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Article abstract

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Abstract

This paper examines reactions to drive-in restaurants in the suburbs of Toronto, Ontario, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It begins by laying out the main themes of a suburban critique of drive-ins, which were seen as symbols of larger problems of automobile landscapes, urban sprawl, runaway progress, and honky-tonk modernity. Next, the paper focuses more closely on an extended anti-drive-in campaign in Bronte, Ontario, one of many villages swept into the growing suburban sprawl around Toronto after World War II. There, a vocal group of activists rebelled against the nature of development in the area, mounting vigorous resistance to high-rise apartments, increased traffic, gas stations, and fast food restaurants. Drawing on the "pro-people," participatory democracy rhetoric of urban reform movements, Bronte activists pressed their case on municipal institutions and scored some important political victories. In the end, however, the drive-ins remained, since activist ratepayers could not overcome the limitations of zoning as a tool of redevelopment or the decline of citizen activism over the course of the 1970s. More importantly, they had to confront the continued popularity of the car itself, a commodity upon which their own suburban lifestyle depended.

Résumé

Cet article examine les réactions vis-à-vis des restaurants dotés d'un service au volant des banlieues de Toronto (Ontario) à la fin des années 1960 et au début des années 1970. L'article débute en donnant un aperçu des principales critiques banlieusardes des services au volant, qu'on percevait comme des symptômes de maux plus larges, tels les nouveaux milieux urbains planifiés en fonction des autos, l'étalement urbain, le progrès effréné et une modernité clinquante. L'article se penche ensuite sur une longue campagne d'opposition aux services au volant à Bronte (Ontario), un des multiples villages engloutis par les banlieues torontoises après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. À Bronte, des militants firent effectivement entendre haut et fort leur désaccord quant à la nature du développement local, de même que leurs vigoureuses objections contre la construction des immeubles à appartements, l'accroissement de la circulation automobile, l'implantation des stations-service et des restaurants à service rapide. Influencés par les « pro-people », ces adhérents à la rhétorique des mouvements de réforme urbaine promouvant la participation démocratique, les militants de Bronte firent valoir leurs positions devant les institutions municipales en récoltant plusieurs victoires politiques. En bout de ligne toutefois, les services au volant survécurent à leurs pressions, parce que les militants se sont montrés incapables de surmonter les limites de

zonage en tant qu'outil de re-développement territorial, sans compter le déclin du militantisme citoyen pendant les années 1970. Qui plus est, ces militants ont été forcés de constater la popularité constante de l'automobile, une commodité sur laquelle reposait le mode de vie en banlieue.

Introduction

"Bronte has had much growth," local columnist Terry Mannell wrote in early 1971,[1] "and it has attracted its rash of new commerce—drive-in restaurants, car washes, gas warriors, all along the main strip. The rash is as desirable as acne and as comfortable as poison ivy." This was not the first time, nor the last, that Mannell weighed in on the limitations of the local commercial strip. A former fishing village 30 miles west of Toronto, Bronte was one of dozens of small towns swept into the emerging suburban sprawl around the city after World War II. Here, the suburban dream was popular: beginning in the 1950s, middle-class subdivisions had been grafted onto a quaint village with a historic harbour. Partway through this change, Bronte itself was amalgamated with neighbouring Oakville, an affluent community also undergoing increasing suburbanization. Yet with these developments came problems. In numerous letters to the editor, in front of seemingly endless meetings of the planning board and local council, next in his own weekly column, and finally as a councillor himself, Mannell was one of the most public spokesmen for activist suburbanites fed up with the development of their area. The drive-in restaurant and its attendant parking lot was a flashpoint for these concerns. For Mannell and a vocal group of Bronte residents, A&W, Dairy Queen, car washes, and gas stations represented the ravages of the modern age, the end of their dream of blending country and city, past and future, people and progress into an intricate balance. "The hissing of the ever-present neon barrage," the "red brick apartment buildings that . . . spit up automobiles from the semi-underground parking lots," and "the crass signs and tasteless facades" all buried the town's heritage—its beautiful harbour and scenic tree-lined streets—under a shocking barrage of modernity.

This paper examines the character of these anti-drive-in sentiments, placing them in the context of a much larger discussion about the form and use of automobile landscapes.[2] By the late 1960s, some residents of the suburbs around Toronto denounced the form of drive-ins, pointing out that suburban commercial strips were ugly "concrete canyons," examples of bad urban planning and landscapes given over to the automobile. Such aesthetic concerns about roadside architecture were not new. After 1965, however, criticisms became much louder and more confident as these groups adopted reformist ideas—environmentalism and urban reform, among others—to launch a broad critique on what they saw as the blind acceptance of progress and development in metropolitan areas. But as they struggled with these developments and marshalled

metaphors to condemn them, they confronted two problems of central concern to cultural and urban history. On the one hand, however powerful their metaphors, they had to convince town officials to adopt them and translate them into programs that conformed to the processes of municipal institutions. On the other, they had to confront the limitations of their own bourgeois rhetoric, the popularity of fast food, and most importantly, the triumph of the car, a development upon which their own suburban lifestyle depended. In many ways, Bronte's struggles with drive-in restaurants provide a good case study in the tensions and contradictions of postwar suburban development across the Greater Toronto Area.

The discussion of these themes is divided into two main sections. First, I lay out the general contours of the suburban critique of drive-ins across the Greater Toronto Area, particularly its links to larger problems of automobile landscapes, urban sprawl, runaway progress, and honky-tonk modernity. Next, following historians and geographers who increasingly stress the complexity of suburban history, the paper focuses more closely on an extended anti-drive-in campaign in Mannell's hometown of Bronte, Ontario.[3] There, a small but vocal group of activists rebelled against the nature of development in the area, mounting vigorous resistance to high-rise apartments, increased traffic, gas stations, and fast food restaurants. Drawing on the "pro-people," participatory democracy rhetoric of urban reform movements, Bronte activists pressed their case on municipal institutions and scored important political victories. In the end, however, the drive-ins remained, revealing the contradictions and ironies of postwar suburbs.[4]

"I do not know who has the bigger job"

The concerns of Bronte residents were one small part of a much larger story: a struggle to come to terms with landscapes built for the automobile. The postwar era was the age of the car. Motor vehicle registrations in Canada more than doubled between 1945 and 1952, and doubled again by 1964, far outpacing population growth in this period. Rates of ownership relative to population recorded rapid and steady increases, growing from one automobile for every seven people in 1941 to one for every five 10 years later, one for every 3.3 in 1961 and one per 2.4 by 1971. Car ownership continued to vary widely by region, type of municipality (urban, surburban, or rural), and income, but in southern Ontario the automobile's triumph in everyday life was undeniable.[5] Raw data only hint at the scope of this transformation. While the car certainly affected urban life before the war, it mainly forced the reshuffling of existing urban spaces that had already been stretched out by previous transportation technologies.[6] After the war, the car burst out of the existing urban fabric and began making new landscapes in its image, creating what historian Kenneth Jackson called a "drive-in society."[7] In Ontario, the provincial government ploughed unprecedented funds into highway building, and municipalities transformed residential streets from peaceful two-lane rambles to four- or six-lane arterials, all to manage the relentless flow of traffic. Beside these widened roads, farmers' fields were trans-

formed into webs of subdivisions, at first haphazardly and then with increasing efficiency by the late 1950s.[8]

The car transformed shopping as well. "Since before the last World War, our market potentials are no longer . . . confined within city and town limits," L. R. Atwater told the Toronto Chapter of the American Marketing Association in 1955. "Markets today have a new dimension, which is changing every day to increase the potential range of every retail business: a dynamic dimension of movement which erases the static lines of civil divisions that used to be our units of measurement. The new dimension is travel time by automobile." For Atwater, the main feature of this new style of commerce was the ability of traditional downtowns to reach out to their fringes, drawing in retail dollars from suburban and exurban areas still under-serviced by commercial institutions.[9] But as the 1960s approached, the new dynamics of automobile commerce changed: consumers continued to stretch out their shopping, but increasingly bypassed traditional commercial areas. New institutions that had been only novelties in the mid-1950s became increasingly common, producing the more uniform commercial landscape that one American geographer has called McUrbia.[10] The shopping mall, surrounded by enormous parking lots, grew to rival the downtown retail district, keeping more dollars and more consumers in fringe areas.[11] Drive-in restaurants, once developed haphazardly by individual entrepreneurs, proliferated with the arrival of American chain restaurants in the late 1950s, a process that was accelerated by the middle of the subsequent decade. "'Booming' aptly describes what the chain-operated drive-in business is doing in Canada these days," *Restaurants and Institutions* reported in 1964, "and from all reports there are no signs of this upsurge diminishing."[12] Indeed, if fast food companies had any problem at all, it was in keeping up with consumer demand: by 1969, the industry was opening an outlet a day across Canada, and in Metropolitan Toronto, the race for good lots was driving property costs to unprecedented levels.[13] By the early 1970s, once-tree-lined suburban streets had become lined with gas stations, car washes, and other drive-in uses. In 1973, a *Scarborough Mirror* survey found that the borough's five main streets contained 116 take-out restaurants, including 42 hamburger stands, 23 fish-and-chip shops, 22 pizza parlours, 9 chicken outlets, and 7 doughnut stores.[14]

In some quarters, however, this drive-in society faced louder and more coordinated attacks. Across North America, critics questioned the value of planning for the car, building on an opposition of machines and people, "autokind versus mankind."[15] In Ontario, residents of several neighbourhoods rallied against the Scarborough and Spadina expressways. Urbanist Jane Jacobs, newly relocated to Toronto's Annex neighbourhood, railed against metro efforts to "Los Angelize Toronto," to remake the city in the name of the car. Outside of Toronto, some suburbanites expressed similar sentiments: "The very mobility provided by the automobile is no longer a blessing but a curse. Our communities today are planned to accommodate cars, not people. Our first consideration is what to do with vehicles when

Figure 1: Eglinton Avenue, Scarborough, 1973. *Along Eglinton Avenue in Scarborough,* Canadian Hotel and Restaurant *captured many of the main offenders for the surburban critique of modernity: cars, parking lots, fast food restaurants, overhead wires, and high-rise apartments.*

Source: Canadian Hotel and Restaurant, *15 February 1973, 26. Reprinted with permission of Kostuch Publications Ltd.*

they are in motion, and our second how to deal with them when they are motionless . . . This is progress?"[16]

