

Preliminary Draft for Discussion

2021-08-23

**Historic Context Statement:
The History and Evolution of the Danforth –
Broadview Avenue to Coxwell Avenue**

**Danforth Avenue Phase 2
Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment**

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Introduction

The existing built form of the Danforth Study Area tells a story about how the Danforth developed and evolved through time. Most of the Study Area was constructed during the first quarter of the 20th century, as access across the Don River was gradually improved through infrastructure and public transportation. Since the development of the Prince Edward Viaduct in 1918, the Danforth Study Area rapidly developed into a retail main street, serving new communities north and south of Danforth Avenue.

Within the Danforth Avenue Study Area, which is situated between Coxwell Avenue and the Don Valley Parkway North, are built, landscape, and archaeological resources that reflect its evolution from ancient Indigenous habitation prior to European contact, through to its annexation to the City of Toronto and subsequent transformation into a prosperous commercial street during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Danforth Avenue is situated on a ridge in the Don River watershed and it is the highest point in the local area. To the north, the land is flat and was known as "The Plains." To the south, the land gradually slopes to the lake. Once thickly wooded, predominately with pine, the area's rich soil supported farming and market gardening, and the large clay deposits led to a significant brickmaking history.¹ Between Jones and Greenwood avenues and in the vicinity of Coxwell Avenue, several creeks and streams ran through ravines and gullies that crossed the Danforth as they meandered south to empty into Ashbridge's Bay.

The area's history can be understood through six periods of development:

1. Indigenous Communities
2. Early Settlement of Concessions 1 and 2 Surrounding Today's Danforth Avenue (1780s-1850)
3. The Creation of the Don and Danforth Plank Road and Other Early Infrastructure and Transit Improvements (1851-1909)
4. The Construction Boom of the 1910s and 1920s (1910-29)
5. The Depression and Inter-War Construction Slow Down (1930-49)
6. Post-War Immigration and Redevelopment (1950-Present)

Indigenous Communities ²

For time immemorial, Toronto has been home to Indigenous peoples. Small groups of Indigenous peoples first moved across this land, hunting and gathering the food they needed according to the seasons. Waterways and the lake were vital sources of fresh water and nourishment, and their shorelines and nearby areas were important sites for gathering, trading, hunting, fishing, and ceremonies. South of the study area, Withrow Public School now occupies a site of Indigenous encampments where a spear point dating back approximately 7000 years was found. The banks of the Don River, Withrow

¹All historical information has been taken from the City of Toronto's "Danforth Avenue Planning Study Area Profile Report, Broadview to Coxwell," (December 2019) and from research completed by Barbara Myrvold unless stated otherwise.

² This summary of the Indigenous history of the study area was informed by an interview with Philip Coté.

Park, Phin Park and parts of Riverdale Park have been identified as areas of Archaeological Potential.

Over millennia, Indigenous peoples in the Toronto area adapted to changing environmental conditions, developing and acquiring new technologies as they did so, including the bow and arrow. After agriculture was introduced to what is now Southern Ontario, corn, beans and squash became important food sources, shaping the way of life of those who farmed them. In the area of today's City of Toronto, ancestors of the Huron-Wendat Nation developed year-round villages surrounded by fields of crops.

These villages were connected to well-established paths 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. Broadview Avenue and Dawes Road may also follow the approximate route of Indigenous trails.³

Archaeologists have identified the remains of an ancestral Huron-Wendat village (known as the Doncaster Site) east of the Study Area, and south of Massey Creek.

By the late 1500s, the Huron-Wendat Nation had concentrated its villages away from Lake Ontario, in the Georgian Bay area. Following contact with French explorers and missionaries in the early 1600s, the Huron-Wendat Nation was devastated by disease transmitted by European contact. In the mid-1600s, the Huron-Wendat Nation was dispersed from southern Ontario by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. 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, after which they returned to the south shore of Lake Ontario. Anishinaabe peoples then inhabited a vast territory which included the Toronto area. 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.

In 1787, as the British began to prepare for an influx of colonists into the area following the American Revolution, the British Crown negotiated Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to obtain title to the land. The flawed and controversial agreement was renegotiated in 1805. In 2010, the Government of Canada settled the Toronto Purchase Claim with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

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 multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

According to 2016 Census data, 275 members of the community living in the Blake-Jones neighbourhood between Danforth Avenue and the C.N.R. and Pape Avenue and Greenwood Avenue identify as First Nations peoples.⁴

³Melanie Milanich, "Dawes Road: a Shortcut to the Market and a Natural Resource Base," [East York Historical Society, Dawes Road.PDF](#) (October 2020)

⁴City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles, "Neighbourhood Census Profile Blake-Jones" (2016), [Blake-Jones.PDF](#)

Themes and Existing Landscapes and Built Form

Themes: Indigenous Practices

Contribution to Existing Landscapes and Built Form:

- Parts of the route of Broadview Avenue may have originated as an Indigenous trail.

Early Settlement of Concessions 1 and 2 Surrounding Today's Danforth Avenue (1780s-1850)

Quickly following the establishment of Toronto (then the Town of York) in 1793, a new population of settlers spread out from the shores of Lake Ontario to clear and farm the land.

Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe had the area surveyed in order to divide the land into parcels which could be distributed to settlers. Surveyor Alexander Aitken's Plan of York Harbour (the earliest known plan of the Town of York) shows the present Danforth Avenue as the first road north of the baseline (Queen Street) at the northern border of the First Concession of York Township (Image 1).

Early surveys and land subdivisions fundamentally shaped the subsequent pattern of development in the Danforth Study Area. Then known as the Second Concession Road, today's Danforth Avenue ran between two-hundred acre farm lots north and south of the road. Loyalists, Late Loyalists, disbanded soldiers, and officials and friends of the government were granted the eight lots (Lots 15-8) between the Don River and present Coxwell Avenue (Image 2). Each of these north-south lots was a quarter-mile wide and extended one-and-a quarter miles from today's Queen Street East to the south side of today's Danforth Avenue.

The lots on the north side of present-day Danforth Avenue were laid out in an east-west pattern to maximize the frontage of the Don River. Two east-west lots within the study area (Lots 6 and 11) bordered the north side of the road, each extending 1 ¼ miles along today's Danforth Avenue. James Playter, one of the earliest settlers in the area, was granted lot 11 and his brother, John Playter, soon established a farm there (Image 3).

By 1799, the Executive Council of Upper Canada commissioned Asa Danforth, an American contractor, to open a street between York (Toronto) and the Trent River to the east. Construction began on 5 June 1799 on the east side of the Don River at Scadding's Bridge. The thirty-foot wide road proceeded along the present Queen Street and Kingston Road, where it branched off to follow a north-east course along today's Danforth Road. Interestingly, although today's Danforth Avenue shares its name with Asa Danforth, he never actually had anything to do with the road's construction.⁵

During the 1820s, lots south of present-day Danforth Avenue were further sub-divided. Today's Pape Avenue was the centre road in the subdivision of Lot 12 and each lot was

⁵Asa Danforth (1768-1078) was an American colonizer who embarked on a real estate speculation scheme in Upper Canada. Although the Broadview Danforth BIA claims that Danforth Avenue was named after Asa Danforth, Barbara Myrvold's "Timeline of Development of Danforth Avenue, Toronto, between the Don Valley and Coxwell Avenue" (30 July 2020) states that he had nothing to do with the construction.

ten acres, except for the pair bordering the "Rear Road" (Danforth Avenue), which were five acres each.

The following decade, the Rectory of St James was given a patent for the crown grant of Lot 6 on 16 January 1836. The 200-acre farm lot was on the north side of present-day Danforth Avenue, east of Playter's lot. In the late 1840s, the church began leasing sections of the "Glebe Land" (Image 4).

