

CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI

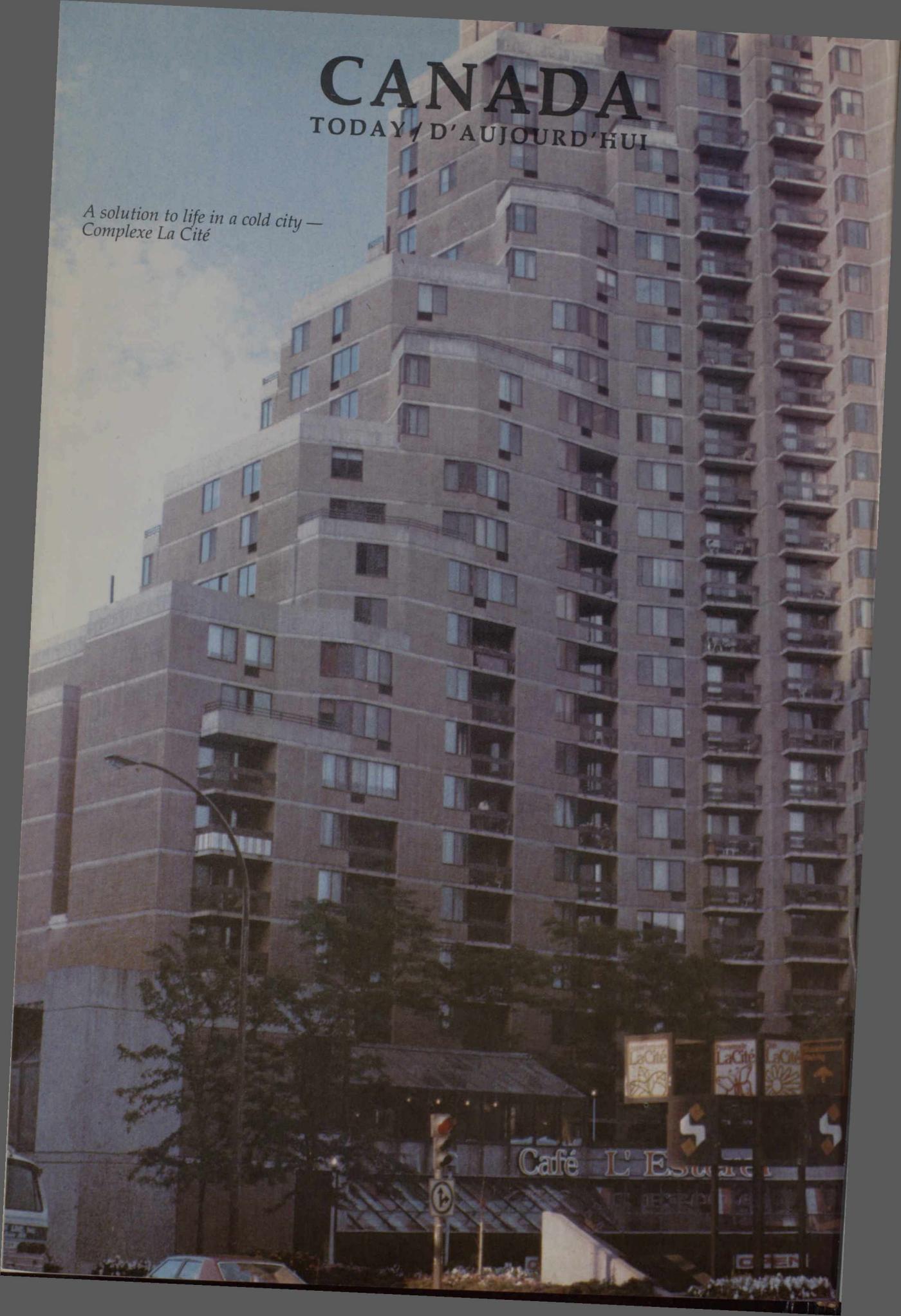
*Rescuing the
Downtown
Core*



CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI

*A solution to life in a cold city —
Complexe La Cité*





I.M. Pei left his mark on Montreal, above. Le Sieur de Maisonneuve, below, founded Montreal in 1642.