After 1965, across the emerging suburban metropolis around Toronto, some citizens expressed doubts about the way drive-in restaurants seemed to be invading once-peaceful neighbourhoods. Paul Godfrey, later chair of Toronto's innovative metropolitan government, made headlines as a North York alderman by waging war on Dufferin Street's drive-in restaurants.[17] It was a losing battle. Six years later, new Scarborough mayor Paul Cosgrove devoted part of his inaugural speech to lamenting the development of one of the borough's main streets. "I do not know who has the bigger job," he quipped, "Mayor David Crombie [of Toronto] in removing sin from Yonge Street, or myself in removing hamburger stands from Eglinton Avenue."[18] Some suburban councils passed or considered zoning amendments that banned all drive-in restaurants from specific neighbourhoods or even from entire townships.[19] Across the suburbs around Toronto, some citizens offered similar laments about the nature of the drive-in landscape. "Is it important that we should all know that a certain hot dog stand has 'served 7 billion'?" ratepayer activist Willis Collinson asked the editor of a local newspaper in 1971. "Are we to go literally to the (hot) dogs?"[20]

For suburbanites like Collinson, the proliferation of drive-ins symbolized larger issues. Even Paul Cosgrove admitted that his criticism of hamburger stands on Eglinton Avenue was only one part of a larger problem. Surprisingly, *Canadian Hotel and Restaurant*, the main trade publication for the foodservice industry and not especially disposed to criticize restaurants of any kind, agreed with the mayor: "Tour those six miles a few times," the magazine reported, "and you realize that this visual blight is the result of uncontrolled growth . . . The mayor's comment should . . . serve to point up the public's growing awareness of visual blight—the ugly hydro poles and sleazy shopping centres—as well as its growing intolerance of those who pollute the environment."[21] Poles, plazas, and hamburger stands were joined by a horde of other offenders: overhead wires, neon signs, widened roads, and high-rise apartment buildings, all of which added up to ugly, grey, and barren streetscapes. In Bramalea, the *Guardian* complained that "the countryside has quite a sufficiency of signs already. They slash the landscape with their ugliness, adding nothing to the view and subtracting much."[22] In North York, Councillor Fred Schindeler went on a personal campaign against garish commercial architecture, extending his wrath to other symptoms of drive-in society, including "expressways, cars . . . and especially the plethora of gas stations which service them."[23]

Drive-in society symbolized still larger problems. To many suburbanites, mundane developments like fast-food strips, parking lots, trees, poles, and asphalt were symptoms of a society embracing runaway progress and modernity. The drive-in restaurant was just the latest example of the 20th-century battle of grey and green, artificial and real, progress and history. Tim Horton raised a commotion in Oakville when he convinced town council to let him cut down a maple tree in the parking lot of his doughnut outlet. The council agreed that the tree was a nuisance—the mayor even admitted that he had hit it several times—but many residents mourned the loss as a product of the age. "People today are too concerned with the so-called 'progress' of the present that they have no regard for the future," a local teenager lamented.[24] Eight months later, the local newspaper used the doughnut shop in a similar way, contrasting the formerly peaceful life of Charlie Sherry (an elderly neighbour of the shop) with the cacophony of the doughnut shop parking lot: "All night the donut shop's big yellow sign brightly whirls round and round, its reflection showing on the windows of Charlie Sherry's home . . . The parking lot is floodlit . . . Cars stopping and starting. Youths shouting and swearing. The neighbourhood has come alive . . . Don't ask Charlie Sherry if he thinks Oakville needs more progress . . . Progress has become Charlie's private nightmare."[25] In Scarborough, Paul Cosgrove tapped this well of concern about progress run amok by calling his inaugural speech, in which he complained about hamburger stands, "Future Shock." For one local paper, commenting on his speech, Eglinton Avenue was one example of the conflict of human and concrete, pitting authentic, natural landscapes against modern consumer paradises.[26]

These critics drew on well-worn bourgeois laments about ordinary commercial landscapes.[27] Symbols of "honky-tonk" architecture like Coney Island, Las Vegas, and Sunset Strip were common reference points. "This place is starting to look like Coney Island rather than a historic part of Oakville," reported a resident of Bronte. "Every time I see the smiling face of Colonel Sanders on the front of the fried chicken shack in Bronte, I think the joke is on us."[28] Reference points could be far away or closer to home, but the conclusion was the same. "We'll get a Sunset Strip here if we just let drive-ins keep sprouting up," Oakville councillor D. M. Clarke told council. "We've got them in Bronte and Cooksville already and they're a horrible blight."[29] Other critics lamented the sleazy look of New Street in Burlington, Yonge Street in Willowdale, Kingston Road in Scarborough, and so on, constructing colourful metaphors to make their point. People feared their neighbourhoods would turn into hamburger alleys, concrete canyons, asphalt jungles, gasoline alleys, asphalt monsters, or concrete wastelands.[30]

These were very old battlefields. In many ways, such suburban complaints simply updated the arguments of progressive-era urban reformers and interwar highway beautifiers, who attacked the aesthetic qualities of auto commerce in similar terms. Both groups shared, for example, a tendency to adopt the language of environmentalism to express their aesthetic criticisms.[31] *Pollution* was a particular favourite. In one Don Mills newspaper, a full-page photographic feature documented the "landscape pollution" caused by "overhanging wires, uncovered pipes, billboards, [and] commercial signs."[32] A few months later, the Scarborough edition of the *Mirror* lamented the "ever-increasing eye pollution of tasteless, huge, garish signs."[33] Though sharing certain forms of rhetoric, 1960s concerns were not merely throwbacks to earlier ideas and campaigns. Highway beautification had returned to the United States by the mid-1960s, with the widely publicized campaign of Lady Bird Johnson and a coalition of reformers, who forced the passage of the Highway Beautification Act in 1965, and continued to push their agenda in the next decade. A government commission on the subject toured the United States in 1972.[34]

North of the border, suburban residents not only applied this older language of urban and highway beautification to new suburban spaces, but marshalled a series of updated metaphors. With so many drive-ins coming to Canada as branch plants of American fast-food companies, Bronte activist Gerald Young tapped the burgeoning nationalism of the 1960s in naming the main offenders: "Burger Chef, McDonalds, Dairy Queen, H. Salt (fish and chips) and many more, the very same buildings for these outlets can be seen all over the United States. I think most Canadians agree and hope that we have a better standard of life and living on this side of the border, so let us not bring their less desirable garish exteriors to food chain buildings in Oakville."[35] Most observations looked closer to home—assessing not American developments but commercial strips in other Toronto suburbs—but like Young, tied the strips to broader ideas. One favourite strategy linked blighted drive-

in landscapes to the development of North America's plastic, disposable society, and crucially, to the growing turn against it. "I think a tremendous number of young people have picked up this cry about the plastic society and therefore resistance to strip development will increase measurably," one Bronte resident wrote in a typical letter to the editor.[36]

Yet plastic and progress had a strange allure. It is a typically modern impulse to find progress simultaneously thrilling, repulsive, inevitable, necessary, and tragic. Writing of America in the 1920s, Lawrence Levine noted the "paradox" of "a belief in progress coupled with a dread of change; an urge towards the inevitable future combined with a longing for the irretrievable past."[37] Indeed, progress and nostalgia coexisted in an ambiguous relationship, though one often seemed more powerful than the other. In the 1960s, the promise of progress might have seemed limitless—one need think only of the popularity of a pop culture genre such as science fiction—but some critics wondered if that promise wasn't itself a curse. These doubts took many forms, from critiques of affluence, through attacks on the omnipotence of science, to questions about the safety of technology.[38] Other critics of progress wondered how the modern world had lost its connection to older, simpler, more soulful values, a concern that could be applied to the most mundane projects. "Progress has no feeling," summed up the Bramalea *Guardian*, speaking of the demolition of a historic house in Brampton to accommodate a new underpass.[39]

These critiques of progress were complicated, however. Nostalgia was more a lament for the past than a wholesale return to lost values. Some observers thought that the solution to the problems of progress and development was more control of landscape, not less. "Let us not take the easy way out and simply throw up our hands and say that we cannot stop 'progress' and that growth is inevitable," argued Carl Erikson. "Surely, if there was ever an age in history in which man was capable of controlling his environment and determining his own destiny, it is ours."[40] Moreover, even critics of widened roads and demolished old houses analyzed drive-in culture from behind the windshield of their cars. The frequent comparisons to other commercial strips revealed a wide knowledge of Toronto's suburban areas based on the very automobility that was feeding drive-in society. Bronte residents, in assessing their own commercial strip, were doing exactly what L. R. Atwater had observed for retailing: "erasing the static lines of civil divisions that used to be our units of measurement." In a particularly contradictory moment, one Oakville resident surveyed the insidious effect of the car on Trafalgar Road by driving the length of the newly widened street.[41]

If there was a single symbol of the contradictory pull of car culture, one example of drive-in society that served as an emblem of both the potential and the limitations of progress, it was the parking lot. By the 1960s, parking lots were a slice of automobile geography most needed and most abhorred. Everybody knew that adequate parking was a necessary condition of development, both in terms of building and imagining the

spaces of consumption. Zoning requirements set precise ratios of number of spots to retail space,[42] but parking was not just a technical question, it was the core principle of the imagined economic geography of the car, expressed in the most mundane business of everyday suburban life. One survey of residents of Bramalea discovered that "parking—or lack of it—influenced 88 [of 122] persons in their choice of store," a fact well known to retailers simply by watching customers arrive at their shops.[43] In an advertisement placed by a group of merchants in Weston, an older streetcar suburb of Toronto, we get a hint of the desperation of an older group of retailers struggling to assert their traditional skills in the new world, straining to come to terms with the transformative power of the car.

Now! Shopping Centre Parking in Downtown Weston

The ease of suburban parking in downtown Weston has been made possible through the cooperation of these public spirited merchants. Now you can have low downtown prices and wide downtown variety . . . with all the ease of shopping plaza parking.

