

Exploring the relationship of parks planning and economic land development in Toronto: A case study of the Rail Deck Park

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A Major Paper
submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in
Environmental Studies, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Date: 29 Aug 2019

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between private economic development and public parkland planning through analysis of the proposed Rail Deck Park (RDP) in Toronto. Led by the city, the ambitious mega park project is planned to be built over one of the busiest rail corridors in the country. The RDP has been considered as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to relieve the lack of park space in the downtown core. However, historical analysis of the site reveals the lands were reserved initially as a major public park, referred as the Walks and Gardens (W&G), but was abandoned by city officials to support the development of the existing railroad.

This paper explores and compares the dominant parkland policies, tools and actors in both periods to understand the influence and impact of private economic interests in the success and failure of public parkland development. Despite being over 200 years apart, comparison of the two periods reveals parallel themes and patterns emerge in both cases related to property relations, civic boosterism, real estate speculation, and city image making. Contrary to planning theories which emphasize a dichotomy between private economic development and public parkland planning, these two forces can be compatible in sometimes contradictory means based on property interests and profit motives. The paper concludes that these competing private interests present a major challenge in the development of public parkland in cities.

Keywords: Toronto, parkland planning, economic development

Foreword

This paper is a culmination of my two years of study towards a Master's degree in the Urban Planning stream of Environmental Studies at York University. I specialized in studying how economic, political and social power dynamics can guide the centralized planning and development process in the City of Toronto, specifically focusing on the urban function and design of public spaces. This Major Paper compliments the critical components of my "Learning Objectives" outlined in my Plan of Study, which included Local Governance, Municipal Planning, and Public Spaces. My studies focused on examining municipal planning in Toronto, primarily because of the major development taking place in the city.

Exploring the relationship between urban green spaces and economic development in cities offers valuable lessons of the contemporary urban planning context. Both the municipal and private economic dynamics embedded in the institutional structure and planning process are based on existing networks, resources, and relationships which shape the planning narrative. It is through these dynamics that significant themes and patterns emerge which provide the understanding and opportunity to address these challenges. The goal of this project was to acquire a knowledge of the theory and practice of urban planning as it shapes the function of urban green spaces into economic driven pursuits.

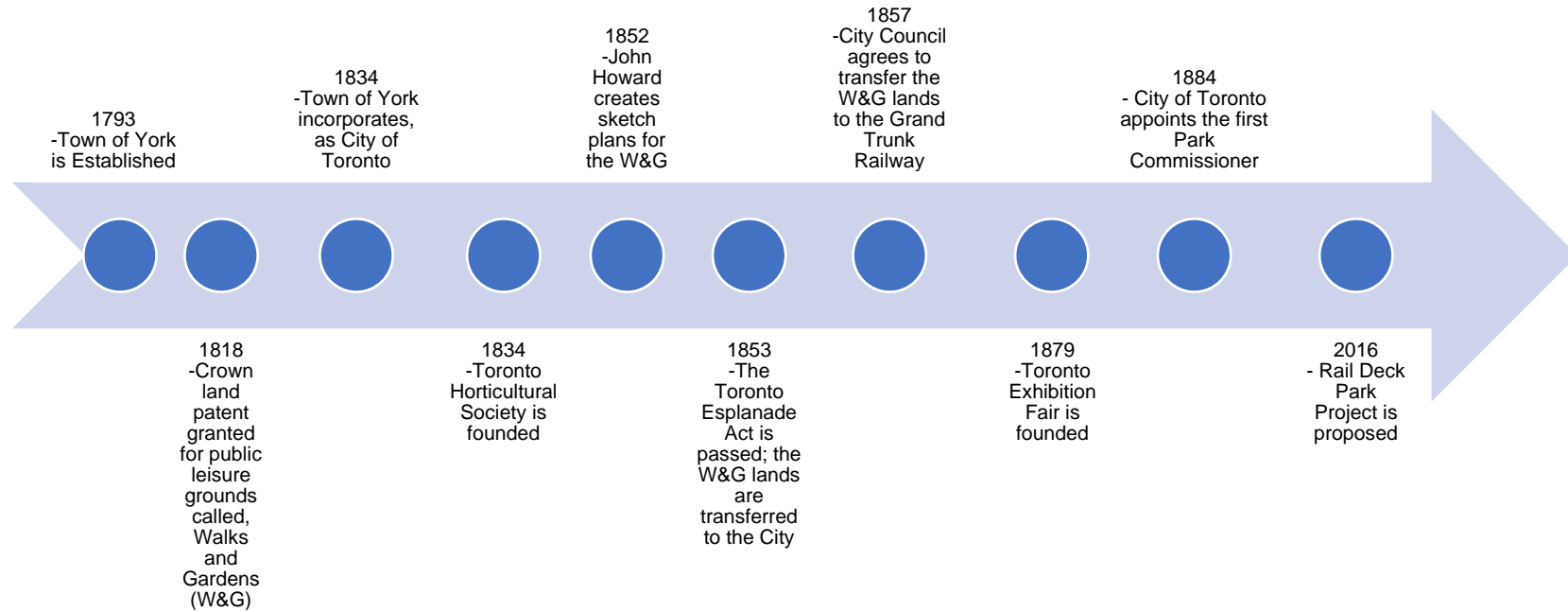
Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been possible without my partner, Sarah. Thank you for your love, patience, and support throughout my studies. I also like to acknowledge my research supervisor Stefan Kipfer for his mentorship, insight and his teachings on urban history, all of which has inspired me to pursue an historical research paper.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Foreword	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Chronological Timeline (1793-2016)	v
Methodology	1
Introduction	5
Planning and Development of Urban Green Spaces in Nineteenth-Century Toronto	8
The Toronto Horticulture Society, Green Space, and Land Speculation	10
The Establishment of a Municipal Park System	19
Part One: The Walks and Gardens	23
Early History of Planning Urban Green Spaces in York	24
Toronto the Good: The Rise of a City and the beauty of the Waterfront	33
Industry and the Waterfront	40
Green Space for Green Money: The Exhibition Grounds	50
Case Summary	53
Part Two: The Re-emergence of The Walks and Gardens?	59
RDP: The strategy of intensification and land speculation in the downtown core	63
The Parkland Deficit: Development Charges, Parkland Funds, and Tax Revenue	72
Case Summary	78
Part Three: Unpacking the association between Urban Green Space and Economic Land Development	82
Urban Planning and Parkland Theories	87
The Role of Land Speculation and the City Image in Park Planning	91
Conclusion	95
References	99

Chronological Timeline (1793-2016)



Methodology

The overall research goal for this paper is to understand the contemporary spatial challenge in which the proposed Rail Deck Park project attempts to resolve: the lack of urban green spaces in the urban core of Toronto. An historical analysis of the planning and development of urban green spaces in the core during the nineteenth century is analyzed to uncover significant findings. Furthermore, the paper intends to unpack and compare the major historical forces behind contemporary parkland planning and economic land development strategies in Toronto, specifically in the waterfront area.

The paper will analyze a historical (W&G) and contemporary (RDP) case to identify and understand the evolving process of parkland planning in conjunction with economic land redevelopment. Case studies provide a valuable framework or “road map” for translating knowledge into action by understanding the context, chronology, key actors and critical decision making to compare and test solutions (Crane & Weber, 2012, p.274). They also offer a practical method for analyzing complex urban processes, testing existing theories and telling a compelling narrative, even as they often result in a generalization of knowledge (Campbell, 2003; Bennett, 2004). To avoid potential over-generalizations in the paper, two case studies are incorporated to help understand the critical sequence of events and test significant theories about parkland development.

A range of research tools and sources are utilized to systematically analyze and compare the W&G and RDP cases. A structural analysis of municipal planning alongside with economic land development strategies, urban renewal and real estate trends, is also analyzed in Toronto. Economic land development trends will be

incorporated and linked with parkland planning and development in both cases. Finally, urban planning theories will be incorporated to compare research findings and understand the critical role of parks in capitalist-based planning frameworks.

It is important to note that at the time writing, the RDP is in its initial planning phase, and new information is still being released, which may require further analysis in the future. Nonetheless, existing reports and documents, along with external factors, provide enough material to identify and understand the driving forces behind the project. Another significant factor to consider is the distinct periods of parks planning in both cases, which have been shaped by different economic development processes: industrialism and post-industrialism.

Analysis of a variety of sources such as archival analysis, documents, maps, reports, and other literature will be applied to make sense of the two cases. The primary sources were found mainly in the Library and Archives Canada, Archives of Ontario, City of Toronto Archives, Toronto Library Archive (Baldwin Collection), Toronto Local History and Genealogy records, and York University Archive (Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections). The first section of the paper will primarily analyze archived public documents and manuscripts (policies, plans, and regulations), maps, land surveys, and newspaper and magazine articles to identify themes. Many of these sources have been digitized and can be viewed in their original formats online.

Maps, sketches, land surveys, and development plans are explored in both cases to help reveal the relationship of urban green spaces and economic land development patterns in the downtown core, including the Toronto waterfront. These illustrations highlight the competing land conflicts and how they served different purposes. The

earliest maps and surveys of Toronto were created by royal military officials primarily for war and engineering purposes. By the 1850s, majority of the mapping work in the city was led by commissioned surveyors, either to advertise property sales, to promote the city for potential colonists, or to track and record subdivision developments (Ganton & Winearls, 1984). Early land speculators or developers regularly commissioned maps or surveys for land development purposes. The geographic focus of these maps is on the evolution of the western section of the waterfront (between Bathurst Street and Spadina), which make up the W&G lands.

Secondary sources from scholarly books, journal articles, encyclopedias and pictures and maps of the urban history of Toronto and the waterfront are used in this paper. In the first section, the analysis is built on historical research (also on Toronto) by Armstrong, Artibise, Careless, Desfor, Foglesong, Glazebrook, Laidley, Sancton, Sanford, and Stelter. Together, these authors explore several themes and critical questions posed in the paper. Several key journals provide a rich database of topics: the *Journal of Urban History* (United States), the *Journal of Planning History* (United States), and the *Urban History Review* (Canada).

The waterfront and downtown core have long served as a major part of the marketing of the city's image for social and economic development purposes. In the first half of the nineteenth century, surveyors and artists focused their attention on the natural scenery of the shoreline. Paintings of the Parliament Buildings located along the waterfront at the time provide the earliest examples. These paintings and images were intended to showcase English civil order and good government to attract economic development along with immigration from settlers and colonial elites. By the 1850s,

images of the city began to market the industrial development of the waterfront which soon transformed the initial beauty of the shoreline. Maps and images of Toronto illustrated the rapid spread of industrialization along the waterfront and downtown core, marketing the image of a prosperous city to attract immigration and capital further.

The paper is structured into three sections. The first section provides a historical analysis of the W&G lands, along with the significant organizations, groups and actors that were involved in parkland planning and development in the nineteenth century. This section will analyze early commercial and industrial development of the core and the waterfront as well as the governance of the W&G lands. The historical section studies the evolution of the periphery as an important part of the shift in parkland planning and development as industrialization took over the urban core. Here, the urban core refers to the old settlement area of Toronto, formerly the Town of York, which goes south of Bloor Street to the waterfront, east of Bathurst and west of the Don River.

The second section of the paper will analyze the RDP project by examining the parkland development process in the context of deindustrialization. The section will analyze the RDP as an ambitious urban park project similar to other global park projects and argue how the project is primarily meant to help transform the downtown core into a liveable place for capital and certain segments of the labour force.

The third section compares the forces behind both the W&G and RDP park proposals by utilizing relevant urban planning theories such as David Harveys' and his concept of the "spatial fix" and Foglesong's concept of property contradiction. The

paper argues that both park projects represent similar municipal interventions that are related to the broader dynamics of economic and land development.

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed a rapid transformation of the downtown core of Toronto from the manufacturing and processing industrial districts of the past into the intensification of high-rise residential condominiums. As more land in the core becomes reserved for residential or commercial development, urban planners, public officials, and developers are confronted with how to engineer green spaces into former industrial areas to promote *liveability*.

In 2016, Toronto's City Council endorsed a proposal to build the Rail Deck Park (RDP), a twenty-one-acre urban public park, over the Railway Lands site, which is located between Bathurst Street and Blue Jays Way, south of Front Street. The site serves as a major commuter rail corridor that connects to the nearby Union Station, the busiest rail transportation facility in Canada. Presently the site is surrounded by new residential communities with proposals for future development. With the rapid development of the downtown core, the lack of open green spaces has become an urgent matter.

Remarkably, the location of the planned RDP was once a strip of prominent green space, later referred as the Walks and Gardens (W&G), which can be traced back to an 1818 crown land patent. The W&G made up the former waterfront, before land infilling took place starting at the middle of the nineteenth century. Not long after the patent was awarded, city officials soon transferred the W&G lands along with much of the waterfront to support industrial land development efforts. At the time, officials

argued for constructing the railways on the site in order to enhance the city's economic position; this earlier argument relied on similar principles to those that are behind the planned RDP. The urban planning context of both the W&G and the RDP share similar elements and highlight crucial stages of the urban transformation and the urbanization of the core. Both cases provide valuable findings on how local officials planned and managed urban green spaces alongside private development in the downtown core.

The paper will attempt to address the following research questions concerning both the W&G and the RDP cases: The historical and contemporary role of municipal planners and officials in balancing the private interests of economic and land development with the planning of urban green spaces? Moreover, how do municipal-led intervention strategies support private interests tied to land development? What are the similarities and differences between the two cases? In general, the paper explores the sometimes-conflictual relationship between public urban green spaces and private economic and urban development. The goal of the paper is not to provide final answers to the above questions, but to explore the cases as lessons that can potentially guide future planning of urban green spaces.

The guiding thesis argues how the RDP park case can be viewed as a municipal-led solution for a municipal-created problem which can be traced back to the Walks and Garden case: the priority of economic land development initiatives ahead of the planning and development of parkland space in the downtown core. In the W&G case, the municipal government intervened to acquire and transfer a strip of federal reserved public green space to support railroad development efforts into the urban core. The controversial transfer of the public lands to private control was driven and promoted by a

powerful group of political and industrial elites, in order to support industrialization efforts in the urban core. As a result, the decision to build a private railroad on the lands eventually transformed the natural landscape of the downtown core and waterfront into an industrial manufacturing and processing landscape.

In the case of the RDP, the downtown core is once again witnessing a rapid urban transformation. However, in contrast to the abandonment of the W&G, the RDP aims to reinstate green space on the same lands in order to support the contemporary planning efforts of economic redevelopment in the core. Supported by an influential group of private real estate developers, park advocates, and municipal officials, the city is once again leading efforts to acquire the same lands that once made up the W&G.

A comparative analysis of both the W&G and RDP highlights the changing role and development of urban green spaces in Toronto and the parallel conflicts of parkland planning as supporting efforts to enhance the value of private properties. While both cases come from different economic and administrative eras of urban planning, they share similar factors such as private property development, city image making, civic boosterism, competitive city building, and socio-spatial segregation patterns played a role in each. Concepts like David Harvey's "spatial fix" and Foglesong's conception of property contradiction in and of planning will help us understand the relationship between urban parks planning and economic development. While each case is shaped by a different combination of economic forces, private interests, and administrative bodies, they are led by municipal officials. Together, these factors extend beyond particular times and places to shape parkland planning and development patterns.

Planning and Development of Urban Green Spaces in Nineteenth-Century Toronto

The integration of green spaces into the urban landscape of Toronto during the nineteenth century can be analyzed and connected through several key stages:



Together, these stages were influenced by the adverse effects of urbanization and industrialism in the city. In Toronto and most of Upper Canada, urban green space was developed and planned in a way that imitated the principles and concepts found in the aristocratic English Garden Landscape (Clerk, 2018). The eighteenth century witnessed the first resemblance of early public parks within the English countryside situated on private estates near noble houses, where they showcased the wealth and status of the owners (Zieleniec, 2010). Piper's map of the Stourhead Estate Gardens in 1779 is one of the earliest illustrations of picturesque landscape principles and displays topographic data to highlight monuments and architectural features (*see Figure 1*) (Nijhuis, 2015). Public Gardens, walks, or pleasure grounds were the earliest urban parks; they emulated the same principles, function, and design of countryside landscape projects.

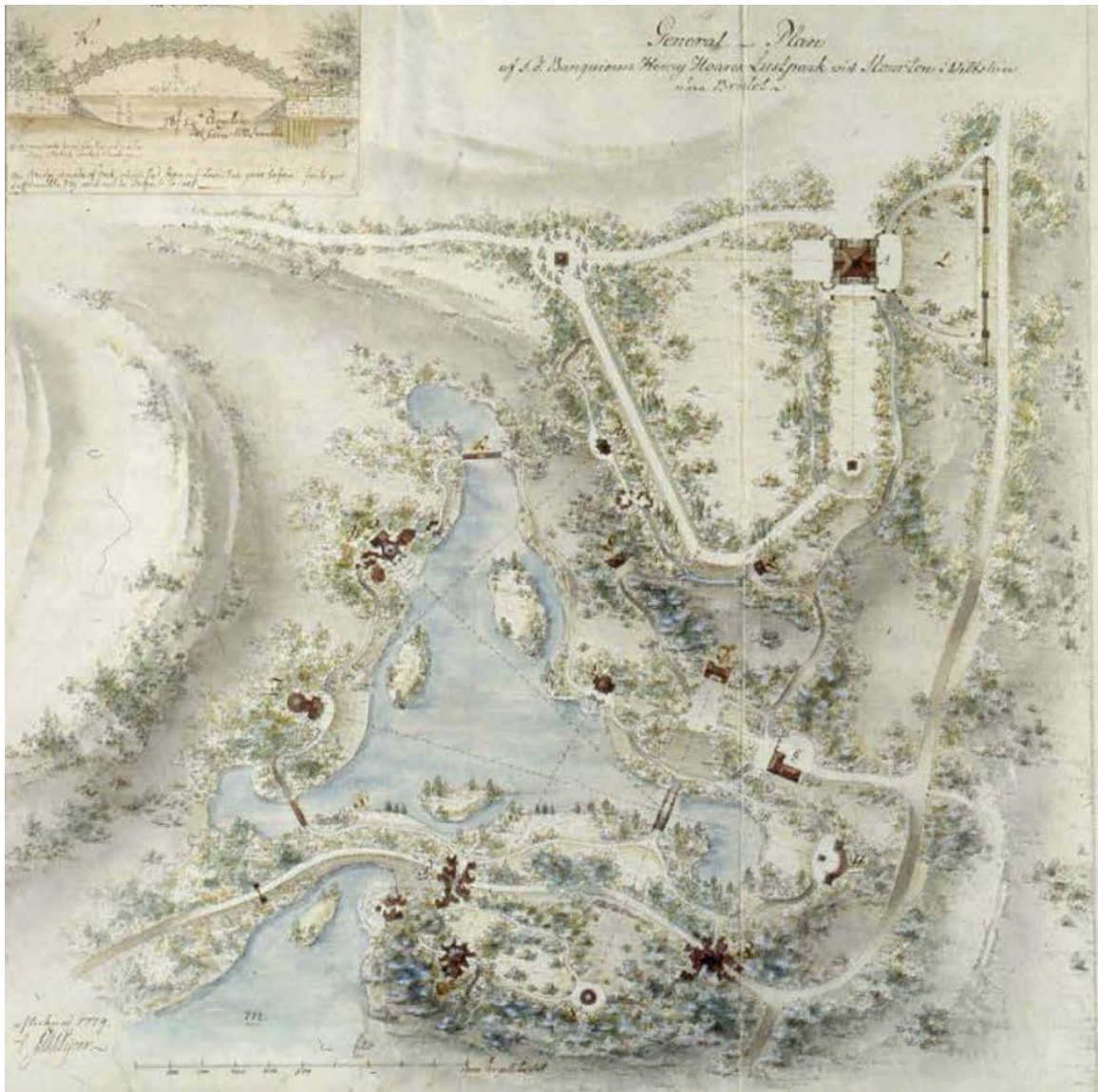


Figure 1: Map of Stourhead Gardens by F.M Piper in 1779. Adapted from 'GIS-based landscape design research: Exploring aspects of visibility in landscape architectonic compositions' by S. Nijhuis (2014, p.207)

In Toronto, these landscape design principles are first applied in rural cemeteries, which offered access to green spaces, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century. Gradually, the same landscape principles and concepts that were established in cemeteries were adopted in urban areas by upper-class elites (Baeyer, 2015; Hall & Bowden, 1986). Victoria Memorial Square Park, located on Bathurst Street and Front Street West, is an active public park, but the grounds had served as the city's first

graveyard for some time. At the time, the graveyard was located outside of the urban settlement and was the final resting place for notable military officials and residents. By the 1860s, the city took ownership of the lands and reduced the size to make room for development; the site was eventually converted into a public park by the 1880s (Wencer, 2012).

