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Lost in Management

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Résumé de l'article

A plusieurs reprises, au début du 20° siècle, certains partisans de l'urbanisme ont proposé des mesures importantes en vue de modifier la disposition des rues de Toronto. Les historiens urbanistes ont souvent rapporté que l'intérêt pour le beau faisait place à celui de l'efficacité, autour des années 20. Toutefois, les plans d'urbanisme de Toronto indiquent un intérêt doublement conjugué pour le beau et l'efficacité. Malgré certaines influences modérées exercées sur la ville, les plans s'estompèrent grandement au milieu des aménagements d'ordre privé et des phases commerciales cycliques. La confusion au sujet des priorités d'urbanisme, les courtes vues des politiciens et un manque de célérité ont aussi fréné l'urbanisme de la ville et de ses environs. Toronto a vécu moins d'épanouissement urbaniste que certaines grandes villes américaines.

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Plans for Early 20th-Century Toronto; Lost in Management

James Lemon

A bstract

On several occasions in the early twentieth century, advocates of urban planning proposed significant measures for altering the layout of Toronto streets. Planning historians often have proposed that an interest in beautification was superseded by a focus on efficiency by the 1920s, but Toronto's plans largely were lost amidst private development processes and business cycles. Confusion over planning priorities, the short-term perspectives of politicians, and a lack of urgency also impeded city and regional planning. Toronto experienced less planning initiatives than major United-States cities.

Résumé

A plusieurs reprises, au début du 20e siècle, certains partisans de l'urbanisme ont proposé des mesures importantes en vue de modifier la disposition des rues de Toronto. Les historiens urbanistes ont souvent rapporté que l'intérêt pour le beau faisait place à celui de l'efficacité, autour des années 20. Toutefois, les plans d'urbanisme de Toronto indiquent un intérêt doublement conjugué pour le beau et l'efficacité. Malgré certaines influences modérées exercées sur la ville, les plans s'estompèrent grandement au milieu des aménagements d'ordre privé et des phases commerciales cycliques. La confusion au sujet des priorités d'urbanisme, les courtes vues des politiciens et un manque de célérité ont aussi fréné l'urbanisme de la ville et de ses environs. Toronto a vécu moins d'épanouissement urbaniste que certaines grandes villes américaines.

In July 1948 the Globe and Mail pointed out that since 1909 Torontonians had been presented with no fewer than nine major plans for the development of the city and its environs. At that time, city officials were in the midst of drafting an "official" plan as required by the province's 1946 Planning Act. With this plan, and the zoning system finally put into place in 1954, the city would gain greater control over land use within its boundaries. Likewise, the newly created City and York Planning Board was a step toward increased regulation of development outside the city. The problems of premature subdivision and traffic congestion, which had plagued the urbanizing area since 1880, were finally being addressed, at least to a degree not seen previously. These planning initiatives rode a wave of postwar prosperity.1

During an earlier ebullient period architects, businessmen, and lawyers had put forward grand plans - in 1905 through the Ontario Association of Architects, in 1909 by the Civic Guild, in 1911 by the Civic Improvement Committee. These plans all advocated the reshaping of the street pattern within the built-up area and proposed wide diagonal roads radiating out from the central business district to increase traffic efficiency and to create an aura of monumentality. They also suggested new parklands, and in 1911 the notion of a civic square facing a grand boulevard was put forward. Later, during the speculative prosperity of the late 1920s, the Advisory City Planning Commission proposed another grand innercity plan of diagonals, boulevards, and a civic square. In 1930 city officials authored another "plan," mostly a compilation of street improvements within the city. In the event, City Council adopted only the last one.

City politicians had approved one other plan, that of 1912. Differing from the rest in that it received legislative approval through the City and approval through the City and Suburbs Plans Act, it anticipated traffic flows through a system of diagonals and other arterials in the urbanizing zone *outside* the city

boundary, as had the 1911 plan (this feature was seemingly tacked on in haste, however, to the earlier plan). The plans of 1905, 1909, and 1911 had shown interest in the environs of the city through a green-belt parkway, an aspect that was continued in 1912. This "general" plan had a life of two decades before passing from view. The precious little that was accomplished from all of these plans, notably parks, could have been done without projecting such comprehensive schemes.

The advocates of these various plans were motivated, it seems, by a desire to improve traffic movement and to enhance the appearance of the city. Given the personal and public energy spent on developing these proposals, it is important to understand why the city failed to follow through on most aspects of the plans. The presumed gains were apparently not sufficient to offset the real or imagined costs. By and large most officials and politicians were unimpressed by the plans, though it is obvious that they were trying to cope with the problems caused by urban growth. Experience suggested that taxes for what seem to us today necessary public works had to be dragged out of an unwilling electorate which decided on major public works by referendum. Behind the political rejections were, it seems, the perceptions of business cycles, the uncertainty raised by dramatically changing transportation technologies, a reluctance to hedge in property rights, and when compared to the experience of some large American cities, their weak sense of urgency. Underlying this last point was the political culture of Toronto: a municipal government controlled by committees composed of politicians elected annually. Jealous of their right to govern the public environment, they were, at the same time, wary of non-elected planning advocates. Toronto voters, it seems, feared going beyond piecemeal management of the public landscape with the least cost possible.

The plans lost out to the overriding goal of management. Unfortunately, the reasons why

there had been so many plans and why they were not adopted are largely unclear. Perhaps no one wanted to record unfulfilled initiatives. It is clear, none the less, that a legacy of law and practice developed during these years that provided a base for planning in the 1940s and beyond, though the common attributes in all of the plans - diagonal arterials and an encircling parkway - were dropped.

The Planning and Local Contexts

The Toronto proposals and debates echoed American and British attempts to introduce planning, plans and public controls. Although no foreign experts were involved in the preparation of Toronto's plans (in contrast to Kitchener, Ottawa-Hull, and Vancouver), some Torontonians were conscious of efforts elsewhere. From 1890, interest was high in what was going on in other countries. Following the monumental White City of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, the merits of diagonals were often discussed. At the turn of the century, Julius Harder proposed a scheme for Manhattan, and in 1905 Daniel Burnham drew up plans with diagonals, a civic square and parkways for both San Francisco and Cleveland. He then placed many diagonals, and a civic square, on a map of the rectangular street pattern of Chicago, thus creating the grandest of all plans before World War I. All large cities, it seemed at the time, needed to follow the baroque style of L'Enfant's Washington. Woodward's Detroit, Ellicott's Buffalo, Hausmann's Paris and the lessons of the World's Fair. This movement has often been referred to as the City Beautiful, though City Monumental would be a better term. Nor was the City Efficient/Functional clearly separated from monumentality in any plans, as some American writers have suggested, since efficiency was a central principle. Perhaps a more pertinent term for both would be City Controlled, since it was the financial, real estate, and architectural elites who supported these plans to reshape their cities. In the 1920s, although initiatives were

less frequent and usually less grandiose, planners in Canada were still being influenced by the greatest plan to date, the Regional Plan of New York, also the work of the elite. Canadian planners followed the refinements of neighbourhood planning and of green belt notions in Britain. Toronto for a while had its visionaries who sought to reshape the public environment in their own image.²

In Toronto the plans set out between 1905 and 1912 appeared during a time of very rapid growth: the city more than doubled its population between 1900 and 1912. Spatial expansion, suburbanization of new manufacturing, and the development of the core as a financial and service employment centre created a city (finally) that resembled the giant metropolises south of the border. Land speculators were active in subdividing the edge of the city for residential buildings, and developers built skyscraper office buildings. During this period City Council made certain improvements to the city's administrative infrastructure to solve problems created by earlier growth. Rising expectations and the scientific revolution in health care contributed to redefining as public problems, the previously esoteric issues of health advocates. Parks were recognized as essential to health. In 1911 a new harbour commission, with city representation, was empowered to plan and reshape the port for more efficient shipping and for industry. As early as 1905 local transportation issues were emerging. The city had to deal not only with the problems of street railway expansion (and with a difficult franchise holder) but also with the development of cheap hydro-electricity at Niagara Falls that opened the possibility of electrical radial interurban lines. Construction of radials would, it was felt, allow Toronto to catch up, at least partially, to the big cities that had installed commuter rail systems converging on the central business district. Also, in 1905 the automobile was still a pleasure vehicle, but by 1912 commuting to work was underway.3

