

JANE FINCH HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

FINAL
JANUARY 31, 2024



PREPARED FOR
HERITAGE PLANNING
CITY PLANNING DIVISION
CITY OF TORONTO

COMMON
BOND
COLLECTIVE



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PREPARED FOR
Heritage Planning
City Planning Division
City of Toronto

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Cover Image: Mural at 292 Grandravine Drive (*CBCollective 2022*).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCE ASSESSMENTS (CHRAs)

City of Toronto Heritage Planning uses CHRAs to document and analyze an area's history and ensure that properties of potential cultural heritage value or interest are appropriately identified, understood and conserved.

This Historic Context Statement (HCS) is an important component of the CHRA as it describes the historic evolution of the Jane Finch neighbourhood, its significant themes and prevalent building types. The CHRA will also include an explanation of the relevant heritage and planning policy frameworks; the study methodology; a description of the community consultation process for the CHRA; a screening of properties against O. Reg. 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act and recommendations.

1.2 JANE FINCH INITIATIVE

The Jane Finch CHRA has been completed as part of the larger Jane Finch Initiative and has been coordinated with several aspects of the initiative including the Secondary Plan, Urban Design Guidelines and Community Development Plan.

In anticipation of transit investment and the potential for growth and change in the area, several City Divisions are collaborating on a community planning exercise in the area. The aim of the Jane Finch Initiative is to develop an integrated plan for the Jane Finch area that advances social equity and economic inclusion for current and future residents, encourages the appropriate kinds of growth and development in the area, and guides investment in community improvements.

The Jane Finch Initiative will update the land use planning framework for the area with Official Plan policies and zoning to shape the development of a transit-supportive complete community. A Community Development Plan will also be produced which will guide change and growth in the community and advance initiatives to enhance social cohesion, community safety, inclusive economic opportunities and stronger neighbourhoods. The updated land use planning framework and the community development plan are companion documents that are intended to work in tandem.

1.3 JANE FINCH CHRA STUDY AREA

The boundaries of the Jane Finch CHRA study area align with Neighbourhood 24 - Black Creek, and Neighbourhood 25 - Glenfield-Jane Heights. The study area is bounded by Steeles Avenue West (north); Black Creek (east); Sheppard Avenue West (south) and Highway 400 (west) and is approximately 8.75 km² in size (Figure 1). The study area covers portions of Concessions IV (Lots 17 to 25) and V (Lots 17 to 25). Concession IV is bounded by Keele and Jane streets and Concession V is bounded by Jane Street and Weston Road. Major east-west roads in the study area are Steeles and Finch avenues.

The study area is characterized by residential use, both in single family and multi-unit residential buildings constructed between the 1960s and 1980s. Light industrial use is located on Norfinch Drive/Oakdale Road and on Eddystone Avenue. The Finch Hydro Corridor runs east-west through the study area between Norfinch Drive and Black Creek and features a recreational trail. Black Creek defines the eastern boundary of the CHRA study area. It is a tributary of the Humber River and a major natural feature of the study area. Other green spaces include the Black Creek Parklands, Derrydowns and Hullmar parks.

2.0 INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND PRACTICES

*Indigenous Peoples in Toronto*¹

For time immemorial, Toronto has been home to Indigenous peoples. Ojibway oral histories speak of Ice People, who lived at a time when ice covered the land.² Following the retreat of glaciers approximately 13,000 years ago, small groups of Indigenous peoples moved from place to place, hunting and gathering the food they needed according to the seasons. Over millennia, they adapted to dramatically changing environmental conditions, developing and acquiring new technologies as they did so. Waterways and the lake were vital sources of fresh water and nourishment, and shorelines and nearby areas were important sites for gathering, trading, hunting, fishing, and ceremonies. Long-distance trade moved valuable resources across the land.

After corn was introduced to Southern Ontario, possibly as early as 2300 years ago, horticulture began to supplement food sources. Between 1300-1450 years ago, villages focused on growing food appeared in the Toronto area and became year-round settlements surrounded by crops. These villages were home to ancestors of the Huron-Wendat Nation, who would continue to occupy increasingly larger villages in the Toronto area and beyond. These villages were connected to well-established travel routes which were part of local and long-distance trail networks, including the Carrying Place trails on the Don, Rouge and Humber rivers that connected Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. Beads made from sea shells from the eastern seaboard were found at the Alexandra site in North York, which was a community of 800-1000 people in approximately 1350.³

By 1600, the Wendat had formed a confederation of individual nations, and had concentrated most of their villages away from Lake Ontario, in the Georgian Bay area. Following contact with French explorers and missionaries in Southern Ontario in the early 1600s, European diseases decimated First Nations. Competition for furs to trade with Europeans and the desire to replenish numbers through absorption of captives, among other factors⁴, contributed to the Beaver Wars, which after 1640, saw the Haudenosaunee Confederacy expand into Southern Ontario, dispersing the Wendat. Within the boundaries of today's Toronto, the Seneca Nation, a member of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, then occupied villages on the Carrying Place trails on the Humber and Rouge Rivers from approximately the 1660s to the 1680s.

1 This section's text and footnotes have been provided by Heritage Planning staff with the City of Toronto.

2 With thanks to Philip Cote for the reference to Benton-Banai, Edward, *The Mishomis book : the voice of the Ojibway*. (Indian Country Press, 1985), 26.

3 Information drawn from various Archaeology reports, including "Stage 1 Archaeological Resource Assessment of the Frank Faubert Woodlot Park Improvements, 165 Borough Drive", prepared by ASI (17 May 2021).

4 <https://histindigenouspeoples.pressbooks.tru.ca/chapter/chapter-5-colonial-wars-looking-east/>; Warrick, Gary. "The Aboriginal Population of Ontario in Late Pre-history," in Munson and Jamieson, eds., *Before Ontario: The Archaeology of a Province*. (McGill-Queens University Press, 2013), 72.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy left their villages in the Toronto area in the late 1680s. Anishinaabe people from the Lake Superior region then moved into the Toronto area. While the Wendat and Haudenosaunee people lived in year-round villages surrounded by crops, the Anishinaabe people continued to live primarily by seasonally moving across the land to hunt, fish and gather resources that were available at a specific time, including migrating birds and maple syrup. To the west of Toronto, the Anishinaabe people became known as the Mississaugas of the Credit. To the east, they became known as the Chippewas of Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama and the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Scugog Island.⁵

In 1787, as the British began to prepare for an influx of colonists into the area following the American Revolution, the British Crown negotiated the Toronto Purchase with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to obtain title to the land. The flawed and poorly documented agreement was invalidated, and Treaty 13 was negotiated in 1805 for lands now including much of the City of Toronto. In 1923, the Governments of Ontario and Canada signed the Williams Treaties for over 20,000 km², including portions of eastern Toronto, with seven First Nations of the Chippewa of Lake Simcoe (Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama) and the Mississauga of the north shore of Lake Ontario (Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Scugog Island). While the Mississaugas, Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, or the Wendat did not traditionally regard land as a commodity to be sold or owned exclusively by individuals, the British government quickly set out to survey the land into lots which were either sold or granted into private ownership of settlers. In 2010, the Government of Canada settled the Toronto Purchase Claim with the Mississaugas of the Credit after agreeing that the Mississaugas were originally unfairly compensated. In 2018, the Williams Treaties First Nations settled litigation about land surrenders and harvesting rights with the Governments of Canada and Ontario.

The City of Toronto remains the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is also covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with seven Mississaugas and Chippewa First Nations.

Indigenous Peoples in the Study Area Vicinity

Archaeological investigations have uncovered dozens of Wendat sites located along the tributaries of the Credit, Humber, Don, and Rouge-Duffins rivers. These sites demonstrate Wendat inhabitation of the area until the end of the 16th century. The remains of a large Huron-Wendat village are situated on the east bank of the Black Creek, north of Finch Avenue, between Jane and Keele streets. Inhabited around the late-fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century, the site is thought to have been created during the period when the Huron-Wendat confederacy was forming and when ancestral

⁵ Mississaugas of the Credit, "The History of Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation." ND.

Wendat villages were being relocated northward from Lake Ontario towards Wendake.⁶

The site (known as the Parsons Site) was a large, ancestral village on a rise of land overlooking Black Creek. Nearly three hectares in size, the village was twice as large as previous sites and contained numerous longhouses, semi-subterranean sweatlodges and a defensive palisade. A series of Heritage Toronto plaques discuss the history of the Huron-Wendat in Toronto. One of these is located in the study area on the Hydro Corridor.

The Wendat today live in four different communities: the Huron-Wendat Nation at Wendake (Quebec); the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation (Michigan); the Wyandotte Nation (Kansas); and the Wyandotte Nation (Oklahoma). Currently, the Wendat number approximately 10,000 people. The Huron-Wendat Nation at Wendake are leading the efforts to connect and protect their ancestral remains and sites in the Toronto region and Ontario.⁷

6 L. Anders Sandberg, Jon Johnson, Rene Gualtieri and Louis Lesage, "Re-Connecting with a Historical Site: On Narrative and the Huron-Wendat Ancestral Village at York University, Toronto, Canada," *Ontario History*, 113(1), 2021, pp. 80–105. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1076079ar>

7 Ibid.

3.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT OF THE JANE FINCH STUDY AREA

The historic context provides an understanding of how and why the current built form and character of the Jane Finch CHRA Study Area were developed. It describes the historical evolution of the study area, including the identification of periods of development as well as themes and building types associated with each period.

The historic context of the study area is organized into six parts, based on periods of development in the area's historical evolution:

- Natural Environment (Section 3.2)
- European Settlement and Agricultural Communities - 1790s to 1920s (Section 3.3)
- Township Growth - 1930s to 1940s (Section 3.4)
- Emergence of a Suburban Community (Section 3.5)
- Transformation - 1950s to 1970s (Section 3.6)
- Community Based Studies and Activism - 1970s to present (Section 3.7)

Each section provides: a narrative description of the period of development; a list of themes and sub-themes that were significant in shaping the CHRA study area; and a summary of the existing built form as related to the themes and sub-themes.

The historic context serves as an evaluative tool when screening properties for heritage potential.

3.1 THEMES

The themes and sub-themes related to the evolution and development of the Jane Finch CHRA Study Area were developed by the consultant team through research, analysis and consultation with the Heritage Focus Group (HFG) and Heritage Planning staff. The themes provide a broad organizing structure with the sub-themes providing a greater level of specificity.

Theme	Theme Description	Sub-themes
Natural Environment	This theme relates to the ways in which the natural environment has shaped the study area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Creek
Organization of European Settlement	This theme relates to the ways colonial settlement and land division have shaped the study area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Townships, Concessions and Lots • Early Settlements

Theme	Theme Description	Sub-themes
Government & Institutions	This theme relates to how government entities have shaped the study area through the services and institutions they created.	<p>Federal Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation ● Social Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority <p>Provincial Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ontario Housing Corporation ● Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority <p>Regional Government: Metropolitan Toronto (1953-1998)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Housing ● Education ● Recreation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Metropolitan Toronto Regional Conservation Authority ● Land Use Planning <p>Municipal Government: York Township (1793-1922); Township of North York (1922-1967); Borough of North York (1967-1979); Amalgamated City of Toronto (1998-present)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land Use Planning
Transportation	This theme relates to how transportation networks have shaped the study area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Road Networks ● Highways ● Public Transit
Residential Development	This theme relates to how the development of residential areas and buildings have shaped the study area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Housing

Theme	Theme Description	Sub-themes
Commercial Development	This theme relates to how the development of major economic activities have shaped the study area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture
Community	This theme relates to how the study area has been shaped by local groups, clubs, organizations and associations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Organizations • Community Activism
Arts & Culture	This theme relates to how the study area has been shaped by art and culture activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music • Food • Artwork • Recreation

3.2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Black Creek runs from its source in Vaughan southwest to the Humber River in Toronto. Within the study area, Black Creek flows in a natural setting passing in short culverts underneath Shoreham Drive, Finch Avenue West, Grandravine Drive and Sheppard Avenue West, before turning to the west and arriving back at Jane Street south of Sheppard Ave. Black Creek and its surroundings provides recreational and parkland areas including Black Creek Parkland, Derrydowns Park, and Northwood Park.

3.3 1790s to 1920s EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Early Settlement

Following negotiation of the Toronto Purchase, the British Parliament created Upper Canada and appointed John Graves Simcoe Lieutenant-Governor. Upper Canada was divided into a series of counties and then further surveyed into townships, concessions and lots. York County was created in 1792 and York Township the following year. Simcoe travelled extensively in Upper Canada in 1793 and 1794 noting towns that had already developed such as York and Chatham and those recommended for development, notably London which he proposed as the capital. Eager to make Upper Canada a place where settlers found land easy to acquire, Simcoe initiated a system of land grants to them. His surveyor general, David Smith, developed a method of surveying and distributing lands within townships that set aside lands for settlers, the crown and clergy. Known as the ‘chequered plan’, it was used consistently throughout Upper Canada (Figure 2).

York Township was surveyed into 200-acre farm lots and in the study area, the first land grants were to ex-military men and Loyalists who accompanied Simcoe to York in 1792. Later, Pennsylvania Germans who left the United States and travelled overland with their families settled in Upper Canada, creating small communities in the study area such as Elia and Emery (Figure 3).

Settlers to the study area found dense forest covering the land and their first task was to clear enough land to build a log house. It could take years to clear a typical farm lot by hand, but most farmers left some trees standing, for firewood and maple sugar production. The land would eventually produce wheat, Upper Canada's cash crop, but farm families also grew fruit and vegetables and kept livestock for household use and sale.

The community of Elia developed in the area between Dufferin and Jane streets, and Sheppard and Steeles avenues. While its amenities including the school and post office were located outside the study area, several families developed sizable properties including the Snider, Kaiser and Stong families (Figure 4).

Samuel Snider and his family came to Upper Canada from Pennsylvania in 1806 and settled in a small log cabin near the Black Creek, south of Finch Avenue. In the early 1800s, the Snider family purchased all four farm lots between Jane Street, Finch Avenue, Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue (Concession IV, Lots 17 to 20). A Pennsylvania German farm developed with a bank barn, carpenter and blacksmith shops, smoke house, sugar bush, saw mill and a second home overlooking the mill pond.

The Stong and Kaiser families developed properties east of Jane Street and south of Steeles Avenue. Peter Kaiser settled in the area around 1803, eventually owning 300 acres of property. In 1816, Daniel and Elizabeth Fisher Stong cleared their land and built a log house in the area of Jane Street and Steeles Avenue. The Stong property developed into an extensive farm.

Portions of the Kaiser and Stong properties are now part of Black Creek Pioneer Village. Many Stong buildings remain in their original locations including the log cabin (1816), smokehouse (1820), grain barn (1825), and their second house (1832).

The community of Emery was centred around Weston Road and Finch Avenue and Finch and Islington avenues (Figure 5). John Crosson and his family arrived in the area about 1799 after walking from Pennsylvania with their possessions and a two year old colt. In exchange for his horse, Crosson obtained one hundred acres of land at the northwest corner of Jane Street and Finch Avenue (Concession V, Lot 21) The Crosson homestead with its apple orchard and family cemetery is now divided by Highway 400. The area with the apple orchard is on the west and the family cemetery on its east side (Figure 6).

Township of North York

Between the 1850s and 1920s, about a dozen areas separated from York Township and incorporated as individual municipalities thus reducing the township's size and tax base considerably. Several of these municipalities, including Yorkville, Brockton, Parkdale, East Toronto, West Toronto and North Toronto, were eventually annexed to the City of Toronto.

The southern part of York Township, bordering the City of Toronto became a 'lunch-pail suburb' - an area close enough to streetcar lines for residents to make the daily commute to factories. While the southern part of the township became increasingly urbanized, the northern part remained primarily agricultural (Figure 7). Farmers were outnumbered by urban residents and politicians grew increasingly concerned with urban issues. Farmers resented paying taxes with little representation and few services and organized a vote on separation which was approved by voters. In August 1922, the northern part of York Township became a separate municipality known as the Township of North York.⁸ (Figure 8).

3.4 1930s to 1940s - TOWNSHIP GROWTH

The Township of North York was hit extremely hard by the Great Depression as farmers had trouble selling their products and many were unable to pay their taxes. In 1933, North York defaulted on its payments to bondholders and two years later was placed under government supervision. This meant that all government expenditures required provincial approval. By 1937, North York had paid off its debts and in 1941, it was released from provincial supervision.

North York was not the only municipality placed under government supervision. In fact, the majority of municipalities in the Toronto area were also insolvent and the Province was forced to take charge of their financial affairs. In 1934, the provincial government established the Department of Municipal Affairs to supervise municipalities whose tax revenue collapsed during the Great Depression. The department also advised municipalities on community development and land use planning and was responsible for meeting the housing needs of low and moderate income families in Ontario. In 1944, the provincial government established the Department of Planning and Development and in 1946 it created the Planning Act which laid the foundation for land use planning in the province for a generation.

Need for a Land Use Plan

Acting under authority of the Planning Act, North York's council designated the township as an Urban Development Area and appointed a planning board to advise on planning measures and regulate land sub-division. The Board sought to ensure growth, servicing and taxation in the Township would be orderly and economical. This was due

⁸ Boundaries were Humber River to the west, Steeles Avenue to the north, Victoria Park Avenue to the east and roughly around Lawrence or Eglinton Avenue to the south.

to the increase in population between the 1940s and 1950s.⁹ This rapid rate of growth led to demand for a variety of buildings: residential housing, commercial shopping centres, industrial properties, educational facilities and hospitals.

In 1948, the Township’s first land use plan was submitted to council. It indicated rural, urban and industrial areas. Subdivision was permitted in urban areas, which were eligible for services (water services, sewers, roads, transportation facilities, etc). Rural areas comprised the majority of the area, set aside for agricultural use, and could only be subdivided to lots of 2 acres or more. Services such as water were not extended to rural areas as they were major items of taxation. The plan also indicated the location of a new north-south highway which was to become Highway 400 (Figure 9).

3.5 1950s EMERGENCE OF A SUBURBAN COMMUNITY

This period of development saw the study area begin its transformation from an agricultural hinterland to a dense, modern suburb. The opening of Highway 400 in 1952, and the formation of Metropolitan Toronto the following year primed the area for suburban growth. The study area’s rapid development began in the late 1950s, shaped by North York’s 1952 Official Plan. Key principles from this plan would be built upon by the 1962 and 1969 district plans.

3.5.1 PLANNING FOR CHANGE IN THE 1950s

Toronto and its surrounding areas grew rapidly following the Second World War. Development quickly moved north from Toronto’s urbanised areas into North York, and its population more than doubled from 35,000¹⁰ to 84,000¹¹ between 1948 and 1952. This period coincided with the emergence of urban planning as a professional discipline in Ontario, and municipal governments increasingly relied on planners to help articulate visions and guidelines for anticipated growth. In 1952 the township released its Official Plan, which was far more comprehensive than the 1948 land use plan, and represented the start of urban planning in earnest for the study area.

That same year Highway 400 opened along the western edge of the study area, as per the 1948 Official Plan. The road connected Highway 401 and Barrie, tying the study area into the region’s nascent highway network. Also in the 1950s, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario (HEPC) built a series of transmission lines in Toronto known as the Finch Corridor which paralleled Finch Avenue between Highway 400 and Pickering (Figure 10).

9 Progress, Economy and Heart - Celebrating 100 Years of North York <https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/history-art-culture/online-exhibits/web-exhibits/web-exhibits-community-neighbourhoods/progress-economy-heart-celebrating-100-years-of-north-york/progress-economy-heart-from-farmland-to-township/>

10 Township of North York Report of the Planning Board: March 1948, 1.

11 E. G. Faludi, “The Official Plan and Zoning By-law of the Township of North York,” February 1952, 2.

Creation of Metropolitan Toronto

In 1953 the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was incorporated, and North York became one of thirteen lower-tier municipalities. Planners had previously identified a need for a regional planning framework, and the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board played an important role guiding suburban growth beyond Toronto's limits. Whereas rural municipalities typically needed to develop a stronger tax base before building the intensive infrastructure required for suburban development, Metropolitan Toronto had the means to finance critical infrastructure projects (major roads, water supply and sewers) irrespective of a local tax base. This allowed Metropolitan Toronto to first build the infrastructure, and then use plans to coordinate the population densities needed to support it, bypassing the incremental growth patterns that both slowed suburban growth and made it uneconomical. The intention was for a Metropolitan Toronto Official Plan to guide growth around this framework at high level, in conjunction with more detailed district plans that would translate policies to local conditions.

Governments helped plan for several important sites within and around the study area in the 1950s. By 1955 a federal-provincial partnership, through the Metro Interim Housing Committee acquired 600 acres of land south of Steeles Avenue between Jane and Keele streets for future social housing. In 1958, the Metropolitan Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority (MTRCA) was formed through the merger of other local conservation authorities. The following year, it acquired the Stong property on the south-east corner of Steeles Avenue and Jane Street. It provided the nucleus of buildings for Black Creek Pioneer Village which officially opened on June 1, 1960 (Figure 11).

Land Use Planning and Development in North York

Despite the regulatory and infrastructural changes in anticipation of development, the study area remained almost entirely agricultural in the early 1950s and was primarily defined by cultivated fields on the flatlands and the forested Black Creek river valley (Figures 12 & 13). The only discernible non-agricultural development to this point was a small number of homes built by 1950 northwest of Jane and Sheppard streets. However many of these appear to have been rural, rather than suburban in nature, generally adhering to established agricultural roads, sometimes with a relationship to nearby crops or gardens (Figure 14).

In the mid-1950s two influential communities were being developed in North York - Don Mills and Flemingdon Park. Located east of the study area, these master-planned developments were important for establishing some of the hallmarks of post-war suburbs in the Toronto area: abundant open space, pedestrian pathways, new housing types, separation of land use, and curved discontinuous roads.

In February 1952, the Township of North York Planning Board and consultant E. G. Faludi released the Official Plan and Zoning By-law of the Township of North York (1952 Official Plan). Far more comprehensive than the 1948 Official Plan, the document

recognized the municipality was part of a broader Toronto Metropolitan Area, and was intended to guide development of the municipality over a 25 year period. Noting the township's recent growth trends, the 1952 Official Plan provided guidance for residential, industrial and commercial development; transportation routes; and for school, park and recreational sites.

The corresponding zoning by-law, designed to implement the official plan's land use designations, was passed in June the same year (Figure 15).¹² The map shows how zoning was used as a tool to shape development based on new ideas about separate land uses. Industrial areas were to be situated on open sites, with ready access to both highways and railways. Nearby residential communities would provide a labour force, though buffer areas were planned between industrial areas and homes. Manufacturing was to be centrally located within industrial blocks, with warehousing and service shop uses around the outer edges. Industrial roads were designed to be 86' - 100' (26m - 30.5m) wide to attract heavy traffic away from residential streets.

In a clear shift toward automobile-centric development, the 1952 Official Plan encouraged commercial development in the form of planned shopping centres over traditional main street mixed-use buildings. Planned shopping centres comprise groups of stores with ample off-street parking areas. Lacking off-street parking and loading areas, traditional mixed-use commercial buildings were expressly discouraged by the plan.

Residential areas were provided in single and multiple family types, each having five different densities. Multiple family types are listed as duplexes, garden apartments, and multiple attached apartment houses. The zoning plan shows higher densities located closer to arterial intersections, arteries, and industrial areas. The plan notes that 10% of residential areas should be designated for rental uses.

Within the study area, the 1952 Official Plan organized these land uses around several major features - the arterial concession roads, Highway 400, the hydro-electric power corridor, and the Black Creek river valley (Figure 16). On the western edge of the study area were industrial uses, located adjacent to Highway 400. This represented a northward extension of a pattern established by the 1948 Official Plan, but which stopped at Sheppard Avenue. The eastern and southeastern edges of the study area corresponding to the river valley were greenbelt zones, with the lands in between primarily residential. Multiple family residential zones were concentrated about the intersections of the arterial concession roads. An additional multiple family residential zone was located directly south of the industrial tract. Single family residential zones occupied most of the large swathes of remaining land, with several golf courses and open spaces interspersed within. Finally, planned shopping centres were situated directly at the corners of arterial intersections, with multiple family residential zones

¹² Town Planning Consultants Limited, "Key Zoning Map Schedule "B" By-law 7625 Township of North York," 1952.

extending further behind. The plan also called for intersection alignments at arterial intersections.

Overall, the 1952 Official Plan established a framework for growth in the study area based on concepts that were defining the emerging practice of land-use planning. These included the intention to design communities for automobile-based living, and the clear delineation between different land uses, densities and resulting building types.

Being the first plan to dictate the township's land-uses in detail, the 1952 Official Plan was foundational in establishing the underlying shape of the study area's urban form. Despite minimal development in the study area until the 1960s, the underlying principles and logic of the plan would heavily inform subsequent plans in 1962 and 1969, and ultimately play an important role in the study area's morphology and character.

3.5.2 STUDY AREA DEVELOPMENT: 1952-1961

In the decade following the release of the 1952 Official Plan, growth in the study area was modest, concentrated in the south end (Figure 17). The trend of rural house construction continued in the area northwest of Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue (see Section 5.1.1), and by 1953 a golf course was under development immediately east of Jane Street. Black Creek Pioneer Village opened in 1960, with most of the site situated immediately east of the study area.

Subdivision plans preceded the construction of several larger developments on both sides of Sheppard Avenue in the late 1950s. These were primarily residential developments, though subdivision plan M-770 created both industrial and residential lots, helping to establish the patterns that would define industrial areas as the area grew (Figure 18). The subdivisions reflected the 1952 zoning by-law at a high, but not granular level. For example, plan M-770 did create industrial and residential lots as per the plan, but the industrial area extended further south than indicated, and no reference was made for a distinction between manufacturing and warehousing / storage uses.

By 1961 large subdivisions on both sides of Sheppard Avenue had been built or were under construction. The developments were predominantly multiple-family (duplex) homes (see Section 5.1.2), with the study area's first extant school (Calico Public School) built within the Oakdale Park subdivision south of Sheppard Avenue (see Section 5.3.1). Roughly a dozen industrial structures were straddling Oakdale Road east of Highway 400 (see Section 5.4.1), a combination of steel and brick-clad concrete block structures (Figure 19).

The residential subdivisions from this period have a rectilinear layout, largely dictated by the confining grid of arterial concession roads. Roads tend to be straight and intersect at right angles, usually parallel to Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue. The internal circulation system connects to the major arteries by way of limited outlets, though a clear hierarchy of internal and collector roads is not fully developed or formalized.

3.6 1960s to 1970s TRANSFORMATION

Much of the study area's layout and built form were cast during this period, and its morphology was heavily influenced by emerging ideas about suburban growth. Post-war planning frameworks played a fundamental role in defining the area's transportation networks, variety of building types, and separation of land uses, including very large areas of social housing.

With development starting to transform the study area by the early 1960s, a number of plans were prepared in response to, and in anticipation of the area's imminent growth. Local district plans were prepared for the area in 1962 and again in 1969. A number of other plans and reports targeted specific local issues related to public housing sites¹³ and the new university^{14,15}. Large numbers of immigrants were drawn to the area, many of whom were Italian. The Township became the Borough of North York in 1967.

3.6.1 DISTRICT PLANNING PHASE 1 (1962 DISTRICT PLAN 10)

In the early 1960s the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board was piloting a system whereby district plans would be used to implement the Metropolitan Official Plan¹⁶ at the local level, with local planning authorities retaining jurisdiction over the details of new development. The 1962 District Plan 10 was the first district plan prepared, an important step forward for the Metro Planning Board.

