

**Blots on the Face of the City:
The Politics of Slum Housing and Urban Renewal
in Toronto, 1940-1970.**

by

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of History
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

The building of cities is contested terrain upon which the interests of capital, the state, and citizens struggle for control of the built environment. On one side stands capital, which is principally interested in creating an urban built environment supportive of increased production, consumption, exchange and accumulation. As a result, periods of “creative destruction” of the built environment are necessary to maintain continued capital accumulation. On the other side stand ordinary citizens whose primary interests lie in maintaining and improving the use value of the built environment to carve out a life for themselves and their families. In the middle stands the state, or more accurately the urban planning apparatus, which seeks to balance the interests of these competing forces to produce a rational socio-spatial ordering of the built environment. Because it attempts to stand in between the two main forces shaping the city the urban planning apparatus becomes a site of struggle itself and thus becomes enmeshed in the “contradictions of the welfare state” by trying to promote an orderly and socially responsible built environment while adhering to the interests of development capital, which ultimately provide the parameters in which planning operates.

Between 1940 and 1970 these struggles played themselves out in Toronto. Like most modern metropolises across the world, the physical and social fabric of Toronto changed dramatically during these years. Nowhere was this more true than in the Toronto’s inner-city neighbourhoods. Here the state (at all levels) and private capital were the driving forces behind the transformation, or in the discourse of the day, the renewal, of Toronto as a modern city. As a result, redevelopment, or urban renewal to use the euphemism of the period, was the most important political issue. According to critics of city building in Toronto “pro-growth coalitions” composed of politicians, developers and modernist-oriented urban planners dominated the politics of redevelopment and ran roughshod over the interests of local citizens. According to the critics, much of the central city was eradicated simply because it was old. And yet, by the 1970s Toronto was internationally lauded as “the city that works,” primarily because of its ability to balance private and public interests in shaping and reshaping the city. Critics argued that this was a recent development, brought on by the very struggles waged by local citizens who “fought back” and “stood up to city hall.” No matter who was to blame, plans to renew and regenerate the inner-city worked against the very interests of those who it was supposed to help most. In essence, Toronto was Haussmannized; state policies to eradicate the slums and renew neighbourhoods exacerbated rather than solved the housing problems of poor and working-class Torontonians. This is the central theme of the thesis.

This thesis seeks to overcome the myopia of previous studies of urban renewal in Toronto through a historical approach to the interaction between state housing policy and community activism in the politics of urban renewal. First, it examines the continuities and discontinuities in the history of planning and social housing activity and activism in Toronto. In particular, the thesis examines the long history of community activism in Toronto, and how local residents resisted - sometimes successfully, most times not - the Haussmannization of inner-city Toronto. Vigorous community opposition to urban renewal, though only successful in the late 1960s was by no means a recent development in Toronto. Second, the thesis places

the local politics of slum clearance and urban renewal schemes within the context of Toronto's chronic low-income housing shortage which conditioned how these programs played out and how Torontonians reacted to them in the ways they did. Third, and finally, it is a central contention of this thesis that the destruction of inner city neighbourhoods under the guise of renewal was due, in large part, to the way in which these neighbourhoods were portrayed in popular discourse.

Thus, the thesis examines the idea of community as "contested terrain" in two different ways - physical and ideological. The battle for control over the renewal of Toronto's inner-city neighbourhoods concerned real spatial sites, the conditions of many of which were harmful to the physical and material interests of their residents. As a result, planners, politicians, and residents of inner-city Toronto neighbourhoods struggled daily to prevent further decay of individual and collective residential environments. Nonetheless, the primary battle waged over the control of inner-city neighbourhoods was ideological. Planners, politicians, social housing activists, the popular media, community activists, and inner-city residents all struggled over the definition of inner-city neighbourhoods as "slums." All too often Toronto's working class neighbourhoods were viewed through the lens of the "Victorian slum" and universally portrayed as landscapes of disease, despair, and degeneracy - both physically and morally. The inability of Torontonians to move beyond a kind of "Victorian environmentalism" to comprehend the diverse realities of inner-city neighbourhoods led to the physical and social destruction of much of working-class Toronto. Ironically, wiping these "cancerous blots" from the face of the city through massive urban renewal and public housing projects was the most costly solution of all and undermined the nation's entire urban housing program. Indeed, the fundamental contradictions between the discourse and the reality of poor housing districts were vital to the struggle of political hegemonies that eventually brought slum clearance and urban renewal schemes to a halt by 1970.

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Every year I try to impress upon my students that scholarship is a collaborative rather than a solitary exercise. Without the help, support, and sacrifice of numerous individuals, this thesis would have never come to fruition.

First, I would like to thank the staff of the City of Toronto Archives, including Linda Price, George Wharton, but especially Karen Teeple. Their help in guiding me through the immense collections at the archives and past the obstacles of so-called “Freedom of Information” legislation was indispensable. Their friendship and enthusiasm for the project helped make the archives a home away from home for the better part of two summers. I would also like to thank the staff of Queen’s University Libraries, including the Interlibrary Loans Department, Government Documents and Special Collections. In addition, I received a great deal of help from the Queen’s University Archives, especially from now retired archivist George Henderson whose presence and warmth will be missed. I would also like to thank the archivists and staffs of the National Archives of Canada, the University of Toronto Archives and Rare Book Room, York University Archives and Special Collections, as well as staff at the Urban Affairs Library of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library. I would also like to thank those who granted me access to various archival collections, including Linda Torney of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto, and Mr. Paul Zarnke of the Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto, who allowed me to dig through old files and minute books in the basement of the Association’s offices. Finally, I would like to thank Graham Fraser for allowing me to reprint the pictures of Trefann Court that appear in Chapter 6.

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Finally, the debts I have accrued to various government agencies in completion of this thesis pale in comparison to those I owe my family. This thesis would not have been completed with aid of my entire family. Few days have gone by in the last couple of years when I have not wanted to “pack it in.” At times, only the knowledge that the ones I love would have been more disappointed than me kept me going. Finishing was also the only way that I could ever begin to express gratitude for the sacrifices that my family made so I could finally get “the damn thesis done.” Though what appears on the following pages is solely my own work, the blood, sweat and tears that went into this thesis were not mine alone. Thank you Mom and Dad for inspiring the historian in me; I love and respect you more than words can express. Thank you Michele for giving up and putting up with so much over the past seven years, I can only hope that I will reciprocate in your hour of need. To Julian and Amelia: Daddy’s “work” is finally done and I can come play now.

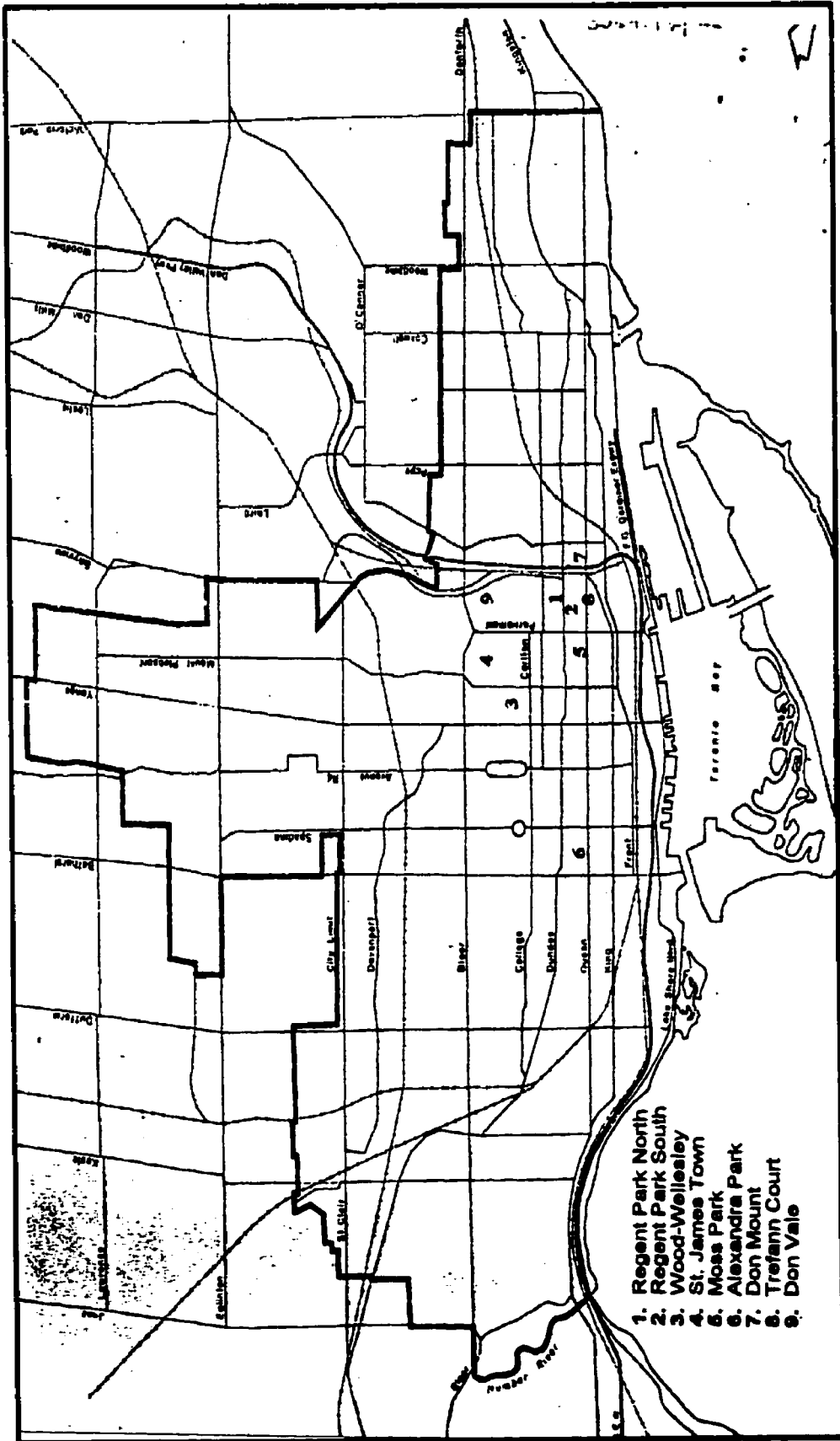
Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Road to Regent Park: Housing and Community Planning in Toronto, 1935-50	46
Chapter 2: Milestone or Millstone: The “Renewal of Cabbagetown as Regent Park	97
Chapter 3: City Made Slums: The Prelude to Urban Renewal	147
Chapter 4: The Renaissance of Toronto’s Inner-City: From Slum Clearance to Urban Renewal	233
Chapter 5: The March of the Towers: Toronto’s Housing Crisis of the 1960s & the Contradictions of Urban Renewal	351
Chapter 6: Urban Renewal in Toronto, 1963-70: “The Same Old Bulldozer”	430
Conclusion	602
Bibliography	631
Vita	666

List of Figures and Tables

	Sites of Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal in Toronto, 1940-1970 . . .	viii
Figure 1.1	The State of Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1943	80
Figure 2.1	Regent Park Before Slum Clearance	118
Figure 2.2	Regent Park Public Housing Project	120
Figure 2.3	Slums and City Finances	123
Figure 2.4	The Bluett's House in Cabbagetown, 218 Sackville St.	144
Figure 2.5	The Bluett's New House in Regent Park	144
Figure 3.1	"Blots Like These"	192
Figure 3.2	"Should Be Replaced By More of This..."	193
Figure 3.3.	Reasons for Admission to Regent Park South, 1958-59	208
Figure 3.4	Regent Park Housing Conditions, 1955	211
Figure 3.5	"Planning For Our Youngest Citizens": Regent Park South and the Benefits of Modern Planning	214
Figure 3.6	Map of Regent Park South After Renewal	223
Figure 3.7	Regent Park South Public Housing Project, 1959	223
Figure 4.1	Urban Renewal as "Dollar Planning" in Toronto	248
Figure 4.2	Wood-Wellesley Redevelopment Proposal	252
Figure 4.3	Parliament Syndicate Proposal for St. James Town, 1956	259
Figure 4.4	City Planning Board's Vision for St. James Town	260
Figure 4.5	Moss Park Housing Conditions	271
Figure 4.6	Moss Park Limited Dividend Housing Project	285
Figure 4.7	Alexandra Park Residential Architectural Heritage	299
Figure 4.8	Alexandra Park Land Use: Pre-Renewal	300
Figure 4.9	Alexandra Park Land Use: After Urban Renewal	301
Figure 4.10	Alexandra Park Public Housing Project	349
Figure 5.1	St. James Town, 1966	382
Figure 5.2	"The Shame of Toronto"	384
Figure 5.3	St. James Town "Multi-Problem Families"	385
Figure 5.4	St. James Town, 1988	410
Figure 6.1	Population and Housing Statistics for Riverdale, 1951-1966	454
Figure 6.2	Housing Conditions in Don Mount (Napier Place)	465
Figure 6.3	Don Mount (Napier Place) Renewal Plans	466
Figure 6.4	Dennison's "Barracks": Don Mount Public Housing Project	483
Figure 6.5	"Victorian Housing" in Trefann Court	487

Figure 6.6	Tracy Street	487
Figure 6.7	“Non-Conforming Uses” in Trefann Court	487
Figure 6.8	Housing Conditions in Trefann Court, 1964	492
Figure 6.9	Citizen Planning in Action: Phase One of Trefann Court Urban Renewal Scheme	534
Figure 6.10	Don Vale	538
Figure 6.11	Gifford Street., between Gerrard and Spruce	539
Figure 6.12	The Wellesley Cottages	539
Figure 6.13	City Owned House, 287-89 Carlton Street	539



Sites of Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal in Toronto 1940-1970.

Chronology of Urban Planning and Housing in Toronto

- 1934 Release of the *Report of the Lieutenant Governor's Report on Housing Conditions in Toronto*, otherwise known as the Bruce Report after Ontario Lieutenant Governor, Herbert A. Bruce. The Report contains the first slum clearance and rehousing plans for Cabbagetown, which would later become Regent Park.
- 1936 City of Toronto establishes Canada's first Housing Standards By-Law, By-Law 14466.
- 1942 Toronto City Planning Board established June 1, 1942, By-Law 15761.
Report on Housing for the City of Toronto, prepared by Lewis Duncan, submitted to City Council and Board of Control, June 23, 1942.
- 1943 Planning Board organizes a planning staff and offices at the Art Gallery of Toronto and appoints a 5 person Advisory Technical Committee.
Establishment of the Toronto Reconstruction Council, December 14, 1943, By-Law 16051.
- 1944 Advisory Committee on Reconstruction releases the *Final Report of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning*, otherwise known as the "Curtis Report."
Passage of the National Housing Act, 1944, (8 George VI, Chapter 46).
City of Toronto Planning Board releases its *Third Annual Report* which classifies city neighbourhoods according to five categories of condition: Sound, Vulnerable, Declining, Blighted and Slums.
- 1945 First Master Plan for the City of Toronto presented to City Council and placed on public display at the Art Gallery of Ontario.
First "Emergency Shelter" opens. By 1948, various shelters house more than 1400 families.
- 1946 City Council appoints the City of Toronto Planning Board in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Act of 1946.
- 1947 Toronto Voters Vote to Construct Regent Park in January 1st referendum. "Yes" votes total 29,677, "No" Votes total 18,028.
Establishment of the Housing Authority of Toronto, May 12, 1947, By-Law 16933.

Appointment of Community Counsellor, Hugo Wolter.

- 1948 Cornerstone laid at Regent Park (North), October 29, 1948. Final building of the project completed in 1959.
- 1949 First tenants move into Regent Park (North) housing project, March 31, 1949.
- Third Annual Report of the City of Toronto Planning Board. The Report contains the final version of The Master Plan for the City of Toronto.
- 1952 Revisions to the Ontario Planning Act allow municipalities to designate areas for redevelopment. In November, 1952, the City of Toronto passes By-law 18764 declaring the area bounded by Wood, Wellesley, Alexander and Carleton Streets for high rise redevelopment.
- 1953 Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto established. (Takes effect January 1, 1954)
- 1953-1959 Regent Park South Slum Clearance Project.
- 1955 Journalist Max Rosenfeld exposes the Jarvis St. Slum Empire of Charles Ingwer in a series of articles for the *Toronto Telegram*. The articles would later be released as *Blot on the Face of the City*.
- 1956 City of Toronto Planning Board releases *The Urban Renewal Study of the City of Toronto*, Canada's first comprehensive plan for public and private redevelopment. The study selects Moss Park and Alexandra Park as the two neighbourhoods most ripe for public urban renewal.
- Residents of Wood-Wellesley and St. James Town successfully defeat developers' plans to redevelop their neighbourhoods for luxury high-rise apartments.
- 1958 Last "Emergency Shelter," at Long Branch closes.
- 1961-1962 Moss Park Limited Dividend Housing Project built.
- 1963 Planning Board releases Report on Priorities for Urban Renewal Study Areas, October 7, 1963, in response to Mayor Summerville's "Blight Fight" Programme.
- 1965 June Marks accuses city officials of being "soft" on developers. Forsyth Enquiry looks into the allegations in September and rules that the city was not guilty of the charges.

Alexandra Park Urban Renewal Project. First public housing units completed by September 1966.

- 1965 St. James Town redeveloped by Belmont Construction Company. Will be completed by 1973.
- 1966 Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board releases *Urban Renewal Study for Metropolitan Toronto*.
- 1966 Don Mount (Napier Place) Urban Renewal Project. First phase of public housing completed by 1968. Second Phase of Rehabilitation does not take place until after the implementation of the Neighbourhood Improvement Plan in 1973.

Trefann Court Urban Renewal Project, Phase I. From 1966-1970 Trefann residents battled the city and amongst themselves over the construction of the project. In February 1970, the different resident and tenant groups decided to put differences aside to design a plan for Trefann. First Phase completed in 1974.

- 1967 Ontario Law Reform Commission releases its report on compensation in expropriation cases.
Prominent Provincial Minister and Progressive Conservative, Allan Grossman, announces that the Ontario government will no longer participate in urban renewal projects unless there is "meaningful" citizen participation.

Don Vale Urban Renewal Project. Tentative Proposals for Sackville-Dermott Place begin in 1967. Project abandoned in 1970.

- 1968 City Council establishes Working Committees in Don Vale, Don Mount and Kensington. Approved in February, the Committees first meet in March, 1968.

Ward Two Residents' Association releases, *Rehabilitation: Outline for a Policy*. The report is the first planning document produced by an independent community organization.

Establishment of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development, otherwise known as the Hellyer Commission. Paul Hellyer and the Commission Visit Toronto on October 1 and 2, 1968 and tour Regent Park and Trefann Court.

- 1969 Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development submits its final report to Parliament, January 31, 1969.

Don Vale Working Committee submits *The Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme to City Council* for approval. The Scheme is the first to be composed by process of "citizen participation" and emphasizes the renewal of area infrastructure to be followed by the rehabilitation of individual homes with a system of grants to home owners.

Introduction

Imagining Toronto's Postwar Slums

You won't believe it
Preposterous! fantastic! incredible!
Truth is stranger than fiction, Here are the startling facts of slum housing in Toronto. Read them for yourself. You may be curious, amused, cynical, shocked, or furious. But hopefully, no longer either ignorant or complacent. Toronto the Good? What a mockery!
Or Toronto the Hypocrite - the Priest or the Levite passing by on the other side? You decide.

... As you sit in your comfortable chair in your comfortable home, does it mean anything to you - this shocking recital of rot, scandal and indifference? Do you care? Does anyone care anymore - about what happens to people in the next block - tonight?
Do you even care that this rot is sapping *your* pocketbook, *your* morals, *your* future and *your* children's future - do you, really now?
Do you even care enough to share your shame with your wife or husband, your priest or clergyman, your alderman or your mayor?
Then do so - but don't pass by on the other side.¹

With calls to arms such as this, state bureaucrats, social housing reformers, urban planners, the local and national media, and even "slum dwellers" themselves, launched a massive assault on the squalid living conditions they claimed existed in the heart of post-World War II Toronto. Through such descriptions the discourse of slum clearance and its later euphemism, urban renewal, attempted to portray the reality of poverty in Boomtown Toronto. However, they did more to cement preconceived notions of "the poor" and the causes and solutions to their poverty. In short, Toronto's poor residential neighbourhoods - slums - were imagined communities, if I may borrow that term from Benedict Anderson and use it in a different milieu.² The idea of the slum, itself a creation of bourgeois culture,

¹Stuart K. Jaffary, "Forward" in Max Rosenfeld and Earle Beattie, *A Blot on the Face of the City: The Story of "Inglewood," Toronto's Most Notorious Slum Empire*. A reprint of the original articles published in *The Telegram*, October 11-October 24, 1955 (Toronto: The Telegram, 1956), 2.

²Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*
(continued...)

obscured and distorted the varied spatial forms and social conditions to which it was applied. Universal in its application, slums subsumed all inner-city working-class districts, irrespective of their diversity, and created one all-embracing concept of outcast society.³

I start with this picture and this story to highlight the durability of Victorian ideas of the slum, that evocative and highly static description of the squalid environs and pathological social conditions of the residential quarters of the poor.⁴ As many prominent urban historians have noted, slums are as much myths - constructions of language and culture - as they are features of urban spatial form and social structure. This is not to say that the miserable living conditions experienced by the urban poor did not exist. The deplorable life choices available to the inner-city poor of nineteenth-century London or mid-twentieth-century Toronto were real in both a material and an absolute sense. However, they did not necessarily extend to slums. To discuss slums is to deal with words, with discourse, with signs and the concepts they communicated as much as with the social geography of inner cities. Historians have nonetheless insisted on their environmental reality, using the term slum as a material reflection of the disequilibrium between wealth and poverty. However, in employing the term slum in these ways historians often lift the term outside the cultural milieu within which it was created, and which audiences depended on for comprehension and credibility. Even when social historians attempt to read between the lines of these cultural performances in an attempt to

²(...continued)

Revised and Extended edition (London: Verso, 1991).

³A. Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities, 1870-1914* (London: Leicester University Press, 1993), 2.

⁴D. Ward, "The Victorian Slum: An enduring myth?," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 66 (June 1976), 323.

distil the reality of the slum, they simply “reify the phantoms of bourgeois imagination and further obscure the lives of the inner-city working classes.”⁵

The study of the imagery and the discourse of the slum is important because they acted as potent trigger devices to mobilize public interest, particularly in terms of bourgeois or state solutions to the problems of poverty. Indeed, as David Ward argues, the usage of the term slum coincided with radical changes in both attitudes and public policy toward poverty. The image of the slum as a place of disease, distress, disorder, disaffection, and decay - both morally and physically - dovetailed with basic assumptions of prevailing common sense opinions about the good and the bad in contemporary society. By constructing the slum as the antithesis of the good city, slum narratives distilled the core values of bourgeois common sense from the indeterminacies of opinion and choice in society. To put it another way, Alan Mayne contends, the cultural performances in which slums were embedded functioned as “a hall of . . . magic mirrors in which social problems were explored, explained and ultimately contained.”⁶

There is a lot to say about Mayne’s contention that slums were (and probably still are) figments of bourgeois culture, rather than realities of urban landscapes. The parallels between the representation of ‘the slum’ in his study of poor Victorian-era neighbourhoods in San Francisco, Birmingham and Sydney and those of post-World War II Toronto are remarkable. Indeed, the durability of the Victorian discourse of the slum throughout much of the twentieth century is astonishing. When I began researching this project, I ignored much of the

⁵Aian Mayne, “A Just War: The Language of Slum Representation in Twentieth Century Australia,” *Journal of Urban History*, 22 (November 1995), 78. See also D. Ward, “The Victorian Slum.”

⁶Sam B. Warner cited in Alan Mayne, “A Just War” 78.

hyperbole of social reformers, city planners and the daily press descriptions of Toronto's inner-city working-class neighbourhoods. It seemed outdated, mistaken, and misguided. I also figured that as I moved forward through the postwar period the Victorian-laden images and discourses of the slum would diminish. I was wrong. Newspapers, social reformers, sociologists, urban planners, and state officials still relished taking melodramatic discovery tours of Toronto's inner-city slums well into the late 1960s. Why? Because slum stereotypes were crucial to the advancement of particular political agendas. Close attention must be paid to the words and images used to construct slums in the popular imagination, because they relate directly to the solutions proposed and acted upon to solve "the problem of the slum"--namely the disruptive urban "renewal" programmes which targeted poor and working-class inner-city neighbourhoods throughout the postwar period. To put it another way, there were many ways to solve the housing problems of Toronto's poor, but there was only one way to solve the problem of the slum -- that is to erase it, to wipe the blots from the face of the city through massive urban renewal and public housing projects which were the most costly solution of all.

As the history of the popular politics of urban renewal in post-World War II Toronto reveals, the exploration and explanation of the social problems embedded in the imagery of the slum could not be, and were not, easily contained. For one, bourgeois reformers were not the only ones who employed the image of the slum. Workers, political leftists (CCF-NDP and Communist Party), and even poor "slum dwellers" employed the discourse and images of the slum. Were they simply victims of false consciousness? As Gramsci reminds us, because common sense contains both elements of truth and elements of misrepresentation it is

essentially an incoherent, chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions and one can find there anything that one likes.⁷ Whether the housing inadequacies of Torontonians constituted full-blown slums was a central basis of contention among social reformers, the state, the housing and land development industry, and ordinary Torontonians who formed community groups to press for and fight against the clearance or renewal of their neighbourhood, their community, their homes, and essentially their lives. Indeed, by employing the terminology of the slum, middle-class reformers, state bureaucrats, and cultural elites opened up a can of worms. The very contradictions between the discourse and the reality of poor housing districts were vital to the struggle of political hegemonies that eventually brought slum clearance and urban renewal schemes to a halt in the late 1960s. Because the term slum lacked a fixed and transcendent meaning it contained alternative, denied and suppressed definitions.

Does Toronto Have Slums?

If Toronto's postwar slums were imagined communities, few Toronto and housing historians imagined that they have even existed. To speak of slums in postwar Toronto seemed to be a contradiction in terms. Indeed, to focus on the housing problems of Torontonians during these years may seem unwarranted for statistics reveal that Toronto's housing stock and its quality steadily improved. The number of dwellings in need of major repairs declined; so too did overcrowding and the incidence of lodging families. Undoubtedly, private and public programs were responsible for replacing inadequate and worn-out housing with newer comfortable living quarters. Particularly after the establishment of the

⁷A. Gramsci, "Observations and critical notes on an attempt at a 'Popular Manual of Sociology,'" in D. Forgacs, ed., *An Antonio Gramsci Reader* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 345-46.

Metropolitan Toronto tier of government in 1953, which put in place a plan for co-ordinating the physical and financial infrastructure necessary for rapid suburban development, housing production out-paced family formation even in a rapidly growing metropolis such as Boomtown Toronto. Rising prosperity and government programs made suburban home ownership a reality for a far greater number of Torontonians than ever before. And since households were spending about the same proportion of income as earlier on shelter, they were buying more space, improved quality and greater comfort. Moreover, compared to residents in other Canadian cities, such as Montreal, Halifax, and Vancouver, Torontonians were among the best housed in the country.⁸

By the end of the time period framing this study, Toronto was being lauded all around the world as “the city that works.” “Toronto the Good,” which had been denigrated by visitors as a dull, depressing, city of churches was now the envy of all North America -- “a model of an alternative future.”⁹ Toronto’s innate conservatism had thus served it well; through prudent rational planning, Toronto was able to combine Boomtown (the fastest growing city in North America Torontonians were continually told over these years) with a livable city of neighbourhoods. Indeed, it was not by coincidence that the champion of neighbourhood based planning, Jane Jacobs, decided to settle there.¹⁰

⁸J. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature’s Limits: Great Cities of North America Since 1600* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 247; J.R. Miron, *Housing in Postwar Canada: Demographic Change, Household Formation and Housing Demand* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988); and J.R. Miron, et. al. eds., *House, Home and Community: Progress in Housing Canadians, 1945-1986* Co-published by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).

⁹J. Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985), 11.

¹⁰Quotes cited in J. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature’s Limits*, 242. On Jacobs see *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).

The contrasts between Canadian and American postwar cities could not have been more stark and, as James Lemon notes, the differences were most stark in the central city neighbourhoods, where Jacobs settled. While American inner-cities steadily deteriorated, Toronto and other Canadian cities generally improved by “mixing people of different incomes and ethnic groups.”¹¹ Unlike the violent upheavals of the built environment of American cities, which took place under the “federal bulldozer,” landscape changes in Canadian cities, especially Toronto, were more ordered. Canadian cities such as Toronto did not experience the same white flight to the suburbs, the red-lining of inner-city neighbourhoods by insurance and mortgage companies, the ghettoisation of public housing, and the rapid construction of “crosstown expressways” that ripped up the fabric of American inner-city neighbourhoods, so stable working-class districts remained and even thrived.¹² Massive redevelopment projects were generally unpopular with Torontonians and, even then, as the popular histories of the city contend, politics in Toronto was largely non-partisan (though most were Tories) so community and neighbourhood groups could generally make city councillors and controllers listen to their concerns. Indeed, when massive redevelopment projects and crosstown freeways threatened to rear their ugly head in Toronto, community groups returned Toronto politics to normalcy by insisting on a slow and orderly growth pattern, which emphasized the protection of neighbourhoods.¹³

¹¹J. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits*, 243.

¹²For an overview of postwar American urban development see Jon Teaford, *The Twentieth Century American City: Problem, Promise and Reality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and J. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America 1949-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

¹³W. Magnusson, “Toronto,” in Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton, eds., *City Politics in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 94-139.

Much of this orderly growth has been linked to the fact that Torontonians, especially its governing elite, had always been “unabashedly interventionist;” they were, in the Canadian lingo, “Red Tories.”¹⁴ Toronto's urban planning and social housing movements had a long, and compared to other Canadian cities, successful history.¹⁵ Though Torontonians had been reluctant to implement their plans during the first half of the century, by the reconstruction period after World War II, Toronto assumed the leadership of urban planning for the remainder of the postwar period.¹⁶ Indeed, centralized rationalist planning reached its apogee in the postwar period under the leadership of such figures as Metro Chairman Fred Gardiner, Toronto's kinder and gentler version of Robert Moses.¹⁷ In addition, campaigns for social housing in Toronto can be traced back to turn-of-the-century dialogues between enlightened manufacturers and socially minded trade union leaders. In the “Progressive” era before the First World War, Toronto social housing activists were alone in Canada to see their schemes succeed when they implemented two modest limited-divided housing projects.¹⁸ During the

¹⁴H. Kaplan cited in J. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits*, 251.

¹⁵See Sean Purdy, “Building Homes, Building Citizens: Housing Reform and Nation Formation in Canada, 1900-20,” *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (September 1998), 492-523; S. Purdy, “Industrial Efficiency, Social Order and Moral Purity: Housing Reform Thought in English Canada, 1900-1950,” *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 25 (March 1997), 30-40; John Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); John Weaver, “The Modern City Realized: Toronto Civic Affairs, 1880-1915,” in Alan F.J. Artibise, and Gilbert A. Stelter, eds. *The Useable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), 39-72..

¹⁶James Lemon, “Plans for Early 20th Century Toronto: Lost in Management,” *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 18 (June 1989), 11-31.

¹⁷Timothy Colton, *Big Daddy: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Building of Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

¹⁸Sean Purdy, “The Political Economy of Housing Reform in Toronto, 1900-1921,” M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1991; Sean Purdy, “‘This is Not a Company; It Is a Cause’: Class, Gender, and the Toronto Housing Company, 1912-1920,” *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 21 (March 1993), 75-91. Lorna Hurl, “The Toronto Housing Company, 1912-1923: The Pitfalls of Painless Philanthropy,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 62, (March 1984); Shirley Spragge, “A Confluence of Interests: Housing

(continued...)

Depression of the 1930s Toronto reformers of all political stripes wrote a new bible for social housing, the Bruce Report, named after a major establishment ally of their cause, Ontario lieutenant governor Herbert Bruce.¹⁹ In the late 1940s and 1950s, Toronto again led the way with the construction of Regent Park, Canada's first publicly subsidized housing project, which Torontonians voted to pay out of their own pockets.²⁰ By the late 1960s Toronto had the most units of publicly subsidized housing in the nation, many of which were built in the suburbs, and thus there was not the same ghettoization of the poor as had occurred south of the border. Nor were there any Pruitt-Igoe catastrophes,²¹ as Toronto's public housing projects were less alienating and better managed. In short, Toronto unlike most other cities of its size in North America seemed to be able to balance public and private interests in developing the urban environment.

And yet by the late 1960s Toronto became the battleground over state urban policy. Community and neighbourhood groups launched attacks on private and public redevelopment projects which they believed belied the image of "Toronto the Good." These protest movements of the late 1960s and the subsequent rise of urban reform politics sparked a deluge of community studies examining the response of working-class and poor neighbourhoods to the forced "renewal" of their neighbourhoods by both the state and capital. According to

¹⁸(...continued)

Reform in Toronto, 1900-1920," in Alan F.J. Artibise, and Gilbert A. Stelter, eds. *The Useable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), 247-67.

¹⁹J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 10.

²⁰Albert Rose, *Regent Park: A Study in Slum Clearance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958).

²¹Pruitt-Igoe was a large public housing project in St. Louis that had to be demolished in 1972, less than twenty years after it was constructed, because poor construction and vandalism by residents rendered it unliveable. Some urban theorists have linked the end of urban modernism to Pruitt-Igoe's destruction. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (London: Blackwell, 1989).

many of the histories, Toronto's city planners "hated cities," especially old downtown neighbourhoods, "simply because they were old."²² According to this argument, Toronto planners' unwavering belief in the ideas of urban modernism²³, along with pro-growth boosterism spelled the end of old mixed-use downtown neighbourhoods. Thus, starting in the immediate aftermath of World War II urban planners, state agencies and private developers began their assault on pre-modern Toronto. Between 1940 and 1970, across downtown and its surrounding neighbourhoods, development eradicated large swaths of the old city and threatened many more neighbourhoods.²⁴ Planners and politicians universally accepted that these urban forms would have to be replaced by new, large-scale forms that separated uses, were structurally homogenous, and appeared orderly to the eye.²⁵ As Jon Caulfield argues, the effect of this development was both unanticipated and revolutionary, because it occurred with such rapidity. What took place in Toronto was not an incremental evolution of city forms but, rather, "an upheaval in collective and official perceptions of urban form and function."²⁶ The imperatives that would guide planning from the late 1960s onward, such as

²²Graham Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 57.

²³In the thesis the modifier "modernism" or "modernist" (i.e. urban modernism or modernist planning) implies an approach to the built environment that attempted to diminish the excesses of industrial capitalism on the form of the city and produce a more unified, efficient, rational and functional city organized for both production and reproduction of capitalism. In this project, planners strove to 1) bring reason and democracy to bear on urbanization, 2) to guide planning decisions by technical rather than political means, 3) produce co-ordinated and functional urban forms organized around collective goals, and 4) to use economic growth to create a middle-class society. For a good discussion of the modernist planning project see Robert A. Beauregard, "Between Modernity and Postmodernity: The Ambiguous Position of U.S. Planning," in Scott Campbell and Susan Fainstein, eds., *Readings in Planning Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 213-233.

²⁴Jon Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 25.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 53.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 27

protecting old neighbourhoods, mixed-use developments and integrating public housing with market housing and seeking to de-emphasize cars as a mode of movement, were recent innovations claimed urban experts, who championed their own efforts to reorient city planning and social housing.

Part of the reason why planners, politicians and developers had free reign in redesigning Toronto along “modernist” lines according to these studies was the fact that community activism, in short democratic control over development, had been weak at best. Instead, all-powerful development interests backed by the force of the state - local, provincial and federal - appeared to have unlimited power to shape the built environment in their interests. Shourky Roweis and Alan Scott refer to this as the “manipulated city analysis,” a view that contends certain key interest groups have privileged access to centres of power and decision making and because of this they can manipulate the powerless with impunity.²⁷ This is somewhat ironic given that the focus of the publications and of the authors themselves, many of whom stood alongside their subjects at the barricades, was to illustrate that autonomous community organizations in working-class inner-city neighbourhoods had “the power to make it happen” by “fighting back” and standing “up against city hall” and “the developers.” Indeed, despite having more sympathy for their subjects, these works tend to paint the same bleak picture of working-class community activism as their more “paternalistic” social reform predecessors.²⁸

²⁷Shoukry T. Roweis and Allen J. Scott, “The Urban Land Question,” in Michael Dear and Allan J. Scott eds., *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society* (New York: Methuen, 1981), 130-36.

²⁸See Graham Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court*, Dennis Keating, *The Power to Make It Happen: Mass-based Community Organizing - What it is and How it Works* (Toronto: Green Tree, 1975); John Sewell, *Up Against City Hall* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1972); and James
(continued...)

They also present a monolithic view of the history of city planning and citizen participation in Toronto since the 1930s. To be sure, urban modernism and urban boosterism formed a powerful ideological combination, and were the most influential forces shaping the built environment of inner-city Toronto in the postwar period. The stress of both urban planners and social housing advocates on the importance of technique also shielded the class bound nature of their cultural and aesthetic judgements. Planners and social housing advocates for the most part disliked the kinds of urban places and forms that working-class families, immigrants, and other low-income households developed. Nonetheless, the city planning and social housing movements were by no means monolithic. Time and time again planners and social housing activists warned against blindly accepting architectural and planning dogma. They often criticized proposed projects because they would not serve the needs of those who would live there. That they were ignored says more about the importance of the logic of capital accumulation than ideas of urban modernist principles for the inhospitable built environment of modern inner-city Toronto. Indeed, as Jon Caulfield argues, the state and capital stood urban modernism on its head: "Under the aegis of Toronto's pro-growth coalition, urban modernism's vision became a utopia deformed, not a surprising outcome given the profoundly anti-utopian nature of capital's monocentric emphasis on its own reproduction..."²⁹ In short, this generation of scholarship presented a populist critique of city development and though it provides a good chronology of events and of participants,

²⁸(...continued)

Lorimer, *The Real World of City Politics* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1970), *A Citizen's Guide to City Politics* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1972); James Lorimer and Myfanwy Phillips, *Working People: Life in a Downtown City Neighbourhood* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1971).

²⁹J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 60.

there was little theorization and little sensitivity to the actual unfolding of the past.

If there is a similarity between the “boosters” and “cutters” debates over housing and planning in post World War II Toronto, both agreed that Toronto was largely slum free. Neighbourhoods designated for urban renewal in the mid-to-late 1960s, such as Alexandra Park, Trefann Court, Don Mount and Don Vale, contained old houses on narrow streets without a great deal of physical amenities, but they were nowhere near the end of their useful life, as later programs of gentrification would amply illustrate. For the most part, these were low-rent, low-cost housing districts, inhabited by proud and decent working-class families, many of whom had scrimped and saved to buy and maintain their houses.³⁰ The poor dilapidated housing that existed in these areas was minimal and owned by absentee landlords and real estate speculators, who were not above packing their properties with society’s “misfits” such as drug dealers, motorcycle gangs, and “multi-problem families” to “blow-out” long-term residents. Both groups would have certainly agreed with the argument of Alexandra Park residents, who faced the federal bulldozer in 1965:

The word slum is an emotion laden word which is ill-defined, but well designed to divert people's attention from the real issues. The real issues arise out of the undeniable fact that there is substandard housing overcrowding and human misery in Alexandra Park. Rather than arguing about whether the area is a 'slum' ... the city recognizes that a housing problem exists and has resolved to do something about it, based upon enlightened and expert judgement.³¹

Thus, in both analyses, to call even the worst of Toronto’s inner-city neighbourhoods “slums” seemed to be hopelessly inflammatory and misguided rhetoric, that was best ignored, rather

³⁰For a explanation of the difference between low-rent and low-cost housing districts and slums see Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers*, Expanded and Updated Edition (1962 repr., New York: Free Press, 1982), 351-52; and John R. Seeley, “The Slum: Its Nature, Use and Users,” *Journal of the Institute of American Planners*, 25 (February 1959), 7-14.

³¹Ben Zion, “What’s a Slum? Its Overcrowding And Human Misery,” *Toronto Star*, July 11, 1963, 6.

than legitimated through analysis.

Alexandra Park residents were right: there was human misery and overcrowding in their neighbourhood, as there was (and continues to be) in many of Toronto's inner-city neighbourhoods. As Albert Rose has argued, "there have been few periods in which there were not expressions of concern about the housing and living conditions experienced by some Canadians."³² Indeed, at almost exact decade intervals between 1935 and 1965 Toronto experienced serious housing crises, which soon became full-fledged moral panics over the existence and growth of the "the slum." The most pressing problem thrown up by the city's superlative growth in the postwar period was the housing question: How could the city provide decent and low-cost shelter for the thousands of working and low-income citizens who flocked to the city in the postwar period? While planners, reformers, politicians, and journalists debated whether the degree of physical decline of the city's housing stock warranted the label slum, they all agreed that slums followed overcrowded housing conditions. The problem of the slum, observers repeatedly claimed, was "nothing more nor less than a shortage of housing."³³ In postwar Toronto, overcrowding rather than structural decline demarcated the city's housing crisis, and hence "the slum."³⁴ Official reports claimed, "No consistent correlation was found between the age of a house and conditions. On the other hand, condition alone (all age groups) does show a correlation with crowding; in most cases,

³²Albert Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies, 1935-1980* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980), 1.

³³R.T. Adamson, "Housing Policy and Urban Renewal," in N.H. Lithwick and Gilles Paquet, eds., *Urban Studies: A Canadian Perspective* (Toronto: Methuen, 1968), 222.

³⁴Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, *Report on Metropolitan Participation in the Proposed Redevelopment of the Moss Park and Alexandra Park Areas*, 1958, 18.

the degree of crowding is greater in the poor properties than in the good ones.”³⁵ According to the common argument, then, the lack of decent low-cost housing for low-income families created slum conditions not just in a physical sense, but, more importantly, in a moral sense. Newspaper stories continually told of houses in once proud inner-city neighbourhoods being vacated by middle class home owners in their flight to the suburbs. Turned into “rabbit warrens,” this deteriorating housing stock was prone to subsequent overcrowding that brought social problems such as “drug peddlers and strumpets.” As a *Toronto Star* editorial concluded: “[Overcrowding] ... create[s] those conditions which historically have gone along with slum living - dependency, irresponsibility, and criminality. These social evils are far more the consequence of how people live than of what people eat or wear.”³⁶ Indeed, it was the social consequences of poor housing which turned Toronto’s neighbourhood problems into a discussion of slums, and thus the terminology cannot be dismissed, because it crystalized so many debates about the good and bad in Toronto society.

Slums also connected with other important discourses including the promotion of the city as a modern metropolis. For more than three decades official reports and newspaper stories warned Torontonians that lurking beneath the city’s Boomtown image was a much darker picture of the central city - overcrowding, decay, and blight. The intractability of the city’s housing problem, especially for low-income earners, punctured the optimism generated by Toronto’s postwar growth. Toronto slums mocked the apparent progress of the age - the idea of poverty in the midst of progress. As an editorial in the *Telegram* as late as January

³⁵Brian J. Berry and Robert A. Murdie, *Socio-Economic Correlates of Housing Condition* (Prepared under contract for the Urban Renewal Study of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1965), 9.

³⁶“Wanted Low Rents for Low Incomes,” *Toronto Star*, April 13, 1961, 7.

1965 stated:

Council may spread parks all over the city; it may litter the city with temples to the arts; it may boast the most majestic city hall in the world; but as long as there are swamps of slums in the back streets Toronto must still count itself a backward city.³⁷

The continued existence of slum housing conditions was blamed for a whole range of urban problems, including crime, juvenile delinquency, poor health, and poverty. Moreover, slums were an aesthetic affront to modernist planning ideals and a functional liability to modern cities. Torontonians were continually reminded that they were “no longer obliged in our present advanced stage of economic and technical progress to leave our urban environment to chance - to let drabness and squalor develop from lot-by-lot development. We now have the physical resources and the organizational experience to build cities which are not only economically efficient but inspiring to live in.”³⁸ In short, it was hard to promote the city as a place for modern development while much of it languished in the past.

Nor did it seem to matter that most poor housing was located in localized pockets; the continued existence of blight, no matter how small, was dangerous to the rest of the city. Newspapers focussed their reports and photographs on the city’s most squalid housing, creating the impression that Toronto’s housing stock was getting worse rather than better. Portrayed in terms of disease, the cancerous blots, unless surgically removed by urban planners, threatened to infect the rest of the city. Slums, Torontonians were told continually, crept slowly and silently; once they fastened themselves like festering sores upon the face of

³⁷“Erase the Slums,” *Toronto Telegram*, January 15, 1965, 6.

³⁸E. Beecroft, “The Challenge of Urban Renewal in Canada,” in City of Toronto Archives (Hereafter CTA), Records of the City of Toronto Planning Board, RG 32, Series B3, Box 11, File 1.

the city they defied every action to clean them up.³⁹ For instance, in the summer of 1960 the *Telegram* published a story under the headline “Huge Area in Toronto Predicted Slum in 20 Years,” suggesting the inevitable decline of all inner-city residential areas south of Bloor and Danforth streets.⁴⁰ Similarly, newspaper reports of the 1966 Metro Urban Renewal report played on traditional fears of the creeping natures of the slum with such headlines as “Bombshell Report - Slum Rot Reaches Our Suburbs.”⁴¹ This headline betrayed the fact that the report claimed that the degree of blight in the suburbs was very minor, representing less than 10% of all the Metro area.

Why, then, did Torontonians proceed to overstate their “slum problem?” The sensationalism of their stories was also necessary to drive home particular political agendas, namely that slum clearance, or its euphemism in the 1960s - urban renewal - was a just, necessary and noble cause. As Frank Tumpane said in response to the controversy created by the portrayal of Regent Park residents as ‘slum dwellers’ in the National Film Board’s documentary of the redevelopment project, *Farewell Oak Street*:

[That the film portrayed Regent Park as a slum] ... Doesn’t mean that the ... area didn’t contain many fine, decent people and many fine clean homes. Of course it did. Many people in the area were heartsick because they had to live under the conditions in which they found themselves. However, people may not want to contribute to slum clearance if they feel the situation isn’t really bad after all. Merely “substandard” in fact. Too many taxpayers are living in

³⁹The organic metaphor is crucial here because of the way in which both planners and the public’s understanding of the physical layout of the city derived from the Chicago School’s ecological model of urban structure, which was based heavily on references to biotic process and Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence. See John Carter & Trevor Jones, *Social Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Issues* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), 44-47; and Marlene Shore, *The Science of Social Redemption: McGill, the Chicago School and the Origins of Social Research in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

⁴⁰“Huge Area Predicted Slum in 20 Years,” *Toronto Telegram*, July 7, 1960.

⁴¹“Bombshell Report: Slum Rot Reaches Our Suburbs,” *Toronto Star*, March 31, 1966, 1.

what they consider “substandard” housing themselves to become unduly excited over the plight of others who live in “substandard” conditions. More slum clearance projects are needed in this city. And the consent of the taxpayers will be more difficult to obtain if those who stand to benefit most and their elected representatives turn into a bunch of nice-Nellies who are afraid to call something by its right name. The Regent Park area was a slum.⁴²

Inner-city residents also realised this fact. To get the state to pay attention to adverse housing conditions in their neighbourhood they had to play the slum game. When questioned by the Mayor why he left piles of garbage festering in his backyard, one St. James Town tenant told the Mayor: “We left it there purposely hoping you’d come down.”⁴³

Yet the various slum clearance, urban renewal projects, both public and private, undertaken during this period not only did not solve the housing problems of Toronto’s poor, but in fact exacerbated them. The activities of the state and social housing advocates were at the expense of, rather than on behalf of, low-income Torontonians. Ironically, Toronto’s housing crisis and the persistence of slums, arose because of a shortage of low-cost dwellings, due in large part to the demolition of low-cost housing under various private and public schemes to “renew” the city. Indeed, some of the most conspicuous violence done to the city’s working-class neighbourhoods during this period was in the area surrounding the central business district (CBD). Here the expansion of core commercial and industrial functions, along with high-rise residential redevelopment and public housing projects displaced thousands of inner-city residents. In this period, neighbourhoods on the edge of the CBD witnessed the destruction of more than 13,000 homes, almost all of them low-cost, but at the

⁴²Frank Tumpane, “A Slum Is a Slum by Any Name,” *Toronto Telegram*, March 5, 1953, 3.

⁴³Jurgen Hesse, “Slum Tenants Alive and Keen, Givens Finds on Tour,” *Globe and Mail*, March 6, 1965, 5.

same time low revenue producing. As the Core Area Task Force reported in 1973:

Over these years 1940-1970 Toronto increasingly became a 'deprived city' with respect to the quality of the environment provided for its less affluent citizens. True, the City continues to go forward in a vast building program under private auspices. But as a consequence, poor, low-income families and single elderly persons are being denied the possibility of independent living in the costly areas beyond the City boundaries, and they are even in great danger of being denied access to the central city itself.⁴⁴

Indeed, the state's approach to the renewal of inner-city slums during the 1950s and 1960s derived not only from the views of urban modernism toward the origins and solutions to inner-city problems, but perhaps more importantly from a disapproval of the way in which the social composition of these districts had evolved. In short, there was no room in the central city for working-class or low income residents apart from public housing projects.

Of course there was nothing new about this phenomenon. Almost a century earlier, Friedrich Engels, in his treatise concerning the way nineteenth-century states and social reformers attempted to solve the housing problems of European workers described the same course of events.

By the term "Haussmann" I do not mean merely the specifically Bonapartist manner of the Parisian Haussmann – breaking long, straight and broad streets through the closely-built workers' quarters and erecting big luxurious buildings on both sides of them, the intention thereby, apart from the strategic aim of making barricade fighting more difficult, being also to develop a specifically Bonapartist buildings trades' proletariat dependent on the government and to turn the city into a pure luxury city. By "Haussmann" I mean the practice which has now become general of making breaches in the working-class quarters of our big towns, and particularly in those which are centrally situated, quite apart from whether this is done from considerations of public health and for beautifying the town, or working to the demand for big centrally situated business premises, or owing to traffic requirements, such as laying down of railways, streets, etc. No matter how different the reasons

⁴⁴City of Toronto Planning Board, *Core Area Task Force: Technical Appendix* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1974), 252-53.

may be, the result is everywhere the same: the scandalous alleys and lanes disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise from the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but they appear again immediately somewhere else and often in the immediate neighbourhood. . . This is a striking example of how the bourgeoisie solves the housing question in practice. The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely *shifted elsewhere!*⁴⁵

At a very crude level of analysis the problem of slums and working-class housing seems to resemble the experience of London during the nineteenth-century, which Gareth Stedman Jones lays out in *Outcast London*.⁴⁶ Planners and social housing advocates, however, were shocked when their relocation studies began to reveal that their urban renewal programs had not produced well-rounded communities, but had simply been a “selective process removing the ‘best’ elements of the community and retaining the poorest.”⁴⁷ This shifting of the poor from “slum to slum,” Haussmannization in short, undermined much of the work to combat overcrowding and poor housing conditions, thus increasing the process of deterioration and the timing of redevelopment. Urban renewal thus backed low-income and working-class residents into a corner. It is little wonder, then, that when the city sped up its urban renewal program in the late 1960s inner-city residents came out fighting.⁴⁸

At the same time city politicians, planners and social housing activists worked within

⁴⁵F. Engels, *The Housing Question* (London: Martin Lawrence Ltd. n.d.), 74-77.

⁴⁶This problem was not new or unique to Toronto. As Gareth Stedman Jones illustrates in his study of the lives of the poor and working class residents of nineteenth-century London, similar state programs to cleanse the city of its slums only made the problem worse. G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London, A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1984), Part II, 159-237.

⁴⁷CTA, RG 32 B3, Box 16 File 16, A.D. Crerar, Memo, 02.15.17, Comment on the “Final Relocation Report,” December 7, 1962, 2.

⁴⁸Graham Fraser reveals that certain families in Regent Park, and later Trefann Court, were shunted from redevelopment area to redevelopment area by the city’s housing authority. G. Fraser *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court*, 59.

the confines of housing policies established by higher levels of government, which severely constrained their abilities to seek solutions to Toronto's housing crisis. As many observers have noted, Canadian housing policy has relied heavily on market oriented, supply-side, new construction strategies, whose primary goal has been to regulate the economy rather than provide decent affordable housing for all Canadians.⁴⁹ In fact, Canadian social housing policy emerged not from the upper levels of government, but from the weakest link in the Canadian federal system -- municipalities. As a result, Toronto planners, politicians and social housing activists repeatedly ran up against the legal and financial restraints of Canadian federalism. Federal and provincial state managers sent Torontonians back to the drawing board to revise their plans time and time again. They were continually told that Canadian urban policy was to encourage "large scale thinking," which meant city-wide, if not region-wide planning, and large scale redevelopment projects rather than less invasive programs of spot clearance, rehabilitation and neighbourhood improvement. The lack of participation between the city, the province, Ottawa and, after 1953, the Metropolitan Toronto government, continually thwarted Toronto's attempts to solve its housing problems. At other times, upper levels of government simply rewrote the rules to rein in the independence and creativity of the city. As John Bacher notes, Toronto's experience reveals that the federal system was "flexible enough to leave room for the ideological opponents of social housing to do as much damage as their coined wills and imagination could create."⁵⁰

Toronto's experience, however, was by no means unique. In most advanced capitalist

⁴⁹Michael Dennis and Susan Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy: Low Income Housing in Canada* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972); and J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*.

⁵⁰J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 13.

nations, the relative autonomy of cities steadily declined in relation to large structures of government, especially the nation state, which reached its apex of power under Keynesianism. In most western nations, especially the United States and Canada, urban growth became a prime instrument of public policy to stimulate and maintain high levels of consumption. Fearing a postwar slump similar to that which followed World War I, the three levels of the Canadian state adopted an ensemble of policies which unleashed the urban growth of the 1950s and 1960s. The federal government viewed city building as a vital Keynesian vehicle for postwar reconstruction in the wake of almost two decades of depression and war. It was also committed to the development of Toronto as Canada's headquarters for domestic and foreign capital, and it supported these goals through public policy initiatives such as the National Housing Act, but also immigration policies that fostered urban expansion. These federal government initiatives helped complete Toronto's long succession of Montreal as Canada's premier urban centre. Similarly, the provincial government was committed over these years to strengthen Ontario's urban-industrial economic base and provided massive funding for the public works necessary to accomplish this task, particularly the establishment of Metropolitan government to oversee these developments. Finally, municipalities identified rapid residential and industrial growth as the keys to prosperity and reoriented their planning policies to attract development.⁵¹

These urban development and redevelopment strategies of the various levels of the Canadian state had pronounced effects on the function of cities, by changing them from "the

⁵¹Michael Goldrick, "The Anatomy of Urban Reform in Toronto," in D. Roussopoulos, ed., *The City and Radical Social Change* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), 260-82; and J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 42-43.

workshops of the nation to artifacts of, and for, consumption.”⁵² Indeed, as scholars such as Stuart Ewen and Dolores Hayden have noted, postwar housing policies designed to stimulate the growth of suburbs were central to Fordist accumulation strategies. Housing was a commodity *par excellence* as it was a spur for male paid labour and a container for female unpaid labour. Occupants of increasingly isolated households became more suggestible, and with the increase in spatial privacy came greater pressures for conformity in consumption. Of course, most of this took place in the suburbs, but attempts to suburbanize the central city through urban renewal sought similar goals and produced similar results.⁵³

Throughout the postwar period cities such as Toronto were responsible for providing the massive housing, transportation and service (ie public utilities, but also schools and other public institutions) infrastructure necessary for such a transformation. The formation of Metropolitan government in 1953 can be seen in this very light. The massive migration of people to Toronto to fill the city’s wartime industries, combined with postwar federal immigration policies, led to a tremendous overcrowding in the central city, stimulating a massive wave of suburbanization. However, the Greater Toronto Area, with its hodge-podge of competing semi-rural townships adjoining the city, was ill-equipped to afford or execute the elaborate servicing networks needed to support massive urban growth. In establishing the Metro government in 1953, the Ontario government provided the jurisdiction to lay down the necessary infrastructure for urban development. The Metro government could now raise, at

⁵²David Harvey cited in M. Goldrick, “The Anatomy of Urban Reform in Toronto,” 265.

⁵³Dolores Hayden, “What Would a Non-sexist City be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work,” in Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout, eds., *The City Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 144; and Stewart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976).

public expense, the enormous sums of money needed to collectivize these costs.

While Metro was providing the framework for suburban expansion, the City of Toronto was responding in its own way to the changing function of the inner city. As the engine of the Canadian economy, Toronto was under pressure to maintain and enhance the city as a site for capital accumulation. Urban planners and municipal politicians were happy that the growth of the suburbs relieved some of the pressures of residential over-crowding for the city, but the loss of young middle-class families to the new housing tracts in the suburbs, combined with industrial decentralization, left the city scrambling to pay for its large proportion of the costs of suburban expansion out of a stagnant, if not shrinking, tax base. In addition, the city also incurred substantial expenses rehabilitating its own public infrastructure, especially transportation networks which funnelled suburban workers into the central city to work, shop, and play. Thus, the city of Toronto was in constant search of tax revenues, which the redevelopment and conversion of land use from residential to industrial and commercial properties would bring. At the same time, the city had another problem: preventing the “blight” in existing inner-city residential areas from spreading and providing a disincentive to new investment. In this sense “cleaning up the slums” was an important aspect of the function of Toronto’s city government to not only protect property values, but to foster central city growth. Indeed, in making these decisions about working-class neighbourhoods urban planners framed their approach in the language of *technique*, reflecting an overriding concern with “manipulative planning.” Planning documents reflected preoccupation with order and functional efficiency and issues of dis-economy. Hidden from view by the prose of *technique* was the highly subjective and class-bound nature of the

politicians' and planners' cultural and aesthetic judgements.⁵⁴

Nonetheless, throughout the postwar period federal housing and urban planners used Toronto as their testing ground for various policies. In contradiction to the "manipulated city analysis" of John Sewell and others, federal urban policy makers were certain of the ends they desired, but had little knowledge of the means to get there.⁵⁵ Indeed, as Fran Klodowsky argues, "Toronto's experience [with urban renewal] suggests that senior government officials and politicians had very little concrete understanding of how redevelopment could in fact occur. They were quite dependent upon the experiences of local officials who were attempting to implement policies on the basis of broad program statements by federal state representatives."⁵⁶ Equally important was the infusion of personnel with direct experience of renewal in Toronto at the upper reaches of CMHC.⁵⁷ Thus, a key element in examining Toronto's urban renewal history lies in understanding the manner by which senior government policies were evaluated and acted on by local officials, and how the concrete actions of the latter led to adjustments in provincial and federal policies and programs. Again in contradiction to the "manipulated city analysis" urban renewal was by no means a coherent program designed to "rape and dehumanize the city," but a confused mess of half-articulated hopes that Torontonians of all classes would benefit from the modernization of the urban

⁵⁴Edward Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), Chapter 3. See also E. Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow Updated Edition* (London: Blackwell, 1996).

⁵⁵See note 27.

⁵⁶Fran Klodowsky, "Accumulation, the State, and Community Struggles Impacts on Toronto's Built Environment, 1945 to 1972," PhD Dissertation, Department of Geography, Queen's University, 1985. 238.

⁵⁷P. Filion, "The Neighbourhood Improvement Plan. Montreal and Toronto: Contrasts Between a Participatory and a Centralized Approach to Urban Policy Making," *Urban History Review*, 17 (June 1988), 24.

environment.

At the same time, the issue of housing, especially inner-city slums, was central to the issue of poverty and thus stimulated humanitarian concerns about the conditions in which workers and the poor were forced to live. Though erroneous, social reformers continued to believe that to find the poor one only needed to point to the slums. Throughout the postwar period, but with particular intensity in the 1960s War on Poverty, the critique of the slum became an attack on the affluent society and the existence of poverty in the midst of plenty. The slum, particularly its image and the discourse surrounding it, is extremely important for such a task because slums acted as a potent trigger device to mobilize public interest, particularly in terms of bourgeois or state solutions to the problems of poverty. Indeed as David Ward argues, the usage of the term slum coincided with radical changes in both attitudes and public policy toward poverty. The image of the slum as a place of disease, distress, disorder, disaffection and decay - both morally and physically - dovetailed with basic assumptions of prevailing common sense opinions about the good and the bad in contemporary society.⁵⁸ Equally important, slums symbolized not only the economic and social alienation of the poor from the rest of Canadian society, but equally important their physical separation. In the postwar period, the slum represented the place not only where poverty existed but more importantly where the pathological culture of poverty was inculcated. Housing reformers of all stripes returned to Victorian environmentalism not only for analysis of the problem, but also for the solution to the slum and its discontents. One only had to change the environment of the poor to break their "deviant" habits and culture which

⁵⁸See D. Ward, "The Victorian Slum: An Enduring Myth."

extended poverty down through the generations. But the problem was that in relating the problems of poverty to the problem of the slum, planners, state officials and social reformers fundamentally misunderstood poverty as well as the lives of the poor.

Canadian historians have, surprisingly, overlooked the link between urban planning, housing and poverty, a problem that is once again rearing its ugly head in Toronto and other large Canadian cities. In almost every history of modern Canada housing policy merits at best a passing remark, which is usually confined to the building of Regent Park.⁵⁹ This is true even of more specialized histories of the development of the welfare state.⁶⁰ To some degree this is understandable since Canadian housing policies acted more as instruments of macro economic planning than as vital elements of social policy.⁶¹ Yet, it is clear that housing issues

⁵⁹Housing issues do not merit space in Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism* Rev. Ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). Somewhat better are more recent texts that incorporate recent research into the nation's "social history" such as R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald B. Smith, *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* 4th ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 2000), 396; and Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel, with Cornelius Jaenen, *History of the Canadian Peoples: Volume II, 1867 to the Present* 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark 1998); Alvin Finkel's recent synthesis is perhaps the best on social housing issues, but still largely ignores the issue after 1950. See Finkel, *Our Lives: Canada after 1945* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1997), chapter 2. Finally a recent history of the Baby Boom generation by Douglas Owrarn completely ignores the vital involvement of the New Left with housing or urban issues, and instead focuses only on student politics. Owrarn also fails to mention in his discussion of "super-hippie" David Dapoe and the fight over Yorkville, that his sit-in at Toronto City Hall upstaged a protest by Riverdale residents who were under the threat of expropriation for an "urban renewal project" (Don Mount) on the same day. A week later the residents association returned and copied a page from Dapoe's protest handbook by staging their own sit-in. See Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

⁶⁰Dennis Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada* (Vancouver: University of Toronto Press, 1980); and Jane Ursel, *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1992). Finally, a recent collection of articles by Raymond Blake and Jeff Keshen does not contain one article on housing policy. See R. Blake and J. Keshen *Social Welfare Policy in Canada: Historical Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1995).

⁶¹The most definitive statement here is Michael Dennis's and Susan Fish's trenchant critique of Canadian housing policy, *Programs in Search of A Policy: Low Income Housing in Canada* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972). In the same vein see John Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*. See also Richard Harris, "Housing and Social Policy: a Historical Perspective on Canadian-American Differences," Unpublished paper, September 1997.

were central to battles over what Manuel Castells calls “collective consumption,” socialized consumption policies largely determined by state activity.⁶² For one, housing programs, such as urban renewal and public housing, were essentially “sold” as social policies geared as much to help the poor as to promote general economic growth. Additionally, those vitally involved in the delivery of traditional social programs such as welfare assistance, believed that housing policies were central to solving the problems of poverty and class inequalities. How could they not when housing costs consumed as much as half of the budgets of families on social assistance, and when housing issues placed increased demands on a whole range of social services from Children’s Aid to health care (both mental and physical)?⁶³ Finally, the “indirect” benefits of welfare state policies have become as important as direct wages for the living standards of working and middle-class Canadians, especially during the postwar period. By focussing solely on federal and provincial governments many scholars have overlooked the fact that the politics of postwar reconstruction was concerned as much with local matters involving housing, zoning, rent controls, slum clearance, and the regulation of public space as it was with national programs, such as collective bargaining legislation and unemployment benefits.⁶⁴

Equally important, the Keynesian city, by placing much more emphasis on

⁶²Manuel Castells, *City Class and Power* (Translation Elizabeth Lebas) (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 168-69.

⁶³Since 1993 state withdrawal from social housing combined with the weakening of rent control legislation has once again highlighted the influence of housing issues on the delivery of traditional welfare state programs to the poor. See City of Toronto (Ont.), *Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto*. (Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force, January 1999), *passim*.

⁶⁴A recent correction to this oversight is James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario 1920-1970* (Toronto, 1994), which reminds us that the local state was very much involved in the delivery and planning of welfare services.

consumption than production raised the stakes in the struggle around the built environment. As David Harvey notes, the popular legitimacy of the Fordism program rested on the performance of the system to distribute its benefits widely and satisfy as many consumers as possible.⁶⁵ But the attempts to use the urban process as a vehicle of redistribution ran up against the realities of class structure, inequalities, and deprivations. It also confronted its own definitions of consumer sovereignty, which led urban dwellers both rich and poor to believe that they should have the right to shape and construct spaces and communities in alternative forms to those embodied in the accumulation functions of capital. Thus, all the talk of affordable housing, public housing, minimum standards, and community organization often had little to do with housing conditions getting worse over this period. Rather, urban renewal raised expectations in the battle for collective consumption. This, then, was at the heart of the urban social movements of the late 1960s, and which forced the state and capital to confront the accumulation and redistributive tensions inherent in Keynesian urban politics.

To summarize then, slum clearance, and its later euphemism urban renewal, represented a doubled-edged urban form in two different, but inter-related, ways. First, it reflected the belief (if somewhat misguided and paternalistic) of social reformers that the state could constructively affect the lives of low-income people by dramatically altering their housing conditions. Throughout these years state bureaucrats and social housing advocates continued to believe in the Victorian notion that a new environment would spiritually, or perhaps in more modern terminology, psychologically up-lift the poor. Such a campaign was not necessarily opposed to the renewal of the city to serve the needs of capital accumulation.

⁶⁵David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 234.

Thus, the humanitarian concerns of housing the poor and the desires of the state and capital to further the process of accumulation easily united in the crusade against the slums. Yet, these two opposing interests provided the battlelines upon which urban renewal schemes were fought, and upon which urban reformers soon transferred their loyalties from the state to those ultimately affected by urban renewal. Increasingly, social housing advocates and urban planners came to see that urban renewal as “dollar planning,” and urban renewal as a key weapon in the “war on poverty” were incompatible. The autocratic and often inhuman methods under which urban renewal schemes were conducted obviated much of the good that was supposed to result from the rehousing schemes.

The existence of these fault lines, which existed even at the heart of the “pro-growth coalition,” is why the previous approaches to the “urban question” in Toronto remain incomplete. Indeed, conflict over issues of housing and urban planning, both within and between different interest groups or coalitions, is endemic to the functioning of capitalist cities. As neo-Marxist urban scholars, such as David Harvey, Neil Smith, and John Mollenkopf, argue conflict is intrinsic to the urban development process. According to Harvey and Smith, the primary nature of the conflict is due to the way in which capital investment in the built environment is always spatially uneven, “moving from one neighbourhood to another in long cycles of development, devalorization, destruction and reinvestment.”⁶⁶ At the most basic level, the conflicts caused by this “locational seesaw,” as Smith describes it, occur between developers (rentier capital large and small) who seek to enhance the exchange value of local land and property, and local residents who hope to

⁶⁶John Emmeus Davis, *Contested Ground: Collective Action and the Urban Neighbourhood* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 287.

maintain the use value of their land and properties to carve out a life for themselves.⁶⁷ In short, as Mollenkopf, the conflict takes places between the interests of “accumulation” and “community.”⁶⁸ Indeed, the process of urbanization itself continually creates and recreates communal forms both necessary and helpful for further capital accumulation. However, eventually those relationships and communal forms become impediments to further accumulation, and they must be undermined and replaced with new arrangements. This process of “creative destruction,” however, is extremely contradictory since it is in the interests of some capitalists, and capitalism as a whole, to retain past accumulative and reproductive investments in the built environment, while simultaneously destroying those investments to open up new areas for further capital accumulation.⁶⁹

Just as urban neighbourhoods become the sites of conflict between the forces of “accumulation” and “community,” so too are the houses contained therein. Housing allocation is a direct function of the class struggle inherent in capitalist societies as well as a central element in understanding the social structure of the city. Much of that social structure is, according to Rex and Moore, “the result of a class struggle over the use of homes in the

⁶⁷For more on this understanding of urban conflict see John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁶⁸John Mollenkopf, “Community and Accumulation,” in M. Dear and A.J. Scott, eds., *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society* (New York: Methuen, 1981), 319-338. See also Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*.

⁶⁹For more on this see David Harvey, “The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis,” in M. Dear and A.J. Scott, eds., *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society* (New York: Methuen, 1981), 91-121; and Neil Smith, “Gentrification and Uneven Development,” *Economic Geography*, 58 (April 1982), 139-55. Much of this analysis relies heavily on John Emmeus Davis’ excellent synthesis of neo-Marxist approaches to conflicts in the built environment. J. Davis, *Contested Ground*, 285-306.

city.”⁷⁰ Indeed, because housing is such a scarce and valuable resource, both materially and symbolically, access to it is rationed. Unlike almost any other consumer good, the free market cannot, as social reformers have long lamented, supply decent affordable housing for the entire range of incomes. Therefore, urban dwellers compete against one another for access to it. For the most part, divisions between the “housing classes” of the city largely replicate those at the point of production, thus, creating gracious estates for economic owners and managers, suburban bungalows for white collar professionals, modest homes for “labour aristocrats,” while leaving “the slums” and tenements for the “urban underclass.” Yet, we should be careful not to do as many observers, both radical and conservative, did in the 1950s and 1960s and assume that people’s housing conditions and tenure reflected their objective and subjective class positions. As both Richard Harris and John Emmeus Davis argue, housing represents a bundle of interests and plays an independently significant role in the social structure; it not only reflects but also helps to determine the economic situation of the family, and this is especially true for the working class, for whom the home has a particular significance.⁷¹ In this sense, housing sits on the fault line between “accumulation” and “community” since it provides not only shelter, but is an important economic asset. Indeed, access to housing was one means by which class became more complicated in the postwar period, and could, in the words of one inner-city activist of the late 60s, “[organize] the poor

⁷⁰ John Rex and Robert Moore cited in John Emmeus Davis, *Contested Ground: Collective Action and the Urban Neighborhood* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 28-29.

⁷¹ Richard Harris, *The Family Home in Working-Class Life*, (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1989); and John Emmeus Davis, *Contested Ground*.

against the working-class.”⁷² At the same time, the nature and content of these struggles are determined by a whole range of factors, some of them relatively autonomous from issues of social class. Indeed, analysing Toronto’s battle with the slum from a monolithic stand point would be dangerous since the discourses of housing, slums and urban renewal crystallized many inter-related issues and other discourses, such as the family, gender, poverty, ethnicity, class, and concepts of citizenship.

The failure to see that houses and neighbourhoods serve both productive and reproductive means that contrary to the “manipulated city” analysis the state is not beholden to the interests of “the developers.” Rather, the state, especially its urban planning apparatus, becomes the chief mediator between the forces of “accumulation” and “community.” The state, and urban planning, does not so much stand between these two parties shielding the real sources of tension from view, but in many cases becomes wholly inseparable from them in the ongoing struggle. Indeed, the state becomes the focus of much of the battle between the interests of “accumulation” and “community,” as actors from both sides attempt to enlist the aid of various agencies of the state in their cause to “redevelop” or “preserve” existing neighbourhoods and their built environment. Urban planning, thus, becomes enmeshed in the “contradictions of the welfare state” by trying to promote an orderly and socially responsible built environment while adhering to the interests of development capital, which ultimately provide the parameters in which planning operates.⁷³ However, in the final analysis, nothing guarantees that the power of capitalist elites and urban managers

⁷²Marjaleena Repo, “Organizing the Poor Against the Working Class,” *Transformation*, 1 (March-April 1971), 4-15, 42-44.

⁷³Claus Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State* (edited by John Keane) (Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T. Press, 1993), especially chapters 3, 5, 6.

will always or completely prevail in urban politics: Urban planning is always contested ground.

For this very reason citizen participation in the politics of urban planning was not limited to the upheavals of the 1960s, but was present from its earliest stages. Aside from Shirley Tillotson's examination of citizen participation in the recreation movement in Brantford Ontario, and Gale Wills' study of social work in Toronto, the history of community organization and its ties to citizen participation in welfare state provisioning remains woefully unexplored.⁷⁴ Many of the same issues, ideas, sentiments, and even personalities, which occupied community organizations during the 1960s can be traced back to the movement during the postwar period. As Jill Wade similarly argues in her discussion of Vancouver's social housing movement of the first half of this century, this "rupture in historical memory" left the activists of the 1960s largely unaware of previous crises, older struggles, previous achievements, and important allies.⁷⁵ Indeed, as John Sewell wrote on the death of Canadian social housing pioneer Albert Rose:

Albert Rose was a man I had difficulty with for a long time. I was of the next generation, and it took me almost 20 years to realize that my struggle was not with him, but with those who disparaged the principles he espoused. Death prevents an apology I should have offered years ago. ... I railed against the public housing projects I blamed him for, and for many years I refused to acknowledge his giant strides. ... It's a common failing of my generation.

⁷⁴Shirley Tillotson, "Citizen Participation in the Welfare State: An Experiment, 1945-1957," *Canadian Historical Review*, 75 (December 1994), 511-542; Gale Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto, 1918-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

⁷⁵Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994), 2. As an example of this rupture in 'historical memory' Martin Loney, former president of the Canadian Union of Students, seemed oblivious to any history of citizen participation before the 1960s in his article, "A Political Economy of Citizen Participation," in Leo Panitch (ed.), *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

We're willing to rip apart a carefully constructed social fabric and destroy otherwise elegant public institutions because of the failure of some government programs to accomplish noble ends.⁷⁶

The failure of the state to embrace the social democratic vision of men like Albert Rose and Humphrey Carver and incorporate genuine citizen participation in social and urban planning schemes, as the case of Regent Park illustrates, cast a long shadow in city planning politics. Not until the late 1960s did community organizations, led by committed activists like Sewell, re-emerge as a powerful force in city planning politics; this time they made their voices heard by bringing the entire postwar program of urban renewal to a halt. Nonetheless, Torontonians, particularly inner city residents, were far from quiescent during this intervening period. Like the residents of Trefann Court and Don Vale who brought urban renewal to an end by 1970, they too demanded that the city and their neighbourhoods be planned with them rather than for them.

Here again we must pay attention to the discourse of planning, particularly in the Toronto setting. As Gerald Hodge reminds us, early planning and social housing advocates in Canada, many of whom worked out of Toronto, spoke of “community” planning rather than the American term “city planning,” or the British term “town planning.”⁷⁷ Even the influential 1944 “Curtis Report” issued by the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction was entitled *Housing and Community Planning*.⁷⁸ Such difference is important since the latter

⁷⁶John Sewell, “Lives Lived – Albert Rose,” *Globe and Mail*, September 3, 1996, A16.

⁷⁷Gerald Hodge, *Planning Canadian Communities: An Introduction to the Principles, Practice, and Participants* 3rd ed. (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1998), “Appendix A: A Note of ‘Community’ Planning,” 454-55.

⁷⁸Canada. Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, *Housing and Community Planning*, vol. 4 (Ottawa: King’s Printer, March 1944), emphasis mine.

terms tended to concentrate more on the physical aspects of planning while the former tended to bring the human dimensions of planning into consideration. Thus in the immediate postwar period Toronto planners, politicians and activists emphasized that the building of good communities rested on efforts in making community planning "a *people's* movement."⁷⁹ Neighbourhoods, they believed, were the "nursery of citizen participation in public affairs." Carver's colleague Dr. Cyril James of McGill University also warned planners and government officials to avoid the temptations of immediate results by "bulldozing the people of the community for their own good."⁸⁰ Unfortunately, few heeded their ideas and warnings.⁸¹ Nonetheless, their encouragement of citizen participation raised the hopes and ambitions of Torontonians that government renewal schemes should be primarily oriented to human values. In doing so they set the roots of more formal citizen participation, which then became further defined as the pace of redevelopment in central Toronto intensified during the 1960s.

At the same time, however, "community" planning remained fraught with tensions, particularly because the term "community" was, and remains, so ill-defined. Common definitions of community focus on a given territory or space as encapsulating the common needs and desires of those who live or work within the area's geographical boundaries. However, the geographical boundaries of the "community" are highly problematic and constantly shifting. Who composed the community - residents of local neighbourhoods, or

⁷⁹National Archives of Canada (hereafter NA), Community Planning Association of Canada (hereafter CPAC), MG 28 114, Vol. 1, File 2, Executive correspondence, R.E.G. Davis to A. Armstrong, 2 September, 1947.

⁸⁰NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Volume 1, File 18, "Report of the 1946 Conference," 9-10.

⁸¹NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Volume 1, File 21, Minutes 1st Annual Meeting, 1947, 5

city wide organizations? More importantly, the interests of which “community” were paramount? Not until the late 1960s as urban renewal schemes were falling apart did Torontonians stop to confront these tensions. Thus, inherent in the politics of urban post-war reconstruction in Toronto were key battles between physical planning and comprehensive social planning, and between centralized, scientific rational planning which would supposedly serve the interests of the greater community, and more defensive, “populist” neighbourhood-based planning which would preserve Toronto as a “city of neighbourhoods.” The successes and failures of trying to integrate community organization and civic planning in the immediate post-war years were conditioned by these approaches to planning in “the community’s interest.”

The term community also carries a great deal of ideological “baggage.” Most uses of the term “community” at all ends of the political spectrum have characterized community as a place of harmony, reciprocity, stability and even affection. Indeed, as many observers have argued the state promoted community organization to assuage class tensions, refocusing the energies of working-class communities towards neighbourhood improvement, which would instill a sense of civic consciousness capable of transcending more parochial identities, particularly that of class. This would be achieved primarily through education; wealthy neighbourhoods would learn “how the other half lived” as well as the need to improve conditions, while the inhabitants of the slums would come to appreciate the leadership and beneficence of the more upstanding members of the community. Under this understanding of “community,” local interests were to be at all times subordinated to the interests of the larger civic community. The organic unity believed to have existed in pre-modern cities,

which it was hoped could be reconstructed anew in the modern city, was not to be threatened by parochial self-assertion. This has been a fundamental principle of state-sponsored schemes of community organization, and has characterized such diverse schemes as settlement houses, model cities and citizen participation.⁸² As we will see in the following pages, many Torontonians thought of “community participation” in these terms.

This belief that community had to imposed “from above” stemmed from the observation that the “ethic of community” had all but disappeared from the modern inner-city, which in turn justified razing the neighbourhood and creating a new community in its place. In the popular mind, slums represented the antithesis of community; they were places composed of a shifting population of transients, tenants (many of whom until 1957 could not vote in municipal elections), and all sorts of social outcasts. In short, there were few people with a *real* interest in the community, namely home-owners. Equally important the disorder and irrationality of the slum landscape existed in large part because of the disorder, irrationality, apathy and demoralization of its residents. Part of the construction of the slum as a place of apathy also stemmed from a gendered interpretation of the physical and social landscape of the inner city. Images of women and children as victims of their environment were central to the construction of slums as a geography of hopelessness and helplessness, which therefore necessitated paternalistic solutions. Both children and women were by definition dependent, not independent, and therefore lacked the capacity to make free choices; they necessarily worked within a framework of adult (male) compulsion. Men, in contrast,

⁸²D. Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital* (Baltimore: John’s Hopkins University Press, 1985), 179-80; and W. Magnusson, “Community Organization and Local Self-Government,” in L. Feldman ed., *Politics and Government in Urban Canada: Selected Readings*, 4th edition (Toronto: Methuen, 1981), 61-86.

only appeared in deviant roles - winos, pimps and shiftless fathers - or in the words of one reformer, "the here today gone tomorrow menfolk."⁸³ Thus, it was not simply that slum dwellers could not afford to improve their housing and neighbourhood conditions, it was that they were unwilling. Slums were places where "the ordinary citizen's desire to do things with the people of his neighbourhood" was wholly lacking.⁸⁴ By reintroducing physical order through urban renewal it was hoped that planning the new environment would provide a training ground for the development of larger loyalties to city and to nation.⁸⁵ No one ever stopped to ask why inner city residents would want to participate in the destruction of their own communities, and how such a demoralizing project could ever stimulate civic loyalties.

Similarly, discovering the community "from below" is equally as difficult and fraught with tension. Most of the community studies of the late 1960s painted pictures of working-class neighbourhoods as tight-knit communities. They largely overlooked important divisions within these neighbourhoods, and when they did acknowledge sharp divisions within the community they attributed them to divide and conquer tactics of a Machiavellian state or to meddling bourgeois reformers.⁸⁶ Yet as John Seeley noted in 1959, inner-city neighbourhoods were highly variegated in terms of their population and hence their interests.

⁸³S. J. Allin, "Toronto Experiments with interim housing for troublesome families," *Journal of Housing*, 16 (June 1959), 200.

⁸⁴CTA, RG 249 (The Toronto Reconstruction Council), Box 6, File 1, Draft Report of Community Counsellor, September 1949.

⁸⁵D. Harvey, "On Planning and the Ideology of Planning," in S. Campbell and S. Fainstein, eds., *Readings in Planning Theory* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 186-88; and S. Fainstein and N. Fainstein, "City Planning and Political Values: An Updated View," in *Readings in Planning Theory*, 268. Colin Bell and Howard Newby, community, Communion, Class and Community Action: The Social Sources of the New Urban Politics," in D.T. Herbert and R.J. Johnston eds., *Social Areas in Cities. Volume II - Spatial Perspectives on Problems and Policies*, (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), 193.

⁸⁶G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*; Lorimer and Phillips, *Working People*; and Sewell, *Up Against City Hall*.

These neighbourhoods had always been composed of a mixture of persons: families and individuals trapped in poor housing by poverty; social outcasts, such as “winos” and other members of the “sporting crowd,” who preferred the *anomie* of such areas; the “respectable poor,” many of whom wanted to remain because of the familiar environment; and recent immigrants and working-class homeowners who viewed inner-city addresses as a temporary stepping stone to something “better.”⁸⁷ Some residents saw their homes and properties in terms of the values of “accumulation,” while others saw “community” values; no doubt many valued their homes as both places of accumulation and accommodation. In short, even within “solid” working-class communities, there was widely differential access to housing as well as vastly different meanings attached to it. As we will see in the following pages, housing issues complicated the concept of class over this period, and made collective “class” action much more difficult. Thus, even more “populist” approaches to citizen participation at the neighbourhood level that promised “power to the people” could never really determine, or justify, which people should be empowered.

Nonetheless, even if home-owners and tenants, welfare moms and respectable working-class families often formed a fragile and fleeting solidarity, they nonetheless wanted to preserve Toronto’s inner-city neighbourhoods as vital living spaces. That the social geography of Toronto has not become one of complete despair, must be accredited to their refusal to be “Hausmannized,” or in their words, “pushed around.”

The Contours of the Study

The following study examines, in chronological fashion, the reaction and responses

⁸⁷John R. Seeley, “The Slum: Its Nature, Use and Users,” 7-14.

of Torontonians to the seemingly unending housing problems of inner-city residents between the end of World War II and the breakdown of federal urban policy in 1968. This work intends to fuse both national and local aspects of Canadian housing policy, and in turn examine the local agitation surrounding national, provincial and municipal housing and urban policy making. It emphasizes the multi-faceted politics of urban renewal and housing provision for low-income Torontonians. In doing so it draws heavily on the existing literature outlining residential conditions and arrangements of working-class households, social control through housing reform movements, state provision of social housing, and the interrelationships between housing and the identities of class, gender, family, ethnicity and race. Tangentially, it deals with the massive suburbanisation during these years because the problem and imagery of inner-city slums was linked to the very processes of suburbanisation. In the minds of urban planners, state bureaucrats, politicians, housing reformers and even 'slum dwellers' themselves, the slum was the topsy-turvy world of the suburb. Moreover, as historians of urban planning have noted, the solution to the disorder, decay, and degeneracy of the inner-city, was the suburbanisation of the inner-city landscape.

The first chapter examines the origins of Toronto's housing struggles during the Depression and Second World War. It explores the extent of the city's housing shortage during the latter years of the depression and throughout the War and immediate postwar period. Also examined are the popular politics of urban planning and social housing, which culminated in the construction of Canada's first public housing project built under the National Housing Act - Regent Park.⁸⁸ Postwar reconstruction plans initiated by the Toronto

⁸⁸The distinction of Canada's first "public housing" project must go to the Hydrostone development
(continued...)

Reconstruction Council and other community-based organizations laid the groundwork for the struggles around the built environment which dominated the city's political and social landscape for the next two decades.

The clearance of Cabbagetown and its reconstruction as "Canada's Premier Housing Redevelopment Project" - Regent Park - is the subject of Chapter Two. It examines the way in which Regent Park acted as a microcosm of the problems and solutions to housing the city's poor and working-class. Hailed as a universal success at the time it was built, Regent Park became the yardstick by which all future urban renewal in the city was measured. On the one hand, this exemplified the hope placed in comprehensive social and physical planning of the built environment. On the other hand, Regent Park represented what Edward Relph has called "benevolent environmental authoritarianism," where expert opinion, that is state officials (urban planners, politicians and other bureaucrats), decide what is in the 'peoples' best interests.⁸⁹ To be sure, much of the residents' opposition to the project was rooted in inadequate compensation to home owners, but equally important was the residents' opposition to having their futures dictated to them from the state. For this reason, the building of Regent Park witnessed the first organized challenge by local residents to urban renewal.

Chapter Three reveals the limitations of the Regent Park experiment in solving the city's housing shortage. During the 1950s many working-class and poor Torontonians continued to face bleak housing choices. In an era of rapid suburban expansion, brought on

⁸⁸(...continued)

constructed in Halifax after the great explosion of 1917 even though as its chief historian Suzanne Morton notes, it assumed its status "inadvertently." See S. Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 16.

⁸⁹E. Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*, 97-100.

by the formation of Metropolitan government in 1953, the inner-city continued in a state of flux and instability. Waves of immigrants inundated the city during this period, changing the social and physical fabric of the city. The intractability of solving the housing shortage and the seeming expansion of slums provoked a moral crisis, which is examined through two slum narratives concerning the city-operated Emergency Shelters and the Jarvis Street Slum Empire. These two issues restarted the housing struggles initiated during the war and eventually led to the clearance and renewal of Regent Park South. Here the chapter explores how the planning and construction of Regent Park South was influenced by these moral crises, particularly the impact of the housing environment on the development of “normal” families and citizens. The moral imperative to “get on with the job” and complete Regent Park, prevented a proper assessment of the impact of urban renewal schemes, from which the program never recovered.

The response to the crises of the continued housing shortages and the shift from slum clearance to urban renewal whereby the reconstruction of central city neighbourhoods and the rehousing of the poor began to diverge, is the subject of Chapter Four. The city’s *Urban Renewal Report* of 1956 and the NHA amendments of 1954 and 1956 represented the final triumph of centralized, scientific and rational planning over social planning. These two enactments reoriented city planning away from concerns of social housing and slum clearance, accenting rational planning of the entire city -whereby reuse of land would be linked to the highest and best use. This shift in planning coincided with and facilitated the movement of finance capital back into the city centre through the building of commercial office towers and high-rise apartments. This chapter examines how the two came together in particular battles

in two inner-city neighbourhoods - Wood-Wellesley and St. James Town. The latter half of Chapter 4 shifts its focus from private renewal to public renewal through an examination of the two urban renewal projects which emerged from the recommendations of the 1956 Urban Renewal Report - Moss Park and Alexandra Park. Both projects were supposed to represent a movement away from the slum clearance approach to urban redevelopment to new thinking which emphasized rehabilitation over clearance, less institutional architecture, and the reintroduction of social planning alongside physical planning. However, the experience of Regent Park cast a longer shadow over urban renewal than the architects of these projects cared to acknowledge. Equally important, while both projects intended to help poor Torontonians acquire better housing, they only exacerbated the housing problems of poor and working-class Torontonians and set the stage for the complete shutdown of urban renewal in Toronto less than half a decade later. The chapter also examines the blossoming of community organization in these inner-city neighbourhoods, and how their experiences informed later community groups in their battles against urban renewal.

Chapter Five discusses how by the mid 1960s the housing problems of the city had come full circle since the end of the war. The media, city politicians and social activists once again rediscovered the growing slums of Toronto's inner-city, now decried as the worst case of urban blight since World War II. The uproar over the St. James Town slum and its subsequent redevelopment into Canada's largest apartment complex is the central focus here. The chapter emphasizes how large scale modernist restructuring of the inner-city set the stage for the conflicts that would occur during the late 1960s around publicly-sponsored urban renewal. On the one hand, the "rediscovery" of poor housing conditions in the central city

was central to the reinvigorated “war on poverty” that began at the end of the Second World War. On the other hand, the rise of blockbusting and the complicity of state officials in transforming central city neighbourhoods “by hook or by crook” placed inner-city residents in a particularly anxious and militant mood. Finally, the resettlement of St. James Town residents through the Neighbourhood Service Unit also signalled a shift in the way social reformers began to think about the relationship between poverty and housing.

Chapter Six closes the narrative with a discussion of how community organizations in three central city neighbourhoods - Don Mount, Trefann Court and Don Vale - brought the nation’s urban renewal program to a screeching halt by the late 1960s. This period witnessed the rise of full-blown community organization. Having been backed into a corner by three decades of public and private renewal of the central city, working-class residents of inner-city neighbourhoods came out fighting. In the process, they not only forced the state to retreat from its urban renewal schemes, but their struggles were crucial to recasting the image of the inner city and of its residents, which had for so long influenced state policies towards the housing problems of the poor. Nonetheless, despite their victory in bringing the federal bulldozer to a halt, subsequent hopes for community-based planning were often compromised by existing divisions within these “communities.” Much like the immediate postwar period, the hopes for democratic participation in urban planning ran headlong into the realities of the modern capitalist city.

Chapter 1

The Road to Regent Park - Housing and Community Planning in Toronto 1935-50

Remember, too, that in attacking this vital problem wisely we are building not only individual houses, but neighbourhoods, and a sense of belonging to a worth-while society of fellow citizens with self-respect. The family which drifts from one slum tenement to another is the natural material for a Hitler with his loud speaker. The family in a well-managed housing project begins to learn and to practise the art of citizenship.¹

During the 1940s housing for working-class Torontonians was the city's chief problem. Though the city had been through other periods of housing shortages, Toronto's housing crisis during and after the Second World War emphasized the long standing housing problems of the city's working classes, as well as the persistent attempts by workers and social activists to improve the city's residential environment. The housing shortages in wartime and postwar Toronto intensified a long-standing need for adequate, affordable accommodation in the city and its nascent suburbs. The thousands of workers flocking to the city's war industries often lived doubled up in central city houses and apartments, while others inhabited abandoned stores, trailers, and even tents in the city's parks and ravines. These housing hardships generated a great outpouring of social housing activism, which in turn had a lasting impact on the provision of government assisted housing, and on the shape of the city.

Toronto's housing problems of the 1940s were so acute that one observer deemed that the city was a "house divided against itself." Due to the lack of housing Toronto was a city under siege; social problems ranged from juvenile delinquency to labour strife to the spectre of communism; and the integration of European immigrants from war-torn Europe (known derogatorily as Displaced Persons) threatened ultimate disorder. Yet while the

¹Mayor R. Saunders cited in "Every Family under \$2,400 Needs House Help - Expert," *Toronto Star*, November 2, 1945, 3.

housing crisis of the 1940s was the root of Toronto's difficulties, it also represented new opportunities to finally carry through with the promises of a planned modern city. The war and the subsequent period of reconstruction presented social housing activists, urban planners, and ordinary Torontonians the chance to rebuild the city along modern lines. At the same time, only through a spirit of co-operation, in which "government and people travelled together" could Torontonians solve their problems.²

As Mayor Saunders stated, the solution to Toronto's seemingly unending housing crisis was not just bricks and mortar, but the reconstruction of communities, and of citizens. To be sure, some like Saunders promoted the provision of social housing in planned communities as a means to instil middle class values and social order in an increasingly contentious citizenry. However, as Sean Purdy notes, in contrast to early twentieth-century reform currents, social housing and planning advocates tried to temper this regulatory thrust with more social democratic values of citizen participation and more inclusive community planning schemes.³ Indeed, during the 1940s, the political and social landscape of Toronto was more open to citizen participation and community organizations than it had ever been. The City Council's establishment of both the Planning Board in 1942 and the Toronto Reconstruction Council (renamed the Civic Advisory Council in 1948) in 1943, illustrate this growing movement towards popular involvement in social and urban planning. Over the previous decade and a half Torontonians had exhibited a tremendous outpouring of local

²City of Toronto Archives (hereafter CTA) Toronto Reconstruction Council/Civic Advisory Council (TRC/CAC), RG 249. Box 5, file 11, Community Council Co-ordinating Committee, Press Release, 6 October, 1947.

³Sean Purdy, "Industrial Efficiency, Social Order and Moral Purity: Housing Reform Thought in English Canada, 1900-1950," *Urban History Review/ Revue d'histoire urbaine*, (Hereafter *UHR*) 25 (March 1997), 37.

activism and social idealism engendered by their own attempts to tackle the social problems caused by the Depression and the War, as well as by their hopes for postwar reconstruction. The Reconstruction Council hoped to harness these forces in support of civic reconstruction plans. In doing so, the local state was not only following imperatives to manage conflict or to manufacture consent, but also found itself responding to the claims that citizens made to meet their needs out of necessity and self-interest. During this crucial period of reconstruction the very definition of community, as well as the command of its institutions, became a central arena of social and political contestations.

The following chapter begins with an examination of Toronto's housing crisis of the 1940s and the depth of the social activism behind seeking solutions to the housing problems of the city's working-classes. But more importantly, it examines the intersection between community organization and urban planning during this pivotal period of postwar reconstruction in Toronto. The Toronto Reconstruction Council and its attempts to incorporate citizen participation in its elaboration of a social Master Plan for postwar Toronto is important for two reasons. First, the Reconstruction Council's agenda reveals how central the politics of city planning was to the construction of the welfare state in postwar Canada. Inherent in the politics of urban postwar reconstruction were key battles between physical planning and comprehensive social planning, and between centralized, scientific rational planning which would supposedly serve the interests of the greater community, and more defensive, populist neighbourhood-based planning which would preserve Toronto as a city of neighbourhoods. The successes and failures of trying to integrate community organization

and civic planning in the immediate postwar years were conditioned by these approaches to planning in the community's interest.

Second, it reveals that citizen participation in the politics of social housing and urban planning was not limited to the upheavals of the 1960s.⁴ Indeed, the rise and subsequent fall of citizen participation as a central aspect of the Reconstruction Council's program of a comprehensive social Master Plan represented a turning point in the participation of people in urban planning. Both the promises of postwar reconstruction and the tremendous social upheavals, of which community planning activists spoke, spurred communities into action while compelling the local state to manage those activities. As the following chapter will illustrate the failure to incorporate genuine citizen participation in social and urban planning schemes, as the case of Regent Park illustrates, cast a long shadow in city planning politics. Not until the late 1960s would community organizations re-emerge as a powerful force in city planning politics; this time they made their voices heard by bringing the entire postwar program of urban renewal to a standstill.

Homes for Heroes: Toronto's Wartime Housing Crisis and Social Housing Activism

Like many other Canadian cities, Toronto entered the Second World War in the midst of a housing problem created during the depression by deferred residential construction and

⁴S. Tillotson, "Citizen Participation in the Welfare State: An Experiment, 1945-1957," *Canadian Historical Review* (hereafter *CHR*) 75 (December 1994), 511-542; G. Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto, 1918-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); and J. Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994), 2.

reconstruction, overcrowding, high rents, and substandard accommodation.⁵ Wartime scarcities in labour and building materials, combined with the federal government's reluctance to provide accommodation for war workers only exacerbated the serious deficiencies of good housing stock. These same problems -- labour and material shortages and government reluctance to supply low rental housing -- plagued the residential construction industry well into the reconversion period.⁶

The war brought an influx of people to Toronto looking for work. Though Toronto was not the most congested city in the nation - Halifax and Vancouver vied for that honour⁷ - the number of incoming workers and their families, along with servicemen's families, overtaxed the city's existing housing stock. At the peak of wartime production in Toronto there were 334,000 workers in the city and surrounding area of which 66,900 were engaged wholly or partially in war production. Nearly 20 percent of Toronto workers had moved to the city after the beginning of the war, and the majority planned to stay afterwards.⁸ Demobilization only added to the serious housing shortages. Almost 200,000 servicemen in the Armed Forces were from the Greater Toronto area, and many assumed that at least half of them intended to return to the area. Surveys revealed that lack of housing would be the

⁵According to the 1934 Bruce Report on Housing Conditions in the City of Toronto there was a need for at least 14,000 more housing units in the city alone. Ontario, *Report of the Lieutenant-Governor's Committee on Housing Conditions in Toronto* (hereafter cited as *Bruce Report*) (Toronto 1934), 33.

⁶In September 1945, material and labour shortages prevented the completion of 1,408 and 2,083 contracted projects in the Toronto area. National Archives of Canada (hereafter NA) Records of the Department of Finance (DF), RG 19, Box 700, file "Interdepartmental Housing Committee," September 7, 1945.

⁷For Vancouver see Jill Wade, *Houses for All*, Chapter 4, and Jay White, "The Homes Front: The Accommodation Crisis in Halifax, 1941-51," *UHR*, 20 (February 1992), 117-27.

⁸CTA, City of Toronto Mayor's Papers (MP), RG 7 Series A1, Box 33, file 4, Memo from Mayor's Office nd; and CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 3, file 2, "A Study Among Employed Persons in the Toronto Postal Area," May 1944.

most serious problem facing them when they returned home. Forty percent of the returnees needed new family accommodation. A survey of 2,000 veterans in Toronto in the summer of 1946 revealed that 75 percent of those who filled out the questionnaire were living with their families, ranging from two to six in size, in single rooms.⁹

At the same time many workers took advantage of regular employment and increased wages during the war to establish their own households. However, in many cases they bought houses over the heads of working-class tenants whose wages had not benefited from wartime labour shortages.¹⁰ Despite the opportunities that wartime prosperity presented for families that had been forced to “double-up” to meet the problems of the Depression, the lack of space available only led to the rise of “doubled-up” families. By the end of the war the number of families “doubled-up” in Toronto reached a record high of 30,000. House hunting became a “nerve-wracking, heart breaking, time and money consuming experience” for many Torontonians, especially low income and servicemen’s families with children whom landlords often turned away.¹¹ As local housing registries revealed, most Torontonians sought houses, but there was little hope in obtaining such accommodation. The only accommodation

⁹NA, DF, RG 19, Box 699, file 1, Canadian Corps Association, Brief to the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, Toronto, June 27, 1945; NA, Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB), RG 64, Box 700, Document 38, Memo, Re: Rates of Demobilization as Related to Need for Housing, July 1945; Humphrey Carver and Anthony Adamson, *Housing for Toronto*, Prepared for the Toronto Metropolitan Housing Research Project, 1947, 15; and CTA, W.H. Clark Collection (WHCC), SC 61, Box, 1, file 12, Community Planning Association of Canada, Greater Toronto Branch, *Housing Digest*, 2, July, 1946, 1.

¹⁰NA, WPTB, RG 64, Vol. 706, Memo from Owen Lobely.

¹¹“Voice of the People, House Hunting,” *Toronto Star*, August 20, 1943, 6; and “Housing Crisis Spreads - at Least 5,000 Families in Canada Face Eviction May 1 Governments Evade Responsibility, Refuse to Act,” *New Commonwealth*, April 27, 1944, 1,8.

available were rooms or flats, which even then remained beyond the budgets of many Toronto workers' and servicemen's families.¹²

Evictions only exacerbated the problem. In response to landlord and real estate protests the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) relaxed eviction controls in 1943, which allowed landlords to evict well-behaved tenants upon 6 months notice if landlords indicated a "desire" to use the property as a primary residence for themselves or close family members. Most landlords of single family homes were unwilling landlords, created by foreclosures during the depression. Many of these properties had reverted to the management of real estate and trust companies who were all too ready to dispose of their properties at handsome "unregulated" profits. Some 4,000 homes in Toronto in the lower price range were sold over the heads of tenants in late 1943 and early 1944; many of these were occupied by servicemen's families. As a result, over 2,300 eviction notices came due between July 31 and September 30, 1944. Landlords who rented rooms and flats also took advantage of relaxed eviction controls to "speedily evict rooms and flat dwellers so as to select from the enormous number of prospects those, for example who had no children, those who were not soldiers' families, and often those who were willing to pay more."¹³ Others used the mere threat of eviction to pry more rent out of the pockets of their tenants. The result was a chain reaction

¹²NA, WPTB, RG 64, Vol. 215, Housing Registry Reports G.05.02 -1670, City of Toronto, Board of Control Report #12, Committee of Public Welfare Report No. 2, April 29, 1943.

¹³NA, WPTB, RG 64, Vol. 29, *Rental Control and Evictions in Canada World War II and the Post War Years*. 41-47.

of evictions across the city and an enormous weekly and monthly turnover of the more than 75,000 units of shared accommodation within the city.¹⁴

The prospect of demobilization in 1945 only brought further problems. In February the WPTB declared the Toronto area a congested area. Anyone wanting to come to the city had to acquire a pass from the WPTB. In addition, the Emergency Shelter Administration (ESA) forced landlords to place all accommodation on the market, and to use all means necessary to find vacant dwellings. The ESA for Toronto only found four vacant dwellings suitable for habitation. Most alarming was the number of eviction notices being given by landlords in 1945. Federal officials estimated that across the country between 15 and 20 thousand notices would be given before October 1, and that at least 60 percent of these notices would result in the eviction of families of men in the Armed Forces, many of whom were still overseas. Of the more than 8,000 notices that would come due between June 30 and October 1, 1945, Toronto counted for nearly half of the total. As a result of tremendous pressures from municipal governments, social service organizations, and veterans and workers' organizations the government froze all evictions as of July 24, 1945.¹⁵

The eviction freeze and the Emergency Shelter regulations brought some short term relief to the city, but did nothing to overcome the real problem - a shortage of 18,000 homes. Agencies established to care for the housing needs of war workers and veterans continued to

¹⁴NA. WPTB, RG 64, Vol. 29, *Rental Control and Evictions in Canada World War II and the Post War Years*. 41-47; July 26, 1944 Memo of Meeting with Toronto Board of Control, Re: Evictions; July 21, 1945, Owen Loblely to Donald Gordon; Canadian Corps, Brief to the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, June 27, 1945; M.W. McCutcheon to Charles E. Purnell, Sept, 4, 1945; and DF, RG 19, Box 727, file 203, CMHC - 1 -1948, CMHC - Board of Directors Meeting, December 1, 1947.

¹⁵“City Council Authorizes Seizure of Vacant Homes,” *Toronto Star*, November 13, 1945, 10; “Housing Progress Slows While Demand Increases,” *New Commonwealth*, July 11, 1945, 8; and *Rental Control and Evictions*, 53-54.

be inundated by thousands of urgent requests for housing, which they could not possibly satisfy.¹⁶ By 1947, the commissioner of Public Welfare revealed that Torontonians continued to suffer "great hardships due to the fact that they are living in very crowded quarters, condemned premises, and accommodation that would ordinarily house one family is now occupied by 2 and 3 families."¹⁷ In addition there were over 1500 families housed in the city's Emergency Shelters. Another 700 families lived in converted stores or condemned dwellings. By 1948 the city had run out of room in its emergency shelters to house evictees and to store their furniture. Social service organizations noted that the housing shortage was responsible for the "breakdown of the family and of individual dignity." Unable to cope with life in single rooms, basements, and generally poor housing conditions many families left children with relatives or turned them over to foster homes until they could find suitable housing.¹⁸

In the 1940s affordability was just as important as availability for many Toronto households. Toronto had always been a city of single-family dwellings with a high degree of owner-occupied units. Jesse Edgar Middleton, an early historian of Toronto, spoke of the

¹⁶By September of 1945 the Department of Public Welfare had recorded 3,676 requests for housing which they could not accommodate, while the WPTB Housing Registry had over 5,000 unfilled requests for housing. Applications for the Wartime Housing and 100 Halliday Homes, limited to veterans families who could show greatest need, exceeded 1,000 by January 1st, 1945 and grew everyday even after the houses had been allocated. The promise of another 600 veterans housing units to be built Wartime Housing brought another 2521 applications. By the end of the year the city's Welfare Department had a total unfilled requests for housing of 4,534. "Wants Houses Built Like Army Operation," *Toronto Star*, November 10, 1945, 4; CTA, MP, RG 7, Series A1, Box 33, File 1, Mayor F. Conboy to G.T. Parmenter for Joseph Pigott, President, Wartime Housing of Canada Limited, May 30, 1944, CONFIDENTIAL.

¹⁷As a result the vacancy rate in the immediate postwar years was less than 0.25 percent and the number of doubled up families exceeded 30,000 in the Greater Toronto Area. See CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, file 7, Report of Welfare Commissioner, January 15, 1947; and W. Geo Farley to R.H. Saunders Esq, K.C. Mayor (Chairman) and members of the Board of Control, November 24, 1946.

¹⁸CTA, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPCMT), SC 40, Box 86, file 7, "Brief to the Welfare Committee - Housing," June 15, 1948.

"Toronto habit of buying a house," a phenomenon that was as popular with the city's workers as it was with its middle and upper classes.¹⁹ Though the depression cut into the number of home-owners in the Greater Toronto area, the city entered the war with favourable rates of ownership compared to other cities in Canada.²⁰ Throughout the war the number of home-owners in the city and surrounding municipalities soared as the housing market became tighter. Many Torontonians made the jump from tenancy to home ownership not necessarily because of an overwhelming desire to own a house, but to achieve security of tenure for themselves and their families. However, wartime shortages drove prices through the roof. The average price of a home in the metro area by the end of the war was over \$6,000 and in many cases prices in suburban municipalities exceeded \$10-12,000 for modest bungalows. Those seeking to buy one of these houses had to come up with a down payment of at least \$2,000 cash and have an income sufficient to support monthly payments of nearly \$50. To meet these payments average earnings had to be about \$250 a month or \$3,000 a year.²¹ The average industrial wage in Toronto in January 1947 was \$34 a week or \$1,768 per year, barely enough to meet the Toronto Welfare Committee's estimated cost of a minimum standard of living for a family of four.²² On the basis of these figures social housing activists

¹⁹Jesse Edgar Middleton cited in M. Piva, *Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979), 125; R. Harris and M. H. Choko, *The Evolution of Housing Tenure in Montreal and Toronto Since the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, Research Paper 166, August 1988); and Richard Harris, "Working-Class Home Ownership and Housing Affordability Across Canada in 1931," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 14 (May 1986), 121-138.

²⁰Rates of home ownership in Toronto in 1941 were approximately 43 percent of all dwelling units, down from 51 percent in 1931 and 55.6 percent in 1921. See R. Harris and M. Choko, *Evolution of Housing Tenure in Montreal and Toronto*, 20.

²¹H. Carver and A. Adamson, *Who Can Pay for Housing?* (Toronto: Toronto Reconstruction Council, 1946), 5-6.

²²H. Carver, *Housing For Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), 82-84.

declared that less than 10 percent of Torontonians could afford to rent or buy new housing, while more than 70 percent would be eligible for subsidized housing based on the Regent Park scale of rents geared to income.²³ The high cost of housing was a chief factor in wage settlements for Toronto unionists in the postwar years. Moreover, women in Toronto were extremely reluctant to leave the work force, in spite of all the advice and state policies admonishing them to do so. The “working wife” became the key to many families’ strategies to leave behind cramped inner-city accommodations for new homes in the suburbs.²⁴

Housing hardships during the war fell heaviest on the lower two-thirds of income earners - those earning less than \$1800 a year. In 1944, the Sub-Committee on Housing and Community Planning of the Federal Advisory Committee on Reconstruction (known as the Curtis Report) determined that over 90 percent of low income, and almost two-thirds of middle income Torontonians, spent more than one fifth of their incomes on rent, the accepted standard of affordability. Toronto also had the dubious honour of being the most expensive city for tenants in the 1940s with an average monthly rent of \$36. Low-income tenants, many of whom earned far less than \$1000 annually, could afford to pay \$13.77 a month for rent, but in Toronto the majority paid in the neighbourhood of \$25 a month. Though low income earners earned more in Toronto than in any other major city in Canada, they also had to pay the widest discrepancy between affordable and actual rents. Middle income earners, whose average annual earnings amounted to \$1560, were better off but still paid \$3 a month more

²³CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 1, file 17, Committee on Metropolitan Problems - Minutes of Meeting, May 26, 1949.

²⁴V. Strong Boag, “‘Their Side of the Story’: Women’s Voices from Ontario Suburbs, 1945-60,” in Joy Parr (ed.) *A Diversity of Women: Ontario 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 46-96.

than the \$26 a month they could afford pay for rent. Moreover, nearly 30 percent of middle income Torontonians paid upwards of \$35 a month for rent.²⁵

Despite the high rentals, many Torontonians faced little choice but to remain as tenants. Federal government emphasis on home ownership meant that very little housing was put up by builders for the nearly 50 percent of Torontonians who lived as tenants. The production of rental units dried up during the war due to material shortages and rent and eviction controls. In the immediate postwar period high construction costs which raised rents above what most tenants could afford meant the construction of rental units remained extremely low despite the fact that the government estimated that 80 percent of the demand for housing was in the rental category.²⁶ Indeed by 1947, only two years after its establishment, the joint government-insurance company venture known as Housing Enterprises of Canada Limited halted all projects in major Canadian cities because construction costs drove rents beyond what the market would bear for the apartments it planned to construct. Housing Enterprises failure only strengthened the arguments of public housing advocates who had always claimed that private enterprise could not solve the housing problems of low and middle income Canadians. As a letter from the Citizens Housing and Planning Association to Prime Minister Mackenzie King stated bluntly: "Valuable time and

²⁵ All figures are from, Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, *Final Report of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning (Hereafter Curtis Report)* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944), 115-121.

²⁶ NA, DF, RG 19, Box 707, file 203, CMHC 1948, CMHC Board of Directors Meeting, December 1, 1947; and H. Carver, *Housing For Toronto*, 40.

effort have been spent to prove what was clear at the outset - that housing for a large section of our population has to be public housing."²⁷

Overcrowding and the shortage of new units caused the city's stock of housing to deteriorate during the war and immediate postwar years. Although, in general, the quality of housing in Toronto was much better than most cities across Canada, many dwellings in the city were overcrowded, in disrepair, and were lacking in the most basic facilities. Of course, those hardest hit were low-income earners who were forced to remain in overcrowded and poorly maintained dwellings. A 1943 city survey of low-income families (those whose annual income was less than \$1,800) and families in receipt of relief revealed that many of the city's working-poor lived in the worst possible conditions where houses were overcrowded, verminous, and damp, and in need of central heating, proper plumbing, and major external repairs. Fully ninety percent of these dwellings fell below the most basic standards of health. Compared with the findings of the Bruce Report, there had been no improvement in housing conditions over the decade and in some districts of the city conditions had deteriorated markedly. Though low-income earners faced the greatest hardships, the acute shortage of dwellings forced middle income families to compete for the same cheap, old and dilapidated accommodation. The same study revealed that income made little difference to overcrowding as many middle income families (those earning \$1800-\$2000 annually) were found to be living in crowded conditions. Unlike the conditions in the 1930s, brought to light by the Bruce

²⁷NA, Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC), MG 28 I 14, Vol. 1, file 2, Executive Correspondence 1947, CHPA to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, May 16, 1947.

Report, families endured such squalor not because they lacked the financial means to acquire better housing, but simply through "an absence of anything better for them to move into."²⁸

Housing Activism in the 1940s

Toronto's social housing movement had a long and, compared to other Canadian cities, modestly successful history. Campaigns for social housing in Toronto can be traced back to turn-of-the-century dialogues between enlightened manufacturers and socially minded trade union leaders. In the "Progressive" era before the First World War, Toronto reformers, led by Frank Beer and his Toronto Housing Company, succeeded in implementing two limited-divided housing projects (Spruce Court and Riverdale Court). In addition, the Toronto Housing Commission built and sold 229 model houses in the Toronto area that "cater[ed] exclusively to . . . working[men]." During the Depression of the 1930s Toronto reformers of all political stripes wrote a new bible for social housing, the Bruce Report, named after a major establishment ally of their cause, Ontario Lieutenant Governor Herbert Bruce.²⁹

Toronto's social housing movement of the 1940s was a continuation of those of the previous decades. The movement was composed of a wide range of community groups, trade unions, social welfare groups, women's organizations, veterans' organizations, and political

²⁸City of Toronto, *Report of the City Council's Survey on Housing Conditions in Toronto, 1942-43* (Toronto, 1943), *passim*, quote from page 9.

²⁹For the limited success of Toronto's first foray into social housing see S. Sprague, "A Confluence of Interests: Housing Reform in Toronto, 1900-1920." in G.S. Stelter and A.F.J. Artibise, eds., *The Useable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Carleton University Press, 1979), 247-67; Lorna Hurl, "The Toronto Housing Company, 1912-1923: The Pitfalls of Painless Philanthropy," *Canadian Historical Review*, 65 (1984); J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 10; and quote cited in R.Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 163-167.

parties. Both labour councils, the Toronto District Labour Council (AFL unions) and the Toronto Labour Council (CCL-CIO) formed housing and municipal affairs' committees which mobilized the membership to lobby the various levels of government to solve the housing crisis. Toronto city council often called upon the two labour councils to represent labour interests on various housing reports, surveys, the City Planning Board, and the Toronto Reconstruction Council. In addition local unions regularly sent depositions, petitions and telegrams to governments protesting evictions, advocating the building of Wartime Housing and supporting campaigns for slum clearance and public housing. Women's groups ranging from the Local Council of Women, to the Association of Women Electors, and from the Women's Council of the CCF to the Housewives Consumer Association, also played a large role in both surveying housing conditions and lobbying for their improvement. There were few overarching organizations that covered all of these groups, although the memberships of the different groups frequently overlapped. While the political forces unleashed were extremely diverse, they remained united by one significant trend: the failure of the private housing market to provide safe, affordable housing to more than a third of the city's population.

By the 1940s working-class radicals and reformers had begun to chip away at the foundations of Tory Toronto. During the 1930s the newly formed Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the Communist Party (renamed during the war as the Labour Progressive Party - LPP) began making inroads in Toronto municipal politics. Both parties organized communities around the issues of unemployment, housing, and relief payments. While the Tories maintained their dominance over municipal, provincial, and

federal seats in the Toronto area into the 40s they were constantly challenged from the left. Though the mayoralty remained solidly in Tory hands, some of the city's most popular aldermen and controllers came from reform ranks. In 1943 the CCF and LPP elected a total of 4 aldermen to city council, while the most popular member of the Board of Control, Lewis Duncan, was a Liberal who soon transferred his allegiance to the CCF. After the CCF suffered a devastating defeat in the 1944 municipal elections the LPP became the preeminent voice of labour civic politics during the War, dominating Toronto's central and western electoral wards (Wards 4,5 and 6) and sending Stewart Smith to the Board of Control for 1945 and 1946. At the provincial level the left prevailed over Tory Toronto in 1943 and again in 1948 when the LPP and CCF captured all but 6 of 18 Toronto area seats. Much of the success of the left in Toronto could be traced to its emphasis on social planning and reconstruction during and after the war. In short, organized labour became the centre of the broadly based reform coalition. Traditional labour demands for adequate and universal social assistance, public housing, health and mass transit were no longer merely trade union demands, but proposals that garnered wide and diffuse support from a range of civic groups.³⁰

By far the most active group on the housing front in Toronto during and after the war was the Communist Party, or as it was known during the war the Labour Progressive Party. At a time when the party eschewed confrontation, organization around consumer and community based issues such as housing provided communists with a "respectable" form of

³⁰Harold Kaplan, *Reform Planning and Civic Politics: Montreal, Winnipeg and Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 619.

militancy, with the struggle for better housing assuming the character of a patriotic crusade.³¹ The LPP advocated a national programme of low rental housing, slum clearance and the development of local housing authorities, policies not very different than those advocated by the CCF. Where the LPP differed from many other social housing activists was in its tactics. The LPP used more aggressive, militant direct-action techniques such as public rallies, forcible halting of evictions, and tenant unions to protect Emergency Housing tenants against increased rents and poor living conditions. The LPP carried on its Popular Front tactics from the 1930s, working closely with veterans groups such as the Canadian Legion, as well as social planning organizations such as the Toronto Reconstruction Council and the Citizens' Housing and Planning Organization. Communists also achieved important positions within the two labour councils, in particular Sam LaPedes who acted as the head of the TDLC's municipal committee, which led the agitation within the labour council for better housing conditions. Communist dominated unions such as the United Electrical Workers (UEW) led by C.S. Jackson and Ross Russell were also active in the social housing movement during the war. Most important was the widespread success and acceptance of the LPP in civic politics, especially Stewart Smith, Norman Freed and Charles Sims, who received widespread praise and public support, not only from the city's labour movement but from other sources, including the *Toronto Star*, for their service to the underprivileged.

Housing activism in Toronto began in earnest in 1942 when evidence of a real housing crisis became readily apparent. Over the next three years housing activists and city officials

³¹R. Lawson, "The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1930-1973," in Ronald Lawson and Mark Naison, eds., *The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 45-90.

attempted to secure federal government assistance to combat the housing shortage either in the provision of Wartime Housing units, or money to erect low-rental homes under NHA provisions. Numerous city reports highlighted the urgent need for the city, province and federal government to step in and solve the growing housing crisis in the city.³² The city was perhaps the most proactive of all cities in Canada in attempting to deal with the housing conditions of its citizens during the war. Nonetheless, petitions, telegrams and depositions from individuals and organizations, many of them from local unions, flooded the mayor's office demanding that the city do something.³³ At the same time housing activists also faced strong opposition to their plans to bring Wartime Housing to the city. In September of 1942, Toronto area home builders, lumbermen's associations, the Toronto Real Estate Board, and property owners' associations, with support from City Hall and governments of surrounding municipalities, came together to form the Greater Toronto Permanent Housing Committee. Their expressed purpose was to undermine Wartime Housing Limited (WHL). The association and its allies inundated Ottawa with protests and convinced federal officials, already worried that WHL was spiralling out of control, to discontinue the activities of Wartime Housing Limited.³⁴ Property owners associations and real estate interests kept up

³²Lewis Duncan's report to the City Council late in 1942 indicated that the city needed a minimum of 1,100 units to house war workers and servicemen's families as well as another 2,000 units of housing for low income families in the city. However, Mayor Conboy and Board of Trade president F.D. Tolchard refused to endorse the recommendations of the committee, especially the provisions for 2,000 units of low-rental housing. Under pressure Mayor Conboy approached the federal government to request 1000 Wartime Housing units to deal with the mounting shortage of housing for war workers in the city.

³³Housing requests from individuals, and organizations, especially labour organizations, fill entire boxes of the Mayor's Papers, MP, RG 7 A1, Boxes 32 & 33. See also the minute books of the Board of Control, CTA, Records of the City Executive/Board of Control (CTBC) RG 2, Board of Control Minutes, 1943-1945, and CTA, CTCB, RG 2, Board of Control Correspondence 1943-45.

³⁴J. Bacher. *Keeping to the Marketplace*. 138-39.

their anti- government housing campaign throughout the 1940s. The federal government often agreed with the property owners claiming that their surveys of the city did not reveal a housing shortage.³⁵ As housing activist and Communist alderman Stewart Smith remarked: "[t]he housing problems of workers in war plants here dissolve into the general housing problem. In small cities or towns with one chief war industry this cannot happen. But here the housing problem is everybody's problem and nobody's problem."³⁶ In the meantime the city relied on the conversion of stores, the federally-sponsored Home Conversion Plan and the relaxing of building standard by-laws to increase the housing stock. Of course, to housing activists these substitutes for proper and permanent housing were inadequate.³⁷

Housing activism peaked in 1944 under the threat of mass evictions during that summer. The WPTB ban on winter evictions created a huge backlog of notices which came due on May 1, 1944. Evictions were nothing new in Toronto, with over 1,000 taking place in each of the previous two years. What was new was both the magnitude of the situation, and that the vast majority of the evictees had "no place to go." Letters flooded into the Mayor's office seeking the city's intervention either to delay evictions or find families a place to live. The classified sections of Toronto's daily newspaper were also filled with desperate appeals for housing, many of them offering large rewards for shelter.³⁸ What made matters

³⁵CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 32, file 10, Joseph Piggot to T.L. Church, MP, May 19, 1942.

³⁶"Voice of the People: Toronto's Housing Problem," *Toronto Star*, March 20, 1943, 6.

³⁷Housing conversions produced only 67 units by 1945, all of them either too expensive or too small for families seeking shelter. Converted stores and the relaxation of building standards only added to the poor housing conditions of low income and even middle income Torontonians, and brought vigorous protests from labour, veterans and other social activists.

³⁸"Housing Difficulties," *Toronto Star*, March 27, 1944, 8; "715 Appeal to City in May 1 Dilemma," *Toronto Star*, April 11, 1944, 2; and "We Have No Place to Go - Letters Flood City Hall," *Toronto Star*, April 12, 1944, 8.

worse was the fact that over 60 percent of the notices involved servicemen's families who often lived in some of the city's worst housing conditions, and whose prospect of finding decent alternative accommodation was slim at best. The city and various organizations, including the local labour councils, lobbied the WPTB and Prime Minister Mackenzie King to freeze all evictions.³⁹ The WPTB refused to grant the freezing of evictions, believing that the press, politicians and social housing activists had inflamed and distorted the situation.⁴⁰

In response to the lack of action by the federal government the LPP and veterans' organizations took more militant action to prevent the eviction of servicemen's families. In early July 1944, over 75 members of the LPP and members of Branch 59 of the Canadian Legion held a street rally and picketed outside the home of a serviceman's family threatened with eviction. Led by Ward 5 alderman Charles Sims, himself a veteran of the war and member of the Legion, the group warned civic officials that they would stop the eviction of servicemen's families "legally or illegally."⁴¹ Two weeks later various labour, women's, and veterans' organizations formed a "Veterans Guard of Honour" officially known as the Toronto District Emergency Housing Committee. The Emergency Housing Committee promised to use any means to "dissuade landlords who feel like evicting soldier's families."⁴² The organization also pledged to help solve the housing crisis by lobbying the various levels of

³⁹ "Would Forbid Evictions Until New Homes Found," *Toronto Star*, April 5, 1944, 2; "Housing 'Chaos' Increases Mayor Conboy to See King," *Toronto Star*, April 21, 1944; "Thousands Homeless - to Evict Families Unless King Acts," *Canadian Tribune*, April 15, 1944, 1; "Still No Relief For Homeless in Large Cities," *Canadian Tribune*, May 6, 1944; 2; and "Toronto Labor Urges Legislature Session," *Canadian Tribune*, July 29, 1944; 2.

⁴⁰ *Rental Controls and Evictions*, 45-46.

⁴¹ "To Stop Eviction Legally or Not Ald Sims States," *Toronto Star*, July 5, 1944, 2.

⁴² "Eviction of Soldier's Wife May Not Take Place - King," *Toronto Star*, July 17, 1944, 2.

government to prevent evictions unless alternative accommodation was provided; to build more Wartime Housing units; to convert large buildings into apartments; to ask that the province pass special legislation allowing the city to proceed with a low-rental housing project.⁴³ The organization also provoked spin off organizations in the surrounding townships, such as the Homes Protective Association in York Township.⁴⁴

As the eviction crisis mounted through 1945 social housing activists continued to halt evictions and press government authorities for a general freeze on all evictions. Pitched battles often occurred between landlords and tenants as landlords descended during the night to forcibly evict or lock-out tenants.⁴⁵ Veterans' groups became especially agitated over the lack of action on the housing front. Servicemen, upon hearing of the housing problems of their families, refused to go the Pacific theatre until their families had been adequately housed. The Canadian Legion in York Township claimed that veterans were "not radicals ... they were loyal British subjects, but they [didn't] like the way they [were] finding their wives and families without homes to live in." They insisted that without action there could be "real trouble."⁴⁶ Donald Gordon, head of the WPTB agreed. He and others in the federal government feared if the "present volume of evictions were permitted to mature ... serious

⁴³CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Board of Control, Minute Book, 1944, Minute # 2281, August 23, 1944; "Sims Campaign to Halt Evictions of Servicemen's War Workers' Families," *Canadian Tribune*, August 12, 1944, 2; "Toronto Body to Stop Evictions," *Canadian Tribune*, August 26, 1944, 2; "Demand Action in Housing Crisis," *Canadian Tribune*, September 2, 1944, 2; "Are Determined to Stop Evictions - Toronto Citizens Serve Warning," *Canadian Tribune*, September 16, 1944, 2; "Tory Cops Forcing Evictions in Toronto," *Canadian Tribune*, September 30, 1944, 2; and NA, Records of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto (LCMT), MG 28 I44, Reel M2293 (Toronto District Labour Council Minutes), Memo of Toronto and District Emergency Housing Committee, August 17, 1944.

⁴⁴"Pickets and Placards Ready to Fight Evictions," *Toronto Star*, December 14, 1945, 16.

⁴⁵"May Open Police, Fire Halls to Aid Spring Evictees," *Toronto Star*, March 6, 1945, 2; and J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 174.

⁴⁶"Warned of 'Real Trouble' Unless Housing Crisis Solved," *Toronto Star*, July 4, 1945, 8.

trouble could be expected." On July 23, 1945 the WPTB froze all outstanding and future eviction notices of well-behaved tenants in self-contained units. Landlords could still evict for such things as the non-payment of rent, or as of August 1947 they could apply for an appeal based on "grievous hardship." The order was flawed in that it kept property owners, many of them tenants fleeing overcrowded quarters or facing eviction themselves, from occupying their newly purchased houses. Yet, despite the freeze evictions and lockouts continued throughout 1945, 1946, and 1947 sparking further battles between landlords, tenants, and labour\ veterans' vigilante groups.⁴⁷

In addition to the assistance given to numerous tenants throughout Toronto, the city's labour movement came to the aid of residents of a downtown trailer camp who faced removal from land slated for the erection of Sick Children's Hospital in the spring of 1947. Unable to find decent and affordable housing many Toronto war workers and returning veterans purchased trailers in which to live. Restrictions against trailer parks in the surrounding municipalities forced the residents to put up camp on the lot at Gerrard and University where they purchased their trailers. By 1947 the city and the hospital, which had eviction orders outstanding since June 1945, decided that the residents had been given enough time to find alternative accommodation. The residents, many of them veterans and unionists, realized that they could not stay there indefinitely. What they demanded was more time or an alternative location for their camp. With evictions slated for May 1 the "trailerites" asked for support from the Toronto Labour Council to fight the evictions. Under the auspices of the TLC the

⁴⁷-'Eviction Order on Vet Stopped,' *Canadian Tribune*, December 8, 1945, 2; "Fight for Homes," *Canadian Tribune*, December 22, 1945, 1; "Eviction in North York and Eviction in Toronto," *Canadian Tribune*, June 22, 1946, 5; and "Official Threatens Girl Report at Eviction," *Canadian Tribune*, July 16, 1947, 12.

residents formed the Toronto Trailer Residents Association, which represented some 120 residents of the camp plus a number of local tenants living in houses on University Avenue slated for demolition. Their common front forced the city and the hospital to give the residents more time to find a solution to their housing problems. However, by the fall the city had not acted on its promise to find a new location for the trailers. The city offered many of the residents and tenants places in the city's emergency shelters, which the majority rejected out of hand; they refused to live in 'slum conditions' which prevailed at the shelters. Continued action and widespread support from other organizations such as the TDLC, Salvation Army, the Canadian Legion, and the Welfare Chest forced the city to appropriate land from the province on Ryding Ave, near the Ontario Stock Yards. Under provisions of the agreement the city allowed the trailers to remain on the Ryding Ave site for 2 years, the city would provide services to the camp, only the existing trailers at the Sick Kids' site could move to the new location, and no new trailers would replace those moving out. At the end of the two years the land would be turned over to developers to build houses. Tenants of the expropriated houses on University Ave. were not so fortunate. On October 8, while the resident and tenants' association was at city hall negotiating the settlement sheriff's officers forcibly removed the last of the tenants despite threats from local residents.⁴⁸

⁴⁸-"Over 100 in Trailer Court to Resist Eviction," *Toronto Star* April 24, 1947, 5; "City Finds Room For Cows But Not for Trailerites," *Toronto Star*, April 29, 1947, 7; "57 Families Protest Order to Vacate Hospital Site," *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1947, 3; "Homeless If Forced Out By Hospital - 35 Tenants," *Toronto Star*, May 22, 1947, 2; "Grant Hospital Right to Break 30 Leases," *Toronto Star*, May 30, 1947, 3; "'All in Our Power' For Tenants - Mayor," *Toronto Star*, September 24, 1947, 2; "75 Hospital Site Residents to Get Housing at Scarboro," *Toronto Star*, September 27, 1947, 20; "City Plans Trailer Camp To Seek Ryding Park Site," *Toronto Star*, October 1, 1947, 2; "Force Door to 'Evict' Goods As Trailerites Plead Case," *Toronto Star*, October 8, 1947, 5; "Start Digging New Site Even If Trailerites There - Hospital," *Toronto Star*, October 28, 1947, 2; "Blame Drew For Scarcity of Housing, Trailerites Told," *Toronto Star*, October 31, 1947, 8; "Trailer Camp Residents Win Round One in Battle to Stop Eviction By City," *Canadian Tribune* May 2, 1947, 1; "Fight Eviction - Trailerites - City is Responsible for Plight of

Nonetheless, the mounting agitation around the eviction crisis of 1944 and 1945 finally forced the federal government's hands and it granted the city 700 houses to be built for returning servicemen and their families. Within weeks of the announcement, Wartime Housing had 2,100 applications for its 600 houses, a number that would rise to over 6,000 by 1948. The city itself also purchased 100 portable houses, which it placed on the edges of various city parks. Though many working-class communities and organizations recognized the need for these houses, they also opposed placing them on parks exclusively used by workers and their children. Many of these so-called temporary houses remained in Toronto parks until 1958. Despite the overwhelming need, the high cost of services in the municipalities prevented the city from participating in any more Veterans' Housing projects sponsored by CMHC after 1946.

The eviction crisis of 1945 also forced the city and the federal government to find ways to house the growing number of homeless veterans and war workers evicted from their dwellings. Under the Emergency Shelter regulations, the federal government transferred surplus buildings, mostly army barracks, to municipalities to convert into temporary shelters. These shelters were to house only evicted tenants. Unless a family was "homeless, or soon to be without shelter of any kind" administrators were to "frankly and honestly express [their] inability to be of assistance. " since it was not the job of the emergency shelters to accommodate the "countless families suffering inconvenience, inadequacy, discomfort, etc...."

Fifty Families, Says Judge," *Canadian Tribune*, September 20, 1947, 16; "Vets Lose Trailer Camp Battle: 29 Vets Face Trailer Camp Eviction But Toronto Ignores Pleas for Alternate Site," *CCF News*, May 22, 1947; CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Board of Control Correspondence, Minute #1190 April 30, 1947 and #1340, May 14, 1947; and #3037, October 10, 1947.

By 1948 the federal government and municipalities across Canada had converted over 9,600 units of emergency shelter, Toronto accounting for more than 1,400 such units.⁴⁹

Government administrators claimed that the shelters should "keep tenants warm and dry with enough space and essential facilities so that a good standard of health and morale was maintained." At the same time the units were not to provide "all the comforts of community homes." To do so would "encourage tenants to settle in and cease searching for housing on the private market." Despite these standards many Emergency Shelter projects fell far short of the most minimum of health and safety standards. Many projects resembled the same overcrowded chicken coops, cellars and garages from which evicted tenants had escaped in the first place. Some, like the Malton Staff Houses used by the City of Toronto to house over 160 families, were firetraps that could burn to the ground in a matter of minutes. At best the projects provided four walls and a roof. Families were herded together, isolated from the rest of the community, and provided with few recreational facilities for their children. As a result, a CMHC survey found that such families suffered marital upsets, poor health, juvenile delinquency, and isolation from normal social contacts. The main reason the projects failed to meet even the most minimal of health and safety standards was CMHC's restriction of conversion costs to \$1,000 per unit, which prohibited municipalities from installing anything that might increase the convenience and comfort of residents. In addition, CMHC left the administration costs to the municipalities, which left the city of Toronto to incur annual operating deficits of over \$100,000.⁵⁰

⁴⁹NA, RG64, Box 708, "Press Release from Eric Gold," November 24, 1945; and DF, RG 19, Box 727, file 203-CMHC-1-1948, Board of Directors Meeting February 23, 1948.