Given the different configurations of the lots on the north and south sides of Danforth Avenue, and that Danforth Avenue ran along the long sides of farm lots and Glebe lands on its north side, Danforth Avenue was slow to be cleared into the mid-nineteenth century.⁶ This meant that very little development actually occurred during this period.

Themes and Existing Built Form

Themes: Community Building

Sub-themes:

- Mapping and Surveying
- Land Division and Subdivision

Contribution to Contribution to Existing Landscapes and Built Form:

- The original farm lot configurations along the north and south side of present-day Danforth Avenue. The farm lots on the north side of present-day Danforth Avenue were laid out in an east-west pattern to maximize the frontage of the Don River, while the lots on the south side were laid out in a north-south pattern. These varied lot configurations are still present today.

The Creation of the Don and Danforth Plank Road and Other Early Infrastructure and Transit Improvements (1851-1909)

In 1851, the Don and Danforth Plank Road Company was organized to build a plank road between the Don River in Toronto and Danforth Road in Scarborough. The Don and Danforth Road included small parts of today's Gerrard Street and Broadview Avenue and most of the present-day Danforth Avenue. The completion of the Don and Danforth Road was presumably when the road ceased being referred to as "Second Concession Line."⁷ George Tremaine's 1860s Map of the County of York, Canada West, illustrates the Don and Danforth Plank Road. Beginning at Broadview, The Don and Danforth Road ran east on today's Danforth Avenue until it angled north on what is still today called Danforth Road. From Toronto, travelers primarily accessed the Don and Danforth Road by an extension of Winchester Street which descended into the valley, crossed the Don River on a small bridge, and angled up to Danforth Avenue following roughly the line of today's onramp to the northbound Don Valley Parkway. (Image 5). A military sketch map from 1868 shows additional details, with the "Don Gate" being located at the present-day Broadview Avenue for travelers on Don Mills Road and the "Danforth Gate" for those using the Don and Danforth Road (Image 6).

⁶Barbara Myrvold, *The Danforth in Pictures* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1979), p.2, [The Danforth in pictures](#) (23 September 2020)

⁷ Myrvold, "Timeline of Development of Danforth Avenue, Toronto."

Tremaine's map also demonstrates that several land subdivisions had been made during the 1850s and early-1860s on the south side of today's Danforth Avenue. More specifically, from 1854-1871, six subdivision plans were registered along the Don and Danforth Road for lots 11-15, all located near Broadview Avenue. His map also lists the names of several owners or occupants. These residents used their holding for farming, market gardening, butchering, speculation, and possibly brickmaking.⁸

During the 1860s, the Playters sold off some of their parcels of land fronting Danforth Avenue and up Broadview on the north side of the road. This led to the creation of the village of Chester.⁹ The name was given by the rector of the Norway Church, James Beaven, when he opened a mission there (after Chester, England).¹⁰ Never incorporated as its own municipality, Chester first appeared in the Toronto City Directory in 1862, and eventually stretched from Sarah Street to the west, Logan Avenue to the east, Danforth Avenue to the south, and Todmorden to the north (Image 7). It was in Chester that one of the earliest Anglican churches in Toronto was erected in 1858. St Barnabas (originally St John's then Church of the Epiphany), a wooden board-and-batten church with Gothic Revival details, was erected on land donated by the Playter family on Ellerbeck Street (Image 8). The original church was later moved when the present church was constructed in 1910 at the corner of Hampton and Danforth Avenue.

Despite the registration of several subdivision plans along present-day Danforth Avenue by the late-nineteenth century, very little had actually been built along the road. This can be seen in an 1889 Goad's Atlas Map, which illustrates less than thirty buildings having been constructed along today's Danforth Avenue within the study area (Image 9). The slow rate of construction may have been due in part to the deterioration of the Don and Danforth Road after the company ceased maintaining it on 1 November 1879. Historic mapping indicates that the name of the road changed from the Don and Danforth Road to Danforth Avenue between 1882-9.¹¹ With its maintenance becoming the responsibility of York Township, the road continued to degenerate until it became a dirt and gravel road. The economic depression of the 1890s also dramatically affected development in the vicinity of today's Danforth Avenue, with the registrations of subdivisions plans and the creation of new streets halting almost entirely.

On 25 March 1884, the south side of today's Danforth Avenue was annexed to the City of Toronto as part of the annexation of the York Township districts known as Riverside and Leslieville. The area was bounded by the Don River, Kingston Road (Queen Street), Don and Danforth Road (Danforth Avenue), and the road allowance between Lots 9 and 10 (Greenwood Avenue). The eastern border changed on 4 January 1890, when annexation was extended to include lots on the east side of Greenwood Avenue (Image 10).

⁸ Myrvold, "Timeline of Development of Danforth Avenue, Toronto."

⁹ "The Tiny Village of Chester Grows to Today's Greek Town, *Beaches Living*, [Beaches Living Guide](#) (24 September 2020).

¹⁰ Ron Brown, *Toronto's Lost Villages* (Toronto: Polar Bear Press, 1997), p.40.

¹¹ The City Engineer's Office's "Plan of the city of Toronto, shewing proposed system of parks and boulevard to accompany Mayor McMurrich's report to council," records that the road was still called "The Don and Danforth Road" in 1882. This changed by the time the 1889 Goad's Atlas Map was published, which called it "Danforth Avenue."

In May 1889, the Toronto Street Railway Company began service to the Danforth district with horse drawn streetcars that ran from Front and York Streets downtown, east to Broadview, and north up Broadview Avenue to the corner of Danforth Avenue in Chester Village. Renamed from "Danforth" to "Broadview" in 1893, the route was electrified by 11 June 1894 (Image 11).

By the 1890s, several types of businesses had been established in the area. Brickmaking, which began in the area during the 1840s, was an active industry in the Don Valley near the north side of Danforth Avenue, west of today's Broadview Avenue. In fact, the Playter Brothers' brickyard operated there as late as 1899. Brickmaking also occurred near today's Danforth Avenue along Jones and Greenwood Avenues. Additional businesses that remained significant to the local economy were market gardening and flower growing, the raising of livestock, butchering, and the recycling of the by-products of the slaughterhouse. W. Harris & Co. had even relocated their glue, fertilizer, and sausage-casing factory from Pape Avenue to the northeast corner of Danforth and Coxwell Avenues on land sold to them by the Synod of the Diocese of Toronto in 1893. Their new factory became both a local landmark and a neighbourhood nuisance and it continued to operate on this site until 1922 (Image 12).¹²

By 1903, the Danforth remained a largely rural road. Though most of the property on the north and south sides of the road from Broadview to Greenwood Avenue had been subdivided, excluding the lots on the north side of the street between Leslie Street and Coxwell Avenue, few buildings had been constructed (Image 13). The years following, however, brought significant change. Further subdivision plans were registered creating new streets. St Barnabas, the oldest church in Chester, relocated to the southeast corner of Danforth and Hampton Avenues, while the Danforth Avenue Methodist Church started holding their services in Danforth Hall near the northwest corner of Ellerbeck Street. Infrastructure improvements also pointed to future growth. In 1907, water mains were laid on Danforth Avenue by the City of Toronto. Two-years later, the area that became known as the "Playter Estates" was created when the Playter family re-subdivided one of the last sections of their old farm (Image 14). By 1908, a new sign of urban growth also appeared in the area. Wilson's (later Playtorium or Playter's Fun Theatre), the area's first movie theatre, opened on the north side of Danforth Avenue between Broadview and Ellerbeck. The Playter Society Building (Playter Hall) followed in 1909 (Image 15).

