Modernizers and Traditionalists in Postwar Hamilton, Ontario: The Fate of a Farmers’ Market, 1945-1965

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Article abstract

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Entre les années 1945 et 1965, le Marché des fermiers de Hamilton est à la fois cité comme un joyau historique et culturel irremplaçable ou condamné comme une institution démodée et sans valeur. Le débat au sujet du marché prend place à l’époque de l’expansion des banlieues après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, alimentée et facilitée par l’automobile. Ce changement dans le paysage d’après-guerre contribue à l’essor d’une puissante idéologie moderniste, provoquant aussi une réplique traditionaliste. Le débat sur le sort du marché envisage la réduction, la relocalisation et même l’élimination complète du marché. On s’entend enfin sur une solution et la construction d’une rampe de stationnement sur le site et l’installation du marché au premier niveau de la structure sont mises en chantier en octobre 1960. Cette victoire pour le camp des modernistes préfigure des projets de rénovation urbaine de grande envergure qui domineront la scène politique régionale à la fin des années soixante et au début des années soixante-dix.

Between 1945 and 1965, the Hamilton Farmers’ Market was hailed as both an irreplaceable cultural and historical gem, and condemned as an antiquated institution not worth the land it occupied. During this period, debates over the market’s strengths, weaknesses, and ultimately its existence, polarized Hamiltonians between two urban ideologies. The market debates occurred in the midst of post–World War II suburban sprawl, fuelled and facilitated by the automobile, which quickly established numerous residential and commercial regions outside central Hamilton. This change in the postwar landscape accommodated the rise of a powerful modernist ideology that would drive the subsequent urban renewal movement in the city while also cultivating a traditionalist response. As suburban growth exceeded that within the city, some metropolitan leaders struggled to protect and promote the urban core. To modernizers focused on the future, the market was incompatible with their vision of city development. For traditionalists, however, it was an indispensable civic landmark in the city centre. These debates over the Hamilton Farmers’ Market touched on some of the most contentious urban development issues of the era while exposing a fierce ideological battle between equally passionate, but not equally powerful, rival visions.

In 1945, the market was already over 100 years in the making. Created in 1837 on land donated by wealthy Hamiltonian Andrew Miller specifically for the establishment of a market, the lot was located at the intersection of York and James Streets in the heart of the flourishing city (fig. 1). Throughout its history the market remained primarily open-air, as none of the three halls constructed in 1849, the 1860s, and 1885 survived. Stallholders were mostly local farmers, who paid weekly rental fees to the city authorities, who retained ownership and carried out managerial duties. Stationary stalls did not exist, but parking sheds were eventually erected to accommodate the trucks that parked directly on the site during the three days a week the market was open (fig. 2).

The controversy over the market unfolded in stages, sparked by the increasing difficulty of maintaining the market while accommodating growing numbers of automobiles in Hamilton. In these debates, modernizers prioritized economic prosperity, technological innovation, and efficiency. Traditionalists, on the other hand, championed the more cultural and social aspects of the city, fighting for the preservation, continuation, and even expansion of historical landmarks, cultural centres, and civic activities. Modernizers’ vision of the city, which involved different views of the future, dominated the debates. During the debates, traditionalists and modernizers adopted the market and the automobile as the respective symbols of their ideologies. While traditionalists advocated an urban ideal that included the market as a key feature, modernizers championed the prioritization of the automobile within the urban landscape.

From April 1947 to September 1957, debates focused on reducing the market’s size, relocating the market, and eliminating the market completely. Although the solution that was eventually implemented—constructing a parking ramp over the market site—was raised a few times in these years, debate over the market continued to be dominated by the other three possibilities. In September 1957, the market debate shifted focus to the parking ramp option, and a ramp plan was subsequently approved in May 1959. The market problems, however, were not over. For more than a year after the ramp proposal was accepted, the challenge of establishing and maintaining an interim market continued to dominate market news. By October 1960, the ramp was complete, and the market relocated to its new accommodations.
The market controversy raged amid the burgeoning popularity of the automobile and in the face of remarkable suburban sprawl. In Hamilton specifically, the number of non-commercial passenger vehicles registered skyrocketed from 4,948 in 1919, to 28,183 in 1941. This meant the number of city residents per vehicle in the same period decreased from 21.8 to 5.9. The trend established in this earlier period continued during the postwar market debates. By 1961, there were 72,037 non-commercial passenger vehicles registered in Hamilton—one vehicle for every 3.7 residents. With the popularization of the automobile, traffic congestion quickly became a problem. Already in 1947, the Master Plan for the Development of the City of Hamilton focused largely on resolving traffic problems. Two additional studies, focusing solely on traffic and parking problems, were issued in 1958 and 1961. Efforts to ease downtown congestion included one-way streets implemented extensively throughout the city in 1956, as well as new additions to the region’s highway network. Both measures focused on moving motorists either through or around the city, instead of encouraging them to linger in commercial districts.

