

Figure 9. This fire insurance plan from 1903 shows the row housing in lanes that continues to define the King-Parliament area today. Red indicates brick structures, yellow indicates wood structures. Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto, Plate 29. 1903. Map and Data Library, University of Toronto.

East of Power Street, Queen Street shifted to a lower density, its streetscape marked by St. Paul's Basilica on the south side of the street and the Dominion Brewery on the north, with a significant number of residential properties in the Corktown area.

In this period, the King-Parliament area was one of Toronto's poorest residential areas, along with The Ward (between Yonge Street and University Avenue, from Queen to College streets) and areas close to industry and railyards to the west of the downtown. Like The Ward, the poorly maintained row houses of the King-Parliament area offered less costly housing for new immigrants, and in the first decades of the 20th century, the area included a concentration of Macedonian and Bulgarian residents⁹. Institutions followed them, including churches and missions.

Today's Dixon Hall at 52 Summach Street was originally built in 1925 as a "Bulgarian Mission". Other organizations offering services to the poor became central to the working class neighbourhood, including the Fred Victor Centre at Queen and Jarvis, founded in 1894.

The expansion of industry fueled a growth in housing, then was responsible for shrinking it¹⁰. In the early 20th century, the continued growth of industry in the area resulted in the redevelopment of residential areas with factories and warehouses. After 1900, for example, the homes in the area of Britain Street were nearly all demolished. Only a few row houses along George Street survive

⁹ Lemos, 93-95.

¹⁰ City of Toronto Planning Board, "Housing in King-Parliament," 4.

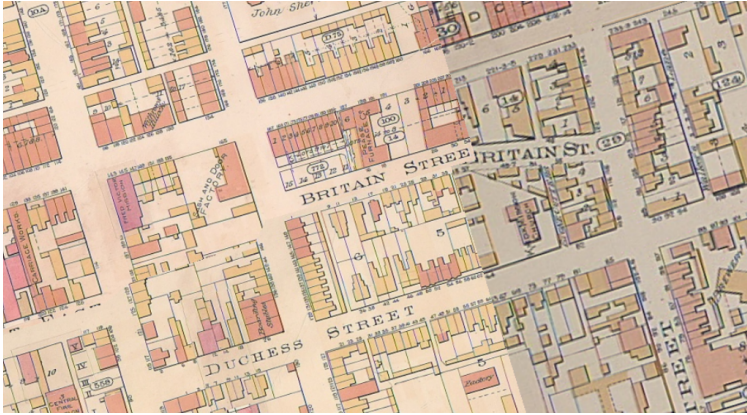


Figure 10. These fire insurance plans from 1889 and 1913 show how industrial buildings replaced houses in the area of Britain Street. Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto, Plate 29. 1890, 1913. Map and Data Library, University of Toronto.

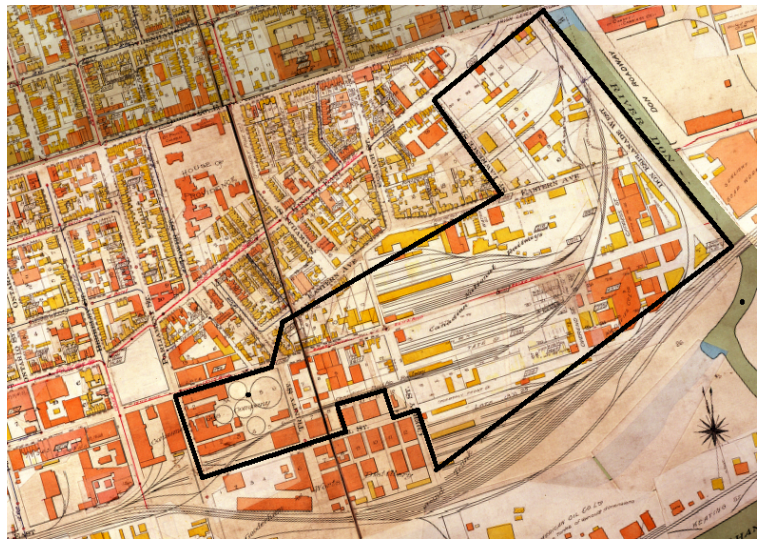


Figure 11. These fire insurance plans from 1903 and 1924 show how industrial buildings and railways replaced houses in the West Don Lands area. Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto, Plate 29. 1903, 1924. Map and Data Library, University of Toronto.

today (see Figure 10). Much of the Old Town, in fact, was slowly transformed by the consolidation of residential or commercial lots and redevelopment for industry. The resulting factories and warehouses, interspersed with a few surviving houses, continue to define the area west of Berkeley Street, and north of King Street.

