

The Annex: A Brief Historical Geography

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THE ANNEX: A BRIEF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

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Today we identify the Annex as the neighbourhood of roughly half a square mile bounded by Bloor Street, the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks, Bathurst Street, and Avenue Road. Some people extend the well-known name to the west into Seaton Village, to the south into Sussex-Ulster, and even to the east into Yorkville. The Annex is a planning district in the City of Toronto and it takes up about a fifth of Ward Five's area. The population is just over 15,000. Today we refer to it as an older inner-city neighbourhood.

But this was not always the case. In fact, only a hundred years ago was it becoming a suburb. Beginning in the 1870s housing was built east of Bedford Road in what was then part of Yorkville. Not until 1912 was most of the area built up. Certainly the Annex is not old by world or even eastern North America standards. Yet as the generations pass and styles change it has aged. Its physical and social characteristics and hence the politics of the area have changed quite strikingly over the hundred years. In this brief overview the three periods of its past will be considered: to 1912, 1912 to 1951, and since 1951.

LANDSCAPE, DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIETY TO 1912

To understand the landscape of the Annex we have to look back first to the rural survey pattern. In the early 1790s York Township was laid

out. The surveyors used Queen Street as the east-west baseline and every mile and a quarter to the north cut through concession roads: Bloor, St. Clair, Eglinton, Lawrence, Wilson/York Mills, Sheppard, Finch and Steeles. The Annex was thus originally part of Concession Two. The surveyors also laid out Yonge Street north from Lake Ontario to nearly Lake Simcoe as a development road. Every mile and a quarter to the east and west of Yonge they put in crossroads such as Bathurst and Dufferin. Although not the pattern in all of Ontario, the mile and quarter square blocks were the basic template for subsequent urban subdivision plans in all of York Township and hence of Metro Toronto. In surveying language these blocks were 100 chains by 100 chains, or 6600 feet square. The only deviation in the Annex area from this basic rectangular system, which clearly guides our every day movements, was an Indian trail, later Davenport Road, which ran along the base of the escarpment, the glacial Lake Iroquois shoreline, and thence along the top of the shallow valley of Nordheimer-Rosedale-Castle Frank Creek across the northeast corner of the present-day Annex. The only other landform feature in this benign environment of formerly gently-sloping lake bottom, Taddle Creek, had only a minor influence in the pattern of settlement.

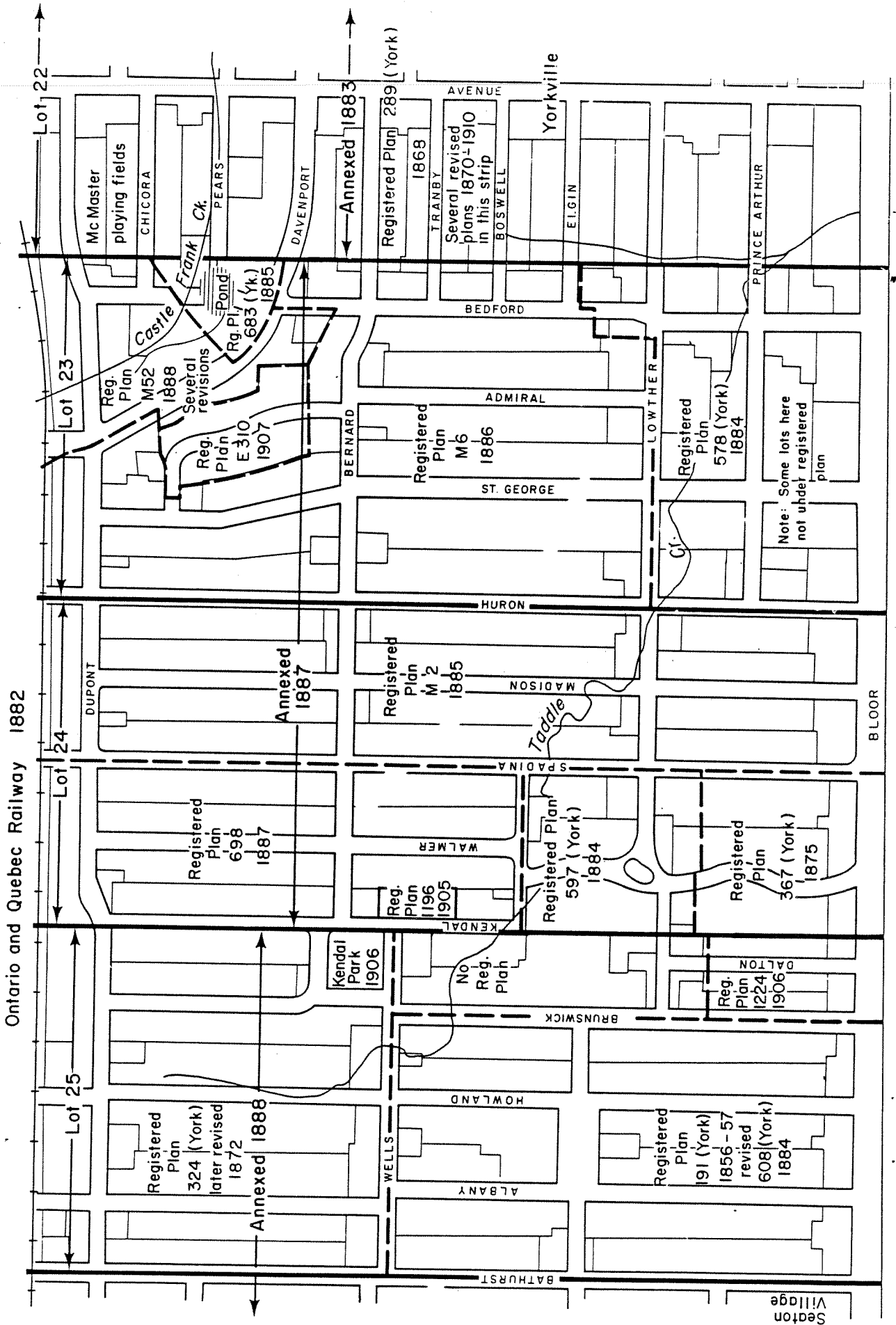
Some of the above features can be seen on the map following, as can numbered township lots. The Annex takes up roughly the south half of three and a half rural lots which were 1320 feet (20 chains) wide. It is divided from the north half by the CPR, built as the Ontario and Quebec in 1882. (In the First Concession from the Bay between Queen and Bloor and from Lansdowne to the Don River, the lots were divided into two--660 feet--being Park Lots held by the early elite of Toronto for agricultural

use and a long-term investment in urban land development).

