

COMMUNITY SPIRIT
OF THE
JANE / FINCH
CORRIDOR

COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN THE JANE/FINCH CORRIDOR

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INTRODUCTION

good
start

In any large, modern city there are the typical 'bad neighbourhoods'; those areas parents warn their children to stay away from; those areas the media love to write about, to show just how 'bad' they are; those areas which police, teachers, and other civic employees commiserate with each other over when they are unfortunate enough to be transferred there; those areas insurance companies are reluctant to insure. In Metropolitan Toronto, the most infamous of these is the Jane/Finch Corridor.

The "Corridor" is typical of such areas; densely populated with a below average income and an above average crime rate. Its uniqueness stems from its history. It has been described as an "Instant City", growing out of farmers' fields in a short decade. A very planned "Instant City", it was designed specifically to avoid the social problems now so overwhelmingly prevalent in it. The results of the "planning" have turned out to be worse than those of the traditional lower socio-economic areas in the city. In many cases, it has made the same problems it was designed to remove, worse. A great many of these problems can easily be tied to an almost total lack of community spirit.

This report will attempt to deal with how the Corridor's current situation arose and try to propose some viable ideas which might alleviate the situation.

"Poverty in Canada may not be the poverty of other parts of the world, but can we accept this planned type of poverty? Can we continue to "blame the victim" for the results of this type of planning? May this planned blunder that is Jane and Finch never be repeated elsewhere! None of us Canadians, old or new, can afford what this has done to our lives or the lives of 20,000 kids."1

In June 1983, I started to work for the United Church's Jane/Finch Community Ministry. I have come to know the community well in the time I have worked there; it has become 'home'.

I am in the unique position of not being tied to any one organization financially (and thus largely practically) for nine months out of the year. I have been accepted by the rival groups in the area; by the Metro Toronto Housing Association employees (the Toronto section of the Ontario Housing Corporation), the North York Department of Parks and Recreation staff, the staff at the schools (Westview Centennial Secondary School, and Firgrove Public School), the church workers (in addition to the United Church, the Mennonite church and the Salvation Army have street workers in the area), the community groups (Firgrove United and Firgrove Concerned Citizens Association), and the residents themselves. I am an insider, with a position enabling me to examine the situation from an unbiased and general viewpoint. I also have an opportunity to have my observations and recommendations acted upon; especially in the area of the needs of teenagers in the Firgrove Neighbourhood. [This is where most of my interest and local contact lies, although by no means all of it.]

The Jane/Finch Corridor is in the north western corner of the City of North York [see Map I]. The 'Corridor' is its popular name, the one coined by the media. The area is referred to as District 10 in the guidelines for its' development and within the Planning Department for the City of North York. This District has been divided into Communities, which are further subdivided into Neighbourhoods [see Map II]. This

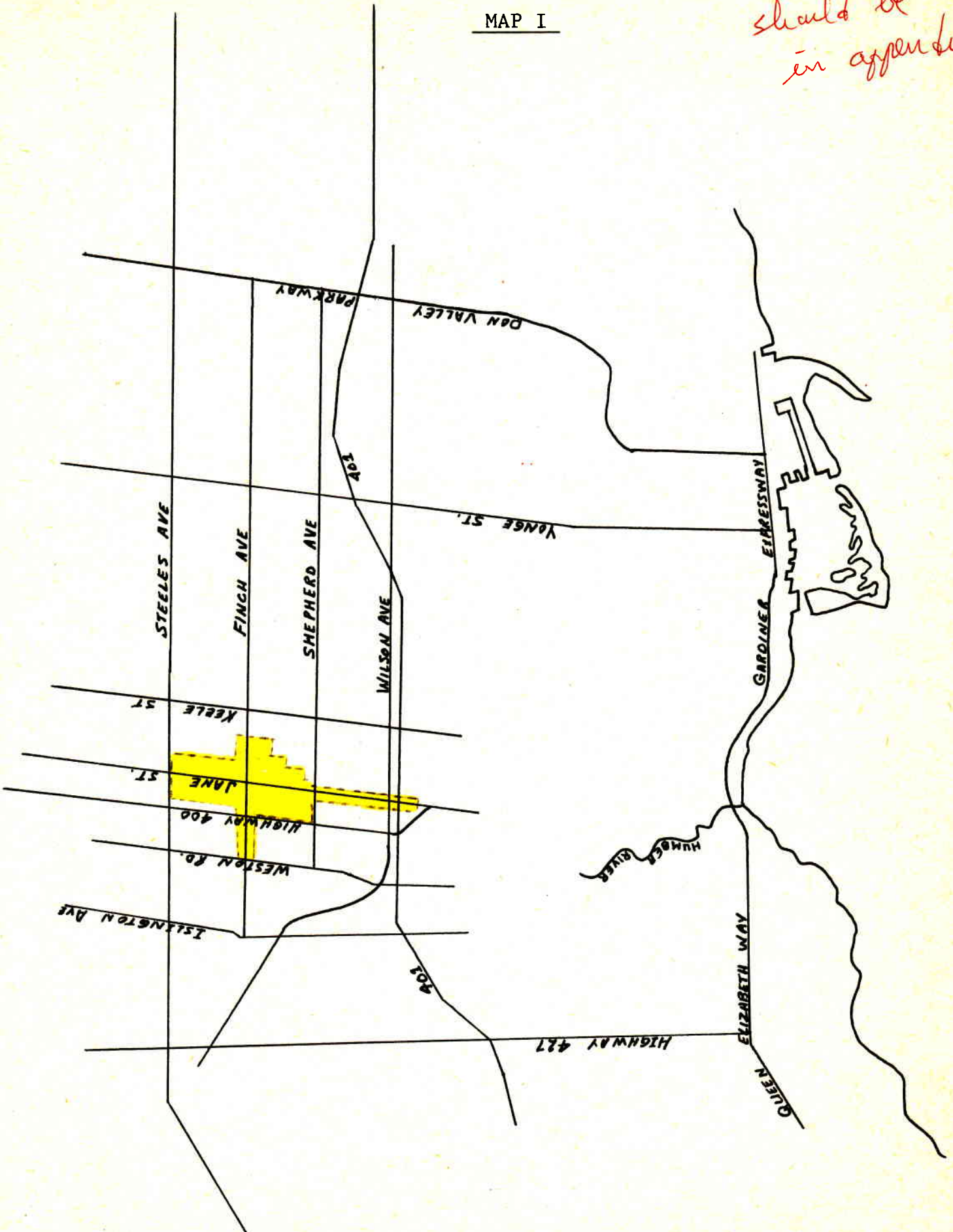
report will be concentrating on the Cook Village neighbourhood [see Map III], with frequent references to those neighbourhoods adjacent to it (Yorkwoods, Glenfield, and York Town). These names, however, are in most cases never heard outside City Hall, as even the civic employees in the area refer to 'Cook Village' as Firgrove (taken from the name of its main access road and its elementary school) On the 'street' it is known as Connection. The neighbourhood boundaries are Finch Ave on the north, Jane St. on the east, Eddystone Ave on the south, and Oakdale Rd. on the west. ✓

In a number of reports on the problems of the Jane/Finch Corridor, the reference area's boundaries are those of the electoral constituency, that of Ward 3. Not only is this useful definition for reports being sent to people who identify with these boundaries (ie. civic politicians), but it also comes very close to the boundaries for two census tracts, making statistical information fairly accurate. It is roughly triangular in shape, with Steeles Ave. on the north, the Black Creek Conservation Area on the east, Sheppard Ave on the south, and Highway 400 on the west. [see Map IV]

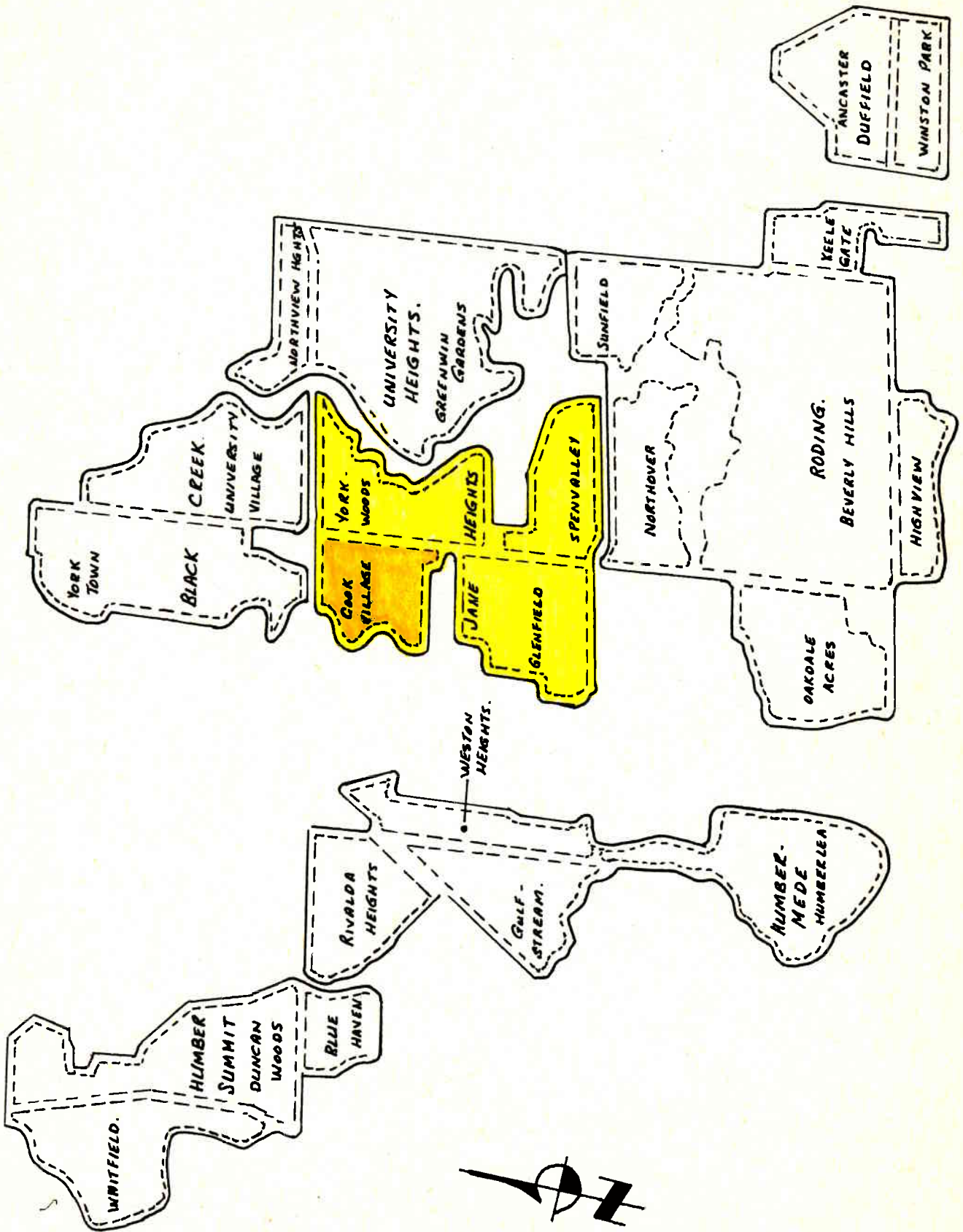
*good intro - but need a
bit more on why of
interest to urbanologist*

