Competing Urban Imaginaries in Jane and Finch Green Spaces

By
Emilia Stanislawa Kolodko

Supervised by
Dr. Ute Lehrer

A Major Paper submitted to the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

July 31, 2026

Abstract

Green spaces are central to Toronto's dominant urban imaginary, leading urban planning to privilege regulated and aesthetic landscapes over the informal social practices through which marginalized communities produce space. This paper explores these tensions through the case of Jane and Finch, one of Toronto's modernist neighbourhoods. It does so by tracing the historical evolution of green space planning in a review of literature, analyzing contemporary planning documents, and examining the spatial transformation of green space amenities between 1956–2024. The findings highlight a persistent mismatch between Toronto's dominant planning imaginary and the lived social landscapes of Jane and Finch. While city-wide planning documents characterize modernist green spaces as ahistorical landscapes requiring animation and redevelopment, the evolution of local amenities demonstrates that green spaces are embedded in broader planning histories, and may function as sites of everyday informality and care. Beyond challenging dominant representations of modernist green spaces rooted in disinvestment and stigmatization, this paper outlines an alternative perspective that advocates for community self-determination in urban planning.

The mapping project that accompanies this paper can be found here: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/22f97262ce7a49118d102f782dff0b64

Key terms: Urban green space; Spatial justice; Public participation; Urban imaginary; Racial Capitalism

Foreword

This paper represents the culmination of my Master of Environmental Studies degree in the Planning stream at York University, including the lessons learned across coursework and professional experiences, also exemplifying the competencies required for Candidate Membership with the Ontario Professional Planners Institute and the Canadian Institute of Planners. My area of concentration is "Planning Housing for Community Empowerment" with the goal of understanding the challenges and potential for equity from increased public participation in the urban planning of one's home. I became interested in this topic due to a string of private development proposals in my community, Jane and Finch. I felt green spaces were being represented as detached from community life. Thus, I was inspired to conduct research that examines how green spaces have been imagined over time, permitting various actions to be carried out or excluded. My paper combines a literature review, a review of policy documents, and GIS analysis to explore the marginalizing effect of the dominant urban imaginary through green spaces today. The paper contributes to learning objectives in all three major components in my Plan of Study: Housing, Racial Equity in Planning, and Public Participation in Planning.

Through historical GIS analysis using ArcGIS Pro, I developed practical skills which allowed me to visually demonstrate change in green space assets (Learning Objective 3.2. To develop applied skills in community engagement, including communication tools, digital and in-person presentation strategies, and conflict navigation.). My investigation of the literature expanded my understanding of how urban plans have led to inequitable cityscapes and continues to use space to displace and dispossess marginalized communities (Learning Objective 1.1. To understand the impacts of planning policy and development processes on housing. & Learning Objective 2.1. To understand how racial inequity is produced along is heteropatriarchal, colonial, and racialized lines in planning contexts.). Finally, by critically examining how planning documents imagine public use, participation, and self-determination within green spaces, this research deepened my understanding of the role of planning policy in empowering or constraining community agency (Objective 3.1. To gain knowledge of concepts and frameworks for transforming public participation in planning into equitable, empowering, and community-driven processes.). As I continue my professional and academic careers, the knowledge and skills gained through this project will support my practice of community-oriented planning.

Acknowledgements

For everyone who reminded me, and continues to remind me, of better futures.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Foreword iii
Acknowledgements iv
Table of Contents v
Table of Figures vi
1. Introduction 1
    1.1. Theoretical Framework 3
        1.1.1. Spatial Imaginaries in Urban Planning 4
        1.1.2. Spatializing Hierarchies 4
        1.1.3. Counter-Imaginaries 5
    1.2. Methodology 6
        1.2.1. Research Design 7
        1.2.2. Methods 7
2. Literature Review 12
    2.1. The Myths of Nature 13
    2.2. Greening Victorian Cities 14
    2.3. Modernism's Inspirations 17
    2.4. Twentieth Century Modernism 19
    2.5. New Urbanism 22
    2.6. Contemporary Approaches to Green Spaces 24
3. Case Context 26
    3.1. Toronto Context 26
    3.2. Jane and Finch Case Study 29
4. Document Analysis 32
    4.1. City of Toronto Official Plan 32
    4.2. City of Toronto Urban Design Guidelines 35
    4.3. Parkland Strategy 37
    4.4. Jane Finch Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines 39
    4.5. Discussion 44
5. GIS Analysis 45
    5.1. Data Description 46
    5.2. Data Limitations 54
    5.3. Discussion 54
6. Conclusion 57
Bibliography 61
Appendix 74

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Satellite image of Jane and Finch with project boundaries. 9
Figure 2. Satellite image of Jane and Finch demonstrating Outdoor Amenities 1956–2024. 12
Figure 3. Green Pedestrian Connection Concept. 40
Figure 4. Green Pedestrian Connections - Pedestrian Only Street Mock-up. 41
Figure 5. North-south desire lines in Finch Hydro Corridor. 42
Figure 6. Green open spaces in use around apartment towers. 43
Figure 7. Cumulative number of amenities across amenity types. 47
Figure 8. Number of amenities created across property types. 48
Figure 9. Cumulative number of amenities across property types. 49
Figure 10. Number of amenities demolished across property types. 50
Figure 11. Cumulative number of amenity renovations across property types. 51
Figure 12. Annually created amenity types across property types. 52
Figure 13. Cumulative number of amenity renovations across amenity types. 53
Figure 14. Number of amenities renovated annually across amenity types. 53

1. Introduction

As Toronto's modernist neighbourhoods undergo revitalization, their informal and underregulated green spaces are at risk of transforming into commodified, surveilled, and exclusionary landscapes. Modernist green spaces, after decades of disinvestment, are now facing speculative activity which accelerates infill development (Valzania, 2022; Zalar & Pries, 2022). This kind of development occurs due to widespread "imaginaries" which are collective understandings of what a space is or ought to be (Davoudi, 2018). Through dominant urban imaginaries that privilege elite, white sensibilities, urban planners have shifted the definition of "valuable" green space to accommodate neoliberal priorities like privatization, private-public partnerships, and deregulation (Brahinsky et al., 2014; Brenner & Theodore, 2005). As a result, urban planning suppresses the informal and emergent uses of green space that support disadvantaged communities. By overlooking these everyday practices, planning forecloses alternative futures rooted in community wellbeing and relational social spaces.

I first encountered the tensions between the dominant urban imaginaries and community counter-imaginaries in the green spaces surrounding my lifelong home, where recreation was a cornerstone for community. I live in Jane and Finch, one of many modernist neighbourhoods created in Toronto between 1960 and 1980. Outside my home, in the middle of a 50-metre by 150-metre field of grass, a line of broken concrete stepping stones leads to nowhere. The grass curls in, through, and around them. They are so overgrown that they are easy to miss. A light post similarly stands, decommissioned, like a ghost watching over the field. They outline a trace of what once was, and function as the sole evidence to my increasingly distant memories of community in this semi-public space. When I was in the early years of primary school, my father would take me to the pool here, armed with floaties and goggles. I enjoyed running my little fingers along the pool's edge, playing with paint as it chips off from the concrete. The water was freezing, it would take hours for the sun to penetrate, but other families and teens would bear it nonetheless. On especially hot summer days, there would be a lineup to enter. The trees beside were a welcome sanctuary, often scattered with canvas camping chairs that held spare pool supplies. It was customary to invite friends from outside the block to come enjoy the space, albeit discreetly to avoid discipline from the apartment staff. The pool was demolished in 2017, representing a major loss to a community that largely could not afford private amenities and

already faced overloaded community centres. In the following decade, a development proposal refashioned the history of the space. The proposal, one of many across Jane and Finch, mythologized an emptiness and underutilization to the green space through a series of planning documents. There was never a pool here, nor families relaxing, nor children playing, in fact, there was never any semblance of the community in this green space. Although the public liveliness that once underpinned the pool has become more insular to tenants and their existing relationships, the liveliness of the apartment building did not dwindle. Teenagers still put up basketball nets, leaving litter in their wake. Young people still sit in the parking lot, with bass-y music blaring from their car speakers. Children still play soccer, build snowmen, or throw paper planes depending on the season. Families still barbecue in the grassy field outside. In fact, gatherings under the trees have only grown more intricate with seating arrangements, canopies, and bouncy castles powered by extension cords slinking into the sidedoor. Although these actions are only temporary, they reimagine the empty green space as a shared, negotiated territory that flexibly serves the needs of local tenants and neighbours. The disappearance of the pool did not erase the community that had formed around it, but has revealed a disconnect between how residents inhabit the space and how planning imagines it.

This paper argues that the diverging views of green spaces illustrated above reflects a broader urban imaginary which fails to recognize non-privatized uses of land. The expansive green spaces and amenities of modernist neighbourhoods provide recreational space for racialized, lower-income residents to engage in hyper-local spatial practices like BBQs and sports matches. The existing practices, histories, and meanings embedded within these green spaces support local social reproduction (Binet et al., 2023). But as formal amenities disappear, the social value of these landscapes is rendered invisible, allowing them to be represented as underutilized and therefore suitable for redevelopment (Zalar & Pries, 2022). This paper examines the perceived role and function of green spaces in the dominant urban imaginary, offering insights which encourage future academic research and policy development to better appreciate community counter-imaginaries. Therefore, using the community of Jane and Finch as a case study, this paper questions:

1. How are green spaces represented in City of Toronto planning documents? How are green spaces represented in Jane and Finch planning documents?

2. What kinds of greenspace amenities have been available in Jane and Finch over time?

The paper is structured as follows. In Part One, I develop a framework for understanding green space perceptions, drawing on spatial imaginaries with particular attention to George Lipsitz's (2011) white spatial imaginary, then follow with a description of my research methodology. As green spaces symbolize different imaginaries according to transforming interpretations of nature, Part Two of this paper reviews literature on the relationship between cities and green spaces. The discourse is synthesized through a chronological history that concludes at the modern day, helping to trace power relations as they produce particular environments. Part Three provides an overview of the case study context. Part Four applies document analysis to City of Toronto planning documents to examine how green spaces are represented. Part Five outlines the study's spatial-temporal GIS analysis of green spaces and opportunities for recreation in Jane and Finch. Using a series of aerial images, I developed an original dataset to model changes in green space amenities. Aerial imagery was analyzed at approximate four-year intervals to identify where amenities appeared, disappeared, or remained unchanged. This spatial-temporal data model enables the analysis of both spatial and temporal relationships, including how amenities are distributed and how ownership structures impact (in)access over time. This project draws on policy documents to discuss the purpose of green space in Toronto's dominant planning imaginary, while conducting a GIS analysis of historical green spaces in Jane and Finch, which together connect discourse to material change.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Imaginaries can be uncovered and studied through the analysis of texts and images, and can be a means to understanding the spaces in which we live and our interactions within them (Graburn & Gravari-Barbas, 2011 as cited in Derrien & Stokowski, 2020). Imaginaries are increasingly being used as a lens to engage with the topics of place, culture, and infrastructure to explain how social, political, and cultural dynamics are negotiated, reproduced, and contested over time (see examples: Gillian, 2026; Bierema & Ruggi, 2025; Fike et al., 2025; Bonakdar & Audirac, 2021; Kazansky & Milan, 2021; Derrien & Stokowski, 2020). Imaginaries in the context of this paper are a theoretical frame of analysis to reveal how planning discourses construct green spaces that marginalize the everyday spatial practices of disadvantaged communities.

1.1.1. Spatial Imaginaries in Urban Planning

Simin Davoudi defines spatial imaginaries as collective understandings of what space is or ought to be, influencing social and political beliefs (Davoudi, 2018). Spatial imaginaries are sustained through an assemblage of shared stories, images, memories, and practices. Together, these create a network of symbols that permeate everyday life and provide "a sense of how one place differs from another, how different places fit together, how to navigate through space and what to expect from the spatiality of our everyday lives" (Davoudi, 2018, *definition* section). This imagined narrative confers "relevance, significance, and meaning" upon particular bodies and practices while marginalizing others (Bierema & Ruggi, 2025, p. 331).

Urban planning provides spatial imaginaries the institutional power to encode a symbolic sense of order into the material environment (Davoudi, 2018). Dominant imaginaries stigmatize places and practices through spatial categories such as "core" and "periphery" or by presenting idealized models such as the global city as objectively desirable (Davoudi, 2018; Young & Keil, 2014). Through maps, policies, and city plans that envision the future, urban planning frequently legitimizes the neoliberal, pro-growth imaginaries of today's urban elite (Davoudi, 2018; Larson, 2018). Thus urban imaginaries restructure space by directing planning decisions, urban design, and patterns of investment to reproduce social hierarchies across landscapes over time (Davoudi, 2018).

1.1.2. Spatializing Hierarchies

The power ascribed to imaginaries lies in their capacity to spatialize and reproduce racial capitalism over time. George Lipsitz (2011) uses the term "white spatial imaginary" to describe the naturalized organization of space around colonial and capitalist norms that reinforce racial segregation. Since the early subjugation of foreigners and their lands, race has been materially and discursively constructed to consolidate power into the hands of white, elite regimes through the uneven production and accumulation of exchange-value (Robinson, 2020; Brahinsky et al., 2014). The racialized spatial logic is inscribed in subsequent property dynamics that discreetly code space as white or non-white, assigning greater social, economic, and symbolic value to whiteness (Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2025; Lipsitz, 2011). As a result, racialized neighbourhoods are viewed as less valuable and less desirable, leading to their disinvestment in capitalist markets (Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2025). Property ownership, zoning decisions, and urban renewal all legitimize discrimination as a social principle, but appear depoliticized both ideologically and

legally (Goetz et al., 2020; Brahinsky et al., 2014). Although all white people benefit disproportionately from the white spatial imaginary, Lipsitz (2011) argues that non-white people can also participate in and reinforce white spatial logics. Multiple scholars also characterize the white spatial imaginary as necessarily capitalist, framing it as an ideological face of neoliberalism, or equating "white space" with "capitalist space" (Randall, 2024; Lipman, 2018). The white spatial imaginary resolutely employs capitalist logics to create white, homogenized spaces that reproduce broader landscapes of exclusion, leading marginalized communities to lack control over space (Goetz et al., 2020; Lipsitz, 2011).

1.1.3. Counter-Imaginaries

The influence of the white spatial imaginary is not totalizing. It is continually negotiated, resisted, and reworked through everyday spatial practices (Ingold, 2021; Lipsitz, 2011). Ruha Benjamin (2024) views imaginaries as projections of desirable futures, whereas radical imagination inspires "us to push beyond the constraints of what we think, and are told, is politically possible". (chapter 1, par. 39). Rather than demanding inclusion into the existing hostile exclusions of the white/urban imaginary, marginalized communities create agency by creating homeplaces (hooks, 1990/2014). The homeplace allows marginalized agents to act as subjects by turning space into sites of refuge, resistance, and wholeness. Naelyn Pike, a Chiracahua Apache woman, describes the Oak Flat desert as such:

> Oak Flat is my home, it is where I come from as a young girl…Going there and praying to see the land, you see the life that it gives. But to corporations, they see it as nothing…I am proud to be Indigenous and I will continue to fight for Oak Flat. Oak Flat is a place of sacredness. It is a place of life. It's a place of who I am and our identity as Apache people. Who are we without Oak Flat? Who are we without these sacred places? (Naelyn Pike in Shirley, 2017, p. 1)

Lipsitz (2011) argues that these spaces are shaped by use and necessity rather than abstract urban planning ideals, making space for agency and imagination. These situated material contexts lead marginalized communities to envision new social realities (Pulido & De Lara, 2018). Robin D.G. Kelley (2002) demonstrates how Black communities have imagined equality through utopian separatist nations, autonomy, and spiritual homelands that challenge dominant understandings of the public good (Brahinsky et al., 2014; Lipsitz, 2011). These everyday practices form what Lipsitz (2011) describes as a Black spatial imaginary, one that prioritizes public investment,

shared resources, and collective wellbeing over private accumulation. Although the cultural and artistic expressions of counter-imaginaries remain vulnerable to co-optation, they reveal alternative ways of inhabiting urban space that provide the initializing step to recognizing and mobilizing against hostile spatial logics (Bierema & Ruggi, 2025; Lipman, 2018). Spatial counter-imaginaries can then inform more democratic planning approaches through practices that prioritize dialogue, creativity, and collective imagination (Davoudi, 2018).

1.2. Methodology

This research study intends to generate an in-depth understanding of competing green space imaginaries as situated in Jane and Finch. The case study location, Jane and Finch, is situated in the north-west part of Toronto (see section 3: Case Context). The study relies on publicly available data on the interpretation of green spaces while remaining cognizant of the broader historical context (Priya, 2021; Chowdhury & Shil, 2021). The qualitative research approach allows me to grasp subjective meanings as purported in non-numerical data. I pursued the case study approach on account of the singularity of the case, Jane and Finch, as a community with a unique sociocultural history related to its urban form (Coombs, 2022; Priya, 2021; Starman, 2013). The case study approach allowed me to conduct an in-depth inquiry using an interpretive and flexible analytical framework. This enabled my interpretation of multiple sources of evidence including contemporary policy documents and historical GIS analysis through the lens of spatial imaginaries, while remaining in context to my neighbourhood of focus (Mills et al., 2010).

In constructing the research design and data analysis, the study relied on the theoretical frameworks of racial capitalism and urban imaginaries to make sense of power and inequality in green spaces, particularly as situated within the visibly-racialized community of Jane and Finch (George & Bennett, 2005). My approach recognizes the inherent variability in attempting to identify "imaginaries" where actors may interpret social reality differently. My case study approach is necessarily descriptive, as opposed to explanatory or exploratory, in documenting the assemblage of ideas which contribute to the dominant urban imaginary of green spaces (Priya, 2021). This approach also raises the significant influence of my personal positionality, as the decision to locate this study in Jane and Finch stems from my personal ties to the neighbourhood and interest in the encroachment of green space by infill development (Chowdhury & Shil,

2021). Remaining cognizant of these influences, it remains true that "the successful identification of themes is critical to producing effective descriptions in case study research" (Coombs, 2022).

1.2.1. Research Design

The case study method requires holistic analyses; as such, this research study employs a mixed-methods approach which combines qualitative and quantitative information (Mills et al., 2010). The frame of the study involves visible green space uses and prescribed green space uses concentrated in Jane and Finch. I used two main research methods:

1. GIS Analysis
2. Policy Document Analysis

The analysis is preceded by a literature review which investigates the perceived role of green spaces in urban planning, as guided by my theoretical frameworks. The methods are anchored in several site visits to green space amenity sites in Jane and Finch. By understanding the circumstances of the sites in-person, I observed evidence of use and disuse. Through casual observations and field notes distinguishing sites of varying physical quality, I became personally drawn to the social dynamics of green spaces and their potential to positively encourage informal uses of space. Photographs of amenity sites are attached to the GIS project.

1.2.2. Methods

Document Analysis

My document analysis included seven urban planning documents by the City of Toronto which impact the Jane and Finch neighbourhood.

i. Official Plan
ii. Tall Building Design Guidelines
iii. Mid-Rise Design Guidelines
iv. Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines
v. Parkland Strategy
vi. Jane Finch Secondary Plan
vii. Jane Finch Urban Design Guidelines

I familiarized myself with each document to understand its overarching goal and the objectives contained as they relate to green spaces. The documents were then inductively coded to identify initial themes, compared on a separate document for cross-analysis retaining relevant material,

and once more critically evaluated with key themes in mind (Mishra & Dey, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2006). After getting an impression of broader emerging patterns across documents, I organized quotes from my source material and began to write my reading of the texts based on recurring themes. The report of my document analysis is deeply rooted in my personal, reflexive process and the theoretical frameworks which underpin my study (Ahmed et al., 2025).

GIS Analysis

While the literature review and document analysis in this research study provide conceptual interpretations of green spaces and nature, the spatial-temporal GIS analysis recognizes that the characteristics of the physical environment has directly impacted Jane and Finch's history to date. The research of humanistic questions using GIS software allows for the creation of multi-layered "deep maps" which provide temporal readings of cartographic data alongside curated variables (Earley-Spadoni, 2017). Longitudinal studies through historical GIS have become common practice, with the potential to highlight the historiography of concepts (see Westerveld & Knowles, 2021; Gregory & Geddes, 2014; Fortin & Bonnell, 2013; Knowles, 2005). The spatial and temporal analysis of green space amenities in Jane and Finch establishes visible, geographic evidence of local conditions over time.

Drawing on my case study approach, I used ArcGIS Pro to document both spatial and temporal relationships through visibly changing green space amenities in Jane and Finch (DeBats & Gregory, 2011). The aerial imagery dataset spans the common boundaries of Jane and Finch from Highway 400 on the west to the Black Creek on the east, and Steeles Avenue West on the north to Sheppard Avenue West on the south (see Figure 1). This is not intended to reinforce the arbitrary boundaries encircling Jane and Finch, as community members differently experience the length of their neighbourhood. Rather, this provided a personal container for my work, so as to not overextend the study while learning a new technology.



Figure 1. ***Satellite image of Jane and Finch with project boundaries.***

Note. Project boundaries are indicated by the yellow border.

Until the 1960s, Jane and Finch was a predominantly rural community characterized by farmlands and forests. Using a combination of publicly-available photomaps (–1990) and orthophotos (1990s–), I produced an ArcGIS Pro project that contains 22 aerial images from 1956–2024 across approximate four-year intervals (1956, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1985, 1989, 1992, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2016, 2020, 2024) capturing the neighbourhood from pre-development to its most recently available aerial image. The photomaps and orthophotos were sourced from:

I. Geoscholar portal
II. York University Maps Library
III. City of Toronto Open Data WMTS servers
IV. City of Toronto Aerial Photographs

In creating the project, I let the photo images take the lead, discovering naturally what amenities were available on green spaces while drawing from my familiarity with Jane and Finch's

landscape. By examining details on each aerial image, I created 186 point features (see Figure 2) which highlight where green space amenities appeared, disappeared, or remained unchanged. The point features contain data that specifies creation dates, amenity types, major renovations, demolition, image attachments, and property classification (private, public, or school property). The public and school property types are differentiated due to differences of access in using these amenities. Feature point datasets were then parsed through ArcGIS Pro and Google Sheets, using both programs' native graphing functions.

Prior to this project, I had experience interpreting aerial photography through preliminary experiments that involved overlaying historical photo images and producing GIFs of urban transformation through Adobe Photoshop. These exercises developed my ability to identify changes in landscape features, including the modification of buildings, roads, and other urban structures over time. Where features such as tree canopies and powerlines were difficult to distinguish, variations in shadows across images provided additional visual indicators. The use of ArcGIS Pro introduced a more rigorous methodology. The land area of Jane and Finch required multiple separate aerial photos to be cropped at the edges, stitched together, and georeferenced to real-world spatial coordinates. I repeated this process across each year included in the dataset and incorporated the 1985 orthophotomosaic from School of Cities' *Historical Aerial Imagery Toronto*, who graciously shared the resource with me, thereby reducing my workload.

After completing the aerial images for each year, I established the foundations for investigating outdoor amenities. I scanned the neighbourhood section-by-section, recording when amenities appeared, disappeared, or underwent significant modifications. During this process, I realized that certain amenities, particularly playground and sports amenities, were not necessarily demolished but instead renovated, relocated slightly, or modified over time. Therefore, I recorded renovation dates as a separate attribute from creation and demolition dates. Renovations were identified through visible changes between aerial images, including shifts in an amenity's spatial demarcations or clear alterations to its layout. Although some images were lower resolution or affected by shadows, sudden changes in contrast or form between successive aerial images provided evidence that a significant modification had occurred. Smaller, individual amenities such as benches, BBQs, and water fountains are excluded due to poor photo image resolution. This approach prioritized observable physical changes while avoiding speculation about less visible forms of maintenance or deterioration.

I did not attempt to measure deteriorating maintenance despite evident losses in certain amenity features, such as missing playground elements, as these conditions cannot be consistently verified through aerial imagery. For example, a pool may appear unchanged while experiencing significant differences in upkeep that are not detectable from above. Instead, I focused on observable investments and modifications, such as playground replacements and court resurfacing. This approach allowed the analysis to document clear evidence of investment and disinvestment without making unsupported assumptions about amenity conditions.