The ad made its priorities clear: local businesses were named around the outside, framing a photograph of the parking lot.[44]

Parking lots also represented the dangers and limitations of progress. Even with landscaping, they were essentially just flat, ugly pieces of asphalt.[45] Parking lots were ubiquitous visual reminders of "the car as architect," of streetscapes given over to the almighty automobile. "Like cancer, the asphalt has eaten away at all the grass and trees around the myriad little buildings, creating Oakville's own black plague," Terry Mannell wrote of the development of Bronte's drive-in strip.[46] Across the wider suburban region, opposition was clear. "Should we make it a park or a parking lot?" the Ontario government mused in a bit of propaganda for regional government and conservation policies. "Unplanned expansion in our province could lead to an unpleasant way of life. Our large cities could become plagued with runaway pollution or parking lots instead of parks for our children to play in . . . Canada's life style of tomorrow presents many challenges. But it's Ontario's style to meet these challenges today."[47]

It was easy enough to complain about progress and to scoff at fast-food stands or parking lots on main streets, but in communities so dependent on the car, how could they be controlled? As a clever editorialist for the *Mirror* pointed out, Paul Cosgrove had gotten it horribly wrong: in fact, it would be a good deal easier to banish sin from Yonge Street than to exile the hamburger from Eglinton Avenue. The "dingy dens" purveying pornography downtown were generally despised, but how could Cosgrove "ever rouse the rabble against the meat pattie with relish, onions and ketchup"?[48] It was a question that many municipalities asked more seriously in the decade after 1965, as the franchise economy pushed up the numbers of drive-ins dramatically, gobbling up more trees and grass to feed what Mannell called the "asphalt monster."[49] Back in Bronte, however, residents of the former fishing village would discover that the monster was easier to track than to kill. Asphalt, drive-ins, and runaway progress were here to stay.

"Where to draw the line?"

"Since amalgamation with Oakville in 1962, Bronte has been turned into a concrete and asphalt jungle, boasting drive-ins as their chief 'industry,'" local resident L. F. Cunningham complained in 1970.[50] Cunningham's lament signalled Bronte's ambiguous position in postwar suburban space. It was no longer a village of its own. Since the early 1960s, it had been one part of the larger community of Oakville, stretching from Mississauga on one side to Burlington on the other, all blended into an emerging suburban sprawl west of Toronto. "By the end of the 1950s," sociologist S. D. Clark wrote in 1966, "the Toronto suburban community . . . consisted of a great arc based on Lake Ontario and sweeping over the top of the city. To the east, what was part of the Toronto suburban community became at a certain point indistinguishable from what was a part of the community of Oshawa, while, to the west, Toronto suburban development met and joined forces with suburban development growing out of Hamilton, to be confounded still further by the efforts of Oakville in between to maintain an independent existence."[51] Indeed, postwar development had stretched the space of cities, sweeping once-distinct towns and villages into one almost continuous sprawling development, forming what one developer called "the Southern Ontario megalopolis," (figure 2).[52]

On the ground, however, the sprawling region remained a patchwork of different spaces: old villages, new automobile subdivisions, small towns eagerly grasping at the promise of rapid development, older streetcar suburbs fighting to adapt, and rural areas alternately resisting and embracing the new order, all pressing their distinctive (if changing) forms onto the shape of the new metroscape. For her part, Cunningham still spoke of Bronte as a real place, albeit one that fit into larger municipal institutions. For anti-drive-in campaigns, it was a crucial point: as much as Bronte residents looked at their commercial strip as a symbol of broader developments and shared the fears of suburbanites in other areas, they were not trying to remake Scarborough, Burlington, or Coney Island. To transfer their rhetoric into actual landscape, they had to confront local institutional arrangements and to struggle with the particular history of Bronte in the emerging suburban sprawl around Toronto.

For most of its history after the village was settled in 1834, Bronte followed the archetypical stages of development for lakeshore communities west of Toronto. Its early fortunes rose and fell with the movement of staples like wood and wheat, which flowed from the interior to the mouth of Twelve Mile Creek for milling, and out through Bronte's harbour onto Lake Ontario transportation routes. After the village was bypassed by railway development in the second half of the 19th century, the harbour's focus shifted to fishing. Later, the automobile age arrived in Bronte, initially when affluent urbanites followed King's Highway No. 2 (which ran straight through Bronte on its way from Toronto to Hamilton) in search of a summer playground.[53] After World War II, developers assembled land north of the original settlement to build low-density subdivisions, hoping to sell

middle-class families on Bronte's central location in the emerging Hamilton-Toronto megalopolis along the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW).[54] The population of the area boomed, probably doubling during the course of the 1950s, and continuing to increase (at a slower rate) in the subsequent decade (figure 3).[55]

Bronte's institutional fate followed its increasing integration into the suburban sprawl around Toronto after the war. Population growth and rapid development brought typical problems of planning and servicing. After 1948, a joint planning board laid out the zoning schemes for all of Bronte, Oakville, and Trafalgar Township, and the village itself was eventually swallowed up in a round of annexations and amalgamations, first joining Trafalgar in 1959, and then Oakville in 1962. By this time, residential development closed the gap between the communities south of the QEW, and Bronte was virtually indistinguishable in the continuous sprawling development along the lakeshore. By the late 1960s, then, Bronte had faced challenges similar to those of other communities west of Toronto: growing subdivisions of middle-class homes north of the old main street, harbours turned over to recreational uses, pressure from the emerging sprawl between Toronto and Hamilton, and amalgamation of small villages into larger suburban municipalities.[56]

For Bronte, amalgamation with Oakville seemed to coincide with a change in the nature of the village's residential and commercial development. By the early 1960s, responding to concern about the placelessness of the emerging Toronto-Hamilton megalopolis, planners across Southern Ontario encouraged the development of "high-density nodes" in an attempt to impose a shape on the region's sprawl. Oakville's Official Plan and subsequent amendments—the basic zoning layout of the community—adhered closely to this "nodes" approach, encouraging apartment development to provide a skyline and give visual shape to the community. Only two low-rise apartment complexes, however, had been constructed in the area by 1965, when residential densities were increased by an amendment to the Official Plan. Two years later, "elevator" apartments began to appear in Bronte.[57]

Coincident with such residential developments was a new configuration of commercial space. The village's original business section was largely confined to a single block near the harbour, but by the late 1950s, scattered commercial development, including some service stations, had mixed into the existing residential stock east of Jones Street. After amalgamation, Oakville officials increased speed limits and modernized roads and bridges throughout the town to accommodate mounting east–west traffic between lakeshore communities. Most significantly for Bronte, the town widened Highway 2 (now called Lakeshore Road) to four lanes, opening an extra lane across the bridge over Twelve Mile Creek and through the centre of the old village. Already facing competition from nearby plazas in Burlington and Oakville, the traditional Bronte commercial section was in no position to deal with any changes that sped up the passing-by flow of traffic, and after 1965, drive-in commerce along "the Strip" increased, mainly through the addition

of fast-food restaurants, car washes, and other automobile services (figures 4 and 5).[58]

Compared to developments in other suburbs, Bronte's drive-in strip remained small, but it still became a symbol of broader trends. Complaints about the strip started to appear in local newspapers in 1969,[59] and soon intersected with concerns about residential development in the area. Opposition to two new high-rise proposals (called Delta Mar and Wuthering Heights) in 1969 and 1970 quickly expanded to a frontal assault on the entire nature of commercial and residential development in the area. Like many other suburban residents across the Golden Horseshoe, Bronte homeowners attacked what they saw as the blind acceptance of progress and development in the emerging megalopolis. "If [the Wuthering Heights apartment complex] does go ahead," lamented Jack Pettitt in a typical letter to the editor, "the apostles of progress will be able to claim along with their other achievements, the car washes and drive-in eating places, that we have the biggest monument to man's stupidity and greed yet erected between Toronto and Hamilton. Right where everyone can see it too."[60]

Residents pressed their claims on the municipal government, adopting much the same rhetoric as the citizen participation movement sweeping through municipalities across Canada. By the late 1960s, diverse constellations of community organizers, political radicals, ratepayers' associations, historical preservationists, anti-highway activists, and not-in-my-backyard homeowners pressed municipal governments on a number of common issues. In most large cities, these groups were described as "reform movements," although even supporters admitted that the coalitions were rarely united in any meaningful way, except in opposition to unchecked development and in favour of a vague sense of democratic participation and "people power."[61] In Bronte, which became the southern part of Ward 2 of Oakville's municipal government upon amalgamation in 1962, the West Oakville Residents' Association (WORA) became the main vehicle of local discontent. By any standard of political activism, WORA had been an irregular affair since it was founded in 1958. It tended, like many ratepayers' groups, to rely on a small core of activists to mount occasionally vigorous resistance to specific projects, but it attracted few long-term members and even less ongoing popular interest. After 1969, however, WORA became the chief beneficiary of increased citizen activism in Bronte, coordinating letter-writing, public meetings, and petition campaigns, all in the name of "people power."[62]

As in larger urban centres, Bronte activists soon began to transform the municipal government. Though initially stymied by what they saw as an Establishment majority on council, WORA built links to activists in other wards (who were mainly fighting high rises and widened roads). After the 1970 elections, they found support from five of eleven councillors, and more importantly, four of nine members of the local planning board (including Bronte activist Don MacCharles). Though still a minority on both bodies, the "pro-people" bloc on the planning board
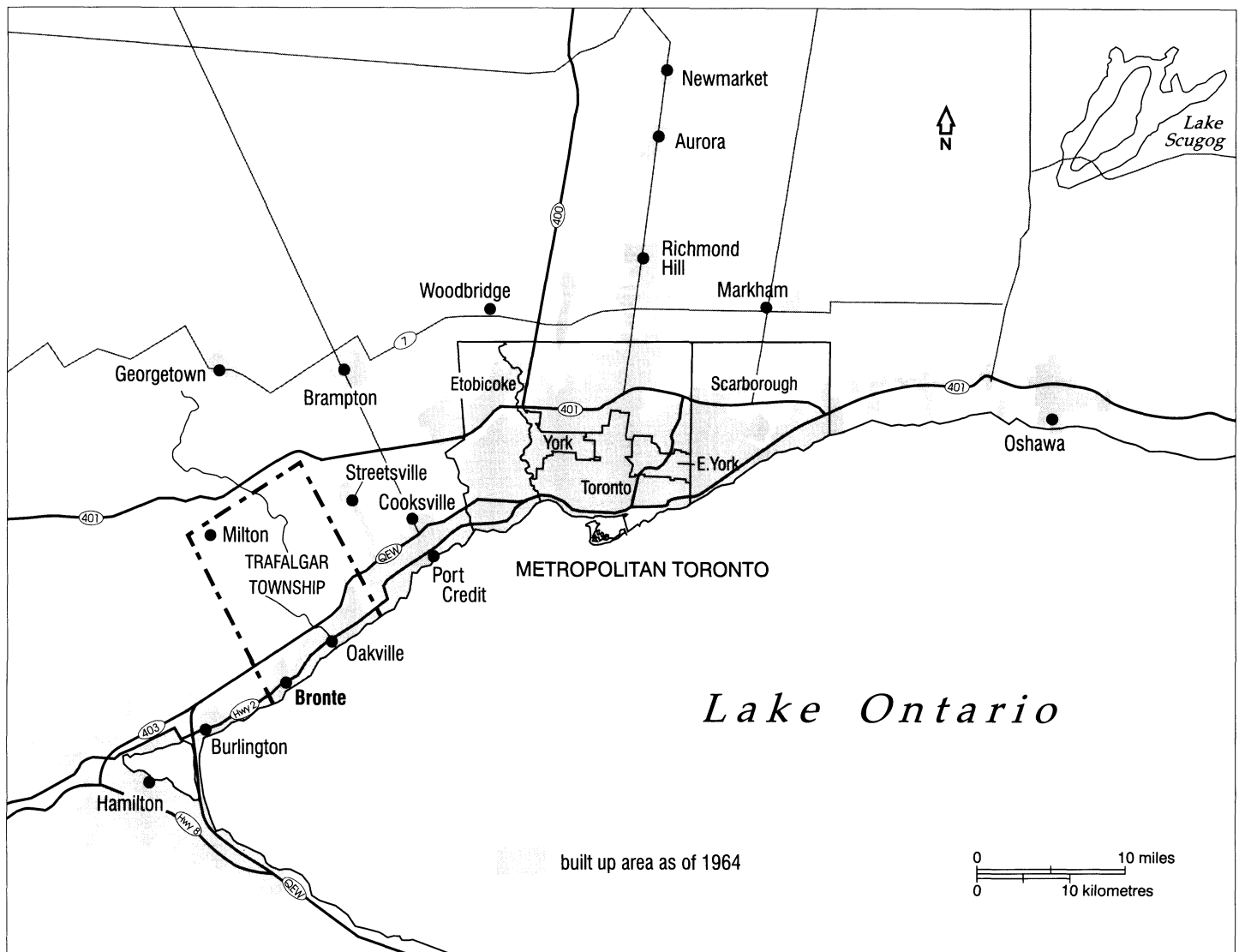
Figure 2: Toronto and surrounding communities, 1964. (Note: Map shows Metropolitan Toronto boundaries as of 1967.)