Between 1905 and the start of WWI, a little-known "Shacktown" developed near Coxwell and Danforth Avenues.¹³ Shacktowns were developed just outside of Toronto's city limits where municipal regulations did not reach. In these areas, land was affordable for new waves of immigrants who purchased lots, and in some cases built themselves shacks to live in until they could afford proper houses.¹⁴

¹²Joanna Dean, Darcy Ingram, and Christabelle Sethna, *Animal Metropolis: Histories of Human-Animal Relations in Urban Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017), p.312, [Animal Metropolis](#) (28 September 2020).

¹³This information was acquired from an interview with Joanne Doucette on 10 June 2021.

¹⁴Nancy Byers and Barbara Myrvold, *St. Clair West in Pictures* (Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication, 2008), p.5.

Today, only six buildings that were constructed before 1900 remain in the study area. They are centered on the west side of Broadview Avenue just south of Danforth Avenue.

Themes and Existing Built Form

Themes:

- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Community Building
- Governance and Public Services
- Industry, Manufacturing and Economic Activity

Sub-themes:

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Early Plank Road
- Streetcar Service

Community Building

- Early settlement
- Land Division and Subdivision
- Places of Worship
- Lodges and Halls

Governance and Public Services

- Annexation to the City of Toronto

Industry, Manufacturing and Economic Activity

- Farming
- Butchering
- Market Gardening and Flower Growing
- Brickmaking

Contribution to Existing Landscapes and Built Form

- The creation of Don and Danforth Road by the Don and Danforth Plank Road Company, with Danforth Avenue following the same street configuration today within the Study Area
- The subdivision of one of the last sections of the Playter family's old farms to create the "Playter Estates." 276 and 280 Danforth Avenue (1913) are remnants of properties that were built as a result of this sub-division
- 29 (4.8%) of the existing properties within the Study Area were constructed during this period
- Notable structures constructed during this period: The Playter Society Building (1909) at 757 Broadview Avenue, and six buildings on the west side of Broadview Avenue south of Danforth Avenue.

The Construction Boom of the 1910s and 1920s (1910-29)

The end of the first decade of the twentieth century brought about significant changes that would help transform the study area from a largely rural road to one of the most prosperous commercial streets in Toronto.¹⁵ Although the south side of Danforth Avenue to Greenwood Avenue had been annexed to Toronto in 1884, the north side remained in the Township of York until 1909. In that year, as part of the Midway annexation, the City of Toronto further expanded its boundary to include the north side of Danforth Avenue between the Don River and Gledhill Avenue, and the south side of Danforth Avenue east of Greenwood Avenue to Gledhill Avenue (Image 16). The Glebe Estates were annexed to the City of Toronto six-years later, on 1 May 1914.

With the acquisition of both sides of Danforth Avenue complete, the City of Toronto was then prepared to initiate much needed transit improvements that contributed to the area's success during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Toronto Civic Railway's Danforth line was constructed and, as part of the project, Danforth Avenue was paved along the route from Broadview to Greenwood Avenue in 1912 and to the city limits at Luttrell Avenue in 1913 (Image 17).

Then, in 1918, the Danforth Avenue Study Area was further unified with the rest of the city through the construction of the Bloor Viaduct – a direct, convenient link across the historic barrier of the Don Valley. Commenced in 1915, the Don section was completed in 1918 (Image 18). Direct, single-fare, crosstown streetcar service was introduced by the publicly-operated Toronto Transit Commission (established 1921) along Bloor and Danforth from Lansdowne Avenue to the eastern city limits at Luttrell Avenue on 1 July 1923.

In the same period, automobile traffic and related businesses grew dramatically along Danforth Avenue. Imperial Oil Ltd opened one of the first gas stations along the Danforth at Broadview Avenue in 1917 in response to the increased automobile traffic along Danforth Avenue. By 1942, the Toronto City Directory listed 15 automobile dealers on Danforth Avenue within the Study Area, most being located east of Pape Avenue.

The two-decades following the annexation of much of Danforth Avenue were important in the development of the Danforth Avenue Study Area. Between 1912 and 1922, the *Globe Toronto* observed that the population bordering Danforth Avenue increased six-fold.¹⁶ Between 1910 and 1929, most of the buildings existing today were constructed, amounting to approximately 433 properties. As a result, the predominant built form character of the area was established as a commercial street defined by a majority of two- and three-storey mixed-use, commercial and residential brick buildings, dotted with places of worship.

The sheer volume of construction during these two decades can be seen in the 1913 and 1924 Goad's Atlas Maps, which illustrate that the portion of the street east of the Don River and west of Coxwell Avenue had been largely built out by 1924 (Image 19, Image 20). In the Study Area, approximately 69% of properties existing in 2021 were

¹⁵Barbara Myrvold, *The Danforth in Pictures*, p.2.

¹⁶Ibid.

constructed from 1910-1929. In comparison, approximately 4% were built before 1910 and approximately 3% from 1930-39 (Image 21).

The predominant cultural groups responsible for that development were people of English, Irish and Scottish descent. However, it was also during the early-twentieth century, that immigrants from Italy began moving to the area. While Italian immigrants who settled along the Danforth are perhaps best known for establishing fruit markets, they initially came to the area to work in the brickyard that was located south of Danforth Avenue near Coxwell Avenue during the early-1900s.¹⁷ During the 1910s, they began to establish fruit markets along Danforth Avenue.¹⁸ The first was opened by Joseph Graziano in 1913 at 238 Danforth Avenue on the north side of the street east of Arundel Avenue. Sebastiano Leo opened another in 1916 at 311 Danforth Avenue, at the southwest corner of Gough Avenue, and he also provided lodging for single Italian men and women. By 1925, there were at least nine fruit traders' stores along Danforth Avenue. Sunkist Fruit Market, opened by Sam Comella and Sam Badali in 1929 at the southeast corner of Carlaw Avenue (Image 22), would remain a fixture on the Danforth until the end of the century.

Beyond their commercial presence, the Italian community played an important role in religious life on the Danforth throughout much of the 1940s and 50s. Holy Name Catholic Church (1913) at 606 Danforth Avenue welcomed waves of new immigrants to Canada during those years (Image 23). Father Leo Smyth, pastor from 1947-79, recited masses in Italian at the church until, in 1966, the Italians established their own parish, St Catherine of Siena (1966) at 1095 Danforth Avenue (Image 24).

Notable structures constructed along Danforth Avenue from 1909-1929 marked the growth of the surrounding community in this period. Allen's Danforth Theatre (now the Danforth Music Hall) was completed in 1919 (Image 25). St Barnabas Anglican Church opened their new church in 1910 at the southeast corner of Hampton and Danforth Avenues (Image 26).¹⁹ Danforth Church (formerly Danforth Avenue Baptist Church) moved from Don Mills Road to the southwest corner of Bowden and Danforth Avenues in 1911²⁰ and Church of the Holy Name opened at the northeast corner of Moscow (Gough) and Danforth Avenues in 1915.²¹ Danforth Avenue Methodist Church followed at the northwest corner of Jackman and Danforth Avenues in 1923.²² New schools were also opened in the area, including Frankland Public School (1910), Earl Gray Public School (1910), Holy Name Catholic School (1913) and Wilkinson Public School (1915), although none were located on Danforth Avenue.

There were also several banks erected during this period that contributed to the commercial character of Danforth Avenue. Although some have since been demolished, including Darling & Pearson's Metropolitan Bank (1909) at the northwest corner of Broadview Avenue, several are extant, including John M. Lyle's Dominion Bank building

¹⁷Thank you Joanne Doucette for this information.

¹⁸Myrvold, "Timeline of Development of Danforth Avenue."

¹⁹The architect of the church was Andrew Sharp and Raymond William George Card was the architect of the 1921 major addition.

²⁰The architect of this church was J. Francis Brown and J. W. Siddall was responsible for the 1931 Sunday School addition.

²¹The architect of this church was Arthur William Holmes. The church was not completed until 1926.