Through the scanning process, I became familiar with the diversity of amenities present across Jane and Finch and developed a consistent categorization framework. Early on, I decided to broadly classify sports amenities (i.e. tennis, basketball, bocci, baseball, and soccer facilities) due to their often-multifunctional nature. This decision does not suggest that the difference in sport types is not impactful, as particular facilities may hold cultural significance for community members (e.g. cricket as a popular sport among Guyanese residents). Different amenity types facilitate different forms of interaction, as spaces designed for organized sports, children's play, or collective gathering support distinct social practices. The categorization process also required adapting to emerging forms of amenity types, such as the recent proliferation of seating areas around schoolyards. After considering their function and context, I differentiated outdoor classrooms from general collective seating areas, the latter referring to informal gathering spaces commonly located near apartment buildings. The amenities identified in this analysis represent different potential sites of collective encounter rather than measurements of particular activity.

I initially intended to classify property ownership using parcel boundaries; however, limitations in data availability and spatial processing requirements made this approach impractical. Instead, I manually classified amenities using their surrounding context as hints (i.e. adjacent to apartment buildings, schools, community centres, or open green space). The "private" classification therefore refers to amenities located on residential properties, excluding single-family homes, and does not distinguish between rental, condominium, or social housing tenure. I expanded my property classifications to differentiate "public" from "school" due to the additional barriers to accessing an amenity on school grounds.



Figure 2. ***Satellite image of Jane and Finch demonstrating Outdoor Amenities 1956–2024.***

Note. Multi-colour point features correlate to presence of outdoor amenities between 1956–2024.

The decision to complete a spatial-temporal analysis also responds to the limited public accessibility of historical amenity data, which is often fragmented across institutional archives, paywalled platforms, or specialized datasets. By compiling this information into an accessible archive, this project can lead to interactive learning experiences and empower community members to engage with the data personally (Bedair et al., 2022). However, in the process of publicly publishing the ArcGIS project, I have encountered cloud storage errors and compatibility issues regarding spatial references and projected coordinate systems. Therefore, certain maps may be missing from the years listed, but the data features are still present. Especially because the public availability of this ArcGIS project cannot be secured indefinitely, I encourage anyone interested to contact me directly regarding this project.

2. Literature Review

Urban green spaces exist across a diversity of forms, uses, and ownership structures. Some examples include parks, forests, gardens and lawns, while others are more passive such as green roofs, landscaped medians, and street trees. This literature review follows the lead of Meredith Whitten in using Clark's interpretation of green spaces as "large and small (sometimes very small) areas of urban open space, normally with vegetation, which are not built up or constructed over, which can be privately or publicly owned, and which have different and changing purposes and perceptions over time" (Clark, 2016, in Whitten, 2025, p. 247). The classifications and purposes of green space types evolved out of a longer planning history. When viewed in their historical conditions, modern green spaces are implicated in the historic white spatial imaginary that to date controls and orders urban environments to the detriment of women, people of colour, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and the non-West (Whitten, 2025).

The inextricable role of race in the imagining of green spaces shapes the urban form and its accessibility. As Brahinsky et al. (2014) argue, nature and race are mutually constituting concepts. Nature is typically defined as the physical world as it exists independently of humans, yet race "provides a critical medium through which ideas of nature operate" (Moore et al., 2003, p. 3). In constructing "natural" spaces as pristine and urban environments as polluted, imaginaries implicitly position white bodies as belonging in nature while marking racialized bodies out of place (Brahinsky et al., 2014). These racialized discourses have materialized in the physical configurations and encouraged behaviours of green spaces, and sustained through inclusionary strategies (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2013). Consequently, green space planning justifies unequal access to resources and spaces, causing communities of colour to face a disproportionate amount of environmental hazards (Moore et al., 2003). Racialized communities are further prevented from participating in recreation and experiences within park systems (Low et al., 2005). This literature review investigates urban green spaces in North America as connected to conceptions of nature, reflecting on diverging green space classifications and purposes over time.

2.1. The Myths of Nature

The dominant imagining of green spaces in North America arose through European settler colonialism which saw humans, and human culture, as separate from the primordial land. While ancient mythologies and folklore had historically interwoven human, nature, and God, the introduction of Euro-American imperialism reconceptualized "nature" as fundamentally separate

from mankind (Aghoghovwia, 2022). Once abstracted from its relational context, nature's resources and inhabitants could be destructively commodified (Aghoghovwia, 2022). As European colonial powers expanded into the Americas, these philosophical understandings of nature became foundational to the colonial project, legitimizing the occupation and transformation of Indigenous territories (Aghoghovwia, 2022). Two main competing imaginaries conceived the "state of nature" prior to human society, setting myths which profoundly influenced the conception of green spaces as either dangerous, wild landscapes requiring order or as restorative, pristine sanctuaries away from urban life (Watkin, 2025). (1) If humans are naturally greedy and prone to violence as believed by Thomas Hobbes in the 16th century, then civil society introduces order and progress. (2) If humans are naturally innocent, romantic, and peaceful as believed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 17th century, then civil society introduces inequality and corruption. Both Hobbes' and Rosseau's competing myths undermined Indigenous understandings of land by universalizing European knowledge and colonial authority (Watkin, 2025). The proliferation of scientific rationalism intertwined nature with racial hierarchies, presenting landscapes and humans as measurable (Gamber, 2022). White settlers took up land across the nineteenth century, encouraged by romantic depictions of idyllic homesteads that lauded an idealized, bourgeois-colonial relationship to nature (Neely, 2024; Hore, 2022). In doing so, the settler-colonial imaginary inscribed European ideals into the New World landscape which further concentrated power in white, settler hands (Whitten, 2025; Gamber, 2022). This settler-colonial imaginary de-rooted humans from their local environment, typically braided with memory and identity, in exchange for the commodified *terra nullius* and racial hierarchy that characterized green spaces since.

2.2. Greening Victorian Cities

In the nineteenth century, North America's green spaces became an intervention to satiate urban elite grievances with Victorian industrial cities. The proximity of towns to the countryside had previously rendered the creation of green spaces unnecessary, so the majority of early urban social life centered on taverns, markets, docks, and streets (Beamish, 2021). The informal recreation of workers often took place in groves outside of towns, allowing a pleasant, comfortable, and leisurely space (Low et al., 2005). Residents of various classes and backgrounds had already begun to share urban spaces in the form of commons, squares, streets, and private gardens (Beamish, 2021; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2014). These informal and

multifunctional public spaces supported the reproduction of working classes through mutual aid networks, informal economies, and everyday practices that blurred the divide between public and private life (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2014). As industrialization intensified, overcrowding, immigration, and precarious labour led growing numbers of impoverished and racialized workers into slums plagued by poor sanitation (Hall, 2014). Inhabitants were forced to share the airless and death-filled rooms, which fronted onto increasingly unsanitary courtyards that lacked sunlight near factories and railyards (Fishman, 1982). The streets became sites for the informal economies, cultural networks, and public commons of workers. Public streets provided relative independence from labour precarity through everyday practices that the urban elite viewed as moral and material abominations, challenging the bourgeois ideals of domesticity, womanhood, and morality (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2014). Incited by the growing threat of disease, like cholera and tuberculosis, spreading to upper-class quarters, urban elites retaliated through a health-reform movement that produced parks as a public health infrastructure (Eisenman, 2016; Hickman, 2013). The growth of interconnected green spaces were envisioned as the purifying lungs of the city, directly countering airborne disease while replicating nature landscapes through networks of open space (Eisenman, 2016; Hebbert, 2008).

While green spaces arose as a health solution for crowded cities, the public park became an economic incentive through its sophisticated imaginary. Parks came to symbolize modernity, civilization, and civic pride, with the potential to promote the state's sensibilities across North America, even in towns which did not face overcrowding (Bain, 2022; Eshrati, 2022). New parks were supported by railroad companies, property owners, newspapers and politicians that were looking to attract investment and tourism (Larson, 2018; Eshrati, 2022; Evelev, 2014). Local levels of government supported parks which claimed to provide mentally restorative nature experiences, inspired by the romanticist and naturalistic English landscape garden through winding roads and central open space (Taylor, 1999). This perceived "progress of art & esthetic culture" as argued by Fredrick Law Olmsted, the co-designer of Central Park, would garner national attention (Lee et al., 2023, p. 1189). While these leisurely picturesque parks increased local landowners' property value, the existing racialized immigrant populations were no longer able to use the land for their livelihood (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2014; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992). Several urban parks were built on de-valued spaces inhabited by racialized and working-class residents, thus forcibly displacing residents (Lee et al., 2023; Taylor, 1999). These historic

actions are mirrored in modern day environmental gentrification, in which urban sustainability initiatives drive up the local cost of living and displace lower-income residents (Lee et al., 2023).

The establishment of North America's early public parks relied on racialized discourses that likened immigrants, the working-class, and racial minorities to the diseased city. The compounding challenges of urban life led public sentiments to broadly reject the "city" which was seen as degrading the idealized, pristine countryside (Whitten, 2025). Thus the natural beauty of public parks was also to be protected from working-class recreation such as picnicking, dancing, sports and gambling (Lee et al., 2023). The logics of these state-sanctioned public spaces normalized the criminalization of undesirable behaviours in order to distill urban elite preferences (Brahinsky et al., 2014). The elitist regulations of Central Park were touted as having "harmonizing" effects upon working class visitors (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2014). Public parks henceforth used aesthetics and enclosures that positioned racialized workers as unaligned and out-of-place (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2014). Parks often featured European flora and design styles that marginalized local cultural traditions, with monuments celebrating white "heroes" reinforcing white superiority within the public imaginary (Whitten, 2025; Kirk, 2017). The popularity of parks were maintained through movements that carried racialized constructions of morality, beauty, and civility into the broader urban fabric (Beamish, 2021; LaGrand, 2020).

Towards the late nineteenth century, the romantic conceptions of pristine nature culminated into the *City Beautiful* movement, believing that beautification would support local wellbeing. Prior to the mainstreaming of public parks, the idea of trees along streets was uncommon, and sometimes viewed incredulously (Beamish, 2018). The City Beautiful movement normalized new picturesque grand boulevards and sanitary environments, leading municipalities to take responsibility for growing expectations (Aoki, 1993). New reform parks were presented as "purpose-built, publicly funded and accessible-to-all" with attractive and useful amenities (Whitten, 2025). Parks increasingly featured benches, playgrounds, and drinking fountains for the average family (Eisenman, 2016; Schenker, 1996). Playgrounds especially proliferated across the U.S. to discourage children from getting in trouble elsewhere (Daniels, 2009). Further communal amenities in the form of shared lobbies, driveways, and a lack of fences also supported the equal distribution of resources across the city (Aoki, 1993). Above all, active recreation amenities were viewed as essential to influencing orderliness, leading New York urban planner Robert Moses to build more than 650 new parks and

playgrounds, also popularizing upscale amenities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, and playing fields for the public (Larson, 2018). Such shared, regulated amenities set a new precedent for the twentieth century which went on to include security features such as cameras and fences, combatting vandalism or loitering (Larson, 2018). The recreational advantages of parks made green spaces a cornerstone of city planning, leading to their ubiquity in provision across cities (Whitten, 2025).

2.3. Modernism's Inspirations

The hostility of urban green spaces, inherently racial in nature, were naturalized by the white urban elite's planning logics into the twentieth century. The turn of the century was characterized by influential architects and planners whose imaginaries used green space as a utilitarian tool. Green spaces visions shifted from consumptive to focused on production, incorporating green spaces to deliver a functional spatial order in utopian planning visions (Hall, 2014; Garrard, 2014). The ornamentation and naturalism of nineteenth century urban parks, in its attempt to imitate the countryside, was challenged by the growing modernist movement's functionalist approach (Garrard, 2014; Aoki, 1993). Rather than pursuing aesthetic reform alone, the correct balance of urban density and natural green space was proposed as a means of achieving social harmony between man (Hebbert, 2008). The Garden City concept (1898) was envisioned by Ebenezer Howard to resolve urban congestion through interconnected and concentric satellite communities of around 30,000 people, surrounded by a greenbelt outside a core metropolis. The spacious communities provided light and air while the greenbelt provided produce and recreation space, unlike the crowdedness and industrial smoke pollution of urban centres (Aoki, 1993). The Garden City concept swiftly became popular due to the belief that exposure to nature would positively influence working-class behaviour (Vijay, 2020). Howard intended for Garden Cities to overtake un-urbanized countrysides, transforming each land into collectively-owned property in contrast to the disparities of the privatized, over congested Victorian city. His intention was to encourage small-scale cooperation and direct democracy through efficient, healthy, and beautiful design (Fishman, 1982). The decentralized low-density communities, segregated land uses, and emphasis on environmental health inspired planning principles into the future (Whitten, 2025; Aoki, 1993). The Garden City model also encouraged the government's more interventionist role in development matters, where profit-driven speculation formerly dominated.

Sir Patrick Geddes popularized modern town planning, regional planning, and the essential role of green spaces therein. Geddes lauded the Garden City, believing that green spaces could be produced in harmony with citizen-subjects, rather than as a mode of social control (Vijay, 2020; Shoshkes, 2017). Geddes considered planning (or landscape-making) to be necessarily socio-cultural through an understanding of local people and processes, rather than a matter of design (Woudstra, 2018). He believed towns could only serve the public good if created through first-hand observations of a place and the relationships therein, not from "in the office with ruler and parallel" (Goist, 1974). He envisioned the non-coercive "cultivation" of space rather than enforcement through eviction and displacement (Vijay, 2020; Goist, 1974). Stimulating public access to green spaces ensured health and "the simple pleasure of natural beauty" (Geddes, 1968, p. 95-96). However, Geddes, as situated in the British empire, also viewed town planning as the pinnacle of the modern man who has been "aristo-democratised into productive citizen" (Geddes, 1968, p. 71). The "cultivation" of citizens was rooted in the elimination of slum-design, not poverty, and sought green spaces as a conflict-free tool in the social reproduction of British sensibilities (Vijay, 2020). Rather than promoting healthy life through mere access to gardens, Geddes viewed the city as an organism to be healed through spatial re-education based on residents' interaction with the environment, creating harmony between organism, function, and environment (Vijay, 2020; Walker & Simo, 1997). The design-forward method of planning, rooted in a balanced natural environment became the dominant planning approach during post-war construction (Woudstra, 2018; Shoshkes, 2017)

Arguably the most controversial utopian thinker of this period was Le Corbusier who spearheaded the modernist architecture revolution (Fishman, 1982). As a result of industrialization, rapid advancements in construction would soon have the potential to replace disease-ridden slums with an orderly green city. Inspired by the Garden City, Le Corbusier aimed to eliminate overcrowding through sweeping, rational schemes (Scott, 1998). He proposed monumental, free-standing high-rise buildings in the middle of a vast picturesque green space, arguing that vertical building will allow 85 to 95 percent of the ground to remain open for gardens, parks, and recreational areas, serving as the city's "lungs" (Corbusier, 1929). Sunlight and fresh air were integral to avoid replicating the Victorian slum corridors, allowing apartment windows to face large parks rather than dim courtyards, away from noisy polluted streets (Corbusier, 1929). Le Corbusier was certain that technological advances would be capable of

delivering cheap, efficient and adequate housing for all (Güney et al., 2019). His vision relied on idealized encounters with nature, prioritizing grid-like standardization in enacting picturesque green spaces similar to the open countryside (Fishman, 1982; Marcuse, 2011; Aoki, 1993). In part due to the broad acceptance of government intervention and site planning following the World Wars, Le Corbusier's insistence on strict functional separation would become embraced in planning doctrine (Walker & Simo, 1997; Scott, 1998).

2.4. Twentieth Century Modernism

The modernist movement treated the vast visions of green, decentralized suburbs and high-rises as a universal remedy for accumulating health concerns and social concerns. Jane Jacobs referred to the expansive and orderly ideas of the modernist era as "Radiant Garden City Beautiful" (Jacobs, 1961, p. 25). The Victorian preoccupation with passive, picturesque landscapes translated into the creation of unbounded, interconnected green spaces which embodied sunlight, air, and openness (Hanzl & Rembeza, 2022; Hebbert, 2008; Qvistrom, 2022). The modernist vision sought implicit greenness in the urban environment, as Hebbert (2008) writes, "It was an idea of progress from enclosure to openness, from the in space of a conventional park to an out landscape of flowing edgeless greenery; from the muddle of the street to the geometrical purity of the freeway; from the profane confusions of the town to the purity of a new garden of eden," (p. 34-35). Parks were no longer enclosed as they had been in Victorian times. Parks, alongside sanitation infrastructure, became a basic public service (Lopez, 2012). As a fundamental planning tool, the green spaces dispersed density and provide structural divides at a variety of scales (Solarek et al. 2023; Shoshkes, 2017). Land use separations and master-planning spread globally, as well as by-laws which decreased lot coverage and enhanced setbacks (Hanzl & Rembeza, 2022; Hebbert, 2008; Aoki, 1993). Incorporating the efficiencies of new vehicular technology, roadways were enveloped by green buffers that recreated the visual pleasure of the picturesque countryside (Hebbert, 2008). Car-centric streetscapes formed alongside commercial and industrial centres, office parks, and shopping centres surrounded by landscaped strips and parking lots (White, 2018; 2010; Aoki, 1993). The new residents of the "tower-in-the-park" building-form and suburban neighbourhood unit had direct access to green spaces on their doorstep, rather than having to travel to an isolated park (Hanzl & Rembeza, 2022; Hebbert, 2008). By placing high-rise parking underground, more land was freed for developer-supplied parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, multi-use community space and a general sense of privacy

that envisioned a desirable alternative to the crowded downtown (Hazeland, 1964/1971; March & Lehrer, 2019). However, the turning reliance to the private provision of green space amenity, also seen in private philanthropy and property taxes surcharges, represented a growing neoliberal doctrine that transformed public goods into commodities to promote business and real estate (Larson, 2018). Irrespective of its effects, green space made cities more attractive to private capital, leading to their proliferation above their initial social cause (Larson, 2018).

Throughout the twentieth century, elite conceptions of nature were mobilized through coercive green landscapes that reinforced racial and economic hierarchies. The spacious, curvilinear modernist suburbs came to be coded as white while urban spaces were stigmatized as racialized and deteriorating environments (Brahinsky et al., 2014). Elite urbanites viewed dense urban environments as spaces of disease, crime, and social disorder with economic consequences (Aoki, 1993). Thus, urban environments were perceived as needing social improvement through orderly, recreational green spaces, not the more esteemed forms of nature "conservation" associated with white elite landscapes (Whitten, 2025; Brahinsky et al., 2014). Such green spaces provided little utility to the needs of slum residents, whose circumstances were rooted not in a lack of structure, but broader contexts of racial inequality and discrimination (Anguelovski, 2016). Yet technical planning concepts depoliticized development and regulation by authorities, allowing power to remain in the hands of landowners and the state (Marcuse, 2011, p. 645). For most modernists, the solution to slums was clear: raze them entirely (Walker & Simo, 1997; Aoki, 1993). Supported by financial incentives from the federal government, large-scale urban renewal projects commenced with the "slum clearance" of entire neighbourhoods. However, slum clearance did not come uncontested, as exemplified by the pioneering Toronto Metropolitan planner Hans Blumenfeld:

> Slums are bad, not because they look unpleasant or because they prevent land from being put to its so-called 'highest and best use,' but because people are forced to live in them under conditions impairing their health and happiness. They live there because they cannot afford better housing. In order to enable them to afford it, either their income must be raised or rents (or prices) for decent housing must be lowered. Tearing down slums does neither. (Blumenfeld, 1962, in Spreiregen, 1971, p. 180–181)

Regardless of approach, the dense city centre was to gradually decentralize through Garden City-inspired suburban developments, thus the decades following the World Wars saw both small and

large recreation-focused parks interspersed throughout planned developments (Chkird et al., 2024; Cranz 1982). The creation of parks amidst post-war suburbanization supplemented a regulating form of social welfare rather than providing a picturesque and restorative nature experience associated with elite landscapes (Lee et al., 2023). Environmental urban design consequently excluded disadvantaged and racialized communities that sought more active, reciprocal relationships with green spaces (Osei Owusu & Rigolon, 2025; Schell et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2023).

A new, elevated form of nature surfaced in the "national park", becoming associated with separation from the city. The construction of national parks increasingly centred narratives of enlightenment and spirituality catered to an elite white class, and tourists in particular (Lee et al., 2023; Brahinsky et al., 2014). Through conservationist rhetoric, national parks reproduced the mythology of untouched, pristine wilderness and racialized, urban pollutedness (Lee et al., 2023; Brahinsky et al., 2014). The national park promoted pleasure and respite that invoked reminders of "empty, virgin lands, untouched by human hands where they can retreat to escape urban problems and people." (Taylor, 2000, p. 174). Unlike urban green spaces which were perceived as tainted by racialized urbanity and merely tasked to address social disorder, national parks symbolized escape from the city. This dynamic mirrors Haussmann's division between bourgeois parks and parks for the public in Paris, which encouraged the influence of elite white sensibilities while maintaining class divides (Choi, 2023). These dynamics sustained environmental privileges, in which wealthier, predominately white communities disproportionately benefited from parks, coasts, open spaces, and sports facilities with enhanced environmental protections and access to coveted amenities while marginalized communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards (Brahinsky et al., 2014; Anguelovski, 2016). Urban greening strategies only further served the uneven accumulation of capital as developments moved from the communitarianism of the neighbourhood unit into dispersed, Fordist suburbanism.

By the end of the twentieth-century, modernist urban green spaces, once inspired by nineteenth-century picturesque ideals, had fallen into decline. The movements' aspirations of social justice through urban design dissipated as private developers took advantage of cheap construction for profitability, rather than passing cost savings onto residents (Güney et al., 2019). Consequently, urban green spaces became largely divorced from romanticist notions of nature, instead conforming to standardized and cost-efficient design standards (Solarek et al., 2023;

Hebbert, 2008). The vast semi-public spaces envisioned by modernists had also required intensive upkeep, which in implementation was reduced to inexpensive batch contracts rather than meticulous horticulture (Hebbert, 2008; Aoki, 1993). Tenants' rights to collectively shape modernist open spaces remained highly limited under private management, as landlords discouraged semi-permanent community uses in favour of a business-oriented approach that prioritized property interests (Valzania, 2022). Thus, most Corbusier-inspired towers would become surrounded by parking lots and vacant green space rather than the envisioned picturesque gardens (Hebbert, 2008; Aoki, 1993). Issues of declining quality were compounded by public disinvestment, as neighbourhoods received poorer city services (Anguelovski, 2016). As wealthier homeowners fled to more desirable suburbs and city-centres, modernist neighbourhoods became sites of premature disinvestment and extraction through rents (August, 2020; Anguelovski, 2016). The majority of rental blocks ceased maintenance, shifting the private cost-burden onto residents' experiences through the rapid loss of recreational amenities (Aoki, 1993). The number of under-programmed green spaces exacerbated neighbourhood challenges through poor design, restrictiveness and dysfunction while regulatory enforcement remained intact (Valzania, 2022; Hebbert, 2008). In their failure to deliver the white-coded suburban dream, the modernist neighbourhoods became associated with the social problems of their racialized residents and vast, collective green spaces (Saberi, 2022; Valzania, 2022). The modernist green space came to be merely an undesirable, amorphous separation between more functional, designated sites (Hebbert, 2008).

2.5. New Urbanism

Gaining prominence in the 1980s, the New Urbanism movement rose in defiance of the perceived anti-humanism and auto-centricity of modernism, instead favouring a new formulation of urban density. Jane Jacobs', *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* invigorated a return to the traditional Victorian urban form as focused on mixed-uses, heightened densities, and communal vibrancy (Lopez, 2012; Hirt, 2009). New Urbanist building guidelines promoted pedestrian walkability and social mixture by structuring interactions in the public realm (Valzania, 2022; Zalar & Pries, 2022; Lopez, 2012). Jacobs argued that historic street orientations generated a sense of humanism in its diversity of uses and foot traffic; standing in contrast to the unsupervised, and thus dangerous, modernist green spaces (White, 2018; Hebbert, 2008). A movement towards heritage preservation emerged, bringing new value to the historical

ambience of Victorian homes in old city centres while re-affirming a distance from undesirable working-class uses such as slaughterhouses and loft factories (White, 2018; Hirt, 2009; Aoki, 1993). The city centre was the site of newfound desirability, attracting affluent residents while marginalized communities remained in decaying, peripheral modernist neighbourhoods (Brahinsky et al., 2014; Aoki, 1993; White, 2018).