MAP I

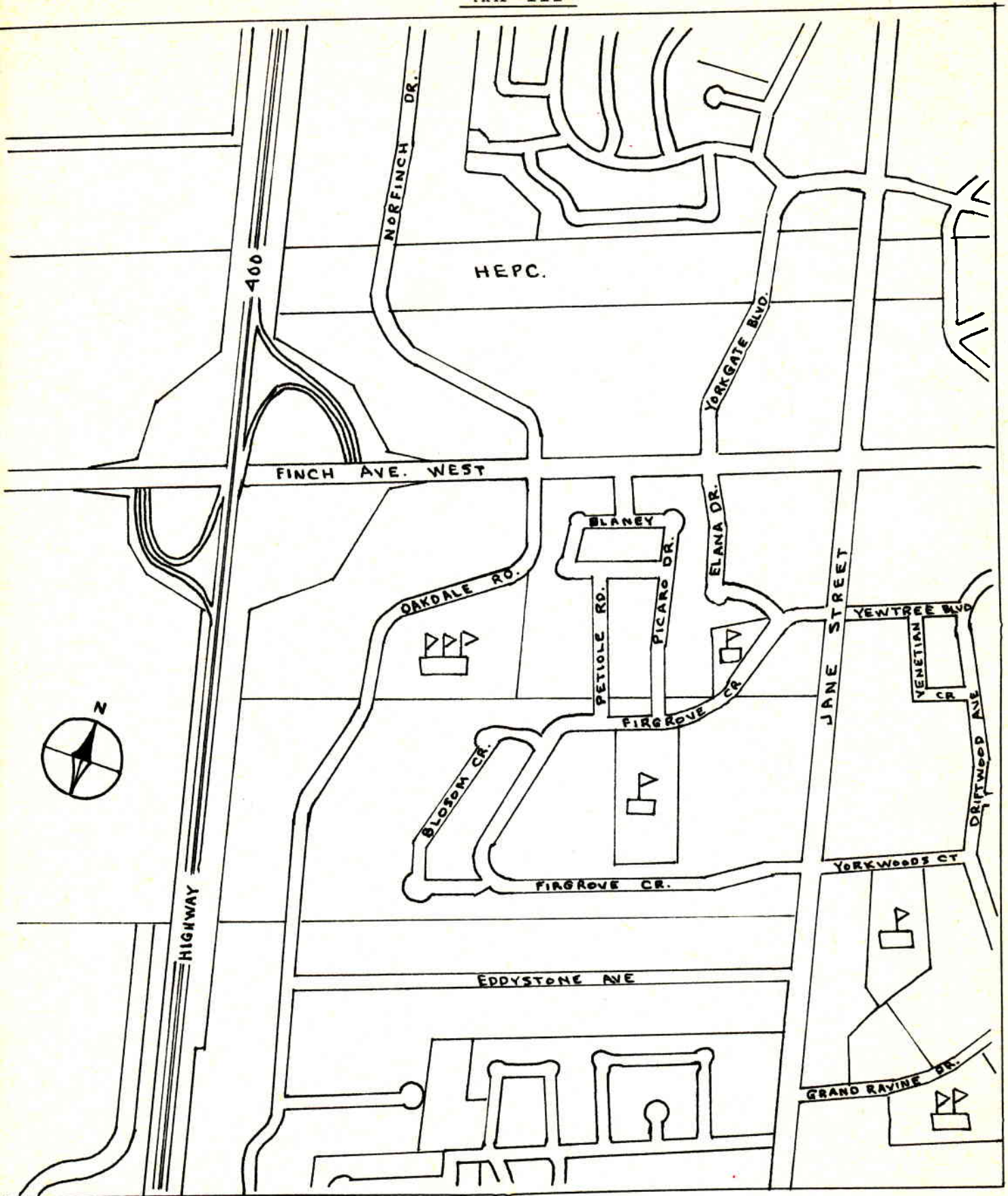
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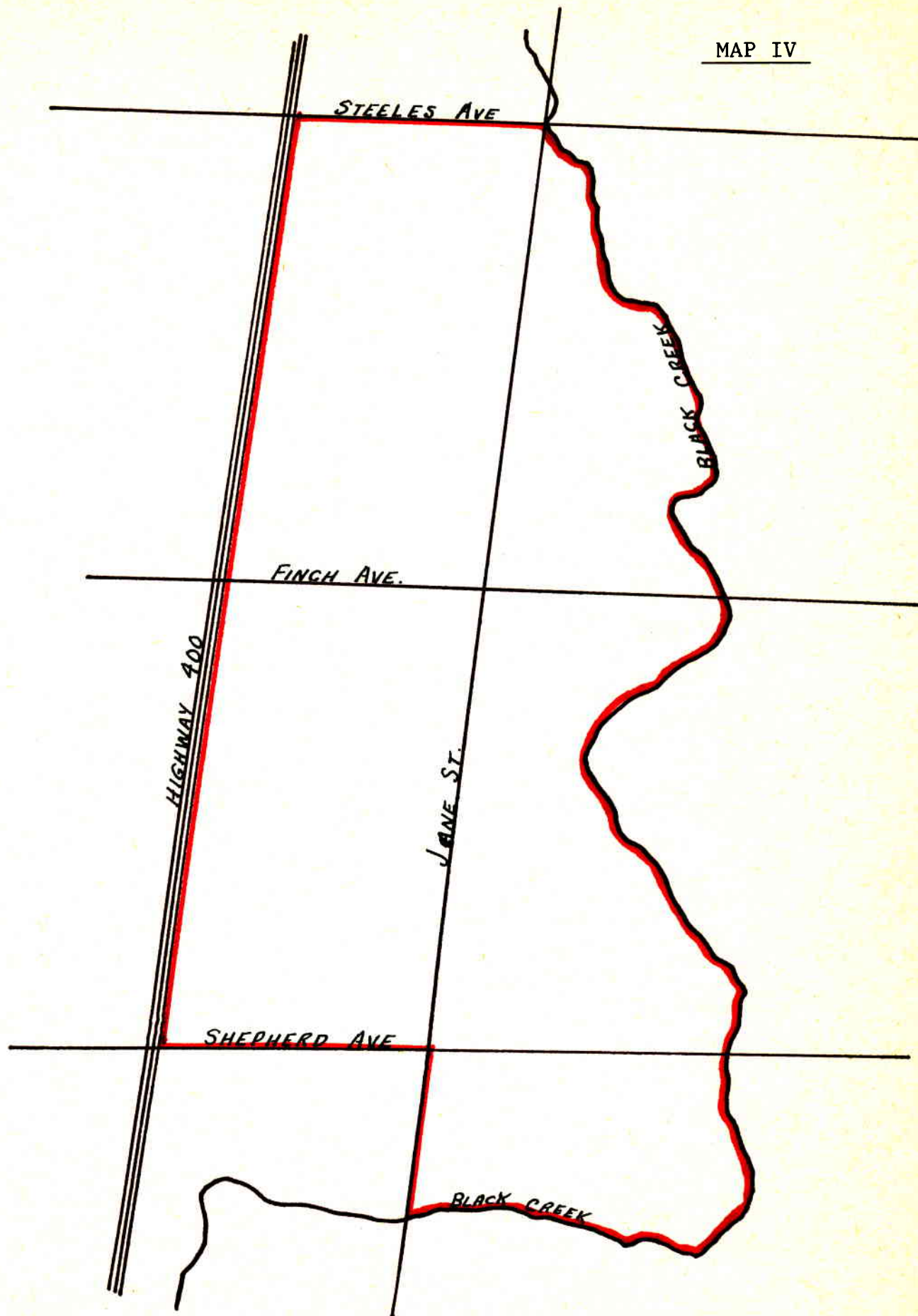


MAP II



MAP III





WARD 3

FOOTNOTES

*should be at
end of report*

¹

Helen Ede Workshop 5, "Neighbourhood Planning - Social Evolution of the Jane-Finch Area" (Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre: 1977) p. 18.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

"Until very recently the area around Jane/ Finch was a small farming community which had existed for over a century without undergoing any major physical changes. In the late 1950's, it was prepared for residential and commercial development. Today, our community boasts of over 55,000 people many of whose homes have been built within the area covered by this [1958] aerial photograph." 1 [see Appendix I]

The second World War had ended, and the thousands of new, young, 'baby-boom' families had the financial means to move to 'suburbia'. The immigration from post-war Europe was at an incredibly high rate. The resulting demand for housing was at an all time high.