convinced council to undertake an Official Plan review of the area, and later to commission a planning study by architects Jack Diamond and Barton Myers, who were associated with the Toronto urban reform movement.[63] Buoyed by such successes, and energized by the wave of urban reform sweeping North America, Bronte residents joined citizens' groups across Oakville in electing a "pro-people," "anti-development" slate in the 1972 municipal elections. This new reform slate was soon dubbed the "Barrett Bunch" by the local press, after new mayor Harry Barrett.[64]

Just after the election, with almost theatrical timing, Diamond and Myers delivered their report. The plan dripped reformist rhetoric, both in its methodology and in its actual proposals for development in Bronte. Up to 1969, much of planning in the area made little serious commitment to consultation with residents.

Planning was handled by a planning board, an advisory committee composed of three council members and six "lay," or citizen, appointments. Citizen participation in planning (at least in the way later reformers imagined it) was neither the intent nor the result of lay appointments to the board. Citizen members were typically chosen because of specialized knowledge (many were architects or engineers) or because of a longstanding connection to community affairs (typically businessmen who had lived in the area for some time).[65] Public meetings were held, but officials were often ambivalent about democratic input, which they saw as a potential threat to sound planning principles. "Since they are appointed and not elected," remarked a Planning Board information sheet, "the members of the Board have no direct responsibility, real or imagined, to any individual or group . . . but only the municipality as a whole. The Board's recommendations to council, therefore, are primarily based on planning principles and do
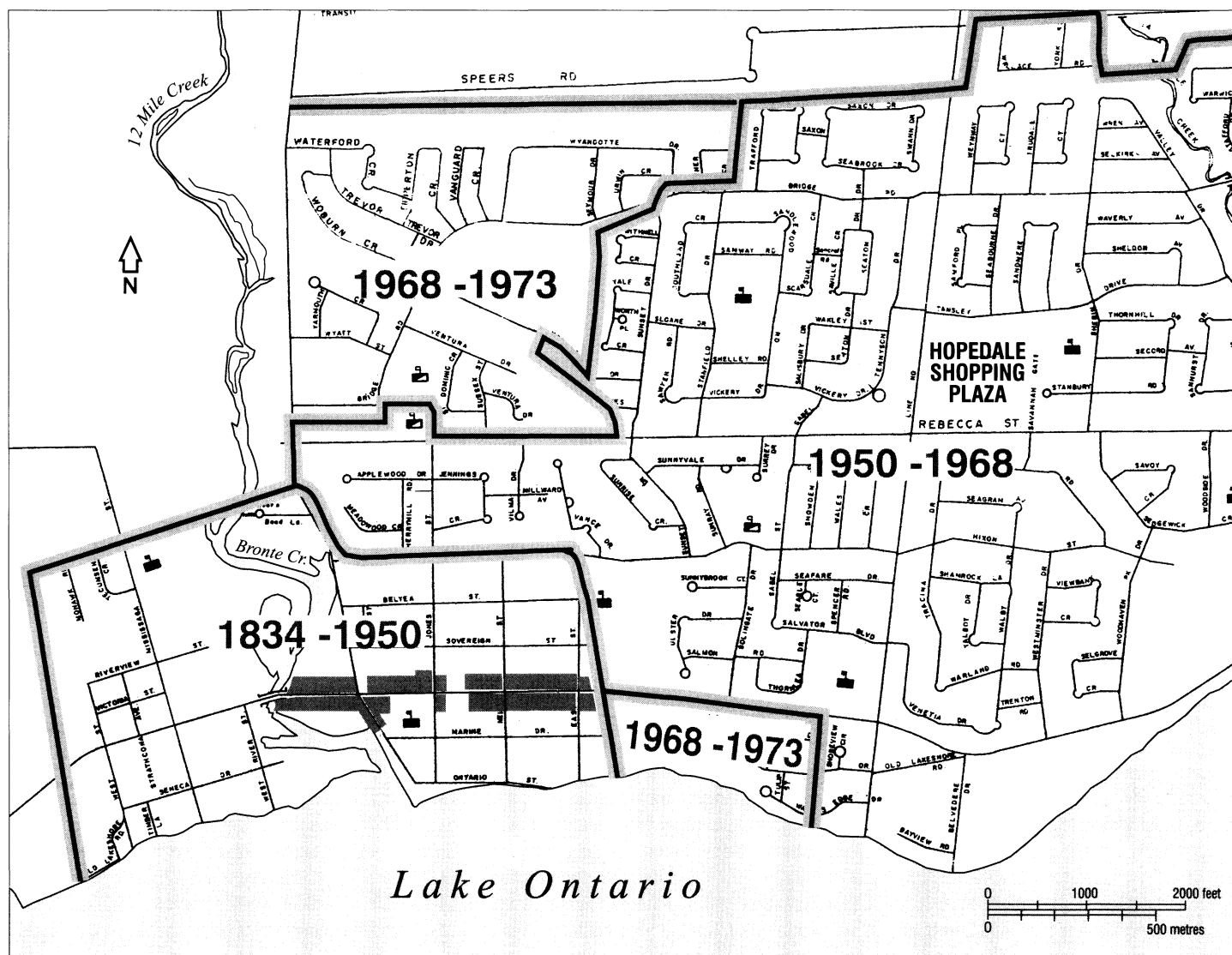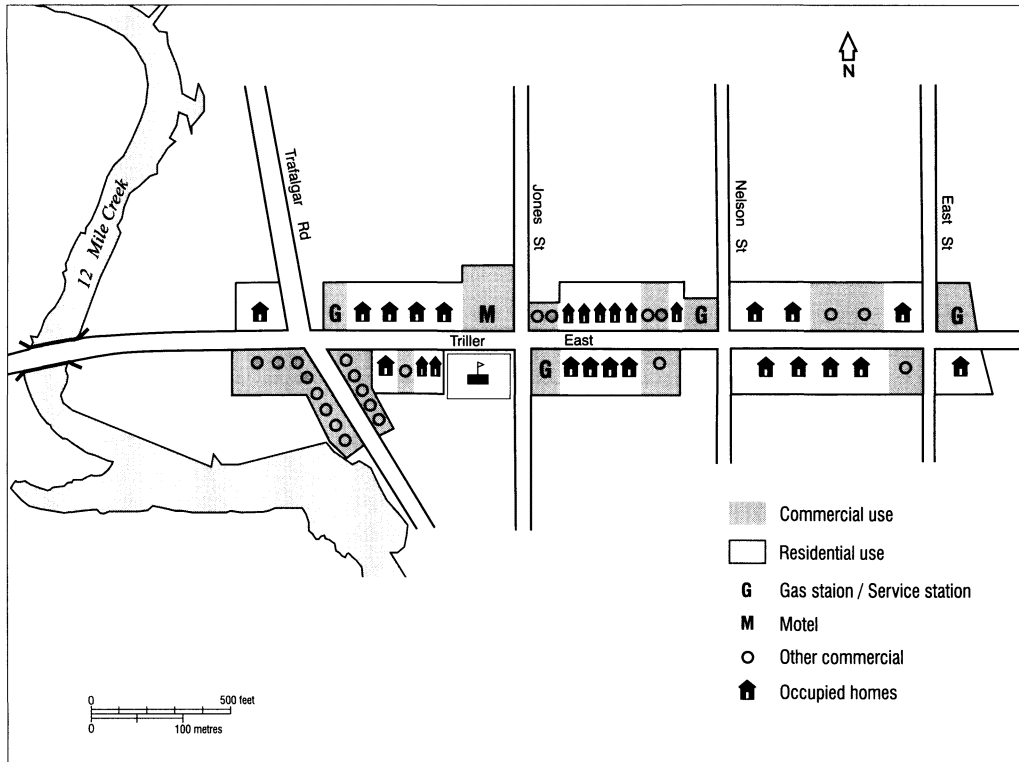
Figure 3. Stages of Residential Development in Bronte. (Note: Shaded area along Lakeshore Road shows commercial development in 1971 [see figure 5]).