The open landscapes of parks and green space buffers were viewed as both wasteful and undermaintained, thus signalling a new desire for intensification and densification (White, 2018; Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995). New Urbanism advanced density as a central principle of sustainable urban development, entailing transit-oriented development, walkability, and parking reductions (Zalar & Pries, 2022; Lopez, 2012). The "compact city" ideal framed walkability and social mixing as products of dense urban form, legitimizing a paradigm that prioritized enclosure, legibility, and programmed space, incidentally benefitting private interests (Zalar & Pries, 2022; Valzania, 2022). Thus commenced "re-enclosures" whereby open modernist landscapes were partitioned and programmed, which in Toronto entailed private landlords erecting fences that fragmented continuous green spaces (Valzania, 2022; Hebbert, 2008). Semi-public green spaces were to be converted into defined recreational or amenity uses, while new developments favoured purpose-built pocket-parks, gardens, and activated boulevards over passive greenery (Boudreau et al., 2020; Hebbert, 2008). The provision of green spaces had shifted from open to enclosed and from passive to active forms of use and surveillance (Hebbert, 2008).

The New Urbanist movement was more focused on manufacturing an aesthetic sense of community and urban vibrancy than it was addressing social justice (Lopez, 2012; Aoki, 1993). New Urbanism embraced a new, subtle urban renewal tactic through "revitalization". New green amenities such as parks, promenades, playgrounds and tree canopies are considered attractive and inclusive upgrades for disinvested neighbourhoods, however they cater to future, higher-income and predominantly white inhabitants over existing residents (Anguelovski et al., 2022; Haase et al., 2017). In doing so, new securitized amenities have proliferated, restricting exclusive or highbrow forms of recreation to residents of increasingly vertical condominium and luxury rental developments (Lehrer, 2017). Thus revitalization transforms modernist "slums" into profitable sites of reinvestment (Wolch et al., 2014; Lehrer et al., 2010).

The multiculturalism of modernist neighbourhoods is desirable to New Urbanism in the modern post-racial era (Dore, 2023; Anguelovski et al., 2022; Brahinsky et al., 2014). Yet, in

order to facilitate redevelopment in established communities, the existing diverse and subversive uses of green spaces must be rendered invisible or delegitimized (Valzania, 2022; Zalar & Pries, 2022; Anguelovski et al., 2022). Modernist green spaces do not reflect pristine countryside landscapes nor compact urban forms, assessing them unused and under-designed by New Urbanism in comparison to potential redevelopment (Zalar & Pries, 2022). As a result, decaying modernist neighbourhoods have begun to be recaptured by private capital through in-fill development and redevelopment (Zalar & Pries, 2022; Solarek et al., 2023; Anguelovski, 2016). In Madison Stirling's (2026) major research paper, White Blocks is a cluster of three 1960s rental apartment towers in Scarborough that underwent infill redevelopment in 2018. A new condominium was constructed by severing and developing part of the towers' shared open space and parking lot, reducing common space available to existing tenants. The project was framed as a sustainable intensification initiative, but it primarily served financialization and private capital while diminishing White Blocks' existing social and recreational value. The turn to revitalization into the twenty-first century was mobilized by neoliberal urban restructuring which enabled free-market doctrines to dominate the urban spatial order (Valzania, 2022; Brenner & Theodore, 2005). Neoliberalization subsequently has incorporated parks not as social infrastructure, but as sanitized, highly programmed tools for urban competitiveness, branding, and capital accumulation within globalized urban economies (Valzania, 2022; Zalar & Pries, 2022; Larson, 2018). New Urbanist developments have widened the gap between market-oriented urban elite groups and materially-disadvantaged low-income groups as development and maintenance became progressively deregulated and dependent on public-private partnerships (Brenner & Theodore, 2005).

2.6. Contemporary Approaches to Green Spaces

In the twenty-first century, growing environmental concerns have spurred renewed interest in the functional potential of green spaces (Whitten, 2025). The dominant green space imaginary has expanded to integrate non-human and ecological needs through concepts such as green infrastructure which necessitate green spaces as a fundamental component of the modern urban fabric (Whitten, 2025; Anguelovski et al., 2022). Policies towards green restoration and sustainability employ technical concepts such as compactness, density, mixed land uses apolitically, which permits new green projects to take place in neglected areas (Whitten, 2025; Valzania, 2022; Anguelovski et al., 2022). Planners have increasingly prioritized equity by

redistributing green spaces, improving green space quality, and promoting human connection with nature (Larson, 2018). While responding to ecological needs, planning priorities have shifted toward ensuring that green spaces acknowledge cultural specificity, and become welcoming and accessible to residents of all backgrounds (see section 4: Document Analysis). In Toronto, this can be seen in the development of Biidaasige Park, which is named after the Anishinaabemowin word for "sunlight shining toward us". The park promotes Indigeneity and reconciliation rhetoric, featuring several spaces for Indigenous art and cultural practices, alongside ecological restoration. The park revitalizes the waterfront with high-quality recreational facilities and spaces for Indigenous inclusion which cannot be understated; however, the $1.4-billion spent across all three levels of government hardly addresses the ongoing harm of colonialism (Canadian Architect, 2025). When implemented without inclusionary zoning or affordable housing objectives, green interventions in disinvested areas inject value into previously invisible landscapes, driving green gentrification (Anguelovski et al., 2022; Wolch et al., 2014). Affected residents face the choice of either "possibly unjust greening" or continuing to live within "untouched gray landscapes" (Anguelovski et al., 2022). The "universally good" greening narrative then undermines local opposition to green projects, denigrating one's right to their neighbourhood (Anguelovski et al., 2022).

The need for adequate green spaces in disadvantaged communities is complicated by State-sponsored "green" or "sustainable" planning that claims to pursue environmental justice objectives (Anguelovski, 2016). Modern equity-centered green space approaches are too restrictive to allow alternative forms of land recognition and control, nor recognize networks of care. Such green projects incidentally increase surveillance and coercion against marginalized residents (Anguelovski et al., 2022; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2014). The creation of these re-securitized and highly-programmed green spaces, as opposed to informal and under-surveilled spaces, directly reflects the top-down enforcement of the white urban elite's desired social order, reproducing the exclusionary logics used previously in Victorian parks and modernist urban design interventions. Current dominant imaginaries have only begun to view green landscapes as locational, cultural and deeply personal (Whitten, 2025; Rigolon et al., 2022). Green projects have introduced community involvement within planning processes, but cannot avoid the increasingly neoliberal demands of profit-seeking private capital and speculative urban development processes (Zalar & Pries, 2022; Larson, 2018). Green space planning continues to

navigate the material demands of city branding, revitalization, and private philanthropy (Larson, 2018). Although green spaces may produce curated amenities for underserved neighbourhoods, urban design strategies alone cannot confront pervasive systemic inequalities such as poverty and racism (Larson, 2018). Addressing these injustices requires green space imaginaries that confront the intersecting forces of white supremacy, colonialism, and neoliberal urban development, while envisioning decolonial geographies rooted in care (Wolch et al., 2014; Rigolon et al., 2022; Foster, 2023; Anguelovski et al., 2022).

3. Case Context

3.1. Toronto Context

Beginning in the 1960s and into the 1980s, the former municipalities of Toronto underwent major transformations to deliver the era's modernist utopian vision. In 1953, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was formed to coordinate regional development across transportation, utilities, and diverse land uses. An influential architect and planner with prior experience on public housing projects, Hans Blumenfeld, came to be a senior planner for Metropolitan Toronto and introduced a growth principle that opposed the creation of new master-planned satellite towns (White, 2018). Instead, development was to be controlled through the expansion of Toronto's urban core, using designated zones and mixed-density developments (White, 2018). The former agricultural farmlands and woodlots of Toronto's periphery, particularly of North York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke, developed new dense suburban neighbourhoods that valorized expansive automotive landscapes, compact low-rise subdivisions, townhouses, commercial centres and high-rise apartment blocks (E.R.A. Architects & University of Toronto, 2008). As the rolling and winding green modernist neighbourhoods connected outwards from the metropolitan city's core, the previously-rural York, North York, and Scarborough increased in population from 50k to 500k between 1951 and 1971 through mostly privately-led development (White, 2018).

In traversing Toronto's modernist neighbourhoods, one is met with expanses of public and semi-public open spaces. The incorporation of ravine valleys along curving residential streets provided pedestrians proximity to natural public parkland, complimenting the unenclosed municipal parks defined by recreation features such as sports fields and playgrounds (Valzania, 2022; White, 2018; E.R.A. Architects & University of Toronto, 2008). The pre-planned neighbourhood units of these developments were intended to coordinate land uses, ensuring the

balanced provision of amenities with community centres, Christian churches, and public schools backing onto spacious public parkland. Around private developments, the City required sixty-to-seventy percent open space, generating open landscapes for recreation space, air, and sunlight while allowing higher residential densities (Stewart, 2008). By the 1960s, the "tower in the park" building form was effectively the only legal form of mass housing, supported by planning policies that permitted taller buildings in exchange for increased open space, leading nearly 90 percent of open space in Toronto to be found around apartment properties (E.R.A. Architects & University of Toronto, 2008; Stewart, 2008). Municipalities encouraged these high-rise developments as they generated substantial profits for private developers and increased property tax revenues for local governments (Stewart, 2008). However, this also left large swaths of modernism's ostensibly public, open green spaces under private ownership and management, now often owned by real estate investment funds and private equity firms.

The undeveloped hinterlands also provided room for modernist planners to carry out their vision of social reform, leading to a significant wave of public housing following amendments to the National Housing Act (Boudreau et al., 2020). Modernist neighbourhoods successfully provided housing for many low-income people in their mixed-income design (Boudreau et al., 2020; White, 2018). But developments were not above urban planning and real estate's Eurocentric assumptions, therefore imagining modernist neighbourhoods to be inhabited by Canada's historically white, Anglo middle-income families (Saberi, 2022). This vision relied upon particular assumptions about household structures, gendered caregiving roles, and everyday relationships with space, presuming residents would participate in the intended white, Anglo forms of neighbourhood life. While rental housing initially attracted the majority White European and middle-income demographics of the 1960s, any positive reception towards Toronto's modernist landscapes faltered following the unprecedented influx of new largely immigrant populations. Following changes to immigration policy in the 1960s, the affordable homes attracted the city's new immigrants, housing families across 1,189 apartment towers in Toronto (Boudreau et al., 2020; E.R.A Architects et al., 2010). Contrary to the envisioned peaceful suburb, the immigrant populations largely struggled with poverty, exploitation, and systemic discrimination (Saberi, 2022). Modernist apartments became associated with crime and impoverishment, entangled with escalating stigma against their working class and racialized immigrant inhabitants (Saberi, 2022; Young & Keil, 2014). As more affluent homeowners

moved to more walkable, cosmopolitan urban neighbourhoods or spacious conventional suburbs, the remaining communities were increasingly racialized and low-income (White, 2018; Lopez, 2012). The formerly glamourized neighbourhoods with lush green spaces and shared amenities faced the abandonment of their owners, while ageing towers and public housing fell into disrepair (Tasan-Kok, 2015). The spacious greening and car-centricity of modernism resulted in left-over spaces without a clear or designated purpose (Tasan-Kok, 2015). Yet these overlooked "inner-suburb" neighbourhoods have continued to provide ongoing relative-affordability for predominately-racialized marginalized populations.

In the 2000s, graduate-level research by architect Graeme Stewart built on earlier studies at the University of Toronto and E.R.A. Architects to demonstrate an ecologically sustainable strategy for retrofitting Toronto's aging apartment towers, drawing on successful international precedents (Saberi, 2022; E.R.A Architects et al., 2010). Amid growing federal and municipal environmentalism, the initiative positioned tower restoration as a viable alternative to demolishing the often-stigmatized concrete buildings, suitable for the city's green strategy and reputation of then-Mayor David Miller (Saberi, 2022). A working group was established, soon followed by the *Mayor's Tower Renewal* in 2007 which expanded the vision of energy efficient retrofits to the revitalization of priority neighbourhoods (Miller, 2007). Green spaces were posed as underused, but capable of providing local communities both social and cultural services while engaging tenants in the planning and implementation of projects (Miller, 2007). In 2009, the provincial government commissioned the Tower Neighbourhood Renewal effort between planningAlliance, E.R.A. Architects, and the University of Toronto and four pilot sites followed, pursuing reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions before making the opportunity public (Miller, 2007). However, the rehabilitation of apartment buildings remained completely voluntary for private property owners, and relatively low energy costs weakened the business case for retrofit projects (E.R.A. Architects & University of Toronto, 2008). Subsequent research has increasingly sought ways to incentivize private investment through mechanisms such as infill developments and green financing tools (Klesmer, 2016). Over time, Tower Renewal became co-opted in Toronto's consensus-oriented planning approach that relied on technical experts and market-led development to address urban issues (Young, 2019). This shift gradually redirected attention away from resident wellbeing and environmental sustainability, and towards profitable urban design interventions, precluding structural change for the stigmatized populations involved

(Saberi, 2022; Young, 2019). The program's emphasis on revitalization and social mixing ignored issues such as rent regulation, tenant displacement, and the need for new social housing (Saberi, 2022; Young, 2019). As a result, Tower Renewal came to reinforce dominant planning ideals that privileged compact, mixed-use urbanism.

As Toronto embraced intensification and the compact city paradigm, modernist neighbourhoods became targets for redevelopment. Planning discourse frequently characterized the extensive open spaces surrounding towers as underused or poorly defined, legitimizing densification as a public benefit (Valzania, 2022; Zalar & Pries, 2022). While Tower Renewal has formally recognized the inherent value of modernist tower neighbourhoods, they simultaneously employed market-oriented policy approaches which identified open spaces as potential sites for infill development (Young, 2019). Residents were largely excluded from expressing the value or future uses of green spaces, while planning policies increasingly treated open land as both an ecological asset and a reserve for future growth (Valzania, 2022). The result thus depoliticized the encroachment of private development in marginalized communities, framing market-led redevelopment as common sense even when it reshapes collective green spaces and is challenged by established communities (Young, 2019; Valzania; Zalar & Pries, 2022).

3.2. Jane and Finch Case Study

One of Toronto's most prominent modernist neighbourhoods is Jane and Finch. The community is popularly demarcated by the neighbourhoods of Black Creek and Glenfield-Jane Heights. At the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue West, common patterns play out: shoppers carry multiple bags of groceries, mothers guide strollers over cracked pavement, day-workers sit on shaded curbs, teenagers cluster towards fast-food chains, and preachers' sermons compete with the bustling traffic. The Jane and Finch neighbourhood encapsulates the diversity of Toronto's periphery communities, containing a population of 51,165 in 2021, of which 81% are visible minorities. 62.5% of residents are immigrants largely descending from Vietnam, the Philippines, Guyana, Nigeria, and Jamaica in comparison to the City of Toronto's 52% immigrant population. The overall landscape has changed subtly since its development in the 1960s and 1970s, with minor infill developments, renovated public parks, and fewer private amenities. Relative to the City of Toronto's 48%, the neighbourhood remains a largely rental landscape with 57.5% renter households also characterized by a large public housing stock.

Although this neighbourhood has been made infamous through media coverage, Jane and Finch has cultivated an enthusiastic working-class identity. Unlike Toronto's downtown, few homes have had rebuilds or substantial renovations (White, 2018). As a multicultural community without the capital to access private resources, community members develop and use local resources and space to their advantage. Jane and Finch may be understood as a remnant of the modernist planning era, only recently subjected to renewed speculative interest through new, compact-paradigm development proposals (Valzania, 2022; Tasan-kok, 2015). The emerging vision for green spaces is in stark contrast to everyday community uses that repurpose the historically embedded landscape.

In 1962, the first district plan, which preceded most development in Jane and Finch, intended to create a model suburb including diverse housing types through neighbourhood units of tower-in-the park buildings and low-rise subdivisions with public parks containing playgrounds and sports fields (Sewell, 1993). Its envisioned urban form followed modernist principles and "medium densities," notably stating that "open space considerations in apartment locations require little explanation" while providing a 1:4 ratio of open space to residential uses (Sewell, 1993, p. 128). When the district plan was revised in 1969, it contemplated increased population projections from 30 to 36.4 persons per acre for the whole district, and up to 50 and 44 persons per acre in the Black Creek and Jane Heights communities respectively (Common Bond Collective, 2024). Amidst a 20-year period of rapid construction, more than 50 per cent of all dwellings were to be high-rise buildings (Boudreau et al., 2020). Private rental apartments predominantly delivered the remainder of recreational amenities such as sports facilities, playgrounds, and swimming pools (see section 5: GIS analysis). The area's projected population was to be 64,700 by the year 1990; However, the population had already met 82.33% of its target by 1975 (Common Bond Collective, 2024). During this time, North York's Ward 3 (the broader area encompassing Jane and Finch) also housed the majority of Toronto's public housing stock at 22.5% in contrast to the approximate 10% public housing in post-amalgamation City of Toronto (Boudreau et al., 2020).

The unexpected population growth and heightened financial insecurity of social housing residents was exasperated by the lack of social infrastructure. Jane and Finch residents have formed in response to both development pressures and inadequate facilities as early as the 1960s with the University Village Ratepayers Association (University Village Ratepayers Association,

1965). Community residents formed the Downsview Weston Action Community to request an assessment of amenities and government intervention. Further initiatives involved the local aldermen, the local newspaper, The Jane Corridor, and the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre (Hayhurst, 1974). Future efforts emerged in the form of PEACH, JFAAP, and Inner City Outreach. Alongside a variety of new curated and collaborative services, community members consistently socialize through churches and school groups. As the quality of modernist towers were ageing and deteriorating from a lack of maintenance, and local challenges of poverty persisted, new public-private interventions have emerged. Notably, San Romanoway (the Palisades) was the site of a pilot project for revitalization as well as a recipient of a garden with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (Tasan-kok, 2015). However, new external investments into the community became reductive such as the Priority Neighbourhoods Strategy (now Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy) and the area's neoliberal re-branding of "university heights" (Saberi, 2022; Narain, 2012). Multiple major transit projects including the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension and the Finch West LRT have renewed interest in the area, increasing development pressures that will disproportionately impact low income and black residents (Lewis & Panou, 2026).

A new spectre of gentrification is looming over Jane and Finch. While residents have adapted to the unique urban form, creating social spaces in parked cars, apartment BBQs, and local shopping malls, new concerns arise about the continued existence of these spaces (Valzania, 2022; Tasan-kok, 2015). Community gatherings have been historically held in parking lots, malls, parks, and churches by local agencies and grassroots organizers and expanded to events like FlauntIt's Community Arts Festival at the placemaking initiative Corner Commons. These community expressions envision decommodified, relational understandings of space which are furthered by a local tradition of activism. However, major redevelopments are slated for the community's recently-demolished Firgrove-Grassways public housing, Jane Finch Mall, the nearby Downsview Park, and proposed infill sites. The community feels the slow encroachment of developer speculation as it threatens to push out long-time residents who built their homes here, not to improve the neighborhood, but to capitalize on its profitability (Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2025). Amidst impending change, residents have impressed the powerful organizing identity of Jane and Finch upon the urban planning process, imbuing private and municipal plans with community counter-imaginaries (see section 4.4).

4. Document Analysis

4.1. City of Toronto Official Plan

The City of Toronto's Official Plan (OP) is a city-wide vision that guides decision making on land use in hopes of delivering "the best use of space". While adopted by City Council in November 2002 and reflecting the urban imaginaries of its time, the OP continues to shape contemporary planning policy, land use decisions, and redevelopment across Toronto. The role of green space is implicated among its key priorities (pursuing reconciliation; adapting to climate change; sustaining housing affordability; resolving inequities) as well as the documents' principles (reconciliation, access, equity, and inclusion). In Chapter Two*, Shaping the City*, the OP establishes policies to direct growth and manage change, while explicitly "protecting our neighbourhoods and green spaces from development pressures" (p. 2-1). The preamble to Subsection 2.3, *Stable but Not Static: Enhancing Our Neighbourhoods and Green Spaces*, conceptualizes green space firstly as an economic development tool which helps "attract people from around the world to make Toronto their home and place of business". However, it also bifurcates the role of green spaces across two categorical areas: Areas of growth (the Downtown, the Centres, Avenues and Employment Areas) and areas expected to see little physical change (neighbourhoods, parks, ravines, watercourses and valleys). The latter notably make up three-quarters of Toronto's land area and are expected to integrate "environmental sustainability" through naturalization and landscaping improvements.

Where *Neighbourhoods* are low-rise, low-density areas in which development will reinforce the existing physical character of buildings, streetscapes and landscaped open space patterns, Apartment Neighbourhoods are high-rise, higher-density areas "in need of physical renewal, greening and in some instances, social transformation" (p. 2-31). Unlike Neighbourhood policies which stress maintaining the existing physical character, Apartment Neighbourhood policies focus on enhancing amenity spaces and pedestrian movement. The OP interprets Apartment Neighbourhoods as underutilized and underprogrammed through "ancillary outdoor recreation facilities, pedestrian walkways, parking lots, service areas and landscape space take up/occupy the entire site" (p. 2-32). Although Apartment Neighbourhoods should not expect significant growth on a city-wide basis, the OP directs infill development to green spaces that are "not well-utilized by the residents" and the "redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites". The OP further frames Apartment Neighbourhoods as likely requiring revitalization

through improving community services, parks, active transportation, and broader social infrastructure, with approaches led by either the City or community organizations. Redevelopments and partnerships are expected to improve on-site conditions and the use of common areas. Development policies in Chapter 4, *Land Use Designations*, aim to improve Apartment Neighbourhood conditions by maintaining or substantially replacing indoor and outdoor amenity space for residents, improving landscaped open spaces, limiting shadows, supporting safety, and framing streets, parks, and open spaces. The OP clearly emphasizes how the spacious, Apartment Tower environments are inadequate irrespective of their proximity to public facilities and commercial land uses.

Apartment Neighbourhood green spaces have the potential to alternatively provide community and residents control over their own spaces. The City previously created Residential Apartment Commercial (RAC) zones to spur vibrancy on green space sites, coming into tension with the OP's direction to redevelop "underutilized" green spaces. Subsection 2.3 references modernist tower-in-the-park communities "with ample open space and surface parking areas" as anticipating environmental, social, economic and cultural improvements through the apartment buildings' owners. The City of Toronto's expanded permissions through the special RAC zone aims to encourage new small-scale nonresidential uses such as food markets, small businesses and community facilities. In alignment with community-oriented uses, Policy 2.3.11 and 2.3.12 also explicitly encourage mobile vendors of fresh food and gardens for growing food "on portions of open space in sites within Apartment Neighbourhoods" (p. 2-34). These visions of improvement contrast with OP policies that encourage development in Apartment Neighbourhood green spaces, overlooking possible community-based land-use strategies while also focusing on natural heritage protection.

The City of Toronto seeks to improve, preserve, and enhance the Toronto Green Space System for its vital role in quality of life and ecosystem health. Subsection 2.3.2, *Toronto's Green Space System And Waterfront*, outlines the system's broad continuum of spaces including waterfront areas, beaches, bluffs, wetlands, ravines, watercourses, cemeteries, and interconnected Parks and Open Space Areas. Green spaces are described as ranging from "the extensive urban wilderness of the Rouge National Urban Park to the urbanity and intimacy of the community parks" (p. 4-10). The OP identifies the main benefits of the system including ecosystem health and environmental resilience; landscapes for reflection and appreciation of nature; recreation,

community gardens and environmental education; and tourism and entertainment. However, the OP places particular emphasis on stewardship, protection, and connectivity. The City is expected to expand the green space system through new linkages that improve movement between green spaces, and access to both public and privately owned lands. New parkland acquisition is permitted to address localized needs, improve connectivity and visibility, provide environmental protections, extend recreational trails, or secure lands with natural heritage value. At the same time, development within Parks and Open Space Areas, even to advance public access, is generally discouraged where it would damage natural heritage features or unreasonably restrict private property rights. Despite the broad conception of green spaces, the policies place special emphasis on preserving key green spaces such as the waterfront, Toronto Island Park, Rouge National Urban Park, and the Greenbelt River Valley Connections of the Don and Humber Rivers and Etobicoke Creek.