It was also a period of expansion for Canada's social welfare programmes; one of the new additions being subsidized housing. The popular social theory at the time was one of "social integration"² It was believed that 'integration' of different levels of socio-economic housing within a community would lessen the negative effects of the class structure.

"...the concept of housing distribution is one of dispersed groupings, each large enough to maintain an identity, but next to another group of a different category - all drawn together by the core - by social and cultural activity." 3

The fast expanding suburbs provided opportunities for application of the theory. In 1954 a Federal -Provincial partnership bought 655 acres of land in the north west area of, what was then, the township of North York.⁴ Of the 655 acres purchased, 476 acres were sold to York University for its new campus; 88 acres along the Black Creek were sold to the Metropolitan Toronto Regional Conservation Authority; and after widening Jane St. to its 120 ft. allowance there were 88.9 acres left for residential purposes.

On November 28, 1961, the Metropolitan Toronto council passed a resolution requesting that the previously purchased lands be developed in part as public housing and elderly persons' housing, with financial assistance from the Federal-Provincial partnership (through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation).

"By proposing that these two kinds of housing be developed comprehensively with equally high standards of site planning and design, it is hoped that the two will develop harmoniously without sharp contrasts in architectural style, hence minimizing the identification of one type of accommodation with one particular income group." 5

Three months later, in February 1962, another resolution was passed requesting a plan be developed as a guideline for zoning and development of the area; which has been labelled District 10. In 1964, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation tabled its guidelines for the development of the public housing portion of the district.⁶ Both the District 10 Plan and the Central Mortgage and Housing programme were "based on the central idea that a community should be created with as much diversity of population and income as possible."⁷

It was planned that the one and two bedroom public housing be built in a single fifteen story tower, which was felt was adequate for the "smaller families these would accomodate".⁸ Adjacent to these were to be "clusters of varied sizes and shapes as well as in linear groups"⁹ for the larger families. The 'clusters' would provide areas that could be maintained for pedestrians only. In these central or 'core' areas "will be acting the social forces

that can help bring together the population from public and private housing..."¹⁰ They were to contain parks, play grounds and community centres. Logically, the better designed and built these amenities were, "the greater the chance of ... social intercourse" ¹¹ being successful. The most important aspect of each neighbourhood was thought to be the community centre.

"It is known that the facilities it can provide are needed in such projects from the ~~day~~ the first tenants move in ... to complement the anticipated facilities of the other community buildings."¹²

As is so often the case, the problems started when the plans were transferred into reality: "The first two phases of Yorkwood Village won a Housing Council Design award",¹³ yet, the 'most important' building in any project, the community centre, was not opened until the middle 1970's, and by 1982, was falling down. Public opinion holds that it was so badly designed originally that it should have been torn down in any event. ✓

The theoretical basis for the whole area was 'social integration';¹⁴ yet 13,000 of the 43,000 Ontario Housing units in North York were in Ward 3; approximately one-third were in one-twentieth of the Borough's acreage.¹⁵ It was "assumed" in District 10 Plan that "development in this district will follow predictable trends basically in conformity with the projections of Metro Toronto."¹⁶ Yet, between 1961 and 1971 the North York population as a whole doubled and Ward 3 tripled.¹⁷ It was "assumed" that "completion of the initial urban development proposed will take place in the next twenty to twenty-five years."¹⁸ Yet, by 1971, Ward 3 had reached 61% of its' total population.¹⁹ Ward

End ?

3 may have had 61% of its population, but it only had 44% of its proposed dwellings.²⁰ It was "assumed" that there would be "an overall average of about 3.4 persons per dwelling in the district."²¹ Yet, in 1971, the average was in fact 4.1.²² It was assumed that North York would be responsible for "the provision of municipal services".²³ The allocation of 0.35% of the Parks and Recreation Department budget in 1973, to an area with 8% of the population is not 'responsible'.²⁴

"...it did not project a rate of development which would see almost 90% of development projected for 1990 realized some 15 years early and merely five years after the District 10 Plan was approved." 25

It became obvious to the residents that the considerable and unanticipated rate of growth (an increase of 2,438% in the decade spanning 1961-1971)²⁶ was responsible for many of their concerns; especially those of public facilities and services, which "did not materialize at the same rate as the population increased".²⁷ To compound the problem "there is no evidence that the planning policies of the Borough anticipated [the] concentration of assisted housing in Ward 3";²⁸ which in reality meant, no allowance for this in the already over-taxed facilities and services.

"...the blame must fall on elected government and social welfare agencies for not fulfilling responsibilities to this and other "instant" communities where human needs are assessed secondly to the rate of physical development." 29

Any community to experience such rapid growth will become unstable; "Community-building takes time and effort";³⁰ "The signals coming in and our own experience tell us the area has developed too much too fast".³¹ The 'Corridor' became a suburban setting for the problems of a deteriorating inner city core.

"the problems following in the wake of the rapid development phase in the social evolution of the Jane/Finch area were further augmented by the second crisis; that of the community becoming a primary reception area for new Canadians."³²

A community with nothing positive to offer (other than cheap housing), already overloaded with unmanageable problems, was becoming 'home' to people of forty or more nationalities.

From the time of the Federal-Provincial land purchase in 1958, private homes were built in the district. Up until the late 1960's the neighbourhoods were developing as average bedroom communities. These first homeowners were of Anglo-saxon descent. Almost simultaneously, a sizeable Italian-Canadian community developed in the area. While not culturally identical, the two groups had goals for the area that were very compatible.³³

By 1972, a new wave of people were entering the community. The vast majority of them were from very different cultures, and are unfamiliar with urban life. Canadian culture is very difficult to adapt to as its' existence is denied until one practices one's own; then suddenly one is chastised for violating "this non-Canadian Canadian culture".^{33 1/2} Their beliefs and expectations are often in conflict with the corresponding Canadian ones. [See Appendix II] It is the new Canadians still in school, and the first generation Canadians who are most hurt in this conflict, as they live in a no-man's-land; in one world at home and another at school. The feelings of rebellion these juveniles have towards both cultures serve only to magnify their other frustrations (to be discussed later).

This was the situation in late 1973, when the situation was

brought to a head by the proposal to develop the empty land on the north side of Finch between Norfinch and York Gate [see map I]. Previously, no consensus could even be reached as to who was responsible for the conditions in the area, or even that there was a problem. The proposal forced the resident's into action; there was no question in their minds that the problems were real, that they were "people-oriented problems, and we do know the answer to them is not more people!"³⁴

The residents "saw elementary schools with populations of over 1,000; traffic that was a nightmare; public transportation that was non-existent on weekends and which has buses moving in convoys at rush-hour; shopping that meant hours in line-ups, facilities and services that did not materialize; questionable educational opportunities for their children and a lack of recreational facilities."³⁵

The frustration of being ignored for the past five years had raised tempers, and when the further development was proposed they exploded into an overwhelming "STOP" from the community. There were large numbers of reports by individuals and rate payers associations written and submitted to the North York Council. The most widely quoted of these was Too Much Too Fast: Breathing Space For Ward 3;

"...we wish to bring to the attention of the Council of the Borough of North York a serious situation existing in Ward 3. Many residents and groups are deeply concerned over a proposal for high-density residential development of land at Jane and Finch. They fear the attraction of several thousand additional people at this time would intensify already serious problems related to the public services and facilities, social conditions and quality of life in the area."³⁶

✓
good use of quotes

On August 18 1975, North York council proved the resolution

to hire Klien and Sears to;

"review policies respecting a specific site ...[and] to effectively examine and recommend policies for the site in question, it is necessary to establish an information base and define issues over a larger area. ... designated Ward 3 of the Borough as the initial General Study Area." 37

Their findings on the critical issues of schools, transportation, and recreation will be summarized here [and can be found in more depth in the Appendix].

The overcrowding in the schools was very indicative of the lag between development of dwellings and provision of services and facilities. At the time of the Klien and Sears study;

"the North York Board operates 10 elementary schools, 2 junior high schools, and 1 secondary school in Ward 3, while the Metropolitan Separate School Board operated 5 elementary [grades kindergarten through 8] schools in the area." 38
[see map II.]

A capacity assessment of each school was done by the North York Board [see Appendix III]. In addition to the straight forward problems of too many students enrolled, many of the schools require special programs (ie. English as a second language classes) which overburden a school, leading to a shortage of classrooms, complicating the overcrowding problem. The problems lead to serious amounts of stress; both in the classroom and in the community. The overcrowding was meaning students were being deprived of opportunities experienced by other students in the Borough; especially that of sufficient individual attention. The new-Canadians in particular were finding the overcrowded schools very frustrating and alienating, and their negative reactions to school were the result. The situation became a self-perpetuating circle.

The teachers had little time for the attention the students needed (or the extra-curricular activities, which can diffuse stressful school situations by humanizing both sides of the conflict, teachers and students). Which, led to increasingly frustrated and hostile students; leading to an understandably reluctance on the part of the teacher to become less authoritarian and more individualistic; thus perpetuating the problem. Teachers new to the area hear of hostile students, in grossly overcrowded classrooms, and resolve to 'rule with an iron hand', and create for themselves a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Since the report was finished, the situation (at least in the Firgrove area) has eased somewhat. The report cited the Separate School Board conclusion that:

"The statistical evidence of the growth ~~growth~~ of the Roman Catholic population and enrolments, combined with immediate and future accomodation requirements, supports the need for future school sites and buildings." 39

In the late 1970's, St Frances De Sales was moved out of Firgrove Public School, and into its own building on the opposite side of Firgrove Cres. [see map II] As stated in the report, because aproximately one-third of the public school enrolment was Roman Catholic children, this new school substantially reduced the pressure on Firgrove. Also in accordance with recommendations in the report, a new academically based high school (supported by the diocese) was built. So as it would complement Westview instead of competing with it, the later has become increasingly a technically oriented school.⁴⁰ Many non-catholic students from the area are attending Jefferies Secondary School (on the east side of the Black Creek, just south of Finch) if they want a more academic

program.