District Plan 10 encompassed an area bounded by the Humber River to the west, Highway 401 to the south, Steeles Avenue to the north, and both Dufferin Street and the CNR railway to the east. The main content of the plan concerned major land uses, road systems, and matters related to residential development, including population densities, elementary schools, local parks, and local commercial requirements.

It built upon population distributions prescribed by Metropolitan Toronto that were critical to effective regional planning. The plan prescribed a gross density of 30 persons per acre in residential areas, equating to a population of 144,000 for the district. This progressive approach allowed regional planners to ensure suburban areas had a sufficient density (and tax base) to support the municipal services associated with urban living. It also represented a significant increase from the 1952 Official Plan, which anticipated a population of 200,000 for the entire township within 20 years. These suburban densities were unique to Metro Toronto in a North American context, and

13 Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation / Environment Planning Associates, *Planning Report for the Federal-Provincial North Jane Street Project Township of North York, Toronto* (Toronto: The Associates, 1965).

14 North York Dept. of Planning, *Report on York University Site: Federal-Provincial housing lands Jane Street and Steeles Avenue* (Willowdale, Ont.: The Department, 1960).

15 Project Planning Associates, *Jane-Finch Commercial Study, Township of North York* (Toronto: The Associates, 1963).

16 The Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board prepared official plans in 1959 and 1966, though neither was adopted by Metro Council. Both remained unofficial in standing.

would play a major role in shaping the study area’s urban fabric. At the same time, the plan discouraged an over-abundance of apartment towers:

...it is preferable to avoid excessive concentrations of apartment buildings, unless a large concentration of apartments forms part of a central area development which provides a full range of community facilities, on a scale which is possible only in a few suburban locations.¹⁷

Despite the increased densities, District Plan 10’s prescribed land uses (Figure 20) fundamentally followed the patterns and principles set out by the 1952 Official Plan. However it did provide greater direction with regard to housing types and locations. Specifically, it advocated for a balanced approach to housing stock via the following principles:

- a) *Diversification of dwelling types at varying densities to avoid the sharp division or firm segregation of rental homes from purchase homes.*
- b) *Provision of rental dwellings mainly in lower and medium density schemes to satisfy the demand for rental family accommodation in the suburbs.*
- c) *High density residential development restricted to sites having special advantages for this use and where provision is made for adjoining local parks [...] and for a full range of community facilities within walking distance, and where the transportation system [...] can deal efficiently with the traffic created.¹⁸*

In contrast to the 1952 Official Plan, the 1962 District Plan 10 anticipated a large number of rental units in the area in response to the nearby employment opportunities. It was particularly concerned with providing an appropriate range of rental unit types. Lower density rental units in the form of ‘plexes’ were seen as ideal for the suburban context and were encouraged. These forms included town-houses, maisonnettes, and garden apartments, some examples of which had been demonstrated at Don Mills and Flemingdon Park in the 1950s.¹⁹

High-rise apartments were necessary to meet the regional density requirements imposed by Metropolitan Toronto, but were to be carefully located. Access to arterial roads, public transportation, and open space (parks or Black Creek river valley) were critical considerations for locating apartment sites, more so than proximity to schools, stores and community centres, which could be provided after construction.

Commercial uses were provided as dedicated commercial land uses, and local commercial uses. The former constituted a distinct land use, located about the Jane Finch and Jane-Sheppard intersections in similar fashion to the 1952 Official Plan.

¹⁷ “District Plan 10 Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area,” 1962, p. 35.

¹⁸ “District Plan 10 Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area,” 1962, p. 8.

¹⁹ John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp.126-127.

The Jane Finch intersection was designated as one of two major commercial areas, intended to serve regional needs. Local commercial uses constituted sites smaller than five acres, and were permitted within residential areas.

District Plan 10's industrial land uses follow the general principles established by the 1952 Official Plan, forming a strip along the eastern side of Highway 400. The exact areas have been somewhat revised in response to subsequent development, in addition to a strip extending east to Jane Street.

District Plan 10's approach to transportation was influential on the study area, formally introducing the collector street system. Collector streets were envisioned as an intermediary between the major arterial and local residential streets. They were to provide carefully spaced outlets from residential areas to the arterial grid (Figure 21), limiting intersections with the arterial streets and providing convenient and regular locations for transit stops. Collectors were intended to be an important factor in subdivision design. The plan also prescribed a number of improvements to the arterial and highway road systems. These included grade separations at Highway 400 and Steeles Avenue, as well as a new interchange where the highway intersects with Finch Avenue. Of the arterials, the right-of-ways at Steeles Avenue, Finch Avenue and Jane Street were all increased to 120' (36.5m), jogs were removed at the Jane Finch and Jane-Steeles intersections, and intersections were channelized throughout.

York University

A major impact just east of the study area was the 1962 decision to allocate 400 of the 600 acres of land set aside for affordable housing to the future York University campus.²⁰ Since this reality was not substantially reflected in the 1952 Official Plan or the 1962 District Plan 10, the North York Planning Board hired Project Planning Associates Limited to consider the impacts of the new university site.²¹ The study proposed rerouting Jane Street and Finch Avenue to support a new undivided commercial centre, but was never implemented (Figure 22).

Edgeley Village

The loss of the university lands left 96 acres for social housing (rental), which the Metro Interim Housing Committee noted could still support 500 units. The site's programme was prepared by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation in 1964, and was "based on the central idea that a community should be created with as much diversity of population and income as is reasonably possible."²² The programme called for social housing to be built and managed by the Ontario Housing Corporation, alongside developer-built private housing, as well as schools, seniors' housing, churches, shops,

20 Metropolitan Toronto Interim Housing Committee, "Metropolitan Toronto Interim Housing Committee Annual Report June 1962," 5.

21 See Project Planning Associates, "Jane Finch Commercial Study Township of North York," February 1963.

22 Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Planning Report for the Federal-Provincial North Jane Street Project Township of North York Toronto," 1965, 3.

a community centre, and parks to round out the community. It resulted in a 1965 master plan²³ that would inform the neighbourhood now known as Edgeley Village.

The plan was premised on a central pedestrian mall surrounded by residential groupings. The central mall contained park space and community facilities (including churches, schools, and seniors housing), and surrounding residential groupings were clustered according to private and public ownership. Both public and private housing were located in towers and clustered townhouses, with private housing predominately rental stock (Figure 23). The plan separated path and road networks, in an attempt to create different experiences for pedestrian and vehicular traffic (Figure 24). Car access was via two curved collectors off Jane Street - one connecting to York University and the other to Finch Avenue. Pedestrian networks were focused toward the central mall, using bridges to avoid automobile routes.

While Edgeley Village was not developed until the early 1970s, several public housing sites were developed elsewhere in the study area through the 1960s. The developments usually took the form of low-rise housing complexes.

3.6.2 STUDY AREA DEVELOPMENT: 1962-1968

Under the guidance of District Plan 10, a number of the key patterns that would come to define the study area began taking shape by the mid-1960s. These include the street patterns, separate and intentionally located land uses, and different building types that would come to characterize suburban form in Metro Toronto (Figure 25).

There was considerable development of residential subdivisions (see Section 5.1.2) throughout the study area after 1962, with a large number built by 1968. The shape of these new neighbourhoods shows the influence of the 1962 District Plan 10 in their integration of curved collector roads (Figure 26). Following the land uses established earlier, residential subdivisions were built away from arterial roads. Schools were often built in conjunction with planned subdivisions, with about a dozen built during this period. Several churches (see Section 5.3.4) were built adjacent to major arterial roads, and several community centres (see Section 5.3.5) were built within neighbourhoods.

Medium density housing complexes (see Section 5.1.3) first appeared by the mid-1960s as an emerging suburban form. Yorkwoods Village was an early example of the type premised on an experimental ownership model whereby all exterior maintenance was assumed by the managing corporation (Figure 27).²⁴ Yorkwoods Village was developed as part of a larger semi-planned community, including at least four phases of housing complexes, with a corresponding plaza and private community

²³ The master plan was designed by Environment Planning Associates (planning and urban design), Sasaki, Strong & Associates (landscape and site development), and Irving Grossman (housing consultant).

²⁴ "These townhouses are for sale on terms that take the onus out of ownership." Canadian Builder 15, no. 7 (July 1965): 26.

centre (Figure 28). Housing complexes developed quickly within the study area, with around fifteen substantial developments built by 1968.

Initially built adjacent to major arteries, housing complexes were also found on interior streets, often along collectors. They often utilised broad sites, sometimes a full block in depth. Underground parking was common, leaving the landscape to support internal circulation systems or open spaces as per the suburban trend (Figure 29). The majority were located off Jane Street, or other arterials, however a large section of housing complexes also emerged on Driftwood Avenue between Arleta Avenue and Venetian Crescent. Housing complexes could operate under ownership, rental, and public housing models.

Residential high-rise apartments (see Section 5.1.4) did not appear in the study area until 1965, but their development was swift thereafter. At least eight apartment towers had been built or were under construction by 1968. The concrete slab buildings typically occupied medium to large sites, with a combination of hard and soft landscaping. Most sites were located on Jane Street or arterials, often adjacent to medium density housing complexes. Two towers off Jane Street were located along the Black Creek valley, and amongst the Driftwood Avenue housing complexes.

The 1960s also brought the first substantial commercial developments to the study area, in the form of plazas, malls and service stations (see Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 & 5.2.3). By 1965 Wycliffe Jane Plaza had been built at the northwest corner of the Jane-Sheppard intersection, with at least three more plazas emerging on Jane Street by 1968. Several malls had also been built by that year, Jane Finch Mall and Jane-Sheppard Mall, both named for their respective locations. The malls correspond to areas zoned for shopping centres or commercial land uses, while the plazas correspond to residential or commercial areas along arterial streets.

By 1965 there was continued industrial development (see Section 5.4.1) on Oakdale Road, and a new area industrial cluster had been established further north on Norfinch Drive. Both areas continued to expand, and Eddystone Avenue was established off Oakdale Road. By 1968 the study area boasted significant industrial stretches supporting well over fifty buildings.

3.6.3 DISTRICT PLANNING PHASE 2 (1969 DISTRICT 10 PLAN)

In 1969 a new plan for District 10 was released by the North York Planning Board. It officially superseded the 1952 Official Plan for North York, and effectively replaced the 1962 District Plan 10 for the local area. As with the 1962 district plan, it was intended to complement the Metropolitan Toronto Official Plan by applying it to local conditions and circumstances.

The 1969 District 10 Plan introduced conscious efforts to create defined communities within the district, characterized by central visual and social reference points. It divided

the district's residential areas into seven communities, which were then further divided into neighbourhoods. Wholly within the study area was the Black Creek community, containing York Town and University Village neighbourhoods, and the Jane Heights community, composed of Cook Village, Yorkwoods, Glenfield, and Spenvally. South of Sheppard Avenue the Northover neighbourhood was also in the study area, part of the larger Roding community.

The plan responded to increased demand in the area, providing for increased densities and population projections over the 1962 plan. The revised gross residential density was increased from 30 to 36.4 persons per acre for the whole district, but the increases were more drastic within the study area - planned densities were 50 and 44 persons per acre in the Black Creek and Jane Heights community respectively. The plan relied on multiple-family housing units to support the population increases. Two-thirds of all housing units were to be in multi-family types, and over half of all units were to be in the form of high rise apartments.

The land use map is more detailed than previous plans, but still carries forward the general principles established by the 1952 zoning map (Figure 30). The plan added a distinction between major and minor commercial uses. The former were only located at the Jane Finch intersection, while the latter along Jane Street. It also provided a more granular depiction of residential densities than previous maps, showing higher densities along arterial roads, collectors, and the Black Creek valley.

In addition to designating communities within the district, the plan encouraged the development of community sub-centres that would provide visual and social focal points within them. Key components of such sub-centres could be high rise apartments, commercial centres, public open space, community centres, libraries and high schools. Community nodes were thus included as a criteria for siting high rise apartments.

3.6.4 STUDY AREA DEVELOPMENT: 1969-1975

The study area continued developing rapidly following the release of the 1969 District 10 Plan. While growth generally adhered to established patterns, the period is distinguished by an increase in high density developments. By 1975, the study area had been fundamentally built out and reflected the typical characteristics of a planned post-war suburb in Metro Toronto (Figure 31).

Residential subdivisions (see Section 5.1.2) remained the dominant form on interior areas off major arteries. Major subdivision plans continued to shape and define large vacant areas, particularly southwest of the Jane Finch intersection (Figure 32). Infill subdivisions developing smaller leftover areas were also common, usually resulting in shorter streets or courts. Duplexes were generally more common than detached homes.

Housing complexes (see Section 5.1.3) remained popular as well, utilizing both large

and infill sites. Several larger scale public housing complexes were built during this period, including the Firgrove-Grassway complex, and the innovative neighbourhood-scale Edgeley Village (Figure 33).

Apartment towers (see Section 5.1.4) were quick to respond to the 1969 plan's increased densities, with over twenty-five new towers built or under construction between 1969 and 1975. For the first time these buildings were being used for public housing in the study area. The scale of structures built during this period increased, with the introduction of Y-shaped plans, sites with multiple towers, and generally larger structures. About half a dozen low-rise apartments (see Section 5.1.4) were built during this period as well.

Five new schools (see Section 5.3.1) were built during the period, four of which were Catholic. A number of existing schools were expanded to serve the growing population. York Woods Public Library (see Section 5.3.2) was built by 1970 off Finch Avenue West in brutalist style using both brick and concrete (Figure 34). Several churches (see Section 5.3.4) were built along arterial and collector streets, employing modernist and functional styles. John Booth arena was built by 1975, and Edgeley Village's associated Driftwood Community Centre was completed two years later (see Section 5.3.5).

Commercial expansion took place alongside the residential growth, almost exclusively along the study area's major arteries. At least six new plazas (see Section 5.2.1) were built during the period, with those along Steeles Avenue West catering to construction and automotive products. Jane Finch Mall (see Section 5.2.2) underwent a substantial expansion and several medical centres were built along Jane Street and Finch Avenue. Industrial infill continued (see Section 5.4.1), with Norfinch, Oakdale and Eddystone streets almost entirely built-out by 1975.

3.7 1970s COMMUNITY INITIATIVES - 1970s TO PRESENT

Residential growth in the study area developed much more quickly than anticipated in the District 10 Plan, prompting dissatisfaction and concern that public facilities and services were not expanding to keep pace. The plan projected the population for the area to be 64,700 by the year 1990. However, by 1975, the population was already 53,265. The increased growth was particularly noticeable in the communities of Jane Heights and Black Creek where the population increased from 1,301 in 1961 to 33,030 in 1971, an astounding increase of 2,438%.²⁵ Several studies were commissioned by ratepayer groups, community organizations and local government to address the population increase and lack of adequate facilities and services.

This section describes some of the community initiatives that occurred in the study area. A more comprehensive description of community initiatives and activism by Wanda MacNevin entitled *It Happened Here!* is included in Appendix A.

²⁵ Klein & Sears, *A review of planning policies re. lands bounded by Finch Avenue, Highway 400, the HEPC Right-of-Way and Jane Street*, 1975, p. 22.

Review of District 10 Policies

In 1974, the University Village Ratepayer Association submitted a brief to North York's Council entitled *Too Much Too Fast: Breathing Space for Ward 3*. The submission asked Council to re-evaluate what constitutes a desirable land use for the 50 acres of undeveloped lands bounded by Finch Avenue, Highway 400, the hydro corridor and Jane Street. Then, the Downsview West Action Community (DWAC), an umbrella organization representing social service agencies, expressed concern that the “rate of population growth, the high concentration of low income households, and the recent immigrant influx have all contributed to a sense of instability with a resulting loss of community feeling and awareness.”²⁶ It made an application to amend the District 10 Plan to decrease the residential density.

In 1975, North York Council requested that the Planning Board undertake a study of the District 10 policies relating to the 50 acres of undeveloped lands bounded by Finch Avenue, Highway 400, the hydro corridor and Jane Street. The architectural firm of Klein & Sears completed the report. The owner of the lands was Elderbrook Development Ltd. and it had an application pending before the Planning Board and Council. The report noted that in Ward 3, 22.5% of all dwelling units were owned by the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) and operated as assisted rental family housing - representing the highest concentration of OHC family housing in Metro Toronto.²⁷ The report recommended that public housing should not be provided on the lands in question. If residential development was to take place on these lands, it would be best located on the central portion of the site after school and park sites were set aside and should provide a mixture of high-rise, non-family as well as low-rise, family accommodation. It also found that existing densities were overloading transportation infrastructure, and that this issue would also need to be addressed prior to further proposed residential and commercial development.

In 1976, the DWAC undertook a study to identify available social services in the area. The study found shortfalls in services compared to other areas in Toronto. In Jane Finch, there were fewer information and counselling centres, subsidised day care spaces, recreational facilities, commercial outlets, services for immigrants as well as insufficient library services and overcrowded schools.

Project Rebirth

Project Rebirth was a process established to identify the needs of the Jane and Finch neighbourhood based on broad stakeholder involvement including individuals, community organizations and government agencies as well as building consensus among participants. In 1989, a community conference was held to bring together diverse interests united in their commitment to Jane and Finch and its improvement. Attendees included individual residents and those representing organizations who

²⁶ Verney, p. 1.

²⁷ Klein & Sears, p. 21.

participated in one of thirteen discussion groups.²⁸ One attendee explained that they wanted “to show the world Jane Finch is a great community and make them jealous.”²⁹

Each of the groups engaged in discussions to identify key problems and issues and create a list of short and long term solutions proposed. One of the actions resulting from the conference was the PRIDE programme which provided \$800,000 for community improvements including lighting, walkways and landscaping including trees along Driftwood and Grandravine drives.

Murals

In the 2000s several murals were created in the study area. These include two murals commissioned by BeLovEd Movement: *Strong Women Strong Community* (2009; 10 San Romanoway) and *Be Inspired, Love Yourself, Educate Others* (2011; 25 San Romanoway). The BeLovEd Movement was launched in 2009, as a community response to the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in high schools. Youth, agencies and community partners in the Jane and Finch community joined together as part of the BeLovEd Movement, educating to end violence against young women and promoting healthy relationships. The third mural is the Black Creek Community Farm Mural (2013; Fence on 4929 Jane Street) which illustrates the topic of food security. For many years, the community lacked access to healthy food and was often referred to as a food desert by residents.³⁰ Together, these murals have created a lasting legacy in the community with many residents expressing a sense of pride in their creation, and indicating that the murals are landmarks for the community.³¹

These community initiatives are representative of the strong, local culture of grassroots organization, social advocacy and activism. Diverse cultural expressions, local organizations, and strong community leaders emerged as hallmarks of the study area during this period. They remain active forces as the study area faces contemporary challenges including large-scale transportation projects, development pressures and years of deferred maintenance at many buildings.

Development Since the 1970s

The study area was fundamentally built out by the mid-1970s. Since then, development has consisted of localized infill as well as intensification of existing sites that is in keeping with previously established patterns (Figure 35).

28 The discussion groups were: 1) Northern Neighbourhood of JF; 2) Central & Southern Neighbourhoods of JF; 3) Transportation; 4) Physical Issues & Lighting/Landscaping; 5) Community Relations & Development; 6) Health; 7) Education & Employment; 8) Communication; 9) Citizenship; 10) Recreation, Parks & Open Space; 11) Social Services; 12) General Housing Stock and 13) Public Safety & Security.

29 *Project Rebirth: A Community in Action: An Assessment of the Needs and Problems of Jane and Finch, 1990, p. 8.*

30 Talisha Ramsaroop, *Murals Talk Back: An Understanding of Community Murals in Jane Finch*. MA Thesis, York University. 2016, p. 34.

31 Ramsaroop, p. 49.

In the early 1980s the Northview Country Club was redeveloped as a residential subdivision (see Section 5.1.2). The development included primarily duplex house types, and tied into the surrounding street network of local and collector streets. Smaller infill projects continued to fill gaps in the suburban fabric, including typical subdivisions (such as Clubhouse Court), and numerous housing complexes (including San Marino Way). Only a few high-rise apartments were built, clearly denoting the end of the boom from the 1970s.

School construction (see Section 5.3.1) also slowed, though a number of facilities were expanded. Monsignor Fraser College's Norfinch Campus was built at the south end of Norfinch Drive, a location far-removed from residential areas. Community amenities (see Section 5.3.5) built after 1975 include the Norfinch Cricket Ground, the Oakdale Community Centre, and the Huron-Wendat Trail. The York Woods Public Library received an addition in 1995 and a full renovation in 2023, and a Jane/Sheppard Public Library was built in 2009 (see Section 5.3.2).

Yorkgate Mall (see Section 5.2.2) was a major commercial development by the early 1990s, adding a third large shopping site to the Jane Finch intersection. Both the Jane Finch and Jane-Sheppard Malls received additions during this period. Several smaller plazas (see Section 5.2.1) were built, and others were expanded with additional buildings in parking lots. Some existing industrial sites were expanded, though new sites altogether were limited. A cluster of sites with disparate uses at the south end of Norfinch were developed, featuring chain hotels, a contemporary police station, assisted living facilities, and a medical laboratory.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF SELECTED THEMES

The study area is associated with several themes which are described in Section 3.0. This section analyzes specific themes to determine those which have “direct associations ...that is significant to a community.” (Ontario Heritage Act, Ontario Regulation 9/06). In determining which themes to analyze, Common Bond took into consideration those that: were identified and discussed during the Heritage Focus Group and Community Advisory Committee meetings; emerged through research; and became evident during the course of the survey work.

4.1 THEMES: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT/GOVERNMENT & INSTITUTIONS - SOCIAL HOUSING

The study area has direct associations with the themes of residential development and the government initiatives that resulted in the social housing units constructed in the Jane Finch neighbourhood during the 1960s and 1970s. The legislation and programs developed by the federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments were aimed at addressing the severe housing shortages that occurred at the end of the Second World War.

Social housing is a broad term used in this CHRA which includes programs related to rental housing, both publicly and privately owned as well as programs geared towards home ownership such as mortgage support/loans.³² This includes:

- Rent-geared-to-income, sometimes referred to as subsidized housing, where rent is a percentage of income.
- Affordable rent, where rent is set at or below average market rent.
- Affordable housing, where homes are priced below market value.

Federal and Provincial Policy

Both the federal and provincial governments entered the housing market in the 1940s. In 1944, Mackenzie King’s government enacted a new National Housing Act (NHA) and a year later established the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to administer the act. The 1944 act and its administrator, CMHC, focused almost entirely on extending financing to home owners and private builders.

The province entered into Ontario’s housing market in 1948 in order to make available large numbers of owned and rented housing for low and middle income earners. Legislatively, this was done through the Housing Development Act, 1948. Following amendments to the federal National Housing Act in 1950, the province made changes to its housing act. This dovetailing of federal and provincial legislation allowed the two

³² Public housing typically refers to rental properties owned and operated by a government entity, such as a municipality. In the study area, this historically includes the City of Toronto, Metropolitan Toronto and Toronto Community Housing.

levels of government to jointly acquire and develop land for housing purposes, and to construct houses for sale or for rent on a cost-sharing basis.

Social Housing In Toronto

Social housing programs emerged in Toronto during the Second World War when emergency shelters were established to provide temporary relief for the city's housing shortages. At that time, more than 30,000 families were sharing dwellings, while several hundred families lived in abandoned stores and condemned buildings.³³ With families already living doubled and tripled up in rooms and flats, there was no room for returning servicemen who returned to Canada by the thousands. As a result, the temporary shelter program expanded at the end of the war when the Canadian military demobilized. In the years immediately following the war, Toronto's existing housing shortages were compounded by high immigration, lack of serviced land to build upon and low numbers of new dwellings being constructed.

The construction of social housing by the municipality began in Toronto in the late 1940s. In fact, Toronto was the birthplace of Canada's first social housing project in 1949, when Torontonians voted overwhelmingly in favour of building and financing Regent Park North. Regent Park North and the several subsequent social housing developments in Toronto - Regent Park South (1960), Moss Park (1960s), Alexandra Park (1968) and the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood (1974) - were urban renewal projects whereby existing residential or industrial properties were redeveloped for housing purposes.

Although CMHC recognized as early as 1947 that rental units were the most pressing housing need in Canadian cities, the corporation did little to entice private builders into the market. In Toronto, the growth of apartment houses remained slow until the mid-1950s, when both rent control and the rapidly expanding market for single-family suburban dwellings came to an end. The shortage sent rents in the city soaring. Additionally, in the 1950s, nearly half a million people arrived in the city.³⁴ At this time, Toronto ranked near the bottom of Canadian cities for dwellings completed per capita. Between 1947 and 1954, the number of new dwellings constructed in Toronto represented only one-tenth of the city's population growth. Even the addition of more than 141,000 dwellings in Toronto's suburbs in the latter half of the 1950s made only a small dent in overcrowding.³⁵

Unlike many other Canadian cities, Toronto had limited spaces to build. While the suburbs of North York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke had sufficient space to house the city's growing population, they lacked serviced land. This lack of serviced land was a chief impediment to solving Toronto's housing crisis and was one of the reasons behind

33 Kevin Brushett, "Where Will the People Go?: Toronto's Emerging Housing Program and the Limits of Social Housing Policy, 1944-1957." *Journal of Urban History*. Volume. 33, Issue 3 (March 2007), p. 378.

34 Brushett, p. 376.

35 Brushett, p. 385.

the formation of the Metropolitan Toronto in 1953.

The Role of Metropolitan Toronto in Social Housing

The Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority was created in 1955, to operate and administer social housing projects constructed jointly by the federal and provincial governments. By 1963, the Authority had constructed Regent Park South (732 units), Scarlettwood (150 units) and Lawrence Heights (1081 units). Regent Park North (1,397 units) was built and administered by the City of Toronto Housing Authority. Rents in all these developments were geared to the incomes of the tenants. Another 347 units were under construction on Warden Avenue. Further projects were planned for O'Connor Drive in North York (300 units) and Thistletown in Etobicoke (500 units).³⁶

Thus, rent-geared-to-income family housing increased between 1953 and 1963 from 650 to nearly 3,500 units, but 90% of these were concentrated at Lawrence Heights and Regent Park South. Realizing that more subsidized housing was required, Metropolitan Council gave the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority more power for the initiation and construction of social housing. Until this time, the Authority had been functioning as a provincial body responsible only for managing social housing projects, not their construction. It set a target of 6,300 subsidized rental units in its 10-year capital works project - considered a minimum to address existing waiting lists.³⁷

The Role of the Province of Ontario in Social Housing

The Ontario Housing Corporation was established in 1964 to oversee the provincial government's housing policies and programs. This included the Home Ownership Made Easy (HOME) Plan which provided or assisted in the provision of residential accommodation, both for rent and sale, for Ontarians in need at a price they could afford. The HOME Plan included programs specific to senior citizens and students and also programs to support tenant purchase, mortgage lending and condominium ownership.

One of the roles of the OHC was to distribute social housing across all parts of Metropolitan Toronto as a way of integrating tenants into communities rather than concentrating them into large projects. The OHC tended to build public housing as high-rise, high-density apartment buildings due to: government-imposed limits on what it could spend; local opposition to public housing in their neighbourhoods; and a shortage of suitably zoned sites.³⁸

Unable to build or acquire enough housing to meet demand, the OHC designed a system to identify applicants in the greatest need. This resulted in the concentration of Metropolitan Toronto's lowest-income families in relatively few areas. As these areas became associated with various social problems, "public opposition hardened not just

³⁶ Metropolitan Toronto Annual Report, 1961, p. 36.

³⁷ Metropolitan Toronto 1953-1963: Ten Years of Progress, p. 37.