Beyond affecting urban form, cars symbolized changing social attitudes. As Jan Jennings notes, the automobile made personal and spontaneous mobility possible to a degree never before experienced by the majority of the population—it symbolized the values of “privatism, freedom of choice, [and] the extending of one’s control over the physical and social environment.” The individualism cars represented led many to criticize them as injurious to community culture in the city. Although the prominence of automobiles did erode communities in urban cores by attacking the type of pedestrian culture identified by Jane Jacobs, this dominance did not represent a forgone conclusion of the automobile age, but rather was a product of the prioritization of the automobile in urban and suburban planning. In other words, the prominence of automobiles reflected their centrality in modernizers’ thought, which pervaded city politics.
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The impact of the automobile was not limited to the city; it affected suburban regions as well. The connections between suburban sprawl and the automobile were important to the market debates for two principle reasons—first, suburban sprawl drew downtown residents out of the city, and second, suburban population growth fuelled the development of new commercial centres, which competed with shops and stores downtown, including the market. Geographer Richard Harris explains the connection between the societal prioritization of automobiles and suburban sprawl. As he notes, the feasibility of suburban development was inextricably linked to the widespread availability of the automobile, as cars provided essential transportation for people moving between their urban jobs and suburban homes.15

In Hamilton, population figures underscored the rapid rate at which suburban expansion occurred. Outside of the city, the region included the towns of Dundas, Stoney Creek, and Burlington; the Village of Waterdown; and the townships of Ancaster, Beverly, Binbrook, East and West Flamborough, Glanford, and Saltfleet. The total population of the Greater Hamilton Region in 1901 was 83,347—56,254 of which was concentrated in the city.16 The numbers exploded to 214,705 by 1941, at which point 172,898 inhabited the city.17 Over the course of the postwar stage of the market debates, the population skyrocketed again, sitting at 395,189 in 1961, with 273,991 of that populace in the city.18 While the population of the inner city was growing, it fell behind the rate at which the Greater Hamilton Region was expanding. In fact, in the face of massive overall population growth, the proportion of Hamiltonians living and shopping in the inner city was actually declining.

This question of where Hamiltonians were shopping had special implications for the market. New suburban stores were ideally situated to accommodate drivers—shopping centres were placed near highways and offered an abundance of free parking.19 Malls constructed in the Hamilton region in this
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period included Limeridge, Eastgate, and the Greater Hamilton Shopping Centre. As historian Lizabeth Cohen argues, these new suburban shopping facilities precipitated the shift in community marketplace from town center to shopping center. This development included the growth of supermarkets offering comparable advantages and further challenging the market. Between 1947 and 1958, the size of the average American supermarket increased from between 8,000 to 9,000 square feet, to 17,000 square feet. The scale of these new stores allowed them to offer one-stop shopping, a popular trend at the time. These stores also failed to follow the tradition of small local grocers who purchased their goods wholesale at the Hamilton Farmers’ Market before regular business hours, instead patronizing the massive Ontario Food Terminal, which opened in the 1950s in Toronto.

Overall then, the majority of the potential commercial benefits of growth in the suburbs was not shared with the city centre, but rather remained concentrated in the suburbs.

Linda Biesenthal confirms the important impact these broader changes had on farmers’ markets across Canada. As she explains, populations in most Canadian towns and cities had grown to sustain markets by the mid-nineteenth-century. Improved transportation, however, granted both farmers and shoppers greater choice in where to buy and sell goods. In addition, the proliferation of supermarkets further eroded markets’ popularity. The crises of both world wars as well as the Great Depression sustained markets for the first half of the twentieth century, but by the 1960s markets’ typical positioning on prime downtown properties meant several sites were destroyed. Such cases included markets in Halifax and Kitchener, both of which were cleared to make way for shopping centres, and a market in Regina, which was flattened to create a parking lot. Another example here was the Edmonton City Market. Although the market ultimately survived, its history was characterized by conflicting conceptions of the role it played in the city. While market proponents argued it infused the central city with a lively atmosphere, modernizers who sought to eliminate the market argued it violated a “respect for order, rationality, and wealth.” In all of these cases, those who worked, lived, and played in cities struggled to find ways to ensure the city centre could withstand suburban retail competition.

In Hamilton, it was the dual pressures of suburban sprawl and the automobile’s burgeoning dominance that gave rise to modernizers’ and traditionalists’ duelling ideologies. Modernizers dominated city politics and planning, working to ensure their view of the city’s ideal future form and function would be realized. This new urban vision regarded the farmers’ market as a relic of the past—a feature of the historical city of Hamilton no longer compatible with the growing urban centre. To this group, the value of the market was derived primarily from the revenue it provided to the city, and modernizers argued that revenue figures increasingly justified the maintenance of the market, especially on a prime piece of downtown property. In reality, revenue figures were actually quite consistent during the market debates. Net figures of the city’s earnings from the market included what was collected through parking fees on the market lot when the market was closed. Between 1945 and 1950, revenues were augmented by parking fees, which were collected beginning in the late 1940s. Ironically, it was after the market was relocated in a new facility that a noticeable drop in revenue occurred. The figures for the period were as follows: $27,253 in 1945, $46,097 in 1950, $46,786 in 1955, $48,220 in 1960, and $43,151 in 1965. These figures provide two important insights into the ideology of urban modernizers as it applied to the market. First, the relative stability of the numbers, particularly in the years when the debates peaked, demonstrates that fiscal consistency was regarded as stagnation, not proven dependability, by modernizers. Furthermore, these figures also ironically demonstrate the irrelevance of numerical statistics to the market controversy. Quite simply, numbers were peripheral to the market debates—traditionalists’ and modernizers’ views did not hinge on numerical data, but rather revolved around more theoretical and philosophical ideas about Hamilton’s urban landscape and culture.