Like the residents' concerns about the over-crowded schools, "it was [also] found that the actual traffic conditions on the arterials justify the concerns expressed by the residents."⁴¹

The situation was described in Too Much Too Fast: as

"The Jane/Finch intersection has the second highest accident rate in Metro... This was before the completion of the shopping centre at the southwest corner of the intersection."⁴²

The Klien and Sears report concluded (from the research done by a traffic consultant [see Appendix IV]) that;

"With localized street improvements such as additional turning lanes, all three intersections could be marginally improved to acceptable or near acceptable standards."⁴³

Since the time of the report, the housing in the Shoreham area of the York Town neighbourhood has been completed and occupied, and the Finch West Mall has also been completed. The mentioned improvements have been made, but the traffic has worsened. The combination of more people, and the traffic across Jane St. immediately south of Finch from one mall to the other, has nullified the improvements [see map IV]. The traffic-jams on the main arteries at rush-hours are still horrendous (the addition of access ramps to Hwy. 400 at Sheppard and/or Steeles would undoubtedly improve this situation. The public transportation (the Toronto Transit Commission) has improved from 'non-existent' on weekends, to barely-existent; and the four bus convoys have been reduced to three.

The commercial and retail amenities tie in closely with the concerns over the lack of recreation facilities. 'Hanging out'

in the mall is the most popular form of recreation, mainly because there is little else to do. The two malls at the Jane and Finch intersection are adequate [See Appendix V for Guttman scale].

Comparison pricing tends to indicate higher grocery prices and inferior quality merchandise. There are a sizeable number of specialty food shops, catering to the large ethnic communities (especially West Indian and Italian). There is no major department store (apart from Towers, which only stocks lower quality merchandise and is thus a poor substitute]

The major deficiency is the lack of any commercial recreation facilities; with the exception of two video arcades (one of which has a few pool tables) opened in the early 1980's.

"the absence of theatres or bowling alleys in the community and the relatively long trips necessary to reach such facilities makes life in Ward 3 difficult for adults as well as children and perhaps even more so for teenagers."⁴⁴

The long distance, when coupled with the barely-existent public transportation on the weekends makes access to even the distant facilities very infrequent.

This lack of commercial recreation, together with the inadequate public facilities, leaves the many frustrated, hostile, and thus delinquency prone juveniles with far too few constructive ways to spend their time (for instance, 'hanging-out' in malls is not constructive.) Despite the recommendation in the District 10 Plan for provision of community centres to parallel housing development, at the time of the Klein and Sears report, many neighbourhoods (including Firgrove) were without any such facilities. It was the general opinion, that the "inadequate recreational facilities are a major cause of juvenile problems"; "More⁴⁵

and different recreational opportunities were needed to help deal effectively with the youth problems in the area."⁴⁶

In a community where the majority of people live in apartments or townhouses with small, narrow yards,

"The number of persons per acre of park land is considerably smaller than for North York as a whole. In fact, the amount of park space per person is only half that of the entire Borough. Similarly, the persons per acre of local park space in Ward 3 is higher than... for Metro as a whole."⁴⁷

The facilities provided in these parks were for the majority, outdoor or sports oriented; such as ball diamonds, ice surfaces, and conventional playgrounds. Schools, at the time of the report, were used to augment the inadequate indoor facilities in the Ward. This lack of indoor facilities would normally have been off-set by the use of church halls and basements, but there were less churches than community centres; it was not only the civic governments who did not adequately provide for the community. [see appendix VI]

Firgrove "with its high proportion of children and Ontario Housing units"⁴⁸ was without a community centre until the late 1970's. Like Yorkwoods, what it now has may be better than nothing, but not much. With a low ceiling, a tile floor, and pressed cardboard walls it is useless for sports. The roof leaks profusely, half the heaters do not work in the winter, and while it can be divided into three rooms with folding doors, all the lights are on one switch (so, if there is a movie being shown, the washrooms are in total darkness) Until March 1983, the community centre was locked, except for adult meetings, so there was still no place for juveniles (8 to 19 years) to go, especially in the winter.

*wow - half an
paper is back ground!
well done, tho
overwhelming
in a way*

"There are few opportunities for children in this age group to become creatively involved in supervised but unstructured creative play situations. In the modern urban environment, where everything is 'nailed down' and planned there is a growing need for places where children can go to experiment and build things."⁴⁹

Due to the conflicting nature of several of the age-groups within this range, there is a need for a variety of programs to meet their various interests. For the younger children, a few adventure playgrounds have been built (including one at the Yorkwoods Community Centre and Firgrove Public School), but nothing has come of the Klein and Sears recommendation that 'ateliers' be built for the teens.⁵⁰ By and large, the programmes for teens are still sports oriented [except at Firgrove, where by necessity, they are 'drop-in' oriented, and in the last year, that meant 'Break dancing' oriented.]

In February 1977, the Klien and Sears report was acknowledged by the North York Council, but was never tabled. As a result, in the words of one member of the Planning Department, "it is useless to us."⁵¹ Some of its suggestions have been acted on, but not officially recognized as coming from that source.

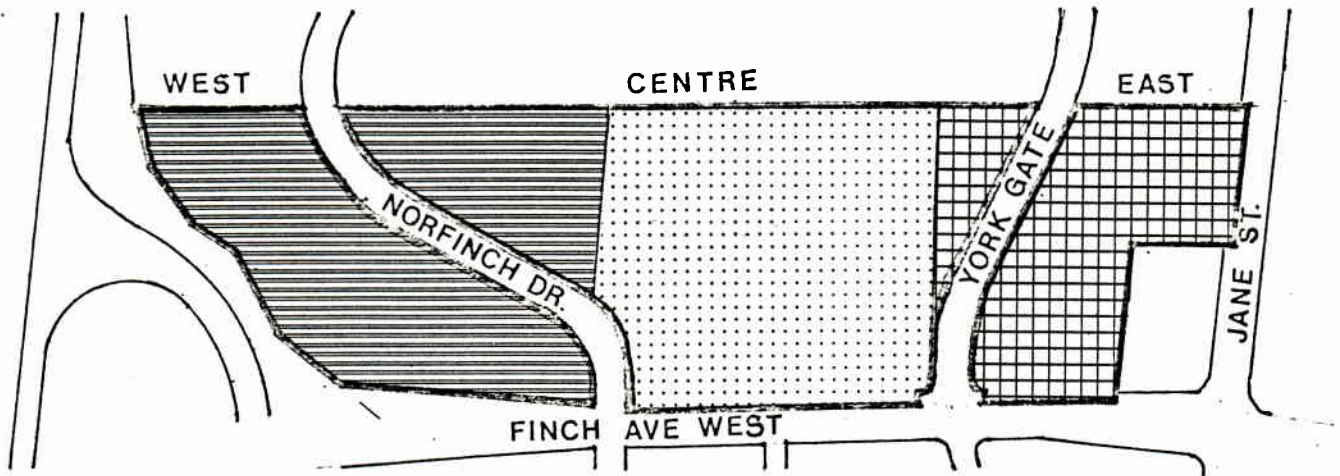
On March 17 1977, the motion to pass the proposed development was defeated. The matter was taken to the Municipal Board in May 1978, which recommended the development wait until the community stabilizes.

To date, with the exception of the private school built in the very late 1970's, the land stands vacant.

The District 10 Plan was to be reviewed and updated every five years; to date, individual zonings have been changed a number of times due to developers' requests, but no review has ever taken place.

FIGURE 11

MAP T

CURRENT ZONING OF THE
LANDS IN QUESTION

LEGEND

M2	
RM2	
RM5	








Zoning*	Acreage	Permitted Use	Number and Type of Units
RM5	13.07	residential @ 40 units/acre	approx. 520 apartments (4 storey)
RM2	20.76	residential @ 8 units/acre	approx. 170 semi-detached
M2	19.39	industrial	
	53.22		690 units

* RR zoning is replaced by zoning in brackets when the lots are serviced by water and sewer services (By-law 7625 S.8.7)

SCHOOLS IN WARD 3



LEGEND

-  PUBLIC ELEMENTARY
-  SEPARATE SCHOOL
-  PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH
-  PUBLIC SECONDARY
-  AT CAPACITY
-  BELOW CAPACITY
-  ABOVE CAPACITY

1. BLACK SMITH P. S.
2. SHOREHAM P. S.
3. GOSFORD P. S.
4. DRIFTWOOD P. S.
5. TOPCLIFF P. S.
6. FIRGROVE P. S.
7. YORKWOODS P. S.
8. SENTINEL P. S.
9. SPENVALLEY P. S.
10. CALICO P. S.
11. JANE J.H.S.
12. OAKDALE J.H.S.
13. ST. AUGUSTINE SEP. S.
14. ST. CHARLES GARNER SEP. S.
15. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SEP. S.
16. ST. JANE FRANCIS SEP. S.
17. ST. MARTHA SEP. S.
18. WESTVIEW CENTRAL SEC. S.