³⁸ Frances Frisken, *The Public Metropolis: The Political Dynamics of Urban Expansion in the Toronto Region, 1924-2003*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2007, p. 131-2.

toward social housing, but toward all forms of low-rental, multiple-unit housing in most parts of the region."³⁹

By 1971, the OHC had 28,871 units either in pre-construction, construction or management in Metropolitan Toronto in the following areas:

- Toronto Centre - 9,490 units
- Scarborough - 8,526 units
- York North - 6,949 units
- Etobicoke - 2,416
- York - 1,186
- York East - 304 units⁴⁰

However, as social housing became increasingly unpopular, so did the OHC. In the mid-1970s, it began to decentralise responsibility for its stock of public housing to local housing authorities, saying that it wanted to put social housing in the hands of local citizens who are sensitive to the particular needs in the area. "There was little scope, however, for community participation and initiative in the authorities that OHC set up. Not only were most of their members appointed by the federal and provincial governments, but they were authorised only to administer the existing stock of rent-gear-to-income housing, not to add to it. Only non-profit agencies, housing co-operatives, and private developers could do that."⁴¹

In 1974 the OHC was dissolved and replaced by the Ontario Mortgage Corporation. By the time it was dissolved, the OHC added more than 15,000 assisted rental family housing units to the existing 3,700 in Toronto. Metro Toronto had 60% of the assisted rental family housing stock in Ontario.

Another provincial initiative in this period was the 1967 introduction of the Condominium Act as one solution to the issues of rising land, construction costs and high interest rates. Condominiums would allow people to buy and hold title to an individual home in a multiple-unit building and thus benefit from lower land and building costs than those for single and semi-detached homes. By 1971, OHC was associated with 10,000 condominium unit starts in Metropolitan Toronto. OHC also provided condominium financing through its mortgage lending program.⁴²

Downloading Social Housing

In 1997, the provincial government declared its intention to transfer administrative and funding responsibilities for social housing to Ontario's municipalities. The following year, full responsibility for the province's annual funding commitment for social housing was transferred to municipalities. The next step was to transfer provincial administrative responsibility to municipalities. Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) was

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ontario Housing Corporation, Policies, Programs and Structure [1971], "Total Ontario Housing Units for Families and Senior Citizens by Municipality," December 1971, Appendix C, p. 5.

⁴¹ Frisken, p. 168.

⁴² Ontario Housing Corporation, Policies, Programs and Structure [1971], p. 10.

formed by the City of Toronto in 2002 through the amalgamation of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Corporation and the former Toronto Housing Company.

Currently the TCHC portfolio contains 1,347 buildings, consisting of townhouses and walk-ups (879 buildings), houses (276 buildings), high-, mid- and low-rise apartments (123 buildings). TCHC provides homes to more than 43,000 households which accommodate 89,000 residents.

Social Housing in Jane Finch

Social housing in Jane Finch was constructed on land that was previously agricultural and almost entirely underdeveloped. This is similar to the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood which was constructed in the 1950s, in the area north of Lawrence Avenue between Bathurst and Dufferin streets.

The following chart identifies some of the Toronto Community Housing developments in the study area that are primarily Rent Geared to Income (RGI) units. The TCH properties in the study area are concentrated along Needle Firway, Sheppard Avenue West, Edgley Village and Driftwood Avenue/Grandravine Drive.

Address/Name	Date Built	Type	TCH ID
20 Yellowstone	1965	Family/RGI (52 units)	TCH 4
1862-1886 Sheppard	1965	Family/RGI (147 units)	TCH 12
10-44 Driftwood	1968	Family/RGI (306 units)	TCH 44
415 Driftwood	1968	Family/RGI (403 units)	TCH 25
367-383 Driftwood	1968	Family/RGI (403 units)	TCH 25
388-404 Driftwood	1968	Family/RGI (403 units)	TCH 25
1-25 Shoreham Crt	1968	Family/RGI (176 units)	TCH 325
35 Shoreham Drive/Edgley Apartments 123	1968	Senior/RGI, Market (323 units)	TCH 123
1901 Sheppard West	1968	Family/RGI (80 units)	TCH 41
7-11 Arleta	1975	Seniors/RGI, Market (372 units)	TCH 131
4400 Jane Street	1975	Family/RGI (171 units)	TCH 3
2999 Jane/Jane Yewtree	1975	Family/RGI (188 units)	TCH 24
2-14 and 22-36 Needle Firway	1975	Family/RGI (152 units)	TCH 42
5 Needle Firway	1975	Family/RGI (152 units)	TCH 42
15 Tobermory	1975	Family/RGI (374 units)	TCH 52

The study area contains a number of condominium buildings. While not considered a form of social housing today, the provincial government began promoting condominiums in the late 1960s as a way of achieving home ownership by allowing people to buy and hold title to an individual home in a multiple-unit building, thus benefiting from lower land and building costs than those for single and semi-detached homes. The following table provides examples of condominium buildings in the study area.

Address	Name	Date	ID
2901 Jane Street	Yorkwoods Village Phase 1	1965	YCC 123
12-20 London Green Court/71-87 Driftwood Avenue	Yorkwoods Village Phase 3	1965	YCC 6
10-92 London Green Court & 53-61 Driftwood Avenue	London Green Condominiums	1968	YCC 14
366-386 Driftwood Avenue		1968	YCC 17
10 Eddystone Avenue	Oakstone Mews	1975	YCC 164
5 Firth Road	Flowertown Place	1975	YCC 36
4645 Jane Street	Edgeley in the Village	1975	YCC 82
2645 Jane Street		1975	

4.2 THEME: COMMUNITY - COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISM

At the first HFG meeting, activism was noted as being an important part of the community's history. As a result, the City Planning division engaged long-time community resident and organizer Wanda MacNevin to identify local organizations, programs and services, as well as the spaces they used in the Jane Finch neighbourhood. Her report, entitled *It Happened Here!* is included as Appendix A.

The report provides the following summary:

“Spaces in both Toronto Community Housing Corporation buildings and in city community centres were instrumental in community development. For example, the work of residents in developing community services could not have been done without utilizing space within the following TCHC locations:

- *4400 Jane Street*: Jane/Finch Centre (office and program space), programs for youth groups, community meetings
- *415 Driftwood Avenue*: YWCA Life Skills Group, Action for Neighbourhood Change, Getting in Touch, community meetings
- *15 Tobermory Drive*: Life Skills Group, moms and tots programs, Mennonite

Community Ministry (had a thrift shop, food bank), meeting spaces

- *2999 Jane Street*: Life Skills Group, Centre for Green Change, meeting space
- *5 Needlefirway*: Life Skills Group, Women’s Group, United Church’s Community Ministry utilized 5 Needlefirway and then they had one of the townhouses – now demolished
- *San Romanoway*: programs and services, community meetings

Meetings, celebrations and events were mostly conducted in the following community centres:

- *Driftwood Community Centre*
- *Oakdale Community Centre*
- *Northwood Community Centre*

The following malls had, or continue to have, community services in their spaces:

- *Jane Finch Mall* – formerly had the Downsview Weston Information Post and continues to have Jane/Finch Centre’s Early ON and JVS Employment Services, Corner Commons
- *Jane-Sheppard Mall* – (northeast corner) Black Creek Community Health Centre was there for about 6 years
- *Jane-Sheppard Plaza* – (northwest corner) Northwood Neighbourhood Services was there for several years as was Delta Family Resource Centre
- *Sheridan Mall* – Black Creek CHC has a site there
- *Yorkgate Mall* – Black Creek CHC has a second site there; also York University-TD Community Engagement Centre, Jane/Finch Centre’s The Spot, and Seneca College”

4.3 THEME: ARTS & CULTURE - ART, FOOD, MUSIC

At the HFG meetings, the role of art, food and music in shaping the community was raised.

The community murals at San Romanoway, Black Creek Farm, Driftwood/Grandravine were identified as significant artworks that need to be preserved. It was noted that each mural has its own backstory and history.

The wide variety of international food in the study area was also noted by the HFG. There was a desire to protect and support these restaurants. Restaurants in Yorkgate Mall (Caribbean/Montego Bay), Yorkwoods Plaza (Debe’s Roti) and along Eddystone (bakeries/pizza) provide different foods and authentic experiences.

Hip Hop and Rap subculture was noted as a strong and significant feature of Jane

Finch. Community events are documented in these songs and are part of the Jane Finch identity. Artists Jully Black, Dream Warriors and Keenan were all noted as coming from the Jane Finch community. Steelbands were also noted (Pan Fantasy Steel Band) which would use schoolyards as gathering places.

4.4 THEME: GOVERNMENT & INSTITUTIONS - URBAN PLANNING

Urban planning is considered an important theme because of its impact in shaping the study area's urban morphology.

In Ontario, urban planning emerged in the mid-20th century as a means for municipal governments to regulate change and growth. The 1946 Planning Act allowed municipalities to regulate growth through policies primarily contained in official plans and zoning by-laws. Such documents governed established urban areas, but had far greater impacts in undeveloped areas where they effectively prescribed road systems, land uses, building types, and parkland, thus shaping new communities through planning regulations. Post-war planning in Toronto and North York was influenced by modernist ideas about growth and new communities, which were automobile-centric and premised on distinct land uses. Jane and Finch developed within this planning paradigm and reflects these ideas in its urban morphology and built form.

The study area's rapid transformation from farmland in the mid-1950s to a dense modern suburb by the mid-1970s reflects the ideas of several important planning documents: the North York 1952 Official Plan, and two Metro Toronto district plans from 1962 and 1969. Each building off the previous, these plans contained the ideas for growth and urban planning that ultimately shaped the study area's road networks, distribution of land uses, building types, and park systems.

Within the study area, the 1952 Official Plan⁴³ established a framework for growth that prescribed distinct land uses based on existing features such as the arterial concession roads, Highway 400, the hydro-electric power corridor, and the Black Creek river valley. These ideas and trends were largely carried forward and refined by subsequent plans.

The 1962 District Plan 10⁴⁴ provided for land uses that fundamentally adhered to the principles and patterns set out by the 1952 Official Plan, while increasing prescribed densities. It also introduced the collector street system of curved roads serving as intermediaries between smaller residential streets and arterials. Substantial population growth through the 1960s made District Plan 10 influential in establishing many of the street patterns, locations of land uses, and different building types that define the study area. As Metro's first district plan, it provides an instructive articulation of contemporary

43 The 1952 Official Plan is described in greater detail in Section 3.5.1, and its physical impacts are summarized in Section 3.5.2

44 District Plan 10 is described in greater detail in Section 3.6.1, and its physical impacts are summarized in Section 3.6.2.

modernist planning ideas about diverse building types, abundance of open space, density limits, and road systems.⁴⁵

The 1969 District 10 Plan⁴⁶ generally adhered to the land use patterns from the 1952 and 1962 plans. It provided for substantially increased densities, relying on a much higher proportion of multiple-family housing types to achieve them. It also attempted to foster local community nodes, by designating distinct communities and promoting the development of visual and social centres for each. The study area had been effectively built-out by 1975, with growth from this period distinguished by an increase in high-density housing types.

45 Sewell, p. 127.

46 District Plan 10 is described in greater detail in Section 3.6.3, and its physical impacts are summarized in Section 3.6.4.

5.0 ANALYSIS OF SELECT DEVELOPMENT TYPES

In order to assist in understanding and grouping properties, a list of development types has been created based on the built form in the study area. Given the study area's large size, and growth on a suburban scale in response to defined planning constraints, understanding the overall patterns of development are more instructive than individual buildings. As such 'development types' rather than 'building types' have been used, to account for developments of multiple buildings in addition to single structures.

The list of different development types was created based on the field survey, and is intended to convey the built form of the study area. While these development types may exist elsewhere in the city, this list is intended to convey the specific built form as it exists here. Additional analysis of prominent or otherwise notable development types is provided below.

- Residential
 - **Single Dwellings**
 - **Subdivisions (Major/Neighbourhood & Infill)**
 - **Housing Complexes**
 - **Apartment Buildings (Towers and Low-Rise)**
- Commercial
 - **Plazas**
 - **Shopping Malls (new and expansion of)**
 - Other: Medical Centres
 - Other: service stations
- Institutional
 - **Schools (new and expansion of)**
 - Libraries
 - Healthcare (hospital)
 - Places of Worship
 - **Community Centres**
 - Parks
- Industrial
 - Industrial Buildings

Additional analysis of prominent or otherwise notable development types (bolded above) follows. Such development types are described, along with a summary of their

typical locations within the study area, a chart indicating which periods they were built or modified during, and sample images of the type. For non-bolded development types, only charts indicating periods of development and sample images are provided.

5.1 RESIDENTIAL

5.1.1 SINGLE DWELLINGS

Description

This development type refers to homes that were built on an individual basis, rather than in relation to larger suburban subdivisions. They reflect rural development patterns, whereby small outside portions of agricultural land were sold for housing. Such areas were usually along existing roads or property lines, retaining the core of the larger property in behind.

In 1942 the federal government established the Veterans' Land Act (VLA) program to allow ex-service members to purchase land with a government loan and small down payment. One of the holding types under the program was part-time farmers / small holders. Originally envisioned to allow holders to supplement income through a market garden, this type evolved to provide land for veterans who wished to live in semi-rural areas.⁴⁷ The single dwelling development process was evident by the early 1950s in the study area (see Figures 12 and 14), and may have been influenced or driven by the VLA.

Single dwellings are low-density single family house forms, displaying ranch-style characteristics, indicative of the larger lots available. They are typically one storey, with low hipped roofs, featuring picture windows, brick and angelstone materials. Despite their similarities single dwellings typically have distinctive designs, symbolizing their construction by individuals rather than developers. They also often differ from neighbouring subdivision properties in terms of form, orientation, lot size and landscaping.

Prevalence in the Study Area

Single dwellings were originally concentrated north of Sheppard Avenue and west of Jane Street. Surviving examples remain at 21 Oakdale Road, 83 and 92 Stanley Road, and 57 Laura Road.

Prevalence over time: Single Dwellings							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Single Dwellings	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X

⁴⁷ Tricia E. G. Shulist, "My Little Piddly House and All This Land - The Veteran's Land Act in Canada and The Hamilton-Wentworth Region" (MA thesis, McMaster University, 1998), 92-93.

Examples: Single Dwellings		
		
21 Oakdale Rd.	83 Stanley Rd.	92 Stanley Rd.

5.1.2 SUBDIVISIONS

Description

Subdivisions are a low-density development type that comprises large areas of dwellings and their related road systems. Residential subdivisions were created in response to land-use planning and zoning with the study area, designing lot patterns and road networks imposed on previously agricultural, recreational, or fallow lands. As such, subdivisions were critical to establishing new urban fabric within their suburban locations. Subdivisions have a homogenous character, both in terms of land-use and building types. This reflects the land-use planning and zoning context they emerged from, which dictated both land use and density.

Subdivisions are defined by large areas of repetitive houses, which are set on internal road networks rather than arterial streets. Subdivisions include both single family and duplex types. They were usually built out by developers, resulting in stretches or entire areas with identical or similar house forms, types, and designs.

Two broad types of subdivision were identified within the study area:

Major / Neighbourhood Subdivisions - are large subdivisions that were usually the first urban fabric prescribed for their area. They established the local characteristics of the area in terms of lot sizes, orientation, and street layouts. Given their size they often include numerous streets with similar shapes or layouts, sometimes within a hierarchy involving collectors. Examples include subdivision plans M-770, M-1004 and M-1320 (see Figures 18, 26 & 32).

Infill Subdivisions - are more localized subdivisions filling smaller spaces left undeveloped by major or neighbourhood subdivisions. They are typically limited in size, often comprising a street or two, often with cul-de-sacs. Naturally, infill subdivisions followed major / neighbourhood subdivisions, and so tend to be built later.

Typically the house forms of detached and duplex types are one- to two-storeys in height, with split level types being common. Designs range from traditional forms




with neo-historical detailing to more modern expressions of massing and design. Typical materials include brick, angelstone, picture windows and wrought iron railings. Common design tendencies include low roof profiles, round arches, and front porches, sometimes created by recessed sections of the massing. The combination of round-arches, wrought iron and covered porches on subdivision houses is often associated with the influence of Italian immigrants.⁴⁸

Subdivisions rely on interior road networks, usually established by the same subdivision plans that created building lots. The approach to roads responded to local plans, particularly the district plans of 1962 and 1969. Early subdivisions featured interior streets with rectilinear layouts, with straight roads and right angle turns/intersections (see Figure 17). By the mid-1960s however, interior roads the use of curved collector roads becomes a defining characteristic, along with more fluidity in the shape of smaller streets (see Figures 25 and 31).


Prevalence in the Study Area

Subdivisions were typically located away from major arterial streets. This was in response to emerging ideas about land-use planning and zoning, which prioritized higher-density residential uses and commercial uses along arteries. These trends are most clearly conveyed on the District Plan 10’s 1969 Land Use plan (see Figure 30), but are also evident on land use plans from 1952 and 1962 (see Figures 16 and 20).

Prevalence over time: Subdivisions							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Maj. Subdivision	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Infill Subdivision	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓

Examples: Subdivisions		
		
100-106 Shoreham Dr.	Blaney Cres. east to Picaro Dr.	136-134 Topcliff Ave.

48 Alessandro Tersigni, “Toronto’s suburban houses are culturally valuable even while reflecting imperfect urban planning,” *Toronto Star*, August 17, 2022. https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/toronto-s-suburban-houses-are-culturally-valuable-even-while-reflecting-imperfect-urban-planning/article_d360d15b-3ca5-5a2c-9a42-c04dc8e83cc9.html

Examples: Subdivisions		
		
Northeast from 41 Elana Dr.	East from 136 Firgrove Cres.	67 Blacksmith Cres.

5.1.3 HOUSING COMPLEXES

Description

Housing complexes are medium-density residential developments comprising groups of connected housing units within a shared or common site. Housing complexes reflect conscious efforts to harmonize multiple housing structures within a designed landscape. This contrasts with earlier, usually urban row-housing, most often composed of interconnected repeating dwellings developed along an existing public street system.

Multiple housing structures are a defining feature of the type, always composed of a range units, including maisonette, back-to-back, and stacked apartments types. At their best, the structures made use of modern layouts and configurations to provide ample accommodation for families within a suburban context. The structures reflect contemporary design trends, integrating conventional domestic materials and concrete within innovative forms that met functional and programmatic needs. The results are contemporary structures, often expressed as geometric volumes while articulating individual units.

Landscape is the other important aspect of housing complexes, especially given the integrated nature of the type. They are found on medium to large sized sites, with typical examples ranging from 3 to 10 acres. Early examples put heavy emphasis on designing landscapes to be contextual and automobile free, defining pleasant pedestrian circulation routes for users. Such sites are organized around considered landscaped pedestrian circulation networks, with most parking underground and limited surface parking. Some housing complexes rigorously adhere to these principles, and some are more functional combining all services and parking at grade. Many demonstrate a combination of surface and underground parking.




Housing complexes were innovative building types in 1960s Toronto, emerging in response to a need for appropriate housing for families. They employed early condominium management structures to allow rental or ownership of individual units

within a site that was commonly managed.

Prevalence in the Study Area

Earlier examples were built adjacent to major arteries, but later examples are found along collector streets, particularly along Driftwood Avenue, Grandravine Drive and Shoreham Drive.

Prevalence over time: Housing Complexes							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Housing Complex	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X

Examples: Housing Complexes		
		
12-14 London Green Ct. (Yorkwoods Village)	30 Venetian Cres. (Yorkwoods Village)	5 Shoreham Ct. (Edgeley Village)

5.1.4 APARTMENT BUILDINGS (TOWERS AND LOW-RISE)

Description

The apartment building development type refers to high-density residential buildings. They display a range of sizes and, but are typically expressed as a single massing with entry to units provided via shared common spaces. This differentiates them from housing complexes, which have less density and usually express units as individual, albeit connected, massings. They occupy large sites, often with large parking and landscaped areas.

Apartment buildings were an important means to achieving the densities prescribed by the 1962 and 1969 district plans. As such, despite a slow uptake they were built in high numbers between 1965 and the mid-1970s.

Apartment buildings demonstrate a range of modern styles and materials, including brick, glazed brick, concrete tile and structural concrete. In some cases new claddings have been added over time. The massings are also highly modern in their geometric volumnar tendencies, often enlivened by the balconies of units.

Apartment buildings in the study area can be divided into two categories:

Apartment Building - Tower: these have massings with a clear vertical emphasis, and typically range in height from 8 to 19 storeys. They have highly rectilinear plans. These higher density developments typically feature landscaped areas to provide green space for their residents. Many reflect configurations associated with the “Tower-in-the-Park”, a term for the popular post-war development type combining residential towers with landscaped or park settings.




Apartment Building - Low-Rise: these have massings defined by horizontality, often featuring more complex or meandering plans that frame the landscape or courtyards. These range in height from 3 to 7 storeys.




Prevalence in the Study Area

The siting of high-density apartment buildings was an important consideration in both the 1962 and 1969 district plans. Priority was placed on locations providing access to roads, public transportation and open spaces. The 1969 land use plan is helpful in visualising these priorities in space (see Figure 30).

Most apartment buildings are located on Jane Street or arterials, often adjacent to medium density housing complexes. Two towers off Jane Street were located along the Black Creek valley, and amongst the Driftwood Avenue housing complexes.

Prevalence over time: Apartment Buildings							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Tower	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	X
Low-Rise	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X

Examples: Apartment Buildings - Tower		
		
4645-4771 Jane St.	2775 Jane St.	5, 10 & 25 San Romanoway.

Examples: Apartment Buildings - Low-Rise		
		
2645 Jane St.	10 Eddystone Ave.	101 Driftwood Ave.

5.2 COMMERCIAL

5.2.1 PLAZAS

Description

Plazas are commercial developments with multiple businesses occupying exposed frontages within a continuous structure. They emerged in North York as a new type of planned shopping centre, favoured over traditional mixed-use commercial buildings which lacked loading areas and off-street parking. Commercial units in plazas are directly accessible from the exterior (in contrast to shopping malls accessed via internal corridors). Plazas feature at-grade parking areas, usually located between the businesses and public right-of-way. Sometimes plazas support secondary office uses above grade. Plazas range in size from one storey strip malls containing several businesses to larger shopping centres containing over a dozen.

The 1962 and 1969 district plans anticipated two principal types of commercial development - Major and Minor/Local commercial. The former was intended to support large shopping sites intended to serve regional areas, whereas the latter were envisioned to serve local customers at the neighbourhood level. Plazas reflect the Minor/Local commercial type, which could either be zoned specifically, but also permitted within residential land uses up to a limited size.

Plazas are typically simple, low-lying structures with a rectilinear plan presenting a continuous elevation of businesses. The elevation is usually fronted by a covered, sometime colonnaded walkway that allows for sheltered access between units. Designs include a variety of modern and contemporary design gestures. Materials are also varied, including brick, sheet metal siding, fieldstone, copper cladding, and shingles (asphalt and cedar) usually over short mansard roofs.

Prevalence in the Study Area

The district plans provided for Minor/Local commercial uses to be zoned specifically or located within residential land uses. In practice all of the study area's plazas are located on arterial streets, with most on Jane Street and the others on the south side of Steeles Avenue West.

Prevalence over time: Plazas							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Plazas	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X

Examples: Plazas		
		
1925-1959 Sheppard Ave. W.	1947-2011 Finch Ave. W.	2512-2546 Jane St.

5.2.2 SHOPPING MALLS

Description

Shopping malls are large commercial developments defined by a single shopping centre containing multiple businesses. They emerged in North York as a new type of planned shopping centre, favoured over traditional mixed-use commercial buildings which lacked loading areas and off-street parking. Unlike plazas, shopping malls are accessed and organized about internal circulation systems. Businesses’ frontages are primarily located inside the mall, although certain tenants are afforded direct exterior frontages. Shopping malls are surrounded by very large surface parking areas to support the volume of business that is regional rather than local in scale.

The 1962 and 1969 district plans anticipated two principal types of commercial development - Major and Minor/Local commercial. The former was intended to support large shopping sites intended to serve regional areas, whereas the latter were envisioned to serve local customers at the neighbourhood level. Shopping malls reflect the Major commercial type, which was zoned specifically at the intersections of arterial streets to maximize access.

From a design perspective, shopping malls are wide and low-lying structures. They generally have very functional rectangular massings, with a range of cladding materials including brick and glazing. Signage and other branding features associated with businesses are the main aesthetic features of the structures. As well the major entrances to the mall buildings usually feature distinguishing or otherwise articulate design gestures. It is common for malls to expand over time, expanding their dedicated shopping buildings.

Prevalence in the Study Area

Shopping malls are located at the intersections of arterial streets, strongly reflecting the ideas of land use planning. There are three shopping malls in the study area, with the Jane Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall located at the intersection of Jane and Finch streets, and Jane Sheppard Mall located at Jane and Sheppard streets.

Prevalence over time: Shopping Malls							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Shopping Malls	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X

Examples: Shopping Malls		
		
2707 Jane St.	1911 Jane St.	1 York Gate Blvd.



5.2.3 OTHER: MEDICAL CENTRES

Prevalence over time: Medical Centres							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Medical Centres	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X

Examples: Medical Centres		
		
2698 Jane St.	4640 Jane St.	2065 Finch Ave. W.

5.2.4 OTHER: SERVICE STATIONS

Prevalence over time: Service Stations							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Service Stations	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓

Examples: Service Stations	
	
4000 Jane St.	3900 Jane St.

5.3 INSTITUTIONAL

5.3.1 SCHOOLS

Description

The school development type is focused on elementary, middle and high school sites, for both public and Catholic school systems. The location of schools within the study area was influenced by the plans of 1952, 1962 and 1969. Generally the plans called for schools to be located within the prescribed residential areas. By 1962 middle and high schools were differentiated from elementary schools – the latter were related to planning of residential areas, whereas the former were considered alongside institutional uses. The 1969 district plan called for middle and high schools to be located on arterial or collector roads. These trends are evident on the 1969 plan’s land use map (see Figure 30). That plan also called for public open space adjacent to schools wherever possible.

Schools are a specialized building type, most often two storeys in height with a range of plans. Designed by architects, they usually reflect contemporary building styles. Early examples display strong influences from the International Style, with more expressive modernist examples emerging over time. Early schools are characterized by compositions of brick, large windows or curtain walls, while later examples introduce more complex massings, and diverse cladding, types including masonry block, aggregate panels and metal roofing. Many schools have been modified over time, including alterations to materials and significant expansions to the facilities themselves. School sites also incorporate parking areas and open spaces, which may include

sportsfields. In some cases schools are adjacent to public parkland.

In the late 1960s rapid population growth was putting immense pressure on the North York School Board. By 1967 there were over 12,000 students without permanent schools needing to be accommodated using emergency measures.⁴⁹ The problem was exacerbated by the conventional construction tendering process, which was delayed until the detailed completion of design drawings. In 1968 the board implemented a bulk contracting process, that effectively minimized design and construction timelines through the use of contract management services to expedite the tendering process based on initial designs and upset limits.⁵⁰

At the same time, a number of school facilities in the study area were designed to permit flexible interior spaces based on an ‘open plan approach’ to delivering education. These ideas manifested in the primacy of large multi-use open spaces supporting shared aspects of education delivery. Within this system the flexibility of spaces was prioritized, and removable or operable partitions were often used. Courtyards were also commonly implemented to provide access to natural light and outdoor spaces. This ideas were implemented at Yorkwoods Public School, the extension to Driftwood Public School, Shoreham Public School, and Brookview Middle School (formerly Jane Junior High School).^{51, 52, 53}

Prevalence in the Study Area

In accordance with planning ideas, schools are most commonly found in the study area’s residential areas, on collector or local streets, and often adjacent to parkland or other community facilities. Several Catholic schools are located on arterial streets, and a high school is located on Oakdale Road, adjacent to industrial properties and the hospital.