At the time, rural cemeteries served as a pleasant Sunday retreat for urban residents attracted to the cultivated green spaces located outside the town. These open green spaces provided refuge from the crowded and unsanitary conditions of urban centres during the nineteenth century (Cranz, 1984). Rural cemeteries were filled with statues, artwork and horticultural gardens (Greenfield, 2011). Influenced by the aesthetic ideals of Victorian upper class values, rural cemeteries became the earliest public parks for the wealthy.

By the end of the century, these principles and values were transferred to the design of public city parks. The application of these principles can be seen in notable works from Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903), such as New York City's Central Park in 1857 and Montreal's Mount Royal Park in 1874. In the case of Mount Royal, Olmsted was able to convince city officials to finance the project, with the understanding that the property values would rise in the future (Murray, 1967).

The Toronto Horticulture Society, Green Space, and Land Speculation

When the town of York incorporated in 1834, City Council was granted new powers to issue property taxes based on assessing land values of private estates. The new land tax assessment framework included the opportunity to further increase land value by building horticulture and gardens on residential property (Matthews, 1985).

Significantly, gardens and lawns were subject to a land tax exemption, which allowed the wealthy land owners of large estates to avoid paying high property tax rates (Lundell, 1997, p.12). Soon after, landowners and elites in York, like the members of the Compact Family, began to enhance private estates by planting horticulture and garden beds, a new sign of value. As a result, the link between gardens and private property was established, which spurred an urban movement to promote green spaces.

In the same year, the Toronto Horticultural Society (THS) was established to beautify residential streets through the planting of gardens (The Horticultural Societies of Parkdale of Toronto, 2012). Gradually, the members of the THS proved to be an instrumental force in pressuring the local government to develop and protect urban green spaces. The society was composed of wealthy property owners, many of whom had a significant role in politics and city planning. George William Allan, who served as the eleventh Major of Toronto, was also the president of the THS for over twenty-five years (ibid, 2012). As will be discussed later, John Chambers, the first Park Superintendent, also was a notable member of the society.

The THS was part of a global urban trend, mainly founded on the ideals of cultivated natural beauty, which first began in England in 1804 with the Royal Horticultural Society and spread in North America with the New York Horticultural Society in 1818. Societies held general meetings, published journals and papers, hosted activities, and distributed prizes for achievements in horticulture (Valen, 2016). Societies contributed significantly to the development of landscape architecture and the incorporation of gardens and horticultural features in urban areas.

Mainly as a means of protecting the value of private estates, as opposed to the public benefit of gardens, property owners took charge in the planning of green spaces. With the rise of industrial and urbanized trends in the early century and the lack of coordinated formal planning of green spaces, wealthy landowners of the city formed horticultural societies. Ironically many of these same members also financially benefited from the rise of industrial development which posed as a conflict with the development and protection of urban green spaces.

Early in the history of the city, residents relied on the contributions of philanthropists in the donation of land for park purposes. Indeed, some of the oldest and popular parks in Toronto originate from private land contributions, including Queens Park (the University of Toronto in 1859), High Park (John G. Howard in 1876), and the Allan Gardens (George Allan in 1860). By the end of the century, residents began to demand more public green spaces in towns which spurred legislation permitting municipalities in Ontario to purchase and acquire land for park purposes in the 1880s.

As the demand and popularity of urban green spaces grew in the city, land speculators and landowners began to incorporate green spaces in subdivision plans as a means of enhancing the value of proposed property lots. The development of the first major public park, the Horticulture Gardens (Allan Gardens), can be traced back to notable land speculator William Allan. Allan was an affluent politician and banker and the “financial genius of the ruling Family Compact, and one of the two or three richest men in the province” (Armstrong, 1988, p. 67). Allan’s power and influence of urban planning matters can be traced back to the early history of the city. By 1829, he managed to accumulate land in every district of the province, including the most

valuable property in the city, Park Lot 5, located in old Toronto (Bain, 2018). Allan's Lot 5 property became the site of the city's earliest and most captivating urban park, Allan Gardens.

Allan was appointed to various influential political and economic roles such as Councillor, Director of the Canada Company, and President of the Toronto Board of Trade (Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1985). Through these high-level positions, Allan played an influential role in land use policy and development in Upper Canada. In 1840, as the Director of the Canada Company, Allan managed to prevent crown land from being sold to settlers for low prices or by free grants (University of Toronto, 1985). After his death in 1853, his son, George Allan, also became a major force in urban politics. George served as an alderman for St. David Ward (1849–1855) and was appointed by City Council as Mayor of Toronto (1855–56). As mentioned earlier, he also served as the president of the THS.

Anticipating the arrival of the railroad and industrialism into the core of Toronto, wealthy property owners and land speculators began to subdivide property lots starting in the middle of the century. Between 1853–1857, the subdivision of lots exploded in the city in an attempt to attract new immigrants from the upper and middle classes (Sanford, 1987). As the city rapidly urbanized and expanded, the lack of suitable green space became a source of profit for landowners. Landowners began to advertise green space with the sale of lots.

John Stoughton Dennis plan for town lots (*see Figure 2*) on Bellevue in 1854, as part of the Denison Estate, provides the following description on the survey plan:

This property is situated in the most healthy and pleasured part of the City upon a considerable elevation above the Lake possess additional attractions from its proximity to the locality of the new Parliament Buildings and the Government House about to be erected and the Docks now being made at the entrance to the Harbor. (Dennis, 1854)

Due to the difficulty in securing a bank loan to purchase a home in the city, for much of the century land was either sold at auction or by a land speculator (Hudson, 1993). As a result, many lots also became rental investments; for instance, one-third of the Bellevue lots became rental property (ibid, p.7). As more immigrants settled in the city the price of land increased which spurred the subdivision of private lots for profit purposes.



Figure 2: Adapted from 'Plan of part of the City of Toronto showing the town lots on Bellevue for sale by the trustees for the Denison Estate March 1854', by J.S Dennis, 1854.

During the time of subdivision, landowners and profit speculators began to market green spaces in lot sales. The description of the town lots highlights several notable urban features that may have been considered desirable for potential buyers. For instance, the reference to "...the most healthy and pleasant part of the city..." points to the growing concerns regarding the rapid urbanization and industrial and the

demand for green spaces. The plan for sale also makes mentions of the city's most significant landmarks of the time, Lake Ontario and the new Parliament Buildings. These landmark sites helped showcase an prosperous and civil Victorian city in efforts to attract immigrants.

In another similar case, in 1858, George Allan agreed to lease 5 acres of land on Lot 5 to the THS in order to develop the Horticultural Gardens (later renamed to Allan Gardens). Unable to raise private funds to purchase the 5 acres, the society turned to the city for public funds. In 1864, the Committee on Walks and Gardens (the successor to the 1818 Land Trust) recommended the purchase of the 5 acres from George Allan for \$11,500, with the THS managing the site over 30 years, with the provision that the grounds be open to the public (Bain, 2018).

The Ownsworth (1854) plan provides an early illustration of how urban green spaces were linked with the sale of land for development purposes.. The significance of the Horticultural Gardens, along with Moss Park, near the proposed *villa* lots represents an added value to the sale of the lots (see *Figure 3*). Both William and George Allan cemented their social status and their gentlemanly credentials by improving estates through horticultural improvements (Schrauwers, 2010, p. 15).

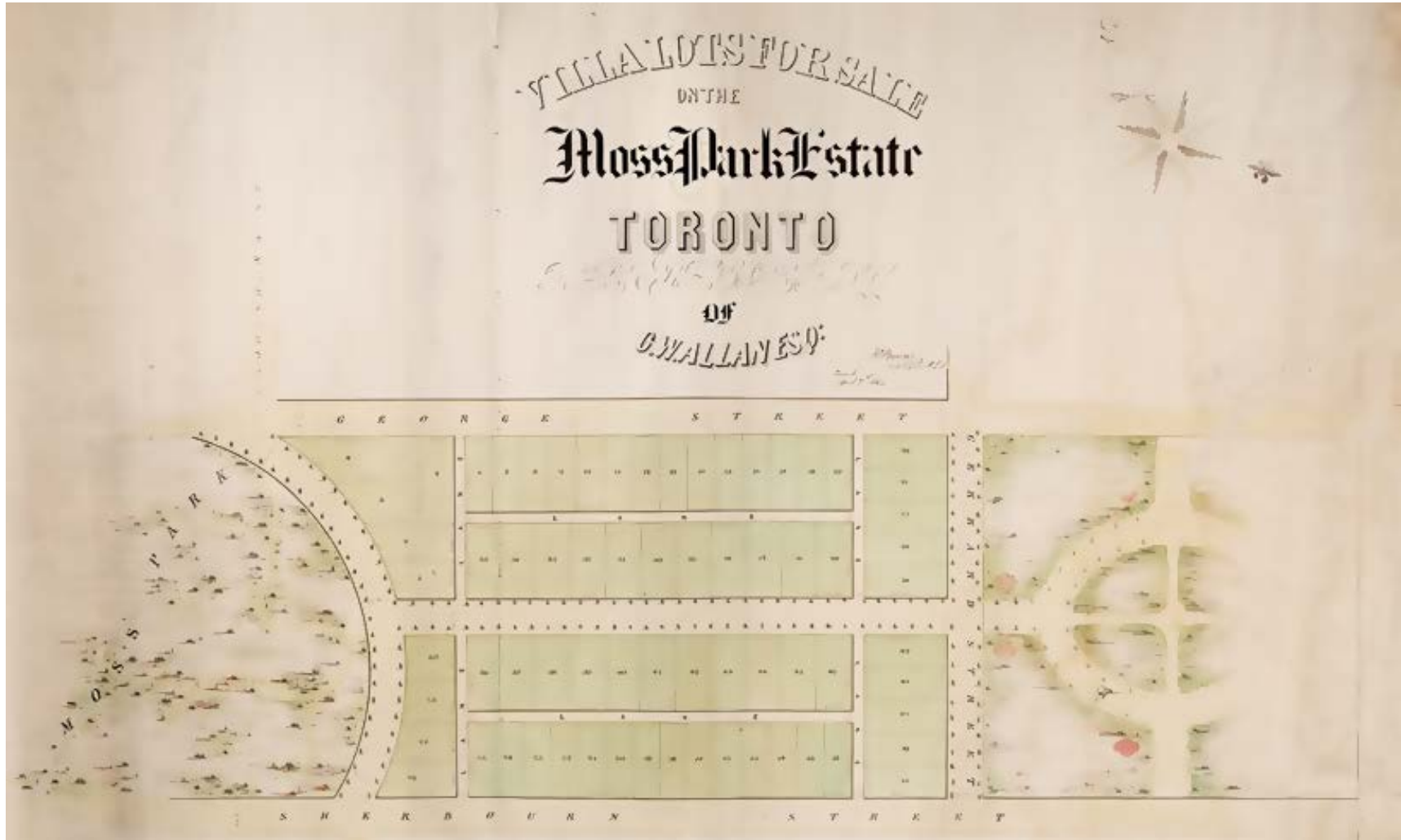


Figure 3: Ownsworth, J.B., 1854, Villa lots for sale on the Moss Park Estate: Toronto the property of G.W. Allan Esq. From Toronto Public Library, #MsX.1921.8=

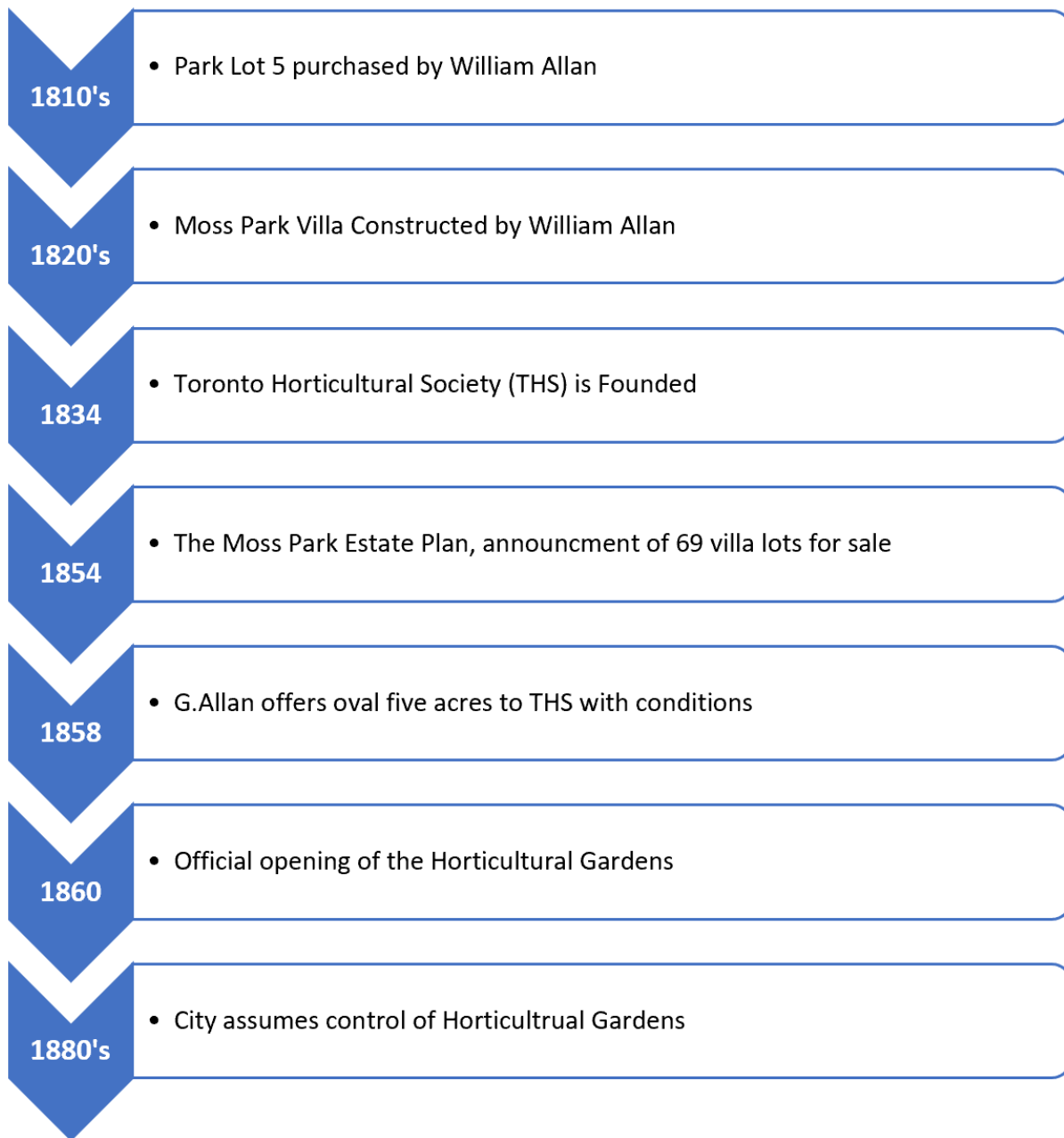


Figure 4: Source: From Friends of Allan Gardens. (2017, February). A vision document for Allan Gardens

Significantly, many of the villa lots and large estates of the century included wide lawn frontage spaces which were exempted from property tax. However, by the 1880s,

the tax exemption on gardens and lawns was repealed, which gradually ending the sale of large garden lots while indirectly support the subdivision of smaller lots (Lundell, 1997).

The adoption and application of English Garden Landscape principles, the rise of horticultural societies, and the incorporation of green spaces into plans for land sales planted the development of green spaces in Toronto. However, these early green spaces were mostly private and catered to the upper class for land development purposes, as in the case of the Horticultural Gardens. By contrast, the waterfront, with its sandy bluff shoreline, was a local popular space for all residents, rich or poor. However, as the harbour witnessed more traffic and warehouses developed along the lake, the beauty of the waterfront was lost.

The Establishment of a Municipal Park System

By the 1850s, the rise of commercial and industrial development along the waterfront and core, along with the urban expansion of the city, eventually increased the need for open green spaces in the city. As the city expanded outwards, pedestrian access to nature at the edge of the settlement was out of reach. Residents could no longer take a short walk to the edge of the city, along with the high cost of transportation made travel unaffordable for most of the city's residents. As a result, residents demanded more open green spaces in towns to escape the ill effects of urban living.