Esso
Gas
Station

Bus
stop

Bus Stop

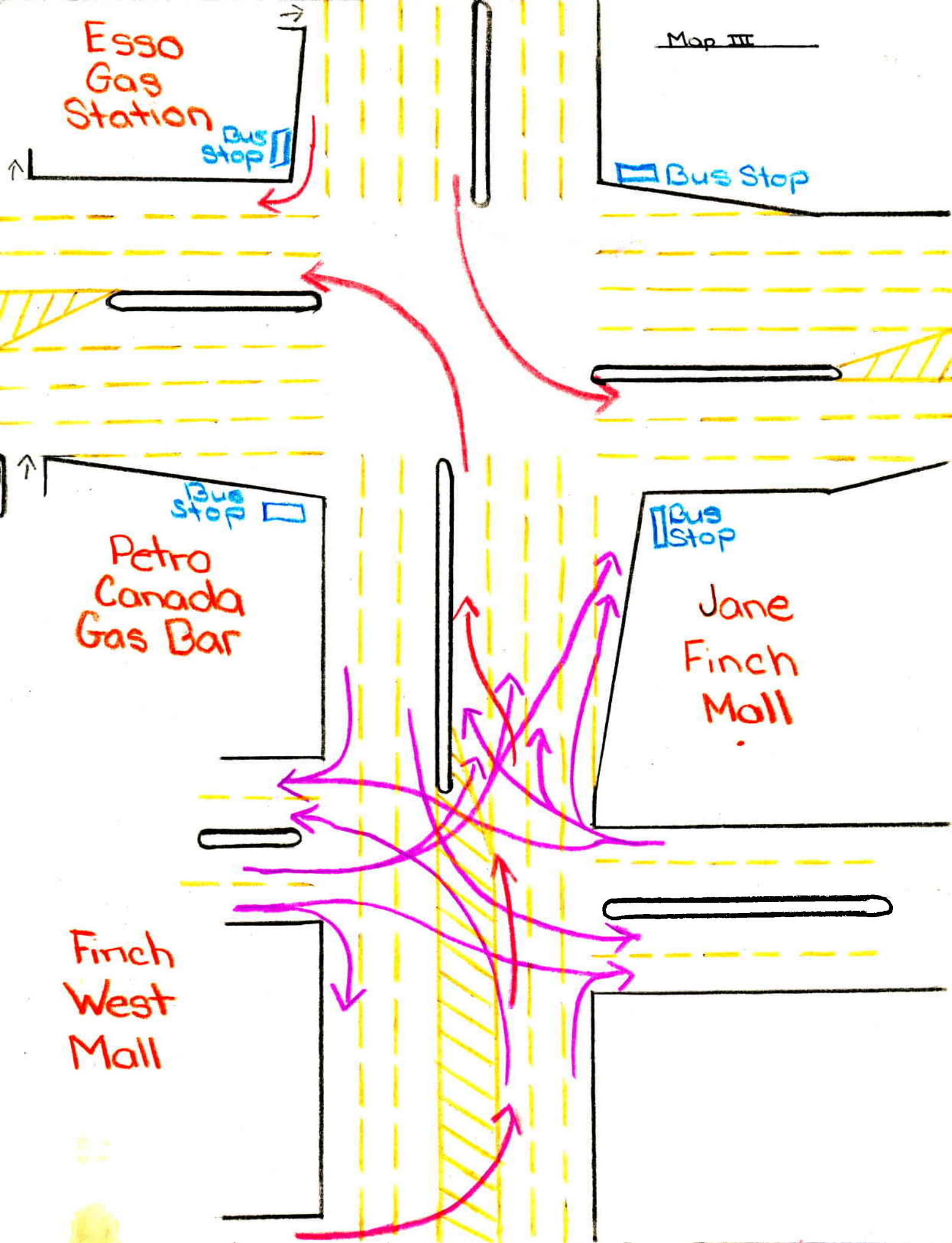
Bus
stop

Petro
Canada
Gas Bar

Bus
Stop

Jane
Finch
Mall

Finch
West
Mall



FOOTNOTES

1

Van J. Newell, Rural Roots of Old Jane/Finch (calendar) (Toronto: Jackson and Cowan, 1984) p. 1.

2

Central Mortgage and Housing Corp. Planning Report For the Federal-Provincial North Jane St. Project (Toronto: Planning and Urban Design Consultants; Environment Planning Ass. Ltd., 1964) p. 6.

3

Ibid., p.6.

4

Ibid., p. 1.

5

Ibid., p. 3.

6

Ibid., p. 1.

7

Ibid., p. 3.

8

Ibid., p. 9.

9

Ibid.

10

Ibid., p. 6.

11

Ibid.

12

Ibid., p. 12.

13

Alex J. Rubin Letter to the Managing Director of the Ontario Housing Corporation Mr. H.W. Suters re: Yorkwoods Village Phase III (Toronto: Rubin Corp. Ltd., December 1, 1965) p. 2.

14

University Village Ratepayers' Association Too Much Too Fast: Breathing Space For Ward 3 (Toronto: March 1974) p. 2.

16

North York Planning Board Office Consolidation (Toronto: Borough of North York, 1976) p. 6.

17

University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 2.

- 18
Planning Board Office Consolidation p. 6.
- 19
University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 2.
- 20
Ibid.
- 21-
Planning Board Office Consolidation p. 6.
- 22
University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 2.
- 23
Planning Board Office Consolidation p. 6.
- 25
Klein and Sears A Review of Planning Policies re: Lands Bounded By Finch Hwy 400, the HEPC Right-of-Way and Jane Prepared for the Borough of North York Planning Board (Toronto: Klien and Sears, December 1975) p. 22.
- 24
University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 4.
- 26
Ibid.,
- 27
Ibid.,
- 28-
Ibid., p. 21.
- 29
Helen Ede Inventory of Human Services in Jane/Finch Area (Toronto: DWAC Press Release, November 24, 1976) p. 11.
- 30
University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 3.
- 31
Ibid., p. 5.
- 32
Helen Ede Workshop 5 "Neighbourhood Planning- Social Evolution of Jane/Finch (Toronto: Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, 1979) p. 13.
- 33
Ibid., p. 14.
- 33½
Ibid., p. 13.
- 34
University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 3.

- 35 Ede Wokshop 5 p. 12.
- 36 University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 1.
- 37 Klien and Sears Planning Review p. 4.
- 38 Ibid., p. 23.
- 39 Ibid., p. 29.
- 40 Ibid., p. 30.
- 41 Ibid., p. 44.
- 42 University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 2.
- 43 Klien and Sears Planning Review p. 44.
- 44 Ibid., p. 43.
- 45 University Village Too Much Too Fast p. 7.
- 46 Ibid. p. 8.
- 47 Klien and Sears Planning Review p. 36
- 48 Ibid. p. 42.
- 49 Ibid., p. 43.
- 50 Ibid., p. 65.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Popular belief has it that Jane/Finch is one of the lowest socio-economic areas in Toronto; that it has one of the highest population densities; that it is largely 'un-employed welfare-bums'; that it is largely immigrants, most of whom are black; and that it has the highest crime rate in Toronto. Some of these rumours are facts, but alot are not. Many simply are misunderstood statistics and over generalizations.

There is no denying it has one of the highest population densities in Toronto. The Firgrove area (section 312.04 in the 1981 census tracts (see Map I)) had a population of 6,552 people in an area of 0.8 sq./km; a density of 8,190 people per sq./km¹, giving the highest density in North York.² The situation was the same at the time of the 1971 census, the 6,500 people per sq./km being the highest density³ (Note: this figure is for the 312 section as a whole; as is amply evident in the density figures the population grew so as to necessitate subdividing the census tract.)^[see appendix VII] About 60% of the housing in the neighbourhood is government subsidized (either Ontario Housing or rental supplements)⁴ Ward 3 as a whole having one-third of the Ontario Housing in North York.⁵

The disparity between employment income and total income statistics (the employment income being very slightly higher)⁶ indicate a basically subsistence financial position for most of the population. These three indications (high density, subsidized housing, subsistence financial position) lead to the conclusion it is in fact a low socio-economic area; the other suppositions about the area are largely derived from these facts, but erroneously so.

It is assumed that someone living in subsidized housing is also on welfare. This is far from true. The criteria for admission to Ontario Housing are based on income, and most residents are 'working-poor'.

should quote (not clear what really show)

The unemployment statistics for the area back this? They do not give an entirely accurate picture, as some people have been unemployed for so long they no longer qualify for Unemployment Insurance and are on Welfare. For many the reason is bad health; but whatever the reason there certainly is not a large number of them. The situation for females is further complicated by the fact that there are a sizeable number of single mothers in the area and many are on Mothers' Allowance or Welfare and are not included in unemployment statistics either. It is assumed that the reason is that they too are 'lazy', but the reason is usually low levels of education and young children. There are some who have children for the sole purpose of receiving welfare, but these are a very small minority.

The belief they are in fact 'working poor' is supported by the statistics on their level of education and the prevalent occupations. It is difficult to get high paying jobs with little education, and the statistics for Firgrove show almost one-third of the population fifteen years and over with less than grade nine education, and only slightly less with high school (and only 30% of those had graduated).⁸ The top four categories of employment for both sexes show 39% of the labour force employed in manufacturing; 20% employed in community, business and personal service industries; 18% in trade; and 10% in construction industries.⁹ These are paid on an hourly wage basis, for the most part, indicating lower pay and less job security. ✓

Reality also ^{appears to} disproves the assumption that the major source of the unemployed are the immigrants; in fact quite the opposite is true. The area has a very high percentage (60%) of recent (post World War II) immigrants.¹⁰ Unfortunately, there are no statistics on the unemployment rate within this group, but the general consensus amongst the government m m.

workers in the area is that it is the third and fourth generation Canadians (usually of anglo-saxon ancestry) who are fairly consistently out of work and/or on welfare. Due to the insecurity of their employment, the immigrants do find themselves on Unemployment Insurance, but it is very seldom voluntary and most usually temporary. Their cultural customs make unemployment a distasteful situation. The majority immigrated to improve their lives and give their children better opportunities. These goals can not be realised on government assistance. The high transience rate in the area (55%)¹¹ is largely due to these immigrants moving out of subsidized housing and into 'better' neighbourhoods.