Sources: Oakville Street Directory (Oakville Planning Board, 1973); A.J. Diamond and Barton Myers, Bronte Planning Study (presented to Oakville Town Council, 6 Dec. 1972); Thomas Heath, Housing Conditions in the Town of Oakville (Oakville Planning Board, 1971); Might's Oakville-Trafalgar Directory, 1958, 1960, 1962; Might's Oakville Directory, 1965, 1971, 1973.

not attempt to reflect political expediency."[66] Regardless, grander plans were often farmed out to experts like E. G. Faludi's town planning consultants, who produced technical reports to serve as guidelines for development. Describing his "method of approach" to a report titled "A Proposal for the Future Development of the Oakville-Milton-Trafalgar Area," Faludi listed the basic criteria for making recommendations:
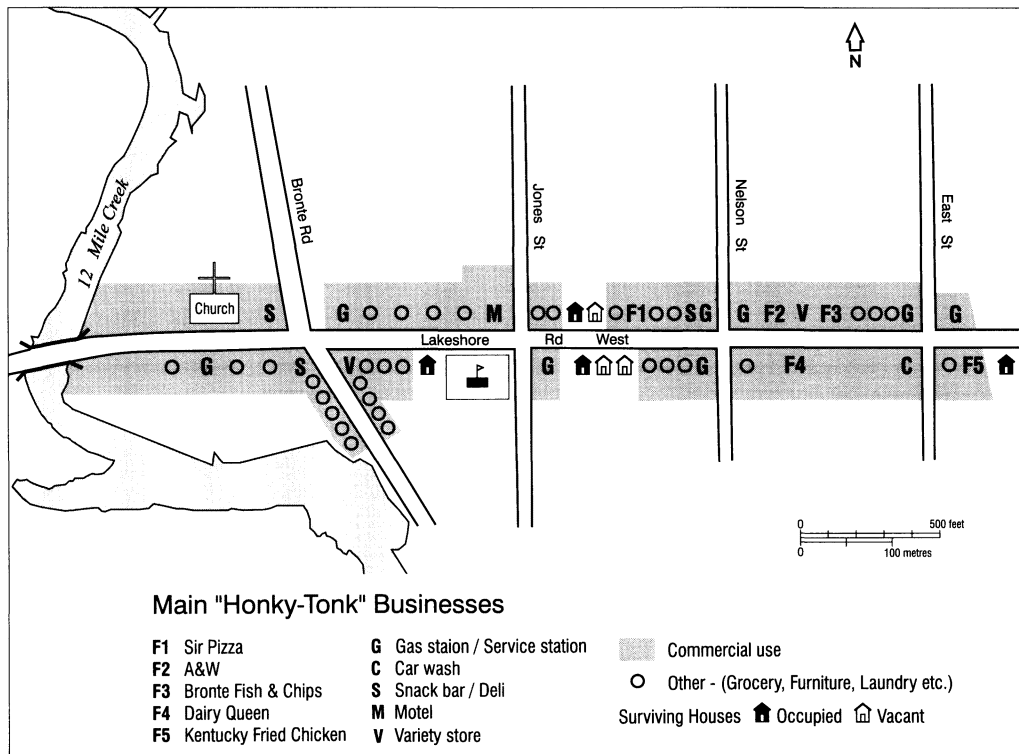
a. We have defined . . . the larger geographical area involved . . .
b. We have examined and analyzed:
    1. The growth
    2. The economy of the area
    3. The existing conditions in the component municipalities
    4. The forces and influences which will have an impact on their future development
c. We have defined the basic problems
d. We have established those principles which will be applied in considering solutions for the basic problems
e. Finally, upon those basic principles and other premises we have formulated our proposals.[67]

Notable for its absence was any reference to "the wishes and desires of local residents" or some other democratic impulse. A

Figure 4: Bronte's Main Street, 1958.
Source: Might's Oakville-Trafalgar Directory, *Oakville, 1958.*

Main "Honky-Tonk" Businesses

F1 Sir Pizza	**G** Gas staion / Service station	Commercial use
F2 A&W	**C** Car wash	
F3 Bronte Fish & Chips	**S** Snack bar / Deli	**O** Other - (Grocery, Furniture, Laundry etc.)
F4 Dairy Queen	**M** Motel	Surviving Houses ♦ Occupied ⌂ Vacant
F5 Kentucky Fried Chicken	**V** Variety store	

Figure 5: The Strip, Bronte 1971.
Source: Might's Oakville Directory, *1971.*

traffic study completed by the consulting firm Damas and Smith in the mid-1960s took a similar strategy, using traffic counts rather than public consultation to map out a revised street grid.[68]

By contrast, Diamond and Myers took the wishes of local citizens as their starting point. "At one time the official plan was a series of coloured blobs on a map with very little regard to the sensitive nature of planning," they argued. "We now believe that planning should also be the responsibility of the people it is going to affect." Planning goals, therefore, should be formulated from "a knowledge of what a community's values are for its lifestyles." Following this philosophy, Diamond and Myers wanted to describe a picture of Bronte that emerged from a "grassroots level," laying out a planning process that combined technical information, briefs from interest groups, a survey of all area residents, and public forums.[69] This was music to WORA's ears, since they had spent the previous two years pushing such a "pro-people" participatory agenda on the local government.[70]

The second notable feature of the Diamond and Myers report was its plan—both its broad vision and specific proposals. In broadest strokes, the report reiterated one version of the classic suburban dream: a bourgeois utopia that could simultaneously unite and separate city and country, creating small-town life within a broader urban region.[71] In surveys and at public meetings, residents consistently described their dreams for a Bronte that preserved its heritage as a "small town" or "village," by which they meant their imagined sense of stable community life rather than the actual cycle of prosperity and stagnation that had characterized the area's economic development. Based on citizen comments, Diamond and Myers assembled a wish list of the essential characteristics of small-town life. Bronte should have "recognizable boundaries" with a distinct downtown, mixed land uses, as many trees as buildings, an accessible natural environment, a heterogeneous population (at least by income), a high level of "informal interaction among residents, i.e. residents recognize each other on the street," a "general atmosphere of peace and quiet as well as vitality," a commercial section of small stores where "you know the manager," and a high degree of political participation.[72] In this version of an invented tradition, Bronte residents imagined a happy picture of small-town life, glossing over questions of whether, for instance, peace and quiet were compatible with vitality, or whether participation (rather than, say, an entrenched patriarchal elite) was actually characteristic of small-town politics. Yet Diamond and Myers made it clear that residents were hardly attempting to cut themselves off from the broader urban region. Rather, they saw this idea of small-town pastoralism very much rooted in the wider world: "People appreciate their location between Toronto and Hamilton (over half of those who answered the questionnaire commute to work in and near Toronto), but at the same time, value the small town atmosphere: its peace and quiet and the 'countryness' of its setting."[73]

To realize this goal, which local activists believed was increasingly at odds with the high-density and honky-tonk nature of development in the area, Diamond and Myers recommended redrawing the Official Plan of the area to promote medium-density residential development, slow down traffic, consolidate businesses in a smaller commercial area around the harbour, and "upgrade existing commercial strip with emphasis on encouraging residential uses" to replace existing drive-in services.[74]

All this must have sounded wonderful to WORA, but the word *encouraging* cloaked considerable complexity and difficulty. Indeed, in many ways, the proposals simply brought Bronte residents back to the original question of how to transfer rhetoric into landscape, a challenge that quickly exposed the limitations of zoning as a tool of positive redevelopment. Diamond and Myers' reformist ideas could easily be adopted into a new Official Plan, but this document did not actually dictate the zoning of the area—it merely set the overall vision, goal, or approach. The actual use of land was determined by the "zoning bylaw," which enumerated several categories of land uses (the three major categories being commercial, residential, and industrial), further subdivided each category, and listed the types of buildings to be allowed in each. But zoning did not build, it merely defined the range of uses allowed on a specific lot. It declared, for instance, that drive-ins are permitted in one area of the town, but not another, and left the actual building to private entrepreneurs.[75]

In fact, by the time Diamond and Myers delivered their report, the council and planning board had already struggled with the question of how to banish drive-ins from the town. In December 1971, Councillor Patrick Hughes suggested changing the town's commercial zoning bylaws to halt the proliferation of drive-in restaurants, specifically citing "Bronte as an example of where the restaurants have created 'a real strip.'" The problem as Hughes saw it was that the current zoning bylaw did not clearly define *drive-in*. He was right, but a precise definition proved elusive. The C3 zoning for the Bronte strip (a general commercial designation typically applied to mixed, "downtown" style development) already prohibited drive-in restaurants, in that the town's zoning bylaw listed a number of permissible land uses under C3 zoning, but excluded "drive-in restaurants or refreshment stands."[76] The problem for Hughes was that the category "drive-in" was already an old-fashioned designation, describing the classic 1950s version with carhops, in-car eating, and almost no inside seating. Beginning in the mid-1960s, however, most drive-ins abandoned carhop service, expanded restaurant interiors, and added tables, mainly to court the family market. McDonalds, for example, was adding seats by the mid-1960s, and subsequently redesigned its standard format restaurants to include 50 seats in 1968. Six years later, only two of McDonalds' Canadian outlets were strict drive-ins with no seating. Once in-car eating disappeared, it became difficult to distinguish a drive-in from a normal restaurant. Commenting on these developments, one U.S. report noted that fast-food and drive-in restaurants were "hard to describe but easy to recognize."[77]

Many municipalities struggled with this definitional problem, with little success. In North York, the planning board at first

defined a drive-in as "a restaurant that serves food in dispos-able containers and which can be eaten on or off the premises," but found that this definition, already somewhat convoluted, cast the net too widely. They eventually abandoned the attempt.[78] Initially, Oakville's council was no more successful at resolving the problem, and referred the issue to the planning board, who were more inventive, but not much more successful in coming to a definition. Board member John Rankin "raised the spectre of future drive-in banks, pharmacies, and stores," and suggested that the town "more effectively separate cars and people . . . by banning all new commercial cross-curb entries," a move the town solicitor declared illegal. After some initial hesitation, both the planning board and town council returned to Hughes's original suggestion, that the zoning bylaw be amended to exclude *all* restaurants from C3 zoning. This allowed council to scrutinize every restaurant application, and simply decide for itself on a case-by-case basis, granting a zoning exemption if councillors approved of the specific plan.[79]

Back in Bronte, not much changed along the honky-tonk commercial strip. Notwithstanding the council's definitional gymnastics, the new regulations applied to future developments, not to existing uses of land. When the new rules came into effect, existing drive-ins became "legal non-conforming uses," which meant they conflicted with current regulations, but were acceptable because they predated the zoning amendment. While such a designation severely limited the ability of drive-in operators to expand, renovate, or alter their buildings, it did not prevent their continued operation, at least in the short term. Certainly, over time, as the drive-ins closed or moved to other locations, the new regulations would ensure that new drive-in uses would not replace old ones, but this was a long-term solution. In the short term, however, the only real answer was to expropriate the properties and sell them for redevelopment, an idea that was suggested by Don MacCharles (Bronte's citizen representative on the planning board) in 1971, but was not seriously considered at that time because of the enormous up-front expense.[80]