Prevalence over time: Schools							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Schools	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓




49 "An Experiment in School Construction Project Management North York, Ontario." *Architecture Canada* 45, no. 3 (March 1968): 49.

50 "How the trend to school bulk contracting moves forward in the Toronto Area." *Canadian Builder* 18, no. 9 (Sept. 1968): 33.

51 "Flexible Schools." *The Canadian Architect* 13, no. 9 (Sept. 1968): 58-64.



52 "Shoreham Drive Public School, North York, Ontario." *The Canadian Architect* 15, no. 12 (Dec. 1970): 53-58.

53 "Jane Junior High School." *The Canadian Architect* 14, no. 5 (May 1969): 55-60.

Examples: Schools		
		
Westview Centennial Secondary School	Oakdale Park Middle School	St. Jane Frances Catholic School

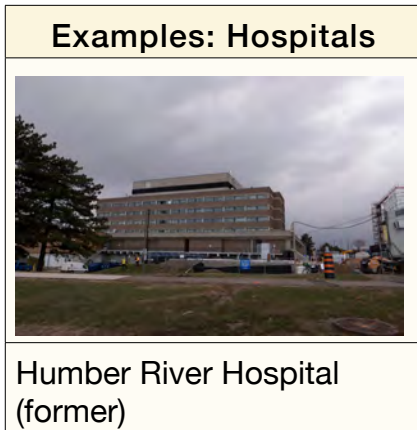
5.3.2 LIBRARIES

Prevalence over time: Libraries							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Libraries	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓

Examples: Libraries	
	
Yorkwoods Library	Jane/Sheppard Branch

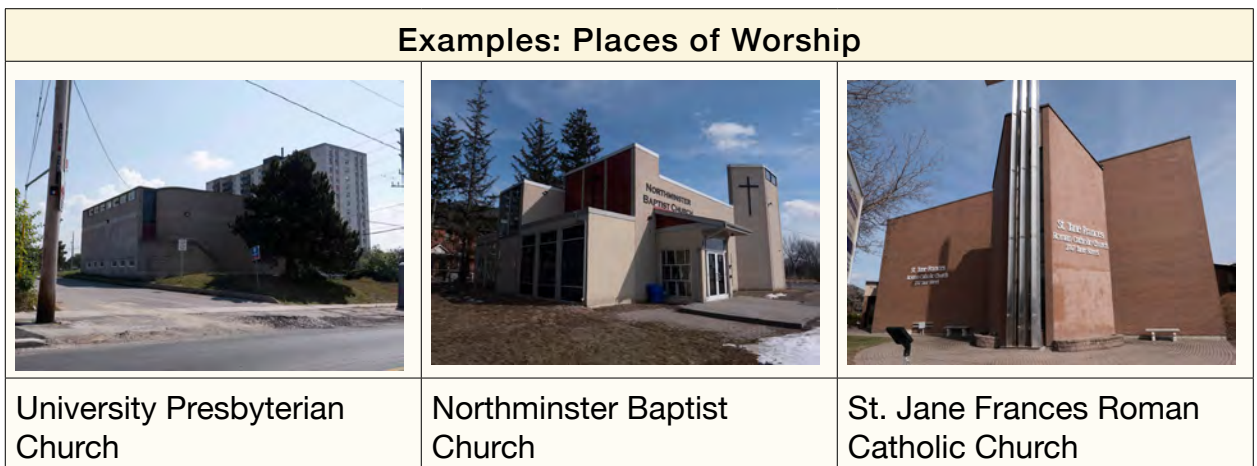
5.3.3 HOSPITAL

Prevalence over time: Hospitals							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Libraries	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X






5.3.4 PLACES OF WORSHIP

Prevalence over time: Places of Worship							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Places of Worship	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	X



5.3.5 COMMUNITY CENTRES

Prevalence over time: Community Centres							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Community Centres	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓

Examples: Community Centres		
		
Driftwood Community Centre	Oakdale Community Centre	Former Yorkwoods Village Community Centre

5.3.6 PARKS

Prevalence over time: Parks							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Parks	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Examples: Parks		
		
Firgrove Park	Driftwood Park	Topcliff Park

5.4 INDUSTRIAL

5.4.1 INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

Prevalence over time: Industrial Buildings							
	1790s - 1930s	1930s - 1950s	1952 - 1961	1962 - 1968	1969 - 1975	1976 - 1989	1990 - Present
Industrial Buildings	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Examples: Industrial Buildings		
		
100 Norfinch Dr.	4101-4113 Steeles Ave. W.	149 Norfinch Dr.

6.0 SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC CONTEXT OF THE STUDY AREA

6.1 DESCRIPTION

The study area comprises an 8.75 km² portion of North York bounded by Steeles Avenue West, the Black Creek river valley, Sheppard Avenue West and Highway 400. The Black Creek river valley is a tributary of the Humber River and a major natural feature of the study area defining its eastern boundary. The Finch Hydro Corridor runs east-west through the study area between Norfinch Drive and Black Creek and features a recreational trail. The former concession roads form the area's underlying grid of east-west (Steeles Avenue West, Finch Avenue West and Sheppard Avenue West) and north-south (Jane Street) traffic arteries.

Most of the study area is residential uses, featuring single family, multi-unit and tower buildings. Plazas and shopping malls are found on arterial streets, while light industrial uses are located on Norfinch Drive/Oakdale Road and on Eddystone Avenue. Institutional uses are found throughout the area, with schools and places of worship widely dispersed. Parks are located in the Black Creek river valley and in residential areas.

6.2 DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

The study area developed very rapidly within the context of heavy suburban growth in the post-war years of Metropolitan Toronto. This period coincided with the widespread adoption of urban planning by municipalities as a tool to direct and shape growth, alongside the emergence of new building and development types.

As a result, the vast majority of the study area, including its urban morphology, was almost entirely cast in a short amount of time between the late 1950s and mid-1970s, with strong adherence to plans. It clearly reflects modernist planning ideas from the post-war period combined with conventional and emerging forms of development. It is best understood as a post-war planned suburb in Metro Toronto.

By the 1950s the study area remained entirely rural in character, comprised of agricultural lands set within the grid of concession roads established by township surveys. Amidst rapid post-war growth, North York township prepared a new Official Plan in 1952 to guide development. In conjunction with its corresponding zoning by-law, the 1952 Official Plan prescribed separate land-uses within the study area, one of the hallmarks of modern planning. It also specified corresponding building types. Land-uses were arranged according to prominent elements including the arterial streets, the hydro corridor, Highway 400 and Black Creek river valley.

The following year the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was incorporated, with a planning board established to provide a regional framework for growth. In 1962, District

Plan 10 was prepared for an area that extended beyond the study area. As the first district plan prepared by the new planning board, it was an important pilot project to implement new ideas about the design and growth of suburban communities. District Plan 10's prescribed land uses fundamentally followed the patterns and principles set out by the 1952 Official Plan, but with additional detail on housing types and new circulation ideas in the form of collector streets.

The district plan was revised seven years later with the 1969 District 10 Plan. It generally adhered to the land-use patterns established in 1952 and carried through 1962, while calling for increased densities along with more multiple-family housing types to achieve them. It also attempted to create new community nodes defined by intentional social and visual centres.

The study area experienced strong growth through the 1960s and into the early 1970s, and so was heavily influenced by the practice of urban planning through official and district plans. As such the study area is a suburb that reflects contemporary, largely modernist ideas about growth and planning.

At the same time that municipal planning was dictating the shape of suburban growth at a land-use level, a number of new building types were being developed in response to modernist planning ideas and emerging suburban contexts. New multi-family housing complexes were first developed in the late 1950s to create new mid-density residential forms, and shopping centres were promoted as an improvement over conventional mixed-use commercial buildings. Residential tower developments increased in size and complexity, often set within generous landscaped sites.

6.3 URBAN MORPHOLOGY AND EXISTING BUILT FORM

The urban morphology and built form of the study area contain the following elements relating to its history as a post-war planned suburb in Metropolitan Toronto:

- Distinct and separate land-uses, organized about the study area's arterial street grid, river valley, hydro corridor, and Highway 400:
 - Residential neighbourhoods, primarily located on interior street networks, and featuring:
 - Subdivisions of single family and duplex homes,
 - Housing complexes
 - Institutional amenities (schools, churches, community centres and parks)
 - Arterial streetscapes, lining Jane Street, Steeles Avenue West, Finch Avenue West, and Sheppard Avenue West, featuring:
 - Apartments and apartment towers
 - Housing complexes

- Plazas
- Shopping Malls (exclusively at arterial intersections)
- Places of Worship, Schools and Libraries
- Industrial zones, near Highway 400 and characterized by wide streets with large industrial facilities
- A hierarchy of streets including:
 - The underlying grid of arterial concession roads;
 - Local residential streets; and
 - Curved collector streets providing regular access to arterial roads from local residential streets.
- Building types associated with modernist suburban development, including:
 - Housing complexes;
 - Apartment towers;
 - Plazas;
 - Shopping malls;
- The use of a range of modernist building styles, including but not limited to the International Style and Brutalism.
- High proportion of social housing projects, including the master planned community of Edgeley Village.

7.0 FIGURES

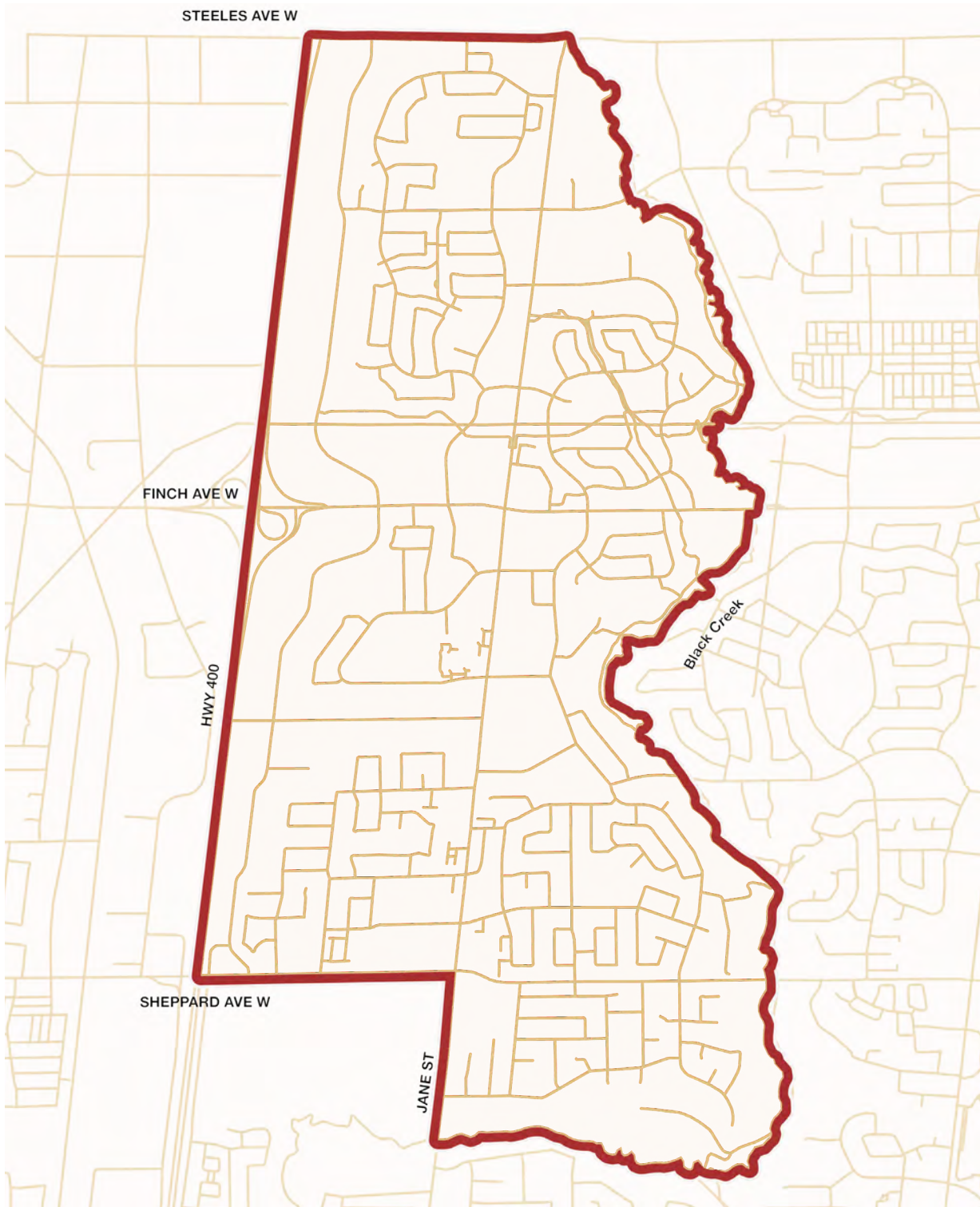


Figure 1: The Jane Finch CHRA study area outlined in red (City of Toronto & CBCollective, 2022).

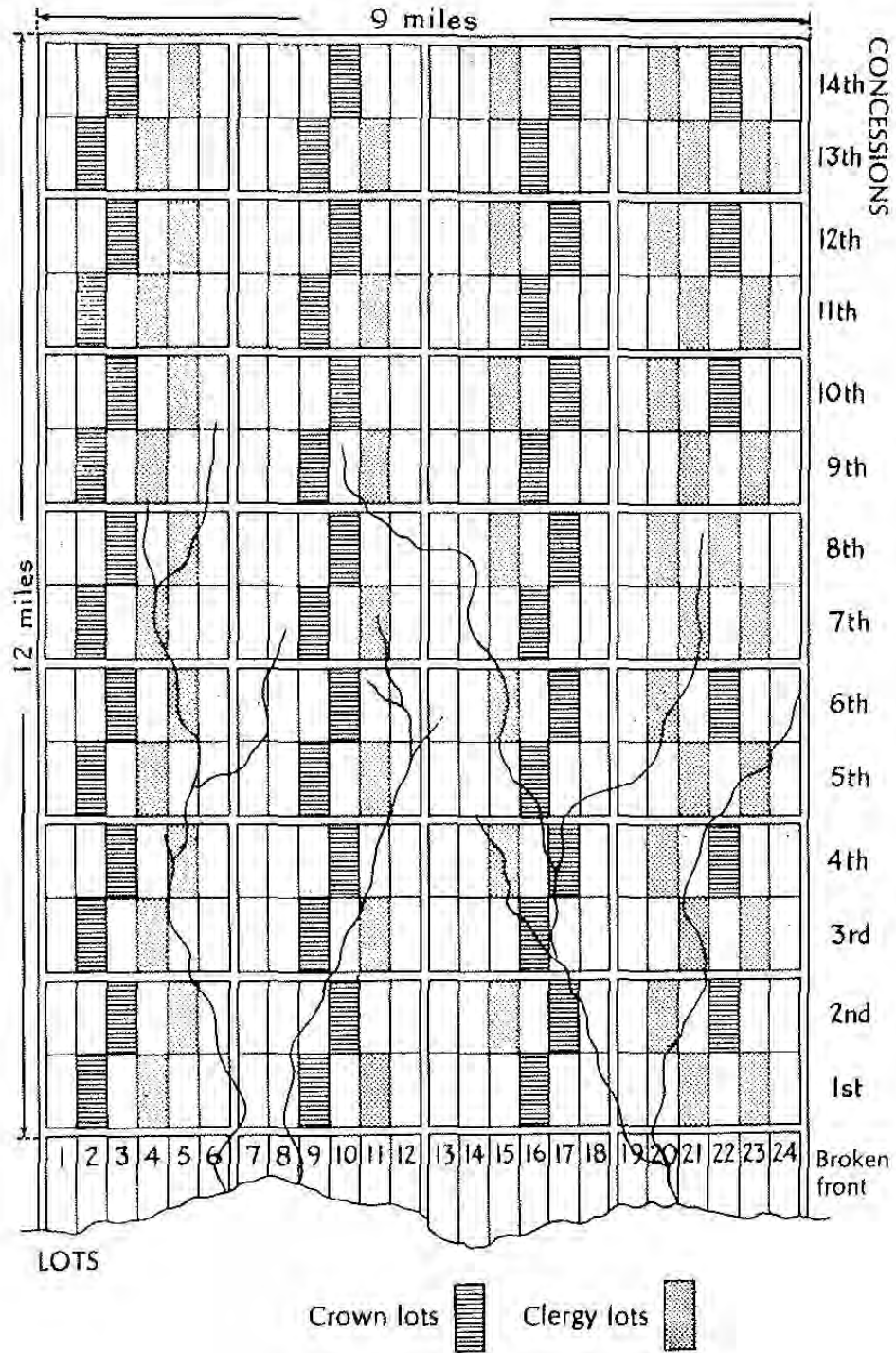


Figure 2: A diagram of the 'chequered plan' which was used across Ontario when surveying townships (Kalman, A *History of Canadian Architecture*, p. 41).

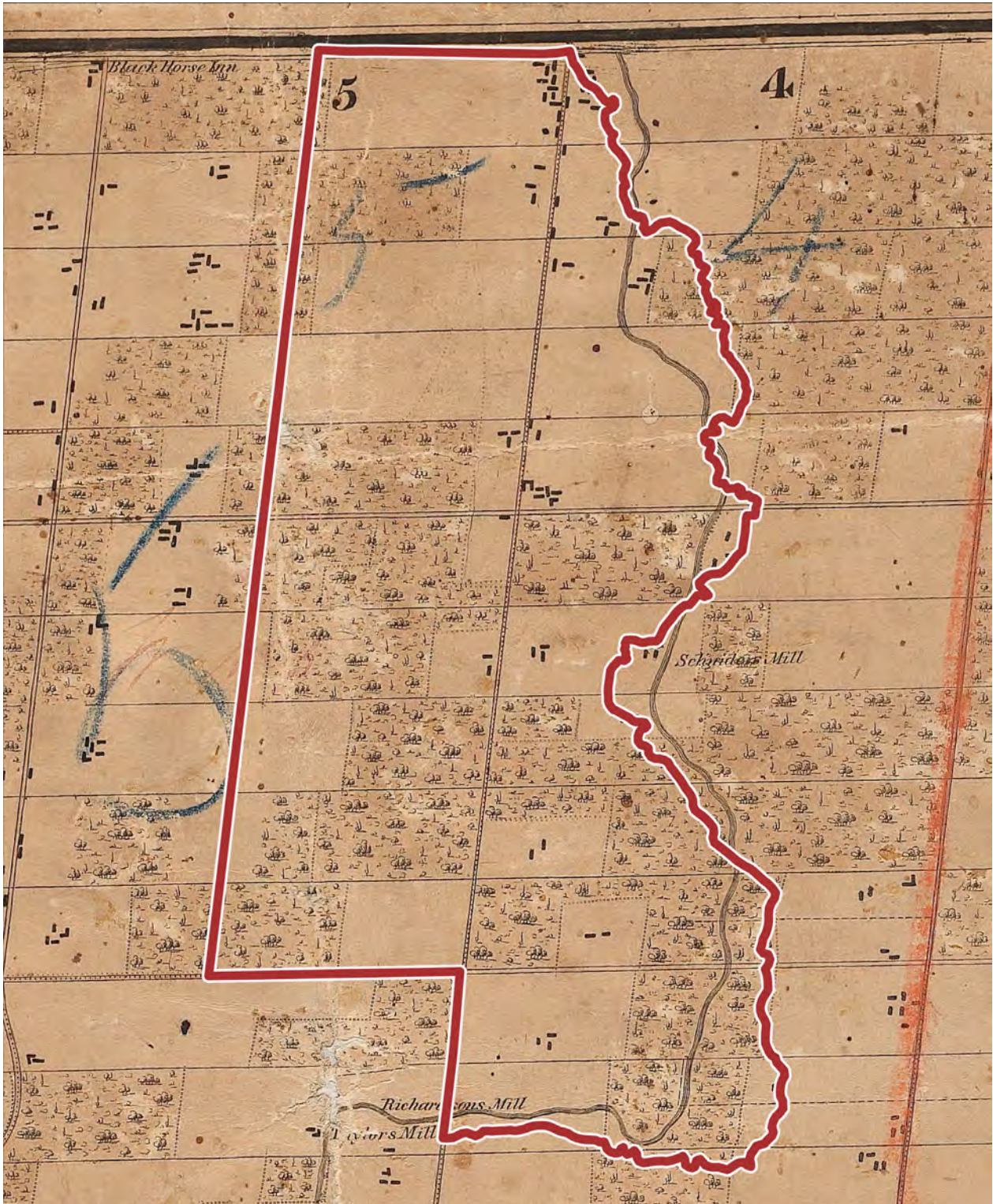


Figure 3: The original 200-acre farm lots and clusters of buildings in the study area are depicted in this 1851 map (City of Toronto Archives; Common Bond Collective 2022).

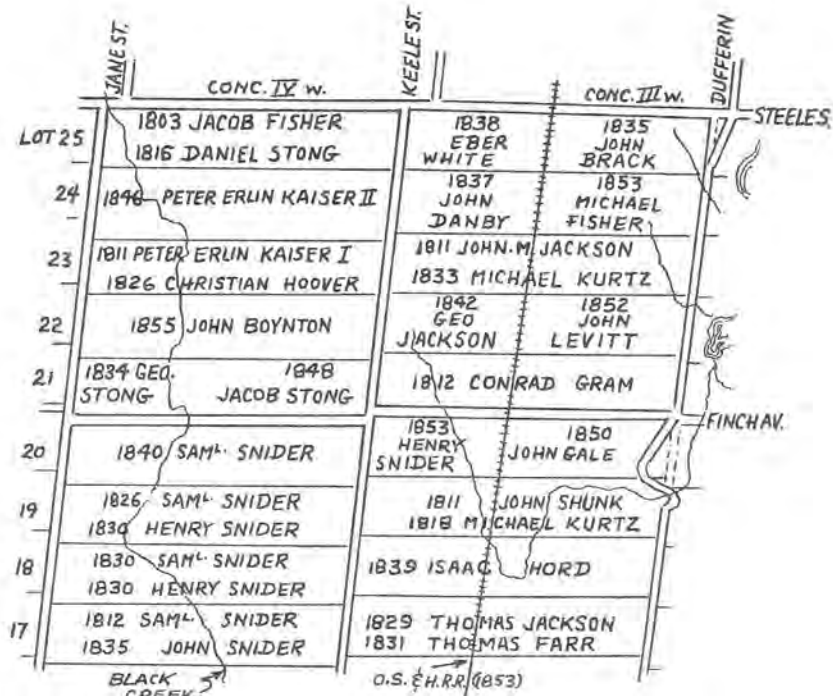


Figure 4: The community of Elia developed around Concession IV, Lots 17-25 on both sides of the Black Creek (Hart, *Pioneering in North York*, p. 214).

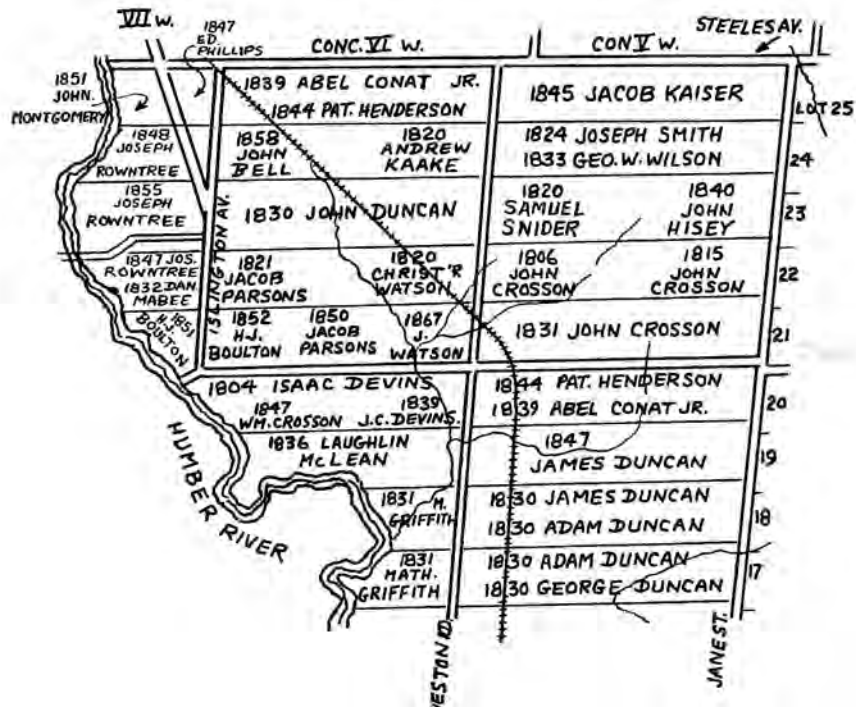


Figure 5: The community of Emery developed around Concession V, Lots 17-25 to the west of Jane Street (Hart, *Pioneering in North York*, p. 220).



Figure 6: The Crosson house at the northwest corner of Jane Street and Finch Avenue, c.1878 (*Toronto Public Library: NYHS00651*).



Figure 7: The Snider Farm, c1930. The study area remained largely agricultural into the 1930s (*Toronto Public Library: R-6548*).

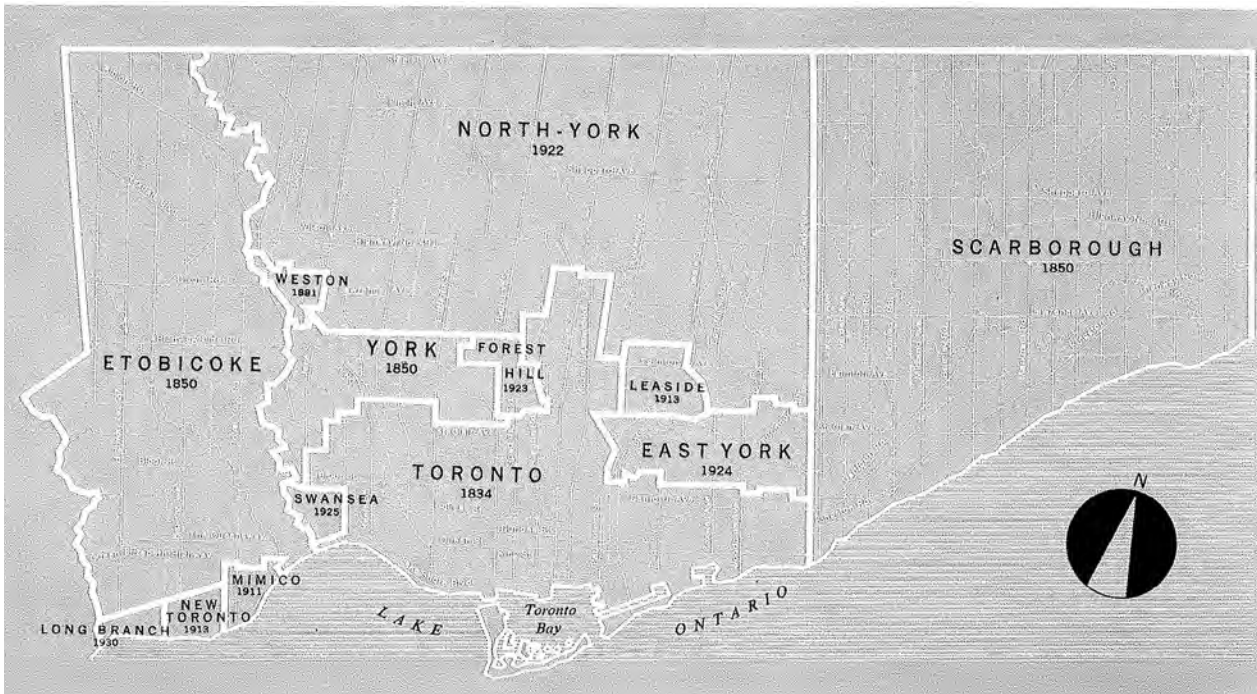


Figure 8: Map showing the boundaries of North York that was created out of York Township in 1922 (*Metropolitan Toronto 1953-1963: Ten Years of Progress*, inside cover).