East of Berkeley, residential use remains highly visible today, but here too housing was dramatically reduced prior to World War II. In the West Don Lands, the growth of the railway industry, in particular, led to the demolition of a whole neighbourhood south of Eastern Avenue and east of Cherry Street between 1900 and 1924¹¹ (see Figure 10). While this area has again been transformed into today's West Don Lands,

¹¹ Archaeological Services Inc., "Stage 1...", 13.

the Palace Street School (1859) at Front and Cherry streets survives as a reminder of the early residential character of this area and, through its later additions, its transition to railway and industrial lands. Just to the north, the former Dominion Wheel and Foundry buildings (1917-1929) remain to tell the story of the West Don Land's industrial heritage.

WWI, Interwar, WWII Period (1914-1945)

While World War I dominated the years between 1914 and 1918, the trend of the demolition of house form buildings and the expansion of industry in the area continued after World War I and through the 1920s. Industrial buildings were inserted into areas which were cleared of previous buildings, as at 52 Lawrence Street (see Figure 13), or with the expansion of the Christie Factory on King Street. Aerial photos from 1939 further reveal the piecemeal clearance of house-form buildings throughout the area by that date, sometimes leaving vacant lots which would be developed in the post-war period. On a larger scale, row housing on two lanes in Corktown, Gilead Place and Virgin Place, were demolished prior to 1939, and the entire block bounded by Eastern Avenue, Front Street East, Trinity Street, and Cherry Street was cleared. The development of the block bounded by Ontario and Berkeley streets, north of Richmond, by the Ontario Drug Company further illustrates the continued expansion of industry and the loss of house-form residential properties¹². Few houses, if any, were constructed in this period.

Industrial Decline and Post-war Urban Renewal (1945-1970)

In the period following World War II, new forces began to shape the King-Parliament area, including the rise in influence of professional city planning. The area entered the 1950s as a stable industrial



Figure 12. 167-185 Queen Street East



Figure 13. 52 St. Lawrence Street, 1929

¹² ERA.

and working-class residential area. With the King-Spadina area and the Junction – both also conveniently connected to rail – it dominated the City’s industrial economy¹³. But change was afoot. For one, the Planning Board of the City of Toronto began applying the latest planning principles to the City, embedded in the City’s first Official Plan of 1949¹⁴. One of the principles which was central to city planning in the period was the separation of land uses. While previously freely-mixed in a largely unplanned old City of Toronto, industrial, commercial and residential uses were now to be separated into distinct areas, as they were in the new suburban developments which defined this period. In the King-Parliament area, planners established new zoning by-laws which, after 1952, restricted the entire area for commercial and industrial development, and attempted to prevent any new housing to be built south of Queen Street East¹⁵.

Virtually no new housing was constructed in the area until the 1970s. As the 1974 report “Housing in King-Parliament” noted, the number of residents in the area declined from 4,390 in 1941 to about 1,100 in 1974¹⁶.

The redevelopment of houses for industrial uses may have continued to play a role in that decline, particularly early in the period, but the commercial re-use of former homes was equally significant. Planners in the 1970s noted the impact of this trend, exemplified best, perhaps, by the conversion of row houses on Berkeley Street, between King and Adelaide streets, to offices. They also noted with concern the impact on the remaining residential areas, overwhelmingly in the Corktown area, of “white painting” – the rehabilitation of old housing in the central core by middle and upper income families in search of homes in walkable

old neighbourhoods, near jobs in the downtown. Planners worried that such practices contributed to rising housing costs, and increasing pressure on low and moderate income families¹⁷.

North of Queen Street, though only partially inside the King-Parliament area boundary, another trend of post-war planning also made a clear and lasting impact: urban renewal tied to clearance and redevelopment. The demolition of existing residential and commercial properties to make way for the construction of the high-rise Moss Park Apartments, planned in 1957, was a clear application of this planning approach (also applied to Regent Park South)¹⁸. Plans for the renewal of Trefann Court, east of Moss Park, were completed in 1965, and called for demolition of 90% of residential buildings and street closures, but did not insist upon high-rise apartments to replace them¹⁹.

