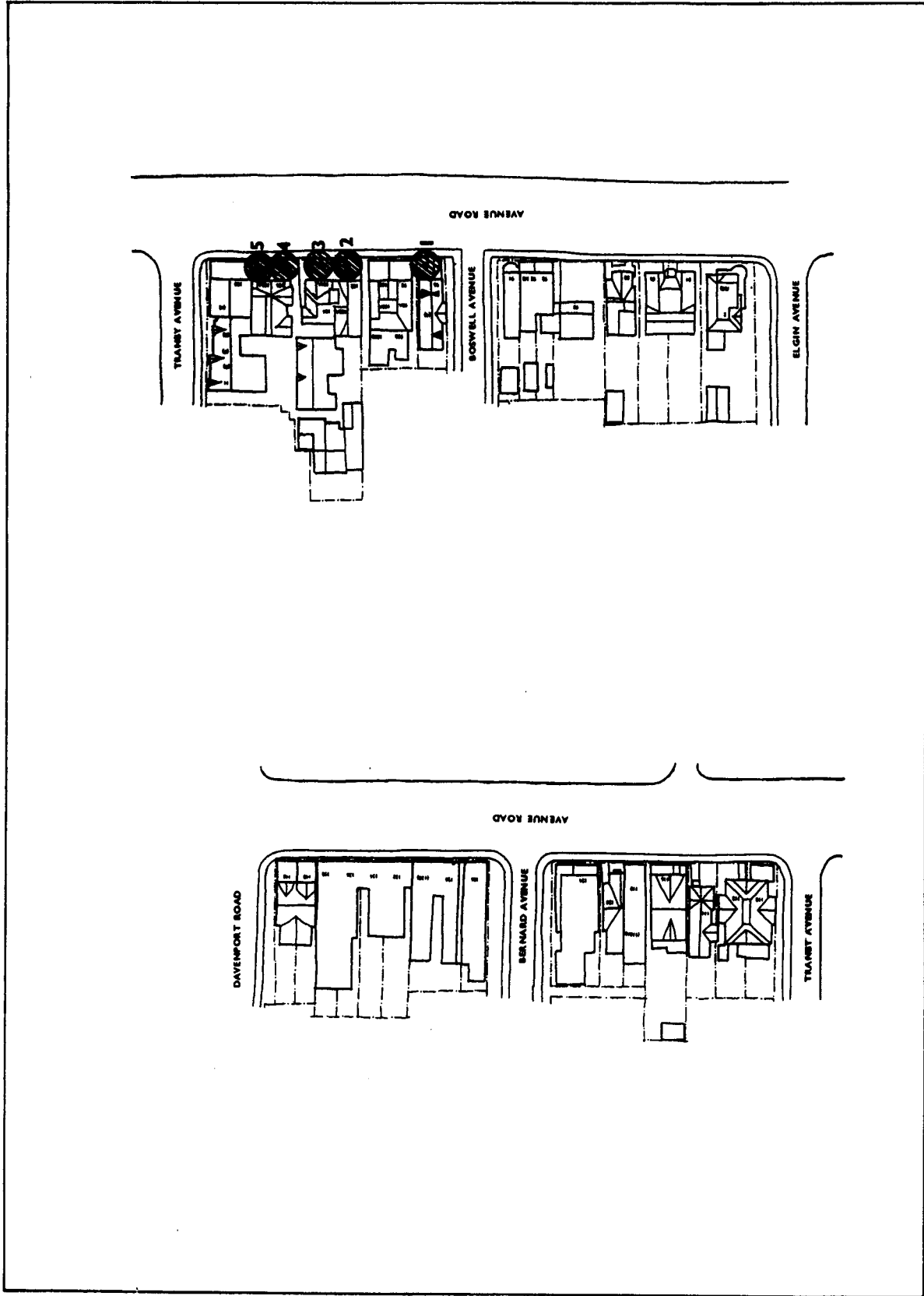
**AVENUE ROAD**  
North of Elgin

**EXISTING AND  
PROPOSED TREES**

#	TREE NAME	dbh
1	ONT PRIVATE PROPERTY	15
2	ONT PRIVATE PROPERTY	15
3	ONT PRIVATE PROPERTY	15
4	ONT PRIVATE PROPERTY	15
5	ONT PRIVATE PROPERTY	15

dbh refers to the diameter of the tree trunk at breast height in centimetres.

FOR AVENUE ROAD,  
PROPOSED STREET TREES  
ARE HONEYLOCUST.  
FINAL LOCATION OF  
TREES TO BE  
DETERMINED BY METRO  
TORONTO AND THE CITY  
OF TORONTO.



0 70 140M