⁵⁰NA, DF, RG 19, Vol. 708, file W.C. Clark -203-CMHC-1 Meeting of the Board of Directors June 7, 1947 - David Mansur, "Report of a Survey of Emergency Shelter Tenants (November 1946-February

In Toronto nearly 1,500 families inhabited the various emergency shelter units throughout the city and surrounding area. Shelter residents were those hardest hit by the housing shortage: low to medium income families with children for whom Canadian housing programs had failed to meet their needs. Conditions in Toronto's shelters mirrored those outlined above. Families lived in complete and utter squalor. Rats and cockroaches infested the grounds and apartments in the shelters. Stagnant water on the grounds of the camps and damp apartments led to various health problems. At Stanley Barracks, situated on the grounds of the CNE, they contributed to an outbreak of polio. In response to the crisis the city erected a 12-foot high fence topped with barbed wire to separate the residents of the Barracks from the CNE fair goers during the annual three-week exhibition. Barrack residents did not appreciate the "concentration camp" conditions. Walls in the projects were paper thin and often did not reach from floor to ceiling, leaving families with little or no privacy. Most projects had communal bathrooms and showers, which resulted not only in a lack of privacy, but fostered the spread of disease. In addition, recreational and school facilities were almost non-existent, which was a real problem for those who lived in projects outside the city in places such as Malton and Long Branch. Having nowhere to play many residents feared that the children "would tear the place apart." Those who lived in the projects outside the city also had to pay transportation costs to commute to their jobs in the city. The extra cost led many to fall behind in their rent. Rentals also were not cheap, especially for the "privilege"

1947), 3-4; and DF, RG 19, box 363, file 101-102-1-1 Emergency shelter, Eric Gold to Donald Gordon, October 30, 1945; J. Bacher & D. Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry: the Policy Response to the Struggle for Shelter Among Canada's Homeless, 1900-1960," in *Urban History Review*, 16 (October 1987), 158-59.

of living in the projects, ranging from \$30 to as much as \$60 a month.⁵¹ Contrary to the belief of many city residents, the projects did not house the “scrapings of society.” Of the nearly 1100 families housed in the projects in 1948 only 111 were in of receipt relief. Most of the residents had decent well-paying full time employment, many of them union jobs.⁵²

In response to the plight of emergency shelter tenants LPP organizers and prominent members of the city's labour movement came to their aid. Beginning in the summer of 1947 emergency housing tenants at each project began forming tenant organizations to pressure the city government to rectify the various problems at the camps. Led by the tenant organization at Stanley Barracks, tenants from the various camps across the city continually inundated City Hall with protest after protest, petition after petition. The residents of Stanley Barracks threatened a rent strike and protest during the CNE unless the city cleaned up the buildings and dealt with the vermin problem. Encouraged by their initial success, resident organizations from other parts of the city headed to City Hall to achieve similar results. Yet despite promises from city council to deal with the problems at the camps, repairs and clean up had

⁵¹“Why Doesn't City At Least Clean Place Up?” *Canadian Tribune*, August 5, 1947, 12; “City Promises Action to Clean up Barracks; Threaten 'Rent Strike' Polio New Fear at Barracks,” *Canadian Tribune*, August 7, 1947, 12; “Barracks Overcrowding Factor in Polio Spread,” *Canadian Tribune*, August 19, 1947, 12; “4th Polio Case at Barracks Can't Close Them, Says City - Fear Haunts Tenants of Dingy 'Apartments,’” *Canadian Tribune*, August 20, 1947, 3; “Evacuate or Renovate Stanley Barracks Now,” *Canadian Tribune*, September 13, 1947, 5; “Long Branch Army Barracks - Tenants Go Before Council to Complain about Living Conditions,” *Canadian Tribune*, September 24, 1947, 12; “Put Them Out or In Jail Says Alderman of Tenants,” *Toronto Star*, February 19, 1947, 3; “Fears Housing Unit Children 'Going to Pull Place Apart,’” *Toronto Star*, May, 6, 1947, 8; “Barrack Tenants Say Wire - 'Like Concentration Camp’,” *Toronto Star*, June 19, 1947; “Trapped in Midway is Crime - Say Barracks Life 'Wicked’,” *Toronto Star*, August 6, 1947, 2; “City's Tenants Plan Rent Strike to Get Paint And Germ Killer,” *Toronto Star*, August 7, 1947, 17; “Widow, Twin Daughters, Son Evicted From Barracks Drivers See Evicted Girl Ruckus in Boulevard Bed,” *Toronto Star*, October 21, 1947, 7; “Emergency Shelter Cruel Fiasco For Tenants,” *CCF News*, February 26, 1948, 5; and “Toronto Housing Deplorable,” *CCF News*, July 22, 1948, 3; “Lakeview Camp 'Cesspool' Says Veteran, Tried Suicide,” *Toronto Star*, July 26, 1948, 32; and “Evils of City-owned Long Branch Housing Said Unmistakable,” *Toronto Star*, July 27, 1948, 3,5.

⁵²CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, File 3, Department of Public Welfare Memorandum, September 17, 1948,

still not been completed to the residents' satisfaction. Many on city council believed that the city was doing these families a favour in providing them with cheap emergency shelter. Those who complained were labelled as "reds", "agitators," or "trouble makers." Most of the residents, many councillors claimed, were happy. Besides, if tenants did not like the conditions they were free to leave at any time. The city also incurred large deficits in the operation of these shelters, and many on council felt that a rent increase was necessary to get the shelters "out of the red."⁵³

In response to the continuing poor conditions and the threat of a rent increase of 25 percent, area tenants under the direction of the LPP, the Housewives' Consumer Association, and the city's industrial union body - the Toronto Labour Council - formed the Citizens' Emergency Housing Council. Led by the diminutive, but fierce, Dorothy Marchment, the CEHC demanded that the city provide adequate recreational facilities, bring each unit up to minimum health standards, reduce rents by 20 percent due to the rising cost of living, and prevent evictions of residents without first finding them alternative accommodation.⁵⁴ To back their demands for better living conditions and lower rents tenants at the various camps staged rent strikes over the summer and fall of 1948. The city attempted to evict those in arrears on their rent, but the magnitude of the protest and the lack of alternative

⁵³"Take Emergency Housing out of the Red - Council Urged," *Toronto Star*, October 30, 1947, 14; "City Will Adjust Rentals on Emergency Home Units," *Toronto Star*, March 23, 1948, 12; and "25 PC Rent Raise July 1 on City Emergency Housing," *Toronto Star*, May 29, 1948, 2.

⁵⁴CTA, Records of the City Executive, RG 002, Board of Control, Correspondence, Minute #3200 - Memo from Toronto and District Emergency Housing Committee, August 29, 1947; "The Tenants Fight Back," *Canadian Tribune*, June 19, 1948, 8; "Window Dressing and Sighs But No Action At City Hall to Cancel higher Rent Edict," *Canadian Tribune*, June 26, 1948, 16; "Rent Rise Termed Unjust - City Tenants to Protest," *Toronto Star*, June 7, 1948, 7; "Balked at Every Turn Homeless GECO Nomads Claim in Rent Row," *Toronto Star*, July 30, 1948, 3; and "City Tenants Organize, Plan Ottawa Rent Appeal," *Toronto Star*, August 9, 1948, 19.

accommodation hampered the city's "get tough" approach. Over the next few years labour groups and local Communist Party members regularly appeared on behalf of the tenants protesting increased rents and continued poor living conditions.⁵⁵ The city, which tired quickly of the steady stream of deputations from the residents and their allies, transferred the administration of the shelters to a private realty firm in 1949. Over the next decade the shelters remained the largest low-income housing project in the city, and became a dumping ground for the city's most problematic public housing tenants. Supposedly temporary, the last shelter closed in 1958.⁵⁶

Throughout the agitations for rent and eviction control, and emergency housing during the war, Toronto's social housing movement did not lose site of its primary goal of a publicly funded slum clearance and low-income housing project. Report after report warned that the poor housing conditions of Torontonians, though made acute by wartime shortages, were not a temporary problem. The crux of the problem, they warned, was the presence in Toronto of "a large number of houses that [were] unfit for human living," and that these should be wiped out and "replaced by new houses suitable for renting at low-rent levels."⁵⁷ It was now time for action on a housing programme centred upon a properly planned public housing project.

⁵⁵NA, LCMT, MG 28 I 44, Reel 2295, Minutes of the Toronto Labor Council, Resolution from Local 717, Textile Workers Union, Re Housing Problem, Jan 12, 1948; Minutes for Council Meeting, June 14, 1948; August 30, 1948; September 27, 1948, October 25, 1948; November 22, 1948; May 23, 1949; LCMT, MG 28 I 44, Reel 2293, Toronto District Labor Council, Municipal Committee Report, September 16, 1948; and Reel 2294, Toronto District Labor Council, Municipal Committee Report, December 6, 1951.

⁵⁶See Chapter 3.

⁵⁷Toronto, City Council, *Report of the City Council's Survey on Housing Conditions in Toronto 1942-43*, 8.

The release of the Curtis Report on Housing and Community Planning was a key document in this regard. Prepared by a subcommittee of the federal government and sponsored by the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction as part of a larger Report, it was one of the most extensive surveys of housing ever made in Canada up to that time.⁵⁸ Composed of prominent social housing advocates, including Eric Arthur, one of the authors of the Bruce Report, the committee denounced the current state of Canadian housing and federal housing policy and called for a courageous federal housing policy that assured every Canadian family decent accommodation. The Report called for better and more co-ordinated town and community planning, including federal sponsored agencies to educate, co-ordinate, and promote such activity. It also called for major changes in government programs geared towards housing rehabilitation to bring the hundreds of thousands of crumbling Canadian homes up to acceptable health and safety standards.

But the most controversial part of the Report was its recommendation of a major program of construction of subsidized, low-rental housing. It came to this decision after receiving a report from economist Dr. O.J. Firestone, who found that less than 8 percent of low-income families in Toronto and Montreal paid less than 20 percent of their income on rent, the commonly accepted standard of housing affordability. In addition, Firestone also uncovered 54,000 tenants in Montreal and another 10,000 in Toronto who were forced to live in overcrowded conditions. Firestone recommended, and the committee accepted, that the federal government finance a low cost housing programme to assure decent living accommodation for low-income groups at a rent they could afford to pay. In its final report

⁵⁸J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 170-171.

the committee recommended that the federal government commit loans to municipalities to build 92,000 public housing units that would be administered by local housing authorities. Even more controversial, the committee recommended that the federal government provide annual subsidies to these local authorities to ensure that rents in such projects would match what low-income earners could afford. The Report, which was the largest of all the reports issued by the Reconstruction Committee, became a vivid symbol of public expectations for postwar social reform.⁵⁹

People and Government Travelling Together: Torontonians Plan a New City

As elsewhere, Torontonians looked to wartime planning as a means to launch a vast program of peacetime reconstruction. Planning had largely lost its ideological stigma and became technical and pragmatic in its outlook. This was the vision of a managerial state, in which planning was simply the means of achieving specific goals. As home to many strains of Canadian reform movements, Toronto was also caught up in the widespread belief that postwar prosperity lay within the powers of scientific and centralized planning.⁶⁰

To this end the city council established the two main planning bodies that would determine the shape of postwar Toronto: the City Planning Board (CPB) in 1942, and the Toronto Reconstruction Council (TRC) in 1943. Both planning bodies represented an amalgam of Tory and populist planning ideas. Tory planning placed value in the ideas of order, rationality, centralization, and hierarchy in decision making. Tory ideology imagined

⁵⁹J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 167-171; and Dorothy Steeves, "Home Building: Canada's #1 Post War Project." *New Commonwealth*, October 12, 1944, 3.

⁶⁰D. Owsam, *The Government Generation: Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

the community as a corporate entity within which one could determine a common public interest. Moreover, because planning was deemed to be in the “public interest” planning was a non-political means to restore order to the city. Populist planning ideology extolled the virtues of common citizens and sought to protect them from the experts, the interests, big government, big business, and big labour. Order and rationality were less important than providing access points for public input into the political system. Populist ideas were voiced primarily by city councillors who remained suspicious of the Planning Board and the Reconstruction Council, which they saw as usurping their role to represent the interests of constituents.⁶¹ However, as the case of Toronto illustrates, Tory and populist ideas should not be seen as mutually exclusive or inherently conflicting categories, but rather as tendencies present at the very heart of planning ideology. The difficulties faced by planners, politicians, and citizen activists alike resulted from their attempts to balance the ideals of democratic citizenship and participation with those of order and rationality.

The establishment of the City Planning Board, the first in Canada, represented the culmination of the previous forty years of urban planning and reform. Formed with popular support, including endorsement from the Association of Women Electors, the Board of Trade and both city labour councils, the Planning Board was established as a quasi-independent board with only an advisory relationship with the City Council. The beliefs in pluralist and non-partisan citizen participation in the planning process were incorporated into the structure of the Board, which was composed of eight members, six of whom represented community

⁶¹P. W. Moore “Zoning and Planning: The Toronto Experience, 1904-1970,” in G. Stelter and A. Artibise, eds., *A Useable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Carlton Library #119, 1979), 316.

interests such as labour, women, and business, while the remaining two positions were held by the mayor and one alderman nominated yearly by the city council. The Board was restructured and formally instituted as a department of city government in 1946 after the passage of the Ontario Planning Act.⁶² The newly instituted planning board stressed that its ideas and plans would be developed in the interests of the whole city and for the economic and social benefit of all:

Heretofore, City Planning has been considered by many Toronto citizens either as a measure to improve traffic and transportation or to beautify our streets, in terms of a rigid plan. This inevitably draws the attention of those citizens who may consider themselves adversely affected, to the damage they may possibly suffer, rather than to the future benefits to the city as a whole. The public should be informed that a city plan does not aim at localized improvements only, but the improvement of the whole city for the economic and social benefit of all...⁶³

Though perhaps not intended for their ears, the above statement was a clear indication to Regent Park residents that the reconstruction of their neighbourhood was a public good and that their interests would ultimately pale in comparison to those of the larger community, however vaguely defined.

Not wasting any time getting down to business, the Planning Board spent its first two years composing a Master Plan for the city. Released in its 1944 Annual Report, the CPBs Master Plan for the City of Toronto is a key document in understanding urban planning in Toronto. The plan represented the culmination of idealist and modernist planning ideas of the last half century, drawing particularly on the ideas of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, Patrick

⁶²City of Toronto Planning Board (Hereafter CTPB), "A History of Planning in Toronto," (Toronto, 1959). See also P. Moore, "Zoning and Planning..." 326-27.

⁶³CTPB, *Annual Report 1942*, 7.

Geddes' social survey approach, and Clarence Perry's notion of the self-contained neighbourhood unit.⁶⁴ The chief innovation of the 1944 report was the CPB division of the city into 78 neighbourhoods and its classification of neighbourhoods according to five types - Sound, Vulnerable, Declining, Blighted and Slums (See Figure 1.1).

The Planning Board defined a neighbourhood as "a more or less homogeneous area large enough to function as a social unit and not too small to stand on its own feet, with well-defined boundaries such as main roads, railway, ravines, etc., and in which the economic and social status of the residents [was] fairly uniform or in which one racial group predominate[d], and there [was] a similarity in age, quality and architectural character of the houses."⁶⁵ According to the Planning Board's definition an ideal or 'sound' neighbourhood was one characterized by low densities, modern and/or well-kept houses and grounds, little or no through traffic, an abundance of modern well-located parks, schools, churches and shops, and an active neighbourhood association. Clearly what the planners had in mind was the classic suburb that would soon come to dominate the postwar urban landscape. The Planning Board, however, found only 11 of Toronto's 78 neighbourhoods met these conditions. Most of these neighbourhoods were located in the newer and more affluent areas of the city's North-End, the fashionable Beaches district, and High Park. The rest of the city was either vulnerable to decline (32 percent), already in decline (50 percent), or slums (2 percent) ripe for clearance and redevelopment. In contrast to sound neighbourhoods, these areas were generally located

⁶⁴See J. Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles With Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); and G. Hodge, *Planning Canadian Communities: An Introduction to the Principles, Practice and Participants* (Toronto: Methuen, 1986).

⁶⁵CTPB, *Annual Report*, 1944, 13.

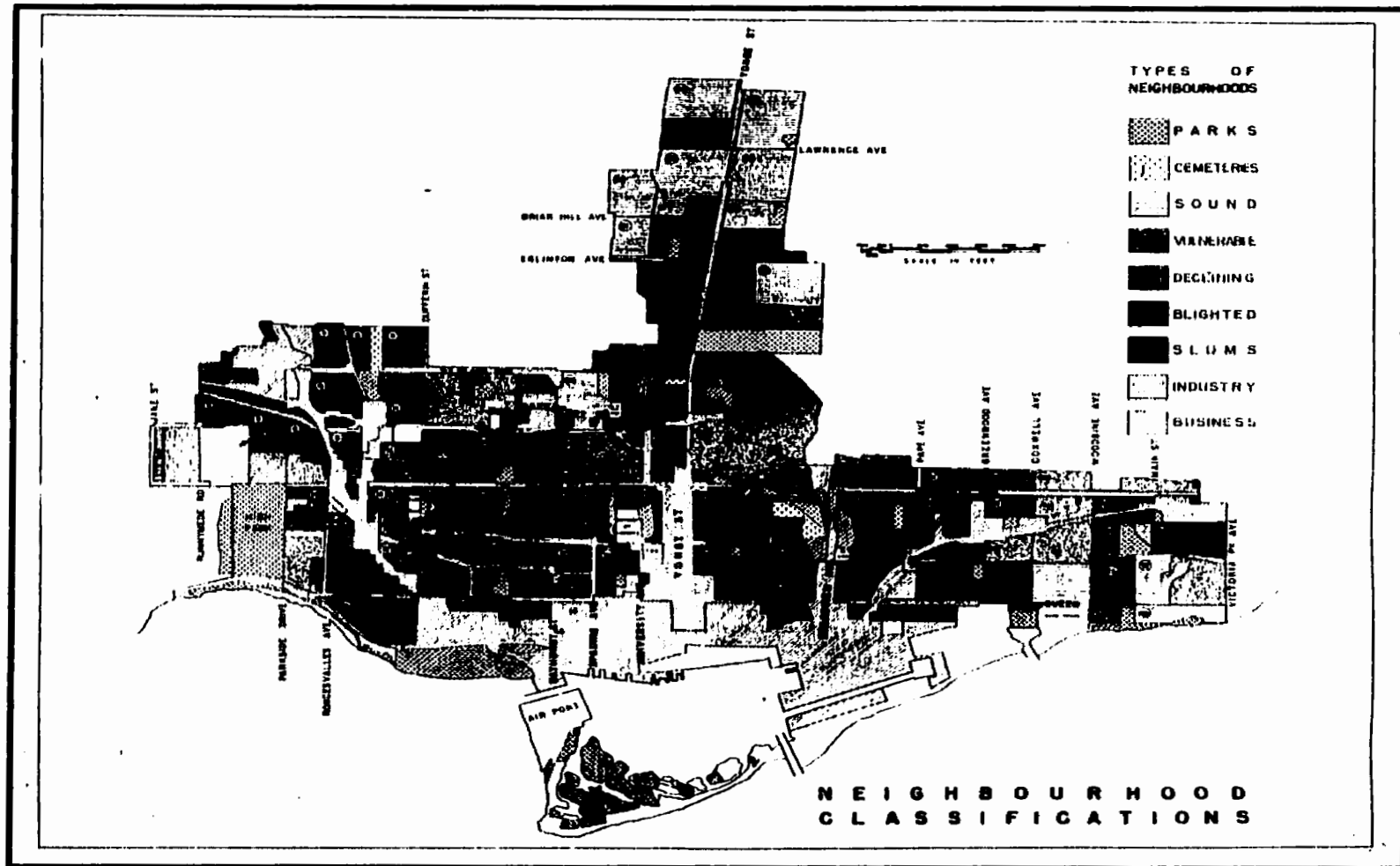


Figure 1.1

Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, *Third Annual Report, 1944* (Toronto: CTPB, 1944), Plate 1.

The State of Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1943

south of the Canadian Pacific Railways North Toronto line and were characterized by a high density of population, houses on small narrow lots, excessive parking at the curb, heavy through traffic, inadequate park facilities for residents, obsolete architecture of houses, second-rate shopping facilities, old-fashioned schools and intrusions of non-conforming land uses. In short, these neighbourhoods broke every rule of modernist city planning.⁶⁶

According to the Report, the history of Toronto's neighbourhoods "has been one of progressive decline, which in its final stage, has resulted in what have been generally termed blighted areas."⁶⁷ Such decline was in some ways inevitable due to age, and new trends. However, in Toronto the Board recognized that decline had set in despite the modernity of the houses, services and community facilities. The reasons for the decline of residential standards were varied and complex, but undoubtedly linked to the intensification of densities and lack of improvements caused by fifteen years of depression and war. The conversion of many single family homes from owner occupancy to rental occupancy, often through mortgage default, threatened Toronto's cherished image as a city of homes.⁶⁸ Indeed, the tremendous increase in the number of Torontonians living in rented dwellings during the Depression and the war led the Planning Board to warn in the preface of its 1945 *Report* that unless proper planning measures were introduced, single family dwellings would disappear from the central city to be replaced by apartments. It also reminded them of the detrimental effects on family life that would ensue from such a development.⁶⁹ The planners, then, were

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁸See note 19.

⁶⁹CTPB, *Annual Report* 1945, Preface.

not simply prejudiced against central city neighbourhoods because they were old.⁷⁰ Rather, there was something even more objectionable behind their classification of Toronto neighbourhoods - the character of the residents. As the Board observed:

The decline in residential character has been coincident with the changes in the character of residents which takes place following or towards the end of the period of initial occupancy and ownership, and that the incidence of such changes is greatest in those areas which are occupied by families in the upper middle class . . . no decline would take place were the original class of residents willing and content to remain permanently in the neighbourhood and to maintain and improve their properties instead of abandoning them.⁷¹

Much like the way the Chicago School's concentric zone theory (an analysis of the city Toronto planners deeply embraced during this period) accurately *described* the emerging social geography of Toronto, the latter comment reflected both the planners' misunderstanding of the housing needs and traditional living places of working-class Torontonians, as well as concern over the effect middle and upper-class flight to the suburbs had on the moral and social environment of the city.⁷²

Nonetheless, the answer to saving these neighbourhoods from sinking into slums was not wholesale redevelopment; only blighted and slum areas would be forced to suffer such a program. Rather, the planners advocated a judicious mix of public enforcement of by-law provisions, the extension and upgrading of parks, recreation, and school facilities and the re-routing of traffic onto main traffic corridors. But the bulk of the responsibility was to rest with individual property owners to keep their properties in proper repair, to modernize them,

⁷⁰G. Fraser. *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 57.

⁷¹CTPB. *Annual Report*, 1944, 16.

⁷²NA. CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Vol. 1, file 17, R.E.G. Davis, "Presidential Address to the 1947 CPAC Conference." In the speech Davis described the middle class flight to the suburbs as bad for them spiritually and a financial drain on the city.

and to keep watch on conditions within their neighbourhood. To do this, planners advocated that the residents form community associations.⁷³

To ensure the Master Plan would come to fruition the city council established the Toronto Reconstruction Council in December 1943 to study and report on the needs of the city in the immediate postwar period. Composed of more than 65 member organizations and almost 1,000 individuals the Reconstruction Council represented a broad cross section of the city. Although the organization was dominated by benevolent institutions, prominent businessmen, and Rosedale charity ladies there was significant representation from labour and left social reform groups including the two city labour councils, the Workers' Educational Association, and the communist led Housewives' Consumer Association. Moreover, the Housing committee was led by prominent CCFers P.A. Deacon and Humphrey Carver who were responsible for drafting the party's housing and town planning platforms.⁷⁴ The Reconstruction Council hoped to draw upon the great outpouring of community action during the war. At the same time it tried to organize and direct opinion in support of government inspired postwar reconstruction projects. In doing so it hoped to expand the social basis of consent by dispelling the pessimistic and defeatist attitude of Torontonians about postwar possibilities, and to promote individual initiative in the program of postwar reconstruction.⁷⁵

The Reconstruction Council's attempt to reassert control over the planning agenda was also an attempt to circumvent the rising support for more radical CCF and Communist

⁷³CTPB. *Annual Report*, 1944. 18-19.

⁷⁴See League for Social Reconstruction, Research Committee, *Social Planning for Canada* (Reprint of 1935 ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 451-63.

⁷⁵CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 1, file 11, Public Relations Committee Minutes, February 13, 1944. Comments by G.F. Davies. See also the comments of J.G. Johnston, *ibid.*, March 17, 1944.

inspired plans. The desire of the local state to expand the social basis of consent was most evident in the composition of the council. Taking its cue from the experience of the labour and social unrest which followed demobilization after World War I, organized labour and veterans were granted greater representation on the council than social service and business organizations. In addition, the council made special provision for women and for youth representation. In short, the Reconstruction Council was an exercise in community-based corporatism. Nonetheless the Reconstruction Council's importance cannot be underestimated as it was evidence of the remarkable permeability of the local state in the 1940s. For this reason, community activists in Toronto were much more successful, and their struggles much less confrontational, than similar urban-based movements across the country.⁷⁶

While the Planning Board focussed on the ordering of the built environment, the Reconstruction Council's mandate focussed on the social aspects of city planning. As such, the Reconstruction Council was composed of a number of sub-committees to deal with everything from demobilization of veterans to employment and postwar works. Considering the scope and gravity of the housing problem throughout the 1940s in Toronto, this was the chief focus of the Council's energies and reports.⁷⁷ Housing and town planning issues were not simply problems of bricks and mortar but were seen by many groups in the community as the means to circumvent poverty and unemployment that might otherwise return in peacetime. Though the financing and creation of public policy for housing and urban renewal

⁷⁶Susan Prentice, "Militant Mothers in Domestic Times: Toronto's Postwar Childcare Struggles," PhD Dissertation, York University, 1993, 86-93; and J. Wade, *Houses for All*, Ch. 5 *passim*.

⁷⁷See H. Carver and A. Adamson, *How Much Housing Does Greater Toronto Need?* (Toronto: Toronto Reconstruction Council, 1946). H. Carver and A. Adamson, *Who Can Pay for Housing* (Toronto: Toronto Reconstruction Council, 1946); and H. Carver and A. Hopwood, *Rents for Regent Park* (Toronto, Toronto Reconstruction Council, 1947).

were expected to come from the senior levels of government, municipal authorities looked upon housing and town planning schemes as their fundamental task in postwar reconstruction. Large scale works to provide new traffic arteries and slum clearance were central to the reconstruction and modernization of Canadian cities. The future of Canada's cities, including Toronto, depended in large measure on the effectiveness of measures taken to stop the decline and begin the restoration and redevelopment of the main residential areas.⁷⁸ The Reconstruction Council was adamant that urban planning in the postwar years, unlike that of the previous four decades, should emphasize social concerns rather than 'showy' projects such as civic centres, war memorials or grand boulevards. Moreover, the chairman of the Public Relations Committee said of the Reconstruction Council: "any report submitted as representing the postwar plans for the City of Toronto should be devoid of selfish planning, that it should be acceptable and popular with the people of Canada generally, as Toronto's situation reflects the situation of the Dominion as a whole."⁷⁹

In theory the TRC's strength lay in its representation of a broad cross-section of the community through its members and organizations represented on the Council. Nonetheless, there existed a tension within the TRC between providing expertise in the drafting of social policy and representing and engendering community action and approval. Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that the TRC played itself up as offering "the views of well-informed

⁷⁸CTA, City of Toronto Planning Board, Tracy Le May Papers, RG 32, Series B1, Box 7, file 3, Memo on Neighbourhood Improvement (submitted by Councillor Stewart Smith).

⁷⁹CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 1, file 11, Public Relations Committee Minutes March 17, 1944; and TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 1, file 8, Community Welfare Committee Minutes, October 11, 1944. For a history of Toronto's planning movement see P. Moore, "Zoning and Planning: The Toronto Experience, 1904-1970, 317-326; and J. Lemon, "Plans for Early 20th Century Toronto: Lost in Management," *Urban History Review* 28 (June, 1989), 11-31.

citizens at little or no expense to local government. Harnessing the best minds in the private sector and academia to the tasks of postwar planning."⁸⁰ As a result, the TRC increasingly functioned as a series of mini "Royal Commissions" composed of a small self-perpetuating group of technicians and activists. Members claimed that this was due to the fact that many of the problems the Council was called upon to investigate and solve needed expert opinion rather than citizen opinion. There was also the difficulty of implementing democratic procedure in such a large and multifarious organization. Yet, according to Eric Hardy, head of the Bureau of Municipal Research and an active council member, actual democratic participation in the Reconstruction Council was less important than maintaining the image of democratic participation.⁸¹

Nonetheless, many key Reconstruction Council members were eager to experiment with new approaches to community organization and citizen participation in social planning. As Gale Wills notes in her study of social work in Toronto during this period, both the Toronto Welfare Council and the University of Toronto's School of Social Work were moving toward more decentralized and direct action approaches to social work and social planning. Many of the key personalities involved in the TRC came from these two organizations. Henry Cassidy, the director of the School of Social Work, was vice-chair of the Reconstruction Council. Other important TRC members included Charles E. Hendry, and Murray Ross, two of North America's leading experts on community organization, and who later became members of the Community Council Co-ordinating Committee. Albert Rose,

⁸⁰CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 3, file 1, Dodger Re: CAC Objectives and Activities, n.d.

⁸¹CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 1, file 5, Executive Committee Minutes, June 15, 1948. .

also a faculty member at the School of Social Work, was the research director at both the Welfare Council and later the Reconstruction Council. Rose, in particular, was a key advocate of citizen participation in urban planning and would become a key player in Toronto's urban renewal planning and politics over the next three decades.⁸² Social workers' and housing reformers' emphasis on an active program of engendering community support for urban planning and social housing projects lay in the belief that former city planning projects had failed because they neglected to stimulate the interest and participation of "the average citizen." They were determined that this would not happen again.⁸³

Central to the ideas of community planning advocates was the assumption that communities existed and that their interests could be determined. However, many believed communities and the ethic of community were rapidly disappearing in the modern metropolis. As E.G. Faludi, author of the City's Master Plan and Canada's premier town planner, lamented:

Today the neighbourhood as a locality has all but disappeared in urban America. One of the most unfortunate consequences of excessive urbanization has been the loss of community interests which form the basis of the neighbourhood. While our system of government is based on the assumption that people living in the same locality have interests in common, and that they may be relied upon to act together for the common welfare, this assumption, unfortunately, is invalid for large cities. Mobility, lack of home ownership, and distance, the distinguishing marks of large urban centres, all have contributed to the disappearance of the neighbourhood as an entity possessing social values.⁸⁴

⁸²Gale Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience*, 118-119.

⁸³CTA, WHCC, SC 61, Box 1, file 1, Transcript of broadcast "Toronto Tomorrow,"(CJBC), August 1, 1945.

⁸⁴NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Vol. 1, file 21, "Report of the Annual Meeting 1947," 19.

Many observers directly linked this loss of “neighbourhood values” to the physical, economic and moral deterioration of the city, which was most evident in its slums and blighted areas.

Community organization through the planning process was the most effective way to promote this organic view of the city among community residents. The job was not simply to get them involved in the development and management of their own community, but to see that their own particular interests were linked to a greater community interest. As one commentator said about the Planning Board's exhibition of the City's Master Plan at the Art Gallery of Ontario:

All [visitors] showed a very great interest in their own neighbourhood - of course, they wanted to know what the plan would mean to their home and their street - and the interest was just as great, if not greater on the part of people who lived in slum and blighted areas as it was among those from healthy parts, though they were very sensitive about the conditions in which they lived. ... The community council movement is another expression of the same thing, groups of local people getting together and trying to improve their neighbourhood. Such movements *properly* directed will have at least three results. First of all, something of the old community spirit of the 19th century will be recaptured. Secondly, the replanning of the community will be from the neighbourhood up, by the people themselves and not superimposed from on top by a bunch of technicians and specialists. And thirdly, such neighbourhood groups once they begin to get active to improve their neighbourhood, they will speedily discover that the solution of some of their problems or the cause of some of their troubles lie outside their immediate neighbourhood and hence they will be forced, *whether they want to or not*, to take an interest in the wider area, of the whole city and ultimately of the whole region. ... If neighbourhood councils were formed within each of the seventy neighbourhoods ... I think we would soon find that the interest of each of these groups would not be confined to its own neighbourhood or district. Before long we would have such a wave of public opinion sweeping across the city that our elected representatives would lose no time in seeing that machinery and funds are provided for proper planning and adequate housing.⁸⁵

⁸⁵CTA, WHCC, SC 61, Box 1, file 1, Transcript of Broadcast CJBC August 1, 1945. Emphasis mine.

Members of the Reconstruction Council agreed with these sentiments. They hoped that the formation of a committee to co-ordinate the activities of community groups would effectively mobilize the latent energies of civic consciousness in the city in the promotion of municipal government projects. Reconstruction Council members believed that the wartime activities of Torontonians were ample proof of their desire to organize collectively to improve their city. The principal task of a co-ordinating committee would be to bridge the gap between the voluntary community service of Torontonians and the local municipal government, especially the newly formed Planning Board. Indeed, the committee saw its role as a promoter of the Planning Board's Master Plan and sought to acquaint the public with the Plan and "*interpret it to them.*"⁸⁶ Moreover, in a period of waning public and political support for the Reconstruction Council, its members saw community councils as the "missing link" without which Council projects would never be undertaken.⁸⁷

By June 1947 the Reconstruction Council brought such a plan to fruition with the foundation of an official Community Council Co-ordinating Committee, known by its members as the "4Cs". The Committee, headed by prominent Conservative politician George H. Hees, drew largely upon social service and social work organizations such as the YMCA, the Red Cross and the Junior League. The close ties between community organization and urban planning were underlined by the inclusion of Bessie Luffman, a member of the newly formed Housing Authority of Toronto which would oversee the construction and management of Canada's first slum clearance and public housing project, Regent Park. Mrs.

⁸⁶CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 1, file 14, Community Council Committee Minutes, December 3, 1947. *Italics mine.*

⁸⁷CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 6, file 1, "Report of The Community Counsellor to the Community Council Committee of the Civic Advisory Council, City of Toronto," September 1949, 21.

W.N. Robertson a member of the CPAC, and Professor C. E. Hendry who also served on the Reconstruction Council's Housing Committee, were also prominent members of the 4C's. However, despite the rhetoric of "organizing people to take part in the affairs of their community of the city as a whole"⁸⁸ only one member of the committee, Mrs. E.W Coleman, Secretary of the Beaches Community Council, came from the so-called "grassroots."⁸⁹

The first task of the newly formed committee was the hiring of a Counsellor who would mobilize and, more importantly, coordinate community organizations in Toronto. The committee selected Hugo Wolter whom the City hired in September of 1947 for the initial term of one year. Wolter, an American, with a long history of welfare and community organizing, had recently served as an assistant project director at the Gila River Relocation project in Arizona where he was responsible for the administration of social and community services for Japanese evacuees. Wolter was an archetypal modern liberal who believed wholly in the benefits of pluralist democracy. He envisaged his role as ultimately encouraging all social constituencies, including labour, youth, and ethnic groups, to become auxiliaries to

⁸⁸CTA, City of Toronto Property Department, RG 16, Box 10, file 61, "Community Councils and a Community Counsellor.", October 1947.

⁸⁹Civic Advisory Council (formerly the Toronto Reconstruction Council), "Report of the Community Council Committee, September 18, 1947 - March 31, 1948," (April 1948), 1. The other Council members included:

Mrs. J. Alex Edmison - Junior League
 Rev. C.J. Frank, Holy Trinity Anglican Church
 Dr. C.C. Goldring - Superintendent - Toronto Board of Education
 Mr. Russell Harvey - Toronto Labour Council
 Mr. George Hees
 Prof. C.E. Hendry - School of Social Work, University of Toronto
 Commissioner W.J. Love
 Mrs. H.L. Luffman - Housing Authority of Toronto
 Mr. C.F. Plewman - represented by Mr. Fred Vance - Red Cross Society
 Mrs. W.N. Robertson - Community Planning Association of Toronto
 Mr. Murray Ross - YMCA
 Mr. H. Arnold Ward - YMCA

state programmes. Wolter fervently believed that democratic processes would yield democratic results. He insisted, that all elements of the community had the right to be heard, and once they won the right to state their case they could make those in power responsive to their needs. As he stated in his introductory press release:

Community councils are a means of organizing the people to take part in the affairs of their communities and of the city as a whole. ... Through them citizens become the active associates of the Board of Control, the Municipal Council and the administrators of the city departments. Through them local problem situations are placed directly into the hands of citizens who are intimately concerned in securing satisfactory solutions. A tremendous amount of official time is saved by solving problems in the areas in which they arise. Community councils are not a cure-all but they are a definite step in including the ordinary citizen in the responsibility of government. The phrase "The city must do something" changes to "We must do something."⁹⁰

Wolter attempted to overcome what he called the "top-down" approach to community planning by stressing to more established interests that local citizens must be allowed to "take the stage ... as actors."⁹¹ Wolter poured his heart into assisting ordinary Torontonians to become active citizens. Within the first six months of his appointment he attended over 300 meetings, worked 12 to 14 hour days including week-ends, and travelled more than 1000 miles per month by car spreading his message of local democracy.⁹²

The work of Wolter and the Community Council Co-ordinating Committee provides a rare glimpse into what still remains the shadowy nature of community organization in 1940s Toronto. Community councils grew out of the experience of depression and wartime

⁹⁰CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 5, file 11, Community Council Co-ordinating Committee, Press Release, October 6, 1947. Emphasis in original.

⁹¹CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 5 file 10, Press release Mayors Office September 17, 1947; and "Report of the Community Counsellor to the Community Council Committee of the Civic Advisory Committee, City of Toronto, Ont," (September 1949), *passim*.

⁹²"Report of the Community Counsellor . . . ," 3-4.

Toronto from diverse sources including Air Raid Patrol groups, local political and service clubs, and 'Tidy Block Associations' affiliated with the annual Beautify Toronto campaigns. Others revived dormant ratepayer associations in Rosedale, the Annex, and Oriole Park, where the latter carried on a protracted, but unsuccessful, campaign to halt the building of the Toronto Transit Commission's subway yards in the neighbourhood. The housing crisis, especially concern over evictions, led to the formation of various community and civic groups including the Communist inspired Toronto District Emergency Housing Committee and the Homes Protective Association of York Township. In working-class neighbourhoods residents, in co-operation with the Toronto Welfare Council, organized councils to provide recreational facilities and programs for young people to head off the growing 'gang problem' which plagued Toronto throughout the 1940s. This issue was especially important in the Junction and Riverdale neighbourhoods, but also in the central city slums such as Moss Park, Ward 4 South, and the Emergency Housing Projects (converted army barracks which housed those displaced by the city's wartime and post-war housing shortage) where parks and playgrounds were scarce. It was also very important to city officials who believed that delinquency was no longer due to conditions in individual families but was "primarily a problem of neighbourhood relationships, standards and traditions." Organizing area residents to combat the conditions in neighbourhoods that contributed to delinquency was necessary unless new residents would "inherit the evil conditions of the area."⁹³

Upon coming to the position, Wolter surveyed the landscape of community and neighbourhood organizations in Toronto. He found 37 community organizations in existence

⁹³See Toronto Welfare Council, "A Plan for the Reduction of Juvenile Delinquency in Toronto," November 15, 1943, *Minutes of the Toronto City Council 1943*, Appendix C, 97.

loosely representing the interests of over 150,000 people in the city and surrounding area. Much like the Planning Board's 1944 Neighbourhood Plan, Wolter classified these associations according to their feasibility of forming part of the larger community council - active, moribund and "Area Projects." Active groups were those which could easily and immediately be incorporated into a central community council. For the most part these groups came from the newer and more affluent 'sound' neighbourhoods in the North of the city such as Rosedale, North Toronto and Forest Hill. However, also included in this group were a significant number of community organizations from working-class neighbourhoods in the city's west-end including the Perth-Royce Community Council, Maybank St. Clair Community Council, the Weston Community Council, and the Fairbanks Community Council. Wolter also identified a number of associations that were active, but due mostly to the presence of partisan politics, needed some assistance before they could be incorporated into the central committee. Once again these may be said to correspond to the vulnerable and declining areas of the city areas such as Parkdale and Riverdale. Finally, there were those areas desperately in need of community organization but that could only be developed as an "Area Project" staffed and organized by social workers. These areas corresponded to the blighted and slum areas outlined in Planning Board reports - Regent Park, the city's notorious "Ward" district; and the Emergency Housing projects. Wolter focussed a great deal of his time and energy organizing community councils with these latter groups, and his experiences with these communities and their associations led him to understand the problems confounding community organization and co-ordination in Toronto.⁹⁴

⁹⁴CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 3, file 2, Survey Of Community Councils And Associations: Re Future Of The Position Of Community Counsellor. For more on the problems and obstacles of community

These ideas were not limited to Toronto social workers and reformers, but were shared by members of Canada's fledgling urban planning community, who together formed the Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC) in 1945 to promote public education and participation in urban planning and social housing issues. The CPAC emphasized that it was not a body of experts which planned for communities. As Alan Armstrong stated in his 1948 presidential address: "In a democracy, we don't want such far-reaching decisions to be made for us by experts. In the words of one of them 'the expert should be on tap, not on top."⁹⁵ Indeed, the building of good communities, it claimed, rested on its efforts in making community planning "a *people's* movement."⁹⁶ Neighbourhoods, claimed one member of the CPAC, were the "nursery of citizen participation in public affairs." "City dwellers," argued Humphrey Carver, Canada's leading advocate of urban planning and a prominent member of the TRC's housing committee, "[were] in need of reassurance that [their] views and predilections are taken into account in shaping [their] increasingly complicated environment. To enlist the cooperation of citizen groups and to convince them of the importance of their active help in plotting the future course of their community would be a necessary precursor to any effective planning action."⁹⁷ In one sense the CPAC's concept of involving "ordinary citizens" in urban planning appears paternalistic. Through the efforts of groups like the

organization in Toronto see Kevin Brushett, "'People and Government Travelling Together': Community Organization, Urban Planning and the Politics of Post-War Reconstruction in Toronto, 1943-1953," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 27 (March 1999), 44-58.

⁹⁵NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Vol. 1, File 23, Program 2nd Annual Meeting 1948 Notes for President's Address October 15, 1948, 5.

⁹⁶NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Vol. 1, file 2, Executive correspondence, R.E.G. Davis to A. Armstrong, September 2, 1947.

⁹⁷NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Vol. 1, file 18, "Report of the 1946 Conference," 9-10.

CPAC, especially its local chapters, planning advocates hoped to educate “ordinary citizens” about housing and planning problems and the recommendations that would provide the ultimate solution to those problems.

Yet it would be wrong to deprecate the belief of planners in the democratic aspects of community planning. Indeed, CPAC members like Carver and Rose spoke of community planning rather than urban or town planning for the very reason that they saw their role as planners not in terms of the physical aspects of planning, but its human and social aspects.

According to Alan Deacon, a prominent planner from Toronto:

A neighbourhood is a collection of people and if we are going to plan, let us plan not only for those people but with them. Planners have to deal not only with the design of material things, but also with the assessment and development of social patterns and traditions. Arbitrary planning results are likely to ensue from a rigid quantitative planning standard. ⁹⁸

According to this view of planning, professional planners did not abandon their responsibility and expertise. Rather, planners like Carver realized that neighbourhood residents had better knowledge of their communities, their needs and their desires, in short the “spirit of their neighbourhood,” than planners could attain through studies and numerical data collected.⁹⁹

Skill is required to show how the cure must be based on a thorough knowledge of the whole anatomy of the community, and must be carefully applied over a long period - the treatment being adjusted to changing conditions. Some changes can be accurately measured by the experts, others are more subtle, and will only be reported by the citizens directly affected, or else go unnoticed until it is too late... The community is a living thing, and the

⁹⁸NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Volume 1 file 21 - Minutes 1st Annual Meeting 1947, comments by P.A. Deacon, 23.

⁹⁹NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Volume 1 file 21, Minutes 1st Annual Meeting 1947, comments by Eugene Fauldi, 21.

process of observing critically its complex ills, working out cures, and reporting on the changes effected is the essence of community planning.¹⁰⁰

As Canada's most prominent social housing and planning advocate, Dr. Cyril James warned planners and government officials to avoid the temptations of immediate results by "bulldozing the people of the community for their own good."¹⁰¹ The way to real improvement of our physical surroundings in Canada, James reminded his audience, "is clearly no[t] the authoritarian way."¹⁰²

Slum clearance and public housing, then, were more than just a project of social reform: it was an experiment in proper community planning. As Humphrey Carver explained to Canadian Welfare Council and Reconstruction Council president R.E.G. Davis:

In the Conference I endeavoured to express what I believed to be the attitude of the Welfare Council towards Community Planning. I particularly took the opportunity of saying that a great deal of planning would be quite unrealistic until new legislation had provided for low-rental subsidized housing; the Canadian Welfare Council believed that only through the introduction of such measures would proper Community Planning be able to embrace all . . . levels of the population.¹⁰³

Here was a chance to implement the latest theories of urban planning in concert with those who experienced the unplanned city at its worst - slum dwellers. The clearance of Regent Park and its replacement with a modernist-inspired public-housing project was, by the end of the war, at the top of every reform agenda. It remained to be seen whether the promise of democratic community planning could overcome the overwhelming impulse to "get on with the job" and remove the "pathological" conditions infecting the heart of the city.

¹⁰⁰CPAC, "Organization: A Review," in *Layout for Living*, No. 5 (June/July 1947).

¹⁰¹NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Volume 1 file 21 - Minutes 1st Annual Meeting 1947, 5

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14 Volume 1, file 1, H. Carver to R.E.G. Davis, June 28, 1946.

Chapter 2

Milestone or Millstone - The “Renewal” of Cabbagetown as Regent Park

On February 18, 1953, Charles Henry, Conservative Member of Parliament for the Toronto riding of Rosedale, rose in the House of Commons to defend what he felt was a slanderous attack on the dignity of many Canadians. The issue at hand was a recently completed National Film Board documentary, entitled *Farewell Oak Street*, which documented the nation’s first slum clearance and public housing project, Regent Park. Henry was displeased with what he thought was the film’s rather disparaging depiction of the neighbourhood residents prior to redevelopment. Noble though it was to defend the “poorer cousins” of his riding, Henry’s complaints about the film fell largely on deaf ears. Most Torontonians agreed with *Toronto Telegram* columnist Frank Tumpane’s response to Henry - that Regent Park was a slum, whose housing conditions were deeply offensive to the dignity of the residents as Canadians and as human beings. As Tumpane wrote:

Before the housing project the Regent Park area had one of the worst juvenile delinquency rates in the city. It had one of the worst records for arrests for drunkenness. It had one of the worst fire records and one of the worst public health records ... Children in that area played on the narrow streets because they had no parks. They played on filthy ash-heaps behind their houses. I saw them myself. I saw coal stored in the bathtubs and ice-boxes in the bathroom, and I remember visiting one six-roomed house with 18 men women and children living in it. ... If those aren't slum conditions then what are slum conditions?

Tumpane was quick to point out that area residents were for the most part fine decent hard-working people, who through no fault of their own were forced to live in such squalid conditions. Indeed, Tumpane believed that Henry’s comments did more harm than good for the very people he sought to protect. “People,” Tumpane argued, “may not want to contribute to slum clearance if they feel the situation isn’t really bad after all. Merely ‘substandard’ in

fact. ...[T]he consent of the taxpayers will be more difficult to obtain if those who stand to benefit most and their elected representatives turn into a bunch of nice-nellies who are afraid to call something by its right name. The Regent Park area was a slum.”¹

The following chapter examines the material and ideological factors behind Canada’s landmark slum clearance and public housing project. Regent Park represented the first salvo in Toronto’s, and indeed, Canada’s modern war on slums, and soon became the paradigm for urban renewal throughout the nation. For this reason, Regent Park has always represented the bellwether of Canadian urban and housing policies. For nearly two decades after it was built, Regent Park was almost universally hailed as evidence of how the principles of modern planning could magnificently transform the lives of society’s poorer members.² In this respect, the clearance of the Cabbagetown “slum” and its reconstruction as Regent Park represented the culmination of decades of planning thought and ardent social housing activism. It was also the result of years of neglect of the housing problems of inner-city Torontonians. But by the late 1960s the once-sincere beliefs of social housing advocates that the state could constructively affect the lives of poor and working-class Canadians seemed not only naive and paternalistic, but brutal and autocratic. As a result, Regent Park became the symbol of all that was wrong with modern planning and public housing; it was too large, too impersonal, too bureaucratic, and was largely alien from the interests of its residents. Rather than building citizens, which the original proponents of slum clearance and public housing argued it would

¹Frank Tumpane, “A Slum Is a Slum by Any Name,” *Toronto Telegram*, March 5, 1953, 3.

²See Albert Rose, *Regent Park: A Study in Slum Clearance* (University of Toronto Press, 1958). Rose’s book remains one of the few comprehensive accounts of the history of Regent Park, and is still cited as an authority on the campaign for public housing in Canadian history texts. See Alvin Finkel, *Our Lives, Canada After 1945* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1997), 43-45.

do. opponents noted how the massive super-block projects created “ghettos of the poor” by physically and socially isolating them from the rest of the city. By the 1970s Regent Park had returned to the landscape of poverty, crime, and despair that had once marked Cabbagetown in planners’ “bad books,” and had animated their plans for its removal.³

Rather than debate the merits of either interpretation of “Canada’s Premier Housing Redevelopment Project,” it is important to note that the campaign to build Regent Park foreshadowed much of what would take place in urban renewal in Toronto over the next two decades. Indeed, planners, social housing activists, politicians, and even Cabbagetown residents themselves, were fully aware that Regent Park could represent a “milestone” or a “millstone” in the history of Canadian urban planning and social housing.⁴ On one hand, many Torontonians, and Cabbagetown residents perhaps more than others, suffered greatly from poor housing conditions and paid rents beyond their economic means, and undoubtedly benefited from the building of Regent Park. On the other hand, what began with a genuine, if at times paternalistic, concern for the housing conditions of poor and working-class Torontonians, slum clearance and its later euphemism, urban renewal, soon ran roughshod over the rights and interests of the very people it intended to benefit. Like all other projects that would follow it, the destruction of Cabbagetown and its renewal as Regent Park was both brutal and authoritarian in its implementation. In the end, many “Cabbagetowners” would

³For critiques of Regent Park’s “modernist” architecture see Robert Fulford, *Accidental City: The Transformation of Toronto* (Toronto: McFarlane Walter & Ross, 1995); John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); and Jon Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto’s Gentrification and Critical Social Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

⁴Alison Hopwood and Albert Rose, “Regent Park: Milestone or Millstone?” *Canadian Forum* 29, (May 1949), 34-36.

never forget the way they were “bulldozed” along with their houses.

A Brief History of Cabbagetown

The Regent Park area known popularly as Cabbagetown (the geographic boundaries of the area were Parliament St. on the west, Gerrard St. on the north, Queen St. to the south and the Don River to the west) was never considered prime real estate. Before the 1850s the area was originally called The Park: a low-lying, sometimes swampy area just north and east of the settled areas of Toronto. Until the 1850s the area was scarcely occupied, and only a fringe of humble cottages and vegetable plots marked the area to this time. Toronto’s burgeoning industrialization changed the face of the area over the last half of the nineteenth century. The coming of the railway fostered the growth of factories in the city’s east end, especially in the area bordering the railway and the harbour. Increasingly, the area became a populous residential district for Anglo-Celtic immigrants drawn to the city to work in these industries. The area was built largely by residents themselves, who in the time-honoured traditions of working-class self-help often put up temporary shacks and then proceeded to improve upon them over time, as well as by petty speculators.⁵ The houses were largely utilitarian frame houses, covered over with stucco and sometimes later bricked. As J.M.S.

Careless describes the area:

Overall . . . the Cabbagetown street scape took characteristic form as plain rows of narrow, gabled residence up to seventeen feet wide, one or more displaying front bay window or an added rear wing, but thinly built, lacking central heating, and boasting privies out behind. Most houses were detached,

⁵On owner building see the work of Richard Harris, “Self-building in the Urban Housing Market,” *Economic Geography* 67 (March 1991) 1-21; and *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto’s American Tragedy, 1900-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), especially Chapter 8; and Richard Harris and Matt Sendbuehler, “The Making of a Working-class Suburb in Hamilton’s East End, 1900-1945,” *Journal of Urban History*, 20 (December 1994), 486-511.

and had sufficient backyard space for vegetable patches - - by the standards of the time these looked desirable, practical homes to those with little money and few pretensions.⁶

Thus, Victorian Cabbagetown developed as a domain of small, cheap, working-class houses on minor streets. The area was easily demarcated architecturally by its contrast with the handsome estates of Rosedale rising beyond Bloor Street on its North, or with the stately mansions on Sherbourne and Jarvis to its West.⁷

Cabbagetown had always been one of the poorer sections of the city from its original settlement. Assessments for St. David's Ward in the period from 1870 to 1900 reveal that it ranked near the bottom in returns for the value of real and personal property. Most inhabitants were unskilled and semi-skilled workers who laboured in the nearby industries such as the Gooderham & Worts distillery and the W. Davies stockyards. Though Victorian Cabbagetown was a working-class neighbourhood that habitually tottered on the thin edge of subsistence, it was hardly the portrait of a Victorian-era slum dominated by physical, social, and moral decay. To be sure, residents' daily lives included coping with the drab environment blemished by the dirt and noise of encroaching industries, and their struggles against sickness and want. But the neighbourhood on the whole strove determinedly to stay decent, ordered and self-respecting. During these years area residents improved their houses and home ownership grew.⁸

Like the rest of the inner city the early decades of the twentieth century were not kind

⁶J.M.S. Careless, "Victorian Cabbagetown," in R. Harney, ed. *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985), 31.

⁷*Ibid.*, 25

⁸J.M.S. Careless, "Victorian Cabbagetown," 31-33.

to the neighbourhood. Toronto's great industrial growth at the turn of the century created housing pressures, which were only exacerbated by a curtailment of construction during the First World War. As in many other inner city neighbourhoods, the residents of Cabbagetown crowded into the neighbourhood's houses, sometimes with two or more families in each. By the end of the war, *Star Weekly* reporter W.A. Craick described Cabbagetown as "constantly shifting" and one of the dingiest districts in the city."⁹ As a result, a few houses on almost every street became verminous and tumbledown. Yet others, next door or across the street, remained clean and in good repair, reflecting the stability of their occupants or a change from tenant to owner occupation. Nonetheless, by the late 1920s most Cabbagetowners rented their houses. Unlike most low rental districts and slums, in the rest of North America, Cabbagetown was not dominated by tenements. Rather, the streets were lined with single family houses, whose upper stories were rented out to boarders, and other families. However, these modest frame-construction houses, deteriorated quickly, especially when landlords found decreasing value in keeping them up. By the time the Depression hit, as novelist and one-time resident Hugh Garner pointed out in his fictional account of Cabbagetown, "the prevailing smell was one of decay, of old wet plaster and rotting wooden steps, the smell of a landlord's carelessness and neglect."¹⁰

The grim years of the 1930s deepened the decline, but it no less marked a process of neighbourhood decay that was common to the rest of urban Canada. Cabbagetown's life-quality, cohesion and morale went downhill together. This was the Cabbagetown which

⁹W.A. Craick cited in J. Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985), 51.

¹⁰Hugh Garner, *Cabbagetown* (Toronto: Simon & Schuster of Canada, 1968), 15-16.

Garner and Lieutenant-Governor Herbert Bruce encountered in the mid-1930s. Here Garner found:

... blocks of red brick houses crowding the broken sidewalks into the narrow roads. they are five or six room houses and are supposedly easy to heat. That is why the landlords refrain from the expense of providing a furnace to heat them. Most of the heat is derived from coal ranges that spread over half the small kitchens. The heat from these, which seeps through the clothes lines full of work clothes, underwear, and socks, is sometimes reinforced by small Quebec heaters in the hall or upstairs rooms. Some of the parlours are decorated with mid-Victorian bric-a-brac In some of the houses of Cabbagetown there is squalor. Not in all the houses, but in some. It is that kind of squalor shown by bare board floors or worn out linoleum. It is apparent in torn wallpaper and fly-specked ceilings. It is noticeable in pieces of dry bread on tables, and filmy milk bottles half-full of souring milk. There are dark faded curtains hanging between the living room and the front room which is turned into a bedroom.¹¹

The area was still dominated by English and Scottish residents with a smattering of Irish and French Canadians and now recently arrived European immigrants, as indicated by the Macedonian church, Saints Cyril and Methody, at the corner of Trinity Street and Eastern Avenue.¹² In many ways little had changed since the turn of the century, but for many observers this was exactly the problem with the neighbourhood; the rest of the city had passed it by.

Good-bye to All That!: The Bruce Report & the Origins of Canada's Social Housing Programs

On March 6, 1934, at a gala luncheon that was part of Toronto's centennial celebrations, Ontario's Lieutenant Governor Herbert Bruce rose to propose a toast to the future health of the city. After directing a few jocular remarks about Toronto's first mayor,

¹¹Hugh Garner, "Cabbagetown" in J.L. Granatstein and P. Stevens, eds., *Forum Selections from Canadian Forum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 145.

¹²Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Macedonian Community in Toronto to 1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 50.

William Lyon Mackenzie, towards the late mayor's grandson, William Lyon Mackenzie King, who was seated at the head of the table, Bruce proceeded to praise the city as "a great and beautiful city ... enviably situated, a city of fine residential areas, of beautiful buildings, of high standards of citizenship." However, no one was prepared for the rest of Bruce's toast:

... but I fear in all candour one must confess that this city, in common with every large city, has acquired inevitable 'slum districts.'

These areas of misery and degradation exert an unhappy environmental influence upon many of our citizens. You will probably say: "But, Toronto has few such areas and they are not of great extent! I say, and I think you will agree with me, that Toronto wants **none** of them, and that the Toronto of the future which we like to contemplate **will** have none of them.

It seems to me that the only availing remedy in Toronto is a planned decentralization which will take the outmoded factory away from our congested central areas and substitute for it on the outskirts a new modern building. That would permit workers to establish their homes convenient to their work in surroundings where their children would learn by experience that grass is a green, living and loving carpet, and that there are really and truly other and livelier flowers than those of the lithographed calendar that hangs on the cracked, crumbling and soiled wall of a murky room into which the sun's rays have never penetrated. It seems to me, also, that as we evacuate those factories and hovels, we must raze them and bury the distressing memory of them in fine central parks and recreational centres.¹³

Lieutenant Governors are ceremonial figures and rarely articulate anything more than banal platitudes, especially at centennial gatherings, yet Bruce's speech marked the opening salvo in Toronto's, and indeed Canada's, modern assault on the slum.

Within days of the speech Bruce and others established a committee to enquire into the housing conditions of poor and working-class Torontonians. By the fall of 1934 the committee issued what would become known as the Bruce Report, written largely by prominent architect Eric Arthur, and Harry Cassidy, a professor of the newly formed

¹³H. Bruce, "Foreword" in *Report of the Lieutenant Governor's Committee on Housing Conditions in Toronto* (Toronto, publisher unknown, 1934), 5. (Hereafter cited as *Bruce Report*).

University of Toronto School of Social Work. The Report soon became the “bible” of social housing activists, not only in Toronto, but across Canada. More importantly, it provided blue prints for the clearance of Cabbagetown’s slums and their replacement by what would be Canada’s first public housing project - Regent Park.

The Bruce Report was an important landmark in Canadian social housing history. For one, not since “Privy Pot” Herbert Ames’s publication *The City Below the Hill* outlined the miserable housing conditions of working-class Montreal at the turn of the century, had there been such a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between urban poverty and the built environment.¹⁴ The committee surveyed more than 1,300 central city dwellings, which contained more than 1,400 households, and revealed that nearly three-quarters of these dwellings fell below minimum standards of health and safety, two-thirds needed fairly extensive repairs, many had no baths, no central heat, and nearly 10 percent still had outdoor toilets. But what the committee found, they declared to be only the “thin-edge of the wedge.” They estimated that these figures represented only somewhere between one-third and one-half the number of unfit dwellings in the city; at least 2,000, and more likely 3,000, Toronto dwellings were unfit for human habitation.¹⁵

The Report laid out not only the statistics, but brought home what such conditions meant to the inhabitants of such housing. This meant that many endured roofs that leaked, floors which rotted beneath them, toilets and sinks which froze into “chunk[s] of ice in

¹⁴Herbert Ames, *The City Below the Hill*, (repr of 1898 ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972). Ames earned himself the nickname of Privy Pot Ames because his study focussed heavily on the existence of outdoor toilets in Montreal’s poorer neighbourhoods.

¹⁵*Bruce Report*, 15.

winter.” The lack of decent indoor plumbing meant that many families lacked proper facilities to bathe, or to wash clothes. Other houses were verminous places, where rats and bugs bit small children and where parents kept lights on all night to prevent the pests from “eating them up.” Even more shocking it outlined that many families were often forced to pay \$20 a month for such accommodation even though in the depths of the depression social workers claimed that few could afford to pay more than \$12 a month.¹⁶

These conditions, especially their concentration in two particular neighbourhoods -- The Ward and Moss Park (i.e. Cabbagetown) -- led the authors to conclude that while Toronto may not have “large area[s] in which all or nearly all the houses are disreputable, decayed, and dirty, in which numerous families are herded together, overcrowded, shiftless, perhaps criminal or semi-criminal, in which the decencies of life are neglected, and the amenities of life are non-existent ... [it did have] small and scattered groups of dwellings in which the conditions of slum life [were] in full evidence.”¹⁷

Though the Bruce Report pontificated about the evils of poor housing, it also laid out the basis for minimum housing standards. Until this time, there were few basic housing, health or safety standards which could be enforced. The Public Health Act, according to the report’s authors, required “adequate sanitary convenience,” which they claimed meant that dwellings with an outdoor toilet and single tap in the yard met health regulations in Toronto. This, however, was hyperbole on the part of the authors to exaggerate the extent of the slum problem in the city. As early as 1913, the city’s chief medical officer, Dr. Charles Hastings,

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 19-22, 56.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 13.

convinced city council to pass a by-law enabling the board of health to force property owners to install basic plumbing, with the city adding the costs of the improvements to property owners' tax bills. Though the law was feebly enforced during the war, by the 1930s, the city virtually ceased financing plumbing improvements, because nearly all dwellings in the city had basic sanitary facilities. Moreover, as Richard Harris notes, most of the improvements were not clustered in the central city slums but took place in recently annexed neighbourhoods bordering the city limits, such as Earls court, the Junction, and Riverdale.¹⁸ To be sure, as the Bruce Report revealed, dwellings with outdoor privies and taps in the yard still existed in the central city during the 1930s, but this had more to do with the reluctance of city officials to compel improvements during the tight years of the Depression, rather than lacking the authority to do so.

Even so, the city had few means by which they could force owners to bring their properties up to current building standards, short of total demolition of the property.¹⁹ Toronto, like most cities, had at best a patchwork of building codes and by-laws. In fact, until the Bruce Report, Toronto lacked a housing standards by-law. The standards outlined in the Report included such basic amenities as proper light and ventilation; complete inside plumbing; central heating in the winter; and adequate protection against the elements, serious dampness, and vermin. These standards went on to become part of Toronto's pioneering Standard of Housing By-law in February 1936, a by-law which governed housing conditions in the city for the next three decades.

¹⁸R. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*, 152-53. See also Map 6.3

¹⁹*Bruce Report*, 68.

The Report and the by-law also helped provoke the federal government into action by sponsoring the Federal Home Improvement Loans Guarantee Act of 1936, as a cheaper palliative than large slum clearance public housing projects. Under the by-law and the Federal Home Improvement loan program city officials inspected over 9,000 homes of which over half were repaired at a cost of just under \$1 million. To many in the city, especially the City's Finance Commissioner these two programs "undoubtedly obviated, to a considerable extent, the necessity of a low-cost housing programme, which would have involved an expenditure of millions of dollars in the erection of buildings."²⁰

More important, however, was the Report's perpetuation of the crude environmentalism characteristic of Victorian exposés of poor housing. According to the authors: "a good environment means increased self-respect and improved morale; a poor environment means the opposite." To underscore the point, the Report quoted American housing reformer Laurence Veiller:

When one's outlook on life is some filthy alley, piled high with the cast-off refuse of humanity, noisome with odours, and when as far as the eye can reach, there is nothing but sordid stretches of drab, unpainted, dilapidated, uninteresting buildings, one vast waste space, it is not strange that one's mental outlook on life should be very much the same. How we can expect either a healthy body or a healthy mind in people who have that kind of environment, day in and day out, is beyond understanding.²¹

Much of the Report thus focussed on the poor mental and physical health of those who lived in poor housing. Overcrowded, cold, damp, and verminous dwellings were breeding grounds

²⁰For more on the Federal Home Improvement Loans Guarantee Act, especially the gender implications of the act, see Margaret Hobbs and Ruth R Pierson, "'A Kitchen That Wastes No Steps': Gender, Class and the Home Improvement Plan, 1936-1940," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 21 (1988), 9-37. Quote from James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918*, 68.

²¹*Bruce Report*, 40.

for disease, and high rates of infant mortality. More importantly, poor housing sustained serious pathologies, including juvenile delinquency, divorce, and incest. One of the authors' chief definitions of a slum was "a place where crime is bred." Overcrowded homes ostensibly led children to use the streets as playgrounds which eventually brought them into gangs who initiated children into the "art of delinquency." This of course led to more general crime as adults, and although Toronto did not yet have certain districts "which are virtually cess-pools into which flow the criminal and debased population of the underworld," it was clear from police reports that "the environment created, [by bad housing conditions] through its encouragement of drinking, gambling, sexual laxity and petty crimes, [made] a breeding ground for crime."²² Finally, the Report concluded that the "whole plane of sex morality is ... lower in districts of poor housing." Where houses were poorly lighted, where the sexes met "indiscriminately," and where the lack of privacy due to overcrowded conditions led to a "breakdown in self respect" there was a general increase in sex delinquency, represented by the numerous "houses of ill-fame."²³

Like other housing reformers, the authors of the Bruce Report declared that better housing would cut mortality rates and stamp out prostitution, reduce crime and eliminate juvenile delinquency, but only if they could completely remodel the environment, by wiping away the old and build again on a grand scale.²⁴ Only the elimination of the entire slum neighbourhood, not just the individual slum houses, could mitigate the pathological effects of

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, 50.

²⁴Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the American Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 234.

slum areas. Picking up the cue from the Bruce Report, the authors of Toronto's 1943 *Master Plan* stated in no uncertain terms that rehabilitation and spot clearance had a "hit and miss" nature which at best would create:

a hodge-podge programme of reconstruction with slum industries, and slum houses hopelessly mixed with a spattering of new duplexes, bungalows, small apartments and patched over dwellings and the whole thing superimposed over an area which is equipped with antiquated educational facilities and a horse and buggy street system. The progress of blight will no doubt be retarded but the sources of the disease will remain to infect not only these areas but the surrounding areas as well.²⁵

Instead, both the Bruce Report and the City Planning Board argued that redevelopment areas needed to clear out everything, houses, industries, shops and streets and start fresh with a "totally new and modern neighbourhood designed for modern urban life."²⁶ Indeed, it was necessary to destroy the neighbourhood to save it.

Part of the Bruce Report was an intensive survey of these two areas and plans for a public housing project for Cabbagetown, which would eventually become Regent Park nearly fifteen years later. Known as the "Bad Areas," the Ward and Moss Park were "a disgrace to the city." Here in these two neighbourhoods nearly three-quarters of the houses fell below a minimum standard of amenities and nearly half of them fell below minimum health standards, while nearly two-thirds were in need of internal and external repairs. According to the Report, the Moss Park district presented a multitude of features which made it unsuitable as a residential district. For one, the Report cited the intrusive smells, dirt and noises from local breweries, textile factories and box manufactures. More important, and in many ways

²⁵City of Toronto Planning Board (CTPB), *The Master Plan for the City of Toronto - Second Annual Report* (December 31, 1943), 19.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 20.

shocking to the investigators, was the lack of vegetation in the neighbourhood. The contrast with the rest of the city, which was generally blessed with grass and trees, could not be more stark. Here small poorly constructed backyards full of automobile parts, garbage, clothes' lines and broken baby carriages forced adults and children to play in the front yards, streets and the "appallingly" numerous narrow alleyways which characterized the district.²⁷ In short, the Report concluded, "the Moss Park problem is one of crowded houses in uncongenial surroundings. The streets and alleys are common playgrounds and the dwellings bordering these streets are generally without style and in bad structural condition."²⁸

From the above descriptions it appeared that complete clearance of Cabbagetown and its replacement by model housing was the only prescription to save the neighbourhood. However, a closer examination of the detailed findings of the Report suggest that housing conditions, while admittedly substandard, were not nearly as bad as might warrant such drastic urban surgery. Of the 3,047 dwellings inspected in the Moss Park area nearly one third of them were in "good" condition. Another forty-three percent, or nearly 1,300 dwellings were categorized as "moderate", that is structurally sound, but in need of some repair. Only twenty-four percent of the more than 3,000 dwellings were deemed to be beyond repair. Figures for the interior condition of the houses revealed even better conditions as only twelve percent of the houses were bad enough to meet the criteria necessary for demolition.²⁹

Even in two of the three selected blocks supposedly chosen to illustrate the worst

²⁷*Bruce Report*, 26.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 28.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 136.

conditions and hence the need for slum clearance, less than 15 percent of the dwellings were so structurally unsound as to justify demolition. The interior quality of the houses in Block I (bounded by Oak-Dundas-Sackville-Sumach Streets), which would later become part of Regent Park North, further revealed that only 3 houses out of a total of 159 in the area were in "bad" condition internally. Ironically, despite the sound structural quality of most dwellings, over sixty percent failed to meet health standards, mostly due to the predominance of dirt basements, stoves to heat the houses, lack of proper bathing facilities and the presence of outdoor privies. Block II, which would later become part of Regent Park South, was in better condition, both structurally and in terms of health standards. Here residents were more likely to have cement basements, central heating, baths and full indoor plumbing. The worst area in Moss Park was in fact outside of the recommended reconstruction area, in what was rapidly becoming known as Toronto's tenderloin district. Even Cabbagetowners drew distinctions between the two neighbourhoods, as this area with a high preponderance of rooming houses was home to a more transient population. In Block III, situated in the south-east corner of Cabbagetown, bounded by Dundas, Queen, Seaton and Berkeley streets, nearly forty percent of the dwellings were in bad repair. This area would eventually be redeveloped, but not until 1961 when the neighbourhood was cleared to make way for the Moss Park Limited Dividend housing project.

Clearly there were other reasons at hand for choosing Block I as the first reconstruction area. As the Report outlined, most of the dwellings in the area had been there since the beginning of the neighbourhood in 1880s. Most were of frame construction with simple brick veneer covering the front of the house. Because the houses were so old and of

simple design, many of them, especially on the interior streets of the district, were valued at less than \$500. For this reason, many of the houses qualified for the city's small house tax exemption, which reached as high as 50% of the taxes to be paid. As a result, the city lost thousands of dollars in tax revenue because of low property and building values in the area. One of the chief arguments used by city officials and social housing advocates to promote the slum clearance and public housing project was the huge discrepancy between the tax dollars the city received from the neighbourhood and the costs of services dispensed to keep the "slum" neighbourhood alive.

To alleviate Toronto's slum problem the report recommended a comprehensive slum clearance plan and the replacement of the dilapidated houses with low-cost publicly subsidized houses and apartments. The Bruce Report suggested three different rehousing schemes for the Oak, Sackville, Dundas and Sumach (Block I) area, all of which were based on American urban planner Clarence Stein's garden suburb model first developed in Radburn, New Jersey. All plans called for the complete clearance of the area and the construction of a varying mixture of single family dwellings, duplexes and apartments. All of the dwellings were to be built on the periphery leaving the central area free as green space and playgrounds for children. In addition to reducing the land coverage occupied by buildings, there were to be no through roads in the interior of the project. The committee preferred the third scheme, which included a number of three-storey apartment buildings with only a smattering of single family dwellings because the plan could house a greater number of families and provide more green space than any of the other plans. The committee, however, recognized that its plans for apartments would not be popular with Torontonians who commonly associated apartments with either

dingy tenements or luxury living.³⁰ The committee estimated that the cost of such a project would be \$580,000, while rentals in the project would be \$19 a month for a five-roomed house, and \$15 and \$25 a month for 3 and 5-bedroom apartments, respectively. Of course these rentals were equal if not more than what area residents were already paying for sub-standard accommodation. Thus, the committee believed that the residents would require some kind of rent subsidy.

The Report and its recommendations reflected growing support during the 1930s for slum clearance and public housing plans. As Sean Purdy notes, the combination of widespread misery and the inability of governments to combat the causes and effects of the Depression allowed social scientists and social housing advocates a much greater range of latitude to study and present solutions to the 'housing problems' of urban Canadians. The Report did much to re-invigorate the social housing movement in Toronto, especially with the establishment of a drop-in housing centre at the University of Toronto to "gain community interest and support for public action in slum clearance, public housing and centralized planning." Those involved with the committee, along with other academics, town-planners and socially-minded politicians used this forum to formulate new approaches to Canadian housing problems and eventually organized two national conferences in 1939, which criticized the federal government's half-hearted attempt at a national housing policy under the Dominion Housing Act (1938).³¹

³⁰See Richard Dennis, "Interpreting the Apartment House: Modernity and Metropolitanism in Toronto, 1900-1930," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 20 (1994), 305-322.

³¹Sean Purdy, "Housing Reform Thought in English Canada, 1900-1950," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*.(hereafter *UHR*) 25 (March 1997), 36. See also H. Carver, *Compassionate Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); and J. Bacher, "One Unit Was Too Many: The Failure to Develop a Canadian Social Housing Policy in the Great Depression," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 22 (Fall 1987), 50-61.

Nonetheless, despite the Report's popularity within the social science and social work communities, official reception of the Report was less than warm. Tracy Le May, the city's planning commissioner since 1930, scoffed at the Report by claiming that dilapidated housing in Toronto was scattered and that the decay had not reached the same proportions as that in some British cities where local authorities were forced to tear down slums to "stave off revolution."³² Le May, like many other Torontonians, also blamed the poor themselves for their substandard housing conditions, and wondered whether new housing could reform their slovenly habits. Mayor William Stewart and prominent realtor A.E. Le Page worried about tampering with property rights, not to mention the interference subsidies would create in the housing market. Prime Minister Bennett was, reportedly, appalled by the sums outlined in the Bruce Report needed to provide decent shelter for poor Torontonians. The Central Council of Ratepayers also objected to the high cost of the plan, especially during the Depression. They also opposed the "segregation of the poor in one district" which they claimed was "even worse than the old feudal system." Finally, Cabbagetowners were themselves apprehensive about the plans for their neighbourhood. They objected to the slumming parties of town planners, architects, clergymen, and public-spirited people who roamed their streets and peered into their windows, closets, and lives. More important was the residents' incredulity concerning the project. As Hugh Garner reported in an article in the *Canadian Forum* in 1936,

There is an embryo movement on foot to clear Cabbagetown of its slums [and] the people who live there don't like it. What is to become of them when the slums are cleared? They will have to move into other slums. And when the new houses are built, how can they move back into them? They have no money. It will indeed be a miracle if they are taken back into the new houses

³²J. Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918*, 68.

for the amount of money that the government now allows for rent. They have no visions of a clean, beautiful district for them. They are not ruled by grandiose illusions as to their status. They have not been at the mercy of relief officers for four or five years for nothing. They think that this slum clearance scheme is one to make the sight of the poor districts easier on the eyes of the beholder. The new houses will cause the slum dwellers to move and scatter or, if the undreamt-of-happens, the new houses will hide the squalor that lies beneath their masonry. In neither case is the Cabbagetowner satisfied.³³

It is not surprising, then, that Toronto electors rejected the proposed slum clearance scheme in a referendum during the 1938 city elections.

Building Regent Park: Bulldozing Buildings and People

On October 29, 1948, as clouds threatened rain, Mayor McCallum dedicated the cornerstone of the Regent Park Housing Project, capping almost fifteen years of concerted action for public low-rental housing. Members of City Council and the newly formed Housing Authority took most of the bows while a small audience of volunteer lay and professional members who had fought long and hard for this project stood quietly in the background. Also hidden in the background, among the “motley array of dilapidated sheds, flat roofs and clotheslines” were Regent Park residents themselves who silently watched the death of their neighbourhood, mere spectators to an event which, for better or worse, would transform their neighbourhood and their lives.³⁴

Clearly marked as Toronto’s, and perhaps even Canada’s, most important reconstruction project, the question now was how to proceed. Between 1938 and 1947 when construction first began on Regent Park, dozens of individuals, groups, and companies came forward with plans to carry out the proposals of the Bruce Report. As the previous chapter

³³H. Garner, “Cabbagetown,” 147.

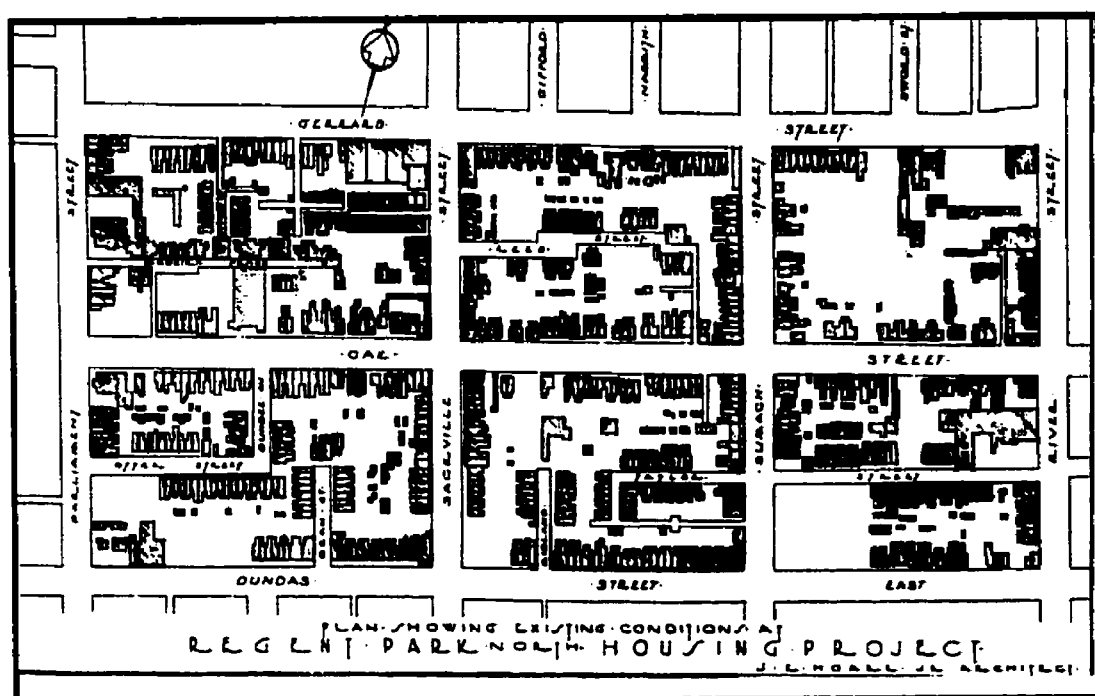
³⁴A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 81-82.

illustrated, politicians, social workers and other social housing advocates had not given up their fight to put the Bruce Report into action. However, the immediate housing needs of war workers put a comprehensive slum clearance and public housing program on the backburner until 1943. It was not until the city and the nation geared up for post war reconstruction that reformers' plans for the "renewal" of Cabbagetown returned to the top of Toronto's political agenda.

In particular, the 1943 Annual Report and Master Plan of the newly formed City of Toronto Planning Board placed the issue of slum clearance in Cabbagetown at the top of its list of planning priorities. In the report, planners selected the area from Dundas Street to Gerrard Street, between Parliament and River Streets as the city's number one reconstruction and planning project (See Figure 2.1). Planners singled out this particular area of Moss Park for a number of reasons. For one, it was one of the oldest sections of Cabbagetown, where the original construction of the houses dated back to the 1880s. As a result, many of the houses were deemed to be in poor shape structurally and many lacked necessary amenities such as central heat and proper plumbing. In addition to the poor structural condition of the dwellings, they were severely overcrowded with 822 families occupying only 765 dwelling units in only 628 houses. These figures did not include the numerous boarders and roomers who also occupied many of the houses in the area, which brought the total population to at least 3,717, and by some estimations as many as 4,000 residents.³⁵ In addition, numerous

³⁵According to city planning reports the "official" population of Regent Park was 3,717, in 1946, but assessment data collected late in 1946 revealed a population of 3,845, while an independent survey estimated the number to be closer to 4,000. See City of Toronto Archives (CTA), Toronto Reconstruction Council/Civic Advisory Committee (TRC/CAC), RG 249, Box 5, file 8, Humphrey Carver, "Memorandum to the Chairman of the TRC, Re: Regent Park Housing Project," February 1946; and J.F. Rowland to TRC Housing Committee Re: Regent Park, n.d.

Figure 2.1



Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, *Report of the City of Toronto Planning Board, 1947* (Toronto: CTPB, December 16, 1947), Plate 7, 20.”

Regent Park Before Slum Clearance

industrial and commercial buildings, including a paper box factory, a poultry supply company and a metal window frame manufacturer, encroached on the residential area. Open space was limited largely to vacant lots where once-dilapidated houses had been torn down. As a result children were forced to play in the “dingy streets and postage stamp backyards.”³⁶

As early as December 1944 Toronto City Council had begun negotiating with the federal government to provide subsidies under the recent provisions of the NHA to proceed with the Planning Board’s plans for slum clearance in Regent Park. By mid 1946 an agreement with Housing Enterprises Limited was now on the table. HEL proposed to clear the area and

³⁶Housing Authority of Toronto (HAT), *The Housing Authority of Toronto Opens the Door to Better Living: A Review of Progress 1947-1964*. (Toronto, Housing Authority of Toronto, 1965), 4.

build 854 new dwellings; 248 of these could be built before any demolitions took place. Most of the new dwellings would be contained in “super-block apartments” leaving more than 70 percent of the area as open green space, hence the designation Regent “Park.” To help alleviate the city’s general housing shortage the initial plans proposed an increase in population from 3,700 to nearly 4,400 persons. The plans also proposed a “built where they ain’t” strategy which would see 248 apartments built on vacant land so as not to exacerbate the housing crisis. HEL agreed to put up 10 percent of the cost of construction and receive the other 90 percent under NHA loans at 3 percent interest. The city agreed to contribute half the cost of acquisition and clearance and accept a limited tax return from the land and buildings. With all of the government subsidies the rents could be reduced from the original proposed range of \$45 to \$60 a month to \$34 to \$40 a month.³⁷

While the plan did have some merits, the rents proved too high to rehouse local residents. Current rentals in the area averaged \$21 a month; 90 percent of Cabbagetowners paid less than \$30 a month in rent and 77 percent less than \$25. Indeed, the rents were so far beyond what Cabbagetown residents normally paid that only 3 percent of area tenants paid the rents proposed in the HEL scheme. For this reason the social housing groups and Regent Park residents attacked the proposal. The city’s most prominent social housing group, the Citizen’s Housing and Planning Association claimed that:

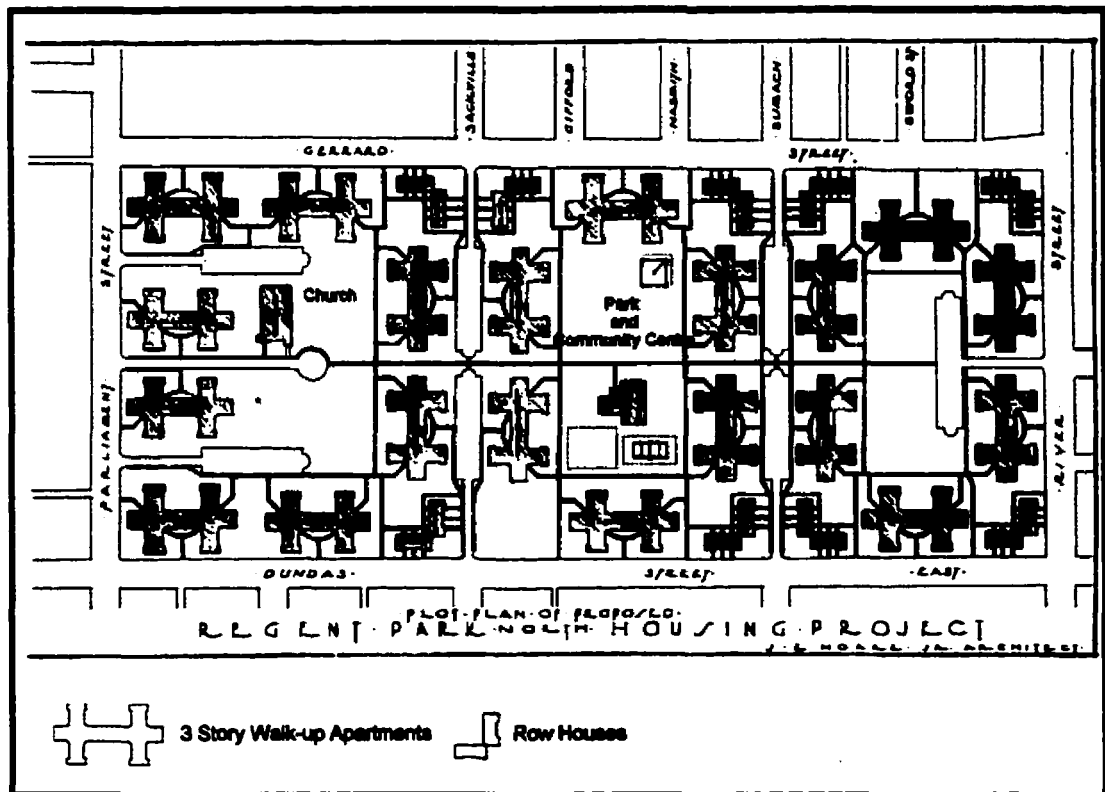
Our association does not consider the present proposal to be a satisfactory solution. It will not in its initial stages result in slum clearance; it is not low-rental housing; it will further overcrowd an already overcrowded area; it will eventually displace hundreds of families who cannot afford the higher rentals.

³⁷CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 5, file 8, H. Carver, Memorandum to the Chairman of the Toronto Reconstruction Council: Re - Regent Park Housing Project,” February 1946; and A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 56.

Hence it will prejudice the cause of true slum clearance and public housing.³⁸

Instead, the CHPA suggested that the city establish a housing authority of its own and finance the project through issuing long-term debentures and an extended amortization period. Though the city hired its own architect, J.E. Hoare, to provide new plans for the area, the revised housing scheme largely resembled the one proposed by the Bruce Committee a decade earlier (See Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2



Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, *Report of the City of Toronto Planning Board, 1947* (Toronto: CTPB, December 16, 1947), Plate 8, 21.

Regent Park After Slum Clearance

³⁸CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 5, file 8, CHPA, "A Statement on the Proposed Regent Park Housing Project," (August, 1946).

The most prominent “citizen” organization involved in the campaign to rebuild Regent Park was the Citizen’s Housing and Planning Association (CHPA). The association came together during 1944 to place pressure on the municipal and federal governments to take immediate steps to solve the wartime housing crisis and start on a project of slum clearance and public housing in Regent Park. The mastermind behind the CHPA was W. Harold Clark, the head of the Toronto Branch of Canada Trust. Like the Reconstruction Council, the CHPA represented a broad cross section of Toronto society, including social welfare and philanthropic organizations, professional town planners and architects such as future CMHC policy planner Humphrey Carver, highly influential social workers such as Albert Rose and Stuart Jaffary, Rosedale ladies, and labour organizations. Despite the number of distinguished luminaries in the association, working-class organizations, especially the Communist Party, composed a significant portion of the membership and played key roles in the organization. The presence of so many prominent social democrats and communists in the CHPA worried its members who feared that their moderate plans for social housing would be branded a communist plot. Indeed, the RCMP eventually investigated Clark as a suspected Communist.³⁹

Over the next three months the CHPA, the city’s two labour councils, the Board of Trade, and the city’s daily press carried out a vigorous campaign to convince city officials and citizens that such a proposition was not only possible, but necessary. Most of these groups soon joined the CHPA, which became the principal advocate of slum clearance and public

³⁹H. Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*, 82-83; and J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 23. Of the approximately 90 members of the organization, one quarter had connections to working-class organizations. Communist Party Controller Stewart Smith and local United Electrical Workers organizer Ross Russell played a prominent role on the executive committee, and regularly spoke on behalf of the organization. Bacher claims that both Clark and the Communist members of the Association were careful not to visit each other’s houses for fear of discrediting social housing as a party plot. John Bacher, Personal Correspondence with the author, June 10, 1998.

housing in Toronto, if not Canada.⁴⁰ The association argued that the federal and provincial governments had neglected their responsibilities to provide for rent reduction funds necessary for public housing. The decision by the city to undertake the project by no means would bring an end to its lobbying efforts on the Dominion government to live up to the recommendations of the Curtis Report to provide such subsidies. In addition, the organization through its document "What the Voters Should Know" outlined their case against slums and for slum clearance.

Though the physical conditions in the neighbourhood would have been enough for planners to justify renewal, the unsavoury and dangerous social conditions in the area came to the forefront of the public campaign to build Regent Park. People assumed that because the physical environment was poor that the residents were as well, and therefore suffered from the familiar problems that accompanied poverty - poor health, unemployment, and social and psychological problems. Time after time, proponents of slum clearance pointed to the disproportionate rates of disease, social service costs, fires and crime in run-down neighbourhoods. As Mayor Robert Saunders argued in his appeal to the voters to build Regent Park, the area accounted for \$46,479.56 of the city's social services budget, while the "sound" area of North Toronto accounted for only \$2,509.82 over the same period. Indeed, the stark contrast presented between the physical, social and economic conditions in "substandard" Regent Park and "sound" North Toronto drove home the argument that slums presented not only a physical problem but more importantly a social problem. No doubt there was a certain

⁴⁰W. H. Clark, the chief force behind the CHPA later claimed that the "Association can with some justification claim to be one of the founders of the Public Housing movement in Canada." Clark cited in Rose, *Regent Park*, 60.

degree of truth in these arguments, but the actual numbers of persons on relief and the costs of social services in Regent Park were difficult to determine.⁴¹ For one, the Departments of

Figure 2.3

1943-45	Substandard District	Sound District
Fires per 100 Acres	140.0	23.0
General Mortality per 1,000 of population	14.4	10.9
Infant Mortality per 1,000 live births	55.2	37.4
Tuberculosis Mortality per 100,000	63.6	31.5
Arrests - Adults	1,765	9
- Juveniles	156	0

Expenditures	Regent Park	North Toronto
Fire Protection	\$35,524.50	\$9,521.80
Social Services	46,479.56	2,509.82
Street Cleaning Services	5,100.00	4,900.00
Health Services	7,200.00	3,000.00
Building Services	801.00	116.17
Total	\$95,105.06	\$20,047.89
Revenue		
Taxation Received	\$31,965.49	\$83,153.52

In addition the Police Department handled 124 cases in the Regent Park area as against seven in the North Toronto Area⁴²

Slums and City Finances

⁴¹See Albert Rose, *Regent Park*, 112-113; Donald F. Bellamy, A Study of the Impact of Public Housing on Unemployment Relief Case loads and costs in the Regent Park (North) Housing Project," Master's Thesis, Department of Social Work, University of Toronto, 1953.

⁴²CTA, City of Toronto Mayor's Papers (MP), RG 7 Series A1, Box 36, file 1, "Statement by Mayor Robert H. Saunders in Connection with Regent Park Low-Cost Housing Project (Toronto, December 1946), 8.

Public Welfare and Health did not maintain detailed records of clients in the area prior to the start of the slum clearance project. Most records were kept according to district offices, and thus, most of the numbers cited by social housing advocates such as Mayor Saunders represented the entire Moss Park district, of which Regent Park was only a small part. Yet the association between the concentration of physical blight and social blight was simply assumed by most Torontonians, and thus incorporated into arguments in favour of the slum clearance project. It was an assumption that created a great deal of controversy not only between advocates and opponents of public housing, but more importantly between the city and Regent Park residents themselves.

The link between the neighbourhood's physical and social conditions also contained other more damaging assumptions, namely the view that degenerate physical conditions led to the creation of "pathological" citizens. Though most reports tended to portray Cabbagetowners as honest hardworking citizens who through no fault of their own had become helpless victims of decay, many others linked the poor physical conditions with the moral degeneration of its residents. For one, the great deal of overcrowding led many to speculate on the sexual deviancy of its inhabitants. In particular, many observers worried about "the lodger evil," the sexual abuse of children, which many believed to be a natural product of poor and overcrowded housing.⁴³ Yet more important was the link made between slums and juvenile delinquency. Given the intense attention paid to the growth of delinquency

⁴³See *Canadian Slums: Farewell Oak Street* (Canada Carries on Series), Prod. Guy Glover, Dir., Grant McLean. National Film Board of Canada, 1953 ; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 136-37.

during the war, this was not surprising.⁴⁴ Like the eradication of slums “delinquency signified the distance between ... hopes for a ‘new’ democratic, postwar society and the difficulty of overcoming past inequalities and moral weaknesses.”⁴⁵ As most “experts” noted, the prime cause of delinquency was “bad home life,” a catchall phrase that simultaneously referred to the moral and physical atmosphere of the home. As Kenneth Rogers’ study of Toronto’s “gang problem” during the Second World War noted about high rates of delinquency in the Moss Park area: “Bad housing is a basic fault. Many houses have no bathtub, and they are dirty and neglected.”⁴⁶ It is unclear whether Dr. Rogers’ statement referred solely to the houses or their inhabitants. But for Rogers, delinquency was far more than the product of individual homes: juvenile delinquency was the product of bad neighbourhoods. As he wrote about Moss Park:

There are many connecting lanes running at the back of [the] side streets and parallel to them. These lanes are excellent warrens of refuge for activities which shun the light of day. The eastern half of the area is a congested area teeming with Anglo-Saxon children.

The people of this area make a very interesting study. It abounds with ‘people of the shadows.’ In an area of this kind the comedy and tragedy of life rub elbows everyday; all the excesses and weaknesses of the flesh are exhibited ... These people are sturdy working-class people, inclined to be suspicious, many of them decent and clean, others, physically dirty and morally corrupt. Children growing up in an area of this kind are exposed to influences which exaggerate the evils of life. Bad language, gambling, drunkenness, and prostitution, are all too familiar.⁴⁷

To further emphasize the problem, the map on the wall of the local police station was so

⁴⁴Jeff Keshen, “Wartime Jitters over Juveniles: Canada’s Delinquency Scare and Its Consequences, 1939-1945,” in J. Keshen, ed., *Age of Contention: Readings in Canadian Social History, 1900-1945* (Toronto: Harcourt Canada, 1997), 364-386; and Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 53-59.

⁴⁵Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal*, 55.

⁴⁶Kenneth Rogers cited in A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 158.

⁴⁷Kenneth Rogers cited in Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal*, 57-58.

covered with pins noting the incidents of crime in the neighbourhood that observers were unable to see the map underneath.⁴⁸

Because the Regent Park project involved a major expenditure of city revenue the issue had to be sent to the voters, property owners and long-term leaseholders, before the city could proceed. In the runup to the municipal elections, the CHPA and other planning and social housing advocates continually reminded Torontonians of the social and economic arguments in favour of the project. Although, as the previous chapter illustrated, there was a good deal of opposition to publicly sponsored housing in the city, and especially to the direct participation of the city itself, there was little overt opposition to the project. To be sure there were many who believed that public housing, like relief, would “demoralize and ruin their character by giving them something for nothing.”⁴⁹ Nonetheless, most Torontonians believed that housing was the city’s most pressing problem and had first priority in Toronto’s reconstruction plans. Thus, Torontonians responded to the CHPA’s “call to action on housing” by voting overwhelmingly in favour of financing the project out of their own pockets in a plebiscite taken during the January 1, 1947 City Council elections.⁵⁰ The popular ratification of Canada’s “Premier Housing Redevelopment Project” thus went down in history

⁴⁸A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 158. Despite the popularity of the link between delinquency and poor housing there were social workers who discredit much of the evidence. In particular, K.M. Jackson of the Canadian Welfare Council was sceptical about the automatic association of the two phenomena. See NA, Records of the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), MG 28 I10, Vol. 54, File 471-2, K.M. Jackson to H.H. Hatfield, April 2, 1948.

⁴⁹W.H. Bosely cited in “Smith Says Clique Holds up Houses,” *Toronto Star*, January 23, 1946, 3. Bosely was a prominent Toronto realtor and Toronto’s Emergency Housing Administrator during the Second World War.

⁵⁰A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 57-68. The results of the election were 29,677 in favour and 18,208 opposed. However, only 47 percent of those eligible to vote, namely property holders and long-term leaseholders, actually voted in the plebiscite.

as a great victory not only for public housing, but for democratic city planning.⁵¹

Despite the popular victory for what would be Canada's first public low-rental housing project, Cabbagetown tenants and property owners remained wary of the project to be constructed for their "benefit." Ever since the first groups of town planners, architects, clergymen, and public spirited people roamed the streets of Cabbagetown in the 1930s area residents remained sceptical, if not hostile, to plans to clear their neighbourhood of its so-called "slums." Indeed, a reporter for the *Canadian Tribune* found the same cynicism and incredulity that Garner had found a decade earlier.

A trip down to Regent Park may be educational, but it is not pleasant. You would resent anyone, for any reason, prying around your front and back doors and discussing your home and property. The Regent Park people don't like it either. Since they were not told the reason for the visit and not consulted during the tour, they had some uncomplimentary remarks to pass about the "slumming" party, with photographers taking pictures of their homes and their children. This reporter got a bit of a crawling feeling at the base of his skull about it, and was glad to leave.⁵²

Slum clearance projects had been proposed for the district for years, and few believed that the current proposals would ever be implemented. But equally important, many residents doubted that they would benefit from the proposals, and therefore, feared rather than embraced the plans. What would happen to them? Would they be able to move back in? Could they afford to move into the new apartments? They continued to believe, as Garner had claimed ten years earlier, that the slum clearance scheme was a grand project of city beautification rather than program to ensure that they were better housed.⁵³

⁵¹A. Rose, *Regent Park*, Chapter 5, "Citizens in Action."

⁵²"Kids Don't Laugh Much Now in 'Cabbagetown': Future Is on Blueprint," *Canadian Tribune*, July 26, 1947, 3.

⁵³See H. Garner, "Toronto's Cabbagetown," 147-48.

These fears resurfaced almost immediately during the postwar campaign for Regent Park. Area home owners immediately formed a ratepayers' group to approach the city to find out exactly what was going to happen to their neighbourhood and to present the views of area residents. Under the leadership of area home owners Peter Semczuk and Norman Florence, the Regent Park Tenant and Ratepayers' Association immediately contacted City Hall through a 75 name petition asking that they be given assurances that home owners would be reasonably compensated during expropriation proceedings, and that rents in the new project be no more than \$30 a month for a 5-room house or apartment.⁵⁴ The association also hired a lawyer, Robert G. Parker, to represent the interests of residents in depositions before various city departments, and during expropriation proceedings. The association made it clear to City Hall that "Nobody is opposed to the Regent Park housing scheme but the residents are very much opposed to the rentals of say \$40 for apartments in that area." Since rentals in the area were less than \$25 a month, many feared they would be shunted from one slum to another.⁵⁵

Indeed, few believed the promises of the city fathers and wanted simply to be left alone. As *Toronto Star* reporter, Dennis Braithwaite reported in July 1947 the "people who live in the shabby and in most cases unpainted houses in the area [weren't] carried away with enthusiasm."

Scepticism born of poverty and years of listening to politicians' promises has taken root in Regent Park. Some are prepared to admit that the plan is fine as a plan, but they want to know where they are going to live if their houses are torn down. Others will tell you quite frankly they don't trust the city fathers, or anyone else, and they want to be left just as they are.

⁵⁴CTA, Records of the City Executive/Board of Control (CTBC), RG 2, Board of Control Correspondence 1946. minute #194, Petition from Regent Park Tenant and Ratepayers' Association, January 23, 1946. See also "Smith Says Rent Subsidies Should Be Paid by Ottawa," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 23, 1946, 2.

⁵⁵"Protest High-rental Plan for Regent Park Housing," *Toronto Star*, February 1, 1946, 17.

Representative of much of the feeling among Regent Park residents was Gordon Percy:

Why don't they just leave us alone? ... What's wrong with these houses .. I drive a milk wagon and I have seen houses out in the Woodbine and other parts of the city that are not better than these. ... They told us they would tear down these houses and replace them with apartments. How are kids going to live in apartments? Fellow down the street has nine kids. Another thing - they said they would rent them to us for \$20 a month and the city would pay the difference. I don't believe it. You wait. When they have them finished they will boost the rents to \$35 and bring in people who can pay that much. We will have to get out.

Others admitted that the conditions were poor, that roofs leaked, and porches sagged, that few houses had basements, and that the houses were almost impossible to keep warm in the winter. Nonetheless, all worried what would happen to them. Others were more militant. William Gray of Reid Street, who, like many Regent Park residents had lived in the neighbourhood for nearly 20 years, warned that area home owners would not give in so easily. He recounted a story of a neighbour whose house had been condemned by the city because it lacked a basement and proper plumbing. He stood on the roof and threatened city workers, sent to demolish the house, with an axe. "Maybe it won't come to that this time," he claimed, but he warned that there would be opposition.⁵⁶

The chief worry among area residents was that they would not receive adequate compensation during expropriation proceedings. Though many owners in the area were absentee owners, a number of owner occupiers had bought their houses during the war at inflated prices and had spent money making necessary improvements. The city's decision to pay 150 percent of assessed value was fair compensation for the absentee landlords who allowed their properties to deteriorate over the years. For those who owned and occupied

⁵⁶Dennis Braithwaite, "Where'll we go? Big Worry of Regent Park Dwellers," *Toronto Star*, July 12, 1947, 31.

their homes, however, the city's offer fell well below what they paid for their houses, what they were worth on the private market, and far below what it would cost to find another house anywhere in the city. Area home owners were caught in a difficult position. The redevelopment designation meant that area home owners had no other option than to sell to the city. Assessed values, however, were not market values, and in the postwar housing shortages people were willing to pay exorbitant prices just to get a roof over their head. In many cases in the downtown area similar houses were being sold at nearly four times their assessed values. The organization warned the city that "people simply cannot and will not work many years for a home only to turn it over to the City for peanuts." It also warned that the City should not think that it was doing any great favours for the residents of Regent Park. In fact, the Association claimed that area residents would pay the most for the project, particularly home owners who would now likely become tenants once again, especially considering the prices paid for their homes were nowhere near enough to purchase similar accommodation elsewhere in the city. As the Association argued before the Board of Control, "home owners should not be asked to subsidize the project. The taxpayers of the City of Toronto voted to proceed with the project and should be prepared to handle the financial responsibility in such a way that it does not fall upon the home owners of Regent Park." As a result, the Association denounced the city's policy of trying to obtain property at a certain percentage above assessment and instead called for replacement value as the guide to settling expropriation cases.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Alderman Dennison who often appeared on behalf of the Association claimed that the average price the city paid for houses in Regent Park North was

⁵⁷CTA, Housing Authority of Toronto (HAT), RG 28 B3, Box 33, file 26, Regent Park Ratepayers' and Tenants' Association, Brief to the Board of Control, April 13, 1949.

\$2,700, with the city paying as high as \$5,000 and as low as \$800.⁵⁸

The majority of Regent Park residents, nearly 85 percent, however, were tenants. Yet, even area tenants remained sceptical of the project constructed mostly in their interests. Tenants remained fearful that they would be unable to pay the proposed rents for the new project, while others were afraid that any increase in income while housed in the project might make them ineligible to remain as tenants. At the same time many landlords in the area refused to make repairs to their premises since they were going to be expropriated anyway. Even when the city acquired these houses through expropriation many tenants remained in dilapidated housing for years until units in Regent Park were ready for their occupancy. The extreme housing shortage in Toronto during the late 1940s and into the 1950s necessitated that Regent Park be built in stages so that tenants were not displaced by the clearance of the area. Tenants were thus shuffled from one house to another in advance of the wrecking ball. Ironically, this meant that the city became Regent Park's largest slum lord leaving many area tenants in squalor for years until the houses were eventually torn down.⁵⁹

At the same time, there were more sinister motives behind the juggling process which took place in Regent Park over the 10 years of clearance and reconstruction. According to Graham Fraser's interviews with Regent Park area residents in the late 1960s, many area tenants were being quietly culled from the list of prospective tenants. According to the Housing Authority's tenant selection policy, all residents living in the neighbourhood on or

⁵⁸G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 59.

⁵⁹CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 36, file 2, Housing Regent Park various letters from area residents, Memo from Regent Park Ratepayers Association May 12, 1947; file 3 - Memo from Regent Park Ratepayers Association, May 27, May 31, 1948; file 4, April 27, May 4, 1949; CTBC, RG 2, Board of Control Correspondence 1947, Minute # 1151 - May 30, 1947 - Memo from Regent Park Ratepayers Association.

before July 15, 1947 were given first priority for rehousing in the project. Yet, both private and public policies were removing many needy tenants from the list of eligible tenants for the new project. According to Albert Rose, many landlords tried to squeeze as much revenue out of their properties as they could before expropriation and evicted tenants to secure new ones at higher rents. Other landlords quietly sold their houses with vacant possession, which despite the expropriation by-law in effect was easy to do in a time of chronic housing shortages.⁶⁰ On the public side, Frank Dearlove, the newly appointed housing manager, was also culling “less desirable” tenants from the lists. One Regent Park resident later told journalist Graham Fraser that:

“[Dearlove] didn’t evict anybody, but eventually time ran out for some. He moved them gradually, and they finally ended up in a corner, from which there was no place to go. So he helped them get out - because he had been the Housing Officer for the City of Toronto, which maintained a kind of emergency operation. And where did he help them? He helped them into [the] Regent Park South [area]. And he said to me several times ... “Jeez, you’ve got a helluva lot of terrible people over the in [the] Regent Park South [area]. You really have . . . he didn’t use the word ‘the dregs’ but that’s what he meant.”⁶¹

Technically, the Housing Authority had to guarantee the priority of these families, but by 1952 the Authority began claiming that the priority would apply only where surplus accommodation was available.⁶² Not coincidentally, at the same time the Housing Authority was debating the rents to be charged to existing and prospective tenants on relief. Many on the Housing Authority, including labour representative C.J. Woolsey, did not want Regent Park to become

⁶⁰A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 90-91.

⁶¹G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 59.

⁶²It should be noted that there are no “official” statistics on how many former residents moved into Regent Park. Even its premier historian who was vitally involved in the project from the start, Albert Rose, does not even hazard an estimate in his own study. See A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 89.

a “dumping ground for city relievees.”⁶³ Clearly, Regent Park was meant for the “deserving poor” and not the “hard to house.”

Yet despite the problem of inadequate compensation and the uncertainties facing many tenants, the real problem with the Regent Park clearance scheme for residents was the way they were completely ignored throughout the entire process of planning, clearance and redevelopment. As the centrepiece of Toronto's post-war reconstruction plans, the clearance and reconstruction of Regent Park represented the best chance to put the ideals of democratic community planning into action. Regent Park was more than just a project of social reform: it was an experiment in proper community planning. As Humphrey Carver explained to Canadian Welfare Council and Reconstruction Council president R.E.G. Davis:

In the Conference I endeavoured to express what I believed to be the attitude of the Welfare Council towards Community Planning. I particularly took the opportunity of saying that a great deal of planning would be quite unrealistic until new legislation had provided for low-rental subsidized housing; the Canadian Welfare Council believed that only through the introduction of such measures would proper Community Planning be able to embrace all . . . levels of the population.⁶⁴

More importantly, Carver's and his colleagues in the social housing movement's emphasis on an active program of engendering community support for urban planning and social housing projects lay in the belief that former city planning projects had failed because they neglected to stimulate the interest and participation of ‘the average citizen.’ They were determined that this would not happen again.⁶⁵

⁶³“Can't Dump Relievees in Regent Park Housing – Board,” *Toronto Star*, November, 18, 1952, 11.

⁶⁴National Archives of Canada (NA), Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC), MG 28 I 14 Vol 1, file 1, H. Carver to R.E.G. Davis, June 28, 1946.

⁶⁵CTA, W.H. Clark Collection (WHCC), SC 61, Box 1, file 1, Transcript of broadcast “Toronto Tomorrow,”(CJBC), August 1, 1945.

Indeed groups such as the CHPA and its national organization the CPAC emphasized that it was not a body of experts which planned for communities. Rather the building of good communities, it claimed, rested on its efforts in making community planning “a *people’s* movement.”⁶⁶ Neighbourhoods, they believed, were the “nursery of citizen participation in public affairs.” “City dwellers,” argued Humphrey Carver, a prominent member of the Reconstruction Council’s housing committee, “[were] in need of reassurance that [their] views and predilections are taken into account in shaping [their] increasingly complicated environment. To enlist the cooperation of citizen groups and to convince them of the importance of their active help in plotting the future course of their community would be a necessary precursor to any effective planning action.” Carver warned planners and government officials to avoid the temptations of immediate results by “bulldozing the people of the community for their own good.”⁶⁷

In many ways the CHPA represented the paradoxical nature of citizen participation as envisaged by planning enthusiasts. Many CHPA members, such as Carver, Rose and Clark believed that the primary objective of the association was to “conduct an educational programme which would acquaint the citizens of the community with housing and planning problems and to make specific recommendations for the improvement and ultimate solution of those problems.”⁶⁸ The CHPA believed that it could educate people as to proper housing and planning programmes and then “plump to get them.”⁶⁹ In short, they believed that despite

⁶⁶NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, vol. 1, file 2, Executive correspondence, R.E.G. Davis to A. Armstrong, 2 September, 1947.

⁶⁷NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, vol. 1, file 18, “Report of the 1946 Conference,” 9-10.

⁶⁸A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 47.

⁶⁹NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Volume 1, file 1, Memo, December 4, 1946.

the urgency of slum clearance and the necessity of public housing, area residents had to be included in these crucial decisions which affected their lives. For this reason the Toronto chapter of the CHPA advocated tenant representation on the Toronto Housing Authority, the organization established to oversee the operation of the public housing project. Yet, at the same time the many experts and activists in the organization claimed to know the solutions. Rather than listening to the community, its job was to struggle against public inertia and to *interpret* the planners' ideas to the people. Certainly the organization was successful in this when it convinced Torontonians to make a bold statement and build and subsidize Regent Park out of their own pockets.⁷⁰ However, despite trying to make planning a "people's project" the CHPA had little if any contact with the Regent Park Tenant and Ratepayers' Association (RPTRA) during the planning stages. Indeed, even Albert Rose, who was "present at the creation," later claimed that "there was little or no objection on the part of the residents, and certainly no formal residents' or citizens' organization, to raise the question of the 'voice of the people' in the planning of the renewal programme and in the re-planning of the neighbourhood."⁷¹

Equally significant was the fact that the Toronto Reconstruction Council's Community Council Co-ordinating Committee, which was organizing Toronto neighbourhood groups around issues of urban planning, did nothing to help area residents organize around the most important issue affecting their neighbourhood. Instead, the Council left the area under the jurisdiction of the Toronto Welfare Council, which was working with local residents to combat

⁷⁰For a full account of the CHPA's role in the battle for Regent Park see A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 47-60.

⁷¹A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, February 1974), 22.

juvenile delinquency and improve morals in the neighbourhood.⁷² It was as if community organizers and social housing activists believed that the issue of the actual plans for the neighbourhood had already been decided by the Bruce Report, the 1943 Master Plan, and subsequent reports from city planners.⁷³ Community workers assumed that the residents of Cabbagetown accepted the idea that the road to their salvation lay in the demolition of their neighbourhood and its resurrection as a public housing project. Even then they believed that Regent Park would create a "community problem" because area residents would still need to be shown how to "take advantage of the opportunities the new housing will give them[!]"⁷⁴

Regent Park residents clearly illustrated to community organizers that they were not so apathetic, and not willing to idly accept the pearls of wisdom handed down to them by city planners. Area residents formed a ratepayer organization which hounded City Hall throughout the planning, clearance and reconstruction stages. Despite their numerous depositions to City Council, the residents of Regent Park during the entire period of planning and construction received almost no explanation of the city's plans, or the project's progress. No public meetings were held with residents to discuss the rent scale or eligibility for tenancy in the housing project. Despite pleas from area residents and certain members of the planning community, there was no provision made on the Housing Authority for community representation. As a result, area residents remained interested yet sceptical of the project. Briefs submitted to City Council by area residents claimed that "80% of the residents were

⁷²See Mariana Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender and Generation in the City," in J. Parr, ed., *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 26-27.

⁷³J. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 72.

⁷⁴CTA, TRC/CAC, RG 249, Box 5, file 10, Suggested letters to Members of City Council Dec 29, 1948.

opposed to the scheme if there was any way they could avoid it."⁷⁵ City politicians and members of the CHPA scoffed at the dissatisfaction of area residents. Yet a report prepared by the newly formed Toronto Housing Authority revealed that area residents referred to Regent Park as "the project rather than our project."⁷⁶ To combat such apathy the authors recommended that residents be given a representative on the Housing Authority board, but this was once again ignored.

Residents felt so helpless in directing changes to *their* neighbourhood that they turned to more antagonistic tactics to voice their concerns about the project. Instead of turning to the community council movement residents turned to more traditional forms of support including their local CCF MPP, William Dennison, and to the two city labour councils, to represent their interests. The Toronto & Lakeshore Labour Council (CLC) was the only organization that consistently came to the aid of area residents throughout the entire process, and perhaps only because Sylvester ("Ves") Perry, a Regent Park resident and member of the Ratepayer's organization, was also a prominent member of the United Packinghouse Workers' union.⁷⁷ Dissatisfied with the City's approach to urban renewal Perry campaigned, unsuccessfully, for Ward 2 alderman in the late 1940s and early 1950s to represent the interests of Cabbagetown residents facing expropriation. Regent Park may have been a success for the

⁷⁵NA, CPAC, MG 28 I 14, Vol. 3, file 1, CPAC, Toronto Branch "The Bulletin," May, 1949.

⁷⁶CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 36, file 3, Housing Authority of Toronto, *Final Report - Rent Capacity Study for Regent Park Housing Project* (May 31, 1948).

⁷⁷NA, Records of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto (LCMT), MG 28 I4, Microfilm Reel M2295, Minutes for January 28, 1946, February 23, 1949, March 14, 1949, April 11, 1949, April 25, 1949, and May 23, 1949. See also "City Hall Falls down on Housing Labor Says Cites Regent Park Rents: TLC - CCL," *Toronto Star*, March 1, 1949, 9; and "Mayor Denies 15 Families in Regent Park Told to Move," *Toronto Star*, March 5, 1949; CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 33 File 10, Mayor H. McCallum to M. Cotterill, March 4, 1949; and M. Cotterill to Mayor H. McCallum, March 8, 1949.

social housing movement, but as Albert Rose and Alison Hopwood, two prominent members of the Reconstruction Council and CHPA believed, as an experiment in democratic community planning, the project was more a “millstone” than a “milestone.”⁷⁸

From day one, Regent Park residents complained of “being left in the dark about what is going to happen to their neighbourhood.”⁷⁹ Letters from Regent Park home owners and tenants flooded into the Mayor’s office on a daily basis, asking when they would be expropriated, if they should make repairs and renovations, when would they have to move, and would they get a place in Regent Park?⁸⁰ Repeatedly, the residents’ organization, the CHPA and members of the Toronto Reconstruction Council called for representation on the Housing Authority, believing that residents had a right not only to be informed about the changes to their neighbourhood and to their lives, but also to participate in making those decisions. Such participation, the RPTRA argued, was imperative not only because area residents were “more familiar with the district and with an understanding of the various peoples involved,” but was “standard democratic practice.”⁸¹ Repeatedly Norman Florence the president of the RPTRA warned both the Housing Authority and City Council that the lack of information and consultation from both agencies was “[leaving] too much to [residents’] imagination [and] as a result ... the city has been faced with rising indignation.”⁸²

By March 1949, just as the first set of tenants were about to take up residence in the

⁷⁸Alison Hopwood and Albert Rose. “Regent Park: Milestone or Millstone?”34-36.

⁷⁹“Protest High-rental Plan for Regent Park Housing,” *Toronto Star*, February 1, 1946, 17.

⁸⁰CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 36, file 2, Housing - Regent Park - 1947

⁸¹CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 56, file 2, Regent Park Ratepayers Association Brief to the Mayor and Board of Control, November 9, 1948.

⁸²CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 33, file 26, Regent Park Tenants’ and Ratepayers’ Association, Brief to the Mayor and Board of Control, April 13, 1949.

new project, relations between the City and area residents reached a boiling point over the lack of consultation. The flare-up occurred over rents being charged to these families. Rumours began flying around the community that rents for the newly constructed 6 room row houses would be as much as \$112 a month. Considering that most residents paid no more than \$30 a month in rent their original fears and scepticism towards the project now seemed wholly justified. Within days the question of rents in Regent Park was being hotly debated in the press and in the Toronto and Lakeshore District Labour Council.⁸³ The Ratepayers' Association called for a march on City Hall to protest the proposed rents and called for a rent scale equal to one week's wages of the principle wage earner. The Hopwood-Carver Rent Scale for Regent Park was based on the same principles, that is based on 20 percent of the principal wage earners' monthly earnings; however, it also calculated another \$10 per week extra for each secondary wage earner. The first families to move into the project were atypical to the "normal" Regent Park family in that they were large and had more than one wage earner, as a result their monthly rent and service costs ran to \$75 dollars a month. Still residents believed that the project would be "low rental" and not based on one's family income. Despite the self congratulatory attitude of city politicians and social housing activists that the sliding scale for rents, was "unique in the world" residents despised the rent scale, calling it a "Russian system

⁸³CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 33, file 10, M. Cotterill to Mayor McCallum, March 8, 1949; University of Toronto Archives and Rare Books, James Shaver Woodsworth Collection, MS 35, Box 52, Scrapbooks, Newspaper Clipping, "Regent Park Rents," *Toronto Telegram*, March 18, 1949; NA, LCMT, MG 28 I 44, Reel 2295, Minutes of the Toronto Labor Council, February 28, 1949; March 14, 1949; April 11, 1949; May 9, 1949; May 23, 1949; "Mayor Denies 15 Families in Regent Park told to Move," *Toronto Star*, March 5, 1949, 1; "Labor Meet Approves Pact Amid Boos," *Toronto Star*, March 29, 1949, 36; "Regent Park Ratepayers Plan 'Surprise' City Hall March," *Toronto Star*, April 6, 1949, 1; and "Weeks Take Home Pay is Suggested as Basis for Regent Park Rent," *Toronto Star*, April 26, 1949, 10.

of prying into their salaries.”⁸⁴ Once again city officials dismissed the protestors as “ungrateful.”⁸⁵ In later years, tenants leaving the project often cited the sliding rent scale and the way it “prevented them from getting ahead” as a primary factor in seeking housing in the private market.⁸⁶

As both the residents’ association and social housing advocate Albert Rose reminded Torontonians, Regent Park residents had opened up their homes and their lives to public scrutiny, some of it in the press was often slanderous and very one-sided, so that a project of great public importance could go ahead. Indeed, residents often complained that their chief source of information about the project was the local newspapers, which despite the sympathetic stories printed about the terrible conditions in the area, tended more often than not to concentrate on the worst aspects of the area; the physical blight, the crime, particularly the constant reference to juvenile delinquency which made it appear that Cabbagetown youngsters were more than simply “potential” delinquents. Yet despite all of this, Regent Park residents were more than willing to do what they could to speed the work. However, in the process they asked to be treated as “humans and not guinea pigs.”⁸⁷ As Norman Florence the president of the Ratepayers Association made clear to the Mayor in the march upon City Hall in April 1949:

⁸⁴Frank E. Dearlove, “Toronto Can Be Proud of Regent Park,” *Toronto Board of Trade Journal*, July 1955, 5; “Ask End of Sliding Scale for Regent Park Rentals,” *Toronto Star*, January 29, 1951, 7; “Labor Says Regent Park Not Now in Low Rent Field,” *Toronto Star*, January 23, 1951.

⁸⁵H.E. McCallum cited in “Ask End of Sliding Scale for Regent Park Rentals,” *Toronto Star*, January 29, 1951, 7.

⁸⁶See Paul Ringer, *The Social Implications of Public Housing in Metropolitan Toronto* (Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, 1963).

⁸⁷CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 33, file 26, RPTRA to Mayor and Members of Housing Authority of Toronto, May 27, 1948.

We feel also that the City has been extremely careless and negligent by its failure to inform the people of the area exactly what they may expect as a result of this scheme. ... We cannot forget for one moment, nor emphasize too strongly that this project is the initial attempt at low rental housing and everyone directly concerned or subsequently affected by its development should be accorded every respect until the completion of the project. In our opinion, it should have been an obligation of the Housing Authority to arrange meetings in the public schools of the area for the purpose of imparting full information on all phases of the project. Instead, the Board chose to dictate the policy of the scheme from a round table at the City Hall, following the policy instituted by [Mayor] Saunders, and ignoring the suggestion of periodic conferences with us and of holding meetings in the area.⁸⁸

Even then the residents' concerns went unheard. Most commentators concentrated on the small turnout and disputed the association's claims that "more than eighty percent of area residents were opposed to the project." In short, politicians, planners and even sympathetic social housing activists like Rose and Carver, did not heed the warning that the project should not run roughshod over the interests, concerns and fears of residents.

Tensions between the Authority's dictatorial management policies, especially those of its Housing Manager Frank Dearlove, and Regent Park residents continued well into the 1950s. In particular, in 1951 the Housing Authority threatened to evict Regent Park's first family, the Bluetts, because Alf Bluett had installed a television antenna on the roof of his row house. Regent Park tenants rallied behind Bluett, to protest the heavy handed approach of the Housing Authority. They also despised being told how they could spend their money and being treated as if they were on public relief. But most importantly the conflict, the tenants' association claimed, was clearly the result of a lack of tenant representation on the Housing Authority. Once again residents were forced to make their case through the press, the Labour

⁸⁸CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 33, file 26, RPTRA to Mayor and Board of Control, April 13, 1949.

Council and local politicians; once again they appeared “ungrateful,” and perhaps undeserving of public housing. In the end the Housing Authority backed down and erected a central television antenna, but the whole incident left a sour taste in the mouths of Regent Park residents and their neighbours.⁸⁹

Despite the rocky road to Canada’s first public housing project, Regent Park (North) was immediately hailed as a success, and was held up as the model of public housing in Canada. By the time of its completion in 1958 there were Regent Park had provided 1,289 families with safe, clean and affordable rent-geared-to-income housing.⁹⁰ When the city ran short of money to complete the project in 1952 it had to resubmit the project to Torontonians for approval to reissue debentures. Though not as overwhelming as the first vote Torontonians once again supported the city’s program of slum clearance and public housing. No doubt they were swayed by the glowing reports that flowed in which claimed that the project had transformed the neighbourhood and its residents. All the reports confirmed what social workers and social housing activists had predicted slum clearance would do - provide “a new mode of living” (See Figures 2.4 and 2.5) Improved housing conditions reduced delinquency in the area from 147 arrests in 1947 to none in 1950 and 1951. According to Inspector Johnson of No. 4 Division, the police had received “no complaints whatsoever ...

⁸⁹“Want Tenants Represented on Regent Park Authority,” *Toronto Star*, March, 12, 1951, 5 ; “Cars Okay Why Ban TV Regent Park Tenants Call Mayor Dictator,” *Toronto Star*, August 23, 1951, 1; “Defy McCallum on Television Is Regent Park Plan - Residents Plan Video Test Case Call Mayor 'Dictator,’” *Toronto Star*, August 29, 1951, 23; “Televisions at Regent Park,” *Toronto Star*, August 24, 1951, 6; “‘Bouquet Giver’ McCallum Now Denying Her TV,” *Toronto Star*, September 11, 1951, 2; “Illegal to Ban TV Aerial to Regent Pk Tenants - MPP,” *Toronto Star*, September 19, 1951, 4; and Albert Rose, “Television and Public Housing” *Canadian Forum*, 31, (October 1951), 145-46.

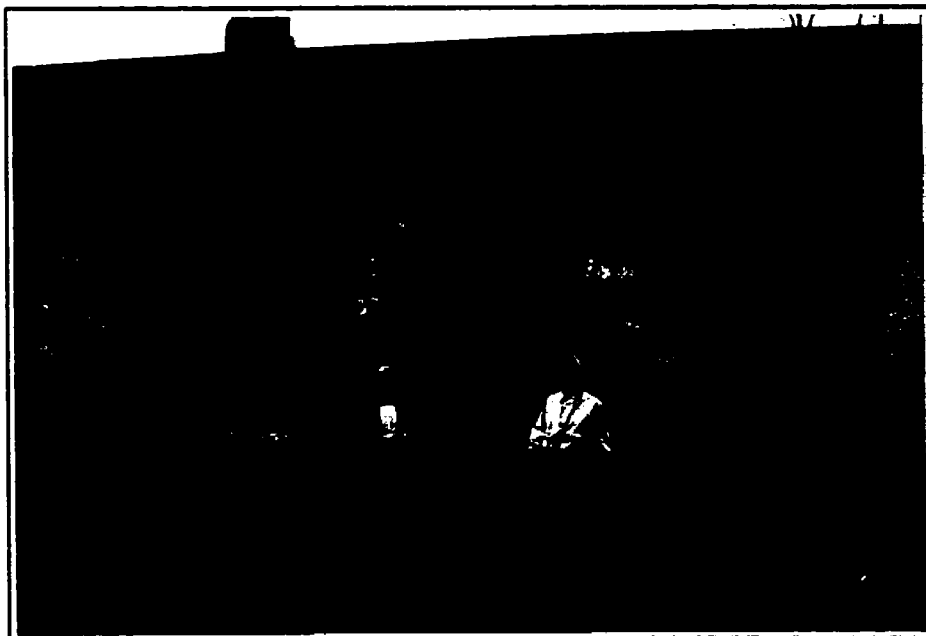
⁹⁰The 1,289 units were divided between a number of 3 storey walk-up apartment buildings with 48 and 54 units, a few 6 storey elevator apartments, built after 1952 and 56 row house units. The latter were reduced from the original plans of 72 to make room for the 6 storey elevator apartments.

[we] have never had occasion to enter any of these apartments.” Considering that the area had been judged “troublesome,” Johnson claimed that “[c]onditions [had] improved beyond ... expectations.” By ridding the area of its “fire traps,” fire officials claimed that the number of fires had been reduced from 18 to 1, and that this fire had only resulted in \$5 damage. Reports flowed in from social workers and school officials that children and families were cleaner, healthier, and most important happier, since moving into the project. Newspaper reports in the women’s section of Toronto dailies, also reported on how clean modern kitchens, bathrooms and living rooms had miraculously lifted the spirits of young mothers. The rise in “maternal efficiency” was perhaps the most important development. As Housing Manager Frank Dearlove noted in a rather disparaging compliment about the drinking habits of Regent Park tenants:

When we first moved them in, we would find a great many empty bottles in the disposal room each Monday morning. This week we found only two. I would say drinking has decreased 90% largely as a result of supplying decent housing for these families. Remember too, that the ladies want new furniture to go with the new homes, and I guess that takes the money he added with a twinkle.

Almost overnight Regent Park residents had been given a new lease on life, where once they had been a liability to the city. Indeed, financial implications were often hailed as the crowning achievement of the project. Not only had the project saved slum families from dirt, disease, and delinquency, but it had done so by earning the city more than \$240,000 dollars in taxes where it had once collected only \$36,000.⁹¹

⁹¹Grey Hamilton “Issue Before the People: Regent Park: Pioneer in Rehabilitation,” Reprinted from the *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, November 11, 1952, 3; and Frank E. Dearlove, “Toronto Can Be Proud of Regent Park,” *Toronto Board of Trade Journal*, July 1955, 5; Jean Armstrong, “Tour of Rent Park Shows Well Kept Homes,” *Globe and Mail*, July 14, 1954; J.M. Mackintosh cited in A. Rose, *Regent Park*, 108; and “Regent Park ‘Decent Housing Cut Drink 90 P.C. – Manager,” *Toronto Star*, May 2, 1950, 24

Figures 2.4 & 2.5

Source: City of Toronto Archives, Globe and Mail Collection, SC 266, Item I32 431, March 31, 1949. "The Bluett's House in Cabbagetown, 218 Sackville St."



Source: City of Toronto Archives, RG 28, 129 N, "Bluett family's new house in Regent Park North," March 31, 1949.

"Goodbye to All That": The Bluett's Move From Cabbagetown to Regent Park

For the next decade city politicians, social workers and social housing activists trumpeted these benefits of Regent Park as propaganda in their “just war” on Toronto’s slums. They repeated these shop-worn homilies so often that they became embedded in the collective consciousness of Torontonians. Indeed, as late as 1965 when neighbourhood organizations were beginning to reveal the darker side of urban renewal, some local ratepayers’ associations, such as the Ward 6 Residents’ Association, were still calling for a “Ward 6 Regent Park.”⁹² Nonetheless, those most associated with the impact of the project on Cabbagetown residents had deep reservations. When asked why she put up such a fight to oppose slum clearance in Trefann Court, Edna Dixon told a reporter: “All we had to do was look across the road at Regent Park ... and see what urban renewal was going to do to us, and we were determined that we were not going to give in.”⁹³

In the end, Regent Park was both a milestone and a millstone. On one hand, the provision of new, safe, rent-geared-to-income housing for thousands of Torontonians represented the crowning glory of the city’s postwar reconstruction programme. However, as an exercise in democratic city planning, Regent Park fell far short of the promises of Carver, Rose and other members of the city’s social housing community. As many social housing advocates feared, the “bulldozing” of the community and the interests of its residents ultimately discredited the whole program of urban renewal. Indeed, planners ignored local interests at their own peril, for Cabbagetown residents long remembered what happened in Regent Park and would ultimately have the final say twenty years later when community

⁹²NA. LCMT, MG 28 I 44, Volume 22, File “Correspondence, November 1964,” “Municipal Program of The Ward 6 Residents’ Association.”

⁹³Edna Dixon cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 42.

organizations in Don Vale and Trefann Court, remembering Regent Park, brought the city's and the federal government's urban renewal program to its knees.

Chapter 3

City Made Slums: The Prelude to Urban Renewal

A great blight creeping out from the shadows of Toronto's multi-million dollar skyscrapers and withering human hopes, is fastening on some of Toronto's most fashionable residential areas.

It is the social blight called "overcrowding." Never in the city's history has human congestion reached the stage it has today, and observers of the social scene say a major tragedy is in the making unless a super-human effort is made to come to grips with the situation.¹

The 1950s are revered as the golden age of prosperity and affluence, no more so than in self-proclaimed Boomtown Toronto. Billed as the fastest growing city in North America, Toronto was transformed by the expansive postwar economic climate. Between 1941 and 1961 the population of Metropolitan Toronto doubled from 900,000 to 1.8 million persons, 500,000 of these during the 1950s alone. Much of this growth was fuelled by a flood of European immigration to Canada. As the developing national metropolis, Toronto was the conduit and destination for much of this immigration, which transformed the city from its staid British Protestant past to a more cosmopolitan and multicultural mosaic.² Fueling this change was Toronto's stature as the centre of the economic revival engineered by the federal government. With the backing of American capital, Toronto soon became the nation's financial capital and Canadian headquarters to many of the world's largest multinational corporations. American branch plants also added significantly to the city's large and diverse manufacturing base. Yet as much as Boomtown Toronto was fed by a burgeoning world economy, it created its own economic growth through massive public investments in

¹Monroe Johnston, "Major Tragedy Coming if City Does not Solve Overcrowding -- Experts," *Toronto Star*, November 11, 1953, 29 & 50.

²W. Magnusson, "Toronto" in W. Magnusson and A. Sancton, eds., *City Politics in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 112.

infrastructure development and modernization. The tremendous growth of public investment in roads, sewers, and schools, especially after the formation of Metropolitan government in 1953, fed the city's economy. Much of this development took place in the suburbs and was underwritten by federal government housing policies, directed through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which sought to sustain a mass market for new housing construction. According to Metro's Planning Commissioner, Murray Jones, "[Torontonians] never had it so good."³

Lurking beneath Toronto's Boomtown image, however, was a much darker picture of the central city - overcrowded, decaying, and blighted. The continued intractability of the city's housing problem, especially for low-income earners, punctured the optimism generated by Toronto's postwar growth. Toronto slums mocked the apparent progress of the age. Despite widespread prosperity, the 1950's ideal of suburban living remained but a dream for many Torontonians. The bold postwar reconstruction promises of adequate and decent housing for all, discussed in the first two chapters, seemed as distant as ever. The continued existence of slum housing conditions was blamed for a whole range of urban problems, including crime, juvenile delinquency, poor health, and poverty. Moreover, they were an aesthetic affront to modernist planning ideals and a functional liability to modern urban centres. In short, slums were "blots" on the face of the city's "Boomtown" image.

The following chapter examines the moral panic created by Toronto's seemingly intractable postwar 'housing crisis' and the city's attempt to resolve the crisis through yet another slum clearance project - Regent Park South. Two particular "stories" spoke to

³M. Jones, "Metropolitan Man: Some Economic and Social Aspects," *Plan Canada*, 4 (June 1963), 11-23; and J. Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918*, (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985) Ch 4. *passim*.

Torontonians' fears that their city was not the progressive metropolis trumpeted by pro-growth city boosters. Indeed, the city's pro-growth boosters seemed to be responsible for fostering slums through acts of both omission and commission. As in the immediate postwar period, however, Torontonians fervently believed that they could overcome the blight which threatened the heart of the city through further programs of slum clearance and public housing. Rather than a critique of Toronto's boosterism, the campaigns against Toronto's officially created slums were an essential part of Toronto's "progressive" image.