The emergence of public parks as solutions to counter the ill effects of urbanization and industrialism can be traced to early nineteenth-century London. In an 1833 report from the Select Commission on Public Walks, highlighted the following:

from the increased value of Property and extension of Buildings, many enclosures of open spaces in the vicinity of towns have taken place, and little or

no provision has been made for Public Walks or Open Spaces, to afford means of exercise or amusement to the middle or humbler classes. (Malcolmson, 1973, p. 109)

As industrialism made its way to the shores of North America, public officials in Toronto also struggled to deal with the impact of urbanization on land patterns. Without the formal structure or financial tools needed to acquire land for park or green purposes, public officials relied on the land contributions of wealthy landowners. However, the development of green spaces in the city continued to be neglected at the hardship of local residents.

In 1883, the Province of Ontario enacted the Public Parks Act, which granted municipalities the legal authority to establish an urban public park system to manage a “system of parks, avenues, boulevards, and drives” (Baeyer, 2015; Marsh & Hodgins, 1998, p. 222). With the new legislation, municipalities were able to acquire and zone new land as parkland. The following year, Toronto Council decided to hire John Chambers as the city’s first Parks Commissioner; responsible for establishing a park system, handling contracts, and managing the operations of public parklands. Chambers was a long-time member of the Toronto Horticultural Society, and supporter of classical English garden principles which emphasized cultivated pristine green spaces over recreation. His previous work included the former Exhibition grounds which was praised by the Council, and helped elevate his status to secure the first Park Commissioner position (Wainwright, 2015).

However, Chambers tenure was plagued with corruption were he was trialed for exploiting public funds to help improve the gardens around his private estate

(Wainwright, 2015). The *Globe* soon published public complaints about Chambers exploiting his public office:

...A correspondent in your valuable paper accuses the Park Commissioner of spending the city's money in adorning the land around his residence. There is a profusion of flowers. The tropical beds have magnificent plants, which are very valuable, and should never be planted to be exposed to the wind and weather, but this is done to gratify the Park Commissioner's desire to make everything beautiful around his residence ... (1896, Sept 26)

...As to changes said to be contemplated in the Parks Department we have no authoritative information, Mr. Chambers has starved the other parks for years to lavish all the money possible around his own home at Exhibition Park. (1896, Apr 29).

Chambers was later investigated and dismissed from his position for signing fraudulent contracts, nepotism, using public funds to maintain his private gardens, and selling produce on public land for private profit (Wainwright, 2015). His principles of landscape design and function of urban green spaces stemmed from his work at the THS, in particular, the concept of Victorian beauty over recreation. Described by friends as "too good a conservative", Chambers' tenure highlights the character of what public parks represented, the conservative, English attitudes of the past (The *Globe*, 1896, April 29).

The case of the first Park Commissioner illustrates how the planning of municipal parks was closely linked with private land development interests..

Significantly, the willingness of City Council to hire Chambers and its lack of action until the media raised the issue, demonstrates how parkland planning was dominated by the interest of the elites. Chambers highlights how the planning and development of public green spaces centered on the private property development which was pioneered by early land speculators through surveys. The conflict of planning urban green spaces based on the value enhancement of private property is cemented in the century. In the next section, the land conflict will be discussed in the context of the waterfront and the goal of industrial development.

Part One: The Walks and Gardens

The following section of the paper will analyze the earliest and perhaps most treasured public parkland space in Toronto, the waterfront. The waterfront has long held historical and contemporary importance in the urban development of Toronto. At the time of British settlement on the lands in 1793, the shoreline was approximately a hundred meters south of Front Street, which was later altered by land infill.

The W&G case reveals the beginning of a long-standing land dispute of purpose of the waterfront as an space to serve private commercial purposes or public enjoyment. In addition to the W&G case, this section will explore the development of the Exhibition grounds, which served as an extension of the industrial development of the waterfront lands. Evidence from the period reveals how green spaces were planned to serve joint private and city-led economic priorities for land development.

Early History of Planning Urban Green Spaces in York

In 1793, British Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe established the Town of York, the predecessor to the Old City of Toronto (pre-1998 boundaries), which soon became the capital of Upper Canada. At the time of settlement, a long strip of land along the waterfront, was reserved as crown public land and intended for the benefit of the town's residents. One of the earliest illustrations of the waterfront highlights its proximity to the settlements and its unobstructed lake views, as highlighted by tree slumps (see *Figure 5*).

However, as the town grew, the waterfront was threatened by growing private commercial interests competing for the land. In 1795, Simcoe awarded William Allan (1770-1853), a notable businessman and politician based in Montreal, two 100-acre

property lots as an incentive to settle in the town¹ (Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1985, para. 3). Three years later, Allan exchanged one of the town lots for a harbour-side property and was also granted a water lot to construct a wharf. The wharf served as the town's first commercially based dock where goods and resources were shipped. It would not take long for commercial activity on the harbour to increase, creating a need for additional capacity to handle more ships.



Figure 5: Elizabeth Frances Hale. 1804. Part of York the capital of Upper Canada on the Bay of Toronto. York, Upper Canada. From the Library and Archives Canada (1970-188-2092)

In 1815, another water lot was granted to William Cooper (1761-1840), a prominent businessman and political office holder, that included permission to build another commercial wharf south of Church Street (Bateman, 2013).² At the time, Cooper was a prominent land speculator in York and owned sawmills along the Humber

¹ At the time, it was common for men of substance to be involved in politics and business

² Both wharfs can be viewed in figure 2, Allan

River (ibid, 2013). By 1842, as the town developed, and more settlers arrived, the number of commercial wharves eventually increased to seven (Brown, 2010, p. 118). Commercial development on the harbour, also gave rise to the development of nearby markets to exchange goods, like the St. Lawrence Market. As commercial activity quickly evolved along the waterfront, congestion and pollution from the increased ship traffic became a concern for the wealthy landowners who owned estates along the western part of the waterfront (Levine, 2014, p.43: MacNamara, 2019).

In 1818, a Crown Land Patent was granted to five public trustees which formally reserved a 30-acre strip of land along the western waterfront for a public walk, vernacular at the time for parkland, with the following mandate: to hold the same for the use and benefit of the Inhabitants of the Town of York as and for a Public Walk or Mall in front of the said town, and to permit and allow such appropriations, disposition, alterations and improvements to be made . . . for the Purpose aforesaid” (City of Toronto, 2001b). The 1818 plan (see Figure 6) is perhaps the first illustration of the public walk, showing green shrubs stretched between the Garrison Creek and Don Valley River, significantly the two major commercial wharves are also displayed.

Front Street, just north of the shoreline, is illustrated on the map; at the time, Front Street was a raised terrace with a steep ascending slope that offered enjoyable views of the lake for nearby property owners and residents of the town. Attempts were made to plant a double row of shade trees on the southern edge, as illustrated, in order to act as a barrier to development; however, these trees failed to materialize (Scadding, 1873).



Figure 6: 1818 Plan of York, Lieut. Philpotts, Royal Engineers, Walks and Gardens is illustrated along the shoreline, stretching between the Garrison Creek and Don River. From Library and Archives Canada: NMC 17026. Winearls, MUC no. 2040 (2)

However, the fate of the 1818 land patent as a public walkway was doomed at the start, due to the background and motives of the private trustees. Among the five trustees were John Beverly Robinson and William Allan, who served with several other leading members of the local Family Compact (Glazebrook, 1971). However, both Robinson and Allan owned private estates along the waterfront, which conflicted with the public duties outlined in the patent (Levine, 2014, p.43). Significantly, this leads to the central question of if the patent was intended to serve the interests of the public or the private interests of the landowners along the lake.

At the beginning of the century, members of the Family Compact dominated the towns political, economic, and social affairs. As major property holders in the city, members of the Compact had special interests in the economic land development of the city and facilitated the earliest institutions which included the Bank of Upper Canada, the Canada Company, and the Law Society of Upper Canada (Mills, 2006). As in the case of many settler towns in Upper Canada, members of the Compact were concentrated in the urban core near central government institutions in order to wield power over local decision making (Stelter, 1980).

The political and economic grip of the Compact represented the aristocratic and governmental class structure, which made up Simcoe's vision for York (Mills, 2006). Political officials like magistrates, land surveyors and military officers were rewarded with land grants to provide the appropriate resources to concentrate power (Clarke, 2001, p. 420). British residents of high nobility were granted 100-acre park lots free of charge to settle in York (Glazebrook, 1971).

Compact members actively pursued "gentlemanly capitalist" opportunities to promote their private economic wealth through land development motives (Schrauwers, 2010, p. 16). The establishment of this social structure concentrated wealth and shaped the early urban patterns in York and across the province (Sanford, 1987). For instance, members financed land development schemes such as the Welland Canal project, which connected Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, to boost commerce between the United States of America and York (Levine, 2014, p. 48). With the new routes, commercial activity along the harbour increased further, bringing new economic development to the wharves.

Chewett's map (*see Figure 7*) provides additional details about the first property lots. These "park lots" were located north of the town and stretched from Queen Street and extended north to Bloor Street. The lots that were closest to the town core were deemed the most desirable and were given to persons with high status (MacNamara, 2019). Many of the park lot grantees also received front lots along the lake, some of which were among the most valuable properties in the town (*ibid*, 2019). With the permission of the town magistrates, these same property owners began to subdivide their respective lots for profit speculation.

In York, members of the Compact held high ranking unelected magistrate positions in the Legislative and Executive branches related to land development and colonialization. In 1826, the *Canada Company* was chartered to encourage British colonization and settlement in Upper Canada through land transfer and the development of crown reserves. The land corporation was granted blocks of urban land at reduced rates in order to aid colonial settlement (Lalonde, 2006).

By 1833, portions of crown land along the western reserve, which were adjacent to the W&G lands, were transferred to the land corporation as 100-acre lots for private sale, and eventually further subdivided by landowners (Sanford, 1987) (*see Figure 7*). While the land corporation promoted settlement, significantly, it also provided new commercial opportunities for existing landowners, who profited by purchasing and subdividing the new park lots (Smith, 1999).

The transfer of military lands to private lots represented the rising demand for land to serve colonization and subdivision efforts. By the 1830s, the role and purpose of maps evolved from providing a military perspective of York into a tool for land

development. The earliest maps were surveyed by graduates of Military College, such as Bonnycastle (see *Figure 8*), and contained detailed and quality illustrations of the city. These maps highlighted engineering efforts such as cleared lands, forests, marsh, roads, buildings, and landmarks. By contrast, private landowners and land speculators began to hire civilian surveyors to design maps that illustrated property lines and boundaries to facilitate subdivision efforts (Ganton & Winearls, 1984). Significantly, the city's westward expansion also highlights how the waterfront continued to be at the centre of settlement and colonization.

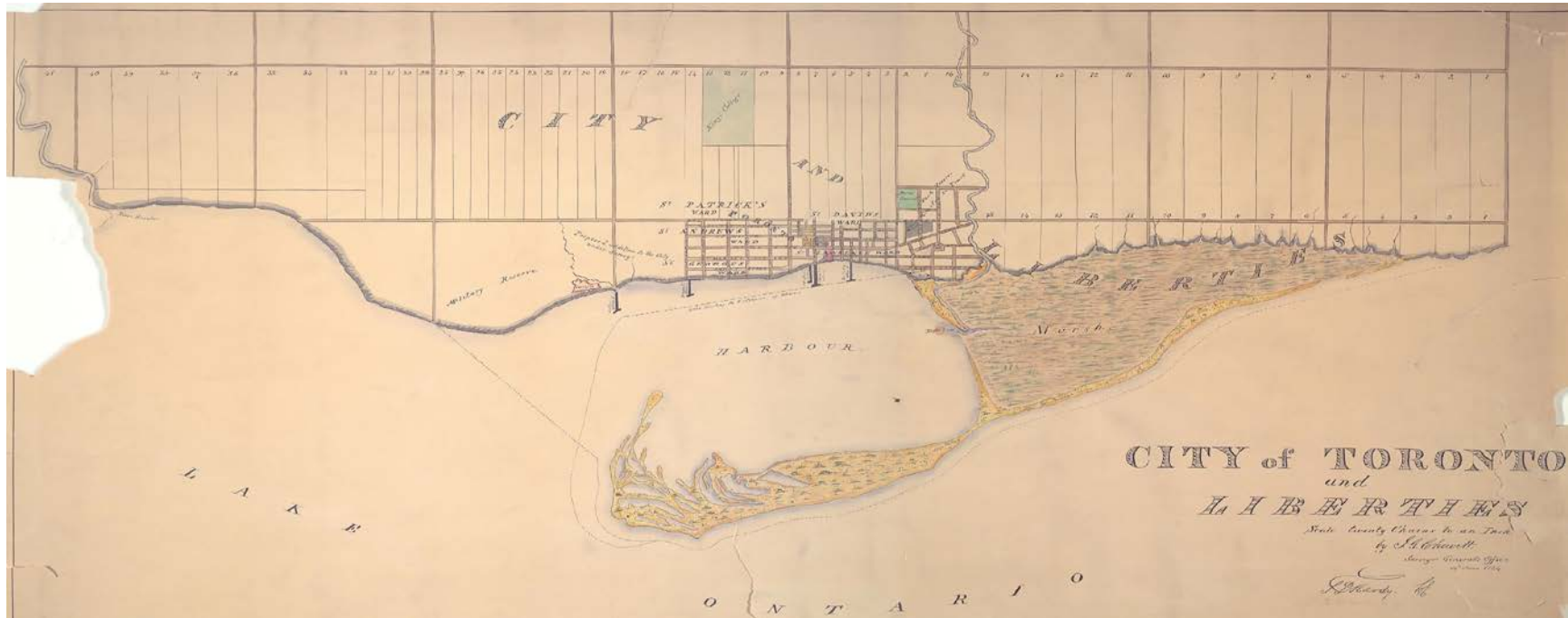


Figure 7: Chewett, J.G., 1834, Plan of the City of Toronto and Liberties, City of Toronto Archives: MsX.1918.1.3

By the 1830s, the imperial control of planning and development in York became inadequate and calls for government reform. With rising public pressure to reform the corrupt local imperial governance of York, the Compact Family began to lose power. In its replacement was the rising commercial and capitalist class. The laissez-faire style of planning with little to no land regulation became cemented as the town grew from its colonial status to a commercial town (Stelter, 1980). As speculators acquired more land in the periphery from the military reserve, new urban infrastructure such as water, roads, and sanitation were required to support settlement.

Driven by the property interests of landowners and speculators for urban infrastructure improvements, the town of York began to evolve from its colonial status into a commercial centre requiring new authority.

Toronto the Good: The Rise of a City and the beauty of the Waterfront

With a growing population of 10,000, the town of York was incorporated as the City of Toronto in 1834. William Lyon Mackenzie, who championed incorporation as reform of the imperial patronage and aristocratic based governance structure of Simcoe became the first mayor. The new municipal Council was made up of full-time elected officials, no longer appointed part-time magistrates of the past. However, voting rights were only granted to male property holders; this excluded all women, minorities and a large section of the working class³. Significantly, the Council was granted new revenue tools and could set tax rates on property and taverns to finance urban infrastructure and services.

The incorporation of York resulted in the emergence of a powerful property owner class, which closely influenced local matters related to the planning of municipal services. Interest in local planning matters related to the protection and enhancement of private property (Sanford, 1987). While the new, democratically elected City Council agreed to develop urban infrastructure to support rapid urban growth, there was public reluctance to raise property taxes to finance municipal services, let alone green spaces or parks (Careless, 1984). Backed by a new influential ratepayer association, the Council avoided raising property tax rates and instead continued to

³ The property qualification to vote in the Municipal Election would be removed in 1972

sell public lands to finance the construction of hospitals, jails, and courthouses (Bradburn, 2014).

In the same year, a detailed official map of the city was produced, with the following illustration along the waterfront: “Lands reserved for a Pleasure Ground” and a “Proposed Esplanade” (see *Figure 8*). The Esplanade is illustrated on the water’s edge, just south of the reserved pleasure grounds, and stretches between Yonge Street and the Queen’s Warf, located at the edge Bathurst Street. Bonnycastle, a trained military surveyor, drew a detailed map of Toronto that outlines the location of the Parliament buildings facing the reserved pleasure grounds and waterfront.

Urban infrastructure development required two-thirds of the neighbourhood residents to agree to have property tax assessments increase to cover any development costs (Sanford, 1987). Consequently, urban development was concentrated in the affluent neighbourhoods of the periphery, while poor inner neighbourhoods such as The Ward which were unable to raise funds, devolved into slum-like conditions. Despite the rising public health concerns about sanitation and fire hazards, which were concentrated in the deprived wards of Toronto, landowners and political officials ensured property tax rates did not rise (Fischler, 2007). Furthermore, attempts to carry out the public health reforms that were necessary to counter the rise of cholera outbreaks faced fierce resistance from property owners and ratepayers (MacDougall, 1982). Altogether, the property owners yielded immense influence and power over local municipal matters after the incorporation of the city.