"Encouraging" rehabilitation of the drive-in strip, then, would be a slow process, and town schemes ran into numerous institutional problems. In 1974, area councillor Gorde Reade (himself a former ratepayer activist) complained of the town's lethargy on the Bronte file, demanding "quick" action on the commercial area.[81] Planning staff went to work on an ambitious scheme, producing a report that called for a three-phase, fifteen-year plan to remake the strip, including public assembly of lands for residential redevelopment.[82] But no "quick" action was forthcoming. Even if the town rezoned the area and offered to buy out the drive-ins, the plan depended on the willingness of businesses to sell and relocate. Yet even before it was announced, the owner of one Bronte strip plaza made it clear that it was not interested. In late 1974, Silcar Realty sued the town, claiming it had the right to expand into an adjacent commercial property. The dispute ended in a compromise encompassing a smaller plaza expansion and a cluster of townhouses, but the

strip remained commercial, the townhouses were never built, and the honky-tonk drive-ins never relocated.[83] Looking back almost a decade later, one planner noted that the impetus was simply lost. "If, in 1975," he said, "we had suddenly started, Bronte would look quite different today."[84]

In fact, by 1975, the momentum was already diminishing, as Bronte activists discovered that it is easier to motivate citizens for a quick strike than for a war of attrition. While the replanning of the Bronte area worked its way through planning board hearings, council meetings, special committees, judicial appeals, and the Ontario Municipal Board, Bronte's citizen activists found it increasingly difficult to hold their neighbours' attention. In early 1975, anti-drive-in activist Elizabeth Milchem literally begged residents to show up to an important council meeting. "Do you remember how adamant the residents of this town were when the Bronte strip was being discussed for the new official plan?" she asked in a letter to the *Journal Record*. "They were adamant that the drive-in restaurants, flashing neon signs and car washes on Lakeshore Road were a mistake of past council planning . . . I remember the meetings were packed with people—emotions were high." By this time, urban reform movements across Canada had run out of steam, as the initial burst of enthusiasm wore off and issues of participatory planning were reduced to technical issues of zoning, and activists were often left to carry their appeals to virtually empty council halls. "Unless the nine councilors hear from us," Milchem implored her more apathetic neighbours, "they can only assume that we have changed our minds and no longer care about the Bronte strip . . . Communicate, Oakville, communicate."[85]

In Bronte, however, problems ran deeper than just the decline of citizen activism. "The problem you're trying to tackle is the car itself,"[86] Terry Mannell told the planning board as it struggled to define *drive-in* in early 1972. It was a startling admission, and one fraught with difficulty. Most critics of car culture were quite ambivalent about the car itself. Even Bronte activists worked in Toronto or Hamilton and drove to work, arguing not for an outright ban on the car but for sanity and moderation in redesigning landscapes in its name. "We must have cars, of course, if we have people," Mannell admitted in another honest moment. "But with that admission, the planning should begin, not be abandoned."[87] It was always easier, however, to call for such balance in rhetoric, and to apply that logic to a specific project that clearly crossed the line—a highway cutting through an urban neighbourhood, for example—than it was to get a handle on the more numerous and diffuse institutions of McUrbia, land uses that were much easier to recognize than to describe, much easier to condemn than to replace.

"Where to draw the line?" wondered Councillor Don Gordon during one of the endless debates on the Bronte strip. "Under the free enterprise system, [drive-ins] have to advertise."[88] It was a good question: once you had a society of drivers, was it too much to imagine that there would be drive-in uses? In their rhetoric, Bronte activists tended to describe drive-in society in terms of impersonal forces ("bad planning," "honky tonk

commerce," and "progress") while giving their own alternatives a more personal gloss ("people," "participation," and "human scale"). But the fact was that for many people, driving their cars faster, getting their food faster, finding a parking space faster *was* progress, and progress not of the lamentable kind. While no one showed up at council meetings to make impassioned pleas to save the hamburger, developers like Silcar Realty saw the commercial potential in serving drivers, and local planners admitted that fast food restaurants were popular, burying this unfortunate truth in technical phrases that nonetheless recognized drive-ins as "viable businesses."[89]

This, in the end, was WORA's biggest problem. In the battle of cars and trees, progress and history, asphalt and nature, activists were a minority. As in many neighbourhood preservation movements at the time, Bronte activists tended to be professionals and homeowners, crystallizing their bourgeois disdain for mass culture into terms like *honky-tonk*. Moreover, the campaign's leaders were people with the technical skills to press their case on the local government: Mannell himself was a lawyer, and Don MacCharles an economist. Nor was it clear they ever had the whole community behind them: however participatory the spirit of Bronte's new democratic activism, for example, only 181 of 2176 surveys were returned to Diamond and Myers, a small fraction by any standard.[90] Most residents, as the old phrase goes, simply voted with their feet—in this case, by pressing them firmly to car accelerators. Despite the small-town dreams of Bronte's chattering classes, even Terry Mannell had to admit that cars were key to the area's retail economy and residential base, hoping to hide, rather than eliminate, the inevitable parking lots with "well located [sites] . . . designed to soften the effect of cars and asphalt through landscaping."[91]

Dairy Queen Suburbs

Asphalt hidden by landscaping—it was a combination perfectly symbolic of the entire problem. In Bronte and the wider urban region, anti-drive-in sentiments were one part of a larger uncertainty about the aesthetic qualities of modern landscapes, focused on the ambiguous allure of asphalt and trees, cars and people, grey and green, history and progress. In many different forums, from town councils to neighbourhood meetings, newspapers to newsletters, small groups of suburban activists linked the form and use of drive-in culture to much larger questions of progress, landscape, and local participation. In advancing their arguments, they drew on and responded to ideas that were increasingly powerful in the late 1960s: nature, history, democracy, and reform. In Bronte, some even tried to reorganize space to fit their visions of aesthetic order, drawing inspiration, and a good deal more rhetoric, from the emerging urban reform and environmental movements, trying to mobilize their neighbours against modern intrusions into the quaint, country atmosphere they had hoped to find in suburban neighbourhoods. They were hardly simple anti-moderns, however, since the complaints of Bronte activists flowed as much from their drives across the sprawling metropolis as from their observations of the handful of restaurants that lined Lakeshore Road.

Quite content to commute to Toronto, they imagined that if only they could drive out the drive-ins, their bourgeois utopia of a small town within an urban region might be realized.

Yet to build these metaphors into actual landscape, Bronte activists needed to translate their rhetoric into technical reports, zoning bylaws, and institutional pressure. The translation, in the end, was more difficult and time-consuming than they anticipated, and lasted considerably longer than the dramatic metaphors or the burst of participatory activity. Change would be gradual, but activism was not sustained. A broader—and ultimately more difficult—problem, as Terry Mannell admitted, was the triumph of the car itself. In many ways, Bronte activists were not simply fighting ugly landscapes or runaway progress, but popular culture in the postwar world, the age (in the oft-quoted phrase) of the "great god car." For many area residents, A&W and Dairy Queen seemed quite in line with their own suburban dreams, and even WORA activists judged drive-in society from the inside of their cars.

The story of struggle with the Bronte strip highlights some of the contradictions, tensions, and ironies of the postwar suburban development around Toronto. The fight against the Bronte drive-ins failed. Even into the late 1980s, the strip was lined with gas stations, fast food outlets, and strip plazas, all of them bustling with customers, but both the struggle and its failure speak to the complexity of the postwar suburban experience. From one perspective, Toronto's suburbs simply sprawled out, nameless and placeless. Zoning regulations, traffic engineers, highway budgets, politicians, commercial entrepreneurs, and mobile consumers set the terms of this new drive-in society. Communities flowed together, borders and jurisdictions were combined and re-sorted, and drivers lived, worked, shopped, and ate in more extensive geographic patterns. But on the ground and behind the wheel, from the perspective of the hamburger stands and parking lots, drive-in society looked more complicated. Confronted with the Bronte Dairy Queen, suburbanites could grasp at the possibilities of the new by turning in, or try to reshape and revive the old by joining WORA. Most, it appeared, chose the former, but there was no single meaning of the suburban dream. Both Terry Mannell and Dairy Queen, in their own way, were part of the tangled story of Bronte's development.

Notes

1. All quotations in this paragraph are from Mannell's column. *Daily Journal Record* (Oakville) (hereafter *DJR*), 14 April 1971.

2. On the idea of "landscape," see Paul Groth, "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 1–21;

Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 15–43; J. B. Jackson, *Landscape into Sight,* ed. Helen Lefowitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); J. B. Jackson, *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Donald Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). See also the entries for "Cultural Landscape" and "Landscape" in R. J. Johnston et al., *Dictionary of Human Geography,* 3rd ed. (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1994), 114–15, 316–17.

3. For recent work on suburban history, see, for example, Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Richard Harris and Peter Larkham, eds., *Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form, and Function* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Barbara Kelley, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Peter Lang and Tam Miller, eds., *Suburban Discipline* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997); and Roger Silverstone, ed., *Visions of Suburbia* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Richard Walker and Robert D. Lewis, "Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier: Industry and the Spread of North American Cities, 1850–1950," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 1 (2001): 3–19 is an excellent review of key issues in suburban development in North America.

4. A note on methodology: this article is based on a comprehensive survey of community newspapers in different kinds of suburbs (Scarborough, North York, Don Mills, Etobicoke, Oakville, Bramalea, and Brampton) from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s (specific starting and finishing dates vary because of the uneven publishing histories of the papers). For most of this period, these newspapers were weeklies, with the exception of the Oakville *Journal Record* (published daily until 1974, when it switched to three issues per week). One anonymous referee of the *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* (hereafter *UHR*) sensibly pointed out that community weeklies are often less substantial in content and quality than major dailies. These community papers were supplemented by planning studies, minutes of municipal councils, local histories, restaurant trade publications, the business press, and the searchable, online issues of the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail.*

5. F. H. Leacy, *Historical Statistics of Canada,* 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983), series T147–194.

6. G. T. Bloomfield, "No Parking Here to Corner: London Reshaped by the Automobile, 1911–1961," *UHR* 17, no. 2 (October 1989): 150; Stephen Davies, "Reckless Walking Must Be Discouraged: The Automobile Revolution and the Shaping of Modern Urban Canada," *UHR* 17, no. 2 (October 1989): 123–38.

7. The term *drive-in society* is taken from the title of a section of Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier: A History of Suburbanization in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 263, part of a chapter analyzing "the drive-in culture of contemporary America." The chapter discusses the interstate highway, the garage, the motel, the drive-in theatre, the gasoline service station, the shopping centre, and other developments. See Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier,* 246–71. For a similar (if briefer) Canadian view, see Graham Fraser, "The Car as Architect," *City Magazine,* November 1976: 44–51.