Doubling-Up in Boomtown Toronto

Throughout Canada the shift to a peacetime economy meant a gathering recovery in residential construction. After initial postwar shortages caused by rapid demobilization and the shortage of construction materials, Canadians were building and buying homes at record levels by 1949. Despite continued shortages, many of the completed dwellings helped "doubled-up" families move into their own homes. However, initially, Toronto did not participate in the national housing boom. In terms of dwellings completed per capita, Toronto ranked last among Canadian cities in 1947, second from last in 1948, and third from last in 1949. Unlike many other Canadian cities, Toronto and its nine inner suburbs had no room to build. The three remaining suburbs of North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke had sufficient space to house the city's excess population, but lacked serviced land. Between 1947 and 1954 there were only 55,680 dwelling units completed in the entire Metropolitan area, despite the fact that the area's population was growing by more than 50,000 annually. The rapid increase in population caused by immigration from abroad and within Canada led the Housing Officer of the Department of Public Welfare to warn the Mayor that:

Housing conditions in Toronto continue to get more desperate each month and it is impossible to locate suitable accommodation for the many families requiring it. Families coming to Toronto from other parts of Canada, and those coming from Europe are causing a serious condition in Toronto today.... I am of the opinion that if families continue to move to Toronto and District the higher authorities will have to do something about providing permanent housing at reasonable rents.⁴

The lack of serviced land was the chief impediment to solving Toronto's housing crisis and was the principal reason behind the formation of the Metropolitan Government in 1953. Once Metro government came into being, housing production immediately soared, climbing from 9.8 dwelling starts per thousand persons in 1953 to 16.4 in 1954. Over the next 7 years more than 141,000 dwellings were completed, enough to start making inroads into the city's overcrowding problem. Nonetheless, the heyday of the suburban bungalow was relatively short-lived. The predominance of single-family housing starts peaked in 1955 and subsided by 1961 when they composed only less than half of the number of new dwellings completed. More and more Torontonians were becoming apartment dwellers, or in the lingo of the day "cliff dwellers" as both the number and size of apartment buildings grew rapidly across the Metropolitan area between 1954 and 1961. Even in the outer suburbs, large apartments rose like Le Corbusier's "City in the Park" and accounted for more than fifty percent of the new dwellings by 1961.⁵

While the quantity of new housing was clearly the chief factor behind Toronto's crisis, affordability limited the ability of almost two-thirds of Torontonians to escape the crowded

⁴City of Toronto Archives (CTA), City of Toronto Mayor's Papers (MP), RG 7 Series A1, Box 33, file 11, D.C. Parker to Mayor H. McCallum, May 18, 1951.

⁵Timothy Colton, *Big Daddy: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Building of Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), Chapter 7; Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), *Annual Report 1950-1960* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, various years); and Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (MTPB), *Metropolitan Toronto Key Facts* (Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, April 1970).

central city. The cheapest suburban house in Scarborough sold for at least \$10,500 in 1956, with average prices running at between \$15-\$18,000. The minimum income required to qualify for a National Housing Act (NHA) mortgage for such a home was \$3,600. CMHC derived this minimum figure solely from the income of the household head and did not include "secondary" incomes of wives, or other household income (including income derived from boarders). The average annual wages distributed by Toronto's seven principal economic sectors was only \$3,120. Blue-collar workers who moved to the suburbs depended heavily on unregulated, and often highly discounted, second mortgages. To afford a home in the suburbs many families resorted to sending married women out into the paid labour force and/or the presence of boarders.⁶ Previous strategies of owner building in the suburbs, prevalent and popular in Toronto in the first half of the century as Richard Harris has shown, were largely closed down after the war due to more stringent building standards established by suburban municipalities and CMHC.⁷ Yet despite the numerous obstacles to home-ownership, owner occupancy in Toronto soared in the immediate postwar period to a high of 80 percent. But even in the self-proclaimed "city of homes" many people worried that such a high degree of home-ownership was not necessarily a positive sign.⁸

Much of the reduction in the rental stock in the city came at the expense of the rising tide of home ownership. As chapter one outlined, many houses rented during the depression and during the war were quickly snapped up by war workers during the housing shortages of

⁶Alvin Finkel, "Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates, 1945-1975," *Labour/Le Travail*, 36 (Fall 1995), 91-118.

⁷R. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy 1900-1950* (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press, 1996), *passim* and 258-262.

⁸"Forced Home Ownership," *Toronto Star*, December 13, 1950, 6.

World War II. Though CMHC recognized as early as 1947 that the most pressing housing need in Canadian cities was more rental units and not home-ownership, the corporation did little to entice private builders back into the market. Private builders shied away from the rental market due to high construction costs and rent control. 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 expense and difficulties associated with land assembly in the central city also restricted the development of multi-family dwellings in the early 1950s. Up until the late 1950s, most apartments in the Metro area were under five storeys and were mostly 1 and 2 bedroom units, and in no way met the great demand for family housing. Metropolitan Toronto Council's submission to the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects claimed rents for two-bedroom apartments could not be found in the Toronto area for under \$150 per month.⁹ The shortage of new rental accommodation only exacerbated housing conditions in the central city. With nowhere to go many families were forced to rent cramped and substandard quarters in aging city houses. Rents in the central city ranged between \$60 and \$175 per month with the average 6 room house renting at \$125 per month plus services, and the average 5 bedroom apartment renting at \$90 per month.¹⁰ American social welfare experts deemed the shortage of affordable housing to be Toronto's chief problem and the cause of innumerable social

⁹“New Resident in Metro Arrives Every 10 Minutes,”*Toronto Star*, January 23, 1956, 4; and Mark Frank, “Who Can Afford a New House,” *Canadian Tribune*, October 29, 1956, 3.

¹⁰CTA, Department of Public Welfare Fonds (DPW), RG 3, Series 100, file 11, Inter-Office Correspondence, November 18, 1958.

problems which overtaxed the resources of family welfare agencies.¹¹

The fanfare surrounding the reconstruction of Regent Park notwithstanding, progress on public housing stalled in the 1950s. In the wake of the Curtis Report, social housing activists believed that public housing would comprise a major part of Canada's overall housing production. Despite the overwhelming need, the production of public housing during the 1950s only amounted to 7,059 units, the vast majority of them in Ontario, representing less than three-fifths of one percent of all the housing completions over the period. By 1961 Canada had fewer public housing units than the city of Newark, New Jersey.¹² As John Bacher has pointed out, although the 1949 amendments to the National Housing Act contained the landmark decision by the federal government to subsidize the operating losses of public housing, other changes to the act were primarily responsible for ensuring that CMHC would be subsidizing as few units as possible. The new federal-provincial partnership, in which the provinces assumed 25 percent of the costs of public housing and removed the management and ownership of such projects from the municipalities, virtually ensured that the housing market would remain in private hands.¹³ Given the suspicious and hostile attitude of Ontario premier Leslie Frost towards public housing, along with suburban reluctance to shoulder the costs of such provisioning, it was preordained that, despite the rancour of social housing

¹¹"Rents in Toronto Unreasonable - City Lacks Housing US Expert," *Toronto Star*, May 31, 1950, 33; and "Day Care City's Task Say US Experts - Back Red Feather's Report," *Toronto Star*, July 5, 1950, 3 & 11.

¹²Less than two thirds of these public housing units were fully subsidized, the rest built as full-recovery limited dividend housing units, mostly two bedroom units renting at almost \$80 a month. CTA, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPCMT), SC 40, Box 127, file 2, Ontario Association of Housing Authorities, "Submission to the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario on Behalf of the Ontario Association of Housing Authorities," Hamilton, June 5, 1961, 1.

¹³J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policies* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 183.

activists, Toronto would come nowhere near meeting the need for socially assisted housing. The addition of 960 units in Regent Park South and another 1,081 in the suburban Lawrence Heights project seemed but a drop in the large bucket of need: waiting lists for public housing in Toronto grew throughout the decade reaching a backlog of nearly 15,000 applications by the end of 1959.¹⁴

Toronto's continued housing crisis was the direct result of federal housing policies, which were preoccupied with suburban home ownership for middle-class families.¹⁵ Many working-class and low-income Torontonians thus remained trapped in crowded and aging central city housing. Though central city housing provided only a small fraction of the total housing in the Metro Toronto area it accounted for the bulk of low-priced accommodation. Much of the city's housing stock had been built prior to 1914, and some houses still in use were built before 1885. For the most part this housing stock was extremely well built due to stringent housing standards established earlier in the century.¹⁶ Also the size and style of inner-city houses made them well-suited to subdivision and conversion from single-family dwellings to multiple-family occupancy. As Richard Harris notes, "Toronto's housing stock of attached (usually semidetached) housing made possible an unusually high incidence of lodging."¹⁷ Much of this stock had been converted to multiple-family occupancy during the

¹⁴The latter number is a combination of applications on hand for projects managed by the Housing Authority of Toronto (Regent Park North) and the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority (Regent Park South and Lawrence Heights). No doubt there was overlap of applications between the two separate housing authorities.

¹⁵J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, Ch. 7 *passim*; H. Carver, *Compassionate Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); and A. Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980).

¹⁶R. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*, 141-167.

¹⁷R. Harris, "The Flexible House: The Housing Backlog and the Persistence of Lodging, 1891-1951," *Social Science History*, 18 (Spring 1994), 33. Harris states: "In the City of Toronto in 1951 rates of doubling-up varied from a low of 6.7% in apartment units, through 22.8% in single detached dwellings, to 31.5% in single attached structures." See 49, note 4.

1930s and 1940s, especially in the once stately homes of the city's elite, such as those in the neighbourhoods of Moss Park and Parkdale.

Nonetheless, by the early 1950s the flexibility of Toronto's housing stock had reached the height of its elasticity. Rapid postwar immigration placed a great deal of strain on the housing stock in the central city, especially in neighbourhoods west of Spadina Avenue which continued to act as immigration reception centres. Despite an overall drop of 7,000 persons in the city's population between 1951 and 1956, the population in neighbourhoods west of Spadina rose by as much as 10 percent, while the numbers of persons per household also climbed significantly. Social workers at the University Settlement, situated at the eastern edge of Spadina-area immigrant neighbourhoods, commented that "every train disgorging immigrants worsens the [deplorable housing conditions in the neighbourhood.]"¹⁸ Indeed, the rate of doubling-up and lodging among immigrants in the Metro area was over 40 percent, twice the rate of native-born Canadians. In the western three wards of the city - Wards 5,6, and 7 - nearly one in three households contained two or more families and nearly one-half contained at least one lodger. In some neighbourhoods, the rates of lodging (single and family) were over 50 percent of all households.¹⁹ Immigrant aid organizations and settlement houses claimed that their toughest problem was the housing of immigrant families. As a social

¹⁸ Monroe Johnson, "Major Tragedy Coming if City Does not solve Overcrowding - Experts," *Toronto Star*, November 11, 1953, 29 & 50; and CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 86, file 10, letter from The University Settlement, November 27, 1953 re: Resolution on Housing Passed at Board of Directors Meeting.

¹⁹ The rates of lodging, for both individuals and families, in the western wards of the city increased by 16.1 percent and 12.5 percent between the 1951 and 1956 census. More important, the number of households with lodgers and lodging families was significantly higher than compared with the city as a whole by nearly 40% and 56% respectively. Since western city neighbourhoods had traditionally acted as immigration reception centres these numbers are not startling unless one considers that the disparity in lodging and lodging families between the city and the western wards was only 26.6% and 22.7% in 1951. CTA, City of Toronto Planning Board (CTPB), RG 32 B3, Box 23, file 6, "Housing in the Western Area of the City of Toronto." 1-2.

worker at the University Settlement described the housing strategies of immigrant families:

... [N]ewcomers, seek out fellow countrymen. They have little money to spare on accommodation and frequently end up sharing quarters with their compatriots. When they discover the money that is to be made in rooming houses, they save their pennies until they are able to branch out and rent a house by themselves and start their own colony.²⁰

With little room left in the central city, every inch of space was carved up to make room for lodgers. With rents at \$15 -\$20 a week for a room, many houses, which themselves rented for \$125 a month, could bring in \$300 to \$400 a month from lodgers and sub-tenants. Surprisingly, social workers were not quick to blame immigrant landlords for the exploitation of their tenants. Rather they laid the blame at the feet of “those who have always been here - those with Anglo-Saxon names.” Their flight to the suburbs was deemed largely responsible for the transformation of once “imposing” central city neighbourhoods such as Parkdale to “sordid” rooming house districts.²¹

Though the rapid influx of people to the city was at the heart of Toronto’s housing crisis of the 1950s, demolitions for public and private renewal schemes had claimed a good deal of older residential housing in the city since the end of war. Between 1946 and 1960 over 6,100 dwellings had been demolished representing more than three-quarters of all demolitions over the period. More important, these demolitions displaced over 8000 families, most of whom were “absorbed sponge-like in an overcrowded city at rents likely far beyond their capacity to pay.” Indeed, the renewal and redevelopment of the central city, as will be highlighted in later chapters, drastically reduced the supply of low cost housing at a time of

²⁰M. Johnson, “Overcrowding Blight on 50,000 in Toronto ...,” *Toronto Star*, November 11, 1953, 29 & 50.

²¹*Ibid.*

rapidly increased demand, thus exacerbating the problems of overcrowding, high rents and the growth of substandard housing.²²

By comparison with other North American cities the incidence of doubling up and lodging in Toronto remained phenomenally high well into the 1950s.²³ According to Richard Harris, the proportion of households containing more than one family, or one or more lodgers was as high in 1951, at 30.6 percent, as it was in 1931 during the depths of the Great Depression.²⁴ The construction boom going on in Toronto's suburbs hardly made a dent in the overcrowded conditions in the central city. By 1956, 66,000 Metro Toronto families still did not maintain their own household while 140,000 families, nearly 40 percent of all families, either lived in other persons' dwellings or shared their homes with others. Conditions were most critical in the city where lodging and doubling up increased, especially among large families. Whereas the lodgings with one or two persons declined, there was a very substantial rise in those with three or more. Indeed, nearly three-quarters of large households (6 or more persons) consisted of various combinations of families and single persons. Just as important was the fact that fewer lodgers lived with relatives and more in households of strangers, thus rekindling fears of the "lodger evil."²⁵

²²City of Toronto Buildings Department, *Annual Report 1960*; Quote in CTA, Association of Women Electors (AWE), SC 8, Box 7, file 1, Canadian Club Speech by D.B. Mansur, January 27, 1960, p. 7; and Committee on Public Welfare, Fire and Legislation, Report No. 19 - Low Rental Housing for Low-Income Families, December 8, 1959 in City of Toronto, *Minutes of the Council of the Corporation of the City of Toronto* (Hereafter *Council Minutes*) 1959, Appendix A, 2874-2875.

²³Metro planner Hans Blumenfeld claimed that Metro Toronto had an "abnormally high" degree of doubling-up and of roomers, especially in comparison with American figures. See CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B2, Box 6, file 1, H. Blumenfeld (Metro Toronto Planning Board), "Report on Households and Families in Metropolitan Toronto, 1951-56," (June 1958), Report Section, 3. See also R. Harris, "The Flexible House,"

²⁴R. Harris, "The Flexible House," 33. The rate of lodging in 1931 was 31.6%.

²⁵For a good dramatization of the supposed sexually deviant nature of lodgers see the National Film Board
(continued...)

Though doubling up and lodging affected low-income renters, it also affected home owners, many of whom were also low-income earners. Whereas observers had once commented on the Toronto working-class habit of buying a house, social reformers now spoke of Toronto as a city of lodgers.

What has happened [in Toronto] is that two families have moved into a one-family house. The family with the mortgage live on the main floor, the family without the mortgage payment move into the basement. Those who cannot find a basement, move into the central slums where the over-crowding increases.²⁶

Despite the demonization of rooming house operators and absentee landlords most of the housing available to low-income families was in the hands of owner-occupiers who owned and maintained a house only through the rental of flats, rooms and basement apartments. They too, undoubtedly suffered some of the disadvantages of crowded housing with their tenants.²⁷

Though the crowding of low-income families in central city neighbourhoods was largely a function of insufficient income and discriminatory federal housing policies, it was also directly related to labour markets of the Metropolitan area, especially markets for unskilled and casual labour. Though industries in Toronto slowly began moving to the suburbs during the early postwar period, the city's share of the metropolitan workforce remained constant over the period. By the mid-1950s, at the height of the city's housing crisis, much of the decentralization had yet to take place. Nearly four-fifths of the entire

²⁵(...continued)

of Canada's documentary on the reconstruction of Regent Park, *Canadian Slums: Farewell Oak Street* (Canada Carries On Series), Prod., Guy Glover, Dir., Grant McLean, National Film Board of Canada, 1953.

²⁶CTA, SPCMT, SC40, Box 86, file 6, Metropolitan Toronto Branch Community Planning Association of Canada, "Statement of Housing Policy," October 1954, 1.

²⁷CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 128, file 2, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "Report of the Technical Committee on Housing - Needs and Resources Study - Park I - Housing in Metropolitan Toronto 1961," 1.

Metro labour force was employed within a four mile radius of Yonge and Front Streets and nearly two-thirds within a two-mile radius.²⁸ The unskilled, service, and clerical employment which dominated the labour market of the central city, drew workers and their families to inner-city neighbourhoods for reasons of both convenience and necessity. Indeed, transportation costs and public transit routes were key in the housing decisions of many low-income families. For this very reason the Welfare Department objected to the proposed Malvern low-income housing development in the far reaches of north-eastern Scarborough, 16 miles from the central city.²⁹ Reformers and urban planners believed that until low income earners were “given a greater degree of security and prosperity” they would not “adopt a more *normal* form of residential living, moving to the suburbs when the family is growing up and commuting to the centre of the city.” They were doubtful, however, that this would occur within the next twenty years.³⁰ In the meantime, the provision of low-income housing in the city would continue to be a pressing problem as areas became ripe for redevelopment. In fact, public attempts to address the housing problems of low-income workers only served to exacerbate the problems by reducing the housing supply and displacing families.

Of course Toronto’s housing shortage hit the most vulnerable members of the community the hardest - relief recipients. As James Struthers illustrates, soaring rents in the postwar period played havoc with the budgets of welfare families and were largely at the root of hunger among Toronto’s poor. Even before the war’s end welfare officials recognized that

²⁸CTA, DPW, RG 3, Series 100, File 39, Memorandum Re: Malvern Low-Income Housing Project, March 1, 1954.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B2, Box 6, file 1, City of Toronto Planning Board (CTPB), “Population,” n.d., 16. Emphasis mine.

the Depression-based formula for shelter allowances, which gave families subsidies equal to 200 percent of property taxes to a maximum of \$20 a month, fell short of actual requirements by over 50 percent.³¹ These allowances bore no relation to market rents, nor did it give landlords any incentive to accept welfare recipients. The decontrolling of rents in the postwar period led the gap between rents and shelter allowances to grow so quickly that the city paid close to \$800,000 in rent for relief recipients in 1956 alone, even though the City had pressured the province to raise shelter allowances to \$40 a month for a family of four, and to a maximum of \$50 for larger families. The truth of the matter was that decent family accommodation, especially for large families, could not be found at anything near the provincial allowances, especially by the end of the decade. Struthers notes that although rents rose 42 percent between 1949 and 1959 and the number of welfare caseloads increased over the decade, Toronto's Department of Welfare spent 40 percent less on shelter supplements than in 1949. Various investigations by the Social Planning Council and newspaper columnists, such as Pierre Berton, revealed that housing costs consumed 70 percent or more of most welfare family budgets. Berton, in particular, tried to find a five-room house for \$40, the maximum rent allowance the city granted a family of six. His search of ten real estate firms and 171 ads in the city's newspapers turned up only two houses with rents of less than \$100 a month. One had no furnace and was infested by rats. The other was a "ramshackle tenement" with torn-up floors, broken windows and holes in the walls. If finding cheap houses on such a budget was next to impossible, Berton found that finding apartments and flats renting for the rate of shelter allowances was equally discouraging. During his house

³¹J. Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 143.

hunting episode Berton discovered that apartments with two rooms and a kitchen could not be found for under \$60 a month, while accommodation for single persons was unavailable for the provincial allowance of \$20 a month.³²

At the same time there was a recognition that inadequate rent allowances fostered overcrowding and poor housing conditions in the central city. To reduce costs and keep as many welfare recipients to the provincial allowance, the Department of Public Welfare made it an unwritten policy to place two or more families in a house so that the total of the allowances would meet the rents. Repeatedly the welfare department was forced to defend itself on the charges that it was placing its clients in substandard housing and fostering the growth of slums. Social reformers and city councillors repeatedly asked the department to investigate the housing conditions of welfare recipients and to stop placing clients in dwellings which contravened the city's building by-law.³³ The department admitted that many welfare recipients lived in substandard housing but that there was little it could do about this in light of the shortage of low income family housing. For one, welfare families, especially large ones were not desirable tenants. As D.C. Parker stated: "It is only rooming-house keepers in the downtown area that will accept families with several children, and consequently, [they] demand a high rent."³⁴ Second, the department reminded its critics that the vast majority of

³²P. Berton, "The Shame of Public Charity - They Still Can't Pay the Rent," *Toronto Star*, February, 27, 1961, 7.

³³CTA, DPW, RG 3, Series 100, File 10, Report 13 of the Committee of Public Welfare, October 11, 1955; RG 3, Series 100, File 11, Memorandum to Committee of Public Welfare, Fire and Legislation - Re Housing Accommodation for Families With Children, Nov 5, 1959; RG 3, Series 100, File 40, Memorandum - re Housing Standards By-Law, November 2, 1959; DPW, RG 3, Series 100, File 70, Response to Brief from Association of Women Electors to Alex Hodgins, Chair and Members of Public Welfare, Fire and Legislation Committee of City Council, April 19, 1960.

³⁴Quoted in Struthers, *Limits of Affluence*, 145.

welfare recipients secured their own accommodation. "The department," Commissioner H.S. Rupert claimed, "had no more control over whether they live in substandard housing or not than it has over other citizens generally." As a concession to its critics, the department asked case workers to report on the housing conditions of their clients and to refer those homes that contravened city by-laws to the buildings department for inspection.³⁵ At the same time building inspectors were authorized to remind tenants that the City "expects a reasonable standard of housekeeping from welfare recipients ... and that unsatisfactory conditions will be reported in writing to the Welfare Department."³⁶ A get-tough policy on delinquent landlords was far too simplistic an answer to the housing conditions of poor Torontonians. Without security of tenure, landlords simply removed "noisy" tenants or raised the rent to cover the cost of improvements, which ultimately had the same effect. In short, welfare recipients were shunted into the most dilapidated and overcrowded accommodation that the city had to offer and remained at the mercy of landlords who did not want them in the first place and were all too happy to see them go.³⁷

Despite the focus of social workers on the housing conditions of welfare recipients, the bulk of the accommodation which the Housing Registry located was for low-wage earners and large families not on relief. Toronto landlords' reluctance to rent to families with children was responsible, to a considerable degree, for the housing shortage. As a result, many families with children were shunted into rooms and basements. Of the nearly 8,000

³⁵CTA, DPW, RG 3, Series 100, File 14, Memorandum Re: General Welfare Assistance Act and Regulations, 2.

³⁶CTA, DPW, RG 3, Series 100, file 70, Report to the Committee of Public Welfare Fire and Legislation Committee April 19, 1960.

³⁷J. Struthers, *Limits of Affluence*, 146.

applications on hand at the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA), nearly four-fifths were from families with children, many of them presently accommodated in rooms, basements or doubled-up with other families. Social workers constantly brought to light cases of dwellings containing as many as six families and 30 children.³⁸ In addition to fears of the social and psychological effects of overcrowding on families, reformers also pointed out that as many as one-quarter of these overcrowded dwellings were also in need of major repair, while others were unfit for human habitation. Others were fire traps as revealed by a number of spectacular rooming house fires which scattered residents into the city streets. A coroner's inquest into a 1953 fire on River Street, in which one person died and 4 others were injured, revealed that 26 persons lived in the dwelling. The coroner's report listed overcrowding as a primary cause of the fire and of the death and injuries to the residents. Yet there was little the city could do to enforce its by-laws governing overcrowding and building standards. Officials agreed that any kind of enforcement of the by-law, which stipulated that there be no more than 1.5 persons per room, would have disastrous effects. As Dr. Alvin Boyd of the Ministry of Health noted:

We can't be too rigid on the matter of simple overcrowding. If overnight we were to move in and try to correct every instance of overcrowding, it would be no answer. We would force people out on the street with absolutely no place to go. Some shelter is still better than nothing. And for that reason we cannot be too ruthless.³⁹

The city's building standards by-law, itself a product of reports condemning the overcrowding

³⁸“30 Children in One House Rent Inquiry Is Informed,” *Toronto Star*, June 12, 1951, 2 & 4; “18,000 Toronto People Live in Substandard Over-Crowded Housing,” *Toronto Star*, November 11, 1953, 22; CTA, SC 40, Box 86, file 6, Neighbourhood Workers Association, “Report of District Secretary, Moss Park-Yorkville District Association, 1950-51,” 1.

³⁹M. Johnson, “Overcrowding Blight on 50,000 in Toronto...,” *Toronto Star*, November 11, 1953, 29.

in central-city slums in the 1930s, was unenforceable by the end of the war. With nowhere for tenants to relocate, building inspectors were reluctant to condemn houses unfit for human habitation.⁴⁰

Social workers and social reformers were not only concerned about the physical safety of overcrowded Torontonians, they were also preoccupied with their moral security. In the turbulent postwar world, security and the single-family dwelling became synonymous.⁴¹ As Ray Mann, Housing Chairman of the Ontario Branch of the Canadian Legion told a meeting of the Tenant Ratepayers Association of Toronto:

Home is the root from which a free civilization draws its living strength and quality. It has no counterpart... it has no substitute. Sanctified by Almighty God and blest by his church on earth ... it is the fortress and temple of our simple faith⁴²

The overcrowding of families in central city slums was deemed by all observers as responsible for the increasing disintegration of family life. In particular social workers blamed overcrowded conditions as the root of increased juvenile delinquency. Rae Morrow, Parkdale district secretary of the Neighbourhood Workers Association, echoed the beliefs of the social

⁴⁰“Another Fire -Trap Victim Claimed by Housing Crisis,” *Canadian Tribune*, January 4, 1954, 2; “Man Dies, Four Hurt in Fire in Condemned Jarvis Rooming House,” *Toronto Star*, December 23, 1953; and “Fire Rouses Public to Housing Urgency,” *CCF News*, December 1953, 5. Another fire on Sydenham Street in November 1954 also raised the hackles of social housing activists. See NA, Records of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto (LCMT), Reel 2295, Minutes of the Toronto Labor Council, October 25, 1954; and Vol. 10, File 4, Moses McKay, “Housing” in Toronto District Labour Council, *Year Book*, 1960; “Fires in Cabbagetown,” *Canadian Tribune*, November 15, 1954; “Mother Four Children Perish 15 Escape from Toronto Fire,” *Toronto Star*, November 6, 1954, 1; and “Shocking Slums Ignored - Blame City for 5 Deaths: TLC-CCL Blames City for Neglect of Housing for Sydenham St. Fire,” *Toronto Star*, November 9, 1954, 8.

⁴¹See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

⁴²CTA, Records of the City Executive/Board of Control (CTBC), RG 2, Board of Control Correspondence, February 23, 1955, Minute #448, Copy of Speech by Ray Mann of Brantford - Housing Chairman of the Canadian Legion's Ontario Command at a Meeting of the Tenant Ratepayers' Association of Toronto, Tuesday, August 24, 1954 at the Carleton St. United Church, 2.

reform community when she stated that:

Children forced to live out their formative years in crowded single rooms are seriously affected. Emotional disturbances are very common among these children and there is a great possibility many of them will become delinquent, ending up as charges on the community.⁴³

It was thus within this context that the City itself came under fire for fostering slum conditions.

“City Owned Slums”: Toronto’s Emergency Housing Program

The intractability of the city’s emergency shelter program revealed much about the depth of Toronto’s housing crisis as well as popular and official attitudes towards slums and slum dwellers. As the previous chapter outlined, conditions at the camps had rarely approximated even the most basic standards of health and comfort. Despite the rancour raised by many Torontonians about the conditions in which veterans were forced to live, the camps were regarded as a temporary, if necessary, evil. The continued use of the shelters well into the 1950s, coupled with the neglect of the properties under the new private management company, led many Torontonians to view the camps as city-owned slums.

When Toronto’s emergency housing program passed into its second decade of operation under new management, it entered a new phase of its history, that of a “dump estate.” Harkening back to Victorian distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor, the camps became the home for the “hard to house,” large families, families on relief, female-led families and “multi-problem” families; in other words, those deemed “unfit” for public housing. The concentration of such families in the camps set in motion a labelling process which stigmatized both the camps and the residents themselves. Media coverage helped to dramatize the situation and reinforce a “moral panic” through the creation of

⁴³M. Johnson, “Overcrowding Blight on 50,000 in Toronto ...,” *Toronto Star*, November 11, 1953, 29.

sensational and often distorted stereotypes of both the camps and their inhabitants. More important, the concentration of such families in these run-down cramped barracks produced nightmarish conditions for the residents and mocked the ideals of public housing as a social service that could redeem such families.⁴⁴

When H.V.Locke took over the shelters in May 1949 there were still 1339 families accommodated in the camps and an assortment of central city apartments.⁴⁵ For many families, the city's emergency accommodation served its purpose by giving them a roof over their heads until they could find suitable private accommodation. Of the 1,486 families originally accommodated in the camps, 966 vacated them between 1945 and February 1, 1951, a turnover rate of nearly 70 percent. At the same time 520 families had spent anywhere between four and six years of their lives in converted army barracks. Why had such a large number still not been able to secure private accommodation over this long period of time? Most local politicians, and no doubt many Torontonians, believed that these families were taking advantage of the good will of Torontonians. Officials believed that families had ample opportunity to secure other premises. "... since there have been a great many houses built in the vicinity of Toronto over this period."⁴⁶ The fact that many emergency housing tenants had not moved out confirmed popular beliefs that they were "lazy and shiftless" and would have to be forced to do something for themselves to better their conditions.

⁴⁴J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 188. For more on "dump estates" see Paul Knox, *Urban Social Geography: An Introduction*, 3rd edition (London: Longman Group Limited, 1995), 145-150. and John Cater & Trevor Jones, *Social Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Issues* (London, Edward Arnold, 1989), 56-57.

⁴⁵CTA, City of Toronto Property Department (CTPD), RG 16, Box 112, file 7, Department of Property Memo, April 16, 1956.

⁴⁶CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, File 4, G.D. Bland (Property Commissioner) to Mayor McCallum, November 10, 1950.

Such concerns worried government officials, both municipal and federal, from the outset. As David Mansur, president of CMHC, wrote to Mayor Saunders in 1947 "a major problem with the emergency housing program would be ... the difficulty in persuading ... tenants to move to private accommodation when such becomes available."⁴⁷ For that very reason CMHC limited conversion expenditures to \$1,000 per unit to ensure that families were not comfortable enough "to cease their effort to find permanent accommodation on their own initiative."⁴⁸ Though city officials were loath to admit it, they knew when they handed the management of the emergency shelters over to Locke that the only way to he could save money was to curtail general maintenance costs, thus making the camps even less appropriate for human habitation and prodding even the most "shiftless" tenants to find private accommodation.⁴⁹

It was not long before complaints came pouring into the Mayor's office that the conditions at the camps had worsened under Locke's management, especially at Stanley Barracks, which had long been regarded as the worst of all the camps. Poor sanitation and poor drainage had resulted in a number of cases of polio in 1947. In addition, rats and other vermin ran rampant over the grounds. Vandalism at the camp was also a problem, as Locke complained that "the children and teenagers are having a circus in and around [the] buildings, ... we cannot adequately cope with [this] situation ... even though we have added additional

⁴⁷CTA, MP, RG A1, Box 34, file 6, David Mansur to Mayor Saunders, August 26, 1947.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹CTA, CTPD, RG 16, Box 112, file 15, Bureau of Municipal Research, "The Story of Toronto's Emergency Housing Programme," A supplement to the Bureau's Open Letter of January 3, 1955, 2.

watchmen."⁵⁰ Inspectors from the Board of Education and the Ministry of Health listed numerous violations of sanitary and building standards at the camps. Delegates to the Toronto convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour in January 1950 called Stanley Barracks a "blight on the city," in which veterans' families lived in "conditions unfit for pigs."⁵¹ Others, such as school trustee Isabel Ross, were shocked by what she called "the pestilence that walked in the darkness."⁵² Conditions at the other camps were little better as the Commissioner of Property noted there was a great deal of maintenance repair work to be done and an evident lack of adequate caretaking at the GECO camp. Scarborough Reeve O. Crockford warned Mayor McCallum that he felt that conditions at the GECO camp were purposely being allowed to deteriorate so that Locke could derive higher profits.⁵³ A rising tide of complaints accompanied by fears that extensive maintenance costs would be incurred with the further continuation of the emergency housing program led Commissioner of Property G. D. Bland to recommend a definite closing date for the program. He composed a progressive schedule for closing the camps which would see Stanley Barracks closed as soon as possible and all of the other camps closed by April 1, 1953, at the latest.⁵⁴

Establishing a schedule for closing the camps was one thing, following it was quite

⁵⁰City of Toronto, Board of Control Report 22, in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1950, Appendix A, 1406-7. Locke soon found out that vandalism and theft of property was a problem at all the camps when he discovered that 1405 screens, 90 shower heads, and 91 toilet seats had disappeared. See "1405 Screens Vanish at Emergency Homes," *Toronto Star*, August 10, 1949, 9.

⁵¹"Stanley Barracks Housing Called Blight on City," *Toronto Star*, January 14, 1950, 1.

⁵²"Mrs. Ross Herself Kills Stanley Barracks Bugs," *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1950, 2.

⁵³CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, file 4, G. D. Bland to Mayor McCallum, November 8, 1950; and G.D. Bland to Mayor McCallum, December 29, 1950.

⁵⁴CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, file 4, G. D. Bland to the Mayor and Members of the Board of Control, February 13, 1951.

another, as the initial experience at Stanley Barracks illustrated. As Locke wrote to Bland: "The closing of Stanley Barracks without a doubt presents the most difficult problem that we have encountered up until this date. We have done everything in our power to convince the tenants that they must move. We have offered them places in other projects but some have rejected this."⁵⁵ Caught in the depths of Toronto's housing crisis, the tenants at Stanley Barracks literally had nowhere to go. J. J. Wingfelder, Deputy Administrator of Rentals, in testimony before the Rental Board for the province of Ontario stated that the housing situation in the Toronto area was "terrifying" and that it had yet to reach its peak of seriousness. The only housing available to the Public Welfare department was the emergency housing units, which the department reluctantly asked the city to keep open despite its policy to close the camps.⁵⁶

For many on relief, especially those with large families, the camps were the only accommodation available to them, and provided respite from a nomadic life in the city's inner city "slums." The rents geared to income also allowed emergency shelter tenants to put food on the table, more than could be said for many relief recipients who found their shelter in Toronto's expensive private housing market.⁵⁷ As the Women Electors Association reminded the city fathers, poor housing conditions were nothing new for emergency shelter tenants since many had come from even more deplorable housing conditions in slum areas in the heart of

⁵⁵CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 35, file 11, Harold V. Locke to G. D. Bland, April 6, 1951.

⁵⁶CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, file 5, H. S. Rupert to H. S. McCallum, March 16, 1951; and Report of the Committee of Public Welfare No. 8, in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1951, Appendix A, 1177.

⁵⁷See James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*, Ch. 5 *passim*, especially 142-147.

Toronto.⁵⁸ There were often-stated reasons why many landlords refused to accommodate tenants who ended up at the shelters. According to Welfare Department officials, many of the individuals and families in the camps receiving public assistance had the most serious social problems with which the department was forced to deal, including "drinking, suspected immorality, mental defect and mental illness, uncleanliness and inadequate care and training of children."⁵⁹ In addition, many of the families on relief were led by single mothers. Of the 28 families at GECO receiving relief in 1953, 17 were female-headed families. The remaining 11 families that were headed by a male member of the household received relief because of his unemployability.⁶⁰ Of course such problems were not limited to those on relief.

With nowhere else to house "problem" families, the Department was caught in a double-bind. Good housing was central to its ideas and programs to rehabilitate the poor. According to the Department, "the problems that many of these families have, including those not on relief, were serious for any community but they became even more serious when the families involved are living in close proximity to their neighbours and share common washrooms, and corridors." Once in the camps, such families became trapped in a vicious circle. Rupert described the conditions under which residents lived:

The environment and crowded conditions prevailing in these rundown temporary structures does not conduce towards the promotion of neighborly and normal community life. Mud is carried into the buildings on the children's shoes and clothes and there is no proper provision for play or recreation inside or outside the project... These places seethe with gossip, families are too

⁵⁸Harriet Parsons, "Where Will the People Go?" *Canadian Welfare*, February 1, 1957, 8.

⁵⁹CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, File 5, Report of the Committee on Public Welfare Re: Families in Emergency Housing Projects, April 27, 1951, 3-4.

⁶⁰CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 34, file 5, Memo from Department of Public Welfare to Mayor McCallum and the Board of Control, Re: Relief Recipients in Emergency Housing Projects, April 29, 1953.

close and in most cases too large to maintain the homogeneous standards known in connection with any venture planned to house large numbers of families in better financial and other circumstances than [these] families. The very nature of their plight, caused by desertion, illness, mental retardation, unemployability of a temporary or permanent nature, plus the crowded conditions of the dismal place they must call 'home,' can only produce despair, disinterest and neglect. Their homes in most cases have been broken and so are their spirits. Fortunately, there are exceptional and hopeful cases where there is a will to win, and there is always hope for the children, but not in these dark and deteriorating huts.

With nowhere else to place such "problem families" except the camps, there was little hope that the Department's plans to "reform" such families along recognized concepts of orderliness and normalcy in communal living would succeed. To be sure, there were families with problems beyond the help of the Department and who caused much grief for other residents, but eviction was not a viable solution since the Department could not secure accommodation at anywhere near the same rents afforded at the camps.⁶¹

Not only were the camps used to keep "problem families" from "infecting" other public housing sites, but tenants were also subjected to further classification within the camps themselves. Locke took it upon himself to segregate "problem families," a category which often included tenants who made complaints about living conditions, in the least desirable units or locations within the camps.⁶² Locke sought official sanction for his segregation policy

⁶¹Rupert wrote the Board of Control:

The only alternative being that they would place the families in two rooms at a cost of \$6 a day each plus any cost of storing furniture and that if the children are placed in the care of the Children's Aid the cost would be more than paying room rent. The Board decided that since the management of these projects is Mr. Locke's concern it would not stand in his way of evicting these tenants.

CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Box 390, Min #403 H. S. Rupert to Mayor Lamport and the Members of the Board of Control, February 4, 1952.

⁶²A delegation from the Long Branch Camp wanted the city to investigate why Locke placed troublesome
(continued...)

from the city council and from the welfare department at the GECO camp in Scarborough. As a result, the Department and Locke agreed to segregate problem families in huts at GECO far removed from the other families in residence at the camps and place them under strict supervision.⁶³ Such supervision was deemed to be essential to the well-being and safety of all concerned. Within a year of the establishment of a program of segregation and supervision of “objectionable” tenants, Rupert was less than happy with the arrangement, claiming that “families having serious social difficulties should not be required to live in such close proximity to other families as is the case in Emergency Housing Projects.” He reminded the Mayor and the Board of Control that the Department was *only* authorized to distribute relief and that “it had no control over the activities of individuals ... although their actions may at times not appear to be in their best interests.” Furthermore, he continued, “the condition of being on relief [did] not alter the social status of families in the community.”⁶⁴

The focus on “problem families” on relief often overlooked the fact that the majority

⁶²(...continued)

families in buildings close to a swamp. CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Minutes of the Board of Control, February 6, 1952 Minute #413 Re Deputation of Rita Dobson, N. Evers, M. Robinson, and G. Drury, Representing the Residents of Long Branch Emergency Housing Project accompanied by Rev. R.E. Gosse Long Branch United Church. Complaints were also received from the Greater Toronto Investment Corporation Limited, which purchased the GECO site in Scarborough in 1954. The company claimed that certain families received preferential treatment in the letting of apartments and cited the case of a family of 10 living in 2 rooms while in another building there were 2 people in 5 rooms. See CTA, RG 007 A1, Box 35, file 13, Legal Department Report to the Board of Control, July 5, 1954.

⁶³“GECO ‘Problem’ Families to Be Housed Together,” *Toronto Star*, January 25, 1952, 2 & 5; City of Toronto, Committee of Public Welfare Report 8, April 27, 1951, in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1951, Appendix A, 1179.

⁶⁴CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Box 390, Minute #403, H. S. Rupert to Mayor Lamport and the Members of the Board of Control, February 4, 1952; and RG 2, Board of Control Minutes, Minute #1203, April 9, 1952.

The commissioner of Public Welfare also pointed out that it had “no authority to supervise difficult families at these projects and that it is inadvisable to segregate troublesome families in one building and that they should be left as they are but with stricter supervision and that if they are evicted there are not other emergency housing units to go to.

of residents were "self-supporting." Of the 827 families accommodated in the camps as of August 1952, only 109 were in receipt of relief, while another 31 families received Mothers' Allowance. In addition, another 106 families received some kind of government assistance in the form of Old Age Security, Veteran's Pension, Workers' Compensation or Unemployment Insurance. Yet the fact that many "hard-working" Torontonians inhabited the camps did not endear them to city council or other observers. Rather, they became the focus of the inability of the city to close the emergency shelter program. Observers were amazed that many families did not want to leave despite the conditions in the camps. Some had made friends in the camps, other had work commitments in the area. But many concluded that tenants "clung" to their emergency accommodation not out of need but to live off the public's charity. Various reports conducted by the Department of Public Welfare revealed that many of these families earned in excess of \$3,600 a year, including a limited number who earned more than \$6,000 a year. Reports also revealed that many owned cars, refrigerators, televisions and radios. These figures led city councillors to believe that the vast majority of residents were taking advantage of the city and its taxpayers. Controller Leslie Saunders, in an unfortunate attack on the residents, claimed that "when the residents moved out the moving truck had to first dispose of their beer bottles."⁶⁵ As a result of the uproar, the city instituted a sliding rent scale in proportion to family income similar to that used in Regent Park. Rents immediately jumped from an average of \$35 a month to a minimum of \$45 and as much as \$112 a month. Apparently unfazed by the squalor, city councillors hoped that the increased rents would finally provide an incentive to the "lazy and the shiftless slum dwellers"

⁶⁵"Beer Way of Life for Emergency Tenants -- Rupert," *Toronto Star*, October 3, 1952, 1.

to locate private accommodation.⁶⁶

The exclusive attention paid to the income and possessions of the tenants obscured more important information that revealed the reasons why many self-supporting families remained in the shelters. As Rupert reminded the councillors, their emphasis solely on the amount of income and possessions of the residents did not give a true picture of the ability of the residents to find private accommodation. The vast majority of “self-supporting” families earned less than \$300 a month. Family incomes did not reveal how many members of the family worked, nor did these figures reveal the size of the family which the income was required to support. Two thirds of families housed in the camps had at least five members and nearly one quarter had seven or more.

If this was not enough evidence to support the inability of Emergency Shelter tenants to obtain housing on the private market, the various surveys also asked residents if they would be willing or able to purchase a house on a low down payment.⁶⁷ A 1952 survey revealed that the vast majority of residents wanted to own their own home. Of the 718 families on relief only 210 said that they would be unwilling to purchase a house, even if they could place a low down payment. Of the remaining 508 families who wanted to become home owners, only 361 said they could afford a down payment, while another 147 said that, although they were

⁶⁶City of Toronto, Report of the Committee of Public Welfare #7, April 13, 1954, in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes* 1954, Appendix A, 1141-45.

⁶⁷The report did not stipulate what officials or residents considered a “low down payment.” 1944 NHA provisions limited loans to 80% of the value of the dwellings up to a maximum loan of \$10,000. Rising land costs during the 1950s forced CMHC to revise the loan schedule to provide a loan-to-value ratio of 90 percent for the first \$8,000 of the lending value and 70% of the remainder to a maximum loan of \$12,800. The average NHA loan in 1953 was \$3,356 and under the new provisions, \$2,660 in 1954. The average borrower’s annual income in these two years was \$4,679 and \$5,065 respectively. By 1956 however, down payments had risen to well above the \$3,000 mark and comprised almost 27% of the cost of the home, while the average income of borrowers was \$5312. See CMHC, *Annual Reports*, 1952, 1954, & 1956, 9; 11-17; and 12.

willing to purchase a home, they could not come up with any sort of down payment. Of those who could afford a down payment, 233 said they could afford between \$251 and \$500, while only 15 could come up with a down payment of a \$1,000 or more. Scarborough Reeve Oliver Crockford claimed that homes in his township "could be bought for as little as \$1,200 down, and payments from \$48 to \$55 per month." Crockford surmised that the under these circumstances, and in view of the low rentals paid by GECO occupants, their lack of decent housing was due more to their inability to properly husband their resources.⁶⁸ Crockford's remarks not only underlined the inability of emergency shelter residents to become home owners, but also the ignorance of many Torontonians when it came to understanding the housing difficulties of the working poor.

The experience of Emergency Shelter residents at the Malton camp underlined the difficulties poor and working-class Torontonians experienced in purchasing suburban houses. Early in 1952 the Malton-based aircraft manufacturer, A. V. Roe, bought the land surrounding its premises, including the land on which the Malton Emergency Housing camp was situated, from the Federal Government in order to expand its production facilities at the height of the Korean War. The company was anxious to acquire the properties as soon as possible and claimed that the Staff Houses, in particular, should be evacuated immediately due to the fire hazard they presented. With the company's new hanger building only 110 feet away, it believed that a fire would cause "serious dislocation to employment and defence production, that the loss would be staggering."⁶⁹ The Staff Houses accommodated 167 families with a

⁶⁸CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 35, File 13, Reeve Crockford to Mayor McCallum, October 27, 1950.

⁶⁹CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 35, File 10, Crawford Gordon (Pres. and Gen Mgr. of A. V. Roe Canada to Mayor Lamport, (Personal & Confidential) July 7, 1952.

total of 762 persons, of which 104 worked for the aircraft manufacturer.⁷⁰ Residents approached City Hall to ask for an extension of residence in the camps beyond the September 30 deadline so that they could investigate the possibility of acquiring land in the area on which to build pre-fabricated houses. Within the month, the residents' committee located land in the area of the factory, but they were refused mortgage support from CMHC for their co-operative project. The negative comments by city councillors about emergency housing tenants did not make their task of finding private accommodation any easier. Local politicians' attitudes towards emergency housing tenants revealed more about the general ignorance of the plight of the poor in finding housing than the ability of residents to "husband their own resources."⁷¹

The city's self-imposed deadline for closing all the projects by April 1, 1953, came and went, but not without a great deal of fanfare. By 1954 both the conditions at the shelters and the inability to close them became a damning indictment of the state's response to Toronto's critical shortage of low-cost housing. Between June and October 1954 the city council was bombarded by reports and investigations from the various social reform groups, most notably the Community Planning Association, the Association of Women Electors, and the Welfare Committee of Peel County, all of which condemned the projects "as city owned slums."⁷²

⁷⁰*ibid.*

⁷¹"Cite Defence Danger, Order City's Malton Tenants Out," *Toronto Star*, July 30, 1952, 4; "Build Own Housing Centre - \$500 Down Malton Plan," *Toronto Star*, August 13, 1952, 30; "Malton Group Must Move Board Refuses Extension," *Toronto Star*, August 27, 1952, 14; CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Minutes of the Board of Control, Minute # 2648, August 13, 1952; #2773, August 27, 1952; and #2949, September 10, 1952.

⁷²CTA, AWE, SC 8, Box 7, File 2, Association of Women Electors Brief to the Board of Control and City Council, October, 12, 1954, Re: Emergency Housing Shelters; CTA, Housing Authority of Toronto (HAT) RG 28, Series B3, Box 35, file 16, Brief from the Community Planning Association of Canada, Re: Tour of Emergency Shelters at GECO and Long Branch, July 8, 1954; CTBC, RG 2, Box 406, Minute # 2360, (continued...)

These reports concluded that the camps were a "public disgrace," that the tenants were being exploited through the provision of dilapidated housing, which was "certain to increase personal demoralization, family break-up, mental health ailments, and further impoverishment."⁷³

Once again, the reports focussed primarily on the living conditions at the camps. Here investigators found that the conditions had worsened over the ten years of operation despite the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on the program. GECO was described as:

Blocked sewers underneath the buildings have been opened up and not repaired, and sewage today is flowing underneath the apartments where the people are living. Toilets are not working and in one building there are only about three toilets for all of the men in 25 families ... Garbage is thrown in open huts and it is a wonder that there has not been more disease in the area [besides a few cases] of polio ... ringworm ... [and] the odd case of diphtheria ... There are many cases of overcrowding [including] 8 children and their parents living in 2 rooms. ... All floors have become rotted because of lack of maintenance and of the plumbing. As you are inspecting, you will notice that the outside walls are patched with cardboard.⁷⁴

Though GECO was deemed the worst of all the Emergency Housing Projects, conditions at Long Branch were hardly better. According to the accounts of numerous Peel County officials, the conditions at the camp could be described as dilapidated and overcrowded. The tar paper covering the huts was in many cases removed. One of the huts, which had earlier

⁷²(...continued)

September 1, 1954, Welfare Committee, Peel County, Ontario, Report, Re: Emergency Housing Units at Lakeview, August 17, 1954; and "Emergency Housing in Wretched State - Citizens Appalled," *CCF News*, October 1954, 1. See also CTA, CTPD, RG 16, Box 112, File 15, Bureau of Municipal Research, "The Story of Toronto's Emergency Housing Programme," January 3, 1955.

⁷³CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Box 406, Board of Control Minute #2306, September 1, 1954, Report of the Welfare Committee. Peel County, Ontario, Re: Emergency Housing Units at Lakeview, 11.

⁷⁴CTA, MP, RG 7, A1, Box 35, File 13, City of Toronto Legal Department to Mayor and Board of Control, July 5, 1954. Re: Facts Which Will Give You an Idea as to What Has Taken Place Since the negotiation and Purchase of GECO by Greater Toronto Investment Corporation Limited.

been claimed by fire remained half demolished, while another building that had been condemned by the local health unit still housed families. The grounds were littered with refuse and there was little or no attempt to maintain the lawns. The larger huts which housed 14-16 families, some of them with as many as 9 children in 3-room apartments, had communal washrooms and toilets with rotting floors, broken windows and gaping holes in the walls and floors, allowing water and sewage to seep in. The corridors which were narrow and dimly lit were full of holes sometimes patched with bare plywood. Though officials remarked that the conditions outside the apartments bore little resemblance to the filth they found outside, they were still grossly overcrowded. The Public Health Act stipulated that in sleeping areas there must be 600 cubic feet of air space for each occupant. In many cases there was less than 200 cubic feet of airspace per person, and that even if all the rooms in the apartments were taken into account conditions still fell well short of accepted public standards.⁷⁵

While the common areas of the camps came in for widespread condemnation, investigators were almost unanimous in their surprise that the individual apartments were clean and "as well kept as any home in Toronto." Despite the disheartening condition of the camps, many tenants had spent a lot of time and effort improving their apartments. Here their descriptions of the apartments stood in stark contrast to the "dark and evil conditions" of the common areas. Apartments were described as "*homelike*" with gay wallpaper, *bright* drapes and a few pictures and lamps. Nonetheless, the camps remained "slums" and observers concluded that the residents could be rehabilitated only if they were removed from the

⁷⁵CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Box 406, Board of Control Minute #2306, September 1, 1954, Report of the Welfare Committee, Peel County, Ontario, Re: Emergency Housing Units at Lakeview, *passim*.

“disheartening conditions.”⁷⁶

Though social reformers were disgusted by the eyesore of the dilapidated camps they were more concerned about the “moral and spiritual” conditions. The distressing environments of the camps were deemed to be “the breeding ground for every considerable evil.” Indeed, the reports of the various social agencies focussed as heavily on the moral conditions at the camps as with the physical squalor. Reformers’ “moral environmentalism” made it difficult to discern whether they were blaming the slum conditions or the slum dwellers for the state of affairs at the camp. To be sure there was a great deal of sympathy expressed towards the tenants forced to live in such surroundings. Many noted that in spite of the conditions the residents, and especially the children, were clean, healthy, and well behaved. The officials of the Greater Toronto Investment Corporation, which had recently taken over the GECO properties, remarked that the residents were “far from the dirty, delinquent ... very bad lot” that they had been made out to be in the newspapers and the general opinion of the City of Toronto.⁷⁷

Despite the fact that Locke and the City shouldered most of the blame for fostering the social problems at the camps, there was a great deal of scorn heaped upon the residents. The Peel County report commented that “many residents lacked self-respect, honesty, respect for the rights of others, regard for law and the principles of good citizenship.”⁷⁸ Toronto

⁷⁶Harriet Parsons, “Where Will The People Go?” *Canadian Welfare*, February 1, 1957, 8.

⁷⁷CTA, MP, RG 7 A 1, Box 35, file 13, City of Toronto Legal Department to Mayor and Board of Control, July 5, 1954. Re: Facts Which Will Give You an Idea as to What Has Taken Place Since the negotiation and Purchase of GECO by Greater Toronto Investment Corporation Limited. 1.

⁷⁸Mrs. N. Horwood, (Peel County Probation Officer) cited in Report of the Welfare Committee, Peel County, Ontario, Re: Emergency Housing Units at Lakeview, 3.

Township Police Chief G. McGill claimed that the department answered an average of six calls a day to the camps with charges ranging from armed robbery, rape, incest, indecent assault, theft, breaking and entering, non-support, and creating a disturbance. Others focussed on the raucous parties that often took place in the camps.⁷⁹ Even Welfare Commissioner Rupert, who often defended the tenants from the attacks hurled at them by city councillors, claimed that “beer was a way of life in the projects,” and it would remain so until tenants moved into a Regent Park style project which “might revive their morale.”⁸⁰

Reformers were most concerned with the effect of the camps upon children. Juvenile delinquency was deemed to be the most serious “social problem” at the camps. Gangs of teenagers roamed the camps vandalizing the property, especially by painting literary and graphic obscenities on the walls of the washrooms and corridors. Others turned to petty, and in the case of an elaborate bicycle stealing operation at the Long Branch camp, not so petty crime. Scores of teenagers had been hauled before the authorities in recent years, while dozens of others reported regularly to police or juvenile court officials. Skirmishes between gangs from the different projects were a regular enough occurrence that area police forces organized “flying squads” to cope with the situation. Teenagers readily admitted to drinking alcohol, much of it given to them by their parents. In addition, Chief McGill reported that children in the camp had been burned to death, ... drowned, killed or injured by explosives when they were wandering ... on the [neighbouring Long Branch Rifle] Ranges formerly used

⁷⁹Garnet McGill (Police Chief Toronto Township) cited in *ibid.* See also E.L. Homewood, *City-Owned Slum*, 6-7.

⁸⁰“Beer Way of Life for Emergency Tenants – Rupert,” *Toronto Star*, October 3, 1952, 1.

for grenade practice.⁸¹

Central to the concerns about the camp and its effect on the morals of the children was the lack of privacy both within the apartments and especially in the dark communal hallways and washrooms. Walls in the camp were not only paper thin, but fell short of the ceiling by almost two feet. As a result, noises of all sorts travelled from one end of the building to another. But it was not simply the lack of serenity that troubled social workers. Rather it was the sexualization of the slum, especially the association of overcrowding and communal living with incest, that most concerned the reformers.⁸² They focussed most on the number of rooms, especially bedrooms relative to the number of family members. Indeed, overcrowded units which did not allow separate sleeping areas for girls and boys were often cited as reasons behind the "ever mounting disintegration of good citizenship." Reformers were also concerned with the effect of co-habitation on the morals of young children. As the director of the Children's Aid, A. E. Kilpatrick, reported: "There are six unmarried parent cases, four of these girls with the second child... In our opinion this type of communal living is taking too heavy a toll on the children." Police Chief G. McGill also worried that men of the camp cohabit with other women: "We do know that this has gone on when the children are sleeping in the same room well knowing that the man with their mother was not their father." He concluded that given such appalling conditions it was "no wonder that the children grow up

⁸¹E. L. Homewood, "City Owned Slum," 7-8; and G. McGill cited in Report of the Welfare Committee, Peel County, Ontario. Re: Emergency Housing Units at Lakeview, 9-10.

⁸²See Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1920* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 134-139.

to be criminals."⁸³ In short, observers declared the camps "pesthole[s] of *moral and physical* squalor."⁸⁴

The wholesale condemnation of the emergency housing program led the city to re-evaluate its decision to farm out the management to a private company. In 1956 the Housing Authority of Toronto, which managed Regent Park, took over the Long Branch Staff house, Little Norway, and the remaining 166 Wartime and Halliday houses constructed on various vacant lots and edges of city parks. In all 424 families were still housed in emergency shelters when the Housing Authority assumed management of the program on November 1, 1956.⁸⁵

The transfer of management to the city, however, did not solve the central problem that had plagued the program and the tenants from the outset - where would the tenants go? The city's policy of raising the rents at the shelters got rid of those who could no longer save at the city's expense. Those remaining in residence were "hard core" families who undoubtedly stayed on because they had nowhere else to go. The completion of Regent Park North and the extension of the project to Regent Park South was frequently hailed as a solution to the problem of the emergency housing situation. However, both the Toronto Housing Authority and the Metro Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA), which managed the North and Sought projects respectively, worried that the introduction of problem families would upset the social and economic balance of public housing. They also worried that many of the "hard core" families, would "like the proverbial rotten apples ... contaminate ... [an

⁸³A.E. Kilpatrick (Peel County Children's Aid Society) and G. McGill cited in Report of the Welfare Committee, Peel County, Ontario, Re: Emergency Housing Units at Lakeview, 7, 9-10.

⁸⁴E.L. Homewood, "City Owned Slums," 8. *Emphasis Mine.*

⁸⁵CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Board of Control Minutes, 1957, Minute # 563, March 6, 1957.

entire] public housing [project].⁸⁶ In an ironic twist of fate MTHA officials reluctantly allowed some tenants to move temporarily into houses awaiting demolition for the Regent Park South project. Officials stipulated that only “good” tenants would receive the privilege of living in slum housing awaiting demolition. Metro authorities also reserved the right to determine the “goodness” of each family and made it clear that these families would not automatically move up the waiting list for units in the new project.⁸⁷

The city also placed stock in an experimental rehabilitation program to “rid the city of [a] 'troublesome family' malady which had exhibited itself in a fairly virulent form in the emergency housing centres.”⁸⁸ The program was first suggested by labour controller Ford Brand in January 1956. Brand proposed that since the city was in the process of closing the Long Branch Emergency Housing Camp in September 1956, it should embark on a project to rehouse and rehabilitate these families in a more permanent structure. Brand's proposal was largely modelled on an existing arrangement established between the Welfare Department and H. V. Locke under which problem families were moved from the shelters to vacant city-owned Wartime Housing. These dwellings, although “by no means luxurious,” acted as “havens for many a family enmeshed with undesirable associates.”⁸⁹ Here public welfare officials kept “a friendly eye” on the living habits of these families to determine their

⁸⁶NA, Records of the Canadian Council on Social Development/Canadian Welfare Council (CCSD/CWC), MG 28 I 10. Volume 54, File - Housing 1953-60, Newspaper Clipping, Pat Brasely, “Toronto Isolates its 'Problem' Families Local Officials Praise Plan to Prevent Housing Project Blight,” *Democrat and Chronicle*, November 3, 1957 attached to letter from Donald H. Gardner to Mr Fred Schenk (Rochester Welfare Council), April 9, 1958.

⁸⁷CTA, CTPD, RG 16, Box 112, File 15, Paul Ringer to G. B. Bailey, n.d. (July 1956?).

⁸⁸S. J. Allin, “Toronto Experiments with Interim Housing for Troublesome Families,” *Journal of Housing*, 16 (June 1959), 200.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 202.

acceptability in future public housing projects.⁹⁰ Despite the success of the program, officials deemed the “temporary” nature of these Wartime Housing dwellings unsuitable for a long range program of family rehabilitation, since the city had been progressively closing them down.⁹¹

A city-appointed committee composed of Welfare Commissioner H.S. Rupert, Housing Authority Manager Frank Dearlove, H. V. Locke, and the Medical Officer of Health agreed to undertake a more permanent program of transition housing. The committee suggested that the city embark on a pilot project which would be built at 288 Gainsborough Road, where the city owned land in “a well maintained middle-class neighbourhood.”⁹² Seeing that the duplex was to house problem families from the emergency housing centres, the committee focussed on the construction of the units. The proposed structure was hailed as indestructible, fireproof and vermin-proof. Indeed, the city was most proud that these dwellings were “designed to withstand the rigours of inordinately hard wear, ... unostentatiously functional, ... economical to maintain, ... clean and free of infestation.” Lest one think that these units were simply slabs of concrete, the report, in a rare rhetorical flourish, claimed that “the austere appearance of concrete walls has been offset and even enhanced by the application of coloured textite, red brick sills, trimming the eaves with a

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* and CTA, CTPD, RG 16, Box 112, file 15, H. V. Locke to J. H. Woods, February 27, 1956.

⁹¹ Wartime dwellings were hastily constructed during the postwar housing crisis with many of them situated on the edges of Toronto parks. Their wood frame construction and lack of basements contravened city building codes. Nonetheless it is remarkable to note the irony of their designation as “temporary” since many “Wartime Houses” still dot the Canadian urban and suburban landscape. For more on the Wartime Housing program see Jill Wade, “Wartime Housing Limited, 1941-1947: Canadian Housing Policy at the Crossroads,” *Urban History Review* 15, (June 1986), 40-59; and John Bacher “Too Good to Last? The Social Service Innovations of Wartime Housing,” *Women and Environments*, 10 (Winter 1988), 8-10.

⁹² The city had already selected the site nearly a decade earlier for one of the Wartime Housing units it had built to meet the immediate postwar housing crisis.

fascia and decorative frieze board, and attractively framing the main entrance with a colonial front." Built for a cost of nearly \$32,000, the buildings were constructed by city labour and were ready for their first families in June 1957. Despite the high construction costs, Toronto officials believed that the savings in welfare and other community services would justify the initial expenditures.⁹³

The "Brand-type" housing scheme harkened back to Octavia Hill's strategies, which sought to prove the feasibility of housing the "destructive classes."⁹⁴ Central to the program was not simply the provision of better housing, but regular visits by experienced social workers who would steer troublesome families towards the "normal responsibilities of citizenship." So called "experts" were to "steer them straight; teach them their place in society; watch them day and night until the lessons [were] learned." The combination of better housing with moral instruction indicated the duality of reformers' moral environmentalism. On one hand, reformers believed that slum conditions bred slum dwellers. If this was the case then the simple provision of better housing should have solved the problems of these troublesome families. On the other hand, the regular surveillance of the families, combined with the "bunker" type construction, revealed that social reformers retained more than lingering doubts over whether environment or individual morality was responsible for creating the horrible conditions in which slum dwellers lived. The link between physical context and morality was so intricately enmeshed that the rehabilitation of

⁹³S. J. Allin, "Toronto Experiments ...," 200-201. See also NA, CCSD/CWC, MG 28 I 10, Volume 54, File Housing 1953-60, Newspaper Clipping "Segregated Housing for the Hard Core?" attached to letter from Donald H. Gardner to Mr Fred Schenk (Rochester Welfare Council), April 9, 1958.

⁹⁴For more on Octavia Hill schemes see G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 193-196.

neighbourhoods and of human beings could not be disentangled. Indeed, as one Rochester, New York, newspaper commented, “[Toronto’s] segregation unit plan is a natural next step in the fight to restore neighbourhoods and human beings.”⁹⁵

These attitudes are more than evident in the description of the two experimental families. Family “A” was a female-headed family with four teenage children which had spent the better part of ten years in the emergency shelters. During more than half that time, the family was on welfare assistance until Mrs. A obtained a divorce from her first husband and married “a gentleman of more stable habits and income.” Yet, despite their improved financial position the family “just couldn’t seem to get ahead.” Moreover, the children had become involved in the gangs at the camps. It was believed that “a new environment might help save all of them from further deterioration.” Family “B” was composed of a husband, wife, and six children aged 2 to 10 years, and was well-known to welfare workers. The family had been on relief since 1951 and had been broken-up several times due to housing conditions.⁹⁶ According to Allin’s description of the family, their nomadic lifestyle was less the result of poverty and landlords’ reluctance to accept children as tenants, and more to Father B’s fondness for “the cup that cheers” and Mrs. B’s great fecundity. “Few landlords,” she stated, “spread ‘welcome’ mats for women with broods of children and here-today-gone-tomorrow menfolk.” Welfare officials decided that Mrs. B “temporarily unassisted - or unencumbered - by her husband,” should move with the six children into the second housing unit. Of course,

⁹⁵NA, CCSD/CWC, MG 28 I 10, Volume 54, File Housing 1953-60, Newspaper Clipping, “Segregated Housing for the Hard Core?” attached to letter from Donald H. Gardner to Mr Fred Schenk (Rochester Welfare Council), April 9, 1958.

⁹⁶CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, File 11, J. A. Sole - Housing Unit Comparative Monthly Operation Report, November 1957.

despite the high drama, the simple change of environment was deemed the saving grace for these two families. Both families became financially independent, the children made new and more appropriate friends, and Mrs. B's husband decided that the place was a "pretty good place to hang his hat" and spent more time at home. Once again, Torontonians committed to battling the bane of the slum, had emerged triumphant. However, closing down the shelters and reforming a select few families was only one small victory in a larger war on the city's slums.⁹⁷

A Blot on the Face of the City - the Inglewood Slum Empire

You won't believe it
 Preposterous! fantastic! incredible!
 Truth is stranger than fiction, Here are the startling facts of slum housing in Toronto. Read them for yourself. You may be curious, amused, cynical, shocked, or furious. But hopefully, no longer either ignorant or complacent. Toronto the Good? What a mockery!
 Or Toronto the Hypocrite - the Priest or the Levite passing by on the other side? You decide.
 ... As you sit in your comfortable chair in your comfortable home, does it mean anything to you - this shocking recital of rot, scandal and indifference? Do you care? Does anyone care anymore - about what happens to people in the next block - tonight?
 Do you even care that this rot is sapping *your* pocketbook, *your* morals, *your* future and *your* children's future - do you, really now?
 Do you even care enough to share your shame with your wife or husband, your priest or clergyman, your alderman or your mayor?
 Then do so - but don't pass by on the other side.⁹⁸

With that introduction Toronto *Telegram* reporters, Max Rosenfeld and Earle Beattie,

⁹⁷S. J. Allin, "Toronto Experiments ... ," 200-201. Donald H. Gardner figured that city officials knew of at least 300 families who could have benefited from the program, and the Housing Authority was investigating the purchase of houses in urban renewal areas for this purpose. NA, CCSC/CWC, MG 28 I10, Volume 54, File Housing 1953-60, Donald H. Gardner to Mr Fred Schenk (Rochester Welfare Council), April 9, 1958.

⁹⁸Stuart K. Jaffary, "Foreward," *A Blot on the Face of the City: The Story of "Inglewood," Toronto's Notorious Slum Empire*, Max Rosenfeld and Earle Beattie (A Reprint of the original articles published in *The Telegram*, October 11-October 24, 1955), 1.

transported Torontonians into a nether world of vice, poverty, and misery complete with petty criminals, wine hounds, prostitutes, shady European landlords, would be “Colonels” and even a “mysterious woman from Panama.” The setting and characters were an integral part of the “story” of Inglewood; a “creeping slum-empire which fastened itself like a festering sore on the face of the city and defied every decent action to clean it up.”⁹⁹ Yet the “story” of the Inglewood Construction Company was not just about how Austrian immigrant Charles Ingwer turned an original down-payment of \$1,000 on a house at 44 St. James Ave into a “slum-empire” of 81 houses in less than ten years, rather both Inglewood and the Jarvis Street skid-row district were made to represent a larger story of the physical and moral degeneration of once proud inner-city neighbourhoods. In doing so, the Inglewood exposé provoked a moral panic among social reformers, politicians and the press, all of whom believed that Toronto's slums had fastened to the city like a cancerous growth and threatened to consume its more “healthy” parts. Underneath the sordid images of a vice district rife with flop houses, prostitution, drinking, gambling, and petty crime, lay the more important concern that Toronto's housing crisis was forcing the respectable poor to associate with the criminal classes. Indeed, the emphasis on the “story” is important because the *Telegram* exposé was constructed as a didactic tale, which like its predecessors in the genre sought not only to entertain readers, but simultaneously to educate them and prick the conscience of citizens to rectify the problem. If nothing else, the *Telegram*'s exposé further cemented in the minds of

⁹⁹M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *Blot on the Face of the City*, 3. Compare this quote to Andrew Mearns' description of London's slums of 1883 in his *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*:

seething in the very centre of our great cities, concealed by the thinnest crust of civilization and decency, is a vast mass of moral corruption, heartbreaking misery and absolute godlessness, and that scarcely anything has been done to ... purify or remove it.

Mearns cited in G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, 222.

Torontonians that urban renewal and slum clearance were not only necessary, but a just and moral crusade.¹⁰⁰

The following analysis of the *Telegram's* exposé illustrates how the city's daily newspapers, especially the *Toronto Star* and the *Toronto Telegram*, were important avenues through which the discourse of the slum was promulgated to Torontonians. Newspapers have always been an essential part of urban life, especially during periods of tremendous social change. They explain the increasingly intricate workings of urban life, satisfying people's need for information about the bewildering place in which they live. As the city underwent change, residents began to regard the city as a place of mystery. The unbounded variety and the constant change which characterized Boomtown Toronto made the city seem unknowable. Citizens suspected that there were thousands of stories out there in the "big city," hidden among the throngs of pedestrians and vehicles, within row houses and mansions, in back alleys, in tenements, pool halls and dingy dives. In an attempt to make the complexities of urban life comprehensible, newspapers used human interest stories - the most common format of slum performances - relating the complexities of urban actions and actors from the perspective of smaller communities. The intimate scale of the stories made it possible to identify people lost in the shuffle of daily life, their joys, but most often their sorrows which were often ignored by neighbours and officialdom.¹⁰¹

Of course to tell the news and to make it believable, newspapers relied on popular and well-known melodramatic narrative formats of dark crime, stark tragedy, and titillating sex.

¹⁰⁰For the didactic nature of slum exposés see Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities, 1870-1914* (Leicester & New York: Leicester University Press, 1993).

¹⁰¹Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), Chapter 3.

The sensationalism of the daily press did not necessarily lay in the human craving for thrills, but in the shrouded nature of city life itself. In the process, elements of fiction entered news reports and became facts and vice versa. Nowhere is this more evident than in newspaper use of slum narratives. Editors recognized the drama of the story line and its ability to reach a mass audience. For the most part, newspapers borrowed the discourse of urban reformers not simply to promulgate their ideas but to entertain. Newspapers selectively borrowed from the reform discourse, often emphasizing the most sensational and shocking discoveries, because they knew that such presentations sold papers.¹⁰²

Photographs were essential elements of these stories. Newspapers employed photographs both to enhance the shock value of their stories, and to visualize or solidify their veracity. More importantly, pictures, especially in bourgeois culture, were thought to simplify complex stories and ideas - speaking a universal language. As Alan Sekula reminds us, the idea that photographs constitute a universal language contains a persistent element of condescension as well as pedagogical zeal.¹⁰³ Photos establish "truths," not through logical argument, which is therefore up for debate, but rather through providing an experience. Photographs of city slums and slum dwellers were meant to allow Torontonians to experience slum living first hand without ever having to cross its borders. Yet the idea that photos "speak a thousand words" is illusory. Despite the impression of reality, photographs are fragmentary and incomplete utterances. Their meaning cannot be distilled from within their borders, because the way things are seen is always affected by what is known or believed.

¹⁰²Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum*, 25.

¹⁰³Alan Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973-1983* (Halifax, N.S., Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 195 .

Ultimate meaning is always directed by layout, captions, text, site, and mode of presentation. In short, the sense that we make of a given photograph depends entirely on the context in which it is set.¹⁰⁴ In this sense photographs of Toronto's slums and slum-dwellers worked to confirm the thousands of words already written about the slums and their inhabitants. (See Figures 3.1 and 3.2)

The Creation of A Slum Empire

Conditions in the Jarvis, Sherbourne and Parliament area had been in flux since the turn of the century when the city's elite began to leave the central city for more suburban areas in Rosedale and North Toronto. The area's proximity to the Central Business District (CBD) meant that it acted as a mixed-use "transition zone" between the office and commercial core and the residential neighbourhoods to the east. Since most of the buildings were solidly constructed and highly adaptable to multiple-uses many were converted to commercial uses. However, if they were retained as residential buildings the rapid architectural and land use changes in the downtown area discouraged their renovation to anything but cheap rooming houses. This was due to the fact that the buildings were of secondary concern for property owners who held the properties in speculation on the ever-rising cost of downtown land values. Housing and other "non-conforming land uses" were deemed inappropriate for such valuable downtown land and many landlords were simply content to wait for the city or private land developers to buy the land and tear down the buildings. While the area awaited redevelopment, both public and private, it gradually became the city's largest and most notorious rooming house district, serving transients, low-income families, and others with

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 199.

Figure 3.1



Source: M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *A Blot on the Face of the City*, (Toronto: *The Telegram*, 1956).

“Blots Like These....”

Figure 3.2



Source: M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *A Blot on the Face of the City* (Toronto: *The Telegram*, 1956).

“Should Be Replaced With More of This...”

“social problems.” The concentration of transients and people with social problems led a number of social welfare organizations, including the Fred Victor Mission and the Salvation Army Hostel, to locate in the area, and only further discouraged its rehabilitation.¹⁰⁵

Regardless of its “non-conforming” population, the Jarvis district, in the minds of Torontonians, was already a slum because of the association of rooming houses with all the evils of tenement life.¹⁰⁶ *Blot on the Face of the City*’s constant reference to the dwellings it examined as “tenements” played on long standing fears of Torontonians. Nonetheless, Inglewood had a decisive impact on Jarvis area neighbourhoods. Inglewood properties were by far the neighbourhood’s most degenerate, both physically and morally, leading one to the conclusion that it was perhaps the city’s first encounter with the phenomenon of “block-busting.” As Rosenfeld crossed the border into “slumland” he recounted that:

Of the hundreds of squalid tenements in the Jarvis district, they [Inglewood properties] were unquestionably the worst. ... All one had to do was go up and down the street, and the dirtiest and most decrepit invariably were ... ‘Ingy houses,’ after Charles Ingwer.¹⁰⁷

Of the 81 properties 35 of them sat abandoned, many of them gutted by fire, others with broken jagged windows partially covered by cardboard, sagging balconies and reeling porches. Venturing inside, Rosenfeld found “refuse littered all over the floor, broken steps, broken windows, smashed doors, roofs open to the sky, stale smells and a general air of decay

¹⁰⁵ According to 1956 Census figures compiled by the Planning Department, the Don Area (Census Tracts 96-98 & 100-102) contained 67 of the city’s 217 Large Rooming Houses (those with 10 or more rooms available for rent) and nearly one third of the total rooming house population. See CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 22, file 8, “Population And Family Data For Large Lodging Houses (10 Or More Rooms Rented Or Available For Rent) For The City Of Toronto By Planning District And Census Tracts, 1956 Census.”

¹⁰⁶ Richard Dennis, “Interpreting the apartment house: modernity and metropolitanism in Toronto, 1900-1930,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, 20 (1994), 305-322.

¹⁰⁷ M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *Blot on the Face of the City*, 4.

and filth.” One particular house had been condemned by the Buildings Department as early as 1947, but the company refused to obey the order until the house fell down around the tenants six years later in 1953. If that was not enough Inglewood houses openly flaunted fire regulations, which had disastrous results when fire destroyed an Inglewood rooming house at 69 Shuter sending “hundreds of human derelicts” into the streets.¹⁰⁸ When delivered with fines and court summons by the City Buildings Department, Steven Feron, a self-anointed “Colonel,” and Inglewood’s general manager, evaded city by-laws through belligerent court room tactics and appeals on the slightest of technicalities.¹⁰⁹

Inglewood properties were not only infamous for their decay, but also as places of assignment. Thirteen of the properties were rented solely as “nightlies” and a significant number of the 33 properties rented on a monthly basis also rented rooms by the day or by the night. Through a complex system of managers, many of whom were tenants, “checkers”, and collectors, Inglewood rooming houses were part of an organized ring of bawdy houses which netted the company an average of \$90 a night per house. In 1955 alone, Inglewood properties had been implicated in fifty prostitution cases. In addition, in the period of a month and half during 1955, the company’s houses had also been scenes of bootlegging operations, malicious damage to property, and the death of tenant James Nice, who had been kicked to

¹⁰⁸Inglewood rooming houses were not the only properties in the Jarvis area to contravene the city’s Rooming House regulations. Of 184 Rooming houses in the area bounded by Shelburne, Parliament, Dundas and Gerrard Streets only 8 met the regulations. The bulk of the contraventions of the rooming house by-law concerned unsatisfactory exits and lack of proper fire-fighting equipment. Only 28 were found to be overcrowded, while another 12 had tenants living in the cellar. Buildings Department inspectors also discovered that many single family dwellings had been illegally converted to rooming houses and did not comply. See City of Toronto, Board of Control Report No. 8 Commissioner of Buildings, “Inspection of Dwellings in Regard to Enforcement of the Standard of Housing and Building By-Laws,” March 21, 1955, in *Council Minutes*, Appendix A, 715-717.

¹⁰⁹M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *Blot on the Face of the City*, 4-5.

death by another tenant at a wine party. Yet despite the notoriety that the company's houses attained in Toronto's courts, Inglewood's owners, Charles Ingwer, and later "the mysterious woman from Panama," Johanna Nemeth, had never been charged with keeping a common bawdy house. Only Steven Feron, who acted as the company's general manager and collection agent had been brought to court on the charge, but he was later acquitted. Technically, the properties were simple rooming-houses into which prostitutes wandered from time to time. Managers, many of whom were tenants who assumed the rooming house business as part of the lease, were the only individuals police could establish had knowledge of the use of the house for means of prostitution.¹¹⁰

Ingwer and Feron denied any involvement or even knowledge of the goings-on in their houses and blamed the tenants for the physical and moral degeneration of the houses. Ingwer and Feron justified their operation claiming that they, much like the city's emergency shelters, accommodated the "hard to house." As Feron claimed:

We pick up all those cast off by society. And if they weren't with us they'd be sleeping in the parks. We let them come into the room with their wine and they smoke in their beds. If the houses are crowded it's because we let in families with children and this is a lot more than some respectable people are ready to do.¹¹¹

Ingwer claimed he was distressed by his image as a slumlord. Indeed, he was, as Rosenfeld claimed, not the stereotypical hard-shelled semi-literate slum boss. He was an accomplished pianist and speed typist who spoke four languages. He lived as spartan a lifestyle as many of his tenants, rejecting television, luxury cars and large houses. He often bunked at one of his

¹¹⁰M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *Blot on the Face of the City*, 6-7.

¹¹¹Steven Feron cited in *ibid.*, 5.

houses, and even when he moved uptown to Rosedale, the only furnishing in his new “mansion” was a grand piano. Though he kept a close eye on his properties, few tenants ever saw Ingwer. Instead, Steven Feron was the familiar face of the operation, the rent collector and director of the company who virtually ran the business from the front seat of his pale green Cadillac. Ingwer defended his dilapidated empire by claiming that every city had its slums, that they provided a service not only for the inhabitants, but for other citizens who would not want such “slum dwellers” as their neighbours. His tenants, he claimed, knew no better and did not want to live anywhere else. The best way to get rid of a tenant, he claimed was to decorate so that the tenant will “feel so uncomfortable he’ll go voluntarily.” Nonetheless, Ingwer’s actions made it clear that he did not want “good tenants.” Tenants who always paid on time were evicted under the pretense that they were subletting rooms. Tenants in houses under rent control were also put under unbearable pressure so that they were forced to move, while others were evicted through devious means. Ingwer, like other absentee landlords, also shifted ownership to non-existent holding companies and to tenants to avoid compliance with by-law enforcement, a tactic which constantly stymied the enforcement of the city’s by-law concerning building standards.¹¹²

In Boomtown Toronto investment in slums was profitable due to ever increasing land prices. Ingwer’s empire, which began with a thousand-dollar down payment in 1943, expanded rapidly due to rising central city land values, which gave him the leverage to buy more houses. By 1953, when Ingwer transferred ownership of his properties to Johanna

¹¹²CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 127, file 8, Housing Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, “Report on Housing Improvement by Inspection, Repair and By-Law Enforcement,” n.d., 3.

Nemeth, the total transaction was worth \$391,000 in cash and mortgages.¹¹³ However, in the same year the credit rating agency Dunn and Bradstreet estimated that the buildings which originally cost Ingwer \$600,000 were now worth more than \$1,750,000, and that the company's annual income from rents was \$186,000.¹¹⁴ Ingwer had been offered \$50,000 for the Shuter House property located on the north-west corner of Shuter and Jarvis Streets by a petroleum company to put up a gas station, but he refused even though he paid only \$30,000 for it. Though Ingwer claimed a love for houses, even those unfit for human habitation, and regretted relinquishing any of his properties, it is clear from his acquisitions that he was assembling land on whole streets so that he could later sell the whole block for private or public redevelopment plans. By 1953, when the federal government began to close in on Ingwer for back taxes, he owed almost \$150,000 in unpaid levies and interest penalties. In addition, he was in arrears to the city for almost \$45,000 in realty and business taxes.¹¹⁵

Though Ingwer, Nemeth and Feron were the villains of the Inglewood story, the City of Toronto did not escape the censure of the *Telegram* exposé. Not only had Inglewood made a mockery of the city's building and health by-laws, but the city was subsidizing the slum empire through uncollected taxes and generous tax laws. Drawing on "common-sense" arguments about the economics of slum clearance already familiar to Torontonians, Rosenfeld compared Inglewood to the situation in Regent Park prior to redevelopment. In both cases, the city spent thousands of dollars more on social services, police, and fire protection than the area's houses could return in taxes. More important, tax discounts on ever decaying houses

¹¹³M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie. *Blot on the Face of the City*, 15.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 19-20.

further reduced the city's take. The housing shortages of World War I coupled with labour and social unrest in the immediate postwar period led the city to devise a program of graded assessments on houses worth under \$4,400 to promote home ownership among workers and returning veterans. On most houses the tax discount was 10 percent, but for houses assessed at \$2,000 the discount was as much as 50 percent. By 1956 nearly 80 percent of Toronto's single-family dwellings were assessed at less than \$4,400, the vast majority owner-occupied.¹¹⁶ As with current schemes for market-value assessment, revising the graded scale, or getting rid of it altogether, was political dynamite. Yet, the same tax laws which benefited working-class homeowners not only subsidized slum landlords, but encouraged them to let their properties deteriorate. Except for a few large rooming houses, all of the Inglewood properties were assessed at under \$4,400, and thus received generous tax rebates. Yet the most scandalous chapter in the story was that the city, in an attempt to collect taxes, ordered tenants and rooming house managers to pay their rents directly to the city. In an ironic twist of fate, the city became a collection agency for brothels. "Toronto the Good" was now living off the avails of prostitution!¹¹⁷

The stories of prostitution, bootlegging and petty criminality were not simply devices to entertain or shock Torontonians. Rather, it was the connection of slums with crime and moral degeneracy and the fear that as slum conditions consumed neighbourhoods degeneracy would soon consume the respectable poor. What most Torontonians would not have gleaned from these newspaper stories was that the Jarvis skid-row district was home to a remarkably

¹¹⁶L. Schrag, "Assessments and Slums," *Globe and Mail*, March 9, 1956, 6; and NA, Records of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), NA, MG 28 IV 4, Vol. 31, file 35, "Housing 1959", Metro Committee Brief to the Mayor and Board of Control, December 16, 1959.

¹¹⁷M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *Blot on the Face of the City*, 20.

stable population of single working-class men and women, low-income families, and retired blue collar workers for whom the area's rooming houses were the best of limited options.¹¹⁸

"These [hard working citizens] and their families are the unending victims of the vice and corruption of Jarvis St.," stated the Toronto tabloid *Flash*.

No decent woman is safe on Tenderloin Streets after dark, and any child in the area is constantly at the mercy of the lechers and perverts and sadists with which dirt-cheap housing abounds ... The [hard-working residents of the neighbourhood] live in constant peril, they are degraded by the thugs and crooks who infest their neighbourhood.¹¹⁹

As with most slum stories the greatest concern was for family life, especially children who were at the centre of the melodramatic vignettes. The crowded, damp, vermin-infested poorly-heated, dilapidated dwellings in which children were forced to grow up were compared to the "backward villages of Asia with their disease-racked children."¹²⁰ More important, the effect of living side-by-side with prostitutes, wine-hounds and drug addicts was deemed most tragic. That slums were the ultimate cause of juvenile delinquency was so often repeated that it became a matter of seeming common sense. Many of the children were offspring of brothel-keepers and prostitutes. In many cases whole families were involved in the operation of the flop-houses. One witness at the subsequent trial of Ingwer and Feron for keeping common bawdy houses, claimed that a French Canadian couple, with at least seven children, lived in

¹¹⁸According to the 1956 Census figures family members made up more than two-thirds of the Don district (Census Tracts 97-98, 100-102) rooming house population, and more than seventy percent of residents had lived at the same address since 1951. CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 22, file 8 "Population And Family Data For Large Lodging Houses (10 Or More Rooms Rented Or Available For Rent) For The City Of Toronto By Planning Districts And Census Tracts - 1956 Census." For more on skid row rooming houses see Larry Ford, *Cities and Buildings: Skyscrapers, Skid Rows, and Suburbs* (Baltimore: Johns' Hopkins University Press, 1994), 64-73.

¹¹⁹"Slum Landlords' Greed Claims Another Victim," *Flash*, June 4, 1955.

¹²⁰M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *Blot on the Face of the City*, 22.

the basement of 69 Shuter, while they rented to prostitutes upstairs.¹²¹ It was not clear that the family involved ran the houses out of choice or necessity. More worrisome was the fact that the housing shortage was pushing “respectable” citizens into a life of vice. Consider the case of Muriel Arsenault, a single mother of four from Perth, Ontario who could not find affordable accommodation for her family. As a last hope she rented an Ingy house, but later refused to let rooms to prostitutes. Feron responded by disconnecting all the utilities to force her out of the house.¹²² In short, the sordid surroundings encouraged widespread demoralization, in all senses of the word, among the respectable classes.

In the early morning hours of October 24, 1955, the day the *Telegram* articles on the slum empire finished, Toronto police raided twenty-five Inglewood properties and arrested Feron, Ingwer, and two of the company's chief collectors, Linus Coghlin and Willy Ingwer. The “mysterious woman of Panama”, Johanna Nemeth, for whom Ingwer and Feron claimed to work, was not extradited to stand trial. The four men were jointly accused of 127 accounts of keeping common bawdy houses. On May 9, 1956 after 12 days of testimony from former managers and prostitutes, Ingwer and Feron were found guilty on at least 24 counts each of operating a common bawdy house and were sentenced to two years less a day and a fine of \$5,000.¹²³ Much of the slum empire was disbanded, seized by the city and federal government to recover taxes owed.¹²⁴

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 23-25; and “Feron, Ingwer, Coghlan Held on Morals Charge,” *Toronto Star*, October 24, 1955, 2.

¹²⁴ Hoping to redeem something from the slum empire the city tried to renovate some Inglewood properties into low cost seniors housing, but nothing come of the scheme. See CTA, CTBP. RG 32 B3, Box 18, file 7, Plans for seniors housing by Jackson & Ypes, Submitted to City Council January 10, 1956.

Yet, the shattering of the slum empire was not the final chapter in the story of Inglewood. Like all slum exposés, the story of Inglewood was not only meant to entertain and to educate but to prick the conscience of its readers and motivate them to take steps to remedy the situation. The sensationalism of the story was important, Rosenfeld claimed, because it was "a first hand account of degraded living in the wealthy city of Toronto, a reminder of how the "other half" lives."¹²⁵ The slum empire existed not only because it was shielded in a cloak of mystery, but because of widespread ignorance and apathy among Torontonians who tolerated these conditions. Public ignorance, apathy and callousness, however, could not be maintained in the aftermath of the exposé. The Jarvis area was still a blot on the face of the city. Though Inglewood had disappeared, "the leaking roofs, poor plumbing, broken furnaces, cardboard windows, rickety stairs, unpainted walls, over-crowded rooms, disproportionately high rents and the squalid streets are still there."¹²⁶ More important, Rosenfeld reminded his audience: "Inglewood was simply the flaunted and exposed form of a deep-seated disease in the city, which has many Inglewoods and many slum landlords."¹²⁷

One of the most significant community action groups to form in the wake of the Inglewood exposé was the committee on *United Action for Slum Clearance (UASC)*. Formed under the guidance of three members of the Association of Women Electors, including future Toronto mayor, June Rowlands, the UASC was a widely representative citizens' committee including representatives from labour, religious leaders, and urban planners and social housing

¹²⁵M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie. *Blot on the Face of the City*, 24.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 25.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 21.

advocates, such as Gordon Stephenson and Albert Rose. Rowlands and her colleagues Betty June Bilkey and Mrs. G. Mackendrick, described as “young, pretty mothers with prosperous homes far outside the city’s slum areas” were horrified by the living conditions of Toronto families. According to the women, their decision to form a citizens’ committee was reached when they found a family of eight living in one “frowsy” room at a rental of \$85 a month.¹²⁸ The organization aimed to remove and prevent the “scourge of slums” through schemes of slum clearance, rehabilitation and the provision of low rental housing. Like the Community Council sponsored directly by the city in the late 1940s the UASC saw its primary role as an educator of “the public” on the problems of slums and urban renewal, as well as a public interpreter of the city’s master plan. They also claimed to speak for the victims of bad housing. The organization also teamed up with the Neighbourhood Workers Association and the Social Planning Council to form the Riverdale Housing Committee established to rehabilitate the neighbourhood before it too fell prey to the city’s creeping slums.

Beneath the anxiety about the invasive spread of slums and the moral degeneracy that accompanied them, lay an underlying confidence that the slum and slum dwellers could be redeemed. What Alan Mayne has concluded about slums in general applies to the story of Inglewood:

the ... slum was constructed as an agent of mobilization. It was not a symptom of despair and hopelessness. Notwithstanding the contrived anxiety about the invasive spread of slum borders, ... [t]he slum 'became an indispensable image of social degradation' with which to define issues and press goals, and thereby

¹²⁸Lex Schrag, “Redevelopment Problems,” *Globe and Mail*, August 16, 1956; and NA, Records of the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), MG 28 I10, Vol. 54, File 116, Newspaper Clipping, “Pretty Housewife Raises Roof About Toronto’s Housing - Slumdom Is Creeping In!” *Toronto Telegram*, April 22, 1959.

harness electoral opinion in support of ... reform strategies.¹²⁹

Indeed, for Rosenfeld, as well as for other social housing advocates, the slum crisis was not endemic to modern societies, but was a problem of the "unplanned city." Wise social policy could easily wipe out the slums through a concentrated program of by-law enforcement; tax incentives for rehabilitation; and most important, an extensive program of slum clearance and the construction of more "Regent Parks." Only an all-out attack on the city's slums would truly destroy the slum and liberate its hostages. Perhaps the most important moral delivered by the slum exposés was that slum clearance was a just and moral war.

In the days after the story broke, Rosenfeld was overwhelmed by the response from other newspapers, reform groups, city politicians and even "slum dwellers" who felt that they had been misunderstood and forgotten. Arousing the community, both the general public and professionals interested in civic affairs, against the contagions of the spreading slum was the answer.

Once the story had been broken civic officials and the public could no longer escape facing the facts of the disgrace and menace in the heart of the city. Feelings of shame, guilt, horror and outrage produced a clamour for action to wipe out [the slum.]¹³⁰

Labour, women's and other social reform organizations soundly condemned the city for tolerating and fostering slum conditions. Slum clearance and rehabilitation once again became the central civic issue in Toronto, just in time for the 1955 civic elections.

¹²⁹A. Mayne, *The Imagined Slum*, 137.

¹³⁰M. Rosenfeld and E. Beattie, *Blot on the Face of the City*, 26.

Environmental Authoritarianism: The Renewal of Regent Park South

The intractability of Toronto's housing crisis and the concerns about the growth of degenerate slums spreading like cancers through the body of the city could not but reinvigorate the drive to complete the transformation of Cabbagetown into Regent Park. Despite what contemporary critics claimed, the failure to clear Toronto's slums and replace them with more public housing units, was not the result of civic apathy. The city had long been trying to extend the Regent Park project, and the questions surrounding the development concerned when, not if. Nonetheless, the sense of urgency created by popular concerns about the housing conditions of poor Torontonians required that Regent Park South be cleared and rebuilt as soon as possible. However, the sense of urgency and the moral panic surrounding Toronto's housing crisis were not conducive to the long term goals of slum clearance, public housing, nor the residents who would eventually be displaced by the project. So confident were planners and social housing advocates that the extension of Regent Park South was the solution to the physical *and* moral aspects of Toronto's housing crisis that few saw the warning signs that Regent Park South would be the beginning of the end of slum clearance.

Regent Park South was, in many respects, simply an extension of the Northern project. The original plans for Regent Park envisioned a much larger project than was built in 1947; however, when the city was forced to build the project itself it scaled back the scope of the original redevelopment scheme. From 1948 through to 1953 the Housing Authority repeatedly lobbied the City Council to extend the Regent Park Project southwards. However, it was not until August 1953 that the city made a formal request to the provincial and federal governments to initiate the project.

The new federal-provincial housing agreements, as established in 1949 amendments to the National Housing Act, greatly influenced the reconstruction project and its ultimate success. The increased role of these two senior levels of government not only affected cost-sharing arrangements, but more importantly design, planning, implementation, and ultimately the management of the project.¹³¹ The latter point was extremely portentous for Regent Park South. Even though Regent Park South was situated in the heart of downtown Toronto, the municipal government had no direct control over the project, either in its construction, or its use as a public housing project. Rather, the agreement to build and operate Regent Park South was signed between Ottawa, the province, and the newly formed government of Metropolitan Toronto, which was itself wholly a creation of the province. Once the project had commenced the newly formed Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority assumed control and management of the project. Thus, control and management remained in the hands of those most hostile to public housing, and in many ways far removed from the front lines of Toronto's housing problems.

Unlike the city's "build where they ain't" approach to the reconstruction of Regent Park North the provincial and federal governments wanted results as soon as possible to reduce costs, but equally as important to show that they were taking action on the housing problems of low-income Canadians. The latter point is especially important given the pressures of the continued housing shortage in Toronto that lasted well into the 1950s. The lack of suburban development until the formation of Metropolitan government, the lifting of rent controls and increased immigration to Toronto led many Toronto families to live in

¹³¹J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 183.

squalor. The fact that in 1955 more families (700) still lived in so-called temporary Emergency Housing barracks than in Regent Park, was a testament to the depth of the housing problem. Everyone was encouraged by the progress made in Regent Park North, but many were becoming impatient with the prolonged construction schedule. Indeed, by May 1954 the Housing Authority reported that it had been completely overwhelmed by the number of people seeking admission to the project and that it was temporarily no longer accepting applications:

... we now have on file applications exceeding eight times the number of units (592) yet to become available in the completed project and that the number showing urgent need exceeds three times the number of such units, it would seem that the Regent Park North Project Office is becoming the Housing Registry of Toronto; and whereas it is not our desire to refuse applications, neither is it our desire to build up false hopes in those families who are still so desperately in need of housing and for whom there appears to be no immediate relief and, therefore, think that it is advisable to recommend that, for the time being, the acceptance of applications be discontinued...¹³²

The desperation of many Toronto families to find decent and affordable housing was further revealed by the basis for admission of many of the first families to move into Regent Park South. Nearly half of those admitted to Regent Park lived in overcrowded conditions, often rooming houses, while another quarter had occupied inadequate dwellings, many of which were a serious threat to their health. (See Figure 3.3)

¹³²CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 36, file 9, Minutes of the Toronto Housing Authority, May 10, 1954, 7.

Figure 3.3

Reason for Admission	Number	Percentage
Overcrowding	317	43.3%
Inadequate Accommodation & Health Factors	171	23.3%
High Rent to Income Ratio	59	8%
Notice to Vacate	62	8.4%
Families Separated by Lack of Housing	26	3.8%

Source: City of Toronto, Development Department, "Regent Park South," in *Info Pack* (Toronto, 1972).

Reasons for Admission to Regent Park South (1958-59)

Government officials from all levels, then, were under pressure to build as many public housing units as they could as fast as they could. However, the desire to fulfill both goals had far-reaching effects not only on the project itself, but the future of public housing. As Albert Rose recalled during the protests over the renewal of Trefann Court:

Government authorities were saying "Why should we go on for 10 years while these guys [City of Toronto and Housing Authority of Toronto] do a custom tailored job?" ... The governments were fed up with this [the shifting of the population until new units were complete]. And so the federal and provincial authorities decided that Regent Park South would be more like three years.

As Rose concluded, "that was the beginning ... of the terrible concern about urban renewal."¹³³

Like its northern neighbour prior to its transformation, the Regent Park South neighbourhood was a typical inner-city working-class district. Here amidst a jumble of factories, warehouses, and other minor industries sat 458 dwellings housing over 2,750 people

¹³³G. Fraser *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 60.

in 638 families, all crammed together “without much thought” on only 27 acres of land. Many of the houses contained more than one family and, as a result, the area had one of the highest rates of doubling up in the city at 39 percent. Many of the houses were over 75 years of age, had outdated plumbing, no basements, and were heated by stoves and “Quebec heaters.” In the words of one report, Regent Park South was “a tired worn-out place ... where life was a losing struggle against dirt, dampness and overcrowding.”¹³⁴

Also, like other inner-city neighbourhoods during the immediate postwar period, the Regent Park South neighbourhood was in constant flux. An original survey conducted by the University of Toronto School of Architecture for the Planning Board in May 1954, revealed 456 dwelling units and a population of 2,389. Significantly, the survey noted that 194 of the dwellings were owner-occupied, another 216 were tenant-occupied, and at least 46 others were shared dwellings.¹³⁵ By 1956, even with the pall of redevelopment hanging over the neighbourhood the number of owner occupied dwellings rose to 219, while tenant occupied dwellings only increased slightly to 238. Undoubtedly the removal of rent control and the general shortage of housing for families forced many families into purchasing shelter to achieve some kind of domestic stability. Given the increase of nearly 400 people in the neighbourhood over a two-year period it appears that many of these new home owners depended on renting parts of their home to pay their mortgages. Tenants may have been moving into the area, some undoubtedly enticed by landlords, in hopes that they might qualify for rehousing in the project. Nonetheless, given that just under half the housing in Regent

¹³⁴National Film Board of Canada, *Report on Redevelopment: Regent Park South*, Prod., Peter Jones, Dir. Clarke Daprato, National Film Board of Canada, 1961.

¹³⁵CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 20, file 3, University of Toronto School of Architecture, “Report on Survey of Regent Park South,” May 10, 1954. (Tabulations of data completed by author).

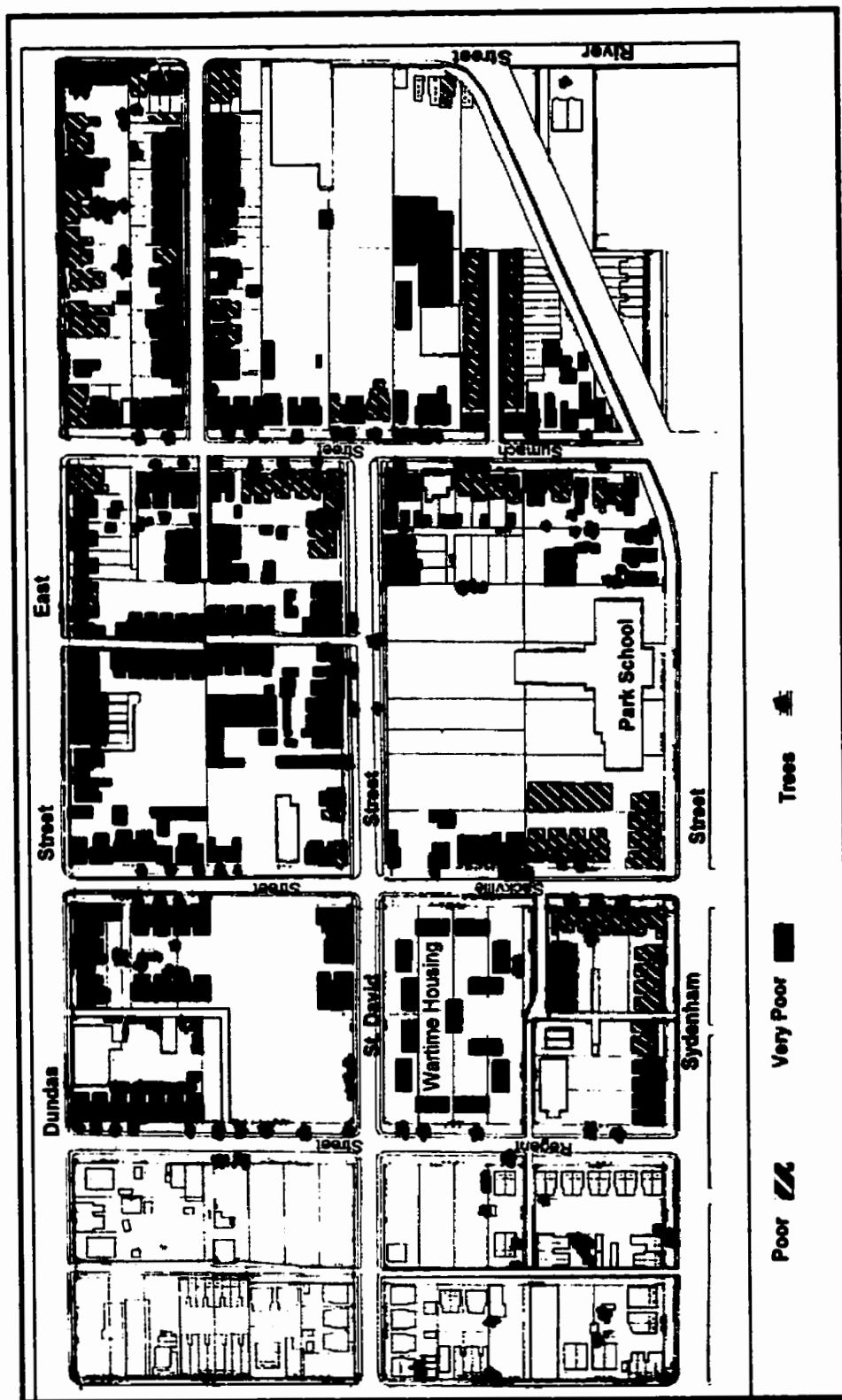
Park South was owner-occupied, it is surprising that Regent Park South was redeveloped at all, and that the project did not meet stiffer opposition.

In addition to overcrowding in Regent Park South, housing conditions remained largely unchanged since the Bruce Report first denounced the wretched living conditions there over two decades earlier. The survey declared that almost every residential structure in Regent Park South was in poor or very poor condition. (See Figure 3.4) Considering the high degree of home ownership in the area, it is extremely unlikely that significant numbers of home-owners had not undertaken any repairs of their homes since the 1930s. Therefore, planners' assessments of housing conditions were more likely based on the age of the dwellings, most of which were estimated at over 75 years old, than their actual exterior or interior conditions. In fact, other than two houses in excellent condition on the south side of Sutton Avenue, the only ones rated as such in the neighbourhood, the only dwelling units in Regent Park South under 50 years of age were the temporary wartime houses built on the edge of Regent Park, and they were due to be torn down anyway. Most of the housing was of the frame-type construction with brick and stucco veneer. As a result, their descriptions of the housing conditions repeatedly referred to "sagging frames," "crumbling brickwork" and "falling stucco."¹³⁶ Only 18 residential structures rated either fair or good, according to the surveyors, and all of these structures, save one, were owner-occupied.¹³⁷ In addition to structural faults, other reports highlighted the fact that nearly half the homes were heated only by stoves. In many ways rents in the area were commensurate with the conditions, as nearly

¹³⁶CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 20, file 3, University of Toronto School of Architecture, "Report on Survey of Regent Park South," May 10, 1954, 1-4.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, (Tabulations of data completed by author).

Figure 3.4



Source: Adapted by Author from Joint Advisory Committee on Regent Park South, *Regent Park South Redevelopment Report* (Toronto: CTPB, 1955), Plate 7.

Housing Conditions in Regent Park South, 1955.

95 percent of all area tenants paid less than \$30 a month, and nearly 80 percent paid less than \$25 a month for accommodation. Many claimed that this was “a high price to pay for living in fire traps.”¹³⁸

Though the reconstruction of Regent Park South did not assume the same mass fervour that its northern neighbour had a decade earlier, there was still the same mission about the task planners and social housing advocates saw before them. For them, Regent Park North represented only the first step in a larger and grander program of providing clean and affordable modern dwellings for all Torontonians. Planners and social housing activists believed that the building of Regent Park North had provided them with the experience necessary to move public housing beyond the elementary goals of safe, sanitary and affordable housing. As planner J.F. Brown wrote to the director of the Ontario Department of Planning and Development A.E.K. Bunnell: “Twenty five years ago the major concern was the provision of sound housing accommodation. Today, public housing is seen as going beyond that immediate goal to a positive program which contributes to a general education for living in a democratic society.”¹³⁹ Much like Regent Park North, and the whole discourse of public housing, new housing would make slum dwellers into citizens. Some ideas obviously never changed.

The Victorian-based assumption that slum environments were the breeding ground of anti-social behaviour was perhaps reinforced best by the cover of the 1955 *Regent Park South Redevelopment Report* (See Figure 3.5). Here, on the bottom half of the cover, was a

¹³⁸NFB, *Report on Redevelopment: Regent Park South*

¹³⁹CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, file 28, Memo from J.F. Brown to A.E.K. Bunnell Director of Housing, Ontario Department of Planning and Development, Appendix C - Residential Building Types and Families, July 16, 1954.

“generic” picture of the slum: a dirty street lined with decaying row housing, rotting fences only partially hiding the heaps of garbage which occupy space where children could (and should) play and where gardens could be cultivated. In fact, there is no green space at all; the only intrusion of nature is an old frail tree at the end of the street. As a result, children are forced to play in the street with all the concomitant evils such as fighting and vandalism, which result from the lack of “proper” outlets for their energy. It is also a picture of apathy considering that most of the children simply sit on the periphery and watch other children harm each other and their environment. The lack of adults, or perhaps more precisely, figures of authority, in the picture, signalled another key to the neighbourhood’s moral and physical degeneration: the apathy and ability of slum dwellers to change their environment. At best, this was a melancholy scene of human suffering and resignation, at worst a visible statement of unrelenting physical and moral degradation, both of which were the results of an outmoded environment.¹⁴⁰

The meaning of this representation is only further enhanced by the scene depicted on the top half of the cover. Here is the “after” picture, the results of a modern and orderly environment that urban planning would inaugurate. Gone are the dingy streets and dilapidated buildings, replaced by modern apartments and row houses. More importantly, there is now green space where children can play organized games in co-operation with each other, and where mothers feel safe to walk their children. Similarly, the National Film Board’s *Report on Redevelopment*, which documented the transformation of the neighbourhood, also illustrated the benefits of slum clearance and public housing by contrasting the old conditions

¹⁴⁰CTPB, *Regent Park South Redevelopment Report* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1955). See also John Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 105.

Figure 3.5



Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, *Regent Park Redevelopment Study*, (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1955).

**“Planning For Our Youngest Citizens”: Regent Park South
and the Benefits of Modern Planning**

where children played in the streets with “nothing to do but hang around and look for trouble” with a scene of the new play equipment at the nursery and a voice over emphasizing that Regent Park South had “planned for its younger members.”¹⁴¹ Once again the message to Torontonians and to Regent Park South inhabitants was clear; only complete redevelopment would provide a new and better world.¹⁴²

The renewal of Regent Park South was such a moot point, its planning almost singularly focussed on issues of technique, especially those which emphasized the social and psychological aspects of building types and site location. If Le Corbusier spoke of remaking the home as “a machine for modern living,” then Toronto planners attempted to use Le Corbusier’s ideas to make public housing a machine for democratic living. Thus, all the preliminary plans for Regent Park South involved finding the appropriate mix of apartments and row houses that would accommodate as many families as possible, while creating the optimum environment contributing to their rehabilitation as citizens. The planners’ quandary between the quantity of housing needed to meet the demand for low-cost housing and the quality necessary to inculcate proper living among tenants, played itself out in debates over the relative merits of apartments versus row houses. These debates over apartments and row houses revealed larger assumptions about the function of public housing and equally important its prospective residents - slum dwellers.

From the start planners found the two goals almost irreconcilable. The northern project had been built simply as a clearance and rehousing project, which would provide better

¹⁴¹NFB, *Report on Redevelopment: Regent Park South*

¹⁴²John Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 105.

homes for the families it displaced. Regent Park South, in contrast, was viewed as the solution to Toronto's housing crisis of the 1950s - large families with school-aged children, the so-called "hard to house." Of the more than 1,800 families on the waiting list for Regent Park South, more than one-third needed three bedrooms, while another fifth needed four bedrooms or more. In addition, a survey of Regent Park South revealed that the area was low in small families, while it was significantly higher than the city average in families of 4-5 and 6-9 persons.¹⁴³ Given that the area was quite small to start, only 25 acres, planners recognized early that many prospective tenants would have to be housed in apartments. The original plan composed by J.E Hoare, Jr., the Architect of the Housing Authority of Toronto and of the northern project, involved 20 elevator apartments, 6 storeys in height and each containing 48 suites for a total of 960 units. However, members of the Advisory Committee found it difficult to "accommodate 1000 units on an area of some 25 acres and still maintain certain guiding principles adopted by the Main Committee in regard to families with children."¹⁴⁴

Like their colleagues in other jurisdictions across North America, Toronto planners were under pressure to cram as many dwellings onto the site as possible to both solve the housing crisis and keep costs to a minimum. Yet, almost from the outset, planners involved in the renewal of Regent Park South rejected an exclusively high-rise apartment development. Despite the desperate housing situation of many low-income Torontonians, planners were adamant that neither these pressures, nor "current architectural dogma" compelled them to

¹⁴³Joint Advisory Committee on Regent Park South, *Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on Regent Park South*. (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, January 31, 1955), 12-13.

¹⁴⁴CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, File 28, Minutes of the Meeting of the Regent Park South Joint Advisory Committee, November 26, 1954.

plan an all-apartment scheme for Regent Park South.¹⁴⁵ Planners rejected high-rise accommodations for a number of reasons. For one, previous experiences in the United States and Britain illustrated that elevator buildings were not only more costly to build, but more costly to maintain and operate. More importantly, high rise accommodation would have an adverse effect on the real mission of slum clearance and public housing, the reconditioning of the poor.

Planners' rejection of high-rise accommodation in slum clearance projects was based on the perceived effects of apartment life on "normal family living." In many ways, the planners' concern for creating an environment conducive to family living was fully in-tune with the needs of those who would reside in the project, an approach which would unfortunately take more than a decade to gain acceptance among state bureaucrats responsible for implementing public housing projects. According to J.F. Brown, the Province's representative on the Regent Park South Advisory Committee, most Torontonians, rich or poor, greatly preferred housing in dwellings rather than apartments. According to Brown, families with children who willingly occupied flats or apartments were families with very young children who did not need extensive play space, or families with older children who did not require parental supervision of their play. Yet families with school-aged children who, out of necessity, were forced to occupy flats and apartments "faced ... serious problems."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵*Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on Regent Park South*, Appendix III, 4. For an insightful critique of the use of high rise apartments in public housing developments see Catherine Bauer, "Clients for Housing - The Low Income Tenant. Does He Want Supertenements?" In her article Bauer criticized the wave of what she called "skyscrapomania," because she, like Toronto planners, claimed that it did not meet the needs or desires of most Americans rich or poor. NA, CCSD, MG 28 I10, Vol. 54, File 471, Copy of Bauer, "Clients for Housing..."

¹⁴⁶CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, file 28, Regent Park South Joint Advisory Committee, Sub-Committee 3, (continued...)

Such families, especially the children, reported increased tensions, anxieties, and generally poor mental and psychological health due to the lack of supervised play space. Thus, moving families with school-aged children into apartments would “only bring pressure... to bear on the Housing Authority or management to provide supervised play areas as a partial solution [to these] problems.” In doing so, Brown argued:

... the Housing Authority will find itself embarked on a paternalistic venture involving responsibilities far removed from those of housing management as contemplated by the Federal and Provincial legislation. On the other hand, refusal to provide these facilities will result in the use of galleries and halls, stairways and elevators as unsupervised play areas with the resultant damages to plant and equipment and increased maintenance costs.¹⁴⁷

Only five years after the project was completed, a study by the Metro Toronto Housing Authority confirmed Brown’s predictions.¹⁴⁸

Though Brown’s memo recorded great insight into the needs and desires of families, it was also clear that he and other planners had a particular kind of family in mind - a middle-class nuclear family. The “normal” modern middle-class family defined by the domestic discourse of the 1950s, as many historians have revealed, was more than simply stay-at-home mothers who raised well-adjusted, industrious children, and breadwinner fathers who skilfully divided time between work and home. Rather, the ideal normal family was characterized by the ethics of democracy where husbands, wives and children comprised a team, or equal

¹⁴⁶(...continued)

“Planning Implementation: Report based on memo from J.F. Brown to A.E.K. Bunnell dated July 16, 1954 and on a paper prepared for the Sub-Committee by Mr. A.H. Armstrong dated Nov 1st 1954;” and J.F. Brown (Ontario Planning and Development Department) to H.S. Rupert, November 19, 1954, “Appendix C: Office of the Department of Planning and Development to A.E.K. Bunnell, Director of Housing Date July 16, 1954 Re: Residential building Types and Families.”

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸Paul Ringer, *The Social Implications of Public Housing in Metropolitan Toronto* (Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, 1964), 89.

partnerships. Equally important, the growing impersonalized environment of the “modern age” increased the importance of healthy family relationships. More than ever, families had to develop an ethic of togetherness and self-reliance among members. Indeed, the essence of a normal family became one whose members could provide and sustain close affectionate relationships, happiness, and a sense of being loved. In short, the home and family became, in the immortal words of Christopher Lasch, “a haven in a heartless world.”¹⁴⁹

For planners such as Brown, apartments could not provide an adequate social and psychological environment to fulfill the “social goals of public housing for families with children in a democratic society.” Row housing, Brown and other planners argued, inspired a sense of belonging and responsibility, because tenants were more likely to undertake minor repairs rather than allowing the Housing Authority to deal with such mundane matters. Also, reports revealed that although families in row houses were larger than those in apartments, they earned higher incomes and were better able to control their children. Apartments provided “little opportunity for the member of a family (father, mother, and children) to do the things together that democratic society has deemed as good to do.” Apartment accommodation also sacrificed family privacy, both within and without its walls. But perhaps most important, apartments subverted the role of fathers in the family by reducing them to

¹⁴⁹See Doug Owsam, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), especially Chapters 1 & 3; Annalee Götz, “Family Matters: The Canadian Family and the State in the Postwar Period,” *Left History*, 1 (Fall 1993), 9-50; Mona Gleason, “Psychology and the Construction of the ‘Normal’ Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-60,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 78 (September 1997), 442-497; Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988) and Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

“star boarder[s].”¹⁵⁰

This latter point is extremely crucial to understanding planners’ views of the “abnormality” of slum families, even when they viewed them and their plight sympathetically. Fathers, in the discourse of postwar domesticity, were crucial to providing a sense of confidence, security, and, most importantly, leadership. Most popular discourses on the slum, however, tended to ignore fathers. Unable to provide a secure environment for their families, men appeared, if they appeared at all, as emasculated in slum discourses. By focussing on women and children, the slum became a geography of hopelessness and helplessness, which therefore necessitated the state assuming the role of father through “paternalistic” solutions to the housing problems of poor families. The absence of men also played into common sense conceptions of the slums and slum families as lacking the positive male traits of organization, authority, and ambition, which explained the lack of both family and community solidarity among the poor. Public housing in Regent Park would not only provide clean and modern living conditions but, more importantly, an “orderly, well supervised and administered” environment.¹⁵¹ In short, public housing should consolidate what the slums clearly lacked: “important opportunities for normal self-reliant living.” By recreating the familial arrangements of the slums, apartments in public housing risked perpetuating these abnormalities, and thus preserving the “social system of the slum.”

The superiority of the row house over the apartment as the site of redemption for slum families was, however, by no means universally accepted. For many planners and social

¹⁵⁰CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, file 28, J.F. Brown (Ontario Planning and Development Department) to H.S. Rupert, November 19, 1954, “Appendix C: Office of the Department of Planning and Development to AEK Bunnell, Director of Housing Date July 16, 1954 Re: Residential building Types and Families, 3, 5.

¹⁵¹Frank Dearlove, “Toronto Can Be Proud of Regent Park,” *Toronto Board of Trade Journal*, July 1955, 6.

housing officials, only a radical break, which modernist-style apartment buildings would provide, could redeem slum dwellers. Many planners and social housing experts, such as Regent Park North manager Frank Dearlove, were not convinced that slum dwellers could ever become self-reliant. For this reason, chiefly, Dearlove opposed any plans that would see a preponderance of row houses in Regent Park South. According to Dearlove, the problem with central city slums was due in large part to the preponderance of that type of housing, and it was “logical to assume that [row housing] will tend to create future slums.”¹⁵² In short, slum dwellers could not be trusted to maintain their own environment:

My experience has proven that it is difficult to supervise a large number of row houses and maintain the grounds properly. I also believe that the present site for Regent Park (South) does not lend itself to individual houses, as the problem of rat and other infestation from fringe areas would be aggravated by the lack of control over the various types of garbage containers in use and the general accumulation of rubbish and waste material in back yards.¹⁵³

To Dearlove, separate, self-contained houses were a very desirable objective, but more suited to small towns or the suburbs than to the central city, where “fenced backyards and arrangement of row houses [would only] perpetuate existing conditions.”¹⁵⁴ The main problems facing public housing, according to Dearlove, were not the best way to provide “a general education for living in a democratic society,” but rather one of control and management of the poor.

Unfortunately for future Regent Park South residents, Dearlove’s arguments initially

¹⁵²CTA, DPW, RG 003 Series 100, File 29, F.E. Dearlove to Rupert, January 26, 1955 attached letter sent from Dearlove to W.W. Scott (Chief Public Housing Officer - CMHC), January 25, 1955, Re: Comments on Final Report of Joint Advisory Committee for Regent Park South, 1.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

won the day. The final recommendations of the Advisory Committee recommended that 721 units would be built of which 448 were to be in 7 8-storey high-rise apartments with the remaining 273 in row houses. These plans were later revised in 1954 when the number of high-rise units was reduced from 7 to 5, but the height of each building was increased from 7 to 14 storeys, and the total number of apartments from 448 to 479 (See Figure 3.6)¹⁵⁵ These modifications to the original plans also reduced the number of row houses to 253. The Authority tried to simulate a house-type environment in the apartments by constructing many of them on two floors to separate the living from sleeping areas. However, residents often joked that the only thing that this design allowed them to do was to “fall down the stairs” in their own apartments.¹⁵⁶

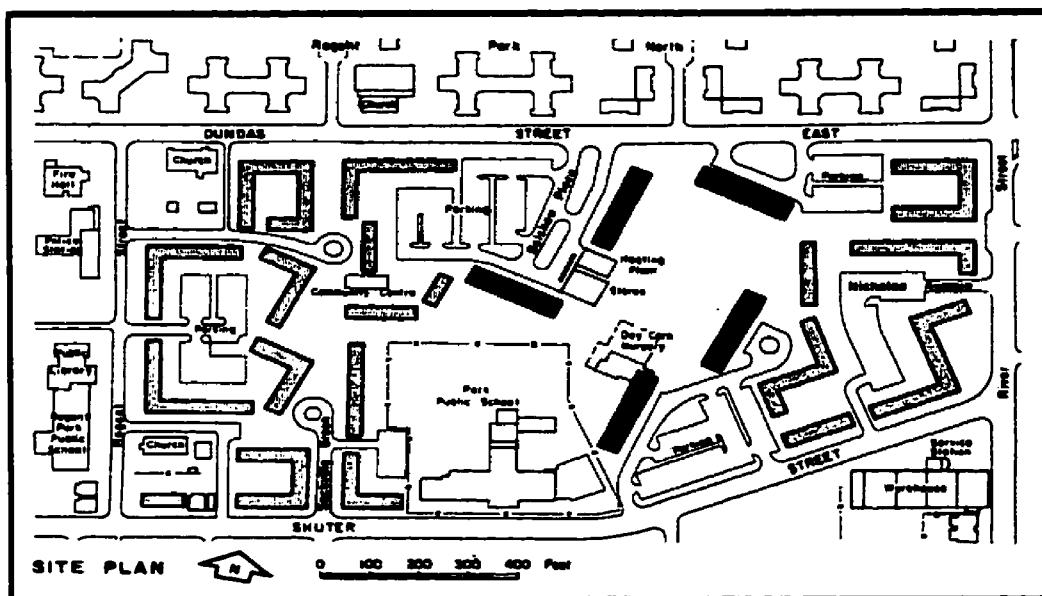
The five towers placed at the centre of the redevelopment soon came to dominate the project (See Figure 3.7). Initially, their design was hailed as an architectural achievement and won the architects Canada’s most prestigious design award, the Massey silver medal, in 1958. However, the “great slabs,” which housed nearly two-thirds of the population of Regent Park, soon fulfilled Brown’s prophecies of the troubles that a high-rise-dominated project would cause. Less than a decade after its construction, Regent Park South became the prime example of the problems of public housing and urban renewal. The Metro Toronto Housing Authority soon discovered “incontrovertible evidence that high-rise buildings in public housing projects are bound to create physical and social difficulties and high costs of maintenance.”¹⁵⁷ Life in

¹⁵⁵City of Toronto Planning Department, *Regent Park South Redevelopment Study*, 1955, 6.

¹⁵⁶John Sewell. *The Shape of the City*, 112.

¹⁵⁷Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA), *South Regent Park: A Study* (Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, January 1962), 58.

Figures 3.6 & 3.7



Source: City of Toronto Development Department, *Regent Park South* (Toronto: City of Toronto Development Department, 1971), 18.



Source: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, *The Official Plan of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area* (Toronto, MTPB, 1959), 262.

Regent Park South After Renewal

the high rises was obviously less pleasant than that in the row houses. For one, the high densities, especially of school-aged children who represented nearly two-thirds of the Regent Park population, led to a great deal of friction between tenants and between the tenants and the Authority. Families were reluctant to let their children go down to the ground level to use existing playgrounds because they could not supervise them. Thus, large numbers of children played in halls, corridors, stairways and the elevators, disrupting the privacy of other tenants. Hallways, laundry rooms, foyers and elevators also provided sites of friction between adults who often "argu[ed] with each other about important or unimportant matters ... [which were] relatively unknown among row house tenants."¹⁵⁸ Equally important, apartment living provided more sources of tension within families, which the Authority was called on increasingly to intervene in. Finally, many reports concluded that the concentration of so many families in one small area called upon the Authority to act as "Big Brother," thus reproducing the alienation supposedly so prevalent in the slums.¹⁵⁹

As with their neighbours to the north, Regent South Park tenants and homeowners vigorously opposed the bulldozing of their homes. The residents' association in Regent Park South was an extension of the Regent Park Ratepayers and Tenants Association formed during the initial campaign to build the northern project. Eventually, as more residents to the north moved into Regent Park North, the leadership and concerns of the association shifted southward. Opposition to extending the project to the south began as early as 1951, when the City and the Housing Authority were caught in a battle over television antennas with

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 20, file 4, Memo, December 16, 1966; and MTHA, *South Regent Park: A Study*.

recently moved in tenants. According to Ves Perry, the president of the residents' association, the association was growing rapidly in the neighbourhood to the South to ensure that their interests would be heard before any action took place. Residents demanded that the city conduct a referendum of area residents before any decisions were made concerning their neighbourhood and their homes. Perry and others told the city to leave their "workingman's castles" alone and look for vacant land "north of the tracks," on which to build public housing.¹⁶⁰ The residents repeated their opposition to the project in a petition, with over 350 signatures, opposing any housing plan that would "disturb their present living conditions." Both City Council and the Housing Authority dismissed the petition, claiming that "236 signatures were of residents outside of the reduced area proposed to be redeveloped or additional signatures other than owners or tenants in the amended area; 47 of those signing were tenants within the area and the remaining 69 signing were assessed as owners within the amended area, in some cases joint owners both having signed."¹⁶¹ Once again Regent Park residents and their concerns were brushed off by city authorities; it would not be the last time.

It was clear that Regent Park South residents had learned valuable lessons from the experiences of their neighbours to the north, but that the city and housing authority had not. Home owners in particular were the most vigorous opponents of the extension of the project southward because they feared that they too would bear the brunt of the costs for the project. They were well aware that many home owners in North Regent Park received very little for

¹⁶⁰"Defy McCallum on Television Is Regent Park Plan - Residents Plan Video Test Case Call Mayor 'Dictator.'" *Toronto Daily Star*, August 29, 1951, 23.

¹⁶¹CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 37, file 1, South Regent Park Housing Project 1953-1961, "Memo from Board of Control." Oct 21, 1952; CTBC, RG 2, Board of Control Minutes #3167, September 24, 1952, Petition from Regent Park Ratepayers and Tenants Association.

their homes when the city first started to expropriate homes in 1947. Some like G. Kucharski, had recently purchased their homes and had begun to make repairs. They feared that they would end up losing money when the city expropriated their homes.¹⁶² Once again they made the same demands as their predecessors; namely, fair negotiations for their properties, and representation on the Housing Authority and any other decision making bodies. Once again they were rebuffed.

On the eve of expropriation in late 1955, residents were still in the dark as to the progress of the project and expropriation proceedings. The residents, represented by the Association's executive members, approached City Hall with relatively mundane questions ranging from compensation for home owners and area businesses to whether residents should order coal for the winter. According to the City's summary minutes from the meeting, most of the discussion focussed on compensation and the City agreed that replacement value would be the basis of compensation during expropriation proceedings.¹⁶³ However, the city and the residents conceived two different interpretations of replacement value. The residents believed that they should be paid market value for their homes, based on what it would cost them to find a similar home elsewhere in the neighbourhood or city. The City was not prepared to pay market value for what it considered rundown properties. The temporary peace between the city and the residents was thus founded on ambiguity.

It did not take long before the misunderstanding reached a boiling point. By early

¹⁶²Mr. Kucharski claimed that he had recently bought his house in July 1953 for \$5,200. His house was only assessed at \$1205, and he had repaired the roof and had \$3,000 still outstanding on his mortgage. CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 37, file 1, Regent Park South, G. Kucharski to Mayor Lamport, April 9, 1955.

¹⁶³CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, File 29, Minutes of Meeting Between Board of Control and Regent Park Ratepayers' and Tenants' Association, August 19, 1955.

1956 the Regent Park Ratepayers' and Tenants' Association was back before City Council complaining of the "horse trading and pressure tactics being used on the people in the Regent Park south area in their negotiations with the City Real Estate Department representatives."¹⁶⁴ The association balked at the low prices being put forward in negotiations by the City. According to the association, the city was offering settlements of \$3,900 to \$4,500 for many area properties, not nearly enough to purchase prefabricated housing, never mind replacing a six-room house elsewhere in the city. While the association admitted that many homes were in poor shape, they claimed that most of those were the property of absentee landlords. Indeed area home owners were not only proud of their homes, but in many cases had sunk their life savings into them. To inadequately compensate them would dispossess them of such savings, as many refused to burden themselves with mortgages as they neared retirement. Furthermore, area home owners also believed they were making sacrifices by finding new places to live, and thus should be compensated fairly in recognition of this inconvenience.

Equally important to residents were the underhanded tactics adopted by city hall which tended to treat them as "outcasts" rather than citizens. Residents believed that they had already been slandered by the city and the newspapers with talk about how the neighbourhood was an awful slum, descriptions which they claimed implicated them as the cause of the poor conditions. Owner-occupiers in the area were "as proud of [their] home as any other home owner and does as much as [they] can to keep up [their] property, the same as any other home owner does." Protests were raised against the pressure tactics used by Real Estate Department officials, whom it was claimed frightened elderly residents into settling for pitiful

¹⁶⁴CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Minute #248, Brief from Regent Park Ratepayers' and Tenants' Association, January 18, 1956.

amounts, which in many cases were less than what they paid for their properties. One of these, they claimed, was an elderly man dying from cancer. Others who were fearful they were “going to be gypped” secured lawyers before they would negotiate any further. In a move that the city would repeat in other confrontations with residents’ associations in the 1960s, city officials harassed residents they identified as trouble makers. In Regent Park South they chose Harry Lebovitz, resident of 90 St. David Street, a prominent member of the Postal Workers’ Union and first vice president of the ratepayers’ association. Lebovitz had been vocal in his opposition to the project, and had also tried to drive a hard bargain with Real Estate officials in expropriation proceedings. According to Lebovitz, because of his stubbornness, Real Estate Department officials threatened his mother. He also claimed that city officials cut off the water supply to the house, an act in which they were caught red handed. He claimed that the person only agreed to turn the water back on after questioning his mother about matters pertaining to her home and the expropriation. Hoping that the carrot was better than the stick, the Board of Control granted Lebovitz’s prior request for an interim payment of \$5,000 to find and make a down payment on a new house.¹⁶⁵

Despite the fact that the residents’ association claimed and probably received support from area tenants, it was clear that the battle in Regent Park South was dominated by home owners and their interests. Other than their housing conditions, little was known about the living conditions of area tenants besides the rent they paid. This is remarkable given that the project was built ostensibly in their interests. However, relatively few area residents moved

¹⁶⁵CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 37, File 1, Copy of Board of Control Minute #1459, June 6, 1956, Re: Payment of \$5,000 to H. Lebovitz; Lebovitz to Mayor and Board of Control, June 4, 1956, and H. Lebovitz to Mayor and Board of Control, June 12, 1956.

into the completed project. Only 148 of the original 638 families (23.2 percent), most of them tenants, were eventually rehoused in the project. Area tenants, like home owners, were equally left in the dark concerning the project and thus received a great deal of misinformation and second hand information. Many moved because they did not know they could be rehoused. In some cases this was due to a genuine ignorance on the part of residents; in other instances, it is likely that "problem families" were deliberately kept in the dark as to their rehousing options.¹⁶⁶ Others claimed that landlords had forced them out with higher rentals. In one instance a landlord hiked the rent from \$36 to \$75 a month, or demanded that the tenants buy the house for \$12,000 if they were to remain.¹⁶⁷ Some disapproved of the project because of the high rents, the high rise apartments which they felt were unsuitable to family life, and because of the regulations they would be subjected to living in a public housing project. Finally, some tenants viewed redevelopment as a blessing in disguise as it motivated them to buy a house and settle down.

Not only did city officials and planners know little about the residents, their accommodations, or their housing needs prior to redevelopment and relocation, but they did not seem to have any foresight about what would eventually happen to the 490 families who disappeared into the great maw of the metropolis after the Regent Park South "slum" was cleared. Those who gave the results some thought, such as Albert Rose, were clearly beginning to worry about the bulldozer approach to urban renewal:

So they went in - Boom! They knocked the whole goddam thing [Regent

¹⁶⁶See G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 56.

¹⁶⁷Elizabeth Goring, "Interim Report of Relocation Study: Regent Park South, Toronto Ontario," (Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority and Housing Branch of the Ontario Department of Planning and Development, April 1958), 37.

Park South] down, and people vanished. In 1955, there was an attempt by the Metro Toronto Housing Authority to find out where they'd gone; they could only trace about one quarter of the people. The rest had vanished. That was the alternative to custom tailoring [in Regent Park North].¹⁶⁸

Indeed, the study to which Rose refers was conducted by Elizabeth Goring in 1958. The results of her extremely limited study should have been enough to make planners and social housing advocates rethink the notion that slum clearance would solve Toronto's housing problems.

Goring's report attempted to trace the post-renewal lives of 516 former Regent Park South families.¹⁶⁹ She located the new addresses of nearly three quarters (397) of the families, but interviewed less than a third (162). The remaining 119 families, she claimed, had simply disappeared. Of those interviewed, most relocated to residential areas similar to Regent Park. Nearly forty percent relocated in the Don Area (within a 1 mile radius) and seventy percent moved less than 3 miles, most across the Don River and into the Riverdale and Broadview neighbourhoods. Significantly, few moved westward into residential districts with similar housing conditions as Regent Park South. Most of the west end of the central city during this period remained the preserve of "New Canadians." Perhaps more significant was the fact that more than half the tenants interviewed moved less than a mile a way, primarily because rents were affordable in the lower Don. Home owners had more mobility and "significant numbers" moved to the new suburb of Scarborough. However, one third of all home owners relocated within the Don area, drawn there because of its proximity to work, the affordability of the housing, as well as the fact that most houses in the Don could easily be converted to

¹⁶⁸G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 60

¹⁶⁹Elizabeth Goring, "Interim Report of Relocation Study: Regent Park South," 37.

accommodate boarders and sub-tenants. For many tenants, redevelopment allowed them to move up the housing ladder. More than one-fifth of former Regent Park South tenants in the study immediately purchased homes after leaving the area. This, however, was offset by the fact that more than a fifth of home-owners became tenants, many of whom were pensioners. In these cases the compensation they received from the city, which was just enough to cover their debts and left little if anything for a down payment on a new home. It is not surprising that Goring found these families to be the most hostile towards her survey and the slum clearance project.¹⁷⁰

On the whole, most families improved the quality of their housing. Nearly two-thirds occupied an entire house and the majority of these now owned their residence. Some continued to share accommodations with others, and in many cases home owners rented out portions of their homes to help meet mortgage payments. Although doubling up was a frequent occurrence in Regent Park, many continued to do so after relocation. Also significant was the fact that those who now occupied flats and apartments did so in converted houses not in the new apartment buildings that began sprouting up around the city after 1955. Nonetheless, former Regent Park residents paid dearly for their new accommodations. Whereas the vast majority paid less than \$30 a month for housing prior to redevelopment, only 3.5 percent paid less than \$30 afterwards. Most paid upwards of \$60 a month and nearly three quarters paid more than \$90 a month. Many families who purchased had multiple mortgages and cited financial difficulties as a consequence of relocation.¹⁷¹ Clearly the results

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

of the study revealed that Regent Park South residents paid dearly for the privilege of cleaning up their old neighbourhood.