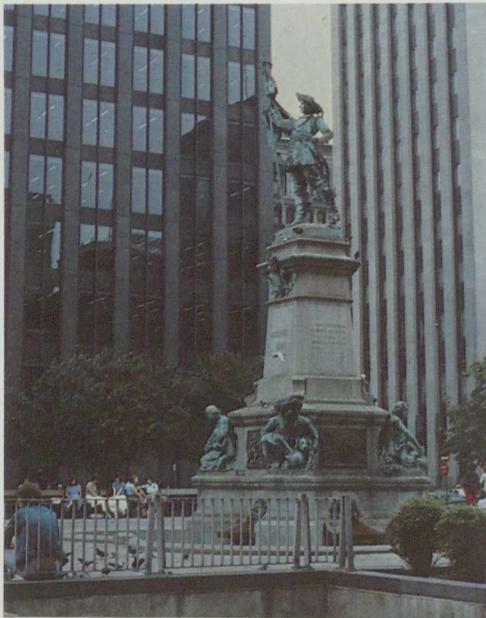
Tales of Three Cities

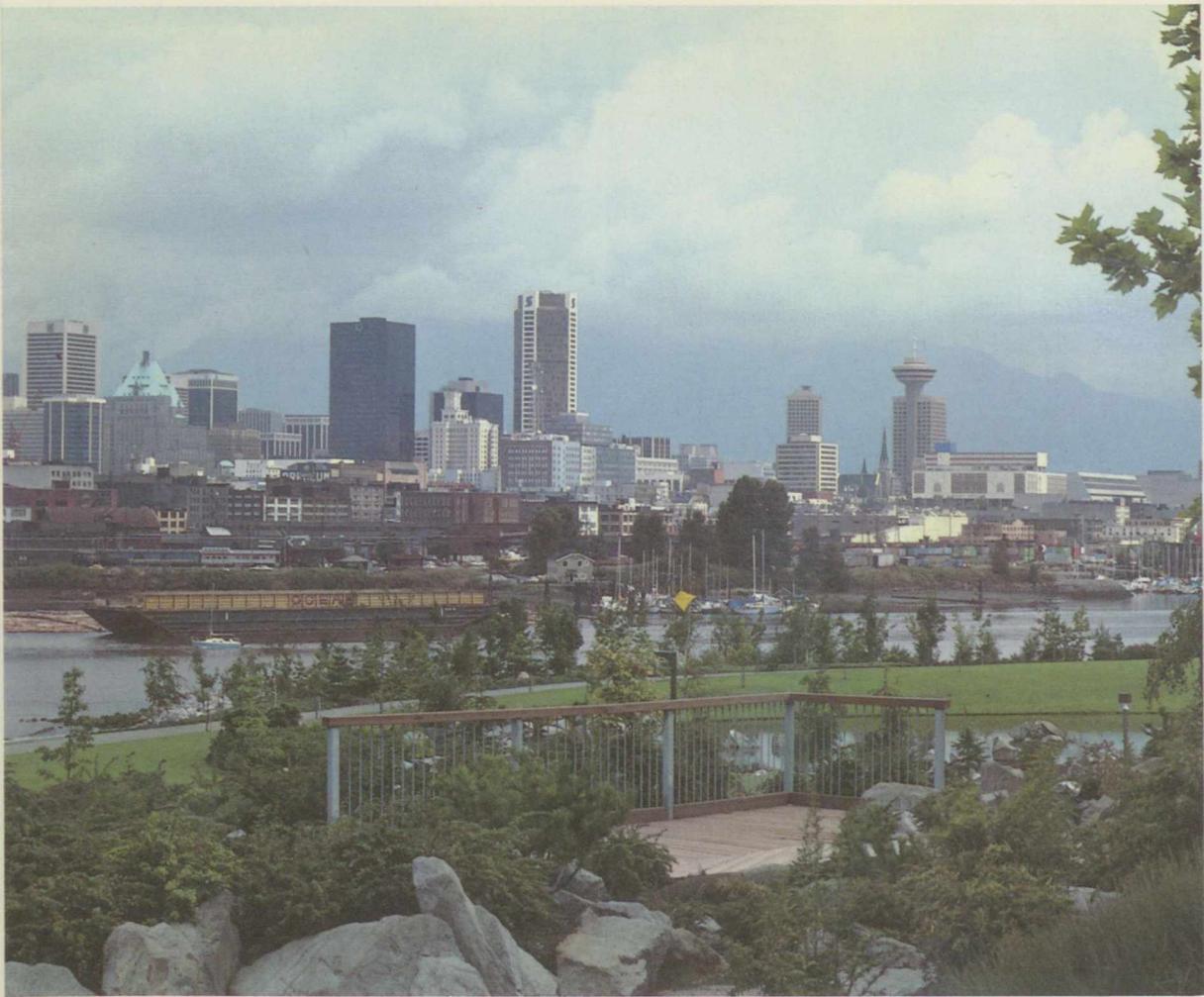
It has taken time to realize that the rebirth of old cities is good and natural. For many years the emphasis in Canada and elsewhere was on urban renewal, bulldozing and rebuilding. It worked well in Montreal, where it provided a bustling and beautiful weather-proof core of hotels, offices, shops and restaurants, but in other places it worked badly. It destroyed needed housing, induced sprawl and turned city neighbourhoods into work places — sterile by day and deserted by night. It implied (unintentionally) that old neighbourhoods, like old horses, could, when necessary, be removed discreetly from the face of the earth.