To planning advocates, Toronto was more disadvantaged in its street pattern than many American cities. Philadelphia, Savannah, Washington, Manhattan (after 1807), Detroit, Boston (belatedly about 1890), and many newer western cities had local grids imposed prior to subdivision. Generally, in the Town of York and New Town (both south of Queen Street) this had not been done, and the same was true in the parklots north of Queen to Bloor and beyond the 1834 city boundary into York Township. The 100-acre parklots were long and very narrow, 6,600 by 660 feet, and the 200-acre farm lots of the rural survey were the same length, only twice as wide. Concession and side roads separated either ten parklots or five farm lots: within these constraints, speculators laid out urban lots and local street patterns on generally much smaller parcels. Thus, where the axis of the bigger lots was north-south, streets on that axis tended to be long, though they rarely ran straight for more than 660 feet; conversely the east-west streets were short and rarely fit together. As a result, even though rectangular, Toronto's inner-city street pattern resembles the chaotic layouts of colonial New York and Boston. Echoing the views of surveyors, architects and many politicians, one commentator complained in 1891:

One has only to look at a plan [map] of the city in order to become disgusted by the piecemeal method which has characterized the extensions and growth of the metropolis of Ontario - streets stopping abruptly jumping a block and then continued ... streets beginning and ending nowhere, lots having an abnormal depth and others too shallow.

The massive speculation of the 1880s, when subdivision after subdivision was laid out usually without connection to the next one, was particularly criticized. Toronto would seem to have been more in need of diagonals than other cities.⁴

In this pre-automobile era, proponents of orderly and linear development would not likely have been so concerned with the street pattern if the city were not laying water lines and paving streets and sidewalks. The medical officer of health was also demanding a vastly improved sewer system. Beginning in 1859 the laws of the province required that the city provide these services, and charge adjacent owners local improvement taxes (except for water, which was taken from general revenues after 1870); in the 1880s the scale of operations had become massive. The speculators passed on the taxes to builders, real estate firms, and individuals. But, during the depression of the early 1890s, lots in the newest subdivisions were serviced but not sold: the result was an infrastructure, built at great cost, lying unused. An innocent activity prior to 1859, and even 1880, subdividing had become a serious problem. The building in some of these subdivisions occurred a business cycle later - 15 or 20 years - than the servicing of the area, with only a scattering of houses being completed prior to then. Thus the haphazard road pattern created by subdividers and premature servicing of their lots came to be seen together as pernicious activities. Even the boosters on City Council. who had gloated over Toronto's expansion in the 1880s, became wary of it during the depression of the early 1890s.5

But the practice of premature subdivision would recur, most rampantly during the strong economic period from 1900 to 1913, both within newly annexed areas and beyond the city limits. In fact, developers promoted the annexation of their subdivided land to get servicing. During this time there were increasing attempts by the city to cure the problems raised by earlier subdivisions and to prevent future abuses. Still, as late as 1945, Planning Commissioner Tracey leMay, originally appointed city surveyor in 1910, opined that the problem had not been solved.⁶

Several motives, then, lay behind the drive for plans: one was the urge on the part of the elite to control and reshape the city in a monumental fashion and another was to improve traffic flows. Part of the planners' insistence may well have arisen from their attempt to establish their own status and advance their public credibility. For example, many pages of the early annual reports of the Ontario Association of Architects were taken up with defining credentials. As well, successful financiers wanted, perhaps, to show the world that they could contribute their skills to the public sphere. At a more mundane level, city politicians and officials, at least for part of the time, wanted to control subdividing. But politicians and advocates clashed over priorities, and over who should be running the city. As we will see, however, except for brief periods between 1909 and 1912 and in the late 1920s, the cautious and managerial ethos prevailed over visionary impulses emanating largely from outside council.

City Plans of 1905, 1909 and 1911

The notion of a general plan for Toronto was discussed as early as 1891 by architects and surveyors, but interest grew slowly. The Guild of Civic Art, later the Civic Guild, was formed in 1897 to promote murals for the new Legislature in Queen's Park and the new City Hall. At the same time, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) became increasingly active in public affairs. From 1901 onward these bodies tried "to move the civic authorities in the direction of an improved plan of the city ... which will make Toronto a fine city." But, after four years of failing to persuade the city to undertake the task, or at least to pay the architects for drawing it up, W. A. Langton, the vigorous editor of the Canadian Architect and Builder, set up a planning committee that worked for several months on a plan dated November 1905. Apparently Alfred Chapman, a young architect, had drafted some sort of plan earlier in the decade which the planning committee used as a starting point. But

before 1905 inactivity may well have been due partly to a failure to persuade enough architects and prominent citizens to support the scheme.⁷

In presenting the plan at the January 1906 annual meeting of the OAA, Langton described three main elements. (see Figure 1) The first was two wide diagonal boulevards - one extending northwest from Queen and University streets to West Toronto and the other running northeast from Queen and Church streets to Parliament and Carlton streets, where it bifurcated. Traffic by streetcar and carriage to burgeoning downtown offices would flow more efficiently along these wide and elegant boulevards.8 Secondly, he urged large parks for the waterfront, but especially a "circumambient line of parkways" for Sunday pleasure drives that would run up the Humber River Valley, across the top of the city, and then down the Don River. Two "miniparkways" would run west from Queen's Park to High Park, and east from Broadview Avenue to Scarborough, partially by linking up disjointed east-west streets. Parks and parkways had come on the agenda of many expanding metropolises in the western world as "breathing spaces." Toronto Mayor W. B. McMurrich had pushed for a systematic park scheme, including a parkway, in the early 1880s. But it was not until 1903 that the province allowed the city to purchase land for parks, which it did in substantial amounts, adding to the great 19th century gifts of parkland from the Crown, G. W. Allan, and J. G. Howard. These parks, however, had hardly added up to a system; the plan's proposals would take the city further toward that goal.9

The third major aspect of the 1905 plan was a magnificent entrance to the city at the foot of York Street. (see Figure 2) Perhaps this was Langton's main interest (he discussed it first). As was the case with other aspects of the plan, this bit of *City Beautiful* was hardly as grand as what Burnham was proposing elsewhere, but Toronto was not as large and

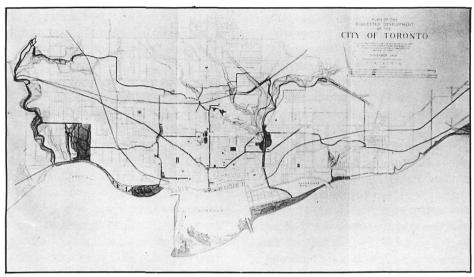


Figure 1: 1905 Plan of the Ontario Association of Architects given to the Civic Guild, showing northwestern and the northeastern diagonals, "miniparkways" west from Queen's Park and east from the Don, the "circumambient" parkway up the Humber, across the top of the city and down the Don, the entrance from the bay up York Street, parks and other features. See note 10.

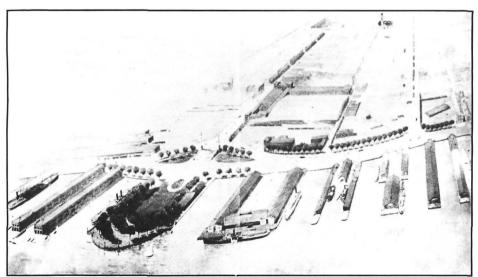


Figure 2: From 1905 Plan, the grand entrance at the foot of York Street.

rich as large American cities. Langton also called for other improvements such as a Chestnut Street extension for a street car route.¹⁰

Responses to the plan were not encouraging. At the OAA meeting in January 1906, Mayor Emerson Coatsworth said that for politicians and ratepayers the impending sewage system held a higher priority. Two members of the Board of Control seemed skeptical about the positioning of the parkway. Later in March, B. E. Walker of the Bank of Commerce, a high profile member of the Civic Guild, publicized the plan to the Canadian Club. Yet, despite the claim that the "comprehensive" plan was "one that has certainly been very dear to my heart for many years," Walker did not emphasize the diagonals, concentrating rather more on the embellishments. In fact, the previous December he had told Langton and another activist. A. W. Austin, that he had neither the time nor the inclination to lobby seriously on behalf of the plan. Even before the plan was publicized, it seems, that Walker felt instinctively its promoters would not succeed. "I do not think I am competent to deal with the subject," he told Langton. "It involves understanding of municipal politics, and these I utterly fail to understand." City Council, he probably believed, would not act without widespread public support, which Coatsworth had indicated was not there. So the plan disappeared from public view.11