8. Bloomfield, "No Parking Here to Corner"; S. D. Clark, *The Suburban Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966); James Lorimer, *The Developers* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1978); John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); James W. Simmons, *Toronto's Changing Retail Complex: A Study in Growth and Blight* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department Of Geography, research paper no. 104, 1966); Gareth Shar, "Shopping Centre Developments in Toronto," in *Shopping Centre Development: Policies and Prospects,* ed. John A. Dawson and J. Dennis Lord (New York: Nichols Publishing, 1985), 105–25; Paul Thomas, "Rexdale: A Case Study of Suburban Industry" (master's thesis, University of Waterloo, 1968).

9. Atwater is cited in *Financial Post,* 5 Nov. 1955, 30. Despite their status as emblems of postwar commercial development, there were still few shopping malls in the late 1950s. Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, Research Division, *The Toronto Region Strip Retail Areas and Shopping Centres* (1976); Bloomfield, "No Parking Here to Corner," 155.

10. Kenneth Helphand uses the term *McUrbia* to describe automobile landscapes after World War II. See his "McUrbia: The 1950s and the Birth of the Contemporary American Landscape," *Places* 5, no. 2 (1988): 40–49. On the development of automobile commerce in North America, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 257–89; Philip Langdon, *Orange Roofs, Golden Arches: The Architecture of American Chain Restaurants* (New York: Knopf, 1986); Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little Brown, 1985); Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920–1950* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

11. One study of retailing in 17 markets in the Quebec City–Windsor corridor calculated that between 1951 and 1961, merchants in fringe areas enjoyed a 136 per cent increase in total dollar volume compared to 36 per cent for central city merchants, though average sales per suburban outlet still trailed downtown retailers in all markets except Toronto. Thayer Taylor, "Seven Million Consumers All in a Row," in *Marketing: Canada,* ed. Isaiah Litvack and Bruce Mallen (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1962), 45. On the general development of shopping malls in the Toronto area, see Robert Koblyck, "The Ottawa Street Shopping Area and the Greater Hamilton Shopping Centre" (undergraduate thesis, McMaster University, 1960); Lorimer, *Developers,* 186–218; Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, *Shopping Centres and Strip Retail Areas, Metropolitan Planning Area* (Metro Toronto Planning Board, Research Division, April 1970); Shar, "Shopping Centre Developments in Toronto," 105–25; Simmons, *Toronto's Changing Retail Complex.*

12. "Chain Reaction," *Restaurants and Institutions* (September 1964): 11. Between 1955 and 1965, the main restaurant trade magazines reported on the advent of more than 20 chain fast food restaurants (mostly American-owned) in Canada, with the bulk arriving after 1959. See *Restaurants and Institutions, Foodservice and Hospitality, Canadian Hotel and Restaurant.*

13. *Toronto Star,* 31 May 1969, 53.

14. The five streets—Eglinton Avenue, Kingston Road, Lawrence Avenue, Ellesmere Avenue, and Sheppard Avenue—were all east–west arterials heading into and out of Toronto or toward a major road or highway into the city. *Mirror* (Scarborough edition) (hereafter *SM*), 17 Jan. 1973, 7.

15. For examples of anti-car opinion in the 1960s, see Andrew Jamison, "Debating the Car in the 1960s and 1990s: Similarities and Differences," *Technology and Society* 17, no. 4 (1995): 453–67; John Jerome, *The Death of the Automobile: The Fatal Effect of the Golden Era, 1955–1970* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 179–210; Kenneth Schneider, *Autokind versus Mankind: An Analysis of Tyranny, A Proposal for Rebellion, A Plan for Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971).

16. John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 177–82. See also Willis Collinson, letter to editor, *DJR,* 30 Jan. 1971; Jane Jacobs, "A City Getting Hooked on the Expressway Drug," quoted (from *Globe and Mail,* 1 Nov. 1969) in David and Nadine Nowlan, *The Bad Trip: The Untold Story of the Spadina Expressway* (Toronto: New Press, 1970), 92; Christopher Leo, *The Politics of Urban Development: Canadian Urban Expressway Disputes* (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1977); Scarborough Expressway Coalition, "Against the Scarborough Expressway" (brief presented by the Scarborough Expressway Coalition), November 1973.

17. *Mirror* (North York edition) (hereafter *NYM*), 6 July 1966; 20 July 1966, 3; 3 Aug. 1966, 6; 10 Aug. 1966, 13.

18. *SM,* 10 Jan. 1973, 7. The *Toronto Star* noted that Cosgrove's comment received loud applause from the audience. *Toronto Star,* 9 Jan. 1973, 23. Yonge Street is the main north–south street in Toronto, and at one time

was the principal retail area for the city. It was in decline by the 1960s. See Kenneth Greenburg, "Toronto: Streets Revived," in *Public Streets for Public Use,* ed. A. V. Moudon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 189–202.

19. *Mirror* (Don Mills edition) (hereafter *DMM*), 13 May 1970, 38 (reporting on North York council); *DJR,* 8 Dec. 1971; 17 Dec. 1971; 4 Feb. 1972; *Foodservice and Hospitality,* April 1972, 70; *SM,* 16 Nov. 1966, 8; 8 Feb. 1967, 1; 17 May 1967, 1. A brief national survey of mid-1960s anti-drive-in sentiments can be found in *Foodservice and Hospitality,* 21 Nov. 1966, 4.

20. *DJR,* 3 Apr. 1971.

21. Cosgrove also noted that he did not see elimination of hamburger stands on Eglinton as a priority as much as ensuring that similar growth did not happen elsewhere. *Canadian Hotel and Restaurant,* 15 Feb. 1973.

22. *Guardian* (Bramalea) (hereafter *BG*), 6 Mar. 1968, 6.

23. *DMM,* 16 Sept. 1970, 3, 5. See also 23 Sept. 1970, 6; 21 Oct. 1970, 10.

24. Oakville Town Council, *Minutes,* 1 June 1970; *DJR,* 6 July 1970.

25. *DJR,* 15 Feb. 1971.

26. *Observer* (Scarborough), 3 Aug. 1973, 4.

27. On ordinary landscapes, see Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

28. *DJR,* 17 Dec. 1971.

29. *DJR,* 17 July 1970.

30. See, for example, *SM,* 9 Mar. 1966, 6; 2 Nov. 1966, 4; *BG,* 26 Mar. 1969, 4; *DJR,* 9 Sept. 1969, 4; 10 Oct. 1969, 2; 7 July 1970, 4; 26 Mar. 1971, 1; 14 Aug. 1971, 4; 4 Dec. 1971, 1.

31. Catherine Gudis, "The Road to Consumption: Outdoor Advertising and the American Cultural Landscape" (doctoral thesis, Yale University, 1999), 158–220. On environmentalism in suburban areas after World War II, see Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

32. *DMM,* 18 Nov. 1973, 13.

33. *SM,* 2 May 1973, 6. "Noise pollution" was another standard complaint, especially regarding drive-ins, arterial roads, and highways. For example, *DJR,* 14 Aug. 1971, 6; *Observer* (Scarborough), 14 Mar. 1972; 24 Mar. 1972; *SM,* 10 Jan. 1973, 6; "Against the Scarborough Expressway," 1, 8; Environics Group Ltd., *The Scarborough Expressway Public Meeting Survey* (Metro Toronto Transportation Plan Review, Feb. 1974), 16.

34. Gudis, "Road to Consumption"; Charles F. Floyd and Peter J. Shedd, *Highway Beautification: The Environmental Movement's Greatest Failure* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979); United States Commission on Highway Beautification, *Highway Beautification: Hearings Before the Commission on Highway Beautification* (Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 1974).

35. *DJR,* 5 Apr. 1971.

36. *DJR,* 17 Dec. 1971.

37. Lawrence Levine, "Progress and Nostalgia: The Self Image of the Nineteen Twenties," in his *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 191.

38. This theme runs through the writings of many social critics during this period. See, for example, John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958); Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962); Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* (New York: Grossman, 1965).

39. *BG,* 28 Sept. 1966, 7.

40. Carl Erikson, letter to the editor, *DJR,* 20 Oct. 1971. Erikson was later a councillor on the area's regional council.

41. For Atwater's quotation, see above. The Oakville resident is in *DJR,* 28 Apr. 1971, letter to editor.

42. See *SM,* 7 Sept. 1966, 1.

43. *BG,* 10 Apr. 1968, 6.

44. *Times and Guide* (Weston), 1 Dec. 1960.

45. On procedures to hide or soften the unpleasant appearance of parking lots, see American Society of Planning Officials, "Parking Lot Aesthetics," Information Report No. 190, Sept. 1964.

46. *DJR,* 14 Apr. 1971, 5.

47. The Ontario government ad appeared in many newspapers. See, for example, *DMM,* 10 June 1970, 5. Readers will no doubt recognize the connection to Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi," released Apr. 1970, and its signature line, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

48. *SM,* 17 Jan. 1973, 4.

49. *DJR,* 4 Dec. 1971.

50. *DJR,* 11 Sept. 1970.

51. S. D. Clark, *The Suburban Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 23. See also Norman Peterson, "The Toronto-Hamilton Conurbation: The Mississauga Nightmare," *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* 44, no. 2 (1958): 36–39.

52. *BG,* 16 Feb. 1966, 5. The notion of the megalopolis—a large, interconnected region of neither/both suburban and urban space encompassing the geographic spread of several large metropolitan areas—was pioneered by Jean Gottman, and was subsequently applied to other areas. Technically, neither southern Ontario nor the densely developed Oshawa-Toronto-Hamilton corridor met the basic definition of megalopolis. See Jean Gottman, *Megalopolis: The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1961); Leman Group Inc., eds., *Great Lakes Megalopolis: From Civilization to Ecumenization* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1976), 2. The concept, however, entered the popular mind in a much less technical way, referring to the sense that once-distinct spaces were blending together and that the area around Metropolitan Toronto was becoming one integrated geographic unit. The classic work on placelessness is Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness,* (London: Pion, 1976).