A further look at the map reveals registered subdivision plans: the earliest in the southwest in 1856-7, then along Avenue Road in the old Yorkville in 1868, and so on until the last, upper Admiral Road, in 1907. In some parts later plans replaced the originals. Most of the middle block of Brunswick/Kendal was not registered. Most of the Annex plans date from the mid-1880s a time of great growth in Toronto, and hence a period of optimism and of speculation. One of Toronto's most prominent developers, Simeon Janes, laid out two large central plans--from Spadina Road to just beyond Bedford Road. Members of the Baldwin family were responsible for those immediately to the west of Spadina and the Wells family for those in township lot 25. These subdividers platted lots and streets within their plots. Because the township lots were long and narrow, most developers followed the line of least resistance and the practice south of Bloor in running most straight streets north and south. Short connecting east to west streets were rarely linked from one subdivision to another. But in contrast to older areas of the city rear alleys were rarely provided. Apparently developers believed that most future residents were willing to rent carriages and horses from livery stables nearby if they did not have carriage houses accessible directly from the street. Unfortunately, the developers also failed to provide footpaths which would have broken up large blocks. By and large the lots laid out within these subdivisions were fifty feet wide though of varying depth. When built upon, the lots were most frequently split in two; by contrast south of Bloor, lots were often divided into three.

Also to be noted on the map are the annexations from the same period.

THE ANNEX



When Toronto was organized as a city in 1834 its population was about 10,000 but a vast area (by early 19th century standards) of 22.5 square kilometres or 8.7 square miles was enclosed within its boundaries in anticipation of urban growth. Therefore, not until the 1880s did the city begin to annex further lands. The first was the Village of Yorkville in 1883. Incorporated in 1853, Yorkville had grown up as a community separate from Toronto. But its ratepayers representing about 5,000 people sought annexation to improve the water supply, sewers and pavements which the city with a population of over 100,000 could undertake much more cheaply. Thus, the first part of what we know as the Annex today, from just to the east of Bedford Road over to Avenue Road was taken into the city.

The second annexation of 1887 was that of the Janes, Baldwin and a few other subdivisions westward over to Kendal. In 1886 Janes had promoted his new subdivisions and at the same time went to the city council asking it to take in what he referred to as "The Toronto Annex," an unimaginative name, but the one we live with today. Even so, Janes advertised his subdivisions for the rich, at about the same time as the developers of upper-income Rosedale and of lower-income Riverdale, another unincorporated area annexed in 1884. After the Baldwin lands, including the curved lower end of Walmer Road, laid out originally in 1874 for villas of the rich, were included the annexation went ahead.

In 1888 the third annexation, referred to as Seaton Village, included a vast swath south of the CPR from Kendal through what was known as Dovercourt over to what is now the Canadian National line just west of Lansdowne. Seaton Village had earlier sprung up as a small settlement

west of Bothurst at Bloor. In the area to the east of Bothurst little construction had taken place, though by 1884 Reford and Hughes on Church Street were selling lots in the resubdivided plot south of Wells then known as St.Alban's Park. This annexation was among the last of the first wave that hit Toronto between 1883 and 1889. (A subsequent round happened between 1905 and 1912 including the lands just to the north of The Annex). All three annexations were included in St.Paul's Ward set up in 1883 with the taking in of Yorkville. In 1891 when the ward system was radically revised, the whole of the present-day Annex was included in the long north/south strip of Ward Four, which persisted until 1969 when the wards were redrawn into blocks rather than strips.

Bringing all of the Annex into the city did not result in rapid development, however. As had happened before in Toronto and elsewhere, most building lagged fifteen to twenty-five years behind subdivision and annexation. So in the mid-1880s many subdivisions within the original 1834 boundaries still had plenty of building lots available without having to use the Annex or any of the unincorporated annexations of the period. But the logic of the age was not based on the rational disposition of land but on the logic of the speculators and the politicians who supported them. During the economic upswing of the 1880s boosterism infected the city fathers; never ending growth was inevitable they thought. The speculators' goal was to sell lots to other speculators, to builders and to individuals who would arrange their own construction. If the lots were serviced so much the better.

It was about this time when the major services we are accustomed to became necessities in everyone's eyes. With the largest cities such as

London and New York leading the way, solutions to public health and accessibility problems and new comforts were sought. Toronto began to grapple with health through a greatly expanded municipal waterworks system in the 1870s and then embarked on a sewerage system. Garbage was collected systematically. Paving of roads and sidewalks began in earnest. A private company supplied gas for street lighting and increasingly to homes. In the 1880s electricity began to replace gas. Telephones began to appear. A franchised street railway company ran horse trams, by the mid-1880s on many lines. More like a toy in 1861 when the first line ran from Yorkville down Yonge, by the mid-1880s it had become a necessity as many of an expanding middle class commuted to a growing central business district downtown. In the early 1890s under a new franchise electrified streetcars rapidly replaced the horses. Undoubtedly the visual pollution of overhead wires was more acceptable than horse dung on the streets.

The newly annexed districts received some of these services very quickly. In fact, the process began just before when the province allowed the formation of improvement districts; all of what became the Annex west of the Yorkville line if only briefly was the District of St. Alban. By 1890 many of the water and sewer pipes had been laid, and the streets and sidewalks paved. While the city paid for all the water lines, the costs for the others were shared between the city and the owners of properties through local improvement taxes brought in at this time. In part because of these taxes, the original subdividers were anxious to sell off lots. Of course, in a time of expansion every time lots passed through new hands the prices rose, though no one could predict when boom conditions would

be followed by sluggish markets.