If Regent Park North was a mixed blessing for Cabbagetown residents, then the extension of the slum clearance and public housing project to the south was an unmitigated disaster not only for Cabbagetown residents, but for social housing in general. While the paternalism of social housing advocates undoubtedly caused the problems inherent in Regent Park North, there was at least some concern expressed for those who would ultimately be affected by the scheme. Indeed, the experience of displacement and relocation in Regent Park South was far worse than in Regent Park North. Though the constant shifting of families from one residence to another while awaiting an apartment in Regent Park North was tough to deal with, it was in some ways humane. The clearance and rebuilding of Regent Park South, in contrast, revealed the naked power of the state to reshape the lives of its citizens with little regard for their own interests. In short, if Regent Park North represented what Edward Relph has called "benevolent environmental authoritarianism" it was at least motivated benevolence, no matter how paternalistic it may have been. The renewal of Regent Park South was simply environmental authoritarianism.¹⁷²

¹⁷²Edward Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 98-100.

Chapter 4

The Renaissance of Toronto's Inner-City: From Slum Clearance to Urban Renewal

Toronto of 1834 has nearly vanished from sight leaving only its original grid of streets. The Toronto of 1860 is easier to find. Church spires mark the centres of the communities of a century ago. ... The city of 1900 can be seen on every hand, the Parliament Buildings, Old City Hall, Massey Hall and the University are indicative of Toronto's vitality at the turn of the century, before the automobile let the city loose over the countryside.... Metropolitan Toronto of today spreads far out, a maze of postwar low-density single-family homes and massive apartment blocks punctuated by new shopping centres and industrial districts. At the centre, towering skyscrapers symbolize Toronto's high place in the nation's economy ... BUT in their shadow, much that remains from the city of 1860 and 1900 presents a sorry picture of decay and disorder; over-crowded slums, congested and old factory areas, ribbons of marginal shops and clogged traffic. In the continual change that every city undergoes, some areas alter rapidly to renew themselves periodically under the impact of new expressways and rapid transit routes. Others gradually run down and change is generally for the worse. They are the problem areas where both human life and public money are wasted; which cry out for replacement but are left in neglect; where, unlike the suburbs, all municipal services are already installed. The problem areas, as in all cities, stand as if the ebb and flow of growth has passed them by.¹

In the immediate postwar period, Canadian cities underwent a period of rapid demographic and economic growth. Competition for downtown land intensified in the early 1950s, and inner cities, increasingly bereft of a middle-class residential tax base, began to fall into decline. Left as they were to lower income families, single persons, new immigrants with meagre resources, and people who faced discrimination in their housing choices, Canada's inner cities joined their American counterparts as special candidates for government attention.² These trends had been underway since the turn of the century, but only by the 1950s had the problems of a deteriorating inner-city housing stock become

¹Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC), *City of Toronto Urban Renewal Study 1956 - Short Statement* (Toronto: Community Planning Association of Canada, 1956), 1.

²K. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 186.

relevant to Canadian policy-makers, not simply for their actual or perceived relationship to social ills, but also because of the larger strategic goals of civic bureaucracies. Foremost among these goals was the “rationalization” of urban land uses, to employ the vocabulary of the day. In particular, politicians and planners focussed their attention on upgrading of areas that they defined as “revenue sinks,” to make central business districts more attractive and accessible to both people and capital.³ Though eradicating swaths of poor housing that marked the landscape of North American cities was the primary impetus behind urban renewal efforts, the primary focus of the program was not the rehousing of the poor, but rather the more heroic goal of comprehensive city planning. This was urban renewal writ large.

As a test site for federal urban policies, Toronto led the rest of the nation through the shift in urban planning from slum clearance to urban renewal. The City Planning Board’s 1956 *Urban Renewal Study* was the first comprehensive view of the city and detailed prescriptions for its reform and regeneration. The first of its kind in Canada, it was soon replicated, faults and all, in Halifax, Vancouver and Ottawa.⁴ The city was also the first to initiate urban renewal projects under the new federal legislation in Moss Park and Alexandra Park. Furthermore, Toronto was one of the first cities to witness fights over private renewal of the central city, especially in St. James Town. As a result, inner-city residential neighbourhoods experienced radical transformations in both their form and function.

Urban renewal, or as it was known at the time, redevelopment, was the most

³*Ibid.* 187.

⁴H. Carver, “Community Renewal Programming,” *Habitat*, 8 (May/June 1965), 6-10.

important issue in Toronto during the 1950s. Growth was a central fact of Toronto life during the 1950s and 1960s. Though the city itself was not the main locus of expansion, its population and workforce remained stable at 650,000 and 470,000 persons respectively, it was being transformed in both form and function. Inner-city neighbourhoods began to witness a shift in population from home-owning families to smaller tenant households at both ends of the population. As a result, apartments began to spring up at strategic places in the city. In addition, the form and function of central city labour markets began to shift during these same years away from industrial warehousing and wholesaling work toward white-collar, retail, and service jobs. Accompanying this shift in labour markets was the expansion both outwards and upwards of the Central Business District (CBD), transforming Toronto's skyline in the process.⁵

The transformation of the central city occurred in the larger context of explosive regional and metropolitan growth. Between the end of the war and 1956 the population of what became Metropolitan Toronto grew by over 400,000 persons, nearly all of it in the outlying twelve suburban municipalities. The establishment of metropolitan government in 1953 allowed the development of the city's suburbs to grow in explosive fashion. Each year vast tracts of suburban land were being rapidly transformed from farmers' fields to housing subdivisions, shopping malls, industrial centres, and highways, which facilitated the

⁵Jon Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1985), Chapter 4; James Lemon *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America Since 1800* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), Chapter 7 *passim*; and W. Magnusson, "Toronto" in Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton, eds., *City Politics in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 94-139; Gunter Gad and Deryck Holdsworth, "Building for City, Region and Nation: Office Development in Toronto 1834-1984," in Victor L. Russell, ed. *Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 272-322.

movement of people and goods between them. Since the creation of Metropolitan Toronto, the city itself largely became a spectator in the development that transformed the city and surrounding region; it had little to say regarding what happened in the suburbs.⁶ However, unlike many American cities, suburban development did not come at the impoverishment of the central city. Toronto, particularly the Central Business District, profited from metropolitan expansion since there was strong and continuing demand for central office space, which translated into a growing need for high-class residential, particularly luxury high-rise apartments, and commercial development in the inner-city. Ironically, as we will see in later chapters, the revitalization of Toronto in the late 1960s was due, in large part, to its ability to retain significant middle and upper class enclaves situated close to the Central Business District.⁷

Nonetheless, none of this was a foregone conclusion in 1956, and many city politicians and planners believed the city could not stand idly by and hope that it would continue to benefit from the region's growth. Instead, municipal leaders believed they had to do what they could to make the central city attractive to people, and more importantly development capital. They had to overcome the belief outlined in the previous chapter that while Metro as a whole was bursting with prosperity, it was decaying at its core. Moreover, the city failed to take advantage of previous opportunities to transform urban spaces along modern lines. As one planner commented: "In [Toronto's] uncontrolled and unplanned

⁶W. Magnusson, "Toronto," 113.

⁷W. Magnusson, "Toronto," 112; and R. Harris and Robert Lewis, "How the Past Matters: North American Cities in the Twentieth Century," Paper Presented to the Urban Affairs Association 27th Annual Meeting "North American Cities at Century's End; Common Challenges, Common Solutions?," April 16-19, 1998, Toronto, Ontario.

growth from frontier town to Twentieth Century Metropolis ... it made all the mistakes a growing city could possibly make ... that now the need for planning is apparent to the most dim-witted Torontonian.”⁸ Here, then, was the function of urban renewal, to go beyond slum clearance to guide and support private investment in the built landscape.

The origins of Canadian urban renewal can be traced to American urban policies developed in the immediate postwar period. Urban renewal emerged as a reaction to the failure of the American federal public housing program to eliminate the inner-city slums. To speed slum clearance, Congress passed legislation in 1949 providing cities with federal funds and the power of eminent domain to condemn slum neighbourhoods, clear them, and sell the razed land to private developers at reduced prices to redevelop neighbourhoods in accordance with urban Master Plans. To deal with the magnitude and complexities of slum clearance, Congress passed amendments in 1954 permitting federal assistance to be used for rehabilitation and conservation efforts as part of a more flexible and comprehensive approach to urban redevelopment. The key to urban renewal lay not only in its emphasis on rehabilitation as well as clearance, but most importantly in the de-linking of redevelopment and rehousing. Whereas the public housing program limited the use of federal slum clearance funds to providing low income housing on cleared land, the new urban renewal legislation allowed cities to redevelop the land according to planning considerations of the “highest and best use,” which often meant the replacement of slums with high-rise luxury apartments, corporate office towers and trendy shopping districts. In de-linking slum

⁸Cited in P. Berton and H. Rossier, *The New City, A Prejudiced View of Toronto* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1961), 109.

clearance from public housing it was hoped that the new urban renewal program would stimulate large-scale private investment in the inner cities, add new tax revenues to the shrinking tax bases of the cities, and halt the exodus of middle class whites to the suburbs. In the process, however, as many of the program's growing legions of critics pointed out, the clearance of inner-city slums did more to harm the impoverished citizens displaced by the "federal bulldozer."⁹

By 1956 Canadian urban planners and state officials had come to the same conclusions as their American colleagues. Canada's public housing program trailed far behind that of other Western nations, including even its more anti-statist neighbour to the south. Up to 1956 only three slum clearance projects had been undertaken through NHA provisions, two of them in Toronto - Regent Park North and South and one in St. John's, Newfoundland.¹⁰ Though slum clearance schemes for other Canadian cities such as Montreal and Halifax were in the process of federal-provincial approval, NHA provisions for inner-city redevelopment had done little more than to remove the absolute worst housing in Canada's urban centres. At the same time there was little incentive for private redevelopment to divert the attention of capital from the booming suburban housing market

⁹See James Q. Wilson, ed., *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966); Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T. Press, 1964); Herbert Gans, "The Failure of Urban Renewal," *Commentary*, (April 1965), 29-37; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Vintage, 1962); Chester Hartman, "The Housing of Relocated Families," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 30 (November 1964), 266-86; and Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation," in Leonard J. Duhl, ed. *The Urban Condition*, (New York: Basic Books, 1963), Chapter 12.

¹⁰On the latter project see Jane Lewis and Mark Shrimpton, "Policymaking in Newfoundland During the 1940s: the Case of the St. John's Housing Corporation," *Canadian Historical Review*, 65 (July 1984), 209-239.

to the more high-risk schemes of replacing pockets of inner-city blight. As Canada's leading urban planner, Humphrey Carver later reminisced:

To deal with the interiors of cities it was clearly necessary to acquire a more sophisticated piece of legislation than the existing section of the National Housing Act which provided funds for redevelopment: this simply offered a 50 per cent federal contribution to the costs of acquiring and clearing slum areas with the proviso that this land had to be used exclusively as a site for low-rental housing. This offered no choice but to bulldoze the old housing and build new public housing in its place. Anyone who had followed the evolution of the urban renewal process in American cities ... knew that there had to be a wider range of treatments for the older areas of cities: the good things ought to be carefully conserved, what was obsolete beyond recall should be removed, ... and some land ought to be turned to quite different purposes.¹¹

Following the American program, Canada's National Housing Act was amended in 1956 to provide federal funds for rehabilitation and conservation schemes, and to remove some of the restrictions on the use of cleared land. The only land use conditions in the new urban renewal program were that the area to be redeveloped had to be "substantially" blighted and that a "substantial" part of the neighbourhood had to be residential either before or after redevelopment. Nonetheless, Canadian legislation and practice did not entail turning former city slums over to developers for luxury developments.¹²

Under urban renewal, slum clearance schemes were now to be subordinated to larger planning considerations whose focus was the entire city as a 'system,' rather than its individual parts - neighbourhoods. Questions of how redevelopment would affect the neighbourhood or the people living in it were thus subordinated to the concerns of planners

¹¹H. Carver, *Compassionate Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 136.

¹²S. Pickett, "An Appraisal of the Urban Renewal Program in Canada," in *University of Toronto Law Journal*, 18 (1968), 233.

and politicians: how redevelopment of particular areas fit with the Master Plan for the entire city or region. Indeed, one of the main forces behind Toronto's *Urban Renewal Study* was the federal and provincial governments' insistence that they would only consider participating in future renewal projects if the city composed an official development plan which could establish that each action proposed was "the correct one in each case."¹³ In short, the upper levels of government were unwilling to participate in spot clearance programs, and wanted cities and their bureaucracies to think in "grandier terms." As prominent urban planner Stanley Pickett remarked:

Urban renewal was an integrated series of actions which together maintain the economic and social health of the *whole* city. It is much more than slum clearance, being also concerned with the alleviation of blight in industrial and commercial districts, with the re-allocation of land uses, with the rehabilitation of property which has a further useful life after repair and with the conservation of good property.¹⁴

In short, urban renewal was the ultimate technique of urban planners to construct the efficient, well-ordered, and modern city of which they had long dreamed.¹⁵

Despite the highly technocratic and bureaucratic orientation that the urban renewal program would soon take on, it is important to note that at its inception planners believed urban renewal, like the slum clearance programs that preceded it, promised a "new frontier" for Canada's cities. According to Eric Beecroft, head of the Toronto chapter of the

¹³City of Toronto Planning Board (CTPB), *Urban Renewal Study* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1956), "Preface," i.

¹⁴S. Pickett, *Urban Renewal* (Community Planning Association of Canada - Pamphlet #1, 1958). See also Pickett, "Milestone in Urban Renewal," *Habitat*, 7 (July/August 1964), 2-9.

¹⁵For a trenchant critique of city wide planning see Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (New York: Vintage, 1970); and Edward Relph, *Rationalistic Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (London: Croom Helm, 1981).

CPAC, urban renewal posed new challenges to planners:

... we now foresee ... an unprecedented opportunity to create a better environment for living. We are no longer obliged in our present advanced stage of economic and technical progress to leave our urban environment to chance - to let drabness and squalor develop from lot-by-lot development. We now have the physical resources and the organizational experience to build cities which are not only economically efficient but inspiring to live in.¹⁶

Unlike slum clearance, urban renewal viewed cities in a more positive light. Whereas slum clearance was outwardly contemptuous towards the city, professing a belief that there was little worth saving, that it should be destroyed and created anew, urban renewal emphasized the “renaissance,” “regeneration,” and “resurgence” of the city.¹⁷ As Toronto’s *Urban Renewal Study* claimed: “renewal implies positive action to reorganize, improve and rebuild obsolete and obsolescent areas.”¹⁸ To this end the *Urban Renewal Study* suggested a multi-pronged strategy to maintain and restore the city, including by-law enforcement and positive steps towards the maintenance, conversion and rehabilitation of entire residential areas.

However, questions remained as to the extent of blight that actually existed in Toronto. By the time of the 1956 Urban Renewal study, urban planners noted that the standard of housing in Toronto was “generally good.” They also claimed that Torontonians knew nothing of the terrible slums which still existed in European and American cities. Nonetheless, Toronto, especially its inner-city neighbourhoods, was no “garden city;” under the surface lay slum conditions, “albeit of a different standard.”¹⁹ In central-city

¹⁶City of Toronto Archives (CTA), City of Toronto Planning Board, RG 32 Series B3, Box 11, file 1, E. Beecroft, “The Challenge of Urban Renewal in Canada,” n.d.

¹⁷H. Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*, 136.

¹⁸CTPB, *Urban Renewal Study*, 12

¹⁹CPAC, *City of Toronto Urban Renewal Study 1956 - Short Statement*, 2.

neighbourhoods where houses were of the poorest quality and often severely overcrowded, social problems such as unemployment, poverty, crime and disease were also rampant.” Moreover, the blight from these neighbourhoods was spreading. Whereas the 1944 Planning Board study placed the extent of blight in Toronto at two percent of the residential area, the 1956 *Urban Renewal Study* estimated that blight now consumed eight percent of Toronto’s residential structures and many planners figured that nearly forty percent of the city’s housing stock would have to be replaced over the next twenty five years. As in 1944, most of the city’s poor housing stock could be found in areas south of Bloor Street. In short, the only way blight could be halted and the generally good housing conditions enjoyed by Torontonians maintained was through a “continuing programme of maintenance and inspection and, where conditions demand, renewal of the fabric of the city.”²⁰ There was also a sense of urgency. Planners reminded governments and citizens that millions of young Canadians, born at the height of the “baby boom,” would soon be entering the housing market. If renewal was not undertaken soon, the housing shortage that would develop would make it difficult not only to tear down even the poorest housing, but make it almost impossible to undertake major programs of renewal.²¹

Though urban renewal programs focussed on “blighted” residential areas, poor housing conditions were not always necessary to justify redevelopment. As the Toronto *Urban Renewal Study* stated, renewal could be justified if “the potential re-use of the area,

²⁰CTA, Reports Collection, Box 97, City of Toronto Development Department, “Community Renewal (Urban Renewal in Toronto) March 1971” in City of Toronto Development Department, *Info Pack 1972* (Toronto: 1972), n.p..

²¹J.S. Hodgson, “The Urgency of Renewal” *Proceedings of the Ontario Urban Renewal Conference*, (Toronto: Community Planning Association of Canada, Ontario Division, 1958), 1.

which may be so great in relation to the present use as to justify redevelopment even though present conditions may not be bad.”²² “Urban Blight” in this sense was not solely concerned with objective physical conditions of the residential environment, but equally, if not more, concerned with “uneconomic uses” of valuable inner-city land. Indeed, urban blight was chiefly the result of the unplanned and unstable growth of the built environment, especially when speculators misjudged the rate of growth of the central city. The primary roles of urban planners and their urban renewal studies were to stabilize and foster the conditions for the balanced growth of the built environment both in terms of capital accumulation and social reproduction.²³ A central aspect of Toronto’s *Urban Renewal Study* was fostering confidence in the future of the city by providing a stable environment for both public and private investment. Much of the problem facing the city was the result of:

The intense competition for land in the central part of the city ... [due] to the rapid growth of the Metro area. New commercial development must be accommodated as well as a limited amount of expansion among industries which are essential to the downtown area. As a residential district, it houses low-income families because it is the only place where they can find shelter, however inadequate, within their means and where many of them will be accepted. Through the conversion of land to other uses, including high-priced apartment developments, the supply of accommodation for the poor in central areas will decrease, despite the increase in demand for such housing. In many parts of the central district future development is doubtful and conditions have become progressively worse. Some have high speculative re-use values on the assumption that they may become commercial or industrial, despite their present residential zoning. ... But the area of speculation extends beyond areas likely to be redeveloped therefore further deterioration which is a strong deterrent to new investment ... In every such area it is clearly essential to adopt a definite policy on its future use and

²²CTPB. *Urban Renewal Study*, 14.

²³D. Harvey, “On Planning and the Ideology of Planning,” in Scott Campbell and Susan Fainstein, eds., *Readings in Planning Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 175.

in many instances a positive programme to bring about improvement.²⁴

Urban renewal, whether in the form of public housing, or private investment in a revitalized Central Business District or high rise apartments, thus became a central component of Toronto's pro-growth politics which dominated the postwar era.

Urban planning in Toronto, and in particular the *Urban Renewal Study*, cannot be understood without reference to the boosterism which dominated Toronto politics during the 1950s and first half of the 1960s. As Jon Caulfield argues, urban planning in Toronto was "shaped and amplified by the specific political context of pro-development boosterism in which it occurred, an ideology underwritten by policies of the federal and provincial governments and vigorously promoted by a pro-growth coalition of local commercial interests, development corporations and municipal politicians."²⁵ However, he notes this pro-growth boosterism, which repeatedly proclaimed the city's growth in superlative terms, did not go unchallenged. Toronto's boosters knew full well that left to their own devices, they could not overcome the obstacles to dramatic growth, such as neighbourhood hostility to disruptive public and private developments, political conflict within and between the region's municipal councils, and the city's conservative political culture.²⁶ In short, they realized that downtown redevelopment could not proceed smoothly without a comprehensive plan and without some justification provided to residents of why they should be relocated for the purpose of restructuring central Toronto to accommodate corporate and financial capital.

Thus, pro-growth boosters such as Metro Chairman Frederick Gardiner co-opted the

²⁴CTPB, *Urban Renewal Study*, II 42

²⁵J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 56.

²⁶*Ibid.*

planning apparatus to lend legitimacy to their class-bound objectives. The development of comprehensive planning during and shortly after World War II was not coincidental. Rather, it was a response to an increasingly pervasive mass consumption that was highly dependent upon a collectively provided infrastructure. A powerful rationale had to be provided for the disproportionate sacrifices by some groups in society. The extensive collection of minute data and statistical analyses, such as the 1956 *Urban Renewal Study*, was the way boosters could present such controversial, and, in many cases, class-bound programs, as technical and apolitical solutions for the radical transformation of the inner-city built environment. This does not mean that Toronto city planners simply became the lackeys of local pro-growth politicians and corporate capital. As revealed below in the case of the redevelopment of St. James Town, planners often opposed the rapid and drastic transformation of the city's built environment. Contrary to the claims of Caulfield, Sewell, and other critics of Toronto's planners during these years, Toronto planners such as Matthew Lawson were not uncritical supporters of urban modernism. Lawson, Hans Blumenfeld, and other key planners were not necessarily hostile toward the old mixed-use neighbourhoods which surrounded the Central Business District, nor did they always prefer new large-scale forms that separated uses, were structurally homogenous, and appeared orderly to the eye. Neither did they subvert issues of quality to the imperative of rapid redevelopment. However, when they opposed the growth coalition they were simply ignored. This, however, did not happen often because planners' commitments to the principles of urban modernism and to their vision of the "renewal of the inner-city were highly compatible with the boosters' interest in enhancing downtown Toronto as a site of investment, an objective toward which the restructuring of

inner-city neighbourhoods was perceived as a key strategic element."²⁷

In short, the *Urban Renewal Study* of 1956 represented the height of the positivist social-scientific approach to the city and its problems. Planners assumed that changes in the urban structure and function of the city were natural and largely self-evident. All that they had to do was to identify how the antiquated landscape and built environment of the central city could be supplanted with the least disruption and cost involved. At the same time, concern for central city residents who would be dislocated by renewal was increasingly relegated to a secondary position. The issue became one of finding alternative accommodation for such people. According to the comprehensive views of planners and politicians, their short term costs and sacrifices could not deter the long-run goal of converting their neighbourhoods into places much more closely tied to the needs of development capital which were playing an increasingly pivotal role in the national economy. However, in seeing the decline of working-class inner-city neighbourhoods as part of a natural and inevitable process, the actions by the Toronto Planning Board only served to accentuate their decline. In short, positivistic planning was a self-fulfilling prophecy.²⁸

Central to the issue of redevelopment were the increased assessments that renewal would bring. Like other Canadian cities, Toronto's urban redevelopment program was closely linked to the commercial property industry, which provided apartment buildings, shopping centres, corporate office space, and industrial complexes. The removal of 'blighted

²⁷*Ibid.* 57.

²⁸This analysis depends heavily on that of Fran Klodawsky, "Accumulation, The State, and Community Struggles Impacts on Toronto's Built Environment, 1945 to 1972," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Geography, Queen's University, 1985.

areas' around the core of the Central Business District, many of which were low density working-class residential areas, and their replacement with high-rise apartments and office buildings would therefore generate important sources of revenue for the city. Mayor Nathan Phillips was not alone in his opinion that the City of Toronto should do nothing to impede private organizations and individuals in their efforts to redevelop sections of the downtown area.²⁹

Thus, although couched in terms of improving the quality of the residential environment, urban renewal could easily slide into an almost exclusive concern with redevelopment as an end in itself, tying the city into a pattern of what Ontario Municipal Board chairman J.A. Kennedy called "dollar planning."³⁰ The city's own 1949 *Master Plan* foreshadowed this development when it noted that "although urban residential property ... does not and perhaps cannot be expected to produce revenue ... equal to the cost of services... there is surrounding the central commercial area ... a belt of substandard property in which this characteristic is accentuated because of the age and obsolescence of the buildings."³¹ As we witnessed in the "selling" of Regent Park to city voters, planners, city politicians, and even social housing activists echoed the familiar refrain that slums were subsidized, high-cost areas, perhaps consuming half of the costs for city services, while contributing as little as five per cent to city revenues. While the uneconomic aspects of slums were a central part of their arguments, the "under-development" of slum areas became much more important in the discourse of "redevelopment." Because of the age and "obsolescence" of slum or blighted

²⁹City of Toronto, *City Council Minutes*, 1957. "Appendix C," 5.

³⁰See G. Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 55.

³¹CTPB, *Master Plan for the City of Toronto* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1949), 5.

of slum or blighted properties, assessments were deemed to be far below that which would prevail if land uses were “up-to-date” (See Figure 4.1). Whole areas of the central city were thus condemned as uneconomic uses of land on the basis of assessments alone -- that is, when the ratio of land value to building value was two to one or more. Under revisions to the Ontario Planning Act in 1952 municipalities could declare such areas for private or public redevelopment and retain the right to expropriate, hold and clear properties in the area.³² By the mid 1950s the city had identified and designated two such areas: Wood-Wellesley and St. James Town.

Figure 4.1



Source: *Toronto Star*, November 18, 1954, 6.

Urban Renewal as “Dollar Planning” in Toronto

³²Murray Jones, *The Role of Private Enterprise in Urban Renewal* (Toronto: Report Prepared for the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1966), 48.

Dollar Planning in Action: The Origins of High Rise Apartments in Toronto

To encourage redevelopment in the central city, Toronto City Council designated the neighbourhood immediately north of Maple Leaf Gardens as a redevelopment area under by-law 18746 in November 1952. Neighbourhoods situated close to the financial and commercial heart of the city had long been coveted for apartment redevelopment by private builders. Private redevelopment had already begun to take place in the neighbourhood. In fact, the area had witnessed one of the city's first high-rise apartment developments - City Park Apartments (See Figure 4.2). This apartment development proceeded without using the expropriation powers of the city, although there were rumours that the city promised the developer that it would help the company acquire other properties in the area to extend the project.

The neighbourhood was typical of most of Toronto central city areas: a mixture of two and three storey detached and semi-detached homes, many of which had previously housed large middle-class families, but which now had become duplexes, triplexes or rooming houses. Though the area was predominantly residential, many of the larger houses had been converted to offices, and headquarters for various clubs and societies.³³ Though there were pockets of 'blight' in the area, it was by no means a slum. The rooming houses on Maitland Street were described as "tired and seedy look[ing]," while others on Alexander Street were a bit "dilapidated." But all reports emphasized that there were far worse conditions elsewhere in the city and that, with minor repairs, many of the houses could

³³In many respects in the area was undergoing similar changes as the Annex, another prominent middle class area to the north and west of the neighbourhood. See Lydia Burton and David Morley, "Neighbourhood Survival in Toronto," *Landscapes*, 23 (Fall 1979), 33-40.

continue to provide decent affordable housing for years to come.³⁴

The area housed a wide variety of people. Occupations of area residents ranged from bricklayers and garage mechanics to real estate operators and doctors.³⁵ The central location also benefited women who worked as stenographers, secretaries and sales clerks. Single persons and young married couples without children predominated, probably due to the high number of rooming houses and small apartments in the area. Despite the high number of tenants, slightly more than half the houses in the area were owner-occupied, many of which contained rented rooms. Rents in the area ranged from \$30 to \$80 a month. Wages of area residents were not investigated, but the rents paid suggest that the incomes in the area were on the whole below average for the City.

The four-acre area between Wellesley, Wood, Jarvis and Yonge Streets had been purchased by the T. Eaton Company when it built its flagship store at College and Yonge Streets nearly twenty-five years earlier. Dismayed by the spread of blight in the area surrounding its elegant new store, Eaton's was anxious to redevelop the parcel.³⁶ In 1951, the company sold its land holdings on Wood Street to Hubert Holdings, who, backed by Swiss capital, built the City Park apartments -- three fourteen-storey apartment buildings. Up to that point, the major pocket of blight in the area was limited to Wood Street, acquired by the company for its apartment development. Nonetheless, the city was anxious to increase assessments from the area and quietly advised Hubert Holdings to acquire as many properties

³⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 14, file 13, City of Toronto Planning Board, "Preliminary Report on the Wood-Wellesley Redevelopment Area," 1956.

³⁵*Ibid.* 6.

³⁶Although some claimed that Eaton's let the area become run down before convincing the city to change the zoning in the area to permit high-rise apartments. See CTA, City of Toronto Mayor's Papers (MP), RG 7 Series A1, Box 37, file 16, Attachment of letter from G. Baker to N. Phillips, n.d.

in the area as possible and that the city would, under its powers of expropriation, secure any additional properties the company had been unable to purchase. For unknown reasons, the company did not take up the city's offer. Anxious to speed up the process of private redevelopment in the area, the city enacted the redevelopment by-law, thus subjecting all the properties in the area to the threat of expropriation.³⁷

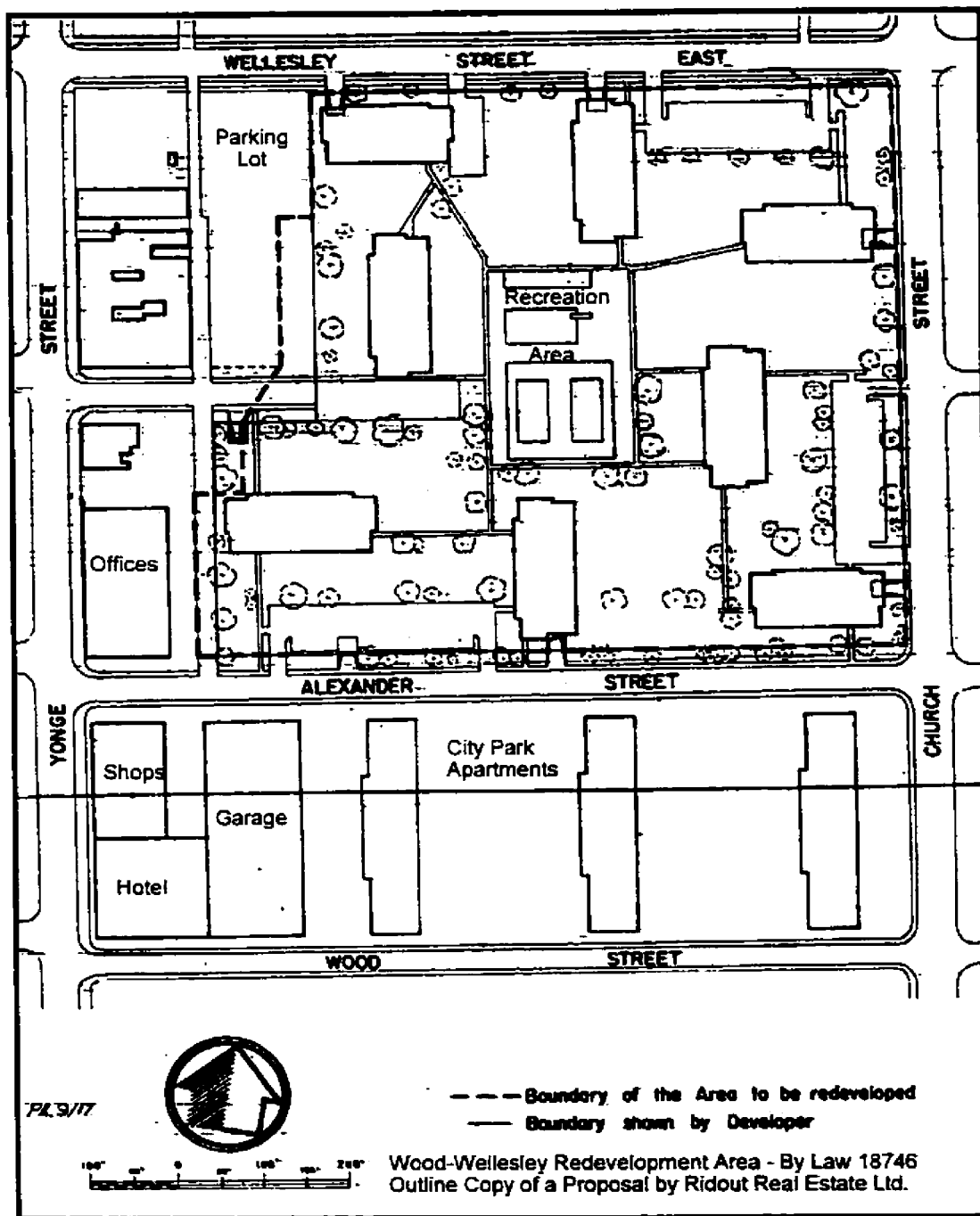
Despite the implementation of the redevelopment by-law, developers did not immediately respond to the city's proffered assistance in land assembly. By January 1955 area residents, who had initially protested the designation of their neighbourhood for "redevelopment", asked that City Council rescind the redevelopment designation.³⁸ The deputation claimed that the designation, combined with the lack of action, had caused the area to become run-down as the by-law had discouraged home-owners and landlords from following through on a normal program of repairs. The Committee on Property agreed with the residents and recommended that Council repeal the by-law unless redevelopment proposals were submitted before April 1, 1955. The city received three proposals which were further revised and submitted to City Council in October 1955.

By mid-October 1955 the City settled on a proposal by Ridout Real Estate to redevelop the area. Ridout planned to build eight seventeen-storey apartment buildings with over 1,500 units, most of them one-bedroom units, with equal numbers of bachelor and two-bedroom apartments (See Figure 4.2). Rents in the new project ranged from \$105 a month

³⁷CTA, William Dennison Collection (WDC), SC 302, Box 3, File "Wellesley-Church Redevelopment - 1952-56." Arthur Lowe, "What Can We Lose? An Editorial," Reprinted from the July [1956?] issue of the *Apartment Owner & Builder*.

³⁸CTA, Records of the City Executive/Board of Control (CTBC), RG 2, Board of Control Minutes, 1952, Minute #3559, November 5, 1952. Deputation of Bloor-Carleton Ratepayers' Association led by Councillor William Dennison and area resident George L. Patterson.

Figure 4.2



Source: CTPB. "Wood-Wellesley Development, Third Report," (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1956).

Wood-Wellesley Redevelopment Proposal

for a bachelor to over \$120 a month for a two-bedroom unit. In return for the city purchasing the land, the company promised to pay full taxes on the land and buildings which would amount to \$528,000 a year, up significantly from the \$56,000 worth of assessment that the area currently brought into the city coffers. In total, the City over the life of the agreement with the company, would be subsidizing the development to the tune of over \$11 million dollars, \$5 million of which included the cost to the city to expropriate the land and buildings in the neighbourhood. No sooner had City Council awarded the contract than criticism of the deal began to pour in.

Opposition to the project came from two different sources. On one side stood real estate interests which opposed the use of public expropriation for private interests, especially in an area that had witnessed redevelopment without public intervention or subsidy. Some of these real estate interests also objected to the manner in which the competition had been held. These objections were voiced so strongly that the resulting bad press forced the two parties to reopen the competition. With a new deadline set for February 15, 1956, another six proposals, including Ridout's winning proposal, were received.

On the other side stood area residents who vigorously opposed both the city and Ridout Real Estate. The Bloor-Carlton Ratepayers Association came together with the help of local CCF riding associations in 1952 upon rumours that the area was to be designated as a redevelopment area.³⁹ The crux of the residents' dissatisfaction lay in the fact that the city proposed to expropriate their properties for what was considered luxury accommodation. In

³⁹Queen's University Archives (QUA), Papers of the Ontario Co-operative Commonwealth Federation/New Democratic Party (O-CCF/O-NDP), Box 32, File 3, St. Paul's Riding Association Minutes - 1951-54, Minutes of the Organizing Committee, April 2, 1952.

this they were supported by a wide range of civic groups who decried the city's attempt to "steal from the poor to give to the rich."⁴⁰ The residents' association expressed the belief that the city had overstepped its powers of expropriation, which should only be used for public purposes in truly slum areas where it could obtain money from the federal government to build public housing such as in Regent Park.

Residents also claimed that the proposed rents were too high in the project to house those currently living in the neighbourhood. Based on their ability to pay and their needs, 95 percent of area residents would not be able to return to the area after redevelopment. Most area tenants paid between \$40 and \$80 a month in rent, which was nowhere near the proposed rents for the new apartments. The small apartments also did not suit area families who needed more space, especially in terms of proposed costs. As a result, less than a third of residents (26.7 percent) were interested in moving into the project, and even then it was on the condition of the "rents being low enough." Many of these people were single persons and young married couples, as very few families felt that they could afford the proposed rents or that the project suited their needs.⁴¹

Confounding the issue was the fact that no provisions had been made for the relocation of area residents. Neither the city, nor the development company, Ridout Real Estate, believed it was responsible for the costs of relocation. Toronto's critical housing shortage also left the question open as to where these people could go? Yet it was clear that most area residents did not want to leave. Most were tied to the central city, not only

⁴⁰CTA. MP, RG 7 A1, Box 37, file 16. "Taxpayer" to Mayor Lamport, March 16, 1954.

⁴¹CTPB, "Wood-Wellesley Development, Third Report," (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1956), Appendix M - Survey of Residents.

because of the cheap accommodation offered, but by other factors such as proximity to work. Of the 450 families who were not interested in living in the development almost two-thirds claimed that they would relocate in the general area. Less than ten percent indicated that they would move out of the city to the suburbs and beyond. Very few families could afford to buy elsewhere, and many homeowners were afraid that the city would not properly reimburse them for the loss of their homes and, in the case of those who rented rooms, for the potential loss of revenue that expropriation would entail. As one woman resident claimed “what point is there to it [redevelopment] if it simply forces a lot of people out of homes they can afford into others they may not want. I lived in Scarboro [sic] once, I don’t want to go back.”⁴²

Meanwhile, only a block away real estate interests were assembling land in the St. James Town area in hopes of redeveloping the area into Canada’s largest high rise development. Bounded by Wellesley, Howard, Sherbourne and Parliament Street the neighbourhood was one of the older residential areas of the city. First developed shortly before 1870, the area soon became home to the city’s burgeoning middle class. Though smaller than the homes of the elite which lined nearby Sherbourne street, the neighbourhood’s townhouses were extremely well built and many of them were excellent examples of the “outstanding work of tradesmen of the era and bear witness to the affluence of the original owners.”⁴³

By the 1950s, the neighbourhood had followed classic processes of urban growth of

⁴²“Blast City Backed High Rental Apartment Project - Consult Psychiatrist Councillors Voting For Project Advised.” *Toronto Star*, October 18, 1955, 33, 35.

⁴³M.V. Jones, *The Role of Private Enterprise in Urban Renewal*, 165; and K. Gilead, “St James Town,” unpublished paper, June 1990. (City of Toronto Archives, Papers and Theses Collection Box 24, file 9), 5.

central city neighbourhoods. As early as the 1930s middle- and upper-class residents began to leave the area for neighbourhoods in Rosedale and North Toronto. This flight stepped up after the Second World War, and by the mid 1950s the area had become dominated by new immigrants and lower-middle class and working-class Torontonians. Many of the homes, now seventy years old, had become rooming houses, or were converted to duplexes and triplexes by their owners to provide additional household revenue.⁴⁴ Despite the filtering of the neighbourhood to inhabitants on “a much lower rung of the economic ladder,” housing conditions in St. James Town had not deteriorated to any significant degree.⁴⁵ Only a few structures could be described as blighted, and all of them were located on Bleeker Street and Darling Avenue, a small back lane in the middle of the area. Otherwise the townhouses which lined the streets appeared to be clean and reasonably well-kept. Even the Planning Board agreed that the area had a number of special attributes that were worth preserving: “a combination of fine trees, good proportions in the relation of building height to street space, ... and relative freedom from heavy [through] traffic.”⁴⁶ Though Toronto planners had often lamented the conversion of stately old homes to rooming houses and multi-unit dwellings, the *Urban Renewal Study* advocated that the neighbourhood’s single family houses would “better serve present-day needs if they were converted to provide two or three self-contained units...” and that “provision be made for roomers or other additional persons within many

⁴⁴According to the 1956 Census, despite the drop in population by almost 8 percent and number of families by almost 16 percent the number of households with lodgers and with 2 or more families increased since the 1951 Census. A sixty percent increase in households with 10 or more persons (1951 - 84 1956 - 132) also indicates an increased conversion of houses to rooming houses or multi-family dwellings. It should be noted that the St James Town area composed the bulk of Census tract 96, but also included the area east of Jarvis between Bloor and Wellesley streets, and a strip of land north of Howard Avenue to Bloor Street.

⁴⁵M.V. Jones, *The Role of Private Enterprise in Urban Renewal*, 165.

⁴⁶CTPB, *Urban Renewal Study*, IV, 15.

households; this will help to provide for many single people who want to live in the downtown areas and will allow an additional source of income to the householder.⁴⁷

The area soon became a prime target of real estate developers and speculators due to its proximity to the downtown core and to the area's exemption from the city's new zoning by-law.⁴⁸ During the process to revise and codify the city's zoning plan area property owners successfully challenged the City's right to lower the density of the area. In 1952 a new zoning by-law recognized the growing presence of multiple family dwellings in the area, and designated it as an R.4 area, which would allow for the development of very tall buildings on large lots. At the same time, the new zoning requirements limited densities to 1.5:1, required landscaped open space, and mandated at least one parking space for every two dwellings. However, over the next two years property owners, real estate interests, and city councillors lobbied to raise the densities in R.4 areas to 3.5:1.

By 1956 their lobbying had paid off and the zoning by-law had been amended applying section 4.10.b to all R4. V1. districts including St. James Town. As a result the new floor- to-area ratio of buildings in St. James Town could be 3.5, the only area in the city with a density higher than 2.5.⁴⁹ Such floor-to-area ratios would allow developers to build at densities of more than 400 people per acre, nearly ten times the average density of the city. The City hoped that the higher density allowances would encourage renewal of blighted

⁴⁷CTPB. *Urban Renewal Study*, IV 26.

⁴⁸For more on zoning in Toronto see Peter W. Moore, "Zoning and Planning: The Toronto Experience, 1904-1970," in Alan F.J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter, eds., *The Useable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), 316-341.

⁴⁹The new zoning requirements also reduced off street parking from 80 to 50 percent of all new units, and contained no requirement to provide landscaped open space. See M.V. Jones, *The Role of Private Enterprise in Urban Renewal*, 164.

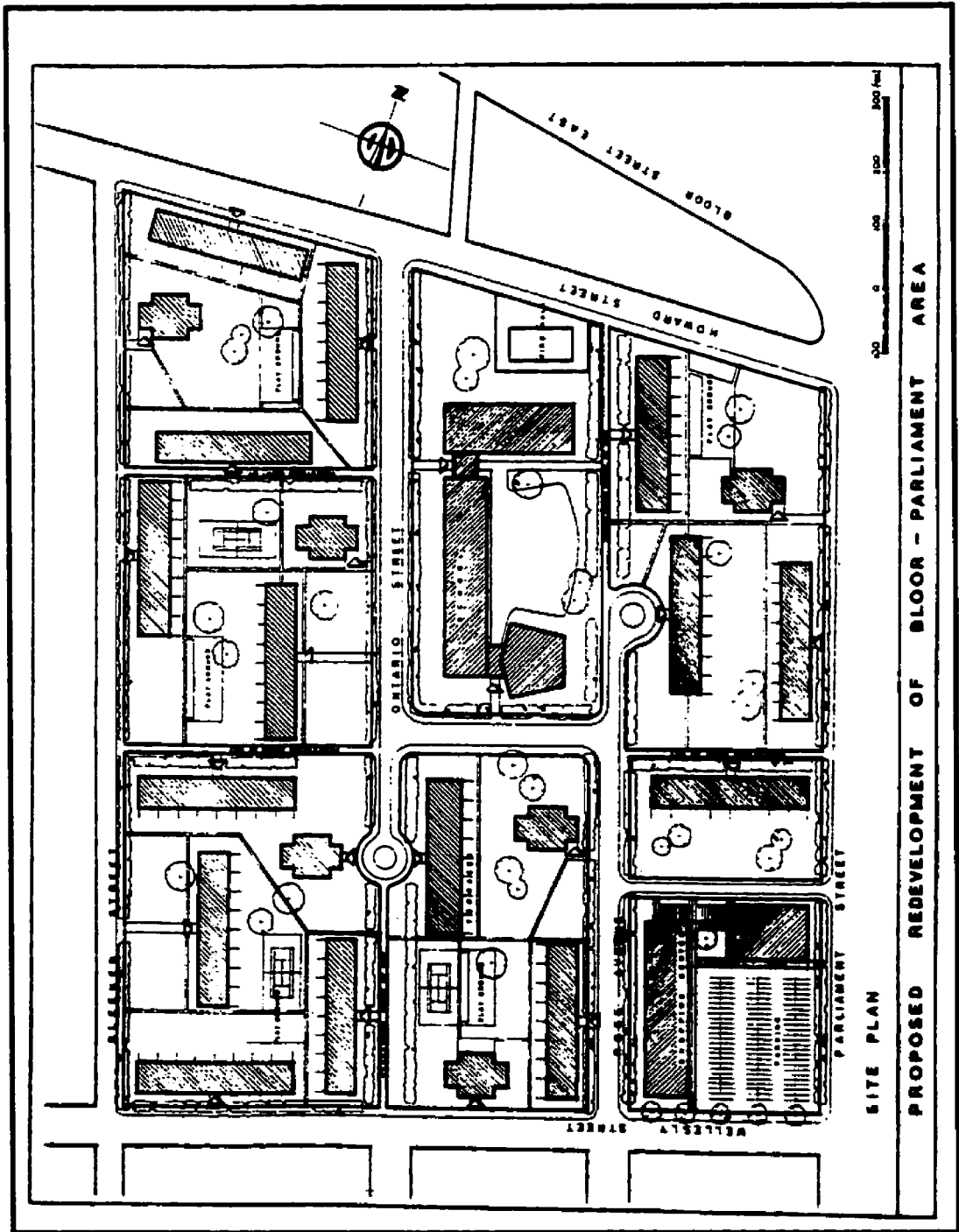
pockets in the area. Others, like labour councillor Ford Brand, believed that raising densities in areas like St. James Town would also help provide more affordable housing to poor Torontonians.⁵⁰ Instead, it only led to the haphazard purchase of area properties by numerous speculators, and a civic scandal which lasted for more than two decades.

By June 1956 a consortium of real estate developers and finance capital, known as the Parliament Syndicate, announced its elaborate \$40 million plan to build 4100 apartments in 19 high rises in St. James Town (See Figure 4.3). The proposed scheme planned to increase the population in the area from approximately 3500 persons to nearly 10,000 persons, half of whom would be housed in two-bedroom apartments renting at approximately \$140 a month. As early as 1954 the Syndicate had been assembling properties in the area through the services of Oxford Realty, which was owned by W.W. Gardiner, son of Metro chairman Frederick Gardiner, perhaps the most influential shaper of the built environment in Toronto's history.⁵¹ The Syndicate claimed that they chose Oxford Realty because of its knowledge of area properties, but owing to the controversial nature of the development it is clear that the Syndicate deemed that ties to one of Canada's most powerful politicians were crucial to the success of the venture. By 1956 the company claimed to control, through purchase, and option over 70 percent of the properties in the area, the remaining properties being rooming houses and others involved in "disputed estates." Though the Syndicate had already received

⁵⁰Robert Collier, *Contemporary Cathedrals: Large Scale Developments in Canadian Cities* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1975), 112.

⁵¹See Timothy Colton, *Big Daddy: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Building of Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980). Colton likens Gardiner's role in the shaping of Metropolitan Toronto to that of the legendary Robert Moses.

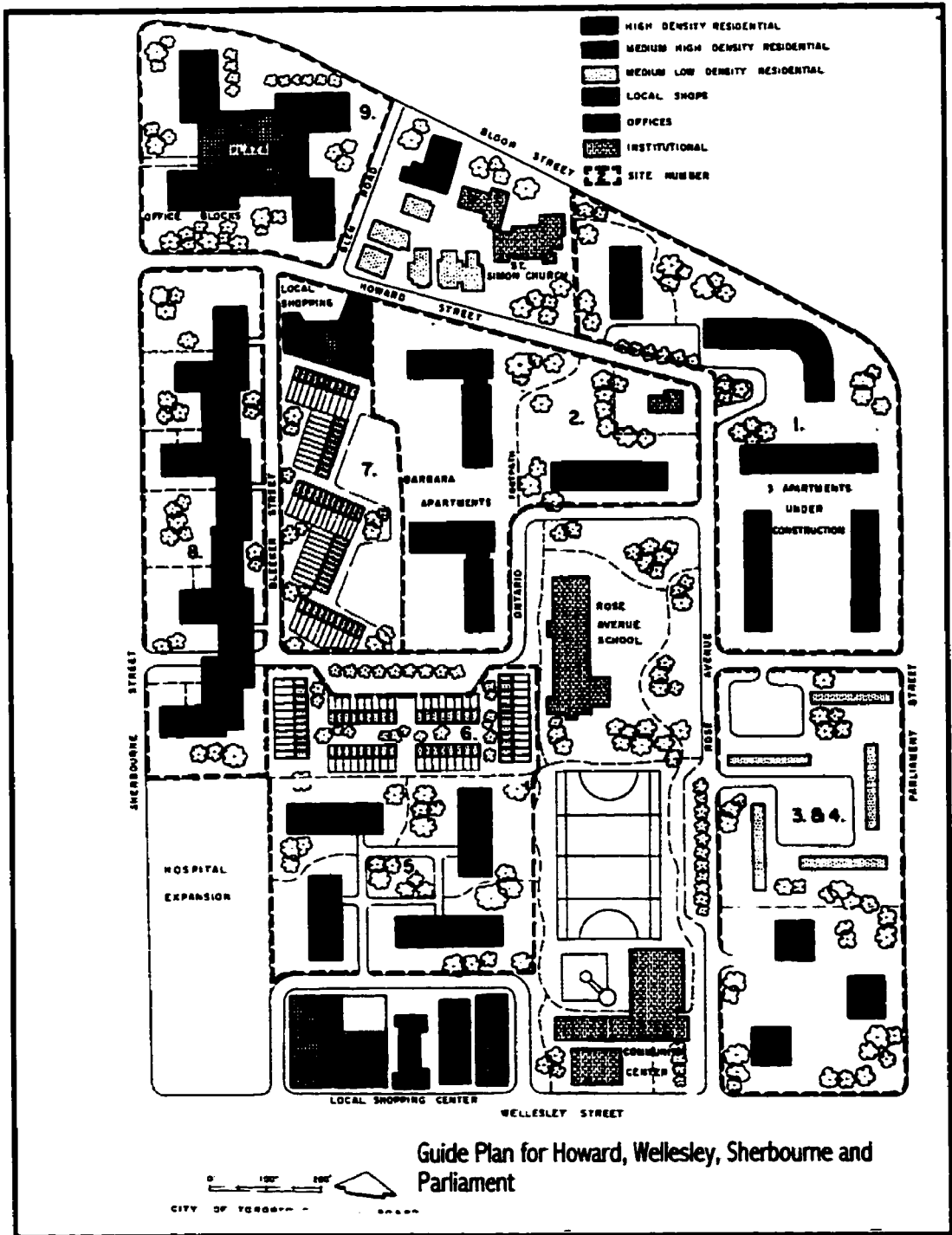
Figure 4.3



Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, "Howard, Parliament, Bleeker, Wellesley Redevelopment Proposal," (Toronto: CTPB, July 1956), Appendix A.

Parliament Syndicate Proposal for St. James Town, 1956.

Figure 4.4



Source: CTPB, *Don District Planning Appraisal* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1963), Plate 23..

City Planning Board's Vision for St. James Town

approval to build five apartments in the area, it asked the city to use its expropriation powers to acquire the remaining properties to permit a “proper and balanced development over the whole area.” In support of such a radical proposal, the Syndicate argued that their proposed development would increase assessment in the area from \$2 million dollars to over \$25 million, thus rescuing a seriously declining and “economically obsolescent” area. It was in the city’s best interest to rid itself of an impending if not rapidly developing slum.⁵²

City Council referred the proposal to the Planning Board for approval. However, the Planning Board was less enthusiastic about the development than was the redevelopment hungry city council. Though Matthew Lawson, the city’s chief planner, agreed that the Syndicate’s proposal met zoning requirements, he was extremely reluctant to endorse a development that would increase residential densities from 100 to 436 persons per acre. In addition, Lawson contradicted the Syndicate’s claims that it controlled over seventy percent of the properties in the area; his figures showed that the Syndicate controlled only 251 of 435 properties, or 58 percent. The project also proposed to remove a substantial amount of low-cost family housing from the downtown core, which given the housing crisis, was something that the city was reluctant to permit. Though single persons and childless couples were an important and growing segment of the housing market in the downtown area, Lawson argued that such people could generally find accommodation without much difficulty. Lawson also did not like the fact that the company had not made provisions for the relocation of area families, and that if the city adopted the Syndicate’s proposal, it would be responsible for rehousing area residents. Given the problem the City already faced in rehousing Emergency

⁵²*Toronto Star*, June 4, 1956 2; and M.V. Jones, *The Role of Private Enterprise in Urban Renewal*, 167.

Shelter residents, this was not a welcome prospect.⁵³

The area, Lawson claimed, should be set aside for mixed use, including family units, and apartments for singles and childless couples (See Figure 4.4). Equally important was the fact that the area was by no means substantially blighted and the Planning Board was extremely reluctant to use the city's powers of expropriation to aid a private developer's assembly of land for luxury apartments. Lawson believed that this would set a "dangerous precedent," leading future developers to believe that the city would bail them out for any incomplete land assembly.⁵⁴ Surprisingly, the Planning Board agreed with Lawson and voted 5 to 1 to turn down the proposal. Ironically, the only dissenting vote on the board was C.J. Woolsey, the labour representative who, in opposing Lawson, also challenged the position of the labour council he supposedly represented. Lawson's opinion also garnered support not only from area residents but by the Toronto & District Labour Council, the Association of Women Electors, the Tenant Ratepayers Association and the newly formed United Action for Slum Clearance.

Area residents represented by the Wellesley-Bloor Ratepayers Association, an offshoot of the Ward 2 South Ratepayers Association and the local CCF riding association, vigorously opposed the development. Veteran CCF city councillors, William Dennison and May Birchard, also came to the defence of area residents. Residents claimed that the Syndicate had used fraud and intimidation in acquiring options on area properties. Allan

⁵³City of Toronto Planning Board, "Report on a Redevelopment Proposal Submitted by Parliament Syndicate for the Area bounded by Howard, Parliament, Wellesley, and Bleeker Streets," July 1956; CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B2 Box 2, file 4, "Proposed Redevelopment in Area Bounded by Howard, Parliament, Wellesley and Bleeker Streets - Statement of comments made by M.B.M Lawson to the Board of Control Meeting," October 2, 1956.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

Ackman, vice-president and chief spokesperson for the ratepayers' association, claimed that the company informed residents that if they did not sell to the Syndicate the city would expropriate their property. In addition, letters to the Planning Board and to the mayor indicate that the developers were bringing in "undesirables," including motorcycle gangs and other criminal elements for the purpose of intimidating residents into selling their properties.⁵⁵ Moreover, the Syndicate promised residents who optioned their property to the company that they could stay on at rents of \$35 to \$40 a month until the houses were demolished, but it soon began raising rents to \$60 and even \$100 a month to force them out of the area. If that was not enough, councillor Dennison accused Metropolitan Toronto Assessment commissioner A.J.B. Gray, who was most undoubtedly in a conflict of interest when he was simultaneously serving as an advisor to the Syndicate, of raising the assessments of those residents who opposed the syndicate.⁵⁶

The Wellesley-Bloor Ratepayers association mounted strong opposition to the project. By mid-July the organization counted over 150 members and had the support of the Ward 2 Businessmen's Association, the local chapter of the CCF, both city councillors for Ward 2, Bill Dennison and Henry Roxborough, as well as former Ward 2 councillor, May Birchard, who now led the Ward 2 South Ratepayers' Association.⁵⁷ Through telephone

⁵⁵K. Gilead, "St James Town," 8-9.

⁵⁶"Gray Not An Employee Got No Money -- Syndicate." *Toronto Star*, June 13, 1956, 12; "Syndicate Denies Link With Gray," *Toronto Telegram*, June 13, 1956, 10; and "Commissioner is Defended by Syndicate," *Globe and Mail*, June 13, 1956, 7.

⁵⁷In the old strip ward system that Toronto employed until 1969, Ward 2 comprised neighbourhoods situated between the Central Business District and the Don River from the harbour north to the boundary with East York. As a result, Ward 2 encompassed a wide range of neighbourhoods from the "slums" of Cabbagetown/Regent Park to the affluent mansions of Rosedale. Ward 2 South encompassed all of the "declining" neighbourhoods south of Bloor Street, the main dividing line in Toronto between rich and poor neighbourhoods.

campaigns and the columns of the city's three daily newspapers, the group carried on a protracted campaign against Mayor Phillips, the City Council, and the Syndicate. The association believed that the acceptance of the proposal would "constitute a violation of sound and established principles, a tyrannical interference with property rights and a precedent which could threaten the security of every home owner in Ontario." "No one's home was safe." they argued. Public expropriation was justified for slum clearance, but not for private financiers. The association did not necessarily resist the redevelopment of the area, but they opposed the tactics of fraud and intimidation. "Redevelopment, ... instead of being a useful institution to remedy a social evil, would become a curse, a threat to basic human institutions and a much more serious social evil than it was designed to remedy."⁵⁸ Though the association did not indicate that its first goal was to maintain the neighbourhood in its present form, it did argue that there was no great demand for large luxury apartments in the area and there was "nothing that would justify uprooting the lives of many residents against their will and cutting at the roots of the basic institutions of the home and property."⁵⁹ Very few area residents would be able to afford the rents in the new apartments and would thus be left to find new accommodation in an already overcrowded city.

Residents' opposition to the syndicate was by no means unanimous. Certain families saw the redevelopment project as a means of escaping the deteriorating physical and moral conditions of the neighbourhood. Mrs. John J. Whittingham, who acted as the spokesperson for home owners who supported the Syndicate, claimed that many home owners were more

⁵⁸CTPB. "Report on a Redevelopment Proposal Submitted by Parliament Syndicate For The Area Bounded by Howard, Parliament, Wellesley, And Bleeker Streets, July 1956," Appendix C - Submission by Mr. Fletcher - President of the Wellesley-Bloor Ratepayers Association, June 25, 1956, 3.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

than willing to sell to the Syndicate because of the juvenile delinquency problem in the area, as well as the general physical deterioration of the neighbourhood.⁶⁰ They also worried that the cancellation of the project would leave them holding two properties since many had already used the options from the Syndicate to find new accommodation. Whittingham attempted to pierce the moral arrogance of the ratepayers' association by claiming that the organization was a puppet of the local CCF. Yet other letters submitted in support of the Syndicate's proposal were identical in their content and appeared with fictitious names such as "Mrs. Dorothy Liberty," and "Mary Annette," pointing to the fact that the resident support for the redevelopment may have been manufactured by the Syndicate itself.⁶¹

The opposition of the Planning Board, and the vigorous protests of the ratepayers killed both Ridout's and the Parliament Syndicate's initial plans. In 1957 the three top bidders to redevelop the Wood-Wellesley area went bankrupt, and City Council soon repealed the by-law designating the area for redevelopment. Similarly, the Parliament Syndicate plans soon fell by the wayside. However, redevelopment proceeded on a piecemeal basis over the next decade. In Wood-Wellesley another private developer constructed a high-rise development in the early 1960s without any government subsidies, and with no protest from area residents. In St. James Town, the Syndicate erected the Barbara Apartments (Ontario Street) in 1959 with aid from the limited-dividend program of CMHC.

⁶⁰CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Board of Control Minutes, 1956, Minute #1857, July 18, 1956; CTA, RG 32 B3, Box 9, File 7, Newspaper Clipping, "Redevelopment Project in Balance After Day Long Meeting," *Globe and Mail*, July 1956.

⁶¹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B2, Box 3, File 4, Letters from "Mrs. Dorothy Liberty," 704 Ontario St., June 26, 1956; "Mary Annette," 722 Ontario St., June 25, 1956; and "Mrs. M Hododa," 715 Ontario St., June 25, 1956; CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 37, File 16, Letter from Mrs. John J. Whittingham (719 Ontario St.) to Mayor N. Phillips, June 14, 1956.

The buildings were built to house young middle-income singles at densities as high as those in the Syndicate's initial proposal.⁶² The construction standards were poor and the buildings deteriorated soon after they were built.⁶³

However, though the residents defeated the Syndicate they lost the war for their neighbourhood and eventually their houses. The beginning of the land assembly sealed the fate of the neighbourhood. With developers holding a high proportion of homes for speculative and redevelopment purposes, there was little incentive for making even minor repairs. Though the neighbourhood was not a "slum" when the Planning Board surveyed the area in 1956, the long, drawn-out process of redevelopment turned St. James Town into one of the city's most notorious blighted neighbourhoods (See Chapter 5).

The battles waged by residents in Wood-Wellesley and St. James Town were the first clashes over urban renewal in Toronto. Though ultimately unsuccessful, both groups alerted Torontonians that redevelopment was not an unmitigated virtue; that it involved real hardships for real people. The lack of thought given to where residents could find new housing also revealed how little the City seemed to care for the interests of its own residents; they were simply obstacles to overcome. Indeed, the Planning Board warned, ironically portending the future, that unless the City accepted the "moral responsibility [and fair

⁶²Both the City and CMHC were so anxious for redevelopment and low-income housing of any kind that the syndicate was allowed to charge substantially higher rentals and higher incomes than was generally accepted in Toronto. They syndicate also wanted to build at densities of 600 persons per acre until Howard Green. Minister of Public Works threatened to cancel approval for the project. CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 32, file 9, S. Frankel Esq to Mayor N. Phillips, November 2, 1959; Stewart Bates (President, CMHC) to Mayor N. Phillips, Re: Barbara Apartments, July 23, 1959; and H.C. Green (Minister of Public Works) to Mayor N. Phillips, Re: Barbara Apartments, July 23, 1959.

⁶³CTA, MP, RG 7 A1, Box 37, file 16, W. Dennison to N. Phillips, Re: Complaint from tenant in Limited Dividend Project - 730 Ontario Street, January 25, 1960. Dennison reported that tenants had great difficulty getting the company to do repairs. He also claimed that there the project housed people whose incomes exceeded eligibility requirements, including two doctors and a lawyer who owned a Cadillac.

treatment] to help ... people when they are being disturbed in the interests of the City as a whole.” resistance to redevelopment would grow making further renewal projects “politically difficult.”⁶⁴ But perhaps most important, these clashes emphasized that the sound planning principles enunciated by the Planning Board in their *Urban Renewal Study* were of secondary concern to fostering a climate favouring development capital. Indeed, the ease with which most city politicians and officials disregarded the opposition of the Planning Board to these projects symbolized how willing the city was to court redevelopment at any price. In this sense, the Bloor-Wellesley Ratepayers’ association was both right and prescient: “no one’s home was safe.”

Moss Park: Creating “a Ghetto of the Disadvantaged”

Part and parcel of courting private redevelopment of the inner-city was a program of publicly sponsored renewal, and in particular slum clearance. As the *Urban Renewal Study* argued, neighbourhoods in poor condition were a strong deterrent to new investment, and public programs were essential to bring about improvement.⁶⁵ Certainly the private redevelopment proposals put forward in St. James Town and Wood Wellesley, illustrated that private developers were not ready to rebuild in the slums, but in declining but “good” and “stable” inner-city neighbourhoods. It was, therefore, up to the city to get its own house in order, so to speak, before it could hope for further private redevelopment.

To this end, the Planning Board’s *Urban Renewal Study* selected two planning areas to begin its own renewal program - the Don Planning Area and the Spadina Planning Area.

⁶⁴CTPB, “Second Report on the Wood-Wellesley Streets Redevelopment Area, (Toronto: CTPB, 1955), 5-6.

⁶⁵CTPB, *Urban Renewal Study*, II 42.

The Planning Board chose these two areas in particular for a number of reasons. First and foremost, both areas were primarily residential neighbourhoods in which the structural quality of the dwellings was poor. Second, they were also adjacent to major transportation routes (the Don Valley Parkway and the proposed Spadina Expressway) which would have a large impact on the kinds of development that would be suitable for such areas (i.e. apartment vs. single family housing). Finally, private developers expressed interest in redeveloping important sections of these areas, but were discouraged by present conditions and the lack of a clear policy for future development.⁶⁶

The Planning Board chose Moss Park as its first “comprehensive redevelopment project,” particularly because the entire Don Area had long been the focus of redevelopment. Indeed, one might argue from the plans contained in the *Urban Renewal Study* that Moss Park was simply the next phase in the city’s plans to wipe the blot of Cabbagetown from the face of the city. Like many of the older sections of the city, the neighbourhood of Moss Park had once housed the city’s elite; Moss Park itself had been the estate of the Honourable G.W. Allan, a prominent Toronto businessman and one-time Speaker of the Senate. Ironically, his original residence was demolished around 1905 to make way for redevelopment. Since that time the area began a long and steady decline towards “slum conditions.” Moss Park had long been at the centre of the attention of urban planners. As early as the 1930s the *Bruce Report* identified the area around Moss Park as one of the City’s worst slums, in many instances worse than Regent Park.⁶⁷ In fact, even nearby Cabbagetown and Regent Park

⁶⁶CTPB. *Urban Renewal Study*, III 4.

⁶⁷Ontario, *Report of the Lieutenant Governor’s Committee on Housing Conditions in Toronto, 1934* (Toronto: Queen’s Printer, 1934), 25-28; and Appendix VI (Statistical Summary of conditions in Three

(continued...)

residents were indignant when outsiders indiscriminately grouped them with their “less respectable” neighbours.⁶⁸ By the 1930s the area was well known as Toronto’s “skid row,” with a population composed of roomers, transients, alcoholics and prostitutes. The presence of so many “problem” individuals and families led a number of social and welfare organizations such as the Fred Victor Mission and the Salvation Army to build shelters and drop-in centres for the area’s transient population. The proximity of the neighbourhood to the Central Business District also led to the destruction or conversion of many residential properties to make way for the expanding commercial core of the city. Many other properties were held in speculation. For these reasons there had been very little private reconstruction or renewal in the area since the end of the Second World War.

City planners selected Moss Park as Toronto’s first comprehensive urban renewal project for two main reasons. First, the entire Don Planning area, the area of the city between Yonge Street on the West, Bloor on the North, Front Street to the South and the Don River on the West, contained some of the poorest housing and the poorest residents in the city. (See Figure 4.5) Over eighty percent of the houses in the area were at least sixty years old. In addition, the migration of wealthier residents had left many of the area’s old homes prey to rooming house operators, who filled the houses to the rafters with transient tenants. Overcrowding led to the rapid deterioration of these once stately homes. Housing inspections between 1958 and 1961 revealed that 62 percent of the non-apartment properties

(...continued)

Block in Moss Park, Toronto - As Revealed by the Intensive Survey, June 1934). Moss Park contained Block III bounded by Dundas, Queen, Seaton and Berkeley Streets.

⁶⁸The boundaries of Cabbagetown and Moss Park remains hotly debated by area residents. See Lloyd Cully, “The Cabbagetown Border Debate.” *cabbagetown-toronto.com*, November, 24, 2000, <www.cabbagetown-toronto.com> (n.d.).

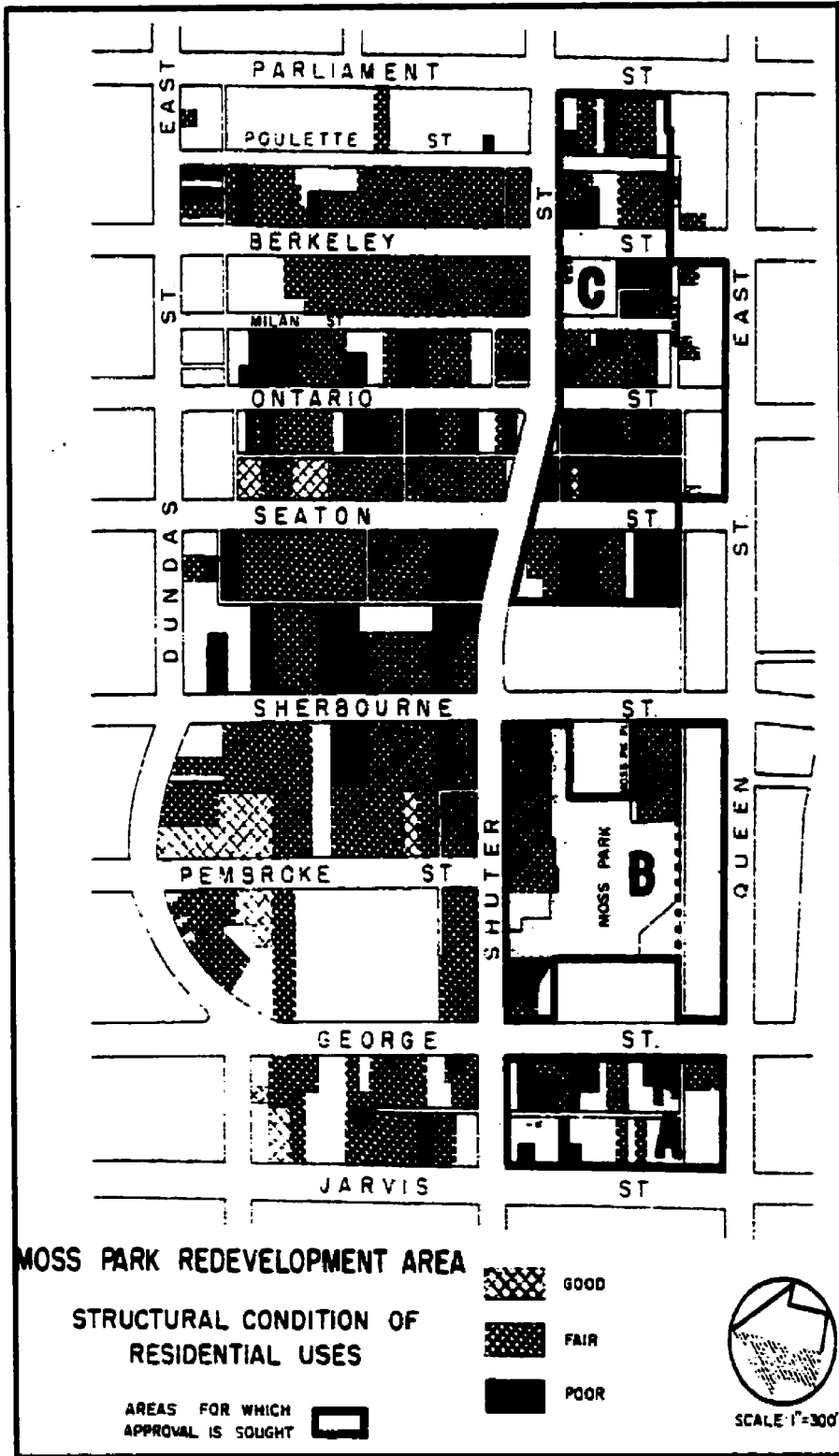
required repairs or alterations to conform even to the minimum physical standards of the city's Buildings and Housing Standards by-law. Further inspections revealed that nearly one-fifth of all residential properties were in the poorest condition, some of which had already been condemned by the Health Department as unfit for human habitation. Indeed, though the area contained only 6 percent of the total dwelling units in the city, it accounted for almost 14 percent of all the dwellings in need of major repair according to the 1956 census. In addition, many of the buildings in the district were deemed firetraps. Although the area contained only 3.5 percent of all the residential properties in the city, it was home to more than 11 percent of all the fires in the city in 1960.⁶⁹ Moss Park (Census Tract 101) had the second highest number of dwellings in need of major repair, at 18.1 percent in the entire district. In short, city planners felt that redevelopment in Moss Park would have, “[c]onsiderable visual and political impact for the city especially as many people associate poor housing almost automatically with Jarvis Street, and its improvement might have great political and psychological effects.”⁷⁰

Despite the degree of physical decay evident in the area, Moss Park was doubly damned in the eyes of city planners and renewal advocates because of the high degree of overcrowding in the area. As was the case with most redevelopment areas in the city,

⁶⁹CTPB, *Improvement Programme for Residential Areas* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, January 1965), 35-36.

⁷⁰CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 6, CTPB, “Determination of First Stage Redevelopment within Redevelopment Area Number 1,” February 18, 1957.

Figure 4.5



Source: CTPB, "Preliminary Report on Redevelopment Area No. 1 - Bounded by Dundas, Parliament, Queen and Jarvis Streets" (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1957).

Note: Area "C" would eventually become the renewal site.

Map of Moss Park Housing Conditions

overcrowding was deemed to be more important than the structural decline of the residential environment in Moss Park. Much of the overcrowding and “doubling” in the area could be traced as far back as the Depression. During the 1940s and early 1950s, at the height of Toronto’s housing shortage, the large townhouses which dominated much of the Don area were subdivided to accommodate an increasing number of Torontonians. While the city grew by only 1.2 percent over this period, the Don Planning Area grew by almost 7 percent in the 1941-51 period and 5 percent again between 1951 and 1954. Though much of the increased population could be linked to the growth of single persons inhabiting the ever-proliferating rooming houses in the area, the neighbourhood also witnessed a substantial increase in the number of large families forced to find housing in the only area of the city that would accept them. The Moss Park area had the highest number of persons per household (6.7) in the Don Planning Area and the highest number of persons per family (3.6), when city averages were 4.2 and 3.1 respectively. As a result, the houses in the area were not only crowded on the land, but people were seriously cramped within them. Over a quarter of the dwellings in the area housed more than one family, and more than 26 percent were deemed overcrowded by federal census guidelines, compared to 17 percent and 12 percent for the rest of the city. Moss Park itself was the worst in the Don area on both counts, with almost one-third of all the dwellings in the area deemed to be overcrowded.⁷¹ The degree of overcrowding was also highlighted by a sample of area residents who had applied for public housing in Regent Park. Of 71 applications received between 1952 and 1956, fifty-five lived

⁷¹CTA CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 11, file 1, CTPB, “Report on the Population and Housing Characteristics in the Planing Area and Proposals as to Unit Size and Distribution for Redevelopment,” December 15, 1955; and CTPB, “Improvement Programme for Residential Areas,” 36.

in rooms, in some cases 8 persons in two rooms, with the vast majority living in no more than three rooms. Though few families had trouble meeting the rents for their accommodation, it is clear that many families succeeded in finding affordable accommodation only by packing themselves into as few rooms as possible.⁷²

The extent to which overcrowding existed in Moss Park is revealed by the relocation report conducted by the Housing Authority in 1961. Before the relocations, 332 families, totalling 1,143 persons, occupied only 212 buildings. Seventy-six of these buildings were occupied by two or more families and/or roomers. To be sure, the majority of these multiple-occupied dwellings were owned and operated by absentee landlords, who in some cases turned the old stately homes into rooming and flop houses. However, doubling-up and crowding were a significant fact of life for home owners. Thirty-two of the area's 114 homeowners, nearly one-third in all, rented portions of their homes to other families and/or single tenants. In some cases the home owners were pensioners, and rented rooms or flats to other small families. But it was not unusual for a family of five or more to share their accommodation with other equally large families. For example, at 16 Seaton Street a labourer with a family of eight rented a flat to a factory worker and his family of seven. Similarly at 167 Berkeley Street, a railway worker with a family of six rented out 3 rooms in his house to a single salesman, a factory worker and his spouse, and another factory worker, his spouse and daughter. Indeed, the average number of residents in these owner-occupied

⁷²CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 6, CTPB, Memo, file 02.15.17 "Rent, Income, and Family Size Information for the Queen-Parliament-Dundas, Sherbourne-Shuter and Jarvis Area," January 10, 1957.

homes was nine, illustrating that crowding was as much the problem of the “poor man in the poor house” as it was the much vilified absentee landlord.⁷³

Nonetheless, the image of the area as Toronto’s skid row remained. Overcrowding and poor housing conditions, which characterized the Moss Park area, were linked to the social problems that accompanied slum living – “dependency, irresponsibility and criminality.”⁷⁴ Though so called “multi-problem families” were characteristic in the entire Don Planning Area, they tended to be “concentrated in pockets” such as Moss Park, “rather than disseminated evenly across all neighbourhoods in the district.”⁷⁵ Indeed, novelist Hugh Garner, author of *Cabbagetown*, drew sharp distinctions between Moss Park residents and those in the rest of the Don Area, including the once vilified Regent Park neighbourhood:

Moss Park is a vicious, criminal neighbourhood, populated by transients from all over the country, who live in squalid, verminous hovels, ... Moss Park has nothing in common with the old Cabbagetown but proximity. Cabbagetown was a slum but not a cess-pool...⁷⁶

Though Garner tended to be hyperbolic, he was not alone in his view of the district. Unfortunately, the city did not keep social statistics, such as rates of delinquency, or persons and families in need of social assistance, on a block-by-block basis, and thus numbers for the Moss Park must be interpolated from those for the entire Don Area. Whereas the population

⁷³Examples drawn from the Housing Authority of Toronto (HAT), *Moss Park Relocation Report* (Toronto, HAT, 1961). For the effects of crowding on home-owners, see CTA, Records of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPCMT), SC 40, Box 127, file 7, Memo from John A. Lee (Ontario Hydro Employee’s Union) to Mr. M Hancock, Chairman, Housing Committee, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, May 5, 1961, 2; and SPCMT, SC 40 Box, 127, file 7, Social Planning Council Housing Committee, “Report on Housing Improvement by Inspection, Repair and By-law Enforcement,” n.d.

⁷⁴“Wanted Low Rents for Low Incomes,” *Toronto Star*, April 13, 1961, 7.

⁷⁵CTPB, *Improvement Programme for Residential Areas*, 37.

⁷⁶H. Garner, “Cabbagetown Revisited: The Story of a Slum,” *Saturday Night*, November 9, 1957, 11.

of the district was only six percent of the City total, the area was responsible for 11.5 percent of all Children's Aid cases, 12 percent of juvenile offenders, 19 percent of welfare recipients, 17 percent of the Neighbourhood Workers Association caseload, 34 percent of drunkenness offenders and 65 percent of all the older homeless and transient men in the city.⁷⁷ For the most part, these problems were limited to the area west of Sherbourne, which, due to the "floating" population of single unemployed persons and the high percentage of one-night rooming houses, was the worst area of criminal activity in the city. Problem families known to the city's welfare department were also located in the western half of the Moss Park area and were once again linked to the rooming houses, especially in cases where large families lived in only one or two rooms. Welfare officials also claimed that welfare problems could be closely allied to the structural quality of the buildings, although they refrained from establishing the causality. Though both police and welfare officials were quick to point out that the Regent Park developments had virtually eliminated the problems they regularly used to encounter in the district, it was more likely that the redevelopment of Regent Park simply moved the problem immediately westward and concentrated the same amount of "deviant" activity in a smaller area.⁷⁸

The proximity of Moss Park to the central business district was the second important reason why city planners chose the area for redevelopment. The area was considered to be

⁷⁷CTPB, *Improvement Programme for Residential Areas*, 37.

⁷⁸CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 6, CTPB, "Preliminary Report on Redevelopment Area No. 1 - Bounded by Dundas, Parliament, Queen and Jarvis Streets;" and "Memo from Police, Welfare, Fire and Health officials in Redevelopment areas 1 & 2," January 1957. It is also important to note that Albert Rose's study of Regent Park observed that after the first few "crime free" years, crime rates in the Regent Park area began to rise. A. Rose, *Regent Park: A Study in Slum Clearance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 165-67.

well-suited to the needs of wage earners dependent on job opportunities in the casual and unskilled labour markets of the central city. Most of the area residents and applicants for public housing worked in the central business district, with almost two-thirds within a two-mile radius of Moss Park. Indeed, a listing of those eventually displaced by the redevelopment project reveals how closely area residents were tied to the casual and unskilled labour markets of the central city. A large number of area residents were engaged in service occupations such as retail sales clerks, janitors and cooks. A great many others were employed in unskilled positions as general labourers, truck drivers and factory workers.⁷⁹ Though many associated the area with "skid row," the majority of single and transient men in the area were unskilled labourers and worked for most of the year. Many of them relied on the proximity of the area to the central city's casual labour markets. Others were migratory and seasonal workers, such as tobacco pickers, who rented in the area during the off-season. Similarly, lumber workers from Northern Ontario, often found temporary housing and enough employment to carry them through the winter months. In addition, the area served as a reception area for migrants from the Maritimes and for Native Canadians from Northern Ontario who came to the city in search of work.⁸⁰ Noting the ever diminishing stock of working-class housing in the inner-city, planners, politicians and social workers were

⁷⁹Occupations derived from City of Toronto, HAT, *Moss Park Relocation Report*.

⁸⁰CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 127, file 5, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "Report of the Meeting on Housing Problems of Homeless and Transient Men, December 29, 1965," and K. Whitney "Skid Row," in W.E. Mann(ed.) *The Underside of Toronto* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 65-67.

determined to maintain Moss Park as a residential neighbourhood suited to the needs of wage earners tied to job opportunities in industrial and downtown establishments.⁸¹

The ever-shrinking supply of low-income housing in the downtown core created an urgency for the redevelopment of Moss Park. Urban planners, city politicians and social housing activists did not want to allow the city's social housing program to wane after the completion of Regent Park South. In the late 1950s a number of areas in the city and suburbs were in the planning stage as future public housing projects and Metro and City planners set a target of one thousand units of public housing per year to help clear out the backlog on waiting lists for public housing. But by the late 1950s, it was becoming clear that the federal-provincial partnership under the 1949 NHA amendments had collapsed. No more than 15,000 units of low income housing (including both publicly subsidized and full-recovery limited dividend units) had been built in the 15 years since the war. Toronto could count itself lucky with two large projects in Regent Park and one in nearby Lawrence Heights in the suburb of North York. Yet between the completion of Regent Park South in 1958 and the completion of Moss Park in 1963 only 38 units (the last to be completed in Lawrence Park) of a projected 5,000 units were built in Metropolitan Toronto. As a result, waiting lists for public housing in the city reached the 10,000 mark by 1960. Even then, waiting lists did not truly reflect the shortage of low cost housing in Toronto during this period. As Albert Rose remarked: "waiting lists over the period ... grew only a moderate rate because eligible families realized that it was futile to make applications for accommodation that did not exist."⁸²

⁸¹CTPB, *Urban Renewal Study*, III 15.

⁸²A. Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies, 1935-1980*, (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980), 37.

Many observers blamed increased bureaucracy for the breakdown of the program. A study by the Metro Housing Authority in 1961 revealed that the number of steps involving the federal, provincial and municipal governments between the initial proposal, the construction and occupation of a project exceeded fifty.⁸³ The existence of independent housing authorities at both the Metro and City level, with very different and, at times, opposing agendas, did not help matters. But the shortage of public housing in Metropolitan Toronto in the late 1950s and early 1960s had deeper roots than increased “red-tape” and lack of coordination between the city and Metro.

The advent of the first serious postwar economic recession in 1957 did not help the cause of low-income housing. Nor did the landslide victory of John Diefenbaker’s Progressive Conservative government in 1958. Though the Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent had been a reluctant supporter of public housing, the new Conservative government and, in particular, the Minister of Public Works, David Walker, whose Rosedale riding included Moss Park and Regent Park, was ideologically opposed to subsidized housing.⁸⁴

More so than ever before, the federal and provincial governments viewed redevelopment and urban renewal in terms of economic development and employment, rather than improving the housing conditions of Canadians, let alone relatively well-housed Torontonians. Meetings between city planners and CMHC officials in 1957 revealed that the federal government was reluctant to undertake the clearance and redevelopment of small pockets of blight such as those outlined in the *Urban Renewal Study*. Urban renewal

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ R. Haggart, “What’s Good for Dr. Kuhl Is Good for the City,” *Toronto Star*, April 21, 1960, 7.

legislation, CMHC officials reminded city planners, was to encourage “large scale thinking.” One CMHC official claimed that Toronto’s *Urban Renewal Study* “overawed us [CMHC],” when “it suggested that a possible 1000 acres of renewal could be found in Toronto [when] we cannot find satisfaction for 11 acres.” Indeed, CMHC officials wondered if Toronto needed any support for redevelopment since in the corporation’s opinion “few places, if any, exist in Toronto that can be seen as slum areas of any consequence.”⁸⁵

Metropolitan Toronto officials were also inclined to agree with CMHC assessments of the quality of housing stock in Toronto’s designated renewal areas. Metro planners claimed that “the level of actual deterioration in the Metro area does not begin to approach the minimum criteria which have been established in most other countries where slum clearance has been conducted...”⁸⁶ Housing officials from the United States and Great Britain, who toured the city-designated slums, reportedly “laughed out loud” when city officials told them that these were the worst slums in Toronto.⁸⁷ To be sure, they admitted, Moss Park had its “pockets of blight” and sub-standard housing, but the proportion of housing with no further useful life in the area was relatively low. Moreover, Metro officials debated the city’s assessment of dilapidation in the renewal areas. The City’s main criteria for assessments of “poor” housing were based more upon the age of the structure and the type of construction (i.e. frame construction) rather than the actual conditions. Also, city assessors only examined the external features of the buildings (i.e. roofing, verandas, garages and sheds), rather than

⁸⁵ CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 7, Memo 02.15.17, “Meeting With CMHC and Other City Departments.” August 26, 1957; and Memo 02.15.17 Meeting Between City Planning Board and CMHC, October 28, 1957.

⁸⁶ Ron Haggart, “Hey Wait A Minute!” *Toronto Star*, June 27, 1963, 7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

internal conditions. Finally, city officials overlooked the fact that nearly all the dwellings in contravention of the buildings by-laws had been or were in the process of being brought up to standard by their owners.⁸⁸

The primary reason behind Metro's opposition to the City's renewal program, however, stemmed from its belief that overcrowding, not structural deterioration, was the key issue in Toronto's housing crisis. According to Metro planners:

The principal characteristic of Toronto's blighted areas is overcrowding; this is not only itself a criterion of substandard housing, but leads directly to such other substandard conditions as inadequate sanitary facilities and poor maintenance. But the high level overcrowding in our blighted areas is in itself evidence of the severe shortage of low-cost accommodation.⁸⁹

Metro planners argued that the city's urban renewal projects, which would displace up to 9,000 persons, including over 3,000 in their initial stages, would worsen Toronto's critical shortage of low-income housing, and hasten the decline of neighbouring low-rent districts. Before such projects should even be considered, Metro officials argued that low-income housing had to be built on empty land in the suburbs to ease the absolute shortage and to help in the relocation of families from urban renewal areas. That housing built on empty suburban land could be built for half the cost of that built on redeveloped land in the city only strengthened Metro's position.⁹⁰

Metro officials voiced a concern that had plagued the thinking on urban renewal since its inception. Canadian urban planners had long worried that the shortage of open land

⁸⁸CTPB, *Improvement Programme for Residential Areas*, 35.

⁸⁹Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (MTPB), *Report on Metropolitan Participation in the Proposed Redevelopment of the Moss Park and Alexandra Park Areas*, (Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1958), 18.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

and the resistance of suburban municipalities toward housing the “dispossessed” of central city slums would pose serious impediments to urban renewal. Here, most boldly, was the central paradox of urban renewal. Planners realized that those in need of low-cost housing had little choice but to live in overcrowded inner-city neighbourhoods, where they could find cheaper and more flexible living arrangements. At the same time, solving the housing problems of central-city “slum dwellers” hinged not on projects to “renew the central city, but on the development of low income housing projects in the suburbs. Unless such projects were completed prior to redevelopment, urban renewal schemes would lead to the blighting of “satisfactory” neighbourhoods in the general vicinity, and the shifting of overcrowding around the city centre.”⁹¹

Overcrowding and the shortage of low-cost family housing presented unique problems for the Moss Park renewal scheme. A primary concern of the City Planning Board was to maintain the existing population characteristics. City population surveys revealed that the largely rooming house population was composed of many single persons and small families, one-third of whom had no children living at home. Unlike the two Regent Park projects, which were built to house as many families as possible, Moss Park was designed with small families and singles who worked in the downtown area in mind. Representatives of area social service organizations believed that there should be provision for single people in any new public housing project. They claimed that “the problem of roomers should not be ignored since the removal of rooming houses would immediately aggravate the problem in the

⁹¹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 10, file 9, “Discussion of Urban Redevelopment June 14 & 15, 1956.” (Meeting of various federal, provincial and municipal planning officials), 2, 7, & 14. See also Gordon Stephenson, “The Design of Cities,” *Habitat*, 2 (March/April 1959), 2-8.

adjacent area to the north.”⁹² City officials were apt to agree since they believed that if single persons were not provided for in the new project they would “move into other areas of the city and affect in some way the stability of other downtown residential areas.”⁹³ Furthermore, Frank Dearlove, the manager of Regent Park North, claimed that he had been swamped with requests for small units (bachelor and one-bedroom), which the city’s current public housing projects could not meet. Dearlove claimed that the shortage of small units prevented the Housing Authority from using its existing accommodation economically since decreasing families had to remain in the larger units originally allocated to them. For this reason, he thought that one quarter of the units in Moss Park should be bachelor and one-bedroom apartments.⁹⁴ The city’s original plan for 1,100 units, split 20-60-20 between bachelor, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units respectively, was the first time planners had given thought to the housing needs of single persons and small families in redevelopment areas.

Despite the innovative approach, Moss Park did not attack Toronto's principal housing problem. the lack of family accommodation, and particularly that of large families. When first proposed in 1956, over 150,000 families in the Metro area, nearly 45 percent of all families, shared their accommodation with others. Waiting lists for public housing revealed that nearly half of the applications came from families needing at least three bedrooms. Of the most pressing cases, nearly three-quarters needed at least three bedrooms, while at least one-half needed four or more. Social workers knew “that no housing project of bachelor and

⁹²CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 6, CTPB Memo 02.15.17, Redevelopment Area No. 1 Note to Meeting with church Representatives at the Fred Victor Mission, Queen St. Tuesday April 2, 1957.

⁹³CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 6, “Population Distribution and the Determination of the Accommodation to be Provided in Any Proposed Layout: Redevelopment Area No. 1,” 7.

⁹⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 6, file 15, Memo: Interview with Mr. Dearlove, Housing Manager of Regent Park North, February 15, 1957.

one-bedroom apartments could possibly meet the [most pressing] problem ... [of] low-income families with four or five children ... who are often forced to live in the most appalling conditions."⁹⁵ The fact that the project was so far out of touch with the demand for public housing led social housing advocate and Ward 2 councillor May Birchard to suggest sarcastically that the city install a birth control clinic in the basement of the Moss Park project.⁹⁶

At the same time Metro and federal officials argued that Moss Park was not a suitable area for redevelopment for families with children. Why Moss Park was any different from the two Regent Park projects, which had been designed for the maximum number of children possible, was never stated. The presence of rooming houses, homeless shelters and the area's proximity to "skid row" were no doubt concerns for social reformers, especially after the *Telegram's* expose of the district's vice conditions (See Chapter 3). Its proximity to the industrial areas south of Queen Street was another concern. Arguing against the renewal of Moss Park, Metro Chairman Fred Gardiner stated:

The Don is so polluted you can almost walk over it. There are railroad tracks and factories. That's not the place to put up subsidized family housing. When that land is cleared, it should be cleared for clearance's sake - for industrial and commercial uses.⁹⁷

Moreover, the area lacked the minimum community facilities, such as day care, which subsidized family housing would have required. Nonetheless, social housing advocates

⁹⁵Margery Stelick (Deaconess of the Metropolitan United Church), cited in CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Minutes of the Board of Control, 1960, Minute # 1039, May 18, 1960.

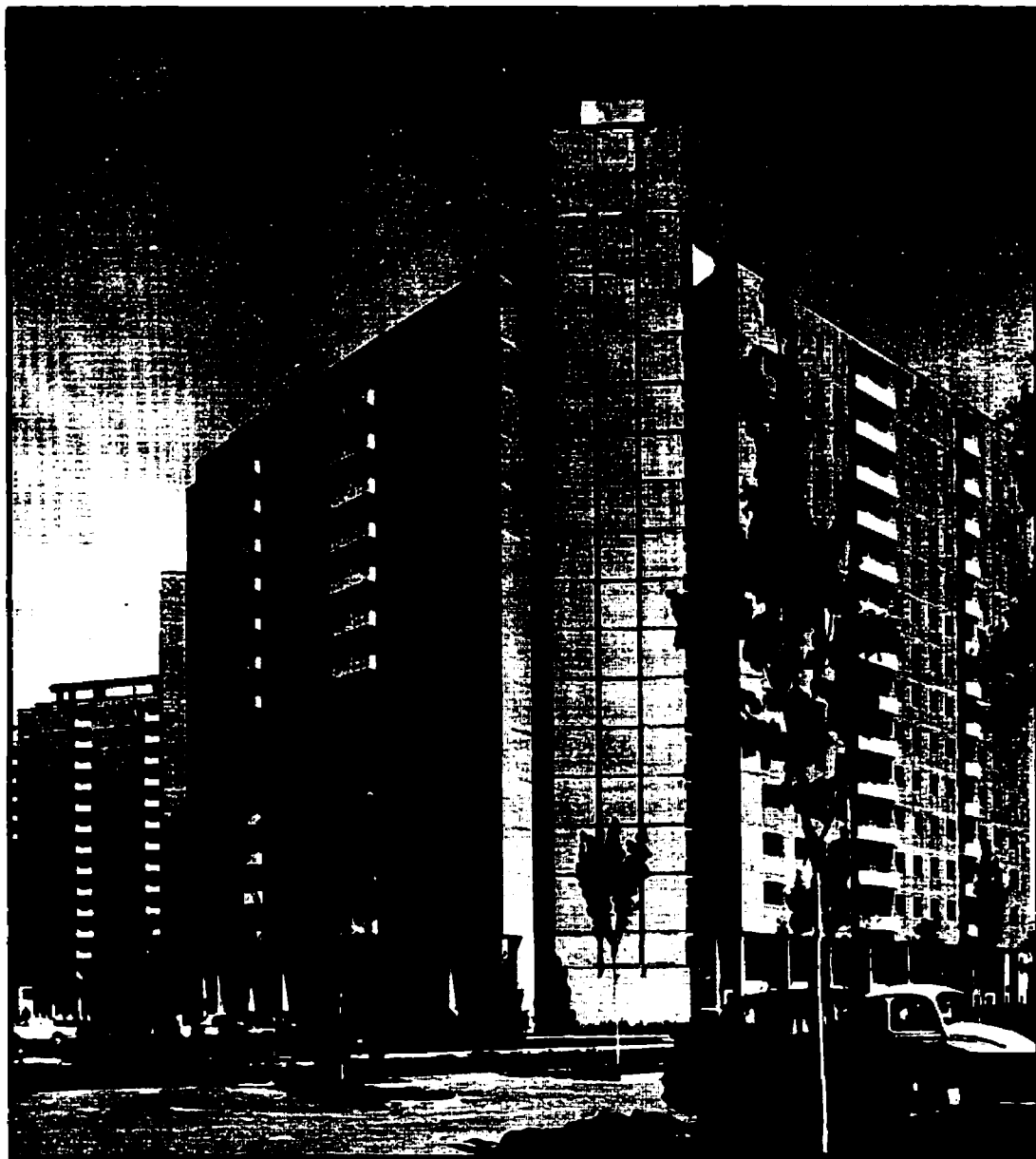
⁹⁶"Moss Park Birth Control Needed," *Toronto Star*, June 4, 1960, 8.

⁹⁷"Big Daddy Has A Housing Cure," *Toronto Star*, January 8, 1960, 4. Accidents involving young children and trucks using the side streets in the Moss Park area was also a concern for many. See "Why Wait For Another Child to Be Killed? Angry Mothers Ask," *Canadian Tribune*, April 28, 1952, 2.

pressured the city to revise its original plans to provide 45 units for larger families. In a unique design the lower two floors of each of the three apartment towers contained three and four bedroom row houses, each with their own front and back door, a private garden, and individual stairways leading to the second floor bedrooms and downstairs to the common storage units and laundry rooms. (See Figure 4.6)

As important as the size of the units was in determining who would occupy them when they were completed was the fact that Moss Park would be built as a limited dividend housing project instead of a publicly subsidized housing project. The reluctance of the Conservative government to continue the federal public housing program, combined with Metro's refusal to take part in the project, forced the city to build Moss Park on a full recovery basis. As a result, rents in Moss Park would not be geared to the family income of the tenants, as they were in Regent Park. Rather, rents were geared to the size of the unit and ranged from \$76.50 a month for a bachelor unit to \$101 per month for a four-bedroom unit. The only stipulation upon tenants was that to be eligible for the units their annual family income could not be more than \$4,150.

The decision to build a limited-dividend project in Moss Park was controversial, given the poor record of the limited-dividend component of the NHA social housing program in providing affordable housing for low-income Canadians. Though provisions for limited-dividend housing had been part of the original 1938 National Housing Act to encourage philanthropic and municipal groups to build low-rental housing, the program remained

Figure 4.6

Source: Housing Authority of Toronto, *The Housing Authority of Toronto Opens the Door to Better Living - A Review of Progress, 1947-1964* (Toronto: HAT, 1964), 29.

(Note the 2 floor "row-house-type" structures can be seen in the bottom right corner of the picture. Each unit was separated from each other by a dividing wall, and from the common area by another wall.)

Moss Park Limited Dividend Housing Project

under-utilized until the late 1950s, when private entrepreneurs began using the limited dividend program as a source of “mortgage financing of last resort.”⁹⁸ By 1963, private builders in Toronto had erected nearly 6,000 units of limited dividend housing, the majority apartments in the suburbs. Most of these apartments were two bedrooms or smaller, built primarily for singles, couples and small families. The projects, in general, lacked basic facilities such as playgrounds and adequate green space, and many like the infamous Barbara Apartments, built in the aftermath of the Parliament Syndicate’s failure, were poorly constructed. When developers had trouble filling their apartments, CMHC officials tossed aside income and rent guidelines. Yet, in the midst of the breakdown of the Federal-Provincial public housing program, many Toronto families turned to limited dividend housing as the best choice among limited options. A 1963 report by the Metro Planning Board revealed that limited-dividend housing attracted many families eligible for public housing. In many cases, the rents for their accommodation were still beyond their means. That many families living in limited-dividend apartments paid a higher percentage of their income on rent than CMHC allowed on NHA backed mortgages, clearly illustrated how Canadian housing policy discriminated against working-class Canadians.⁹⁹

Rents charged for the apartments in Moss Park were only slightly below those charged in the private rental market and in no way met the needs of Moss Park residents. As members of one of the most marginal income groups in the city, average weekly wages of family heads

⁹⁸CMHC, “Memorandum,” October 9, 1959, cited in M. Dennis and S. Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy: Low Income Housing in Canada* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), 227.

⁹⁹MTPB, “The Effect of Limited Dividend Housing upon the Demand for Subsidized Public Housing in Metropolitan Toronto,” (Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, January 1963); see also “Subsidized Rents Found Too High in Metro Housing,” *Toronto Star*, January 25, 1963, 25

in Moss Park averaged \$64 a week, nearly one-fifth less than the \$82 weekly average for the entire metropolitan area. Moss Park tenants forced to relocate because of the renewal project averaged rents of \$63 per month in their new accommodation, significantly below the average Metro rental of \$101 per month. Moreover, the average rents charged in Moss Park of \$81.54 were above the maximum average rent of \$75.50 allowed by CMHC in limited dividend projects.¹⁰⁰ Low wages were not the only income barrier for residents who wished to move into the project. For large families in need of a four-bedroom unit, annual family income would have to be at least \$4,850 to meet the generally accepted guideline of paying no more than one-quarter of family income on shelter, but families became ineligible for accommodation when their annual income reached \$4,550.¹⁰¹

Considering all of the controversy surrounding the renewal of Moss Park, it is surprising that area residents did not provide any resistance to the project. Unlike the experience in Regent Park, home owners did not dispute the prices the city was willing to pay for their homes, nor did area tenants worry about the high rents to be charged in the project ostensibly built for their benefit. The only group from the area to appear before the Board of Control was a delegation of Queen Street merchants who wanted the city to expedite the expropriation of their properties since the announcement of the project had led to a decline

¹⁰⁰CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 128, file 1, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Research Department, "MOSS PARK: Relocation of 335 families," (June 1963), 2; and CTBC, RG 02, Minute #1204, Walter Manthorpe (Deputy Planning Commissioner) to P.D. Churchill (Toronto District Labour Council), March 17, 1960.

¹⁰¹"Moss Park a Colossal Blunder?" *Toronto Star*, August 1, 1963, 7.

in business and the refusal of insurance companies to renew the fire insurance policies on their stores.¹⁰²

The lack of protest appears all the more puzzling considering over seventy per cent of the 332 families forced to relocate because of the project expressed a desire to return to the Moss Park area.¹⁰³ Area residents were reluctant to move, and they displayed their displeasure in more subtle ways. The Moss Park Coordinating Committee, established by the city to oversee the expropriation, clearance and relocation procedures, expressed concern over "the apparent lack of urgency displayed by the tenants in the matter of relocation."¹⁰⁴ In response, the committee decided to increase pressure upon residents by informing them that if they refused offers of the Housing Authority for relocation, the Authority would be relieved of any responsibility in finding new accommodation for them, and that the city would forcibly evict tenants by court order if necessary. Whether the committee's threat was effective is difficult to ascertain, but by the time the Housing Authority closed its relocation office in Moss Park at the end of August 1961, there were only 15 tenants left in the entire redevelopment area.¹⁰⁵

Considering the shortage of low income housing, just what happened to the families displaced by Moss Park? For the first time, planners and state authorities recognized the need to answer this pertinent question. In late 1961 the Planning Board undertook an official

¹⁰²CTA, CTBC, RG 2, Minutes of the Board of Control, 1959, Minute #444, February 25, 1959; and #1221 June 3, 1959.

¹⁰³Results tabulated by author from HAT, *Moss Park Relocation Report*.

¹⁰⁴CTA, Moss Park Redevelopment Area - Minutes of the Co-ordinating Committee (MP-CC), RG 120, Moss Park Co-ordinating Committee, Meeting 28, April 11, 1960.

¹⁰⁵CTA, MP-CC, RG 120, Meeting 29, April 19, 1960, and Meeting 85, September 18, 1961.

relocation study, tracking the relocation experiences of 332 families representing a total of 1,143 individuals. Also, for the first time planners and housing officials were forced to recognize that relocation entailed hardships and uncertainties for families.

The Housing Authority's "Final Relocation Report" revealed many reasons why the overwhelming majority of Moss Park residents wished to return to a neighbourhood that had been denigrated for over thirty years as the city's worst slum. Forced to move from a blighted central city neighbourhood, Moss Park residents, out of reasons of necessity and choice, relocated to areas whose housing and neighbourhood characteristics were similar to those they left behind. Nearly forty percent remained in the Don area, many within a 15-block radius of Moss Park. One quarter of Moss Park residents, including many home owners, moved east across the Don River into the working-class neighbourhoods of Riverdale and Broadview-Greenwood. Indeed, only twenty percent of Moss Park families moved out of the central city. Even families who had no desire to return to Moss Park showed little propensity to move out of the central city; nearly two thirds of these families remained in older downtown neighbourhoods, especially Riverdale, which accounted for half of this group.¹⁰⁶

There were good reasons why Moss Park residents remained in central city neighbourhoods and in dwellings similar to those they left behind. For one, many residents had lived in the area for twenty years or more and there can be no doubt there was a sense of neighbourhood, an identification with the area and its familiar surroundings. The local shops, eateries and bars served their needs, desires and sense of identity and community. The

¹⁰⁶CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 128, file 1, Social Planning Council, Research Department, "Moss Park: Relocation of 335 families."

centrality of their new neighbourhoods to employment, social services and other community amenities was an important part of decisions made by dislocated families. Of the 123 families whose principal wage earners worked in central city locations, 97 remained in the city after relocation. Moreover, nearly one-quarter of the families who refused accommodation located for them by the Housing Authority cited "location" as their reason for refusing the offered accommodation. Of those who were offered accommodation in public housing, only two families of thirteen chose the suburban Lawrence Park project, while eight families moved into one of the two Regent Park projects, just a stone's throw from their former residences. The nature of the housing stock in their new neighbourhoods must also have been a factor in their decision to remain in the central city. In downtown neighbourhoods such as Riverdale, families had a fairly wide range of choice in accommodation. Here rooming houses mixed with duplexes and triplexes, while the large stock of single-detached dwellings allowed owner and prospective owner families to sublet parts of their houses to help pay the mortgage. Considering the increased number of restrictions on the use and form of suburban housing, it is not surprising that many Moss Park residents chose to remain in the central city.¹⁰⁷ In short, the Relocation Report forced planners to recognize their "need to develop more knowledge about the meaning of neighbourhood to people, particularly in those areas slated for redevelopment."¹⁰⁸

Also surprising to many planners was the fact that few Moss Park residents moved to neighbourhoods west of Yonge Street, such as those in the Spadina planning district

¹⁰⁷See Richard Harris, "The Flexible House: The Housing Backlog and the Persistence of Lodging, 1891-1951," *Social Science History*, 18 (Spring 1994), 37.

¹⁰⁸CTA, SPCMT, SC40, Box 128, file 1, Social Planning Council, Research Department, "Moss Park: Relocation of 335 families."

(Census Tracts 56-62). This was all the more surprising given that the housing and neighbourhood characteristics (age, size, quality, prices, rents and proximity to downtown core) were similar to those in the Don area. Perhaps, the pall of renewal that hung over Alexandra Park led Moss Park residents to avoid settling in an area that would soon be redeveloped. However, given the propensity of Moss Park residents to relocate in other areas of the Don and Riverdale, which were also being considered for renewal activity, this factor does not seem crucial to the decision on their place of relocation. The only factor that was different between the two areas was their ethnic composition. The Don and Riverdale areas were overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon in their composition and their culture, while the Spadina area was composed of recent immigrants from Italy, Portugal, and Poland. Thus, the decision to relocate from Moss Park to Riverdale may have had to do with ethnic clustering.

Nevertheless, many Moss Park families had little choice in the nature of their housing environments. Moss Park residents were, for the most part, of the city's poorest classes. Those who were employed were most likely unskilled labourers and factory workers, whose average weekly earnings were one-fifth lower than most Torontonians. Moreover, one-third of area residents were unemployed and relied on various forms of state support including pensions, Unemployment Insurance, General Welfare Assistance, and Mothers' Allowance. The ability of the poor to find housing at rents and prices they could afford was underlined by the fact that the rentals paid by the relocated families averaged \$63 a month, far below the Metro average of \$101. The only significant stock of low income housing available in the city, both for rent and purchase, remained in the Don and Riverdale areas. This is underlined

by the fact that of the 87 families who relocated in the Don area, 75 were either on welfare or were families whose principal wage earner brought home less than \$250 per month. Even those who used the clearance of Moss Park as an escape from the “rent race” to join the propertied classes were limited in their housing choices. Of the 15 families who moved up the housing ladder to become home owners, the majority were factory workers whose monthly earnings ranged from \$190 a month to a high of \$315 a month. Almost all of these families purchased houses in the Don and Riverdale areas.¹⁰⁹

Moss Park punctured the widely held belief in the efficacy of the filtering mechanism. Planners and social reformers had always assumed that families, forced from decaying inner-city slums, would “filter up” to better housing. Indeed, the whole program of urban renewal depended heavily on this largely untested assumption. The movement of Moss Park residents from “slum to slum” highlighted the brutal realities of slum clearance for the first time. Only 15 families of 332 were able to take advantage of the opportunity of the project to enter the world of home ownership. This one ray of hope from the process, however, was almost completely obliterated by the dozen owners, many of them pensioners, who became tenants after the city expropriated their homes.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the city recognized that the renewal of Moss Park would be harmful to the great number of seniors who lived in the area, and it lobbied the federal government to provide some kind of rent reduction for seniors housed in the project. Nonetheless, there was no evidence to suggest that many seniors would have

¹⁰⁹ Data compiled by author from HAT, “Moss Park Relocation Report.”

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

chosen to live in the project, even with a modest reduction in their rents.¹¹¹ That urban renewal had done little to help, and perhaps more to harm, the very people the program was intended to benefit shocked planners and social reformers. According to Planning Board official, A.D. Crerar, urban renewal was in danger of becoming a “selective process removing the ‘best’ elements of the community and retaining the poorest. The implications [of which] in producing a ‘ghetto’ of the disadvantaged is obvious.”¹¹² In the future, Crerar continued, “planners would have to give more thought to combatting the selective processes of clearance if it were to fulfill one of the chief aims of the urban renewal programme - ‘well rounded communities.’”¹¹³

Urban renewal in Moss Park not only confounded the programme’s aims, but it also subverted the future of the city’s fragile housing programme. The heavy concentration of relocated families in the Don Planning Area, in particular in the nine blocks between Dundas and Shuter Streets, only exacerbated the problems of neighbourhoods already overcrowded and in decline. The increase in population in surrounding neighbourhoods undermined the purpose of housing inspections and enforcement of by-laws governing overcrowding and minimum health and safety standards, and thus increased the process of deterioration and the timing of redevelopment. In particular, the Planning Board cited the short-sightedness of the Housing Authority’s placement of families in industrial areas south of Queen St. slated for demolition and re-zoning. But more importantly, the Planning Board recognized that the

¹¹¹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 21, file 9, “A Brief from the City of Toronto to the Government of Ontario Concerning Federal Government Contribution to a Rent Reduction Fund for the Housing of Old People in the Moss Park Limited Dividend Housing Project,” October, 16, 1963.

¹¹²CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 16, file 16, A.D. Crerar, Memo, 02.15.17, Comment on the “Final Relocation Report,” December 7, 1962, 2.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

clearance of Moss Park was backing many Torontonians into a corner. As a Planning Board official claimed:

The additional population pressure on a seriously declining and problematic sector of the city will ... undermine good public relations that various Civic departments have built up to ease the pragmatic problems as well as the anxieties of expropriation when it becomes necessary for these people to move again.¹¹⁴

Many Moss Park families had already experienced the selective processes of clearance first hand in Regent Park, and now the city was asking them to move once again in the interest of the community.¹¹⁵ It is little wonder then that when the city moved into Trefann Court only five years later residents were in more of a fighting mood.¹¹⁶ In the meantime, city planners were about to engage in another struggle across town.

Alexandra Park - "Urban Village" or "Ethnic Slum"

The houses ... are old and worn, and smell of damp wood and too much humanity. They press in on one another like the waves of immigrants passing through them. In many there are cockroaches and mice; in some there are rats. The fire hazard is so great that many insurance companies have blacklisted the area... At least two, and often three or four families live in one house. Cooking and toilet facilities are severely strained. ... The problem of overcrowding in each house worsens as the tenants save enough to bring over fathers or brothers or wives and children. Often the tenants are relatives of the homeowners who readily agree to live in crowded surroundings so that the family can be reunited. The newcomers pack into the house, everyone

¹¹⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 16, file 16, Memo 02.15.17, Final Relocation Report, December 6, 1962.

¹¹⁵The relocation of Moss Park residents revealed similar moving patterns to those of Regent Park South residents. Though not as detailed as the Moss Park Study the joint study of relocatees from Regent Park South undertaken by Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority and the Provincial Department of Planning revealed a great deal of clustering around the two Regent Park projects as well as a significant cluster of former residents in an area bounded by O'Connor Drive, Main, Queen and Broadview (Riverdale). The reasons most tenants chose these areas was linked to the fact they were low rental areas. See Elizabeth Goring, 'Interim Report on Relocation Study: Regent Park South, Toronto' (Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority and Ontario Department of Planning and Development, Housing Branch, April 1958), 44-45.

¹¹⁶See G. Fraser *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 59. Fraser notes from interviews with Trefann residents that many had already been shunted from redevelopment area to redevelopment area by the Housing Authority.

working and saving until they can afford to make a down-payment on a house which will, in turn, be packed full of boarders.¹¹⁷

I live in Alexandra Park. I own a house here and I live in it and I love it, and so do my six children. ... It makes my blood boil slightly every time I pick up a paper to see that somebody thinks she'll just waltz in here with her bulldozer and blow my whole little system to smithereens.

To me the whole area is beautiful the way the world is beautiful. The back lanes may have their share of debris, but they also have wild flowers growing in the corners. Some of the front yards are so carefully and lovingly tended that they are still bursting with flowers even now in November. All summer long people of all nationalities sit outdoors and enjoy the ever-changing crowded, pushing pulsing, life of the streets.

If the 'experts' want to put up one of these cold, sterile, unromantic low - rental housing projects - which I would hate to even have within sight of my front door - let them go buy some cheap land on the outskirts of the city and put it there. Just please, please don't disturb my warm and darling 'slum.'

- Mrs. Meg Richardson (November 21, 1961)¹¹⁸

On the morning of May 14, 1965, in front of a full barrage of press cameras, Toronto Mayor Phillip Givens drove a sledge hammer into an old semi-detached house at 110-112 Augusta Street marking the official destruction of the slum/neighbourhood of Alexandra Park. For Givens the destruction of Alexandra Park had a personal note: forty-three years earlier Givens was born just down the street at 88 Augusta Avenue, now unrecognizable to him as a run-down rooming house. Givens' experience visiting his old stomping grounds would prove not to be so unique. Over the next five years the city's urban renewal plans for Alexandra Park left the neighbourhood completely unrecognizable, socially, physically and functionally, to the majority of its former residents.

For advocates of urban renewal, Alexandra Park represented the apogee of the

¹¹⁷Earl Berger, "A City of Immigrants," *Globe and Mail*, September 9, 1964, 7.

¹¹⁸Meg Richardson, "Voice of the People," *Toronto Star*, November 21, 1961, 6.

program. Despite the long wait and constant disputes between planners, bureaucrats and politicians, in Alexandra Park the years of study produced a balanced plan which replaced the brutality of the bulldozer with a more balanced program of spot clearance, rehabilitation and conservation. Planners and politicians praised the good community relations, which permitted a smooth transition between the old neighbourhood and the newly redeveloped one.¹¹⁹ For opponents, Alexandra Park symbolized all that was wrong with urban renewal. The interminable delays caused greater deterioration of the neighbourhood and postponed the natural course of rehabilitation of the neighbourhood by owners. Even still, by 1965 much of the area was in good condition and largely owner-occupied. Indeed, according to residents and other opponents of the project, the issues of principal concern for planners appeared to be matters of image and perceptions of economic efficiency: old inner-city neighbourhoods violated their aesthetic and professional sensibilities, and "better" use could be made of them.¹²⁰ To them, "community relations," though couched in phrases such as good will and fairness to those affected, was merely a smokescreen under which they were robbed of their homes and their neighbourhood. As with every other slum clearance project, planners, politicians and social workers were more concerned with planning techniques than with real community participation. Finally, urban renewal in Alexandra Park not only destroyed a vital immigrant working-class community, but destroyed the critical physical function the neighbourhood played in receiving new immigrants from across the world. Residents were displaced by a project ostensibly built for them, but which did not meet their housing needs

¹¹⁹A. Rose, "The Crisis in Urban Renewal in Toronto," *Habitat*, 11 (May/June 1968), 4.

¹²⁰Jon Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 54.

or aspirations.

A Brief History of An Immigrant Reception Area

In 1951, Alexandra Park was a densely built-up, mixed use, inner-city neighbourhood, occupied by a low-income working-class population composed of various ethnic groups. It was characteristic of many neighbourhoods in the west central part of Toronto. True to the experience of such areas, it had been recognized as having serious housing and environmental problems as early as the Bruce Report of 1934. But it was not until the release of the 1956 *Urban Renewal Study* that serious consideration was given to its potential for urban renewal. Like other inner-city neighbourhoods the area was overcrowded, the housing stock was allegedly deteriorating, poor health (high rates of tuberculosis) prevailed, and the crime rate had reached unacceptable levels. Formal designation for redevelopment came in 1964, and by 1970 clearance was complete and considerable rebuilding, largely in the form of public housing, had taken place (See Figures 4.7 & 4.8).¹²¹ Also gone were more than five hundred families, the majority of them Eastern European immigrant families, for whom public housing did not meet their housing needs or aspirations. In their place stood a ghetto composed largely of Anglo-Saxon and African Canadian families, many of whom were on various forms of public assistance, large, and headed by single mothers.

From a traditional planning perspective, the neighbourhood exhibited the “standard” features of residential decline: functional obsolescence, ageing, blight, overcrowding, land-use

¹²¹Richard Peddie, “Residential Mobility, Occupancy Conversion and Neighbourhood Change: Methodology and Application in Alexandra Park (Toronto), 1951-1970,” PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1978, 38-39.

conflicts, health problems and ever was before.”¹²² Unfortunately he was right. Like Regent Park, Alexandra Park would become a public housing “ghetto,” plagued by poverty, vandalism, and rampant drug peddling, much of the latter due ironically to the award winning design of the public housing project. (See Figure 4.10) other social ills. But from another perspective, it was an attractive neighbourhood for various populations, including immigrants, the elderly and single mothers, and other low-income families. It offered affordable accommodation, to buy or rent, it was close to central city employment, as well as social and recreational services offered by agencies such as St. Christopher House, and great shopping in Kensington Market.

The late Victorian origins of urban development in Alexandra Park were still evident when city planners and social reformers roamed the neighbourhood in the late fifties and early sixties. Over eighty percent of the houses in the area had been built before 1920 with many dating as far back as the neighbourhood’s beginnings in the 1870s and 1880s. The residential environment was marked by a mixture of front-gabled, Victorian terrace houses, interspersed with detached and semi-detached houses and small walk-up apartments.(See Figure 4.7)¹²³ Also sprinkled among the houses were numerous small commercial and industrial establishments, many with flats above them. In addition, there were three major industrial establishments in the area - General Bakeries, Parisian Laundries and Maple Leaf Cleaners - which, with the exception of the constant coming and going of trucks from the Bakery, residents did not feel were as much of a “nuisance” as did city planners (See Figure 4.8).

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

Figure 4.7



Source: M. Lipman, "Relocation and Family Life," *Urban Renewal and Low-Income Housing*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1969), 2.

Toronto's "Urban Village": Alexandra Park Residential Architecture

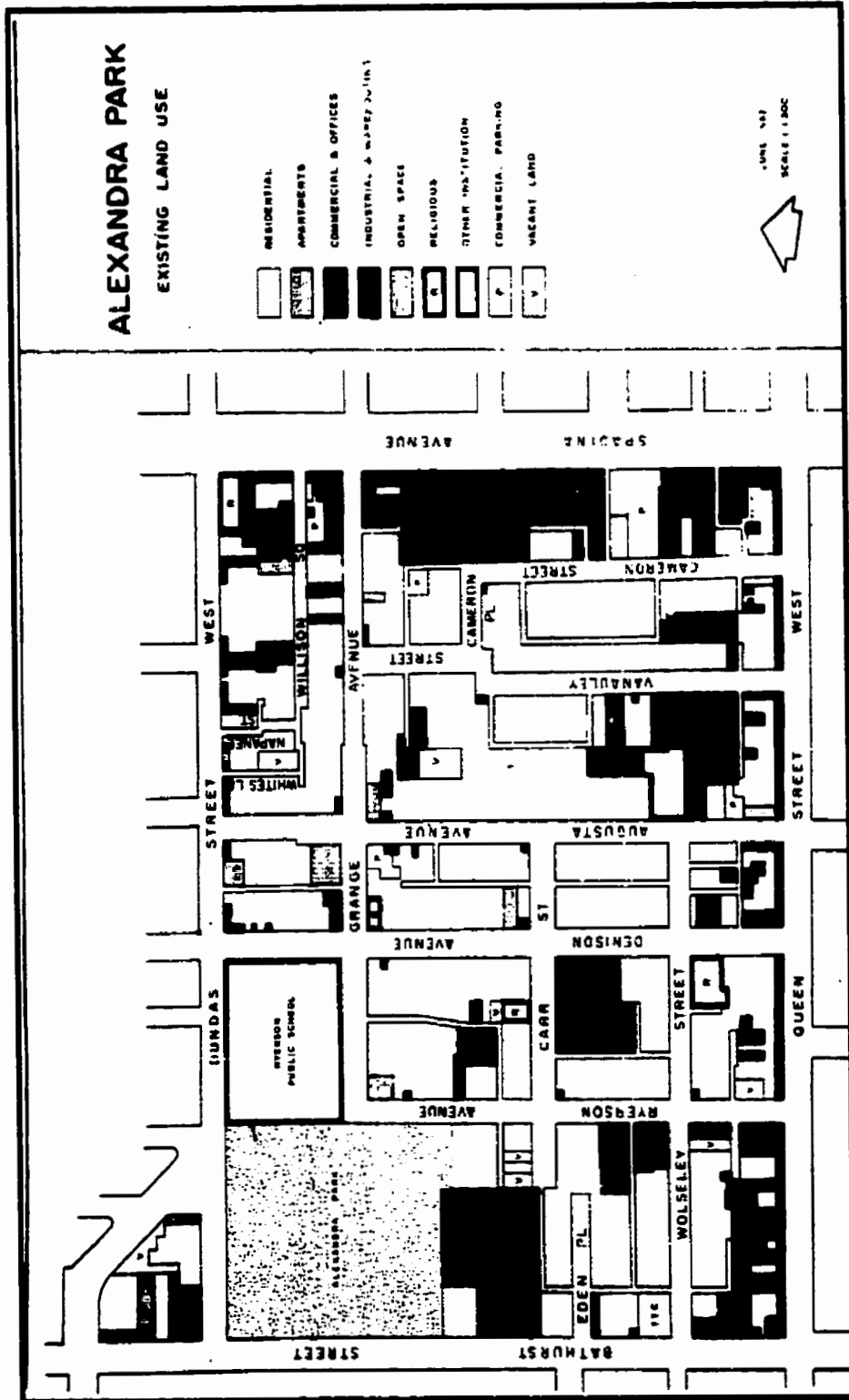
Immigration and the Physical Fabric of Inner-city Toronto

The former staid and predominantly Anglo-Saxon pattern of Toronto is a thing of the past. Our residential districts have undergone a veritable social revolution.¹²⁴

Alexandra Park, like many other central city neighbourhoods, was affected by the great wave of postwar immigration which profoundly changed the social *and* the physical fabric of the city. In the two decades following the Second World War, Toronto lost its image as the Belfast of North America to become one of the most cosmopolitan cities on the continent. Boomtown Toronto was, in large part, fostered by the city's role as the conduit

¹²⁴CTA, SPCMT, SC40, Box 56, file 1, "Community Conference Under the Auspices of the Integration Committee, A Statement by the Committee Chairman Rev. F.W.L. Brailey," (n.d).

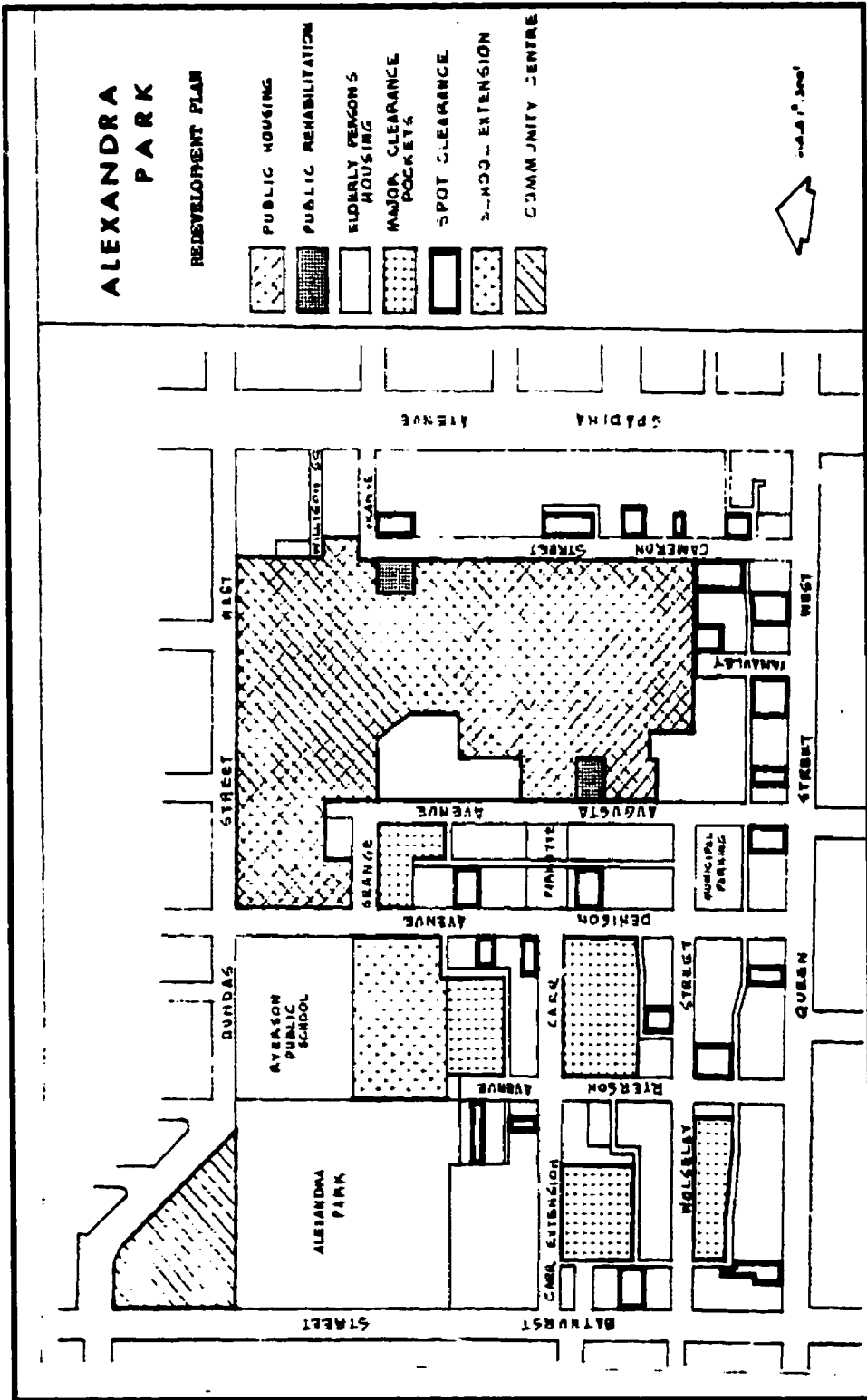
Figure 4.8



Source: City of Toronto, Alexandra Park (Toronto: Development Department, 1972).

Alexandra Park Land Use: Pre-Renewal

Figure 4.9



Source: City of Toronto, Alexandra Park (Toronto: Development Department, 1972).

Alexandra Park Land Use: After Urban Renewal

and destination point for much of the postwar immigration arriving in Canada during this period. Of the 2.7 million immigrants who came to Canada between 1945 and 1966, at least one-quarter settled in Toronto. Immigrants accounted for more than fifty percent of Toronto's population growth over this period. More important than the number of immigrants who arrived in Toronto was their place of origin. In the two decades following the war, the bulk of immigrants came from Southern and Eastern European countries such as Italy, Poland, and Hungary. Though Toronto had been a settling place for European immigrants in the early part of this century, the city was still 80 percent Anglo-Saxon by the start of World War II. In 1951 those reporting non-British origins rose to 31 per cent of the population, and to 42 per cent by 1961. These dramatic changes in the ethnic composition of the city were also reflected in its religious mosaic. In the city itself, Roman Catholics rose from only one-seventh of the population in 1941 to one-fifth in 1951 to one-third by 1961, now the largest religious denomination in the city.¹²⁵

Though the effects of the tremendous influx of immigrants were also felt in the suburbs and other parts of the city, it was the ethnic map of western Toronto that experienced the most dramatic changes over these two decades. Though many of these neighbourhoods served as immigrant reception areas in the early part of the century, they remained predominantly Anglo-Saxon in character until the post World War II era. By 1961, postwar immigrants were the dominant population in many western city neighbourhoods, filling the void left by former British and Jewish residents who were moving northward to the suburbs. The proximity of these neighbourhoods to the factory district south of Queen Street West

¹²⁵See J. Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918*, 113-118; W. Magnusson, "Toronto,"; and Canada, Department of Manpower and Immigration, *White Paper on Immigration* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 15.

and to the Central Business District, both major sources of employment for immigrants, was undoubtedly a factor in the creation of ethnic neighbourhoods such as “Little Italy,” “Polish Parkdale,” “The Goulash Strip” (Hungarian settlement in the Annex area), and the “Portuguese Village” (Kensington Market). The nature of the housing which was, by and large, older, more densely packed and, therefore, cheaper than anything that could be had in the suburbs, was also a factor in the initial settlement of immigrants in inner-city neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, despite Torontonians’ creation of an “ethnic” map of the city, most inner-city neighbourhoods did not become ethnic ghettos, and ethnic groups inter-mixed with one another, sometimes caustically. Indeed, when social workers finally ventured into these neighbourhoods they found that “new community patterns have not developed . . . and attempting to define or describe [them] is like trying to grasp a handful of jelly.”¹²⁶

Given Toronto's long-standing shortage of affordable accommodation, the housing of immigrants was a key concern. Finding accommodation in Toronto was a daunting task for recent émigrés, especially those who arrived unsponsored, as a report by the Housing Registry of the Social Planning Council revealed.¹²⁷ According to the report, a volunteer body of 120 church organizations canvassed more than 2,000 houses in a well-known renting district for accommodation for immigrants and their families. They found only a dozen apartments or flats for rent, all of them already listed with the registry. A concerted advertising campaign procured better results, and by the end of 1958 the Registry had

¹²⁶CTA, SPCMT, SC40, Box 53, file 3, International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto, Parkdale Branch, “Branch Director’s Report, May, 24, 1962,” 3.

¹²⁷The Housing Registry was established in 1957, with a grant from the Federal Government, to meet the housing needs of the large influx of Hungarian refugees who arrived in Canada after the failed 1956 Revolution.

directed over 2,000 families to accommodation. A slowdown in immigration in 1959 led the Federal government to withdraw its funding from the service, despite the fact that more than 2,200 immigrants had found housing through the service in the first ten months of the year.¹²⁸

The need for housing for immigrants was one of several concerns expressed by government officials, social workers, immigrant aid groups and even ordinary Torontonians. Those interested in the welfare of immigrants were concerned that the combination of low education and occupational skills, rural background, and generally poor socio-economic status might cause the “ethnic slums” to develop in Toronto with “all their concomitant social evils.”¹²⁹ Similarly, the Federal Government was also worried about the concentration of immigrants, especially unskilled immigrants and their sponsored families, in the central cores of Canada's largest cities. As the 1966 *White Paper on Immigration* remarked:

Migrants have found initial security in neighbourhoods occupied largely by people of the same ethnic origin. These neighbourhoods serve as natural reception and orientation centres. As a general rule the deterioration of properties in such areas is checked and even reversed as the immigrant succeeds economically. There is a constant movement of population as individuals or groups move out to better neighbourhoods and more immigrants arrive; and the sustained demand has its effect on the maintenance of property values. There is a fine balance to be maintained in this process, however. It depends on a low proportion of economic failures. The migrant who lacks the skills or competitive qualifications to establish his economic position will tend to become a permanent inhabitant of the ethnic concentration area to which he has first migrated. If many fail to move on, the balance will be upset and we will find ourselves with ghetto-like slums, with all they entail in human misery and increased welfare costs. This danger would be increased if there were a rate of immigrant movement into urban

¹²⁸CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 54, file 5, “Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto Operation on Behalf of the Immigrant 1957: Summary of Activities June to Sept 1957.”

¹²⁹CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 53, file 1, “Draft Proposal for a Branch of the International Institute,” September 11, 1961.

areas seriously out of proportion to the availability of housing...¹³⁰

To a large extent, the *White Paper* was not describing the fears of what might happen, but the actual situation in cities such as Toronto during the 1950s and early 1960s. Immigrants, by necessity and partly through choice, often occupied some of the worst houses in the city, usually at exorbitant rents. Further complicating the matter, as we will see, many immigrants found housing in neighbourhoods designated for redevelopment.¹³¹

The concentration of immigrants in these older and, in many cases, “blighted sections” of the city was of special concern to government officials and social planners because of the proclivity of recent immigrants to “double-up.” The settlement of immigrants in the western neighbourhoods of Toronto was largely responsible for continued high rates of overcrowding and doubling-up throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Given the high cost of housing in Toronto during this period, doubling up or renting a small flat (2 rooms or less) was a necessity for many recent immigrants to gain a foothold in the country. Housing for large immigrant families was often difficult to find and, as a result, social workers soon unearthed cases of families with as many as seven or eight children packing themselves into “sardine-tin flats,” in remodelled homes and above stores. In such cases every room, with the exception of the kitchen and bathroom, became a bedroom. Social workers worried about “proper sleeping accommodation for children” and the family strife created by living in such crowded

¹³⁰Canada, Department of Manpower and Immigration, *Canadian Immigration Policy - White Paper on Immigration* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 15.