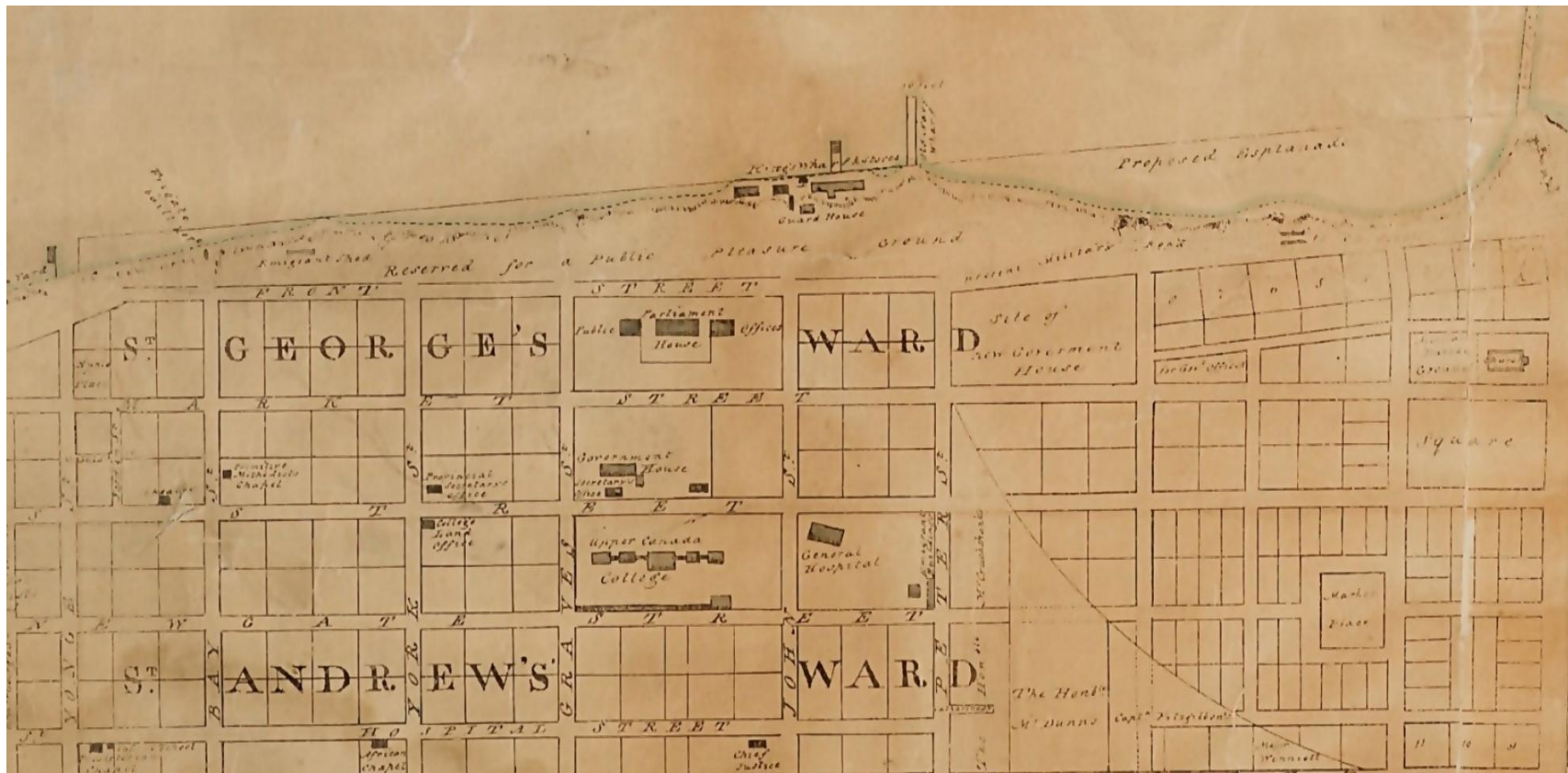


Figure 8: 1834, H.W.J. Bonnycastle and Lithographed by S.O. Tazewell. City of Toronto: The Capital of Upper Canada. From the Royal Ontario Museum [955.87.2]. The Reserved for public pleasure grounds is labelled stretching from Yonge Street to Peter Street

In celebration of the city's incorporation, City Council agreed to commission lithographs to capture the Parliament Buildings. Lithographs by John Howard and Nathaniel Currier depict watercolour illustrations of Front Street overlooking the waterfront and provide some of the earliest detail of the reserved pleasure grounds and waterfront area (see *Figure 9 and 10*). One of the two artists, Currier (1813-1888), was a well-known New York lithographer. He produced some of the most famous depictions of American people and history (Currier & Ives, 2017). The watercolour painting of the parliament buildings provides a valuable illustration of the scale of the pleasure grounds.

The two lithographs captured the focal points of early Toronto centered around — good governance, finance, culture, and religion. These works also make up a collection of illustrations of the urban built environment in Toronto, which reflected the desire of government officials to have the city recognized as an equal of British towns and cities (Vattay, 1998). Once again, the ambitions of Council members and local elites were on full display, to promote settlement efforts of British immigrants. By the 1840s, elegant commercial buildings located in the financial center of the city, near Yonge and King, became the focal point of plans, schemes, and photos as a sign of prosperity (ibid, 1998).

Figure 9: Howard, John.G. (1834). Front St. W., looking N.W from Front and Simcoe St. Toronto Public Library # JRR 826 Cab



Figure 10: Currier, Nathaniel. (1835). Parliament Buildings. Toronto Public Library # JRR 1060 Cab II

The civic pride and popularity of the Parliament lands along the waterfront soon became an area of interest for land speculators. An 1840 Crown Patent granted the municipality over 60 acres of water lots along the foreshore, adjacent to the reserved

Walks and Garden lands (City of Toronto, 2001b). This patent allowed the lands to be leased for 42 years and included a clause that required the city to infill the shore about 350 feet into the bay (Goheen, 2000). In this case, the Esplanade was a land reclamation project aimed to capture new lands for development purposes. The decision by City Council to lease the lands along the waterfront perhaps illustrates the influence land speculators had in urban planning matters in the city.

Howard's map (1846) provides greater context about the layout of the 1840 water lots, which stretched south of the shoreline, leaving the W&G lands wedged between the water lots and Front Street, along with the planned Esplanade to the east (see Figure 11).

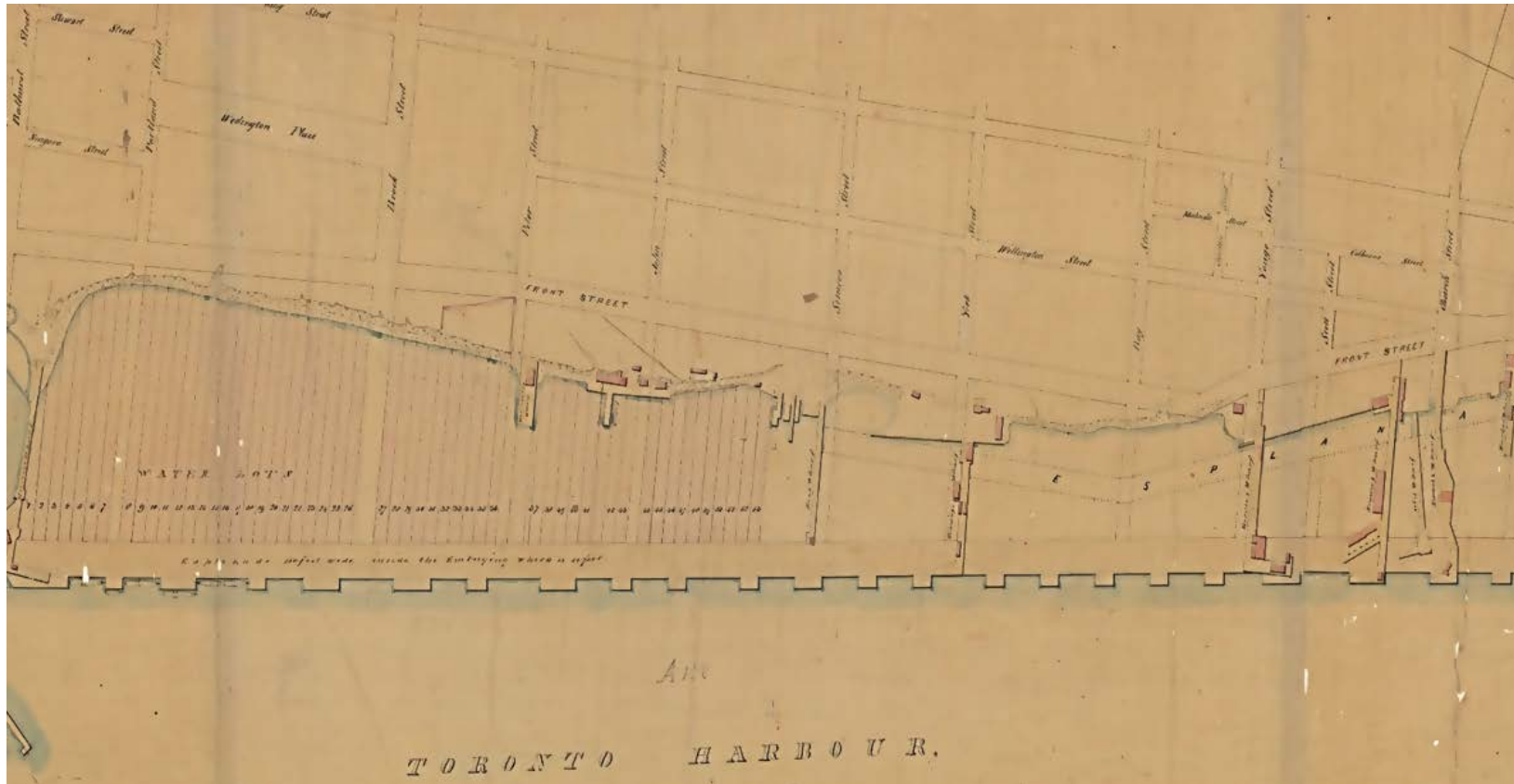


Figure 11: 1846, August 17th, Toronto Harbour [Sgd] John G. Howard D.P. Surveyor, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Office of the Surveyor General. SR 6477 P10-22. Water lots and Esplanade are labelled south of Front Street

Industry and the Waterfront

With the expansion of commercial activity in the downtown core local business leaders began to lobby all levels of governments to finance railroad construction in the city. The construction of railroad lines in Toronto was argued by local business leaders to transport resources from the hinterland into the city thereby supporting urban growth and compete with the established markets in Montreal (White, 1981). However, concerns from property owners regarding the use of treasury funds to finance the project put a roadblock to railway development in the city. Property owners argued that more work was required to develop local markets to take advantage of the railroad, perhaps as a measure to spur further private investment (ibid, 1981). One merchant described his objections to the project in a letter to the newspaper: “Why to increase taxes, he asked, to build a speculative venture designed to increase the value of the lands of the propertied class?” (ibid, 1981, p. 34) The decision to fund the rail line was put to a vote in June 1850 and was rejected by the electorate. The disagreement of the railroad rested on the use of public funds to finance the project.

In 1850, City Council agreed to issue \$25,000 in debentures to finance a northern rail line to Huron, with the condition that the “...line of railroad shall be carried along Palace Street and Front Street, to the full extent of the City Water Lots” (Globe, 1850, November 28). The development of the railroad was in part influenced by the desire to improve property values along the city-owned water lots. Indeed, property values doubled between 1850 and 1856, causing many businesses to relocate from north of Yonge to proximity of the future railroad tracks (White, 1981).

In 1851, Toronto elected Alderman John Bowes, who championed the Huron rail line, as Mayor. According to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (1976), Bowes was a prominent business leader who served as the President of the Toronto and Guelph Railway Company and sat on numerous boards of commercial and financial enterprises. However, Bowes tenure as Mayor was accused of having a conflict of interest from his private stake in the financial development of the Huron railway line (Bradburn, 2014). Bowes efforts were instrumental in supporting the construction of a railway line over the lands, initially reserved for the W&G.

Despite increasing interest to develop a rail line along the waterfront, the public lands designated as the W&G did not escape the conscience of the public. In 1852 City Officials commissioned architect John G. Howard to illustrate plans for a strip of walks and gardens on the waterfront (*see Figure 12*). Howard was instructed to prepare the design outline of the W&G south of Front Street and west of York Street in "...for the recreation of the citizens" (City of Toronto, 2001b, p. 6). On the plan, the following is written in pencil: "This design seems altogether too ornamental and inconsistent therefore with the idea for an Esplanade or Promenade". The comment on Howard's sketch highlights the conflict over the fate of the W&G lands along with the waterfront. Once again, the role and planning of the waterfront became contested on interests of recreation or development.

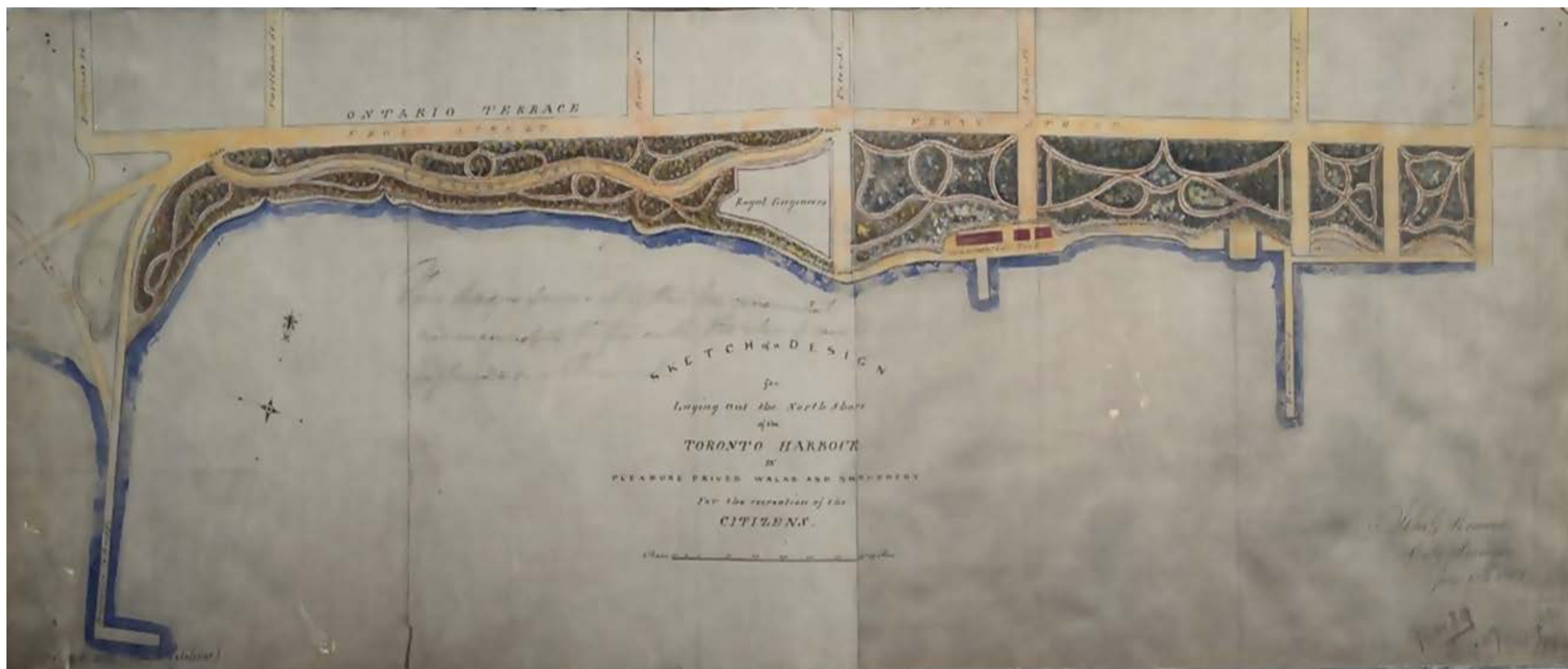


Figure 12: 1852, John Howard's sketch for Harbour Toronto Harbour with parks and public spaces, From Toronto Library Archives # MsX.1921.6

Despite efforts to preserve public green space along the waterfront, the lands were vulnerable to development due to the proximity to the harbour. As railroad lobbyists continued to petition the government and the public, residents who were initially against the project, began to favour construction of the railroad along the waterfront in the anticipation of economic development (McIlwraith, 1991). In 1849, the Royal Canadian Institute was established in Toronto, the organization was made up of engineers, surveyors and architects and represented the rising industrial-capitalist class,

which was eager to promote railway construction as a top priority (Killan, 1980). An article published by the institute in 1852 reveals the ongoing debate over using the land for “pleasure grounds” or a railway:

One party advocates the conversion of every foot of ground now lying waste into “track” “brick and mortar”—another party, which more concerned for the healthful recreation of future generations than the convenience of the present, insist on these Reserves for pleasure grounds being retained for the purpose they were originally intended to serve....every facility should be afforded them [Railway Companies] in endeavouring to establish their works at the most suitable points... (Journal of the Royal Canadian Institute, 1852)

Directed by Sandford Fleming (1827-1915), a prominent engineer and railway builder, the Institute hired Hugh Scobie to publish a new map with the design of a railway terminus on the W&G lands (*see Figure 13*). Together, Fleming and Scobie's ideas helped promote commercial interests to secure the waterfront and acquire the W&G lands to serve the private interests of railroad development in the city.

Significantly, Fleming was hired as an engineer for the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union Railroad company (Creet, 1998). The railroad company was eventually selected by Council to construct a rail line on the W&G lands (Creet, 1998). Fleming was later involved in the construction of several other major railway projects across Canada, such as the Intercolonial Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Institute was successful in encouraging local officials and reluctant property owners, in the economic opportunities of a railroad.

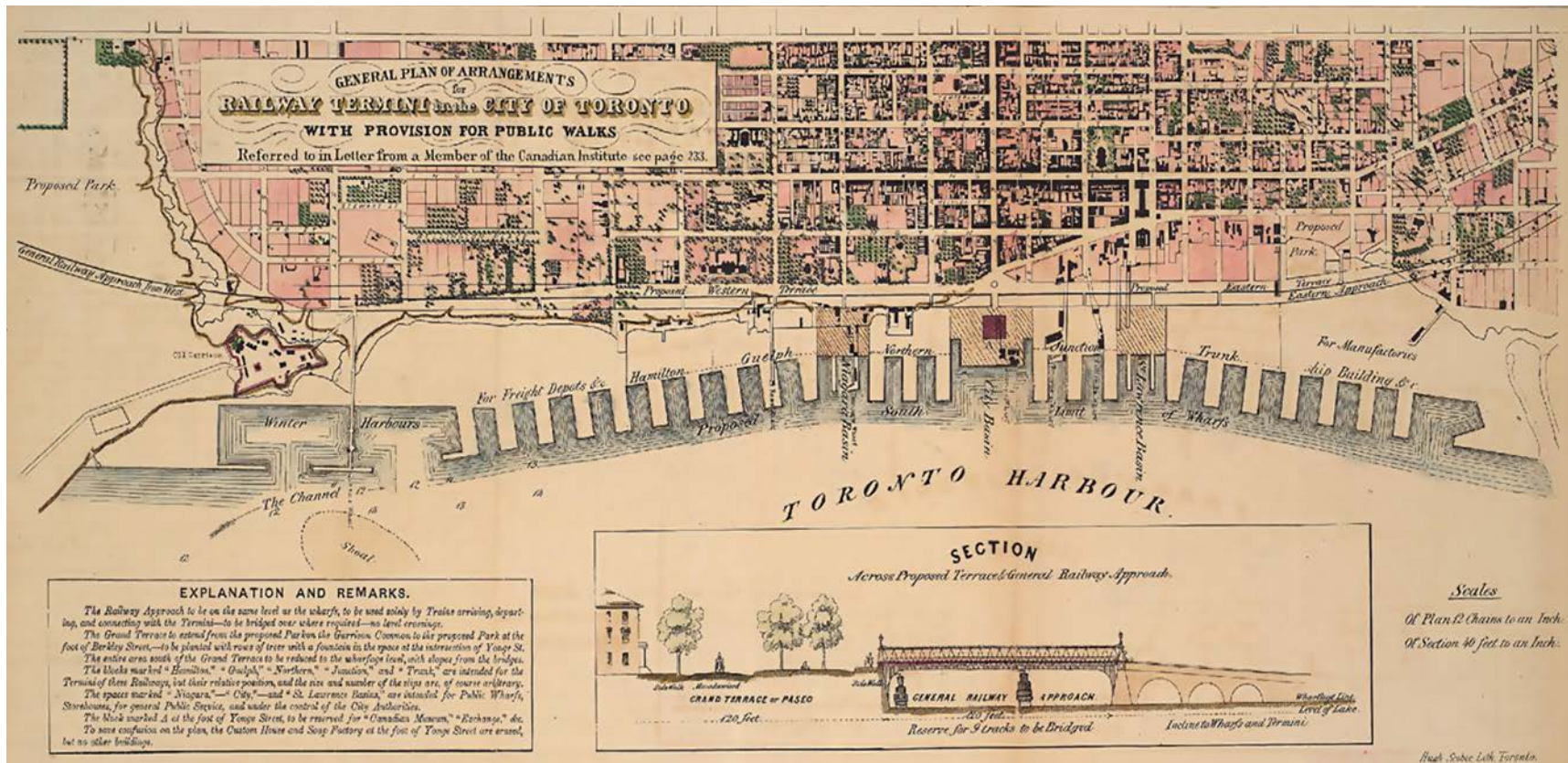


Figure 13: 1853, Plan for a Railway Terminus with the Provision for Public Walks, From Toronto Public Library: T 1853/5

Further private railroad interests continued to lobby government officials to construct a rail line along the waterfront. Walter Shanly, the chief engineer of the Toronto and Guelph Railway, addressed his Board of Directors in a speech that mentioned that connecting the track directly to the lake was “indispensable” for the project’s success (Goheen, 2000). In his speech, Shanly also emphasized the company’s success in actively lobbying City Council and Senior levels of

governments to acquire public lands. In this manner, the destiny of the public waterfront was negotiated privately between economic and political interests, with disregard of the interests of all residents.

