BUILDING BY DECADES



DAVID WILKES

PRESIDENT & CEO OF BILD

he Building Industry and Land Development Association's (BILD) predecessor association, the Toronto Home Builders' Association, was founded in 1921. To mark its 100th anniversary, BILD has partnered with the Toronto Star to put together a special feature tracing, decade-by-decade, the history of residential and commercial development in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The 1960s were a period of tremendous growth and development for the region. The City of Toronto saw the opening of the Bloor-Danforth subway, a new City Hall and impressive developments downtown and, in 1968, the registration of its first condominium. The decade also marked an important shift in the pattern of development in the region, one that was mirrored across the continent—the meteoric rise of the suburbs.

Suburban development was fueled by population increases due to the baby boom and immigration, an expanding network of roads and highways, and in 1967, the opening of the Government of Ontario (GO) Transit commuter rail service. Thanks to insurance-backed mortgage loans and new ways of building homes and communities, the Canadian dream of home

ownership came to be within reach for virtually everyone.

As Toronto expanded east, west and north, residential and commercial builders and developers literally built the region as we know it. Much of what they built, including schools, hospitals, infrastructure, workplaces, shops and entertainment facilities, is still in use today.

A home in the suburbs became the dominant housing choice not only for GTA residents, but for many Canadians. Today, more than six in 10 Canadians call the suburbs, in one form or another, home.

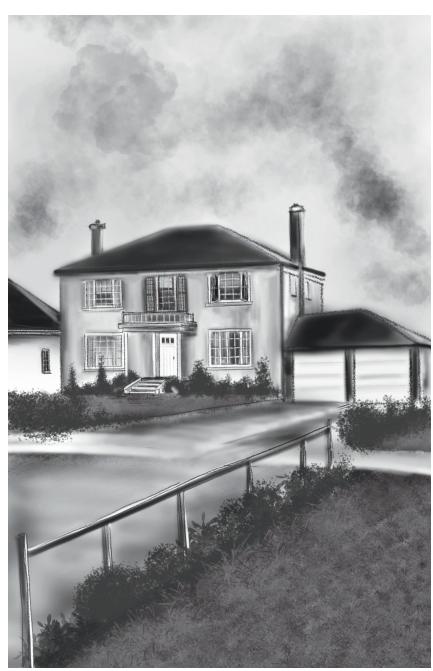
For local home builders' associations, the 1960s hold another important milestone. Recognizing the growing importance of the provincial government in planning and development, the Toronto Home Builders' Association joined a group of other home builders' associations in 1963 to establish the Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA). Its role was, and remains, to focus on provincial legislation, regulations and policies that impact the residential construction industry and its customers, new home buyers across the province. BILD remains the largest member of the OHBA, our member companies responsible for more than half of the homes built in Ontario in any given year.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 124, File 2, Item 21

THE SIXTIES SUBURBS

Population increase and the lure of open space drive expansion



A suburban Toronto home, which became a predominant housing style in the 1960s.

As long as cities have existed, so have suburbs. The one depends on the other. But it wasn't until the post-war period that the suburbs took over from cities as the place most Canadians wanted to live. And what began as a trickle in the 1950s had grown into a torrent by the 1960s, the

decade Canada went full-on suburb. The flight from the city was less pronounced in Toronto than in many big American cities, but the lure of a house and yard of one's own at a more affordable price was irresistible. Despite the potential, at the time, for fewer amenities and car dependency, Canadians abandoned downtown in droves for the wide-open spaces of suburbia. The creation of GO Transit in the 1960s, which connected Oakville to Pickering, added a layer of accessibility that further enhanced the appeal of the suburbs.

The exponential growth of Etobicoke was typical; in the 20 years after the Second World War, its population exploded from 40,000 to more than 200,000. Thousands of houses were built, along with hundreds of office buildings, schools, stores and gas stations, lots of gas stations. Single-use planning meant one place to live, another to work and yet another to shop, all connected by a network of multi-lane streets. Living in Etobicoke meant living with the car. But with parking available at every turn, that wasn't a problem.