In the early seventies

Canada decided to accept the urban past as a natural part of the urban future. It inaugurated the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) to provide federal aid for rehabilitation and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) to make loans to the owners of old houses. From the start the programs recognized that no two old neighbourhoods are alike. Some, like those surrounding the Kensington Market in Toronto, survive unaided — the colourful house on the cover is an example of Kensington vitality — and some need help.

In this issue of CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI we consider revitalization in Canada's three largest cities.





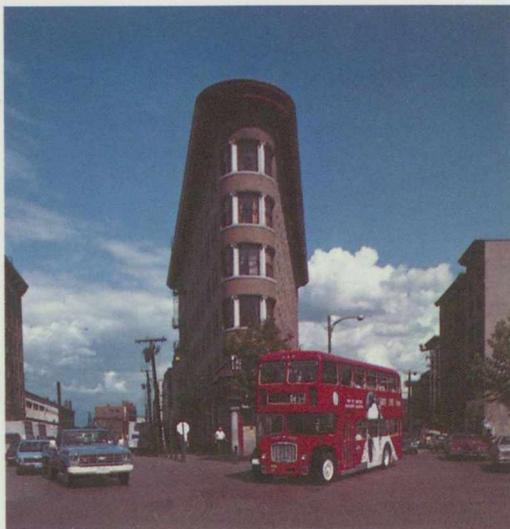
Vancouver's impulse was to build up.

Montreal: Ingenious and Beautiful

Montreal is not just another big city. It is a historic metropolis and a great port, more complex than its population of three million suggests. It is also the site of what is probably North America's most successful effort at urban renewal. Urban renewal, invented in the United States to solve basic problems in old American cities, has often been misapplied in Canada, where the problems were different and usually less severe. It was, as it happens, well applied in Montreal.

In the early 1960s the city had twenty-two acres of ugly, open elevated railway tracks. Donald Gordon, president of Canadian Na-

tional Railways, invited New York developer William Zeckendorf to build something over them. Zeckendorf hired Vincent Ponte, who in turn hired I. M. Pei, Mies van der Rohe and other extraordinary architects. The complicated result is ingenious and beautiful. The trains still come right into the heart of Montreal, but they are now sandwiched between layers of activity above and below ground, and the central city is full of architectural grandeur, everyday excitement and people.



The Hotel Europe in Vancouver has retained its old style.



Toronto lost forty pounds of pomposity.

The Métro

Montreal's modern subway, the Métro, is at the bottom of the pile. It comes together at the Berri-deMontigny station. The blue-enamelled cars move on quiet rubber tires, carrying hundreds of thousands of people in and out of downtown each day. Each station is designed by a different architect and dominated by a huge work of original art.

Since it opened in 1966, it has made the city a fluid unit and played a significant part in its rebuilding. It continues to grow in size and excellence. In 1977 it was extended to the east, from Préfontaine to Honoré-Beaugrand; and in 1978,

to Lasalle in the southwest. The level of architecture and art has been sustained and perhaps surpassed. At the Champ-de-Mars station, for example, Marcelle Ferron's glass now bathes the different platform levels in warm colours.

René Viau, writing in *vie des arts*, has called Montreal's Métro "a subway where one feels good, where the light of day penetrates right to the bottom of the underground corridors, ... [where] works of art come one after the other, animate the surfaces, share in the ambience."

The modern Métro contrasts with Montreal's 19th century elegance.



Le Vieux Montréal

The overhaul of the mid-town destroyed many old buildings, but not all. Not surprisingly, the destruction brought a reaction.

As the business centre moved uptown, the original



To save old cities one saves old houses and sometimes, for the tourists, old horses and calèches too.

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century city along the waterfront fell on hard times. Rasco's Hotel, where Charles Dickens stayed in the 1840s, became a flop-house. The home of the nineteenth-century rebel and patriot, Louis Joseph Papineau, became a fish market. Other historic homes became warehouses, and hundred-year-old buildings were demolished for parking lots.