The ecological emphasis becomes more pronounced in Subsection 3.4, *The Natural Environment*, which sets the Natural Heritage System apart from Open Spaces and Parks. The natural environment is viewed as contributing to the economy and healthy ecosystems. The subsection frames it as critical to biodiversity and climate change. The OP encourages the City to "seize opportunities" to enhance natural heritage features through development and partnerships, describing the Natural Heritage System as "areas where protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural features and functions should have high priority in our citybuilding decisions." (p. 3-44). Therefore, uses within Natural Areas are only permitted where they maintain the area "in a natural state" and minimize impacts on natural features and functions. Recreational uses receive comparatively little attention, although urban green spaces with significant recreational value are also to be protected and enhanced where feasible.

The OP acknowledges both public and private "but publicly accessible" green spaces as providing important recreational opportunities. The OP forbids the loss of public space through public green space sales or development. Chapter 4, *Land Use Designations*, discerns three green space land uses, Natural Areas, Parks, and Other Open Space Areas, which collectively "provide respite, recreation, ecological and hydrological functions and beauty" (p. 4-1). Parks primarily accommodate public recreational opportunities. Subsection 4.3, *Parks And Open Space Areas*, emphasizes the everyday passive and active recreational uses of green spaces "where we can take a break from the bustle of city life, participate in a sporting activity, or play an informal game of

frisbee with friends on a Sunday afternoon" (p. 4-11). Although the OP prioritizes natural heritage features and linkages, Policy 4.3.6 seeks to enhance the usability of public green spaces for recreational, as well as non-descript cultural purposes. Other Open Spaces include golf courses, cemeteries, utilities, and other specialized open space uses. The utility corridor in particular are envisioned as sites for secondary uses such as 'linear park' open spaces, pedestrian and bicycle trails, sport fields, agriculture, and temporary garden centres. These corridors are expected to provide movement and low-stakes recreation, while remaining compatible with their primary infrastructure functions. Lands declared surplus may be retained or leased for public amenities and community-serving uses. Although the OP's preamble ties green spaces to Toronto's competitive advantage as a place to invest, they also establish its recreational function.

The OP approaches green space provision largely through a framework of acquisition, management, and land-use regulation. The Chapter 3 preamble acknowledges that planning decisions may prioritize one objective (social, economic or environmental) over another depending on circumstance. Green space expansion and reinvestment are explicitly restricted by physical and financial constraints, while parkland acquisition policies prioritize on-site dedications over cash-in-lieu contributions. Where necessary, the City may accept off-site parkland, exchange publicly owned parkland for lands of comparable or greater utility, or acquire land to address identified service gaps. Public access and connectivity are important considerations in these decisions, but privately owned green spaces are generally not targeted for acquisition and are not expected to provide public access. While aiming to improve public access to green spaces, the OP focuses on measurable factors such as existing amenities, site conditions, demographics, and connectivity. The OP's policies thus designate what spaces are appropriate for human recreation from above instead of through community involvement. Little attention is paid to what makes a green spaces welcoming, culturally responsive, or reflective of community identity. As a result, the OP focuses on the preservation of naturalistic green spaces and opportunities to improve connectivity, with less emphasis on how communities may be allowed to inhabit space as needed.

4.2. City of Toronto Urban Design Guidelines

The City of Toronto's design guidelines (Townhouse And Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines, Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines, and Tall Building Design Guidelines) prioritize a lively public realm, using green space as an urban design tool. The Tall Building

Design Guidelines (2013) recounts the evolution of tall buildings until the 1980s, portraying the errors of previous design philosophies such as inadequate setbacks and parking. In this reflection, the modernist tower-in-the-park is a promised landscape of privacy, sky view, and sunlight, that instead became a tower-in-the-parking-lot, disrupting the vitality of the traditional pedestrian-oriented street, “These buildings did not support walkable streets and lacked the mix of uses, small retail frontages, porches, and stoops which successfully animated the public realm elsewhere in the city.” (City of Toronto, 2013, p. 6). Across the documents, tower-in-the-park green spaces fail to provide walkability and connectivity. Modernist landscapes are portrayed as isolated and inefficient, framing the open spaces as barriers for pedestrians rather than community assets. By contrasting these neighbourhoods with today’s idealized "pedestrian-oriented" city, the documents establish redevelopment as both an apolitical and necessarily corrective solution.

Each of the Design Guidelines imagine intensification to be a common-sense technical improvement that incorporates green spaces as connective infrastructure. The primary role of contemporary green spaces is to facilitate pedestrian circulation through the city. The guidelines each distinguish between a range of green space types to contribute to the broader urban fabric across the public realm (streets, parks, and open spaces) and the private realm (front yards and private amenity spaces). Green spaces are intended to promote pedestrian mobility and permeability, physically improving circulation networks. Thus, green spaces extend the public realm through privately owned land by being designed to read as public places, be highly visible, and visually connect sites to surrounding streets and parks. Publicly accessible open spaces may include courtyards, plazas, urban gardens, forecourts, landscaped setbacks, and walkways for year-round use, with surrounding buildings oriented to encourage animation. While at least 25 percent of a large development site's area must be landscaped, smaller infill sites may instead incorporate green rooftops. Green spaces are recast from a destination for community into an infrastructure that creates an efficient, dense public realm.

Generally, the Design Guidelines prescribe carefully-managed green spaces for public life to take place. Modern green spaces are inspired by “large sunlit courtyards and play areas” of the Garden City (City of Toronto, 2018, p. 7). Shared amenity areas are described as necessary gathering spaces, providing space for social interaction, neighbourhood activity, and recreation. The guidelines encourage further context analysis to determine which facilities may support a

high-quality living environment. New developments are encouraged to include seating, communal gardens, public art, shade structures, and programming opportunities. The available amenities should maximize comfort, usability, aesthetic, and privacy for public enjoyment. The Mid-Rise Design Guidelines further notes that shared outdoor amenities allow residents "to experience and share in their collective property" (City of Toronto, 2024, p. 41) and that design decisions can contribute to placemaking. The documents recognize green spaces as being able to honour the history and culture of Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities and facilitate cultural, civic, and social places. Yet these forms of community inclusion remain embedded in carefully curated spaces that emphasize anticipated uses, and above all prioritize pedestrian movement. While the guidelines indirectly acknowledge user self-determination by recommending flexible design, they do not treat its users as active subjects intended to inhabit, reshape, and reimagine space. The documents reflect an inoffensive passivity for the greater public realm ideal, leading to more restrictive designs than imagined.

4.3. Parkland Strategy

The Parkland Strategy, *Growing Toronto Parkland*, details how green spaces can be optimized to contribute to public and ecological benefits. The Strategy evaluates neighbourhood green-space needs through indicators including parkland provision, park type, and income levels. The Strategy recognizes that new urban developments "will decrease parkland provision across the city unless new parkland is acquired." (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 27). Therefore, two of the Parkland Strategy's objectives are to Expand parkland and Connect green spaces beyond its existing 1,500 parks. These objectives are intended to increase the use of parks for both public enjoyment and ecosystem benefits, while improving the potential uses that can take place in parks.

The Parkland Strategy aims for parks to be flexible and multi-functional for the needs of diverse groups. However, the Strategy revolves around park classifications: sport and play (programmed and active recreation), community and civic (social cohesion and interaction), and passive and ecological (passive nature recreation and ecological services). It then outlines Toronto's current parks' features: 57% sport and play, 24% community and civic, 7% passive and ecological. Toronto's ravine system is also constrained mainly to ecological protection in line with Official Plan policies, but it offers compatible, passive recreation opportunities. The

document foregrounds the ability for communities, including marginalized groups, to access parks that meet the three different functions.

The Strategy's technical approach does not incorporate relevant community contexts as it systematically distributes green spaces and green space functions. As every community deserves a fair share of parks across classifications, the Strategy's equity approach focuses on barriers of physical access. Modernist neighbourhoods have abundant green spaces, but their autocentric urban design is described as a frequent barrier to access. Especially in low income communities such as Jane and Finch, these parks "play a vital role in supporting quality of life and/or where access to private greenspace is limited." (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 19). The document casts private green spaces because their limited active programming and passive recreation "do not replace the need for public parks." (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 19). Yet, the Strategy includes a map of Priority areas, measuring where "there is low parkland provision, low park supply, high-growth, and a high percentage of low income residents" (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 46). A contradiction arises as Jane and Finch's existing private green spaces reduce the projected need for parkland, yet their potential loss through redevelopment is not accounted for. As a result, the wider Jane and Finch neighbourhood is identified as having little or no "Areas of Parkland Need" despite relying heavily on private green spaces.

While the Parkland Strategy recognizes green spaces as community assets, it does not anticipate the appropriation and improvisation of space. The strategy intends for green spaces to be community focal points that "provide places for community gathering and celebration, public art, heritage interpretation and cultural expression as well as recreational opportunities" (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 47). This community-oriented vision is reinforced through the Strategy's Include objective, which seeks to reflect Toronto's diversity and history through placemaking. While the document acknowledges that placemaking changes according to local contexts, its measured and prescribed approach undermines community self-determination. The Strategy presents placemaking as something achieved by planning, designing, and managing public spaces, relying on park design, public art, programming, and local partnerships to produce "more meaningful relationships between people and the place that they call home" (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 41). These green space improvements broaden public park possibilities in their initial creation, but neglect the particularity of community contexts.

In an effort to maintain equal access to diverse green spaces, the Parkland Strategy foregoes the historicity and ongoing role of public participation. While the Strategy acknowledges that communities create meaning in parks, these meanings are to be accommodated within top-down, professionally designed and programmed landscapes. The Strategy seeks to capitalize on growth and placemaking opportunities from revitalizations, institutional partnerships, and philanthropic contributions as opposed to community informality. As a result, the Strategy privileges planned and anticipated forms of use over the informal, self-determined practices through which communities already inhabit and continually remake green space. The Strategy's intent for meaningful green space relationships is held in tension with the documents broader growth goals, as it seeks to "acquire and create new legacy parks over time that will be powerful city-building moves and iconic open spaces that strengthen Toronto's identity as a global, liveable city" (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 39). The result is a strategy that abstractly quantifies green space distributions instead of maintaining the place-specific experiences of green spaces that communities use to serve their needs.

4.4. Jane Finch Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines

The Jane Finch Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines set out public realm policies underpinned by a philosophy of green space ahead of urban development in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood. The documents recognize the modernist, unbounded urban green form of the neighbourhood; however, markedly, it respects the generous setbacks and landscaping tied to the high rises. While the curvilinear low-rise residential blocks are noted to create barriers in connectivity, the tower-in-the-park building form offers public open space amenity and landscaping. This form is distinguished from other forms of tall buildings in its own typology, the "Jane Finch Pavilion Building." The separation between towers is stated to preserve the natural environment, pedestrian mobility, and shared access to sunlight. One of the guiding themes of the Design Guidelines is "Greening" the public realm network. The Secondary Plan and Guidelines developed green space typologies that preserve and build upon the neighbourhood's open space character. Green Spines and Green Pedestrian connections intend to create a sense of greenness and openness, which contrasts with contemporary compact, street-fronting forms of development. Green Spines preserve the existing pattern of deep setbacks in the neighbourhood, doubling to provide a streetscape where people can walk, cycle, and wait for public transit using pedestrian amenities. Green Pedestrian Connections simultaneously ensure

public "short cuts" to travel shorter distances between destinations. Any visible private uses are expected to "enrich the pedestrian experience" through architectural elements that distinguish them from public use and ensure "the legibility of semi-private spaces," while limiting barriers such as fences. The decision-making power of property owners is highlighted, "Collaboration between landowners is encouraged, emphasizing the importance of inclusive and welcoming open spaces." (JFUDG, p. 48). As an organizational element, these green space concepts uphold commonly-held themes of connectivity and mobility grounded by the Design Guidelines' "Moving" theme.

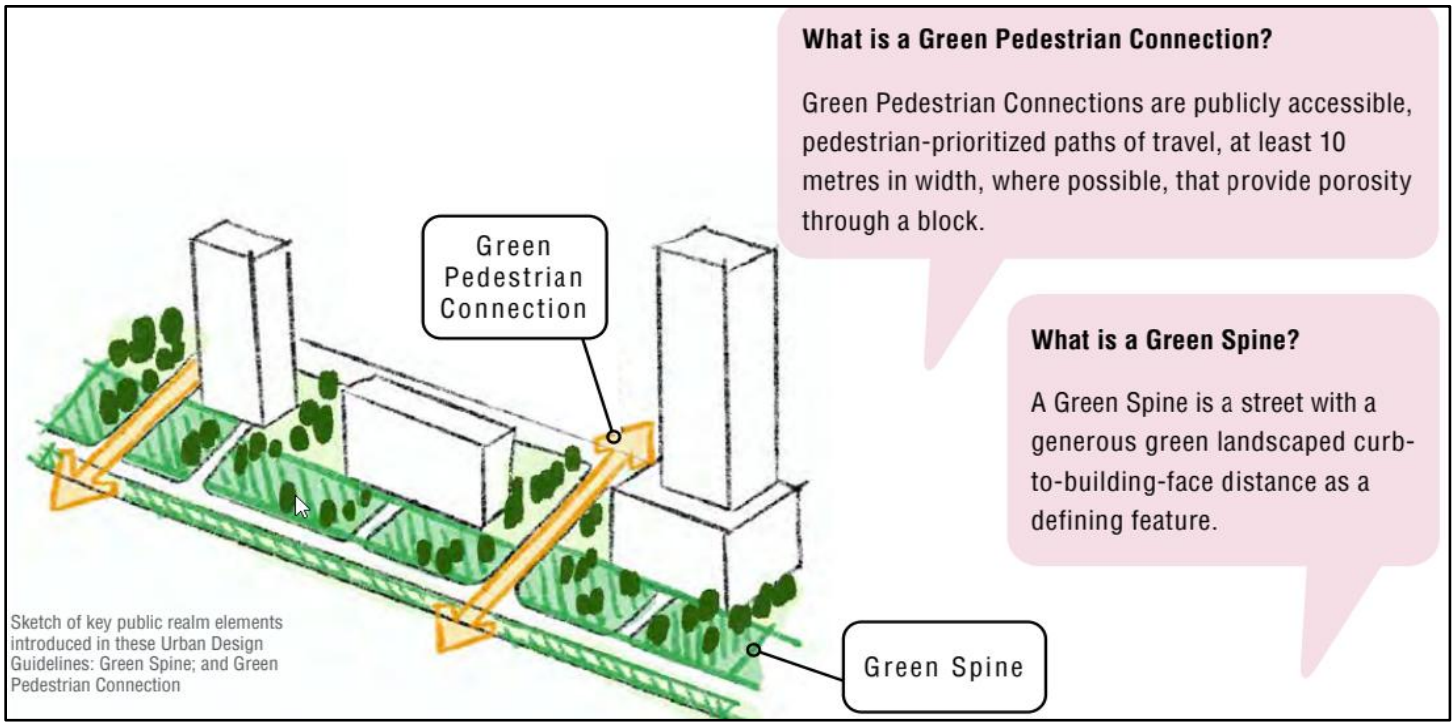


Figure 3. ***Green Pedestrian Connection Concept.***

Note. Source: Jane Finch Urban Design Guidelines (p. 34).

In discussions of facilitating "movement" in the public realm, the accompanying policies emphasize users' comfort and convenience. The development of infill buildings is intended to be compatible with ample soft landscaping and community assets in tower-in-the-park settings, while providing for small-scale retail and community serving uses. And while public realm movement underpins these urban design decisions, the green spaces ultimately ensure that residents are provided with consistent "exposure to nature and greenery" throughout the urban fabric, as opposed to planned encounters in natural heritage areas.

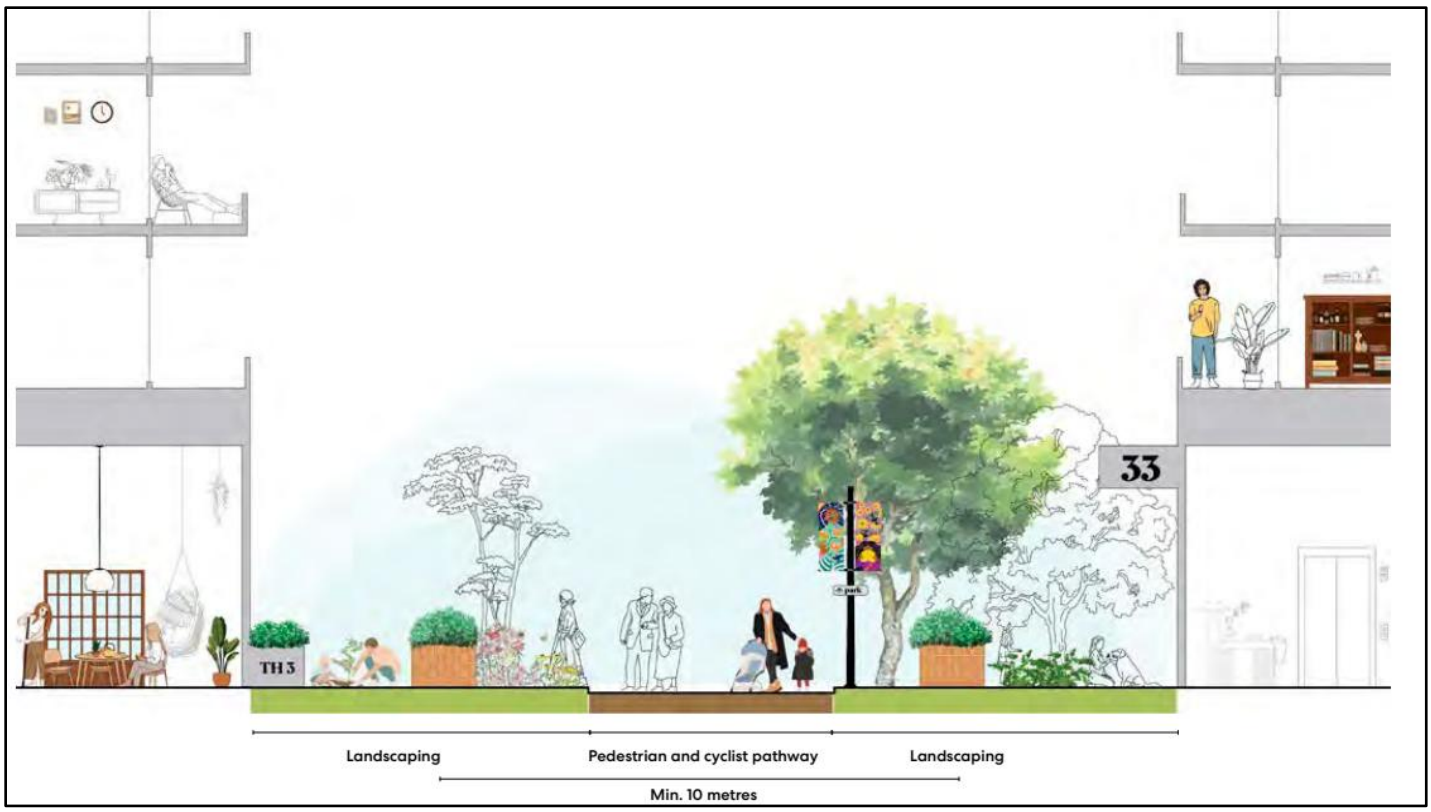


Figure 4. ***Green Pedestrian Connections - Pedestrian Only Street Mock-up.***

Note. Source: Jane Finch Urban Design Guidelines (p. 47).

The Jane and Finch documents insist upon the versatile use of green spaces by public users more than strict categorizations of function and aesthetic. Jane and Finch contains 22 parks alongside the Black Creek Ravine and the hydro corridor. Although the Official Plan depicts ravines as being preserved in a natural state in order to ensure ecological protection, the Jane Finch Design Guidelines state that the local community "has indicated that they value the [Black Creek] ravine, both as an area of retreat to nature, and as a recreational asset" (JFUDG, p. 23). The City's Parkland Strategy points out "the fine line between protection and use" in ravines, and has encouraged limited compatible recreational programming. The Jane Finch Design Guidelines address the Black Creek's role as a recreational asset by suggesting that activity hubs, building setbacks with amenities, new access points, and stewardship programs enhance the active experience of Black Creek. The guidelines exemplify the importance of resident-led gardens using Rudy's Garden, informally constructed beside the Black Creek trail. Further potential lies in Indigenous-led placekeeping along the Black Creek, wherein permanent park assets,

community gardens, programming, and direct access to water may provide opportunities for cultural activities.

The Jane Finch planning documents also acknowledge the Finch Hydro Corridor as an important open space for recreation with existing sports fields. Meanwhile, the Official Plan acknowledges the existing secondary uses of utility corridors in parks, pedestrian and bicycle trails, agriculture, parking lots, open storage, stormwater management, public transit; however, the OP emphasizes utility corridors' secondary purpose as providing mobility, only being leased or acquired for public services (such as allotment and community gardens) after being "declared surplus". The Finch Hydro Corridor, in turn, is envisioned as an "inviting and comfortable environment to sit, rest, and gather" through investments in lighting and seating. Unlike the OP's emphasis on movement in utility corridors, the Jane Finch Urban Design Guidelines considers the Hydro Corridor as a site for active and self-directed recreation in the form of outdoor learning spaces and urban agriculture. Further, the Guidelines consider the Hydro Corridor as a place for expressions of identity that will "create a unique and memorable character for the corridor while also engaging and inspiring visitors". Instead of being urban encroachment, the Jane Finch planning documents assert that "corridor enhancement strategies should be cocreated with the community," centralizing the role of the user.



Figure 5. ***North-south desire lines in Finch Hydro Corridor.***

Note. Source: Jane Finch Urban Design Guidelines (p. 36). Photo author: Access Planning.

The Jane Finch Urban Design Guidelines generally acknowledge the agency of green space users as they occupy and re-make space. Besides its most significant green assets, several smaller green spaces are recognized including parks, playgrounds, sports fields, community gardens, urban agriculture initiatives and vast landscaped edges. Green spaces are one of many noted space social spaces, "The public realm network of Jane Finch does not only include parks and natural areas, but residents also congregate and socialize in courtyards, backyards, porches, and parking lots including at Corner Commons, a pop-up gathering space designed by the community in the parking lot of the Jane Finch Mall that is also a site for local public art, events, and activism." (JFUDG, p. 13). Spaces are envisioned as well-furnished and well-maintained, providing for community gatherings, active programming, and passive programming which "typically supports more unstructured and leisurely activities such as picnic areas, open lawns, naturalized areas, healing gardens and walking trails." (JFUDG, p. 32). The proposed Green Pedestrian Connections and Green Spine, beyond facilitating movement, imagine users gathering, socializing, resting, eating, and formalizing existing desire paths. The Jane Finch planning documents evaluate the public realm in a way which foregrounds community desires and the ability to act upon them, therefore blurring the lines between "nature spaces" and "recreation spaces" and "transport spaces".



Figure 6. ***Green open spaces in use around apartment towers.***

Note. Source: Jane Finch Urban Design Guidelines (p. 32).