Yet the planning group committee of the Civic Guild under Langton's chairmanship did not give up. It went to work refining the plan until late in 1907. With a small grant from the city, which indicated a slight shift of support on the part of the politicians, Langton hired a draftsman from a prestigious British architectural firm. Unfortunately for the project, the visitor left after only a few months in Toronto though Langton continued to seek advice from his employer.¹²

Meanwhile, in 1908 the ratepayers finally approved the trunk sewer, sewage disposal

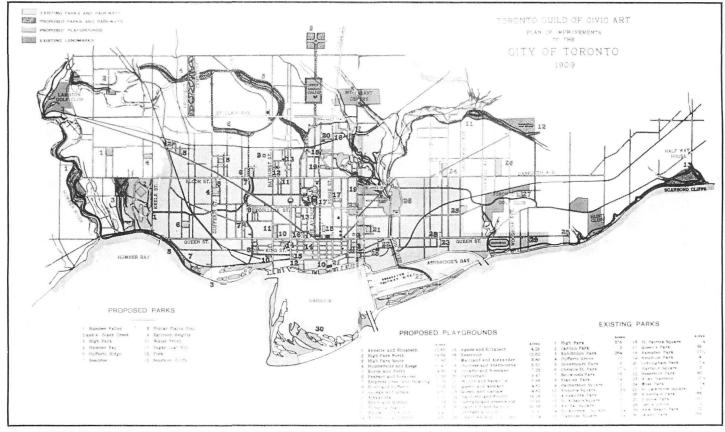


Figure 3: 1909 Guild of Civic Art Plan, while retaining features from 1905 plan, altered the northeast diagonal and moved the parkway farther north and extended it along Humber Bay, proposed more parks, and advocated playgrounds. See note 13.

plant and water filtration system. That cue may have led Langton and others to sense that the people might now be willing to support the plan. Since Mayor Joseph Oliver confidently asserted in his inaugural address of 1909 "we should build for the future," the politicians were possibly also ready to move. In Toronto there was an awareness that planning as a movement was reaching a crescendo in North America, especially with the formation of the American Planning Association, acceptance of Burnham's plan for Cleveland, and the appearance of his scheme for Chicago. So the Civic Guild released a plan in 1909 similar to that of 1905, but this time publicized it with a glossy brochure. (see Figure 3)13

Although Langton's proposed entrance to the city did not reappear, the two diagonals were again conspicuous as bright red slashes, though the northeast line had been shifted to meet Danforth Avenue at Broadview. These diagonals were to be wide enough to include either four tracks of streetcars or a shallow subway. Besides, as Langton pointed out, where the diagonals crossed other streets "pleasant irregularities" for parkettes and public art (such as statues) would be created. The plan also reiterated that the grid street pattern "means a waste of time." Langton and others did not tire of pointing out the obvious efficiency of movement along the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle that would be created by diagonals in contrast to the grid of arterials of what had been township concession and sideroads.14

The "circumambient" parkway was redesigned somewhat and pushed a bit farther north (likely because subdivisions had already been laid out beyond the 1905 route): up the Humber River, then along Black Creek, over the watershed and then down Cedarvale-Nordheimer-Rosedale Valley to the Don River. But with more automobiles, the parkway was seen as a greater necessity than before for recreational Sunday pleasure outings. The mini-parkways of 1905, edged with green, also reappeared.

The plan increased the number of proposed parks to 13. The major addition in 1909 was the specification of 28 playgrounds, averaging an extravagant eight and a half acres each. At this time in Toronto, as elsewhere in North America, playgrounds

were being widely advocated. Inspector of Schools J. L. Hughes was a strong supporter and the politicians were convinced too. In his 1910 inaugural address, Mayor G. R. Geary underlined the widespread conventional view: "Fresh air and abundance of playground space is the inherent right of every child and will do more to obliterate vicious juvenile habits and petty crime than any other means yet conceived." 15

Some action resulted from this latter aspect of this scheme. Over the next few years the successive mayors pridefully pointed out the number of playgrounds of various types that had been built and the summer use of school yards. Goldwin Smith willed The Grange and its lands to the city in 1911. Through an agreement with R. H. Smith, then one of Toronto's greatest developers, some of the Humber Valley was put in the city's hands for the parkway. Even so, in 1912 the parks commissioner, Charles Chambers, was convinced that the city could benefit from nearly 400 more acres of parkland. Progress was being made, but slowly.16

More importantly, in 1910 City Council created a Civic Improvement Committee which put forward yet another plan the next year. This action came about because a sufficient number of politicians were caught up in the enthusiasm of the time, brought on by very rapid growth after an economic slowdown in 1907 and 1908, and were no doubt influenced by the interest in planning in the United States, as well as an apparent promise of support from Ottawa for the scheme. Like similar bodies with the same name elsewhere, the committee was composed of politicians and prominent professionals and businessmen, including Langton and other members of the Civic Guild. Chaired by Chief Justice William Meredith, the committee possessed a clear mandate to propose improvements. The well-known J. M. Lyle was consulting architect to the committee. (see Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7)17

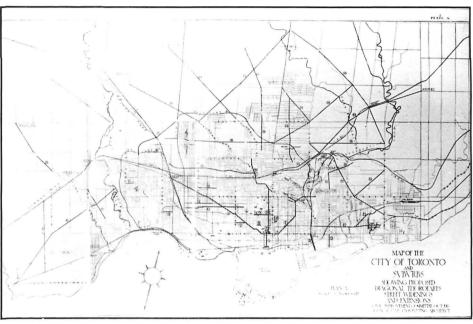


Figure 4: 1911 Civic Improvement Committee plan again changed the northeastern diagonal and the earlier circumparkway, and proposed Federal Avenue and Square and diagonals outside the city. See note 17.

Still conspicuous on the 1911 plan were the 125 foot diagonals, though they had again been refined. (see Figure 4) The centrepiece of this plan was, however, a monumental boulevard, Federal Avenue, extending north from the already planned, but yet to be started, Union Station at Bay and Front, to Federal Square just north of Queen. (see Figure 5) The square to the west of city hall (and the site of today's Nathan Phillips Square) was to be surrounded by beaux-arts public buildings along the lines that had been proposed for a number of cities, such as Cleveland. The plan called for an elabourate formal public garden and a parade ground adjacent to the armoury. Toronto, like similar American cities, deserved "no little plans," though the two diagonals hardly matched what Burnham had in mind for Chicago. Like the diagonals, Federal Avenue and the square would, it was innocently noted, eliminate some "ordinary business" buildings and a good part of Toronto's most visible slum, The Ward. As they had in the United States, proponents argued that adjacent land

values would be raised, and with them the city assessment base.¹⁸

A series of maps detailed jog eliminations and street extensions elsewhere, some to relieve traffic on streets carrying streetcars. (see Figure 6) A design was presented for the Bloor-Danforth Viaduct, though not quite the route approved by electors in 1913 and built later in the decade. (see Figure 7) The need for a hierarchy of streets was recognized. Finally, in anticipation of city control over suburban subdivisions and roads, the plan showed 14 diagonal roads outside the city among a total of 38 improvements. (see Figure 4) None the less, the committee chairman stated that the plan was "tentative," which is odd considering that this was the third time in a few years that a plan had appeared and that it was being presented by prestigious men.19

At the final meeting of the 1911 council, the plan was tabled by the mayor. Conditions seemed right to proceed; the city engineer had approved the diagonals as "a vast

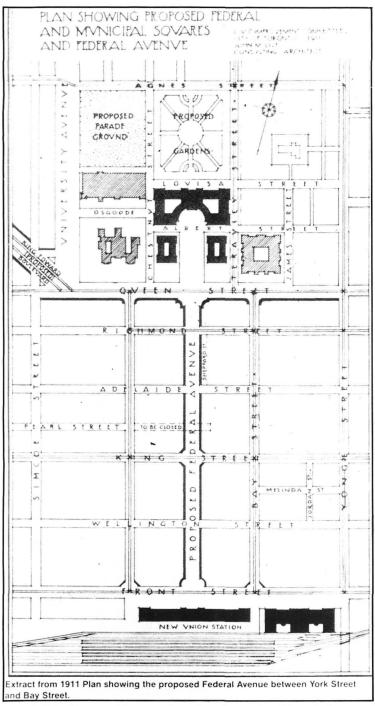


Figure 5: Federal Avenue and Square, gardens and parade ground would have wiped out part of The Ward. Federal support for the scheme was not forthcoming.