In reaction, Eric McLean, the music critic of *The Montreal Star*, took all of his savings and bought the Papineau house and inspired a movement. The city and the Province of Quebec designated most of the area that had been within the original town walls as historic. It is clearly that, since it includes such mementos of the past as the Château de Ramezay, built in 1705 by the governor of Montreal, and Montreal's oldest church, Notre Dame de Bonsecours, rebuilt in 1771 after a fire destroyed the original 1657 building. A commission named Viger, after Montreal's first mayor, was formed, and a law was passed banning any alterations to the old buildings without its approval. In its first show of strength, it blocked a highway planned along the river front. The city spent \$3 million restoring the old market, putting cobblestones in the streets and installing gaslamp-like fixtures on the corners, but by the mid-sixties, preoccupied with Expo '67 (the hugely successful World's Fair held during Canada's Centennial), it stopped investing.

The restoration is a qualified success — it is full of excellent restaurants, crowded discothèques, flower stalls and street singers, but it has few residences and no schools, parks or grocery stores. It is not a real neighbourhood.

Jeanne Mance

The interest in old buildings took a more aggressive form in the summer of 1975 when the people living in 14 nineteenth-century houses on rue Jeanne Mance, south of Sherbrooke, began getting eviction notices. Instead of moving along peacefully, they collected thousands of signatures and formed the Jeanne Mance Housing Corporation. Their petition began: "We demand that the row of Victorian grey-stone homes on Jeanne Mance be left intact." It got results. The city denied demolition permits, and eighteen months later the Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs classified one particularly ornate building as having historic value, which automatically barred the demolition of it and any other structure within five hundred feet.

After negotiating with the organized tenants, the federal government, and the city, the speculators who had planned to tear the buildings down sold out for \$780,000 to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a federal agency. The city put up ten per cent, and the CMHC forty. The rest was covered by a CMHC loan.

The CMHC transferred the title to the tenants' cooperative, giving it a fifty-year mortgage at eight per cent. The buildings have been converted into sixty-eight living units, ranging in size from one-room efficiencies to an entire house. At the end of the fifty-year mortgage, the title will revert to CMHC.



Les Places such as the original one, Place Ville-Marie, have transformed Montreal's downtown.

Carré St-Louis

Montreal is a city of extensive working-class neighbourhoods, full of sturdy old houses, most of them in good repair and suitable for rehabilitation.

East of Mount Royal's pleasant park are endless blocks of lively, overlapping ethnic neighbourhoods — Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Caribbean. Rue St-Urbain, memorialized by Mordecai Richler in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, was once Jewish. It is now more complex, though there still are a great many Hasidic Jews living along it and other tree-shaded streets.

The streets around Carré St-Louis, a bustling area of restaurants and cafés, are now in a period of swift, upgrading transition. Many are triplexes, 15 rooms, more or less, divided into three flats. Three years ago, when the renovation began, a typical rundown building sold for \$15,000. Now the same building brings \$23,000, and a refurbished one, up to \$100,000.

Louis Terry bought the one at 3695 Drolet for \$20,000 and has been doing all but the most demanding remodelling himself. He has spent an estimated \$10,000 to \$12,000 and plans to spend \$5,000 more before he is through. He has received an unsolicited offer of \$60,000 for it as it now stands, and he calculates that it will be worth at least \$90,000 when he is through.

His neighbour, Mark Levy, at 3670 Drolet, bought his house for \$15,000 and has spent an estimated \$6,000 to \$8,000 inside and out — painting walls and bricks and replacing plaster and much of the flooring.

There is a steady influx of affluent younger people who still find the solid turn-of-the-century houses great bargains, but a good many of the old landlords remain content to leave the houses as they pretty much were. Dominic Lasson, a tenant at 3701 Drolet, is interested in buying his, though the landlord is not particularly eager to sell. The house is in good condition, and its only conspicuous need is for additional electrical power — it is not possible to turn on all the lights in the house at the same time.

Les Places

Above the Métro are the core complexes — Place Ville Marie, Place Victoria, Place Bonaventure, Place du Canada. Each is colourful, efficient and busy. They include a mélange of hotels, offices, auditoriums, shops, restaurants, promenades, stores and places of entertainment, all connected and protected from the weather. It is possible to spend a full winter in the middle of the city — living, sleeping, swimming, eating, working, shopping and being entertained — without ever stepping out into the cold. The newest complex, La Cité, was designed by Eva Vecsei, above.



The Métro links the concentration in the centre of the city to the Place des Arts concert halls and theatres, and further to the east, to the Olympics sports complex.



Montreal's high rises are often surrounded by old churches, small, smart, inexpensive dining places and all kinds of shops and offices. This building which seems to have a thousand eyes is Château Champlain in Place du Canada.



Vancouver: Almost Too Good To Be True

Things are different in the West.