If anything, the evolution of North York in the '60s was even more dramatic. Roads were quickly remade into multi-lane streets and residential subdivisions. The T-intersection of Lawrence Ave. E. and Bayview, a major obstacle to development, was solved (Continued on pg. 2)

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国 GREAT GULF

(Continued from pg. 1)

when a new underpass was constructed in 1962. It travelled beneath Lawrence to the Bayview Bridge, constructed originally in 1929 but rebuilt in the early '60s.

At the west end of North York, the intersection of Jane and Finch was a featureless landscape bisected by wide roads largely empty of traffic. That would soon change; by the end of the decade, the population of North York was a busy mix of residential neighbourhoods, factories, commercial buildings and shopping malls. Speaking of shopping malls, when Yorkdale Shopping Centre opened in February, 1964, it was the largest enclosed mall on the planet. For the first time, Eaton's and Simpsons



Ontario's population will grow to nearly eight million, at the net rate of twenty new arrivals (by birth or immigration) every hour. That's enough to support an extra grocery store every two days...

were both along for the ride, as were 100 smaller retail outlets. And let's not forget the parking lot, which had space for 6,500 cars. That sounds like a lot, but on opening day, it was overwhelmed by the crowd of 100,000 that showed up for the occasion.

Then there's Scarborough. For all its success, it has been dogged by the myth of "Scarberia." As Robert Fulford writes in his book, Accidental City, The Transformation of Toronto, "That word appeared in the 1960s...at the point when Toronto was becoming self-conscious about urbanism. It was, ironically, the moment

when Scarborough was beginning to shed many of the characteristics of a standard suburb." Indeed, the urbanizing forces that have changed the city have also remade Scarborough; development has grown ever denser and niche projects are filling in the gaps that remained after the first wave of post-war building.

It's important to remember that the suburbs of the '60s were conceived and constructed as quickly as possible. Builders were hard-pressed to keep up with a fast-growing population that wanted a fresh start in new housing that looked and

"During the Sixties," Peter Newman enthused in Maclean's magazine in 1960, "Ontario's population will grow to nearly eight million, at the net rate of twenty new arrivals (by birth or immigration) every hour. That's enough to support an extra grocery store every two days, or enough every fortnight for a new supermarket. To maintain no more than current living standards, Ontario residents will need, every hundred days during the Sixties, eighteen new dentists, thirty-two new lawyers, fifty new doctors, one-hundred and thirty new nurses and seven hundred new teachers."

The endless expansion that underlined the spread of the suburbs was based on a spirit of optimism that has given way to greater recognition of the need to plan for growth. The suburbs of the '60s were a well-intentioned landscape where democratic domesticity and equality of opportunity were given built form. If a man's home was once his castle, in suburbia it became his split-level bungalow with a front yard and a garage on the side.

Unlike planned communities such as Don Mills, the more ad hoc development that occurred around Toronto had the flexibility needed to remain relevant as times changed. Though transit continues to be a challenge, mobility comes in forms other than the car. The TTC's proposal for priority bus lanes on its busiest corridors - Finch E., Eglinton E., Jane, Steeles and Dufferin – is just the latest example.

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BEYOND THE CITY: PICKERING IN THE 1960s

In the 1960s, the federal government began developing plans to build a second international airport that would serve Toronto and the Golden Horseshoe. A tract of land, called the Pickering Airport Lands, was expropriated in 1972-1973, but the much-debated project was halted when the provincial government declined to build the necessary roads or sewers to service the site. Since that time, these lands have been preserved by the federal government for the "option" of building an airport. In 2015, more than half of this land (both farmland and natural habitat) was added to the Rouge National Urban Park, while much of the rest is still available for development.

But these lands have a much longer history. When the British took over Canada in 1763, British colonial settlers moved into the area and named it after Pickering in North Yorkshire, England. In the late 1700s, the township consisted of several hamlets, including lands that are now part of Scarborough, Ajax and Whitby. In the 1870s, a lighthouse, wharf and grain elevator were built at Frenchman's Bay, attracting farmers into the area.