benefit to the public at large." Following the legislative power given municipalities in 1907 to expropriate land in built-up areas for street extensions, the city had successfully sought excess expropriation legislation to proceed with the two diagonals and other street extensions. As in Europe and in some American states, the city could buy more land than it actually needed for the streets, then within seven years sell off land unnecessary for public purposes - at a premium, because of the increased land value created by the improvements. This procedure would mean a profit rather than a loss to the city. After the plan was released to the public, city officials and politicians "waited" on the prime minister after requesting that promised new federal buildings, such as the post office, be placed on the square.20

The year 1912 saw the peak of urban growth rates in Toronto and across the western world. That year was also the apogee of planning as Torontonians witnessed two more plans, one for the suburbs and the other by the harbour commission for the waterfront. The harbour commission, formed in 1911, was chiefly interested in industrializing Ashbridge's Bay and improving shipping berths, but its plan extended the parkway of previous plans all along the waterfront²¹ (probably at the insistence of Commissioner Home Smith, the prominent developer of the Kingsway area in the west end).

Despite the great effort by the architectural, financial, and real estate elites, interest in overall planning for the built-up city ebbed quickly. The two diagonals within the city were apparently dropped quietly in 1912, since neither the council nor the press discussed them further. One can only speculate on the reasons; perhaps some city officials were affected by the majority position on council to go slow. The fact that Frank Spence, hitherto an energetic supporter of the diagonals in the city, had not been re-elected to the Board of Control,

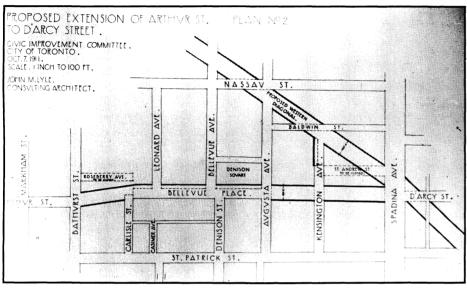


Figure 6: Detail on how northwestern diagonal would have crossed Spadina and other streets. Later Arthur Street would be linked to St. Patrick, Agnes and Wilton to form Dundas Street east of Ossington.

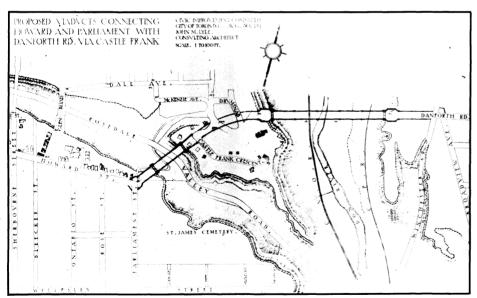


Figure 7: Among the various proposals for the approach to the Bloor-Danforth Viaduct was this one using Howard. On the fourth vote in four years in 1913 the electors approved the viaduct, though Bloor was extended along the "terrace" — the southern lip of Rosedale Valley to Parliament.

probably weakened political support. Then the public square and Federal Avenue were forgotten when Ottawa failed to respond to Toronto's request for new public buildings. Of course, even if Ottawa had agreed to build a new post office or custom house on the square, the city may not have gone ahead with it. In reality, it is also doubtful that politicians would agree to tearing up their wards for diagonals and grand boulevards; displacing downtown businesses and the housing of the working and middle classes would have caused a great uproar. After returning from an American planning conference in 1913, Alderman Morley Wickett, a strong advocate of planning, suggested that social centres rather than the civic square should be pursued.22

Like the plan itself, the Civic Improvement Committee disappeared. The Civic Guild and other groups previously committed to the grand view took comfort in a list of small accomplishments and became increasingly preoccupied with piecemeal solutions for the improvement of traffic, even though some of these were expensive. The extension of Bay Street via Terauley Street, the Bloor-Danforth viaduct, and a few jog eliminations were completed from the 1911 plan. The widening of Yonge Street and alternative streets to the north were discussed intensively. The fact that most commuters were from the rapidly growing, largely middle-class North Toronto and Moore Park districts, annexed in 1912, may well have deflected interest away from the diagonals to the northwest and northeast. The Guild helped to persuade landowners along Bloor Street to dedicate land for its widening. (see Figure 8) Modest solutions increasingly dominated the scene. Eventually the guild itself petered out, despite a few modest attempts at revival.23

The street railway system was scrutinized closely during these years, by and large independently of the plans; at least six reports and plans appeared between 1911 and 1915 suggesting service improvements - whether to dig a "tube" to the north from

downtown and east to west, where to put electric radial entrances (a short-lived possibility, even then slipping away) whether to wrest control from the franchised Toronto Railway Company, and after a buyout was rejected, how to prepare for the inevitable takeover by the city in 1921. In a major study that appeared in 1915 not a word was said about the two inner-city diagonals, which were to have carried streetcars and perhaps subways, nor, for that matter, was much said about other traffic on streets.²⁴

Enthusiasm for the encircling parkway was sustained for a while when Board of Trade members reported on the wonders of Buffalo, Cleveland, and Detroit after a Great Lakes boat trip in 1914. This receded quickly, however, with the declaration of war. Interest in grand planning waned; improvements continued to be piecemeal and would remain so through most of the 1920s. Inertia of property rights and an economic downturn began in 1913 and would persist for nearly three decades to undercut the visions.²⁵

The City Plans of 1929 and 1930

In the 1920s, particularly toward the end of the decade, subdividers and builders became active again, if not as vigorously as before 1912. City Council, generally tightfisted since 1913, had become enamoured of planning once again, if only briefly. Given the failure to embellish Toronto between 1905 and 1912, the time seemed ripe to revive those grand notions. The immediate stimulus was the interest of the Ontario premier G. H. Ferguson, and his Tories, in extending University Avenue south of Queen Street to the waterfront, or at least to Front Street, to enhance the vista to Queen's Park. In 1928 the city used the otherwise weak planning legislation of 1917 and 1918 to set up an Advisory City Planning Commission composed of leading officials and citizens, of whom only Home Smith was carried over from the palmy days before 1913. Though a great deal of political controversy was stirred up in the press as to which downtown businesses would benefit financially from

some of the proposals, the commission's final plan was published in May of 1929. (see Figure 9)²⁶

The Advisory City Planning Commission chose to stress efficiency of auto and street railway movement and monumentality in the downtown. It picked up on the 1911 notion of a major boulevard and an entrance to the city, but changed the name from Federal Avenue to Cambrai (after a battle fought by Canadians in the Great War). It was to run north from the now nearly finished Union Station, splitting to avoid the necessity to tear down some new office buildings, and then criss-crossing with an extended York Street across yet another proposed civic square (named St Julien). After several alternatives had been considered, University Avenue was to be extended south from Queen at an angle to York and Front Streets. Although this projection did not quite satisfy Premier Ferguson's wish for a clear view to Queen's Park, the planners had little choice but to angle it since the York Street underpass was already under construction.

Diagonals - so important in the pre-1912 plans - resurfaced, though they were shorter. Downtown Richmond Street (freed of streetcars) would cross University at Vimy Circle (like Piccadilly in London and Detroit's Grand Circus) (see Figure 10) and sweep through the factory loft and residual housing district to the southwest as far as Clarence Square. A modest second diagonal would run through Moss Park and the adjacent working-class housing area to Dundas and Parliament streets. Several jog eliminations and street extensions, some proposed two decades earlier, were suggested. City Beautiful and City Efficient as well as City Controlled on a grandiose scale reappeared in this plan. The sketches of buildings on circles and squares stressed classical lines with equal heights and cornices.