Modernizers did not rate the market’s cultural and community value nearly as highly as traditionalists did; in a few extreme cases, members of this group argued the market had no value whatsoever because it was not an essential provider of food for the community. But not all modernizers called for the abolition of the market. Many supported its continuation under different circumstances—in a different location, for example, or under more efficient management. Modernizers valued innovation and viewed not only the accommodation but the prioritization of the automobile within Hamilton’s urban infrastructure as an important goal. In this way, the automobile was the driving force behind modernism. Modernizers upheld the idea that a modern, efficient, and orderly city was best, and for the market to survive, it would have to conform to the demands of the automobile age. Under this ideology, urban development and planning eroded what historian John C. Weaver refers to as the traditional “pedestrian culture” in the city, instead prioritizing the fast and efficient movement of traffic around and through the core.

Although by far the dominant group, modernizers did not go unchallenged in postwar Hamilton. Traditionalists responded with an alternate ideology that resisted the modernizing impulse. Traditionalists’ arguments about the fate of the market were informed by its historical functions. In this respect, the market’s origins as a town square and community centre made its preservation of paramount importance. This group embraced nostalgic views of the market in earlier times, when populations were not sufficient to support shops and stores and the market was essential in providing food and other goods to the community.

For traditionalists, the market was an important cultural landmark—a refreshing reminder of rural values and culture.
in an increasingly modernized urban centre. As local historian Michael Quigley notes, “There is a deeply felt popular sense that the market makes a vital contribution to city life . . . The market is an anchor and a calm centre of stability at the heart of the storm of commercial and civic rebuilding.” Nostalgia fuelled this view, both for people who remembered the pre-supermarket days when the market was essential, and for younger generations who wanted to recapture the simpler, kinder, purer time the market was popularly portrayed as representing. To traditionalists, the market embodied numerous qualities threatened by modernism. It represented a sense of community, as it was a locale for human contact and interaction, which shunned modern commercialism’s fixation on economic transactions in favour of emphasizing interpersonal relationships between market shoppers and stallholders.

Where the market was concerned, traditionalists and modernizers were divided by two key issues. First, there was the question of whether the market should be preserved or be eradicated completely. Second, of those who advocated the preservation of the market, there was the additional consideration of how the market should be preserved—where, in what form, what size, and for how long. Those who advocated the eradication of the market were obviously staunch modernizers, but a great number of those who supported the preservation of the market were also modernizers. Traditionalists and modernizers were divided mainly by their ideas on how the market should be preserved. Traditionalists typically included farmers, market vendors, a minority of municipal politicians, and local community associations. Modernizers were usually municipal politicians and business owners.

In the late 1940s, it initially seemed as though reconciling the market and the growing presence of the automobile in the city would not be an impossible task. In response to the need for additional parking space downtown, in August 1948, Property and License Committee Secretary Walter Griffin suggested the market lot be used for parking on non-market days. The implementation of Griffin’s suggestion marked the first time the lot was used for parking. While Griffin’s solution appeared to be a neat compromise between traditionalism and modernism, few subsequent solutions to market problems were as quickly approved and roundly satisfying.

Another looming problem was the protrusion of the market onto streets bordering the lot. Some market trucks and stands extended onto portions of MacNab, York, and Merrick streets. In addition, market customers regularly parked along the market’s perimeter to load their purchases, which further obstructed traffic. For these reasons, the Traffic Committee proposed the banning of stalls along the affected roadways in October 1947. Market Clerk Alfred Smees, responsible for managing the market’s day-to-day operations, was a traditionalist, but he appealed to modernizers dominating City Hall by warning the proposed regulations would result in significant financial losses. Police Chief J. R. Crocker, on the other hand, supported the ban, calling the market “a relic of the horse and buggy days,” and arguing, “it’s the most serious traffic hazard we have.”

While City Council considered the removal of stalls from MacNab, York, and Merrick streets, another solution was proposed. Reeve Niram Fletcher suggested splitting the central market into two smaller markets in the east and west of the city to relieve downtown congestion, and make the market lot available for alternative uses. Modernizer politicians embraced the notion of dividing the market, but others, including Alfred Smees and traditionalist stallholders, feared the market would lose its atmosphere and historical character if moved from its original location. Stalholder Ewart Colling offered additional reasons for preserving the market, including its popularity with both locals and tourists, as well as its drawing power in bringing shoppers into the city centre. Traditionalists also touted the market as a distinctive feature of Hamilton, and it was not unusual for supporters to argue, without proof, that the market was famous all over North America.

As early as April 1949, the possibility of building a parking ramp was raised. Alderman Douglas B. Gordon favoured a ramp as a way to both preserve the market and provide additional downtown parking. Although a ramp was eventually constructed, at the time the suggestion seems to have attracted little attention, as the possibility of moving the market, and thus selling the market lot, dominated headlines. The prospect of moving the market, and moreover selling the land designated since the city acquired it to house the market, quickly provoked protests from traditionalists. The city’s newspaper, the Hamilton Spectator, exhibited strong traditionalist rhetoric in its editorials, with one such April 1949 piece titled, “Selling Our Birthright.” The editorial argued the value of the market as a cultural and civic landmark was immeasurable and could not be compared to the financial gain of selling the property. Other traditionalists echoing the newspaper’s sentiments included the Civic Club, the Local Council of Women, and some downtown business owners, all of whom argued the market was a unique and famous feature of the city in which Hamiltonians should take pride. Traditionalists’ defence of the market was also characterized by a strong emphasis on the value and importance of history. Media coverage underscored this emphasis with news articles that almost always referred to how many years a quoted stallholder had been on the market, and frequently included anecdotes about the vendors’ family histories.