²²The architect of this church was William John Miller.

at the northwest corner of Logan Avenue (1914) (Image 27) and Bond & Smith's Union Bank (1913) at the northwest corner of Pape and Danforth Avenues (Image 28).

The result of this period of dramatic expansion was the establishment of much of Danforth Avenue as an important commercial thoroughfare serving its surrounding communities by the end of the 1920s (Image 29).

Themes and Existing Built Form

Themes:

- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Community Building
- Governance and Public Services
- Industry, Manufacturing and Economic Activity

Sub-themes:

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Streetcar Service
- Bridging ravines
- Service Stations for automobiles

Community Building

- Land Division and Subdivision
- Population Growth- English, Irish, Scottish and Italian Communities
- Places of Worship
- Theatres

Governance and Public Services

- Annexation to the City of Toronto
- Education (Schools)

Industry, Manufacturing and Economic Activity

- Fruit Trading
- Main Street Retail

Contribution to Existing Landscapes and Built Form

- The Don section of the Bloor Viaduct was completed in 1918, which unified the Study Area with the rest of the City of Toronto
- Immigrants from Italy began opening fruit stores along Danforth Avenue, including Sam Comella and Sam Badali's Sunkist Fruit Market (1929) at 561 Danforth Avenue
- Approximately 424 (68%) of the existing properties were constructed in this period, which established a built form character comprised of largely 2-3 storey main street commercial row buildings and dotted with places of worship and banks
- Some notable structures constructed during this period are: Allen's Danforth Theatre (now Danforth Music Hall) (1919) at 147 Danforth Avenue, Danforth Avenue Baptist Church (1911; Sunday School 1931) at 285 Danforth Avenue, Holy Name Catholic Church (1915-26) at 606 Danforth Avenue, The Dominion Bank (1914) at 480 Danforth Avenue, and Union Bank (1913) at 646 Danforth Avenue

The Depression and Inter-War Construction Slow Down (1930-49)

Prior to 1930, Danforth Avenue had reached a mature state of development with only a few vacant lots remaining along its length east to Coxwell Avenue. The Great Depression of the 1930s curtailed development in the area, and resulted in only a few new buildings being constructed. The commencement of WWII in 1939 also significantly slowed further construction in the area. As a result, only 16 of the existing buildings in the Study Area were constructed from 1930-49. Trull Funeral Home (1930) was erected during this period on Danforth Avenue near Byron Avenue. The business had been in operation in the area since 1912, first at 742 Broadview Avenue, then at various locations on Danforth Avenue until its present location, which was designed by W. Breden Galbraith. Notably, it was also during the 1930s that the brickyards on the west side of Greenwood south of Danforth Avenue became the Greenwood dump (or Harper's Dump), which was Toronto's main landfill site. In the 1960s, the dump site was redeveloped by the TTC into the Greenwood Yards.

Themes and Existing Built Form

Themes:

- Industry, Manufacturing and Economic Activity

Sub-themes:

Industry, Manufacturing and Economic Activity

- Waste disposal
- Funeral homes

Contribution to Existing Landscapes and Built Form:

- The Great Depression and the commencement of WWII slowed construction in the Study Area with only 15 (2.04%) of the properties existing today been constructed during this period
- Some notable structures constructed during this period are: Trull Funeral Home (1930) near Byron Avenue and the Second Church of Christ Scientist (1939) at 1015 Danforth Avenue

Post-War Immigration and Redevelopment (1950-Present)

The 1950s and 60s were marked by a lull in construction and redevelopment within the Study Area, with approximately 5% of the existing properties having been constructed during these two decades. Transportation improvements came again to the Danforth though during this time. In 1966, the Bloor-Danforth subway line was extended to Woodbine Station, and in 1968, to Main Street Station and Victoria Park Station.

The opening of the subway came with the closing of streetcar lines on Danforth Avenue, with apparently mixed results. Without streetcar services, which had previously brought shoppers to the doors of businesses along Danforth, and with faster subway access to other parts of the city, local residents and shop owners feared that more residents were venturing out of the area to do their shopping. In fact, residents living in the area were so worried about the decline in business that they circulated a petition to reinstate regular surface transit along Danforth Avenue.²³

In the 1970s, however, things changed again. A spike in redevelopment resulted in 11% of existing properties being constructed in this period. At the same time, the Danforth reemerged as a popular commercial strip. In 1972, the Danforth Village Business Improvement Area (BIA) was established from Hampton to Woodycrest Avenue.²⁴

After WWII, the demographics of the area also changed significantly with many newcomers emigrating from Europe. As previously noted, the largely English, Irish and Scottish inhabitants of the study area had been joined by Italians in the 1910s and 1920s. The 1951 census recorded that the people with origins from the British Isles still made up 83.5% of residents in the area. By 1961, however, they had dropped to 63% of the population. In the same decade, the number of Italians in the area rose from 1.3% in 1951 to 11% in 1961. This number grew again to 17% ten years later.

In a 1960 report completed by the *Globe*, it was noted that the Danforth was one of several Toronto neighbourhoods at that time with a substantial Italian population. It was also mentioned that Ukrainian and Estonian communities were present in the area. Although figures for those of Greek origin were not recorded in the published census tract bulletins, the number of individuals belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church was included at less than 5% of the Danforth's population in 1961. This swelled to 15% in 1971, which was also when Toronto's "Little Greece" began to receive attention on Danforth Avenue. Greek emigration continued into the early-1970s, spurred by the 1967 Greek junta which led to seven years of military rule in Greece.²⁵

It is clear that by the 1970s, the city's Greek community saw the Danforth as its cultural hub, with the area being referred to as "Little Athens" in a *Globe and Mail* article in 1976 (Image 30).²⁶ By this time, there was a population of 30,000 Greek immigrants living near Danforth Avenue, which had also become home to various other groups, including people of Chinese and Finnish descent, as observed by the *Star's* humour writer Robert Thomas Allen.²⁷ The area's Greek identity was further solidified during the 1980s. In 1982, street signs in English and Greek were placed along Danforth Avenue and parades commemorating important Greek historical events took place. (Image 31). The area had apparently begun to be referred to as "Greektown" in 1986.²⁸

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ It changed its name to GreekTown on the Danforth BIA in 1993.

²⁵ David Wencer, "Historicist: Greentown on the Danforth, Greek immigrants bring new life to Toronto's east end," *Torontoist* (15 October 2016), [Historicist: Greektown on the Danforth](#) (1 October 2020)

²⁶ Wencer, "Historicist."

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

After 1970, a flourishing live music scene also emerged along Danforth Avenue.²⁹ The Danforth Music Hall (previously Allen's Danforth) on the south side of Danforth Avenue east of Broadview Avenue began hosting live shows in 1978. Similarly, the Roxy Theatre on the side south of Danforth Avenue east of Greenwood Avenue was used as a music venue during the mid-to-late-1970s as was the Rex Theatre (previously located at 635 Danforth Avenue), which hosted The Clash for the first time in 1979. There were also several hotels located within the Study Area that came to host live music, such as the Commerce Hotel (now Black Swan Tavern), The Linsmore Tavern, and Eton House. There were also several venues that catered to the musical tastes of the diverse cultural groups living around Danforth Avenue, such as the Trojan Horse Coffee House, which was devoted to Greek music, and Fantasia Bouzouki Lounge, which was an afterhours coffeehouse with live bouzouki music.

After 1980, relatively few properties were re-developed along Danforth Avenue in the Study Area, with approximately 8% of the existing properties dating to the period from 1980-2013. One notable change made to the built form during this decade came from the creation of Carrot Common at 438 Danforth Avenue (Image 32). This was led by The Big Carrot, a natural food market that was founded in 1984 as a worker cooperative. Originally located at 355 Danforth Avenue, The Big Carrot approached David Walsh for assistance to purchase the former car dealership across the street (Image 33). Realizing that the site could serve as an anchor for a neighbourhood shopping centre, Walsh helped raise the financing for construction and acted as the developer, completing the new building on the site in 1987.³⁰ Today, The Big Carrot remains a partner in the ownership of Carrot Common.³¹

The Broadview Danforth BIA was established in 1986 along Danforth Avenue from Broadview to Hampton Avenue and along Broadview Avenue from Fairview Boulevard north to Pretoria Avenue. In 1994, the renamed GreekTown on the Danforth BIA started the Taste of the Danforth event, and in 2008, a new BIA – the Danforth Mosaic BIA – was formed to include commercial property and business owners along Danforth Avenue from Jones to Westlake Avenues.

Reflective of the diversification of the neighbourhoods surrounding Danforth Avenue is the presence of a number of places of worship that were established by faith groups in buildings that had already been constructed. The west portion of the property at 1015 Danforth Avenue had been built by 1939 and expanded eastward during the 1960s. However, today it is notably the home of Madinah Masjid. Established in early 1974 by a group of Sunni Muslims from Gujarat, India, in a basement on Gerrard Street, "Jamiatul Muslemin of Toronto" purchased the property in 1983 from the Second Church of Christ, Scientist. In three decades, it has become one of the leading Islamic Centers in North America (Image 34).³²

The neighbourhoods along Danforth Avenue have continued to attract various cultural groups and immigrants who have also contributed to the cultural mosaic that continues

²⁹Information on the history of live music venues along Danforth Avenue was acquired from interviews conducted with venue owners, and music historians and journalists.

³⁰"Eat, drink and be merry on Danforth," *Toronto Star* (24 September 2011), H13.

³¹Thank you, David Walsh, for this information.

³²"About Madinah Masjid," [Madinah Masjid](#) (22 February 2021)

to be present within the Study Area today. According to 2001 Neighbourhood Census data for the five City of Toronto identified neighbourhoods surrounding Danforth Avenue, amongst the top identified Ethnic origins were the British Isles, Scottish, Italian, Greek, German, French, Chinese, Jewish, and East Indian. By 2016, the Neighbourhood Census data included additional ethnic origins such as Polish, Welsh, Ukrainian, Dutch, Russian, First Nations, Filipino, and American.

Themes and Existing Built Form

Themes:

- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Industry, Manufacturing, & Economic Activity
- Community Building

Sub-themes:

Transportation and Infrastructure

- End of Streetcar Service
- Subway line extension

Industry, Manufacturing and Economic Activity

- Commercial Redevelopment

Community Building

- Community Diversification- Ukrainian, Estonian, Greek, Finnish, Italian, British Isles, Scottish, German, French, Chinese, Jewish, East Indian, Polish, Welsh, Ukrainian, Dutch, Russian, First Nations, Filipino, and American communities
- Establishment of Business Improvement Areas
- Places of Worship
- Live music venues

Contribution to Existing Landscapes and Built Form:

- Change in demographics within the community, with an increase in Italian and Greek communities living in the area, among other
- Notable structures constructed in this period include: St Catherine of Sienna (1966) and Madinah Masjid (1939; additions in 1960s, 1990s & 2000) and Carrot Common (1987)

Research Sources

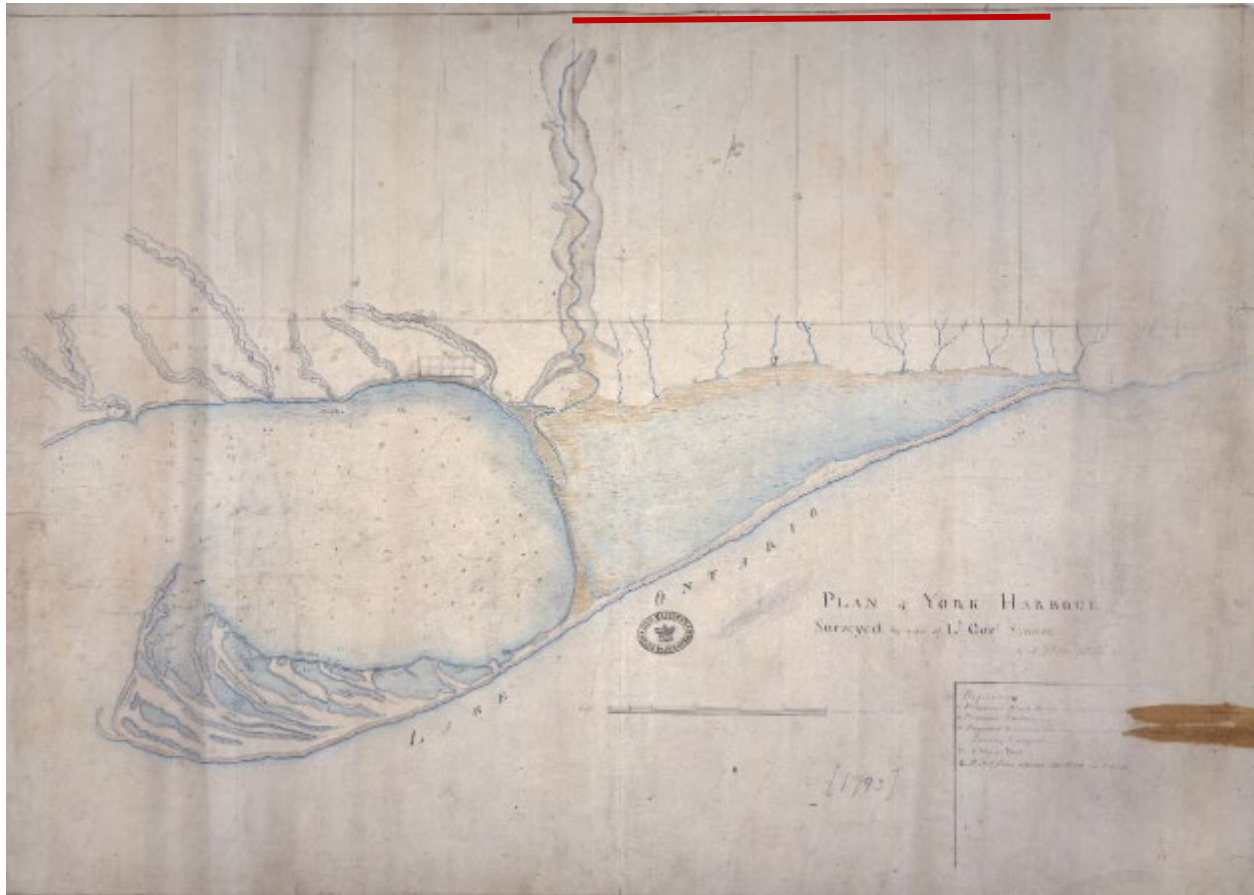
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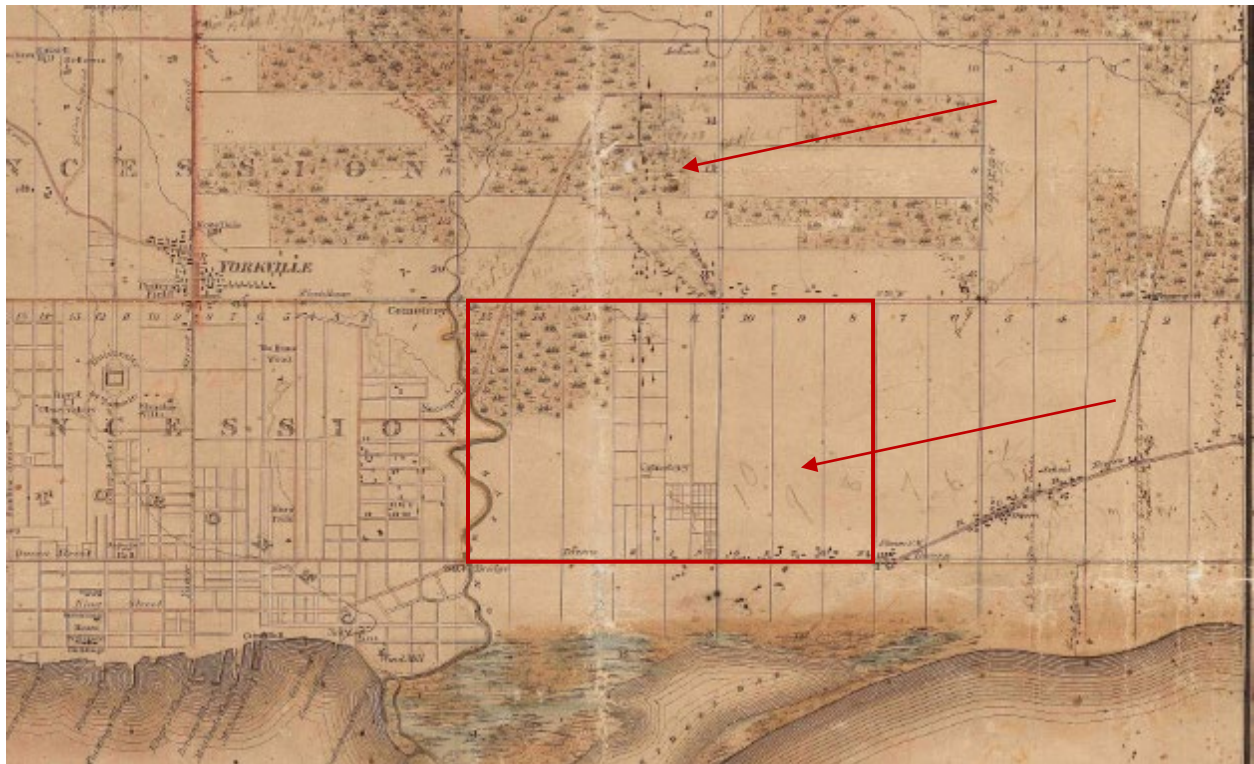
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Images



1. Alexander Aitken's Plan of York Harbour, Surveyed by Order of Lt. Gov. Simcoe (1793), annotated to show the approximate location of Danforth Avenue ([University of Toronto Map, Alexander Aitken's Plan of York Harbour \(1793\)](#))



2. Browne's Map of the Township of York (1851), annotated to show lots 15-8 as well as the different lot configurations on the north and south sides of present-day Danforth Avenue ([Browne's Map of the Township of York \(1851\)](#))



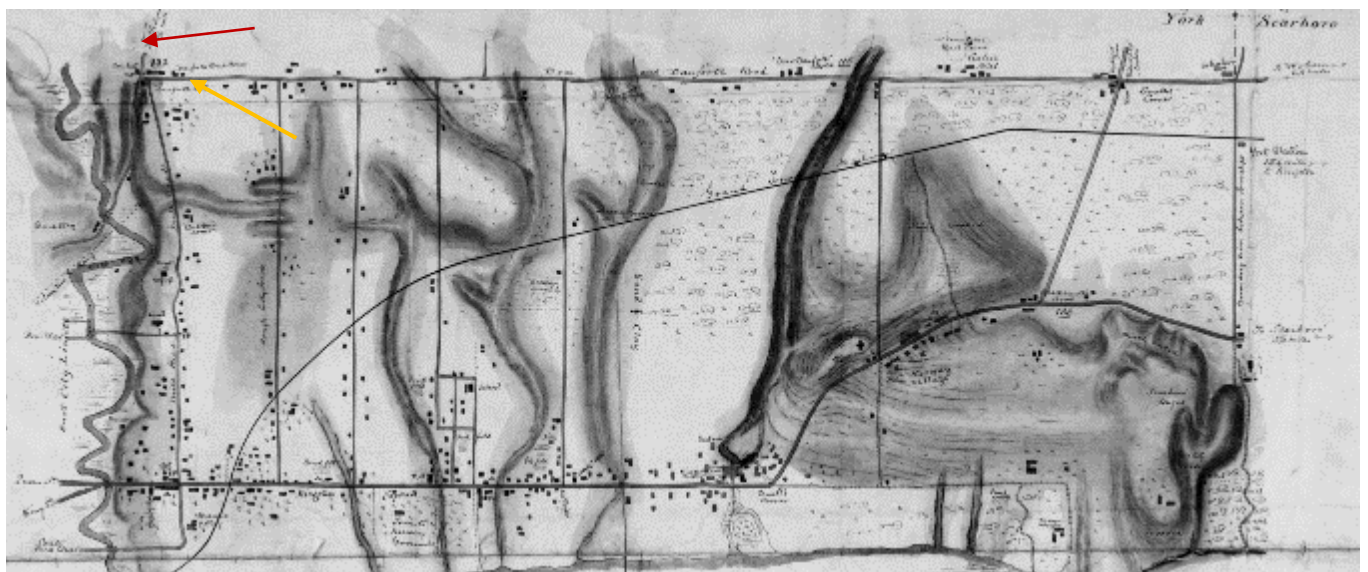
3. George Tremain's Map of the County of York, Canada West (1860), annotated to show lot 11 ([George Tremain's Map of the County of York, Canada West \(1860\)](#))



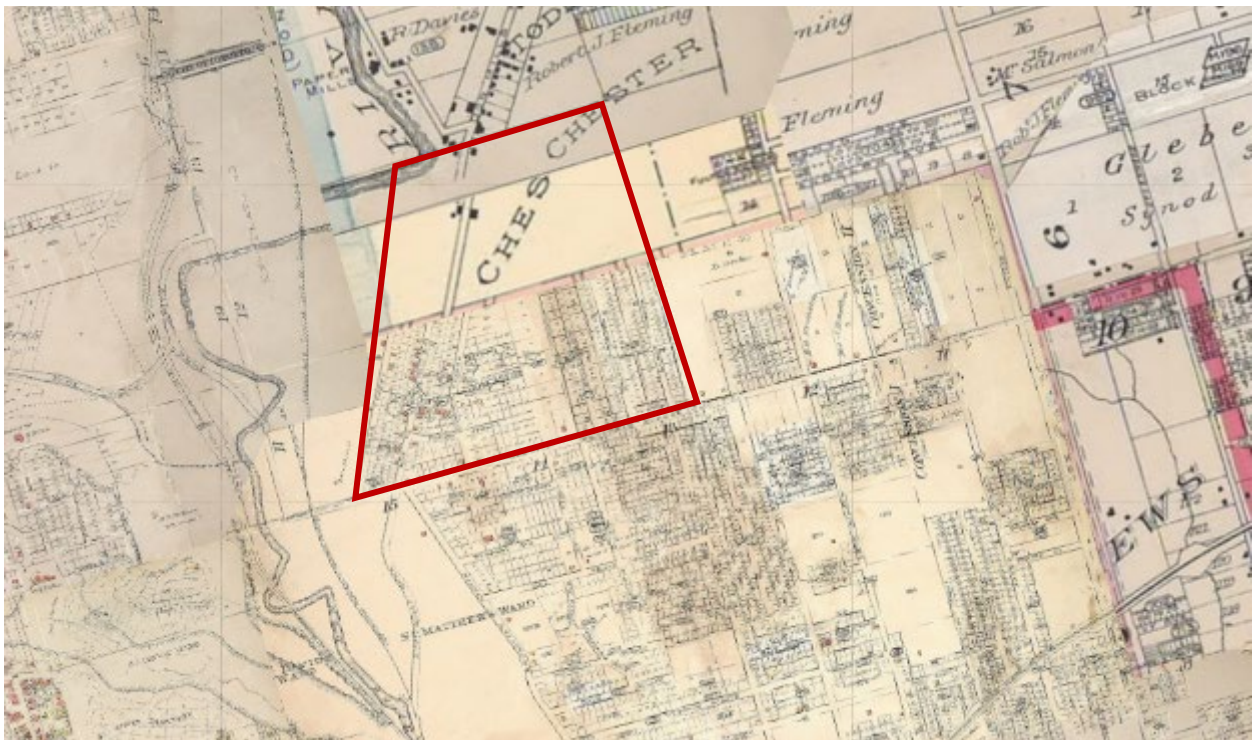
4. George Tremaine's Map of the County of York, Canada West (1860), annotated to show the "Glebe Land" on Lot 6 ([George Tremaine's Map of the County of York, Canada West \(1860\)](#))