In the annual civic election of January 1930, this plan was put to the voters; the only plan of those discussed so far that was actually

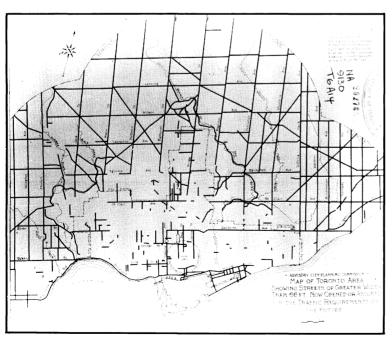


Figure 8: 1929 Civic Planning Commission map, probably drawn by Tracy leMay's Staff, shows the piecemeal widenings, such as the widening of Bloor east of Spadina, and suburban diagonals incorporating the circumparkway in a "general plan" following the City and Suburbans Plans Act of April 1912. See notes 22, 23, 34.

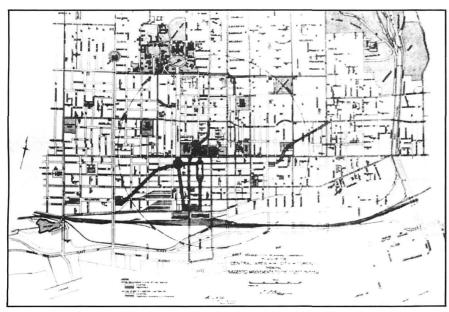


Figure 9: 1929 Advisory City Planning Commission plan of central area advocated diagonals, Cambrai Avenue (similar to the Federal Avenue of 1911), University Avenue extension south of Queen, and other improvements to Toronto's archaic road pattern. See note 26.

placed on the ballot, it appeared only because it had a specific price tag. Toronto ratepayers turned it down, though the vote was close. The stock market crash the previous October and the unremitting attack on the scheme by the *Telegram* (claiming to represent prudence and working people), may well have contributed to the failure. Indeed, in the election, Controller Bert Wemp the *Telegram's* city editor, defeated Sam McBride (a city booster and plan advocate) for the mayoralty chair. Because the provincial government remained keen to extend University Avenue, it would be the only feature of the plan that was completed.²⁷

Early in 1930 a Civic Planning Committee of senior appointed civic officials (not the commission) prepared another plan, one which Mayor Wemp could tout as a "general plan" combining the "greatest utility with a maximum of safety and economy." Public Works Commissioner R. C. Harris, who chaired the group, added that "the utilization of ideal principles ... would be an unnecessary extravagance" so "no special"

attempt" was made "to create vistas or sites for the display of architectural features which are characteristics of cities aiming at aesthetic pre-eminence." (Apparently the grandly designed waterworks plant built in 1937 and named after Harris was exempted.) Diagonals within the city were dismissed as causing "property mutilation, complicated intersections, and great cost, ... and [they] have a tendency to attract and concentrate traffic to an undesirable degree." Finally Harris declared that he had never really wanted the diagonals anyway. The 1905 and 1911 diagonals had been dropped quietly in 1912; those of 1929 were openly scorned (though it would appear that Harris and the other public officials had been involved to some degree in drawing them up) as a duty to the growth-oriented council. The anticipated difficulty of coordinating automatic traffic signals which had recently been introduced at the complicated intersections that would have been created by the construction of diagonals may well have been another factor.28

So much for the dreams of W. A. Langton as well as those of other architects and a minority of politicians and officials who sought to combine beauty and utility. Utopians may have been consoled by the appointment of Tracy leMay as planning commissioner, which gave him responsibility for the 1930 plan. On the other hand, the 100 improvements "incorporated into the plan" would, according to one commentator, "give councillors the opportunity of justifying their stewardship when they return to their wards," a fitting reminder that politicians took the narrow view.²⁹

The 1930 plan proposed more down-to-earth planning than had been going for two decades: widenings, extensions, and jog eliminations. (see Figure 11) Some of the ideas had been around for years too, such as the Jarvis/Mount Pleasant extension (which would not be approved until the mid 1940s). Using the attractive principle of separating modes of traffic, the committee itself went overboard, by its own standards, in advocating the linking of many disjointed east-west streets to create several automobile routes parallel to those with streetcar lines - an example is the extension of Gerrard Street westward from University Avenue. Just like the mini-parkways of the 1905 to 1911 plans, these routes did not materialize. But a few improvements did occur in the early 1930s, some providing jobs for day labourers caught in depression conditions. But, most of the elements of the plan, big or small, were never built.

The Suburban Plan of 1912

Another plan that had been proposed, that for the area outside the city, was decidedly concerned with efficiency and not aesthetics. The City and Suburbs Plans Act, passed by the Ontario legislature in April 1912, is now sometimes referred to as the starting point for Ontario planning. This act allowed the city for the first time to lay out a "general plan" and, with the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board having the final say, to inspect and

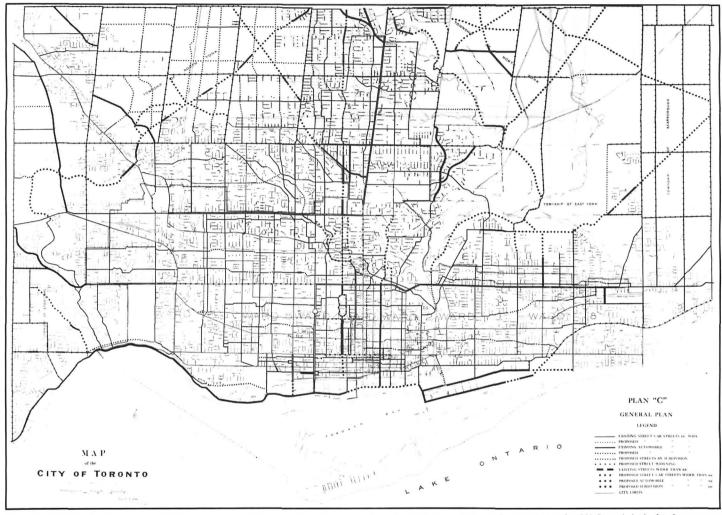
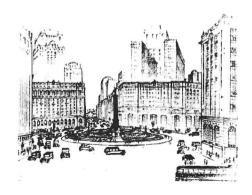


Figure 11: 1930 Plan for city and most of 1912 suburban plan of diagonals. One of three maps drawn in 1929 by Tracy leMay at the same time as the 1929 Commission's plan. Improvements and designation of some streets for either streetcars or automobiles formed the basis for the 1930 mundane "plan." Note the Jarvis-Mt. Pleasant (Clifton Road) extension. It also shows most of the 1912 suburban diagonals (Figure 8) emphasizing those stretches that had been "dedicated." Tretheway Drive, a private initiative, is marked. See notes 28, 34, 35, 36, 44.

Figure 10: Vimy Circle, on the intersection of the University Avenue extension and Richmond, like other features in the 1929 plan, commemorated Canadian participation in the Great War. This was the clearest example of city beautiful, city efficient and city controlled wrapped into one.



approve of subdivision plans within a fivemile "urban zone" beyond the city boundary. For several years the city had sought this legislation, which followed precedents set in some American states.³⁰

Previously, City Council had gained certain powers over land use within the city: fire districts were created in the mid 19th century; in 1904 certain unwanted activities were excluded from residential districts; in 1907 the inspection of subdivision plans within the city began in an attempt to knot together roads within and between adjacent subdivisions, to ensure 66-foot street allowances and to expropriate existing buildings so as to extend streets in built up areas; and height limitations were imposed on downtown buildings, also in 1907. City Council also held, though did not use, the power of excess appropriation, as noted above. In 1912 provincial legislation was passed that allowed the city to prevent construction of apartment buildings in certain areas.31

The city, however, had little control over what went on beyond the city limits; annexations had been the only way to control suburban development. Yet speculators' subdivisions ran well ahead of the annexations (between 1883 and 1889 and then again from 1905 to 1912) and even farther ahead of building demand. (see Figure 12) In 1913 Assessment Commissioner James Forman calculated, perhaps generously, that enough land had been subdivided to house 50 per cent more people than the 450,000 who lived in Toronto. He called for a moratorium on annexations, certainly not realizing how enduring that prohibition would be. In 1913 and 1914, City Council turned down petitions from newly populated districts for annexations, rejecting motions from a still enthusiastic Board of Control. Apparently, the other strong motivation for annexations improved public health through sewage systems - had receded as a concern. By this time politicians had been persuaded to stop annexations, which, according to the editor of the *Telegram*, John Ross Robertson, only fostered higher land prices for the "land butchers." York Township would have to service its own urbanized areas in the future. Although metropolitan government was discussed then, and from time to time subsequently, not until Metropolitan Toronto was formed in 1953 was the problem of governing this urbanizing area addressed.³²