Alongside this press coverage, the popularity of traditionalism among Hamiltonians was demonstrated by the phone calls and letters that flooded City Hall protesting the rumoured sale of the market.

In the meantime, attention turned back to an October 1947 recommendation to trim peripheral market stalls. In November 1951, the Traffic Committee again called for stalls to be banned from lining Merrick and York streets. Traffic
Committee members lent weight to their protests by arguing the traffic hazard created by the market was so severe that Hamiltonians' lives were in danger. In response, stallholders argued if their trucks and stands were removed from the specified streets they would only be replaced by parked cars, creating similar congestion.\textsuperscript{51} Like most arguments over the market, the dispute raged on, intermittently, until January 1952, when the designated space was cleared, and parked cars quickly moved in.\textsuperscript{52} Subsequent moves later that year by the Traffic Committee to ban additional stands in the interests of alleviating traffic congestion and providing additional parking were also approved and implemented.\textsuperscript{53} While traffic congestion was a real problem in the core, replacing stalls with parked cars did little to address the problem. This measure was significant, however, because it was a direct manifestation of modernizers' goals, prioritizing the accommodation of automobiles at the expense of the market.

In February 1952, the parking ramp suggestion arose once again, this time promoted by downtown business owner Ted Farrar, who touted the same benefits previous proponents had—mainly increased parking downtown, and the preservation of the market at its original site. Many downtown merchants like Farrar espoused this particular brand of modernism, which supported the preservation of the market. This group's support was principally derived from their contention that the market attracted both pedestrian and auto traffic, which in turn increased business at downtown stores.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, supporting the market's preservation was not a sign of traditionalist allegiances within this group as much as it was a typically modern-minded business decision.

Still, in 1952, Farrar's parking ramp suggestion failed to find a broad audience. Instead, public debate throughout the first half of the 1950s increasingly focused on the possibility of closing the market altogether. Over the course of the decade, modernizers speculated about how much more the city could profit from the market site if the property was sold. Indeed, the value of the property was often cited as the ultimate argument for removing the market and engaging the land more lucratively. In reality, an official appraisal of the lot was never conducted, and therefore any numbers offered as to the value of the land were primarily, if not entirely, speculative. The lack of a legitimate estimate did not prevent politicians from frequently arguing stall rental fees were infinitesimal compared to the money the city stood to gain from selling or renting the property. Indeed, the perceived gap between the actual revenue and potential earning power of the land was a key justification employed by modernizers supporting increased stall rental rates.\textsuperscript{55} As rates rose in the early 1950s, stallholders responded by accusing municipal officials of trying to force them off the market with fees they could not afford.\textsuperscript{56} The ambiguity and lack of consensus over the market's economic status in the city further complicated the market debates. On one hand, vendors revelled in a free market atmosphere where they were only restricted by their monthly rental payments—otherwise, they owed nothing to the city, and prices were determined by the cost of goods and competition among stallholders, not rates dictated by the city. On the other hand, the setup was remarkably protectionist, as the city facilitated the market's operations by renting space on municipally owned land at a low cost to vendors. Not only did the city charge rental rates below market value, but it subsidized market operations further by exempting stallholders from other fees such as business taxes charged to other businesses in the city.\textsuperscript{57} In addition, municipal employees also managed the market's daily operations.

In her study of public markets in Canada, Linda Biesenthal notes this combination of a free market model and economic protectionism was standard in markets across Canada.\textsuperscript{58} Biesenthal does not, however, spend much time discussing the awkward effects of this combination of economic policies.\textsuperscript{59} The effect, however, was indeed quite awkward, as the Hamilton Farmers' Market was essentially exempt from the economic and political rules and regulations governing the rest of the city.

This operational atmosphere meant arguments over the market were framed in very different terms, derived from traditionalist and modernizers' interpretations of what type of economic policy governed the market, as well as the kind of economic policy that should govern the market. For stallholders, the rental fees they paid, as well as their instrumental role in the market, meant they deserved to be treated with at least as much consideration as one would afford a business associate. For example, farmer Joseph Woolley argued, "We haven't even the status of tenants when it comes to getting a better market."\textsuperscript{60} City officials, however, typically regarded the market as a venture the city supported in a charitable spirit, as a civic service to the Hamilton community. In the postwar period, though, as modernizers gained power at City Hall and problems with the market mounted, many politicians increasingly viewed the market as a business more than a cultural and community feature, and pursued policy changes accordingly. In 1951, for example, a business tax similar to the one applied to Hamilton-area merchants was proposed for stallholders.\textsuperscript{61} A few years later in 1954, Market Clerk Alfred Smees commented, "Sooner or later you are going to come to the conclusion . . . that you can't tie up property valued at $1,000,000."\textsuperscript{62} Smees's observation reflected the prevailing wisdom that dominated the debates up to this point.