The private utilities of gas, telephone and electricity were extended into the Annex, though the pace has not been determined. By the mid-1880s the horse trams ran up to Bloor on Spadina and Bathurst and by the end of the decade north of Bloor on Bathurst and along Bloor. After electrification in the 1890s, streetcars ran on Avenue Road and finally in 1901 on Dupont. These privately-run services also influenced the speed of settlement. (Interestingly, though hydro and street railways were eventually municipalized, gas and telephone never were as was the case in western Canada. During the era 1870 to 1920 each utility went through political debate as to whether they should be municipally-owned or not).

Neither subdivisions, annexations nor laying pipes could guarantee the building of houses, stores or churches. In fact the speculators who bought lots from the original subdividers probably lost a good deal in the 1890s because the economic downturn slowed real estate activity to a snail's pace. The 1870s and 1880s had seen the area between Avenue Road and Bedford almost totally built up, including Tranby, a new street with working-class housing. On the northern reaches of Bathurst, Albany and Howland a scattering of working-class houses went up. But in the Annex east of Walmer Road only 16 percent of the lots had become occupied. In the late 1880s and the slow 1890s, as is usually the case during depression, most of the modest number of houses and their carriage houses were constructed by the rich, and mostly in the southern blocks of the central Annex, thereby beginning to fulfill Jones's expectation of an upper-class neighbourhood. The pattern of settlement was decidedly scattered and patchy, however.

After the turn of the century development picked up gradually--30 percent of the lots from Walmer eastward were still unoccupied as late as 1905--and then quickly, peaking in 1907. This was the decade when most of the northeast corner, the northern tier of the central tracts, and virtually the whole of the west Annex were nearly contiguously filled. It was the boom period for the neighbourhood. Growth continued but more slowly after 1907 up to 1913 when as everywhere in the western world urban expansion virtually ground to a halt. Most of the housing built during the boom period was semi-detached and for middle and upper-middle class settlers. But the developers saw no need to provide driveways for every house or lanes, even though by then automobiles were becoming common. Today's seemingly insoluble parking problems date from this period. Dalton Road was a example of how developers and builders could shoehorn in a lot of houses onto very shallow lots. A few low-rise apartments were put up here and there late in this boom era.

Architectural styles changed over time, partly reflecting incomes and the cost of materials and labour. Following Patricia McHugh, the Bay n-Gable is virtually a Toronto trademark and may have had as its prototype the double house built in 1875 at 30-32 Bernard. But, since most of the Annex was built after this style faded, only a few houses as on Tranby fit the pattern. Most Annex houses can be classified predominantly under the very name "Annex", being a hybrid of lofty and asymmetrical Queen Anne with the massiveness of Richardsonian Romanesque both of which are represented mainly in the south-central Annex. The towers here and there, as on the York Club, mostly built in the 1890s for the very affluent characterize the latter. The first model of the "Annex" house designed by E.

J. Lennox can be seen at 37 Madison. (See the following drawing by Robert McInnis). Most of the ordinary houses of the west Annex are a modification of this style. Houses of classical design and other types, such as workingmen's cottages, appear only in a few scattered places.

Stores and churches were built to serve Annegonians. James explicitly excluded shops from his residential streets, and even from the Bloor Street frontage of the central Annex. Shops did appear along Avenue Road, on Bloor west of Spadina (a streetcar strip), and here and there along Davenport, Dupont and Bathurst. But unlike the working-class neighbourhoods south of Bloor, the middle-class west Annex did not see interior corner stores any more than did the rich central subdivisions.

Most churches were opulent and massive, either Gothic or Romanesque though the grandest of them all was only partly built. In the mid-1880s the Church of England (now Anglican) diocese decided after some internal struggle to shift cathedral status from St. James at Church and King to a new structure in the west Annex in the Barton, Wells, Albany, and Howland block. After the choir and the foundation of the nave were constructed the project was abandoned. The bishop's palace later became St. George's school, and most of the intended cathedral close was sold for housing. The square remains for sitting and (illegal) ball throwing. The impressive gothic choir still serves as St. Alban's parish church.

Other churches mostly built in the late 1880s in anticipation of development were impressive. Generally built on the peripheral main streets as symbols of their leading members' material success, their great size was possible, as were the large houses of the central Annex, because of low building and labour costs of the late 19th century. The Anglicans



m. m. m. 1976

37 Madison Ave.

built the Church of the Redeemer, the Church of the Messiah, and St. Thomas; the Methodists, St. Paul's, Trinity, and Bathurst St. (after 1925 all United); the Presbyterians, Avenue Road (now Hare Krishna), Bloor St. (now United), and St. Paul's on Bathurst at Barton (demolished); the Baptists on Walmer Road; and in 1916 the Christian Scientists on St. George. Roman Catholics replaced an earlier building with a new St. Peter's on Bathurst north of Bloor in 1925. In those early days overflowing attendance and large Sunday Schools were the norm. Some later provided gymnasiums for church league sports.

The developers, concerned as they were with creating affluent subdivisions, showed little interest in allocating public spaces, aside from the nice touch of Walmer Circle. For a time McMaster University (located west of the museum on the south side of Bloor) had its playing fields in the northeast corner of the Annex. Two bowling clubs, one in the east and one in west, operated. Croquet and garden parties on large private lawns not public parks for the masses were in the minds of the developers. Only in 1906 did the city buy several lots to create Kendal Square later Sibelius Park. Except for the Huron-Lowther parkette, the east Annex was deprived until the middle 1960s when the Bedford streetcar turnaround became a parkette and then in the mid-1970s Taddle Creek Park finally graced the area. Even a public school was opposed by the earliest rich occupiers of the central Annex. Despite their complaints, in 1809 Huron St. was built and the annex building in 1915. The original structure was replaced in 1957. By 1912 private schools were operating in a few of the larger houses and Loretto College was put up soon after.

The developers could hardly prevent industry in the old village of

Yorkville. At Davenport and Bedford ice was cut from a pond in the winter, and the Hees windowshade company, Lake Simcoe Ice and Coal, and Bredin (later Canada) Bread were located on the banks of Rosedale Valley Creek. As elsewhere along railways in the city, the late nineteenth-century shift of industry from the downtown and waterfront resulted in a row of factories and warehouses adjacent to the CPR.