In 1853, the Province of Upper Canada passed the *Toronto Esplanade Act (16 Vic. Cap. 219)*, which stipulated the transfer of the original 1818 parkland trust to the Mayor, Councillors, and the Corporation of the City of Toronto. With the transfer, a Walks and Gardens Committee was established by the city. The Act further permitted the development of a public walk along the Esplanade including any other improvements for public purposes that it deemed appropriate.

However, City Council, led by Mayor Bowes efforts to build railway tracks on the waterfront, opposed the new legislation, arguing that the concept of an Esplanade intended as rail tracks (McIlwraith, 1991). Consequently, the act was amended four years later (20 Vic. Cap. 80), bestowing additional powers to the Council to “sell and dispose of this space or strip of land in the said patent and section of the Act, freed and discharged from any and all of the said trusts, conditions and restrictions in the said Patent contained” (City of Toronto, 2001b, p. 7). The amended legislation also stipulated that any sales money made from the reserved pleasure gardens on the waterfront be directed towards the “purchase, planting, ornamenting and care of some other piece or parcel of land” (ibid, 2001b,p. 7). Funds derived from the sale of public waterfront lands acquired by the W&GC were primarily used to purchase or develop parkland in the new periphery neighbourhoods such as High Park, Riverdale, and Allan Gardens (City of Toronto, 2001b).

An 1854 lithograph by Whitefield illustrates a birds eye view of the waterfront, which illustrates the disputed Esplanade, visible between the harbour and the city (see *Figure 14*). Almost ten years later, another drawing of the waterfront showed its rapid industrial development and the railroad tracks (see *Figure 15*). Both of the illustrations depict a more industrial and booming city with heavy ship traffic on the harbour. In the 1863 drawing, the construction of the first railroad line can be identified adjacent to the shoreline.

In 1857, legislation was amended to allow the sale or lease of the W&G lands by the City Council. In the same year, City Council sold the W&G lands to the Grand Trunk Railway with the condition that revenue collected would go into a new fund to serve the original purposes of the trust (City of Toronto, 2001b). Criticism of the City Council in the handling of the W&G lands is captured by one resident in an article from the *Globe*:

The whole was sold or leased at extremely low prices, no competition having been allowed in the sale....It is wrong that valuable public property like this [Esplanade], held in trust for the benefit of the present and future generations should be disposed of either by lease or otherwise without public competition... To prevent jobbing or sacrifice, a fair upset price should be put on it – which price should be fixed by the Council, not by any Committee [W&G Committee]...
(1866, Jan 24)



Figure 14: Whitefield, Edwin. 1854. Toronto, Canada West, from the top of the Jail. Library and Archives Canada #2836240

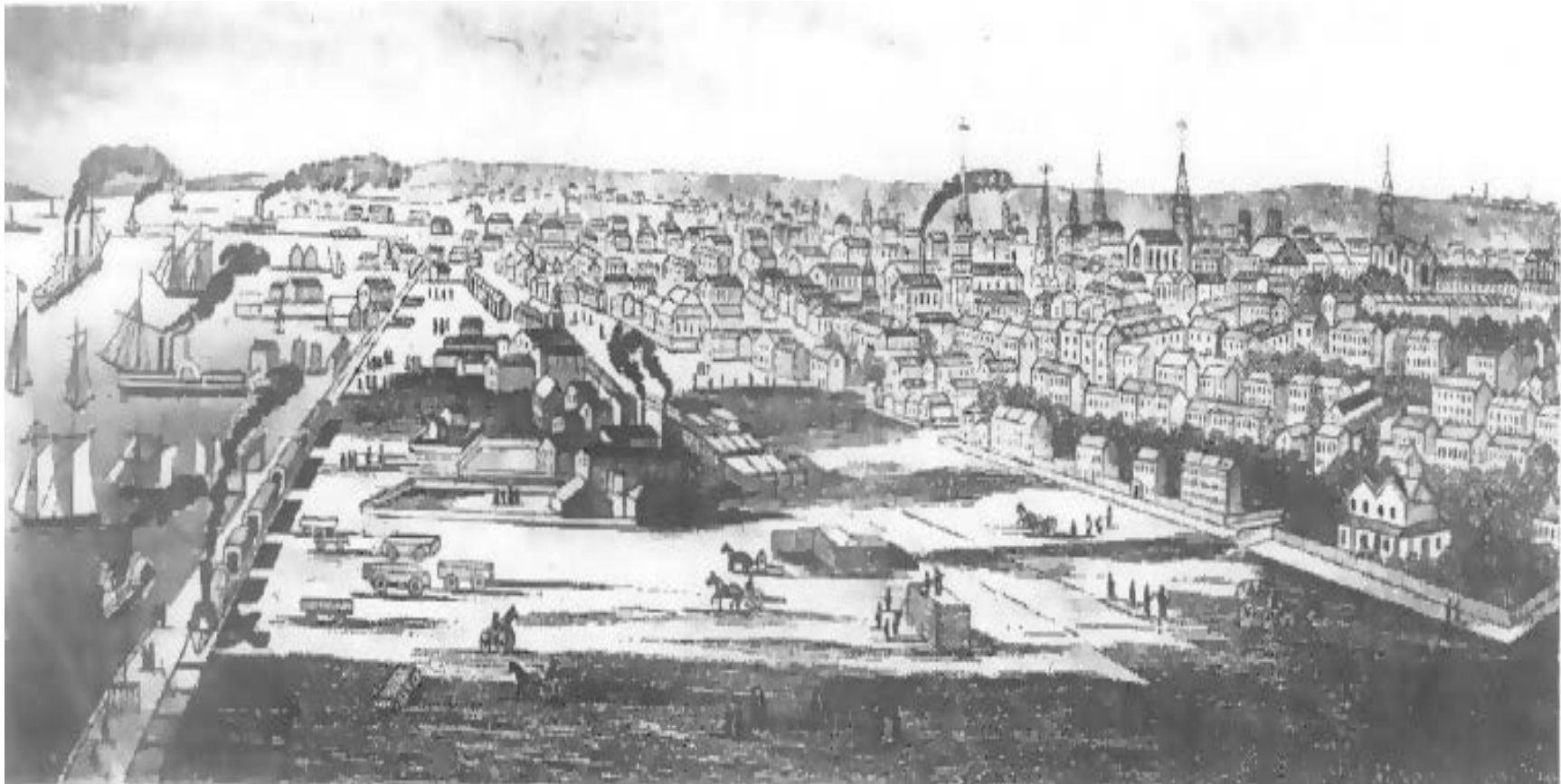


Figure 15: Hind, H.Y. 1863. The city of Toronto, From a cleared space on the Esplanade, near the Don River. From *Eighty years' progress of British North America*, p. 461

By 1863, ten of the approximately fourteen blocks of land under public ownership that had been transferred to the Walks and Gardens Committee were sold, mostly at low rates, to private interests (City of Toronto, 2001b). Suddenly, the civic landmark of the city, the waterfront, was replaced with a rail corridor, which left a physical mark on the urban landscape of Toronto's core up until the twenty-first century. This loss of the W&G lands in favour of industrial interests along the waterfront signalled the first of many ongoing conflicts over the control of the waterfront.

Green Space for Green Money: The Exhibition Grounds

By the 1870s, industrialism had managed to radically alter the urban landscape of the city. Industrial development soon shifted further west along the waterfront onto the remaining public lands of the former Garrison Common (see Figure 16).

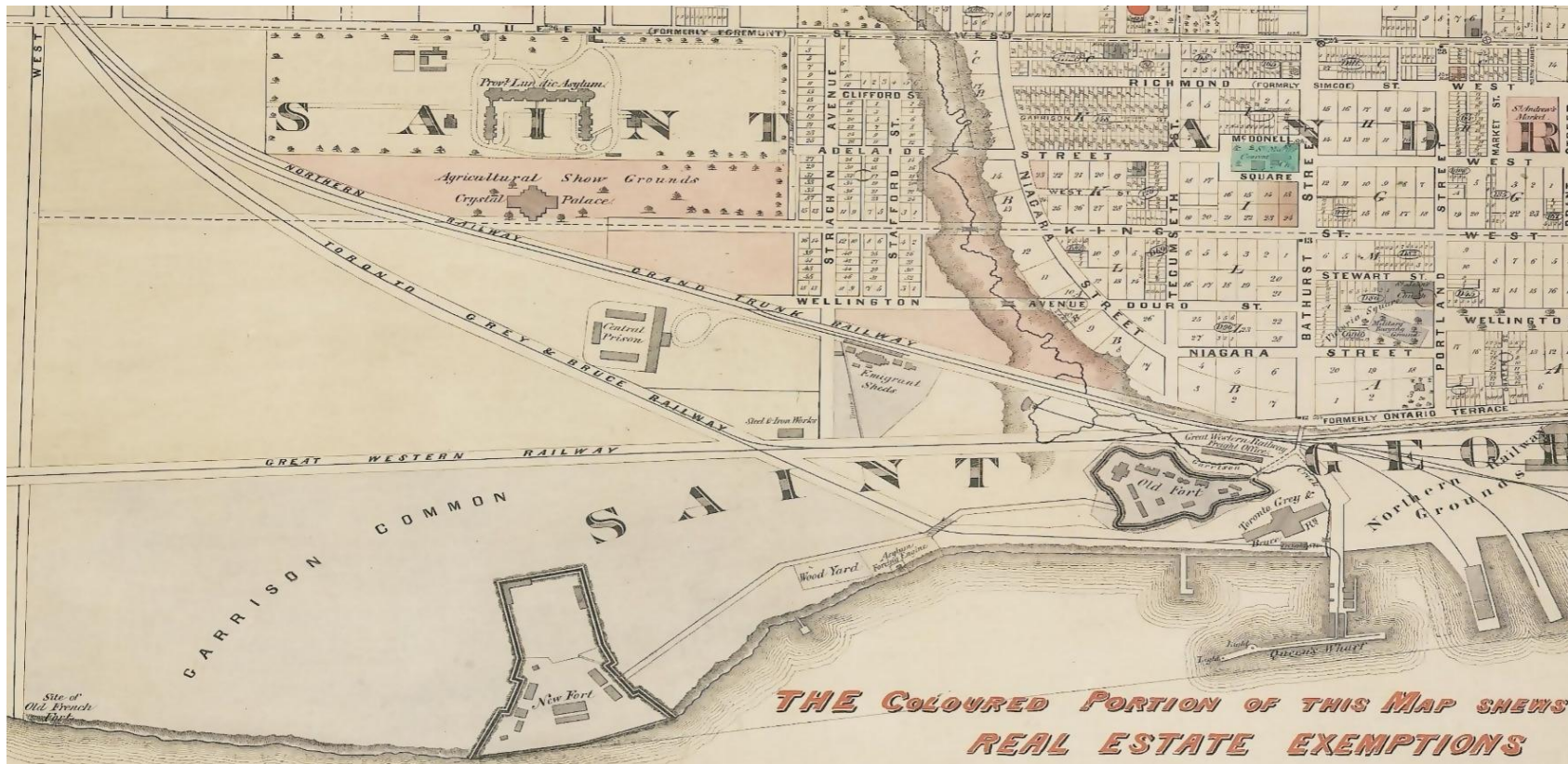


Figure 16: 1872. Wadsworth & Unwin, P.L. Surveyors. Map of the City of Toronto (with manuscript additions shewing real estate exemptions from taxation, 1878), From Library and Archives Canada: NMC25641

In April of 1878, on behalf of local business leaders from the Agriculture Association, the City Council signed a contract with the Federal Government of Canada to lease a large section of the old western Garrison Common to host the annual Provincial Agriculture Fair permanently. Local business and political leaders claimed that the location of the Garrison lands provided a closer connection with the harbour and the railroad transportation network. While there was a long tradition of agricultural fairs in Canada, the idea of designating permanent buildings on the grounds was unprecedented. The new exhibition buildings were planned to replace the small and deteriorating Crystal Palace building built in 1858.

With the support and backing of local industrial groups, City Council issued a vote on a proposed Exhibition By-Law to consider hosting the fair on an annual basis. The vote was open to all residents, not just limited to property owners, and asked if the city consider hosting the fair annually. Articles from *The Globe*, which was considered an industry-friendly newspaper, illustrated the rising tensions over the by-law vote:

...They [Property Owners Association] chose to assume that, if the by-law were defeated, the old buildings would be accepted, and patched up at the cost of \$20,000 or so, which they had no objection to see thus thrown away rather than invest a larger sum to permanent advantage. They know now that the Agricultural Association will not accept the old grounds and buildings. They professed – very unfairly – to be bent upon reducing taxation...(1878, May 25[b],p. 2)

In another article from *The Globe*:

... The city expends many thousands of dollars annually in drainage, lighting, watering, sodding, tree-planting, boulevard construction, and otherwise beautifying property and making the city attractive – all, within certain limits, highly commendable – but no “property owners” ever think of objecting to such expenditures... Apparently they [property owners] are unable to see that a measure which promotes the welfare of so large a body of citizens must add to the value of their property and the means of beautifying it...(1878, May 22[c], p. 2)

The deliberate move to have an open vote can be considered a strategic approach by industrial and political actors to counter opposition from the Property Owners Association (POA). The POA was concerned about the use of public funds to finance the construction of permanent buildings on the new exhibition grounds.

In 1878, City Council invited representatives to form a Committee referred as the Industrial Exhibition Association of Toronto, which was made up of the Ontario Society of Artists, the Toronto Mechanics’ Institute, the Toronto Horticultural Society, the Board of Trade of Toronto, the Manufacturers’ Association, and the Poultry Association (Lorimer, 1973). The goal of the Exhibition committee was to establish a new permanent annual Industrial Exhibition in Toronto which would replace the old agriculture fair grounds. Despite the defeat of two by-law votes, first to raise \$150,000 and later \$75,000, City Council neglected voters interests and devoted \$75,000 in the municipal budget to build the permanent buildings (ibid, 1973).

The Exhibition Committee aimed to replicate the popular World Expositions set in London and Paris, which highlighted local achievements in agriculture, industry, and the

arts. The idea originated from Toronto's Mayor Angus Morrison trip to the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition which celebrated 100 years of American independence. The fair was the first of its kind in North America and symbolized the economic emergence of the American industry and its establishment as an emerging global market.

Two years later, Mayor Morrison negotiated with the federal government to acquire parcels of lands on the remaining western public reserve to host the Exhibition Fair (Russell, 1982). An anonymous author highlighted the fair's potential in an article from *The Globe* (June 4, 1879, p. 2): "The Exhibition will form an era in the history of these gatherings and will bring with it an amount of business transactions and of circulation of money such as have not yet been known in the Province". The Exhibition case can be considered as an extension of industrial interests along the waterfront and illustrates how collective political and private interests dictated the function of the public grounds to serve industrial purposes.

Case Summary

Throughout the nineteenth century, the control and fate of the public lands along the waterfront were largely influenced by intense competition for land between private and public interests which eventually resulted in the loss of parkland space in the core. Initially reserved as crown lands, the W&G was intended to serve a range of public purposes. However, historical analysis reveals that municipal officials neglected their role as guardians of the W&G lands, in favour of private economic ambitions centered around railroad development.

Backed by the Canada Lands Company, sections of public land along the western reserve were sold to private interests. Shortly after that, the lands were subdivided, marking the earliest instance of profit speculation in the city, though the subdivision was intended to promote colonization in the town and finance urban infrastructure projects. The practice of selling crown land to raise public revenue, in this case, was the first case of government-backed land speculation in the city. Furthermore, this incident began an ongoing practice of transferring public land to private ownership in order to raise funds for local services.

With the incorporation of Toronto in 1834, a rising class of property owners emerged with collective interest in low property taxes and the enhancement of private property estates through infrastructure development. Before incorporation, private property lots were assigned fixed low prices in order to promote settlement. Incorporation equipped the City Council with new tools for generating revenue, such as assessing property taxes. However, due to property ownership requirements to vote in local elections, property owners managed to preserve low property taxes and avoid financing the development of the waterfront. Consequently, the opportunity to develop parks on public lands, like the W&G, was largely lost.

Magnusson and Sancton (1983) describe local politics in nineteenth-century Toronto as ongoing struggles of urban matters between two major groups of residents described as Boosters and Cutters. "Cutters" were the residents who advocated for smaller government and efficient urban services to save property owners from tax burdens. This collective advocacy group included the Rate Payer Association, and the Tories or Conservatives. Cutters were not necessarily against public investments, but

they believed that the role of municipalities should focus on the expansion of local commerce (ibid, 1983). By contrast, “Boosters” related to the Reformers or Financial elites. Like modern-day Liberals, this political group generally supported the expansion of public work projects. Significantly, financial elites supported public works projects such as railroads, not necessarily for the benefit of city residents, but rather for private economic gain through property values (ibid, 1983). At the time, the delivery of municipal services in Toronto was organized by private enterprises, from whom the Boosters benefited as private investors (ibid, 1983). Altogether, urban development for much of the century was an ongoing “struggle between various interests’ groups between property owners and capitalists.