The most visible ethnic group in the area is the black West Indians, (and the area is the largest community of such in Toronto¹²) but it is far from predominantly such. The 1981 census for Firgrove shows that the largest ethnic community (Note: the largest community is Canadians, the ethnic communities are those of people born outside Canada) is the one defined by the census as 'Europeans other than the United Kingdom', 42% (the majority are Italian in Firgrove).¹³ The next is the Asian, at 14%, which includes East Indians and Orientals.¹⁴ Then, a community defined as 'Americans other than the United States' at 13%.¹⁵ The majority of this community are West Indians, but it also includes the Latin American countries (from which an increasing number have been emigrating in the years since the census) and there are a surprising number West Indians of East Indian descent (They, like the blacks before them, were imported to the islands to work plantations in the 1800's) The impression of the black community being prevalent probably stems from their being more vocal, and the more visible role their women play (as opposed to Asian in particular). (see map II for local ethnic distribution)

In the mid-1970's the Downsview Weston Action Community organization did a comparison with the Parkdale area (see map III) of Metro Toronto.¹⁶ Its purpose was to compare the services in a similar area in terms of size, population and socio-economic characteristics, to Jane/Finch. Parkdale was chosen on the basis of its 1971 census data. While the two are similar, there are a few significant differences. First by the time the report was written (1976) Parkdale's population had slightly decreased, while Jane/Finch was 20,000 larger;¹⁷ secondly despite the fact the female population (fifteen and forty years) was only 6% larger¹⁸ larger at Jane/Finch, 13% more were in the work force; thirdly 60% of the twenty-five to forty-four male age group at Jane/Finch has more families and more children per family.¹⁹ Yet, the inventory of services and facilities showed the following ratios (Jane/Finch: Parkdale) information and counselling centres 8:19; social and recreation centres 3:10; immigrant services 1:18; day care centres 577:527; and churches²¹ 8:46. The only change to these since 1976 is the addition of one more community centre, which is the Shorham area.

One concludes from this, that not only is Jane/Finch a community that was developed too fast to be stable; not only does it have most of the characteristics of a deteriorating inner city neighbourhood; it does not even have the services these older areas have to try to cope with the problems they both face.

"Services should then be prepared to serve the people these statistics describe - that is a very young population, families with children, working mothers, slightly below median income groups, and finally a large and diverse immigrant population."²²

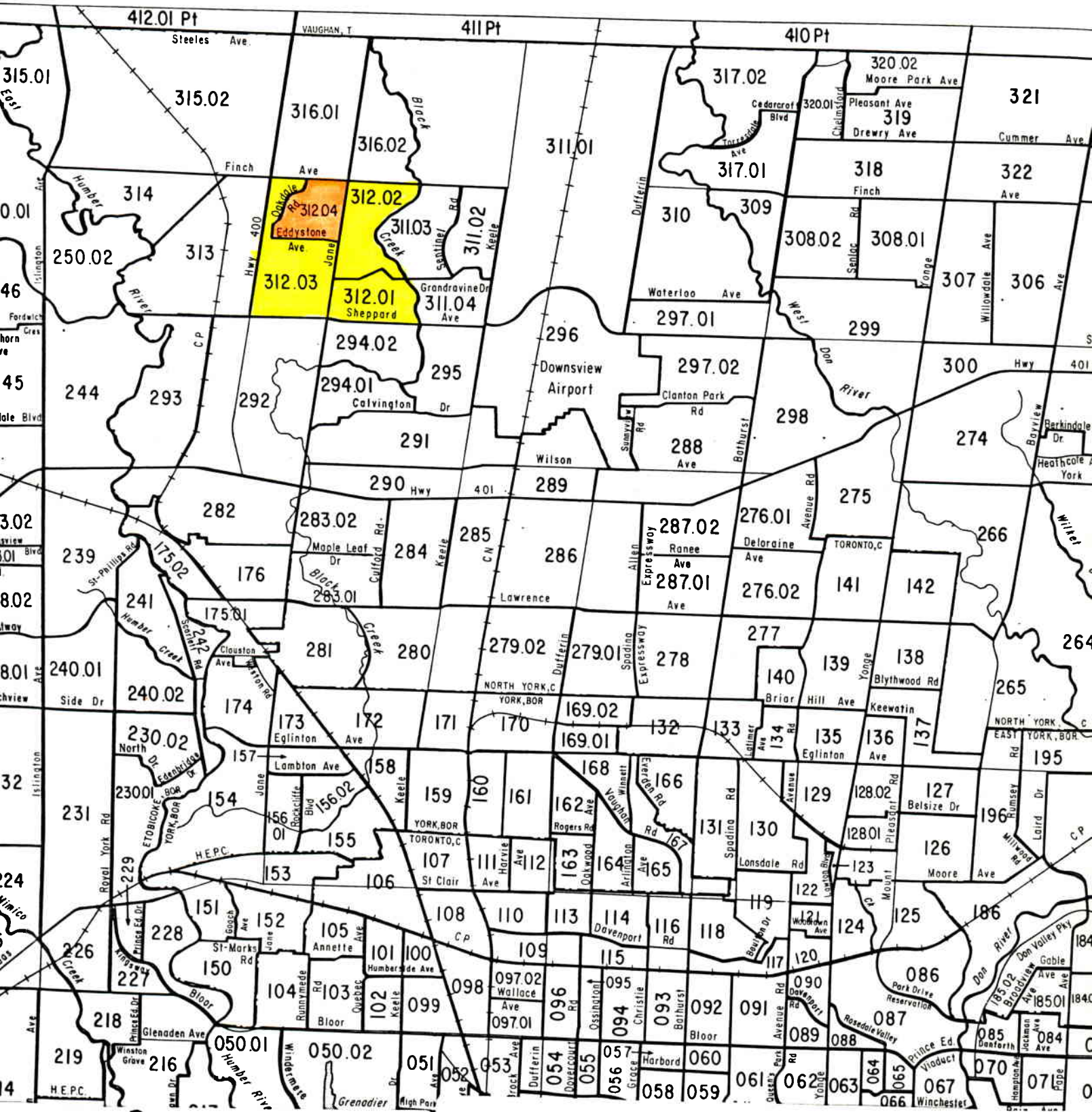
This lack of adequate services is held largely responsible for the area's high crime rate, especially that of juveniles (22.4% of all juvenile offences²³) and domestic oriented offences (19.8% in North

York ²⁴). The crime rate in general is a deceptive figure. If taken on its own, the area has the highest crime rate in Metropolitan Toronto. But, if taken in a per-capita form, it is about average, yet it is seldom quoted in this form. And the number of police officers in the area does not help to dispell the illusion. When people are forced to live in confined, over-crowded areas, their aggressive impulses increase. Coupled with the frustration many of the immigrants feel in their inability to hold a steady job, it is no wonder the rate is as high as it is.

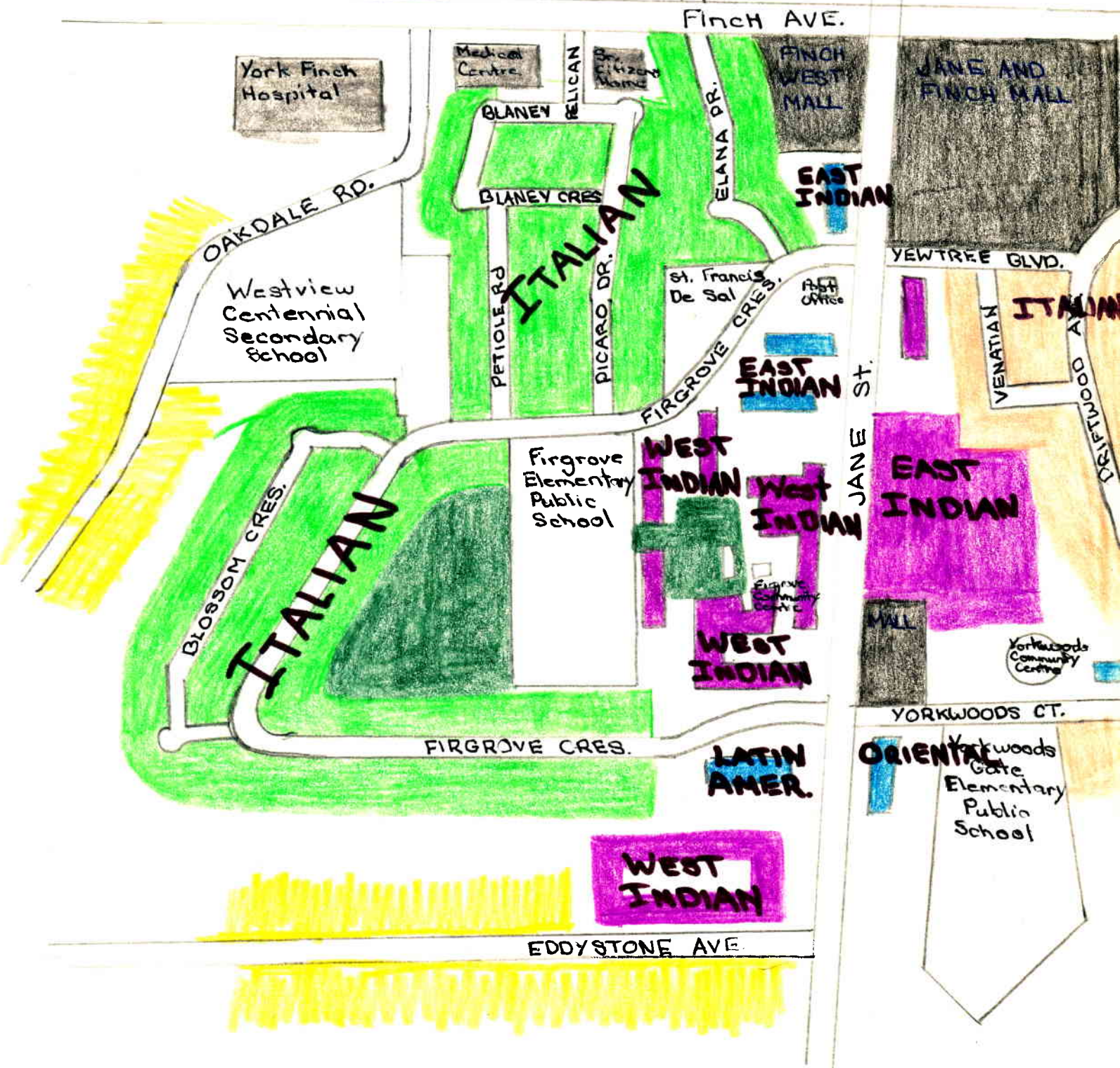
(SEE APENDIX VIII for expansion of figures.)