As the battle between traditionalists and modernizers raged, one high-profile member of City Council complicated the situation and blurred the lines between these opposing ideologies. Lloyd Jackson served as the mayor of Hamilton from 1949 to 1962, and crowned himself the market's chief defender; in other words, a staunch traditionalist.\textsuperscript{63} In reality, Jackson's actions demonstrated his sympathies with modernizers, but his rhetoric was very traditional. Jackson issued his most public profession of support for the market at the height
of the debates in August 1954 when he refused to entertain the possibilities of moving or closing the market, instead insisting on its continuation in the city centre. For most of 1955 and 1956, debate over the market’s fate continued, but on a smaller scale—no new proposals were introduced, and no significant moves towards resolving the dilemma were made. Given the power Jackson wielded over the decision-making process when the debate picked up again in 1957, it seems likely he played a role in muting the controversy in these years. It is also possible that the debates over the fate of City Hall in this decade played a role in stalling, and eventually spurring, the market plans. Whatever the case, as the market debate re-emerged in 1957, Jackson’s position had not changed. He vowed to defend the market tirelessly because he said most Hamiltonians supported his stance. Jackson’s fiery rhetoric against the removal of the market encapsulated traditionalist views. He railed against those who sought more profitable uses for the market site, saying, “Some things in civic life are more important than money.”

In addition, he ably communicated his determination to preserve the market with declarations such as, “I’ve fought such moves [to relocate or abolish the market] before and I’ll fight them again. If necessary, I’ll fight this thing on my own.”

From the fall of 1957 to the spring of 1959, market debates focused on the old parking ramp suggestion, and a plan was finally approved. Mayor Jackson aimed his traditionalist rhetoric of previous years directly at his many opponents in City Hall, arguing, “It is nonsense to talk about traffic hazards. If we are going to subordinate ourselves to the automobile, we might as well quit living.” Originally strongly opposed to the prospect of a parking ramp over the market, Jackson later modified his stance by arguing the “historical nature, essential characteristics and atmosphere of an open-air” market must be retained.

Many city politicians took issue with Jackson’s stalwart defence of the market. Alderman Ramsey Evans, for example, argued the market lot was too valuable to be permanently designated as either a market or parking site. Alderman Malcolm Cline took a more flexible stance. He acknowledged the market had “sentimental” value to Hamiltonians, but argued that since the city was evolving, the market should as well. In failing to provide specific suggestions, Cline’s vague stance resembled that of many conservative modernizers, who applauded urban development but also sought to preserve some historical urban features in a way that would be compatible with, not in stark and awkward contrast to, downtown’s evolution.

Despite such cautionary politics, the ramp plans moved forward. In September 1958 the Hamilton Parking Authority approved the parking ramp, at an estimated cost of $850,000 to the Board of Control. In a move that clearly demonstrated Jackson’s flamboyant political style, the mayor voted against the Board of Control’s ramp endorsement because, in Jackson’s words, “It stipulated that the characteristic of an open air market” would be preserved, instead of “the characteristics of our market and not just any market.” Days later, City Council—the mayor included—approved “in principle the idea of a parking ramp,” contingent on the plan’s preservation of “the historic nature, essential characteristics, and atmosphere” of an open-air market. No one ever explained how housing the market under a concrete parking ramp could possibly allow the market to retain its open-air atmosphere, and only Alderman John Munro seemed to notice that, regardless of what kind of ramp was constructed, by virtue of there being a ramp over the market, the market would cease to be open air.

Contradictions aside, a parking ramp plan presented by architectural firm Duncan McIntosh was unanimously approved by City Council in May 1959. It seemed as though traditionalists and modernizers had all been satisfied—Mayor Jackson called the plan “marvelous,” while Traffic Director W. E. Ewes proclaimed it “one of the finest designs I have seen.” The sketches outlined a four-level parking garage that accommodated 158 market trucks and 447 cars, or 570 cars on non-market days. With the new plans, local traffic changes were also proposed to ensure cars entering and exiting the ramp would not disrupt traffic flow on the streets bordering the market.

Although the ramp plan appeared to strike a careful balance between traditionalist and modernizers’ visions of the city, the parking ramp was no victory for traditionalists. Under the new plan, parking accommodations took predominance quite literally over the market. The market was now to be housed under a parking structure—a structure with the primary function of providing downtown parking, and the secondary function of accommodating the market. This clear subjugation of the market to the automobile was ultimately a logical extension of previous parking and traffic regulations that both encouraged and accommodated the presence of the automobile at the expense of the market.

The market’s secondary status in its new location was further demonstrated by modernizer Jack MacDonald’s contention that since the market was now contained within a parking structure, the City Parking Authority should manage the market instead of the Property and License Committee. This attitude was shared by Parking Authority Chairman Ronald Fraser, who angrily blamed traditionalists’ demands that the market’s “open-air characteristics” be preserved for prolonging the project and increasing its costs. Both politicians’ comments clearly indicated the market was, at best, a second-rate concern.