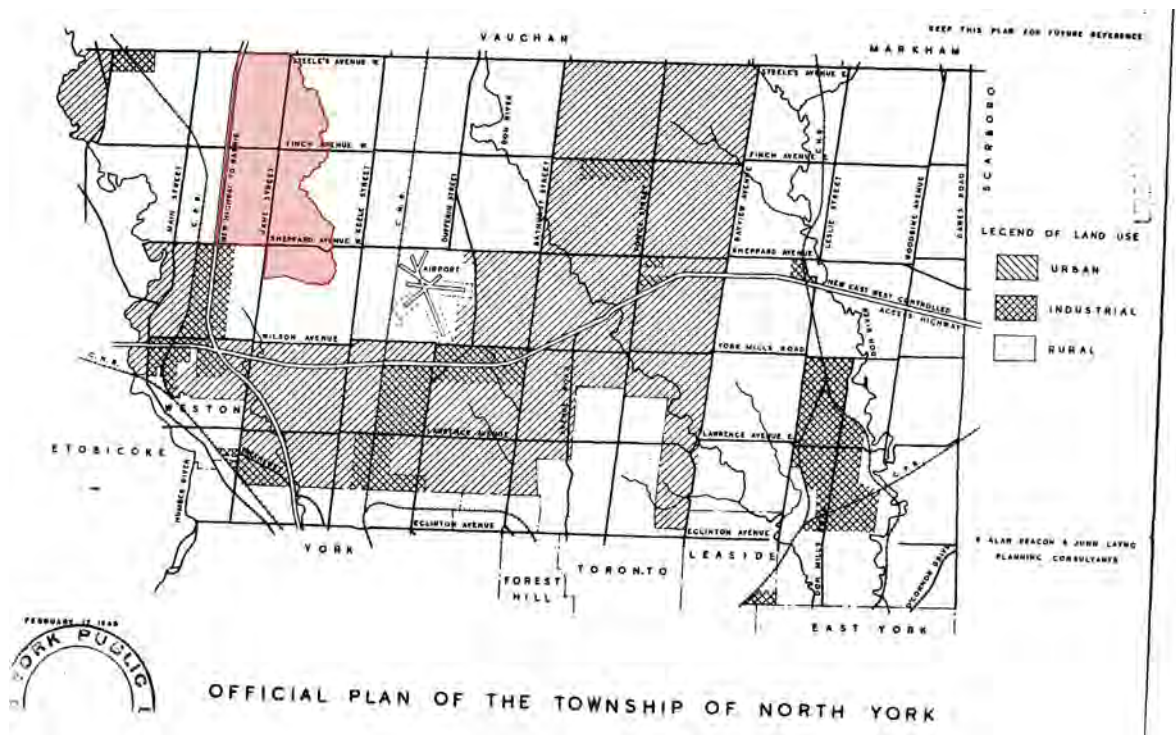


Figure 9: The land use plan from the Township of North York's 1948 Official Plan. The study area is shaded red and identified as maintaining rural land use (*Township of North York Report of the Planning Board, March 1948; Common Bond Collective 2022*).



Figure 10: 1959 aerial photograph centred on Finch Avenue and Highway 400, showing the transmission towers of the Hydro Electric Power Corridor in the top right (*City of Toronto Archives*).



Figure 11: c.1960 archival photograph of Black Creek Pioneer Village, shortly after its official opening (*City of Toronto Archives*).

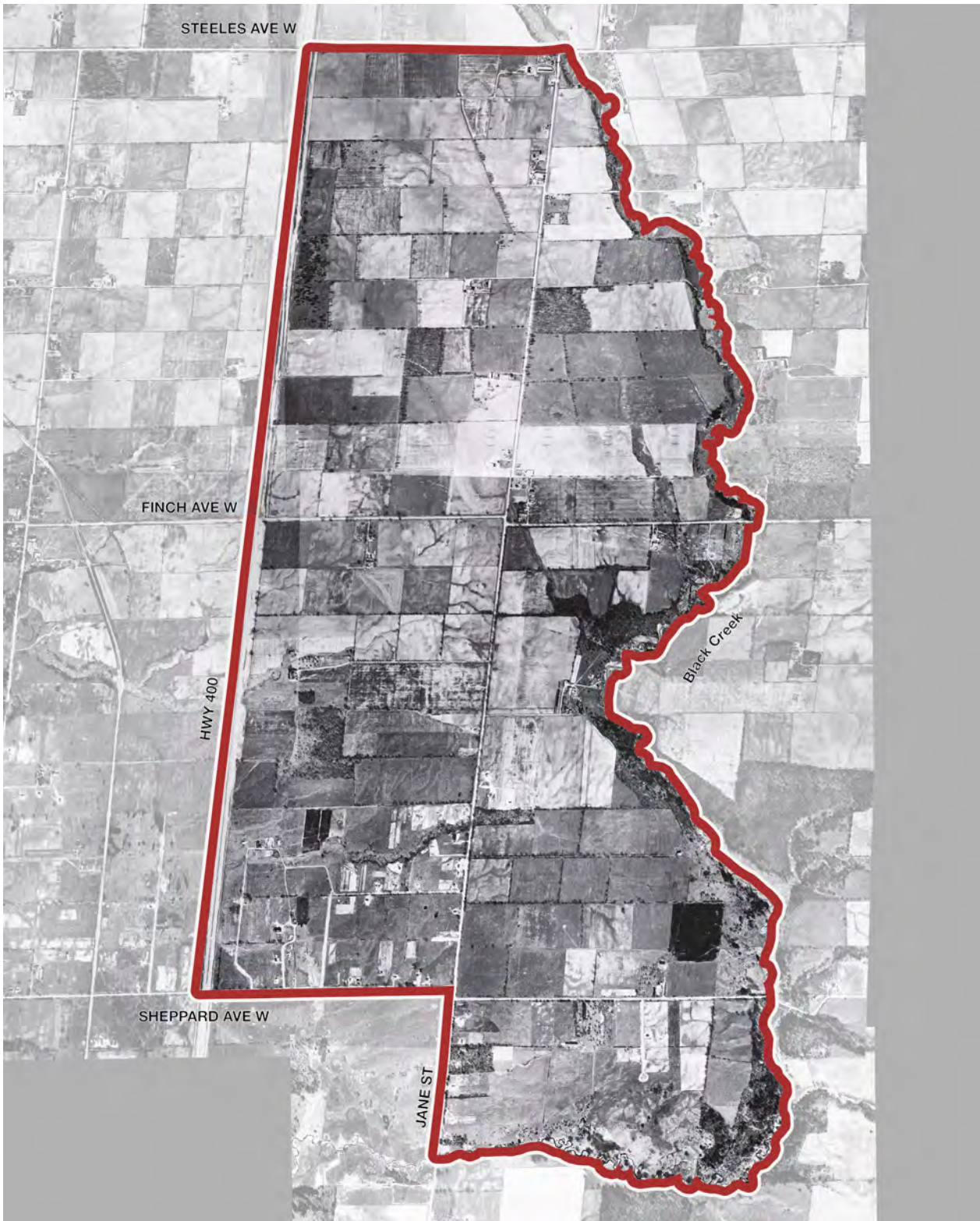


Figure 12: 1950 aerial photograph showing the study area's agricultural makeup (City of Toronto Archives; Common Bond Collective 2022).



Figure 13: 1957 archival photograph showing the study area's rural character looking north up Jane Street from Finch Avenue West (*City of Toronto Archives*).



Figure 14: 1953 aerial photograph showing individual houses northeast of the Jane-Sheppard intersection and their rural character (*City of Toronto Archives*).

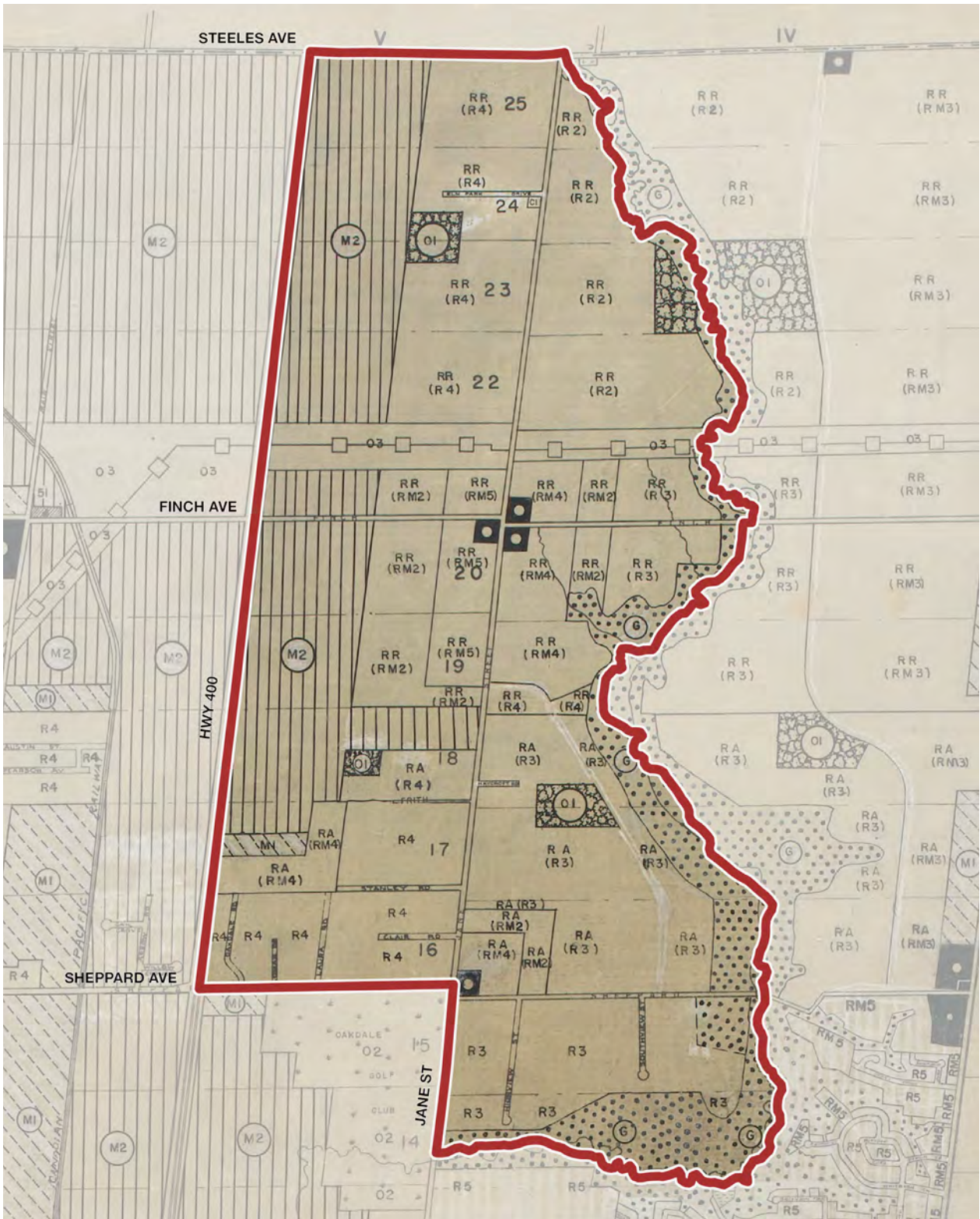


Figure 15: The 1952 North York zoning bylaw within the study area. RM refers to multiple-family residential zoning, with higher numbers equating to higher densities (*City of Toronto Heritage Planning; Common Bond Collective 2022*).

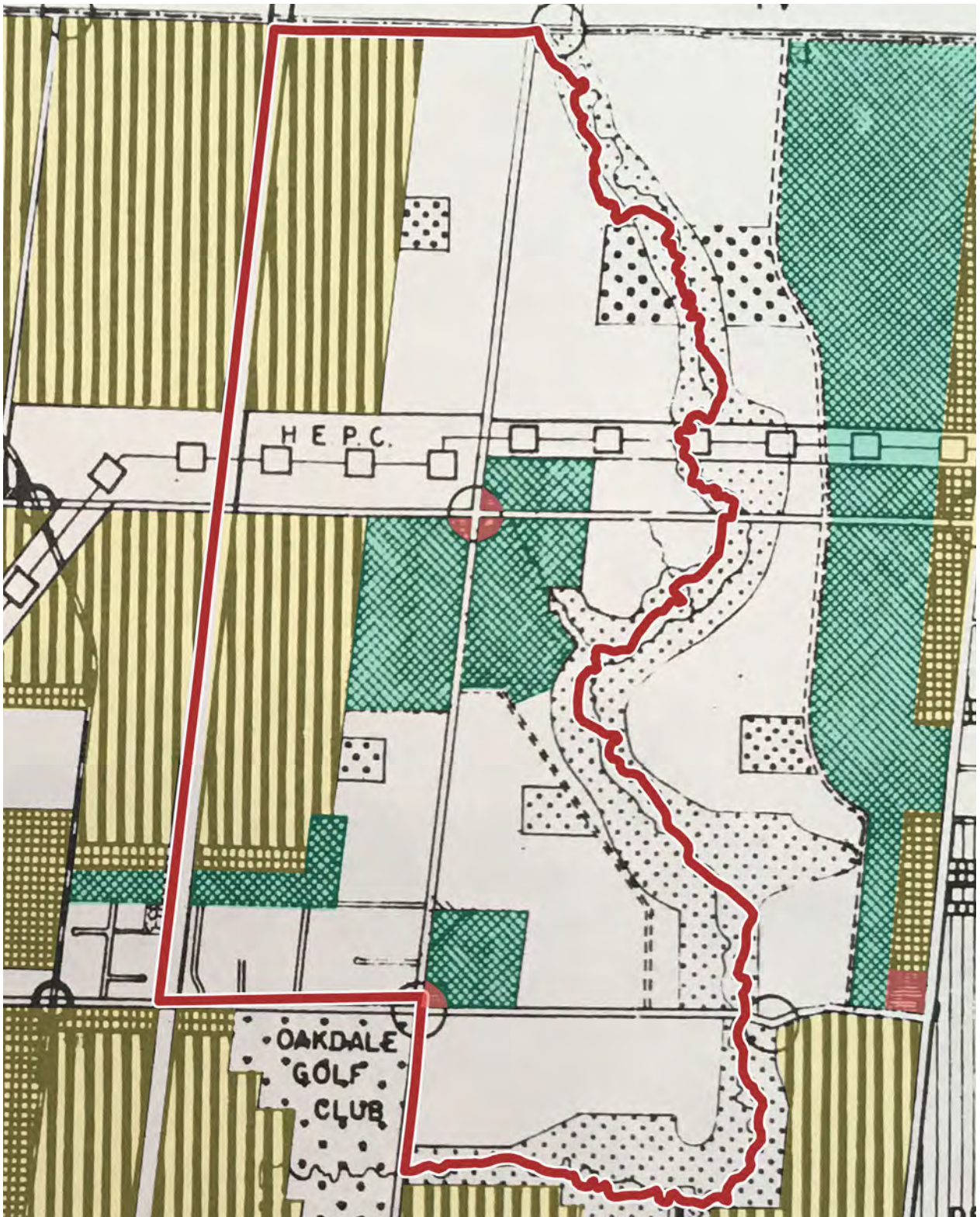


Figure 16: The land use map from the 1952 Official Plan. Colours have been added to help identify different land uses - manufacturing and yard storage are shaded yellow; planned shopping centres are shaded pink; and multiple family dwellings are shaded green. Blank areas are one family dwellings and fine dots indicate greenbelt zones (*City of Toronto Heritage Planning*).

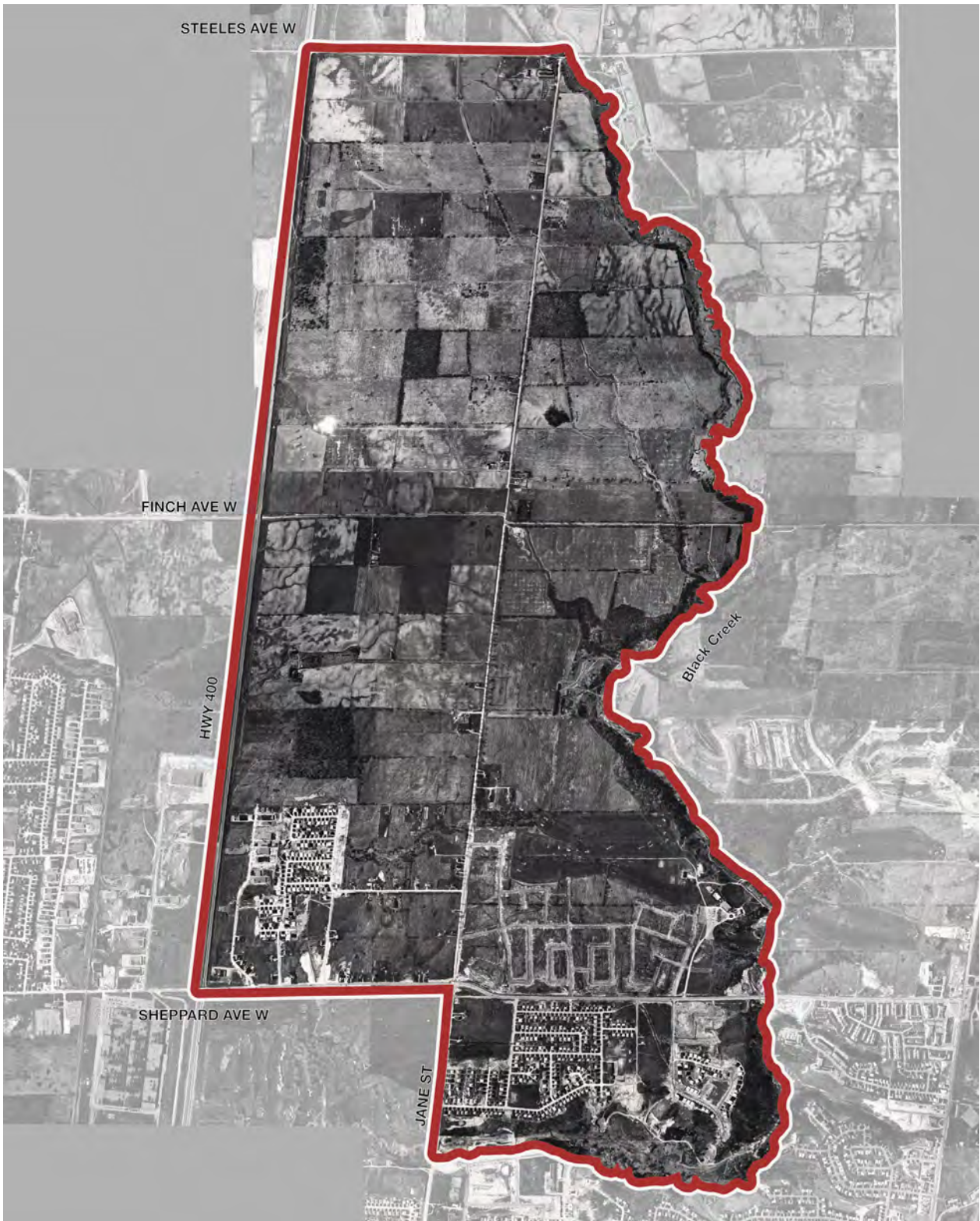
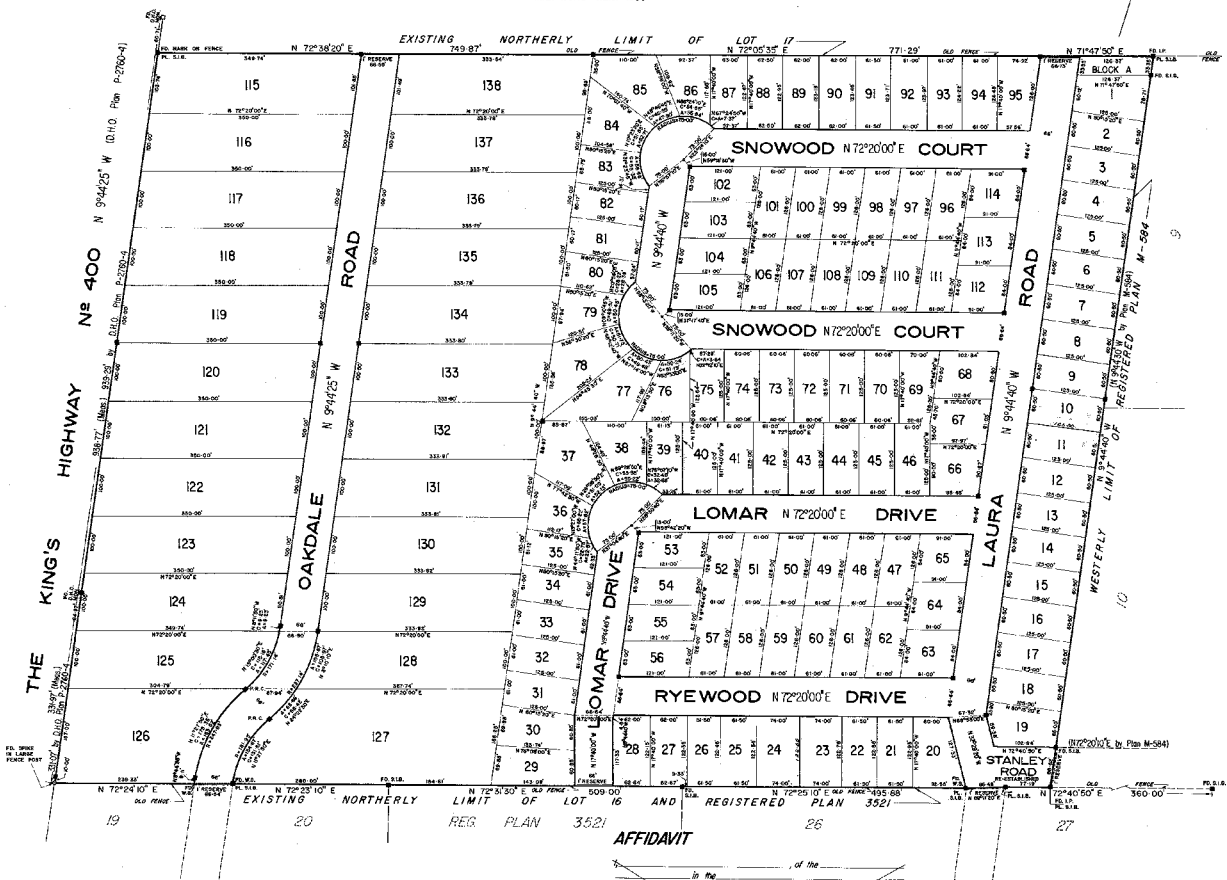


Figure 17: 1961 aerial photograph showing the residential development in study area's south end up to that point (*City of Toronto Archives; Common Bond Collective 2022*).

ORIGINAL
1/30

PLAN OF SUBDIVISION OF
PART OF LOT 17, FIFTH CONCESSION, WEST OF YONGE STREET
TOWNSHIP OF NORTH YORK
COUNTY OF YORK

SCALE 1" = 100'
M.B. WONG O.L.S. 1958



[Handwritten signature]
23rd April 1958
REGISTERED PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

AFFIDAVIT
I, _____ of the _____
do hereby depose and say:
1. That I was personally present and did see this plan and duplicate duly signed by _____
2. That the said plan and duplicate were signed by the said party of _____
3. That I know the said party
4. That I am a subscribing witness to the said signing.
Sworn before me this _____ day of _____ 1958.
A Commissioner, etc.

Certificates, Consents and dedications are filed under Number **R-230645** in the Office of Land Titles at TORONTO.

Figure 18: Detail from 1958 plan of subdivision M-770 showing industrial lots along Oakdale Road on the left side, east of residential lots on the right, reflecting the general land use principles (Onland).

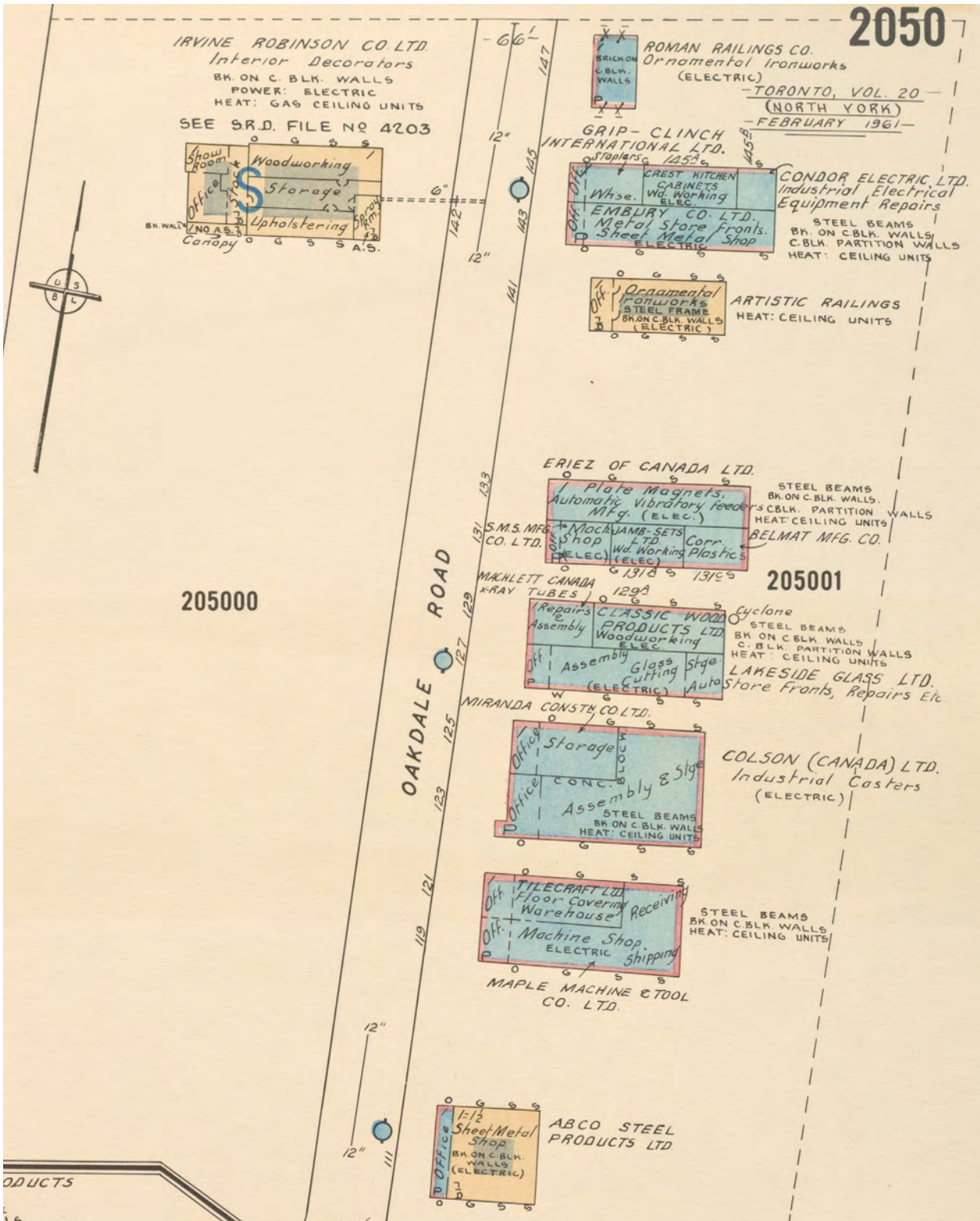


Figure 19: 1961 fire insurance plan showing the study area's earliest industrial facilities near the south end of Oakdale Road (University of Toronto).