As was the case around 1890, there was concern expressed about the haphazard layouts of the subdivisions the city had inherited and the services they required. (Figure 12) Forman, other civic officials, and the politicians were all vocal about it. Now the City and Suburbs Plans Act presented a great opportunity: draw a plan of roads and persuade the narcissistic speculators to

conform to a general plan. If the city could not control the pace of development, it could at least create a degree of rationality in traffic flows, and the disposition of the size and shape of lots. Another source of potential control was the Toronto and York Roads Commission, created in 1911 and responsible for county roads. City electors supported a modest amount of money for upgrading some major concessions and side roads, but the connection with the city would not be strong, and indeed in the 1940s Frederick Gardiner would rail against this commission for its inaction.³³

Under Forman's authority, City Surveyor Tracy leMay set out diagonal roads on a map, altering the seemingly arbitrary patternof the 14 diagonal roads on the 1911

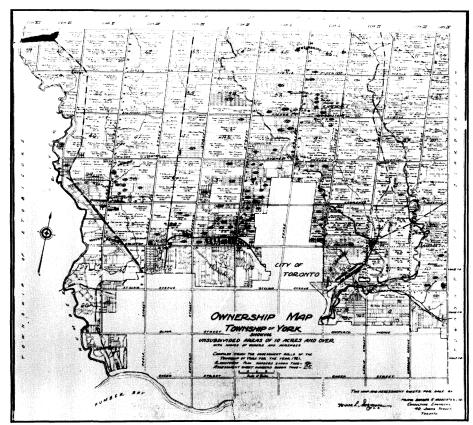


Figure 12: 1921 Ownership Map of York Township showing owners of unsubdivided lands and the scattered subdivisions. Only a few subdividers had incorporated the 1912 leMay diagonals into their schemes, as around Wilson and Bathurst. See note 33.

Civic Improvement Committee plan. (see Figure 4) As Forman said later, he wished to link built-up communities that he expected would grow as nodes. Four months after the passage of the 1912 act, City Council approved diagonals labelled A to I on his map. leMay noted A and B had already been accepted, which conceivably could have meant the two inner-city diagonals of the earlier plans, though since the original map has not been found it is at present impossible to say. (see Figures 8 and 11) These would supplement th few diagonals, such as Vaughan Road, inherited from the natives and early settlement. The parkway, following the 1911 plan, was incorporated into the scheme, but yet again was moved farther north. The lea lying to the northwest (that is running northeast/southwest, after emerging from Black Creek Valley, and labelled King George's Drive for a distance on some later maps) continued across the divide of the Humber and Don watersheds to the apex in Hogg's Hollow. The northeast leg followed down the west branch of the Don River. In August 1912 the plan was presented to the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board (ORMB) as a "general plan" allowing the city to inspect the plans and act as a guide for the board.34

LeMay then embarked on an arduous program of staking and monumenting the diagonals. Assessment Department staff seemingly contacted landowners of previously laid out and new subdivisions to "dedicate" the stretches on their land for the diagonals and to make sure their residential streets linked up with others. leMay also started an intensive topographic survey of the urban zone so that subdivision plans would be adjusted and thus refined against the contours of the land. None of this survey seems to have survived.³⁵

Each year thereafter the assessment commissioner reported to City Council on the progress and the number of subdivision plans that had been inspected, altered and approved. In 1924 he stated that 77 miles of

diagonals had been laid out and monumented (including part of the encircling parkway) and 24 miles dedicated. On the 1930 plan for the city these were boldly marked. (see Figure 11) He also noted that 324 miles of main roads had been widened by the county board. Plans (830 in total) equal to the area of the city had been dealt with, all supposedly fitting the general plan. By 1941 leMay claimed to have assessed about 1,500 subdivision plans.³⁶

By 1926 leMay had analyzed 15,000 acres, only a quarter of the potential area within the five-mile urban zone defined in the 1912 City and Suburbs Act. In fact, after 1913 Commissioner Forman often complained to City Council that the planning process had been slow because it had not allocated sufficient funds for leMay's work. The suburban diagonals had appeared in the 1915 public transportation study, but without discussion (see Figure 8). Although they continued to appear on maps into the 1920s and 1930s, the stretches that had been dedicated to the public, apparently early in the process, were very short (see Figure 11). A report of the York County Roads Commission in 1927 failed to mention them.37

Thus, it seems that without compulsory powers Forman and leMay could not have fulfilled the 1912 plans for diagonals. In its first annual report after the passage of the legislation, the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board praised the collaboration between developers and civic officials that resulted in "a very great improvement in the manner of laying out streets, park reserves and lots, which the Board feels will greatly enhance the appearance, accessibility and convenience of the new districts surrounding the city." After the acceptance of the plan by the board in early September, the city seems to have complained less than had been the case from May onward, since fewer objections were noted in the ORMB list of subdivisions. Yet it is highly unlikely that the ORMB took a firm hand with speculators for

the sake of such an esoteric item as diagonals, which complicated the surveying of parcels of land. Indeed, leMay may have been hinting at the board's lack of direction in December 1912, when he hoped that "in the future the City will not be compelled, as it repeatedly is at present, to take action for the extension of blind streets." Either leMay was referring to the period just before the passing of the legislation, or he was in fact describing a continuity of the old bad practices caused by board inaction. If the board would not control the connections between speculators' streets, it would hardly have shown interest in the bigger question of diagonals, even though it had accepted his plan in September. When the economic downturn in 1913 weakened any sense of urgency, far fewer subdivisions were submitted. Even the substantial revival of subdividing and residential construction in the early 1920s did not alter the situation.38

Another serious outcome of lack of control was scattered building in the suburbs. In 1924 leMay explained to the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors:

Restrictions which would have made it imperative that all local improvements be placed upon land before registration was permitted would have had this effect: It would have curbed development for residential purposes.

For example, for a mile and a quarter east and west of Yonge Street, north of Sheppard, land

has been sold in many cases to the speculator and in some cases to the home builder. The home builder has constructed a shack or house. The land in the whole district covers something like ten or twelve square miles and is sparsely dotted with small dwellings, and that means the supplying of these people with public conveniences of any kind is impossible.³⁹

Shack towns found on the margins of Toronto before World War I and the automobile era had not only continued to appear but had perhaps become even more scattered than on earlier subdivisions. Petty speculators would buy several lots from developers (by this time several of them large operators) and then often hold them for appreciation; small builders and self-builders would buy others, but only here and there. In contrast to those annexed in the pre-war era, those in rural North York were not serviced. Robertson (in the Telegram) and Controller T. L. Church suggested providing services outside city boundaries to "help the city's own people to find outside the municipal boundaries the homes they cannot buy inside" because of high prices. This move, they thought. obviated the need for annexation, which drove up land prices for the land "butchers," such as W. F. Maclean, a major developer and the publisher of the decidedly proexpansionist Toronto World . But given continued small-scale speculation and scattered building, this approach would not likely have worked any better than the blanket servicing provided after annexation. Ironically the 1912 act permitting the plan may have contributed, as a presumed substitute, to the halt in annexations and so in servicing. Despite the concern for "wageearners" owning their own homes, they, as well as the townships, were left dangling. The solution for scattered building as well as subdivision control would have to wait until after 1945.40

Despite the continued failure to organize what was seen at the time as comprehensive planning, and to establish adequate regulations, advocacy for planning suburbs in Toronto and the rest of Canada did not disappear. Thomas Adams's arrival at Ottawa in 1914 to head the federally appointed Commission of Conservation inspired professionals, some of whom by then were thinking of themselves as planners, and supportive politicians. That year the American National Conference on Planning met in Toronto, though only the

harbour plan received much attention. Adams and others urged provinces to strengthen their planning legislation. But the great energy put into this effort yielded modest results; the 1917 Ontario Plannina Act and its 1918 revision hardly increased the city's power. Yet the formation of the Town Planning Institute of Canada kept the professionals busy talking. Then in 1923 leMay and others proposed new and stronger legislation for Ontario. The central idea - to hedge in the rights of property by increasing subdivision control slightly - was not favourably viewed by the Board of Trade which had by then lost its zest for planning. For a 1925 conference on town planning, leMay listed all the planning and zoning powers possessed by the city and again advocated stronger measures. But nothing came of this conference. In the meantime Thomas Adams moved to New York City to produce the regional plan sponsored by businessmen which was published in 1929. leMay, however, seems to have been standing almost alone in Toronto. The city rewarded him with the title of planning commissioner in 1930, supposedly to indicate it was serious about the 1930 plan, but ironically this move took place just when planning initiatives ground to a halt.41

The 1943 Plan:

Ideas Lost and Kept, and Today's Remnants

In 1942, as military production was sustaining a long period of prosperity, overall master planning was revived with the appointment of the City Planning Board. Soon after, late in 1943, the board published a plan for the city and its environs - it was both the most comprehensive plan to date in defining land use and a forerunner of the era (from the late 1940s to the 1970s) of official general plans. The intention here is not to analyze this plan in its entirety, but rather to use it to see what remained of earlier ideas (see Figure 13).