¹³¹Canada, *Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee on Immigration*, Volume 10, February 16, 1967 Testimony of Henry Weisbach, Director of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 253-254; and B. Neumann, R. MezoFF, and A. Richmond, *Immigrant Integration and Urban Renewal in Toronto* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), XII-XV, 18-20.

conditions.¹³² Edith Ferguson, a social worker at the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto, described the typical housing experience of recent immigrants:

A family usually gets along with one room until the third child arrives. Some families with three small children still have only one room and a kitchen, and share the bath. This type of accommodation generally costs \$40 to \$50 a month. Families with three, four or five children usually have two rooms, kitchen and bath, but in some cases, may share the bath. For this the rent runs from \$65 to \$75 a month or perhaps less, if both kitchen and bath are shared.¹³³

The prevalence of immigrants to first take residence in flats had a tremendous impact on the physical shape of the city. As Michael Doucet's and John Weaver's study of housing in Hamilton reveals, flats in houses increased phenomenally at mid-century due, in large part, to the living arrangements of postwar immigrants, who were likely to subdivide houses and rent flats to relatives and other members of their ethnic group. During this period, flats performed similar functions for immigrants as boarding and rooming houses had done earlier in the century. The replacement of boarding houses by flats was undoubtedly linked to the more family-oriented immigration patterns in the postwar period, but also to other factors such as a rise in the housing expectations of immigrants and more stringent building and public health codes. Flats were most prevalent in the neighbourhoods just beyond the Central Business District (CBD), where houses were large enough to subdivide and close to immigrant-dominated labour markets. Flats were also largely the function of under-building in the rental market of the 1950s, and many vanished by the late 1960s due to the onset of

¹³²CTA, Records of St. Christopher House (SCH), SC 484, Box 33, file 15, "A Family Life Project in A Downtown Neighbourhood: Prepared by St. Christopher House for the Canadian Conference on the Family," 8.

¹³³E. Ferguson, *Newcomers in Transition* (A Project of the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto, 1962-1964), 37.

public and private urban renewal schemes.¹³⁴

Such conditions of overcrowding in immigrant households were a chief concern of social workers and municipal planners, not only for the health of the individual families involved, but also for the health of Toronto's housing stock and neighbourhoods. According to observers, the multiple occupation of one-time single-family homes by two, three and even four families (sometimes including roomers) taxed city facilities and services, especially education, and flagrantly disregarded housing standards and public health by-laws "passed for the good of citizens."¹³⁵ What was worse was that the phenomenon of doubling up among immigrant families was more widespread than the number contained in official reports, since many immigrant landlords did not give accurate statements about the number of families or individuals in their homes for fear of having building standards enforced and higher assessments placed on their homes.¹³⁶

Yet, as Franca Iacovetta argues in her study of postwar Italian immigrants in Toronto, immigrants did not "huddl[e] indiscriminately, people living in these crowded households had a deep-seated sense of propriety and retained as much as possible their sense of nuclear family."¹³⁷ For the most part houses were shared by, and flats rented to, relatives and friends

¹³⁴M. Doucet & J. Weaver, *Housing the North American City* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 340-41 and 380-81.

¹³⁵CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 56, file 11, "Memorandum: Integration Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto," Rev. F.W.L. Brailey, n.d..

¹³⁶CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 13, file 15, "St. Christopher House, Agency Self Study," June 23, 1958, 6-7.

¹³⁷Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 89. See also F. Iacovetta, "Making New Canadians: Social Workers, Women and the Reshaping of Immigrant Families," in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, eds., *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 261-303; F. Iacovetta, "Remaking Their Lives: Women Immigrants, Survivors and Refugees," in Joy Parr, ed. *A Diversity of Women: Ontario 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995),.

from “back home.” Even still, though families may have shared facilities such as the kitchen, most families prepared and ate meals separately.¹³⁸ For women who were most likely to experience the deprivations caused by crowded living conditions, sharing accommodation with other families was often preferable to renting a flat, which could often entail daily intrusions into their lives. Moreover, as Iacovetta points out, doubling up may have been advantageous for women, providing them a community where help and friendship were always available. In many cases, women established informal baby-sitting schedules so that others could work outside the home. Despite the overcrowded conditions social workers were often amazed that the houses were remarkably clean and well maintained. They were also surprised that the crowded conditions did not appear to have strained relationships between relatives and friends; few families were forced to move due to strained relationships between lodging and landlord families.¹³⁹

“Doubling-up” was not simply a necessity for immigrants families to meet the high costs of Toronto housing, but a choice they made to facilitate home ownership. Doubling up, taking in roomers, and generally living in overcrowded conditions, were, in most instances, the only way that immigrants could afford to purchase a home. Sharing one’s house with others was not limited to simply taking in roomers or renting the second floor of the house. In many cases, men who arrived in Toronto before the rest of their families would jointly purchase houses and pay off the mortgage with boarding fees, upon which shares in the

¹³⁸ Anthony Richmond in a study of immigrants and housing in Toronto during this period found that it was rare for immigrant families to share eating facilities. On the other hand immigrant families were more likely (31%) to share a washroom with another family. A. Richmond, B. Jensen, R. Mezoff, *Sociological Aspects of Urban Renewal in Toronto* (Toronto: Ethnic Research Programme, Institute for behavioural Research, York University, 1970), 31.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 89-92, 97-99; and E. Ferguson, *Newcomers in Transition*, 37.

ownership of the house would be used to provide a down payment on another house when the rest of the family arrived. In other cases, two or more immigrant families jointly purchased a house for the same reasons. It is no wonder, then, that the population in immigrant districts of the city was so mobile during the first few years of settlement. Families were constantly on the move as landlords pushed out boarders so that they could rent to new ones, usually sponsored relatives. Or conversely, families moved from flats to purchased houses so that they could fulfill the duties of sponsoring relatives.

Torontonians were amazed, and more than a bit jealous, at the ability of seemingly impoverished immigrants to become home-owners so quickly. Prominent Toronto journalist, Pierre Berton, captured Torontonians' amazement at this phenomenon:

... these people are surely the hardest pressed in all Toronto. They tumble from the immigrant ships with a single suitcase, often in debt for their fare. Yet in five of six years they own their own house... They do this by sacrificing their leisure, their privacy and their comfort – everything indeed but their dignity. They crowd into ancient houses, so heavily mortgaged that for almost anybody else the investment would be insane. They accept, without whimper, the crushing [mortgage] discounts and exorbitant interest rates that are the shame of the city. They work long hours and their children work long hours and they rent out spare rooms and paint their houses and fix the stairs and scrub the interiors and pay off every cent often at thirty per cent interest.¹⁴⁰

Of course other Torontonians were less sympathetic towards immigrant home owners, whom they believed were undermining Canadian standards of living in the process.

By the late 1960s, it was evident that the sacrifices many immigrant families endured had begun to pay off. By the time of the 1971 Census, the level of home ownership among European immigrants greatly surpassed that of Anglo-Canadians. In 1971, over seventy-

¹⁴⁰Henri Rossier and Pierre Berton, *The New City: A Prejudiced View of Toronto*, 39.

seven percent of Italian-Canadians owned their own homes compared to fifty-five per cent for all others. In Toronto, the rate of home ownership among Italians was 83 per cent. Rates of home ownership were even higher among those of Eastern European origin, such as Poles and Ukrainians. Even among recent immigrants (those arriving since 1945) home ownership had reached an incredible 62 per cent by 1961. Even more incredible was the fact that less than a third of these recent home owning immigrants reported the existence of a mortgage.¹⁴¹ This was true even for the most recently arrived and impoverished immigrant groups such as the Portuguese, who soon achieved high rates of home ownership; by 1969 Grace Anderson found that 54 percent of a sample of Portuguese blue-collar workers owned their own home.¹⁴² Indeed, in direct contravention to the popular and bureaucratic predictions of the creation of ethnic slums, waves of postwar immigrants rejuvenated many inner-city neighbourhoods that were in decline prior to the war.¹⁴³

The resolute drive toward home ownership among immigrant groups has been well documented. For the most part, it has been explained in terms of the love of property inherited through the culture of peasant societies.¹⁴⁴ Edith Ferguson explained the home

¹⁴¹Anthony Richmond, *Immigrants and Ethnic Groups in Toronto*, 56-57.

¹⁴²See Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 70-71; Grace Anderson and David Higgs, *A Future to Inherit: Portuguese Communities in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart in association with the Multiculturalism Program, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada and the Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1976), 44-45; Doucet and Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 336-338; Brian K. Ray, "Immigrants in A 'Multicultural' Toronto : Exploring the Contested Social and Housing Geographies of Postwar Italian and Caribbean Immigrants." PhD Thesis, Department of Geography, Queen's University, 1992, 292-93.

¹⁴³CTA, CTPB, RG 32 Series B2, Box 6, file 1, Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, Research Division, "Population Changes in the City of Toronto by Census Tract, 1951-56", 2.

¹⁴⁴See Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, Brigitte Neumann et. al., *Immigrant Integration and Urban Renewal in Toronto*; and Oliver Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality : Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

owning proclivities of Italians and Portuguese immigrants in Toronto:

Owning a home is tremendously important to the rural immigrant In the villages of Italy and Portugal each family had its own home, even though it may have been small, poorly furnished over crowded. New immigrants find themselves here with no possessions, nothing but their hands, they bend every effort toward saving for a home which gives the security, some roots and some status in the community. Without it, they are nobodies.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, as scholars have noted, home ownership allowed immigrants to join “the mainstream [culture] without having to make the sacrifices required for full cultural assimilation.”¹⁴⁶

Immigrants often cited high rates of home ownership as proof of their exemplary citizenship and assimilation to Canadian cultural ideals. We should, however, not overlook the fact that the patterns of postwar immigration, especially sponsorship programs, had a tremendous impact on the drive towards home ownership. Home ownership and the sponsorship programs had a symbiotic relationship. On one hand, owning a home was an absolute necessity to qualify as a sponsor, while on the other hand, it is highly unlikely that immigrants would have achieved such high rates of home ownership without the income derived from rents or loans paid by sponsored kin. Despite the link of home-ownership to the “cultural baggage” of immigrants, the process by which immigrants became home owners reveals the patterns of continuity and discontinuity that characterized the immigrant experience.¹⁴⁷ Though many Torontonians claimed that immigrants were used to poor, overcrowded housing conditions, few had been forced to share their homes in “the old world.” Finally, home ownership has also been a prominent strategy of working-class families to minimize

¹⁴⁵E. Ferguson, *Newcomers in Transition*, 35.

¹⁴⁶M. Doucet and J. Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 338-39.

¹⁴⁷F. Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 71.

financial insecurities, regardless of ethnic background.¹⁴⁸

This leads us to Alexandra Park, which, like the rest of the Spadina Planning Area, had long been an important immigrant reception area. Since the turn of the century, the area had housed successive waves of immigrants, including the founding members of Toronto's Italian, Ukrainian and, most important, Jewish communities. In the decades prior to the Second World War, the area was a prominent centre of settlement and institutional life for Toronto's Jewish community. After the war, many of these families moved north along Bathurst Street into the suburb of North York. In turn, their places in the neighbourhood were taken by successive waves of immigrants from Italy, Poland, the Ukraine and, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Portugal. Population changes, in both numbers and ethnic composition, were rapid during the 1950s. The changes in the neighbourhood could be charted through the files of St. Christopher House, a settlement house located just across Dundas Street, in the heart of Kensington Market. According to staff workers, by the mid 1950s the House was serving fewer Jewish residents and more Roman Catholic neighbours, the largest group of whom were Polish, with Italians and Portuguese close behind. By 1958, the director of the House, John Haddad, noted the complete transition of the neighbourhood: "It is believed that our neighbourhood, which was approximately 60 percent Jewish after the war, is now approximately 60 percent Roman Catholic." According to House files, more than thirty-one nationalities resided in the immediate neighbourhood.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸F. Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 71; Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 131-134; and R. Harris, "The Family Home in Working-Class Life," Research Paper No. 171 (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1989).

¹⁴⁹CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 13, file 15, St. Christopher House, "Agency Self-Study," June 23, 1958, 6-7

Perhaps the most dramatic ethnic change in the Alexandra Park area was the rapid influx of Portuguese immigrants starting in the mid-1950s. Prior to the 1950s, Portuguese immigration to Canada was negligible. Large-scale immigration to Canada from Portugal was largely the result of shortages of heavy manual labourers in Canada, and the persistent pressure from railway construction companies and agricultural organizations for cheap, unskilled, immigrant workers. The Portuguese government was also interested in relieving population pressures on its outward islands, the Azores. Over the next decade both governments facilitated the movement of nearly twenty-five thousand Portuguese citizens to Canada, seventy percent of whom came from the Azores. In the years before 1960, the bulk of immigration was composed of single men brought to Canada to work as agricultural labourers and railway track workers. After 1960, direct importation of unskilled labour from the Azores, slowed due to the closing of the recruitment office on the islands by the Canadian government. Immigration officials cited a decline in the need for unskilled labour as the principal reason for closing the office. However, they were also worried that the previous movement of unskilled workers from the Azores was producing a disproportionate volume of sponsored immigrants, similar to the experience with the movement of unskilled immigrants from Southern Italy. After 1961, the bulk of Portuguese immigration to Canada came in the form of chain migration, as Portuguese immigrants began the reconstitution of their families through sponsorship programs.¹⁵⁰

When the Portuguese community celebrated the tenth anniversary of their arrival in

¹⁵⁰Grace Anderson, and David Higgs, *A Future to Inherit*, 23-30; E. Ferguson, *Newcomers in Transition*, 25 and 29; and Carlos Teixeira and Victor M.P. Da Rosa, eds., *The Portuguese in Canada: From the Sea to the City*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

Toronto, on June 9, 1963, there were an estimated 15,000 Portuguese immigrants living in the Toronto area. Prior to 1953, the only Portuguese immigrants who had settled in Toronto had already sojourned first in South America. Similarly, those who settled in Toronto before 1957 were single men lured away from their work as farm labourers and railroad maintenance workers by the promise of better and more well-paid employment in the 'big-city.' Many first came to Toronto during the winter months to find employment and shelter during winter layoffs, and then returned to railway and agricultural employment in the spring. Those who decided to stay often found jobs either in Toronto's burgeoning construction industry or as semi-skilled workers in the factories below Queen Street, while others found employment as custodians, dishwashers, and housekeepers in downtown hospitals. Portuguese women found work in the garment industry in near-by Spadina, food processing plants, and also as cleaners in local hospitals and private homes. In many cases, married women worked during the winter months when their husbands, employed in seasonal industries such as construction, railway labour or farming, were unemployed. Another industry that tended to draw upon Portuguese workers was worm picking. Live bait companies operating in the Toronto area employed hundreds of workers, sixty percent of whom were reputed to be Portuguese. Women were deemed the best pickers, but often whole families picked worms to supplement the family income. Paid at rates of \$5.50 per thousand worms (1968) the average weekly wage of such workers was only one hundred dollars. In almost all industries, Portuguese workers were deemed by many observers to be "exploited more than any other ethnic group."¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹Anderson and Higgs, *A Future to Inherit*, 31. See also CTA, SCH, SC 484, Box 33, file 15, "A Family (continued...)"

Portuguese immigrants settled in and around the Kensington Market area by the mid-1950s. Two streets in particular became important places in this burgeoning Portuguese community - Nassau and Augusta Streets. Nassau Street in the 1950s witnessed the emergence of the community's first institutions, namely the first Portuguese restaurant and the First Portuguese Canadian Club - one of the oldest and most important cultural institutions for Portuguese immigrants in Canada. Other businesses opened up along Augusta Street, which soon became known as the "street of the Portuguese." It was not long before the influx of Portuguese businesses transformed Kensington Market from "the Jewish Market" to the "Portuguese Market."¹⁵²

Portuguese immigrants were also transforming the residential fabric of Kensington Market and Alexandra Park. Like most other immigrants, the Portuguese started out as renters and roomers often sharing overcrowded houses and flats with two or three other families. But renting and boarding were only intended as short-term housing solutions. Many proceeded to purchase houses in the area, particularly because of the low prices of houses in the Spadina area. It did not take long before they began renovating the houses inside and out. Their own extensive renovations included new plumbing and wiring, additions to kitchens and bathrooms, along with the addition of extra rooms or flats to pay for the mortgage and renovations. Portuguese residents of Kensington also had a propensity to

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Life Project in a Downtown Neighbourhood Prepared by St. Christopher House for the Canadian Conference on the Family," 8-9; and CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 53, file 3, International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto, Parkdale Branch, "Report of the Branch Director: Beginnings of the Portuguese Community," October, 1962.

¹⁵²Carlos Teixeira, "On the Move: Portuguese in Toronto," in C. Teixeira and V.M.P. Da Rosa, eds., *The Portuguese in Canada*, 208-211.

paint the outside of their houses bright colours, often red, and to use the entire space around their homes for vegetable and fruit gardens. Most carried out this work themselves and with help from friends and family, many of whom were employed in the construction industry. As with many other immigrant groups, the Portuguese of Kensington and Alexandra Park did much to rejuvenate their neighbourhood, and with little or no government assistance.¹⁵³

Portuguese immigrants were not the only ethnic group transforming the Alexandra Park neighbourhood in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Though smaller in numbers, Canadian-born families were also migrating to the neighbourhood. Although there had always been a number of Canadian-born families in Alexandra Park, their numbers increased after the designation of the area for renewal, a circumstance which only tended to hasten the decline of many residential properties, especially those owned by absentee landlords. Canadian-born families represented a transitional and an already transient population who moved into the area in search of low-rental housing, which grew as a result of the progressive deterioration of the area during the long wait for redevelopment. Many of these families were large families led by single mothers, both “abandoned” and “widowed,” who were dependent on various forms of provincial assistance. Forced to exist on less than \$75 dollars a month in Mothers’ Allowance, single mothers and their children tended to occupy the worst housing in the area along Wolesley and Napanee Streets, described by one observer as two of the “blackest streets in Toronto.”¹⁵⁴ To pay the rent, or in some cases the mortgage, and put food

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Mother led families on welfare were a particular focus for slum exposes, since their extreme poverty invariably led them to occupy the worst housing in the city. See Lotta Dempsey, “The Tragedy of Toronto’s Blackest Street - Condemned Three Years Ago it Still Breeds Sorrow,” *Toronto Star*, March 2, 1960, 1 and 4; and Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPCMT), *Alexandra Park*

(continued...)

on the table many mother-led families derived extra income from roomers. The proximity to valuable social services, such as hospital clinics, recreational programs of settlement houses such as St. Christopher House, and public transportation was a benefit to living in central city neighbourhoods such as Alexandra Park. So too was the general anonymity of the neighbourhood, where mother-led families did not stand out for all to see and remark upon. In the words of one single mother, who lived in Alexandra Park prior to renewal: "it was all right to be without a husband and have a limited income; you weren't made to feel different in this neighbourhood because of these things."¹⁵⁵ Canadian-born families led by single mothers were perhaps the only group to reap benefits from the renewal process, since the public housing project greatly improved their housing environments.

Thus, by 1956, when renewal was first proposed for Alexandra Park, the entire Spadina Planning Area, of which it was a part, functioned as a "zone of transition." Like other inner city Toronto neighbourhoods Alexandra Park seemed to followed classic urban ecology patterns set out by the Chicago School of Sociology. Long-standing Anglo-Saxon and Jewish families were leaving the neighbourhood for the suburbs to be replaced by an ethnically heterogeneous population produced by successive waves of Italian, Eastern European (especially Hungarian and Ukranian), and Portuguese immigrants, generally of low education and economic status. Population turnover was extremely high, especially in the mid-1950s, when as much as twenty five percent of the population was replaced. For many

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Relocation: Supplementary Report Part II, (Toronto: The Council, April, 1970), 27.

¹⁵⁵M. Lipman, "Relocation and Family Life," *Public Housing and Urban Renewal*, 5 (January /February 1969), 4.

people, the area served as a way station; a place where they could obtain necessary shelter, social services, and community services until such time as they could move on to more stable situations.

As these patterns threw the neighbourhood into flux, the neighbourhood attracted more transients, "outcasts," and some elements of Toronto's "dangerous classes" - prostitutes, drug addicts, and alcoholics. The area gained notoriety in this regard during a 1959 survey of vice and drug rings in the Dundas-Spadina area sponsored by Metro Chairman F.G. Gardiner. For the most part, the survey was just a tempest in a teapot, as most crime in the neighbourhood was petty and unorganized. Police officials claimed that crime in the neighbourhood was no worse than in any other area in the city. Most of the area's European immigrant families were "hard-working, law-abiding citizens." The absence of nightly rooming houses in the area also made for fewer troubles caused by drink and prostitution, especially when compared to Toronto's other notorious "slum" - Moss Park.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, concerned citizens and Toronto planners were disturbed by the effects that crime was having on neighbourhood children. Juvenile delinquency rates in Alexandra Park were nearly three times higher than in other areas in the city. Indeed, what sparked Gardiner's survey in the first place were disturbing reports from St. Christopher House social worker Bill Leggatt that outlined problems of teenage narcotic addiction, pimping and prostitution, chronic unemployment among school drop-outs, and habitual theft. Leggatt cited one particular case in which two 14 year-old girls were arrested for prostitution and another four male youths

¹⁵⁶CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 6, CPB Memo- Re Interviews with Police, Fire and Health Officials in Redevelopment Areas 1 & 2; and NA, Records of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), MG 28 IV 4, Vol. 28, file 19 - "1958 Civic Elections," "Is This Justice?"

were charged with living off the avails of prostitution.¹⁵⁷ Observers were quick to point out that despite the preponderance of immigrants in the area the bulk of “criminal activity” and delinquency was limited to a small but ever growing population of “undesirable” Canadian-born citizens. Planners and social workers expressed concern for the unfortunate New Canadian residents who, although from “poor backgrounds,” were not used to living and raising their children in the “midst of vice.”¹⁵⁸ Once again harkening back to environmental causes of delinquency that were so prevalent in the immediate postwar period, planners and social workers were concerned that New Canadians might “inherit the evil conditions of the area.”¹⁵⁹

Alexandra Park, then, was chosen for renewal both for its social as well as its physical conditions. Yet, despite the area’s unfavourable social and physical characteristics, the Planning Board, as in Moss Park, sought to maintain the area’s population structure. The area’s proximity to both the industrial district south of Queen and the Central Business District made it imperative that the area should continue to house a largely working-class and low-income population. At the same time, the Planning Board recognized that the area should retain its function as an immigrant reception area, and, as such, redevelopment plans should give generous allowance for:

open air markets, community centres, hostels for single people, with special attention given to parks and recreation facilities. In this way the ebb and flow of changing population could be accommodated with opportunities provided

¹⁵⁷ Allan Irving, Donald Bellamy, and Harriet Parsons, *Neighbours: Three Social Settlements in Downtown Toronto* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1995), 76.

¹⁵⁸ CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 53, file 3, International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto, Parkdale Branch, “Report of the Branch Director: Beginnings of the Portuguese Community,” October, 1962.

¹⁵⁹ See Toronto Welfare Council, “A Plan for the Reduction of Juvenile Delinquency in Toronto, November 15, 1943,” *Minutes of the City Council of Toronto*, 1943, Appendix C, 97.

for retaining old customs and for adopting new ones.¹⁶⁰

The Planning Board, however, was unclear about how this could be accomplished. Given the disposition of immigrant families to become home owners and to achieve such status through filling their houses with roomers, city planners recognized that the Board's goal of reducing overcrowding, while retaining enough houses for ownership, would be a delicate and difficult task.

The lack of clarity, the half-hoped desires, and the desperation of Toronto city planners to solve the city's chronic housing shortage was plainly evident in the plans for Alexandra Park. These facts were not lost on other government officials and planners, especially those at Metro. If Metro planners were opposed to Moss Park, then they were equally, if not more, opposed to the redevelopment of Alexandra Park. According to Metro Chairman F.G. Gardiner, there was nothing wrong with Alexandra Park, at least nothing that a few immigrants could not fix.

Have you ever looked at the homes out there? Most of them are good solid homes. Our own planners tell us the houses haven't lost 30 per cent of their use. ...If you put 100 Poles or 100 Dutchmen in there, they would clean it up in two years and you would have white picket fences and flower beds all over the place. There's no need to tear that area apart with bulldozers.¹⁶¹

Metro planners were apt to agree with "Big Daddy's" off-hand assessment. Like their objections to the Moss Park scheme, Metro planners claimed that the real problem in the area, as with all downtown neighbourhoods, was overcrowding, and the displacement of thousands of residents from Alexandra Park would only further exacerbate this problem. They also

¹⁶⁰CTPB, *Urban Renewal Study*, III 26

¹⁶¹"Big Daddy Has a Housing 'Cure'" *Toronto Star*, January 8, 1960, 4.

doubted the city's estimation of blight in the neighbourhood. According to Metro planners, the city's assessments were hastily gathered; in many cases officials assessed the condition of the houses from the roadside and often from the front seat of their cars. Moreover, poor assessments were often based solely on the fact that the houses were of frame construction without careful reference to the actual condition of the house or its facing material. A survey by University of Toronto urban planning students found that only thirty percent of the houses in the neighbourhood could be classified as poor, and that the vast majority, nearly two-thirds, were in at least fair condition. Much of the blight could be traced to a few buildings and a couple of back lanes, such as Eden Place, which were isolated and peripheral to the rest of the area. The poor appearance of yards and lanes could also be easily rectified by more attention from the city. Considering the attachment to the neighbourhood by recent immigrant families, the best course of action was the rehabilitation of the area through by-law enforcement and financial assistance to home-owners, rather than demolition.¹⁶²

Finally, Metro planners hit on a key issue which would plague the city's redevelopment programme during and after Alexandra Park: the high rate of home ownership in many urban renewal areas. In Alexandra Park, more than 55 percent of residents owned their own homes and over two-thirds of all residential structures were owner-occupied. Redevelopment would mean not only finding low-cost rental accommodation, which was scarce, but finding a suitable stock of low-cost dwellings for purchase, which were rapidly

¹⁶²CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, File 8, CTPB MEMO 02.15.17/18 to Mayor Phillips, Re: "Report on 3 Man Committee on 'Metro Participation in the Proposed Redevelopment of the Moss Park and Alexandra Park Area, 1958" 27; A. Richmond *et. al.*, found that while most immigrants disliked the physical quality of their neighbourhoods, most liked their social qualities, especially the proximity to work, shopping and family and friends. *Sociological Aspects of Urban Renewal in Toronto*, 35.

disappearing due to private and public renewal schemes. Residents in future renewal schemes in Don Mount (Riverdale), Don Vale, and Trefann Court looked back on these very problems experienced by Alexandra Park residents when they called for a “house for a house” as justifiable compensation in expropriation for urban renewal.

The Origins of Alinsky-Style¹⁶³ Organizing in Toronto - Community Participation in Alexandra Park Renewal

Key to the Alexandra Park project was revival of citizen participation. Because there had been little opposition in Moss Park, this seemed somewhat surprising. However, given the tremendous opposition from ratepayers engendered by private renewal schemes in the St. James Town (See Chapter 5), the city was anxious to avoid such opposition to its plans. City publications sent to area residents throughout the planning stages were couched in phrases such as good will, fairness to those affected, and the safeguarding of the public interest, both present and future.¹⁶⁴ Also central to the City’s plans was enlisting the support and resources of the local settlement house, St. Christopher House.

¹⁶³Saul Alinsky is often hailed as the “father of modern American radicalism” for his revolutionary approach to community organization. Trained as a criminologist Alinsky began working in working-class neighbourhoods of Chicago, the most prominent of which was The Back of the Yards. It was here in 1938, where he undertook his first community organizing, which became a prototype for a generation of community organizations. According to Alinsky, community organizations are only successful when they motivate their members to democratically determine their own goals and the means to achieve them. The role of the organizer, according to Alinsky, is catalyst rather than a leader, whose main task is to bring out the potential leaders within the community itself. Alinsky also believed that community organizations should be oriented towards gaining power, and thus should be pragmatic and non-ideological and should employ any tactics necessary, including militant and confrontational ones. Alinsky placed great stock in the revolutionary nature of community organization and saw neighbourhood-based organizations as “trade unions in the social field.” Alinsky, his ideas and his tactics, became extremely influential to the New Left of the 1960s. See Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighbourhood Organizing in America, Updated Edition*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 51-65; and Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946); and Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971).

¹⁶⁴John Richard Dorrell, “Alexandra Park: A Case Study in Residential Urban Renewal,” M. Sc., Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Toronto, 1968, 10.

By the 1960s, St Christopher House, located just to the north of Alexandra Park at 67 Wales Avenue, in the heart of Kensington Market, had nearly half a century of experience with the people of Spadina. Founded in 1912 by the Presbyterian Church of Canada, during the first great wave of urban social reform, St. Christopher House was the city's largest and best equipped settlement house, thanks to the contributions of James Woods (later Sir James), a Toronto dry goods wholesaler and prominent Presbyterian philanthropist.¹⁶⁵ St. Christopher House provided a wide range of social and recreational services to area residents. Though recreational services, such as its overwhelmingly popular music school, remained central to the House's programme, by the 1950s, the House workers increasingly viewed St. Christopher House as a neighbourhood centre whose chief task was to be sensitive to the increasingly serious plight of inner-city residents confronted by rapid urbanization, poverty and unemployment, and to a neighbourhood with more than its fair share of what social workers were now calling "multi-problem families." In confronting the problems of its clients on a daily basis, St. Christopher House workers and board members began to view the area's decaying and overcrowded housing as the root of many of its clients' problems. On their home visits, social workers connected with the House often remarked upon the squalid and cramped living conditions. Such poor home lives of its clients led many to question just how beneficial the House's programmes were, when individuals and families had to return home to their depressing and inadequate conditions. According to the 1958 Annual Report, Alexandra Park was a place:

where rooming houses are filled with the sons of many lands seeking the promise of something better; where social tensions clash or harmonize as

¹⁶⁵A.Irving, *et. al.*, *Neighbours*, 75-79.

lonely people strive to feel they are part of something meaningful; where decaying housing is often left to the most needy; where transient workers have a temporary life until the season changes and a new job pulls them to another place.¹⁶⁶

St. Christopher House responded to the neighbourhood's poor housing by becoming actively involved in the United Action for Slum Clearance and later the Social Planning Council's Housing Committee.

St. Christopher House became intricately involved in the Alexandra Park renewal scheme from the outset, and was a significant factor in the evolution of the renewal process. From the start, it provided a liaison between city departments and area residents worried about what renewal would mean to them. In fact, the Planning Board redirected phone calls from area residents looking for information about the project to St. Christopher House. House workers used their knowledge of and influence with city officials to relay information to area residents, and to advance the interests of the neighbourhood to the appropriate authorities. In the late 1960s, when the city was under attack from citizen groups fighting urban renewal, city officials looked back on their experience with Alexandra Park residents and St. Christopher House as a model of citizen participation in urban renewal.¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the House was also the first to initiate Alinsky-style community development projects in the neighbourhood when it appointed the first community worker, Charlyn Howze, in 1961, a practice that would be repeated in all other urban renewal projects after Alexandra Park. Howze, "The Angel of Kensington" as she became affectionately known to area residents, spearheaded numerous community development projects, including an annual

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁶⁷ Albert Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1974), 138-39.

neighbourhood beautification program in Kensington market, and she almost single handedly organized Alexandra Park residents into the Alexandra Park Residents' Association to voice the concerns and demands of neighbourhood home owners and tenants. St. Christopher House not only provided the association a place to meet, but an independent voice and some measure of control over the development of their neighbourhood.

Citizen participation and community development were key to St. Christopher House's programmes after 1960, and reflected a larger movement in social work away from a more paternalistic approach to the poor towards organizing people to solve their own difficulties and to create a satisfactory community life for themselves and their neighbours. This slow, and often incomplete, transformation can be traced through the history of St. Christopher House's involvement in the Alexandra Park renewal project. Much like the social settlements that Herbert Gans found in West End Boston during the same period, St. Christopher House workers initially hoped that citizen action in urban renewal would change the behaviour of neighbourhood residents.¹⁶⁸ Like other Torontonians, the social workers at St. Christopher's questioned the commitment of New Canadians to their new country. They wanted to break down the insularity of immigrant families and ethnic groups and refocus their activities and identities towards more "purposive" groups, such as the neighbourhood, the broader community (Toronto), and ultimately the nation.¹⁶⁹ According to the directors of St. Christopher House, the underlying function of all the programs offered by the House was "to help give people roots, a sense of identification with a place, other people and existing

¹⁶⁸H. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian Americans*, Updated and Expanded Edition, (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 148-150.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*

agencies of their society, and if they stay long enough, with the ongoing goods, traditions and obligations of that society.”¹⁷⁰ Citizenship, then was not a passive process. Only through active and purposeful involvement in one’s community could immigrants truly become Canadian. Indeed, St. Christopher House community worker Arthur Davis recounted the story of one of the neighbourhood’s “New Canadians,” a Portuguese barber, who had received his Citizenship Papers nearly five years earlier, who when asked to become a member of the Beautification Committee remarked, “now I am a Canadian because I’ve been asked to be on the Committee.”¹⁷¹

St. Christopher House hoped neighbourhood involvement in urban renewal would teach citizenship through action. Citizen involvement in the renewal scheme was deemed crucial, since many of the neighbourhood’s problems could be linked to its lack of community spirit. Beyond St. Christopher House there were no other neighbourhood institutions serving the role of a community organization; there were no Home and School Associations, no ethnic clubs or business groups, even area churches drew parishioners from a wide area of the downtown. In a tone which suggested that Alexandra Park residents were largely responsible for their poor living conditions *Globe and Mail* reporter Marvin Schiff wrote:

... waging a frustrating battle on behalf of this seemingly hopeless neighborhood are John Haddad and a dozen workers at St. Christopher House [T]hey work to bring a sense of unity and community spirit to 40 square blocks where more than 30 languages are spoken and neighbors willingly remain strangers. In this social climate, with ethnic and even family groups isolating themselves, cultural divisions widen, community pride wanes, and ancient housing lapses further into disrepair. As if by some unspoken agreement, no one interferes with what his neighbor does. A man’s pride in

¹⁷⁰CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 13, file 15, St. Christopher House, “Agency Self-Study,” June 23, 1959, 1.

¹⁷¹CTA, SCH, SC 484, Box 11, File 14, Arthur Davis, “Neighbourhoods - A Community Development Target,” May 1966, 5.

this surroundings - if he has any - ends at his property line.¹⁷²

According to John Haddad, many of the solid Jewish families and other established leaders “who were concerned about the condition of their homes and surroundings” had progressively left the neighbourhood since the end of the war.¹⁷³ Finding new leaders to inspire confidence in the neighbourhood would be difficult considering that many of the new immigrants, especially the Italians and Portuguese, had “no democratic background whatsoever.”¹⁷⁴ At the same time, however, social workers never asked why residents would develop attachments to a neighbourhood officially condemned for “slum clearance.”

Despite the rhetoric of citizen action, the initial response to the renewal scheme by St. Christopher House was more reactive than proactive. Workers at St. Christopher House saw their role in the project as facilitating the inevitable changes to their neighbourhood. In the early stages of the project, St. Christopher House workers never challenged the planning board's assessment of the area nor its plans for the neighbourhood. Rather, the role of St. Christopher House workers was to bring planners and residents together, to provide accurate information, to quell fears and rumours, and eventually to help families adjust to their ultimate dislocation from their homes and their neighbourhood. Area residents were vitally interested in the plans for their neighbourhood, especially concerning whether or not they should make improvements to their homes, but there was little action taken by St. Christopher House to organize area residents into a ratepayers' association beyond an abortive attempt in 1957. At

¹⁷²M. Schiff, “Alexandra Park Sinks Into Decay: The Long Wait for Redevelopment,” *Globe and Mail*, July 10, 1961, 7.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴CTA, SCH, SC 484, Box 11, File 1, “Program Report,” April 26, 1956, 8.

the time, St. Christopher House workers selected thirty area residents as potential community leaders who might take part in a housing inspection committee for Alexandra Park. But the hopes of St. Christopher House workers were dashed when the city redefined its area of housing inspections to exclude all redevelopment areas, including Alexandra Park.

The lack of action by St. Christopher House workers in Alexandra Park was undoubtedly linked to the decade-long impasse surrounding urban renewal and public housing in Toronto. After announcing the redevelopment of the Alexandra Park area in 1957, the various levels of government involved simply kicked the plans back and forth, producing study after study, and comment after comment. Each time planners' opinions differed as to how much of the area should be cleared, how much of the area could and should be rehabilitated, and how much and what kind of public housing (apartments or row houses, how many for seniors and singles and how many for families) would be built in its place. At the same time, the various levels of governments remained reluctant to spend money on public housing, never mind a controversial housing project, which would see Toronto emerge from the project with less housing than with which it began.

In early 1960, the city made a formal application for urban renewal assistance to the provincial and federal governments. Despite their approval in principle both levels of government rejected the city's original redevelopment plans. Urban renewal assistance from the senior levels of government once again hinged upon yet another plan for the neighbourhood, this time drafted by an Advisory Council composed of City, Provincial and Federal officials. The new plans were to emphasize a larger and more comprehensive plan of spot clearance, rehabilitation, both public and private, and a larger area of wholesale

clearance and redevelopment.

By December 1962, the Advisory Committee on Alexandra Park submitted what would become the final report and plans for the Alexandra Park area. The Report recommended two major areas, sixteen acres in total, of clearance and public housing redevelopment in the heart of the neighbourhood, spot clearance with reuse for small scale public housing for seniors and families and a wider program of private rehabilitation by individual property owners. Unlike previous urban renewal projects in Toronto, most notably Regent Park South whose once award-winning design had only recently come under greater scrutiny for its dehumanizing effects, the design of Alexandra Park was supposed to correspond with the architectural character of the area. Planners wanted Alexandra Park to be “less institutional and self-conscious” with greater emphasis on the quality of the immediate environment of individual dwellings rather than the “functional” design of the overall project. Row houses and maisonettes, each with small gardens and access to play spaces, were to be built for families in the centre of the project, while low-rise apartments, serving the single and elderly population, were to be built on the outer edges of the neighbourhood along the main transportation routes.¹⁷⁵ In March 1963, Mayor Donald Summerville and the Board of Control gave their assent to the report and asked various city departments involved in the project to expedite any agreements necessary to get the project rolling.

Despite the city's commitment to the project, urban renewal in Alexandra Park was far from certain. Questions remained whether major urban surgery was necessary for the

¹⁷⁵CTPB, *Report of the Advisory Committee of the Alexandra Park Area*, (Toronto, City of Toronto Planning Board, December 1962).

area. By 1961, nearly 69 percent of all residential structures in the area were owner-occupied, enough to make anyone wonder how renewal could have been contemplated in the first place, and how officials could possibly have forced so many people to give up their homes without a tremendous struggle. Despite the high degree of home ownership, the City Planning Board justified renewal in Alexandra Park, claiming that the area still ranked as the second-worst slum in the city, surpassed only by an area south of King Street East known as Duke-Duchess, where a small pocket of decrepit houses was located in the midst of an industrial area and which were already slated for demolition to make way for off-ramps for the Don Valley Parkway.¹⁷⁶ According to the Advisory Committee's Report, only 49 houses in the area could be classified in "good" condition while more than 250, nearly one half of all dwellings, were in poor condition including nearly eighty percent in the first phase area of the project. Once again, however, the city's assessments were called into question. According to Metro officials, assessment records for the area differed by as much as 25 percent.¹⁷⁷ Two Metro Planning Board officials in particular placed the number of good structures at 362 and found only 75 "poor" structures.¹⁷⁸ The huge discrepancies could be linked to the city's "windshield survey" of the area whereby city officials assessed the quality of the dwellings from the sidewalk, and often from the front seat of their car; city officials only entered 56 of the 581 houses in the area.

Had city officials cared to enter some of the so-called sub-standard houses they found

¹⁷⁶City of Toronto, Commissioner of City Planning, "The Priority of Alexandra Park for Urban Renewal, June 17, 1963," in Board of Control Report# 19, in *Minutes of City Council*, Appendix A, 1669.

¹⁷⁷CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, file 4, MTPB, "Comments on the Report of the Advisory Committee on the Alexandra Park Improvement Area," June 14, 1963.

¹⁷⁸R. Haggart, "Now Then Just What is a Slum?" *Toronto Star*, July 4, 1963, 7.

in Alexandra Park they would have noticed that housing conditions in the neighbourhood had improved immensely, largely due to the hard work of many area residents. To be sure, there were a number of dwellings in Alexandra Park that were a menace to their occupants, but squalor was the exception to the majority of properties which were owner-occupied and reasonably well kept. In spite of the threat of demolition and expropriation hanging over their heads for nearly a decade, area residents purchased homes and spent thousands of dollars renovating them. Perhaps all the talk of spot clearance and rehabilitation instead of outright redevelopment convinced many area residents that they could save their homes from the wrecking ball.

The fates of Alex Cavallo and Mike Michalec are but two examples of the “free-lance slum clearance movement” which took place in Alexandra Park (and other immigrant neighbourhoods across the city) prior to redevelopment. Cavallo and his wife rebuilt their house, adding “an imaginative front porch of concrete and brick.. [which looked like] the pictures in the better homes magazines.” Inside the Cavallos installed a new furnace and water heater, and they were in the process of renovating the upstairs. According to city assessments, however, all of the Cavallo’s work was for naught, since it had officially classified the house as “poor.” To add insult to injury, according to the official plans, the Cavallo’s house was not going to be demolished to provide public housing for needy Torontonians. Rather, a parking lot, servicing the local Woolworth’s store, would soon stand in its place.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Mike Michalec, a section hand who fixed track for the Canadian Pacific Railway, bought his Augusta Avenue house in late 1961. When he took possession

¹⁷⁹R. Haggart, “When is a ‘Slum’ a Slum?” *Toronto Star*, July 5, 1963, 7.

of the house it was in terrible shape and the yard was littered with junk. For the next year and a half, Michalec spent most nights after work completely rebuilding his house inside and out, often labouring until 2 in the morning. In a little over a year and a half he fixed the porch; put in new doors throughout the house; repaired and painted the fence; cleaned up the yard and planted cherry and peach trees in the front, while turning the backyard into a small market garden. He also completely rebuilt the upper floor before renting the space to roomers (most likely to help pay for the repairs and mortgage) who greatly appreciated the work he put into his house. Despite all his work, City Planning Board officials only rated his house as one of the 278 houses in Alexandra Park in "fair condition," and given its location in an area slated for complete redevelopment, the Michalec's house would meet the same fate as his neighbours, the Cavallos.¹⁸⁰

It is somewhat ironic then, that the Alexandra Park Residents' Association was initially founded not to fight the city's urban renewal plans, but to press the city into action. Despite the city's acceptance of the Advisory Committee Report and Mayor Donald Summerville's campaign to root out "pockets of blight" such as Alexandra Park, the city and other levels of government continued to drag their feet on the project. By April of 1963, rumours began circulating in the neighbourhood that the city was going to delay the project indefinitely or terminate it all together. Charlyn Howze, who had just recently started working at St. Christopher House as a community worker, received this news from sources at the Social Planning Council, which had been lobbying City Council to commence the renewal of the neighbourhood. In May 1963, a small group of thirteen area residents, led by Mary

¹⁸⁰R. Haggart, "Now Then, Just What is A Slum?" *Toronto Star*, July 4, 1963, 7.

Semcychen and Olive Herchak, met informally to decide what action to take. Both were long standing residents of the area, who were concerned about the future of the area if redevelopment did not go ahead, and of the effects nearly a decade of indecision and neglect by city officials were having on the neighbourhood. They decided to hold an open meeting to inform the neighbourhood of the city's plans and to gather support for a deputation to march on the Board of Control asking for action.¹⁸¹

On June 17, over three-hundred angry area residents packed into the auditorium at Ryerson Public School to denounce the living conditions in the neighbourhood and to attack the city's procrastination.¹⁸² Two days later, one-hundred area residents marched on City Hall to repeat their demands. Area residents, claimed the leaders of the delegation, "lived in a constant state of uncertainty and instability."

For years a question mark has hung over our area. We have no idea what the future holds. Our district has been called a slum over and over again. All of us are left with a feeling of helplessness. ... We ask that you give us a decision.¹⁸³

Area residents also received support from the Social Planning Council and the Association of Women Electors, who were anxious that renewal proceed in Alexandra Park. Both groups agreed with the residents that the prolonged discussions and studies had already contributed to the decline of the area, and further delays would no doubt accelerate the decline as well as

¹⁸¹Most members of the Alexandra Park Residents' Association were women. See Albert Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 133-34.

¹⁸²CTA, City of Toronto Development Department (CTDD), RG 33, Box 1, File 1, Newspaper Clippings "Attacks Alexandra Stall He Wants City Action," *Toronto Star*, June 18, 1963, "Will Storm City Hall over Homes," *Toronto Telegram*, June 18, 1963.

¹⁸³CTA, CTDD, RG 33, Box 1, File 1, Newspaper Clipping, *Toronto Star*, June 20, 1963.

the demoralization and apathy which reigned over the neighbourhood.¹⁸⁴ At this point few residents, including those on the residents' committee, were as committed to the redevelopment of the area as their supporters. The attitude of area residents was simply that the city should make a decision either way so they could get on with their lives.¹⁸⁵

Over the next year and a half, APRA worked constantly to pressure the city to commence the project. The Association saw its role as a "watchdog" for the rest of the area, passing on information from various city departments, and, in particular, voicing the concerns of neighbourhood residents over the repeated delays to the project. Support for redevelopment by area residents was by no means overwhelming. While many residents did not welcome the clearance of their neighbourhood, most were resigned to it. They agreed that housing conditions in the area had declined substantially over the last decade and that there were substantial "slum pockets" that needed rooting out. Home owners and tenants, though for different reasons, were furious that absentee landlords had not maintained their properties, and wanted them expropriated and cleared as soon as possible. And though many residents disliked references to themselves as slum dwellers, they were pretty sure that Alexandra Park was a slum. Surprisingly, when opposition to the project arose in the newspapers in 1963, most notably from Ron Haggart of the *Toronto Star*, who questioned the designation of Alexandra Park as a slum, the Residents' Committee was offended by Haggart's remarks and invited him to tour the area. By March of 1964 the Residents'

¹⁸⁴CTA, CTBC, RG 2 Board of Control Correspondence, 1963, Box 444, Minute # 1429, June 19, 1963, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "A Brief to the Council of the City of Toronto on the Alexandra Park Area," 4.

¹⁸⁵CTA, SCH, SC 484, Box 11, File 14, C. Howze, "History of Community Development in Alexandra Park Through the Work of St. Christopher House," 3; see also G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 67-68.

Association was furious over further delays to the project. Residents began to talk about a demonstration and a sit-down strike at City Hall to force the city to take action.¹⁸⁶

Though opposition to the project had always been present, it did not crystallize until 1965 when the city and area residents entered expropriation proceedings. Area residents, especially home owners who dominated the Residents' Association, had always been concerned about expropriation procedures. Would the city pay them enough for their houses? Where would they move? These fears bubbled under the surface during the entire planning stage, until July 1965 when the city began making formal offers to area residents. Residents banded together at a meeting in early July 1965 to denounce the city's expropriation procedures, which one Jewish resident likened to his experience with the Nazis. Area residents were furious at the low bids the city was offering for their homes. It was not that area residents had an over-inflated opinion of their homes. Many recognized that their homes were in poor condition and needed to be razed. But in many cases what the city offered was not only below the price paid for the homes, but did not compensate home owners for the thousands of dollars they had invested to make them habitable. They also recognized that the prices offered by the city were often nowhere close to what it would cost them to find a similar house elsewhere in the city.¹⁸⁷

This situation was compounded by the fact that many immigrants had just recently bought their homes and had little or even negative equity in their homes.¹⁸⁸ As Albert Rose

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ "Alexandra Park Expropriation: City doing what Nazis did bewildered immigrants say," *Toronto Star*, July 8, 1965, 27.

¹⁸⁸ CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, file 8, MTPB, "Report on Metro Participation in the Proposed
(continued...)

later explained:

As you move further and further into areas where you were dealing with large proportions of homeowners, particularly newcomers, you were dealing with people who had very little stake in the total financial situation of their homes. We knew of many cases in Alexandra Park where a guy might have paid \$12,000 – and he had \$1,000 in it, that was all. He had three mortgages. The City Property Department, if they carried out an expropriation, would have to recommend, on the basis of the condition of the property, what he might justifiably expect: we'll say \$6,800, plus 10% for compulsory taking. With figures like that, where does this lead this guy? Sunk! Absolutely sunk! And this happened in a lot of cases.¹⁸⁹

According to one survey of area home owners, the average price paid by the city for homes was less than \$13,000 while the average repurchase price for a new home was almost \$20,000. This discrepancy was not surprising, given the renewed intensity of a housing shortage in Metropolitan Toronto in 1965 and 1966; the shortage itself was due largely to private and public renewal projects like Alexandra Park, which drastically reduced the stock of low-income housing. As a result, average resale prices for houses in the city increased dramatically from \$18,883 in 1965 to \$24,078 in 1967, the period in which Alexandra Park residents negotiated expropriation settlements with the city. In many cases, the compensation home owners received from the city was only half what it cost them to relocate. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of home owners had completed their mortgage payments when the city expropriated their houses; nearly all had to reassume mortgages upon relocation. Nor were area residents adequately compensated for other incidental costs of relocating, such as new furniture, draperies, and lost work time. In addition, area residents were given little help in

(...continued)

Redevelopment of the Moss Park and Alexandra Park Areas, 1958," 25 - 31.

¹⁸⁹Cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 67.

finding new homes, despite promises made by the relocation office and the Toronto Real Estate Board. Only the strong commitment to home ownership led the overwhelming majority to remain as home owners after expropriation. Nonetheless, the increase in shelter costs for expropriated home owners was a very real concern, given that the majority of them were immigrant workers employed in low-skilled, low-paying jobs. According to one former Alexandra Park home owner:

If I had been able to stay (in Alexandra Park) I'd have paid off my house and now I would be saving money. Now I'm unemployed, in debt, and helped out by my brother. With the money the city gave me I was not able to buy a good house.¹⁹⁰

He was not alone, as many families lived close to the edge of bankruptcy upon relocation, such that the loss of employment or a prolonged period of illness would have meant the loss of their house. It is little wonder that the foremost worry of families after relocation was monetary.

Yet despite the anger of residents that reached a boiling point by 1965, much of it simmered under the surface, and did not result in the kind of collective opposition that residents in Trefann Court, Don Vale, and later some of the same residents would mount in Kensington. Some laid the blame for the lack of opposition to the project at the feet of St. Christopher House and its social workers. According to later opponents of urban renewal in Don Vale and Trefann Court, social workers hired by settlement houses were dupes of the city hired to placate the fears of residents rather than act on their behalf.¹⁹¹ Certainly it looked

¹⁹⁰SPCMT, *Alexandra Park Relocation: After Relocation, Part I* (Toronto: The Council, April 1970), 45.

¹⁹¹J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People: Life in a Downtown Neighbourhood* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, Ltd., 1971), 99.

this way on the surface in Alexandra Park. As John Richard Dorrell argues, the lack of organized opposition to the city's plans for Alexandra Park was due to "competent persuasion and assistance from St. Christopher House and the Site Office manager hired by the City."¹⁹² However, Howze and other social workers at St. Christopher House gave the residents' association a great deal of autonomy in setting its own agenda. Most residents were tired of the wait and wanted the city to simply make up its mind, even though they may have been opposed to the project.¹⁹³ In addition, much of APRA's work existed "behind the scenes," through constant contact with local councillors and their provincial and federal elected representatives. This allowed many in the organization to plan ahead for their own future, if not necessarily for the other residents in the neighbourhood, whose interests they were supposed to represent. As Albert Rose later reported, "most people involved in [the residents' association] were involved because of the issue of expropriation ... few were interested in what happened to the neighbourhood as a whole."¹⁹⁴

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the expropriation proceedings left many Alexandra Park residents, both home owners and renters (since many tenants rented from friends and relatives) bitter. Most interviewed after the relocation process excoriated the city for the arbitrariness of its decisions, both in choosing their homes for demolition and in arriving at a compensation figures during the expropriation proceedings. Most interviewed claimed that

¹⁹²John Richard Dorrell, "Alexandra Park: A Study in Residential Urban Renewal," 57.

¹⁹³G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 68.

¹⁹⁴A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 26, 133. The letters from the residents association to their elected officials exist in the Allan Grossman Papers housed at the York University Archives and Special Collections (Fonds 0317). However, researchers will have to wait until 2010 to gain access to the collection due to Mr. Grossman's concerns to protect politicians and public figures from adverse publicity. Robbie Grossman to Kent Haworth (York University Archivist and Head of Special Collections), April 8, 1998, attached to letter from Kent Haworth to the author, April 9, 1998.

the city should have offered them a “just price” or a “fair price” for their homes, while others expressed the demand of a “home for a home,” a demand which became the rallying cry of owners after the expropriation experience in Don Mount (see next chapter). However, at the time most, Alexandra Park home owners felt powerless to change the situation. Since most were immigrants, many of them elderly, language difficulties and other handicaps left them isolated from the political life of the larger community. Few looked to the residents’ association for help during expropriation proceedings. Some hired lawyers to help them negotiate, but few found either tactic helpful. Most felt powerless to “fight city hall.”¹⁹⁵

As in Moss Park, planners continued to justify urban renewal on the basis that residents would filter-up to better housing. However, just as in Moss Park, expropriated owners were most directly disadvantaged by redevelopment. Initially, Alexandra Park residents were promised help from the Toronto Real Estate Board in finding new homes; however, many real estate agents refused to offer their listings to them.¹⁹⁶ In most cases new homes were better than what they had in Alexandra Park, but not substantially so. Some home owners took advantage of the opportunity to move to the suburbs, but the majority moved to existing older homes in the inner-city. Many of these homes were in areas slated for redevelopment, and as such often required major repairs. Indeed, nearly 70 percent of a sample of former Alexandra Park home owners told the Social Planning Council that their new homes required “major repairs” or “major changes.” Most needed roof, floor and plastering repairs, while others needed new plumbing, bathrooms, and furnaces, repairs which

¹⁹⁵SPCMT, *Alexandra Park Relocation: After Relocation, Part I*, 28-33.

¹⁹⁶R. J. Dorrell, “Alexandra Park: A Case Study in Residential Urban Renewal,” 31, 44.

cost as much as \$6,000.¹⁹⁷ And though many had better facilities and more room in their new houses, relocation did not substantially alter the rate of overcrowding in home owning families. Indeed, nearly 40 percent of families continued to share their houses with lodgers and other families, especially households who had formerly rented in Alexandra Park, in order to meet their shelter costs.¹⁹⁸

Also similar to the experience in Moss Park, most tenants in Alexandra Park moved less than a mile from their previous residence. Many of them moved in to the Kensington Market area, which had been slated for renewal during the planning stages for Alexandra Park. Backed into a corner, many former Alexandra Park residents decided to fight the city more vigorously when planners invaded Kensington in the late 1960s. Unlike home owners, many Alexandra Park tenants did not experience a change in the quality of their housing environments. The only exceptions to this were the tenants who moved into public housing.

Even so, though many expressed satisfaction with the physical nature of their new accommodation, many claimed that "it isn't home", while others decried the nature of "institutional living."¹⁹⁹ Former Alexandra Park tenants who found new rental accommodation on the private market, in some cases, fared much worse after relocation. Most paid more for their new accommodation, which was true even of those living in public housing. Some, however, not only paid more, but did so for poor dwellings as unfit as the ones they left behind in Alexandra Park.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

For some tenants, relocation sped up the process of home buying that was already latent in immigrant enclaves such as Alexandra Park. In many cases, tenants who used the opportunity that relocation presented to buy their own dwellings had rented the accommodations in Alexandra Park from relatives. This was especially true of those in the Portuguese community. Indeed, the move from tenants to home owners was almost singularly an immigrant phenomenon. Canadian-born families were more likely to remain as tenants, many of whom moved into the Alexandra Park public housing project. Nonetheless, the move to home ownership did not necessarily improve the quality of their accommodation. Since renters did not have the same financial resources to fall back on as did home owners, most paid about \$3,000 less for their homes and put down similarly lower down payments. In this sense, the prices paid reflected the quality of the housing purchased. Most needed major repairs, while some were "unfit to live in." As one woman recounted:

The cost of repairs is keeping this family back. This is a very poor, dilapidated house, in a very depressed area. Mrs. F. said she saw it in the evening, with no light, bought it immediately, then went back the next day, and cried. Some of the plumbing and some of the wiring had been removed, there were big holes in the walls, and the floors were in bad repair. She pasted paper over the holes, then painted over that, the place looks as if it is held together with scotch tape.²⁰¹

The high costs of ownership, of which repairs were a significant part, necessitated that these new home owners rent out part of their houses to lodging families and roomers, thus leaving them almost as crowded as had been in Alexandra Park.

For the most part, the new public housing project itself was unimportant to the rehousing needs of the displaced persons and families. This was undoubtedly due to the high

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, 50.

number of immigrants who lived in the area. Home ownership was not only a strong desire among immigrant families, but essential to meeting their obligations to kin through sponsored immigration. Thus, few immigrants were to be found in the newly-built public housing. Incredibly, the city already knew this would be the case as early as 1956 when the area was first designated for renewal. Though many residents of the Spadina planning area qualified for public housing on the basis of their incomes and housing conditions, the city received the fewest applications for public housing from this area. Less than a quarter of area residents expressed interest in the public housing to be built on the site, and much of the interest in public housing was simply to ensure that their families would have a place to live after expropriation and until new accommodation could be found.²⁰²

The renewal of Alexandra Park did not simply result in the destruction of houses, but the destruction of a community. Though most residents would not have understood the community in terms of the formal definitions used by social workers and sociologists, they still believed that they belonged to a distinct community in Alexandra Park. For many residents, especially newly arrived immigrants, the Alexandra Park area was the only part of Canada, if not Toronto, they knew. People missed their friends and extended families, the atmosphere of the area, the “neighbourliness,” the proximity to shopping in Kensington Market and the crowds and excitement that came from living in an inner-city neighbourhood. Many also missed their old homes as poor as they were. Those who most keenly felt the break in neighbourhood relations were those relegated to their homes and their immediate neighbourhood, the aged and immigrant housewives. Though many were satisfied with their

²⁰²J.R. Dorrell, “Alexandra Park: A Case Study in Residential Urban Renewal,” 73.

new physical environment, few were satisfied with the social environment of their new neighbourhood. According to one former resident: "When I went to a beer parlour in Alexandra Park it was like seeing all your friends. To go to a beer parlour around here, it's almost like you need a formal invitation."²⁰³ Many families moved out of the inner-city because they felt it was not the best environment for their children, but many of the children expressed a desire to return to Alexandra Park. Others had difficulty adjusting to their new environments and new schools. Part of this was due to the lack of recreational facilities which was most keenly felt by families who had been relocated to public housing in the suburbs. Many of these families had previously relied on free recreational services offered by institutions such as St. Christopher House and the YMCA. One single mother of four children, living on provincial assistance, who had been relocated to a large four-bedroom public housing unit in the suburbs lamented the lack of services available to her and her family. Where she had once been within walking distance of a great range of shops in Kensington Market, to hospital clinics and free recreational services for her children, she now regretted her move. Shopping in the suburbs was more expensive and getting around more difficult. On top of these difficulties, swimming, which had once been free at the local pool in Alexandra Park, now cost a quarter for each child, and nobody came by to take the children to Sunday school or to other club activities.²⁰⁴

²⁰³M. Lipman, "Relocation and Family Life: A Study of the Social and Psychological Consequences of Urban Renewal," PhD Dissertation, School of Social Work, University of Toronto, 1968, 112.

²⁰⁴SPCMT, *Alexandra Park: After Relocation, Part I*, s4-s5; M. Lipman, "Relocation and Family Life: A Study of the Social and Psychological Consequences of Urban Renewal," 115, 175, 196; M. Lipman, "Relocation and Family Life," *Urban Renewal and Low Income Housing*, 5 (January/February 1969), 6. Sylvia Goldblatt found that these were the most common complaints of suburban public housing residents, especially those who had moved from central city neighbourhoods. See Goldblatt, "Integration or

(continued...)

At the same time, because the project entailed an original and ambitious program of rehabilitation, not everyone in Alexandra Park was forced out of the neighbourhood. Indeed, the rehabilitation phase of the renewal project was an attempt to retain a certain degree of continuity in the area. Nonetheless, residents whose houses were neither expropriated nor forced to move faced similar problems. Supposedly the centrepiece of the project, the rehabilitation phase, especially private rehabilitation, was a complete failure. Considering that the planners envisaged the same population characteristics after urban renewal as before, it was never clear how poor immigrant home owners could afford to substantially improve their housing environment or manage the resulting increase in assessments. Area residents lived in Alexandra Park because the costs of housing fit their budgets.

According to the official plans, 112 houses were deemed worthy of remaining in the neighbourhood after redevelopment. The majority of the houses to be rehabilitated were owner-occupied and were to be privately repaired and rehabilitated through existing NHA and city loan programmes. However, forty-two houses were initially slated for public rehabilitation, which would hopefully serve as an inspiration to private home owners to follow suit. The city also hoped that a program of spot clearance and information to remaining home owners would create confidence in the area, lead to the rehabilitation of the entire neighbourhood. First, the city insisted on repairs to bring houses up to by-law codes and checked every six months. Though these orders were based on ability of owners to pay, the costs of repairs were staggering. On average, houses slated for rehabilitation required \$1,600

²⁰⁴(...continued)

Isolation," *Habitat*, 9 (January/February 1966), 8-16.

in repairs just to meet the city's Housing Standards By-Law.²⁰⁵ Despite the costs, lifting the pall of indecision, which hung over the neighbourhood for a decade, led many home owners to undertake repairs to their properties. Indeed, building inspectors were surprised to see many improvements before the first visit, once owners were certain that their properties would not be expropriated.²⁰⁶

Yet repairs are not the same as rehabilitation, and by 1968 no one in the area had contacted the city, or CMHC, for rehabilitation loans or advice. The reason for the lack of action by area residents was clear - inadequate financial assistance. Even the city dropped its own program of public rehabilitation due to the high costs of bringing houses up to the stringent standards which would permit a fifty-year life expectancy for the dwellings. Indeed, over three years, the number of houses deemed suitable for rehabilitation along these lines dropped from 42 to 19, to 17 and then to 6, when the city finally decided that six houses were too few to be economically feasible, or much of an encouragement to home owners.²⁰⁷

For home owners rehabilitation ran up against the problem of the "poor man in the poor house." Nearly one-fifth of home owners whose properties were slated for rehabilitation earned less than \$200 a month, and most of these were elderly persons who had paid off their mortgage and survived on pensions and income derived from roomers. Many others with outstanding mortgages also could not qualify for NHA home improvement loans since they already exceeded or would exceed gross debt ratios of 27 percent of income allowed by

²⁰⁵Commissioner of Development "Urban Renewal - Rehabilitation - Interim Report on Alexandra Park," in Board of Control Report #39, *City of Toronto Council Minutes*, 1966, Volume 2, Appendix A, 2369.

²⁰⁶J.R. Dorrell, "Alexandra Park: A Case Study in Residential Urban Renewal," 49.

²⁰⁷Bureau of Municipal Research, "Rehabilitation - One More Demonstration Project," *B.M.R. Comment* #126, July 1971, 2 n3; and J.R. Dorrell, "Alexandra Park: A Case Study in Residential Urban Renewal," 47-50.

CMHC.²⁰⁸ As Albert Rose's study of the prospects of rehabilitation in central Toronto revealed to city planners and politicians, home owners in areas like Alexandra Park were highly unlikely to have the assets to cover the average two to four thousand dollar costs of repair and rehabilitation that planners envisaged for urban renewal areas. Home owners in such areas were likely to be middle aged or older, mortgage free, and unwilling to reassume debts to fix their house or to pay higher assessments that would result from rehabilitation. Home owners were more than willing to maintain an annual program of repairs and improvements, but in most cases they could only afford \$250 a year for such work. To keep costs low, many performed the work themselves or laboured alongside contractors. Repairs and improvements were also likely to improve living conditions within the house, such as painting and new bathroom or kitchen fixtures, rather than repairs or improvements to the structural quality of the house.²⁰⁹ According to Rose any realistic programme of rehabilitation had to provide outright grants to home owners, otherwise:

... the conclusion is inescapable that much of the past thinking and many of the assumptions current within the field of urban renewal cannot be supported when one examines carefully the realities of the prospects for rehabilitation of older dwellings in the central city. If it is the intention of the public authorities to dispossess long-term residents as a consequence of the rehabilitation programme, the present assumptions are certain to bring about this result. However, if the intention is to maintain, as far as possible, those families who want to remain in their own homes after such homes have been brought to a desirable standard of repair and improvement, our thinking and our policies must be carefully reconsidered to bring them in line with the realities of the personal, social, and physical characteristics within the neighbourhoods which

²⁰⁸ Commissioner of Development "Urban Renewal - Rehabilitation - Interim Report on Alexandra Park," Board of Control Report #39, *City of Toronto Council Minutes*, 1966, Volume 2, Appendix A, 2370

²⁰⁹ Albert Rose, *Rehabilitation of Housing in Central Toronto* (Toronto: Report Prepared for the City of Toronto Planning Board, 1966), 140-142.

we seek to improve and conserve in the heart of the Metropolitan area.²¹⁰

Changes to federal and city housing policies that would properly address the costs of rehabilitation would take almost another decade to come to fruition. In the meantime, many Alexandra Park residents faced the same uncertainties that plagued them before urban renewal.

In the final analysis, redevelopment had destroyed the old community, but had not replaced it with a new one. Lack of neighbourliness was also a frequent refrain from planners and residents who remained in Alexandra Park after redevelopment. According to Mary Semcyszen, former president of the APRA: "Before it was a friendly place, ... Now they don't know you and you don't know them and you don't care if you ever do know them. ... You feel as if you just moved in yourself. It'll never be the same."²¹¹ Many complained about the character of the new residents, especially the large Canadian-born and African-Canadian families that had come to predominate in the public housing project. Indeed, as early as 1967 area residents and social workers worried that the lack of community spirit would hasten the return of the slum. As William Newman, another former president of APRA and recent tenant in Alexandra Park, worried aloud: "If something isn't done, it's just going to be another slum." "I'll guarantee," he continued, "that in 15 years it'll be a worse slum than it ever was before."²¹² Unfortunately he was right. Like Regent Park, Alexandra Park would become a public housing "ghetto," plagued by poverty, vandalism, and rampant drug

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ CTA, CTDD, RG 33, Box 1, File 1, Newspaper Clipping, Cameron Smith, "Alexandra Park Project: All Could Be Lost Without Old Community Spirit," *Globe and Mail*, n.d.

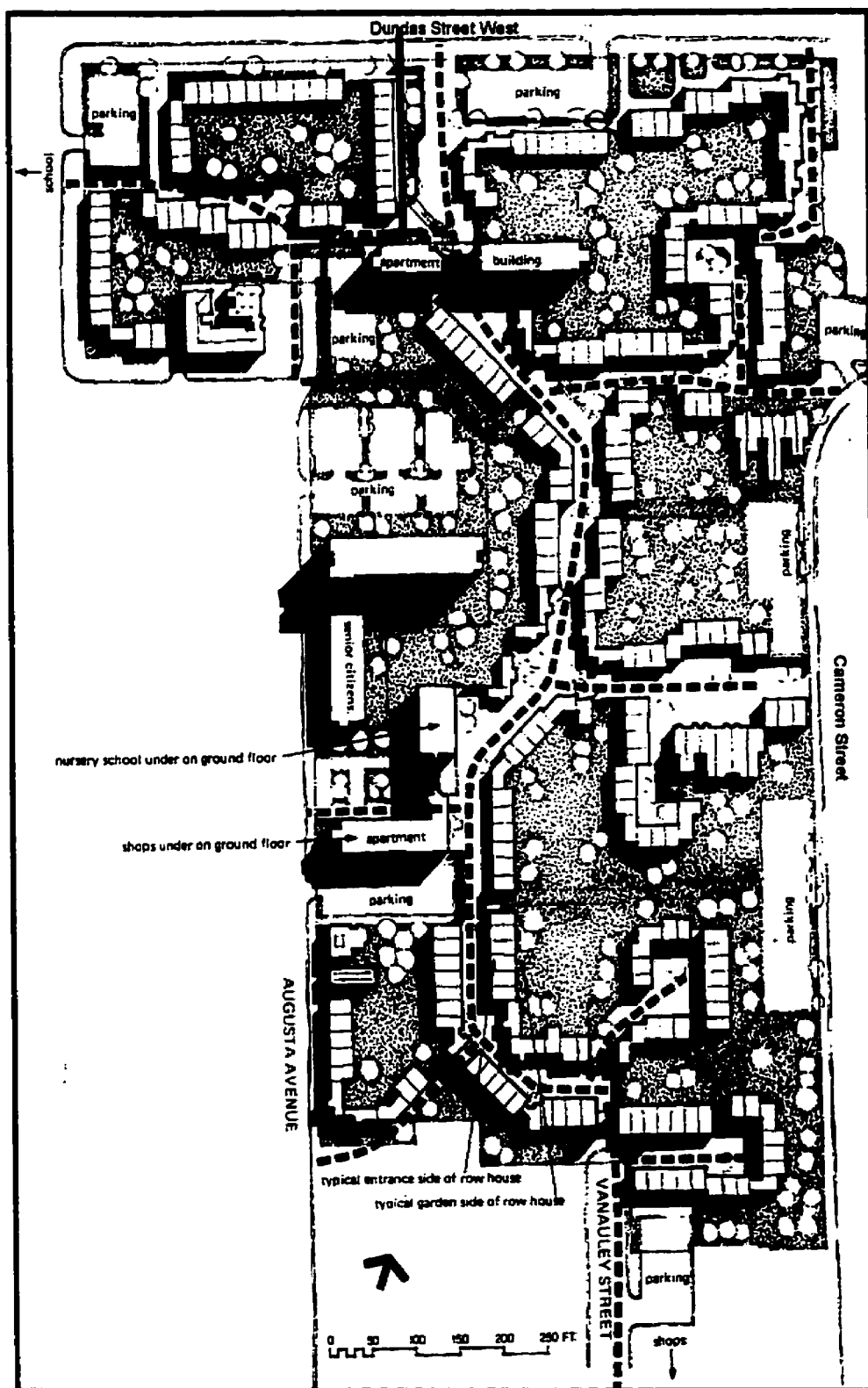
²¹² *Ibid.*

peddling, much of the latter due, ironically, to the award winning design of the public housing project. (See Figure 4.10)

Conclusion:

For all the talk about the rationalization of the city's built landscape, initial attempts at urban renewal were incoherent, if not contradictory. At the macro level planners looked to urban renewal, both public and private, as a means to increase and improve the city's housing stock. But in looking at the city from above, they missed what was happening on the ground, at least until it was too late. In doing so they not only worked against these goals, but ultimately undermined the entire renewal program. Apartment construction in Wood-Wellesley and St. James Town had very little to do with "improving" or for that matter increasing the housing stock for Torontonians who needed it most, working-class Torontonians. Similarly public programs in Moss Park and Alexandra Park knocked down one slum only to create many more. One wonders why it took Toronto planners nearly a century to come to the same conclusion as Engels' study of Baron Von Haussman's "renewal" of Paris: that urban renewal and all of its other euphemisms simply shunted the poor from slum to slum. Similarly, planners expressed the desire in both cases to "retain the characteristics of the area," even while they radically changed the environment that supported and nourished those particular "characteristics of the area." How a public housing project could serve the needs of nascent immigrant communities, never seemed to cross the minds of planners, politicians, and other advocates of urban renewal and social housing. Finally, for all the talk about the flexibility of "urban renewal," the renewal of Moss Park and Alexandra Park looked a lot like the "same old bulldozer" that symbolized slum clearance.

Figure 4.10



Source: Jack Klein, "Alexandra Park: Urban Renewal," *Canadian Architect*, Vol. 14, No. 9, (September 1969), 58.

Alexandra Park Public Housing

Perhaps the task of comprehensive planning was simply too complex for planners to grasp. In a city as complex and as changing as Toronto, comprehensive planning, as envisaged by the *Urban Renewal Study*, required a level of information and analytical complexity that was beyond the grasp of planners no matter how noble their intentions.²¹³ But given how Alexandra Park was “studied to death” between the time of its designation for urban renewal in 1956 and its completion in 1969, even this may not be the answer. Perhaps it was not the amount of information that planners collected that led them astray, but the kind of information that they collected, or failed to collect, that ultimately subverted their goals. Norman Richardson, a consultant to the Planning Board, admitted that planners knew very little about the social aspects of renewal, that is how the plans affected people. As he stated:

[Planners made] little or no effort ... to explore the particular cultural needs of people to be rehoused, especially of ethnic minorities (it is not necessary to be a romantic or a “Jacobian” to realise that a slum is much more adaptable to special needs and institutions than a housing project.); to investigate the actual social effects of rehousing through ‘before and after’ studies; or to examine objectively the social pros and cons of concentrated vs. dispersed public housing.²¹⁴

In the short term, the ignorance of planners and politicians did not get in the way of achieving what they wanted in Moss Park and Alexandra Park, unfortunately residents did not have the same luxury of being able to “muddle through” in their fight to stop the bulldozers.

²¹³See Charles E. Lindblom, “The Science of ‘Muddling Through’” in S. Campbell & S. Fainstein, eds., *Readings in Planning Theory*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 288-304.

²¹⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 11, File 5, Memo from N. H. Richardson, May 13, 1965.

Chapter 5

The March of the Towers: Toronto's Housing Crisis of 1960s & the Contradictions of Urban Renewal

There is a housing crisis in Toronto ... [and] [a]t this moment we are in a war, and we are losing. We are in a battle to save our community from stagnation and disintegration. We are in a last-ditched fight to prevent it from rotting from the core outwards. There is not one in the community exempt from the effects of this war. While there may be friendly powers (senior levels of government) willing to be our allies, in the last analysis we must wage this war literally on the home front.

There is only one answer: Mobilize!

As in war time, we must put aside sectional differences, petty gains, personal prides, monetary spitefulness, and concentrate all our efforts upon the single thought of victory against the foe that is slowly but surely strangling our community... All it takes is the guts to declare this kind of war.¹

With this rousing speech to the troops, Toronto alderman Horace Brown once again sounded the battle cry against Toronto's inner-city slums. For the next five years, Toronto's housing crisis and battle against the bane of the slums became front page news in the city. And for good reason: the city had not witnessed such a housing crisis since the end of the Second World War. In fact, observers claimed that the crisis of the mid-sixties was worse, since the postwar shortage was due to a lack of materials and a slow down because of war priorities "where as today [1965] production is at its fullest but the housing product is beyond the ability of the low and middle income family to finance."²

But in many ways the housing crisis of the mid-to-late 1960s was, indeed, due to war conditions, although very different war conditions than those of the 1940s. It was in many respects the result of Toronto's twenty-year war on the inner-city and its slums. The weapon

¹City of Toronto Archives (CTA), William Dennison Collection (WDC), SC 302, Box 8, file 19, Horace Brown, "The Housing Crisis: A Point of View. Speech Delivered to the Committee on Welfare Housing, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, [1967], 1.

²CTA, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPCMT), SC 40, Box 128, file 2, Robert Bradley to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto n.d. [1965?].

of “urban renewal,” both public and private was a double-edge sword, and now Torontonians were being hoisted upon their own petard. Tragically, many Torontonians, as Brown’s rallying cry to the troops reveals, did not recognize the fundamental contradictions of urban renewal, and decided that one more battle would end the war for good. This last battle, however, was the final one for urban renewal, and it was a short-lived battle at that. Almost as soon as Torontonians set out to wage war against the slums, grassroots action by neighbourhood resident and ratepayer groups forced a reconsideration of Toronto’s so-called slums and, more importantly, the urban renewal programs that had long been regarded as the ultimate weapon against them.

Before examining urban renewal’s last stand in Toronto in the late 1960s, however, it is necessary to understand the context within which the cries for massive urban renewal became so urgent. First, the following chapter outlines the dimensions of the housing crisis of the 1960s to reveal that the city’s and the federal government’s postwar housing program had come full-circle. Housing shortages, especially for poor Torontonians, by 1965 became almost as critical as those faced by Torontonians at the end of the Second World War. Unlike the immediate postwar years, the desperate housing shortage of the late-sixties occurred during one of the city’s most impressive building booms in its history. Demographic trends, such as continued immigration and the coming of age of the children of the baby boom, placed great strains on the ability of the city’s existing housing stock to accommodate everyone. At the same time, the apartment building boom of the mid-sixties was reducing the stock of low-cost housing available to Torontonians of all classes, but most importantly the poor and working-class of the inner-city. The effects of these developments brought the

housing plight of inner-city Torontonians to the forefront of civic consciousness, particularly through two separate, but interrelated, events - the "blockbusting" of St. James Town and alderman June Marks' charges that the city was complicit in such techniques, turning the central city into one large slum.

By 1965, Toronto's postwar housing program had come full-circle. Once again Torontonians, especially its low-income citizens, faced critical housing shortages, rising rents and house prices. Just as during and immediately following the war, evictions forced all levels of government to deal with the growing homelessness crisis, and the city once again turned to emergency shelters to deal with the situation. City officials were warning Canadians, especially the growing number of Maritimers heading to Toronto, to stay at home. Moreover, the consequences of twenty years of hesitant post-war urban renewal activity, of changing provincial and federal legislation, combined to create an air of uncertainty over many parts of the central city. As a result, housing standards, as they had during the depression and war, declined throughout many central city neighbourhoods, as home owners and absentee landlords waited for their neighbourhoods to be "redeveloped." The irony of the entire situation was that Toronto's postwar housing program had not been "lax, negligent, callous or without heart in the exercise of its public and private responsibilities in the field of housing, and in particular the provision of public housing for low income families." Indeed, as the Interim Report of the Consultative Committee on Housing Policies for the City of Toronto noted, not a year had gone by since the release of the Bruce Report in 1934 when issues of low-income housing, slum clearance and urban renewal had not been

at the top of the agenda of public and private bodies in the city.³ By 1965 public housing in the City of Toronto alone accounted for nearly one-quarter of all the public housing units in the country. Such accomplishments paled in comparison to the escalating need for accommodation. Added to these problems was the shifting nature of the housing market after 1958, when apartment construction for singles, couples, and small, self-sufficient families displaced thousands of single-family dwellings in the city, which traditionally housed low-income and working-class Torontonians.

Concern, anger, and outrage over housing conditions in the inner-city had been growing since the early 1960s due to the slowdown in public housing construction and a general stagnation in redevelopment activity in the city during the economic recession of the early years of the decade. The first real stirring of opposition occurred in 1963 when a group of clergymen of various denominations appeared before the City Council to protest slum conditions in their central city parishes.

We clergy of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Churches of the central area of Toronto ... have a first hand picture of how people are living in the central section of the city ... the vast stretch which lies south of Bloor Street, from Dufferin on the west running east to the Don River and a mile beyond it. Within this area there are some sections which can be accurately described only by that dreadful word "slum." In other parts of it there are small slum corners. ... many of the residential streets in the Central Area have deteriorated and some are in extremely bad condition. Persons who want to live in the centre of the city are thus limited in their choice of accommodation. Most of them cannot afford to rent new luxury apartments and they are compelled to find what they can by renting rooms or flats in houses which were originally designed to house one family. ... We wish to make it clear that we are not here engaged in preaching one more sermon against greedy landlords. We are not so naive as to imagine that the housing crisis has been caused by a few individuals. Such persons do (unfortunately)

³Albert Rose, *et. al.*, *Interim Report of the Consultative Committee on Housing Policies for the City of Toronto*, October, 15, 1965.

exist, but they always have and always will. The problem has arisen because there has been little or no new housing built in the central Area and rental costs have increased steadily. ... Our concern for a housing programme did not arise because we set out to discover case histories or instances of great need. Rather, we found, in the course of our every day work, which takes us into the homes of our people, that we were disturbed and angered by what we saw. Many of them live in ... quarters which are badly heated, ... dirty, ... drafty, insufficient sanitary facilities, and a complete lack of play space for children. These factors all combine to produce a devastating effect on family life. We believe it is our duty and our right to speak about the effect of bad housing on personal and family life. We find it useless to try to 'cheer up' a family whose children are constantly ill because they are cold or undernourished.⁴

They insisted that low income families should not have to vacate the central city to make way for commercial and luxury residential redevelopment.

Though most active on the housing front in the early 1960s, inner city ministers were not the only ones concerned with the deteriorating housing conditions of the poor. Soon after denouncing the lack of movement in slum clearance and public housing the clergy members went on to form the Ecumenical Committee on Housing. The Committee became a "peoples" Redevelopment Advisory Committee (see below), by attracting representatives from the Labour Council, the Association of Women Electors, and members of the social work community in the city. The committee saw its role as bringing to the public's concern not only the physical aspects of the growing housing crisis in the central city, but more importantly the "human blight which develops in unsuitable housing and living environments."⁵ Though the Committee folded within a year, it had lasting effects on the social role of many inner-city churches which formed community organization projects to

⁴CTA, Department of Welfare and Community Services Fonds (DPW), RG 3, Series 100, file 12, Diocesan Council for Social Service, "Third Draft of a Brief on Housing," May 27, 1963, 1,3,4.

⁵CTA, DPW, RG 3, Series 100, File 14, J. E. Page, "Report to the Sub-Committee of the Ecumenical Committee on Housing," June 26, 1964, 2; "The Clergy and Slums," *Canadian Tribune*, June 17, 1963, 5.

help inner-city Torontonians deal with their poor housing situations.⁶

By 1965, however, Toronto's low-income housing shortage had reached a crisis point not seen since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, the similarities between the postwar housing crisis and that of the late 1960s were remarkable. As in the immediate postwar period, Metro Toronto's economic boom continued to attract workers from across Canada, especially the Maritimes, and from overseas. The coming of age of the early baby-boom generation led to a thirty percent increase in family formation over the last half of the 1960s. As a result, Toronto's population growth was nearly double that of the province. By early 1965, the city's vacancy rate dropped to less than one percent. In addition, suburban housing starts slowed by nearly one quarter, after reaching record levels in 1964, leading to a sharp rise in housing prices. Housing prices for new suburban homes in Metropolitan Toronto doubled between 1955 and 1965, from \$14,000 to nearly \$28,000. The Toronto Real Estate Board estimated that families needed an annual income of at least \$8,000, and more likely, \$9,000 dollars to qualify for an NHA backed mortgage. Fully eighty percent of Torontonians earned less than \$8,000 in 1967. In addition, mortgage rates jumped by more than 3 percentage points from 7.5 percent to 10.5 percent between 1965 and 1970. Indeed, by 1970, the income needed to qualify for an NHA mortgage on a new house was so high that

⁶Churches such as St. Simon's in the St. James Town area were critical in organizing area tenants to fight for a relocation program when the developers were ready to evict them. Central Neighbourhood House, and Woodgreen Community Centre also became involved in organizing residents in the urban renewal areas of Don Vale, Trefann Court, and Don Mount Village. Also the United Church was responsible for funding the Toronto Community Union Project (T-CUP) which helped organize Trefann Court residents in their fight against expropriation and urban renewal.

only 2.1 percent of all Torontonians could afford one.⁷ Though homes in the central city were as much as 35 percent cheaper than what could be purchased in the suburbs, housing prices in the central city began to climb rapidly after 1963, because of the reduction of single-family dwellings due to apartment redevelopment and public urban renewal projects. The difference in price and the attraction of living in the central city attracted many middle-class Torontonians to remain in the central city to “gentrify” once slum-designated areas, thus raising the prices of central city homes.⁸ By the late 1960s, rising suburban house prices soon began to set the resale prices of central city houses, reversing a 20-year postwar trend.⁹

As the expropriation proceedings in urban renewal areas soon revealed, central houses valued at less than \$12,000 in 1963 could not be had for \$16,000 less than five years later.

Government officials concluded that families earning less than \$8,000 would have to find their housing in the rental market, mostly in the concrete apartment towers mushrooming across the city. This was perhaps the cruelest irony of Toronto’s housing crisis of the mid-to-late 1960s: the apartment boom was perhaps the greatest single cause behind the crisis, despite the fact it was responsible for the greatest addition of dwellings in the entire postwar period.

Prior to the 1960s, apartments in the inner-city were few and far between, even though nearly 99 percent of all dwelling units completed since 1955 in the City were in apartments. Up until the mid-sixties, apartments were most prevalent in the outer suburbs

⁷G. Barker, J. Penney and W. Seccombe, *High-Rise and Superprofits: An Analysis of the Development Industry in Canada* (Kitchener: Dumont Press Graphix, 1973), 25-26.

⁸J. Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 175-76.

⁹J. Sewell, *Houses and Homes: Housing for Canadians* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1994), 99.

of North York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke, where land costs were substantially lower. The Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board's *1961 Apartment Survey* revealed that only 14 percent were within 2 miles of downtown. Even during the great apartment boom of 1965 and 1966, the vast majority of Toronto's 46,000 apartment units were located in nine major clusters following the Yonge Street Subway line.¹⁰

By 1963, the "march of the towers" was on in Toronto.¹¹ In 1961 and 1962, twenty apartment buildings were built each year, accounting for nearly 3,000 new units. Between 1963 and 1966, nearly 3,500 apartment suites came on the market yearly, even though the number of apartment buildings increased by only five to nine buildings per year; the size of the developments was increasing exponentially. In 1966 alone, forty new apartment developments were constructed, accounting for an additional 7,600 units. After 1966, citizen resistance and a shortage of appropriate development sites cut the number of buildings by half of the 1963 levels, although the size of the developments was becoming larger, with an average of more than 200 units per building.¹² This too was revolutionary; before 1961, 60 percent of apartment buildings in Metropolitan Toronto had fewer than fifteen suites and over 75 percent had fewer than thirty. The vast majority were three storeys or less and only one in twenty exceeded seven storeys in height.¹³

Despite the rapidly expanding supply of apartments, neither rents nor vacancy rates

¹⁰J. Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985), 142.

¹¹Patrick McNenly, "Can He Tame the March of the Towers?" *Toronto Star*, 1966.

¹²Numbers compiled by author from City of Toronto, Buildings Department, *Annual Report, 1960-1969* (Toronto: City of Toronto Buildings Department, Various Years).

¹³Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (MTPB), *1961 Apartment Study* (Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1961), 5.

declined over the period. In 1961, vacancy rates averaged six percent and ranged as high as fourteen percent in the city's west end. But by 1966, vacancy rates in the city were less than one percent, despite the fact that nearly 3,000 apartment units came on the market.¹⁴ In addition, the growing shortage of family housing sent rents through the roof. Tenants in Toronto experienced a seventy percent increase in rent between 1963 and 1968, and a fifty percent increase in the 1965-1968 period alone.¹⁵ In 1965, the monthly rent of ninety percent of bachelor suites ranged from \$90 to \$115, one bedrooms \$110-\$160, and two bedrooms from \$130-\$190. However, most of the apartments constructed in the city, and the suburbs, were designed for singles, young couples, or small families with very young children. This was not only a ploy of developers who hoped to squeeze as much profit as they could, but also from municipal governments who wanted high-density apartment developments to keep taxes down since there were fewer school-aged children in such buildings.¹⁶ Given the high cost of land and land assembly, especially in the central city, the economic rationale for luxury apartments was well established.¹⁷

Toronto's great apartment boom fundamentally transformed the social landscape of the city. In 1958, when the number of apartment suites first began to outstrip starts on

¹⁴“Mother Threatens to give up children,” *Toronto Star*, September 30, 1965, 2.

¹⁵Virginia Smith, “Welcome to the Wonderful World of the Ontario People-crate Corporation: Where Misery gets you 30 points,” *Toronto Citizen*, March 29 - April 19, 1974, 9.

¹⁶Frank Jones, “High-rises: Where will they go?” *Toronto Star*, November 30, 1966, 7. See also the report of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto on high rise apartments in North York which revealed that as the number of bedrooms per apartment increased so too did number of children per family to the point where the family size approached the general average for single-family homes. On the other hand nearly 50 percent of all the apartment units in North York were occupied by couples without children, nearly twice the portion of all North York families. CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 127, file 5, “High Rise Apartments in North York - Draft Report,” May 3, 1965.

¹⁷Larry S. Bourne, *Private Redevelopment of the Central City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Studies in Geography #112, 1967), 33.

single-family houses, apartments represented less than 20 percent of the city's housing stock. By 1961, the figure had surpassed 20 percent and, as late as 1964, apartments only composed a quarter of Toronto's housing stock.¹⁸ Within two years the number was up to 46 percent and by 1970 apartment buildings accounted for nearly half of the city's housing stock. Indeed, of the 48,000 dwellings constructed in the city during the 1960s, only 4,500 were single-family homes. Toronto was in the process of changing from "a city of homes" to a city of "cliff dwelling" tenants.¹⁹

The implications of such a rapid transformation were not lost on many social welfare groups. As a Social Planning Council Report on the "Social Implications of High-Density Living" lamented:

Over the years Toronto has been described as a "city of homes." This description evokes a picture of tree-lined streets, of single detached houses with adjoining pieces of ground, small or large, on the front, side and back. In it are families whose activities are centred around the house, small gardens being tended and friendly neighbourhoods chatting over the back fence.

The Council was worried that the trend towards apartment living would severely reduce the housing choices available to Torontonians. Whereas apartments tended to serve small families either "just starting out" or "declining families," the Council was worried that the rapidly expanding supply of apartments would soon serve as "the only form of housing for ... families from newly-weds through child rearing and the grandparent phases." According to the Report, high-density apartments did not receive favourable reviews by social scientists. Apartment living retarded the emotional growth of children who became estranged from their

¹⁸CTA, City of Toronto Planning Board (CTPB), RG 32, B3, Box 21 File 7, Ref. #02.02.01, L.O. Gertler to S. Hazama, December 19, 1962; and RG 32 B3, Box 21, File 8, Ref #02.02.01, R.W. McCabe to M.W. Sparling, March 29, 1966.

¹⁹Jon Caulfield, *Tiny Perfect Mayor* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1974), 52.

parents, subverted the father's masculinity in "subtle and emotional ways," and added to the worries of mothers who could not control their children's play space.²⁰

Indeed, it was not simply the rapid construction of apartments that worried Torontonians. Rather it was the fact that single-family homes were being demolished to make way for luxury apartments built for "swinging singles" and young couples. Between 1954 and 1964 nearly 8,000 single-family homes were demolished in the City of Toronto to make way for apartment and office construction. In 1965 alone, over 1,250 single-family houses were demolished, while only 136 were constructed in the same time period. Moreover, this phenomenon was no longer restricted to the city. For the first time in its history more single-family houses were being demolished than constructed in Metropolitan Toronto.²¹ Indeed, despite the fact that nearly 31,000 new dwelling units came onto the market since 1954, nearly 97 percent of them were apartments built for small households.²²

As Robert Bradley, the Director of the Housing Authority of Toronto, testified before the Forsyth enquiry:

The new apartment boom is responsible for the housing shortage now facing the city. ... It is flushing out the people who live in older housing. They can't afford the rents and many have a surfeit of children that make them ineligible for many of the new buildings.²³

Those particularly hard hit were large families on welfare, whom Bradley claimed he had to move like "checkers" across the city, trying to keep one step ahead of the wreckers. The

²⁰Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Housing Committee, "A Preliminary Study of the Social Implications of High Density Living," April 4, 1965, 1, 6, 12-14.

²¹David Thompson, "'Who Can Afford a Home? - Boom,'" *Toronto Star*, October 1, 1966, 12.

²²The average number of persons per city apartment as of 1964 was 1.9. CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 21, File 8, Ref #02.02.01, R.W. McCabe to M.W. Sparling, March 29, 1966.

²³"Public Housing Shortage Said Acute by 1968," *Toronto Star*, September 2, 1965, 33.

downtown apartment boom, he claimed, was responsible for a 22 percent increase in public housing applications.²⁴ Though large, low-income families were hardest hit, and received the most attention, the demolition of single-family housing for apartments also removed single transient and homeless men from inner-city rooming houses. As the Social Planning Council noted, central city missions and churches were receiving greater numbers of requests for housing from "men who in the past found their housing ... using their own funds."²⁵

Also, like the immediate postwar period, social welfare groups reported that the housing crisis was taking a terrible toll on the mental, physical, and emotional health of families. One study reported that of 50 selected families, only 10 were in good health.²⁶ Overcrowding was a chief cause of distress for families cooped up in "black holed garrets." More than seventy percent of families applying for public housing were found to be living in overcrowded conditions.²⁷ In a number of highly publicized incidents social workers reported that mothers were ready to give up their children due to their inability to find adequate and affordable housing. According to Lloyd Richardson, director of the Children's Aid Society, the apartment boom and concomitant housing crisis was responsible for an increase in the number of cases being handled by the organization. Richardson claimed that the society was dealing with as many as 400 children per day.²⁸ In many cases, the families

²⁴"He Plays Checkers With Welfare Families," *Toronto Star*, November 26, 1965, 29.

²⁵CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 197, file 5, Social Planning Council Consultative Group for Homeless and Transient Men Minutes of Meeting, December 29, 1965.

²⁶Michael Best, "Poverty in Toronto," *Toronto Star*, December 10, 1965.

²⁷"He Plays Checkers with Welfare Families," *Toronto Star*, November 26, 1965, 29.

²⁸"Slum Crisis: 3 Shocks;" "CAS can't save families broken by house shortage;" "Mother of 6 Threatens to Give up Her Children;" "Narrow-minded' block public housing;" "Givens: Homes needed lack 'worst since war:'" and "The 'human debris' of city's hi-rise boom," *Toronto Star*, September 30, 1965, 1,2,4, 14,

(continued...)

were large and led by single mothers who had been deserted by their husbands. Social workers were sickened by the conditions in which many of their clients were forced to live. Survey after survey revealed that families were living in quarters that were overcrowded, structurally unsound, and/or too expensive.²⁹ In many cases, the housing difficulties of these families were chronic. Many had become nomads constantly avoiding the wreckers and building inspectors, or continually seeking cheaper and better quarters. Indeed, a study conducted by the Family Service Association, found that 21 of 24 families interviewed by the association had moved at least once a year in each of the last five years.³⁰ Social workers would have agreed with a wartime report which claimed families endured such squalor not because they could not afford better housing, but through "an absence of anything better for them to move into."³¹ Most social workers found the families "responsible, vigorous, and even ingenious in their efforts to solve their housing problems." However, their housing conditions were "so defective or limited that [they] constitute[d] an insuperable obstacle to any permanent solution to their difficulties."³²

The lack of adequate and affordable housing led to the most telling statistic of Toronto's critical housing shortage, the rising backlog of families on the Housing Registry waiting lists for public housing. At the end of 1964, the number of such families amounted

²⁸(...continued)

²⁵; "Mother Ready to Give Up Children, Slum Probe Told;" "Families Driven to Desperation;" *Globe and Mail* September 30, 1965, 4..

²⁹"Study Shows high rent, squalid homes for poor," *Globe and Mail*, June 8, 1966.

³⁰Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto (FSAMT), "The FSA Looks At Housing," *On Record*, June/July 1966.

³¹City of Toronto, *Report of the City Council's Survey on Housing Conditions in Toronto, 1942-43*, 9.

³²FSAMT, "The FSA Looks At Housing," *On Record*, June/July 1966.

to 2,783, including over 7,100 children under the age of eighteen. By the end of 1965, the backlog had increased to 4,770. In fact, the Housing Authority had received more than 850 applications between June and September, a 25 percent increase “unheard of in any American city” and enough to occupy both the Alexandra Park and Napier Place projects when built.³³ By June 1966, the Housing Authority was receiving over 100 applications per day, pushing the number of families on the waiting list to 8,000. In 1968, alone the number of applications for family housing was increasing at a rate of 40 percent.³⁴ By the end of the year, the waiting list had topped 13,340 families, representing 27,400 children. In addition, the number of seniors waiting for publicly-assisted housing topped 6,200, more than double the 1966 figures.³⁵ Yet by the end of 1968, despite a huge increase in public housing completions, there were only 5,000 public housing units in Toronto, all of them occupied and experiencing decreasing turnover rates. Housing Authority director Robert Bradley claimed that the common yardstick used to estimate public housing provision was 8 percent of the total housing stock in the city. Remarkably, 8 percent of the total housing stock in Toronto would amount to 14,800 units.³⁶

As startling as these numbers were, many believed that they under represented the

³³CTA, Housing Authority of Toronto (HAT), RG 28 B3, Box 7, File 4, R.B. Bradley to William Archer, November 25, 1965.

³⁴CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 28, file 12, Housing Authority of Toronto, Minutes, September 12, 1968, 4.

³⁵CTA, HAT, RG 28, B3, Box 7, file 4, R.B. Bradley to Alderman Kenneth Dear, August 9, 1966;CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 128, file 2, R.B. Bradley to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Social Planning Council, n.d.

³⁶Since 1964 the housing authority had been experiencing decreasing turnover rates of tenants who moved out to purchase homes or rent on the private market. In 1964 the turnover rate was 14.6 percent, which dropped to 11.7 percent in 1965, to 8 percent in 1966 and 8.4 percent in 1967. In all Bradley estimated that the drop in turnover rates robbed the waiting list of 300 applications annually. CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 128, file 2, R.B. Bradley to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Social Planning Council, 3.

desperate need for low-income housing in the city. A study conducted on behalf of the Housing Authority of Toronto estimated that the real demand for public housing by low income families was more likely to represent somewhere between fifteen and thirty thousand people based on the backlog on the waiting list and the number of applications which lapsed due to inaction. Further, if one added to this the number of people who “don’t apply because they feel it is futile to do so or who have been previously frustrated in their attempts to secure decent housing at a reasonable price,” the researchers estimated the effective demand for public housing in Metropolitan Toronto to be as high as 50,000 people. Nonetheless, the Report reminded its readers that even though such a number seemed critical, it represented only 2 percent of the population of Metropolitan Toronto, and the problem could be hidden “quite effectively in a metropolitan area approaching 2,000,000.”³⁷

The growing housing crisis finally forced the Ontario government to step into the housing field in 1964, through the formation of the Ontario Housing Corporation. Though the Conservative government, under the leadership of Premier Leslie Frost, had generally opposed public housing, Ontario had not been completely negligent in its duties to provide low-cost housing to Ontarians. Indeed, Ontario alone accounted for 6,100 units of public housing, over 55 percent of the units built under the NHA public housing provisions in Canada in the 1950 to 1964 period.³⁸ Nonetheless, these 6,100 units represented less than 1 percent of the total number of housing units produced in Ontario during the period; this paltry number frustrated local officials and social housing advocates continually pointed to

³⁷CTA, HAT, RG 28, B3 Box 28 file 14, RERCO Canada Limited, “Public Housing and Low Income Families in Toronto,” July 1967, 1-3.

³⁸M. Dennis and S. Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy: Low-income housing in Canada*, (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 146-47.

it as the housing crisis in Metropolitan Toronto grew in the 1960-65 period.³⁹

To meet this growing crisis, the Ontario government started with tentative steps by establishing a rent certificate plan in April 1962. Under the plan, the province entered into agreements with landlords to pay the difference between the market rents and the rents low-income and welfare families could afford to pay (rents geared to income as in public housing projects). The cost of subsidizing rents in the private market averaged about forty dollars per unit, and when administration costs were factored in, the subsidies were about the same as those in Regent Park South (\$48/ unit).⁴⁰ By 1963, the province had entered into agreements on 168 units, the majority of them consisting of two and three bedroom apartments in the outer suburbs of Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke. The plan, however, was a quick fix and only a temporary solution to the housing problems of low-income Torontonians. For one, landlords had the last say in the tenants placed in their units, and they rejected all "multi-problem families," which were often the most needy. In addition, many of the agreements signed with private landlords were due to the soft rental market of the early 1960s. As would be the case when OHC began assembling and building public housing of its own in the late 1960s and early 1970s, most of the units were available in marginal and often poorly-planned locations in the suburbs, where, not surprisingly, there were high vacancy rates. Many landlords, rather than losing revenue, accepted such tenancies on the understanding that when the rental market heated up, they could find new tenants, or hit the province for more money to keep the current tenants. Indeed, a year into the

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁰ CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, File 14, Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, "Report on Rent Certificate Plan," July 4, 1963; and CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 22, file 2, M. Fullerton, MEMO # 02.02.111 re Rent Certificate Plan, April 10, 1963.

programme, this is exactly what began to occur as the rental market once again “stiffened up” and tenants worried about the security of their tenure.⁴¹ The province also had great difficulty in procuring larger units to house the most needy Toronto families, those who required at least three, and often as many as five, bedrooms per unit.

By 1964, the Province was ready to plunge head first into the housing business with the establishment of the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC). The move on the part of the Roberts’ government was a complete about face for the Conservatives’ housing policy. Only a year earlier the province had been moving in the direction, especially with respect to Metropolitan Toronto, of increasing the power of municipalities to initiate and contract with the federal government for public housing. However, a cabinet shuffle and news of impending changes in the National Housing Act, which would see a greater infusion of federal money for urban renewal projects, led Ontario to change direction. In August 1964, the Ontario Housing Corporation came into being to act as the primary builder and administrator of public housing in the province. Thereafter, all federally-sponsored public-housing programmes, including Alexandra Park, and Don Mount Village, would be built and administered by OHC.

The Ontario Housing Corporation quickly developed into a strong, sophisticated, and extremely centralized and aggressive public housing agency.⁴² By January 1967, only 25 months into its operation, OHC had built, bought, or had under construction and design, more

⁴¹CTA, DPW, RG 3 Series 100, File 14, Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, “Report on Rent Certificate Plan.”

⁴²M. Dennis and S. Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy*, 174.

public housing units than had been provided in all of Canada since 1950.⁴³ In Toronto, the results of OHC's bold housing program were no less revolutionary. In November 1964, the province dissolved the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority and on January 1, 1965, OHC assumed the administration of all 2,300 public housing units under its jurisdiction. By 1967, it had also gobbled up the city's public housing units, chiefly Regent Park North; though not without a fight from many within the city's housing authority and from tenants of Regent Park. In addition to taking over all public housing units in Metro, OHC began an aggressive policy of acquiring existing housing accommodation across the city; everything from single-family dwellings to garden court apartments and other forms of multi-family dwellings were accumulated. In large part, this plan of attack on Toronto's housing crisis came from the recommendation of a Metropolitan Toronto Council report of February 1965, which called on the province to assemble 4,500 units of public housing by the end of 1967. The province largely met these targets by acquiring more than 2,700 units, with another 4,450 in various stages of planning or construction by the end of 1966.⁴⁴ As Albert Rose notes, Metro officials were "dubious about the ability of the new corporation to fulfil such a large quota, and it [was] obvious that they had not envisaged the possibility that the response of the corporation would be to purchase existing houses."⁴⁵

OHC's vigorous programme, however, did little to ease the housing problems of low-

⁴³ According to Stanley J. Randall, Minister of Economics and Development, OHC had 10,794 units under its control by the end of January, 1967, and would soon have 22,535. CTA, June Marks Collection (JMC), SC 305, Box 3, file 2, Statement on Ontario Housing by Hon. Stanley J. Randall, Minister of Economics and Development, Government of Ontario, January 1967, 3-4.

⁴⁴ CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 31 file 9, OHC Report on Housing to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto as at December 31, 1966.

⁴⁵ Albert Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies, 1935-1980* (Toronto: Butterworth & Company, 1980), 103.

income Torontonians. It soon became obvious to everyone involved in the housing field that such a programme was again nothing but a stop-gap measure, and perhaps not a very effective one at that. For one, many of the properties acquired by OHC were already partially, if not wholly, occupied, and existing tenants in these projects were given the option of remaining for two years, at which time they would have the option of signing a lease with OHC on a rent-g geared-to-income basis, or moving out. Indeed, of the 2,063 units the corporation assembled in 1965 and 1966, 1,686 were occupied at the time of purchase. In addition, nearly half of these existing tenants remained in the units until the end of the two-year period.⁴⁶ Equally important, since the acquisitions did not add to the existing stock of housing, OHC merely transferred housing accommodation from one group, mostly the lower middle-class to low-income Torontonians, leading Housing Authority director, Robert Bradley to denounce the program as a "game of housing chairs."⁴⁷

Bradley was not the only one dissatisfied with OHC's solution to the city's mounting housing crisis. OHC's activities rekindled the opposition to public housing by the three largest suburban municipalities - North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke - where OHC was most active. Municipalities began refusing approval of subdivision plans incorporating housing accommodation which might be suitable for purchase by OHC, or by slowing down the approval process.⁴⁸ The reaction by the suburban governments was not surprising, given that suburban residents rose up *en masse* to protest Ontario Housing Corporation's purchase

⁴⁶CTA. HAT, RG 28 B3 Box 31 file 9, OHC Report on Housing to the Municipality of Metro Toronto as at December 31, 1966.

⁴⁷Michael Best, "Public housing: The MOST urgent Metro need," *Toronto Star*, December 2, 1966, 7.

⁴⁸A. Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies, 1935-1980*, 103.

programme. Two large acquisitions, in particular, raised the hackles of suburban residents. In July and August 1965, OHC purchased 104 maisonnettes in the Bermuda Court development in Etobicoke and another 524 townhouses and garden court apartments in North York's Flemingdon Park, originally hailed as Canada's most innovative development.⁴⁹ Such developments included "luxuries" such as swimming pools, tennis courts and a golf course, which the new low-income tenants would be permitted to use. Suburban residents were worried that their facilities would be overrun by the massive waves of children; that the introduction of low-income families would eventually "lower the tone" of the neighbourhood; that "chronic" welfare families would "creep in"; that there would be an increase of juvenile delinquency; and that their property values would decline.⁵⁰ In short, they told OHC officials that they "did not want a Cabbagetown [in the suburbs] and that they should "keep them [the slum dwellers] in Toronto in familiar surroundings."⁵¹ Newspaper editorials on the controversy were quick to condemn suburban residents as mean-spirited neer-do-wells, and in the words of OHC managing director P.E.H. Brady, "poor people swim too."⁵² Yet, putting aside suburbanites' prejudicial images of the inner-city poor, their hostility to the so-called invasion is somewhat understandable, given that most of them were

⁴⁹On Flemingdon Park see John Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 98-102.

⁵⁰"He'd Be Jittery as Low-Income Tenant," *Globe and Mail*, July 8, 1965, "Low-rent maisonnettes bought by Ontario anger Etobicoke," *Toronto Star*, July 6, 1965, 4; "Orliffe says Etobicoke's low rental foes snobs," *Toronto Star*, July 7, 1965; "Takeover splits Flemingdon Park," *Toronto Star*, August 23, 1965; Ron Haggart, "A Concise Guide to Etobicoke Language," *Toronto Star*, July 14, 1965, 7; and George E. Mortmore, "Bermuda Court: Then ... And Now," *Ontario Housing*, 12 (Summer 1966), 8-11.

⁵¹"Low-rent maisonnettes bought by Ontario anger Etobicoke," *Toronto Star*, July 6, 1965, 4; and George E. Mortmore, "Bermuda Court: Then and Now," 8-9.

⁵²"Orliffe says Etobicoke's low rental foes snobs," *Toronto Star*, July 7, 1965 45; and National Archives of Canada (NA), Metropolitan Toronto Labour Council, MG 28 I44, Minutes of the Municipal Committee of the Toronto & District Labour Council, August 19, 1965 Reel M2296.

working-class families too “wealthy” for public housing, but too “poor” to afford the suburban single-family home of their dreams. Also, given the none-too-flattering images of the St. James Town slum, which appeared in the papers during the same period, the reaction of suburban residents, though regrettable, was not surprising.

At the same time, social workers, social housing advocates, and even “slum dwellers” themselves, were not entirely convinced that OHC’s programme of setting them up with new houses in the suburbs was a very good solution. For one, social workers doubted whether slum residents would be able to meet the “suburban lifestyle.” Social workers worried that poor inner-city residents might stand out, or in their attempts to “keep up with the Joneses ... they might over extend themselves ... and run into credit problems.”⁵³ Given the virulent opposition of the residents, the “transplant[ation of] a family into a hostile or unfamiliar environment would add to their problems and suffering.”⁵⁴ Indeed, HAT director Robert Bradley claimed that sending dislocated residents from inner-city neighbourhoods, such as St. James Town, would be “cruel,” given the lack of social services available to them in the suburbs and the distances they would have to travel to work.⁵⁵

Yet even had suburban governments and residents been more accepting of public housing, it is unlikely that OHC’s crash housing program could have kept pace with the need for emergency accommodation. Indeed, much like the immediate postwar period, the apartment boom of the 1960s led to a rapid rise in evictions, leaving many Torontonians

⁵³Paul Ringer cited in “He’d Be Jittery as Low-Income Tenant,” *Globe and Mail*, July 8, 1965, 19.

⁵⁴Lena Cooke cited in “Moving Slum families to suburbs opposed,” *Toronto Star*, August 20, 1965, 16.

⁵⁵CTA, WDC, SC 302, Box 8, file 19, Robert Bradley, (Director, Housing Authority of Toronto) to William Dennison, August 26, 1965; and, “Suburbs Wrong for Low Rental,” *Toronto Star*, June 16, 1965, 37. For a general discussion of the problems public housing tenants experienced in suburban projects see Sylvia Goldblatt, “Isolation or Integration,” *Habitat*, 9 (January/February 1966), 8-16.

homeless at almost a moment's notice. Welfare Department officials responsible for emergency accommodation were at a loss as to where to move dislocated families. The department often placed families in downtown hotels, at considerable cost to the department. Additionally, hotels were reluctant to accept these families. Thus, in many cases they had no choice but to put families in substandard accommodation, subsidizing slumlords and blockbusting activities of speculative developers.⁵⁶ In one well-publicized case, the Housing Authority was forced to reopen and repair a condemned house for a desperate family of thirteen.⁵⁷

By the summer of 1966, the city was forced to re-establish an emergency housing program of the kind undertaken in the aftermath of postwar demobilization. City councillors began calling for the building of prefabricated houses on vacant lots, and even the conversion of empty warehouses to provide emergency shelter.⁵⁸ In every case, they were reminded of the previous emergency housing programme. Trying to avoid the pitfalls of emergency housing, the Housing Authority instituted a \$20,000 rent supplement program to maintain welfare families in private accommodation. The subsidies paid to landlords revealed the shortage of affordable accommodation for many families. Whereas the average market rental in Toronto in 1965 was \$127 per month, the average rent that these families could afford to pay according to their income was only \$77.⁵⁹ The Authority also received permission to buy up homes in the Metro area to use as emergency housing. By the end of

⁵⁶“Shortage Forces use of Substandard housing – Supervisor,” *Toronto Star*, September 23, 1965, 8.

⁵⁷“Desperate, put family of 13 in condemned home,” *Toronto Star*, June 11, 1965.

⁵⁸“Put people up in Warehouse, Dennison Urges,” *Toronto Star*, August 18, 1964.

⁵⁹CTA. HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 31 file 9, Agenda, Metropolitan Toronto Welfare and Housing Committee. City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1967, Appendix A, Board of Control Report #, April 12, 1967.

1967, the Housing Authority had acquired 77 houses in addition to supplementing the rents of another 40 families. It also had under its control a number of houses awaiting demolition for city projects.

Nonetheless, as redevelopment quickened in 1966, the Housing Authority was forced to find whatever space it could to house homeless families, including nine “spacious and airy apartments” carved out of what were once jail cells in an abandoned police station on Cowan Avenue.⁶⁰ In addition to the police station, the Housing Authority used Seaton House, a shelter used for homeless and transient men during the winter to house evicted and homeless families. Here families endured similar living conditions to those in the police station and endured by those who suffered through Toronto’s previous emergency shelter programme. Over the summer, a total of nine mother-led families, with 51 children, occupied the basement ‘cells’ of the hostel. Families lived within a 15-foot wire mesh cubicle separated only by blankets and screens. By September, however, Seaton House had to return to its main function of providing beds for homeless men. Forced to find further emergency accommodation the city acquired the Richmond Street Armouries, which it leased from the federal government for \$1, to rehouse these homeless families. Though not jail-like, the conditions at the armouries were not any better. The city converted the officers’ and sergeants messes’ into living quarters for families, again using only 6-foot high partitions to separate them. In addition to the armouries and the police station, the Housing Authority purchased the Red Cross building at 674 Dundas West. However, since the building was already housing war veterans it had to accommodate both vets and families under one roof.

⁶⁰“The Police Station becomes a home.” *Globe and Mail*, September 1, 1966, 4.

In July 1967, there were 141 families, with 103 children, in residence at the two shelters, and by the end of the year over four-hundred families, most of them led by single mothers, had spent on average two weeks housed in the shelters. Nearly half of them were forced into the shelters due to evictions. Shelter officials tried to find the families more permanent housing within a month, otherwise the "family's emotional and moral fibres [began] to break down."⁶¹ Nonetheless, it was not an easy task. The size of the families, combined with their lack of furnishings to establish themselves in a new location, made it difficult. Brother Columban of the Brothers of the Good Sheppard, who helped operate the shelters, organized a drive among city churches to donate furnishings for the families. By the end of 1967, ten tons of merchandise had passed through the shelter.⁶²

Despite the attention by the media and social welfare groups, there was a great deal of apathy concerning the housing plight of Toronto's inner-city poor. As one critical report stated: "The 50,000 [poorly housed Torontonians] are not militant like the United States Negro. ... they have not yet reached the level of desperation where they feel violence is the only answer. They are in most cases decent people and until a series of actions takes place which dramatizes their plight, it is difficult to be optimistic concerning a change in public attitudes."⁶³ Two particular events in 1965 dramatized the housing problems of Toronto's inner-city poor, although it would be difficult to say if public attitudes towards Toronto's slums and slum dwellers changed. More likely, they cemented in their minds the idea that

⁶¹Suzanne Morrison, "What is life like in the old armouries?" *Toronto Star*, November 10, 1966, 37.

⁶²CTA, Reports Collection, Box 144, Housing Authority of Toronto, "Annual Report of the Executive Director, 1967," 12

⁶³CTA, HAT, RG 28, B3 Box 28 file 14, RERCO Canada Limited, "Public Housing and Low Income Families in Toronto," July 1967, 3.

the war against the slum was a just war.

Pirates, Profiteers and Poor Housekeepers:⁶⁴ The Destruction of St. James Town.

Early Friday morning March 5, 1965, Toronto Mayor Philip Givens and three carloads of reporters from the Toronto media descended upon what had become the city's most notorious slum neighbourhood, St. James Town. Since the mid 1950s, speculative apartment development had turned a once stable working-class neighbourhood into an "urban jungle" of distressing proportions. Having come to "learn" about the terrible conditions in which his citizens lived, Givens stepped from his chauffeured Cadillac and approached the front door of number 1 St. James Avenue; here he came face to face with the sub-standard living conditions in the area, as well as the growing hostility of area residents. From the top floor a woman shrieked for the Mayor and the reporters, "damned bastards" she called them, to leave her and her children alone. Moving on to number 40 St. James, the most notorious rooming house in the district, Givens met a slightly warmer response. After slipping off his overshoes at the front door, Givens entered a "pitch-dark fetid hallway" and proceeded to inspect one of the rooms. As he entered the room, he walked across a carpet of sodden newspapers, probably wishing that he had kept his overshoes on, to "bravely chat" with a woman clutching a baby with measles. Back out in the hallway, the Mayor encountered two "barefoot[ed] girls," standing in awe of the television lights. When he asked whether they had shoes, they replied no. Dumbfounded by the response, Mayor Givens asked what they wore when they went outside, to which they replied that they never left the house to play

⁶⁴Margaret Campbell, cited in *Toronto Star*, "City Blight - Profiteers Help It," May 5, 1965, 63. Margaret Campbell was a member of the Board of Control and represented a consortium of developers involved in the redevelopment of St. James Town in 1964.

outside. Givens just shook his head and left. Across the street, he encountered a man to ask why the garbage in his yard had not been removed. "We left it purposely hoping you'd come down," he was told. Once again Givens shook his head in disbelief.⁶⁵

After touring some of the more notorious houses in the area, Givens returned to his Cadillac to render judgement on what he saw. "I hate being mayor of a city where conditions like this prevail," he said. "But," he continued, "most of these cases it's just bad housekeeping ... these people are alive and keen, but in some cases they have gone wrong somewhere." To back up his judgment, Givens claimed that he, too, knew a life of poverty and cramped housing conditions, having grown up in Alexandra Park during the 1930s: "These houses," he declared are no worse than those I lived in as a kid - except we knew a bit more about housekeeping." In a final observation, which once again placed the entire blame for their plight on the backs of the "slum dwellers" themselves, Givens remarked that most of the houses were full of luxury items such as televisions, record players, and books. After rendering his judgment, Givens climbed back into his limousine to prepare for a \$50 a plate testimonial dinner.⁶⁶

Givens' reconnaissance mission deep into the depths of Toronto's slums was prompted by public complaints by area residents that "95 percent of the houses in the area were unfit for pigs to live in."⁶⁷ The residents clearly had different ideas of who was to blame for their poor housing conditions. Earlier that week, area residents marched to City

⁶⁵Nicholas Steed. "The Mayor Meets the Barefoot Girls - Slums," *Toronto Star*, March 6, 1965, 1 & 5; Jurgen Hesse, "Slum Tenants Alive and Keen, Givens Finds on Tour," *Globe and Mail*, March 6, 1965, 5.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷"Authority May Manage 250 Doomed Houses," *Globe and Mail*, March 4, 1965, 5.

Hall to express their outrage at the block-busting techniques of the development companies that had laid waste to their neighbourhood, and at the city welfare and buildings departments which “officially tolerated” the substandard conditions in their neighbourhood to develop over the years.

Since the debacle over the Parliament Syndicate in 1956-57, St. James Town had taken an even more vicious downhill slide. After the construction of the Barbara Apartments by developer Shabese Frankel, development in the area slowed dramatically. Frankel had tried to get more money from CMHC to continue building in the area, but government officials were less than pleased with the Barbara Apartments, whose densities and high rents contravened CMHC guidelines for limited-dividend apartment projects. As a result, Frankel sold off his holdings to former Czechoslovakian deputy prime minister Rudolf Frastacky. Frastacky would soon become chairman of Metropolitan Trust, a key player in urban redevelopment in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶⁸ Acting on behalf of a German banker, Frastacky assembled 115 homes in the area in hopes of building high-rise apartments, but his plans also fell through. In turn, he sold out his holdings to Rose Park Apartments, which then liquidated the acquisitions to Belmont Construction Company. The latter finally succeeded in building three apartments in the north-east end of the area in 1963. At the time, the

⁶⁸According to Steve Oaks, Frastacky came to Canada from Czechoslovakia in 1949 where he had been involved in industry and politics since 1934. He was a graduate of higher economics from the Institute of Bratislava and went on to become a member of the Association of Co-operative Banking /Society until 1939. After the start of the war he became manager of the Czech Sugar Monopoly until 1944 when he entered politics and went on to become Minister of Food and Supply from 1945 to 1948, during which time he also served as vice-president of Slovakia. When he fled Czechoslovakia in 1948, he was accused by the communist government of collaborating with the Nazis during the occupation. See Howard Fox and Michael Winton, “A Study of Private Redevelopment: St. James Town North,” n.d. unpublished paper - Osgoode Hall Law School Library - York University, 5; and Steve Oaks, “Metro Trust’s foreign dollar machine,” *Toronto Citizen*, Nov 9-22, 1973, 11-12.

Planning Board opposed the development on the same grounds as the original Parliament Syndicate proposal. It wanted to see more park land and low-density town homes interspersed in the development. The Planning Board in a final attempt to control the development of the area appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board to rescind the zoning exemption. The OMB turned down the Planning Board's request in large part because the Wellesley-Bloor Ratepayers' Association, the group that had vigorously opposed the original scheme of the Parliament Syndicate, was now supporting the developers. According to Alan Ackman, the President of the Ratepayers's Association, the city was now obliged to act in concert with the developers because:

the area has been subjected to continual exploitation for the last eight years, consequently it has deteriorated to a distress slum [sic] in most sections. Now you have before you an opportunity to clean this up.⁶⁹

Indeed, according to Ackman, the developer's plans for the area would reveal "one of the most constructive and dynamic changes in the history of Canada."⁷⁰

At the same time, Meridian Investments, another emerging player in the urban renewal and redevelopment game, was also working in the north-west corner of the neighbourhood, having bought out the Highland Dairy at the intersection of Ontario and Clyde Streets. However, realizing that others were working in the neighbourhood, Meridian decided to join forces with Belmont, Howard Investments, and two other major development companies working in the city, Philip Roth and Max and David Merkur. The new

⁶⁹Ackman cited in Carolyn Whitzman, "Community & Design: Against the Solution in St. James Town," *City Magazine*, Vol 11 (Summer/Fall, 1989), 33.

⁷⁰City of Toronto, "Brief from the Wellesley-Bloor Ratepayers' Association, September 28, 1960 viz. Amendment to Zoning By-law and official Plan Yonge-Bloor-Jarvis Carlton Area, in Report No. 15 of the Committee on Buildings and Development, City Council *Minutes*, Appendix "A", 2305. See also Toronto Board of Control, *Minutes*, #771, March 27, 1963, and #941, April 24, 1963.

partnership bought up the remaining properties in the area, save that of the tailor Lucio Casaccio who refused to sell; Casaccio's tailor shop soon sat in the shadow of the 32-storey apartment buildings. Hoping that a unified development would get support at City Hall, in August 1964 Meridian floated a proposal for a \$50 million apartment development complete with 15 apartment buildings, 10 of them new, which when completed would contain 5,000 apartments housing nearly 16,000 persons (See Figure 5.1)⁷¹ Rents in the new project would range from \$85 to \$140 a month. The mammoth apartment project was the biggest development in Canada and the largest single concentration of dwellings in the entire country; it was in all respects a city within a city. Its central location made it one of the most sought after addresses in the city for "swinging singles." It also became an epithet of outrage in the vocabulary of citizen's groups for dispersing low-income tenants to the four winds in favour of luxury apartments. In the words of one city councillor, William Kilbourn, the redevelopment of St. James Town from slum to swish apartments was not slum clearance or "urban renewal" but "community destruction."⁷²

Anxious for development, especially on such a monumental scale, city councillors and the newly created Development Department hailed the proposal as the most comprehensive and impressive they had seen.⁷³ Mayor Givens commented that the development "obviously required a herculean job of land acquisition."⁷⁴ Even one of the original opponents of the scheme, Alan Ackman, now living in Moffat, Ontario, claimed that

⁷¹—"Board Hails \$50 Million Apartment Complex," *Globe and Mail*, January 14, 1965, 29.

⁷²Robert Collier, *Contemporary Cathedrals: Large Scale Developments in Canadian Cities*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 108-110.

⁷³—"Board Hails \$50 Million Apartment Complex," *Globe and Mail*, January 14, 1965, 29.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

“the new plan is just wonderful. Something we had always dreamed of and fought for.”⁷⁵

The distance of time and space obviously allowed Ackman to forget the ratepayers’ vigorous opposition to an almost identical scheme by the dreaded Syndicate less than a decade before.

Support for the project was by no means unanimous. Despite the rush by the company and the city to get on with the project, some councillors remembered the uproar over the original scheme. Councillors Horace Brown and June Marks suggested that the proposal contain public housing. Brown echoed criticism of apartment development in the city more generally, claiming that the proposal “frighten[ed]” him: “A development of this kind says ‘you shall not have children...’ A development of this kind picks children up and sets them down in the suburbs. I don’t think the laughter of children should be prohibited in the middle of the city.” Givens and the rest of the council, however, rejected the proposal, claiming that the redevelopment project was on “the razor’s edge” and might collapse.⁷⁶

The development was not the only thing in St. James Town on the “razor’s edge.” Area residents had been living with the collapse of their neighbourhood for more than five years, awaiting anxiously the promised redevelopment. In official terms, the decay that set in during the long delay between the original proposal for the area and its actual redevelopment was a prime example of “planning blight.”⁷⁷ For residents, a more appropriate term would have been block-busting. Indeed, a central aspect of the “herculean

⁷⁵Sid Adilman, “St. James Town Story: ‘A Fine Project, Wonderful Idea - I Wish I Could Talk!’ - Con. Campbell,” *Toronto Telegram*, January 18, 1965, 7.

⁷⁶CTA, WDC, SC 302, Box 9, file 2, Newspaper Clipping: “City Approves High Rise Plan - Rejects Public Housing Proposal,” *Globe and Mail*, February 16, 1965.

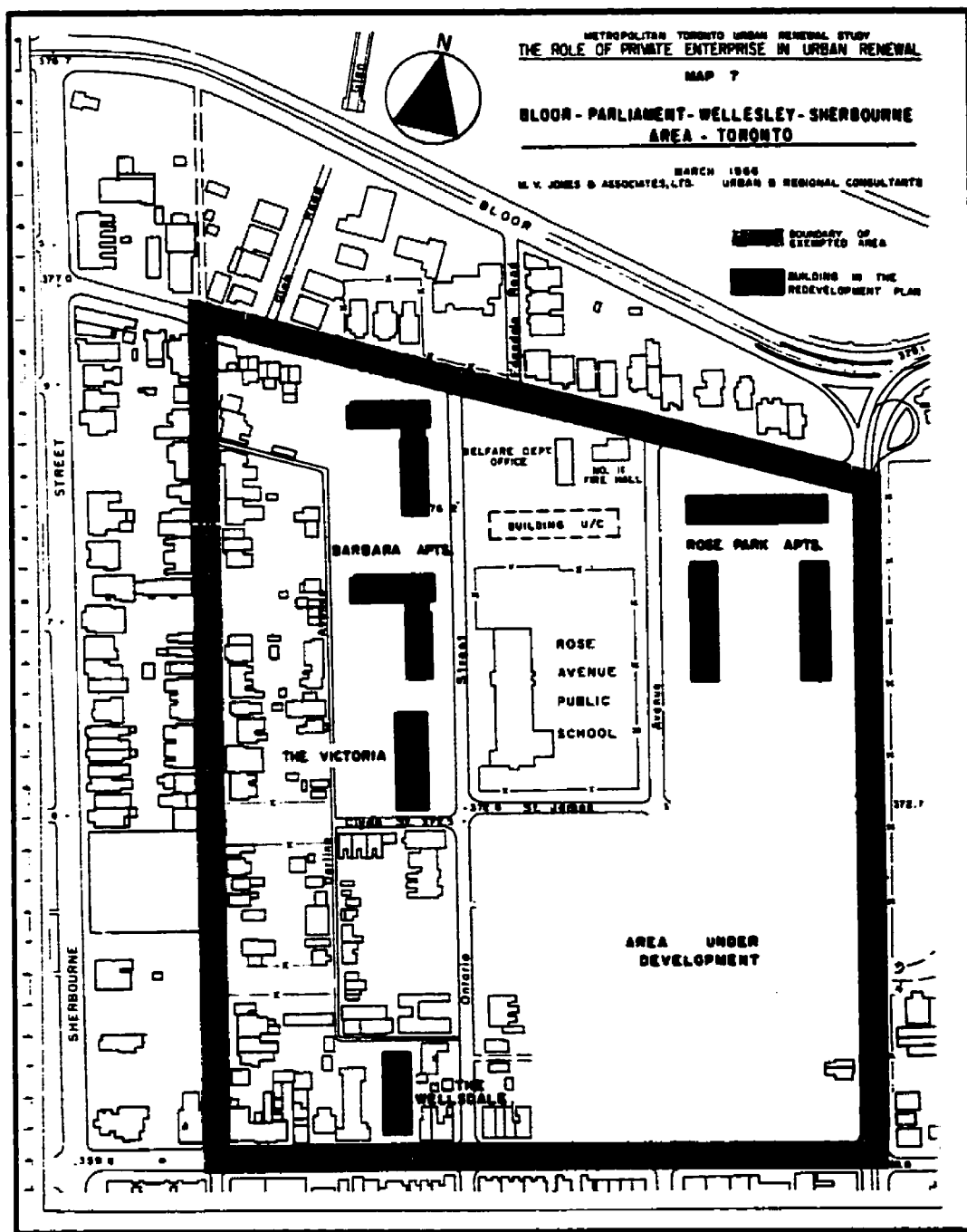
⁷⁷Fox and Winton, “A Study of Private Redevelopment...,” 10.

job of land acquisition,” was the developers’ success in destroying the physical and social landscape of the neighbourhood.

As in the 1950s, the development companies kept up their high pressure tactics to acquire remaining properties. As early as the construction of the Barbara Apartments in 1958, developers made life difficult for remaining area residents by blocking off streets with construction and construction vehicles. In few cases, home-owners still negotiating with the companies found that the rowhouse next door was torn down leaving them with holes in their walls, or their plumbing so exposed that it froze in the winter. Demolition crews “accidentally” smashed holes in houses whose owners were still negotiating, only to patch them up with materials banned by the Buildings Department. Others experienced mysterious fires in the vacant adjoining houses, leading to the cancellation of their fire insurance.⁷⁸ In addition, the development companies acquired properties in a “hop-sotch pattern,” buying incomplete rows of houses. In doing so, they hoped to discourage other companies from acquiring properties in the area. They also hoped that such a pattern of acquisition would keep prices down. Companies, such as Meridian, worked secretly through various real estate companies often slowing down its buying to lead home owners to worry that they might not be able to sell and thus forcing prices down. However, without an active residents’ association, many became resigned to the fact that they had no choice but to let their properties go at any price. According to one resident, who had lived in the neighbourhood since the end of the war:

⁷⁸Andrew MacFarlane, “The Legal Nightmare,” *Toronto Telegram*, June 22, 1961, 7.

Figure 5.1



Source: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, *The Role of Private Enterprise in Urban Renewal* (Toronto: Prepared by Murray V. Jones for the MTPB, 1966), Map 7.

St. James Town 1966

I knew sooner or later I was going to have to go. At the time, I thought maybe I would be able to stay there for another two years or so, but as it turned out, I was only able to stay for one year. I realized that I couldn't stop them when they have millions behind them, especially when they had gotten 50 percent to 60 percent of the houses. And I knew I wouldn't have been able to live in that house on my own forever. It only would have been a matter of time before I would have moved into an apartment anyway. But, at that time, I wasn't in any rush to go.⁷⁹

Residents soon realized that they were essentially being expropriated since no one would buy their homes except for the developer. Indeed, the developers became their only hope.

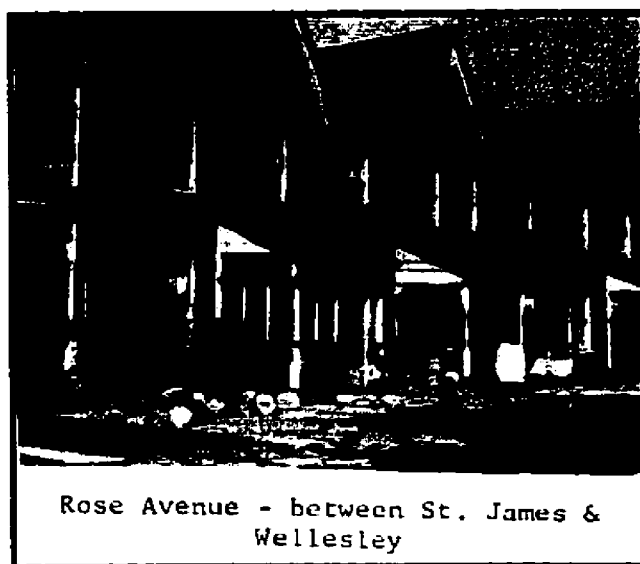
If that was not incentive enough to leave, developers turned the once proud neighbourhood into the "shame of Toronto." In an effort to make life unbearable for area homeowners, the developers turned the remaining houses into rooming houses and packed them full of "multi-problem" families, vagrants, and prostitutes. When the houses became too deteriorated, they were left vacant for vagrants, winos, and even area children to use as "hang-outs." According to *Telegram* reporter Andrew MacFarlane, one could tell which houses were controlled by developers. They were the ones characterized by:

Trampled mud where the grass used to be... garbage strewn in the back lots, ... broken windows [and] the shards of glass on the sidewalk outside, ... rotting steps, ... filthy wastelands that the backyards have become. Behind these houses are old mattresses, festering clothes and rags, rotten masonry, broken glass, all piled in a vast midden of filth. ... the physical rot has to be seen to be believed.⁸⁰ (See Figure 5.2)

As a result, home-ownership plunged to less than a quarter of the houses, while overcrowding in the area had risen to over 25 percent, one of the highest rates in the city. Developers once again succeeded in stripping area home-owners of their homes through nefarious techniques.

⁷⁹Fox and Winton, "A Study of Private Redevelopment," 14-18, quote on 17-18.

⁸⁰Andrew MacFarlane, "The Shame of Toronto," *Toronto Telegram*, June 19, 1961, 7

Figure 5.2

Source: CTPB, *Don District Planning Appraisal*
(Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1963), 12.

“The Shame of Toronto”

As the physical conditions of the neighbourhood declined, the area became a refuge for families on welfare with “nowhere else to go” and to those who preferred the anonymity in the transient character of a “boarding house” area. Given the similarities to the description of the problems of Toronto’s other notorious slum empire on Jarvis Street, it appeared that “Toronto’s tenderloin” had crept north to set down new roots in St. James Town. All in all, the families in St. James Town were what social workers referred to as “multi-problem families.” The majority of them were “white Canadians of Anglo-Saxon background” and many were well known to various agencies throughout the city. These families experienced high rates of unemployment, alcoholism, poor moral and physical standards, and often were emotionally unstable, and had poor marital relations. Some families were also afflicted by

drop outs and high unemployment due to a lack of training and education. In a sample of just 28 families, social workers of the Neighbourhood Service Unit found the following:

Figure 5.3

"Problems"	Number of Families
Alcoholism	7
Single Parents	15
School Related - Truancy, etc...	12
Physical Health	16
Welfare and Mothers' Allowance	22
Emotional Retardation	2
Mental Retardation	4
Financial Problems	2

Source: Lena Cooke, Neighbourhood Service Unit, First Report, February 19, 1966, Appendix.