The status of people of the early years to 1912 matched the landscape of housing. The general impression of the Annex in those days is that of wealth or at least affluence. Certainly several indicators support this view, though local variations were quite apparent. An analysis of the assessment rolls in 1910, when the population was just under 11,000, and in 1923, when it was just over 12,000, indicates homogeneity in homeownership--just under 70 percent. A majority of block faces reached 80 percent, a few even 100. These high levels can be somewhat deceiving, however. The first decade and a half of the century was a time of rapidly expanding home ownership well down the income scale. Even so, regionally within the area the highest rates of tenancy occurred in the blocks with the presumed lowest incomes: in the northwest, west of Kendal, and in the oldest Yorkville strip east of Bedford.

Occupations, religious affiliation, assessment and population densities confirm these patterns. Overall in 1923 55 percent of those listed by occupation were proprietary, managerial or professional. The Annex was represented in the society Blue Books of the time far out of proportion to its numbers signifying a population quite conscious of status. Clerical (22 percent) and manual (23) were quite absent from many central blocks but predominant in the east, north and west.

Religiously, the area was overwhelmingly Protestant. In 1910 of 2358 heads of household, 37 percent stated they were Anglican. They were most conspicuous in the richest south-central and working-class blocks in the east and northwest. Presbyterians and Methodists, composing 24 and 22 percent respectively, were quite ubiquitous but tending to be the largest in the west Annex. All other groups composed 17 percent. Two of these, presumed to be weighted toward lower income levels, Baptists and Roman Catholics, were strikingly sparse in the blocks south of Bernard between Brunswick and Bedford. They were especially prominent along the upper stretches of Albany and Howland.

Assessed values per front foot provide the clearest data on local variations. Although high-income families paid proportionately less taxes from their incomes than those further down the scale, the differentiation is clear enough: Walmer over to Bedford and south of Bernard was the most affluent part, though Prince Arthur and Lowther east of Bedford and upper Admiral and St. George should be included reflecting their easier accessibility to the downtown and Queen's Park. Within the south-central area, lower Walmer and lower and middle St. George stand out as the streets of the establishment rich. Indeed, their low population densities clearly indicate the greater amounts of space consumed per person. The west Annex south of Wells and the northern tier from Kendal over to Huron were marked as middle and upper-middle class, blending in with other blocks in the south-central area. Working-class streets, with high densities and low assessments on the average, were Boswell, Tranby, Bernard, Davenport, Pears and north Bedford (most clearly so being adjacent to industry), Chicora, the length of Dupont, and then in the west,

upper Brunswick, Howland, Albany and Bothurst. (Commercial assessments are excluded).

So while considerable homogeneity was apparent quite sharp local distinctions had been created, enough to say that even in 1910 the Annex was quite a diverse neighbourhood. Although Janes had succeeded in creating a central high-income area, the Annex reflected something of older residential patterns. It was not nearly as homogeneous in housing sizes and income as post-second world war suburbs. Indeed, St. George was an extension of Beverley and St. George south of Bloor where mansions predominated on big lots. In this way it was similar to Sherbourne, Jarvis and University-Queen's Park Crescent. As along the Grand Canal, Venice's main street, the rich wanted to display their success. In the area south of Bloor, where working-class housing was built within a block or so of the villas of the rich, and some middle-class in between, segregation was on a micro scale. The Annex, by contrast, was a step toward homogeneous rich and affluent neighbourhoods, not quite on a par with Rosedale nor up to the standard of Forest Hill that emerged after 1912.

DECLINE OF THE ANNEX AND THE POLITICAL FAILURE OF THE ORIGINAL RESIDENTS, 1912-1951

The visible external landscape changed very little after 1912 when the area was mostly built-up. Some stores were added on the periphery, major landmarks --the Medical Arts Building at Bloor and St. George, the Park Plaza at Bloor and Avenue Road, and St. Peter's Church--were built in the mid to late 1920s and early 1930s, and a modest number of

mock-Tudor North Toronto-type dwellings infilled large lots here and there, as on Kendal, Brunswick, Madison and Bernard, in the late 1930s.

These slight alterations, however, were less significant than the restructuring of the internal landscapes of houses, especially of the imposing piles in the central and southeast Annex. Gradually and inexorably they became rooming houses, boarding houses or were converted to institutional use. Single-family occupancy declined dramatically. By 1923 25 percent of heads of households were widows or spinsters. Many of the offspring of the old elite, professionals and of the successful new industrialists had moved away, beginning soon after 1912, to Rosedale and to emerging Forest Hill, Deer Park, Moore Park and Lawrence Park. No longer as attractive as in 1890s, the very large houses could not easily be sold. The process was slow, however, as indicated by the persistence of Blue Book entries from the Annex. Perhaps signifying the trend most symbolically was ^{Mrs. T.} Lady Eaton's move in 1931 northward from the northwest corner of Spadina and Lowther. Where the houses were more modest as in the West Annex changes were less dramatic. But nonetheless many homeowners took in a boarder or two, probably university students and the increasing number of female clerical workers and professionals in loco parentis.

Controlling change was not easy and essentially rearguard. The developers could in large measure set the original tone of a neighbourhood, formally through restrictive deed covenants, but subsequent protective devices had to be sought through local government bylaws. As in other recently established affluent neighbourhoods, from 1904 onwards the exclusion of nonresidential activities through bylaws were successfully

sought. These bylaws were the basis of a zoning system that would only be put in place a half century later. The developers of the upper block of Admiral, apparently because their proposed elegant street was so close to Davenport and Pears industry pushed for a bylaw to exclude "factories, lumber yards, warehouses, or similar lines of business." The building of a few low-rise apartment buildings after 1910--even though they were inhabited by the middle-class--gave rise to another set of bylaws prohibiting their construction in parts of the Annex and some other neighbourhoods. As the great rush of development was virtually exhausted by this time, the passing of these bylaws had the effect of locking the barn door after the horse had escaped. (Similarly, in the same year the province passed legislation, often considered Ontario's first planning device, controlling the disposition of new subdivisions on the margins of the city.)

