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Reclamation project turns industrial area into residential district, 1

Defence minister attends NATO nuclear meeting, 3

Changes in foreign service, 3

Gold fever in B.C., 4

Researcher wins alcoholism award, 4

U.S. Governor presents commemorative flag to Canada, 4

Voyages to giant worlds, 5

Ottawa leads in high technology, 5

OECD official visits Canada, 5

Greek earthquake relief, 6

Travellers warned about pests, 6

Telidon test project gets funding, 6

Situation in Lebanon, 6

News of the arts — awards, 7

News briefs, 8

Reclamation project turns industrial area into residential district

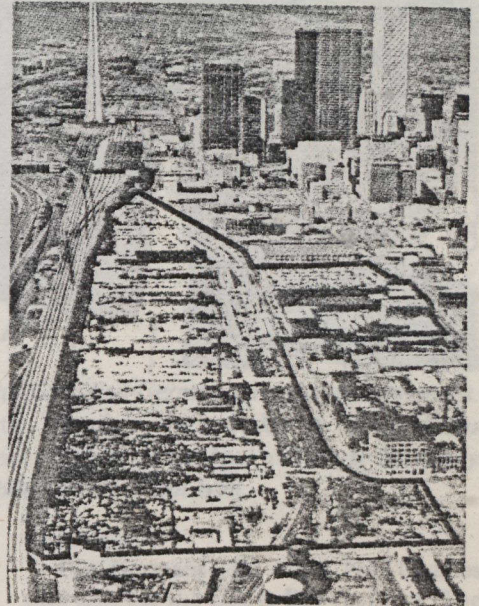
Forty-five acres of marginal-use land, once zoned only for industrial purposes, is being turned into a vibrant residential and commercial area in Toronto. The land reclamation project, considered to be one of the largest of the decade, will provide homes, schools, stores, recreation and health care for an estimated 10,000 people.

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood stretches for one mile across 11 city blocks. Once it was an almost forgotten part of the city, cut off from Toronto's residential fabric and bounded by a railway line and the Gardiner expressway. Separated from the warehouses and factories of the waterfront, it had been given over to auto wrecking operations, garages, parking lots, abandoned sidings and scrap-yards.

Now, six years after the City of Toronto decided to make it the site of a new residential development designed to "satisfy the needs of people of all ages, interests and incomes", it is being advertised as "a bright new world to live in" with its own "quiet inner streets, pleasant tree-lined promenades, playgrounds, schools, health clinic and neighbourhood stores".

Phase A, the completed first phase of the project, occupies some 7 acres of land bounded by three existing city streets and the railways. Construction began in 1977, and 700 living units have been developed by five separate non-profit corporations — four of them private co-operatives and the fifth associated directly with the City of Toronto and its housing program. The financing comes from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Ontario Ministry of Housing and the City of Toronto.

Although St. Lawrence will eventually be a mixed public, private non-profit, and entrepreneurial development, a deliberate decision was made to have the non-profit organizations develop all this first phase. Thus it could be guaranteed that the first 25 per cent of these initial 799 units are eligible for deep rent sup-



St. Lawrence Neighbourhood is outlined by black border.

plement and hence can house those with the lowest incomes.

Affordable homes

Aside from this, however, it has been city policy to keep the project within natural market dynamics and still create "affordable" homes in the downtown area.

Another policy pursued by the city has been to recreate the fabric of the original neighbourhood. The buildings have been designed to fit in with the style and layout of existing city streets. They follow a traditional block pattern in which all family units are accessible from street level, and almost all have private patios or some form of outdoor space.

Apartment buildings, meanwhile, have been kept long and low, and run the full length of the block. A deliberate decision was taken by the city planners to include no high-rise apartments.

Another decision was to have all exterior walls clad in brick, a building material commonly used in the early days of Toronto's development. Individual



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