The competition between Cutters and Boosters shaped political life in the nineteenth century class-based society of Toronto, which further evolved with the rise of industrialism in the 1850s. Power shifted from the military and political elites of the Compact Family to the capitalist families composed of industrialists, bankers, contractors, and corporate directors like the Gooderhams, McMasters, Masseys, and Eatons (Careless, 1984). The upper and lower middle-class represented the bulk of the electorate; these classes were comprised of brokers, academics, real estate dealers, storekeepers, artisans, and office clerks. The lower class consisted of skilled merchants, factory workers, labourers, sweatshop workers and unemployed (ibid, 1984). Consequently, urban planners matters became the control and direction of the new capitalist families who made built their wealth through the industry.

Former wealthy residents of the core began to migrate into the periphery, spurring new neighbourhoods like Rosedale, Annex, Jarvis, and Yorkville (Sanford,

1987). Significantly, these new neighbourhoods became a source of major development of urban services and infrastructure, mainly because of the influence of property ownership. By contrast, many of the underserved neighbourhoods in the core were occupied by renters who mostly worked in the nearby warehouses (Bradburn, 2014).

The combination of low property taxes, which prevented City Council from financing public park development and the pursuit of industrial development along the waterfront resulted in the eventual loss of the W&G lands. The *Toronto Esplanade Act* of 1853 transferred the reserved public lands from the 1818 W&G trust to a Council-led Walks and Gardens Committee, the first municipal public parks planning system in Toronto. Led by City Council, the waterfront and the reserved W&G lands were transferred to private control to support the construction of a railroad route to connect with the harbour and industrial core.

At the same time, land infilling of the harbour was carried out to support the construction of the Esplanade, a project intended to raise the value of the government-owned water lots from 1840. The Esplanade became a major public works project to create new land for industrial purposes. However, the construction of the Esplanade soon made headlines regarding the massive cost overruns. In an 1864 transcript, S.M. Jarvis, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Wharves and Harbours, titled the “Esplanade Question”, writes the following:

Under the said Act of Parliament, the Corporation of the City of Toronto, has incurred a Debenture debt of upwards of \$840,000 in the construction of the said Esplanade, and it would be manifestly unjust towards the general rate-payers of

the City and its public creditors now to make any alteration in or repeal the said Acts, or to pass the Bill now before Parliament, for the benefit of a few individuals. (Toronto Public Library, #1864.Jarvis.sb)

The mismanagement of the Esplanade eventually resulted in a drop in the value of the water lots, which paved the way for the Canadian Pacific Railway to acquire the lots for a low price (Engineering News Publishing Company, 1890, p. 4). As the City Council neglected to protect the waterfront, the residents of Toronto woke up to find the beauty of their once beloved shoreline converted to a dreary rail yard.

The transfer of the W&G lands by City Council to support the construction of the railroad provides context to understand the conflicted relationship between the planning of public green spaces with economic land development efforts. The case highlights how public officials recklessly transferred valuable waterfront lands to support private industrial development of the core. Indeed, private property development has long been a significant factor in the rise of green spaces in the city. The rise and importance of horticultural societies in promoting green spaces on the frontage of property lots to support land speculation as in the case of Allan Gardens is one example. The construction of the Exhibition grounds is another example of how green spaces were utilized to showcase industrial development. Equally, the creation of the city's first park division operated in terms of private property development. Together these factors highlight the major challenge of planning and development of public green spaces along with economic land development, specifically private property.

Desfor (1988) provides analysis of similar land reclamation work on the eastern portion of the waterfront at the end of the nineteenth century. Desfor demonstrates that

the opportunity to reclaim the marshlands of Ashbridge's Bay for commercial purposes was recognized as early as 1835, along with the potential to generate a significant sum of profit by land development from the project. The city agreed to clean the marshlands and reclaim the bay; not necessarily in order to maintain public ownership over the waterfront lands, but rather to make new land available for private enterprise.

By the 1870s, an ongoing dispute over the fate of the remaining public lands along the far western section of the waterfront continued between industry and property owners. Property owners argued against raising property taxes to finance the construction of buildings on the new western Exhibition grounds. With the support of local business leaders, City Council neglected the wishes of property owners and financed the construction of buildings on the grounds in order to support private industrial interests.

The Exhibition case highlights a major shift in the planning and development of urban green spaces in the city. Before the rise of industrialism in the city, green spaces were centrally planned to serve private land owners interests of subdivision. However the planning of green spaces in the city soon shifted to serve private industrial efforts, despite the great efforts of property owners who opposed the development of Exhibition Place. The opportunity to protect any remaining parkland space along the waterfront was lost in the land dispute. A century later, the loss of green space in the core would be recognized and addressed by new post-industrial municipal officials, planners and groups.

Part Two: The Re-emergence of The Walks and Gardens?

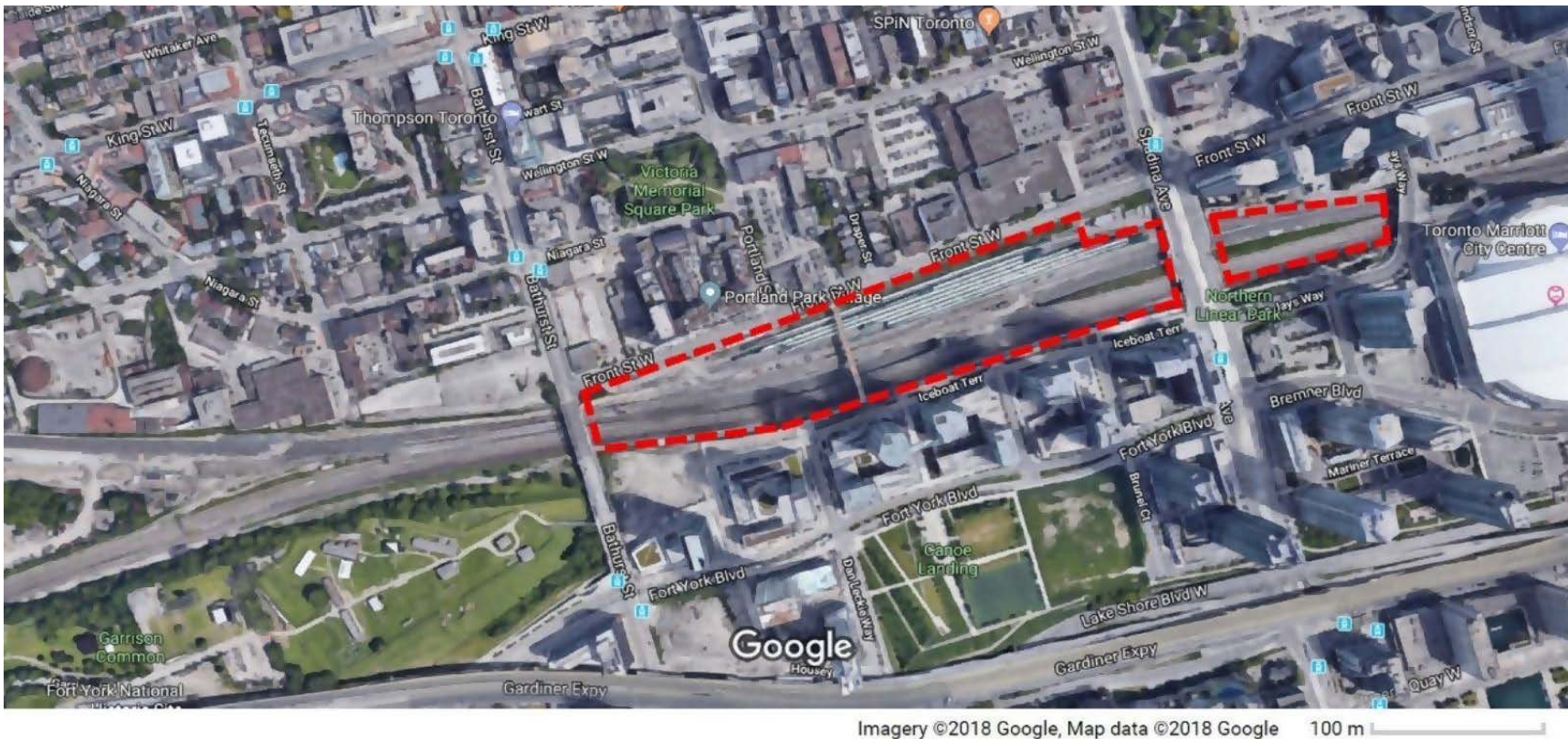


Figure 17: 2019, Ariel map of the Railway Lands site, with the proposed Rail Deck Park Project highlighted in red

In 2016, a twenty-one-acre public park project was proposed, called the Rail Deck Park (RDP), to be built over the Railway Lands site, located between Bathurst Street and Blue Jays Way in Toronto (see Figure 17). The estimated cost of the mega park project is pegged at \$1.665 billion (as of 2017), which is to be funded by a mix of levies such as cash-in-lieu parkland dedication funds, incremental growth-related funding tools, and private donations (City of Toronto Executive Committee, Nov 20, 2017).

However, the park project poses a series of land challenges such as ownership disputes regarding air rights. Shortly after the announcement of the park, a group of developers claimed ownership over the railway corridor with plans for high-rise residential development. Despite the land claims, there are significant political, economic, and social forces that have promoted the park project. Referred to as a legacy project of Mayor John Tory, the mayor has expressed determination to secure the space for the RDP (Pagliaro, 2017; Skinner, 2017). However, the Mayor has also led several neoliberal budgets with the goal of keeping property taxes low. Thus, the determination and involvement of the mayor in promoting green space in the downtown core are questionable.

Currently, the RDP project is in its initial planning stage, which will be followed by a second stage in 2019, with possible subsequent stages in the future. The latest major update on the project occurred on December 5th, 2017 when the City Council voted overwhelmingly in favour of continuing its planning efforts. The discussion of the RDP proposal centred on how much taxpayers should pay for the park and the role and contributions of the developers who seek to benefit financially through increased property values. The project's financial strategy relies on incremental, growth-related funding tools; revenues such as Section 42 cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication funds and Section 37 funds; development charges; and "value uplift capture tools" (City of Toronto, November 20, 2017, p. 3).

The underlying economic motives of the park project is one critical focal point of discussion in this paper. In addition to being an eye sore of the area, the railway corridor acts as a physical barrier between the surrounding neighbourhoods. Concept plans illustrate the project's potential to dramatically transform the site into a vibrant and engaging space for residents (see *Figure 18*). Significantly, the RDP has the potential to enhance the surrounding properties while benefitting proposed and future private development projects in the area.



Figure 18: From UrbanToronto.ca, <http://urbantoronto.ca/news/2016/08/tory-announces-plan-21-acre-rail-deck-park-downtown>

RDP: The strategy of intensification and land speculation in the downtown core

Over the last decade, the downtown core has experienced a surge in the construction of high-rise residential and commercial development (see Figure 19 and Figure 20). According to the City of Toronto's current *Downtown Plan*, the core is expected to grow from 240,000 to 475,000 residents by 2041, spurred by the development of high-rise residential condominiums (2017, August 18). Based on the latest research findings from the City of Toronto, most of the development in the city is concentrated in the downtown and central waterfront areas (2018, July, p.1).

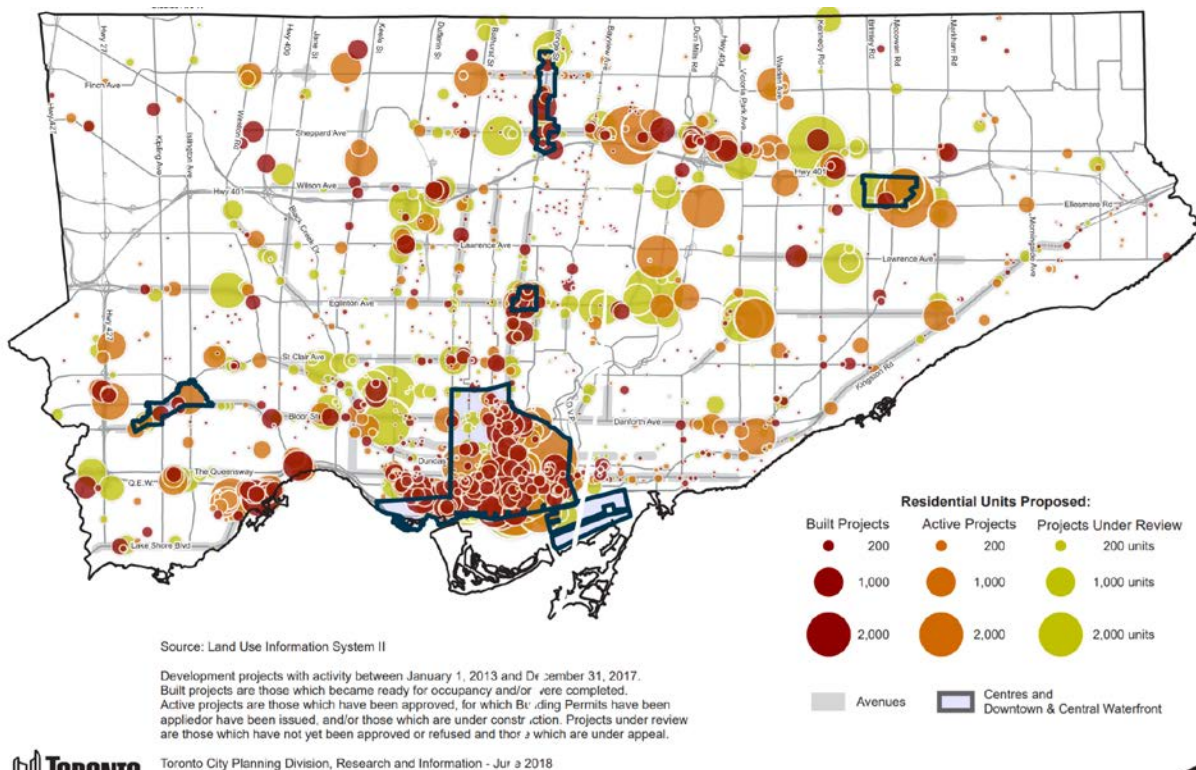


Figure 19: Proposed developments city-wide. Source: City of Toronto - How Does the City Grow? (2018, p.7)

Development in the core within the last twenty years has spurred several new neighbourhoods surrounding the RDP, including CityPlace, Fort York, and Liberty Village. A review of recent development applications highlights further concentration of

activity taking place along the northwestern sections of the proposed RDP site. The nearby King-Spadina area is expected to increase from between 19,260 and 19,985 inhabitants in 2015, to between 49,740 and 52,5656 inhabitants in 2041 (Canadian Urban Institute, 2016, p.42).



Figure 20: 2017, Map with proposed and approved development surround the RDP site (highlighted in black). From the City of Toronto Planning Study

Concord CityPlace, built by private real estate developer Concord Adex Inc, is located directly south of the RDP and considered the first master-planned residential development project of its scale in the city. In 1997, Concord Adex purchased 45 acres of downtown land from the *Canada Lands Company*, a federal crown land development corporation, the successor to the same Canada Company involved in the W&G case. Since 2001, over \$2 billion in redevelopment has been carried out in CityPlace, with the construction of twenty-five residential condominiums (Lee-Shanok, 2017).

CityPlace has been criticized for its lack of integrated planning and has faced concerns about the quality of units and inaccessibility for families. Criticisms regarding the lack of integration of Cityplace to surrounding areas and neighbouring neighbourhoods can be partly due to the rail corridor, which serves as a physical wall (Lornic, 2016). Cityplace residents have also been vocal about the buildings' poor structural conditions, and some have launched lawsuits against Concord Adex (CBC News, 2011, Nov 14; CBC News, 2016, Nov 1). The lack of connectivity, the separation from the city, and the large share of owner-investors have led some to call the area a "slum in the making" (Michalowicz, 2011, para.2).

Cityplace has also been considered an investment-driven development, demonstrated by the lack of family-friendly units and large quantity of small and single bedroom units. Development of the area is emblematic of the reliance on condominiums as the primary source of growth in rental housing (rather than purpose-built rentals), spurring concerns about home affordability and stability (City of Toronto, 2019). The lack of family-friendly three-bedroom condo units, a common practice that occurs when smaller units are constructed, deters a community of owners and instead

creates an investor-driven market (City of Toronto, 2017, May). According to the 2016 Census tract for the City Place area, approximately 95% of residents live in condominiums, 65% are renters, and the majority of residents live in either a one-bedroom (62%) or two-bedroom (31%) dwelling (Statistics Canada, 2017). The monthly median shelter costs for rented dwellings in the census tract is approximately \$1,683, which is higher than the \$1,207 city-wide median (ibid, 2017).

Despite public criticisms and complaints, the RDP announcement has already improved public opinion about CityPlace and may signal further speculation in the area. Since the announcement of the RDP in 2016, the price per square foot for condo sales in CityPlace has jumped by approximately 45%, compared to the downtown average of 40% (see *Figure 21*) (Condos.ca, 2019). According to Zoocasa, a real estate property listing website, some of the most expensive luxury-style condos can be found in neighbourhoods surrounding the RDP (Zoocasa, 2019).