*good use of stats
tho not always clear*

MAP I



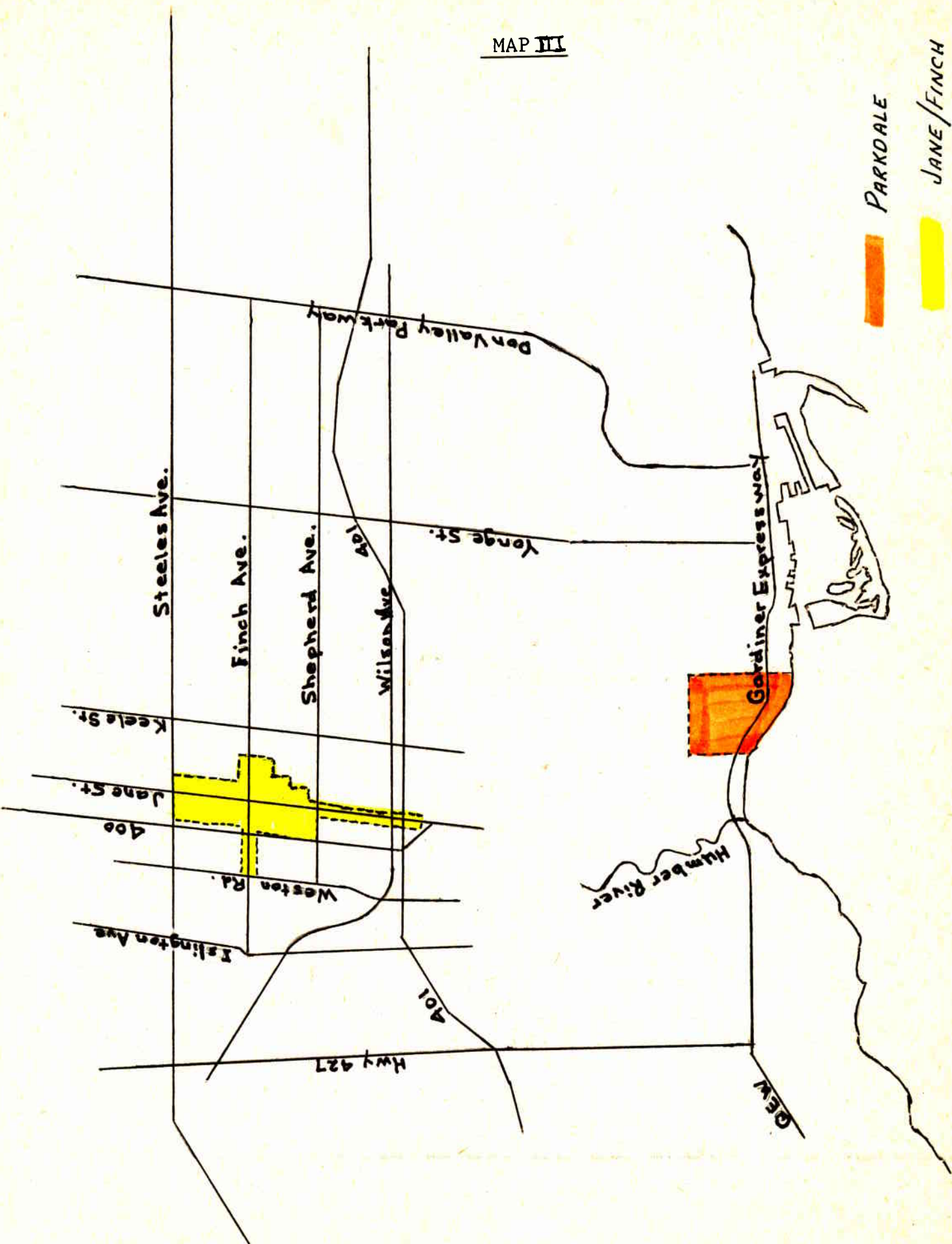
- Industrial
- ONTARIO HOUSING
- PRIVATE APARTMENTS
- SEMI-DETACHED
- TOWNHOUSES
- MALLS
- PARKS



MAP III

PARKDALE

JANE/FINCH



FOOTNOTES

- 1 Statistics Canada 1981 Census Tracts For Metropolitan Toronto (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983) p. 331.
- 2 North York Planning Board Office Consolidation (Toronto: Borough of North York, 1976) p. 29.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Statistics 1981 Census p. 337.
- 7 Ibid., p. 335.
- 8 Ibid., p. 333.
- 9 Ibid., p. 335.
- 10 Ibid., p. 331.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Helen Ede Workshop 5 "Neighbourhood Planning - Social Evolution of Jane/Finch Area" (Toronto: Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, 1979) p. 15.
- 13 Statistics 1981 Census p. 331.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Helen Ede Inventory of Human Services in the Jane/Finch Area (Toronto: DWAC Press Release, November 24, 1976) p. 1.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.

19
Ibid., p. 2.

21
Ibid.

22
Ibid.

23
Planning Board Office Consolidation p. 30.

24
Ibid.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Community spirit at Jane/Finch has gone through a number of distinct stages. First, it was a fairly cohesive bedroom-suburb with its residents working together to provide a good environment for growing children. Then, the period of rapid growth began, with the "limited number of middle-class residents who could have offered leadership mov[ing] away in the early 1970's for their own self-protection"¹. The 'few could-be-leaders' quickly became frustrated with the lack of acknowledgement from governments; "the burn-out rate... [was] dreadfully high..."² The area became one in which "no sense of community existed..."³ The third stage began in 1973, with the development proposal. What leaders were left started to get community support. Community oriented activities and organizations began to increase.

"All of this demonstrates the recent concern of residents of this community, a concern that goes beyond the wringing of hands or the making of demands of government, to direct involvement by people in meeting their needs. But the process is very young and very fragile at present. It cannot yet cope with what now exists, let alone with more problems."⁴

The fourth stage was a reaction of Metro as a whole to the third. The community's struggle against further development got a lot of publicity, and the outsiders (some would call them bleeding hearts) started to flood in 'to help'. What seems to have resulted was a destruction of that 'fragile process'. When the fight against City Hall was won, the community sat back to let the new 'professional community-builders' do their 'stuff'. Little communication existed between the new organizations and associations, and even less with the actual community.

They started to compete for support (in terms of numbers of bodies) instead of complementing each others' programs, they duplicated, the little regard for what other needs were in the community. It all boiled down to justifying maintenance of the grants they were funded with; not meeting the peoples' needs. They needed enough bodies, not people, to prove they were needed.

The community is still in this last stage. When the current District Co-ordinator for Parks and Recreation started her job her predecessor had been transferred due to a nervous break-down, and she was warned that if the situation in the community did not improve soon, the police feared rioting.

It did improve. In the last few years, a number of people have come to work in the community who are trying to foster a sense of independence. I like to think I am of this 'new school' and the key informants I talked to are as well: Rev. Peggy Campbell is the Community Minister for the United Church in the Jane/Finch, and currently works out of the recreation room in an Ontario Housing apartment building (which had been locked for years.) Mrs. Campbell is ideally suited to her position, as she has spent most of the past sixteen years in Jamaica as a missionary (teaching primary school teachers). At this point, it would be helpful to describe in more detail the distribution of the ethnic groups in Firgrove. [see Map I] The west end of Firgrove Cres. is semidetached housing, which is almost entirely Italian. The Ontario Housing around Needle Firway is West Indian and Canadian. The various apartments are Latin American and East Indian (with a large number of West Indians mixed in with the East for reasons previously discussed.) The Ontario Housing buildings are a fif-

teen storey apartments (5 Needle Firway), and a townhouse complex ironically named the Grassways.

Wendy Neill, is the District Recreation Co-ordinator. She works out of Yorkwoods Community Centre. The other two were community residents (although Peggy Campbell moved into the area when she started her job) Lennox, and Alison Solomon. Lennox, a twenty-two year old Jamaican, is one of the founders of the community organization Firgrove United. Alison, a eighteen year old student at Westview originally from Guinea, is involved in just about everything going.

What they are trying to accomplish is a hard task. They are not only battling a community who likes its present 'spoon-fed' position, but the other professional 'community builders' stand to lose their jobs if they succeed, and are thus fighting hard to back the residents. Rev. Campbell has nothing to loose, there is always work for a minister. Wendy Neill's job will only get easier if the community develops some independence, and she will be free to devote more time to other areas of her disrict. And as for Lennox and Alison, their community will be a better place to live, and they and their friends will no longer be so reluctant to admit they are from 'Jane/Finch'.

This is an enlighting statement. When I took groups outside the neighbourhood, I was always asked to tell people they were from Firgrove as "they won't know that is Jane/Finch". The only exception, was when they were going to rival areas, [ie. Shoreham, Driftwood, 'Jungle' (Bathurst and Lawrence), or what they generally refer to as 'Scarborough' (Ontario Housing in that city)] when

they are uneasy as they are in someone else's 'territory'. When this is the case they become very community spirited.