Pressures to admit heterogeneous uses increased in the city, and since the notion of exclusive neighbourhoods had become more firmly entrenched in the middle-class mind, ratepayer groups sprang up here and there to protect their turf. In 1917 a substantial number joined together to form the Central Council of Ratepayers' Associations, their listing in the City of Toronto Handbook denoting some degree of legitimacy among politicians and officials who apparently shared the protective impulse. Certainly exclusionary bylaws were extended over more residential districts, and then in the early 1920s positive residence-only bylaws were passed in a few well-heeled areas, specifying detached houses and other tight restrictions. Indicating the fragility of the exclusionary bylaws were two political fights in the 1920s, the second leading to the

formation of the Annex Ratepayers' Association.

In 1921 the Separate School Board, seeking to relocate its St. Basil's School, bought two properties, 14 and 18 Prince Arthur with 124 foot-frontage, intending to build a schoolhouse. Residents of the street banded together and successfully persuaded City Council to prohibit any structure other than detached private residences. But that was not the end of the battle. While the school operated temporarily in the two standing houses, the case seesawed through the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board, the Ontario courts, the Supreme Court of Canada, and finally to the Privy Council in London which in 1925 upheld the city bylaw and thus the residents on Prince Arthur. Interestingly, the Separate Board was able to build on another residential street close by, Hazelton in Yorkville. There, apparently, the will to resist was not as strong.

Not daunted by the failure of the Separate School Board, the Toronto Orthopedic Hospital took an option on the same two properties with the intention of building. Again the residents of Prince Arthur resisted, only this time by drawing in neighbours from adjacent blocks to organize the Annex Ratepayers' Association. They were again successful, but not before the legal costs mounted. In the end the Separate School Board sold the properties at a loss. All through the 1920s various streets had sought protective bylaws, but unlike owners in other districts, it was not until 1928 that the street dwellers became sufficiently agitated to recognize their neighbourhood through association. Even then, in the minds of the prestigious directors whose names graced the letterhead, the Annex extended only over to Walmer. The west Annex, despite the presence of many professionals, was considered a cut below. Undoubtedly too, Boswell

and northward was not in their line of vision.

In the 1930s the pace of conversion accelerated; rooming and boarding houses became more common as the large single family houses were only valuable with these or institutional uses. In the early 1930s the ARA and the old rich residents became almost apoplectic about the changes. Newspaper ads were sent to the beleaguered secretary, Ross Taylor, who pleaded with City Council to stop these houses from operating or at least not allow signs in windows advertising rooms. In an attempt to create an exemplary case of 97 Bedford, the ARA hired a Pinkerton detective to watch the house. But the cause was lost. In the fall of 1932 the ARA's chairman, industrialist George Gooderham, wrote to Taylor: "In these strenuous times I would not want to prevent people who really require it, from getting assistance in the way of boarding a few people...." But Gooderham saw this condition as strictly temporary; with the end of the Great Depression, he told Taylor, the fight would be resumed.

But it never really was. Rooming and boarding houses kept appearing and institutions kept on moving into the big houses. By 1939 many head offices of Canadian non-profit organizations were established with more to come. Perhaps ironically the first major conversion, that of the twenty-year old Gooderham mansion at the corner of St. George and Bloor to the York Club in 1910 and catering to the elite, paved the way for the conversions clearly resisted by this same elite.

In the late 1930s the ARA faded away for a while, and with it most of the rich people. Also disappearing were other ratepayer groups and the Central Council. The depression, to Gooderham in 1932 an aberration, had unanticipated results. The war hastened transformation even further; the

need for workers brought many people to Toronto. The federal government ordered the temporary lifting of bylaws to ease the housing shortage. The number of Annegonians grew from 13,501 in 1939 to 16,295 in 1945. Even then the pressure continued as another 757 were added by 1949. The ARA was revived in 1948 with the same protective notions of the 1920s and early 1930s in mind. But the placards in the windows would not disappear. The time had come for the acceptance of the new order and to live with it, but also to improve it. The "renaissance" of The Annex was underway by 1951.

AN INNER-CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD AND THE POLITICS OF PROTECTION, 1951 TO THE PRESENT

The Annex landscape was dramatically transformed in the 1950s up to the late 1960s after which the scale and tempo of change slowed. Most conspicuous in the 1950s, as shown by circled dots on the accompanying Existing Land Use map of 1958, were the low and medium rise apartments of 4 and 8 to 10 storeys on St. George, Spadina and the lower end of Walmer, built on large lots previously occupied by the mansions of the rich. In the 1960s some of the highest, 10 and 50 Prince Arthur and 100 Spadina Road, precipitated public opposition. The Ontario Housing Corporation has operated the highest one of 25 storeys, 250 Davenport at Bedford, since the mid-1960s. It replaced a factory, shown on the map. Over the past fifteen years no new high apartment structures have gone up, though some of more modest scale have been built. The most interesting has been Wigwamen on Spadina. Very recently condominiums have been built on Avenue Road and the Medical Arts parking lot.