4.5. Discussion

Unlike the city-wide planning documents, the freedom of movement, connection, and activity in the Jane Finch Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines expands the urban imagining of greenspaces with the community's sense of identity and belonging. The imagined green spaces in Jane and Finch planning documents recognize the temporal and interactive nature of inhabiting place, whether public and private. Developed through iterative consultations with local residents, the Jane Finch documents have made strides to include anti-displacement which encompasses a proactive community imaginary that recognizes how residents shape green spaces. The Secondary Plan sets out several goals relating to inviting collaboration and avoiding displacement that are not included in the City of Toronto planning documents. Rather than reinforcing exclusionary property logics, green spaces are more legible in order to welcome self-determined behaviour in the public realm, "...realizing the potential for the parks and public realm network to provide affordable and equitable ways to move around, support physical and mental health, foster local economic development, mitigate cultural displacement and strengthen communities." (JFSP, p. 12). This framing is a manifestation of Jane and Finch residents' material reality and needs. The documents' Vision statement similarly constructs green space as integral to neighbourhood identity, envisioning "a vibrant core, beautiful, connected, welcoming parks and open spaces, and access to nature through the nearby Black Creek ravine" (JFSP, p. 6). The Secondary Plan further commits to public spaces that reflect "Indigenous identity and the local heritage of Jane Finch communities" (JFSP, p. 11), therefore embedding the rhythms of local identity, culture, and needs into green spaces.

By centering community experience and self-determination, the Jane Finch urban imaginary differs markedly from that found in the city-wide planning documents. The Official Plan primarily frames green spaces through ecological protection, connectivity, and managing growth; the City of Toronto Urban Design Guidelines emphasize movement through the city and animating streets; while the Parkland Strategy places greater emphasis on the social functions of parks through park typologies, access, and equitable distribution.

By contrast, the Jane Finch planning documents foreground residents' existing relationships with place, recognizing how residents already use, shape, and assign meaning to space. The Jane Finch documents construct an urban imaginary that embeds identity within

urban green spaces not only through heritage recognition or public art, but through an urban design framework that strengthens residents' collective right to the city.

5. GIS Analysis

I developed a dataset using ArcGIS Pro in order to visualize green space outcomes, expecting to reveal the shifting priorities of different "stakeholders". As previously discussed, dominant green space imaginaries are imbued with racialized understandings of nature and its purpose in urban environments. Such understandings affect urban planning policies, materializing in green space classifications and quality on the ground. These spatial outcomes affect local resident wellbeing. Thus, an investigation of existing green spaces in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood will produce valuable insights into the treatment of green spaces according to the amenities present and ownership structures involved. The spatial-temporal GIS analysis provides a grounded model for the abstract concepts employed in the literature and policy documents. Although the literature reviews the unique components influencing dominant green space imaginaries, the following analysis provides a bounded "case" of green space amenities, exemplifying planning trajectories in Toronto (Coombs, 2022). The spatial-temporal analysis compliments the contemporary policy document analysis, providing a multi-layered understanding of the dominant green space imaginary and its spatialized impacts, revealing broader structural patterns.

Currently, there are few regulations dictating the provision of amenities for private developments in the City of Toronto. Landlords are generally understood to be responsible for maintaining their residential complex "in a good state of repair" (Residential Tenancy Act, 2006, s. 20). The City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013 (s. 10.5.55) dictates that apartments with 20 or more dwelling units are required 2 square metres indoors and 2 square metres outdoors of amenity space per dwelling unit, unless abutting a major street in which there must be more than 30 dwelling units. However, the required amenity space may change either positively or negatively during a site-specific zoning by-law amendment process through conditions set out by the City of Toronto case-by-case, as exemplified in the case of White Blocks where amenity space requirements were reduced to 1.2 square metres indoors and 1 square metre outdoors per dwelling unit (Stirling, 2026). Following the redevelopment of a rental apartment building, the City of Toronto does not require property owners to replace the amenities and building features previously present in the original building (City of Toronto, 2025). But, an Ontario Landlord and

Tenant Board ruling suggests that tenants are entitled to access long-standing amenities, if implied by the established behaviour of the landlord. In *P.T v. V.R and L.R* (2018), the landlords attempted to repeal a tenant's access to a parking space that is not listed in the terms of their lease, however the Landlord Tenant Board decided the tenant relied on the parking space and was granted implied permission through four years of uninterrupted use. While this ruling is dependent on the particular amenity type in question (a parking space), the degree to which residents "rely" on an amenity may be argued. Consequently, the retention of existing amenities remains inconsistently protected, making it necessary to examine how they have been transformed in Jane and Finch.

5.1. Data Description

The dataset analysis includes 186 recorded amenities distinguished between 10 gardens, 9 outdoor classrooms, 59 playgrounds, 25 pools, 9 seating, 68 sports, 3 water parks, 3 unknown/unidentified amenities and 2 cases of green space infill between the years 1956–2024 in approximate four-year intervals. The goal was to identify trends in the provision, demolition, and maintenance of green space amenities. I expected relationships to differ depending on the type of green space amenity and property ownership category. Therefore, in the graphs below I sought correlations between amenity type and property ownership types.

Figure 7 shows an initial increase in sports and pool amenities, beginning in the mid-1960s then levelling off by the end of the 1970s. Sports amenities have remained most prominent overall, including a sharp increase with residential development until 1978, steadily increasing until its peak at 59 in the year 2002, and then dipping by 2005 before remaining largely unchanged until the present day. The number of pools grew rapidly with development of apartment buildings beginning in 1968 and had outnumbered playgrounds until 1978, after which no new pools were constructed. Pools plateaued significantly until 1985 before gradually declining until the present day. The number of pools peaked at 22 and declined to 11. Playgrounds continue to be the second most prominent amenity, consistently growing in number with minor dips and plateaus after 1978, 1997, 2009, and 2020 to a total of 50. While a single private water park feature exists, two public water parks were added in the twenty-first century to complement public playgrounds. Playground and sports amenities far outnumber any other amenity in Jane and Finch and have remained similar in quantity since 2005. The number of gardens has risen gradually since 1997, while the provision of public seating has only risen

gradually as of 2012. Outdoor classrooms first appeared in 2009 with a more significant increase in 2024. Two instances of green space infill are also visible in 2005 and 2020. Figure A3 in the Appendix provides deeper insights into the cumulative total of amenities proportionate to property type.

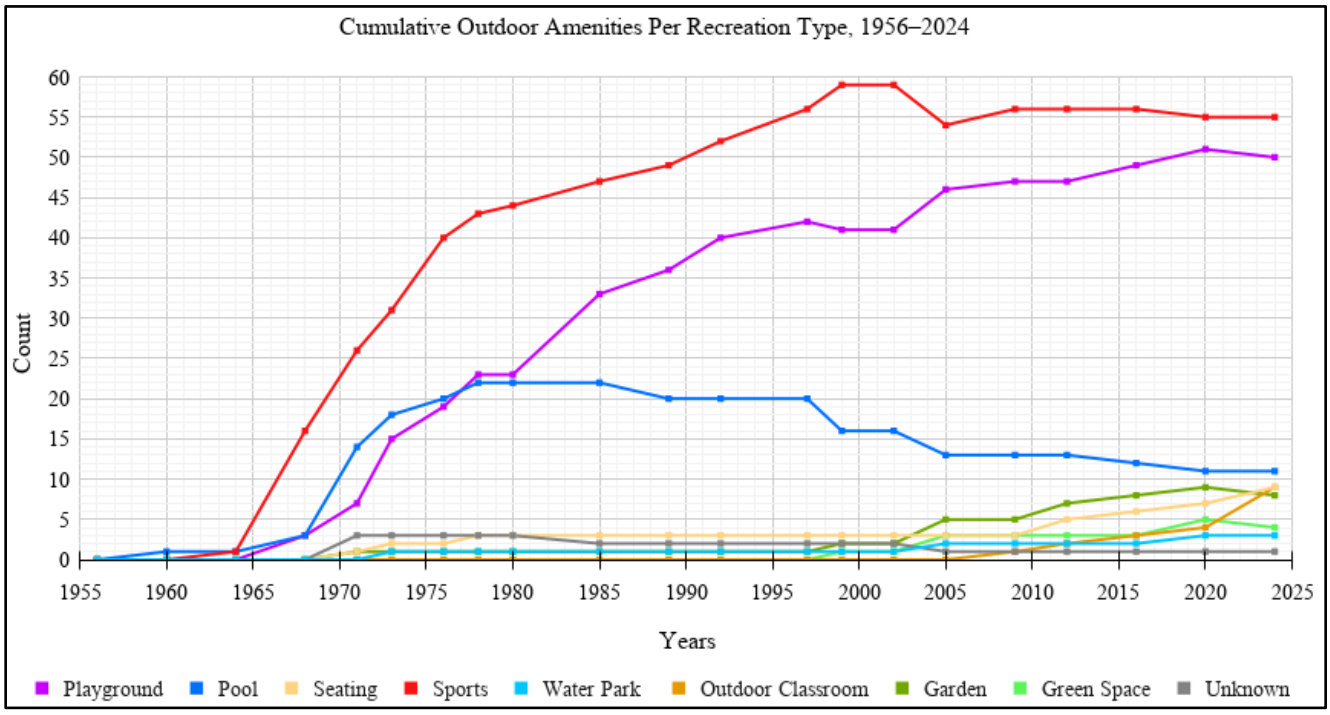


Figure 7. ***Cumulative number of amenities across amenity types.***

The ownership of amenities Figure 8 reveals stark variations over time, revealing significant shifts in the private and public actors responsible for provision. In assessing the private, public, and school-specific contribution to amenity creation, the role of private development in the creation of amenities was most significant during the initial residential development of Jane and Finch in the 1970s. The concentration of amenity creation peaked at 30 amenities with further high-activity years around 1968, 1972, and 1976, indicating a sustained wave of outdoor amenity expansion driven by private property ownership. This data does not reveal the ongoing status of amenities; however, it reveals a period of clear disinvestment by private ownership predominantly between 1980 and 2005, after which minor amenity contributions were made. Public-owned amenities and fewer school-owned amenities were present before 1968, and contributed in smaller varieties during residential development until the late 1970s. After 1980, amenity creation declined entirely and only resumed in 1985 (however, the low resolution of

aerial images during the 1980s may be affecting accuracy and reducing the number of amenity creations reported). From 1985 to 2005, additions fluctuated towards much lower volumes, resulting in typically fewer than ten amenities per year. Amenity provision transitioned towards being school and public ownership-led. From the 2000s onward, overall creation levels continued to be comparatively low; however, the low number of school amenity additions was consistent. A decrease in public-owned investments as of 2009 and slight increase in 2020 led school properties to become especially prominent, particularly in 2024 where no public or private property amenities were created. Minor additions by private properties, slightly below that of schools, can be seen between 2005 and 2020.

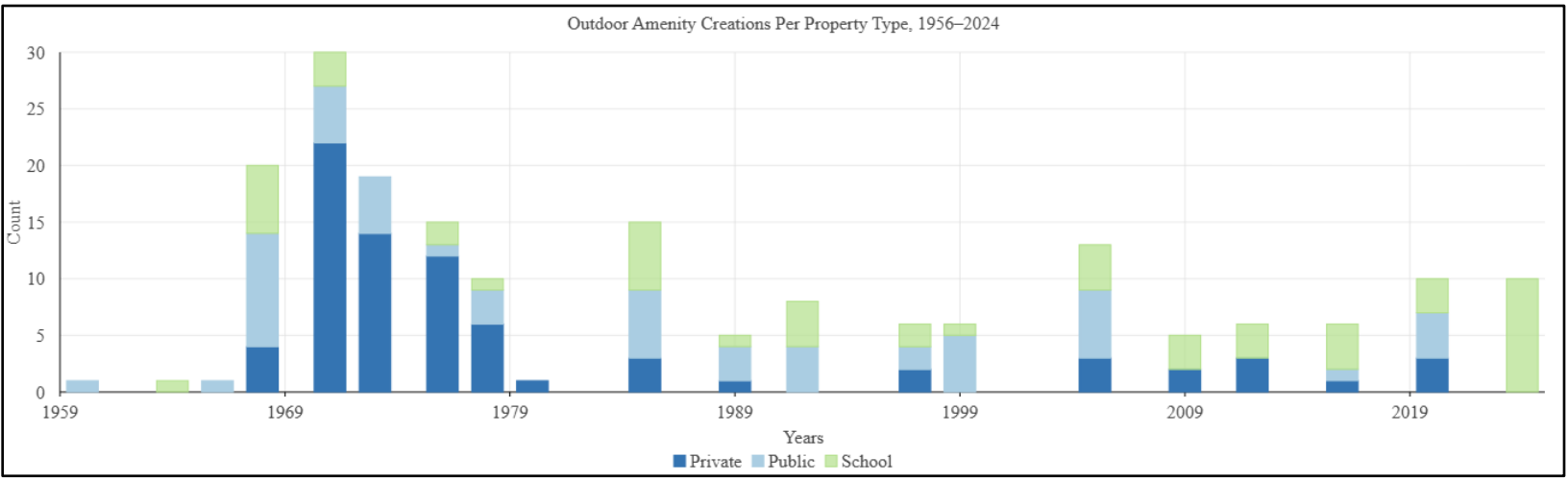


Figure 8. ***Number of amenities created across property types.***

Figure 9 brings the creation of amenities in conversation with their demolition. In a cumulative perspective, the graph confirms the concentrated boom in amenity provision by private property owners during Jane and Finch's initial development, starting in 1968. Private green spaces amenities sharply plateaued in 1978 and fluctuated between 58-60 until 1997. At private amenities' peak, the number of public amenities steadily rose with school amenities similarly rising at a lower total amount. Between 1997 and 2005, the number of private amenities declined to 48. By 2005, publicly owned amenities had marginally surpassed private amenities, after which both ownership categories remained at a relatively similar and stable level of approximately 50 total amenities over time. Throughout the graph, the slope in cumulative school amenity provision has been slightly flatter than that of public amenities, only reaching a similar number during a modest upward turn in 2024. This contrasts with public amenities which have seen its growth gradually slows, approaching a stable level.

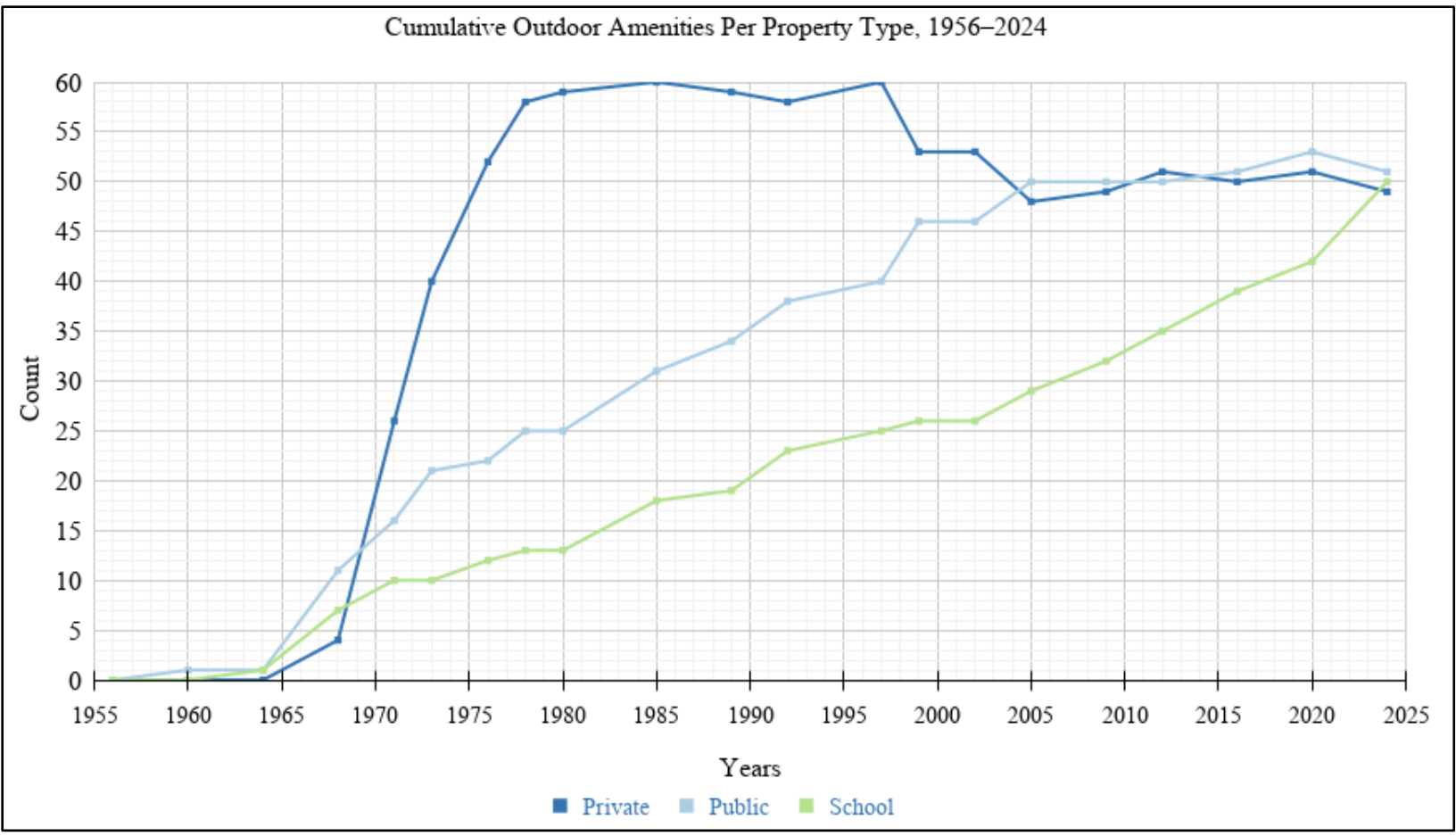


Figure 9. ***Cumulative number of amenities across property types.***

Although the cumulative number of private properties has clearly decreased, looking at Figure 10 circumvents any obfuscation by new amenities, while making the relative lack of demolition by public and school property ownership evident. Five private amenities and one school amenity were demolished between 1985 and 1992 across three instances. The turn of the century was characterized by rapid demolition with seven private amenities demolished in 1999 and eight private, three public, and one school amenity demolished in 2005. The number of demolitions returns to a relatively stable, low level with four private and one public amenity demolished between 2009 and 2016. A moderate increase occurs in 2020 and 2024 with the majority of removals being public amenities, with few school amenities.

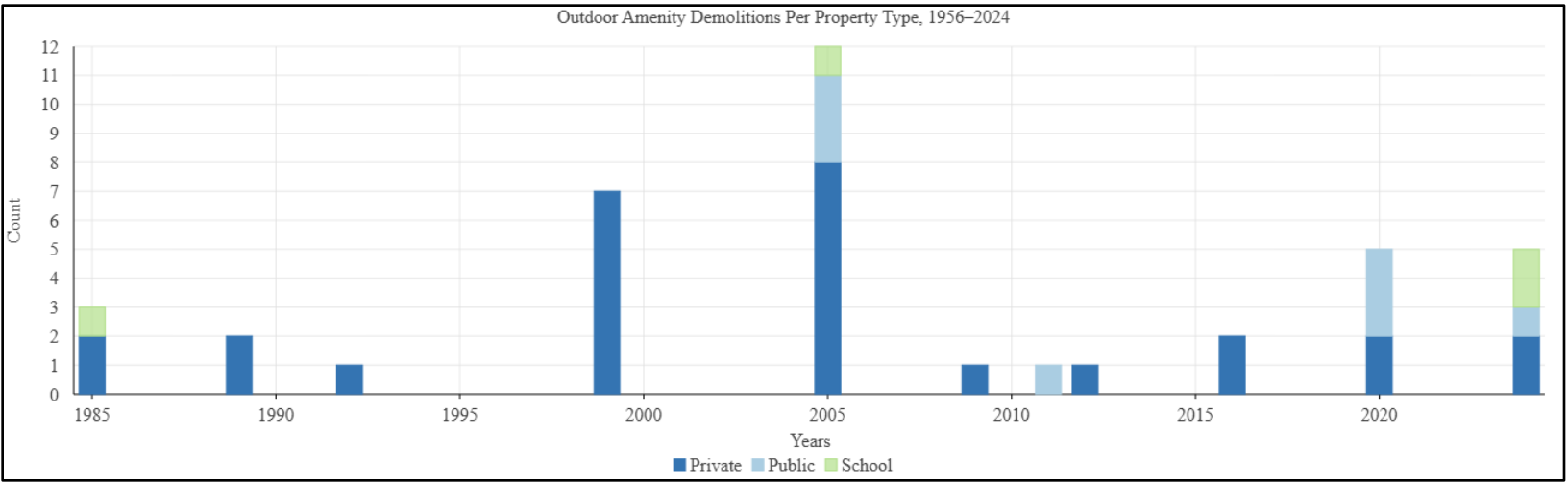


Figure 10. ***Number of amenities demolished across property types.***

Figure 11 displays the cumulative number of amenity renovations across property types, while Figure 12 makes clear the number of renovations taken place annually. Together, the graphs demonstrate consistent-to-increasing investment across all property types. Renovations occur cyclically, with 5–15 year spikes rather than steady activity. While public and school renovation peaks are increasing steadily over time, private peaks are minimally increasing. Private amenity renovations have peaked at around 3–5 instances approximately during the early 1990s, 2005, 2020. Most renovations have always been conducted on public amenities. Public amenity renovations typically have peaked at around 4 approximately during the late 1980s, 1999, and 2012, with the latest exception incurring an all-time-high of 10 in 2020. Public amenity renovations have occurred sooner and in greater amounts than their counterparts. As a result, public amenities have accumulated the most overall renovations up to date. School amenities received few but consistent renovations until 1992. The number of school amenity renovations

increased in 2005, whereafter a clear upward-curve indicates an accelerating rate of renovation. The cumulative number of renovations for school amenities followed a similar but distinct pattern to private amenities. Private amenity renovations first bypassed school amenity renovations in 1989, then gradually increased during investment cycles, maintaining a higher overall total in renovations. Between 2016 and 2024, the number of school amenity renovations increased steeply, leading school amenity renovations to close its cumulative gap with private renovations.