There are a few inherent reasons for the area's lack of community spirit, based largely on its population characteristics. The majority of the population, as already discussed, is immigrants. They wish to stay in Canada; Jane/Finch may be below Canadian standards, but compared with where most have come from, it is an infinite improvement. Because most are still landed-immigrants when they live at Jane/Finch, they do not wish to 'make waves', and risk jeopardizing their obtaining of their Canadian citizenship. As most of the native Canadians in the area also depend on the government (be it for welfare, unemployment insurance or subsidised housing) they too are reluctant to 'make waves'. For many of the immigrants, the mistrust of anyone in a position of authority, especially if it is at all related to government, is something they brought with them to Canada. In many of their native countries, everything is run on patronage, and governments are corrupt and omnipotent. It does not seem to matter how many times they are told or have it proven to them that things are different here, that basic fear and mistrust is still there. The language barrier with many is also a problem, even for the West Indians (who's dialects are often very difficult to understand). The religious convictions of some also cause problems, especially for teenage girls. They are not allowed to participate in the programs, and they are often very confused, with no where to turn to. Many of the cultures (the East Indian and the Italian in particular) believe a young girl's place is in the home

learning to be a good house-wife; a woman has no need for education or sports. This attitude makes the provision of programs for teenage girls very difficult, especially when it is compounded by organizations' reluctance to communicate with the community and try to reach some sort of a compromise.

The situation of hostility in the schools worsens this situation. Teachers have a tendency to be out of the building faster than the students at the end of the day. This, naturally, means a severe lack of extra-curricular activities, which in turn leads to a severely under-developed leadership potential in the youth of the community. In September 1983, a Positive Peer Culture program was started at Westview. Its goal is to make being involved the 'in' thing to do, and to develop some of that untapped leadership potential (or in some cases, potential that is being tapped in a negative way.) It seems to be having some success, and the effects can already be felt in the community itself (for instance, Alison is in the PPC program.)

Outside and inside the school, the only type of extra-curricular activities were sports; basketball, soccer, track and field, some hockey, and field hockey for the girls. Lately, break dancing could also be probably added to the list. The area is known for its top notch basketball teams (boys and girls). Lennox (one of the chief organizers of teams and tournaments outside the school) told me that in this field they 'almost always win', and from what I have seen in the last two years, if anything that is an underexaggeration. All the teams seem to have one underlying problem, however. The players are all 'street kids', and for many of them, the sports and the break dancing are mere-

ly ways to fight. On the basketball court, they most often play one-on-one; these leads to an inability to play well as a team. Survival to these kids does not mean good marks, it means knowing their space and 'rank' and keeping to it.

These attitudes are reflected in their community spirit. Usually the community centres are supervised by outsiders, middle-class students in their late teens, early twenties. They run the centres like the ones they attended were run; in other words 'street rules' are ignored. This makes the kids' lives difficult; within the walls of the centre you are expected to live a middle-class way, but once those doors close, you are on the street and the guy you admitted was beating you up (not just playing) is going to be waiting for you, and this time there will be no supervisor to 'throw him (or her) out!'. Thus, the kids are reluctant to go to the centres, and it is often the weaker and the stronger who do. These attitudes are often ignored, or unnoticed when programming is being planned.

When meetings are held to discuss what programs are needed and wanted, no one shows up. Here we are back to the underlying fears. There is one more factor involved however, the professional community-builders. When a public meeting was called to discuss with the mayor of North York the terrible facilities at Yorkwoods Community Centre, approximately sixty people showed up. At a later date, when the reasons were analysed, it was discovered that the residents felt insecure about talking to a supposedly powerful man, that they did not have the skills they needed to speak out (not to mention the desire not to 'make waves'). Also, they believed the outside professionals would be sufficient to

} could ?

get their point across. In addition, one of the 'professionals' had called a meeting in competition to the one at Yorkwoods (which was organized by Wendy Neill) and refused to cancel it. This limited numbers as well. The day was saved by Lennox, who found a basketball game outside, and talked the players into coming in to fill up some of the empty places. [And near then end of the meeting, to bring the point that the facilities were less than adequate, he sent them upstairs for a quick game near the end of the meeting (the gym being round, with low rafters, and upstairs with no sound-proofing in the floor)] Soon the mayor could not hear the person next to him shout. The centre is currently undergoing renovations; yet, if there had been more resident support, there is no question they could have had a new, reasonably shaped and designed building.

It would seem from this example and thousands of others, that a large part of the problem is communication. There is an information booth in the Jane Finch Mall, but it is un-titled and ~~never~~ ^{manned} When a meeting was held with some of the more involved teens in the fall, it was discovered they did not even know it existed. Communication tends only to be effective by word of mouth, and any communication expert will attest that this is the most unreliable and ineffective. Yet, printed notices and announcements in the school (as with any school) largely go unread and unlistened to. To get a group, one must interest a few people sufficiently to get the word to spread. To compound this problem, (again the source is in their background) telephone numbers are generally unlisted and changed constantly, meaning alot of footwork must be done (if one could find out where they

lived in the first place.)

There are community wide events, despite the problems. The most common of these are street-dances in the summer, and 'block-o-parties' in the winter (meaning an entire floor of an apartment or townhouse gets together and throws a large party, usually with the assistance of a professional DJ, which are in abundance in the area) Word about such things spreads like wild-fire, and little effort is required on the part of the organizer to publicize. Firgrove United has been responsible for a large number of such events, the proceeds from which go towards future sports tournaments, up-graded equipment, etc. In the past year, break dance contests have also been prevalent. This 'craze' really is the phenomena it has been made out to be in the media. It has reduced the number of gang fights substantially, and the attendant graffiti art and DJ'ing (a complicated combination of 'rapping', 'scratching', playing electronic beats and other background sounds, as well as playing continuous records) seem to be giving teens something creative to do. [In the Firgrove Community Centre the past summer, the walls were papered with blank paper, so the teens could graffiti without de-facing the property. It went over well, and the damage to the buildings in the community was substantially reduced.]

There seems to be a vicious circle preventing any substantial improvement to the community spirit. The young people have few constructive things to do with their time. They live in small units [one teen I have worked with lived in a two bedroom apartment with thirteen other people.] where privacy is a dream. They are frustrated by a system they do not understand and seems

to be uncaring. Often, they resort to delinquency. There are racial tensions ~~between~~ very diverse cultures, and between the immigrants and the Canadians (who feel the former are stealing 'their' jobs.) The police and fire department are hassled and put down by the residents for inefficiency and discrimination. [In 1982, 5 Needle Firway had over 600 false fire alarms, which does not include a fair number of small real fires, set by arsonists.]

Yet, when an organization like Firgrove United is set up, to try to give the residents entertainment and sources of recreation, hopefully resulting in the cutting down of the number of social problems in the area, they are almost immediately investigated by the police. When a meeting was called with the police to discuss what the problem was, Lennox politely asked what they were being investigated for. The answer he got was "they were not going to sit there and be insulted, they did not have to stand for this" and proceeded to walk out. Such actions can only serve to diswade others, and frustrate to the point of giving up those like Lennox who are trying.

Taking a pride in ones' home is inadvertently (hopefully) discouraged by the Metro Toronto Housing Association (MTHA) a subdivision of Ontario Housing Corporation. Residents are monetraily punished for painting their homes and doing their own maintenance work. All maintenance is done by people from outside the community, whose numbers have been severely cut back in recent years and are thus over-worked. The past two summers, MTHA has spent thousands of dollars stuccoing the outside of the red-brick townhouses (which were in good repair). This served no obvious

purpose (it does not improve heat efficiency) and only gave the delinquent teens more surfaces suitable for graffiti. Instead of spending the money on building a more useful community centre, a 'financially strapped' association spent money on unnecessary beautification. In fact, the general consensus is 'it looked better before'.

These kind of actions only serve to further deplete an already low community spirit.

Despite all this there is a real desire on the part of the community to improve its image. When the National Film Board movie came out last summer, the reaction was one of disappointment that it was not more positive (although it was also felt it was accurate in its portrayal of the institutions in the community) I heard more than one teen ask "Why didn't they show some of the good things that happen around here?"

The summer of 1984 saw a number of "I'm proud to live at Jane and Finch!" t-shirts.

There is still lots of hope!!

*good opinions on
com spirit, but
useful (and more reliable)
if you could have
had some key informant
surveys as suggested*

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Helen Ede Workshop 5 "Neighbourhood Planning - Social Evoution of Jane/Finch Area" (Toronto: Jane/Finch Community and FAmily Centre, 1979) p. 12.
- 2 Ibid., p. 11.
- 3- Ibid., p. 13.
- 4 University Village Ratepayers' Association Too Much Too Fast: Breathing Space For Ward 3 (Toronto: March 1974) p. 2

CONCLUSIONS

should summarise all sections here

There are a number of things that could be done to improve the situation:

- 1) The people of the community should be allowed to do the maintenance work, or perhaps a few of the unemployed Ontario Housing residents could do it in place of their rent. This would give a sense of dignity and pride in the community.
- 2) More leadership programs should be run in the schools and in the Parks and Recreation Department. These graduates of these programs should be hired as the staff for the community centres, people with a knowledge of 'street rules' and what kind of programs the residents want.

This recommendation has been started this fall, and already the improvements are noticeable.

- 3) The money saved from decreasing the number of false alarms and the amount of vandalism should be fed back into the community. At present, the teens only see it as meaning one less thing to do. If the money was spent on equipment or dances, there would be more of an incentive to help stop the delinquency.
- 4) The professional 'community-builders' should put more effort into training members of the community to take over from them, to help them take charge of events which influence their lives. If one does not push these people into taking some action, they will continue to let others 'better suited' do it for them. There will always be areas that need help, if Jane/Finch becomes independent of such outsiders, they will no doubt find somewhere else with problems.
- 5) Never again should such an area be planned, if diversification is what is the end, then do not put one-third of the subsidised

in one-twentieth of the land space.

Never again should an area be allowed to develop so quickly.!

✓
- future studies ?
- your learning ?

An impressive study, the
not always following
suggestions in handout.
- all charts, formats etc.
Should be at end

bg and history	18/25
SEC	20/25
Can spirit	17/25
Intro and style	<u>16/25</u>
	70/100