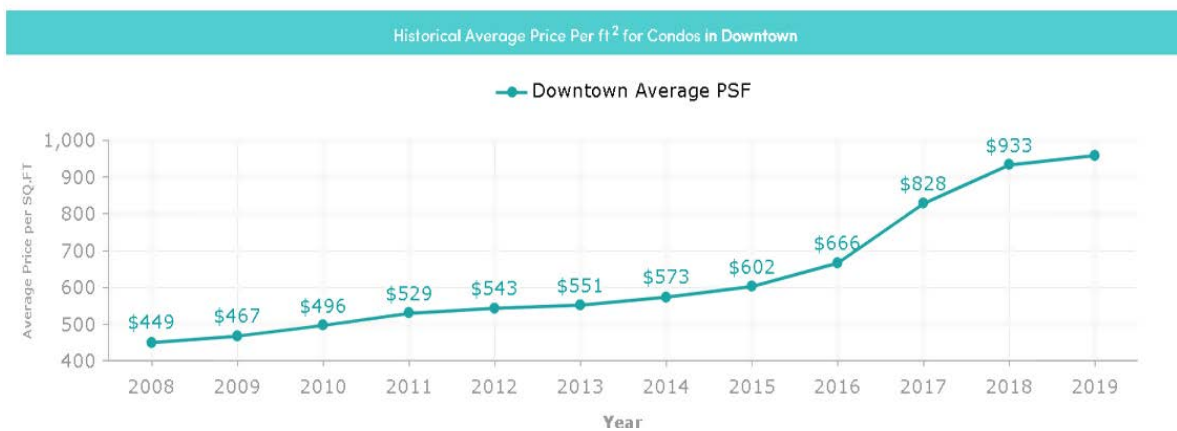
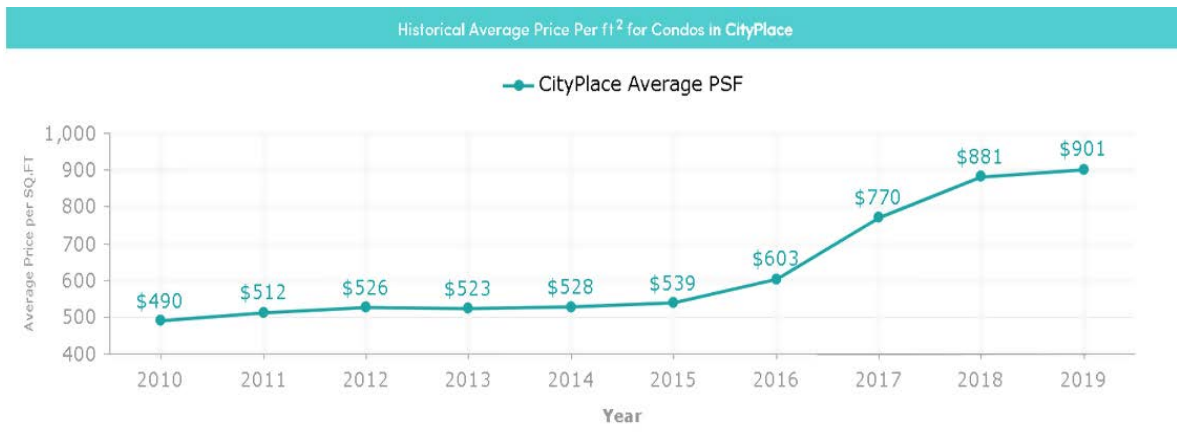


Figure 21: Price comparison of Condominium sales between Cityplace and the Downtown average, based on price per square feet. [Downtown Average PSF for 2019, based on sales up to March 31st at \$959]. Source: Condos.ca

More recently, the RDP has been advertised in current luxury style condo developments, such as the *Well* project, located directly north of the rail lands site at the intersection of Spadina and Front St West (see Figure 22). RioCan Real Estate Investment Trust, the second-largest real estate trust in Canada, is the primary developer for the massive mixed-use development project with seven buildings confirmed and 1,800 residential units planned for the site (RioCan, 2019). According to the project website, “The Well is located at the epicentre of Toronto’s west downtown core and flanked by ample green space including Clarence Square, Victoria Memorial Park and the proposed 21-acre Rail Deck Park” (The Well, 2019, para.4).



Figure 22: The Well. From <https://www.thewelltoronto.com/the-area/location/>

In May 2017, P.I.T.S. Development Inc. proposed the ORCA project on the RDP site; this project consists of 8 buildings and a 12.8-acre linear park over the rail corridor (see *Figure 23*). The consortium has claimed ownership of the air rights above the Railway Lands. The developer has proposed a total of 2,750 residential units; of these, 1,100 will be two-bedroom units, 825 will be three-bedroom units, and 825 will be one-bedroom units.

The mix of family-friendly three-bedroom condo units is a good sign since the rate of production for these units are low in comparison with one-bedroom units (Ryerson City Building Institute, 2017).

However, on January 31st, 2018, City Council rejected the development application for an Official Plan Amendment of the site area by P.I.T.S. The development application has since been in limbo since an appeal was made to a provincial administrative land tribunal board. Before the City Council refused the development application, the Toronto Terminals Railway Co.Ltd (TTR) and Canadian National Railway Company (CN) sent a letter indicating that there was an agreement between Craft Acquisitions Corporation and P.I.T.S . The letter claims 100% ownership of all property air rights and claims that TTR and CN retained interests in building future development of buildings and structure within the lands dating back to 2001 (City of Toronto, 2018, Jan 15).

From a community perspective, the ORCA project has garnered positive feedback from one local community association. In a letter to the Council, the Grange Community Association recommends that the Council continue working with the P.I.T.S. team to settle on an agreement (Allen, 2018, Jan 16). The letter discusses the financial implications of losing the development and claim that the city and the ORCA team have something to contribute. The letter may be surprising as community groups generally oppose developments, yet it reveals the mix of perspectives.



Figure 23: Jan 2019, Proposal of the ORCA Project with the proposed 12.8-acre park over rail deck. From Urbantoronto.ca

The nearby construction of the CIBC Square complex is a similar project that includes an elevated green space above the rail tracks (see Figure 24). The private development will include two high rise office towers on both sides of the existing Railway Lands, which will be connected by an elevated park. The 0.4-hectare park project will be publicly accessible and bridge the rail corridor, making it the first elevated park in Toronto. Unlike the RDP, the project is surrounded by commercial properties that limit its opportunities to generate profit due to its smaller scale.



Figure 24: CIBC Square with the elevated park. Source: Urban Strategies, 2019, From <http://www.urbanstrategies.com/project/45-and-151-bay/>

The function and design of the RDP shares similar outcomes of urban redevelopment projects implemented across global cities. Oxford Properties, the Toronto-based global real estate investment arm of OMERS and the largest pension fund in Canada, has co-invested over \$400 million to build a rail deck project in New York City, called the Hudson Yards Development. On January 24, 2019, Stantec, an international consulting agency, was selected to provide technical consulting and costing services for CreateTO, the City of Toronto's real estate corporation, for the next stage of planning. The consulting agency has worked on similar projects, like the Hudson Yards in Manhattan and the Atlantic Yards (also called Pacific Park) in Brooklyn. Like the RDP project, these developments are part of a large-scale effort to deindustrialize and redevelop the railyards into large-scale property development projects.

The Parkland Deficit: Development Charges, Parkland Funds, and Tax Revenue

The intended outcome of the RDP project, can be understood as a city-proposed solution for a city-created problem that can be traced back to the W&G. The lack of urban green spaces to accommodate residential growth in the urban core is well-documented, as is the city official's inability to find solutions. In 2001, at the start of the initial redevelopment process, a coalition of inner-city neighbourhood associations and Councillors sounded the alarm about the need for more green space in the downtown core. With the support of Toronto city staff, the coalition formed the Walks and Gardens Working Group (WGWG) to investigate the status of the former 1818 trust. According to the findings of the working group, the "Walks and Gardens Fund was never set up as a true trust account, despite being referred to as a special fund" (City of Toronto, 2001, p. 9). Furthermore, there was "...little evidence for City staff to say indefinitely that the obligations of the Walks and Gardens Trust have been either breached or fully met" (ibid, p. 16). The loss of the W&G lands was dug up and uncovered to bring to light.

More than a decade after the WGWG published its findings; a city report was released to request the province to repeal the W&G trust with the following comments:

The Trust long ago ceased to serve any purpose, and this is supported by the fact that the Trust has been overlooked for close to 100 years. The City now has legislative tools in respect of parks and park acquisitions that did not exist at the time that the Trust was established. However the Trust continues to exist in law and accordingly, it would be prudent for the City to seek repeal of the Trust legislation and dissolution of the Trust in order to relieve Council of any ongoing obligations in respect of the Trust, to clear title to the remaining lands affected by

the Trust, including the Union Station lands and to clarify that the City is free to use Union Station revenues as it sees fit. (City of Toronto, 2012, p. 5)

The recommendation to repeal the W&G trust and remove any legal obligations by City Council as its trustees is perhaps an acknowledgment of the mismanagement of funds. The amendment from the *1857 Toronto Esplanade Amendment Act, 20 Vict. C. 80* act required that the city replace any parkland space that has been sold off with parkland. However, a comprehensive historical search of records by the WGWG found that it cannot determine if the obligations of the trust were met or breached (2001, p.16). The uncertainty of the trust in this matter may be an outcome of limited evidence or possible negligence by city officials.

Despite findings from the WGWG's report, City Officials continue to repeat the planning mistakes of the past. The lack of suitable efforts by municipal officials to properly plan urban green spaces to support ongoing intensification of the core is a major sign of this ongoing negligence. Furthermore, the rapid redevelopment of the core has driven property values up, causing financial challenges for requiring land for park purposes in the downtown area. The current municipal strategy of acquiring parkland using development charges has not been updated to meet the rising property values and needs reform (Knowles, 2013). Based on city reports, there are two central arguments to justify the RDP project: the low amount of parkland space per capita in the downtown core and the lack of available space for parks due to recent and future intensification (City of Toronto, 2017b, November). Supplementary planning assessments such as *TOcore: Planning Downtown Secondary Study* and the *Parkland*

Strategy: Growing Toronto Parkland have also identified for the need for green spaces in the downtown core.

The *TOcore, a Secondary Plan* for the downtown area, is a 25-year policy framework with a series of land use initiatives that are aimed at improving the economic vibrancy of the downtown core. The plan builds on the policy directions of the *Municipal Official Plan* and highlights the importance of downtown for projecting the city's image as a global city (City of Toronto, 2015). Together, the provincial and municipal land use policies are part of a vision that can best be described as part of a "smart growth" framework that aims to attract and channel private investment practices and skilled labour in the downtown core (Bunce 2004, Fillion 2003).

The Ontario Development Charges Act (1997) stipulates a "growth pays for growth" framework of city building that permits municipalities to collect development charges to raise funds for infrastructure improvements. The core principle of the act is based on collecting growth-related capital costs for public infrastructure, including parks, are collected through development charges (The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2013, p. 1). Parkland development charges are collected with residential and commercial development in the city. Along with intensification efforts of the core, the collection of development charges have become a major revenue source for municipalities.

According to the City of Toronto's data from 2018, the most considerable growth is occurring in the Downtown and Central Waterfront, where between 2013 and 2017, 37% of the proposed residential units and 40% of the proposed non-residential units in the City are located. Within the downtown core, growth has concentrated along King

Street West and Spadina Avenue, with over 91 proposed residential and non-residential projects, almost double the second fastest growing area, King-Parliament, which has 40 projects. Both of these neighbourhoods are located in the same vicinity as the proposed RDP site.

Beginning in the twentieth century, mutual efforts by officials from the provincial and municipal government have encouraged intensification policies aimed at promoting compact growth. Filion & McSpurren (2007) discuss previous smart growth policies aimed at achieving residential density development along with the transit to support mobility since the late 1950s. The latest example is the 2017 Provincial Growth Plan, which lays out intensification and density targets for urban centres to encourage growth.

Consequently, municipalities follow pro-development land policies in order to increase their respective tax base while keeping property taxes at or below inflation levels. Low property taxes assist in promoting development by encouraging future homeownership while also supporting existing homeowners. At a political level, homeowners are a major voting body and able to influence of urban matters related to park development. With the rise in real estate development in the last decade, the city has managed to generate a large portion of revenue from several taxes, the most significant being property tax.

The growth framework attempts to place the burden of financing new infrastructure onto developers by issuing development charges. According to the Official Plan for the City of Toronto, “City services are delivered efficiently through a growth-supportive infrastructure system” (City of Toronto, 2015, p.5). Growth-related funding tools make up an umbrella of pro-intensification policies, which includes Section

37 Benefits and Section 42 Parkland Dedication. Together with property taxes, these charges attempt to provide financial support for addressing the adverse effects of rapid growth; however, these funds are strategically utilized by elected officials to gain political support of property owners at the expense of future generations.

The value of properties surrounding the RDP are considered some of the most expensive in Canada. Consequently revenue collected from development around the RDP make up a major source of revenue for the city (Rider, 2017). In 2007, Toronto City Council approved the Municipal Land Transfer Tax (MLTT), another source of revenue generated from land development. The MLTT is applied to a change in residential property ownership and calculated based on the value of the land. The municipal tax is based on the same model as the Provincial Land Transfer Tax, with exemptions for first-time home buyers. Toronto is the only city that charges both a provincial and municipal land transfer tax on residential properties, which provides greater revenue potential from development.

Since 2011, the MLTT has generated approximately \$800 million in municipal tax revenue in 2017, an increase of over 350% (Elliott, 2018). However, critics have argued against the Council's strategic use of MLTT funds for balancing the city budget and satisfying homeowners instead of investing in public improvements (Elliott, 2018). A literature review of global municipal land tax strategies indicates that the MLTT is regarded as a "tolerable tax" as it shifts the burden of existing property owners to pay for development (Clayton, 2015; Dachis et al., 2012). Critics also point out that the \$30 billion price tag for unfunded capital public projects that have been planned for the city is being neglected in order to balance the budget (City of Toronto, 2017a, November).

As city officials struggle to develop open green spaces in the core, developers and private donations have stepped in to address the gap. One example is the nearby Bentway Park, a revitalization project which transformed underutilized space below the Gardiner Expressway highway. The space has been redesigned as parkland and hosts public and private events. Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces (POPS) are another recent initiative led by property developers to construct small green spaces as part of development projects in the downtown core. In exchange for approval of development by the city, private developers take financial responsibility for creating and maintaining the adjacent public space. While POPS have successfully promoted the creation of urban green spaces, they are not suitable substitutes for high quality public green spaces. Many POPS spaces lack the proper public regulation, greenery, trees, and seating to be suitable public green spaces (Noble, 2015). These spaces can be thought of a city band aid solution for the more significant green space deficiency problem. While the private sector has managed to play a role in creating green space, the city must take a leadership role in the creation of high-quality green spaces.

Case Summary

Despite the RDP being in early stages of planning, the opportunity to analyze the institutions, actors, and strategies that support the project offers valuable insights in understanding the power dimensions, emerging priorities, and existing trends which influence the local urban planning context. Several critical questions remain about the status and feasibility of the project, including the ownership of existing air rights and the public-private framework. As the project progresses, these issues will require further analysis.

The RDP provides a case study on collective power dynamics that support the strategic goal of deindustrializing the railway lands. . At the central front of the project is the potential of spurring local economic development. In this aspect, commercial and residential developers have a financial interest in the success of the project. Another important factor, is the city-led role in the project to spur local economic development efforts. In the context of the RDO, municipal officials and planners are active in carrying out neoliberal based land development policies centered around competitive city building and public entrepreneurialism (Sager, 2011). The Mayor and Municipal Councillors who represent the downtown wards support local efforts in marketing and branding the downtown core and waterfront. Third, is the social and cultural interest in transforming industrial spaces into “liveable” green areas. The actors or groups who fall into this group are comprised of non-economic or non-political actors like park associations, private urban planners, and advocates for urban parks. They may have a value-based connection to the downtown core as either residents or users of green space.

According to a public poll taken on November of 2016, over 46% of 778 respondents disagreed that public funds of over \$1 billion should be used to develop the RDP (Forum Research, 2016, para.1). However, when asked if more parkland is needed in the downtown core, more than 65% agreed (ibid, 2016). Understandably, the public disapproval of the project may stem from the concern regarding the sizeable amount of public funding required to finance the project, rather than opposition to investment in downtown parkland space. The survey findings may also require alternatives to address the lack of green spaces which require responsible use of public funds.

Along with the lack of parkland, the rapid redevelopment of the core has also spurred a housing affordability and transit crisis in the city. In a recent public poll conducted in July 2018, city residence reported housing affordability as the most pressing issue (26%), followed by public transit (18%) (Forum Research Inc, 2018). From another perspective, the RDP proposal has received mostly positive praise from park agencies and urban planning associations. Park People, a Toronto-based independent charity that advocates for park space in the city, has released an article in support of the project (Garrett, 2017). However, the article fails to justify the cost of financing the project or any alternatives.

Overall, while the park has received positive praise from political actors, developers not connected to the air rights, and community park advocates, concerns have been raised over the use of public funds for a park, particularly in light of the more pressing issues of affordable housing, poverty, transit, and traffic. The role and

influence of the above private groups in supporting the project require caution and may make up the existing reluctance for development on the site.

The Ryerson City Building Institute, a network of philanthropists and organizations in both the private and public sectors, have also released a report in support of the project. Repeating the same language that was used by the Mayor, the report labels the project to be a “once in a generation” opportunity that will improve the liveability of the downtown core (Haines & Nelischer, 2017). The report continues to state the “Rail Deck Park offers the last opportunity to access a large, contiguous piece of land in the downtown core and transform it into public space” (ibid, p. 9).

With the rise of development applications in the neighbourhoods surrounding the RDP site, the opportunity to transform the rail corridor into a park space may have a significant impact on property values. The active rail corridor serves the nearby Union Station, the busiest passenger transportation hub in Canada. The active and busy rail corridor will witness further increase in commuter train activity as part of Metrolinx’s GO Regional Express Rail 10-year transit expansion program (City of Toronto, October 2017, p.28). The RDP may play a significant role in the mitigation of noise and pollution concerns from the nearby rail corridor. Finally, at a visual scale, the project will make the rail corridor more appealing for residents and tourism efforts.

Current provincial growth-management policies support the ongoing intensification and redevelopment efforts on the site. The recent Provincial Growth Plan (2017) outlines a series of guiding principles that are based on utilizing public infrastructure for residential intensification purposes. With intensification as the central planning strategy for provincial and municipal policies, new issues emerge requiring

Careful planning on how to adequately support growth with necessary infrastructure such as parks.

Funds collected from development charges such as the Municipal Land Transfer Tax have managed to raise millions of dollars. Significantly, revenue from property taxes, which is considered the “most important and stable revenue source”, has decreased (City of Toronto, 2016, October, para. 4). As a result, funds collected from development charges intended for infrastructure has been utilized by Mayor John Tory as balancing the local budget, to the benefit of property owners.

At a global scale, the rise of mega urban park projects has demonstrated the neoliberal pursuit of capturing economic land development opportunities through profit speculation and rising property values. In this respect, the RDP follows the same trends and principles as similar renewal park projects of urban industrial spaces like Paris’s Promenade Plantée, San Francisco’s Transbay Transit Centre, New York City’s High Line, Atlanta’s BeltLine, Chicago’s Millennium Park, and Boston’s Rose Kennedy Greenway (City of Toronto, 2017b, November). These projects, significant in both scope and cost, have carried out the major urban transformation of former and active industrial spaces. Finally, the high economic return of these projects through the restructuring of underutilized industrial spaces into engaging liveable spaces is noteworthy.

Part Three: Unpacking the association between Urban Green Space and Economic Land Development

Historical analysis of the RDP site reveals an former 1818 crown land trust intended to reserve a strip of land along the waterfront, referred as the W&G, for public purposes. While the trust was written to preserve and protect the beauty of the waterfront from commercial development encroachment, the identity of the trustees perhaps signals its intent as a strategic tool to protect the value of private estates along the waterfront. By the 1850s, city officials decided to transfer the W&G lands along with much of the waterfront, to private control in order to support railroad construction efforts.