The parkway still appeared roughly where it was on the 1912 suburban plan, but it was

altered to account for land-use changes and was straddled by a greenbelt. Even though leMay had participated in the planning exercise, neither his suburban diagonals nor the earlier inner-city ones were anywhere to be seen; they were replaced by expressways, a conspicuous feature of this latest plan. Some of the proposed inner-city expressways (altered on later plans) would, interestingly, become far more contentious than Langton's original inner-city diagonals. Another new element of the plan was the rather vague array of new towns with industrial districts (of which Leaside, laid out in 1913 by the Canadian Northern Railway. was the only clear Toronto example up to that time).42 Urban redevelopment was also included as an issue.

With the return to a period of growth in the post war era, Toronto, like other cities, began a more serious and vigorous round of planning, based in part on the experience learned through the failures of the early plans. If diagonals had no future, the notion of a hierarchy of roads emerged gradually, especially as the increasing impact of the automobile became stronger. Similarly, the concept of a hierarchy of parks (regional, neighbourhood and playground), worked out early in the century, remained. The city had continued to establish parks through the 1920s and early 1930s. In the post-war era further large parks, such as Bluffers, shown in the 1909 plan, were added. Subdivision control, advocated since about 1890, and certainly supported by leMay, would be required. Perhaps that step is the clearest positive legacy of that earlier era, though recent developments on the margins and downtown show that the foundation is shaky.

Aside from parks, precious little from all these plans remains on the ground today. Of the inner-city diagonals of 1905, 1909, and 1911 there is nothing. As for the "circumambient" driveway of various vintages, from 1905 to 1943, there are only pieces: Humber Boulevard between Bloor and Dundas streets and in Black Creek valley west of

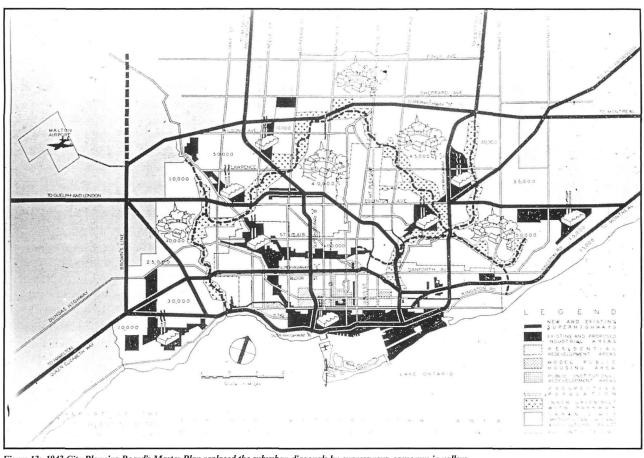


Figure 13: 1943 City Planning Board's Master Plan replaced the suburban diagonals by expressways, some run in valleys, but bolstered the somewhat altered circumparkway with a green belt, an idea then in vogue. See note 42.

Weston Road; King George's Drive between Tretheway and Keele; and Westgate Boulevard in Armour Heights. Bicycle paths and park access-roads have replaced some pieces in the valleys such as Leslie Street at Eglinton Avenue. Just as the "shack town" east of Prospect Cemetery on developer Wilfred Dinnick's land had, it seems, killed the possibility of one link in the 1909 plan, airfields in the 1930s, the 401 freeway (planned about 1940), golf courses, a hospital, and then (in the 1950s) Lawrence Heights housing, ended the dream. In the 1950s a system of regional parks in the river valleys replaced the green "belt" idea - for Sunday outings but not for Sunday drives. An expressway (called a parkway) eventually took some of the Don Valley.43

Of the other 1912 rural diagonals, only three short stretches survive: west of Yonge Street and north of Sheppard Avenue, one simply called Diagonal Street. Although not on the plan, O'Connor Drive (named after the owner of the property) was donated to the city about 1930, as Tretheway Drive had been in 1925. Both underline the reality: more was accomplished through generosity (and as a statement of status) than by compulsion. One might add that the widenings within the city, such as Bloor Street east of Spadina, Mount Pleasant north of St Clair, and Duplex Avenue and Avenue Road north of Eglinton (the latter two woven through pre-existing subdivisions), were largely the result of persuasion too, in some cases by members of the Civic Guild after 1912. Most extensions possibly were the result either of gifts or of ordinary, rather than excess, expropriations⁴⁴ (see Figure 12).

Nothing further was heard of Langton's 1905 entrance to the city on the bay. As we have already noted, waterfront improvements were made after the 1912 plan, and many remain in place, though Ashbridge's Bay was never very successful as an industrial district and major changes have since occurred. University Avenue and the civic square (after much debate over further proposals following 1945) were completed.

Plans and Management

The questions of why the plans were attempted and why they were not implemented need to be addressed. Unfortunately, the record is largely unclear on both issues; only occasionally do explicit comments by those involved explain much. Hence the proposed answers must be largely speculative. These grand attempts were part of the European and North American experiences in coping with the enormous expansion of cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The contradictory impulses of promoting growth and of controlling the negative results of scale seem to have created a heady atmosphere in which enterprises of the elite and municipalities could flourish. In this context planning rose to prominence in the western world between 1893 and 1912. Additionally, in Toronto, technologies increased local wealth and, together with foreign investment, they fuelled the city's boom economy, especially between 1900 and 1912. Architects such as W. A. Langton, who did very well during the expansion years, at the same time worked hard to establish professional credentials. By so doing, they apparently saw the opportunity to put their profession on a pedestal, and thus to appoint themselves to rebuild Toronto as a new Athens, or Buffalo at any rate. Financial wizards, such as Edmund Walker, who were accustomed to enormous success, had become visionaries, believing they could mold the public environment to their image if, of course, the politicians would let them. After all, had not L'Enfant's plan for Washington been revived and had not Hausmann driven diagonals through the urban fabric of Paris? Beauty and efficiency should and could be combined to elevate Toronto's public environment. Land developer, R. H. Smith, creator of the Kingsway, insisted before a Canadian Club audience in 1912 that parkways "must" be constructed if Toronto was to become a great city like Birmingham or Pittsburgh.45

The members of the architectural, financial and real estate elites supported commissions, which could get things done by eliminating petty ward jealousies espoused by aldermen, who were elected annually. In 1908 a proposal was made for a park commission and in 1911 a far-reaching suggestion to create a Civic Improvement Trust actually reached the floor of City Council for debate. Commissions were thought to be working in cities in the United States, and Adam Beck had headed the drive to set up the Hydro-Electric Power Commission to provide cheap power for an industrializing province. Like other municipalities Toronto set up a local hydroelectric commission. Largely through the efforts of the Board of Trade a stagnant harbour and a becalmed Harbour Board were rejuvenated. Apart from a Social Service Commission, that was created in 1912 to control welfare spending (but dismantled in 1921), an almost impotent Housing Commission established in 1918, and the powerful Toronto Transportation Commission that appeared in 1921. commissions did not replace elected government to the extent that their proponents had hoped.46

Business and professional leaders undoubtedly had a vision and can be fairly described as civic promoters if not populists. They had a strong sense of the public good. Men such as Walker fostered hospitals, the Royal Ontario Museum, universities, and the National Gallery. Unlike many businessmen of the 1920s and of recent times, they shared with others the need for a measure of public control over the environment, and attempted to create a workable context for their businesses and for what they saw as the common good.