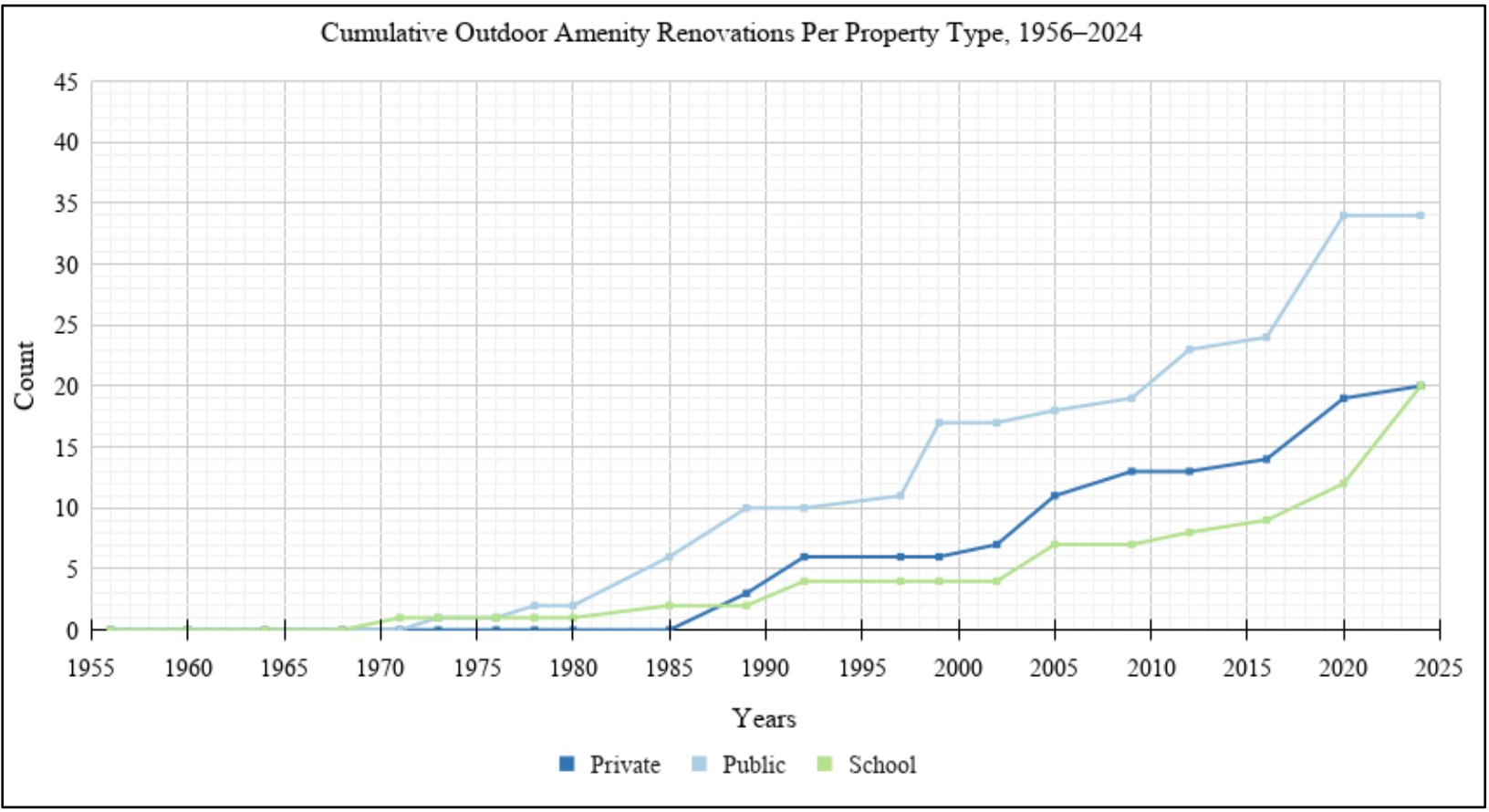


Figure 11. ***Cumulative number of amenity renovations across property types.***

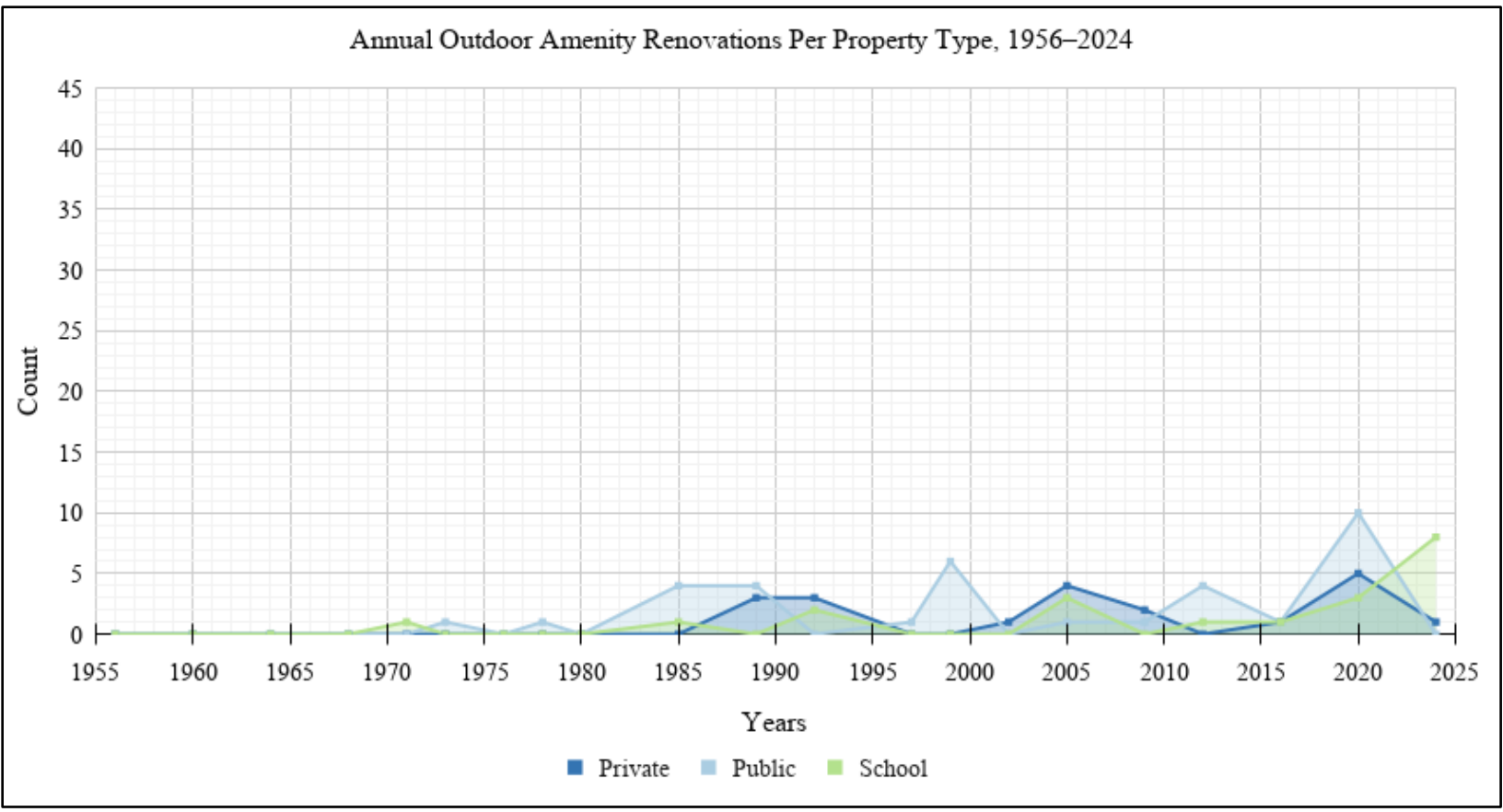


Figure 12. ***Annually created amenity types across property types.***

Figure 13 displays the cumulative number of amenity renovations across amenity types, while Figure 14 makes clear the number of renovations taken place annually. Together, the graphs signal a clear preference for the maintenance of playground and sports amenities. Sports amenities were the earliest and primary focus of renovations, beginning in the 1970s then again accelerating in the 1980s. By 1989, sports amenity renovations reached 10 cumulative instances, exceeding all other amenities. However sports renovation activity plateaued entirely after 1989, only steadily increasing between 2005–2024, reaching about 21 cumulative renovations. Although sports amenities were the dominant recreational priority during the neighbourhood's earlier decades, playground renovations peaked beyond all other amenities during 1985, 1999, 2005, and 2020. By 2024, playground renovations accounted for approximately 45 cumulative renovations, more than double the number for sports amenities. Other recreation types received relatively little attention. Pools experienced limited renovation activity, with 4 cumulative renovations despite their early presence. One garden site was renovated in 1992 while more recently seating areas were renovated.

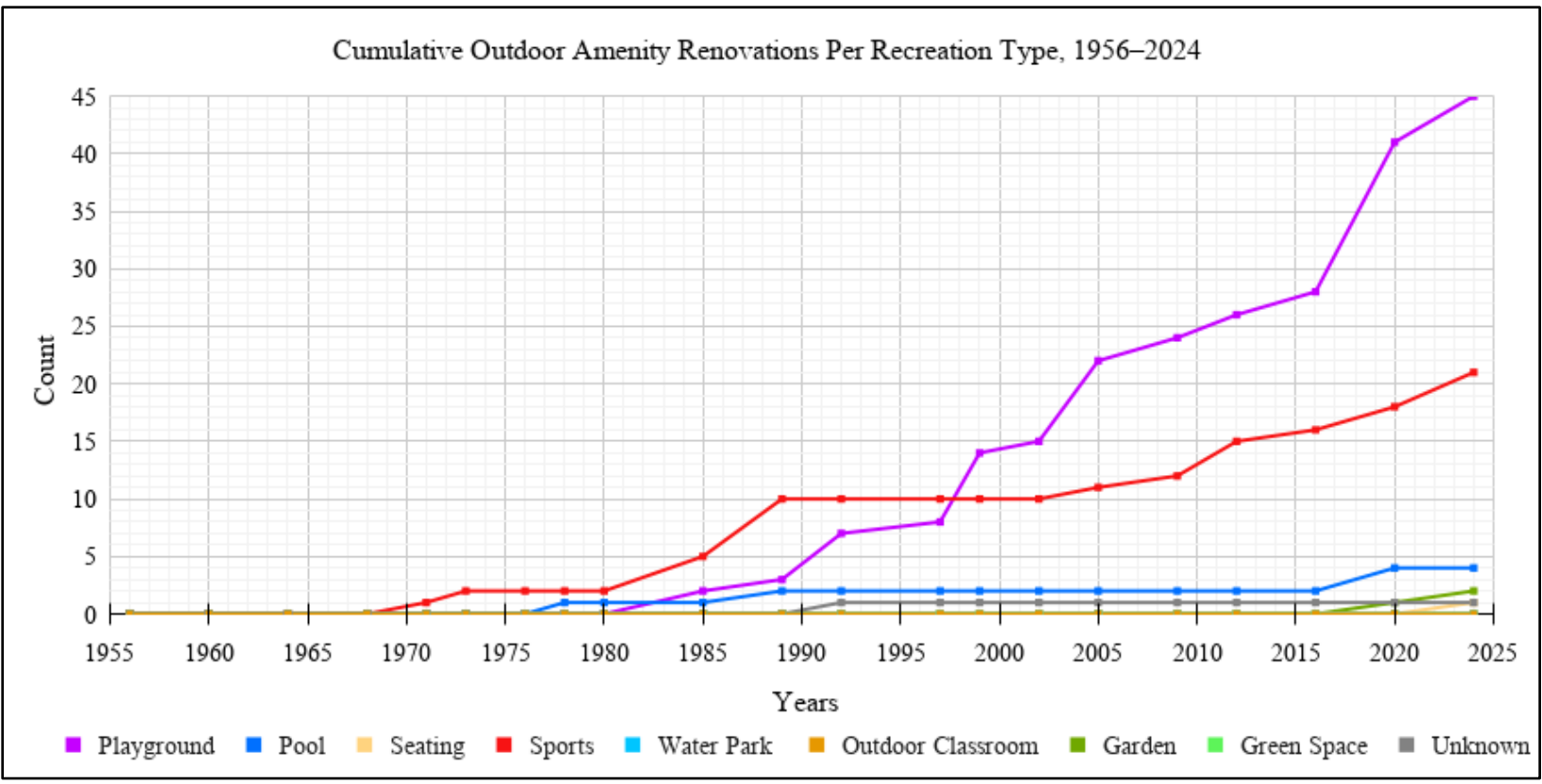


Figure 13. ***Cumulative number of amenity renovations across amenity types.***

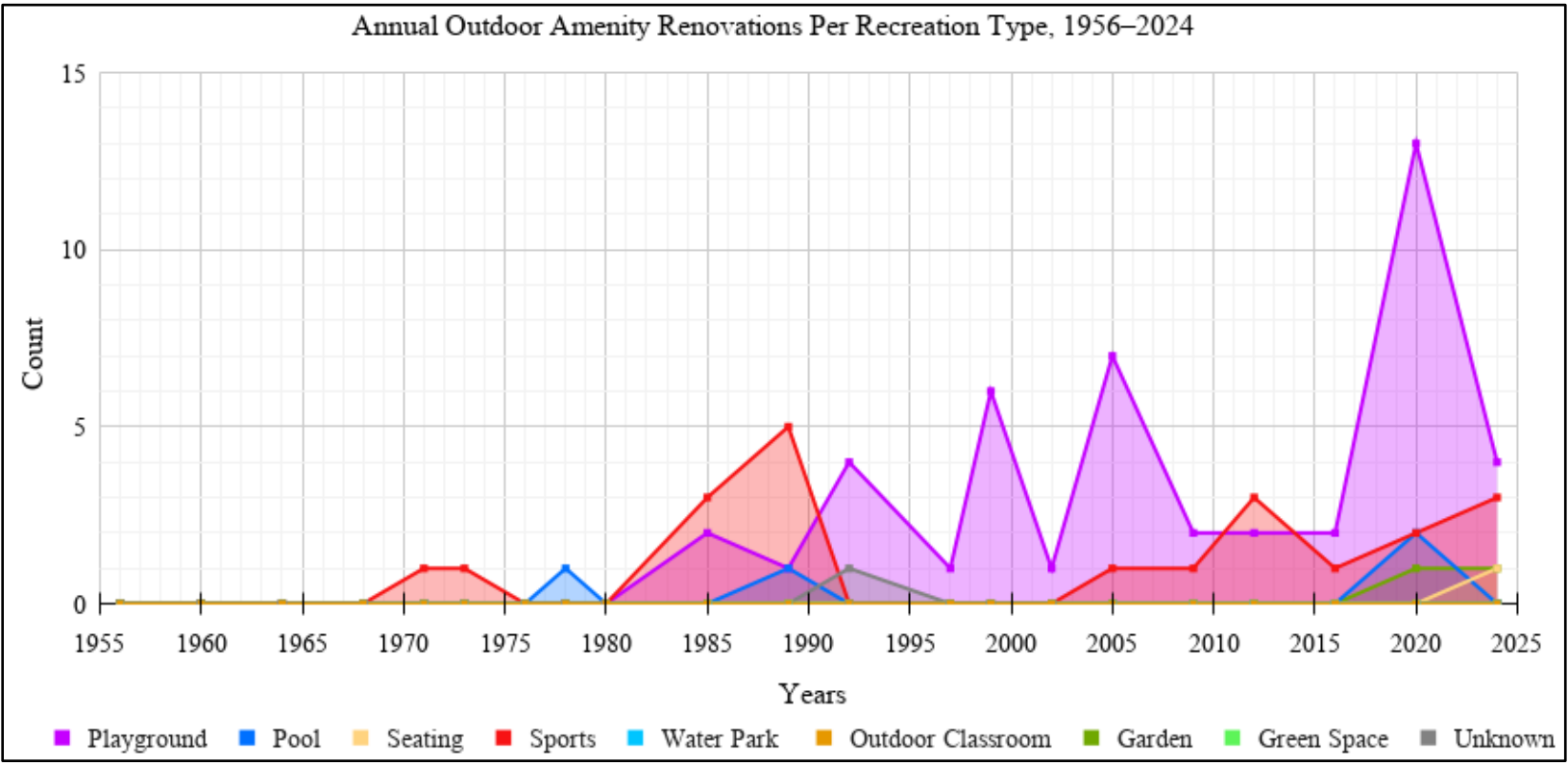


Figure 14. ***Number of amenities renovated annually across amenity types.***

5.2. Data Limitations

The study data is subject to several limitations affecting precision. The City of Toronto did not produce aerial images for every year. Consequently, I used photomaps and orthophotos adjacent to the unavailable years to approximate the four-year intervals. The available imagery was captured at varying times of year, seasonal conditions, and aerial perspectives. Because the dataset relied on free-to-access images from predominantly online sources, image quality and spatial coverage varied considerably. Missing data tiles from the 2016 orthophotomosaic also affects the specificity of reporting. Several digital photomaps were only available in low-resolutions, increasing the difficulty of identifying smaller amenities and determining precise dates of establishment, renovation, or demolition. These issues were amplified in older photomaps due to the technological limitations.

Although every effort was made to ensure methodological rigor, the analysis is also limited by the nature of historical aerial imagery. Minor georeferencing inaccuracies between aerial images occasionally produced slight spatial distortions. Consequently, amenity point locations represent their approximate positions relative to the most recent imagery rather than precise real-world coordinates. Aerial photography also cannot consistently capture the condition or quality of amenities beyond major physical modifications, nor can it reliably identify smaller features obscured by shadows, canopies, or image resolution. While my approach enables longitudinal analysis from above, any experiential data in regards to patterns of use, community attitudes, or perceived quality according to local residents is not encompassed in the study.

Finally, a major feature of Jane and Finch, the Black Creek Ravine, was not investigated as part of this analysis, however it was a space for swimming and general recreation prior to urbanization and continues to function as a recreational trail with amenities such as BBQs, exercise parks, and fire pits (MacNevin, 2022).

5.3. Discussion

Jane and Finch was developed upon modernist principles, and has faced minimal urban development since. The creation of amenities was privately-driven during the neighbourhood's development in the 1960–1970s. This early provision of amenities provided a form of regulating social welfare, supporting everyday life rather than the picturesque nature associated with elite urban landscapes. Early amenities were primarily active recreation including sports fields, playgrounds, and swimming pools, located on the vast open spaces that surrounded apartment

towers, if not in public parks and community centres. Yet in the 1980s and 1990s, a shift occurred where reinvestment in private amenities did not match their initial provision. Alongside increased demolition, private amenity provision plateaued before decreasing between 1995–2005. Private actors appeared to withdraw from responsibility for these collective open space sites.

After the majority of Jane and Finch had been built out by the 1980s, public institutions took on a greater role in providing public benefits. Although public amenities were still outnumbered by private ones into the 1990s, the renovations of existing amenities outpaced the private sector. By 2005, public amenity growth plateaued after decades of steady increase, having expanded enough to offset the demolition of private amenities. The total number of public and private amenities has since remained at approximately 100, which potentially represents a local equilibrium in City of Toronto standards. Amenity renovations occur cyclically in 5–15 year intervals, and have increased significantly since the mid-1980s onward. Public amenities have consistently received the greatest share of reinvestment. In contrast, private amenities, although declining in total, have seen gradual increases in renovation activity, suggesting a relatively improved average quality among the existing private sites. This produces a new dynamic for the twenty-first century, wherein Jane and Finch residents have fewer private pool and sports amenities in particular, and must seek out public amenities instead. School amenities, while initially limited, are emerging rapidly, particularly by 2024 when they match other ownership types in total provision. School amenities have experienced accelerating renovation rates since the 2000s, and provided relatively positive reinvestment in comparison to private amenities. In retrospect, the lower total amount of public and school amenities in Jane and Finch prior to 1997 can now be interpreted as an overall deficit, compared to contemporary dynamics.

The types of amenities in Jane and Finch over time have revealed a recent shift towards amenity diversification. Historically, sports amenities were dominant across all ownership types, and have subsequently received less intensive upgrades, which in part may be due to their ease of maintenance. Pools, despite their early prominence as a private amenity, have been largely neglected in maintenance cycles, and declined consistently since 1985. In contrast, playgrounds have sustained prioritization among public and school amenities since 1985. Playgrounds receive the most renovations, far surpassing the cumulative renovations of sports amenities despite

having the smaller overall quantity. The attention towards playgrounds, both in creation and renovation, reflects their perceived significance as curated to families. More recently, new amenities such as gardens, outdoor classrooms, water parks, and general seating reflects new interests in both passive and active recreational uses across all property types.

Although the new urbanist compact city approach is evident in literature and policy, Jane and Finch has not yet experienced a resurgence in urban development accompanied by private amenities. The narrative of Jane and Finch's disinvestment and community in the latter 20th century occurred whilst private amenity provision was at its peak, reaching 60 in total, and public and school amenities were still far fewer in total. This shows a failure of anticipation by Keynesian public amenity provision, underestimating community needs despite local planning efforts. The growth of new public amenities was a priority until 2005, during which the focus shifted to renovation. Although modernist open spaces were not entirely abandoned, the questionable role of private amenities is especially critical to evaluating the prospective outcomes of the compact new urbanist paradigm. Jane and Finch is expected to undergo major changes in future years due to major revitalizations and numerous proposed infill developments in the greater neighbourhood area.

The established dataset and findings provide a foundation for future research, linking amenity distribution to policy, offering deeper insights into how policy implementation shapes everyday neighbourhood life. The rapid development of Jane and Finch, premised on private amenities, did not fully respond to community needs. Increased public amenity provision was necessary and overtook responsibility for the disappeared private amenities between 1999–2005. While renovations are the primary focus, the data suggests that new more intense and dense developments will require even more intentional amenity provision to accommodate not only new populations, but the maintenance and ongoing existence of the amenities into the future. The current balance of amenity distribution across ownership types is a result of a decrease in private amenities. Looking forward, more concern should be placed on maintaining the long-term condition of private amenities, and the uneven treatment of amenity types, particularly the neglect of pools. If new private developments are not accompanied by new public and school amenity provision, then historic issues of scarce amenities may be reproduced, however, this time alongside dynamics of gentrification. Future policy frameworks must recognize the risks of neoliberal private development failing to generate public benefit to future populations, especially

as new amenities are increasingly securitized and catered to elite classes. Thus, greater attention should be paid to amenities as sites of informal community gathering, as their uses project alternative histories of planning.

6. Conclusion

The Jane and Finch neighbourhood demonstrates that green spaces are social landscapes whose meanings exceed the ecological or recreational functions prescribed by Toronto's dominant urban imaginary. As Jane and Finch was developed, modernist planning required generous green spaces and recreational amenities to be integrated alongside housing. While the provision of amenities was insufficient in the early 1970s, it rapidly increased by the end of the decade (Hayhurst, 1974). However, this growth was driven primarily by private apartment developments, whose semi-public outdoor amenities increased in number more rapidly than publicly-owned amenities. Consequently, privately-supplied amenities like pools, playgrounds, and sports fields became essential neighbourhood infrastructure. These semi-public green spaces could then be transformed by residents into sites of care and collective life, supporting the community's overall wellbeing.

Despite their importance to community life, Jane and Finch's green spaces are not politically neutral. Across Victorian planning, Modernism, and New Urbanism, green spaces have served as mechanisms through which elite social values are spatially normalized. Modernist planning, while encompassing recreation and social housing provisions, responded to urban issues through assumptions rooted in white, middle-class norms. Throughout the historical evolution of green space planning, desirable landscapes have repeatedly been defined through aesthetic and behavioural expectations rooted in the urban elite's Eurocentric ideals. Because many of Jane and Finch's amenities were privately owned, their continued provision depended on landlords ongoing investment, which in turn relied on the neighbourhood's economic desirability as perceived through attractive lush green spaces, high-quality facilities, and lifestyle norms. As Jane and Finch failed to embody the white, middle-class ideal, increasingly became home to immigrant and racialized populations through its affordable rental housing, the established set of privately-owned green space amenities received less sustained private investment. While publicly-owned amenities continued to increase in number and renovations, the social structures underpinning the modernist neighbourhood failed to meet the needs of its marginalized population. As a result, Jane and Finch not only lacked green space luxuries, but

also experienced deteriorating infrastructure alongside growing social stigma. This history illustrates that as green space planning shapes the lives of all residents, it disproportionately harms marginalized racialized communities through the continued reproduction of a white spatial imaginary that privileges particular understandings of how green spaces should be designed, managed, and used.

As the disinvestment of modernist neighbourhoods contributed to relative affordability for marginalized groups, expansive green spaces provide opportunities for collective living. Racialized and low-income residents continue to access Jane and Finch's semi-public green spaces, where they collectively manage the constraints of their oppressive environment. Ironically, the value of modernist green spaces emerges because many remain loosely programmed. Rather than being defined by formal design intentions or territorializing borders, these landscapes help community life to develop through self-directed practices. Residents from across the neighbourhood can visit, reinterpret, and collectively produce green spaces as desired. In Jane and Finch's low-income, renter landscape where many households lack private backyards and storage space, green space amenities facilitate child-care, exercise, social gatherings, and key recreational opportunities. This does not mean that value lies in green spaces or amenities themselves, but in the experiences and relationships they enable, thereby impacting one's sense of place, attachment, and belonging (Kimpton et al., 2013). Consequently, the demolition of more than ten privately supplied amenities after the 1990s reduced opportunities for Jane and Finch residents to connect with their community and share responsibilities. Despite the disappearance of these physical infrastructures, the histories embedded within these spaces endure through memories. This suggests that successful green spaces are not necessarily those that are most comprehensively planned, but those that remain open to continual reinterpretation by the communities that inhabit them.