The urgency to create and preserve open green spaces in the city to mitigate rapid industrialism became a pressing issue of local affairs by middle of the century. At the beginning, the promotion for green spaces in the city was led by wealthy landowners, primarily through the rise of horticultural societies, intended to protect and enhance private estates. Soon after land speculators began to incorporate green spaces into subdivisions in attempts to attract potential home buyers. Prominent land speculators such as William Allan and members of the Compact Family were central figures in the planning and development of green spaces in the city. By the end of the century, municipal officials began to take a lead role in the planning and development of parkland in the city. However, the planning and development of urban green spaces continued to center around the potential to enhancement the value of private estates as witnessed in the hiring and corrupt practices of the first Park Commissioner.

The RDP project can be understood as an extension of the former planning priorities of the past centered on the promotion of land values through urban greenery. While the narrative communicated by municipal politicians and planners is one that supports the RDP in order to increase green space in the downtown core, the

underlying economic potential is also significant and warrant of analysis. The connection between green space and private property development is another critical piece which connects both periods, primarily in terms of each project's relationship to land speculation and increasing land values.

The W&G and the RDP illustrate city-led efforts to remove or add green space in the downtown core in order to serve the dominant economic interests of the period. While both park projects are set in different capitalist-driven liberal structures, they can be considered critical components of the dominant economic land development efforts of their respective periods. The two projects also demonstrate how the scale, impact, and function of green spaces in the city is determined by a collective group of economic, political and social actors. On a spatial scale, both projects are intended to radically restructure the physical landscape of the downtown core.

Both cases also offer valuable learning opportunities regarding the role and influence of political and economic actors and groups in the planning and development of parkland in Toronto. At the emergence of industrialism, the railroad was advocated by local economic, political, and social elites as a major project to assist in the city's economic growth. The opportunity to trade goods and resources between local and rural markets provided an economic boost to the city, but significantly to land owners and speculators looking to seek profit from rising property values. Similarly, the RDP is described by municipal officials and planners as a must-have project, needed to support ongoing redevelopment efforts of the downtown core. The elevated park project is characterized and illustrated by key developers and economic actors as an anchor needed to avoid the ill effects of rapid development which has played a major factor in

the loss of green space in the core. core. Unpacking the economic, political, and social dimensions behind both park cases will require exploring critical theories of urban planning.

The planning and development of green space in the downtown core is closely connected to the dominant economic land development patterns of each respective period. In the case of the W&G, the rise of industrialism drastically altered the waterfront and the downtown core, eventually pushing residents to the periphery. Wealthy residents that originally settled in the core began to flee to the new neighbourhoods in the periphery to avoid the ill effects of rapid industrialism. These new spaces in the periphery enjoyed access to the green spaces surrounding private estates, such as backyards. Also referred as the *streetcar suburbs*, these middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods largely consisted of property holders. Non-property holding residents, who made up the underprivileged working class, occupied the core and included neighbourhoods such as the Ward, Cabbagetown, and Spadina. Without the necessary property rights to vote in elections, the neighbourhoods in the core were powerless to influence urban planning decisions and preserve green spaces in the core.

In contrast to the W&G case, the RDP project is a clear break from the former industrial land use planning measures. Current planning strategies are focused on the revitalization of the waterfront and downtown core to create land for residential and office development. Unlike the W&G, the RDP project can be understood as an intervention strategy. Led by a neo-liberal based planning body, the RDP is intended to serve the luxury redevelopment districts of the downtown core, such as CityPlace, Liberty Village, and Fort York. Turner (2002) provides some understanding of the

planning framework behind the RDP and how cities are revitalizing former industrial spaces in the core to enhance surrounding land values for revenue generation purposes. These neoliberal growth based planning policies make up the “competitive city” framework with the narrative of reaping economic benefits for all residents, in the downtown core and periphery (Desfor et al., 2006).

Since the late 1950s, the central strategy of urban planning and land use policies of the downtown core have focused on intensification and density. The concentration of high-rise development in the downtown core and waterfront serves as a current trend of urban policies of the core. These “smart growth” land use policies draw on intensification measures to enhance the economic and physical revitalization efforts in the downtown core (Bunce, 2004). Significantly, density is intended to be supported by further investment in public facilities such as transit, schools, community centers, and parks. However, municipal officials and planners have been unsuccessful in properly planning and developing these public works alongside development in the core.

The 2017 Ontario Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe is a central guiding planning policy that sets key growth targets in cities in towns in order to increase density⁴. Another major challenge of growth based policies which needs mention is the environmental impact of rapid intensification and density. Initially, growth-based planning policies were designed to intervene and address the spatial challenges unchecked suburban sprawl. However, empirical evidence does not necessarily support the notion that growth based , or compact, policies are more

⁴ The provincial government has recently released Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act (2019) which affects the municipal planning process, change the appeals process, and financial framework to support new park development. The City of Toronto, along with several other municipalities, have opposed the legislation and argue the changes will reduce development funds collected to support public amenities.

sustainable than sprawl. Neuman (2005, p. 23), states that following “compact city fallacy holds that the compact cities are neither a necessary or sufficient condition for a city to be sustainable and that the attempt to make cities more sustainable only by using urban form strategies is counterproductive”. Neuman further argues that the focus should be applied to the coevolutionary organic process of growth, rather than the formal interventional approach fixed on promoting a compact urban form.

In Toronto, this clearly apparent in the planning and development of high-rise residential condominiums and the lack of mid-rise residential apartments in the downtown core. Growth based planning policies also hinder “gentle density”, or housing that provides a suitable alternative to high-rise or low-rise density such as mid-rise and compact row houses (Clayton & Petramala, 2019). The impact of intensification and growth-based land use planning policies is a major factor regarding the lack of open green spaces in the downtown core. Instead, the importance of public amenities such as transit and public green spaces becomes elevated in dense settlements.

Urban Planning and Parkland Theories

Urban planning theories provide some understanding of the underlying forces involved in shaping the framework of both the RDP and the W&G. The contemporary urban planning structure traces its roots to the nineteenth century and incorporates the central principles of classical liberal economic ideology. Laissez-faire markets promoting competitive urban conditions to allocate society’s scarce resources in an “efficient” manner (Klosterman, 1985). An important distinction of both classical and neo-classical theories is the acknowledgement that governments play a significant intervention role in the correction of market failures (ibid, 1985). Indeed, both the W&G

and RDP case are shaped by different degrees of capitalism which share similar underlying components that are significant to understanding the driving forces of both projects.

The transformation of the urban planning context and the restructuring of land in both cases is centred on the pursuit of liberal and neoliberal urban development policies; this is highlighted by Marxist thinker David Harvey (2005)

in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (p. 2)

The process of neoliberalization has, however, entailed much “creative destruction”, not only of prior institutional frameworks and powers (even challenging traditional forms of state sovereignty) but also of divisions of labour, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart (p. 3).

Harvey goes on to list a series of urban planning initiatives that are aimed at promoting neoliberalism such as the privatization of public services, the removal of land regulations, and the reduction of development costs and tax burdens (2005). The term *creative destruction*, coined by economist Joseph Schumpeter, can also be applied to

both cases to understand the transformation of the shared site to serve economic interests by profit building for the dominant private industry leaders.

The paradoxical process of capitalist-driven urban development can be unearthed in the W&G and the RDP. Harvey describes the concept of “spatial fix” as “capitalism’s unstable drive to resolve its inner crisis tendencies by geographical expansion and geographical restructuring” (2001, p. 24). Indeed, two park cases take an interventionist approach to plan sites around broader economic development processes and the many interests that emerge from the latter. A spatial fix is conceptually based on capitalist attempts to solve urban planning problems while paradoxically reproduce the contradictions of capitalism.

In the case of the RDP, one internal contradiction is the need to build a public park to remediate the adverse effects of rapid development from high rise condominiums. More broadly, the two cases show how a particular spatial fix can become an obstacle to the development of capitalism once a particular era of accumulation has reached its end. Harvey (1976), further describes the paradox of planning for urban public parks as humanity’s need to establish a relationship with nature, while at the same time concealing the source of this lost relationship: the capitalist organization of land. For this reason, the notion of urban parks as “the lungs of the city” emerged in the nineteenth century, to symbolically counter the adverse effects of industrialism (Crompton, 2017).

Foglesong (1986) also argues that public amenities such as parks, transit, or roads can be utilized to support private markets even though individual property owners or fractions of capital may not support such initiatives conceived in a broader conception

of capitalist self-interest. In the case of the RDP, the municipal administration is set on austerity-style budgets that are based on the premise of keeping property tax rates low. Green spaces become planned as revenue-generating spaces, instead of recreation, to assist in the establishment of balanced budgets and the preservation of low residential property taxes (Turner 2002). Thus, the financial investment in green spaces, along with their planned function and role, is justified based on the merits of local economic development.

The RDP can be recognized as an extension of ongoing revitalization efforts of the downtown core and the application of spatial fix within the post-industrial era. In the last twenty years, *Waterfront Toronto*, a land development agency, has managed billions of public funds into the redevelopment of the waterfront to accommodate and make room for private development. Lehrer & Wieditz (2009) explored the redevelopment of former industrial spaces along the waterfront by developers that have been previously active in suburbanization. These actors have shifted attention into urban areas and carried out massive redevelopment efforts based on profit-driven interests.

In such economic land development initiatives, city planners are altering the landscape of the waterfront once again by reintroducing nature. Desfor & Laidley (2011) describe the re-naturalization of the waterfront and the downtown core as a process of capitalist accumulation based on the production of both land and nature in the urban setting. Similar to how land reclamation projects transformed the waterfront throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century to support industry, the government is

playing a lead role in altering the waterfront by reintroducing nature to support private economic development interests.

The re-emergence of the W&G, in the form of the RDP, signals a significant cultural shift in how urban green spaces are viewed as initiatives for sustainability. Concerns regarding the development of sustainable spaces have become a major trend of the current municipal urban planning framework. Loughran (2018) builds on the concept of spatial fix to conceptualize urban green spaces in relationship to the environmental crises faced by cities. In this view, the function of urban parks is to mitigate climate disasters and reduce carbon emissions in order to build resilient cities.

The Role of Land Speculation and the City Image in Park Planning

The economic dimension of green spaces is a major driving force behind the promotion of parkland development in both periods. In the case of the W&G, land speculators utilized the lack of public green space to showcase their plans for the subdivision, as was the case in Allan Gardens. In the RDP case, both private developers and the municipal government have applied land speculation strategies to acquire the rise of property values surrounding the site. Highlighted in the RDP official planning reports are cases of comparable urban park projects that increase the value of the surrounding property such as Millennium Park in Chicago (US\$1.4 billion increase) and Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston (US\$3.1 billion) (City of Toronto, 2017b, November; Crompton, 2004).

Following global planning trends, city officials and planners believe the RDP has similar potential to raise property values through real estate speculation. While cities continue to serve developers' interests in promoting more consumer-based urban

landscapes, existing accessible public spaces like urban parks are reconfigured for land speculation purposes (Boonchuen 2002, Turner 2002, Zukin 1991). The potential of urban green spaces to spur land speculation within nearby neighbourhoods is demonstrated in the case of CityPlace.

Since the time of settlement, images of the city have showcased the waterfront as an extension of the dominant economic development initiatives within the period. In the first half of the nineteenth century, surveyors and artists illustrated the waterfront as a civic landmark. Historical paintings of the former Parliament Buildings along the waterfront provide some of the earliest examples. These paintings and images were intended to showcase English public order and good government in effort to attract settlers and imperial elites. By the turn of the century maps and images of the waterfront and city began to illustrate an growing industrial city in attempt to showcase an competitive and prospers city.

The RDP case builds on the same principles of city image-making aimed at promoting an competitive and vibrant image for purposes of attracting new labour and capital to the city. According to City of Toronto official background reports, the “Rail Deck Park also has the potential to strengthen Toronto's global image and competitive position by creating an iconic new public space that exemplifies livability, cultural vibrancy, social inclusiveness, environmental resiliency, and civic pride” (2017, November 20, p. 2). This list of themes comprises the central goals city planners aim to promote locally and globally in their branding of the downtown core.

The municipal entrepreneurial framework of marketing the city has become a significant driving force to attract foreign capital (Burgers, 2000). In Toronto, the urban

planning framework is aimed at serving a “competitive city” image, a motive that can be found in similar local public projects (Kipfer & Keil, 2002). Parks serve as an extension to other public work projects which have incorporated neoliberal principles of economic efficiency in the planning of public spaces (Banerjee, 2001). Thus, the planning and development of public amenities such as parkland is largely focused on creating economic based spaces. The current paradigm of planning green spaces in the city is one that shifts away from the recreation function toward the economic driven principles of the past.

The RDP is characterized as major park project to show case to the world, an achievement of planning in the city and the ability to overcome the static industrial spaces of the past. In this sense, the transformation of an industrial space into a liveable green space is a major place maker. Place-making was established in the late nineteenth century during the “city beautiful” movement, which linked planning, design, and speculation (Tafuri, 1986). The practice of place-making and image building in cities, in the service of attracting capital investments, is documented in urban planning literature (Bradley et al., 2002; Evans, 2001 & 2009). These policy strategies are closely connected to revitalization efforts, which are aimed at rebranding post-industrial spaces that are deemed to be underutilized or in decay. For marketing purposes, the urban core of the city is an central image and the major narrative of the economic ambitions of the city (Zukin, 1987). As a result, urban planning policies are aimed at strengthening the global image of the city in order to attract foreign capital and promote the city as a top economic location (Burgers, 2000; Kipfer & Keil, 2002).

The role and influence of land speculation and economic development in both the W&G and RDP highlight potential social inequalities in the distribution of quality, safe, and accessible green spaces in cities. The influence and connection of private property values is a significant driving force in the distribution and development of green spaces in the city. Municipal property tax measures and land assessments have played a vital role in the development of urban green spaces. The underlying economic motives of park planning based on property development raise an equality challenge in terms of the distribution of green space.

Campbell (1996, p. 296) describes how urban planners are wedged within a triangular set of contradictions between balancing natural, economic, and justice concerns. In both park cases, environmental considerations were pitted against land development interests. Campbell provides some understand of the planning dilemma related to parkland development. Despite reasonable efforts to manage and support local economic growth, municipal officials and city planners face practical challenges in avoiding degrading the ecosystem. On paper, balancing between economic growth, equitable delivery of green spaces, and environmental sustainability may appear realistic; however, in practice, these priorities are compromised due to capitalist forces based on private property.

Dooling (2009, p. 622), describes the socio-ecological injustices produced by government interventions in creating urban green spaces as “ecological gentrification”. Ecological gentrification incorporates the social and spatial effects of parks planning, which, if undertaken in the interest of economic land development, may displace

vulnerable residents, such as renters or the homeless who become displaced through development.

High-quality, accessible, and safe urban parks may provide health benefits for residents and can even promote social inclusion (Lee & Maheswaran, 2010). As noted in municipal planning reports for the RDP, the projects intended to emulate the same economic developments created from the High Line park in New York City.

Significantly, the High Line park was initially planned and supported by community groups as a tool to promote social inclusion, but case studies reveal the opposite effect occurred as existing inequalities were reinforced through gentrification (Loughran, 2014). Loughran argues the High Line park reflects the “archetypal urban park of the neoliberal area” (2014, p. 50). Similar to the High Line project, the RDP is supported by powerful mobilized coalition made up of public officials, developers, financial and cultural elites with a common goal to redevelop the downtown core in the name of justice and progression.

Conclusion

The RDP case is as a city-led solution for a city created problem which can be traced back to the W&G and the priority of economic land development initiatives ahead of the planning and development of green space in the downtown core. While the construction of the railroad can be considered an reasonable pursuit at the time, the decision to radically alter and destroy the beauty of the waterfront in the name of industry is a major planning lesson. Ironically, what was historically abandon by the city to serve industrial development, the W&G lands, is considered a required urban solution

to serve contemporary economic development efforts based on the intensification of high-rise buildings.

The objective of the paper is to analyze the competing political, economic, and social forces behind parkland planning and development in Toronto through a historical and contemporary comparison. The first public parkland planning project in the city can be traced back to an 1818 crown patent which initially reserved a strip of land along the waterfront for a public park, or leisure grounds, later known as the Walks and Gardens (W&G). However, the site soon became an obstacle to commercial and industrial private interests which sought to acquire the lands for railroad development purposes. With the support and intervention of City Council, the W&G public lands, along with the much of the waterfront, were transferred to private control to support the construction of a railroad corridor.

As industrialism and urbanization radically altered the downtown core the protection and need for green spaces evolved in the city. The creation of horticultural societies by wealthy property owners to enhance private estates spurred land speculators to market urban green spaces in subdivision plans. Soon after, land speculators began to subdivide property lots in the periphery, spawning new upper- and middle-class neighbourhoods. The Allan Gardens serves as one notable example of how private donation of urban green space was based on plans for the sale of villa lots.

By the end of the century, public health concerns jeopardized local development efforts, and new government measures were introduced to promote the development of public parks. At the time, Toronto City Council hired the first Park Commissioner; however, parkland planning continued to serve private development efforts of land

speculation and industrial purposes through the rise of the Exhibition and world fairs. However, the English horticultural practices of status and wealth became transferred into municipal parkland planning to help market the city image as progressive for economic driven measures.

The second section of the paper unpacked the contemporary context of parkland planning through analysis of the Rail Deck Park (RDP) project. The park project can be considered an extension of ongoing efforts to de-industrialize and re-naturalize the downtown core and waterfront. In the case of the RDP, developers have replaced former individual land speculators, and park association groups have replaced the role of horticultural societies to pressure public officials to plan green spaces as a counter the intensification of the core.

The paper pinpoints a problematic dilemma for urban planners: how to balance the planning of public urban green spaces with competing for private economic development motives. Concepts and theories such as property contradiction and spatial fix provide some understanding of the underlying neoliberal and capitalism forces in both cases. The planning and development of urban green spaces, like other planning projects, is a process driven by competing or converging private interests that attempt to control land development for profit motive purposes.

In the case of the Rail Deck Park, the property contradiction of capital generated from land development reveals a set of competing private development interests. Developers who claim ownership of the air rights over the rail corridor oppose the public park project and propose to build multiple residential high-rise buildings in order to generate the most capital potential from the land. In support of the park project is a

broad group of propertied interests who seek to capture the collective benefit of the needed parkland space to support development capital of the surrounding lands. Important to the conversation is understanding how competing private groups can support or resist the development of green spaces dependent on the economic return of land enhancement.

While the degree and complexity of local government, bureaucratic administration and market forces are different in each period, common themes prevail that influence the planning and development of parkland in both cases. Both cases offer valuable insight on how elite financial, political and social actors have managed to determine the narrative of both projects, with private economic development as the (admittedly contradictory) driving force. Municipal politicians, planners, and officials can draw lessons from the W&G and RDP cases and consider alternative strategies to develop and support parkland spaces that results in the best interests of all residents.

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