St. James Town "Multi-Problem Families"

Their bleak home life and lack of future prospects led many children into petty crime and promiscuous behaviour. According to social workers who visited families in the area, bootlegging was a thriving business, along with petty crime among juveniles. The burned-out, boarded up houses awaiting demolition became a hiding spot for alcoholic transients, as well as area children. Although the area was not frequented by prostitutes or drug pushers, many of the young children in the area were particularly "promiscuous," and sought escape and excitement through precarious activities to escape their poor home life. Young girls, they claimed, were "lured by the bright lights of the downtown City, [and] ... drift[ed] into prostitution, usually encouraged by older men."⁸¹ The development company reportedly

⁸¹CTA, DPW, RG 3, Series 100, file 122, "Proposal for a Neighbourhood Services Unit," September 1965.

allowed motorcycle gangs to rent houses in the area, leading the RCMP to conduct narcotics surveillance in the neighbourhood.⁸² Yet despite the bleak picture, area social workers were determined that the families were “not altogether hopeless.”

In response to the charges of residents and social workers, the developers evaded any responsibility for the neighbourhood’s physical and social degeneration. While they readily admitted they were not the best landlords, and conducted very few repairs, they argued that the deterioration was an “unintended consequence” of redevelopment.⁸³ Renting houses was not a money-making business, and in fact the developers did not go into the rooming house business. Rather, they leased out houses to a third party for approximately \$130 to \$150 a month. These intermediaries, for all intents and purposes, became slumlords when they carved up the houses and sub-let rooms and flats to low-income tenants at outrageous rents. Though probably aware of what was going on, the development companies turned a blind eye to what their “tenants” were doing, in return for an agreement that the “tenant” would be responsible for all repairs to meet city by-law standards. When approached by sub-tenants, the rooming house managers claimed that the owners were responsible for repairs. In addition, few of the tenants had any security. Leases were uncommon, and most residents were weekly or monthly tenants who could be evicted at a moment’s notice. Few tenants knew their landlords, or how they might contact them. To discourage tenants from asking for repairs, landlords shifted tenants from house to house, while others were simply evicted

⁸²Kay Gilead, “St.. James Town,” unpublished paper June 1990, CTA, Papers and Theses Collection, Box 24, File 9; and Andrew MacFarlane, “The Shame of Toronto,” *Toronto Telegram*, June 19, 1961, 7.CTA, RG 3, Series 100, file 122, Minutes of the St. James Town Project, September 9, 1965; and “Proposal for the Neighbourhood Services Unit,”(September, 1965); and Lena Cooke, “Neighbourhood Service Unit, First Progress Report,” February 19, 1966, Appendix.

⁸³Fox and Winton, “A Private Redevelopment Project...,” 20.

when they complained. In the end, neither the tenants nor the various “landlords” felt any compunction to maintain even the most minimal housing standards.⁸⁴

Nonetheless, by 1965, the conditions in St. James Town had fallen so far that the slumlord business was no longer profitable. Joe Shori, a “chain-smoking Hindu” and St. James Town’s most notorious slumlord claimed that there was no money in renting out old houses to welfare families.⁸⁵ Shori rented 64 houses in the central city, 43 of them from Meridian’s holdings in St. James Town, including the infamous 40 St. James Street.⁸⁶ According to Shori, he went into the rooming house business intending to make a profit, but lost over \$1,700 in 1964 alone, due to the cost of providing utilities to the drafty houses. He also had a great deal of difficulty collecting money from his tenants, whose welfare allotments barely met the rent. Some families owed him \$150-200 in unpaid rent. In addition, he claimed that he bought them food, lent them small sums of money and paid the occasional taxi fare. “Not one family can criticize me - I’ve lost enough money now. I’ve got to get out of this headache.”⁸⁷ Indeed, he went so far as to claim that he should be commended for being so humanitarian, rather than scorned as a “slumlord!” Nonetheless, his tenants all complained that they could not get a nickel out of him to pay for repairs.⁸⁸

Shori’s houses were among the worst in St. James Town, if not in the city. According to city and provincial health and building inspectors, 40 St. James Street was the worst slum

⁸⁴James Lorimer. “Anxiety in housekeeping while awaiting the wrecker,” *Globe and Mail*, August 15, 1969.

⁸⁵Paul Hunt, “Ghetto of Poverty,” *Toronto Telegram*, March 4, 1965, 33.

⁸⁶Paul Hunt. “Ghetto of Poverty;”and “Board to hear St. James Ave. slum story,” *Toronto Star*, March 3, 1965, 53.

⁸⁷“Angry slum landlord threatens to cut off heat, light power,” *Toronto Star*, March 5, 1965, 27.

⁸⁸Paul Hunt, “Ghetto of Poverty.”

property they knew. Here four families totalling 23 people, including 13 children, were packed into 12 rooms. One tenant said she had to keep the light on above her baby's bed to keep the rats away. In the third floor flat rented by the Clarke family, who had recently arrived from New Brunswick, a leaky pipe under the sink required a catch basin underneath to be emptied 8 times a day. If that were not bad enough, the house had only one working bathroom on the second floor, and according to Ministry of Health inspector Dr. A.R.J. Boyd, its walls and adjacent halls were smeared with human excreta.⁸⁹ For the convenience of living in such conditions, families often paid between \$85 and \$110 monthly, or nearly 40-50 percent of their total monthly income.⁹⁰

Though 40 St. James was the worst house in St. James Town, the physical condition of other homes in the neighbourhood was scarcely better. City and provincial health officials and building inspectors reported that they had warned one tenant to lock the door to one room and keep children out because the wiring was so poor that bare wires were sticking out of the wall. They told another tenant not to have anyone sleep on the couch because the plaster above could come down at any time, and to avoid one section of the floor or else they "might find [themselves] in the basement."⁹¹ Garbage was strewn across the back porch and the common law husband said he was unable to shut an outside porch door that would stop the neighbourhood rats and alley cats from sneaking in and pawing through the rubble.⁹² Tenants in this house also consumed more than one hundred gallons of oil per month just to keep the

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ CTA, HAT, RG 28, B3, Box 28, file 13, Rev. John Metson to HAT, October 6, 1965.

⁹¹ "Board to hear St. James Ave. slum story," *Toronto Star*, March 3, 1965, 53.

⁹² Paul Hunt, "Ghetto of Poverty."

temperature at 68 degrees Fahrenheit, to meet city health standards. Amazingly, the house actually passed inspection. No wonder the deputation of St. James Town residents, who showed up at City Hall in early March, claimed that the houses were “unfit for pigs.”⁹³

Ironically, the sensational media stories and photographs of squalid housing, children playing among garbage, mothers with tired and worn faces - in short images of the slum - intended to graphically demonstrate the inadequacy of the free market to satisfy the minimal needs of families and to promote benevolent solutions to the housing problems of the poor did more to emphasize the powerlessness of the poor themselves to make claims on the state and civil society, based on their rights as human beings. The use of such images to evoke public sympathy implied that to make claims upon the state for decent housing, slum dwellers first had to meet the test of public opinion. They had to prove that they were ‘deserving’ of the public’s sympathy and its charity. This was a concept not entirely lost upon social workers of the times. As one Children’s Aid official remarked: “for a family to get improved housing it had to go on TV or submit to the invasion of privacy that went with a heart-rending front-page newspaper story depicting its plight.”⁹⁴ In doing so, the press unwittingly continued a long-standing practice of public surveillance of the poor. As Marjaleena Repo argues: “People sitting on their front steps, children playing on the street, in the backyards, and in the lanes. people looking out of their windows, women hanging laundry in their backyards - all were easy prey to the ambitions of the photographers. It seemed the existence of the area residents was a public one, that in terms of their person, their faces, their

⁹³“Authority May Manage 250 Doomed Houses,” *Globe and Mail*, March 4, 1965, 5.

⁹⁴“Substandard Housing Worst Home Wrecker,” *Toronto Star*, May 14, 1963, 29.

identities, they had no rights at all and photographers literally walked all over the people, children, youth and adults alike. ... Downtown everyone is fair game."⁹⁵

Certainly this was true of St. James Town residents. Despite the constant repetition of the phrase "by no fault of their own," the sensational accounts of the deplorable living conditions left many Torontonians wondering how "decent people" could live and raise children in such surroundings. Novelist and newspaper editorialist, Hugh Garner, probably summed up the views of many Torontonians when he wrote:

When I'm shown a fat, dirty, sloppy housewife surrounded by a brood of neglected, unwashed offspring living in filth, I'm disgusted. I'm not disgusted only with her but with the bleeding heart officials who are derelict in not slapping her into jail and taking the children from her. ⁹⁶

In addition, reports from city and provincial officials tended to blame the tenants for a good deal of the situation. The woman who acted as the spokesperson for area residents, Mrs. Dorothy McCaw, lived in such squalor that health officials claimed the entire premises were in an unclean condition. They pointed to a "large accumulation of dog excreta in the cellar, and a malodorous bathroom due to the "misuse" of the bathroom for the storage of dirty diapers. McCaw explained that she found the diapers in a closet three months after she moved in, left there by a previous tenant. She also explained that the dogs belonged to her children whom she sent to the cellar periodically to clean up the mess.⁹⁷ At the same time, reports also questioned McCaw's credibility by commenting on her rather impressive clothing: "she was wearing a blue knitted suit, sparkling rings and an *expensive* looking

⁹⁵Marjaleena Repo, "Photography and the Powerless," *This Magazine Is About Schools*, 4 (Winter, 1970), 8.

⁹⁶Queen's University Archives, Hugh Garner Collection, ARCH 2065 B023.F266.I37, Hugh Garner, "Slums: The Gray Area Almost Touches Rosedale," newspaper clipping - *Toronto Telegram*, March 1965.

⁹⁷"Authority May Manage 250 Doomed Homes," *Globe and Mail*, March 4, 1965, 5.

watch.”⁹⁸

Nonetheless, the focus on the “deservedness” of the poor was starting to come under attack, both in the social work profession and in the media. Social work organizations, such as the Neighbourhood Workers’ Association, worried that it still categorized its clients as “deserving” or “non-deserving,” rather than using simple adequacy to determine its approach to the needs of its clients. The organization went further to say that the policy of using “only ‘simon-pure’ cases ... for publicity purposes was out of date and should be dispelled.”⁹⁹ Many people were sickened by the way the Mayor and the Toronto media subjected the residents of St. James Town to such public scrutiny. Once again, the churlish Garner paid a backhanded compliment to St. James Town residents when he wrote:

While we’re on the subject, why is it that every newspaper or television story about a slum has to be illustrated by a photograph of or interview with the neighbourhood’s prize slob? ... All neighbourhoods have their slob housewives, including our residential suburbs, and they are not more representative of Alexandra Park or St. James St. than they are of .. Etobicoke or .. Agincourt. The clean and decent slum housewives don’t want to be represented by a moronic slob any more than their sudsy sisters to the North would want a slob elected Don Mills’ homemaker of the year.¹⁰⁰

According to *Toronto Star* columnist Ron Haggart, Given’s “hokum tour” of St. James Town might have been an appropriate tour of the zoo, but it was not the “humble and respectful way to learn of the personal tragedies which lie in the destruction wake of ‘urban renewal.’”

⁹⁸“Authority May Manage 250 Doomed Homes,” *Globe and Mail*, March 4, 1965, 5. Emphasis mine. For a discussion of “deservedness” in regards to public welfare and single women, see Margaret Little, “No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit:” *The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920- 1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹⁹Records of the Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto, Minutes of the Social Action Committee of the Neighbourhood Workers Association, Volume I, December 6, 1960.

¹⁰⁰Queen’s University Archives, Hugh Garner Collection, ARCH 2065 B023.F266.I37, Hugh Garner, “Slums: The Gray Area Almost Touches Rosedale,” newspaper clipping - *Toronto Telegram*, March 1965.

“Though the people may prefer bread and circuses,” he continued, “that does not mean that those who need bread the most must be conscripted into the cheapening circus of the mayor’s publicity gimmicks.”¹⁰¹ Unfortunately for inner-city Torontonians, Givens’ tour was an annual spring-time event in Toronto; it was not the first nor would it be the last time that city politicians snooped around the slums in search of publicity.

For more than five years, the anger of the residents had slowly been bubbling under the surface. While the majority of home owners had disappeared since the late 1950s, the growing number of low-income tenants who now occupied the houses were tired of the declining conditions and the constant neglect of their interests by the city and the developers. In the words of Reverend John Metson, who had been influential in organizing area residents to protest their housing conditions:

the only consideration appeared to be for the profit of the developer and the assessment renewal of the City. In a word, private precocity, rather than public planning. This was possible as a result of the power of the Province, specifically the OMB, which overruled the City and allowed the developer a density of building profitable in relation to the cost of land. It was also partly the result of an inertia in the development by the City of a comprehensive land policy with the introduction of the Bloor Subway. Even the plans which have been formulated for this area have excluded most of the people living there now, with no realistic alternatives in terms of their needs of space, cost, location or amount of housing needed. The general shortage of middle class family housing makes, the "Trickling down process" a figment of the imagination in relation to need. This shortage has been aggravated by an archaic housing standard by-law intermittently enforced.¹⁰²

The finalization of the apartment development in February 1965 was the final straw. Area residents knew that their time in St. James Town was limited, but all their attempts to find

¹⁰¹Ron Haggart, “That hokum tour by Philip Givens,” *Toronto Star*, March 8, 1965, 7.

¹⁰²CTA, HAT, RG 28, B3, Box 28, File 13, Letter from John Metson to Housing Authority, October 6, 1965.

out what was going on, and when they would have to move, were rebuffed by the developers and by city officials.¹⁰³ Now the developer was sending out eviction notices claiming that residents had to move by April 30, 1965. Forgotten throughout the entire process, and now bewildered and angry, area residents formed a neighbourhood housing committee and appeared before City Council to protest the housing conditions, and to plea for help in relocating.

The St. James Town Housing Committee emerged from the out-reach work of a number of neighbourhood churches that formed as a result of the Ecumenical Council on Housing. Most important was the work of St. Simon's Anglican Church and the Christian Resource Centre. The idea of a residents' housing committee first emerged from a coffee club for neighbourhood mothers held at St. Simon's Anglican Church every Thursday morning. After listening to the housing woes of the women, as well as getting first hand evidence from periodic visits to some of the houses, the church's Social Service Advisory Committee, led by social worker Lois Hayes, urged the women to form a housing committee and approach City Hall. According to Hayes, she, her committee, and even the rector of the church, Canon Hugh Bedford-Jones, got nowhere either with the developers or with City Hall. Hayes believed that without the active support of the residents the group would be ineffective. Similarly, neighbourhood residents received a great deal of support from the Toronto Christian Resource Centre, which first opened its doors at 615 Ontario Street late in 1964, just as the developers were approaching City Hall with the new scheme. Run by

¹⁰³According to an official with the Neighbourhood Services Unit, no one from the community, not even "influential people," such as lawyers could get any answers out of City Hall as to the future of the neighbourhood. Albert Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, February 1974), 145-46.

Revered John Metson, the CRC grew out of the concerns of the Rosedale United Church that it should be "reaching out in the community and ... if it had anything to say, it ought to be involved in peoples' lives."¹⁰⁴ Members of the church also conducted research on behalf of area residents to uncover what they could about their present living conditions and their future prospects in the neighbourhood.¹⁰⁵ Though supported by the United Church, the Centre developed as an ecumenical attempt reaching out to those not attracted by conventional church organizations. Originally, it acted as a drop-in centre for area youngsters, hoping to provide them with more salubrious surrounding and activities. However, it too became vitally involved in the daily lives of area residents, especially their forced relocation.

After its initial foray to City Hall in the spring of 1965, the St. James Town Housing Committee formed an executive to press the city for more improvements in the area. The committee was led by the outspoken Dorothy McCaw, the original spokesperson for the group.¹⁰⁶ The group demanded that the city demolish the vacant houses which they deemed to be fire traps, within the month. They also demanded that the city establish recreation programs for area children, to get moving on the proposals for low-income housing before Council, and to warn residents in areas where redevelopment was imminent so they could prepare for relocation. Finally, they warned the city not to place welfare tenants in sub-

¹⁰⁴Sheila H. Kieran, "Social services together in one house provide care, advice for St. James Town," *Globe and Mail*, January 4, 1966, 11.

¹⁰⁵See note 103.

¹⁰⁶Others on the committee included: Eric Bastin an electronics technician who has been living in St. James Town for 2 years; Mrs. Leonard Porter, Barry Morris, Robert McCarthy, a University of Toronto graduate student who helped Councillor June Marks collect affidavits in connection with her charges against the city and Toronto slum landlords. In addition to area residents, Hayes and Metson sat as ex-officio members. "Controller attacked over slum rides," *Toronto Star*, July 30, 1965, 13.

standard housing. "There is no excuse for authorities," they claimed, "not knowing the filthy conditions they offer to people, hoping they will meekly accept or ... burdening housewives with having to investigate offers many of which are below the legal standards."¹⁰⁷ They also strenuously objected to the "red-baiting" and pressure being placed on them by certain members of City Hall to go easy on the developers. In particular, they singled out Controller Margaret Campbell for chauffeuring residents around the city in her limousine in an attempt to curry favour with them.¹⁰⁸ St. James Town had been Controller Campbell's pet project since the late 1950s when she acted as a "one-woman development department" trying to get the various proposals for the area approved. She certainly was not going to see the actions of these "poor housekeepers," as she once called area residents, slow down the "wonderful" redevelopment of the area.¹⁰⁹

To the relief of both the tenants and the developers, the Housing Authority of Toronto agreed to help the families relocate. For the nearly 70 families living the second phase of the development who would have to move by April 30, the Housing Authority and Ontario Housing Corporation assumed the responsibility for relocation. Over the next two months, the two agencies provided a crash rehousing program, which from a statistical view point was a resounding success. However, as a *Toronto Star* editorial remarked: "this sort of relocation cannot be done on short notice without seriously disrupting the lives of a great many hard-working, low-income families, who, through no fault of their own, suddenly find

¹⁰⁷CTA. Records of the City Executive, RG 02, Box 456, Minute #1639. Board of Control, Correspondence, Resolutions of the St. James Town Residents Committee, August 4, 1965.

¹⁰⁸"Controller attacked over slum rides," *Toronto Star*, July 30, 1965, 13.

¹⁰⁹When off city council in 1963, Campbell acted as legal council for developers Alex Grossman, Max Merkur and Philip Roth. Sid Adilman, "St. James Town Story: 'A Fine Project, Wonderful Idea I wish I could Talk!' - Con. Campbell," *Toronto Telegram*, January 18, 1965, 7.

a bulldozer roaring at their front door. ... [They] are not numbers on a chart, that the developers and the city are shifting around. They are human beings with complicated, interwoven lives. They need time to readjust to the demands of progress.”¹¹⁰ Though grateful for new and better housing, St. James Town residents found the relocation program extremely dehumanizing. Families were broken up, separating elderly people, children, and friends. Children were pulled out of school in the middle of term. Others refused apartment accommodation because they would not part with their dog. Two sisters who cared for each other refused to be separated.¹¹¹ In short, residents found the relocation process unsettling, and it added to their already shaky financial, emotional, and psychological foundations. Because many of the families were on public welfare, they lived a “very hand to mouth existence always on the borderline of subsistence and often in heavy debt.”¹¹² Added to this was the fear of the unknown and the desire to remain with family and friends in a familiar environment. Shocking to many observers, families from the area derived both comfort, strength, and most of all acceptance, from the neighbourhood and its residents who suffered similar problems and tribulations. Many did not want to move to the suburbs for precisely this reason.¹¹³

Officials from OHC and the Housing Authority only added to the residents’ anxieties by adopting a “take it or leave it approach” to the relocation process. As the property manager of Regent Park North stated to residents: “If you’re going to start to turn

¹¹⁰“Housing is For People,” *Toronto Star*, May 26, 1965, 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Lena Cooke, “Report on the St. James Town Project,” (Toronto, Report Prepared for the Housing Authority of Toronto, 1965), 6.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

down one place in the hope of getting something better or of moving further out, as far as I'm concerned our obligation to you would be finished."¹¹⁴ Most of them rejected public housing, partially because they disliked apartment living, and wanted to stay locally. Social workers also worried that many St. James Town residents would be deemed unsuitable for public housing. As one stated: "The type of family found in relocation areas often are not able to adjust to controlled living in apartments, or conform to rules and regulations. Their lives are not organized or orderly and they find it difficult to conform." However, follow up studies revealed that only one family had been evicted from public housing. St James Town families expressed strong feelings about remaining in the central city for a number of reasons, not the least of which was welfare services, both public and private, which were not as accessible in the suburbs. In addition, social workers also worried that families could not adjust to the pressures of suburban living, and transplanting a family to a hostile or unfamiliar environment would add to the problems and suffering of numerous families. The answer to the relocation of families from this type of area, social workers claimed, was "the purchase and maintenance of homes in locations easily accessible to employment, social welfare services, and special schools, which would be rented to families at an economic rent."¹¹⁵

In addition to relocating those from the second stage of redevelopment, the Housing Authority agreed to take over some of the properties in St. James Town from the developer, bring them up to the city's housing standards and health code, and then lease them to area residents on a rent-geared-to-income basis. The Housing Authority also wrote off all rents

¹¹⁴"St. James Towners Confront Officials." *Globe and Mail*, April, 1965, 9.

¹¹⁵Lena Cooke, "Report on the St. James Town Project," 1965, 14-15; Sylvia Goldblatt, "Isolation or Integration," *passim*..

in arrears by tenants and agreed to pay all insurance premiums on the houses. Tenants were required to pay for their utilities. This would only be a temporary solution for residents in phases three and four of the project until they could find alternate accommodation. The Housing Authority guaranteed the residents that it would be at least six months before these homes would be demolished to make way for the new development. The HAT made it clear to tenants that this housing was temporary while they searched for new accommodation. HAT promised to help them in this regard, but officials warned residents that the Authority was under no obligation to accommodate families, or guarantee them entry into public housing, at the end of this six-month period. In all, the Housing Authority conducted 110 inspections and interviewed 224 tenants. It finally assumed control of 68 houses in St. James Town and turned back 27 which it deemed unfit for human habitation, or too costly to make them so. The tenants from these houses were turned over to OHC for relocation. To relieve the housing shortage, the Housing Authority also assumed control of an additional 12 houses from another notorious Toronto "slumlord," Alex Cowley, just a short distance from St. James Town in the Carlton and Spruce Streets area.¹¹⁶

Though only a temporary solution to the residents' housing problems, the HAT's assumption of the houses had an immediate effect not only on the physical conditions in the neighbourhood, but also on the morale of the residents. For the first time, tenants encountered a landlord who was willing to provide regular maintenance. In fact, the years of neglect led the Authority to issue more than 1,500 work orders for general repairs in the year and half it operated the houses. To improve neighbourhood conditions in general, the

¹¹⁶Housing Authority of Toronto, "Report on the St James Town Lease Rental Proposal," April 15, 1965.

Authority and other city departments conducted two clean up days and removed nearly fifty tons of debris from the area on just one of these days. The mysterious fires in vacant buildings that had threatened area residents for nearly a decade also came to a halt once the Housing Authority assumed control of the area.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the introduction of rent-g geared-to-income leases reduced the rents of more than 95 percent of St. James Town residents.¹¹⁸ The attention paid to the houses, and to the neighbourhood more generally, immediately rubbed off on the residents as the Authority and area social workers noticed that “when the tenants being relocated knew of the renovations and had a share in looking over the house the Authority had for them, some of them volunteered to assist with the cleaning up. Since the relocation, there has been a very noticeable improvement in housekeeping standards generally.”¹¹⁹ In short, the Housing Authority argued that, while challenging, its work in the neighbourhood “assisted in bringing calm to an area that otherwise would have been hostile and belligerent to such a scheme.”¹²⁰

Despite the improvements, behind the lease rental proposal of the Housing Authority lay a firm belief that the majority of St. James Town residents were completely unable, or worse unwilling, to solve their own housing problems. Many social workers and city councillors believed that slum dwellers’ poor homemaking standards and their multiple

¹¹⁷CTA, Reports Collection, Box 144, Housing Authority of Toronto, “Annual Report of the Executive Director, 1967,” 25.

¹¹⁸Housing Authority of Toronto, “Report on the St James Town Lease Rental Proposal,” April 15, 1965.

¹¹⁹CTA, HAT, RG 28 Box 28, File 13, Letter from John Metson to Housing Authority, October 6, 1965.

¹²⁰CTA, Reports Collection, Box 144, Housing Authority of Toronto, “Annual Report of the Executive Director, 1967,” 25.

problems prevented them from taking advantage of better housing even when offered.¹²¹ Lena Cooke, a social worker hired by the city to act as a relocation officer in St. James Town and Alexandra Park argued: “The type of family found in relocation areas often are not able to adjust to controlled living in apartments, or conform to rules and regulations. Their lives are not organized or orderly and they find it difficult to conform.”¹²² For this reason, public housing authorities, including HAT, were reluctant to accept families, even if they had the most urgent needs for such housing.¹²³ The lease-rental program could then serve as “gradual program of [human] rehabilitation,” a sort of stepping stone to their eventual entrance into public housing.¹²⁴ Indeed, according to social workers, while the problems of St. James Town residents were serious, the “families [were] not altogether hopeless” and there were indications that the families were responding to the reaching out process started by social workers in the area.¹²⁵

Thus, in combination with the relocation program, the city agreed to cooperate in an experimental project proposed by the Social Planning Council to provide an intensive neighbourhood- based program of family rehabilitation.¹²⁶ Known as the Neighbourhood Service Unit (NSU), the project attempted to coordinate the services of nine different private and public social agencies, including the Children’s Aid Society, the Family Service

¹²¹*Toronto Star*, June 28, 1965, 27.

¹²²Lena Cooke, “Report on St. James Town Project, Phase II”, s.n. [1965], 14.

¹²³RG 3, Series 100, file 122, Minutes of the St. James Town Project, September 9, 1965.

¹²⁴CTA, RG 2, Minutes of the Board of Control, #443, March 3, 1965. Comments made by Controller Margaret Campbell.

¹²⁵CTA, RG 3, Series 100, file 122, Proposal for a Neighbourhood Services Unit, s.n. 1965.

¹²⁶The project had been in the works for over a year when the opportunity of St. James Town presented itself. CTA, RG 3, Series 100, file 122, Report of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Submitted by the Committee on the Co-ordination of Help to Families,” May, 27, 1965.

Association and the Departments of Public Welfare and Health, under one roof and provide on-going assistance for area families rather than “waiting for [them] to disintegrate.”¹²⁷ Over a three-year period, the NSU hoped to reach out to “unmotivated” long-term-assistance families, providing them with intensive and extensive help prior to and after their relocation. As Lena Cooke, the original co-ordinator of the program, stated the project was intended for “families [who] don’t know who or how to ask for help ... The accent is on rehabilitation rather than on simply handing out money.”¹²⁸

On November 1, 1965, the Unit quietly began its work from the house at 615 Ontario Street, the location of the Christian Resource Centre.¹²⁹ Area residents were by no means forced to accept the “help” of the Unit, but it did try to “reach out” to as many residents as possible by going door to door, explaining the Unit’s purpose and its services. Nonetheless, area residents took a while to “warm up” to the Unit’s presence in their neighbourhood. For one, area residents were initially hostile to the Unit’s presence when they found out that its mandate was not to solve their immediate housing problems.¹³⁰ This was an understandable concern, given that residents’ most pressing problem was relocation. The uncertainty hanging over the neighbourhood and the residents’ lives for so long was a source of anger, but so too was the fact that many people were “visiting” these families and “rumour and

¹²⁷The nine member agencies of the NSU included the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Housing Authority of Toronto, The Toronto Christian Resource Centre, Catholic Family Services, Department of Public Health, The Family Service Association, Children’s Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto, Department of Social and Family Services, Central Neighbourhood House. See also “St. James Town area: Slum project fosters community spirit,” *Toronto Star*, October 29, 1965, 29.

¹²⁸L. Cooke cited in “Social services together in one house provide care, advice for St. James Town,” *Globe and Mail*, January 4, 1966, 11.

¹²⁹FSAMT, “FSA On Location: St. James Town,” in *On Record*, (January/February, 1966), 1.

¹³⁰Neighbourhood Service Unit, “Final Report of the Neighbourhood Service Unit,” 1968, 20.

counter-rumour predominated,” producing a “free-floating hostility” between residents and city officials.¹³¹

By the summer of 1966, however, relations between the Unit, area families and members of the Housing Committee had largely been smoothed out. A well-attended Christmas party and social tea organized by residents for the social workers had gone a long way to reducing tensions. So, too, had the establishment of a co-operative nursery school in the premises of the old offices of the City Welfare Department. Nonetheless, most residents did not really enquire into the origins and purpose of the Unit’s activities in their neighbourhood. For the most part, they were grateful for the services it offered, and were pleased that someone was actually sympathetic to their plight and, more importantly, willing to help.¹³²

Others, nevertheless, remained uncomfortable with the watchful eyes of social workers so close and so prevalent. Some in the community, especially those with child welfare problems, felt threatened by the presence of the Unit in their neighbourhood. One woman told social workers that the people of the area knew which workers represented which agencies and, by simply looking out the window, one could tell what kinds of problems their neighbours had.¹³³

Undoubtedly swayed by the press coverage of the St. James Town saga, the NSU

¹³¹Lena Cooke, “Report on the St. James Town Project,” 1965, 2.

¹³²Neighbourhood Service Unit (hereafter NSU), “Second Interim Report of the Neighbourhood Service Unit for Submission to the Welfare and Housing Committee of Metropolitan Toronto,” January 1967, 3; and Neighbourhood Service Unit, “Final Report of the Neighbourhood Service Unit,” 1968, 30.

¹³³CTA, RG 3, Series 100, file 122, NSU, “Draft of Interim Report of the Neighbourhood Service Unit to the Public Welfare, Housing, Fire and Legislation Committee of the City of Toronto,” May 1966, 7; and NSU, “Final Report...”, 31.

originally assumed that the vast majority, 80 percent in their original estimation, of residents were typical slum dwellers, that is "multi-problem" families. However, within the first year of operation, the Unit discovered that at least half of the families were "self-sufficient." Indeed, where it once believed that it would be easy to identify families needing help, in the final analysis, the Unit was shocked to discover that only 30 percent of area families needed the comprehensive and intensive aid offered by the Unit.¹³⁴ There were at least two different communities within St. James Town whose needs and interests differed greatly. These differences between low-income, but self-sufficient, families and those on various forms of public assistance came to a head on numerous occasions. In one particular instance, NSU workers had to break up a "donnybrook" that broke out at a meeting on housing when low-income families alleged that welfare recipients were "getting better service." They complained that welfare recipients always moved to the head of the line for public housing, health coverage, and other social programs for which low-income families were ineligible.¹³⁵

Nonetheless, the one area in which the Unit believed all families needed help most was homemaking. Social workers believed, just as Mayor Givens, that a great deal of the housing difficulties of area residents stemmed from bad housekeeping, and as such, their poor standards would prevent them from finding, or keeping, decent housing in the future. Yet, once again, they were soon forced to revise their opinions. As they soon discovered, conditions in St. James Town "scarcely provided opportunities for demonstrating good

¹³⁴Lena Cooke. "Report on the St. James Town Project," 1965, 7. NSU, "Final Report...", 5; and NSU, "Second Interim Report of the Neighbourhood Service Unit for Submission to the Welfare and Housing Committee of Metropolitan Toronto," January 1967, 2.

¹³⁵CTA. Central Neighbourhood House (CNH), SC 5, Box 8, file 19, Minutes of the Neighbourhood Social Unit, June 2, 1966.

standards of homemaking.” The houses were impossible to keep clean, no matter how hard people tried. The houses had little in the way of conveniences and the plumbing and heating systems were old, in poor repair, and rarely worked properly. Social workers attached to the Unit came to these conclusions not only through their visits to area residents, but also from their own experience with the house the Unit rented for its offices. Despite the fact that the Housing Authority provided maintenance service twice weekly, social workers regularly complained that the offices “always looked and smelled dirty.” As a result, the Unit and its social workers decided that it was not only difficult, but even unfair, to pass judgement on families living under these conditions. In follow-up visits with the families, the Unit only found two families whose poor housekeeping habits had not improved in better housing. Other than these two families, most families took pride in their homes.¹³⁶

Social workers attached to the Unit soon found the problems of the residence far more complex than poor housekeeping skills. As if they had not been discovered before, social workers ran headlong into the causes of poverty. Most residents, working or on welfare, did not have enough money to cover basic needs. For the most part, their problems did not stem from an inability to properly husband their resources: “generally most families managed their limited income well and were able to stretch their meagre finances to cover basic necessities.” Rather, they lived hand-to-mouth and were in constant financial difficulty. Social workers continued to be shocked by how even relatively small expenditures, such as extra use of utilities or deposits required for accommodation in public housing, sent them into crisis. For families not on welfare, another major cause of financial crisis was medical costs.

¹³⁶NSU, “Final Report...,” 6 & 35.

As a result, many St. James Town residents suffered serious chronic health problems including asthma, bronchitis, and various forms of heart disease. In addition, the poor housing of area residents hampered the rehabilitation efforts of the Unit. As the Unit stated in its final report: "Even if the people had not been forced to relocate ... the provision of good housing is a prerequisite to any concept or demonstration project concerned with upgrading the levels of family functioning." Indeed, many of the problems from which the families suffered, including housing, stemmed primarily from their lack of income, a problem which the Unit even admitted, "[could not] be improved by counselling,"¹³⁷

Though rehabilitation was the focus of the Unit, the residents' singular focus on relocation "made it well nigh impossible ... to adhere to that focus." Housing may not have been the cause of people's problems, but it was their foremost concern. As social workers discovered, the initial hostility towards the Unit over its mandate had only subsided, not disappeared. Area residents were not motivated to become involved in any problem-solving process that did not include their immediate need for finding alternate living accommodation. In one case in particular, unit social workers discovered that "Mr & Mrs. C" and their six children had numerous marital and domestic problems. However, the family approached the Unit only looking for housing and they resisted all attempts by the social worker to discuss their "other difficulties." On top of this, the Unit was unable to find the family new accommodation, only increasing the family's hostility towards the Unit, which they now regarded as "useless." Eventually, with the help of relatives, the C family found accommodation on the private market, and the Unit feared that this would be the end of the

¹³⁷*Ibid.* 6, 33-34, 36.

contact with the family. Yet only two weeks after relocating, Mrs. C contacted the Unit and requested continuing service in the problems the family had previously refused to discuss.¹³⁸

The problems faced by residents and the Neighbourhood Service Unit became much more acute after April 1966 when the developer speeded up the timetable for redevelopment and residents had to relocate much sooner than expected. Instead of two years, all the families had to move by December 1966. The change in the time table threw a kink into the NSU's mandate. Now the staff had to focus more of their time on the practical details of relocating people, and less on developing methods for helping them with their other social problems. Indeed, as the Unit's final report stated: "Counselling a person around problems other than housing was incongruous in a situation where the bulldozer was already at work demolishing the house next door." In short, the requirements of a rehabilitation service and those of a relocation service were diametrically opposed.¹³⁹

Reluctantly forced to become a relocation agency, the Unit oversaw the relocation of 123 families by the end of December 1966. Of the 123 families forced to move from the area, more than half moved into private housing, mostly in the downtown core. In many instances, these families rejected public housing because they made it clear that under "no circumstances would they leave Toronto - particularly the downtown area of the city." Of these 56, only 18 moved into better housing, and almost as many exchanged deteriorated housing in St. James Town for similar housing elsewhere.¹⁴⁰ For many of these families and individuals they would soon become nomads once again as they had settled in areas soon to

¹³⁸ NSU, "Second Interim Report....," Appendix B.

¹³⁹ Neighbourhood Service Unit, "Final Report....," 2, 5, 29.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

be redeveloped.¹⁴¹

Of those who moved into public housing, the vast majority (38) found accommodation in OHC projects, mostly in the suburbs. All were provided with housing vastly superior to that in St. James Town. They liked the cleanliness of the houses and the new spaciousness, which gave family members greater privacy. According to the social workers, the latter quality was instrumental in solving many family difficulties by reducing tensions within the home. Fathers stayed at home more often, replacing their drinking habits with hobbies such as woodworking; while children no longer felt ashamed to entertain their friends at home. Nonetheless, many still expressed a dissatisfaction with their housing arrangements, mostly due to a sense of isolation from the people and places they had known. Many felt lost and lonely in the suburbs far from shopping and services that were readily accessible downtown. Indeed, St. James Town residents relocated to suburban OHC projects expressed the same litany of complaints about suburban life as suburban relocatees from Alexandra Park: the suburbs were expensive, remote from everyday needs, and lacking in accessible recreational activities for their children. As the authors of the final report claimed the “suburbs [had] not yet realized that there [were] low income families amongst them ... some ... feel left out of things and ‘different’.”¹⁴²

By June 1967, when the NSU wrapped up its activities in the neighbourhood, most St. James Town residents had been scattered to the winds. Some remained in a small block in the western section that would not be developed until 1971. But the majority were gone.

¹⁴¹CTA, RG 3, Series 100, file 122, “Draft of the Second Interim Report...,” 4.

¹⁴²Neighbourhood Service Unit, “Final Report...” 45-46..

In place of their former homes stood a concrete jungle of massive proportions. Home to young executives and Toronto's "swinging singles," St James Town became a much sought after address in the late 1960s. But not for long. In 1968 Meridian, without warning, entered into an agreement with OHC to build two public housing towers. At first the announcement was hailed as a *great step forward in public housing*; it would be a *mixed-development* where rich and poor would rub shoulders and would prevent the area from becoming a slum. The YMCA also entered into the agreement with the developers and the province to provide a recreation centre, in an attempt to integrate the two communities and rid the project of the public housing stigma attached to living in such developments as Regent Park. However, the decision instantly split the community. In the first year after the completion of the OHC built apartments, vacancy rates reached 15 percent in some of the private high-rises. Those who remained wanted to have nothing to do with the public housing tenants. Even the residents of the Barbara Apartments were not entitled to use the recreation centre, though the apartments were owned by Meridian. Perhaps, given the tensions in the development they may not have wanted to. As one mother on welfare said: - "We don't say we're from St. James Town - that's for rich people. We say we live at 335 Bleeker St. in the public housing part."¹⁴³

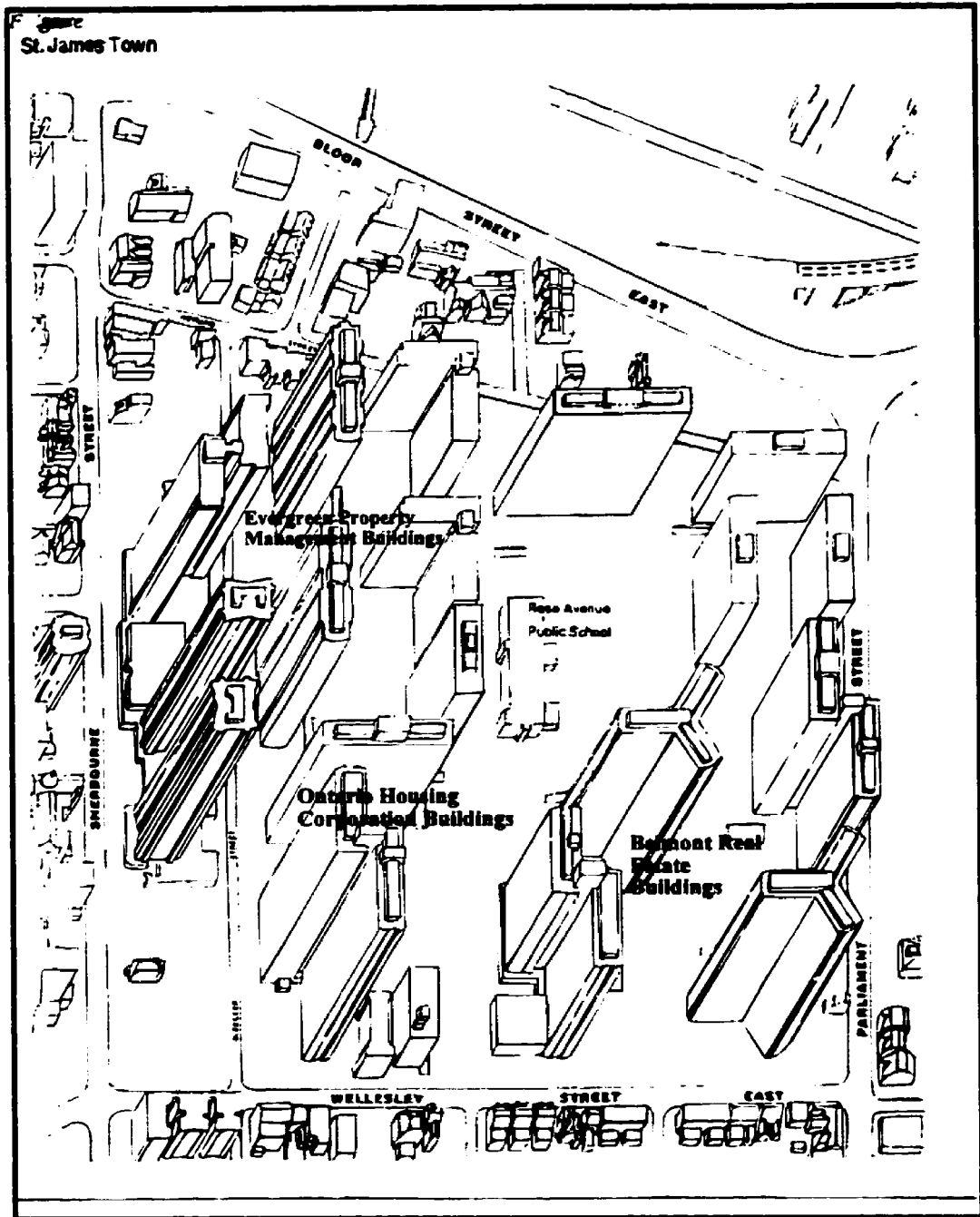
By the 1980s, St. James Town had gone full-circle, from a refuge for low income families, many of them migrants from the Maritimes, to one of Toronto's most prestigious addresses, back to a refuge for low-income immigrant families entering Canada from the Third World. Even upon the completion of the last phase of construction between

¹⁴³Fox and Winton, "A Private Redevelopment Project," 55-57; and *Telegram*, October 20, 1969.

Sherbourne and Bleeker Streets in 1973, the signs of deterioration had already begun to appear (See Figure 5.4). Despite the \$50 million dollar price tag, substandard materials had been used throughout the project, and residents soon began complaining about problems. In addition, the management partnership began to fall apart. By 1973 St. James Town had been split between three landlords - OHC, Evergreen Property Management and Belmont Real Estate. While Belmont tried to keep its properties in good repair, Evergreen almost immediately closed the recreational facilities and common rooms, and began charging residents for repairs. Conditions became so bad that Belmont built a concrete wall and placed barbed wire around the Rose Park apartments to distance its properties from the growing dilapidation to the west. There were also claims that Evergreen began segregating residents on the basis of race. Today, Torontonians are once again wondering what to do with the "shame" of St. James Town.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴Kay Gilead, "St. James Town" unpublished paper, June 1990, 13-15. See also CTPB, Planning and Development Department, *St. James Town Revitalization: Social Analysis*, (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning and Development Department, 1988); and Carolyn Whitzman, "Toronto Report: Community & Design: Against the Solution St. James Town," *City Magazine*, 11 (Summer/Fall, 1989), 32-36.

Figure 5.4



Source: City of Toronto Planning and Development Department, *St. James Town Revitalization: Social Analysis* (Toronto: Planning and Development Department, 1989), 4.

St. James Town 1988

“The Crusader of Pembroke Street”: June Marks’ Enquiry into City Sponsored Block-Busting

I charge that the Buildings Department is soft on absentee landlords, particularly real estate developers, when it comes to prosecuting infractions of the Buildings By-law, and concentrates on owner-occupied homes who are discouraged because of the ‘block-busting’ tactics of the developer-speculators which cast a pall over entire areas. These block-busting tacts consist of purchasing a few older homes and introducing undesirable tenants who overcrowd and despoil the premises so that the neighbours are compelled to sell to the developer-speculator, who proceeds to extend the process of letting the houses run-down and further increasing overcrowding. By appearing to offer low rents (in gross sums) the Housing Registry and the Welfare Department are led to recommend these homes. ... I charge that without either the ignorance of the responsible officials, or their connivance, the developer-speculators would not be able to carry out their ‘block-busting’ activities.¹⁴⁵

And on it went in one charge after another, firing a slingshot of accusations against anyone she could think might even be remotely involved in running down inner-city neighbourhoods. When challenged to substantiate her charges, Marks quickly went to work gathering evidence and support for her allegations in petitions and letters from central-city residents. To help her on her fact-finding mission in “Toronto’s tenderloin,” she hired 25 university students to go door-to-door in central-city neighbourhoods to provide details of the poor housing conditions and evidence from tenants about the nefarious activities of their landlords and welfare department officials. The “phone-book size,” 3^{1/4} pound, document she delivered to City Council on July 7, 1965, outlining the disgusting conditions under which many Torontonians lived, once again raised the battle cry against the slums to a fever pitch. Though she and others hoped that it would provoke Torontonians out of their apathy,

¹⁴⁵CTA, RG 3, Series 100, File 119, Submission of Alderman June Marks with respect to the administration of the Buildings Department and the Department of Welfare to the Mayor and members of the Board of Control, July 6, 1965.

only the ensuing media circus, which surrounded the report and the judicial enquiry into her charges, did.

June Marks knew first hand the degenerating conditions of inner-city neighbourhoods. A resident of Pembroke Street, located only a stone's throw from Moss Park, for nearly 25 years, she watched her street slowly disintegrate from a decent working-class neighbourhood to the heart of Toronto's "tolerated tenderloin." Born in the north end of the city, she moved downtown with her mother at the age of 17. During the war she married Nicholas Marks, a postal employee, and the two settled down in a large 14-room house on Pembroke Street, and proceeded to raise a family of four children. Like most inner-city, working-class families, they could only afford such a house by renting out the upper floor to cover the mortgage and pay for regular maintenance costs. When they first moved to their house on Pembroke Street, the area contained a mixture of residents, ranging from working-class families like the Marks to middle-class and professional people, including a judge who lived across the street, and a number of clergymen. However, as in St. Jamestown, by the late 1950s, real estate companies began to speculate that the area would become zoned for high-rise apartments, and began buying out original residents. Area homes like the Marks' were large and were soon transformed into rooming houses, or in the common discourse of the slum - rabbit warrens, - which were soon filled by "drug peddlers and strumpets."¹⁴⁶ Working-class residents, who had relied on the income of boarders and sub-tenants, soon found that the conditions in the neighbourhood precluded them from "getting the right kind of people" for tenants. Over the years, the Marks witnessed their neighbours leaving one-by-one, the last

¹⁴⁶Dick Snell, "She's Making Her Marks," *Toronto Star*, March 10, 1965, 23.

one apologizing that “they just could not hold out any longer.”¹⁴⁷

Neighbours and family members tried to convince Marks to move from the area for her safety and that of her children; she had been accosted by men who cruised the streets searching for the nearly forty prostitutes who worked the area. Marks refused; she and her family had sunk roots in the neighbourhood, becoming active in the home and school association, the church, and increasingly in the Ward 2 South Residents and Ratepayers Association. Instead of leaving, Marks decided that she would stay and fight. The ferocity and commitment she devoted to cleaning up the neighbourhood soon earned her the title “The Crusader of Pembroke Street.”

Her first foray into local politics began with the death of two neighbourhood children when a truck ran them down near her Pembroke Street home. She went to City Hall to demand a ban trucks on area side streets and to turn Pembroke into a one-way street. Her activities soon brought her into the ratepayers’ association and she became president in 1955. While president of the association, she fought successful battles for the Moss Park housing project, and the Metropolitan Toronto Licensing Commission’s restaurant vice-probe, which forced the closure of a number of notorious neighbourhood restaurants - Norm's Grill, Wilton Restaurant, and Spot One - because of their connection to local prostitution rings.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷Paul Hunt. “Our Rotting Core,” *Toronto Telegram*, January 18, 1965, 23.

¹⁴⁸The following were letters submitted by Marks in her deposition regarding slumlords. The listings for 1958 are those in association with her support for the Moss Park redevelopment scheme, while those for 1959 and 1963 concern “vice” conditions in the neighbourhood. The numbers refer to the affidavit submitted by Marks for the Forsyth Inquiry. RG 3, Series 100, file 119, #250 Marks to Mayor and Board of Control, June 23, 1958; #255 Roland Michner to Marks, December 30, 1958; #256 Jean Newman to Marks, June 12, 1958; #251 William Allen (Chairman of Metropolitan Toronto) to Marks, June 24, 1963; #252 William Dennison to Magistrate Charles O. Bick (Commissioner of Police), September 3, 1963, and Dennison to Marks, September, 19, 1963; and #254, Jean Newman, June 4, 1959.

However, it was her concern with declining housing conditions which brought her to City Council during the elections of 1964. Marks and the Ward 2 Ratepayers' Association had been involved with the Social Planning Council's Central District Housing Committee since its inception in 1961. The Planning Board's release of the *Don Area Appraisal* in 1963, which outlined urban renewal plans for the district, reawakened interests in housing issues. Led by Marks, area residents formed the Don Branch of the Central District Housing Committee, and communicated area residents' reaction to the city's plans for the area as well as complaints about how the city had allowed conditions to deteriorate in the area. Citizens were particularly incensed that the Planning Board had referred to their area as "skid row" in the report. They were "upstanding members of the community and wanted to live in dignity and with some security." They were responsible people and wanted to keep their properties in good repair until, and if, expropriation took place, and they encouraged their neighbours to do the same. They claimed that years of indecision hanging over the neighbourhood were largely responsible for the declining conditions. They also demanded that despite the redevelopment plans, the city should provide full services to the area.¹⁴⁹

During her campaign she attacked absentee landlords and launched a crusade against slum conditions in her ward and across the city. Distressed by the situation in St. James Town, Marks became more bold in her accusations, which were now involving the malfeasance and complicity of city departments. In June 1965, she brought allegations to City Council that various city departments, notably the Buildings Department and the

¹⁴⁹CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 4, file 22, "Summary of Central Neighbourhood House Involvement in Community Activity 1964"; Box 9, file 5, "Report of Meeting Between Residents of Don Sub-Area 3 and City Planning Board," February, 12, 1964; and Box 9, file 5, "Don Valley Between September 1961 and January 1964."

Department of Public Welfare, were aiding and abetting developers and slumlords in their block-busting of inner-city neighbourhoods. Asked by Alderman Menzies if she was willing to have a judicial enquiry determine the truth of her allegations, she declined. Instead, she asked the Board if she could have a month to gather evidence to support her allegations, so that city officials could explain their actions and policies.¹⁵⁰ The report she delivered to the Board of Control on July 7, 1965, was nothing short of sensational, in all senses of the word. The 324 documents she gathered included reports on the houses and block-busting tactics of some of Toronto's most notorious slum landlords. It also included hundreds of letters and petitions from downtown residents in support of her charges.

The depositions in Marks' report identified a number of prominent slum landlords, including Alex Cowley, William Stein, Jerry Bratty and Gary Bluestein, Herman Airst, and Charles Ingwer, who was once again back in the block-busting business. In every case, the allegations against them and their properties were astounding. In all, the report specifically listed 92 properties in the central city owned by these landlords, and nearly every house visited listed numerous complaints. The properties fell under the typical descriptions of slums. They were almost universally described as foul smelling, filthy, with cracks in the walls and garbage in the backyards. In others, roofs and pipes leaked, while some had gaping holes in the walls and floors. Rooming houses rarely had proper fire escapes or more than one bathroom for as many as two dozen inhabitants accommodated therein. In still others, people lived in basements. Some of the houses were in decent condition, while others were "no worse than the rest of the street." Even then, this was "not saying much." In other cases,

¹⁵⁰CTA, WDC, SC 302, Box 8, file 11, William Dennison to Naomi Riddell, (President Spadina Young New Democrats), July 6, 1965.

there were no words that could describe the conditions - once again they "had to be seen to be believed."¹⁵¹

Most scandalous were the various types of vermin which infested these properties. The depositions in the reports listed infestations of cockroaches, bedbugs, and other household pests. In some houses, tenants left the lights on in their bedrooms to keep the cockroaches from crawling all over them, their children, and their clothes. Worst of all, however, were the rats that crawled out from beneath cupboards and miraculously up from toilet bowls. Indeed, Marks' report all but declared 1965 as the "year of the rat" in central Toronto. Mothers claimed that they saw them everywhere, including in their baby's cribs. In one highly publicized incident on Trefann Street in the weeks just prior to the judicial inquiry, a baby was admitted to hospital after being "attacked by a rat while it slept."¹⁵² Under the headline, "Rat Chews Cabbagetown Baby, Leaves Head a Mass of Blood," the *Toronto Star* emphasized that such stories "cruelly dramatiz[ed] the bureaucratic jousting which [kept] low income families from decent housing they can afford."¹⁵³ This was undoubtedly true in one regard, but newspapers noted that the presence of rats on Trefann Street was not always as straightforward as it appeared. What the headline stories only vaguely mentioned, but follow-up stories often emphasized, were the complicity of tenants in the creation of slum environments. In this particular case, the press later reported that the tenants had been given rat poison by the city and by June Marks. Furthermore, the family

¹⁵¹CTA. RG 3, Series 100, files 118-119. June Marks Enquiry Depositions. Quote from file 118, Deposition #60, "Comments unsigned re various locations belonging to William and Mildred Oskenberg, c/o 462 Parliament Street."

¹⁵²"Rat Chews Cabbagetown Baby, Leaves Head a Mass of Blood," *Toronto Star*, September 3, 1965, 1, 8.

¹⁵³Ron Haggart, "The Role of the Press in the Slum Probe," *Toronto Star*, October 4, 1965, 7.

were the poorest housekeepers on the street. The Buildings Department had been called to the house numerous times that year to order the family to clean up the house and the backyard, both of which were littered with food and auto parts. Moreover, Marks' researchers could not find fault with the landlord, Harry Solomon, and specifically reported that no other Solomon tenants or Trefann Street residents had complained of rat, cockroach, or bedbug problems. In fact, the other tenants on the street wanted the family evicted because of the "stench" emanating from the house.¹⁵⁴ As with most "slum stories" there was more than one way to interpret the presence of vermin. Nonetheless, both Marks and the media continued to use the highly-value laden image of the rat as an exemplary facet of slum housing. Marks was not above livening up her speeches by unveiling a dead rat, as she did during her campaign for a seat on the Board of Control in 1966. To Marks and others, the ubiquitous slum rat represented more than the plague of slum housing infecting the central city, but also the "dirty rat" developer-speculators who threatened to infest every downtown neighbourhood.¹⁵⁵

Some of the landlords had been known to city departments and area residents for years. Alex Cowley's name increasingly found its way into the Building Department's records, and eventually onto newspaper pages. Cowley had been purchasing houses in a neighbourhood just north of Regent Park, bounded by Sackville, Carlton, Spruce, and Parliament since the mid 1950s in anticipation of redevelopment for high-rise apartments and

¹⁵⁴Ron Haggart, "The Role of the Press in the Slum Probe," *Toronto Star*, October 4, 1965, 7; "Rat News Cabbagetown Baby, Leaves Head a Mass of Blood," *Toronto Star*, September 3, 1965, 1 & 8; and CTA, RG 3, Series, 100, file 118, Depositions #222-23, "Unsigned comments on houses owned by Harry Solomon."

¹⁵⁵*Toronto Star*, "Dead Rat perks up campaign," November, 30, 1966, 25.

a shopping centre. By the early 1960s, he had virtually sown up control of the area by acquiring 38 houses, approximately one-quarter of the area's domiciles. Residents, however, had enough of his block-busting tactics. According to home owners, Cowley had approached all of them seeking to purchase their properties, but when they refused they claimed he proceeded to crowd the houses with "people nobody else wants - bums and winos."¹⁵⁶ One area resident referred to some of Cowley's rooming houses as "Peyton Place," and complained that Cowley's houses had turned the entire Carlton Street area into a den of rouses and thieves: "you can't walk to the store without seeing a bunch of winos and prostitutes."¹⁵⁷

Cowley admitted that he was ashamed of the state of his houses and of the tenants who inhabited them, yet he denied any ulterior motives. According to him, he tried to rent to respectable tenants, but there were none to be found. He also denied that any of his properties were rooming houses, claiming he only let to single families. However, like the developers in St. James Town, Cowley turned a blind eye to the goings on in his properties. According to city assessment records, four of his houses in the area were listed as rooming houses run by Leo McGrath, who in turn had recently turned them over to another landlord.¹⁵⁸ He also disputed the accusations that the Buildings Department was negligent in enforcing the building by-laws. In 1964 alone, he claimed, he was cited and convicted three times of

¹⁵⁶RG 3, Series, 100, file 119, Deposition #21, Newspaper clipping "Firm Accused as Slum Maker." *Toronto Telegram* October 4, 1963."

¹⁵⁷RG 3, Series, 100, file 119, Deposition #21 Newspaper clipping, "Firm Accused as Slum Maker," *Toronto Telegram*, October 4, 1963;" Deposition #59, Richard Powell (313 Carlton Street) to William Dennison, November 28, 1963; Deposition #26, "Unsigned comments regarding block Carlton, Sackville, Parliament and Spruce Streets;" and Deposition #30, Newspaper clipping, "Denies Making Riverdale Slum," *Toronto Star*, October 4, 1963.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*

contravening the housing standards by-laws.¹⁵⁹

Perhaps first and foremost, Marks brought her allegations to City Council because of her belief that the city's Building Department was not only "soft" on absentee landlords, but that it "pestered" owner-occupiers for "apparently insignificant infractions."¹⁶⁰ Because of this, she assumed that "speculators must have connections which permit them to carry on in breach of the bylaws." Marks was not alone in feeling unfairly pestered and victimized by the Buildings Department. Since the city had stepped up its inspections of inner-city neighbourhoods in 1955, after a rooming house fire on Dundas Street East, inner-city residents resented the inspection of their houses and the "singling" out of their neighbourhood by the Department.¹⁶¹ The reason they felt hounded by the department was due to what they felt were excessively rigid building standards established by the city, especially regarding the conversion of single-family dwellings into "rooming houses." According to Controller William Dennison, who represented inner-city residents in the Don area, where conversions to rooming houses were prevalent:

Toronto has a very high and seemingly rigid building code standard which sometimes works a hardship on the owner of three-storey house in the older sections of the city - owner of a new house in which only a single family lives is permitted to have only one stairway from the first to the second floor. However, the moment he starts to rent out a few rooms in order to assist in making a living, building inspectors demand that two stairways be provided, and that the stairways to the third floor be covered in with gyprock and a fire-proof door put on. In many older houses, as you will see when you examine them, this makes for a great destruction and ugliness of the interior of the house and also makes it much less desirable for any future single-family use.

¹⁵⁹-"Wellwood denies city soft on Slum landlords," *Toronto Star*, September 24, 1965, 30.

¹⁶⁰Ron Haggart, "The judge declared open season on smear," *Toronto Star*, December 1, 1965, 7.

¹⁶¹-"Claims Rooming House By-Law Discriminatory," *Toronto Star*, June 21, 1956, 2; and "Rap Rooming House Laws Need Army of Snoopers," August 22, 1956, 1.

The house has therefore been for all time made into a rooming house with little chance of it ever reverting to single family use again. I have argued with the building inspectors that some thought should be given to easing this very rigid requirement.¹⁶²

For these reasons much of the conversion of single-family houses into multiple units or into rooming houses, was done in defiance or ignorance of the law. Yet according to unionist John Lee, himself familiar with inner-city housing, such “incomplete” or illegal conversions were:

an essential part of the solution of the average working man buying a house ... in older Toronto areas. ... [If he abides by the letter of the law] ... the owner occupier is faced with two unpleasant choices.. He can reduce the occupancy of the dwelling to meet the law, which means an immediate loss of income, or he can retain the high occupancy ... by making expensive alterations... [or] he can sell and move away. But to do this and recoup anything approaching his investment in the house ...the owner will have to deceive the potential buyer into thinking he is getting a multiple units house. Result: present owner out of the trap and someone else in.

Indeed, Lee asked how the Buildings Department could view such owner occupiers as “anything but ... troublemaker[s], [if not] ... perhaps ... tragedy-maker[s] as well?”¹⁶³

Marks’ charges that the Buildings Department was soft on absentee owners was nothing new: Not one year had gone by since the end of the war when the Department had not been criticized for its lax enforcement of the city’s housing standards. Most of these allegations stipulated negligence and incompetence on behalf of the Department, and perhaps the lack of resources allocated to the department by City Council. The allegations against the Department this time, however, insinuated that the Department was responsible

¹⁶²CTA. JMC. SC 305, Box 10, File 12, W. Dennison to Donald F. Bellamy Secretary, Consultative Committee on Housing Policies for the City of Toronto, s.d. 1965.

¹⁶³CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 127 file 7, Memo from John A. Lee (Ontario Hydro Employee’s Union) to Mr. M Hancock, Chairman, Housing Committee, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, May 5, 1961, 2.

for the conditions because it had “gone easy with the developers.” In response to Marks’ allegations, the Department vigorously denied that it was “soft on developers.” In fact, Buildings Commissioner Frank Wellwood noted that it had vigorously opposed Council’s requests to relax its enforcement of the by-law for private redevelopment projects. Prior to Marks’ allegations, Wellwood warned City Council that:

The city should in addition consider the plight of tenants of the buildings within the private re-development project. Having in mind that the regulations contained in the Standard of Housing By-law are extremely minimal and that the buildings within the project may remain and be rented as living accommodation for a period of years between optioning and clearance there seems little justification for even further reducing these standards of occupancy for such lengthy periods. ... If the By-laws are not enforced the neglect to the properties may result in an accumulation of maintenance requirements that will be costly to rectify, and this in turn, will make it relatively difficult for these owners to restore the condition of their properties so that it can continue as a sound and satisfactory residential area.¹⁶⁴

Yet, Wellwood had more than simply tenants’ interests at heart in opposing City Council’s instructions to relax its enforcement. He also supported the claims of home-owners that the lack of repairs that often accompanied properties waiting to be redeveloped had “a depressing effect on the values of other properties in the general area.” He also went so far as to suggest, as did inner-city owner-occupiers, that developers planned such deterioration to depress property values for cheaper acquisition. Finally, he also worried about what might happen to home owners whose properties had been optioned and then not required for the redevelopment. After allowing their property to decline they would then be forced to catch up, making it even more difficult and costly for them to continue occupying their homes, or

¹⁶⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 11, file 5, Department of Buildings, Joint Report of April 26, 1965 Concerning Reduced Housing Standards Requiring Minimum Repairs Necessary for Reason of Health and Safety in Redevelopment and Improvement Areas of the City.

selling them on the open market.¹⁶⁵

Numerous examples can be quoted of private re-development projects which involved lengthy periods of time between optioning and ultimate clearance. One example, however, is well known to all members of the Committee which is the area originally known as the Parliament Syndicate project, various parts of which have been developed by a succession of developers and parts of which are at present being developed by a new developer.¹⁶⁶

As for the specific allegations, the Department claimed that all of the properties under question had not only been inspected, but had been brought up to standard on numerous occasions in the past five years. To be sure, these houses kept the Buildings Department busy and they returned frequently to reinspect them. One particular property (167 Sherbourne Street) owned by an absentee landlord mentioned in Marks' report had been issued summonses for repairs in 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, and 1965, and each time they were completed to the Department's satisfaction.¹⁶⁷ According to Wellwood, the rapid deterioration of such houses, was due mostly to age and normal wear and tear, although he also claimed that a lot of it was due to the willful destruction by the occupants.¹⁶⁸ He also reminded city officials that the city by-laws governing building standards only established "minimum standards" concerning health and safety. Buildings could comply with the by-law and yet look run-down and still fall far short of providing ideal accommodation.¹⁶⁹

Wellwood also disputed Marks' claims that his department unduly harassed home owners. He pointed out that although the number of notices of by-law violations were split

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Ron Haggart, "June Marks aimed mud in a slingshot," *Toronto Star*, July 21, 1965, 7.

¹⁶⁸ RG 3, Series 100 File 120, Interim Report of the Department of Buildings Re: Submission Regarding housing conditions by Alderman Marks, July 20, 1965, 5

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 4-5

almost equally between absentee landlords and owner-occupiers, the Department was more likely to take recalcitrant absentee landlords to court to force them to undertake repairs, than they were owner-occupiers. According to Buildings Department reports, in 1964, 85 absentee-owners were issued summonses as compared with 36 owner-occupiers. Moreover, the average fine was \$18.80 for owner occupants and \$25.77 for absentee owners. Similarly, the costs of repairs demanded by the Department for absentee landlords were nearly double those demanded for owner-occupiers. For the most part, the great differential in cost was due to the type of repairs to each type of dwelling. Houses owned by absentee landlords were more likely to have external structural defects, including roofs, eaves, and brickwork, while owner occupiers had more internal repairs. But the Department also released some interesting statistics which confirmed John Lee's claims above. According to Department figures, buildings occupied as "lodging houses" amounted to approximately 20 percent for owner occupants, as compared with roughly 10 percent for absentee owners, and that illegal cellar occupancy existed in 3.3 percent for owner occupants as compared to 2.1 percent for absentee owners.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, overcrowding was more than twice as prevalent in owner-occupied units than in those owned by absentee landlords.¹⁷¹ Thus, whether they intended to or not, owner-occupiers had a significant impact on the creation of "slum housing."

Though Marks was particularly concerned with the inability or unwillingness of the Buildings Department to prosecute by-law violations for absentee landlords, the second prong of her attack on the slums concerned the activities of the Welfare Department. As with the

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁷¹ City of Toronto, Buildings Department, Housing Inspection Branch, *Annual Report*, 1965, 10-13.

charges against the Buildings Department, the city's Welfare Department had long been accused of subsidizing slums by placing its clients in run-down housing. Once again, like the "Blot on the Face of the City" exposé, Marks' exposé intended to draw attention to the demoralization of the inner-city poor. Affidavit after affidavit began with "the welfare department sent me to" followed by a litany of defects with the dwelling. More important than the physical defects of the dwellings, however, were the social and moral failings. In their desperate search for housing, welfare families were once again forced to live alongside winos, drug addicts, sex perverts, and prostitutes. Families, especially those led by single women, often lived in constant terror. Many women claimed that they were assaulted by the "house-managers," especially when they complained about the living conditions or the illicit goings on in the houses.¹⁷² One woman stated that at the accommodation the welfare department found her family "my fellow roomers were petty thieves and winos. A gang of Indians would drink shaving lotion and fight. I believe that two girls living downstairs were prostitutes." She concluded that she had "seen more of life since I came under the jurisdiction of Welfare than I ever had before." "But perhaps more importantly," she claimed "living with these people you start to go to pot and you even sometimes stop caring."¹⁷³

Though Marks' charges and the newspaper reports of the moral conditions to which welfare tenants were subjected were nothing new, Marks also claimed that the Department was not simply negligent but that the Housing Officer, J.A. Sole, was in cahoots with slumlords. Marks' charges stemmed from a number of affidavits she collected. According

¹⁷²CTA. RG 3, Series 100, file 119, Deposition #75, "Statutory Declaration of Miss Eileen Walker, 115 Pembroke St, June 6, 1965.

¹⁷³...[saw a rat in baby's crib mother writes June Marks." *Toronto Star*, July 13, 1965, 15.

to the testimony of Mrs. Dorothy Faulkenham, formerly the superintendent of rooming houses owned by landlord William Stein at 72 and 74 Wellesley St. East, she had been instructed by Mr. Stein to "fill the place with people ...it doesn't matter who it is, but fill up the rooms." She noted that people arrived for accommodation with a note from the Welfare Department indicating that Mr. Stein knew the procedure in housing welfare families.¹⁷⁴ Welfare workers, she testified, had visited the houses, but never inspected the conditions, despite the fact that the houses often accommodated as many as 24 people and had only one washroom.¹⁷⁵ Marks also presented testimony from a former welfare visitor who reported that she was deeply disturbed by the fact that the Department maintained "an apparently close connection with slum landlords."¹⁷⁶

However, the crux of Marks' allegations against the Welfare Department rested with the circumstantial testimony of Elizabeth Brandt, a young mother of six on welfare who had been placed in a house owned by William Stein by the Department of Welfare. She claimed that she saw Welfare Department housing officer J. Alex Sole meet slum landlords William Stein, Gary Bluestein and Jerry Bratty in Club Harmonie "quite often." Mrs. Brandt first approached Marks about her poor housing conditions when a doctor from the Hospital for Sick Children, who was treating her children for bedbug bites, referred her to Marks. Because Brandt lived in Ward 1, Marks referred the complaint to Alderman Oliver Sigsworth, who promptly told Mrs. Brandt that he had more "important things to do" and that

¹⁷⁴Documents Indicate City in Middle of Landlord-Tenant Tug of War," *Globe and Mail*, July 13, 1965, 4.

¹⁷⁵RG 3, Series 100, file 119, #100 Statement of Mrs. Dorothy Faulkenham, 72 Wellesley St. East, June 17, 1965; and "Documents Indicate City in Middle of Landlord-Tenant Tug-of-War," *Globe and Mail*, July 13, 1965, 4.

¹⁷⁶CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 9, file 10, Sworn Deposition from Margaret Elisabeth Martell, September 22, 1965.

she should call the Welfare Department with her complaints. If she did not get anywhere with them, then she could call him back.

Brandt had been abandoned by her husband in 1961, forcing her to rely on welfare. In that emergency, the Welfare Department found her a house at 2 Flager Street. Here she complained that her house was infested with rats, had missing windows, and was inadequately heated. She then moved to 41 Brooklyn Street, where the living conditions were no better. Unable to cope with the deplorable accommodations, she checked herself into hospital after having a nervous breakdown. On May 12, 1965, she claimed in her affidavit, she went to Club Harmonie for a cup of coffee and was then invited upstairs by a man she preferred not to name on the grounds that it might "damage his marriage and his career." It was there she said she saw Sole and Stein together. She identified Stein, but said that a waitress told her that the other man was housing officer Sole. According to the waitress, the two men, sometimes joined by "Gary" (Bluestein) and "Jerry" (Bratty), reserved a conference room where they met every Wednesday between 1 and 3 o'clock in the afternoon. She also claimed that since the Marks report had been made public, she had received numerous threats on her and her family's lives. Someone connected to William Stein also offered her \$5,000 to "forget her testimony," a sum that could easily buy her better accommodations. However, testimony from waitresses at the club failed to support her testimony as anything other than hearsay. Marks' case against the Welfare Department was rapidly falling apart.¹⁷⁷

On the charges that the Welfare Department placed clients in poor housing, the

¹⁷⁷CTA, DPW, RG 3, Series 100 File 119, Sworn Deposition of Elizabeth Brandt; and "\$5,000 offer if I'd Forget Slum Probe Witness Tells Judge," *Toronto Star*, September 21, 1965, 1, 3.

housing officer J.A. Sole all but pled no contest. As the Buildings Commissioner's 1965 Report revealed, more than one-third of dwellings occupied by welfare families contravened the city's housing standards by-laws, and nearly two-thirds of these had higher numbers of deficiencies than was encountered in normal inspections throughout the city. None of the dwellings, however, were found upon inspection to be structurally unsound or to require demolition.¹⁷⁸ Sole noted though that the responsibility for the situation lay not with the Department's co-operation with slumlords, but rather with the extreme shortage of housing available for low income families, especially large families. The increased number of cases for which the Department was being asked to find "emergency housing" simply overtaxed its resources. The Department had neither the staff nor the time to inspect all the dwellings in which it placed its clients. Nonetheless, the Department still tried to do what it could to ensure that its clients received the best accommodation possible. In 1965 alone, welfare workers referred nearly 400 dwellings to the Buildings Department for inspection.¹⁷⁹ As it had done before on numerous occasions, the Department emphasized that it in no way forced its clients to take the housing it located for them, but since there were few options available to these families, there was not much the Department or their clients could do but accept.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, even the testimony of the welfare visitor Marks used to bolster her case against the Department claimed that her statement pointed mostly towards "the humanly intolerable social and economic structure within which the Department is forced to work; they are not to be interpreted as a criticism of the Welfare Department itself; they are rather a criticism

¹⁷⁸City of Toronto, Buildings Department, Housing Inspection Branch, *Annual Report, 1965*, 8-9.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰"Marks," *Toronto Star*, September 22, 1965, 2

of the public opinion that has forced the Department to do such things as maintain a close relationship with slum landlords.”¹⁸¹ In addition, numerous welfare families testified before the enquiry that the Department had found them clean and comfortable dwellings, including Mrs. Brandt who admitted that the house at 41 Brooklyn, which supposedly drove her to a nervous breakdown, was “as clean as a house could be” when the Welfare Department first sent her there.¹⁸²

Thirty-seven witnesses and 200,000 words of testimony later Judge Forsyth handed down his decision.¹⁸³ According to Forsyth, Marks had not presented any substantial evidence of wrong doing on behalf of city employees. Nonetheless he still placed the majority of the blame for the existence of “slum conditions” in Toronto’s core on the city government in general. For this, the judge praised Marks’ report. Despite the failure of the enquiry to blame specific individuals, the report had a tremendous impact on city housing policies; not the least of which was the passage of stricter housing standards by-laws which went beyond simple health and safety standards to cover maintenance. In addition, it led to the formation of the Consultative Committee on Housing, led by Albert Rose. But most important, it confirmed that there was nothing that could be done to save the inner-city short of public urban renewal projects, which Toronto had on the backburner for years.

Conclusion

By 1966, Toronto was a city held under siege by redevelopment. Here was the

¹⁸¹CTA. JMC, SC 305, Box 9, file 10, Sworn Deposition from Margaret Elisabeth Martell, September 22, 1965.

¹⁸²Ron Haggart, “The Role of the Press in the Slum Probe,” *Toronto Star*, October 4, 1965, 7.

¹⁸³“Mother Threatens to Give up Children,” *Toronto Star*, September 30, 1965, 2.

paradox of Boomtown Toronto. By the mid 1960s, all of the hopes and dreams of Toronto's boosters appeared to be coming true; all across the city rose gleaming new high-rise apartments and office towers. And yet, at no time since the immediate postwar period was there so much fear and anxiety among its residents, particularly those living in older inner-city neighbourhoods. Where planners, politicians, and developers saw the benefits of growth, residents saw its costs, particularly the disappearance of affordable family housing. As residents of the city's oldest homes, they knew that their neighbourhoods remained prime targets for redevelopment, both public and private. While many hoped to profit by selling out to developers, others were quite rightly afraid that the city's complicity in the debacle in St. James Town had given developers free licence to plunder inner-city neighbourhoods. To make matters worse, anything left untargeted by private developers was soon earmarked for public acquisition and redevelopment. By 1965, the Planning Board had identified nearly sixty "pockets of blight" crying out for redevelopment, while the Ontario Housing Corporation was busy buying up low cost suburban houses and land for public housing. This activity and the fears it produced, as the preceding pages have illustrated, were amplified by the news media. Given that Torontonians were reminded day after day that the city's "slums" were growing as fast as the apartment towers that replaced them, it was no wonder, as Albert Rose claimed, "[that] citizens in many [inner-city] neighbourhoods began to view their futures with such trepidation that they felt they had nothing to lose in their resistance to the progress of urban development."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴A. Rose. *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 144.

Chapter 6

Urban Renewal in Toronto, 1963-70: "The Same Old Bulldozer"¹

Since when has the city come to the people and asked them any questions, listened to their ideas, or consulted them as to what is needed or desired in the area slated for redevelopment? The answer is: never once. All the redevelopment areas in Toronto: Alexandra Park, Don Mount Village, and now Trefann Court were ready-made packages handed down to us, and we are then told to put up or shut up. When are our "highly qualified" and "professional" city planners going to realize that we are fellow human beings, that we have families and children whom we care for, that we have a way of life that we value, that the majority of us like the area and would have wanted to see it improved rather than torn down? Instead the planners and politicians treat us as if we were children or idiots or scum (they call us "slum dwellers" to justify their high-handed methods) and our opinions and feelings are worth nothing at all.²

Mrs. Pat Rice

Trefann Court resident Pat Rice had not lived an easy life. She had lived in the Trefann Court area most of her life. Abandoned by her husband, with eight children and dependent on Mothers' Assistance, she also knew the nomadic existence that many low-income Torontonians were forced to endure to find decent and affordable housing for her family. Indeed, her plight as a "slum dweller" had first come to Torontonians' attention, albeit anonymously, nearly a decade before she made the above statement, when her life became the focus of a *Toronto Star* editorial entitled "Child Sleeps on Chair in Slum," written by June Rowlands, later Mayor of Toronto, but then a prominent member of the Association of Women Electors.³ Both Rice and Rowlands would soon find themselves at the centre of Toronto's battles over urban renewal and community organization, when they formed a separate organization for Trefann Court tenants. However, in the fall of 1966, Pat Rice felt

¹Hans Blumenfeld cited in *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (March 31, 1967), 8-9.

²Pat Rice cited in *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (September, 1966), 10.

³Personal Interview with June Rowlands, August 10, 1996. See June Rowlands, "Child Sleeps on Chair in Slums," *Toronto Star*, February 4, 1956, 6.

that she and her neighbours had been pushed around enough and were now going to stand together to defeat the city's attempt to destroy their neighbourhood.

What happened in the small neighbourhood of Trefann Court between 1966 and 1970 symbolized the failure of national and local housing policies to address the housing needs and desires of working-class Torontonians. It also vividly represented the effects that public and private renewal programs had on inner-city residents. The following chapter examines the rapid rise and fall of urban renewal in Toronto between 1963 and 1968, when the battles waged in three inner-city neighbourhoods - Trefann Court, Don Mount, and Don Vale - brought the city's and Canada's urban renewal program crashing to a halt. Much of the story of this period in Toronto's history of urban development has been studied in great detail, and so many will probably be familiar with the outlines of the events.⁴ The aim of the chapter, then, is not to provide a detailed account of the battles waged in each neighbourhood, previous monographs do an excellent job of this already; rather, it is to reveal the connections, as well as the discontinuities, with the previous thirty years of urban renewal and slum clearance in Toronto.

Much of the historiography of this period of urban renewal in Toronto tends to be proto-populist in its approach. Written at time of great upheaval, these commentaries tend to overemphasize the idea of community organization as "power to the people." Interests at City Hall, and within the neighbourhoods, tend to be analysed in terms of "the interests" vs.

⁴See Graham Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court*, (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972); John Sewell *Up Against City Hall* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1972); James Lorimer and Myfanwy Phillips, *Working People: Life in a Downtown Neighbourhood* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1971); James Lorimer, *The Real World of City Politics* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1970).

“the people,” rather than along class lines. As a result, most studies tend to interpret the splits which inevitably occurred within home owner groups and between home owners and tenants as fostered by city hall and meddling outsiders to divide and conquer the otherwise “real” convictions of the community. This is not to say that these studies neglect the incidences of internal tensions and conflicts that emerged within these communities. However, when meddling outside interests cannot be located, they tend to explain intergroup conflict in terms of the antagonistic attitudes, lifestyles, and social attributes (such as ethnicity, and class, but not in a structural sense). As the following pages reveal, much of this is true. The duplicity of city officials and abrasive personalities placed difficult, and sometimes insurmountable, barriers in the way of a successful defence of community interests. However, one cannot assume the existence of a community interest, before, during, or after the experience of urban renewal, as many of these studies tend to do. In short, the development of community solidarity must be problematised rather than assumed.

This fuzzy conception of community is perhaps the chief flaw of many of the existing studies of community organization in Toronto. In the eyes of many of these early studies of urban renewal, the mere living in a particular geographic area, such as Don Vale or Trefann Court, automatically qualified a resident as part of the community. No doubt, within these neighbourhoods a sense of community, that is shared meanings, sentimental attachments to locally-based people, institutions, and places, and interpersonal networks of recognition and reciprocity which develop over time among the proximate inhabitants of a common territory, existed in Trefann Court, Don Vale, and Don Mount.⁵ There is also no doubting that these

⁵John E. Davis, *Contested Ground: Collective Action and the Urban Neighbourhood* (Cornell University (continued...))

communities acted collectively on the basis of interests and solidarities that were endemic to the places themselves.⁶ However, what Sewell's, Fraser's and Lorimer's studies failed to analyze was how inner-city people became conscious of the interests of their neighbourhoods. Yes, the threat of expropriation and displacement hung like a pall over their streets, but other Torontonians had faced similar situations over the past two decades and urban renewal had not engendered widespread conflict prior to 1965. In short, to quote Charles Tilly, "of course communities act," but the very existence of community action demands a better understanding of the conditions under which such action takes place in the first place.⁷

To get a better grip on why community organization against urban renewal became such a divisive issue, not only between the affected neighbourhoods and state authorities, but more importantly within these very neighbourhoods, we must examine the structural roots of the conflicts. By presenting the conflict over urban renewal in terms of "the interests" vs. "the people," previous studies tended to characterize the conflicts over urban renewal as ones between two domestic property interests: accommodation and accumulation. At the most general level, these are the two most important property interests. Either people use land and property for personal accommodation, or they use it for financial gain and the accumulation of capital. Thus, these studies tend to emphasize the divisions between owner-occupiers and absentee landlords, and between home owners and tenants. In both cases, they presume that home-owners' primary interest in organizing is to protect their living place, rather than their

⁵(...continued)
Press, 1991), 12.

⁶*Ibid.*, 5.

⁷Charles Tilly "Do Communities Act?" in Marcia Pelly Effrat, (ed.) *The Community: Approaches and Applications* (New York: Free Press, 1974), 212.

investments, while absentee landlords and tenants have only a pecuniary interest in property, that is selling out at a profit, or finding the best place to rent at the lowest cost. However, as the following pages will reveal home owners, tenants and landlords were often concerned with both the accommodative and accumulative interests in their built environment. Community solidarity was, thus, elusive from the start as each neighbourhood was composed a complex mosaic of objectively different and conflicting interests.

Equally important, is the lack of historical context. Most tend to emphasize the rise of community organization as both spontaneous and radical. Many of the authors, themselves participants in the organizations and the conflicts, in typically New Left fashion saw themselves as taking part in something original, more militant, and more radical than anything that had gone before. Many of them had observed the various protests emanating from the United States, including the Civil Rights Movement, Students for a Democratic Society, and the Vietnam War protest movement.⁸ They also drew heavily on the style of organizing and methods of protest made famous by labour and community organizer Saul Alinsky.⁹ Following Alinsky's ideas of community organization, they saw themselves as facilitators, rather than organizers, of community action. The goal of community organizers was to give

⁸See Margaret Daly, *The Revolution Game: The Short Unhappy Life of the Company of Young Canadians* (Toronto: New Press, 1970). Daly attributes the failure of the CYC and the New Left in general to its lack of "indigenous" Canadian radicalism.

⁹See Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); S. Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books 1969 original edition 1946); R. Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighbourhood Organizing in America - Updated Edition* (New York: Twayne, 1994). According to Fisher, there are five main rules of Alinskyism: 1) The organizer is the catalyst for social change; 2) The task is to build democratic community-based organizations where "ordinary people" make decisions about things that affect them; 3) The goal of the organization is to win power; 4) Any tactics necessary should be used; 5) People's organizations should be pragmatic and non-ideological.

“ordinary people” the ability to influence decisions and events that shaped their lives.”¹⁰ Thus, New Left organizers claimed that they were more willing to listen to the people, their interests, their needs, and their plans of action, as opposed to the various social service organizations, working with inner-city residents on issues such as urban renewal, whom they saw as mere “caretakers” of the community.¹¹ They deemed organizations such as inner-city churches, settlement houses, and the Social Planning Council as dupes of city hall and development interests who merely worked to ease the suffering caused by urban renewal, rather getting inner-city residents to confront the causes of their suffering, namely urban renewal itself. Yet as Margaret Daly argues, the New Left’s commitment to community organizing was often aimless. Precisely how the disadvantaged and dispossessed were to organize, gain power, and transform society were rarely discussed in depth. Moreover, behind the radical veneer was often no more than “an unstrategic, left-liberal humanitarianism.”¹²

But perhaps most important, the lack of historical context led them to overlook the importance of timing in the rise of community activism. As the previous chapters have outlined, even though Torontonians faced a continuous low income housing shortage since the Great Depression, there were particular periods of crisis recurring at almost decade intervals (1943-47, 1954-57, and 1964-69). During these periods tremendous strains were placed on the flexibility of the city’s existing housing stock to provide adequate shelter for all

¹⁰Stuart Goodings cited in M. Daly, *Revolution Game*, 47.

¹¹For a critique of the role of social service organizations (both public and private) in poor communities see Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis William Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1987), 16, and Chapter 5.

¹²M. Daly, *The Revolution Game*, 38.

Torontonians, but especially working-class and low-income citizens. Indeed, neglected by previous studies, is the role of relocation in fostering neighbourhood/community activism. Throughout the entire postwar period, those interested in the housing of low-income Torontonians continually asked “where will they [the residents] go?” whenever an area was slated for redevelopment. Each time however, residents somehow found new housing, much of it in inner city neighbourhoods under the pall of redevelopment. But by the late 1960s, inner-city Torontonians simply had nowhere else to go. For thirty years many urban residents had been shuffled from one neighbourhood to another to keep ahead of the bulldozers. By 1965, the private and public renewal projects intended to keep Boomtown booming effectively backed people into a corner. This great instability in the inner-city housing market, not to mention the great deal of anger and anxiety that accompanied it, led inner-city residents to believe that they had no choice but to band together and fight¹³.

As Kevin Cox argues, neighbourhood activism directed against urban renewal most often arises from home-owners, but not necessarily from the point of protecting their investment. Rather, most home-owners fight urban renewal, Cox claims, because of the transaction costs which act as barriers to relocation. As Cox argues, homeowners, when given the choice between relocation and activism, often opt for the latter because of the high costs associated with selling their home and finding a new one. Tenants, nevertheless, often use urban renewal as an impetus to act on previous desires to move. Thus, in contrast to most of the studies of Toronto’s community organization against urban renewal, the following

¹³John E. Davis argues that instability in the housing market is the most important factor in engendering “housing consciousness” and the formation of community or neighbourhood organizations. J.E. Davis, *Contested Ground*, 264–66.

chapter argues that communities rarely came together in defence of a neighbourhood turf because they shared goals that were inseparable from the continued physical existence of a localized community. In many cases residents shared “an *individual* interest ... that could just as easily be satisfied elsewhere if it were not for the factor ... of transaction costs.”¹⁴

This does not mean that homes and neighbourhoods are interchangeable commodities, or that inner-city residents saw them as such. As John Logan and Harvey Molotch argue, place is an idiosyncratic commodity because people invest certain emotional and psychological values in particular environments that they do not regularly invest in other commodities.¹⁵ Neighbourhoods are more than just a conglomeration of houses. As we have seen in previous chapters, particular houses, streets, and neighbourhoods foster memories, attachments, and ultimately shape political, social, and cultural attitudes and identities. Similarly, it would be difficult to separate the struggle of home owners, and even tenants, to remain in their own homes from their battle to save their neighbourhood. Home, especially for the working and lower classes, spills beyond individual houses and dwellings to the entire neighbourhood, its people, its streets, its local business, its schools, and its institutions. Residents in Don Mount, Trefann Court, and Don Vale fought not just to retain tenure in their homes, but for the stability and security of the surrounding neighbourhood as well. In this sense, the transactions costs for these Torontonians were doubly prohibitive: not only were they unable to find similar working-class housing, but they knew that if they did not fight urban renewal there would be no more working-class neighbourhoods left in Toronto.

¹⁴Kevin R. Cox, “Housing Tenure and Neighbourhood Activism,” *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 18 (1), (September, 1982), 118, 124.

¹⁵J. Logan and H. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), Chapter 4.

As the following chapter will highlight, mutual interests between residents in Toronto's urban renewal areas were weak, except on one issue, that the bulldozer approach to urban renewal had to stop. Once the bulldozers had been stopped, and communities were forced to come up with new approaches intra-neighbourhood relations between residents often became as heated as those between the neighbourhood and the various levels of the state involved in urban policy making. Indeed, the very politicization, or perhaps more accurately, the re-politicization of community organization raised the issue of the representativeness of such organizations. Given the differing and often opposing bundles of interests which existed in these communities, how could one group of citizens claim to speak, argue, or vote for the entire community? The creation of community organizations, such as residents' and ratepayers' groups, often only widened the gap between those who claimed to serve the neighbourhood's interest and the neighbourhood itself. In short, stopping the bulldozers, while immensely significant, was the easy part, providing real "community participation" in urban renewal was far more frustrating task.

The Changing Face of Urban Renewal in Toronto

By 1963, public urban renewal in Toronto, if not in Canada, had largely ground to a halt. Though the city was interested in moving forward with its plans, both the provincial and federal governments had largely given up on the entire program. Since the completion of Regent Park in 1959, only 38 rent-geared-to-income family dwellings had been built in the Metropolitan area, and none in the city proper, despite the projected need of at least a thousand per year. The intransigence of the upper levels of government was perhaps best symbolized by the delays encountered during the planning of Alexandra Park. Identified in

1956 as the second highest priority for renewal, it took more than eight years to finally get the project off the ground. As one planner explained, “What they did was to kick it back and forth at the civil service level for study after study and comment after comment on other peoples’ ideas.”¹⁶

Nonetheless, despite the stagnation of urban renewal, both public and private, there were signs that Toronto’s housing conditions had begun to improve after decades of chronic shortages caused by the depression, war, and then massive waves of immigration. Both the 1961 and 1966 censuses revealed that the number of houses in need of major repair, and the incidences of overcrowding and doubling up had declined by more than half from the heights they reached in the 1950s. Intensive campaigns by the Buildings Department to enforce minimum housing standards had made marked improvements in housing conditions in inner-city neighbourhoods. Reports from inner-city neighbourhoods, such as Riverdale, revealed that many home owners were conducting repairs and improvements “in spite of the knowledge that taxes will increase.”¹⁷ Indeed, as the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board’s 1966 *Urban Renewal Report* stated: “Unlike many other metropolitan areas of comparable size in North America, structural deterioration is not widespread in the Toronto area, and there are not substantial concentrations of residential blight.” The only concentrations of any consequence, Metro planners claimed, were to be found in the predominantly industrial districts south of Queen Street, both east and west of the downtown area, and “even these do not comprise more than a few blocks at any single location.” Apart from these, Metro

¹⁶G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 67.

¹⁷CTA, City of Toronto Planning Board (CTPB), RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 3, (Reference no. 02.15.19) Riverdale Questionnaire, House to house survey, May 12, 1960, Mathilda [sic] Street.

planners noted that “there were only several blocks at scattered locations, mostly within two or three miles of downtown, in which half or more of the residential structures are in a deteriorated condition.”¹⁸

Yet, despite the good news, the rediscovery of poverty by the mid-sixties, as the previous chapter reveals, led to growing public impatience with the lack of progress in urban renewal. The stagnation of public and private renewal efforts conveyed the image that the housing conditions throughout the inner-city were stagnating, if not declining. Indeed, despite the fact that the city had nearly half the public housing units in the entire country and numerous projects waiting for approval, Torontonians seemed singularly dissatisfied with the progress and accomplishments of urban renewal. As Albert Rose noted in a 1965 city report on Toronto’s public housing crisis:

The fact is that no Canadian city of size and importance (with the possible exception of Halifax) has either devoted more attention and money to the solution of the problems of housing and urban renewal, or constructed more public housing in proportion to population (within its boundaries) than the City of Toronto. A year has not gone by since 1934 when it has not been a matter of great official and public concern and not since 1944 has there been a year when there has not been an official formal proposal before city council for slum clearance, public housing, urban redevelopment or urban renewal. ... It is simply not true that Toronto has been lax, negligent, callous or without heart in the exercise of its public and private responsibilities in the field of housing, and in particular the provision of public housing for low income families. [Indeed], the current dissatisfaction with housing policies and achievements is a mark of the great concern of the residents of Toronto for the alleviation of the hardships of some its families.¹⁹

Nonetheless, given the construction boom, particularly of private high-rise apartments, the

¹⁸Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (MTPB), *Urban Renewal Report* (Toronto, Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1966), 9.

¹⁹City of Toronto, Consultative Committee on Housing Policies for the City of Toronto, *Interim Report*, October 15, 1965, 1-2.

paucity of public housing construction appeared disconcerting to many.

Much of this had to do with the media's focus on the isolated pockets of blight, which it continued to portray in terms of disease; the cancerous blots, which, unless surgically removed by urban planners, threatened to infect the rest of the city. Newspapers, especially, largely ignored any information which contradicted the existence of slums in Toronto. Instead they focussed their reports and their cameras on the city's most squalid housing to create the impression that things were getting worse, rather than better. It did not matter that most poor housing was located in isolated pockets, the continued existence of these pockets was dangerous for the rest of the city. For instance, in the summer of 1960, the *Telegram* published a story under the headline "Huge Area in Toronto Predicted Slum in 20 Years," which forecast the decline of all inner-city residential areas south of Bloor and Danforth Streets from Dufferin Street on the west to Woodbine Avenue in the east end.²⁰ Similarly, newspaper reports of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board's 1966 *Urban Renewal Report* played on traditional fears of the creeping nature of the slum with such headlines as, "Bombshell Report - Slum rot reaches our suburbs."²¹ This headline betrayed the fact that the report claimed that the degree of blight in the suburbs was very minor and represented less than 10 percent of all the blight in the Metro area. Nonetheless, any degree of blight in boomtown Toronto was sufficient to organize a drive to "erase the slums." As an editorial in the *Toronto Telegram* stated:

Council may spread parks all over the city; it may litter the city with temples to the arts; it may boast the most majestic city hall in the world; but as long

²⁰"Huge Area Predicted Slum in 20 Years," *Toronto Telegram*, July 7, 1960.

²¹"Bombshell Report: Slum Rot Reaches Our Suburbs," *Toronto Star*, March 31, 1966, 1.

as there are swamps of slums in the back streets Toronto must still count itself a backward city.²²

For the most part, the politicians in the “Great Clam Shell” at the new City Hall agreed. There was a mood of impatience both with the planners’ desires for “comprehensive planning” and the bureaucratic delays fostered by the higher levels of government. The newly elected mayor, Donald Summerville, who had championed the establishment of the Development Department to kick-start private redevelopment projects in the city in 1962, also hoped to do the same with public renewal activities. For one, the new department took control of the implementation of urban renewal projects in hopes of cutting through the planning “ping-pong” which had strangled the renewal of Alexandra Park for nearly a decade. Second, Summerville and others on council believed that large-scale redevelopment was too time consuming to work out and to execute. To this end, he instructed the Planning Board to develop a program which would identify “pockets of blight” that could be easily “cleaned up.”²³

On October 7, 1963, the Planning Board released its “Report on Priorities for Urban Renewal,” which identified over 100 “pockets of blight” in the city. Of these 12 areas were particularly bad as they contained more than 60 percent of the housing rated in poor condition. At the same time, nearly 90 percent of the houses in these areas, which accommodated more than 250,000 persons, were considered to be in “fair or “good” condition. Though individually, block by block and district by district, they did not constitute

²²“Erase the Slums,” *Toronto Telegram*, January 19, 1965, 6.

²³City of Toronto Planning Board (CTPB), *Improvement Programme for Residential Areas*, (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, January 1965), 5-6.

slums, the Planning Board argued that they did, on the whole, present a “massive problem.” For the most part, Metro planners agreed. As their 1966 *Urban Renewal Report* stated: “With respect to actual deterioration, therefore, it is evident that the problem rests not in the existence of substantial areas of serious blight, but in a widespread distribution of a moderate degree of blight through many parts of the city and a few suburban areas.”²⁴ Nonetheless, Metro planners were not as confident that a simple spot clearance plan would solve the problem of blight. As they reminded Torontonians and, perhaps more importantly, Toronto officials and politicians: “It is not only the existence of deteriorated and overcrowded dwellings, but their conjunction with other manifestations of neighbourhood blight, which leads to the need for a comprehensive renewal program directed toward the entire range of problems encountered in the renewal areas rather than exclusively toward the elimination or improvement of deteriorated dwellings.”²⁵ Unfortunately in their rush to “get while the getting was good” city politicians and planners largely ignored the warnings of their Metro colleagues.

Federal officials were equally sceptical of the city’s spot clearance project. Time and time again, CMHC officials told city planners that urban renewal legislation was designed to encourage comprehensive planning, not spot clearance. Thus, when the city took their maps with all the blots on the face of the city to Ottawa to ask for money, they were told to return to their drawing boards and produce more “comprehensive schemes.”²⁶

²⁴MTPB, *Urban Renewal Study*, 1966, 10.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 11.

²⁶CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 11, J. McCulloch Manager of Toronto Branch (CMHC) to M.B. Lawson, June 19, 1966.

Nonetheless, the Planning Board's "blight-fight program" fit well with the rediscovery and subsequent war on poverty during the early 1960s. As David Ward argues, the attention paid to slums often corresponds to periods of extraordinary changes in the attitudes and public policy towards poverty.²⁷ Much like Toronto's substandard housing, Canada's poor, according to those who studied it, existed in pockets, both statistically and geographically (most notably the Maritimes). In urban Canada, they could be found in pockets of blight in inner cities. As the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development (hereafter Hellyer Report) professed:

Here, [in the inner-city], is poverty in its rawest and ugliest form. No pretty gardens or painted cottages here to camouflage economic depression. Poverty in the worst areas of the city core is abundantly visible in the decrepit structures which form its housing, the cracked pavement of the streets which are its recreation area, and the rodents which are its wild life. This poverty you can see – and hear – and taste – and smell. These residents are not simply failures struggling to catch up to the average national income; too often they are people fighting to retain a vestige of human dignity and self-respect. No Task Force impression is more vivid of mind or depressing of spirit than those formed amid the blight and slum of Canada's larger cities.²⁸

Much like Toronto's slum pockets, the problem of poverty was greater than the sum of its parts. Nor did it matter that the poor were materially better off than their predecessors. Much like the paradox of Toronto's slum housing, it was the existence of poverty in the midst of plenty that was the crux of the problem. The affluent society, which manifested itself in Toronto's built environment with new luxury apartments and gleaming skyscrapers, created new needs, and new demands. The poor of the 1960s, as the argument went, were not simply

²⁷David Ward, "The Victorian Slum: An Enduring Myth," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 66 (June 1976), 324.

²⁸Canada, *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Redevelopment*, (Hereafter *Hellyer Report*) (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1969), 11.

victims of scarcity, but of a rising sense of expectations and entitlement.²⁹ Indeed, to quote the Hellyer Report once more: “[There] is a growing anger of people who, amid the material plenty around them, refuse to wait that ‘little bit longer’ for their minimal share. In a world of rising need and increasing expectations, a bit more and a bit better are not good enough.”³⁰

The idea of slum pockets also meshed well with contemporary ideas about poverty. Much like the pockets of substandard housing, the poor were a marginalised and increasingly self-contained population. Like the physical fabric of the city, the poor were “victims of progress,” unable to keep up in a rapidly changing world. Nor were they able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. The poor were, for the most part, invisible, like the horrible inner-city housing conditions, both of which Torontonians cared not to acknowledge. For this reason, the continued existence of poverty in the midst of plenty was as dangerous to the social fabric as slums were to the city’s physical fabric, because they transmitted their “culture of poverty” down the generations. In many ways, there was nothing new about these ideas; Victorian notions of the slum and of poverty stressed that both nurtured a different way of life under circumstances of social and spatial separation from the rest of society.³¹

Nonetheless, the containment of poverty and substandard housing in pockets also implied that these conditions were not so widespread that urgent action could not solve the problems. Because poverty and poor housing existed in an “affluent” society for the first time in history, Canadians and Torontonians believed that they had the ability to eliminate both.

²⁹ James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario 1920-70* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 214.

³⁰ *Hellyer Report*, 13.

³¹ David Ward, “The Victorian Slum,” 326.

They believed, as did the Ontario Federation of Labor, that “poverty is no longer a dilemma but a problem that can be solved.”³² Speaking of housing and urban conditions, the Hellyer Task Force agreed: “to believe otherwise [was] to despair and surrender to the inevitable.”³³ Indeed, one of the chief justifications for moving towards a spot clearance program was that the size of the areas was “such that clearance and redevelopment operations could be handled easily.”³⁴

The emphasis on a more flexible and specialized blight fighting program also seemed to correspond to shifts in planning thought brought on by the critiques made by Jane Jacobs, Herbert Gans, Lewis Mumford, and Robert Venturi.³⁵ Though Jacobs would become the most influential of the group, especially in Toronto, where she relocated in the late 1960s just in time to head up opposition to the Spadina Expressway project, each of these authors and their trenchant critiques of the modernist urban environment influenced Toronto planners and related professionals. Planners like Hans Blumenfeld did not accept Jacobs’ ideas uncritically, but they endorsed the view that old inner-city neighbourhoods were not urban cancers that had to be eradicated, but rather were the roots of the vitality of healthy cities.³⁶ According to critics of urban renewal, such as Jacobs, the key to “unslumming” inner-city

³²Cited in J. Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*, 214.

³³*Hellyer Report*, 13.

³⁴CTPB, *Trefann Court Data Abstract* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1966), 5.

³⁵Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1962); Lewis Mumford, *The Highway and the City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963); Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966); and Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1962); and H. Gans *People and Plans: Essays on Urban Problems and Solutions* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

³⁶See Blumenfeld’s review of Jacobs’ book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in *Ontario Housing*, 9 (August 1962), 17-22.

neighbourhoods was to stabilize these areas and help them retain their current residents, rather than uprooting both the buildings and people and starting with a clean slate.³⁷

Perhaps most representative of this shift in planning ideology was the Planning Board's 1972 "Working Paper on Southeast Spadina." As Jon Caulfield notes, the report was a barely veiled attack on the previous three decades of city building.³⁸ Gone were the references to inner-city neighbourhoods as "sorry picture[s] of decay and disorder ... overcrowded ... congested old factory areas, ribbons of marginal shops and clogged traffic."³⁹ Rather, Toronto planners lamented the passing of Toronto's "aesthetically and emotionally pleasing" nineteenth-century streetscape, which they claimed "brought together through scale and proportion to form one of the most humane residential environments in all Toronto."⁴⁰ And whereas planners in the 1950s viewed the emerging skyscrapers as monuments of Toronto's progress, these new planners worried about the growing sterility of the central city that accompanied such development.⁴¹ Their praise of the old city, however, was not based solely on aesthetic judgments. Rather, the flexibility and functionality of the old built environment were now highly regarded by planners, something that most inner-city Torontonians had known for the greater part of the century.⁴²

³⁷Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Chapter 15.

³⁸Jon Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 30.

³⁹Community Planning Association of Canada, *City of Toronto Urban Renewal Study 1956 - Short Statement* (Toronto 1956), 1.

⁴⁰CTPB, *South East Spadina - Tentative Planning Proposals - Towards a Part II Plan* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1972), 32.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 30.

⁴²Richard Harris, "The Flexible House: The Housing Backlog and the Persistence of Lodging," *Social Science History*, 18 (January 1994), 31-53. Norman Richardson also comments on the lack of adaptability (continued...)

At the same time, we should not overstate the shift in planning ideology. As Caulfield notes, the number of anti-modernist planners in Toronto was small in the larger scheme of things. However, they occupied a crucial position in the changing face of Toronto's development. They also came to the planning process and to the city at a time when power was shifting from City Hall offices to the neighbourhoods, their institutions, and their own grassroots experts. Nonetheless, by the early 1970s, planning principles such as gradual change, mixed use, conservation, and social and physical diversity had become common sense within Toronto's planning community.⁴³

Revisions to the National Housing Act in June of 1964, also buoyed the confidence of Toronto planners, politicians, and social housing activists. The 1964 revisions, which virtually rewrote most of the social housing provisions of the act, had far reaching effects in the realm of urban renewal and public housing.⁴⁴ For one, Part III of the Act was now designated "urban renewal" as opposed to "urban redevelopment," recognizing a shift away from the bulldozer approach to renewal to a more broad-gauged approach, which allowed for rehabilitation as well as clearance. Similarly, the 1964 revisions removed the stipulations under the 1954 Act which decreed that federal aid was only available for projects which were

⁴²(...continued)

of the new "elegant and efficient" skyscrapers compared to the "old-fashioned, ...untidy ... drab and inconvenient ... [structures of the Core Area]." Richardson, cited in Core Area Task Force, *Technical Appendix* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1974), 254.

⁴³J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, Chapter 3.

⁴⁴Albert Rose *Canadian Housing Policies* (Toronto: Butterworths', 1980), Albert Rose, "Canadian Housing Policies," in Michael Wheeler, ed., *The Right to Housing - Background Papers and Proceedings of the First "Canadian Conference on Housing held in Toronto (20-23 Oct., 1968) under the sponsorship of the Canadian Welfare Council* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1969), 93-123, and Jeffrey Patterson, "Housing and Community Development Policies," in John R. Miron, ed., *House, Home and Community: Progress in Housing Canadians 1945-1986* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press and Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation, 1993), 328.

predominantly residential. Under the new provisions, urban renewal plans could allow cleared land to be used for industrial and commercial purposes. In addition, CMHC finally recognized that urban renewal schemes required the employment of relocation officers to help families and individuals find and adjust to their new surroundings. Ironically, the provision of publicly-funded social workers to “help the poor help themselves,” ultimately led to the formation of strong community organizations which would bring the nation’s entire social housing program to its knees less than four years later.

On the public housing front, the 1964 amendments created a new public housing section which allowed CMHC to make loans to municipal and provincial housing companies, thus by-passing the cumbersome federal-provincial partnership arrangements, which had largely resulted in the collapse of Canada’s public housing program. The federal government also provided more generous financial arrangements, which now covered 90 percent of the construction costs, and increased the federal government’s share from 25 percent to 50 percent. The government of Ontario responded to the new public housing provisions by establishing the Ontario Housing Corporation in 1964 to build and operate public housing in the province. By the time the federal government imposed a moratorium on the urban renewal and public housing programs, nearly 23,000 units had been built in only five years, almost doubling the output of the previous 15 years..⁴⁵

In the summer of 1964, then, as the city set out to embark upon an ambitious programme of urban renewal, it appeared to have all the “tools” it needed to get Toronto’s housing program back on track. Thus, it was quite a shock to all involved that only five years

⁴⁵M. Dennis and S. Fish, *Low Income Housing in Canada: Programs in Search of a Policy* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 177, J. Paterson, “Housing and Community Development Policies,” 328.

later the city's urban renewal programme had been derailed, mainly by the very people it intended to help. Indeed, virtually all of the new tools granted to Toronto planners and politicians by the NHA amendments were turned against them by inner-city resident organizations who, by and large, rejected outright urban renewal as it was "presently constituted." By September 1967, the city admitted defeat when it cancelled all of its urban renewal projects except Alexandra Park and Don Mount, projects already under construction. The Hellyer Task Force's recommendation of a federal moratorium on urban renewal in early 1969 was only the final nail in the coffin. The lack of "elbow room," caused by the past two decades of the Haussmannization of the city, combined with a complete lack of understanding of the housing needs of the citizens urban renewal was supposed to benefit, killed urban renewal in Toronto, and essentially in Canada. Indeed, to residents of Toronto's inner-city (a.k.a. "slum") neighbourhoods, the 1964 amendments to the National Housing Act meant little; to them urban renewal was still "the same old bulldozer."⁴⁶

Don Mount: Where Expropriation Sometimes Means Grab

The City decided to kick-start its lagging urban renewal activities in Don Mount in 1965, hoping not only to clean up Toronto's rotting core, but also provide much-needed public housing. It was an auspicious start. In fact, CMHC and city officials boasted that Don Mount was the fastest urban renewal project ever completed in Canada. In the fall of 1965, the Planning Board submitted its agenda to Council, and within six months the plan had been approved by all levels of government, and expropriation of home owners began. It appeared that the city's more modest slum pocket plans were finally achieving results.

⁴⁶Hans Blumenfeld cited in *Trefann Court News*, Volume 1, No. 8 (March 31, 1967), 8-9.

Don Mount, or as it was originally known, Napier Place, was located just east of the Don River in Riverdale, one of the city's oldest Anglo-Saxon working-class districts. Like many other central city neighbourhoods, the area was occupied mainly by industrial workers, many of whom worked in industries near the lakefront. As a result, the neighbourhood was officially declared a "low-income" area compared to the rest of the city, and to Metropolitan Toronto more generally. Nonetheless, Riverdale was by no means a slum in terms of the social characteristics of the area. Its residents, though not affluent, were better off than most inner-city residents, including those living in the Don area, Alexandra Park, and Kensington Market, each of which had been previously designated for slum clearance and urban renewal. Nor were residents socially apathetic. Significant numbers of Riverdale residents belonged to unions, riding associations for the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Parties, as well as area churches and Orange Lodges. Indeed, Riverdale residents prided themselves on their respectability and independence, both of which they fiercely guarded.

As part of Riverdale, the Don Mount area had long been under the watchful eyes of planners and social housing advocates. Napier Place itself was one of the earliest neighbourhoods in Riverdale. First developed in the 1870s, Munro and Hamilton Streets sprung up to house workers in the factories that started to line the eastern bank of the Don River on Davies Avenue, then called Mill Street. Over the next half-century, growth was slow and intermittent, and depended heavily on the overspill of working-class households from the Don Area. In 1956, the Planning Board's *Urban Renewal Study* ranked the area as the city's fourth most urgent priority for renewal. The shortage of low-cost housing for families in the 1950s, combined with increased immigration, placed great pressures on

Riverdale's housing stock. Though still predominantly Anglo-Saxon in character, the area began acting reception area for Italians, Greeks, and Macedonians. In 1951, nearly three-quarters of Riverdale residents claimed British heritage. A decade later the number had fallen to less than 60 percent, while European immigrants now represented nearly 35 percent of Riverdale's population. A significant drop in both total population and the number of families over the decade revealed that the neighbourhood was extremely fluid and unstable. There was a core of ageing families who had remained in the district since the war, some who had even been born in the area at its origins in late nineteenth-century. But, like most inner-city neighbourhoods in the post-war period, the tremendous mobility of people in and out of the neighbourhood affected not only the quality of the housing stock, but what planners called the "general character of the area." Indeed, although most of the neighbourhood was in "sound shape" physically, many social agencies working in the area feared that the once small pockets of blight were spreading. As the Neighbourhood Workers Association argued before the Board of Control in February 1957:

.... within the area bounded by the Don River, Pape and from Gerrard to the Waterfront our Committee has found that deplorable conditions exist which are far below the minimum standards of health and welfare. Houses in some sections are structurally so unsound that the approximate area mentioned above has been marked in black - in fact is one of the largest areas so marked - on the attached map prepared by the City Planning Board. The physical and social deterioration go hand in hand and the effect on the physical and mental health and welfare of the occupants must be devastating. Any such district in a city has been proven beyond doubt to constitute a continuous drain on municipal funds.⁴⁷

According to the Housing Committee, the root of this growing black stain on the face of the

⁴⁷CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 12 (reference no. 02.15.19) Neighbourhood Workers' Association - Housing Committee of the Riverdale District Association, Brief to the Board of Control. February 13, 1957.

city was area landlords' open flaunting of the city's housing standards by-law, and, in particular, the growth of overcrowding in the area. Abuse was often heaped on immigrants who began crowding two and three families into many of the houses, although Helena Munz of the Riverdale District branch of the Neighbourhood Workers Association claimed that immigrants were being used as scapegoats by home-owners unwilling to keep up their properties.⁴⁸ Area residents also linked the declining conditions and overcrowding to some of Toronto's most notorious absentee landlords, including Mary Parks and Charles Ingwer, who began acquiring properties in the area.

Aside from the alarmist rhetoric, census figures reveal that the social agencies' worries over Riverdale's imminent decline were not wholly unjustified. Like most inner-city neighbourhoods, Riverdale emerged from the war in rather rough shape. In 1951, the area housed nearly 9,750 persons and 2,536 families in only 1,868 dwellings. The number of dwellings with lodgers was 680, and there were 506 lodging families in Riverdale. In addition, there were 661 households occupied by two or more families. By 1956, the situation had eased some. Like the rest of the eastern half of the inner-city, Riverdale lost nearly seven percent of its population in just five years. Much of the population decline was due to an undoubling of the households, as young residents moved out to form their own households, many no doubt in the suburbs. As a result, the number of dwellings with lodgers, or housing more than one family dropped significantly. Not all families who "undoubled" moved out of the district. As the census reveals, the number of occupied dwellings in Riverdale shot up by 400 between 1951 and 1956, even though the area had no land left for

⁴⁸"Housing Subsidy Asked to Develop Riverdale," *Globe and Mail*, October 11, 1956.

in-fill housing. Most of these new dwellings, then, must have been in converted dwellings, as owner occupiers and real estate companies bought up larger houses, converted them into 2 or more units and rented them to tenants. Not coincidentally, this phenomenon also occurred as European immigrants began moving into the district.

After 1956, however, conditions once again began to deteriorate in the area. By 1961, the population had once again dropped by another 5 percent, and the number of families had declined by nearly 13 percent. Moreover, as quickly as the number of dwellings in the neighbourhood had risen by 1956, by 1961 the number dropped by nearly 500, perhaps signifying the end of the boom in immigration, and the reconversion of households back to single-family use. However, despite the drop in the number of dwellings, households with lodgers rose by more than 200, or nearly 53 percent, taking the total back to 1951 levels. Similarly, the number of lodging families and households with 2 or more families rose sharply, especially the latter which increased by nearly 63 percent. (See Figure 6.1)

Figure 6.1

	1951	1956	1961	1966
Total Population	9742	9092	8665	8134
# of Families	2536	2268	1976	1712
Occupied Dwellings	1868	2248	1750	1693
Dwellings with Lodgers	680	391	597	407
Households with 2+ families	661	237	386	211
Lodging Families	506	328	348	144

Source: Census of Canada, 1951-1966.

Population and Housing Statistics for Riverdale 1951-1966

As in other neighbourhoods designated for renewal, Riverdale residents and leaders of area institutions, such as local clergy and social workers at the Woodgreen United Church Community Centre, hoped the official designation would lead to concrete action by the city. Indeed, no sooner had the 1956 *Urban Renewal Report* come off the presses, than area representatives began pressing the city to take immediate action. In particular Reverend Ray McCleary, pastor of Woodgreen United Church, told the city to begin renewal activities now, rather than “waiting until the area becomes completely run down.”⁴⁹ Reverend McCleary believed that many of his parishioners were leaving the area, but returning to the church, signifying that residents wanted to remain in the area, and they would not have left if “official encouragement had been given to establish the area as a residential district.” Indeed, he continued, “residents very understandably won’t put money for improving into their property unless they can be assured the area would be preserved as residential.”⁵⁰

Not wasting any time, area social agencies formed the Riverdale Housing Committee in 1958, under the auspices of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto. The Committee included social workers working in the neighbourhood, clergy members, including R.D Reid of Woodgreen United Church, and school principals. Consultants to the group represented a “who’s who” of Toronto’s social housing community including Albert Rose, Eric Hardy, prominent CCF lawyer Andrew Brewin, as well as Marc Rosenfeld the *Toronto Telegram* journalist responsible for the “Blot on the Face of the City” slum exposé. The group was also supported by the Association of Women Electors (AWE), the Community

⁴⁹“Housing Subsidy Asked to Develop Riverdale,” *Globe and Mail*, October 11, 1956.

⁵⁰CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 10, File 9, Minutes of Meeting Between Riverdale Representatives (Rev. McCleary and Rev. Smith) with City Planning Board, December 5, 1957.

Planning Association, the recently formed United Action for Slum Clearance (led by AWE member June Rowlands), and Local 166 of the International Chemical Workers' Union.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the group was hardly a local one, since only one member of the Committee actually lived in Riverdale. The committee recognized its short comings in this area, and "explored the possibility of organizing a Home Owners Association to encourage those ... who live in ... Riverdale ... and feel that by co-operation with their neighbours they could make the district a desirable place in which to remain."⁵² Beyond contacting Ron Dawson, the leader of the Broadview Queen Homeowners' Association, there is little evidence that they were successful in their attempts to broaden their support to include area residents.

In place of active community support, the Housing Committee tried to keep in contact with residents' ideas and opinions about their neighbourhood through a number of door-to-door canvasses. These surveys revealed that area residents were deeply ambivalent about plans to improve their neighbourhood. Nearly sixty percent of area residents were satisfied with the way the city took care of the neighbourhood, although they claimed the city needed to make room for more parking, improve streets and sidewalks, as well as reduce the flow of traffic. They also bitterly complained, as city planners did, that the area was completely deficient in parks and recreation space, leaving children to play on the street. As for removing nuisance industry and run-down housing, residents believed that these were minor problems. Their answers were similarly ambivalent when asked about the state of housing in their

⁵¹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 12 (reference no. 02.15.19) Neighbourhood Workers' Association - Housing Committee of the Riverdale District Association, Brief to the Board of Control, February 13, 1957.

⁵²CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 12, Minutes of the Riverdale Housing Committee, June 5, 1958 & October 23, 1958.

neighbourhood. Nearly forty-five percent of area residents felt that the area had become a very "run down, shabby and depressed area." Almost an equal number claimed that the area was no worse than other inner-city areas in Toronto, and that people generally tried to keep their property in good repair with the limited funds they had available. As one canvasser noted, the exterior conditions of area houses could be "deceptive." While many appeared from the outside to be in poor condition, internally they were in "very good condition," had been "fixed up very well ... in spite of the knowledge that taxes will increase." Some residents were particularly vocal about the practices of absentee landlords, namely Mary Parks, and their properties, although most claimed that the area was predominantly owner-occupied, and that most of the rental housing in the area was in the hands of owner-occupiers who rented rooms to help pay for the mortgage and repairs. When asked about overcrowding in the area, most people believed that it was not widespread and was limited mainly to newly-arrived immigrants. Even then many agreed that "New Canadians [were] setting a high standard." In general, most residents were satisfied with the area, and were not planning to move anytime in the near future. Most wanted to remain in the area because they were close to work, good shopping, and good schools for their children.⁵³

When asked whether they would be interested in co-operating with the city in an improvement program for the area, only about 50 percent of area residents agreed that they

⁵³CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 3.(Reference no. 02.15.19) Riverdale Questionnaire, House-to-House Survey, May 24, 1960 Houses on Napier, Munro, Hamilton and Queen Sts; and House-to-House Survey, May 12, 1960, Mathilda Street; and Riverdale Questionnaire, Representative of the Youth Service Y.M.C.A Broadview, January 25, 1960. For more on Mary Parks see Ruth Worth, "The Grandmother Who's A Slum Landlord," *Toronto Star*, July 2, 1965, 5.

would be interested in forming a residents' association for this purpose.⁵⁴ For the most part, residents were waiting for the city to provide some leadership, especially through the enforcement of its housing standards by-law. At the same time, many complained about the taxes on their properties, and claimed that they would undertake repairs and renovations if they could be guaranteed their taxes would not increase.⁵⁵

The primary focus of the Housing Committee was on repairs and rehabilitation of the area, rather than wholesale clearance or even spot clearance. To this end, they convinced the city to add Riverdale to the Buildings Department priority list for inspections in March 1957. By the end of 1958, the Buildings Department had inspected close to four thousand dwellings in Riverdale, of which nearly 1,500 needed repairs to meet the minimum standards set by the city for health and safety. Most common faults were leaky roofs, loose and broken stucco and plaster, and faulty eaves troughs. More serious problems included decayed and termite-eaten wooden beams and joists, allowing many of the area dwellings to settle, and the use of flammable materials in the creation of partitions between units. Nearly two-thirds of the houses inspected were owner-occupied, and the vast majority completed the repairs with a minimum of reluctance. Unfortunately, the Housing Committee noted, absentee landlords in the area, especially those who owned substantial numbers of houses in the area, had largely

⁵⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32, B3, Box 17, File 3, (Reference no. 02.15.19) Riverdale Questionnaire, House-to-House Survey, May 24, 1960 Houses on Napier, Munro, Hamilton and Queen Sts.; and House-to-House Survey, May 12, 1960, Mathilda Street - here figures were as high as 75 percent in favour of co-operating with the City.

⁵⁵CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 3, (Reference no. 02.15.19) Riverdale Questionnaire, House-to-House Survey, May 24, 1960 Houses on Napier, Munro, Hamilton and Queen Sts.; House-to-House survey, May 12, 1960, Mathilda Street; Answers to Questionnaire Discussed at a Meeting Between the Home and School Association, Morse Street School, and this Department, nd; and Answers to Questionnaire Discussed at a Meeting between Selected Riverdale Area Residents and this Department, Queen Alexandra School, Broadview. nd

ignored the requests of the inspectors, electing to pay the maximum \$50 fine, rather than complete the repairs. The Committee was most distressed by this situation, since a great many of these dwellings had become so deteriorated that they should be condemned, but there was little the Buildings Department could do, since condemnation would only create a greater hardship for those evicted.⁵⁶

To counter this problem, the Committee also called for a program of rehabilitation in the area, led by the city. According to the Committee's parent organization, the Social Planning Council, successful by-law enforcement necessitated the availability of alternative accommodation. The group was also concerned that by-law enforcement, like slum clearance, was largely reactive, and often hurt the poor in the poor house. Instead, the group argued that the city and the planning board should be "concerned with the development of a housing improvement programme which would ensure standards of decency for all and extend the useful life of the existing housing stock." Therefore, they argued, "the City should acquire, on the open market, older properties suitable for renovation, to not only swell the stock of low-rental housing under public control, but also to provide a first step towards neighbourhood improvement."⁵⁷

The Planning Board agreed, and embarked on a pilot improvement project in Riverdale by purchasing houses and rehabilitating them to city and CMHC standards. The project was a milestone in Canadian urban planning, as it was the first publicly-supported

⁵⁶City of Toronto, Buildings Department, *Annual Report*, 1958; CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 12, Minutes of the Riverdale Housing Committee, October 23, 1958. According to the Housing Committee, 1273 of the 1507 (84 per cent) of Riverdale property owners cited by the Department had completed the repairs.

⁵⁷CTA, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPCMT), SC 40, Box 127, File 8, "Report on Housing Improvement by Inspection, Repair and By-law Enforcement," (November 1958).

program of neighbourhood conservation. However, the Provincial government was not so impressed. According to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the project did not constitute a housing project within the meaning of the National Housing Act, and he denied the enabling legislation to allow the city to purchase the houses.⁵⁸ After pressure from the Planning Board and the Housing Committee, the Minister relented, but only allowed the city to purchase and rehabilitate 301 Broadview Avenue, which was eventually converted to a home for elderly persons. Nonetheless, the Planning Board and the Housing Committee kept up pressure to extend the project, which the latter believed was extremely important not only for the physical fabric of the community, but also for its social fabric. As the Housing Committee reminded its members:

... we should remember that our object is to rehabilitate people not just the houses... and suggest that great care in tenant selection because of the money spent to rehabilitate homes ... and if the wrong family got into these homes, they would deteriorate very rapidly and the pilot project could then not be used to demonstrate the feature of rehabilitation under public auspices.⁵⁹

Unfortunately, the image of the poor slum housekeeper remained a common stereotype, even for those who believed that poor housing in Riverdale was often due to “the poor man in the poor house.”

The Housing Committee and the Planning Board kept up their activities in Riverdale until 1961. By then, the Planning Board had become tied up in the bureaucratic politics of getting its two highest priority projects, Moss Park and Alexandra Park, off the ground. After the run in with the Province over the rehabilitation of 301 Broadview, the Planning Board also

⁵⁸CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 12, Minutes of the Riverdale Housing Committee, December 2, 1958.

⁵⁹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 17, File 13, Minutes of the Riverdale Housing Committee, April 13, 1960.

realized that progress on a rehabilitation programme in Riverdale was going to require a comprehensive plan, as well as new legislation and funding agreements with the higher levels of government. For the moment, the Planning Board shelved comprehensive rehabilitation plans for the neighbourhood, but it told area Alderman Oliver Sigsworth (Ward 1) that it “had not forgotten Riverdale.”⁶⁰

Nonetheless, there were encouraging signs that the activities of the Housing Committee and the Planning Board had a positive effect on the neighbourhood as Riverdale had dropped to tenth on the Planning Board’s list of priorities.⁶¹ By 1961, the number of dwellings in need of major repairs had decreased to 10 percent, down from nearly 15 percent in 1951. Indeed, by 1963, the Buildings Department only had 25 active files for the Riverdale area, and most of those were due to recent inspections.⁶² Despite the shifting nature of the population, assessment roles showed that home ownership had increased slightly over the same period, from 63 percent to 67 percent. On other factors, such as age of dwellings, assessment per square foot, the percentage of family income for rent, and the rate of traffic accidents in the area, the neighbourhood ranked either tenth or eleventh of the 12 selected areas. The only factors for which Riverdale was found deficient were park space, in which it was the second worst of all the improvement areas, and the fact that nearly 10 percent of area houses did not have a central furnace, ranking Riverdale sixth of the dozen areas. Why, then, did the Planning Board choose Riverdale above other “priority” areas?

⁶⁰CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, File 5, M.B.M. Lawson to Alderman O. Sigsworth, s.d. 1963.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 15, File 5, F.E. Wellwood (Commissioner Department of Buildings) to M.B.M. Lawson and L.O. Gertler, April 18, 1963.

One reason Riverdale became a priority area was overcrowding, which remained a significant problem. As noted previously, Toronto planners almost automatically linked overcrowding to a neighbourhood's poor physical and social fabric. Despite the 10 percent drop in population since 1951, overcrowding remained high in Riverdale, even by central city standards. According to the Planning Board, 430 of the area's 1,750 dwellings, or nearly one-quarter, were overcrowded according to the census definition of more than one person per room.⁶³ These figures were slightly higher than other inner-city neighbourhoods, twice that of the rest of the city, and nearly triple that of Metropolitan Toronto. Indeed, as John Lee argued in a letter to the Riverdale Housing Committee, overcrowding in Riverdale was as bad as ever, despite the attention paid to the district by the Riverdale Housing Committee and the Planning Board:

I would suggest that anyone who believes the general situation of housing accommodation has been improved in Riverdale by the by-law enforcement, inspect the area for himself. As a resident of the adjoining area, with many acquaintances in the affected area, I suggest that the situation has not improved. Overcrowding is as serious as ever, and it is overcrowding, not the physical conditions of the buildings, which constitutes our most serious housing problem in Toronto.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, the conditions in 1961 may still have been a blip on the landscape. By 1966, when the City moved in to expropriate the houses, overcrowding and lodging seem to have declined precipitously since 1961. Figures are inconclusive given the fact that an incalculable number of residents may have moved out once expropriation began and prior to the taking

⁶³CTPB "Report on Improvement Areas," 1965, 55.

⁶⁴CTA, SPCMT, SC 40, Box 127, File 7, John Lee to M. Hancock Chairman Housing Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, May 5, 1961, 1.

of the census in mid-1966.⁶⁵

Nonetheless, planners and politicians decided that Napier Place would be the perfect area to jump-start Toronto's lagging urban renewal programme. Under the new provisions of the National Housing Act, the plan called for a mixed development of spot clearance for public housing, increased space for industry, and rehabilitation of the remaining houses. At the centre of the project, was a seven-acre public housing site comprising 232 units of much needed public housing to be built by the Ontario Housing Corporation. As in Alexandra Park, the development tried to avoid an institutional look by mixing 105 low-density maisonnettes with 127 one and two bedroom apartments. Also included in the plan was increased space for industry at the western end which adjoined the Don Valley Parkway. Finally, the plan called for the rehabilitation of 135 houses in the eastern sector of the area. (See Figure 6.3). According to the Planning Board, the clearance of the area would displace nearly 1200 persons, occupying 278 dwellings, and eventually rehouse only 972 people, representing a decline of 228 persons.⁶⁶

Phase 1 of the project was the public housing and industrial section of the area centred around Napier Street. According to the Planning Board, the first phase was chosen because it "had the greatest concentration of poor housing in the improvement area," as well as the fact that "the existing street pattern was such that the flow of industrial traffic exerted a very

⁶⁵See Table 1 above. The census also reveals that the number of owner-occupied dwellings in the area had declined by nearly 200 to only 58 percent of area dwellings since the 1961 Census.

⁶⁶CTPB, "Napier Place Urban Renewal Scheme: Data Abstract," (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, May 1965), 7, 13.

harmful effect on the surrounding residential area.”⁶⁷ (See Figure 6.2) Indeed, nearly every house on Napier Street, a dead-end road at the heart of the area, had been marked in black on Planning Board maps, indicating their dilapidated condition. These houses were also some of the oldest in the neighbourhood. Conditions on the other streets to be cleared - Matilda, Munro, Steiner, and Thompson - were far more variable. Nonetheless, of the nearly 280 dwellings to be cleared, more than half were classified as “poor.” Of these more, than half were owner-occupied, once again emphasizing that the plight of the “poor man in the poor house” was equally responsible for the declining conditions of inner-city neighbourhoods, as much as the oft-vilified “absentee landlord.”⁶⁸

Despite the auspicious start to the project, Don Mount residents had largely been left in the dark as to what would happen to them. According to the residents’ association, the first that many of them had heard of the plans was in mid-December 1965, right in the middle of the holiday season. Because of this, residents had little chance to form an association until after the project had received official endorsement.⁶⁹ Because of the lack of information about what renewal would mean to them individually, most area residents who visited the site office when it opened in January 1966 were impressed with the plans for the neighbourhood and claimed that they were well overdue.⁷⁰

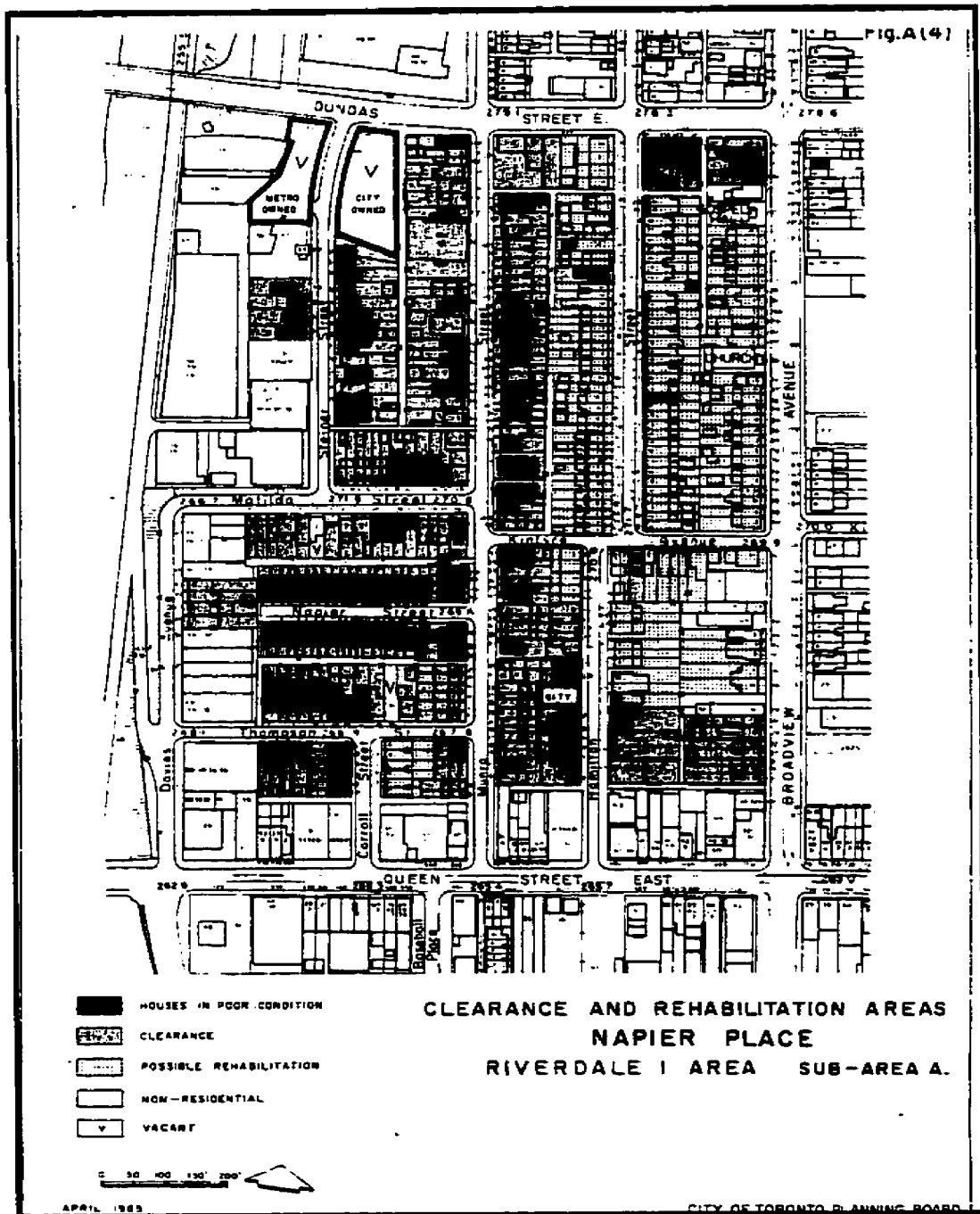
⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁸CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 21, File 1, CTPB Memo - Characteristics of Home Ownership in the Napier Place Project. December 2, 1965.

⁶⁹CTA, Phillip Givens Collection (PGC), SC 301, Box 5, File 18, Brief from the Officers of the Napier Place Residents’ Association to Certain Elected Representatives of the Federal - Provincial Metropolitan and Toronto Governments and Others on March 20, 1966, 1.

⁷⁰CTA, Housing Authority of Toronto (HAT), RG 28 B3, Box 27, File 16, Napier Place Co-ordinating Committee Progress Report #1, February 7, 1966. See also Albert Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Planning* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, 1974), 146-47.