More than fifty years after Jane and Finch's development, its modernist-era green spaces have become increasingly targeted for redevelopment. Although planning paradigms have changed, they continue to suppress the informal spatial practices through which racialized and low-income communities take care of one another in favour of orderly, highly regulated green spaces. The City of Toronto reimagines modernist green spaces, especially those surrounding towers-in-the-park, through a reductive and ahistorical planning lens. With the rise of New Urbanism, modernist neighbourhoods became symbols of planning failures, attributing local

crime and poverty to their design. Amidst media spectacle and stigmatization, the private amenities in Jane and Finch green spaces continue to be demolished. Their neglect reinforces narratives that characterize these landscapes as underused, poorly defined, and dangerous. Because planning and ownership structures rarely accommodate informal community uses in green spaces through permanent infrastructure or recognition, the absence of formal amenities provides little visible evidence to corroborate their continuing social importance. In contrast, the City of Toronto protects publicly owned parks from private encroachment, failing to even acknowledge semi-public green spaces as community assets. Consequently, these "peripheral" and "in-between" sites are primed to be captured by the compact city paradigm, which prioritizes urban intensification and densification (Valzania, 2022; Zalar & Pries, 2022). This approach supports neoliberal logics which enable private developers to treat green spaces as sites to extract economic value, rather than social spaces (Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2025; Young & Keil, 2014). Therefore, Toronto's urban planning imaginary must represent modernist green spaces as empty, problematic landscapes to solve through active programming, management, and development (Zalar & Pries, 2022). In reducing modernist green spaces to landscapes of decline, and Jane and Finch residents as unfortunate or criminal, the urban imaginary fails to see our lived histories of care, cooperation, and community-building.

In a neoliberal era that continues to displace and dispossess marginalized communities, the importance of preserving informal and undefined green spaces cannot be overstated. Across Toronto's planning documents, the value of green spaces lies not in enabling residents to define purpose and meaning for themselves but in the ability to support compact urban form. The Urban Design Guidelines documents and Official Plan imagines green spaces using clearly prescribed functions such as connectivity, natural conservation, or recreation that efficiently organizes the public realm, but overlooks the negotiated uses that characterize neighbourhoods such as Jane and Finch. While these documents and the Park Strategy invoke accessibility, equity, placemaking, and diversity, they largely omit how informal practices contribute to community wellbeing. By contrast, the Jane Finch planning documents recognize residents as active producers of space by acknowledging informal uses, everyday leisure, and the risks of displacement and gentrification, thereby advancing a community-based counter-imaginary. Yet, even these planning documents stop short of recognizing that the concentration of racialized poverty is not accidental, but the product of neoliberal urbanization operating through racial

inequalities (Saberi, 2022). Preserving Jane and Finch green spaces therefore preserves the openness by which communities imagine, negotiate, and produce space on their own terms. Ultimately, this paper argues that the greatest threat to Toronto's modernist green spaces is not development itself, but the planning imaginaries that devalue their histories and everyday community uses by continually seeking to animate, define, and prescribe every landscape. Reframing these landscapes as lived, socially productive spaces offers a foundation for more equitable approaches to urban planning and development. Rather than determining every function or activity, urban planners must encourage unfinished landscapes, allowing their futures to be shaped by the communities that inhabit them. In doing so, planners acknowledge that justice lies not only in participation during the planning process, but also in protecting space for communities to continue producing place long after planning is complete.

Bibliography

Ahmed, S. K., Mohammed, R. A., Nashwan, A. J., Ibrahim, R. H., Abdalla, A. Q., M. Ameen, B. M., & Khdhir, R. M. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, *6*, Article 100198. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198

Aghoghovwia, P. (2022). Postcolonial Nature. In *Nature and Literary Studies* (pp. 211–228). https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108872263.014

Anguelovski, I., Brand, A. L., Ranganathan, M., & Hyra, D. (2022). Decolonizing the Green City: From Environmental Privilege to Emancipatory Green Justice. *Environmental Justice*, *15*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2021.0014

Anguelovski, I. (2016). From Toxic Sites to Parks as (Green) LULUs? New Challenges of Inequity, Privilege, Gentrification, and Exclusion for Urban Environmental Justice. *Journal of Planning Literature*, *31*(1), 23–36. https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412215610491

Aoki, K. (1993). Race, space and place: The relation between architectural modernism, post - modernism, urban planning and gentrification. *The Fordham Urban Law Journal*, *20*, 699–829.

August, M. (2020). The financialization of Canadian multi-family rental housing: From trailer to tower. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *42*(7), 975–997. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2019.1705846

Bain, D. (2022). Toronto's Nineteenth-Century Exhibition Parks: free of admission to all peaceable persons... *Ontario History*, *114*(1), 64–87. https://doi.org/10.7202/1088105ar

Beamish, A. (2018). A garden in the street: the introduction of street trees in Boston and New York. *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, *38*(1), 38–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/14601176.2017.1281034

Beamish, A. (2021). Before Parks: Public Landscapes in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. *Landscape Journal*, *40*(2), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.3368/lj.40.2.1

Beckett, J. (2020). Public parks and urban development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Nottingham. *Midland History*, *45*(1), 75–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/0047729X.2020.1712078

Bedair, S., Sayed, S. A., & AlMetwaly, W. M. (2022). Enhancing Hybrid Learning using Open Source GIS-Based Maps Archiving System. *The Egyptian Journal of Remote Sensing and Space Sciences*, *25*(3), 779–793. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejrs.2022.07.003

Benjamin, R. (2024). *Imagination: A manifesto*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Bierema, S., & Ruggi, L. O. (2025). The Ramblings of an Angry Pig: Disruptive Counter-Imaginaries and the Meaning of Work at the University of Galway. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-025-10013-8

Binet, A., Houston-Read, R., Gavin, V., Baty, C., Abreu, D., Genty, J., Arcaya, M. (2023). The Urban Infrastructure of Care: Planning for Equitable Social Reproduction. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 89*(3), 282–294. https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/10.1080/01944363.2022.2099955

Blumenfeld, H. (1971). The Good Neighbourhood. In P. D. Spreiregen (ed.), *The Modern Metropolis: Its Origins, Growth, Characteristics, and Planning: Selected Essays by Hans Blumenfeld* (pp. 180–189). MIT Press. (originally published 1962).

Bonakdar, A., & Audirac, I. (2021). City planning, urban imaginary, and the branded space: Untangling the role of city plans in shaping Dallas's urban imaginaries. *Cities*, *117*, Article 103315. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103315

Boudreau, J.-A., Keil, R., & Young, D. (2020). The In-between City. In *Changing Toronto* (pp. 119–140). University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442603363-010

Brahinsky, R., Sasser, J., & Minkoff-Zern, L.-A. (2014). Race, Space, and Nature: An Introduction and Critique: Race, Space, and Nature. *Antipode*, *46*(5), 1135–1152. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12109

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brenner, N., & Theodore, N. (2005). Neoliberalism and the urban condition. *City (London, England)*, *9*(1), 101–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810500092106

Canadian Architect. (July, 2025). Biidaasige park opens in Toronto's Port Lands. *Canadian Architect*. https://www.canadianarchitect.com/biidaasige-park-opens-in-torontos-port-lands/

Choi, H. (2023). Paris, origin of urban modernism. *Urban, Planning and Transport Research*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/21650020.2023.2246541

Chowdhury, A., & Shil, N. C. (2021). Thinking 'Qualitative' Through a Case Study: Homework for a Researcher. *American Journal of Qualitative Research (AJQR)*, *5*(2 (In Progress)), 190–210. https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/11280

City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013 (Office consolidation). (2013). City of Toronto. https://www.toronto.ca/zoning/bylaw_amendments/ZBL_NewProvision_Chapter10.htm#10.5.55.1

City of Toronto. (2013, March). Tall building design guidelines. City Planning Division. https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/96ea-cityplanning-tall-buildings-may2013-final-AODA.pdf

City of Toronto. (2018, January). Townhouse & low-rise apartment guidelines. City Planning Division. https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/7f47-city-planning-townhouse-low-rise-apartment-guidelines-2018.pdf

City of Toronto. (2019, November). Parkland strategy: Growing Toronto parkland. Parks, Forestry & Recreation. https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/97fb-parkland-strategy-full-report-final.pdf

City of Toronto. (2024). Mid-rise building design guidelines. [Draft]. City Planning Division. https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/8e11-city-planning-mid-rise-building-design-guidelines.pdf

City of Toronto. (2024a, February). Jane Finch Secondary Plan. (Amendment 633). City Planning Division. https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ey/bgrd/backgroundfile-243794.pdf

City of Toronto. (2024b, February). Jane Finch urban design guidelines. City Planning Division. https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ey/bgrd/backgroundfile-243795.pdf

City of Toronto. (2024, June). Toronto official plan: Office consolidation (Chapters 1–5). City Planning Division. https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/895f-CityPlanning-Toronto-Official-Plan-Chapters-1-5-June-2024-Office-Consolidation.pdf

City of Toronto. (2025, April). Demolition and Replacement of Rental Housing: A handbook for tenants and property owners. *City of Toronto*. https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-254085.pdf

Clark, P. (2016). Introduction. In P. Clark, M. Niemi, & C. Nolin (Eds.), *Green landscapes in the European City, 1750-2010* (pp. 1–16). Routledge.

Common Bond Collective. (2024). Jane Finch historic context statement. City of Toronto. https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ey/bgrd/backgroundfile-243799.pdf

Coombs, H. (2022). *Case study research defined* [White Paper]. Southern Utah University. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7604301.

Cranz, G. (1982). *The politics of park design: a history of urban parks in America*. MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5469.001.0001

Crompton, J. L. (2020). Using proximate real estate to fund England's nineteenth century pioneering urban parks: viable vehicle or mendacious myth? *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, *40*(1), 43–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/14601176.2019.1638164

Daniels, T. L. (2009). A trail across time: American environmental planning from city beautiful to sustainability. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 75*(2), 178–192. https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/10.1080/01944360902748206

Davoudi, S. (2018). Policy and practice spatial imaginaries: tyrannies or transformations? *Town Planning Review*, *89*(2), 97–124. https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2018.7

DeBats, D. A., & Gregory, I. N. (2011). Introduction to Historical GIS and the Study of Urban History. *Social Science History*, *35*(4), 455–463. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0145553200011639

Dempsey, N., & Nam, J. (2024). Urban parks in crisis…again? A historical examination of the political, economic and social context of UK parks. *Landscape and Ecological Engineering*, *20*(3), 311–322. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11355-024-00597-7

Derrien, M. M., & Stokowski, P. A. (2020). Discursive constructions of night sky experiences: Imagination and imaginaries in national park visitor narratives. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *85*(complete). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103038

Dore, M. (2023). Governing through design: the politics of participation in neoliberal cities. *CoDesign*, *19*(3), 253–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2022.2129691

Earley-Spadoni, T. (2017). Spatial History, deep mapping and digital storytelling: archaeology's future imagined through an engagement with the Digital Humanities. *Journal of Archaeological Science*, *84*, 95–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2017.05.003

Eisenman, T. S. (2016). Greening Cities in an Urbanizing Age: The Human Health Bases in the Nineteenth and Early Twenty-first Centuries. *Change over Time*, *6*(2), 216–246. https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2016.0014

E.R.A. Architects, planningAlliance, & Cities Centre at the University of Toronto. (2010). *Tower neighbourhood renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: An analysis of high-rise apartment tower neighbourhoods developed in the post-war boom (1945-1984)*. Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure, Ontario Growth Secretariat. https://cugr.ca/tnrggh/

E.R.A. Architects, & University of Toronto. (2008). *Mayor's tower renewal: Opportunities book*. City of Toronto. https://towerrenewal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MTR-030908-part-1.pdf

Eshrati, D. (2022). The motives behind creating nineteenth-century pleasure grounds in the newly-settled state of Kansas, USA. *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, *42*(1), 48–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/14601176.2022.2045741

Evelev, J. (2014). Rus-Urban Imaginings: Literature of the American Park Movement and Representations of Social Space in the Mid-Nineteenth Century. *Early American Studies*, *12*(1), 174–201. https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2014.0004

Fike, K. J., Wolf, J., & Williams, P. C. (2025). Modeling the Black Spatial Imaginary: Exploring communal dynamics and emotional investments as contributors to residents' ownership of change. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2025.2577381

Fishman, R. (1982). Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier. MIT Press. (pp. 3–22)

Fortin, M., & Bonnell, J. (Eds.). (2013). *Historical GIS research in Canada*. University of Calgary Press.

Foster, J. (2023). Conceptualizing Urban Postindustrial Greenspace. In *Post-Industrial Urban Greenspace Ecology, Aesthetics and Justice* (1st ed., pp. 12–46). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315106403-2

Gamber, J. (2022). Nature and Race. In *Nature and Literary Studies* (P. Remien & S. Slovic eds.) (pp. 280–295). https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108872263.019

Garrard, G. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of ecocriticism* (G. Garrard, Ed.; 1st ed.). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199742929.001.0001

Geddes, P. (1968). *Cities in Evolution: An introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics 1915*. London: Ernest Benn.

George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.

Rose, G. (2026). Image, screen, projection: Conceptualising the urban (imaginary) in digital visual culture. *Urban Studies (Edinburgh, Scotland)*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980251407960

Goetz, E. G., Williams, R. A., & Damiano, A. (2022). Whiteness and urban planning: Journal of the American Planning Association, 2020. In E. J. Mueller & J. R. Tighe (Eds.), *The Affordable Housing Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 458–476). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429299377-39

Goist, P. D. (1974). Patrick Geddes and the City. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, *40*(1), 31–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944367408977444

Gregory, I. N. & Geddes, A. (2014). Toward spatial humanities: historical GIS and spatial history (I. N. Gregory & A. Geddes Eds.). Indiana University Press.

Güney, K. M., Keil, R., & Üçoğlu, M. (2019). Conclusion: Massive Suburbia – From The Legacy Of The Habitat To The Financialization Of Housing In The Planetary Periphery. In K. M. Guney, R. Keil, & M. Ucoglu (Eds.), *Massive Suburbanization* (pp. 344–354). University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487531867-020

Haase, D., Kabisch, S., Haase, A., Andersson, E., Banzhaf, E., Baró, F., Brenck, M., Fischer, L. K., Frantzeskaki, N., Kabisch, N., Krellenberg, K., Kremer, P., Kronenberg, J., Larondelle, N., Mathey, J., Pauleit, S., Ring, I., Rink, D., Schwarz, N., & Wolff, M. (2017). Greening cities – To be socially inclusive? About the alleged paradox of society and ecology in cities. *Habitat International*, *64*, 41–48. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2017.04.005

Hall, P. (2014). Cities of Imagination: Alternative visions of the good city, 1880–1987. In *Cities of Tomorrow*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Hanzl, M., & Rembeza, M. (2022). Greenery and Urban Form vs. Health of Residents: Evaluation of Modernist Housing in Lodz and Gdansk. *Urban Planning*, *7*(4), 96–112. https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v7i4.5831

Hayhurst, K. (April 29, 1974). From your alderman: Recreation anyone?. *The Jane Corridor.* (790991-22, Fonds 1142, File 57),. City of Toronto Archives.

Hazeland, A. (1971). Design of multiple housing. In R. R. Krueger & R. C. Bryfogle (Eds.), *Urban problems: A Canadian reader* (pp. 249–251). Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited. (Reprinted from *Housing in Cities, Some Examples of Multiple Housing Recently Built in Canada*, by A. Hazeland, 1964)

Hebbert, M. (2008). Re-Enclosure of the Urban Picturesque: Green-Space Transformations in Postmodern Urbanism. *Town Planning Review*, *79*(1), 31–59. https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.79.1.4

Hickman, C. (2013). 'To brighten the aspect of our streets and increase the health and enjoyment of our city': The National Health Society and urban green space in late-nineteenth century London. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *118*, 112–119. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2012.09.007

Hirt, S. A. (2009). Premodern, Modern, Postmodern? Placing New Urbanism into a Historical Perspective. *Journal of Planning History*, *8*(3), 248–273. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513209338902

hooks, b.. (2015). Homeplace: A Site of Resistance. In b. hooks (Ed.), *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (2nd ed., pp. 41–49). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743110-5

Hore, J. (2022). *Visions of Nature : How Landscape Photography Shaped Settler Colonialism* (1st ed.). University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520381278

Ingold, T. (2021). The temporality of the landscape. In T. Ingold (Ed.), *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (1st ed., pp. 234–258). Routledge. https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/10.4324/9781003196662

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities*. Random House

Kaplan, E. K. (1972). Gaston Bachelard's philosophy of imagination: An introduction. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *33*(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/2106717

Kazansky, B., & Milan, S. (2021). "Bodies not templates": Contesting dominant algorithmic imaginaries. *New Media & Society*, *23*(2), 363–381. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820929316

Kimpton, A., Wickes, R., & Corcoran, J. (2014). Greenspace and Place Attachment: Do Greener Suburbs Lead to Greater Residential Place Attachment? *Urban Policy and Research*, *32*(4), 477–497. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2014.908769

Klesmer, I. (2016). What's the renewal potential for tower sites in the GTA?. The Atmospheric Fund. https://taf.ca/t/

Knowles, A. K. (2005). Emerging trends in historical GIS. *Historical Geography, 33*(1), 7-13. University of Nebraska Press. https://dhjhkxawhe8q4.cloudfront.net/nebraska-journals-wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/16184618/01HG33-Knowles.pdf

LaGrand, J. B. (2020). Understanding Urban Progressivism and the City Beautiful Movement. *Pennsylvania History*, *87*(1), 11–21. https://doi.org/10.5325/pennhistory.87.1.0011

Larson, S. M. (2018). Imagining social justice and the false promise of urban park design. *Environment and Planning. A*, *50*(2), 391–406. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X17742156

Lee, K. J., Fernandez, M., Scott, D., & Floyd, M. (2023). Slow violence in public parks in the U.S.: can we escape our troubling past? *Social & Cultural Geography*, *24*(7), 1185–1202. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2022.2028182

Lehrer, U. (2017). Room for the Good Society?: Public space, amenities and the condominium. In H. Rangan, M. K. NG, L. Porter, & J. Chase (Eds.), *Insurgencies and Revolutions* (pp. 161–170). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315545011-26

Lehrer, U., Keil, R., & Kipfer, S. (2010). Reurbanization in Toronto: Condominium boom and social housing revitalization. *DISP*, *46*(180), 81–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2010.10557065

Lewis, N. K., & Panou, D. (2026). Expropriation and Refusal: Black Tenants, Racial Capitalism, and the Struggle for Home at Chalkfarm Drive. *Geoforum*, *170*, Article 104557. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2026.104557

Lipman, P. (2018). Segregation, the "Black Spatial Imagination," and radical social transformation. *Democracy & Education*, *26*(2). https://doi.org/10.65214/2164-7992.1398

Lipsitz, G. (2011). *How Racism Takes Place*. Temple University Press.

Lopez, R. (2012). Modernism and the Scientific Construction of the Built Environment. In *Building American Public Health* (pp. 81–97). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137002440_6

Loughran, K. (2017). Race and the construction of city and nature. *Environment and Planning. A*, *49*(9), 1948–1967. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X17713995

Loukaitou-Sideris, A. (1995). Urban Form and Social Context: Cultural Differentiation in the Uses of Urban Parks. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, *14*(2), 89–102.

Low, S. M., Taplin, D., & Scheld, S. (2005). *Rethinking urban parks : public space & cultural diversity* (1st ed.). University of Texas Press. http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0513/2005014161.html

MacNevin, W. (2022). *By Us! For Us!: activism in Jane-Finch a working class community* (1st ed.). FriesenPress.

March, L., & Lehrer, U. (2019). Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Resident Participation in Revitalizing Suburban High-rise Buildings. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, *28*(1), 65–85.

Marcuse, P. (2011). The Three Historic Currents of City Planning. In G. Bridge & S. Watson (Eds.), *The New Blackwell Companion to the City* (pp. 643–655). Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444395105.ch56

Miller, D. (2008). *Mayor's Tower Renewal* [Policy memo]. City of Toronto. https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-14989.pdf

Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). Encyclopedia of case study research (A. J. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe, Eds.; 1st ed.). Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397

Mishra, S., & Dey, A. K. (2022). Understanding and Identifying 'Themes' in Qualitative Case Study Research. *South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases*, *11*(3), 187–192. https://doi.org/10.1177/22779779221134659

Moore, D. S., Kosek, J., & Pandian, A. (2003). *Race, nature, and the politics of difference* (D. S. Moore, J. Kosek, & A. Pandian, Eds.; 1st ed.). Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822384656

Narain, S. (2012). The Re-Branding Project: The Genealogy of Creating a Neoliberal Jane and Finch. *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.24908/jcri.v2i1.4295

Neely, E. R. (2024). *Political Economy, Race, and the Image of Nature in the United States, 1825-1878* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032620817

Nichols, A. (2022). Natural History. In *Nature and Literary Studies* (P. Remien & S. Slovic eds.) (pp. 280–295). https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108872263.019

Osei Owusu, R., & Rigolon, A. (2025). What has Contributed to Green Space Inequities in U.S. Cities? A Narrative Review. *Journal of Planning Literature*, *40*(1), 59–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122241269981

Portelli, S. (2024). Neighbourhoods against the state: Reversing territorial stigma in Casablanca and beyond. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *48*(4), 697–707. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13237

Priya, A. (2021). Case Study Methodology of Qualitative Research: Key Attributes and Navigating the Conundrums in Its Application. *Sociological Bulletin*, *70*(1), 94–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038022920970318

PT v. VR and LR, 2018 CanLII 88578 (ON LTB). https://www.canlii.org/en/on/onltb/doc/2018/2018canlii88578/2018canlii88578.pdf

Pulido, L., & De Lara, J. (2018). Reimagining 'justice' in environmental justice: Radical ecologies, decolonial thought, and the Black Radical Tradition. *Environment and Planning. E, Nature and Space (Print)*, *1*(1–2), 76–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618770363

Randall, C. (2024). *Beyond Black and White Spatial Imaginaries: A Case Study of the Model Cities Area in St. Louis, Missouri*. (Publication No. 3083) [Doctoral dissertation, Washington University]. WashU Scholarly Repository. https://doi.org/10.7936/0jt3-0304

Raynor, R. (2018). The formation of value in spatial imaginaries. *Town Planning Review*, *89*(2), 112.

Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, S.O. 2006, c. 17. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/06r17#BK26

Rigolon, A., Yañez, E., Aboelata, M. J., & Bennett, R. (2022). "A park is not just a park": Toward counter-narratives to advance equitable green space policy in the United States. *Cities*, *128*, Article 103792. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103792

Robinson, C. J. (2020). *Black marxism* (Revised and updated third edition.). The University of North Carolina Press.

Rosenzweig, R., & Blackmar, E. (1992). *The park and the people : a history of Central Park*. Cornell University Press.

Rucks-Ahidiana, Z., Choi, J., & Dobreva, T. (2025). The Growth Machine as an Agent of Racial Capitalism: Gentrification Coverage and the News Media. *City & Community*, *24*(3), 167–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/15356841251330240

Saberi, P. (2022). *Fearing the immigrant : racialization and urban policy in Toronto*. University of Minnesota Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctv2ckjqf5

Schell, C. J., Dyson, K., Fuentes, T. L., Roches, S. D., Harris, N. C., Miller, D. S., Woelfle-Erskine, C. A., & Lambert, M. R. (2020). The ecological and evolutionary consequences of systemic racism in urban environments. *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, *369*(6510), 1446–1446. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aay4497

Schenker, H. M. (1996). Women's and Children's Quarters in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. *Gender, Place and Culture: A journal of feminist geography*, *3*(3), 293–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/09663699625577

Scott, J. C. (1998). The high-modernist city: An experiment and a critique. In *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (pp. 103–146). Yale University Press

Sevilla-Buitrago, A. (2014). Central Park against the streets: the enclosure of public space cultures in mid-nineteenth century New York. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *15*(2), 151–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2013.870594

Sewell, J. (1993). *The shape of the city : Toronto struggles with modern planning*. University of Toronto Press.

Shirley, V. J. (2017). Indigenous Social Justice Pedagogy: Teaching into the Risks and Cultivating the Heart. *Critical Questions in Education*, *8*(2), 163.

Shoshkes, E. (2017). Jaqueline Tyrwhitt translates Patrick Geddes for post world war two planning. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *166*, 15–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2016.09.011

Solarek, K., Domaradzka, A., & Zdunek-Wielgołaska, J. (2023). Changing approaches to green infrastructure design: from modernism to the future: Warsaw case study. *Urban Design*

International (London, England), *28*(3), 202–219. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-023-00220-5

Starman, A. B. (2013). The case study as a type of qualitative research. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies/Sodobna Pedagogika, 64*(1).