Vancouver is almost too good to be true. It is built on hills with mountains in its back yard, the ocean in its front, clean air, year-round pleasant temperatures and flowers and handsome, sculptured shrubbery everywhere.

It is on a peninsula, and the remaining open land is reserved for farms. Until recently, the understandable impulse was to build up, since there was no room to move out. The provincial government was planning the highest skyscraper in western Canada when a reaction set in. Vancouver has its high, handsome skyline, but it is now not likely to get much higher. For the centre of the city, Arthur Erickson has designed Robson Square — a three-block complex that includes a civic centre with gardens, shops, restaurants, a day-care centre and an ice-skating rink that becomes a market place in the summer; a court house; and an art gallery in the old court-house building.

Vancouver also has slums, but they are neither as appalling nor as visible as those in the older East, and the remodelling of its greatest eyesore, the central waterfront, is slowly getting underway. False Creek, once a scrofulous collection of sheds, warehouses and hippie pads, has been changed into a sparkling residential neighbourhood with breathtaking views; and Gastown, a flophouse slum in the sixties, is a bustling tourist attraction. Chinatown, saved from demolition ten years ago, is a reborn natural neighbourhood with the second greatest concentration of Chinese in North America.

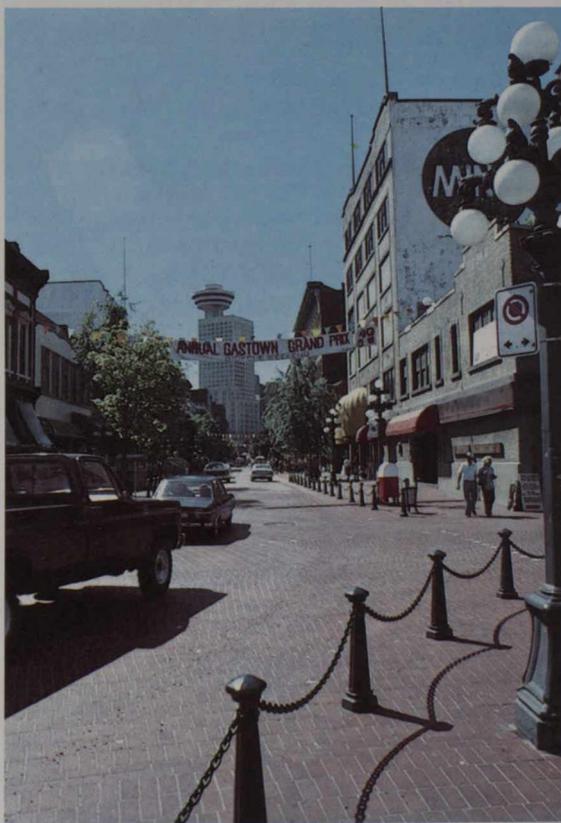
Gastown



Gastown began with Jack Deighton's saloon in 1867 and expanded to be incorporated as the City of Vancouver in 1886. Three months later it all burned down. Most of the city's oldest buildings were built in Gastown just after the fire. They and the streets are red brick, and the red brick got mighty dingy as

the years went by. By the 1930s Gastown was skid row with flophouses in every block.

In 1969 businessmen began fixing things up, for purely commercial reasons. Gastown is now booming as a tourist attraction, full of shops, restaurants, boutiques and street celebrations.



John Sullivan, who owns several ancient piles including the Hotel Europe (built in 1908 and modelled after the Flatiron Building in New York), is currently marketing both office and residential space. The Europe has a handsome turn-of-the-century saloon on its triangular first floor and apartments upstairs, some remodelled, some not. The ground-floor drinkers include the prosperous young and tourists as well as retired loggers and seamen, some of whom still live upstairs. "I threw the rubbydubs out, but I've got a half-dozen old guys who are going to stay on." One, a retired logger, has lived at the Europe for 35 years.

Gastown is still next door to what is left of skid row, and there is room for expansion.

Chinatown

Most people of Chinese descent who live in Canada live in Vancouver, and most of those who live in Vancouver live in Chinatown, a huge neighbourhood, perhaps a mile long and a half-mile wide. It includes Shanghai and Canton Alleys, Pender Street and much of Main Street and is a vigorous inner-directed community with two Chinese-language newspapers. A visitor walking into a crowded restaurant may find the tables filled with Chinese families including infants and grandmothers, and the menu filled with scores of dishes he has never before encountered. There are no fortune cookies.

