Case Study 1: Dundas Square

THE ISSUE

One of the most high-profile recent urban development projects in Toronto is Dundas Square, at the corner of Yonge and Dundas Streets. There has been considerable controversy surrounding the design of the square, the city government’s image of what the district surrounding it is all about, and where the boundary lies between public and private space.

Dundas Square is clearly modeled on Times Square in New York City. This comparison is worth exploring.

SOURCES & MATERIALS


Hume, Christopher. ‘You’re Not Welcome’. Toronto Star (5 February 2005).


Web sources:

Yonge-Dundas Square Website, <http://www.ydsquare.ca/home.htm>


See also:

Case Study 2: The Gardiner Expressway

THE ISSUE

Some see the Gardiner Expressway as a barrier to the waterfront. Others say the real barrier is the rail corridor or the condominiums along Queen’s Quay. It is clear that the lands surrounding the roadway today are of poor quality and underused. What is the best thing to do?

The Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation has commissioned two studies of the Gardiner: one for the “Retain” option, and one for the “Remove” option (often called Option 8A). Given the aesthetic and functional significance of the Waterfront and the Gardiner itself, the media, the public and local politicians have weighed in heavily on this debate.

SOURCES & MATERIALS


Mau, Bruce. ‘View the Gardiner’s supposed flaw as a virtue and exaggerate it,’ Toronto Life (June 2002).


Web Sources:

Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation website. <www.towaterfront.ca> (search under Gardiner).
Case Study 3: The Regent Park Revitalization Project

THE ISSUE

Regent Park is one of Canada’s oldest public housing projects. Today it is home to 7,500 people, most recent immigrants. The buildings have aged poorly, and there problems with poverty and crime in the neighbourhood. A long consultation process has led to a revitalization proposal involving the introduction of market-priced housing units and the re-integration of the street grid. Some, including former mayor John Sewell are troubled by the fact that none of the new units are designated affordable. Is this gentrification by stealth, or a smart way to turn Regent Park into a mixed-income, mixed-use community?

You may wish to look at the “HOPE VI” federal public housing framework in the United States, which is a program to revitalize old housing projects along New Urbanist lines.

If any of you are from Montreal, you might compare it to the Benny Farm project in Notre-Dame-de-Grace, which has received a lot of media attention.

SOURCES & MATERIALS


Gillespie, Kerry. ‘Regent Park Overhaul Wins Council’s Approval’ (4 February 2004).


Daly, Rita. ‘The Big Fix’. Toronto Star (12 February 2005).

Web sources:

Case Study 4: New Cultural Institutions

THE ISSUE

Ever since architect Frank Gehry’s design for the Guggenheim Bilbao, the idea that the architecture of a cultural institution can be an engine of economic growth has gained steam. In Toronto today, several major projects are in progress or have been recently completed:

- The Art Gallery of Ontario, by Frank Gehry
- The Royal Ontario Museum, by Daniel Liebeskind
- The Ontario College of Art and Design addition, by Will Allsop
- The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (Opera House), by Jack Diamond

Some say that “Bilbao effect” architecture for museums takes away from the art inside; others say that showy design will attract more locals and tourists to cultural institutions. What do these projects say about art, architecture, commerce, and Toronto itself? Is this a good or bad approach?

SOURCES & MATERIALS


[stapled together]


See also:

Case Study 5: The Toronto Islands

THE ISSUE

The Toronto City Centre Airport (better known as the Toronto Island Airport) was the main issue in Mayor David Miller’s victorious election campaign in November 2003. The mayor campaigned on shutting down construction of a bridge (the “fixed link”) to the airport, saying that it would lead to expansion. The other candidates disagreed, saying that expansion was not permitted under the airport’s charter. Some groups oppose it for many different reasons: the environment, noise, safety, etc. Others support it, saying that is essential for business travel and medical emergency flights.

Some people believe that the airport lands should be turned into a park; others believe they should be turned over to housing. Given the context of waterfront revitalization, the waterfront and Ward’s Island community, and the park on Centre Island, what should be done with the airport?

SOURCES & MATERIALS

Brown, James. “Create a network of 100 islands, separated by street-width canals,” Toronto Life (June 2002).


Community AIR, email circulated on 10 February 2005 about ‘Airport expansion threat back on the front burner’.

Web sources:

Toronto Port Authority website http://www.torontoport.com/

See also:

Crane, David. “Air Canada woes provide opening for new rivals,” Toronto Star (23 Apr 2003).
Case Study 6: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMh) Revitalization Project

THE ISSUE

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health is a 150-year-old institution located south of Queen Street at Ossington. Its ‘superblock’ campus was originally surrounded by farmland, but is now fully integrated into Toronto.