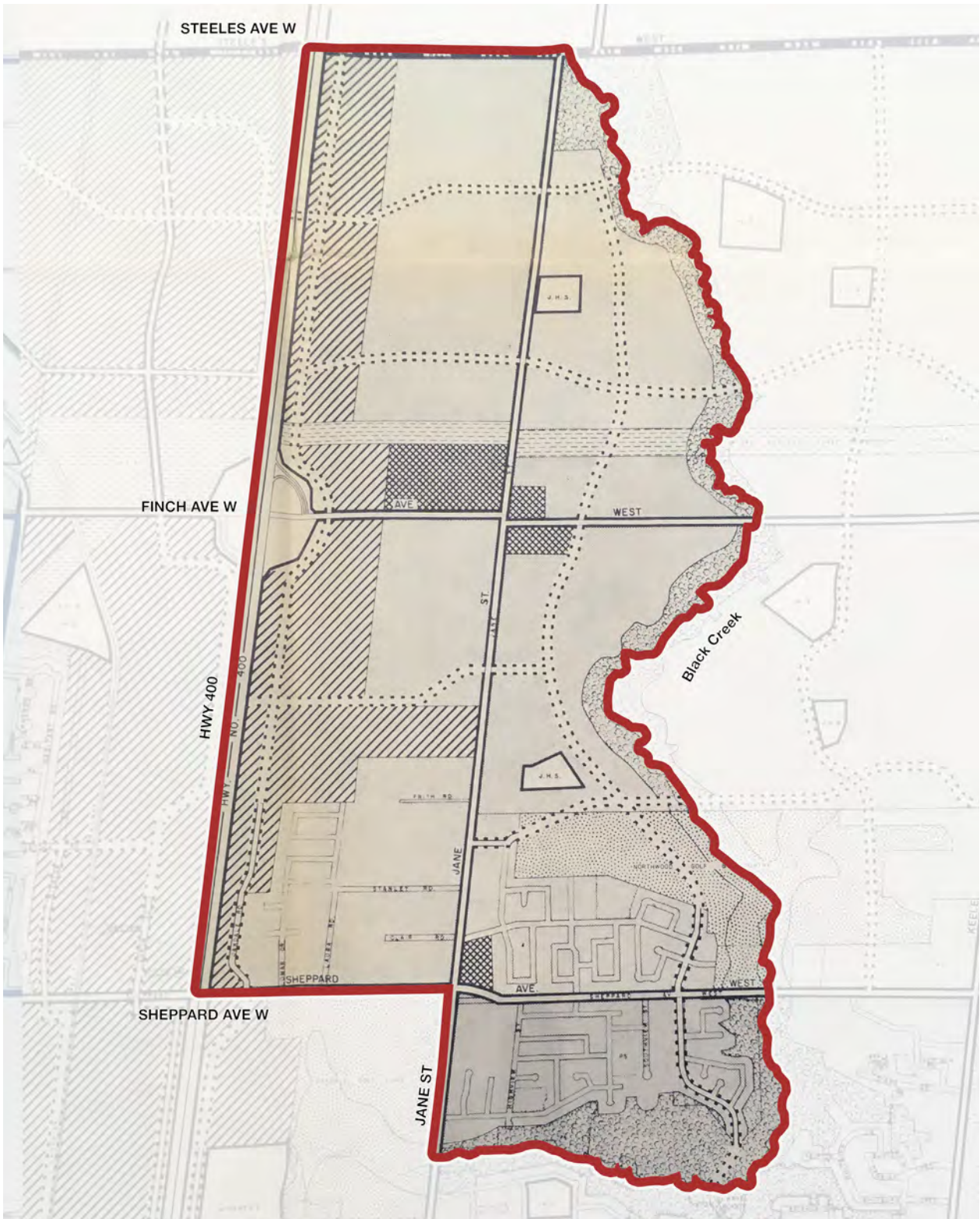


Figure 20: Land Use map from the 1962 District Plan 10. Single hatched areas are industrial, cross hatches are commercial, and blank areas are residential (*Toronto Public Library*).

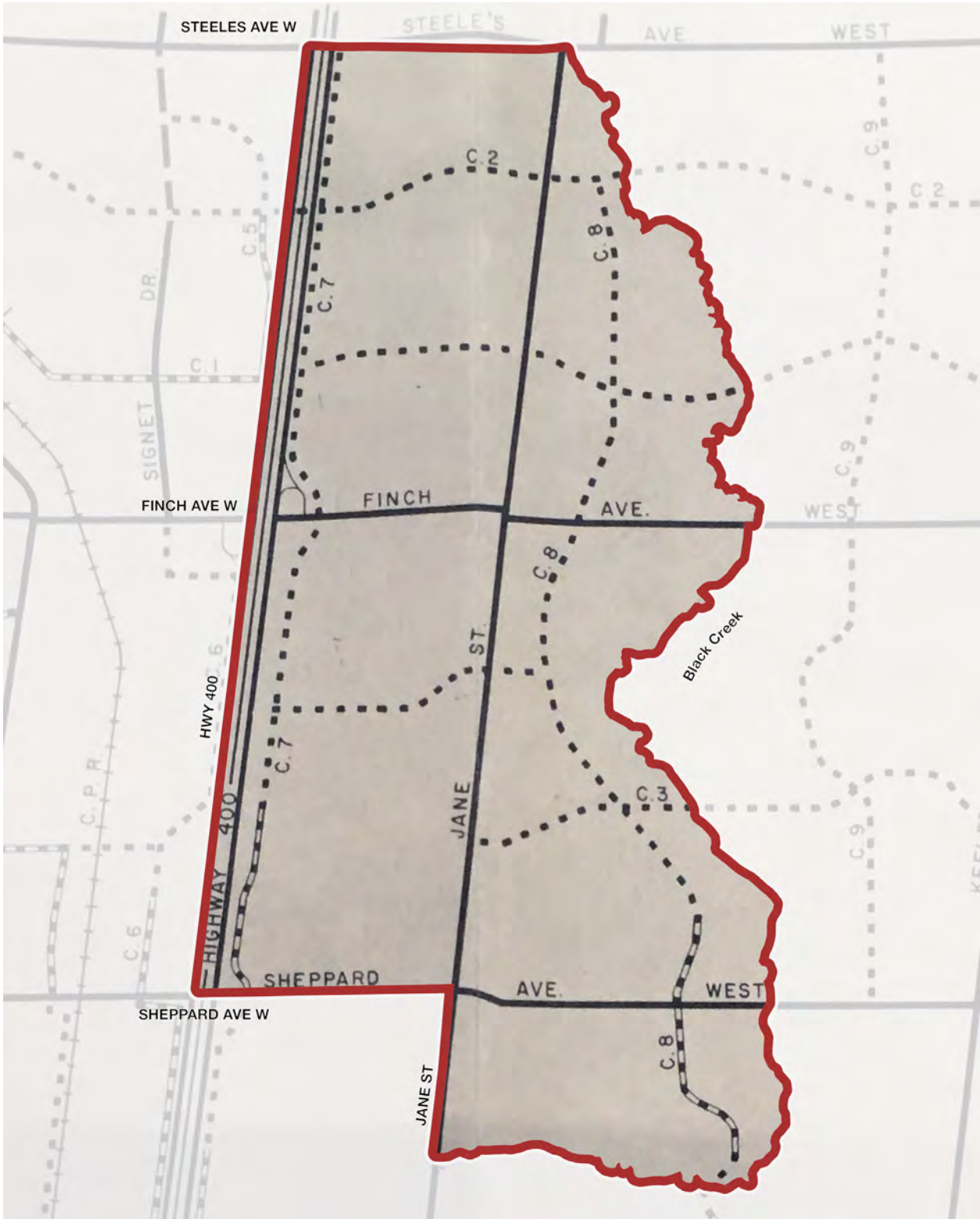


Figure 21: Road Plan map from the 1962 District Plan 10. Arterial streets are solid single lines, whereas the collectors are shown in dashed lines in a schematic fashion (*Toronto Public Library*).

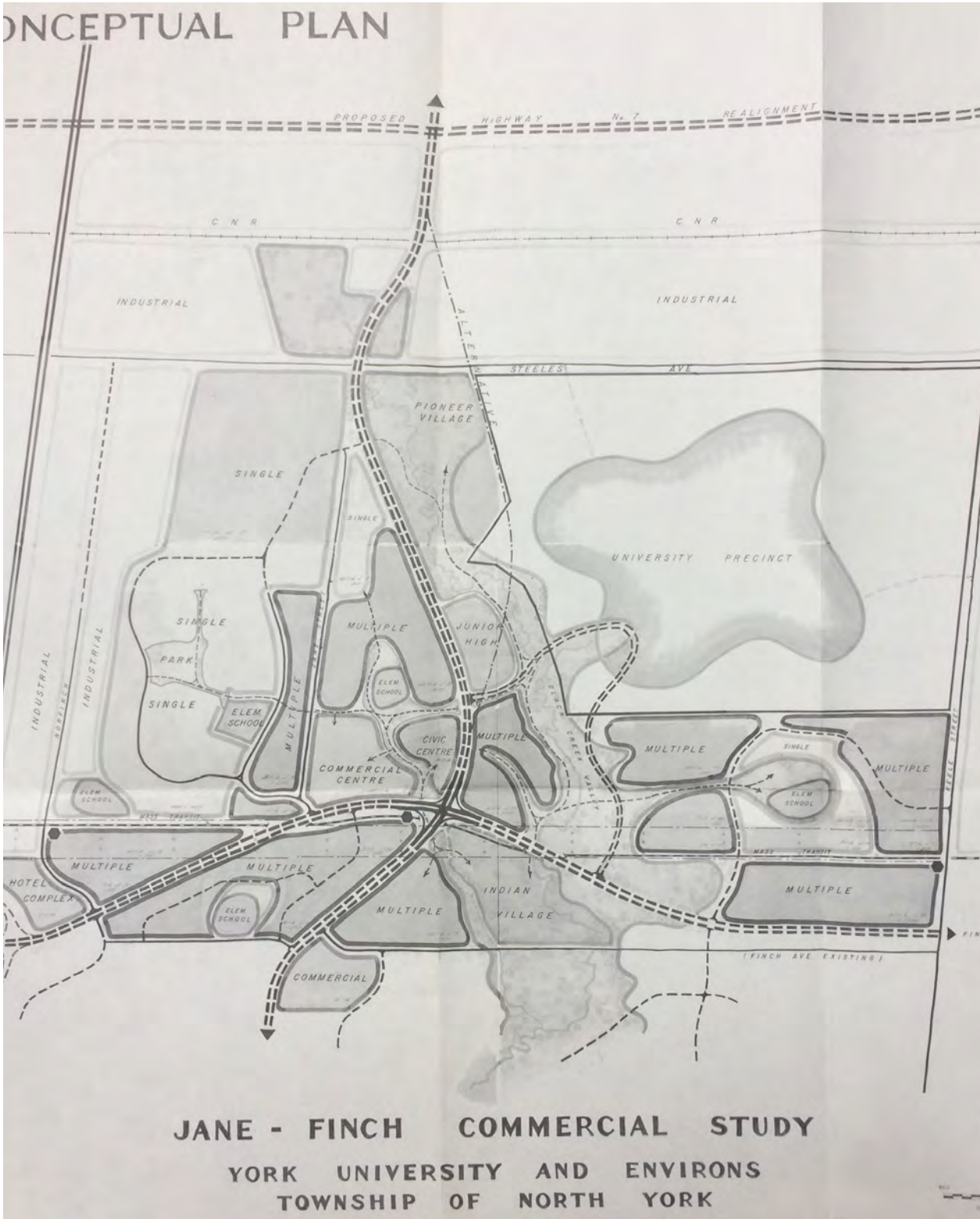


Figure 22: Proposed alterations for the study area in response to the new York University site, as recommended by Project Planning Associates Limited in 1963 (*Toronto Public Library*).

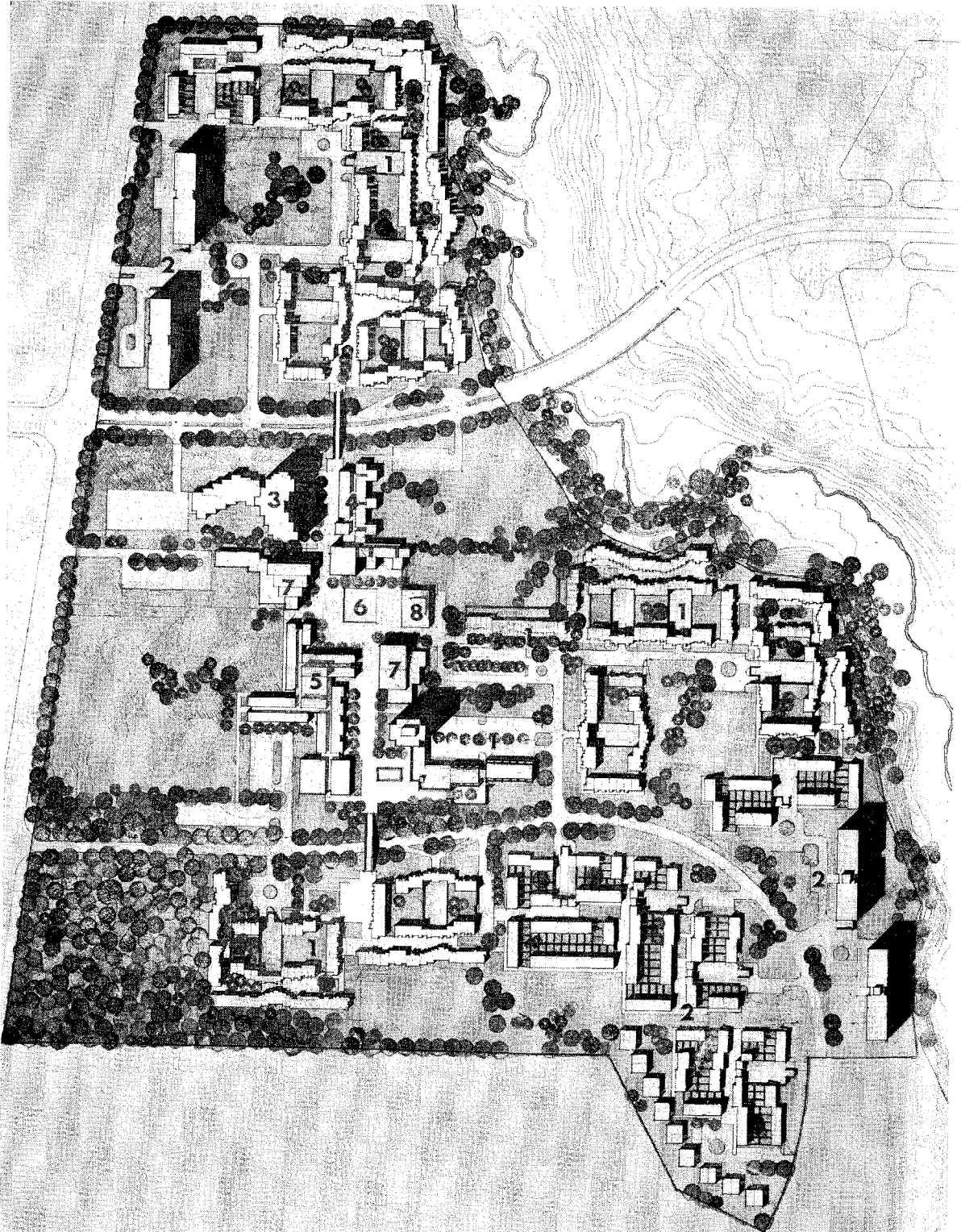


Figure 23: 1967 site plan for the Edgeley site, showing alternating blocks of public and private housing, surrounding the central community area. Number correspond to the following: 1-Public Housing; 2-Private Housing; 3-Elderly Persons Housing; 4-Elementary School; 5-Junior High School; 6-Central Mall; 7-Church; 8- Community Centre (*The Canadian Architect*, November 1967).

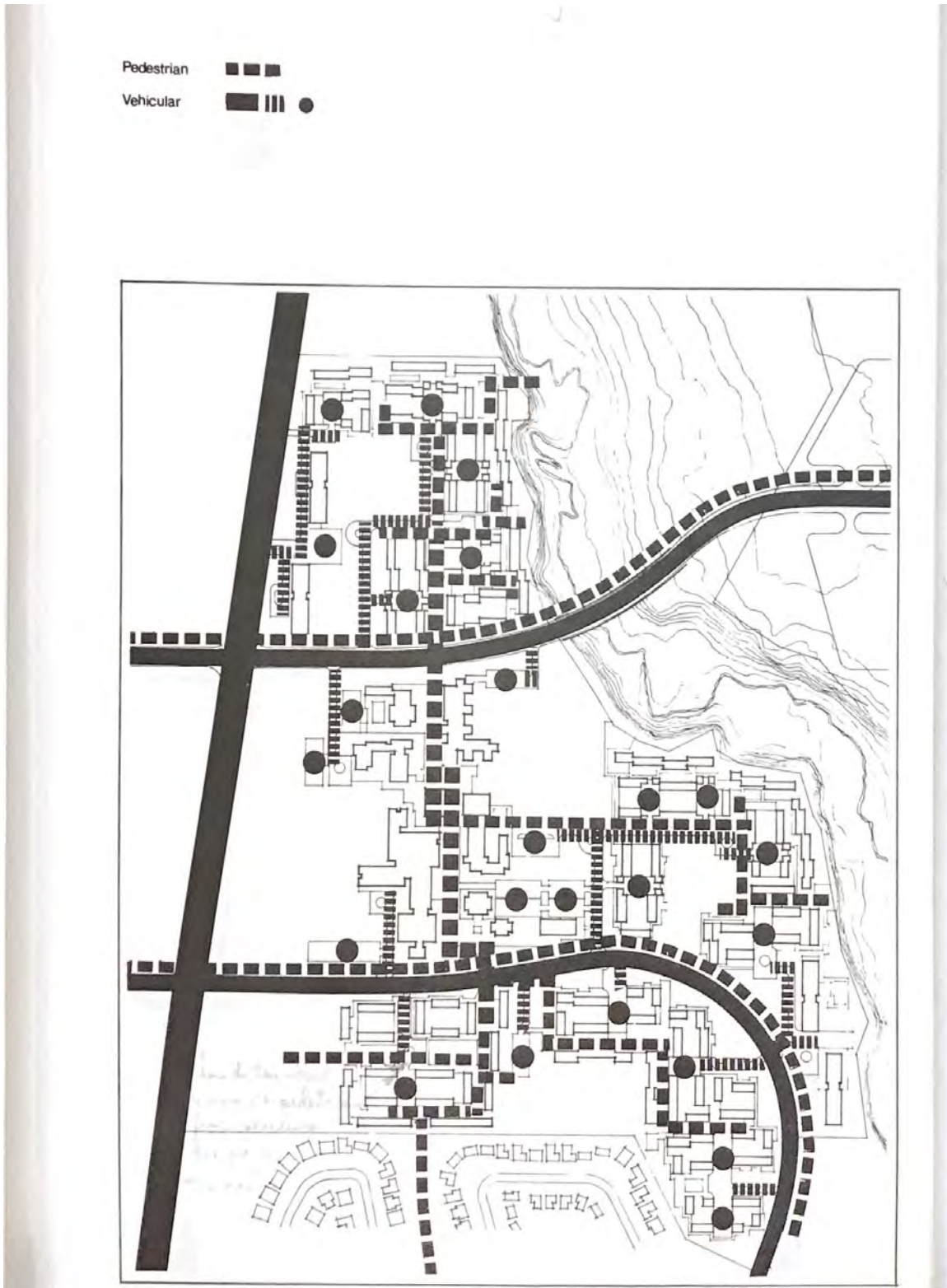


Figure 24: Circulation plan for the Edgeley site, showing the intended separation between pedestrian (dashed lines) and automobile (solid lines) networks (*City of Toronto Heritage Planning*).



Figure 25: 1968 aerial photograph showing the influence of the 1962 District Plan 10 on the study area. The newer subdivision north of Finch Avenue West show an adherence to the collector system concept that is lacking in those built earlier at the south end (*City of Toronto Archives; Common Bond Collective 2022*).

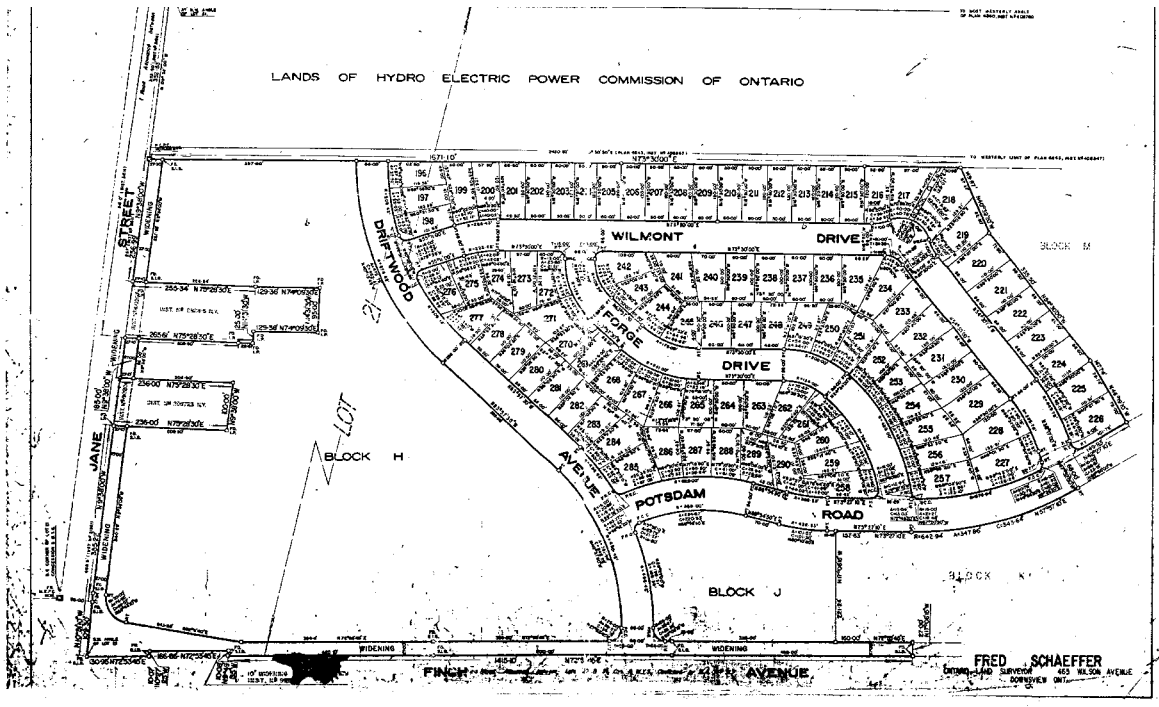


Figure 26: Detail of subdivision plan M1004 from 1963, with Driftwood Avenue demonstrating the collector road concept (Onland).



Figure 27: 1964 archival photograph looking north on Jane Street at Yorkwoods Village. The townhome development was innovative at the time for passing exterior maintenance activities to management (City of Toronto Archives).

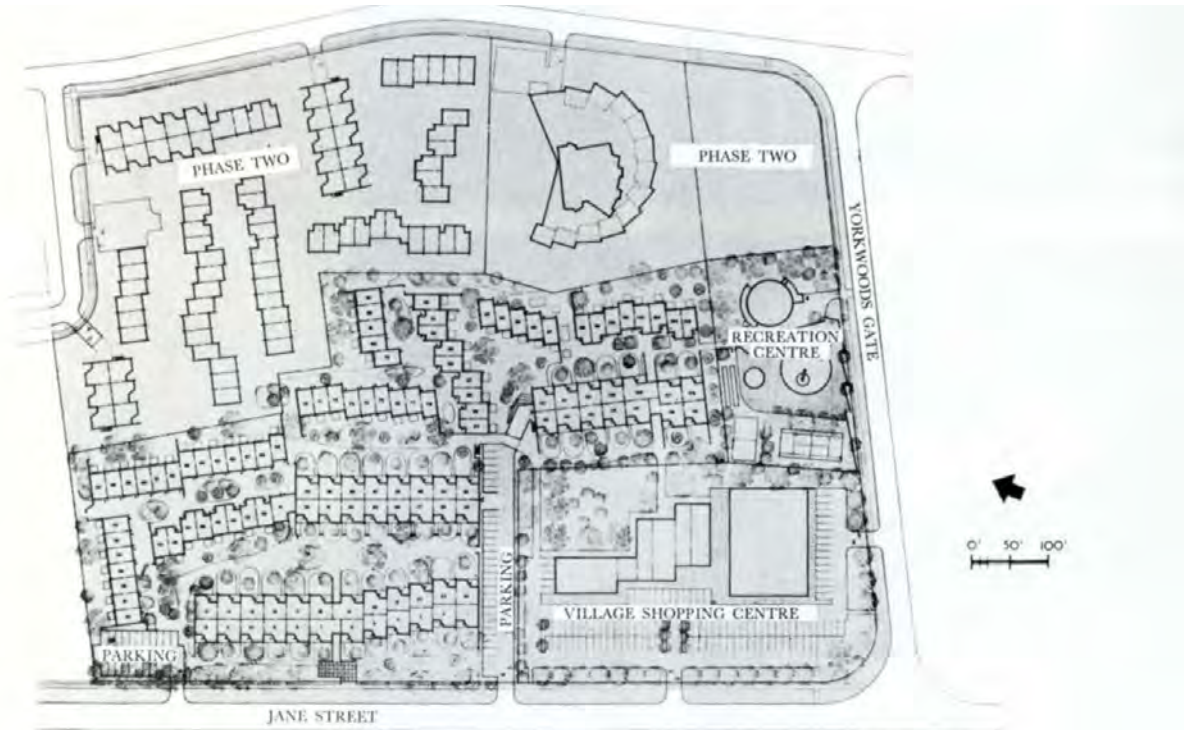


Figure 28: Site plan showing a design for the Yorkwoods Village development, including Phases one and two of housing complexes, along with shopping and recreation centres. Phase one (bottom, unlabeled), the western part of Phase two and the recreation centre were built as shown. Others were not built or modified (*RAIC Journal August 1964*).



Figure 29: Archival photograph of phase one of Yorkwoods Village. The image highlights the considered design resulting from use of underground parking and townhouse siting to frame interior pedestrian landscapes (*RAIC Journal August 1964*).