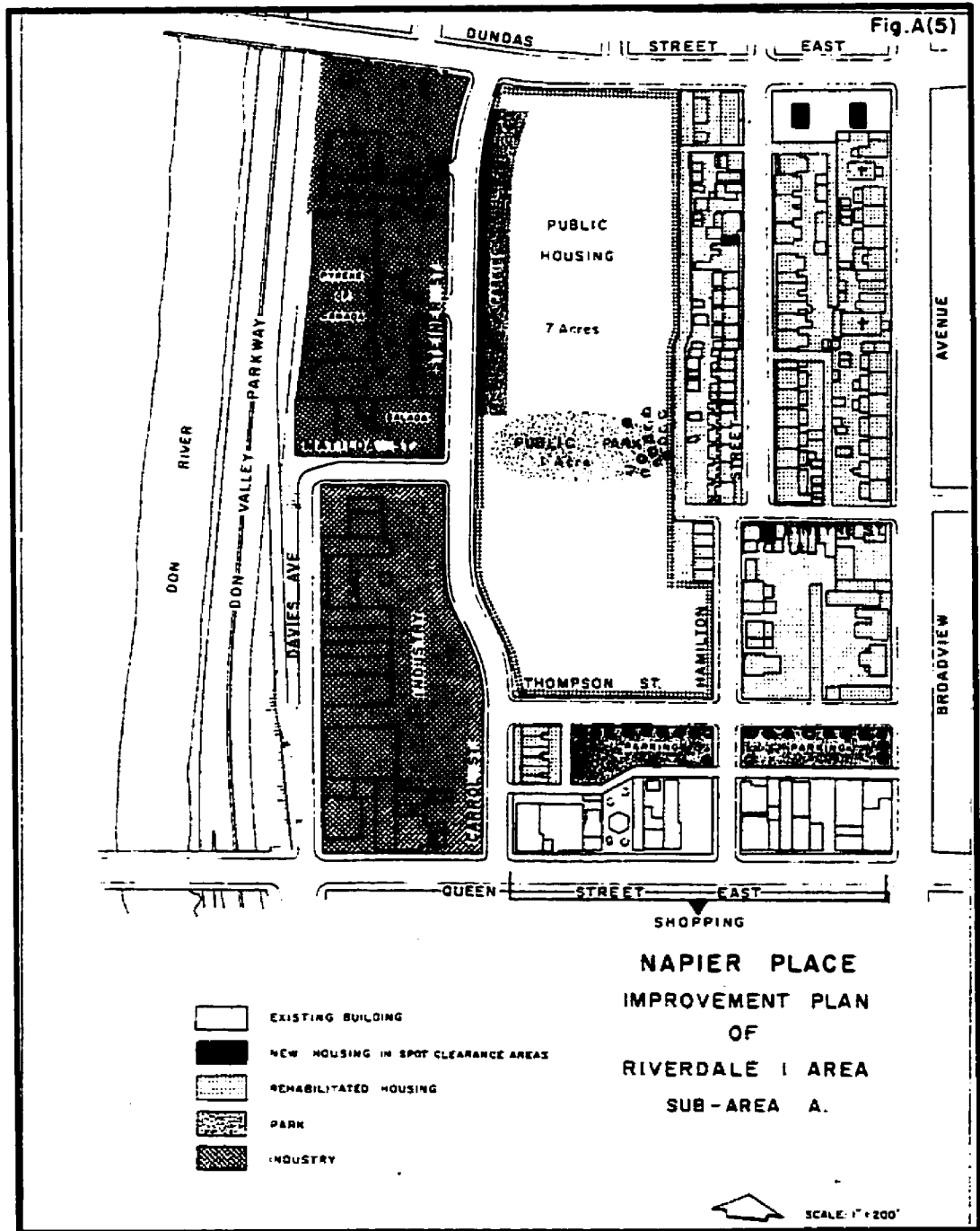
Figure 6.2



Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, *Napier Place Data Abstract* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1965), Figure A (4).

Housing Conditions in Don Mount (Napier Place)

Figure 6.3



Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, *Napier Place Data Abstract* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1965), Figure A (5).

Don Mount (Napier Place) Renewal Plans

Despite the calm, trouble was brewing in the neighbourhood. As soon as Metro agreed to the plans for the neighbourhood in early December 1965, area residents were afraid that “we’re going to just be left holding the bag.” Many area residents were elderly or near the end of their working careers, and were “just too old to move.” Some expressed a profound attachment not only to the neighbourhood, but to the houses that they had “worked so hard to put together.” Most had bought their houses during or just after the war, and many had completed extensive repairs over the years, much of it with their own labour, “expecting to spend the rest of our days there.” For many elderly residents, relocation meant not only uncertainty, but probably higher housing costs for both owners and tenants.⁷¹

By March 1966, a full-fledged rebellion in Napier Place was under way. At the heart of the Napier Place uprising were the expropriation notices and offers of compensation, which area residents had received in the previous two months. Most were furious with the low prices that the city offered for their homes. Offers made by the city were usually in the \$8-9,000 range for the six-room houses that dominated the neighbourhood. In fact, more than half of the forty-two settlements made by the city in 1966 were for less than \$10,000. But even then, that was not the crux of the residents’ anger with the city. Rather, it was the fact that they were being forced to subsidize the project by relocating at higher costs. According to the residents the “point of real interest is not if \$6,000 or \$8,000 is a fair price for this

⁷¹“Napier Place Housing - Planners play politics ‘spank’em’: Campbell,” *Toronto Star*, December 5, 1965, 27; and Tori Slater, “Matilda: A Street of Broken Dreams,” *Toronto Star*, December 19, 1966, 7; CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 21, File 1, Letter from Mrs. Jane Craigen and Mr. Thomas Craigen (64 Munro Street) to City Clerk Re: Objection to the by-law 22678 governing the expropriation of certain lands in the Napier Place Redevelopment Area, January 10, 1966. See also letters from Mrs. Fannie C. Boyle (39 Matilda Street), January 6, 1966, A. Hickford, (15 Matilda Street) January 10, 1966; and Rilda Hughes (32 Matilda Street), January, 3, 1966.

particular house, the important point is if people can re-locate in a similar home without taking on debts that are quite beyond their means. To give less than this is to make paupers of independent people.”⁷² Furthermore, they felt that the city was not taking into account the numerous renovations and repairs they had completed on their homes. According to the Planning Board’s “Data Abstract” the clearance area did not contain a single house that was in “good condition.” However, assessments conducted on the houses of Don Mount’s infamous hold-outs declared that their houses were in “excellent condition”⁷³ The Don Mount residents’ fight for adequate compensation forced the Ontario Government to study, and eventually replace, its expropriation laws to ensure that hardship was not induced by public activities such as urban renewal. Their fight also confirmed the rising suspicion that urban renewal was an “insidious monster which has destroyed the heart, soul, and spirit of many self-respecting communities.”⁷⁴

From the start, the City argued that the offers it made to area residents were fair and reasonable. According to the Planning Board’s Data Abstract, area homes had been sold for anywhere between \$4,100 and \$9,000 in 1963 and 1964, although the average value of area

⁷²CTA, PGC, SC 301, Box 5, File 18, Brief from the Officers of the Napier Place Residents’ Association to Certain Elected Representatives of the Federal - Provincial Metropolitan and Toronto Governments and Others on March 20, 1966, 1.

⁷³According to anonymous assessments in the possession of Controller June Marks the houses belonging to Thomas Craigen, Rilda Hughes, Thomas Cox, and Dorothy Graham were described as such: Craigen, 64 Munro Street, city’s offer \$8800 - 5 large rooms plus a large sun porch new roof house in very good condition; D. Graham, 90 Munro Street - Solid brick construction, modernized kitchen, three bedrooms, full basement, new forced air gas furnace in good condition. in excellent condition; R. Hughes 32 Matilda Street - Row house brick front 6 rooms with full-basement in good condition, new coal furnace, new roofing housing in good condition offer of \$11-\$12,000; Cox , 30 Matilda, in very good condition, offer \$12,000.

CTA, June Marks Collection (JMC), SC 305, File 15, “Details on the houses in Don Mount,” n.d.

⁷⁴E.W. Dempster cited in *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 10 (July 17, 1967), 7.

houses was closer to \$12,000.⁷⁵ An independent study by the Toronto Real Estate Board (TREB) also revealed that the average sale price of homes in an area adjacent to Don Mount was just under \$10,000. Yet housing prices in 1966 and 1967 were climbing rapidly due to both private and public renewal schemes that were reducing the city's stock of single-family dwellings. In fact, the effect of the Don Mount expropriation was almost immediate according to the residents' association, as area sellers realized that "most residents would have to move soon, had cash from the city, *and were likely to relocate in the same area.*"⁷⁶ Residents claimed that they could not find equivalent housing for the prices they were being offered by the city. The City disagreed, claiming that "hundreds of houses were available on the market for under \$10,000."⁷⁷ Yet the Real Estate Board, fully aware of the price of homes in Toronto, disagreed. According to its own figures, only 10 houses of 1,131 properties it sold in November 1966 were purchased for less than \$10,000. Even during the same period in 1965, TREB reported only 34 properties were sold at such prices, representing a mere three percent of the market. Indeed, the two percent drop over the year was due to the loss of such houses to various forms of urban renewal. As TREB research director, Donald Kirkup, ironically remarked: "because it is getting scarce, the cheap house is becoming expensive."⁷⁸

⁷⁵CTPB, "Napier Place Urban Renewal Scheme - Data Abstract," May 1965, 4.

⁷⁶"City Called Shortsighted and unfair over Napier Place expropriations," *Globe and Mail*, March 7, 1966. Emphasis Mine.

⁷⁷Walter Manthorpe, cited in Ralph Magee, "City officials: They waffle and they pass the buck along to Queen's Park," *Toronto Telegram*, January 14, 1967.

⁷⁸Donald Kirkup cited in *ibid*. Kirkup's comment was later supported by a study of filtering by C.A. Mahar, who illustrated that redevelopment and rehabilitation, both public and private, played havoc with the filtering process in Toronto by making houses in poor neighbourhoods more expensive rather than cheaper See C.A. Mahar, "Spatial Patterns of Urban Housing Markets: Filtering in Toronto, 1953-1971,"

(continued...)

Kirkup's observations were also supported by a study conducted by Michael Dennis, on behalf of the Ontario Law Reform Commission, to investigate the province's expropriation laws. Dennis found that Don Mount home-owners paid 56 percent more for their new houses than they received in compensation, or about \$5,450 per owner, the equivalent of one year's income for most Don Mount homeowners.⁷⁹ Equally important, many of the families were mortgage-free and now had to take on mortgages, raising their housing costs from next to nothing to an average of nearly a quarter of their income, and in two cases to nearly 60 percent of their income. Even those who were able to purchase a new house without a mortgage still subsidized the urban renewal project, since their property taxes increased by 112 percent.⁸⁰ Once again, homeowners too "rich" for public housing, but too "poor" for anything but small inner-city houses, were being asked to subsidize urban renewal.

In a bitter twist of irony, this was not the first time some Don Mount residents had been required to subsidize the city's slum clearance programme. Both Euna Turner and Agnes Ridgers had been expropriated before, in Alexandra Park and Regent Park respectively. Both were determined to put up a stronger fight this time. However, it was not to be. Ridgers, a 57 year-old widow, had been expropriated in 1953 for the sum of \$4,500, even though she had bought the house with her husband during the inflationary post-war period at \$6,500. After the city expropriated her house for the completion of Regent Park,

⁷⁸(...continued)

Canadian Geographer, 18, (Summer 1974), 108-124.

⁷⁹Ontario, Department of the Attorney General, *Report of the Ontario Law Reform Commission on the Basis for Compensation on Expropriation (Hereafter OLRC Expropriation)* (Toronto: Queen's Printer, September 1967), Appendix B, 80.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

she moved to 35 Matilda Street, for which she paid \$8,900 in 1954. Between 1954 and 1966, when her property was expropriated, she had made extensive repairs, including a new roof, chimney, copper plumbing, aluminum storm windows, and a new furnace, which alone cost \$1,000. The property had been independently assessed at \$9,500; the city offered \$8,000. After bargaining with the city she finally received what she had paid for it over a decade earlier: \$8,900. Both Ridgers and Turner moved into public housing, fulfilling the Residents' association's prophecy that the city's urban renewal program was making "paupers of independent people."⁸¹

Yet there was even more evidence that the city's urban renewal activities were also fulfilling Engels' prophecy that the government programs essentially "Hausmannized" the inner-city. By paying expropriated homeowners less than enough to buy a replacement home, the city was perpetuating bad housing rather than solving the crisis. People who had been expropriated from Regent Park, Moss Park, and even Alexandra Park were being backed into a corner. Even the city recognized this fact:

Properties which are being expropriated for urban renewal are necessarily amongst those which are in the worst condition in the City, and the expropriated owner, on the basis of the present interpretation of the rules governing compensation, can only seek equally poor accommodation, with the result that those being relocated move to areas which will undoubtedly be the subject of further urban renewal activity in the near future.⁸²

Nonetheless, despite the city's declaration of *mea culpa*, its actions in Don Mount were only perpetuating the problem. In the case of Rilda Hughes, one of the infamous Don Mount

⁸¹Tori Salter, "Matilda: A Street of Broken Dreams," *Toronto Star*, December 10, 1966, quote from CTA, PGC, SC 301, Box 5, File 18, "Brief from the Officers of the Napier Place Residents' Association ... March 20, 1966," 1.

⁸²CTA, JMC, SC 305 Box 3, File 2, Brief to the Hon. John R. Nicholson, PC, OBE, QC, MP Minister of Labour and Minister responsible to Parliament for CMHC. (nd)

“hold-outs,” the new home into which she finally moved, because it was a bargain, required nearly \$1,500 worth of repairs to bring the house up to the City’s new minimum housing standards by-law. “Out of no fault of my own,” she claimed, “[t]hat [e]xpropriation ruined my life.”⁸³

To meet higher housing costs, residents called for relocation payments to equalize the cost of finding new houses. Though the eventual battle over compensation in urban renewal areas would focus on the idea of a “house for a house,” Don Mount residents did not initially make such a demand. Instead, they suggested that the city consider a \$1,500 cash grant for people with incomes lower than \$4,000 per year, and long-term mortgage money for others at a reasonably low rate of interest.⁸⁴ From the start, the City claimed that its hands were tied in the matters of compensation. Under current legislation, the city could only offer market value. It could not in any way offer grants or pay for relocation expenses, outside of a \$15 per room subsidy for moving expenses. According to the city’s Real Estate Commissioner, Col. S .J. Jackson, “market value is our one and only guide. We are bound to pay cash value until the act is altered.”⁸⁵ Yet market value was a dubious yardstick to measure the value of Don Mount’s houses, since the designation of urban renewal automatically and artificially lowered the “market value” of properties. Indeed, whereas house prices in Toronto had generally risen in the neighbourhood of 30 to 40 percent since 1963, those in Don Mount had only risen 5 percent. In fact, most Don Mount homeowners did not get significantly more

⁸³John Sewell, “She won ‘incredible’ expropriation fight,” *Toronto Star*, August, 3, 1968; and CTA, John Sewell Collection (JSC), SC 306, Box 2, File 15, Rilda Hughes to Mayor Dennison, January 3, 1968.

⁸⁴CTA, PGC, SC 301, Box 5, File 18, “Brief from the Officers of the Napier Place Residents Association ... March 20, 1966,” 3.

⁸⁵G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 107.

from the city in compensation than they had paid for their houses nearly a decade earlier. In many cases, this was not due to deterioration. On the contrary, many had made extensive repairs and renovations adding furnaces, new roofs, extensions, and extensive brickwork. Nonetheless, the provincial and federal governments rejected any kind of plan that could even be remotely construed as replacement value, or “a home for a home.” Both the province and the federal government were willing to make special allowances to ease situations of hardship “provided the City makes a special recommendation and can satisfy itself that it is not setting precedents which it might regret in light of other property acquisition programs present and future.”⁸⁶

Others, however, believed that the city was not doing all it could under existing legislation to ensure that homeowners were adequately compensated and properly relocated.⁸⁷ According to the residents and the city-employed relocation officer, Vance Davis, the city had been shortsighted, if not cruel, in rushing forward with expropriation, without first insuring there was sufficient housing available for displaced persons. They argued that since the city had created the emergency, it was obliged to compensate owners so that they could find comparable housing at prices they could afford. For this reason, residents and their supporters argued that the city was obliged to make settlements according to the “value to the owner,” meaning that the city should pay “an amount that the owner would pay for the property rather than be ejected from it.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶“Copy of Letter (November 18, 1966) from the Minister of Municipal Affairs,” in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1967, Appendix A, Board of Control Report # 18, 1074-75.

⁸⁷G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 108.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 107.

Instead, home-owners were subjected to intimidation from city officials. When the city first notified residents of expropriation proceedings, their notices stated that they could raise objections to the plan. When residents, such as Thomas Craigen, stated their dislikes about the project, the City sent Peter Allen, the scheme co-ordinator, to get the residents to retract their statements. They refused. Residents also complained bitterly about the tactics of the negotiators from the City Real Estate Department. According to Michael Dennis's study, "owners complained more bitterly about the treatment that they received at the hands of municipal officials than they did about the amount of compensation."⁸⁹ According to residents, the real estate negotiators took a very "hard-nosed" approach to their dealings with residents. They not only refused to incorporate improvements made to the properties over the years, but they steadfastly refused to discuss how they arrived at their offers. They also forced the residents to negotiate individually rather than as a group, and told them that they had to keep quiet about the "special treatment" they were receiving. Residents were simply told that the city's offer of compensation was a "take-it or leave-it" proposition. In several cases, where owners refused offers, property department officials told owners that they would have to bring the premises up to the housing standards by-law in the interim.

More important, real estate negotiators never attempted to pay "market value" for the homes in the first place. According to Dennis's report, negotiators started out below the price at which they believed they would have to settle. Then, if they met resistance, they would come up a \$100 at a time to a maximum of \$300, and then tell owners that this was the best offer they would receive. In fact, officials from the provincial and federal

⁸⁹*OLRC Expropriation*, 79.

governments were astounded at the low prices the city paid for the properties in Don Mount. While most municipalities prided themselves on fairness, City of Toronto negotiators often bragged about the city's low expropriation costs.⁹⁰ Under the regulations of the Expropriation Act, property owners had the option of arbitration if the two sides could not agree on a fair price. However, even when owners elected to go to arbitration, the new offers they received were only minimally higher than those originally offered by city officials.⁹¹

If this were not bad enough, residents remained poorly represented both by city officials who were supposed to help them and by their own lawyers. From the start, home owners viewed their situation as hopeless, and there is little evidence that lawyers representing residents viewed the situation any differently. Most lawyers were unwilling to press City officials for more money and more information, and regularly tried to persuade owners to sell and get on with their new lives. Residents wanted to negotiate as a group, but were forced to negotiate individually. Many felt guilty that in doing so they were "letting down the side."⁹² But residents felt so disgusted at the process that they followed their lawyers' advice, and moved on. In addition, many refused to talk to researchers and sympathetic journalists, such as Tori Salter, whose articles on the Don Mount expropriations did much to change Torontonians' opinions about slums and urban renewal.⁹³

Meanwhile, the city council was adopting a dual strategy to deal with the growing

⁹⁰G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 106.

⁹¹*OLRC Expropriation*, 80.

⁹²"Offers Rile Napier Place Folk," *Toronto Telegram*, March 17, 1966.

⁹³*OLRC Expropriation*, 79; G. Tori Slater, "Matilda, A Street of Broken Dreams," *Toronto Star*, December 19, 1966, 7; and G. Tori Slater and Ralph Magee, "Expropriate sometimes means grab," *Toronto Telegram*, January 14, 1967.

impasse. It could be likened to an iron hand in a velvet glove. On the one hand, city politicians, such as Controllers Margaret Campbell and William Archer, along with Ward 1 (Riverdale) councillors Oliver Sigsworth and Thomas Wardle, urged residents to “march on city hall” in support of their demands for better compensation. Indeed, Campbell stated: “Expropriation is morally wrong when it forcibly places people in the position where they are obliged to accept financial responsibilities they cannot meet; or insists they move into public housing where they don't wish to live.”⁹⁴ For this reason, she floated the idea of interest free loans, rather than cash grants to disadvantaged home owners, because the latter “would inflate an already inflated real estate market.” Even newly elected Mayor William Dennison, who had long fought on the side of home owners under the gun of expropriation, conceded that “expropriated persons should not lose money” and was not concerned “if they gain a little.” Nonetheless, Dennison, Campbell and other government officials, including Development Commissioner Walter Manthorpe, refused to budge from their original position that the city could offer nothing more than the legislation permitted. They argued that if the city initiated a special compensation fund, it might be forced to pay the entire difference or, worse, set a precedent for all future expropriation proceedings.⁹⁵

Instead they asked the provincial and federal governments to clarify the situation under the law and under CMHC guidelines. A decision on the matter was imperative for the city, since the issue of expropriation had begun to affect the city's urban renewal plans in Trefann Court and Don Vale (see below). In their application to federal and provincial

⁹⁴M. Campbell cited in *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 1, No.6 (January 28, 1967), 6.

⁹⁵William Bragg “And Now the city moves to pay for uprooted lives,” *Toronto Star*, December 19, 1966, 7.

authorities, the city adopted almost the identical arguments of the Don Mount home owners: that expropriation in a tight housing market made it difficult to find affordable replacement homes; that houses expropriated in poor areas left homeowners to seek equally poor housing somewhere else only to face the prospect of having to face urban renewal again; and that home-owners, unlike tenants, were generally not provided for as far as relocation assistance was concerned.⁹⁶ Indeed, as Margaret Campbell argued, the city had “overlooked the forest for the trees,” by focussing almost solely on the plight of tenants in “slum areas.” The city, and indeed, federal housing policy, “never adopted a policy that we must be concerned for the home-owner living on a limited income.”⁹⁷

In an attempt at compromise, Development Commissioner Walter Manthorpe, devised a policy to compensate “hardship cases,” which consisted of deferred repayment loans, paid to homeowners to defray some of the costs of relocation. These loans could amount to as much as \$3,500 per family, but they were not universally available. According to the plan, only owner-occupants who had resided in their house for at least two years (unless there were unusual circumstances), and whose compensation was fixed at no more than \$12,000, would be given consideration under these rules. Furthermore, the amount of the loan would be determined by the city according to the following criteria: age and health of owner-occupant; financial circumstances; equity position prior to expropriation; housing needs; and finally, details of any alternative house proposed to be acquired and the

⁹⁶CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 3, File 2, Corporation of the City of Toronto “Urban Renewal in the City of Toronto,” Brief to the Hon. John R. Nicholson PC OBE, QC MP Minister of Labour and Minister Responsible to Parliament for CMHC.

⁹⁷CTA, JSC, SC 306, Box 3, File 11, Report on Urban Renewal by Margaret Campbell, July 13, 1965, 4.

reasonableness thereof.⁹⁸ Residents in Don Mount and Trefann Court rejected the compensation scheme outright. They did not want loans and they did not want to go into debt; they wanted a home for a home. It was on this point that the Don Mount situation came to a head in 1967.

By the summer of 1967, almost all of the residents of Don Mount had been expropriated and moved away. All, that is, except for five hold outs: Matt Kondrat, a 57-year old Polish immigrant who had once worked in construction, but now, with arthritis and a heart condition supported himself by buying and renovating houses; Rilda Hughes, an elderly widow; Thomas Cox, a veteran of the Boer War, then in hospital; Thomas and Jane Craigen, he a 77-year old veteran of the First World War; and Dorothy Graham, a middle-aged widow with two young sons.⁹⁹ The fight of the “gang of five” to get the city to find them replacement homes revealed the brutality of the city in pushing through a project supposedly in the “community’s best” interest.

While the city was moving ahead to establish a program to ensure homeowners did not subsidize urban renewal, it was also determined that the remaining residents would not get in the way of progress. Indeed, the City and the Ontario Housing Corporation had already cleared the area and started on the construction of the public housing units. Because the city had passed an expropriation by-law, it had the right to apply to a judge for a warrant of possession of the remaining houses. In essence, the city owned the houses now. Thus, on August 26, 1967, the city moved in on Matt Kondrat’s house on Steiner Street. Kondrat, a

⁹⁸“Report of Commissioner of Development viz. Compensation for Hardship Cases in Don Mount Village, January 31, 1967,” in, City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1967, Appendix A, Board of Control Report #18, 1070-74.

⁹⁹G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 106.

resident of Trefann Court, had been living for the past month in a house he formerly rented to guard against the forcible expropriation of his property. August 26, being a Saturday, Kondrat let his guard down and left at 6 a.m. to do some shopping at the St. Lawrence Market. When he returned, only an hour and a half later, it was too late. The city had seized the opportunity and proceeded with the demolition of his house. Barred from the property by a sheriff and five policemen, Kondrat watched his possessions carted out and the house demolished before his eyes.

In response, residents from other renewal areas, including Trefann Court and Don Vale, picketed the homes of city politicians, including those of Mayor Dennison and Controllers June Marks and Margaret Campbell, to protest the high-handed actions of the city. They carried placards denouncing the eviction and proclaiming that "the poor cannot afford urban renewal." Unfortunately for the protestors, all but one of the politicians they picketed was away. The only one who was not was Ward 1 councillor Fred Beavis, who told them to take their case to the Board of Control next week. That Board of Control meeting, however, never occurred. It was the day that David DePoe of the Company of Young Canadians took over city hall to get the city to block traffic in Yorkville.¹⁰⁰ In the resulting confusion, the Board never took the time to hear the final four eviction cases.

Nonetheless, the Don Mount hold-outs and their sympathizers from Don Vale and Trefann Court took a page out of DePoe's book and decided to show up at the Board of Control unannounced to get their point across. On the morning of September 6, 1967, only

¹⁰⁰See the movie *Flowers on a One Way Street*, Producer Robin Spry, National Film Board of Canada, 1968. See also Doug O'ram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 210-215.

two days before the final writs of possession were to go before the courts, the group headed down to City Hall to protest the municipality's actions. Led by Riverdale MPP James Renwick, they quietly filed into the meeting room and waited their turn to present their case. When Renwick rose to introduce a new order of business for the Board, the controllers walked out of the room. Stunned, the residents decided to conduct a sit-in and read their statement, which called for a halt to evictions until the principle of a "home for a home" was established. After police hauled Renwick from the chamber, the remaining protesters refused to be intimidated. As they waited for the Board's decision, they sang songs associated with the African-American civil rights movement - "We Shall Not be Moved" and "We Shall Overcome." The Board of Control decided to let the courts decide.

Here in the courts, the residents once again outwitted the city, but to no avail. The lawyer for the holdouts, Andrew Brewin, who like Dennison was a long-time CCF/NDP stalwart and frequent defender of expropriated homeowners, argued that the city had to justify its evaluations and reveal how they reached their prices in expropriation cases, or dismiss the case. Even though there was no legal precedent to do so, the judge agreed with Brewin's argument. However, city officials refused to reveal their reasons, which essentially proved that they could not defend the amounts being offered as anywhere remotely fair. Undeterred, the city maintained its campaign of terror on the remaining hold-outs. On October 5, 1967, the day the ruling was to be announced, the city was so confident it would win, it sent the bulldozers in, crashing right through Dorothy Graham's backyard. Although the city claimed it was an accident, workers said that they were under orders. The pressure was too much and two of the three remaining owners could no longer stand the sea of mud

that existed outside their doors, the noise of the construction, and the harassment of having power, telephone, mail and garbage services cut off for several days at a time.

Dorothy Graham, however, was not about to be moved. She remained firm in her struggle to force the city to find her a replacement home. In late 1967, she tried to force Mayor Dennison to come house hunting with her to prove that she could not obtain a home similar to her current one in Don Mount for the \$12,000 the city offered for her property. Instead he took her on a tour of houses the city had purchased for less than \$15,000 and had renovated. Despite trying to defuse the issue, Dennison's tour only confirmed Graham's and other inner-city residents' claims that there was nothing worth buying for less than \$12,000. Throughout 1967 and into 1968, she lived literally surrounded by the new public housing project. To enter her house, she had to walk through the first floor of the row houses while they were still under construction. It was then that John Sewell, a young lawyer, who was helping in the fight against urban renewal in Trefann Court discovered a clause in the Municipal Act stating that the city could not close a street without providing alternate access for those remaining on the street. After two years, Graham finally had had enough and gave notice to the city and Ontario Housing Corporation that unless they compensated her with a new home, she would apply to have Munro Street re-opened, which required that some of the units already finished be demolished. Within 48 hours, Graham had a city-owned house at 28 Austin Avenue, her legal fees paid, and \$200 to decorate the house. In a bitter twist of irony, to accommodate Ms. Graham, the city had to evict the Porter family, who had been forced out of St. James Town, and who would once again be shuffled to keep one step ahead of the wreckers. Even more ironic was the fact that Ms. Porter had also fought against urban

renewal as the chair of the St. James Town Housing and Residents Committee.¹⁰¹

While originally viewed as a manageable project, Don Mount triggered a chain of events that eventually brought urban renewal to a halt. Don Mount was the last urban renewal project built in Toronto, and even then, it remained incomplete. The uproar over the issue of expropriation led the city to delay, and eventually shelve, its plans for the rehabilitation of the eastern section of the area. By 1968, the public housing project was complete, and while it added much needed low-income housing to the city, only one-quarter of Don Mount residents moved into public housing either in Don Mount or in other projects throughout the city. Those who moved into Don Mount, however, were less than satisfied with the conditions, which they claimed were a slum in the making. By January 1970, tenants had formed a union to fight for repairs.¹⁰² Even city officials, such as Mayor Dennison, were less than happy with the final product. In a letter to the Planning Board, he complained that the maisonettes looked like “barracks.” Instead, Dennison claimed that the project should have included more high-rise apartments to break up the monotony of the low-rental project (See Figure 6.4).¹⁰³ Once a defender of home owners under the gun of expropriation and once a supporter of the Planning Board’s insistence on mixed development (as in the original fight in St. James Town), Dennison’s comments only revealed how far removed he had become

¹⁰¹ John Sewell, *Up Against City Hall*, 31-32; “Don Mount Scheme: Still a Hitch as Hold Out Quits,” *Toronto Telegram*, March 25, 1968; “Don Mount Hold Out: ‘Won’t Get My Home’,” *Toronto Star*, March 25, 1968.

¹⁰² For more on the origins of the Don Mount Tenants organization and the formation of the Riverdale Community Organization see Donald Keating, *The Power to Make It Happen: Mass Based Community Organizing. What It Is and How It Works* (Toronto: Green Tree Publishing, 1975), 13-35.

¹⁰³ CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 21, File 5, Mayor’s Office - Dennison to Dennis Barker, September 13, 1968 Re: design of Don Mount; see also attached letter from Paul Hellyer to Donald S. Macdonald, July 12, 1968.

from the housing needs and desires of Toronto's working-class who had put him in the Mayor's chair.¹⁰⁴

Figure 6.4



Source: Ontario Housing Corporation, "OHC in Metropolitan Toronto - A Progress Report," *Ontario Housing*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (March 1971), 3.

Dennison's "Barracks:" Don Mount Public Housing Project

Dennison's apparent about face was perhaps the most important outcome of the struggle over urban renewal in Don Mount. Prior to the fiasco in Don Mount, residents of old inner-city neighbourhoods could generally count on support from the more "progressive" elements on City Council to advocate their interests. In Don Mount, not one city councillor came to the aid of area residents, not even the local aldermen. Don Mount was a clarion call for inner-city residents to "wake up before it was too late." Even sources of conservative opinion, such as the Toronto Real Estate Board, were advocating citizen action to protect

¹⁰⁴See James Lorimer, "The Tragic Career of William Dennison," in James Lorimer (ed.) *A Citizen's Guide to City Politics* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1972), 124-26.

Toronto's inner-city neighbourhoods. As E.W. Dempster stated:

People in the shadow of expropriation should resist this outrageous exercise to force a showdown ... RESPONSIBLE citizens, by action or by threat, must implore their local elected reps to protect the interests of their families and the whole community, for I have come to realize that extremely few leaders are aware of the needs of the constituents they are supposedly representing. This is why it is imperative that citizens, individually and collectively, should educate themselves and express themselves more strongly on vital issues¹⁰⁵

Trefann Court residents first heard about the "insidious monster" that urban renewal had become from Don Mount residents, and they were determined that what happened in Don Mount would not happen to them. Their first lesson was to organize. As community organizer Marjalena Repo Davis stated: "Most of the people in Don Mount had no motivation ... they couldn't talk to other people and they didn't know where to go for help." Indeed, added Trefann Court resident Edna Dixon, "without the organization [Trefann Court] residents would have been long gone by now."¹⁰⁶

Trefann Court: Remember Regent Park

Trefann Court was the most notorious of the three areas up for urban renewal. The area was a thin five-block strip, just south of Regent Park South, bounded by Queen, Parliament, Shuter, and River streets. It was the last patch of Cabbagetown. Indeed, no one thought of themselves as residents of Trefann Court, but as Cabbagetowners, a process of designation that changed when the city created the community nearly overnight by designating its destruction. Like other urban renewal projects, Trefann Court was named after the street

¹⁰⁵Don Mount Prices Far below par realtor Toronto Star, March 20, 1968; and CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 2, File 20, *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (July 17, 1967), 7.

¹⁰⁶Marjaleena Repo Davis and Edna Dixon cited in Michael Enright, "The Snail in Urban Renewal: People Vs. Plans or Plans vs. Agitators." *Globe and Mail*, January 23, 1967, 1.

with the most notoriously dilapidated conditions.

Unlike the city's other urban renewal neighbourhoods of Don Vale, Riverdale or Kensington, Trefann had virtually no middle-class people living in the area, and none of the quaint appeal of these neighbourhoods, which qualified them for rehabilitation rather than outright clearance.¹⁰⁷ Trefann Court was solidly working-class; the majority of residents were employed in inner-city service industries, transportation, and factory labour. Most Trefann families earned between \$3,600 and \$3,800 a year, making the neighbourhood one of the poorest in all of Toronto. The poverty of the residents was reflected in the neighbourhood's architectural environment. Unlike Don Vale and Kensington, there were few quaint Victorian houses, and little of the bustling street life of an immigrant neighbourhood. Instead, Trefann Court was an architectural jumble of housing types, much of which had fallen into disrepair. In the western half, stood small frame cottages on Trefann, Tracy, and Sackville Streets, now tired-looking, worn, and cramped (See Figure 6.6). Built according to an award winning design for a workman's cottage at the Crystal Palace exhibition in London in 1851, they, too, were reminders of the long history of paternalistic schemes to "uplift" the housing conditions of working-class Torontonians. In the eastern half, stood more substantial three-storey Victorian-era houses on Sumach, Shuter and River Streets (See Figure 6.5). Interspersed through the neighbourhood were various industries, including auto wreckers, garages, a furniture factory, and the Good Shepherd Hostel for single men (See Figure 6.7). Other than being home to the smallest house in the city, 383 Sumach which measured only 6.5 feet wide on the inside, there was little of architectural interest in Trefann Court. Since the house had

¹⁰⁷G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 4.

received wide publicity in the 1934 *Report of the Lieutenant-Governor's Committee On Housing Conditions in Toronto* (Bruce Report) as a prime example of slum housing in Toronto, even this distinction was a dubious one.¹⁰⁸

Trefann, like Don Mount, had long been under the watchful eyes of planners and social housing activists. The conditions in the neighbourhood had first come to light in the Bruce Report in 1934, and then again in the Urban Renewal Report in 1956. There had been some interest in private redevelopment in the area at that time by Toronto Industrial Leaseholds, who employed former Toronto planner Eugene Faludi to compose the scheme. The area under consideration in 1956 incorporated not only what would become Trefann Court, but also the whole area south of Queen Street to Front Street. The project was to consist of a complex of office towers between Queen and King, a shopping centre at Shuter, Ontario, and Queen Street, as well as two 8-storey limited-dividend apartment buildings of 500 units each, mostly one and two bedrooms, on the same site as the Planning Board's later proposal for public housing in Trefann Court. The rest of the area would be given over to a mixture of industrial and commercial redevelopment. Though it had no legal responsibility for relocating residents, the company promised to rehouse residents either in the apartments or in one of its developments in the suburbs. Since most of the buildings in the area were substandard and unsafe, the area cried out for redevelopment, claimed the proposal. Industrial Leaseholds asked the city for help in expropriating the properties so improvements

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

Figures 6.5-6.7



Figure 6.5
 Source: G. Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1974).
 "Victorian Housing" in Trefann



Figure 6.6
 Source: City of Toronto Planning Board, *Don Planning District Appraisal* (Toronto: CTPB, 1963), 50.

Tracy Street

*(Note the similarities between the scene depicted here and that in bottom half of figure 3.3)



Figure 6.7
 Source: G. Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1974).

"Non-Conforming Uses" In Trefann Court

could begin.¹⁰⁹

Nonetheless, the Planning Board was not terribly enthusiastic about the proposal. At the time, the area housed 1,147 families totalling 6,300 residents in 794 dwellings. Somewhat surprisingly for a “run-down area,” owner occupancy was 52 percent. Though the area south of Queen had been zoned for commercial and industrial use, the Planning Board was having second thoughts about that designation, and felt that the need for housing in Toronto at the time outweighed the need for industry.¹¹⁰ Others at City Hall who saw the proposal, believed that it was phony, as many of the properties the company claimed were falling down were in good condition, while properties not needed for redevelopment, which they claimed “had years of useful life in them, were falling into their cellars from termite infestation.”¹¹¹ On the advice of the Planning Board, the City let the project lapse. In the meantime however, the company acquired and built an office building on Sumach Street that housed the offices of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Soon, agents from the Rubin Corporation, which later merged with Industrial Leaseholds to form Revenue Properties Company Limited, approached area homeowners with low offers for their homes. When home owners refused, as they invariably did, the agents were reported to have said that they would eventually get them when the city expropriated.¹¹² When residents learned that the western section of the renewal area was slated for industrial and commercial land, it is no wonder that they believed

¹⁰⁹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 27, File 1, Draft Report of Redevelopment Proposal for the Queen-Sumach Area by Toronto Industrial Leaseholds Co. Ltd., September 27, 1956, 8.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 65.

¹¹²*Ibid.*

a conspiracy was afoot between the city and private real estate interests.¹¹³

By the time planners reached Trefann Court in 1966, there were slightly less than 1,300 people living in 185 buildings on the small 24-acre site. As a result, overcrowding was a problem in nearly one-third of Trefann dwellings. Even worse, according to Planning Board surveys, there was not a “good” house in all of Trefann Court. Nearly 150 of the 185 residential buildings were in poor condition, many on the verge of condemnation; unlike the renewal programs in Don Mount and Don Vale, not a single house in Trefann was recommended for rehabilitation (See Figure 6.8). Again, the planners’ designation of Trefann houses as “poor” had more to do with their age, more than 80 percent were 60 or more years old, than it did with their structural conditions. Home owners claimed that the poor houses were almost invariably owned by absentee landlords, but the Planning Board did not record much of a difference between the state of owner, as opposed to tenant, occupied dwellings. Even still, absentee landlords were more likely to own substandard dwellings, since they controlled more than 60 percent of the dwellings in Trefann Court, the vast majority situated in the eastern section. Despite the vocal nature of the home owners who would oppose the redevelopment of Trefann Court, nearly 65 percent of residents were tenants, occupying both the homes of absentee landlords and owner-occupiers. For the privilege of living in Trefann, tenants paid, on average, \$90 to \$100 per month for a 3-bedroom house, while single rooms rented for \$8 to \$12 a week. Despite the high degree of tenancy, the area was not characterized by a great number of rooming houses or the high degree of transiency which

¹¹³James Renwick, New Democratic Party of Ontario MPP for Riverdale was the first to bring this to the attention of residents and the public more generally in a radio broadcast on July 31 1966. For a transcript of the speech see CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 9, File 3, Speech by James Renwick MPP (Riverdale) “Public Housing and the Trefann Court Project.”

often accompanied blighted neighbourhoods. Indeed, Trefann's houses may have been blighted, but its residents were not. Most Trefann residents, home owners and tenants, had lived in the neighbourhood for upwards of ten years and had become attached to it despite its decline. The Planning Board also noted the high degree of social problems in the Don District, but contrasted it with Trefann, which was "not much of a social problem area."¹¹⁴

Nonetheless, the Planning Board decided that Trefann's deteriorated and overcrowded houses, largely owned by absentee landlords, necessitated renewal. According to the Planning Board, its reasons for selecting the area were that the project was close to two existing housing projects and "presents a poor contrast in appearance... [and] ... [t]he size of the area is such that clearance and redevelopment operations could be handled easily."¹¹⁵ The city largely concurred, and as in Don Mount, quickly approved the scheme to "push the project ahead." The only protest at this point was from June Marks' old association, the Ward 2 Ratepayers and Residents, now headed by Trefann tenant Margaret LeMay, who wanted an injunction to stop the city from including industry in the plan. The city's plan to tear down the best housing in the area to make way for more industry during the worst housing crisis the city had faced since the war was the first piece of evidence for residents that the plan was, at best, poorly conceived, at worst, a massive land grab on behalf of private industry, namely the Rubin Corporation. Indeed, when Edna Dixon, the secretary of the Residents association but really its de facto leader, discovered that home owners would be paid on average \$9,800 per house, or \$6.62 per square foot, when the city valued the land at \$8.96 a square foot,

¹¹⁴CTPB, *Trefann Court Data Abstract*, (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, February 1966), 8.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1.

residents were convinced that the city had “become the middle man for big business.”¹¹⁶

It did not take long for organized resistance to the plan to develop. Trefann Court residents, like their fellow Torontonians, watched in horror the events taking place in Don Mount.¹¹⁷ Don Mount residents attended Trefann Court meetings and gave first-hand accounts of the realities of urban renewal and expropriation. But Trefann Court residents were more afraid, since no one had paid any attention to their area and it had been allowed to decline even further than Don Mount.¹¹⁸ Home owners originally hired lawyers from Cameron, Brewin, McCallum, and Scott to represent their interests, since the law firm had long fought on the side of home owners in expropriation cases. The lawyers advised home owners that it would try to delay expropriation to force the city to negotiate before expropriation, and thus garner better prices for the homes. But as John Sewell recounts, within a month home owners, and even some tenants, who had already been refugees from other urban renewal programmes in Regent Park and Moss Park, began to change their minds. They felt that:

there is no way we are going to win under urban renewal ... We're going to lose no matter what happens. If we try to dicker about prices, we're still going to get hurt. What we want is to have urban renewal called off. No expropriations, no demolition, no bargaining about prices: The City should go away and leave us alone.¹¹⁹

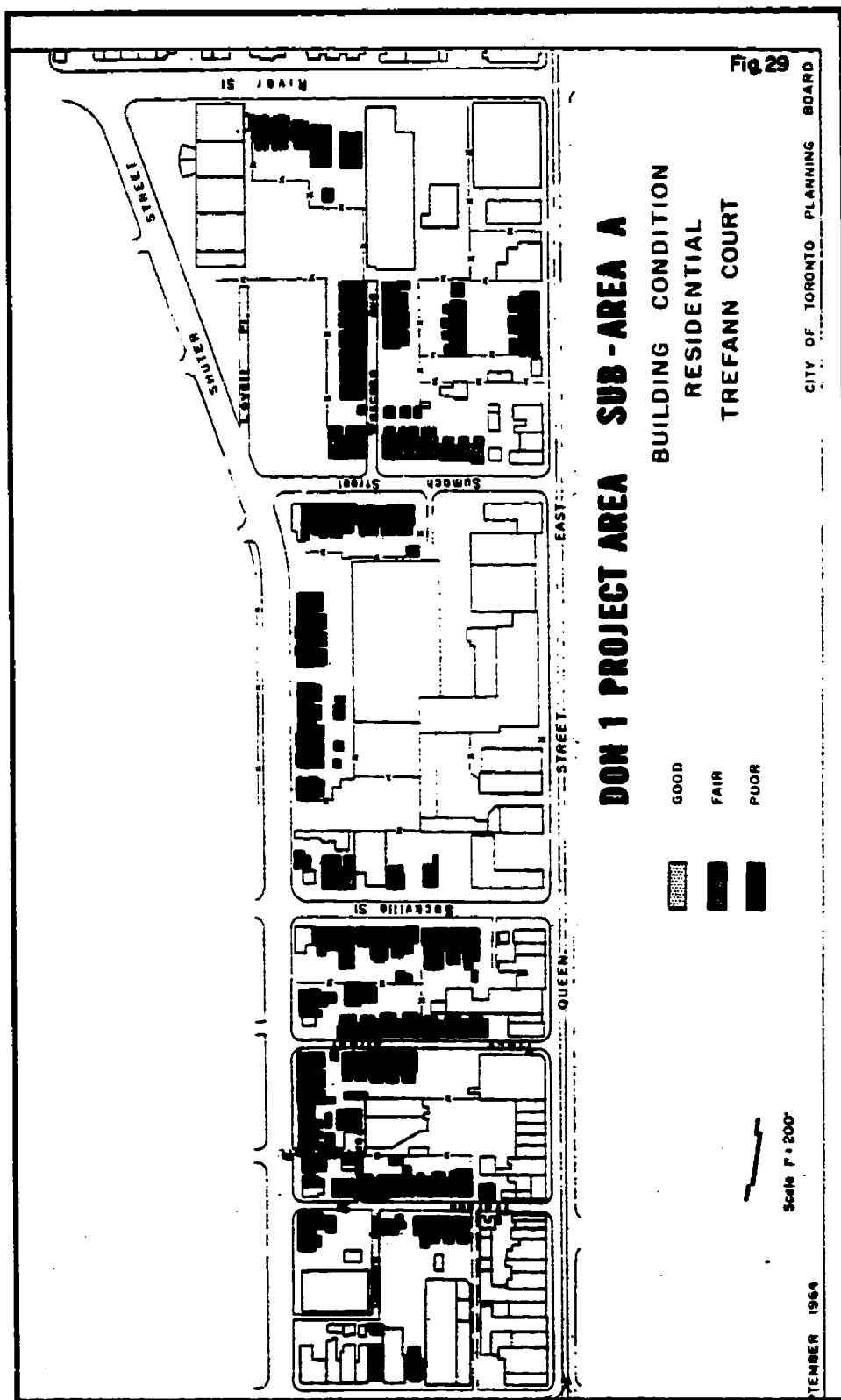
¹¹⁶CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 2, File 20, *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (September 23, 1966), and quotation from Mike Koverko, 8.

¹¹⁷G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 75-76.

¹¹⁸John Sewell, *Up Against City Hall*, 24.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

Figure 6.8



Source: *Trefann Court Data Abstract* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1966).

Housing Conditions in Trefann Court, 1964

Within two months residents had organized a petition with 230 of the 400 adults in the area asking for the city to revise its plans for Trefann.

In place of the City's plans, the residents' association suggested that urban renewal be cancelled and that the area continue "as a community making use of its own association in conjunction with the city, for the gradual renovation of the area."¹²⁰ By lifting the urban renewal designation, a threat that had hung over the neighbourhood for a decade, residents would return to making improvements on their houses and the city could enforce its housing standards on absentee landlords, who had also let their properties decline because of the threat of expropriation. In short, though residents recognized that some of the area was seriously blighted, they rejected "the bulldozer as the sole instrument of urban renewal."¹²¹ Instead, they wanted as much of the area to be left standing as possible. Their proposals entailed a spot clearance, mostly in the eastern section along Tracy and Trefann streets, and the rehabilitation of the remaining houses, especially those in the eastern section, along Sumach, Wascana, and Sackville. Part of their decision was due to the severe housing shortage, which made the original proposal of total clearance not only unacceptable, but sheer folly on the part of the city. Yet, there was no desire to have Trefann Court turned into another public housing super-block like the Regent Park developments that loomed over their community. A mixed development of private rehabilitation and low rise public housing units, residents argued, would be better socially. Under the current plans they argued "people are forced to leave the area, probably never to return, and thus the community life is totally wiped

¹²⁰CTA, JSC, SC 306, Box 2, File 2, Trefann Court Residents' Association(hereafter TCRA), Brief to Board of Control, May 3, 1967, 6.

¹²¹*Ibid.*

out.” In short, they saw an opportunity to “build a model community - a community built through the co-operation between the people of the area and the municipal departments which exist to serve the people of Toronto.”¹²² Throughout the entire five-year fight with the city, the residents’ association consistently retained this position. Ironically, as Fraser notes, after four years of bitter fighting between and among residents and the city, these ideas became the platform for the urban renewal process finally initiated in 1970.¹²³

Trefann residents came to oppose urban renewal after patiently listening to planners and politicians explain the plans for their neighbourhood. In meeting after meeting with residents between August and October 1966, Trefann neighbours believed that they were “getting the run around.” No one seemed willing to explain the plans, the means for compensation, relocation priorities, or whether the plan could be changed to incorporate residents’ suggestions. As Edna Dixon wrote in the *Trefann Court News*:

Residents agreed afterwards that they got no real answers to their question. There was a peculiar tendency among those responsible for the plan and its execution to shove off their responsibility on somebody else; there always seemed to be still another department or another level of government who was ‘responsible’, whereas those on the platform declared themselves both innocent and helpless.¹²⁴

Politicians repeatedly told residents that they would get replacement value for their homes, while others claimed that the city had no authority to do so, and even if it did, it was not prepared to “get residents off the hook for their over-valued mortgages.” Mayor Philip Givens went even further claiming Trefann residents’ demands would result in one of the

¹²²TCRA Brief to Mayor and Board of Control, November 3, 1966, cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 89.

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴Edna Dixon, cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 79.

“biggest swindles in real estate history.”¹²⁵ If this were not insulting enough, Givens stretched the incredulity of Trefann residents to the breaking point when he claimed that, “the City promised fair treatment and that the City did not have a record of being unfair.” In short, City officials and politicians asked Trefann Court residents to accept the good faith of the City.¹²⁶

Trefann residents had long memories, and recalled how the City pushed many of them out of Regent Park, Moss Park and, more recently, Don Mount. As the TCRA argued: “Resentment among the residents has been building up over the past ten years. We were well educated in the unfairness of expropriation when you expropriated our friends in Regent Park, Moss Park and Don Mount Village.”¹²⁷ Residents soon became convinced that the city was not going to bargain in good faith. They realized that much like the way the Real Estate Department made offers of compensation to Don Mount home owners, the city was telling residents that the scheme was a take it or leave it proposal. Margaret Campbell, in a verbal jousting match with June Marks, the only councillor to initially support the residents’ opposition to the project, claimed that, although the plan was “a mistake,” Trefann Court residents had been “led down the garden path in the belief that they [could] come into... City Hall any time and demand changes.”¹²⁸ Mayor Philip Givens agreed, and claimed that the City could just as easily take its plans to other areas of the city “crying out for development.” More importantly, he added that: “All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put this thing together if it is dropped now.” In a prophetic addition to his original statement, he

¹²⁵“Trefann Court Renewal: Mayor Fears ‘Swindle’ if City Pays Mortgages,” *Toronto Star*, September, 29, 1966, 9.

¹²⁶“Trefann Court Owners Reprieved,” *Toronto Star*, October 20, 1966, 40; and “Homeowners Fail to Win Guarantee,” *Toronto Star*, October 27, 1966, 25.

¹²⁷CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 5, File 19, TCRA Brief to Board of Control, January 24, 1967.

¹²⁸M. Campbell cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 79

claimed that if the plan were abandoned, it would mean “the death knell to any future urban renewal scheme.”¹²⁹ As it turned out, the plan for Trefann died when the Ontario Municipal Board was unable to approve the plan before the December 31, 1966, deadline.

Resident opposition to the plan immediately brought cries of disbelief from observers, city politicians, and even many of the people working with the residents. One newspaper noted that City officials were shocked that residents would “rather live in a near slum neighbourhood than accept . . . urban renewal.”¹³⁰ City officials and politicians were certain that “outside agitators” were responsible for the unreasonable and negative position of the residents’ association. Margaret Campbell believed that these “Marxist agitators” were responsible for “directing the residents to believe that the City was their enemy, and without concern for their needs.”¹³¹ While the sentiment behind the statement was malevolent, it contained a grain of truth. Trefann Court may have gone the way of Don Mount had it not been for the intervention of four individuals and two organizations dedicated to organizing the residents to fight City Hall.

Trefann residents were fortunate in that a revival of community organization swept through Canadian society in the late 1960s. For the most part, community organization was sparked by the upsurge of youth radicalism represented by the birth of the New Left in Canada and the United States. Though most came to radicalism through the peace movement, represented in Canada by the Student Union for Peace Activism (SUPA), others emerged out of more traditional channels including Student Christian Groups, and social work

¹²⁹*Toronto Star*, November 4, 1966.

¹³⁰G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 88.

¹³¹Campbell cited in, “Board Throws Out Urban Renewal Plans for Trefann Court,” *Toronto Star*, January 26, 1967.

and the Settlement houses of the inner-city. For the most part, the New Left was born of a rejection of an emerging bureaucratic and technocratic society, supposedly created by affluence. Young radicals argued that affluence did not come without serious costs, not the least of which was a sense of alienation from oneself and the rest of society. Those in this "New Left" also tended to reject past politics, especially those organized around class. Instead they threw their lot in with "humanity," rather than with the working-class. Instead, modern society was organized into the haves and the have nots, or those with power and those without. For this reason, New Left organizations focussed on those who had been excluded from the affluent society - racial minorities, women, francophones, and the poor.

The antidote to the alienation of the affluent society was involvement. Instead of empty theorizing about the world's problems, it was time to "put your body on the line," as the phrase went. This is perhaps the origins of the idea of the rebirth of participatory democracy, which became the vital centre of the New Left ideology. Much of the anger of the New Left was focussed on a society which did not allow people affected by decisions to participate in decision making. Combined with the idea of "power to the people," participation, more so than poverty or class, was the idea that underlay the principles of community action, and which led community organizers into inner-city neighbourhoods like Trefann Court to help organize the "people" to help themselves.¹³²

¹³²Surprisingly, very little has been written about the New Left in Canada, so most of the analysis in the preceding paragraphs draws heavily on American sources such as Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), Wini Briens, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal* (New York: Praeger, 1982), James Miller, *"Democracy Is In The Streets:" From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); and Todd Gitlin, *The 60s: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* Revised Edition (New York: Bantam, 1993). For the most recent treatment of the Canadian New Left see D. Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 226-233. Norman Penner's, *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1977), barely even mentions the existence of the New Left, and when he does it is only in association (continued...)

Community organization in Trefann Court came from a number of different sources; some of them were traditional, but others were new and innovative. The first came from a group of people from the federal government's newly formed Company of Young Canadians (CYC), an organization modelled on the United States Peace Corps, but soon transformed into a Canadian version of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In Toronto the CYC, led by Wolfe Erlichman and Sarah Spinks, decided it would choose an inner-city community to research and organize. Erlichman had recently graduated from the University of Toronto in social work, but, like many in the profession, he had become disillusioned with traditional approaches. Spinks had been involved in SUPA in university, and had spent time organizing communities in Kingston. Though the group wanted a "stable" low-income community so that it could organize the residents over the long term, the situation in Trefann Court appeared urgent. Erlichman soon met up with then law student John Sewell, whom he convinced to join the project. Sewell became the most prominent of the three, and, perhaps, the most significant community organizer in Toronto for the next decade. The three soon formed an organization known as the Toronto Community Union Project (T-CUP), supported with funds from the United Church, which was itself beginning to broaden its work in the community.¹³³

For the most part, Sewell and the other members of T-CUP took a non-directive, non-authoritarian approach to community organizing. Erlichman, especially, was convinced that his role as an organizer was to bring people together, suggest plans of action, but not make

¹³²(...continued)
with the Waffle Movement within the New Democratic Party.

¹³³G. Fraser, *Fighting Back* 81-82..

decisions for them. It was up to the community members to decide their concerns, prioritize them, and decide on a course of action. Community organizers in this view were more facilitators than leaders. Like many in the New Left, those in T-CUP, with the exception of Spinks, also adopted a non-ideological approach. As Sewell later commented on attacks made on his efforts in Trefann Court from within the New Left,

I don't think we [T-CUP] defined the differences in the interest groups (in the area) We consciously tried not to do that, actually. For me, anyway, I was working in a very pragmatic situation, I didn't have any of this theory - my God, I'm not a theorist - we tried to work with all the people there, and somehow, I guess we just assumed that their interests would coincide on a large number of issues.¹³⁴

Sewell and the others tended to see splits in the community, especially between home owners and tenants, as conflicts of personality and poor communication, rather than the way existing divisions of labour and housing tenure structured the life chances, and interests of different groups of Trefann residents.

The second source for community organization in Trefann came, again quite ironically, from traditional sources: social workers from the local settlement house - Central Neighbourhood House. Now that the National Housing Act had been amended to allow funds for hiring relocation officers, the city's Development Department asked Central Neighbourhood House to suggest two social workers for the Don Mount and Trefann Court projects. For the city, the House was a perfect place to turn. Traditionally, settlement houses had provided what Herbert Gans has called "caretaker" roles.¹³⁵ They provided staff and

¹³⁴J. Sewell cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 134.

¹³⁵H. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian Americans* Updated and Expanded Edition (New York: Free Press, 1980), 142-145.

assistance to area residents to facilitate the inevitable changes to the neighbourhood and to the lives of its inhabitants. Settlement houses had what Edward Banfield and James Wilson call a “community - or public - regarding” political ethos which stressed a sense of obligation to the community, a high sense of personal efficacy, a long-sighted perspective, a general familiarity and confidence with political and bureaucratic structures, cosmopolitan orientation towards life, and organization skills and resources.¹³⁶ This analysis matched the city’s description of a community organizer almost to a tee. According to Walter Manthorpe, Commissioner of Development and the one responsible for implementing urban renewal schemes, community organizers were to act as catalysts for the encouragement of citizen participation and involvement, a job which consisted of interpreting and informing the people of the plans, and referring them to agencies and organizations when a need for help was identified. Nowhere in his definition was there any mention of serving the needs of residents. Indeed, community workers were to provide a service that was geared to the “ultimate goals to be achieved.”¹³⁷ In short, the city saw the settlement houses and their workers as the perfect kind of citizen participation in urban renewal, since they would organize residents to help the City implement more efficient renewal programmes.

However, as the example in Alexandra Park revealed, the Settlement houses, their staff, and indeed, the entire social work profession, was returning to the more community and advocacy oriented work that the Toronto Welfare Council and others had begun during the Depression and immediate postwar years before more conservative elements suppressed such

¹³⁶See Donald Clairmont and Dennis Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*, (Rev. ed.) (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1987), 132.

¹³⁷G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 100.

activity.¹³⁸ As historians of Toronto's settlement houses, Donald Bellamy, Allan Irving, and Harriet Parsons, note, settlement workers were changing their attitudes about their inner-city clients. No longer were they asking what could be done for them, but rather "how can the poor be organized to press for relief from their poverty."¹³⁹ Central Neighbourhood House (CNH) was, as they note, at the forefront of this shift in attitudes. As the previous chapter outlined, CNH workers helped citizens in St. James Town form a residents' organization, which was instrumental in winning them a public rehousing and relocation program. The St. James Town fiasco also led the House to become involved with local ratepayers' groups to ensure that residents in the southern Don area would face a similar fate. The Wellesley Park project (Carlton, Bleeker, Wellesley, and Parliament area), helped organize residents in what would eventually become the Don Vale urban renewal area (see below).¹⁴⁰ Given the speculation, both public and private in the area, the House believed that residents should organize to protect their properties and their interests. The House reports noted that this was its own idea, as they had not been approached by residents.¹⁴¹

With the recommendation of Central Neighbourhood House, the Development Department hired Marjaleena Repo (then known as Marjaleena Repo-Davis) in June of 1966 as a relocation officer. Repo was a 28 year-old sociologist who had emigrated to Canada from Finland in 1960. Recently graduated from the University of Toronto with a degree in

¹³⁸See Gale Wills, *Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto, 1918-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

¹³⁹Allan Irving, Harriet Parsons, and Donald Bellamy, eds., *Neighbours: Three Social Settlements in Downtown Toronto*, 167.

¹⁴⁰CTA, Central Neighbourhood House (CNH), SC 5, Box 9, File 5, Don Valley Between 1961-1964; and Box 9, File 17 - "Report on the Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme - 1963-69," by Susan Roper

¹⁴¹CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 8, File 13, Interim Report - Wellesley Park Project, November 15, 1966.

sociology, she had done some social work at a Toronto mental hospital before Central Neighbourhood House recommended her to the city for the relocation officer position in Trefann Court. According to Graham Fraser, Repo's assignment to Trefann Court was the most important event that happened to Trefann Court. Without her work, there probably would not have been any organized resistance to the urban renewal scheme.¹⁴²

This does not mean that Trefann residents were completely apathetic before Repo arrived. Some area residents such as Margaret LeMay, Ray Tomlinson (President), and Gus Dixon and Edna Dixon (the "sparkplugs" of the association) had all been, or were still, involved in the Ward 2 Ratepayers' Association. Most however, had dropped out seeing the organization as nothing more than a bunch of ne'er-do-well's who used association meetings as a pretext to "booze it up."¹⁴³ Local residents were reluctant to form an organization until Repo began knocking on doors in the summer of 1966. They all agreed that "they did not know how to organize themselves ... and knew nothing about City Hall."¹⁴⁴ Residents were at first weary of Repo's presence in the neighbourhood, fearing that she was just another snoop social worker. As she realized home-owners were going to be hurt by the scheme, she quickly abandoned her allegiance to the City for the residents; it was a decision that essentially got her fired and tagged as an "agitator" by the Development Department.¹⁴⁵ According to Repo, the Development Department completely ignored her reports, and she claimed that it

¹⁴²A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 153.

¹⁴³G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 76.

¹⁴⁴A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 150

¹⁴⁵Michael Enright, "The Snail in Urban Renewal - People Vs. Plans, People Vs. Agitators," *Globe and Mail* January 23, 1967; CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 5, File 18, Marjaleena Repo-Davis to Walter Manthorpe, Commissioner of Development, January 10, 1967. 2-3

“acted as if there was no community worker in the Trefann Court area.”¹⁴⁶ In response to the charges, Manthorpe claimed that she was confused about her role in the area. According to

Manthorpe:

She didn't grasp that it was her job to assist the Urban Renewal scheme and in that way the people. She did not fulfil her duty to the City and after all, it was the City that was paying her.... [Moreover] the Development Department ... is not a social agency. If the City was going to get involved in social problems, then it would have to be done through the Welfare Department.¹⁴⁷

Free from the duplicitous actions of her employer, Repo became singularly committed to building a strong residents' organization to fight the city, rather than participate in the community's own destruction.

According to Graham Fraser, Repo was a “radical with ... considerably sharper intellectual analysis than was then current in left-wing university circles; however, she declined to label herself.”¹⁴⁸ This is true to some extent. Though she refused to pigeon-hole herself politically or ideologically, she borrowed heavily from Marxist theory to analyze the community politics of urban planning. She, unlike Sewell and the other members of T-CUP, saw the class fractures in the community, especially between owner-occupiers and tenants as serious impediments to the unity of the neighbourhood. Indeed, despite the fact that she persuaded area residents to organize, she ultimately rejected community organization as a tool of the middle-class that would eventually force working-class residents to participate in their

¹⁴⁶CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 5 File 18, Marjaleena Repo-Davis to Walter Manthorpe, Commissioner of Development, January 10, 1967. 2-3.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 76.

own destruction.¹⁴⁹

According to Repo, the neighbourhood as a community assumes a classless society at the local level, in which a mysterious “people of all classes work towards a common goal.” Middle-class elements, such as Sewell, she claimed, loved to talk and attend meetings because they were capable of controlling meetings and challenging authority. The working-class, however, “have no training in leadership and verbal skills, are socially insecure and feel inferior when having to deal with or work with highly literate and extremely verbal middle class elements. As a rule, they are not able to challenge verbally authorities... and feel - quite correctly - that circles are being talked around their heads by conservative and radical middle-class elements alike.” According to Repo, the problems of working-class home owners in Trefann and across the city, began and ended with urban renewal; their only demand was that urban renewal be cancelled, housing by-laws enforced and owner occupiers be allowed to renovate their property according to their own means. However, middle-class groups and individuals saw such demands as essentially negative. They were *intrigued* by the urban renewal game and would play it forever. Instead of allowing working-class home owners to be left alone, they insisted on *more* participation and spent much time and effort trying to involve residents in “positive” planning. In essence, middle-class community organizers adopted the same approach as the “caretakers” from the settlement houses and social welfare agencies.¹⁵⁰

Nonetheless, at the start Repo, the members of T-CUP, and the Residents’

¹⁴⁹Marjaleena Repo, “The Fallacy of ‘Community Control,’” *Transformation*, Vol. 1, No.1 (January-February 1971), 15.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 11-15.

Association worked together against an increasingly duplicitous city bureaucracy. On one hand, the city promised residents in an 'act of good faith' that it would not resubmit the original urban renewal proposals to the Ontario Municipal Board, and directed Development Commissioner Walter Manthorpe to sit down with residents to redraw the plans for the neighbourhood. On the other hand, Manthorpe and the city used the process to embark upon a divide and conquer strategy to call the bluff of the residents' association. First, the department produced another survey of housing conditions to determine which houses might be worth rehabilitating. This time the survey revealed that only 52 rather than 148 houses were in poor condition. Of the remaining houses, 80 were judged "poor to fair," 42 in "fair condition," and 9 in "good condition," the latter of which belonged to members of the residents' association. Since residents had been told for nearly a decade not to conduct any repairs because they would be expropriated, the change was not due to recent improvements, but a strategy to attempt to detach the strongest elements of the residents' association.

Second, the city began to question the representativeness of the TCRA, first by trying to ascertain how many people wanted to change the plans and how many only wanted better compensation. It also began meeting with dissident owners who wanted the city to proceed. This group, led by lawyer Louis Velanoff, represented mostly absentee landlords led by Harry Solomon, but others such as Noella Piquette, who owned a beauty parlour on Queen Street, also were ready to leave the area. The group had existed from the beginning and had opposed the residents' association's demands to remove the urban renewal designation at the November 3, 1966 meeting with the Board of Control. This group claimed to represent 75 percent of the owners in Trefann Court. However, the TCRA dismissed these claims,

believing that the City was manoeuvring the defectors, as they called them, to destroy the association.”¹⁵¹ In a shocking move, the TCRA called for Manthorpe’s resignation. Clearly tensions were mounting within Trefann Court.

More ominous than the “defectors,” was the emerging split between tenants and home owners. As the urban renewal scheme became bogged down in endless bickering between the city and the various residents’ associations, tenants began to worry that their interests were being lost in the process. Most of the tenants in Trefann Court in 1966 had been long-term area residents who did not see themselves or their interests as different from home owners. They too did not want to be uprooted from the place they called home.

Trefann tenants had always been a small, but vital, part of the original residents’ association. Pat Rice, who eventually split with the residents’ association to form Trefann Neighbours and Tenants, had been on the executive since day one, boldly supporting the home owners against expropriation. She had also done a lot of work in the community, organizing rummage sales and Christmas parties to keep up the spirits of residents and to raise money for the association. Others like Margaret LeMay, who also became a key member of TNT, did not join the residents’ association, but still had opposed the original plan from the beginning. Nonetheless, tenants soon began to worry that the home owners and their interests were receiving undue attention. While they sympathized with home owners who were under the gun of expropriation, they felt that the undue attention to the plight of home owners was obscuring the immediate needs of Trefann tenants, who composed more than 65 percent of area residents.

¹⁵¹CTA, JSC, SC 306, Box 2, File 2, TCRA Brief to City Council, May 3, 1967.

Tenants' concerns about being left behind by the home owners took root early in the fight against urban renewal. In March 1967, tenant Sarah Sissons, of 4 Trefann Street (one of Harry Solomon's infamous houses), wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Trefann Court News*:

To this date I have noticed in the Trefann Court News that what is best for the homeowners is what is appearing in the [Trefann Court] NEWS. At the meetings it is the same: what is best for the home owners is discussed, and never what concerns the tenants. Yet we are looked to, to help the homeowners to have a vote passed. What I want to ask now is this: when the time comes for us, who have been pushed to the background, to fight for what we need, will we get the same support as the homeowners got from us? Or will they feel that now when they have gotten what they want, they will not want to become personally involved with the tenants' affairs so as not to hurt their newly gained progress? I have been asking this question, but have gotten no answer, or an evasive answer - the kind of answer that we usually get from the City Hall.¹⁵²

Sissons fully sympathized with the plight of home owners, and, despite her reservations, she remained a member of the TCRA even after the tenants formed their own organization. She well understood "the ugly monster" of urban renewal which had haunted her family for more than a decade. Forced out by the Moss Park development, and forced out again for the failed Blue Heron development, Sissons and her family were once again being asked to move.¹⁵³ TCRA president Ray Tomlinson defended the actions of the association and promised to be more open to tenant concerns. Indeed, the association was not blind to the diversity of interests in Trefann Court. In 1968, during a review of its own activities, the Residents Association recognized that urban renewal meant different things to different groups in

¹⁵²CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 5, File 20, *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 1, No. 8, (March 31, 1967), 4.

¹⁵³CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 5, File 20, Sarah Sissons "I've Gone through it Before..." *Trefann Court News*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (December 12, 1967), 1-2.

Trefann, and that it should try to “understand the self-interest of the different groups so we can better understand their participation or lack of participation in the Association.”¹⁵⁴

Nonetheless, despite the acknowledgement of the diversity of interests within Trefann Court, there is little evidence that home owners, who dominated the TCRA, truly understood or were committed to defending tenant interests. Though the Association worried it had not given much attention to tenant issues, and that the separate tenants’ committee had not been active, it blamed the problem on its concentration on “urban renewal issues” that the City had forced upon the association. How tenant issues could be defined as something other than “urban renewal issues” is difficult to understand, since the program was designed with the interests of tenants first and foremost. Nonetheless the association believed that tenant concerns would only become relevant issues once a new urban renewal scheme had been completed. In the meantime, “urban renewal issues,” in the eyes of home owners, implied compensation and expropriation, and the creation of new plans which would emphasize rehabilitation and stability, rather than clearance and public housing. Pat Rice confirmed the powerlessness of the tenants in the TCRA. She claimed that there were only two tenants on the committee, herself and Noreen Gaudette, and when it came time for a vote “it seemed silly to argue about everything ... the odds were obviously too great.”¹⁵⁵

This home-owner centred approach to urban renewal is perhaps no more evident than in the association’s approach to the issue of housing standards enforcement in the neighbourhood. The delay in implementing the plan led to greater deterioration throughout

¹⁵⁴CTA, Karl D. Jaffary Collection (KDJC), SC 309, Box 9, File 5, “Report of the Activities of the Trefann Court Residents’ Association, 1967-68,” 1.

¹⁵⁵CTA, JSC, SC 306, Box 2, File 5, “Voice Your Views,” Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1, 1968.

the area. For one, the designation of an area for urban renewal allowed the city to relax the enforcement of its housing standards by-law. During the renewal period property owners would only be forced to repair their dwellings to ensure the health and safety of its residents. According to the Buildings Department, however, the effect of reduced standards in Trefann was "visible to any observer walking through the district."¹⁵⁶ The further deterioration of houses owned by absentee landlords became a sore point with home owners and tenants alike but for different reasons. In January of 1967, the TCRA formed three working committees and asked home owners to volunteer their services. Despite the fact that one of the committees would deal with the problems faced by residents under the housing standards by-law enforcement, not one tenant was represented on the committees. Home owners continued to press the city to enforce minimum housing standards on dilapidated dwellings, especially those owned by absentee landlords, or condemn them. Such properties not only lowered the value of owner-occupied properties, but their presence was a clear disincentive to them to rehabilitate their own properties. However, what home owners did not understand was that both the tenants and the city were in a precarious position. Forcing landlords to repair their properties would have increased rents and evictions at a time of the worst housing shortage in Toronto's history.¹⁵⁷

The association's hardline approach to the issue also stemmed from a concern that the depressed housing conditions in Trefann were attracting undesirables to their neighbourhood,

¹⁵⁶CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 2, File 7, Report 11 of the Committee on Buildings and Development, Re: Housing Inspections in urban Renewal Private Redevelopment Areas, May 21, 1969, 2.

¹⁵⁷J. Rowlands, "Trefann Court: The Tenant Story," in *Town Planning Institute of Canada News* (December 1971), 8.

thus hastening the descent of the neighbourhood into “slum conditions.” According to the home owners, the tenant population in Trefann radically changed after the breakdown of urban renewal; stable “working-class” families who could no longer put up with declining conditions were forced out and replaced by long-term chronic welfare recipients and troubled and demoralized people, such as bootleggers, prostitutes, drunks, petty criminals, and the catch-all category of “problem families.”¹⁵⁸ Long term tenants who remained did so both because they had nowhere else to go, and because if the urban renewal scheme was adopted, they would receive priority for public housing and other forms of relocation assistance. The latter issues were also important for newly arrived tenants, a point which did not go unobserved by Trefann home owners. Indeed, they complained bitterly about the Welfare Department’s practice of placing families in run-down Trefann area homes so that they could earn “extra points” on their applications for public housing.

Despite the fact that home owners often placed the blame for the deterioration of the physical and social conditions on absentee landlords, they remained wary of, if not hostile towards, their new neighbours, and soon towards tenants altogether. The emergence of the deepening hostility might best be illustrated through the ideas of Marjaleena Repo, who most heavily allied herself with Trefann homeowners and their attempts to abolish urban renewal. While Repo had nothing but praise for working-class home-owners, she had nothing but contempt for area tenants, especially those on welfare. Part of this was understandable, since one of the main foes of the home owners were absentee landlords who rented their properties

¹⁵⁸ Marjaleena Repo, “Organizing the ‘Poor’ Against the Working-Class,” *Transformation*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (March-April 1971), 9.

to “problem families” on welfare. But Repo seemed unduly wary of all Trefann tenants. There was a cruel sense of irony here because Trefann tenants were the first to warm to her presence in the neighbourhood. As Sarah Sissons, one of the tenants put it, she was the first person to treat Trefann people as human beings:

They didn't like you [at City Hall] Marjaleena, because you treated us like humans. You should have treated us like animals, and you would have had your head stroked. You were supposed to come into our district and you were supposed to sell us on this marvellous thing called rehousing development in the city. ... But you didn't do this. You acted like a human being, and you treated us like humans. Do you think if you hadn't treated us like this . . . we would have confided in you at all? We wouldn't have - we would have rejected you . . . completely.¹⁵⁹

However, Repo did not always reciprocate these feelings towards the tenants. According to Repo, the poor were different from the working-class. On one hand, working-class home owners were “guarded until they knew you,” were “more practical about the reasons you came to see them, and “always sparing of your time and theirs.” The poor, according to Repo were more talkative and gregarious, but more manipulative and sycophantic. Working-class home owners were also more “reliable, whereas the poor criticized ‘the establishment’ but rarely lived up to their promises of action.”¹⁶⁰ Indeed, according to Repo the most vocal poor were the least class conscious, lumpenized (chronic welfare) element, who “had grown fond of publicity of *any* kind.”¹⁶¹

Most of these differences, according to Repo's analysis, sprung from their respective class experiences. “Chronic long-term [welfare] recipients,” claimed Repo “[were] removed

¹⁵⁹Sarah Sissons, quoted in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 77.

¹⁶⁰Marjaleena Repo, “Organizing the ‘Poor’ Against the Working-Class,” 8.

¹⁶¹Marjaleena Repo, “The Fallacy of ‘Community Control,’” 16.

from any working-class context by the very fact that they do not work; thus they have often not experienced even the rudiments of a typical working-class collective experience, which frequently contains elements of loyalty and solidarity with fellow workers.” Many of these were women, who Repo claimed were “capable, intelligent and articulate,” but lacked “any significant working-class experience” that would provide them with a consciousness of themselves as members of a class. Indeed Repo’s description of Trefann’s welfare mothers, which was clearly a jab at Pat Rice, was equally as insulting as the frequent media exposés that Trefann residents found so abhorrent:

One can indeed, in these projects find a certain type of woman who became elevated into a leader. These were women with numerous children, separated or deserted, who had spent long stretches of their lives on assistance. They were bright and volatile and were always willing to ‘tell it like it is’ to anybody who cared to listen. The willingness to ‘bitch’ and to ‘mouth off’ to anyone who is willing to lend an ear, is quite typical of the under class, since it has no experience of collective action or co-operation, and feels, like the angry young men and women of the middle class, that anger by itself, loudly and clearly expressed, can change society.

Moreover, Repo claimed that welfare recipients were “better off than their working-class neighbours,” many of whom earned less working than they would on welfare, because of the “fringe benefits” of being on welfare, such as eligibility for public housing and free medicine. Indeed, though most of them “bitched” about how hard life was on welfare, they took every advantage to cheat the system by bootlegging and odd jobs. As a result, their demands “did not show the slightest consideration for the rest of the working-class.” In short, the poor were not only incapable of collective action, but they could not be trusted. They preferred to work

as individuals “fighting the system all by themselves.”¹⁶²

While much of Repo’s analysis is accurate, she nonetheless wrote off more than half of the Trefann “community,” thus weakening its bargaining position with state officials. By painting tenants in these terms, Repo bought into the very ideology of community that her Marxist underpinnings should have led her to oppose; namely, that collective action can *only* arise from those who have a stake in the system itself - either through unions in the workplace or through home ownership in the community. Or, to put it another way, she believed that home owners were full-fledged citizens and expected to be treated as such, whereas tenants were not and did not deserve such respect. As one community organizer stated: “Basically, they [home owners] don’t want to be shoved around. It is a concern, I think, to be a first class citizen. ... Tenants, who are used to moving frequently and are likely on welfare may take pushing around in their stride because they’re used to it.”¹⁶³ Indeed, it was the very idea that the poor and tenants had no dignity or civic commitment that led planners and politicians to set their sights on inner-city neighbourhoods as easy targets for urban renewal in the first place.

It is unclear whether Repo made her feelings known explicitly to the tenants, however, tenants soon came to distrust her and the other “community organizers” in Trefann. For the most part, the tenants met in private, usually in Pat Rice’s house on River Street, where often 20-25 tenants attended meetings. According to Rice, the tenants preferred private meetings. Many of them were on welfare and their children had problems, such as sniffing glue or

¹⁶²Marjaleena Repo, “Organizing the ‘Poor’ Against the Working-Class,” 8.

¹⁶³A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 126.

difficulties in school, and they did not want to air their problems before the whole neighbourhood. At the same time, meeting people with the same problems provided therapy for many of the families, who knew that they were not alone. They also knew that they could trust the others to keep such information confidential, especially some of the ways they “cheated” the welfare office. Indeed, as Pat Rice claimed “anybody living on public assistance right now has to be crooked in some way to make ends meet - regardless of how small that way might be. Even if it’s only \$20 a month ... because that ... might mean perhaps 100 gallons of oil and that’s very important.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, when the tenants’ committee was asked to hold their meetings in the site office, attendance began to drop off markedly. Tenants feared not only that city officials might overhear their conversations, but so too might Repo and Sewell.

In early 1968, two events finally ruptured the increasingly fragile relations between home owners and tenants in Trefann. The first was the infamous cold-houses incident. In January 1968, Toronto experienced a particularly severe cold snap. The age and frame construction of Trefann’s houses, combined with the fact that many of them had no insulation, made them difficult, if not impossible, to keep warm even in more moderate winters. Many of them had furnaces, while others relied on stoves to keep the houses and flats warm. However, keeping them warm often placed a terrible strain on the resources of families, especially those on welfare. Indeed, one of the largest expenses of the welfare department was paying for emergency deliveries of coal and other heating sources. Thus, whereas rent for the houses may have been cheap at \$60 to \$80 a month, heating costs for tenants in

¹⁶⁴Pat Rice quoted in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 124.

particularly cold weather could run anywhere between \$70 and \$200 a month, and in some cases nearly \$1,000 over a winter. This was the situation when Pat Rice ran into Ann McDougall on her way to a residents' meeting on January 2, 1968.

According to McDougall, a tenant active in the residents' association who lived on Sackville Street with her four children and her mother, Florence Wright, and her three children, there was no heat in her house and her children were in bed with chilblains and clothed in their snowsuits. Rice convinced McDougall to come to the meeting and state her case and ask what the association could do for her. The association decided that they would take temperatures over a period of a week, documenting the terrible conditions in the houses owned by absentee landlords and make their case to the City and the Buildings Department to bring them up to standard. However, McDougall and some other tenants at the meeting worried that complaining to the city would get them evicted, while another suspected that complaining about the poor record of the Buildings Department might result in reprisals against her husband who worked for the City. The residents' association, quite naïvely, countered that they would also recommend that the law be changed so that tenants would have no fear of being evicted, or having their rent raised if they registered a complaint with the Buildings Department. Such a plan of action was impossible given that the province, not municipalities, controlled landlord-tenant relations, and until the revision of the landlord tenant act in 1969, tenants had virtually no legal recourse to fight these actions by their landlords. Worried that the weather would improve in the interim, Rice became impatient with the TCRA's approach. She believed that "unless they could get inspectors into the

houses while the frost was still on the wall, nothing would be done about the situation."¹⁶⁵

It was at this point that June Rowlands became closely involved in Trefann Court. Rowlands had been a member of the Association of Women Electors and the Social Planning Council since the 1950s, and had been vitally involved in housing issues for both organizations. With her weekly bridge partners, she became interested in the housing situation of the poor back in 1956 when she formed the United Action for Slum Clearance, ironically after delivering a Christmas basket to Pat Rice in her dilapidated apartment.¹⁶⁶ She had also worked vigorously on getting the city to strengthen its housing standards and regularly acted as an observer at the housing court, which heard cases tried under the City's housing standards by-law. Her relationship with Pat Rice, relatively infrequent since the 1950s, was nevertheless intimate and Rice named Rowlands as the godparent of her children. Rowlands became involved in Trefann as early as 1966, asking if she could sit in on meetings on behalf of the Social Planning Council. The TCRA agreed, but only allowed her to attend meetings that were open to the general public. Re-immersing herself in the local politics of urban renewal, Rowlands became much more involved with Pat Rice, giving her advice and passing on information. One of these pieces of advice involved Rowlands persuading Rice to go public with Ann McDougall's heating problems.

On January 9, 1968, Torontonians woke to bitterly cold weather and pictures in all the daily newspapers of Mrs. McDougall's family huddled in their snowsuits. Under headlines of "Mission of Mercy," and "Where Baby Wears a Snowsuit to Bed," Toronto newspapers

¹⁶⁵ June Rowlands cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back* 126.

¹⁶⁶ Personal Interview with June Rowlands, August 10, 1996. See June Rowlands, "Child Sleeps on Chair in Slums," *Toronto Star*, February 4, 1956, 6.

immediately jumped on the story. According to the reports, Ann McDougall's situation was "common" in Trefann: "... knock on any door in the urban renewal area bounded by Parliament, Queen, Shuter and River streets and the odds are good that you'll find a family living with little or no heat, frozen pipes and with mice or rats as boarders."¹⁶⁷ The media attention sparked a flurry of action in Trefann. Four other families, who were in a similar situation, had their heat turned on by the city, while food, clothing and money poured in from 'concerned' newspaper readers across the city.

But while the incident refocused the attention of Torontonians on the plight of the poor, Rice's actions only provoked the fury of the TCRA executive. The executive were angered by Rice's going public with the story for a number of reasons. Rice had acted against the wishes of both the executive and the advice of the local organizers, Sewell and Repo. Equally important to them, was the intervention of June Rowlands, who had taken the story to City Hall to have it typed up and put on the Board of Control's agenda, where it eventually made it to the media. Finally, the newspaper stories, revealed that Ann McDougall's house was cold not due to poor heating or insulation, but rather unpaid gas bills, something no one had told the executive at the first meeting. Many Trefann home owners simply saw this as the result of welfare recipients flagrantly wasting their money on alcohol, rather than a fact of life for many welfare recipients. In fact, many tenants inherited unpaid bills from previous tenants, which made the fuel companies reluctant to re-establish service.

Yet, the most maddening aspect of Rice's and Rowlands' actions to Trefann home

¹⁶⁷CTA, JSC, SC 306, Box 2, File 5, Letter to the residents of the Trefann Court Area, the Press and the Board of Control. Re: Pat Rice going to the board about freezing tenants

owners was the sensational publicity which the story attracted. Like other inner-city residents, they were tired of having their lives and neighbourhood put on public display, especially when such stories focussed on the worst conditions in the neighbourhood and then tarred all residents with the same brush. Area residents believed that the public already had an inaccurate image of what the houses were like, and stories which emphasized vermin and families without heat only reinforced these stereotypes in their minds. As one Trefann Resident claimed: "The newspapers report facts, such as the number of Christmas baskets needed or those who don't pay (or can't pay) their light bills"¹⁶⁸ More importantly, they realized how such publicity had been used and would be used against their cause to alter or stop the destruction of their neighbourhood:

The resulting publicity, we believe, has been highly distorted and therefore damaging to the area and the Trefann Court Residents Assoc. We believe that it has set our fight for changes in the City's urban renewal policy back to where it started eighteen months ago . . . [B]ecause of these stories such as the one in the STAR the old battle cry is being raised again: Tear down the area.¹⁶⁹

In short, the residents found Rice's actions not only damaging to their cause, but completely unsuitable for self-respecting home owners who wanted to effect "real changes ... rather than settle for handouts that come through sensational publicity."¹⁷⁰

Such negative and sensational press was not new to Trefann, and such stories continued to capture the imagination of the media and its consumers, despite the emergence of alternative discourses surrounding inner-city neighbourhoods and urban renewal. On the

¹⁶⁸ A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 149.

¹⁶⁹ CTA, JSC, SC 306, Box 2, File 5, Letter to the residents of the Trefann Court Area, the Press and the Board of Control. Re: Pat Rice going to the board about freezing tenants

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

one hand, the press coverage of the battle of Don Mount residents for compensation on the basis of a home for a home shifted the focus away from urban renewal as a benevolent programme geared to improving the lot of the poor. The media soon sided with respectable home owners in their struggle against inhumane governments and unresponsive bureaucratic henchmen.¹⁷¹ Newspapers began running stories with headlines such as “Urban Renewal: Euphemism for Destruction;” “A Story of Grand Schemes That Ignored The Little People: Why Slum Clearance Slowed Down;” and “The Snail in Urban Renewal: People Vs. Plans or Plans Vs. Agitators.” Urban renewal was no longer the “sacred cow” that it had only recently been in the Toronto media. A 1967 editorial in the *Toronto Telegram* perhaps best stated the emerging consensus around urban renewal:

The practice of urban renewal has lost human touch, that is it is more concerned with bricks and concrete than with people. ... This attitude, no doubt unconscious, has in fact caused distress and uncertainty among residents of the Trefann Court area and other areas scheduled for redevelopment. They feel that they are being deprived of their homes with no prospect of other accommodation they can afford ... They suspect that they are pawns in a dehumanized game of blockbusting, [that] they the are being pushed around to make way for bulldozers for the glorification of the City and for the convenience of others.¹⁷²

Quite ironically, this same argument had been made by Cabbagetown residents all the way back in the 1930s when the Bruce Report designated the area for its opening round of “urban renewal.”¹⁷³

¹⁷¹A. Mayne, “A Just War: The Language of Slum Representation in Twentieth-Century Australia,” *Journal of Urban History*, 22 (November 1995), 101.

¹⁷²“Urban Renewal,” *Toronto Telegram*, April 1, 1967, 6.

¹⁷³See Hugh Garner, “Toronto’s Cabbagetown,” in J. L. Granatstein and P. Stevens, (eds), *Forum: Canadian Life and Letters, 1920-1970 - Selections from the Canadian Forum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 145-148.

However, for the most part, the media treated Trefann residents differently than it did those in other neighbourhoods who were fighting urban renewal in Don Mount, Don Vale (see below), or Kensington. Though press reports and editorials, such as the one from the *Telegram*, generally supported home owners in their fight for “a home for a home” and to make changes in the plan, they retained the view that if any place in Toronto needed to be renewed, it was Trefann Court. For them, Trefann was still a slum. Indeed, only a week before the *Telegram* published Marjaleena Repo’s attack on urban renewal - “Urban Renewal: Euphemism for Destruction,” it ran a series of stories and editorials describing the Trefann area as “Toronto’s Festering Sore,” which fell into the classic discourse of the slum exposé.¹⁷⁴ Once again, Torontonians were reminded that beneath their lovely, clean grand city, Toronto too had its miserable side, “its foul spots, places where men, women and children live under horrifying conditions ... You read about it in yesterday’s *Telegram*. It was a true report yet incredible.” “Despite a few decent houses,” the editorial continued, “the area ... on the whole ... is a festering sore, a wretched place of derelict houses, a stinking slum.”¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the stories carried in the paper in days prior to the editorial appeared more like those that might have appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* about the vicious residuum of Victorian London. Under the title, “The Trefann Court Story,” reporter Jerry Gladman congealed slum stereotypes in a few lines of journalism:

The first thing that hits you when you walk into the homes in ... Trefann Court ... is the stench. ... It fills your nostrils and stays with you long after you return to the street.... You have little time to accustom yourself to the odours of

¹⁷⁴Marjaleena Repo, “Urban Renewal: Euphemism for Destruction,” *Toronto Telegram*, September 21, 1968, 8; and “Toronto’s Festering Sore,” *Toronto Telegram*, September 11, 1968, 6.

¹⁷⁵“Toronto’s Festering Sore,” *Toronto Telegram*, September 11, 1968, 6.

greasy foods and week-old garbage and the musty smell of dirt. You open your eyes to the surroundings and you feel slightly ill. . . . [The] tenant [is] a woman probably no more than 40 but whose appearance suggests she's at least 50 ... You know the place won't be cleaned up that day or the next or possibly all week. .. The walls are filthy, unpainted, chipped and torn. The rooms, subdivided too many times to count, are crowded with battered old furniture.... Across the hallway, there's a tiny bedroom accommodating three to five people, two children to a bed. More chipped paint and plaster, more dirt . . . The kids are something else. Running noses, running eyes, filthy clothes, unwashed, unkempt.¹⁷⁶

While not all stories about Trefann were as vicious as Gladman's, even those which expressed a more sympathetic view of the residents and their living conditions still assumed that Trefann was a slum and continued to focus on the same issues, the dirt, the disrepair, the "poor" children. As Marjaleena Repo wrote, reporters, and especially photographers, came with the stated intentions of uncovering misery, injustice etc.. but really what they were looking for was "expressive materials." They wanted the authentic slum experience. For this reason they were especially interested in

little children found playing in the lanes or found resting on some steps or sidewalk, especially if they had dirt on their faces and looked somewhat sad. Likewise, rundown houses and boarded up properties were a favourite target, as were piles of garbage (often prior to the day's pick up not to mention that city services in certain districts in the inner-city were often well below normal standards), back lanes and junk on the yards of vacant buildings. The photographers simply never had enough of these things they loved any signs of what to them was general gloom, despair, decay, deprivation, child neglect etc.. those very features which the area residents were organizing to fight against. On the other hand, photographers and journalists rarely took pictures or wrote stories of people fixing up their houses, families doing things together, mothers walking their children to school, etc... In short, photographs and journalists ignored or downplayed anything that might indicate that health,

¹⁷⁶ Jerry Gladman, "The Trefann Court Story," *Toronto Telegram*, September 10, 1 & 4.

happiness, cleanliness, friendliness, and family life existed in the area.¹⁷⁷

If they existed, they were surely exceptions to the rule. Then again, in view of the strong assumptions about the deviancy of slum residents, it is not surprising that conventional patterns of life would be overlooked in favour of the distinctive and peculiar.

By the middle of January the split between Pat Rice and the rest of the TCRA was complete. Rice resigned from the residents' association and formed the Trefann Neighbours and Tenants (TNT) to "voice the views" of Trefann tenants. TNT soon became, as Fraser put it, "a strange collection of disparate elements: absentee owners, property owners who wished to sell, tenants and a variety of 'outsiders,'" including members of the Social Planning Council, St. Paul's Church, Professor Ted Mann of the York University sociology department, and, of course, June Rowlands.¹⁷⁸ TNT justified its position, claiming that since it represented so many different interests, it was the most representative association in the neighbourhood; 65 percent of Trefann residents were tenants. Yet, the one thing that united the group was the desirability of some kind of urban renewal in Trefann Court.

Trefann home owners, represented by the TCRA, viewed the formation of TNT with a great deal of suspicion and hostility. They believed, as did Repo, that the tenants were so "personally unstable and could not through its own efforts have become an organized opposition to the working-class home owners." They believed that tenants had to be "consciously and deliberately organized into such an opposition" by outside agitators, namely June Rowlands, who were responsible for "organizing the poor against the working-class."

¹⁷⁷M. Repo, "Photography and the Powerless," *This Magazine is About Schools*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (Winter 1970), 27.

¹⁷⁸G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 133

This was a strange charge considering most Trefann residents agreed that they would never have formed an organization without the help of outsiders such as Repo, Sewell, Erlichman, and Spinks. However, according to Repo: the working-class home owners needed help in getting organized, but “they were on the move before any organizer came into the area. They had definite interests in common with each other, whereas the lumpenized element were just so many individuals with different points of view.”¹⁷⁹ Rowlands’ presence in the organization confirmed their belief that TNT was undemocratic and accountable to no one. They were also convinced that the presence of absentee landlords in TNT severely compromised an organization ostensibly established to protect tenant interests. Moreover, they saw Rowlands as the mastermind behind the organization, as well as a “bully” who really did not trust the tenants to properly articulate their interests. In fact, Fraser reports that one of Rowlands’ colleagues overheard her say that the tenants should not worry about replanning the neighbourhood, since they were “not smart enough to do planning.”¹⁸⁰ Despite their mutual suspicion of each other, at least Repo and Rowlands could agree on that one thing.

Rowlands’ connections at City Hall, however, led the TCRA to believe that something more sinister was afoot. According to the TCRA, June Rowlands was merely a pawn of the Development Department which was trying to play off one group against the other. Though the charge was not true, the Development Department did not fail to exploit the opportunity once it presented itself. According to one official, the arrival of Rowlands was “the best thing that happened; she was constructive, she was helpful, and she understood what

¹⁷⁹M. Repo, “Organizing the ‘Poor’ Against the Working-class,” 8.

¹⁸⁰G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 133.

we were trying to do.”¹⁸¹ Rowlands flatly denied that TNT was organized to oppose the residents’ association. She claimed that she initially dissuaded Rice from forming a separate organization. Furthermore, she emphatically denied that TNT was in the pocket of the Development Department, by claiming that the TCRA had more “clout” at City Hall than did the tenants.¹⁸² Yet, whether Rowlands decision to divide the community between tenants and home owners was conscious or not, the effect was the same. The City, which had constantly questioned the representativeness of the TCRA, now had ample reason to continue its delaying tactics. The existence of two opposing groups divided the “community,” and created greater apathy among members of both organizations.

TNT soon articulated its desire for the city to restart urban renewal in Trefann Court. First, the tenants wanted the city to acquire any properties offered to the city, but they made it clear that the city was not to expropriate. Properties had to be acquired on the open market. They also asked for a revised plan with full citizen participation. In addition, TNT also called for the city to close down houses unfit for human habitation, with any tenants housed therein to be relocated by the city to affordable accommodation of their choice, as well as having the right to return to Trefann if and when the public housing project had been completed. Finally, the association asked for the provision of recreation, health, and social services in the area. Indeed, despite the hostility from the TCRA, TNT’s position appeared to be very similar to that articulated in the association’s early submissions to the city and federal governments.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁸² J. Rowlands, “Trefann Court: The Tenant Story,” 9.

TNT, especially its tenant members, were eager to restart the urban renewal scheme not because they no longer cared about the interests of area home owners, but because they believed that the cancellation of urban renewal would leave them in a terrible squeeze. If the city lifted the urban renewal designation and followed the TCRA's suggestion that the city "do its job" and enforce housing standards by-laws against area landlords, tenants feared that they would either be evicted, or forced out through higher rents with nowhere else to go. Without urban renewal they would also lose their rights to relocation assistance, and would lose their priority for public housing. Home owners and area businessmen who wished to sell, were also caught in a bind. Not only could they not sell their property and leave, but they, too, would have had to bring their properties up to standard after years of the city telling them not to conduct a normal program of repairs. This was also the fear of absentee landlords, who, in all likelihood, would face hundreds of dollars of fines under the by-law.

Home owners rejected these arguments, and saw the call for restarting urban renewal by purchasing area properties as block-busting and subsidizing slum landlords at the expense of "respectable" owner-occupiers. Moreover, they were convinced, and with good reason, that the city had not completely disowned the original plan, despite the fact it had been shelved on numerous occasions. The emergence of TNT and its position that the City acquire properties in the area, led the TCRA to believe that the city would try to re-introduce the original scheme through the backdoor. The TCRA had clearly had enough by this point, and expressed its frustrations and demands for an end to urban renewal once and for all in a letter to Edgar Benson, the federal minister responsible for CMHC. The letter recounted the association's exasperating fight with the city: "For 18 months we have tried to present our

case to the City Hall; we have sent numerous briefs and we have had depositions, we have lobbied and negotiated, we have protested and picketed, but today we are no further ahead than we were when we started in August of 1966." The letter continued:

... the scheme came into being without any prior consultation with the area residents; thus it never at any time took into account the needs of the residents affected. ... We have no desire to become yet another set of victims of a callous and wrongly conceived urban renewal policy ... We have never asked for extraordinary privileges and favours; we have asked for changes in a plan that was created without any consultation with us, and we have asked to be able to relocate elsewhere without suffering hardships in addition to being uprooted from a community where we have lived for a long time. We have now reached the point of total exasperation with the urban renewal policies and schemes forced upon us. We never asked for urban renewal in the first place and now we ask to be left alone altogether. We have nothing to gain from urban renewal and we have nothing to lose by being left alone. We now want to be relieved of the pressures and insecurities and the general demoralization that has been created amongst us throughout the urban renewal scheme. We want to be able to improve the conditions in this area on our own, within the financial means of the individual owners. We want the City to participate only in doing the job it has neglected over the years...¹⁸³

On March 11, 1968, 71 residents endorsed the letter. It was a position from which the TCRA would not budge for more than two years. It represented the final break with the City, but more importantly, it represented the final break with other groups in Trefann. Many at the meeting after hearing the tone of the letter walked out. Though Sewell and the other members of T-CUP remained solidly behind the residents' association, their worst fears had been confirmed by the letter; the TCRA had ceased to be representative of the area, it was now simply a home-owners association. The impasse between the tenants, represented by TNT, and the home owners, represented by TCRA, remained deadlocked for nearly two years.

¹⁸³CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 5, File 19, TCRA Brief to Edgar Benson, March 18, 1968, 2.

By 1968, residents of Trefann Court, both home owners and tenants had succeeded in shutting down “the same old bulldozer,” and urban renewal would never be the same. Indeed, the complete breakdown of urban renewal in Toronto, coupled with the infamous relocation of the residents of the Halifax-area African-Canadian “slum” Africville, led the federal government to appoint a federal task force led by Paul Hellyer to investigate housing and urban renewal issues. Both sides hoped that the Task Force would get to the bottom of their problems, and suggest viable alternatives to the “federal bulldozer.”

Given the intense politicization of urban renewal and community participation engendered during the fight in Trefann Court, their hopes for something new and bold from the federal government were soon dashed. On October 1, 1968, Paul Hellyer arrived in Toronto with the Task Force to conduct three days’ worth of hearings on the housing situation in the city. Hellyer, himself, spent very little time listening to the hundreds of depositions presented by city officials and other groups concerned with housing and urban renewal in the city. Instead, Hellyer toured inner-city neighbourhoods like Regent Park and Trefann Court to hear from the people most affected by the government’s housing policies. When he visited Trefann Court he soon found himself caught in the crossfire between rival groups, and between residents and city officials. For one, he was greeted with a protest from the TCRA who saw the whole tour as a circus and a charade, especially since the city work crews had arrived unannounced only the day before to pave the streets and fix the sidewalks in preparation for the Task Force’s visit. The executive of the TCRA picketed the site office carrying signs reading “Homes Not Tours,” and “Bulldozers Don’t Build Homes.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴“Politicians Take a Toronto Poor Tour.” *Globe and Mail*, October 1, 1968, 5; “Hellyer Sees How the
(continued...)”

At the same time both groups, TCRA and TNT, manoeuvred Hellyer through the neighbourhood to bolster their position on urban renewal. As usual, Development Commissioner Emslie and TNT led Hellyer through the Cormier household at 133 Sackville Street, the “model bad house” always shown to visiting officials.¹⁸⁵ Here Hellyer, his entourage, and the accompanying hoards of media, ducked through the washing hung in the living room, through a kitchen with a leaking roof, to the dishevelled bedrooms where the house’s only source of heat, a portable heater, was kept in the closet. Hellyer was not impressed, either at the conditions or the negligence of the city to allow such conditions to exist in the first place. Chastened, Emslie then led Hellyer to the TCRA’s “model house” belonging to John Warwin on Trefann Street. After touring the old, but spotlessly neat, house, Hellyer and his entourage left Trefann to return to the meetings, confident that he had learned more in Trefann and Regent Park than he could ever have learned by listening to the endless stream of official depositions.

Three months, later on January 29, 1969, Hellyer presented his report to Parliament. The Report called for sweeping changes to Canadian housing policy to ensure access to adequate housing for all Canadians. To this end, the Report advocated such measures as public land banking to undercut inflationary pressures on the costs suburban land, the development of model cities, and new forms of socialized housing, such as co-operatives. But most important, the Report blasted the previous thirty years of public urban renewal. It attacked public housing as “un-Canadian,” uneconomical, uninspiring for its residents to live

¹⁸⁴(...continued)

Other Half Lives in City Housing Tour,” *Globe and Mail*, October 2, 1968. 1

¹⁸⁵G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 150.

in. Public housing projects, such as Regent Park, claimed Hellyer's report, had become ghettos of the poor, where problem families were segregated like "Indians on reserves." Because these projects were too large and too alienating, Hellyer suggested that public housing be dispersed and constructed on a smaller scale, and that municipalities purchase existing houses to better integrate the poor into the rest of the community. Finally, it attacked the process of urban renewal as destructive and undemocratic. Hellyer and his colleagues were distressed by the process by which whole neighbourhoods were "circle[d] ... with an urban renewal pencil, when the real concern, ... was with one or two blocks ... or even a group of houses on one street." As a result, the Task Force recommended that the practice of designating wide areas as "urban renewal areas" be discontinued. Instead, Hellyer told municipalities to get their own house in order by enforcing minimum housing standards, and concentrate on providing incentives for home owners to maintain and improve their properties.¹⁸⁶

Much like everything else that went on in Trefann Court, and Toronto's other urban renewal areas, Hellyer's Report only further divided the community, even though there was a great deal in the Report that both sides agreed upon. On one side stood tenants and the various social welfare organizations who supported their interests. In Trefann, Pat Rice remained ambivalent about the report. While she commended the report for denouncing the "bulldozer approach" she still worried that something had to be done about the poor housing conditions, or the "the fire-traps" as she called them.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, the Social Planning Council

¹⁸⁶Canada, *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Redevelopment* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, January 1969), 13-21, 52-68.

¹⁸⁷G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 155.

also worried about the report's recommendations, especially the recommendation that cities vigorously enforce housing standards. According to the Social Planning Council, the Report's recommendations would "result ... [in] ... disaster for hundreds of low income people in this City." The recommendations to enforce housing standards and encourage rehabilitation would displace both home owners and tenants from inner-city neighbourhoods. Instead, the Council recommended a policy of conditional grants and loans to home owners and landlords, contingent on rent controls and the resale of the property.¹⁸⁸ Others denounced the report as reactionary. In particular, Albert Rose, rejected the report as "old hat," "insulting," "unfocussed" and "unrealistic." Much like Trefann tenants, Rose worried that the end of the current urban renewal program advocated by Hellyer was not an opportunity for change, but merely the first step in a complete federal withdrawal from social housing.¹⁸⁹

That the Report had drawn fire from such "expert" groups was evidence enough that Hellyer had got it right; he had listened to "the people" rather than "the experts," who were responsible for the mess of urban renewal in the first place.¹⁹⁰ Community organizations fighting urban renewal proclaimed it "the most sensible report in years" precisely because it

¹⁸⁸CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 2, File 8, Audrey Burger (Social Planning Council) to Mayor William Dennison, February 3, 1969; and Box 196, File 44, Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development, A Review," (Toronto, SPCMT, February, 1969).

¹⁸⁹A. Rose, "The Federal Housing Task Force: The Flaws in the House That Paul Built," *Ontario Housing*, 15 (February 1969) 8-15. See also H. Carver, "Like a Cavalry Charge," in *ibid.*, 6-7. John Bacher's study of Canadian housing policy largely agrees with Rose that Hellyer's report added little new to the debate over urban renewal and public housing. The Report's recommendations such as dispersed and small scale public housing projects, the development of cooperatives and other non-profit housing schemes, rent supplements, land banking, subsidized rehabilitation programs, and model cities, had long been advocated by the CMHC Advisory Group, and other social housing activists. See J. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 25-29.

¹⁹⁰The Hellyer Report denounced planning and housing experts as lacking foresight and wholly deficient in providing constructive alternatives to current housing policies. See *Report*, 20-21.

finally listened to the concerns and experiences of “ordinary people,” rather than the experts. In Trefann, Edna Dixon saw “clear support” for TCRA’s approach in Hellyer’s Report: “[he] suggests tearing down only a few houses on a street; only those that are sub-standard.” “We and many others own our own homes in Trefann,” she continued, “and ... [h]e says there’s no reason why we should be forced out.”¹⁹¹ They also supported Hellyer’s lambasting of city authorities for not vigorously enforcing housing standards. In a scathing attack on the “paternalism and arrogance” of the Social Planning Council, Marjaleena Repo denounced the Council’s hysterical reaction to the report. Not only did she attack its legitimacy to speak on behalf of the poor, but she attacked their solutions as a “misguided effort on nobody’s behalf,” which would “protect ... the poor against their very wishes.” Despite the acerbic censure of the SPC’s policies towards poverty and housing, Repo’s recommendations were not substantially different from those of the Council.¹⁹²

Yet, despite the degree of acrimony and mutual suspicion that existed in Trefann Court, between residents and the City and between tenants and home owners, Trefann was the only neighbourhood to benefit from the new approach to urban renewal. In February 1970, Trefann residents finally overcame their suspicions and hostilities to form the Trefann Court Working Group, which over the next two years would hammer out an urban renewal

¹⁹¹Cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 155.

¹⁹²CTA, JMC, SC 305, Box 2, File 7, M. Repo to Mayor W. Dennison, February 8, 1969. The Social Planning Council during the latter half of the 1960s was in the process of change from a co-ordinating agency for social service organizations to an advocacy organization. Though the organization began to incorporate more “citizen participation,” within its ranks the pace of change was too slow for many anti-poverty activists and groups. For more on the controversy over the paternalism of the Council see, Howard Buchbinder, “The Toronto Social Planning Council and the United Community Fund,” in D.I. Davies and K. Herman, (eds.) *Social Space: Canadian Perspectives* (Toronto: New Press, 1971); and Margaret Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit’: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), 146-149.

scheme for the neighbourhood based on the principles of rehabilitation and community stability, rather than wholesale clearance. As Graham Fraser's book *Fighting Back* illustrates in great detail, the Working Committee was fraught with tension and regularly teetered on the brink of collapse. Nonetheless, by January 6, 1972, the Committee had composed a scheme that most residents of Trefann could live with. The 1972 plan called for the retention of approximately half the houses in the area; the acquisition of non-conforming uses such as auto wreckers, the demolition of bad housing and the construction of 17 new units (See Figure 6.9). At the time, Trefann looked like a success story; Trefann residents had not only stopped a destructive urban renewal project, but they had won a considerable amount of power and influence within the planning process.¹⁹³

However, by 1976 Trefann residents, or what was left of the original 1966 community, were still fighting with the City and the federal government over control of the first phase of the project. After the ratification of plans in the summer of 1972, Trefann residents formed a cooperative housing company, Trefann Homes Corporation (THC), to supervise the construction of the new units. After a protracted battle with the city and the federal government to get the necessary funding, the houses were finally ready for occupation by the summer of 1974. However, they remained unoccupied for another two years due to a dispute between THC and CMHC over ownership provisions of the new houses. Trefann residents had always wanted to maintain a degree of home ownership, particularly on Trefann Street, where most of the houses had been owned by absentee landlord, Abe Solomon. As a result, they asked the federal government to lease the land under each house for 60 years

¹⁹³G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, Chapters 11-14.

at a written-down price, and then sell the houses to individual owners. This would keep the costs low enough for working people to afford the homes. To prevent speculation in a tight and inflationary housing market, THC also wanted the resale value of the house to be tied to the Consumer Price Index for Toronto. Instead, CMHC offered two alternatives. First, it offered Trefann residents the right to purchase the homes under its new Assisted Home Ownership Program (AHOP), which controlled the selling price of the home only for five years. Trefann residents rejected the scheme saying that the initial prices were too high and eventually the homes would be sold off at high prices leading to the gentrification of the neighbourhood. The second option CMHC offered was a plan by which the houses would be sold to residents who, upon resale, would be allowed to keep an increase in the price equal to any variance in the CPI, but only on the original down payment and any acquired equity in the home. Trefann residents initially rejected the proposal as a “glorified rental scheme.” Two years later, however, they relented in the face of CMHC’s steadfast position. Given the length of time, the precious few houses, and the final lack of control over the project, one may wonder just how much the original Trefann residents really won by “fighting back.”¹⁹⁴ As it had done in 1966, federal housing policy had largely decided that the inner-city off would be off limits to independent working-class homeowners.

¹⁹⁴Kamal S. Sayegh, *Housing: A Canadian Perspective* (Ottawa: Academy Book, 1987), 514; John Sewell, “City News: Toronto - CMHC Defeats Trefann Residents,” *City Magazine* 1 (January-February 1976), 5-6.

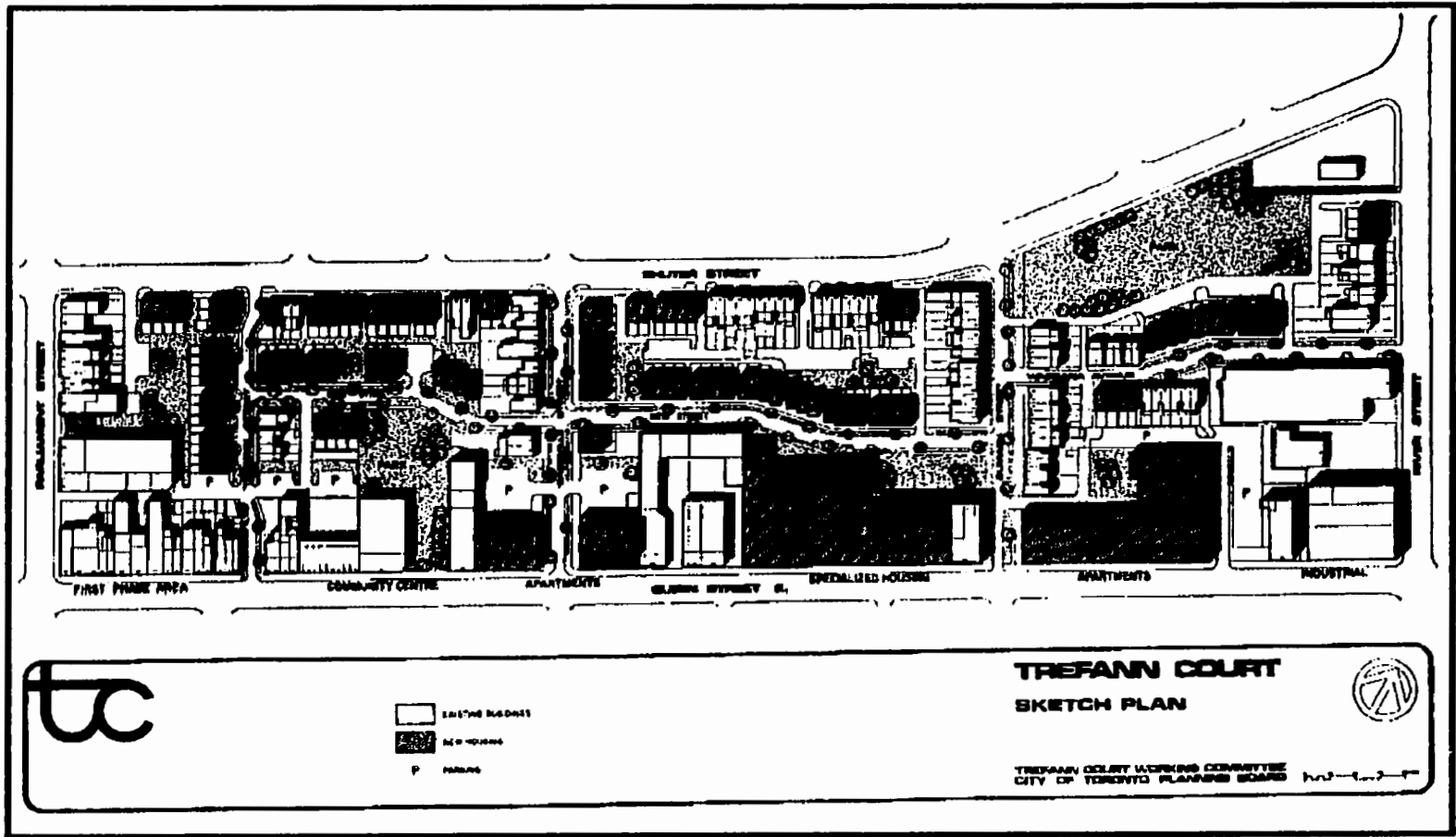


Figure 6.9

Source: CTPB, *Trefann Court Urban Renewal Area First Phase Scheme* (Toronto: Prepared by The Trefann Court Working Committee, 1971).

Citizen Planning in Action: Phase One of Trefann Court Urban Renewal Scheme

Don Vale: Urban Renewal's Last Stand

Meanwhile just north of Trefann, working-class Torontonians living “east of Parliament”¹⁹⁵ in a neighbourhood soon to be known as Don Vale, were also gearing up for a battle against the City over urban renewal (See Figure 6.10). Ironically, their fight against urban renewal was almost the direct opposite to that of Trefann. While both groups fought against expropriation, the bulldozer method of urban renewal, and for a meaningful process of citizen participation, Don Vale residents embraced urban renewal as the principal means to retain the physical fabric of the area and to maintain its low density character. Unlike in Trefann, the bulldozer and the wrecking ball were to be used sparingly in Don Vale. Instead, home owners would be encouraged to rehabilitate their properties, a development that was already beginning to take the neighbourhood by storm by the late 1960s. But once again, the economics of urban renewal paralysed the program and the community. Residents were adamant that any program that would force residents to rehabilitate their area without adequate financial compensation for property owners was unacceptable. In the end, Don Vale residents, like those in Trefann Court, put a halt to the renewal of their neighbourhood, but it was a dubious victory. Though the physical fabric of the neighbourhood had been saved, the defeat of urban renewal only increased the influx of “new middle-class” gentrifiers, signalling the death-knell of the neighbourhood’s social fabric, ironically asserting once again that Toronto’s urban core was no place for the working-class and the poor.

¹⁹⁵Like Trefann and Don Mount, the designation of the neighbourhood as Don Vale, was a creation of the urban renewal process. According to James Lorimer and Myfanwy Phillips, most people who lived in the neighbourhood, did not call it Don Vale, or Cabbagetown, as it is erroneously called today, but “east of Parliament.” *Working People: Life in A Downtown City Neighbourhood*, (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel Ltd, 1971), 13.

In the late 1960s, Don Vale represented a window on both the city's past and its future. Don Vale was one of the most unchanged residential areas of the city. Popular Toronto media personality Gordon Sinclair, who was born and raised in Don Vale, recalled in 1969 that the houses on eastern Carlton Street were still occupied by families "who lived there when Victoria was queen ... and [e]xcept for a few odds and ends, like electricity and the telephone, many of those houses are unchanged. I can think of no street in the whole of Toronto that looks so much now as it looked when I was born."¹⁹⁶

Indeed, when Sinclair made these comments more than ninety percent of Don Vale's houses had been built before 1910, many of them before the turn of the century during the construction boom of the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁹⁷ In fact, the Wellesley Cottages, which would be privately renovated during the 1960s, were built back in 1860. Most of the houses in the area were working-class cottages, often hidden away among cul-de-sacs and narrow lanes. Two or two-and-a-half storey brick, gabled, semi-detached or row house structures predominated. At the same time there were numerous larger homes built along the main thoroughfares such as Carlton, Sumach, and Winchester Streets, which were owned by wealthy Toronto merchants and businessmen. These would later be converted to rooming houses, as their more affluent residents migrated northward after the First World War (See Figures 6.11 to 6.13).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶Gordon Sinclair quoted in Janice Dineen, *The Trouble with Co-ops: The Political History of a Non-Profit Co-operative Housing Project* (Toronto: Green Tree Publishing Company, 1974), 16.

¹⁹⁷Peter Goheen, *Victorian Toronto, 1850-1900: Patterns and Process of Growth* (Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago, no. 127, 1970). Goheen claims that this housing boom in the area coincided with the extension of the street railway to the corner of Parliament and Winchester Streets, which made the area more attractive for development.

¹⁹⁸Joanne Sabourin, "The Process of Gentrification: The Example of Private Housing Renovation in Don
(continued...)

Don Vale's built environment was not only a reminder of the city's residential architectural history, but also its long history of social housing activism. In particular, the neighbourhood was home to Canada's first publicly-assisted housing project - The Spruce Court Apartments. Built in 1912 by a number of prominent Toronto philanthropists interested in alleviating the "housing problems" of Toronto's working-classes, Spruce Court was the first in a long line of "urban renewal" experiments that would be imposed on Cabbagetown residents. The duplex apartments, or cottage flats as they were called, to avoid the unseemly association between apartments and tenements in the minds of Torontonians, were built around grassy courtyards to provide much needed "green space" for working-class families. The apartments were also designed to emphasize the distinction between public and private space, including the fact that each apartment had its own ground floor entrance, a point which the Toronto Housing Company repeatedly emphasized in its promotional literature.¹⁹⁹ In contrast to the modernist, and wholly functional approach to public housing represented by Regent Park, only a stone's throw away from Spruce Court, the 1912 development appeared to many contemporary critics as a successful solution to the problems of "low-income housing."²⁰⁰

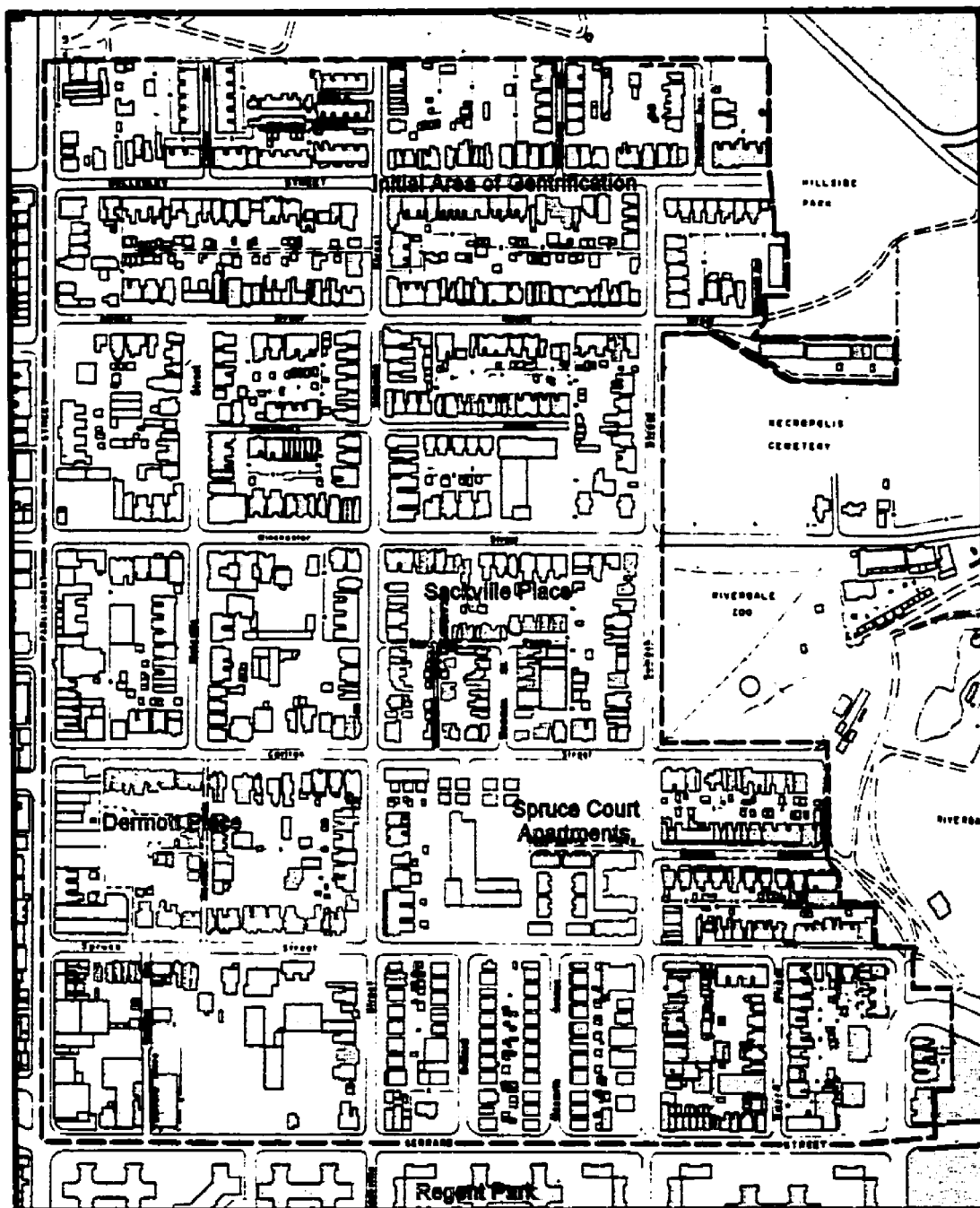
¹⁹⁸(...continued)

Vale, Toronto," PhD Dissertation, Department of Geography, York University, 1988, 40.

¹⁹⁹Spruce Court was built by the Toronto Housing Company. To overcome the negative association of apartments with tenements the dwellings in Spruce Court were called cottage flats rather than apartments. See Lorna Hurl, "The Toronto Housing Company, 1912-1923: The Pitfalls of Painless Philanthropy," *Canadian Historical Review*, 65 (1984); Sean Purdy, "'This is Not a Company; It Is a Cause': Class, Gender and the Toronto Housing Company, 1912-1920," *Urban History Review*, 21,(July 1993); Shirley Spragge, "A Confluence of Interests: Housing Reform in Toronto, 1900-1920," in A. Artibise and G. Stelter, eds., *The Useable Urban Past: Richard Harris, Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 100-106.

²⁰⁰Janice Dineen, *The Trouble with Co-ops*, 20.

Figure 6.10



Source: (Map Adapted by Author from Map 2B-2: Building Covered by Phase II Survey, City of Toronto, Don Vale Working Committee, *Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme* (Toronto: City Planning Board, 1969).

Don Vale

Figures 6.11 - 6.13

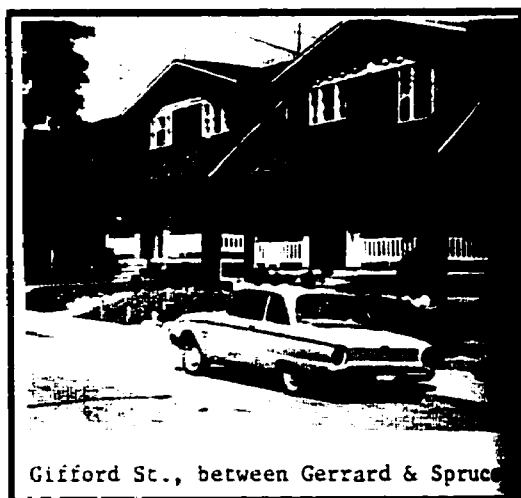


Figure 6.11
Source: CTPB, *Don District Planning Appraisal*
(Toronto, City of Toronto Planning Board, 1963), 16.

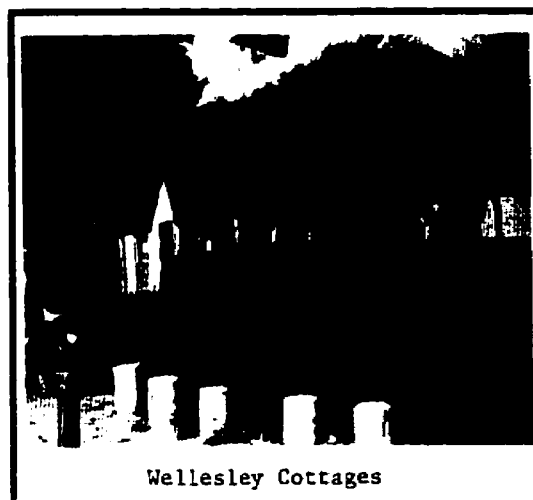


Figure 6.12
Source: CTPB, *Don District Planning Appraisal*
(Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board,
1963), 13.



City Owned Houses 287-89 Carlton St.

Figure 6.13
Source: Housing Authority of Toronto, *The Housing Authority of Toronto
Opens the Door to Better Living - A Review of Progress* (Toronto: HAT,
1964), 21.

Housing in Don Vale

Like Don Mount and Trefann, Don Vale had also been under examination since the *Urban Renewal Report* of 1956, but no concrete proposals were made for the area until the release of the Don Planning District Appraisal in 1963. The report recommended that the northern part of the Don be rehabilitated, with a couple of small pockets of “blight” around Sackville and Dermott Place cleared and redeveloped for public housing. By the 1965 “Report on Improvement Programme for Residential Areas,” the city’s so-called blight-fighting programme, redevelopment in the Sackville and Dermott areas was imminent. The city believed that a radical attack on these two areas of blight would instill confidence in the area, and thus encourage individual home owners to make the necessary repairs and renovations on their homes. Even the Metro Planning Board concurred with the city’s plans for the area. In fact, Metro planners called for even more drastic “urban surgery” in the area, urging the removal of 207 “blighted” houses and the rehabilitation of another 106.²⁰¹ Within a year, the City Planning Board had finalized plans to submit to the provincial and federal governments for funding.

These plans were to represent the first phase of the Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme. They focussed solely on two pockets of blight, both around two back lanes in the midst of the district - Sackville Place and Dermott Place. Housing conditions in both areas had recently received much attention in the press during June Marks’ slum housing enquiry. In particular, Ms. Marks’ star witness, Elizabeth Brandt, lived in a “cold, rat infested” house at 2 Flager Street, a back alley off Sackville Place, which had been found for her by the City Welfare

²⁰¹MTPB, *Urban Renewal Report*, 85.

department.²⁰² Poor housing conditions in the Dermott Place area had also come to the attention of Torontonians two years earlier when residents, led by Reverend Roger Lenny of St. Enoch's Church, marched to City Hall to complain about the movement of "undesirable" tenants into the rooming houses in the area.²⁰³ These houses belonged to developer Alex Cowley, who had been assembling the properties since 1958 in the hopes of redeveloping the area into a new shopping plaza and parking lot, or high-rise apartment towers.²⁰⁴

In preparation of the scheme, the City Planning Board conducted what it called "Phase I surveys" of housing conditions in these two areas. These surveys, undertaken in late 1966 and early 1967, assessed not only the condition of buildings in the area, but also made cost estimates of repairs required to bring the properties up to the new Housing Standards by-law passed in July 1965. According to the surveys, only 113 of nearly 1230 residential properties required no repairs at all. A further 926 needed various degrees of repair and rehabilitation, while another 191 were deemed "substandard" and demanded major repairs, or in most cases demolition.²⁰⁵

According to the Data Abstract for the Sackville-Dermott Place Renewal Project, the vast majority of the poor housing in the northern part of the entire Don Planning District was concentrated in these two areas. Housing inspectors rated only 4 houses of a total of 205 in

²⁰²CTA, RG 3, Series 100,(Department of Public Welfare Records), File 118, June Marks' Enquiry Documents, Deposition #79, "Sworn Deposition of Ms. Elisabeth Isabel Brandt, nd.

²⁰³CTA, RG 3, Series 100, File 118, June Marks Enquiry, Deposition #21 Clipping "Firm Accused as Slum Maker, *Toronto Telegram* October 4, 1963, 3; # 26 unsigned comments regarding block Carlton, Sackville, Parliament and Spruce Streets; #59 Richard Powell (313 Carlton St.) to William Dennison, November 28, 1963.

²⁰⁴CTA, City of Toronto Development Department (CTDD), RG 33, Box 1, File 3, Don Vale Newspaper Clippings 1966-1970, "Don Vale Developer Told Try Again," *Toronto Star*, April 11, 1968.

²⁰⁵City of Toronto, Don Vale Working Committee, *Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1969), 10.

these two areas as “good”, all of them in the Sackville Place area, and all of them owner-occupied. Nonetheless, conditions in Sackville Place were generally considered “fair,” with 60 per cent of the houses receiving such a rating. However, particularly in the interior of the area along notorious back lanes, such as Flager Street, more than one-third of all houses in the block were considered poor, fit only for demolition and reconstruction as public housing. Despite the poor conditions, which could be found equally among owner and tenant occupied houses, more than 60 percent of residents owned their homes. Many home owners achieved this only through a high degree of crowding, caused by the sub-letting of portions of their houses to boarders and tenants. Households in Sackville Place contained, on average, four persons. But more telling of the deterioration in the neighbourhood was the fact that 171 households occupied only 121 residential buildings, leaving 31 of the residential buildings in the area “overcrowded” according to municipal and federal housing standards. As usual, overcrowding was found by and large in houses of poor condition.²⁰⁶

Dermott Place, however, was a different story because of the extensive control of the area by Cowley. Here, where Cowley controlled almost the entire block between Parliament and Dermott Place, home ownership amounted to less than 50 percent of all the properties. Cowley’s effect on the housing conditions in the neighbourhood was also more evident in the condition of the houses. Whereas in Sackville Place nearly half of the poor houses were owner-occupied, in Dermott Place over 80 percent of the poor houses were tenant-occupied. The number of small families and greater number of non-family persons also indicated that the houses had largely been subdivided into flats, leading to a high degree of

²⁰⁶All figures are drawn from the CTPB, “Sackville-Dermott Place Urban Renewal Scheme - Data Abstract (Draft),” April 1966 in, CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 27, File 18.

“overcrowding.”²⁰⁷ Nonetheless, despite the poor housing in these two blighted pockets, city planners clearly stated in their report to federal and provincial officials that “Don Vale is by no means a “slum area” and that “neither social nor building conditions would justify such a term.”²⁰⁸

Following the growing trend in renewal planning, the two areas were not to be completely razed, but rather were to experience a limited program of demolition to be followed by a comprehensive program of public works and housing rehabilitation. Less than half the houses in the two areas were to be demolished, displacing what appeared as a relatively modest 111 households with 477 persons. The building program would consist of two low-rental projects with some of the land in Dermott Place to be used for parking for nearby shops on Parliament Street. Overall, the City Planning Board envisaged that the total population of the two areas would decrease by only about 40 persons.²⁰⁹ In contrast to previous urban renewal projects, the plans for Don Vale appeared like microscopic surgery rather than amputation.

The federal and provincial governments, however, were less than impressed by the Planning Board’s scheme for the area. They agreed that the pockets of blight in Sackville and Dermott Place needed attention, but they were reluctant to give money for what they deemed a very limited program of renewal. Once again, CMHC officials wanted the city to drop its “blight fight” program and think in grander terms. As a result, CMHC sent city planners back

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 11, CTPB, “An Application for Federal and Provincial Approval and Assistance in the Preparation of Don-Vale Urban Renewal Scheme,” (June 1966), 6.

²⁰⁹ City of Toronto Planning Board, “Sackville Dermott Place Urban Renewal Scheme - Data Abstract (Draft)” (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, April 1966), 36.

to their planning tables to draw up a series of detailed schemes for the entire area. In the meantime, CMHC agreed to fund the clearance and renewal of Sackville Place and Dermott Place as Phase I of a larger renewal program.²¹⁰ While city planners were disappointed they had not received unconditional support for their plans, they proceeded on the understanding that the upper levels of government would eventually approve their plans.