The surrounding residential and industrial area has been depressed, but gentrification and the recent conversion of old factory buildings into condominiums along Queen and King has brought in new and wealthier residents.

CAMh is now in the process of planning a redevelopment of its campus. What will be the impact on the institution’s patients, the present residents and the surrounding community?

SOURCES & MATERIALS


[A full version of this is apparently available at CAMh — see the website.]


Prittie, Jennifer and Joanna Lavoie. “South by Queen West,” Eye Magazine (2 June 2003) [http://www.eyemagazine.com/issue/issue_02.06.03/news/queen.html]


Web sources:

CAMh redevelopment website, [http://www.camh.net/redev_index_pr.html]
Case Study 7: Fort York

THE ISSUE

Fort York was originally located in a large parkland to the west of Toronto’s downtown. As Toronto grew, it enveloped the fort. Today, the rail corridor heading into Union Station runs along its north side while the Gardiner Expressway runs along its south edge, cutting it off from Lake Ontario.

The current controversy over Fort York has both heritage preservation and environmental management dimensions: First, large-scale high-rise condo development is being built on the other side of Bathurst St. to the east (CityPlace) and south of the Gardiner (WaterParkCity). There is also a proposal that some of the land east of Bathurst be devoted to high-density affordable housing. Heritage activists fear that these towers and affordable housing developments will overshadow the fort and destroy Toronto’s last connection to its early history. Second, Fort York is at the mouth of historic Garrison Creek, a watercourse that runs underground from North Toronto to Lake Ontario.

At the same time, the city has commissioned a parks and open space plan for the fort.

What is the right answer for the Fort York area?

SOURCES & MATERIALS

Mays, John Bentley. ‘CityPlace Neighborhood Redrawn’. Globe and Mail (18 February 2005).

Web sources:

CityPlace condominium website. <http://www.livingincityplace.com/>
Fort York and Garrison Common Parks and Open Space Design Implementation Plan <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/culture/fort_york.htm> [at bottom]
WaterParkCity condominium website. <http://www.waterparkcity.ca/project.html>

See also:

Case Study 8: Minto condo tower (Yonge and Eglinton)

THE ISSUE

The Minto tower project at Yonge and Eglinton led to a hard-fought council election in November 2003. At 38 and 52 storeys, the two towers will be much taller than what is already there.

Some see it as the litmus test of the City’s new scheme to intensify at subway stations — if intensification fails here, then we will lose the battle for sprawl. Others, including North Toronto resident groups, see it as the tipping point toward the undesirable “Manhattanization” of Toronto.

Is Minto good or bad — in principle and in practice — for Toronto and for its local neighbourhood?

SOURCES & MATERIALS


Web sources:

YE Development website – ratepayers group
http://www.ye-development.com/YEdev/

Confederation of Toronto Resident and Ratepayers Associations in Toronto website.
<http://www.corra.ca/hyperintensification.shtml?yonge-eglinton>

Minto homepage
<http://www.mintomidtown.com/home/home.htm>
Case Study 9: East Bayfront

THE ISSUE

The East Bayfront is the shelf of land south of the Gardiner Expressway between Jarvis and Cherry Streets. Approximately 40 hectares in size, it is larger than the St. Lawrence neighbourhood to the north. Today it is occupied by “junk” buildings and parking lots.

The Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation and the City of Toronto are presently engaged in planning the site. Several public meetings have been held, and the prestigious Boston design firm Koetter Kim is leading the planning scheme. Between October 2003 and March 2004 the East Bayfront precinct planning team organized a series of public forums to get input on the planning and design process for the area.

What do you think of the plans and public input as developed so far? If you were in charge, what would you build in this space? Will the plan provide an appropriate mix of housing, commerce, and recreation for all Torontonians?

SOURCES & MATERIALS


Hume, Christopher. ‘Blue Skies Far off for Waterfront’. Toronto Star (3 February 2005).

Web sources:

Toronto Waterfront Design Initiative. &lt;http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/waterfront/waterfront_design_initiative.htm&gt;

Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation website. &lt;http://www.towaterfront.ca&gt;

Under ‘What’s New’ click on “West Don Lands”, then in left margin, click on “East Bayfront.” There several PDFs pertaining to the public forum.
Case Study 10: Downsview Park

THE ISSUE

Until 1994, the Downsview lands were used as a military airport. In 1998, the federal government designated the lands as the first urban National Park. A design competition was won by architecture superstar Rem Koolhaus and Toronto designer Bruce Mau. They developed a highly abstract concept plan that has been criticized for being too vague.

What do you think of the plan? Is this good environmental management? Has the process made sense?

SOURCES & MATERIALS


Web sources:

On short-term loan in the Shore and Moffat Architecture Library: