

Tower Renewal Project Series

STEELES AVENUE RUNS THROUGH IT

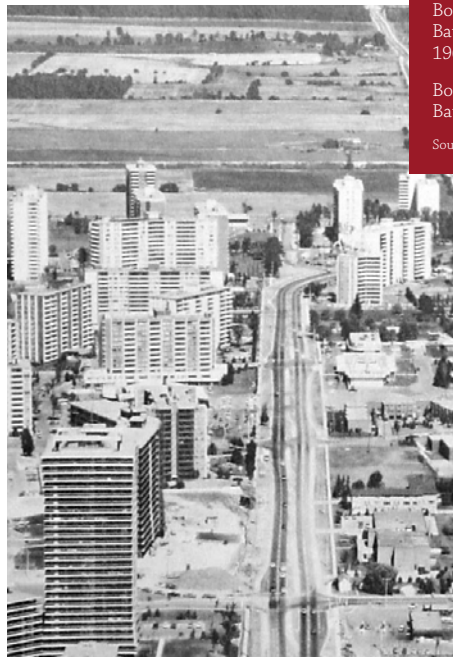
A study in contrasts

By Graeme Stewart and Michael McClelland with Marsha Kelmans

In the 1960s, Steeles Avenue was the end of Metropolitan Toronto's servicing area; the northern boundary of the region's planned urbanization. North of Steeles, the rolling pastures were to remain as the area's green belt, while in contrast, dense, mixed-use post-war communities emerged to the south.



Top images:
Many thousands live in Bathurst
and Steeles 40-modern towers



Bottom left:
Bathurst and Steeles in the late
1960s at Metro's northern boarder

Bottom right:
Bathurst and Steeles, looking west

Source: A.R.A. Architects



such as Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park, the area developed property by property along Bathurst, following the set-back, open space and parking requirements for multiple-storey buildings required by North York and Metro Toronto guidelines. Located adjacent to two-large cemeteries, the large G. Ross Lord Park along the West Don River and for a brief period of time a golf course, many of the area's towers were truly planned as "towers in the park." Others, located next to shopping plaza, were attempting mixed use.

Rich with Jewish heritage, the area was part of the northern expansion of Jewish Toronto along Bathurst. Beginning in the 1970s and intensifying in the 1980s, the area became home to Russian Jews fleeing the former Soviet Union. The



Bathurst and Steeles emerged as a dense community containing nearly 40-modern residential high-rises. Incorporated with the ravine, neighbourhood parks, elementary and secondary schools, churches and synagogues, shopping plazas and the cul-de sacs of adjacent single family homes, the towers provided the bulk of housing for an area of over 20,000 people.

Unlike earlier master planned apartment neighbourhoods

collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s attracted a steady flow of Russian speakers of all backgrounds together with immigrants from other countries. Today the area remains one of the city's most prominent immigrant receptions sites, as well as Russian communities. Cyrillic and Hebrew commercial signage and community newspapers display the current cultural mix.