From the outset, city officials were determined to avoid the confrontations and bad publicity they had already received in Trefann Court and Don Mount. By early November 1966, just as the plans for the Sackville-Dermott areas had been announced, the city established a site office at 297 Carlton, hired community workers from Central Neighbourhood House (Jo Casey and Linda Light), and began establishing contacts with residents and representatives from local service agencies. The establishment of a site office, upon the release of the plans, signalled a more pro-active approach to community participation by the city. The city even went as far as to hold a Christmas Party for area children with the hopes that such action would be seen as a sign of good faith to area residents.²¹¹

At the same time, the Development Department was busy revising its approach to citizen participation in urban renewal planning, an approach that could only be described as “divide and conquer.” According to many city officials, especially Development Commissioner Walter Manthorpe, the difficulties that arose in Trefann Court and Don Mount had little to do with the actual plans or the city’s approach to urban renewal. Rather, the

²¹⁰CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 11, J. McCulloch (Manager of Toronto Branch) to M.B. Lawson re Sackville Dermott, nd

²¹¹“City to throw X-Mas Party for Don Vale Kids,” *Toronto Star*, December 15, 1966.

problems the city encountered in these two neighbourhoods were due to the city's failure to "sell" its plans to *individual* residents. Furthermore, Manthorpe had come to the conclusion that the designation of entire neighbourhoods as urban renewal areas gave disorganized and apathetic communities something around which to rally. As a result, Manthorpe argued that the traditional means of gathering together residents en masse to explain the plans, for the neighbourhood as a whole should be scrapped in favour of "group discussions to be held *privately* in the site office with a small number of residents who would be brought together on a street or block basis." According to Manthorpe, large public meetings with area residents left too much ambiguity as to how the plan would affect individual residents. The result of such ambiguity led people to oppose the plans, not necessarily for the greater good of the neighbourhood, but because "generalized answers to common questions ... [did] not give reassurance to ... individual[s]." Indeed, Manthorpe believed that the primary cause of opposition to urban renewal had nothing to do with abstract ideas of saving the physical and social fabric of inner-city neighbourhoods, and everything to do with material issues of compensation and relocation for *individual* home owners. The plans therefore had to be sold to individuals not to the community as a whole. Moreover, Manthorpe believed that the city had to co-opt the "natural leaders" within the community who would then form a co-operative residents' organization that would "explain the facts and true intentions of the City to their fellow residents." According to Manthorpe, the city had been wrong in encouraging residents to form their own associations. Community participation in urban renewal projects should be limited to "Citizens' Committees" composed of representatives of different groups who would be "*called* to serve on such a committee." In short, Manthorpe conceived of the

residents' association as a sales team for the city's plans, rather than a group advocating the interests of Don Vale residents.²¹²

Manthorpe's new approach to community organization in urban renewal areas initially appeared successful. In December 1966 and January 1967, the city conducted nine "Block Meetings" with Sackville-Dermott residents in the site office. Here the two chief planners for the area, Ray Spaxman and Bob Van Alstyne, presented detailed proposals and asked residents for their reactions. According to Central Neighbourhood House worker Susan Roper, who was intimately involved in the community organization process from the start, residents' reactions were varied. Some were surprised to be consulted in the first place, and largely accepted the plans. As with other Torontonians who had faced urban renewal, it never occurred to Don Vale residents that they could change the plans. Some tenants were pleased by the prospect of escaping their poor housing conditions, although many expressed the opinion that they did not want to move from the area or into public housing. Home owners were concerned with issues of expropriation, compensation and, by corollary, the designation of their houses for clearance. Most of them, however, appeared resigned to the fact that they would have to move, and worried most about the timing of the move, and whether the compensation they received would be enough to purchase similar housing elsewhere in the city.²¹³ According to Manthorpe "the meetings have been successful in that the residents have aired many of their concerns and during the question-and-answer period, after the showing

²¹²CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 6, Walter Manthorpe to Matthew Lawson, November 28, 1966, 1; and CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 27, File 18, Don Vale Special Committee, Minutes of Meeting no. 11, October 16, 1967. Emphasis mine.

²¹³CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 9, File 17, Susan Roper, "Report on the Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme, 1963-69," 5.

of the slides and diagrams, their queries were answered by City officials.²¹⁴ By early 1967, everything seemed to be proceeding according to the city's plans.

While the city had caught most Sackville-Dermott residents off guard, other Don Vale citizens had been quietly organizing themselves to deal with the coming changes to their neighbourhood. As in many other urban renewal areas of the city, it was workers from the local settlement house, Central Neighbourhood House, who provided the impetus for citizen action. Like St. Christopher House, Central Neighbourhood House spent the 1960s reinventing the nature of the settlement house and its role in the community. Of all Toronto's settlement houses it was Central Neighbourhood House which led the entire Canadian settlement house community into a new era of community development, citizen participation, and social research. During the 1960s, Central Neighbourhood House conducted six pivotal research studies, ranging from education programs for pre-school children, to the Canadian Indian Family Project, to the Unreached Youth Project for Girls.²¹⁵

Equally important, Central Neighbourhood House was also concerned with the physical and social impact of redevelopment in the Don Area, particularly in the wake of the St. James Town redevelopment. Central Neighbourhood House had been involved in planning and housing issues in the Don Planning Area since the early 60s when the city first began producing plans for the district. It joined forces with the Social Planning Council to form the Central District Housing Committee. The two groups tried to foster citizen involvement in urban planning issues, especially after the release of the *Report on the Don*

²¹⁴CTA, RG 3 Series 100, File 73, Development Department to the Board of Control, Progress Report #5, May 6, 1967.

²¹⁵Donald Bellamy *et al.*, *Neighbours*, 193-202 *passim*.

District in 1963. The House organized numerous meetings between city officials and area residents, but the meetings according to CNH workers were “not very lively ..., city plans [were] met with lethargy by residents, ... [and] certainly no great fund of resident leadership was discovered or developed.”²¹⁶ Most who attended the meetings were property owners, and the group was dominated by June Marks, who soon used her position in the Ward 2 Ratepayers’ Association to vault herself onto City Council in 1966.

Despite the inauspicious start, the controversy and uncertainty created by the redevelopment of St. James Town and the city’s ambitious urban renewal plans put housing and urban planning issues once again at the forefront of the minds of Don area residents. Sensing the degree of unease in the area around issues of land speculation, redevelopment, and expropriation, as well as encountering the impact of the city’s low income housing shortage on a daily basis, in the spring of 1965 Central Neighbourhood House and members of the Junior League joined forces to initiate a community organization project in the Wellesley Park area (bounded by Amelia and Sackville Streets and Wellesley/Hillside Park) to help “neighbours mobilize to improve housing and property standards.” The idea behind the project came solely from the House, as no “unified calls of help were heard” from area residents.²¹⁷

²¹⁶CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 9, File 5, “Don Valley Between September 1961 and January 1964” Members of the Don Area Housing Committee included Thomas “Vern” Ayres (20 Spruce Street - Bricklayer), Clare McQuaid (127 Spruce Street - President of St. Martin’s School Parent Teacher Association), John McQuaid (127 Spruce Street - Department of Public Works) June Marks (Ward 2 Ratepayers’ Association) and Clara Kelemen, Bob Manson (Cleaner at University of Toronto and member of Bloor-South Ratepayers’ Association), Alan Ackman (Ward 2 Businessmen’s Association and President of Bloor-South Ratepayers’ Association), Rev. Lenny (St. Enoch’s Church), Thomas Powell (313 Carlton Street - Brewery Worker, O’Keefe Breweries), Mr. Marandiuk (134 Spruce Street - Roofer).

²¹⁷CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 8, File 13, The Wellesley “Park” Project, Interim Report, November 15, 1966, 1.

In the fall of 1965 social workers from the House and volunteer members from the Junior League embarked on a survey of the area to determine the degree of home ownership in the area, problems faced by residents, and their willingness to form some kind of residents' association. On the first issue, they were surprised to find that "the area was not a slum after all."²¹⁸ They were also surprised to find that only 69 of 274 properties in the area were not owner-occupied. However, these 69 properties were often a source of tension in the neighbourhood because of the high degree of transiency of the tenants. But even among home owners, the surveyors found a great deal of flux. Many properties along Hill Park Crescent, Alpha Avenue, and Laurier Avenue were undergoing extensive renovations, so called "white-painting" or "town housing," the effect of which was having large implications for the rest of the neighbourhood (See below). The concerns of area residents were similar to almost all inner-city residents; they complained about the lack of services in the area such as street cleaning, and garbage and snow removal. They also complained bitterly about the lack of parking, especially on summer weekends when visitors to the Riverdale Zoo sought parking in the area. However, most residents were worried about the changing character of their neighbours. Older residents were anxious about "the kind of people moving into the area:" their habits, living standards and child rearing skills. Many saw this as a prelude to the kind of blockbusting that had overrun St. James Town, while others believed that Don Vale was now receiving the "refuse" from the city's redevelopment areas, those deemed unsuitable even for Regent Park.²¹⁹ As a result, many residents "expressed grave questions about the

²¹⁸ "Junior League Helps Neighbours Improve Area," *Toronto Star*, February 26, 1966, 51.

²¹⁹ CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 8, File 13, The Wellesley "Park" Project, Interim Report, November 15, 1966, 2.

wisdom of putting more money into their properties.” Many families, such as the Petereit family of Wellesley Street, believed they were in a real bind, since they had bought “fixer uppers” in the neighbourhood because of the price, but if they were forced to sell, they would be hard pressed to recover enough money to purchase a house elsewhere.²²⁰

Nonetheless, despite the “very grave questions” of area residents, there was little interest in forming a residents’ association. Of 122 residents interviewed, only 22 said they were definitely interested in forming a residents’ association, while another 31 said they were only “probably interested.” To give residents something more concrete around which to organize, Central Neighbourhood House arranged meetings for area residents with Planning Board Commissioner, Matthew Lawson, and George Cook from the Buildings Department to discuss the city’s plans for the area, as well as building regulations and what residents could do to improve housing conditions in the area. However, few residents turned out to the meetings, leading House social workers to conclude that area residents lacked “leadership and self-directiveness.” Not only did social workers find area residents largely apathetic, but they also discovered that a significant number of residents were not interested at all in improving neighbourhood conditions and only wanted to “sell and [get] out (at a profit).” Undeterred, Central Neighbourhood House proposed to go ahead with its own housing rehabilitation project to help kick start interest among residents. In the meantime, the House workers were willing to bide their time until the City released more definitive plans for Don Vale.²²¹

The release of the plans for Sackville-Dermott and the opening of the site office on

²²⁰“Junior League Helps Neighbours Improve Area,” *Toronto Star*, February 26, 1966, 51.

²²¹CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 8, File 13, The Wellesley “Park” Project, Interim Report, November 15, 1966, 6.

Carlton Street provided the kick start for which House workers had been waiting. To try to clear up exactly what the plans meant for the neighbourhood as a whole, Central Neighbourhood House asked Controller Margaret Campbell to meet with area residents to answer their questions and deal with their concerns, especially concerning private development. On January 9, 1967, Controller Campbell addressed a crowd of 150-200 residents at St. Enoch's Church. Here, she all but guaranteed residents that the city had no plans for large-scale expropriation and clearance, and that it was the city's policy to keep Don Vale as a low-density residential neighbourhood. Anyway, she claimed, the small lot sizes meant that developers would not be interested in redeveloping the area for high-rise apartments as they had done in St. James Town. While these announcements assuaged some of the fears of residents, many others were worried about housing inspections that were taking place in the neighbourhood in preparation for the larger Don Vale project. Were their houses up to code? How much would it cost to bring them up to building standards and what would happen to their houses if they could not afford to complete the repairs?

After the meeting, Charlotte Mahar, a social worker at Central Neighbourhood House, tried to move the discussion toward the formation of a residents' association. She soon selected fourteen people whom she considered were interested in the community and represented different parts of the neighbourhood, including both old and new residents.²²² Slowly but surely, a residents' association began to come together over the next three months. By the end of January, the group selected by Mahar, had chosen an executive led by Peter

²²²CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 8, File 13, Charlotte Mahar, "Wellesley Park, Second Interim Report, November 1966 - March 1967," May 5, 1967, 1-2. (Eventually 10 of the 14 went to become part of the Residents' Association).

Akhurst of 306½ Wellesley Street and Ann Petereit, which began formulating a response to the city on the issue of inspections.

In the meantime, however, another group of residents was organizing Don Vale residents around the issue of city taxes “and other concerns that might arise.”²²³ This group was led by Dorothy Gladwin of 20 Amelia Street, who also owned a building on Parliament Street which housed her beauty salon on the ground floor and contained apartments above.²²⁴ According to Don Vale activist and chronicler James Lorimer, Gladwin was a “tough [and] aggressive woman, who usually dominate[d] people she [came] into contact,” and could make “verbal mincemeat of city officials and politicians.”²²⁵ Though not involved with the Ward 2 Ratepayers’ Association, Gladwin was a member of the Ward 2 Businessmen’s Association, and had long been interested in the prospect of private redevelopment in Don Vale.²²⁶ Members of the Gladwin group, as they became known, began contacting members of the Wellesley Park group. Gladwin’s organization believed that the Wellesley Park group was merely a puppet organization of City Hall, organized by Central Neighbourhood House workers to “soften up residents for expropriation.”²²⁷ Nothing could have been further from the truth. For one, social workers at Central Neighbourhood House were willing to allow

²²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²²⁴ J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People*, 30-31. In writing his book Lorimer used fictional names for area residents. Gladwin appears in the book as “Fran Anderson.”

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 8, File 13, Charlotte Mahar, “Wellesley Park, Second Interim Report, November 1966 - March 1967,” May 5, 1967, 5. What is also significant about this analysis of the Wellesley Park group is that Lorimer also believed that the group formed by Central Neighbourhood House was merely a puppet of the city. See J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People*, 99.

Akhurst and the executive to control the agenda of the newly formed residents' association. Second, Gladwin's association with the Ward 2 Businessmen's Association gave her much closer access to city officials, including the councillors of Ward 2 and Mayor William Dennison, who was a member of the organization.

By early March, the Gladwin group had begun to make more noise in the area, holding their own meeting at St. Enoch's to form a permanent executive to represent the interests of Don Vale residents. Workers from Central Neighbourhood House suggested that such a move was premature before consulting with the Wellesley Park group. Akhurst and Paul Petereit remained open to working with the Gladwin group despite their personal differences, because they believed a united community group was important and that responsible leadership would eventually emerge from the Gladwin group. By May 30, 1967, the two groups had largely resolved to put their differences aside and form a united residents' association.

Nonetheless, unity between the groups was, at best, tenuous, and the differences between the two groups remained considerable. As Alistair Hay, one of the original planners, noted after a discussion with Residents' Association president Karl Jaffary:

He is well aware of the different interests of the members of executive, for instance McDonald wishes to be bought out by developers and to receive high-rise prices for his land, this is of course completely different from most people in Dermott Place. Lorimer is interested in people's reactions in a situation such as the one the city has created in Don Vale, he is not interested in the scheme or in the production of the scheme as such, and therefore his participation is negative. No one knows exactly what Mrs. Gladwin's main interests are. Chapman is no leader and has only general interests, at least he only speaks of his general interest which are elimination of welfare, reduction of over-crowding, general cleaning up the streets and the neighbourhood, and he ascribes the cause of all those defects for foreigners i.e. any body who is not an English Canadian. No one seems to be certain what Fisher's motives

are and in fact it seems that the groupings within the executive change constantly with only Jaffary and Mrs. Summers holding a constant focus.²²⁸

The diversity of interests within the organization would soon prove too much to bear. Within a year Gladwin's group, which remained distrustful of the entire urban renewal scheme right from the start, eventually left the Ward 2 Residents' Association to form the Ward 2 Property Owners Association in June 1968.

All of the delays in getting organized did not leave the Association much time to present its position on the redevelopment of the neighbourhood to city authorities. Though the city had not received full approval of the project from federal and provincial authorities, it was still prepared to go ahead with the demolition of Sackville-Dermott, as a spot clearance program, on the understanding those formal agreements would be worked out in the near future. In March 1967, the Mayor's office notified residents that the city hoped to "begin working in the two blocks sometime this year," and by June, the city had drawn up "revised" plans which it hoped to show to residents and the newly formed Residents' Association. The City had also earmarked part of the 1967 budget to pay for the expropriation of properties in the Sackville-Dermott renewal area.²²⁹

As the first order of business, the newly formed association confronted the city over surveys being conducted by housing inspectors and city-hired social workers, Jo Casey and Linda Light. As part of the proposal to the federal and provincial governments, the city had to conduct a "social survey" which asked residents about their ethnic origins, religion,

²²⁸CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 9, Memo A.M. Hay, July 27, 1967, Re: Discussions with Karl Jaffary.

²²⁹CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 9, File 18, "One Year Later: What the Residents' Association Has Done" *Action Report from the Ward Two Residents' Association*, Vol.1, No. 8 (April 8, 1968), 3.

education, as well as their incomes and expenditures. Many residents found the collection of such information objectionable, and did not like the city “prying” into what they considered private information. The association confronted city officials over the nature of the questionnaires and warned residents that they were not obliged to complete them. In the end, city officials eventually agreed to the Association’s demands to drop the survey, since the survey form was “so badly drawn up and used that the results it yielded [were] virtually useless.”²³⁰ What made residents so sensitive about the questionnaires was the fact that the city was also sending in Buildings Department officials to ensure compliance with the recently enhanced housing standards by-law. Don Vale residents were up in arms over the process which they viewed not as routine by-law inspections, but rather, as “pre-expropriation” assessments of their houses. They claimed that such action was an underhanded move by the city because it had no right to enter houses for appraisals prior to expropriation, but residents had no right to refuse entry to building inspectors.²³¹ Slowly but surely, tensions were beginning to mount between residents and the city as they had done so in the other renewal areas.

What residents realized, if only subconsciously, was that the city was as close as it would ever get to expropriating their houses and redeveloping Don Vale. The two surveys signalled that the city was anxious to get started on redevelopment in Don Vale, since the production of a social survey was necessary to receive approval from the higher levels of government. Indeed, Karl Jaffary, the association president used the issue of the social survey

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²³¹ CTA, CTDD, RG 33, Box 1, File 3, Newspaper Clippings, Don Vale - 66- 70, “A Plan to Expose ‘Deceit’ by City,” *Toronto Telegram*, March 3, 1967

to buy time and publicity for Don Vale residents.²³² Jaffary had to present a strong front to overcome the schisms within the association. In this he was successful. According to Jim Lorimer, the initial dealings with the city over the social survey and the brief on Sackville-Dermott (see below), “solidified the group considerably. Alliances are developing between the radicals – like Glad [Dorothy Gladwin], MacDonald and Jim [Lorimer] – and the conservatives – John [Fisher], Akehurst, Chapman – which are much more reasonable and logical than previous arrangements.”²³³ Secondly, Jaffary and others were determined that the association was going to take a very pro-active part in any urban renewal program slated for Don Vale, and that it was not about to accept the wisdom of planners and politicians about what they thought were the best interests of residents. However, Jaffary and others knew that the group lacked the technical expertise necessary to effectively critique the plans or present alternatives.²³⁴ For this reason, the group needed time to decide how they would negotiate with the city. Would they fight it outright, or simply demand certain modifications to the plan? Either way, Jaffary and the others were insistent that the city would have to explain its plans and motives clearly and persuasively.²³⁵ Indeed, the very first communication from the residents’ association made it clear that the city could not simply hope to use neighbourhood participation as a cover to “sell the plan” to residents. As the association

²³²Jaffary admitted to city planner Alistair Hay that the protest over the social survey was a means of getting publicity for Don Vale. CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 9, Memo A.M. Hay, July 27, 1967, Re: Discussions with Karl Jaffary.

²³³CTA, KDJC, SC 309, Box 9, File 2, Jim Lorimer to Karl Jaffary, July 18, 1967, Re: Proceedings of the Residents’ Association, 2.

²³⁴Although Jaffary did say that “there are certain aspects that laymen can comment upon intelligently and without any special detailed technical knowledge.” CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 9, Memo A.M. Hay, July 27, 1967, Re: Discussions with Karl Jaffary.

²³⁵CTA, KDJC, SC 309, Box 9, File 4, Ward 2 Residents’ Association Memo, May 25, 1967.

reminded city officials:

Various elected representatives and City officials have on numerous occasions stated that what they most wanted to see in the area was a strong and active residents' association with whom they could deal in the presentation of the plan. ... [There is] bound to be a built in preconception in favour of the plan as they have arrived at it [by City officials]. Our Association suffers from no such disability. We consider ourselves to be the legitimate voice of the residents of the area and we consider ourselves far better equipped to communicate with those residents than are the officials in the rented house on Carlton Street.²³⁶

The association also asked the city for detailed proof that the area was as bad as they claimed it was. Most residents doubted the city's opinion that the houses were beyond repair and needed to be demolished.

Less than two weeks later, the Residents' Association drew up a petition to send to City Hall to detail residents' concerns about the renewal plans. In all, 157 tenants and home owners, out of a possible 205 in the area, signed the petition. The petition asked the city to delay their renewal plans until three issues had been sufficiently resolved. First, after witnessing the problems faced by residents in Don Mount and Alexandra Park, Don Vale residents asked the city not to proceed with renewal plans until the issue of compensation in expropriation proceedings had been resolved by the provincial and federal governments. Second, they wanted the city to give residents detailed information about housing conditions in the area, so that the residents' association could better determine if and how much expropriation was required in Don Vale. Finally, the association vigorously opposed the demolition of 28 homes in Dermott Place to be used for parking for the stores on Parliament

²³⁶CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 12, "Ward 2 Residents' Association, Letter to Mayor and Board of Control," June 3, 1967, 2.

Street.²³⁷

The petition also revealed other concerns of the residents beyond the issue of compensation and expropriation proceedings. As had been the case in other inner-city neighbourhoods slated for renewal, from Regent Park to Trefann Court, most residents did not want to move from the area, nor did tenants view the prospect of public housing as a gift from the state. Nearly eighty percent of home owners (65 of 81 interviewed) and nearly two-thirds of the tenants (53 of 80 interviewed) said that they did not wish to move, and, if they did have to move, they still wanted to live in "this part of the city." Though home owners had the most to lose if the city proceeded with its urban renewal plans, tenants believed that the plans were equally damaging to their interests. Tenants nearly unanimously believed that it was the city's duty to find them "as good accommodation at no higher rent" as they had in Don Vale. But few believed that the city would be able to live up to this expectation, even if it found them accommodation in public housing. Only a third of the tenants said that they would move out of Don Vale if they could be guaranteed public housing in the area once it was built. The reason behind the lack of tenants' desire to live in public housing was that they believed that moving into public housing would entail paying higher rents, even though the accommodation would be better.²³⁸ Of course, public housing did not interest owners in the least. Despite its attempts to avoid the problems of Don Mount and Trefann, the city was wading back into the same fight once again.

²³⁷CTA, HAT, RG 28 B3, Box 27, File 18, Ward 2 Residents Association, "Brief Concerning the Sackville Dermott Urban Renewal Scheme presented to the Board of Control, incorporating a petition from residents of that area concerning the plan," 12, July 1967.

²³⁸*ibid.*

Already bogged down in Trefann, Don Mount, and soon the Kensington Market area, city planning officials shelved their “revised” plans for Sackville Dermott in August 1967. They agreed with local residents that the tearing down of houses in Dermott Place was not a good idea, especially given the current housing shortage. Though the city never promised that the parking lot plans would not be implemented, the idea of a parking lot from Carlton to Spruce quietly died. They also agreed with the residents’ association to conduct more detailed inspections of the 95 houses slated for expropriation and demolition in Sackville-Dermott to see if they could be rehabilitated rather than demolished. In some ways, this did not represent a radical departure from the original plans for the area. Right from the start, the city made it clear that the preferred approach to urban renewal in Don Vale would be through rehabilitation and repair, rather than clearance. But as the experience in Alexandra Park revealed, urban renewal through rehabilitation was new and uncharted territory, for planners, governments, and citizens alike.

By the end of September, the Buildings Department and the Planning Board returned the results of their Phase II studies to the residents of Don Vale. These surveys of housing conditions extended to various houses throughout Don Vale, and were not limited solely to the Sackville Dermott areas. The Phase II inspections differed from the initial inspections only in that they gave more detailed reports of the repairs necessary for each dwelling, as well as detailed estimates of the labour and material costs involved in bringing the houses up to city rehabilitation standards.²³⁹ These standards were somewhat lower than CMHC standards for granting rehabilitation loans, but more stringent than city housing standards because they

²³⁹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 2, File 4, Joint Liaison Committee for Urban Renewal 1966-69: Don Vale, Kensington and Angus Place, Third Meeting, Thursday, November 3, 1966, 5.

required not simply the repair of defective items, but the replacement of items near or at the end of their useful life. According to the Phase II reports, city building inspectors required that rehabilitated dwellings have recently installed wiring, plumbing and heating systems, along with floors, walls, windows, roofs and foundations that were new or in good condition. According to the city's standards a rehabilitated dwelling should remain in a good state of repair for 20-25 years with normal annual maintenance.²⁴⁰ In addition to setting standards of the rehabilitation project, the city also forecasted that such work would take place over a three to five year period. The reports by the Buildings Department also estimated that the costs for such a program would amount to an average of \$3,000 per house in Don Vale, with some costs ranging from \$6,000 to as much as \$10,000. Of course residents were astounded at the costs of the program, and many believed that rehabilitation was simply expropriation under a different guise.²⁴¹ Nonetheless, under current federal and municipal legislation these figures were only proposals and the city had no authority to undertake a rehabilitation project of this magnitude.

Residents were extremely wary when the Planning Board returned to the neighbourhood in late 1967 to explain its tentative proposals for Don Vale. Hoping to quiet their fears, the Residents' Association and the Planning Board agreed to hold six "block meetings" with people from specific blocks to outline what the plans would mean for them and their street. The Planning Board hoped that through the meetings it could regain the trust

²⁴⁰Ward Two Residents' Association, *Rehabilitation: Outline for a Policy* (Toronto: Rochdale College Press - with grant and assistance from the City of Toronto Planning Board, 1968), 3.

²⁴¹"Cost Figures For Repairing Homes Released to Residents by City Association Members Call it 'Indirect Expropriation,'" *Ward Two Action Report*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (December 6, 1967), 2.

of area residents, while the Residents' Association hoped that it would stimulate greater interest in the issues facing the neighbourhood and strengthen its position with the city. By November, however, the block meetings began to break down into shouting matches between residents and city planners. Residents who came to meetings, in particular certain members of the Residents' Association Executive, were extremely aware of all facets of the issues at stake and were confident of their ability and right to criticize the City's approach. They bombarded city planners with questions on all issues, including housing and rehabilitation standards, expropriation procedures, rehabilitation financing and municipal tax increases, and the economic advantages of private redevelopment.²⁴² The planners, however, were both unable and unwilling to give clear answers to these issues, since they went beyond the scope of the plans they were presenting. Residents were unwilling to accept vague promises that the city would act and plan in good faith. They demanded that these issues be settled before they would consider giving any consent or participation in the project.²⁴³

Relations between the city and residents completely broke down during the fourth meeting held on December 7, 1967, which ended when residents called the city officials and their plans "stupid" and "incompetent."²⁴⁴ The collapse of the city-resident relationship in Don Vale was not unforeseeable. Only a week before the block meetings began, the Residents' Association executive decided that it would no longer participate in discussions with the city

²⁴²The Residents Association would later release its own study of rehabilitation entitled, *Rehabilitation: Outline for a Policy*.

²⁴³CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 10, K. Jaffary to G. Emslie (Development Commissioner), January 18, 1968.

²⁴⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 10, Notes on Meetings Held in Don Vale Site Office, 297 Carlton Street, Block Meeting 4 - December 7, 1967, for Blocks 8,9,10.

until a representative of the residents' association was awarded a seat on the Joint Liaison Committee, the intergovernmental committee that developed and implemented urban renewal schemes.²⁴⁵ Thus, when the fourth meeting ended with such rancour, the Planning Board accused the Residents' Association of packing the meetings and obstructing progress, and cancelled the last two block meetings. By December 1967, the second phase of the project had also reached a stalemate.

Rehabilitation: In Search of a Viable Policy

The shift from expropriation and demolition to rehabilitation and repair in Don Vale symbolized two very important and interrelated phenomena in planning in the central city - gentrification and advocacy planning.

Part of the reason why planners and city officials were so willing to shift gears in Don Vale, away from past practices of expropriation and clearance and towards rehabilitation and modernization, was that the practice was already underway in Don Vale by the mid 1960s. Increasingly after 1965, small, young, middle-class families began purchasing properties in Don Vale and renovating them, either slowly themselves or with the use of private contractors. By the time planners arrived in Don Vale, the neighbourhood was in the process of "unslumming," to use the words of prominent urban planning critic Jane Jacobs, whose own work greatly influenced Toronto reformers in their battles against urban renewal.²⁴⁶ Within five years, the image of Don Vale had gone from a respectable, but declining, working-class neighbourhood to a *chic* place to live. What started innocently enough as the refurbishment of a small number

²⁴⁵ *Ward Two Action Reports*, Vol. 1, No.4 (December 6, 1967), 3.

²⁴⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Chapter 15

of workers' cottages in 1965 soon turned into a flood of "white-painters" who, by the late 1970s, had transformed the neighbourhood from one that was suitable to study the culture of blue-collar Canadians to one full of "egotistical, glossy *Toronto Life* sorts of people."²⁴⁷

On the surface, the rehabilitation of Don Vale (by private or public means) seemed to present a "win-win" situation for both the city and residents. From the city's point of view, rehabilitation would not simply renew the city's housing stock, but more importantly it would provide a healthier inner-city tax base, and renew the vitality and stability of the inner core. For residents, rehabilitation meant the end to both publicly-implemented urban renewal and the encroachment of private high-rise redevelopment. However, the defeat of modernist urban renewal, both public and private, was not an unmitigated success. Even by the late 1960s, as Don Vale residents were busy congratulating themselves on killing the urban renewal monster, it was becoming clear that, while the physical fabric of the neighbourhood had been saved, its social fabric as a working-class neighbourhood was rapidly unravelling. Indeed, by the early 1970s, concludes Jon Caulfield, Don Vale's working-class population had been displaced by middle-class resettlers "nearly as thoroughly as St. James Town's former residents had been by the high-rise builders."²⁴⁸

The gentrification of Don Vale was a complex development linked to shifting demographic and economic trends that had been underway in Toronto since the end of the Second World War. First, gentrification in Toronto began just as the baby-boom generation began to enter the housing market. For many young families, suburban neighbourhoods and

²⁴⁷Lorimer and Phillips, *Working People*, 23-33; and D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 247.

²⁴⁸J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 29.

homes were not nearly as attractive as they had been during the 1950s. As previous chapters illustrate, suburban housing was becoming much more expensive after 1965, leaving many house-hunters to look elsewhere, including inner-city neighbourhoods. Also important in this regard was a trend that began in the 1960s towards smaller, dual-wage earning families. Young families that had chosen to flee the inner-city for the suburbs in the 1950s were not only affected by the ideology of family togetherness, but also by more mundane concerns of the quality of inner-city schools and the shortage of safe play spaces for their children. But smaller, younger and more affluent families did not worry to the same degree about these problems. Rather, access to work and adult leisure activities played a stronger role in neighbourhood choice. Indeed, the “reinvansion” of middle-class households into the central city was also linked to the changing nature of the inner-city labour market. By the late 1960s much of the “blue collar” industry which had characterized late 19th and early 20th century Toronto, was in decline. In its place rose Toronto’s financial core at King and Bay, which became the home of sixty percent of the nation’s resource companies, half of its finance and manufacturing headquarters and nearly twenty percent of its service companies by 1975. The city also benefited from the increase in government activity, particularly the provincial government headquartered at Queen’s Park. As a result, the city experienced an increase of nearly 60,000 high paying “white collar” jobs in the growing state, service, financial, and corporate head office sectors of the economy. ²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹James Lemon *Liberal Dreams and Nature’s Limits* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 249-50; David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) (Chapters 3 & 4) and D. Ley, “Past Elites and Present Gentry: Neighbourhoods of Privilege in the Inner City,” in Larry S. Bourne and David Ley *The Changing Social Geography of Canadian Cities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 214-33; and David Ley, “The Inner City,” in P.

(continued...)

In addition, by the 1960s accelerating suburbanization led to a deepening of the inner-city rent gap. The rent gap develops when the depreciation of existing housing creates a situation where the difference between the existing capitalized ground rent to property owners and the potential ground rent that would result from higher and better uses encourages reinvestment. As the cost of building and servicing suburban homes became more expensive, relative to what could be built, or rebuilt in the central city, developers and other property interests soon realized that the renewal or rehabilitation of central city neighbourhoods could yield higher returns on their investments, and thus capital flowed back into the inner-city by the mid to late 1960s. In this sense, gentrification is not a back to the city movement of people, but of capital. Indeed, the vast majority of those who moved to central city neighbourhoods were upper status households choosing to remain in the central city. In Don Vale, only two percent of households who moved to the neighbourhood during the initial phase of gentrification between 1966 and 1971 relocated from the suburbs. To use the old invasion-succession model employed by Toronto's planners for most of the postwar period, gentrification may be understood as the process by which middle-class Torontonians simply reclaimed the territory that had once been theirs, but had been taken over by other social classes.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹(...continued)

Filion and T. Bunting, *Canadian Cities in Transition* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991), 313-348.

²⁵⁰The literature on gentrification is vast, but a good introduction may be found in Bruce London and J. John Palen "Introduction: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues Regarding Inner-city Revitalization," in *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighbourhood Revitalization*, J. John Palen and Bruce London (eds.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 9. The classic Marxist statement is Neil Smith's "Toward a theory of gentrification: A back to the city movement by capital not people," *Journal of the American Planning Institute* 45, (1979), 538-48. For the Canadian context see David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, 42. For the statistics on Don Vale see Godfrey L.

(continued...)

Finally, gentrification was also fuelled by the cultural politics of the late twentieth century. The 1960s disenchantment with the Fordist paradigm carried over into a critique of suburbia, or at least the idea of suburbia.²⁵¹ To an increasing number of young people, the pleasures and rewards of suburban family living appeared alienating and were absent of authenticity. In addition, many young Canadians were moving into the inner-city, most of them to attend university. As David Ley reveals,

In Toronto the dominant demographic fact of suburbanization was countered by the movement of thousands of adolescents and young adults into the inner-city; single census tracts in the Annex, adjacent to the University of Toronto with its 25,000 daytime students, gained more than 1,000 15-19 year olds each in the 1961-6 period. ... and in a demographic explosion, their numbers expanded by over 40,000 in the City of Toronto overall through the 1960s.²⁵²

Reared on the permissive doctrines of Dr. Spock, influenced by critique of modern society by Herbert Marcuse and his colleagues in the Frankfurt School, and entranced by the emerging Hippie counterculture, university graduates were often gentrification's pioneers. Indeed, as Jon Caulfield argues, choosing the bright lights and diversity of the city over the security and conformity of the suburbs represented a kind of everyday "critical social practice."²⁵³ In short, choosing an inner-city address, rather than a suburban one, came to represent a rejection of the social and spatial alienation of modernism in favour of more human values of belonging,

²⁵⁰(...continued)

Spragge, "Exploring a Planning Methodology: Policies for Whitepainted Neighbourhoods," *Plan Canada*, 23 (April, 1983), 37.

²⁵¹See S.D. Clark *The Suburban Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966). Clark argues that the suburbs were not the uniformly middle class societies that many critics, and indeed promoters, claimed they were. Cheap housing, not a particular "lifestyle" attracted people to the suburbs, argues Clark.

²⁵²D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, 182.

²⁵³D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, Chapters 5 and 6; and J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, especially Chapters 5 and 8.

identity, and participation.

Though it would become the most celebrated example, Don Vale was not the first inner-city neighbourhood in the city to experience gentrification, or what was then known as “whitepainting” or “town-housing.” The first such instance of gentrification in Toronto took place in the late 1950s on Collier Street, then a run-down cul-de-sac at the edge of a commercial area in the Yonge and Davenport area. Here, architect David Molesworth renovated a house and was soon followed by other urban professionals including University of Toronto law professor and president of the Town Planning Institute of Canada, James Milner.²⁵⁴ The transition of Collier Street was largely complete by 1965 when another architect Joan Burt, decided to try her luck renovating twelve of eighteen labourers’ cottages on Alpha Street, a cul-de-sac at the northern edge of Don Vale, because she thought that, when renovated, they would have the allure of a London Mews.²⁵⁵ Though her project was larger than Molesworth’s, she was not a speculator; in fact she sold the properties to friends and clients. In many ways, she was taking significant risks because mortgage lenders had almost completely withdrawn from the neighbourhood due to the threat of urban renewal, thus impeding the normal operation of the local housing market.

Burt’s idea soon caught on with others. Gentrification was most pronounced in the northern end of the district, particularly along Amelia Street, Wellesley Street and a number of cul-de-sacs close to Riverdale Park. The cul-de-sacs, short lanes, and lack of through

²⁵⁴Godfrey L. Spragge, “Exploring a Planning Methodology: Policies for Whitepainted Neighbourhoods,” 41, & 50 n. 15.

²⁵⁵D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, 46; J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People*, 6-7.

traffic, combined with near-by parkland made this part of Don Vale the most attractive for would-be gentrifiers. The proximity to Rosedale in the north, rather than Regent Park to the South was also important.²⁵⁶ Aside from Burt's ambitious project of completely gutting the Alpha Street cottages, most of the early renovations were small and involved a fair amount of sweat equity by their owners. These early gentrifiers,²⁵⁷ because of their limited market power were unable, and often unwilling, to bring about much dislocation to local housing markets.²⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the pioneer stage of gentrification in Don Vale was relatively short. Home purchasers in Don Vale in 1965 included a mechanic, a chauffeur, and an electrician. By 1970, new home owners included a doctor, a design engineer, a journalist, and an antique dealer. Particularly after 1969, there was a rapid increase in the social status of entering households in Don Vale, even though the issue of urban renewal had not yet been decided. Lorimer estimates that between 1966 and 1970, 150-200 houses were purchased by middle-class families, who in some cases replaced area home owners, but most times displaced tenant families who had rented from absentee landlords at modest rates. By this time media and real-estate exposure prepared the ground for the neighbourhood's commodification and income

²⁵⁶Ley notes that the strongest correlation for gentrification was proximity to an exiting elite census tract and that gentrification typically occurs in the shadow of an existing high status district, and in many ways represented its incremental expansion. D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, 105-06

²⁵⁷Some even question the use of the term gentrify, particularly for the initial phase, because many "gentrifiers" were at best marginally middle class. See Bruce London and J. John Palen "Introduction: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues Regarding Inner-city Revitalization," in *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighbourhood Revitalization*, J. John Palen and Bruce London (eds.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 7; J.J. Palen and Chava Nachmias, "Revitalization in a Working-Class Neighborhood," in London and Palen, *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighbourhood Revitalization*, 128-139.

²⁵⁸D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, 56; and J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 202-211.

transition²⁵⁹

Also by this time, gentrification had spread beyond the northern sector of Don Vale. As a result, housing prices in the entire area soared. Whereas in 1965 and 1966 housing prices in Don Vale ranged from \$11,000 to \$14,000, by 1969 renovated townhouses were selling for as much as \$49,000, more than three to four times the original prices of the houses. Indeed, the Don Vale Working Committee calculated that given the average cost of renovation at \$8,000 per unit, property developers could pay as much as \$18,000 for a property and still retain a healthy profit margin. Given the new-found profits to be made by retaining the low density residential nature of the area, real estate agents began calling residents to inquire if they were interested in selling. Moreover, by paying such high prices for the property and dwelling, developers, speculators, and home buyers were paying more than the land would be worth even for high-rise development, thus ensuring the retention of Don Vale as a low-density neighbourhood.²⁶⁰

The entrance of middle-class gentrifiers into the neighbourhood altered not only its physical fabric, but, more importantly, its social fabric. Prior to gentrification, Don Vale residents saw their neighbourhood as solidly working-class. Protests against the city “dumping” welfare families in the neighbourhood, particularly in the Cowley-owned houses, revealed not only a sense of working-class respectability and pride, but also a wariness of outsiders. Though many were relieved that their new neighbours were not “problem families,”

²⁵⁹J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People*, 10. D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, 57.

²⁶⁰City of Toronto, Don Vale Working Committee, *Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme*, June 1969, Appendix Item No. 10, viii.; and “Don Vale has become a hot area,” *Action Report from the ward 2 residents’ association* Volume 2, no. 7, February 1969, 3; S. Davies, “Old Homes Rejuvenated into Instant Housing,” *Toronto Star*, May 31, 1969, 19

Don Vale residents still viewed these new middle-class renovators as “intruders.”²⁶¹ As James

Lorimer recalls:

Relations between long-time residents and town-house renovators on the street were courteous but edgy. Behind them was an unspoken mutual recognition that the old residents found the town-house renovators quite different from the rather disreputable tenants who for a long time had lived in many of the houses now being renovated and from the respectable but friendly working-class home owners like themselves whom they might have expected to move onto the street. The renovators were a disruption in normal neighbourhood life, and though in some ways they were a relief to long-time residents because they didn't bring with them the noise and trouble which some of the previous tenants had caused, in other ways they were an annoyance and trouble themselves in the way they fussed about parking on the street or John's truck, which he left in front of his house every night. This general opinion was always left unstated by long-time residents. What they did talk about was the threat that their taxes would be forced up, the ‘unfriendliness’ of the new people, their unwillingness to deal with them as neighbours should, and even sometimes the unaccustomed peace and quiet which the new residents had brought with them.

Similarly, some of the new middle-class “intruders” considered that the street had been a slum before they had arrived, that the long-time residents were less-desirable neighbours than other middle-class renovators, and that the stability of the street would emerge only when all the houses had been taken over for town-house style renovations. Many of the original renovators saw themselves as “a colony in hostile territory.” Of the original group of six renovators on Alpha Street, three sold and moved out after two years.²⁶²

Indeed, it is important to note at this point that middle class “town-housers” were the most important and influential members of the Residents’ Association and key advocates for both urban renewal in Don Vale and community participation. The most prominent of these

²⁶¹See Hugh Garner's novel, *The Intruders* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1976). In Garner's novel, many long time Don Vale residents commonly referred to the middle-class renovators as “crazy.”

²⁶²J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People* 27-28. See also Hugh Garner, *The Intruders*.

middle-class resettlers were Karl Jaffary, James Lorimer and Alan Samuel. When Karl Jaffary moved into his renovated house on Hillcrest Ave in 1965, he was a young aspiring lawyer and dedicated member of the New Democratic Party of Canada. According to Graham Fraser, Jaffary had a “tough, abstract intellectuality ... and was extremely ambitious.”²⁶³ As the first president of the Ward 2 Residents’ Association, Jaffary asserted strong control over the direction of the organization, especially its strong “anti-city” stance.²⁶⁴ Jaffary would use his position and experience in the Ward 2 Residents’ Association to run for alderman in Ward 7 in 1969 as a reform candidate. According to Jaffary,

I suppose I always thought I would run for office at some point ... But I always thought that it would be for the provincial legislature; I thought that was where the action was. But the period of working with Don Vale got us so browned off at City Council that it got a lot of us saying we had to run someone for alderman. I was getting pressure from the party [NDP], which wanted a creditable candidate for Ward Seven, and from Don Vale, which wanted a creditable candidate from Don Vale.²⁶⁵

Over the next half decade, Jaffary and John Sewell would go on to dismantle the city’s attachment to urban modernism in Toronto. In a twist of irony, Jaffary was the son of Dr. Stuart Jaffary, a professor at the University of Toronto School of Social Work, who played an instrumental role in the building of Regent Park.

Lorimer, like Jaffary, was also a newcomer to Don Vale. Then a Professor of Sociology at York University, Lorimer would bankroll his experience in community politics into a successful publishing career. In the meantime, Lorimer and his wife Myfanwy Phillips

²⁶³G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 170.

²⁶⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32, B3, Box 12, File 12, CTPB Memo: Al Demb to D. Barker, September 4, 1968, Re: Don Vale Working Committee Meeting September 4, 1968.

²⁶⁵G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 170.

had largely stumbled upon Don Vale in late 1966. Lorimer had just finished graduate studies in London, England, and had returned to Toronto to look for work. He was looking towards a new project about the “poverty problem” in Canada, and settled on Don Vale as the place for his “participant observation” study.²⁶⁶ Little did he know when he chose Don Vale that the neighbourhood and its residents would be undergoing such dramatic change. Also unbeknownst to Lorimer, was the nature of his new accommodation. The house at 9 Alpha Avenue, along with 11 others on the street, had just been transformed by Joan Burt, and the street was changing from a street known to social workers as a haven for “multi-problem” families, to a fashionable enclave of middle-class people. At the time, however, the Lorimers did not realize that they were pioneers in the gentrification of Don Vale, and indeed, the entire central city.²⁶⁷

Once plans had been announced for Don Vale, it did not take long for Lorimer to move from a passive observer of the neighbourhood to a full-fledged participant in the fight for meaningful community participation in urban renewal. Though only ever a member at large on the Ward Two Residents’ Association, Lorimer played a key role in articulating and promulgating the position of the association through the association’s newsletter, *The Ward Two Action Report*. Armed with a tape recorder, which he took to every meeting, Lorimer carefully documented the hypocrisy and arrogance of city officials and politicians, as well as the consistency with which they made decisions harmful to residents of less-affluent neighbourhoods of the city. Like Jaffary, Lorimer soon became a thorn in the side of city

²⁶⁶The study would eventually be published as *Working People*

²⁶⁷J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People*, 2-4.

officials, politicians and opponents of urban renewal in Don Vale.²⁶⁸ By 1969, Lorimer began writing columns for the *Globe and Mail*, documenting the growing activity of local ratepayer groups in their fight against the city's approach to urban renewal.

Unlike Jaffary and Lorimer, Dr. Alan Samuel was more conciliatory. A professor of classics at the University of Toronto, Samuel was newly arrived from New Jersey, where he once ran, unsuccessfully, for a seat in Congress. Like Lorimer, Samuel had been involved in the organization from the beginning, but only as a member at large. When Jaffary was forced to give up the presidency of the association due to time restraints associated with establishing his own law practice, Samuel was elected president and remained so until 1969. As president, Samuel adopted a more conciliatory approach with the city, but often felt that the executive wanted him to adopt a harder line. The one thing on which he remained adamant as president was the restriction on expropriation in Don Vale.²⁶⁹

After blocking the demolition of the Sackville Dermott areas, the ball was thrown to the Ward Two Residents Association to come up with a viable alternative to the city's original plans. Within three months, the residents' association had put together a policy statement on rehabilitation, composed and unanimously endorsed by area residents. Such a step marked the beginning of advocacy planning in Toronto.

Like the emergence of vigorous community organizations, the rise of advocacy planning was also linked to changing conceptions of poverty and helping the disadvantaged.

²⁶⁸City officials and other groups on the Working Committee objected to Lorimer's use of the tape recorder at Working Committee meetings and he was soon forced to stop. However, he continued to use the tape recorder at public meetings. See CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 9, File 19, "Residents Businessmen Tape Recorder Dispute Settled" *Ward Two Action Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (May-June 1968), 1.

²⁶⁹CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File, 12, CTPB Memo, Al Demb to D. Barker Re: Don Vale Working Committee Meeting, September 4, 1968.

One of the first statements on advocacy planning came in 1965 from Paul Davidoff, then Professor of City Planning at Hunter College of the City University of New York City. Davidoff believed that city planning was not, and could not be, a value-neutral process, since its prescriptions for action were based on desired objectives. What planners passed off as “facts,” or in the “public interest,” were nothing but their own subjective interests, or the interests of the organizations that hired them. To Davidoff, there was nothing inherently wrong with this, except that planners and planning boards rarely exposed their decision making processes to the public. Rather than hiding behind the facade of political neutrality, Davidoff advocated that planners not only recognize the politicized nature of planning, but employ these political forces planning released to increase its effectiveness. In this sense, planners should act in much the same fashion as lawyers do, as advocates for their clients, and, in particular, local community groups facing the “renewal” of their neighbourhoods. The benefits to the planning process would be enormous, Davidoff claimed. First, citizen inclusion would be more meaningful, since citizens would not only be consulted, but would be able to respond to the plans “in the technical language of the planning profession.” Second, by drawing up multiple plans, the public would be better informed of alternatives, rather than being confronted with a “take-it-or-leave-it” proposal from City Hall. Finally, such an approach would channel the criticisms of “official plans” into more constructive venues by giving residents and interested parties the ability to present and defend their own interests, needs, and desires.²⁷⁰

Advocacy planning appeared suited to many of the members of the Residents’ Association. Indeed, as noted previously, the Residents’ Association from the outset adopted

²⁷⁰Paul Davidoff, “Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning,” *Journal of the Institution of American Planners*, 31 (November 1965), 332-3.

a far more confident tone in its dealings with planners and city officials by telling them that they knew more about what the neighbourhood wanted than “the officials in the rented house on Carlton Street.”²⁷¹ More importantly, the Don Vale Residents’ Association had an advantage that its counterparts in Trefann and Don Mount did not, an indigenous and growing population of educated middle-class residents. Though most of those who came together in May of 1967 to form the residents’ association were of blue collar background, there were a number of important middle-class persons in the organization who would eventually come to direct the policies and ideas of the association. Indeed, it is no coincidence that these prominent middle-class residents lived in recently renovated town homes.

Despite the complete breakdown in city-resident relations in December 1967, both sides were confident that urban renewal with community participation could proceed in Don Vale. In many ways, both sides had little choice but to try to find a solution. Though city officials and politicians were reluctant to share their power with community organizations, they had little choice but to accede to their demands for meaningful citizen participation. During the 1967 provincial elections, prominent Tory cabinet minister Allan Grossman pledged to the Kensington Area Ratepayers’s Association that the provincial government would no longer commit financial support to urban renewal projects unless there was meaningful citizen participation. On the other side, the Residents’ Association believed that the cancellation of urban renewal in Don Vale could have disastrous results for local residents, due to the reimposition of city housing standards. In addition, many on the executive believed that the proposals for Don Vale might very well represent “something that would be a model for

²⁷¹See note 226 above

[urban renewal in] North America.²⁷²

In a gesture of good faith, the City Planning Board assigned a new planner to Don Vale, Alan Demb, in January 1968. Demb had only recently arrived in Toronto from the United States, and had no connection with past plans or battles between residents and city hall. Demb was also solidly committed to working with local residents and their organizations in devising a new scheme for Don Vale. Though he did not live in Don Vale, he lived in Ward 2 and joined the Ward 2 Residents' Association, again to signal that the city was serious about its new approach to renewal. Demb's appointment was a key event in keeping urban renewal alive in Don Vale.

Nonetheless, the Residents' Association made it clear that it would no longer discuss the proposals for Don Vale until the matter of meaningful community participation had been officially resolved. The Association believed that without a say in the actual planning of the area, community participation was simply a waste of time. However, the various levels of government involved in urban renewal were unwilling to allow citizen participation at the level of the Joint Liaison Committee. To resolve the crisis, Association president Karl Jaffary suggested the formation of a new "informal" working committee composed of representatives from various city departments, local politicians, and community groups with "legitimate interest[s] in the area."²⁷³ When approved in March 1968 the Working Committee consisted of two representatives from each of the Planning Board, the Development Department, the

²⁷²City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1968, Appendix A, Board of Control Report No. 44, November 20, 1968, 2661.

²⁷³CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 10, Ward Two Residents' Association Brief to Board of Control February 29, 1968, 1. The Kensington Area Ratepayers' Association (KARA) also advocated the same type of working committee. See CTA, Horace Brown Collection (HBC), SC 307, Box 1, File 23, "The Miracle at Kensington: A Brief From KARA in Relation to the Kensington Urban Renewal Proposal."

Buildings Department, and the Ward Two Businessmen's Association, three members of the Ward Two Residents' Association, and the two aldermen for Ward Two. The representatives from the city departments were to act as technical consultants and provide a direct link with city departments. In addition, the two aldermen were given ex-officio status on the committee and were not allowed to vote on any measure before the Committee. Despite the revolutionary approach laid down by the Residents' Association, city planners and politicians were quick to support the proposal for Working Committees in Don Vale and Kensington, which began meeting in March 1968.²⁷⁴ They did so for two reasons. First and foremost, the establishment of working committees would resolve the stalemate in urban renewal. Second, neither city officials nor politicians believed that they would be bound by any decisions or policies passed by the Working Committees.

However, the Residents' Association had other ideas. Though Jaffary called for the internal operations of the Working Committee to be "informal," he envisaged that the Committee would have extremely broad and important planning powers in Don Vale.

According to the terms of reference of the Working Committee:

The Working Committee would participate *directly* in the preparation of any Urban Renewal Scheme for Don Vale. By meeting regularly and frequently the Working Committee would discuss, advise, and make recommendations for the improvement of Don Vale which will benefit both its inhabitants and the City as a whole. *Any* reports by City Departments which deal with *any matter* of concern to Don Vale would be referred to the Working Committee for review and comment - these comments would be attached to anything going on to city council etc...²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 10, Al Demb to A. Hay, Re: Meeting with Karl Jaffary, February 9, 1968.

²⁷⁵CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 10, Ward Two Residents' Association Brief to the Board of Control, February 29, 1968, 2. Emphasis mine.

The Residents' Association was clear that nothing concerning the neighbourhood was beyond the purview of the Working Committee, and that they were willing to oppose any urban renewal agreements negotiated without the committee's prior approval.²⁷⁶ Indeed, by April 1968, in another unprecedented step, the residents' association demanded that the Working Committee review the City's application for NHA Section 23A agreements; commitments with the senior levels of government to share the costs of preparing urban renewal plans for Don Vale.²⁷⁷ Jaffary and the Residents' Association did not envisage the Working Committee as simply a place where residents and other interests could comment on the plans, but saw the Committee as composing urban renewal policy for Don Vale and, indeed, for the entire city. As the Residents' Association told city planners: "The Committee [should] crystalize City policy so that the City could request that policy from the senior levels. The Committee wanted the City to approve a policy, and then say to the other governments: "This is our policy. If urban renewal cannot be done within this sort of framework, then we don't propose to do it."²⁷⁸

As the Working Committee began to meet in Don Vale, the Residents' Association was also in the process of "crystalizing" its policy toward urban renewal. From the beginning, Jaffary was adamant that the residents of Don Vale would not face a situation like that in Don Mount or Trefann Court. To avoid being ignored or harmed by city and federal housing

²⁷⁶CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 4, City Planning Board Memo: Re - Future of Working Committee and Scheme Preparation in Don Vale, Al. Demb to A. Spaxman, June 12, 1968

²⁷⁷Section 23A of the National Housing Act, allowed for cost sharing agreements between the federal, provincial and municipal governments to fund the preparation of urban renewal plans. Section 23 B concerned the implementation of those plans.

²⁷⁸CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 4, Agenda for Working Committee Meeting May 15, 1968; HBC, SC 307, Box 1, File 23, "The Miracle at Kensington..."

policies, Jaffary and other members of the executive believed that the Residents' Association had to do more than simply say no to urban renewal; they had to devise credible alternatives. As a result, the Residents' Association established its own working committees to investigate the various issues involved in urban renewal, such as expropriation, assessment and taxes, and rehabilitation. Since the approach in Don Vale would concentrate on rehabilitation and repair, the Committee on Rehabilitation Financing was the most important of these sub-committees. The committee began meeting in late August 1967, just as the Buildings Department started conducting its Phase II reports on housing conditions and rehabilitation costs in Don Vale. By December the committee had submitted its final report which would later be published as *Rehabilitation: Outline for Policy*. The Report represented the work of more than 30 over three months and dozens of meetings and discussions. It was unanimously approved by the association at every stage except the last, when one of the 150 residents attending the meeting opposed the report on the grounds that it would be impossible to implement.²⁷⁹

A landmark study in the history of Canadian housing policy, the Report was emphatic that rehabilitation was the most desirable and most financially effective means of renewing the city's housing stock. The Report excoriated current housing and urban renewal policies as a very expensive way of standing still, "since they drove low-income owners and tenants from one area to another in search of a declining stock of low-cost housing." In addition, the Report believed that to replace all of the substandard dwellings in Don Vale would cost approximate \$36 million or ten times the expense of rehabilitation.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹Ward 2 Residents' Association, *Rehabilitation: Outline for a Policy*, 5.

²⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 12.

Though financially prudent for governments, the Report recognized that rehabilitation could harm residents as seriously as demolition and clearance, if financial safeguards were not implemented to help home owners and tenants with the cost of rehabilitation. Indeed, the extent of rehabilitation that officials were considering to be completed within a 3-5 year period in Don Vale amounted to almost two decades of work for ninety percent of the residents. As Albert Rose's pioneer study of rehabilitation illustrated, residents of inner-city neighbourhoods, including those in Don Vale, typically did not spend any more than \$500 a year in repairs and improvements to their houses. More importantly, they only spent large amounts of money or conducted large-scale repairs and improvements during their initial few years in their houses. In addition, most owner-occupiers in Don Vale had reached, or were nearing, the age of retirement, and had been in their homes 15 years or more; they were not planning extensive repairs or improvements to their homes, especially if they had to go into debt to do so.²⁸¹ Finally, the Report recognized that extensive repairs and rehabilitation of housing in Don Vale would surely raise the market value of homes in the area, both individually and collectively, and thus raise the assessment and taxes on them.

As a result, the Report recommended that the only way to proceed would be to provide "a simple, generous, universal program of grants to pay most of the cost of the work involved." To meet the costs of rehabilitation, the Report advised that owners be given a grant of 80 percent of the total cost of the work needed to bring their house up to the rehabilitation standards by right, and offered a low-interest loan of approximately 3 percent, for the remaining 20 percent of the cost. In addition, grants for the remaining 20 percent should be

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 8; and A. Rose, *Rehabilitation of Housing in Central Toronto* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1966), 46-49.

available to all owner-occupiers who would suffer any financial hardship by having to pay for this portion of the work. The association further recommended that home owners who choose to provide the labour should be given a 100 percent grant on the cost of the materials involved. Similarly, to prevent home owners from using the financial compensation to rehabilitate their homes and then sell their properties, the association called for a sliding scale of repayment on the grant, starting at 100 percent repayment if the house was sold in the first five years after completing rehabilitation to 15 percent if sold within 10 years. After the 10 year period, home owners would not have to repay any part of the grant upon the sale of the house. The association also asked that assessments be frozen at pre-rehabilitation levels, and only increase at the rate of the city average for 10 years. Finally, the Report recognized that improvements to Don Vale dwellings might provide an opportunity for landlords to raise rents. Considering that renters and roomers were the most disadvantaged in the community and it was generally their housing conditions which urban renewal programs sought to improve, the Report suggested that there be a ten-year moratorium on rent increases, and should be subject only to the cost of living index during this time.²⁸²

Despite the fact that the Working Committee and the Report received great praise as new directions in Canadian housing policy, cracks were beginning to re-emerge within the Residents' Association. The original divisions between residents opting for rehabilitation and neighbourhood stability and residents who desired the removal of urban renewal and the up-zoning of the area to permit high-rise development never really disappeared. Members of the Gladwin group never abandoned the idea that high-rise development would be most beneficial

²⁸²Ward 2 Residents' Association, *Rehabilitation: Outline for a Policy*, 18, 23-25.

to home owners, even though City Council, the Planning Board, and the Committee on Buildings and Development repeatedly assured residents that Don Vale would remain a low-density neighbourhood. Though many home owners worried about speculators invading the neighbourhood, as they had done across Parliament Street in St. James Town, the Gladwin group believed that they were “sitting on the most valuable property in North America” and welcomed the chance to sell their homes at a profit. The designation of Don Vale as an urban renewal area would only delay, if not completely preclude, private high-rise redevelopment. The two groups agreed to come together in May of 1967 to fight urban renewal, but now the Residents’ Association was set on working with the city to proceed with urban renewal. In addition, the Residents’ Association positioned itself in favour of an expensive program of rehabilitation, for which financial assistance was not provided under current NHA legislation. Finally, there was no iron-clad guarantee from the city that urban renewal in Don Vale would proceed without the use of expropriation. In short, the original Gladwin group remained hostile toward state-sponsored urban renewal in any shape or form.²⁸³

In February 1968, just as the city was agreeing to work with local citizens in Don Vale through the Working Committee, Dorothy Gladwin and Norman MacDonald began circulating an unofficial petition around the neighbourhood asking residents if they would rather sell out to a developer than be expropriated, or forced to make costly repairs. Given the widespread opposition to expropriation, it was not surprising that more than two-hundred residents signed the petition. Gladwin and her supporters also contacted local councillors and members of the Board of Control to lend support to the idea of re-zoning Don Vale for high-rise development.

²⁸³“Ward 2 Split on Don Vale Plan,” *Toronto Telegram*, July 11, 1968, 29.

This was not a difficult task, given the pro-development nature of City Council and the worry of many councillors that the formation of the Working Committees had drastically reduced their ability to “speak” for their constituents. Gladwin soon had Councillors Helen Johnston and David Rotenberg, as well as Controller June Marks on her side. Johnston, in particular, had kept Gladwin’s re-zoning project alive by throwing her support behind high-rise development in Don Vale at various residents meetings in late 1967 and early 1968. In an attempt to divide and conquer the Working Committee, Johnson, Rotenberg, and Marks protested that the Working Committee, and by implication the Residents’ Association, was not “representing the interests of all the residents [since] ... a substantial number of people had approached [them] stating that they wished to capitalize from their properties and sell for as high a price as possible.”²⁸⁴ This was not entirely true, since neither the Residents’ Association nor the Working Committee had ruled out high-rise development in Don Vale. Indeed, the final terms of reference governing the Working Committee called upon the committee to study alternate plans for Don Vale, including those of differing densities.²⁸⁵ Nonetheless, Gladwin and her supporters believed that the current thinking of planners and the Residents’ Association would significantly restrict, if not completely inhibit, private high-rise development in Don Vale.

By June of 1968, the cracks in the Residents’ Association had widened considerably.

Gladwin had reformed her initial group into a separate organization known as the Ward Two

²⁸⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12 File 12, Minutes of the Don Vale Working Committee, May 1, 1968, 3; “Board Orders Renewal Study for Don Vale,” *Globe and Mail*, November 14, 1968, 5; “Controllers to Recommend New Development Plan for Don Vale,” *Toronto Star*, November 14, 1968, 25.

²⁸⁵“Terms of Reference for the Working Committee for the Don Vale for the Presentation to His Worship Mayor Dennison and Members of the Board of Control for the City of Toronto,” in *City of Toronto, Council Minutes*, 1968, Appendix A, Board of Control Report 44, November 20, 1968, 2668.

Property Owners' Association, and asked for separate representation on the Working Committee. But the final break did not come until July 9, 1968, when the Residents' Association agreed to proceed with the city in composing urban renewal plans for Don Vale on the basis of a 12-point program, at the heart of which were assurances that expropriation would not be used and that any program of rehabilitation must include financial assistance to home owners. Members of the Ward Two Property Owners Association rejected the terms of the Working Committee and stormed out of the meeting in protest. Instead, they demanded that the city remove the urban renewal designation for Don Vale, suspend the operations of the Working Committee, and rezone the area at Z5 (the highest possible zoning density permitted) to make way for private redevelopment. Though they were not averse to bringing their houses up to standard, they made it clear that the city could not force them to "fancy up" their houses. They also pinned the run-down conditions in the neighbourhood on absentee landlords and the city who aided these slum lords by placing welfare tenants in these dwellings.²⁸⁶ As in Trefann Court, urban renewal split the community in two.

For the next year and a half, the two rival organizations battled each other to speak on behalf of the community. The Ward Two Residents Association claimed they were the legitimate voice of Don Vale residents because the organization included both home owners and tenants, and because all residents were welcome to attend its meetings and run for its executive council. The Property Owners Association, in contrast, was a closed clique centred around Gladwin, MacDonald, and its newest president, George Loumbardas, a stock clerk at Simpson Sears who lived at 420 Sackville Street. Nonetheless it claimed to speak for long-time

²⁸⁶CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 12, Ward 2 Property Owners Association to H. Billington, July 31, 1968.

working-class residents of the neighbourhood, and especially for elderly home owners who could neither afford, nor wanted to rehabilitate their homes. To discredit the Residents' Association, Gladwin and others claimed that it was run by tenants and recent town-house dwellers, a clear attack on the key members of the Residents' Association executive - Lorimer, Jaffary, and Samuel. Both groups contended that their membership was well over three hundred residents, the vast majority of them home owners.²⁸⁷ What made the situation even more confusing, for residents and city officials alike, was the fact that some residents appeared to belong to both organizations.²⁸⁸ Nonetheless, as in Trefann, city officials and politicians who opposed community participation latched on to the dissident Property Owners' Association to thwart the devolution of planning powers to the Working Committee. Even Controller Margaret Campbell, a supporter of urban renewal in Don Vale, claimed that "unless all groups are represented on the [Working] committee's proposal the Board [of Control] will not consider it."²⁸⁹

Despite the continuous battle waged by the Property Owners Association against the Residents' Association and urban renewal in Don Vale, the city was unwilling to abandon its plans in Don Vale. Over the objections of Controller Marks, who claimed that "75 percent

²⁸⁷Between September and November 1968 the Ward Two Residents' Association claimed to represent between 417 and 600 residents of a total 1300 properties (780 of which were owner-occupied) in Don Vale. The Ward Two Property Owners' Association, however, repeatedly refused to divulge its membership lists to city officials. Instead they submitted petitions as evidence of its support in the neighbourhood. CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 12, File 10, Membership list of Don Vale Residents' Association, October 9, 1968; and Box 13, File 13, File 02.15.02 (3) Dennis A. Barker to Board of Control Re: Number of Property Owners' In the Various Residents' Associations, September 3, 1968. See also Peter Whelan, "Dead on List Foes of Don Vale Study Charge," *Globe and Mail*, November 20, 1968, 5.

²⁸⁸CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 13, File 02.15.02 (3) Dennis A. Barker to Board of Control Re: Number of Property Owners' In the Various Residents' Associations, September 3, 1968.

²⁸⁹"Ward 2 Split on Don Vale Plan," *Toronto Telegram*, July 11, 1968, 29.

of Don Vale residents just want to be left alone,” the Board of Control decided, by a vote of 4 to 1, to recognize and empower the Working Committee as the principal medium for citizen participation in scheme preparation and implementation in Don Vale on the basis of a policy that would ensure no-expropriation and no enforced rehabilitation beyond minimum housing standards without grants. Even Mayor Dennison, who had waged battles against community planning groups in Trefann, Don Mount, and would do so later even in Don Vale, felt obliged to recognize the Working Committee, otherwise, he claimed, the city’s urban renewal program would be “set back ten years.”²⁹⁰ Besides, most city politicians believed that they were in no way required to implement the Working Committee’s plans or recommendations. Little did Don Vale residents realize how prophetic those statements would be. For now, urban planning was taking a new and exciting turn.

Between November 1968 and June 1969, the Working Committee devised a new and revolutionary approach to urban renewal in Don Vale. According to the *Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme* composed by the committee, renewal in Don Vale would primarily involve a massive public works program to improve basic infrastructure in the neighbourhood (sewers, hydro, street improvements, along with improved city services such as garbage collection and snow removal). This first phase would then be followed by a concerted program of housing repairs to bring all of Don Vale’s homes up to city housing by-law standards, with financial help in the form of no-interest loans and grants to needy and elderly property owners. To help tenants, who represented more than fifty percent of the population of Don Vale, the Scheme recommended the establishment of a revolving fund established by the urban renewal

²⁹⁰“Controllers to Recommend New Development Plan for Don Vale,” *Toronto Star* November 14, 1968, 25.

corporation to purchase and improve existing houses and sell them to tenants at low down payments, or on a lease-to-own basis. In addition, tenants displaced by any renewal work would be given \$100 to cover any relocation costs and would have priority for public housing vacancies.²⁹¹ Gone was the initial program of rehabilitation, since home owners and the Federal Task Force (Hellyer Report) rejected the idea. As an area of gentrification, rehabilitation had come to mean something quite different than originally envisaged by residents and the city. Indeed, after nearly 35 block meetings held by the Residents' Association between November 1968 and February 1969, there was a total lack of interest, if not hostility, to higher housing standards being enforced in Don Vale, even with a universal program of grants. The Residents' Association was clear that residents were not shying away from doing more than normal repairs, but they would not be forced into a program of "fancying up their homes," until the city made a commitment to providing long needed improvements to the area.²⁹²

Agreement between the parties involved in the Working Committee was by no means unanimous. The Ward 2 Businessmen's Association still desired some high-rise development, especially in the Spruce and Carlton area, where real estate developer Alex Cowley had been assembling properties. However, they were more committed to a stable and workable plan, so they did not push for high-rise development. Similarly, the Residents' Association objected strenuously to the section of the Scheme which outlined the social problems in Don Vale. Finally, city officials and residents also differed on their interpretation of the "no

²⁹¹City of Toronto, Don Vale Working Committee, *Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1969), 87.

²⁹²CTA, CTPB, RG 32, B3, Box 12, File 12, Jim Lorimer (Block Meetings Co-ordinator) to the Don Vale Working Committee, February 13, 1969; Ward Two Residents' Association, "Hellyer and Local Residents Say the Same Thing - No City Rehabilitation Program For this Area," *Ward Two Action Report*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (February 1969), 1-2.

expropriation” clause. Residents were clear that they wanted no expropriation unless consent was given by the owner of the property. City officials, especially city planners, viewed this as unworkable, since one recalcitrant owner could hold up entire sections of the plan. Instead, they proposed that expropriation only be used as a last resort, and that the new legislation ensuring market value as compensation in expropriation proceedings was adequate protection for property owners. Finally, even the Property Owners revised their views on high-rise development for Don Vale after it became obvious that city officials and politicians were adamant that Don Vale would remain a low-density residential neighbourhood.²⁹³

Nonetheless, the Report encountered a wall of opposition from the Property Owners’ Association. The Association challenged the Scheme at every turn, calling it “the pious longings” of the Working Committee which “basically ... ignor[ed] ... the fundamental principles of urban renewal.”²⁹⁴ First, they claimed that the plans composed by the Working Committee did not constitute an urban renewal scheme, but rather a concerted program of public works and housing by-law enforcement.²⁹⁵ According to the Property Owners, urban renewal schemes should concern “the physical condition of buildings and the disability of homeowners ... to bring their houses to the standards required.”²⁹⁶ They were wrong on this point; the 1964 amendments to the National Housing Act extended senior government

²⁹³CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 6, Don Vale Property Owners, Area Report, (February 1970); and City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1969, Appendix A, Report #10 of the Committee on Housing, Fire and Legislation, “Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme,” *passim*.

²⁹⁴CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 6, Don Vale Property Owners Association to G. Emslie, October, 4, 1969.

²⁹⁵CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 6, Don Vale Property Owners Association to G. Emslie, October, 4, 1969.

²⁹⁶“Communication from: George Loumbardas, Don Vale Property Owners’ Association, June 23, 1969,” City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1969, Report # 10 of the Committee on Housing, Fire and Legislation, 2067.

financing to service improvements in urban renewal schemes. Secondly, the Report of the Hellyer Task Force recommended that cities attack blight through a concerted program of by-law enforcement.²⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the Property Owners believed that the emphasis on public works would have a devastating impact on individual home owners. First, the Scheme recommended that housing repairs not start until the public works program was well underway. As a result, the Property Owners believed that housing conditions would deteriorate even further, and cost home owners more than double the 1967 estimates, when city officials first told them not to proceed with normal repairs. Second, public works improvements would most likely raise assessments and property taxes in the area. Third, the Property Owners' Association feared that the public works program might eventually lead to high-rise development in the area, since the chief reason city departments had rejected high densities in Don Vale was the inability of the current utilities system to meet the increased demand. The Property Owners, however, worried that once the services were installed, the city and federal government might change their mind about housing improvements and leave home owners in the position where they might be "blockbusted" by a developer or expropriated by city hall.²⁹⁸

But more importantly, the Property Owners believed that the Scheme would saddle home owners with expensive repair costs without adequate guarantees of financial assistance. They claimed that present legislation made no explicit provisions for financial aid to meet local housing standards, and that proceeding with the Scheme in the absence of such guarantees

²⁹⁷ *Hellyer Report*, 65.

²⁹⁸ CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 6, Don Vale Property Owners, Area Report, (February 1970)

could only open “a Pandora’s box with disastrous results for the majority of home owners.”²⁹⁹ According to the Association: “Attempting to pass a scheme, before getting commitments regarding financial assistance from the participating governments is like putting the cart before the horse, or better still, making it an issue in a political controversy.”³⁰⁰ If this were not enough, the Property Owners’ Association believed that the Scheme was also unclear as to the impact of repairs on assessments and taxes. A program of housing enforcement and public works could only raise taxes and thus force working-class and low income residents out of the area and pave the way for greater townhouse development. Finally, the Association objected to the equal treatment of owner-occupiers and absentee landlords. According to the Property Owners Association, absentee landlords were responsible for the “slum conditions” in Don Vale and should have to repair their properties immediately and without financial support. Owner occupiers, however, should be given more time to comply with housing standards. In short, the Property Owners’ Association believed that urban renewal, even without expropriation, would still harm the working-class home owners of Don Vale.³⁰¹

The Property Owners’ Association was not the only local group to denounce the Scheme. Don Vale tenants had also been wary of the urban renewal scheme right from the start when the city first proposed to clear Sackville-Dermott. Some tenants had become

²⁹⁹ “Enclosure dated June 16, 1969 from Mr. G. Loumbardas addressed to the Commissioner of Development,” in Report #10 of the Committee on Housing Fire and Legislation Report, 2081.

³⁰⁰ CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 6, Don Vale Area Report, February 1970.

³⁰¹ “Enclosure dated June 3, 1969, from the Metropolitan Assessment Commissioner, addressed to Mr. George Loumbardas, Don Vale Property Owners’ Association,” in Report #10 of the Committee on Housing Fire and Legislation, 2094-2097; and “Communications from the Don Vale Property Owners’ Association, August 11, 1969, in *ibid.*, 2123-2125; “Communication (June 9, 1970) from Mr. George Loumbardas, Executive Secretary, Don Vale Property Owners’ Association viz.,” in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1970, Appendix A, Report #14 of the Committee on Urban Renewal, Housing, Fire and Legislation - Item 2 - Reintroduction of Housing By-Law No. 73-68 in Don Vale, 2059-60.

involved in the Residents Association, but the vast majority remained aloof from the various organizations in the neighbourhood. Undoubtedly, many tenants were apathetic because of the transient nature of tenancy. Yet, it was also clear that home owners in both Associations viewed tenants as the source of Don Vale's major problems. Though the Residents Association was technically open to all residents regardless of their occupancy status, the Association made little attempt to organize tenants. Most tenants met privately with Susan Roper, the community worker hired by the city. Here, in private, many of them divulged their concerns and anger with their housing conditions and the rising costs of living. "However," Roper noted, "none of the people we talked to were willing to meet with their neighbours to attempt to work out solutions to their problems."

Some people felt they had been beaten so often that they no longer had any energy or hope left to try to do anything themselves about their situation, although they felt the government should do something in the way of rent control or subsidies. Others expressed a fear, which is quite realistic, of possible repercussions should they mobilize for action - or even speak out in a public meeting. Some tenants stated that in the past when complaints had been made to their landlords or building inspectors about the conditions of their homes they had met with reprisals in the form of evictions and rent increases.³⁰²

Up to now, tenants had not banded together because there had been no real plans for the neighbourhood on which to comment. Moreover, the initial proposals conceived by the Residents' Association included safeguards for tenants, including rent control. However, the Scheme did not provide security of tenure for tenants, which largely negated the benefits of rent control.

For this reason, a number of Don Vale tenants came together in June 1969 to form

³⁰²CTA, CNH, SC 5, Box 9, File 17, Susan Roper, "Report on the Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme - 1963-69," 21.

their own association under the leadership of Norman Brown. Like the Property Owners, they did not oppose the general principles of the plan. They, too, wanted “clean streets, good schools ... and improved recreation and cultural facilities,” but they feared that the current scheme would remove them from the Don Vale with only a “princely \$100” compensation.³⁰³ Many of them had already lived a nomadic life, forced by private and public renewal activities in the inner-city to move from one renewal area to the next in search of an ever-declining stock of low-rental accommodation. Now the Working Committee’s scheme was proposing to “squeeze” them out of Don Vale. Brown noted that even the Urban Renewal Scheme itself recognized that its proposals would entail “considerable hardships” for tenants unless there was a guarantee of rent subsidies.³⁰⁴ More importantly, many tenants believed that the plans for Don Vale would not maintain the existing community, as the Scheme claimed it would, but would turn Don Vale into an area of single-family housing at the expense of tenants and roomers. In this claim, they were supported by the Commissioner of Development, Grahame Emslie, who alleged that the Working Committee had fallen into the same trap as previous urban renewal schemes by reducing the amount of low-cost rental properties. As Emslie’s report stated:

From my examination of this Scheme document, I conclude that the Working Committee, in an attempt to maintain a very desirable flexibility in implementation, has fallen into a common error which has been experienced in previous renewal plans not only in this city, but in many centres throughout the United States and Canada. Namely, there is no clear program devised to ensure that more housing accommodation will be available for the residents of the Don Vale area and the residents of the City at large when the scheme is

³⁰³“Communication from the Don Vale Tenants Association” in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1969, Appendix A, Report #10 of the Committee on Housing, Fire and Legislation, 2130.

³⁰⁴City of Toronto, Don Vale Working Committee, *Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme*, 83.

completed. In fact, although very little actual clearance is contemplated, I believe there will be much less housing of a moderate cost of purchase or rental in Don Vale than is now the case because of the extensive program of public and private improvements which will undoubtedly result from implementation.³⁰⁵

In response, the Tenants Association refused to back the Scheme unless it contained means to provide security of tenure and rent levels, and that grants and loans be conditional on landlords maintaining the amount of rental space available in the neighbourhood.³⁰⁶

While Don Vale residents were debating the merits of the Working Committee's Scheme, movements were afoot at City Hall and in Ottawa to shelve it all together. Many city politicians and bureaucrats resented the power of the Working Committee, and frankly, they were scared of the precedents that the implementation of the Scheme would establish. For one, many councillors did not see anything wrong with previous urban renewal projects; at least they cleaned up the slums and provided better shelter. Alderman Thomas Wardle was by no means alone when he argued:

I believe at one time the City did have a philosophy on urban renewal which seemed to be summed up in the desire to provide better housing for those who were poorly housed and to rid Toronto of slum conditions. I suggest that this policy and philosophy still commends itself to the members of this Council and definite steps must be taken if this philosophy is to be carried out.³⁰⁷

For this reason, they believed that the tools of expropriation and planning initiative from the city and senior governments must continue. But most important, the Working Committee and

³⁰⁵“Communication (June 19, 1969) from the Commissioner of Development, viz.: Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme.” in City of Toronto, *Council Minutes*, 1969, Appendix A, Report #10 of the Committee on Housing, Fire and Legislation, 2079.

³⁰⁶“Communication from the Don Vale Tenants Association” in Report #10 of the Committee on Housing, Fire and Legislation, 2132.

³⁰⁷“Brief from Alderman Wardle, ‘The Philosophy of Urban Renewal in Toronto,’” in *ibid.*, 2140.

its plans for Don Vale disturbed the cosy relationship between city politicians and developers. It was not so much that the Scheme closed off a valuable part of the city to high-rise development. Given the substantial amount of private renovation in the area, the good press it was receiving, and the increased assessments it was bringing in, a shift in policy towards high-rise development would have been disastrous politically, economically, and socially. However, pro-development politicians were worried that if Don Vale residents succeeded in implementing their renewal scheme there would be nothing to stop residents in other neighbourhoods threatened by private renewal efforts to demand similar rights. Indeed, the Don Vale scheme came before City Council just as residents across Toronto were beginning to band together to fight block-busting activities in the area South of St. James Town, the Annex, in west Toronto near High Park, and against the completion of the Spadina Expressway. Though control over planning would gradually shift towards the neighbourhoods over the next five years, politicians were not going to give it way by ratifying the Don Vale Scheme.

Yet city councillors and bureaucrats could not reject it outright. Instead, they performed a “dance of delay,”³⁰⁸ in hopes that Ottawa and the province would ultimately decline to provide the necessary funds and changes to the legislation needed to allow the Scheme to go ahead. Some, such as Buildings Commissioner George Cook and the City Solicitor, believed that if the city approved the Scheme without the appropriate agreements from the senior governments, the city could be held responsible for fixing the deteriorated conditions in the area. Though the principles and approach of the Scheme paralleled the

³⁰⁸“City’s Dance of Delay Around Don Vale,” *Toronto Star*, August 13, 1969, 6.

recommendations of the Hellyer Task Force Report, there was little support for this kind of urban renewal in Ottawa. The Liberal government in Ottawa began a period of retrenchment in the late 1960s, and pulled back on welfare state spending. Part of the reason for the Hellyer Task Force was an attempt to control the escalating costs of Canada's housing and urban development programs. Indeed, Robert Andras, the newly-appointed Minister for Housing, announced on August 14, 1969 that the federal government was suspending any further urban renewal studies and programs not only because a "more well-defined and logical long-term ... urban renewal policy can be formulated," but because of the "rigid constraints presently imposed upon the Federal Treasury."³⁰⁹

As a result, on June 4, 1969, the newly formed Committee on Urban Renewal, Fire and Legislation attached a list of seven principles and sent the Scheme back to Council for further study. They also recommended that before the city approved the scheme that it establish agreements with senior governments to enact the necessary changes to the National Housing Act so that the plan could be carried out. The refusal of the Committee to make a clear decision on the scheme infuriated the Residents' Association. They viewed this decision as "an insult to all the people in Don Vale .. [to] dismiss the year and a half of work by the residents."³¹⁰ They called on the city to end the state of confusion and indecision that had hung over the neighbourhood for more than five years. Even the Planning Board agreed, that further studies were "futile." If the city wanted senior governments to make the necessary

³⁰⁹Statement by Honourable Robert Andras, Federal Minister For Housing – at Press Conference, National Pres Conference Theatre, North Building Ottawa, 9:30 am, Thursday, August 14, 1969." in Report #10 of the Committee on Housing, Fire and Legislation, 2136.

³¹⁰"Communication (July 11, 1969) from the Don Vale Association of Homeowners and Residents," in *ibid.*, 2105

commitments then it had to “specif[y] that this is the scheme it wants, [or] it won’t get anywhere with the senior governments.”³¹¹ To display their anger, the Residents’ Association picketed the Site Office and closed it down.³¹² In addition, the Association kept up its pressure on the city, not only through deputations to City Hall, but through the press, in particular, a series of condemnatory articles by Jim Lorimer in the *Globe and Mail*.³¹³ Nonetheless, it was clear at a meeting with city, provincial, and federal officials on October 15, 1969 that the Don Vale Scheme, and indeed, all the plans of the city’s other working committees, were to be for naught. Treated with contempt by Andras, Dennison, and McKeough, the Residents’ Associations of Don Vale, Don Mount, Kensington, and Trefann left the meeting in disgust.³¹⁴

The stalling techniques of the city were also successful in killing the Scheme by eroding support for the Residents’ Association. Though most of the anger and frustration of residents was directed towards city politicians and officials, some of it spilled over into long-simmering disputes within the neighbourhood. In August, Peter Verboom left the Residents’ Association, claiming it had been taken over by “leftist elements” who had turned the Association into “a movement with the stress mainly for the so-called ‘unfortunate poor.’”³¹⁵ Verboom and others resented the Association’s acknowledgment of the concerns of the

³¹¹CTA, CTDD, RG 33, Box 1, File 3, Newspaper Clippings, “More Reports Futile,” *Toronto Telegram*, July 5, 1969.

³¹²“Angry Picketers Close Don Vale Planning Office,” *Toronto Star*, June 6, 1969, 35.

³¹³David Allen, “Urban Renewal Three Years Later...” *Toronto Star*, June 18, 1969, 12; “City Ignores Us, East End Complains,” *Toronto Star*, July 12, 1969, 2; “Don Vale Fold to Get Tough,” *Toronto Telegram*, August 6 1969; James Lorimer, “Don Vale at Simmering Point,” *Globe and Mail*, July 14, 1969; and James Lorimer, “Are Controllers Deaf to People on Planning,” *Globe and Mail*, September 8, 1969.

³¹⁴James Lorimer, “The Fiasco Andras Is Likely to Face at City Hall,” *Globe and Mail*, October 13, 1969; “City Warned about Dragging its Heels on Urban Renewal,” *Globe and Mail*, October 16, 1969.

³¹⁵CTA, CTDD, RG 33, Box 1, File 3, Newspaper Clippings, “Leftist Take over Seen by Don Vale Executive,” *Globe and Mail* August 12, 1969.

Tenants' Association, especially the latter's demands for controls on rent and tenancies. Though anger and reproach of welfare tenants was most pronounced among the members of the Property Owners Association, there was a near universal contempt for the "disreputable poor" who had invaded and destroyed an otherwise respectable working-class neighbourhood.³¹⁶ By the end of 1969, there was a mass exodus from the Residents' Association, including some of its longest standing members. In particular, A.E. Chapman, who had been Vice President of the Residents Association since its inception, resigned "in disgust" in December 1969. Chapman claimed that:

the Association has ceased to be representative of the area and should now in no way be considered to be the voice of the people. As it now stands, the Executive is, and has been for a long time, dominated by a handful of self-appointed 'intellectuals' who appear to get an immense gratification out of constant confrontations with City Hall and a certain egotistical satisfaction out of their constant sniping and belittling of City officials.

This was a clear attack on James Lorimer and the militant tactics adopted by the Association in its battle with the city and senior levels of government. As a result, support for the Association fell precipitously. According to Chapman, only 39 of 500 members had turned out for the association's most recent meeting, and most of these, he claimed, were from the town-housing areas of Alpha, Hillcrest, and Laurier Streets.³¹⁷ With little support behind them, the Residents' Association eventually joined forces with the Property Owners to demand an end to urban renewal, a guarantee on low density zoning, and a return to normal housing standards, to be enforced first on absentee landlords, but spread over time for owner-

³¹⁶J. Lorimer and M. Phillips, *Working People*, 110.

³¹⁷CTA, CTPB, RG 32 B3, Box 13, File 6, A.E. Chapman to the Executive Committee of the City of Toronto February 18, 1970.

occupiers.³¹⁸

After 1970, official urban renewal in Don Vale died a slow death. The City Planning Board tried to keep the scheme alive asking Ottawa to fund the program as an experiment in rehabilitation. By 1972, the federal government decided to give the city money for such a project, but it was not clear that Don Vale was eligible for the program, since the degree of whitepainting in the neighbourhood led municipal and federal officials to earmark the funds for more “needy” working-class neighbourhoods. In 1973 proposals were put forward by a non-profit company called DACHI (Don Area Co-operative Homes Incorporated) to turn the decrepit Cowley houses into a co-operative housing project. This, too, turned into an ugly fight between more conservative forces in the neighbourhood, such as wealthy whitepainters and remnants of the old ratepayers’ association who opposed any movement of “welfare bums” into the neighbourhood, and those who hoped to resurrect the goals of the now defunct Don Vale planning scheme.³¹⁹

Conclusion

In the space of less than five years, the people of Toronto’s so-called “slums” brought the city’s and the nation’s postwar assault on the inner city to a screeching halt. After “ordinary working-people” stopped the federal bulldozer, the politics of city planning in Toronto would never be the same. Indeed, the residents of Don Mount and Trefann Court not only brought the wanton destruction of inner-city neighbourhoods, and some might say communities, to a halt, but they were instrumental in changing the way people viewed the city

³¹⁸City of Toronto, *City Council Minutes*, 1970 “Appendix A” Report No. 14 of the Committee on Urban Renewal, Housing, Fire and Legislation: Reintroduction of Housing By-Law No. 73-68 in Don Vale, 2024.

³¹⁹See Janice Dineen, *The Trouble With Co-ops*.

itself. Inner-city neighbourhoods were no longer solely seen as landscapes of disease, despair, and degeneracy, which could only be saved by wiping the slate clean and starting over on the basis of “modern” city planning and architectural techniques. Indeed, after 1970 both planners and politicians began to promote the protection of old, inner-city neighbourhoods and buildings, the promotion of mixed-use developments, the dispersal and integration of social housing with market housing, and a restriction of large-scale developments to the Central Business District. If nothing else, community organizations and reformers returned the city to its more conservative roots and away from the late 1950s and early 1960s obsession with development at any cost.³²⁰

The success of community organizations in inner-city neighbourhoods revealed both the positives and negatives of greater community participation in urban planning. The development of working committees devolved a great deal of power to “ordinary people,” and largely fulfilled the original dreams of Humphrey Carver and Albert Rose of making planning a “people’s movement.” Politicians, planners and other so-called experts soon realized that the devolution of planning to the neighbourhood did not mean an abdication of responsibility, but rather enhanced the decision-making process. As David Crombie, future “reform” mayor of the city, but then one of the city representatives on the Trefann Working Committee, said about Edna Dixon:

Edna ... [has] got a - I was going to say genius, but that’s too strong - she has an aptitude for detail, and she knows exactly how something will affect people’s interest. When she was reluctant about something, I didn’t always understand her fully, or know exactly what it was she was getting at, but there was always a kind of murmur. What I did learn was to respect that, and see

³²⁰W. Magnusson, “Toronto” in A. Sancton and W. Magnusson, *City Politics in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), ; and J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 67.

that there was something wrong.³²¹

Equally important, the success of residents in Trefann and Don Vale to win a seat at the planning table had a ripple effect on citizen participation in all aspects of social planning and the delivery of social programs.

Nonetheless, the success of “community organization” and “citizen participation” obscured larger and more fateful questions, none of which was more important than the actual definition of “the community.” As the previous pages have outlined, the devolution of “power to the people” often overlooked the vital questions of which people and what power. Residents of inner-city neighbourhoods rarely saw themselves as part of a greater community prior to the imposition of urban renewal. These neighbourhoods were hardly “communities,” but a collection of “communities” (established residents, owner-occupiers absentee owners, newcomers, tenants, waged, and unwaged) each of whom had a particular stake in the maintenance of their common built environment. Citizens banded together initially because urban renewal plans threatened to “turf them out” in the midst of the city’s worst housing crisis. All of them “had no idea where they could to go escape the spectre of urban renewal again.”³²² Once this instability was removed, however, the initial divisions within the “community” reemerged and were exploited by those who sought a return to the status quo. Stopping urban renewal was one thing, agreeing upon another program that would benefit all elements of the “community” was quite another. Indeed, as David Crombie noted, only when planners, politicians and citizens accepted “the Great Myth” that representatives of “the

³²¹David Crombie cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 187.

³²²A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 148.

community” actually spoke for their community, could the construction of a new approach to urban renewal proceed.³²³ Much like in the postwar reconstruction period, community planning in Toronto could only succeed by foregoing a definition of the “community” itself.

³²³Crombie cited in G. Fraser, *Fighting Back*, 182.

Conclusion: The Milestones and Millstones of Urban Renewal in Toronto

There is an embryo movement afoot to clear Cabbagetown of its slums. The people who live there don't like it. What is to become of them when the slums are cleared? They will have to move into other slums. ... They have no visions of a clean, beautiful district for them. They are not ruled by grandiose illusions as to their status. ... They think that this slum clearance scheme is one to make the sight of the poor districts easier on the eyes of the beholder. (Hugh Garner - former Cabbagetown resident)¹

Toronto is going to get beautiful and I am going to pay for it. (Trefann Court Resident)²

Toronto's modern assault on slums began in Regent Park and ended just one block south in Trefann Court. The distance travelled by Canadian housing and urban policy between the two renewal projects is equally short. The problems that plagued the transformation of Cabbagetown into Regent Park, such as the decades of official neglect by city departments, the sensational stories about the area's houses and residents, and the inadequate compensation to home owners, and perhaps above all the lack of meaningful consultation with area residents, were all crucial to cementing Trefann Court residents in their battle to kill the urban renewal monster. In this sense, Albert Rose's and Alison Hopwood's premonition that Regent Park might be a "millstone" rather than a "milestone" in Canadian housing policy ultimately came to fruition.³ Over the intervening two decades, Torontonians seemingly learned little about the housing problems, needs, and desires of the residents of these neighbourhoods. However, this was to be expected, given the way that poor inner-city neighbourhoods continued to be portrayed as places of deprivation, disease, despair, and

¹Hugh Garner, "Cabbagetown", *Forum: Selections from Canadian Forum*, J.L. Granatstein and P. Stevens, eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 145.

²A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1974), 87.

³Alison Hopwood and Albert Rose, "Regent Park: Milestone or Millstone?" *Canadian Forum*, 29 (May 1949), 34-36.

desolation. As a result, urban renewal, harmed, rather than helped, the housing situations of poor and working-class Torontonians. Whether it was termed slum clearance or urban renewal, for inner-city Torontonians, it was the same old bulldozer which demolished not only their dwellings and neighbourhoods, but their sense of belonging to a greater “community.”

Nonetheless, as the preceding pages have illustrated, it was not a lack of concern by planners, politicians, and social housing activists that led to this situation. To be sure, much of their thrust to improve the lives of poor and working-class Torontonians was often at best hopelessly paternalistic, and at times even contemptuous of their lives and living arrangements. Too often planners, politicians, and social housing activists believed that residents of Toronto’s so-called slums had little or nothing to contribute to the future development of their neighbourhoods; they were too apathetic, uneducated, or they were so mobile that they had no right to make decisions for the neighbourhoods in which they would no longer reside.⁴ Yet, at the same, time these groups should not be tarred with the same brush. Planners, politicians, social workers, those who have so often been excoriated by the histories of urban planning in Toronto for being condescending or hateful towards working-class neighbourhoods, often lobbied aggressively for what would later be hailed as innovative solutions to the housing problems of the city’s poor. For years, Toronto planners and social housing activists lobbied aggressively for low-density mixed developments, housing repair and rehabilitation programs, rent-subsidies, the dispersal of public housing, simultaneous social and physical planning of neighbourhoods, and even genuine citizen participation.

Yet, despite their concern for the housing conditions of poor and working-class

⁴A. Rose, *Community Participation in Urban Renewal*, 5.

Torontonians, their interest in the welfare of the city's weakest citizens was not incompatible with more mundane concerns of the state and capital of increasing assessments (dollar planning) and creating favourable conditions for investment. The built environment of the slum may have sustained the city's poor and working-class citizens, but it could not maintain either city tax bases or the insatiable needs of capital investment and development. To repeat a caption from an editorial cartoon concerning the renewal of inner city Toronto during the 1950s, "[there's] gold under them thar [sic] heaps."⁵ Poor and working-class Torontonians occupied some of the most valuable land in North America, and they were viewed as the principal opposition to seeing it turned into "higher and better uses." Nonetheless, if the development of social housing programs with the objective of providing better housing to the poor was politically impossible unless it was coupled to these wider objectives, it was equally true that American-style slum clearance programs, whereby poor and working-class neighbourhoods were razed and then turned over to private developers, were also politically impossible in Toronto. Torontonians have always prided themselves on being able to broker public and private interests in shaping the city.⁶ Wiping the slums from the face of the city was part and parcel of Toronto's image as Toronto the Good, or its more recent incarnation as the "city that works." Slum clearance/ urban renewal promised to improve the quality of the urban environment for everyone; slum dwellers would "filter up" to better housing and, in the process, become better and more self-reliant citizens, the city would collect more taxes

⁵Les Callan "Gold Under Them Thar Heaps?," *Toronto Star*, November 18, 1954, 6.

⁶Deryck Holdsworth, "Evolving Urban Landscapes," in L. Bourne and D. Ley, eds., *The Changing Social Geography of Canadian Cities* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 50; J. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America Since 1600* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996).

while providing fewer services to these once troublesome neighbourhoods, and the program would instill confidence for private rehabilitation and renewal. In short, urban renewal was seen as a socially responsible act.

But as the preceding pages have outlined, those Torontonians who lived in urban renewal areas rarely experienced the benefits of these schemes. Indeed, the Social Planning Council noted in its critical review of Toronto's urban renewal program that the promises of a better city for all were not only false, but "dangerously misleading" because they originated with the assumption that what was good for one segment of the community was necessarily good for all of it.⁷ What was needed, the Council and many others argued, was a balance between the needs of inner-city neighbourhoods and their residents with those of the larger community. Here, then, we return to the attempts by Torontonians to balance Tory and populist conceptions of planning, which have been at the centre of Toronto politics since the 1930s.⁸ For the most part, planners were most comfortable with long-term, macro-level planning, which was orderly, rational, hierarchical, and centralized. Planning at the local level was too messy, too time consuming, and, frankly, too political for a profession whose legitimacy rested on objectivity and rationality. They wanted a modern city that could operate effectively in a modern age. They also realized that this was what most Torontonians wanted too.⁹ Nonetheless, they did not completely abandon the interests of individual

⁷Inner City Renewal Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "Urban Renewal Policies and Procedures in the City of Toronto," (Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, September 1968), 27.

⁸Harold Kaplan, *Reform, Planning and City Politics: Montreal, Winnipeg, and Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

⁹Frank Lewinberg, "Neighbourhood Planning: The Reform Years in Toronto," in *Toronto Neighbourhoods: The Next Ten Years - Papers Delivered at the Neighbourhood Planning Conference, Toronto, November 16-17, 1984* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning and Development Department, June 1985), 13.

neighbourhoods. Time and time again Toronto planners, led by chief planner Matthew Lawson, tried to preserve the social and physical fabric of individual neighbourhoods. However, planners and politicians rarely saw the contradictions between their proposed physical changes and the hopes to maintain and enhance the social fabric and functions of inner-city neighbourhoods. Perhaps the best evidence of this was their belief that they could transform the physical fabric of Alexandra Park from flexible two and three-storey semi-detached houses to a regimented public-housing project and yet retain its social function as an immigrant reception area.

Planners', politicians,' and social housing activists' inability to balance the interests of the inner-city communities with those of the larger city (and one might even add the nation as a whole) stemmed not from a lack of ability or knowledge. Rather, they started with the wrong assumptions of the needs, wants, and values of the city's working-class residents. For all the studies conducted on the housing situation in Toronto's inner-city neighbourhoods, they offered little more understanding than the moralistic social surveys conducted at the turn of the century. Granted planners had dropped much of the moralizing prose in favour of the more technical prose of sociology and psychology. Nonetheless, the statistics yielded by these data abstracts were used for the same ends, to make assumptions about the lives of the poor and working-class based on their incomes, their rents, and how many people were crammed into one house, or used the same toilet. Try as they might, planners rarely seemed able to overcome the legacy of Victorian environmentalism which dominated the early history of urban planning. Though the planning discourse of the modern slum concentrated more on the

physical aspects of the slum, rather than the inhabitants, this represented not so much a shift from subjective moralism to objective social science, but simply the ascription of social deviance to physical objects.¹⁰ Up and until the late 1960s, Torontonians still discussed how the poor physical environment of “the slum” bred disease, desolation, and eventually, disorder.

Indeed, the undue concentration on the physical nature of the slum meant that few people understood these neighbourhoods in human terms. Though the primary impetus for urban renewal stemmed from the physical conditions of inner cities, the program was also focussed on economic and social objectives. It was not simply the physical conditions, the leaky roofs, cramped quarters, rotting walls, and vermin infestations that constituted Toronto’s slum problem. Rather, it was the social, moral, and psychological effects of bad housing which turned poor housing into slums, and which justified wholesale changes to the built environment. To be sure, the physical landscape of these areas left much to be desired, even from the point of view of their inhabitants. Residents of inner-city neighbourhoods fully realized that they lived in overcrowded and inadequate, if not dangerously substandard, accommodation, much of which cost them more in rent per month than middle-class families paid on the mortgages of their suburban bungalows. To be sure, many of them endured such living conditions because of sheer poverty. And there can be no doubt that their bleak and dismal accommodations undoubtedly influenced their social, psychological, and physical well-being. In short, life in inner city neighbourhoods was hardly romantic. Yet, given the hardships, many inner-city residents still voiced a preference for living in the inner city, a built environment which they viewed as familiar, flexible and supportive, over what they pictured

¹⁰M. Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada: 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 133.

as the vast expanse of nameless and faceless suburbs.¹¹ Torontonians, planners and social housing activists included, only rarely understood the ambiguities, complexities, and paradoxes of life in inner-city neighbourhoods; to them “a slum was a slum by any name.”¹²

Toronto’s slums were more the creations of Torontonians’ imaginations than they were accurate images of inner-city life. As Trefann Court resident Edna Dixon recalled: “People were hollering to get people out of the slums ... [but the] public had an inaccurate image of what the [conditions] were like.”¹³ The link between the physical environment and social problems was always assumed and never clearly appreciated. Even when planners and social workers were more circumspect about the conclusions they drew from their studies, others were not. The sensationalism and constant repetition of hand-me-down “truths” proffered by the press, pro-development politicians, and even by social housing activists obscured an understanding of these neighbourhoods and the lives of their residents. No one really knew how these neighbourhoods worked, and in the end the failure of urban renewal was due largely to the inability and unwillingness of urban renewal proponents to understand the social patterns of life in inner-city neighbourhoods and how they related to the built environment.

¹¹It should be noted here that this view of city dwellers of the suburbs was often as short-sighted and perjorative as the suburban view of inner-city slums. As the work of Herbert Gans, Bennett Berger, S.D. Clark and most recently, Richard Harris, reveals the social, economic and cultural life of the suburbs was and continues to be extremely complex. See H. Gans, “Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life,” in *People, Plans and Policies: Essays on Poverty, Racism, and Other National Urban Problems*, H. Gans, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press/Russell Sage Foundation, 1991), 51-69; H. Gans, *The Levittowners* 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University, 1982); Bennett Berger, *Working Class Suburb: A Study of Auto Workers in Suburbia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960); S.D. Clark, *The Suburban Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966); and Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, “The Geography of North American Cities and Suburbs, 1900-1950: A New Synthesis,” *Journal of Urban History*, 27 (March 2001), 262-292.

¹²Frank Tumpane, “A Slum Is a Slum by Any Name,” *Toronto Telegram*, March 5, 1953, 3.

¹³Albert Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 148-49.

For too long, Torontonians simply believed that getting rid of slums would get rid of poverty. Though most Torontonians would have agreed that poverty created slums, they also believed that slums tended to perpetuate poverty, eventually leading to what many in the 1960s called “the culture of poverty.” Torontonians believed that solving the problem of the slums was the first step in breaking this chain of dependency. They were reminded of this so often by before and after human interest stories, which depicted poor, despondent families wallowing in slums only to be rescued by housing with greater privacy, clean and modern kitchens, a bathroom of their own. Tear down the old houses, put up new clean ones and the problem of poverty magically disappears. And yet, in many cases, poor housing, was if not the least of the worries of the “slum dwellers,” perhaps the only thing that kept families from becoming even more impoverished. Moreover, if slums were defined by more than just physical and material considerations, then social planning should have been a primary objective of urban renewal programs. Yet, other than relocation assistance, the state provided no social assistance to residents facing the transformation of their neighbourhood. Canadian housing policies, especially the National Housing Act, did not include financial assistance for recreation facilities, day nurseries, community centres, health clinics, or even welfare offices, despite the fact that renewal schemes tended to concentrate social problems rather than disperse them.

Ironically, then, clearing the slums only increased the dependency of the poor. In the end, urban renewal and public housing schemes got rid of a great deal of poverty from inner-city neighbourhoods, but not in the way most Torontonians assumed. By the early 1970s, many of Toronto’s poor may have disappeared from the central city, but where did they go?

Some remained in the islands of blight among the seas of renewal, such as Parkdale, while others moved into the new inner-city ghettos created by urban renewal - public housing projects. But most drifted towards the suburbs where the ultimate consequences of the “creative destruction” of inner-city neighbourhoods soon became evident for all to see. The dispersal of residents from inner-city neighbourhoods increased social isolation, placed great strains on the provision of traditional community services, and led towards the eclipse of public space and its replacement by privatized, commercially functional, but socially dysfunctional shopping plazas.¹⁴ Given that others had noted that these were the most likely results of urban renewal for more than a century, it is, at times, difficult to believe that planners, politicians, and state officials could not see this coming.

Pitched as a panacea to all of Toronto’s urban problems, urban renewal was bound to create disappointments, confusion, and ultimately failure. Indeed, confusion reigned at the heart of Canada’s and indeed Toronto’s urban renewal program. As the Social Planning Council summed up in a 1968 report:

A laudable desire to get rid of slums and ‘blight’ seems to have led us to neglect the question of what, in a positive sense, the renewal process ought to try to achieve. Many of the travails experienced by Toronto’s urban renewal program seem to arise from the fact that it has never been clearly established just what, specifically, the program is intended to do.¹⁵

There can be no doubt that a great number of houses in Toronto inner-city neighbourhoods were blots on the face of the city that had to be erased. Nonetheless, as the preceding pages

¹⁴Harold Chorney, *City of Dreams: Social Theory and the Urban Experience* (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1990), 202.

¹⁵Inner City Renewal Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, “Urban Renewal Policies and Procedures in the City of Toronto,” (Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, September 1968), 2.

have illustrated, they were few and far between. In terms of the physical nature of the city's housing stock, housing conditions improved substantially between 1940 and 1970. As Paul Hellyer later noted about his experience with urban renewal:

In order to eradicate the 20 to 30 per cent of buildings that were rotting beyond repair, whole blocks were demolished. Thousands of sound houses capable of being rehabilitated at reasonable cost, together with thousands of others in perfectly good condition were destroyed. The economic waste was enormous. But far more importantly, the sense of community, that certain intangible something that gives a district life and meaning, was eradicated. An atomic bomb could have scarcely produced greater dislocation.¹⁶

Indeed, the dislocation of those Torontonians least able to deal with the problems urban renewal inevitably created was nothing short of devastating.

The chief fault of advocates of urban renewal was their inability to recognize the fundamental contradiction between the goals of renewing the city and the need for more low-cost housing. Given that time and time again planners believed that Toronto's housing crisis was one of overcrowding and not the quality of its housing stock, it is difficult to believe that anyone could have believed that urban renewal and slum clearance were going to solve the city's housing crisis. As a program to develop more housing for the poor, state-sponsored renewal efforts only exacerbated the problem. The destruction of low-income neighbourhoods simply reduced the stock of housing available to Torontonians with the least ability to find or afford it. Time after time, urban renewal schemes only helped to spread "slum conditions" and increase the housing problems of poor and working-class Torontonians¹⁷ By the early

¹⁶Paul Hellyer cited in John Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 227.

¹⁷Inner City Renewal Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "Urban Renewal Policies and Procedures in the City of Toronto," (Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, September 1968), 17.

1970s, Toronto had not moved very far in solving the problem that plagued it most since the Depression - a shortage of low-cost housing for poor and working-class families.¹⁸

More damning was the fact that it was becoming increasingly evident that the central city was no place for working-class Torontonians. Despite the defeat of public urban renewal in 1969, the removal of poor and working-class Torontonians continued apace over the next decade. What public renewal plans had failed to remove were subsequently eliminated by the quickening pace of high-rise development in working-class, and increasingly, in middle-class neighbourhoods. Moreover, the breakdown of public urban renewal only quickened the pace of gentrification across the central city. By 1973, the City's *Living Room Report* estimated whitepainting was transferring nearly 1,000 homes a year from low-income and working-class households to middle and upper income ones.¹⁹ The reform cry of "neighbourhood protection" may have saved the physical fabric of the inner-city but it could not preserve its social fabric. Ironically, the "more livable," and the better planned Toronto became, the greater the dispersion and invisibility of its poorest citizens.

Perhaps the critique here assumes that the state (at all three levels) could have, or should have, produced a coherent urban housing program. Indeed, if benevolence was the guiding principle behind state policies affecting housing, one would expect successive major housing acts to show an evolution of sophistication and effectiveness in dealing with the

¹⁸One needs only compare the results of the Social Planning Council's 1973 Report *Rent Race*, with the dozens of reports documenting the extent of the problem since the Second World War. Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, *The Rent Race* (Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1974).

¹⁹City of Toronto, Housing Work Group, *Living Room: An Approach to Home Banking and Land Banking for the City of Toronto* (Toronto: Housing Work Group, 1973), 13.

problems of bad housing. History shows no such pattern.²⁰ Much of the “progress” in Canadian housing policy can be characterized as mere tokenism. Indeed, for every advancement in NHA social housing and urban renewal legislation, there was at least one step backward. In 1949, the federal government subsidized the operating losses of public housing projects, but it reduced effective community control over those projects and made the construction of public housing much more arduous by tying it up in red tape. Similarly, the great flexibility added to the 1964 revisions of the NHA provisions for urban renewal were largely illusory. The emphasis on rehabilitation gave new hope to social housing activists and inner-city residents alike. But the very flexibilities in the legislation, which could have given vast potential for progressive interpretation, were defeated by the unwillingness on the part of the senior governments to allow the legislation to be interpreted and applied in accordance with the needs of inner-city communities. Instead, senior officials in Ottawa and at Queen’s Park insisted on maintaining rigid regulations and guidelines, all in the name of “administrative efficiency.”²¹ Indeed, even the victory for more humane and flexible planning in Trefann Court was subverted by the federal government’s insistence that publicly funded housing schemes could not be in any way owned by individual occupants.²²

In this sense, the promises of the Hellyer Report, hailed by Toronto’s neighbourhood organizations as the “first sensible report in years,” because it reflected the concerns needs

²⁰Peter Marcuse, “Housing Policy and the Myth of the Benevolent State,” in R. Bratt, C. Hartman, and A. Myerson (eds.) *Critical Perspectives on Housing* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 254.

²¹Inner City Renewal Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, “Urban Renewal Policies and Procedures in the City of Toronto,” (Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, September 1968), 21.

²²Kamal S. Sayegh, *Housing: A Canadian Perspective* (Ottawa: Academy Book, 1987), 514.

of ordinary people, proved to be illusory in the long run.²³ Although the Hellyer Report was a trenchant critique of urban renewal, its authors only revealed their ignorance by laying the blame for the failure of urban renewal at the wrong door - city planners, officials, and housing "experts." Toronto's planners, politicians, and social housing activists were undoubtedly responsible for much of the debacle. Too often, they were unwilling to press for the changes the city and its affected residents wanted and needed to make urban renewal a more just programme. The prospect of federal funding for development of any kind led them to accept half a loaf, rather than none at all. And yet, one can understand their approach. So often the two higher levels of government placed road blocks in front of ambitious city plans, or sent them back to their drawing boards to "think in grander terms." Toronto may have been the laboratory for federal urban and housing policies, but it was a tightly controlled experiment, and its results were often misinterpreted and their practical applications frequently thwarted.

If any blame may be laid at the door of Torontonians it was that, in their rush to wipe the slums from the face of the city, planners, politicians, and even social housing activists rarely stopped to consult residents about their plans. Too often, after years of speculation and rumour, residents were presented with a *fait accompli*, with little room for negotiating and, therefore, no real citizen or community participation. Even early planning activists, like Humphrey Carver, Albert Rose and Dr. Cyril James, failed to heed their own advice that planning should be a "people's movement," and that bulldozing the community for its own good would be disastrous. To justify the lack of citizen participation, many of them pointed to the lack of interest and ability of working-class Torontonians to form community

²³G. Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972), 156.

organizations to protect and promote their interests. As Albert Rose concluded in his review of community organization in urban planning:

[In the early years] ... citizens who were active ... were middle or upper middle-class ... These persons participated in their local Boards of Trade or Chambers of Commerce, the local Community Chest, the Boards of Directors of voluntary charitable organizations, the governing bodies of churches, the Home and School or Parent Teacher Associations, and the like. In many of the working-class or still poorer neighbourhoods, the only institution close to the people was the church, and it was a case of the ministers and priests, the deaconesses and nuns ministering to the residents. There were no Home and School Associations to guide residents in their participation in activities, charitable organizations sent their workers into these districts from the outside ... In short, citizens in poor neighbourhoods were unorganized ... they generally lacked either the skill or the motivation to organize, and to that extent the efforts of outsiders or self-appointed organizers were justified.²⁴

Rose's conclusions may be somewhat valid here if he is speaking of the post-war Toronto Reconstruction Council, which was dominated by middle-class and social-service organizations. But even here, he suffers from historical amnesia. As the preceding pages have illustrated, the problem was not a lack of interest or organization ability on the part of inner-city residents. From Regent Park through to Trefann Court, community groups of all kinds grappled with the city's housing shortage and its programs of slum clearance and urban renewal.

Community organization in working-class neighbourhoods was alive during the 1940s, as the Reconstruction Council and its Community Council Co-ordination Committee reveals. Early attempts at community organization in inner-city Toronto neighbourhoods came from working-class sources, the labour councils, the CCF, and the Communist Party. For the most part middle-class organizers and other "caretaker organizations," such as the Welfare Council

²⁴A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 20-21.

and the local settlement houses, left these groups alone. If anything, the intervention of middle-class outside organizers was more pervasive by the 1960s. Community organizations that arose in the 1960s found their origins in the work of “caretaker organizations,” such as social workers from settlement houses and local churches, as well as middle-class professionals who had never really left the central city. Residents from Alexandra Park to Don Vale all remembered that they would have been lost without the help of these middle-class “outsiders.”

To celebrate the late 1960s as the only period of community organization, is to forget the struggles waged and the lessons learned by Torontonians over the previous two decades. Torontonians were not any less concerned about the pace and nature of development prior to 1965, nor were they, by comparison, substantially weaker, more unorganized, or less committed to sustaining their radicalism. Community organizations in general, and those in Toronto, have been no different, they rise and fall with the seriousness of the threats facing them.²⁵ In Toronto, citizen movements flourished when people struggled with immediate threats to their lives and their communities, particularly during the housing crises that struck the city at almost exact decade intervals starting in the mid-1930s. Once these immediate threats faded, or citizens believed that there was little they could do to influence the situation, their organizations fell silent. Indeed, despite the celebration of 1960s community organizations, they also followed the ebb and flow of protest and quiescence. Of the nearly 45 community organizations that existed in 1969, only 15 were active the following year, and

²⁵For example see Joel Schwartz, “Tenant Power in the Liberal City, 1943-71,” in R. Lawson and Mark Naison, *The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1940-1984* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 134-208; and F. Piven and R. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York, Vintage Books, 1979).

10 of these were resident associations from the middle-class north end of the city.²⁶ In short, we should not view the failure of community organizations to transform housing and urban policy as a sign of quiescence. For more than two decades, “ordinary” Torontonians made it clear that the renewal of their neighbourhoods should be “planned with them if they were to feel that it is being done for them and not to them.”²⁷

Though more popular than at any other time in Canadian history, the idea of organizing people to help themselves and give them more power over their lives was not a new development in Canadian society, nor was it the brain child of the New Left. For one, the Company of Young Canadians, which would become the centre of urban activism in Canadian cities, was much like the Toronto Reconstruction Council, a creation of the state trying to re-establish the bonds of community. Its mandate to “give power to the people who were powerless to reach out to the victims of society and transform them into agents of their own lives and communities” was hardly different than the hopes of the Community Council Co-ordinating Committee that popular participation in community planning would be an exercise in democratic citizenship. Moreover, as early as the 1940s, social workers and others grappling with on the economic problems of workers and the poor, began to identify with the people they served.²⁸ The emphasis of social service organizations on the psychological and social problems of individuals during the 1950s appears as an interruption of, rather than the

²⁶Bureau of Municipal Research, *Neighbourhood Participation in Urban Renewal* (Toronto, Bureau of Municipal Research, 1970).

²⁷Inner City Renewal Committee of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, “Urban Renewal Policies and Procedures in the City of Toronto,” (Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, September 1968), 17.

²⁸Gale Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto, 1918-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); and Daniel Walkowitz, *Working With Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

maturation of, the profession's approach to social issues. By the 1960s, just as the conflict over urban renewal was beginning to rage, social work was returning to its more activist and client-centred approach. Organizations such as the Social Planning Council, the Bureau of Municipal Research, and the city's three settlement houses, began to emerge from under the control of their benefactors. As a result, the effect of the social workers and settlement houses on the origins of citizen participation cannot be underestimated. Yet, at the same time as social workers and settlement houses were changing the nature of community organization, community organizations themselves were also transforming the nature of social work. By the end of the decade, the Social Planning Council, though still vilified by some inner-city community organizations as hopelessly paternalistic, was beginning to build coalitions with emerging anti-poverty organizations, and was becoming an advocacy organization for disadvantaged Torontonians rather than a direct service agent.²⁹

The emphasis on the strength of community organization during the late 1960s and early 1970s is due to the fact that community organizers translated the up swell of community feeling into political victory and the emergence of a strong reform caucus on Toronto City Council.³⁰ But this was hardly different from what occurred during the 1940s and early 1950s

²⁹CTA, June Marks Collection, SC 305, Box 2, File 7, M. Repo to Mayor W. Dennison, February 8, 1969; Howard Bookbinder, "The Toronto Social Planning Council and the United Community Fund," in D.I. Davies and Kathleen Herman, eds., *Social Space: Canadian Perspectives* (Toronto: New Press, 1971), 196-205; and James Lemon, "Social Planning and the Welfare State," in Larry Bourne and David Ley, eds., *The Changing Social Geography of Canadian Cities* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 272-75.

³⁰See J. Caulfield, *The Tiny Perfect Mayor* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1974); M. Goldrick, "The Anatomy of Urban Reform in Toronto," in D. Roussopoulos, ed., *The City and Radical Social Change* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), 260-282; Bill Freeman, "Toronto's Sewell and Urban Reform," in D. Roussopoulos, ed., *The City and Radical Social Change*, 283-300; F. Lewinberg, "Neighbourhood Planning: The Reform Years in Toronto," 1-50; J. Caulfield, "'Reform' as a Chaotic Concept: The Case of Toronto," *Urban History Review*, 17 (October, 1988), 107-111; and R. Harris, "A Defence of Urban 'Reform,'" *Urban History Review*, 17 (February 1989), 209-210.

in Toronto, when inner-city communities and residents could count on political support from CCF, Communist, and other reform-minded politicians.³¹ Indeed, one might say that inner-city residents turned to independent community-based action because they could no longer count on significant political support at the municipal, provincial, or federal level.

And yet, while we should recognize the continuities in the history of citizen participation in urban renewal in Toronto, we should not lose sight of the fact that community organizations won concessions of which their predecessors only dreamt. Community organization of the late 1960s was more radical, more pervasive and longer lasting, and had far greater impact on the socio-political structure of Toronto than anything that had preceded it. Community organizations in Don Vale, Kensington, and Trefann Court finally forced planners, politicians, and Torontonians more generally, to listen to them and to pay genuine attention to their needs and desires. Their protests not only stopped urban renewal, but won a place for them in the formal apparatus of urban planning and city governance. After 1970, a significant degree of power shifted from City Hall to the neighbourhoods, even if it was only for a short period.³²

Equally important, community organizations of the 1960s changed popular conceptions about inner-city neighbourhoods and programs, such as slum clearance and urban renewal, ostensibly designed in their interests. The popular media and others did not suddenly discover these unheard voices. Though it appears that a new vision of the inner-city appeared

³¹The Communist Party for one continually lamented its inability to tap into neighbourhood or community based struggles to bolster its political fortunes as it had once done during the 1940s and early 1950s. See NA, Records of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), Vol. 28, file 20, "Draft Resolution of the Metro Toronto Municipal Elections, 1956;" Vol. 29, file 42, "Metropolitan Toronto Convention- Calls and Resolutions, 1964;" and Vol. 29, file 44, "Labour in the Municipality and the Fight Against Monopoly, 1968."

³²*Ibid.*

almost overnight, the shift in thinking from slum clearance to neighbourhood preservation drew on the ambiguities and inconsistencies in previous representations of the geography of inner city neighbourhoods that had always been evident.³³ The arguments by residents of Trefann Court, Don Vale, and Kensington would not have had nearly as much force had the meaning of the slum not been contested and renegotiated by their predecessors. Nonetheless, over the next decade, community organisations and their political representatives successfully reversed civic policy toward inner-city neighbourhoods. Gone were the large public-housing projects, freeways, and unlimited commitment to commercial and residential high-rise construction. In their place, stood imperatives that have largely guided inner-city planning to the present - protection of old neighbourhoods and buildings, promotion of mixed-use developments, the dispersal and integration of social housing with market housing, and the restriction of large-scale developments to the Central Business District. If nothing else, community organizations and reformers returned the city to its more conservative roots and away from the late 1950s and early 1960s obsession with development at any cost.³⁴

Yet, if this study has illustrated that community organizations of the late 1960s and the ideas that many of them espoused were not new, why were they so much more successful? The community organizing of the 1960s appeared stronger, not necessarily because of a greater commitment on behalf of the people or their organizations, or even a better understanding of the problems they faced. Rather, it was due to the extensive nature of the

³³ Alan Mayne makes this argument for the shift in public attitudes towards inner-city neighbourhoods in Australian cities. A. Mayne, "A Just War: Slum Representation in Twentieth-Century Australia," *Journal of Urban History*, 22 (November 1995), 100.

³⁴ W. Magnusson, "Toronto" in A. Sancton and W. Magnusson, eds., *City Politics in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 75 ; J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, 64; and J. Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

threat that they faced. As Albert Rose notes, “as long as there appeared to be a good deal of land available for the continued expansion of housing stock within our towns and cities, the concern over change in the form of redevelopment or renewal was relatively moderate.”³⁵ While Rose speaks here of a broader public concern, the same might be said for the concern of individual neighbourhoods. Certainly the previous pages have illustrated that poor and working-class Torontonians prior to the late 1960s were not any less motivated, or had fewer organization skills, than the residents of Trefann, Don Vale, and Don Mount. What differed between the early and later community groups was the ability of their individual members to pick up and move on. Prior to 1965, no matter how much residents protested that “they had no place to go,” there were still low-income districts that could accommodate a small influx of new residents. However, by 1965, the quickening pace of private and public redevelopment, combined with the sharp demographic shock of the first wave of the baby-boom generation coming of age, substantially removed the flexibility of the city’s housing stock. Everywhere they looked, potential neighbourhoods for relocation had been identified for public and private renewal. As a senior member of the Trefann Court Residents’ Association remarked: “The citizens were upset [and anxious] because of the uncertainty ... [they] had no idea where they could go to escape the spectre of urban renewal again.”³⁶ They recognized that they lived in the last working-class neighbourhoods in Toronto, and they believed they had nothing to lose and everything to win by “fighting back.”

Initially, it looked like their version of populist planning won out. Community

³⁵A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 1.

³⁶Cited in A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 148.

organizations brought the “federal bulldozers” to a halt, and their neighbourhoods were protected from the incursion of massive public housing projects. To be sure, the prospect of private redevelopment loomed equally as large over their heads, but the victories in Trefann, Don Vale, and Kensington had emboldened people to be more vigilant about the future of their neighbourhoods and communities. All across the city, in both middle-class and working-class neighbourhoods, Torontonians banded together to fight high-rise development, expressways, and form tenant unions. Moreover, starting as a trickle in 1969 and then a tidal wave by 1972, reformers, drawn from community organizations (in particular John Sewell, Karl Jaffary), swept the “old guard” from Toronto City Council by vowing to protect neighbourhoods, make government more responsible to citizens, and to give power back to Torontonians so that they could decide the direction and pace of change.³⁷

Yet, despite saving much of the physical character of the inner-city, reformers could not save its social fabric. Why? For one, community organizers mistook the upsurge of opposition to urban renewal as renewed strength of working-class, inner-city neighbourhoods, rather than their last hurrah. From Regent Park to Trefann Court, those who lived in downtown Toronto neighbourhoods designated for slum clearance and urban renewal differed widely in their attitudes towards the goals and consequences of the renewal process. The populations of inner-city neighbourhoods varied widely due to age, gender, family structure, ethnicity, and housing and socio-economic class. The only thing that united residents was their common opposition to the way in which the so-called “decision makers” - planners,

³⁷See Note 29.

politicians, and nosey social workers - "pushed them around."³⁸ For the most part, people in these neighbourhoods had little idea that they lived in Alexandra Park, Don Vale, or Trefann Court, that is until city bureaucrats drew a circle around them and designated them for renewal. Moreover, even though inner-city residents may have identified themselves and spoke of their situation in class terms, it was quite another thing to get them to act on behalf of a common class interest. Too often, community organizers entered inner-city neighbourhoods with a monolithic and romantic view that these were "real" working-class communities, in which existed a mutually interactive and supportive association of people based on common interests. What community organizers saw as cohesive working-class communities, often turned out to be a collection of potentially conflicting sectional interests (established residents and newcomers, waged and unwaged) and housing classes (owner-occupiers, absentee owners, tenants).³⁹ Indeed, housing issues complicated the concept of class over this period, and made collective "class" action much more difficult. Even within "solid" working-class communities, there was widely differential access to housing as well as vastly different meanings attached to it.

Indeed, the hopes for democratic participatory planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s proved to be nearly as ephemeral as those dreamed of by Humphrey Carver and his colleagues in the heady days of postwar reconstruction. As the experiences in Don Vale and Trefann Court reveal, democratic planning often exacerbated divisions in neighbourhoods

³⁸A. Rose, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal*, 126.

³⁹Joel Schwartz argues that a similar "romanticization" of the poor and working-class and a simplified picture of the slum hampered efforts to mobilize tenants in New York City. See Joel Schwartz, "Tenant Power in the Liberal City, 1943-71," 181.

rather than brought residents together to work towards a common goal. Participatory planning often resulted in the organizing of one group of residents, usually working-class home-owners, in defence of their interests against the incursions of another, often less-privileged group, usually poor tenants, many of them women and their families on social assistance. Few community organizations or organizers recognized the structural differences between home-owners and tenants, between the poor and the working-class. Community organizers often saw the anger of working-class home owners towards welfare tenants as simply displaced anger towards developers and absentee landlords. What they failed to see, and plan for, was the complex internal class dynamics that reigned in these neighbourhoods.

In the end, Marjaleena Repo's analysis of the social relations within inner-city neighbourhoods like Trefann Court, was accurate - the poor and the working-class were often two very different beings.⁴⁰ Poor tenants were not simply working-class persons who did not work, or who did not own a home. Years of poverty, instability, and dependency on outsiders for daily survival made them and their interests very different from working-class home-owners. For one, the mere ownership of property, no matter how dilapidated, shielded working-class homeowners against abject poverty, instability, and dependency. It gave them a stake in the community and a sense of respectability. Indeed, almost all the depositions from homeowners over these years spoke in a language of respectability that property ownership conferred upon them. How dare politicians and planners push them around? At the same time, they feared, and rightly so, that their home was the only thing standing between working-class respectability and the dependency of poor tenants. Tenants were at the mercy

⁴⁰M. Repo, "Organizing the Poor Against the Working-Class," *Transformation*, 1 (March-April 1971).

not only of absentee landlords, blockbusters, and “nosey” public housing managers, but also of working-class home owners from whom they rented, and who wanted them out of their neighbourhood since even the slums could benefit from a better class of slum dwellers. Even though most tenants would have also lost had urban renewal gone through they also realized that it offered them forms of assistance that they could not get otherwise. In short, the divisions between working-class home owners and tenants existed without the intervention of duplicitous city politicians, bureaucrats, and “meddlesome charity ladies.” To be sure, these groups exacerbated the problems and often did not pass up the opportunity to exploit these divisions, but bringing the two groups together would have been a difficult task anyway. In this sense, the victory in Trefann was not so much winning a seat at the planning table, but the way residents overcame the nearly insurmountable obstacles that seemed to conspire to keep them apart.

Finally, the Alinsky-style approach of community organization in Toronto put too much faith in their liberal democratic conception of the state and the democratic process. From Regent Park to Trefann Court, social reformers and social housing activists believed that by giving inner-city residents a place in the planning and administration of housing policy that they would have significant impact on the outcome. But this could not be achieved on a piecemeal basis at the level of the neighbourhood, nor could it be done without sustained political pressure, something that liberals, radicals, and conservatives hoped the planning process would ultimately remove. The reawakening of the “principle of community” unleashed forces with which neither the state nor community groups themselves could deal with. Much like Canadian housing policy itself, community organization embodied the same

fundamental contradictions of the welfare state. The program hoped to simultaneously enhance social welfare, develop the abilities of individuals, and exert control over the play of remote socio-economic forces, all the while seeking to regulate people's actions and ideas and adapt them to the requirements of the state and capital.⁴¹ However, in the long run, the state (both municipal and federal) found new ways to adapt community participation to its requirements and those of capital. Indeed, community participation in urban renewal often gave reformers the false idea that they possessed real power over urban policy formation. Public outrage against the evils of urban renewal was strong enough to get rid of the worst abuses in Canadian city planning and housing policy, but, as it turned out, reformers and community organizations were not strong enough to keep more powerful interests from controlling its future directions.⁴²

Nonetheless, despite the lack of ultimate success of community organizations in Toronto to significantly alter the state's housing and urban policies, Canadian historians should not ignore their activities, nor the importance of housing and other community-based issues in general, to the course of modern Canadian history. Most overviews of the postwar period have emphasized the decline of class politics and emphasized the rise of other social issues such as gender, ethnicity, regionalism, and the rise of "identity politics" more generally.

⁴¹G. Walker, "Reproducing Community: The Historical Development of Local and Extra-Local Relations," in R. Ng, G. Walker & J. Muller, (eds.) *Community Organization and the Canadian State* (Toronto, Garamond Press, 1991), 42.

⁴²Canadian planner Aryeh Cooperstock argued as early as 1971 that the new prophets of community organization were setting up themselves, and their organizations, for failure by exaggerating the promise of community participation, and by becoming seduced by the process of Alinsky-style politics rather than on the objectives they hoped to achieve through this style of protest. See Cooperstock, "The New Religion of Citizen Participation," *Habitat*, 14 (May/June 1971), 12-16; and F. Lewinberg, "Neighbourhood Planning: The Reform Years in Toronto," 33-34.

Yet, as the preceding study has illustrated, those who neglected class, did so only through failing to look beyond the point of production. Community organization, especially around issues of housing, reveals that the politics of class shifted significantly, though by no means completely, from the sphere of production to the sphere of consumption. As this study and the recent work of Shirley Tillotson reveal, much of the work of labour and the political left in the postwar period moved from the picket line to the less-visible realm of community services.⁴³ Given the troubles of the political left during the 1950s, grassroots political action around issues of housing and redevelopment were about the only things that “kept the dream alive” during 1950s and early 1960s.⁴⁴ Indeed, it is no coincidence that the revival of the Ontario New Democratic Party occurred in Toronto’s inner-city neighbourhoods like Riverdale, where NDP members, such as Andrew Brewin and James Renwick, were vitally involved in the struggles to stop urban renewal.⁴⁵

But while class was the primary focus for the preceding study, it must also be noted that housing issues have been important in grass roots political development of many kinds. As Barry Hindness reminds us, housing is “not simply as a matter of bricks and mortar but [is] an area in which, for many people the most intimate connections between the personal and the

⁴³Shirley Tillotson, “Class and Community in Canadian Welfare Work, 1933-1960,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32 (Spring 1997) 63-92; and Shirley Tillotson, “‘When our membership awakens’: welfare work and Canadian union activism, 1950-1965,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 40 (Fall 1997), 137-69.

⁴⁴Political histories of the CCF and NDP rarely examine the importance of “extra-curricular activities” of party members or party associations in keeping the party in touch with its voting constituency. See Dan Azoulay, *Keeping the Dream Alive: The Survival of the Ontario CCF/NDP, 1950-1963* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵New Democratic Party of Ontario, *The Riverdale Story: A By-Election Campaign* (Toronto: New Democratic Party of Ontario, 1964).

political [are] established.”⁴⁶ Perhaps this is no more evident than the involvement of women in the politics of urban renewal. As the preceding pages illustrate, issues of community, neighbourhood, urban renewal, and housing were vitally infused with gendered meanings and implications. While urban renewal has been excoriated for its racial and class biases, the gendered effects of urban renewal have perhaps been the most important and the most neglected. Male planners and politicians thought primarily in terms of the physical and economic aspects of city planning, and did not understand the social aspects of planning, or perhaps more accurately, the gendered nature of the links between the physical, economic, and social aspects of space. Perhaps it is for this reason that housing and community planning as vital places of women’s activism during the postwar period remains largely unexplored in Canadian history. The obverse might also be true as well, that the dominance of women in community organizations mobilized around housing and planning issues might account for its “invisibility” in Canadian history. Women played a prominent role in the local politics of urban renewal at every level. While social workers and community-oriented women’s groups were primarily, but not exclusively, motivated by issues that might be called maternal feminism or social housekeeping, other women, like Rose Salson, Mary Semcychen, Edna Dixon, Dorothy Graham, and Pat Rice, were vitally involved in organizing their communities to fight for more equitable housing environments.

Why women should have led these battles, particularly on behalf of home-owners, is not entirely clear. Certainly poor and working-class women were affected most by urban

⁴⁶Barry Hindness cited in Colin Bell and Howard Newby, “Community, Communion, Class and Community Action: the Social Sources of the New Urban Politics,” in *Social Areas in Cities: Volume II - Spatial Perspectives on Problems and Policies*, D.T. Herbert and R.J. Johnston (eds.) (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), 201.

renewal. As inhabitants of the city's worst housing, they became the primary focus of slum exposés, which constructed the geography of the inner-city as one of hopelessness and helplessness. And yet, while urban renewal offered them decent, affordable accommodation, they were more likely to suffer from the dislocation of social networks caused by renewal schemes. Poor and working-class women may have had more time to devote to community activities than men, while the housing issues were undoubtedly linked to their roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers. Nonetheless, the prominent, forceful and vocal nature of women's involvement in these neighbourhood organizations speaks to a conception of women's respectability, strength, and independence more commonly associated with the rise of modern feminism. No more so than their husbands, these women were not going to be "pushed around."⁴⁷

At the dawn of a new century, Toronto once again faces another housing crisis, this time due more to government inaction and public apathy than to a unified crusade to rid the city of its slums. Since 1993, the senior levels of government have been abandoning social housing faster than rats leaving a sinking ship. Left to the vagaries of the private housing market, many of Toronto's poor, working-class, and increasingly lower middle-class households resort to time-worn strategies of doubling up, living in inadequate accommodation, and robbing their food budgets to pay rents that frequently consume more than thirty, and in some cases more than fifty, percent of their incomes. Currently, there are more than 100,000 people on the waiting lists for social housing in the city, comprising more than 37,000 families, and 31,000 children. Nearly half of those using emergency shelters are

⁴⁷ Leonie Sandercock and Ann Forsyth, "A Gender Agenda: New Directions for Planning Theory," in Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout, eds., *The City Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 408-420.

families, twenty percent of whom are children.⁴⁸ Though the focus of the current housing crisis is the ever increasing numbers of homeless persons living hand to mouth on the streets of Toronto, the city's current housing problems are, as were those in the past, far deeper and far more complex. Thousands more Torontonians rest on the cusp of homelessness, due to evictions which have soared in the wake of the removal of rent controls and the reduction of tenant rights, as well as the removal of thousands of low-cost dwellings from the city's housing stock through the conversion of apartments to condominiums. Unfortunately little has changed since 1940: the modernization, or more accurately the "Hausmannization" of Toronto, continues apace, with the resultant deprivation and isolation of its poorest citizens.

⁴⁸City of Toronto, *Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto*. (Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, January 1999), passim

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