At the same time, planners struggled to find ways to encourage the growth of industry in the area as major trends in the post-war period began to work against them. First in the 1950s, then in the 1960s and 1970s, planners studied the area to determine why industry was in decline. In essence, they discovered that large, expanding industries in the King-Parliament area were limited by aging buildings

¹³ City of Toronto Planning Board, “Industry in King-Parliament,” 2-3.

¹⁴ White, 49.

¹⁵ City of Toronto Planning Board, “Housing in King-Parliament,” 8.

¹⁶ City of Toronto Planning Board, “Housing in King-Parliament,” 8, 10.

¹⁷ City of Toronto Planning Board, “Housing in King-Parliament,” 12.

¹⁸ White, 167-169.

¹⁹ White, 167-169.

and a lack of space, and were enticed away by areas well-served by an expanding highway system and a growing trucking industry. As larger industries left the area, smaller industries moved in, attracted by the central location of the King-Parliament industrial area. Overall employment in the area, however, declined²⁰.

Existing industrial buildings from this period reflect these trends. Very few large scale, mid-century industrial buildings were constructed here, as they were in North York's Don Mills, or Scarborough's Golden Mile. Industrial buildings that were built here in this period and which survive today are mostly small in scale, and generally undistinguished in design. They are also scattered about the area, which contributes to their low impact on its overall character.

Much the same can be said of some small-scale commercial buildings in the area. Given that the commercial streets of King and Queen were largely built out by World War I, commercial buildings built between 1945 and 1970 are largely characterized by small in-fill projects, as demonstrated by the building at 225 Queen Street East currently occupied by Anishnawbe Health Toronto. On former industrial lands, particularly the site of the former Consumer's Gas plant south of Front Street between Parliament and Berkeley streets, industrial buildings were demolished and replaced with parking lots and automobile related commercial buildings.

If the 1945-1970 period was marked by industrial stagnation and decline, it was also defined by the impact of the automobile, primarily through highway construction. Following the establishment of Metropolitan Toronto in 1953, Metro's new planning department began a rapid and transformative period of road and expressway expansion. The Gardiner

Expressway cut through the bottom of the King-Parliament area in the late 1950s, further severing it from the waterfront. The Gardiner was followed by the construction of the Don Valley Expressway in the 1960s. Looking for a route connecting the Don Valley Parkway into the downtown, planners settled on ramps that would cut through Corktown, then considered a largely derelict residential area in an industrial/commercial zone, to connect with Duke and Duchess Streets.

The impact of that idea transformed the area unlike any other transportation development since the railways. Duke and Duchess were made extensions of and renamed Adelaide and Richmond streets (which, thanks to the 1797 survey which first laid them out, previously dead-ended at Jarvis), and were converted to one-way thoroughfares. Much more significantly, the Adelaide and Richmond Street ramps resulted in the demolition of the House of Providence, a defining institution in the area for over 100 years, the demolition of approximately 200 houses²¹, the severing of formerly continuous north-south streets, and the introduction of vacant spaces on the edges and beneath the ramps where housing and shops once stood. While vacant open spaces created by the ramps have since been converted into parks or public amenities, the negative impact of the ramps on the formerly cohesive nature of Corktown remains.

²⁰ City of Toronto Planning Board, "Industry in King-Parliament," 5-7.

²¹ City of Toronto Planning Board, "Housing in King-Parliament", 10.

Residential and Mixed-use Renewal (1970-present)

Beginning in the mid-1960s, a shift in the view to urban renewal led to new approaches which had a particularly large impact on the King-Parliament area. Plans for the redevelopment of Trefann Court from the mid-1960s ran aground on neighbourhood resistance, leading to a changed process that has become a landmark in the history of city planning in Toronto. Instead of implementing a plan designed without consulting local residents, the City set up the “Trefann Court Working Committee” which included local residents, and asked it to assist in the development of a new plan²². Unveiled in 1972, that plan sought to retain as many existing homes as possible, and to integrate new buildings into the scale of the neighbourhood. New housing was more compatible to the 19th century neighbourhood character in its use of red brick and gabled roofs. Two portions of row-housing related to Trefann Court are in the heritage survey area (see Figure 14).