53. On the early history of Bronte, see *Hamilton Spectator,* 21 Apr. 1951; 21 Mar. 1959; 6 Aug. 1963; Clare McKeon and Joseph McKeon, *Oakville: A Place of Some Importance* (Burlington, ON: Windsor Publications Limited, n.d.), 41–47; Francis Ahern, *Oakville: A Small Town* (Erin, ON: Oakville Historical Society in association with Boston Mills Press, 1981); Philip Brimacombe, *The Story of Bronte Harbour* (Oakville: Oakville Historical Society, 1976); A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers, *Bronte Planning Study* (presented to Oakville Town Council 6 Dec. 1972), 9–20; Town Planning Consultants Ltd., *A Proposal for the Future Development of the Oakville-Milton-Trafalgar Area* (rev., 1 Oct. 1959), 7–16.

54. In 1971, the Bronte area (which spanned two census tracts) had an average household income of $12,433—well into the upper range of the middle class. Planning reports noted, however, the presence of many lower-income families (likely tied to high-rise development and the persistence of some older, working-class cottage housing near the lake). Thomas Heath, *Report on Housing Conditions in the Town of Oakville* (Oakville Planning Board, 1971); Oakville Planning Department, *Critical Choices and Future Options: Bronte Tertiary Plan* (November 1975), 23.

55. The administrative history of the village is complicated, and Bronte never constituted a single census tract, so exact population figures are difficult to pin down, but it is clear that both the village itself and the surrounding area were growing quickly after the war. Estimates place the 1951 population of Bronte proper at about 1,200, growing to at least 2,500 by the late 1960s. The story is more complicated, however, since the growth of the village itself was less important than that of the surrounding area. This too is difficult to measure exactly. Oakville's population recorded steady increases, slowing

somewhat in the 1960s (13,193 in 1950, 40,540 in 1960, 57,771 in 1970, and 67,634 in 1975). Trafalgar Township's population increased from 8,118 to 31,743 from 1950 to 1960, with "southwest Oakville" (an area slightly larger than Bronte proper) accounting for about 15,000 of that increase. In 1972, the Bronte Planning Area (smaller than southwest Oakville but larger than Bronte itself) had a population of slightly less than 8,000. Population figures from Diamond and Myers, *Bronte Planning Study*, 109; *Hamilton Spectator*, 21 Apr. 1951; 21 Mar. 1959; 6 Aug. 1963; Oakville Planning Department, *Critical Choices*, 22–24; Robert Thacker, "A Municipal Pressure Group/ Hybrid Party: The West Oakville Ratepayers' Association" (master's thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1976), 43; Town of Oakville Planning Board, *Population* (October 1989).

56. E. G. Faludi and Associates, *A Proposal for the Future Development of the Oakville-Milton-Trafalgar Area* (prepared for Council of the Township of Trafalgar, 1 Oct, 1959), 27.

57. Diamond and Myers, *Bronte Planning Study*, 2–4; Heath, *Housing Conditions*; Oakville-Trafalgar-Bronte Planning Board, *Official Plan of the Oakville Planning Area* (5 Jan. 1962); Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group," 40–45.

58. Diamond and Myers, *Bronte Planning Study*, 2; *Might's Oakville Directory*, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1965, 1971, 1973; Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group," 56–60. Before amalgamation, Highway 2 through Bronte was called Triller Street.

59. See, for example, *DJR*, 14 Nov. 1969; 18 Nov. 1969.

60. Jack Pettitt, letter to the editor, *DJR*, 26 Feb. 1971.

61. On urban reform and anti-development coalitions, see Kevin Brushett, "Blots on the Face of the City: The Politics of Slum Housing and Urban Renewal in Toronto, 1940–1970" (doctoral thesis, Queen's University, 2001); Jon Caulfield, *The Tiny Perfect Mayor* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1974); James Lorimer and Carolyn MacGregor, eds., *After the Developers* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1981); Jack Granatstein, *The Marlborough Marathon: One Street Against a Developer* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1971); Dimitrios Roussopoulos, ed., *The City and Radical Social Change* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982); Sewell, *The Shape of the City*; John Sewell, *Up Against City Hall* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1972). Relatively little work has been done on anti-development coalitions outside large cities like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Ottawa. But see Richard Harris, *Democracy in Kingston: A Social Movement in Urban Politics, 1965–1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); Desmond Morton, "Mississauga: The Story of a Municipal Investigation," *City Magazine*, June 1976, 36–43; Jack Pasternak, *The Kitchener Market Fight* (Toronto: S. Stevens, Hakkert, 1975).

62. Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group." On the participatory "people power" rhetoric of WORA, see, for example, *DJR*, 15 Feb. 1971; 26 Mar. 1971.

63. *DJR*, 26 Nov. 1971. Bruce Kuwabara and Barry Sampson discuss Diamond and Myers reform outlook in "Diamond and Myers: The Form of Reform," *City Magazine*, Aug.–Sept. 1975, 29–47.

64. Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group," 93; Harry Barrett, interviewed by author, 1 Mar. 2000. Barrett's presence at the lead of the local reform coalition demonstrates how useless the rhetoric of "old guard" versus "new guard" was for the local situation. Barrett, whose family ran a local plumbing business, had been on the Planning Board since 1953, serving as chair for many years, before being elected as a councillor in 1967, deputy reeve in 1970, and then mayor in 1972, a position he held until 1984, when he retired. Certainly Barrett, whatever his view of development at the time, was as old guard as it gets.

65. Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group," 69–72; Barrett interview.

66. "The Planning Board" (information pamphlet, Sept. 1967), file 5503, box 1486, Town Hall Records Centre, Oakville.

67. Faludi and Associates, *A Proposal for the Future Development of the Oakville-Milton-Trafalgar Area*, 5. Faludi was a dominant figure in postwar

68. See Damas and Smith, *Town of Oakville Traffic Planning Report, 1965–1985* (Toronto: Damas and Smith, 1969), available at the Main Branch of the Oakville Public Library. Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group," 58–60.

69. *Beaver* (Oakville) (hereafter *OB*), 25 Oct. 1972; Diamond and Myers, *Bronte Planning Study*, 20–22.

70. See Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group."

71. On this point, see especially Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

72. Diamond and Myers, *Bronte Planning Study*, 31–32.

73. Ibid., 27.

74. Ibid., 34–58.

75. Thacker, "Municipal Pressure Group," 63; Oakville Town Council, Amendment 24 to the Official Plan of the Oakville Planning Area; Oakville Town Council, Amendment 28 to the Official Plan of the Oakville Planning Area. On general issues of planning in this period, see Ontario Economic Council, *Subject to Approval: A Review of Municipal Planning in Toronto* (Toronto, 1973).

76. Bylaws of the Corporation of the Town of Oakville, bylaw 1965–136, section 39(1).

77. Antoinette McAllister, *Zoning for Fast Food and Drive-In Restaurants* (Chicago: Planning Advisory Service, American Society of Planning Officials, 1976), 1. See John Love, *McDonalds: Behind the Arches* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 282. *Financial Post*, 12 Oct. 1974, C5. *Foodservice and Hospitality* (2 Jan. 1967): 1.

78. *DMM*, 13 May 1970, 38. See also McAllister, who borrowed a tentative definition from William Fisher, executive vice-president of the National Restaurant Association. Drive-in restaurants, in Fisher's view, were characterized by one or more of the following: containers/utensils are disposable, customers wait on themselves, food can be taken out, and/or customers clean up their own mess. McAllister, *Zoning*, 1.

79. The new bylaw amended bylaw 1965–136 so that permitted uses clause now lists several permitted uses, "but not including restaurants or refreshment stands." Bylaw 1972–33: A Bylaw to Amend Bylaw 1965–136 (Restaurants in C3 Zones), passed 6 Mar. 1972, approved by Ontario Municipal Board, 26 Sept. 1973. In other words, each new restaurant required a specific amendment to the zoning bylaw. The discussion of the bylaw can be followed in Oakville Town Council, *Minutes*, 7 Dec. 1971; 11 Feb. 1972; 7 Aug. 1973; *DJR*, 8 Dec. 1971; 17 Dec. 1971; 4 Feb. 1972; *OB*, 6 Jan. 1972; *Foodservice and Hospitality* (April 1972): 70. The new rules were not without their critics. Six years later, it still made some observers bristle. Douglas Sweet, for example, called it "the town's insane restaurant bylaw." *Oakville Journal Record* (hereafter *OJR*), 5 July 1978.

80. In 1973, the Scarborough planning board briefly entertained the same idea, and rejected it for similar reasons.

81. *DJR*, 2 Apr. 1974, 14 June 1974.

82. Drafts of the plan were discussed over the course of 1975, then assembled into Oakville Planning Department, *Critical Choices and Future Options: Bronte Tertiary Plan* (November 1975).

83. The story of the Silcar dispute is painfully convoluted. Part of the conflict stemmed from the status of municipalities in Ontario. In Canada, municipalities do not have independent constitutional status, but are creatures of provincial governments. In Ontario at the time, major decisions (e.g., town budgets, official plans and their amendments) were subject to review by a provincially appointed Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). The conflict with Silcar resulted partly from this institutional oversight: the company applied for a building permit between the time that the council passed its new official plan for Bronte and the scheme was approved by the OMB. The town

initially insisted it could refuse the permit, while Silcar argued that until the OMB approved the change, the land remained zoned for commercial use and the company had a right to expand. *OJR,* 8 Nov. 1974; 11 Nov. 1974; 20 Dec. 1974; 22 Feb. 1975; 26 Feb. 1975; 4 Mar. 1975; 14 May 1975; 7 July 1976; 9 July 1976; 7 July 1978; 20 Dec. 1978.

84. *OB,* 12 Dec. 1984.

85. *OJR,* 15 Jan. 1975. The difficulty in building ongoing participatory planning was also emphasized by John Sewell in *Up Against City Hall.* Sewell found that citizens slowly lost interest in the forums and committees he set up to ensure ongoing consultation. It makes one wonder if, rhetoric aside, the goal of citizens on the fringes of urban reform was actually participation, or simply a more responsive form of representative democracy. The point reinforces the need for a more systematic historical study of reform movements across Canada, looking particularly at a variety of types of municipalities.

86. *DJR,* 4 Feb. 1972

87. *DJR,* 4 Dec. 1971.

88. *DJR,* 9 July 1971, 2.

89. Oakville Planning Department, *Critical Choices* 86, describing A&W. Earlier, planner John Walker complained about the "headaches" and cost of land assembly, especially the way business people held out for more money. *OJR,* 21 May 1975.

90. Homeowners were 12 times more likely than tenants to return a survey to Diamond and Myers. Diamond and Myers, *Bronte Planning Study,* 22. One hundred and eighty-one of 2176 equals about 8 per cent. On more general issues of the middle-class nature of many reform movements at this time, see Ontario Economic Council, *Subject to Approval,* 139.

91. *DJR,* 21 April 1971.