FIG. 13

ANNEX PLANNING DISTRICT

EXISTING LAND USE

1958

LEGEND

RESIDENTIAL

SINGLE FAMILY

MULTIPLE FAMILY & ROOMING HOUSES

APARTMENTS

HOTELS

COMMERCIAL

RETAIL COMMERCIAL

OFFICES

AUTOMOTIVE SERVICES

INDUSTRIAL

INDUSTRY

WAREHOUSE & STORAGE BUILDING

INSTITUTIONAL

ORGANIZATION

CHURCH

SCHOOL

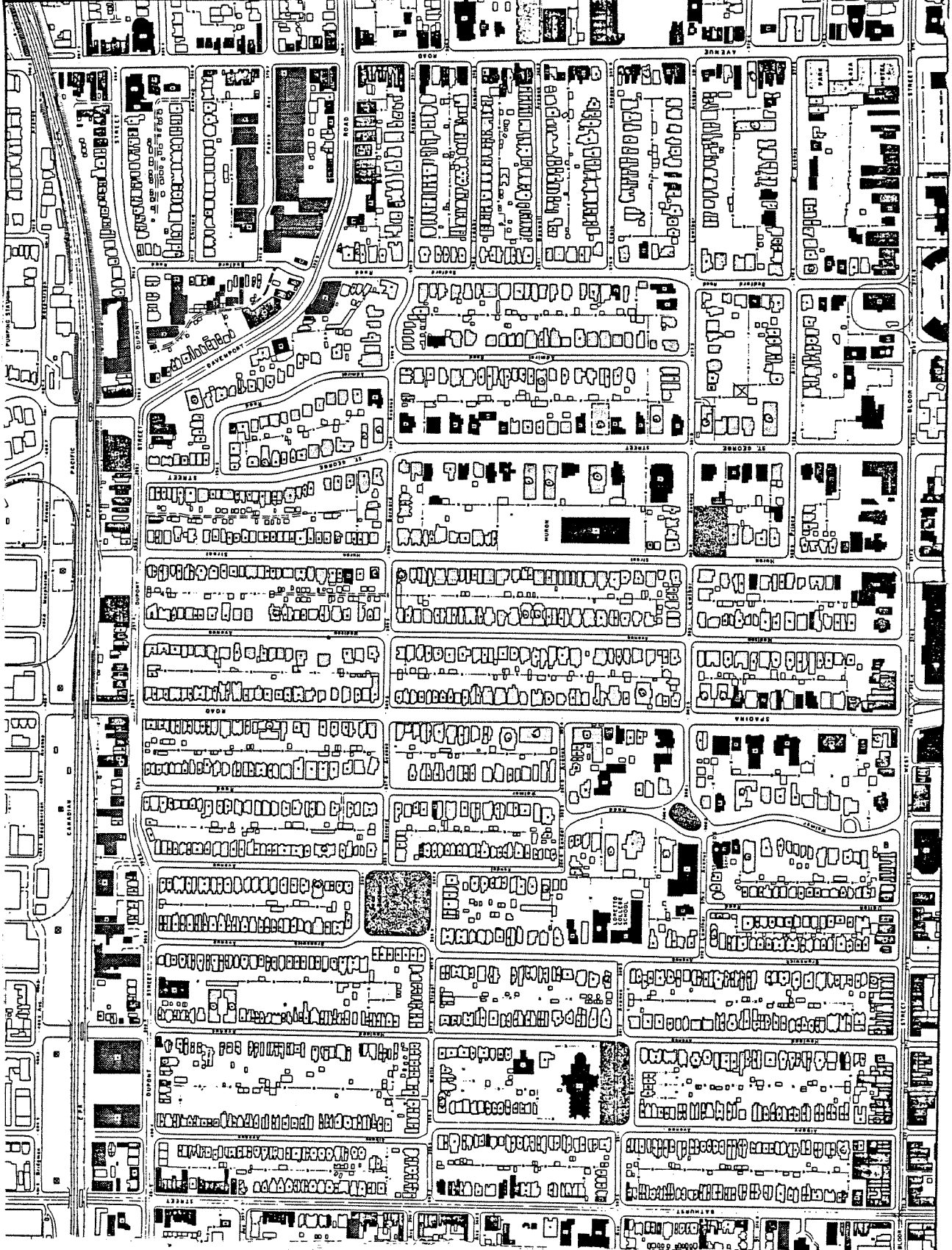
CLUB

INSTITUTIONAL RESIDENCE (FACILITIES, HOUSING HOMES ETC.)



400 300 200 100 0 100 200 300 400 Feet

CITY OF TORONTO PLANNING BOARD



The most obvious other large buildings are OISE built in the 1960s when education was seen as the great panacea for creating "human capital," the addition to the Park Plaza, and adjacent office buildings to the west. One can hardly ignore other changes on the margins such as Hazelton Lanes, the Four Seasons Hotel, Renaissance Centre, and Rochdale College of 1968 whose educational regime was but an instant compared to its neighbour to the west, the College of Education built in the late 1920s. Today we know Rochdale as the Croll Apartments housing seniors, handicapped, students and others.

Smaller in scale but probably greater in bulk have been the conversions of old houses. The 1950s saw rapid expansion of institutions to nearly 100 in 1958, as shown on the map, including the offices of Canadian non-profit organizations, and roominghouses, a substantial number absentee-owned. Together with multiple family units which were widespread, these are shown on the map by a dot. Campus Coop and fraternities took up some houses.

But in the same decade what was then called townhousing began, at first in the oldest working-class streets especially Boswell and Tranby between Avenue Road and Bedford. In the mid-1960s the pace picked up. "Gentrification" or its Toronto equivalent, "whitepainting," became more prevalent though less conspicuously as in the working-class districts such as Don Vale. If gentrification denotes the gutting of interiors and the cleaning up of exteriors, then a great deal of renovation in the Annex has to be classed as less dramatic. Additions have been frequent. Over the last decade and a half many roominghouses have been switched back to single family or converted to flats. Overall in the past ten years the

number of dwelling units has fallen by 3 percent to 14,201, particularly in owner-occupied houses. A few houses on the east side of Spadina bought by Metro for the Spadina Expressway route remain empty and in need of renovation, though one was handsomely restored recently for institutional use. The great virtue of the well-constructed and substantial houses of the Annex is their convertibility.

Adding to the housing stock have been some infill row, semidetached and single houses. In a few cases, developers have torn down existing houses and factories, replacing them with Victorian-looking structures as on Dupont east of Davenport. City Housing put up a few on the subway lands in the west Annex. An important addition has been the inner-block apartments and nine renovated houses between Madison and Huron just north of Bloor, a project initiated by the tenants in the old houses slated for replacement by a high-rise, and the Annex Ratepayers' Association. The project is now owned by City Housing, but with a local board involved in the management. Attempts to convert apartment buildings to cooperative ownership have been undertaken.

Streetscape changes have been substantial in the postwar era, though the original pattern remains very clear. The widening of Spadina Road and of Avenue Road speeded up north-south flows of commuters which had gradually increased after the first war. Mature large trees were cut down and the streets became busy and the traffic fast. With the formation of Metro in 1953 these two, Bloor, Dupont and St. George became part of its arterial network, the last reverting later to the city. Local streets remained under city jurisdiction. The two most dramatic proposed landscape changes, the Spadina and Crosstown expressways, were, as we

will see below in considering political action, not built.