Although the ramp was approved in May 1959, debates continued, as an interim location for the market during construction had to be secured. Since both relocating and abolishing the market had already been ruled out as permanent
The success of the dislocated market awakened much of the original resistance stallholders showed to relocating under the concrete ramp, while also fuelling nostalgia. The impending move evoked renewed longing for not only the old open-air market, but for earlier times in general. The Hamilton Spectator both reflected and promoted this sentiment by running articles on the market’s history. One such article recalled how the market had “seen horse cars pass along York Street and women’s long skirts trail through market dust.” Stallholder Mary Stott expressed the mood succinctly when she said, “Out on the street it’s like an old English market. Under that thing [the parking structure] . . . well, I don’t know.”

The Hamilton Farmers’ Market reopened in its new location in the Market Square Carpark in October 1960 (figs. 5 and 6). Even on the first day, complaints from stallholders abounded. Alderman Fred Whitehouse dismissed the complaints as merely growing pains, saying, “In time most of these grievances will take care of themselves.” For a city that had just spent $1,150,000 to construct the new accommodations, gloomy reports were not welcome news. By the mid-1960s, headlines such as “Seek cure for sick mart,” “Elixir’ sought for market,” and “Market death predicted” confirmed the market’s new crop of problems had not resolved themselves.

Although it appeared to some to be a good compromise between traditionalists’ and modernizers’ visions, in reality the ramp solution solidly favoured modernizers’ ideology. In the years after the ramp’s construction, the large degree to which traditionalists’ concerns had been overlooked became increasingly apparent. Contrary to Fred Whitehouse’s optimistic prediction, problems continued to plague the market, including traffic congestion, parking shortages, lower revenues, and declining attendance figures. Market Clerk Leslie Nutley blamed both the existence of six other local farmers’ markets and the proliferation of shopping plazas in the region for the revenue and attendance problems.

The difficulties the market faced in its new location should not have been surprising, given the logic behind its move. Efforts to relocate the market, and indeed to modify its situation at all, were never aimed primarily at ensuring the market’s success and sustainability, but rather were about making the market compatible with modernizers’ vision of the ideal city. The crisis facing the market was not a pre-existing one so much as it was the product of pressure from modernizers who sought to reshape the city as a whole, and had no intentions on giving the market a free pass from urban redevelopment. Thus, this period in the Hamilton Farmers’ Market’s history can be scored as a qualified victory for modernizers. Although the market was not abolished or removed from the city centre, housing it under the parking ramp was a prelude to the more extensive implementation of modernizers’ urban vision realized during the height of the city’s subsequent urban renewal movement in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The struggle to find ways to respond to suburban growth was not exclusive to Hamilton. Rather, many cities across the country faced the same challenges. Accordingly, the
competing urban ideologies that grew in Hamilton during this time emerged in other metropolitan centres as well. In Vancouver, for example, historian Patricia Roy argues much of the transportation infrastructure improvements carried out in the 1950s and 1960s "symbolized the belief that if traffic problems were solved, downtown's rejuvenation would automatically follow"—a classic example of modernism. Amid postwar prosperity, Vancouverites demanded transportation infrastructure to accommodate their automobiles, including the 1954 eight-lane Granville Street Bridge. In terms of city development, traditionalists rallied against downtown high-rises like the 1965 Pacific Centre, which relocated shopping activity from city streets to inside a massive shopping centre, while obstructing the view of the mountains. Public discontent was so strong that subsequent developments were reconfigured as low-lying structures so as not to obstruct the view of the natural landscape.

Urban renewal efforts in Calgary also followed these patterns—plans were ambitious, but seldom implemented, as a result of insufficient authority, support, and funding. For example, as membership and funding for the 1953 Regional Planning Commission was voluntary, the commission lacked the power to influence urban planning. Instead, private developers who were modernizers exercised considerable influence, using reports such as the 1966 Downtown Master Plan to learn about housing shortages, but ignoring calls for more central-city housing and instead establishing planned communities on the outskirts of the city, feeding suburban sprawl. Furthermore, the automobile, which allowed greater personal mobility independent of public transport systems, meant the influence of public transportation routes over the location of new residential and commercial developments declined.
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Figure 4: Another view of the interim market in November 1959, looking north-west on York Street. The imposing building on the right is City Hall.

In Winnipeg, too, urban renewal efforts were uneven. Created in 1943, the Metropolitan Planning Committee consisted of provincial and municipal representatives whose mandate was to assist in urban planning, but the lack of municipal government until 1960 hindered its work. Like in Calgary, the committee's nine urban planning reports, dating from 1944 to 1949, never played more than an "informational role." Events in Hamilton suggest clashing urban ideologies, which hindered progress and hampered support, were a culprit in the recurrent problems throughout these cities in making plans reality.

In Toronto, postwar urban planning was dominated by modernizers' plans to construct a massive network of highways. The city's 1943 thirty-year development plan, for example, included a network of "superhighways," many of which were slated to run through established residential areas. Although modernizers advocated inner city expressways to alleviate traffic congestion in the city, the lack of broader public support and financial backing meant the 1943 plan, as well as a subsequent 1949 plan, were never implemented.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, public protests against roadway construction peaked with the proposed Spadina Expressway. Opponents argued the plan prioritized the accommodation of the automobile above the quality of city residents' living environment. Despite traditionalists' resistance, urban development and construction was widespread in Toronto during the 1960s, as apartment buildings, commercial spaces, office buildings, and highways all proliferated. Traditionalists' protests grew louder as the decade progressed, and historian James Lemon credits these protests with imbuing subsequent urban renewal efforts with a concern for curbing pollution, providing social services, and building and improving schools.
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Figure 5: The Market Square Carpark, shown shortly after its completion. York Street is in the foreground, while Macnab Street is partially visible to the left.