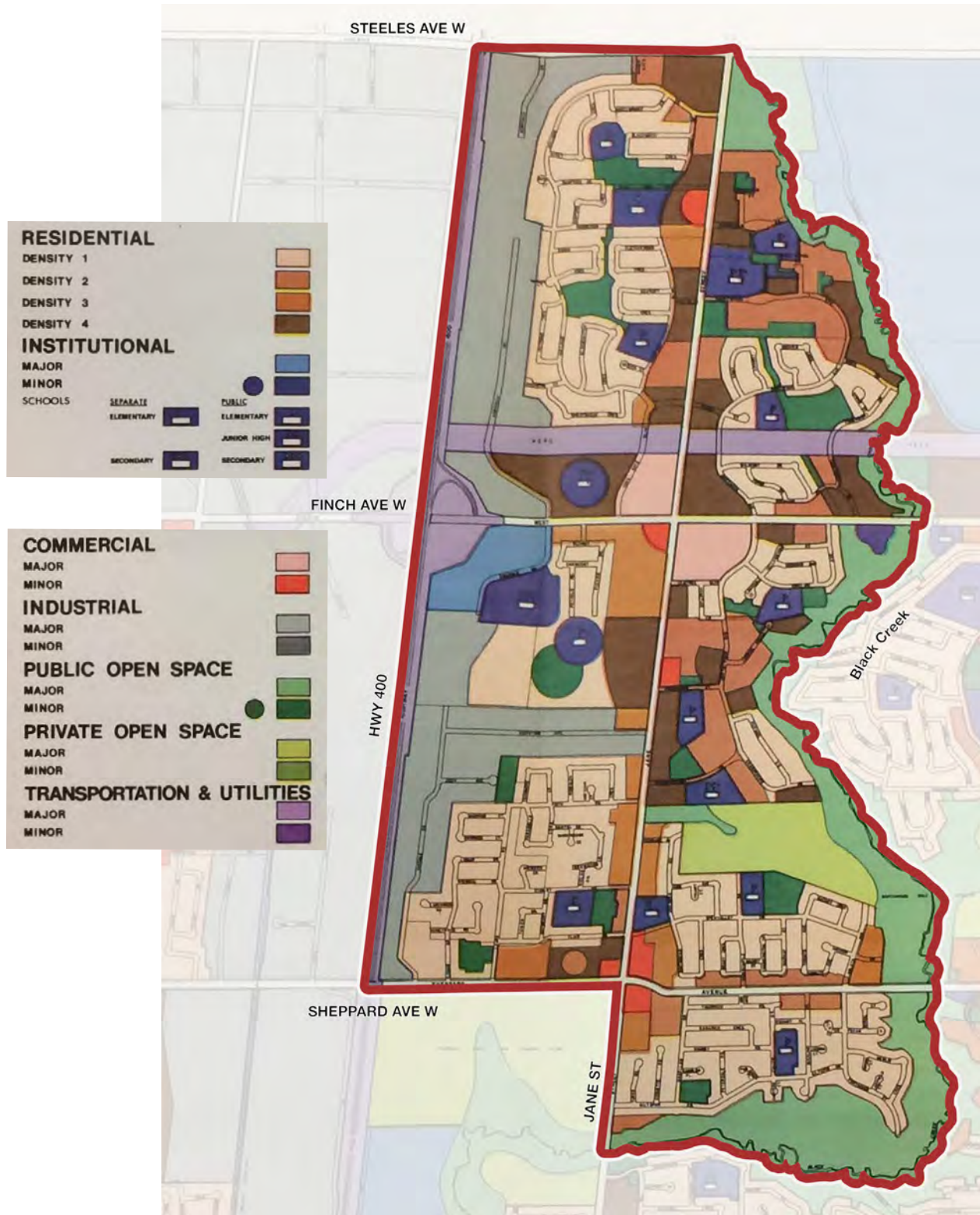


Figure 30: Land Use plan from the 1969 District 10 Plan with legends inset. The plan clearly demonstrates the principles of placing higher density residential uses along arteries, around arterial intersections and adjacent to green or open spaces (*City of Toronto Heritage Planning*).

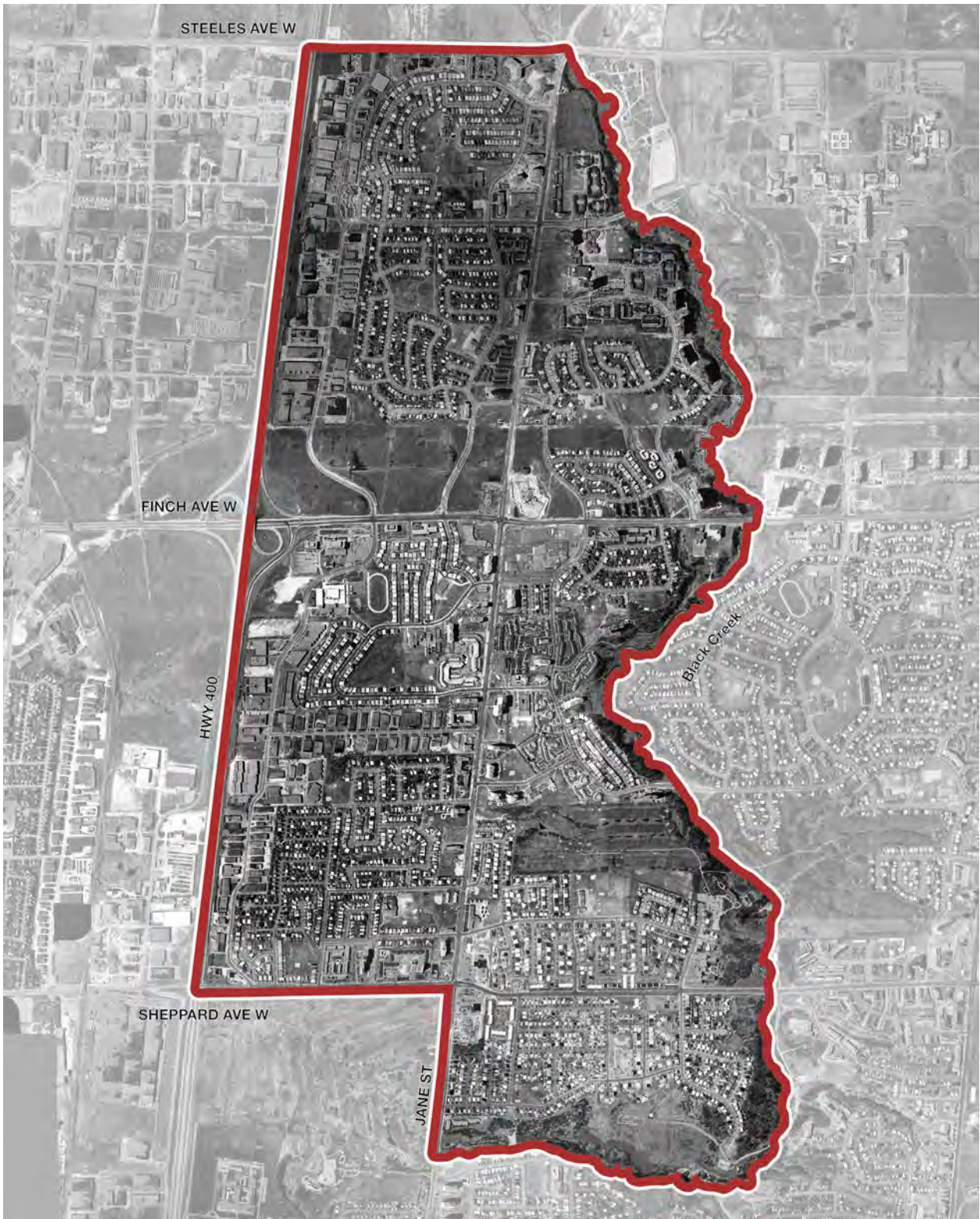


Figure 31: 1975 aerial photograph, showing the study area fundamentally built out (City of Toronto Archives; Common Bond Collective 2022).

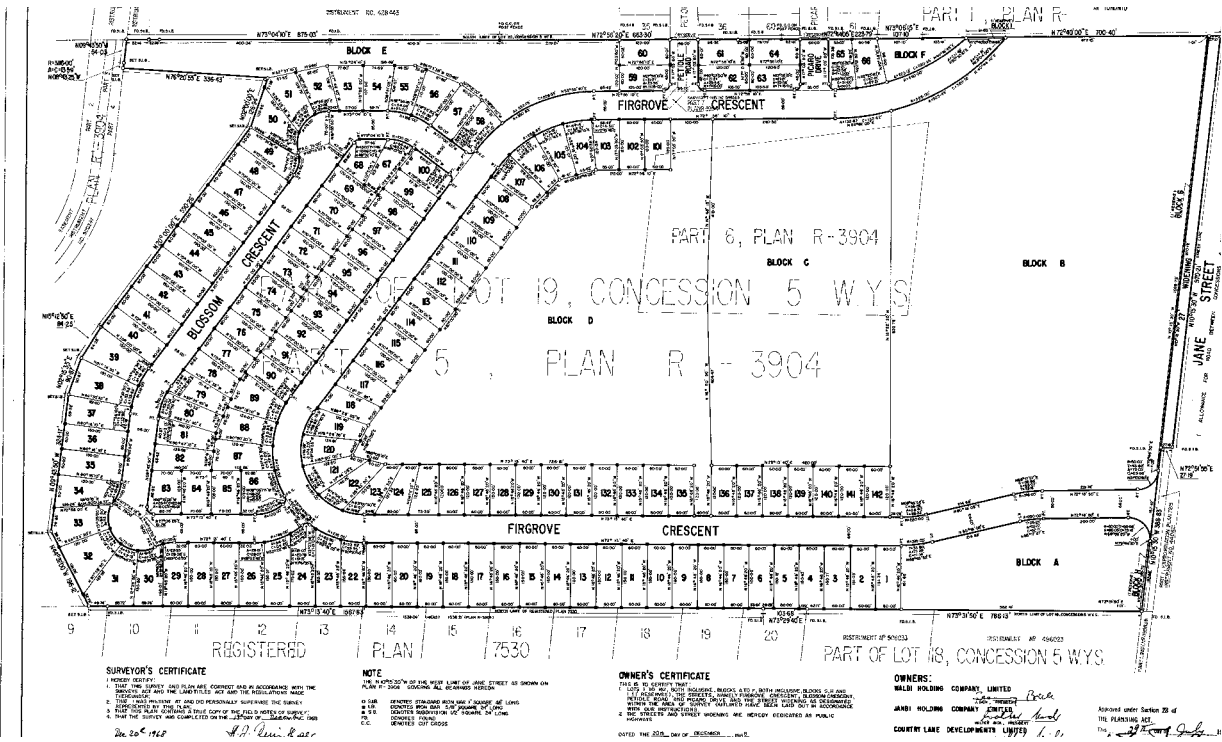


Figure 32: Collector roads remain apparent following the on subdivision plan M-1320 (Onland).



Figure 33: 1970 photograph of children playing in the central community area of the Edgely site (TPL_Toronto Star Archives).

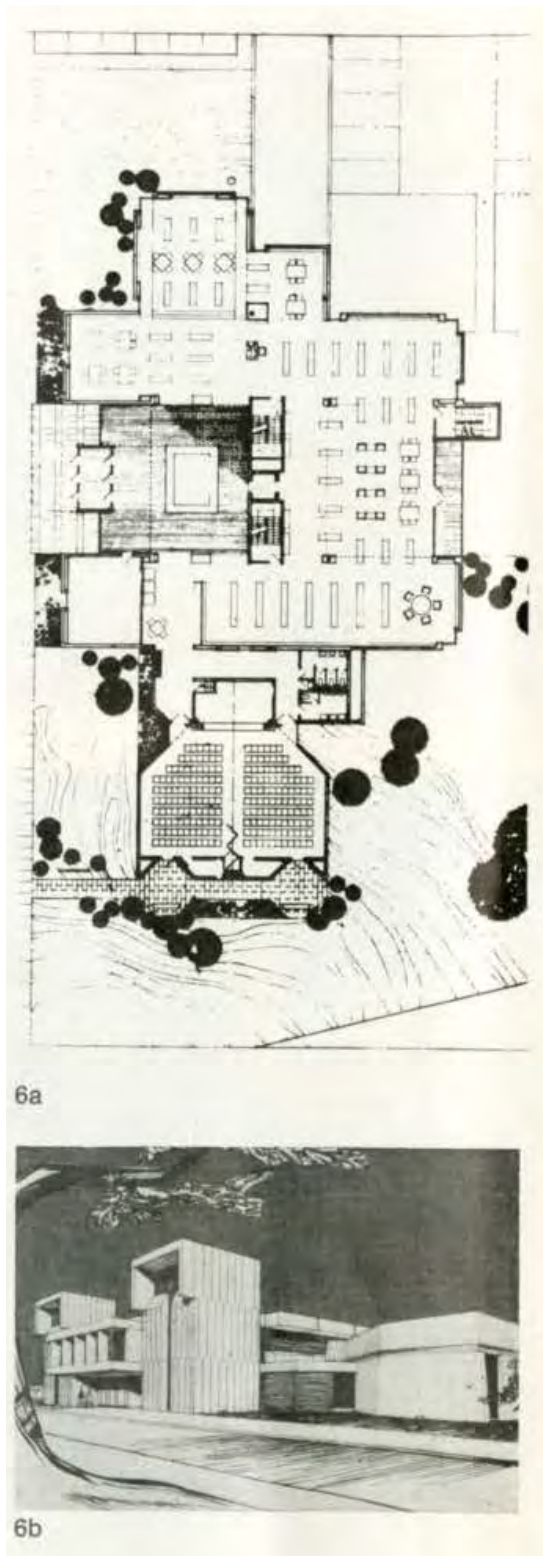


Figure 34: 1969 promotional plan and rendering of the York Woods Public Library Building by Thomas Ibonyi (*Architecture Canada January 1969*).



Figure 35: 2021 aerial composite demonstrating the extant patterns of the study area's urban fabric (City of Toronto; Common Bond Collective 2022).

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APPENDIX A - IT HAPPENED HERE

WANDA MACNEVIN, 2023

It Happened Here: Places of Community Organizing and Activism in Jane-Finch

Introduction

When I moved into the Jane-Finch community as a single mother with three children and living on social welfare assistance, I did not know that living in Jane-Finch would change my life. I moved into 15 Tobermory Drive, where I became involved with community action that led to securing a job with the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre.

This report is based on 41 years of experiences working and volunteering in the community and is also based on 40 interviews I conducted, a review of the transcripts from those interviewed for this project, as well as reports and documents I saved over the years. It is not by any means a complete picture of all the activities and accomplishments in the community – there are far more stories to be told. No one person carries all the knowledge of Jane-Finch. Some may not share the perspectives of the stories told here, but I take full responsibility for any mistakes in relating the stories below.

In the beginning

The value of places in the Jane-Finch community starts with a recognition that the Indigenous people lived, and farmed, on the land now called Jane-Finch, and utilized the Black Creek for transportation, food and water. A small part of their story is told by the Huron-Wendat Trail which moves through the hydro-corridor in the community and interprets life in an ancestral Huron-Wendat village whose archaeological remains still exist on the edge of Black Creek.

After millennia of an Indigenous presence here, European settlers developed a farming community in the area in the 19th century. An interpretation of their way of life can be seen at Black Creek Pioneer Village. They too utilized the land and the Black Creek, which they also used as a place of recreation.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Jane-Finch was again transformed into a new community. The Second World War was over, families were growing, and immigrants were moving to Toronto to build new lives. This was also the time of the ‘baby boom’, where there was a significant increase in babies being born. As a result, demand for housing was critical. By the mid-1960s, the federal government de-racialized the immigration policy by introducing a merit-based point system to determine admissibility to the country. This meant that immigrants from previously excluded parts of the world—Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America — were able to settle in the Toronto area. “Jane-Finch, newly developed with a lot of affordable housing, came

to house a proportionately large number of new immigrants, many of whom were people of colour.”¹

Metropolitan Toronto created the District 10 Plan for the west end of the city, including Jane-Finch, and its principles and approach to land use was largely adopted by the Borough of North York, of which Jane-Finch was a part. It focused on land use, population, and transportation with no provision for social factors beyond schools and parks. The plan greatly underestimated how quickly North York would grow in population.

1970s

The 1970s for residents in Jane-Finch was all about developing programs and services to meet the critical and growing needs of those living in the community. The three North York Parks and Recreation community centres (Driftwood, Yorkwoods [now Oakdale], Stanley Road [now Domenico Di Luca] and the community rooms in Metro Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA) buildings became critically important meeting places. Public housing was initially run by the Province under the Ontario Housing Corporation until the Metropolitan Toronto regional government was created and MTHA was set up. It was within the community centres and MTHA buildings where programs were established, services developed, and strategic responses were created to fight further development and other negative conditions affecting those who lived in Jane-Finch.

The Jane Finch Mall was also utilized in that way during this decade with the mall becoming a ‘hang-out’ for youth. At the same time, there was a growing incidence of youth-related crime. There were few resources, services, or even safe spaces for youth to gather in the community. Pat O’Neill, a former North York alderman (city councillor), pointed out that there were twenty thousand young people under the age of twenty, but only one pool and one arena.²

The mall management hosted the Youth Action Project in the 1970s with a trailer parked in the back parking lot. Five years later, funding for the YAP ended, and the mall was not interested in supporting the trailer in that location any longer.

Residents were having difficulty finding out about programs and services, so community activists got the mall to host the first information kiosk rent free. It was a hit and after the first month, they fielded 1,444 inquiries. Some time later, the mall decided that they wanted the kiosk for a paying vendor, so the organizers secured space in the Yorkwoods Community Centre (20 Yorkwoods Gate – now owned by the Salvation Army).³

¹Julie-Anne Boudreau, Roger Keil and Douglas Young, “The In-Between City,” in *Changing Toronto: Governing Urban Neoliberalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009, 127) quoted in MacNevin, *BY US! FOR US!* p49

² Wanda MacNevin, *BY US! FOR US! Activism in Jane-Finch, A Working-Class Community*. Toronto, 2018, p82

³ *BY US! FOR US!* p89

Metro Toronto Housing Corporation was one of best sources for space in the community at that time. 15 Tobermory hosted the first YWCA Life Skills program for women (childcare provided) and it was so successful that the 'Y' expanded this program to 415 Driftwood, 5 Needlefirway, and 2999 Jane Street. When the Life Skills programs ended, the women formed a network with support from Mary Lewis, the Children's Aid Society community worker. There were seven groups throughout the community with the leaders meeting monthly and engaging on broad issues facing the community. Community spaces in the various MTHA buildings was critical for developing resident leadership, as well as supporting families.

The Yorkwoods Community Centre, south of Finch Avenue, was originally built as a private community centre for the condominium townhouses and apartments on Driftwood Avenue and London Green Court. This large white, round building was futuristic and unlike any other building in the community. In the late 1970s, North York purchased it for the whole community to use. While children and youth utilized the centre for recreation, it was also used by community groups for activities. One such group was the Ghanaian Women's Association, which subsequently created the Asante Multi-Cultural Association of Toronto. They were new to Canada, new to the community, and wanted to contribute to their new community. At the same time, they were teaching their children Ghanaian languages and customs. Yorkwoods was also home to the Caribbean Youth Connection drop-in program at the time.

Driftwood Community Centre (4401 Jane Street) opened its doors in 1974, serving neighbourhoods north of Finch Avenue. While the Centre ran its own activities, there was a need for more programs, particularly for youth. The Black Creek Venture Group was started in 1973 by a resident, with a focus on prevention of unhealthy conditions for children and youth. Their afterschool program was run out of Driftwood Public School (265 Driftwood Avenue). In 1977, Driftwood Community Centre gave them a small office adjacent to their kitchen. They hired local staff to work in the after-four and other drop-in programs, complementing the existing Parks and Recreation programs.⁴ The Driftwood Community Centre also opened its space in the 1970s for Probation Officers to see youth in their own community and for Children's Aid Society to connect with families.

Driftwood Community Centre became an important space for local community organizations and groups to meet. The newly formed Downsview Weston Action Community (DWAC) — the first community-wide group to focus on issues such as the rapid development and growing population — began meeting there. Residents were struggling with poverty, discrimination, and social isolation and DWAC was instrumental in assisting in the development of community-based organizations and services. As a result of that early work came many more opportunities for residents to come together to respond to issues that were impacting them, to become engaged in the community, and to organize to fight for change.

⁴ *BY US! FOR US!* p80

One service, supported by DWAC, was Downsview Services to Seniors (DSS) that started as a Meals on Wheels program in 1974. Their home base was located in an office in the recreation rooms at 35 Shoreham Drive, a MTHA building for seniors. DSS operated out of that location for many years, until the service grew. It developed into Lumacare, a service for seniors with 250 staff serving 3500 older adults operating out of other locations, including the Northwood Community Centre, north of Sheppard Avenue West.

DWAC conducted two years of research to create the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre (Jane/Finch Centre), a resource centre that provided three components: the Community Office, the Child/Parent Program, and the Community Development team. The Centre's first six months operated out of a small office in Driftwood Public School, but they needed space to provide programs and services. There were two unused community rooms at 4400 Jane Street, a high-rise social housing building, and with the support of MTHA staff they were able to work out of there on a temporary basis. The service was found to be valuable to the people who lived in the building, and also to people living elsewhere in the community. The Jane/Finch Centre remains there to this day, while also utilizing spaces in other buildings.

The Community Office component of the Centre provided a place where fledging organizations or individual residents and small grassroots groups could get administrative resources, talk about needs, or get support for self-help initiatives. Through the Jane/Finch Centre's community development work, it was also a space where people could link up with others to create new organizations in the community. The Jane/Finch Centre became the base of support for many organizations in the community.

The Firgrove neighbourhood was the last large public housing development to be built in the community [and the first to be largely demolished]. There were no streets running through it; most of the townhomes faced inwards and were stacked to four levels without an elevator for the families on the fourth floor. But, Firgrove had a recreation centre and a swimming pool in the midst of the townhouses, and meeting space in 5 Needle Firway, a high-rise building that was part of the complex. The Firgrove United Sports and Cultural Club operated out of the Firgrove recreation centre, although with insufficient funding and with volunteers playing an important role. It was also in the Firgrove neighbourhood that the first parent-school association in Jane-Finch was established at Firgrove Public School (270 Firgrove Crescent) by a new resident, originally from Jamaica, who wanted to ensure that her six children were successful in the school system.⁵

Another MTHA recreation space that was well utilized was located in the Yorkwoods/Grandravine community (23 Grandravine Drive). Their large recreation room, located within the townhouse complex, became the site of Mothers on the Move (1978). This was initiated and developed by a resident, Donna Wilson. This organization became a training program for mothers with limited working skills, and Wilson considered herself to be one of

⁵ *BY US! FOR US!* p125

them. With support from DWAC and MTHA, she opened the low-priced grocery / convenience store within the recreation space, where women could work for the minimum wage while developing new employment-related skills. MTHA eventually wanted this space for their own programs, so the group relocated to the Jane Eglinton area.⁶

For residents in Jane-Finch, the 1970s were all about developing programs and services to meet the tremendous needs of those living there. Ward 3 (Jane-Finch) had 2,286 social housing units, compared to Ward 1 to the east, with 142 social housing units, and Ward 5 to the west, with 223 social housing units. Jane-Finch was not a community that was designed or developed with large community-based, multi-service centres such as Dixon Hall, that serves the downtown east end, or the former Central Neighbourhood House. Rather, the community was designed with specific neighbourhoods (Edgeley Village – Shoreham and Driftwood – Gosford, Tobermory, Firgrove, Yorkwoods, Northwoods and Spenvally). As a result, local organizations would have to find their own office space, while services would be delivered within those neighbourhoods, wherever space was available.

It was left up to community residents and their supporters to find and utilize spaces to respond to the implications and impact of poverty, newcomer settlement, racism and discrimination, isolation, large numbers of children and youth, and more.

1980s

Activism in response to the school system issues, policing, negative media coverage, unwanted development, and housing issues dominated the 1980s .

The Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (now called Social Planning Toronto) released a report entitled, *Suburbs in Transition, Part 1: Evolution and Overview* written by Marvyn Novick In 1979.⁷ (Part Two came out in 1980.) The *Suburbs in Transition* report played an instrumental role in bringing attention to the suburbs. While experiencing similar issues to inner city areas such as Regent Park and Parkdale, the suburbs had been forgotten - especially areas in the northern corners of Metro Toronto like Jane-Finch, Rexdale, and Malvern. This report changed the way in which the City leaders thought about the suburbs and opened the doors to possible funding and increased supports.

The Downsview Weston Action Community members were meeting with residents and supporters in local community spaces and continuing to identify service needs. These meetings led to the formation of the Delta Family Resource Centre, initially located in Stanley Road Public School (75 Stanley Road) and Northwood Neighbourhood Services, originally located on the northwest corner of Jane and Sheppard, within the plaza.

⁶ Ibid p93

⁷ Marvyn Novick, "Metro Suburbs in Transition—Part 1: Evolution and Overview," Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1979, in *BY! US! FOR US!* p128

While there are stories to tell about the development of the above organizations, Northwood had an interesting start. The former Northwood Golf and Country Club, just north of Sheppard Avenue West on Clubhouse Court, closed and the clubhouse facility was given to the city for a nominal fee. The facility also included a second building of which people in Jane-Finch wanted to use to serve people in the south end of the ward, as Jane-Finch services were at capacity. Residents in the new homes did not want services in their community, so it was torn down. After research was conducted by DWAC, it was determined that services were indeed needed, and this led to the formation of Northwood Neighbourhood Services, now located at 1869 Wilson Avenue West, Unit 400.

The Northwood Community Centre (15 Clubhouse Court) sits on a beautiful piece of land overlooking the ravine. The banquet hall is unlike any other community centre so as a result, many organizations have held their annual general meetings there and other social functions and celebrations.

Development of organizations meant meeting in community centres and in residents' homes. Once founded, some had to move multiple times over a period of many years before establishing themselves in their preferred location. For example, Delta Family Resource Centre moved from Stanley Public School to Eddystone, then to the Jane Sheppard Plaza (northwest corner), and finally to 2291 Kipling Avenue in the Humber Summit community. Elspeth Heyworth Centre (formerly the Asian Community Centre) moved to an office building at Keele and Finch and are now located at 2350 Finch Avenue West. The Jane Finch Community Legal Clinic, initially located in Norfinch Plaza (2005 Finch Avenue West) eventually moved to 1315 Finch Avenue West. High rents and suitability were factors in their moves around the community and outside of the community.

At the same time, ethno-cultural groups were establishing their own associations to respond to the needs of their populations, with support from established community organizations. For example, Cambodian newcomers formed the Cambodian Association as they were concerned about their youth and integration in Canadian society and received funding to establish an office in the Yorkwoods Plaza (2845 Jane Street). The Jane Finch Concerned Citizens Organization was also established there by Linda Morowei after her brother was shot and killed by police. Office space on the 2nd floor of Yorkwoods Plaza was utilized for over 10 years while their supportive programs and services were offered in community centres, MTHA spaces, or schools.

Similar to other community-based organizations, the Jane Finch Concerned Citizens moved from the Yorkwoods Plaza and eventually moved into the Yorkgate Mall until the mall could no longer provide them with space.

The York Woods Public Library was built and opened to the community in 1970. A theatre was later built that allowed for larger community events. When Peter McLaren's book, *Cries from the Corridor*, came out in 1980 residents and supporters in the community

organized a meeting there that allowed the author to talk about his book, and for the community to express its objections. The theatre has been utilized over the years as a place for community to make presentations, host large community meetings, sponsor special events and host recitals. It has also been used for plays and events by neighbouring communities.

During this decade, the community mobilized to fight development on the vacant Yorkgate lands and fought with the school system about overcrowding in the schools, securing adequate resources, and racial discrimination within the school system. Black children and youth were more likely to be labelled by the school system, media, government, and the police; they were assumed to be “troubled” children coming from poor families. This racial profiling of children was carried on in different ways throughout the lives of Black people.⁸ Meetings continued to happen in community locations where space was available.