Improving the accessibility of The Annex to other parts of the city was the construction of subway routes: the University extension of the Yonge line to the St. George Station opened in 1963, the Bloor/Danforth in 1966, and the Spadina in 1978. Streetcars disappeared from Bloor and Avenue Road. Bus routes on Dupont, Spadina, Bathurst and Avenue also make it possible for many Annegonians to get around without owning cars. Despite good public transit, street parking permits, even some frontyard pads and space in apartment buildings, parking remains a problem.

A few other changes can be noted. This neighbourhood deficient in open space finally obtained some bits of open space: Bloor Bedford parkette next to OISE, Taddle Creek Park, the Dupont parkette at Avenue Road, and the Dalton, Seaton Walk and Ecology House parkettes over the subway. One piece of open space yet to be reckoned with is the Metro/TTC land on Spadina Road. Tennis courts were added to Huron Street School, the continuing location of the Home and School Fair in the spring and of the Annex Residents' Fall Fair. The Ontario Bible College property on Spadina has for a decade been in the hands of the Native Canadian Centre and the Toronto Public Library, both enhancing the neighbourhood. Restaurants have blossomed on Bloor, Bathurst, Dupont and Avenue Road. Perhaps most striking was the coming of Hungarian restaurants and shops in the late 1950s, and then more recently cafes with outdoor seating. Some factories and warehouses along the tracks and along Pears and Davenport (shown on the 1958 land use map) have been altered for a wide variety of community and commercial uses or replaced with housing. Most of the churches too have become community centres for many groups including theatres. It is

quite likely, given the substantial shift in the economy to services, that more people are using their homes as places of work than ever before.

The population of the Annex has changed greatly over past thirty-five years. Following the postwar baby boom, and the proliferation of roominghouses and then apartment buildings, the number rose from 17,000 in 1950 to over 19,000 in 1971. Then in 1970s Annegonians fell back again before levelling off at 15,434 in 1985, largely because a more affluent population could command more space per person. For many single people flats and apartment units replaced rooms with shared baths and kitchens. Families in loco parentis declined dramatically. By 1981 80 percent of the households were renting, a far cry from early in the century when nearly as many were owner-occupiers, or even 1951 when 2 in 5 households rented, with dramatic jumps to 3 in 5 in the 1950s and then 4 in 5 in the 1960s. This was in substantial measure the result of many more units being created, and the number of persons per household dropping from 5 in 1951 to 2 in 1981. (Definitions of households and families were changed over time too). Households of single persons became the largest category. Over the past ten years, however, the number of owner-occupied dwellings without tenant units has increased by 22 percent to about 25 percent of the total units of 14,201. Since the total population has stabilized in the 1980s and the number of units has fallen a bit since 1975, persons of lower income in the Annex are doubling and tripling up, now in flats rather more than in roominghouses as in the 1950s. While housing costs in the Annex and Toronto generally have always been higher than in most parts of the country, the upward pressure on rents has been strong in these recent years of depression as much of

the money of the affluent has been invested in property rather than in manufacturing and other productive sectors of the economy therefore pushing up values.

The rise of a multicultural society in Toronto, perhaps today the world's most ethnically-diverse cosmopolitan city, has been shared by the Annex. In 1951, 2 in 3 shared British Isles origin; today those of British origin reach only 2 in 5. The only other group in Toronto to reach 10 percent in 1951 were Jews. In the 1950s continental Europeans of varied nationalities were prominent settlers; since 1962 when immigration laws were altered, visible minorities from Asia and the West Indies have become more apparent. In fact, in recent times Huron Street Junior School reputedly has had over 200 nationalities. The same can be said for Palmerston Junior which serves the west Annex eastward to Howland. Although in the 1950s Anglos had a difficult time coming to terms with the new immigrants, gradually if fragily Toronto and the Annex have accepted the mixture of population.

As a result of landscape and social changes, politics in the Annex have been lively and have had their tense moments since 1951. Major developments are always scrutinized by neighbours. In 1952 the West Annex and East Annex Neighbourhood Associations were formed, largely because the Ratepayer Association still showed signs of trying too much to retain the past. Also it had never recognized the existence of Annegonians in the area less vulnerable to development west of Walmer, nor of tenants. Activists were also involved in setting up the Co-ordinating Committee of Toronto Ratepayer Associations in 1955. In 1960 three years after tenants were granted municipal suffrage, the ARA

admitted tenants for the first time, largely because the two other associations, which had included tenants, threw in their collective lot with it.

In 1969, when a new constitution was written, the ARA in fact became officially a residents' association, as voting membership was then defined as anyone resident in the area who paid the modest fee. Non-residents were excluded from voting, but could enroll as associate members. The name was changed to Residents' in 1975. Signalling a general change in this direction a reorganized city-wide body, in which the ARA became active, was named the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations. Although homeowners still outweigh tenants among the 500 or so members of the ARA and on the thirty-person board of directors, tenants have continued to have a voice on neighbourhood issues. (Usually on matters having to do with tenant rights, the tenants in various buildings have dealt with them, in some cases through their own organizations affiliated with the Metro Tenants' Association. Roomers and boarders have yet to achieve effective rights, though they have become organized now as never before). The admission of tenants, at first tentatively, clearly points to a major shift in how homeowners view the neighbourhood, at least to a degree beyond the 1920s bylaws, as a collective environment.

In the 1950s politics heated up over a number of issues. The two neighbourhood associations promoted the area with the slogan of "It's smart to live in the Annex." These groups, in which women had a central role, pushed clean up campaigns in cooperation with the Beautify Toronto campaigns of the era in their attempt to bring a "renaissance" to the area.

They also advertised that the district was suitable for families. They did not oppose tenants, since some members were active in the Association of Women Electors who sought the suffrage for them. But they did want to see a greater number of professional homeowners who having a longer term stake would be more inclined to protect the environment. They tried to slow down the number of apartments and of institutions infiltrating the area, particularly opposing the Institute of Child Study on Walmer and fraternities in the central Annex. In an effort to improve the quality of roominghouses they successfully sought licensing, which was resisted by operators. Not all roominghouses were, however, subsequently kept in good condition.