In Hamilton, the height of urban renewal fervour followed the market debates. In the immediate postwar years, modernizers who later led the urban renewal efforts of the 1960s and 1970s sharpened their views during the market controversy. In keeping with the chronology of national urban renewal trends, the clamour around development issues peaked in 1965 with three noteworthy reports. The first, Hamilton at the Crossroads: Development or Deterioration, was issued by the Hamilton Downtown Association, and heralded the imminent decline of the city as a result of poor planning. Shortly thereafter, city officials released both an urban renewal study and an implementation scheme. Although the mayor at the time, Victor Kennedy Copps, was a determined modernizer, public response to the plans was mixed and they were modified numerous times before being partially implemented over a protracted period. These urban renewal campaigns forced yet another move on the market, as the Market Square Carpark facility was demolished in the 1970s to make way for the new Eaton's Shopping Centre. In 1980, the market was relocated to a fully enclosed two-tier facility within that shopping complex, where it remains today.

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Notes
1. In referring to traditionalists and modernizers as two different groups, no official association between proponents of each ideology is implied. Although there were clearly two central urban ideologies driving the market debates, they were not coordinated or organized movements. Modernizers and traditionalists shared similar overarching visions of what the city should look like and how it should operate, but these groups did not form coalitions, nor did individual advocates of each position identify themselves as part of a larger movement. Thus the labels of traditionalist
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Figure 6: Market stalls in the new car park facility in July 1961.

and modernizer, and their derivatives, were typically not employed by participants contemporary to the debates, but are helpful for historians identifying the ideological trends that characterized urban development and politics in Hamilton at the time.


6. Ibid.

7. This 1945 planning report pinpointed traffic congestion as a key concern: Hamilton (Ontario) Planning Committee, Report on Existing Conditions Prepared as Base Material for Planning (Hamilton, ON: Town Planning Consultants, 1945).


14. For two examples of how significant the impact of the automobile has been on urban development in Canada, refer to Gerald T. Bloomfield, “No Parking Here to Corner: London Reshaped by the Automobile, 1911–1961,” Urban History Review 18, no. 2 (1989): 139–158; and Stephen Davies, “Reckless Walking Must Be Discouraged”: The Automobile...
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17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.


20. Bill Freeman, Hamilton: A People's History (Toronto, ON: Lorimer, 2001), 156; Weaver, Hamilton, 173.


22. Although these figures apply to American supermarkets, given the similarities between Canadian and American urban and suburban development and planning in this period, comparable growth in the size of Canadian supermarkets seems likely. Bernard J. La Londe, Differentials in Supermarket Drawing Power (East Lansing, MI: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Michigan State University, 1962), 1–4. For a more recent analysis of the state of farmers' markets in the United States, focusing on the impact of food wholesalers and modern supermarkets, see Allison Brown, Counting Farmers Markets,” Geographical Review 91, no. 4 (2001): 655–674.

23. La Londe, Differentials, 1–4.


28. Chase Merrett, Edmonton City Market, 8.


31. Weaver, Hamilton, 181–186. Although there were no explicit links between traditionalists and modernizers in Hamilton and other earlier urban visionaries, some of the debates in Hamilton echoed those between earlier American planners Lewis Mumford, Norman Bel Geddes, and Robert Moses. Lewis Mumford was against building expressways into the heart of urban centres, and instead advocated alternative modes of urban transportation to counteract the growing dominance of the automobile. In contrast, Norman Bel Geddes advocated urban planning that prioritized the automobile, as did Robert Moses. Refer to Clifford Ellis, "Lewis Mumford and Norman Bel Geddes: The Highway, the City, and the Future," Planning Perspectives 20 (January 2005): 51–68; Martha Bianco, "Robert Moses and Lewis Mumford: Competing Paradigms of Growth in Portland, Oregon," Planning Perspectives 16 (2000): 95–114.


35. Traditionalists often defended historical elements of cities, from farmers’ markets to old buildings, and small, locally owned and run businesses, as features of cities that needed to be protected to preserve the individuality of urban landscapes, as well as the personal connection felt for uniquely local, historical landmarks. Architectural conservation consultant Harold Kalman discusses what he calls the "Crisis on Main Street" in an article of the same title. Kalman’s discussion is framed in typical traditionalist rhetoric; for example, he refers to new building materials and styles as "tacky." He argues that Main Street as an institution has lost most of its historical features to the point it is now regarded as a nostalgic tourist attraction—a relic of the past, not a representation of present urban realities. Refer to Harold Kalman, "Crisis on Main Street," in Reviving Main Street, ed. Deryck Holdsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 30–54.


48. Like most of the tenets of traditionalism, this emphasis on history was
44. See, for example, “One of Few Distinctions: Do Away with the Market?
22 April 1949.