5. George Tremaine's Map of the County of York, Canada West (1860), annotated to show the Don and Danforth Plank Road [George Tremaine's Map of the County of York, Canada West \(1860\)](#)



6. A military sketch map from (1868), annotated to show the "Don Gate" (red) and the "Danforth Gate" (yellow) [A military sketch map from \(1868\)](#)



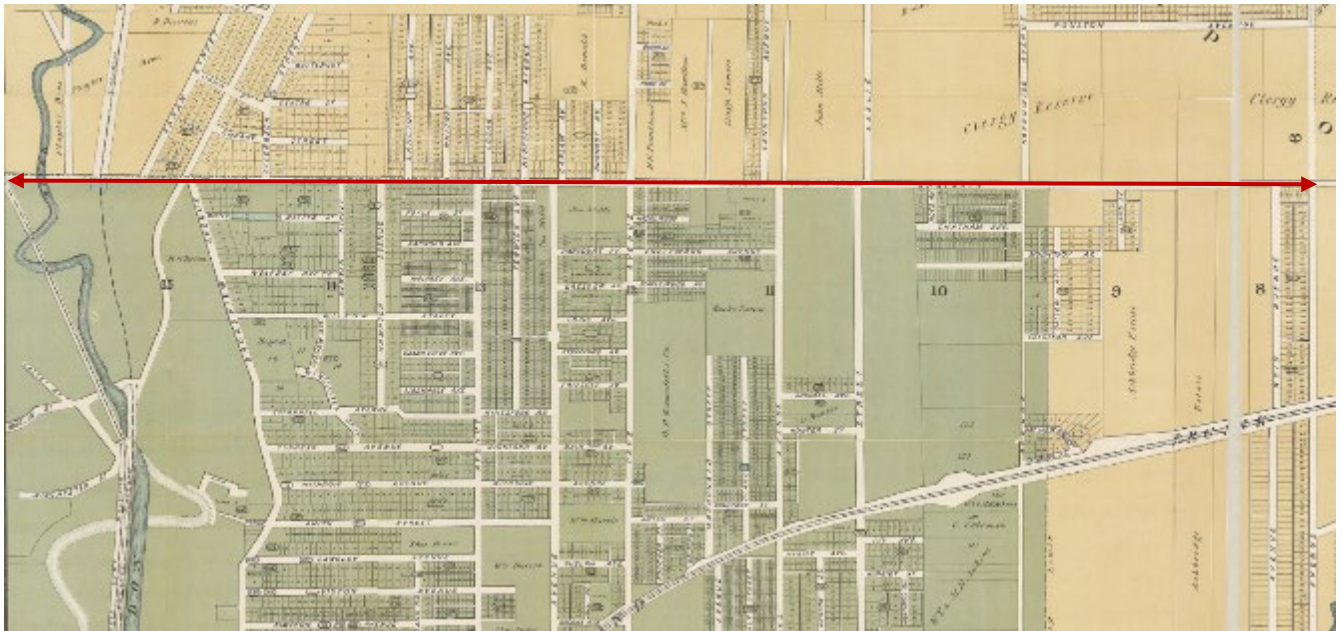
7. Goad's Atlas Map (1889), annotated to show the approximate location of the Village of Chester ([Goad's Atlas Map \(1889\)](#))



8. The original St Barnabas Anglican Church (1858) on Ellerbeck Street ([St. Barnabas Anglican Church](#))



9. Goad's Atlas Map (1889), annotated to show the approximate length of Danforth Avenue located in the Study Area ([Goad's Atlas Map \(1889\)](#))



10. Abrey and Tyrell's Map of Toronto and Suburbs east of the Don, including East Toronto Village, compiled from latest registered plans and surveys (1892), area annexed to the City of Toronto is in green with the Study Area highlighted in red ([Abrey and Tyrell's Map of Toronto and Suburbs east of the Don](#))



11. Historic photo of streetcar No. 325, at Danforth and Broadview (1896) [Historic photo of streetcar No. 325](#)

GLUES **W. HARRIS & CO. Fertilizers**

A detailed illustration of the W. Harris & Co. industrial complex. The main building is a large, multi-story factory with several chimneys emitting smoke. To the right are smaller buildings labeled "STABLES" and "STORAGE". In the foreground, there are tracks and a sign that reads "COXWELL AVE. SIDING". Below the illustration, text indicates the location: "OFFICE & WORKS DANFORTH AVE. OPP. COXWELL AVE."

COXWELL AVE. SIDING. OFFICE & WORKS DANFORTH AVE. OPP. COXWELL AVE.

Manufacturers and Cleaners of
SAUSAGE CASINGS
 DEALERS IN
 Grease, Crackling, Hog and Horse Hair, Horns, Bones, Etc.