The pressures of change and strong response from some Annegonians led the politicians and the City Planning Board and staff to undertake in 1958 the first intensive study of a neighbourhood to sort out the problems and find solutions through a plan. As noted above, the notion of neighbourhood, that is a sense of living together in a shared environment, took hold early the century with the formation of local ratepayer associations, home and school groups and the application of bylaws to streets and then to wider areas. Eventually in 1937 the city decided to draw up a comprehensive zoning bylaw covering the city. Owing to the convoluted politics of depression and war periods, the process of putting this in place was exceedingly slow. Not until the early 1950s was it in place, though soon altered in some areas. On a parallel stream, in 1943 the planning board put forward an overall plan for Toronto and its environs, and then in 1944 a report on the condition of seventy-eight districts including the Annex, which was considered vulnerable to

"invasion and succession" pressures, that is, of increasing numbers of lower-income people, absentee ownership and structural deterioration leading to decline. The protection of this and other neighbourhoods was on the minds of many and so eventually though slowly led to action.

In 1959 after a protracted series of meetings the planning staff and board issued its "Plan For The Annex." Although many residents thought it gave away too much to developers and to institutional use, the city promoted it as a compromise document. The 1952 zoning pattern was radically transformed to allow two times coverage (Z4), that is the floor area within a residential building could be double the ground area of the lot, on Walmer south of Kendal, on both sides of Spadina Road and of St. George for their whole length, and on parts of Lowther southward east of Walmer. As noted above, new apartment blocks had already, with rezoning permission of City Council, been built. Most of the same areas were given the most permissive residential designation (R4), and Huron, Madison and Chicora were placed in R3, allowing a great deal of institutional use. The margins as before were specified as commercial. Most of the west Annex but only a small area of the east remained R2, that is, specified primarily for families and families who took in up to three roomers or created flats.

But the general solution not altogether enthusiastically embraced by residents did not end the matter. Of the struggles of the 1960s two stand out: the Parcon development and the Spadina Expressway. The first was a proposal in 1964 to build two high apartment towers west of Bedford on Prince Arthur and Lowther. The developer wanted to build not only on the south frontage but also the north, which had been kept at Z3, or a coverage equal to the lot area, in the debates of the late 1950s. Although the

developer offered a small park as an inducement, the ARA resisted the upzoning of the north parcel. Then the developer offered a compromise of a higher thus denser tower on the south and townhouses on the north at three times coverage. Although some ARA board members agreed to this, the majority did not, believing the trading of density from one plot to another was not in the best interests of the neighbourhood. Although after an acrimonious debate City Council approved the scheme, late in 1966 the Ontario Municipal Board reduced the overall density to two times. The tower of 19 storeys was built, but for years the north piece was surrounded by a hoarding. Finally, in the mid-1970s the city finally struck a deal with the developer and then constructed Taddle Creek Park, an enduring symbol of the resistance of the ARA. This battle was a harbinger of the struggle to save many of Toronto's older neighbourhoods from the wreckers and the high-rise builders.

The other finest hour of the ARA and of inner-city neighbourhoods was the great fight over the Spadina Expressway. A version of an expressway system had originally appeared in the 1943 plan for the city and environs, following plans in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit and other American cities. By the mid-1950s plans became firmer for the system. The Spadina route would run through the Annex from the north to Bloor. It would intersect with the Crosstown Expressway, first marked on the 1943 plan just north of Bloor (where the east-west subway was eventually constructed), and then by Metro in late 1950s just south of Dupont. The City did not like the siting for the latter, and so proposed the CPR tracks, and then in the latter 1960s excised it altogether from its new Official Plan. In the meantime, construction of the north end of Spadina began. The

ARA sought a compromise of a depressed route on Spadina south of Dupont, replacing the notion of one way south on Spadina to Bloor and one way north on Madison. Only in 1969 did the tide turn toward complete opposition, in part because, if there was to be no Crosstown to siphon off traffic from the north to the east and west, then the Spadina would simply dump traffic onto Davenport and Dupont and thence into the Annex and streets to the south. The effects of dumping traffic and destruction of housing--in the Annex this would have meant all the east side of Spadina Road--had become clear.

Between the fall of 1969 and June of 1971 the fight was fierce. The ARA joined with a great number of groups in persuading the province and its new premier, William Davis, to cancel the project, though later in 1975 he approved the paving the constructed ditch to Eglinton to the chagrin of Spadina opponents. Today the long lineups of traffic dump onto Eglinton. Despite a number of safeguards put in place since 1975, the Spadina can never, however, be considered dead, particularly because it remains firmly fixed in the minds of some North York politicians and Metro officials. The need for vigilance remains.

In the wake of the 1971 Spadina decision, reformist impulses gathered further strength to elect a City Council in 1972 that was much more sympathetic to residents' associations. Although the pace of development slowed largely because of weakening economic conditions, council did have a strong hand in redirecting construction activity. Its energy was put into useful projects such as St. Lawrence and other City Housing projects throughout Toronto, helping to hold down the rise of housing costs. The reform thrust of protecting neighbourhoods enhanced

the attractiveness of inner-city districts such as the Annex. An unintended consequence has been to contribute to the rise of property values. In 1976 council passed the Central Area plan, attempting to control office development, but also to add housing in the core. Today developers are still active, mostly clearly in the massive proposal for the railway lands--the Dome Stadium, offices (too much), and housing (too little).

At the neighbourhood level, since 1972 most developers have sought approval of the ARA before proceeding. Only the Avenue Road margin has seen major controversy because of the excessive demands of the proposers of large buildings. A new neighbourhood plan has slowly been put into place, and with it new zoning regulations. The chief changes have been to cut back high-rise densities to only the areas now occupied by them, to allow mixed developments on the margins (as in the central area generally), to hold the heights at 11.6 metres in low density areas, and to reduce the use category for Huron and Madison north of Lowther, Chicora, and the streets with apartment blocks to R2 like the more prevalent low density areas. For Huron and Madison this measure was adopted so as not to concentrate institutions, especially group homes that are now allowed (at appropriate distances) in all residential districts. Overall, the physical quality of the area has improved since the 1950s, though the position of the ARA to retain a mixed social and income population is actually jeopardized by the appeal of the area. Undoubtedly, issues will continue to rise, and the ARA will continue its watchdog role in protecting the collective environment of the Annex, now a hundred years old.

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