Far larger than Trefann Court is the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood, built on former industrial lands around the Esplanade, east of Jarvis, in the mid-1970s. Considered “one of the best known and most-admired initiatives of Toronto’s reform years” by planning historian Richard White, it adopted Trefann Court’s model of a working committee, and began planning in 1974 – just as City Planners were seriously considering revising the exclusive industrial/commercial zoning of the King-Parliament area. Residential use was allowed here due to the need for more housing downtown, the fact that the land was nearly all vacant and no jobs would be lost, and that most of the land was also city-owned. The new St. Lawrence Neighbourhood embodied the new principles of urban renewal including Low-Rise-High-Density housing - meaning stacked townhouses and mid-rise apartment buildings - a mix of uses, income levels, and ownership/rental/co-op models, and full integration into existing street



Figure 14. Part of Trefann Court, 440-450 Queen Street East, 1979

grids²³. The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood has been identified as worthy of study for a future Heritage Conservation District.

Beyond the housing constructed as part of urban renewal efforts, residential use in the King-Parliament area has grown since the 1970s, first through relatively small, low-scale infill projects, and more recent residential stretches of row and townhouses on King and Queen Streets, in the Corktown area²⁴. Since the mid-1990s, however, mid-rise, and now high-rise residential buildings have appeared in the area, largely as a result of another landmark moment in the history of City Planning in Toronto: an innovative slate of Secondary Plan policies for the “Two Kings”.

²² White, 281-286.

²³ White, 326-332.

²⁴ Notes from Resident at Open House, January 31.

The policies directed at the King-Parliament and King-Spadina areas were a response to the fact that the two areas continued to struggle through the 1980s as industry declined. The recession of the early 1990s made things even worse, resulting in alarm at the growing deterioration of properties in the area. In response, the King-Parliament area and King-Spadina area became the site of an innovative policy framework to remove zoning that only allowed industrial uses on industrial lands, and to instead allow for mixed uses to reclaim vacant industrial buildings²⁵. Considered a novel, risky move at the time²⁶, the “Two Kings” plan sparked engaged citizens to build on the work of the Town of York Historical Society (founded 1983). They formed the “Citizens for the Old Town”, among other groups, to support the retention and reuse of heritage buildings, to advocate for the preservation and integration of the area’s rich history into its renewal, and to insist that redevelopment support and enhance the historic character of the area²⁷. Notably, citizen activism further contributed to the discovery of archaeological remains of Ontario’s first purpose-built Parliament buildings at Front and Parliament, to the public acquisition of the site, and to a continuing effort to appropriately commemorate their location.

In this period, new commercial buildings continued to be inserted into the area, though now increasingly in larger scale formats. Redevelopment of the south side of Queen Street between Parliament and Power, for example, consolidated a former row of 19th century commercial properties and a used car lot (the result of previous demolitions in the 1960s) into two properties with larger single and two-storey retail buildings. In this period, as well, large format, car-oriented retail was constructed on the former industrial lands between King and Front, and between Berkeley and Parliament. Car dealerships

and automobile repair centres also became prevalent in the area, perhaps in relationship to the DVP ramps completed in the mid-1960s.

Heritage conservation and commemoration of the former Gooderham and Worts distillery (closed in 1990) has contributed significantly to the success of the Distillery District, a mixed-use culture and heritage destination in the area since its redevelopment began in the early 2000s. With many of its properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, the Distillery District is being considered for a Heritage Conservation District. Next door, residential uses have also dominated the redevelopment of the West Don Lands, former industrial and railways lands that had been slated for various development plans since the 1990s. The West Don Lands Precinct Plan was endorsed by Toronto City Council in 2005, and a significant portion of the 80-acre site was completed for use as an Athletes Village for the 2015 Pan Am Games. Two heritage buildings, the former Palace Street School and the former CN Railway Offices, were conserved and form a gateway to the area. In 2015, City Council also designated a significant part of the Old Town as the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District (under appeal).

²⁵ City of Toronto, “The Two Kings: A Status Report – For Information.”

²⁶ Wickens, “Downtown Toronto went all in with a pair of Kings.” *The Globe and Mail*, February 16, 2016. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/property-report/going-all-in-with-a-pair-of-kings/article28745451/>

²⁷ Heritage Focus Group notes.

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