Conversations started in the 1980s about establishing a Women’s Shelter in North York to meet the needs of women and children coming from abusive situations. Peggy Edwards, Community Development Coordinator for the Jane/Finch Centre led that initiative with support from the North York Inter-Agency and Community Council [amalgamated with five other social planning organizations into the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (Social Planning Toronto)]. When the shelter project received funding, their first staff worked out of the Jane/Finch Centre at 4400 Jane Street for two years while the shelter was being built.

The 1980s saw the Mennonite Church come back to the community. Historically, the Edgeley Mennonite Church was built in 1824 on Jane Street north of Highway 7 to serve the Mennonite farmers who arrived from the United States and settled in the area. The original church building was moved to Black Creek Pioneer Village in 1975. The Mennonite Conference of Ontario hired a community chaplain to work with the social housing residents at 15 Tobermory Drive, providing pastoral care and helping residents develop activities to improve their quality of life. The United Church followed this example with a community minister at 5 Needle Firway, in the Firgrove neighbourhood. Both ministries were involved with community engagement and community development initiatives, standing in solidarity with low-income and oppressed peoples on a daily basis. The United Church ministry continues at this time using office space at the Firgrove Public School.

Some of the local churches have engaged with community by responding to issues impacting their congregations while others opened their doors to programs and meeting spaces to the community at large by hosting after-school programs, day care centres, food banks, and more.

The York Finch Hospital [now Humber River Hospital at 1235 Wilson Avenue] was very important to the community. In 1984, York Finch had the busiest emergency department of any hospital of its size in Ontario.⁹ For many years, there were tensions, complaints, and issues

⁸ *BY US! FOR US!* p177

⁹ Michael Spensieri, “York Finch Updates Equipment” (*Jane Echo*, Feb. 1984)

raised about the hospital by members of the community, and in the 1980s attempts were made to improve communications and build bridges between the hospital and the community residents. Community discussions happened in community spaces and away from the hospital. When it was time to meet with representatives from the hospital, it was sometimes at the hospital and sometimes in a neutral space in the community.

The North York public schools also offered space for community activities, after-school programs, and daycare. For example, a community forum of over 100 people was held at Firgrove Public School in 1982 to identify areas of concern. They included youth employment, social services, education, recreation, housing, and municipal concerns.¹⁰ In many cases, the principals set the tone for how schools were utilized, with some being very open to community activity and some more reserved. Brookview Middle School (formerly Jane Junior High) was utilized more for north of Finch community meetings as the school was located on Jane Street and easy to access (4505 Jane Street) by the community as a whole.

Affordable housing continued to be a dominant issue in Jane-Finch. In the late 1980s, a housing co-operative development organization wanted to build housing on an empty lot at 2750 Jane Street. They recruited residents who wanted to live someplace where they had more control over their living environment and that was more affordable. Rent subsidies were still available in those days. With residents joining, a Board of Directors was established and after an intensive, but successful fight with neighbours and North York politicians over a re-zoning amendment, the construction went ahead. Residents began moving into the new Glen Gardens Housing Co-operative in 1989.

Since its inception, the co-op became another site for community events and organizing. For example, it was the home base for a number of years for the construction of *Serious T'ing* "float", the only reggae float in the annual Caribana parade in the 1990s.

1990s

In the decade of the 1990s, government cuts to services, increasing drug use, education issues, and continuing housing issues became larger. It was also a time of increased organizing of Jane-Finch residents and groups.

The Network of Community Based Organizations was formed in the early 1990s. DWAC had dissolved, and the Network continued some of its work. This network brought community-based organizations together on a monthly basis to discuss issues facing the community and to develop strategies to respond to the issues of the day. The Network did not have staff, nor have their own space, so the members shared the work collectively in their own spaces.

Their meetings were held in various community organizations' locations such as the Jane/Finch Centre, Black Creek CHC, Delta Family Resource Centre, and Northwood

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10 Pat O'Neill, "Youth Hiring Headaches" (North York: *Jane Echo*, May 1982).

Neighbourhood Services. The Network was deliberate in moving their meetings to different parts of the community, so that members became familiar with the service provider locations and their programs and services. It was also easier to book a space with a local community organization rather than the school board or the Parks and Recreation department, both requiring a permit that took time, and sometimes cost, to process.

In 1992, the Network learned that Seneca College wanted to consolidate its west-end campuses into one location. The community fought vigorously to have the college locate on the vacant York Gate land, located behind the Yorkgate Mall. Meetings were held in various spaces and, while the community did not win, Seneca College eventually located a small satellite campus in the Yorkgate Mall. This space became another option for community to use for meetings or gatherings.

During this period of time, the community was dealing with increased drugs and alcohol problems. Discussions occurred in the community and by 1993, the Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group, known as FOCUS, became incorporated with a mandate for anti-poverty, anti-drug, and anti-alcohol initiatives.¹¹ Their work brought them into schools, community centres, and MTHA buildings. Dr. Ruth Morris, a resident, led this organization with innovative outreach and programming. In 1998, the board changed its name to Promoting Economic Action and Community Health and later to Promoting Education and Community Health. They had limited office space in the community, and over time, moved to 127 Eddystone Avenue where their location is known as a safe and positive space for youth.

Media played a role in sensationalizing the challenges facing Jane-Finch. In 1994, the concept of “neighbourhoodism” was introduced between two areas in North York, Jane-Finch and Lawrence Heights, and they established the Coalition Against Neighbourhoodism (CAN). Both neighbourhoods were portrayed negatively in media. Meetings were held between both neighbourhoods in community spaces; and meetings with the media were held downtown with the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail. Training was held for residents on how to deal with print and broadcast media in their respective communities.¹²

Neighbourhoodism drew the attention of academics. A three-year research project out of the University of Toronto called, “Toward Indicators of Community Capacity: A Study in Four Toronto Communities” included Firgrove and 15 Tobermory. After extensive research in the community, Firgrove was referred to as, “the community that flies,” and Tobermory, “the community that cares.” A new definition spoke to the communities’ ability to build on the strengths of the residents in order to achieve its goals.¹³

The newly elected Conservative Government under Premier Mike Harris in 1995 brought cuts to social services and to recipients of social assistance. Welfare was reduced by 21.68%

¹¹ *BY US! FOR US!* p219

¹² *BY US! FOR US!* p222

¹³ *Ibid* p224

and residents in the community were deeply affected by drastic cuts to government programs. Spaces (MTHA and community organizations) were utilized for residents to meet and to develop responses (e.g., letters to government and organizing protests). A local protest was organized at the corner of Jane-Finch, where protesters joined hands and formed a human chain, first across Finch Avenue, then across Jane Street. Traffic was halted for five minutes until police arrived to force the protesters off the street. The Jane/Finch Centre space was often used for the planning and organizing. Other protests followed at York University and one on Arrow Road.¹⁴

Also by this time, the Jane/Finch Centre had expanded its space to include four social housing units on the main floor of 4400 Jane Street, leaving their initial two rooms open for meetings and small events.

The concept of the Caring Village emerged in Jane-Finch in the early 1990s. The Caring Village was not a program, rather a “forum to do and promote advocacy for systemic change. Lasting change can only happen when you organize and inspire people to imagine a positive change that we all want and deserve.” Their focus was on the areas of Shoreham Drive and Driftwood Avenue.¹⁵ Most of their meetings were held at Shoreham Public School (31 Shoreham Drive) as many of the participating parents had children attending Shoreham School.

In 1998, the Jane-Finch community won the Caring Community Award. The Ontario Trillium Foundation invited communities across the province to submit a proposal identifying why their area should receive this award. The Network of Community Based Organizations highlighted five accomplishments, including when the Firgrove neighbourhood increased voter turn-out for the 1995 provincial election from five percent to fifty percent through the hard work of two residents. Another accomplishment was when residents at 15 Tobermory established welcome tables in the lobby of the building, run by volunteers, to discourage people from selling drugs in front of their building. A sign was posted along Jane Street to celebrate this win, but it was eventually taken down. The Ontario Trillium Foundation prepared a news release that said, “Perhaps one of the most significant accomplishments of this community is the tenacity of the residents to transcend adverse circumstances and to create a community that continues time and time again to inspire hope in its members.”¹⁶ This was indeed an amazing compliment to the residents and workers who continued the work in community spaces across the area.

When the Province downloaded social housing to the newly amalgamated City of Toronto in 1998, the Metro Toronto Housing Authority became the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCH).

¹⁴ *Ibid* p240

¹⁵ *Ibid* p254

¹⁶ *Ontario Trillium Foundation (1998) BY US! FOR US!* p247

The end of this decade brought the shooting of young Brianna Davy in 1999 at the Yorkwoods Toronto Community Housing Corporation (23 Grandravine Drive). She was hit by one of the four bullets intended for her father. Prior to the shooting, a steering committee of residents and service providers had been meeting at Yorkwoods Community Centre for the purpose of developing programs and services for that area as there were safety concerns with a high number of youth hanging around with nothing to do along with some drug trafficking. After many meetings it was agreed to do a feasibility analysis to improve the physical infrastructure on City and TCH lands through a pilot capital project, an assessment of community needs, and a community-based art project. The art project went ahead first with the intent for a design that would honour the death of Brianna. Space could not be found at Yorkwoods, rather the design can be found on the north side of Driftwood Community Centre. An artist from Montreal worked with residents to design and install *The Garden of Thought*, a design that includes boulders with inscriptions of one or several words and a circular bench backed by birch trees.¹⁷

The shooting of Brianna Davy galvanized community organizations to come together to create a reference group to address some of the concerns within the community at available community spaces. Their focus was to build on the area's strengths by placing emphasis on building on assets and capacities, prevention, community involvement, diversity, and community well-being. Funding was secured, and space was shared. Doorsteps Neighbourhood Services was the trustee for the grant, Delta Family Resource Centre provided the office space and Black Creek Community Health Centre provided the supervision of the staff.¹⁸ The reference group became the Black Creek Community Capacity Building Project that began its work in the early 2000s.

2000s

The Black Creek Community Capacity Building Project (BCCCBP) started with five priority objectives for the community: economic independence and stability; development of services; healthy, safe, and aesthetic spaces and facilities; enhancement of information and services; and showcasing the Black Creek (Jane-Finch) community. There was also a coordinating committee and a resident advisory committee set up for this project. For each objective there was a working group that met in various spaces within the community – community centres, TCH spaces, and within the offices of local community organizations.¹⁹ The BCCCBP continues to meet today under the name Black Creek Collaborative.

The largest private development in the community was on the northeast corner of Jane-Finch, then called the Palisades, which was built in the 1970s despite resistance from the

¹⁷ *BY US! FOR US!* p262

¹⁸ *BY US! FOR US!* p264

¹⁹ *BY US! FOR US!* p265

community. It included two high-rise condominium towers and a thirty-three-storey rental building, where twenty-five percent of the units were subsidized. It became known as San Romanoway, after the name of the street that runs through the development. A recreation centre with a day care centre was built for the residents.

Over time, there was an increase in violence on this corner – 128 per cent above the national average in 2000. The San Romanoway Revitalization Association was established in 2000, with Stephnie Payne, a former North York school board trustee and Black activist who lived in the community, at the helm. Space for the association was made available at 10 San Romanoway and in the recreation centre. Through a variety of programs and support services for children, youth, adults, and seniors, they were able to bring down the crime rate in this neighbourhood.²⁰

The Building Hope Coalition, a coalition that started in the community and was supported by Councillor Maria Augimeri, began to respond to violence impacting members of the Black community. After countless meetings and advocacy efforts, this group played a significant role in getting the City to create a \$4.45 million dollar strategy to promote a safer Toronto for youth. Three grants came to Jane-Finch. One was for the Jane-Finch Khmer-Cambodian Youth Drug Prevention Project, another for Project YOU (Youth of Unity) to do glue sniffing awareness utilizing ten peer youth workers to provide eight skill-building sessions and a conference for youth, and a Jane Finch Gang Prevention Project. Each of these projects utilized various spaces throughout the community while attempting to deal with long-term youth issues with a combined total of \$53,062.²¹

The Jamaican Canadian Association (995 Arrow Road) is located west of Highway 400. There were various meetings and occasional public events in their space. For example, a Youth Forum was organized in 2001 in hopes of improving communication between the police and youth in the community. Youth spoke about their negative experiences including officers being transferred from one station to another, so relationships could not be built.²² Places like the Jamaican Canadian Association allowed for a freer discussion on the issue of discriminatory police practices at the time.

This was also the time when the Humber River Regional Hospital (2111 Finch Avenue West) was considering a move from its Jane-Finch location to another one further away in Downsview, along with a merger of the two other local hospitals. This would mean building a new and bigger hospital. The community mobilized and organized a protest at the Finch Avenue site dubbed, “Save Our Hospital”. A group of concerned residents utilized various spaces to meet and established the Coalition to Save Our Hospital. One of the spaces used for these meetings was the Community Room at the 31 Police Division building at 40 Norfinch Drive.

²⁰ *BY US! FOR US!* p293

²¹ *BY US! FOR US!* p271

²² *BY US! FOR US!* p278

They also held a town hall meeting with a public forum at that location. The police division did provide space for community meetings over the years, but due to tensions between police and many community members, it did not get used as frequently as other spaces in Jane-Finch.

The Jane/Finch Centre utilized Toronto Community Housing spaces for programs and services: 4400 Jane Street for its offices; 415 Driftwood recreation room for its Getting-In-Touch Mental Health Program; 15 Tobermory Drive, 2999 Jane Street, and 5 Needlefirway for its children's programs. The Jane/Finch Centre's newest initiative was developing The Spot: A Place Where Youth Wanna Be and they secured storefront space in the Yorkgate Mall, across from the Black Creek Community Health Centre, and down the hall from Seneca College. Yorkgate was considered a neutral safe space for youth to come together, receive support, participate in programs, and build their skills and capacities.

With long-standing systemic issues facing the Jane-Finch community, activities by social justice action groups of residents continued during this decade. For example, Jane Finch is Getting On organized a conference at Oakdale Community Centre (350 Grandravine Drive) focusing on access and equity. Jane Finch On The Move (JFOTM) emerged from the conference to focus on issues impacting residents. That group organized another community conference that had over 300 people attending. It was held in a community centre, with prestigious guest speakers: noted educator, George Martell and U of T professor, J. David Hulchanski. JFOTM continued to meet in various spaces while focusing on poverty and social justice work.²³

Jane Finch Action Against Poverty later emerged from these initiatives to fight poverty and to act on issues impacting the community. Some of their early actions included the Jane-Finch Save our Schools Campaign, Jane-Finch Community Forum on Immigration, Right Food/Food Right campaign, May Day rallies, advocacy for expanding the Ontario Special Diet program, all-candidates election meetings, and Raising the Rates for social assistance. While they were supported by the Jane/Finch Centre, Black Creek Community Health Centre, and Community Legal Aid Support Program (CLASP) at York University, the residents led and actively participated in all the initiatives, utilizing various community spaces to meet, plan, and mobilize.

Space for community-based services and programs continued to be a serious problem in the 2000s for non-profit organizations and grassroots groups in Jane-Finch, not unlike the difficulties faced in other former suburban communities in North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough.

York University got funding from the TD Bank and opened the YU-TD Community Engagement Centre (CEC) in Yorkgate Mall. They invited the community to work with them and to utilize their space. The CEC is also connected to the Seneca College facility at Yorkgate, whose classroom spaces were occasionally used for larger meetings or events. The CEC became a hub of activity for the community.

²³ *BY Us! FOR US!* p308

Action for Neighbourhood Change was a new initiative of the United Way of Greater Toronto in 2007. The Jane/Finch Centre was successful in securing ANC funding, but again space had to be found for an office and activities. They initially had space on the 2nd floor in Norfinch Plaza, but without an elevator some residents could not access the office, so they moved into 415 Driftwood's recreation room, where they stayed until the funding ended. Affordable space is challenging to find in the community so, once again, space within TCH enabled the ANC initiative to carry out its activities and achieve its goals.

New services for youth continued to be developed by residents with locations within local schools and outside of school facilities. Friends in Trouble was started by a young man who attended Westview Centennial Collegiate (755 Oakdale Road) with the intention of providing programs that would engage youth and assist them with the court system. Success Beyond Limits was started by parents and community agency staff meeting at Westview to deal with high school drop-out rates. This program led to a relationship with York University that ensured a better transition from high school to university for youth who may not have considered post-secondary education as an option. Belka Enrichment Centre (120 Norfinch Drive) was started by two teachers outside of school hours to help youth move beyond anger and despair by providing positive alternatives.

Lastly, the Jane Finch Mall has provided some much-needed space for community organizations. Many years after hosting the Downsview-Weston Information Post, the Jane/Finch Centre was able to obtain storefront space in the mall for the Early Years' Centre (now referred to as Early ON Child and Family Centre). This program started out as the Child/Parent Centre at the 4400 Jane Street site, then utilized various spaces, including Gosford Public School (30 Gosford Blvd.) to provide early childhood programs. The Jane Finch Mall is also a site for the JVS Toronto employment support services.

2010s

Residents continued to access community spaces to meet and organize in the 2010s. York University-TD Community Engagement Centre at the Yorkgate Mall was utilized frequently by networks and grassroots groups, as were spaces next door in Seneca College's classrooms. Meetings also took place in spaces within local community organizations (e.g., the Jane/Finch Centre [various locations] and the Black Creek CHC at Yorkgate Mall, across from YU-TD CEC).

Late 2009 and into 2010, the Toronto District School Board, suffering from continuing funding cuts by the provincial government, did a review of school populations. They determined that several Jane-Finch schools, among others in the system, were under-enrolled and therefore targeted for possible closure and sale of the property. Led by community activists, residents in Jane-Finch formed a coalition to stop the closures and held meetings of up to 300 people in spaces such as Brookview Middle School. As a result, none of the schools in the area were closed.

The Centre for Green Change, a new component of the Jane/Finch Centre, was developed in late 2009 into 2010. Space was secured at the rear of 2999 Jane Street, a high-rise Toronto Community Housing building, but the space needed renovation to create offices and a community meeting space. A Green Gala fundraising event was organized and held at the Oakdale Golf and Country Club; a private club not accessible to Jane-Finch organizations in the past [Oakdale was the site of the 2023 PGA Canadian Open golf tournament]. As well as proceeds from the gala, a proposal was submitted to Volunteer Canada for renovations for the Green Change centre. The proposal was successful, and with sponsorship from Starbucks, approximately 750 volunteers came to help with the make-over. Further funds were also obtained from the City of Toronto and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

For many years, events and festivals and protests utilized the northwest section of the Jane Finch Mall's parking lot. More recently, the newest initiative that has significant value for the community is the Corner Commons, a program of the Centre for Green Change. It is located on the southeast corner of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West and operates from spring to the fall. It was created to bring residents and workers together in a very visible, public space for a wide range of programs and activities including community events, educational workshops, artist residencies, live music, and much more.

In the early 2010s, work was begun to establish the Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF) at 4929 Jane Street by residents and staff in the area. This eight-acre property on Jane Street just south of Steeles Avenue West and next to the Black Creek Pioneer Village, was held by the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA) and included a heritage farmhouse, a barn, and enough acreage to grow food for the community. Meetings and negotiations resulted in the establishment of this newest community-based organization in 2012.²⁴

The Black Creek Community Farm set up its office in the original farmhouse on the land and production began. Their purpose is to improve food security, reduce social isolation, and improve employment and education outcomes. This also became a space community organizations could utilize for relevant meetings.

Once the farm was established and functioning, they grew sustainable and organic food and led a fight for food justice by establishing the Black Creek Food Justice Network. Meetings were held at the farm to organize action for food security and food equity with their partners: the Jane/Finch Centre and the Black Creek CHC.²⁵ Several initiatives were organized that mobilized more residents to act on their own behalf and for the needs of the community.

Another source of resident-led community activism was the York-West Community Action Planning Group (CAPG). CAPG was established to address the issue of poor planning in the community and to ensure community voices were heard in any future planning by governments or private developers. Consisting of long-time community activists, they held their

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initial meetings in their homes. As they grew in number and wanted to be more visible to residents, they negotiated regular meeting space at the York Woods Public Library. They held their first public forum on the transit crisis and solutions for the community in the library. CAPG later held their meetings at the Green Change offices at 2999 Jane Street.

While working on building support for a Light Rail Train to run from Keele and Finch to Humber College, and beyond in Etobicoke, CAPG learned that the Province was actually going to build the LRT. When they found out that Metrolinx intended to build a maintenance and storage facility (MSF) on the empty lands across from the Yorkgate Mall, they took it upon themselves to ensure some of that land was given to the community for social purposes. Some members remembered the fights with developers who wanted to build condos on that land and felt the community deserved something better that would benefit the community.

CAPG was invited by their partners, the Toronto Community Benefits Network, to speak at a meeting of Metrolinx and the developer consortia bidding to build the LRT and the MSF. After compelling presentations from three CAPG activists, Metrolinx and the developers agreed to a minimum of a 32-metre setback.²⁶ Many meetings were held at 2999 Jane Street to discuss this process and to plan the presentation. Some years later, when Metrolinx reneged on its offer for the 32-metre frontage along Finch – thus taking this land from the community to sell on the private market – community residents and supporters organized and mobilized a sizable demonstration at the Yorkgate Mall parking lot across the street from the site. The media picked up on the protest and numerous columnists criticized the provincial government for this reversal, making the Ford government look bad. Metrolinx reversed course and relinquished the land to the City for use by the community.

When the City announced the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (TSNS) in 2013, the City planned to hold consultations across Toronto, but the Jane-Finch community was not included. Jane Finch Action Against Poverty wrote a letter to the City reminding them that Jane-Finch was the priority community with the worst livability scores and insisted that the community be part of the consultations. The City agreed to this, so residents and community staff worked hard going door-to-door—visiting youth, seniors, and parent groups – and as a result of this local outreach well over two hundred residents attended the consultation. It was the largest consultation meeting the City held, larger than all the other consultations on this issue combined.²⁷ This meeting with the City happened at the Driftwood Community Centre.

Some social action work in Jane-Finch was done on the street, some at a desk, and some in a community space. For example, when Jane Finch Action Against Poverty (JFAAP) tackled the issue of precarious jobs, they spent time talking to temporary and precarious workers on their way to work in order to learn more about this issue. More than one hundred exploitative temporary employment agencies operated in the community at that time. JFAAP held

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workshops, advocated by telephone, and handed out flyers at the four corners of Jane Street and Finch Avenue (or wherever people congregated) to inform workers about their rights.²⁸

Jane Finch Action Against Poverty prepared a report for an all-candidates meeting for the municipal election of 2019. They found that residents continued to feel the impact from the lack of affordable housing, increasing rents, and insufficient income to pay their bills. They also found that the Humber River-Black Creek riding (including neighbourhoods from Keele to Hwy. 400) had the highest number of families on the waiting list for subsidized housing. The households in the area had the highest number of children waiting for a child-care subsidy and the highest rate of poverty among racialized and Indigenous people than the rest of Canada. JFAAP also found an increasing number of seniors living in poverty. Their document concluded that there was substantial demographic information documenting Jane-Finch as having enormous challenges, scarce resources, and insufficient social supports to address the systemic issues that have impacted the community since its beginning.²⁹

Mural and graffiti artistic design

Over the years, community staff and residents have invited artists, local and from outside, to paint murals and graffiti art in the community. Those artistic designs can be found on the walls of community centres (Driftwood), apartment buildings (4400 Jane Street, San Romanoway), Black Creek Community Farm and in the Yorkgate Mall (beside The Spot). [*Note: there are additional murals in the community.*] Each has a story to tell and brings character to the community. One specific mural, painted by people in the Firgrove community, depicts 12 youth who lost their lives due to violence over a fifteen-year period called *Towards a Higher Journey*. The mural hung outside the former Firgrove recreation centre until the centre was demolished.

Community Minister, Barry Reider, read an article in the Toronto Star around that time that compared the youth who died in Toronto to the Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan. In a ten-year period, approximately 53 youth in Toronto Housing had lost their lives to violence. During that same period of time, 55 Canadian soldiers lost their lives in Afghanistan. Rieder saw the violence against youth in the community as another war “. . . that we don’t talk about, and that’s called poverty.”³⁰ Most recently, the mural was displayed at York University’s Art Gallery show and is being kept by a professor at York University who has been working with youth in Firgrove and PEACH over the past six years.

Summary

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For those who call Jane-Finch home, or work with the residents, there continue to be major challenges facing the community, challenges that have been exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the construction of the LRT. Despite this situation, the people of Jane-Finch and their supporters have managed to mobilize and fight against negative conditions imposed on them, creating community-based services in whatever spaces they could find. This is a very diverse community with people from around the world, with their cultures, skills and experiences that add to creating a better community. What Jane-Finch has in abundance is social capital.

People volunteered a great deal of their time and knowledge, working with others to build the community they wanted and deserved. In Jane-Finch, there is a very deep and valuable legacy of community-led organizing, advocacy, and action. While that legacy is primarily about people acting collectively, it is important to acknowledge that the work would not have happened without the community spaces that were provided, where meetings were held, where events took place, and where memorials were constructed.

Spaces in both Toronto Community Housing Corporation buildings and in city community centres were instrumental in community development. For example, the work of residents in developing community services could not have been done without utilizing space within the following TCHC locations:

- *4400 Jane Street*: Jane/Finch Centre (office and program space), programs for youth groups, community meetings
- *415 Driftwood Avenue*: YWCA Life Skills Group, Action for Neighbourhood Change, Getting in Touch, community meetings
- *15 Tobermory Drive*: Life Skills Group, moms and tots programs, Mennonite Community Ministry (had a thrift shop, food bank), meeting spaces
- *2999 Jane Street*: Life Skills Group, Centre for Green Change, meeting space
- *5 Needlefirway*: Life Skills Group, Women's Group, United Church's Community Ministry utilized 5 Needle Firway and then they had one of the townhouses – now demolished
- *San Romanoway*: programs and services, community meetings

Meetings, celebrations and events were mostly conducted in the following community centres:

- *Driftwood Community Centre*
- *Oakdale Community Centre*
- *Northwood Community Centre*

The following malls had, or continue to have, community services in their spaces:

- *Jane-Finch Mall* – formerly had the Downsview Weston Information Post and continues to have Jane/Finch Centre’s Early ON, JVS Employment Services and Corner Commons
- *Jane-Sheppard Mall* – (northeast corner) Black Creek Community Health Centre was there for about 6 years when they were established
- *Jane-Sheppard Plaza* – (northwest corner) Northwood Neighbourhood Services was there for several years as was Delta Family Resource Centre
- *Sheridan Mall* – Black Creek CHC has a site there
- *Yorkgate Mall* – formerly had the Jane Finch Concerned Citizens Organization and continues to have the Black Creek CHC as second site; York University-TD Community Engagement Centre, Jane/Finch Centre’s The Spot, and Seneca College

Submitted by Wanda MacNevin

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Biographic information about Wanda MacNevin:

Wanda MacNevin grew up in Downsview on the former Canadian military base. While living in Jane-Finch, she started work in 1976 at the Jane/Finch Centre and then in 1991, she worked at the Black Creek Community Health Centre. She went back to the Jane/Finch Centre in 2003 until she retired in 2016 as the Director of Community Programs. MacNevin dedicated time volunteering on boards, committees, and in political action.

In 2017, York University awarded her with a Doctor of Laws degree for her lifework. MacNevin has authored three books, *From the Edge - A Woman’s Evolution from Abuse to Activism* (1999), *Teen Moms: If I Only Knew* (2008) and *By Us! For Us! Activism in Jane-Finch, A Working-Class Community* (2022).

[All documents saved by Wanda MacNevin can be found in the archives at York University.]