In the late 1960s the city planned to knock down most of the Strathcona section of Chinatown for urban renewal, but the residents resisted and, with government help, organized the Strathcona Rehabilitation Project. In 1970 the city cancelled all urban renewal projects and adopted a \$19 million, city-wide federally and provincially supported program called Community Improvement and Development (CID). It and its national successor, the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP), have overhauled eight neighbourhoods in Vancouver — Kitsilano, Riley Park, Cedar Cottage, Downtown-Eastside, Mount Pleasant, Grandview-Woodland, Kiwassa and Kensington. Each plan is unique. Some have developed new housing, some have preserved existing homes, and all have provided parks and open spaces.

False Creek

Vancouver is a major ocean port, and its waterfront is not a total disgrace, thanks to False Creek, a mid-town residential community that has replaced grimy work sheds and battered houses. The creek is now depolluted and full of sailboats. Around the yacht basin, new condominiums, stacked like blocks, face the water from the sides of gentle hills. Most are high rent; some are supplemented housing for low-income families. Further up the hills are the old, peaked-roof, two-



or three-bedroom frame houses. Some were once the homes of hippies living ten to a room. The hippies are gone, and many houses have been converted into offices for lawyers and architects or homes for the affluent. Buildings that once sold for taxes now bring up to \$150,000. "If you want to make money in real estate," realtor Marilyn Currie says, "follow the hippies." Ms. Currie and other realtors have persuaded the city to zone the old houses commercial, allowing free conversion to offices. Many are still occupied by long-time residents, and some house recently-arrived working couples, such as Richard and Lyn Glazier, a lawyer and a school teacher. The house they bought six years ago, when it was full of debris and noxious odours, is now handsomely redone, mostly by Lyn and, like its neighbours, hangs on a hillside and looks down to sailboats in the basin and across to the high-rise centre of Vancouver and the coastal mountains beyond.

There has been some resistance. "Fight Redevelopment" is scrawled across a sign announcing plans for a lot next to an extraordinarily long, narrow, unrestored building that was a dormitory for Japanese pulp-mill workers at the turn of the century. However, most old residents are pleased to see property values rising. An untouched house and lot now sell for up to \$100,000,



and restored houses, for \$50,000 more. Whatever the final destiny of the old houses, the community will remain residential because the new blocks of condominiums outnumber the old. The neighbourhood has one industry, both pleasant and pervasive, an aromatic candy factory. A section of terraced greenery, called Chocolate Park, sits between it and the converted headquarters of Purdy's Chocolates.



The Rest of the Waterfront

Alan Daniels, writing in the *Vancouver Magazine*, calls the central waterfront "a sink, a slum, a shambles of unkempt gravel, carparks and rotting piers, barricaded by chain-link fences topped with barbed wire."

There is, however, hope. The central waterfront is divided by plans for the future into three parts: Pier BC,

where the big cruise ships dock in the summer, and the sections east and west of it.

All three sections are owned by the National Harbours Board, the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National. In 1973 architect Richard Mann did a waterfront planning study for the city and the federal government. He made twenty-three policy recommendations. Unfortunately, the boom times of the early 1970s slacked off, and the remaking of the sink hole and the slums is taking a long time. There are two major plans, nevertheless, and some preliminary steps have been taken.

One is for a Convention Centre at Pier BC, with new docks for the cruise ships, shops and other attractions. The city, provincial and federal governments have agreed to put up \$25 million; but it will take a great deal more to do it properly, and the landowners — the Harbours Board, the railroads and the CP's development branch, Marathon Realty — are finding it hard to agree on a common purpose.

The National Harbours Board, which owns the stretch east of Pier BC, intends to convert that into a lively area that will include moorings for 378 fishboats, restaurants, pubs, a fishermen's market, canneries and a marina for tugs, barges and water taxis, but no housing. It would all be connected by a causeway with a park to a man-made island housing the Port of Vancouver offices and headquarters for pilots, the coast-guard and the harbour air traffic control.

The area west of Pier BC, owned by CP, consists mostly of switching tracks and parking lots for long-haul trucks. Until someone can figure out a practical way to combine those with something more exciting, it seems doomed to remain as it is.

Government Programs

Since the United States and Canada are alike in many things, it is wise, occasionally, to emphasize the differences. The principal one is the size of their populations — the United States has ten times as many people, and in most cases its government budgets are about ten times greater.

This is not, however, true in the general area of housing. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), for example, committed \$1.9 billion in loans and grants in fiscal 1976, while the corresponding US agency, Housing and Urban Development, committed \$7.4 billion, less than half as much on a per capita basis.

Both countries phased out extensive urban renewal programs in the fifties and early sixties. The successor programs, the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) in Canada and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in the United States, had somewhat similar aims, but different methods, partly because Canadian provincial governments exercise greater controls over municipalities than do US state governments. They control local budgets, physical development and even, to a degree, the forms of local government, making it relatively easy to develop sophisticated forms of regional government.