Perhaps an even stronger conviction of municipal enterprise and control was expressed by the most active politicians during what might be called the high era of municipal autonomy - between 1880 and 1912. Toronto politicians were in the forefront

of the creation of the Union of Canadian Municipalities in 1901, a step that tried to shift greater power to municipal governments from foot-dragging rural dominated legislatures. All of Toronto's mayors between 1890 and 1914, as stated in their (increasingly longer) inaugural addresses, favoured more local control over the physical and social fabric of the city, though their degree of stridency and methods varied somewhat. Politicians wanted to gain more independence from the electors for public works spending. To increase municipal action they hired strong department heads, such as R. C. Harris in 1910. To combat the great meat trusts and to ensure cleanliness in slaughtering, the city set up a public abattoir. A couple of times, mayors even advocated municipal housing. In 1912 City Council supported a body that built non-profit housing. Council asked the province over and over for legislation to contain property rights and expand its prerogatives. Though more resistant to commissions than the visionaries, politicians, including Mayors Oliver and Geary, temporarily caught planning fever from the visionaries and from the bullish times between 1909 and 1912. In 1928 and 1929 they, together with visionaries and probably reluctant officials, abandoned their post-1912 restraint during a period of intense speculation. Even then, most of the mundane 1930 plan never saw the light of day.47

Why the plans were not implemented is largely a matter of conjecture since critics and opponents were generally more silent than advocates and enthusiasts. Five reasons can be suggested, starting with two mentioned just above, namely an economic downturn and a lack of commitment by politicians to long-term innovations that were comprehensive but expensive.

First, when economic conditions slowed down, as in 1890 and 1913, politicians retrenched quickly and returned to being guardians of the public purse. In both these years council stopped annexing adjacent

areas and, since annexations signalled an expansive future-oriented stance, the politicians probably lost interest in long-term planning as well. Even the business and professional visionaries showed less interest during recessions, conceivably because they had to deal quickly with the weakening of activity in their own businesses. In an economy sensitive to business cycles, the future had to wait. World War I undoubtedly weakened resolve further, and the return to normalcy in the 1920s did not bring back the rate of economic and population growth that Toronto had experienced either in the 1880s or between 1900 and 1912. Conditions in the late 1920s created false promise, and the crash in October 1929 may have been behind the rejection of the 1930 plan.

Secondly, politicians and public officials appear to have viewed the world mainly in immediate terms and, even when members of council did commit themselves to planning, as in 1910 and 1928, they were not strong enough to sustain the momentum. With a weak mayor and committee system, compromise usually ruled. Elected politicians were wary of commissions that would weaken their power, differed from visionaries over priorities, and held a stronger sense of limits. Even though a sufficient number of councillors seemed on the verge of approving the diagonals and a civic square by 1911, most politicians may well have been reluctant to rip up neighbourhoods and displace residents, many of them workingclass homeowners. Politicians also knew how hard it was to persuade electors to vote financial support for anything. Mayor Coatsworth's response to the 1905 plan clearly suggests that the voters had to be convinced of the advantages of sewers before one could expect them to favour expensive diagonals. On a different issue later, that of zoning, it took nearly 20 years to get the system in place.48

A third factor, new transportation technologies, may well have created confusion over priorities. The rapid introduction of electric traction in the early 1890s promised a solution to the problem of the journey to work in the new metropolis with its rising downtown office sector and it delivered. Yet in the process it created a great deal of congestion on city streets. Subways, elevated lines, and commuter rail service in large American and European cities were installed to alleviate congestion and to promote suburban expansion. In Toronto the first of these innovations was contemplated, but with retrenchment after 1912, was rejected or at least postponed. Further, the building of radial lines between cities and towns opened the promise of a vast network in the minds of Adam Beck and others. However, a workable system meant entrances into, and terminals in, the city, not simply interchanges with the street-car lines. By the time the radial system was proposed by Toronto's public officials in 1915, it was probably already too late.

Increased use of automobiles and trucks followed quickly after the development of electric transport. No longer a recreational toy, after 1910 the car was promoted as a necessity. Commuters in cars began to dominate city streets. By 1910 trucks were replacing drays. Cars, buses and trucks killed Beck's inter-urban vision by the early 1920s, as farmers and those from small towns saw the virtue of their flexibility. North Torontonians did too. The rapid cumulation of new technologies understandably created a great deal of underlying uncertainty, even though one would think increased commuting by auto should have strengthened the resolve to do more.49

The above factors do not explain why leMay's diagonals outside the city were not put into place or why it was so difficult to adjust local streets on new subdivision plans to create what planners thought would be a more rational pattern of traffic flow. Given the rising use of the car, one might think that putting the diagonals on the ground would have been relatively easy prior to building. The demise of the 1912 general plan has to

be seen as a failure of voluntary dedication. In other words, as a fourth factor, property rights were a higher priority than a presumed improved efficiency. To developers, except a few interested in elegant garden-suburb design, a problem as simple as surveying odd-shaped lots was cause for rejection, as was implied in Harris's dismissal of the 1929 proposed diagonals in 1930. Similar to those suggested in the city, these diagonals were seen by many as adding confusion rather than efficiency. Why leMay persisted, when he was obviously not succeeding, is difficult to answer; maybe it was nothing more than a tenacious belief that the diagonals were in fact more efficient, and that, like other ideas their time would come. Following the retirement in 1929 of the only other known strong advocate, Assessment Commissioner Forman, and the forceful rejection of the internal diagonals on the 1929 plan, one suspects leMay gave up not long afterward. Why were the politicians tolerant of leMay and Forman's pet idea? Forman's annual reports provide a clue: leMay's valuable dayto-day surveying and his own task of assessing were given much higher priority. The diagonals were only marginal to their main activities.50

Finally, Toronto demonstrated a lack of urgency compared with some cities in the United States, and not simply because growth slowed. Adams's departure to New York in 1923 signalled not only a decline of serious interest in planning in Canada, but also that New York businessmen were still committed to reshaping cities and their environs. In fact the 1920s saw a remarkable rise in regional planning there, though advocates differed in solutions. Rapidly growing Los Angeles laid out a system of arterials in the mid 1920s. The 1929 Regional Plan of New York laid out expressways to decentralize the middle class and industry and to promote central-area office construction. New York and many other cities had by then comprehensive zoning ordinances. In Toronto the 1904 bylaw excluding non-residential uses from

residential districts was extended only piecemeal. In 1921 and in 1927 bylaws were passed in some districts permitting only single-family housing, and for certain affluent areas specifying detached houses only. While these bylaws echoed American zoning ordinances to a degree in protecting property, they did not carry the same weight, simply because politicians could and did amend some of them frequently. Only much later did Toronto have a zoning system. Toronto and Ontario politicians (and in the 1920s the real estate elite), as we saw earlier could not see any need for regional planning or zoning. The urgency for the former was obvious to elites in New York, and for the latter it seems to every city in the United States, plagued they thought by ethnic and particularly black invasions.51

In Toronto functional management solutions were to rule - the norm was, as Roland Harris asserted in 1930, not "ideal principles" since Toronto was not "aiming at aesthetic pre-eminence." Toronto's political culture was one of making do, of managing the mundane. By all means it had to avoid "unnecessary extravagance" in politics and on the landscape. Plans were only useful if they were set within, not apart from, management by council and its officials.⁵²

All the same the energy expended from 1905 onward did have a cumulative social effect. Just as public health measures gradually piled up before 1910, and as demands rose in the 1920s and, especially during the Great Depression, for higher-level funding on welfare, so too did agitation for land-use planning controls. Finally this accumulation resulted in plans after 1940. Public officials, such as leMay, had long careers - leMay remained commissioner until his death in 1954. To a degree not seen since the few years after 1793, when the original town lots, roads, and townships were surveyed, a planned pattern of streets determined the shape of development in the 1950s. Metro and the large-scale development corporations thus created a more rational

hierarchical pattern of streets in new areas, though, except for expressways, within the old rural grid. In the older built-up city, small management solutions to traffic continued to prevail, most obviously when the expressway system was not completed. Perhaps the confusing inner-city street pattern of Toronto encourages transit, bicycle and foot movement, and thus fits nicely with what has been rather inscrutably called the post-modern world.

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