It was after the Second World War that Pickering started to grow, with major housing developments and subdivisions built in the 1960s to support families that wanted a more affordable lifestyle than what was available in Toronto. While the federal government started planning for an airport, Ontario Hydro began construction on the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station in the 1960s, beginning commercial operations in 1971. The station is still a part of Pickering's identity, today employing about 3,000 people. Over the years, several modifications have taken place to the town lines, and Pickering Village (part of the original township) became part of Ajax. Pickering's first mayor was George Ashe.

In 2000, Pickering officially became a city, as population growth in Toronto resulted in growing demand for more affordable suburban housing. Pickering is expected to grow from 94,000 to 190,000 residents. Today, the southern part of Pickering remains largely suburban, with industrial areas situated around the nuclear station. The northern part of Pickering retains its rural roots and is still used for farming in communities such as Claremont, Brougham and Whitevale. There are more than a dozen urban growth centres across the GTA, two of which are in the Durham Region - Oshawa and Pickering. The latter is also planning a downtown intensification program, which includes new condominium developments around the Pickering GO station and Pickering Town Centre, as part of a commitment for more downtown density and economic development opportunities.

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Yorkwood Homes 1963

Yorkdale Shopping Centre opens (world's largest enclosed mall)

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HEAD OF THE CLASS

The link between education, demographics, growth and development

By the time Bill Davis became Premier of Ontario in 1971, he had already transformed the province he would run for the next 14 years. As minister of education and also minister of university affairs from 1962 to 1971, the Man From Brampton spearheaded legislation that gave thousands of Ontarians access to a better life through higher learning. Not only did he preside over the creation of the community college system, he revamped public schools and helped establish numerous new universities.

The population of Ontario and Canada in the 1960s was literally booming, powered by immigration and the post-war baby boom. By 1969, there were 8 million of us. Shaping the socio-economic profile of this population would largely fall to the education system, and this in turn would help influence the what and where of the region's development.

Davis specifically helped enlarge the middle-class. A better-educated populace meant a better-paid populace. That in turn led to unprecedented demand for single-family housing. This was the fuel that powered the growth of the suburbs. At the same time, the need for new commercial and industrial development, both urban and suburban, took off. Roads, bridges and sewers were critical, of course, but without higher education – what we now call investment in human capital – modern Ontario would not have been possible.

Picking up where John Robarts, Davis's predecessor both as education minister and

premier, left off, he completed the metamorphosis of Ontario into a society preparing itself presciently for the "knowledge economy" that still lay decades ahead. And, as the need for knowledge grows, so too does the need for education.

Ontario in the '60s was a place of unabashed optimism and a willingness to move boldly, even radically. Indeed, the revolutionary '60s demanded action. Nowhere more so than in education, which remained largely stuck in the past. Baby Boomers were ready to start classes. Because they were so numerous, the need to expand the elementary school system was glaring. At the same time, by 1963 the number of university students had doubled from the early '50s. Established educational institutions entered a period of unprecedented growth.

The University of Toronto opened satellite campuses in Mississauga and Scarborough, suburban locations that previously couldn't have supported such a venture. New universities – including York, Trent, Laurentian, Windsor, Brock – were chartered. They took higher education out of the city into more dispersed communities throughout the province. Simply constructing the new facilities, residences and supporting infrastructure would keep builders and developers busy for years.

Through it all, regional growth continued at lightning speed. York University, for example, one of Ontario's first suburban campuses, is now accessible by subway. When it opened in 1960, its 76 students



Buildings on the campus of York University in 1964. Toronto Star, Harold Whyte / Contributor

attended classes in the University of Toronto's Falconer Hall. Several years later, it moved to its current location in North York, where today it has 55,700 students and 7,000 staffers.

This massive expansion reflected the recommendations of the 1956 Royal Commission on the country's economic future. It made clear the need for more university graduates and improved educational opportunities in general. In 1965, Davis launched the College of Applied Arts and Technology legislation that led to the formation of 24 community colleges throughout Ontario. Universities retained the right to grant degrees while colleges awarded diplomas.

Most Ontario community colleges were established between 1965 and 1967. Their purpose was not to replicate programs offered by universities but to prepare students for careers in fields as varied as healthcare and technology to journalism and hospitality. Typically, teachers were workplace veterans

with plenty of real-world experience. This job-orientated approach was a response to an economy that wasn't just growing but shifting away from traditional manufacturing to higher-paying, skill-based industries.