In 1974 Canada's Parliament amended the National Housing Act, creating both NIP and a supplementary loan program, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). NIP upgraded public places. It made schools more accessible to the public, built new parks and refurbished old ones, planted trees, built bus shelters and repaired streets and sidewalks. Each NIP program was intended to last for four years, and the last will terminate in 1982. The federal government usually paid half of the costs, while the provincial and municipal governments each paid 25 per cent. About 10 per cent of NIP expenses were for staff salaries and office maintenance.

The affected citizens helped plan the parks, libraries and community centres. The Community Service Program, which began after NIP was discontinued in 1978, includes a neighbourhood program that provides many of the same services.

The basic funding program, RRAP, provides low-interest loans (up to \$10,000) to the owners of homes and rental property and to non-profit organizations within NIP neighbourhoods. The funding is federal, and up to \$3,750 of each loan may be forgiven.

Toronto: Grand and Exciting

Toronto is like a fortunate matron who suddenly lost forty pounds of pomposity, had her face lifted, bought a Givenchy wardrobe, learned to sing in three languages, became a gourmet hostess and started getting love notes in the mail.

She is still perfectly respectable (she doesn't answer the mail), but she can hardly stop looking at herself in the mirror.

The transformation has contradictory elements. First came a surge of spectacular high-rise building: Viljo Revell designed the breathtaking City Hall complex; Mies van der Rohe, the Toronto-Dominion Centre; and I. M. Pei, the Commerce Court. Then came Edward Durell Stone's First Canadian Place, the Royal Bank Plaza by Boris Zerafa and Robin Clarke, and Raymond Moriyama's Metro Library.

After the high rises came the reaction to what John Sewell and the Reform Caucus considered the Manhattanization of the city, and in 1973 David Crombie, Toronto's "tiny perfect mayor," and his council put a moratorium on buildings more than 45 feet high. The Province of Ontario overruled the council, but Crombie still refused all but a few permits for skyscrapers. Toronto today has a mid-city showcase of architectural masterpieces surrounded by small-scale, livable neighbourhoods.



Cabbagetown

The moratorium saved Cabbagetown, a downtown neighbourhood of modest row houses. Cabbagetown was settled and built by nineteenth-century Irish immigrants who planted cabbages in their front gardens. The brick houses are small and sturdy, with stained glass over the doors and flowers in the yard. For most of its long life, Cabbagetown was the home of the respectable working class, but by the 1960s it was turning reluctantly into a slum. Though its renaissance began with the moratorium on high buildings, it received little else in the way of official inspiration. Its attractions were inherent. The solid houses were cheap at a time when new, not particularly well built ones were getting alarmingly expensive, and the location was ideal. The location is still ideal, but the houses are no longer cheap.

decades ago, she moved to No. 31. It cost \$8,500, and she worked twelve years at the Monarch Textile Mill to pay for it. Later she and her husband acquired the house next door as well, and this summer she gave that one to their son. She intends to leave the one she lives in to her daughter. "My husband and I agreed that when they got older, we'd give the houses to them, one each." They are substantial gifts: on today's market each would bring over \$60,000, and prices are rising.



Mrs. Almoze Leclerc, 72, sits in the summer on her front porch in the evening sun. She and her late husband, a travelling organ tuner, came from Quebec to No. 16 Seaton Street in 1925, and she has lived on the street ever since. When they tore down No. 16 some

Almost every block of Cabbagetown now has what one of the older residents calls "doctors and high-class people," and one of the larger houses on Seaton Street has been converted into a modern, privately-owned day nursery for the children of the new professional couples. Many old-timers remain, but it seems clear that Cabbagetown will never be a modest working-class neighbourhood again.

The Annex



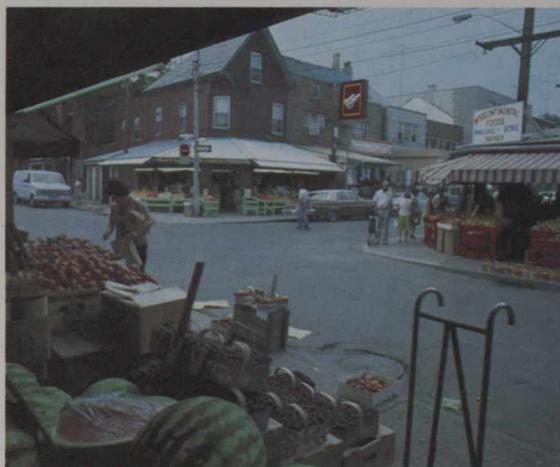
The Annex is a handsome turn-of-the-century neighbourhood next to the University of Toronto — wide, substantial houses with pillars and occasional porches and old trees. Some of modern Toronto's founding fathers once lived here. Though it was never rundown, in the 1960s it was in danger of sudden death. A planned intra-city expressway would have cut it in two. The residents — a mix of university students, professors and professional men and women — fought back successfully. When the fight began they thought of the neighbourhood as simply pleasant, but along the way they began to think of it as pleasant and historic. They saved it, and though it is now often referred to as The Historic Annex, it is a neighbourhood, not a shrine.