W. HARRIS & CO. TELEPHONE 4386 Correspondence Solicited
 DANFORTH AVENUE, TORONTO

12. Advertisement for W.Harris & Co. (1900) ([Advertisement for W.Harris & Co. \(1900\)](#))



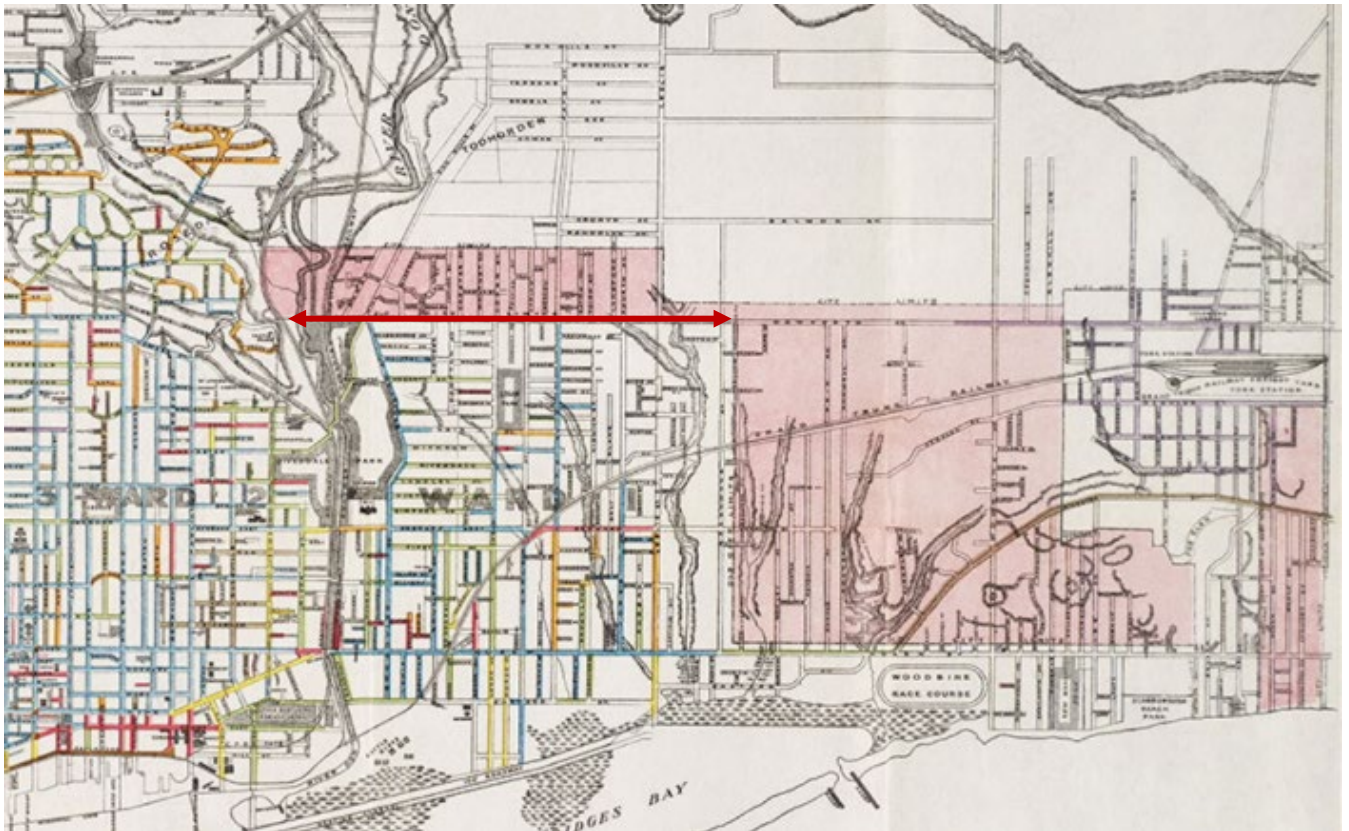
13. Goad's Atlas Map (1903) showing how little had been built along Danforth Avenue, annotated to show the location of the Study Area [Goad's Atlas Map \(1903\)](#)



14. Map showing the location of the Playter Estates ([Playter Estates](#))



15. Playter's Society Hall (1909) ([Playter's Society Hall \(1909\)](#))



16. C. H. Rust's Plan of the City of Toronto (1909), showing the recent annexations in red with the approximate Study Area location ([C.H. Rust's Plan of the City of Toronto \(1909\)](#))



17. Detail of tracks being laid on Danforth Avenue in 1913 ([Rail tracks on Danforth Avenue in 1913](#))



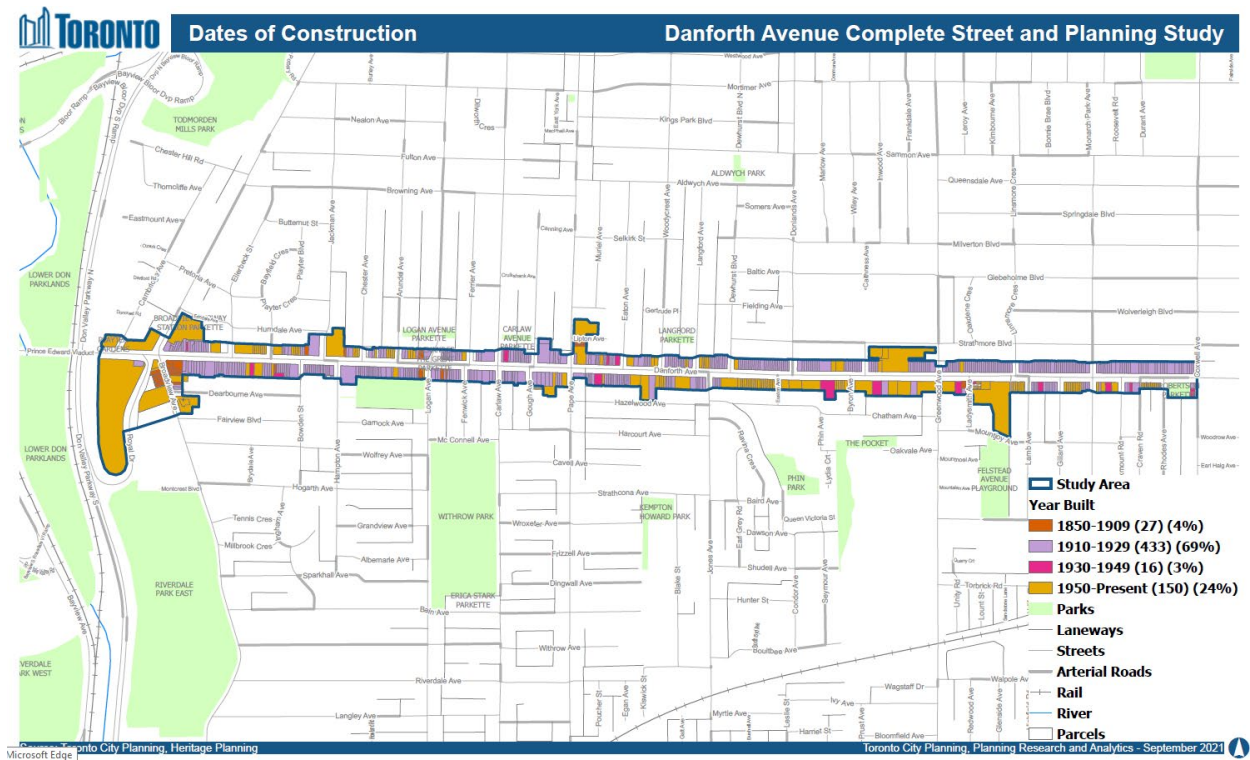
18. Detail of the Don section of the Bloor Viaduct during construction in 1916 ([Detail of the Bloor Viaduct](#))



19. Goad's Atlas Map (1913) showing how brick and frame buildings began to appear along Danforth Avenue, annotated to show the location of the Study Area ([Goad's Atlas Map \(1913\)](#))



20. Goad's Atlas Map (1924) showing how most of Danforth Avenue had been built out, annotated to show the location of the Study Area ([Goad's Atlas Map 1924](#))



21. Map showing the dates of construction in the Danforth Avenue Study Area, note the number of extant properties built from 1910-29 (City of Toronto)



22. Sunkist Fruit Market in 1934 at the southeast corner of Danforth and Carlaw ([Sunkist Fruit Market 1934](#))



23. Church of the Holy Name (1913) (Heritage Planning Image)



24. St Catherine of Siena Catholic Church (1966) (Heritage Planning Image)



25. Allen's Danforth Theatre (now the Danforth Music Hall, 1919) ([Allen's Danforth Theatre](#))



26. St Barnabas Anglican Church (1910) (Heritage Planning Image)



27. The Dominion Bank building at the northwest corner of Logan Avenue (c.1918) (Heritage Planning, 2020)



28. Union Bank (1913), by Bond & Smith (Heritage Planning Image)



29. Danforth Avenue west at Logan Avenue (1932), illustrating that the street had largely been built out by this time ([Danforth Avenue West at Logan Avenue \(1932\)](#))



Artist Carlos Marchiori's impression of the Danforth, where signs reflect a community of 30,000 Greeks

The Danforth - it's Little Athens now

30. Illustration by Carlos Marchiori in *The Toronto Star* on 24 February 1976 ([Historicist: Greektown on the Danforth](#))



31. Detail of a street sign along Danforth Avenue in English and Greek (c.1982) ([Gough Avenue Street Sign](#))



32. Carrot Common (1987) (Google Streetview, 2020)



33. Historic image of the car dealership that occupied the property where Carrot Common is now located (c.1985) (Image courtesy of David Walsh)



34. Madinah Masjid, 1015 Danforth Avenue (1939; addition in 1960s, 1990s, and 2000s; became Madinah Masjid in 1983) (Heritage Planning Image)