When Davis succeeded Robarts as premier, a vast network of schools, colleges and universities had been established across the province. As a result, spending on education between 1962 and 1971 increased a staggering 450 percent. On the other hand, Davis consolidated school boards, reducing the number from almost 3,700 to fewer than 200 by 1967.

In the '60s, an enlightened provincial government decided to reinvent education to meet the needs of both the individual and the economy. Fifty years later, Ontario's population ranks among the most highly educated in Canada and by far the most prosperous.

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BUILDING ON A LEGACY





DOUBLING DOWN

Two stellar projects – New City Hall and the TD Centre – announce a city's arrival

Every 50 years or so, Toronto experiences a watershed moment. That happened at the turn of both the 20th and 21st centuries and again halfway between the two. In every instance, the results were dramatic, none more so than what unfolded in the 1960s, when Toronto decided to show the world what it could do when it put its collective mind to it. Two especially spectacular examples are New City Hall, one of the most compelling such structures in the world, and the Toronto-Dominion Centre, whose internationally recognized architecture spawned copies in every corner of the planet.

When it opened in 1965, New City Hall - as it's still called - turned heads here and everywhere. No one had ever seen a building like it, let alone a civic headquarters. In truth, the planning goes back to the late 1950s, when the city launched an unprecedented international design competition. It attracted 510 entries from 42 countries and was a global event in its own right. The jury of five included three renowned architects, Eero Saarinen (US), Sir William Holford (UK) and Ernesto Rogers (Italy). Its first task was to choose seven finalists, who were then invited to refine their designs.

The winning scheme, submitted by little-known Finnish architect Viljo Revell and his team, was the last thing Torontonians expected. Unlike Old City Hall, the impressive Romanesque structure that preceded its successor by barely six decades, the proposal was modern, forward -looking, even futuristic. It was also one of the most compelling architectural expressions of civic democracy ever conceived. A pair of curved towers embraces a saucer-shaped council chamber, the symbol of democracy, where the city's most important decisions are taken.

The complex is set back from Queen St. at the north end of Nathan Phillips Square, named in honour of the mayor who championed the project. It is still Toronto's only genuinely civic space and its finest piazza. This is a place of celebration and demonstration. It is also among the best spots in the city to sit and eat a hot dog. A raised walkway separates the square from its bustling surroundings without creating a sense of isolation. If anything, the square gives the feeling of being in the centre of things-the very heart of Toronto.

A few blocks south, at Bay and King, the TD Centre, constructed between 1964 and 1969, looms over the Financial District, a presence whose purity of form transcends the restrictions of function and other such worldly concerns. The attention to detail lavished upon the complex by its architect, the seminal German-American Modernist Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, goes beyond anything found in conventional office towers, no matter how expensive or prestigious they may be. Like New City Hall, the Miesian ensemble is the creation of an all-encompassing architectural vision. From the placement of the towers and their respective heights to the interior stone panels and the travertine cladding, every aspect



Toronto's New City Hall, which opened in 1965. Toronto Star, John Mahler / Contributo



of the centre contributes equally to a

The banking pavilion, which sits in the northeast corner of the TD Centre's blocksized site, brings to life Mies's famous dictum that "Less is more." With its perfectly aligned marble wall slabs, English oak counter tops and granite floor, the simple glass-and-steel box is one of the best-appointed bank branches in this or any city. Its longing for perfection brings an almost spiritual quality to a building whose purpose is more prosaic. It is more temple than a bank.

In truth, Mies was as fortunate to find a patron as enlightened as TD Bank's former CEO and chair, Allan Lambert, as the latter was to find Mies. The one empowered the other. Together, they changed Toronto. TD Centre's architectural and material excellence set the standard by which all others would be judged. Though the International Style Mies pioneered would quickly spawn imitators (the sincerest form of flattery), in his hands it was an opportunity to build unapologetically beautiful spaces.

Together, the TD Centre and New City Hall tell the story of a city emerging from the shadow of its muddy provincial past to become a player on the larger stage. For the first time, Toronto realized that greatness was within its grasp. The two projects catapulted the city into the global spotlight. People everywhere were suddenly paying attention. Toronto was becoming more comfortable in its role as one of the world's most liveable cities and a beacon of civic success. These investments ensured the future vitality of the downtown core and, with that, the rest of the city.