The Ethnic Neighbourhoods

Not all of Toronto's vital (or revitalized) inner-city neighbourhoods house the affluent, and some have changed their essence without greatly changing their real-estate prices. One of the principal attractions of Cabbagetown and The Annex is their proximity to the excitement of downtown Toronto. To a considerable degree, that excitement is associated with the waves of immigrants who came to the city after World War II. It is estimated that half of Toronto's population is foreign-born, with the Italians the biggest single ethnic group. The post-war immigrants have converted the city from a staid Anglo-Celtic town, which was seldom exuberant and always closed on Sundays, to a lively place with a rich variety of good restaurants, music, laughter and entertainment.

Chinatown stretches along Dundas Street and is authentic, enduring and not hyped up.

The Kensington Market, to the west of Chinatown



and not far from Cabbagetown, was once Jewish. It is now predominantly Portuguese. In the bins along the sidewalks are Greek, Spanish, Italian and West Indian staples and delicacies. The row houses on the side streets off Kensington are brightly painted, and many with Portuguese owners have enamelled holy pictures beside the front door.

St. Lawrence Neighbourhood

Toronto is building a new inner-city neighbourhood beside the old ones. In the early 1970s the city's housing commission decided to replace the sheds, warehouses and vacant lots next to the St. Lawrence Market with homes.

The new neighbourhood is shaped like a submarine with conning tower, thirty blocks long and three to four blocks wide amidships. It is laid out along existing streets, and the traffic flow follows familiar lines in and out. A park through the centre, stretching the full length along Esplanade Street, is under construction. At one end, the old market, a handsome ark built



around the original town hall of the city of York, is full of fresh vegetables, fish and butcher stalls, and shoppers.

Over 8,000 people will soon be housed in townhouses and high-rise apartments. Some homes will be supplemented housing for lower-income families, and some will be let at high, unsupplemented rents. One block of smaller townhouses was fully occupied by last summer, and the more expensive ones around the corner were filling up.



John Hunt, sixty-seven, is a retired post office employee who once, long, long ago, stacked celery in the old St. Lawrence market. In June he moved into the corner house on Jenoves Place with his wife and granddaughter, Katherine, and their Chihuahua, Pepper. The house is air conditioned and has two bedrooms and a 34-

by 12-foot basement, which can be converted into a recreation room.

"This is a great improvement," Mr. Hunt said, shortly after he moved in. "The walls are thick, and you can't hear your next-door neighbours." Mrs. Hunt is pleased that there are no hills to climb and that the mid-city bus stops are only a block away.

St. Lawrence has five projects: one is city owned and all are non-profit co-operatives. The co-ops are

an established Canadian institution in which ownership is collective, residents are members with well defined rights, and the whole shebang is run by them through a board of directors.

The new neighbourhood is cheek by jowl with the O'Keefe Centre, the Young People's Theatre, the Toronto Free Theatre and some of the best restaurants in the city. It is a half-dozen blocks from Union Station, which has subway and train connections to all parts of



the spread-out metropolitan area.

It is not without its mild critics. Penina Coopersmith, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, noted that the new neighbourhood is buffered from noise by a line of 45-foot high buildings backed up against the Gardiner Expressway. These and a variety of utility buildings along the major streets create a kind of walled town or, as Ms. Coopersmith put it, "superblocks which surround and overlook the townhouses." The park's "elegant green spine" along Esplanade will serve the residents well and should attract office workers and strollers to the public square at the western end, near the O'Keefe Centre, but she fears nothing will bring outsiders to the eastern end, which is devoid of shops and other enticements.

In 1842 Charles Dickens noted that Quebec City was a place "not to be forgotten or mixed up in the mind with other places or altered for a moment in the crowd of scenes a traveller can recall." It may be the best example on the continent of the intelligent adapted use of old towns. The seventeenth century remains intact within the old city walls, as shown below, and the \$100 million commercial array of Place Québec, Place Haute-Ville and Place de la Capitale surrounds it.





Montreal provides many mid-city benches on which to rest. These two wandering minstrels are making music in Place Jacques Cartier.

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