47. “Opposition Grows to Proposed Sale of Market Place,”
21 April 1949. HS,
45. “Alderman Scores Central Market Sale Proposal,”
HS, 19 March 1949.
43. “Farmer Warns Hamilton Big Loser If Central Market Allowed to Go,”
20 April 1949.
42. “Move from Central Spot Shown Failure Elsewhere,”
HS, 19 March 1949.
41. “Two Markets: East, West Locations Advocated,”
HS, 19 March 1949.
40. “City Is Behind Times re: Market, Declares Chief,”
HS, 19 March 1949.

51. “Remove Stalls, Face Big Loss Manager Warns,”
3 May 1952.
50. “City Is Asked to Clear Some Market Stalls,”
HS, 6 November 1951.
49. “Opposition Grows to Proposed Sale of Market Place,”
HS, 22 April 1949.
48. “Selling Our Birthright,” Editorial,
21 October 1954.
22 October 1958.
73. “Must Preserve Historic ‘Air,’”
22 October 1958.
72. “Historic Nature’ Ramp,”
HS, 22 October 1958.
71. “Too Valuable’ for Either Use Evans Contends,”
6 May 1959.
59. W. Thomas Matthews’s study of the Upper Canada market between
1800 and 1860 highlights the conflicting nature of the various economic
governing market operations. He uncovers a dichotomy between the
“interventionist tradition” evident in municipal codes and by-laws that
allowed the market to operate as a sheltered economic arena “conducive
to the pursuit of private profit.” Refer to W. Thomas Matthews, “Local
Government and the Regulation of the Public Market in Upper Canada,
1800–1860: The Moral Economy of the Poor?” Ontario History 29, no. 4
(December 1977): 321, 298.
62. “Future of Market in Doubt as Hamilton Continues Growth,”
Globe and Mail, 1 October 1954. As noted previously, no official or confirmed
estimates of the market lot’s value were produced; this was one of many
speculative figures offered during the debates.
63. For more on the direction and themes of city government under Lloyd
25 in A Mountain and a City (see note 34). Although Campbell writes in
the booster tradition, the chapter provides a general impression of city
government at the time.
64. “Proposal to Oust Market Said Nonsense by Mayor,”
17 August 1954.
65. Refer to Dennis Missett, “City Hall,” in Downtown Hamilton (Hamilton, ON:
Seldon, 1995), 18–20. Missett notes that an extension for City Hall “on
stilts, over the market” was considered in the 1950s before the building
was demolished and rebuilt elsewhere.
67. “Council, Voters’ Ideas Split on City Market Elimination,” HS, 9 January
1957.
69. “Future of Market in Doubt as Hamilton Continues Growth,”
Globe and Mail, 13 September 1957.
70. “Mayor Ready to Fight for Market,”
HS, 22 October 1958; “Must Preserve Historic ‘Air’,”
HS, 22 October 1958.
71. “‘Too Valuable’ for Either Use Evans Contends,”
HS, 24 October 1958.
72. “‘Historic Nature’ Ramp,”
HS, 29 October 1958.
73. “Must Preserve Historic ‘Air’,”
HS, 22 October 1958.
Demands,” HS, 24 October 1958; “Market’s Individuality Must Be
Saved—Mayor,” HS, 29 October 1958.
75. “‘Historic Nature’ Ramp Gan
council Approval,” HS, 29 October 1958.
76. Ibid.
77. “Keep Parking, Market Separate, Mayor Urges,”
HS, 7 May 1959; “Ramp Plans Given Nod by Board,”
HS, 7 May 1959; “‘To Suit Women Drivers’:
Parking Ramp Design Wins Council Approval,”
HS, 13 May 1959.
78. “‘Finest Ever’ Parking Ramp Design Unveiled,”
HS, 6 May 1959.
79. Ibid.; “‘To Suit Women Drivers,’’
HS, 13 May 1959.
80. “Ramp Plans Given Nod by Board,’’
HS, 7 May 1959.
81. “Market Seen Cause of High Cost,”
HS, 8 May 1959. In discussions a
year later over adding amenities such as electrical outlets on the market
level of the ramp, a new estimate emerged of $1,153,000 for the ramp’s
construction. Refer to “Market Stalls’ Needs Outlined for Designers,”
HS, 14 May 1960.
82. “‘Outlived Usefulness’ Two Aldermen Maintain,”
HS, 23 June 1959.
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There is very little literature on the impact of urban renewal in Hamilton.


105. Ibid., 16–165.

106. Ibid., 165–166.


109. Ibid., 179.


111. Ibid., 134–145.


113. Lemon, Toronto since 1918, 151, 156. For detailed accounts of the Spadina Expressway controversy, refer to Rosemary Donegan, Spadina Avenue (Toronto, ON: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985); David Nowlan and Nadine Nowlan, Bad Trip: The Untold Story of the Spadina Expressway (Toronto, ON: House of Anansi, 1970); John Sewell, The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

114. Lemon, Toronto since 1918, 151, 156. For detailed accounts of the Spadina Expressway controversy, refer to Rosemary Donegan, Spadina Avenue (Toronto, ON: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985); David Nowlan and Nadine Nowlan, Bad Trip: The Untold Story of the Spadina Expressway (Toronto, ON: House of Anansi, 1970); John Sewell, The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

115. Lemon, Toronto since 1918, 134–145.


117. The Hamilton Downtown Association, Hamilton at the Crossroads: Development or Deterioration; A Study (Hamilton, ON: Hamilton Downtown Association, 1965).