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THE PEOPLE MOVERS

Subway expansion extends the GTA in every direction

The 1960s was the decade when The Better Way got better. In 1963, the Yonge subway was extended north from Union Station up University Ave. Better still, the Bloor-Danforth line opened three years later. It ran from Keele east to Woodbine. As the media was quick to point out, the new subway went from suburb to suburb, all the way from Etobicoke to Scarborough. It was a measure of the importance of the new line that both Ontario Premier John Robarts and Prime Minister Lester Pearson were on hand on 25 February, 1966, to bask in the glow of the unveiling.

Their presence was understandable. The newly expanded subway system confirmed the thinking of the time that Toronto was moving beyond the conventional car-based model of mobility to something urban and efficient. People hoped it would reduce congestion, cut pollution and make getting around a whole lot less stressful, if not more comfortable. Experts also argued that development would respond to transit and become concentrated and connected.

The need for the Bloor-Danforth subway had long been obvious. The streetcars it replaced carried 9,000 passengers hourly during morning and evening rush hours. By comparison, the subway moved 40,000 an hour in both directions. Interestingly, though enhanced rapid transit led to an increase in development, especially around busy stations such as Bathurst,

much of Bloor and Danforth remained relatively untouched. That was especially true along Danforth, where minimum cityparking requirements and height restrictions limited growth.

Though plans originally called for the line to be built in three phases, a last-minute \$60-million loan from the province allowed simultaneous construction of the second and third sections. Speaking of moving quickly, it's worth noting that work on relocating utilities began just weeks after the Ontario Municipal Board approved the Bloor-Danforth subway in September, 1958, and Metropolitan Toronto Council okayed the line's \$200-million budget. Premier Leslie Frost officially kicked off the project from the cab of a power shovel just over a year later, in November 1959.

It helped that the new lines could be financed without assistance from Queen's Park or Ottawa. The money came instead from TTC surpluses and property tax surcharges levied by Metro. Torontonians were overwhelmingly on board with building subways. Underlying this confidence was the fact that the new lines would mostly run through high-density neighbourhoods and would, therefore, be able to pay their way through the fare box.

On the other hand, the city's monumental failure to build the Downtown Relief Line (DRL), first proposed in 1911, is an indictment of a political sys-



A mere 12 years after the Yonge subway line opened, the first train to make the west-east run on the Bloor-Danforth subway pulls into Keele St. Station. Toronto Star, Doug Griffin / Contributor

tem that increasingly treated transit as a means to encourage growth even when the potential was limited by low densities. Low population density, of course, leads to low ridership and low revenues.

As Andy Byford, TTC CEO from 2011 to 2017, argued before he left Toronto, "I think the most pressing need is to focus on subway expansion where it's not so much that they will come, it's [that] there's already a demonstrable need." Bloor-Danforth had shown that the old build-it-and-theywill-come approach didn't work. But by then, subways were an emotional issue. When Toronto Mayor Rob Ford proposed a Scarborough subway in 2010, provincial politicians latched onto the idea with tenacity. And so it is that the subway lines on which the vast majority of Torontonians still rely every day are those that date back to the '50s and '60s.

By contrast, the University subway was aimed less at moving people than taking care of business. It served the Financial District and provincial government employees, but then, so did the old Yonge line. On the other hand, unlike more recent TTC subway expansions to the north, the University route increased capacity as well as ridership.

"[W]e can't build only downtown," says respected Toronto transportation engineer, Ed Levy, "but it was madness to stop building subways in old Toronto in the 1960s."

Transit planners and users would concur. But the debate about whether the future belonged to the car or public transit raged then as now. Though Metro chair Frederick Gardiner made no secret he preferred cars, a decade after he retired, Ontario Premier Bill Davis killed the Spadina Expressway, and with it Gardiner's vehicular dreams. Half a century later, we're no closer to agreement. In good Toronto fashion, we demand transit, but only if we can still take the car.

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Government of Ontario starts GO service

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