Statistics Canada. 2023. Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue number 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

Stein, S. (2019). The Housing Crisis and the Rise of the Real Estate State. *New Labor Forum, 28*(3), 52–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/1095796019864098

Stewart, G. (2008). The Suburban Tower and Toronto's Legacy of Modern Housing. *Docomomo*, *39*. 23–29. https://towerrenewal.com/wp-content/uploads/docomomo-sm1.jpg

Stirling, M. (2026). Isolation in Practice: The Infilling of Common Space in Toronto's Vertical Suburbia [Master's thesis, York University]. *YorkSpace*. https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/items/c2942118-5f0b-49bd-bfbe-b8324a92f7ca

Taşan-Kok, Tuna (2015). Creating 'spaces for diversity' from 'spaces of modernity'. *Arhitektura, raziskave, 15*(1), 24–33. https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-UA7KWN2S

Taylor, D. E. (1999). Central Park as a Model for Social Control: Urban Parks, Social Class and Leisure Behavior in Nineteenth-Century America. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *31*(4), 420–477. https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1999.11949875

Taylor, D. E. (2000). Meeting the Challenge of Wild Land Recreation Management: Demographic Shifts and Social Inequality. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *32*(1), 171–179. https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2000.11949910

University Village Ratepayers Association. (November 1965). Executive Meeting Minutes. (118008-36, Fonds 434, File 3). City of Toronto Archives.

Valzania, G. (2022). Towers Once in the Park: Uprooting Toronto's Welfare Landscapes. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, *104*(3), 227–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2022.2032256

Veblen, T. (2017). *The theory of the leisure class: An economic study in the evolution of institutions*. (1st ed.) Taylor and Francis. (Original work published 1899)

Vijay, A. (2020). Cultivating Colonial Subjects: The Planner as Gardener in the Work of Patrick Geddes. *The Global South*, *14*(2), 10–28. https://doi.org/10.2979/globalsouth.14.2.02

Westerveld, L., & Knowles, A. K. (2021). Loosening the grid: topology as the basis for a more inclusive GIS. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science : IJGIS*, *35*(10), 2108–2127. https://doi.org/10.1080/13658816.2020.1856854

Walker, P., & Simo, M. L. (1997). *Invisible gardens: the search for modernism in the American landscape* (1st ed.). MIT Press.

Watkin, C. (2025). *The state of nature and the shaping of modernity : tracing the roots of colonialism, secularity, and ecology* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.

White, R. (2018). Toronto's Inner Suburbs Through the Lens of Planning History. *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien 68*. 25-46

Whitten, M. (2025). Sidelined by History: Revisiting the Evolution of Green-Space Planning. In L. Andres, Y. Beebeejaun, & Y. Rydin (Eds.), *New Planning Histories* (pp. 247–267). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-3867-3_15

Wolch, J. R., Byrne, J., & Newell, J. P. (2014). Urban green space, public health, and environmental justice: The challenge of making cities 'just green enough.' *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *125*, 234–244. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2014.01.017

Woudstra, J. (2018). Designing the garden of Geddes: The master gardener and the profession of landscape architecture. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *178*, 198–207. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2018.05.023

Young, D., & Keil, R. (2014). Locating the Urban In-between: Tracking the Urban Politics of Infrastructure in Toronto. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *38*(5), 1589–1608. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12146

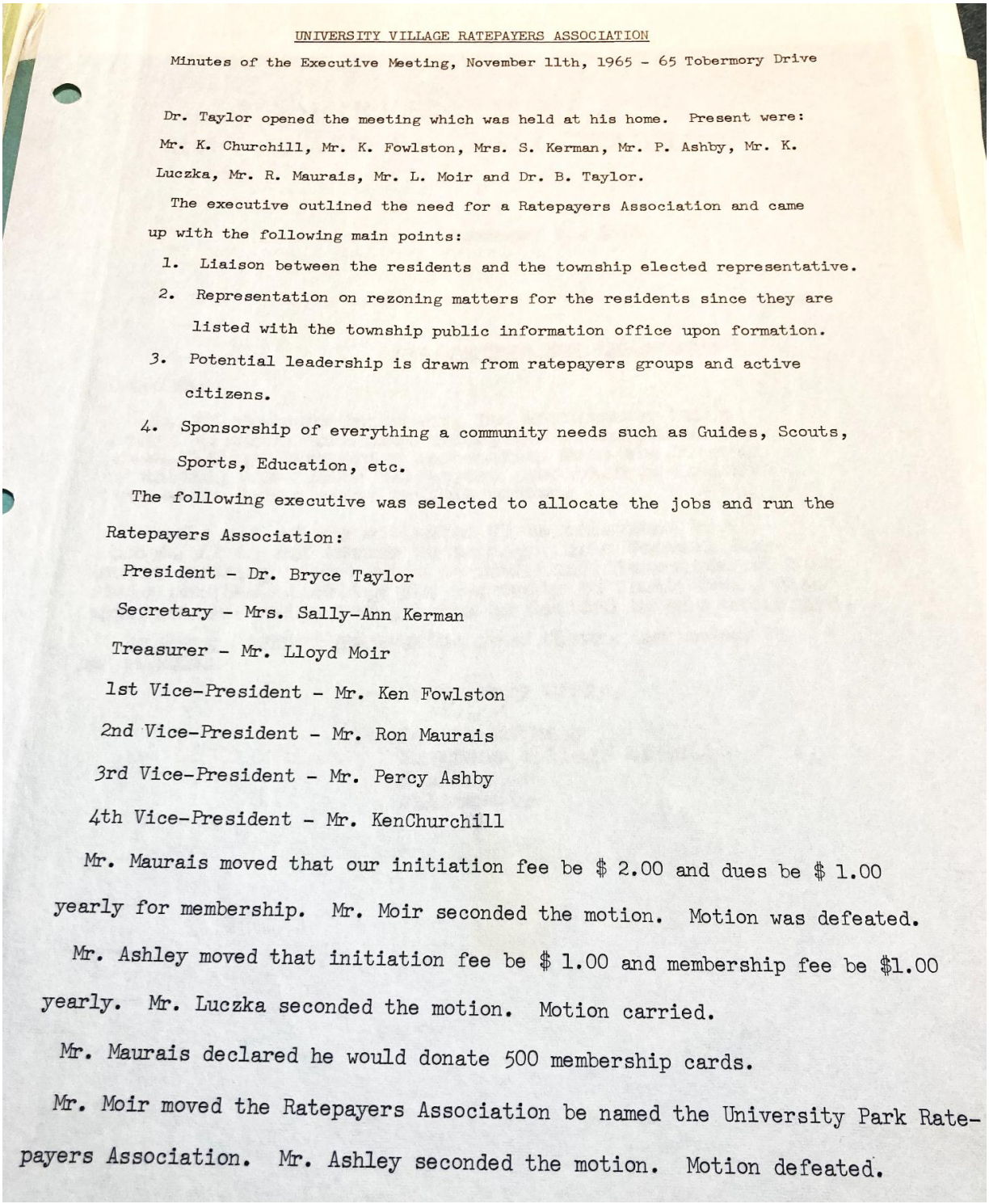
Young, D. (2019). Decline And Renewal In Toronto's High-Rise Suburbs: The Tragedy Of Progressive Neoliberalism. In K. M. Guney, R. Keil, & M. Ucoglu (Eds.), *Massive Suburbanization* (pp. 111–125). University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487531867-008

Zalar, A., & Pries, J. (2022). Unmapping green space. *City (London, England)*, *26*(1), 51–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2021.2018860

Appendix

Archival Documents

Figure A1



UNIVERSITY VILLAGE RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Executive Meeting, November 11th, 1965 - 65 Tobermory Drive

Dr. Taylor opened the meeting which was held at his home. Present were: Mr. K. Churchill, Mr. K. Fowlston, Mrs. S. Kerman, Mr. P. Ashby, Mr. K. Luczka, Mr. R. Maurais, Mr. L. Moir and Dr. B. Taylor.

The executive outlined the need for a Ratepayers Association and came up with the following main points:

1. Liaison between the residents and the township elected representative.
2. Representation on rezoning matters for the residents since they are listed with the township public information office upon formation.
3. Potential leadership is drawn from ratepayers groups and active citizens.
4. Sponsorship of everything a community needs such as Guides, Scouts, Sports, Education, etc.

The following executive was selected to allocate the jobs and run the Ratepayers Association:

President - Dr. Bryce Taylor

Secretary - Mrs. Sally-Ann Kerman

Treasurer - Mr. Lloyd Moir

1st Vice-President - Mr. Ken Fowlston

2nd Vice-President - Mr. Ron Maurais

3rd Vice-President - Mr. Percy Ashby

4th Vice-President - Mr. KenChurchill

Mr. Maurais moved that our initiation fee be $ 2.00 and dues be $ 1.00 yearly for membership. Mr. Moir seconded the motion. Motion was defeated.

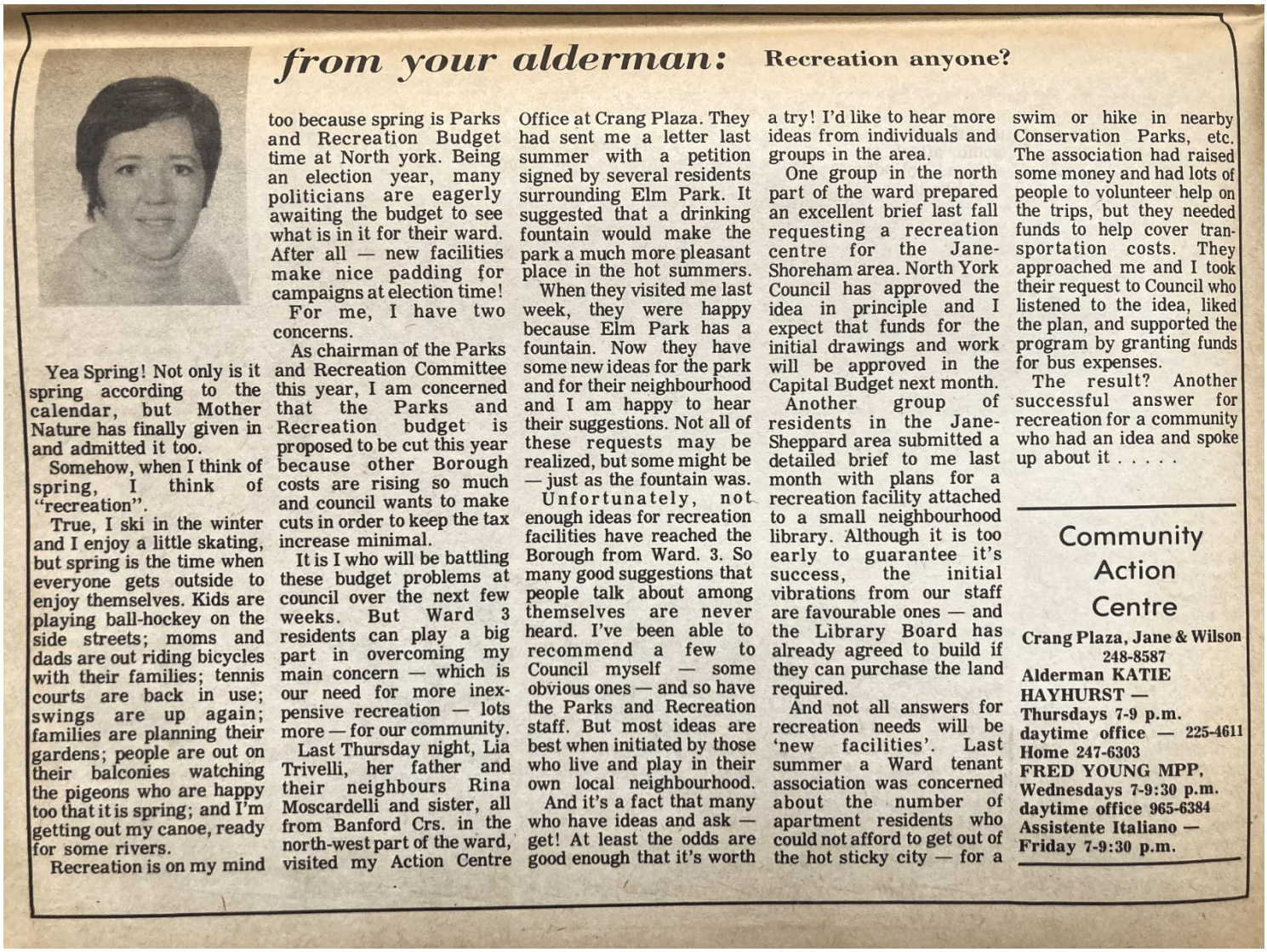
Mr. Ashley moved that initiation fee be $ 1.00 and membership fee be $1.00 yearly. Mr. Luczka seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Maurais declared he would donate 500 membership cards.

Mr. Moir moved the Ratepayers Association be named the University Park Ratepayers Association. Mr. Ashley seconded the motion. Motion defeated.

Note. Minutes from University Village Ratepayers' Association Meeting, November 11, 1965.

Figure A2



from your alderman: Recreation anyone?

Yea Spring! Not only is it spring according to the calendar, but Mother Nature has finally given in and admitted it too.

Somehow, when I think of spring, I think of "recreation".

True, I ski in the winter and I enjoy a little skating, but spring is the time when everyone gets outside to enjoy themselves. Kids are playing ball-hockey on the side streets; moms and dads are out riding bicycles with their families; tennis courts are back in use; swings are up again; families are planning their gardens; people are out on their balconies watching the pigeons who are happy too that it is spring; and I'm getting out my canoe, ready for some rivers.

Recreation is on my mind too because spring is Parks and Recreation Budget time at North york. Being an election year, many politicians are eagerly awaiting the budget to see what is in it for their ward. After all — new facilities make nice padding for campaigns at election time!

For me, I have two concerns.

As chairman of the Parks and Recreation Committee this year, I am concerned that the Parks and Recreation budget is proposed to be cut this year because other Borough costs are rising so much and council wants to make cuts in order to keep the tax increase minimal.

It is I who will be battling these budget problems at council over the next few weeks. But Ward 3 residents can play a big part in overcoming my main concern — which is our need for more inexpensive recreation — lots more — for our community.

Last Thursday night, Lia Trivelli, her father and their neighbours Rina Moscardelli and sister, all from Banford Crs. in the north-west part of the ward, visited my Action Centre Office at Crang Plaza. They had sent me a letter last summer with a petition signed by several residents surrounding Elm Park. It suggested that a drinking fountain would make the park a much more pleasant place in the hot summers.

When they visited me last week, they were happy because Elm Park has a fountain. Now they have some new ideas for the park and for their neighbourhood and I am happy to hear their suggestions. Not all of these requests may be realized, but some might be — just as the fountain was.

Unfortunately, not enough ideas for recreation facilities have reached the Borough from Ward. 3. So many good suggestions that people talk about among themselves are never heard. I've been able to recommend a few to Council myself — some obvious ones — and so have the Parks and Recreation staff. But most ideas are best when initiated by those who live and play in their own local neighbourhood.

And it's a fact that many who have ideas and ask — get! At least the odds are good enough that it's worth a try! I'd like to hear more ideas from individuals and groups in the area.

One group in the north part of the ward prepared an excellent brief last fall requesting a recreation centre for the Jane-Shoreham area. North York Council has approved the idea in principle and I expect that funds for the initial drawings and work will be approved in the Capital Budget next month.

Another group of residents in the Jane-Sheppard area submitted a detailed brief to me last month with plans for a recreation facility attached to a small neighbourhood library. Although it is too early to guarantee it's success, the initial vibrations from our staff are favourable ones — and the Library Board has already agreed to build if they can purchase the land required.

And not all answers for recreation needs will be 'new facilities'. Last summer a Ward tenant association was concerned about the number of apartment residents who could not afford to get out of the hot sticky city — for a swim or hike in nearby Conservation Parks, etc. The association had raised some money and had lots of people to volunteer help on the trips, but they needed funds to help cover transportation costs. They approached me and I took their request to Council who listened to the idea, liked the plan, and supported the program by granting funds for bus expenses.

The result? Another successful answer for recreation for a community who had an idea and spoke up about it . . . . .

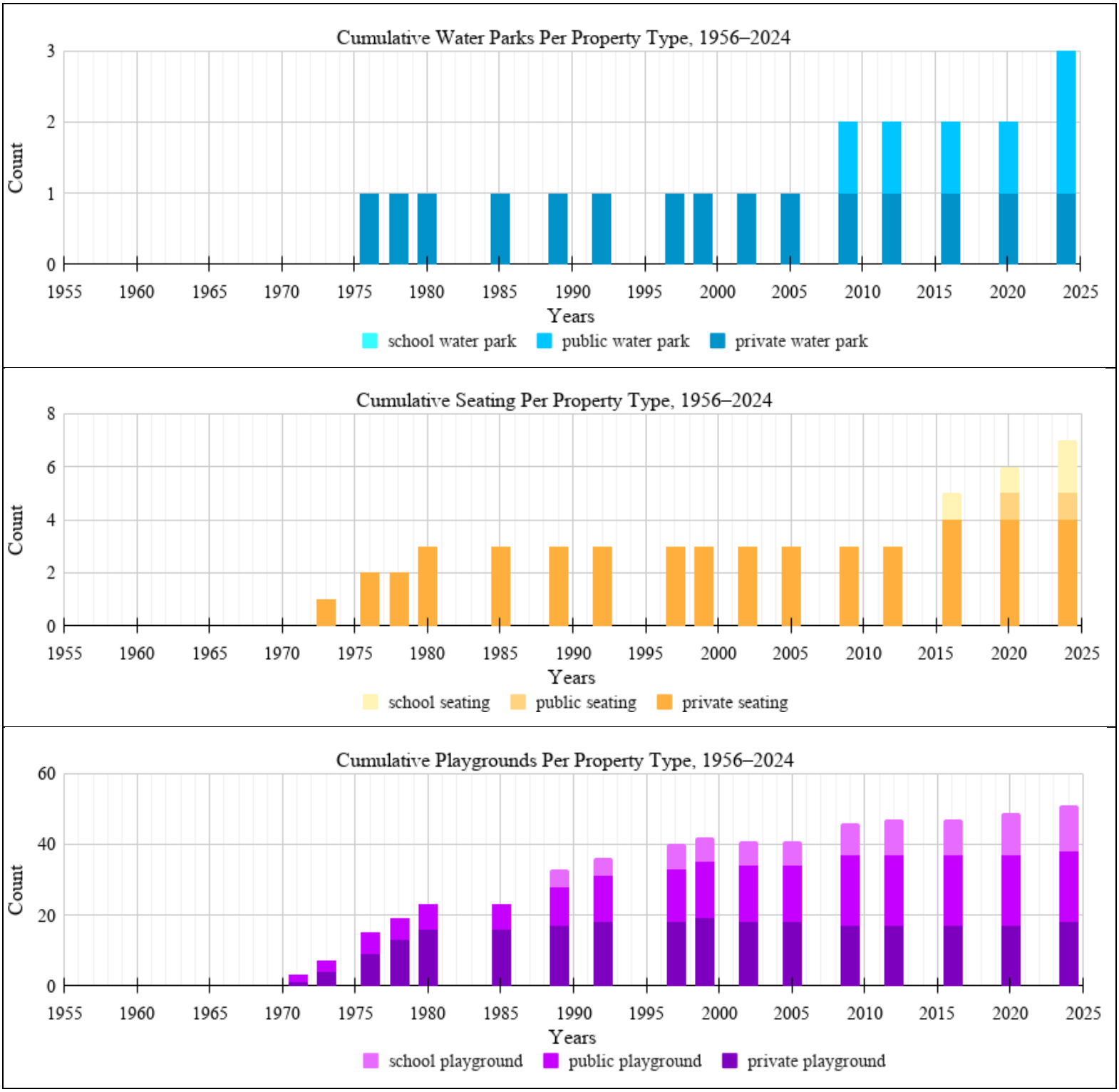
Community Action Centre

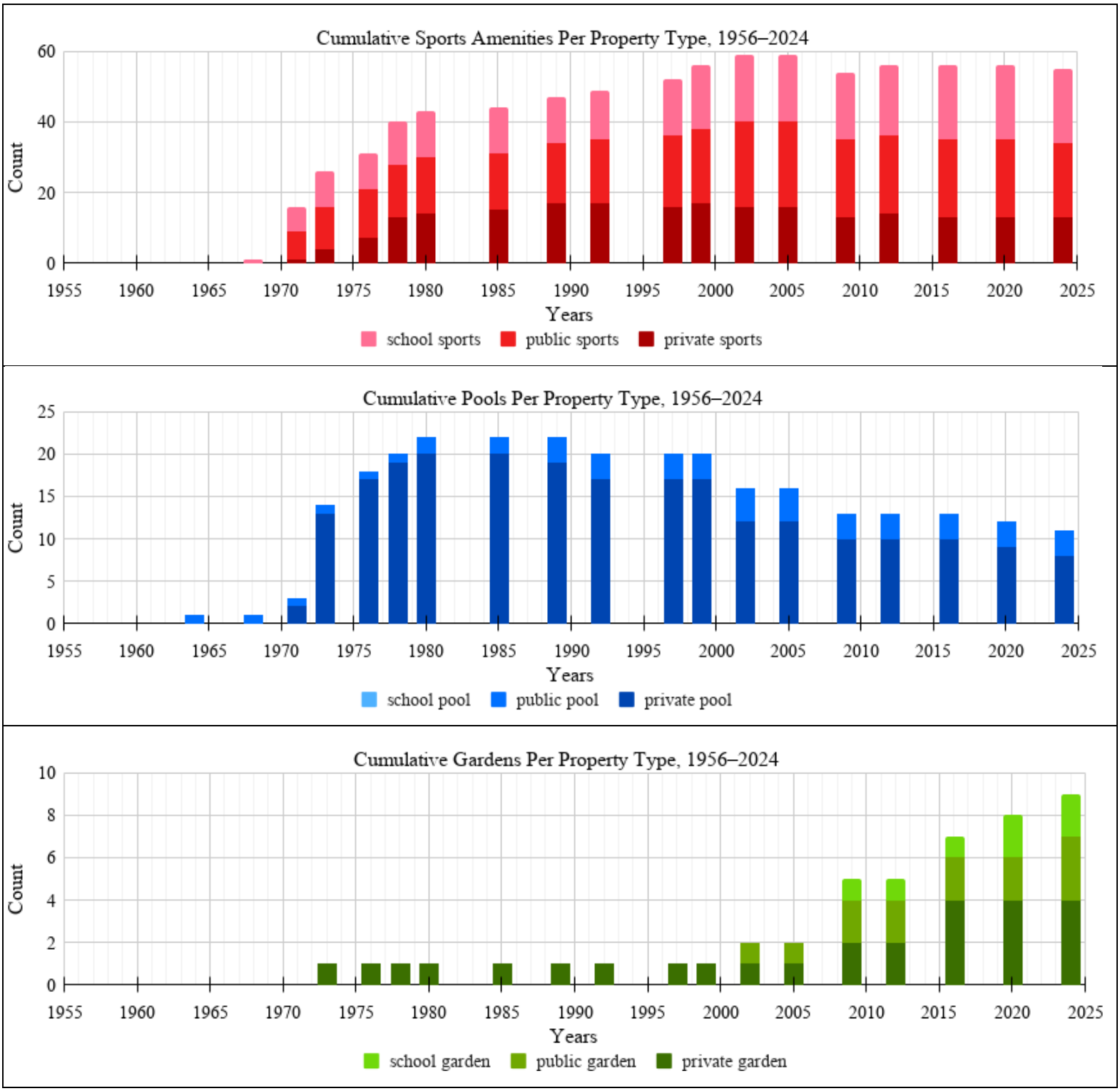
Crang Plaza, Jane & Wilson
248-8587
Alderman KATIE HAYHURST —
Thursdays 7-9 p.m.
daytime office — 225-4611
Home 247-6303
FRED YOUNG MPP,
Wednesdays 7-9:30 p.m.
daytime office 965-6384
Assistente Italiano —
Friday 7-9:30 p.m.

Note. Newspaper article by then-Alderman, Katie Hayhurst, about recreational opportunities.

Trellis Chart of Cumulative Amenities Per Property Type

Figure A3





Note. The trellis chart excludes outdoor classrooms as the amenity only exists under the school property type